Student data - what is collected and for which purpose
Agile collection of information
Volume 3
Student data - what is collected and for which purpose: 3rd Agile collection of information is created as a set of three documents in which you may find additional information and resources:

- Report
- Country cards
- Presentation

All documents are available at European Schoolnet, and you may contact Lidija Kralj (lidija.kralj@eun.org) should you need one.
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Student data - what is collected and for which purpose

Introduction

Data protection is the focus of the several European Union documents, starting from the General Data Protection Regulation, Convention for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data, to the newly created Data Governance Act, Data Act, Digital Services Act, and Artificial Intelligence Act. Recommendations and guidelines for data management in education are described:

in Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success (2022) as follows:

Develop and further strengthen data collection and monitoring systems at national, regional and local level which allow for the systematic collection of quantitative and qualitative information on learners as well as on factors that affect learning outcomes, especially socio-economic background. These systems must be in compliance with protection of personal data and national legislation. They should ensure that disaggregated data and information on a wide range of aspects are available at different policy levels and used for prevention and early intervention, analysis and policy design, steering, monitoring and evaluating the above strategies.

In Annex Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success (2022) as follows:

(2) To be effective, an integrated strategy should be based on robust data collection and monitoring systems, which should:

(a) Allow analysis, at all policy levels (national, regional and local) of the scope, incidence and possible reasons of underachievement and early leaving from education and training, including by collecting the views of marginalised learners and families.

(b) Be used to design and steer policy development, monitor implementation and evaluate effectiveness and efficiency of the measures adopted.

(c) Allow early detection and identification of learners at risk or those who have left education and training early, to provide timely and appropriate support, without labelling or stigmatising such learners.

(d) Provide the basis for developing effective guidance and support to schools.

in Council recommendation on blended learning for high quality and inclusive primary and secondary education (2021) as follows:

Invest in research on and monitoring and evaluation of the policy challenges and the impact of these initiatives on the educational ecosystem in order to build on lessons learnt and feed into future policy reform, including by building on learners’ experiences as well as on the data collected, if available, to develop best practices and tailored AI solutions for improved learning programmes.

In 2022, we are also expecting the publication of the Ethical guidelines on artificial intelligence (AI) and data usage in teaching and learning by the Commission expert group on artificial intelligence (AI) and data in education and training.

Following data management trends in the European Union and on the suggestion of the European Schoolnet Steering Committee, the topic of digitally processed data use for learning and other educational purposes was chosen for the third edition of “Agile Collection of Information”. Following this recommendation, we collected information about data regulation, governance, management, and use from fourteen member countries: Belgium-FR, Belgium-NL, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Portugal.
Information was collected through an online questionnaire, accompanied by a Glossary (regularly updated), which the participating countries answered with the support of different country experts. Their answers enabled us to identify the legislation, plans and processes, initiatives, actions, measures, and challenges in each country concerning data use for learning and other education purposes which we share with you in a cross-country overview of the interesting observations and insights.
Regulation

What legislation (or other forms of regulation and principles governing action or procedure) exists in each country (at any government level e.g., national, regional, local) that defines how digitally processed data is used in K12 education?

Two main law documents govern the collection and use of education data in most of the participating countries. These are the Education Law and the Data Protection Law or Act which is usually based on the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union. What student data is collected is usually stated in the Education Law (as in the case of Hungary) or in accompanying regulatory documents (as in the case of Croatia). However, in these statutes, the purpose of student data use is mentioned just in general terms. Data sharing protocols (e.g., protocols on sharing of data between schools, the Ministry and service or technology providers) exist in Belgium, Spain, Slovenia, Finland, France, and Greece. Finland, France, Hungary, and Greece also have information sensitivity classifications. Hungary mentioned National Data Protection Office with regulatory, audit functions and institutional-level policies.

Some of the more specific regulatory documents mentioned are:

- Croatia: Ordinance on the Joint Electronic Register of School Institutions – “e-Matica”;
- Finland: The Data Protection Guide (or Privacy Guide);
- France: Digital Services and Trust Framework;
- Ireland: Social Welfare Consolidation - Sharing of Information;
- Serbia: The Bylaw on the Unified Information System of Education;
- Slovenia: Organisation and Financing of Education Act;
- Spain: Contracts for Specific Tools and Services with Technology Providers.

