



European
Commission

Education and Training Monitor 2019

France



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2019 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. 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 focuses on teachers and challenges of teaching profession. Section 4 looks at investment in education and training. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise early childhood and 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 Education and Training Monitor 2019 was prepared by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), with contributions from the Directorate-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) and the Eurydice Network. DG EAC was assisted by the Education and Youth Policy Analysis Unit from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), Eurostat, Cedefop and the JRC's Human Capital and Employment Unit, Directorate Innovation and Growth. The Members of the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB) were consulted during the drafting phase.

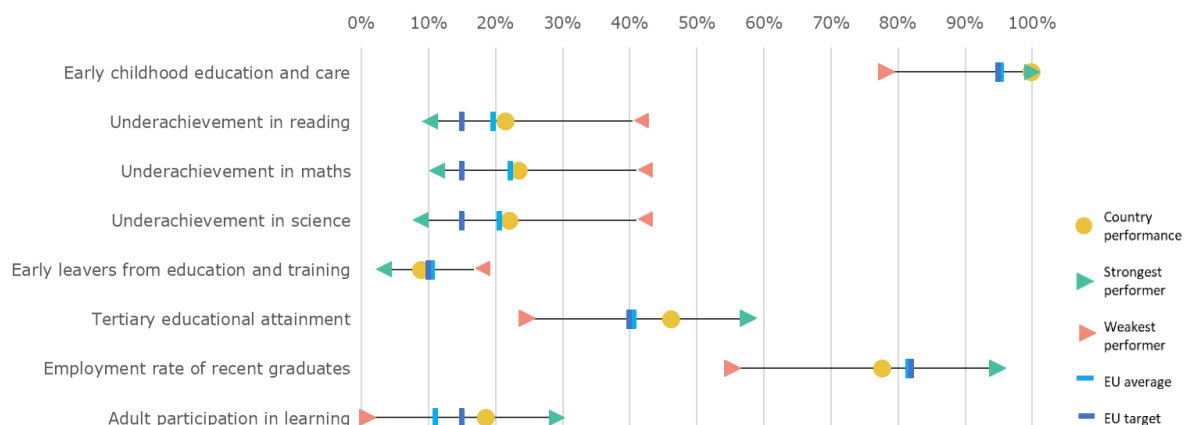
*The manuscript was completed on 26 August 2019.
Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)*

1. Key indicators

		France		EU average	
		2009	2018	2009	2018
Education and training 2020 benchmarks					
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)		12.4%	8.9%	14.2%	10.6%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)		43.0%	46.2%	32.3%	40.7%
Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)		100.0%	100.0% ^{17,p}	90.8%	95.4% ^{17,d}
Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:	Reading	19.8%	21.5% ¹⁵	19.5% ^{EU27}	19.7% ¹⁵
	Maths	22.5%	23.5% ¹⁵	22.3% ^{EU27}	22.2% ¹⁵
	Science	19.3%	22.1% ¹⁵	17.7% ^{EU27}	20.6% ¹⁵
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-8 (total)	77.3%	77.7%	78.3%	81.6%
Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	5.7%	18.6%	9.5%	11.1%
Learning mobility	Degree-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	3.4% ¹⁷	:	3.6% ¹⁷
	Credit-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	14.6% ¹⁷	:	8.0% ¹⁷
Other contextual indicators					
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		5.7%	5.4% ¹⁷	5.2%	4.6% ¹⁷
Education investment	ISCED 0	€5 101 ¹²	€5 939 ¹⁶	:	€6 111 ^{15,d}
	ISCED 1	€5 171 ¹²	€5 532 ¹⁶	€5 812 ^{12,d}	€6 248 ^{15,d}
	ISCED 2	€7 322 ¹²	€7 731 ¹⁶	€6 937 ^{12,d}	€7 243 ^{15,d}
	ISCED 3-4	€9 895 ^{12,d}	€10 202 ¹⁵	:	€7 730 ^{14,d}
	ISCED 5-8	€11 556 ¹²	€11 771 ¹⁶	€10 549 ^{12,d}	€11 413 ^{15,d}
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	11.6%	8.4%	13.1%	9.5%
	Foreign-born	24.3%	15.0%	26.1%	20.2%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	44.3%	47.2%	33.1%	41.3%
	Foreign-born	34.1%	40.4%	27.7%	37.8%
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4	69.0%	68.0%	72.5%	76.8%
	ISCED 5-8	83.4%	84.4%	83.8%	85.5%

Sources: Eurostat; OECD (PISA); Learning mobility figures are calculated by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre from UOE data. Further information can be found in Annex I and in Volume 1 (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor). Notes: The EU's 2009 PISA averages do not include Cyprus; d = definition differs, : = not available, 12=2012, 14= 2014, 15 = 2015, 16=2016, 17 = 2017.

Figure 1 Position in relation to strongest and weakest performers



Source: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport (DG EAC) calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2018, UOE 2017) and OECD (PISA 2015).

2. Highlights

- Work continues on improving educational outcomes and reducing inequalities, with support for teaching staff and funding measures.
- A new law on education extends the length of compulsory education and training to 3-18.
- Authorities are faced with the challenge of combining the rapid pace of reforms with the need to consult stakeholders to ensure good ownership and optimal impact.
- Implementation of the vocational education and training reform is in full swing.

