

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

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National strategy

In Denmark, two political documents address the problem with early leavers in specific education sectors.

The political agreement in the Danish parliament on [Better Paths to Education and Employment](#)

The parties behind the agreement agree that too many young people under the age of 25 years have no youth education and are not in education or employment. A new education, the preparatory basic education and training ([FGU](#)), should remedy this problem by reforming and simplifying the preparatory educations.

The objective of FGU is to provide young people with the knowledge, skills, clarification, and motivation needed in order to complete a youth education or to have unskilled employment. FGU should also contribute to the students' personal and social competences and citizenship education.

FGU establishes three entries to the preparatory basic education and training

1. General basic education: Education in fundamental subjects such as Danish language, mathematics, English, nature and science, etc. targeted at young people who want to qualify for further vocational education.

2. Basic production education: Workshop-based education with a high level of practical learning, targeted at young people who want to carry on to vocational education and training or the labour market on a more qualified basis.
3. Basic vocational education: Internship-based education

As part of the reform, cross-sectoral municipal youth guidance units were established. The units are responsible for education, social, and employment measures for young people below 25 years of age. The units offer guidance, outreach services, as well as follow-up work as the main focus areas in the preparatory basic education and training. Therefore, the student will receive a great amount of guidance – also when employed. As an example, due to personal or social reasons, young people may need support from a contact person in order to enrol on and complete an upper secondary education.

Targets in the agreement: At least 90% of 25-year-olds should complete a general or vocational upper secondary education and 10% should be in employment. Furthermore, the percentage of youth who is not in education or the labour market should be reduced by half by 2030.

Target group: Young people under the age of 25 years without an upper secondary education and who are not in education or employment.

The agreement was implemented in 2019, and the Ministry of Children and Education supervises and monitors the FGU education institutions. The monitoring consists of evaluating the quality of the teaching and of the economy and management of the FGU education institutions.

Read more about FGU in [section 6.1](#).

From Primary and Lower Secondary Education to Skilled Worker

In 2018, the political agreement ‘From Primary and lower secondary education to skilled worker – VET educations for the future’ ([art](#) was settled.

The agreement focuses on increasing the admission of students to VET programmes and reducing the drop-out rate in vocational education and training (VET) programmes. The 2018 reform can be seen as a continuation of the 2014 efforts to improve the Danish VET programmes. In 2014, [a reform of the VET programmes was implemented](#). The targets of the reform were that at least 25% of young people in 2020 should enrol on a VET programme after completion of lower secondary education, increasing to at least 30% in 2025. Furthermore, the completion rate should increase to at least 60% in 2020 and at least 67% in 2025.

According to the parties behind the agreement, the drop-out rate is too high. In order to reach the target, the parties behind the agreement agreed to initiate new measures.

Elements in the agreement relevant for reducing early leavers (list not complete):

- Establishment of a national programme for the selection of youth education. The programme should ensure that all students in lower secondary education are presented with a systematic, coordinated, and structured measure, where activities in relation to the transition to upper secondary as well as guidance are closely connected. The programme supports a new practice in the final years of compulsory education. The Ministry of Children and Education sets up a panel with the task of developing and evaluating measures and initiatives for the national programme.

- Students in lower secondary education must be assessed ready for all types of upper secondary education.
- More guidance and skills upgrading of study and career advisors.
- Activities in the 10th grade should to a larger extent prepare the students for VET programmes.
- Creating more attractive study environment.
- Increased the use of boarding facilities for students in sparsely populated areas.
- VET colleges must register students' absenteeism.
- VET colleges are monitored based on targets set by the reform in 2014, for instance drop-outs and well-being. New sanctions will be implemented and the monitoring will be of departments and single education programmes – not aggregated numbers for the VET college.

The Ministry of Children and Education is responsible for the reform.

Moreover, in November 2020, the Danish government, the Confederation of Danish Employers (DA), the Danish Trade Union Confederation (FH), Local Government Denmark (KL) and the Danish Regions (Danske Regioner) entered into a [tripartite agreement to reduce the drop-out rate in VET education programmes](#).

The aim of the agreement is to make it easier for VET students to find apprenticeships, because a third of VET drop-outs occur in the transition to the VET main course, where the education switches between apprenticeship and school-based training.

It is the VET student's own responsibility to find an enterprise and enter into an apprenticeship agreement. The tripartite agreement introduces a new division of responsibility so that VET education institutions are responsible for finding apprenticeships for students who are unable to find apprenticeships themselves.

The agreement establishes an 80% target, which implies that 80% of VET students must have an apprenticeship agreement by the end of the VET basic course.

The local trade committees at the local VET education institutions are involved in finding apprenticeships.

In 2021, DKK 141 million has been allocated to the apprenticeship-supporting measure, and from 2022 and onwards DKK 139 million has been allocated.

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET (early leaving from education and training)

According to the Consolidation act on Municipal Provision for young people under 25 years (lov om kommunal indsats for unge under 25 år, [Lbk nr 1301 af 04/09/2020](#)), a range of general measures are established in the formal education system aimed at preparing, informing, and supporting the young person in the transition to an upper secondary education until the completion of the upper secondary education programme. The measures include elements such as guidance, support, and cooperation between education institutions.

