EU presents education package on basic skills, AI and teachers

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Today, the European Commission presents a new Education and Skills Package to reverse the decline in basic skills, help schools make AI and digital technologies work for learning and address teacher shortages.

The package focuses on four priorities: raising achievement in basic skills, harnessing digital and AI tools for education, strengthening the teaching profession and making vocational education and training (VET) more agile, strategic and better connected. It also reflects changing labour market needs, which must be better addressed in education systems to safeguard Europe´s competitiveness and democratic resilience.

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said: “A stronger Europe starts with empowered young people. We are backing our Member States to raise standards in literacy, maths, science, digital and citizenship education. While also equipping children with the skills they need to safely navigate AI. And for this it is essential that they are supported by well-trained teachers. Together we will work to ensure future generations thrive.”

Among the concrete initiatives, the Commission has put forward a Council Recommendation on reversing the decline in basic skills. The recommendation proposes to target reforms and investments to raise achievements in basic skills, give schools and teachers the autonomy to act, strengthen evidence-based practice and improve support at school level.

European School Alliances will bring schools and school authorities from different Member States together in long-term partnerships to improve pupils' results in at least one basic skill, each with a measurable improvement plan. Erasmus+ is already preparing for the roll-out of the European School Alliances, with dedicated support for schools and school authorities starting in 2027, with the ambition to scale-up to 100 Alliances yearly in the next MFF.

From 2027, the new EU Network of Advisory and Support Services will connect national and regional services, to strengthen practical support to schools on leadership, well-being, digital and AI readiness and cooperation with parents. In addition, 30 regional services will be launched with funding support from Erasmus+.

Better and safer use of digital technologies for education

On 3 November, the Commission established the European Digital Infrastructure Consortium on Education (EDU-EDIC), at the request of eight founding Member States. The EDU-EDIC will enhance European tech sovereignty in education and pool resources and expertise to deploy trusted AI and digital services for schools, enable secure

data exchange between education institutions, and help European education technology (EdTech) companies better serve schools across borders. This strengthens Europe's own capacity and tech sovereignty in education.

The Commission will develop age-appropriate reference learning outcomes and assessment guidance for AI literacy, based on the EU-OECD AI Literacy Framework, and pilot an AI Literacy Certificate for learners from the school year 2027/28.

In addition, building on the 2026 Communication on an EU approach to online child safety, the Commission will propose a European Healthy Screens Pledge, giving schools, parents and pupils common tools and guidance on online safety, screen time and a healthy balance between online and offline life.

A more attractive and supported teaching profession

The Commission has also proposed a Council Recommendation on the attractiveness of the teaching profession (EU Teachers Agenda). It asks Member States to address teacher shortages through attractive careers and working conditions, stronger initial education and professional development, and teachers' agency in the use of AI.

It also proposes a closer European dialogue with the teaching profession, by encouraging Member States to invite the European social partners in education and teachers' representatives to the High-Level Group on Education and Training. EU support will also come through revamped Teacher Academies 2.0, which from 2027 will target novice teachers and school leaders.

Stronger EU support for modernising vocational education and training

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a central role in equipping people with the skills needed in today's economy. It provides learners with practical, job-ready skills in sectors with strong demand for workers, such as energy, manufacturing, healthcare, defence and construction.

The European VET strategy will support learners to get skills that drive innovation and growth through training on cutting-edge technology and give them access to careers with long-term prospects.

Key initiatives include: a European Sectoral Training Accelerator, with a pilot starting in 2027 to offer short, flexible training modules, which VET providers can add to national programmes. They will be developed with industry partners and offer shared quality standards; VET business partnerships for new training centres will be set up jointly by companies and VET institutions. Starting in 2028, they will help businesses – especially SMEs – to secure skilled workers and deploy new technology; an EU mobility marketplace to help VET learners and apprentices find training abroad and to support companies and VET schools in organising quality exchange opportunities.

Next steps

The Council is invited to examine and adopt both Council Recommendations.

On 20 November, the Commission will host the 2026 European Education and Skills Summit to launch implementation of the Package alongside Member States, social partners, school networks, teacher organisations, EdTech companies, and pupils' representatives.

Background

The recent EU analysis of PISA 2025 results shows that 33.9% of European 15-year-olds underachieve in mathematics, 31.3% in reading, and 25.9% in science. Excellence is also declining; in 2025, the share of top performers in the EU stands at 4.8% in reading, 6.4% in science, and 6.8% in mathematics.

The Education and Skills Package is a key contribution to the Union of Skills and aims to support Member States to achieve the agreed 2030 EU-level targets, which include increasing to at least 12% the share of 15-year-olds with top performance in reading, mathematics, and science, lowering to below 15% the share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, mathematics and science, and the share of eighth graders (age 13-14) with low achievement in computer and information literacy, and increasing to at least 25% the share of 15-year-olds from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds with good results in at least one skill (reading, mathematics or science).

The VET Strategy builds on the framework set out in the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training. It therefore focuses on key areas where the EU level can best support Member States in their reforms and policies. In the 2025 Herning declaration, Member States have already committed to modernise and make

their VET systems strong and future-fit.

These actions are also aligned with the Apply AI Strategy, which focuses on supporting the adoption of AI across key strategic industries and the public sector, including education.

For more information

Questions and answers

Factsheet on the education and skills package

Factsheet on vocational skills for a competitive Europe

Education and Skills package

Communication on Stronger education foundations for all in the age of AI

Proposal for reversing the decline in basic skills

Proposal for an attractive teaching profession: the EU Teachers Agenda

Strategy for vocational education and training 2026-2030

Quote(s)

A stronger Europe starts with empowered young people. We are backing our Member States to raise standards in literacy, maths, science, digital and citizenship education. While also equipping children with the skills they need to safely navigate AI. And for this it is essential that they are supported by well-trained teachers. Together we will work to ensure future generations thrive.

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

One in three of our 15-year-olds struggles with reading and mathematics, and the trend is getting worse. This is not only an education issue: it is about democracy and competitiveness, it is about the very future of Europe. Education must become a top political priority everywhere. With this package, we ask Member States to commit, and we commit to support them and work together. European School Alliances will help schools learn from each other, an EU Teachers Agenda will support making teaching a profession people want to join and stay in, and a VET Strategy will make vocational training a first choice. Europe’s future is first built in the classrooms.

Roxana Mînzatu, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness

With the establishment of the EDIC on education, the Union takes a step forward to achieve tech sovereignty in a crucial sector. It will ensure that our teachers and students have at their disposal trustworthy and safe European digital infrastructures, including AI tools and information management systems. The European EdTech companies will also receive support, ensuring that the entire ecosystem benefits from the EDIC.

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