

## Education in Europe

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**Abstract:** *The paper presents some indicators used to analyse the educational system. The indicators are: “at least upper secondary educational attainment”, “tertiary educational attainment”, and “employment rates of recent graduates”. All indicators were analysed using information from EUROSTAT. This analysis focused on the European Union (28 countries) as well as on Romania. This paper analysed the differences and also the similarities between the evolution of those indicators at the two presented levels. We have also presented the highest levels as well as the lowest ones in some European countries.*

**Key-words:** *education, graduates, employed*

### 1. Introduction

The importance of the educational system is well known or at least it should be.

In the past years, many employers complained about the lack of labor force and qualified employees. That is why this paper aims to analyse these two important aspects of the labor market, taking into consideration three indicators referring to the rate education, upper secondary and tertiary system and also to the employment rate of recent graduates. The objective is to analyse the evolution of those indicators in order to observe the number of persons qualified for the needs of the labor market and to determine the employment rate of those graduates to see if there is a link between those indicators.

### 2. Material and methods

The paper used EUROSTAT indicators, time series and graphs.

All three indicators are set at European Union and Romanian level. According to Eurostat, the first indicator “at least upper secondary educational attainment” refers to ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 2011 level 3-8 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 level 3-6 for data up to 2013. The indicator is based on the EU Labour Force Survey. In addition to this, EUROSTAT

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mention that it should be noted that completion of upper secondary education can be achieved in European countries after varying lengths of study, according to different national educational systems.

The second indicator „tertiary educational attainment”, refers to ISCED 2011 level 5-8 for data from 2014 onwards and to ISCED 1997 level 5-6 for data up to 2013.

EUROSTAT also mention that the last analysed indicator presents the employment rates of persons aged 20 to 34, fulfilling the following conditions: in the first place, they are employed according to the ILO definition; in the second place, they completed at least upper secondary education as the highest level of education; in the third place, they did not receive any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey; in the fourth place, they completed successfully their highest educational attainment 1, 2 or 3 years before the survey.

### 3. Analysis

The first analyzed indicator was “at least upper secondary educational attainment” in the European Union and particularly in Romania. According to EUROSTAT, the indicator is defined as the percentage of people who have successfully completed at least upper secondary education. The indicator aims to measure the share of the population that is likely to have the minimum necessary qualification to actively participate in the social and economic life.

To begin with, the “at least upper secondary educational attainment” indicator was analysed for the age group 20-24 years. The evolution of this indicator at the European Union level as well as in Romania in the chosen period 2012-2016 is presented in Figure 1:

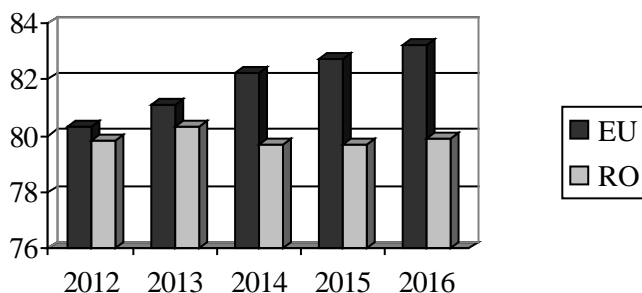


Fig. 1. *At least upper secondary educational attainment, age group 20-24*

We can observe that the situation is different in European Union in comparison with Romania. In the European Union, the indicator is increasing every year, from 80,3% in 2012 to 83,2% in 2016 which means an improving of the qualification necessary for the labour market.

In Romania the evolution fluctuated with an increase from 79,8% in 2012 to 80,3% in 2013, and then with a decreasing trend in the following two years. In the last year of analysis, we can observe a small increase, with 0,2% in 2016.

In Europe, the highest levels are registered in Greece (91,2%), Ireland (93,6%) and Croatia (96,3%). The lowest levels were registered in Portugal (77,5%) and Denmark (75,4%).

The same indicator, at least upper secondary educational attainment, was analysed for the age group 25-64 years, and it also applied to Romania and the European Union.

The evolution of this indicator during the same period 2012-2016 is presented in Figure 2:

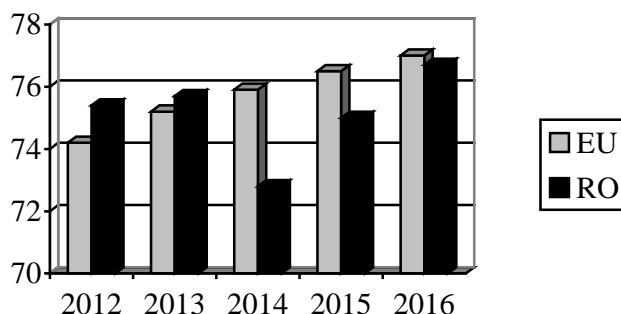


Fig. 2. *At least upper secondary educational attainment, age group 25-64 years*

We can observe the same tendency at European Union level, which translates as a continuous increase during the entire period, from 74,2% in 2012 to 77% in 2016. In Romania, the first two years saw a higher level than in the European Union with 75,4% in 2012 and 75,7% in 2013. Unfortunately, in the following year 2014, the level decreased dramatically to 72,8%. In the following two years we can observe an increase, reaching 76,7% in 2016 but lower than the European Union level.

In Europe, the highest levels were in Poland (91,3%), Slovakia (91,9%), Czech Republic (93,4%) and Lithuania (94,6%), all in 2016.

The lowest levels were registered in Spain (58,3%) and Malta (45,2%), also in 2016, the last analysed year.

