

Early school leavers and labour markets: The Portuguese case in European context



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Early school leaving (ESL) can be seen both as a educational and a social problem, but not necessarily a social deviation phenomenon.

The majority of cases of early school leavers are preceded of cumulative school failure, but we must consider that failure is sometimes an anticipation and a non-explicit decision of future dropout.

In some cases ESL can be seen as a rational choice between one more year of cumulative school failure and a opportunity to enter the labour market and obtain a income, even if it is the case of unskilled labour and a low remuneration job.

The problem may be formulated as the difference between a perceived short term rational choice and a unperceived long term irrational option.

What supports this difference is the social value of education and the social perception of the return of education.

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Portugal:
one of the highest rates of early school leavers in Europe

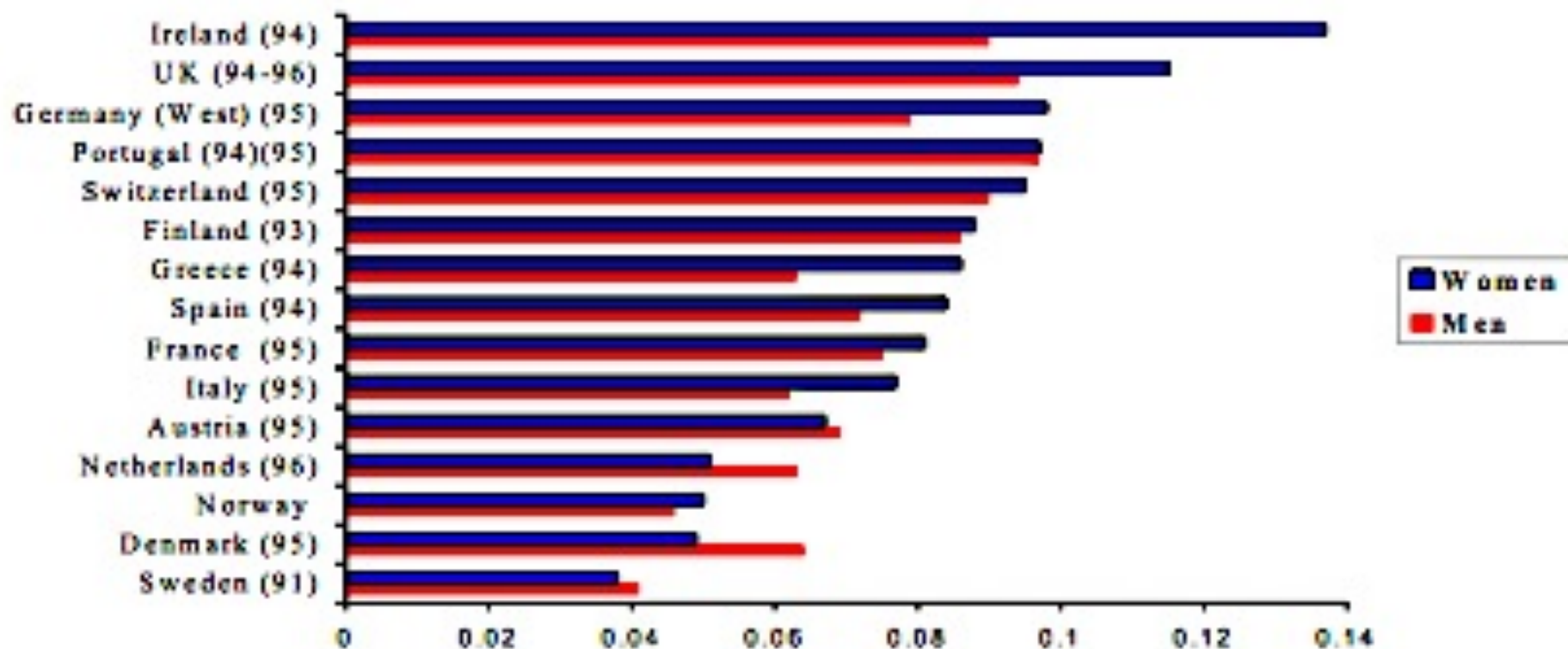


Source: Eurostat (LFS).