3. A focus on teachers

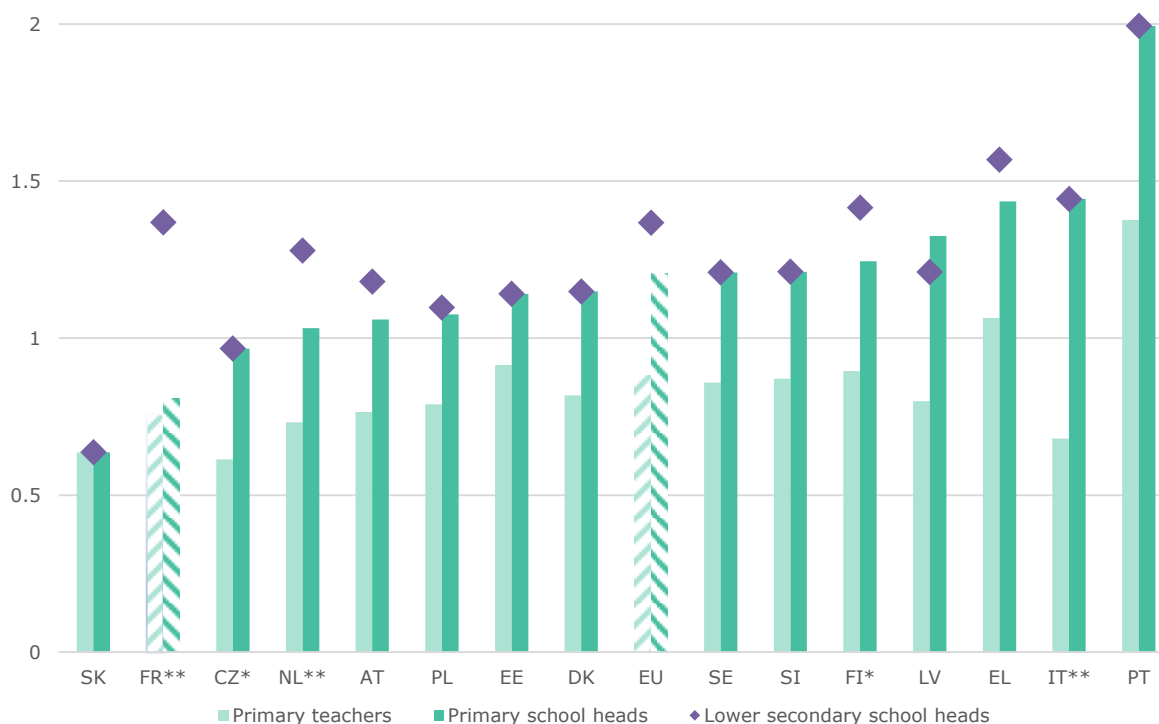
France has a comparatively young teacher population. The overall gender balance is among the best in the EU and the proportion of women is increasing.

The teaching profession has become less attractive. The applicant-to-job ratio has fallen sharply over the past years (Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, 2019). Possible explanations are working conditions (including relatively high number of teaching hours and relatively low salaries for primary education teachers) (OECD, 2018a). Teacher shortages affect disadvantaged schools and poorer and remote regions disproportionately. Increasingly, schools are tackling the problem by hiring contractual teachers, possibly at the expense of teaching quality. The share of contractual teachers in public schools increased by 10.2% in 2016/17 compared with the previous year and again by 11.8% in 2017/18 (DEPP, 2018a and 2019a).

The attractiveness of school leadership in primary education is also at risk. The salaries of primary school heads are only 7% higher than teachers' salaries; the OECD average gap is 41% (OECD, 2018a)¹. In addition, a lower secondary school head earns almost 70% more than a primary school head, the widest gap across all EU countries with available data (see figure 2 below). Furthermore, in this highly centralised system, school leaders' autonomy is comparatively limited.

¹ It must be noted that primary school heads in France have less responsibilities than in secondary as primary schools do not have autonomy or legal personality.

Figure 2 Primary teachers' and primary and lower secondary school heads' salaries relative to earnings of tertiary-educated workers (ISCED 5-8, 25-64 years old), 2016



Source: OECD (2018). Notes: The unit is the ratio of teachers' and school heads' salaries to average earnings of tertiary-educated workers in the country; *Reference year for tertiary-educated workers earnings is 2015; ** Reference year for tertiary-educated workers earnings is 2014.

Science teachers in disadvantaged schools are less qualified than their counterparts in advantaged schools (OECD, 2018b). This qualifications gap was the widest in France, with only 26% of science teachers in schools in the bottom socio-economic profile quarter being fully certified (with a university degree with a major in science), against 94% in the top quarter. A study on teachers in the Ile-de-France region shows that teachers aged under 30 and contractual teachers are three times more numerous in the most disadvantaged schools as compared with the most advantaged schools within the region, and turn-over is nearly twice as high (CNESCO, 2018).

Participation in continuing professional development (CPD) is low. Primary teachers must follow 18 hours of CPD per year, but there is no similar obligation for secondary teachers. In 2016/2017, France was one of the countries that did not give teachers allowances for either further formal qualifications, excellent job performance or completing CPD (Eurydice, 2018). According to a 2017 report by the General Inspectorate for National Education, 73% of primary education teachers surveyed after taking part in CPD stated that they 'did not acquired anything' in terms of improving professional skills, and there is a concern about low relevance of the courses on offer to the needs of teachers (IGEN-IGAENR, 2017). The report identified a top-down approach to defining and implementing CPD, largely focused on reform implementation, whereas participants would favour a less prescriptive approach better adapted to their needs. A lack of replacement teachers for those absent on CPD is a further barrier. Results of a 2019 survey on CPD confirm earlier findings and show that (i) 75% of teachers consider the CPD on offer to be of insufficient quantity and 65% consider the quality is low, (ii) sharing of knowledge gained through CPD with colleagues is rare, and that (iii) 83% of teachers were not consulted in designing the training offer (though 80% would have liked to be consulted) (reported in Eduveille, 2019).

According to the 2018 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the proportion of French teachers who believe that teaching is a valued profession is among

the lowest in the EU (6.6% v 17.7% at EU level) (OECD, 2019)². The proportion of teachers satisfied with their job (84.7%) is lower than the EU average (89.5%).

Authorities increased annual salaries in the most disadvantaged schools by EUR 1 000 in September 2018 and will do the same again in September 2019 and 2020 (MEN, 2018a). The measure aims to attract teachers to those schools (*Réseaux d'éducation prioritaire renforcés REP+*). At lower secondary level, *REP(+)* schools host 21% of pupils (DEPP, 2018b). This increase is complementary to earlier measures targeted to these schools, including halving the class size (see section 5), strengthened pedagogical support, and CPD for teachers. Schools will be able to make targeted recruitments to better meet local needs and to assign the most experienced teachers to the neediest students.

A 2019 law for a school of trust (*Loi pour une Ecole de la confiance*) reforms initial teacher education (ITE). The aim is to provide the same standard of education and training to all future teachers, drawing on research into the most effective teaching methods (on ITE and CPD, also see European Commission, 2017). Central governance over institutions and courses will be reinforced. To enable 'pre-professionalisation', the law enables some undergraduate students (1590 in 2019/2020) to be recruited as 'education assistants' for 3 years and start an early training in the classroom under the supervision of a tutor from the second year at university (eight hours a week, with front-line exposure increasing gradually afterwards) (MEN, 2019a). Starting practical experience early and starting to earn may increase the attractiveness of ITE programmes.

The *Grand Plan d'Investissement* will allocate EUR 250 million to pilot innovative projects for teacher training. It includes EUR 30 million for projects launched in 2018 to create pilot networks of universities, research institutes and schools to strengthen multi-disciplinary education research, transfer results to teacher education and training institutes, and to support experimentation in pedagogical practices (MESRI, 2018).

