

# Young people on the labour market - statistics

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in January 2018*

*This is an eight-yearly module, so the article will be updated in the first quarter of 2026*

**" In 2016, 77 % of young people in the EU did not change or were not willing to change their place of residence for a job. "**

**" In 2016, 54 % of young people in the EU did not work while studying for their highest completed qualification, with the largest rate of non-working students in Romania (91 %) and the smallest in Finland (8 %). "**

**" In 2016, 16 % of employed persons in the EU aged 15-34 reported that their current main job did not correspond to their level of education. "**

This article presents some findings from a survey on the situation of young people in the labour market<sup>1</sup>. The survey has a special focus on [work based education](#), finding out in detail how different types of education correlate with, for instance, the [employment rate](#) and with [quality of employment](#). Other topics which are covered are education/job mismatch, reasons for not completing qualifications or not continuing education, methods for finding a job, and being ready either to commute or to move residence in order to have or to find a job.

## Key messages

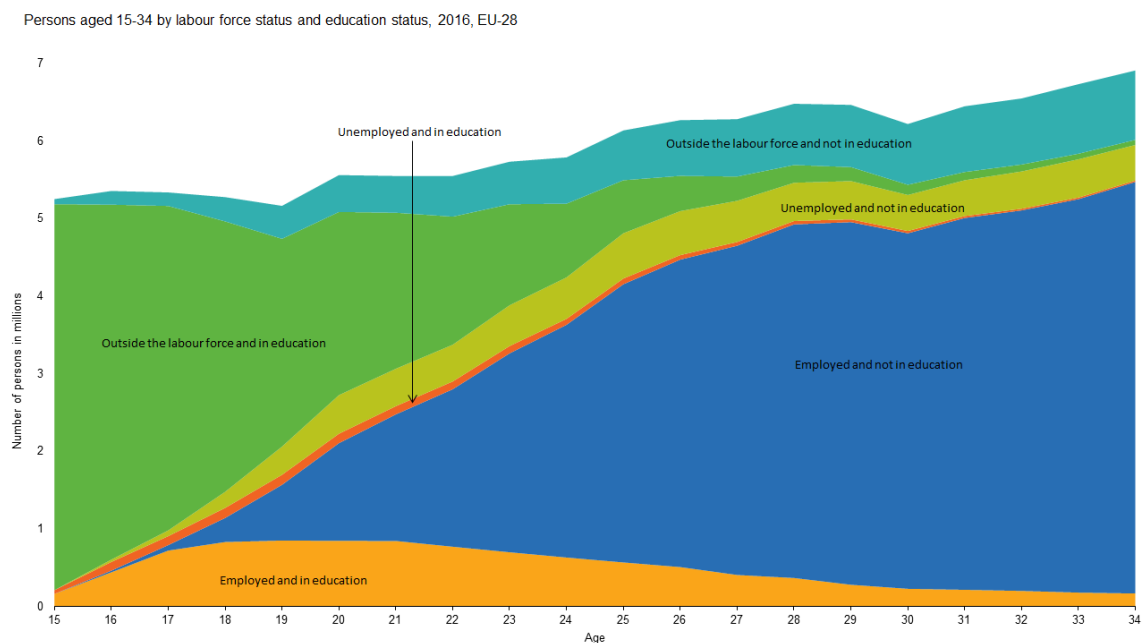
- The most common reasons respondents give for not completing their education or training courses, is their wish to start working or their lack of interest in the chosen course
- Only 15 % of those who recently started to work received any help from the public employment office to find work
- The most common method of finding a job is to ask friends or relatives
- About one quarter (23 %) of young persons are either willing to move residence or have done so in order to find or have a job
- Having work experience while in education correlates with higher employment rates, but not with higher job quality

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<sup>1</sup>The European [Labour Force Survey](#) is a large sample survey among private households in Europe and an important source for European statistics about the situation and trends in the EU [labour market](#). In addition to the [core survey](#) which is unchanged from year to year, there is also a supplementary, or [ad hoc](#), module, each year. The topic of the 2016 ad hoc module was *young people on the labour market*. A similar topic was part of the EU-LFS in 2000 and 2009.

## Survey population

The Labour Force Survey ad hoc module 2016 targeted persons aged 15 to 34 years. This article will therefore exclusively analyse this age group. Figure 1 shows that important changes take place in this age span. Almost all 15 year olds are in education but outside the labour force (so neither having a job nor looking for or being available for one), whereas a very large majority of the 34 year olds are in employment and not in education. It also shows that the peak age for being both in education and having a job at the same time is 18 - 21, and that the number of unemployed persons is rather stable between the ages of 20 - 34.<sup>2</sup>

