

# Culture statistics - culture-related education

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in June 2025.  
Planned article update: June 2026.*

## Highlights

In 2023, 13.8% of tertiary students in the EU were studying in culture-related fields. Between 2018 and 2023, among all students pursuing culture-related fields of education, the number of students in arts increased the most. Women accounted for close to two-thirds of all tertiary students in culture-related fields.

This article forms part of the [Culture statistics](#) online publication. It describes 2 areas that link education with culture

- tertiary students who are studying culture-related fields
- the role played by education in facilitating cultural exchanges, for example, by learning foreign languages

## Tertiary students in culture-related fields of education

### Defining tertiary students in culture-related fields of education

Universities and similar institutions provide tertiary education within the higher education sector. According to the [international standard classification of education \(ISCED\)](#), it is classified as ISCED levels 5 to 8.

The following fields are considered to be culture-related

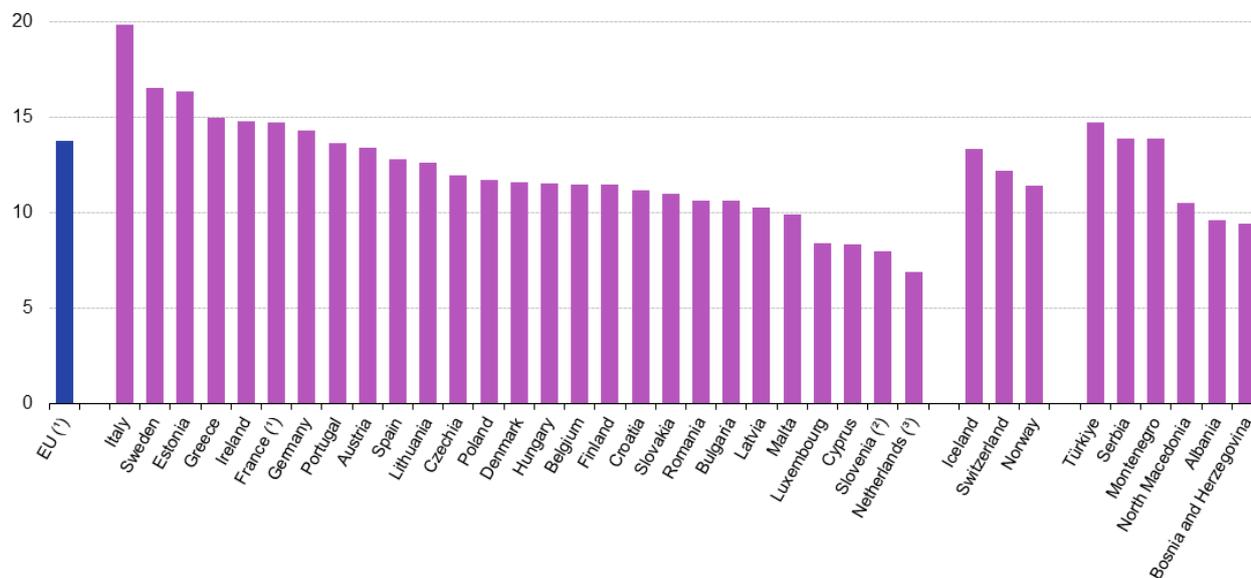
- arts
- humanities and languages
- journalism and information
- architecture and town planning

### Tertiary students – around 2.6 million studying in culture-related fields across the EU in 2023

In 2023 there were around 2.6 million students in the EU studying in culture-related fields. This represented 13.8% of all tertiary students in the EU (see Figure 1). The share of students in culture-related fields was equal to or higher than the EU average in 7 EU countries. The largest share was in Italy at 19.8%, followed by Sweden, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, France and Germany. The smallest shares of tertiary students in culture-related fields were in Malta (9.9%), Luxembourg (8.4%), Cyprus (8.4%), Slovenia (8.0%) and the Netherlands (6.9%).

## Tertiary students in culture-related fields of education, 2023

(%, share of all tertiary students)



(\*) Definition differs.

(†) Culture-related education, number of students - architecture and town planning not included.