A municipal youth guidance unit has the responsibility for the coordination of measures aimed at young people in the municipality. The municipal council has the responsibility to establish a coherent municipal youth measure targeting young people under 25 years of age that aims to support the young person in completing an upper secondary education or being employed. The municipal youth guidance unit's responsibility regarding young people below 25 years of age consists of:

- The formulation of a personal education plan aimed at embedding the young person in education, training, or employment.
- Guidance.
- A continuing follow-up of young people.
- Outreach measures targeted at young people under 25 years of age without upper secondary education.
- Municipal job centres' tasks in relation to young people under 25 years of age.
- The arranging of a contact person for the young person, when the youth unit estimates that the young person is in need of support in order to complete a youth education or be in education.

The guidance must contribute to the reduction in the number of dropouts and changes of education. All young people in the 9th and 10th grade must go through an assessment of their readiness for upper secondary education. The assessment is mandatory for the four general upper secondary educations and for all the VET programmes. When a young person is assessed as not being ready for upper secondary education, the municipal council and the principal initiate a targeted guidance and education plan in order for the young person to become ready for further education.

The education institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Children and Education must cooperate with the municipal council, and if necessary the Study and Career Guidance Denmark ([Studievalg Danmark](#)). The cooperation implies that education institutions are obliged to inform the municipal council when young people under the age of 25 without upper secondary education enrol on, discontinue, or complete an education. When the education institution estimates that the young person is in risk of discontinuing a study programme, the municipal council must be notified.

Furthermore, the providers of upper secondary education programmes are obliged to inform primary and lower secondary education institutions ([folkeskole](#)), providers of the 10th form, providers of preparatory basic education and training ([FGU](#)), and the municipal council about the general competences necessary for benefiting from the education. The information should help the education institutions to evaluate their guidance measures and their transition activities.

General upper secondary education

As an integrated part of the three-month basic programme, students in general upper secondary education are obliged to complete an evaluating conversation with a teacher and, if necessary, a study adviser. The conversation should help the student in clarifying the choice of study programme. In connection with the evaluating conversation, it is possible to discuss whether the student has made the right choice of education. One of the objectives of the conversation is to reduce school dropout.

On the two-year [HF](#) programme, students' academic benefit of the education is evaluated continuously, and at the end of the first semester the students' development of competences in Danish, English, and mathematics is established. The evaluation of competence development constitutes the basis for further choice of subjects and cluster of subjects.

Vocational training and education (VET) programmes

The ministerial order on VET programmes (Bekendtgørelse om erhvervsuddannelser, [LBK nr 1619 af 27/12/2019](#)) establishes several requirements for the development of the quality of the education programmes. VET institutions must develop a quality assurance system for the internal development of the school-based teaching. The quality assurance system should consist of procedures for self-assessment and procedures for the collection of data.

Furthermore, the procedures for the collection of data should ensure that the VET institution is able to document its results, for instance regarding the reduction of dropouts. The documentation should also be part of the VET institution's self-assessment.

The procedures for the collection of data should:

- clarify how the teaching and the chosen working methods support the education programme's objective and targets.
- include a statement of completion and dropouts.

Every year, the Ministry of Children and Education monitors the results from all self-assessments from the VET institutions according to four targets for the development of the VET programmes. The four [VET targets](#) are:

- More young people should enrol in VET programmes directly after completion of lower secondary education.
- More people should complete a VET programme.
- VET programmes should challenge all students in order to make them as skilful as possible.
- The confidence in and the satisfaction at VET programmes must be improved.

VET institutions with bad performance are offered counselling from the Ministry of Children and Education's educational advisers. A small number of schools are selected for further monitoring, which includes a monitoring visit from the ministry where the school has formulated a follow-up plan to improve the development of the school's performance regarding dropout rates.

In order to retain students in VET programmes, the ministerial order on VET programmes obliges VET institutions to have mentors or contact teachers at the disposal of students in need of counselling and support. Furthermore, VET institutions must offer students social, personal, or psychological counselling. Finally, VET institutions must offer support and counselling subject-related reading for students who need to improve their reading ability in order to complete a VET programme. The VET institutions establish the framework for the counselling activities. A student at risk of dropping out due to academic or personal reasons may be accepted at a [boarding facility for students](#) if the VET institution believe the stay will significantly improve the student's chance of completing the education.

The target group for the new preparatory basic education programme, [FGU](#), are all young people under the age of 25 years without an upper secondary education and who are not in education or employment. The objective of the FGU is to make a coherent preparatory programme in order to support young people to continue in education, training, or employment after the completion of lower secondary education.

Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

After finishing compulsory education (primary and lower secondary education), some young people find that the gap to continuing education is insurmountable. Several education offers target this group of young people.

