



Education and Training Monitor 2016

Spain

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

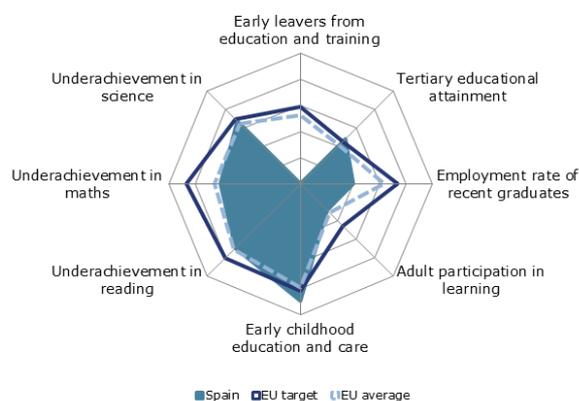
		Spain		EU average		
		2012	2015	2012	2015	
ET 2020 benchmarks						
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Total	24.7%	20.0%	12.7%	11.0%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Total	41.5%	40.9%	36.0%	38.7%	
Early childhood education and care (ECEC) (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory education)		97.7% ¹¹	97.1% ¹⁴	93.2% ¹¹	94.3% ¹⁴	
Proportion of 15 year-olds with underachievement in:	Reading	18.3%	:	17.8%	:	
	Maths	23.6%	:	22.1%	:	
	Science	15.7%	:	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)	63.6%	65.2%	75.9%	76.9%	
Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	11.2%	9.9%	9.2%	10.7%	
Other contextual indicators						
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	4.2%	4.1% ^{14,p}	5.0%	4.9% ^{14,p}	
	Expenditure on public and private institutions per student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€5.879	€5.549 ¹³	:	: ¹³
		ISCED 3-4	€6.886	€6.528 ¹³	:	: ¹³
ISCED 5-8		€9.303	€9.426 ¹³	:	: ¹³	
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	21.4%	17.5%	11.6%	10.1%	
	Foreign-born	40.2%	33.3%	24.9%	19.0%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	46.7%	45.2%	36.7%	39.4%	
	Foreign-born	23.4%	25.1%	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	49.6%	54.9%	69.7%	70.8%	
	ISCED 5-8	68.4%	68.7%	81.5%	81.9%	
Learning mobility	Inbound graduates mobility (bachelor)	0.6% ¹³	0.6% ¹⁴	5.5% ¹³	5.9% ¹⁴	
	Inbound graduates mobility (master)	4.7% ¹³	5.2% 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

- The 2016 political impasse has limited progress on education reforms: the future of the 2013 Organic Law for Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) is questioned and the reform of the teaching profession remains on hold.
- Spain has increased the education budget since 2015. However, the previous accumulated financial constraints have reduced equity in education, and the effectiveness of education spending can be improved.
- Enrolment and transition rates in the 'basic vocational education and training' programme are below expectations after the first two years of implementation.
- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) is making significant efforts to prevent violence in schools and promote civic education and fundamental values.
- A new tracking system for graduates should help to improve the relevance of university programmes and graduates' employability rates.
- The Government takes initiatives to support cooperation between universities, businesses and research centres but university governance and financing systems do not create a favourable environment.

3. Investing in education to address demographic and skill challenges

General government expenditure on education was among the lowest in the EU in 2014, as a proportion both of GDP (4.1 %) and of total general government expenditure (9.1 %).¹ Under significant fiscal pressure, Spain is struggling to finance an effective and equitable skills system.²

After 5 years of consecutive cuts in public spending, the Government reversed the downward trend in 2015 with a nominal increase in education expenditure of 4.5 %. In 2016, the Government has increased the education budget by a further 10.8 % above the 2015 level.³

The effectiveness of Spain's education spending remains an issue. For tertiary education, per-student spending in Spain is lower today than the OECD average, but the public share of such expenditure remains above the OECD average. Part of the problem relies in the low return on such public investment in terms of skills and employability, since a significant number of university programmes show low employability rates (MECD 2014b). Moreover, the considerable differences in tuition fees and levels of public funding between the regions increase skills inequality at national level. The national budget for study grants has increased by only 0.2 % since the past year but the number of eligible university students is significantly higher. The average amount spent per student is thus lower, while the actual needs at family level have increased.