For what purposes is education data collected?

Collecting data at the system monitoring level (monitoring dropout levels and education systems and providing general statistical analysis) as well as at the individual level (student academic and non-academic monitoring, measuring student performance) is frequent among participating countries and is present in almost all of them. Collecting data for measuring school performance is present in Belgium-FR, France, Hungary, Portugal, and Serbia. The same countries, also collect data for school self-assessment. Data is collected for measuring system performance in Belgium-NL, Cyprus, France, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Serbia, and Slovenia.

Regarding the teachers, Finland, France, Hungary, and Portugal collect data for teacher self-assessment. Cyprus, France, Hungary, and Serbia collect data to measure teacher performance. For example, in Cyprus, The Law on Public Educational Service prescribes what teacher data is collected and how it can be used for teacher recruitment.
Figure 1. Purpose for collecting student data

In **France** and **Hungary**, student data is collected for all the listed purposes, from the system monitoring level to the school and individual one, including for self-assessment purposes. To conduct this comprehensive data collection, both countries have created national platforms managed by the ministries of education. In Hungary, most of the data collection and use is regulated by the **Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education**. The **French Roadmap** on Data Policy, Algorithms, and Source Codes, which describes activities for the 2021 – 2023 period, ensures interoperability between all applications used by the institutions to consolidate and manage education data, regardless of the IT solutions chosen locally, following the “Tell us once” principle.

By contrast, **Slovakia** focuses only on system monitoring level purposes (general statistics, dropout rates, education system monitoring). Despite the fact that the country has a central register with different kinds of student data, we could conclude that such a register is insufficient to capture all student data.

**Greece, Spain and Croatia** collect data at individual level (student academic and non-academic monitoring, measurement of student performance) as well as at system monitoring level (monitoring dropout rates and education system, and providing general statistical analysis). Central databases with student data are available in Greece (**MySchool**) and in Croatia (**e-Matica**). In addition to the already mentioned purposes, the Spanish authorities also collect data for student formative assessment.

**Cyprus, Slovenia, and Portugal** collect data at individual level (student academic and non-academic monitoring, measurement of student performance) as well as at system monitoring level (monitoring dropout rates, the education system and providing general statistical analysis). Additionally, they also collect data to measure system performance. Furthermore, Cyprus and Slovenia collect data for student formative assessment, while Portugal collects data to measure school performance.
Governance

**At which level is education data managed (e.g., organized, curated, archived)?**

In almost all participating countries, education data is managed at several levels: Country level (11), Local authority (8), School level (12).

Management of data only at **school level** is mentioned by **Ireland** where individual primary schools collect and enter their enrolment data on the Primary Online Database. This enrolment data is then collected and checked by the Department. The Department engages with schools individually and collectively, when necessary, to improve or correct enrolment data. The same process happens in post-primary schools.

Management of data only at **country level** is reported by **Serbia**. Serbia uses the unified education information system established and managed by the Ministry. The Ministry ensures the safety and security of the technical equipment and the software. It also provides the necessary resources for the operation of the information system. The school is responsible for entering and updating the data required in the registers.

Management of data at the **school and local authority level** is characteristic of Belgium’s Flemish and French communities. The **Belgium-Flemish** community has a centralised database platform called “**Discimus**” which enables the collection and exchange of data between schools, education centres and The Agency for Educational Services. They web application “Dataloep” provides figures and statistics from schools or school boards and allows comparison between institutions and metrics. [Demo version](#).
In the Belgium-French community, some data is managed at school level for organizational and pedagogical purposes, and at local authorities level for other purposes. Schools and/or groupings of organizing authorities are allowed to develop their own digital solutions for data collection and use (Décret du25/04/2019).

Management of data at school and country levels is present in Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia. In Hungary, data is collected and processed in two ways: Schools record and manage student personal data, school-student legal relationship data and academic progress related data, while The Educational Authority maintains a national centralised personal register of students and various statistical education data.