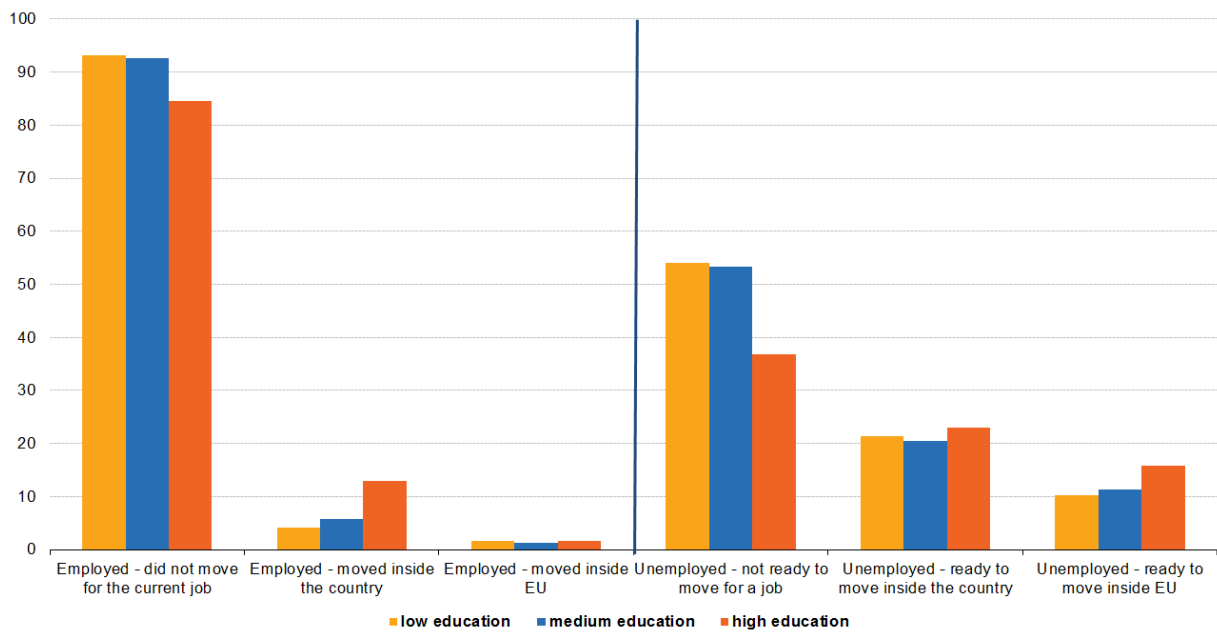


**Figure 1: Survey population of the Labour Force Survey ad hoc module 2016 by age, labour force status and status in education. Millions of persons. Source: Eurostat customized data extraction**

## Few move house or commute to find or to have a job

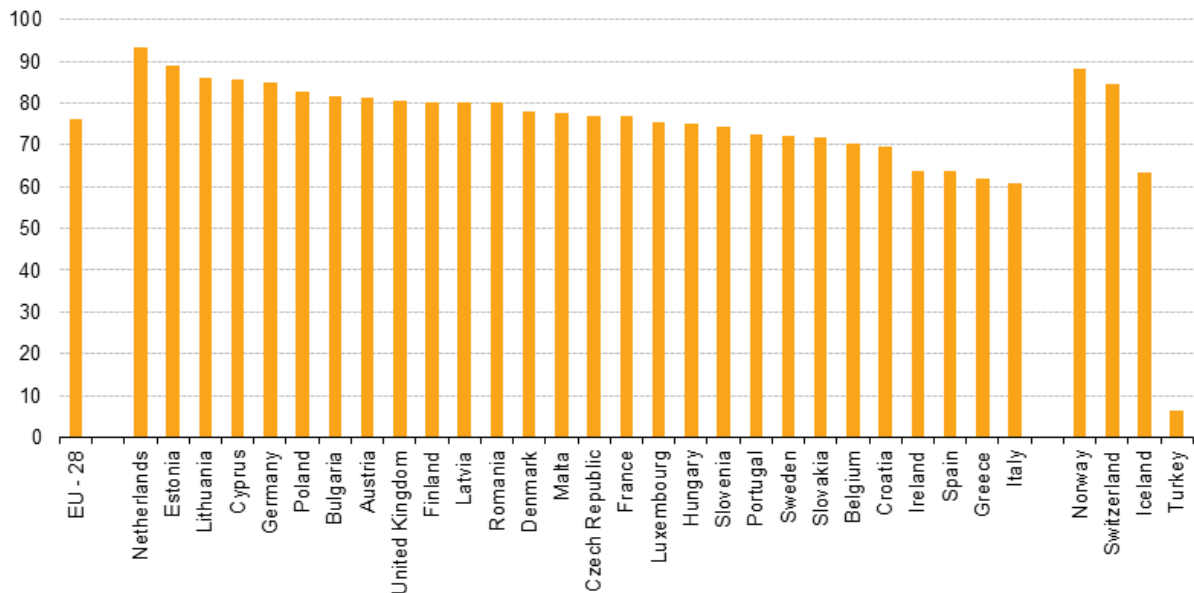
In the EU-28 in 2016, 77 % of young people did not change or would not be willing to change their place of residence for a job. Figure 2 shows that the willingness to move residence correlates somewhat with education level and strongly with status in employment (i.e. employed or unemployed). Among those who had a job at the time of the survey, 90 % had not changed their place of residence in order to get their current job. This 'did not move for the job' rate decreases with increased education level (93.2 % for low education, 84.6 % for high education) that is, persons with high education move residence for professional reasons more often than others. Among those who were unemployed at the time of the survey, 23 % of those with high education would change residence inside the country and 16 % would change residence inside the EU to get a job. The corresponding numbers for persons with medium level education and low level education were a bit lower, at 21.3 % (low education) and 20.4 % (medium education) for moving inside the country and at 11.3 % (medium education) and 10.2 % (low education) for moving to another EU country. People are more willing to change residence inside their countries than to move to another EU country for work purposes.

<sup>2</sup>Percentage calculations exclude item non-response.



**Figure 2 : People aged 20-34 by readiness to move residence in order to find or have a job, education level and labour market status, EU-28, 2016 (% of concerned labour market status and education level). Source: Eurostat (lfsa\_16move4j)**

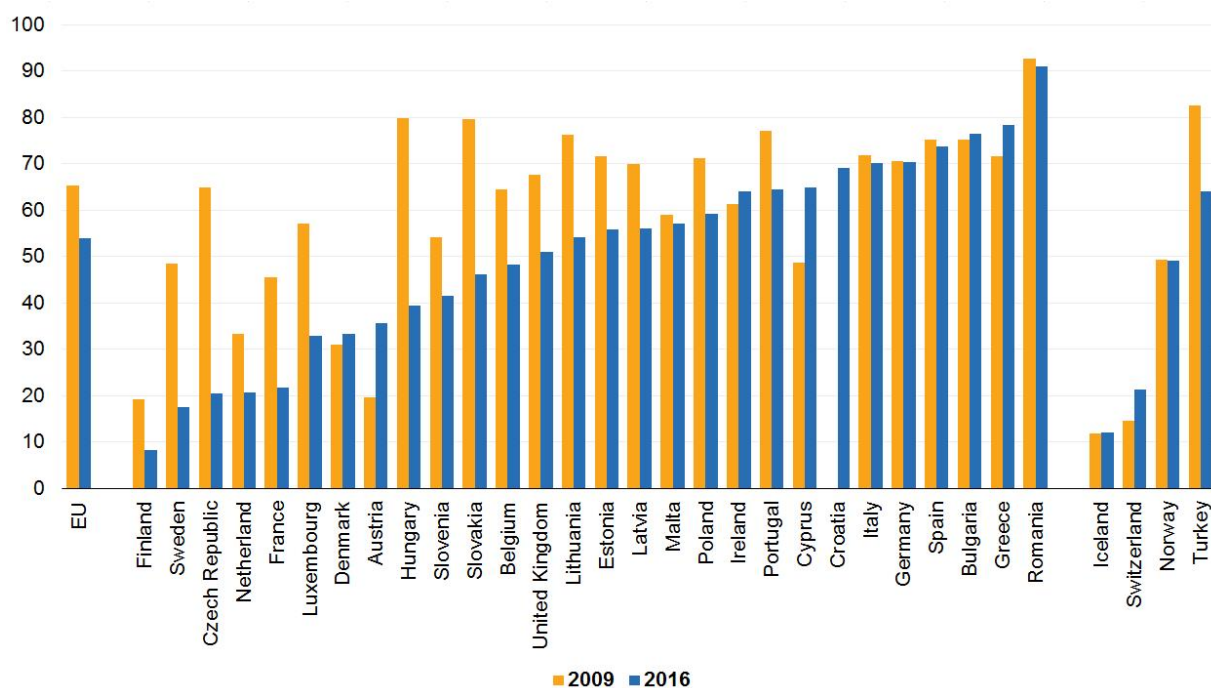
Regarding commuting, 76 % of young people in the EU-28 are not currently commuting or would not be willing to commute for longer than one hour each way between home and work. Among the EU Member States this rate was highest in the Netherlands (93%) and lowest in Italy (61%). Among all the countries covered by the survey the lowest rate was in Turkey (6%), meaning that practically all young people in Turkey are willing to travel at least one hour each way between home and work every day.



