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(Information)

COUNCIL

**MODERNISING EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A VITAL CONTRIBUTION TO PROSPERITY
AND SOCIAL COHESION IN EUROPE****2006 JOINT INTERIM REPORT OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE COMMISSION ON PROGRESS UNDER
THE 'EDUCATION & TRAINING 2010' WORK PROGRAMME**

(2006/C 79/01)

1. INTRODUCTION

In their 2004 Joint Interim Report ⁽¹⁾ the Council (Education) and the European Commission called for urgent reforms of Europe's education and training systems if the Union is to achieve its social and economic objectives. They undertook to review progress every two years on implementing the Education and Training 2010 work programme, which includes the Copenhagen process on vocational education and training (VET), and actions for higher education. The present report is the first in this new cycle. Education and Training 2010 is also a key contribution to the implementation of the new integrated guidelines for jobs and growth ⁽²⁾, including the European Youth Pact.

The recent mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy confirmed the central place of education and training within the European Union's agenda for jobs and growth. The integrated guidelines call on Member States to expand and improve investment in human capital and adapt education and training systems in response to new competence requirements. In this context, the European Council has requested that the Education and Training 2010 work programme continue to be implemented in full.

The Council has repeatedly emphasised the dual role — social and economic — of education and training systems. Education and training are a determining factor in each country's potential for excellence, innovation and competitiveness. At the same time, they are an integral part of the social dimension of Europe, because they transmit values of solidarity, equal opportunities and social participation, while also producing positive effects on health, crime, the environment, democratisation and general quality of life. All citizens need to acquire and continually update their knowledge, skills and competences through lifelong learning, and the specific needs of those at risk of social exclusion need to be taken into account. This will help to raise labour force participation and economic growth, while ensuring social cohesion.

Investing in education and training has a price, but high private, economic and social returns in the medium and long-term outweigh the costs. Reforms should therefore continue to seek synergies between economic and social policy objectives, which are in fact mutually reinforcing.

⁽¹⁾ Education and Training 2010: The success of the Lisbon Strategy hinges on urgent reforms, 3 March 2004 (Council doc. 6905/04 EDUC 43).

⁽²⁾ The integrated package brings together the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (BEPG) and the Employment Guidelines (Council Decision of 12 July 2005 on Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (2005/600/EC), OJ L 205 of 6.8.2005, and Council Recommendation of 12 July 2005 on the broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and the Community (2005-2008) (2005/601/EC)).

These considerations are highly relevant to the Union's current reflection on the future development of the European social model. Europe is facing enormous socio-economic and demographic challenges associated with an ageing population, high numbers of low-skilled adults, high rates of youth unemployment, etc. At the same time, there is a growing need to improve the level of competences and qualifications on the labour market. It is necessary to address these challenges in order to improve the long-term sustainability of Europe's social systems. Education and training are part of the solution to these problems.

2. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010

The following sections present, for the first time, an overview of the progress made towards the modernisation of education and training systems in Europe, which was called for at Lisbon. The analysis is based primarily on the 2005 national reports of the Member States, EFTA-EEA countries, and the acceding and candidate countries ⁽¹⁾. It shows how reforms are contributing to the priority areas for action identified in the 2004 Joint Interim Report ⁽²⁾. The references to countries in brackets are provided as examples of good practice and in order to facilitate mutual learning.

2.1. At national level: reforms are moving forward

The national reports indicate that the Education and Training 2010 work programme has become a clearer part of the national policy landscape. All the Member States now consider, to varying extents, that the Lisbon strategy is a factor in national education and training policy development.

An increasing number of countries now have concrete arrangements for coordination between Ministries (especially education and employment) with responsibility for implementing the Education and Training 2010 work programme, and for consultation of stakeholders such as social partners. Many countries have established or are establishing their own targets that relate — to varying degrees — to the reference levels of average European performance for education and training (benchmarks). This is also of particular importance to the implementation of the European Employment Strategy ⁽³⁾.

2.1.1. Priorities and investments are aiming at greater efficiency and quality

Since 2000, as far as total investment in key knowledge-economy sectors are concerned, the gap has not narrowed between Europe and competitor countries such as the United States. Some Asian countries such as China and India are catching up fast.

Nonetheless, public spending on education as a percentage of GDP is increasing in nearly all EU countries (EU average: 4,9 % in 2000, 5,2 % in 2002).

The upward trend noted between 2000 and 2002 is a promising sign that Governments consider public expenditure in education to be a priority. Nonetheless there are large variations between countries, ranging from four to eight percent of GDP. Most Governments seem to recognise that the necessary reforms cannot be accomplished within current levels and patterns of investment.

⁽¹⁾ The 2005 report on progress towards the benchmarks (Commission Staff Working Paper: 'Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and Training' (SEC (2005) 419)) was also a basis for the analysis. The national reports will be available on the Education & Training 2010 web site from November 2005 (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html).

⁽²⁾ More detail is presented in the statistical annex. A full analysis of national reports and developments at EU level may be found in the Staff Working Paper accompanying this Communication.

⁽³⁾ Three out of the five benchmarks are also targets under the EU employment guidelines.

Many countries are stimulating private investment from individuals and households, particularly in areas where there are high private rates of return, for example through incentives such as vouchers or individual learning accounts (e.g. AT, NL, UK ⁽¹⁾) ⁽²⁾, tax incentives (e.g. CY, FI, HU, LT, PT, SI) or tuition fees (e.g. AT, CY, PL, RO, UK). There is little evidence of an overall increase in employer investment in continuing training. As a result, greater efforts are required to encourage employers to invest more.

Enhancing efficiency through improving quality is a major theme for reform for most countries, with emphasis also being placed on decentralisation and improving institutional management. While most countries make use of international comparative data on outcomes to assess their system performance, many have not developed adequate national performance indicators or arrangements to collect the necessary data. It is thus difficult to measure the impact of actions taken.

All countries emphasise the crucial importance of developing the skills needed for the knowledge-based economy and society, and for economic competitiveness. Achieving higher quality in provision and improving standards are also major priorities for most countries, along with teacher training, expanding higher education participation and implementing the Bologna process reforms ⁽³⁾, enhancing the attractiveness of VET, and ensuring access to ICT.

In relation to social inclusion, all countries indicate that access and the employability of target groups are defining components of their policy. A number of countries (e.g. CY, CZ, EL, ES, LV, MT, PT, RO) emphasise that financial constraints limit their capacity to implement all necessary policies.

Several countries underline that in their education and training policies economic and social objectives are mutually supportive. Others argue that if the economic and employment agenda is successful, the social goals (equity and social cohesion) can be addressed more readily. These issues are particularly relevant to the discussion on the European social model.

2.1.2. *Progress in defining lifelong learning strategies, but implementation remains the challenge*

Progress has been made since 2003 towards the goal, agreed by the European Council, that lifelong learning strategies ⁽⁴⁾ should be put in place in all Member States by 2006 ⁽⁵⁾. This is a key dimension of the new Lisbon integrated guidelines. Many — but by no means all — countries have now developed lifelong learning policy statements, for example strategy documents or national action plans. Others have put in place framework legislation (e.g. EL, ES, FR, RO).

It is still the case, however, as demonstrated in 2003, that strategies are imbalanced. There is a tendency either to focus on employability or on re-engaging those who have become alienated from the systems. Some countries like Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway are well on their way to achieving a national approach which is coherent and comprehensive, and are making strong progress on implementation.

⁽¹⁾ Refers here to Scotland and Wales only.

⁽²⁾ See the statistical annex for a key to country abbreviations.

⁽³⁾ The Bologna process is an inter-governmental process, aiming to create a European Higher Education Area in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education. For more information, see http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html.