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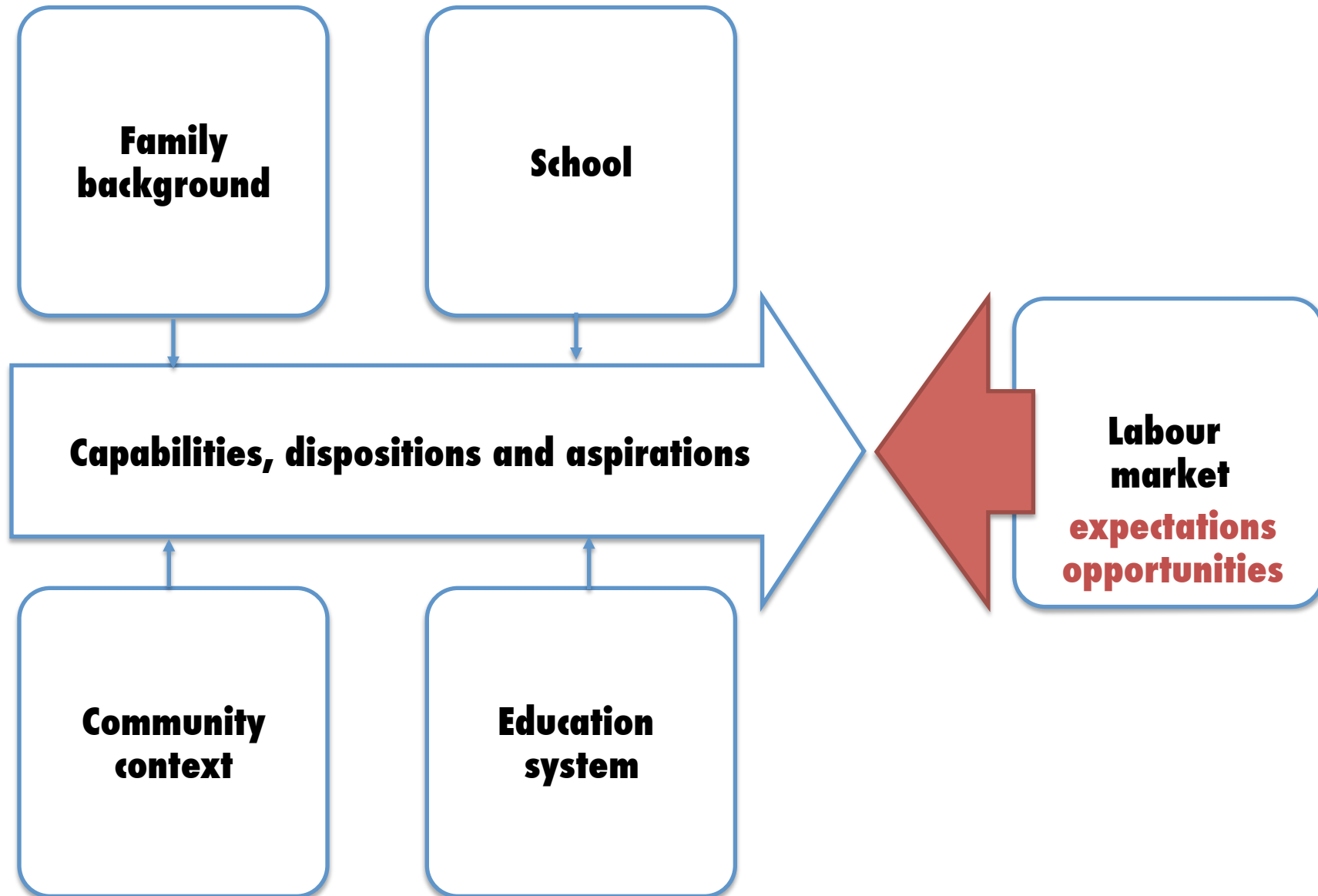
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Portugal: ... but one of the highest returns of education!



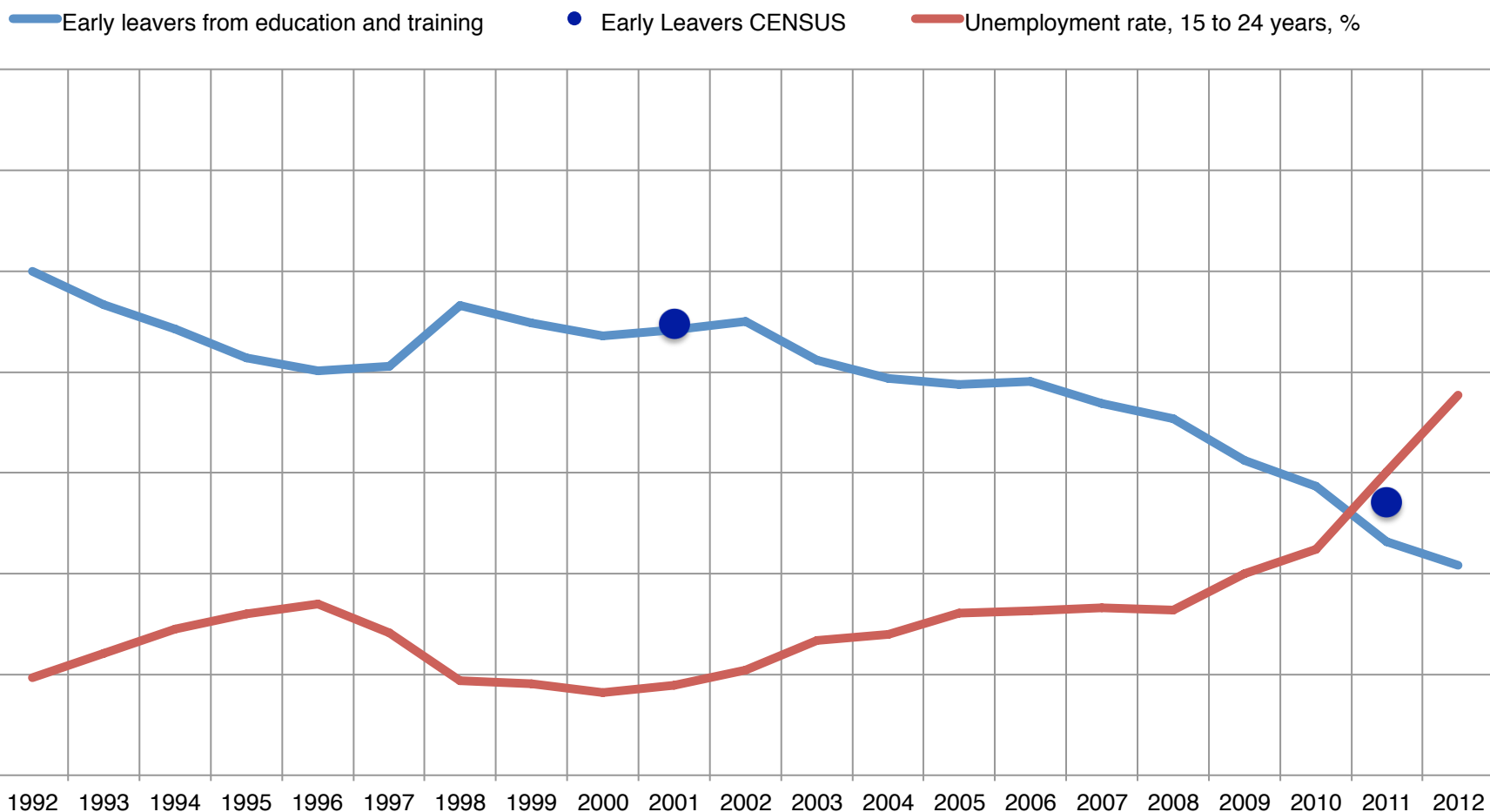
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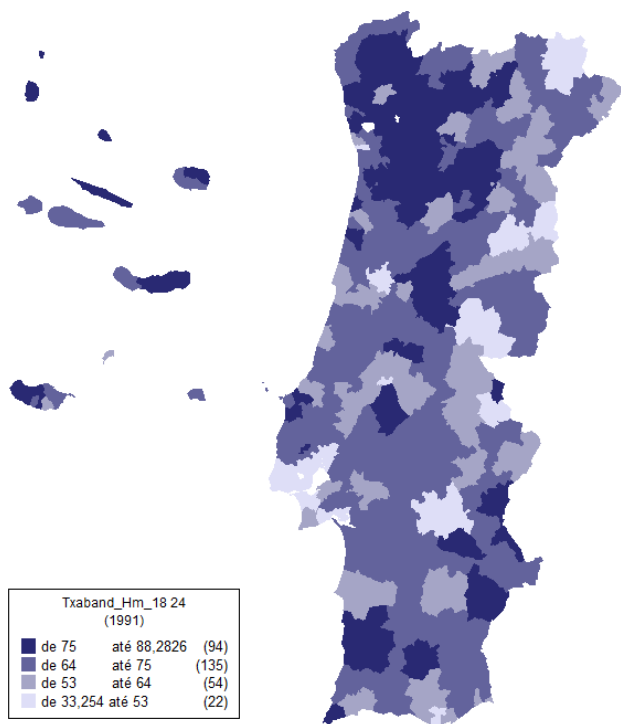
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PORTUGAL Early school leavers and unemployment 15-24 1992-2012

