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Key competences for people 50+

REPORT



The state of education of key competences and the educational needs of adults, including people aged 50+ in the European Union

Project result 1 - Methodology of training courses
"Key competences for people aged 50+" (part 1)

Free publication

PREPARED BY: DEINDE SP. Z O. O.
2022



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Report

The state of education of key competences and the educational needs of adults, including people aged 50+ in the European Union

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Prepared by: Deinde sp. z o. o.

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Introduction

The aim of the report is to analyze the existing data on the state of education in the field of key competences in the European Union, especially in terms of the needs of people aged 50 and more. The starting point for our considerations will be the presentation of basic data on the socio-economic and demographic situation of the European Union, starting with the labor market.

When talking about the EU labor market, we must remember that it is not of a uniform nature. The legal framework of the European Union leaves the Member States the freedom to create policies and rules for the functioning of national labor markets. Each EU country conducts its own labor market policy, individually decides on its scope, forms, activities and the amount of financial resources allocated to it.¹ There are different social and economic processes in the EU member states, as well as different historical and cultural conditions, which determine the diversification of the structure and level of development of individual regions and national labor markets. The European Union harmonizes actions taken on the national labor markets, leaving the member states the freedom to individually shape labor market policies. The literature on the subject most often distinguishes between four main models of the labor market in Europe, taking into account the conditions of their functioning and the applied solutions in the field of social policy (aspects of efficiency and quality).²

Table 1 Typology of European labor markets.

		EFFICIENCY	
		LOW	HIGH
QUALITY	HIGH	CONTINENTAL	NORDIC
	LOW	MEDITERRANEAN	ENGLISH

Source: A. Sapir, *Globalization and the Reform of European Social Models*, "Journal of Common Market Studies" 2006, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 375–376.

The continental (corporate) model is characterised by strong institutional protection by the state of workers against dismissal, generous social security, high fiscal burdens and the declining role of trade unions. Flexibility in employment and wages is limited. It is a labor market characteristic of France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and Luxembourg.³

The Nordic model (Scandinavian, social democratic) occurring in Finland, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands. It is characterized by high fiscal burdens on the part of employers and high state expenditure on social policy (social security). On these markets, an active policy is implemented in the field of education and improvement of professional qualifications of human resources in order to ensure high mobility of the workforce. Those labor markets are characterised by the highest flexibility,

¹ P. Pasierbiak, *Integration with the European Union and changes in the labor markets of Central and Eastern Europe*, "Yearbook of the Institute of Central and Eastern Europe" 2016, no. 14, issue 5, p. 154.

² A. Sapir, *Globalization and the Reform of European Social Models*, "Journal of Common Market Studies" 2006, vol. 44, No. 2, pp. 375–376.

³ P. Maleszyk, *Labor markets of the European Union countries in the period of crisis. Adaptation processes and anti-crisis measures*, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Publishing House, Lublin 2016, p. 170; G. Coppola, N. O'Higgins, *Youth and the Crisis. Unemployment, education and health in Europe*, Routledge, London and New York 2016, p. 253.

providing employees with general job security on the market (*employment security*) instead of protecting a specific workplace (*job security*).⁴

The Anglo-Saxon (liberal) model prevailing in Great Britain and Ireland is much less legally regulated than the Nordic model, and the employment relationship is often not protected by the state. It is characterised by a large number of low-paid jobs, weak trade unions and significant disparities in the income of the groups of the best and the lowest paid workers.⁵

The Mediterranean model (southern or conservative) is found in Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain. It is characterised by strong, even restrictive, employment protection and centralization of wage negotiations, which leads to flattening of wages and a clear segmentation of the labor market. In this system, there are relatively low expenditure on active labor market policy, relatively low unemployment benefits and low mobility of labor resources.⁶

The model of Central and Eastern European countries (post-communist countries) is sometimes distinguished in the literature as the fifth labor market model. On one hand, it is characterized by a relatively low flexibility of contractual solutions, relatively strong legal protection of contracts, a strong position of trade unions (especially in some professions), and low employee mobility. On the other hand, it is characterised by a relatively low level of social security (low and short-term unemployment benefits, low sickness / disability / retirement benefits).⁷

The European Union currently covers a space of 27 countries with a population of 440 million. The table below presents the change in the population size of individual countries in the last decade.

Table 2 Population of the European Union countries in 2009-2018 (in thousands).

TIME	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	432 211.3	433 252.1	434 011.5	436 550.2	437 153.9	438 230.4	438 686.8	438,74 2.7	439 529.5	440 129.1
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	494 416.3	495 878.8	497,07 8.7	500 082.9	501 199.8	502 779.3	503 617.3	504 135.6	505 294.1	:
European Union - 15 countries (1995-2004)	390 676.9	392 350.6	393,76 3.3	397,05 0.6	398 381.0	400 430.1	401 593.2	402 412.7	403 807.9	:
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	329 571.5	330 687.9	331 480.0	334 083.5	334 975.2	336 212.8	336,75 2.6	337,08 6.1	337 966.8	338,77 4.6
Belgium	10,989 .4	11,063 .4	11 125.1	11 181.1	11 236.0	11 283.4	11 191.4	11 258.0	11 319.4	11 377.7
Bulgaria	7 333.2	7 277.8	7,241. 9	7 209.7	7 164.2	7 114.2	7,061. 8	7 011.0	6 964.7	6 918.6
Czechia	10,496 .4	10 514.6	10 520.7	10 518.0	10 545.9	10,563 .3	10,587 .2	10 622.9	10 664.2	10 699.2
Denmark	5 224.3	5,238. 8	5 254.1	5,269. 9	5 301.5	5,341. 4	5 365.9	5 379.4	5,384. 6	5 371.4
Germany	79 128.3	79 526.2	79 704.5	80,015 .7	80 586.8	81,463 .0	81,767 .6	81 637.4	81 875.9	82 181.0
Estonia	1,326. 4	1,320. 3	1,315. 7	1,311. 4	1,297. 3	1 299.7	1,298. 9	1,301. 6	1,307. 7	1,312. 7
Ireland	4 578.5	4 597.4	4 620.0	4,652. 5	4,695. 8	4,749. 0	4 802.3	4,860. 7	4,927. 2	4,980. 3

⁴ A. Szymańska, *The impact of the economic crisis on the labor markets of OECD countries in the context of model conditions*, in: RW Włodarczyk (ed.), *Labor markets in the European Union countries in the face of crisis challenges*, Publisher eBooki.com.pl, Wrocław 2015, p. 166; G. Coppola, N. O'Higgins, *Youth and the Crisis. Unemployment, education and health in Europe*, Routledge, London and New York 2016, p. 253.

⁵ A. Szymańska, *The impact of the economic crisis on the labor markets of OECD countries in the context of model conditions*, p. 166; G. Coppola, N. O'Higgins, *Youth and the Crisis. Unemployment, education and health in Europe*, Routledge, London and New York 2016, p. 253.

⁶ P. Maleszyk P., *Labor markets of the European Union countries in the period of crisis. Adaptation processes and anti-crisis measures*, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Publishing House, Lublin 2016, p. 170; G. Coppola, N. O'Higgins, *Youth and the Crisis. Unemployment, education and health in Europe*, Routledge, London and New York 2016, p. 253.

⁷ D. Kubas, *Theoretical foundations and strategies for implementing flexicurity as a model for solving labor market problems*, Lublin 2021, p. 234.

Greece	10,998.3	10,967.2	10,921.1	10,880.5	10,831.7	10,783.2	10,730.7	10,673.4	10,612.4	10,567.6
Spain	46,306.8	46,324.5	46,145.7	45,994.9	45,967.0	45,977.8	46,079.7	46,296.3	46,654.5	46,896.0
France	61,760.9	62,071.7	62,402.9	64,548.8	64,813.2	65,050.5	65,246.5	65,419.4	65,608.0	65,740.6
Croatia	4,279.9	4,266.2	4,253.1	4,236.3	4,201.4	4,171.1	4,142.7	4,118.3	4,097.7	4,081.3
Italy	59,659.7	59,898.0	60,224.7	60,447.9	60,441.0	60,325.7	60,220.0	60,092.0	59,933.8	59,771.5
Cyprus	818.6	831.2	827.6	818.5	814.6	820.0	832.6	842.7	852.9	862.3
Latvia	2,049.9	2,015.7	1,995.5	1,968.2	1,951.9	1,936.3	1,913.7	1,890.3	1,890.3	1,878.5
Lithuania	3,032.0	2,991.4	2,960.3	2,934.3	2,907.5	2,872.9	2,827.7	2,801.5	2,790.3	2,792.4
Luxembourg	502.2	514.5	523.3	534.8	550.8	566.1	580.4	591.5	603.2	615.1
Hungary	9,778.4	9,750.5	9,723.8	9,694.9	9,668.7	9,649.2	9,609.8	9,594.7	9,594.2	9,599.8
Malta	407.5	412.5	418.8	428.3	439.2	449.3	462.3	478.8	498.0	507.4
Netherlands	16,400.2	16,507.1	16,622.2	16,657.6	16,684.8	16,776.5	16,896.7	16,991.1	17,087.3	17,184.4
Austria	8,244.6	8,281.2	8,330.0	8,394.4	8,470.0	8,581.8	8,622.6	8,660.2	8,697.5	8,744.5
Poland	36,600.1	36,609.7	36,586.4	36,511.6	36,484.2	36,204.7	36,127.0	36,005.2	35,884.9	35,894.4
Portugal	10,553.2	10,508.0	10,449.3	10,387.3	10,337.2	10,306.4	10,285.1	10,264.1	10,263.4	10,291.7
Romania	20,173.4	20,078.1	20,001.8	19,923.8	19,859.4	19,778.0	19,659.0	19,532.2	19,405.8	19,314.4
Slovenia	2,051.3	2,055.9	2,059.0	2,061.4	2,063.0	2,064.2	2,066.0	2,068.5	2,085.1	2,098.0
Slovakia	5,392.4	5,404.3	5,410.8	5,415.9	5,421.3	5,426.3	5,435.3	5,443.1	5,450.4	5,457.9
Finland	5,371.3	5,397.4	5,423.5	5,449.9	5,466.0	5,480.6	5,493.3	5,503.5	5,509.7	5,514.9
Sweden	8,754.2	8,828.4	8,949.6	9,102.5	9,895.3	9,919.5	9,938.7	9,939.8	9,566.6	9,475.4
United Kingdom	62,205.0	62,626.7	63,067.2	63,532.7	64,045.9	64,548.9	64,930.5	65,393.0	65,764.6	:
Montenegro	619.9	619.4	619.9	619.4	619.2	618.6	618.5	618.7	619.7	619.8
North Macedonia	2,055.1	2,061.6	2,060.0	2,063.0	2,070.4	2,072.2	2,073.9	2,075.7	2,076.6	2,075.2
Serbia	7,407.6	7,356.4	7,106.1	7,097.0	7,056.9	7,026.2	6,989.5	6,952.0	6,912.0	6,874.4
Turkey	72,371.2	73,599.9	74,451.6	75,692.0	76,384.3	77,128.1	78,860.9	79,760.8	80,707.5	81,870.1

Source: Number of persons by working status within households and household composition, Eurostat (04/25/2022).

In 2020, the most populous EU countries were: Germany, France, Italy and Spain. In turn, the fewest inhabitants were in: Malta, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia.

Table below show us the number of employed people, which is crucial factor for development of the EU economy and the EU labor market.

