



Leaving education early:

putting vocational education
and training in centre stage



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Introduction

This is one of the 15 country fiches that have been developed as background material to the Cedefop study:

Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage.

[Volume I: investigating causes and extent](#)

[Volume II: evaluating policy impact](#)

The publication was produced by Cedefop, Department for learning and employability, under the supervision of Antonio Ranieri.

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Country fiches have been developed and drafted on the basis of desk research and interviews conducted between 2014-15 by ICF consulting services with national stakeholders, social partners, companies, VET providers and practitioners as well as learners who provided country-specific information. They have been validated by selected interviewees ⁽¹⁾.

Country fiches are available for: Austria, Belgium-Fr, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal and United Kingdom.

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Please note that this is an unedited version.

⁽¹⁾ The detailed methodology as well as an anonymous list of all interviewees, including information on country, organisation and job position/role, is available on request. Please contact Cedefop expert in charge Irene Psifidou: rena.psifidou@cedefop.europa.eu

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1. Definitions applying in national and regional context

Questions	Answers
<p>What is the national definition(s) of early leavers from education and training: Who are classified as early leavers from education and training?</p>	<p>(a) Austria uses the same definition as Eurostat to determine the ESL rate. This includes the share of 18-24 year-olds who have no upper secondary qualification and did not take part in training or continuing training in the four weeks before the time of the survey. The group is heterogeneous and includes also those without a compulsory school qualification and those who drop out shortly before their upper secondary school-leaving examination (Reifeprüfung) ⁽²⁾.</p> <p>(b) Another definition used ⁽³⁾ is based on the share of students at risk according to the PISA study. According to the 2009 PISA survey, 34% of students belong to the group at risk in at least one of three basic competences.</p> <p>(c) NEETs: The share of young people who are not in education, employment or training is seen as an indicator for ESL.</p> <p>(d) Drop out is defined different from ESL, as a rate of loss of a specific educational institution - those who leave their pathways before obtaining a qualification. As they might take up another training programme afterwards, this is not ESL per se.</p> <p>(e) Pupils who are not undergoing training after completing compulsory schooling, which means they have left the education system.</p>
<p>What is the national definition of early leaving from VET? Does it include those in apprenticeships?</p>	<p>Drop-out in VET cannot be defined easily, as the rates of loss recorded in school statistics are "gross losses" and include pupils who change school, but do not leave the system. There are net rates of loss at vocational schools and VET colleges based on the school statistics calculated in surveys. They include the vocational schools which represent the school-based part of dual apprenticeship training.</p>

⁽²⁾ Pressl, G. (2014). *Early leaving from vocational education and training*. Austria. Refernet.

⁽³⁾ Steiner, M. (2012). Early school leaving and drop out. A challenge for education and society. Lecture held at the stay on track. *Final conference, Vienna, 31.5.2012*.

Questions	Answers
What are the data used to inform this definition and who is responsible for it? (i.e. which data set(s) provide information that is used to compute ELET indicators and who sponsors the collection and collects these data).	Drop out data are included in school statistics as rates of loss from school types by Statistics Austria. Data on the number of young people who are not undergoing training after completing compulsory schooling is based on the school statistics as well. The NEET indicator is based on the microcensus labour force survey.

2. Rates of early leaving from VET during last five years

The following table presents recent statistical data on early leaving from education and training. In lower secondary school, the number of those who dropped out is at 3.6% and male pupils are at higher risk than female. The group of those who drop out after compulsory lower secondary school and do not continue education or training is at 6.8%, also with a larger share of males.

The drop out numbers at VET schools are at 9.3%, while there is a big difference between VET schools with drop-out rates at 12.7% and VET colleges ⁽⁴⁾ with drop-out rates at 5.9%. Figures also show a higher dropout during the first school year, as compulsory schooling does end after nine years, while lower secondary school ends after eight years and the polytechnic school is not considered attractive by many pupils.

