Briefing

European Parliament

Education policy in the Europe 2020 Strategy

SUMMARY

In 2010, the EU adopted its Europe 2020 strategy to put Member States back on track following the crisis shocks of 2008. Education was identified as one of five key areas needing specific measures to support economic recovery which could not be based exclusively on financial and budgetary reforms.

The governance of the strategy rests on yearly cycles of reporting and feedback known as the European Semester. This makes it possible to monitor progress in individual Member States as a basis for recommendations from the European Commission. Supplementary thematic coordination involves both political leaders and experts in the field. Coordinated by the Council of the European Union, the mechanism is referred to as the open method of coordination.

Member States are on their way towards meeting the Europe 2020 education targets: lowering the number of early school leavers to less than 10% and ensuring that at least 40% of 30-34 year olds have completed tertiary education.

However, EU citizens are not yet benefitting evenly from the positive outcomes. A closer look reveals that some regions and segments of the population fare less well than others. At the same time, employment rates have worsened in spite of improvements in the general level of education. The European Parliament has expressed its stance on these issues, indicating possible ways forward.

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The Europe 2020 strategy

In 2010, the European Commission presented its Europe 2020 growth strategy designed to help the European Union (EU) recover quickly and sustainably from a long period of stagnation followed by an economic and financial crisis. Like its predecessor, the Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 is based on the premise that the single market would make recovery possible by improving the EU's competitiveness. Coupled with a more effective use of resources, this would maintain a social market economy modelled on the principles of the free market economy and the welfare state. Europe 2020 also set itself the task to overcome the shortcomings of the Lisbon strategy, for instance by establishing clearer roles and setting precise targets.

The strategy set five mutually reinforcing headline targets for 2020, including one for education. Their progress is monitored by Eurostat through nine indicators. Figure 1 relates the nine indicators to each other and contextualises progress using the baseline year 2008 and the target year 2020.

Five headline targets in Europe 2020

Target 1: 75% employment for 20-64 year olds

Target 2: 3% of GDP for R&D

Target 3: 20% less greenhouse gas emissions, 20% more renewable energies, 20% more energy efficiency

Target 4: 40% of 30-34 year olds hold a tertiary degree, school drop-out rate falls to less than 10%

Target 5: 20 million fewer people at risk of poverty or social exclusion

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So far results have been irregular. While the education indicators have advanced further than those for research and development (R&D) expenditure and primary energy consumption, they have not done as well as those related to 'final energy consumption' and 'greenhouse gas emissions'. The situation with regard to employment and poverty has actually worsened.

Figure 1 – Developments on Europe 2020 indicators
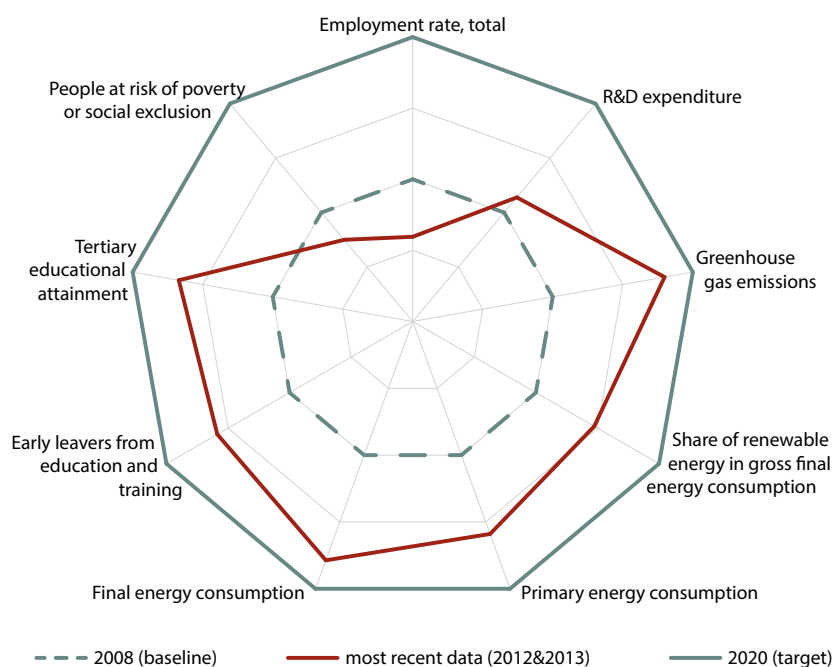
Data source: Eurostat.

