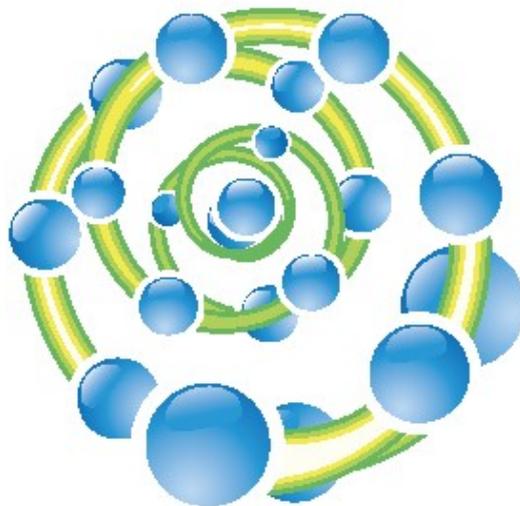


Early leaving from vocational education and training

Spain



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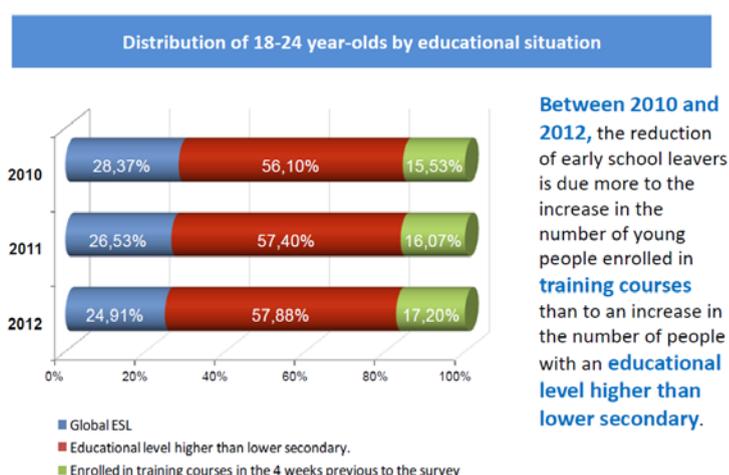
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A. Early leaving from education and training in Spain: definitions and statistics

Early school leaving (ESL) is defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most the lower secondary education certificate (school leaving certificate) and not in further education or training programmes of baccalaureate or intermediate vocational education and training cycles. In Spain this definition has been used alongside with “school failure”, a somewhat different term which refers to leaving education without having acquired the certificate of compulsory secondary education. Therefore, ESL includes school failure by definition.

ESL is one of the worries for the Spanish Government. Despite being one of the clearest success stories of European economic development (Spanish per capita GDP went from 73% of the EU average in 1987 to 95.5% in 2007), the rate of early school leaving (ESL) in Spain is the third highest of the whole EU, only lower than that of Portugal and Malta: Until the mid-nineties, the ESL rate was reduced very rapidly, but it remained unchanged until four years ago. It was in 2009 that early school leaving started a decreasing tendency. So, the ESL rate in 2009 was 31.2%, coming down to 28.4 in 2010, descending to 26.5% in 2011 and to 24.9% in 2012. (Source: Eurostat, 2013).

