

## EDUCATION AT A GLANCE 2014

*Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* is the authoritative source for accurate and relevant information on the state of education around the world. It provides data on the structure, finances and performance of the education systems in the 34 OECD member countries, as well as a number of G20 and partner countries.

### European Union

**Access to higher levels of education has expanded steadily over the past decade, yet there are significant differences across countries.**

Over the past decades, all European countries have seen significant increases in the educational attainment of their populations. Tertiary education has expanded markedly, and in most European countries, a large majority of adults now has an upper secondary qualification. **Since 2000, tertiary attainment rates have been increasing steadily in most European countries; upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary attainment levels have remained stable; and the proportion of people with below upper secondary education decreased in most European countries.** This same pattern applies as well in the United States and across OECD countries. Across European Union countries between 2000 and 2012, the proportion of adults with below upper secondary education shrank by 11 percentage points while tertiary attainment increased by almost the same degree (Table A1.4a).

However, changes in attainment rates vary greatly between countries. Differences in tertiary attainment rates between 2000 and 2012 can range from an increase of 5 percentage points in Germany and 6 in Sweden to 21 percentage points in Luxembourg, 18 in Ireland and 15 in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, southern European countries made great efforts, between 2000 and 2012, to reduce the proportion of people without upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (a reduction of 19 percentage points in Greece, 12 in Italy, 19 in Portugal and 17 in Spain), while in other countries, such as Austria, Germany and United States, the decrease has been less significant, probably because the proportion of people without this level of education was already very low (Table A1.4a).

**The expansion of education has given young people an opportunity to attain a higher level of education than their parents...**

There are now more people participating in education than ever before. Indeed, both the highest tertiary attainment rates (37% for EU countries) and the smallest proportion of people who have not completed at least an upper secondary education (16% for EU countries) are found among 25-34 year-olds. This suggests that in most countries for which information is available, there has been a positive expansion of access to education (Tables A1.2a and A1.3a). **On average among the countries participating in the 2012 Survey of Adult Skills<sup>1</sup>, about 32% of 25-34 year-olds have a higher**

<sup>1</sup> The Survey of Adult Skills is a product of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies.

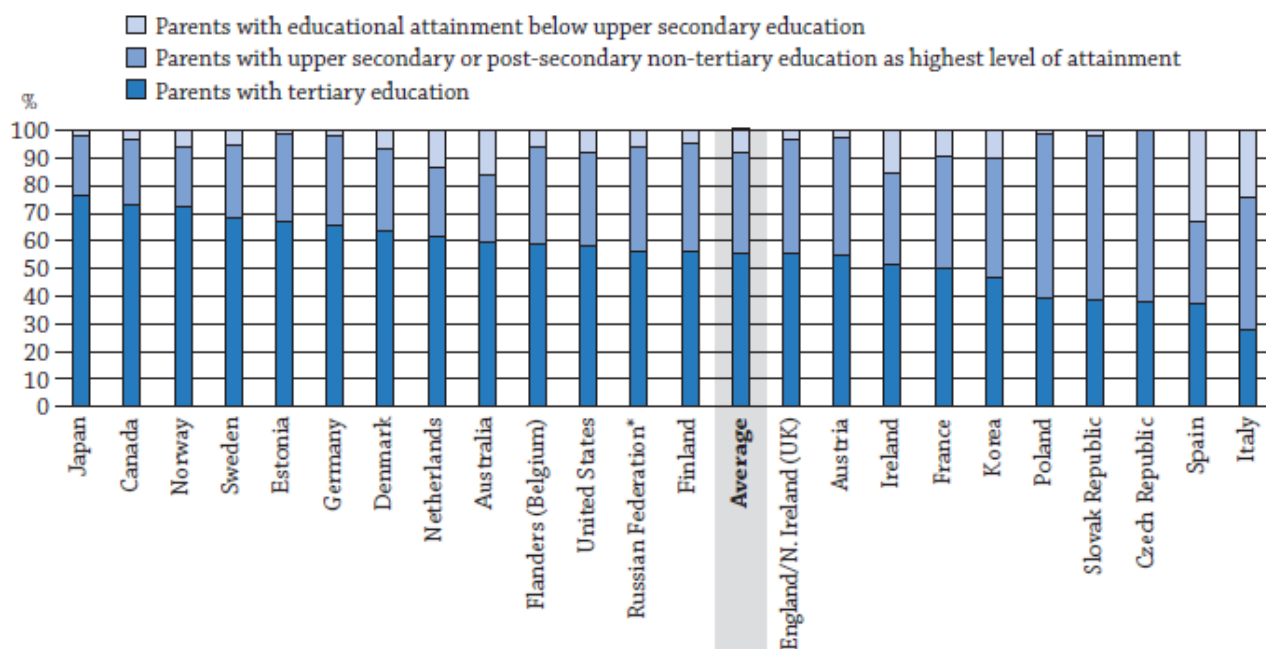
**level of education than their parents (upward mobility).** In most countries, educational upward mobility is considerably more common than downward mobility, especially in France, Ireland, Italy and Spain, where the difference equalled or exceeded 30 percentage points. In Estonia, Germany and Sweden, the educational downward mobility is higher than the upward mobility (Table A4.4).