Table 3 The number of people working in the EU countries (in thousands).

GEO / TIME	2019Q	2019Q	2020Q	2020Q	2020Q	2020Q	2021Q	2021Q	2021Q	2021Q
	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	195,748.5	195,790.9	192,950.8	189,753.3	191,964.7	192,359.5	188,679.2	192,347.3	195,348.8	195,502.8
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	227,126.0	227,374.5	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
European Union - 15 countries (1995-2004)	180,945.9	181,499.5	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:

Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	148,774.3	149204.1	146855.5	144043.5	145701.1	146213.4	143598.4	146560.7	149129.5	149432.7
Belgium	4,805.9	4,779.7	4765.8	4703.0	4762.6	4731.0	4,661.9	4768.4	4,872.8	4,875.9
Bulgaria	3,194.1	3123.5	3015.3	2979.5	3,072.8	3,029.7	2940.2	2,974.1	3,042.0	2990.4
Czechia	5153.6	5153.8	5126.5	5,064.7	5,086.7	5,069.6	5,023.5	5,023.8	5106.2	5111.1
Denmark	2796.2	2796.7	2766.0	2,731.6	2,747.8	2765.7	2720.0	2796.0	2816.2	2844.1
Germany	41153.3	41,599.4	:	:	:	:	39455.1	39,842.8	40557.9	40759.2
Estonia	630.4	634.8	621.5	597.5	611.7	615.3	611.2	605.4	621.7	626.0
Ireland	2241.9	2268.9	2,263.7	2136.9	2204.6	2210.5	2142.1	2247.3	2366.2	2400.2
Greece	3882.3	3810.6	3762.2	3750.5	3826.7	3,781.7	3,524.9	3,809.7	4,011.4	3,945.4
Spain	19,653.7	19,748.6	19,449.2	18377.5	18926.4	18926.4	19,077.1	18,939.9	19393.0	19754.4
France	26698.7	26824.6	26727.5	26,290.6	26555.3	26678.9	26841.7	27252.0	27533.8	27,467.9
Croatia	1673.5	1,647.4	1620.9	1636.4	1652.9	1,608.9	1603.4	1,655.2	1677.2	1661.2
Italy	22796.2	22704.7	22395.9	22032.7	22189.0	22273.2	21,096.9	21860.8	22,203.0	22236.0
Cyprus	404.4	409.0	405.0	405.6	402.0	406.6	400.4	412.9	426.4	428.1
Latvia	878.2	871.2	858.2	852.6	850.6	847.2	812.6	819.2	833.5	822.9
Lithuania	1,327.7	1,326.2	1324.2	1,292.8	1,280.1	1,293.2	1,296.8	1,301.4	1322.3	1,318.3
Luxembourg	287.2	287.1	287.6	288.6	288.6	295.3	297.7	304.3	306.3	302.7
Hungary	4,442.6	4,437.6	4,386.4	4316.1	4,403.1	4,397.7	4,476.3	4524.4	4560.8	4,580.0
Malta	251.3	256.2	260.2	252.1	254.2	255.7	257.0	259.2	261.9	268.2
Netherlands	8727.1	8733.1	8741.2	8622.6	8,660.9	8699.4	8861.3	8918.4	9,024.5	9,096.4
Austria	4316.1	4304.9	4214.6	4,141.6	4,283.7	4,255.9	4118.9	4179.3	4322.5	4306.1
Poland	16225.6	16101.0	16,055.9	15886.3	16106.1	16149.0	16,045.6	16186.7	16376.9	16339.7
Portugal	4,683.7	4,653.7	4614.4	4,482.0	4540.9	4592.5	4508.5	4627.2	4678.0	4676.9
Romania	8,482.4	8,397.9	8,274.9	8,249.0	8297.2	8267.8	7,559.6	7755.5	7689.0	7666.4
Slovenia	970.5	967.7	969.4	954.4	964.6	970.5	913.8	960.7	979.3	963.3
Slovakia	2545.7	2548.6	2510.0	2465.3	2488.9	2499.3	2464.3	2499.0	2552.7	2570.8
Finland	2520.3	2474.9	2450.4	2441.9	2469.8	2439.6	2393.4	2499.9	2501.0	2483.7
Sweden	5,006.0	4,928.9	4,849.4	4,846.3	4,897.1	4,857.6	4712.3	4,871.0	4,951.1	4877.1
Iceland	191.5	189.3	188.6	183.0	191.8	175.0	175.9	183.7	192.3	190.4
Norway	2646.5	2620.5	2620.3	2593.9	2604.4	2602.2	2587.4	2653.3	2694.0	2692.7
Switzerland	4521.7	4562.8	4,538.8	4,467.8	4503.5	4563.5	4,471.8	4,457.9	4511.9	4578.9
United Kingdom	31377.5	31,583.6	31,498.5	31,250.7	31114.4	:	:	:	:	:
Montenegro	244.7	232.3	231.4	218.4	208.0	195.3	:	:	:	:

North Macedonia	789.5	800.8	799.2	782.1	775.8	778.8	:	:	:	:
Serbia	2 765.6	2,766. 5	2,712. 8	2 679.1	2 759.2	2 745.3	2 621.7	2,714. 4	2 801.4	2,784. 8
Turkey	27,651 .8	27 296.3	25 989.5	25 132.6	26 780.1	26 309.3	:	:	:	:

Source: Population by sex, age, citizenship and labor status, Eurostat (04/21/2022).

As we can see, in the fourth quarter of 2021, most people were employed in: Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Poland. This is partly a natural consequence of the highest population in these countries.

In the next step, let's see how the employment rate was in the last decade in the EU countries.⁸

Table 4 Employment rate in the European Union and EFTA countries in 2012-2021 (%).

TIME	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	66.9	66.8	67.5	68.5	69.6	70.9	71.9	72.7	71.7	73.1
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	67.7	67.4	67.9	68.8	69.8	70.8	71.8	72.5	71.2	72.5
Belgium	67.2	67.2	67.3	67.2	67.7	68.5	69.7	70.5	69.7	70.6
Bulgaria	62.4	62.9	64.4	66.5	67.0	70.6	71.7	74.3	72.7	73.2
Czechia	71.5	72.5	73.5	74.8	76.7	78.5	79.9	80.3	79.7	80.0
Denmark	74.3	74.3	74.7	75.4	76.0	76.6	77.5	78.3	77.8	79.0
Germany	75.8	76.3	76.7	76.9	77.6	78.2	78.9	79.6	78.1	79.6
Estonia	73.1	74.1	75.0	76.7	77.0	79.2	79.7	80.5	79.1	79.3
Ireland	64.5	66.5	68.1	69.8	71.3	72.9	74.0	75.0	72.1	74.9
Greece	54.5	52.5	53.1	54.8	55.9	57.4	59.0	60.8	58.3	62.6
Spain	59.6	58.6	59.9	62.0	63.9	65.5	67.0	68.0	65.7	67.7
France	69.7	69.7	70.0	70.3	70.7	71.3	72.0	72.3	72.1	73.2
Croatia	58.1	57.2	59.2	60.6	61.4	63.6	65.2	66.7	66.9	68.2
Italy	60.2	59.1	59.5	60.2	61.4	62.3	63.0	63.5	61.9	62.7
Cyprus	70.2	67.2	67.6	67.9	68.7	70.8	73.9	75.7	74.9	75.9
Latvia	67.9	69.5	70.6	72.5	73.0	74.6	76.8	77.3	76.9	75.3
Lithuania	68.5	69.9	71.8	73.3	75.2	76.0	77.8	78.2	76.7	77.4
Luxembourg	71.4	71.1	72.1	70.9	70.7	71.5	72.1	72.8	72.1	74.1
Hungary	63.8	65.2	68.7	70.9	73.7	75.4	76.7	77.6	77.5	78.8
Malta	63.9	66.2	67.9	69.0	71.1	73.0	75.5	76.8	77.3	78.6
Netherlands	77.5	76.7	76.3	77.2	77.9	78.9	80.0	81.0	80.8	81.7
Austria	74.4	74.6	74.2	74.3	74.8	75.4	76.2	76.8	74.8	75.6
Poland	62.9	63.2	64.9	66.3	68.2	70.0	71.4	72.3	72.7	75.4
Portugal	64.0	63.4	66.1	67.9	69.5	72.5	74.7	75.5	74.2	75.9
Romania	56.8	56.9	58.0	59.2	60.3	62.7	63.9	65.1	65.2	67.1
Slovenia	67.8	66.7	67.3	68.6	69.5	72.9	74.9	75.9	74.8	76.1
Slovakia	66.9	66.9	67.8	69.6	71.8	73.2	74.5	75.6	74.6	74.6
Finland	73.0	72.5	72.2	71.8	72.4	73.2	75.3	76.2	75.5	76.8
Sweden	78.9	79.2	79.4	79.9	80.6	81.2	81.8	81.5	80.1	80.7
Iceland	81.8	82.8	84.9	86.5	87.8	87.6	86.5	85.9	82.3	81.4
Norway	79.9	79.6	79.6	79.1	78.6	78.3	79.2	79.5	78.8	80.0
Switzerland	81.0	80.8	81.1	81.7	82.0	82.1	82.5	82.9	82.5	81.8
Montenegro	52.0	52.7	55.6	56.7	57.1	58.2	59.8	60.8	55.2	:
North Macedonia	48.2	50.3	51.3	51.9	53.3	54.8	56.1	59.2	59.1	:
Serbia	51.0	53.4	53.5	54.7	57.6	60.0	61.6	63.6	64.3	66.7
Turkey	52.8	53.4	53.2	53.9	54.4	55.3	55.6	53.8	51.0	:

Source: Employment and activity by sex and age - annual data, Eurostat (04/29/2022).

⁸ Cf. *Policies for system change and lifelong learning, A Torino Process crosscountry digest (2018–21)*, European Training Foundation, 2022, p. 14.

As we can see in 2021, the employment rate for the entire European Union was 73.1%. The highest rates were recorded in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, the Netherlands and Sweden. In turn, the lowest employment rate was characteristic of countries such as Greece, Italy, Romania, Croatia and Spain.

Since unemployment is one of the most undesirable phenomena on the labor market, let us take a look at how this phenomenon developed in the EU countries in the last decade.

Table 5 Number of unemployed people aged 15-74 in the EU countries (in thousands).