**Figure 3 : People not having or not willing to have more than one hour travel time each way to work, 2016 (% of people aged 15-34). Source: Eurostat (lfsa\_16cmt4j)**

## Half worked while studying

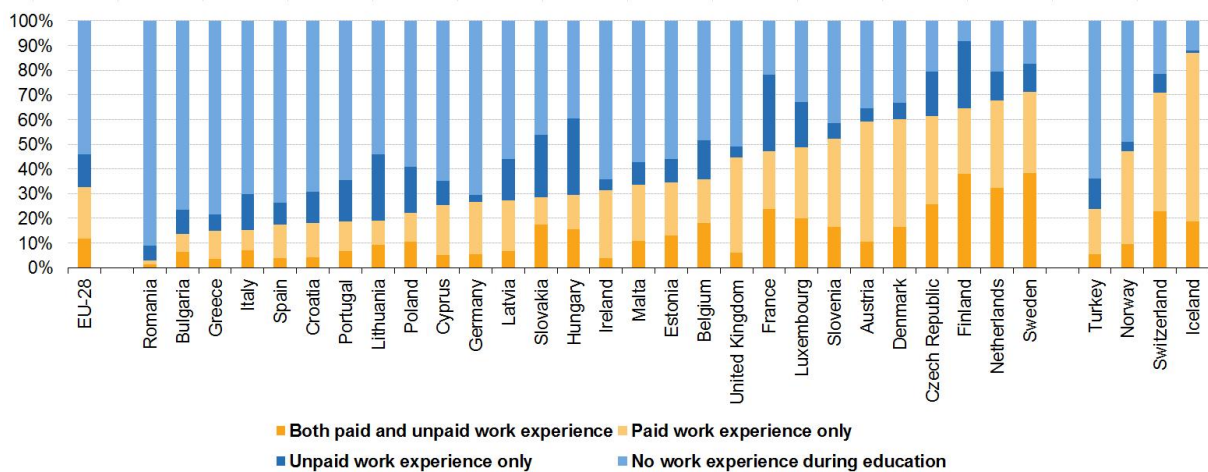
In 2016, 54 % of young people in the EU-28 did not work at all while studying for their highest completed qualification, neither paid nor unpaid. The largest rate of non-working students was in Romania (91 %) followed by Greece (78 %), Bulgaria (77 %) and Spain (74 %), while the smallest rates were in Finland (8 %) and Sweden (17 %). The 2009 and 2016 rates are not fully comparable due to slightly different definitions,<sup>3</sup> but it can be reasonably concluded that working while studying has become more widespread over time (Figure 4). In the EU the rate of young people not working while studying for their highest completed qualification decreased from 65 % (EU-27) in 2009 to 54 % (EU-28) in 2016.



**Figure 4 : People aged 15-34 who did not work while studying for their highest qualification, 2009 and 2016 (% of people aged 15-34 who had completed any formal education). Source: Eurostat customized data extraction**

Close to a third of the respondents had paid work experience while studying (Figure 5) with the highest rates in Sweden (71 %), the Netherlands (68 %) and Finland (65 %) as well as in Iceland (87 %) and Switzerland (71 %). Among the Member States, Austria is the country with the highest rate of young people with only paid work experience (49 %) while studying. Lithuania, Hungary and Romania are the only countries where the percentage of people with unpaid work experience is higher than the percentage of people with paid work experience. Looking at the share of people with only unpaid work experience, the rate is lower than 15 % in a large majority of the countries (21 of 32 countries). The countries with a high rate of people with only unpaid work experience are France and Hungary (both 31 %).

<sup>3</sup>Variable WORKEDUC in 2009 No work or work less than 1 month per year. Variable WORKEXP in 2016 Persons not working at all during studies.

