

Europe fact sheet – 2020 GEM Report.

Please note that this factsheet only contains some of the mentions from the region. The full Report and all regional mentions can be found here:

[Bit.ly/2020gemreport](https://bit.ly/2020gemreport)

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Persistence of exclusion and segregation:

- Roma children suffer various forms of segregation in education. The shares of those attending classes where all or most learners were Roma ranged from 14% in Portugal to about 60% in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. In Bulgaria, 27% of Roma children attended schools where all their classmates were Roma, according to the Second Survey on Minorities in Europe. In Hungary, segregation has increased, with the proportion of basic schools with a Roma population of at least 50% rising from 10% in 2008 to 15% in 2017. Roma children were also segregated on separate floors or in separate classes
- Across nine countries in Europe in 2016, the early childhood education participation rate among Roma was 53%. About 6% of 16- to 24-year-olds had never attended school, with country shares as high as 42% in Greece. The secondary school completion rate of 18- to 24-year-olds was 34% among men and 29% among women.
- Roma children are disproportionately diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and placed in special schools, as in Hungary and Slovakia. In 2016, 16% of Roma children aged 6 to 15 in the Czech Republic and 18% in Slovakia attended special schools
- Special needs: According to one estimate in England, students with special needs were over nine times as likely to be permanently excluded. In 2017/18, they accounted for almost half of the official 411,000 temporary and 8,000 permanent exclusions (5.1% and 0.1% of the student population, respectively). Schools have both leverage and incentive to off-roll: Students avoid a stain on their records, and schools avoid including them in disciplinary exclusion statistics. Recent estimates suggest that 1 in 10 students experiences an unexplained exit during secondary education. About 24,000 students, or 4 in 10 of those who experience an unexplained exit, do not return to a publicly funded school by the spring term of grade 11
- Women in European countries were almost twice as likely as men not to participate in adult education for family-related reasons
- Prisoners: Less than one-quarter of all prisoners in most European countries participated in education and training. In the United Kingdom, 32% of new prisoners were recorded or self-reported as having learning difficulties or disabilities in 2014/15
- Bullying: A quarter of students in France, around 1 in 10 students in Belarus, Norway and Spain reported feeling like outsiders at school
- The proportion of cyberbullied children aged 11 to 16 in Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom rose from 7% in 2010 to 12% in 2014. Lack of more recent data is troublesome. Despite growing concern, with countries including Italy and Lebanon providing teacher training on online safety and prevention and reporting of cyberbullying, there are fewer data on cyberbullying than on other types of bullying. The last round of Health Behaviour in School-aged Children in 2013/14 indicated that 10% of children in Canada and Europe were cyberbullied through messages and 8% through pictures. Girls were more likely to be cyberbullied through messages than boys, and immigrants were more likely to be cyberbullied than natives.

- Grade repetition, practiced worldwide, is an inclusion challenge. In 2016, the lower secondary school repetition rate was 10.2% in Luxembourg and 8.5% in Spain.

Inclusive foundations:

- Three of the five countries with inclusive education laws that cover all learners are in Europe: Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal [See Box 2.3: Portugal has comprehensive inclusive education legislation].
- Countries are beginning to pay attention to gender identity. In 2015, Malta passed the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (*see* Box 14.1). Later that year, the Ministry for Education and Employment published the Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy. In 2016, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly called on member countries to promote respect and inclusion and disseminate objective information. As of 2018, 21 of its 47 members had national or regional action plans explicitly prohibiting and addressing school bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.
- Although countries are moving towards recognition of the rights of people with diverse gender identities, incoherent laws and policies persist. In **Lithuania**, while the 2017 Law on Equal Treatment obliged secondary and post-secondary education institutions to guarantee equal opportunity for all students regardless of sexual orientation, an article of the 2011 Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information prohibits dissemination of information on concepts of marriage and family values that differ from those in the Constitution and Civil Code

Curriculum and textbooks can exclude:

- In Europe, 23 of 49 countries did not address sexual orientation and gender identity expression explicitly. Following recommendations by the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group, Scotland (United Kingdom) announced it would be 'the first' to embed LGBTI-inclusive education in the curriculum across all state schools by 2021. The state of Berlin in Germany focused on concepts such as difference, tolerance and acceptance to introduce sexual diversity in the primary curriculum.
- Women's under-representation in textbooks was observed in Italy, despite its participation in a European Union project in which textbook publishers agreed to a code to improve gender equality. In Spain, the share of female characters was 10% in primary school and 13% in secondary school textbooks. One-fifth of more than 12,000 images were of women
- In Spain, 0.6% of primary school physical education textbooks published between 2006 and 2013 involved people with disabilities, chiefly people with physical disabilities using a wheelchair. A study of 96 primary school textbooks in the United Kingdom showed that 0.3% of characters in illustrations and 0.8% in photographs were people with disabilities
- In many parts of Europe, Roma and traveller children are at high risk of exclusion in education through curriculum deficiencies. They are disproportionately likely to be taught a reduced curriculum because they are often sent to remedial classes and special schools. Moreover, the core curriculum does not reflect their history. The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues is working towards a recommendation on the inclusion of their history in curricula and teaching materials

Curricula should be flexible according to different learners' needs

- In Portugal, a 2017 legislative order increased school autonomy in curriculum management and flexibility. In the pilot phase of an autonomy and curriculum flexibility project in 2017/18, 302 schools could adapt the curriculum to various learning needs and teachers

could tailor delivery to make lessons more inclusive. The 2018 law for inclusion formally offered all schools more autonomy to manage curricula.

- Use of different or non-standard curricula for some groups hinders inclusion. In England and Wales (United Kingdom), results from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff project suggested that students with special education needs were often involved in one-to-one interaction with a teaching assistant and removed from class. In 87% of cases when they were not in class, they were known to be doing a different task than their peers
- Choice options, whether for schools or students, may hurt disadvantaged learners. In Austria, school autonomy over curriculum provides a means of boosting schools' attractiveness but creates a hierarchy among schools, as they can choose students from a surplus of applications. Most often, the most vulnerable and marginalized students end up in the 'leftover' classes or schools.

Parents can help or hinder inclusion:

- Some 15% of parents in Germany feared that children with disabilities disrupted others' learning.
- **School choice** has implications for inclusion and segregation. In countries where school choice is possible or even actively encouraged, a portfolio of options beyond the local school usually means families with adequate financial means are more likely to avoid disadvantaged schools and send their children to schools that cater to their academic or social aspirations. This choice can lead to enrolment patterns that increase segregation and reduce social cohesion. In Europe, when the share of immigrants becomes disproportionately high in less affluent neighbourhoods, parents of native students may respond by moving to other schools (Brunello and De Paola, 2017). In Denmark, an increase by 7 percentage points over 15 years in the share of students in larger municipalities whose parents were born outside the EU or OECD was associated with a rise of 1 percentage point in the share of natives attending private school.
- **Homeschooling** expands but also tests the limits of inclusion: Educating children at home is illegal in many countries, especially in Europe. In Germany, a family whose request for exemption from compulsory primary school for religious reasons was rejected by the school supervisory authority appealed to the European Court of Human Rights. The court sided with the national body on multiple grounds, notably in asserting that the obligation of the state extended beyond the acquisition of knowledge to the education of responsible citizens who participate in a democratic and pluralistic society. The acquisition of social competence in dealing with other persons who hold different views and in holding an opinion which differed from the views of the majority could only materialise through regular contact with society. ... Given the general interest of society in the integration of minorities and in avoiding the emergence of parallel societies, the interference with the applicants' fundamental rights was proportionate and reasonable. The European countries that still allow homeschooling do so under tight restrictions.