Graph 1. **Distribution of 18-24 year olds by education situation**

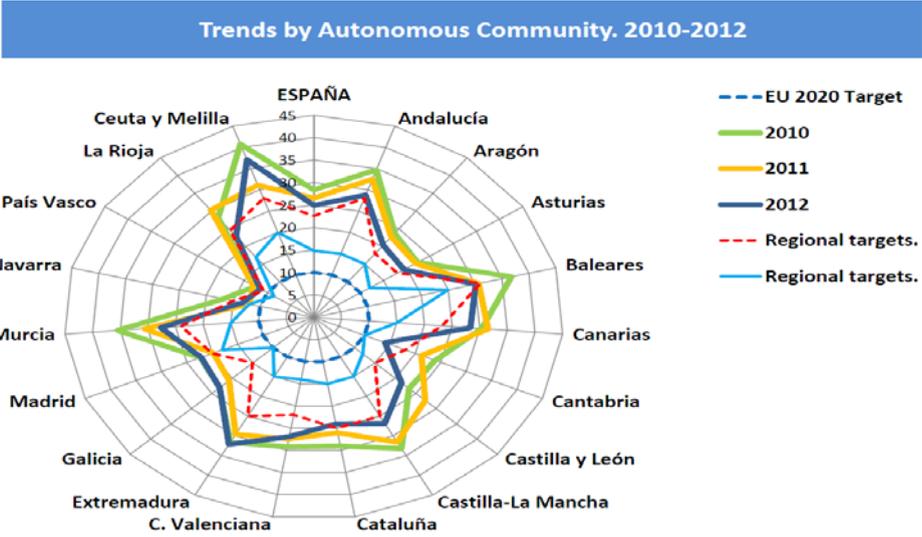


Source: Labour Force Survey 2013, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2013.

It may be relevant to mention that the school leaving rate in Spain offers important regional disparities between the North and the South. In 2011, Navarra has 12% ESL rate and the Basque Country, 13%, below the European average which is situated in 13.5%. While in the rest of the autonomous regions, the ESL rate stands at around 20%, there are six communities exceeding 30%. In 2012, just the País Vasco was 11%, below the European average which is situated in 12.8%, while in the rest of the autonomous regions, the ESL rate stands at around 23%.

There are three communities exceeding 30% and the highest values are presented in Extremadura 32,2%, the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, 37,2% and the Balearic Islands, 30,1%. In general, ESL rate between has been diminishing in all the regions during the last five years.

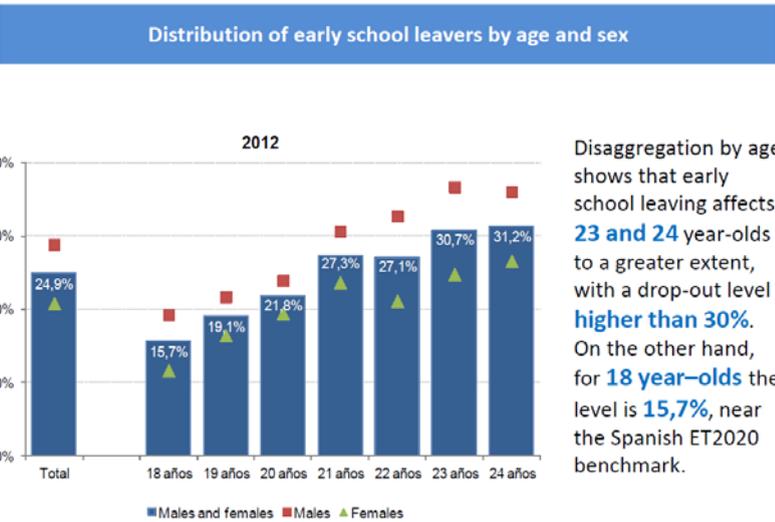
Graph 2. **ESL trends by Autonomous Communities 2010-2012**



Source: Labour Force Survey 2013, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2013.

The decreasing tendency seems to be addressing a gradual convergence towards the expected benchmark in 2015 of 23% and 15% in 2020. These figures are still far from the EU 2020 target of 10%, but show a realistic perspective.

Graph 3. **Distribution of early school leavers by age and sex**



Disaggregation by age shows that early school leaving affects 23 and 24 year-olds to a greater extent, with a drop-out level higher than 30%. On the other hand, for 18 year-olds the level is 15,7%, near the Spanish ET2020 benchmark.

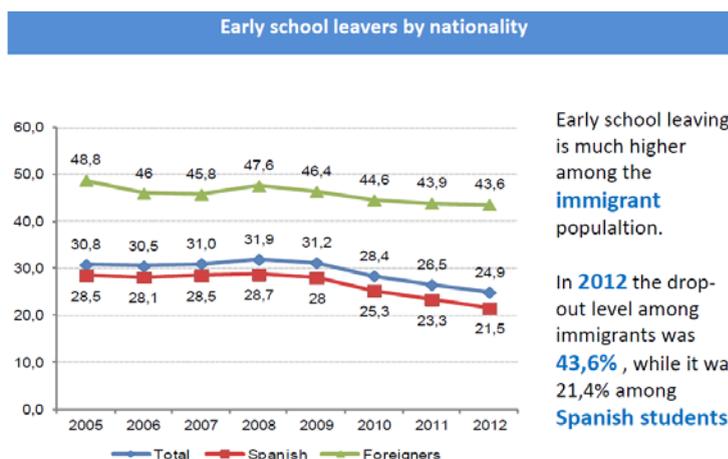
Source: Labour Force Survey 2013, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2013.

