



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education
and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**



| EU internal action

Overview and challenges

A skilled and culturally literate workforce is key for a prosperous and inclusive economy. Quality and accessible education and training systems are the foundations for lifelong learning, employability, innovation and participation in society. Implementing the measures to achieve SDG 4 in the EU focuses on basic skills, early childhood education and care, early school leaving, tertiary education, adult learning and digital skills.

Developments on SDG 4 indicate that the EU made substantial progress on meeting most 2030 targets, boosting participation in early childhood education, reducing the share of early school leavers, and increasing tertiary educational attainment.

Progress in other areas is more mixed. Adult participation in learning and share of adults with at least basic digital skills has not improved since 2015. One in five young Europeans still lacks adequate reading, maths or science competences. Reducing educational inequalities remains a major concern for the EU. The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds increased between 2015 and 2018, undoing the improvements of the previous years. School closures disrupting many children's and young people's access to quality education during the COVID-19 pandemic increased the impact of the socio-economic background on the learning outcomes of disadvantaged children and young people, including those with a migrant or minority ethnic background.

Investing in skills will remain a crucial factor for ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital and green transition. The challenge remains to not only speed up progress towards

achieving targets but also ensure that policies reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Key initiatives

The EU has a wide range of policies in place addressing or touching upon the different aspects of SDG 4 in different education and training phases and systems. Ensuring that everyone can access quality education, training and lifelong learning is a key objective of the [European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan](#). It sets out several targets in the area of education and skills.

European Commission President von der Leyen announced the 'European Year of Skills'. The European Parliament and the Council agreed that it will last between 9 May 2023 and 8 May 2024. The [European Skills Agenda](#) launched in July 2020, is a five-year plan aiming to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills and to put them to use by strengthening sustainable competitiveness.

A [Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021–2030](#), adopted in November 2021, highlights the need to significantly increase adult participation in formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#), adopted in February 2021, is an umbrella initiative that helps EU Member States work together to build quality and inclusive education and training systems that people with disabilities

2030 targets and trends at EU level

Target and policy reference

The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15 % by 2030

Set in the European Education Area strategic framework

At least 96 % of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education and care by 2030

Set in the European Education Area strategic framework

The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9 % by 2030

Set in the European Education Area strategic framework

The share of 25 to 34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 45 % by 2030

Set in the European Education Area strategic framework

Increase the share of people aged 25 to 64 who stated that they received formal or non-formal education and training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey ⁽¹⁰⁾

Set in the European Education Area strategic framework

At least 60 % of all adults should participate in training every year by 2030

Set in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

By 2030, at least 80% of those aged 16 to 74 should have basic digital skills ⁽¹¹⁾

Set in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

Trends

Reading up from 20 % to 22.5 % (2015-2018).

Maths up from 22.2 % to 22.9 % (2015-2018).

Science up from 21.1 % to 22.3 % (2015-2018).

Progress has stalled. The challenge posed by the persisting large share of low-achievers has yet to be resolved.

Participation in early childhood education increased slightly from 92 % in 2015 to 93 % in 2020. The EU is on track to reach this target.

The share of early leavers from education and training declined from 11 % in 2015 to 9.6 % in 2022. The EU is on track to reach the ambitious target given this steady long-term improvement.

Tertiary educational attainment increased from 36.5 % 2015 to 42.0% in 2022. The EU is on track to reach the target given this long-term rise of tertiary education attainment.

There was an improvement from 10.1 % in 2015 to 11.9% 2022. The approach to measuring adult learning will be thoroughly overhauled.

37.4 % of adults aged 25–64 participated in some form of education or training (last 12 months) in 2016 (last available data point).

The share of adults with at least basic digital skills has made very limited progress between 2015 and 2019 (from 54 % to 56 %). In 2021, a measurement based on the new Digital Competence Framework showed a result still far from the target (54 %).

More details on indicators and trends for SDG 4 can be found in the statistical and analytical annex and Eurostat's monitoring report on progress towards achieving the SDGs.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The methodology of this indicator is currently being revised. The new indicator will use a 12-month reference period instead of 4 weeks.

