



# Leaving education early:

putting vocational education  
and training in centre stage



POLAND

# 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](#)

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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 <sup>(1)</sup>.

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.*

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<sup>(1)</sup> 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](mailto:rena.psifidou@cedefop.europa.eu)

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# 1. Definitions applying in national and regional context

Please indicate the main national and regional definitions applied, (other than those used at EU level).

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>The definitions used in the official documents (besides the definition of the EUROSTAT) are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) students not continuing education and/or training after lower secondary education (gimnazjum);</li> <li>(b) students having dropped out of education and training without completing compulsory education (so called 'drop-outs') <sup>(2)</sup>.</li> </ul> <p>The concern about ELET in policy documents was raised by the Europe 2020 agenda.</p> <p>The Eurostat definition is seen in Poland as valuable for statistical purposes, but it is also considered to be inadequate due to the difficulty of identifying the exact moment of school dropout, among other problems <sup>(3)</sup>.</p> <p>In the academic literature, there also definitions of ELET that refer to <sup>(4)</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the 'natural' early leaving – referring to the students who drop out due to natural reasons, e.g. death;</li> <li>(b) the 'ostensible' early leaving – the reasons for which include e.g. emigration. In such a case, a student can come back to the school system;</li> <li>(c) the 'potential' early leaving – in which the students will remain in the compulsory school system, but are highly likely not to continue their studies after that.</li> </ul> <p>The terms 'early school leaving' and 'dropout' are understood equally. The early leaver is understood to have resigned from school, dropping out from formal education.</p>
<p>What is the national</p>	<p>There is no specific definition of early leaving from VET</p>

<sup>(2)</sup> [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications:Tackling\\_Early\\_Leaving\\_from\\_Education\\_and\\_Training\\_in\\_Europe:\\_Strategies,\\_Policies\\_and\\_Measures](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications:Tackling_Early_Leaving_from_Education_and_Training_in_Europe:_Strategies,_Policies_and_Measures) [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(3)</sup> Resl.eu project paper 1: formulation of a common working definition of ESL: international contributions, Final 2013-10-21 .  
<https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container23160/files/Project%20Papers/Project%20Paper%201%20-%20Final.pdf> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(4)</sup> [https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/ReferNet\\_PL\\_ESL.pdf](https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/ReferNet_PL_ESL.pdf) [accessed 25.4.2017].

<p>definition of early leaving from VET?</p> <p>Does it include those in apprenticeships?</p>	<p>and the definitions above also refer to VET system. The apprenticeship is a particular type of practical training and is part of the VET system in Poland (see section on recent policies).</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>The main purpose of the data collection in Poland is to monitor and evaluate the education system as a whole, to gather administrative information and monitor schools as well as to make policy decisions based on the collected data.</p> <p>Data on ELET rates exist only in the official Europe-wide Eurostat datasets. Statistics are collected on the population's educational level, although this is most often related to their labour market status or continuing participation in education or training. Most current data about ELET are taken from the 2011 national census, disseminated through the Central Statistical Office - CSO (Główny Urząd Statystyczny - GUS) <sup>(5)</sup>. Various reports created on the basis of the database present the characteristics of the Polish population aged 15 years and over, in terms of socio-demographic and labour market indicators, although variables concerning educational status and non-participation in education are not currently included.</p> <p>Data on students failing to complete compulsory education is collected via the education information system – EIS (System Informacji Oświatowej - SIO <sup>(6)</sup>), which was introduced in 2005, and is aggregated twice a year. Since 2012, changes are being gradually introduced in the way data is collected as well as to the structure and operation of the EIS. For more information see the section on monitoring systems.</p>

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

According to the Eurostat, ELET rate in Poland was 5.3% in 2009 and have slightly increased to 5.6% in 2013. It is below the Europe 2020 headline target of 10%. However, Poland has set up a national target of reducing the ELET rate to 4.5 % by 2020.

As regards NEET rate for young people aged 15-17, it is very low in Poland - only 0.6% in 2012 and 0.7% in 2013. This is mainly due to the existence in

<sup>(5)</sup> <http://www.stat.gov.pl/> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(6)</sup> <https://sio.men.gov.pl/> [accessed 25.4.2017].

Poland of compulsory education until the age of 18. In 2013, in the group of 18-24 years-old the rate was 16.7%, and in the whole group 15-24 – 12.5%. The size of the whole population aged 15-24 in the NEET category is estimated at approx. 560 000 people. There are regional differences of NEET rate in the group of 15-24 years old in 2013: the highest in Podkarpackie (17.2%), Lubuskie (16.8%), Warmia and Mazury (16.2%) and Zachodniopomorskie (15.5%); the lowest in Mazowieckie (9.2%) and in Podlasie (9.8%) <sup>(7)</sup>.

The regional labour offices (wojewódzkie urzędy pracy) conduct surveys and provide some statistics related to the young people employment issues in the regional perspective. For example, in Malopolska ('Lesser Poland'), it seems that it is the region that definitely stands out in terms of the involvement of young people in education. Almost all young people in the region achieve at least lower secondary education. In 2011, there were only 2.3% of early leavers - the lowest result in the country.

Professional activity of people is clearly connected with the level of their education. Holders of a university degree are in the group with the highest rate of professional activity (87.5%). In turn, there are only 25.4% of active people who hold a diploma corresponding to lower secondary, primary or incomplete primary education. These people presents 37.5% of the total economically inactive persons aged 15-64 <sup>(8)</sup>.