(‡) Data are limited to the overall number of students in the 'Arts and Humanities' fields of education. Detailed data, broken down by Arts, Humanities and Languages, as well as data on the number of students pursuing "Journalism and information" and "Architecture and town planning" are not available.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ\_uae\_enrt03)

eurostat

**Figure 1: Tertiary students in culture-related fields of education, 2023** Source: Eurostat (educ\_uae\_enrt03)

### Between 2018 and 2023, the number of people studying arts increased the most among all those pursuing culture-related fields of education

Table 1 compares the number of students in 2023 with those in 2018 at national level. It shows that in this timeframe, 11 of the 25 EU countries with available data saw an increase in the number of students in culture-related fields. An increase in the total number of tertiary students was seen in 18 EU countries.

The highest increases in the number of students in culture-related fields were recorded in Sweden (18%) and Portugal (17%). An increase in the number of students in culture-related fields of education was also observed in nine other EU countries. Conversely, Luxembourg (-24%), Denmark (-19%), Poland and Slovenia (both -15%) recorded the largest decreases. In Denmark the number of students decreased in all culture-related fields of education.

The highest increase in the number of students was observed in arts. This growth concerned 19 out of 25 EU countries. Luxembourg, Malta, Sweden and Greece saw the most significant growth in arts students, with 43%, 41%, 28% and 27%, respectively. 'Architecture and town planning' saw an increase in 13 EU countries, 'Journalism and information' in 9 countries and 'Humanities and languages' in 6 countries. The most significant decreases among all culture-related fields of education were seen in 'Architecture and town planning', dropping by 57% in Lithuania and by 50% in Malta between 2018 and 2023.

Number of students in culture-related fields of education, 2018 and 2023  
(thousand, % of change)

	2018						2023						% of change					
	Total number of students	Culture-related education – number of students	Arts	Humanities and languages	Journalism and information	Architecture and town planning	Total number of students	Culture-related education – number of students	Arts	Humanities and languages	Journalism and information	Architecture and town planning	Total number of students	Culture-related education – number of students	Arts	Humanities and languages	Journalism and information	Architecture and town planning
