

*School Reopening Webinar Series: Strengthening
and building resilient education systems:
Webinar 2 – Recovering Learning Innovatively*

Input from UNICEF Regional Office for Europe & Central Asia and Kazakhstan
24 November 2020

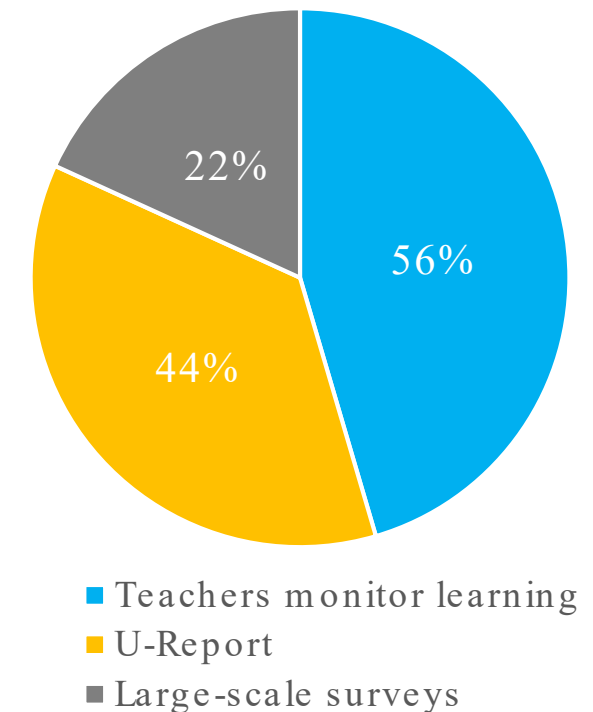
Question:

Based on UNICEF's experience in the region and broadly around the globe, what would you say about the challenges faced in assessing student learning? How would countries go about mitigating these challenges? Are end-of-year assessments still valid?

Limited quality assessment during COVID-19

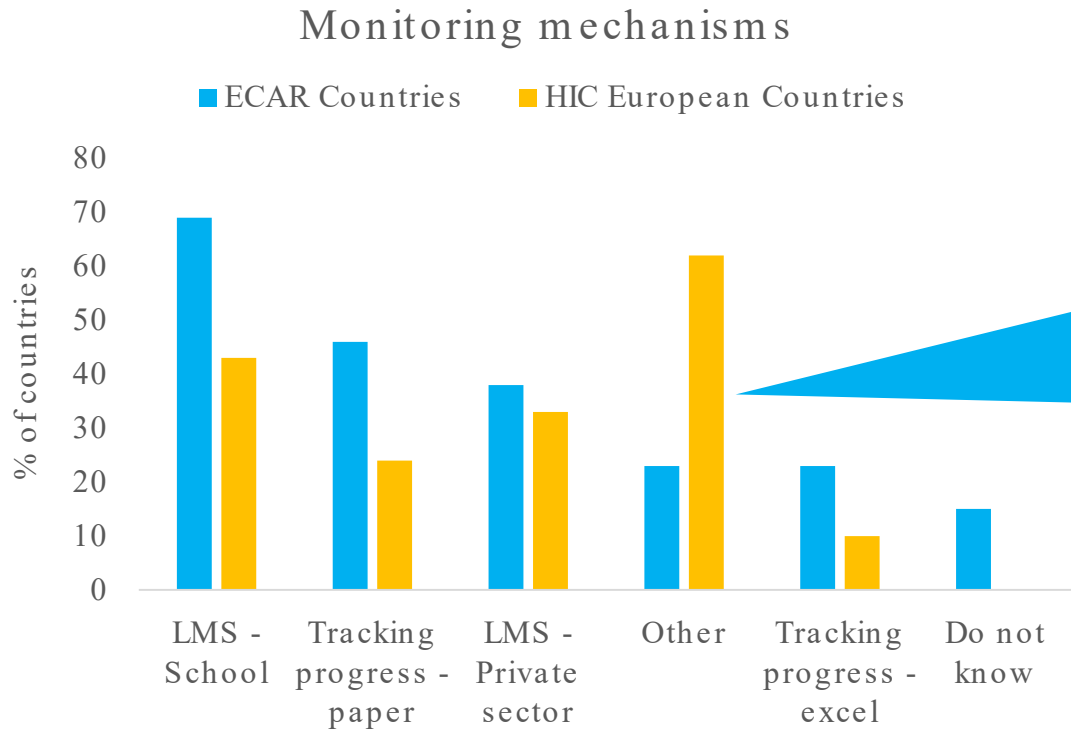
- UNICEF has been supporting national and school-level monitoring
 - In Serbia, for example: Country Office provided support to the Institute for Education Quality & Evaluation to develop M&E frameworks for what was learned during school closures
- Information on *quality of learning* is particularly limited
- As of September, only 30% of countries had systems in place to monitor the quality of distance learning, compared to more than half of countries monitoring access and participation.
- Most often, quality monitoring has been through TEACHERS (e.g. formative assessment through online platforms, phone calls, messaging).