Nevertheless, although the figures are improving, ESL continues to be a major concern for the Spanish Government, and a need for improving detected at national level and also at European level. According to the European Commission and the European Council, problems in the Spanish education system include low levels of achievement at secondary level, too many students leaving school early and a vocational training system insufficiently tailored to market needs.

The identified groups of early school leavers are:

- Children from low educational background, especially when it comes to their mothers' educational attainment level.
- Immigrants ESL rate reached 44% in 2011, 43.6% in 2012. The two points decrease may be linked to the present economic crisis which has provoked the immigrant population decline.
- ESL is higher among males, 31%, than among females, 21%, this applying also to male immigrants that to female.

Graph 4. Early school-leavers by nationality



Source: Labour Force Survey 2013, Statistics Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2013.

Data drop-outs from VET programs are collected and identified for IVET programs. Drop-outs from VET Diplomas are collected by the education authorities and although high are less than for the general branch studies (see Annex 1). The rate of drop outs in the case of vocational programs do not differentiate between young and adults, employed and unemployed but whether the reason of dropping out is due to job placement or any other cause. Dropout is considered a quality indicator in the Annual Evaluation Plan of the training for employment subsystem together with other impact and context indicators.

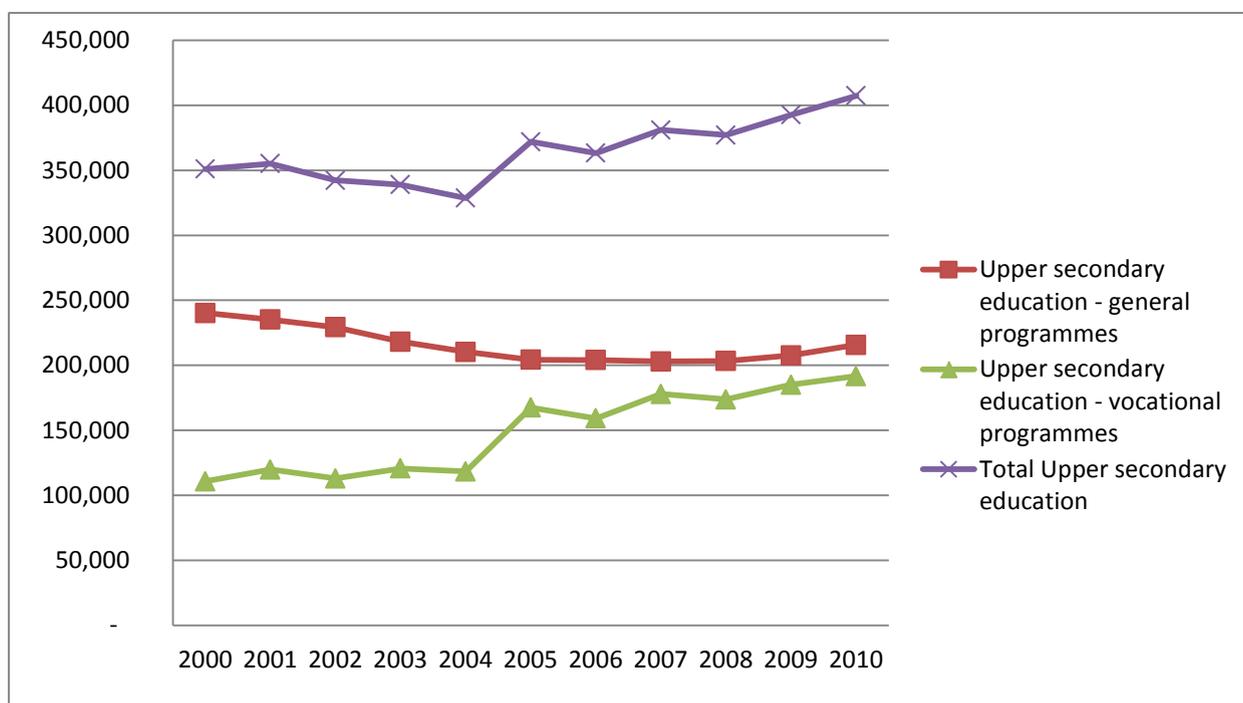
B. Different aspects that may influence the decision to remain in or drop out from VET

