

population increases tolerance and inclusion while encouraging all learners to develop their linguistic skills⁵⁷.

Analyses on classroom and school variables have also found a direct link between teacher and student well-being⁵⁸. Involving teachers in strategies to improve student well-being is sensible as they have close day-to-day interactions with their students⁵⁹.

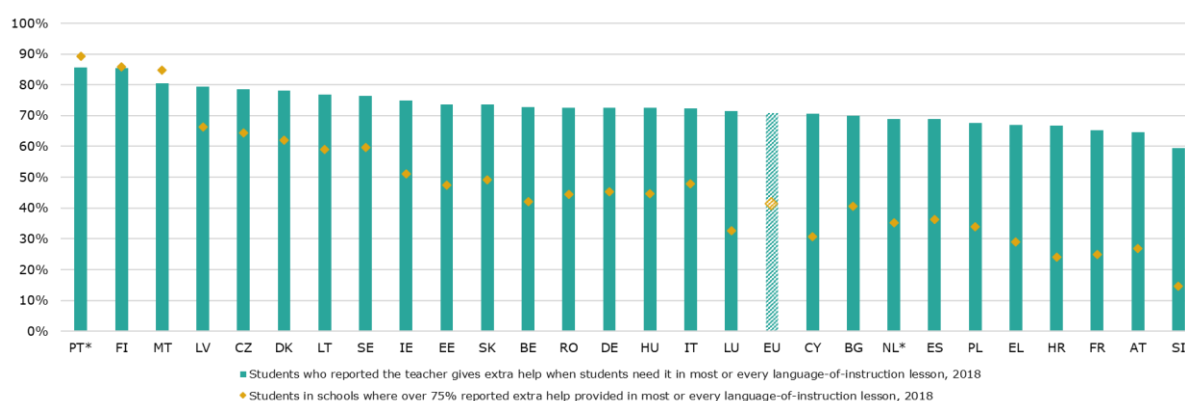
1.4 Teachers' perspective and the role of school governance in shaping well-being

1.4.1 The role teachers play in students' well-being

A teacher's role is to support students in their learning process, and their social and emotional development. They can make students feel confident in their skills, and feel supported and understood. Teaching behaviour and school practices can foster a pleasant climate and increase students' well-being. There is a clear link between the mental health of teachers and that of students⁶⁰. There is also evidence⁶¹ that students' perceptions of teachers' support are significantly correlated with greater life satisfaction.

According to PISA 2018, an average of 71% of students in the EU reported that their teacher gives extra help when needed in most or in every lesson taught in the language-of-instruction. The proportions varies across the EU, ranging from 85.6% in Portugal to 59.4% in Slovenia.

Figure 19: Students who reported that the teacher gives extra help when they need it in most or every language-of-instruction lesson, 2018 [%]



Source: PISA 2018.

Note: *Data did not meet the PISA technical standards but were accepted as largely comparable. Original OECD Table III.B.1.6.4

⁵⁷ See Herzog-Punzenberger, B., Le Pichon Vorstman, E. and Siarova, H. (2017). [Multilingual Education in the Light of Diversity: Lessons Learned](#). A NESET network report for the European Commission.

⁵⁸ Van Petegem, K., Aelterman, A., Van Keer, H. and Rosseel, Y. (2008). [The influence of student characteristics and interpersonal teacher behaviour in the classroom on student's wellbeing](#). *Social indicators research*, 85(2), 279-291.

⁵⁹ Another approach is closely involving educators and empowering them through, *inter alia*, achievement motivation, environmental resilience (i.e. teaching educators how to focus on developing their students' strengths), and developing social competences; Morrison, G. M. and Allen, M. R. (2007). [Promoting student resilience in school contexts](#). *Theory into Practice*, 46(2), 162-169.

