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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Education and Training Monitor 2022**

*Accompanying the document*

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the  
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

**on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area**

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# **Education and Training Monitor 2022**

SPAIN



The Education and Training Monitor's country reports present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy development at all education levels in EU Member States. They provide the reader with more in-depth insight of the performance of countries with regard to the EU level targets agreed within the EEA. They are based on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence available.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 focuses on how the Member State has addressed or is addressing one of its education challenges. Section 3 covers early childhood education and care. Section 4 deals with school education policies. Section 5 covers vocational education and training and adult learning. Finally, Section 6 discusses measures in higher education.

The Education and Training Monitor's country reports were prepared by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), with contributions from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL).

The document was completed on 30 September 2022

More background data at:

<https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2022/en/>

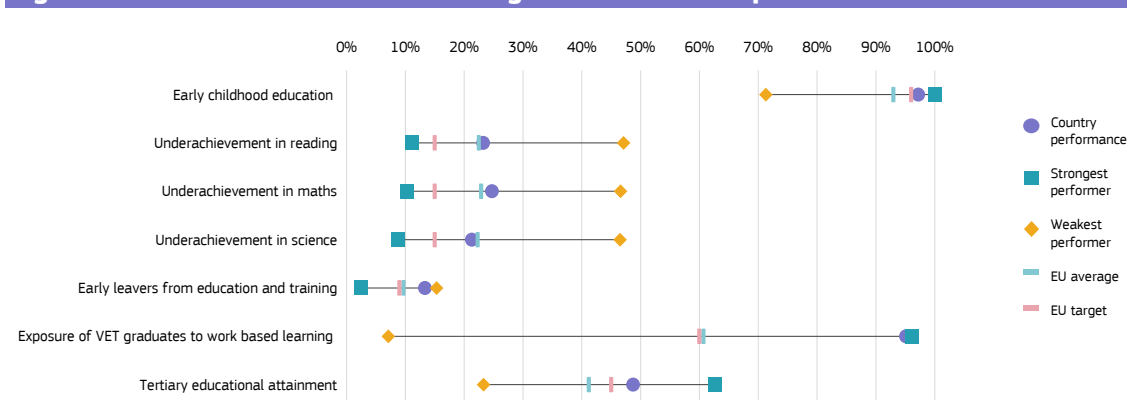


# 1. Key indicators

**Figure 1: Key indicators overview**

			Spain		EU	
			2011	2021	2011	2021
<b>EU-level targets</b>			<b>2030 target</b>			
Participation in early childhood education (from age 3 to starting age of compulsory primary education)	≥ 96 %		96.6% <sup>13</sup>	97.2% <sup>20</sup>	91.8% <sup>13</sup>	93.0% <sup>20</sup>
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills	< 15%		:	:	:	:
Low achieving 15-year-olds in:	Reading	< 15%	19.6% <sup>09</sup>	23.2% <sup>18</sup>	19.7% <sup>09</sup>	22.5% <sup>18</sup>
	Maths	< 15%	23.7% <sup>09</sup>	24.7% <sup>18</sup>	22.7% <sup>09</sup>	22.9% <sup>18</sup>
	Science	< 15%	18.2% <sup>09</sup>	21.3% <sup>18</sup>	18.2% <sup>09</sup>	22.3% <sup>18</sup>
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	< 9 %		26.3%	13.3% <sup>b</sup>	13.2%	9.7% <sup>b</sup>
Exposure of VET graduates to work-based learning	≥ 60 % (2025)		:	95.1%	:	60.7%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)	≥ 45 %		40.3%	48.7% <sup>b</sup>	33.0%	41.2% <sup>b</sup>
Participation of adults in learning (age 25-64)	≥ 47 % (2025)		:	:	:	:
<b>Other contextual indicators</b>						
Equity indicator (percentage points)			:	16.2 <sup>18</sup>	:	19.30 <sup>18</sup>
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native		23.1%	11.3% <sup>b</sup>	11.9%	8.5% <sup>b</sup>
	EU-born		39.2%	28.5% <sup>b</sup>	25.3%	21.4% <sup>b</sup>
	Non EU-born		41.6%	22.0% <sup>b</sup>	31.4%	21.6% <sup>b</sup>
Upper secondary level attainment (age 20-24, ISCED 3-8)			62.0%	78.8% <sup>b</sup>	79.6%	84.6% <sup>b</sup>
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)	Native		45.3%	54.0% <sup>b</sup>	34.3%	42.1% <sup>b</sup>
	EU-born		28.8%	38.5% <sup>b</sup>	28.8%	40.7% <sup>b</sup>
	Non EU-born		21.6%	30.1% <sup>b</sup>	23.4%	34.7% <sup>b</sup>
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		4.4%	4.6% <sup>20,p</sup>	4.9%	5.0% <sup>20</sup>
	Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure		9.6%	8.8% <sup>20,p</sup>	10.0%	9.4% <sup>20</sup>

Sources: Eurostat (UOE, LFS, COFOG); OECD (PISA). Further information can be found in Annex I and at *Monitor Toolbox*. Notes: The 2018 EU average on PISA reading performance does not include ES; the indicator used (ECE) refers to early-childhood education and care programmes which are considered by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to be 'educational' and therefore constitute the first level of education in education and training systems – ISCED level 0; the equity indicator shows the gap in the share of underachievement in reading, mathematics and science (combined) among 15-year-olds between the lowest and highest quarters of socio-economic status; b = break in time series, u = low reliability, : = not available, 09 = 2009, 13 = 2013, 18 = 2018, 20 = 2020.