4. Investing in education and training

Public expenditure on education increased in real terms by 6.9% between 2010 and 2017, compared with a 0.2% average increase in EU member states. Public expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP remained higher than the EU average, at 5.4% in 2017. The increases for pre-primary and primary education (+15.6% against a 3.3% EU average) and for tertiary education (+3.6% against an average EU decrease by 6.9% in the EU) are comparatively high³. The increase for (pre-)primary education is in line with the government's policy priority to support improvements in basic skills and lower the compulsory age of starting education from September 2019. The EUR 811 million 2019 budget increase will fund the creation of 2 325 teaching posts for pre-primary and primary education, though the pupil population will fall by 36 300. 2 450 posts will be cut in secondary education (-0.2%), though the number of pupils will increase by 34 400 (+0.73%) (DEPP, 2019b and 2019c). This cut is to be offset by the scope for teachers to work paid overtime. Additional primary education teachers will enable full rollout of the plan to halve class sizes in disadvantaged schools, to reach 300 000 pupils by September 2019; and to improve education in rural areas (MEN, 2019b).

The government will also increase the budget for support measures tackling inequalities. The budget for the support scheme for parents of non-native speaker pupils and students will be doubled. New posts will be created for assistants of pupils with a disability.

5. Modernising early childhood and school education

France has wide socio-economic and regional disparities in educational outcomes and basic skills are low in primary education (European Commission, 2018 and 2019, OECD, 2018a). Inequalities also affect pupils with a migrant background. The proportion of early school leavers remained stable at national level between 2017 and 2018 at 8.9%, below the 10.6% EU

² In 2018, 23 Member States participated in TALIS: Austria, Belgium fr, Belgium nl, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, England (UK), Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. TALIS 2018 covers lower secondary teachers and school leaders in mainstream public and private schools.

³ Eurostat, COFOG.

average. Measures to improve basic skills in primary education (see below) aim to reduce early school leaving since children who perform poorly in the early years often end up leaving school early. Authorities are seeking to take a comprehensive approach to reducing inequalities, linking educational measures to measures on housing, urban policies and poverty alleviation (Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, 2019).

The 2019 law for a school of trust lowers the age of starting compulsory education from 6 to 3 and raises the age of ending compulsory education or training from 16 to 18 from September 2019. The aim is to reduce inequalities in educational outcomes. Lowering the age of starting compulsory education mainly targets those territories where pre-primary education lacks the necessary infrastructure and staff and has the aim to boost pupils' skills in reading, writing, maths and respecting others. Language acquisition is a particular focus. In 2017, participation in early childhood education and care for children aged 4 to 6 varied between 89.9% in Guyana, 90.6% in Corsica and 100% in most other French regions⁴. The law also extends compulsory training from 16 to 18 years (either through education, training, apprenticeships, employment, civic service or through a social or professional integration scheme).

The new law extends the opportunities for research and experimentation in schools and strengthens evaluation at pupil, school and system levels (see European Commission, 2018). Encouraging experimentation in schools is intended to encourage improvements in practices in a highly centralised education system. The law also creates the possibility to establish international public schools that provide an education in both French and a foreign language, leading to French and foreign language school diplomas.

Box 1: Halving class sizes

To address the issue of low basic skills in primary education (20% of pupils at the end of primary education) and the link with early school leaving, class sizes were progressively reduced to a maximum of 12 pupils in the first two grades in disadvantaged schools (*REP* and *REP+*) between 2017 and 2019 (European Commission, 2018). The Ministry of Finance expects to generate over the very long-term a 2% increase in GDP by creating 120 000 new jobs (Ministère de l'Action et des Comptes publics, 2018). Teachers receive specific training support. From September 2019, the measure benefits 300 000 pupils, equivalent to 20% of the population. A first evaluation in the first grade provided very positive results in terms of class climate and pupil attitudes (DEPP, 2019d). The impact on performance is also judged as positive. Nonetheless, the evaluation shows that the reform would require a deep transformation of teaching practices to unlock its full potential. In line with findings in international literature, the Ministry of Finance recommends encouraging the posting of experienced teachers to disadvantaged schools, contrary to current practice where newly-qualified teachers are more often placed there (Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, 2019)⁵. It also encourages strengthening teacher education and training, including in adapted pedagogical techniques. These could be explored, for example, to reduce stigmatisation of failure, which is strong in France. To have a wider impact, it would be useful to extend measures to the high proportion of disadvantaged students who do not attend *REP(+)* schools (European Commission, 2019). TALIS finds that the proportion of French teachers who feel (very) well prepared in teaching in multicultural/multilingual settings is the lowest in the EU (8.2% v 23.8%). Only 12% report that this was included in their formal education (compared with the 31.7% average). Positively, the proportion increases to 22% for teachers having graduated in the 5 years prior to the survey.

Authorities are taking measures to strengthen digital skills. A new optional digital science course is being created in upper secondary education. The Ministry of Education is running a number of projects to step up ICT-based learning, increase students' and teachers' competencies and to use digital evaluations at different levels (MEN, 2019c). The *Magistère* scheme offers around 400 free training courses to teachers. The *Etincel* platform developed in partnership with industry offers digital resources for professional and technological education to support career guidance and better preparation for the workplace.

⁴ Eurostat, UOE, 2017. Online data code: [educ_uoe_enra17](#).

⁵ International literature also suggests that reducing class size is not the most efficient way to improve pupil performance.

6. Modernising higher education

In 2018, 46.2% of 30-34 year-olds had a tertiary education, above the EU average of 40.7%. The employment rate of recent graduates (84.4% in 2018) continued to rise and is catching up with the EU average (85.5%).

The 2018 reform, including the *Parcoursup* registration platform, was fine-tuned to speed up admissions of future students in universities and improve their information (European Commission, 2018). The number of holders of a needs-based grant admitted to higher education increased by 21% in 2018, overall costs for students fell and the offer of student accommodation increased (Gouvernement, 2019a and Gouvernement, 2019b). In line with the Ministry's objectives to reduce inequalities, the share of students with a technological or professional end-of-school qualification in short programmes in higher education increased since 2017 (Gouvernement, 2019b).

To further broaden access to higher education and reduce territorial inequalities, 13 connected campuses were created in cities distant from large universities. (MESRI, 2019a). The campuses offer innovative third spaces where distance learning is provided with tutoring by qualified staff. Local authorities make infrastructure available for the projects and central authorities allocate funding.

The Ministry launched a new plan to boost entrepreneurship in higher education. Building on earlier schemes, *The spirit of undertaking* aims to give all students experience with entrepreneurship, to increase training in entrepreneurship, to improve the recognition of skills and competences developed by 'student-entrepreneurs'. The plan also aims to support 'student-entrepreneurs' in developing a start-up with individualised support while gaining credits (European Credits Transfer System), to extend the offer of curricula on entrepreneurship, to strengthen the status of 'student-entrepreneur', to further develop training of trainers, to encourage mobility for students-entrepreneurs and to share good practices with other countries willing to know about it the PEPITE model (MESRI, 2019b).