⁽⁴⁾ Lifelong learning is defined as 'all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.' (Commission Communication on 'Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality', COM(2001) 678 final).

⁽⁵⁾ 2004 Joint Interim Report, op cit.; conclusions of the European Council, 2004, 2005.

Nonetheless, it is encouraging that cornerstone policies for lifelong learning are gaining ground in Europe. For example, a few countries (e.g. FI, FR, PT) have well-established systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning, while several others have recently introduced measures, or are in the process of doing so (e.g. BE, DK, ES, NL, NO, SE, SI, UK). Lifelong guidance is also being tackled by an increasing number of countries (e.g. BE, DK, FR, IE, IS, LI), as is the development of single national qualifications frameworks (e.g. IE). This latter issue is also a key priority for some new Member States and candidate countries (e.g. CY, EE, HR, LV, PL, RO, SI, TK).

About 11 % of adults in the EU, aged 25-64 ⁽¹⁾, take part in lifelong learning, representing some progress since 2000, with significant variations between countries.

The need to increase participation rates in further learning remains a major challenge for Europe, particularly in the southern European countries and the new Member States. Greater numbers of adults in lifelong learning would increase active participation in the labour market and contribute to strengthening social cohesion.

Across Europe, insufficient priority and funding is being dedicated to increasing access to adult learning opportunities, especially for older workers, whose numbers are set to increase by around 14 million by 2030, and for the low skilled. Most of the countries that record the highest levels of participation have given a high priority to adult learning strategies as part of an integrated and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy.

Almost 15 % of young people in the EU still leave school early, reflecting only slight progress towards the EU 2010 benchmark of 10 %.

Nearly 20 % of 15 year-olds continue to have serious difficulty with reading literacy, reflecting no progress since 2000 against the EU benchmark of reducing the share by one fifth.

About 77 % of 18-24 year olds complete upper-secondary education, still far from the EU benchmark of 85 %, despite good progress in some countries.

The persistently high numbers of young people leaving school without a basic level of qualifications and competences are a worrying signal that initial education systems are not always providing the necessary foundations for lifelong learning. This concern is also reflected in the new Lisbon integrated guidelines and in the European Youth Pact. Several countries are responding to this by reforming curricula and study programmes, aiming to ensure that key, transversal competences are acquired by all (e.g. AT, CY, DE, FR, IT, NO, UK), and that young people — especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds — do not 'slip through the net' (see also section 2.1.4).

2.1.3. Higher Education reforms increasingly support the Lisbon agenda

The Bologna process is continuing to drive reforms in higher education structures, particularly in relation to introducing the three-cycle structure of degrees and enhancing quality assurance. The Bologna process, rather than the Lisbon strategy, tends to be at the foreground of national policy development in this sector. Nonetheless, there are signs that countries are beginning to tackle the challenges of governance, funding and attractiveness, which should help to ensure universities' contribution to competitiveness, jobs and growth ⁽²⁾. Several countries mention initiatives to establish centres or poles of excellence (e.g. AT, BE, DE, DK, FI, FR, IT, NO).

⁽¹⁾ Percentage of population participating in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey.

⁽²⁾ See Commission Communication 'Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy'. COM (2005) 152 final.

In relation to governance, many countries have, for example, introduced various forms of contractualisation to regulate the relationships between higher education institutions and the State, as a basis for internal resource allocation (e.g. AT, CZ, DE, DK, FR, IS, LI, SK). Several central and eastern European countries are trying to cope with the problem of fragmentation of their higher education systems by introducing new institutional governance regimes, often including external stakeholders.

The total (public and private) investment in higher education in the EU in 2001 is 1,28 % of GDP, compared to 2,5 % in Canada and 3,25 % in the US ⁽¹⁾. The three highest-spending EU countries are Denmark (2,8 %), Sweden (2,3 %) and Finland (2,1 %). To close the spending gap with the USA, the EU would have to commit an additional 180 billion per year, securing in particular substantial increased investment from the private sector.

For many countries funding remains a key challenge and an obstacle to implementing the modernisation agenda.

Facilitating incoming mobility seems to be a widespread means of enhancing the attractiveness of higher education in Europe. Only few countries go further by undertaking active marketing or targeted international recruitment activities (e.g. DE, FI, FR, IE, NL, UK). Several new Member States are aiming to tackle this issue by establishing partnerships with universities abroad for the provision of joint degrees.

Strengthening collaboration between higher education and industry is recognised by most countries as a basic requirement for innovation and increased competitiveness, but too few have a comprehensive approach on this issue. Part of the problem is that national innovation strategies too often do not incorporate higher education reforms.

Many countries are encouraging universities to play their part in making a reality of lifelong learning by widening access for non-traditional learners, such as those from low socio-economic backgrounds, including through the establishment of systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This is part of a general effort across Europe to raise participation levels in higher education. A great many universities offer continuing professional development, and open universities using distance and blended learning and ICT-based learning approaches are also increasingly popular.

2.1.4. The status of vocational education and training is gradually improving but much remains to be done

National priorities for the reform of vocational education and training (VET) seem broadly to reflect those of the Copenhagen process. The implementation of common principles and references agreed at European level (e.g. for validation of non-formal learning, quality assurance, guidance) has begun, but countries emphasise that it is too early to present concrete results.

In some countries VET has a positive image (e.g. AT, CZ, DE, FI), owing to such factors as having a 'dual system' (i.e. alternance training), double qualifications (combining general and vocational education) and recent measures in favour of access to higher education. It is still too often the case, however, that vocational pathways are less attractive than academic ones. The improvement of the quality and attractiveness of VET continues to be a key challenge for the future.

⁽¹⁾ See 'Key Figures 2005 on Science, Technology and Innovation: Towards a European Knowledge Area', European Commission.

In order to increase the attractiveness of VET most countries focus on upper secondary education, including the development of curricula and apprenticeships, flexible progression and transfer routes, links to the labour market, and guidance. Some countries have well established routes from VET into higher education (e.g. CY, CZ, ES, FR, IS, IE, NL, PT, UK) whilst others are giving priority, in the context of developing lifelong learning strategies, to increasing progression into general and higher education (e.g. AT, CZ, DE, ES, SK).

Enhancing the relevance of VET to the labour market, and improving relations with employers and the social partners, is an important factor for most countries trying to tackle the issues of quality and attractiveness. Improvements in the structure of VET, access to apprenticeships and the reform of VET standards are crucial in this context. Forecasting skills and qualifications needs remains a key challenge, requiring more stakeholder involvement, a sectoral approach and the improvement of data collection.

A large majority of countries express concerns about the needs of low-skilled people, currently numbering almost 80 million in the Union, highlighting the importance of labour force participation and the role of VET systems as key means of ensuring social inclusion.

Most countries concentrate on target populations in this context, and in particular on the youth population, where VET programmes have a positive effect on reducing rates of early school leaving. Adults and older workers, on the other hand, are still given insufficient priority.

The professional development of vocational teachers and trainers remains a real challenge for most countries.

2.1.5. *A growing yet insufficient European dimension in the national systems*

All countries consider it important to increase participation in mobility in education and training from primary to higher levels, including mobility of teachers and trainers as part of their professional development. However, despite some promising initiatives, for example as concerns quality of mobility (e.g. AT, BG, CZ, EL, IE, LV), there are not enough national strategies. The main support continues to come from EU programmes. Countries generally tend to promote mobility for incoming students more than for outgoing ones. Europass, a key instrument for supporting mobility, is being implemented across Europe ⁽¹⁾.