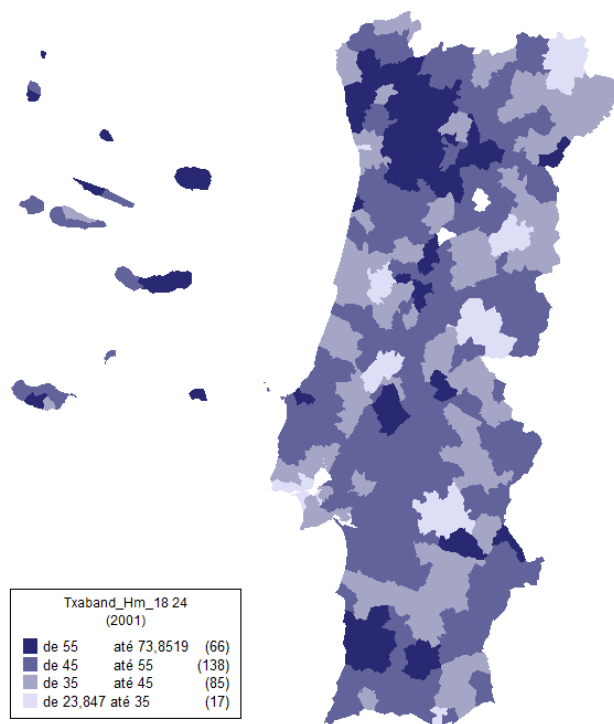


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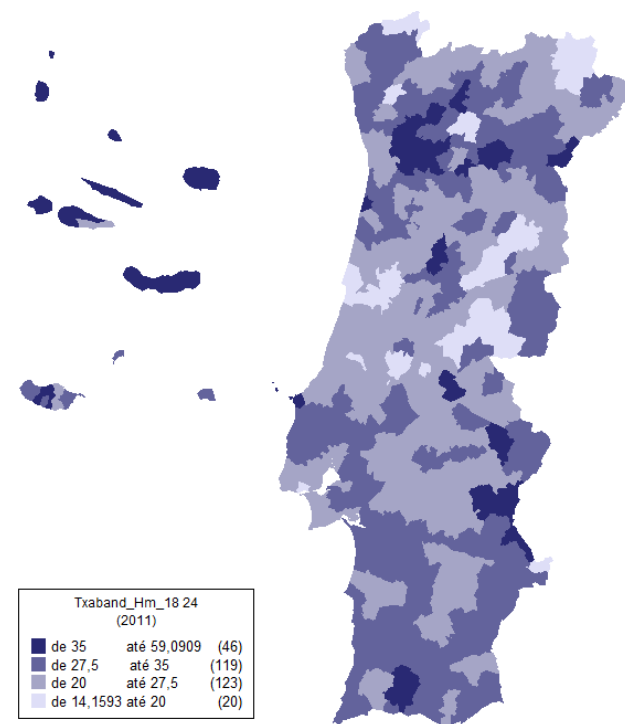
1991