GEO / TIME	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	22 918	24 034	22 939	21 252	19 436	17 444	15 643	14 503	15 182	14 954
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	18 262	19 302	18 655	17 471	16 278	14 770	13 398	12 449	12 841	12 616
Belgium	374	423	430	430	395	357	305	278	291	324
Bulgaria	444	469	417	337	280	240	206	176	201	171
Czechia	367	369	324	268	211	155	121	109	137	150
Denmark	224	210	198	181	176	173	153	152	170	155
Germany	2 066	2 026	1 941	1 809	1 650	1 510	1 368	1 280	1 555	1 536
Estonia	68	59	50	43	47	40	38	31	48	43
Ireland	343	308	267	225	195	158	138	121	139	158
Greece	1 208	1 344	1 277	1 198	1 146	1 043	935	847	791	678
Spain	5 811	6 051	5 610	5 056	4 481	3 917	3 479	3 248	3 531	3 430
France	2 877	3 048	3 042	3 073	2 992	2 807	2 701	2 519	2 381	2 365
Croatia	297	318	327	306	240	205	152	119	135	138
Italy	2 719	3 078	3 223	3 009	2 978	2 873	2 709	2 540	2 301	2 367
Cyprus	52	69	70	63	54	47	37	32	34	35
Latvia	156	121	108	98	96	86	73	62	79	71
Lithuania	197	172	158	134	116	103	90	92	126	105
Luxembourg	13	15	15	18	17	16	17	17	21	17
Hungary	473	440	343	308	234	192	172	159	198	196
Malta	11	12	12	11	10	9	9	10	12	10
Netherlands	625	756	769	723	647	547	459	423	466	408
Austria	224	249	263	271	290	267	237	220	272	284
Poland	1 749	1 792	1 566	1 304	1,063	843	659	558	537	580
Portugal	836	855	726	646	573	462	366	339	351	339
Romania	695	719	693	683	581	500	429	400	497	459
Slovenia	89	101	98	90	79	67	52	45	51	48
Slovakia	386	394	366	323	274	229	184	161	186	188
Finland	209	221	232	250	236	233	202	184	209	212
Sweden	408	416	417	393	373	365	351	380	467	489
Iceland	11	10	9	8	6	5	6	7	11	13
Norway	83	92	95	119	129	115	106	104	125	128
Switzerland	204	219	227	229	238	234	231	216	238	252
Montenegro	50	49	47	47	48	44	42	43	48	:
North Macedonia	292	277	269	249	225	214	199	166	156	:
Serbia	791	740	635	576	511	454	430	351	299	352
Turkey	2 202	2 442	2 843	3 035	3 308	3 421	3 512	4 445	4 045	:

Source: Unemployment by sex and age - annual data, Eurostat (04/28/2022).

As we can see, in 2021 there were almost 15 million unemployed people in the entire European Union. The largest population of this category of people was found in Spain, Italy, France and Germany. In no other country has the number of unemployed exceeded one million. The lowest number of unemployed was in countries with a small population, such as Malta, Luxembourg, and Cyprus.

The table below shows how the data on the nominal number of unemployed compare to the number of economically active people (unemployment rate).

Table 6 Unemployment rate in the EU countries (percent).

GEO / TIME	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	6.9	7.3	6.9	6.4	5.9	5.3	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.5
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	7.3	7.7	7.4	6.9	6.5	5.9	5.3	4.9	5.1	5.0
Belgium	4.6	5.1	5.2	5.2	4.7	4.3	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.8
Bulgaria	7.8	8.3	7.4	6.1	5.1	4.4	3.8	3.3	3.8	3.3
Czechia	4.4	4.5	3.9	3.3	2.6	1.9	1.5	1.3	1.7	1.9
Denmark	5.3	5.0	4.7	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.9	3.6
Germany	3.4	3.3	3.2	2.9	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.5
Estonia	6.8	5.9	5.0	4.5	4.9	4.2	3.9	3.2	5.0	4.4
Ireland	10.2	9.1	7.8	6.6	5.6	4.5	3.9	3.3	3.8	4.3
Greece	14.6	16.4	15.7	14.8	14.2	13.0	11.7	10.7	10.0	8.6
Spain	16.5	17.3	16.0	14.5	12.8	11.2	9.9	9.1	9.9	9.6
France	6.2	6.6	6.5	6.5	6.3	5.9	5.7	5.3	5.0	4.9
Croatia	9.1	9.8	10.1	9.5	7.5	6.5	4.9	3.8	4.3	4.5
Italy	6.0	6.8	7.1	6.7	6.6	6.4	6.1	5.7	5.2	5.3
Cyprus	8.0	10.7	11.0	10.0	8.6	7.4	5.7	4.9	5.2	5.2
Latvia	10.0	7.9	7.2	6.7	6.6	6.0	5.2	4.4	5.7	5.1
Lithuania	8.6	7.6	7.1	6.1	5.3	4.8	4.3	4.4	6.0	5.0
Luxembourg	3.2	3.7	3.7	4.3	4.0	3.5	3.6	3.7	4.4	3.5
Hungary	6.2	5.8	4.5	4.1	3.1	2.6	2.3	2.1	2.7	2.7
Malta	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.2	2.9	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.9	2.4
Netherlands	5.0	6.0	6.1	5.7	5.1	4.2	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.1
Austria	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.4	4.0	3.6	3.3	4.1	4.2
Poland	6.1	6.3	5.5	4.6	3.8	3.0	2.4	2.0	1.9	2.1
Portugal	10.5	10.8	9.2	8.3	7.3	5.9	4.7	4.4	4.5	4.4
Romania	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.5	3.8	3.3	2.9	2.7	3.4	3.2
Slovenia	5.6	6.3	6.1	5.7	5.0	4.2	3.3	2.9	3.2	3.1
Slovakia	9.0	9.2	8.5	7.5	6.4	5.4	4.3	3.8	4.4	4.5
Finland	5.2	5.4	5.7	6.1	5.8	5.7	4.9	4.5	5.1	5.2
Sweden	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.4	5.1	4.9	4.7	5.1	6.2	6.5
Iceland	4.8	4.3	4.0	3.3	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.8	4.3	4.8
Norway	2.2	2.4	2.5	3.1	3.3	2.9	2.7	2.6	3.1	3.2
Switzerland	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.7	3.9
Montenegro	10.7	10.4	10.1	10.1	10.3	9.4	9.1	9.3	10.2	:
North Macedonia	18.1	17.1	16.6	15.3	13.8	13.1	12.2	10.2	9.6	:
Serbia	14.3	13.7	11.5	10.5	9.4	8.4	8.0	6.6	5.6	6.7

Turkey	4.2	4.6	5.2	5.5	5.9	6.0	6.1	7.6	6.8	:
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Source: Unemployment by sex and age - annual data, Eurostat (04/27/2022).

As we can see, in 2021 the unemployment rate for the entire EU was 4.5%. The countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Malta, Germany and Hungary were characterised by the lowest unemployment. In turn, the highest unemployment rate was recorded in Spain, Greece and Sweden.

As the most common motivation for undertaking training and education by adults is work, let us also see what the average duration of economic activity in individual EU countries looks like.

Table 7 Average duration of economic activity (in years).

GEO / TIME	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	34.1	34.5	34.7	34.8	34.9	35.2	35.5	35.7	35.9	35.7
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	34.7	35.0	35.2	35.3	35.5	35.7	35.9	36.2	36.4	:
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	34.5	34.9	35.0	35.1	35.2	35.4	35.6	35.9	36.1	35.7
Belgium	32.1	32.2	32.5	32.6	32.6	32.6	32.9	33.3	33.6	33.4
Bulgaria	31.1	31.6	32.0	32.0	32.1	31.7	33.1	33.1	34.0	33.5
Czechia	33.9	34.3	34.7	34.9	35.2	35.6	35.9	36.3	36.3	36.0
Denmark	39.0	38.7	38.4	38.5	38.7	39.0	39.3	39.5	40.1	40.0
Germany	37.4	37.5	37.8	38.0	37.9	38.2	38.4	38.7	39.1	39.1
Estonia	36.0	36.2	36.5	36.4	37.2	37.8	38.7	39.1	39.1	39.2
Ireland	35.1	35.1	35.6	35.7	36.0	36.5	36.7	37.0	37.5	36.9
Greece	32.0	32.0	32.1	32.1	32.3	32.5	32.7	32.9	33.2	32.8
Spain	34.6	34.8	34.8	34.8	35.0	35.1	35.1	35.2	35.4	34.8
France	34.1	34.5	34.7	34.7	34.9	35.0	35.2	35.4	35.4	35.2
Croatia	31.4	31.2	31.1	32.3	32.6	32.2	32.5	32.4	32.6	32.8
Italy	29.7	30.5	30.3	30.7	30.7	31.3	31.7	31.8	32.0	31.2
Cyprus	36.6	36.3	36.3	36.7	36.2	36.0	36.3	37.2	37.4	37.1
Latvia	34.3	35.0	34.8	34.6	35.4	35.6	36.2	36.7	37.0	37.3
Lithuania	33.8	34.0	34.1	34.8	34.9	35.7	36.1	36.7	37.2	37.4
Luxembourg	31.9	32.5	32.7	33.3	33.5	33.0	33.2	33.5	33.9	34.1
Hungary	29.6	30.3	30.8	31.8	32.6	33.3	33.7	34.1	34.5	34.4
Malta	31.1	31.9	33.1	33.5	33.7	34.0	34.8	36.0	36.3	36.9
Netherlands	39.0	39.5	39.7	39.6	39.9	39.9	40.1	40.5	41.0	41.0
Austria	36.2	36.5	36.7	36.6	36.7	37.1	37.2	37.5	37.7	37.5
Poland	31.8	32.1	32.2	32.6	32.6	33.0	33.3	33.5	33.6	33.6
Portugal	36.9	36.9	36.6	36.7	36.9	37.1	37.7	38.0	38.3	37.6
Romania	32.0	32.4	32.6	32.8	32.8	32.4	33.3	33.5	33.8	34.0
Slovenia	33.7	33.6	33.7	34.2	34.3	34.2	35.7	36.1	35.9	35.7
Slovakia	32.5	32.8	33.0	33.2	33.4	33.9	34.1	34.1	34.2	34.0
Finland	37.2	37.4	37.2	37.4	37.7	37.7	38.0	38.7	38.9	38.8
Sweden	40.3	40.6	40.9	41.1	41.2	41.3	41.7	41.8	42.0	42.0
Iceland	44.4	44.5	45.5	46.2	46.6	47.4	47.0	46.2	45.8	44.9
Norway	39.3	39.6	39.5	39.6	39.8	39.6	39.3	39.6	39.8	39.7
Switzerland	41.2	41.4	41.5	41.9	42.0	42.4	42.5	42.7	42.7	42.5
United Kingdom	38.1	38.3	38.5	38.6	38.7	38.9	39.0	39.2	39.4	:

Montenegro	27.8	28.7	28.7	30.1	30.8	31.2	31.2	32.1	32.6	32.6
North Macedonia	31.1	30.9	31.3	31.3	31.2	31.0	31.3	31.5	31.7	31.4
Serbia	30.1	30.4	31.0	31.3	31.3	32.3	32.8	33.3	33.4	33.1
Turkey	26.5	26.6	27.2	27.5	28.0	28.5	29.0	29.4	29.4	27.3

Source: Duration of working life, Eurostat (04/26/2022).

As we can see for the entire EU, in 2020 the average duration of professional activity was 35.7 years. The countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Estonia were characterised by the longest professional activity of their citizens. On average, the citizens of Italy, Croatia, Greece, Belgium, Bulgaria and Poland work the shortest. Over the last decade, we have observed a trend of increasing professional activity: both for the EU and for individual Member States. This is due to the increase in the life expectancy of Europeans, which is followed in most countries by pension reforms by increasing the age for retirement. On the other hand, societies in the EU are aging, which means that there are more and more people aged 50+ on the labor market.

In the conditions of global economic competition, progressing technological and technical changes, adults are forced to constantly improve their competences and acquire new knowledge and skills. Therefore, in the next step of our considerations, we will look at the deficits in the competences of adults in the European Union.

Deficits in the scope of key competences in the European Union, taking into account the situation of people over 50 years.

