# Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe 2020

## Overview of major reforms since 2015

*Eurydice Background Report*

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# Monitoring Education and

# Training Systems in Europe

# 2020

Overview of
major reforms since 2015

Eurydice Background Report

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# INTRODUCTION

This report contains more than 35 key structural indicators on education policies in six areas: early childhood education and care (ECEC), achievement in basic skills, early leaving from education and training (ELET), higher education, graduate employability and learning mobility.

**Policy context**

The indicators provide information on the national policies and structures that contribute to achieving the benchmarks set in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020').

EU and Member States' performance on the ET 2020 benchmarks are analysed in detail in the European Commission's Education and Training Monitor. The Eurydice project on Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe contributes to the contextual information for this analysis. It provides yearly data since 2015, which illustrate the main policy developments in education and training systems across Europe.

**Selection of indicators**

The structural indicators were selected by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) using information from several recent Eurydice reports that provide extensive focus on specific policy areas.

The selection of the structural indicators was discussed with the Eurydice National Units and country representatives of the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB).

**2020 update**

This report contains the updated indicators for the 2019/20 school/academic year together with a short overview of the major reforms since the start of the 2014/15 school/academic year in six policy areas:

1. Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

2. Achievement in basic skills

3. Early leaving from education and training (ELET)

4. Higher education

5. Graduate employability

6. Learning mobility (reference year 2018/19) ([1])

Information on the scope of each indicator, as well as detailed definitions of the terms used, can be found at the end of the report.

Further information on recent reforms in all countries in the Eurydice network is available in the Education system descriptions, chapter 14.

Part of the information in this report that concerns the EU Member States was published in the Education and Training Monitor 2020.

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[1] This report contains the indicators on learning mobility for academic year 2018/19. The source of the data is the 2019 Mobility Scoreboard. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/mobility-scoreboard/scoreboard-indicators-higher-education

**Country coverage**

The 2020 update of the structural indicators covers the EU Member States, as well as the United Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey. The information has been collected through a questionnaire completed by the national representatives of the Eurydice network.

# 1. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)

The structural indicators in this chapter provide an overview of key features of early childhood education and care (ECEC) systems. The choice of indicators was based on the research literature analysis as well as the factors listed in the Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems ([2]). The recommendation identified five main aspects of quality in early childhood education and care: access, staff, curriculum, evaluation/monitoring and governance/funding. Seeing children as active participants in their own learning, the recommendation highlights that parents ([3]) are the most important partners and their participation is essential if high-quality ECEC is to be delivered.

However, considering the vast range of possible system-level information and bearing in mind the limitations of scope and time, only a certain number of essential and robust indicators have been chosen for yearly monitoring. The diagram below presents the ECEC structural indicators included in the Eurydice data collection:
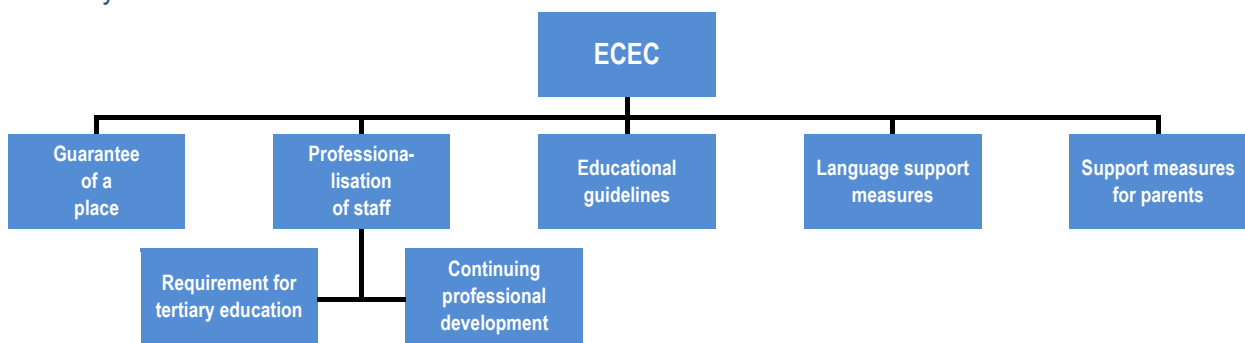


In this analysis, '**early childhood education and care (ECEC)**' refers to provision for children from birth through to compulsory primary education that falls within a national regulatory framework, i.e. which must comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures. Only centre-based provision is considered. The definition goes beyond the education programmes classified as ISCED level 0 (early childhood education), as it includes all registered ECEC services, not only those with a defined educational component. In many European countries, ECEC provision for children under age 3 does not qualify as 'early childhood educational development' (ISCED level 010), but it still offers an important service for children and their families.

Many European countries structure ECEC services according to the age of the children. Usually, the transition from the first phase to the second takes place when children are around 3 years old. In order to reflect the different regulations, a distinction between provision for 'children under 3 years old' and provision for 'children of 3 years and over' is often made. However, it is important to keep in mind that in some countries the transition can be as early as 2-and-a-half years or as late as 4 years of age.

Some European countries have several types of ECEC provision. The indicators show if a certain measure is available in the main type of ECEC provision for each age group.

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([2])  OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 4-14. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2019.189.01.0004.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2019:189:TOC

([3])  The term 'parent' includes mothers, fathers, foster carers, adoptive parents, step-parents and grandparents.

# Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015

Since 2014/15, when the structural indicators on ECEC were first gathered, there have been substantial changes in the **legal framework that guarantees access** to ECEC in several European Union countries. Five countries have introduced compulsory ECEC for one year prior to starting primary education, and two education systems have prolonged the period of mandatory attendance to 2-3 years. Moreover, three countries are extending the ages of the legal right to ECEC for every child.

Attending the last year of ECEC has been made **compulsory** in Czechia (from the school year starting September 2017), Croatia (2014), Lithuania (2016), Finland (2015) and Sweden (2018). Three countries have made compulsory attendance longer than one year. In Hungary, ECEC has been compulsory for children from the age of 3 since September 2015. In France, the starting age of compulsory education has been lowered from age 6 to 3 since September 2019. Greece is gradually lowering the starting age of compulsory pre-primary school attendance from age 5 to age 4 (between 2018 and 2021). There are some recent changes: in Belgium the last year of ECEC became compulsory from September 2020. In Slovakia, the planned reform to introduce compulsory pre-primary education from age 5 is postponed from 2020 to 2021.

A **legal entitlement** to ECEC has been introduced or extended in Czechia, Poland and Portugal. These countries have imposed a statutory duty on ECEC providers in a catchment area to secure publicly subsidised ECEC provision for all children of a certain age whose parents require a place. Czechia and Poland have been gradually extending the entitlement to age 3 (fully implemented in Poland from 2017 and in Czechia from 2018). Portugal is still implementing the reform started in 2015 to establish universal pre-school education. The legal entitlement to ECEC currently starts at age 4 and is planned to be lowered to age 3.

There have been substantial reforms aimed at improving the quality and governance in ECEC in some countries. It is important to mention Italy, which is carrying out a major restructuring of the ECEC system. An integrated ECEC system from birth to age 6 is being introduced: the two components of ECEC (nursery services and pre-schools) have been integrated in a single framework with the aim of enhancing quality, effectiveness and numbers of providers all over the country.

Several countries have introduced structural reforms concerning **staff qualification or continuing professional development** (CPD). Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta and Finland have raised, or are in the process of raising, a minimum qualification requirement for all or for a large proportion of staff working with children. In these countries, supporting systems of CPD to attain the necessary qualifications have been established. However, the process of staff professionalization is still on-going. In addition, Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria and Estonia introduced reforms to provide a coherent system of continuing professional development. Since September 2018, a school type called *Fachschule für pädagogische Assistenzberufe* [school for pedagogical assistant professions] (ISCED 3) operates in Austria.

**Educational guidelines** have been established for the youngest children for the first time in Belgium (Flemish Community) and France. In Belgium (Flemish Community), a non-binding pedagogical framework for childcare settings for babies and toddlers (under 2-and-a-half years) is being implemented from 2015/16. In 2017, France adopted the National Framework for Early Childhood Care for services outside the ISCED classification (mainly ECEC provision for children under age 3). This non-binding document sets the main principles and values for safe child development and provides some educational guidance. In addition, Italy and Portugal plan to draw up educational guidelines for the ECEC provision for children under age 3 in the forthcoming years.

New ECEC educational guidelines are in place in several countries. In 2016, a [new curriculum for pre-school education](#) (children aged 3 and over) was introduced in Bulgaria. Croatia adopted the new National Curriculum for Early and Pre-primary Education (2014), followed by amendments for preschool programme in 2018. In Slovakia, a new State Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education is applied in all ECEC settings for three- to five-year-olds from 2016. In Finland, a new national core curriculum for pre-primary education is in place since 2016 and for ECEC since 2017. Norway introduced a new [Framework Plan for Kindergartens](#) in 2017.

A few countries changed their ECEC educational guidelines or introduced new areas of instruction. Lithuania (2015) updated its pre-primary curriculum (for the last year of ECEC), and established a detailed achievement list of children in ECEC. Poland introduced an area 'Preparation to use a modern foreign language' (since 2014) as well the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills (since 2017) in the pre-school core curriculum for children aged 3 and over. In Portugal, the educational guidelines for children aged 3 and over have been reviewed and updated (2016). In Greece, new areas and soft skills will be included in the pre-school curriculum (children aged 4 and over) from 2020/21.