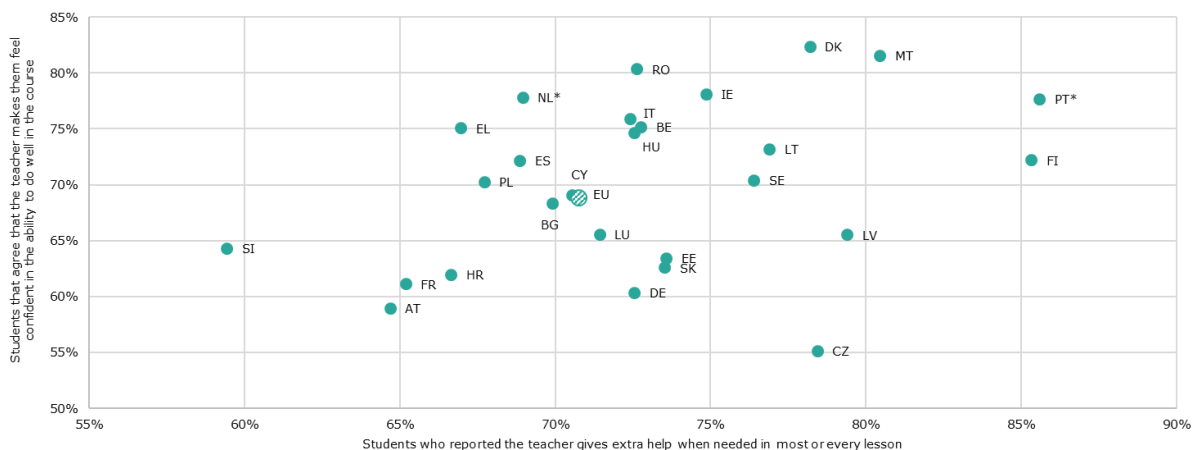
⁶⁰ Cefai, C., Simões, C. and Caravita, S. (2021). [A systemic, whole-school approach to mental health and well-being in schools in the EU](#). A NESET report for the European Commission.

⁶¹ Guess, P.E., and McCane-Bowling S.J. (2016). [Teacher support and life satisfaction: an investigation with urban, middle school students](#). In: *Education and Urban Society* 48.1, 2016: 30-47.

Whether a consensus exists in these perceptions can be deduced from the proportion of students in schools where over 75% students reported extra help. As shown in Figure 19, countries with the highest share of students reporting teachers' extra help correspond to the ones where the majority agrees with this perception. Conversely, a low percentage of students in schools where 75% reported extra help shows that students' differ on their perception, not reporting help similarly in all schools. Indeed, in the EU, there is still disparity of students' opinions regarding the extra help provided by teachers: only 41.4% of students are in schools where at least three out of four agreed that the teacher gives extra help when needed in.

In addition to educational help, teachers provide students with emotional support, which makes them more confident in their skills and ability to participate in class, and thus contributes to their well-being. As shown in Figure 20, among EU countries, there is generally a positive relationship between students reporting that extra help was provided when needed, and students reporting that the tutor makes them feel confident in their ability to perform well. Denmark (82%), Malta (82%) and Romania (80%) are the countries where most students agreed that the teacher's behaviour helped give them confidence to perform well.

Figure 20: Teacher's extra help versus self-reported confidence influenced by the teacher, 2018



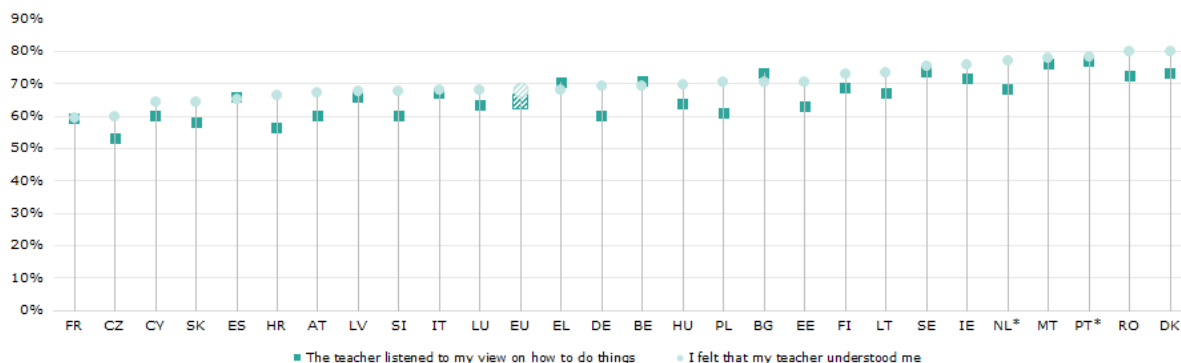
Source: PISA 2018.

Note: *Data did not meet the PISA technical standards but were accepted as largely comparable. Original OECD Table III.B1.6.4

Developing a classroom environment where questions are encouraged is one of the factors that makes students more likely to perceive support from teachers. This support is also perceived when teachers try to connect with students on an emotional level, including by demonstrating fairness or acknowledging academic success. According to the same study, teacher support accounted for 16% of the variance in students' subjective well-being.

Teachers who listen and consider students' opinions can help their students to feel understood. A supportive teacher-pupil relationships can therefore increase a schools' potential to support student well-being. An average of 64% of students in the EU agreed that their teacher listens to their views on how to do things, but there is a 20 pps difference across countries. On average, 68% of EU students felt that their teacher understands them, but again there are large variations across EU countries, ranging from 60% in France and Czechia to 80% in Romania and Denmark. Figure 21 shows that countries where fewer students report that the teacher listened to their views coincide with the ones with lower proportions of students who felt understood by the instructor.