⁽¹¹⁾ The Digital Skills Indicator (DSI) has been revamped in its second edition, 2.0. The revised indicator is the result of work carried out in 2019-2022 within Eurostat's Information Society Working Group to modernise the indicator by adapting it to the revised conceptual framework (DigComp 2.0) as well as to keep it aligned with technological progress since the first version was published in 2015.



can access. It embraces a future-looking, comprehensive and people-centred vision of education.

The [Reinforced Youth Guarantee](#), adopted by the Council in October 2020, aims to ensure that all young people under 30 years of age receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship and traineeship within a period of 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

In the field of vocational education and training (VET), the Council adopted in March 2018 a [Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeship](#) which aims to improve and further develop apprenticeships schemes in the Member States. Furthermore, the Council also adopted in November 2020 the Recommendation on [VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness](#) and resilience which defines key principles for ensuring that VET adapts swiftly to labour market needs and provides quality learning opportunities for young people and adults alike.

In June 2021, the [Commission adopted a proposal for a Council recommendation on Pathways to School Success](#). This is a flagship initiative to boost the inclusive aspect of education by reducing low-achievement in basic skills and increasing secondary education attainment.

The [Digital Education Action Plan \(2021–2027\)](#) is a renewed EU policy initiative to help Member States adapt their education and training systems to the digital age sustainably and effectively. The plan is key to achieving the European Education Area's vision and helps meet the goals of the [European Pillar of Social Rights action plan](#) and the '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade'.

The **cultural dimension** of sustainable development is being promoted under a range of EU policies and programmes to support societal change and lessen the effects of green and digital transitions. The EU's actions in culture contribute to all dimensions of the SDGs, in line with the [New European agenda for culture](#) and the [European framework for action on cultural heritage](#). EU policy harnesses the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being by: i) promoting cultural participation, artists' mobility and the protection of cultural heritage; ii) boosting jobs and growth in the cultural and creative sectors through arts and culture in education, promoting skills and innovation in culture; and iii) strengthening international cultural relations through culture to promote sustainable development and peace. The need to preserve and promote the intrinsic value of culture and of artistic expression is also highlighted in the guiding EU cultural policy documents.

The Council [Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development](#) from June 2022 calls for Member States to establish the 'learning for the green

transition and sustainable development' as a priority area in education and training policies. This will ensure that learners of all ages acquire the knowledge to live more sustainably, get the skills needed in a changing labour market and take action for a sustainable future. The Commission also released the [European sustainability competences framework \('GreenComp'\)](#) which sets out the skills and competences that all learners need to acquire for the green transition.

In April 2023, the Commission adopted [two proposals](#) for a Council Recommendation in the context of the European Year of Skills, with the aim to support Member States and the education and training sector in providing high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education and training to develop the digital skills of European citizens.

In higher education, the 2022 [European Strategy for Universities](#) aims to empower universities to manage the impact of, and find solutions to, present and future challenges, including the green and digital transitions. It recognises that the higher education sector has a key role to play in helping societies manage the impact of climate change, live more sustainably and exercise socially responsible leadership.

Selected enablers

The [Erasmus+ programme](#) focuses on quality and inclusive education with over EUR 26 billion allocated for 2021-2027. Its projects contribute directly to achieving SDG 4 as well as other SDGs in the EU and abroad. Two compendia provide a valuable overview of supported projects that contribute to achieving the SDG in relation to inclusive education and citizenship.

As people age and are required to work longer, the [European Social Fund Plus](#) promotes the training, reskilling and upskilling of workers to prepare for the green, blue and digital transitions. The fund also recognises the need to improve structures, e.g. modernising the education system and creating stronger links between educational and training systems. The European Regional Development Fund and the Just Transition Fund also supports skills for smart specialisation and the upskilling / reskilling of workers and jobseekers in the context of a just transition.

The [Digital Europe programme \(DIGITAL\)](#) is the first EU financial instrument designed to bring digital technology to businesses and individuals. It focuses on building the EU strategic digital capacities and on facilitating the wide deployment of digital technologies.