EU (1)(*)	17 502	2 062	..	..	..	..	18 823	2 593	718	1206	257	230	8	26	..	..	..	..
Belgium (†)	516	59	23	20	6	9	551	63	27	19	6	11	7	8	15	-3	-9	26
Bulgaria	236	23	8	10	3	2	221	23	9	10	2	2	-6	3	16	-4	-13	15
Czechia	329	42	12	14	5	7	339	41	12	16	4	5	3	-4	0	12	-14	-35
Denmark	311	43	11	22	6	4	296	35	10	16	5	3	-4	-19	-13	-27	-9	-8
Germany (1)(†)	3 128	504	98	290	37	54	3 336	477	98	260	36	60	7	-5	0	-10	-2	11
Estonia	46	7	3	3	1	1	44	7	3	3	1	1	-4	-4	0	-1	-34	5
Ireland (†)	231	36	22	9	1	2	243	36	22	9	1	3	5	1	-1	3	117	23
Greece	767	121	23	67	6	12	873	130	29	70	8	14	14	8	27	5	28	16
Spain	2 052	284	119	109	32	25	2 372	304	130	111	37	25	16	7	10	2	15	1
France (1)(†)	2 619	405	112	228	33	27	2 853	420	124	226	36	26	9	4	11	-1	7	-3
Croatia	165	19	4	10	4	1	159	18	5	8	3	1	-4	-9	16	-17	-18	24
Italy (†)	1 896	311	..	..	..	..	2 217	440	96	207	63	17	17	..	..	..	..	..
Cyprus	47	5	1	2	1	1	53	4	1	2	0	1	12	-5	1	-3	-22	-11
Latvia	82	8	3	2	1	1	75	8	4	2	1	1	-8	2	12	-4	-11	-4
Lithuania	118	14	5	5	2	2	103	13	5	5	2	1	-13	-6	3	-10	25	-57
Luxembourg	7	1	0	1	0	0	8	1	0	1	0	0	13	-24	43	-31	-41	-22
Hungary	283	32	7	16	4	4	290	33	8	16	5	5	2	5	10	-3	26	9
Malta	16	2	1	1	0	0	21	2	1	1	0	0	36	6	41	-18	28	-50
Netherlands (1)(†)	890	61	..	..	..	..	985	68	..	..	..	..	11	..	..	..	..	..
Austria	430	62	16	27	6	11	436	58	16	23	5	11	1	-6	0	-12	-14	-2
Poland	1 493	187	34	99	18	28	1 356	158	38	80	15	21	-9	-15	10	-20	-16	-25
Portugal	356	50	22	14	7	7	428	58	26	18	8	7	20	17	15	26	18	2
Romania	539	59	12	37	5	5	539	57	13	34	4	6	0	-3	9	-7	-19	16
Slovenia (†)	77	7	3	3	1	1	80	6	3	3	1	1	5	-15	3	-23	-12	..
Slovakia	144	17	4	7	4	1	140	15	4	6	4	1	-3	-10	4	-13	-14	-9
Finland	295	39	14	21	2	3	328	38	14	18	2	3	11	-4	7	-12	-11	3
Sweden	431	67	16	35	8	6	476	79	21	42	8	7	10	18	28	20	1	3
Iceland	18	3	0	2	0	0	20	3	1	2	0	0	14	8	22	2	-8	100
Norway	289	35	10	18	5	2	313	36	10	17	5	2	8	1	-2	-1	0	20
Switzerland	307	41	11	18	3	8	336	41	12	17	3	9	9	1	9	-5	-5	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina (†)	95	8	..	..	..	..	77	7	2	4	1	0	-19	-13	..	..	..	..
Montenegro	..	..	..	..	..	..	21	3	1	1	0	0	..	..	..	..	..	..
North Macedonia	60	10	2	6	0	2	58	6	2	3	0	0	-3	-38	8	-38	-65	-93
Albania	..	..	..	..	..	..	121	12	2	6	1	3	..	..	..	..	..	..
Serbia	256	34	8	19	3	4	249	35	11	16	3	5	-3	1	38	-17	-7	18
Türkiye	7 560	1 074	197	732	37	92	7 056	1 036	259	634	64	71	-7	-4	32	-13	73	-23

