

Participation of young people in education and the labour market

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in December 2025

Planned article update: January 2027

Highlights

In the EU, the Netherlands had the highest share of young people aged 15-34 who were both in formal education and in the labour market (36.4%), while Romania had the lowest (1.2%). In 2024, among people aged 15-29 in the EU, 16.2% of women were not in formal education or training or in the labour force, compared to 6.9% of men. This article focuses on young people's participation in **formal education or training** and in the **labour market** in the **European Union (EU)** as a whole and in each of the **27 EU countries**.

For young people, participation in formal education and in the labour market can be interconnected in various ways and not limited to a simple transition from school to work. Some young people combine both, for example through part-time, weekend or student jobs while studying. This leads to participating in education and the labour market at the same time, resulting in some overlaps. Recognising these overlapping activities is important when interpreting and assessing youth participation in the labour market and unemployment.

Participation of young people in formal education and in the labour market

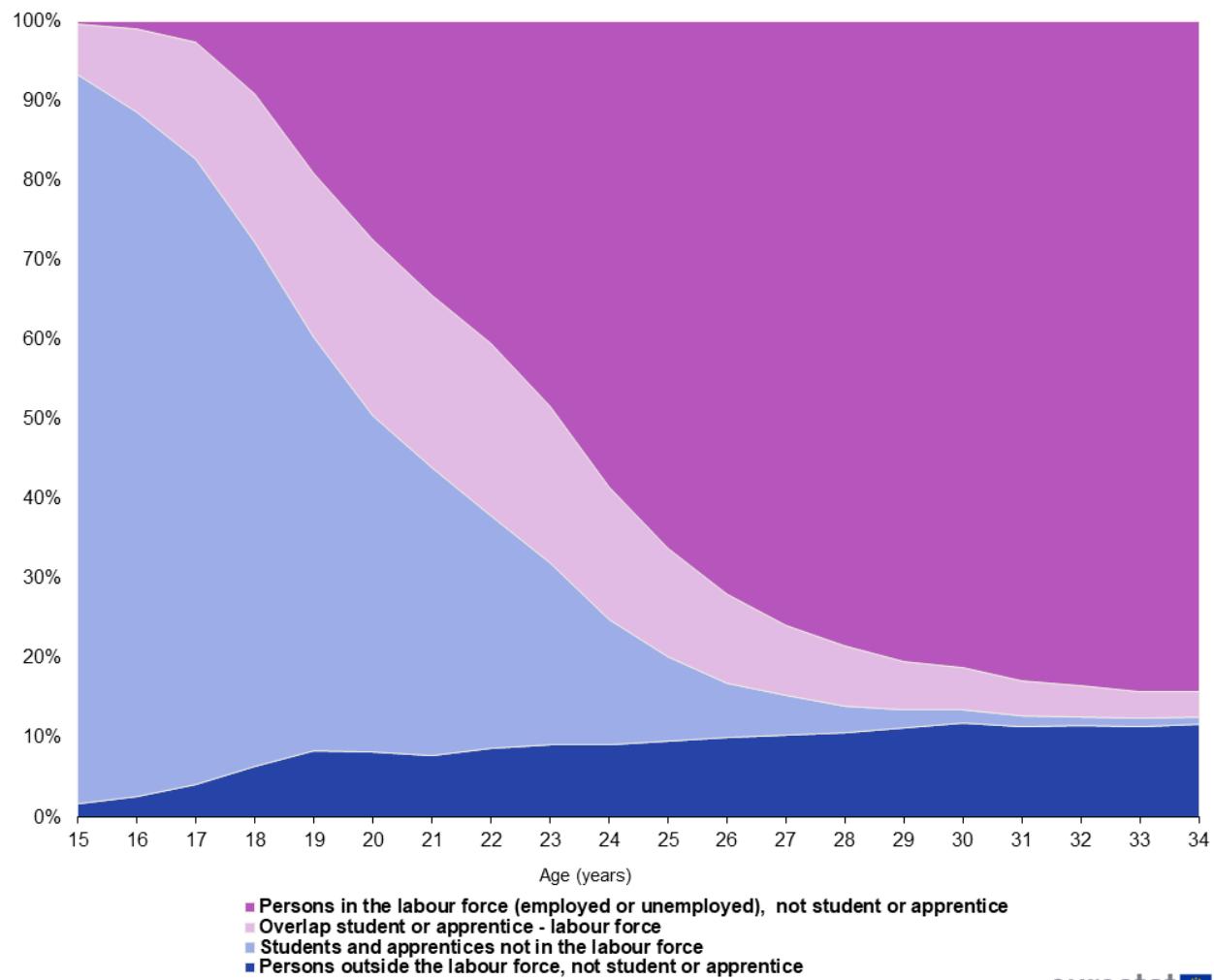
Figure 1 shows the shares of young people aged 15 to 34 who are in formal education and in the labour market.

- individuals **employed** or **unemployed** are classified as being in the labour force and are shown in purple
- people who participated in formal education or training in the previous 4 weeks are considered students or apprentices (not part of the labour force) and are shown in light blue
- young people who are simultaneously engaged in formal education and the labour market are represented in pink
- people who are outside the labour force are represented in blue (either dark or light blue)

Note that people who only participated in non-formal training, such as courses, seminars or private lessons, are not included and might fall into either 'Persons outside the labour force and outside formal education' or 'Persons in the labour force and in formal education' categories¹.

¹For the purpose of this article, the definition of people neither in education nor in employment is different from the one for **NEET** where people both in formal and/or in non-formal education and training are considered as being in education or training (for more information on this category of young people, refer to the article '[Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training](#) ').

Structure of young people in the population in formal education and in the labour force by age, EU, 2024
 (% of the population in formal education, people aged 15 to 34)



Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

eurostat

Figure 1: Structure of young people in the population in formal education and in the labour force by age, EU, 2024 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

In 2024 a decrease in the share of young people in formal education can be observed, from 97.9% at age 15 to 4.1% at age 34 (regardless of their labour force status). The pace at which young people leave education differs from the pace at which they enter the labour force. This is because some young people are in education and in the labour force at the same time, while others finish their education and stay outside the labour force. The difference could be influenced by national education and training systems, as well as factors such as national labour market characteristics and cultural determinants.

