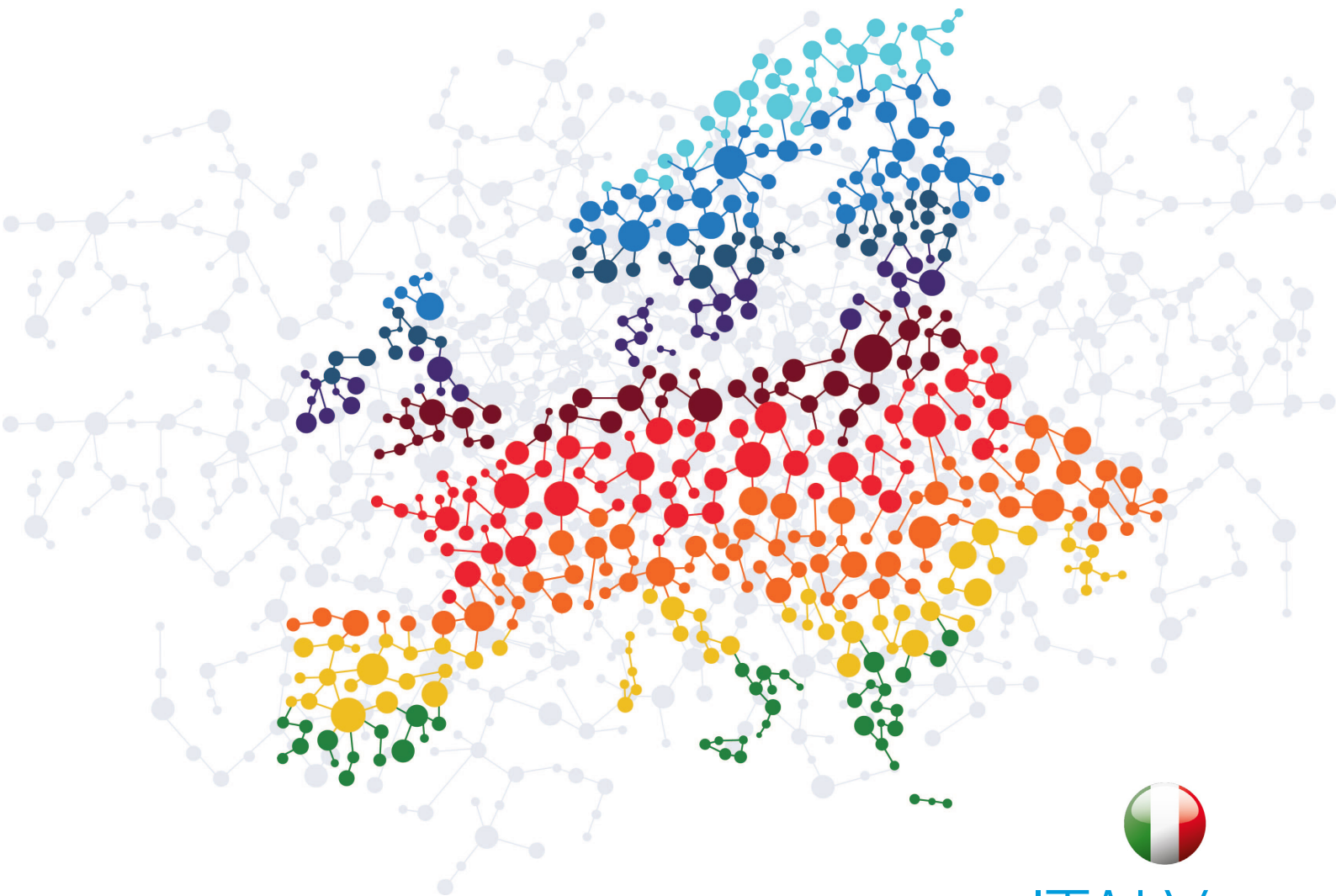




Leaving education early:

putting vocational education
and training in centre stage



ITALY

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.

Irene Psifidou, Cedefop expert, was responsible for the publication and research conducted under the 'Early leaving from education and training' project from October 2013 to July 2016.