However, in most countries, 40% to 50% of adults have the same educational attainment as their parents (status quo). This share is even larger in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, where more than two out of three 25-34 year-olds attained the same education level as their parents (Table A4.4).

### ... yet parents' level of education still has a strong influence on their child's educational attainment.

Intergenerational mobility varies according to people's education level and context. The likelihood of a student participating in tertiary education, depending on the level of education attained by his or her parents, varies greatly across countries. In almost all European countries participating in the Survey of Adult Skills, **the majority of 20-34 year-old tertiary students has at least one parent who has completed that level of education**; in Estonia, Germany and Sweden, more than two-thirds of these students do. Other countries, such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Spain and the Slovak Republic, where tertiary attainment was traditionally low, less than 40% of students participating in tertiary education has parents who had attained that same level of education. . By comparison, in United States, 58% of 20-34 year-old tertiary students have at least one parent who has completed that level of education (Table A4.1a).


**Chart A4.1. Percentage of 20-34 year-olds in tertiary education, by parents' educational attainment (2012)**



\* See note on data for the Russian Federation in the Methodology section.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the participation in tertiary education of 20-34 year-olds that have parents with tertiary attainment.

Source: OECD, Table A4.1a. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm)).

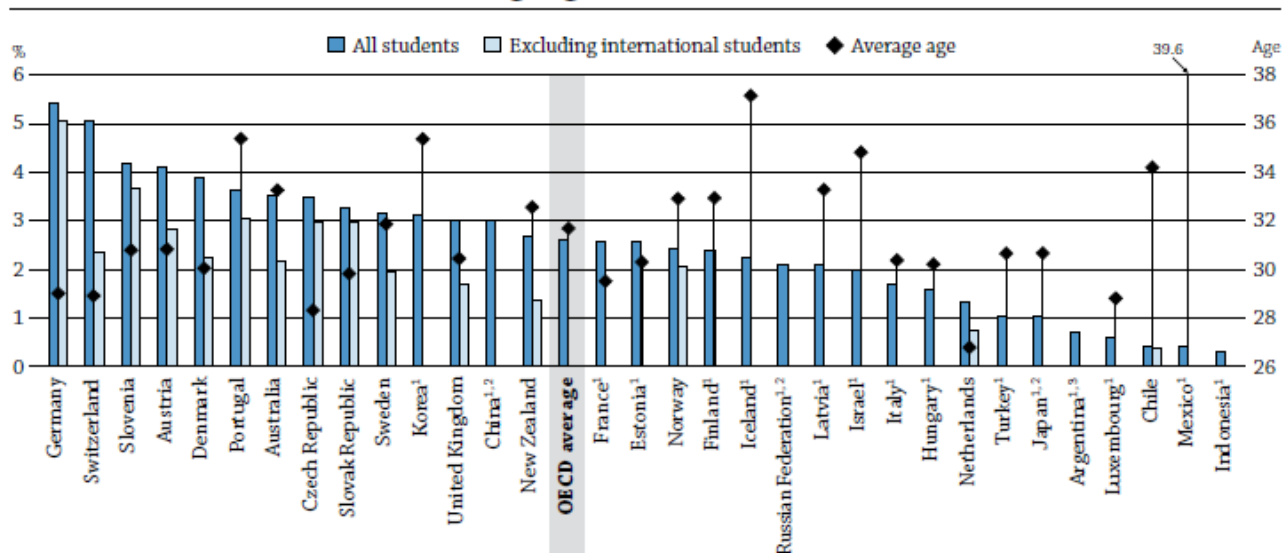
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## A population with high qualifications and skills makes the European Union a strong competitor.

