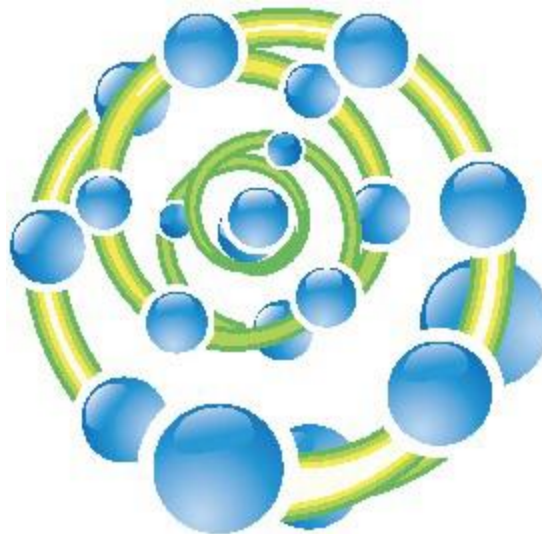


Early leaving from vocational education and training

France



This article on early leaving from vocational education and training, written in 2013, is the first of a set of articles prepared within Cedefop's ReferNet network. It complements general information on VET systems available online at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>.

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Author: Anne Grillot

Coordinator: Régis Roussel

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Introduction

In the 1980s, 30% of young people emerged from the school system with no diplomas; today, the figure is only 12%. Nevertheless, the level is still too high.

Combating early leaving from VET is a priority in France's education system, especially as the causal link between early leaving from VET and long-term youth unemployment is now indisputable.

The need for young people to stay in education until they have obtained diplomas is now greater than ever. The economic crisis of 2008 has perhaps reinforced the idea that young people must absolutely obtain an education and certifications, in order to guarantee access to the labour market.

Moreover, on 4 December 2012, Minister of Education Vincent Peillon announced a major plan to combat early leaving from VET, with the stated political aim of reducing the "cohorts" of early leaving from VET by 20,000 in 2013 ⁽¹⁾.

(¹) <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid55632/la-lutte-contre-le-decrochage-scolaire.html>

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

A.1. Definition established by the 2009 Act

School dropout, deschooling, early exit from the education system, early leaving from VET, there is a plethora of words or expressions used for a phenomenon that is not attributable to any one single factor. In France today, “décrochage scolaire” (early leaving from VET) has become the standard expression, largely because of the dominant role attributed to preventing early leaving from VET in public policy. “Early leavers” are defined as pupils or students who leave school without completing their current stage of education, and without obtaining the corresponding qualification. The term also applies to young apprentices who stop their training or break their contract before it reaches its term.

Within the framework set by European educational policy at the Lisbon summit in 2000, the French government developed a definition of early leaving from VET. This was introduced into the Act of 24 November 2009 on lifelong learning and guidance, in Clause L. 313-7 of the Education Code and its Implementation Decree (Decree No. 2010-1781 of 31.12.10). It defines a school “dropout” as someone who has obtained neither the baccalaureate, nor a vocational qualification listed in the National Directory of Professional Qualifications and ranked at level V or IV of the interministerial classification of educational levels.

A.2. Dropout statistics

The statistical measurement of early leaving from VET levels in France is tricky, because there are many different agencies involved in combating early leaving from VET, which all keep their own figures: education authorities, establishments, Ministry of Education, apprentice training centres (CFA), agricultural training institutions ⁽²⁾.

Because of the disparate counting methods, an interministerial system to harmonise the identification of early leaving from VETs was introduced in February 2011, known as the Interministerial Information Exchange System (Système interministériel d'échange d'informations - SIEI). However, whilst it combines the contributions of the ministries of Education, Employment and Agriculture, it does not provide statistical information on early school leavers.

In addition, Insee (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies) produces a continuous annual “Employment” survey that includes an indicator for education dropouts. In 2011, in mainland France, the proportion of youngsters aged 18-24 leaving school with no qualifications and no longer engaged in education or training, stood at 11.9%. According to the Ministry of Education, the number of annual “early leavers” stands at 140,000 ⁽³⁾.