B.1. Structural characteristics of the education and training / VET system

Traditionally, the Spanish VET system has been accused of being rather rigid and extremely school-based in everything regarding timetables, closed curricula and class attendance.

Things started to change after the approval of the Act 5/2002, 19 June, on Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training and the development of Act 2/2006, 3 May, on Education. Both have contributed to turning VET into a more flexible training option, and more closely related to the labour market needs. In fact, the number of graduates in the upper secondary vocational orientation programs has increased significantly, although students slightly preferred the general to the vocational paths (44,6% in 2010).

Graph 5. **Number of graduates in upper secondary education, ISCED 3**



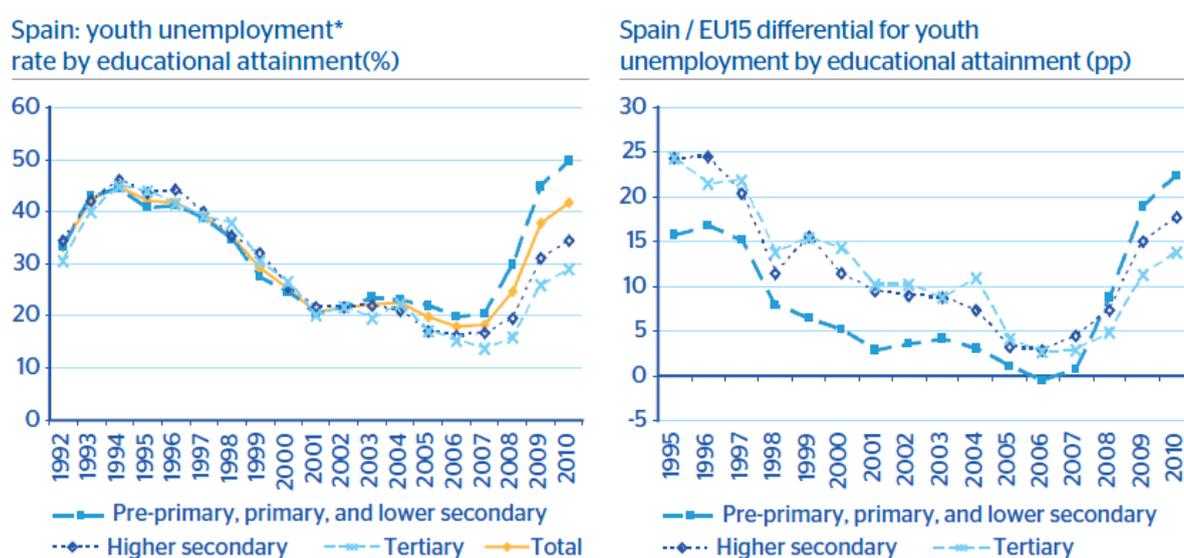
Source: National Indicators Education System 2012, Ministry of Education.

The Education and Labour Administrations are working together in an integrated vocational system and are trying to change the current structure of qualifications in Spain, which still resembles a sand clock, where the very low-qualified (ISCED 1-2) occupy the big low chamber, and the highly qualified (ISCED 5-6), placed at the top chamber, signify a high number of people, 10 points higher than the average European, while a very narrow neck is reserved for the medium-qualifications (ISCED 3-4) of upper secondary level, especially intermediate VET graduates.

This unbalanced situation has become more evident since the economic crisis broke out and although unemployment has stricken all groups of population, qualified and non-qualified, it is true that the low-qualified citizens are suffering the most.