Similar methods of data collection and use are present in Slovakia where schools are collecting and storing all kinds of data about students. Most of the data, apart from grades, is sent to a centralized electronic register managed by the Ministry. A third kind of data is the results of national testing. This data is collected and stored by an organization under the hat of the Ministry and is used to monitor the performance of schools and the educational system as a whole.

In Slovenia, schools collect, process, store, transmit and use data from databases kept in accordance with the regulations on personal data protection. The Ministry of Education creates, manages, maintains, and controls an IT database for the purposes of uniform data management, and for the purposes of monitoring education work, planning policy initiatives, and conducting analytical and statistical research.

In seven countries, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, Portugal and Spain, the data management model covers all three levels: school, local authority and country level. Cyprus and Portugal reported the following data management model:

- Schools – local access and control which is restricted to each school’s own data; each school is responsible for its own management systems;
- Municipal and district education offices – regional access and control which is restricted to each district’s data;
- Country level under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education – global access and control to all the data, central management system.

Various types of platforms and computer systems are used to navigate between the three levels, some centrally developed by the Ministry, others outsourced at each of the three levels.

Croatia uses “e-Matica”, a centralized system created by the Ministry of Science and Education where the most important data on students and staff of primary and secondary schools is recorded. Data is automatically synchronized with other education institutions such as NISpVU (National Information System for Higher Education Registration), “e-Class” register, NISPI (National High School Enrolment and Enrolment Information System).

Finland also mentioned all three levels of data management, however, the approach there is different. In Finland, education providers (local authorities, the municipality) negotiate education data use with technology providers. At school level, students and teachers most often use the same data management systems, applications, digital learning materials and environments as the rest of the municipality. At country level, Finland has only some statistical analyses and archived data on completed education levels and degrees.

The French Roadmap of the Ministry of National Education and Youth on Data Policy, Algorithms and Source Codes prescribes the principles of data governance, evaluation and sharing. Educational institutions and
private providers have access to data that is not considered to be of general interest, and which is not shared with Academies and the Ministry. The Ministry is working on harmonisation and the establishment of common nomenclatures and interoperability to enable use of the data at country level.

In **Greece**, data management is organized at central level by the Ministry of Education, at regional level by the Regional Education Directorates, and at local level by Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education and Schools. The information system “Myschool” of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs registers the data from the daily operations of the schools.

In **Spain**, schools collect and record student academic data. All academic data and records are kept on official platforms provided by the Autonomous Communities (local authorities) for all publicly funded schools. The Autonomous Communities are responsible for data maintenance and security, and have complete oversight (the Ministry of Education has to go through the Autonomous Communities to coordinate international cooperation (Consejeros de Educación), for example, Conferencia Sectorial de Educación).

### Who monitors data management in education?

In all participating countries, the levels of data monitoring are very similar to the levels of data management. The main stakeholders in data monitoring are the Ministry of Education (BE-NL, BE-FL, CY, EL, FR, HR, IE, PT, RS) and the National Agency for Data Protection (BE-NL, ES, FR, HU, PT, SI, SK). In BE-NL, FI, FR and PT, the local authorities are also monitoring data management in education. In BE-NL, ES, FR, IE and PT, this is done together with the school boards. Some specific instances are mentioned by four countries:

- **ES**: Regional Educational Administrations;
- **CY**: Ministry of Education; School Admin Teams, District Education Offices;
- **SI**: Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education and Sport;
- **HU**: At institutional level - the head of the school, the system administrator; At central level - the Educational Authority.

![Figure 3. Monitoring of data management](image)

The **Ministry of Education** is the only monitoring body in the Belgium-French community, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia and Serbia.

In Finland, municipalities (local authorities) are responsible for data monitoring which resonates with the Finnish approach in which education providers are organized at the municipalities level.
The **National Agency for Data Protection** is involved in data monitoring in almost all countries, especially in Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia where it is the main data monitoring entity.

In **France**, many actors oversee data management. A Ministerial Steering Committee for Data has existed since 2015. It is supported by a network of correspondents. There is one correspondent in each department of the Ministry, and they report to the Secretary General. An Ethics Committee for Education Data comprised of parliamentarians, researchers, academics and association leaders has been in place since 2019, and in 2020, a Strategic Committee for Data was established to support the Steering Committee.