The [2021-2027 Creative Europe programme](#), the only EU programme that targets the cultural and creative sectors, supports the EU's commitment to achieving the SDGs, in particular as regards their cultural dimension, under all three programme strands.

The research programme **Horizon Europe** supports EU priorities in education and training. For instance, the ‘Emotion-Expressive Robot EmoSan’ project (**CybsPEED**) designed by the Institute of Robotics of the **Bulgarian** Academy of Sciences is capable of imitating the movements of the human head in order to improve the pedagogical rehabilitation of children with special educational needs.

The **Recovery and Resilience Facility** will advance large-scale investments and reforms in education that have the potential to improve the resilience of EU Member States’ education systems. For example, the **Romanian** national recovery and resilience plan aims to implement reforms to address various challenges across education levels. The plan envisages reducing early school leaving, building 110 kindergartens, training almost 20 000 staff in early childhood education and increasing the share of students taking higher technical education courses from 17% to 40%.

Another example is the project ‘Promoting inclusive education: addressing challenges in legislation, educational policy and practice’ in **Greece** supported by the **Structural Reform Support Programme** under the call for 2019. Greece needed assistance in developing the framework and guidelines, and in training staff connected to the new law introducing inclusive education practices. The provider helped the Greek Ministry of Education design and implement several provisions of the existing legislation as well of the Strategic Plan for the Equitable Access of Students with Disabilities to Education.

Stakeholder engagement

The EU delivers on SDG 4 in a collaborative approach through various stakeholder platforms such as those mentioned in the following list.

- ▶ The **Education for Climate Coalition** – a community for students, teachers and other stakeholders to develop innovative solutions for environmental sustainability. It encompasses art and science, taking stock of good practice and citizen science endeavours. It promotes community building along language lines, and helps run events, from small-scale workshops to big policy and practice forums.
- ▶ The **European Education Area working group on learning for sustainability** brings together experts from ministries of education, social partners, NGOs and international organisations working on ESD, sustainability and environmental education. The group works together on topics of common interest (eg teacher training, curriculum development, youth engagement) and regularly publishes key policies messages.
- ▶ The **Learning Lab on Investing in Quality Education and Training** promotes evaluation practices to improve evidence and identify investment features for education policies for better learning outcomes and equity. It helps

Member States make the most of public resources invested in education.

- ▶ **The Pact for skills** was launched in November 2020 as a shared engagement model for developing skills. Companies, workers, national, regional and local authorities, social partners, cross-industry and sectoral organisations, education and training providers, chambers of commerce and employment services are involved.
- ▶ Since 2013, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaFA) unites governments and key stakeholders with the aim of strengthening the quality, supply and overall image of apprenticeships across Europe, while also promoting the mobility of apprentices. These aims are promoted through national commitments and voluntary pledges from stakeholders.

Multi-level approach

Achieving the SDGs implies ambitious action at all levels. Good practices from Member States in implementing SDG 4 include the following examples.

Czechia provides support to children with special education needs to improve their inclusion and development at school. This support includes providing teacher assistants and special aid professionals in schools, granting scholarships to students and promoting and adopting quality legislation.

Germany is committed to carrying out the necessary action that was put forward in the 2021 ‘Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)’, to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Germany is setting up several programmes in technical and vocational education and training, and promoting lifelong learning for ESD in municipalities across Germany. Innovative ESD practices are being highlighted with national ESD awards promoting a whole-institution approach as well as a national endowed ESD prize encouraging the spread of these innovative practices.

At local level, **Finland’s** six largest cities are committed to achieving SDG 4, as highlighted by the following examples. In Helsinki, schools are educating children on the environment and climate, providing knowledge on the circular economy and Agenda 2030. In Tampere, schools, up to secondary level, are offering subjects on eco-social consciousness and the relationship with nature. In Oulu, primary school teachers are active in sustainability education, including the organisation of an Agenda of Hope event focusing on education and sustainable development for children, young people, and education professionals.



