Sanoma Learning

European Teacher Survey 2026

Education in evolution: Teachers are ready for AI but only when it is built for learning

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The European Teacher Survey findings for 2026

1 Teachers want educational AI, not generic tools adapted for the classroom.

Teachers are increasingly interested in using AI, but they want it to be education-specific, grounded in pedagogy and didactics, aligned with curricula, and integrated into trusted learning materials.

2 AI use is accelerating fast, and it's mostly generic

The share of teachers who expect to use AI to prepare learning materials has grown rapidly, up from 49% in 2023-2025, to 63% in 2026. Most of this use is general-purpose tools such as ChatGPT rather than education-specific AI, a gap explained less by teacher preference than by the current scarcity of educational AI tools. More teachers expect to use AI and believe it can save them time, yet only a small minority believe it improves students' learning outcomes. This points to an urgent need for education-specific AI tools.

3 Blended learning is the new normal

Digital tools are becoming more widely used, but print remains important. Teachers are not moving toward fully digital models; instead, they prefer a balanced mix of print and digital materials.

4 Nordic teachers are more cautious about digitalisation than many European peers

Teachers in highly digitalised countries like Finland and Sweden are moving towards a stronger preference for print and more cautious toward digital-first models, while Southern and Central European markets appear more optimistic about digital learning.

5 Teachers want more differentiation, but lack the time and capacity to deliver it consistently

Differentiation and personalisation are widely seen as important, especially with growing knowledge gaps and inclusive education needs in the classroom, but teachers struggle to implement differentiation at scale.

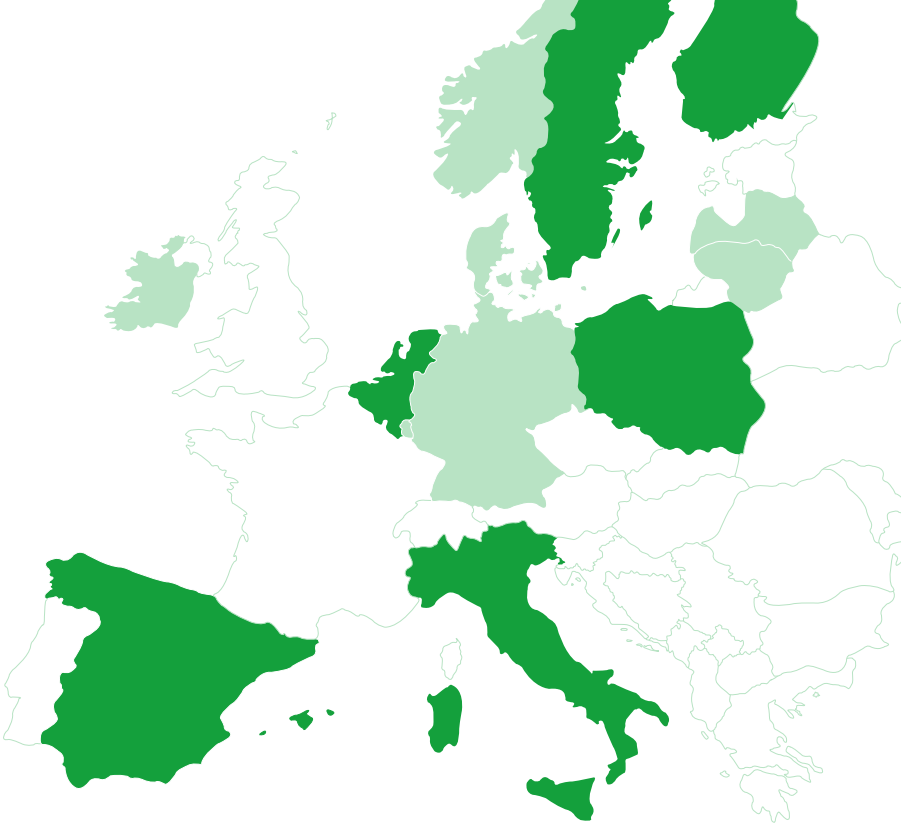
Abstract

The 2026 European Teacher Survey collected more than 20,000 responses from teachers in 14 countries, offering a broad view of how teachers are navigating change in European education. The report finds a profession that is pragmatic rather than resistant: teachers are adopting digital tools and beginning to use AI, but they continue to judge new technologies by their pedagogical value, reliability, and impact on pupils' learning. The share of teachers who expect to use AI to prepare learning materials has grown rapidly, up from 49% in 2023-2025, to 63% in 2026; yet the report's central AI finding is a split verdict. **Most teachers expect to use AI to prepare learning materials and believe it can save them time, yet far fewer believe general-purpose AI improves pupils' learning outcomes.** While 3 in 4 remain concerned about risks of (general-purpose) AI to the quality of education, and only one in three endorses student use of (general-purpose) AI at school.

Teachers can see the time AI saves in their own preparation, but they do not yet see convincing evidence that it helps pupils learn. As a result, they test tools on themselves first, keep caution high around student use, and state their requirement clearly: AI should be education-specific, grounded in pedagogy and didactics, aligned with curricula, and integrated into trusted learning materials. Across the countries studied, 75-93% of teachers say that this matters.

Beyond AI, the survey highlights two wider patterns. First, **blended learning has become the dominant model**. Digital tools are used more regularly, but print remains valued for stability, focus, and pedagogical control. Teachers are not moving towards format extremes; they are asking for a balanced mix that supports learning in practice. Second, **differentiation is a growing priority** as classrooms become more diverse and inclusive education expands. Teachers want to adapt content, pace, feedback, and support to individual needs, but time pressure and implementation capacity limit what they can do consistently at scale.

The report concludes that evidence will define the next phase of educational technology. AI tools that demonstrate their effect on learning, save teachers meaningful time, and keep teachers in control are more likely to earn trust. More broadly, the sector's task is to support teachers with solutions that strengthen blended learning, enable differentiation, and free up time for what teachers see as most important: meaningful interaction with students.



About this survey

The 2026 Sanoma Learning European Teacher Survey, with participation from more than 20,000 teachers across 14 countries, provides a broad view of their working context, priorities, and perceived barriers to stronger learning outcomes across primary and secondary education in Europe.

- Countries covered in 2026: Finland, Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Poland, Spain, Italy, all with sizeable samples. Additional small samples included from Germany, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and Luxembourg.
- Levels covered: primary, secondary (meaning general secondary, i.e. ISCED 23 and 34 according to UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education) and vocational (meaning vocational secondary, i.e. ISCED 25 and 35).
- When referring to multiple countries, the results are weighted in proportion to the number of primary and secondary/ vocational teachers in each country.
- The sample consists mostly, but not exclusively, of teachers contacted by email through local Sanoma companies.
- The survey is designed by Sanoma and conducted regularly since 2021 (also in 2015-2020 with a different methodology). For consistency, whenever 2026 results are compared with earlier results, only Finland, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Italy are included, as results from partly-covered countries differ between years.[1]
- Data collection has been conducted by GfK, a NIQ Company.

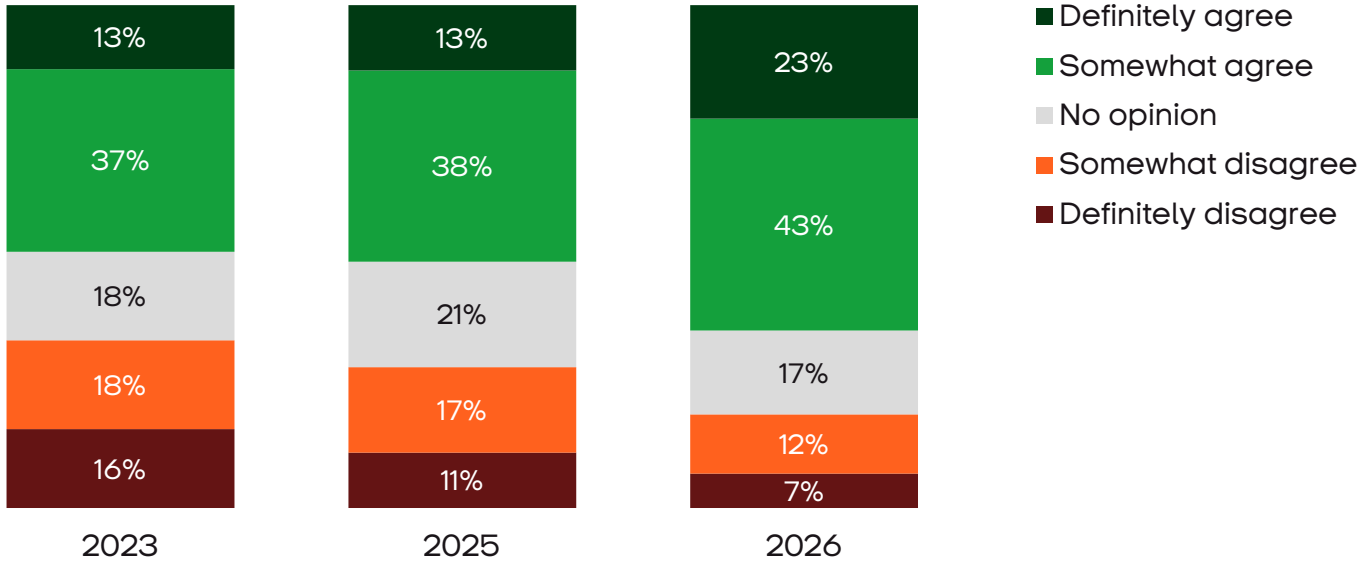
[1] Except Italy until 2022 as it was not included in the survey yet, and Spain for selected questions about AI, which have not been asked in that country in 2023.