In fact, there does not appear to be any publicly available dataset that aggregates the data relating to early leaving from VET (ELVET). However, the statistics related to final vocational examinations in VET schools <sup>(9)</sup> are collected by the Central Examination Board (Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna - CKE) <sup>(10)</sup>. The analysis of data is systematically conducted by the CKE and by other

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<sup>(7)</sup> The implementation plan for guarantees for youth.

<http://www.mpips.gov.pl/aktualnosci-wszystkie/art,5543,6742,gwarancje-dla-mlodziezy-pomoc-dla-mlodych-szukajacych-pracy.html> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(8)</sup> [http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Departament%20Analiz%20i%20Prognoz/Rynek\\_pracy\\_zabezpieczenie\\_2010.pdf](http://www.mpips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/File/Departament%20Analiz%20i%20Prognoz/Rynek_pracy_zabezpieczenie_2010.pdf) [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(9)</sup> Since the 2012 reform, there are two types of upper secondary schools offering VET:

- (a) the three year basic vocational schools (zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa), completing with vocational examinations which lead to the 'qualified worker' qualification giving access to the labour market; and
- (b) the four year technical upper secondary schools (technikum), which are finalised with both vocational examinations leading to the professional title of technician (technik) and general education final examinations (egzamin maturalny) which give access to higher education.

<sup>(10)</sup> [www.cke.edu.pl](http://www.cke.edu.pl) [accessed 25.4.2017].

organisations and bodies (such as for example the Labour offices – Urzędy pracy), and provides an interesting perspective at national, regional and local levels of various issues related to VET which are of interest to the VET schools themselves but also to other stakeholders, as for example, the labour market or employers.

Some examples of the available statistics:

- (a) final end-of-upper secondary basic vocational school exam passing rates in occupations that were selected most often in 2010 <sup>(1)</sup>.

Profession/occupation	Candidates passing the professional exam	Pass rates (Successful candidates)
Small catering chef (Kucharz małej gastronomii)	10 795	92.70%
Seller (Sprzedawca)	9 698	89.60%
Car mechanic (Mechanik pojazdów samochodowych)	4 857	74.40%
Medical care (Opiekun medyczny)	2 304	94.80%
Bricklayer (Murarz)	2 101	59.60%
Locksmith (Ślusarz)	1 738	85.80%
Mechanic – operator of agricultural machines (Mechanik-operator pojazdów i maszyn rolniczych)	1 171	92.30%
Electro-mechanic of vehicles (Elektromechanik pojazdów samochodowych)	1 117 952	86.70%
Electrician (Elektryk)	952	45.40%

<sup>(1)</sup> The available statistics collected by the CKE do not distinguish the differences between the rates related to the four-year technical upper secondary schools (ISCED 3) and those related to the post-secondary schools (ISCED 4). For this reason, only statistics related to the basic vocational schools (ISCED 3) have been provided in the table.

Operator of machine tools (Operator obrabiarek skrawających)	940	84.40%
Carpenter (Stolarz)	919	83.00%

Source: Adapted from the Report on vocational education in Poland, 2013 (Raport o stanie szkolnictwa zawodowego w Polsce) <sup>(12)</sup>.

With these statistics, it is possible, for example, to analyse the correlation between the number of graduates available in the given year qualified in a given profession and the needs of the labour market;

- (b) the final vocational examination passing rates (end of basic vocational and technical upper secondary and post-secondary schools), June 2014 (CKE - Central Examination Board) <sup>(13)</sup>:
- (i) in technical upper secondary and post-secondary schools delivering programmes in 102 professions there were 107 696 candidates (students took both parts of the examination). The number of diplomas received was: 70 958 (65.89%);
  - (ii) in basic vocational upper secondary schools delivering programmes in 51 professions, there were 18 312 candidates – diploma received: 13 777 (75.23%) for students who took both parts of the exams;
  - (iii) total number of final diplomas delivered in basic vocational and technical upper secondary and post-secondary schools: 84 735 (67.25%) for students who took both parts of the examination.

In basic vocational upper secondary schools, in January 2014, in 19 professions there were 731 graduates across the country reported as admissible to the final exams. The exam (at least one part) was taken by 658 graduates, i.e. 90.01% of all graduates took the exam.

Written exam: the number of candidates was 634 and 585 successfully passed (92.27%).

Practical part: the number of candidates was 558 and 549 successfully passed (98.39%).

<sup>(12)</sup> Report available at: [www.koweziu.edu.pl](http://www.koweziu.edu.pl). The data analysed in the report is from the Central Examination Board – Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna (<https://www.cke.edu.pl/> [accessed 25.4.2017]).

<sup>(13)</sup> [https://www.cke.edu.pl/images/files/zawodowe/informacje\\_o\\_wynikach/2013/Sprawozdanie\\_stary\\_egzamin\\_2013-2014.pdf](https://www.cke.edu.pl/images/files/zawodowe/informacje_o_wynikach/2013/Sprawozdanie_stary_egzamin_2013-2014.pdf) [accessed 25.4.2017].

Students taking both parts of the examination and attaining the complete final diploma: number of candidates 535; successfully passed: 491 (91.78%).