⁽²⁾ Céreq brief 298-1, April 2012

⁽³⁾ Information Release No. 12-15, September 2012, by the Ministry of Education

B. Dropout factors in VET

Beyond individual reasons for early leaving, explanations can be found in a cluster of indicators: structural characteristics of education and training, the labour market and social policy problems.

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

In France, the minimum school leaving age is sixteen, and pupils are required to attend until that time; most pupils aged 11-16 follow the secondary educational curriculum in a *collège* (lower secondary school or high school). Moreover, when early leaving from VET are broken down by age group, the majority are 16-year-olds (24% as against 6% for people aged 21 and over).

Internal school factors can be a reason for early leaving from VET, and are classified in two categories:

- organisational and structural factors in the educational systems: the existence of disparate learning paths, with significant differences in performance between establishments, encourages early leaving from VET. In these cases, school curricula are often differentiated, with the sense that certain options are second-class (for example, vocational education in France). It should be noted that repeating a school year is both a factor in and a source of early leaving from VET;
- pedagogical factors: any factors associated with the interactions and relations between teachers and students. For example, managing timeouts during class is essential: good time management encourages students to get involved in the work and therefore reduces the risk of their dropping out ⁽⁴⁾.

In April 2013 the Minister for Education presented a draft of “Orientation and Programming Law for the Reform of the Republic’s School”. This text, adopted by the Parliament in July, 2013, tries in particular to bring solutions for reducing the number of early leaving from VETs. In so doing, the Minister cited a number of facts, in particular:

- “since 1975, multiple schemes for managing problem students have been introduced, without reducing the hard core of academic failure. These schemes, initially presented as “temporary” and “exceptional”, have usually evolved into separate learning paths, which do not encourage the acquisition of a common education, but often lead to students in difficulty being excluded within the educational system itself, frequently with the result that they drop out later in their education.

⁽⁴⁾ *Dossier d’actualité veille et analyses* No. 84, May 2013, by Rémi Thibert

We need to question any system or class of early exclusion that might divert students from the aim of mastering the basics and send them early down a separate path”. The act therefore eliminates the system of “junior apprenticeship” and the work experience scheme (dispositif d’initiation aux métiers en alternance – DIMA) for young people under the age of fifteen.

- “Schools are responsible for providing education on health and responsible behaviour. School health policy is divided into three elements: education, prevention and protection. The work of social and health staff in the national education system is a major tool in the fight against social inequalities in health and early prevention of student difficulties and early leaving from VET”.
- “At the secondary school level, development plans should set precise targets for educational teams on reducing absenteeism, the first sign of potential dropout” ⁽⁵⁾.

B.2. Labour market and social policy issues

These days, young people leaving the educational system with few qualifications raise the problem of access to the labour market. The shortage of work at a time of economic crisis crystallises the issue of youth qualifications.

To enable young people to continue their education without dropping out, preventative measures have been introduced in France:

- ✓ families are liable to a fine of €750 when children fail to attend school (Decree No. 2004-162 of 19 February 2004);
- ✓ the law included a provision to remove family benefits. However, this provision was repealed on the grounds of ineffectiveness.

In addition, with regard to the allocation of educational grants in France, recipients must meet the attendance requirements in order to receive their grants.

B.3. Individual reasons that may influence the decision to discontinue VET

Few studies or surveys have been carried out on the personal reasons or factors that trigger early leaving from VET. Nonetheless, a few possible explanations have been put forward. A pupil does not suddenly drop out of school. There may have been symptoms running over a long period, dating back to *collège*: boredom, disruptiveness or restlessness, inattention in class.

⁽⁵⁾ For more information about the bill http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichLoiPreparation.do;jsessionid=7785625021DBB03742EAFA D861CB5787.tpdjo01v_1?idDocument=JORFDOLE000026973437&type=expose

Another very common reason for dropout is when a student has been given poor advice on study options or has been forced to choose certain options.