The strategy adopted a two-pronged approach to achieve its targets; thematic on the one hand and the publishing of **country reports** on the other. The thematic approach

focuses on the EU dimension and reflects the interdependence of Member States' economies. It identifies seven themes, each with its own flagship initiatives, categorised under the three types of growth – smart, sustainable and inclusive – which the strategy promotes (Table 2). The different sectoral Council formations monitor and review progress in meeting the targets. Member States report on streamlined national reform programmes and receive advice in the form of recommendations under the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines and the Employment Guidelines.

Table 2 – Themes and EU flagship initiatives

SMART GROWTH	SUSTAINABLE GROWTH	INCLUSIVE GROWTH
INNOVATION flagship initiative: **Innovation Union** *EDUCATION* flagship initiative: **Youth on the move**	*CLIMATE, ENERGY AND MOBILITY* flagship initiative: **Resource-efficient Europe**	*EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS* flagship initiative: **An agenda for new skills and jobs**
DIGITAL SOCIETY flagship initiative: **A digital agenda for Europe**	*COMPETITIVENESS* flagship initiative: **An industrial policy for the globalisation era**	*FIGHTING POVERTY* flagship initiative: **European platform against poverty**

Source: Annex 1 Europe 2020: An Overview.

Country reports, on the other hand, help Member States define and implement strategies that address macro-imbalances and help them achieve sustainable growth and restore their public finances. Integrated guidelines are adopted at EU level and country-specific recommendations are addressed to individual Member States. Reporting for Europe 2020 and the Stability and Growth Pact evaluation is done simultaneously, but the two instruments are kept separate so that the integrity of the Pact is maintained.

Positioning education within the strategy

EU and educational policy: between legitimacy and purpose
Education is the responsibility of Member States, and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) identifies education as an area in which the EU can support Member States' efforts only by facilitating exchanges and cooperation in full respect of their sovereignty. This approach, known as the open method of coordination (OMC), poses some difficulties, given that the EU Treaties do not mention 'the European education and training area' in the same way as they speak about 'the area of freedom, security and justice'. It has therefore been suggested that some rephrasing of the Treaties would clarify the exact scope and impact of the EU's competences.

The OMC was introduced in the field of education in 2000, with the Lisbon Strategy, as it was recognised that policy reform in this area was necessary for the strategy's success. In May 2003, the Council adopted five EU-level benchmarks for 2010, which included the lowering of the average rate of early school leavers to less than 10%. In its Conclusions of May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), the Council adopted a similar set of five benchmarks for 2020. It kept the benchmark of 'less than 10% early school leavers' as progress had been slow, and introduced another benchmark requiring 40% of 30-34 year olds to have completed tertiary education. Of the seven benchmarks under ET 2020, these two were chosen for the education headline target in Europe 2020 under smart growth.

Education within Europe 2020

Each headline target, theme and flagship initiative was identified for its role in achieving economic growth. Both education indicators are intended to contribute towards developing a highly skilled labour force that matches labour market needs more closely. In fact, within the education headline target, reference is also made to the need to strengthen links between education, business, research and innovation at EU level. At national level, the strategy promotes cooperation between universities, researchers and businesses in the design of curricula that develop creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Efforts are also to be made to reach a sufficient supply of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates. The strategy indicates this as the way forward to restore Europe's competitive edge and open possibilities for job creation. The headline target was accompanied by the flagship initiative 'Youth on the move', whose actions were subsumed under the Erasmus+ programme from 2015.

Two other flagship initiatives, both under 'Inclusive growth', were charged with education-related tasks: the 'Agenda for new skills and jobs' was to develop a strategic framework for lifelong learning, whilst the 'European platform against poverty and social exclusion' was to provide innovative education opportunities to deprived communities. However, no benchmarks were set, against which efficacy could be measured.

The EU has faced criticism that the economic focus risks sidelining the other functions of education. For its part, the European Parliament has highlighted the need to guarantee public education that is free, accessible to all and responsive to the needs of society. It has also noted that the much contested Bologna Process, which is building a European higher education area, is essential to the implementation of Europe 2020. Interestingly, the Bologna Process is refocusing its efforts to widen access to higher education for all segments of the population, introducing a social dimension. In Europe 2020, concern for social equity is seen in a brief statement that education has the potential to help overcome health inequalities linked to socio-economic status.

