



European  
Commission

# Education and Training Monitor 2019

## Italy



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

# **Education and Training Monitor 2019**

Italy

Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2019 includes twenty-eight individual country reports. It builds on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence to present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy measures in each EU Member State. It therefore complements other sources of information which offer descriptions of national education and training systems.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 briefly identifies the main strengths and challenges of the country's education and training system. Section 3 focuses on teachers and challenges of teaching profession. Section 4 looks at investment in education and training. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise early childhood and school education. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and training, while section 8 covers adult learning.

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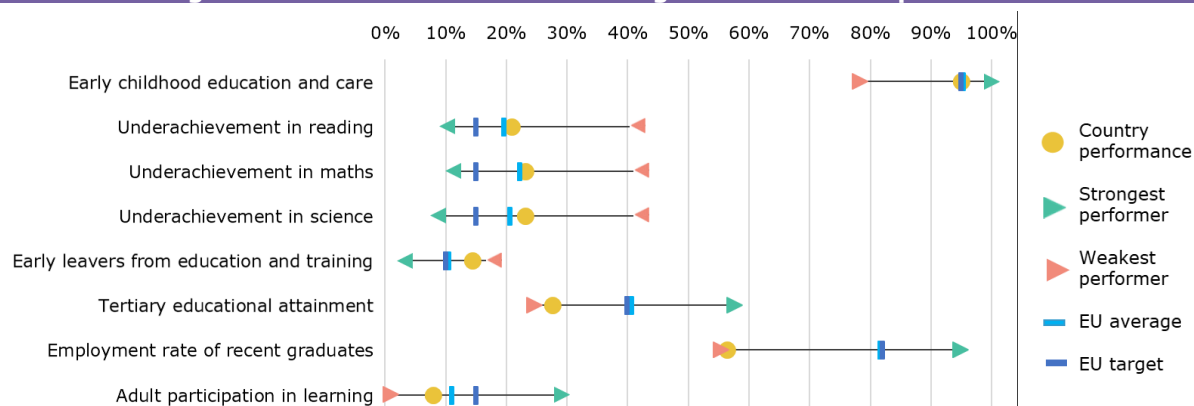
*The manuscript was completed on 26 August 2019.  
Additional contextual data can be found online ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor))*

## 1. Key indicators

		Italy		EU average		
		2009	2018	2009	2018	
<b>Education and training 2020 benchmarks</b>						
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)		19.1%	14.5%	14.2%	10.6%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)		19.0%	27.8%	32.3%	40.7%	
Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)		99.8%	95.1% <sup>17</sup>	90.8%	95.4% <sup>17,d</sup>	
Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:	Reading	21.0%	21.0% <sup>15</sup>	19.5% <sup>EU27</sup>	19.7% <sup>15</sup>	
	Maths	25.0%	23.3% <sup>15</sup>	22.3% <sup>EU27</sup>	22.2% <sup>15</sup>	
	Science	20.6%	23.2% <sup>15</sup>	17.7% <sup>EU27</sup>	20.6% <sup>15</sup>	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-8 (total)	60.6%	56.5%	78.3%	81.6%	
	ISCED 0-8 (total)	6.0%	8.1%	9.5%	11.1%	
Learning mobility	Degree-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	4.4% <sup>17</sup>	:	3.6% <sup>17</sup>	
	Credit-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	9.1% <sup>17</sup>	:	8.0% <sup>17</sup>	
<b>Other contextual indicators</b>						
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	4.6%	3.8% <sup>17</sup>	5.2%	4.6% <sup>17</sup>	
	Expenditure on public and private institutions per student in € PPS	ISCED 0	€4 609 <sup>12</sup>	€5 380 <sup>16</sup>	:	€6 111 <sup>15,d</sup>
		ISCED 1	€5 805 <sup>12</sup>	€5 814 <sup>16</sup>	€5 812 <sup>12,d</sup>	€6 248 <sup>15,d</sup>
		ISCED 2	€6 665 <sup>12</sup>	€6 470 <sup>16</sup>	€6 937 <sup>12,d</sup>	€7 243 <sup>15,d</sup>
		ISCED 3-4	:	€6 822 <sup>16</sup>	:	€7 730 <sup>14,d</sup>
ISCED 5-8	€7 771 <sup>12,d</sup>	€8 431 <sup>16</sup>	€10 549 <sup>12,d</sup>	€11 413 <sup>15,d</sup>		
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	16.6%	12.0%	13.1%	9.5%	
	Foreign-born	42.1%	35.2%	26.1%	20.2%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	20.0%	31.4%	33.1%	41.3%	
	Foreign-born	12.9%	14.0%	27.7%	37.8%	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4	55.9%	50.3%	72.5%	76.8%	
	ISCED 5-8	66.1%	62.8%	83.8%	85.5%	

Sources: Eurostat; OECD (PISA); Learning mobility figures are calculated by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) on UOE data. Further information can be found in Section 10 and Volume 1 ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)). Notes: The EU's 2009 PISA averages do not include Cyprus; d = definition differs, : = not available, 12= 2012, 14=2014, 15 = 2015, 16=2016, 17 = 2017.

**Figure 1 Position in relation to strongest and weakest performers**



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

## 2. Highlights

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

## 3. A focus on teachers

**Italy has the oldest teaching workforce in the EU.** As a high share of teachers in Italy are approaching retirement age, renewing the teaching body is a major challenge. In 2017, more than half (58%) of primary and secondary teachers (ISCED 1-3) were over 50 years old (against 37% in the EU), and 17% were over 60 (EU: 9%)<sup>1</sup>. This means that, on average, 3.8% could retire each year for the next 15 years. Italy also has one of the largest proportion of female teachers, though (like in other countries) it decreases with educational level taught: in 2016 it ranged from 99% in pre-primary school to 63% in upper secondary education and 37% in universities.

