



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Better vocational options lead to fewer dropouts from education and training

Early findings of a Europe-wide Cedefop study of the effect of vocational education and training (VET) on the dropout rate reveal that this effect is largely positive. In countries where vocational pathways account for a large share of education and training, rates of early school leaving are below the EU target for 2020 (10%). Conversely, in countries where VET lags behind, the dropout rate is higher than 10%; in some cases, significantly so.

The study also addresses the lack of commonly accepted definition of early leavers from vocational education and training. Data at EU level and in many countries do not accurately track young people as they leave and re-enter learning environments and/or the labour market.

The study has found that over 97% of early leavers are dropouts, with the remainder being young people who never start post-compulsory education and training. It also found that 1 in 5 dropouts eventually achieve upper secondary qualifications, with 77% doing so within three years. The findings were discussed last week at an expert workshop organised by Cedefop in Thessaloniki.



Left to right: project manager Irene Psifidou, Director James Calleja, Aline Jürges of the European Commission and Sogol Noorani of Eurydice at the conference

Addressing the workshop, Cedefop Director James Calleja pointed out that the problem of early leaving is largely VET's to solve: early leavers between 16 and 24 who return to education typically choose vocational options. Mr Calleja spoke of early leavers as 'casualties of the education system' whom public authorities have a responsibility to support.

Workshop participants agreed that data collection must be improved to provide an accurate overall picture for policy-makers and allow them to implement the right policies. Thanks to such a comprehensive data collection and monitoring system, policy-makers in the Netherlands have solid evidence on which to base policy decisions. As a result, early leaving rates have dropped significantly in the past few years. In addition, systematic tracking (by means of a personal education number which is linked to a social security number) alerts authorities when learners leave or re-enter education and training at any level and in every kind of learning environment. This system has revealed that the real national rate of early leaving from education and training is lower than previously thought.

Cedefop has launched a three-year project (2014-17) to address the lack of data on early leaving specifically from vocational pathways and to analyse the role VET plays in reducing the dropout rate. Cedefop's Irene Psifidou, who organised the workshop, said that the ultimate aim of the project is 'ambitious but necessary to develop tools that will make it possible for countries to monitor individual learning pathways and to evaluate national policies on early leaving.'

Mr Calleja also emphasised this point: 'As a public agency, Cedefop must ensure that Member States can use our research in order to implement measures that will make a difference. But it is not enough to develop tools. Countries will also need help in implementing them until they become part of the culture of the education and training system.'

In its first year, the project addresses how to measure the magnitude and determine the causes of early leaving from VET, and the ways in which improved data and analysis can feed into targeted policy measures. Workshop discussions will feed into next year's research, which is to focus on indicators and on evaluating the impact of policy measures in tackling early leaving from education and training through VET.

For more on the workshop: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/events/ELET2014>

Briefing note available in Spanish, German, Greek, English, French, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese: [Keeping young people in \(vocational\) education: what works?](#)

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About Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), an agency of the European Union based in Thessaloniki, Greece, supports European policy-making in the field of vocational education and training. www.cedefop.europa.eu