Private, non-formal, preparatory vocational education and training (Frie fagskoler):

The schools offer practical and vocational teaching combined with general education to young people who have completed compulsory education. The objective of the teaching is to prepare the young person for further education. The teaching focuses on:

- Enlightenment (livsoplysning)
- Non-formal general adult education ([folkeoplysning](#))
- Citizenship education

The schools may also offer the 10th grade, which means that young people can take the leaving examination of the primary and lower secondary school (folkeskole). The schools are boarding schools and the students live at the school.

Continuation school ([efterskole](#)):

Continuation schools target young people in the 8th, 9th, and 10th grade and offer general education and special subject areas such as sports or music. There are three different types of continuation school:

- General continuation schools
- Continuation schools for young people with dyslexia
- Continuation schools for young people with special needs

Furthermore, continuation schools focus on:

- Enlightenment (livsoplysning)
- Non-formal general adult education ([folkeoplysning](#))
- Citizenship education

Lastly, continuation schools are schools with a specific approach to teaching and a strong set of values, for instance pedagogic or religious. When students have not finished compulsory education, the education must measure up to the education provided in the municipal lower secondary education. Students enrolled at a continuation school in the 10th grade are entitled to take the leaving examination of the primary and lower secondary school.

Continuations schools can choose not to hold the leaving examination.

Folk High Schools ([højskoler](#))

Over time, the Danish folk high school association has managed several programmes with public funding aimed at young people without a youth education:

- [Mentoring programme 2007–2009](#): The mentoring programme was developed by the Danish Folk High School Association with funding from the Ministry of Education's rate adjustment pool (satspulje) in 2007–2009. The programme was evaluated in 2009 by the Danish School of Education (DPU). The [evaluation of the mentoring programme](#) showed that the students participating in the programme experience increased knowledge about education and the labour market, perceive themselves as being able to act, and experience a sense of personal growth.
- [STAR project 2008–2015](#): A bridge-building programme where young people without a youth education were prepared to enrol in an ordinary education programme. The evaluation of the programme shows that 55% of the participants experienced that they were more motivated to complete a youth education than before the programme, and 51% were in education or awaiting the commencement of their study.
- [Combination project 2008–2013](#): An education programme combining a stay at a folk high school and a vocational education targeting young people in the 16–25-year age group in risk of dropping out or without the qualifications to begin a youth education. The final evaluation of the programme shows that 78.6% of the young people who had participated in the programme were in education, employment, or had completed a youth education in 2013.

Folk high schools offer preparatory courses for young people without a youth education:

- Folk high schools can be an integrated part of the [EGU](#) education programme, which is a two-year, individually planned, practical education programme aimed at young people below the age of 30 who are not in education, employment, or training and who do not have the qualifications to enrol in ordinary youth educations.
- Alternative to [FGU](#): Municipalities are obliged to consider FGU for all young people below 25 years old without youth education or employment in the municipality. Some young people will benefit more from a stay at a folk high school, production school, municipal youth schools, or other non-formal learning offers.
- Folk high schools offer a mentoring programme for young people without a youth education in the 17.5–25-year age group.
- Intensive learning courses: The Danish High School Association has received funding from the rate adjustment pool to develop a three-week intensive learning course at a folk high school. The target group is young people in the 16–25-year age group without a youth education or the qualifications to enrol in an ordinary education. The purpose of the programme is to prepare the young person for an admission test at a youth education institution.
- Two folk high schools are targeting young people in the 16–19-year age group.

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

Youth database

The National Agency for IT and Learning is responsible for a youth database (Ungedatabasen) containing information on young people's education and employment status: admission, risk of dropping out, completion or discontinuation of studies, whether the young person has an instruction to begin education, the level of

completed education, education and employment targets, etc.

The information in the database is used to organise the municipal youth guidance units including the preparation of personal education plans or instructions to begin education (uddannelsespålæg). Data from several authorities ensures a cross-sectoral cooperation regarding ELET and ensures that municipalities and education institutions can initiate the proper measure for the young people.

Municipal councils, education institutions, and other public authorities are obliged to report to the database any education, training or employment activity for all young people in the 15-29 year age group without an upper secondary or higher education.

Furthermore, with the new preparatory basic education and training programme ([FGU](#)), a reform of the municipal measures has been implemented. The new municipal youth guidance units ([kommunal ungeindsats](#)) will be in charge of a unifying and coherent cross-sectoral measure that coordinates educational, social and employment initiatives. The tasks cover guidance, assessment of readiness for a youth education, arrangement of internship and outreach measures aimed at young people below 25 years. For a more detailed description of the municipal responsibility, see [section 6.6](#).

Furthermore, the municipal youth guidance units are responsible for measures previously managed in municipal job centres. The measures are linked to the Act on Active Employment Measures (Lov om aktiv beskæftigelsesindsats, [lov nr 548 af 17/05/2019](#)), which obliges young people below the age of 30 on social assistance without an education leading to a vocational/professional qualification to participate in an offer, for instance a traineeship, after one month of unemployment.

This is the Danish implementation of the youth guarantee.

Furthermore, the individual FGU education institutions are obliged to enter into a close cooperation with the local community, including local associational and business life. FGU education institutions are obliged to pay attention to and cooperate with relevant authorities when there are signs of radicalisation.