Means of monitoring quality in distance learning



Source: UNICEF ECAR COVID-19 Country Office Education Response Questionnaire, September 2020

How do teachers keep track of what students have learned?

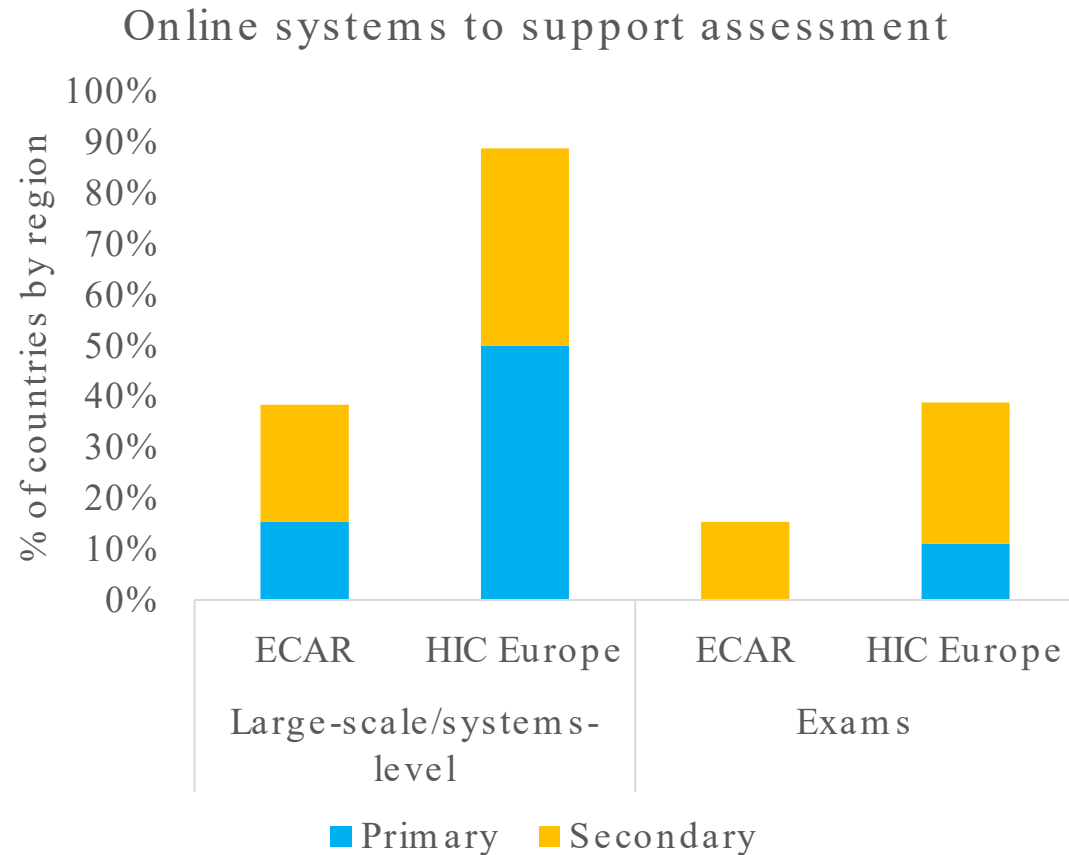


Other means include:

- Through social networks and the delivery of completed materials (e.g., Bosnia & Herzegovina)
- Interactions with students through electronic media, at-home portfolios (Kyrgyzstan), growth and development chart (Uzbekistan)

Source: UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank (2020). Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures, second iteration.