Some 2.8% of today's young adults in European countries are expected to enter advanced research programmes during their lifetime, significantly above the OECD average of 2.6% (Table C3.1a).

Doctoral-level research plays a crucial role in driving innovation and economic growth, and contributes significantly to the national and international knowledge base. Many OECD countries invest heavily to provide doctoral-level education. Chart C3.4 shows that 8 out of the top 10 countries in the percentage of students who will pursue doctoral studies are members of the EU. In Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Switzerland, around one in 20 students is expected to enter an advanced research programme.

**Chart C3.4. Entry rates into advanced research programmes and average age of new entrants (2012)**



**Note:** The average age refers to an average weighted age, generally the age of the students at the beginning of the calendar year. Students may be one year older than the age indicated when they graduate at the end of the school year. Please see Annex 3 to learn how the average age is calculated.

1. New entrants data for international students are missing.

2. New entrants data by age are missing.

3. Year of reference 2011.

Countries are ranked in descending order of new entrants into advanced research programmes in 2012.

**Source:** OECD, Table C3.1a. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm)).

**StatLink** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933118637>

Several countries are developing doctoral programmes or changing their funding policy to attract the best students from around the world to ensure a leading role in research and innovation. For example, almost half of new entrants into doctoral programmes in Denmark and the United Kingdom, a third in Sweden and about a quarter in Austria are international students.

More than 60% of new students in advanced research programmes in EU countries entered before the age of 30, and there are significant differences among countries in students' age at entry into these programmes. In the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands, more than 75% of students are younger than 30 when they enter this level of education, while in Portugal the average age at entry is 35 (Table C3.1a and C3.1b).

**The doctoral level of education is the only level with near gender parity.** While there are proportionally more women than men at all other levels of education, this is the only level of education

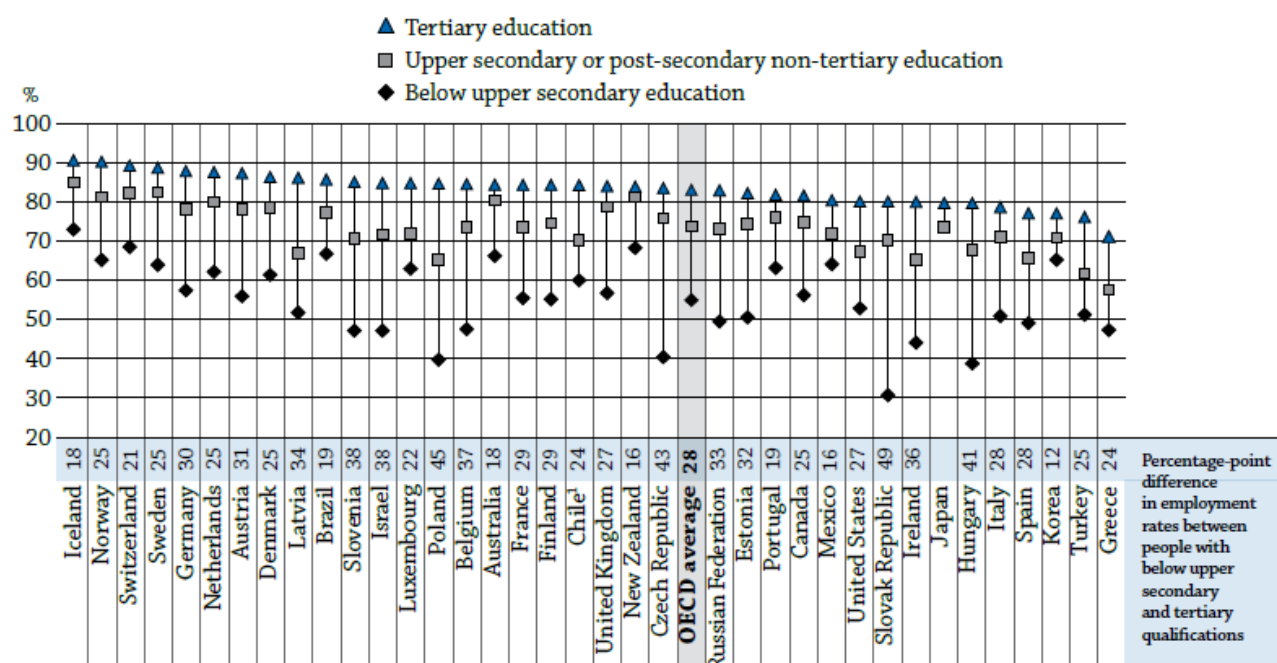
at which the proportion of entrants (and consequently the proportion of graduates) is slightly larger among men than women. **On average across EU countries, 3.0% of men and 2.9% of women enter a doctoral programme.**

