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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu
on behalf of the European Commission
(6.8.2025)

In 2023, 26.9% of tertiary¹ students in the EU were enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields². The EU average has increased by 0.6 percentage points in the past decade, though not fast enough to keep up with job market needs for some STEM fields.

Compared to other large economies³, the EU has the second-lowest ratio of STEM graduates per thousand young people⁴ (14.3), above the US (12.3) but well below Canada (18.0). Comparable data for China are not available.

Findings suggest that among the key reasons behind this low ratio, are a marked decline in some STEM skills at school level in the EU, as shown by the latest PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results, while Asian countries dominate the top of the rankings. This discourages EU learners from pursuing STEM programmes in higher education or vocational education and training. Moreover, gender bias contributes to low female enrolment. Women make up to only one third of STEM students.

The STEM education strategic plan⁵ adopted by the Commission in March 2025, outlines ambitious actions and targeted initiatives to help addressing the growing demand for STEM professionals, starting from early years and at all stages of education.

¹ Tertiary education comprises short-cycle tertiary education, bachelor's level, master's level, and doctoral level. Colleges and universities are considered tertiary education institutions.

² STEM fields: 'natural sciences, mathematics and statistics', 'information and communication technologies' and 'engineering, manufacturing and construction'.

³ The data refers to 2022 graduates. More recent data as well as figures on enrolled students are not available. Japan, the only other non-EU G7 economy, is excluded because data on ICT (information and communication technology) graduates in are not available.

⁴ Between 20 and 34 years old.

⁵ COM/2025/89 final; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0089>.