Increasing importance is also being given to building a European or international dimension into national education and training systems, as a means of promoting an understanding among young people about the European Union. A few countries (e.g. EE, EL, FI, LU, NL, UK) include a European or international dimension as an explicit part of the curriculum, and some are introducing legislative reforms accordingly. Others are also promoting the European dimension through cooperation projects at regional and local level (e.g. DE, ES, IT). Many underline the importance of language learning. Policies and actions tend to be scattered, however, and ensuring that all pupils leave secondary education with the knowledge and competences they will need as European citizens remains a major challenge. This was an objective underlined in the 2004 Joint Interim Report.

⁽¹⁾ http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/europass/index_en.html

2.2. At European level: improving the governance of the Education and Training 2010 work programme

Over the course of 2004-2005 the Council (Education) has adopted a number of common tools, principles and frameworks, for example related to mobility, quality assurance, non-formal learning and guidance. As noted in the 2004 Joint Interim Report, such agreements can usefully support national policies and reforms, and contribute to developing mutual trust. In the field of VET, the Maastricht Communiqué (December 2004) ⁽¹⁾ has fixed new priorities at national and EU level. The Commission has also adopted a number of Communications, for example on higher education in the Lisbon strategy and on the development of a European language competence indicator ⁽²⁾, and draft recommendations of the Council and the European Parliament, for example on key competences for lifelong learning.

As part of an overall streamlining of the process, and in order to enhance coherence and strengthen governance, an Education and Training 2010 Coordination Group has been set up, gathering ministerial representatives of both education and training, as well as the European Social Partners. A regular report on indicators and benchmarks also supports the monitoring of progress.

Working methods have also been updated to better support implementation at the national level. The working groups ⁽³⁾ which implemented the first phase of the work programme are being replaced by 'clusters' of countries, focussing on key issues according to their national priorities and interests. The clusters are organising concrete 'peer learning' activities during 2005-2006, whereby countries offer mutual support in the implementation of reforms through the identification of success factors and the sharing of good practice.

The European area of education and training continues to be strengthened, notably by the development of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF). A consultation process has been launched on a blueprint for the EQF, and the Commission will come forward with a proposal for a draft recommendation of the Council and the European Parliament in 2006. The Commission will also present in early 2006 a draft recommendation of the Council and the European Parliament on the quality of teacher education, as well as a Communication on adult learning at the end of 2006.

3. CONCLUSION: ACCELERATING THE PACE OF REFORMS TO ENSURE A MORE EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE LISBON STRATEGY AND THE STRENGTHENING OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL

National reforms are moving forward. There are signs that a sustained public effort is being made throughout the Union and in some areas is beginning to reap rewards. Such developments are encouraging, especially taking into account the fact that educational reforms are slow to take effect, and that differences in national situations and starting points in the enlarged Union are significant.

The long-term sustainability of the European social model will depend to a considerable degree on the effectiveness of these in-depth and wide-ranging reforms, in securing the active participation in economic and social life of all citizens, at all levels of ability and social background.

It is thus particularly worrying that, notwithstanding the early achievement of the EU benchmark on increasing the number of maths, science and technology graduates, there is too little progress against those benchmarks related most closely to social inclusion. Unless significantly more efforts are made in the areas of early school leaving, completion of upper-secondary education, and key competences, a larger proportion of the next generation will face social exclusion, at great cost to themselves, the economy and society. The European Council highlighted the particular importance of these areas of Education and Training 2010 for young people, when adopting the European Youth Pact in March 2005.

⁽¹⁾ http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/vocational_en.html

⁽²⁾ COM(2005) 556 final

⁽³⁾ The outcomes of the working groups in 2004 may be found on the Education & Training 2010 web site: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html

The priority levers for action set in the 2004 Joint Interim Report, as well as the message that the pace of reforms must be accelerated, remain fully valid. Progress will continue to be followed up closely in the next Joint Report in 2008.

3.1. Reforms need to pay special attention to the issues of equity and governance

The national reports demonstrate that Governments are aware of the challenges involved in modernising education and training. They refer in particular to the difficulty of securing the necessary public and private investments, and of reforming the structures and management of the systems. In this context, particular attention must be paid to the key areas of equity and governance, including through the development of appropriate incentives, if the reforms underway are to be successful. The Commission will support national efforts by giving priority to these areas in future peer learning activities at EU level.

3.1.1. *Implement reforms which ensure that the systems are both efficient and equitable*

The greater emphasis being placed on efficiency in public investment in education and training is a positive trend. Nonetheless, due attention needs to be paid to the whole lifelong learning continuum, and the efficiency, quality and equity objectives of the systems must be given equal consideration. This is a *sine qua non* of achieving the Lisbon goals while strengthening the European social model.

Ensuring that systems are equitable implies that the outcomes and benefits of education and training should be independent of socio-economic background and other factors that may lead to educational disadvantage. As such, access should be open to all, and treatment should be differentiated according to people's specific learning needs.

Research shows that there is no trade-off between efficiency and equity, because they are inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing. Increasing access to education and training for all, including disadvantaged groups and older workers, will contribute to increasing the active population, which simultaneously promotes growth and reduces inequalities. The Commission will discuss the issue of equity and efficiency in a Communication which it plans to adopt in 2006, and special attention should be paid to this area in the 2008 Joint Report. In addition, the search for excellence including through better links between higher education and research, should go hand in hand with a search for greater access and social inclusion.

Investments should be targeted on areas where the social and economic returns are highest, thereby effectively combining efficiency and equity. In this respect, Member States' efforts towards achieving the EU benchmarks related to early school leaving, completion of upper-secondary education, and key competences, need to be stepped up in the coming years. In particular, investment in pre-primary education is of paramount importance for preventing school failure and social exclusion, and for laying the foundations for further learning.

Furthermore, investment in the training of teachers and trainers and the strengthening of leadership for education and training institutions are crucial to improving the efficiency of education and training systems.

3.1.2. *Mobilise actors and resources by means of diverse learning partnerships*

Reforms are facilitated by a favourable economic and social context, and where there are high levels of public and private investment in knowledge, skills and competences, but also where modes of governance of the systems are coherent and coordinated. Effective inter-ministerial synergy between 'knowledge policies' (education, training, employment/social affairs, research, etc.), strong social dialogue, and the awareness and active involvement of other key actors such as parents and teachers/trainers, the voluntary sector and local actors, all promote consensus as regards policy goals and the necessary reforms. Such forms of governance are not widespread, however.

Priority should be given to improving governance through learning partnerships, especially at regional and local levels, as a means of sharing responsibilities and costs between the relevant actors (institutions, public authorities, social partners, enterprises, sectoral organisations, community organisations, etc.).

Such partnerships should involve teachers and trainers as main agents of change in the systems. They should also foster greater involvement of employers in ensuring the relevance of lifelong learning provision.

3.2. Strengthening the implementation of Education and Training 2010

3.2.1. At national level

Even though progress has been made, the priorities of the Education and Training 2010 work programme need to be taken more fully into account in national policy making. Member States should in particular ensure that:

- education and training have a central position in the national Lisbon reform programmes, in the national strategic reference framework for the structural funds, and in the national strategies on social protection and social inclusion;
- mechanisms for coordinating the implementation of the work programme at national level are in place in all countries, involving the different Ministries concerned and the main stakeholders, especially the social partners;
- national policies contribute actively towards the Education and Training 2010 benchmarks and objectives. National targets and indicators should be further developed, taking account of these European references;
- the evaluation of policies is improved, to enable progress to be better monitored, and to create a culture of evaluation, making full use of research results. The development of high quality statistical instruments and infrastructure is therefore indispensable;
- the various European agreements (e.g. Council resolutions or conclusions on common references and principles) adopted in the context of the work programme are used as important reference points when designing national reforms.