The AI Paradox: Rising adoption, stagnant belief in learning gains

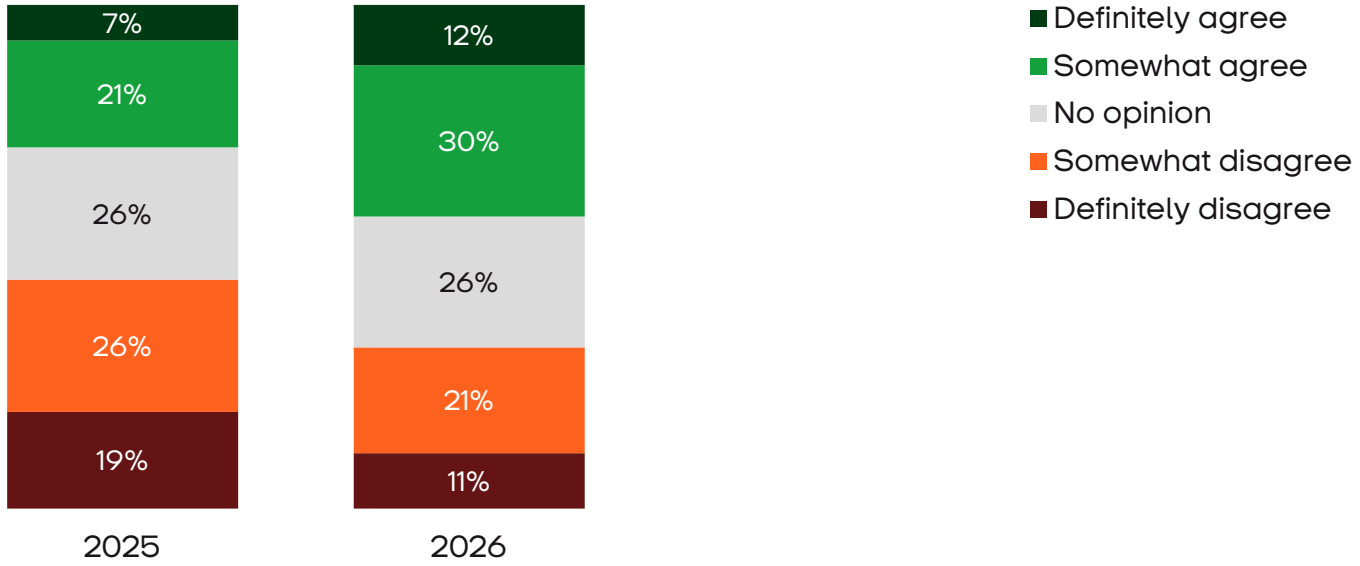
Teachers' intent for adopting AI tools has risen significantly in recent years, up from 49%[2] in 2023, to 63% in 2026.

Confidence in using generative AI rose by half compared to last year's survey (from 28% to 42%), which indicates a major jump in teacher's familiarity with AI tools.

"I will probably use AI to generate learning materials myself"



"I feel confident using generative AI tools"

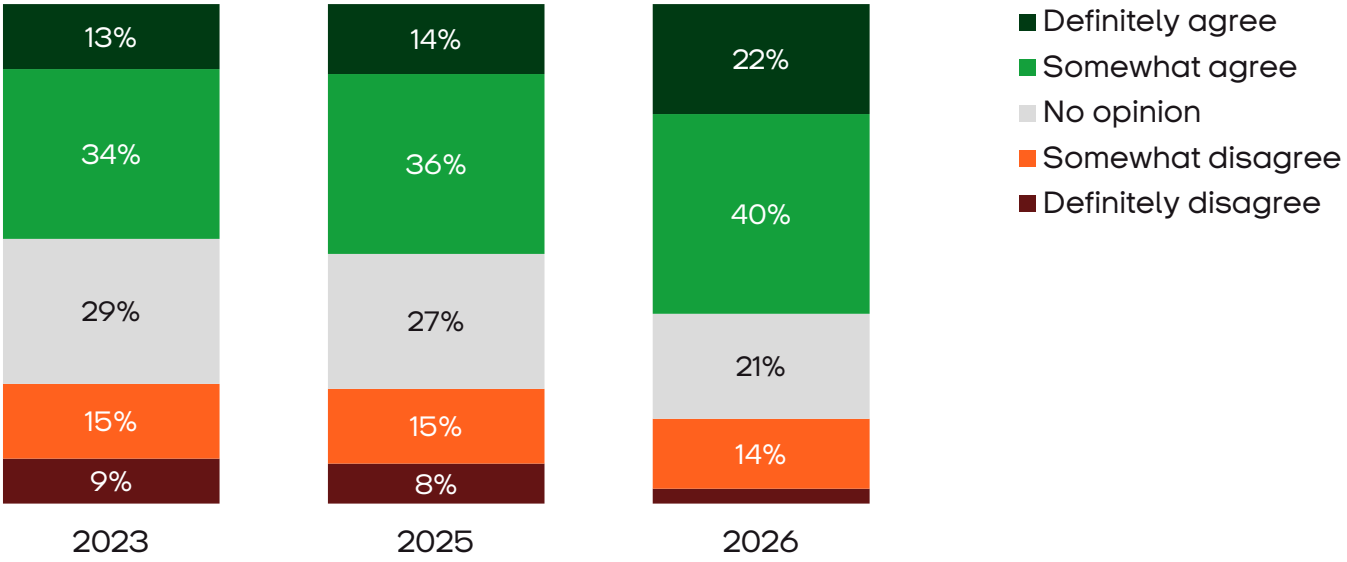


[2] All figures rounded to the nearest percent.

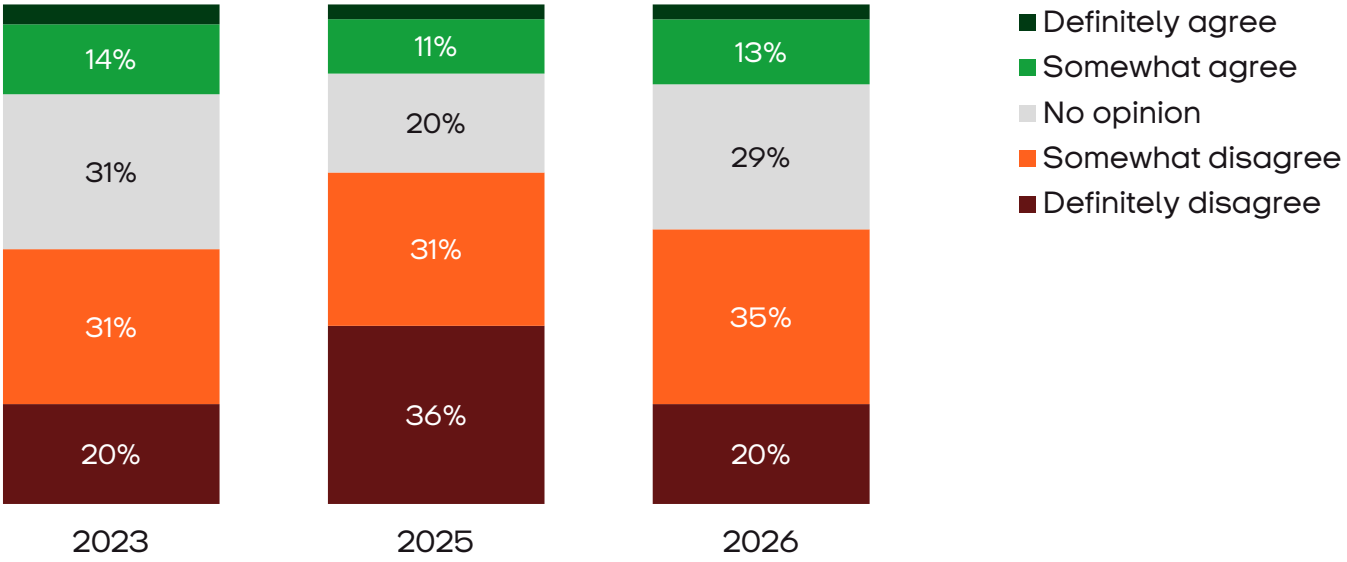
The share of teachers who believe AI will help them save time has risen steadily from 47% in 2023, to 53% in 2025, and 63% in 2026[3]. However, the belief that (general-purpose) AI improves pupils' learning outcomes has barely changed: fluctuating from 18% in 2023, to 14% in 2025, and 16% in 2026.