The government adopted the national strategy for artificial intelligence *AI for Humanity*. The total EUR 1.5 billion budget up to 2022 includes EUR 665 million for the Ministry of Higher education, Research and Innovation. Among measures planned, the strategy will double the number of doctorates in the field and enhance partnerships.

The French authorities launched the *Choose France* strategy in September 2019 to improve the attractiveness of French higher education to foreign students, with the objective to welcome 500 000 students by 2027 (Gouvernement, 2018). The strategy supports French as a foreign language programmes, programmes taught in English, and a quality label *Bienvenue en France* for institutions fulfilling certain requirements. The authorities also increased fees for non-EU students (they remain much lower than in most countries attracting high number of foreign students⁶). In parallel, they increased scholarships and fee exemptions.

The *Grand plan d'investissement* will support participation by French universities in the European universities initiative (EUR 100 million over 10 years). The project aims to promote European values and identity, increase mobility and improve quality, innovation and the international competitiveness of higher education institutions (Permanent Representation of France to the EU, 2019).

7. Modernising vocational education and training

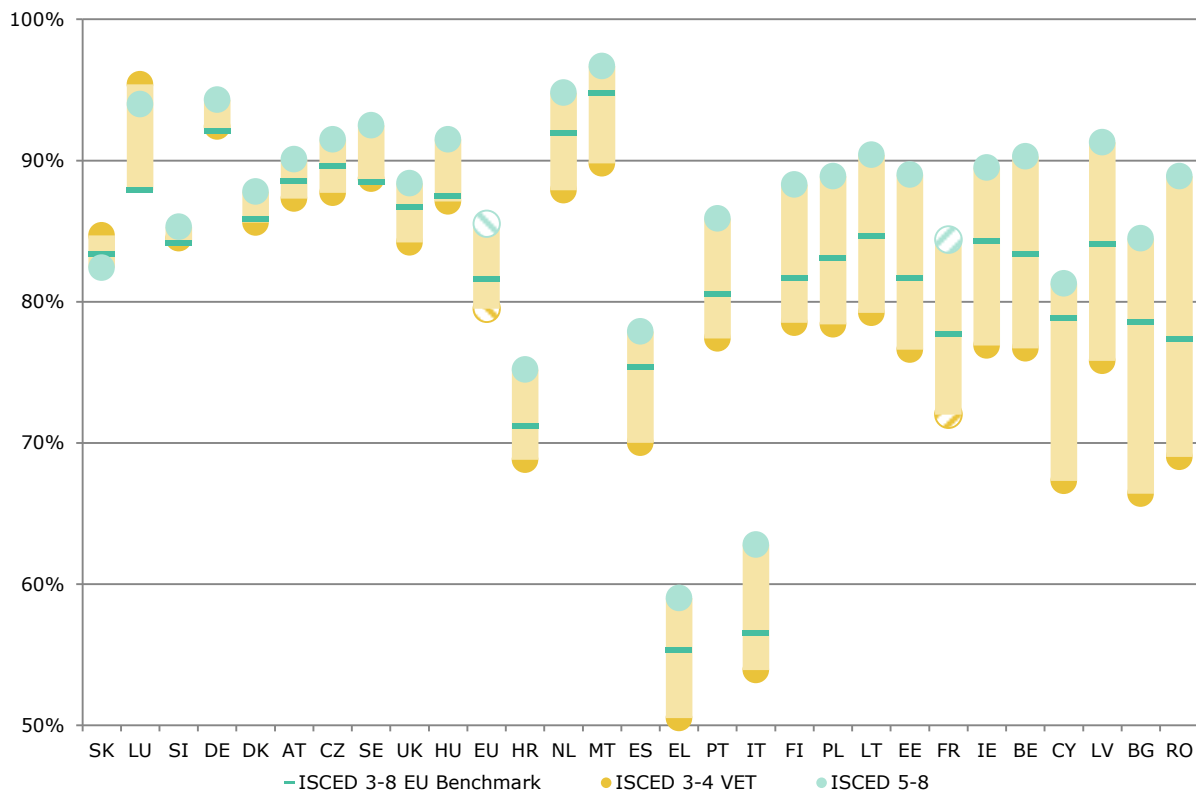
In 2017, enrolment in upper secondary VET slightly decreased overall in 2017 compared with previous years, to 39.9% of students (the EU average was 47.8%). 24% had some exposure to work-based learning since most educational programmes include practical elements in the curriculum. The level of employability of recent VET graduates in 2018 increased noticeably to

⁶ On 19 November 2018, authorities announced an increase to EUR 2 770 for students at bachelor's level and to 3 770 for those at master's level. The increase at PhD level was abolished.

72%, up from 64% in 2017, but still below the EU 2018 average of 79.5% and with a comparatively large gap in the employability of tertiary education graduates (see figure 3 overleaf).

The 2019 European Semester country-specific recommendation to France included the recommendation to 'address skills shortages and mismatches.' (Council of the EU, 2019).

Figure 3 Employment rate of recent graduates by ISCED level, 2018



Source: Eurostat, LFS, 2018.

Implementation of the 2018 VET reform is in full swing (European Commission, 2018).

France Compétences, the new National Skills Agency is working on several fronts, such as modernisation of professional certifications (Ministère du Travail, 2019a). In 2019, VET funding bodies are restructured into 11 *Skills Operators (Opérateurs de compétences)* in charge of funding apprenticeships, supporting professional branches and employers (especially SMEs) to design certifications, anticipating skills needs and increasing access to training (Ministère du Travail, 2019b). Key features of the reform on apprenticeships involve new incentives for apprentices and companies, the apprenticeship premium for SMEs and first qualification levels, and joint development of vocational courses by the state and professional branches (Gouvernement, 2019c). The law also seeks to improve the attractiveness of VET, notably via a preparatory programme designed to attract low-qualified young people and residents of deprived urban or rural areas.

A systemic transformation of school-based upper secondary VET is ongoing. New reforms planned for 2019 cover innovative pedagogical approaches, better adaptation of sectoral offers to labour market trends and new degrees in priority areas for the economy, better connection between general subjects and vocational material, and bringing in apprenticeships in all professional high schools. A new generation of campuses for careers and qualifications is being developed with support provided under the plan. The aim is to open at least three new campuses in each region by 2022 (MEN, 2019d).