**Figure 2: Position in relation to strongest and weakest performers**


Source: DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2021, UOE 2020) and OECD (PISA 2018).

## 2. A focus on education for environmental sustainability

**Education for environmental sustainability is a key component of the Education Act.** Under the reform of the Organic Law of Education (LOMLOE), adopted in December 2021, the topic is addressed both as a transversal component and in the subject of Civic and Ethical Values. The law also envisages the inclusion of sustainable development and global citizenship in the training programme of future teachers.

**Action Plan on Environmental Education for Sustainability 2021-2025 (PAEAS)**<sup>1</sup>. The Plan, adopted in August 2021, is the result of an extensive consultation and participation process conducted since the end of 2019. It aims at: a) generating changes in curricula to include competence on sustainability; b) training of teachers related to sustainability; c) incorporating environmental aspects into school projects; and d) designing and implementing programmes and projects coordinated with education stakeholders, schools, and universities. The PAEAS 2022 Work Programme<sup>2</sup>, approved by the Ministry of Ecological Transition and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, includes the following actions related to education: a) approval of new curricula in primary and secondary education (lower and upper); b) publication of guidelines on how to incorporate education for sustainable education into teaching methodologies; c) incorporating competence related to sustainable development into vocational education and training (VET) curricula; d) identifying new competencies concerning sustainable development in all professional sectors; e) updating and

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ceneam/plan-accion-educacion-ambiental/plandeacciondeeducacionambientalparalassostenibilidad2021-202508-21\\_tcm30-530040.pdf](https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ceneam/plan-accion-educacion-ambiental/plandeacciondeeducacionambientalparalassostenibilidad2021-202508-21_tcm30-530040.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ceneam/plan-accion-educacion-ambiental/programa-trabajo-2022-paeas\\_tcm30-534147.pdf](https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ceneam/plan-accion-educacion-ambiental/programa-trabajo-2022-paeas_tcm30-534147.pdf)

creating new VET degrees on conservation and restoration of the environment; f) launching calls for innovation projects on sustainable education; g) training of teachers on sustainable development; h) running seminars on education for sustainable education (addressed to all citizens); i) promotion of the national network of networks of sustainable non-university educational centres (ESenRED schools towards sustainability online); and j) online publication of collections of good practices in education for sustainable development.



### Box 1: Schools engaged in environmental and sustainable projects

Since 2018-2019, the public school Gaspar Remiro in Épila (Zaragoza, Aragon), in collaboration with a private company *Nómadas*, has been carrying out a waste composting project. All students (around 440) participated. This project is supported by the municipality through the EU LEADER programme and has been identified as a best practice by the Interreg Europe programme CECI (Citizen Involvement in Circular Economy Implementation).

In Castile and Leon, the Segovia City Council and the regional government promote the study of climate change in secondary schools, as part of the second regional strategy for environmental education. Almost 300 students have studied carbon footprints and how to reduce them.

In Andalusia, there are almost 100 schools that belong to the *Naturaliza* network, a project supported by the non-profit organisation *Ecoembes*. Collaborators include the regional governments of Madrid, Extremadura and Castile and Leon, and private organisations (FUAM, CICA, *Bosquescuola*, *Asociacion Española de Educacion Ambiental*). The project includes training for teachers, teaching resources and out-of-school activities.

More information available at:

Aragon:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sU\\_4iXP51Yc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sU_4iXP51Yc);  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc14ghSGDCw>;

Castile and Leon:

<https://medioambiente.jcyl.es/web/es/planificacion-indicadores-cartografia/estrategia-educacion-ambiental-20162020.html>;

Andalusia:

<https://www.naturalizaeducacion.org/>;  
<https://www.ecoembes.com/es/>;  
<https://www.fuam.es/>/<https://www.cicae.com/>;  
<https://bosquescuela.com/>; <https://ae-ea.es/>.