Students with disabilities have mixed attitudes about inclusion too

- In the United Kingdom, 65% of children with mild to moderate learning difficulties in both mainstream and special schools gave positive reports about their current education experience. Among those in special schools, 74% had previous experience in mainstream schools. Of those, twice as many expressed negative as expressed positive views. One-third of students in special schools said they would have preferred mainstream school

More equitable resources are needed for inclusion

- An analysis of inclusive education in Europe found that many implementation weaknesses were linked to governance mechanisms that did not ensure sufficient resources or allow for inter-institutional cooperation and coordinated provision. Local authorities lacked capacity to use resources efficiently, and schools lacked staff to assist learners
- Patchy historical information from Europe and Northern America suggested that students with disabilities cost about 2 to 2.5 times more to educate than other students.
- Good information on school financing is usually lacking, especially on how resources are allocated to special and inclusive settings. A project mapping how 16 European countries finance inclusive education found that 5 had information available. Thus, few countries can analyse cost-effectiveness or estimate the financial impact of policy changes.
- The cost of delivering education for learners with disabilities has been rising in high-income countries, in some cases because more students are being identified as needing support. In Croatia, increased expenditure on transport and co-financing for nutrition and special teaching aids, along with a rising number of learners with special education needs, are the main cost drivers. In Ireland, public expenditure for disability and special education support increased by 38% between 2011 and 2017, in line with the increase in students qualifying for such support, although those diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder increased by 84%.
- Decentralization can exacerbate inequality when it does not fully take into account local governments' uneven capacity for resource mobilization. In the United Kingdom, while the number of children and youth with an education, health and care plan rose by 33% between 2015 and 2019, funding to local councils increased by only 7%.
- Countries have tinkered with their funding mechanisms with mixed results. Schools in the Netherlands used to receive funding based on the number of students identified as having special needs. As this encouraged schools to declare more such students, the relevant budget was shifted in the mid-1990s to regional institutions, which allocated some funds to mainstream schools with the expectation that collaboration with special schools would grow. However, the reform was applied inconsistently across regions, and the number of students in special education kept rising. As a result, the funding model changed back in 2003. The 2014 inclusive education policy shifted back again, calling for regional partnerships to improve resource sharing and school collaboration. However, this shift has also encountered difficulties, as regions with higher school participation rates had lower budgets.
- Several European countries have changed their inclusive education funding mechanisms in response to growing numbers of students diagnosed with special needs and to potential perverse incentives in funding mechanisms. Finland reformed its funding system in 2009, when the share of full-time students in special education reached 8.5% (a 3 percentage point increase in 10 years) but also out of concern over delivery differences among municipalities. Although the reform broadly met its aims, incentives for segregated provision still exist, while part-time special education and early intervention in mainstream education remain underfunded.
- A review of financing practices across Europe concludes that there is no ideal way to fund inclusive education, since countries vary, 'depending on their history, their understanding of inclusive education, and levels of decentralisation'. However, it argues that governments need to foster synergies and encourage networks to share resources, facilities and capacity development opportunities, for instance through block grants under service agreements with local authorities or school clusters. Such autonomy and flexibility would need to be accompanied by quality assurance mechanisms to monitor whether local authorities and schools achieve inclusion-specific results

Teachers need training to be able to teach all students

- In a survey of teachers in 48 countries Finland was among the countries where teachers adapted their teaching the least to students' cultural diversity. One reason may be both countries' relative ethnic homogeneity and recent exposure to immigration. By contrast, almost all teachers in Portugal adapted their teaching in diverse classrooms
- Roma parents in Europe cited discriminatory teacher behaviour, such as bullying and ostracization, as a key safety consideration for their children.
- Attitudes affect student achievement, even when they are not explicit. In Italy, girls assigned to teachers with implicit gender bias underperformed in mathematics and chose less demanding schools, following teachers' recommendations
- Training support personnel is necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure an inclusive learning environment and effective cooperation with teachers. A review of studies from 11 high-income countries, including Canada, Italy and Norway, found that teaching assistants often had unclear responsibilities and limited collaboration with and supervision by teachers. It also noted that their efficacy in raising learning outcomes and inclusion was mixed. For instance, teaching assistants often taught students with disabilities in small, separate groups, effectively excluding them from the wider classroom.
- In England (United Kingdom), teaching assistants often took responsibility for instruction but were rarely adequately trained and prepared.
- Homogenous teaching staff may struggle to find common ground with diverse student and parent populations. Yet in most countries the staff composition is not representative of the population. In England (United Kingdom), a study found that, as most teachers came from middle-class backgrounds, they were not always able to listen to and take into account comments from working-class parents. About 81% of teachers with disabilities in the United Kingdom reported having been discriminated against because of their disability during their teaching career

There is a chronic lack of quality data on those left behind.