Stakeholders and process

Europe 2020 is governed by the OMC which follows yearly cycles of economic policy coordination known as the European Semester. The exercise takes into account budgetary, macroeconomic and structural reforms, including reforms to meet the education targets. Once the **Commission** had set the education target for early school leavers at below 10% and that for the completion of tertiary education above 40% of the population, **Member States** were required to set their own targets in their national reform programmes. Member States are also required to draw up annual reports laying out results achieved and bottlenecks on the basis of which the Commission issues country-specific recommendations. The **Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council** monitors progress, while in its conclusions the **Council** addresses both the Commission and the Member States on the way forward. Likewise, in its resolutions, the **European Parliament** communicates its position to the other stakeholders. Parliament also plays an important role in mobilising **national parliaments** and it engages in an economic dialogue to scrutinise the work of the Council and the Commission. The two consultative institutions, the **European Economic and Social Committee** (EESC) and the **Committee of the Regions** (COR) have each set up a Europe 2020 monitoring platform to collect feedback from organised civil society and from local and regional authorities.

The political process is complemented by 11 **expert working groups** which build on cooperation between the Commission and the Member States. Between 2011 and 2013, these groups engaged in promoting peer learning and providing examples of good practice in the implementation of ET2020 and the Europe 2020 priorities. One of these groups was dedicated to early school leaving and another to the modernisation of higher education. However, in 2011, the Council called for the strengthening of the OMC through increasing opportunities for mutual learning in policy development, improving the visibility and transparency of measures taken and providing analysis to support these exchanges. The European Parliament acknowledged the OMC as an appropriate tool for cooperation, but indicated a number of weaknesses that might also apply when using the OMC in education. The resolution pointed out a deficit in legitimacy, a lack of effective cooperation between experts and politicians, a lack of proper integration with national priorities and the risk of confusion over responsibilities at different levels. A strong political will was seen as necessary to maximise results.

The European Parliament's stance

The European Parliament has expressed its position in a number of resolutions other than those mentioned in the body of the text. The following examples are not exhaustive yet highlight some relevant key messages which resurface repeatedly:

Resolution of 2015 on Promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training emphasises the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills and competencies in young people and specifies the role of EU institutions in terms of coordination, methodology and financial tools in view of Europe 2020 and other related EU initiatives.

Resolution of 2013 on Rethinking Education recalls the headline targets and goals of Europe 2020 and calls on Member States to invest in education and training as part of their recovery strategy.

Resolution of 2012 on Education, training and Europe 2020 calls on Member States to invest at least 2% of GDP in higher education and proposes that investments are deducted from the national deficit calculation of the fiscal impact.

Resolution of 2011 on European cooperation in vocational education and training to support the Europe 2020 strategy draws attention to the contribution of flexible paths in education, training and lifelong learning to help various disadvantaged groups join the labour market and develop sustainable careers.

Resolution of 2011 on Tackling early school leaving warns that cutting spending in education is counter-productive as reducing the number of early school leavers will improve youth employment rates. It warns that Member States' approaches are still fragmented. The resolution highlights the importance of linguistic support for students from migrant backgrounds, the need to take steps so that Roma and children irregularly resident in the country concerned can attend school, and the way schools can compound disadvantage.

Resolution of 2011 on Youth on the move highlights the value of extending mobility to disadvantaged young people. It identifies the potential of high-quality traineeships to facilitate the transition to employment and points out that the initiative is also about young people fulfilling their potential and aspirations.

Following a brief description of Europe 2020, the place of education within it, the interplay between different actors in its implementation and the EP's input, the following sections will discuss the two indicators identified under the education headline target. The analysis will look at current results, policy directions and obstacles. The discussion draws heavily on Eurostat, which provides yearly statistical updates on

each headline target, and Eurydice,[1] which collects data from each of the Member States via its network.

