



Education and Training Monitor 2016

Denmark

Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2016 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-2015. It therefore complements the existing sources of information which offer descriptions of national education and training systems.

The structure of the country reports is as follows. 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 expenditure on education, and demographic and skill challenges. Section 4 focuses on early school leaving, early childhood education and care, and basic skills as important areas related to tackling inequalities and promoting inclusion. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise school education, covering, inter alia, the teaching profession and digital and language skills. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and training, as well as adult learning.

The manuscript was completed on 15 September 2016.

Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)

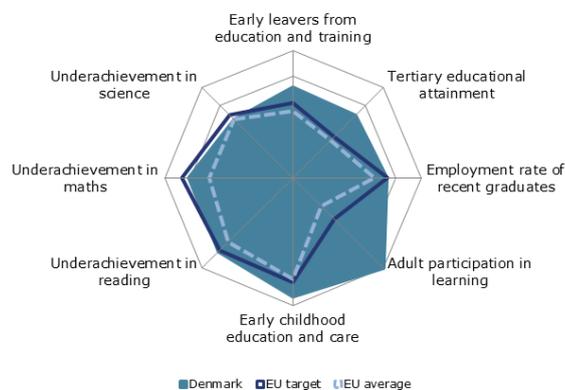
1. Key indicators

		Denmark		EU average		
		2012	2015	2012	2015	
ET 2020 benchmarks						
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Total	9.1%	7.8%	12.7%	11.0%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Total	43.0%	47.6%	36.0%	38.7%	
Early childhood education and care (ECEC) (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory education)		97.9% ¹¹	98.1% ¹⁴	93.2% ¹¹	94.3% ¹⁴	
Proportion of 15 year-olds with underachievement in:	Reading	14.6%	:	17.8%	:	
	Maths	16.8%	:	22.1%	:	
	Science	16.7%	:	16.6%	:	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-8 (total)	84.1%	81.7%	75.9%	76.9%	
Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	31.6%	31.3%	9.2%	10.7%	
Other contextual indicators						
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	7.0%	7.2% ¹⁴	5.0%	4.9% ^{14,p}	
	Expenditure on public and private institutions per student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	:	€8.519 ¹³	:	: ¹³
		ISCED 3-4	:	€7.502 ¹³	:	: ¹³
		ISCED 5-8	:	€12.148 ¹³	:	: ¹³
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	9.0%	7.7%	11.6%	10.1%	
	Foreign-born	10.1% ^u	8.7% ^u	24.9%	19.0%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	43.5%	46.6%	36.7%	39.4%	
	Foreign-born	39.3%	51.1%	33.8%	36.4%	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4	82.4%	79.5%	69.7%	70.8%	
	ISCED 5-8	85.5%	83.8%	81.5%	81.9%	
Learning mobility	Inbound graduates mobility (bachelor)	7.4% ¹³	6.9% ¹⁴	5.5% ¹³	5.9% ¹⁴	
	Inbound graduates mobility (master)	18.1% ¹³	17.7% ¹⁴	13.6% ¹³	13.9% ¹⁴	

Sources: Eurostat (see section 9 for more details); OECD (PISA).

Notes: data refer to weighted EU averages, covering different numbers of Member States depending on the source; b = break in time series, d = definition differs, p = provisional, u = low reliability, 11 = 2011, 13 = 2013, 14 = 2014. 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 2015) and OECD (PISA 2012).

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

- Denmark has low early school leaving rates, but the gender gap is higher than in neighbouring countries. The tertiary educational attainment rate is one of the highest in the EU.
- Denmark has the highest proportion of vocational education and training (VET) students in work-based programmes of all the EU countries; also adult participation in lifelong learning is one of the highest in the EU.
- In view of the fact that Denmark's expenditure on education is the highest in the EU and to reduce costs and improve efficiency in the public sector, the financial bill for 2016 made budgetary cuts across the education sector.
- The 'Growth and Development Strategy' (*Vækst og Udvikling i hele Danmark*) announces the intention to support quality of teaching and online learning in school education and tertiary education.
- The 2016 reform of general upper secondary education aims to raise academic standards, provide a solid preparation for higher education and encourage more young people to choose a VET pathway.

Box 1: The 2016 European Semester country-specific recommendation on education and training

The 2016 European Semester country-specific recommendations (CSRs) to Denmark (Council of the European Union 2016) included a recommendation on education and training:

Incentivise the cooperation between businesses and universities.

