



Brussels, 18.11.2022
SWD(2022) 751 final

PART 11/28

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

{COM(2022) 700 final} - {SWD(2022) 750 final}

Education and Training Monitor 2022

FRANCE



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/>



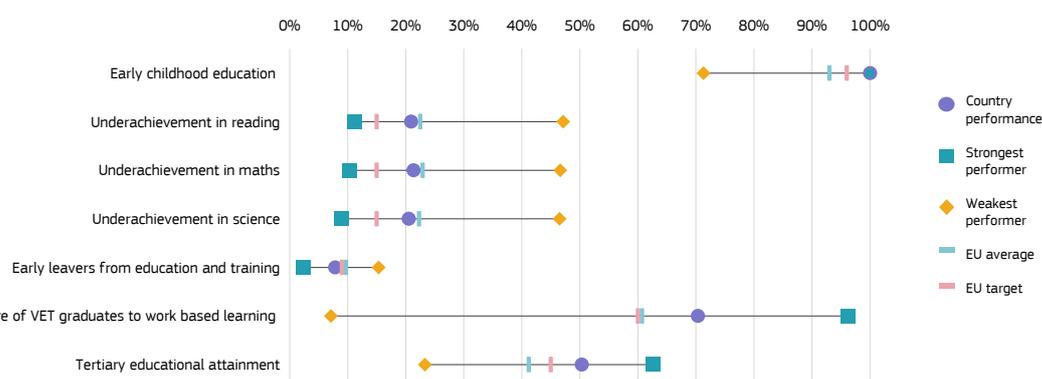
1. Key indicators

Figure 1: Key indicators overview

			France		EU	
			2011	2021	2011	2021
EU-level targets			2030 target			
Participation in early childhood education (from age 3 to starting age of compulsory primary education)	≥ 96 %		100.0% ¹³	100.0% ^{20,p}	91.8% ¹³	93.0% ²⁰
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills	< 15%		:	43.5% ¹⁸	:	:
Low achieving 15-year-olds in:	Reading	< 15%	19.8% ⁰⁹	20.9% ¹⁸	19.7% ⁰⁹	22.5% ¹⁸
	Maths	< 15%	22.5% ⁰⁹	21.3% ¹⁸	22.7% ⁰⁹	22.9% ¹⁸
	Science	< 15%	19.3% ⁰⁹	20.5% ¹⁸	18.2% ⁰⁹	22.3% ¹⁸
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	< 9 %		12.3%	7.8% ^b	13.2%	9.7% ^b
Exposure of VET graduates to work-based learning	≥ 60 % (2025)		:	70.3%	:	60.7%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)	≥ 45 %		42.8%	50.3% ^b	33.0%	41.2% ^b
Participation of adults in learning (age 25-64)	≥ 47 % (2025)		:	:	:	:
Other contextual indicators						
Equity indicator (percentage points)			:	20.9 ¹⁸	:	19.30 ¹⁸
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native		11.5%	7.5% ^b	11.9%	8.5% ^b
	EU-born		22.4%	12.8% ^{bu}	25.3%	21.4% ^b
	Non EU-born		22.7%	12.2% ^b	31.4%	21.6% ^b
Upper secondary level attainment (age 20-24, ISCED 3-8)			83.6%	89.7% ^b	79.6%	84.6% ^b
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)	Native		44.1%	50.7% ^b	34.3%	42.1% ^b
	EU-born		35.8%	45.1% ^b	28.8%	40.7% ^b
	Non EU-born		33.9%	47.5% ^b	23.4%	34.7% ^b
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		5.5%	5.5% ^{20,p}	4.9%	5.0% ²⁰
	Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure		9.7%	8.9% ^{20,p}	10.0%	9.4% ²⁰

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, p = provisional, 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 equity in education

