

VET supporting the qualification of migrants

07/12/2018  [Guidance](#), [Policy](#), [People and Skills](#)

Early leaving from education and training is understood at EU level as a failure to complete upper secondary education. Staying in school beyond lower secondary education, and thus fighting [early leaving from education and training](#), can ultimately help stimulate labour market participation, prevent poverty and promote social inclusion.

The Europe 2020 Strategy set the target of reducing the rates of early leavers to below 10% and progress towards this target is on course (there has been a consistent decline since 2008, and in 2017 the indicator stood at 10.6%, compared with 14.6% in 2008) [\[1\]](#). Despite the good progress, the EU average hides important disparities between different groups of people. Foreign-born students in the EU are more likely than their native-born peers to drop out of school early.

It is essential to ensure that support systems are in place to help foreign-born pupils succeed and remain in education and training. According to [Cedefop findings](#), vocational education and training (VET) is one key way to help tackle early leaving from education and training among different groups of young people.

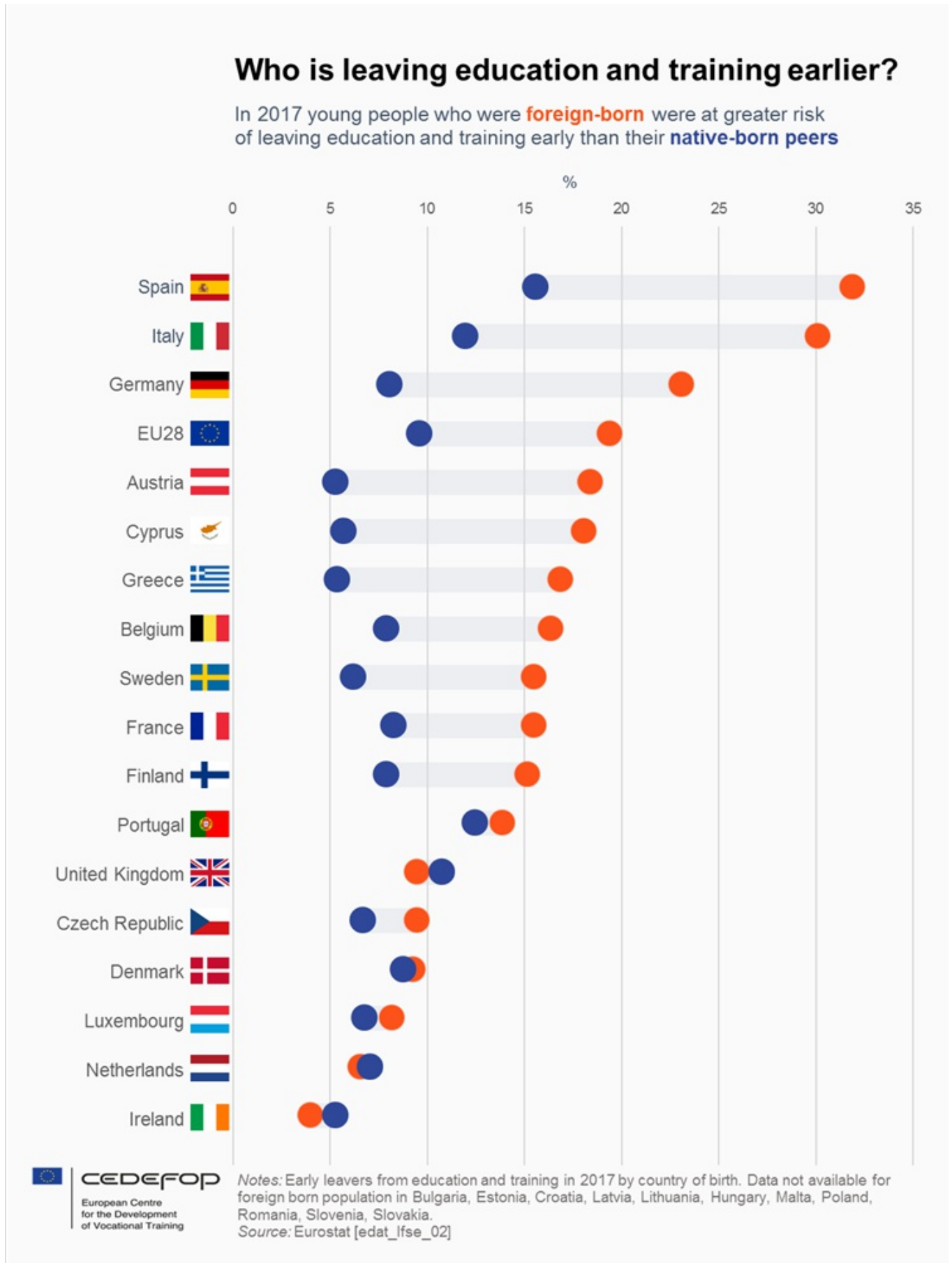
[Cedefop's VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) launched in 2017 offers a number of evidence-based approaches to identify students at risk and intervene in time to help them stay in education and training, which can be useful to increase education achievement among learners of migrant backgrounds.