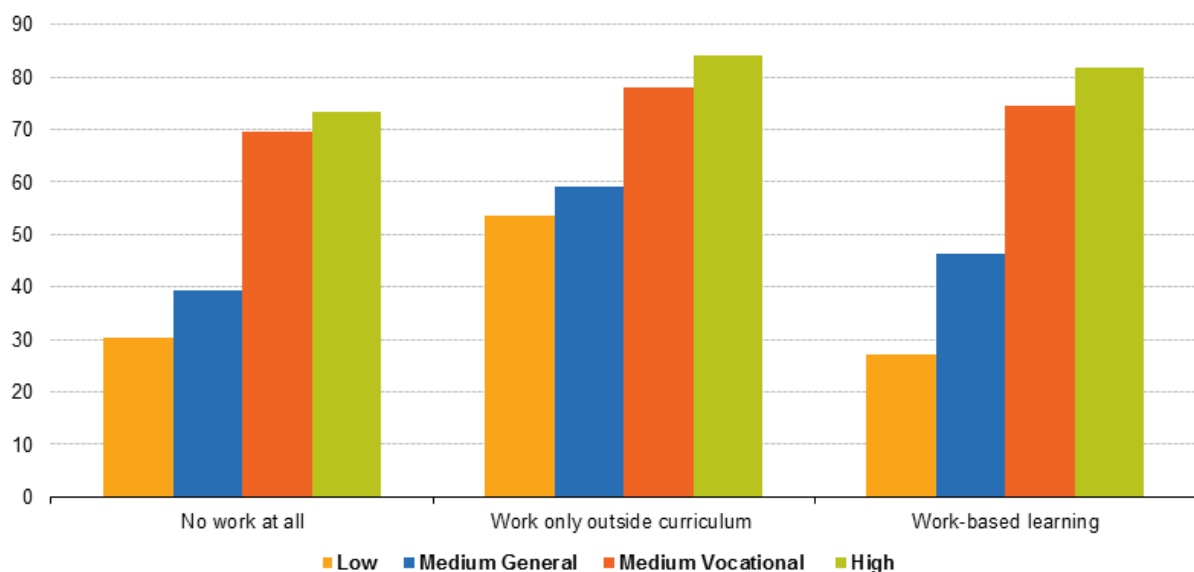


**Figure 5 : Young people by work experience while studying, 2016 (% of people aged 15-34 who had completed any formal education). Source: Eurostat (Ifso\_16workexp)**

## Labour market outcomes by type of education

### High education means high employment rate

The employment rate was lower for people who did not work at all while studying for their highest completed qualification than for those who did (Figure 6).



**Figure 6 : Employment rate of people aged 15-34 by education type and work experience while studying , EU-28, 2016. Source: Eurostat (Ifso\_16emprt)**

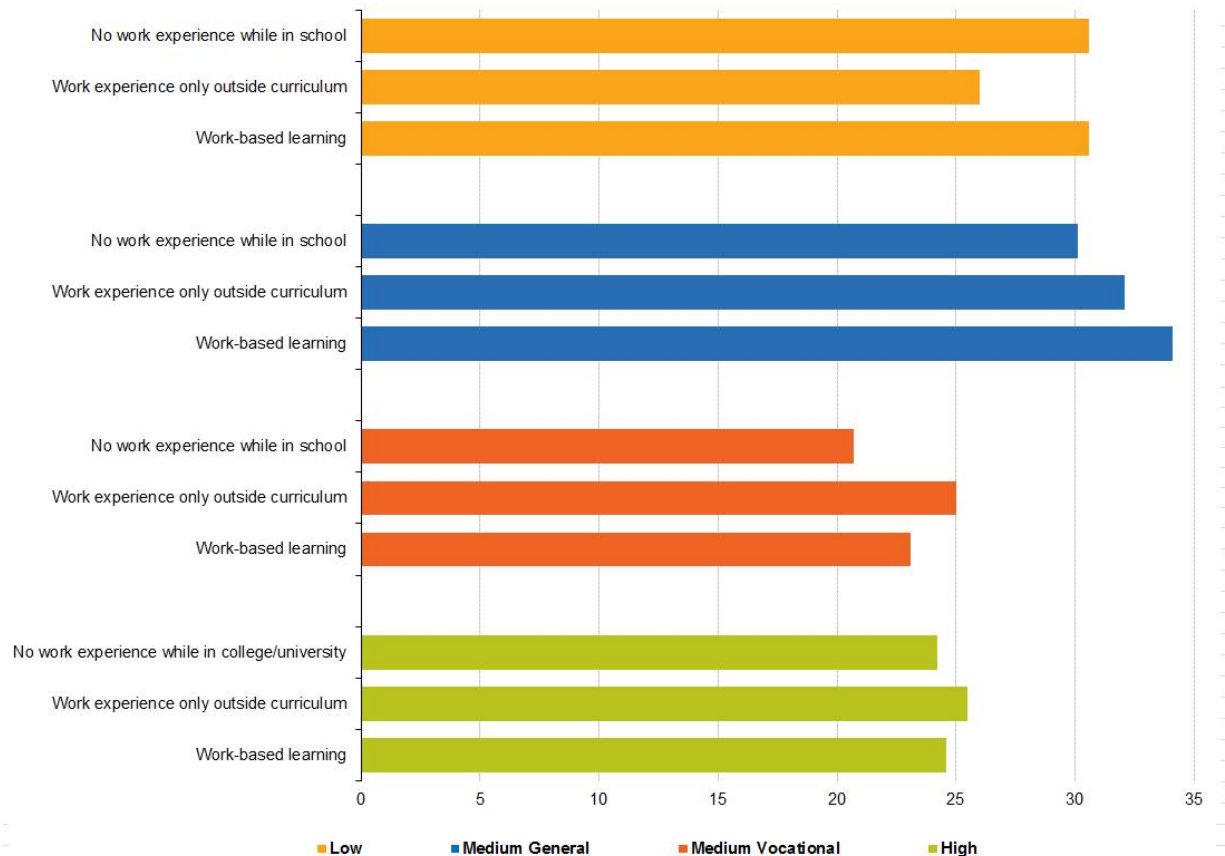
Perhaps surprisingly, work-based learning (work as a structured part of the education) correlates with a lower employment rate than work experience outside the curriculum does, no matter the education level.

Furthermore it can be observed that education level and type matters greatly: the employment rate of those with a high education is always highest, followed by those with a medium level vocational education, then by those with a medium level general education, and the low level education at the bottom. The impact of the education level on the employment rate is however less pronounced for people having worked only outside the curriculum while studying.

