

Reading the country statistical overviews

The country statistical overviews cover the EU Member States and selected EFTA and candidate countries ⁽¹⁾. The core indicators are presented in the same format for each country in a statistical overview.

A chart compares the situation of the country with that of the EU, based on the most recent data available (this differs by indicator). Data in the chart are presented as an index where the EU average equals 100. If the index for a selected indicator for a country is 100, then its performance equals the EU average. If the index is 90, the country's performance is 90% of (or 10% below) the EU average. If the index is 200, the country's performance is twice (or 200%) the EU average. For some indicators, such as early leavers from education and training, a country is performing better if its index is below that of the EU average. If country-level data for a given indicator are not available or of limited reliability, they are not shown in the chart.

Data on which the index scores are calculated are presented in a country table, which also shows change over time. Comments are provided to help read the data and highlight key points. In addition to country data, comments also refer to EU averages and, in some instances, to EU benchmarks (targets set for the EU averages and to be met by 2020), as well as to 2020 national targets. This is done to contextualise country data and to offer a basis for comparisons. There is no intention to identify EU averages or EU benchmarks as concrete target values for the countries. Even national targets, which could be more naturally interpreted in this sense, should be read with caution because they are objectives to be met by 2020 and not at present. A technical definition of each indicator is in Annex 1, which also includes the years used to calculate each indicator and additional notes.

To provide some idea of change, data from the baseline year 2010 are compared in the table with the most recent update (if available). For 2010 and the last available year, country data are shown alongside the EU average. For most indicators the last available year is 2014, 2015 or 2016, but there is no update for some indicators. Not all data or indicators are updated annually: some originate from surveys with a five year periodicity. In some cases, comparisons are not possible owing to breaks in data series. Where a break in series occurs between the 2010 baseline and the last available year, the baseline data are not presented in the table.

The data represented in the charts are included in a table, which also shows change over time. In the right hand part of the table, recent change is shown for the country, alongside the comparable recent change for the EU. Change is expressed in the unit of measure of the indicator itself (in most cases percentage points increase or decrease). Recent change is calculated as the difference between the indicator value in the last year available and the first reliable indicator value available since the baseline year or since the most recent break in the data series (whichever comes last). This ensures that the change value considers the longest and most recent period available for the indicator. The length of the period may vary, therefore, not only between indicators but also between countries. The

¹ The selection of the candidate and EFTA countries is driven by data availability. Countries were excluded when available data were scarce for drawing a reasonably complete statistical overview. Of the countries whose ministers signed the Bruges communiqué, only Liechtenstein is not covered.

country change value is shown alongside the corresponding EU change value ⁽²⁾. The tables contain flags and footnotes giving more information about the status and reliability of the different statistics.

EU average data are based on 28 countries. In some cases, EU averages were not directly available from the Eurostat online database and have been estimated as weighted averages of available country data (as indicated in the footnotes of the country tables).

Country tables do not present data when they are not available and offer additional information on data points which can be affected by quality issues (flags and footnotes). One footnote (A) states: 'UOE back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED 2011 not yet available'. This is to signify that some UOE comparable data for the 2010 baselines are expected from the ad hoc data collection Eurostat has launched, but they are not yet available. Another footnote (C) states: '2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata'. This is to signify that due to implementation of ISCED 2011 in LFS and Eurostat online tables policy, a b flag is systematically used by Eurostat in association with 2014 data. This is, however, just a programming option which has to be read in combination with other relevant metadata stating that, given the level of aggregation considered in the tables, data can be compared. The 2014 b flag is therefore assessed redundant and ignored.

² In each comparison between a country and the EU, the same range of data points has been used to calculate change for both. When necessary, the country range of data points has been limited further to make this possible.