## Employment rates have fallen to their lowest levels in over a decade, while tertiary education continues to offer insurance against economic downturns.

Since the beginning of the financial crisis, employment rates across European countries have dropped at all levels of education reaching the lowest rate in a decade. However, even during the financial crisis, employment rates have been consistently higher for people with a tertiary education than for those without that level of education. People with a higher education degree are 50% more likely to be employed than those without such a qualification.

Thus, having a tertiary education increases the likelihood of being employed. As shown in Chart A5.1, this finding is not particular to EU countries; it also holds true across all OECD and G20 countries. On average across EU countries, 83% of tertiary-educated people are employed compared with 73% of people with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education and 51% of people with below upper secondary education. There are, however, significant differences across European countries. For example, in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic, the gap in employment rates between people who hold a tertiary qualification and those whose highest qualification is below upper secondary education is larger than 40 percentage points, whereas in Portugal is smaller than 20 percentage points (Table A5.3a).


**Chart A5.1. Employment rates among 25-64 year-olds, by educational attainment (2012)**



1. Year of reference 2011.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the employment rate of tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds.

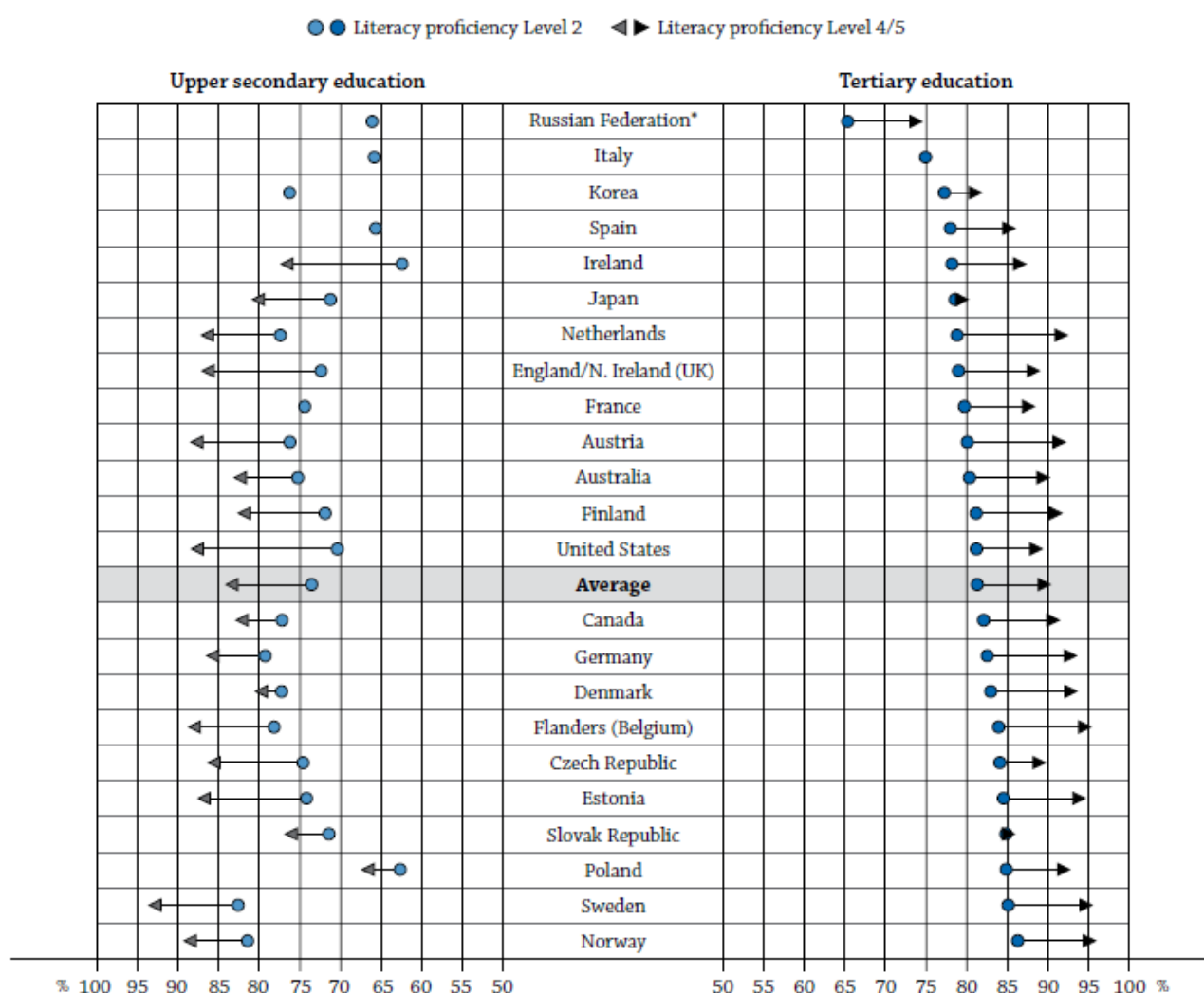
Source: OECD. Table A5.3a. See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm)).