Often the default option proposed is vocational training, which is imposed on students when they failed to achieve good enough results to join the general educational path. In this case, both teachers and students have the sense of being steered towards a second-class option. The particular history of the youngster's personal environment can reveal motives for early leaving from VET. It is a very common outcome in the case of single-parent families, family breakdown or family conflict.

Although resource centres or tools (websites, publications, etc.) exist, lack of information is another reason cited. In the absence of information or an understanding of the education system, parents find it hard to grasp the different study options or may even be unaware of all the options available.

The final explanatory factor in early leaving from VET is academic failure, caused in some cases by learning difficulties which result in a succession of failures to acquire the basics. For example, in an assessment on Defence and Citizenship Day (JDC) in 2012, while eight out of ten French boys and girls are good readers and have grasped the basics of the French language, two in ten have difficulty in reading and one in ten has trouble with writing ⁽⁶⁾.

In short, the explanations for early leaving from VET are multifactorial.

⁽⁶⁾ Information Release - DEPP – No. 13.09, June 2013.

C. Measures to reduce dropout from VET

In France, in accordance with European objectives, the first step in reducing early leaving from VET is prevention, followed by correction.

C.1. Measures in place to prevent dropout from school-based VET and apprenticeship-type training

Several structures, operating in parallel to school, have been set up to tackle educational difficulties in young people between the 1st and 4th year of *collège* (lower secondary school). For example, bridging schemes (*dispositifs relais*), i.e. additional classes and workshops, offer temporary support for *collège* students at risk of educational marginalisation. Their purpose is to encourage a “back-to-school” and resocialisation for these students. These schemes have shown their effectiveness in combating early leaving from VET: 82% of students go back to high school. They offer a higher level of supervision, temporary inclusion in a small group of students with multiple partnerships.

Another measure, also part of the National Education System, is the regional special education establishments (*Établissements régionaux d’enseignement adapté – Erea*). In reality, they are local state schools. Their role is to look after teenagers with serious academic and social problems, or with disabilities. These establishments are often residential.

Finally, the special general and vocational education sections (*sections d’enseignement général et professionnel adapté – Segpa*) within high schools cater for students with serious and lasting learning difficulties. These are students who have not acquired all the knowledge and skills expected at the end of primary school, in particular the standard basket of basic skills. Apart from teaching these basics, these structures help students to develop their own educational plan and to prepare for an education that will bring certifications.

C.1.1. Guidance information structures

➤ Information and guidance centres (*centres d’information et d’orientation – CIO*)

Reporting to the Ministry of Education and spread across the whole country, the CIOs support young people and their families with information on education, vocational training, qualifications and careers. They also provide personal advice through guidance counsellors.

- Support, information and guidance offices (permanences d'accueil, d'information et d'orientation – PAIO)

These voluntary sector structures work with young people aged 16 to 25, helping them find appropriate sandwich courses, but also supporting them on all issues of training and employment in order to facilitate their entry into the labour market.

- Joint university information and guidance services (services communs universitaires d'information et d'orientation – SCUIO)

These university-based structures offer students a wide range of documentation and information services on university courses, career options and jobs.

- Local youth centres (missions locales)

These voluntary sector structures work with young people aged 16 to 25. They deal with the full range of issues affecting this age group: employment, training, housing, health, sports, and leisure. They work in partnership with the dropout identification system (see below).

- Youth information centre network (réseau du Centre d'information Jeunesse – CIDJ)

These structures provide information nationally, regionally and locally on all areas affecting young people (day-to-day life, education, employment, leisure, health, housing, etc.). They form part of a general information network open to all young people, whatever their circumstances.

- The “Orientation pour tous.fr” website

This Web portal provides information on jobs, courses and guidance centres for both young people and adults, as part of the public careers service.