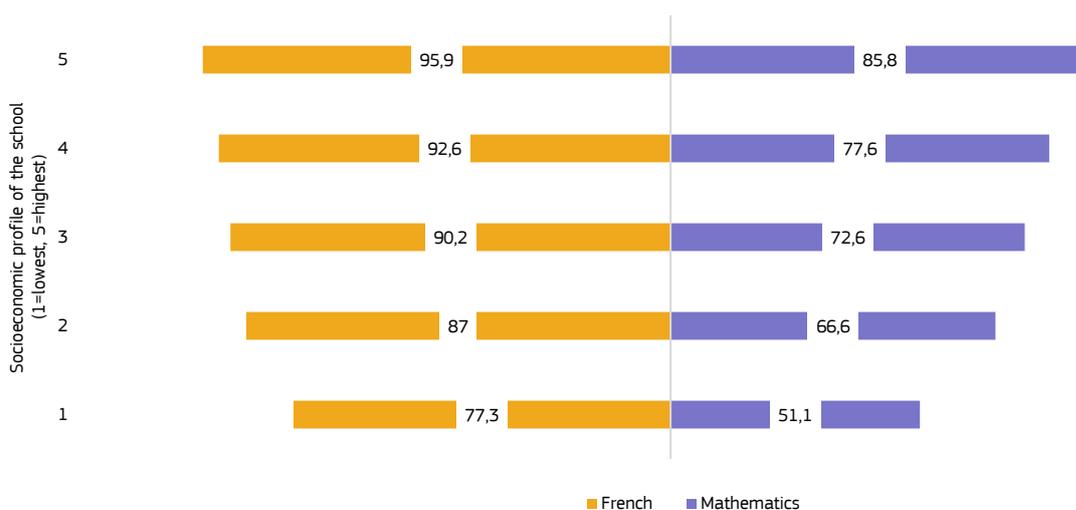
Pupils' educational outcomes depend to a large extent on their socioeconomic background. International studies have repeatedly shown that, in France, socioeconomic background determines educational performance to a greater extent than in other countries (OECD, 2019a). France ranked fourth in the EU on how strongly socioeconomic status predicts performance in reading (it explains 17.5% of the variation in reading scores). In maths, too, there are large performance gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students (DEPP, 2022a). Access to early childhood education and care below the age of 3 is highly dependent on parents' socioeconomic background (see section 3). The French Court of Auditors concluded that the promise of the education system to reduce socioeconomic inequality has not been fulfilled (Cour des Comptes, 2021b). In June 2022, the Council of the EU recommended France to '[raise] the share of people with basic skills [by] improving

the learning outcomes of all students, in particular by adapting resources and methods to the needs of disadvantaged students and schools and by improving the working conditions and continuous training of teachers' (Council of the European Union, 2022).

From early childhood education and care to higher education, the French government is taking measures to address inequality. France concentrates mainly on measures relying on geographical demarcation (priority education zones), combined with schemes emphasising individual motivation and merit. These latter schemes (partly supported by the Recovery and Resilience Facility) include the mentoring programme *Cordées de la réussite*, boarding schools (*Internats d'excellence*) and support to enter highly selective higher education institutions (like the newly created *Cycle Pluridisciplinaire d'Études Supérieures*¹).

¹ <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/fr/le-cycle-pluridisciplinaire-d-etudes-superieures-cpes-nouveaute-parcoursup-2022-84197>

Figure 3: Percentage of pupils having a satisfactory or very good level of knowledge and skills according to the social status of the school, 2021



Source: DEPP [Note d'Information n° 22.04]. Notes: Schools are classified according to socioeconomic quintiles (from 1-lowest to 5-highest). The classification is based on the professions and social status of the parents of pupils. Pupils were tested at the beginning of lower secondary school (sixième).

These schemes often target disadvantaged young people directly or encourage their participation in these programmes. Recently, additional measures focused on the early years: the mandatory school age was lowered to 3 and class sizes were substantially reduced in certain grades and schools (see section 2). During the COVID-19 pandemic, France kept schools open or partially open for much longer than other countries, with potentially positive effects. Early research suggests that inequality and underperformance were only temporarily aggravated by the pandemic, but returned to pre-pandemic levels soon after schools reopened (DEPP, 2022a). Different schemes are in place to reduce the socioeconomic gaps in performance, such as support with homework and summer schools (*Devoirs faits, Vacances apprenantes*) and the 200 *Cités éducatives* in disadvantaged areas supporting young people aged 0-25.