In short: greater experience with AI is not yet translating into stronger belief in its impact on learning. While AI use and confidence have grown, and more teachers believe in its time-saving value, the belief that AI improves learning outcomes has changed marginally.

In the future, thanks to AI, teachers will be able to save some time



In the future, thanks to AI, students will reach better learning outcomes



> Nearly two thirds of European teachers expect to use AI in 2026, but they are not yet convinced that it will help pupils learn better.

[3] Years shown are all these in which the respective questions have been included in the survey.

Caution, not resistance: teachers are asking for proof

What may look like hesitation is better understood as professional caution. Teachers are increasingly willing to use AI where the benefit is clear, especially in their own preparation and time-saving tasks[4]. But they remain careful about bringing AI closer to pupils' learning until they see stronger evidence that it is safe, pedagogically sound, and genuinely improves learning outcomes.

63%
of teachers expect to use AI in their own preparation

Only
33%
endorse student use of (general-purpose) AI at school (no increase since 2023)[5]

75%
are concerned about the risks of (general-purpose) AI to education (an increase from 70% in 2023)

In teachers' own words, on specific tasks they have in mind for AI:

"Streamlining the workflow in general. That is, the so-called 'shovelling jobs' could be outsourced to it. Making review materials, 'centring' tasks on the topic, taking into account the curriculum and the learner's level/goals. Creating meaningful images and diagrams for the topic being covered. 'Sparring' new teaching ideas. Teaching the sensible use of artificial intelligence!"
- Natural Science teacher, lower secondary, Finland

"Create practice exercises exactly as I would do them myself."
- Foreign Languages teacher, lower secondary, Norway

[4] In line with Carson et al. 2026, whose study of English teachers found that thanks to using AI they save about 5 hours weekly on lesson preparation.
[5] Sweden and the Netherlands are an exception here with higher acceptance of student AI use at school, up to 60% among Dutch Secondary teachers.

The evidence gap

Nothing in a teacher's world shows concretely what AI's effect on learning is. Teachers see only the hours AI saves them in their own preparation. They do not see whether the tool actually helped a child finally understand fractions.

Research offers a wider view. A meta-analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental studies finds positive effects of generative AI on learning outcomes (Ma and Zhong, 2025)[6]. However, by design, that evidence base measures the effect in research settings; it is not visible to teachers in the classroom. This is why teachers' belief in AI's impact on learning remains flat, and the survey tells us exactly what would change that.

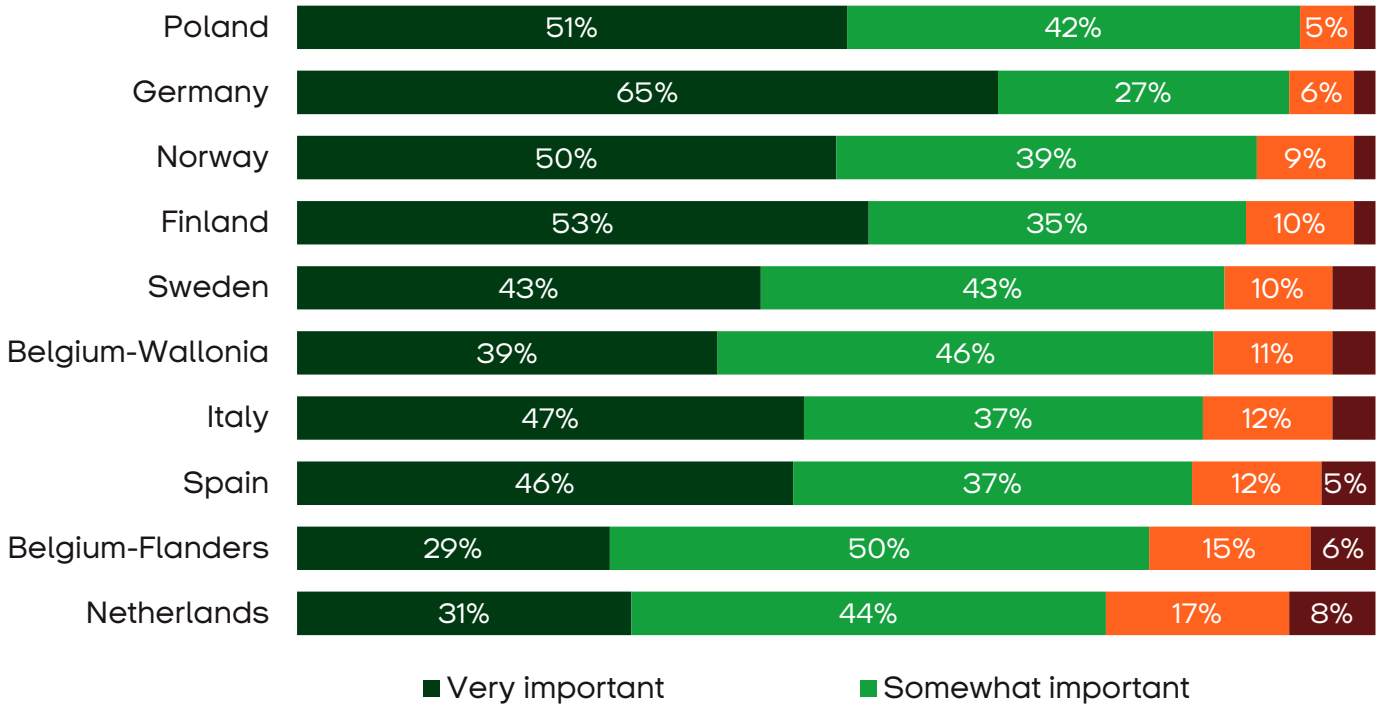
Teachers state their requirements plainly. In the countries studied, 75-93% say it is important that AI tools are education-specific: grounded in pedagogy and didactics rather than adapted from consumer products. Roughly two-thirds want such AI integrated directly into their digital learning materials.

Two different things are called AI in this debate. General-purpose AI means consumer tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Copilot: systems built for any task and adapted to classrooms. Educational AI means education-specific systems aligned with the curriculum, working under the teacher's direction, and able to show their effect on learning. Most (around 88%) of today's adoption data describes the first kind. Teachers' requirements describe the second. The distance between the two is a central finding of this report.