2001

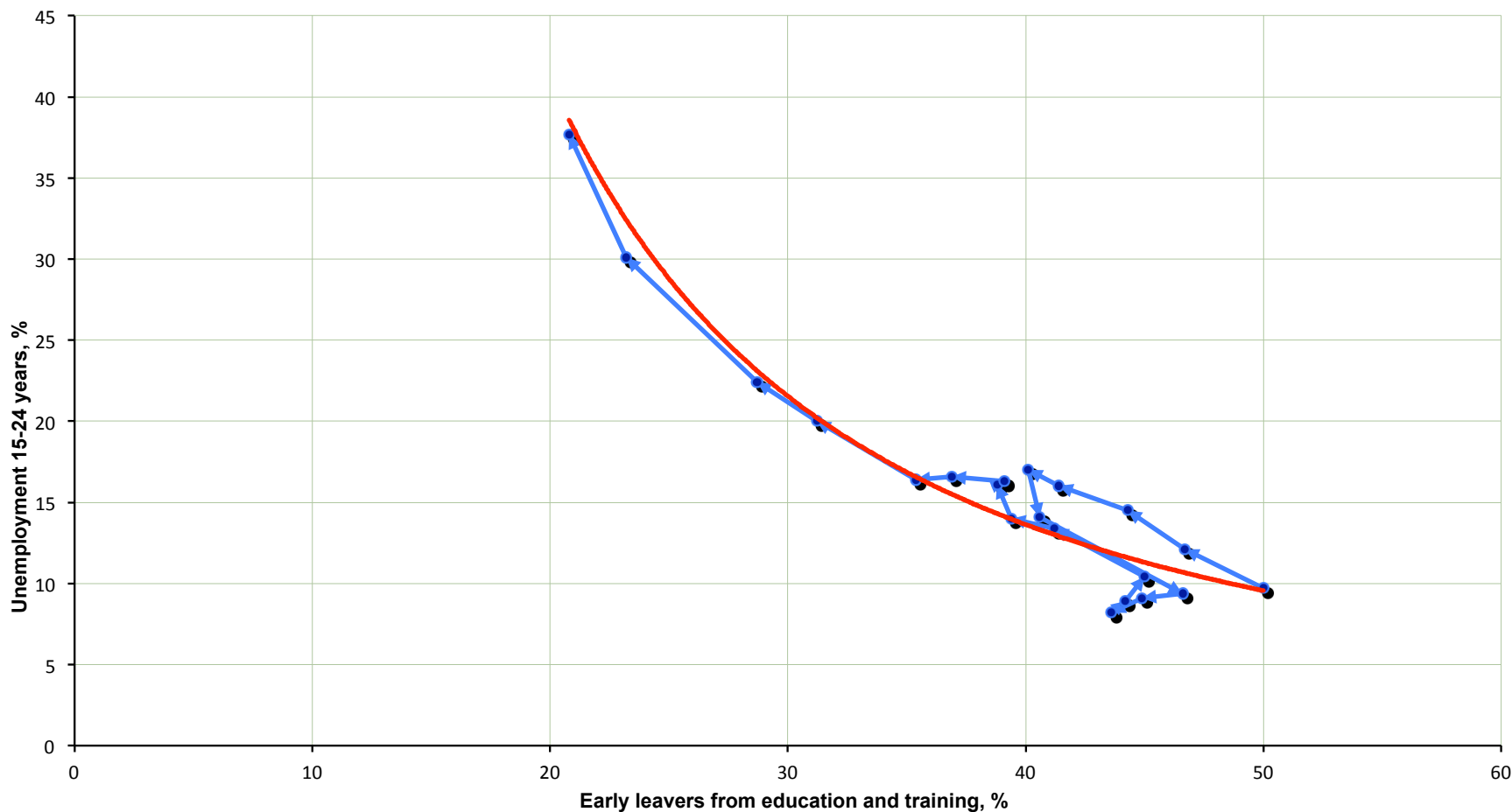


2011



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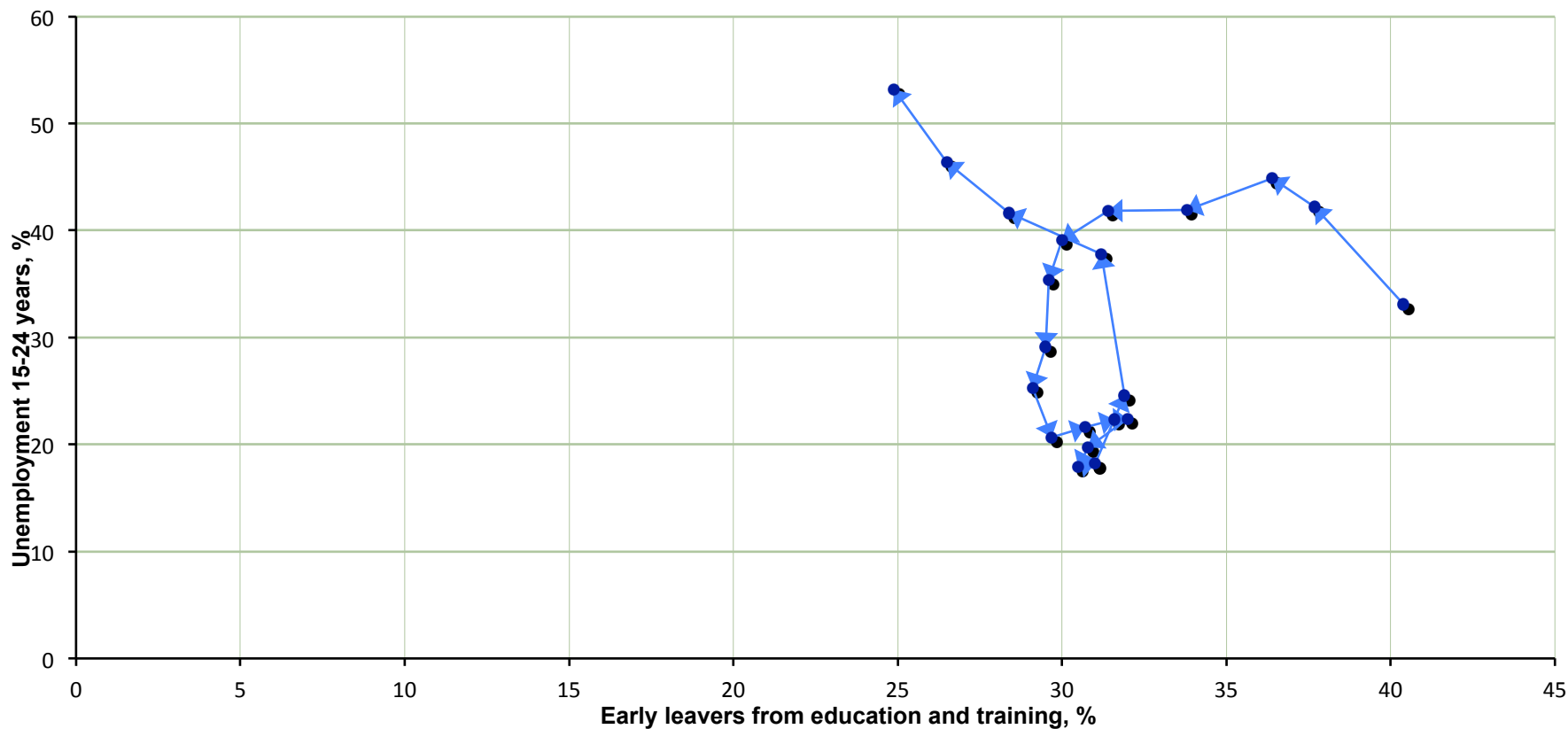
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SPAIN