In 2014, Spain's net migration rate was negative by more than 94 000 people.⁴ The crisis has more directly affected people with lower levels of qualifications who have been inclined to emigrate since 2010. The number of Spanish citizens with a tertiary education degree leaving the country has also increased over the past few years and has not been compensated by inflows of equally-qualified nationals returning to the country. This hints at the possible start of a brain drain which could exacerbate the effects of the crisis on the country's skills mismatches (Banco de España 2015).

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

² The OECD identified 12 skills challenges for Spain across education, employment, research, social, growth and fiscal policies, all interlinked (OECD 2015a).

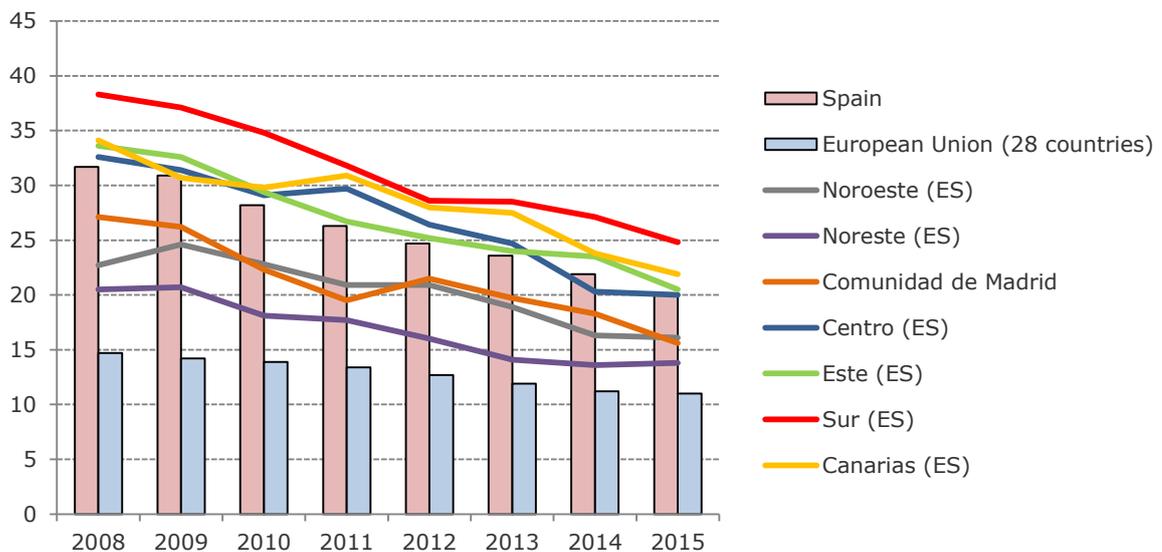
³ Source: Minister of Education, Culture and Sport.

⁴ Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

4. Tackling inequalities and promoting inclusion

Spain's early school leaving⁵ (ESL) rate has continued to fall, from 21.9 % in 2014 to 20 %. However, it is still the highest in the EU, and above the national Europe 2020 target of 15 %. There are big disparities in ESL rates between Spain's regions, including major differences in ESL trends. A few autonomous communities (AACC) have ESL levels of over 20 %, while some others score better than the 10 % European average. Moreover, a number of AACC have achieved considerable reductions over the past 5 years, whereas ESL has remained high in a few others. Disparities are also underpinned by factors such as gender, whether students have a native or migrant background, and the family's socioeconomic situation. Tackling ESL remains crucial for the country to address its educational gap, increase its competitiveness and unlock its growth potential (European Commission 2016a).