Figure 21: Students who agreed or strongly agreed that the following occurred during the previous two language-of-instruction lessons, 2018 [%]



Source: PISA 2018.

Note: *Data did not meet the PISA technical standards but were accepted as largely comparable. Original OECD Table III.B1.6.2.

The quality of teacher-students interactions also matters for educational outcomes and student well-being. To be able to learn, students need to be understood by their teachers and have them recognise the challenges they face outside school. At-risk students reported better outcomes when teachers worked with them respectfully and provided opportunities to exercise more autonomy⁶².

A study⁶³ comparing the influence of support on students' social, academic and emotional adjustment, found that – although support from parents, classmates and friends also had an influence on their adjustment – emotional support from teachers was particularly predictive of better social skills and academic competence. Consequently, greater emotional support provided to disadvantaged students can help close the gap between socio-economic backgrounds by boosting social and academic competences in this group. In this sense it is reassuring that PISA 2018 shows that students from disadvantaged schools perceive support from teachers to a greater extent than their counterparts in advantaged schools⁶⁴. This was the case in 23 EU Member States, and in 16 of them this difference was statistically significant. The negative difference was most pronounced in Austria (-0.52), Germany (-0.43) and Bulgaria (-0.41). In contrast, in only four countries (Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Sweden) students from disadvantaged schools reported lower perceptions of teachers' support than students in advantaged schools.

In general, across the EU, satisfaction with the quality of school life seems to be more common than dissatisfaction. However, in some countries (cf. Figure 22) interpersonal teacher-student interactions was rated as negative⁶⁵. Improving teacher-student interactions and students' sense of achievement requires comprehensive support systems. To improve perceived quality of life, the same study suggests the need of pre-service and in-service training for teachers on monitoring

⁶² Sanders, J., Munford, R., and Liebenberg, L. (2016). *The role of teachers in building resilience of at risk youth*. In: *International Journal of Educational Research* 80, 2016, 111-123.

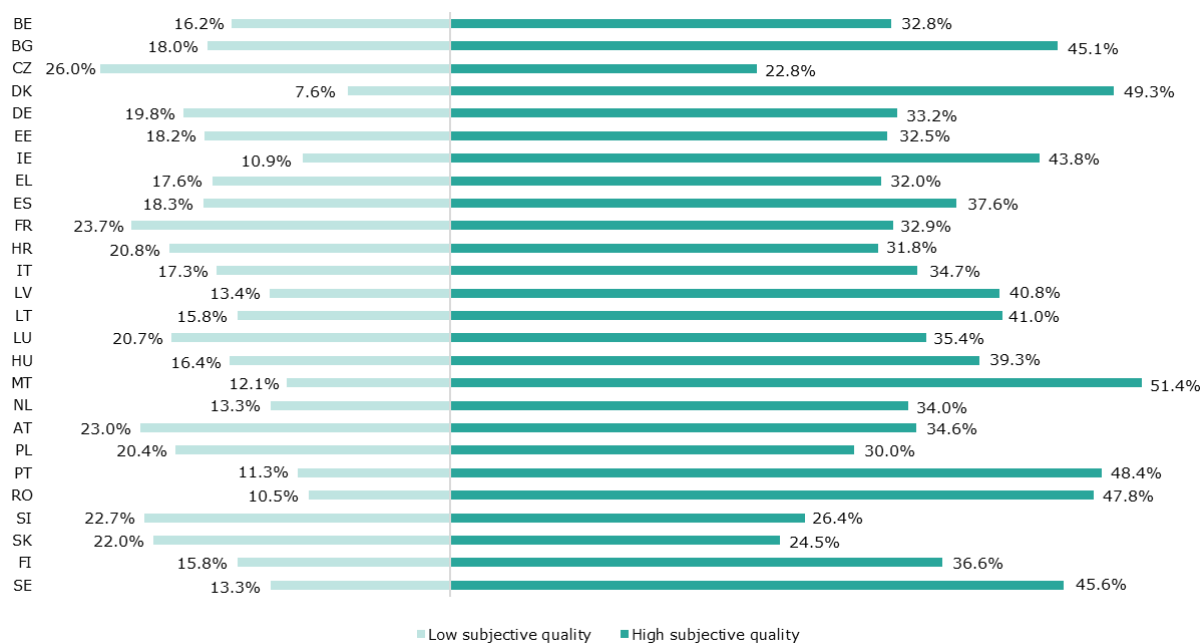
⁶³ Malecki, C. K. and Kilpatrick Demaray, M. K. (2003). *What type of support do they need? Investigating student adjustment as related to emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental support*. In: *School psychology quarterly* 18.3, 2003, 231.