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**Are there any consultations (in progress or completed) with parents and carers or the general public about using and managing student data?**

Seven of the surveyed countries, BE-FR, EL, HR, HU, FR, IE, SK, reported that they conduct consultations with parents, carers or the general public.

In **France**, consultations with different stakeholders, including parents’ associations, are part of the process of setting up “Education Data Hub”.

In **Ireland**, consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including parents, preceded the introduction of the Primary Online Database in academic year 2016. The [linked circular](#) lays out the rationale for its introduction and the benefits of using the system.

In **Belgium-FR**, consultations with representative organizations of parents and of students are mandatory for matters that can have direct impact on pupils’ experiences. The consent of learners and/or of their guardians is also ensured by the obligation of any educational provider to declare the different data collected and to advise on its use.

**Hungary and Greece** mentioned that parents have the option in the education data system to track their child’s academic progress and provide feedback on the data.

The respondents from **Croatia and Slovakia** reported that they do not consult the parents “per se”, but said that in some cases the consent of parents/guardians for use of student personal data is required to comply with GDPR.
Organization and implementation

What processes and tools are used to collect student data for learning? How is data exchanged between different institutions and/or stakeholders and how is this data selected and protected?

The legislation and procedural steps are different but similar examples of data exchange are present in all participating countries.

In all participating countries, the collection of student data is based on the Education Law and the Data Protection Law. Consent forms signed by parents or by students are used only in cases that are not covered by the Education Law.

In some instances, additional consent from parents or students is required e.g., in the case of collecting data for research purposes. In such cases, research approval and signed consent forms are needed. Additional consent forms may be needed when a school or a teacher would like to use some digital tool outside of the pre-agreed set of tools.

The exchange of data among different stakeholders is covered by a special legislation or by protocols specifically signed by the different entities involved in the data sharing processes.

Education data, which is already collected in some of the education databases and archives, may be used for research or statistical reports, designing pilot projects, and monitoring purposes. In such cases, access is given according to the purposes pursued (in accordance with GDPR), data is aggregated, anonymized or pseudonymized and securely transferred.

There is also a legitimate data exchange for specific administrative purposes to institutions, which have a legal basis for data acquisition and further processing. In such cases, data is not anonymized, but access is secured and complies with the legislation in place.

Student data is also shared among schools of the same level – in the case of a student transferring schools, the student’s previous school can share his/her data with the student’s new school. What data exactly can be shared is prescribed by government policy. If a student is transferring schools during the school year, the shared set of data is larger and includes all grades, results, attendance records, etc. If a student is transferring schools at the end of the school year, only the standard diploma is shared.

When students graduate some level of education (e.g., when students move from primary to secondary/middle school, or from there to high school) their data is shared with the next level of education. Usually, higher education institutions have a different database, and some data from the pre-tertiary education database is shared, for example the exam results with which a student has graduated. The Educational Authority can connect data from different databases using unique student identifying numbers.
For how long is student data stored (archived)?

The regulations regarding the storage time for student data depends on the type of data, and vary in all participating countries. Some of the data about students’ progress, results and accomplishments is stored only during the ongoing school year.

The duration of data keeping is defined in the Education Law. Respondents from all participating countries reported archiving student data in centralised records databases. All personal data is processed until the purpose of processing is achieved in accordance with legal and other regulations. Afterwards, the personal data is no longer used, but is stored in accordance with the regulations on the preservation of documentary and archival material.

Respondents from Slovakia mentioned that they store attendance data for 7 years. End-of-year grades/results are stored for 60 or 80 years or indefinitely. In Ireland, pupil data will be retained on Primary Online Database for administrative, identification and analysis purposes until the pupil’s 19th birthday. After this point, the sensitive data will be anonymised in line with national and international best practices (and in keeping with the National Archives Act from 1986) and used only for statistical and longitudinal analyses. At post-primary school level, the retention period is age 25, subject to review thereafter. Data could be retained longer to enable the auditing of the public funds expenditure.