System readiness

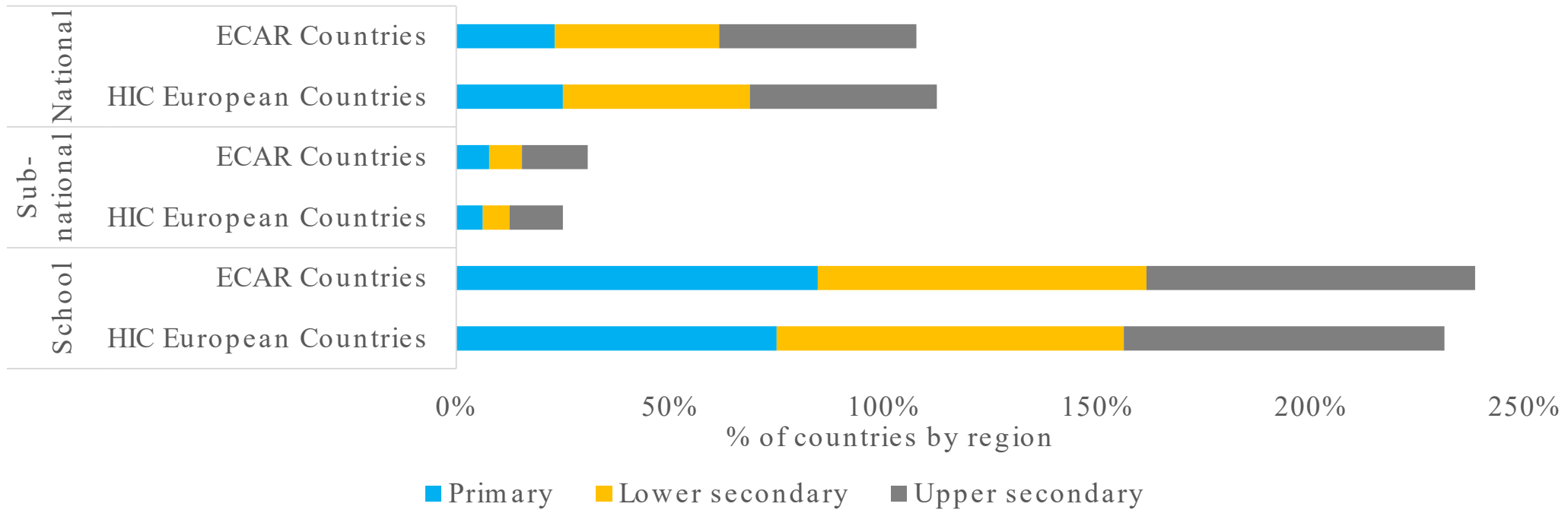


Note: Percentages are per education level and should not total 100%.

Source: UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank (2020). Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures, second iteration.

- One challenge in ensuring information on quality is available has been that systems were not fully ready to transition to distance assessment.
- Online systems to support secondary-level examination are available in 15% of ECAR countries, compared to 28% of HIC European countries.
- Online systems to support large-scale or systems-level assessments are available in fewer than 1 in 4 ECAR countries compared to 1 in 2 HIC European countries.