## Low education means low job quality

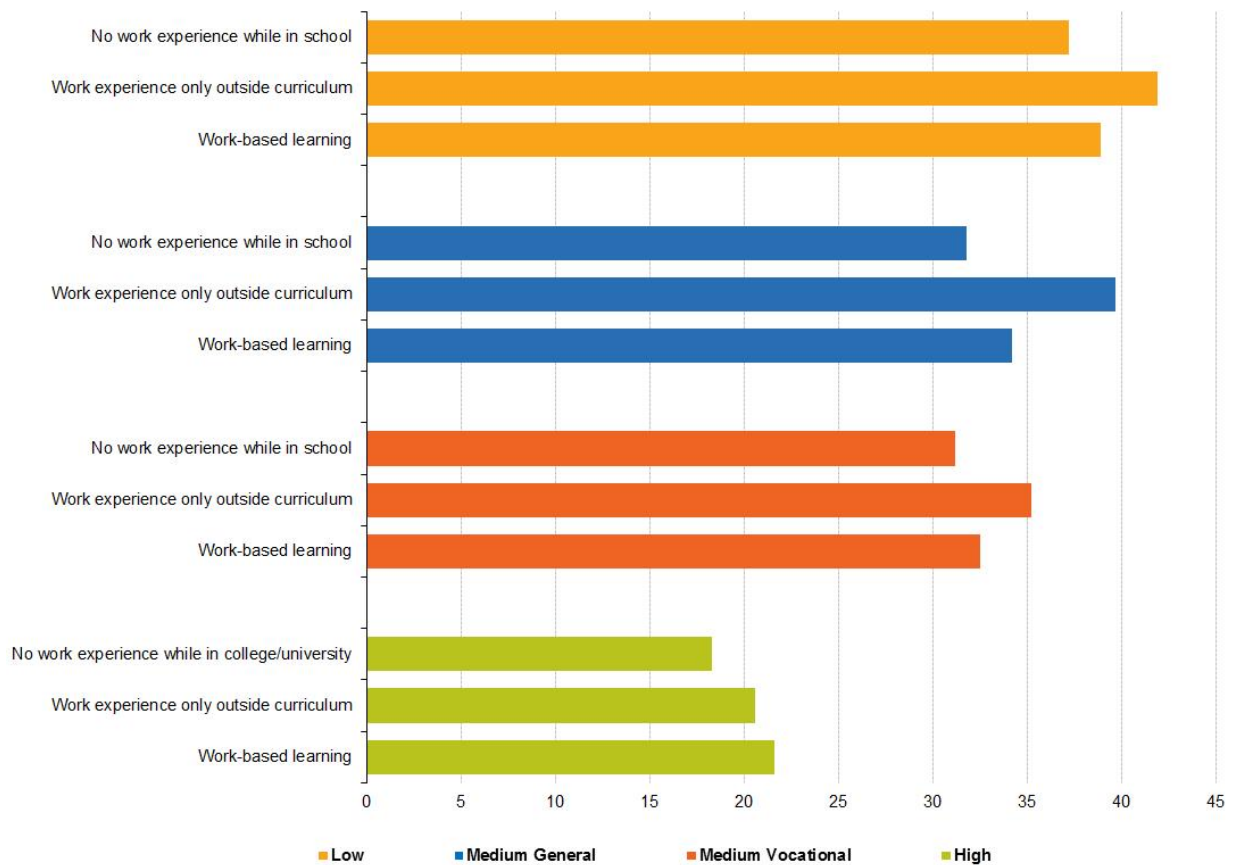
Quality of employment can be measured in many ways, three of which are presented in this article.

Figure 7 shows that persons with medium level vocational training are least subjected to short job tenures (defined here as less than one year), and furthermore that among these persons it is those with no work experience while in school that are in the best position, followed by those who had work based learning (i.e. work as a structured part of the curriculum). Persons with medium level general education are worst off on this indicator of short job tenures. It can therefore be reasonably concluded that the orientation of the education (general vs vocational) is more important than the length of the education (low vs medium vs high). There is no clear pattern coming from having had work experience or not.



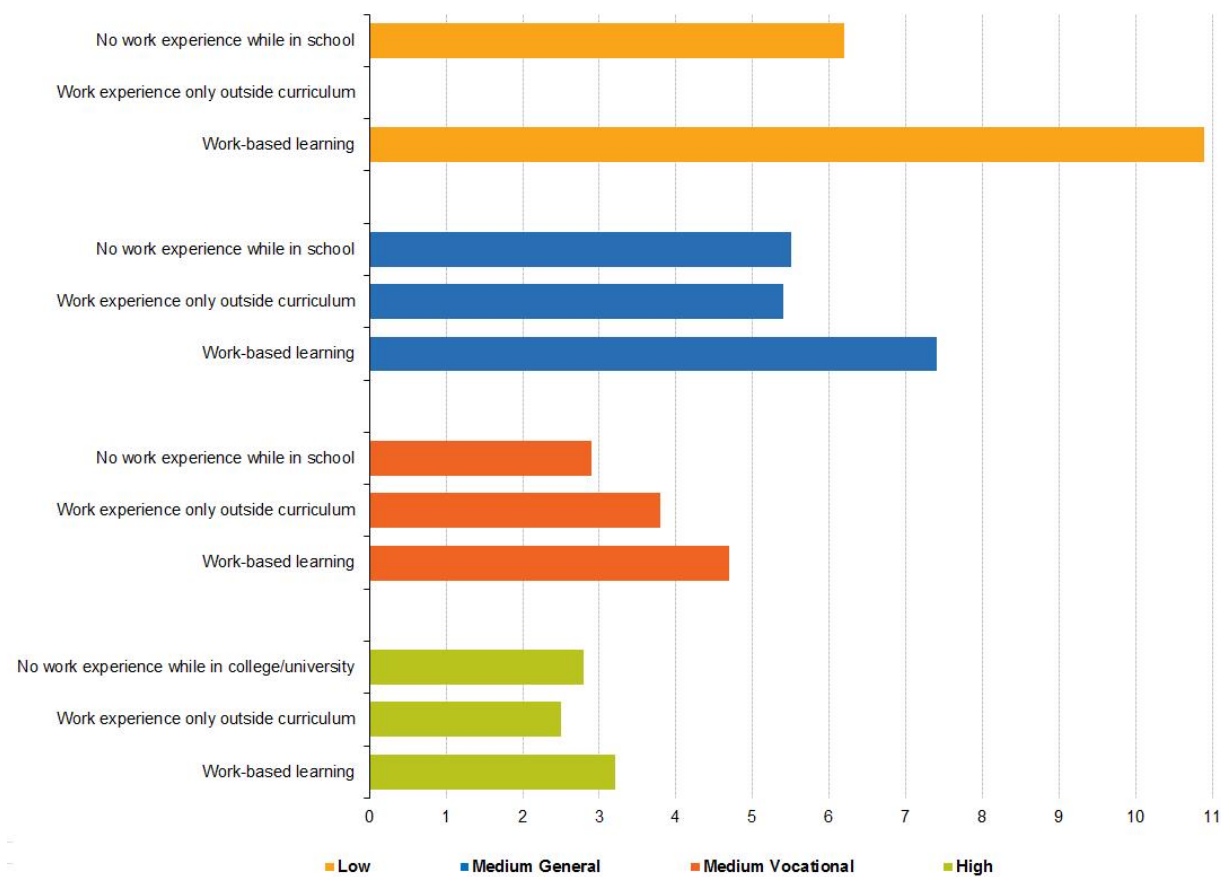
**Figure 7 : Employed persons with job tenure less than one year by education level and work while studying, persons aged 20-34, EU-28, 2016 (% of total employed persons). Source: Eurostat (lfso\_16jobten)**

