Al in European Schools

A European report comparing seven countries





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Preface: The growing role of Al in education

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly recognised by students as a critical skill for the future. In fact, 74% believe it will play a significant role in their professional lives. Yet, our findings reveal a concerning gap: fewer than half of students feel adequately prepared by their schools to engage with AI, and nearly half (49%) worry that it could exacerbate inequalities among their peers.

AI is rapidly reshaping education in European secondary schools, trans-

forming how students learn and interact with technology. While its potential to enhance academic performance and improve learning outcomes is widely acknowledged, its adoption brings with it pressing challenges. Schools, educators, NGOs and policymakers face an urgent need for clear guidance, comprehensive training, and robust frameworks to navigate this evolving landscape.

Lisa FeltonHead of
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Young people see AI's practical and meaningful applications in education, but they often lack the understanding and skills needed to fully harness its potential. Bridging this knowledge gap must become a priority—not only to ensure students are capable users of AI, but also to empower them as informed, ethical, and innovative contributors to its development. Students are also eager to understand the broader implications of AI, from its societal and scientific benefits to the risks it presents, such as bias, ethical dilemmas, and disinformation.

At the same time, disparities in access to digital tools, skilled educators, and reliable infrastructure threaten to deepen existing inequalities across Europe. For students from lower-income households, limited access to AI resources and digital education poses a significant barrier to opportunity. Addressing this digital divide requires targeted investments and policy interventions to promote inclusivity and ensure that every student can benefit from AI's potential.

Europe finds itself at a pivotal moment, with the introduction of the AI Act holding significant implications for education. The Act's effective implementation will be crucial in striking a balance between enabling the benefits of AI and safeguarding individual rights. This will require moving beyond broad discussions of data ethics to adopt actionable, context-specific approaches at the European level. By fostering collaboration among policymakers, educators, NGOs and stakeholders, Europe can establish a framework that promotes responsible AI use while equipping the next generation to lead in an AI-driven world.

This study captures the perspectives, challenges, and aspirations of students across Europe regarding AI in education. It serves as a call to action: to address the critical gaps and opportunities identified, and to shape a future where AI is not just a tool but a transformative force for equitable, effective, and inclusive learning.

Executive Summary

This report presents insights into students' perceptions, usage, and concerns regarding artificial intelligence (AI) in education, based on a comprehensive cross-country survey questioning students between 12 and 17 years old. The findings highlight diverse regional attitudes, the role of AI in academic settings, and the growing demand for skills and tools that integrate AI into learning environments. Additionally, the report examines the potential risk of a widening digital divide caused by disparities in students' starting conditions, which could significantly influence their opportunities to develop essential AI competencies.

Student usage and familiarity with AI

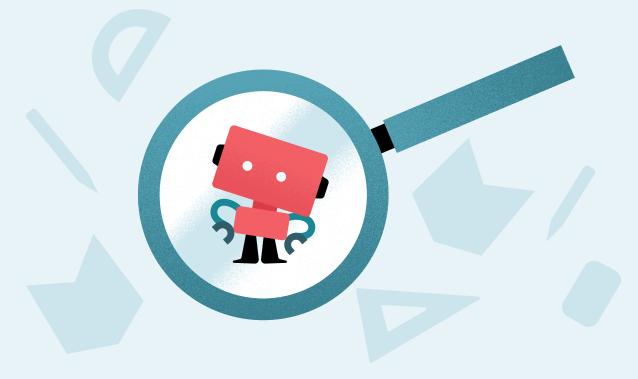
AI tools are used both inside and outside the classroom for varied purposes. ChatGPT emerges as the most widely utilised AI tool, with 48% of students using it personally and 47% instructed by their teacher. Familiarity with and understanding of AI also varies, with most students identifying as "somewhat familiar" but with notable regional gaps; for instance, Portuguese students report the lowest familiarity levels.

Perceived importance of AI competencies

AI is viewed as vital for future success, with 74% of students recognizing its importance for professional careers. Turkish students show the strongest conviction, with 85% emphasizing the role of AI in their future, and 81% linking access to AI with academic success. In contrast, German and Greek students exhibit the least interest in AI competencies and their practical applications.

Support systems and preparedness

Peers are the primary source of AI-related support for students (65%), followed by parents (60%) and teachers (50%). Turkish students report the highest levels of support across all



groups, whereas German and Greek students receive the least. Preparedness also varies: only 46% think their schools adequately prepare them for AI, and just 44% perceive their teachers as competent in AI usage. Greek students express the lowest confidence in their teachers' readiness (29%).

