Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe 2021

Overview of major reforms since 2015

Eurydice Background Report

3. EARLY LEAVING FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ELET)

European Education and Culture Executive Agency

Structural Indicators for

Monitoring Education and

Training Systems in Europe

2021

Overview of
major reforms since 2015

Eurydice Background Report

Authors EACEA:
Teodora Parveva (Coordinator), Akvile Motiejunaite,
Sogol Noorani, and Jari Riiheläinen

European
Education and
Culture
Executive Agency

CONTENTS 5

INTRODUCTION

This report contains more than 20 key structural indicators on education policies in four areas: early childhood education and care (ECEC), achievement in basic skills, early leaving from education and training (ELET) and higher education.

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').

The performance of the EU and its Member States with regard to the ET 2020 benchmarks is 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, from 2015 onwards, 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 an 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).

2021 update

This report contains the updated indicators for the 2020/21 school/academic year together with a short overview of the major reforms since the start of the 2014/15 school/academic year in four 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

The 2021 update of the Structural indicators marks the transition to the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (2021-2030) ([1]). The next editions will contain a revised set of indicators in order to be aligned with the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (2021-2030).

Information on the scope of each indicator, along with detailed definitions of the terms used, can be found in Section 5.

Further information on recent reforms in all countries in the Eurydice network can be found in the Education system descriptions, chapter 14.

([1]) Council Resolution of 19 February 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). 2021/C 66/1.

Part of the information in this report that concerns the EU Member States was published in the *Education and Training Monitor 2021*.

Country coverage

The 2021 update of the structural indicators covers the EU Member States, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey. The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by the national representatives of the Eurydice network.

3.   EARLY LEAVING FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ELET)

The structural indicators on ELET ([8]) 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 ([9]). This set of indicators therefore provides an overview of recent reforms and policy developments related to some of the main activities taking place in European countries to achieve the European benchmark on ELET ([10]). The indicators focus on school education: primary and general secondary along with school-based initial vocational education (ISCED 1, 2 and 3).

The diagram below indicates the six ELET structural indicators covered in the Eurydice data collection:
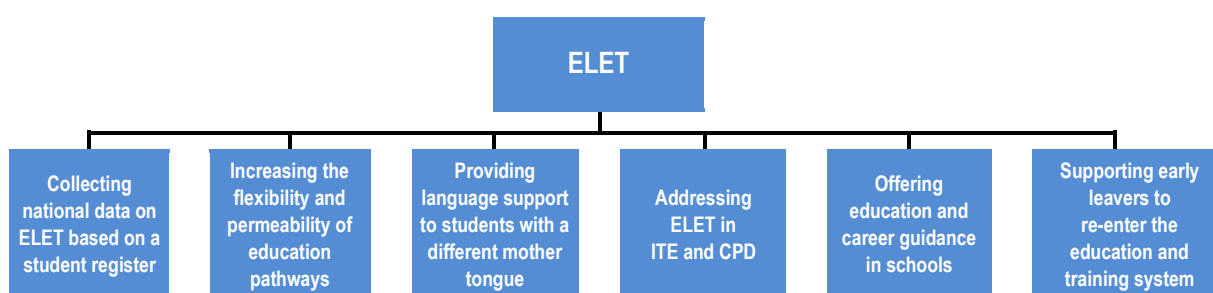
Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015

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. A system like this 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 this kind of data collection in the last few years (2016) as part of an early warning system for primary and secondary schools. This data collection makes it possible to monitor absenteeism and analyse early school leaving patterns at several levels – school, local, regional and national. In some other European countries, the national data collection has been modified or expanded. In 2020/21, the majority of countries are collecting national data on ELET through a student register. In Portugal, the existing data collection on ELET is currently under revision; new methodologies to measure ELET more accurately are now being studied.

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. For example, in Greece, 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, with the aim of

---

([8]) ELET refers here to students leaving education or training before completing the upper secondary level and thus not obtaining the corresponding school leaving certificate. However, the structural indicators on ELET focus on the whole period of school education: primary education and general secondary along with school-based initial vocational education (ISCED 1, 2 and 3).

([9]) Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving, OJ C 191, 1.7.2011.

([10]) Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021–2030), OJ C 66, 26.2.2021.

attracting a greater number of students. It also promotes a smoother transition from one education pathway to another. In 2020/21, there have been reforms in two education systems (Spain and Poland) that aim to increase the flexibility and permeability of education pathways. The current update of the structural indicators thus shows that almost all European countries now have policies in place to promote alternative education and training pathways, and measures exist in many countries to facilitate transitions between the different pathways.

Language support for students with a mother tongue other than the language of instruction can be crucial as these students are often more at risk of leaving school early. The 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, reforms implemented in Slovenia in 2019/20 increased language provision and support for students with no or very limited knowledge of the language of instruction. Similarly in 2020/21, various programmes have been implemented in the different Autonomous Communities in Spain to support the skills of young people in the language of instruction. This structural indicators update shows that almost all European countries now 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 relatively few countries in 2015, but has since become the focus of top-level regulations/recommendations and/or practical support in many of them. For example, since the implementation of the 'Teacher and school leadership education programme 2017-2020' in Estonia, inclusive education has become the priority in all CPD courses. As a result of a reform in 2020/21, teachers in Cyprus are now attending training programmes that help them to react to signs and circumstances that could indicate the possibility of students wanting to leave school early. Despite these positive developments across Europe, this current update of the structural indicators shows that educating and training teachers on issues relating to ELET is still an area where comparatively fewer policies exist.

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 European countries have introduced reforms in recent years 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 2020/21) promoted through top-level policies in about two thirds of the countries.

Support for early leavers to re-enter the education and training system has been strengthened through a number of policy developments since 2015. These have involved the provision of second chance education, education and career guidance and/or Youth Guarantee-related education and training initiatives (¹¹). 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. These

---

(¹¹) 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 the Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, OJ C 372, 4.11.2020.

young people can then be guided directly to a job or to 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, career guidance and through Youth Guarantee-related initiatives that aim to help early leavers re-enter the education and training system.

ELET summary table 1, 2020/21

	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 and training pathways	2.2. Facilitating transitions within education and training systems	2.3.Recognising skills and/or qualifications	
Belgium (BE fr)	●	●	●	●	●
Belgium (BE de)		●	●	●	●
Belgium (BE 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	●	●	●	●	●
Bosnia and Herzegovina	●				
Iceland	●	●			
Liechtenstein	●	●	●	●	●
Montenegro	●	●	●	●	●
North Macedonia	●	●	●	●	
Norway	●	●	●		●
Serbia		●			●
Turkey	●				

ELET summary table 2, 2020/21

	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 help early leavers re-enter the education and training system:		
			6.1.Second chance education	6.2. Education and career guidance	6.3. Youth guarantee
Belgium (BE fr)	●	●	●	●	●
Belgium (BE de)	●	●	●		
Belgium (BE 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	●	●	●	●	●
Bosnia and Herzegovina			●		
Iceland					
Liechtenstein		●	●	●	
Montenegro	●		●		
North Macedonia			●	●	●
Norway		●	●	●	
Serbia		●	●		
Turkey		●	●		

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