⁶⁴ In 2018, there was a negative difference in the EU (-0.23 points difference) in the PISA index of teacher support in advantaged and disadvantaged school. For the index students were asked about the occurrence of following statements: "The teacher shows an interest in every student's learning"; "The teacher gives extra help when students need it"; "The teacher helps students with their learning"; and "The teacher continues teaching until students understand". Students' responses were combined to create the index of teacher support.

⁶⁵ Hristova A. and Tosheva, E. (2021). *Quality of School Life in Europe in the Light of Large-Scale International Assessments*. An EENEE network report for the European Commission.

emotions, identifying and addressing destructive behavioural patterns and promoting constructive interactions. Teachers' programmes should therefore aim at improving self-efficiency in classroom management, in teaching, in engaging students and working in multicultural environments⁶⁶.

Figure 22: Share of students perceiving the quality of teacher-student relations as low or high



Source: PISA 2018, calculations by the EENEE network of experts.

Note: CY was not included in the EENEE study.

To have a positive impact on students, a teacher's well-being is essential, but this can depend on their working environment and practices. Teachers in the EU still experience high levels of work-related stress, according to the OECD's 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey, which affects their mental health.

Teachers point to administrative tasks, changing requirements from authorities and being held responsible for students' achievements as major sources of stress. Among the top five sources of stress across the EU⁶⁷, only two ("having too much marking" and "maintaining classroom discipline") are directly related to the tasks of teaching. Factors inducing lower levels of stress are a collaborative school environment, perceived autonomy in their job, and self-confidence in motivating students⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ For tools available to teachers for assessing the quality of classroom climate Cf. a NESET network project [A formative, inclusive, whole school approach to the assessment of Social and Emotional Education in the EU](#).

⁶⁷ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2021). [Teachers in Europe: Careers, Development and Well-being. A Eurydice report](#). EU refers to all European Union countries/regions that participated in TALIS survey 2018, including UK.

⁶⁸ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2021). [Teachers in Europe: Careers, Development and Well-being. A Eurydice report](#).

1.4.2 Teachers' and school governance's influence on well-being

Considering students' life satisfaction, well-being and resilience can help schools themselves become more successful and resilient to long-term challenges. The Council conclusions on "European teachers and trainers for the future"⁶⁹ stressed that: "In order to support both the achievement and well-being of teachers and trainers, as well as learners, it is beneficial to build and promote collaborative learning communities, and a collaborative team culture between teachers and trainers, their peers and institution leaders, learners, parents, and other stakeholders, such as employers".

School climate is a determinant of resilience and well-being⁷⁰. Schools and teachers are therefore important protective assets for students. Higher levels of school discipline and order have been associated with lower probability and frequency of behavioural problems⁷¹. Sufficient security policies and practices, students' respect for teachers and school property, clear rules of conduct as well as the consistent and fair enforcement of rules influence teachers' perceptions of safety and order in schools across the EU. In 2019, between 45% and 60% of fourth grade students in EU countries for which TIMSS data is available (

Figure 23) were in schools considered "very safe and orderly" by teachers, with some countries scoring higher than others. For example, Ireland (78%), Spain (76%), Bulgaria (73%) and Portugal (71%) were on the higher end of the scale while the Flemish community of Belgium (28%), France (37%), Sweden (37%) and Finland (31%) were on the lower end.

Box 9: Strengthening teacher policies in Bulgaria

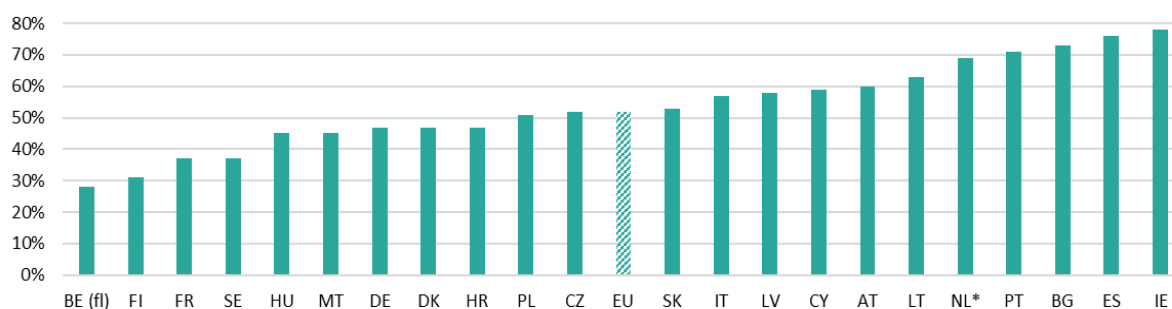
Bulgaria has taken additional measures to strengthen initial teacher education (ITE) and continuous professional development (CPD). New requirements for the acquisition of teacher professional qualifications were adopted in February 2021 with a focus on strengthening the competence-based approach in both ITE and CPD. The State requirements for obtaining a vocational teacher qualification have also been updated. Compulsory disciplines were introduced in various fields of pedagogy, while others were reinforced with additional hours of training. Furthermore, the proportion of teachers taking part in professional development has increased in recent years. In 2021-2027, the European Social Fund (ESF+) will continue to provide support to upgrade the competences of teachers. Significant efforts have also been made in recent years to increase teachers' salaries and therefore the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