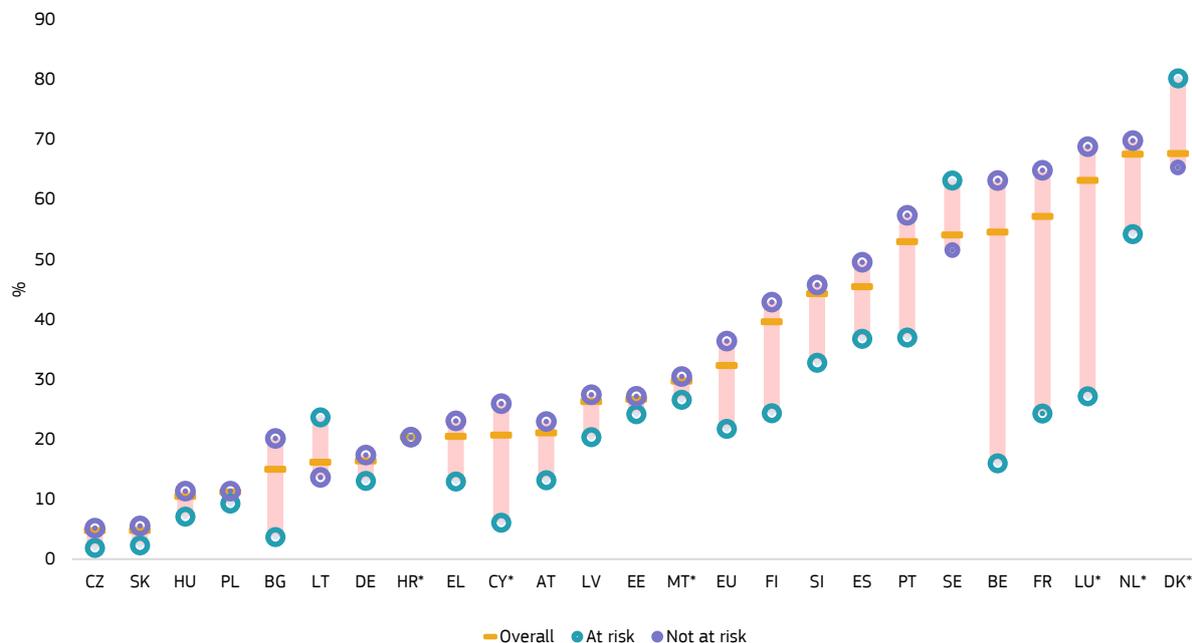
Nevertheless, finding the right policy mix remains a challenge. Directing additional funding at certain geographical areas, such as education priority zones, has some caveats. Disadvantaged groups outside these areas might not be covered and stigma effects tend to increase segregation. Schools in priority areas might become less attractive for teachers; consequently, they might have less experienced or qualified staff (Bakelants, Nicaise, Vandevort, & Verelst, 2020). This finding is consistent with other studies indicating that, also in France, less experienced teachers often work at disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2022). Researchers found that funding based on pupils' profiles might produce fewer adverse effects and that systems combining earmarked and free allocation of funds are most efficient (Bakelants, Nicaise, Vandevort, & Verelst, 2020). However, schools have little autonomy to manage funds locally. The French Court of Auditors also highlighted school autonomy as an important lever for achieving more equality, when coupled with responsibility and accountability (Cour des Comptes, 2021b). While school autonomy remains very limited, policy pilot projects do take place: in Marseille, 59 schools were selected to receive greater autonomy regarding pedagogy and recruitment.

This pilot project is planned to be implemented nationwide.

3. Early childhood education and care

Children below 3 increasingly participate in early childhood education and care, but significant socioeconomic disparities exist. In 2020, 57.2% of children below 3 participated in formal childcare or education (above the EU average of 32.3%), 6.4 percentage points (pps) more than in 2019. As the participation of children at risk of poverty and exclusion has increased faster (+9.5 pps) than that of children without such a risk (+6 pps), the gap between the two groups of children is among the highest in the EU, at 40.6 pps (see figure 4). Support for low-income families is available; however, the support system can be complex to understand (CESE, 2022). Around 80% of families below the poverty threshold do not use childcare services, even though their children could reap the highest benefits of high-quality childcare (Cnaf et. al., 2021). Children of Ukrainian families under temporary protection can benefit from a place free of charge, depending on availability. A staff training plan will be funded in 2022 (*plan de formation Enfance=Égalité*) to help childcare staff acquire knowledge in areas where inequality might manifest itself, such as language development, nutrition or prevention of stereotypes (Ministère des Solidarités et de la Santé, 2022).

