



Chapter 2: **RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

Leaving education early: putting vocational education and training centre stage

Volume I: investigating causes and extent



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CHAPTER 2.

Research scope and methodology

This study is based on qualitative and quantitative research.

The main research questions were:

- (a) how can the concept of early leaving from VET be defined and understood;
- (b) what is the size of this phenomenon in Europe;
- (c) what countries measure and how;
- (d) what are the push and pull factors associated with the decision to abandon VET.

The first question was addressed by reviewing EU and national definitions, involving desk research and interviews with national and regional actors. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter 3 of this report.

To answer the second question, the research team undertook analyses of international and national quantitative sources. First, they looked into the microdata of the AES and the programme for international assessment of adult competences (PIAAC), to extract information on early leaving and dropout specifically from VET. The analysis of these two international surveys was complemented with a review of national statistics from selected countries. Second, the team used two national data sets – from France and the Netherlands – to explore the pathways of learners during secondary schooling to understand how their trajectory results in completion or ELET. The results of these analyses are presented in Chapter 4 of this report.

The third research question examines data collection and monitoring systems in the selected countries through interviews and literature review presented in Chapter 3.

The fourth question related to the factors associated with dropping out from VET, discussed in Chapter 5, was addressed through literature review, qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research looked into the relationships between the features of the education (VET) system in different countries and ELET rates: the correlation between ELET rates and the share of students in VET tracks; the age at which students first need to choose an education track; the number of VET programmes offered; the availability of work-based learning (apprenticeships); the perception (image) of VET; the employment outcomes of VET graduates; and the number of regulated professions.

Qualitative research on the factors associated with ELVET involved desk research and semi-structured interviews in eight countries: Belgium, Denmark,

Germany, France, Croatia, Italy, Austria and Portugal with the following key stakeholders ⁽¹⁰⁾:

- (a) 63 national-level interviews were carried out with experts in ministries or education agencies, researchers, stakeholder representatives and persons in charge of the data sets explored;
- (b) 346 on-site interviews were carried out with local authorities in education, in VET schools (heads of schools, teachers or professionals in charge of early leaving), from apprenticeship programmes (in apprenticeship training centres or training companies), in charge of orientation and guidance, and organisations working with dropouts (non-governmental organisations (NGOs), PES). VET schools and apprenticeship centres visited covered a wide range of economic sectors as well as areas with high concentration of disadvantaged population.

Two international workshops were organised to validate the findings from the desk research and fieldwork, in Thessaloniki, 3 and 4 June 2014 ⁽¹¹⁾ and in Brussels, 21 October 2015 ⁽¹²⁾. The workshop conclusions fed into the analysis of this research paper.

The study methodology and statistical analysis undertaken is described in detail in a separate annex available on request ⁽¹³⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁾ An anonymous list of all interviewees including information on country, organisation and job position/role is available on request.

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/events/ELET2014/> [accessed 22.6.2016].

⁽¹²⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/evaluating-impact-and-success-vet-policies-tackle-early-leaving-education> [accessed 22.6.2016].

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