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Education and Training Monitor 2017

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

The EU is working with Member States to make education systems fit to give all young Europeans the best start in life. The 2017 edition of the Education and Training Monitor shows progress, but also points to the need to address inequality in education in order to build a fairer society.

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



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2016)

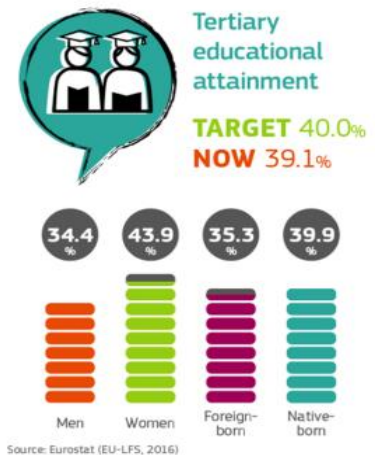
Further decrease in the rate of early school leavers

Remarkable success has been achieved since the target was adopted: the EU average share of early school leavers has decreased steadily from 13.9% in 2010 to 10.7% in 2016. The EU is on track to reach the 10% target in 2020. The greatest reduction since 2010 has been achieved by Portugal, now at 14.0%, followed by Spain at 19.0% — when the targets were agreed on, the two countries had the highest shares of early leavers (Portugal: 28.3%, Spain: 28.2%). Greece has also made remarkable progress: in 2016 the share was 6.2%, well below the target.

The tertiary attainment target is within reach

The EU has seen a continuing expansion of higher education over the last two decades and is close to reaching the 40% target.

The tertiary attainment rate currently stands at 39.1%, up 0.4 percentage points in the past year alone, and up more than 5 percentage points since 2010. 17 Member States are above the 40% target (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom).



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2016)

Achievement in basic skills of 15-year-olds has decreased since 2012

One of the EU's targets for 2020 aims to reduce to below 15% the share of 15-year-old pupils who fail in basic reading, maths and science tests carried out every three years. Not only has the EU been lagging behind that target, it has recently moved even further away from it: in 2015, 20.6% of pupils did not achieve basic proficiency in science — a rise of 4 percentage points compared to 2012. The difference in the share of low achievers between pupils from the highest and lowest socio-economic backgrounds is striking. Pupils from a lower socio-economic background are almost five times more likely not to reach the basic level of competence in science, for instance, than those from a higher socio-economic background.

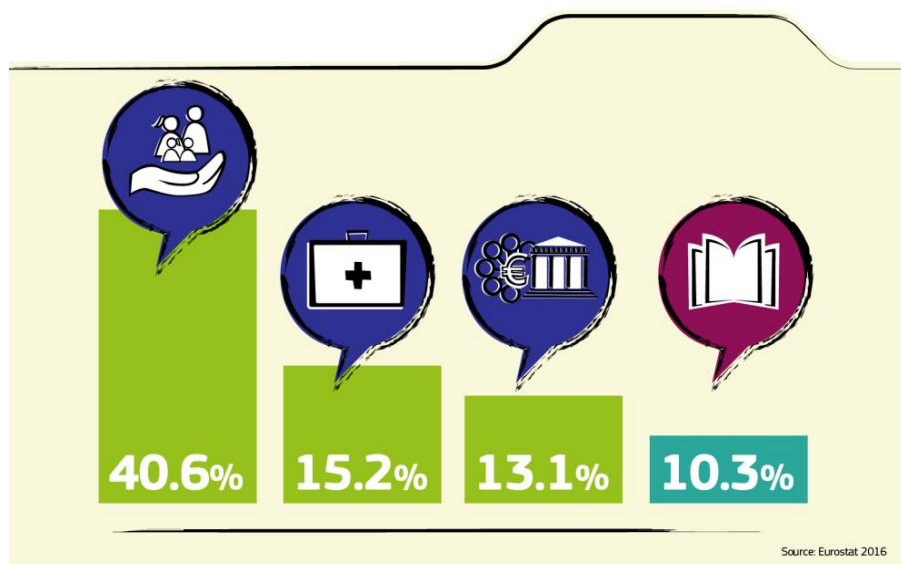
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How are Member States responding to these challenges?

Investing in quality education

Investment in education in EU Member States, treated as a whole, has recovered from the financial and economic crises and increased by 1% between 2014 and 2015 adjusted for inflation. About two-thirds of Member States recorded a rise. In four countries, this increase was above 5% (Estonia, Malta, Romania and Slovakia). By contrast, eight countries reduced their spending on education in 2015 compared to 2014 (Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovenia and the United Kingdom). As a share of total government spending, investment in education reached 10.3% on average in 2015, that is a total of around EUR 716 billion for the whole EU.

Education remains the fourth largest government expenditure item after (from left to right) social protection, health and general public services.



Measured as a share of GDP, public spending on education has been stagnant in recent years and remained at 4.9% for the EU as a whole in 2015.

Policies to support inclusion

Several Member States are working to make their education systems more inclusive. For instance, Bulgaria has started tackling early school leaving by deploying integrated teams of specialists (e.g. mediators, social workers) at local level to identify children not attending school and reintegrate them. Germany is adapting its vocational education and training system to integrate refugees into education and the labour market. Portuguese local administrations and school clusters are cooperating to prevent school failure and reduce grade repetition. Sweden has increased resources to tackle inequalities and has announced a long-term investment plan to support the provision of high quality education to newly arrived students. And Hungary has introduced mandatory data collection on pupils' progress which feeds into an early warning system to prevent early school leaving.

The Commission supports Member States in improving their education systems through different tools, including policy cooperation, benchmarking and funding programmes such as Erasmus+. The Monitor fosters dialogue with and between Member States, highlighting promising policy initiatives and measures that have delivered results on the ground.



The Education and Training Monitor is the Commission's annual report which examines the evolution of the national education and training systems in the EU, including the Europe 2020 headline targets: reducing the share of early school leavers and increasing the proportion of persons having completed tertiary education.

Read more in the **online** and **printed publication**, which comes with **clickable data sources**, **28 individual country reports**, **online interactive maps** and **examples of policy practices** from EU Member States.

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