About 14.5 % drop out from apprenticeship training. The percentage of female drop outs is higher than male drop outs. Differences can also be seen by economic sectors and regions ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽⁴⁾ VET schools ('Berufsbildende Mittlere Schulen - BMS', ISCED 3) are schools for intermediate vocational education; they last 1-4 years at upper secondary level and do not provide a university entrance certificate. VET colleges ('Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen - BHS') are colleges for higher vocational education and last 5 years at upper secondary level. Years 1-3 are at ISCED3, years 4-5 at ISCED level 5. Colleges provide a university entrance certificate and a vocational diploma, which also, depending on the field, may entitle to work in regulated professions.

⁽⁵⁾ WKO (2014). *Daten zum QML- Qualitätsmanagement in der Lehrausbildung. Österreich gesamt.*

		2013-14			
Type of ELET		Cohort or age range	male	female	total
		e.g. those who started the third year of secondary education in 2004-05	(or other relevant breakdowns)		
Statistik Austria, Bildung in Zahlen 2013/14	% ELET during lower secondary (less than ISCED3c long)	Those who were 14 years old in 2010/11 (age cohort to complete secondary I education) and have not completed lower secondary education in 2012/13	4.70%	2.50%	3.60%
	% ELET did not make transition following lower secondary (non-starters)	Those who ended compulsory lower secondary education in 2010/11 and have not started until 2011/12	7.60%	6%	6.80%
	% ELET during upper secondary GE (includes those completed GE programme but failed assessment)	Those who started upper secondary GE in 2008/09 and have not completed 2013/14			7.10%
	% ELET during upper secondary VET (includes those who completed VET programme but failed assessment)	Those who started upper secondary GE in 2008/09 and have not completed 2013/14. VET schools: 12.7%; VET colleges: 5.9%			9.30%
	% ELET during upper secondary apprenticeships	Those who ended their apprenticeship contract in 2012 and did not continue with an apprenticeship until the end of 2013. Source: WKO, Apprenticeship Statistic	11.80%	14.50%	12.80%

Source: Statistik Austria (2015). *Bildung in Zahlen 2013/14. Tabellenband*.
<http://www.statistik.at/wcm/mvc/publicationsCatalogue/redirectDetailedView?pubId=509§ionId=128> [accessed 3.4.2017].

3. National and regional strategy to tackle ELET

Scope	Description
National and/or regional strategy/action plan to reduce ELET	<p>Name and year: Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-) Bildungsabbruchs (national strategy to combat early school leaving), 2012 ⁽⁶⁾.</p> <p>Brief description: the strategy is based on a strategic triangle, including measures at system level, provider level and individual level. Measures are developed within the dimensions of prevention, intervention and compensation, aligned with the EU policy framework. Moreover, quality improvement within the school system is discussed as one of the key factors in combating early school leaving. Also measures against absenteeism from school are mentioned in the strategy.</p>
Elements of the strategy are explicitly linked to VET	<p>Some measures mentioned in the strategy explicitly refer to VET. For example the apprenticeship-coaching initiative to support apprentices during their training and boost completion rates is mentioned. Moreover supra-company apprenticeship training was introduced to ensure that every learner will find a training place. Also, a quality assurance initiative (QIBB ⁽⁷⁾) for school-based VET was introduced.</p>

4. Recent policy initiatives

Scope and questions	
<p>New policy initiatives being undertaken that include a role for VET to reduce ELET: either;</p> <p>(a) reduce ELET from VET;</p> <p>(b) reduce ELET (in general) through VET.</p>	<p>A- Since July 2014 a new directive for the promotion of apprenticeships has been in place. It includes coaching for apprentices, a focus on disadvantaged groups (migrants, women in non-typical professions and SMEs), the implementation of regional coordination of measures, guidelines for trainers and evaluation measures ⁽⁸⁾.</p> <p>A- The Austrian government aims to reform the educational system in 2016, by introducing compulsory education/training until the age of 18 (AusBildungspflicht 18). It aims to reduce the number of dropouts and increase the number of those who obtain a qualification beyond compulsory education. It also aims to evaluate and further</p>