The process of target-setting was criticised on two accounts. First, the education indicators themselves were not seen as adequate to achieve the overall aim of increasing employment. Second, some Member States were criticised for not being ambitious enough in setting their targets, to the extent that some countries did not need to make any progress at all. The UK decided not to adopt either of the education indicators. On the other hand, an EP study indicates that Member States claimed that 'soft law' measures on early school leaving did encourage them to focus and act.
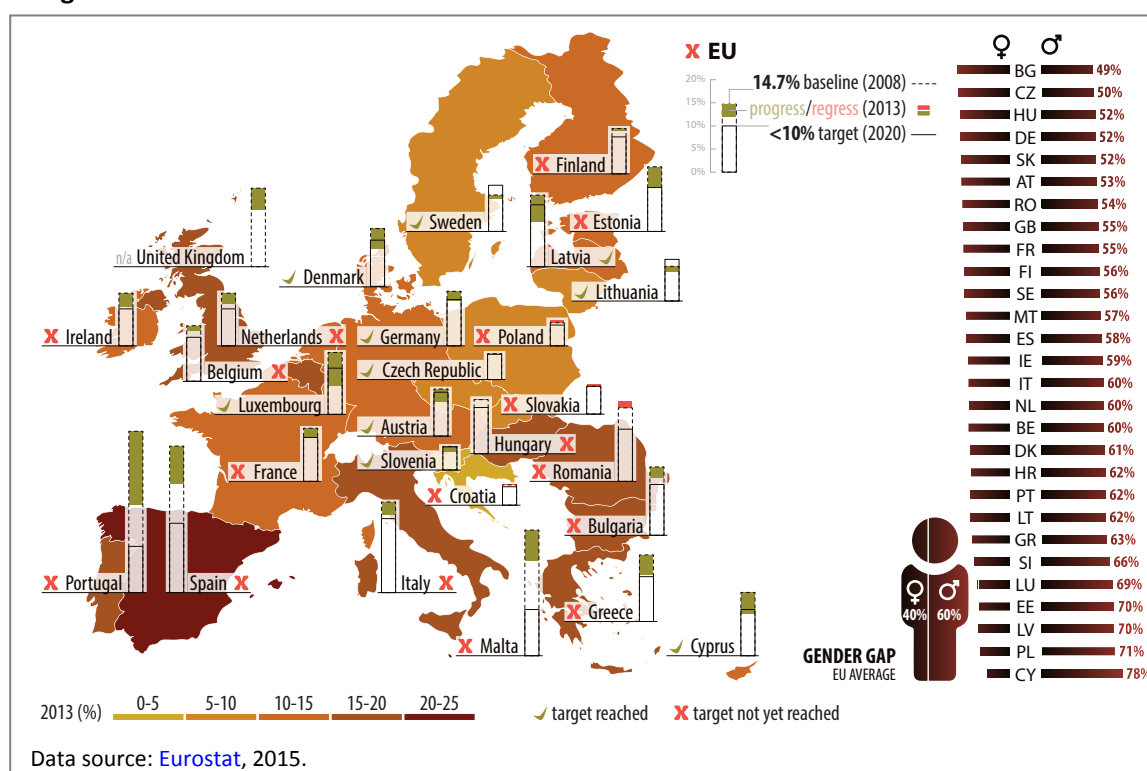
Less than 10% early school leavers

The issue

The first indicator of Europe 2020 educational attainment under the Europe 2020 strategy is lowering the rate of early school leavers to less than 10%. Eurostat defines 'early school leavers' as those who have reached, at most, lower secondary education and are not in further education or training. For statistical purposes, the survey covers persons aged 18 to 24. However, most Member States have adopted their own definition of early leavers in addition to that of the EU.

Eurostat indicates that the unemployment rate is much higher among early school leavers than among the total population of the same age group, and that it has worsened between 2008 and 2013. Furthermore, tertiary education graduates claim to be in better health than their counterparts with only lower secondary education and this is taken as an indicator of a person's perception of her or his quality of life.

Figure 3 – Early school leavers: EU and national targets, situation in 2013, evolution since 2008 and gender variable

Data source: Eurostat, 2015.