3. Investing in education to address demographic and skill challenges

Denmark is one of the biggest investors in education in the EU. General government expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP was 7.2 % in 2014 (compared to an EU average of 4.9 %). It has increased slightly from 7 % in 2013 and 6.1 % in 2008.¹ General government expenditure on education as a share of total public expenditure in 2014 was 12.8 %, a slight increase on 2008 (12.1 %).² While the employment rate of medium-qualified workers was well above the EU average in 2015 (80.3 % compared to 73.9 %) and the same was true for the employment of low-qualified workers (60.5 % compared to 53.2 %), the employment of highly qualified workers was only slightly above the EU average (85.9 % compared to 84.1 %).³

The Danish Government introduced budgetary cuts across the education sector in the 2016 Budget Act. The cuts have the dual aim of reducing the overall cost of the public sector whilst improving the efficiency of the public sector as a whole, including the education sector. The 2017 budget for the municipality sector was agreed between the Association of Municipalities (*Kommunernes Landsforening*) and the Government in June 2016 (Finansministeriet 2016).

¹ Source: Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (COFOG) database.

² Source: Eurostat, General government expenditure on education as a share of total public expenditure.

³ Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey. Online code *lfsa_ergaed*. Low-qualified = ISCED 0-2; medium-qualified = ISCED 3-4; highly qualified = ISCED 5-8.

According to the agreement, the Government will propose to the Parliament that the centrally defined 're-prioritisation contribution' (*omprioriteringsbidrag*) of 1 % of the budget from the municipalities to the central government will not be applied from 2018 onwards.⁴

The Danish Economic Council for the Labour Movement (*Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd*) estimates that cuts to the education sector could result in a reduction of up to 2 000 teachers in the compulsory education system by 2019.⁵ If the Parliament approves the proposal agreed between the Association of Municipalities (*Kommunernes Landsforening* - KL) and the Government, this is likely to reduce teacher lay-offs (*Kommunernes Landsforening* 2016).

The higher education institutions have indicated that the cuts will impact their future programmes. The Danish Economic Council for the Labour Movement estimates that the proposed cuts until could impact the vocationally-oriented higher education programmes, particularly outside the big cities (because institutions in smaller cities tend to have a lower number of applicants for their courses than those in the bigger cities, and some programmes will probably no longer be profitable (*Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd* 2015)). The national 'Growth and Development Strategy' (*Vækst og Udvikling i hele Danmark*) proposes that tertiary institutions can overcome some of these challenges by offering online programmes. Some universities already offer online and blended learning programmes. Others have, as a result of lower budgets, laid off staff and closed study programmes. This has affected specialised studies, in particular languages.

4. Tackling inequalities and promoting inclusion

The early school leaving rate has been improving since 2008 when it was 12.5 %, and remains well below the EU average (7.8 % in 2015 compared with an EU average of 11 %). While foreign-born students perform well in Denmark as regards early school leaving (8.7 % compared to an EU average of 19 % for foreign born students and 7.7 % for those born in Denmark), the results of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2012) showed a significant gap between native-born and foreign-born students on average maths performance (OECD 2013).⁶ Furthermore, there is a significant gender gap, as boys are almost twice as likely as girls to leave school early (9.7 % compared to 5.7 %; see Figure 2).

Participation in early childhood education and care is almost universal (98.1 % in 2014) at the age of four. The participation rate of foreign and native-born children is almost identical. There are, however, differences in enrolment for three year-olds and below — with first- and second-generation immigrants participating to a lesser degree. Nonetheless participation rates are very high (Eurydice 2014).⁷ Recent research identified refugees with young children as a target group for awareness-raising of the benefits of participating in early childhood education (KORA 2016). The municipalities have estimated that the number of refugee children who need a place in early childhood education and care has increased from 109 in 2006 to an estimated 2 318 in 2015 (see also Box 2).⁸

⁴ For the 2016 budget, the municipalities' budgets were cut by 1 %, corresponding to DKK 2.4 billion, to give the Government the opportunity to prioritise investment in core welfare centrally. With effect from 2018, the Government and the Association of Municipalities have agreed that a multi-annual efficiency improvement programme will be implemented with a DKK 1 billion annual financial framework (*Kommunernes Landsforening* 2016).

⁵ In August 2015 there were 47 765 full-time teachers employed in the compulsory public education sector (*folkeskolen*) (*Danmarks Lærerforening* 2016).