Values indicating the number of students in culture-related education also includes students from those fields of education which are not specified in the table: arts and humanities not further defined and inter-disciplinary programmes involving arts and humanities.

(1) 2023: definiton differs.

(†) Culture-related education, number of students - data are limited to the overall number of students in the 'Arts and Humanities' fields of education.

(\*) 2023: break in time series.

(†) 2020: break in time series.

(†) 2018: definiton differs.

(\*) 2018: Culture-related education, number of students - data are limited to the overall number of students in the 'Arts and Humanities' fields of education.

(†) Culture-related education, number of students - architecture and town planning not included.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ\_uoe\_ert03)

**Table 1: Number of students in culture-related fields of education, 2018 and 2023 Source: Eurostat (educ\_uoe\_ert03)**

## In most EU countries, the highest number of students in culture-related tertiary education were enrolled in 'Humanities and languages'

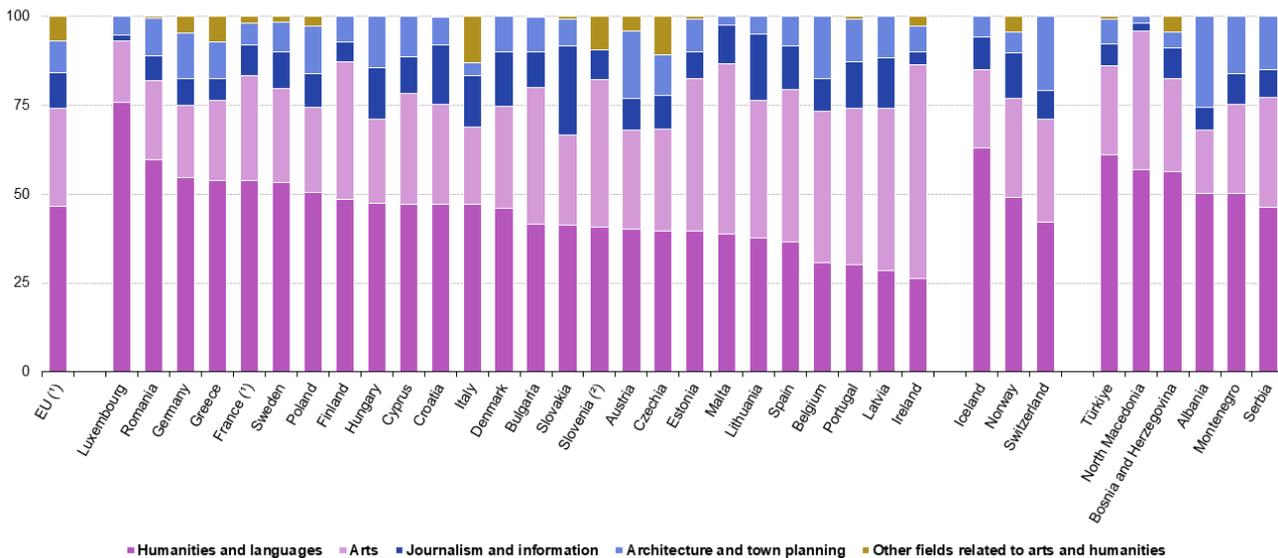
Figure 2 provides a breakdown of culture-related fields that tertiary students studied in 2023. 'Humanities and languages' was the most common field of study in the EU (more than 1.2 million tertiary students), representing almost half (46.5%) of all tertiary students in culture-related disciplines. Otherwise, 27.7% of the EU students in culture-related fields in 2023 were enrolled in 'Arts', while 9.9% were studying 'Journalism and information studies', 8.9% were studying 'Architecture and town planning' and 7.0% were studying in 'Other fields related to arts and humanities' (the latter include arts and humanities not further defined, together with interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving arts and humanities).

'Humanities and languages' account for the greatest share of tertiary students in culture-related fields. In 2023, this was observed in 17 of the 26 EU countries with available data, with the greatest share recorded in Luxembourg (75.8%), followed by Romania (59.7%) and Germany (54.5%). In the remaining 9 countries (where 'Humanities and languages' were not the most common subjects), 'Arts' had the greatest share of tertiary students in culture-related fields. Ireland was the only EU country where 'Arts' was chosen by more than half (60.2%) of all students in culture-related fields.

The largest shares of tertiary students in 'Journalism and information' were reported in Slovakia (25.2%), followed by Lithuania (18.5%) and Croatia (17.0%), while the largest shares for 'Architecture and town planning' were reported in Austria (18.9%) and Belgium (17.5%).

## Distribution of tertiary students in culture-related fields of education, 2023

(%, share of all tertiary students in culture-related fields)



Note: the category of other fields related to arts and humanities includes arts and humanities not further defined and inter-disciplinary programmes involving arts and humanities. Data not available for the Netherlands.

(†) Definition differs.

(‡) Culture-related education, number of students - architecture and town planning not included.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ\_uae\_enrt03)