The situation

Figure 3 shows that the number of early school leavers is dropping in all but five countries: Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia. In the baseline year 2008,

early school leaving rates in Croatia (4.4%), Poland (5%) and Slovakia (6%) were below the EU target. Croatia and Poland set out to lower their rates even further (4.5%) but both countries experienced a slight increase instead (4.5% and 5.6% respectively). Romania set itself a target that was higher than the EU's (11.3 %) and early school leaving rates were still on the increase in 2013 (17.3%). In 2013, Slovenia (3.9%) and Croatia (4.5%) had the lowest early school leaving rates, with much lower rates than the EU target, while Spain (23.6%) and Malta (20.5%) had the highest proportion of early school leavers. While southern European countries had higher rates at the outset, they made some of the biggest progress over time, with Portugal achieving a decrease of 16%, Spain of 8.1% and Malta of 6.7%. In the UK, early school leavers dropped by 4.6% between 2008 and 2013, bringing its rate (12.3%) closer to the EU target. To a large extent, regional differences reflect national differences. Poland and Bulgaria have the largest internal differences, whereas Slovenia, Croatia and Finland present a fairly homogeneous picture.

Factors contributing to early school leaving

With the exception of Bulgaria, whose rates are marginally worse for women, men within the EU are more likely to leave school early than women, and in some Member States like Cyprus, Poland, Latvia and Estonia the gender gap is substantial. In discussing factors that contribute towards early school leaving, Eurydice notes that the higher the socio-economic status, the narrower the gender gap becomes. However, at the other end of the social spectrum, across the EU, the school attendance rates of Roma girls are lower than those of Roma boys, albeit drop-out rates are high for both (54% for girls and 43% for boys).

Being 'native' or 'foreign' too has an impact on early school leaving rates. Yet, while there may be some common problems such as the language barrier, the label 'migrant students' covers very different situations. For instance, school completion rates among second-generation students are generally better. On average, foreign-born students are twice as likely to drop out. Eurydice also quotes studies carried out in individual Member States which suggest that there are noticeable differences between different countries of origin. Yet again, this is linked to socio-economic status and the corresponding ease of access to adequate learning supports, which overall seem to have the greatest impact.

When examining school-related factors that contribute to early school leaving, the Eurydice report notes that educational systems which practice grade retention, encourage socio-economic segregation or select students early on the basis of their academic achievements, also tend to produce more early school leavers. On the other hand, systems which provide high quality early childhood education and care; carefully manage transitions from primary to secondary, from lower to upper secondary school, as well as from school to work; and systems that provide flexible pathways in upper secondary education, tend to retain students longer. Local labour market conditions can also have an impact either way, underlining the importance of career guidance.

Policy responses

An analysis of measures taken in the different Member States indicates that a third of them have adopted a national strategy or are close to adopting one, but emphasis varies between prevention[2] and compensation.[3] At the same time, even Member States without a national strategy have policies and measures to combat early school leaving. Most Member States are focusing on high quality early childhood education and care

and flexible educational paths. Vocational education and training (VET) frequently offers a 'second chance' or 'catch up programmes', but if VET provision is weak and insufficiently funded, it can also suffer from high early school leaving rates. Most Member States also offer guidance and counselling – especially in secondary schools – either as part of the official curriculum or as an extra-curricular activity. Few Member States make efforts to address the problem of repeat rates and socio-economic segregation, in spite of their impact on early school leaving, and less than a third mention initial and ongoing teacher training to sensitise teaching staff on early detection and support.

In most Member States, strategic approaches[4] are still fragmented and insufficiently coordinated, leading to sporadic measures and duplication of efforts. However, early school leaving has been effectively reduced where working practices have succeeded in mainstreaming cooperation between different agencies and specialists rather than imposing it as an additional task. The strategies involved in this success have combined individual, school and system-specific actions which have been sufficiently funded. Other key features have included flexibility, creativity and problem solving as well as an approach communicating high expectations and offering a sense of belonging.

At least 40% with tertiary education

Reaching targets
The second indicator of educational attainment is that 40% of the population aged 30-34 years old completes tertiary studies (university or higher technical institute).[5] This definition restricted the time frame for action because 2020 statistics will not reflect any increases in the enrolment of under-24 year old students after 2014 or in the number of masters' students.[6] Nevertheless, projections indicate that almost every Member State will attain its target or be on a clear track to attaining it. The exceptions are mainly Member States that have set themselves very ambitious targets (Austria, France, Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal).