EU external action

Global trends

Progress since 2015 to achieve SDG 4 has been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, with an estimated 147 million children unable to attend school in 2020 and **2021** ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Internal/external coherence, including policy coherence for development

Education is key to achieving several SDGs, including ending poverty (SDG 1), reducing inequality (SDG 10), promoting gender equality (SDG 5) and promoting skills for employment (SDG 8). Due to the scale of its investment in education, the EU is a leader in promoting global transformation for this goal, including in the preparation and follow up of the **UN Transforming Education Summit** in September 2022, and pursues external objectives consistent with its actions within the EU. Through intensified engagement as Team Europe with partners, the **Global Gateway strategy** and its dedicated regional investment packages strengthen the way **SDG 4** is implemented. This covers inclusive and equitable

quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, and promoting learning mobility and the digital transition in and through education, as well as quality, equity, inclusion and gender equality in education.

In terms of coherence between internal and external actions, the European Education Area is a driver of reforms in partner countries (**EU and Western Balkans Innovation Agenda**), through the strengthened international dimension of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 with a budget of about EUR 2.2 billion from EU external cooperation instruments IPA III and NDICI ⁽¹¹⁾. In 2019, the EU was the top global destination for higher education, receiving 1.1 million students of the world's total of 5.5 million. The European Education Area serves as a global standard for quality and excellence thanks to actions supported under Erasmus+, such as the with its Jean Monnet actions, the Partnerships for Excellence (centres for vocational excellence and **Erasmus+** teacher academics), highlighting the attractiveness of European education and encouraging progress in accession countries.

⁽¹⁰⁾ See UN SDG Report 2021 (page 34) and UN SDG Report 2022 (Page 33).

⁽¹¹⁾ This budget complements the overall indicative financial envelope of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 which amounts to EUR 26.2 billion.

Since 2015, **Erasmus+** has also allowed for short-term mobility between EU and other countries for students, researchers, and staff who study in a foreign university for 3-12 months and obtain credits recognised as part of their degree at home. A grant for staff mobility is also possible for 5-60 days. Erasmus+ mobility with partner countries outside the EU involves the movement of 40 000 students and staff per year. Of the 10 top academic disciplines covered by Erasmus+ mobility partnerships with partner countries, 9 are related directly with one or several SDGs. The top three are business, engineering and economics which are linked to SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth and SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure. Women represent 54 % of all participants. A key objective of Erasmus+ is to promote equity and inclusion by helping people from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special needs (over 400 participants from Asia and southern Mediterranean countries).

Erasmus+ also supports Capacity Building projects to improve the quality and relevance of higher education and of vocational education and training in EU partner countries worldwide, as well as high-level international joint masters degrees involving EU and non-EU higher education institutions.

EU and Member States external financial support for SDG implementation and results

In 2021, EU institutions reported to the OECD commitments for EUR 2.2 billion in projects helping to achieve SDG 4. The largest share of the EU's contribution to SDG 4 involves projects that target SDG 4 as the main SDG. These projects also make a strong contribution to other linked SDGs such as SDG 5, SDG 10 and SDG 8. The pursuit of other SDGs also contributes to SDG 4 as a significant objective. The main contributors are projects targeting SDG 1, SDG 8 and SDG 16. When taking into account also other official flows, private funds mobilized through public intervention and support to international public goods, the Total Official Support to Sustainable Development (TOSSD) of the EU to SDG 4 amounted to EUR 2.3 billion in 2021. In terms of selected results of its assistance, EU support helped 38 million students enrol in primary education and 8.2 million students enrol in secondary education in 2018-2021.

Collectively, the EU and those Member States that reported on SDGs to the OECD in 2021, contributed EUR 9.4 billion to achieving SDG 4. EU and Member States' flows to SDG 4 in 2021 predominantly focused on projects in Africa (34 %), Asia (32 %) and other countries in Europe (16 %).

Part of the EU and Member States support to SDG 4 has been channelled through global education funds such as the Global

Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait – a UN global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises. Up until now, EU and Member States' contributions to both of these funds have amounted to EUR 4.3 billion and account for 52 % of all contributions received.