Concerns about AI in education

Students express a mix of optimism and apprehension about AI. While 55% believe AI could make grading fairer, 46% fear that it might lead to discrimination. Concerns about inequality are significant, with 49% worrying that AI could widen gaps in academic success. Bullying via Deep Fakes is another prevalent fear, especially among Turkish students (64%), whereas German and Spanish students are less concerned.

Opportunities and risks

Students are eager to explore how AI can enhance their academic performance (52%) and address broader societal, scientific, and economic challenges (37%). However, 27% feel left behind compared to their peers in using AI at school, with Turkish students reporting this concern most frequently (39%).

Student preferences for assessment and learning

Students show a clear preference for modernizing education. A majority (79%) favour problem-solving assessments over memorization, and 69% advocate for continuous progress evaluations instead of one-off tests. Turkish and British students are particularly supportive of these changes, while German students are less inclined toward continuous assessments (53%). Additionally, 40% of students support the use of AI during exams, with the highest approval in Türkiye (52%).

Access to AI and digital tools

While AI tools are increasingly integrated into education, significant disparities exist in access to digital devices and internet. UK students report the highest access to digital devices that enable the use of AI at school, while Greek students face the most barriers, with 74% lacking sufficient access to devices. In most schools, the use of AI is governed by regulations set either by the school itself or by individual teachers while 16% state that AI use is outright prohibited at their schools.

Research findings

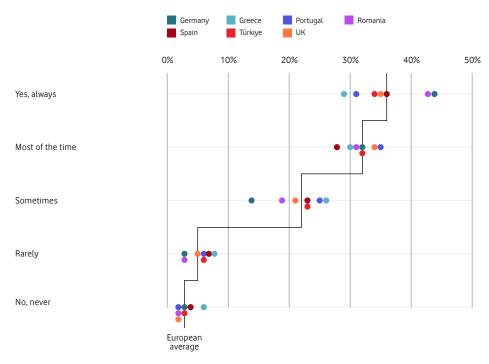
1. Access to AI and digital tools in and outside schools

Based on the survey findings, over one-third of the students between 12 and 17 (36%) reported having consistent access to devices equipped with AI capabilities. In total, more than two-thirds of teenage students (68%) indicated they have access to such devices either "always" (36%) or "most of the time" (32%). Additionally, 22% of students stated they have access to AI-enabled devices "sometimes," while only 3% reported "never" having access to such technology. Notably, the higher the parents' income, the more likely students are to have access to AI tools.

While a majority of students (59%) report limited access to digital devices at school, posing a significant challenge to technology integration, an equal proportion (59%) recognize the compatibility of AI applications with other tools used in their schools. However, inadequate internet connectivity persists as a barrier, with 51% of students experiencing insufficient access. Nearly half (46%) of students report being able to use AI in their schools without any difficulties. Furthermore, the lower the parents' income, the less access students have to AI tools in schools.

Frequency of having access to digital devices that enable the use of AI

Do you have access to digital devices that enable the use of Al?

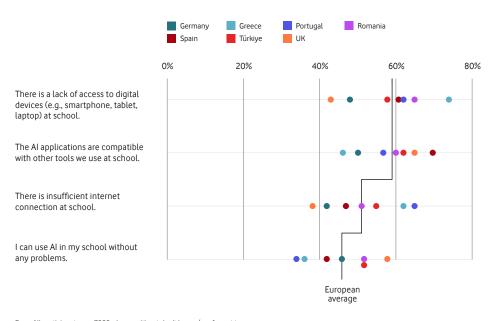


Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer

In most surveyed countries, the majority of students have access to devices that support AI usage. Germany and Romania stand out with the highest percentages of students reporting consistent access to such devices, at 44% and 43%, respectively. Across all surveyed countries, fewer than 10% of students report rarely or never having access to digital devices. However, Greece exhibits lower levels of access compared to the European average. Only 29% of Greek students report always having access to AI-enabled devices, significantly below the European average of 36%. Additionally, Greek students are more likely to report limited access, with 8% rarely and 6% never having access, compared to European averages of 5% and 3%, respectively.

Perception of AI accessibility in schools

How would you rate the accessibility of AI applications in your school?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer Top-2 boxes in percent (strongly agree & agree); scale: 1 = Strongly agree to 4 = Strongly disagree

When evaluating key factors such as access to digital devices, internet connectivity, and seamless AI usage in schools, the UK emerges as the leader, providing the best overall access to AI and digital tools. Notably, Spain surpasses the UK in one area: compatibility of AI applications with other tools, with 70% of Spanish students reporting compatibility compared to 65% in the UK. Compatibility means that AI tools support and complement the applications already in use without causing technical problems or reducing user-friendliness.