⁶⁹ [Council conclusions of 26 May 2020 on European teachers and trainers for the future, OJ C 193, 9.6.2020, C 193/16.](#)

⁷⁰ Cohen J. (2013). [Creating a Positive School Climate: A Foundation for Resilience.](#) In: Goldstein S., Brooks R. (eds) *Handbook of Resilience in Children.* Springer, Boston, MA.

⁷¹ Wang, M. T., et al. (2010). [A tobit regression analysis of the covariation between middle school students' perceived school climate and behavioral problems.](#) In: *Journal of Research on adolescence* 20.2, 274-286.

Figure 23: Percentage of students in schools that are “very safe and orderly” according to the teachers, 2019 (TIMSS).



Source: IEA TIMSS 2019.

Note: Students were scored according to their teachers' responses to eight statements on the Safe and Orderly School scale. Cut scores divide the scale into three categories. Students in “very safe and orderly” schools had a score at or above the cut score corresponding to their teachers “agreeing a lot” with four of the eight statements and “agreeing a little” with the other four, on average.

(*) indicates data are available for at least 70% but less than 85% of the students.

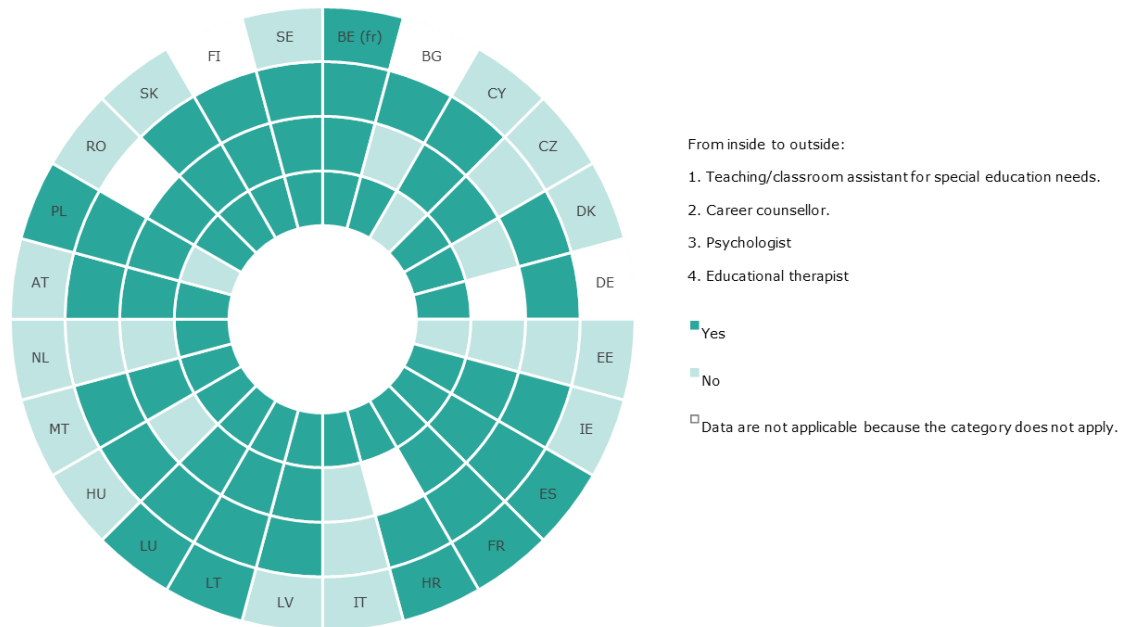
School-level support measures and help enable learners to overcome academic, social and personal difficulties. Multi-professional teams and integrated strategic responses can give tailored assistance to students to improve their resilience. EU countries have therefore been adopting policies and regulations to integrate specific support staff in schools. Assistant teachers for special education needs are the most widespread support staff in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education (Figure 24). In 21 countries this support is mandatory in at least two out of the three levels mentioned, and in 18 of them, it applies to all three. The support of psychologists is also widespread in EU educational systems. In only four EU countries, for which data are available, the presence of psychologists is not required at any level (Czechia, Estonia, Italy and the Netherlands). To help students in serious emotional distress, emotional counselling is provided in a range of EU countries. Some countries, such as Poland, provide one-to-one academic tutoring and psychological support, other countries offer psychological or socio-emotional support to students at risk of early school leaving⁷² to reduce drop-out rates⁷³.