Leaving school before completing compulsory secondary education without any higher secondary education makes it more difficult for youngsters' employability in the first place, and influences their career very negatively due to the fact that they lack basic knowledge and skills to enter the labour market and if so, to remain in it and progress in their future long life learning opportunities. It has been proved that the lower the qualification level attained the lower interest in participating in training activities during their life cycle.

Graph 6. **Youth unemployment in Spain and education attainment**



Source: BBVA, based on Eurostat 2011.

Currently, the National System of Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training contemplate an integrated system, structured through the legislation mentioned above, with a strong co-relation between VET in the Education System and VET in the National Employment System. Both are contributing to the decrease of early leaving and the options to attain a VET diploma have increased and opened up through:

- Tests to access VET, intermediate and higher, without any academic requirements, which allow people who abandoned the education system without the acquisition of a formal qualification to return and obtain one.
- Modular offer of VET cycles and distance learning. The former permits registration by module, making it easier for workers to combine work and training. The latter reproduces via the use of ICT virtual environments so that the professional competences included in a VET cycle can be achieved without personal class attendance.

- Higher VET cycles are tertiary non university studies, included in the higher education framework, and with progression between University and VET and recognition between them both.
- Development of the National Repertory of Professional Certificates based on the occupational standards defined in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications (INCUAL, Ministry of Education). The Repertory is officially regulated by the Ministry of Employment and contains with *ad hoc* and short vocational programmes in main occupational profiles and priority areas of employment for young-adults employment transition but who abandoned the education path without low or no-formal qualification (less than ISCED 2) and specific professional competence needs.
- Specific National Action Plans for Youngsters Qualification financed by Employment Public Service for the low skilled to acquire a formal qualification, Professional Certificates and reintroduce and motivate NEET's for working and learning.
- The procedure for the assessment and accreditation of the professional competences acquired through work experience, developed by the autonomous regions according to the regulation which entered into force in 2009 (RD 1224/2009). The work experience is thus valued and opens the possibility of completing whatever training lacks for the acquisition of a formal VET diploma. This is a pathway intended mainly for young adults who despite having abandoned school too early, have gained professional competences which deserve being taken into account.

B.2. Labour market and social policy related issues

The economy model based in the years before the crisis on the construction sector and on tourism, is highly responsible for the ESL high rates in Spain. These two sectors labour demands require little qualification and offer comparatively high salaries and attracted youngsters to abandon their education before completing an ISCED 3 qualification or even earlier, in the case of nationals, and not to enter in the education system in many of the immigrants arriving in Spain at the time.

The deterioration in the job market during the crisis has confirmed that Spain's youth, particularly those with the lowest level of education, continue to have more difficulties accessing the labour market than their European peers. Overall, it is clear that education is playing a relevant role in determining the risk of a youngster becoming unemployed during the current crisis: the rise in the youth unemployment rate differential with the EU15 has been significantly greater among those with the lowest educational attainment (22.9pp between 2007-2010) than among those with a university degree (11.5pp). (Source: BBVA Research Working Paper 2011).

However, without denying the fact that those with lower qualifications are suffering the most, it is also true that university graduates are not easily finding a job due to the fact that access to the labour market is reluctant to new contracts, that many university students are overqualified and there are too many students accessing university when what is really needed is VET graduates, mainly of intermediate level Technicians.

During the last two years 2011 and 2012 specific training action plans have been put into force by the labour administration for qualifying youngsters, under 30, who abandon the education without a formal professional qualification and giving them the training to take positions in other sectors and financed by active employment policies.