⁶ The overall proportion of low achievers in science was around the EU average (16.7 % compared to 16.6 %), but this figure was lower in maths (16.8 % compared to 22.1 %) and reading (14.6 % compared to 17.8 %). The difference between the proportion of low achievers among native-born (13.2 %) and first- and second-generation immigrants was 35.2 and 25.6 percentage points respectively (*Folkeskolen* 2014).

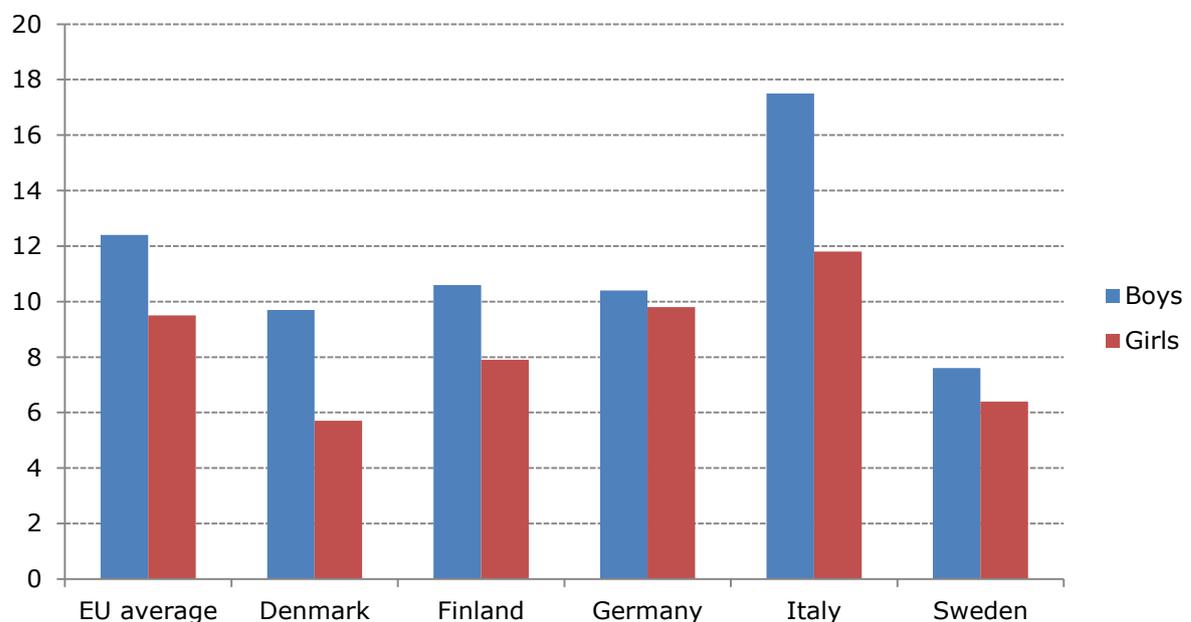
⁷ In Denmark, the participation rate in early childhood education and care for children from immigrant families is 19 percentage points lower than that for non-immigrant children; the difference in PISA reading results between those who participated in early childhood education and care for more than three years and those who did, or participated for more than one year, is 36 points; in mathematics it is 43.5 points.

⁸ This compares to 8 692 children aged 0-3 years enrolled in early childhood education and care in 2014, and 53 942 children aged 3-6 in early childhood education and care (*Danmarks Statistik* 2014).

In November 2015 the Government established a forum, 'Kvalitetsforum for dagtilbud', for quality development in early childhood and pre-school education involving stakeholders from the sub-sector. The aim is to provide a practice-based forum for quality improvements in pre-school education, such as improving the transition from pre-school to the school sector and developing a new curriculum.

In November 2015, an expert group was formed to review the effects of the inclusion reform adopted in 2012. The group handed over their recommendations to the Minister of Children, Education and Gender Equality in May 2016. The proportion of all students enrolled in mainstream education (as opposed to special schools for students with special needs) has increased from 94.2 % in the 2010/11 school year to 95.2 % in 2014/2015 (Ministeriet for Børn, Undervisning og Ligestilling 2015). The Danish public school sector (*folkeskolen*) is thus close to reaching the formulated policy target of 96 % of pupils in compulsory education participating in ordinary schooling. However, the group recommended abandoning this target and focusing instead on the academic progress and well-being of the individual student. Furthermore, they recommended that schools work towards an inclusive learning environment for all students.