### 3. Early childhood education and care

**Spain aims to ensure quality and affordable, universal access to childcare for children aged 0-3.** Participation of children above 3 years in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is the third highest in the EU (97.2%), surpassing the EU-level target of 96%. The participation rate of children below the age of 3 (55.3% in 2021) is also well above EU average (36.6%) and the Barcelona target (33%). Similarly to other EU countries, there was a drop in the participation rate of the younger age cohort in 2020, probably linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the trend seems to have recovered in 2021 (55.3%). In 2021-2022, there were around 435 000 children below age 3 attending the first cycle of ECEC (*educación infantil*). Of the 36 500 ECEC centres available, 53% are public kindergartens, around 30% private centres and the rest publicly funded private ECEC schools<sup>3</sup> (MEFP, 2021). Although regional differences are narrowing, ECEC participation below age 3 ranges from 53.4% to 21.8% in 2020-2021. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) includes the creation of 60 000 free public ECEC places for children below 3 in 2021-2023, with an allocated budget of EUR 670.1 million distributed among the Spanish regions<sup>4</sup>. To meet expected demand for free places, some regional governments (Madrid, Galicia, Andalusia and Murcia) are negotiating

agreements with Acade<sup>5</sup>, the association of private schools in Spain. Regional inequality in access to ECEC is due not only to the scarcity of free places but also to the lack of homogeneous criteria at national level that guarantee access to the most vulnerable. The LOMLOE states that the government will set some minimum requirements for ECEC (curricula, children per classroom ratio, and teachers' qualification). A proposal to amend the LOMLOE education law, aimed at guaranteeing free universal access to ECEC below age 3, regardless of the type of school, was approved by the Spanish Congress, and will be tabled for parliamentary discussion before the end of 2022. Under the proposal, the State should transfer to autonomous communities enough credits to guarantee the free socio-educational care service, both in public and private schools<sup>6</sup>.

**A sound monitoring system of the quality of early childhood education and care is still to be established.** While ECEC participation is overall high, challenges linked to unequal quality continue. Otero et al (2021) concludes that there is an urgent need to develop indicators to assess the quality of services and results of the two ECEC cycles (ages 0-3 and from 3 to compulsory education), with sound and reliable tools to achieve comparable results. The need for further territorial cooperation among autonomous communities is necessary, to ensure access to ECEC services, and their proper quality.

### 4. School education

**A curriculum reform for primary and secondary education is being rolled out.** In February-April 2022, several Royal Decrees were

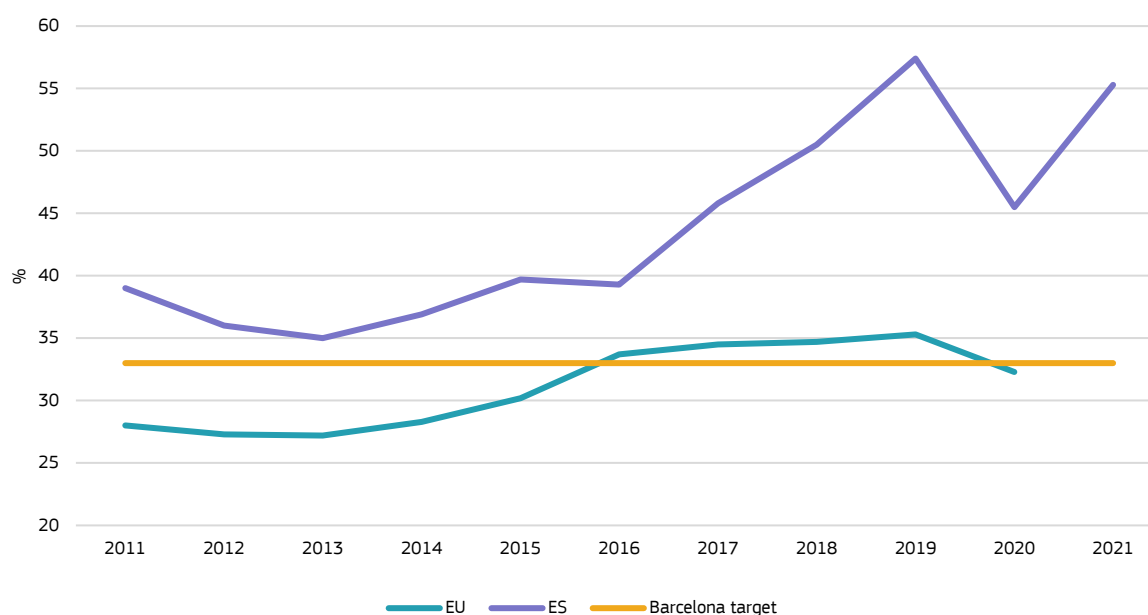
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/dam/jcr:38b733ce-a07a-4b83-a911-dde297965023/notaresumen2021-22.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/dam/jcr:24dac4b0-2908-40df-a97a-c27243e67746/anexos-cmin.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://educacionprivada.org/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.congreso.es/notas-de-prensa?p\\_p\\_id=notasprensa&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=normal&p\\_p\\_mode=view&notasprensa\\_mvcPath=detalle&notasprensa\\_notalId=41169](https://www.congreso.es/notas-de-prensa?p_p_id=notasprensa&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&notasprensa_mvcPath=detalle&notasprensa_notalId=41169)

**Figure 3: Participation in formal childcare or education of pupils below 3, 2011-2021 (%)**



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC), [ilc\_caindformal].

published updating the curriculum of primary<sup>7</sup>, lower secondary<sup>8</sup> and upper secondary education<sup>9</sup>. The new curricula have been designed based on the adaptation of the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning<sup>10</sup> to the Spanish education system and the different education levels. The primary education curriculum is based on eight key competences:

- i. linguistic communication;
- ii. multilingualism;
- iii. mathematics and science, technology and engineering;
- iv. digital;
- v. personal, social and learning to learn;
- vi. citizenship;

- vii. entrepreneurship; and
- viii. competence in cultural awareness and expression.