### 3. National and regional strategy to tackle ELET

There is no national strategy aimed specifically at ELET in Poland. However, there are two integrated strategic documents adopted in 2013 that have similar aims and include the objective of reaching the national ELET target of 4.5 % by the year 2020 (see below). The actions set out in the Strategies are also the basis for the use of EU funds (EFS) to achieve the objectives of the 'Europe 2020'. Thus various projects have been conducted within the 2007-13 financial programme (called development of the human capital). Within the new financial perspective 2014-20 'knowledge, education and growth' operational programme (Program Operacyjny 'Wiedza Edukacja Rozwój' – 'PO WER', 2014-20) <sup>(14)</sup> actions will be developed and are expected to contribute to the objective to reduce the proportion of ESLs in Poland to 4.5% by 2020.

Scope	Description
National and/or regional strategy/action plan to reduce ELET	<p>Name and year: the strategic document 'lifelong learning perspective' ('Perspektywa uczenia się przez całe życie') <sup>(15)</sup> and the 'strategy for the development of human capital 2013-20' ('Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego') <sup>(16)</sup>.</p> <p>Brief description: these documents are aiming at improving students' skills and competences, including actions for preventing early leaving, such as: prevention measures at all educational levels, starting from pre-primary education, e.g. extending and improving access to early childhood education and care; improving the national qualification system; strengthening educational and professional counselling at school or adjusting education and training to the sustainable economy needs, labour market changes</p>

<sup>(14)</sup> For more information, see <http://www.kapitalludzki.gov.pl/power/dokumenty/> or <https://www.power.gov.pl/> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(15)</sup> [http://bip.men.gov.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1040%3Aperspektywa-uczenia-si-przez-cae-ycie-dokument-strategiczny-opracowany-przez-midzyresortowy-zespo-do-spraw-uczenia-si-przez-cae-ycie-w-tym-krajowych-ram-kwalifikacji-dziaajcy-na-podstawie-zarzdzenia-prezesa-rady-ministrow-nr-13-z-dnia-17-lutego-2010-r&Itemid=59](http://bip.men.gov.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1040%3Aperspektywa-uczenia-si-przez-cae-ycie-dokument-strategiczny-opracowany-przez-midzyresortowy-zespo-do-spraw-uczenia-si-przez-cae-ycie-w-tym-krajowych-ram-kwalifikacji-dziaajcy-na-podstawie-zarzdzenia-prezesa-rady-ministrow-nr-13-z-dnia-17-lutego-2010-r&Itemid=59) [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(16)</sup> The human capital development strategy – Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego, 2020 <http://isip.sejm.gov.pl/Download?id=WMP20130000378&type=2> [accessed 25.4.2017].

	and social needs.
Elements of the strategy are explicitly linked to VET	Regarding VET, the strategies mainly refer to increasing the effectiveness, attractiveness and flexibility of VET (also in relation to the VET reform introduced from September 2012) and to adjusting it to the needs of the labour market. They also envisage development of cooperation between VET providers and many different stakeholders: central government, local government authorities and professional bodies, employers, NGOs.

Scope	Description
National and/or regional strategy/action plan to reduce ELET	Modernisation (since 2008) and systemic reform of the VET system (gradual implementation since September 2012). The most important reason behind the changes was the need to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the VET system and to better adjust to the needs of the labour market <sup>(17)</sup> .
Elements of the strategy are explicitly linked to VET	<p>(a) Occupations described in terms of qualifications. The new classification includes 200 occupations which encompass 252 qualifications. Within particular occupations one, two or three qualifications are distinguished.</p> <p>(b) Pupils and adult learners can acquire qualifications one by one throughout the whole education process, not only upon the completion of the school. Examinations confirming vocational qualifications are held at different stages of education (certificate for a single qualification possible).</p> <p>(c) The system of exams confirming vocational qualifications is flexible enough to allow validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Starting from September 2012, this system has become open to those who had acquired vocational knowledge and experience outside vocational schools.</p> <p>(d) Vocational education at upper secondary level is linked to the general lower secondary (gimnazjum) core curriculum. This means that students continue to follow a general education curriculum in the first year of</p>

<sup>(17)</sup> The changes were introduced in 2012 on the basis of the legislation adopted in 2011 and 2012 (amendment of 19 August 2011 to the School Education Act, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2011 on the classification of occupations for vocational education, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 February 2012 on the core curriculum for vocational education).

[https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Legislation#Anchor\\_uoso](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Poland:Legislation#Anchor_uoso) [accessed 25.4.2017].

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vocational upper secondary education.

(e) Changes of the organisation of VET system: all basic vocational upper secondary schools now offer a three-year programme (before the programmes were of two or three years of duration, depending on the profession); it has become possible to develop cooperation between basic vocational schools and centres of vocational and continuing training in order to diversify vocational education offer and increase opportunities for cooperation with employers; new forms of vocational training in non-school settings were introduced, i.e. vocational qualification courses for adults that make it possible to take exams of specific qualifications; some institutions, i.e. specialized upper secondary schools (licea profilowane) and supplementary general and technical upper secondary schools for adults (Licea and technika uzupełniające dla dorosłych) will gradually cease to exist (admission to these schools is no longer possible from 2012). After the reform, VET programmes are offered by two types of upper secondary schools:

- (i) the three-year basic vocational upper secondary schools (zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa), ending with vocational examinations which lead to the 'qualified worker' qualification; and
- (ii) the four-year technical upper secondary schools (technikum), ending with both vocational examinations leading to the professional title of 'technician' (technik), and end-of-general upper secondary education 'matura' examinations, giving access to higher education.

The actions towards reforming and introducing the systemic changes in the Polish VET system are supported by a number of projects co-funded by the ESF in the framework of the development of human capital strategy. Within the financial perspective 2007-13 there were, for example, projects carried out by the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (KOWEZiU), as part of the 'human capital operational programme' (e.g. 'Strengthening the core curriculum as a key to the modernisation of vocational education and training (2008-13)'; 'System support for schools and institutions implementing modular vocational training programmes (2009-13)').

