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Education and Training Monitor 2018

Poland
Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2018 includes twenty-eight individual country reports. It builds on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence to present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy measures in each EU Member State, with a focus on developments since mid-2017. It therefore complements other sources of information which offer descriptions of national education and training systems.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 briefly identifies the main strengths and challenges of the country’s education and training system. Section 3 looks at investment in education and training. Section 4 focuses on citizenship education. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise school education. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and training, while section 8 covers adult learning.

The manuscript was completed on 1 September 2018. Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)
1. Key indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and training 2020 benchmarks</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>EU average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
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<td>Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:</td>
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<td>14.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)</td>
<td>ISCED 3-8 (total)</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)</td>
<td>ISCED 0-8 (total)</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning mobility</td>
<td>Degree mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Other contextual indicators | | | | |
| Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP | 5.3% | 5.0% | 4.9% | 4.7% |
| ISCED 1-2 | £5 165 | £5 378 | £6 494 | : |
| ISCED 3-4 | £4 244 | £4 346 | £7 741 | : |
| ISCED 5-8 | £7 125 | £7 658 | £11 187 | : |
| Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24) | Native-born | 5.4% | 5.0% | 10.4% | 9.6% |
| Foreign-born | : | : | : | 20.2% | 19.4% |
| Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34) | Native-born | 42.0% | 45.6% | 38.6% | 40.6% |
| Foreign-born | 61.6% | 62.1% | 34.3% | 36.3% |
| Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year) | ISCED 3-4 | 65.6% | 74.3% | 70.7% | 74.1% |
| ISCED 5-8 | 83.7% | 89.2% | 80.5% | 84.9% |

Sources: Eurostat (see section 10 for more details); OECD (PISA).
Notes: data refer to weighted EU averages, covering different numbers of Member States depending on the source; d = definition differs, 12 = 2012, 13 = 2013, 15 = 2015, 16 = 2016.
On credit graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by DG EAC on the available countries; on degree graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by JRC over Eurostat and OECD data.
Further information can be found in the relevant section of Volume 1 (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor).

Figure 1. Position in relation to strongest (outer ring) and weakest performers (centre)

Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2017, UOE 2016) and OECD (PISA 2015).
Note: all scores are set between a maximum (the strongest performers represented by the outer ring) and a minimum (the weakest performers represented by the centre of the figure).
2. Highlights

- Poland invests heavily in education, but spending per pupil remains below the leading EU and OECD countries.
- The Polish education system is undergoing significant changes at every stage, from preschool to higher education.
- Further changes in the teaching profession have been adopted recently.
- The structural changes introduced in September 2017 to primary and lower-secondary education have brought major organisational and financial challenges.
- In the majority of benchmarks set for 2020 Poland has good performance or fast development. The early school leavers, tertiary attainment and employment of recent graduates' benchmarks have already been reached. The ECEC and the proportion of low-achievers benchmarks are almost achieved, but there is still fairly limited participation in adult learning.

3. Investing in education and training

Poland continues to invest considerably in the education sector. According to Eurostat data, Poland spent 5.0% of its GDP in 2016, above the EU-28 average of 4.7%. Education represents 12.1% of the public budget vs 10.2% for the EU. Against the background of rapid economic growth over the last decade, education spending has significantly increased in absolute terms, growing from the equivalent of almost EUR 20.3 billion in 2012 to EUR 21 billion in 2016 at constant prices (Eurostat, 2018). However, the spending on higher education remains below the EU and OECD averages.

There is scope to catch up with the EU-15 and the leading OECD countries. According to the OECD’s ‘Education at a Glance’ (OECD, 2017a), annual spending per student in Poland for all ISCED levels is significantly below the OECD average: USD 6,948 in purchasing power standard (PPS) vs USD 9,760 in PPS, but also below the EU average (USD 9,908 in PPS). For primary education, Poland is only slightly below the OECD and EU averages, but for secondary and tertiary education levels the spending gap increases significantly. Whereas spending per secondary student is generally higher than for primary level across the OECD, in Poland the opposite occurs i.a. reflecting the large number of small primary schools, mostly in rural areas (Jakubowski & Wiśniewski, 2017).