Lifelong learning is the engine of social and economic progress in the European Union. It contributes to the employability and professional development of Europeans as well as contributes to their personal development and well-being. In addition, lifelong learning is an opportunity to overcome the social and economic difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate the digital and ecologically sustainable transformation of the European economy and society.⁹

In the current context of the European economy and the EU labor market, the basic competences, skills and qualifications of adults are of key importance. Research shows that around one fifth of adults aged 25-64 in the European Union have not completed secondary education. These people have less chance of participating in education and training compared to those with a higher level of education. In addition, many adult Europeans have low levels of literacy, numeracy or digital skills.¹⁰

European policy recognizes that everyone has the right to inclusive and high-quality education, training and lifelong learning. These assumptions were underlined in the adopted action plan under the "European Pillar of Social Rights", which sets a new EU headline target of 60% of adult Europeans participating in education or training each year by 2030 ("Porto Declaration"). Many important EU policy initiatives such as the "European Skills Agenda", "Council Recommendation on Upskilling

⁹ *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications, Eurydice report*, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 5; *Assessment of the effectiveness of active labor market policies in crisis and post-crisis situations*, European Training Foundation, 2022, p. 3, *Investing in Career Guidance*, revised edition 2021, pp. 14-15; *Osnabrück Declaration 2020 on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies*, s. 3.

¹⁰ *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications, Eurydice report*, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 5; Cf. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions; Key competences for a changing world*, Brussels 2009, p. 6.

Pathways" or the communication on "European Education Area" underline the importance of EU Member States investing in adult skills and lifelong learning. It is essential to develop national education and training systems with the aim of increasing adult participation in education.¹¹

As we live in a time of constant change, modern technologies and digital transformation are rapidly changing the way Europeans live and work. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the pace of change. In this context, lifelong learning and key competence development throughout life has become more relevant than ever. Everyone has a basic right and at the same time needs the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills. Be it in order to maintain employment, improve one's situation and chances on the labor market, or to remain active and independent in society. Years of research and analysis have shown that adult education and training - both formal and non-formal - contributes to increasing employability, health and well-being. Adults, especially those aged 50+, with a low level of key competences or qualifications (basic skills), are among the most disadvantaged groups in the EU labor market and in society. Their situation is likely to worsen with mounting economic and social pressure. That is why it is so important that EU Member States develop education systems in order to identify and reach the most vulnerable to adverse socio-economic changes groups of citizens and encourage them to participate in education and training, especially in key competences. These groups of citizens include people over 50.¹²

When analyzing the deficits of key competences among the inhabitants of the European Union, in the first step, let's look at the basic results of research concerning not only key competences, but more broadly, level of education, skills and qualifications possessed by adults in the European Union. Research from recent years has shown us the following results:

- in 2019, 21.6% of European adults aged 25-64 (i.e. 51.5 million) did not complete upper secondary education (ISCED 3; EQF 3 or 4). Of these, 12.5 million left the education system with education below lower secondary school;
- Southern European countries are worst affected by low levels of education among the adult population;
- People in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups have a higher level of education than the older population (people 50+);
- The proportion of adults not completing upper secondary education is higher among adults born outside their country of residence (born abroad) than among the native population;
- A significant proportion of adult Europeans (depending on the country from 15% to 57%) have a low level of key competences in: reading, writing, numeracy or digital skills;
- On average, around 40% of adults in the EU are at risk of digital exclusion: i.e. they either have low or no digital skills, or do not use the internet or use it in a very limited way.¹³

¹¹ *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications, Eurydice report*, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 5; *Recommendations Council on learning myself on thing sustainable environment*, Commission European, Brussels 2022, pp. 3-5; *Osnabrück Declaration 2020 on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies*, s. 7.

¹² *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications, Eurydice report*, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 13; *The importance of being vocational: challenges and opportunities for VET in the next decade*, Cedefop, ETF, Luxembourg 2020, pp. 8-9; *International trends and innovation in career guidance*, volume I, European Training Foundation, 2020, pp. 10-12; *New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now*, A report by the Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs prepared for the European Commission, 2010, p. 24; *Skills for green and inclusive societies in the digital era*, European Training Foundation, 2021, p. 5-7.

¹³ *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications, Eurydice report*, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 14.



The participation of adults in education and training varies among EU countries, but the common feature is that most of the learning activities involving adults are non-formal. Adult participation in education and training is unevenly spread across the EU, with the Nordic and some Western European countries having a much higher participation rate than the EU average. In 2019, less than a third of European countries met the EU 2020 goal of 15% adult participation in education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey. A positive trend here is the slow but steady increase in adult participation in education and training. The average rate for the EU increased from 7.9% in 2009 to 10.1% in 2014 and 10.8% in 2019. However, in 2020, the year (probably due to the COVID-19 pandemic), the EU average fell again to the level of 9.2% - a decrease in participation was observed in practically all countries. Adult Europeans during the period participated mainly in short, informal education and training courses.¹⁴

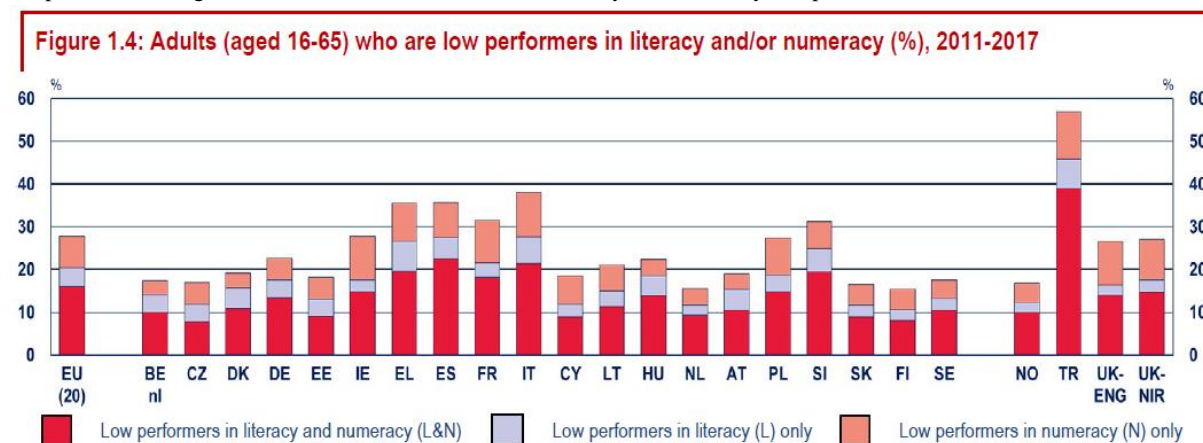
Research also shows that adult Europeans with lower level of education participate less in education and training than people with higher levels of education (such results have been observed in all EU countries where the study was conducted). Thus, the level of education turns out to be a key determinant of participation in adult education and training. Thus, in 2019, in some European countries only 1% of low-skilled adults participated in education and training, while in other countries participation rates ranged from 10% to 25%. At the same time, on average 3.2% of adults across the EU completed upper secondary education in adulthood. There are significant differences between countries here. Graduation rates from secondary school into adulthood ranged from less than 1% to 14%. The conducted research allowed to distinguish three profiles of countries in the EU. About one third of the EU countries had a relatively low proportion of adults not completing upper secondary education (below the EU average) and a relatively high proportion of low-skilled adults participating in education and training (above the EU average). This category of countries included mainly the countries of Northern and Western Europe. The second group of countries (one third) has a low proportion of low-skilled adults, with a low proportion of low-skilled adults enrolling in education and training. Most of these countries are located in Eastern Europe. The third category of countries is made up of countries that have recorded a high proportion of low-skilled adults and a relatively low participation rate of low-skilled adults in education and training. The countries of Southern Europe belong to this category.¹⁵

Going directly to the deficits in the field of key competences, let us take a look at the results of the study on literacy and numeracy. The results are provided by the OECD's "Adult Skills Survey" (PIAAC), which measures the differences between the basic skills levels of the adult population (aged 16-65) for literacy, numeracy and problem solving in different countries.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*., p. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*., p. 15; *Key indicators on education, skills and employment*, European Training Foundation, 2020 p. 17.

Graphic 1 Percentage of adults with a low level of basic literacy and numeracy competences.



Source: *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications*, Eurydice report, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 34.

According to a survey across countries (EU Member States and non-EU countries), around 8% to 39% of adults are poor in both literacy and numeracy (the average for the 20 participating EU Member States was 16.0%). The highest values were recorded in: Spain, Italy, Greece, Slovenia and France (in descending order), where 18.1% to 22.5% of adults have low levels of skills in both literacy and numeracy. At the other end of the scale are the Czech Republic, Finland, Cyprus, Slovakia, Estonia and the Netherlands (in ascending order), with no more than 10% of adults performing poorly in literacy and numeracy. None of the countries surveyed had less than 15% of adults with low literacy and / or numeracy skills.¹⁶

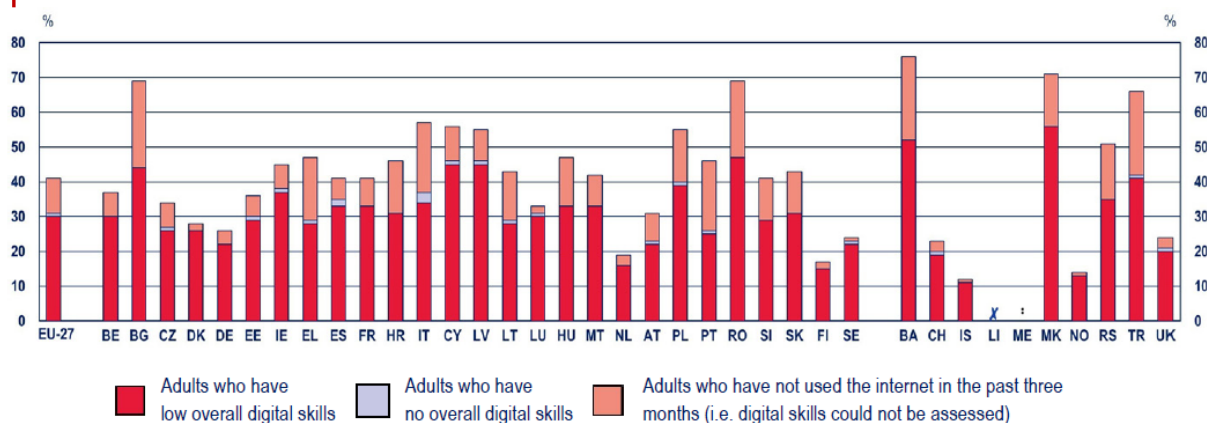
In the next step, let's look at digital skills. According to a 2019 survey measuring the level of digital skills and ICT use in households in the EU-27, on average 30% of adults (aged 25-64) have a low level of digital skills and around 1% have no digital skills at all. For 10% of adults, the level of digital skills cannot be assessed because they did not use the Internet in the three months preceding the survey. Thus, it can be assumed that in the entire EU about 40% of adults are at risk of digital exclusion. For individual EU countries, the highest proportion of adults with low levels of digital skills and no digital skills - ranging from 40% to 56% - was observed in Romania, Cyprus, Latvia, Bulgaria and Poland (in descending order). On the other side of the scale were the Scandinavian countries (Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway), as well as Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, where the proportions of people with low levels of digital skills and without digital skills ranged from 11% to 23% - i.e., less than a quarter of the adult population.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications, Eurydice report*, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 33; *Key competences in initial vocational education and training: digital, multilingual and literacy*, Research paper, Cedefop, Luxembourg 2020, pp. 125-126; Cf. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions; Key competences for a changing world*, Brussels 2009, pp. 5-6.

¹⁷ *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications, Eurydice report*, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, pp. 34-35

Graphic 2 Percentage of adults with low levels of digital skills.

