



Monitoring early leavers

Problem statement

Addressed problem: Locating early leavers

Determining the whereabouts of early leavers, as swiftly as possible, increases the chances that they reengage.

Once learners drop out, the longer they stay outside education and training:

- the more difficult it is to re-join former classmates, and the more likely it is that they will have to join groups of students younger than them, unless alternatives are in place;
- the more likely the young person gets involved in activities other than education and training, such as unqualified employment; and
- the higher the chances that the young person loses basic routines (e.g. following a daily schedule of activities) needed to reintegrate in a programme and succeed.

All these issues often act to demotivate young people to return to education and training. However, in some cases, in particular when the young person is employed, a period of drop-out can also help to mature and gain motivation to return to education and training.

Education and training providers have information on the students who drop out of their programmes, or leave the school or training centre before attaining a qualification. However, they usually do not have the necessary information to verify if the young person is an early leaver, has enrolled in a programme elsewhere, or is employed. A centralised monitoring system can help follow up early leavers with more accuracy.

Beneficiaries

Early leavers from education and training

Addressing the problem

Tips: How can a centralised monitoring system be set up?

The following tips are given as advice to policy makers at national or regional level aiming to introduce a centralised system to monitor early leavers. The information is based on Cedefop research into existing monitoring systems.

Tip 1: Define the purpose of data collection

The main purpose of a centralised monitoring system is to identify early leavers as to be able to provide them with timely and appropriate support. Such systems can serve additional purposes such as:

- Monitor early leaving at local, regional or national level,
- Assess the effectiveness of measures to tackle early leaving,
- Increase knowledge on the education pathways of early leavers and the protective and risk factors linked to early leaving.

It is important to define the purpose/s of data collection before deciding what data to collect. For instance, for data to be used for research purposes it is important to collect information on individuals' characteristics and education pathways. For data to be used to assess the effectiveness of measures to tackle early leaving it is important to collect information on the support measures provided to individuals.

Tip 2: Establish a centralised monitoring system that provides nominal information on early leavers

There are different types of such monitoring systems:

Option A: Cross-referencing enrolment data from different education and training providers

It is possible to detect early leavers by comparing enrolment data from the different education and training providers. The aim is to identify young people who are not enrolled in any education and training programme and have not attained a qualification. This requires the cross-referencing of administrative data from various education and training sub-systems (significantly, between school-based VET and apprenticeship schemes) and networks of providers. This cross-referencing can present significant technical challenges.

Option B: Student registers based on individuals' personal identification

Each learner has a unique identification number. This makes it very easy to cross-reference administrative data from various education and training sub-systems and providers, and to identify who has left the education and training system. However, data protection regulations may pose some challenges to the implementation of such systems.

Option C: Centralised register of early leavers

Every education and training centre has to report all students who leave without finishing their studies to a central service that keeps a specific register on early leavers.

Tip 3: Regularly update and review centralised monitoring systems

Data in centralised monitoring systems needs to be regularly updated and reviewed to make sure that the time elapsed between drop-out and the moment young people are contacted is as short as possible.

Tip 4: Establish a process that determines which organisation (and within it which person) is responsible for reaching out to the individual

Monitoring systems need to be complemented by procedures ensuring that each person identified as an early leaver is contacted as soon as possible. There can be a centralised service in charge of contacting early leavers, or a coordination structure involving different stakeholders in this task.

The approach adopted when reaching out to early leavers needs to take into account the specific characteristics of each young person. In particular, early leavers facing significant barriers to education, including those with complex life situations, are more easily reached through community-based interventions. These young people often do not trust people who represent 'the system,' so people who are closer to their community may be better placed to help them re-engage. This can involve street work (for instance, a youth educator could visit the young person at his/her house or during outdoor activities with other young people).

Tip 5: Link the identification of early leavers with the necessary measures

The services or structures contacting early leavers are in charge of:

- Verifying if the young person is indeed an early leaver (to exclude for instance those who changed residence to another country; employed youths could also be excluded);
- Check if the young person is already receiving support;
- Collect information on the characteristics of the young person and his or her needs to be able to offer tailored support;
- Coordinate the different services and education and training providers to offer an adequate response to each young person.