The overlaps between participation in education and the labour force reflect a wide range of situations. For some young people, employment plays a secondary role to education, for example, students who work just a few hours a week, such as at weekends or in the evenings after classes. Others combine work and formal education at the same time. In some cases, education is secondary to employment, for example, when people take classes after work to obtain a qualification.

There are also situations where the same activity counts as both education and employment, e.g. apprenticeships, paid traineeships (when part of a formal education programme)² or specific vocational training phases integrated into some higher education study programmes. In line with the [EU labour force survey \(EU-LFS\) definitions](#), paid

²Apprentices and trainees have been defined in detail in the [EU Labour Force Survey Explanatory Notes](#) in line with the regulations in force from 1 January 2021.

trainees are classified as employed, but unpaid trainees are not.

At age 15, the share of young people simultaneously engaged in formal education and the labour market is 6.2% and drops to 3.2% by age 34.

There is a peak among young people in their early twenties where more than 20% are engaged in both (19-22 years).

The status of young people in the labour force can be further broken down to make a clear distinction between those who are employed and those who are unemployed. For instance, in Figure 2

- all unemployed people are shown in yellow (student or apprentice) and brown (neither a student nor apprentice)
- all employed people are shown in pink
- all people outside the labour force are shown in blue (light blue for students or apprentices and dark blue for those who are neither students nor apprentices)

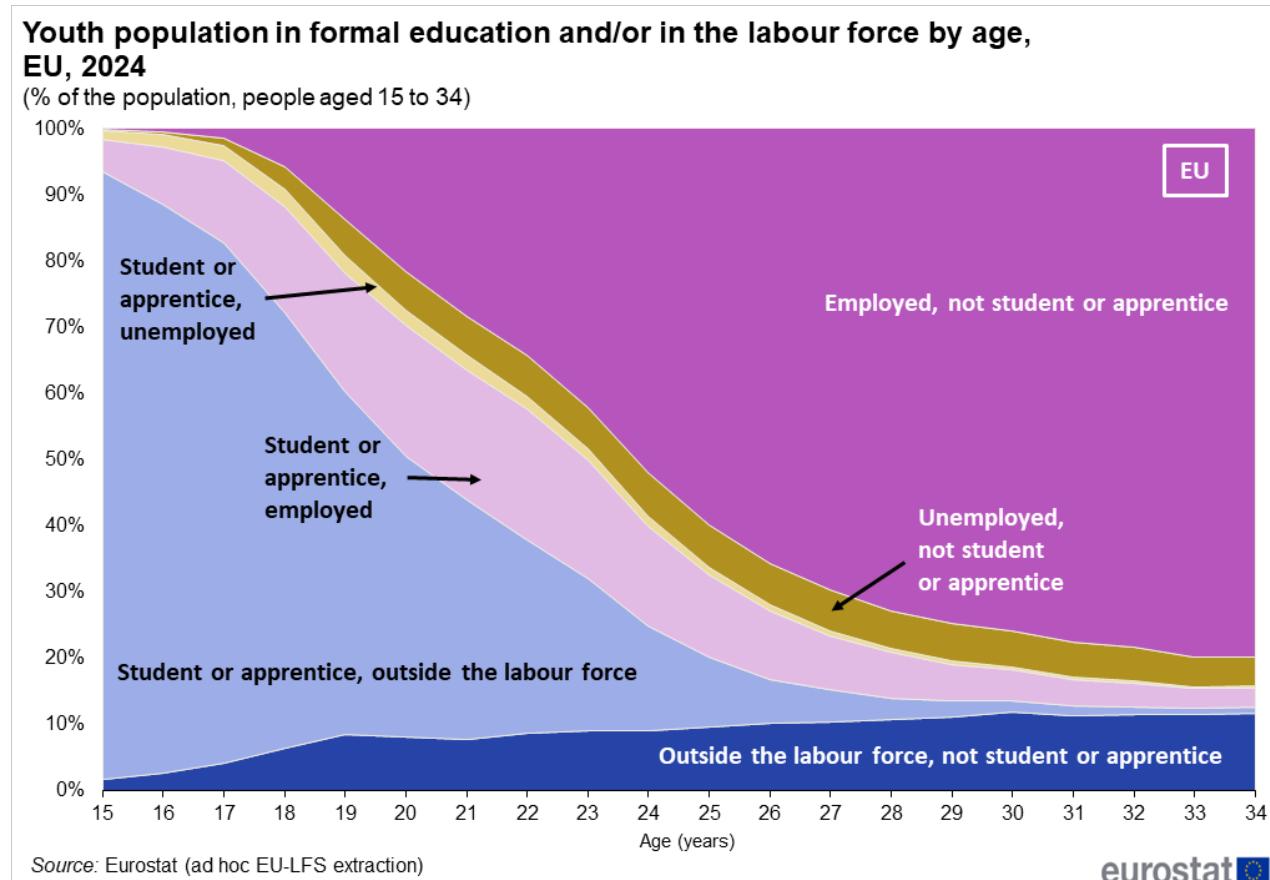


Figure 2: Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force by age, EU, 2024 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

In the EU, the share of young people who are simultaneously employed and in education peaks at age 20-22, at 19.7%. At the same age, around 6.0% of young people are employed but not in education. A significant increase is observed among those employed but not in formal education as age increases, particularly from age 24 onwards, where employment rates exceed 50%, reaching 79.8% by age 34.

The percentage of young people who are unemployed while in education remains consistently low across all age groups, peaking at 2.7% around ages 18-19 before decreasing. A substantial portion of young people are outside the labour force while in education, especially in their early teens, with a gradual decline from 91.7% at age 15 to 0.9% at age 34. Meanwhile, the share of those not in education and outside the labour force shows an increasing

trend, from 1.7% at age 15 to 11.7% by age 34.

