

Annex 2

Reading the indicator statistical overviews

The 36 core indicators considered in the 2017 update of the overviews are discussed individually in ‘indicator overviews’. Each overview adopts the same structure. First the policy relevance of the indicator is briefly outlined, then a short definition and the source for the indicator are presented: more technical definitions of each indicator are in the annex. A chart, a table and concise textual comments highlighting key points are used to present the data.

To the extent allowed by data availability, each indicator overview presents data for the European Union, the 28 EU Member States and five selected EFTA and candidate countries (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey) ⁽¹⁾.

Each indicator overview shows a bar chart representing country data for the most recent year available (which differs between indicators). For most indicators, most recent data refer to 2016, 2015 or 2014, but there is no update for some. Not all data or indicators are updated annually: some originate from surveys with a five year periodicity.

The bar chart compares the situation in all countries and the EU as a whole on that indicator. In some cases, if comparable data are available, bar charts with two columns per country are used to include the 2010 policy cycle baseline. This makes it possible not only to compare the performance of the countries at a given point, but also to observe change over time. For certain indicators, additional information has been added to the charts, for example to compare the scores for VET indicators with the general stream. Countries are clustered in two different groups, EU and non-EU Member States; within each group, countries are sorted in descending order based on the most recent available value of the indicator.

The data represented in the charts are included in a table, which also shows change over time. In the right hand part of the table, recent change is shown per country, alongside the comparable recent change for the EU. Change is expressed in the unit of measure of the indicator itself (in most cases percentage point increase or decrease). Recent change is calculated as the difference between the indicator value in the last year available and the first reliable indicator value available since the baseline year or since the most recent break in the data series (whichever comes last). This ensures that the change value considers the longest and most recent period available for the indicator. The length of the period may vary, therefore, not only between indicators but also between countries. The country change value is shown alongside the corresponding EU change value ⁽²⁾. Due to rounding effects, minor discrepancies can be found between the value reported in the column “recent

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

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

change” and the difference of the concerned data points. The tables contain flags and footnotes giving more information about the status and reliability of the different statistics.

Comments are provided to help read the data and highlight key points. Countries can be considered as being a comparison for each other, with the EU average a central reference value. Where EU-28 averages were not directly available from the Eurostat online database, they have been estimated as weighted averages of available country data (with details reported in tables footnotes). Two other types of reference are used. For certain indicators, targets have been defined at EU and/or national levels ⁽³⁾; for others it is possible to compare the scores for VET indicators with the general stream at a comparable level. This is done to contextualize country data and to offer an additional basis for comparisons. There is no intention to identify EU averages or EU benchmarks as concrete target values for the countries. Even national targets, which could be more naturally interpreted in this sense, should be read with caution because they are objectives to be met by 2020 and not at present. Similarly, there is no intention to assess the convergence of VET and general education with respect to those indicators for which they are both considered.

In several tables a footnote states that the ‘UOE back reconstruction of the 2010 values based on ISCED 2011 is not yet available’. This is to signify that some UOE comparable data for the 2010 baselines are expected from an ad hoc data collection Eurostat has launched, but they are not yet available. Another footnote states that ‘The 2014 ‘b’ flags in the Eurostat online tables have been ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata’. This is to signify that, due to the implementation of ISCED 2011 in the European labour force survey and to Eurostat online tables policy, a ‘b’ flag is systematically used by Eurostat in association with 2014 data. This is, however, just a programming option which has to be read in combination with other relevant metadata stating that, given the level of aggregation considered in the tables, data can be compared. The Eurostat 2014 ‘b’ flag is, therefore, assessed as redundant and neglected

³ National targets have been set for benchmark indicators considered in the Europe 2020 strategy. They include the indicator on employment as well as those on education and training (early leaving and tertiary level attainment). These two are also considered in the Education and training 2020 framework.