**Specific language support measures** have been introduced in several countries. In Denmark, the age of the obligatory language assessment for 3-year old children was lowered and can now be made when the children are between 22 and 30 months. In 2017/18, Luxembourg introduced a multilingualism education programme (focused on Luxembourgish and French) targeting children aged one to four. Malta launched a ['Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo'](#) in 2016, promoting bilingual development in both English and Maltese for children (0 to 7 years). Poland established a mother tongue instruction in regional or ethnic language for children aged 3 and over (2014). Austria strengthens early language support introducing a uniform language testing instrument for all *Länder* (2018-2022).

**Support for parents of children in ECEC** or parenting support in general has been expanded in Bulgaria, France, Estonia, Lithuania, Croatia, Finland, the United Kingdom (Wales) and North Macedonia. Bulgaria enshrined in the law certain rights for parents. Since 2016, parents have a right to receive information, support and counselling at the kindergarten or school on issues related to the education, career orientation and personal development of their children. France introduced a national strategy of support for parenthood for the period 2018-2022. In 2014, the United Kingdom (Wales) published comprehensive non-statutory [guidance](#) (updated in 2017) for those providing parenting support.

Since 2014, parents are explicitly addressed in the ECEC curriculum in Croatia. Bulgaria and Estonia expanded parenting programmes. Lithuania issued new editions of guidance materials for parents.

## ECEC summary table 1: Legal framework, 2019/20

| | Starting age of | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | universal legal entitlement to ECEC | compulsory ECEC | compulsory primary education |
| Belgium fr | 2y 6m | (5) | 6 |
| Belgium de | 3 | (5) | 6 |
| Belgium nl | 2y 6m | (5) | 6 |
| Bulgaria | | 5 | 7 |
| Czechia | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| Denmark | 6m | | 6 |
| Germany | 1 | | 6 |
| Estonia | 1y 6m | | 7 |
| Ireland | | | 6 |
| Greece | | 4 | 6 |
| Spain | 3 | | 6 |
| France | | 3 | 6 |
| Croatia | | 6 | 7 |
| Italy | | | 6 |
| Cyprus | | 4y 8m | 5y 8m |
| Latvia | 1y 6m | 5 | 7 |
| Lithuania | | 6 | 7 |
| Luxembourg | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Hungary | | 3 | 6 |
| Malta | | | 5 |
| Netherlands | | 5 | 6 |
| Austria | | 5 | 6 |
| Poland | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| Portugal | 4 | | 6 |
| Romania | | | 6 |
| Slovenia | 11 m | | 6 |
| Slovakia | | | 6 |
| Finland | 9 m | 6 | 7 |
| Sweden | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| United Kingdom - ENG | 3 | | 5 |
| United Kingdom - WLS | 3 | | 5 |
| United Kingdom - NIR | | | 4 |
| United Kingdom - SCT | 3 | | 5 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | | 5 | 6 |
| Iceland | | | 6 |
| Liechtenstein | 4 | | 6 |
| Montenegro | | | 6 |
| North Macedonia | | | 6 |
| Norway | 1 | | 6 |
| Serbia | | 5y 6m | 6y 6m |
| Turkey | | | 5y 9m |

*Notes:* abbreviation y means years, m means months.
Age in brackets indicates the situation from 2020 September.

# ECEC summary table 2: Selected quality aspects, 2019/20

| | 1.2. Staff | | 1.3. Curriculum or Educational guidelines | 1.4. Language programmes as targeted support measure | 1.5. Parent support | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | 1.2.1. At least one staff member with a tertiary qualification in education sciences | 1.2.2. CPD professional duty or necessary for promotion | | | 1.5.1. Home-learning guidance | 1.5.2. Parenting programmes |
| Belgium fr | 🟨 | ● | ● | 🟨 | | 🟨 |
| Belgium de | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | | ● |
| Belgium nl | 🟨 | ● | ● | 🟨 | | |
| Bulgaria | ● | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | | 🟨 |
| Czechia | | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | | |
| Denmark | | | ● | ● | | |
| Germany | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Estonia | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Ireland | | | ● | | ● | |
| Greece | ● | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | | |
| Spain | 🟨 | 🟨 | ● | ● | | ● |
| France | ● | ● | ● | 🟨 | ● | ● |
| Croatia | ● | ● | ● | 🟢 | | ● |
| Italy | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | | |
| Cyprus | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | | | 🟨 |
| Latvia | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Lithuania | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Luxembourg | 🟨 | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Hungary | 🟨 | ● | ● | 🟨 | | For under 3s |
| Malta | | 🟨 | ● | 🟨 | ● | ● |
| Netherlands | 🟨 | | 🟨 | ● | | |
| Austria | | ● | ● | ● | 🟨 | ● |
| Poland | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | ● | |
| Portugal | ● | 🟨 | 🟨 | ● | | |
| Romania | | ● | ● | 🟨 | | ● |
| Slovenia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Slovakia | | 🟨 | 🟨 | 🟨 | | |
| Finland | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Sweden | ● | | ● | ● | | |
| United Kingdom - ENG | 🟨 | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - WLS | 🟨 | ● | 🟨 | ● | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - NIR | 🟨 | ● | 🟨 | ● | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - SCT | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Iceland | ● | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Liechtenstein | 🟨 | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Montenegro | 🟢 | ● | ● | ● | | |
| North Macedonia | 🟨 | ● | ● | ● | 🟨 | |
| Norway | ● | | ● | ● | | |
| Serbia | 🟨 | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Turkey | 🟨 | ● | ● | | | ● |

Notes: 🟨 = children aged 3 years or more ([4]); ● = the entire ECEC phase (from birth to the start of compulsory education).

1. Tertiary qualification in education = minimum 3 years ISCED 6.
2. CPD refers to continuing professional development.

[4]    🟨 refers to children aged 2 years or more in France, 2.5 years or more In Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) and to children aged 4 years or more in Greece, the Netherlands and Liechtenstein.

## 2.   ACHIEVEMENT IN BASIC SKILLS

Low student achievement in the basic skills of literacy, mathematics and science is a concern for many European countries. It is an issue associated not only with the effectiveness of teaching and learning, but also with providing an equitable system of education. Recognising the need for targeted action, the Council of the European Union adopted an EU-wide benchmark related to basic skills, which aims to reduce the proportion of 15-year-olds underachieving in reading, mathematics and science to less than 15 % by 2020 ([5]).

However, underachievement, defined as performing below level 2 in the PISA test, continues to be a serious challenge across Europe. The latest PISA results from 2018 show that 21.7 % of European students had low achievement in reading, 22.4 % in mathematics, and 21.6 % in science. Over the past decade, across the EU as a whole, underachievement increased in science and reading and remained stable in mathematics (PISA 2018 and the EU: Striving for social fairness through education).

The structural indicators below concentrate on a selection of policies and measures that could contribute to improving student achievement. All indicators concern compulsory education, which in the majority of countries corresponds to ISCED levels 1 and 2.
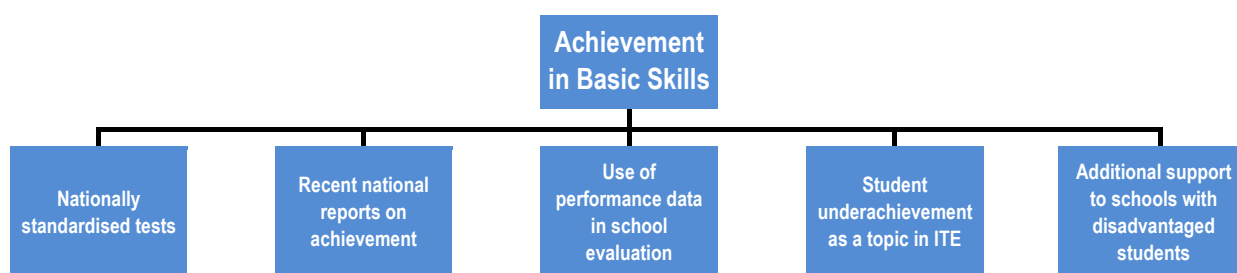


The selected indicators relate to competences in three distinct areas, i.e. literacy, mathematics and science. These are often treated separately and given different emphasis in national policies. Evidence shows that usually there is more focus on literacy and numeracy than on science.

# Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015

**The national testing** of students has emerged as an important instrument of education policy. It is a widespread practice in Europe but takes different forms, including sample-based testing. In the school year 2019/20, all European education systems, except Belgium (German-speaking Community), Greece, Croatia ([6]), Bosnia and Herzegovina ([7]) and North Macedonia, planned to organise nationally standardised tests in compulsory education ([8]). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, around a third of all education systems were forced to cancel the national tests that were scheduled to take place in spring 2020.

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([5]) Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009.

([6]) There is a pilot project Development of National Examination System (*Razvoj nacionalnog sustava ispitivanja*) in implementation in Croatia. See https://www.ncvvo.hr/vanjsko-vrednovanje-odgojno-obrazovnih-ishoda-srednje-skole/razvoj-nacionalnoga-sustava-ispitivanja/

([7]) Nationally standardised tests in compulsory education are organised in only two cantons, Sarajevo Canton and Tuzla Canton.

([8]) In Belgium (Flemish Community), the national tests in school year 2019/20 were to include reading comprehension, among other competences. These tests were subsequently cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

National tests in some education systems such as Belgium (Flemish Community) and Czechia are based on the rotation of subjects. In the majority of European countries, standardised national assessments in compulsory education focus on the language of instruction and mathematics, and to a much lesser extent on science.