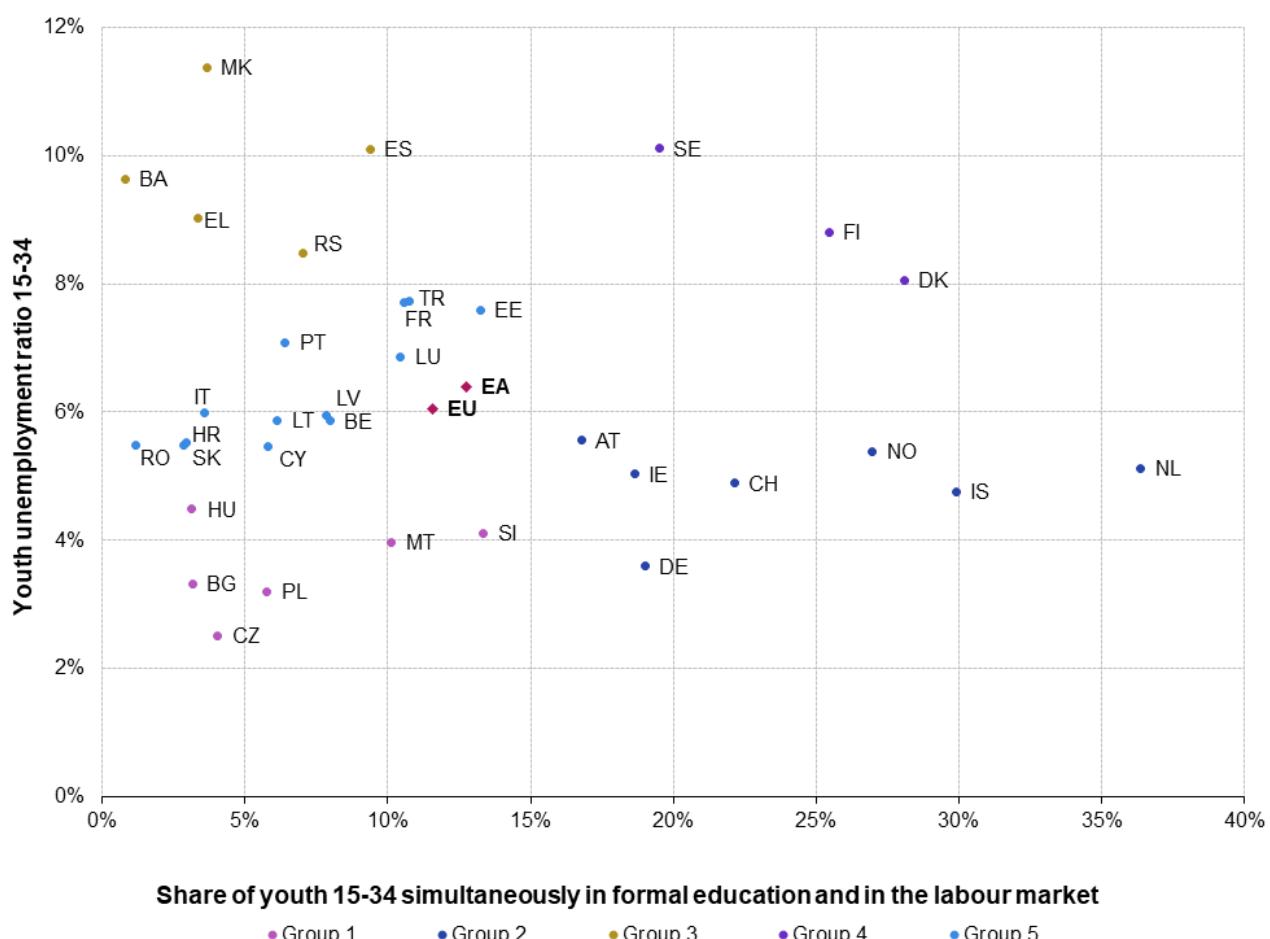
Differences across the EU

Young people's participation in the labour market varies across EU countries. The reason appears to reflect a mix of factors, including the availability of opportunities to work while studying and the differences in national education and training systems. For more details, see [Eurydice - Description of national educational systems and policies](#).

Each country has different characteristics and results, but it is possible to group countries based on certain similarities. Figure 3 shows how countries compare based on 2 indicators for the 15-34 age group. The first indicator is the share of those who are simultaneously in education and in the labour market (horizontal axis), including those who are employed or looking for a job while studying. The second indicator is the level of [youth unemployment](#), measured in terms of the youth unemployment ratio (vertical axis), which describes those who are available for work and still looking for a job. Figure 3 highlights 5 groups of countries, which are described below.

Country grouping according to youth unemployment ratio and share of youth in education and labour market, 2024

(% of the population, people aged 15 to 34)



Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

eurostat

Figure 3: Country grouping according to the structure of young people in the population, 2024 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

Group 1 comprises countries where the share of young people simultaneously participating in formal education and the labour market is generally low compared to other countries. This group also features low youth unemployment ratios (all below the EU average of 6.1%). In Group 1, Slovenia has the highest proportion of young people in education and the labour market at 13.3% (and the only country in the group above the EU average of 11.6%). Bulgaria and Hungary are at the lower end at only 3.1%. Youth unemployment ratios in Group 1 show Czechia having the lowest at 2.5%, while Hungary reports a higher unemployment ratio of 4.5%.

In Group 2, countries have a relatively high share of young people who are simultaneously engaged in formal education and in the labour market, although there are significant differences within the group. Simultaneous participation in education and the labour market is coupled with moderate youth unemployment ratios in this group. In the Netherlands, 36.4% of young people are in both formal education and the labour market, which is the highest in the EU. Germany and Ireland have high participation rates as well, at 19.0% and 18.7% of young people in education and employment, respectively. Youth unemployment ratios in Group 2 range from 3.6% (Germany) to 5.6% (Austria).