Why are migrant students at a higher risk for leaving the education system early?

Students of migrant background are at a higher risk of leaving the education system early. [Eurostat data](#) shows that in 2017 there was a significant disparity between the rate of early leavers from education and training of native- and foreign-born students in the European Union: 9.6% and 19.3% respectively. There is variation, however, between Member States. In the Netherlands, Ireland and the UK native-born students have higher rates of early leaving from education and training than foreign-born students; however, the reverse is true for most other Member States.

It is important to note that there is no substantive difference in the rate of early leaving for foreign-born people coming from other EU countries (19.2%) and those coming from outside the EU (19.3%), and that both rates have decreased since 2008.

Figure 1 Early leavers in education and training in 2017 by country of birth



There are several reasons for the high rate of early leaving from education and training among foreign-born learners. In particular, children with a migrant background face challenges related to [2]:

- linguistic and cultural differences which may cause barriers for migrants to stay in school;
- lack of support from schools to help migrant students integrate; and
- the fact that foreign-born students are more likely than their native-born peers to attend schools with a larger share of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils.

This can create an environment where low educational expectations dominate [3]. Moreover, parents of migrant students may have a harder time supporting them as they themselves may be unfamiliar with the education system and the different opportunities available in the host Member State [4].

How can VET help in tackling early leaving from E&T?

Cedefop's [VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) proposes several evidence-based approaches which can be useful to help learners with a migrant background remain or reintegrate into education and training and qualify:

**VET toolkit
for tackling early leaving**
suggests effective ways
supporting retention
in education and training



Community involvement
Inclusive work-based learning environments
Tailored learning pathways
are some of the suggested
intervention approaches

- [Involving the entire community in the prevention of early leaving from education and training](#) Migrant community organisations can compensate for linguistic barriers and the lack of knowledge that families may have of the education systems by offering additional education support. In doing so, these organisations should themselves be well equipped with strong networks. This can help create greater cultural and social capital among migrant communities and help young migrant learners achieve higher qualifications by staying in education and training.
- [Fostering inclusive and supportive work-based learning environments](#) It is important to establish mechanisms to prevent discrimination at entry and during the development of work-based learning. The standardisation of application procedures for apprenticeships helps prevent discrimination against foreign-born young people. During the development of work-based learning, tutors or supervisors need to be alert to detect any discrimination situation as early as possible and act against it.
- [Tailoring learning pathways to young people's interests and learning styles](#) Young people at risk of leaving education early need individualised education responses. This involves the development of individual learning or career plans based on an initial assessment of the young person's profile and existing skills. Such skills assessment is even more relevant in the case of young people with irregular learning pathways, for instance, newly arrived refugee children who have been out of school for significant periods of time, or who may have received little formal schooling before arriving in the EU.

- **Validating non-formal and informal learning.** Validation has the potential to bring wide benefits to young people who have dropped out of education and training, including those at risk of early leaving. Finding opportunities to enable early leavers to identify and recognise all learning that happens outside of formal education can be significant. It can lead to a huge confidence-boost which is the first stepping stone towards a return to formal learning, finding a pathway to employment, or simply an understanding of their own competences and capabilities.

More information on Cedefop VET Toolkit for tackling early leaving can be found here: www.cedefop.europa.eu/TEL-toolkit

References

[1] European Commission (2018). Education and Training Monitor 2018

[2] OECD (2010). Reviews of Migrant Education - Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students: Policies, Practice and Performance

[3] European Commission - JRC Technical Reports (2018). Immigrant background and expected early school leaving in Europe: evidence from PISA

[4] Borgna, C. and Dalit C. (2014). Migrant Achievement Penalties in Western Europe: Do Educational Systems Matter? In *European Sociological Review* 30(5), pp. 670–683.

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