

Education and training in the EU: where do we stand?

The Education and Training Monitor

The Education and Training Monitor is the European Commission's annual flagship publication on the state of play in education in the EU. The Monitor reports on the EU-level targets that are part of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021 – 2030). It also provides an overview of Member States' key challenges and analyses recent policy developments in the form of country profiles. The Monitor focuses each year on a 'lead theme'. This year's tenth edition of the Monitor addresses the topic of well-being in education.

This year's focus: education and well-being

The concept of well-being covers both mental and physical health and is closely connected to students' performance at school and in other aspects of their lives. The life satisfaction of students and their psychological coping mechanisms are crucial for lifelong learning, and for individuals to lead meaningful lives. They lay the foundations for self-awareness, building relationships and forming resilience. They enable individuals to adjust and to overcome personal adversity, long-term life challenges and societal shocks.

Most countries address well-being partially or implicitly in their education policies and practices. Competences related to mental health are generally incorporated in the curricula of specific subjects or as cross-cutting issues. The majority of Member States implement targeted programmes to tackle bullying and violence. A number of initiatives are focused on physical activity and healthy lifestyle, discrimination and racism, mental health, school climate and equal opportunities. A few Member States have taken steps towards a comprehensive approach on well-being in education. These include concepts and policy objectives linked to well-being, data collection and monitoring on the well-being of students and concrete requirements and guidance on the implementation of well-being policies at the institutional level.

How are educational systems performing against the EU-level 2030 education targets?

The 2021 edition is the first one to assess EU's progress towards the new, more ambitious set of EU-level targets for 2030.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

The latest available data from 2019 puts the share of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education at 92.8% in the EU, with at least six Member States reaching or surpassing the EU-level target of 96%. The rate of participation in ECEC has steadily increased during the five last years in most countries. Member States are working on increasing the accessibility of ECEC and on improving the quality of staff and curricula in order to comply with the 11th principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which states 'children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality.'

Early childhood education and care (age 3+)



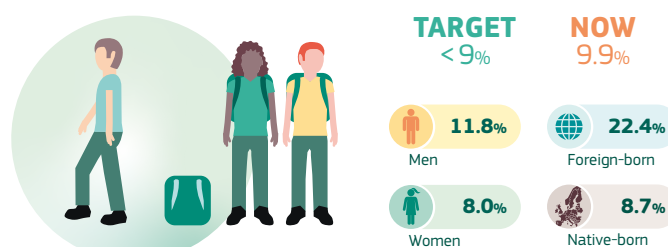
Source: Eurostat (UOE, 2019)



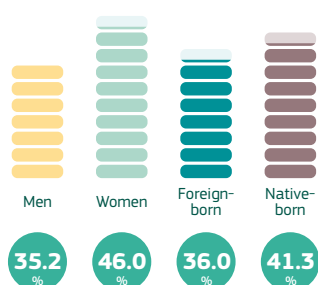
Early leavers from education and training (ELET)

The last decade saw a reduction in the percentage of early leavers from education and training (young people aged 18-24 years) from 13.2% in 2011 to 9.9% in 2020 in the EU27. This means the 2020 target of decreasing this share to 'below 10%' was achieved. Portugal, Malta, Spain and Greece had the strongest decreases over the past decade. While there are pronounced differences between and within countries, the average share of early leavers from education and training is consistently higher among young men (11.8%) than it is among young women (8%) and there are striking disadvantages for foreign-born young people. A more ambitious EU-level target of 'below 9%' has been set for 2030.

Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2020)



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2020)

Tertiary level attainment (age 25-34)

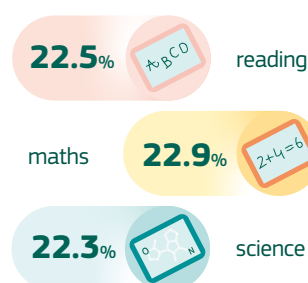
TARGET 45%
NOW 40.5%



Tertiary level attainment

Following the achievement of the 2010-2020 target, Member states agreed in 2021 on a new EU-level target of at least 45% of 25-34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment by 2030. Over the past decade, this rate progressed from 32.2% to 40.5%, with women (46%) showing better results than men (35.2%) in 2020. However, the disparity between native-born and foreign-born populations, remains significant (41.3% and 36%, respectively).

15-years-olds' underachievement in



TARGET below 15%

Source: OECD (PISA, 2018)

Low-achieving 15-year-olds in basic skills

Over the last decade, there has been little progress in reducing low achievement in basic skills to less than 15%. The share of low achievers stood at 22.5% in reading, 22.4% in mathematics, and 21.6% in science in 2018, the year of the latest PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test. The EU faces a persistent challenge with more than one-fifth of 15-year-olds demonstrating underperformance in basic skills. This bodes ill for their chances in professional and private life. In reading, only four EU Member States met the 15% EU-level target: Estonia (10.2%), Denmark (14.6%), Poland (14.7%) and Finland (15.0%). At the other end, the underachievement rate exceeded 30% in Romania (46.6%), Bulgaria (44.4%), Cyprus (36.9%), Greece (35.8%) and Malta (30.2%).