In contrast, Greece faces the most significant challenges, with 74% of students reporting a lack of access to digital devices at school, well above the European average of 59%. Both Greek and Portuguese schools struggle with weak internet connectivity, with 65% of Portuguese and 62% of Greek students reporting insufficient access, compared to 51% European average and just 38% in the UK. Furthermore, these two countries have the lowest shares of students who can use AI at school without issues, with only 34% in Portugal and 36% in Greece reporting smooth AI usage.

2. Regulations and guidelines for AI use in schools

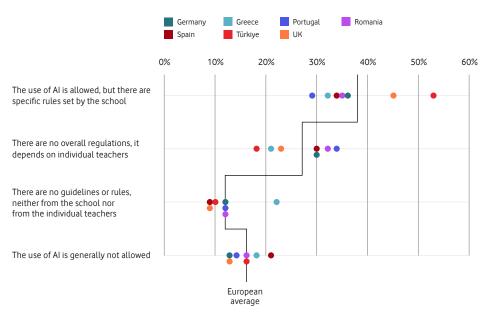
In most European schools, the use of AI is governed by regulations set either by the school itself (38%) or by individual teachers (27%). However, a notable 12% of students report the absence of any regulations regarding AI use, while 16% state that AI use is outright prohibited at their schools.

16%

state that AI use is outright prohibited at their schools

Regulation of AI in European schools

How is the use of AI systems regulated at your school?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer

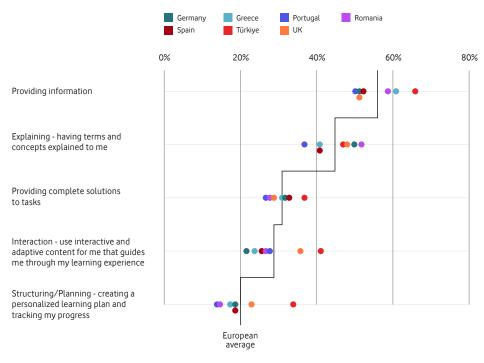
Türkiye leads in the proportion of students (53%) reporting that AI regulations are primarily set by schools, followed by the UK at 45%. In contrast, in countries like Portugal and Spain, regulations are more commonly established by individual teachers. Around 30% of students in these countries indicate that no school-wide rules exist, leaving AI use to the discretion of teachers. Greece stands out with the highest percentage of schools lacking any rules or guidelines for AI usage, at 22%, nearly double the European average of 12%.

Students' usage instructed and non-instructed by teacher

AI usage outside of school is highly diverse, with students leveraging the technology in various ways to enhance their learning. The most common application is obtaining information, reported by 56% of students. Additionally, 45% use AI for explanations of terms and concepts, while nearly one-third (31%) rely on it to provide complete solutions to tasks. Furthermore, 29% engage with adaptive and interactive content to guide their learning experience, and 20% utilize AI to structure personalized learning paths and track their progress.

Ways of European students using Al to study

What do you currently use AI applications for when learning outside of school and not being instructed by your teachers?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer Multiple answers possible

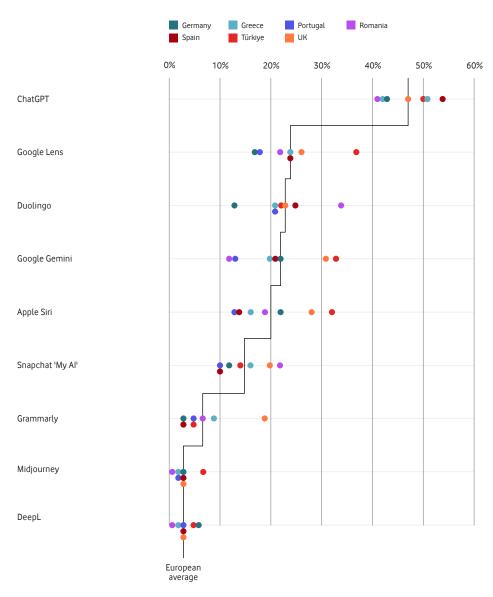
Across all surveyed nations, the primary use of AI is to provide information, while structuring and planning personalized learning paths is the least common application. However, Türkiye stands out with 34% of students using AI for structuring and planning, significantly above the European average of 20%. Additionally, interactive and adaptive content generated by AI to guide learning is particularly popular in Türkiye and the UK, with usage rates of 41% and 36%, respectively, compared to the cross-country average of 29%.