Figure 1.5: Adults (aged 25-64) who have low or no digital skills, or who have not used the internet in the past three months (%), 2019



Source: *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications*, Eurydice report, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 35.

In the next step, let's look at the knowledge of foreign languages¹⁸ by people aged 55-64 in the EU.

Table 8 Percentage of the total population and population aged 55-64 declaring the lack of knowledge of foreign languages (not a single language - percentage).

GEO / TIME	Total population			People aged 55-64		
	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	37.4	34.5	31.8	52.9	47.6	42.9
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	37.1	34.5	35.4	51.7	47.6	45.3
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	35.5	33.8	30.2	52.5	47.3	40.7
Belgium	32.1	42.1	21.5	43.0	54.3	28.5
Bulgaria	44.1	61.1	50.5	52.9	73.6	59.8
Czechia	31.9	30.9	21.0	43.3	41.5	33.7
Denmark	12.0	5.9	4.2	21.4	11.5	5.9
Germany	28.6	21.5	21.3	47.4	34.9	29.9
Estonia	13.6	14.5	8.8	16.0	21.6	14.6
Ireland	:	:	49.2	:	83.8	57.1
Greece	43.4	41.9	33.5	67.8	69.2	59.5
Spain	46.6	48.9	45.8	66.1	63.8	61.1
France	41.2	41.2	39.9	53.9	51.9	48.5
Croatia	31.4	:	26.8	46.0	:	43.4
Italy	38.6	40.1	34.0	59.0	58.4	46.2
Cyprus	14.6	16.1	10.5	32.4	33.6	22.4
Latvia	5.1	5.1	4.2	5.4	7.7	6.1
Lithuania	2.5	2.7	4.5	4.0	2.3	5.5
Luxembourg	:	1.1	5.5	:	:	6.2
Hungary	74.8	63.2	57.6	83.5	79.5	74.6
Malta	8.3	10.9	8.2	14.4	19.1	12.3

¹⁸ See: *Key competences for lifelong learning*, Education and Training, Luxembourg 2019, p. 7.

Netherlands	:	13.9	13.7	:	21.6	20.1
Austria	20.3	21.9	13.8	37.3	32.8	26.9
Poland	37.3	38.1	32.9	49.5	51.2	45.4
Portugal	51.3	41.5	31.0	68.6	62.3	50.2
Romania	69.6	:	64.2	82.3	:	82.9
Slovenia	7.7	7.6	15.9	11.4	10.2	22.7
Slovakia	7.6	14.7	11.8	11.0	21.1	14.0
Finland	16.1	8.2	8.0	37.2	21.1	17.8
Sweden	5.0	8.2	3.4	11.3	11.6	4.1
Norway	2.9	4.4	7.9	6.7	6.4	8.2
Switzerland	:	12.1	8.3	:	17.3	12.7
United Kingdom	35.1	:	65.4	43.5	:	66.9
North Macedonia	:	:	31.7	:	:	44.0
Albania	:	:	59.9	:	:	76.6
Serbia	:	37.4	20.7	:	53.0	30.1
Turkey	75.5	81.8	:	85.3	88.7	:
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	61.0	:	:	73.1

Source: Number of foreign languages known (self-reported) by labor status, Eurostat (04/21/2022).

We can notice that in this age category, more than 42% of the EU population declared that they do not know even one foreign language. The worst results were observed in Romania, Hungary, Spain, Bulgaria and Greece. Countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia and Luxembourg fared best in the study.

In the next step, let's look at the results of the study on the knowledge of two foreign languages by people aged 55-64.

Table 9 Percentage of the population aged 55-64 declaring knowledge of two foreign languages (percentage).

GEO / TIME	2016	2011	2007
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	17.1	15.7	14.1
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	16.3	15.7	12.3
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	18.1	15.8	14.0
Belgium	30.1	15.3	19.6
Bulgaria	11.7	8.0	17.1
Czechia	20.2	17.7	19.0
Denmark	40.5	41.9	32.4
Germany	20.7	20.0	14.5
Estonia	33.4	30.5	29.6
Ireland	11.9	2.5	:
Greece	7.6	6.8	4.9
Spain	10.1	9.0	8.8
France	15.1	14.2	12.8
Croatia	14.1	:	14.4
Italy	14.7	10.5	13.3
Cyprus	15.4	10.9	10.7

Latvia	39.1	36.8	33.6
Lithuania	32.4	36.3	37.3
Luxembourg	32.0	29.7	:
Hungary	5.3	4.5	3.8
Malta	35.1	33.3	31.8
Netherlands	35.9	30.2	:
Austria	15.3	15.0	14.2
Poland	14.1	13.4	14.1
Portugal	17.3	12.4	10.6
Romania	3.8	:	5.6
Slovenia	23.9	32.1	35.0
Slovakia	31.3	28.0	36.1
Finland	26.0	24.3	20.0
Sweden	29.0	25.5	28.1
Norway	19.2	22.3	25.2
Switzerland	31.0	28.8	:
United Kingdom	8.6	:	:
North Macedonia	15.3	:	:
Albania	4.0	:	:
Serbia	20.3	8.8	:
Turkey	:	1.2	1.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.5	:	:

Source: Number of foreign languages known (self-reported) by age, Eurostat (04/22/2022).

We can notice that in the EU only 14% of people aged 55-64 declared knowledge of two foreign languages. Countries such as Hungary, Greece, Romania and Spain fared the worst. The highest rates in terms of knowledge of two foreign languages were recorded in Denmark, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia and Slovakia.

Educational needs of European Union citizens, including people over 50.

As indicated in the introduction, European Union citizens work longer and longer. This is due to both the increasing life expectancy and the lack of the necessary human resources in the labor market.¹⁹ The table below presents the rate of economically active people aged 50-74 in the entire population of this age group.

Table 10 Percentage of economically active people aged 50-74 (percent).

GEO / TIME	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	43.4	44.5	45.2	46.0	46.7	47.6	48.4	49.0	49.6	49.4
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	44.3	45.3	46.1	46.8	47.5	48.3	49.1	49.7	50.3	:

¹⁹ *Opinion on the future of vocational education and training post 2020*, the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, 2018, p. 7.

European Union - 15 countries (1995-2004)	45.0	46.1	47.0	47.8	48.5	49.6	50.3	50.9	51.6	:
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	43.6	44.8	45.7	46.6	47.5	48.6	49.4	50.0	50.7	50.2
Belgium	38.5	39.0	40.3	40.9	41.6	41.8	43.0	43.5	43.9	44.1
Bulgaria	41.5	42.2	43.7	44.5	44.8	44.5	46.4	47.3	49.3	49.5
Czechia	45.5	45.6	46.3	46.6	47.2	48.4	49.3	50.8	51.2	51.3
Denmark	49.9	50.0	49.8	50.6	51.4	52.8	53.5	54.1	55.5	56.0
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	49.0	50.6	52.3	53.9	54.8	57.1	58.1	58.6	59.6	58.0
Estonia	54.8	55.6	56.8	56.9	58.3	60.4	60.6	61.0	61.7	61.7
Ireland	48.4	48.1	49.3	49.4	50.7	50.7	51.3	51.9	53.0	53.3
Greece	37.7	36.5	36.6	36.4	37.2	39.1	40.3	41.3	42.6	43.4
Spain	43.8	44.7	44.7	44.9	46.1	46.9	47.2	47.9	48.9	49.0
France	42.1	43.6	43.8	44.2	44.5	44.6	44.7	44.7	44.8	44.6
Croatia	37.9	38.0	37.5	37.6	38.9	36.8	37.1	37.4	37.6	37.9
Italy	35.6	37.4	38.7	40.4	41.7	43.1	44.5	45.6	46.1	45.8
Cyprus	50.7	50.0	49.3	49.1	48.9	48.4	49.3	51.1	51.5	51.2
Latvia	48.9	50.9	51.3	51.8	53.0	54.5	55.3	57.2	58.0	59.4
Lithuania	49.4	50.7	50.7	52.6	54.4	56.9	57.6	59.2	59.5	60.4
Luxembourg	38.7	40.4	41.4	42.4	41.8	42.6	41.6	42.7	43.5	45.3
Hungary	36.3	36.9	37.1	38.4	40.3	42.1	42.9	44.5	45.7	47.2
Malta	31.8	33.0	34.1	35.9	36.9	37.3	37.7	39.4	40.6	42.7
Netherlands	49.3	50.6	51.4	52.0	52.4	52.7	53.3	54.2	55.2	55.4
Austria	40.8	41.7	43.1	43.8	45.2	46.9	48.4	49.5	49.7	49.6
Poland	40.7	41.3	41.6	41.9	42.0	41.9	42.2	41.3	40.9	41.1
Portugal	48.6	48.9	49.0	48.5	49.2	49.6	51.0	51.8	52.7	52.6
Romania	42.0	43.1	43.1	43.2	40.7	40.4	41.7	43.1	43.9	44.3
Slovenia	37.7	38.0	38.7	40.5	39.9	39.8	42.6	44.8	43.9	44.4
Slovakia	45.6	46.1	45.9	45.8	46.3	47.0	47.7	47.7	48.5	48.0
Finland	50.6	50.6	50.2	50.3	50.7	50.6	51.0	51.7	51.6	51.5
Sweden	56.9	57.3	56.8	57.4	57.6	57.9	59.2	59.8	60.3	61.3
Iceland	71.7	71.1	71.9	74.2	74.2	73.6	72.2	70.2	68.8	67.1
Norway	58.1	58.1	57.5	58.2	58.1	57.6	56.9	57.0	57.5	57.1
Switzerland	57.2	57.3	57.8	58.7	59.5	60.3	60.7	61.2	61.2	61.4
United Kingdom	50.9	51.3	52.2	52.6	53.0	53.6	53.7	54.3	55.0	:
Montenegro	36.2	36.7	38.0	40.2	42.5	42.4	43.4	45.5	48.4	44.0
North Macedonia	42.9	42.1	43.0	42.8	43.1	42.2	41.5	42.5	42.1	41.8
Serbia	34.9	35.1	37.5	40.0	39.4	42.3	43.3	43.5	44.6	44.7
Turkey	33.3	33.6	33.8	33.7	34.7	35.7	36.5	37.1	36.2	32.9

Source: Activity rates by sex, age and educational attainment level (%), Eurostat (04/29/2022).

As we can see in the entire EU, 49% of people aged 50-74 were economically active in 2020. The highest rates were observed in Sweden, Estonia and Lithuania. The lowest rates were in: Poland, Belgium, Greece, Italy, Romania and Slovenia.

In order for people over 50 to remain active in the labor market as long as possible, they must raise and update their competences and skills. They can do this by participating in formal and non-formal education and training.²⁰ The table below shows how participation in adult education and training in the EU has looked in the last decade.²¹

Table 11 Participation in formal and non-formal forms of training and education in the last 4 weeks of people aged 25-64 (as a percentage of the entire population).