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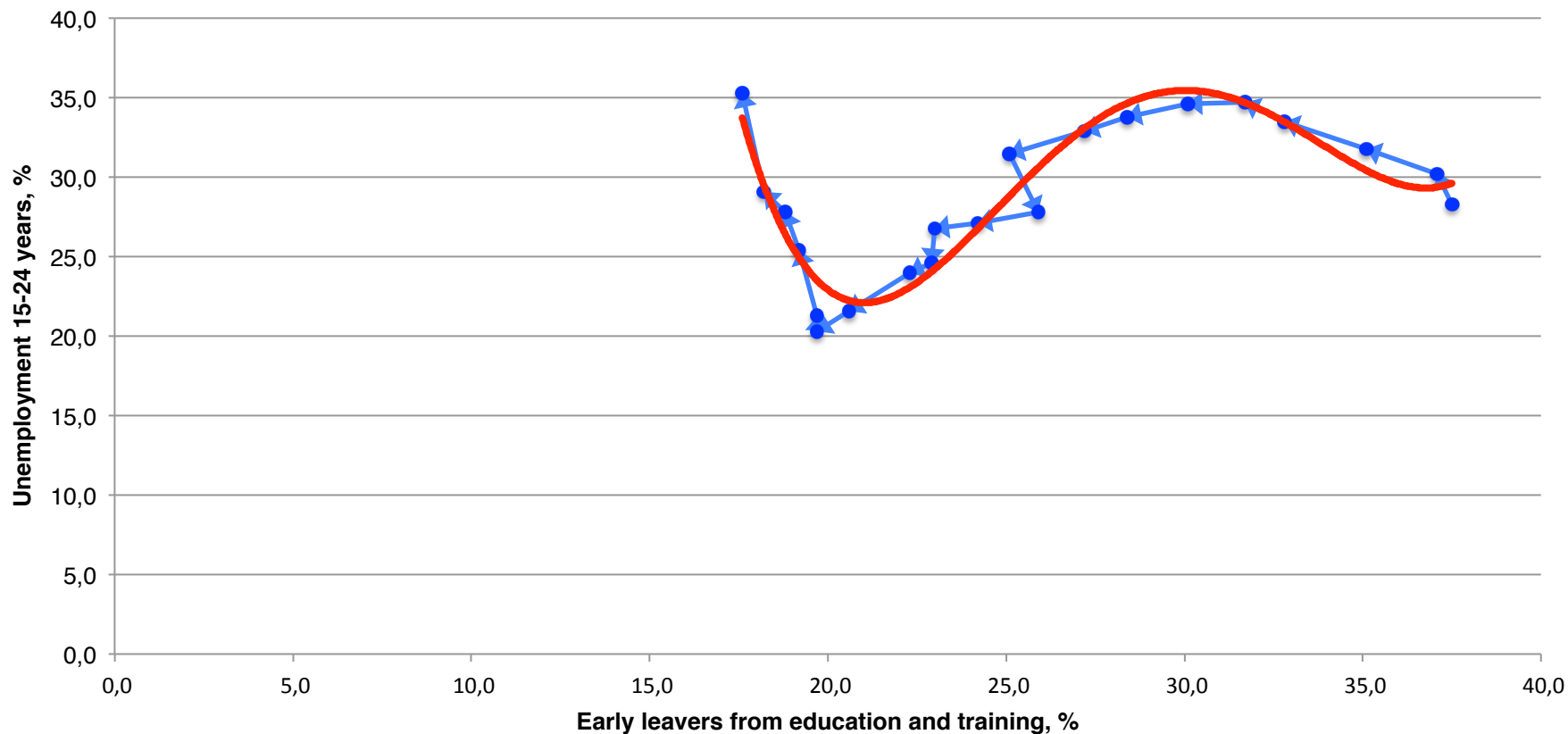
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ITALY