#### **The curriculum for secondary education pays special attention to academic orientation and**

**educational inclusion.** This is to prevent early school-leaving and to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes for all students. The Royal Decree establishes curricular diversification programmes (where subjects are organised in a flexible and alternative way for those students with learning difficulties). As for the Royal Decree on upper secondary education, it sets up four independent tracks to be chosen by students: sciences and technology; humanities and social sciences; arts; and general. This last track is a new route designed for those students who are looking for a more global and flexible training, and allows a practically individualised organisation of this educational stage.

**The educational community is divided regarding the new curriculum for lower secondary education.** Some trade unions (CCOO, UGT) and parent associations (CEAPA) welcome the competence-based approach of the new

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2022/03/02/pdfs/BOE-A-2022-3296.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2022-4975](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2022-4975)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2022/04/06/pdfs/BOE-A-2022-5521.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/key-competences>

curriculum, and the more flexible methods to assess the academic performance of students. Other trade unions (CSIF) and parent associations (CONCAPA) are critical, claiming that the new regulation would not improve the quality of education as the curriculum would be more competence-based at the expense of content. They also question the more flexible promotion system. ANCABA, the association of full professors in high schools, denounces the new track *Bachillerato General*, may be perceived as an easily accessible upper secondary education (due to content of the subjects that students have to learn), but providing lower competences<sup>11</sup>. The Ministry of Education has put forward a proposal of the curricular content for the 4 different upper secondary tracks<sup>12</sup>.

**The rate of early leavers from education and training continues to decrease.** The ELET rate stood at 13.3% in 2021 (2.7 percentage points lower than in 2020), but still above EU average (9.7%). Nevertheless, large regional differences persist, ranging from 17.7% to 4.8%. In addition, 78.8% of the population aged 20-24 has reached at least upper secondary education level, that is 16.8 percentage points more than in 2011, and increasingly closer to the European average (84.3% in 2020). Research by Morentin-Encinas (2021) reveals that most students who finish lower secondary education continue to VET studies or upper (general) secondary education. However, 30% of students (official estimate around 16%) do not complete general lower secondary education (*enseñanza secundaria obligatoria*, ESO), and two thirds among these abandon the education system in the fourth grade of lower secondary education (the final grade of this educational stage). In parallel, over half of students leave basic VET, the alternative pathway. In conclusion, the education system faces difficulties in retaining students. The authors also point out that the decision to abandon school is

often linked to grade repetition. In the same vein, the research conducted by López-Rupérez et al. (2021) looked at associations between grade repetition and socio-economic and cultural status, and between graduation in compulsory secondary education. The findings reveal a large rate of grade repetition at 15 years of age, significant differences between territories, and a strong and negative causal link between repetition and graduation. Building on this evidence, the authors advocate for effective compensatory policies and well-founded proposals to reduce grade repetition in Spain. The European Commission, supports Spain, through a multi-country project with Portugal and Italy under the Technical Support Instrument, in improving the quality of their inclusive education policies.

**Spain aims to improve working conditions for teachers by reducing the number of temporary contracts.** The Government approved Royal Decree 270/2022<sup>13</sup>, which aims to reduce the high rate of teachers in public schools under temporary contracts (around 23% of all staff). The goal is to reduce the rate of interim teachers to below 8%. The new regulation envisages two extraordinary ways for interim teachers to become permanent staff. The first one is restricted for those who worked as interim teachers from 2017-2020 and it consists of a competitive exam and the appraisal of merits. A second entry procedure is for those teachers who had a temporary job prior to January 2016 and it is based exclusively on the appraisal of merits. Some trade unions (CSIF, UGT, STEs) opposed the new regulation and consider that this diversification of entry processes may hinder the reduction of the number of temporary teachers. Every year, around 28 000 new students enrol for undergraduate programmes to become a primary education teacher, and 20 000 to master's programmes for secondary education teachers.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.magisnet.com/2021/10/el-bachillerato-general-puede-ser-segregador-advierten-los-docentes-de-esta-etapa/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://static.hoy.es/www/multimedia/202109/27/media/PropuestaESOBACH.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2022-6048](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2022-6048)



**Almost EUR 285 million for educational digital competence is disbursed among the Spanish regions.**

In April 2022, the government approved the distribution of RRF funds among Spain's autonomous communities<sup>14</sup>. The distribution key is based on the number of university professors, the number of schools, and the dispersion of the population and insularity. The national RRP has a strong focus on digitalisation (European Commission, 2021). As part of the plan, around 700 000 teachers will participate in training related to digital skills. The funds will also finance the preparation of the digital school-level strategy in more than 22 000 schools. These funds are in addition to the almost EUR 12 million transferred to the autonomous communities in 2021 from EU funding programmes (structural funds, REACT-EU) to improve digital competence, almost EUR 150 million for the provision of portable devices and connectivity for students in need, the EUR 821 million for interactive digital classrooms, and almost EUR 19 million for the technical training of teachers in schools with interactive digital classrooms.