Group 3 contains countries where the youth unemployment ratio is higher than the EU average and simultaneous participation in education and the labour market is generally lower than the EU average (11.6%). Spain and Greece show lower dual participation percentages, at 9.4% and 3.4%, respectively. Both countries show a high youth unemployment ratios, with Spain at 10.1% and Greece at 9.0%.

Group 4 has countries with relatively high shares of young people simultaneously in formal education and in the labour market, combined with unemployment ratios above the EU average. Denmark has the highest share of young people balancing education and employment (28.1%), followed by Finland (25.4%) and Sweden (19.5%). Despite the high dual participation, all 3 countries have higher youth unemployment ratios compared to the EU average (6.1%): 8.0% for Denmark, 8.8% for Finland and 10.1% for Sweden.

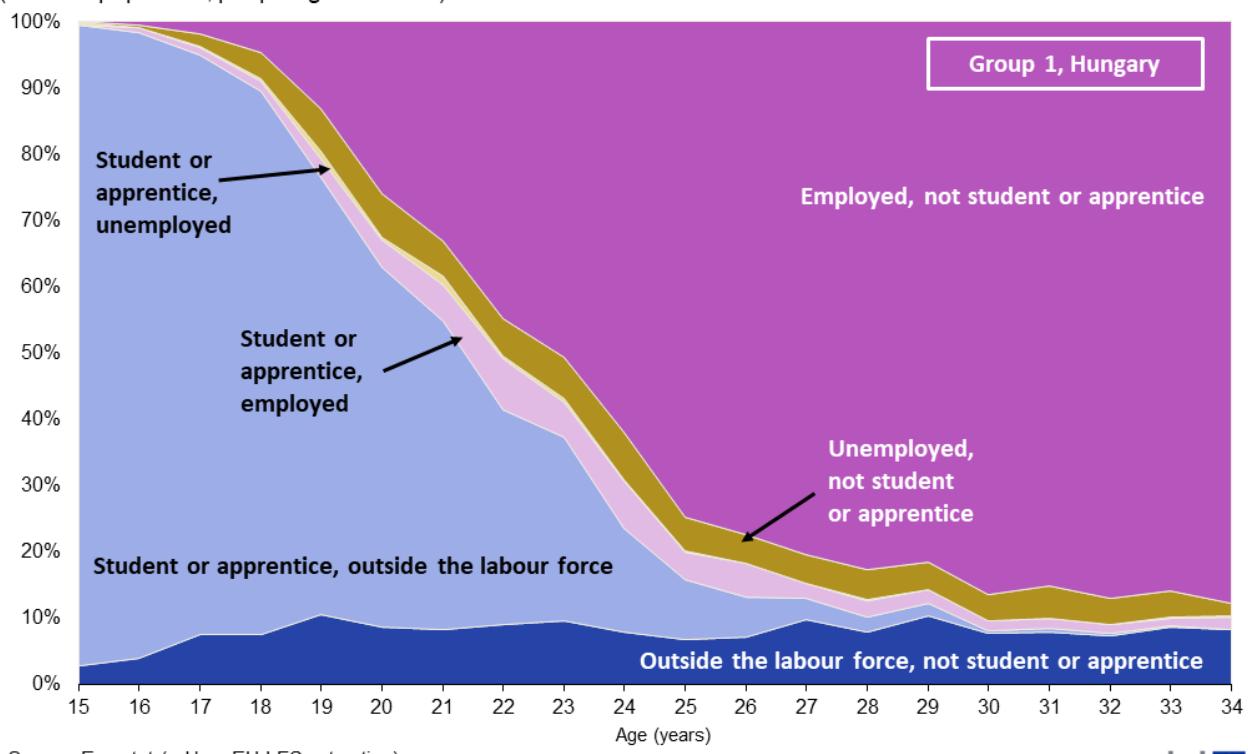
In Group 5, the shares of young people in both formal education and the labour market are generally below the EU average (11.6%), except for Estonia (13.2%). Youth unemployment ratios in Group 5 are more varied and generally closer to the EU average. Croatia, Cyprus, Slovakia and Romania all have the same youth unemployment ratio of 5.5%. However, France (7.7%), Estonia (7.6%), Portugal (7.1%) and Luxembourg (6.9%) exhibit slightly higher unemployment rates, above the EU average (6.1%). In this group, Romania has the lowest percentage of young people in both formal education and the labour market, at only 1.2%.

The following charts illustrate the situation in certain countries, representing their respective groups.

Group 1: These countries have a low share of young people simultaneously in formal education and the labour market, and youth unemployment ratios are below the EU average (except Slovenia). **Hungary** is shown in Figure 4 as an example with the youth where the share of young people simultaneously in formal education and the labour market is 3.1%, and the unemployment rate is 4.5%. At age 19, 13.2% of young people not in formal education are employed, but this percentage increases to 87.8% by age 34.

Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force by age, Hungary, 2024

(% of the population, people aged 15 to 34)