Figure 2. Early school leaving rates by regions in Spain⁶



Source: Eurostat

For early childhood education and care, participation by children aged 3 to 6 is almost universal and average participation by 3-year-olds is 95.8 %, well above the EU average of 85.3 %. However, participation by children aged 0-2 shows wide disparities between and the proportion of public centres remains low. 7 AACC are over the 30 % EU average, 8 remain under 20 % and two AACC do not reach 10 % (Save the Children 2015).

The limited number of evidence-based analysis of the various root causes of ESL hinders national policies from capturing and addressing the complexity of the problem. Some regional administrations have tackled their specific causes effectively through local projects and policies. Such good practices could be more widely disseminated and exchanged to speed up improvements more consistently across the country. Policies targeting groups at high risk (especially Roma) have also proven effective (Eurydice 2015a). The Government is implementing the National Plan to reduce Early School Leaving 2014 -2020 (MECD 2014a). This plan is less of a strategy and more of a framework for education stakeholders and institutions to propose specific programmes.

The flagship ESL initiative is the Organic Law for Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) adopted in 2013. The law introduced the new 'basic vocational education and training' (VET) (*Formación Profesional Básica, FPB*) — a 2-year alternative path for students in lower secondary education to reach medium VET. They could eventually obtain the compulsory secondary education national diploma (*educación secundaria obligatoria, ESO*) if they passed an

⁵ 18- to 24-year-olds who have not completed upper secondary education and are no longer in education and training.

⁶ Based on NUTS classification.

external exam. Facing strong criticism, in November 2015 the Government issued a Royal Decree that grants students completing the basic VET in 2016 and 2017 the ESO diploma without passing the external exam. The Government has approved 33 new FPB degrees in 2016, which should enrich the offer and increase its attractiveness. However, enrolment rates have so far been low and several AACC have disclosed poor transition and promotion rates which call into question the effectiveness of the programme (see also Box 2).

Low performance and grade repetition are also critical factors in ESL. At 32.9 %, Spain is among the countries with the highest rate of grade repetition in the OECD, and far above the OECD average of 12.4 % (OECD 2013). Moreover, the recurrent use of grade repetition is proven to aggravate education inequalities, since the repetition rate among disadvantaged students rises to 52 % (OECD 2014c). The LOMCE aims to improve student performance but does not include specific measures to address grade repetition.

The budget constraints of the past few years have hurt other equity indicators, such as grants for textbooks or school meals and the quality of public education infrastructure. In 2016 the education budget has increased but the funds dedicated to compensatory measures targeting vulnerable groups have fallen by 2.6 %.⁷ The MECED has allocated EUR 13.5 million to support the territorial cooperation plan on special needs and EUR 1.5 million to support the students' health plan. The education gap is particularly sharp between the native and migrant populations. The proportion of foreign students in special-needs education (11.9 %) is higher than the national average, and the percentage of foreign students in higher education is much lower than for native students. Moreover, with more than 80 % of foreign students attending public schools the proportion of foreign pupils is not equally distributed between public and private centres.⁸

Harassment and bullying constitute a serious issue in the school environment, where internet and social media are gaining relevance. In October 2015 the MECED and the AACC signed a territorial cooperation plan of EUR 1.5 million to prevent bullying and violence and promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts in schools. The MECED also signed a framework collaboration agreement with the Spanish Data Protection Agency to promote training and raise awareness among children and young people about privacy and data protection on the internet, particularly on social media. Related initiatives such as 'You decide on the internet' (*Tú decides en internet*) provide children, parents and teachers with advice and support (Eurydice 2016). Interim Minister of Education Iñigo Méndez de Vigo has voiced the Government's strong commitment to promoting the values of citizenship and civic competences in education. On the basis of the Paris Declaration of March 2015 to prevent radicalisation, he proposed to his European counterparts an initiative to include the teaching of European history and values in national curricula. The MECED has also proposed a set of specific measures to allow the quick integration of Syrian refugees into the education system. The measures concern individual support in schools, targeted information and guidance, the recognition of qualifications, and a territorial cooperation plan to hire relevant language assistants.