In Figure 8, which shows how many persons work during weekends, it can be seen that the length of the education is the best predictor for the indicator: those with low education are twice as likely to work during weekends as those with high education, and the persons with medium level education are in the middle. Having had work experience only outside the curriculum has some correlation with more weekend work, but the effect is not strong.



**Figure 8 : Employed persons working on weekends by education level and work while studying, persons aged 20-34, EU-28, 2016 (% of total employed persons). Source: Eurostat (ifso\_16wkendw)**

Clear education level effects are also found in Figure 9: precarious work (defined here as work contracts of maximum three months' duration) is much more common among persons with low education than among those with high education. Again, persons with medium level vocational education are better off than those with medium level general education. Work based learning correlates with more precarity for all education levels.

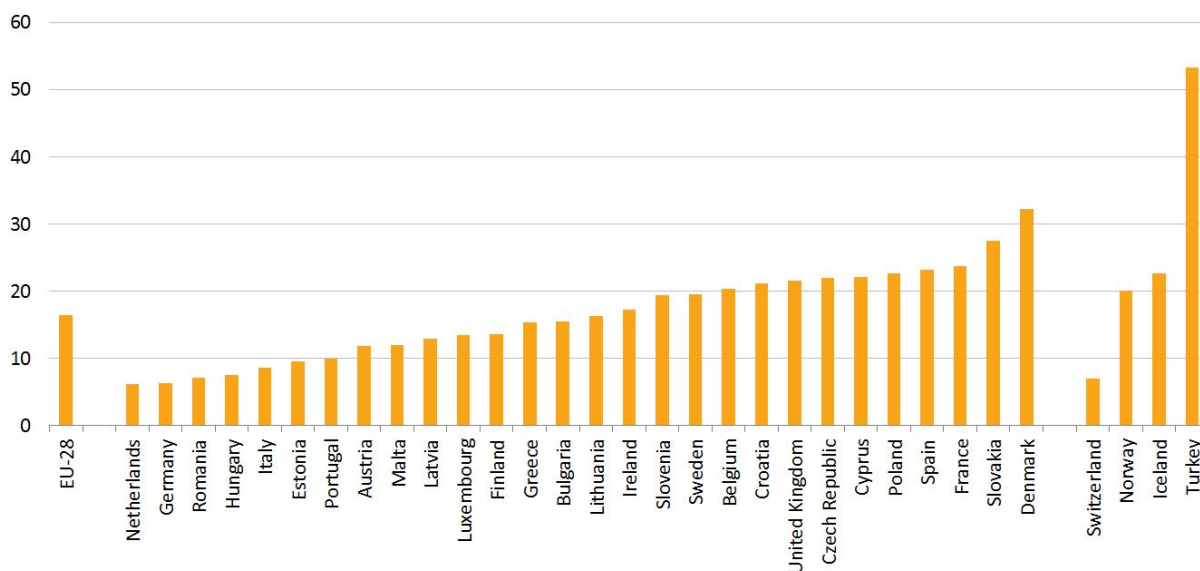


**Figure 9 : Precarious work by education level and work while studying, persons aged 20-34, EU-28, 2016 (% of employees). Source: Eurostat (lfso\_16precomp)**

### One in six work in jobs that do not fit their qualification level

Figure 10 presents education/job mismatch. At EU-level, 16 % of employed persons aged 15-34 reported in 2016 that their current main job does not correspond at all to their level of education. The mismatch between the current job and the education level was highest in Denmark (32 %) and Slovakia (27 %), followed by France (24 %), Spain and Poland (both 23 %). As regards the non-EU Member States, one out of two persons in Turkey also had this problem. On the other hand, the job mismatch levels were the lowest in the Netherlands and Germany (both 6 %), Romania, Hungary and Switzerland (all 7 %).





**Figure 10 : Education/job mismatch by country, 2016 (% of total employed persons). Source: Eurostat (lfso\_16oklev)**

**Working while studying increases the chance of finding a job later**

In the EU-28, the unemployment rate among young people without work experience during their education was 15.7 % while it was 8.1 % for persons with work experience outside the curriculum (Table 1). The unemployment rates ranged from 3.2 % (Germany, work based learning and work outside curriculum) to 37.2 % (Greece, no work experience). The results vary greatly among the countries, with the highest unemployment rates for young people with no work experience at all in Greece (37.2 %) and Spain (31.7 %). On the other hand, the lowest unemployment rates were for people with work experience: Germany (3.2 %), Poland (3.5 %, work only outside curriculum) and the United Kingdom (4.6 %, work based learning).

	Work only outside curriculum	Work-based learning	No work experience
<b>EU-28</b>	8.1	10.5	15.7
Belgium	8.2	9.1	18.3
Bulgaria	6.5(u)	6.5	11.9
Czech Republic	5.4	6.6	5.7
Denmark	8.0	7.3	14.6
Germany	3.2	3.2	6.5
Estonia	5.0(u)	6.3(u)	10.7
Ireland	6.3	8.4	18.9
Greece	19.3	27.6	37.2
Spain	17.3	19.8	31.7
France	13.0	14.7	21.0
Croatia	11.2(u)	20(u)	20.1
Italy	14.2	18.2	24.8
Cyprus	16.2	12.8	19.3
Latvia	10.3	7.3	14.3
Lithuania	8.2(u)	6.5	13.2
Luxembourg	:	10.0	12.2(u)
Hungary	5.0	5.7	15.0
Malta	:	:	7.9
Netherlands	6.1	5.6	14.6
Austria	5.8	6.6	12.5
Poland	3.5	9.3	10.2
Portugal	13.2	14.6	17.6
Romania	7.1(u)	10.0	9.9
Slovenia	9.8(u)	11.6	14.4
Slovakia	5.0	11.5	17.1
Finland	11.7	12.7	17.7
Sweden	10.3	9.2	19.8
United Kingdom	5.0	4.6	11.3
Iceland	6.1	:	:
Norway	6.0	3.8	11.9
Switzerland	7.3	5.6	8.3
Turkey	10.0	14.3	14.3