GEO / TIME	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	8.1	8.2	9.9	10.1	10.1	10.3	10.4	10.6	10.8	9.2
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.9	11.1	11.3	:
European Union - 15 countries (1995-2004)	10.3	10.5	12.4	12.7	12.5	12.5	12.6	12.7	13.0	:
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	8.3	8.5	10.6	10.9	10.9	11.2	11.3	11.5	11.6	10.0
Belgium	7.4	6.9	6.9	7.4	6.9	7.0	8.5	8.5	8.2	7.4
Bulgaria	1.6	1.7	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.0	1.6
Czechia	11.6	11.1	10.0	9.6	8.5	8.8	9.8	8.5	8.1	5.5
Denmark	32.3	31.6	31.5	31.9	31.5	28.0	26.9	23.5	25.3	20.0
Germany	7.9	7.9	7.9	8.0	8.1	8.5	8.4	8.2	8.2	7.7
Estonia	11.9	12.8	12.6	11.6	12.4	15.7	17.2	19.7	20.2	17.1
Ireland	7.2	7.5	7.6	7.0	6.5	6.5	9.0	12.5	12.6	11.0
Greece	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.3	4.0	4.5	4.5	3.9	4.1
Spain	11.2	11.2	11.4	10.1	9.9	9.4	9.9	10.5	10.6	11.0
France	5.5	5.7	17.8	18.4	18.6	18.8	18.7	18.6	19.5	13.0
Croatia	3.1	3.3	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.0	2.3	2.9	3.5	3.2
Italy	5.7	6.6	6.2	8.1	7.3	8.3	7.9	8.1	8.1	7.2
Cyprus	7.8	7.7	7.2	7.1	7.5	6.9	6.9	6.7	5.9	4.7
Latvia	5.4	7.2	6.8	5.6	5.7	7.3	7.5	6.7	7.4	6.6
Lithuania	6.0	5.4	5.9	5.1	5.8	6.0	5.9	6.6	7.0	7.2
Luxembourg	13.9	14.2	14.6	14.5	18.0	16.8	17.2	18.0	19.1	16.3
Hungary	3.0	2.9	3.2	3.3	7.1	6.3	6.2	6.0	5.8	5.1
Malta	6.6	7.2	7.7	7.7	7.4	7.8	10.6	10.9	11.9	11.0
Netherlands	17.1	16.9	17.9	18.3	18.9	18.8	19.1	19.1	19.5	18.8
Austria	13.5	14.2	14.1	14.3	14.4	14.9	15.8	15.1	14.7	11.7
Poland	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.0	3.5	3.7	4.0	5.7	4.8	3.7
Portugal	11.5	10.5	9.7	9.6	9.7	9.6	9.8	10.3	10.5	10.0
Romania	1.6	1.4	2.0	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.1	0.9	1.3	1.0
Slovenia	16.0	13.8	12.5	12.1	11.9	11.6	12.0	11.4	11.2	8.4
Slovakia	4.1	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.4	4.0	3.6	2.8
Finland	23.8	24.5	24.9	25.1	25.4	26.4	27.4	28.5	29.0	27.3
Sweden	25.3	27.0	28.4	29.2	29.4	29.6	30.4	31.4	34.3	28.6
Iceland	26.4	28.1	26.3	26.3	28.1	24.7	23.6	21.5	22.2	20.3
Norway	18.6	20.4	20.8	20.1	20.1	19.6	19.9	19.7	19.3	16.4

²⁰ *Skills & Qualifications: Benefits for People. How learning and guidance professionals make it happen*, European Training Foundation, 2019, pp. 9-10.

²¹ Cf. *Policies for system change and lifelong learning, A Torino Process crosscountry digest (2018–21)*, European Training Foundation, 2022 p. 14.

Switzerland	28.9	29.1	29.3	30.5	30.8	31.4	31.2	31.6	32.3	27.6
United Kingdom	16.3	16.3	16.6	16.3	15.7	14.4	14.3	14.6	14.8	:
Montenegro	2.4	2.4	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.3	2.8	3.2	2.5	2.7
North Macedonia	3.6	4.1	3.7	3.2	2.6	2.9	2.3	2.4	2.8	2.6
Serbia	3.5	3.6	3.9	4.4	4.8	5.1	4.4	4.1	4.3	3.7
Turkey	3.4	3.9	4.5	5.7	5.5	5.8	5.8	6.2	5.7	5.8

Source: Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and age, Eurostat (04/28/2022).

Across the EU, only 9% of people aged 25-64 participated in some form of formal or non-formal training and education in the last 4 weeks prior to the survey. The highest rates were recorded in Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark. The smallest number of people was educated and trained in: Slovakia, Romania, Poland, Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Cyprus.

Let us compare the above data to the population of people aged 50-74, which is presented in the table below.

Table 12 Participation in formal and non-formal forms of training and education in the last 4 weeks of people aged 50-74 (as a percentage of the entire population).

GEO / TIME	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	3.5	3.7	4.9	5.1	5.1	5.3	5.3	5.5	5.6	4.3
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	4.3	4.5	5.5	5.7	5.7	5.8	5.8	5.9	6.1	:
European Union - 15 countries (1995-2004)	5.1	5.3	6.6	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.9	7.1	:
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	3.5	3.7	5.1	5.3	5.4	5.7	5.7	5.8	5.9	4.6
Belgium	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.7	3.7	3.6	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.1
Bulgaria	:	:	:	:	:	0.2	:	0.2	0.1	:
Czechia	5.4	5.1	4.8	4.6	4.0	4.3	4.8	4.2	4.3	2.7
Denmark	24.1	24.1	23.6	24.0	23.4	20.4	18.3	15.4	17.8	12.9
Germany	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	3.1	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.8
Estonia	4.6	5.0	4.7	4.6	4.2	8.7	7.4	9.5	9.3	8.0
Ireland	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.1	2.8	2.9	5.0	7.8	8.0	6.6
Greece	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.6	1.0	1.2	1.2	0.9	0.7
Spain	5.2	5.5	5.5	4.1	4.1	3.8	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.8
France	2.4	2.5	10.8	11.0	11.0	11.3	11.4	11.2	11.6	6.9
Croatia	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4
Italy	2.2	2.8	2.7	4.1	3.7	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.3	3.4
Cyprus	3.6	3.0	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.1	3.3	2.6	2.5	1.3
Latvia	1.8	3.1	3.0	2.1	2.3	3.3	3.1	2.8	2.8	2.5
Lithuania	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.5	2.6	2.9	3.6	3.8	3.8
Luxembourg	5.7	6.0	6.0	6.4	8.1	7.8	7.5	8.9	8.2	6.5
Hungary	0.4	0.5	0.6	1.0	2.8	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.3	1.9
Malta	3.1	3.1	3.9	3.5	3.0	3.7	4.6	4.0	5.0	4.5
Netherlands	8.6	8.7	9.3	9.9	10.5	10.4	10.2	10.1	10.7	9.9
Austria	6.5	6.9	6.8	6.9	7.3	7.5	7.9	8.1	7.6	4.9
Poland	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.2	2.0	1.7	1.2
Portugal	4.5	4.1	3.9	3.6	4.1	4.5	4.3	4.6	5.0	4.3
Romania	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2

Slovenia	6.9	6.5	6.3	5.6	4.7	5.1	5.7	6.0	5.8	3.6
Slovakia	1.4	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.1	0.9	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.0
Finland	13.6	14.3	14.5	15.1	15.1	15.7	16.4	16.9	17.0	14.6
Sweden	17.0	18.2	19.0	19.6	20.1	19.8	20.6	21.7	24.5	18.5
Iceland	16.8	17.9	17.3	16.5	17.0	15.6	14.2	12.5	12.8	10.8
Norway	10.4	11.4	11.4	11.1	11.6	11.3	11.0	11.2	11.1	8.4
Switzerland	20.2	20.1	20.5	21.9	22.1	22.5	22.1	21.8	22.3	17.2
United Kingdom	9.8	10.1	10.3	10.2	10.1	9.0	8.8	9.1	9.5	:
Montenegro	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
North Macedonia	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1
Serbia	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.4
Turkey	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.7

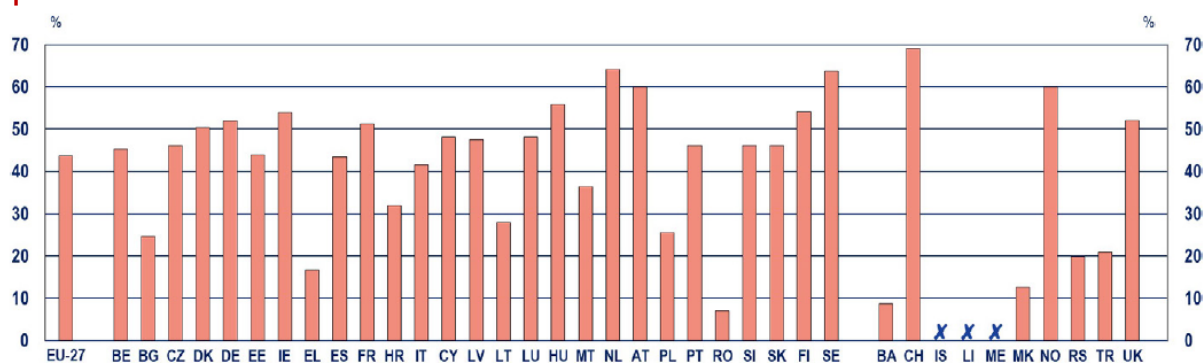
Source: Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and age, Eurostat (04/27/2022).

The indicator for the entire EU was only 4.3%, i.e. more than two times less than for the group of people aged 25-64. The countries such as Romania, Greece, Slovakia, Poland and Croatia were the worst in the 50-74 age category. Most people aged 50-74 participated in some form of formal or non-formal education and training in countries such as Sweden, Finland, Denmark, France and the Netherlands.

In the last step, let's see how the participation in training and education looked in the last 12 months preceding the survey. According to the AES survey, we know that in 2016, 43.7% of adults (aged 25-64) in the EU-27 participated in education and training at least once. Nine countries have an index of at least 50%: the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Hungary, Finland, Ireland, Germany, France and Denmark (in descending order). In turn, the worst results were recorded in: Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Poland and Lithuania.²²

Graphic 3 Percentage of people aged 25-64 who participated in training or education in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Figure 1.7: Adults (aged 25-64) who participated in education and training in the 12 months prior to the survey (%), 2016



Source: *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications*, Eurydice report, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 38.

²² *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications*, Eurydice report, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, pp. 37-38.

Lifelong learning opportunities in the European Union.

In recent years, lifelong learning, including the improvement of key competences among the inhabitants of the EU, has become one of the key European policies. In 2009, the European Council set the target that by 2020 at least 15% of adults (aged 25-64) should participate in education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey. In February 2021, the Council introduced a new EU-wide target of 47% adult participation in education and training in the 12 months prior to the survey by 2025, while the target is 60% by 2030.²³

According to the most recent studies, in 2016, about a third of adults in the EU wished to participate in education or training, being hampered by financial issues. And every fifth respondent indicated that costs are the main obstacle in undertaking education. More often, the financial obstacle in education was experienced by people with a lower level of education than those with higher education. Therefore, within the EU, it is important to offer free or subsidized forms of adult education and training. In most European countries, low-skilled adults are not expected to pay fees when participating in state-subsidized education and training programs at ISCED levels 3 or EQF level 4 (i.e. upper secondary education or equivalent). In around one third of countries, adults may not pay for this type of education, depending on additional factors (eg labor market status).²⁴ The table below shows the percentage of the population not participating in training and education due to the excessively high costs of education.

Table 13 Percentage of the population not participating in training and education due to too high costs of education.