Box 2: Early school leaving and the new basic vocational education and training path

Spain has introduced a 2-year initial vocational education and training (VET) path (*Formación profesional básica, FPB*) for students aged 15 to 17 who have completed third grade of secondary education but have difficulties in the regular academic path. FPB is a 2-year compulsory programme leading to a VET certificate (level 1 in the national catalogue of professional qualifications). Students can also pass an external exam to obtain the secondary education certificate (ESO).

This programme replaces the previous alternative path (*programas de cualificación profesional inicial, PCPI*) that targeted students aged 16 who could not be promoted to third grade. PCPIs were a 1-year compulsory and a 1-year voluntary programme. Only the completion of the two full years granted the ESO certificate, though no access to medium VET.

⁷ Source: Fundación Secretariado Gitano <https://www.gitanos.org/actualidad/archivo/112711.html.es>

⁸ Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Base Statistics of Education, 2016.

Strengths and expected benefits:

- The FPB is embedded in the VET system and therefore grants direct access to medium VET. The element of learning at the workplace also makes it particularly attractive.
- The combination of vocational and academic modules associated respectively with the national catalogue of professional qualifications and the national learning objectives makes it easier for them to be recognised across the national territory and allows student mobility.
- The academic modules aligned with the national learning objectives are expected to improve the level of basic skills compared to the previous programme.
- It is proposed that the FPB should better address students' difficulties the number of different teachers per class group is reduced to encourage personal tutoring and follow-up; moreover, the system encourages teaching through a 'project' approach.
- Taking the decision at an earlier age allows children to join the programme before they have suffered recurrent failures and grade repetitions. This should be reflected positively in the quality and motivation of the groups and in the social perception of VET in general.

Implementation challenges:

- The FPB was approved without a large consensus, in the midst of a strong political and social debate about the overall education reform. Some sectors have expressed their concern for advancing the decision to gear students towards a VET path by 1 year and also for the prevalence of the education centre's opinion over that of parents (FAPA 2015). Some other voices claim that, even if the programme could give better results than the previous one (PCPI transition rates were extremely low), its implementation should be significantly improved.
- In practice, the implementation of the FPB was launched at too short notice for the AACC to make the arrangements — in terms of teachers, infrastructure or workplace learning agreements — needed to offer a wide enough range of good quality programmes.
- The legal framework and the programme's implementation do not provide enough improvements to address the specific needs of these students: the student/class ratio is set at 30 students (as many as in the ESO); only one hour per week is devoted to tutorial assistance; teachers' continuity with the groups is not guaranteed; and there is no specific mechanism to provide special support to students preparing the external exam to get the ESO certificate.
- The offer of programmes needs to be better adjusted to the demand (many places remained empty) and there was no time to organise a proper workplace learning programme. Such a programme has proven particularly complex considering the young age of the students and the limited capacity of Spanish companies.

The first 2 years of implementation have shown results that do not differ much from the previous PCPIs. Dialogue with the AACC has become more fluid, and the programme's implementation will require some further adjustment to improve its attractiveness and quality.

5. Modernising school education

The level of job satisfaction among Spanish teachers has declined over the past 10 years (MECD 2014b). Career and salary progression do not reflect teachers' performance. Teachers feel they are continuously faced with new challenges. Examples include the recurrent education reforms, the increase in the student/teacher ratio, the new skills and competence paradigm, and the promotion of information and communication technology (ICT) and bilingualism in the school system.

Despite the many changes ahead, the regulation of teachers' professional status and working conditions was not addressed by the recent education reform. To trigger a national debate on a major reform of the profession, the MECD entrusted the drafting of a White Book on the teaching profession (MECD 2015b) to a well-known Spanish philosopher, J.A. Marina. The White Book was published in December 2015 but the national political blockage is delaying a concrete follow-up. However, the increase in the teachers' replacement rate from 10 % in 2013 to 50 % in 2014 and to 100 % in 2015 is a positive step that has reduced the proportion of interim teachers and the turnover of teachers at school level.