eurostat

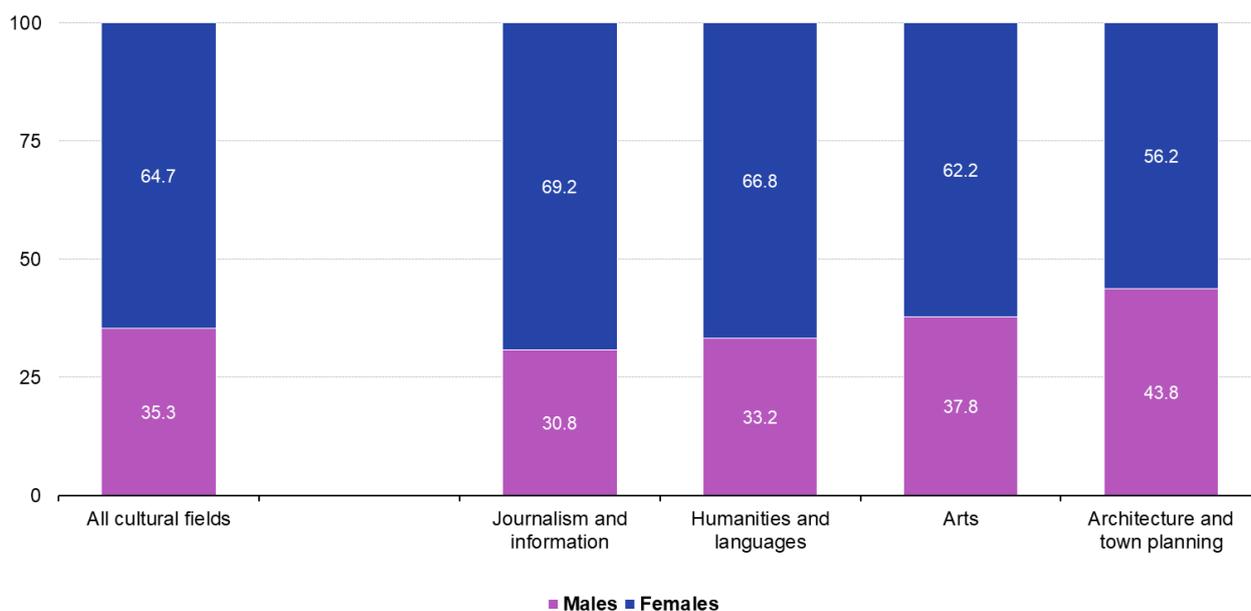
**Figure 2: Distribution of tertiary students in culture-related fields of education, 2023** Source: Eurostat (educ\_uae\_enrt03)

### Women accounted for most tertiary students in each of the culture-related fields of study

In 2023, there were more female than male tertiary education students in the EU studying culture-related fields, with women accounting for 64.7% of the total (see Figure 3). The share of women was slightly greater among those studying 'Journalism and information' (69.2%) and 'Humanities and languages' (66.8%), while the gap between the sexes was much less pronounced for those studying 'Architecture and town planning', where women accounted for 56.2% of all students.

## Tertiary students in culture-related fields of education, by sex, EU, 2023

(%)



Note: the EU aggregate does not include all Member States.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ\_uoe\_enrt03)

eurostat 

**Figure 3: Tertiary students in culture-related fields of education, by sex, EU, 2023** Source: Eurostat (educ\_uoe\_enrt03)

## Foreign languages

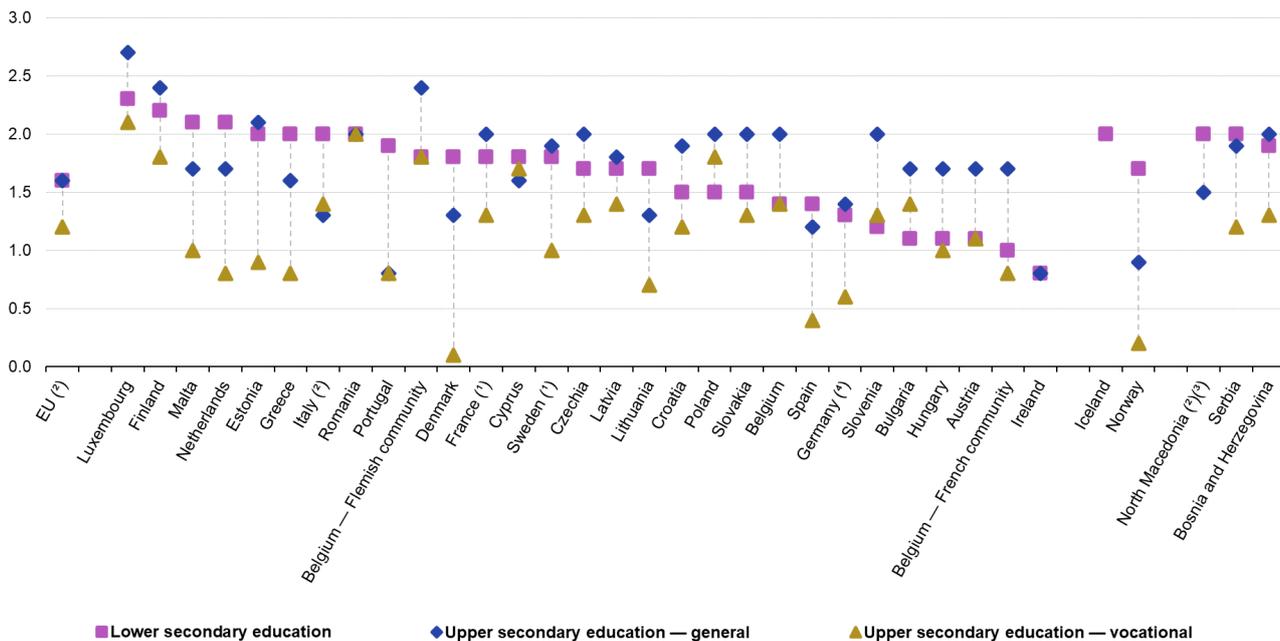
**In 2023, secondary school pupils in Luxembourg, Romania and Finland were taught at least 2 foreign languages on average**