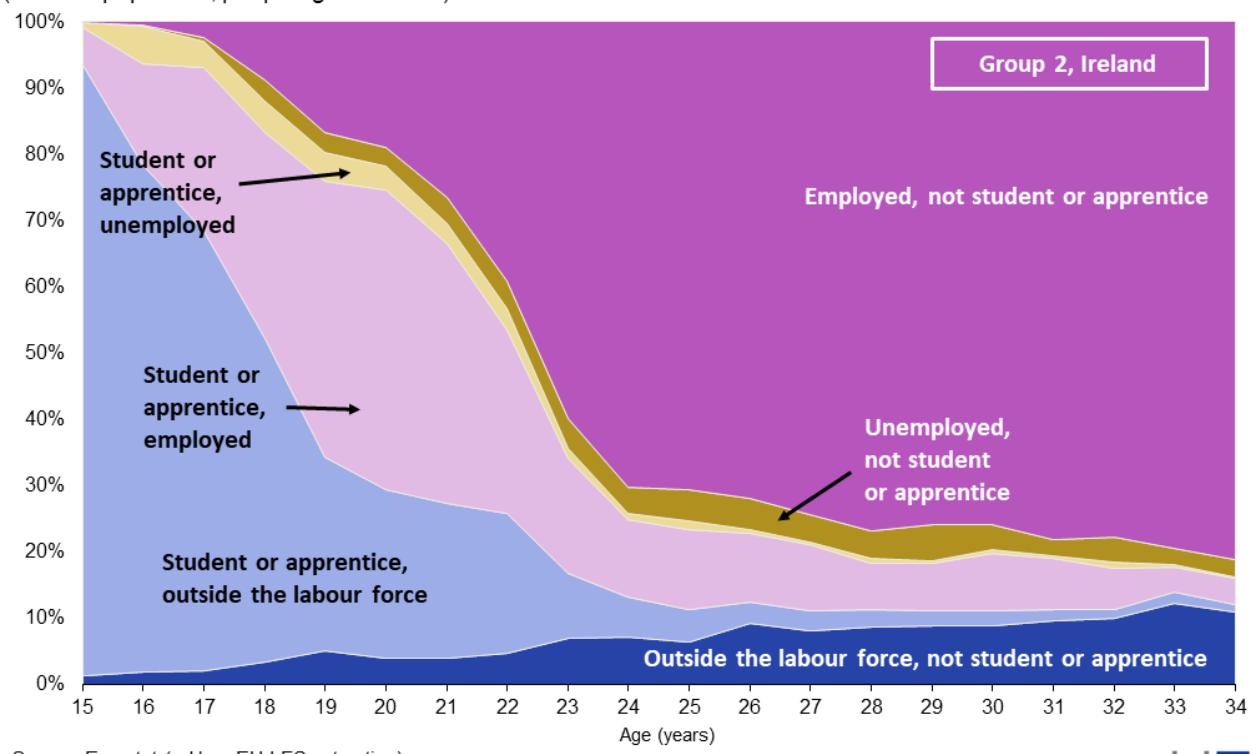
Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

eurostat

Figure 4: Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force, Hungary, 2024 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

Group 2: These countries have a high participation of young people in education and the labour market with unemployment ratios below the EU average. In **Ireland** (see Figure 5), the share of young people simultaneously in formal education and in the labour market is 18.7%, and the unemployment rate is 5.0%. Employment among young people in formal education starts at 5.7% at age 15 and peaks at 45.2% by age 20.

Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force by age, Ireland, 2024
 (% of the population, people aged 15 to 34)



Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

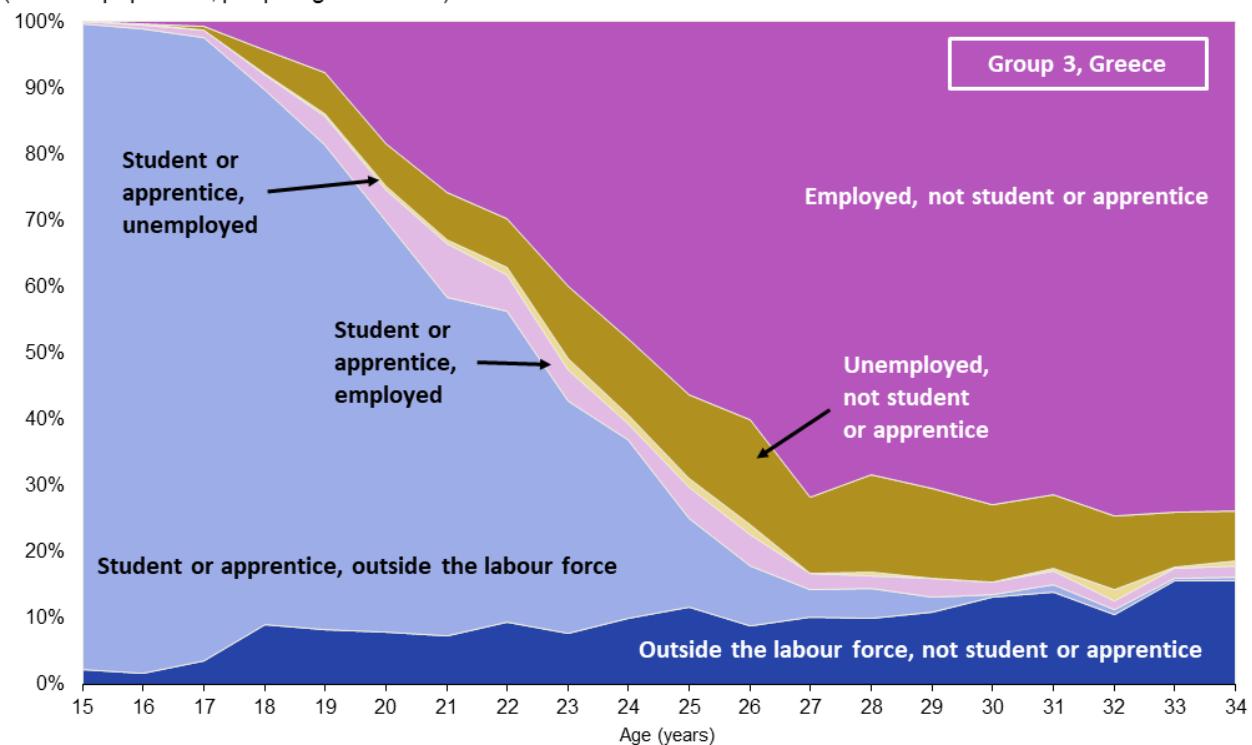
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Figure 5: Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force, Ireland, 2024 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

Group 3: These countries have a relatively high level of youth unemployment and a low share of young people participating in education and the labour force. **Greece** serves as an example for Group 3, where youth unemployment is particularly high (9.0%) and only 3.4% of young people are in both education and the labour market (see Figure 6). For young people simultaneously participating in formal education and the labour market the employment rate starts at 0.3% at age 15 and peaking at 8.0% by age 21. Meanwhile, unemployment only fluctuates slightly, staying largely under 2.0% across all age groups.

Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force by age, Greece, 2024

(% of the population, people aged 15 to 34)



Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

eurostat

Figure 6: Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force, Greece, 2024 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

Group 4: These countries have a high share of young people in education and the labour force and a high level of youth unemployment. **Finland** is shown in Figure 7 as an example; it has an unemployment ratio of 8.8%, and a substantial 25.4% of young people are simultaneously participating in formal education and the labour market. At age 15, the share of young people in formal education who are outside the labour force stands at 79.5%, while 12.6% are employed and 5.6% unemployed. These values change with age: by age 22, the share outside the labour force falls to 20.2%, while employment rises to 33.8% and unemployment to 5.3%. By age 34, only 3.8% of those in formal education are outside the labour force, 12.4% are employed and 1.3% are unemployed.

Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force by age, Finland, 2024
 (% of the population, people aged 15 to 34)

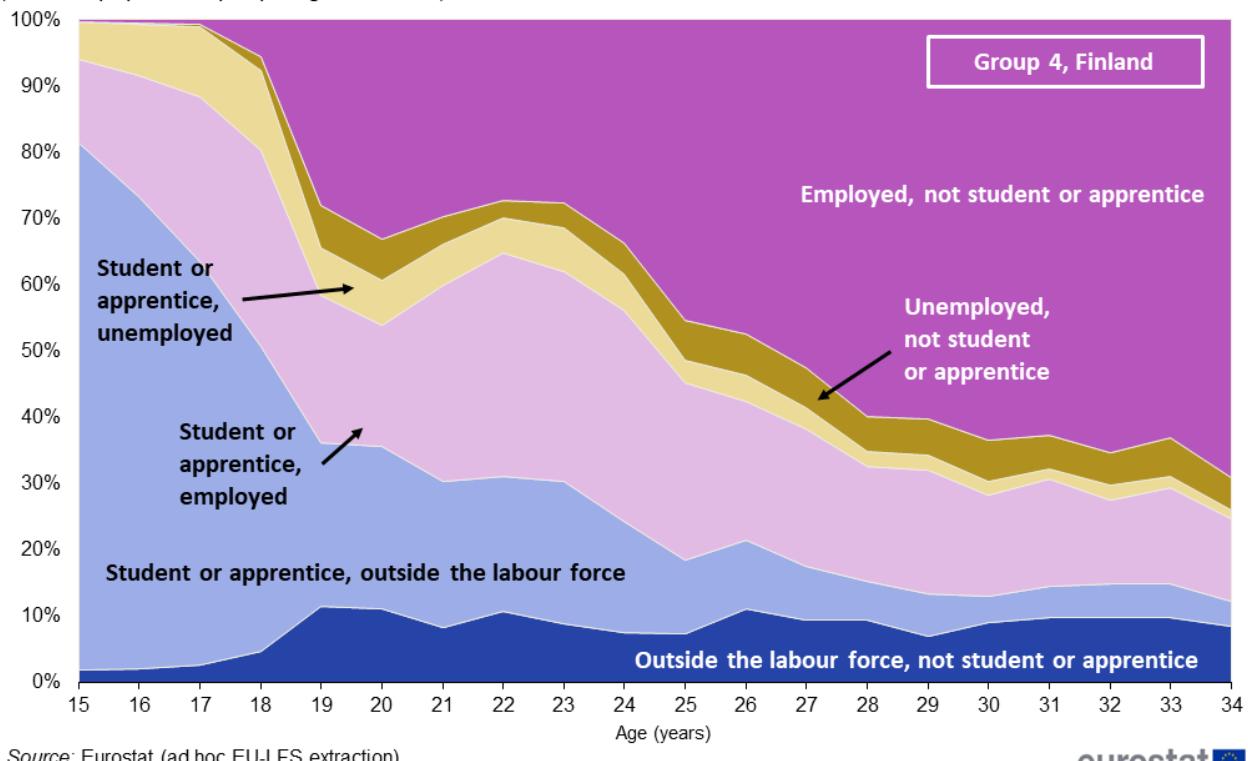
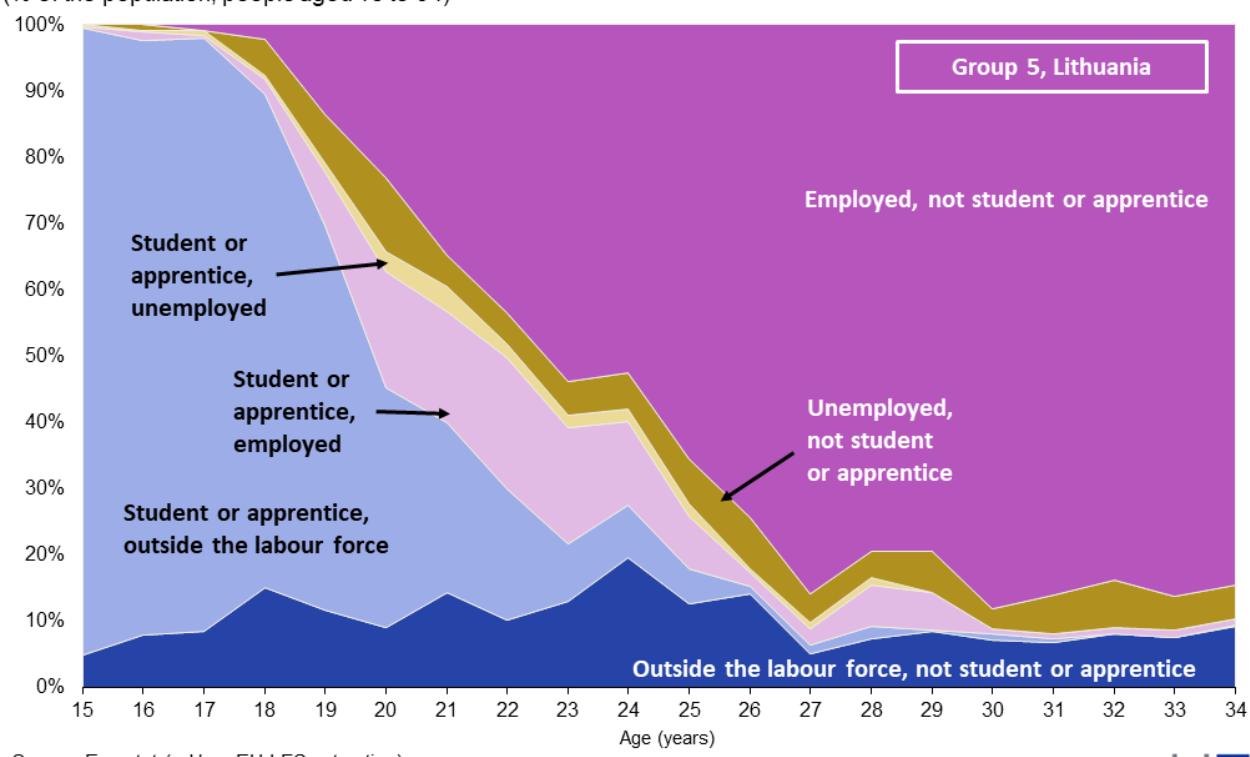