Figure 4: Participation of children below 3 years in formal childcare or education by AROPE, 2020 (%)



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC), special extraction. Notes: * = Data with low reliability; Data for IE and IT not available. At risk of poverty or social exclusion, abbreviated as AROPE, corresponds to the sum of persons who are either at risk of poverty, or severely materially and socially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

Parents can struggle to find a place in the childcare of their choice, while a legal entitlement to a place is being discussed.

According to official estimates, 200 000 additional childcare places are needed in France. Between 2018-2022, 30 000 places were supposed to be opened (Government of France & Cnaf, 2018), but only 40% of those were created. According to estimates, almost a quarter of parents do not obtain a place in their preferred type of childcare, especially if they opted for a crèche (as opposed to more individual types of care) (Damon & Heydemann, 2021). In France, unlike in some European countries², parents have no legal entitlement to a place for their children below 3, despite limited possibilities of paid parental leave. The expert commission on the child's first 1 000

days, put in place by the French government in 2019, recommended introducing both a legal entitlement and a 9-month parental leave (Ministère des Solidarités et de la Santé, 2020). Political discussions on a legal entitlement continue, but without any results yet. However, under conditions and depending on availability of places, children who are 2 years old on the first day of school may be admitted to pre-primary school.

Staff shortages and qualifications remain important issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated existing childcare staff shortages, as working conditions became more difficult and turnover increased. In some cases, existing childcare capacities cannot be fully used due to a lack of staff (CESE, 2022). As local authorities play an important role in organising childcare, the Association of French Mayors raised an alert about staff shortages, stating that more places in initial staff training needed to be created, and that qualification requirements should not be

² A legal entitlement for children below 3 exists in DK, DE, EE, LV, SI, FI, SE, NO (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019).

lowered (Association des maires de France, 2022). In November 2021, the French government created a working group to find short- and long-term solutions to staff shortages and to enhance the attractiveness of childcare professions³. So far, suggestions include: better anticipating current and future staff needs and ensuring enough places in initial training; increasing salaries and better monitoring of working conditions; improving continuous training; and creating smooth transitions between the different types of professions within early childhood education and care (Comité de filière 'petite enfance', 2022).

A reform package aims to address challenges in the sector. Reforms adopted in 2021 further define the roles and responsibilities of different types of childcare institutions, including of their heads and staff (French Republic, 2021). The provisions also address staff shortages by allowing childcare institutions to temporarily run above their capacity (at 115% under certain conditions). Some staff unions fear that such provisions will worsen the image of the profession and the quality of childcare (Collectif Pas de bébés à la consigne, 2022). A government proposal (Government of France, 2022) to promote childcare professions to people having difficulties in accessing the labour market (such as the long-term unemployed) was met with scepticism among some professionals (FNEJE, 2022).

For children above 3, enrolment in pre-primary school is mandatory and almost universal. With a participation rate of virtually 100% since 2015, France is leading the enrolment statistics in the EU, together with Ireland. Since 2019, enrolment is mandatory as the school age was lowered to 3. The French Senate Culture

Committee stated that this reform needs to be accompanied by additional measures focused on improving quality, as participation was already almost universal. The Committee suggested to concentrate on staff training and the evaluation of the conditions and quality of care (Billon, Brisson, & Monier, 2022).

4. School education

Early school leaving continues the downward trend of the last decade. At 7.8% in 2021, the early school leaving rate was lower than the EU average (9.7%). However, only girls reached the EU-level target of below 9% (6.1%), but not yet boys (9.6%). This gender gap of 3.5 pps is in line with the EU average (boys: 11.4%, girls: 7.9%).

Performance in maths is of concern in particular due to major inequalities. To a larger extent than in other subjects, maths teaching fails to compensate for pupils' socioeconomic differences and to convey a high level of knowledge, even to the top performers (DEPP, 2021a). The overall performance of French pupils in the 2019 *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* was the lowest in all participating 22 EU Member States, and was highly dependent on pupils' socioeconomic background. In addition, only 41% of the most advantaged students reached a high performance level, compared with 61% across the OECD. At the same time, instruction time for maths in primary schools is the second highest in the EU and remains comparatively high also in lower secondary school (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022a)⁴. This raises doubts on the quality and effectiveness of maths teaching.

