Building motivation to learn

Problem statement

Addressed problem: Motivation and engagement of young people

Once a learner at risk of early leaving or an early leaver is identified, it is important to assess his or her motivation to continue or return to education. Many of these young people have experienced continued underachievement at school which has undermined their trust in their own capacities and their interest in education and training.

Many support measures can contribute to building motivation. For instance, career counselling involves discussions with the young person about his/her future, and encourages him/her to take responsibility and act upon his/her aspirations.

However, such measures are often insufficient. In particular, they may not succeed at engaging young people with a long history of negative experiences at school, and who have internalised a vision of themselves as 'poor students'. These young people often need to strengthen their self-confidence and rediscover an interest in learning, before they actually engage in education and training.

Beneficiaries

Early leavers from education and training

Low-motivated learners

Secondary education students

Young people with complex needs (e.g. health issues, in poverty, with caring responsibilities)

VET students (school based)

VET students (in work based learning schemes)

Vulnerable groups

Measures to build motivation can help all learners to build trust in their capabilities and interest in education and training. These activities are particularly useful to reengage those who are highly disengaged from education and training, and at-risk students showing signs of low motivation.

Addressing the problem

What makes measures to build motivation effective?

Motivational activities are most often used in the context of a comprehensive set of measures for young people who are highly disengaged from education and training, and who distrust the education and training 'system' and the people who work for the system (teachers, trainers, etc.). However, such activities can be used in other contexts, including general education schools, VET schools, and after-school activities.

The following tips are given as advice to policy-makers and practitioners involved in the design and delivery of VET measures, in particular those targeting learners at risk of early leaving or aimed at re-engaging early leavers. The information is based on Cedefop research into successful measures.

💡 Tip 1: Activities that are outside the formal learning environment

Re-engaging measures for young people with a long history of negative experiences at school tend to include activities that are not directly linked to a training programme or qualification. These activities promote interaction with peers, teachers, or other staff outside a formal learning environment. The main objective is to ensure that the young person can enjoy an activity in a group and feel valued for his/her contribution, promoting his or her sense of belonging.

💡 Tip 2: Provide a variety of activities to engage and motivate learners

Motivational activities mainly include:

- Artistic activities, which can include the organisation of performances
- Sporting activities
- National and international youth exchanges and trips
- School-related nature activities (e.g. community gardens)
- School-related active citizenship activities (e.g. related to local environment)
- Other group activities (e.g. cooking together, organising an event)

These activities can be developed in cooperation with local services and organisations. For instance, sporting activities can be developed in cooperation with local sports clubs, and municipalities can promote nature and active citizenship activities.

💡 Tip 3: Ensure activities promote personal and social development

Motivational activities provide a safe place for young people to spend their time in. Moreover, such activities can be a forum for young people to open up about their problems, and an opportunity for staff to offer support.

Even if provided outside a formal learning environment, motivational activities must establish concrete objectives and be guided by professionals (e.g. teachers and trainers, counsellors, etc.). Such activities aim at helping young people to get to know themselves better and to interact with others, and should for instance promote cooperation and conflict resolution. This will strengthen learners' ability to cope with difficulties or challenges.

💡 Tip 4: Build trusting relationships between the young person and members of staff

A key factor in enabling young people to succeed in education and training is for the adults around them to show that they believe in their abilities and to support them towards achieving their goals. Motivational activities which bring together staff and young people in an informal activity can help young people form a positive relationship with a member of staff. This staff member could just turn out to be the one adult who they can 'connect with' and who motivates them to work towards achieving a qualification.

Expected outcomes

Motivational activities aim at strengthening self-esteem and self-confidence and contribute to the development of social skills. These activities can help stimulate young people's interests and curiosity and encourage a positive attitude towards learning.

These activities can also promote discipline and reduce aggression, they can help in dealing with conflicts, and also strengthen resilience or the ability to cope with difficulties or challenges.