Figure 7: Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force, Finland, 2024 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

Group 5: These countries have lower shares than the EU average for young people in both education and the labour market. The [unemployment ratios](#) are close to the EU average. **Lithuania** is a good example in this group, with a youth unemployment ratio of 5.9% and a labour market participation share for students or apprentices of 6.1%. For young people simultaneously participating in formal education and the labour market the employment rate starts at 0.2% at age 15 and peaking at 19.8% by age 22. By age 34, only 0.9% of those in formal education are employed.

Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force by age, Lithuania, 2024

(% of the population, people aged 15 to 34)



Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

eurostat

Figure 8: Young people in formal education and/or in the labour force, Lithuania, 2024 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

Figure 9 presents the labour status distribution of young people aged 15 to 29 who were in formal education in 2024. The Netherlands has the highest proportion (74.3%) of young people in formal education who are also employed, and it has the lowest proportion of students/apprentices outside the labour market (18.7%). By contrast, Romania has the lowest percentage of young people in formal education that are employed (2.4%) and the highest percentage of young people in formal education who are outside the labour force (97.0%). However, Romania has the lowest **unemployment rate** for students in formal education (0.6%). Notably, Sweden has the highest proportion of young people in formal education who are unemployed, at 14.1%.

Figure 9

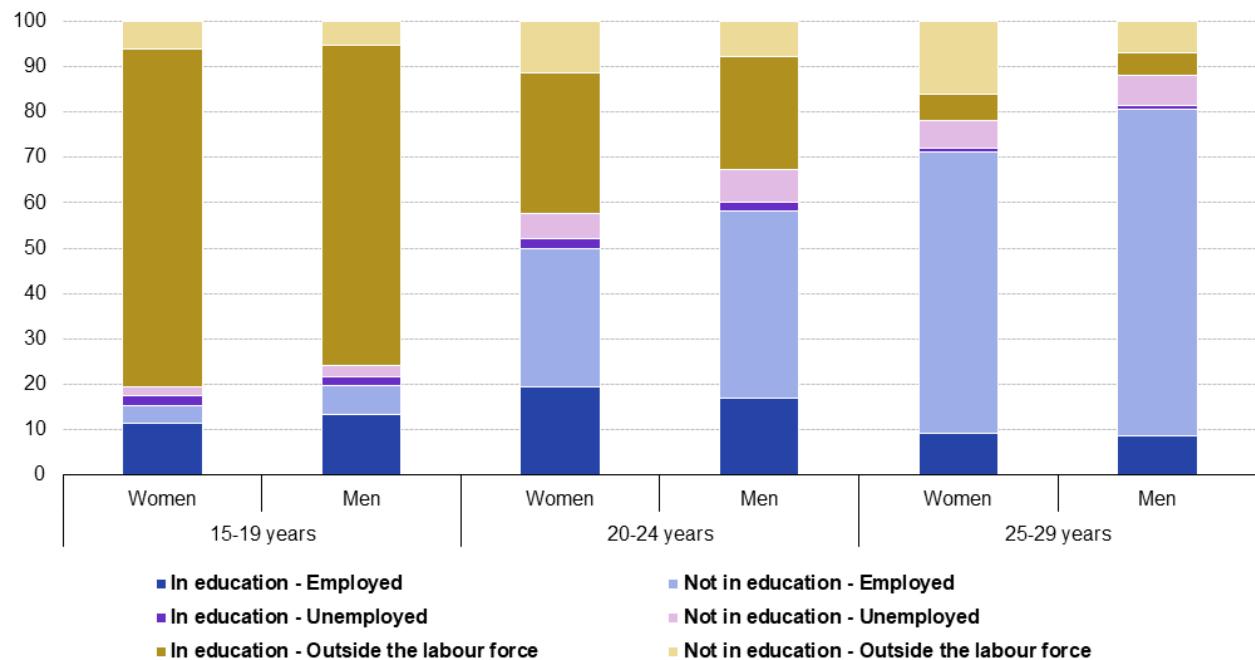
Differences between men and women

Figure 10 illustrates the participation of young people in formal education and/or the labour market, broken down by sex and age across the EU in 2024.

Among the 15-19 age group, a notable proportion of both women and men remain outside the labour force while in education, with 74.4% of women and 70.4% of men doing so. This shows that young people predominantly focus on education during their early years. As they move to the 20-24 age group, the proportion outside the labour force falls to 30.9% for women and 24.8% for men, indicating greater integration into the labour market alongside educational activities. The percentage of young people employed while in education increases to 19.6% for women and 17.0% for men during these years. For young people aged 25-29, there is a notable shift among those no longer in formal education. Employment reaches 62.0% for women and 71.9% for men, which may reflect a greater transition into the workforce as education is completed. Women outside the labour force and not in formal education outnumber men, accounting for 16.2% compared to 6.9%.