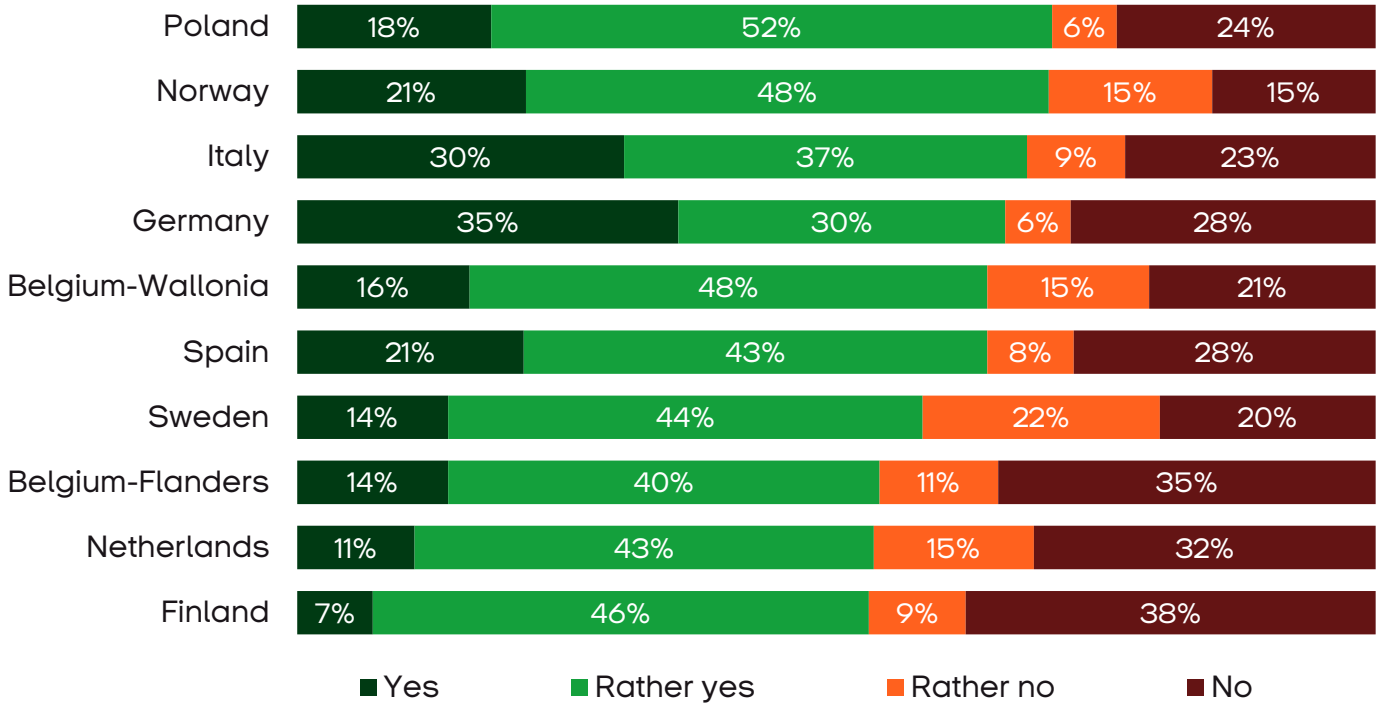
[6] When AI is used in a pedagogically appropriate way, guided by the teacher. When that is not the case, students' use of general-purpose AI for cognitive offloading can lead to markedly worse learning outcomes (Kosmyna et al. 2025; Bastani et al. 2025; Strömberg et al. 2026).

The specification: What teachers want from AI

How important do you think it is that AI tools are education-specific? (not generic like Chat GPT but built with pedagogy and didactics)



Would you like digital textbooks and workbooks to include integrated, education-specific AI?



What the study shows is teachers across all countries overwhelmingly prefer education specific AI tools. When we compare countries, teachers in Poland (93%) and Germany and Nordics (89%) are the strongest advocates stating that it is important that AI tools are education-specific, including over 50% of these teachers saying it is very important.

As teachers are increasingly familiar with AI tools and many expect their use to continue expanding, awareness and experimentation are no longer niche phenomena. AI is becoming part of the broader educational landscape and at the same time, teachers remain cautious about AI's role in education. Many question whether it will improve learning outcomes and express concern about its implications for instructional quality, student development, and the future role of the teacher. In other words, interest in adoption is rising faster than confidence in educational value.

This is why we can observe a clear preference for education-specific tools across markets and segments, as some of our respondents' comments highlight:

If AI could support you in any aspect of your teaching, what would you most want it to do?"

A separate AI environment for each subject, so that students receive the correct subject-specific information"

Upper secondary Social Science teacher, Netherlands.

If it were an AI tool created by an educational publishing house in Poland, adapted to the core curriculum, which would generate lesson plans tailored to the class or student with special needs"

Secondary Natural Sciences teacher, Poland.

Adjusting and checking quizzes and assignments, analysing the level of content mastery, and providing individual feedback would be beneficial. Specific subject-specific programs for a given class would be helpful, allowing students to work individually at the computer"

Secondary Natural Sciences teacher, Poland.

Could be used as a function for students to write with and that the AI is trained on the material that the teaching material contains. And possibly other material in the subject, but specifically subject-specific. Be able to brainstorm thoughts, ideas and be able to make questions that students can practice on as well. A training buddy"

Upper secondary Social Science teacher, Sweden

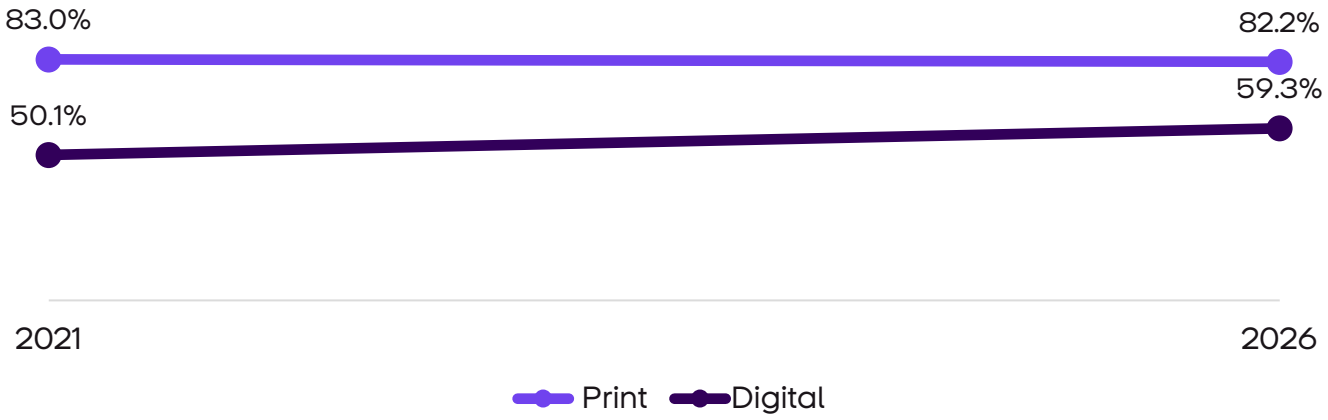
As things stand, and based on my experience, I would like AI to be trained to perform a specific task, such as producing exercises or summaries of varying complexity based on specific, well-known study programs. Currently, achieving a decent result requires more time spent on prompts and hallucinations than it would take to create a lesson or exercise from scratch. The fact that the various intelligences almost always respond affirmatively to a request, when unable to fulfil it, is bizarre to say the least"

Secondary Italian literature teacher, Italy.

Preference for blended learning

The same professional judgment that teachers now apply to AI, as discussed above, is the judgment that blends print and digital in their practice, free from ideology. Most teachers report regular use of both print and digital learning materials, confirming that blended teaching is now the dominant model. Indeed, while the adoption of digital solutions (textbooks, workbooks, platforms, videos etc.) has increased, along with the strengthening of the offer, reliance on print content hasn't decreased. This reflects a shift from a "print plus digital add-ons" method of working to a truly blended approach.

This is in line with both the development and strengthening of the digital offer in all countries studied, and the recognized importance of off-line learning. Indeed, the latter addresses issues caused by digital materials, such as the reduced interactions between pupils, dependence on infrastructure (hardware, software) and cognitive overload for teachers.



Looking ahead, teachers continue to place greater trust in print than in fully digital learning materials, and support for digital-first models is stable rather than accelerating. The implication is not resistance to digital tools per se, but continued demand for balance, reliability, and pedagogical fit. Again, teachers' judgement as identified in the survey agrees with academic research which points to blended learning having a positive impact on learning outcomes (Angawi & Tasir, 2024).

Case example: Nordic countries

Teachers in highly digitalised countries like Finland and Sweden are showing a stronger preference for print and greater caution towards digital-first models. Also, in public debates, the pendulum has been swinging towards a more balanced blended learning approach, particularly for younger children, where the role of printed materials in primary education is increasingly being debated.

Finland stands out as a market where confidence in print remains particularly strong and has increased over time. One plausible explanation is that digitalization in Finnish education is typically framed as a means to improve learning outcomes rather than as an end in itself. In that context, teachers may continue to favour established formats until digital tools demonstrate clear and consistent instructional value.

