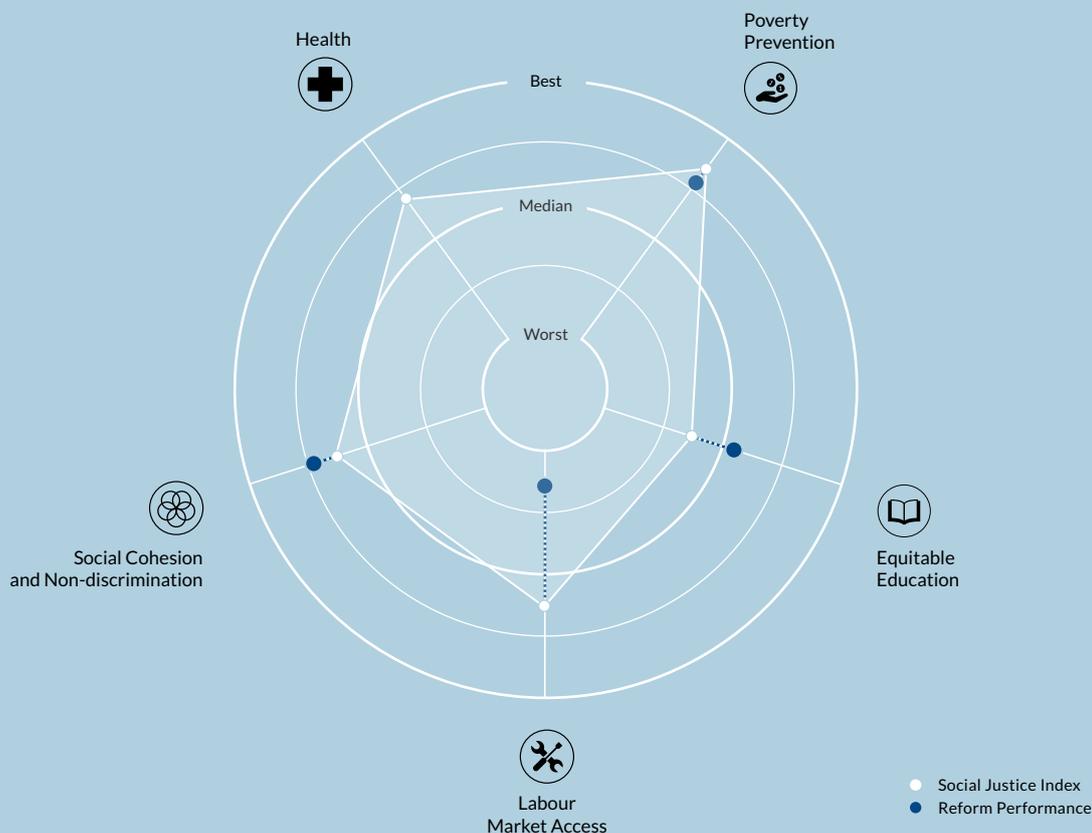


## Findings by Country


**France**

How does the country rank in the EU?



### Overall Findings

**Need** According to the experts, the overall need to improve social inclusion in France is the 3rd highest; only in Bulgaria and Greece do the experts see an even stronger need to foster social inclusion. This is somewhat surprising as, after all, France ranks 12th in the 2015 Social Justice Index (SJI). Most pressing seems to be improving Social Cohesion, where the need for reforms is the highest among the countries examined (2.74, rank 18/18). Equally, in safeguarding Equitable Education (2.29, rank 17/22) and improving Labour Market Access (2.33, rank 11/19), the experts report a rather high need for government action. For Poverty Prevention, the need is slightly lower (1.95, rank 12/27), reflecting the country's good performance in the 2015 SJI, where France ranks 5th in that dimension.