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1992-2012



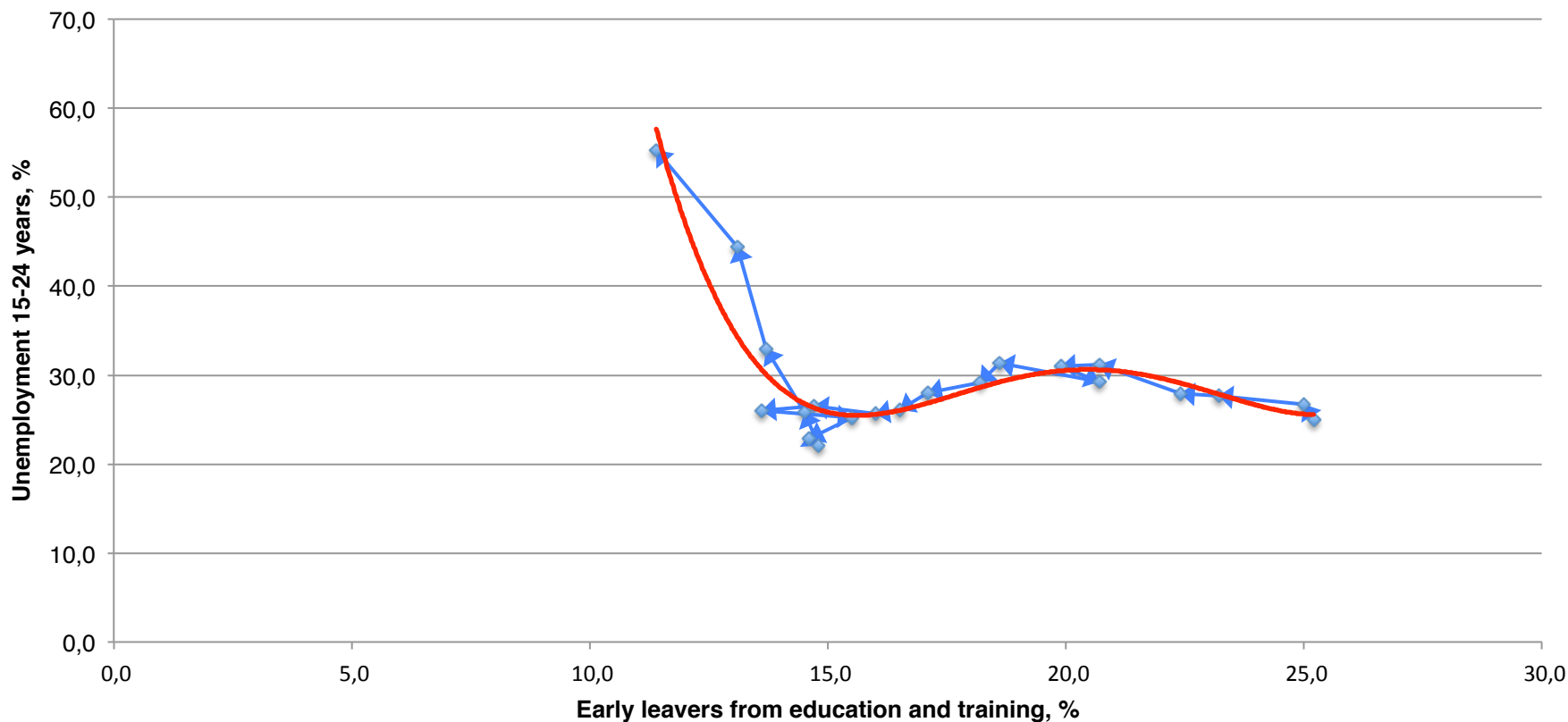
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GREECE

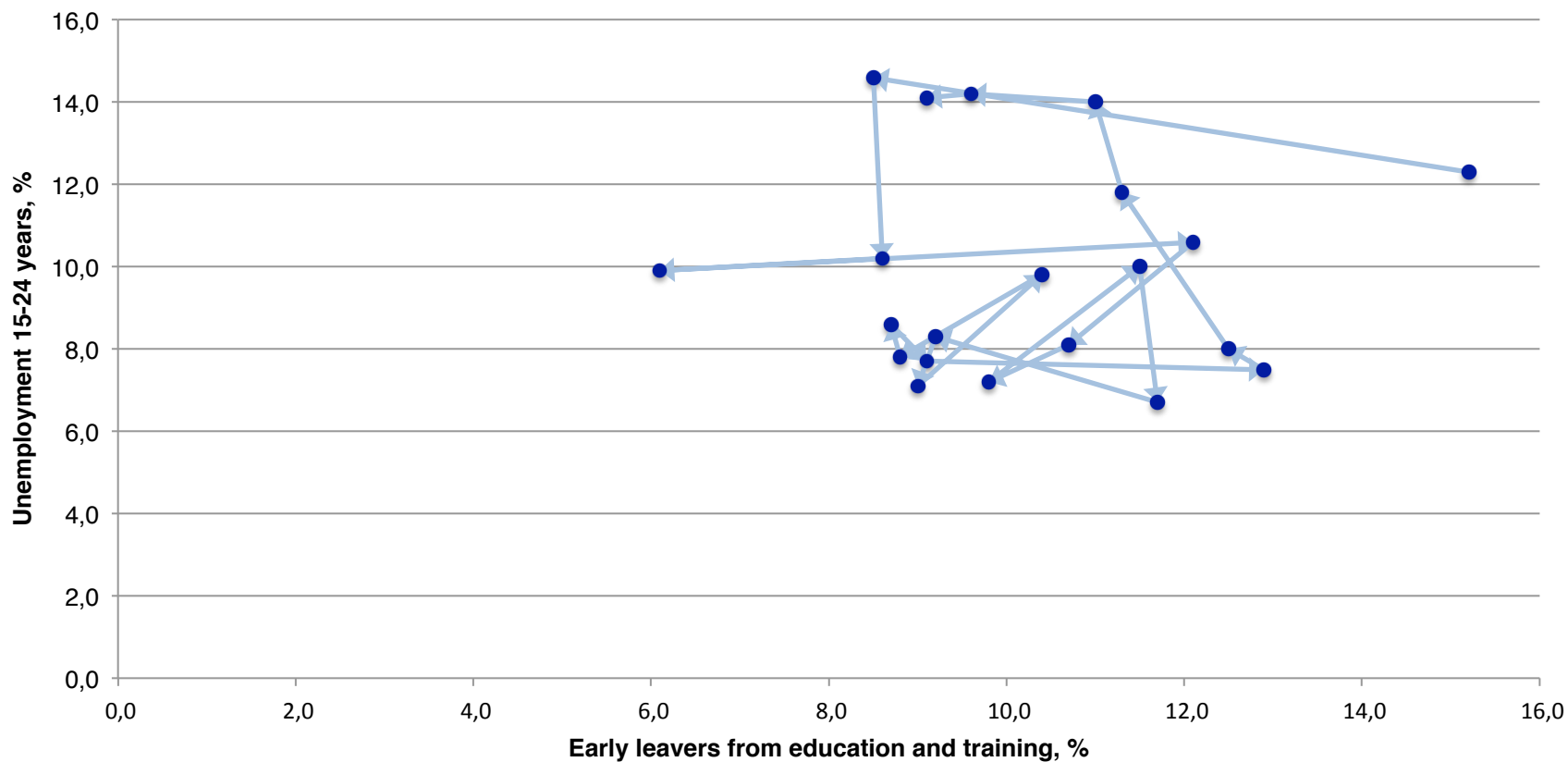
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1992-2012



