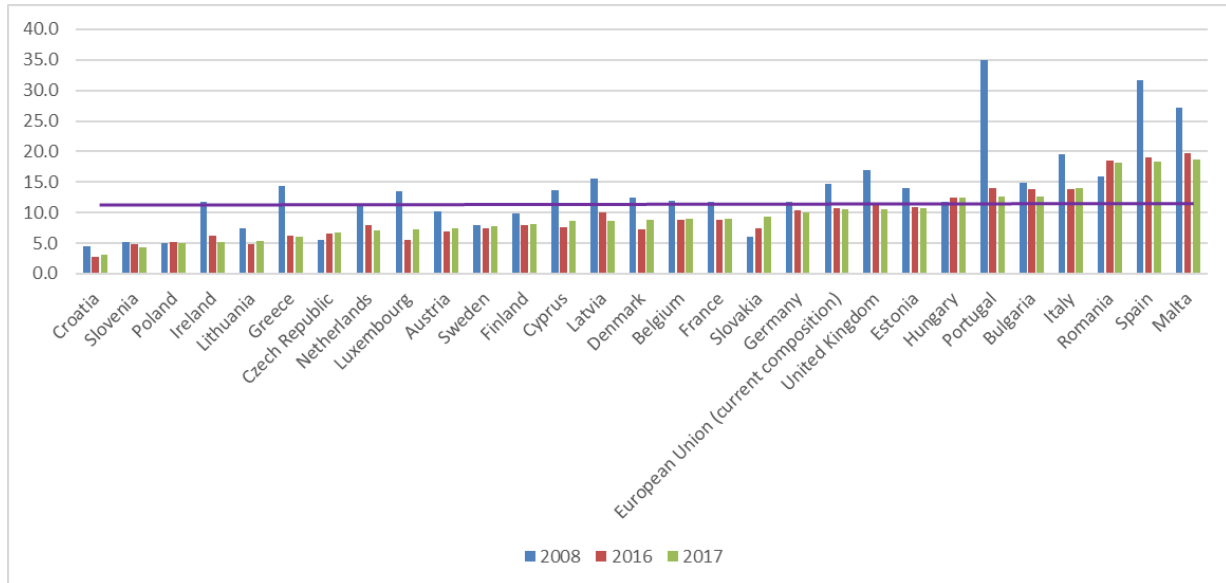


## Education and Skills

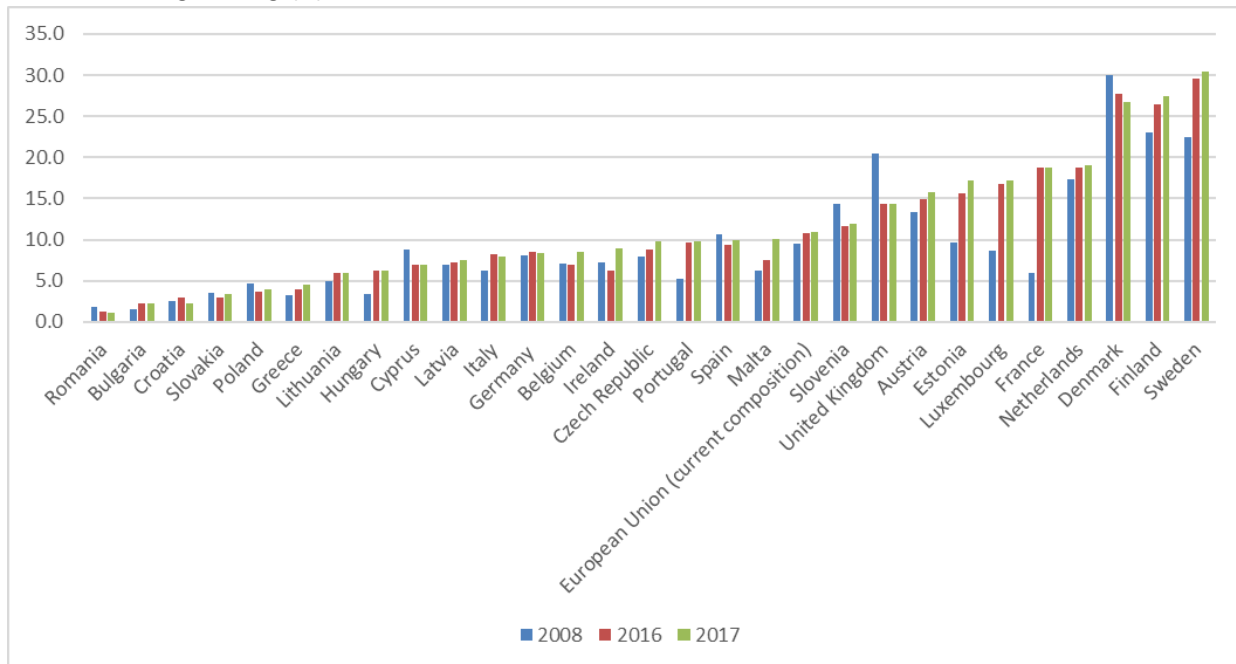
**Chart 3.1: Early School Leaving (%), EU-28, 2008, 2016 and 2017**