Across all dimensions and policy objectives, the most pressing issues for the French government are to:

- safeguard independence of learning success from children's socioeconomic background (3.0, rank 26 in SJI)
- reduce the number of early school leavers (2.75)

## Overall Reform Performance Ranking



## Overview of Reform Barometer Scores



- improve job prospects for the long-term unemployed (2.88) and young people (2.75)
- tackle income inequality (2.75)
- improve integration policies for refugees (3.0) and the foreign-born population (2.75)
- reduce the number of NEETs (3.0)

**Activity** Overall, 42 percent of the reform need in France has been addressed (rank 17/23), which is slightly below the EU median (46%).

Looking at the dimensions, the experts report relatively high activity rates with regard to Poverty Prevention (60%, rank 3/27), Equitable Education (39%, rank 7/22) and Social Cohesion (46%, rank 7/18). Regarding Labour Market Access, the activity is much lower (24%), ranking France last of all in this respect (19/19).

With regard to the main pressing challenges mentioned above, the related activity rates differ strongly. The experts report high activity rates in safeguarding educational mobility (67%, rank 2), reducing the number of early

school leavers (64%, rank 3) and cutting the number of NEETs (75%, rank 3). The activities aimed at improving job prospects for the long-term unemployed (37%) and young people (39%) are mediocre in absolute terms but relatively low, as here France ranks 18th and 19th, respectively. Regarding integration policies, the experts have seen no activity at all in better integrating refugees; for the foreign-born population, the activity rate is also low (33%).

**Quality** The overall quality score of 0.63 (rank 13/20) suggests that the experts expect the initiated reforms to have slightly positive effects on social inclusion in France. This is also the case with regard to Poverty Prevention (0.73, rank 14/24) and Equitable Education (0.56, rank 10/21).

### Dimension Findings



#### Poverty Prevention

**Need** As in most other countries, the need to reduce poverty among the total population (1.46) is much lower than for specific societal subgroups. A more pressing need is seen in reducing poverty among the foreign-born population (2.33) and refugees (2.38) as well as among children (2.15) and single parents (2.0).

**Activity** The related activity rates are (very) high both in absolute terms and compared to other countries, particularly with regard to child poverty (82%, rank 5), poverty among the foreign-born population (71%, rank 1) and poverty among refugees (66%, rank 2). On the other hand, the activity rate concerning poverty among single parents is quite low (36%). The experts report that a multi-year plan was adopted in 2013 to tackle poverty and foster social inclusion (Plan pluriannuel de lutte contre la pauvreté et pour l'inclusion sociale).

**Quality** The experts expect the measures aimed at reducing child poverty to have slightly positive effects (0.48). The activities designed to reduce poverty among refugees and the foreign-born population are assessed better, with a score of 1.0 for each. In absolute terms, this means that the experts think the reforms will have quite positive effects, but that they see some room for improvement. But compared to other countries, with a quality score of 1.0, France ranks 1st regarding poverty among the foreign-born population and 2nd with regard to poverty among refugees.



#### Equitable Education

**Need** The need score of 2.29 (rank 17) reflects France's performance in the 2015 SJI, where the country ranks 18th in the Education dimension. Looking at the policy objectives in this dimension, the experts see a rather mediocre need to improve the structural conditions regarding finances and human resources (1.77) and the quality of teaching (1.45). On the other hand, the need for government action concerning the policy objectives 'safeguard equal opportunities' (2.3), 'improve integration of refugees' (2.5), 'reduce the number of early school leavers' (2.75) and 'safeguard educational mobility' (3.0)

is (very) urgent. With regard to ‘equal opportunities’, the most pressing need is seen within primary education (2.67) and lifelong learning (2.67).

One expert thinks that “the French system is characterized by instability and by a constant flux of changes. However, most of these changes are piecemeal, incremental, partial and not always fully implemented, as the system is extremely centralized, controlled by the unions and partly dependent on the goodwill and support from local authorities, which are responsible for the funding of most non-core activities.”