Al Tools used instructed by teacher

Under teacher instruction ChatGPT emerges as the most frequently used tool, with 47% of students identifying it as their primary AI resource. It stands out significantly, far ahead of other tools. Trailing behind but closely ranked are Google Lens (24%), Duolingo (23%), Google Gemini (22%), and Apple Siri (20%).

Top 10 Al tools use in the classroom

Which AI tools do you frequently use instructed by your teacher in your school?



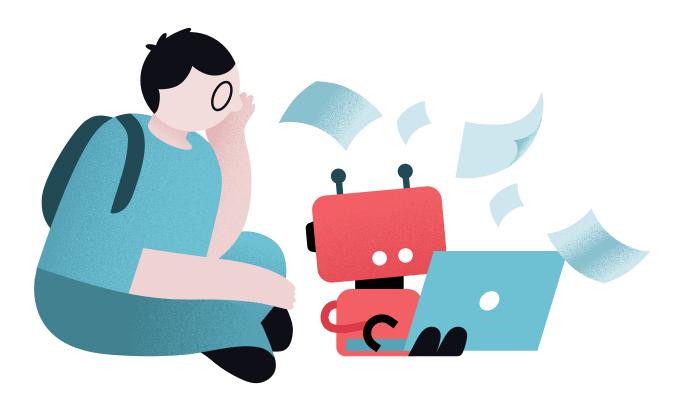
Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer; other; I have never used Al in class instructed by my teacher Multiple answers possible

ChatGPT is the most widely used AI tool that teachers instruct students to use in schools across all surveyed countries, except Romania. Notably, Google Classroom, despite being surveyed only in Romania, ranks in the cross-national top 10 due to its high usage there (48%).

Spanish students show the strongest preference for ChatGPT, with 54% reporting its use in school, while Turkish students favour Google Lens the most, with a 37% usage rate compared to the 24% average in other countries. Duolingo reaches its peak popularity in Romania (34%) but is least used in Germany (13%), with an overall average of 23%.

Google Gemini and Apple Siri are particularly popular in the UK (31% and 28%, respectively) and Türkiye (33% and 32%, respectively). Meanwhile, Portuguese students use AI tools less overall, except for ChatGPT, which is used by 51%, above the cross-country average of 47%.

Grammarly is notably more popular in the UK (19%) compared to a European average of 7%, while Midjourney finds its highest popularity among Turkish students, with 7% usage compared to the European average of 3%.

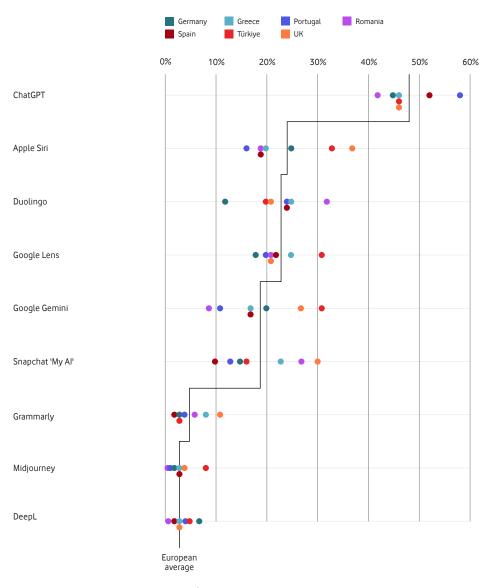


Al tools used without instruction by teacher

Not instructed by a teacher, ChatGPT remains the most widely used AI tool, with nearly half of the surveyed students (48%) reporting its use during their personal time. It is utilised approximately twice as often as Apple Siri (24%), Duolingo (23%), and Google Lens (23%), which are nearly tied for second place in terms of popularity.

Top 10 Al tools used outside of school

Which AI tools do you frequently use outside of school?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know \prime prefer not to answer Multiple answers possible

Across different countries, the use of AI tools outside the classroom reveals distinct regional preferences, highlighting significant variations in student engagement with technology in their personal time. For example, Duolingo shows significant regional variation in usage outside the classroom. It is particularly popular in Romania, where 32% of students use it, but sees its lowest usage among German children, with only 12% reporting its use. Google Classroom, although surveyed exclusively in Romania, still ranks in the cross-national top 10, driven by its substantial 26% usage rate there.

In the UK and Türkiye, Apple Siri and Google Gemini are the most frequently used AI tools outside of school. Apple Siri is used by 37% of British students and 33% of Turkish students, compared to a European average of 24%. Similarly, Google Gemini is used by 27% of British students and 31% of Turkish students, significantly above the European average of 19%.