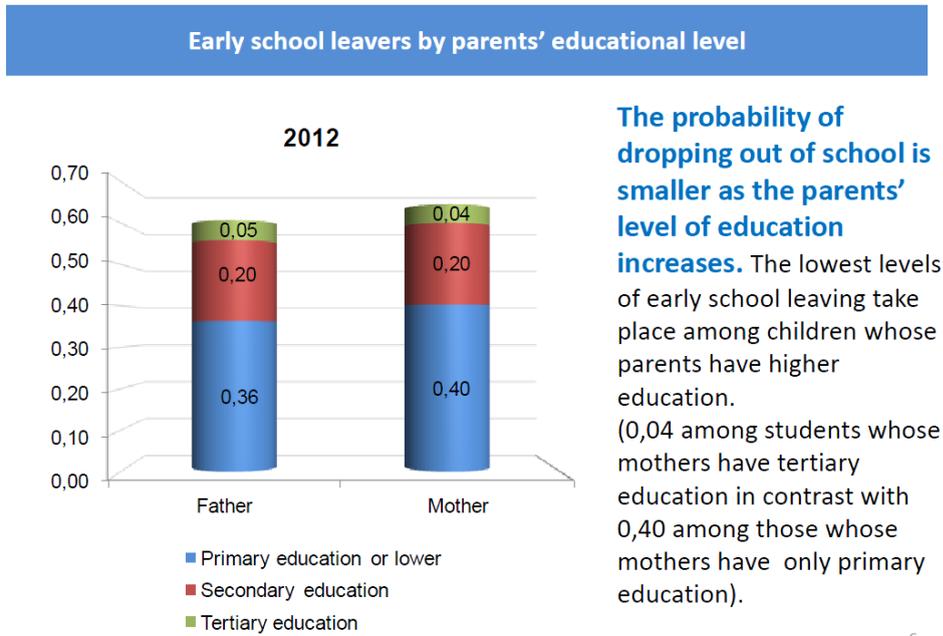
In several sectors, competent authorities ask for a compulsory training programme or even a formal qualification for guarantee of workers and society. In fact this is the case of occupations with medium-high qualification level and high employment demand as for example, pool lifeguards or beach lifeguards as well as refrigerators installers, professional drivers (vans, trams or ambulance), electric, gas or any thermal installations in buildings, certain beauty activities (hair removal, Tan or similar) or specific nursing occupations for elderly or disabled. Depending on the compulsory training needs settled by the competent authorities a certificate of competence or a higher formal professional qualification may be needed.

B.3. Individual reasons

We can state that early school leaving is the result of a combination of factors and individual reasons are a combination of them all:

- 1) Poor achievement at the compulsory secondary level education.
- 2) Poor incentives for youngsters to continue in the education system.
- 3) Poor backgrounds of immigrant families
- 4) The economy based on the construction sector is paying its tribute some years after attracting thousands of sixteen-year-olds to a well-paid job for doing an unqualified job.
- 5) Little social recognition for VET as a good alternative with social status to baccalaureate first and to university afterwards.

Graph 7. Early school leavers by parents' educational level



The probability of dropping out of school is smaller as the parents' level of education increases. The lowest levels of early school leaving take place among children whose parents have higher education. (0,04 among students whose mothers have tertiary education in contrast with 0,40 among those whose mothers have only primary education).

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2013.

C. Measures to reduce drop-out from VET

C.1. Measures to prevent drop-outs from school-based VET and apprenticeship-type training

Last November, a new piece of legislation was approved, jointly prepared between the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. It develops the training and apprenticeship contract as a means to study and work at the same time and lays the bases for the Dual VET system.

The main objectives of the reform are to reduce early school leaving and to attract more learners to VET studies, by flexibilising access, by incentivising students and companies, and by not only attracting more students to intermediate VET studies, but facilitating the completion of their studies at ISCED 2 level.

Specific Plans to reduce early school leaving were put in force during the last 5 years to retain young students in risk of abandon education without a lower secondary certificate. The so-called PCPI, Initial Vocational Qualification Programs aim to retain young students at school without a lower secondary education certificate and give them a basic occupation training profile for transition to the labour market avoiding to become a NEET. However, the objective was that once students pass the PCPI program, they enrol in an Intermediate VET Cycle (ISCED 3) in their field of interest and improve their qualification level.

In general, accessing VET intermediate studies, requires attaining the certificate in compulsory secondary education. However, 17.4% of the students who access VET cycles do it after failing to obtain this certificate and access through an entry test. This means that 26,000 students would abandon the education system if VET did not play this important inclusive role. On the other hand, 39% of the students who access VET intermediate cycles fail to obtain their Technician diploma in the year they are expected to (Intermediate VET cycles are two years in length). This means that even though VET is inclusive, at the same time it is not succeeding in its attempt to help reduce early school leaving as desired.

