



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

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
1. Early childhood education and care (ECEC)	9
Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015	10
2. Achievement in basic skills	14
Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015	14
3. Early leaving from education and training (ELET)	18
Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015	18
4. Higher education	22
Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015	22
5. Scope of indicators / Key definitions	24
1. Early childhood education and care	24
1.1. Guarantee of a place	24
1.2. Professionalisation of ECEC staff.....	24
1.3. Curriculum or educational guidelines	25
2. Achievement in basic skills	25
2.1. Nationally standardised tests in literacy, mathematics and science	25
2.2. Recent national reports on achievement in basic skills.....	26
2.3. Use of student performance data in external school evaluation	26
2.4. Central guidelines on addressing student underachievement in initial teacher education (ITE).....	26
2.5. Additional support for schools enrolling large numbers of disadvantaged students	26
3. Early leaving from education and training (ELET)	27
3.1. Collecting national data on ELET based on a student register	27
3.2. Increasing the flexibility and permeability of education pathways.....	27
3.3. Providing language support for students with a different mother tongue	27
3.4. Addressing ELET in initial teacher education and continuing professional development	27
3.5. Offering education and career guidance in schools.....	28
3.6. Providing support for early leavers to re-enter the education and training system	28
4. Higher education	28
4.1. Quantitative targets relating to the social dimension of higher education	28
4.2. Monitoring of the socio-economic characteristics of the student body.....	28
4.3. Recognition of informal and non-formal learning on entry to higher education.....	29
4.4. Completion rates as a requirement in external quality assurance	29
4.5. Performance-based funding mechanisms with a social dimension focus.....	29

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*](#).

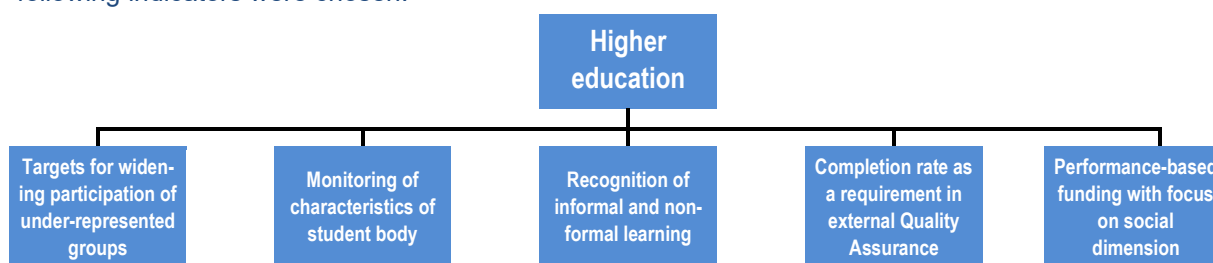
Country coverage

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.

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⁽¹²⁾. This benchmark was part of the double headline target on education within the Europe 2020 growth strategy. According to Eurostat data, this target was reached in 2019⁽¹³⁾.

The following five structural indicators were 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'⁽¹⁴⁾. Among the main objectives laid out in the communication are two key interlinked policy goals: increasing and widening participation, and improving the quality and relevance of higher education. To achieve these goals, the following indicators were chosen:



Overview of reforms and policy developments since 2015

In the area of higher education, there were very few reforms that took place since 2015. New policies were introduced to include 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). It called for an increase in the proportion of higher education students with parents without upper secondary school leaving examination or other higher education entrance qualification. Croatia's Agency for Science and Higher Education also decided to include completion as a requirement in external quality assurance when a new cycle of re-accreditation started in 2017. The higher education institution (HEI) collects and analyses data on student progression and uses them to obtain data on student completion. The re-accreditation cycle has been completed for 30 HEIs, so data on completion rates as a required criterion in external quality assurance are available for all of them.

For Hungary's institutional accreditation in 2018, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee included in its evaluation criteria the way the institution manages (i.e. gathers, analyses and uses) completion rates and drop-out rates. In 2019/20 a new criterion was added presenting the rate of doctoral students who obtain a doctoral degree and whether this rate reaches the level defined by the doctoral school in its quality objectives.

⁽¹²⁾ 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.

⁽¹³⁾ Eurostat Press release 22th April 2020 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10749941/3-22042020-BP-EN.pdf/04c88d0b-17af-cf7e-7e78-331a67f3fcd5>

⁽¹⁴⁾ 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 Romania) ceased to have quantitative targets for widening participation and attainment of under-represented groups between 2015 and 2021.

When looking at the five indicators for the reference year 2020/21, in more than two thirds of the education systems, the monitoring of the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body was the most widely implemented policy. In addition, the recognition of prior informal or non-formal learning and the requirement of completion rates was implemented in more than half of the education systems.

The two remaining policies (indicators 4.1 and 4.5), which focus heavily on the social dimension and widening participation in higher education, were implemented in less than half of the education systems. 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 in relation to the two indicators on widening participation and the social dimension of higher education.

Summary table on higher education, 2020/21

	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 (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 Switzerland					
Iceland			●	●	
Liechtenstein		●	●		
Montenegro			●	●	
North Macedonia		●		●	
Norway		●	●		
Serbia	●	●		●	
Turkey		●	●		