3.2.2. At European level

The Commission will ensure that the outcomes of the Education and Training 2010 work programme are fed into the implementation process of the Lisbon integrated guidelines and the EU guidelines for cohesion, and into follow-up action related to the future of the European social model, as discussed at the informal meeting of Heads of State and Government at Hampton Court. In this context, the structural funds should give priority to investment in human capital.

In order to strengthen the implementation of the work programme, particular attention will be given to:

- the development of a well-focused and relevant programme of peer learning activities in the framework of the new Integrated Programme for Lifelong Learning and in the light of experiences and policy priorities agreed throughout 2005. Peer learning activities will concentrate on those areas where reforms are most needed (EU benchmark areas; lifelong learning strategies; efficiency and equity; governance and learning partnerships; higher education; VET);
 - enhanced monitoring of the implementation of lifelong learning strategies in all Member States. This issue will be a main priority of the 2008 Joint Report, especially in relation to the role of lifelong learning in the strengthening of the European social model;
 - reaching agreement on a recommendation for a European Qualifications Framework (EQF), as well as the draft recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning, and taking forward work on the quality of teacher education;
 - better information and exchanges of experiences regarding the use of the structural funds and the European Investment Bank, to support education and training development, with a view to better exploiting these resources in the future.
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STATISTICAL ANNEX

PROGRESS AGAINST THE FIVE REFERENCE LEVELS OF AVERAGE EUROPEAN PERFORMANCE (BENCHMARKS) IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Country Codes

EU European Union

BE Belgium

CZ Czech Republic

DK Denmark

DE Germany

EE Estonia

EL Greece

ES Spain

FR France

IE Ireland

IT Italy

CY Cyprus

LV Latvia

LT Lithuania

LU Luxembourg

HU Hungary

MT Malta

NL Netherlands

AT Austria

PL Poland

PT Portugal

SI Slovenia

SK Slovakia

FI Finland

SE Sweden

UK United Kingdom

EEA European Economic Area

IS Iceland

LI Liechtenstein

NO Norway

Acceding Countries

BG Bulgaria

RO Romania

Candidate Countries

HR Croatia

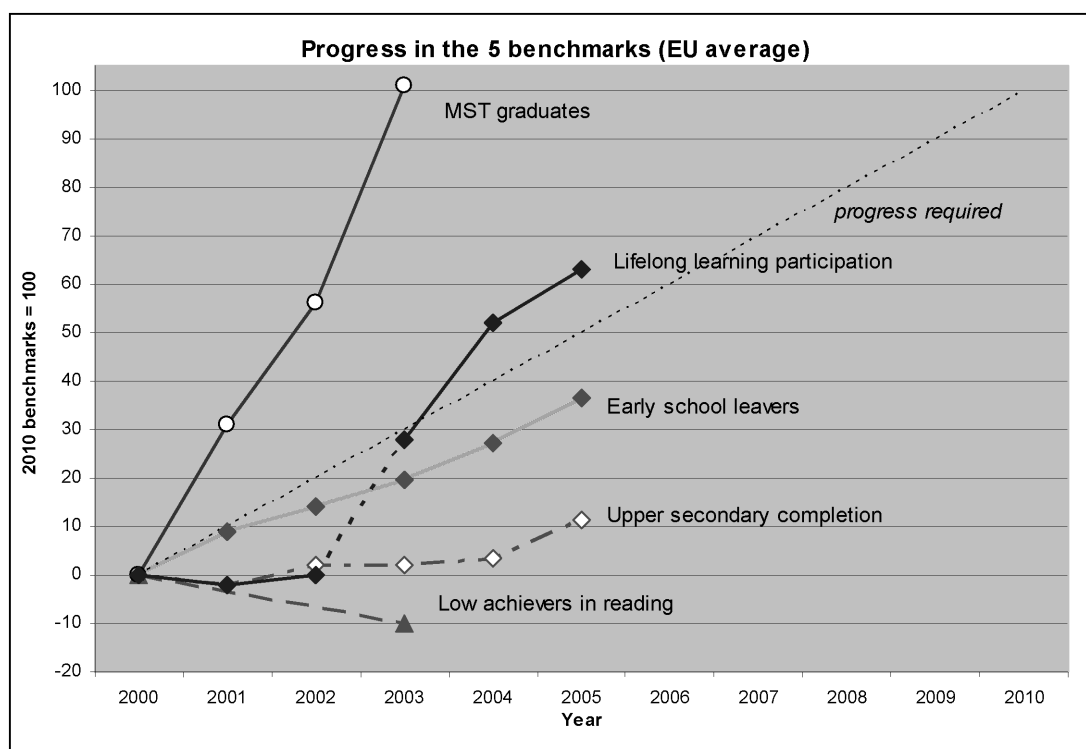
TR Turkey

Others

JP Japan

US/USA United States of America

OVERVIEW ON PROGRESS IN THE FIVE BENCHMARK AREAS



Methodological remarks: The starting point in the year 2000 is set in the graph as zero and the 2010 benchmark as 100. The results achieved in each year are thus measured against the 2010 benchmark. A diagonal line shows the progress required, i.e. each year an additional 10 % of progress would have to be achieved to reach the benchmark. If a line stays below this diagonal line, progress is not sufficient.

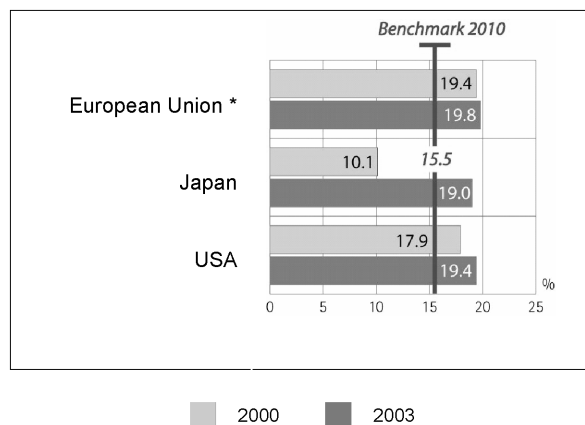
As regards lifelong learning participation, there have been many breaks in time series: some countries have revised their data collection methods between 2002 and 2003. The application of the new methods led to higher results from 2003, and thus progress is overstated between 2002 and 2003. The line 2002-2003 on lifelong learning participation is therefore dotted. For low achievers in reading (data from PISA survey) there are only results for 16 EU countries and for two years.

Key results:

- As regards the number of maths, science and technology (MST) graduates the benchmark will be over-achieved; the progress required has already been made in 2000-2003.
- There is some progress in lifelong learning participation. However, much of it is a result of changes in surveys in several Member States, which led to higher nominal participation rates and thus overstate overall progress.
- There is constant improvement as regards early school leavers, but faster progress is needed in order to achieve the benchmark.
- As regards upper secondary completion there has been very little progress.
- Results for low achievers in reading have not improved (but this is based only on two reference years).