- In 2023, the average number of foreign languages learnt by pupils in lower secondary education (ISCED level 2) was higher than 2 in Luxembourg (2.3), Finland (2.2), Malta and the Netherlands (2.1). Ireland (0.8) recorded the lowest average number of foreign languages at ISCED level 2.
- The average number of foreign languages studied by pupils in upper secondary general education (ISCED level 3) peaked at 2.7 in Luxembourg. It was higher than 2 in Finland, the Flemish community of Belgium and Estonia. By contrast, Portuguese and Irish pupils in upper secondary general education were studying just 0.8 foreign languages on average.

Generally, there was less focus on teaching foreign languages in vocational compared with upper secondary general education. Poland, Italy, Cyprus, Portugal and Romania did not show significant differences regarding the number of foreign languages between these 2 educational paths. The average number of foreign languages studied by pupils enrolled in upper secondary vocational education in Estonia, Portugal, the Netherlands, Greece, the French community of Belgium, Lithuania, Germany, Spain and Denmark was less than 1.0 (see Figure 4).

## Average number of foreign languages studied per pupil in secondary education, 2023

(number)



(\*) Definition differs.

(†) Upper secondary education — vocational: definition differs.

(‡) Upper secondary education — general: definition differs.

(§) Lower secondary education — definition differs.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ\_uoe\_lang03)

eurostat

**Figure 4: Average number of foreign languages studied per pupil in secondary education, 2023** Source: Eurostat (educ\_uoe\_lang03)

### English is the most common foreign language taught to upper secondary pupils in the EU

Table 2 shows that English was by far the most taught foreign language in upper secondary general education in the EU. The next most taught foreign languages were Spanish, German and French.

In 2023, across most EU countries 96% of upper secondary general education pupils were learning English as a foreign language. In 8 countries, this figure reached 100%, meaning that all pupils were studying English. The exceptions, where fewer than 90% of pupils learnt English as a foreign language, were Bulgaria (87%), Denmark (79%) and Portugal (67%).

In addition to English, looking at the next most frequently studied foreign language in upper secondary general education in each of the EU countries, German appears 10 times and French and Spanish 6 times. Close geographic and historical ties also influence which foreign languages pupils learn. In 2023, the second most frequently taught foreign language in the [Baltic countries](#) was Russian, in Malta it was Italian, and in Finland Swedish.