Student assessment during or after closures

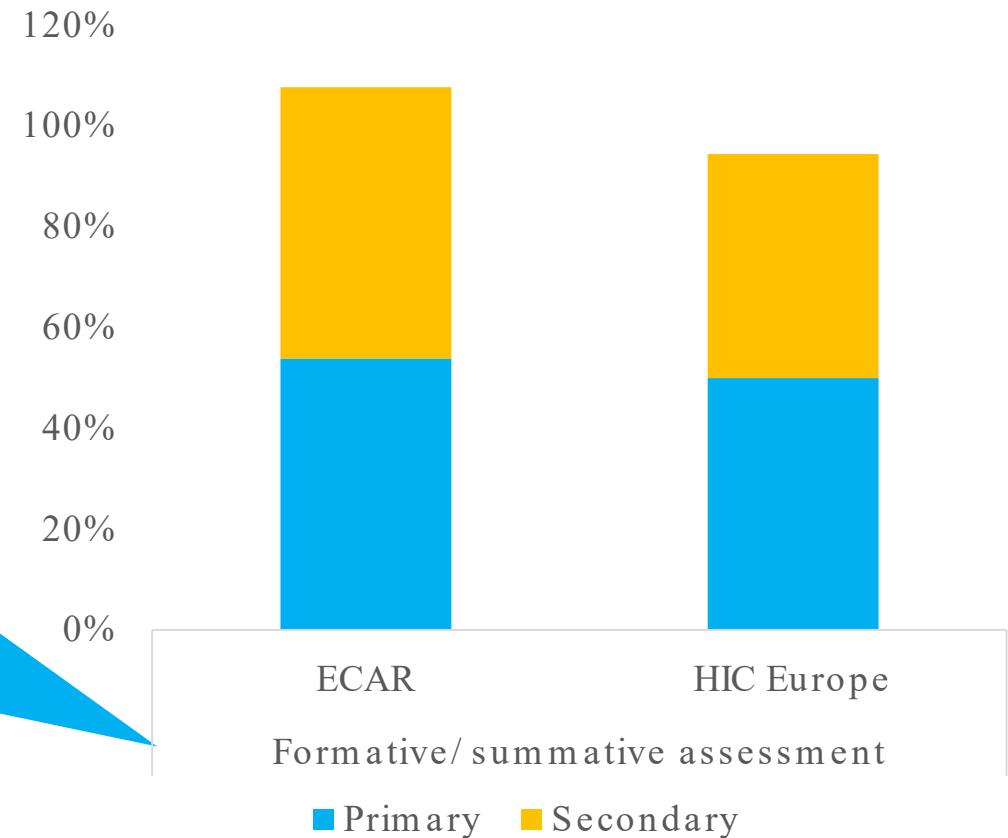


- Student assessment during or after school closures has been taking place primarily at the school level.
- Close to 3 in 4 ECAR and HIC countries were conducting assessment as school level, compared to between 1 in 3 and 1 in 2 at the national level.

Note: Percentages are per education level and should not total 100%. Source: UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank (2020). Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures, second iteration.

- How can we improve the availability of information through systems that are already in place and at levels where they are already being carried out?
- How can we make sure this assessment accurately reflects the situation of both learning gaps and students' strengths?

Online systems to support assessment



Formative assessment

- Formative assessment is not a particular task or method but is determined by when and how the information collected must be used.
- This use should be driven by promoting learning rather than evaluating the learner.
- Should be strengths based, grounded in feedback from both teachers and learners, and guide decisions about what is taught.
- Ensure that this is assessment *for* learning and not just *of* learning.
 - Key components of formative assessment: Must be valid, timely, aligned with learning goals, conducive of quick course correction, lead to feedback and guidance, personalized to learning needs and informs students and teachers of progress toward learning goals.

Supporting teachers to conduct formative assessment

- Experience from OECD countries highlights the following challenges:
 - Formative assessment practices have been dependent on students' physical presence → It is important to support teachers to implement formative assessment in asynchronous, and low-tech, contexts.
 - Translating assessment activities (observation, discussion) into meaningful and actionable feedback for students that moves them toward their learning goals.

Assessment for distance & blended learning

- Tasks and feedback sent via mail, hand-delivered, or picked up
- Phone calls to follow up on distance lessons
 - Use of messaging platforms or text messaging
 - Automated assessment apps (tasks, activities, quizzes) – combined with other forms of assessment
- Discussions, blogs, and written submissions
- Voice audio recording sent via messaging apps

UNICEF case studies

Uzbekistan

- Piloted “catch-up” approach after distance learning, with support of UNICEF, to combine remediation of learning gaps and a longer-term re-focusing on teaching at the level of the students.
- Involved: Identifying priority learning outcomes and their success criteria (formulated in child-friendly manner); assessment of knowledge gaps against these criteria; automatic results calculation.
- Catch-up programs differentiated by student ability were designed for those with largest learning gaps
- Distance training course for teachers and teacher support networks

Republic of Afghanistan

- Ministry of Education (with ACER & UNICEF) has introduced *assessment for learning* (formative assessment) to support learning and improve constructive feedback
- Involves: Clear learning objectives, clear criteria, evidence of learning to guide teachers in how to adjust their teaching, provision of feedback, peer and self-assessment, and parental engagement
- Two-year project: guides for teachers, supervisors, administrators, and training facilitators, DVDs with real classroom demonstrations, training, supervision, and monitoring
- Evaluation found a significant difference in learning gains

Experiences in assessment & COVID-19 from OECD countries

Finland

- High degree of autonomy afforded to teachers facilitates active communication and encourages feedback throughout the learning process.
- Normally, assessment, including self-assessment, is continuous and versatile.
- Seen as a tool for supporting learning and is focused on positive feedback.
- Few national standardized exams.
- Matriculation exam at the end of upper secondary, was organized in a condensed timetable, spread across multiple days to allow flexibility, spacing, and smaller groups, and students have the chance to re-sit the exams unlimited times to focus on learning rather than outcomes.

United Kingdom

- Schools have been asked to plan based on students' educational needs, using diagnostic assessment of students' starting points to plan for addressing gaps in their knowledge and skills.
- Namely, they are using formative assessment approaches – quizzes, observation, discussion, review of work – to personalize learning and avoid the unnecessary introduction of additional tracking mechanisms.



THANK YOU!