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**Early school leavers returning to
education: perspectives from the
UK and Finland**

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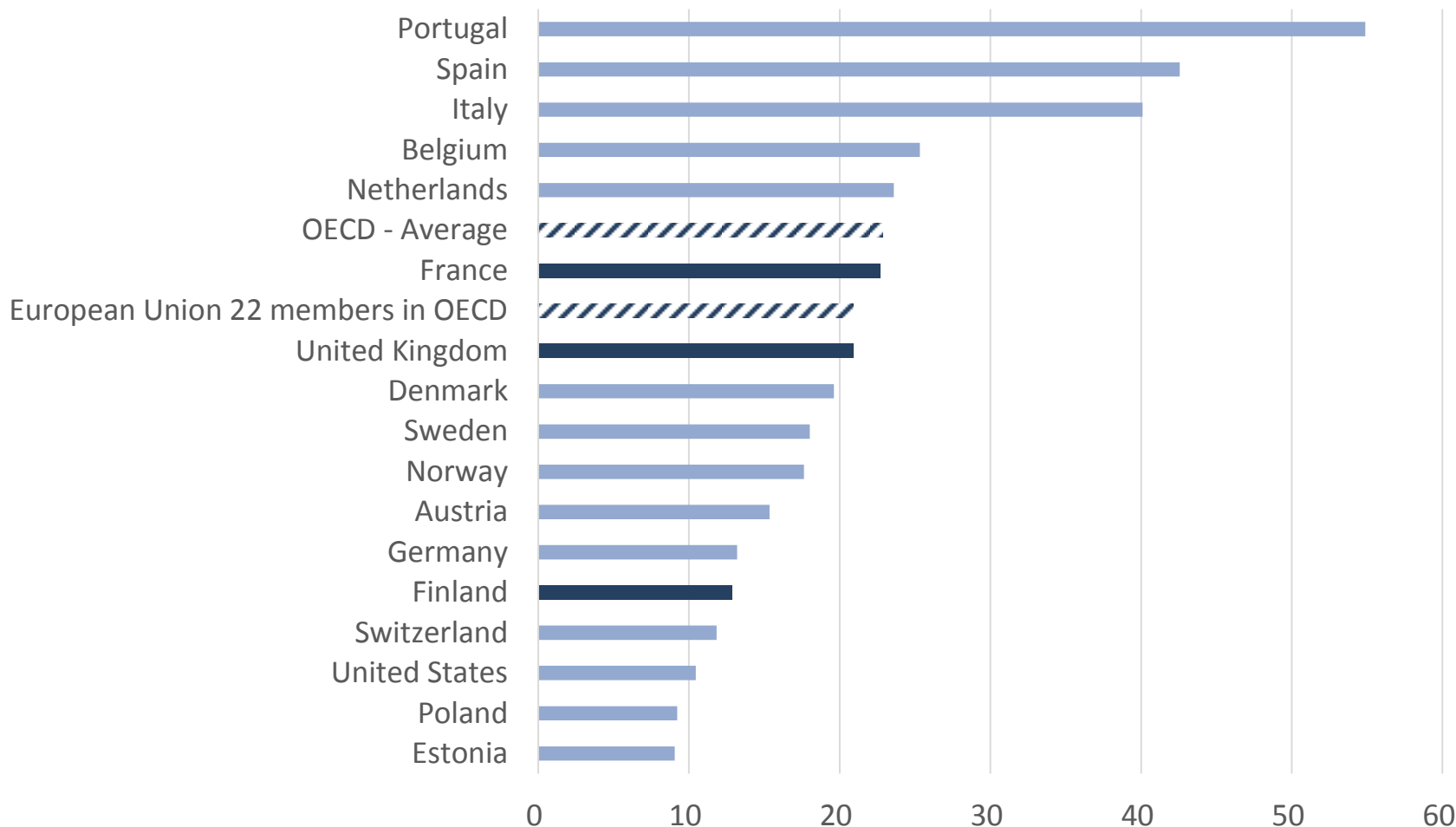
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Background