Teacher training is a major challenge under the 2018-2019 social agenda. Redesigning initial and continuing training for VET teaching/training staff and supporting the professionalisation of other training providers are covered in a 2018 report commissioned by the Education Ministry.

Box 2: European Social Fund (ESF) project *Developing the employability of young people in sewing and fashion jobs in Santerre Haute Somme*

In 2017 and 2018, the *Maison pour l'Entreprise, l'Emploi et la Formation Santerre Haute Somme* carried out a comprehensive scheme to support young people aged 16-25 interested in the fashion industry and related jobs. The EUR 200 000 project (EUR 117 000 from the European Social Fund) culminated in December 2018 with an event, *The night of fashion*, co-organised by 70 young people.

8. Developing adult learning

Work on up-skilling and re-skilling could be strengthened. In 2018, a relatively high share of adults (20.6%) did not have at least an upper-secondary qualification, compared with an EU average of 21.9%. The likelihood that adults in France frequently update their knowledge and skills through adult learning was higher than the EU average: 18.6% of adults aged 25-64 have had a recent learning experience during the last 4 weeks, compared with 11.1% for the EU average. In 2017, 71 640 adults aged 25 or above have acquired an upper-secondary qualification, only a small percentage of the 7.2 million adults (aged 25-64) with only a low-level of educational attainment (yet decreasing: 6.9 million in 2018). This is particularly worrying, given the much smaller number of jobs requiring only a low level of education (2.6 million in 2017).

Work is ongoing to update the personal training account in line with the 2018 law. Accounts are now credited in euros instead of hours. Changes in the quality assurance of training courses are also being made to prepare for mandatory certification of training providers (2021) (Cedefop ReferNet, 2018).

Support for career transition is increasing. As from 2020, new providers of free and tailored professional development counselling will be selected in each region (Ministère du Travail, 2019c). The *Pro-A* program allows employees to access a training program through an apprenticeship, while keeping their work contract and salary.

The skills investment plan is financing innovative experimentation. It will support access to training for low-qualified jobseekers and NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) at national and regional levels and scale up the successful pilot *Action on Workplace Learning* (Ministère du Travail, 2018).

Professional development for adult educators is likely to increase with the ongoing reform. *France Compétences* will monitor the sector closely as part of its work on quality assurance.

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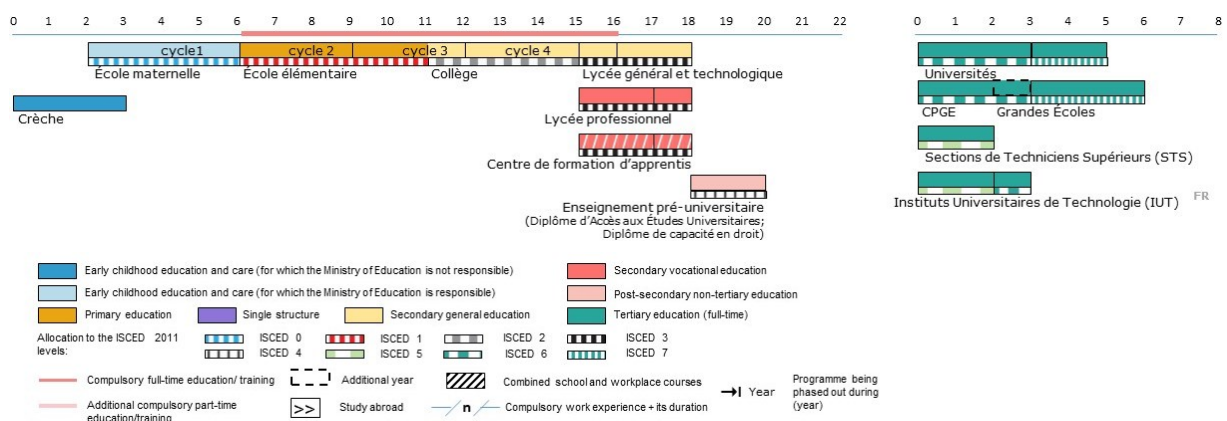
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Annex I: Key indicator sources

Indicator	Eurostat online data code
Early leavers from education and training	edat_lfse_14 + edat_lfse_02
Tertiary educational attainment	edat_lfse_03 + edat_lfs_9912
Early childhood education and care	educ_uoe_enra10
Underachievement in reading, maths, science	OECD (PISA)
Employment rate of recent graduates	edat_lfse_24
Adult participation in learning	trng_lfse_03
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	gov_10a_exp
Expenditure on public and private institutions per student	educ_uoe_fini04
Learning mobility:	
- Degree-mobile graduates	JRC computation based on Eurostat / UIS / OECD data
- Credit-mobile graduates	

Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018. The Structure of the European Education Systems 2018/19: Schematic Diagrams. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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Highlights of the cross-national analysis

Among all factors in the school environment, teachers are considered to have the greatest impact on students' learning outcomes. At the same time, more than 60%⁷ of public expenditure in education in the EU is spent on teachers. Any policy effort seeking to improve educational outcomes – or the efficiency of education and training – is bound to take a close look at the role of teachers and look for ways to help teachers excel in their demanding profession. New evidence from the OECD TALIS survey sheds more light on teachers. The recent survey data inform the 2019 Education and Training Monitor, which contains a dedicated analysis of school teachers in the EU. Being a unique source of information on teachers' motivations, lifelong learning and careers, the new evidence from TALIS 2018 can help policy-makers harnessing the full potential of teachers by preventing and addressing challenges.

After the teacher-dedicated part, the 2019 Monitor sets to analyse the existing targets adopted by the Council of the European Union under the strategic framework for European cooperation Education and Training 2020 ('EU benchmarks'). This part of the report presents latest data on participation in early childhood education and care; early leaving from education and training; tertiary educational attainment; underachievement in basic skills; employment rate of recent graduates; adult learning; and learning mobility in higher education. Next, the 2019 Monitor offers analysis on education indicators used in other well-established or emerging priorities, including entrepreneurship education; digital education; multilingualism. The report concludes with a section analysing public investment in education and training.

At the core of learning: the teachers

Across the entire EU, education systems are confronted with a number of challenges relating to teachers. Several countries already face or are about to face shortages of teachers, either across the board or in particular subject areas (typically science, technology, engineering and maths); or in particular geographical areas. In view of the proportions of teachers aged 50 or plus, the 23 EU countries participating in TALIS 2018 will have to renew about one third of their teaching population in the next decade or so. At least five EU countries will have to renew around half of their secondary school teachers in the same period (Italy, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia, Greece and Latvia; and the same applies to primary school teachers in the former three countries).