³ Childcare stakeholders, such as unions, employer organisations, regional authorities and other organisations are represented. <https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/ministere/acteurs/instances-rattachees/article/comite-de-filiere-petite-enfance>

⁴ Instruction time for mathematics per notional year at ISCED level 1 (primary schools) in 2020/2021 was 180 hours, second only to Portugal with 251 hours. Most other EU countries provide between 100-150 hours of maths per year.

Teacher shortages and the implementation of reforms put further pressure on maths teaching, while efforts to monitor pupils' performance are ongoing. Following the 2018 baccalaureate reform, maths became a voluntary subject at general upper secondary school (*lycée*) for those pupils not specialising in sciences. Given the high share of pupils who quit maths, this part of the reform has been withdrawn: from 2022/23, 1.5 weekly hours of maths will be added to the core curriculum of students not specialising in sciences. At the same time, following the 2021 national teaching profession entry exam (*Capes*) for maths, not all open posts could be filled.⁵ Regular national tests taken by all pupils in certain grades help to diagnose pupils' difficulties and to measure the performance of the education system. A report on the 2018 national action plan on maths⁶ concluded that the plan's goals are not yet reached (pupils' learning outcomes have not yet significantly improved), but participation in continuous training for teachers has increased (IGÉSR, 2022) – also thanks to a national training strategy at primary school level which privileges interactive ways of learning, such as exchanges with peers.

The national Court of Auditors made recommendations to improve the school system, and pointed to the low efficiency of education spending. The Court questioned the efficiency of public education spending: educational performance has deteriorated in recent decades, whereas spending per pupil has increased (Cour des Comptes, 2021b). They suggested to concentrate on school autonomy and on teachers to improve the school system's outcomes and reduce inequality. Concretely, the auditors recommended giving headteachers more decision-making power, also vis-à-vis their staff, for example regarding recruitment and evaluation.

As a rule, schools are mainly executing bodies with little room for manoeuvre, or sometimes do not have the tools to use existing decision-making powers. The Court also thought it crucial to better recognise tasks outside of teaching. Although vital for the school and pupils' success, these tasks are not sufficiently reflected in the hours worked, except, to some extent, in priority education.

A first round of school evaluations was carried out nationwide. Since 2020, all schools are evaluated externally every 5 years, combined with a self-evaluation. After the first evaluation round in 2020/2021, the School Evaluation Council recommended schools to make better use of already existing data (e.g. on performance, absenteeism or grade repetition) to improve pedagogical choices and pupils' outcomes, as well as to examine the different factors for educational inequality. It recommended local authorities (*académies*) to encourage innovation and experimentation in schools and generally found that schools need a greater margin of manoeuvre to act on their recommendations (Conseil d'Évaluation de l'École, 2022).

The reduction of class sizes in disadvantaged public pre-primary and primary schools continued. The reduction of class sizes was progressively rolled out from 2017. It is now completed for first and second grades in primary schools in priority education zones (*REP* and *REP+*), while class sizes of the last pre-primary year (*grande section de maternelle*) will continue to be reduced until 2023. The Education Ministry's statistical department found that this reduction did not lead to larger classes elsewhere, such as in grades at the same school not concerned by the measure, or in schools outside priority areas (such as in rural areas). Since 2020, class sizes are limited to 24 pupils at all schools in France, in the three mentioned grades, which also helps to avoid adverse effects. In rural areas, demographic decline is the main driver behind smaller classes (DEPP, 2022b).

Flanking measures could enhance the class size reform's effectiveness. The French Senate raised the question as to whether the improvements in learning outcomes justify the

⁵ Repères et références statistiques 2022, fiche 8.28

⁶ <https://www.education.gouv.fr/21-mesures-pour-l-enseignement-des-mathematiques-3242>

reform's high costs. The Senate's report also recalled that pupils need support when returning to normal class sizes in the third year of primary and that a significant number of additional teachers are needed (Billon, Brisson, & Monier, 2022). Next to class size, teaching pedagogies and practices need to stay in the focus: teachers need training on how to provide differentiated learning opportunities.