- Finland and the UK
 - Comprehensive education systems until the age of 16
 - Vocational and academic options at the upper secondary level
 - Upper secondary in UK two years, three years in Finland
 - Education systems at upper secondary and tertiary levels are relatively open (switching/re-entering possible)
- Cross-national comparison of early school leavers
 - In the OECD as a whole, slightly less than 25% of people aged 25-34 years old have left school without obtaining an upper secondary school qualification
 - France and the UK are also near this proportion (with 23% and 21% respectively).
 - Finland has a substantially lower proportion of low qualified individuals in this age group: only 13 %



Early school leavers in selected countries



Percentage of 25–34 year-olds with less than upper secondary education (Source: OECD 2016)

Early school leavers in the UK

- Statistical analysis of early school leavers and their participation in education when they are aged 17–30
- Outcomes analysed:
 - Enrolling in further formal education
 - Earning an upper secondary qualification (i.e. no longer falling into the category of “early school leaver”)
 - Participating in training (i.e. non-formal learning)
- Analysis based on British Household Panel Study (1999–2010)

Descriptive results

- In our sample:
 - 39% enroll in education (14% of relevant yearly observations)
 - 18% gain a qualification at the upper secondary level
 - 19% take part in training (8% of yearly observations)
- These are likely to be slight underestimates of the true population averages due to the fact that not all are followed until age 30

Summary of modeling results

- The lower the qualifications that young people left education with, the less likely they are to participate
 - Largest difference for enrolment in further formal education
- Young people with higher social origins are more likely to take up learning opportunities – but not to exit the ESL category
- Those who are employed are the most likely to begin training courses
- The probability of enrolling in formal education reduces as individuals age
- Gender, having children, ethnicity and migrant status do not seem to be important factors

Early school leavers in Finland

- Statistical analysis of early school leavers and their participation in education when they are aged 17–26
- Analysis based on linked administrative register data of compulsory school leavers in 2000–2002 followed for 10 years

➤ Who are the early school leavers in Finland?

	Total	Parental educ.			Gender		Immigrant origin		
		Pri	Sec	Ter	M	F	Maj	Mix	Im
On-time qual.	76	59	71	84	74	78	77	66	53
Delayed qual. (no dropout)	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3
Direct dropout	8	16	10	5	8	9	8	14	19
Later dropout	13	22	16	9	17	10	13	18	25

➤ Do they return and complete a qualification?

	Total	Parental educ.			Gender		Immigrant origin		
		Pri	Sec	Ter	M	F	Maj	Mix	Im
Returners	75	67	73	83	70	82	75	75	73
Complete qual.	56	43	54	65	52	61	57	50	47

Also, returning and completing a qualification is more probable among those who did not continue directly after comprehensive school compared to those who dropped out from upper secondary education after having started it

Policy responses in the UK

- It is mandatory for young people to attend some sort of education until they are 18 years old
 - Young people aged 16–18 who have left school are therefore obliged to participate in education or training at least part-time
- There has been a large push by the government to reduce the number of NEETs by increasing apprenticeship places
 - The aim is to introduce 3 million new apprenticeship places between 2016–2020

Policy responses in Finland

- There are enough places in upper secondary education in Finland so that every young person may attend
- Youth Guarantee (linked to the European Commission's programme of the same name)
 - With regard to early school leavers, the main strategy is to ensure that these young people receive guidance in a timely manner and that they are supported and given flexible ways of completing education, for example educational programmes that include more on-the-job experience
- Educational programmes that prepare students for upper secondary studies
 - Preparatory training for vocational education aims to both guide students in their choice of field as well as to give them relevant study skills
 - Relevant both for people who never entered upper secondary education and for those who have dropped out of upper secondary education
 - Flexible and oriented towards the needs of individual students

Non-governmental interventions

- Range of not-for-profit companies and other organisations in both countries offering different forms of consultation and programmes
- For example, the Movement to Work (UK)
 - Network of employers that provide work placements for young unemployed people with the aim of turning these short-term work placements into either longer-term employment or further education and training, including apprenticeships

Concluding thoughts

- Social inequalities in who re-enrolls in education and who gains a qualification at upper secondary level
 - In particular in terms of social origin
 - In Finland also in terms of gender and migrant status
 - When designing interventions, important to address these kinds of inequalities
- Important to assess the effectiveness of interventions (follow-up, comparison group)

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