In the past five years, national authorities in some European countries have moved from pilot national tests to the establishment of regular testing systems (Czechia, Spain ([9]), others have shifted some national tests from a summative to a formative approach (Portugal). Some countries have added new tests in specific years (Lithuania and Portugal), while others have discontinued certain tests (Latvia), or all national testing for the time being (North Macedonia).

The majority of European countries publish **national reports on achievement** in each of the basic skills based on national performance data. In many cases, these reports are complemented by reports based on the country results from international surveys such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS. Moreover, in around a third of countries, national reports are based solely on the results of international surveys. In terms of the subject areas covered by these reports, as with the previous indicator on national testing, it appears that performance in the language of instruction and mathematics is analysed much more often than performance in science.

Across Europe, the **evaluation of schools** has become increasingly important for monitoring the overall quality of education. In most cases, school evaluators examine a variety of data from different sources, which could include different types of **student performance data**.

In the vast majority of countries where the external evaluation of schools is practised, evaluators take student performance data into account in order to form their judgement on school quality. This is not the case in Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia, Slovakia and Norway, where external school evaluation is concerned with school processes and compliance with regulations. Moreover, several countries do not carry out any external school evaluation (Croatia ([10]), Finland and Bosnia and Herzegovina). In the past five years, a major reform in Bulgaria led to the introduction of external school evaluation and the use of student performance data in it.

Teachers' ability to deal with student difficulties and their skills in managing students with a range of different abilities and needs are crucial. A number of countries stipulate that **competences to tackle low student achievement** should be acquired during **initial teacher education (ITE)**.

The education authorities in 24 European systems provide central level regulations, recommendations and/or guidelines for ITE programmes specify that prospective teachers should learn how to address student difficulties during their training. Central level involvement in determining the content of ITE programmes varies between countries. The diverse approaches are reflected in the differing degrees of detail in guidance documents and the variety of practices both at national level and at the level of individual higher education institutions. In some cases, only general guidelines are provided without specifying particular subjects. Again, science is the area that is less likely to be mentioned explicitly. It is also significant that in 18 education systems there are no such guidelines, which is often due to the fact that, in these cases, higher education institutions are completely autonomous in determining the content of their teacher education programmes.

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([9]) The tests in Spain are sample-based and have no academic consequences.

([10]) The pilot project 'External Evaluation of Primary and General Upper Secondary Schools' (*Vanjsko vrednovanje osnovnih škola i gimnazija*) started at the end of 2017 and represents the first phase in the preparation for the introduction of a comprehensive system of external evaluation of educational institutions. See https://www.ncvvo.hr/vanjsko-vrednovanje/vanjsko-vrednovanje-odgojno-obrazovnih-ustanova/pilot-projekt-vanjskoga-vrednovanja-osnovnih-skola-gimnazija/

The central education authorities in around two thirds of all education systems allocate **additional resources to schools that enrol large numbers of disadvantaged students**. There are a variety of approaches in terms of the organisation of the support, the target groups and actions funded.

In most countries, schools receive the additional funding directly from the central authorities, although in many cases local authorities are also involved. In some countries, financial flows are rather complex because several levels of authorities (central, regional, local) are involved in the allocation of funding. Moreover, in some cases, in addition to the centrally allocated funding, education providers/schools can apply for extra funds for specific purposes.

Central authorities **do not** allocate such additional resources in Denmark, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, North Macedonia and Norway. In Denmark and Norway, this is done at the level of municipalities. In other countries, additional resources for these purposes are provided mainly through social programmes (Romania) or EU and other international projects (North Macedonia). In certain cases (Denmark and Hungary), central level support is not financial, but focuses on reinforcing the professional development of teachers, providing remedial classes and other educational support.

Across Europe, most commonly, additional support is linked to socio-economic background, migrant status and disability. Criteria like geographical location and ethnic origin are used less often. Targeted funds are used most often to provide additional staff (educational or other professionals), the creation of specific professional development opportunities to improve teachers' competences in providing inclusive education and for career advice services. In the past five years, reforms in this area have led to the establishment of a scheme for additional support to disadvantaged students (Malta) or to the reinforcement of existing support (Germany and Spain).

In conclusion, the review of the structural indicators on achievement in basic skills demonstrates that while most countries organise national standardised tests and publish national reports on achievement, not all three basic skills are treated equally and science is given less attention. Moreover, many countries use student performance data in external school evaluation but only around half have issued national guidelines to include tackling student underachievement as a topic in initial teacher education. Finally, while the majority of countries provide some type of central support to schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students, there is a great variety of approaches in terms of the organisation of the support, the target groups and actions funded.

Overall, there have been few policy changes and reforms across the indicators on Achievement in Basic Skills in the past five years. This could be seen as an indication that these areas (except the organisation of national standardised tests) do not seem to be a priority for policy action, despite the fact that in many countries there are no major improvements in student achievement as measured by the PISA survey.

**Summary table on achievement in basic skills, 2019/20**

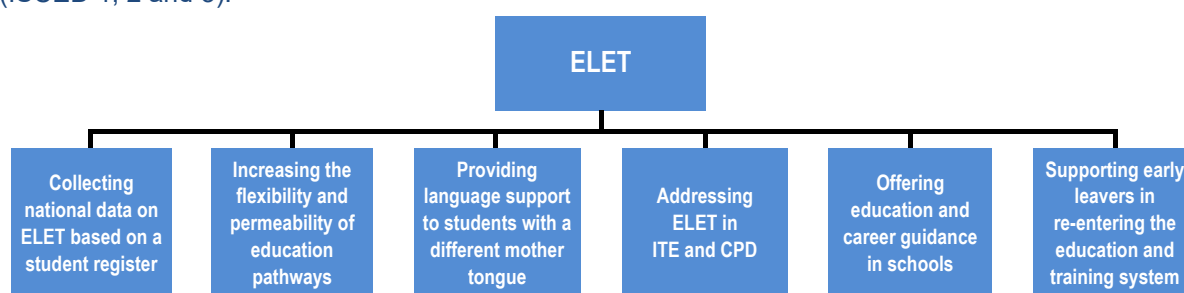| | 1. National tests in compulsory education | | | 2. Recent national reports on achievement | | | 3. Use of performance data in school evaluation | 4. Guidelines on underachievement as a topic in ITE | | | 5. Additional resources provided by top-level authorities to schools with disadvantaged students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium fr | * | * | * | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Belgium de | | | | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Belgium nl | | | | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Bulgaria | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | | | | ● |
| Czechia | | M | | R | M | S | ● | | | | ● |
| Denmark | * | * | * | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | |
| Germany | * | * | * | R | M | S | ● | R | | | ● |
| Estonia | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Ireland | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | R | M | | ● |
| Greece | | | | R | M | S | | | | | ● |
| Spain | * | * | * | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| France | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Croatia | | | | R | M | S | | | | | |
| Italy | * | * | | R | M | | ● | | | | ● |
| Cyprus | R | M | | R | M | S | | R | M | S | ● |
| Latvia | R | M | S | R | M | | ● | | | | ● |
| Lithuania | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Luxembourg | R | M | | R | M | | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Hungary | * | * | | R | M | | ● | R | M | S | |
| Malta | * | * | * | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Netherlands | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | | | | ● |
| Austria | R | M | | R | M | | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Poland | R | M | | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| Portugal | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | | | | ● |
| Romania | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | | | | |
| Slovenia | * | * | * | R | M | S | | | | | ● |
| Slovakia | R | M | | R | M | | | R | M | S | ● |
| Finland | * | * | | R | M | | | | | | ● |
| Sweden | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| United Kingdom - ENG | * | * | * | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| United Kingdom - WLS | * | * | | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| United Kingdom - NIR | * | * | | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | ● |
| United Kingdom - SCT | * | * | | R | M | S | ● | R | M | | ● |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | | | | R | M | S | | | | | ● |
| Iceland | R | M | | R | M | | ● | | | | ● |
| Liechtenstein | R | M | | R | M | | ● | | | | ● |
| Montenegro | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | | | | ● |
| North Macedonia | | | | R | M | S | ● | R | M | S | |
| Norway | R | M | | R | M | S | | R | M | S | |
| Serbia | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | | | | ● |
| Turkey | R | M | S | R | M | S | ● | | | | ● |

Notes: 'R' = reading; 'M' = mathematics; 'S' = science.          * National tests cancelled due to COVID-19.

Portugal: Only the national exams in grades 11 and 12 that are needed for access to higher education were maintained.

## 3.    EARLY LEAVING FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ELET)

The structural indicators on early leaving from education and training (ELET) ([11]) focus on certain key policies and measures that together cover the three main areas of action – prevention, intervention and compensation – as highlighted in the EU Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 ([12]). This set of structural indicators therefore provides an overview of some of the main activities taking place in European countries to achieve the ET 2020 benchmark on ELET. The indicators focus on school education: primary and general secondary as well as school-based initial vocational education (ISCED 1, 2 and 3).