Conversely, Google Gemini sees the least usage outside school in Romania (9%) and Portugal (11%). In Portugal, ChatGPT dominates as the most popular AI tool for personal use, with 58% of students using it outside school, far exceeding the European average of 47%.

4. Perceived importance of AI competencies for future career

AI-competencies is widely recognized by students as a critical skill for the future, with 74% believing it will play a significant role in their professional lives. A majority (66%) view access to AI as essential for academic success, and 61% report knowing how to use AI to enhance their school performance. Students from higher-income families and those with access to AI tools feel significantly better prepared by their schools to use AI.

However, perceptions of readiness vary. Half of the students (51%) believe their parents are prepared to work with AI, while 46% feel adequately prepared by their schools to engage with AI. Similarly, 44% perceive their teachers as well prepared to work with AI applications. Despite these numbers, more than one in four students (27%) feel they are falling behind their peers in using AI at school.

Students who already have regular access to AI tools are noticing the support AI provides in their learning process. Generally, it is notable that students from higher-income families view the assistance AI can offer more positively and are more likely to develop AI-related skills.

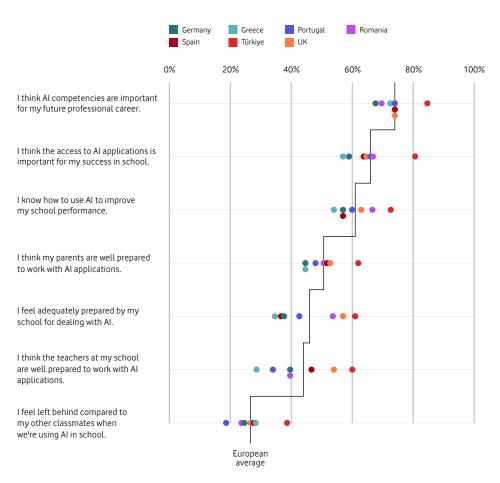
74% of students believe that AI will play a significant role in their professional lives

44%

perceive their teachers as well prepared to work with AI applications

Perceived importance of AI competencies

How strongly do you agree with the following statements?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer Top-2 boxes in percent (strongly agree & agree); scale: 1 = Strongly agree to 4 = Strongly disagree

AI competencies are widely perceived as essential for future success, with 74% of students in the surveyed European countries agreeing on their importance. Turkish students, however, express the strongest conviction, with 85% believing that AI skills are crucial for professional careers, significantly above the European average. Additionally, 81% of Turkish students consider access to AI applications vital for their academic success, far surpassing the European average of 66% and the second-highest figure in Romania (67%).

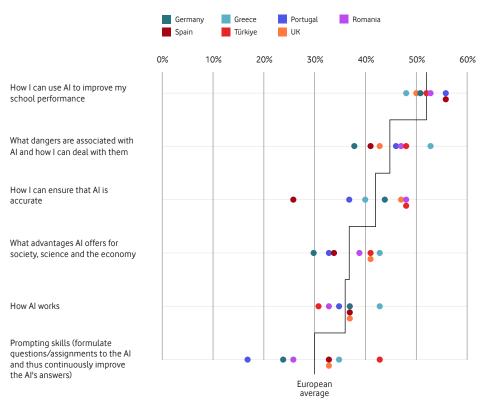
In contrast, German and Greek students are the least likely to value AI skills and access to AI for school success. Only 59% of German and 57% of Greek students regard AI competencies as important for their careers or view access to AI as essential for school success.

Turkish students also excel in practical AI usage, with 73% knowing how to use AI to improve their school performance, compared to the European average of 61%. They feel the most supported by their schools (61% versus a European average of 46%) and perceive their teachers as better prepared (60% compared to 44% European average). However, despite this strong preparation, 39% of Turkish students report feeling left behind compared to their peers in using AI at school, significantly above the European average of 27%. In contrast, Portuguese students feel the least left behind, with only 19% reporting such a sentiment.

German and Greek students report the lowest levels of preparation among both parents and schools. Just 45% of students in these countries believe their parents are well-prepared to work with AI, and only 38% of German and 35% of Greek students feel adequately prepared by their schools to handle AI. Greek students, in particular, perceive their teachers as the least prepared to work with AI, with only 29% expressing confidence in their teachers' readiness, well below the European average of 44%.