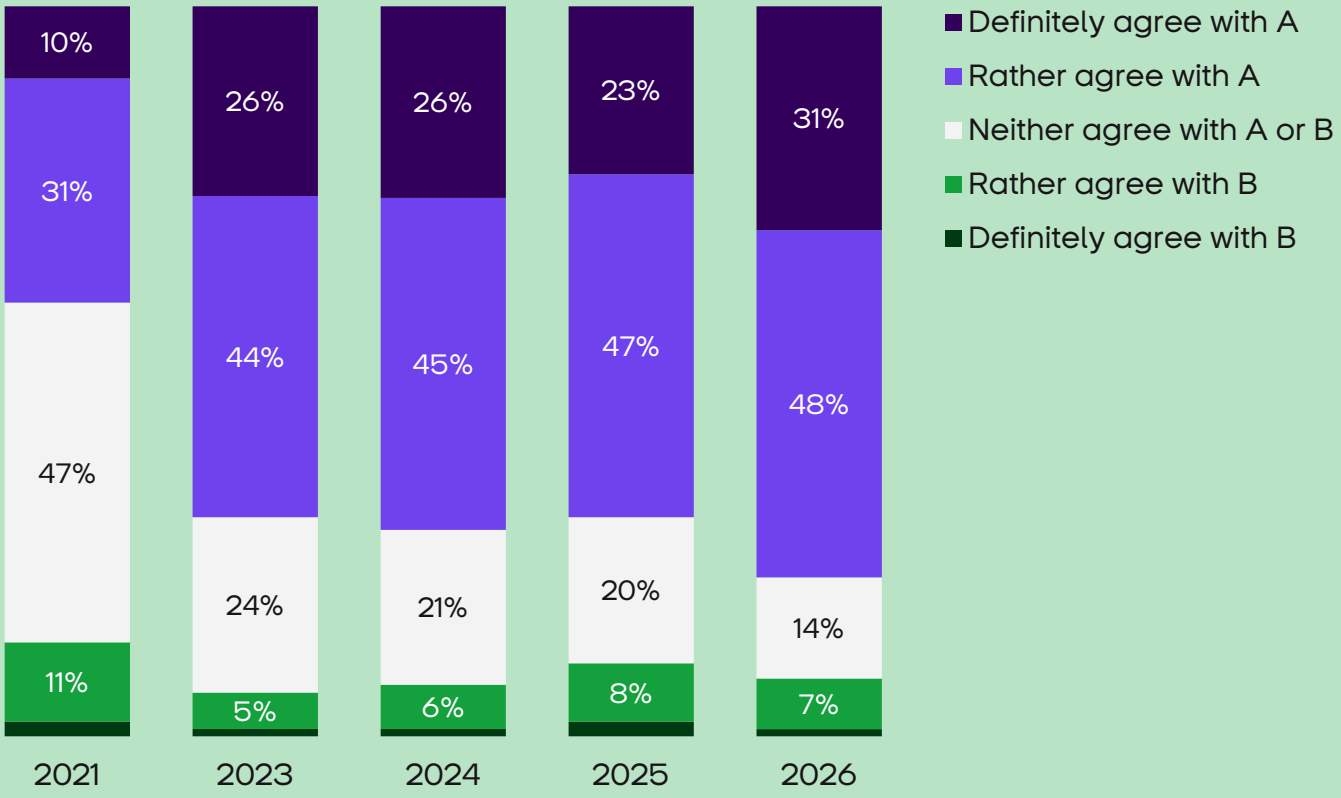
Zooming in on the specific segments, we observe that preference for print is especially salient in primary. Indeed, upper secondary education teachers for instance, appear more open to digital tools being used widely in the future.

Additionally, although Finnish teachers are much less optimistic about digital than their European peers, with almost 80% of primary and lower secondary teachers in favour of having mostly print materials, observations in other Nordic countries, such as Sweden, follow similar patterns, with 62% preferring print. This is well above the 42% average observed across markets.

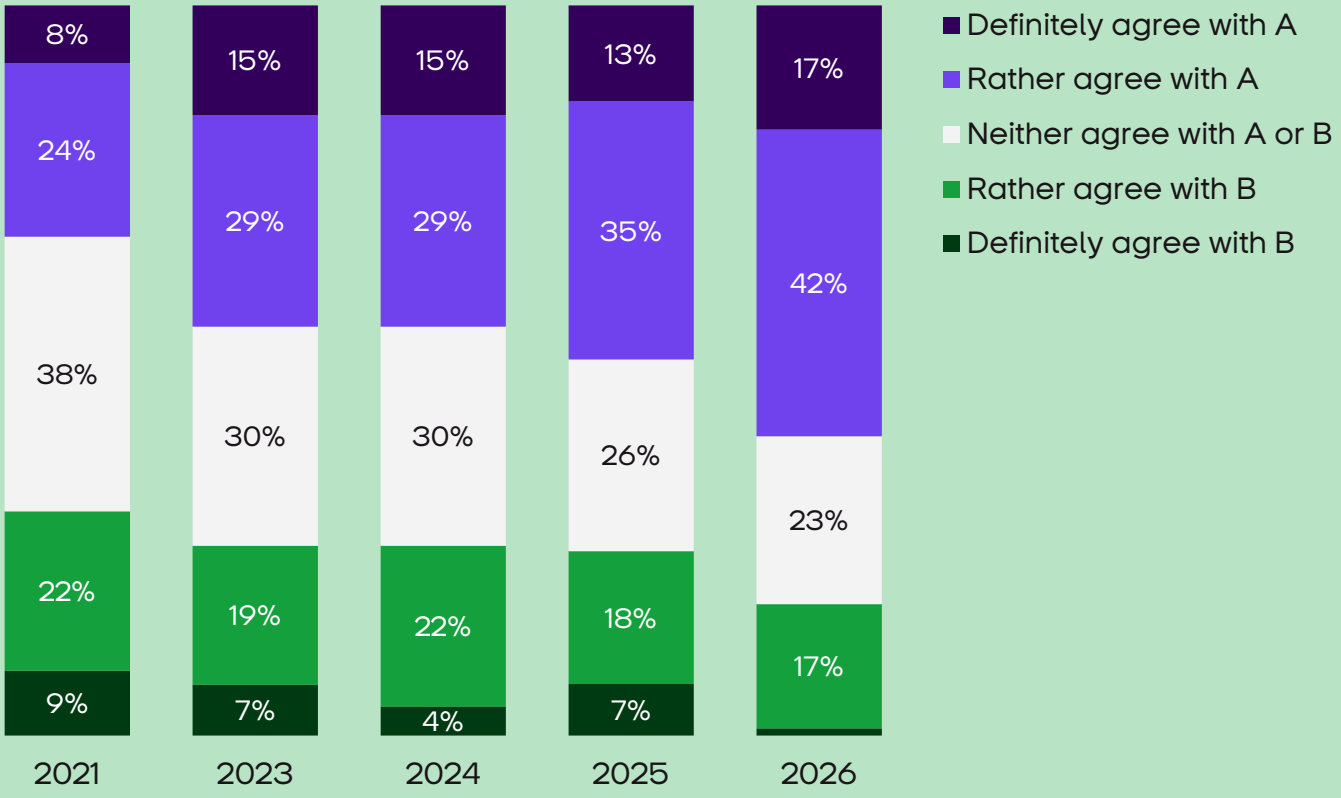
Like Finland, Sweden was among the first countries to put digital skills at the core of education. As the market matured and concerns about learning outcomes grew, leading politicians and parents have advocated a return to a more balanced approach, with a still significant presence of print and limited use of screens. The limited sample available in this survey for Norway suggests a similar picture in that country (with 62% of the sample preferring print).

In your opinion, in the future, learning materials should be A. mostly printed on paper OR B. Learning materials should be all or almost all digital?