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                              ┌──────────┐
                              │   ELET   │
                              └──────────┘
```

| Collecting national data on ELET based on a student register | Increasing the flexibility and permeability of education pathways | Providing language support to students with a different mother tongue | Addressing ELET in ITE and CPD | Offering education and career guidance in schools | Supporting early leavers in re-entering the education and training system |

# Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015

A **national data collection system based on a student register** can be used to understand the scale of the problem and to develop and implement appropriate policies to address ELET. Such a system can also be employed to both monitor absenteeism and evaluate the effectiveness of policies to reduce early leaving. Hungary is one of the countries that has introduced an early warning system for primary and secondary schools in the last few years (2016). Its data collection makes it possible to monitor absenteeism as well as to analyse early school leaving patterns at several levels – school, local, regional and national. In some other EU countries, the national data collection has been modified or expanded. In the current reference year, the majority of European countries are collecting national data on ELET through a student register.

Policies for **increasing the flexibility and permeability of education pathways** can help prevent ELET by removing potential obstacles to the completion of education and training programmes. These might include initiatives to promote alternative education and training pathways (e.g. vocational or technical rather than general), to facilitate the transition between pathways, and to improve systems for the recognition of students' skills and qualifications. In Greece, for example, new legislation introduced in 2016 has reformed the vocational lyceum (upper secondary vocational cycle). This allows for greater permeability between programmes within a more flexible framework so as to attract a greater number of students. It also promotes a smoother transition from one education pathway to another. The 2019/20 update of these structural indicators shows that almost all European countries now have policies to promote alternative education and training pathways; and many countries also aim to facilitate transitions between the different pathways. In the current academic year, there have

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([11]) In this analysis, 'early leaving from education and training' refers to students leaving education or training before completing the upper secondary level and thus not obtaining the corresponding school leaving certificate. However, these structural indicators focus on the whole period of school education: primary education and general secondary as well as school-based initial vocational education (IVET) (ISCED levels 1, 2 and 3).

([12]) Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011. (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:191:0001:0006:en:PDF)

also been reforms in two education systems (Greece and North Macedonia) aiming to promote the recognition of skills and/or qualifications.

**Language support for students with a mother tongue other than the language of instruction** can be crucial, as these students are often at increased risk of early leaving. The great majority of European countries already had such policies in place in 2015. Further developments in this area have mainly been focused on intensifying this support. For example, in Italy and Cyprus, reforms in 2015/16 were intended to ensure that language support was available to unaccompanied foreign minors as well as to children of asylum seekers. In Austria, as part of the legislative package of July 2016, language support courses were extended to part-time vocational schools and VET colleges; and recent reforms implemented in Slovenia in 2019/20 increase language provision and support for students with no or very limited knowledge of the language of instruction. This latest structural indicators update thus shows that almost all European countries have policies for language support for students with a different mother tongue.

**Addressing ELET in ITE and/or in CPD** is essential if teachers are to know how to support students who are showing signs of disengagement at school, and who are therefore at risk of leaving school early. This was an area addressed by the least number of countries in 2015, but has since become the focus of top-level regulations/recommendations and/or practical support in many countries. For example, since the implementation of the 'Teacher and school leadership education programme 2017-2020' in Estonia, inclusive education has been the priority in all CPD courses. Teachers and school heads, for instance, are being trained on how to adapt their teaching and assessment methods to the needs of disadvantaged students who are at most risk of leaving school early. The training has also covered the ways in which teachers can work together and with parents to support these students. Despite the positive developments over the last few years across Europe, the latest update of the structural indicators (with the reference year 2019/20) shows that educating and training teachers on issues relating to ELET is still the area where the least number of policies can be found.

The role of **education and career guidance services** in preventing students from leaving education and training is widely acknowledged. In order to strengthen this area in schools, several countries have recently introduced reforms to ensure that education and career guidance is not only delivered through school-based guidance or counselling services, but also through the national curriculum, thus systematically reaching all students. In Poland, for example, education and career guidance became part of the ISCED 2 and 3 national curricula in 2017/18, and more recently in Malta at ISCED 1-3 in 2018/19. These developments are in addition to the existing support provided by the school guidance services in all these countries. This two-way approach to promoting education and career guidance in schools is now (in 2019/20) promoted through top-level policies in about two-thirds of European countries.

**Support for early leavers to re-enter the education and training system** has been provided through a number of new policy developments since 2015. These have involved the provision of second chance education, education and career guidance and/or youth guarantee commitments ([13]). For example, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, young people who leave school without qualifications are automatically registered with the public employment service of Flanders (VDAB), as a result of the real-time data exchange between education and work, and then can be guided directly to a job or an educational pathway. Currently, almost all European countries have policies promoting second chance education for early leavers, and most of them support early leavers through targeted education and career guidance. However, fewer European countries rely on Youth Guarantee related initiatives as a way of supporting early leavers to re-enter the education and training system.

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([13]) The Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, further education, apprenticeship, or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. See: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079

## ELET summary table 1, 2019/20

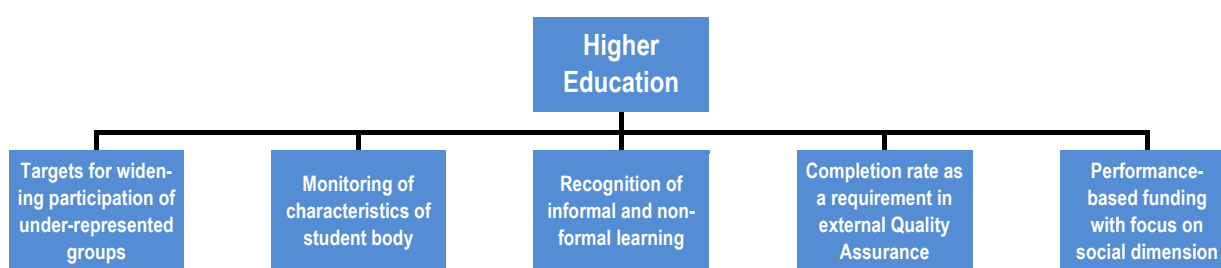| | 1. National data collection on ELET based on a student register | 2. Policies for increasing the flexibility and permeability of education pathways: | | | 3. Policies for language support for students with a different mother tongue |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2.1.Providing alternative education & training pathways | 2.2. Facilitating transitions within education & training systems | 2.3.Recognising skills and/or qualifications | |
| Belgium fr | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Belgium de | | | ● | ● | ● |
| Belgium nl | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Bulgaria | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| Czechia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Denmark | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Germany | | ● | ● | | ● |
| Estonia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Ireland | ● | ● | | | ● |
| Greece | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Spain | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| France | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Croatia | ● | | ● | ● | ● |
| Italy | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Cyprus | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Latvia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Lithuania | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Luxembourg | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Hungary | ● | ● | | | |
| Malta | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Netherlands | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Austria | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Poland | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| Portugal | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Romania | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Slovenia | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Slovakia | | ● | ● | | ● |
| Finland | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Sweden | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - ENG | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| United Kingdom - WLS | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| United Kingdom - NIR | | ● | ● | | ● |
| United Kingdom - SCT | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | | | | | |
| Iceland | ● | ● | | | |
| Liechtenstein | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Montenegro | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| North Macedonia | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| Norway | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Serbia | | ● | | | ● |
| Turkey | ● | | | | |

**ELET summary table 2, 2019/20**

| | 4. Policies encouraging the inclusion of ELET in ITE and/or CPD | 5. Education and career guidance in schools, ISCED 2 and 3* | 6. Policies to support early leavers re-enter the education & training system: | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | 6.1. Second chance education | 6.2. Education and career guidance | 6.3. Youth guarantee |
| Belgium fr | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Belgium de | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Belgium nl | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Bulgaria | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Czechia | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Denmark | | | ● | | |
| Germany | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Estonia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Ireland | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Greece | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Spain | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| France | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Croatia | | | ● | ● | ● |
| Italy | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Cyprus | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Latvia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Lithuania | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Luxembourg | ● | | ● | ● | ● |
| Hungary | ● | ● | ● | | ● |
| Malta | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Netherlands | ● | | ● | ● | ● |
| Austria | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Poland | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Portugal | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Romania | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Slovenia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Slovakia | | ● | ● | | |
| Finland | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Sweden | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - ENG | | | ● | ● | |
| United Kingdom - WLS | | | ● | ● | |
| United Kingdom - NIR | | | ● | ● | |
| United Kingdom - SCT | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | | | ● | | |
| Iceland | | | | | |
| Liechtenstein | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Montenegro | ● | | ● | | |
| North Macedonia | | | ● | ● | ● |
| Norway | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Serbia | | ● | ● | | |
| Turkey | | ● | ● | | |

Note: * Education and career guidance provided both as a compulsory part of the curriculum **and** by school guidance services in lower and upper secondary education.

## 4. HIGHER EDUCATION

In 2008, the Council adopted an EU-wide benchmark on tertiary education, stating that by 2020 at least 40 % of 30-34 year-olds should have a tertiary or equivalent level qualification ([14]). This benchmark has since become part of the double headline target on education within the Europe 2020 growth strategy.

The following five structural indicators have been developed in relation to this headline target (see summary table below), and guided by the Commission's communication, 'Supporting growth and jobs: An agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems' ([15]). Among the Communication's main objectives are two key inter-linked policy goals: increasing and widening participation, and improving the quality and relevance of higher education. To achieve these goals, the following indicators were chosen:

```
                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │     Higher      │
                          │   Education     │
                          └─────────────────┘
```

| Targets for widening participation of under-represented groups | Monitoring of characteristics of student body | Recognition of informal and non-formal learning | Completion rate as a requirement in external Quality Assurance | Performance-based funding with focus on social dimension |

# Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015

In the area of higher education, there were very few reforms that had taken place since 2015. Areas with new policies were quantitative targets for widening participation and attainment of under-represented groups, and completion as a required criterion in external Quality Assurance. In 2017, in Austria, quantitative targets were introduced through the outcome objectives for the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFW) which asked for an increase in the proportion of higher education students with parents without upper secondary school leaving examination or other higher education entrance qualification. In Croatia, in order to have completion rate as a requirement in external quality assurance, the Agency for Science and Higher Education included in a new cycle of re-accreditation which started in 2017 the following criterion: HEI collects and analyses data on student progression and uses them to secure student completion. The accreditation has been completed for 30 HEIs, and so data on completion rates as a required criterion in external QA are available for 30 HEIs.

In Hungary, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee has included in its evaluation criteria for institutional accreditation in 2018 the criterion of how the institution manages – gathers, analyses and uses – completion rates and drop-out rates. In 2019/20, the criterion of presenting the rate of doctoral students obtaining a doctoral degree and whether this rate reaches the level defined by the doctoral school in its quality objectives, was added as a criterion.

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([14]) Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009.

([15]) Communication from the European Commission, 2011. 'Supporting Growth and Jobs: an Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems'. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities [COM (2011) 567 final].

However, two countries (Finland and the United Kingdom – Northern Ireland) ceased to have quantitative targets for widening participation and attainment of under-represented groups between 2015 and 2020.

When looking at the five indicators for the reference year 2019/20, monitoring of socio-economic characteristics of the student body was the most widely implemented policy (28 education systems). Also, recognition of prior informal or non-formal learning was implemented in more than half of the education systems, and the requirement of completion rates in external Quality Assurance were implemented in almost half of the education systems.

The two indicators, which focus the most on the social dimension and widening participation in higher education, were implemented in less than half of the education systems. Only 12 education systems had quantitative targets for widening participation and/or under-represented groups, and 13 countries had performance-based funding systems with a social dimension focus. This suggests that while indicators related to the quality and relevance of higher education show implementation in the majority of education systems, there is more work to be done related to the two indicators on widening participation and the social dimension of higher education.
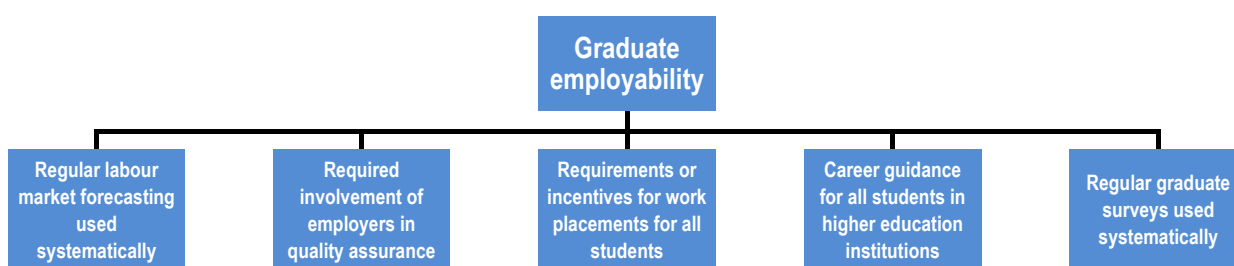
## Summary table on higher education, 2019/20

| | 1. Quantitative targets for widening participation and/or attainment of under-represented groups | 2. Monitoring of socioeconomic background of students | 3. Recognition of informal or non-formal learning in entry to higher education | 4. Completion rates as a required criterion in external QA | 5. Performance-based funding mechanisms with a social dimension focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium fr | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Belgium de | | | | ● | |
| Belgium nl | | ● | ● | | ● |
| Bulgaria | | ● | | ● | |
| Czechia | | | | | |
| Denmark | | ● | ● | | |
| Germany | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Estonia | | | ● | ● | |
| Ireland | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Greece | ● | | | | |
| Spain | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| France | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Croatia | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Italy | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Cyprus | ● | | | | |
| Latvia | | | | | |
| Lithuania | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Luxembourg | | | ● | | |
| Hungary | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Malta | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| Netherlands | ● | ● | | | |
| Austria | ● | ● | | | ● |
| Poland | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Portugal | | | ● | ● | ● |
| Romania | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| Slovenia | | | | ● | |
| Slovakia | | | | | |
| Finland | | ● | ● | | |
| Sweden | | ● | ● | | |
| United Kingdom - ENG | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - WLS | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - NIR | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - SCT | ● | ● | ● | | |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | | | | | |
| Iceland | | | ● | ● | |
| Liechtenstein | | ● | ● | | |
| Montenegro | | | ● | ● | |
| North Macedonia | | ● | | ● | |
| Norway | | ● | ● | | |
| Serbia | ● | ● | | ● | |
| Turkey | | ● | ● | | |

Employability has played a central role in the Europe 2020 strategy as well as in the Education and Training 2020 ('ET 2020') ([16]) and higher education modernisation strategies (European Commission, 2011). Within the ET 2020 strategy, the Council of the European Union adopted a benchmark on graduate employability in 2012 ([17]). According to this benchmark, 'by 2020, the share of employed graduates (20-34 year-olds) having left education and training no more than three years before the reference year should be at least 82 %' ([18]). Also, the monitoring of graduates' career development by higher education institutions (HEIs) has also been identified as crucial in increasing the relevance of programmes (European Commission, 2011). As a result of these goals, five policy measures to monitor the achievement of this goal were selected as structural indicators (see the diagram below).