Student's fields of interest regarding AI

What would you like to learn about AI systems?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer Top-2 boxes in percent (strongly agree & agree); multiple answers possible

30%

of students are interested in developing prompting skills to refine Al-generated responses

Students show the greatest interest in learning how AI can enhance their academic performance, with over half (52%) expressing eagerness to explore this area. Nearly half (45%) are also interested in understanding the risks associated with AI, while 42% want to learn how to ensure the accuracy of AI-generated answers. Additionally, 37% of students are curious about the societal, scientific, and economic benefits AI offers. More than a third (36%) are keen to understand how AI works, while a smaller group (30%) is interested in developing prompting skills to refine AI-generated responses.

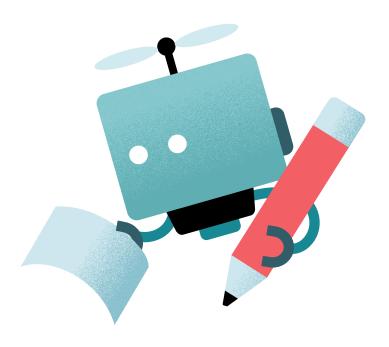
Interest in learning about AI varies significantly across countries, highlighting diverse educational priorities. German students show the least interest in the risks of AI (38% compared to a 45% average) and in its advantages for society, science, and the economy (30% compared to a 37% average). Conversely, Greek students are the most eager to explore these societal and scientific benefits, with 43% expressing interest, and they also lead in curiosity about how AI works.

In Spain, students are the least interested in learning how to ensure the accuracy of AI's outputs, with only 26% showing interest compared to the 42% average. Meanwhile, Turkish students exhibit the highest interest in developing prompting skills to refine AI-generated answers, with 42% prioritising this area, whereas Portuguese students show the least interest, at just 17%. The cross-country average for interest in prompting skills stands at 30%.

5. Familiarity with AI

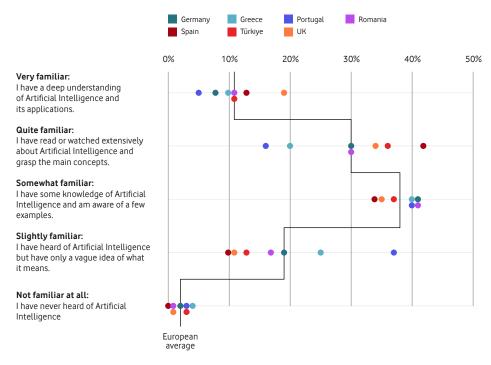
When describing their familiarity with AI, the most common response among students is "somewhat familiar" (38%), indicating a basic understanding of the technology and awareness of a few examples. Additionally, 30% of students consider themselves "quite familiar," reflecting a moderate level of knowledge, while 11% describe themselves as "very familiar," suggesting a deep understanding of AI and its applications. Meanwhile, 19% report being "slightly familiar," meaning they have heard of AI but only possess a vague understanding. Additionally, the higher the family's income, the more likely students are to be very familiar with AI.

Overall, 98% of students report at least some level of familiarity with AI, leaving only 2% who have never heard of it. But only one in nine students claim to have a comprehensive understanding of AI and its practical uses.



Familiarity of Al among students

How familiar are you with the term artificial intelligence?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer Scale: 1 = Very Familiar to 5 = Not familiar

The survey reveals notable differences in AI knowledge levels among students across countries. Portuguese students rate their familiarity with AI lower than their peers in other countries. Only 5% of Portuguese students describe themselves as "very familiar" with AI, significantly below the European average of 11%, and just 16% consider themselves "quite familiar," compared to the European average of 30%. Consequently, a higher proportion of Portuguese students identify as "somewhat familiar," "slightly familiar," or "not familiar at all" compared to the survey's overall results.

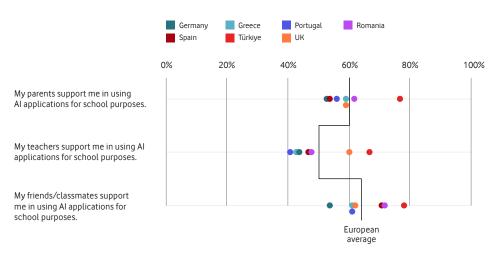
In contrast, British students demonstrate the highest self-reported familiarity with AI among all surveyed countries. A notable 19% of British students describe themselves as "very familiar," almost double the European average, and 34% report being "quite familiar," exceeding the European average of 30%.

Spanish students also exhibit above-average familiarity with AI. While 13% of Spanish students describe themselves as "very familiar," slightly above the European average, 42% report being "quite familiar"—the highest percentage for this category among all countries surveyed.

However, the majority of students report receiving support when using AI applications for school purposes. Peers are the most common source of assistance, with 65% of students relying on their friends for help. Parents also play a significant role, providing support to 60% of students. Teachers, however, are the least involved, with only 50% of students reporting receiving help from them.