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## Economic growth in European countries depends upon a sufficient supply of high-skilled workers, and labour markets reward them.

Chart A5.4 shows that in Austria, Finland, Flanders (Belgium) and Sweden, employment rates are more than 10 percentage points higher among individuals scoring at literacy proficiency Level 4 or 5 in the Survey of Adult Skills (the highest proficiency levels) than among those scoring at Level 2, regardless of their educational attainment. However, labour markets in different countries seem to give different weight to qualifications and skills. In some contexts, educational qualifications have more of an impact on employment than skills proficiency does. For example, among tertiary-educated adults in Japan, Korea and the Slovak Republic, and among adults with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (including VET qualifications) in Denmark and Poland, differences in employment rates related to literacy proficiency levels are very small (Table A5.7a [L]).

**Chart A5.4. Employed adults at literacy proficiency Level 2 or Level 4/5, by educational attainment (2012)**  
Survey of Adult Skills, percentage of 25-64 year-olds



\* See note on data for the Russian Federation in the Methodology section.

Countries are ranked in ascending order of the proportion of employed adults with tertiary education who score at literacy proficiency Level 2.

Source: OECD, Table A5.7a (L). See Annex 3 for notes ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm)).

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## **In OECD and EU countries, there is a relatively large pool of skilled individuals who are either unemployed or inactive.**

Across OECD countries in 2012, 20% of adults who have upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education as their highest level of attainment, regardless of the orientation of the education programme, were inactive, and some 8% were unemployed (Table A5.5a). Data show that the lower the level of skills proficiency, the higher the unemployment and inactivity rates. However, in most European countries there is a large pool of skilled adults that is not being tapped. This is shown in the large proportions of inactive people with high levels of proficiency, particularly people who have already completed compulsory education and who hold an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification. In Denmark, Ireland and Poland, more than 15% of adults with an upper secondary qualification and who perform at Level 4 or 5 in literacy are inactive. This is the case for 5% of adults in Sweden (Table A5.7a [L]).

## **Education leads to further education: the higher the educational attainment and level of skills, the greater the participation in formal and/or non-formal adult education.**

In Austria, Germany and Spain, less than 30% of those with low literacy proficiency (Level 1 or below in the Survey of Adult Skills) participated in formal and/or non-formal education during the 12 months prior to the survey, while more than 70% of adults with high literacy proficiency (Level 4 or 5) did. A highly proficient person was thus more than 2.5 times more likely to participate in formal and/or non-formal education than a person with low literacy proficiency in these countries and also in France, Italy, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Flanders (Belgium) and Northern Ireland (UK). These factors combine to create a virtuous circle for persons with high skills proficiency who tend to acquire yet more skills by attending adult education activities, but can also establish a vicious circle of low skills proficiency and no participation in formal education to redress skills deficiencies (Table C6.1 (L)).