```
                            ┌─────────────────┐
                            │    Graduate     │
                            │  employability  │
                            └─────────────────┘
┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ Regular labour│ │   Required   │ │ Requirements │ │Career guidance│ │Regular graduate│
│market forecasting│ │involvement of│ │or incentives │ │for all students│ │surveys used  │
│    used      │ │ employers in │ │for work      │ │in higher educ.│ │systematically│
│systematically│ │quality assurance│ │placements for│ │institutions  │ │              │
│              │ │              │ │all students  │ │              │ │              │
└──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘
```

# Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015

Between 2015 and 2020, there were reforms in all policy areas, except in career guidance (Indicator 4). Greece and Estonia started using labour market forecasting systematically in 2015 and 2016 respectively. For example, in Greece, an Action Plan for labour market forecasting was drafted by the Ministry of Labour and the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources in May 2015. It was approved by the European Commission on 15 May 2015 and implementation started immediately.

In Czechia, an amendment to the Higher Education Act introducing a new system of quality evaluation for higher education institutions was approved in 2016. A new accreditation agency – the Accreditation Bureau – was established. The members of the Accreditation Bureau are appointed in such a way that nine members of the Board of the Accreditation Bureau, including the Chairman and one Vice-Chairman, are long-term members of academic staff and five members of the Accreditation Board, including one Vice-Chairman, are people from practice, especially from Professionals Chambers established by law. There is no requirement for the five members from practice to be directly employers, but they should be from the future potential workplaces of the graduates. Croatia introduced requirements for work placements (Indicator 3) in the academic year 2016/17. In order to increase the volume and quality of work-based learning in higher education, the Ministry of Science and Education in Croatia allocated a special funding for this purpose in the European Social Fund in 2019.

When looking at the situation in 2020, the most widely implemented policy area is clearly career guidance for all students in higher education institutions, implemented in almost all countries. As this was already the case in 2015, not many reforms have taken place since then. The area where most

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([16])   Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), OJ 2009/C 119/02, 28.5.2009.

([17])   Council conclusions of 11 May 2012 on the employability of graduates from education and training, OJ 2012/C 169/04, 15.6.2012.

([18])   Ibid., p. 10.

work is needed is incentives or requirements for work placements for all students. This kind of policy is implemented only in 11 education systems, suggesting that most students in Europe do not necessarily have the opportunities to undertake work experience as part of their studies. Many more countries do offer incentives or require work placements, but these very often concern only professional higher education. The implementation of policies in the other three areas (labour market forecasting, required involvement of employers in Quality Assurance and graduate tracking surveys) is relatively wide and has taken place in at least half of the education systems. However, clearly more is needed to be done in many countries in these policy areas.

## Summary table on graduate employability, 2019/20

| | 1. Regular labour market forecasting used systematically | 2. Required involvement of employers in external QA | 3. Requirements OR incentives for work placements for all students | 4. Career guidance for all students in HEIs | 5. Regular graduate surveys used systematically |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium fr | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| Belgium de | | ● | ● | | |
| Belgium nl | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Bulgaria | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Czechia | | ● | | ● | |
| Denmark | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Germany | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Estonia | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Ireland | ● | | | ● | ● |
| Greece | ● | ● | | ● | |
| Spain | | ● | ● | ● | |
| France | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Croatia | | ● | ● | | ● |
| Italy | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Cyprus | | | | ● | |
| Latvia | ● | ● | | | ● |
| Lithuania | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| Luxembourg | | | | ● | |
| Hungary | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Malta | | ● | ● | ● | |
| Netherlands | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| Austria | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Poland | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| Portugal | | ● | | ● | |
| Romania | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Slovenia | | ● | | ● | |
| Slovakia | | | | ● | ● |
| Finland | ● | | | ● | |
| Sweden | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - ENG | ● | | | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - WLS | ● | | | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - NIR | ● | | | ● | ● |
| United Kingdom - SCT | ● | | | ● | ● |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | ● | ● | | | |
| Iceland | | | | ● | |
| Liechtenstein | | ● | | ● | ● |
| Montenegro | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| North Macedonia | ● | ● | | ● | |
| Norway | ● | | | ● | ● |
| Serbia | | | | ● | |
| Turkey | | | | ● | |

## 6. LEARNING MOBILITY

Despite all the added values of learning mobility in higher education, the path towards the free movement of students is still obstructed by several obstacles, including issues related to the portability of grants and loans, the recognition of qualifications and credits, the accessibility and relevance of information and guidance, or linguistic skills. For this reason, the Council of the European Union recommends ([19]) that Member States implement structural reforms and create a positive environment supporting learning mobility. This Recommendation also provides the framework for the Mobility Scoreboard, a tool for monitoring progress made by European countries in this area.

Among the indicators of the Mobility Scoreboard, three were selected to be part of the structural indicators: 1) the portability of grants and/or loans; 2) the percentage of higher education institutions using ECTS; and 3) the recognition of qualifications.
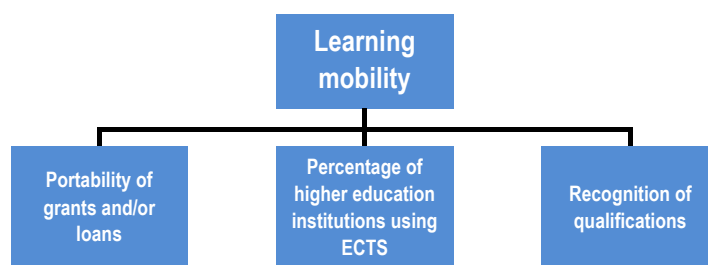


## Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015

This analysis examines indicators on learning mobility up to the academic year 2018/19. The data collection for 2018/19 took place within the framework of updating the Mobility Scoreboard, during which indicators and country positions have been clarified and revised accordingly. More detailed information is published in the Eurydice background report ([20]).

**Portability** refers to the possibility for students to take domestic grants and/or loans to another EHEA system, easing the funding of mobility periods. Portability should ideally apply to both short-term study visits in the framework of a home-country programme (credit mobility) and entire-degree courses (degree mobility). However, less than half of European education systems allow for both the credit and degree portability of all domestic support measures (grants and/or loans, depending on their availability). In addition, even when they do so, some of them apply at least some restrictions related to geography (country limitations), the types of programme, the field of study, or time. At the same time, the large majority of education systems allow the portability of domestic support measures for at least credit mobility.

Malta and Romania are the only countries reporting regulatory changes since 2015/16 that have enhanced the portability of domestic grants. In Malta, public grants are portable for both credit and degree mobility since 2016, while in Romania, a 2017 Ministerial order made the portability of grants for credit mobility possible (with restrictions). In addition, while grants ceased to exist in the United Kingdom (England), the portability of loans has remained stable and therefore the changes do not have an impact on the position of this education system.

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([19]) Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

([20]) European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020. *Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report 2018/19*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

The **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)** is a student-centred credit system based on the student workload required to achieve specified learning outcomes. As such, it is an essential tool facilitating the recognition of students' learning achievements in the home-country programme as well as during mobility periods in a comparable manner. ECTS is widely used in European countries. As the table shows, in the large majority of higher education systems, all institutions are using ECTS, and the number of education systems in this category has been increasing throughout the years. The implementation of the learning outcomes approach has progressed at institutional level, and top-level authorities in most countries have taken efforts to implement the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide and monitor ECTS implementation by external quality assurance agencies. However, there are six systems where a national credit system operates in conjunction with ECTS. Although these national and European systems may be sufficiently similar for conversion of credits to be easily made, there may be aspects of the use of national credits which differ from the agreements on how ECTS should operate, and each of these systems will have differing degrees of ECTS compatibility.

The **automatic recognition of qualifications** – that is, the automatic right of an applicant holding a qualification of a certain level to be considered for entry to a programme of further study in the next level in any other EHEA-country – is a key condition facilitating degree mobility. One of the hopes and expectations of the Bologna Process when it was launched in 1999 was that, through establishing convergent degree structures across Europe, it would become much easier for students to be mobile and study in different systems. However, so far, the smooth recognition of academic qualifications is still not ensured in most European education systems. The indicator on the automatic recognition of qualifications reveals the greatest need for progress in comparison with the other policy areas. Yet it is still the most dynamic policy area among the three in terms of policy changes taking place since 2015/16.

While national situations are often not clear-cut, given the autonomy of higher education institutions and the fuzzy boundary between the concepts of degree recognition and admission, ten education systems reportedly operate an automatic recognition system, based on trust, of the degrees issued in other EHEA countries. While automatic recognition was already in place in 2015/16 in most of these countries, Turkey's new regulation on the recognition and equivalence of foreign higher education has been in force since 2017.

While not yet having full system-level recognition for all EHEA countries, a further 15 systems report that they have automatic recognition for some of these countries. This is usually based on regional, bilateral or multilateral agreements on the mutual automatic recognition of qualifications. In addition, Portugal and Romania operate an automatic recognition system that does not (yet) cover all EHEA countries. In Portugal, the list of countries whose qualifications fall under the automatic recognition procedure are continuously expanding. In Romania, automatic recognition applies to degrees from all EU countries as well as to degrees issued by selected higher education institutions from EHEA and non-EHEA countries.

Regional bilateral and multilateral agreements represent the main direction of change in this policy area. Such agreements can be regarded as important steps towards the mutual automatic recognition of qualifications. Among the recent multilateral agreements is the Benelux agreement – between the three Communities of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – which was signed in 2015. Shortly after, in 2016, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway revised the Nordic Declaration on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. In 2018, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also signed an intergovernmental agreement on the automatic recognition of higher education qualifications, which entered into force in the academic year 2018/19. Hungary also signed a bilateral

agreement with Russia in the same year. Most recently, at the end of 2019, a new step was taken by two regions already having separate multilateral agreements: the Benelux countries and the three Baltic States signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the automatic mutual recognition of higher education diplomas.

## Summary table on learning mobility, 2018/19

| | Portability of grants and/or loans | | | Percentage of higher education institutions using ECTS | Automatic recognition of qualifications | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Full | Partial | No | | Yes | Partial | No |
| Belgium fr | | | ● | 100 % | | ● | |
| Belgium de | ●a | | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Belgium nl | ●a | | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Bulgaria | | | ● | 100 % | | | ● |
| Czechia | | ●c | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Denmark | ●b | | | 100 % | ● | | |
| Germany | ●b | | | 100 % | ● | | |
| Estonia | | ●c | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Ireland | ●b | | | 75 % - 99 % | | | ● |
| Greece | | | ● | 100 % | | | ● |
| Spain | | ●d | | 100 % | | | ● |
| France | ●b | | | 100 % | ● | | |
| Croatia | | ●c | | 100 % | | | ● |
| Italy | | ●c | | 100 % | ● | | |
| Cyprus | ●a | | | 75 % - 99 % | | | ● |
| Latvia | | ●d | | National system, ECTS compatible | | ● | |
| Lithuania | | ●d | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Luxembourg | ●a | | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Hungary | | ●c | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Malta | ●a | | | 100 % | ● | | |
| Netherlands | ●a | | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Austria | ●b | | | 100 % | | | ● |
| Poland | | ●c | | 100 % | ● | | |
| Portugal | | ●d | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Romania | | ●d | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Slovenia | ●a | | | 100 % | | | ● |
| Slovakia | | ●c | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Finland | ●a | | | 100 % | ● | | |
| Sweden | ●a | | | National system, ECTS compatible | ● | | |
| United Kingdom - ENG | | ●d | | National system, ECTS compatible | | | ● |
| United Kingdom - WLS | | ●d | | National system, ECTS compatible | | | ● |
| United Kingdom - NIR | | ●d | | National system, ECTS compatible | | | ● |
| United Kingdom - SCT | ●b | | | National system, ECTS compatible | | | ● |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | | | ● | 100 % | | | ● |
| Iceland | ●a | | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Liechtenstein | ●a | | | 100 % | | ● | |