The LOMCE creates a new external evaluation system that is based on learning standards set at national level. The outcomes are expected to inform the transformation of learning processes and the management of education centres, and to spur local and regional administrations to improve their quality and effectiveness in teaching key competences. However, the strong political opposition to the LOMCE has led several AACC to implement the evaluation under different specific conditions, both in third grade and at the end of primary school, as well as in upper secondary education.

The LOMCE envisages specific measures to encourage the use of ICT in education and eventually improve students' ICT competences. ICT will thereby gain a higher relevance in the curricula. Spain is also implementing a national plan to improve connectivity and promote digital culture in schools (European Commission 2015).

Several AACC are introducing or reinforcing bilingual teaching in primary and secondary schools. The introduction of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) system aims to improve the proficiency of students in their first foreign language, namely English, by teaching subjects such as sciences or history in this language. The reaction among teachers and parents has been lukewarm. Detractors point to the lack of resources for providing national teachers with a good command of the foreign language as well as the risk of segregation schemes in secondary levels (Madrigal 2016). Others complain about a lack of pedagogical preparation of support staff and the negative impact on students' skills (FEDEA 2013). The MECD has assigned EUR 11.7 million to a territorial cooperation programme to hire assistants and support teachers' language courses. The LOMCE also introduces the second foreign language as a specific subject as early as primary and lower secondary education.

6. Modernising higher education

Spain's tertiary educational attainment rate for 30-34-year-olds has decreased by 1.4 percentage points (pps.) to 40.9 %, still above the EU average of 38.7 % but moving away from the national Europe 2020 target of 44 %. The attainment rate shows a significant gender gap, with women surpassing men by over 10 pps., at 47.1 % compared with 34.8 %. There is an even wider gap between Spanish-born cohorts, with a tertiary education attainment rate of 45.2 %, and foreign-born cohorts, with a rate of only 25.1 %.

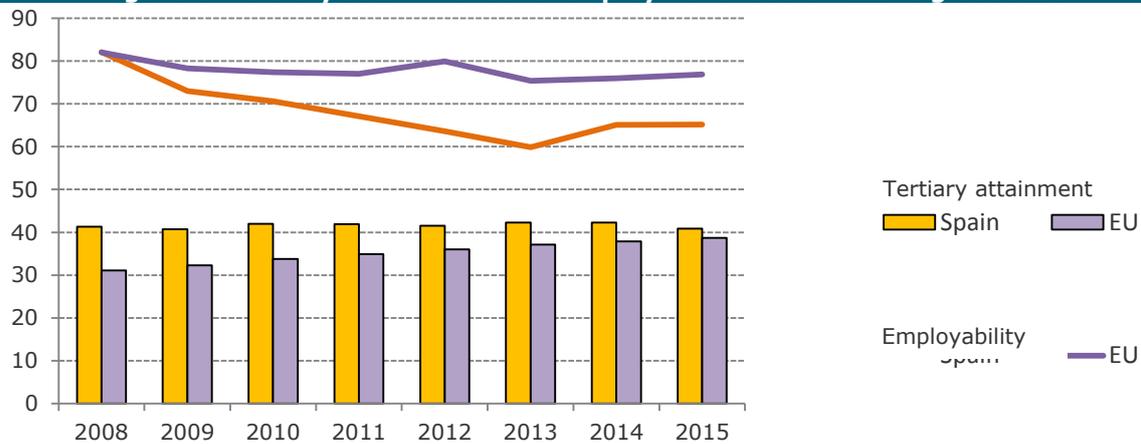
The employment rate of recent tertiary graduates⁹ is one of the lowest in Europe at 68.7 %, far below the EU average of 81.9 %. The MECD has put in place a system for tracking university graduates to deliver employability data. The first report showed particularly poor employability figures for the humanities and social sciences, whose enrolment rates have changed little over the past 10 years (MECD 2014c). The publication of the report is expected to raise awareness among university applicants and attract their interest to higher education fields with greater labour market relevance. The MECD is working on an updated report to show the employability rates of the current degree programmes. The Government has also approved a number of fiscal incentives to encourage companies to hire research staff and to propose apprenticeships to university and VET students. It is now exploring the possibility of expanding the dual model to higher education (Government of Spain 2016), and some universities have already signed agreements with companies to develop dual training, namely in engineering programmes.