## **Other findings**

- **Younger adults struggle the most, and unemployment rates among them have reached an historic high.** Unemployment hits the younger generations hardest, and unemployment among younger adults has reached the highest rate registered in more than a decade. Unemployment rates are higher among younger adults than among older adults at all levels of education. On average across European countries, about 12% of older adults who have not attained upper secondary education are unemployed compared with an unemployment rate of 24% among younger adults with a similar level of education. Similarly, 12% of younger adults with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education are unemployed, compared to 8% of older adults with similar education. The gap between the two age groups is smallest among tertiary-educated adults: 8% of younger adults in this group are unemployed compared to 4% of older adults (Table A5.4a).

- **The proportion of young Europeans who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) has stabilised since 2010; but the high percentages are still a reason for concern.** During the recent economic crisis, the number of 15-29 year-olds who were neither in employment nor in education or training increased as employment among young people and low-skilled workers fell sharply. From 2008 to 2010, the NEET population increased, regardless of their level of education. From 2010, the situation improved slightly and between 2010 and 2012, the percentage of 15-29 year-olds NEETS has nearly stabilised. Some countries have been able to reduce the number of NEETS: Estonia and Germany, for example, recorded a 2 or 3 percentage-point decrease in this population during this period while Greece and Turkey recorded a 5 and 7 percentage-point

decrease, respectively. However, in many countries, there was no such improvement. In Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain, for example, there was a 1.5-3 percentage-point increase in this population during the period. On average across EU countries, 16% of 15-29 year-olds with or without upper secondary education were neither employed nor in or training in 2012, and 12% of those with tertiary education were NEET (Tables C5.3a and C5.4a).

- **Despite the economic crisis, public spending on education decreased in only 3 European countries between 2008 and 2011.** For all levels of education combined, public investment in education increased by an average of 4% among EU countries between 2008 and 2011. Over this period, Estonia, Hungary and Italy cut public expenditure on educational institutions (by around 10%) while in many European countries, public investment increased, especially in the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic (both 16%) and the United Kingdom (17%). In 2011, 5.8% of GDP was devoted to expenditure on educational institutions (all levels combined), on average across EU countries with available data; in Denmark, 8% of GDP went to spending on education. At the other end of the spectrum, Hungary, Italy and the Slovak Republic spent less than 5% of their GDP on education (Tables B2.1 and B2.5).

- **The share of private expenditure on tertiary institutions increased in European countries from 15% in 2000 to 21% in 2012.** High private returns to tertiary education suggest that a greater contribution to the costs of education by individuals and other private entities may be justified, as long as there are ways to ensure that funding is available to students regardless of their economic backgrounds. European countries suffered from insufficient capacity to mobilise private resources, which could be an issue in the current economic environment. Even if the share of private expenditure has increased, it was far below the 31% observed across OECD countries (Table B3.2c). The balance between public and private financing of education is an important policy issue in many EU countries, especially at the tertiary level of education. However, there are large differences across countries. For example, the proportion of expenditure on tertiary institutions covered by individuals and other private sources, ranges from less than 6% in Denmark and Finland, to more than 20% in Italy and Poland. In the United Kingdom, the share of private expenditure is 70%, the highest across EU countries (Table B3.1).

- **Between 2002 and 2012, the proportion of secondary teachers aged 50 or older climbed in most EU countries.** The increase was 10 percentage points or more in Italy and Portugal, while Austria recorded striking 26 percentage-point increase in this proportion during the period (Table D5.2). Some 31% of primary school teachers are at least 50 years old, on average across EU countries. The proportion exceeds 40% in Germany, Italy and Sweden. Only in Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom does the proportion of primary teachers under the age of 30 equal or exceed 20%. There is a similar age distribution of teachers at the secondary level (Table D5.1). On average among EU countries, 37% of teachers are at least 50 years old. In Austria, Estonia, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, 45% or more of secondary teachers are at least 50 years old, while more than 60% of secondary teachers in Italy are. In countries that stand to lose a significant number of teachers through retirement, governments will have to make the teaching profession more attractive. Fiscal constraints – particularly those driven by pension obligations and healthcare costs for retirees – are likely to result in greater pressure on governments (Table D5.2).

- **Europe is an attractive market for international students.** Europe is the top destination for students at the tertiary level of education enrolled outside their country of origin, hosting 48% of these students, followed by North America, which hosts 21% of all international students (Table C4.6).

