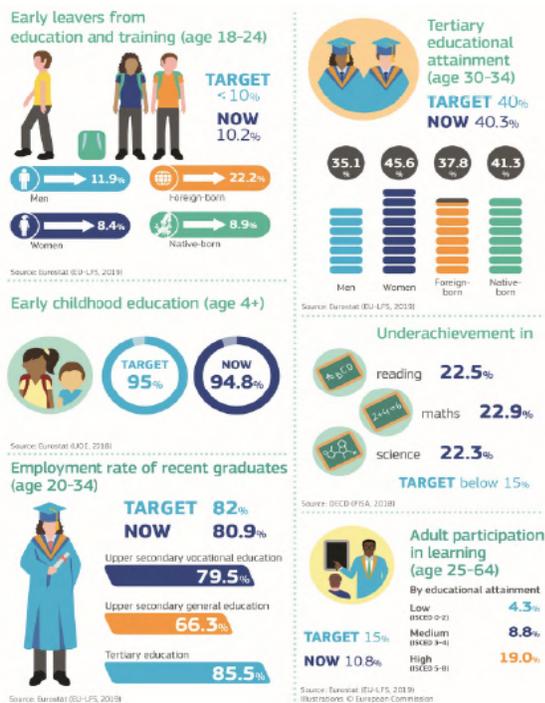


Brussels December 2020 - European Commission launches the annual report on ET2020 targets (ET2020 Monitor) focused on teaching and learning for the digital age - Where do ET2020 goals stand in 2020?

The Lifelong Learning Platform – European civil society network for education – welcomes the 2020 Education and Training Monitor, launched by Commissioner Gabriel on 12 November 2020 at the [DigiEduHack](#) conference. Expectedly, this year’s edition focuses on digital education and digital competence, also addressing the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on education and training.

The focus of the introductory chapter is on the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on education and training, namely distance learning, for which the Commission expresses concerns surrounding the **uneven access, quality and wellbeing**. The report elaborates on how the pandemic has shown us the importance of stepping up the readiness of digital education, preparing teachers and supporting pupils who contrary to popular belief are not digitally native. It also highlights that Member States which adapted better to the crisis, managed to do so because of **investments in comprehensive digital education policies** covering a broad range of aspects, from devices and infrastructure to skills development and pedagogical content.



We praise the Commission for not losing sight of learners being at risk of **educational poverty** stemming from a lack of basic skills, which we believe must be addressed as it will otherwise inevitably widen the existing gaps, especially the digital divide even further. What’s more, the fact that a learner’s socio-economic background is still the most important determinant of educational outcomes in the EU, is an alarm bell. We must ensure that **equity is streamlined across all actions and initiatives**, to guarantee access to quality education to all learners irrespective of their backgrounds.

We are happy to see that progress has been made since the EU benchmarks were established back in 2009. Most targets have been met, such as **reducing early leavers from education and training** (the target is less than 10% and it currently stands at 10.2%);

increasing the number of children who benefit from **early childhood education** (the target is 95%, currently it stands at 94.8%); or **tertiary educational attainment** (which has exceeded the 40% target, performing at 40.3%). However, **lowering underachievement** to 15% was not met, as it currently is at a

high 22%. Similarly, increasing the share of **adult learners** was also not met, since currently it stands at 10.8% while the target is 15% .

In **LLL’s ET2020 Shadow Report**¹ launched in November 2020, we focused our attention on two targets: **adult learning**, as this target is the one with the least progress, and **early leavers from education and training** because of the prevention role that vocational, non-formal and informal learning pathways can play.

We emphasise on the need to adapt the benchmarks for adult learning in order to have a more holistic approach, since **current benchmarks exclude learners aged over 65**, which with an ageing population on the rise excludes an important segment of learners. We hope to see that the Updated Skills Agenda quantitative objectives, to monitor by 2025, will take up this issue and **embrace a lifelong learning approach** as the Skills Agenda states “to succeed [in the twin transitions and socio-economy recovery from Covid-19], lifelong learning for all must become a reality in Europe, in each Member State and in each region”.

As for early leavers from education and training, we invite a **reflection on the current data collecting and setting of benchmarks**, as in our Shadow Report we found that grassroot level organisation are able to report more accurate figures on ELET which could be valuable for national and EU institutions to better understand this complex issue and tackle it. Besides, reinforcing **cross-border exchange of innovative teaching and learning practices** can help us create more inclusive learning environments.

We renewed our recommendation expressed in the 2018 ET2020 Review, which referred to including a **new target on teachers and educators** – to improve the status and access to continuous professional development opportunities. This year’s Monitor states that the performance of education systems depends largely on the quality of teaching, moving on to highlight issues in this domain such as a shortage of teaching staff due to the unattractiveness of the profession, as well as an ageing workforce. Although some positive improvements are mentioned, such as Member States raising salaries, increasing budgets and facilitating entry into the profession, we believe that **ensuring training of teachers and educators at all levels should be a priority** in terms of reform and investment. This is a way to make education more inclusive and a need which has become even more apparent and relevant in the context of digital education. In this sense, we encourage Member States to include this in their Recovery and Resilience Plans.

It is clear from the Monitor’s results as well as from our own research that the inclusion dimension of education and training really needs to be reinforced as learners are being left behind and will only fall further behind with the digital transformation if concrete actions are not taken now. We recommend for the Commission take measures to **further support the implementation of EU policies on inclusive education**.

¹ Lifelong Learning Platform, ET2020 Shadow Report, November 2020
<https://bit.ly/ET2020SR>

Furthermore, key to tackling the inclusion challenge is cross-sector cooperation between education institutions, civil society and social services, which needs further investment. In this sense, we see an important need to **further include and support civil society organisations**, particularly European networks which are essential for awareness raising and outreach to local and grassroots organisations who themselves often manage to reach the most marginalised of learners. We highlight that strengthening these networks would also foster cross-border and cross-sector dialogue and cooperation at EU level.

We hope to see the [European Education Area](#)² acting as a tool to reinforce the involvement of civil society in education and training policies as well as the open method of coordination tools in this field which can create a larger space for coordinated EU level discussion on policy reform between national policymakers.

Lastly, we believe that **additional and bespoke funds are needed to support the implementation of national strategies for quality, accessible and inclusive education and training for all**. These allocations should include a nuanced approach to economic and social disparities between regions or municipalities within a country and the socio-economic background of learners – the most predominant challenge which must be addressed, especially in light of the Covid-19 crisis.

² Lifelong Learning Platform Reaction to the Education Package, 2020
http://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/LLLP_European-Education-Area_reaction-1.pdf