Main policy orientations and initiatives for external engagement

Education is essential for eradicating poverty and achieving the SDGs, including by ensuring that no one is left behind by reducing barriers to accessing quality education, including for girls, the **poorest children or children with disabilities, and building skills** ⁽¹²⁾. The EU commitment to quality education and vocational training is embedded in a common vision on education being an enabler for achieving all SDGs, contributing to breaking intergenerational transmission of inequalities and promoting equitable, inclusive, greener and more digital societies.

In the face of the current global learning crisis and in line with partner countries' own policies and plans for developing education, the EU's priorities in the field of development cooperation are:

- ▶ **teachers**: focus on well-trained and motivated teachers;
- ▶ **equality** in education: education is one of the most effective ways to tackle increasing inequalities by focusing on inclusion, gender equality and digital innovation;
- ▶ **skills** for life and work.

The EU's partnerships in education promote education on all levels, by focusing on marginalised and vulnerable people. The EU is also working on improving health, nutrition and social protection.

The EU actions under the **NDICI – Global Europe** instrument aim to contribute with at least 20 % of the official development assistance (ODA) funded under the instrument to social inclusion and human development, which includes education. The share of investment to education will increase from 7 % to at least 10 % of the EU's budget for international partnerships. The EU and its Member States in a Team Europe approach provide over half of the ODA allocated to education. The EU was particularly vocal on education partnerships and financing at the **UN Transforming Education Summit** in September 2022.

Education is one of the five investment priority sectors of the EU's **Global Gateway strategy** and the **Africa-Europe Global Gateway Investment Package**. Several major regional education initiatives contributing to achieving various SDGs (including SDG 4) have been launched, such as: i) the **Regional**

⁽¹²⁾ Council Conclusions 8856/21 of 14 June 2021, Strengthening Team Europe's commitment to Human Development.



Refugees and vulnerable children

also benefit from humanitarian Education-in-Emergencies programmes, notably in Ethiopia, Bangladesh, South Sudan, Türkiye, Central America and Mexico.

Teacher Programme for Africa, which aims at strengthening regional and national capacity to support teachers and the teaching profession; ii) **opportunity-driven skills and VET in Africa**, a Team Europe initiative seeking to achieve systemic and sustainable change in developing skills for employment creation; and iii) **Youth Mobility for Africa**, which is aimed at greater international and intra-regional mobility, increasing young people's skills and employability, as well as youth leadership. The **economic and investment plans** in the European Neighbourhood and Western Balkans also help develop people's skills and potential, including through promoting high-quality education and training.

The EU and its Member States are major contributors to global education initiatives, such as the **Global Partnership for Education** (where EU and Member States' funding represents 51 % of the total), which aims to empower young girls and vulnerable groups through education. It focuses on providing good quality basic education and aims to transform education systems. The EU supports Africa with an integrated continental approach to transformative education and training systems. The EU also supports **Education Cannot Wait** (EU and Member States fund 41.6 % of total spending) and the **UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report** to strengthen national, regional and global accountability for education results.

The EU continues to be a strong advocate for the global approach for Education in Emergencies as part of its **humanitarian assistance**, also in the context of and as follow up to the UN Transforming Education Summit. Providing safe and quality education to the most vulnerable children affected by emergencies is a priority of EU humanitarian action, with the EU meeting its funding target of 10 % of its initial humanitarian aid budget being allocated to Education in Emergencies since 2019 (which increased from 1 % in 2015). Over 2015-2021, the EU's investment in education in emergencies-related activities enabled 12 million children and young people (50 % of them girls) caught in crises to return to and stay in education through formal and non-formal pathways at primary and secondary levels. The EU also remains strongly focused on protecting education from attack and supporting the roll-out of the Safe Schools Declaration.

Examples of EU actions (with a focus on Global Gateway and Team Europe initiatives)

In relation to SDG 4, with the COVID-19 pandemic, EU changed the focus of its education support programmes to provide emergency funding and ensure over 355 million children in 66 countries were able to continue their education. The EU strengthened its collaboration with global education

funds, announcing EUR 700 million in support for the **Global Partnership for Education** and furthermore supported **Education Cannot Wait**. It actively contributed, in a Team Europe approach, to the reform of the Global Education Coordination Mechanism to ensure a joint, coherent and efficient global education aid structure in support of SDGs 4, 5 and 10.