Figure 2. Early school leaving by gender in 2015



Source: Eurostat. Online data code: *edat_lfse14*.

A new agreement in June 2016 between the Association of Municipalities and the Government in June 2016 followed in general these recommendations. Furthermore, the agreement leaves the municipalities free to organise tailored education programmes lasting up to two years for children and young people with special needs, e.g. heavily traumatised children or children who need extra language support. The purpose of tailored programmes is to ensure that pupils are quickly and efficiently provided with the personal, social and educational competences to participate in ordinary schooling under the Act of Public Compulsory Education (*Folkeskoleloven*). The learning outcomes of the specially organised programmes should correspond to the learning outcomes in compulsory education. The law will come into effect in August 2016.

In December 2015 the Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality initiated several initiatives to prevent radicalisation and extremism (Eurydice 2015):

- A theme week on community, democracy and citizenship in the Danish educational system where pupils obtain practical experience with democracy in practice;

- The provision of materials on preventing radicalisation and extremism; dissemination of existing material from the Agency for International Recruitment and Integration, presented in a way that is useful for teachers and other school stakeholders;
- Updates of the existing guidance on safety and emergency response;
- Further education for selected learning consultants who are tasked with providing guidance to teachers and other people in the education system on how to prevent young people and adults being exposed to radicalisation and extremism.

Box 2: Integration of refugees and asylum seekers through education

In 2015, Denmark received 21 000 asylum seekers, the highest number in over 20 years. Recently-arrived children who do not yet have refugee status participate in education offered by Red Cross refugee centres. Municipalities assess whether such children are ready to be enrolled in the Danish compulsory education system 6-11 months after they have arrived in Denmark at the latest. If so, the child will typically start in a regular class, often with some additional support for some of the classes and depending upon their Danish language skills. The Association of Municipalities estimates that the number of reception classes has increased from 24 in 2006 to 288 in 2015.

A refugee integration agreement between the Government and the Association of Municipalities was reached in March 2016. It allows municipalities to increase the number of refugees in reception classes from 12 to 15, especially if the pupils have the same language background. As part of the agreement and to ensure better and early integration, refugees are to have their formal and informal competences assessed when they are in the process of applying for refugee status and with the use of more standardised methods (Folkeskolen 2016).

Recent legislation also provides that foreign young people — including refugees over the compulsory school age and less than 25 years old — may participate in compulsory school education if it is considered to be the most relevant option to ensure their integration and enable them to enrol in education or find employment in the future (*Ministeriet for Børn, Unge og Ligestilling* 2016a). If refugees are assessed to be labour-market ready, they must participate in a scheme of combined work placement and labour market training, including teaching in Danish as a foreign language. This is to ensure that the refugees can find employment as quickly as possible. (Ministeriet for Udlændinge, Integration og Boligområdet 2016).

5. Modernising school education

In April 2016 the Government proposed a reform of general upper secondary education with the aim of raising academic standards and providing a solid preparation for higher education. One specific objective was to boost the learning of maths and natural sciences in order to reverse the trend of decreasing numbers of students choosing natural science subjects, and the increasing number of general upper secondary graduates needing to take supplementary courses in maths and natural sciences to meet entry requirements for tertiary education studies (Leffland 2014, Produktivitetskommission 2013).

The reform maintains an emphasis on general competences traditionally associated with general upper secondary education while, in parallel, making new competences such as digital literacy more prominent. The students that choose one of the general upper secondary pathways should do so with the aim of continuing their studies in the higher education system — either the vocationally-oriented short-cycle and medium-cycle programmes or a university degree. The reform will also reduce the number of specialisations within the three main general upper secondary programmes to 49 in all. The higher preparatory examination (HF programme) will specifically target students that prefer vocationally-oriented academic studies. A political agreement was reached on 3 June 2016 between the government and a broad group of political parties (Ministeriet for Børn, Unge og Ligestilling 2016b). The bill on the reform is expected to be adopted by Parliament in the autumn of 2016 and implemented as from 2017. The reform allocates DKK 400 million, in the period 2017-2024, for the continuing education of teachers and high school principals.