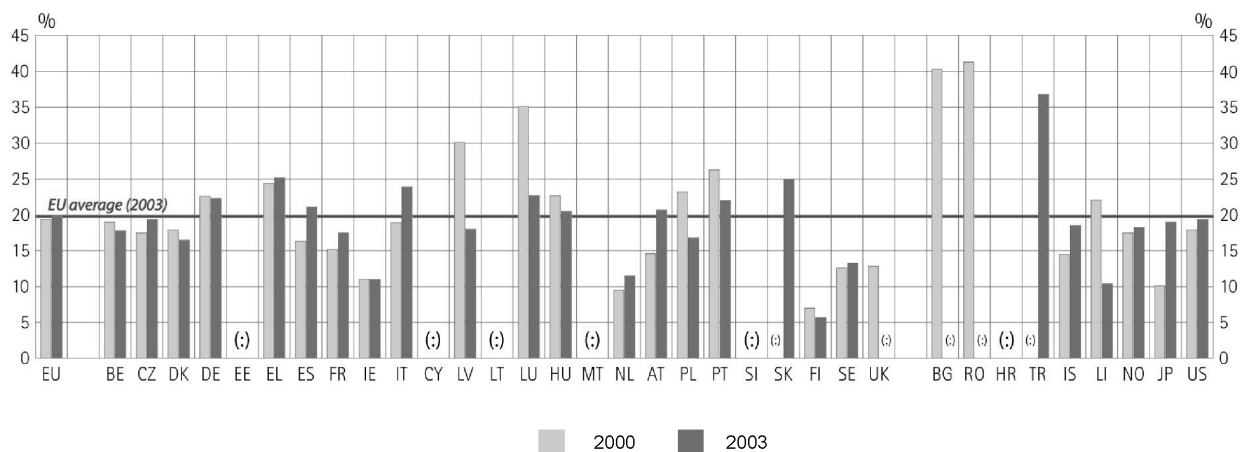
KEY COMPETENCES

Percentage of pupils with reading literacy proficiency level one and lower (on the PISA reading literacy scale), 2000-2003



Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: OECD, PISA 2003 database.

* In 2000, in the 16 EU countries for which comparable data is now available both for 2000 and 2003, the percentage of 15-year olds at level one or below was 19,4. The benchmark of reducing the share by 20 % thus implies a target figure of 15,5 %.



	EU		BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	
2000	19,4		19,0	17,5	17,9	22,6	:	24,4	16,3	15,2	11,0	18,9	:	30,1	:	(35,1)	22,7		:
2003	19,8		17,8	19,4	16,5	22,3	:	25,2	21,1	17,5	11,0	23,9	:	18,0	:	22,7	20,5		:

Breakdown of 2003 results

Boys	25,6		22,4	23,5	20,5	28,0	:	32,6	27,9	23,5	14,3	31,0	:	25,0	:	28,6	25,6		:
Girls	14,0		12,9	14,9	12,7	16,3	:	18,5	14,5	12,1	7,7	17,2	:	11,6	:	17,2	14,9		:

	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO	JP	US
2000	(9,5)	14,6	23,2	26,3	:	:	7,0	12,6	12,8	40,3	41,3	:	:	14,5	22,1	17,5	10,1	17,9
2003	11,5	20,7	16,8	22,0	:	24,9	5,7	13,3	:	:	:	:	36,8	18,5	10,4	18,2	19,0	19,4

Breakdown of 2003 results

Boys	14,3	28,2	23,4	29,4	:	31,0	9,0	17,7	:	:	:	:	44,1	26,9	12,6	24,8	23,2	24,3
Girls	8,6	13,1	10,2	15,1	:	18,5	2,4	8,7	:	:	:	:	27,8	9,5	8,0	11,3	15,1	14,4

Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: OECD PISA database

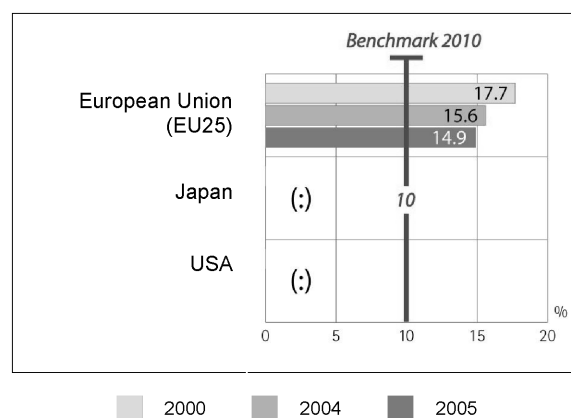
Additional notes:

EU figure: weighted average based on number of pupils enrolled and data for 16 countries (NL, LU data not representative in 2000, same for UK in 2003, SK not participating in 2000).

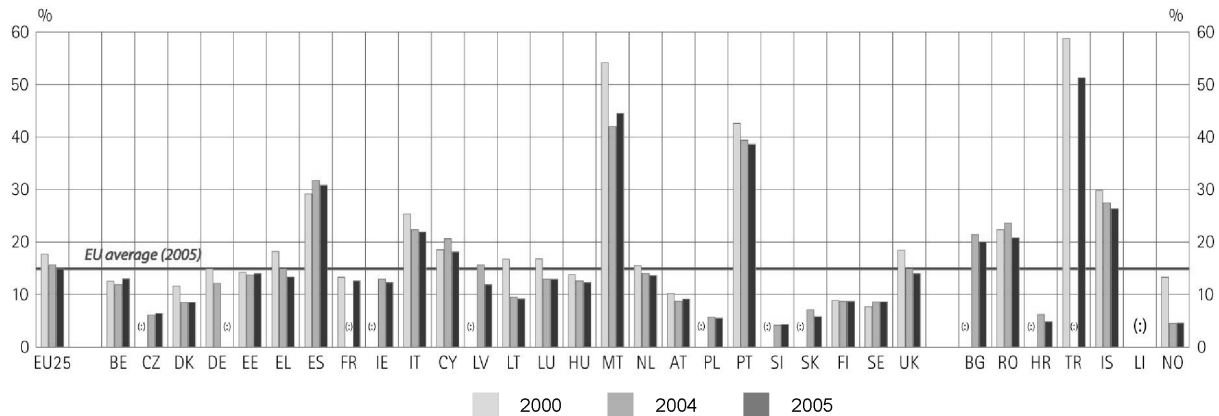
In 2000 the share of low performing 15-year olds in reading was 19,4 % (data available for 16 Member States only). According to the benchmark this proportion should decrease by one fifth by 2010 (and thus reach 15,5 %). While the share has decreased in some Member States (notably Latvia and Poland) no progress on this objective has been achieved since 2000 at EU level (2003: 19,8 %).

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

Share of the population aged 18-24 with only lower-secondary education and not in education or training, 2000-2005



Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey)



	EU25		BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
2000	17,7		12,5	:	11,6	14,9	14,2	18,2	29,1	13,3	:	25,3	18,5	:	16,7	16,8	13,8
2004	15,6		11,9	6,1	8,5	12,1	13,7	14,9	31,7	:	12,9	22,3	20,6	15,6	9,5	12,9	12,6
2005	14,9		13,0	6,4	8,5	:	14,0	13,3	30,8	12,6	12,3	21,9	18,1	11,9	9,2	12,9	12,3

Breakdown of 2005 results by gender

Males	17,1		15,3	6,2	9,4	:	17,4	17,5	36,4	14,6	14,9	25,9	26,6	15,5	12,2	12,8	13,5
Females	12,7		10,6	6,6	7,5	:	10,7	9,2	25,0	10,7	9,6	17,8	10,6	8,2	6,2	13,0	11,1

	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO
2000	54,2	15,5	10,2	:	42,6	:	:	8,9	7,7	18,4	:	22,3	:	58,8	29,8	:	13,3
2004	42,0	14,0	8,7	5,7	39,4	4,2	7,1	8,7	8,6	14,9	21,4	23,6	6,2	:	27,4	:	4,5
2005	44,5	13,6	9,1	5,5	38,6	4,3	5,8	8,7	8,6	14,0	20,0	20,8	4,8	51,3	26,3	:	4,6