Figure 4 shows that the percentage of the population with tertiary education is increasing in all but two countries: Belgium (0.2% decrease) and Finland (0.6% decrease). Both, however, are above the EU target (40%). National targets range from 26% for Italy to 66% for Luxembourg. By 2013, 11 Member States[7] had reached their national targets and 16,[8] among which the UK (47.4%), had exceeded the EU target. The highest completion rates are in northern and central Europe, though some eastern European countries experienced the strongest increase between 2008 and 2013 (Latvia 14.4%, Czech Republic 11.3%, Slovakia 11.1%, Hungary 9.5% and Romania 6.9%). The situation in the regions roughly reflects that in the Member States, with the Czech Republic and Romania having the most pronounced internal differences. Croatia, Ireland and Slovenia were the most homogeneous.[9]

Women's lead over men in tertiary education attainment has increased since 1998. The difference stemmed mainly from tertiary enrolment rates in the 20-24 age group.[10] Germany is the only Member State where the number of women graduates does not exceed that of men. The gender gap is widening significantly. By 2013, 15 Member States had a gap of more than 10%, and another two of more than 20%. Men are better represented in subjects like maths, science or engineering, while women are more represented in subjects related to education, the humanities, arts and services.

Figure 4 – Tertiary education attainment: EU and national targets, situation in 2013, evolution since 2008 and gender variable

Data Source: Eurostat, 2015.
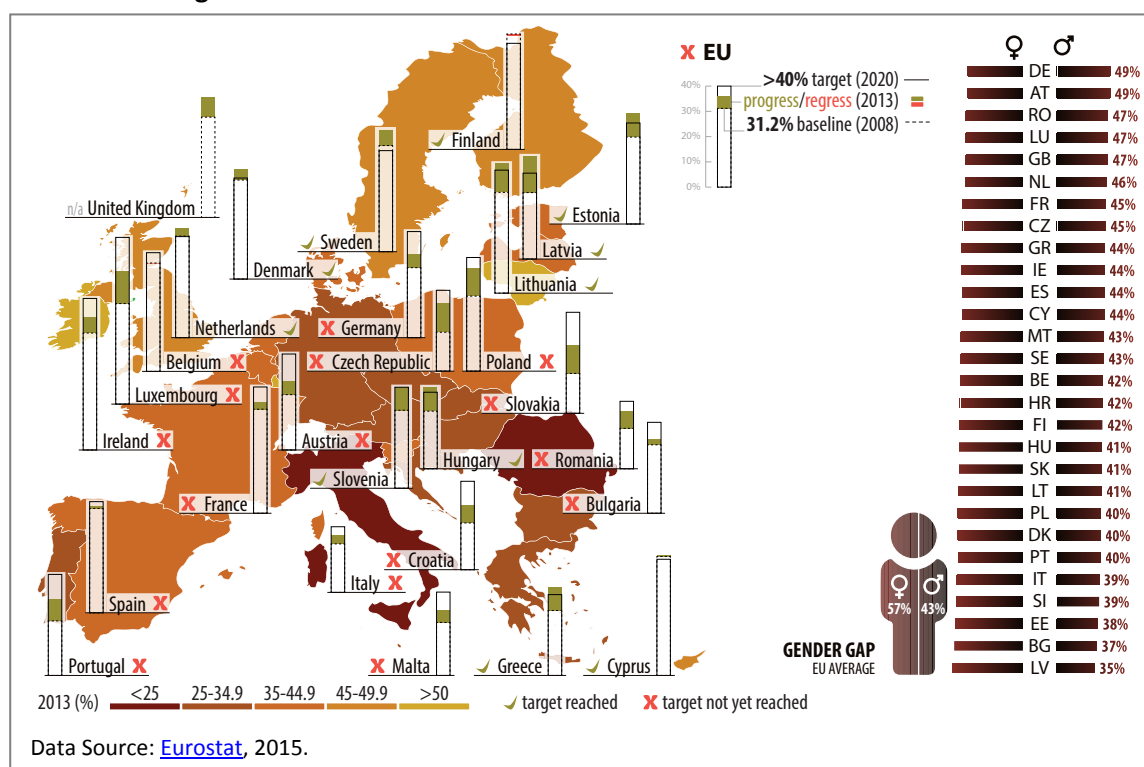
Increase in uptake reflects investment in higher education and could be linked to shortened courses following the Bologna Process. The number of years people spend in education does not seem to be related to the number of years of compulsory schooling, but rather to the levels of public spending on education as a percentage of GDP which is, on average, 0.33% per extra year of education.[11] The top three reasons universities cite for increases in enrolment are stronger emphasis on widening access and participation (41%), international recruitment (39%) and changes in admission policies (28%).