Successfully renewing the teachers' population requires acting upon key factors such as the number of students deciding to embark on teacher education, the number of new teachers starting in the job and the number of teachers stopping to work. To address this challenge, there is a need to improve the attractiveness of the profession and offer good working conditions for sustained professional activity.

According to survey data, only 18% of lower secondary school teachers in the EU consider their profession as valued by society; and their proportion lowers with longer years of teaching experience. Similarly, the share of teachers would still choose to work as teachers, declines significantly, in several EU countries, among more experienced teachers. Overall, there is a specific challenge in attracting men into teaching; and particularly so for primary and pre-primary education, where the proportion of female teachers reaches 85% and 96% respectively.

Salaries of teachers do not always compare favourably to salaries of other equally qualified professionals. Among EU countries with available data, in four countries (Czechia, Slovakia, Italy and Hungary) teachers at all education levels earn less than 80% of what other tertiary-educated workers do. In most Member States, primary (and especially pre-primary) teachers earn less than secondary level teachers. In secondary education, teachers' statutory salary tends to be higher at upper-secondary level than at lower-secondary level.

There are also shortages of teachers with specific profiles. Nearly 40% of principals in lower secondary schools in the EU declare that the shortage of teachers teaching students with special

⁷ DG EAC calculation on Eurostat's general government finance statistics, reference year 2017 ([gov_10a_exp](#)).

needs hinders the quality of instruction at their school. Principals also point to shortages of teachers who have competences in teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting (the largest shortages are in France, Italy and Portugal); and competences in teaching students from socio-economically disadvantaged homes (largest shortages in France, Italy, and Portugal). This second type of shortage is driven by change (technology; diversity in classrooms) and points to a need to improve training (initial and continued).

Furthermore, against an evolving technological and demographic background, teachers need new skills more than ever, including for dealing with cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom, teaching in a technology-rich environment, and adopting collaborative teaching practices. While 92% of teachers report regular participation in professional development, 21% of them declare a further need for training on teaching students with special needs; 16% report a further need for training on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for teaching; and about 13% report a further need for training in teaching in multilingual and multicultural environments.

Growing participation in education and educational attainment: main achievements in the last decade

In the last decade, the EU experienced a massive increase in tertiary educational attainment and met its target of having at least 40% tertiary graduates in the 30-34 year-old population – up from 32% in 2009. Despite this increase, there are clear patterns of inequalities in educational attainment. For example, on average, women's tertiary educational attainment (45.8%) is higher than men's (35.7%) – and the gap has been continuously increasing over recent years. Typically, women complete tertiary education earlier than men do. Also, young adults born in the reporting country or elsewhere in the EU, graduate more than their peers from non-EU countries (41.0% against 35.8% respectively). Yet, an overview of policy measures to broaden tertiary educational attainment shows that less than half of EU countries set specific targets to support participation in higher education of under-represented groups, such as, for example, people with disabilities, migrants or students from disadvantaged background.

The attendance of children from the age of 4 in early childhood education has expanded, and is, by now, almost universal. There are also high rates of participation in early childhood education by children from the age of 3. Yet the 90% participation rate for the general population decreases to 77.8% in the group of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Experiencing education in the early years of life has been found to be beneficial for better learning outcomes later on in life, and particularly so for children from socio-economically disadvantaged homes. The challenge of ensuring equal access to education in the early years needs to be addressed.

Since the EU cooperation framework in education and training started in 2009, the proportion of young adults leaving education and training without obtaining at least an upper secondary qualification has considerably reduced. Nonetheless, at EU level this process came to a halt after 2016. Comparing 2016 and 2018, there was progress on this indicator in large countries such as Spain or Poland, as well as in other countries such as Romania, the Netherlands and Portugal. However, this was countered by negative developments in other countries – for example, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Slovakia, and Estonia (in descending order by size of population). Furthermore, in the past 2 years, early school leaving rates increased for both young adults born in the EU (between 2016 and 2017) and those born outside (between 2017 and 2018). Reducing early leaving remains a priority and a target of the EU, as those who leave education and training before obtaining an upper-secondary diploma will struggle with lower employment rates and lower rates of participation in adult learning.

The main challenge for the next decade: improving learning outcomes at school, and increasing adult participation in learning

Participation in education can be measured by data on enrolments, qualifications, or performance test. The latter show that reducing the number of underachieving 15-year-olds to meet the EU

target of less than 15% by 2020⁸ remains a challenge, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Failing to achieve basic mathematics, reading or science tasks at the age of 15 impacts on individuals' chances to continue studying, find and maintain employment later in life, cope with fast-paced technological change, and develop as citizens. Between 2012 and 2015, the EU has actually moved further away from meeting this target. Approximately one fifth of pupils in the EU cannot complete basic reading tasks, and the share is slightly higher for science and maths (2015 data). Despite less favourable or sometimes adverse background conditions, around a quarter of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils born in another country are considered academically resilient. Individual factors associated with higher resilience include high academic expectations, and not repeating grades; while disengagement from school (for example skipping classes, and abusing substances) has a negative association with resilience. At school level, the use of school evaluations, connecting the students' test results to teachers' performance, adequate provision of study rooms and being surrounded by pupils with higher socio-economic status are all factors correlating positively with resilience.

Over the years, there has been limited growth in the share of adults participating in education and training during the last 4 weeks in the EU – from 9.5% in 2008 to 11.1% in 2018. In addition, in practically in all EU countries people with little or no qualifications in education – those most in need of access to learning – are the least likely to benefit from it. Age and educational attainment matter when it comes to adult participation in learning. Young adults (25-34) are more than four times more likely to participate in learning as those aged 55-64. Similarly, those with a tertiary degree are more than four times more likely to participate in learning than those holding at most an upper-secondary diploma.

Developing competences for future life and employment

Research has long established the positive outcomes of being able to study abroad. Transnational learning mobility is associated with future mobility, higher earnings, and lower risk of unemployment. 'Making learning mobility a reality for all' is one of the objectives of the European Education Area⁹. In 2017, 11.6% of higher education graduates 'were mobile', meaning that they studied partially or entirely abroad. About 8% of them were abroad for short-term periods, while 3.6% graduated in another country. The Erasmus+ programme supported about half of the short-term study periods spent abroad by EU graduates. Overall, Luxembourg, Cyprus, the Netherlands, and Finland (in descending order) have high shares of mobile graduates. As to inward mobility, capturing the volume of students coming into a country for a period of study, it can be read as a measure of the attractiveness of the education system. On this indicator the United Kingdom leads the way – both in percentage of inward graduates and in absolute numbers.