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Scope	Description
National and/or regional strategy/action plan to reduce ELET	The 2014/15 programme 'Year of VET professionals' (Rok szkoły zawodowców) <sup>(18)</sup> – as continuation of the modernisation of VET, the Ministry of National Education put this school year the focus on strengthening attractiveness of effectiveness of VET by launching series of actions that should continue in the forthcoming years. The priorities are: adjustment of vocational education to the needs of the labour market, strengthening cooperation between schools and entrepreneurs, organisation of practical training placements (through a cooperation agreement between different ministries signed recently - see section on stakeholders cooperation).
Elements of the strategy are explicitly linked to VET	The Ministry has already developed several actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the interactive map 'click on your vocational school!' (Wyklikaj szkołę zawodową!) <sup>(19)</sup>, enabling to find information on the local vocational schools;</li> <li>(b) media campaign 'Dobry ZAWODnik' (a good professional/competitor) <sup>(20)</sup>: focusing on promotion of vocational education among young people;</li> <li>(c) portal (map) on vocational guidance <sup>(21)</sup> launched by the National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej - KOWEziU). The portal helps to find information that may be helpful in choosing a VET programme and in choosing or changing professional career. Map leads to 16 provincial sites.</li> </ul>

#### 4. Recent policy initiatives

Scope and questions	Answers
New policy initiatives being undertaken that include a role for VET to reduce ELET: either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) reduce ELET from VET;</li> <li>(b) reduce ELET (in</li> </ul>	The most recent initiatives are linked to the 2012 reform of the VET system in the lifelong learning perspective (see also section on strategies). These initiatives may be considered as preventive because they focus on simplifying the acquisition of necessary qualifications and making VET choice more attractive and linked to the labour market, and/or as compensatory because people who have recently or in the past left education without acquiring their

<sup>(18)</sup> Programme will be reinforced by both national and EU funds (an amount of 120 million Euros from the 'PO WER' programme. For more information, see <http://men.gov.pl/en/?p=50> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(19)</sup> <https://men.gov.pl/dodatki/mapazawodowe/> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(20)</sup> <https://men.gov.pl/ksztalcenie-zawodowe/rok-szkoly-zawodowcow/dobryzawodnik-rusza-kampania-promujaca-szkolnictwo-zawodowe-3.html> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(21)</sup> [www.doradztwo.koweziu.edu.pl](http://www.doradztwo.koweziu.edu.pl) [accessed 25.4.2017].

<p>general) through VET</p>	<p>qualification may now attain it through VET programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) introduction of the 'modular programmes' (programy modułowe) <sup>(22)</sup> in IVET, which allow for the creation of more flexible, tailored to market expectations VET programmes. The National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Kształcenia Zawodowego i Ustawicznego – KOWEziU), supports the implementation of such programmes. Until 2012, the systemic project aiming at the implementation of such programmes was conducted in 256 VET institutions with the involvement of approx. 300 experts. The project mainly aimed at the preparation of VET teachers and the local governing and supervisory bodies to deal with their implementation;</li> <li>(b) possibility to improve skills by acquiring the missing qualification through VET (for adults and under certain condition also for young people under the age of 18) in 'short' forms of VET education (courses and training are based on the core curriculum) <sup>(23)</sup>. This is a big step forward in simplifying the acquisition of the necessary qualifications;</li> <li>(c) the new core curriculum for VET in force since 1 September 2012 defines the learning outcomes (in line with the guidelines of the EC);</li> <li>(d) remedial courses will be organised for students with low levels of key competencies, related mainly to foreign language skills or ability to write and express themselves. Adults will have the opportunity to do it through participation in non-formal education or other forms of courses offered by public VET institutions (e.g. centres of continuing education or practical training centres). These courses will be an additional opportunity to supplement the professional qualifications of the person who left vocational education and now want to finish it. There is also a regulation on the obligation of local authorities to provide free of charge language lessons to those that do not have sufficient knowledge of Polish;</li> <li>(e) compulsory practical training within VET – may be organised in VET schools <sup>(24)</sup> or centres for practical training (Centrum kształcenia praktycznego – CKP), as</li> </ul>
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<sup>(22)</sup> <http://www.koweziu.edu.pl/programy-modulowe> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(23)</sup> According to the Decree of the Minister of National Education of 11 January 2012 (see reform of VET system).

<sup>(24)</sup> According to the results of the survey conducted in 2009/10, more than half of the surveyed population of students attended practical training at the VET school.