Making reforms
In various conclusions,[12] the Council has advocated reforms to higher and vocational education in order to attract more people and provide the skills needed by the economy. These have included making efficient use of investments from a variety of sources; improving governance; updating curricula; and introducing innovations at both systemic and institutional levels. Universities have been encouraged to develop better links with the business sector.

A Eurydice study has monitored these links by looking at employers' roles in education, noting that employers are more likely to take part in the work of decision-making or consultative bodies than be involved in developing curricula or teaching. The same study points out that in most Member States, higher education institutions submit employability-related information to quality assurance agencies for the accreditation and evaluation of programmes or institutions. Such agencies' standards often focus on the relevance of programmes to labour market needs, employers' involvement and proof that an institution tracks its graduates' employment. In about half of the educational systems, employers also participate in external quality assurance.

Yet, according to Eurostat, while the percentage of graduates (ISCED 3-6[13]) employed within the first three years of graduating rose steadily up to 2008 (82%), a consistent

decline led to a record low of 75.5% in 2013. On the other hand, Cedefop's skills forecasts 2015 indicated that whereas the number of people with primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 0-2) in employment has diminished and will continue to do so, the demand for graduates will increase, though it has dipped in recent years. These patterns suggest that the employability of graduates should not be presumed, and Parliament has insisted on the importance of entrepreneurial education to support youth employment in general and that of graduates specifically.

This leads to a related concern – that of skills mismatch. An example is the incidence of over-education and over-skill. Patterns in 17 Member States reveal that the two phenomena are not synonymous. In some Member States such as Italy and Spain there is a high incidence of over-education but not of over-skill, but the reverse is true for Finland and the Netherlands. This indicates that some educational systems are not matching the level of skills with the level of qualifications. Another example of skills mismatch is the shortage of STEM graduates, which highlights two issues: difficulties in filling vacancies at a time when youth unemployment is very high, and the minor uptake of STEM subjects by women, who constitute the majority of graduates. A recent study has looked into the latter phenomenon by taking a wide range of cost factors into account, including foregone earnings due to heavier study commitments. In the private sector, women STEM graduates are less well rewarded five years into their careers than women graduates from the medical or social fields. Parliament has recognised gender stereotyping as a constraining factor on student choices in education and training, especially in STEM areas.

In its conclusions, the Council has also indicated the need to widen access so as to increase the potential number of graduates. To this end, vocational education was to be strengthened by offering more work experience, deepening cooperation with different stakeholders and by allowing greater permeability with higher education. This requires the application of national qualification frameworks (NQFs make different study units comparable) to make transfers possible.

Widening access raises the issue of the social composition of the student population linking Europe 2020 with the Bologna Process and the Modernisation Agenda. Student unions have identified various under-represented groups, the most frequently cited being students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, students with physical disabilities and students with psycho-social disabilities or mental health issues. The European Universities Association (EUA), on the other hand, adopted a slightly different focus on the composition of the student population, and while it still mentioned socio-economic background, disabilities and ethnic minorities, it also identified different types of enrolment: international/EU students, full-time/part-time, without standard entry qualifications. Most student unions indicated that the social dimension is a low or medium priority for their national government. Eurydice underlined that only six Member States[14] have targets for specified groups, and given the voluntary approach they do not all focus on the same groups. Member States resort to strategies such as offering part-time courses or recognising non-formal and informal learning to widen access. They also provide guidance or use financial incentives to improve completion rates. Yet, as monitoring practices vary hugely between Member States, it is difficult to evaluate certain policies.

Stakeholders' reactions

In reporting the results of a public consultation on Europe 2020 held in 2014, the Commission claimed the strategy was generally described as relevant and well structured. Others were more critical, pointing to the strategy's lack of impact at national and regional levels, the isolation, lack of visibility and insufficiency of the flagship initiatives, as well as the inability of some of the indicators to reflect problems on the ground. Some suggested that an indicator on matching skills to labour market needs would have been more appropriate for higher education. Others remarked that relevant stakeholders were not sufficiently involved or suggested closer monitoring, which included qualitative evaluation within the European Semester, to improve delivery and implementation. Respondents identified Member States' lack of ambition and the amplification of differences due to the crisis as threats to the strategy.