Over 40 Team Europe initiatives with education and training components are being developed at country and regional level worldwide. In **Niger**, the Team Europe initiative **#nigergenerationsfutures – Emergence d'une économie inclusive et verte pour et avec les jeunes** supports a green and inclusive economy, offering young people and women opportunities to develop their skills. In **Kenya**, the Team Europe initiative on **Human Centred Digitalisation** will draw on the potential of digitalisation to create jobs, especially for young people. It will work on reducing the digital gap through e-education services. Another initiative following the Team Europe approach, is the **E-Youth** project in **Mozambique**, which is aimed at unleashing the full potential of Mozambique's young people through decisive action across public, social and private sectors to address education, employment and empowerment. In **Haiti**, the Team Europe Initiative '**Haiti: Invest in the future**' will focus on further improving the governance of the education system (access, quality, higher education through partnerships with European institutions, VET reforms). All the above-mentioned Team Europe Initiatives support the Global Gateway strategy and, for African countries, the Africa-Europe Investment Package.

The EU helps partner countries such as **Sierra Leone, Nepal or Lebanon** lessen the impact of the pandemic in order to reopen schools and ensure a safe return for staff and students, recover lost learning and transform education systems that ensure equitable access to education for all. In Lebanon, 90 175 children were reached, including those with disabilities. In **Tajikistan**, the EU supported the reform of continuous professional development for teachers, the piloting of the first ever national learning assessment in several grades and the finalisation of the reform towards a competency-based approach, resulting in over 63 000 teachers being trained and 72 school laboratories being set up. In **Cambodia**, following protracted school closures, the EU budget support for education and the Capacity Building Partnership Fund, managed by UNICEF, prioritised actions on inequalities by offering scholarships for up to 250 000 students in basic education per year, increasing operating funds for schools, building 750 new, healthy and climate-resilient classrooms.

In **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine**, the **Connecting Research and Education Communities** project (EaPConnect) is now in its second phase, bringing together the research and education communities from the EU and Eastern Partner countries, reducing the digital divide. In **Armenia**, a programme addresses education as a key priority for reform, with EU support mainly focused on i) Vocational and Educational Training (VET), ii) higher education, particularly through the

Erasmus+ programme, and iii) the EU TUMO Convergence Centre for Engineering and Applied Science. In **Georgia**, the EU uses the **Skills4Jobs programme** to address the country's constraints in better matching skills with labour market demands and providing a better quality of skills.

Through its humanitarian action, the EU has supported the education of **Syrian** refugees and Internally Displaced Persons as well as host communities in Türkiye, Jordan and Lebanon. In **Türkiye**, the EU's Conditional Cash Transfers for Education programme assists around 795 000 children, and EU humanitarian funding enabled 62 000 refugee children to be referred to education programmes. This helped to almost quadruple the overall enrolment rate of the refugee school-age population over 2014–2022. This led to the project being extended to include Afghan and Iraqi refugees and host communities and its scope being expanded to include early childhood, technical and vocational education, and activities to promote social cohesion and psychosocial well-being. In **Jordan**, the challenge of providing education to refugees was addressed through budget support (through the EU Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, 'Madad'). Measures implemented by UNICEF and local civil society organisations (CSOs) were funded to address the challenges of the vulnerable populations in question, and higher education scholarships were offered to Syrian refugees and vulnerable people in Jordan. In **Lebanon**, international and local NGOs provided support to refugees out of education as well as Lebanese children to get them back into learning and formal education. Refugees and vulnerable children also benefit from humanitarian programmes on Education-in-Emergencies, particularly in **Ethiopia, Bangladesh, South Sudan, Türkiye, Central America and Mexico**. Attention is focused on female participation (at least 50%) and often the support provided integrates child protection as well as back-to-school initiatives.