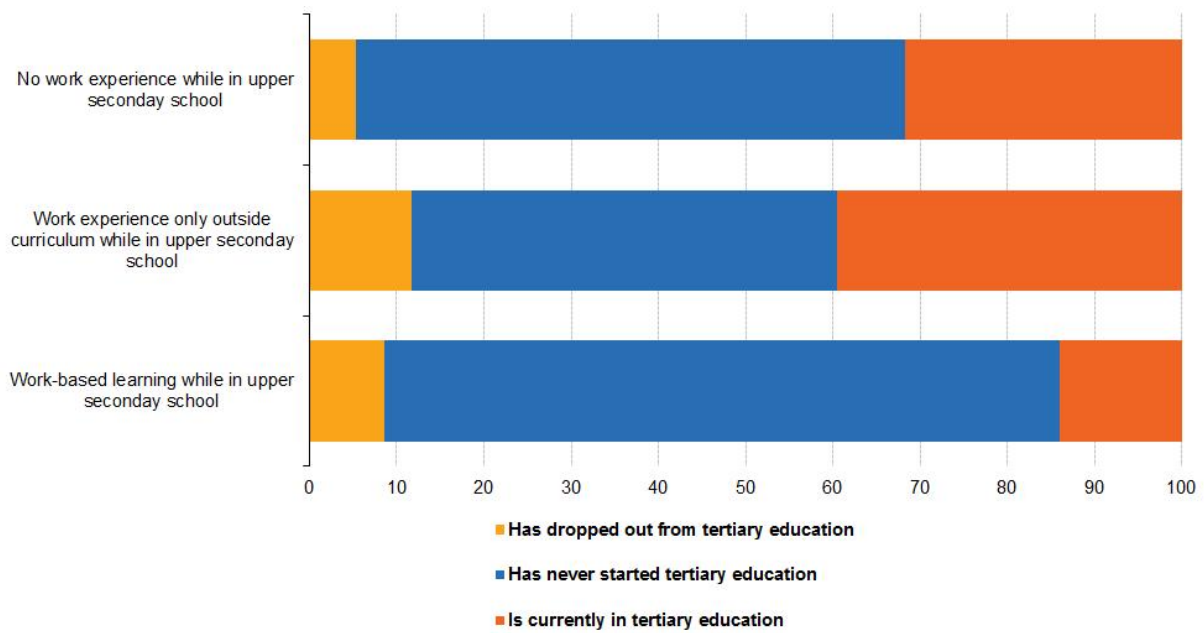
Note: (u) low reliability

Table 1 : Unemployment rate of people aged 15-34 rate by work while studying , EU-28, 2016. Source: Eurostat (lfso\_16unert)

### Highest dropout rate from tertiary education among those who had work based learning in secondary education

Figure 11 shows persons with completed medium level education and who had not (yet) completed tertiary education. Their decision on whether or not to continue their education is presented according to their previous work experience.

Among those who had work based learning during their secondary education, typically associated with vocational education, more than three quarters (77 %) never started tertiary education. Furthermore, 8 % started but dropped out, and 14 % were in tertiary education at the time of the survey. This means that about one third of those who started tertiary education did not complete their studies. The corresponding number for those who worked only outside the curriculum was one quarter, and for those who did not work at all it was one sixth.

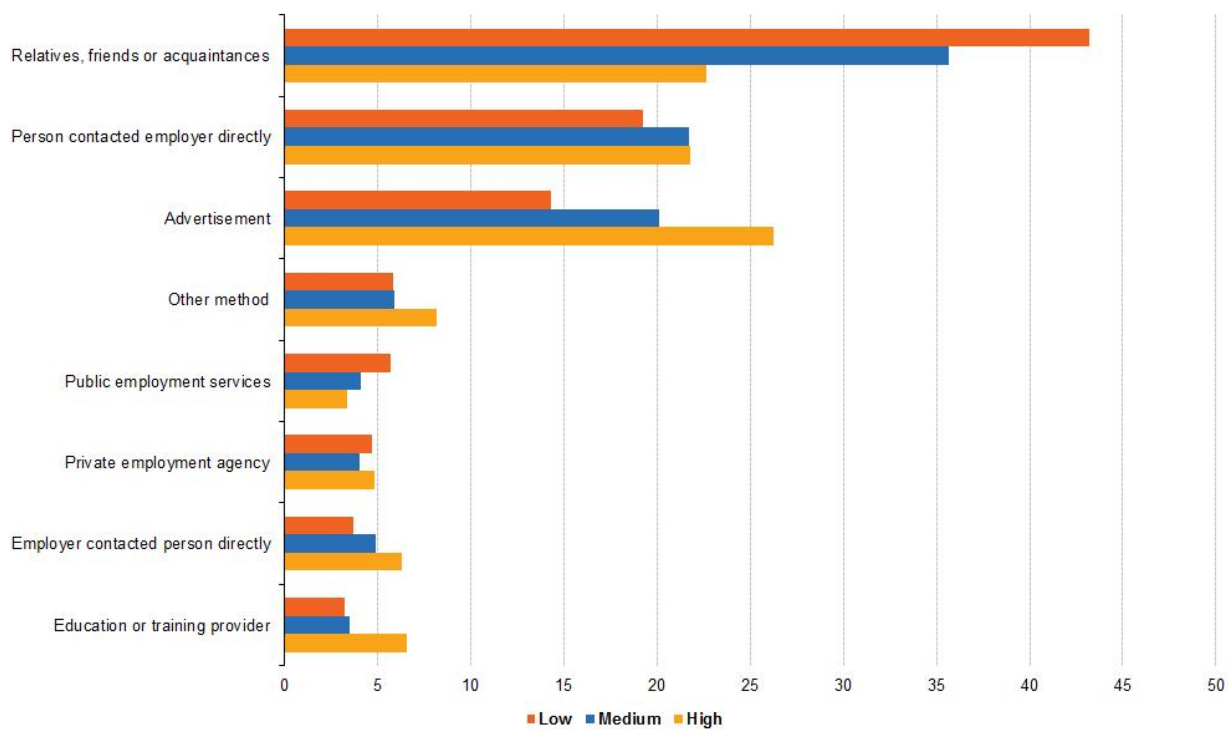


**Figure 11 : Tertiary education decisions by work experience while in secondary education, people aged 15-34 (% of work experience type). Source: Eurostat (lfsa\_16ymghied) and (lfsa\_16ymgnedns)] and (lfsa\_16ymgnednc)**

