



# To the point!

Cross-Asset- and Strategy-Research

## Schools in Germany: Not good enough



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The latest Pisa results must not remain without consequences

It was a failure in the waiting. For the first time, the global test comparison of pupils carried out by the OECD reflects the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. With disastrous results for Germany. Following the also embarrassing first Pisa test a good 20 years ago, the country had pulled up its sleeves and inched up into the top half of the table. Now it has plummeted again in all three disciplines tested: reading, mathematics and science (see chart). Particularly in mathematics the drop below the OECD average is worrying. Those Germans who have school-aged children already were probably filled by a sense of trepidation, I think. And the anticipated debacle did not fail to materialize. Germany's educational standards are crashing. And not just because of the temporary disruption caused by the pandemic.

### Education is not optional

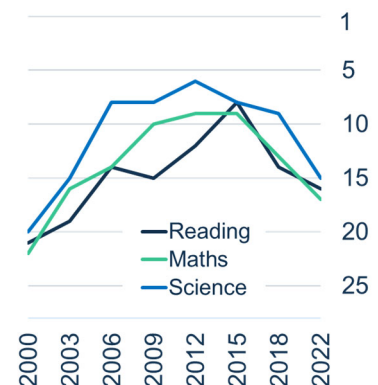
Germany is a country with few natural resources. However, it has always compensated for this locational disadvantage with knowledge and ingenuity. This has brought the prosperity Germany enjoys today. However, this prosperity must be regained in every generation. And good education is an indispensable prerequisite for this. We can argue about what exactly constitutes a good education. But we should quickly agree that Germany is increasingly straying from the path of good education. The Pisa results make it clear that things cannot go on like this.

### Wastefulness in times of skills shortages

Almost 50,000 young people leave the education system in Germany every year without even the most basic secondary school qualification, which is 6% of any given cohort. This is often due to (curable) language deficits. But the rate is also 4.6% for native

## Setback in all areas

Germany: Position in the Pisa test, 2000-2022



Source: OECD. In each case in relation to the 28 countries that have participated continuously since the start of the studies.

German-speaking pupils. And Pisa shows: In an international comparison, those who have a school-leaving qualification are achieving progressively less to obtain it. The country can no longer afford this incredible waste of human and economic potential.

But it actually needs to start much earlier. Decisive foundations are laid in early childhood education. Here, too, there is no good news: There is a nationwide shortage of almost 400,000 daycare places and almost 100,000 educators in Germany. And the trend points towards further worsening. Germany is letting its children (and young parents!) down. What's more: the country is undermining its economic prospects with this short-sightedness.

### Ceterum censeo, debt brake esse delendam

Yes, I admit it, I learned Latin at school. But it's not enough to do much more than quote the Roman statesman Cato the Elder, who at the end of every speech – regardless of its content – always expressed his claim that Carthage should be destroyed.

I may seem similar to Cato to some readers. After all, since the Federal Constitutional Court ruled on the federal budget in mid-November, I have repeatedly called for the debt brake to be reformed (see my [reform proposal](#), for example).

Overall, Germany spends little on education compared to other countries (see figure). This must not be allowed to continue. Our prosperity is based on what goes on between our ears. Education must become – and stay - our top priority!

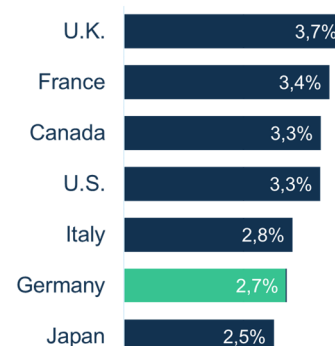
### I wish you all a happy festive season

This is the last newsletter for 2023. I would like to thank all readers for their loyalty and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024!

## Debt-free, but uneducated?

Public spending on education\* (average 2010-2020, % of GDP)

Primary and secondary education.



Source: [OECD](#), LBBW Research.

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