A new VET panorama with an education and employment fold, started on 2012, with the setting of the dual VET system and the training and apprenticeship contract, as another learning modality of VET, as well as, the “Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment Strategy 2013-2016” of the Ministry of Employment, agreed with social agents and enterprises, to tackle with youth unemployment centres a National Strategy introducing measures to favouring international learning and labour mobility with foreign language learning programs and improve youngsters qualification level and formal accreditation through motivating and granting students who do not abandon school or enrolled in dual training VET programs.

The European CSR recommendations in 2012 and 2013, added to our own national targets, have boosted the VET reform, which has started by increasing the time students spend training at a company in the current school-based system, and which come to 20% of the total time of a VET cycles (400 hours out of the total of 2000) to a minimum 33% during the first year, and 75-85% maximum during the second year. This new situation has brought more companies on board, wishing to participate in the design and implementation of the training necessary to acquire the entire learning outcomes in a diploma.

The relationship between companies and training centres has meant a bigger collaboration between them both, through a great diversity of options in the way of pilot projects. They have involved so far 500 companies, 4000 students and 140 training centres. The interaction depends on their respective needs, on the learning units the students are to achieve and on the characteristics of the company involved.

The collaboration can range from using premises, facilities and machinery to totally sharing training between the school teacher and the company expert.

The aims of the education authorities through these pilot dual projects are to:

- enhance motivation among students;
- reduce early school leaving rate;
- attract students to VET;
- facilitate labour insertion;
- strengthen joint responsibility and links between business and VET;
- boost links between VET teachers and industry;
- favour knowledge transfer.

These projects are being financed in various different ways:

- ✓ training contracts;
- ✓ education administrations funding;
- ✓ company funding: up to 80% of the minimum inter-professional salary;
- ✓ transportation grants;
- ✓ grants co-financed between the company and the training centre;
- ✓ social security coverage.

The new VET panorama implies changes regarding school organization, incentivising companies to encourage them to take on apprentices, special support for small and medium-sized enterprises which will require associations of companies from the same sector so they can cover all the training needs of the students, ensuring that all the learning outcomes are acquired, which will identify the achievements through the current school – based model with the experimental work-based learning.

All these needs and requirements will be accomplished following the European quality descriptors and indicators and according to the National strategy which is being developed.

C.2. Remedial measures within VET/related to VET

The remedial measures within and related to VET, taken by the Labour Administration, to attract youngsters under 30 or even adults-whether they are unemployed or employed who long ago abandoned the education system and now have the opportunity through the acquisition of a professional certificate level one, two or three. The fact that they contain the professional qualifications also included in the VET diplomas facilitate the recognition of the professional competences acquired and the recognition of the corresponding professional modules from the VET diploma and constitute a re-entry opportunity to improve young adults together with the option to improve their level of qualification and employability.

It is true that the certificates have professional value and not academic, whereas, diplomas have both, it is a step forward to be able to offer citizens with the possibility of the recognition of the professional modules that contain the professional competences acquired. Since the education VET system is modular, they can gain professional modules until completion of the VET cycle and be granted the Technician diploma.

Active Employment Policies Authorities have identified those occupations with high demand and stability for offering youngsters with formal training programs for those profiles and constituting priority areas for vocational training for employment in 2012 and 2013.

Another possibility envisaged refers to the procedure of validation of non-formal or informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences accessible to everybody, through which people without any academic requirements can have their professional competences assessed and recognised and can apply for the recognition of the corresponding professional modules. More than 50,000 are supposed to have been assessed this way and the Ministry has the responsibility to offer the autonomous regions the training necessary to allow these people to complete their studies. The validation procedure has proved costly and slow, so a more agile way of going through the process is being designed in collaboration with the autonomous regions.

To that purpose learning distance material has been prepared, already at the disposal of citizens, for 100 diplomas as well as e-learning platforms as a new scenario for VET programs provision.

The procedure has proved costly and slow, so a more agile way of going through the process is being designed in collaboration with the autonomous regions.