**The integration of Ukrainian students in the Spanish education system follows a comprehensive contingency plan.**

Since the beginning of the war (*data available from beginning of May 2022*), over 28 000 displaced Ukrainian children (around 66% of total refugees) have been enrolled in school in Spain: 22% in early childhood education and care, 46% in primary, and 32% in secondary education. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) created a working group within the sectorial conference (the coordination body between the Ministry and autonomous communities) and developed the comprehensive educational attention contingency plan for these students. This plan envisages the creation of school materials in both Spanish and Ukrainian and the admission of teachers from Ukraine to provide educational support in schools. MEFP is

also working on streamlining the procedures for homologation of titles and professional qualifications. In addition, the Ministry launched a call for 200 places for Ukrainian language assistants in Spanish educational schools who started to work in May 2022, in order to provide support to displaced students.

## 5. Vocational education and training and adult learning

**Participation in vocational education and training remains fairly limited although it is increasing.**

In 2020, 36.6% of upper secondary pupils were enrolled in VET programmes<sup>15</sup>. While this rate is fairly low in comparison with the EU (average of 48.7%), there has been a marked increase in Spain in recent years, up from 33.5% in 2013. In 2021, 67.1% of recent VET graduates were employed<sup>16</sup>. While this rate remains below the EU average of 76.4%, it does represent a marked increase from the previous year (50.3% in 2020).

**The new VET law puts focus on academia-business collaboration and professional accreditation.**

Organic Law 3/2022 on the organisation and integration of vocational training, entered into force on April 2022. It envisages new developments such as the consolidation of a modular single system integrating the two previous subsystems (initial and continuous VET). It also introduces dual VET in certain study grades and emphasises the relationship between training centres and companies. In addition, the new law sets a new model of accreditation of professional skills aimed at increasing the current percentage of population with formal professional accreditation. Among other things, the new law emphasises the role of professional guidance, internationalisation, and it enhances the quality

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/prensa/actualidad/2022/04/20220405-fondosdigitalizacion.html>

<sup>15</sup> Eurostat, educ\_uoe\_enrs05.

<sup>16</sup> Eurostat, edat\_lfse\_24.

and evaluation system inspired in EU standards (EQAVET).

**The National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications has been renewed.** In line with the new VET Law, the Council of Ministers approved a new National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications aimed at adapting the training offer to the needs of companies in the fields of digitalisation, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and graphic design. It also approved the distribution of funds to regions as follows: EUR 193 million for the creation of new VET places and bilingual places; EUR 179.6 million for accreditation of 750 000 workers; EUR 50 million for the creation of a network of 50 centres of excellence; EUR 13.7 million for the technological conversion of classrooms; and EUR 6.6 million for entrepreneurship teaching.

**Recent policy developments focus on promoting flexibility of adult education and continuity in the educational system.** First, in November 2021, MEFP passed new legislation establishing equivalences between previous qualifications and the current education system to enable access to vocational training education<sup>17</sup>, easing transitions from the previous educational system to the new one and therefore promoting continuity. Second, in January 2022, MEFP increased flexibility in key adult learning areas in terms of the requirements to provide professional training offers linked to the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications, and to advance in the expansion and flexibility of the vocational training offer<sup>18</sup>. In the context of the 2030 target for adult learning participation in a year, Spain set a national objective of 60%, the same as the EU target, about double the 2016 rate of 30.4%.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2021/BOE-A-2021-18189-consolidado.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2022/BOE-A-2022-1274-consolidado.pdf>

## 6. Higher education

**A new law has been passed on university coexistence, laying down key principles in the operation of universities to ensure the exercise of freedoms and fundamental rights and guaranteeing equality<sup>19</sup>.** Under the new law, all universities are required to have rules of coexistence, which incorporate mediation mechanisms as the preferred way to resolve conflicts. They must also have prevention and response measures against violence, discrimination or harassment. In addition, the universities must create a Coexistence Commission made up of representatives of students, academic (teaching and research) staff and administration and services staff. The Law on University Coexistence lays down a new system of offences and sanctions for students, with maximum guarantees and the possibility of replacing sanctions, in certain cases, with measures of an educational or remedial nature.

**Reform of the Organic Law on University System.** A proposed draft law for the new university act was approved by the government in June 2022<sup>20</sup> and is now under parliamentary discussion<sup>21</sup>. The draft law proposes to increase public spending to 1% of GDP (currently 0.7%) and reduce temporary employment of teaching and research staff from 40% to 20%. In addition, the proposal aims for the introduction of lifelong training degrees through various arrangements including micro-credentials, micro-degrees and other short-term programmes that may have academic recognition. It will also create a more predictable, shorter, and more stable academic career with three states - access, stabilisation and promotion - so that only 10 years should pass from the beginning of doctoral studies until

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2022-2978](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2022-2978)

<sup>20</sup> <https://elpais.com/educacion/2022-05-09/subirats-deja-la-espinosa-reforma-de-las-universidades-en-manos-de-los-claustros.html>

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.congreso.es/public\\_oficiales/L14/CONG/BOCG/A/BOCG-14-A-111-1.PDF](https://www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L14/CONG/BOCG/A/BOCG-14-A-111-1.PDF)

stabilisation<sup>22</sup>. From 2016 to 2023, 50% of senior professors (*catedráticos*) and 20% of permanent-contract professors will be retired (almost 12 000 people). The law reform is part of the national RRP.