GEO / TIME	2007	2011	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	31.6	32.5	32.2
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	32.5	32.5	35.5
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	26.0	31.7	33.6
Belgium	:	13.3	18.9
Bulgaria	50.7	51.3	40.9
Czechia	18.1	25.2	21.7
Denmark	:	24.7	19.6
Germany	37.4	33.2	32.9
Estonia	43.5	39.2	:
Ireland	:	:	28.2
Greece	30.5	40.3	46.9
Spain	12.5	16.5	43.3
France	:	29.5	26.2
Croatia	46.2	:	46.2
Italy	28.9	42.0	37.1
Cyprus	16.3	26.3	36.9
Latvia	46.2	54.6	54.5
Lithuania	42.3	55.8	42.8
Luxembourg	:	21.6	25.8
Hungary	41.3	54.5	42.4
Malta	:	19.1	20.5

²³ *Adult education and training in Europe, Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications, Eurydice report*, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg 2021, p. 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Netherlands	27.1	42.9	:
Austria	28.9	28.3	32.7
Poland	52.3	38.1	21.4
Portugal	29.8	19.4	38.9
Romania	61.4	55.4	42.2
Slovenia	43.7	:	37.8
Slovakia	:	:	33.2
Finland	26.1	21.2	25.4
Sweden	23.6	23.2	20.9
Norway	13.7	:	:
Switzerland	33.4	40.2	41.5
United Kingdom	34.3	:	50.7
North Macedonia	:	:	71.8
Albania	:	:	62.1
Serbia	:	47.6	56.4
Turkey	41.3	17.4	21.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	55.9

Source: Population wanting to participate in education and training, by reason for not participating and educational attainment level, Eurostat (04/21/2022).

In 2016, more than 32% of adult Europeans did not participate in education and training due to the financial costs of studying. The highest rates were recorded in: Latvia, Greece, Croatia, Hungary and Spain. The situation was best in countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Malta, Poland and Sweden.

In a further step of the analysis of education opportunities in the EU, let us look at the availability of non-formal forms of training and education depending on the status of providers of adult education services, starting with formal institutions.

Table 14 Availability of non-formal forms of education and training offered by formal education and training institutions (percentage).

formal education and training institutions			
GEO / TIME	2007	2011	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	10.3	10.4	7.8
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	10.4	9.8	7.6
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	11.0	10.7	7.7
Belgium	15.2	13.6	11.0
Bulgaria	3.1	2.5	3.2
Czechia	10.7	9.1	6.7
Denmark	:	13.6	17.6
Germany	4.8	16.8	3.3
Estonia	10.0	27.6	11.7
Ireland	:	12.4	11.6
Greece	14.6	8.4	13.1
Spain	9.7	9.5	16.2
France	1.2	2.7	2.9
Croatia	15.6	:	12.4
Italy	12.9	11.0	12.0

Cyprus	5.4	7.7	5.2
Latvia	13.4	10.9	6.1
Lithuania	20.8	29.9	20.1
Luxembourg	:	9.0	12.5
Hungary	7.0	3.7	4.1
Malta	:	18.7	16.3
Netherlands	38.2	9.6	3.8
Austria	6.7	12.2	10.4
Poland	13.1	11.9	8.6
Portugal	9.1	7.1	7.4
Romania	19.3	13.6	5.0
Slovenia	8.7	11.3	13.7
Slovakia	17.0	11.0	8.5
Finland	8.8	20.4	23.1
Sweden	4.2	7.5	9.8
Norway	:	8.4	7.7
Switzerland	:	11.0	6.8
United Kingdom	11.1	:	6.2
North Macedonia	:	:	16.4
Albania	:	:	10.7
Serbia	:	16.7	9.6
Turkey	7.3	9.9	8.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	18.1

Source: Distribution of non-formal education and training activities by provider, Eurostat, state on 04/28/2022.

In 2016, 7.8% of available forms of non-formal education and training on the EU education market were provided by formal educational institutions. The greatest number of educational services from this type of entities was observed in countries such as: Finland, Lithuania, and Denmark. The lowest availability of services offered by formal educational institutions was in Bulgaria, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

In the next step, let's see how the availability of non-formal forms of education and training looked like in the case of non-formal institutions.

Table 15 Availability of non-formal forms of education and training offered by non-formal education and training institutions (percentage).

GEO / TIME	non-formal education and training institutions		
	2007	2011	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	17.5	18.1	19.3
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	16.6	17.7	17.7
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	15.1	16.8	18.3
Belgium	7.3	7.7	11.3
Bulgaria	14.1	11.3	17.5
Czechia	27.9	32.6	35.4
Denmark	:	7.5	15.5

Germany	14.7	14.3	14.3
Estonia	34.4	9.9	24.4
Ireland	:	11.1	14.2
Greece	12.1	15.9	17.9
Spain	26.2	13.5	14.2
France	1.5	23.4	23.0
Croatia	24.2	:	20.3
Italy	8.5	11.1	17.8
Cyprus	19.3	22.2	14.2
Latvia	21.3	22.7	22.9
Lithuania	28.7	25.3	24.3
Luxembourg	:	15.6	22.0
Hungary	32.0	12.9	13.0
Malta	:	17.7	15.8
Netherlands	:	17.5	21.5
Austria	21.8	25.3	25.9
Poland	49.9	53.6	48.7
Portugal	20.9	18.6	21.3
Romania	31.2	35.4	28.6
Slovenia	44.6	45.7	36.7
Slovakia	28.2	25.2	16.5
Finland	10.1	8.9	9.1
Sweden	14.6	10.5	5.1
Norway	:	11.1	12.2
Switzerland	:	17.8	18.7
United Kingdom	8.2	10.7	5.8
North Macedonia	:	:	30.7
Albania	:	:	17.3
Serbia	:	26.3	14.5
Turkey	27.0	36.8	24.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	29.2

Source: Distribution of non-formal education and training activities by provider, Eurostat, state on 04/27/2022.

The result for the European Union hovered above 19%. The greatest availability of non-formal educational institutions and the adult education and training services they offer were in the following countries: Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, France and Romania. The lowest availability of such institutions and services was observed in Sweden and Finland.

Let us also see what the availability of non-formal education related to professional work and financed by employers looked like in the European Union.

Table 16 Availability of non-formal work-related education and training financed by the employer (as a percentage for the entire employed population).

GEO / TIME	2007	2011	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	21.4	28.0	30.4
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	22.0	27.0	31.4

Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	22.0	30.2	33.0
Belgium	25.7	27.0	31.4
Bulgaria	32.8	22.1	20.9
Czechia	31.9	26.7	37.0
Denmark	33.7	43.2	35.1
Germany	32.3	37.5	38.3
Estonia	34.5	36.5	33.7
Ireland	:	:	39.9
Greece	7.6	4.6	5.2
Spain	14.9	24.5	28.0
France	21.4	36.9	34.3
Croatia	13.4	:	23.6
Italy	9.5	20.8	27.1
Cyprus	28.1	29.1	27.7
Latvia	23.3	19.8	33.6
Lithuania	24.2	19.8	17.8
Luxembourg	:	48.1	32.9
Hungary	4.0	29.2	35.2
Malta	19.5	24.6	24.6
Netherlands	33.4	46.2	48.2
Austria	27.1	30.0	41.6
Poland	16.2	15.6	17.6
Portugal	17.6	29.3	35.5
Romania	3.3	4.6	3.4
Slovenia	23.6	22.9	33.1
Slovakia	36.7	32.9	38.6
Finland	38.8	41.2	36.5
Sweden	58.1	55.9	47.8
Norway	44.7	50.7	47.1
Switzerland	32.3	44.9	52.9
United Kingdom	26.7	19.1	39.8
North Macedonia	:	:	7.9
Albania	:	:	5.1
Serbia	:	8.1	11.9
Turkey	6.1	8.0	12.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	4.4

Source: Participation rate in job-related non-formal education and training by type and labor status, Eurostat (04/21/2022).

In 2016, the EU average was 30%. The highest rates were recorded in the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria. The lowest availability of employer-funded education services was observed in Romania and Greece.²⁵

²⁵ See: *The importance of being vocational: challenges and opportunities for VET in the next decade*, Cedefop, ETF, Luxembourg 2020, pp. 6-7.

Continuing our considerations on the financing of adult education and training by employers, let's have a look how the percentage of enterprises providing their employees with vocational courses and training looks like in the EU.

Table 17 Percentage of enterprises providing courses and vocational training to their employees.

GEO / TIME	2005	2010	2015
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	55.6	63.6	70.5
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	59.7	65.7	72.6
Belgium	62.5	77.6	83.9
Bulgaria	28.7	31.2	42.2
Czechia	72.0	72.2	90.6
Denmark	85.3	90.9	86.6
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	69.5	72.8	77.3
Estonia	66.6	67.7	86.1
Ireland	66.9	:	77.4
Greece	21.0	27.8	21.7
Spain	47.1	74.9	86.0
France	73.8	76.1	78.9
Croatia	:	57.1	55.4
Italy	32.2	55.6	60.2
Cyprus	50.7	71.6	69.5
Latvia	36.4	40.4	99.9
Lithuania	46.4	51.9	61.6
Luxembourg	71.8	70.8	77.1
Hungary	49.1	48.7	43.8
Malta	45.6	53.9	61.6
Netherlands	74.7	78.6	85.0
Austria	81.1	86.9	88.1
Poland	34.8	22.5	44.7
Portugal	44.1	64.6	75.0
Romania	40.3	24.1	26.7
Slovenia	72.9	68.0	84.1
Slovakia	60.4	69.0	70.0
Finland	76.7	74.4	83.1
Sweden	78.4	87.0	93.1
Norway	86.0	96.8	99.1
United Kingdom	90.4	80.4	85.7
North Macedonia	:	:	61.9

Source: Enterprises providing training by type of training and size class -% of all enterprises, Eurostat (04/22/2022).

In 2015, over 70% of enterprises in the EU provided their employees with work-related training and vocational courses. The highest index was recorded in countries such as Latvia, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Austria, Denmark and Spain. The lowest rates were observed in Romania, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria.

Differences in educating people over 50 and younger in the European Union.

When discussing the differences in the education of people over 50 and younger in the European Union, let us start by analyzing the percentage of people aged 25-34 and 55-64 participating in formal or non-formal education and training.

Table 18 Percentage of people aged 25-34 and 55-64 participating in formal or non-formal education and training.

GEO / TIME	People aged 25-34			People aged 55-64		
	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	42.2	48.5	52.2	18.5	26.0	31.6
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	44.1	47.8	53.2	20.8	26.1	32.4
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	44.6	52.4	57.0	19.8	29.1	35.5
Belgium	56.3	49.5	59.3	23.5	19.9	29.2
Bulgaria	44.7	31.0	29.6	20.3	15.1	14.7
Czechia	44.1	44.2	51.9	21.7	20.4	29.1
Denmark	57.2	68.4	61.0	28.6	45.5	37.0
Germany	53.3	57.4	57.4	28.2	38.6	43.9
Estonia	52.5	64.5	52.9	27.5	32.6	30.4
Ireland	:	29.2	63.5	:	16.4	40.3
Greece	22.7	20.3	28.8	5.1	3.1	5.8
Spain	39.7	47.8	55.6	17.0	23.2	29.1
France	48.2	61.1	61.1	16.2	32.8	35.1
Croatia	33.5	:	44.0	9.0	:	15.7
Italy	30.5	43.0	49.8	11.8	22.3	33.0
Cyprus	53.2	50.2	57.9	20.1	27.8	29.9
Latvia	39.0	38.0	56.9	21.8	19.7	34.1
Lithuania	42.7	37.3	36.1	19.0	16.2	19.2
Luxembourg	:	81.4	58.5	:	49.4	29.8
Hungary	15.8	51.8	63.2	2.5	21.7	38.2
Malta	50.4	43.7	48.5	16.2	20.1	19.8
Netherlands	59.7	72.4	73.9	28.7	38.2	51.4
Austria	47.1	55.4	69.3	25.4	35.7	41.3
Poland	34.1	36.0	33.8	6.8	9.6	13.4
Portugal	40.3	59.9	60.3	10.9	21.9	28.6
Romania	14.0	13.1	13.9	2.5	2.0	1.5
Slovenia	52.1	43.3	56.4	22.2	22.8	27.3
Slovakia	51.0	49.4	54.3	23.8	21.9	30.3
Finland	66.0	65.8	67.6	37.8	35.5	34.3
Sweden	81.0	78.7	69.7	60.6	57.5	54.7
Norway	65.0	71.5	69.2	41.2	40.6	47.0
Switzerland	55.4	73.0	79.6	36.8	54.0	57.4
United Kingdom	58.8	42.6	60.3	37.0	26.5	39.0
North Macedonia	:	:	20.6	:	:	5.4

Albania	:	:	17.3	:	:	3.5
Serbia	:	27.4	29.2	:	5.9	7.4
Turkey	21.1	26.8	31.2	4.4	5.5	6.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	25.6	:	:	2.7

Source: Participation rate in education and training by age, Eurostat (04/25/2022).