In conclusion, the 2024 data indicate that women tend to participate in formal education more than men across all age groups and employment statuses. However, when not in education, women are less likely to be employed or seeking employment, as reflected in their lower employment rates and higher shares of inactivity compared to men.

Young people by participation in formal education and/or the labour market, sex and age, EU, 2024
 (% of the population in each age group)



Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

eurostat

Figure 10: Young people by participation in formal education and/or the labour market, sex and age, EU, 2024
 Source: Eurostat (ad hoc EU-LFS extraction)

Source data for tables and graphs

- Participation of young people in education and the labour market: 2024 Data and figures

Methods and definitions

Data sources

All figures in this article are based on the [European labour force survey \(EU-LFS\)](#).

Source: The European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) is the largest European household sample survey providing quarterly and annual results on labour participation of people aged 15 years and over and on people outside the labour force. It covers residents in private households. It does not include conscripts in military or community service in its results. The EU-LFS targets the same populations and uses the same definitions in all countries, which means that the results are comparable among the countries. The EU-LFS is an important source of information about the situation and trends in the national and EU labour markets. Each quarter around 1.2 million interviews are conducted throughout the participating countries to obtain statistical information for some 100 variables. Its diversity of information and large sample size also make the EU-LFS an important source for other European or regional statistics on subjects like education.

Reference period: Yearly results are obtained as averages of the 4 quarters in the year.

Coverage: The results from the EU-LFS currently cover all [EU](#) Member countries, the [EFTA](#) Member countries

Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, and the [candidate countries](#) Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye. For Cyprus, it only covers the areas of Cyprus controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

European aggregates: EU and EU-27 refer to the total of the 27 EU countries. If data are unavailable for a country, the calculation of the corresponding aggregates takes into account the data for the same country for the most recent period available. Such cases are indicated. For the 2024 in this article, there were no such cases.

Country notes

In [the Netherlands](#), EU-LFS data is collected using a rolling reference week instead of a fixed reference week, i.e. interviewed people are asked about the situation during the week before the interview rather than a pre-selected week.

Definitions

The concepts and definitions used in the EU-LFS follow the 19th Resolution of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS).

According to the [United Nations definition](#), young people, for statistical purposes, refer to the age group 15-24 years. However, the age category 15-29 years also deserves attention as it was considered the reference in the context of the [European Year of Youth](#) (2022). For this reason, the current article considers young people aged 15-29 years, but it also provides data on people aged 15-34 years to cover the transition from formal education to the labour market more extensively.

Employed people are people aged 15-89 who, during the reference week, worked, even for just 1 hour, for pay, profit or family gain or were not at work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent for reasons such as illness, holiday and job-related training.

Unemployed people are people aged 15-74 who were not employed during the reference week, but who were available for work immediately, and were either actively seeking work in the past 4 weeks or had already found a job to start within the next 3 months.

The labour force comprises both employed and unemployed people. People outside the labour force are those classified neither as employed nor as unemployed.

People in education in this article refers to people in formal education during the 4 weeks preceding the interview. Formal education and training is defined by UNESCO as 'education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organisations and recognised private bodies and – in their totality – constitute the formal education system of a country'³.

Non-formal education and training, i.e. any learning activities organised and attended outside the formal education system, are excluded from the analyses of this article. For further information on participation in non-formal education and training see the [article on adult learning statistics](#).

Time series

Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 came into force on 1 January 2021 and caused a break in the EU-LFS time series for several EU countries. In order to monitor the evolution of employment and unemployment even with the break in the time series, EU countries assessed the impact of the break in their country and computed impact factors or break-corrected data for a set of indicators. Break-corrected data are published on the Eurostat website for the EU-LFS main indicators.

³International Standard Classification of Education 2011, paragraph 36, page 11.

Additional methodological information More information on the EU-LFS can be found in the [EU Labour Force Survey online publication](#). In the 'Contents' sidebar with 8 articles on the technical and methodological aspects of the survey, you can find information on the [EU-LFS methodology used until 2021](#) and on the new [methodology from 2021 onwards](#). You can also find [documentation](#), including detailed information on the coding lists, explanatory notes and classifications used over time.

Context

The [EU Youth Strategy](#) is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027. It sets 11 European Youth Goals, and quality employment is set as one of these goals.

Focus on young people is also highlighted in the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which sets out 20 key principles and rights that are essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems. Principle 4 ('Active support to employment') states that 'young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or a job offer of good standing within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education'.

In October 2020, all EU countries committed to the implementation of the [improved Youth guarantee](#) in a [Council Recommendation](#) which steps up the comprehensive job support available to young people across the EU and makes it more targeted and inclusive.

Footnotes

Explore further

Other articles

- [All articles on labour market](#)
- [Unemployment statistics and beyond](#)
- [Employment - annual statistics](#)
- [Education and training statistics introduced](#)
- [EU Labour Force Survey — online publication](#)

Thematic section

- [Employment and unemployment \(LFS\)](#)
- [Labour market \(including Labour Force Survey\)](#)
- [Education and training](#)
- [Youth](#)
- [European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

Publications

- EU Labour Force Survey — online publication
- Youth in Europe
- Labour force survey in the EU, EFTA and candidate countries — Main characteristics of national surveys, 2020 , 2022 edition
- Quality report of the European Union Labour Force Survey 2021 & 2022 - 2025 edition
- European Union Labour Force Survey - selection of articles (Statistics Explained)

Methodology

- Employment and unemployment (Labour Force Survey) (ESMS metadata file — employ_esms)

External links

- European Commission — European employment strategy
- European Commission — Youth policies
- European Commission — New Skills Agenda for Europe
- European Commission — Education and training policies