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DENMARK Early school leavers and unemployment 15-24 1992-2012



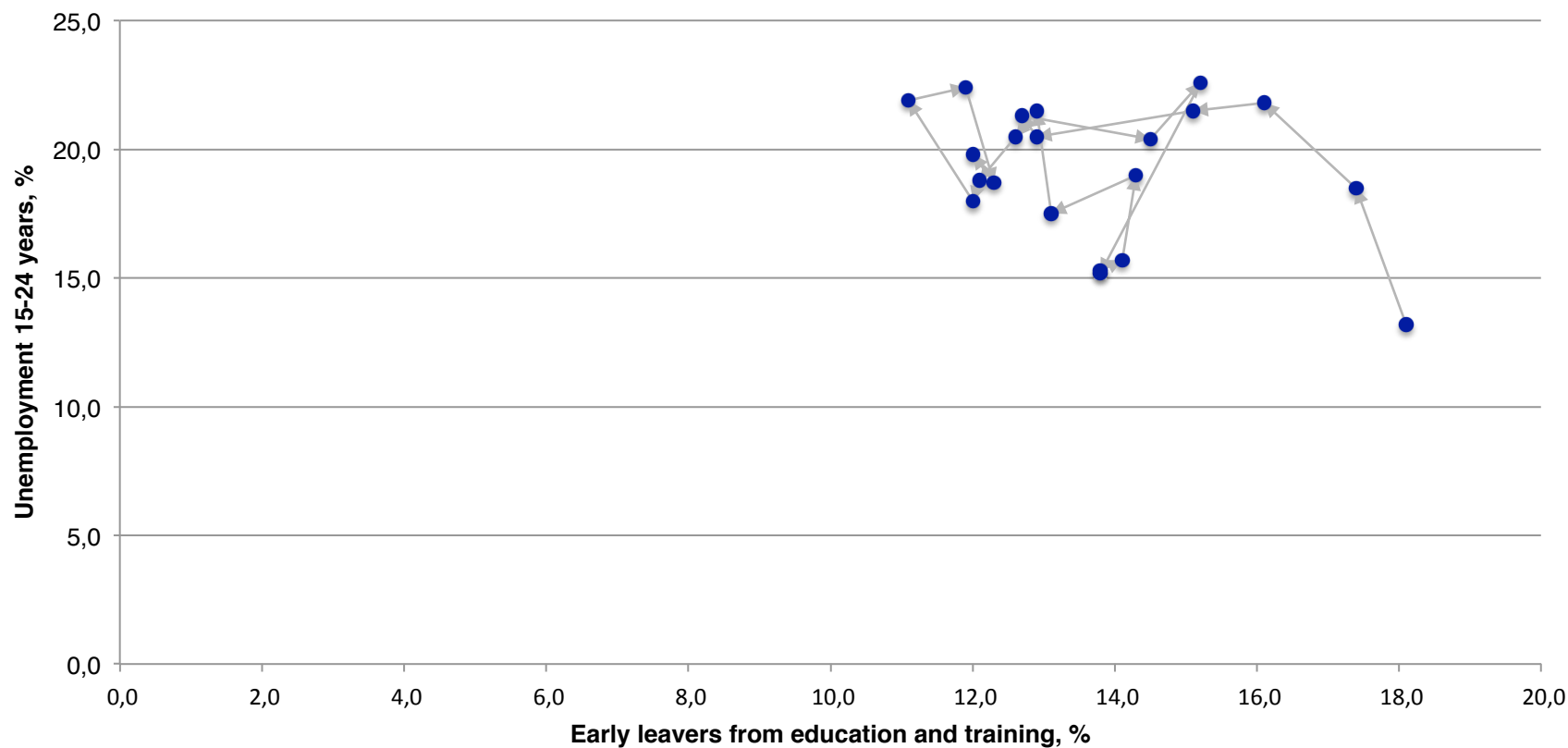
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BELGIUM

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1992-2012



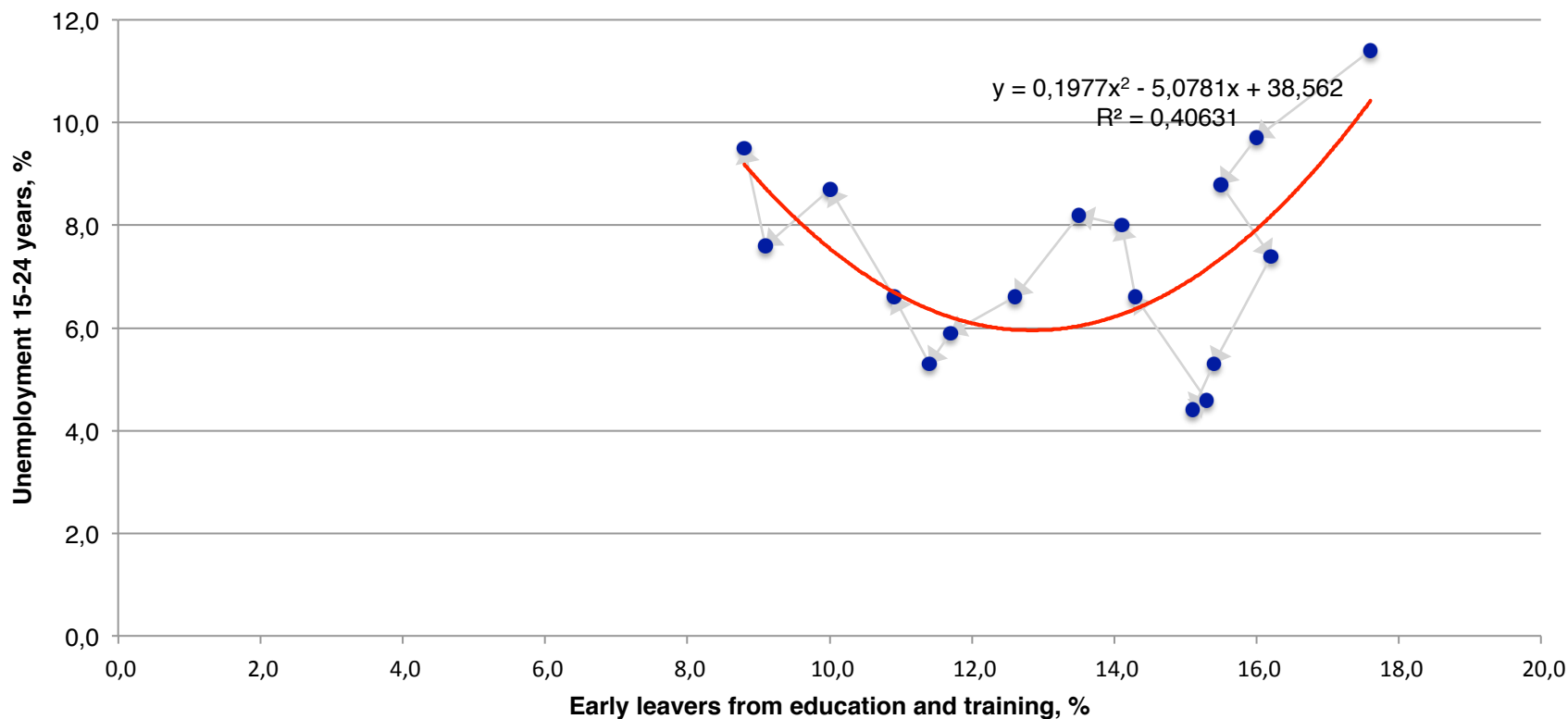
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NETHERLANDS