The need for improving the continuous training of teachers is recognised and a reform has been put in place. The 2019 school reform obliges all teachers to participate in continuous training, which is less developed in France than in other countries (OECD, 2019b). As from January 2022, new training centres for education staff opened their doors (*écoles académiques de la formation continue*). The objective is to develop training by better taking into account the needs of education staff (administrative staff, teachers, health personnel etc.) The training offer will gradually be expanded during 2022. Through its Technical Support Instrument, the European Commission supports the Education Ministry in setting up and monitoring the new training centres.



Box 1: A digital solution for inclusion

An app for special educational needs (*livret numérique de parcours inclusif*) aims, for each pupil concerned, to gather all information about specific support measures they need, and to share this information with the various professionals involved (teachers, medical staff, social workers, etc.) as well as with their families. The objective is to make the support for vulnerable pupils with learning difficulties more effective and to reduce educational inequality. The tool should contribute to breaking institutional silos, clarifying responsibilities and ensuring a more customised and consistent support to each child. The European Commission's Technical Support Instrument supports the development and deployment of the app with EUR 500 000 between 2022 and 2024.

5. Vocational education and training and adult learning

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the French government has significantly invested in vocational education and training (VET). It provided hiring subsidies for apprenticeship and work-study contracts and supported enrolled VET students. In 2021, 733 200 new apprenticeship contracts (+38% compared with 2020) and 120 600 work-study contracts (+7% compared with 2020) were signed^{7, 8}. These investments, partly funded by the French recovery and resilience plan, contributed to a significant increase in the number of students in the VET system. From a comparative perspective, the share of upper secondary pupils enrolled in VET⁹ was relatively low (39.3% in 2020, compared with an EU average of 48.7%).

First evaluations show that more qualified people benefited more from the investments than the most vulnerable groups. The Court of Auditors highlighted that mostly students and people in a less vulnerable situation on the labour market benefited from the investments in the apprenticeship system (Cour des Comptes, 2022). Despite the positive short- to medium-term impact of these investments, close monitoring and further evaluation of these measures will remain important. The revamped national youth guarantee instrument (*contrat d'engagement jeune*), which aims to support young people's access to education, training or employment, may also contribute to improving their access to the VET system.

⁷ <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/publication/lapprentissage-en-2021>

⁸ <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/publication/le-contrat-de-professionnalisation-en-2021>

⁹ Eurostat [educ_uoe_enrs05]

Following the 2018 reform of the apprenticeship system, the financial support mechanisms have changed. In 2019, the newly created *France Compétences* took over the governance of the apprenticeship and lifelong learning systems. Since January 2020, the training centres for apprentices (*centre de formation des apprentis*) receive financial support based on a cost per contract defined at the level of occupational branches. This important change had an impact on the functioning of the apprenticeship system. Despite a majority of centres reporting a positive impact of the reform, some of them faced economic difficulties in 2020, and one third of them stressed the insufficient level of the financial support per contract (France Compétences, 2021). Notably due to the impact of COVID-19 and to the measures adopted to shield French firms from the pandemic, the goal of balancing the budget of *France Compétences* for 2022 has not been reached. Additional public financial support was granted to support the apprenticeship system, including support from the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The government plans to introduce measures to balance the budget of *France Compétences* (see below).



Box 2: A rural campus for young learners: teaching transversal digital skills

The campus Territoires communs run by the organisation La Smalah is located in a rural area in Nouvelle Aquitaine. It provides learning opportunities and psychosocial support to people between 18 and 35 who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET). Between 2021–2023, the European Social Fund is contributing EUR 290 000 to the training course *Numérique et territoire* at the rural campus, teaching transversal digital skills that are needed locally in many professions. The aim is that participants, after the training, sign an employment or apprenticeship contract or set up their own business.

<https://www.territoires-communs.fr/>

In comparison with the EU, France performs relatively well in terms of access to lifelong learning. Some 11% of adults participated in training in 2021, however, this rate was only 4.2% for low-qualified adults (lower secondary education at most), in line with the EU average¹⁰. The COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on overall access to upskilling and reskilling¹¹. In the framework of the 2030 target for adult learning participation in a year (a new indicator for which data will be only available next year), France set a national objective of 65%, above the EU target of 60%. Considering the lower employment rate of low-qualified adults (52.3% in 2021 vs 53.7% in 2019)¹², helping them access upskilling and reskilling opportunities is essential in the aftermath of COVID-19. Thus, evaluating and improving the quality and labour market relevance of upskilling and reskilling measures remains important.