D. Conclusions

1. Early school leaving is a major concern for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and although the number of early school leavers has decreased more than 5 points in the last two years, Spain is still far from reaching the European benchmark which is 10% for the year 2020. Spain's challenge is to descend to 15%, which seems at the moment of speaking quite realistic.
2. VET seems to be the key factor to both reduce early school leaving and increase the qualification level of the population.
3. The bases for a dual system together with the already work-based VET integrated system is expected to reduce early leaving and improve qualification level of the population. The Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment Strategy 2013-2016 established concrete measures in the short run focused on youngsters who abandon school without an ISCED 2level and formal vocational training programs as a way for improving employability of youngsters.
4. VET measures are intended to help reduce early school leaving and to allow young people to attain levels of excellence in the sector they have been trained.
5. The integrated system and the cooperation between the Education and Labour Administrations is expected to reinforce VET within the population and re-engage specially young adults (under 30) that once left the school without a formal qualification to be open to new learning opportunities based on learning outcomes and accreditation of their competence.
6. It is expected that the increase in the work-based learning VET programmes will attract more young people to VET studies and will contribute to adjust the number of University students and the number of VET students, mainly intermediate level to the real needs of the labour market while serving the purpose of fulfilling young people's dreams and ambitions.

Annex 1 Sources

- [Organic Act 5/2002](#), of 19 June 2002, on Qualifications and Vocational Training (Spanish Official Gazette 20/6/2002).
- [Organic Act 2/2006](#), of 3 May 2006, on Education (Spanish Official Gazette 4/5/2006).
- [Royal Decree 1224/2009](#), 17 July, on the assessment and accreditation of the professional competences acquired through work experience
- [Royal Decree 1027/2011](#) establishing the Spanish High Studies Qualifications Framework
- [Royal Decree 1529/2012](#), 8 November, which develops the training contract and lays the bases for the dual VET system
- [COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 28 June 2011](#) on policies to reduce early school leaving. (Text with EEA relevance). (2011/C 191/01).
- COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on Spain's [2012](#) and [2013](#) National reform programmes.
- [Statistics and Graphs: Datos y Cifras de la Educación](#), Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Eurostat.
- [Youth Unemployment in Spain: causes and solutions](#) (BBVA, 2011)
- [Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment 2013-2016](#), Ministry of Employment
- [Annual Evaluation Plan of the Training for Employment Subsystem](#), Spanish National Public Employment Service 2010, 2011

Annex 2 Tables

Table 1. **Students finalising studies from ISCED 3 programs (General and Vocational brands), years 2006 to 2011**

VET Intermediate Diploma ISCED 3B		
Academic year	% Students finalising studies (in relation to the students registered in the second year)	% Students finalising studies (in relation to the students registered in the first year)
2006-2007	88,90	51,22
2007-2008	91,26	49,80
2008-2009	88,50	48,30
2009-2010	86,71	47,03
2010-2011	81,34	47,31

Upper Secondary Certificate ISCED 3A		
Academic year	% Students finalising studies (in relation to the students registered in the second year)	% Students finalising studies (in relation to the students registered in the first year)
2006-2007	73,93	68,31
2007-2008	75,40	68,89
2008-2009	77,21	68,61
2009-2010	79,43	69,42
2010-2011	78,42	70,05

VET Advanced Diploma ISCED 5B		
Academic year	% Students finalising studies (in relation to the students registered in the second year)	% Students finalising studies (in relation to the students registered in the first year)
2006-2007	73,93	68,31
2007-2008	75,40	68,89
2008-2009	77,21	68,61
2009-2010	79,43	69,42
2010-2011	78,42	70,05

Source: National Indicators Education System 2012, Ministry of Education.

Table 2. **Drop-outs from VET programs from the National Subsystem on Training for employment, years 2005 to 2012**

Finalization year of the VET program	Drop-outs due to job placement	Drop-outs for other causes different to job placement
2006	9,74%	13,82%
2007	9,62%	13,07%
2008	7,79%	14,45%
2009	5,82%	11,21%
2010	5,90%	11,63%
2011	5,63%	14,11%
2012	4,28%	12,78%

Source: SEPE Database (Public Employment National Service), update July 2013.