	<p>internships in enterprises or as apprenticeships (mainly in handicrafts) <sup>(25)</sup>.</p> <p>The Polish labour code states conditions and requirements concerning practical training (apprenticeship) and defines the status of 'young workers' (młodociani pracownicy) <sup>(26)</sup>. Young workers are of age 16-18, because it is forbidden to hire a person below the age of 16 (under certain conditions may be younger – for example if a participant of the OHP) as schooling is compulsory until the age of 16.</p> <p>There is an employment contract between the employer and a young worker. Employment of young workers is considered as fulfilling compulsory education (lasting until the age of 18 and defined in the Constitution) <sup>(27)</sup>. The apprentice gets salary and has a social insurance. Learning of a profession lasts two to three years and during the process of learning, the apprentice has to learn also</p>
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- <sup>(25)</sup> Two legal acts govern the organisation of practical training: Regulation of 28 May 1996 on training and remuneration of 'young workers' (Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z 28 maja 1996 r. w sprawie przygotowania zawodowego młodocianych i ich wynagradzania) and Regulation of 15 December 2010 on practical training (Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z 15 grudnia 2010 r. w sprawie praktycznej nauki zawodu). The first regulates the practical training (apprenticeship) of 'young workers' aged 16-18. The second regulates issues related to organisation of practical training in general (apprenticeships and internships). The documents emphasises the mutual obligations between the school and the employer, the conditions of the practical training, the amount and the method of calculating remuneration for apprentices and for the mentors – persons responsible for their supervision of the practical learning (prowadzący naukę), and also the time allocation to apprenticeship (during a day, week, month and year). Much place is also devoted to the training of the mentors.
- <sup>(26)</sup> The young worker is a person who has attained 16 years of age and does not exceed 18 years. The labour code covers young workers with increased protection in the work process. A young person may be hired for vocational training, within two possible forms of employment:
- employment connected with the 'learning of profession' (*nauka zawodu*) leading to the qualified worker status;
  - employment related to apprenticeship for a particular tasks/job (*przyuczenie do wykonywania określonej pracy*) preparing for the 'learning of profession'. More information about the young worker status may be found on <http://www.pip.gov.pl/pl/f/v/97320/14%20ul%20prac%20mlodociany.pdf> (in Polish). [accessed 25.4.2017].
- <sup>(27)</sup> According to the Education Act from 1991, there is distinction between obligatory schooling and compulsory education. Obligatory schooling (*obowiązek szkolny*) lasts 6 years and covers primary and lower secondary education; it lasts until graduation from a lower secondary school – *gimnazjum*, usually at the age of 16. Compulsory education - *obowiązek nauki* lasts until the person is 18 years old, and the student can choose among different learning or training pathways - e.g. by attending a public or non-public upper secondary school; by participating in courses offered by other accredited institutions and/or by attending vocational training with an employer (subject to separate regulations). [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4105\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4105_en.pdf) [accessed 25.4.2017].

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professional theory (either in a vocational school or by attending other accredited, qualifying courses). The salary increases as they progress in the training, which motivates them to keep on learning. An additional discretionary bonus may be awarded to a trainee by the employer for very good results at work. Non-financial, but a very important bonus, which may result of the employer's satisfaction with the work of a student may become its offer of a permanent employment after finishing the VET programme. According to the labour code, employers can get salary and social security contributions of apprentices refunded.

Furthermore, an education and career guidance system <sup>(28)</sup> is in place as a prevention, intervention and compensatory measure. It targets students in all secondary schools.

There are school counselling services (Szkolne Ośrodki Kariery) in certain secondary schools (lower and upper). Guidance activities/classes in schools are also offered by professional advisors specially hired by the schools (if possible), but also by teachers (not specially trained), school psychologists and pedagogues. Special trainings in vocational counselling are available for secondary schools teachers. Education and career guidance is also provided to secondary students by external guidance and counselling centres (Poradnie psychologiczno-pedagogiczne), organising on-demand individual consultations with students and their parents. In addition, the voluntary labour corps (Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy – OHP) (see below) also manages the mobile centres for professional information (Mobilne Centra Informacji Zawodowej), and the youth career centres (Młodzieżowe Centra Kariery) which offer career and professional guidance services to young people aged 15-25.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPIPS) has developed since 2012 various programmes (in addition to the standard services offered to the unemployed and jobseekers by labour offices), which contain a number of measures aiming at the economic activation of people under 30. For example, the 'Your career your choice' (Twoja Kariera-Twój Wybór) project run by several public employment services, with the goal to design and test new training measures for unemployed persons under 30 years of age. Participants take part in on-the-job training and school-based VET. Furthermore, the youth guarantee programme (Gwarancje dla młodzieży), promoted by the

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<sup>(28)</sup> Educational Act from 1991, Regulation of Minister of National Education from 17 November 2010 and 30th April 2013 on rules of provision and organisation of vocational counseling and psychological and pedagogical support in educational institutions.

	<p>EU, and managed by the MPIP, was enacted in March 2015 <sup>(29)</sup>. The programme is intended to reinforce the national youth employment policy by professional and social activation of young people by ensuring a good quality offer of employment, continuing education, an apprenticeship or training. It targets young people under 25 years old mainly in the NEET category but also the early school leavers (aged 15-18) - neglecting their compulsory schooling (up to 16) and compulsory education (up to 18).</p> <p>The Voluntary Labour Corps (Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy – OHP) <sup>(30)</sup> is the main executor of this programme and is currently developing two projects – ‘Equal on the labour market’, (Równi na rynku pracy) for 18-24 years old and ‘The idea for yourself’ (Pomysł na siebie) for 15-17 years old. The projects are mainly addressed to vulnerable young people, especially from disadvantaged families affected by unemployment and poverty, or those who neglect compulsory schooling and education, or are not in education or training. Both projects have been joined by 7 400 young people who have sessions with employment counsellors, psychologists and lawyers, benefit from foreign language, computer, driving, entrepreneurship courses and social skills training. Younger beneficiaries are provided with remedial education in subjects taught at school, while older ones take part in vocational training or vocational qualification courses. In addition, participants of the ‘equal on the labour market’ project have guaranteed traineeships and receive a scholarship during the project. Furthermore, the OHP provides an integrated support and assistance to early leavers under the age of 18 (see section on Policy measures to be considered in detail).</p>
<p>Is the role of VET in reducing ELET assuming greater or lesser importance? Why?</p>	<p>Given the fact the ELET rate in Poland (5.6%) is quite low comparing with other EU countries, the policy discourses and focus are rather on improving the attractiveness and effectiveness and on adjusting VET to the needs of the labour market than on reducing ELET. However, Poland envisages reduction of the ELET ratio to 4.5% by 2020 and all the recent VET reforms and policies are also expected to contribute to this objective. Furthermore, VET is expected to play a crucial role in the forthcoming years in the reduction of the youth unemployment rates. The unemployment rate stands at 27.3%, continues to be higher than the EU average and the proportion of young</p>