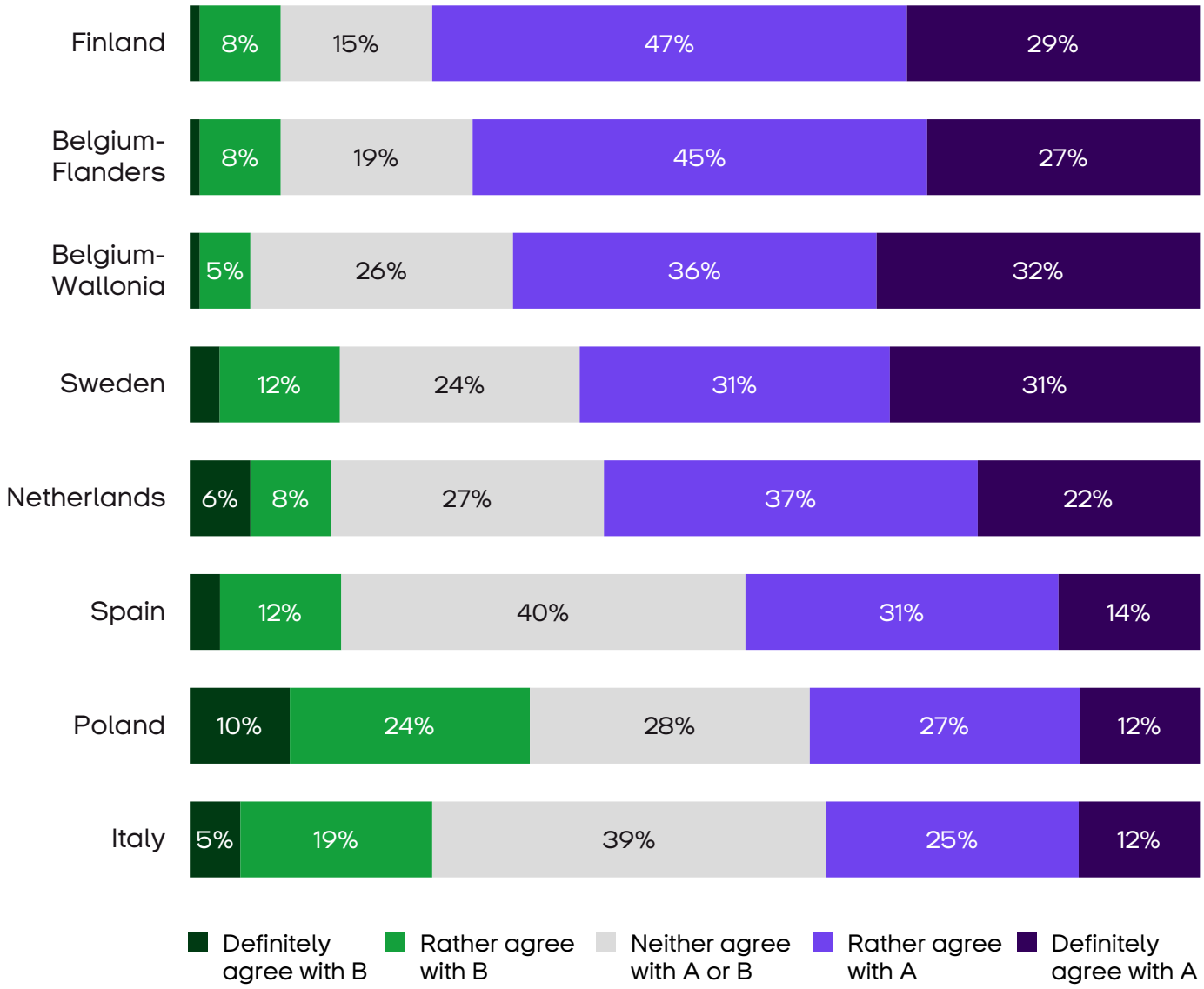
Finland Primary and Lower Secondary



Finland Upper Secondary



In your opinion, in the future, learning materials should be A. mostly printed on paper OR B. Learning materials should be all or almost all digital?



By contrast to the Nordic countries, teachers in parts of Southern and Central Europe appear more optimistic about the future role of digital learning materials. A likely factor is that countries such as Spain and Italy are still progressing along the digital adoption curve, with policy attention and investment continuing to support infrastructure and digital capability building. In such settings, digitalisation may be associated more strongly with forward momentum and system improvement.

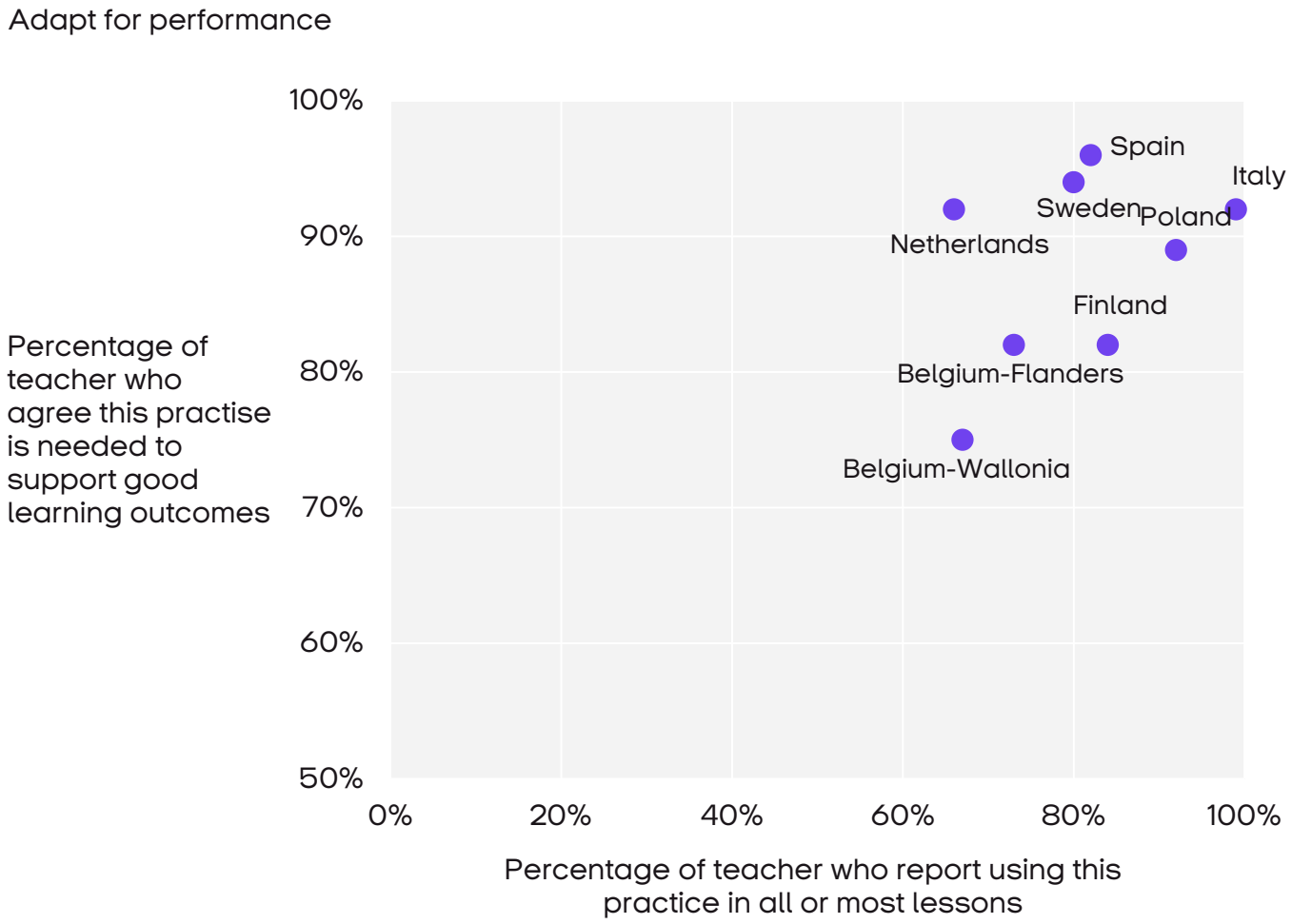
A further notable pattern is that younger teachers express stronger preference for print than older peers. One interpretation is that early-career professionals, who often face greater classroom-management demands (Hirsch et. al, 2021), may perceive print materials as more stable and less distracting than device-based alternatives. Additionally, as research shows that novice teachers tend to prioritise engagement, relationships and interactions in their classes (Sampurna et al., 2025), print materials may be more appropriate to create the environment in which they wish to work.