Breakdown of 2005 results by gender

Males	46,2	15,8	9,5	6,9	46,7	5,7	6,0	10,6	9,3	14,7	19,5	21,4	5,6	58,2	30,5	:	5,3
Females	42,8	11,2	8,7	4,0	30,1	2,8	5,7	6,9	7,9	13,2	20,6	20,1	3,8	43,8	22,0	:	3,9

Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey)

Additional notes:

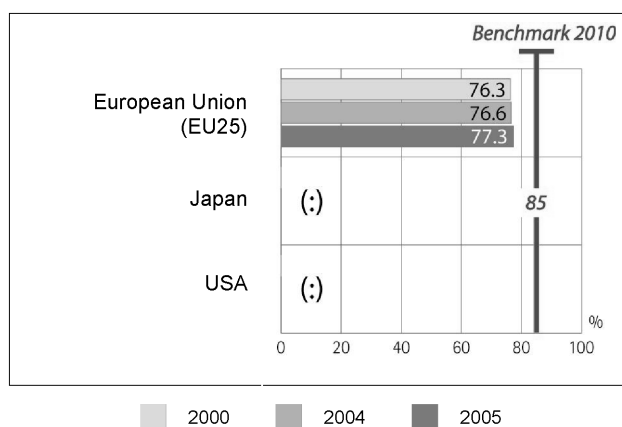
From 5 December 2005 release, Eurostat implements a refined definition of the educational attainment level 'upper secondary' in order to increase the comparability of results in the EU. For 1998 data onwards ISCED 3c levels of duration shorter than 2 years do not fall any longer under the level 'upper secondary' but under 'lower secondary'. This change implies revised results in DK (from 2001), ES, CY and IS. However, the definition can not yet be implemented in EL, IE and AT where all ISCED 3c levels are still included.

- Breaks in time-series in 2003: CZ, DK, DE, EL, FR, IE, in 2004: BE, LT, MT, PL, PT, RO; in 2005: E; 2004 data provisional for IE; 2005 data provisional for IE, LU, MT, FI, SE, UK, IS.
- CY: reference population excludes students abroad.
- DK, LU, IS, NO, EE, LV, LT, CY, MT, SI: high degree of variation of results over time partly influenced by a low sample size.
- EU25: where data are missing or provisional, aggregates provided use the result of the closest available year.

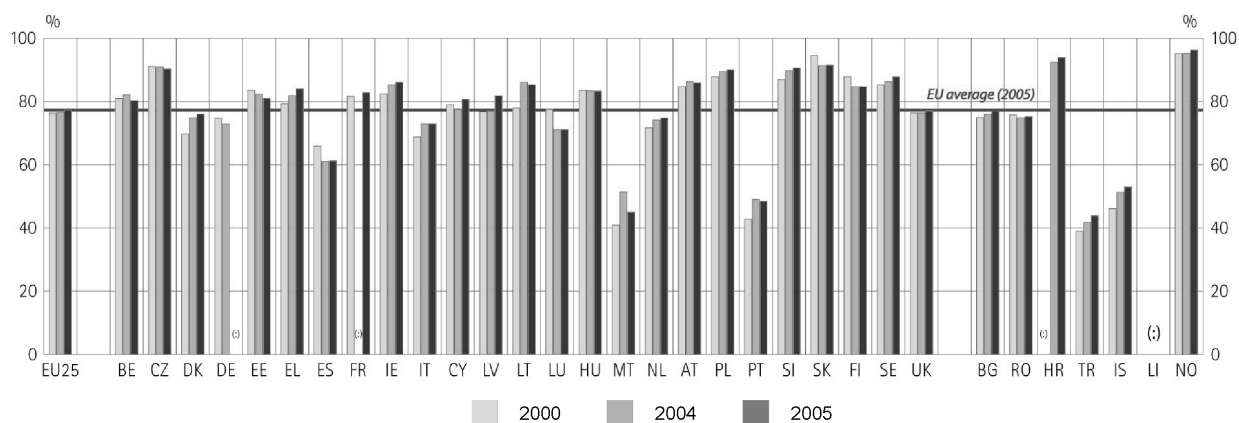
In 2005 early school leavers in EU 25 represented nearly 15 % of young people aged 18-24. There was continuous improvement in recent years in reducing the share, but progress will need to be faster to reach the EU benchmark of 10 % in 2010. However, several Member States, notably the Nordic countries and many of the new Member States, already have shares of less than 10 %.

COMPLETION OF UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Percentage of the population aged 20-24 having completed at least upper-secondary education, 2000-2005



Source: DG Education and Culture; Data Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey).



	EU25		BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
2000	76,3		80,9	91,1	69,8	74,7	83,6	79,3	65,9	81,6	82,4	68,8	79,0	76,8	77,9	77,5	83,6
2004	76,6		82,1	90,9	74,8	72,8	82,3	81,9	61,1	:	85,3	72,9	77,6	76,9	86,1	71,1	83,4
2005	77,3		80,3	90,3	76,0	:	80,9	84,0	61,3	82,8	86,1	72,9	80,7	81,8	85,2	71,1	83,3

Breakdown of 2005 results by gender

Males	74,6		76,0	90,8	74,5	:	74,9	79,4	54,8	81,2	83,4	67,8	72,0	77,0	80,5	70,4	81,3
Females	80,0		84,6	89,8	77,5	:	87,0	88,7	68,2	84,3	88,8	78,1	88,9	86,6	90,1	71,7	85,4

	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO
2000	40,9	71,7	84,7	87,8	42,8	87,0	94,5	87,8	85,2	76,4	74,9	75,8	:	38,9	46,1	:	95,1
2004	51,4	74,2	86,3	89,5	49,0	89,7	91,3	84,6	86,3	76,4	76,0	74,8	92,5	41,8	51,3	:	95,3

	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO
2005	45,0	74,7	85,9	90,0	48,4	90,6	91,5	84,6	87,8	77,1	76,8	75,2	93,9	43,9	53,0	:	96,3

Breakdown of 2005 results by gender

Males	41,7	70,6	84,1	88,4	40,4	87,8	90,9	81,2	86,6	77,5	77,3	74,1	93,5	38,0	49,4	:	95,2
Females	48,4	78,9	87,6	91,7	56,6	93,5	92,1	87,9	89,0	76,7	76,3	76,4	94,4	50,9	56,9	:	97,3

Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey).

Additional notes:

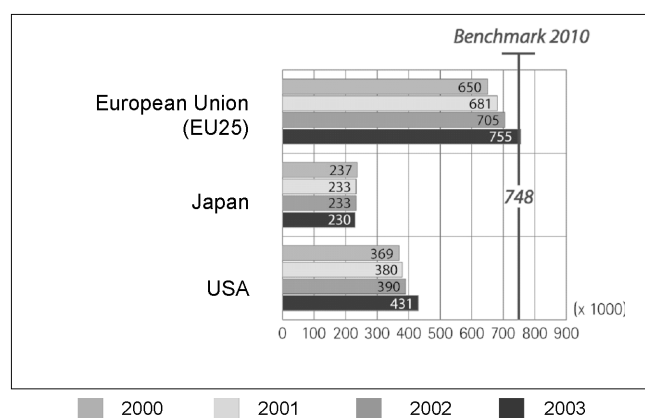
From 5 December 2005 release, Eurostat implements a refined definition of the educational attainment level 'upper secondary' in order to increase the comparability of results in the EU. For 1998 data onwards ISCED 3c levels of duration shorter than 2 years do not fall any longer under the level 'upper secondary' but under 'lower secondary'. This change implies revised results in DK (from 2001), ES, CY and IS. However, the definition can not yet be implemented in EL, IE and AT where all ISCED 3c levels are still included.