Four most-learnt foreign languages in upper secondary general education, 2023  
(%, share of pupils learning each language)

	First	Second	Third	Fourth
EU	English 96	Spanish 27	German 21	French 21
Belgium (*)	English 96	French 49	Dutch; Flemish 36	German 18
Belgium — French community (*)	English 91	Dutch; Flemish 70	Spanish 8	German 4
Belgium — Flemish community (*)	English 100	French 100	German 33	Spanish 2
Bulgaria	English 87	German 35	Russian 25	Spanish 13
Czechia	English 100	German 62	Spanish 18	French 11
Denmark	English 79	German 28	Spanish 17	French 8
Germany	English 93	Spanish 21	French 19	Italian 2
Estonia	English 98	Russian 65	Estonian 19	German 18
Ireland	French 44	Spanish 20	German 17	Italian 2
Greece	English 99	French 33	German 32	Italian 0.1
Spain	English 98	French 20	German 3	Portuguese 0.3
France (*)	English 100	Spanish 74	German 19	Italian 7
Croatia	English 100	German 59	Italian 23	Spanish 5
Italy	English 97	Spanish 15	French 13	German 7
Cyprus	English 98	French 52	Russian 6	Spanish 5
Latvia	English 91	Russian 55	German 26	French 5
Lithuania	English 98	Russian 25	German 6	French 2
Luxembourg (†)	English 90	German 85	French 83	Spanish 8
Hungary	English 90	German 54	French 8	Italian 8
Malta	English 100	Italian 35	French 16	Spanish 11
Netherlands	English 100	German 38	French 27	Spanish 6
Austria	English 99	French 27	Spanish 24	Italian 15
Poland	English 96	German 55	Spanish 19	French 11
Portugal	English 67	Spanish 9	French 2	German 1
Romania	English 100	French 80	German 17	Spanish 2
Slovenia	English 99	German 62	Spanish 18	Italian 12
Slovakia	English 99	German 56	Spanish 16	Russian 15
Finland (‡)	English 100	Swedish 90	Spanish 13	German 13
Sweden (‡)	English 100	Spanish 43	German 19	French 15
Norway	English 37	Spanish 25	German 20	French 7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	English 98	German 78	Russian 8	Other 7
North Macedonia (‡)	English 100	German 30	French 18	Other 2
Serbia	English 99	German 44	French 26	Russian 13

For the Belgian French community, Denmark, and the Netherlands only a limited set of foreign languages is reported in the data.

(\*) The official state languages of Belgium are Dutch, French and German; notably French is considered as a foreign language in the Flemish community and Dutch is considered as a foreign language in the French community. Information for the French community also includes a small German-speaking community.

(†) Although the official languages of Luxembourg are French, German and Luxembourgish, for the purpose of education statistics French and German are counted as foreign languages.

(‡) In Finland, for pupils whose first language is Finnish, Swedish is considered second national language

(§) Definition differs.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ\_uoe\_lang01)

Table 2: Four most-learnt foreign languages in upper secondary general education, 2023 Source: Eurostat (educ\_uoe\_lang01)

## Source data for tables and graphs

- [Culture-related education: tables and figures](#)

## Data sources

The education statistics presented in this article draw principally on a joint exercise run by [UNESCO](#), the [OECD](#) and [Eurostat](#) known as the [UOE data collection](#). It provides annual statistics on the participation in and the completion of education programmes by pupils and students, as well as data on education staff and education spending.

### Tertiary students in culture-related fields of education

The [international standard classification of education \(ISCED\)](#) is the reference classification for organising educational programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields. ISCED 2011 took into account a range of changes to education systems (for example, those relating to the [Bologna process](#) in tertiary education, or the expansion of education programmes for very young children).

Levels of education are classified by ISCED 2011 as follows

- ISCED 0: early childhood education
- ISCED 1: primary education
- ISCED 2: lower secondary education

- ISCED 3: upper secondary education
- ISCED 4: post-secondary non-tertiary education
- ISCED 5: short-cycle tertiary education
- ISCED 6: bachelor's or equivalent level
- ISCED 7: master's or equivalent level
- ISCED 8: doctoral or equivalent level

ISCED also classifies fields of education and training ( [ISCED-F 2013](#) ). Within this classification, four main fields have been identified as being related to culture:

- ISCED-F 02: Arts and Humanities (fine arts, music and performing arts, audio-visual techniques and media production, design, craft skills, religion, history and archaeology, philosophy and ethics, language acquisition, literature and linguistics, etc.);
- ISCED-F032: journalism and information (journalism and reporting, library, information, archiving);
- ISCED-F 0731: architecture and town planning.