⁽⁶⁾ BMUKK (2012). *Nationale Strategie zur Verhinderung frühzeitigen (Aus-) Bildungsabbruchs*.

https://www.bmbf.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/ba/schulabbruch_eslstrategie_24401.pdf?4dzgm2 [accessed 3.4.2017]

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.qibb.at/de/English> [accessed 3.4.2017]

⁽⁸⁾ <http://www.bmwf.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/LehrlingsUndBerufsausbildung/Seiten/Lehrepoedern.aspx> [accessed 3.4.2017]

Scope and questions	
	develop current measures. The strategy is being developed by ministerial working groups and supported by a scientific institute ⁽⁹⁾ .
Is the role of VET in reducing ELET assuming greater or lesser importance? Why?	The role of VET in general is considered of high importance, as 80% of learners at upper secondary level are involved in either apprenticeship-based or school-based VET.

5. Stakeholder cooperation

Question	Please elaborate on their role or involvement
What are and have been the main influences of stakeholders in the development and implementation of VET related policies specifically to reduce ELET?	<p>The Austrian policy system is based on social partnership, which means that stakeholders such as employers and trade unions are involved in most policy processes - especially in those related to the labour market and vocational education and training.</p> <p>The new initiative to introduce compulsory education until the age of 18 is steered by a group which includes the Ministries of Education, Labour, Social Affairs and Economy. The process is supported by working groups (e.g. on monitoring, measures) which involve regional governments and social partners in the process. This initiative will have major effects on future VET policies in Austria as it will prolong compulsory education and training from currently the age of 14 to the age of 18. As there is a shortage of apprenticeship training places, this will cause additional measures to ensure training and education opportunities for every young adult. However, it is not clear at this stage, how this will be implemented.</p> <p>The 'territorial employment pacts' (Territoriale Beschäftigungspakte) are contracted regional partnerships which aim to ensure better links between employment policy and other policies in order to improve the employment situation at regional and local level. They include VET policies, but also womens affairs, equity, disability, economic and social affairs policies. TEPs have been created in all nine Austrian Federal Provinces since 2000, involving ministries, social partners and regional governments.</p> <p>Learning providers are mainly involved in projects and initiatives at local and regional level.</p>

⁽⁹⁾ <http://www.equi.at/en/projects/focus/12/Wissenschaftliche+Grundlagenanalysen+zur+Konzeptionierung+der+Ausbildung+bis+18+%28%22Ausbildungs-Pflicht%22%29> [accessed 3.4.2017]

6. Monitoring systems

Question	Answers
<p>What specific early leavers monitoring systems exist?</p>	<p>Name/descriptor: school statistics ⁽¹⁰⁾.</p> <p>Aims: collects data of pupils in school system, including GE, vocational schools, VET schools and VET colleges.</p> <p>Year introduced: Since 2002 comprehensive data has been collected, based on tracking individuals' career pathways.</p> <p>Coverage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) it covers school-based VET. Also covers data on apprenticeship, but less comprehensively; (b) national scope; (c) early school leaving, drop-outs, based on socio-demographic factors.
<p>What information is monitored/collected?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Numbers of drop outs: yes, it follows individual pupils' careers by a longitudinal method and allows differentiation between non-starters and drop-outs and relies on indicators of non-attainment and loss rate. However, it does not differentiate between real leavers and those who continue another programme. (b) Reasons for dropping out: partly – e.g. drop-out rates from vocational schools are partly explained by the fact that many learners, before starting an apprenticeship training ⁽¹¹⁾, complete the ninth year of compulsory schooling by attending a VET school or VET college for one year only and then intentionally dropping out. (c) Background characteristics of dropouts/those at risk: yes; migrant status, gender differences and socio-economic background are taken into account.
<p>What are the data used for? How it is used by VET institutions/providers?</p>	<p>Data inform national and regional strategies. Data are discussed in national bodies and working groups. Currently they inform the development of compulsory education until the age of 18, together with other monitoring systems explained below. Data are currently discussed within the working groups (including ministries and stakeholders) developing the compulsory education until the age of 18. As the discussions are not concluded yet, no concrete</p>