**Activity** The activity rates with regard to the most pressing policy objectives differ greatly. While about two-thirds of the reform need in safeguarding educational mobility and reducing the number of early school leavers have been addressed, no expert has seen relevant government action to improve the integration of refugees within the education system. As for safeguarding equal opportunities, the related activity rate is mediocre (47%).

One expert reports that “budgetary efforts have been targeted towards early childhood but depend a lot on local governments and on the facilities they provide. Some effort (but rather marginal) is also being made towards ‘college education’ (11- to 15-years-old) within the framework of the 2015 reform and of the programmes designed to provide special support to suburban schools facing economic and social difficulties, in particular in relation to the integration of foreign or migrant families. Given the budgetary restrictions, not much money is available for the whole education system.”

**Quality** With regard to equal opportunities and early school leavers, the reforms are expected to have slightly positive effects (0.54 / 0.57), but experts are not satisfied. Many would like the education system to become more decentralised. One expert explains that “the adopted reforms are plagued by a certain number of ‘sacred cows’ which remain untouched and impede substantial change. These ‘fundamental principles’ include the complete centralisation of programmes with no margin of manoeuvre at local or school level and the de facto co-management of the entire system with powerful and conservative unions.”

With regard to educational mobility, one expert complains: “Educational reforms under the auspices of *égalité* are blind to major problems for young people from poorer social backgrounds or immigrants. The one-size-fits-all approach does not work.”<sup>1</sup>

## Labour Market Access

**Need** Experts see the need to increase employment levels as quite pressing (2.5, rank 18). This is especially true for specific subgroups, such as the long-term unemployed (2.88), young people (2.75), the low-skilled (2.63) and the foreign-born population (2.63). With regard to precarious employment (2.25) and in-work poverty (2.25), the need for government action is also quite high in absolute terms but relatively low (rank 9 and 8, respectively).

**Activity** The activity rate aimed at improving job prospects is very low (24%),

<sup>1</sup> Jake Murdoch, University of Burgundy, Dijon

ranking France last out of 19 countries. No activities at all are reported for tackling in-work poverty or at increasing labour market access for senior citizens, women, refugees and the foreign-born population. For the long-term unemployed, 37 percent of the reform need has been addressed; for young people, 39 percent. The highest activity rate is reported with regard to precarious employment (56%).



### Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination

**Need** The overall need for improvement in this dimension is the highest among the countries examined (2.74, rank 18/18). This is surprising, as France ranks 11th in the 2015 SJI Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination dimension. While the need to improve gender equality is somewhat lower (2.33), the experts see an urgent need to tackle income inequality (2.75), reduce the number of NEETs (3.0) and improve integration policies (2.88). With regard to the latter aspect, one expert explains: “Integration of migrants and refugees essentially rests upon the signature of a ‘reception and integration contract’, which is very insufficient in providing skills (especially language skills) and access to rights. Further, there is no specific assistance and follow-up for people with over 5 years’ residence. Migrants and refugees face numerous obstacles in their professional ‘insertion’. Many jobs are forbidden for foreign people. All these topics should be taken into account, but the social and political climate in France is very hostile to these groups.”<sup>2</sup>

**Activity** The activity rates in this dimension differ strongly. While that aimed at reducing the number of NEETs was 75 percent, only 17 percent of the reform need for improving integration policies has been addressed. The activity rates aimed at tackling income inequality (42%) and gender inequality (50%) are mediocre. With regard to the latter aspect, one expert reports that “the Act of 4 August 2014 increased the mandatory presence to 40 percent women on the board of directors of listed companies by 2017.” Another one explains that “parental leave has been reformed in order to reduce the average length of maternity leave and to encourage fathers’ involvement. A leave of absence for working partners of pregnant women has also been adopted. Family support allowance for single mothers is being gradually revised so as to increase it by 25 percent, excluding inflation, by 2018. Protection against unpaid maintenance allowances will be implemented from 1 April 2016 onwards.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Kirszbaum, École normale supérieure de Cachan

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Kirszbaum, École normale supérieure de Cachan