### **The number of scholarships increases but fails to cover the living costs for students.**

The call to apply for a scholarship in all education levels for 2022/2023 closed mid-May – 4 months earlier than in previous years. This will allow students to know before the start of the new academic year whether they are eligible for a scholarship. In an effort to enhance educational opportunities, the amount allocated to scholarships increases year after year, and so does the number of beneficiaries. During the last 4 years<sup>23</sup>, the amount allocated for education scholarships increased by 45%: from EUR 1.5 billion to EUR 2.15 billion. However, the debate on scholarship amounts should be accompanied by a debate on the efficiency of the scholarship scheme to overcome socio-economic disadvantages. Hernández Armentós and Pérez García (2021) propose to increase investment in scholarships by EUR 800 million to cover real and opportunity costs, especially for lower-income students. The EUA report *Public Funding Observatory 2020/2021*<sup>24</sup> reveals that public investment in Spanish university education decreased by 20.1% in the period 2008-2019, whereas student numbers decreased by 5% and academic staff numbers by 2%. Transfers from educational administrations (autonomous communities and central government) to universities was 8.1% less, whereas income from fees was 18% more than in the previous year.

### **Higher dropout rates in university studies happened in the first year, greatly influenced**

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.universidades.gob.es/stfls/universidades/Prensa/ficheros/2022/09052022\\_Ministro\\_Universidades\\_presenta\\_LOSU.pdf](https://www.universidades.gob.es/stfls/universidades/Prensa/ficheros/2022/09052022_Ministro_Universidades_presenta_LOSU.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/prensa/actualidad/2022/08/20220801-complementobecas.html>

<sup>24</sup> <https://efficiency.eua.eu/public-funding-observatory>

### **by the socio-economic characteristics of their family.**

In 2021, tertiary education attainment in Spain was 48.7%, (1.3 percentage points more than in 2020), above the EU average (41.2%) and the EU-level target (45%). The Ministry of Universities reports<sup>25</sup>, however, that 13% of students of Spanish nationality who entered the 2015/2016 academic year dropped out from undergraduate studies. This figure drops to 11% when it comes to students under 30 years of age. Another report on performance of university studies<sup>26</sup> found that one in five students abandons their undergraduate studies in the first year, and another 8% change their study field. The dropout rate from master's level is lower at around 10%. Moreover, of all students who drop out, more than half do so after the first year, which shows that the beginning of the degree is the most delicate moment in terms of continuity in studies. Dropping out can often be explained by individual factors and family circumstances. A relationship has also been found with the level of tuition fees, the age of students and their socio-economic background. To prevent dropouts, the Ministry of Universities has made progress in reducing tuition fees for bachelor's and master's degrees, and correcting imbalances between autonomous communities.

### **Variations in performance among regional university systems.**

According to the CYD Foundation report on the situation of higher education in all autonomous communities<sup>27</sup>, the highest student performance rates (measured on the basis of the ECTS credits<sup>28</sup> for which they enrolled and were granted) is found in Navarra,

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.universidades.gob.es/stfls/universidades/ministerio/ficheros/Informe\\_Abandono\\_Universitario\\_completo\\_MFMS.pdf](https://www.universidades.gob.es/stfls/universidades/ministerio/ficheros/Informe_Abandono_Universitario_completo_MFMS.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.universidades.gob.es/portal/site/universidades/menuitem.78fe777017742d34e0acc310026041a0?vgnextoid=c08855e937680710VgnVCM1000001d04140aRCRD>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.fundacioncyd.org/publicaciones-cyd/universidades-espanolas-por-comunidad-autonoma-2021/>

<sup>28</sup> European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

Catalonia and the Valencian Community (more than 88%). Extremadura, the Basque Country and Navarra stand out with the lowest dropout rate in the first year. A certain degree of field specialisation occurs in the regional university system. Some appear to be more specialised in social and legal sciences, engineering and architecture, arts and humanities, health, science, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). As regards job placement indicators, Catalonia registers the highest rate of activity and employment for higher education graduates, along with Navarra and the Basque Country (over 83.5% for all three). The highest unemployment rates are found in the Canary Islands and Andalusia (17.3% and 13.7% respectively). Regarding teaching staff profiles, participation of female teachers ranges from 40-47%, whereas the percentage of women appointed as senior professors (*catedráticos*) at public universities ranges from 15-29%.