## Findings related to Europe 2020 Strategy

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**By 2020, at least 95% of children between the age of four and the age when they begin compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education.**

**For most children in European countries, formal education begins well before they are five years old.** This is important, given that 15-year-old students who had attended at least one year of pre-primary education perform better on the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) than those who did not – even after accounting for their socio-economic background. On average in 2012, 89% of children in EU countries were enrolled in early childhood education at the age of 4. In Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, more than 95% of 4-year-olds were enrolled (Table C2.1).

**Reduce the proportion of early school-leavers to below 10% by 2020.**

Early school leavers are defined by the European Union as 18-24 year-olds who have only lower secondary education or less, and are no longer in education or training. *Education at a Glance* measures the number of young people who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) among 15-19 year-olds, 20-24 year-olds and 25-29 year-olds, at all levels of attainment, and among 15-29 year-olds and 25-29 year-olds by level of attainment.

The proportion of individuals in education has grown over time: **across EU21 countries, only 9% of 15-19 year-olds are not in education.** In most OECD and EU countries, education policy seeks to encourage young people to complete at least upper secondary education. The result of these efforts is seen in young people's participation in education beyond compulsory schooling. Many countries have attained near-universal access to education among 15-19 year-olds. On average across EU countries, 91% of 15-19 year-olds were in education in 2012, compared with the OECD average and the United States average of 86%. Since 2005, this rate increased by almost 3 percentage points. Between 2005 and 2012, the largest increases were seen in Greece, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom (Table C5.3a).

**By 2020, at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds will have completed tertiary education.**

Many EU21 countries can expect a significant increase in the proportion of their population that attains a tertiary education, especially among young adults. **In 2012, an average of 38% of 30-34 year-olds in EU countries had completed tertiary education, compared with the OECD average of 40% and an average of 45% in the United States** (Table A1.3a).

**At least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.**

**Across European countries with available data, more than 50% of adults participate in formal and/or non-formal education in a given year.** The proportion ranges from more than two out of three people in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, to one out of three people in the Slovak Republic and one out of four people in Italy (Table C6.1 (L)).



**At least 82% of employed graduates (20-34 year-olds who have successfully completed upper secondary or tertiary education) will have left education in the previous 1-3 years.**

**Across European countries with available data, 82% of 25-34 tertiary-educated adults were employed in 2012, compared to 85% in 2005.** The ratio is at or below 75% in the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, the Slovak Republic and Spain. Among 25-34 year-olds with only upper secondary education, 75% were employed in 2012, compared to 79% in 2005 (Table A5.3a).

**At least 20% of graduates from higher education and 6% of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad.**

**In 2012, around 18 million citizens from EU21 countries were enrolled in tertiary education, nearly 700 000 of whom were enrolled abroad. This represents around 4% of EU21 citizens studying abroad.** Luxembourg has the largest proportion of citizens studying abroad (74%), followed by Ireland (15%) and the Slovak Republic (15%). By contrast, Poland (2.4%), Spain (2.0%) and the United Kingdom (2.2%) reported the smallest proportion of citizens studying abroad.

\* EU21 countries are those that are members of both the European Union and the OECD. These 21 countries are Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

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#### **Note regarding data from Israel**

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and are under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

#### **Note regarding data from the Russian Federation in the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)**

Readers should note that the sample for the Russian Federation does not include the population of the Moscow municipal area. The data published, therefore, do not represent the entire resident population aged 16-65 in Russia but rather the population of Russia *excluding* the population residing in the Moscow municipal area. More detailed information regarding the data from the Russian Federation as well as that of other countries can be found in the *Technical Report of the Survey of Adult Skills* (OECD, forthcoming).

**For more information** on *Education at a Glance 2014* and to access the full set of Indicators, visit:  
[www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm)

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Key Facts for EU21 average  
in Education at a Glance 2014