| Montenegro | ●a | | | 100 % | | | ● |
| North Macedonia | | | ● | 100 % | | | ● |
| Norway | ●a | | | 100 % | ● | | |
| Serbia | | | ● | 100 % | | | ● |
| Turkey | | ●c | | 100 % | ● | | |

| | **Portability of student grants and/or loans** |
|---|---|
| *Yes* | a) Full portability or b) portability of domestic student support measures – grants and/or loans – for credit and degree mobility, but with some restrictions. |
| *Partial* | Credit portability<br>c) without restrictions and<br>d) with restrictions related to geography (country limitations), and/or types of programme, and / or field of study or time. No degree portability or not all major support measures with degree portability. |
| *No* | No portability: public grants and/or loans are only provided if students study in the home country or are portable only in exceptional cases (no equivalent programme is available in the home country). |
| | **Automatic recognition of qualifications** |
| *Yes* | All higher education qualifications issued in other EHEA countries are recognised on an equal level with qualifications in the home country. |
| *Partial* | Automatic recognition takes place with a subset of European countries; for other countries, specific procedures are in place for recognition. |
| *No* | There is no automatic recognition at system level. |

## SCOPE OF INDICATORS / KEY DEFINITIONS

# 1. Early childhood education and care

## 1.1. Guarantee of a place

This table shows the starting age of the universal legal entitlement to an ECEC place, compulsory ECEC and compulsory primary education.

**Compulsory ECEC** refers to the obligation for children to attend ECEC settings when they reach a certain age.

**Legal entitlement to ECEC** refers to a statutory duty on ECEC providers to secure publicly subsidised ECEC provision for all children living in a catchment area whose parents, regardless of their employment, socio-economic or family status, require a place for their child.

It is important to note that a 'right to ECEC for every child' expressed in legislation in general terms, but without adequate funding and the necessary policies to ensure the delivery of sufficient places is not considered a legal entitlement. Similarly, the existence of some publicly subsidised ECEC settings providing places for limited numbers of children is not considered a legal entitlement if public authorities are not obliged to provide a place. A legal entitlement to ECEC exists when every child has an enforceable right to benefit from ECEC provision. An enforceable right means that public authorities guarantee a place for each child whose parents request it (in the age-range covered by the legal entitlement), regardless of their employment, socio-economic or family status. It does not necessarily imply that provision is free, only that it is publicly subsidised and affordable.

A targeted legal entitlement or targeted compulsory ECEC that applies only to certain groups of children (e.g. disadvantaged learners, children of parents who are in employment, certain minorities, etc.) are not considered in this publication.

## 1.2. Professionalisation of ECEC staff

**ECEC staff** refers here only to those professionals who have regular, daily, direct contact with children and whose duties involve education and care. These staff have the main responsibility for groups of children in an ECEC setting. Their duties usually include designing and delivering safe and developmentally appropriate activities in accordance with all relevant programmes/curricula.

The term ECEC staff does not include heads of ECEC settings, medical/healthcare staff (such as pae-diatricians, physiotherapists, psychomotor therapists, nutritionists, etc. providing support for children's physical development), professional specialists (such as psychologists), assistants/auxiliary staff who perform only domestic or maintenance roles (such as preparing food and cleaning premises).

The indicator 1.2.1 on the requirement for at least one staff member per group of children in ECEC to be qualified to a minimum of Bachelor level in the field of education (i.e. a minimum of three years at ISCED 6 according to the ISCED 2011 classification) aims to show whether education staff in the sector are highly qualified. This is important as staff who are highly qualified in education can provide leadership to other team members when designing and delivering developmentally appropriate activities for children and thus raise the quality of provision.

Programmes at **ISCED level 6, at Bachelor's or equivalent level**, are often designed to provide participants with academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level are typically theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions, but do not necessarily involve the completion of a research project or thesis ([21]).

The indicator 1.2.2 presents the basic requirements regarding the **continuing professional development** (CPD). CPD consists of the formal in-service training undertaken throughout a career that allows ECEC staff members to broaden, develop and update their knowledge, skills and attitudes. It includes both subject-based and pedagogical training. Different formats are offered such as courses, seminars, peer observation and support from practitioners' networks. In certain cases, continuing professional development activities may lead to supplementary qualifications.

**Professional duty**: CPD is considered to be one of ECEC staff's professional duties according to regulations or other relevant policy documents.

## 1.3. Curriculum or educational guidelines

This indicator shows whether countries have ECEC curriculum or educational guidelines for the entire ECEC phase or only for the children aged 3 and over.

The **ECEC curriculum** as defined in the ECEC quality framework covers developmental care, forma-tive interactions, learning experiences and supportive assessment. It promotes young children's per-sonal and social development and their learning as well as laying the foundations for their future life and citizenship. The ECEC curriculum is set out in formal documentation issued by the responsible authorities.

The learning opportunities to be provided to young children can also be communicated through official **educational guidelines** which explain the content and teaching approaches incorporated into legislation as part of, for example, an ECEC education programme or reference framework. The guidelines often refer to skills, educational standards, curriculum criteria or care/education plans; they may also offer practical advice for ECEC practitioners.

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([21]) http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf

## 1.4. Language programmes as targeted support measure

This indicator shows if any of the three types of language support measures are available in ECEC:

a) measures for children who have speech, language and communication needs in the language of instruction;

b) measures to improve the language of instruction for children who speak other language(s) at home;

c) mother tongue teaching: measures to improve children's skills in the language they speak at home where it is not the language of instruction.

**Language of instruction** refers to the main language that is officially used in education at ECEC and school level. It may not be the first or home language for all pupils.

The limitation of this indicator relates to the fact that only central level recommendations are reported, therefore regional and local practices are not reflected even when they are widespread. Languages spoken in a country often vary in different regions and localities, therefore many measures are taken at these levels.

## 1.5. Parent support

These two indicators concern measures issued by top-level authority regarding parent support. Bottom up, NGO and pro-profit educational activities that are not initiated/supported from top-level are not considered.

**Top-level authority**: the highest level of authority with responsibility for education in a given country, usually located at national (state) level. However, for Belgium, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, the Communautés, *Länder*, *Comunidades Autónomas* and devolved administrations respectively are responsible for all or most areas relating to education. Therefore, these administrations are considered as the top-level authority for the areas where they hold the responsibility, and for the areas of responsibility shared with the national (state) level, both are considered to be top-level authorities.

**Home learning guidance** refers to fostering the child's learning at home, by providing information and ideas to families about how to help their children with curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning. Home learning guidance aims to inspire parents to offer their children all kinds of learning experiences at home, both implicit and explicit, e.g. by involving children in routine activities (making grocery lists, shopping, preparing meals, getting dressed, making phone call, etc.) and by enriching these activities with stimulating discussions.

**Parenting programmes** have similar objectives to those set for guidance on home learning. The main distinction between these two types of support lies in their organisation: in the case of parenting programmes, parents attend formal courses covering a variety of topics related to children's education and development. Parenting programmes refer to formal parenting classes to help families establish home environments that support children as learners. Parents attend formal courses covering a variety of topics related to children's education and development (for example, speech/language development, effective discipline, building self-esteem, understanding challenging behaviour).

# 2. Achievement in basic skills

## 2.1. Nationally standardised tests in literacy, mathematics and science

This indicator examines the extent to which the three basic skills are assessed in national tests during compulsory education.

**National testing** is defined as 'the national administration of standardised tests and centrally set examinations'. These tests are standardised by the national education authorities or, in the case of Belgium, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, by the top-level authorities for education. The procedures for the administration and marking of tests, as well as the setting of content and the interpretation and use of results are decided at central level. National testing is carried out under the authority of a national or centralised body and all examinees take the tests under similar conditions.

This indicator includes national testing for both summative and formative purposes. Both compulsory and optional tests are considered, as are sample-based national tests.

## 2.2. Recent national reports on achievement in basic skills

This indicator relates to national reports on performance trends, factors contributing to underachievement, and effective approaches for raising attainment in the basic skills. These reports are based on national data and/or results of international surveys such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS and have been published since 2015.

## 2.3. Use of student performance data in external school evaluation

This indicators looks at whether student performance data is used as an information source in external school evaluation.

The **external evaluation of schools** is conducted by evaluators who report to a local, regional or central/top level education authority; they are not directly involved in the activities of the school under evaluation. This type of evaluation covers a broad range of school activities, including teaching and learning and/or all aspects of school management.

The **student performance data** used in external school evaluation may include students' results in centrally set examinations and nationally standardised assessments. Also used are student results in teacher assessment; data on student progression through school; student results in international surveys; as well as, although less frequently, outcomes in the job market and student or parent satisfaction.

## 2.4. Central guidelines on addressing student underachievement in initial teacher education (ITE)

This indicator shows whether central level regulations, recommendations or guidelines for ITE programmes identify any final competences related to the knowledge and skills needed for addressing underachievement in basic skills or whether higher education institutions have full autonomy with regard to the content of ITE programmes.

## 2.5. Additional support for schools enrolling large numbers of disadvantaged students

This indicator examines whether central education authorities allocate additional resources to schools that enrol large numbers of disadvantaged students. **Additional support to schools** refers to nationally allocated financial and/or other resources that require additional funding (extra educational staff, special allowances, professional development opportunities, reduced teaching time, scholarships, career advice services, etc.). The central education authorities can allocate these resources to the regional, local or school level directly.

**Disadvantaged students** (groups at risk or vulnerable groups) are defined at national level. Possible criteria are socio-economic status, ethnic origin, having a migrant background or others depending on the national context.

**Socio-economic status** refers to a combined economic and sociological measure of an individual's or his/her family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. Parents' educational attainment is often taken as a proxy measure for socio-economic status.

# 3. Early leaving from education and training (ELET)

In this analysis, **'early leaving from education and training'** refers to students leaving education and training before completing the upper secondary level and obtaining a corresponding school leaving certificate. This broad definition encompasses the young people who, according to their own country's definition, are considered to be early leavers. It includes, for example, young people who leave (or drop out of) school without completing what is considered in the national context as basic education (usually primary and lower secondary education).

## 3.1. Collecting national data on ELET based on a student register

This indicator examines the existence of a national data collection system on ELET to assess the scale of the problem. ELET data from student registers is collected automatically from school administration systems based on students' personal data. This can be used to determine the number of early leavers by comparing records from one school year to the next. It can also be useful when evaluating the effectiveness of policies to reduce early leaving. Student register based data can finally also be employed to monitor absenteeism, thereby acting as a warning system to alert schools and authorities that they may need to intervene to help students at risk of leaving early.

## 3.2. Increasing the flexibility and permeability of education pathways

This indicator focuses on policy initiatives aimed at minimising the risk of early leaving by offering students a wider choice of programmes or alternative pathways (academic, technical or vocational), as well as providing opportunities for students to change tracks or programmes which do not meet their needs. The indicator also covers policies that are designed to ensure a smooth transition between education levels and programmes (especially from general education to VET programmes). It also includes policies that aim to improve the recognition of skills and qualifications, thereby helping students to progress to the next level or to re-engage in education or training if they have left the system prematurely.