What measures are in place to prevent data misuse such as the use of biometric data, students profiling, re-identification of students, use of student data outside of the education system, sharing with non-authorised parties (e.g., other teachers, parents, or service & technology providers)?

All participating countries have strict legislation and policies on education data use. When data exchange involves a third party, protocols are put in place and parties are responsible for complying with them. All parties must comply with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation. The Data Protection Officer’s duties include responding to requests, management of data breach incidents and management of dedicated channels for reporting unlawful practices.

In all participating countries, there are technical and security measures in place against unauthorised or unlawful data processing and against accidental loss, destruction, damage, alteration or disclosure of data. These include: strong firewalls, use of own servers, passwords, tracing, logging, operating security, clamp-down on malicious software, enhanced security of computer channels/networks, website security, backups. Additionally, the deployed platforms/systems/databases are installed on intranets which allow local storage of the collected data and prohibit access to any external users.

In Belgium-FR, all data exchange tools are created and technically managed by ETNIC, a public benefit organization. Specific permissions are required for authorized users to access (some of the) tools, databases and warehouses.

Belgium-NL has a Declaration of Intent for Privacy in Digital Educational Resources jointly developed with the Federation Centers for Basic Education and a number of suppliers of digital educational resources.
Use

What kind of student data (academic, non-academic, administrative, socio-economic) is collected?

In all participating countries, Education Law and Data Protection Law define what kind of data is collected in the field of education, as mentioned in the beginning of this report. All participating countries collect data about: name, age, sex, parents’/caretakers’ names, addresses, attendance, grades, special needs and students assessment data. Frequently collected data includes also information about: exam performance (11 countries), social benefits (10), behaviour reports (9) and learning progress (8). Additionally, Croatia mentioned collecting unified education numbers for every student. Hungary mentioned collecting student data on foreign study visits and trips and on school-student legal relationship data.

What are the most used forms of data use for learning?

In the section on the purposes of education data collection we talked about monitoring at system and at individual levels as well as collecting data for measuring school and system performance. Here we focus on the more specific use of student data for learning by students, teachers, schools and the education system. While regulatory frameworks prescribe what data can be collected, they do not offer specifics on the forms of data use. The survey participants reported that they mostly use the collected data for the following purposes: adaptation of teaching materials and methodologies (9 countries), teaching staff management (9), academic orientation (9). They reported that they use the data least for: monitoring student progress (2), stakeholder accountability (2) and district accountability (0).
Regarding the use at **system level**, all three forms of data use (infrastructural resource management, financial resource management and stakeholder accountability) are present in **Belgium-FR**; two of them in **Cyprus, France and Ireland**; one of them in **Finland, Croatia, Portugal and Slovakia**.

If we look at the **individual level** of data use by students and teachers, participating countries’ responses show that use of data by **students to monitor their progress** (e.g., to monitor their own achievements and compare their results with averages) is still very rare. Only **Belgium-NL** and **Finland** reported this practice. Meanwhile, teachers in ten out of the fourteen studied countries reported using the data **to adapt their teaching** methods.

**Using data for predictions** (e.g., for the choice of next subject, next level of education, a different strand of education; achievement predictions; dropout predictions) is also relatively rare – it was mentioned by **Belgium-NL, Finland, Hungary and Ireland**. Furthermore, only three countries, **France, Ireland and Portugal**, mentioned using the data for **curriculum planning**.

**Belgium-NL, Finland, France, Slovenia, and Spain** reported using the data for **adaptation and personalization** of the learning process:

- teachers use it to adapt teaching (e.g., consult a dashboard to check students’ quiz answers and make decisions accordingly);
- computer-supported personalization or adaptation (e.g., automated adaptation of difficulty of activities based on student’s answers) (not ES);
- guiding learning paths (e.g., suggesting topics, subjects or complexity levels) to progress;
- academic orientation (e.g., where to continue education) (not FI).

**Croatia and Slovakia** have organized educational data use around:

- teachers use it to adapt teaching (e.g., consult a dashboard to check students’ quiz answers and make decisions accordingly);
- academic orientation (e.g., where to continue education);
- financial resource management;
- teachers follow-up: teaching staff professional development in Croatia, and teaching staff management in Slovakia.
Participants from **Greece and Serbia** reported using the data only for teaching staff management.