¹⁰ Eurostat [trng_lfs_02]

¹¹ Eurostat [trng_lfs_02]

¹² Eurostat [lfsi_educ_q]

The roll-out of large-scale learning opportunities continued, but participation of low-qualified adults and access to qualifications need to improve. Since its launch in 2018, the Skills Investment Plan had supported over one million training courses by the end of 2020. In 2021 and 2022, a similar number is expected to be funded. Despite these significant investments, low-qualified adults remain disadvantaged in accessing upskilling and reskilling opportunities, and they tend to benefit less from training leading to qualifications. Participants often indicated a lack of suitable guidance during and after the training courses, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis (DARES, 2021b). Similarly, the upskilling and reskilling scheme *FNE-Formation* has mainly benefited the more advantaged categories of workers, as previous evaluations of the Court of Auditors showed, pointing to the need to focus on low-qualified adults (Cour des Comptes, 2021a). Significant investments in the lifelong learning system have been implemented through the recovery and resilience plan, including the adaptation of *FNE-Formation* to support the training of workers placed in partial activity. The outcome and impact of this adaptation remain to be assessed.

The uptake of individual learning accounts (ILA) increased rapidly since the 2018 reform. Statistics point to an increased uptake by workers in non-managerial positions (DARES, 2021a). Data on access of low-qualified adults to training through ILA are currently not available. A report on the reform's impact recommended to limit the costs of ILA for *France Compétences* to help balance its budget (Inspection générale des finances & inspection générale des affaires sociales, 2020). These recommendations include introducing a financial contribution by employees when buying training through their ILA and setting a ceiling regarding the level of costs paid for it. Considering the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the financial perspectives of *France Compétences*, measures should be taken to ensure the system's sustainability.

6. Higher education

Tertiary education attainment is high, but some disparities exist. Over 50% of 25-34-year-olds held a higher education diploma in 2021, with both men (46%) and women (54.2%) reaching the EU-level target of 45%. The gender gap is rather low in a European comparison. However, the rural-urban gap, at 22.2 pps, is slightly above the EU average (21.8 pps). In 2021, 83.7% of recent higher education graduates aged 20-34 were employed, slightly below the EU average (84.9%).

Various initiatives aim to make access to the most selective higher education institutions more equal. The share of disadvantaged students at the most prestigious higher education institutions (*grandes écoles*) is still low: 9% in 2016-2017 vs 20% of higher education students overall (IPP, 2021). A report published by the *Grandes Écoles* presents their efforts to open up to a socially and geographically more diverse public: to different degrees, they concentrate on outreach to secondary schools (for example through tutoring programmes for disadvantaged pupils), adaptation of selection practices, accompanying of disadvantaged students throughout their studies, and raising awareness on the benefits of social diversity among all students (Conférence des Grandes Écoles, 2022). In 2019, the French government took the decision to replace the prestigious *École nationale d'administration* (ENA) by the *Institut national du service public* (INSP), which opened its doors in January 2022. The new institute takes specific measures to make the student body more diverse, such as an overhaul of entry exams with a view to help disadvantaged students succeed.

Investment in higher education is linked to equity targets. Higher education expenditure has remained roughly stable between 2013-2018, with 1.23% of GDP in 2018, compared with an EU average of 1.19% (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022b). EUR 7.8 billion are planned to be invested in higher education, research and innovation from *France Relance*, which is also planned to be supported by

the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility. Some measures particularly aim at improving students' experience at university and supporting their living costs, such as increasing admissions in higher education, ecological renovation of buildings, digitalisation of higher education, boosting state-guaranteed student loans as well as tutoring and outreach programmes (MESRI, 2021). France is one of the few EU countries (together with Italy) where public funding for higher education institutions is linked to achieving equity targets, such as widening access for students with low socioeconomic status, disabilities or special educational needs, and from particular geographical areas, like French overseas territories (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022b).

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