Constraints to Adaptive Practice

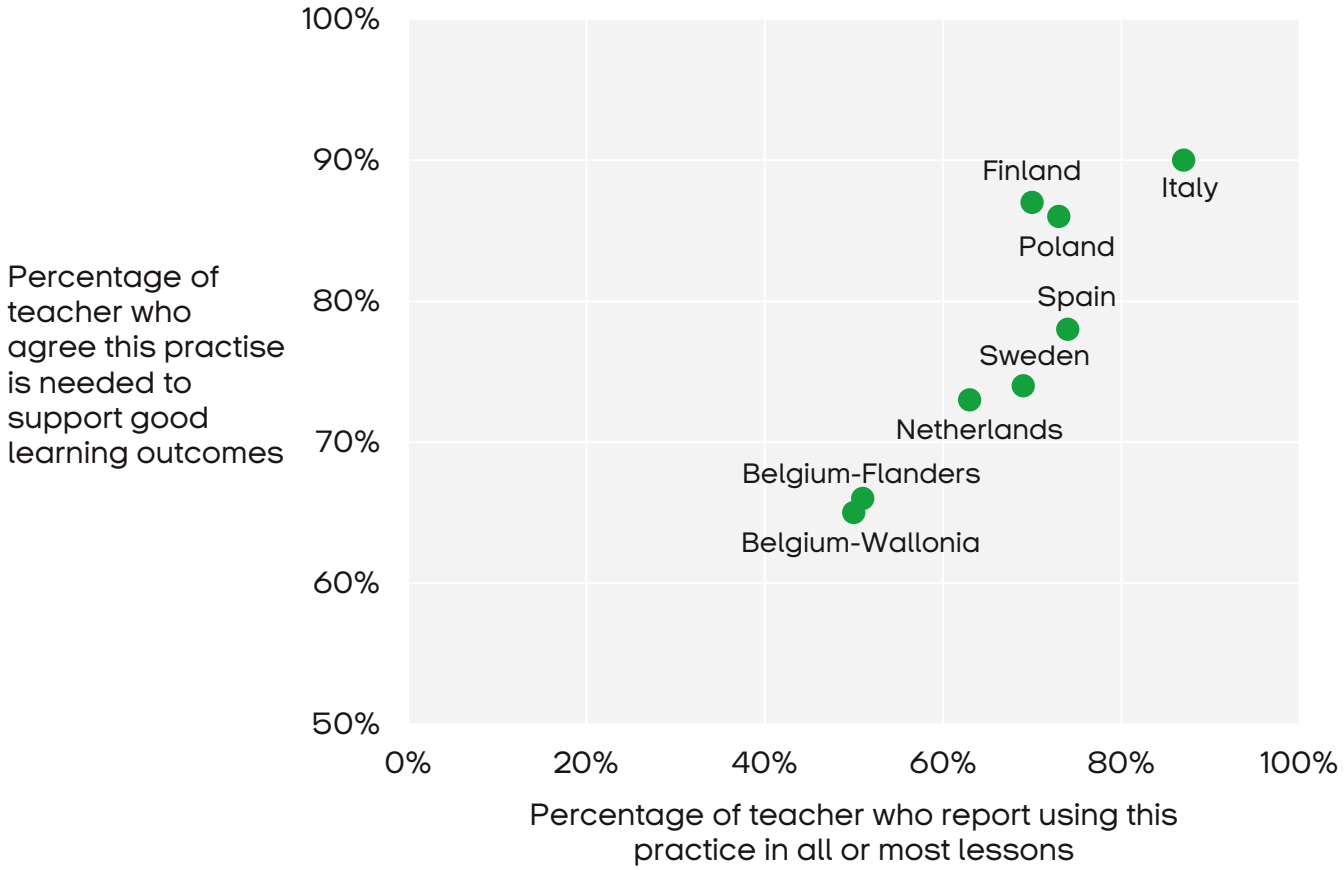
Differentiation and adaptive teaching have a significant positive impact on learning outcomes (Safawi and Akay 2022, AM et al. et al. 2023, Sedanza and Abatayo 2026). However, differentiation is consistently one of the most difficult teaching skills to master, appearing later in teacher development than classroom management or clear instruction (Maulana et al. 2020, 2023).

Accordingly, our survey shows that teachers strongly value differentiation practices, but that teacher intent is ahead of implementation capacity (see graphs below, shown for secondary education where this effect is more pronounced). In other words, teachers want to adapt teaching more, but often lack the time, resources, training, or practical support to do so systematically. The implication is clear: differentiation is not limited by teacher motivation, but by capacity. To support adaptive teaching at scale, teachers need tools, materials, and workflows that make personalisation easier without adding to workload.

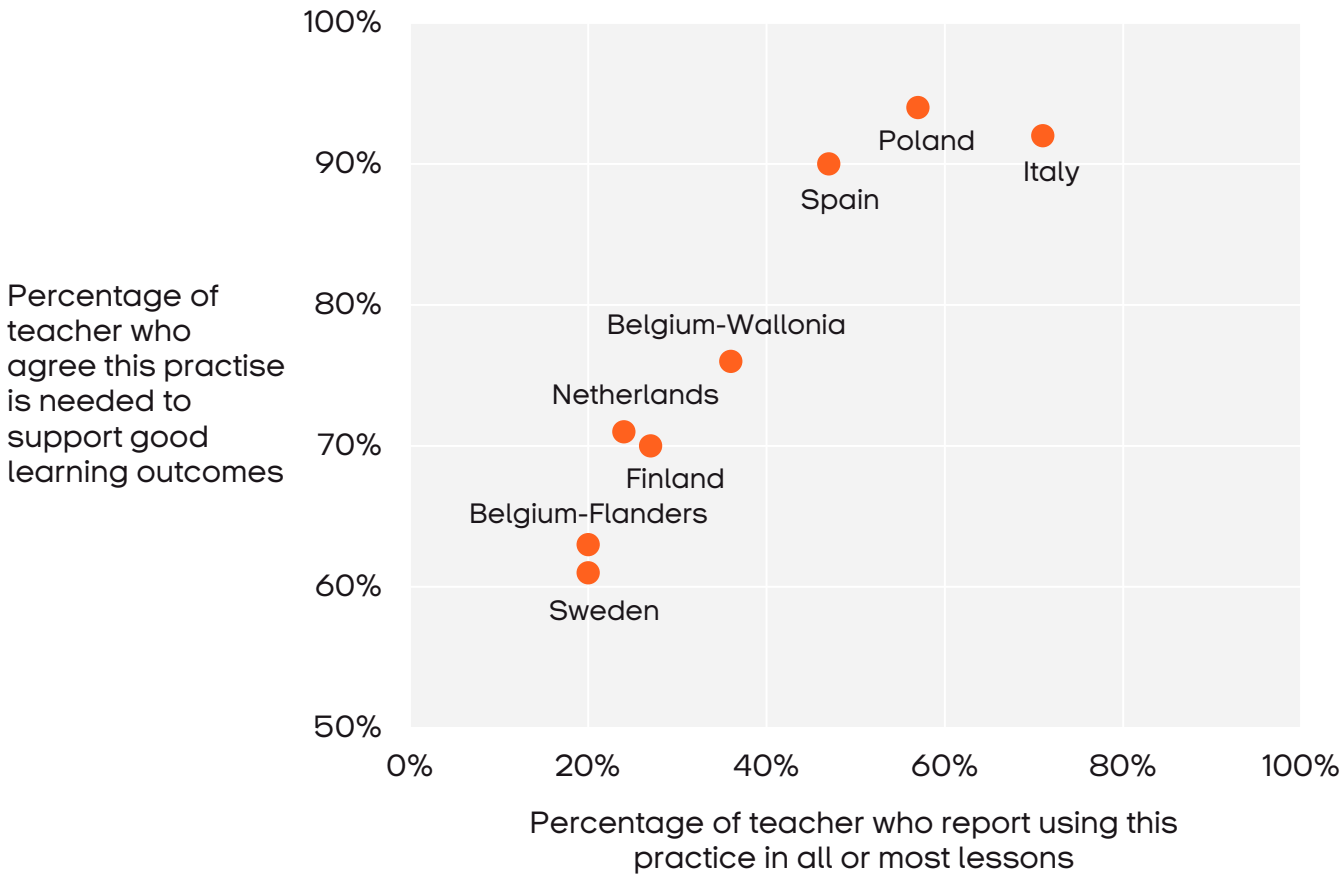
Perceived need vs. reported use of personalization practices, secondary education