Support by teachers, parents and friends using Al

Please indicate how often the respective statement applies to you.



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer Top-2 boxes in percent (very often & sometimes); scale: 1 = Very often to 4 = Never often 6

In a cross-country comparison, Turkish students receive the highest levels of support for using AI in school, with 67% receiving assistance from teachers, 78% from classmates, and 77% from parents. In contrast, German students report the lowest levels of support, with only 44% receiving help from teachers, 54% from classmates, and 53% from parents. The UK presents a unique balance, where support from parents, teachers, and peers is nearly equal, with around 60% of students reporting assistance from each group.

6. Disadvantages of using AI in education

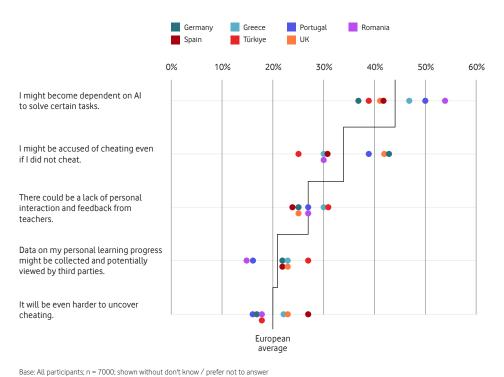
Students identify several key disadvantages of using AI in educational settings. The most significant concern, cited by 44%, is the risk of over-reliance on AI for certain tasks. Additionally, 34% express fears of being unfairly accused of cheating. A lack of personal interaction and feedback is seen as a major drawback by 27% of students, while 21% are worried about the potential collection of personal data on their learning processes. Similarly, 20% believe that AI could make it even more challenging to detect instances of cheating, highlighting another critical concern.

44%

cite, that the most significant concern is the risk of over-reliance on AI for certain tasks

Concerns about AI in education

What are the main disadvantages you expect from the use of Al in schools?



Two answers possible

Student perceptions of AI's greatest disadvantages vary widely across countries. Romanian students are the most concerned about over-reliance on AI for completing tasks in schools, with 54% identifying this as a top issue, while German students are the least worried about this, at 37%.

When it comes to fears of being falsely accused of cheating, Turkish students are the least concerned (25%), whereas German and British students express the highest levels of worry, with 43% and 42%, respectively.

Concerns about personal data collection are lowest among Romanian (15%) and Portuguese (16%) students, while Turkish students exhibit the highest concern, with 27% viewing this as AI's greatest drawback.

Spanish students stand out for their worry that AI use in schools will make uncovering cheating even more difficult, with 27% citing this concern compared to the European average of 20%.

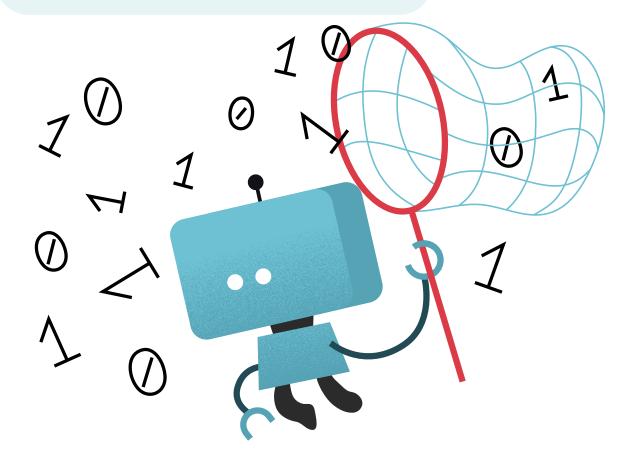
AI-related concerns among students reveal significant apprehensions about its potential social and academic impacts. Nearly half (49%) fear that AI could create inequalities in success among peers, while 48% are concerned about the risk of being bullied through the misuse of Deep Fakes. Additionally, 38% report feeling overwhelmed by AI, and 34% worry about having fewer opportunities than their classmates to leverage the advantages of AI in their education.