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:</p> <p>Who are classified as early leavers from education and training?</p>	<p>Italy puts a lot of emphasis on distinguishing between 'dropping out' and 'dispersion', because the two terms refer to two different stages of one process and it is important to bear that in mind in order to formulate policies/better understand the Italian context.</p> <p>'Dispersion': leaving school prematurely or irregularly attending school (repeating school years, interrupting studies repeatedly, etc.).</p> <p>'Dropping out': students who leave school in the middle of the year (as calculated by the MIUR ⁽²⁾).</p>
<p>What is the national definition of early leaving from VET?</p> <p>(Does it include those in apprenticeships?)</p>	<p>The two definitions given above are also used for early leaving from VET.</p> <p>Apprenticeships are not part of any of the statistics or researches being undertaken regarding early leaving in Italy for two main reasons:</p> <p>(a) they are not part of the education system (as VET now is since 2003) and therefore are not part of the statistic collection methods;</p> <p>(b) the apprenticeship system never really took off in Italy because it is based on an employment contract (rather than training) and involves significant administrative hurdles that are too time consuming and complex for SMEs (the bulk of apprenticeships) to handle.</p>
<p>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?)</p>	<p>Statistics on dispersion/ELET in Italy are calculated on the basis of the information included in the national student registry, which is compiled by the MIUR with the information provided by the schools regarding absenteeism during the school year. Because this concerns only students who are enrolled in the state school system, it does not include students who are in centres providing VET – statistics for VET are kept by each VET centre and then compiled regularly (though not necessarily yearly) by the ISFOL (Institute for the development of vocational training for the labour force).</p>

⁽²⁾ Ministero per l'Istruzione, l'Università e la Ricerca – Ministry for Education, University and Research.

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

In Italy, statistics on ‘dispersion’ are calculated on the basis of the information included in the national student registry, compiled by the MIUR with the information provided by the schools regarding absenteeism during a school year. Because this concerns only students who are enrolled in the state school system, it does not include students who are in centres providing VET. The main findings of the MIUR’s 2013 report on school dispersion – based on the students enrolled for the year 2011/12 – are summarised in the table below.

Category		Students at risk of dropping out as share of students enrolled
By type of institution	High school	0.44%
	Ex-‘magistral’ institutes	0.86%
	Artistic education	1.56%
	ITS ⁽³⁾	1.46%
	IFTS ⁽⁴⁾	2.36%
By region and gender	Piemonte	0.15% (M) and 0.10% (F) in lower secondary school 1.15% (M) and 0.93% (F) in upper secondary school
	Lombardia	0.12% and 0.09% 1.13% and 0.81%
	Veneto	0.08% and 0.09% 1.22% and 0.78%
	Friuli Venezia Giulia	0.08% and 0.06% 1.46% and 0.93%
	Liguria	0.17% and 0.12% 2.05% and 1.47%
	Emiglia Romagna	0.11% and 0.06% 1.03% and 0.88%

⁽³⁾ Istituto Tecnico Superiore (higher technical institute).

⁽⁴⁾ Istituto Professionale Tecnico Superiore (higher professional technical institute).

Toscana	0.17% and 0.10% 1.77% and 1.29%
Umbria	0.11% and 0.09% 1.06% and 0.89%
Marche	0.13% and 0.06% 1.81% and 1.04%
Lazio	0.14% and 0.11% 1.22% and 0.76%
Abruzzo	0.15% and 0.10% 1.25% and 0.92%
Molise	0.09% and 0.02% 0.63% and 0.29%
Campania	0.42% and 0.31% 1.59% and 1.12%
Puglia	0.34% and 0.22% 1.64% and 1.06%
Basilicata	0.23% and 0.11% 1.43% and 0.90%
Calabria	0.26% and 0.11% 1.34% and 0.86%
Sicilia	0.58% and 0.36% 1.91% and 0.29%
Sardegna	0.52% and 0.28% 3.11% and 2.14%

The table below, on the other hand, shows the number of students enrolled in 2010-11 that have dropped-out of courses delivered by IeFP ⁽⁵⁾ centres – the information was compiled by ISFOL ⁽⁶⁾ the branch of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies dealing with VET.