- Breaks in time series: 2001: SE; 2002: LT, LV; 2003: DK, HU, AT.
- 2004 results for IE and IL, 2005 results for IE, LU, MT, FI, HR, IS are provisional.
- CY: Students usually living in the country but studying abroad are not included.

The share of young people (aged 20-24) who have completed upper-secondary education has only slightly improved since 2000. There was thus little progress in achieving the benchmark of raising this share to at least 85 % by 2010. However, some countries with a relatively low share, notably Portugal and Malta, have made considerable progress in the recent past. It should also be noted that many of the new Member States already perform above the benchmark set for 2010 and that four of them, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, and in addition Norway and Croatia, already have shares of 90 % and more.

GRADUATES IN MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Total number of tertiary (ISCED 5A, 5B and 6) graduates from mathematics, science and technology fields (MST), 2000-2003

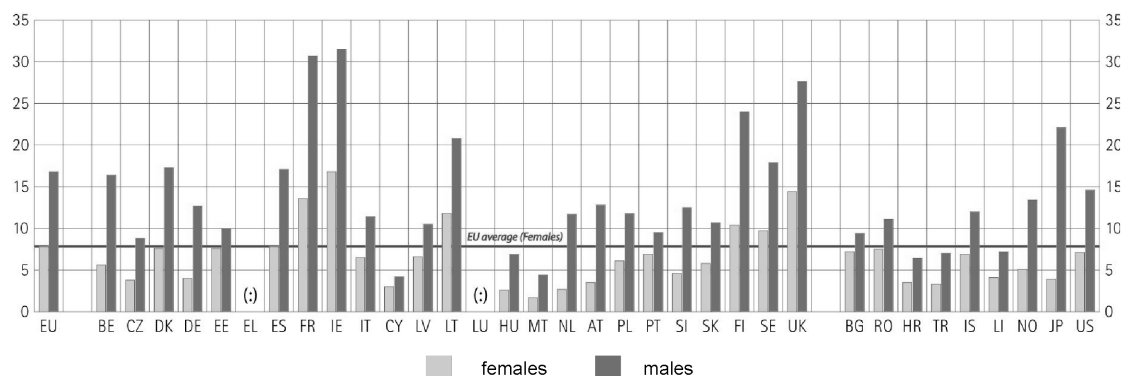


Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: Eurostat (UOE)

Additional notes:

- EU total does not include Greece. EU total 2000 includes national UK data.

Tertiary MST graduates per 1 000 population (20-29) females/males, 2003



Number of MST graduates (1 000)

	EU 25	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
2000	650,2	12,9	9,4	8,5	80,0	1,3	:	65,1	154,8	14,5	46,6	0,34	2,4	6,6	0,10	7,2	0,19
2003	754,7	14,4	10,7	8,4	80,3	1,7	:	84,1	171,4	15,7	66,8	0,40	2,8	7,7	:	7,6	0,20

Percentage of females

2000	30,4	25,0	27,0	28,5	21,6	35,4	:	31,5	30,8	37,9	36,6	31,0	31,4	35,9	:	22,6	26,3
2003	31,1	25,1	29,3	30,3	23,5	42,5	:	30,4	30,3	34,7	35,7	42,0	37,8	35,7	:	26,6	26,4

	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO	JP	US
2000	12,5	7,5	39,2	10,1	2,6	4,7	10,1	13,0	140,6	8,1	17,1	:	57,1	0,35	:	4,8	236,7	369,4
2003	14,6	8,3	55,2	13,0	2,6	7,7	11,2	15,1	155,2	9,6	32,5	3,4	69,6	0,41	0,03	5,4	229,7	430,7

Percentage of females

2000	17,6	19,9	35,9	41,9	22,8	30,1	27,3	32,1	32,3	45,6	35,1	:	31,1	37,9	:	26,8	12,9	31,8
2003	18,4	21,1	33,2	41,5	25,5	34,4	29,2	34,2	34,4	42,1	39,4	30,6	31,4	35,9	36,0	27,1	14,4	31,9

Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: Eurostat (UOE), EU figure for 2000 and 2003: DG Education and Culture estimate

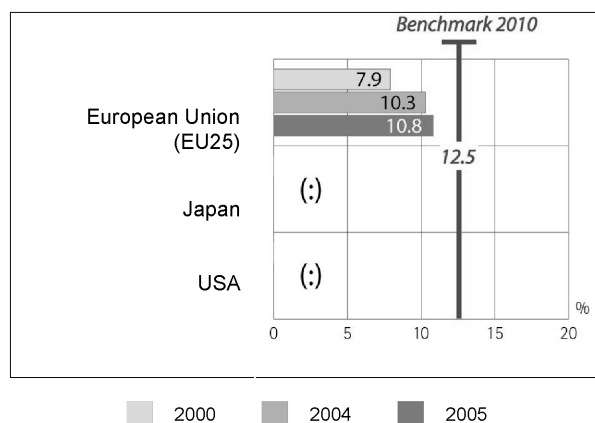
Additional notes:

- BE: Data for the Flemish community exclude second qualifications in non-university tertiary education.
- LU: In the reference period Luxembourg did not have a complete university system, most students study abroad.
- EE: Data exclude Master degrees (ISCED 5A).
- CY: Data exclude tertiary students graduating abroad (idem for LI). The number of students studying abroad accounts for over half of the total number of Cypriot tertiary students. The fields of study in Cyprus are limited (idem for LI).
- HU: Duration of certain programmes extended in 2001, thus low number of graduates compared to 2000.
- PL: Data for 2000 exclude advanced research programmes (ISCED level 6).
- UK: National data have been used for 2000 to avoid a break in series, the 2000 result is thus 15 000 greater than the Eurostat data.
- RO: Data exclude second qualifications and ISCED 6 2000-2002.

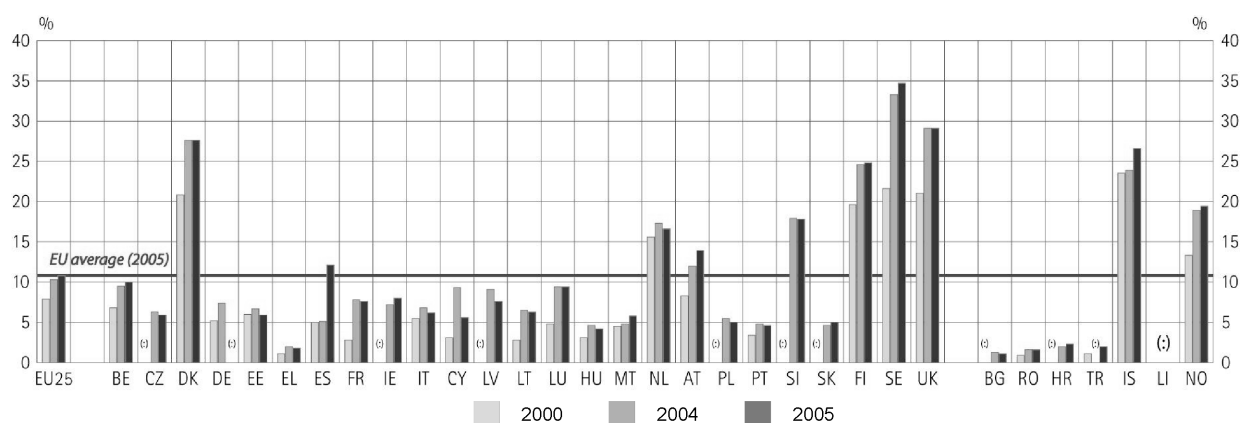
The number of graduates from mathematics, science and technology (MST) in EU 25 has increased since 2000 by over 100 000 or by 16 %. The EU has thus already achieved the benchmark of increasing the number of MST graduates by 15 % by 2010. Progress has also been achieved as regards the second goal of reducing the gender imbalance in MST graduates. The share of female graduates has increased from 30,4 % in 2000 to 31,1 % in 2003. While Slovakia, Poland, Spain and Italy showed the strongest growth in the number of MST graduates in recent years (annual growth above 10 %), the Baltic States perform best as regards gender balance.