49%

fear that AI could create inequalities in success among peers

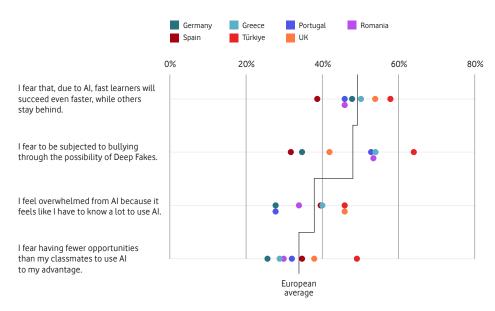
34%

worry about having fewer opportunities than their classmates to leverage the advantages of Al in their education



Fears about the use of AI for educational purposes

What are you worried about when it comes to the Al in school?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer Top-2 boxes in percent (strongly agree & agree); scale: 1 = Strongly agree to 4 = Strongly disagree

Concerns about the effects of AI vary significantly across countries, with Turkish students expressing the highest levels of worry and German students the least. Turkish students are particularly concerned about bullying through Deep Fakes, with 64% citing this as a worry, compared to the European average of 48%. In contrast, only 32% of Spanish students and 35% of German students share this concern.

Turkish students also report the greatest fear of having fewer opportunities than their classmates to use AI to their advantage, with 49% expressing this concern, well above the European average of 34%. German students are the least concerned in this area, with only 26% reporting such a fear.

Spanish students stand out for their lower concern about AI exacerbating inequalities between fast learners and others, with only 39% worrying about this compared to the European average of 49%.

7. Student preferences for assessment and learning

Students express a clear preference for innovative approaches to learning and assessment. Over three-quarters (79%) favour testing their problem-solving skills over memorization, and 69% believe that one-off performance tests should be replaced with continuous assessments of individual learning progress.

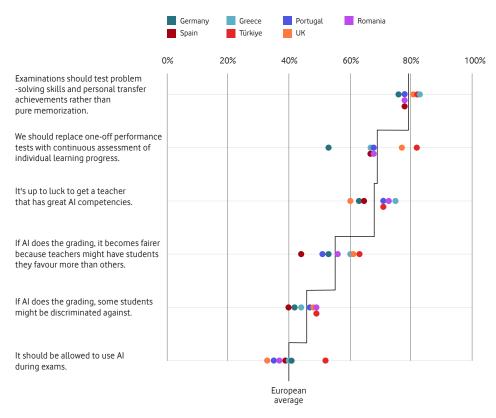
However, concerns about fairness and equality in AI usage persist. While 68% of students feel it is largely a matter of luck to have a teacher with strong AI competencies, 55% think grading would become fairer if AI was used. At the same time, 46% fear that AI-based grading could lead to discrimination. Additionally, 40% of students believe that AI should be allowed during exams, reflecting a growing openness to integrating technology into academic evaluations.

55%

think grading would become fairer if AI was used

Preferences for assessment and learning with Al

How much do you agree with following statements?



Base: All participants; n = 7000; shown without don't know / prefer not to answer Top-2 boxes in percent (strongly agree & agree); scale: 1 = Strongly agree to 4 = Strongly disagree

While opinions on some aspects of AI in education vary across countries, there is broad consensus among students regarding the content of examinations. German students stand out for their relatively low support (53%) for replacing one-off performance tests with continuous assessments, compared to a European average of 69%. In contrast, Turkish and British students express strong support for continuous assessments, with 82% and 77%, respectively, favouring this approach.

Turkish students also differ significantly from the European average regarding the use of AI during exams. More than half (52%) believe AI should be allowed, compared to the European average of 40%, highlighting their openness to integrating AI into academic settings.

Research Design

Purpose of the study

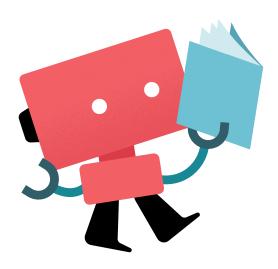
The study surveyed teenage students in seven European countries about the accessibility of technologies, their current familiarity and usage of AI, their support environment regarding AI-usage, their concerns and interests around AI and the role students ascribe to AI in their future professional career. Thereby the study examines how AI in school influences learning progress and inclusion, and where resources and competencies are lacking.

The survey asked students about their experiences and thoughts regarding AI in an educational context. The results are subjective perceptions, but nonetheless reflect a valid assessment of the school.

Methodological Remarks

The survey was conducted by the opinion research institute Ipsos on behalf of the Vodafone Group Foundation. The survey was conducted in seven countries: Germany, United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Türkiye.

The survey took place between September 26th and November 4th, 2024. 1,000 school children between 12 and 17 years old were interviewed online in each country.



Imprint

About the Vodafone Foundation

Vodafone Foundation (UK registered charity 1193984) is committed to connecting communities around the world to improve lives. There is a unique network of 27 local foundations and social investment programs that Vodafone Foundation works through.

The underlying belief of this network of foundations is that connectivity drives change. By using this network Vodafone Foundation aims to connect people with the necessary tools to make a difference in the world.

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Design and Illustration

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