⁽⁵⁾ Istruzione e Formazione Professionale (professional education and training).

⁽⁶⁾ Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori (Institute for the development of workers' professional training).

Region	Number of drop-outs	% of region population	% of Italy's dropouts
Piemonte	2 501	1.7	2.2
Valle d'Aosta	333	7.7	0.3
Lombardia	21 504	6.2	18.9
Trentino Alto Adige	893	4	0.8
Veneto	5 685	3.2	5
Friuli Venezia Giulia	1 008	2.6	0.9
Liguria	3 141	6.3	2.8
Emiglia Romagna	856	0.6	0.8
Toscana	3 926	3.3	3.4
Umbria	713	2.4	0.6
Marche	1 019	1.9	0.9
Lazio	10 430	5	9.2
Abruzzo	2 652	5.3	2.3
Molise	186	1.5	0.2
Campania	22 733	8.1	20
Puglia	11 366	6.4	10
Basilicata	209	0.9	0.2
Calabria	5 030	5.8	4.4
Sicilia	15 548	6.8	13.7
Sardegna	4 066	6.8	3.6
North West	27 479	5	24.2
North East	8 442	2.1	7.4
Centre	16 088	3.9	14.1
South	42 176	6.7	37.1
Islands	19 614	6.8	17.2

More recently, ISFOL published a report giving statistics on the number of students that have graduated from the different types of institutions. The results show that:

- (a) 65.7% of the students coming from leFP accredited centres graduated;
- (b) 56.9% of the students coming from integrated subsidiarity courses graduated; and,
- (c) 61.2% of the students coming from complementary subsidiarity courses graduated.

ISFOL also published a report highlighting the impact of the different types of courses on students' employability after graduating. The table below summarises the findings of the survey.

Type of VET institution	Geographical area	Employed (%)	Job hunting (%)	Inactive (%)	Total (%)	Basis (sample No)
Accredited leFP centre	North West	55.4	39.4	5.2	100	1928
	North East	61.5	32.7	5.8	100	1278
	Centre	30	60	10	100	190
	South & Islands	27.7	62.6	9.7	100	155
School (ITS and IFTS)	North West	38.5	45.4	16.1	100	434
	North East	50.5	39.8	9.7	100	319
	Centre	39.6	44.3	16.1	100	273
	South & Islands	27.8	62.5	9.7	100	464

3. National and regional strategy to tackle ELET

Scope	Description
National and/or regional strategy/action plan to reduce ELET	<p>Law 53/2003 (also known as 'Riforma Moratti') is a 'government mandate for the definition of the general norms regarding education and the essential performance levels in relation to vocational education and training'.</p> <p>The aim of the mandate was to institutionalise a reform that would include VET pathways into the education system. Previous to this mandate, VET was not part of the system and was delivered through specific centres accredited for that purpose.</p> <p>Since 2003, therefore, the education system now offers students, upon reaching upper secondary education (age 14), a wider variety of choices in relation to general education or VET (or, in some cases, the opportunity to switch between the two systems at given points of their</p>

Scope	Description
	<p>schooling. These now include five choices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) high school; (b) higher technical education (ITS – Istruzione Tecnica Superiore); (c) higher technical education and training (IFTS – Istruzione e Formazione Tecnica Superiore); (d) professional education and training (IeFP – Istruzione e Formazione Professionale); (e) apprenticeships. <p>While the first three options fall within the responsibility of the state, IeFP and apprenticeships are the responsibility of each region.</p> <p>This system was elaborated following numerous studies proving that, in regions where VET was fully implemented and part of the educational offer, early school leaving had decreased. It is therefore the most important strategy to tackle early leaving and VET is the central tenet. This is a preventative measures, established with the belief that if students are given more choices within the formal education system they will be less likely to drop out or become NEETs.</p>
Elements of the strategy are explicitly linked to VET	The main element of the strategy is VET (as explained above).