⁽¹⁰⁾ http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bildung_und_kultur/formales_bildungswesen/index.html [accessed 3.4.2017]

⁽¹¹⁾ Primary and lower secondary school only last eight years. Compulsory schooling in Austria however is of nine years. For those who want to start an apprenticeship training afterwards, there is a special school type called prevocational school, which lasts one year and corresponds to the ninth year of schooling. However, the school is not seen as a good choice by many pupils and their parents. Therefore, many go to a VET school or VET college instead, where they intentionally drop out after one year to start an apprenticeship training. In the statistics this is recorded as a dropout, as the school statistic does not record transfers to apprenticeship training.

Question	Answers
	<p>information is available.</p> <p>VET schools do not use the data.</p>
<p>How is the monitoring system linked with offering support measures? (i.e. is it being used to contact those who have dropped out to provide support to find employment, education or further training?)</p>	<p>Support measures are developed based on the monitoring data.</p> <p>Support measures (e.g. youth coaching) are developed by the responsible Ministries (e.g. economy, education, employment) in cooperation with stakeholders (parents' organisations, school inspectorate, social partners). Measures are also developed at regional levels.</p> <p>Data are not used to contact those who have dropped out.</p>
<p>What role is/ has the monitoring system played in the design, development or implementation of the policies, strategies and initiatives?</p>	<p>Monitoring data informs national and regional strategies and the development of measures. Furthermore, it is used in research and evaluation of initiatives to inform evidence-based policy-making.</p>
Question	Answers
<p>What specific early leavers monitoring systems exist?</p>	<p>Name/descriptor: apprenticeship statistics ⁽¹²⁾.</p> <p>Aims: provide data on apprenticeships in Austria.</p> <p>Year introduced: 2002.</p> <p>Coverage:</p> <p>(a) it covers apprenticeships;</p> <p>(b) national scope;</p> <p>(c) number of apprenticeship contracts, number of apprenticeship contracts with early termination, final exams and final exams not taken.</p>
<p>What information is monitored/collected?</p>	<p>Numbers of dropouts: yes, including data on apprentices who missed final exams and rates of apprentices who left the program before the final exam and did not start another apprenticeship ('real leavers').</p> <p>Reasons for dropping out: no</p> <p>Background characteristics of drop outs/those at risk: gender.</p>
<p>What are the data used for? How it is used by VET institutions/providers?</p>	<p>The data are used by the Chambers of Commerce, who are responsible for the apprenticeship-leave exam and collect the data on apprenticeship contracts for the development of measures, also in cooperation with companies. The collected data is based on the numbers reported by VET training centres, which are provided by them once per year. The data covers all apprentices and</p>

(¹²) WKO (2014). *Lehrlingsstatistik*.
https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Interessenvertretung/ZahlenDatenFakten/Daten_zum_Thema_Lehrlinge.html [accessed 3.4.2017]