A new Law on the financing of education was adopted in late 2017. It includes measures for financing school education and changes related to the ‘Teachers’ Charter’, which sets out teachers’ statutory rights and obligations. Changes mainly concern pre-school and school subsidies and include: (i) adjustments to the methodology for calculating the state grant; (ii) management of the textbook subsidy; (iii) increased autonomy for school heads; and (iv) financial support to students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background (Eurydice 2018). This set of measures is expected to have a positive impact in the future. For instance, since April 2018, teachers’ salaries have increased by 5%, helping to reduce the gap between teachers’ salaries in Poland and the OECD average for workers with a tertiary degree (OECD, 2017a).

Considerable changes to the Teacher’s Charter come into force from September 2018. The new Act has introduced a number of measures on working time, professional advancement, pay and holidays. It links salary increases with teaching performance (based on periodical assessment) and seniority required for professional advancement. The weekly obligatory teaching workload has been unified for the following categories of teachers: pedagogues, speech therapists, psychologists and vocational counsellors, as well as pedagogical therapists, with the exception of teachers employed in psychological and pedagogical counselling centres. Their didactic work time is determined by the local school managing authority and cannot exceed 22 hours. For teachers holding qualifications in the field of special education employed to co-organize integration
Education of disabled students or those at risk of social exclusion, this limit is 20 hours (Teachers’ Charter).

**Poland prioritises investment in ICT infrastructure for classrooms.** Through the ‘Interactive Whiteboard’ programme, which supports school infrastructure and students’ and teachers’ ICT competences in 2017-2019, primary schools will be equipped with interactive whiteboards, projectors, speakers and interactive touch screen monitors. Teaching aids will be supplied to nearly 15,580 schools. The programme’s budget is PLN 279 million (approx. EUR 66.5 million), of which PLN 224 million (approx. EUR 53.3 million) will be provided from the state budget. The project is funded up to 80% by the central government and the remaining 20% will come from the schools’ own contribution — which is potentially problematic (Polish Government, 2018).

### 4. Citizenship education

**There is compulsory but limited provision of citizenship education in Poland.** According to a recent Eurydice report, citizenship education is taught in Poland as a separate subject at lower secondary level with a minimum of 16.5 hours of teaching time per year. This subject is continued in upper secondary education with a minimum of 7.5 hours a year. Otherwise, it is combined with cross-curricular activities and integrated in other subjects (Eurydice, 2018). In order to disseminate global education in schools and support teachers in teaching global education, the Ministry of National Education cooperates with other ministries and non-governmental organizations as part of the Agreement to support global education in Poland. The Ministry of National Education promotes an active and civic attitude among young people by organizing nationwide initiatives, cooperation with other entities and supporting ventures in the area of civic education. There is also a standardised examination in citizenship education in a form an optional subject at the matura examination.

### 5. Modernising school education

**Poland has a low school dropout level.** At half the EU average (5% in 2017), Poland has one of the lowest rates of early school leaving (ESL) in the EU. The 2017 rate is the lowest of the past several years, but is still slightly above the Europe 2020 national target of 4.5%. The Voluntary Labour Corps (Polish Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy, OHP) helps keeping the benchmark early school leaving at a very low level. Nevertheless, there are still significant geographical variations (see Figure 2), with higher ESL rates in rural areas. As in the rest of the EU, the ESL rate is higher among men than women. The current reform of vocational education may contribute to further reducing ESL, particularly among men, although the authorities acknowledge that as measures have only been in place since 2017/2018, it is still too early to assess the impact (Polish Government, 2018). Poland had better results than other countries in the region in this respect (Jakubowski, Konarzewski, Muszyński, Smulczyk, & Walicki, 2017). In March 2018 the Polish Ombudsman concluded that recent structural changes (including the decision to phase out lower secondary schools) could have negative consequences in the future — such as school overcrowding — in particular during the 2019/2020 transition period (RPO, 2018). Following the signature of the new regulation on 30 January 2018, there have been substantial changes in the new core curriculum for post-primary schools, which will come into effect in the 2019/2020 school year from the first grade of general upper secondary (4 years) through to technical upper secondary (5 years) and stage II sectoral vocational school (2 years) (Eurydice, 2018).
Participation in pre-school education has been rising constantly since 2001. The availability and affordability of childcare services in Poland have improved significantly over recent years and participation rates are quickly catching up with the rest of the EU. In 2016 (see Figure 3 below), almost 95% of children aged 4+ attended early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Poland, almost reaching the EU-28 average after more than a decade of constant progress. However, access to ECEC for the youngest children remains very low. According to Eurostat data, less than 10% of 2-year-olds were in ECEC in Poland in 2016. Additionally, little more were covered by early childhood development services coordinated by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. Introducing a right to pre-school education for 3-year-olds from September 2017 is an important step for further improvement in this area. Increased government funding for ECEC facilities, often using EU structural funds, is also positive. The implementation of the ‘Toddler+’ (Maluch+) programme, which focuses on creating childcare facilities and care places for children under 3, is another welcome initiative (Polish Government, 2018).