Table	Indicator	EU21 average		OECD average	
Educational Access and Output					
	Enrolment rates	2012	2005	2012	2005
C2.1	3-year-olds (in early childhood education)	79%	73%	70%	64%
	4-year-olds (in early childhood and primary education)	89%	84%	84%	79%
C1.1a	5-14 year-olds (all levels)	98%		98%	
	Percentage of population that has only attained below upper secondary education	2012	2000	2012	2000
A1.4a	25-64 year-olds	23%	34%	24%	34%
	Percentage of the population whose highest level of attainment is upper secondary education	2012	2000	2012	2000
A1.4a	25-64 year-olds	48%	46%	44%	44%
	Percentage of population that has attained tertiary education	2012	2000	2012	2000
A1.3a A1.4a	25-64 year-olds	29%	20%	33%	22%
	25-34 year-olds	37%	24%	40%	26%
	55-64 year-olds	22%	14%	25%	15%
	Entry rates into tertiary education	2012	2000	2012	2000
C3.1b	Youth expected to enter tertiary-type A programmes before turning 25	48%	m	48%	m
	Graduation rates	2012	2000	2012	2000
A2.2a	Percentage of today's young people expected to complete upper secondary education in their lifetime	83%	77%	84%	76%
A3.2a	Percentage of today's young people expected to complete university education (tertiary-type A) in their lifetime	38%	27%	38%	28%
Economic and Labour Market Outcomes					
	Unemployment rate of 25-64 year-olds - Men and Women	2012	2008	2012	2008
A5.4a	Below upper secondary	17%	10%	14%	9%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	9%	5%	8%	5%
	Tertiary	6%	3%	5%	3%
	Unemployment rate of 25-64 year-olds - Women	2012	2008	2012	2008
A5.4c (Web)	Below upper secondary	16%	11%	13%	9%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	10%	6%	9%	6%
	Tertiary	6%	4%	5%	4%
	Average earnings advantage for 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education**	2012 or latest year available		2012 or latest year available	
A6.1a A6.1b (Web)	Men and women	159		159	
	Men	166		164	
	Women	160		162	
	Average earnings penalty for 25-64 year-olds who have not attained upper secondary education**	2012 or latest year available		2012 or latest year available	
A6.1a A6.1b (Web)	Men and women	79		78	
	Men	80		78	
	Women	76		75	
	Percentage of 15-29 year-olds neither employed nor in education or training, by highest level of education	2012	2008	2012	2008
C5.3d (Web)	Below upper secondary	15%	13%	15%	14%
	Upper secondary	16%	12%	16%	14%
	Tertiary	12%	10%	13%	11%

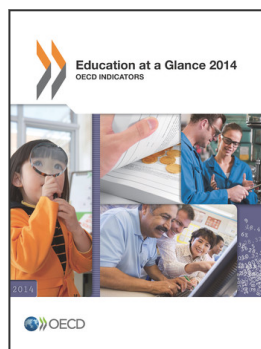
Key Facts for EU21 average  
in Education at a Glance 2014

Table	Indicator	EU21 average		OECD average	
Financial Investment in Education					
	Annual expenditure per student (in equivalent USD, using PPPs)	2011		2011	
B1.1a	Pre-primary education	7933		7428	
	Primary education	8482		8296	
	Secondary education	9615		9280	
	Tertiary education	13572		13958	
	Total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP	2011	2000	2011	2000
B2.2	Percentage of GDP	6%	5%	6%	5%
	Total public expenditure on education	2011	2000	2011	2000
B4.2	As a percentage of total public expenditure	12%	11%	13%	13%
	Share of private expenditure on educational institutions	2011		2011	
B3.1	Pre-primary education	13%		19%	
B3.1	Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	6%		9%	
B3.1	Tertiary education	21%		31%	
B3.1	All levels of education	11%		16%	
Schools and Teachers					
	Ratio of students to teaching staff	2012		2012	
D2.2	Pre-primary education	13		14	
	Primary education	14		15	
	Secondary education	12		13	
	Number of hours of teaching time per year (for teachers in public institutions)	2012	2000	2012	2000
D4.2	Pre-primary education	988		1001	
	Primary education	761	776	782	780
	Lower secondary education	657	658	694	697
	Upper secondary education	638	635	655	628
	Index of change in statutory teachers' salaries for teachers with 15 years of experience/minimum training (2005 = 100)	2012	2008	2012	2008
D3.5	Primary school teachers	99	103	103	103
	Lower secondary school teachers	99	103	102	103
	Upper secondary school teachers	98	103	101	103
	Ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education	2012		2012	
D3.2	Pre-primary school teachers	0.76		0.80	
	Primary school teachers	0.81		0.85	
	Lower secondary school teachers	0.85		0.88	
	Upper secondary school teachers	0.90		0.92	

\* Countries are ranked in descending order of values.

\*\* Compared to people with upper secondary education; upper secondary = 100.

'm': data is not available. 'n': magnitude is either negligible or zero.



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## Education at a Glance 2014

OECD Indicators

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