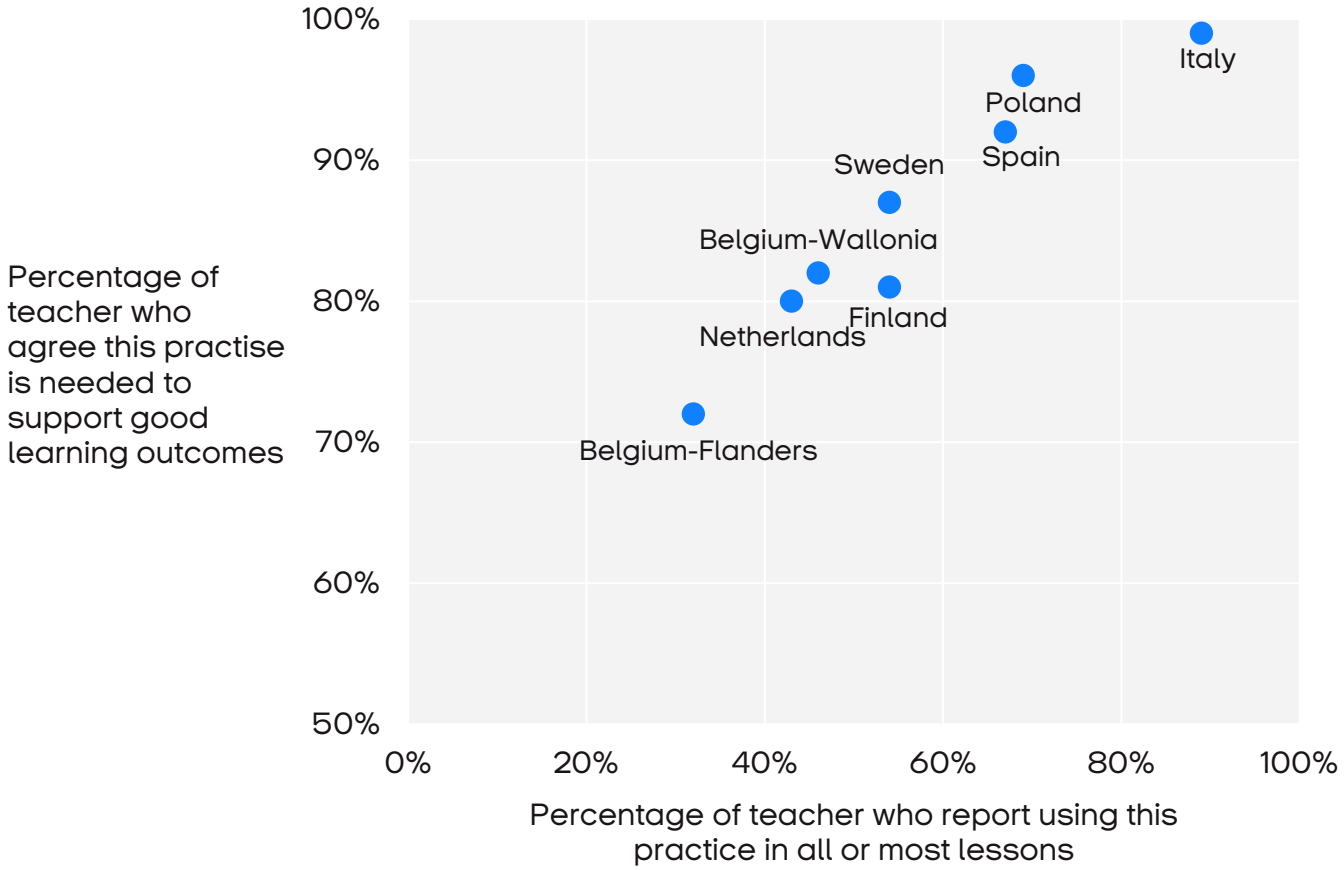
Adapt for ethnicity/language



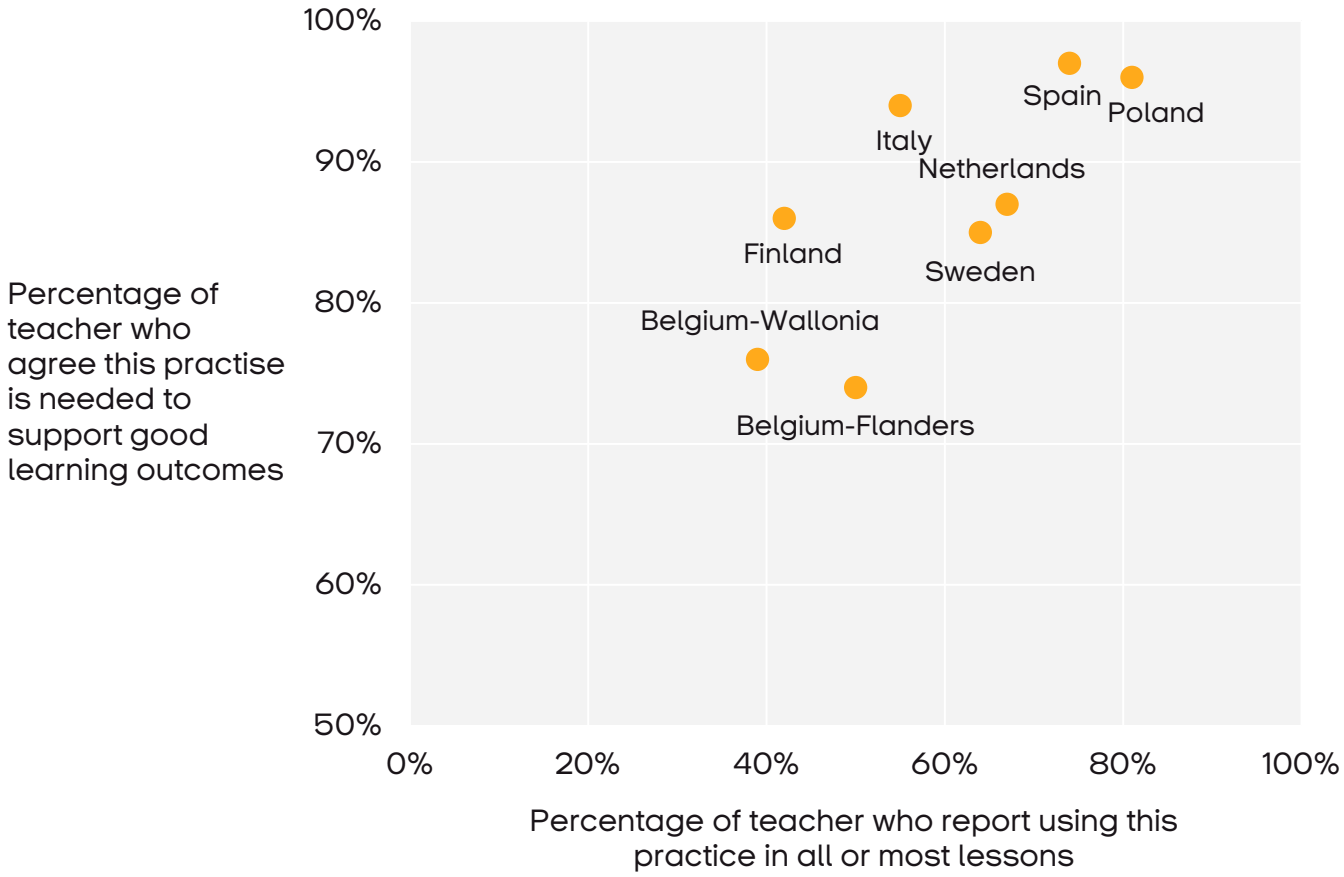
Adapt for interests



Adapt for learning style



Choose individual tasks



Conclusion

The 2026 European Teacher Survey describes a profession that is pragmatic about technology and clear about its priorities. Teachers favor blended teaching over format extremes, they want more capacity, and above all, more time to address the diverse needs of their students.

On AI, teachers have already made their first decision: a large majority expect to use it to prepare materials and to win back time. They have not yet extended that trust to their pupils' learning. Confidence trails adoption, and few teachers today believe general-purpose AI improves learning outcomes. This is a professional demand for evidence, and teachers are explicit about what would earn their trust: AI that is education-specific, grounded in pedagogy and didactics, and integrated into the materials they already use. In every major market surveyed, 75-93% of teachers share that requirement.

For publishers, the mandate is concrete: build the trust infrastructure around AI. That means tools that demonstrably save time, meet pedagogical standards and keep the teacher in control, so that the hours saved can go to what no system can replace: meaningful human interaction between teachers and students.

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Authors

Cristina Taroiu, Chief Strategy Officer, Sanoma Learning

Piotr Labenz, Strategy Director, Sanoma Learning

Alku Sirén, Senior Advisor, Miltton

Leopoldine Bernardin Aubouin, Analyst, Sanoma Learning

Inka Törmä, Communications Manager, Nordics, Sanoma Learning

Contact information

We hope that these main findings from the 2026 Sanoma Learning European Teacher Survey are of interest, and that you have found some valuable insights that could help in understanding the current state and trends expressed by teachers across Europe.

Please reach out if you would like to get in touch for specific questions, more insight in local findings or for potential cooperation with Sanoma Learning to improve everyday life for teachers and students.

Contact:
communications@sanomalearning.com

sanomalearning.com

sanoma