4. Recent policy initiatives

Scope and questions	
<p>New policy initiatives being undertaken that include a role for VET to reduce ELET: either</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) reduce ELET from VET; (b) reduce ELET (in general) through VET. 	<p>The national policy mentioned above (i.e. Law 53/2003 (also known as ‘Riforma Moratti’ – ‘government mandate for the definition of the general norms regarding education and the essential performance levels in relation to vocational education and training’) is the only main policy initiative that has been taken in Italy to address ELET. Other steps have been taken at national level to address ELET (such as the establishment of the student registry in order to be able to keep better track of students’ enrolments and absences, national orientation plans, interventions in risk areas) but these have not included any element of VET.</p> <p>Rather, through the use of the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the government has been financing schools, communes, provinces and regions that have wished to develop and implement projects and programmes aimed at tackling ELET – generally as intervention or compensation methods. Many of these are highly likely to include elements of VET, however since they are so dispersed and</p>

Scope and questions	
	<p>carried out by such a wide variety of actors, no study to date has been able to keep track of all the initiatives that have been taking place in Italy. It is worth noting, nonetheless, that a study carried out by WeWorld Intervita, Associazione Bruno Trentin and Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli (LOST - Dispersione scolastica: il costo per le collettività e il ruolo del terzo settore) has tried to map out the type of actions and actors involved in the implementation of programmes to tackle ELET in Milan, Rome, Naples and Palermo (none of these, however, refer to VET).</p>
<p>Is the role of VET in reducing ELET assuming greater or lesser importance? Why?</p>	<p>This system was elaborated following numerous studies proving that, in regions where VET was fully implemented and part of the educational offer, early school leaving had decreased. It is therefore the most important strategy to tackle early leaving and VET is the central tenet. This is a preventative measure, established with the belief that if students are given more choices within the formal education system they will be less likely to drop-out or become NEETs.</p> <p>At regional level and at the level of ISFOL (Institute for the development of vocational training for the labour force), there is a growing belief (and evidence) that VET plays a significant role not only in tackling ELET but also in increasing young people's employability. Interviewees have repeatedly pointed out, however, that whilst this is a known fact for practitioners in VET, the government is not giving any signs of increasing funds for VET institutions or harmonising the situation.</p>

5. Stakeholder cooperation

	Please elaborate on their role or involvement
<p>What are and have been the main influences of stakeholders in the development and implementation of VET related policies specifically to reduce ELET?</p> <p>(a) Employers, (b) trade unions social partners, (c) VET institutions, (d) other learning providers (please specify)</p>	<p>(a) MIUR (Ministry for education, university and research) is the main national body responsible for the development of policies aimed at tackling ELET. The law 53/2003 was indeed drafted by then Education Minister Letizia Moratti.</p> <p>(b) MLPS (Ministry for Labour and Social Policies) is responsible more specifically for the financing of VET initiatives and should be in constant dialogue with MIUR to ensure that VET projects and programmes contribute to address early leaving where it is most needed (for instance, funds should be going for the development of a VET system in the South of Italy, where there is currently nothing, however funds there are distributed to the same schools that display high levels of dropouts; the rest of the funds are distributed to the regions of the North where the VET system is</p>

	<p>much more established).</p> <p>(c) Italian regions are responsible for the implementation of Law 53/2003 (which gives a lot of leeway to regions for doing as they see fit within their territory), and manage the system in coordination with the MLPS.</p> <p>(d) Provinces, communes, third sector are not responsible for the development of policies, but many of these bodies often times implement projects and programmes that aim to addressing ELET through VET. Generally speaking, however, these actions do not fall within the responsibility of the MIUR, the MLPS or the regions and therefore do not count as formal VET. They need to be mentioned, nonetheless, because in regions where formal VET is practically absent (such as the Southern regions) they play a key role in attempting to tackle ELET through intervention and compensation measures.</p>
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6. Monitoring systems