Question	Answers
	<p>includes administrative data (e.g. personal data, grades in school, absenteeism) and includes data on apprentices who have ended their education and training (including drop outs and missed exams). The monitoring system is not based on individual longitudinal data and does not include detailed data on sectors and regions in detail. Data are published in a yearly report.</p> <p>One measure resulting from this data is the apprenticeship coaching. Another measure implemented by the Chamber of Commerce but also a number of companies are preparation courses for the apprenticeship leaving exam.</p>
How is the monitoring system linked with offering support measures? (i.e. is it being used to contact those who have dropped out to provide support to find employment, education or further training?)	<p>The monitoring system is used by the Chambers of Commerce to identify regional differences and develop support measures based on that information. For example, the apprenticeship coaching was developed based on the apprenticeship statistics, e.g. as a reaction to a high number of missed apprenticeship-leave exams. The coaching was developed at national level together with the Chambers of Commerce and vocational schools, who are responsible for the school-based part of the dual apprenticeship education.</p> <p>The monitoring system is also used within the development of the new initiative for compulsory education until the age of 18.</p> <p>The monitoring is not used to identify individuals at risk.</p>
What role is/ has the monitoring system played in the design, development or implementation of the policies, strategies and initiatives?	<p>The apprenticeship statistics broadly inform the development of strategies and initiatives. They are presented once a year and discussed in sectoral bodies, ministries, regional governments and to the public. However, strategies seem to be more informed by the school statistics.</p>
Question	Answers
What specific early leavers monitoring systems exist?	<p>Name/descriptor: career monitoring ⁽¹³⁾ ('BibEr').</p> <p>Aims: monitor individuals after leaving education.</p> <p>Year introduced/planned: 2008.</p> <p>Coverage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) it covers apprenticeships and school-based VET; (b) national scope; (c) monitoring of the career pathways of those solving an apprenticeship contract, early school leaving, occupational status at intervals of 3, 6, 12, 18 and 24 months after leaving formal education;

⁽¹³⁾ http://www.statistik-austria.at/web_de/statistiken/menschen_und_gesellschaft/bildung_und_kultur/bildungsbezogenes_erwerbkarrierenmonitoring_biber/index.html [accessed 3.4.2017]

Question	Answers
	(d) it is a joint project by the Ministry of Labour, Public Employment Service and Statistics Austria to track the careers of Austrian residents after graduating from formal education and training.
What information is monitored/collected?	Numbers of drop outs: yes Reasons for dropping out: no Background characteristics of drop outs/those at risk: yes
What are the data used for? How it is used by VET institutions/providers?	Data are used by policy makers at national and regional level to develop measures (e.g. youth coaching, apprenticeship coaching, 'Produktionsschule'). Reported data are sent to VET schools and training centres once a month to inform about the numbers of students who found a regular apprenticeship or employment. However, they are not used at provider level for developing specific measures at individual level.
How is the monitoring system linked with offering support measures? (i.e. is it being used to contact those who have dropped out to provide support to find employment, education or further training?)	The monitoring system is linked with the responsible ministries and the public employment service to develop measures (e.g. coaching). Also teachers who are responsible for career guidance at institutional level are provided with detailed data, to inform their work and develop measures at institutional level (e.g. remedial support, coaching).
What role is/ has the monitoring system played in the design, development or implementation of the policies, strategies and initiatives?	The system is also used within the development of the new initiative for compulsory education until the age of 18. Within this initiative, it is planned to further develop the monitoring system, to get more detailed information about ESL and especially about NEETs. However, it should be noted that school leavers who have never been employed or registered at the public employment service are not represented in the data.

7. Effect of the economic crisis

Question	Answers
In what ways has the role of VET in reducing ELET been influenced by the economic crisis? Please consider: (a) supply of VET	The economic crisis has affected the Austrian VET system in different ways. Within school-based VET, enrolment figures slightly increased in most fields during the last years. In apprenticeship-based VET, the number of supplied apprenticeship places (within companies) decreased ⁽¹⁴⁾ . While between 2006 and 2008, the gap between demand

⁽¹⁴⁾ Tritscher-Archan, S. (2010). *Berufsbildungspolitik in Österreich. Fortschritte in bildungspolitischen Schwerpunktbereichen der Berufsbildung.*