Requirements for having educational therapists in schools are less widespread, as are requirements for having career counsellors. The latter are present in only nine countries for all three educational levels and in four countries for both secondary levels (Austria, Cyprus, France and Luxembourg).

⁷² Donlevy, V., Day, L., Andriescu, M., Downes, P. (2019). [Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving. Final Report July 2019](#). Directorate General, Education, Sport, Youth and Culture.

⁷³ Quiroga, C. V., Janosz, M. and Bisset, S. (2013). [Early adolescent depression symptoms and school dropout: Mediating processes involving self-reported academic competence and achievement](#). *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105, 2, 552–560.

Figure 24: School support staff required by policy or regulation to provide access to students in schools, general programmes 2018.



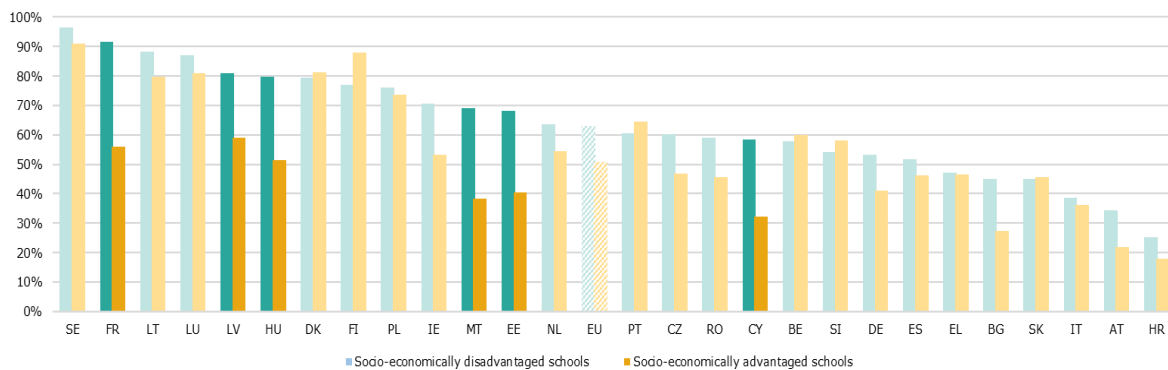
Source: PISA 2018 system-level data collection.

Note: Responses are marked as "yes" if at least 2 out of 3 levels have the staff (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education). Data are missing for BE (fl), EL, SI and PT. Data for career counsellor at primary level does not apply to IE and SE due to inapplicability of the category. Federal states or countries with highly decentralised school systems may experience regulatory differences between states, provinces or regions. For further information see: System-level data collection for PISA 2018.

At a personal level, positive and respectful teacher-student relationships that empower students, can increase resilience, particularly for students in the high-risk category. On average, EU students from disadvantaged schools (63%) receive more support from school staff to do their homework than students in advantaged schools (51%). Schools can therefore help to protect at-risk students⁷⁴ and help narrow gaps due to socio-economic background. Help with homework is very widespread in schools in Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Denmark, Finland and Poland. Some countries focus on disadvantaged students where the difference with their advantaged peers is significant, such as France (35 pps), Malta (31 pps), Hungary (28 pps), Estonia (28 pps) and Cyprus (26 pps). On the other hand, regardless of schools' socio-economic status, fewer than 40% of students received help with homework in Italy, Austria and Croatia (Figure 25).

⁷⁴ Sanders, J., Munford, R. and Liebenberg, L. (2016). [The role of teachers in building resilience of at risk youth](#). In: International Journal of Educational Research 80, 2016: 111-123.

Figure 25: Percentage of students in schools where staff provides help with homework, by school's socio-economic status, 2018.