### Spain invests heavily in digital skills, with significant support from the national RRP.

According to DESI 2022<sup>29</sup>, Spain ranks 10th at EU level on adult digital skills. The shares of the adult population having at least basic digital skills (64%) and above (38%) are higher than the EU average (54% and 26% respectively). The proportion of ICT specialists is close to the EU average (4.1% vs 4.5%), and the share of women is the same as the EU average (19%). One of the 10 objectives of the Digital Spain 2025 strategy<sup>30</sup> is to strengthen the digital skills of people across Spain by 2025, with particular focus on workers. Under this strategy, Spain adopted in January 2021 the National Plan for Digital Skills<sup>31</sup> to promote the development of digital skills in the population. This plan is aligned with the Digital Decade 2030 targets for 80% of the EU adult

population to have basic digital skills and for 20 million ICT specialists to be employed. Spain's national RRP is one of the largest and most ambitious on digital. Particular focus is given to digitalising businesses, including SMEs, strengthening the digital skills of people across Spain, improving digital connectivity across the country's territory, continuing the digitalisation of public services, supporting digital-related R&D and the deployment of digital technologies.



#### Box 2: Labour insertion of adults aged over 45 through guidance and upskilling measures

The project *Programa 45+* provides direct support to unemployed people aged 45 to 60, with tailored education and training activities that better adapt to the requirements of companies, to ultimately increase their employability. It consists of a tailored training path aimed at improving digital and professional expertise. The programme is structured in four phases:

- Phase I: Guidance. A career counsellor defines the participant's profile based on a personal interview (professional qualification, level of competence, training in professional activity). The most appropriate training path is then identified.
- Phase II: Training in digital or professional skills (in person or online).
- Phase III: Brokering or intermediation. The Chamber supports the employability of the participant in the labour market.
- Phase IV: Hiring incentives for companies that hire unemployed workers aged 45-60.

In 2020-2022, this project was carried out under the ESF multi-regional programme POEFE. With a budget of almost EUR 14 million (EUR 10 million from ESF), the project has implemented 3 788 training events and generated 1 259 jobs (year 2021). By 2022 (ongoing), there have been 8 266 actions in career guidance, 6 798 in digital skills training, and 3 796 in labour intermediation.

More information available at:  
<https://www.camara.es/formacion-y-empleo/programa-45-mas>

<sup>29</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/88720>

<sup>30</sup> [https://portal.mineco.gob.es/RecursosArticulo/mineco/ministerio/ficheros/210204\\_Digital\\_Spain\\_2025.pdf](https://portal.mineco.gob.es/RecursosArticulo/mineco/ministerio/ficheros/210204_Digital_Spain_2025.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> <https://portal.mineco.gob.es/RecursosArticulo/mineco/ministerio/ficheros/210902-digital-skills-plan.pdf>

### STEM graduates have very good prospects for work opportunities.

The proportion of STEM graduates has decreased since 2015 while it seems that they have good employment opportunities. In 2020, STEM graduates represented 20.8% of the total (25.4% in 2015). Although 56% of total university students are women, they only represent 26% of total engineering students. The same low proportion occurs on staff composition: women account for only 26% of engineering teachers and 20% of professors. According to the CEDEFOP skills forecast<sup>32</sup>, by 2030, STEM field sectors and occupations will rank among the top in terms of future employment with the highest annual growth rate: ICT technicians (2.2%) and science and engineering professionals (1.9%), above the EU average. The average insertion rate in the labour market of recent graduates (those who started in 2015-2016) is 75.4% (ranging from 69% to 85% across regions)<sup>33</sup>, being much higher

for ICT (87.1%) and engineering, industry and construction (79.1%). ICT and engineering professionals are also those having one of the highest shares of workers with permanent contracts (91% and 80% respectively). Fundacion CYD also reports<sup>34</sup> that ICT, engineering, industry and health graduates have more chances to find a job that matches their qualification, and with better salaries and stability, compared with graduates in arts, humanities and services.

### Measures to host Ukrainian refugees in the university system.

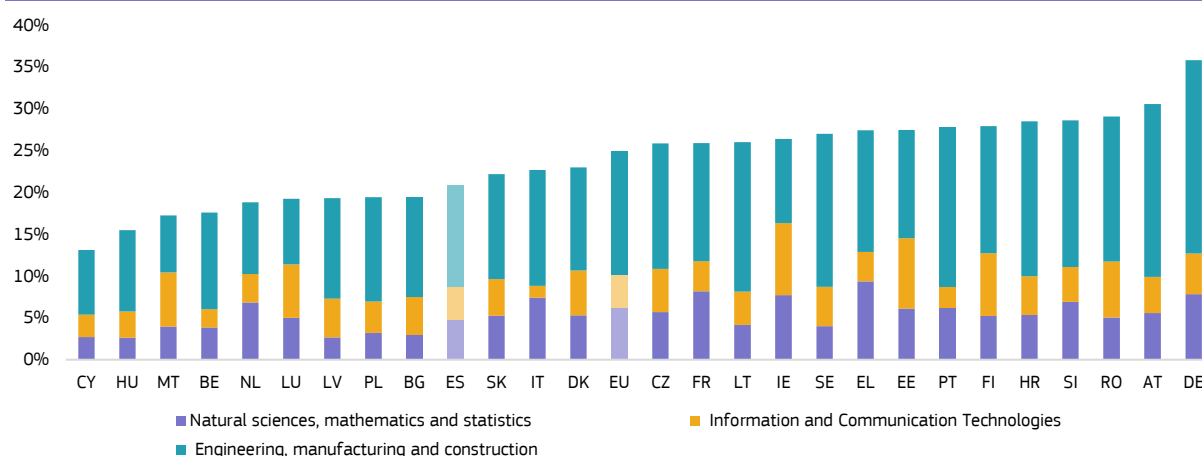
The Ministry of Universities, in collaboration with other ministries, presented before the end of March 2022 the *University-Shelter Action Plan* for people affected by the conflict in Ukraine. Based on this, universities in Spain will host students, researchers and administration and service personnel affected by the conflict in Ukraine.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-forecast>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.universidades.gob.es/portal/site/universidades/menuitem.78fe777017742d34e0acc310026041a0?vgnextoid=b747122d36680710VgnVCM100001d04140aRCRD>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.fundacioncyd.org/calidad-de-la-insercion-laboral-de-los-graduados-universitarios/>