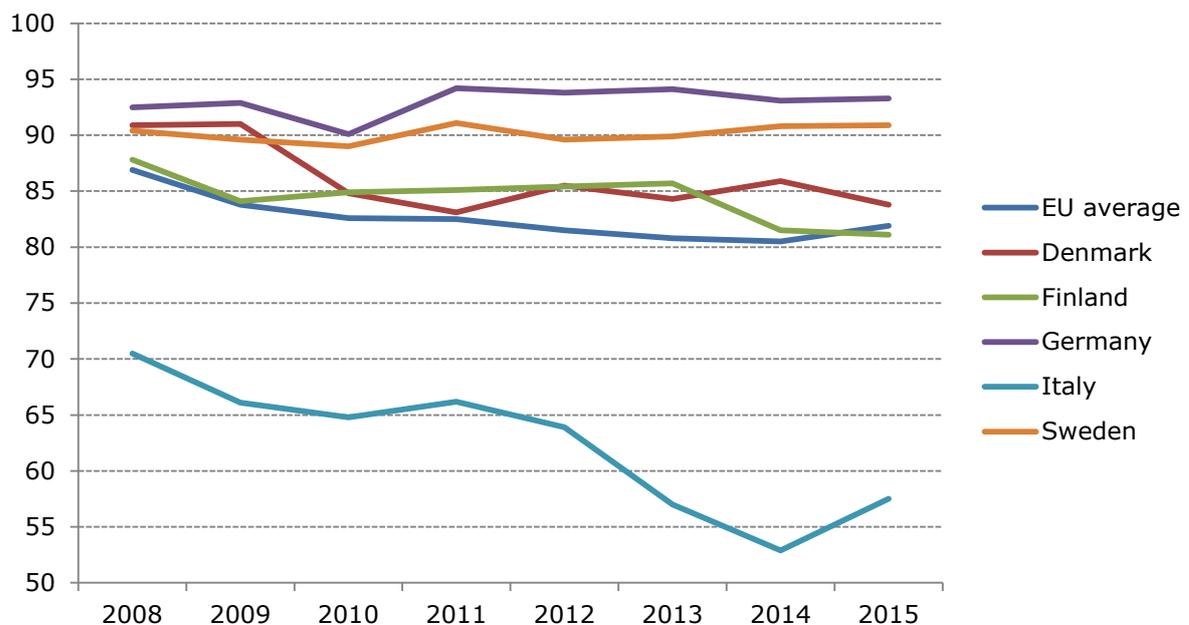
The educational readiness assessment, which is compulsory for all students in lower secondary education, defines a minimum grade students in the eighth and the ninth form must attain to be assessed as 'education ready'. In the school-leaving exam, students should not obtain grades that are lower than these minimum grades. The access criteria will be implemented from the summer of 2019.

The Government's 'Growth and Development Strategy' (*Vækst og Udvikling i hele Danmark*) of November 2015 also includes pilot measures in the school sector. These include improving opportunities for teaching students through distance education and establishing campus environments with local centres of provision to improve access for upper secondary education students.

6. Modernising higher education

The tertiary educational attainment rate for the 30-34 age group is one of the highest in the EU – 47.6 % in 2015 – and well above the EU-28 average of 38.7 %. However a gender gap exists, as 55.9 % of women have a tertiary degree compared to 39.6 % of men. The employment rate of recent tertiary graduates⁹ is high: 83.8 % compared to an EU average 81.9 % in 2015.

Figure 3. Employment rate of recent tertiary graduates (ISCED 5-8)



Source: European Commission elaboration on Eurostat data. Online data code: *edat_ifse_24*.

The Eurostudent survey suggests that the study intensity of Danish full-time students is one of the lowest in the EU. Only 72.8 % of full-time students devote more than 21 hours per week to their studies (Eurostudent 2015), which may partly be explained by the fact that many Danish students have jobs during their studies.

The final report of a higher education Expert Committee in 2015 (Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet 2015) proposes improving the quality and labour market relevance of higher education. The proposals call for making tertiary pathways more flexible, reforming the admission system, deregulating programme content and organisation, and improving the quality and relevance of programmes.

In November 2015, an amendment to the 2013 Study Progress Reform came into force giving the higher education institutions more autonomy in finding solutions to meeting targets for the

⁹ People aged 20-34 who left tertiary education one to three years before the reference year.

faster completion of tertiary studies. The amendment also improves the offering of supplementary courses for bachelor and professional bachelor students seeking admission to master's programmes. Short-cycle and medium-cycle professionally-oriented study programmes are a central feature of higher education provision due to the large number of small and medium-sized enterprises in the private sector. The short- and medium-cycle, practice-based tertiary programmes may, due to their practical focus, be more immediately suited to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in traditional sectors of the economy (Shapiro et. al. 2014).