Furthermore, the EU has provided budget support to education and VET reforms in more than 20 countries over 2015–2021. For example, in **Jordan**, both education and VET have been supported since 2018 with projects and budget support to develop a workforce with skills, qualifications and capabilities. In **Tunisia**, support to education has also been long established and now aims to improve the sector's governance and digitalisation, the quality and access to primary and secondary education as well as the matching of skills to labour market needs. Meanwhile, the construction and redevelopment of schools for greener and better-digitally connected buildings is co-financed and implemented with the EIB.

Actions by the EU and its Member States are mutually supportive and are coordinated to ensure complementarity and a positive impact in support of the SDGs. In addition to acting together with the EU through joint programming and Team Europe Initiatives, Member States carry out their own projects in support of the 2030 Agenda including SDG 4, such as the following illustrative initiatives.

As the world's largest bilateral donor in the area of education, **Germany** relies on close cooperation between government and businesses to assist partner countries in establishing high-quality, inclusive, practice-based vocational training systems reflecting the needs of the labour market – with projects currently undertaken in countries such as South Africa, Vietnam, Indonesia.

Many Member States offer scholarships and specialised training, such as **Latvia**, which offers training programmes at its universities for young professionals working in public administration from countries in Central Asia and the Western Balkans.

Looking ahead

EU citizens have called on the EU and its Member States to establish by 2025 an inclusive European Education Area within which everyone has equal access to quality education and lifelong learning. Emphasis was given to the specific needs of young people being considered across all relevant policies in order to offer them the best possible conditions to study, work and start an independent life. EU citizens also expressed their wish that the EU ensures that everyone can benefit from digitalisation, by empowering them with the necessary digital skills and opportunities. The request for establishing the European Education Area was highlighted in Proposal 46 on education of the final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The 2022 European Year of Youth has offered many opportunities for young Europeans to strengthen their skills and competences, and to increase their level of civic engagement. The 2023 European Year of Skills' activities and events will also target young people, particularly those not in education, employment or training (NEET). With only 15 % of young people having undertaken studies, training or apprenticeships in another EU country, the Commission will propose updating the current EU learning mobility framework to enable learners to move more easily between education systems: a key step towards a European Education Area for 2025.

With the European Year of Skills, the Commission also proposes giving a fresh impetus to lifelong learning. In particular, the Commission intends to promote increased, more effective and inclusive investment in training and upskilling to harness the full potential of the European workforce, and to support people in changing from one job to another. Further attention will also be paid to matching people's aspirations and skill sets with opportunities on the job market, especially for the green and digital transition and the economic recovery. To improve digital skills, the Commission intends to help raise awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics including for women, and improve the way digital skills are taught in education and training. More generally, the Commission will promote upskilling and reskilling opportunities, for instance, by highlighting relevant EU initiatives, including funding possibilities, to support their take-up, implementation and delivery on the ground.

The upcoming **Council Recommendation on social economy framework conditions** will include recommendations on supporting social economy in reskilling disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.

On the external side, building on the 2022 Transforming Education Summit, the EU will help ensure the Summit outcomes are translated into tangible benefits at all levels. The EU will work on further promoting a coordinated approach on investments in education in partner countries, acting in a Team Europe approach so as to be a more effective driving force in the education sector at country, regional and global levels. It will continue to take determined action to help speed up the implementation of SDG 4 globally, including through rolling out a range of multiannual indicative programmes with partner countries where education is a shared priority. The EU will also continue stepping up coordination and improving the quality of the global response to education by strengthening a joint humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, building on the 10 % investment target for education in both humanitarian and development instruments.

A tangible contribution to achieving SDG 4 (and other linked SDGs) will be the deployment of the Global Gateway strategy at regional and national level, including the following initiatives presented during the 6th EU-Africa Summit in February 2022 as part of the Global Gateway Africa Europe Investment Package, to be carried out in a Team Europe approach:

- ▶ the Regional Teacher Programme, to support at continental, regional and national level effective policies and practices for innovation, equity as well as digital and green transformation in teaching;
- ▶ opportunity-driven skills and VET in Africa, to equip young people with the skills they need to succeed in the labour market (including digital skills for employment);
- ▶ Youth Mobility for Africa, to promote youth exchanges and mobility between Africa and Europe.