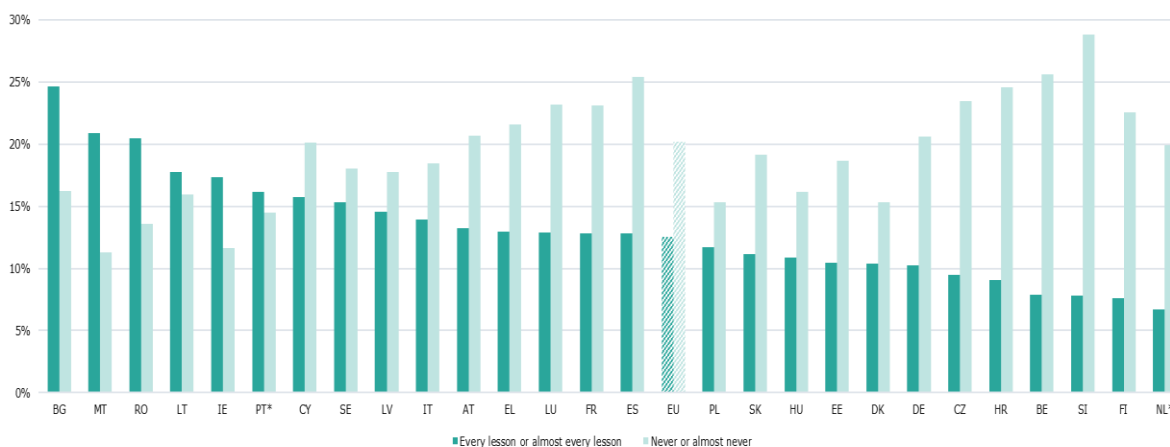


Source: PISA 2018.

Note: a socio-economically disadvantaged (advantaged) school is a school in the bottom (top) quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in the country/education system in question. Values of the percentage point difference between both that are statistically significant (20 pps or more) are shaded. Data sorted in descending order according to socio-economically disadvantaged schools' values.

Guidance and feedback from teachers on their tasks can help students to develop their abilities and figure out how to solve similar problems in the future. However, the data show that students across the EU do not perceive that they receive extensive feedback, or guidance to improve. On average, 13% of EU students reported that the teacher tells them how to improve their performance in every lesson or almost every lesson while 20% reported that this never or almost never happened (Figure 26). This is worrisome, as the percentage of those that claim to receive guidance exceeds the percentage that claim the opposite (i.e. guidance is (almost) never given) in only six EU countries. These countries (Bulgaria, Malta, Romania, Lithuania, Ireland and Portugal) are also those where students are more likely to report that constant feedback for improvement is given. In 12 EU Member States, over one fifth of the students reported that they never or almost never receive feedback for improvement (Figure 26). This can hamper the capacity of students to develop resilience.

Figure 26: Percentage of students reporting that the teacher tells them how to improve their performance by frequency, 2018.

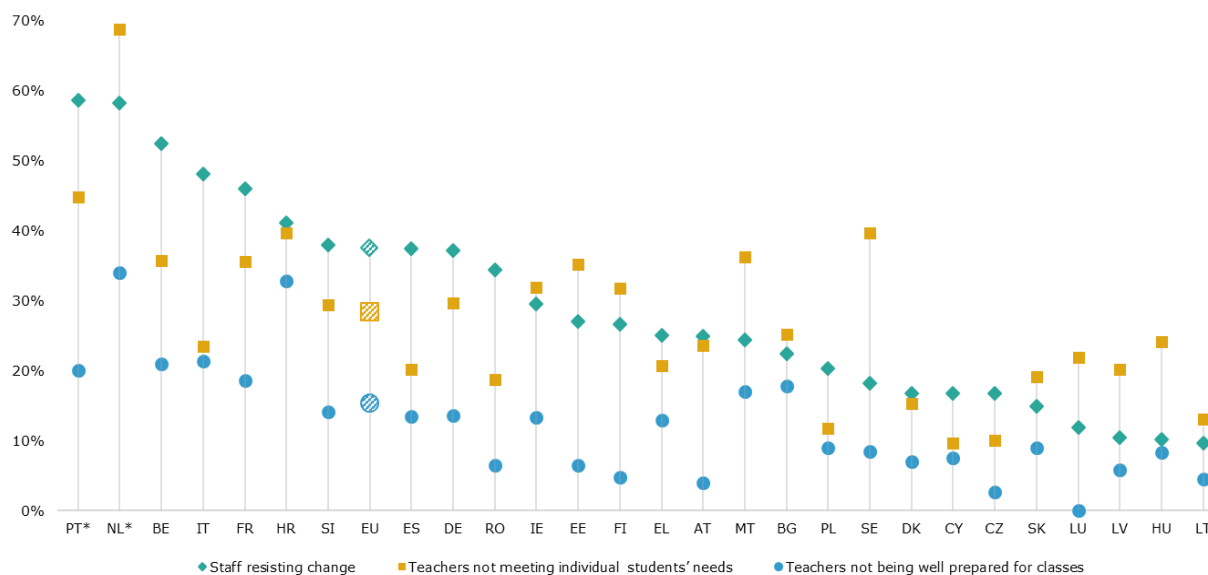


Source: PISA 2018.