Certain gaps in ECEC access and provision remain. In its recent economic outlook for Poland, the OECD finds that whereas access to childcare is improving and is relatively good for 3-5 year-olds, it remains insufficient, in particular for the youngest children and in rural areas (OECD, 2018). Efforts are still needed to extend coverage, which will help parents to combine work and family life.
and which can address the gaps in provision and standards between rural and urban areas. As of September 2017 local authorities responsible for pre-schools must guarantee places for all 3 year olds and older as part of a wider reform to improve ECEC throughout the country (Eurydice, 2018).

**Progress has been made on special education needs but new rules on individualised support may prove problematic.** An assessment of education for students with disabilities by the Supreme Audit Office found that the availability of inclusive education for such students has increased in recent years. The assessment emphasised the need to ensure that pupils receive the support to which they are entitled (NIK, 2017). On 9 August 2017, the Education Minister signed a new framework regulation on individualised teaching for students with special education needs (Eurydice, 2018). However, stakeholders — parents in particular — are concerned that these changes may reduce the level of integration of students with disabilities in mainstream education in the future (RPO, 2018).

### 6. Modernising higher education

**The level of tertiary education attainment in Poland has rapidly increased and is now well above the EU average.** Tertiary educational attainment in 2017 reached 45.7 %, exceeding Poland’s Europe 2020 national target of 45 %. The level is higher for women than for men — a gap of 10.6 pps (similar to the EU average gap of 10 pps). However, according to a 2018 OECD Economic Survey for Poland there is ample room to improve the quality of higher education and research (OECD, 2018). The number of doctoral graduates per 1 000 population aged 25-34 is still low: 0.55 vs 1.07 for the EU. The 2018 national reform programme includes measures to improve higher education outcomes, e.g. in medical universities (Polish Government, 2018). Finally, more funding is available for Polish higher education institutions (HEIs) for teaching, international cooperation and management, i.e. through the integrated HEIs programme managed by the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR), with an overall budget of almost PLN 1 billion (approx. EUR 240 million) (Eurydice, 2018).

**Poland has adopted a comprehensive reform of the HE system.** The Act on research, science and higher education (Ustawa 2.0) was approved by Parliament on 3 July 2018 and is expected to come into force on 1 October 2018 (Polish Government, 2018). Universities (public and non-public) will be divided into academic and professional schools and a new body for university governance — ‘the university board’ — will be created, with new competences including choosing the rector. Changes will also affect PhD students, as: (i) universities will be required to establish doctoral colleges; (ii) scholarships will be guaranteed for all PhD students; (iii) short-cycle studies will be introduced and; (iv) there will be a new Council of Scientific Excellence. The HE and science financing model will also change, with an evaluation of the quality of scientific activities conducted every 4 years by the Science Evaluation Committee at institutional level (Eurydice, 2018). A maximum yearly number of teaching hours for academic teachers, including lecturers, instructors and language teachers will be set at 360 hours instead of the current 540 hours. The set minimum number of hours will be abolished with responsibility passing to the HEI itself, increasing its autonomy (Eurydice, 2018). This is a major modernisation effort, which could bring about an important qualitative shift for the HE sector.