- The share of students identified as having special education needs varies widely. In Europe, it ranges from 1% in Sweden to 21% in Scotland (United Kingdom). Such variation is mainly explained by differences in how countries construct this category of education.
- Comparing the prevalence of disability, difficulties and disadvantage across education systems and over time is problematic, even for clinical diagnoses. For instance, learning disability is the single largest category of special education needs in Germany and the United States, but practically unknown in Japan
- In Europe, large variation is observed in data on children in special schools. Scotland (United Kingdom) and Sweden have a similar share of students in special schools (just under 1%). However, those students in Scotland are a small minority of the more than 20% identified with special education needs. By contrast, few Swedish students are identified with special needs and they are concentrated in special schools

Signs of moves towards inclusion: The Report notes many countries using positive, innovative approaches to transition to inclusion.

- In recent years, several European countries have been converting special schools into resource centres. This strengthens links between special and mainstream education and supports the shift towards inclusive education without making existing institutions redundant. Lithuania has two national resource centres (for the visually impaired and

hearing impaired) and a project to reorganize four special schools into resource centres is under way. Slovenia's move towards mainstreaming includes conversion of special schools into resource centres at which mobile specialist teachers are based. Portugal has gone furthest along this route. Since 2009, it has converted most special schools into resource centres and provides support through specialized professionals

Notable policies and initiatives that have promoted inclusion:

- Successful large-scale anti-bullying programmes, such as Kiva in Finland and Zero in Norway, have included teacher education. In France, new teachers are expected to complete training on violence management. In the United Kingdom, schools with less bullying kept records of bullying incidents, organized professional development, talked to parents of bullies and victims, had policies on teacher roles during breaks and developed behaviour codes collaboratively
- Portugal established a network of 41 reference schools to educate blind and partially sighted students in regular classes in mainstream schools. The schools provided screen readers, refreshable Braille displays, Braille embossers, scanners, electronic calculators, electronic pocket magnifiers and CCTV. Computers with assistive and other software, as well as the learning content management system Moodle, were also used. Specialist and regular teachers worked together, without a technology adviser. Specialist teachers had more knowledge of the tools used
- A review of 32 inclusive early childhood education programmes in Europe identified active participation as the overarching objective to ensure children learn and develop a sense of belonging. Positive interaction with adults and peers, involvement in play and other daily activities, a child-centred approach, personalized learning assessment, and accommodation, adaptation and support are essential components.
 - In France, where all children are entitled to free pre-primary school (recently extended to age 2), classes for children with autism spectrum disorders have opened in preschools, and other children are taught to understand their classmates' needs in order to communicate.
 - In Latvia, Chinese immigrant parents spend time with children and teachers during the first month of preschool before children are left with teachers for increasing lengths of time.
 - In Sweden, all children have the right to ECCE from age 1 and to free services for 15 hours per week from age 3. Children under age 1 with special education needs may start free ECCE for 15 hours per week. Support is offered to the entire preschool class, scaling staff or number of children as appropriate

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For more information, b-roll, photos, for interviews, videos or animations please contact Kate Redman k.redman@unesco.org 0033 6 71 78 62 34

Notes to editors

Visit the Report's [electronic press kit](#) containing Report and multimedia materials. [password: AllmeansAll]

The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report) is developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO. It has the official mandate of monitoring progress in meeting the fourth Sustainable Development Goal on education, SDG 4.

A youth Report is also available, containing case studies, and online campaigns around the 2020 Gem Report's recommendations.

Two regional reports will be released on the theme of inclusion and education later in the year: A Report on Latin America and the Caribbean in October, and a Report on Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in December