**Cyprus, Finland, Ireland and Portugal** reported using the education data they have for teaching staff management and teaching staff professional development.

**Belgium-FR, Croatia, France, Greece, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain** reported using the data for either teaching staff management or teaching staff professional development, but not both.

If we look at the numbers of the kinds of different data that is used to make decisions, **France** and **Finland** are implementing comprehensive use of data (8), followed by **Ireland** (7), while other countries’ use of the data is less diversified (6 or less).
Initiatives and future steps

Initiatives and examples of responsible education data management

Below are short descriptions of the examples mentioned by some of the participating countries. More detailed descriptions are available in the Country Cards section of this report.

The Belgium-Flemish community has a centralised database platform called “Discimus” which enables the collection and exchange of data between schools, education centres and The Agency for Educational Services. “Dataloep” is a web application with statistics from schools or school boards that allows extraction of specific figures and comparison with other institutions. Demo version.

The Belgium-French community created and shared various publications on the pedagogical platform “e-classe” aimed at raising awareness among teachers, headmasters, schools and stakeholders on data practices, including the course “Comment développer des sites web et des applications conformes au RGPD ?”.

Croatia is currently implementing the project “e-Upisi” (Informatizacija procesa i uspostava cjelovite elektroničke usluge upisa u odgojne i obrazovne ustanove) which will create a system at national level that will digitalise the processes of application and enrolment in all education institutions. It will be the ecosystem in which data is managed responsibly and efficiently, integrating different public registers, data collection and exchange via the Government Service Bus.

Cyprus is using graded access to ensure appropriate data processing (e.g., at school level, by district education offices and by the Ministry of Education). It provides access only to authorized officials and is strengthened by a set of technical/organizational measures.

Finland funded several projects at municipality level related to education data. Some of these projects are building an open ecosystem where all actors working in the field of education can join together to build a national service platform for education.

France is launching the “Education Data Hub”, a data platform intended for researchers, edtech players and national education stakeholders. The ambition of the project is to enable researchers, the entire educational community and its partners to create a coherent ecosystem, guided by common ethical standards around a shared data catalogue and an open algorithms library. This ecosystem aims to take shape within a strong legal framework that respects the protection of personal data. It also aims to support the national AI strategy with the creation of sovereign data warehouses on which to train AI.

Hungary established protocols and procedures on how to follow data related to national competency measurements across grades 6, 8 and 10 in an anonymized way.

Spain ensured that platforms used by the schools to store and manage data belong to the educational administrations and are located on their own servers thereby making data safer.

What areas of data use for learning would you like to be further investigated, for example through further cooperation between ministries and agencies members of European Schoolnet?

Four main areas are recognized by the participating countries as most important for future development and research: data literacy, efficient data use, standardization and interoperability, and artificial intelligence implementations.
Data literacy of teachers and school leaders refers to the more responsible use of data, safer data use, data protection, raising awareness among learners and/or guardians about data collection, management and use, developing knowledge of applicable regulations, developing compliance audit methodologies on data processing (BE-FR, BE-NL, FR, HR, PT).

More efficient use of data refers to the use of data for assessment, for adapting teaching methods, for personalization or adaptation by computer system support, for guiding learning paths and for use by students to monitor their progress (CY, HR, IE).

Standardization of education data refers to the national models for managing education data, interoperability and data sharing, data retention periods, management of some specific databases (such as early school leaving prevention databases), learning analytics at country level (FI, HU, SI, PT).

Artificial intelligence implementation refers to the use of data to personalize students’ learning processes and also to facilitate the teachers’ pedagogical and administrative tasks, to enable predictions, to alert teachers of possible difficulties, to guide students, and to deepen understanding of how machine learning and AI can enhance data assessment (ES, FR, IE).

These and many other topics and questions regarding data use for learning will be addressed and discussed in a newly organized EUN Data Interest Group (to be launched in the autumn). Data Interest Group members are expected to express their interest in the area of data use and further research, and to discuss these elements in structured ways. Their conclusions and findings will be presented in future editions of “Agile Information Collection” reports during 2023.