<sup>(29)</sup> The 2015 amendment to the 2004 Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (*Ustawa o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy*). Amended regulation obliges labour offices (*urzędy pracy*) to offer help to young people under 25 within four months since registration in the office (hitherto, they were obliged to do this within six months). <http://prawo.lego.pl/prawo/ustawa-z-dnia-20-kwietnia-2004-r-o-promocji-zatrudnienia-i-instytucjach-rynku-pracy/art-12/?on=28.01.2015> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(30)</sup> [www.ohp.pl](http://www.ohp.pl) [accessed 25.4.2017].

people aged 15-24 who are neither in education, nor unemployment or training (NEETs) was 11.8% in 2012 and increased to 12.2% in 2013 <sup>(31)</sup>.

## 5. Stakeholder cooperation

Questions	Answers
<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.</p>	<p>In 2008, the Minister of National Education set up an advisory group in order to develop proposals of modernisation of VET system in Poland to adjust it to the labour market needs and the EU VET strategy. The advisory group consists of representatives of ministries, employers, trade unions, sectoral organisations, chambers and academia.</p> <p>As a result, the 2012 VET reform provides the legal basis and requires cooperation between the education, employment, youth and social affairs policy areas. The Ministry of Education cooperates with social partners (Advisory Council for Initial Vocational Education and Training, the national trade committees, the local training committees). The Inter-ministerial cooperation agreement for the development of vocational education (międzyresortowe porozumienie o współpracy na rzecz rozwoju kształcenia zawodowego) was signed on 23 January 2015 by the ministers of education, economy, labour and social policy, and the treasury <sup>(32)</sup>. They committed to cooperating on the development of vocational training tailored to the needs of employers, local labour markets and a modern and innovative economy. Concerted actions of the ministries are aimed at, among others, promoting and developing cooperation in VET between schools and employers and increasing the involvement of employers in apprenticeships (see section on recent policies). The cooperation concerns, among others, activating vocational schools to adapt their educational and training offer to the needs of a modern economy and activating employers to join in the process of VET in basic vocational and technical upper secondary schools, and post-secondary schools <sup>(33)</sup>.</p>

<sup>(31)</sup> <http://www.mpips.gov.pl/aktualnosci-wszystkie/art,5543,6742,gwarancje-dla-mlodziezy-pomoc-dla-mlodych-szukajacych-pracy.html> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(32)</sup> <http://men.gov.pl/ministerstwo/informacje/miedzyresortowe-porozumienie-o-wspolpracy-na-rzecz-rozwoju-ksztalcenia-zawodowego.html> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(33)</sup> In the new financial perspective 2014-20 of the programme 'PO WER' – knowledge, education, development' as well as the regional operational programmes many activities are planned in the field of cooperation between VET and representatives of the world economy.

## 6. Monitoring systems

Question	Answers
<p>What specific early leavers monitoring systems exist?</p>	<p>The specific ELET monitoring system does not exist yet. Data on the rate of ELET exist only in the official Europe-wide Eurostat datasets. The Central Statistical Office (GUS) collects statistical data for the eurostat labour force survey (LFS).</p> <p>There is the database called education information system – EIS (System Informacji Oświatowej – SIO) <sup>(34)</sup> collecting data, among others, on students failing to complete compulsory education. The Ministry of Education makes publicly available only some statistics (e.g. numbers, ages of learners by regions, types of schools). To access the database and more specific indicators, a special authorisation is needed.</p> <p>Year introduced: in 2005 (under modernisation)</p> <p>Coverage: all the schools of the formal education system.</p> <p>A new project consisting of monitoring of VET students trajectories (Badanie losów absolwentów szkół zawodowych) will be developed starting from 2015 in the framework of the 'PO WER programme' (see national strategies). The Centre for Educational Studies (Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych) is in charge for the call of tenders <sup>(35)</sup>. The objectives include the drafting of recommendations for the development of the education system based on the results of research and pilot projects, and for the development of a teaching offer adequate to the needs of the labour market, students and graduates <sup>(36)</sup>.</p>
<p>What information is monitored/collected?</p>	<p><b>Concerning EIS:</b></p> <p>(a) numbers of drop outs: yes but not the moment of drop out;</p> <p>(b) reasons for dropping out: no</p> <p>Background characteristics of drop outs/those at risk: yes (gender, age, area of residence).</p> <p>The EIS currently in place allows only for the collection of data in aggregated form, i.e. reflecting the total number of students in each category. In the near future (to be available in 2017), the data will be collected for each student individually so that recording and monitoring of a</p>

<sup>(34)</sup> See <http://www.cie.men.gov.pl/index.php/sio-struktura-zbiorow.html> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(35)</sup> <http://bip.ibe.edu.pl/index.php/zamowienia-publiczne/745-badanie-losow-absolwentow-szkol-zawodowych> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(36)</sup> For more information <http://men.gov.pl/en/?p=50> and [http://men.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ksztalcenie\\_zawodowe\\_dzialania.pdf](http://men.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ksztalcenie_zawodowe_dzialania.pdf) (in Polish) [accessed 25.4.2017].