However, fostering cooperation between universities and the business sector remains a challenge (European Commission 2016a). Cooperation between university, business and the public sector is channelled through different actors: university foundations, spin-offs, offices for transfer of research results, sponsorship chairs, scientific and technological parks, and alliances among universities. Stakeholders identify funding, relational barriers and excessive bureaucracy as the main obstacles to cooperation between universities, research institutions and businesses (European Commission 2014). The Government passed a decree in September 2015 to increase business representation in university governing boards. In November 2015, it allocated EUR 7 million to support the development of 'international campuses of excellence' that aim at promoting the international recognition of Spanish universities and their cooperation with business (MECD 2015c). The university governance and financing systems do not provide

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

enough incentives for cooperation. Teachers' recruitment and career promotion system limits staff mobility both among institutions and between universities and businesses. Moreover, the university financing system is mainly based on quantitative criteria and does not reward innovation.

Figure 3. Tertiary attainment and employment rate of recent graduates



Source: Eurostat.

The 2015-2020 strategy for the internationalisation of Spanish universities (MECD 2014d) aims to build a strong, internationally attractive university system and to promote mobility among the best students, teachers and researchers. As a cornerstone of the reform, in February 2015 the Government approved a Royal Decree-Law that allows universities to adjust the credits given for degree courses and at master's level in order to move to the 3+2 years scheme (from the current 4+1) in line with the prevailing standard in Europe. Students and universities have strongly opposed this reform (European Commission 2015). Universities are demanding coordinated implementation across the territories to avoid an institutional competition based on the length of the proposed programmes. The Chancellors' Conference of Spanish Universities has (CRUE) delayed applying it until 2017.

7. Modernising vocational education and training and promoting adult learning

The employment rate for recent upper secondary graduates¹⁰ in Spain has fallen by 50 % since 2009. It reached its lowest rate — 40.9 % — in 2013 but grew again to 54.9 % in 2015. Adults' rate of participation in lifelong learning stood at 9.8 % in 2014 and 9.9 % in 2015, slightly below the EU average of 10.7 %.

Spain is reforming the VET system to better adapt young people's skills to labour market needs and to increase the attractiveness, transparency and acceptance of VET programmes. It is doing so by reforming the catalogue of diplomas offered both for medium-level and high-level VET and increasing the flexibility of the curricula of medium-level VET programmes. In line with ECVET principles, mobility has also earned some attention and some steps have been taken to implement regional mobility systems (e.g. in Catalonia). The MECD has allocated EUR 10 million to a territorial cooperation programme to improve the quality of VET. The programme matches the demand of productive sectors, fosters dual VET and will improve the employability of students.

In September 2015, Spain finalised the reform of the training for employment subsystem (the TES — *subsistema de formación para el empleo*) started in March 2015. The new governance model leaves the system basically in the hands of the public employment service, thus substantially reducing the influence of trade unions and employers' associations. Nevertheless,

¹⁰ People aged 20-34 who left upper secondary education between one and three years before the reference year.

their participation in the consultative General Council of the Employment National System (*Consejo General del Sistema Nacional de Empleo*) is guaranteed.

Other changes introduced by the reform in 2015 aim to boost lifelong learning programmes targeted at employed workers. These include the right to a 20-hour period of training leave for all workers with at least 1 year of seniority, and the option of introducing an individual training account for workers.

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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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