Note: *Data did not meet the PISA technical standards but were accepted as largely comparable. Data based on student's reports and in descending order according to "every lesson or almost every lesson" values. Original table III.B1.6.3.

In addition, 28% of students attend a school where the principal considers the inability of teachers to meet individual students' needs to be a hindrance (Figure 27). This problem may be linked to a lack of staff, which remains a concern across the EU and is reported as being a hindrance for 28.5% of students. Also according to school principals, teachers' resistance to change affects 37% of learners across the EU. Yet, equipping students with tools and skills to adapt to changing and unexpected circumstances is crucial for strengthening their resilience and their ability to overcome life challenges.

Figure 27: Percentage of students in schools whose principal reported that the following behaviours hinder student learning to some extent or a lot, 2018.



Source: PISA 2018.

Note: Countries are presented in descending order according to the survey response "Staff resisting change". *Data did not meet the PISA technical standards but were accepted. Original table III.B1.7.1

Finally, evidence has shown that structured outdoor learning measures increase resilience and a growth mind set⁷⁵. Extracurricular activities provided by the school and outdoor programmes can help balance the negative health impacts caused by excessive screen time. They can also help students to develop non-cognitive skills and increase their sense of belonging at school. On average, creative extracurricular activities were more frequently offered in advantaged schools (2.01 in PISA index of creative extracurricular activities⁷⁶) than in disadvantaged ones (1.53 in PISA index). However, with variations across countries, on average in the EU the difference between cities (1.78 in PISA index) and rural areas (1.74 in PISA index) was minimal, and in-existent between private and public schools.

⁷⁵ O'Brien, K. and Lomas T. (2017). [Developing a Growth Mindset through outdoor personal development: can an intervention underpinned by psychology increase the impact of an outdoor learning course for young people?](#) In: Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning 17.2, 2017: 133-147.

⁷⁶ The PISA index of creative extracurricular activities at school was computed as the total number of the following music- and art-related activities that are offered at school: band, orchestra or choir; school play or school musical; and art club or art activities. Values in the index range from 0 to 3. Higher values in the index indicate greater number of creative extracurricular activities at school.

Building students' resilience and prioritising their well-being requires a joint effort from the whole community. This has become even clearer in the last 2 years when the COVID-19 pandemic forced learners and teachers to adapt to new educational challenges, highlighted the importance of well-being and resilience and revealed the need of efforts across the EU to ensure that no one is left behind.

1.5 Effect of COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to physical school closures in many countries worldwide coupled with a move to online teaching, considerably reduced the intensity of students' social interactions with their peers and teachers. This reduction in social contact due to the pandemic is expected to be particularly detrimental to vulnerable students (OECD, 2020)⁷⁷.

Harmonised and internationally comparable sources allowing to analyse what happened to children's well-being during the pandemic across the EU are still rare. This chapter sets out to draw conclusions from several surveys undertaken to clarify the picture: the "Kids' Digital lives in COVID-19 Times" (KiDiCoTi) survey, coordinated by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre⁷⁸, the COVID-19 International Student Well-being Study (C19 ISWS), a global survey on "Student perceptions of remote learning" and an online survey conducted by the European Commission in 2020 on how Vocational Education and Training (VET) ensured continuity of learning and teaching during the COVID-19 lockdown measures⁷⁹.

1.5.1 Well-being during COVID-19: evidence from the KiDiCoTi Survey

The project on "Kids' Digital lives in COVID-19 Times" (KiDiCoTi) aimed to understand how children at the end of primary education and in secondary education (10-18 year-olds) and their parents engaged with digital technologies while staying at home and how these experiences may have affected children's online safety and overall family well-being. The survey was carried out during the COVID-19 lockdown in spring 2020 and involved nine EU Member States (Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain), plus Switzerland and Norway.

In these 11 countries, Figure 28 shows, very few students continued with regular face-to-face schooling during the lockdown (maximum 1%), while between 1 and 4% of the children did not receive any education. Depending on the intensity of the lockdown and the preparedness of the system, other countries moved education for most of the respondents to remote education totally⁸⁰ or partially⁸¹. On the effects physical school closures had on schoolwork (as a sum of school hours and homework), no unified image emerged in the participating countries.

⁷⁷ OECD. The impact of COVID-19 on student equity and inclusion: Supporting vulnerable students during school closures and school re-openings (2020).

⁷⁸ In a partnership with the research office of UNICEF and 26 research centres in 15 European countries.

⁷⁹ [European Vocational Skills Week](#) 9-13 November 2020.

⁸⁰ IT (75%), PT (71%), NO (70%), ES (62%), FR (56%) and RO (53%).

⁸¹ SI (63%), DE (56%), CH (55%) and AT (53%).