

Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe 2022

Overview of
major reforms since 2015

Eurydice background report

6. Scope of indicators / Key definitions



6. SCOPE OF INDICATORS / KEY DEFINITIONS

6.1. Early childhood education and care

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, socioeconomic 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, socioeconomic 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.

Professionalisation of ECEC staff

Here, '**ECEC staff**' refers only to those professionals who have regular, daily, direct contact with children and whose duties involve education and care. These staff members bear 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 paediatricians, physiotherapists, psychomotor therapists, nutritionists, etc. providing support for children's physical development), professional specialists (such as psychologists), assistants / auxiliary staff members who only perform domestic or maintenance roles (such as preparing food and cleaning premises).

Indicator 1.2.1 on the requirement for at least one staff member per group of children in ECEC to have a minimum of Bachelor-level qualification in the field of education (i.e. a minimum of 3 years at ISCED level 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 (i.e. Bachelor's degree 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 ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

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, CPD activities may lead to supplementary qualifications.

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

Curriculum or educational guidelines

This indicator shows whether countries have an 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, formative interactions, learning experiences and supportive assessment. It promotes young children's personal and social development and their learning as well as laying the foundations for their future life and citizenship in their society. 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.

6.2. Achievement in basic skills

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.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

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.

Use of student performance data in external school evaluation

This indicator looks at whether student performance data is used as a source of information 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, 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 assessments; data on student progression through school; student results in international surveys; and, although less frequently, outcomes in the job market and student or parent satisfaction.

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

This indicator shows whether there are any central-level regulations, recommendations or guidelines for ITE programmes regarding the competences needed to address underachievement in basic skills or whether higher education institutions have full autonomy with regard to the content of ITE programmes.

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 would otherwise 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 at the regional, local or school level directly.

Disadvantaged students (from at-risk or vulnerable groups) are defined at national level. Possible criteria are socioeconomic status, ethnic origin and having a migrant background, along with other criteria depending on the national context.

Socioeconomic status refers to a combined economic and sociological measure of an individual's or their 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 socioeconomic status.

6.3. Early leaving from education and training

In this analysis, **early leaving from education and training (ELET)** 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).

Collecting national data on 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.

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) and providing them with opportunities to change paths or programmes when these 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 vocational education and training 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.

Providing language support for students with a different mother tongue

This indicator covers language-support policies 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⁽⁴⁷⁾. Language-support policies can help ensure the provision of measures to strengthen the students' competences in the language of instruction, which are crucial in order to benefit from learning opportunities and avoid falling behind.

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 and strengthening their 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.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Eurostat (EU-LFS) [edat_ifse_02]

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 and support in developing decision-making and other skills which are important for managing their educational and/or career choices. Guidance may also include psychosocial work or counselling to help students, in particular those at risk of leaving early, as they progress through education and training.

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' ⁽⁴⁸⁾, which seeks to ensure that all young people under 25 get a good quality, definite offer within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education that is adapted to each individual's needs and situation.

6.4. Higher education

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 socioeconomic status groups, women/men, etc.

Monitoring of the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body

For this indicator, **systematic monitoring** refers to the process of systematic 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: upon entry to higher education, during studies (i.e. student retention), at graduation (i.e. completion rates) and after graduation (i.e. 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 **socioeconomic 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 socioeconomic status, the household income (combined and individual) is examined, along with the education and

⁽⁴⁸⁾ 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\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013H0426(01))).

occupation of earners. Parents' educational attainment is often taken as a proxy measure for socioeconomic status.

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 which 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 skills acquired 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 online 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.

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 policymaking. The completion rate indicates the percentage of students who complete the higher education programme they have started.

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 socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, migrant status, etc.