Tip 6: Protect the confidentiality of personal data

An adequate follow-up of young people who left education and training early requires sharing data with other relevant services (e.g. public employment services, social services, health services, youth services, or other). For this to happen, certain conditions need to be in place:

- Legislation needs to allow for the exchange and use of data for monitoring and contacting young people.
- Protocols of collaboration need to be created to enable databases to be shared and used by various organisations.
- VET providers and other relevant organisations need to ask young people for permission in registration forms, surveys and other data collection tools, to use the data, including by third parties, and to use personal codes/identifiers to link young people's records in different systems. Before giving their consent, young people need to receive clear information on how data might be shared and used by other entities.

Political will is needed to enable data collection, exchange and use. Legislation may need to be changed and the creation of protocols requires political leadership to bring all actors on board. The development of protocols for data sharing can be a technically complex and lengthy process, and requires close collaboration between policy officers and technical staff from statistical and IT backgrounds.

Data should only be used by organisations providing support to young people, or by researchers and evaluators in charge of assessing if the support provided is beneficial. For data to be used with other research purposes, it needs to be anonymised. Specific ethical guidelines in using the data should be followed by all actors involved. In many countries, it is not possible to use or share data to monitor or contact young people. In these cases, the use of anonymised data for research on the factors related to early leaving, can enable the design of more targeted measures.

Tip 7: Collect information on individuals' characteristics as well as their education pathways, with research purposes in mind

Information on individuals' characteristics and their education pathways can greatly contribute to the analysis of the problem of early leaving in a country. A good comprehension of the phenomenon requires collecting data that allows to establish:

- Who is leaving the system, based on information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the learners?
- When are learners leaving the system?
- Where are they dropping out from?
- Why are they leaving the system?

WHO IS LEAVING THE SYSTEM?	WHEN ARE EARLY LEAVERS LEAVING THE SYSTEM?	WHERE ARE EARLY LEAVERS DROPPING OUT FROM?	WHY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING THE SYSTEM?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender • Migrant or ethnic minority background • Other (e.g. disability) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early leavers who do not finish lower secondary education • Early leavers who finish lower secondary education but do not make the transition to upper secondary education • Drop outs from upper secondary (per year of the programme) • Early leavers who completed a short upper secondary programme (ISCED 3c) • Drop outs who 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General programme / VET • Type of programme (e.g. school-based VET / apprenticeships) • Field of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and well-being issues or conditions • Family responsibilities • Non-availability of work-based learning opportunities or apprenticeship placements • Disliked programme, VET provider, staff, or peers • Found a job • Financial problems in the family

complete an upper secondary programme but fail the final exam

- Etc.

Tip 8: Use monitoring data to assess the effectiveness of measures to tackle early leaving from education and training

The monitoring of early leavers helps collect useful data for the evaluation of measures. For instance, to analyse whether participants in different support measures have ultimately completed upper secondary education.

Expected outcomes

The availability of monitoring systems to track early leavers, and services in charge of contacting them, facilitate information sharing, cooperation between the relevant stakeholders, and a better coordination of re-engagement measures for early leavers. It can also contribute to:

- Comprehensive centralised monitoring system in place;
- Reference system in place to link the identified early leavers to the necessary measures;
- Use of data for evidence-based policy making;
- Increasing early leavers' interest in education and training providers;
- A better understanding of the process of disengagement and the factors that lead to early leaving among practitioners; and
- A better acceptance of irregular education and training pathways and of the diversified solutions available for learners.

Related resources

Statistics and data



Latest data on education and training to achieve the EU 2020 target on early leaving from education and training

The Education and Training Monitor presents a yearly evaluation of education and training system across Europe. The report brings together the latest data, technical reports and studies, as well as examples of policy measures from different EU countries. The 2019 Monitor analyses the targets and benchmarks adopted under the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training Education and Training 2020.