Question	Answers
What specific early leavers monitoring systems exist?	<p>The student registry was implemented with a vision of compounding together all the data gathered by schools on enrolments, presences/absences, etc. It was established in 2004.</p> <p>Regarding VET delivered by leFP, ISFOL is responsible for collecting the data (usually delivered by the regions), but there is no specific system in place.</p>
What information is monitored/collected?	<p>For VET in leFP accredited centres, the centres themselves collect information on enrolment and qualification/diplomas obtained by students (including gender, age and migrant status).</p> <p>The drop-out rates for the school system (which includes VET carried out through ITS and IFTS institutes) are calculated on the basis of the information collected in the registry: the data is triangulated so as to be able to determine whether students have (re)enrolled in a school year or whether they stopped attending classes midway through the term. The system collects data on truancy/absenteeism/enrolment at school and monitors gender, age, grade and migrant status.</p> <p>The two systems of data collection do not communicate, and it is therefore difficult to be able to say whether a student who has dropped out of school has then enrolled in an leFP.</p>
What are the data used for? How it is used by VET institutions/providers?	<p>Regarding the information collected by schools, the data is used to be able to identify students at risk of dropping out (that is to say, referring to the definitions mentioned earlier,</p>

Question	Answers
	<p>when they are getting dispersed).</p> <p>Regarding VET in leFP, accredited centres get funds on the basis of the number of courses they are delivering and the number of people that are attending them; therefore they are closely monitored at regional level.</p> <p>None of this information appears to actually be used to develop policies at either regional or national level. Regions simply do not have the money to be able to fund a more coherent and all-encompassing VET system/network of VET centres – these initiatives are usually the result of individuals/organisations seeing a gap in their province/region and wishing to address it. At national level, interviewees have repeatedly indicated that despite evidence that there is much less dropping out from VET centres than ITS and IFTS, no policies appear to be stemming from these findings.</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>Normally, if the student reaches a certain number of unjustified absences, the school is supposed to call the family to understand what is happening and discuss possible courses of action with them. If the family fails to give an adequate answer (or is simply not reachable), social services should be notified and the police should be going to visit the family directly. In reality, however, administrative staff are overwhelmed with work and if a case gets reported to social services there is often a very long delay before the police goes to visit the family (if at all). This therefore fails to properly address the issue of dispersion before it becomes an issue of drop-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>The data should be used for policy making. Interviewees, however, have pointed out that whilst ISFOL regularly publishes reports indicating that VET is being very effective in tackling ELET (in the regions where the system is well developed and established), no policies have thus far been developed with the aim of providing more support for the system. It would therefore appear that this is currently not really being used.</p>

7. Effect of the economic crisis

Question	Answers
<p>In what ways has the role of VET in reducing ELET been influenced by the economic crisis: (please consider):</p> <p>(a) supply of VET places;</p> <p>(b) demand for VET</p>	<p>There are no official statistics regarding the effects of the crisis on ELET.</p> <p>Nevertheless, two interesting points emerged during the interviews:</p> <p>(a) the number of students enrolling in VET courses (whether within the state system or with leFP), has been constantly growing in the past years and it is not</p>

Question	Answers
places; (c) qualifications of VET students (increasing decreasing); (d) popularity and perception of VET; (e) increase/decrease in public resources for VET; (f) access to 'second chance' VET opportunities.	<p>really possible to say whether this is related to the crisis or not. More importantly, centres delivering leFP rely on funding from the region for their survival, which is calculated on the number of students they estimate will be enrolling – as such, these centres usually work on a numerus closus, that is they accept 25 students plus two (in the event that there are students that do not show). These enrolments have to be made early on, otherwise the courses fill up and there is no room left, however a number of young students drop out of their programmes mid-way through the year and are often too late to enrol in these courses – they therefore get lost in the system. These factors make it very difficult to distinguish the impact of the crisis from the issues inherent to the system;</p> <p>(b) the crisis has hit more indirectly regarding the ability to get internships as part of the VET course. All the VET courses require that students do 250hours of internship with a company, however since many of these companies are usually SMEs, and are therefore those that have been most hit by the crisis, a number of them have closed and others simply can no longer afford to have a trainee with them.</p>

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

Stakeholders interviewed mentioned several factors positively contributing to the effectiveness of VET which in turn can reduce early leaving from education and training (ELET)/early leaving from VET (ELVET). The factors reported are:

8.1. National/regional policy factors

- (a) Regions where the leFP system has been well developed and implemented (such as Lombardia, Veneto, Piemonte, Liguria, Emilia-Romagna, where the system has a long-standing presence on the territory) have been showing signs of decreasing ELET as well as increasing employability of the young people graduating from these courses.
- (b) Generally, in the above-mentioned regions the leFP system has also been implemented to respond to the industry needs of the region – they are tailored to the type of work that young people who be expected to be able to access within their region upon finishing their studies. This facilitates not

only a better rate of success but also young people's ability to relate to what is being taught in class and what surrounds them.