**Figure 4: STEM tertiary graduates as a proportion of total graduates in 2020, (%)**



Source: Eurostat (UOE), [educ\_uae\_grad02].

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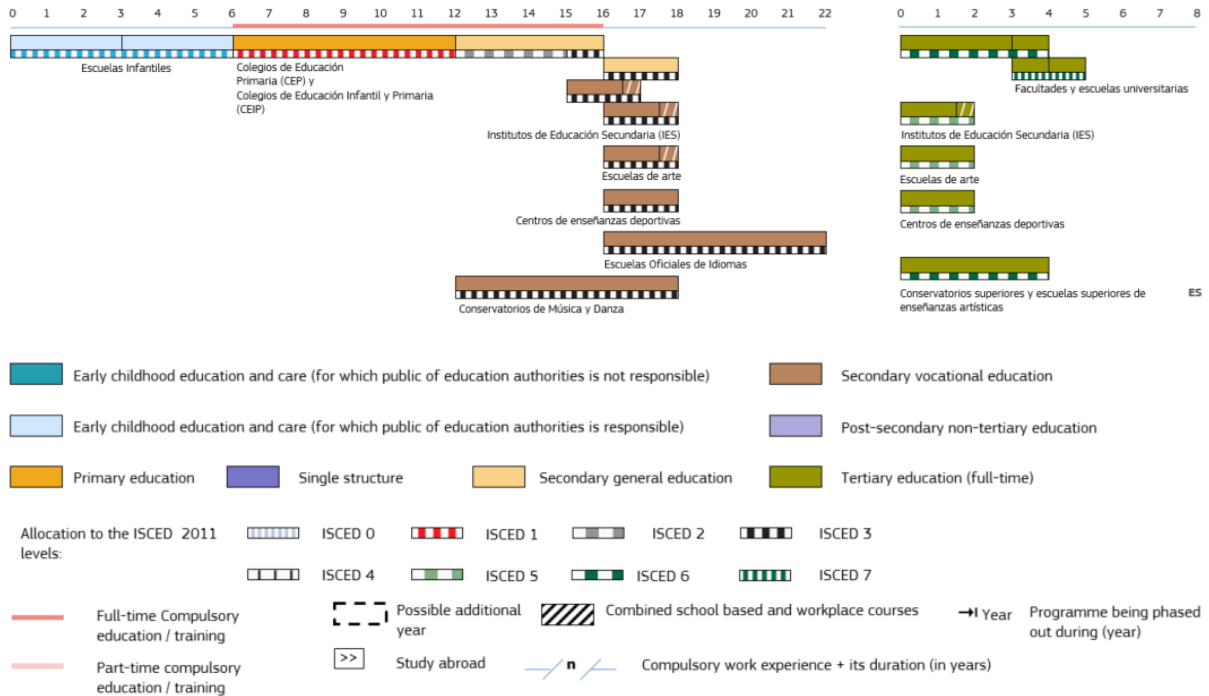
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## Annex I: Key indicators sources

Indicator	Source
Participation in early childhood education	Eurostat (UOE), educ_uoe_enra21
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills	IEA, ICILS
Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science	OECD (PISA)
Early leavers from education and training	Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_14 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_02
Exposure of VET graduates to work based learning	Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfs_9919
Tertiary educational attainment	Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_9912
Participation of adults in learning	Data for this EU-level target is not available. Data collection starts in 2022. Source: EU LFS.
Equity indicator	European Commission (Joint Research Centre) calculations based on OECD's PISA 2018 data
Upper secondary level attainment	Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp
Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure	Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp



## Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022. The Structure of the European Education Systems 2022/2023: Schematic Diagrams. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Notes: Escuelas oficiales de idiomas offer language courses that may last for 11 years. Some of the education provision of Conservatorios can be recognised/validated in full-time mainstream education programmes and contribute to the obtaining of Bachillerato certificate Bachiller artístico.

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