	<p>students' complete educational career will be possible. Furthermore, the data from schools and other education institutions will be transferred directly to the central database run by the Ministry of Education, instead of being transferred through the local authorities (samorządy terytorialne) and then the regional superintendent's office (kuratoria). The new system will also make the data collection available.</p>
<p>What are the data used for? How it is used by VET institutions/providers?</p>	<p><b>Concerning EIS</b></p> <p>The main purpose of the data collection via EIS is to make policy decisions based on the collected data and to monitor schools. There is no clear evidence on how data from EIS are used by VET institutions.</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><b>Concerning EIS</b></p> <p>There is no clear evidence on whether it is used for offering support measures.</p>
<p>What role is/ has the monitoring system played in the design, development or implementation of the policies, strategies and initiatives?</p>	<p>All recent policy initiatives and actions in Poland are developed and implemented on the basis of results and recommendations from the pilot projects, consultations, evaluation surveys or research reports (Central Statistical Office - GUS, Institute of Research in Education - IBE, Center for Development in Education - ORE, Central Examination Board - CKE, etc.). Regarding ELET, the conclusion is that there is a need for developing appropriate tools that could help monitoring ELET at national, regional and school levels, with the possibility to identify young people at risk of dropping out.</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>VET opportunities Since the economic crisis in 2007/08, there has been a substantial rise in unemployment and particularly in youth unemployment. Young people (with low education or with a university degree but without work experience) are among the groups most often excluded from the labour market. The unemployment rate has risen</p>

<p>(a) supply of VET places;  (b) demand for VET 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>	<p>among young people in the crisis – from 18.7% in 2007 to 27.4% in 2012, and is 2-2.5 times higher than the unemployment of overall adult population (in 2012 – about 10.3%) <sup>(37)</sup>. As a whole, VET institutions are expected to play an important role in diminishing youth unemployment rates caused by the crisis, mainly by adapting their educational offer to the needs of the labour market and by closely cooperating with employers. The recent reform of VET is also expected to make the VET system more flexible and allowing adults (unemployed) to easily adjust their qualifications and/or to obtain new qualifications relevant to the current needs of the labour market.</p> <p>As an aggravating factor of such effects of this crisis, several sources mention the quality of vocational education and the lack of adjustment with the real needs of the labour market. Indeed, the education reform of 1999 resulted in the 'production' of a high number of general secondary schools graduates and a lack of VET graduates with the qualifications and skills required by the employers <sup>(38)</sup>.</p> <p>The systemic changes introduced recently to the VET system are expected to play an important role in preparing highly qualified VET graduates which will also have an impact on reducing ELET from VET.</p>
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<sup>(37)</sup> 'Toward greater social inclusion in Poland: a qualitative assessment in three regions'. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/05/19781768/toward-greater-social-inclusion-poland-qualitative-assessment-three-regions> [accessed 25.4.2017].

<sup>(38)</sup> Regarding the adaptation of the VET programmes to the labour market needs, the report 'Badanie Bilansu Kapitału Ludzkiego' shows that the majority of employers have problems with recruitment of candidates with appropriated qualifications. In 2012, 76% declared such difficulties.

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

According to the stakeholders, the effectiveness of VET in reducing ELET is due to several factors:

### 9.1. National policy factors

The presence of policy initiatives to increase the attractiveness of VET schools (for example the recently launched 2014/15 'Rok szkoły zawodowców') are seen as helpful in tackling ELET and positive mainly regarding improvements in the perception of VET.

The stakeholders underlined the traditional importance in prevention of ELET, which plays the monitoring by the education authorities and heads of schools of fulfilment of compulsory education until 18 <sup>(39)</sup>.

The 1999 reform of education system consisting among other things of extension of the duration of compulsory schooling from eight to nine years – until age of 16 instead of 15 (six years of primary school and three years of secondary education) is also underlined as a positive factor in ELET prevention. This means that young people are a year older (and spent one year more in a general compulsory education) when choosing their further step and type of education. This fact is seen as positively influencing students' choices and impacting on their motivation and engagement. As a result, there is less dropout due to lack of interest in the programme chosen.

The educational subsidy (subwencja oświatowa) from the State budget provided by local governing bodies to schools is calculated according to an algorithm which takes into account the number of pupils. This makes that keeping students in school is of interest for the schools themselves, i.e. the more learners, the greater the subsidy. Therefore, it is in the interest of the schools to take actions aimed at attracting and maintaining students, for example, by offering more attractive VET programmes or extra-curricular activities.

Stakeholders also agree that support provided by the educational and career guidance system (both directly in schools or outside of the schools) also plays an important role in reducing ELET risk by helping young people to make more informed choices and assisting them in case of learning or other difficulties.

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<sup>(39)</sup> Education Act of 7 September 1991 (Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty), and 2) Administrative application Act of 17 June 1966 (Ustawa z dnia 17 czerwca 1966 r. o postępowaniu egzekucyjnym w administracji).

## 9.2. Systemic features of the VET education system

Stakeholders agree that the reforms introduced in VET system since 2012 will have positive effects on prevention of ELET from VET (see section on recent policy measures).