C.1.2. The “early leaving from VET prevention unit”

The “mission de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire” (MLDS – early leaving from VET prevention unit) runs prevention initiatives but also acts in an advisory and educational engineering role. It contributes to the preparation of situation assessments and works with the support institutions in the establishment and monitoring of training initiatives and individual career management. Young people are offered solutions for resuming their education either in a school, notably an innovative structure such as a “micro-lycée”, or in a public Apprenticeship Training Centre (CFA) or apprenticeship training unit.

The National Education tutor, the young person and his or her family sign an “Employment Qualification Training” contract, which formally sets out the individual procedures for the return to education.

In September 2013, in support of the FoQualE networks, “early leaving from VET” correspondents will be appointed in secondary schools that have a high rate of absenteeism and dropout.

In addition, there is a special partnership with the Civic Service Agency (ASC) to offer young people community service assignments ⁽⁷⁾.

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

C.2.1. Identifying the young people and creating networks of actors

➤ The Interministerial Information Exchange System (SIEI)

Young early leavers are identified through an interministerial information exchange system. It draws up lists of young people over the age of 16 who have left education without a certification and have not reregistered in a public or private training institution under contract to the Ministry of National Education or the Ministry of Agriculture, nor in an apprentice training centre (CFA). These lists are then sent to the heads of 360 dropouts monitoring and support units across the country, appointed by the departmental prefects. In 2012, 9,500 young people returned to education through this support framework ⁽⁸⁾.

➤ The FoQualE (Formation Qualification Emploi – Training Qualification Employment) networks

Working within the coverage area of a dropout monitoring and support unit, these networks bring together national education establishments and schemes with the potential to help young early leaving from VETs. This approach runs alongside the action undertaken by local and regional authorities. It forms part of “the regional pacts for the educational and professional success of young people”, constituting particular applications of the regional vocational training development plan contracts (contrats de plan régionaux de développement des formations professionnelles – CPRDFP) developed to combat early leaving from VET.

⁽⁷⁾ For more information <http://www.service-civique.gouv.fr>

⁽⁸⁾ MEN – DGESCO Circular No. 2013-035 of 29.3.13

C.2.2. Innovative structures

Structures that use innovative pedagogical techniques have emerged in France to support young early leavers. Their aim is to re-motivate young people and help them reconstruct an educational programme and a career plan ⁽⁹⁾.

- The “collège lycée élitare pour tous” (CLEPT) High-quality secondary schools for all ⁽¹⁰⁾

Developed as an experimental scheme in 2000, these support young people aged 15 to 23 who have been outside the school system for more than 6 months. Their aim is to raise students to “end of *collège*” level or place them in a *lycée* to prepare for the general baccalaureate.

- The “Écoles de la deuxième chance” (E2C) Second chance schools

These schools support motivated young people aged 18 to 25 without diplomas or qualifications, who have been outside the school system for at least a year. The training they provide alternates between internships and refresher sessions, to help students join the labour market or access a course leading to qualifications. The E2C issues a skills certificate on completion of the course. Young people access these schools via local youth employment agencies, the government’s Pôle emploi agency and integration structures.

The Regional Councils are heavily involved in funding these structures. For example, in 2013 the Alsace Region decided to invest € 645,000 in the Second Chance Schools. 185 young early leavers in great difficulty will have access to training, guidance and support.

- The “Établissements publics d’insertion de la défense” (Épide) Public defence integration establishments

These establishments take in young unemployed volunteers aged 18 to 25 who are without qualifications and have educational problems. The support lasts between 8 and 10 months and provides:

- ✓ upgrading on the educational basics, initiation to IT and Internet use;
- ✓ civic and behavioural education including training in first aid and the highway code;
- ✓ vocational pre-training in partnership with local companies and structures to facilitate employment in sectors of employment.

The students are boarders and receive an allowance. The Épide are also open to delinquent minors on court recommendation.