Another indicator taken into consideration was “tertiary educational attainment, age group 30-34 years”.

According to EUROSTAT, the indicator is defined as the percentage of population who have successfully completed tertiary studies (e.g. university, higher technical institution, etc.). During the analysed period, 2012-2016, the indicator evolution is presented in Figure 3.

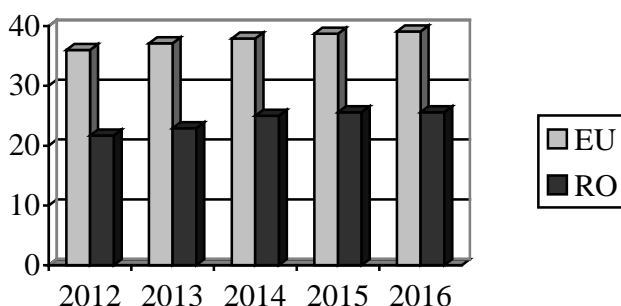


Fig. 3. *Tertiary educational attainment, age group 30-34 years*

At the European Union level, the evolution increased slowly but continuously, from 36% in 2012, 37,1% in 2013, 37,9% in 2014, 38,7% in 2015 and 39,1% in 2016. The same situation was registered in Romania, but, unfortunately, we came last in Europe in 2016 from this indicator point of view.

The percent of people who attend the tertiary education system increased from 21,7% in 2012 to 25,6% in 2016. The last analysed indicator was “employment rates of recent graduates”, persons aged 20 to 34 years. The evolution of this indicator during the analysed period 2012-2016 in the European Union as well as in Romania is presented in Figure 4:

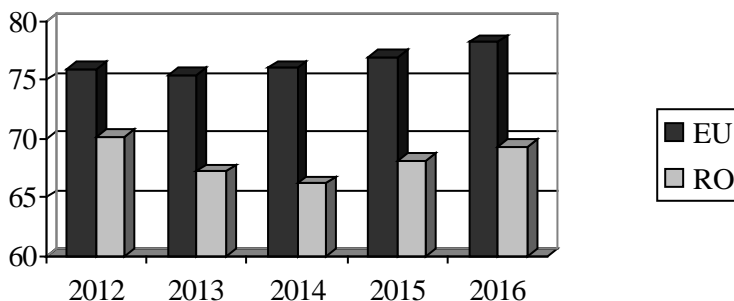


Fig. 4. *Employment rates of recent graduates*

In Romania and in the European Union the percent of recent graduates' evolution had almost the same trend during the analysed period.

In the European Union the percent decreased from 75,9% in 2012 to 75,4% in 2013 but after that it started to increase, reaching 78,2% in 2016.

In Romania the rate decreased from 70,2% in 2012 to 67,2% in 2013 and to 66,2% in 2014. In the following two years the indicator began to increase, reaching 69,3% in the last year, 2016.

The highest levels in Europe were: Netherlands (90,1%), Germany (90,2%) and Malta (96,6%), all in 2016. The lowest levels were registered in Italy (52,9%) and Greece (49,2%).

#### **4. Results and discussions**

According to EUROSTAT, the employment rate in the EU for the age group 20 to 64 peaked at 70.3% in 2008, after a period of steady increase. In the following years, employment trends reversed as a result of the unfavorable effect of the economic crisis on the European labor market.

By 2013, the rate had fallen to 68.4%, marking a deviation of 6.6 percentage points from the Europe 2020 target of increasing the employment rate of the population aged 20 to 64 to at least 75%.

In 2014, the employment rate started increasing again and by 2015 reached 70.1 % — close to the 2008 level. As a result, in 2015 the distance to the EU 2020 employment target of 75 % had narrowed to 4.9 percentage points.

In 2016, an average of 10.7 % of young people (aged 18-24) in the EU-28 were early leavers from education and training. In other words, they had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not attending further education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey.

Among the EU Member States, the proportion of early leavers in 2016 ranged from 2.8 % in Croatia (note that data have low reliability) to 19.6 % in Malta.

The overall share of early leavers from education and training fell in the EU-28 by 2.7 percentage points between 2011 and 2016.

Among the EU Member States, the largest reductions (in percentage point terms) between 2011 and 2016 in the proportion of early leavers were in Portugal, Spain and Greece, each reporting a fall in excess of 5.0 points; this was also the case for Turkey and Norway among the non-member countries.

There was an increase between 2011 and 2016 in the proportion of early leavers in eight of the Member States. The biggest increases were recorded in Slovakia (up to 2.3 percentage points), Bulgaria (2.0 points), the Czech Republic (1.7 points) and Hungary (1.0 points), with increases of less than 1.0 points in Sweden, Slovenia, Romania and Estonia.

The Europe 2020 strategy, adopted by the European Council on 17 June 2010, is the EU's agenda for growth and jobs for the current decade. It emphasizes smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as a way to overcome the structural weaknesses in Europe's economy, improve its competitiveness and productivity and underpin a sustainable social market economy.

The headline targets related to the strategy's key objectives at the European Union level are:

- 75% of the population aged 20 to 64 years to be employed
- 3% of GDP to be invested in the research and development (R&D) sector
- Climate change and energy targets:
  - Greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced by 20% compared to 1990
  - Share of renewable energy sources in final energy consumption to be increased to 20%
  - Energy efficiency to be improved by 20%
  - Share of early school leavers to be reduced under 10% and at least 40% of 30 to 34 years old to have completed tertiary or equivalent education.
  - Poverty to be reduced by lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion.

## 5. References

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