There are a number of key competences (or combination of knowledge, skills and attitude) that can support an individual's life chances and also easier transition to the labour market and career job prospects. For example, participation in entrepreneurship education increases the likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial activities later in life by 35% on average. Of this 35%, a 7 percentage point increase is due to improved self-perceptions by participants of their entrepreneurial skills. However, available data show that participation in entrepreneurship education in the EU is mostly optional, and only a handful of countries make it compulsory.

Furthermore, the potential of digital technologies in improving educational practices is being held up by challenges that education systems still face. To successfully undergo digital transformation, schools need to support teachers' digital competence for pedagogical use, design innovative pedagogical approaches, and provide digital equipment as well as better connectivity. Capacity

⁸ Data for this benchmark come from the OECD PISA survey. Students scoring below level 2 are considered underachievers.

⁹ In November 2017, EU leaders met in Gothenburg to discuss the social dimension of Europe, including education and culture. As part of the debate on the Future of Europe, the Commission set out its vision and concrete steps to create a European Education Area by 2025. One of the main objective of the European Area of Education is 'making mobility a reality for all', by building on the positive experiences of the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps and expanding participation in them, as well as by creating an EU Student Card to offer a new user-friendly way to store information on a person's academic records. Other measures to boost mobility under the European Education Area include initiating new processes to ensure the mutual recognition of diplomas; improving language learning; creating a network of European universities; and supporting teachers and their mobility.

building for digital assessment needs to be implemented for learners, teachers, schools and education systems.

Moreover, speaking several languages can increase individuals' employment prospects. Overall in Europe, between 2005 and 2015, the number of pupils who experienced compulsory language learning grew both in primary and secondary education. As to the former, 83.7% of primary school children learned at least one foreign language in 2014, against 67.3% almost a decade before. At lower secondary level, 59% of pupils learned two languages in school in 2015, against 46.7% in 2005.

After reaching the lowest point in 2013 (75.4%), the employment rate of recent graduates has been continuously increasing in the EU. With 81.6% in 2018, the rate is now close to the pre-crisis 2008 level of 82%. However, some countries still suffer from the effects of the crisis on employability of recent graduates – in particular Greece and Italy, where employment rates of recent graduates are around 55%. As compared to secondary graduates holding a vocational qualification, those with a general orientation qualification have a less easy transition into the labour market (66.3% against 79.5%). The employment rate of tertiary graduates was at 85.5% in 2018.

Public investment in education

In 2017, EU Member States invested, on average, 4.6% of their gross domestic product (GDP) in their education systems. This proportion has been slightly but continuously decreasing in the last few years, down from 4.9% in 2014. On average, EU countries spend about one third of their public expenditure for education on pre-primary and primary education; 41% on secondary education; and 15% on tertiary education. Looking at different education sectors, real expenditure on secondary and post-secondary education decreased (-1.3%, between 2016 and 2017) and increased in pre-primary and primary education (+ 1.4%), as well as tertiary education (+ 1.7%). So far trends in education expenditure have been largely independent from demographic developments, with the partial exception of expenditure on tertiary education. Due to the predicted school-age population decline in many EU countries, even constant spending on education is likely to result in an increase in spending per student.

Highlights of the country analysis

Austria

To avoid teacher shortages, Austria needs to attract enough students into initial teacher education and improve continuing professional development. Investment in higher education aims to improve the study environment. Improving digital competence is a priority in the education and training system. Discontinued recent reforms may weaken efforts to integrate students with migrant backgrounds and to improve education outcomes of students from a socially disadvantaged background.

Belgium

The Flemish Community (BE fl) will implement reforms at all levels of education, including dual learning, starting in September 2019. The French Community (BE fr) will also implement school reforms, starting with changes to governance, then the new extended common curriculum and reforming initial teacher education from September 2020. Education spending in Belgium is among the highest in the EU, but educational outcomes are comparatively low, suggesting room for increased efficiency and effectiveness. To reduce inequality and improve outcomes, teachers need more support to manage diversity in the classroom. Tertiary educational attainment is high but disparities remain between regions and groups.

Bulgaria

The modernisation of the education and training system continues while quality, labour market relevance and inclusiveness remain challenging. Demographic trends and rising skill shortages suggest that Bulgaria needs to invest better in the skills of its current and future workforce. The need to upskill and reskill the adult population is high while participation in adult learning is low. The status of the teaching profession is low, and the teacher workforce is ageing. Salaries are being increased as a means to boost the attractiveness of the profession. Steps have been taken to increase the labour market relevance of vocational education and training (VET).

Croatia

Pilot implementation of curricular reform and ambitious preparations for full implementation are under way. Reforms are under way in vocational education and training. Participation in early childhood education and care is held back by shortages of teachers and places. Plans to expand the very short average instruction time could help to improve low education outcomes.

Cyprus

The teaching profession is highly attractive. Reforms to upgrade it are promising but need to be sustained and expanded. Reforms are implemented to foster high-quality public early childhood education and care. However, provision is insufficient for the early years. Tertiary education attainment has risen further but underutilisation of skills remains a challenge given the specific features of the Cypriot labour market. Measures have been taken to upgrade vocational education and training and adult learning, but attractiveness of both sectors and participation in them remain low.

Czechia

Czechia continues to make vocational education and training more relevant to the needs of the jobs market. Authorities are making good use of EU funds to support reforms. Inclusive education is progressing but measures targeted at Roma remain limited. The attractiveness of the teaching profession remains low.

Denmark

Changes to university education are making it more flexible and labour market friendly, but the need for more STEM graduates remains. The number of apprenticeships has been increased and measures are being taken to promote adult learning. Reduced education spending is having an impact on schools and universities. There is considerable local variation in the education performance of young people from migrant backgrounds.

Estonia

Estonia is developing an education strategy for 2021-2035, aiming to bring gradual changes to the system to respond to changes in the labour market and society. Due to demographic trends and

the limited responsiveness of the education and training system to labour market needs, aligning skills supply and labour demand remains a challenge. The ageing of the teaching population coupled with the low attractiveness of the teaching profession are a long-term challenge for the functioning of the education system. Participation in adult learning has reached a record high but the need for upskilling and reskilling remains high.

Finland

While teaching is a prestigious and attractive profession, there are teacher shortages for kindergarten and special needs education. There has been some growth in education inequalities, and spending on education has fallen. New policy measures aim to improve the quality, effectiveness and internationalisation of higher education. Demand for graduates in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is high and difficult to meet. Implementation of vocational education and training reform is ongoing, and reforms are planned to foster adult learning.

France

Work continues on improving educational outcomes and reducing inequalities, with support for teaching staff and funding measures. A new law on education extends the length of compulsory education and training to 3-18. Authorities are faced with the challenge of combining the rapid pace of reforms with the need to consult stakeholders to ensure good ownership and optimal impact. Implementation of the vocational education and training reform is in full swing.