The European Students' Union (ESU) noted that a participation rate of 40% in tertiary education was only a minimum, and called on the EU to support the drawing up of national access plans within the framework of the Bologna Process. It appealed to the Commission to protect investment in education and not to support tuition fees in higher education, as they could create barriers and weaken the notion of free education as a public good and a public responsibility. The ESU highlighted the multifaceted nature of education as important for inclusive and sustainable growth. It also commented that labour market forecasts are not very accurate and that the relationship between labour markets and higher education is an issue for critical public debate. The Erasmus Student Network further commented on the importance of mobility and the internationalisation of higher education to enhance employability. They proposed new indicators, based on a priority mentioned in ET 2020, 'making lifelong learning and mobility a reality', which would quantify the percentage of higher education students who study for a period out of the country and the percentage of degrees earned by non-nationals.

The European Universities Association focused primarily on research and innovation and pointed out that the number of tertiary graduates in science and technology grew by almost 70% in Europe between 2000 and 2011, with considerable variations between Member States. On the other hand, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) lamented a lack of coherence between the Europe 2020 and ET2020 targets and benchmarks as well as a worsening in the quality of education due to the crisis. The trade unions noted that Europe 2020 did not address concerns at the grassroots, issues related to investment or the quality of education. It highlighted the importance of improving teachers' professional development and their working conditions. Finally, it indicated that the focus on skills needed to broaden to include all eight key competencies, especially 'learning to learn' (i.e. the ability to organise one's own learning), as well as learners' and teachers' social, civic, digital and linguistic competences.

Both educational targets – less than 10% early school leavers and more than 40% completing tertiary education – are integral to the Europe 2020 strategy, which is currently under review. The aim is to put Europe back on the path of economic growth. Yet while progress for the education indicators is on track, it has been uneven both regionally and for different strata of the population. Furthermore, developments on the education headline target have not been matched in the area of employment, and this has attracted criticism on the inadequacy of the indicators. In a number of resolutions, the EP has indicated that investment in education needs to be strengthened and

measures adopted to widen access to education. It also draws attention to the importance of entrepreneurial education, traineeships and mobility to improve young people's chances to find employment.

Endnotes

[1] Eurydice provides information on education systems and policies in 37 countries and produces studies on common issues.

[2] The preventive approach either reforms the system to reduce risks of disengagement or targets identified vulnerable groups, schools and individuals. The Council, for instance, has proposed system-wide policies such as the generalised provision of high quality early childhood education and care and the updating of curricula, as well as targeted policies such as teacher training for early detection and individualised support.

[3] The compensatory approach entails opening up second chance schools, transitional classes or even the validation of competencies acquired in non-formal (structured learning activities outside of schools) and informal settings (unstructured learning activities). These might be part of a package of holistic support services for young people at-risk.

[4] The strategic approach seeks to monitor the phenomena of absenteeism and early school leaving, both in terms of numbers and reasons and to coordinate policies and measures.

[5] Eurostat defines tertiary education as equivalent to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 5-8 for data from 2014 onwards and ISCED 1997 level 5-6 for data up to 2013. The ISCED is a common measure established by UNESCO to qualify one's level of education.

[6] Barslund, M., 'Recent developments in selected education indicators and their relation to Europe2020 targets,' National Institute Economic Review, 220, April 2012, pp.11-13.

[7] Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia, Finland.

[8] Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom.

[9] For a fuller discussion of regional performances see Eurostat Statistical Books, 2015 pp. 118-119.

[10] Barslund, 2012 p. 11.

[11] Op. cit., 2012 p. 7.

[12] Council conclusions on the role of education and training in the implementation of the 'Europe 2020' strategy (2011/C 70/01), Council conclusions on education and training in Europe 2020 - the contribution of education and training to economic recovery, growth and jobs (2012/C 393/02), Council conclusions on investing in education and training — a response to 'Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes' and the '2013 Annual Growth Survey' (2013/C 64/06).

[13] ISCED Level 3 is equivalent to higher secondary education and level 6 is equivalent to a Bachelor's degree.

[14] Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Scotland (UK).

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