Source: Eurostat, [t2020\_40]

Note: Line shows the <10 % target set in the Europe 2020 strategy

**Chart 3.2: Lifelong Learning, (%) EU-28, 2008, 2016 and 2017**



Source: Eurostat,[tsdsc440]

## Education and Skills

### Early School Leaving



Improving the educational achievement of young people is a cross-cutting measure that addresses two priority areas of the Europe 2020 Strategy - that for 'smart growth' by improving skills levels, and 'inclusive growth' by tackling one of the major risk factors for unemployment and poverty. Reducing early school-leaving is seen as a 'gateway' to achieving other Europe 2020 Strategy targets. Early leavers from education and training are defined as those aged 18-24, with at most, lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks preceding the survey.

The average early school leaving rate across Europe in 2017 was 10.6 %. It has fallen significantly from 2008, when it was 14.7%, but it has not decreased to any extent in the most recent years (for example, in 2015 it was 11%). Therefore, while in recent years it has been approaching the <10% target set in the Europe 2020 strategy, improvement rates have, unfortunately, levelled off (Chart 3.1). This rate has been improving in most European countries since 2008. There have been particularly notable decreases between 2008 and 2017 in the rate in countries with relatively high levels such as Portugal (-22.3 percentage points) and Spain (-13.4 percentage points).

In 2017 the highest rates of early school leaving were to be found in Malta (18.6%), Spain (18.3%), Romania (18.1%) and Italy (14%) followed by Bulgaria, Portugal and Hungary, and there remains a large gap between the countries with the highest rates (Malta, Spain and Romania), and that with the lowest rate, Croatia (with a rate of 3.1%).

### Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning can play many important roles in the life of an individual, not least

offering a second chance for people who may not have had good experiences in school first time around. In economic terms it is recognised that countries need to invest not just in initial education and training systems but also in lifelong learning to ensure that skills are used, maintained and updated. This is obviously of particular importance in ageing societies, not just in human terms, but also because there is more and more emphasis on extending working lives. However, despite their apparent greater need for training, the participation of low-skilled people in lifelong learning/training activities (both when employed and unemployed) is much lower than for other groups.

In 2017 the average rate of participation in lifelong learning was 10.9%, and it has been at a similar level since 2013 (when it was 10.7%). It is higher than it was in 2008 (when it was 9.5%). The European Commission argues that such a relatively low rate (representing just one in ten of those aged 25-64 regardless of labour-market status) represents a real lost opportunity.

There is great variation across Europe in terms of the rates of participation. Nordic countries tend to top the table; in 2017 the top three countries were Sweden (30.4%), Finland (27.4%) and Denmark (26.8%). With Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia at the other end of the scale. Thus, there is close to a 30 percentage point difference between Sweden with the highest rate and Romania with the lowest (Chart 3.2).

### Policy Priorities:

- Invest in retention supports to reduce the level of early school leaving.
- Invest in lifelong learning opportunities, particularly for those furthest from the labour market and those whose jobs are at greatest risk from automation.