

Approaches of the Council and the Commission to the European Education Area: strategic priorities and quantitative objectives

Strategic priorities

In September 2020, the Commission published a communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 with an ambitious strategy revolving around six key dimensions (European Commission, 2020a). In February 2021, in its resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), the Council welcome the Commission's proposal (Council of the European Union, 2021). It set out a series of 'strategic priorities' bearing some similarities with the key dimensions mentioned above but giving less prominence to inclusion and the geopolitical dimension while putting a stronger focus on lifelong learning and mobility.

Commission communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025	Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training
Dimension 1: Quality in education and training	Strategic priority 1: Improving quality, equity, inclusion and success for all in education and training
Dimension 2: Inclusion and gender equality	-
Dimension 3: Green and digital transitions	Strategic priority 5: Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training
Dimension 4: Teachers and trainers	Strategic priority 3: Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession
Dimension 5: Higher education	Strategic priority 4: Reinforcing European higher education
Dimension 6: Geopolitical dimension	-
-	Strategic priority 2: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all



Reference levels of European average performance in education and training

In May 2009, the Council had adopted a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') in which it established a list of benchmarks that would allow for monitoring the progress achieved across Europe in education and training (Council of the European Union, 2009).

In 2020, mainly in its communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 but also in the European skills agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, the Commission took stock of the performance of the past decade and suggested amending these benchmarks with a view to better address the major challenges of our times (European Commission, 2020a and b). Most notably, it proposed a new indicator on low achievement in computer and information literacy.

In its resolution of February 2021, the Council advocated slightly lower levels of ambition for the different benchmarks and added an indicator on "Exposure of VET graduates to work based learning".

	European Union targets for 2020 in education and training	Targets 2030 - Commission communications on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 and on the European skills agenda	Targets 2030 - Council resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training	Progress toward targets
Underachievement in reading, maths and science	The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15 %	The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15 %	The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15 %	Rates 2020: Reading: 22.5 % Mathematics: 22.9 % Science 22.3%
Underachievement in computer and information literacy	-	The share of low-achieving year eights in computer and information literacy should be less than 15 %	The share of low-achieving eight-graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15 %	-
Early childhood education	At least 95 % of children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education	At least 98 % of children between the age of three and the time they start compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education	At least 96 % of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education and care	Rate 2020: 94.8 %
Tertiary educational attainment	The share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40 %	The share of 30-34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 50 %	The share of 25-34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 45 %	Rate 2020: 40.3 %

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Early leavers from education and training	The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10 %	The share of 20-24-year-olds with at least an upper secondary qualification should be 90 %.	The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9 %	Rate 2020 of early leavers: 10.2 %
Adult participation in learning	An average of at least 15 % of adults should participate in lifelong learning (in the four weeks preceding the survey)	50 % of the adult population in the EU should participate in learning every year	At least 47 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months	Rate 2020, during the last four weeks: 10.8 %. Rate 2016, during the last 12 months: 38 %
Learning mobility	At least 20 % of higher education graduates and 6 % of 18-34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad.	-	-	Rate 2018, in higher education: 13.5 %
Employment rate of recent graduates	At least 82 % of graduates (20-34-year-olds having successfully completed upper secondary or tertiary education) who left education in the last one to three years should be in employment	-	-	Rate 2019: 80.9 %
Exposure of VET graduates to work based learning	-	-	The share of recent graduates from VET benefiting from exposure to work-based learning during their vocational education and training should be at least 60 %	-

Sources: European Commission (2020a, b and c), Council of the European Union (2021).

Bibliography

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- European Commission (2020c), [Education and Training Monitor 2020](#).

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