The introduction of the common core curriculum for general education makes that after the three year lower secondary education (gimnazjum), students continue to follow it in upper secondary schools. In practice, it means that, for example, after completion of the three year basic vocational upper secondary school (zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa) students can directly enter the second year of the general upper secondary school (the three year liceum for adults) ending with the 'matura' exam which gives access to higher education. This 'curricular' link between general and vocational education has a positive impact on the perception of VET schools.

VET schools have the possibility to cooperate with other educational centres of vocational education and continuing education (Centrum Kształcenia Praktycznego – CKP or Centrum Kształcenia Ustawicznego – CKU), which creates conditions for a more diversified offer (e.g. if the school does not have its own atelier/workshop, students can attend their education and theoretical training at a given school and follow their practical training and/or pass their practical exams in a CKP or CKU). VET institutions have also better opportunities to adjust their offer to the needs of the employers by offering modular programmes or organising vocational qualification courses leading to confirmation of qualifications in the system of external exams.

The existence of opportunities for VET schools to benefit from various EU and other funds and projects allows them to offer to their students' attractive (international) exchanges and internships, as well as to introduce innovative technologies to the curricula. This also helps to attract, motivate and keep students in schools.

## 9.3. Features of the labour market

The high proportion on the labour market of unemployed young people with low or without qualifications (also early leavers) makes VET the best solution for professional activation of this group of people.

## 10. Factors constraining the effectiveness of VET to reduce ELET

Stakeholders interviewed highlighted various factors which constrain the effectiveness of VET to reduce ELET.

### 10.1. National policy factors

The recent policy initiatives to increase VET attractiveness are seen as positive. However, according to stakeholders, communication of the policy-makers (in the media) is to the large extent limited to the 'nice slogans'; not enough efforts are put on informing different stakeholders, especially in the most disadvantaged areas, about available programmes, projects and funds; also regarding reduction of ELET, this specific topic seems to not appear (is not present) in the policy discourse (probably because of the low rate of ESL in Poland).

It seems that despite efforts in development of an efficient educational and vocational guidance system, parents' and students' choices of VET schools are not informed enough and not guided by the real analysis of the educational offer provided by the given VET school (and of the situation on the labour market). Their choices are often based on 'fashion'/trends or on the stereotypical negative opinion that vocational schools are those attracting students with the lowest educational attainment. VET perception as cultural, social and professional marginalisation is always present.

The representatives from several small schools in one of the most agricultural regions in Poland interviewed for this study underlined that in the context of demographic decline in Poland, they are mainly facing the basic problem of finding pupils/candidates. Once they have them in their school, they do everything to keep them for as long as possible (to receive the educational subsidy which takes into account the number of students and, therefore, to survive). It should also be noted that within the current context of demographic decline a large number of (small) schools are at risk to be closed. In case of students at-risk of dropping out, grade retention becomes a method to keep them at school instead of using another, much appropriate method such as vocational counselling resulting in changing the school or acquiring qualification outside the school system (e.g. OHP).

Investment in VET seems to be under-estimated and is not correlated with the specificity of each VET school (e.g. offering vocational programmes in only one or in several specialities (multi-profiles), type of a speciality offered, etc.), which makes the maintenance and organisation more or less costly. The problem

of funding is seen as limiting the possibilities for development of the VET excellence.

The lack of a systemic tracking system of VET leavers does not help in the development of effective measures to reduce ELET.

## 10.2. Systemic features of the VET education system

According to new regulations, VET schools should cooperate with the employers, self-regulatory organisations and occupational associations. However, levels of cooperation depend to the large extent on local authorities' (powiaty) or other stakeholders' goodwill and their interest in developing cooperation with VET institutions.

Deciding which profiles and specialities will be taught in schools is the responsibility of the heads of schools and of the regional authorities. To the large extent, it depends on the policy-makers as well as on the situation in the region (e.g. agricultural, only few industries, etc.). It raises problems to VET schools because decisions often do not take into account the already existing infrastructure and materials or the availability of specialised staff. Furthermore, students' motivations and expectations, especially of those at-risk of dropping out, may be impacted by the limited VET offer in the region or the no correspondence to their aspirations.

The educational cycle/programme in VET schools is quite long (three years in basic vocational schools and four years in technical upper secondary schools). It impacts on the school capacity to adapt 'instantly' to the labour market/employers needs and students may leave earlier to take an available job instead of continuing their training.

In the context of demographic decline and the small number of students in schools, VET teaching staff is currently facing the employment problems. Sometimes they work in several schools to ensure their salary. It affects their motivation and may have impact on their involvement in tackling the problem of ELET. Furthermore, they often lack skills in this field. Stakeholders say that teachers (in small cities) easily deal with ELET not because they acquired the necessary skills but because they know families of students at risk (which means that they can anticipate certain difficulties, involve parents and/or can organise/offer some support/assistance adapted to the family situation of these young people). N.B. A wide range of training courses and internships for teachers has been organised within the 'human capital operational programme' but in

2009 only 11.8% of teachers participated in various forms of improvement across the country <sup>(40)</sup>.

### 10.3. Features of the labour market

There is a high level of registered unemployment among young people in Poland, including graduates from VET schools. At the same time, employers consider that there is a lack of qualified people on the labour market. It is commonly agreed, that the risk of early leaving increases when there is no connection between the educational system and needs of the labour market, i.e. the lack of employment perspectives in a given profession (see also section on effects of economic crisis).

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<sup>(40)</sup> Report 'Teachers in September 2009. Situation and structure of the employment' ('Nauczyciele we wrześniu 2009 roku. Stan i struktura zatrudnienia') – ed. Jadwiga Zarębska, ORE.