Question	Answers
<p>places;</p> <p>(b) demand for VET places;</p> <p>(c) qualifications of VET students (increasing decreasing);</p> <p>(d) popularity and perception of VET;</p> <p>(e) increase/decrease in public resources for VET;</p> <p>(f) access to 'second chance' VET opportunities.</p>	<p>and supply in apprenticeship places decreased, in 2009 it increased again. In 2012, the gap decreased again, however during the last year the gap became larger again. Between 2009 and 2013, the number of available apprenticeship training places in companies decreased by 1000 per year. Since 2013, this number decreased even more, reducing apprenticeship training places by 1500 ⁽¹⁵⁾.</p> <p>VET is a popular pathway in Austria. The share of 15 year olds participating in apprenticeship-based VET remained stable since the mid-90ies at around 40%, also during the economic crisis. Since 2012, this share has been decreasing (from 41.1% in 2012 to 39.9% in 2013). A further decrease is expected, also because of the demographic situation ⁽¹⁶⁾. The demographic change leads to difficulties for companies to find qualified apprentices. The lack of basic competences becomes a bigger issue, as more and more professions are linked to technological developments.</p> <p>Another issue is the underrepresentation of migrants in the apprenticeship training. Only 11 per cent of the migrants of an age cohort choose to participate in apprenticeship training, which is significantly below the average cited above (40 per cent), while the share of migrants in VET schools and VET colleges is up to 30% of a cohort.</p> <p>The economic crisis led to an increase of public resources spent on measures to reduce the impact of the crisis, especially aiming to increase the number of apprenticeship places ⁽¹⁷⁾.</p> <p>Second chance education in the area of VET was extended during the last years. The number of those who sit extraordinary apprenticeship-leave exams increased up to about 16 per cent in 2013 ⁽¹⁸⁾.</p> <p>Interviewed stakeholders did not report on this question.</p>

⁽¹⁵⁾ Dornmayr, N. (2014). *Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick*. Ibw Forschungsbericht 180.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Dornmayr, N. (2014). *Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick*. Ibw Forschungsbericht 180.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Tritscher-Archan, S. (2010). *Berufsbildungspolitik in Österreich. Fortschritte in bildungspolitischen Schwerpunktbereichen der Berufsbildung*.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Dornmayr, N. (2014). *Lehrlingsausbildung im Überblick*. Ibw Forschungsbericht 180.

8. Factors positively contributing to the effectiveness of VET in reducing ELET

8.1. National/regional policy factors

- (a) Cooperation among stakeholders: the main factor considered by the interview partners to positively influence the effectiveness of VET measures is the cooperation between stakeholders in the areas of labour market, social work and education. This reduces double-efforts and allows the use of synergy effects. It is thus important to create interfaces between the areas. Some measures consider this and aim for a network between schools and initiatives (e.g. 'FIT für den Arbeitsmarkt'). Moreover, the communication among involved organisations, stakeholders and services is considered very important, to ensure the individual young adult is transferred to the right services if needed and therefore get ideal support as soon as possible.
- (b) Regional provision: Another factor stressed by interview partners is the regional provision of measures. To ensure low-threshold opportunities, measures 'have to be where the youth is' and thus adapted to the regional context.
- (c) Reduction of barriers to participate in a measure: Young adults are often confronted with barriers (e.g. administration, opening hours, no information in understandable format, low flexibility). Measures which provide low barrier opportunities to participate enable an easier start for target groups at risk, or those who already dropped out. For example, the Spacelab in Vienna, where young individuals can work on a daily basis in a workshop without notification in advance.
- (d) Individualised support: Counselling and coaching measures are effective, because they work on a one-to-one basis. Young individuals have a clear and continuous contact person. This ensures the individual needs are at the centre of attention.

8.2. Systemic features of the (VET) education system

- (a) Target-group orientation: One main success factor considered is that measures are tailored to the needs of the target group. This enables a clear focus of the initiative and allows better evaluation of results. Individual counselling is considered as a main strategy to reach the target group of ELET, some interview partners said that counselling efforts should be further intensified and extended during the next years, e.g. regarding 'exit strategies'/options to choose from after leaving the 'regular' school system.