⁽⁹⁾ To find the nearest of these initiatives in France: website www.masecondechance.fr
⁽¹⁰⁾ Site www.onisep.fr

➤ The “Lycées de la nouvelle chance” (another chance schools)

Two or three experiments in France to help young people aged 18 to 25 to prepare for a vocational or general baccalaureate.

➤ Micro-lycées

Admission on interview of students aged 16 to 25 who have been admitted to fifth form, but have dropped out of school for at least 6 months. These structures are connected to EPLE and receive resources from the academies and partners, including local authorities, in particular the Region ⁽¹¹⁾.

➤ Municipal adult lycées (LMA)

These are primarily aimed at working people over the age of 18 who have interrupted their education, sometimes for many years, and who would like to take their baccalaureate. The compulsory classes are held in the evenings or on Saturday mornings.

C.2.3. Employment and support measures

➤ The Social Life Integration Contract (Contrat d’insertion dans la vie sociale – CIVIS)

The “social life integration contract” (CIVIS) is aimed at young people aged 16 to 25 (i.e. up to their 26th birthday) who are experiencing particular difficulties in obtaining employment. The goal is to organise the measures they need to take to acquire a lasting job. This contract is signed with the local youth employment agencies or support, information and guidance offices (PAIO). The contract is for one year, but renewable. CIVIS beneficiaries aged 18 or above are supported by a mentor and can receive State support in the form of an allowance paid during periods in which they receive neither income from employment, nor other benefit.

➤ Support for young jobseekers by the social partners

The social partners adopted a national interprofessional agreement on 7 April 2011 which provided for the local youth agencies (Missions locales - see above) to increase support for 20,000 young “early leavers” in 2011. If they are aged under 21 on their first visit to the local youth employment agency and have an academic level of IV or below, they receive increased support for a maximum period of 18 months and the possibility of an internship through partnerships with companies, local interprofessional and professional organisations and the approved joint collecting bodies (Opca) responsible for contributing to the development of vocational training.

⁽¹¹⁾ See the Aquitaine Region’s operation to support the micro-lycée that will open in September this year within Lycée Antoine-Lomet d’Agen

➤ The “emplois d’avenir” scheme

The “emplois d’avenir” are a real work experience and a second chance of training for young people with few or no qualifications. The objective of Future Jobs is to improve professional integration and access to qualifications for young people with few or none, who face particular difficulties in obtaining work. Central government is supporting the creation of 150,000 future jobs by 2014 ⁽¹²⁾.

➤ Regional initiatives

Virtually all of France’s regions, as part of the professional training regional development contract, establish a regional action plan to combat educational dropout: bridging courses for access to apprenticeships, success for all ⁽¹³⁾, etc.

➤ The future “Garantie jeunes” Youth Guarantee

This measure will be tried out in 10 areas in September 2013 with the aim of rollout to the whole country. This guarantee targets highly vulnerable young people who are neither at school nor in training. It consists of an annual, renewable contract of reciprocal undertakings between the young person and the local youth employment agency. The recipient is paid benefits equivalent to the RSA (minimum living allowance) and the local youth employment agency provides training courses or a job ⁽¹⁴⁾.

C.2.4. Actions in the regions

The Regional Councils, which have full prerogatives in the sphere of vocational training, have tested schemes or even adopted strategies to combat educational dropout. Certain regions have even sought inspiration in solutions tried elsewhere, for example the Brittany Region which drew on experiences in Quebec.

Of the strategies adopted, the following are the most frequent.

➤ Dropout prevention plans

The Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region has asked the local youth employment centres to set up “area plans to combat apprentice dropout”. The authority plans to spend almost €820,000 on these initiatives under the 2011-2015 apprenticeship development COM (targets and resources contract) signed with the Government, including €272,000 in 2013.

⁽¹²⁾ See <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/emplois-d-avenir,2189/>

⁽¹³⁾ See <http://www.iledefrance.fr/aides-regionales-appels-projets/projet-reussite-tous>

⁽¹⁴⁾ See <http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/cnml/garantie-jeunes-mesure-faveur-des-jeunes-difficulte-d%E2%80%99insertion-sera-mise-place-septembre>

The Rhône-Alpes and Île-de-France Regions have also adopted a Regional Plan to Combat Early leaving from VET and Departures without Qualifications ⁽¹⁵⁾.