The following outcomes can be expected at individual level:

INDIVIDUAL
• Development of interests and curiosity

- Development of a positive vision of oneself
- Improved social skills
- Improved relationship with the education and training st in the system)
- Development of a positive attitude towards learning
- Improved relationship with teaching / training staff
- Improved capacity to deal with barriers to learning (complex personal issues)
- Reduced risk of early leaving

INDIVIDUAL

Related protective factors

Positive self-perception linked to learning ability

Related resources

Good practices

GOOD PRACTICE

Carpo – Assistierte Ausbildung (assisted VET)

In Germany, assisted VET ('Carpo') incorporates intensive individual social-pedagogical coaching and guidance, offered by certified social-pedagogues.

Germany

GOOD PRACTICE

Guidance at School: Tutoring, support and study continuation

Guidance process in secondary education to accompany the student in his/her process of personal development and study continuation.

Spain

GOOD PRACTICE

SUCCESS: An educational accompaniment programme in Barcelona to reduce ELET

A reinforcement programme in Barcelona to reduce early leaving from education and training (ELET) by providing assistance to students from tutors and older student mentors.

Spain

Tools

TOOLS

FEIGHT - The eight solutions for fighting early school leaving in VET (funded by the LLP)

The FEIGHT tool proposes eight solutions for fighting early leaving in VET – these include a combination of teaching and learning methods centred on outdoor activities, art, music, drama and learning by doing.

Netherlands

United Kingdom

Turkey   Italy

TOOLS

Need for all Youngsters

Brug for alle Unge, (BFAU)

The Danish initiative 'Need for all Youngsters' included national initiatives to raise awareness of the educational system, in particular VET, amongst parents from ethnic minorities.
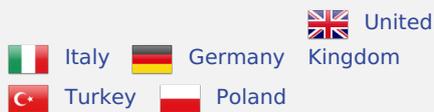
Denmark

TOOLS

## Theatre as empowerment methodology for iVET - Handbook

Leonardo da Vinci (LLP project) - Transfer of Innovation

As part of forum theatre, learners explore solutions to their problems by acting out difficulties encountered in daily life.

Italy   Germany   United Kingdom
Turkey   Poland

TOOLS

Training programme for VET teachers developed within the framework of the STAY IN project

The STAY IN project proposes a training programme for VET teachers and youth workers. Its module 1 discusses indicators to identify learners at risk of early leaving

Austria   Bulgaria   Germany
Finland   Italy   Netherlands
Portugal   Turkey
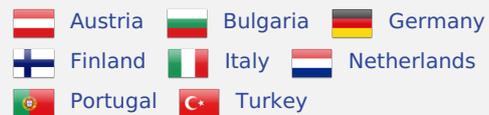
TOOLS

DIDO - Dropping-in the dropouts toolkit

The DIDO toolkit contains practical tools aimed at preventing dropout in adult education.

Belgium   Finland   Denmark
Portugal   Netherlands   Switzerland

Publications

📖 PUBLICATIONS

Vocational pedagogies and benefits for learners: practices and challenges in Europe

Cedefop study on vocational pedagogies finds that good communication and high levels of trust between teacher or trainer and learner are important for retention.

Download the report here

🇪🇺 EU level

📖 PUBLICATIONS

Preventing early school leaving in Europe: Lessons learned from second chance education

The overall purpose of the study was to undertake research to identify good practices in second chance education, their success factors, and their transferability into initial education and training. The work was commissioned against a backdrop of growing recognition of the scale of the challenge presented by Early School Leaving (ESL) in Europe, as enshrined in the target to reduce ESL by 10% Europe-wide within the EU 2020 strategy, and reinforced by the 2011 Communication on ESL.

Download the report here.

🇪🇺 EU level

Quick wins

⭐ QUICK WIN

Create opportunities for informal interactions between students and VET provider staff

Creating opportunities for informal interactions between learners and staff can help build trust and create positive relationships.

🇵🇱 Poland   🇵🇹 Portugal