-  EU level
-  Austria
-  Belgium
-  Bulgaria
-  Croatia
-  Cyprus
-  Czechia
-  Denmark
-  Estonia
-  Finland
-  France
-  Germany
-  Greece
-  Hungary
-  Ireland
-  Italy
-  Latvia
-  Lithuania
-  Luxembourg
-  Malta
-  Netherlands
-  Poland
-  Portugal
-  Romania
-  Slovakia
-  Slovenia
-  Spain
-  United Kingdom
-  Sweden

Good practices



GOOD PRACTICE

Local Action for Youth (ALJ, Action locale pour jeunes)

The Luxembourgish Local Action for Youth can make direct contact to help early leavers from education and training thanks to the national register of pupils updated monthly by the Education Ministry.

 Luxembourg



GOOD PRACTICE

The drive to reduce drop-out rates

Based on data from a centralised database, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science provides monthly and yearly reports on Early School Leaving (ESL). Based on this data, new policies are developed at ministerial level to tackle ESL.

 Netherlands



GOOD PRACTICE

Information Exchange Inter-Ministerial System (IEIS) and Disengagement Monitoring and Support Platforms (PSAD)

An inter-ministerial information system at the national level to identify and support early school leavers and a network of local “second chance” actors providing the support.

 France

Publications



PUBLICATIONS

School-based Prevention and Intervention Measures and Alternative Learning Approaches to Reduce Early School Leaving

This study shows that early warning systems usually cover more visible cognitive and behavioural indicators like students’ grades, truancy or transgressive behaviour. This causes at-risk students who do not display such signs to remain undetected. The authors insist on the need to also monitor students’ emotional well-being. Download the report [here](#).

 United Kingdom

 Portugal  Sweden

 Netherlands  Poland  Spain



PUBLICATIONS

Evaluation partenariale de la politique de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire

Would you like to read about the benefits of coordinating different stakeholders in the monitoring of early leavers? The 2014 evaluation of policies against early school leaving in France discusses the impact of the Platforms for monitoring and coordination of early leavers (PSAD).

Read the report [here](#) (in French)

 France



PUBLICATIONS

Austria - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

This report discusses the rates of early leaving from VET, and the type of data collected in the country to monitor this phenomenon. The report summarises the main strategies and policy initiatives to tackle early leaving from education and training, and discusses the role played by VET. The country report was developed as background material to the Cedefop study: [Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage](#).



Austria



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Estonia

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France

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Germany

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Hungary - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

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Hungary



Ireland - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

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Italy



Luxembourg - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

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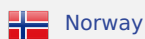
Luxembourg



Norway - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

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Poland - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

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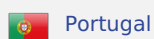
Download the report [here](#).



Portugal - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

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The Netherlands - Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

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Assessment of the implementation of the 2011 Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving

Final report - Study

This study analyses the development of policies and practice on reducing ESL after 2011, seeking to assess the contribution of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving (henceforth the 2011 Recommendation) and associated EU policy instruments to the development of policy, practice and research on ESL across Europe.



Immigrant background and expected early school leaving in Europe: evidence from PISA

This technical brief analyses the relationship between immigrant status and educational expectations in PISA. Migration flows from outside and within the EU have increased in recent years, and this has raised the attention of policy makers and the general public, with special interests on the implications that those flows can have on, among other, the education system and the labour markets.



Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

Volume I: investigating causes and extent

This Cedefop study examines the contribution that vocational education and training (VET) can make to reducing early leaving from education and training (ELET).





Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

Volume II: evaluating policy impact

This Cedefop study focuses on the contribution that vocational education and training (VET) can make to reducing early leaving from education and training (ELET).



Stronger VET for better lives

Stronger VET for better lives Cedefop's monitoring report on vocational education and training policies 2010-14

Cedefop's monitoring report on vocational education and training policies 2010-14 synthesises progress towards the objectives of the Bruges communiqué including these related to early leaving from VET.



European cooperation in VET: one process, many steps

Developments in vocational education and training policy 2015-17

Work in 2015-17 signals continuity with earlier national strategies and initiatives.



Quick wins



Using data to make the right decisions

In the city of Hasselt in Flanders (Belgium) data on school absenteeism is used to inform school-specific action plans.