➤ Support measures

The Picardie Region has opted to coordinate measures with the other actors and in particular the Education Authority. In this context, the Education Authority and the Region are about to start an experiment in Creil, Hirson and Amiens to prevent early leaving from VET and to support early leaving from VETs in a targeted process of training and professional education. In addition, the Amiens Academy has created a Public Interest Group to combat school dropout and early school leaving. The body, called “Open School”, is an initiative that the Amiens Academy has been running since 1998. With joint funding of €210,000 from the European Social Fund, Open School offers an activity programme – educational, cultural, sports, leisure – for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who live in rural or urban areas without extracurricular activities.

In Poitou-Charentes, under the aegis of the Region, the 14 local youth centres carried out a survey on the implementation of the national interprofessional agreement of 7 April 2011, which provides for increased support for young people with difficulties in obtaining employment, with the aim of improving their access to the labour market. This increased support reflects the partnership with the dropout support units to organise the fight against early leaving from VET. The survey describes the methods of the approach and presents the figures for January 2011 to March 2013. A few experiences of young people are also described.

➤ New schemes

In Franche-Comté, to give a second chance to its young early leaving from VETs, the Region is testing the “100 early leavers” scheme. This scheme offers a special approach for young people wanting to reinforce their grasp of the educational basics and to learn about different employment sectors. The aim is to find an alternative solution to the learning problems they encountered in their initial schooling.

⁽¹⁵⁾<http://deliberations.rhonealpes.fr/RecueilsPDF/2008/assembl%C3%A9epl%C3%A9ni%C3%A8re/23,%2024%20et%2025%20janvier%202008/d%C3%A9lib%C3%A9rations/01.dly.d%C3%A9crochage%20scolaire.PDF>

D. Conclusions

Noting the scattering of the measures taken against the early school leaving and the essential necessity of driving an age group until the success of the young people in the program of their studies, France put on its new law voted in July, 2013 on the refoundation of the school ⁽¹⁶⁾.

So, the law creates an obligation for the State to allow every pupil to study until have achieved of level Isced 3 (CAP Vocational Skills Certificate). “For the young people going out of the system without diploma, the law puts the principle of a *right for a deferred training* (droit à une formation différée). She reaffirms the necessity of strengthening the role of the Region as local authorities for the decisions of opening or closure of sections of vocational training, in the term of a real renewed dialogue between State and region”.

In 2012, Guillaume Balas had published a note on the early school leaving where he called up to a “regional piloting of the fight against this plague in the multiple origins” ⁽¹⁷⁾.

In a second study, he maintains the regional piloting. Because " what we have to build, it is the link between all the dimensions of a pupil: school, place of life, family, extraschool activities. The school cannot take sole responsibility for combating early leaving from VET. It is necessary to create relations between those who act in the school and those who work outside ".

But he widens his vision of the early school leaving. For him this phenomenon really questions the foundations of the school system. “The school of the Republic is thought as unique vector of transmission of a dominant knowledge, necessarily justifiable. Today to learn, there are other places than the school institution” ⁽¹⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Loi n° 2013-595 du 8 juillet 2013 d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'école de la République – <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr>

⁽¹⁷⁾ Lutter contre le décrochage scolaire : Vers une nouvelle action publique régionale – Guillaume Balas - 2012
<http://www.jean-jaures.org/Publications/Les-essais/Lutter-contre-le-decrochage-scolaire>

⁽¹⁸⁾ Lutter contre le décrochage scolaire pour atteindre une égalité réelle – Guillaume Balas - Note n° 179 - Fondation Jean-Jaurès - 20 juin 2013 <http://www.jean-jaures.org/index.php/content/download/17715/174060/version/1/file/Balas.pdf>