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1992-2012



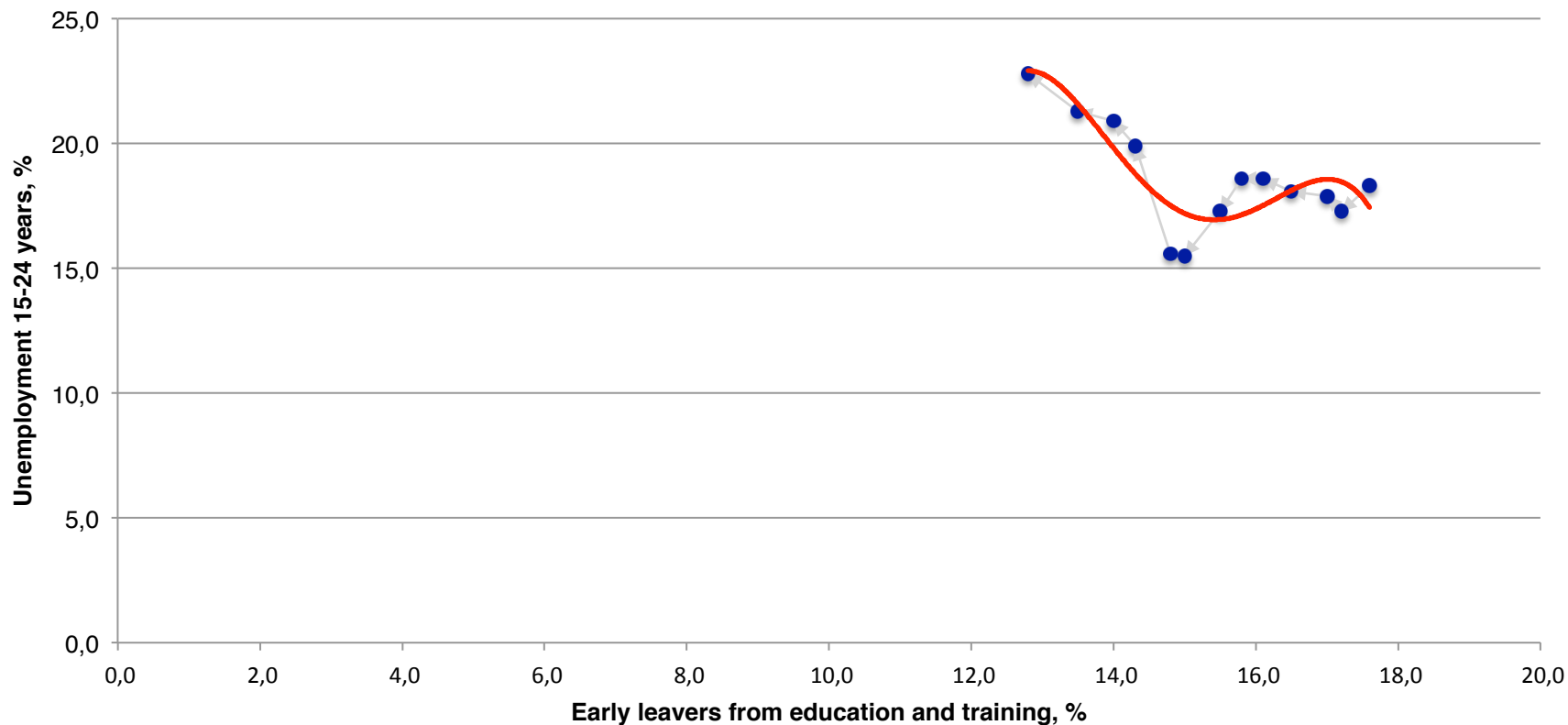
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EUROPEAN UNION 27

Early school leavers and unemployment 15-24

2000-2012



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Early school leaving (ESL) is a complex phenomenon that demands multifactorial approach.

Different societies tends to combine diversely the main factors, suggesting different strategies from public policies.

We can polarize the diverse factors into two main views of the problem:

1. The social background approach valuating family, school and community targets.
2. The social expectations and opportunities mainly generated by labour market.

Both are complementary, but the second tends to be easier and make policy measures more efficient, regulating transition process from school to work.