Germany

Germany has announced significant investments in digitalisation, higher education and research in the decade ahead, but as well in school education. Germany is preparing for fundamental change in the skills of its workforce by carrying out digital initiatives and by refocusing the system of adult learning. The teaching workforce is aging and Germany faces a challenge to replace a large number of teachers. Young people from disadvantaged socio-economic and/or migrant backgrounds continue to lag behind in educational attainment.

Greece

The teaching profession is highly attractive in Greece but opportunities and incentives to improve professionalism are lacking. Education expenditure is lower than in most EU countries and largely spent on salaries. Early school leaving has been further reduced, particularly in rural areas. Finding employment after education remains difficult, including for highly qualified people. Measures to tackle the brain drain of tertiary graduates are being implemented but internationalisation of Greek universities is underdeveloped.

Hungary

Recent measures have raised the qualification levels of staff in early childhood education and care. Measures to reduce performance gaps between pupils have been strengthened. Admission conditions for entry to higher education have been made more restrictive. A new medium-term strategy aims to modernise vocational education and training and adult education.

Ireland

Ireland has a strong framework to ensure highly qualified teachers and further plans to meet emerging needs, including teacher shortages. Early school leaving has continued to decline, and participation in early childhood education and care is to be supported by new national schemes. Despite increased public spending on education, investment in higher education has not kept up with rising student numbers. Ireland implements initiatives aimed at upskilling and increasing adult participation in learning and training but the numbers of low-skilled adults in the population remain sizeable.

Italy

Italy invests well below the EU average in education, particularly in higher education. The share of teachers satisfied with their jobs is among the highest in the EU, but only a small share believe that theirs is a valued profession. Compulsory work-based learning in vocational education and training could help provide more structured training for apprentices and ease the transition from education to work. The level of tertiary educational attainment is low, and the transition from education to work remains difficult, even for highly qualified people.

Latvia

Latvia has already met and exceeded its Europe 2020 education targets. Latvia should achieve further improvements in learning outcomes through the new competence-based curriculum, a stronger individual approach to students at risk and support for inclusion of students with special educational needs. Enrolment in vocational education and training (VET) is increasing and the employment rate of VET graduates is improving, although both remain below the EU average. In higher education, a gradual increase in investment and incremental changes in quality assurance are welcome, but the sector remains fragmented and international competitiveness low.

Lithuania

Current trends in student population and teacher workforce call for a comprehensive strategy to manage teacher supply and demand. Improving key competences and relevant skills remains a priority at all levels. Further development of monitoring and evaluation systems may help improve the quality of education and training. Measures have been put in place to increase the education system's overall efficiency, but further efforts are needed to ensure their implementation. Policy measures to address low participation in adult learning are lacking.

Luxembourg

In 2018, more flexible entry requirements for the recruitment competition for early childhood and primary education teachers attracted more candidates. Pupils' performance is heavily influenced by their ability to cope with the trilingual system. A reform of the orientation process at the end of primary education may have stopped a trend whereby many pupils were being guided to the lowest track in secondary education. Employment rates among recent graduates from all types of education are significantly higher than the EU average.

Malta

Work is underway to improve the quality of teaching and the attractiveness of the profession. Improving the quality of investment in education and developing monitoring and assessment are key challenges. Increased participation in early childhood education and care and the new secondary system may help reduce the number of early school leavers. While participation in tertiary education is increasing, its labour market relevance is still a challenge.

Netherlands

The early school leaving rate is below the Europe 2020 national target but has slightly increased. The Netherlands faces an increasing shortage of teachers, both in primary and secondary education. The 2019-2022 Quality Agreements aim to improve the quality of vocational education and training. Dutch tertiary education increasingly attracts foreign students.

Poland

Early school leaving continues declining and participation in early childhood education and care among children under 3 remains low. The higher education reform has been launched, bringing major changes to the functioning of higher education institutions. Implementing the 2017 school system changes is causing organisational, financial and curricular challenges. Further challenges relate to teachers' pay, emerging shortages, and initial and continuing training. Participation in adult learning remains low.

Portugal

Teachers are satisfied with their jobs, but the ageing teacher population, the high proportion of non-permanent staff and weaknesses in induction and continuing professional development remain challenging. Investment to upgrade infrastructure is insufficient, particularly for early childhood education and care in metropolitan areas. Regional disparities in education outcomes, grade repetition and early school leaving rates are improving. Tertiary educational attainment has grown but business demand for ICT specialists exceeds supply. There is a significant proportion of low qualified adults while participation in adult learning remains low.

Romania

Concrete ideas have been presented for major reform of the education and training system. Clear steps need to be taken for the implementation of the reform. Public spending on education is low in EU comparison, while the sector's investment needs are high. Any major reform is likely to require additional funding linked to stronger equity and efficiency mechanisms. Better support for teachers – in particular by redesigning initial teacher education and strengthening continuing professional

development – can help improve quality and equity. Efforts were made to expand dual education. Participation in adult learning remains low despite the high need for upskilling and reskilling.

Slovakia

Slovakia is improving early childhood education and care, which is particularly positive for children from deprived families. Slovakia is taking a more strategic approach to lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling. The early school leaving rate has continued increasing since 2010, approaching 14% in Eastern Slovakia. Investment in education and training is insufficient, and this is reflected in teachers' still low salaries despite recent increases.

Slovenia

Enrolment in early childhood education and care is approaching the EU benchmark. The proportion of Slovenian upper secondary students enrolled in vocational education and training is one of the highest in the EU, and the employment rate of such graduates is high. There are enough new entrant teachers but large numbers are approaching retirement and shortages already exist in certain categories. Tertiary educational attainment is high, but the differences between men and women and the native-born and foreign-born population are large.

Spain

The teaching profession is attractive, but working conditions differ among regions and between public and private education systems. Private spending in education is significant, while public spending is static compared to GDP. Planned reforms, reflecting political uncertainties, have been slowed down. The process to modernise vocational education and training is ongoing. Adult participation in education is slowly rising.

Sweden

Tertiary educational attainment and graduate employment rates are high. The population's digital skills are among the best in the EU. There is a serious teacher shortage, and a large number of teachers lack formal qualifications. School segregation and inequality are serious and growing concerns.

United Kingdom

Efforts are being made to tackle the high proportion of teachers leaving the profession. In England, school academies are growing in number but many are facing financial pressures. The consequences of Brexit for UK higher education are unclear but policy responses to address the potential loss of EU research funding and reduced student inflows will be needed. England will introduce new qualifications as part of ongoing reforms of upper secondary VET.

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