### 3.3. Providing language support for students with a different mother tongue

This indicator covers policies for language support for students with a mother tongue that is different from the language of instruction. Empirically, young people from migrant backgrounds tend to be over-represented among those leaving education and training early in many European countries ([22]). Policies on language support for these students can help ensure the provision of measures for strengthening the students' competences in the language of instruction, which are crucial in order to benefit from all the learning opportunities and to avoid falling behind.

### 3.4. Addressing ELET in initial teacher education and continuing professional development

This indicator examines policies and measures for improving teachers' understanding of the challenge of early leaving through initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD). This implies increasing teachers' awareness of the underlying causes, the main triggers and early warning signs, as well as strengthening teachers' capacity to take action in both preventing early leaving and supporting students who are at risk. Training on ELET may also provide teachers with an opportunity to engage in peer learning and collaborate with other teachers and schools with experience in this area.

### 3.5. Offering education and career guidance in schools

This indicator analyses policies on education and career guidance, which is provided both as a compulsory part of the curriculum and by school guidance services in lower and upper secondary education. Education and career guidance provides students with information as well as support for developing their decision-making and other skills important for managing their educational and/or career choices. Guidance may also include psycho-social work or counselling to help students, in particular those at risk of leaving early, as they progress through education and training.

### 3.6. Providing support for early leavers to re-enter the education and training system

This indicator presents policies and measures that help young people who have left education and training early to re-enter the system. This may entail: policies promoting the provision of second chance education, i.e. alternative education and training pathways leading to a formal qualification; education and career guidance, which may be combined with practical skills training, one-to-one or group counselling, or similar support offered to help young people develop a vision for their careers and lives; and initiatives taking place within the context of the 'Youth Guarantee' ([23]), which seeks to ensure that all young people under 25 get a good quality, definite offer within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed, for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continuing education that is adapted to each individual's need and situation.

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[22]    Eurostat (EU-LFS) [edat_lfse_02].

[23]    Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee. OJ C 120, 26.4.2013.
        (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013H0426(01))

# 4. Higher education

## 4.1. Quantitative targets relating to the social dimension of higher education

This indicator examines countries attempts to widen participation in higher education through quantitative targets for under-represented groups of students. It encompasses quantitative targets which focus on widening or increasing participation among the groups currently under-represented in higher education. However, equity in treatment is also important, so targets related to improving completion rates (attainment) for these groups are also considered here. Examples of under-represented groups might include people with disabilities, migrants, ethnic groups, lower socio-'economic status groups, women/men, etc.

## 4.2. Monitoring of the socio-economic characteristics of the student body

For this indicator, **systematic monitoring** refers to the process of systematic data gathering, analysis and use of data to inform policy. It aims to capture how the higher education system operates and whether it is reaching its objectives and targets. It can take place at various stages: on entry to higher education, during studies (refers to student retention), at graduation (refers to completion rates) and after graduation (refers to graduate destinations – employment or further study). Systematic monitoring must include mechanisms for cross-institutional data gathering and allow cross-institutional data comparability.

This indicator focuses on the systematic monitoring of the **socio-economic status of students**, defined as a combined measure of students' or their families' economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. When analysing a family's socio-economic status, the household income (combined and individual) is examined as well as the education and occupation of earners. Parents' educational attainment is often taken as a proxy measure for socio-economic status.

## 4.3. Recognition of informal and non-formal learning on entry to higher education

This indicator focuses on prior informal and non-formal learning.

**Informal learning** means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective. Examples of informal learning outcomes are skills acquired through life and work experiences such as project management or ICT skills acquired at work; languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country; ICT skills acquired outside work; skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports and youth work; and through home-based activities (e.g. taking care of a child).

**Non-formal learning** means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives and learning time), where some form of learning support is present (e.g. from a tutor); it may cover programmes to deliver work skills, adult literacy, and basic education for early school leavers. Very common examples of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target groups or the general public.

## 4.4. Completion rates as a requirement in external quality assurance

This indicator focuses on the use of completion rates as one of the criteria included in external quality assurance procedures for higher education institutions/programmes. Where the monitoring of completion rates is a requirement, it gives a good indication that they are measured in practice and that the information is likely to be used in policy making. The completion rate indicates the percentage of students who complete the higher education programme they have started.

## 4.5. Performance-based funding mechanisms with a social dimension focus

Performance-based funding mechanisms with a **social dimension focus** enable funding to be provided to higher education institutions if they meet a defined level of performance in relation to social objectives. The performance may refer to people – staff or students – with defined characteristics in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, migrant status, etc.

# 5. Graduate employability

## 5.1. Labour market forecasting

**Labour market forecasting** means 'estimating the expected future number of jobs available in an economy [in the medium or long term] and their particular skill or qualification requirements'. Skills needs forecasts are complemented by forecasts of the number of people (supply) with particular skills. The comparison of demand and supply can indicate potential imbalances or skill mismatches in future labour markets ([24]).

This indicator looks specifically at whether educational authorities and recognised stakeholders make systematic use of information from labour market forecasts through established mechanisms.

## 5.2. Required involvement of employers in external quality assurance (QA) procedures

Quality assurance is the most common mechanism to evaluate and monitor the employability performance of higher education institutions in the EHEA. Through quality assurance, education authorities can encourage HEIs to be responsive to the needs of the labour market. Employer involvement in quality assurance procedures is a relatively common way of ensuring that study programmes provide graduates with the skills they need in the workplace.

This indicator shows whether employers are required to be involved in quality assurance in higher education.

## 5.3. Requirements or incentives to include work placements in higher education programmes

Practical training is regarded as a key element in enhancing employability as it helps graduates acquire the work-related skills demanded by employers. The term 'work placement' has referred to two types of experience in a working environment in the research literature. Firstly, it is the placement of students in supervised work settings (e.g. through internships) so they can apply the knowledge and skills learned during their studies. Secondly, it refers to a period of voluntary work (also referred to as 'student-community engagement') that is intended to allow students to become familiar with the

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([24])  Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), 2012. *Building on skills forecasts – Comparing methods and applications. Conference proceedings.* Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

working environment in general, whilst also conveying some benefit to the community. Nevertheless, this latter type of placement should also be integrated into tertiary programmes in order to have a positive impact on graduate employability.

This indicator looks at whether pubic authorities in European countries have requirements or give incentives to ensure that higher education institutions include work placements/practical experience as part of their education programmes.

## 5.4. Career guidance for higher education students

In the context of employability, an important role of higher education institutions is to provide graduates with the work skills that will enable them to find jobs after graduation. Career guidance services can help students acquire the job-hunting skills they need to find work. Career guidance is regarded as particularly important for non-traditional learners, especially if it is provided throughout their course of study, not only in their last year(s).

This indicator looks at whether career guidance is available to all home students ([25]) in higher education institutions throughout their course of study.

## 5.5. Systematic use of graduate tracking surveys

Graduate tracking surveys seek to track the employment destinations and early careers of higher education graduates. According to research, these self-assessment surveys are valuable tools for evaluating graduate employability. They not only provide the means to measure the percentage of graduates finding employment after graduation, but they are also able to describe the quality of jobs, the time it took to find a job, graduates' job satisfaction, and the match between graduates' skills and job requirements. Furthermore, based on graduate surveys, it is possible to conduct analyses on the relative impact of graduates' individual characteristics and the higher education programme they attended. In this way, these surveys are useful tools for a multi-dimensional evaluation of employability in higher education, particularly when there are established mechanisms by which both education authorities and HEIs can make use of the information gathered.

This indicator examines whether graduate tracking surveys are used systematically by education authorities. Systematic use of graduate tracking surveys means that education authorities have established mechanisms with well-defined actors to make use of the information gained from graduate tracking surveys. Examples of systematic use: quality assurance procedures, mechanisms to determine the number of publicly funded study places, etc.

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([25])    Home students are students that are either nationals of a country or are treated in the same manner from a legal perspective (e.g. EU citizens studying in another EU Member State).

# 6. Learning mobility

## 6.1.  Portability of domestic grants and/or loans

Portability refers to the possibility of students to take domestic grants and/or loans to another EHEA system, easing the funding of mobility periods. Portability can apply to either short-term study visits in the framework of a home-country programme (credit mobility) or entire-degree courses (degree mobility), or both.

This indicator examines the extent to which education systems allow for the portability of available domestic support measures, with or without additional restrictions related to geography (country limitations), the types of programme, the field of study, or time. Full portability refers to the possibility of students to take domestic grants and/or loans to another EHEA system for both credit and degree mobility; partial portability limits this possibility to credit mobility periods; while in case of no portability, public grants and/or loans are only provided if students study in the home country or are portable only in exceptional cases (no equivalent programme is available in the home country).

## 6.2.  Percentage of higher education institutions using ECTS

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a student-centred credit system based on the student workload required to achieve specified learning outcomes.

This indicator looks at the percentage of higher education institutions using ECTS in each education system. The assumption behind the indicator is that reliance on ECTS, without the need for conversion between national credit systems, facilitates the recognition of students' learning achievements during mobility periods in their home countries/institutions. Where a national credit system operates in conjunction with ECTS, there may be aspects of the use of national credits which differ from the agreements on how ECTS should operate, and therefore there is a risk of differing degrees of ECTS compatibility.

## 6.3.  Recognition of qualifications

The automatic mutual recognition of a qualification is the right for holders of a qualification of a certain level that has been issued by one country to be considered for entry to a higher education programme in the next level in another country, without having to go through any separate recognition procedure. This shall not prejudice the right of a higher education institution or the competent authorities to set specific evaluation and admission criteria for a specific programme [26]. Such automatic recognition is an important facilitator of degree mobility.

This indicator examines to what extent there is automatic recognition of qualifications within the European Higher Education Area, or whether there are additional procedures in place for the recognition of qualifications. In education systems with a system of full and automatic recognition, all higher education qualifications issued in other EHEA countries are recognised on an equal level with qualifications in the home country. A partial application of this system exists where automatic recognition takes place with a subset of European countries only, and specific procedures are in place for recognition for the other countries. Finally, there is no automatic recognition at system level where additional recognition procedures are in place for all higher education qualifications issued in any other country.

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[26]   See the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C444/01 10.12.2018.

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