

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

The EU works with the Member States to make education systems fit to give all Europeans the best start in life. The 2020 edition of the Education and Training Monitor, published during the unprecedented disruption caused by the coronavirus crisis, shows the importance of digital skills. As the last edition of the Monitor under the outgoing Education and Training 2020 cooperation framework, it highlights the successes and remaining challenges of the past decade of policy efforts.

### The Education and Training Monitor

The Education and Training Monitor is the EU's flagship publication that analyses how education and training is evolving in the EU and its Member States.

Over the past nine years, the Monitor has been instrumental in driving education reform by fostering dialogue with and between Member States, and highlighting policy measures that have delivered results on the ground.

Each year, the Monitor tracks progress towards the Europe 2020 headline targets, the benchmarks adopted under the EU cooperation policy framework Education and Training 2020, and other important indicators in the sector.

### This year's focus: digital skills

The COVID-19 crisis demonstrated the importance of stepping up the readiness of digital solutions for teaching and learning in Europe and also pointed to where the weaknesses lie. The digital infrastructure of schools developed significantly in the past decade, yet large disparities persist in many countries. The share of students attending highly digitally equipped and connected schools differs widely across Europe. It is highest in Nordic countries, and ranges from 35% (primary) to 52% (lower secondary) to 72% (upper secondary). However, only 8% of students attend schools located in a village or small town which has access to a high-speed Internet above 100 Mbps.

In addition, teachers were not adequately prepared to use digital technologies in the classroom before the crisis. On average in the EU, fewer than half of teachers (49.1%) report that ICT was included in their formal education or training. Moreover, while a growing number of teachers participate in continued professional development (CPD) programmes related to the use of digital technologies, this does not always translate into teaching practices.

Pupils' digital skills are improving, but they need to be developed further. Contrary to the commonly held view that today's young people are a generation of 'digital natives', the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) results indicate that young people do not develop sophisticated digital skills just by growing up using digital devices. Underachievement, in the sense of a failure to understand and perform even the most basic ICT operations, is widespread in the EU. In 2018, as many as 62.7% of Italian pupils did not manage to pass the underachievement threshold (however the pupils tested were on average one year younger than in other countries). Neither did 50.6% of pupils in Luxembourg, 43.5% in France, 33.5% in Portugal, 33.2% in Germany, 27.3% in Finland and 16.2% in Denmark.

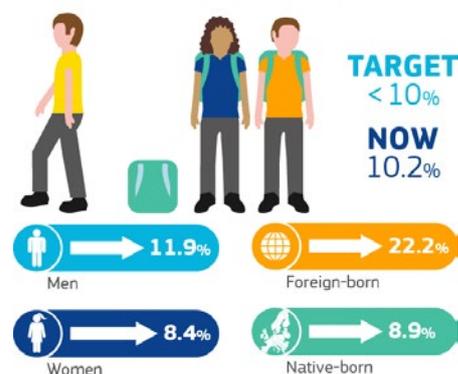


# Education and Training Monitor 2020

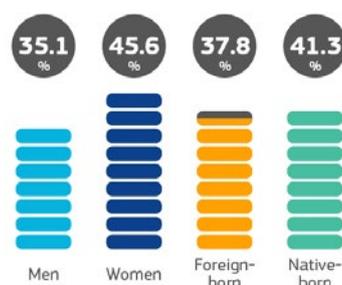
## How has the EU performed against the 2010-2020 education targets?

The target on **early leavers from education and training** stood at 10.2% in 2019, only 0.2 percentage points from the target. This represents progress of 4 percentage points over the past decade. Fewer girls are early leavers (8.4%) than boys (11.9%). These figures hide sizeable differences between countries, varying between 3% in Croatia and 17.3% in Spain. Some countries have made considerable progress, particularly Portugal (20.3%), Spain (13.6%) and Greece (10.1%). There has been a persistent gap in the rate of early leavers between the foreign-born (22.2%) and the native-born (8.9%).

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



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2019)



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2019)

**Tertiary educational attainment** has seen its target value of 40% reached. In 2019, the EU-27 had 40.3% people aged 30-34 with a tertiary degree. This means the EU-27 has raised the TEA rate by 9.2 percentage points in the past decade.

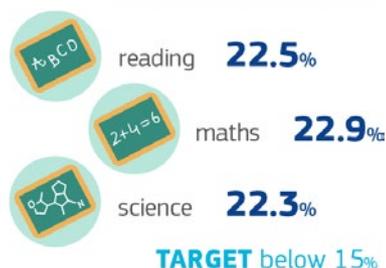
Participation in **early childhood education** is high but uneven access and quality remain a challenge. On average in the EU, participation in early childhood education (4+) stood at 94.8% in 2018 (latest available data), just 0.2 percentage points below the target. However, some Member States have not made sufficient progress and stayed well below the 2020 benchmark, notably Greece (75.2%), Croatia (81.0%), Slovakia (82.2%), Bulgaria (82.4%) and Romania (86.3%).

### Early childhood education (age 4+)



Source: Eurostat (UOE, 2018)

### Underachievement in



Source: OECD (PISA, 2018)

However, the EU has not met its target to reduce **underachievement in basic skills** to less than 15% and little progress has been achieved over the past decade. The underachievement rate stood at 21.7% 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. That means that Europe faces a persistent challenge with more than one-fifth of 15-year-olds demonstrating underperformance in basic skills that bodes ill for their chances in professional and private life. In reading, only four EU Member States met the 15% ET2020 benchmark: 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%).