### Foreign languages

Within the UOE data collection, Eurostat gathers information on foreign language teaching in primary and secondary educational programmes. The educational curriculum drawn up in each country defines the languages considered as foreign languages. Regional languages are included if they are considered as alternatives to foreign languages. Non-nationals studying their native language in special classes or those studying the language(s) of the host country are excluded. Foreign languages learnt in formal education include all modern languages taught as foreign languages; ancient Greek, Latin, Esperanto and sign languages are excluded. Only foreign languages studied as compulsory subjects or as compulsory curriculum options are included.

## Context

Culture is one of Europe's greatest assets: it is a source of values, identity and a sense of belonging. It also contributes to well-being, social cohesion and inclusion. The cultural and creative sectors provide a stimulus for economic growth, job creation and international trade. In accordance with Article 167 of the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU is obliged to contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common heritage to the fore. The EU supports these objectives through the [Creative Europe programme](#) and a number of policy actions included in the [work plan for culture \(2023-2026\)](#) . The work plan, adopted by EU culture ministers in December 2022, sets out 4 main priorities for European cooperation in cultural policymaking

- Artists and cultural professionals: empowering the cultural and creative sectors
- Culture for the people: enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society
- Culture for the planet: unleashing the power of culture
- Culture for co-creative partnerships: strengthening the cultural dimension of EU external relations

Producing reliable, comparable and up-to-date cultural statistics, which provide a basis for sound cultural policymaking, is a cross-sectoral priority for the European Commission. Eurostat compiles culture statistics from several different data collections to provide policymakers and other users of statistics with information on the main developments in the field of culture, covering issues such as education, employment, business, international trade, participation patterns and consumption patterns.

## Explore further

### Other articles

- [Culture](#)
- [Education and training in the EU - facts and figures](#)
- [Learning mobility statistics](#)
- [Foreign language learning statistics](#)

### Database

[Population and social conditions](#) , see:

- [Education and training \(educ\)](#)
- Participation in education and training ([educ\\_part](#))
  - Pupils and students - enrolments ([educ\\_uoe\\_enr](#))
    - Tertiary education ([cult\\_uoe\\_enrt](#))
    - Students enrolled in tertiary education by education level, programme orientation, sex and age ([educ\\_uoe\\_enrt02](#))
    - Students enrolled in tertiary education by education level, programme orientation, sex and field of education ([educ\\_uoe\\_enrt03](#))
- Languages ([educ\\_lang](#))
  - Language learning ([educ\\_uoe\\_lang](#))
    - Pupils by education level and modern foreign language studied - absolute numbers and % of pupils by language studied ([educ\\_uoe\\_lang01](#))
    - Average number of foreign languages studied per pupil by education level ([educ\\_uoe\\_lang03](#))

### Thematic section

- [Culture](#)

### Publications

- [Culture statistics](#) online publication

### Methodology

- [Guide to Eurostat culture statistics — 2018 edition](#)
- [European statistical system network on culture \(ESSnet-Culture final report \(2012\)\)](#)
- [Education administrative data from 2013 onwards \(ISCED 2011\) \(ESMS metadata file — \[educ\\\_uoe\\\_enr\\\_esms\]\(#\)\)](#)
- [ISCED 2011 operational manual – Guidelines for classifying national education programmes and related qualifications](#)
- [UNESCO OECD Eurostat \(UOE\) joint data collection – methodology](#) (article on Statistics Explained)
- [UOE data collection on formal education – Manual on concepts, definitions and classifications – 2024 edition](#)

## External links

- [European Commission — Culture and Creativity](#)
  - [European Commission — Data on the cultural sector](#)
  - [Cultural and creative sectors](#)
  - [Creative Europe](#)

## Legislation

- [Regulation \(EC\) No 452/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 concerning the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the Creative Europe Programme \(2021 to 2027\) and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 1295/2013](#)
- [European Council work plan for Culture \(2023-2026\)](#)
- [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European agenda for culture in a globalising world \(COM\(2007\) 242\)](#)