**Scientific and research networks are being improved, as are opportunities for postgraduates.** Legislation is being prepared to create an integrated, goal-oriented network of research institutes, whose activity will be coordinated by a central unit, the ‘Centrum Łukasiewicz’. The main objective of this body will be to carry out scientific research and development projects that are particularly important for: (i) implementing the national innovation policy; (ii) transferring knowledge; (iii) applying research results; and (iv) supporting economic development initiatives (MNiSW, 2018). The ‘Implementation PhD’ programme, which aims to develop cooperation between the scientific community and the economy is to be integrated in doctoral studies and will offer participants training opportunities in companies. The industrial doctorate has been implemented since academic year 2017/2018 via a dual system. The PhD student is employed by the company and has two tutors: one appointed by the company (or a public sector employer) and another in the public research unit (a faculty or a research institute of an A or A+ category) to ensure the quality of research (Polish Government, 2018).
There is more and more emphasis on practically oriented university studies. The 2018 NRP highlights that the new HE law includes a new model of tertiary education, with a better match of the skills of graduates and PhDs to labour market needs. In order to strengthen the cooperation of higher education institutions (HEIs) with the economic sector regarding study programmes, the act provides for two paths of study at a practice-oriented profile emphasising practical knowledge: mandatory six-month practical placements and dual-degree training (dual studies). Vocational HEIs will focus on providing both the local and the regional labour markets with the most sought-after specialists (Polish Government, 2018). As regards the Graduate Tracking System (ELA) the third wave of career monitoring was published in June 2018 encompassing graduates of 2014, 2015, 2016. In the coming years it will include the impact of first cycle studies, tracking PhD graduates, as well as students and doctoral students career path (Eurydice, 2018). Finally, in April 2018 The Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the National Centre of Research and Development announced a call for proposals within the EU Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development “The third mission of higher education institutions”.

Box 1: An initiative for Polish researchers living abroad

Polskie Powroty or ‘Polish Returns’ is the first pilot project by the newly established National Agency for Academic Exchange (Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej, NAWA) which began operation in October 2017 and also took over the task of academic recognition for foreign degrees in February 2018.

A new pilot project launched by the Agency in March 2018 gives returning Polish researchers the possibility to set up their own research teams in Poland. Long-term financial support (36 to 48 months with financing up to PLN 2 175 000 (approx. EUR 520 000)) is offered. This financial support covers the salaries of returning researchers up to PLN 350 000 (approx. EUR 85 000) per year for a period of 4 years, as well as pay for the members of their teams. This gives Polish HEIs an opportunity to improve their research and innovation potential without substantial additional costs (Eurydice, 2018).

For more information: https://nawa.gov.pl/naukowcy/polskie-powroty

7. Modernising vocational education and training

Poland pursues its comprehensive vocational education and training (VET) reform from December 2016 and sees improvement in the employability of vocational graduates. The reform includes changes in vocational pathways, curricula, the financing system and greater employer involvement. First-stage sectoral or branch schools began operating in September 2017. They offer three-year programmes leading to a vocational certificate for qualification in a single occupation. Graduates of such schools can either enter the labour market or go on to second-stage schools, which offer two-year programmes for further study. Graduates of these schools can take the secondary school exam and go on to HE. In addition, as of 1 January 2019, the allocation of funds for initial VET will be based on factors including: (i) the demand for specific occupations in the region; (ii) the effectiveness of the education process; and (iii) training costs for specific jobs. The reform also makes it mandatory for schools to cooperate with employers when launching new courses and allows schools to open short-cycle training courses for adults (‘vocational skills courses’) (MEN, 2018). Finally, in January 2018 the Ministry of Education established an advisory body — the Council of Vocational Schools Directors —to support the reform (MEN, 2018a).

Although the number of employers that provide continued VET was higher in 2015 than in 2010, it is still well below the EU average.
According to the CVTS 2015 data, 44.7% of Polish companies provided vocational training to their employees (EU-28 average: 72.6%), and 37.1% of employees participated in this training (EU-28 average: 40.8%). Most Polish companies regard technical, practical and job-specific skills to be the main competences needed for company development (Eurostat 2018a). In parallel to the VET reform, Poland continued to develop 15 Sector Skills Councils and the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) also continued with a project co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) on this topic (Cedefop, 2018).