The funding system for higher education is also being reformed to stimulate the quality of programmes and their relevance to the labour market. Institutions and other stakeholders were invited to provide recommendations for the design of the future financing system of higher education up until the end of January 2016, after which meetings with the institutions and other stakeholders took place (Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet 2016).

The 'Growth and Development Strategy' (Erhvervs- og Vækstministeriet 2015) entails a proposal to pilot vocationally-oriented tertiary education with the aim of better supporting local offers of tertiary education, including continuing further education through digital and online learning. The National Centre for Evaluation has recently mapped the use of project-oriented cooperation to improve employment opportunities for university students. 29 % of students, most of whom are in master's programmes, have participated in at least one such project-oriented cooperation venture with companies during their studies¹⁰ (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut 2016a). The evaluation shows that students regard the cooperation initiatives as a way of applying their competences, thereby improving their employability competences, their networks and employment (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut 2016b).

Transferring the results of university research to innovation by businesses remains a challenge. There are significant barriers to the utilisation of university research due to inadequate cooperation between universities and the business sector. To address this challenge, a report published by the Government in 2014 made recommendations on how to boost university-business collaboration and the utilisation of university research. Furthermore, a strategic objective of the new Government's 'Growth and Development Strategy' is to strengthen the interaction between higher education institutions and businesses (Danish Government 2016).

In August 2016, the Government unveiled its economic strategy for 2025 which if adopted, will mean substantial changes in the grant and loan system for students in Denmark.

7. Modernising vocational education and training and promoting adult learning

The employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates was 79.5 % in 2015 compared with an EU average of 70.8 %, a significant decrease on the 2008 figure of 90.2 %.¹¹ At the same time, the number of 15-29 year-olds in Denmark who are neither in employment nor in education or training is only 10.7 %. Participation in adult learning in Denmark is one of the highest in the EU and was 31.3 % in 2015, well above the EU average of 10.7 %.

Denmark has almost all VET students in work-based programmes — 99.7 % in 2014. However, more apprenticeship places in companies are still needed. In January 2015, a joint report from the Government and social partners estimated that the supply of apprenticeships could still be increased by 59 % compared with the 2012 level. In October 2015 some 5 % of VET students were actively seeking an apprenticeship place, while about 8 % were only in school-based internships.

¹⁰ The analysis of project-oriented cooperation shows that the majority of the initiatives involve a placement in a company. 67 % of bachelor and master's programmes offer opportunities for project-based cooperation. There are large variations in how the placement programmes and the nature of cooperation are organised, as well as in the degree of formalisation of these arrangements.

¹¹ People aged 20-34 who left upper secondary education one to three years before the reference year.

The aim of the 2015 reform, 'Better and more attractive vocational education and training programmes' was to increase the proportion of young people starting a VET programme from the current level of 19 % to 25 % in 2020 and 30 % in 2025. A second target is to increase the completion rate from 52 % in 2012 to at least 60 % in 2020 and 67 % in 2025. The reform took effect in the school year 2015/2016. The most recent data from the Ministry of Children, Education and Gender Equality show an improvement in the drop-out rate of 15-17 year-old students during the basic programme, from 15 % in 2014 to 11 % in April 2016 (these data, however, do not show whether or not the drop-outs continue in another education pathway, Ministeriet for Børn, Undervisning og Ligestilling 2016a). The additional funding in 2016 targets activities that improve the quality of the education and should aid the implementation of the reform.¹²

Over the last few years, 50 placement centres have been established, which are responsible for cooperating with local businesses on creating apprenticeships and offering school-based internships. The Government's November 2015 'Growth and Development Strategy' includes initiatives to increase the chances of students in vocational education finding practical training providers.

Encouraging more young people to choose a VET pathway is also one of the main elements of the 2015 VET reform. This includes extending the new VET pathway called EUX to more VET programmes, which offers a dual qualification — as a skilled worker and access to general tertiary education.

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9. Annex. Key indicator sources

Indicator	Eurostat online data code
Early leavers from education and training	edat_lfse_02 + edat_lfse_14
Tertiary educational attainment	edat_lfse_03 + edat_lfs_9912
Early childhood education and care	educ_ipart (2011), educ_uoe_enra10 (2014)
Employment rate of recent graduates	edat_lfse_24
Adult participation in lifelong learning	trng_lfse_01
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	educ_uoe_mobg03

Comments and questions on this report are welcome and can be sent by email to:
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