As we can see in 2016, for the entire EU, the participation rate in formal or non-formal education and training for people aged 25-34 was 52%, and for older people aged 55-64 only 31% (a difference of 21 percentage points). We are seeing the same trend in every EU country. The percentage of people participating in formal or non-formal education and training decreases with age.

In the next step, let's see how age influences participation in informal education and training.

Table 19 Percentage of people aged 25-34 and 55-64 participating in informal training and education.

GEO / TIME	People aged 25-34		People aged 55-64	
	2007	2016	2007	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	47.0	63.7	33.7	54.1
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	48.1	64.1	35.2	55.4
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	50.5	66.3	36.8	57.5
Belgium	42.4	71.5	25.3	55.1
Bulgaria	34.8	58.3	18.6	42.8
Czechia	59.4	76.6	47.7	61.7
Denmark	:	81.1	:	61.6
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	53.8	44.3	45.7	44.3
Estonia	48.5	83.7	40.3	72.6
Ireland	:	69.3	:	54.8
Greece	24.6	58.0	11.7	35.1
Spain	33.0	66.3	20.3	51.4
France	72.9	73.5	54.4	61.4
Croatia	53.4	94.9	35.4	87.8
Italy	49.6	77.4	29.5	71.3
Cyprus	71.3	97.9	55.7	92.9
Latvia	55.8	87.2	51.5	75.9
Lithuania	53.4	29.4	30.9	16.0
Luxembourg	:	77.4	:	59.0
Hungary	33.7	46.0	17.4	33.3
Malta	42.0	46.8	38.9	35.6
Netherlands	:	80.2	:	67.7
Austria	77.1	83.8	68.8	73.1
Poland	31.3	35.6	17.1	24.3
Portugal	50.6	94.2	25.8	80.6
Romania	24.1	72.1	12.6	50.8
Slovenia	72.1	74.2	50.1	57.1
Slovakia	87.6	76.3	79.9	67.0
Finland	61.0	79.0	47.8	57.3
Sweden	80.7	79.1	71.1	77.1

Norway	74.0	85.1	67.1	80.5
Switzerland	66.4	50.7	60.9	37.2
United Kingdom	56.3	66.9	46.1	67.6
North Macedonia	:	74.5	:	62.1
Albania	:	74.0	:	62.0
Serbia	:	93.4	:	84.6
Turkey	35.9	39.6	21.3	22.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	81.1	:	69.7

Source: Participation rate in informal learning by learning form and age, Eurostat, state on 04/26/2022.

The same negative trend is also observed here. Participation in informal learning declines with age. While in 2016 for the group of people aged 25-34, the ratio was 63%, for the age group 55-64 it was only 54%. The lower share of people over 50 compared to younger people in informal education and training is a constant trend in all Member States.

In the next step, let's see how age influences the search for information on available forms of lifelong learning and training.

Table 20 Percentage of people aged 25-34 and 55-64 seeking information on education and training opportunities (percent).

GEO / TIME	People aged 25-34			People aged 55-64		
	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	27.8	29.9	30.2	10.1	10.6	11.2
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	32.5	34.6	30.3	14.7	16.5	12.1
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	28.0	32.5	32.9	11.1	12.1	12.3
Belgium	35.5	32.0	:	12.2	7.5	:
Bulgaria	20.2	13.7	9.0	5.8	2.0	2.8
Czechia	:	26.5	20.9	:	10.6	9.3
Denmark	:	52.1	61.6	:	31.9	30.9
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	22.3	28.7	25.6	10.9	15.6	12.1
Estonia	:	35.0	43.1	:	7.4	14.0
Ireland	:	25.6	36.2	:	11.9	17.6
Greece	14.6	15.4	18.9	2.5	2.6	1.7
Spain	30.4	35.8	45.0	10.4	11.8	15.3
France	:	38.8	37.3	:	12.6	13.1
Croatia	32.1	:	31.2	9.0	:	7.5
Italy	15.8	25.4	25.4	3.3	8.3	7.9
Cyprus	29.2	27.5	23.4	9.6	6.7	8.7
Latvia	35.2	31.2	36.7	9.7	12.8	14.1
Lithuania	24.0	20.0	15.4	4.4	5.9	3.9
Luxembourg	:	55.4	51.6	:	34.2	21.3
Hungary	13.4	20.2	19.5	2.5	5.1	5.4
Malta	:	30.6	27.3	:	12.1	9.9
Netherlands	73.5	45.2	55.1	39.7	13.4	23.0
Austria	38.1	28.9	49.4	18.5	13.2	22.9
Poland	29.0	25.4	20.7	6.3	3.8	5.6
Portugal	29.1	44.0	40.0	6.3	12.7	12.2

Romania	21.6	4.4	8.7	6.1	:	1.4
Slovenia	38.8	31.1	43.2	10.1	12.3	28.5
Slovakia	45.2	33.3	29.2	23.8	11.3	13.9
Finland	55.1	55.6	58.6	22.2	23.6	20.3
Sweden	49.4	48.0	52.7	17.9	14.0	22.6
Norway	:	35.2	49.9	:	10.1	21.6
Switzerland	:	45.3	47.4	:	19.7	19.4
United Kingdom	63.5	73.0	31.1	41.8	64.5	20.9
North Macedonia	:	:	15.7	:	:	2.3
Albania	:	:	16.7	:	:	1.9
Serbia	:	21.4	27.1	:	3.4	4.9
Turkey	13.3	13.3	10.1	2.5	1.8	1.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	22.0	:	:	2.0

Source: Learning possibilities by type of learning and age, Eurostat, state on 04/27/2022.

In 2016, across the EU, over 30% of people aged 25-34 searched for information on available education and training opportunities. Among the group of people aged 55-64, this indicator was only 11%. We have noticed a declining interest in seeking lifelong learning opportunities in all EU countries with age.

In the last step of the analysis, let's see how age influences the time spent by an adult on lifelong learning and training.

Table 21 Number of hours per year spent on participation in education and training in the 25-34 and 55-64 age groups.

GEO / TIME	People aged 25-34			People aged 55-64		
	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016
European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)	216	207	207	77	76	63
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	200	207	203	68	83	65
Euro area - 19 countries (from 2015)	211	209	210	79	77	65
Belgium	225	158	180	115	79	67
Bulgaria	163	184	183	35	36	51
Czechia	156	148	92	46	48	29
Denmark	326	256	303	118	106	81
Germany (until 1990 former territory of the FRG)	294	274	279	76	79	52
Estonia	160	161	185	50	60	51
Ireland	:	296	129	:	112	45
Greece	184	298	248	88	68	76
Spain	225	255	232	131	107	90
France	122	147	160	72	64	65
Croatia	181	:	169	83	:	45
Italy	205	174	202	50	63	76
Cyprus	140	124	79	66	54	40
Latvia	251	218	168	86	105	80
Lithuania	200	140	89	70	46	46
Luxembourg	:	128	228	:	81	66
Hungary	316	103	135	73	48	56

Malta	13	149	132	14	79	130
Netherlands	64	148	129	57	83	63
Austria	220	215	219	79	76	57
Poland	241	203	222	89	73	56
Portugal	296	255	234	105	119	72
Romania	289	139	144	55	67	32
Slovenia	176	140	252	56	80	126
Slovakia	146	120	72	41	44	35
Finland	239	227	235	90	85	61
Sweden	252	291	236	68	91	58
Norway	213	106	139	71	56	45
Switzerland	66	205	227	50	84	75
United Kingdom	110	212	177	37	142	82
North Macedonia	:	:	74	:	:	48
Albania	:	:	228	:	:	51
Serbia	:	245	137	:	57	29
Turkey	135	282	173	85	326	174
Bosnia and Herzegovina	:	:	230	:	:	45

Source: Mean instruction hours spent by participant in education and training by age, Eurostat (04/26/2022).

While in 2016 people aged 25-34 spent an average of 207 hours per year on participation in all forms of lifelong learning and training, people aged 55-64 spent only 63 hours. The unfavorable trend could be observed in all EU countries. People over 50 have spent around 1/3 of their time on education and training compared to younger people.

Conclusions and recommendations

Lifelong learning, including the acquisition and improvement of key competences by adults, is the driving force of social and economic progress in the European Union. It not only translates into better career opportunities for Europeans, but also affects the personal development and well-being of people.

Lifelong learning is an opportunity to overcome the social and economic difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate the digital and ecologically sustainable transformation of the European economy and society.

In the conditions of global economic competition, advancing technological and technical changes, occurring crises and economic shocks, adult Europeans must constantly improve their key competences and skills.

European Union policy gives everyone in the EU the right to inclusive, high-quality education, training and lifelong learning.

The EU target by 2030 is for 60% of adult Europeans to participate in education or training each year.

The participation of adults in education and training differs from one EU country to another. A common feature is that most of the learning activities in which adults participate are non-formal.

Adult participation in education and training is unevenly spread across the EU, with the Nordic and some Western European countries having significantly higher participation rates than the EU average.

EU Member States must develop education and training systems to identify and target the most vulnerable socio-economic groups of citizens and encourage them to participate in education and training, especially in key competences / basic skills. These groups of citizens include people over 50.

In 2019, less than a third of European countries met the EU 2020 benchmark of 15% adult participation in education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey.

In 2019, 21.6% of European adults aged 25-64 (i.e. 51.5 million) did not complete upper secondary education (ISCED 3; EQF 3 or 4). Of these, 12.5 million left the education system with education below lower secondary school.

People in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups have a higher level of education than the older population (people 50+).

Southern European countries are most affected by low levels of education among the adult population.

Low-skilled adult Europeans participate less in education and training than those with a higher level of education.

People aged 50+ with a low level of basic competences or qualifications belong to the most disadvantaged groups on the labor market and in society.

A large proportion of adult Europeans (depending on the country from 15% to 57%) have a low level of key competences in literacy (reading and writing), numeracy or digital skills.

Between 8% and 39% of adults are low achievers in both literacy and numeracy (EU average 16.0%).

On average, around 40% of adults in the EU are at risk of digital exclusion: i.e. either have low or no digital skills, or do not use the internet or use it in a very limited way.

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