8.2. Systemic features of the (VET) education system

- (a) Students are particularly attracted to the leFP programmes because they offer immediately a higher number of hours spent in the laboratories learning the trade. It allows them to relate much more quickly to the reality of their future vocation and draw a better link between what they are being taught in class and why it is useful on the job.
- (b) Pedagogically, leFP offer a much better environment for the students to thrive and develop their skills because courses are not delivered by teachers or lecturers but by trainers who are present in the classroom and in the school a larger number of hours (32 hours per week) than teachers in a normal school (18 hours per week). This allows for a stronger bond to develop with the students and much more supervision to help those that may be struggling at the beginning.
- (c) The methodology is different as well in that there is much less theory and much more practice. Many of the students who choose these pathways usually struggle with the high amount of theory being taught in the normal school system, as such even the required basic classes such as mathematics, Italian and languages (if necessary) are taught in a way that constantly draws a link between the topic and the trade they are learning. This allows student to feel that they are learning something that will be useful to them, rather than learning for the sake of it.
- (d) The centres delivering leFP also offer an environment that gives confidence back to these students. Many of them arrive in the centres after a number of failures in the normal system and have been told repeatedly that they do not succeed, they are not good enough and this is their last/second chance. In the centres, on the other hand, they are being valorised, told that they have skills they can develop and that this will allow them to earn a living. For many students, is the first time they are being told they can do something, and it gives them confidence back.
- (e) The sense of community that develops in these centres is also key for many of these students. The small numbers and the relationship they build with their trainers allow them to feel that they are part of a community of like-minded people, a community where they are valued and where they feel they have a purpose. Again, for many, this is a very welcome change from the school environment where there were too many other students and they,

for their inability to find interest/follow normal classes, were cast aside as failures.

9. Factors constraining the effectiveness of VET to reduce ELET

Stakeholders interviewed highlighted various factors that constrain the effectiveness of VET to reduce ELET/ELVET.

9.1. National/regional policy factors

The system that has been seen to be working best with students is the leFP, because it is delivered by centres that are established with the sole purpose of delivering VET. VET delivered by ITS and IFTS state institutions is not seen as working as well for two main reasons: first, because the hours of laboratory are minimal the first two years and remain quite small even as they increase in the third and, if applicable, fourth year; second, because they continue to put too much emphasis on theory rather than practice and, the classes being taught by teachers rather than trainers, the theory is not even necessarily related to the trade the students are learning in a way that can grasp their attention.

However, leFP is responsibility of the regions, both in terms of curriculum and in terms of financing, which means that as financing has been decreasing in the past few years, the number of students centres can accommodate is limited and the number of centres that are surviving is decreasing. As a result, in regions where leFP is will developed (that is, especially in the north), there continues to exist a relatively large offer of leFP for young people; on the contrary, in regions where there is small budget (especially in the south), leFP is practically non-existent.

9.2. Systemic features of the VET education system

Even in regions where the system is well established, the decrease in the funds allocated to leFP is pushing a number of regions to adopt what is known as the 'subsidiarity' system, that is: leFP is being delivered by ITS or IFTS that have been accredited by the region to do so. This is a significant issue because many of those institutes do not have the facilities to provide the same quality of training (lacking laboratories, not enough trainers) and their pedagogical means are very different, replicating the same issues that one can find in normal education or in

ITS and IFTS that do not deliver leFP. As a result, the level of dropouts from those institutes remains quite high because students are disappointed with the type of education and training they find (they expected more hours of laboratory and practice). This defeats the purpose and effectiveness of the leFP.