Box 2: Local Centres of Education and Development (Lokalne Ośrodki Wiedzy i Rozwoju, LOWE), financed from the national Operational Programme — Knowledge Education, Development

The project aims to reach parents and carers with low skills living in disadvantaged areas through their children, and to help these adults develop key competences to improve their prospects on the labour market.

LOWE are based on existing schools’ infrastructure and human resources. The role of the school in the LOWE model is to identify the education needs of the local community, to develop methods and tools to work with adults, and to organise different forms of learning (e.g. educational and social projects, etc.).

In the pilot project the LOWE model will be tested in 15 locations, with each school receiving a grant of up to PLN 250 000 (approx. EUR 60 000). This project is being carried out by four institutions — two universities and two local government organisations that developed the basic concept. It is supported by the ESF¹.

For more information: http://lowe.fundacjamis.org.pl/

8. Promoting adult learning

Upskilling was stepped up but further efforts are needed to increase currently low adult participation in learning. The latter stood at 4% in 2017, compared to the EU average of 10.9%. Despite improvements over time, only 41.8% of low-qualified (ISCED level 0-2) Poles were employed in 2017, compared to the EU average of 55.6% (Eurostat, 2018c). However, the share of adults not having upper secondary attainment is among the lowest in EU countries. The Ministry of Education initiated an ESF project ‘Chance – new opportunities for adults”, which aims at identifying innovative ways to support low-skilled adults. The project will be implemented by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System in cooperation with the Educational Research Institute with a budget of approximately PLN 30 million (ca. EUR 7.2 million EUR) (MEN, 2018). In 2018 the Council addressed the following country specific recommendation to Poland: "foster labour market relevant skills, especially through adult learning" (Council of the European Union, 2018).

¹ In the 3 pilot projects implemented by 9 institutions (universities and NGOs) in the Knowledge Education Development Operating Programme the model of LOWE is tested in 50 locations. Altogether the projects amount to 14.4 mln zł. More information can be found on:
- http://lowe.oic.lublin.pl/
- http://lowe.fundacjamis.org.pl/
Sectoral skills councils were established in Poland since 2016 in the fields of health, construction, finances, tourism, fashion and innovative textiles, IT and automotive including electro mobility. Poland has also established a Program Council on Competences. Councils are financed from the state budget and their aim is to enhance cooperation between educational institutions and the labour market, so the competences possessed by employees meet employer's needs. Sectoral councils consist of representatives of different stakeholders: employers, employees, public institutions which has a significant influence on the sector’s regulations (e.g. representative of the Ministry of Finance) and other. They will have an influence on how the public money for adult learning will be spent. The Program Council on Competences consists of experts who represent different ministries responsible for labour market, primary and vocational education, higher education, economy, employers and employees. It is a platform for dialog, cooperation and exchange of knowledge and its aim is to engage more employers in the system of identification and forecasting needed competences and supporting changes in the area of science, formal and non-formal education that help to diminish the skills gap2. The role of the National Training Fund (NTF), established in 2014 is also very important in this context. Since 2016 Poland support employers and employees with a database on training services (Baza Usług Rozwojowych - BUR).

9. References


Cedefop (2018), Modernising vocational education and training and promoting adult learning — Poland; Cedefop contribution to the Education and Training Monitor 2018 — country analysis EU 28; Unpublished


GUS (2017b), Higher Education Institutions and their Finances in 2016.


Note

2 More on http://power.parp.gov.pl/power212elektromobilnosc/sektorowe-rady-ds-kompetencji
NIK (2017), Wspieranie kształcenia specjalnego uczniów z niepełnosprawnościami w ogólnodostępnych szkołach i przedszkolach - LKI.410.005.00.2017 Nr ewid. 18/2017/P/17/073/LKI “Supporting special education of students with disabilities in mainstream schools and kindergartens” - LKI.410.005.00.2017 Nr ewid. 18/2017/P/17/073/LKI


### 10. Annex I: Key indicator sources

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11. Annex II: Structure of the education system


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