### One in five are content with the Public Employment Services

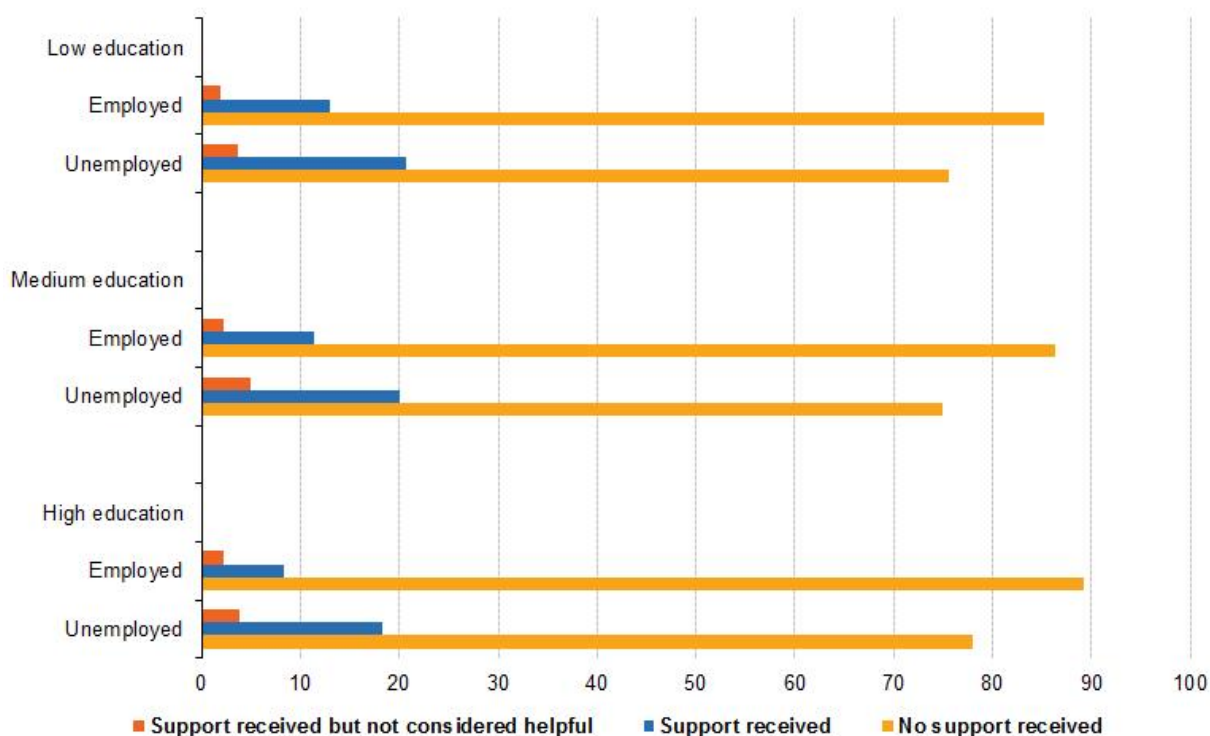
Although there are notable differences in the way persons found their current job, three methods are much more common than the other methods (Figure 12). No matter the education level, asking relatives, friends or acquaintances, contacting employers directly and using advertisements vastly outnumber the other methods.

The most used method for persons with low or medium level of education was clearly to ask relatives, friends or acquaintances. On the other hand, the most used methods among persons with high education was to read or place advertisements. Contacting employers directly is almost equally used across all education groups.



**Figure 12 : Methods used to find the current job, people aged 15-34 by education level, 2016 (% of people aged 15-34 who stated which method they used). Source: Eurostat (lfsq\_16findmet)**

Figure 13 also shows that the use of public employment services are low. About 20 % of persons aged 15-34 say they have received helpful support to find a job this way. Those who are unemployed are happier with the received support than those who are in employment. The education level does not influence this result to any noticeable degree.



**Figure 13 : Support for finding a job, people aged 15-34 by education level and status in employment, 2016 (% of people aged 15-34 who stated their level of received help). Source: Eurostat (Ifso\_16supemp) and (Ifso\_16supnemp)**

## Data sources

The data source for this article is the European Labour Force Survey ad hoc module 2016, covering all Member States, as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

## Context

The [European Commission's EU2020 Strategy](#) has several goals for education and labour market participation for young people:

- at least 40% of young people should have a tertiary education
- the employment rate of people aged 20-34 within 3 years after their graduation should be at least 82%
- no more than 10% of early leavers from education and training.

The [Youth Guarantee](#) is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

The [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training](#) is working to increase the quality of vocational training in Europe by making it more accessible and relevant to the needs of the labour market. This is a key component in reducing the number of early leavers from education and training. The [Bruges communiqué](#), as part of the [Copenhagen Process for European co-operation on vocational education and training](#), underlines the need for apprenticeships to provide labour market skills.

The European Council is promoting [cross-border EU labour mobility](#) through the Your first EURES job programme and the Programme for employment and social innovation.

## Other articles

[EU Labour Force Survey](#)

## Database

- [Employment and unemployment \(Labour Force Survey\) \(employ\)](#) , see:

[LFS ad-hoc modules \(lfs\)](#)

## Dedicated section

- [Labour Force Survey](#)

## Methodology

[Metadata](#)

## Legislation

- [Regulation \(EC\) No 0577/1998](#)
- [Summaries of EU Legislation: Labour force survey](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 0459/2015](#)

## External links

- [General Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion](#)
- [General Directorate for Education and Culture](#)
- [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training](#)

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