PARTICIPATION IN LIFELONG LEARNING

Percentage of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training in the four weeks prior to the survey, 2000-2005



Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey)



	EU25		BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU
2000	7,9		6,8	:	20,8	5,2	6,0	1,1	5,0	2,8	:	5,5	3,1	:	2,8	4,8	3,1
2004	10,3		9,5	6,3	27,6	7,4	6,7	2,0	5,1	7,8	7,2	6,8	9,3	9,1	6,5	9,4	4,6
2005	10,8		10,0	5,9	27,6	:	5,9	1,8	12,1	7,6	8,0	6,2	5,6	7,6	6,3	9,4	4,2

Breakdown of 2005 data by gender

	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO
Males	10,0		10,3	5,5	24,2	:	4,2	1,9	11,2	7,4	6,6	5,7	5,1	4,9	4,9	9,3	3,5
Females	11,7		9,7	6,4	31,0	:	7,5	1,7	13,1	7,9	9,4	6,6	6,1	10,0	7,6	9,5	4,8

	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO
2000	4,5	15,6	8,3	:	3,4	:	:	19,6	21,6	21,0	:	0,9	:	1,1	23,5	:	13,3
2004	4,8	17,3	12,0	5,5	4,8	17,9	4,6	24,6	33,3	29,1	1,3	1,6	2,0	:	23,9	:	18,9

	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO
2005	5,8	16,6	13,9	5,0	4,6	17,8	5,0	24,8	34,7	29,1	1,1	1,6	2,3	2,0	26,6	:	19,4

Breakdown of 2005 data by gender

Males	6,7	16,6	13,2	4,3	4,5	16,0	4,7	20,9	29,2	24,2	1,1	1,5	2,3	1,4	23,5	:	17,8
Females	4,8	16,7	14,6	5,6	4,7	19,6	5,2	21,1	29,9	33,9	1,1	1,7	2,3	2,6	29,7	:	21,0

Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey, EU 25 figure for 2000: estimate

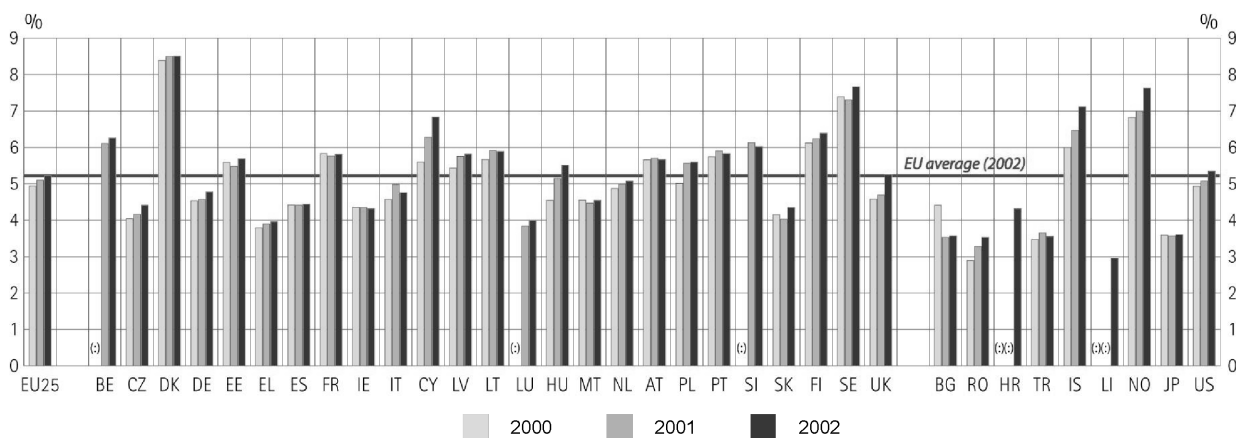
Additional notes:

- Due to implementation of harmonised concepts and definitions in the survey, breaks in time series: CZ, DE, DK, EL, FR, IE, CY, LU, HU, AT, SI, SK, FI, SE, IS, NO (2003), BE, IT, LT, MT, PL, PT, RO (2004) and E (2005).
- 2005: provisional data for LU, MT, UK, HR.

The percentage of the working age population who participated in education and training in the 4 weeks prior to the survey amounted to 10,8 % in 2005. Since the data overstate progress as a result of breaks in time series, this represents only a slight real progress compared to 2000, despite the nominal three percentage point increase. Additional efforts are needed to reach the benchmark of a 12,5 % participation rate in 2010 ⁽¹⁾. The Nordic countries, the UK, Slovenia and the Netherlands currently show the highest lifelong learning participation rates.

INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, 2000-2002



	EU25		BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
2000	4,94		:	4,04	8,39	4,53	5,59	3,79	4,42	5,83	4,36	4,57	5,60	5,43	5,67	:	4,54	4,55
2001	5,10		6,11	4,16	8,50	4,57	5,48	3,90	4,41	5,76	4,35	4,98	6,28	5,70	5,92	3,84	5,15	4,47
2002	5,22		6,26	4,41	8,51	4,78	5,69	3,96	4,44	5,81	4,32	4,75	6,83	5,82	5,89	3,99	5,51	4,54

⁽¹⁾ Data used for assessing the benchmark refer to a 4-week period of participation (LFS 2004). If a longer period were used, rates would be higher. Eurostat data from the LFS ad hoc module on lifelong learning carried out in 2003 (referring to a 12-month period) show a participation rate of 42 % (4,4 % in formal education; 16,5 % in non-formal learning and nearly one European out of three declared having taken some form of informal learning).

	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	BG	RO	HR	TR	IS	LI	NO	JP	US
2000	4,87	5,66	5,01	5,74	:	4,15	6,12	7,39	4,58	4,41	2,89	:	3,49	6,00	:	6,82	3,59	4,93
2001	4,99	5,70	5,56	5,91	6,13	4,03	6,24	7,31	4,69	3,53	3,28	:	3,65	6,47	:	7,00	3,57	5,08
2002	5,08	5,67	5,60	5,83	6,02	4,35	6,39	7,66	5,25	3,57	3,53	4,32	3,56	7,12	2,95	7,63	3,60	5,35

Source: DG Education and Culture. Data source: Eurostat (UOE data collection)

Additional notes

- DK: Expenditure at post secondary non-tertiary levels of education is not available.
- FR: Without French Overseas Departments, GR, LU, PT: Imputed retirement expenditure is not available.
- CY: Including financial aid to students studying abroad.
- LU: expenditure at tertiary level of education not included. PT: expenditure at local level of government not included.
- UK, JP, US: adjustment of GDP to the financial year, which differs from the calendar year.
- TR, IS: expenditure at pre-primary level not included, TR: expenditure at regional and local levels of government not included.
- HR, US: Expenditure on educational institutions from public sources.

Between 1995 and 2000 public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP fell slightly in the EU ⁽¹⁾. Since 2000, however, there has been an upward trend at EU level and in most Member States. The available data show, however, strong differences in spending levels between countries. Denmark and Sweden spend over 7,5 % of GDP on education, while some Member States spend less than 4 % of GDP (however spending is increasing in these countries).

⁽¹⁾ However, in real terms, public expenditure on education and training increased on average by 1,9 % per year from 1995 to 2000 and even by 3,8 % since 2000.