- (b) Impartial counsellors: One of the factors considered to add to the success of a youth counselling measure at VET schools is the fact that external counsellors instead of teachers conduct the talks with the students, which makes them more effective and enables a relationship, which is not influenced by the teacher-pupil hierarchy.
- (c) Relaxed and motivating atmosphere: young learners are often under high pressure. Therefore, initiatives aim to reduce the pressure and provide an atmosphere which reduces stress. It was also mentioned that they 'think in small steps' and do not want to overload students with decisions regarding the far future, but to rather focus on the present, and current interests, as well as small goals along the way of lifelong learning.
- (d) Highly qualified staff: most measures have highly qualified teachers, trainers and coaches with long experiences in their profession and continuous further training. This provides the basis for good work with young adults. Moreover, many measures enable supervision for their staff, which also enhances the quality of their work.
- (e) Focus on individual strengths: while the school system is often focussed on the individual's weaknesses. This measure focuses on the strengths instead, which encourages the individual development of young adults.
- (f) Comprehensive approach: measures do not only to focus on the individual level, but also on the learners' environment. Issues can be system-based and related to the training place or vocational school. Therefore, it is important to offer coaching and counselling also to trainers and training companies.

9. Factors constraining the effectiveness of VET to reduce ELET

9.1. National/regional policy factors

- (a) Lack of focus on the socio-economic background of learners: it is still one of the main barriers for the Austrian education system to overcome. This is also the case related to measures aiming to reduce early leaving: The more favourable the socio-economic and educational background of a learner, the better he/she is involved in initiatives and is successful. Measures to tackle this issue are related to social work at schools, especially to combat school absenteeism.

- (b) Language barriers: another issue are language deficits, especially among migrant learners. Initiatives should take language barriers into account, to plan low-threshold offers.
- (c) Costs of measures: one main factor constraining the effectiveness of VET to reduce ELET is related to costs of the measures. Although it is proven that the investment in measures to reduce early leaving from education is efficient in the long run, there are not always enough resources provided as needed. However, this depends on the specific measure.
- (d) Moreover, measures considered effective (e.g. coaching), are often based on intensive individual processes and therefore the staff costs (e.g. of coaches) are more expensive than in other measures.

10. Systemic features of the (VET) education system

- (a) Negative image of prevocational school: the ninth year of compulsory education in Austria is a system-based challenge. While school at lower secondary level only lasts until the eighth year of education, pupils need to attend a ninth year before they can start apprenticeship training. Prevocational schools last one year (the ninth year) and were implemented for that reason – however they are not considered ‘good’ schools in the public opinion. Therefore, many pupils (about two thirds) attend a VET school or VET college ⁽¹⁹⁾ for one year and leave the school on purpose after this year to start an apprenticeship training. According to the interview partners, this is a crucial point to be solved in near future to reduce early school leaving and ensure a more efficient system.
- (b) Lack of permeability: another problem mentioned by some interview partners relates to a ‘systemic’ difficulty of changing school types without ‘losing years’, i.e. the permeability of the VET and general education systems. It should be made easier for drop-outs of one school or programme type to transfer to another area/school/measure.
- (c) Lack of information to and involvement of parents: the involvement of parents in the process is also considered important by some of the respondents. Many parents would like to support their children but do not

⁽¹⁹⁾ VET schools (BMS, ISCED 3) are schools for intermediate vocational education lasts one to four years at upper secondary level and does not provide a university entrance certificate. VET colleges (BHS) are colleges for higher vocational education and last five years at upper secondary level. Years one to three are at ISCED3, Years four to five at ISCED level 5. Schools provide a university entrance certificate and a vocational diploma, which also entitles to work in regulated professions.

have sufficient information on the initiatives provided. Current initiatives, e.g. Lower Austria's counselling programme 'Begabungskompass' ('compass of strengths'), already partly involve a commitment by parents, which is considered to contribute to the success of the measure. However, this could be further improved.

- (d) Lack of a comprehensive monitoring system: The monitoring system is complex and split in three different systems: the school statistics, the apprenticeship statistics and the career monitoring. On the one hand, it is challenging to find information for users, on the other hand, schools, training centres and other providers need to report data for up to three different data systems managed by three different authorities.