**Procedures for selecting and hiring teachers were repeatedly modified over the last decade, but so far have not succeeded in ensuring a reliable supply of qualified teachers.**

The massive wave of recruitments in recent years (over 150 000 since 2015) has had little or no impact on teachers' average age, and did not reduce the problem of teachers' allocation in secondary schools due to a lack of candidates with relevant qualifications (most acute in the sciences)<sup>2</sup>. The 2015 school reform introduced a strong initial education and training component (*percorso FIT*) and clear employment prospects, with the aim of cutting long waiting lists and meeting future teacher requirements through forward planning, but the reform was not fully implemented. The 2019 budget law abolished the *FIT* system and reinstated centrally-administered public competitions open to all graduates<sup>3</sup>, reducing the training component to a one-year induction period giving access to tenure. The competition will be organised at regional level, and those selected will be required to spend at least five years in the region of appointment to reduce teacher turnover. Its effectiveness in ensuring an adequate supply of teachers will depend on the ability of the Ministry of education, university and research (MIUR) capacity to organise the competitions as planned, every two years.

**Limited career prospects, coupled with relatively low salaries compared to those of other highly qualified professions, make it difficult to attract the best-qualified graduates.**

The teaching career system offers only a single career pathway with fixed salary increases based solely on seniority. In the absence of performance-related incentives, mobility across schools remains the only possibility to improve working conditions. As a result, schools in disadvantaged areas tend to be deprived of the best teachers and staffed with young, inexperienced teachers on temporary contracts. Teachers' statutory salaries are lower than the OECD average at every career stage. The seniority-based career system means that teachers can only reach the maximum salary after 35 years of service; the OECD average is 25 years. Teachers' salaries are also lower than the earnings of other workers with a tertiary education. The wage freeze for public-sector employees, still in place since 2010, continues to have a detrimental impact on teachers' purchasing power. The salaries of teachers entering the profession in 2016/17, in real terms, were around 94% of the salaries in 2009/10 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2018b). Nevertheless, according to the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018<sup>4</sup>, the proportion of teachers

<sup>1</sup> Source: Eurostat (UOE) 2017. Online data code: educ\_uoe\_perp01. Unknown age category not included in the calculation.

<sup>2</sup> The majority of appointments (over 85 000) were to regularise long-term temporary teachers, following a ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union (*Judgment in Joined Cases C-22/13, C-61/13, C-62/13, C-63/13, C-418/13 Raffaella Mascolo and Others v Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca*).

<sup>3</sup> With a master's degree and 24 credits in pedagogical subjects.

<sup>4</sup> In 2018, 23 Member States participated in TALIS: Austria, Belgium fr, Belgium nl, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, England (UK), Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal,

satisfied with their job is the second highest in the EU, at 96% v 89.5%. Overall, 87% of teachers say that if they could decide again, they would still choose to become a teacher (compared with an EU average of 77.6%), but only 12% believe that teaching is a valued profession in society (OECD 2019). This apparent contradiction can be explained by the attractiveness of the profession in terms of scope to reconcile private and professional life<sup>5</sup>, which makes teaching attractive especially to women (Argentin 2018).

**There are teacher shortages in some subjects and regions and oversupply in others.**

Teacher shortages are most acute in disciplines like science and maths, foreign languages and learning support, and in the north of the country. While most teachers (80%) are from the south, most teaching posts are available in schools in the north, and cannot be filled on a permanent basis due to excessive teacher turnover. The government has announced new measures to curb teacher transfers from the next school year. Indirect evidence of persistent teacher shortages is the share of teachers on temporary contracts (*'supplenti'*, or substitute teachers). In the 2018/19 school year, they numbered 164 000, or 18.5% of the total, up from 135 000 the previous year<sup>6</sup>. As the vast majority of temporary teachers has no automatic right to fill the same post the following school year, this corresponds to an expected turnover rate exceeding 20%, factoring in expected retirements<sup>7</sup>.

**Continuing professional development is defined by law as a 'professional duty' of teachers, but there is no minimum number of compulsory hours.**

The 2015 school reform introduced the principle of compulsory continuing professional development, allocating earmarked funds to access additional educational resources (books, theatre, exhibitions, ICT, courses etc.). The reform also introduced in-service teacher appraisals, with a view to awarding bonuses worthy teachers in every school type and level (European Commission 2018 ETM). School leaders receive funding of an average of EUR 200 per teacher per year, depending on the type of school and area, with ex-ante criteria covering the award and amount of the bonus. After three years of trialling this initiative, the government is expected to enact formal criteria for awarding the bonus and to make permanent provision to fund the initiative. Only teachers on permanent contracts are subject to (bonus-related) appraisals; teachers on temporary contracts are not evaluated. There are no measures to address insufficient performance

**School leaders are relatively well paid. They have a distinct career profile from teachers, and a different statutory salary range.**

School leaders (*dirigenti scolastici*) are selected and recruited through *ad hoc* public competitions open to teachers with at least 5 years' teaching experience. In 2018, the government aligned the professional status of school leaders to other public administration managers. This is reflected in their remuneration: while school heads' salaries are still lower than those of other public managers, they are now significantly higher than those of teachers (between 50% and 100% higher, depending on seniority). Salaries are defined according to criteria relating to the school district (number of schools and number of foreign students).

## 4. Investing in education and training

**Italy's investment in education is low and unevenly spread across education levels.**

General government expenditure on education, both as a proportion of GDP (3.8%) and as a proportion of total general government expenditure (7.9%), was among the lowest in the EU in 2017<sup>8</sup>. While the share of GDP allocated to pre-primary, primary and secondary education (ISCED levels 0-3) is broadly in line with EU standards, expenditure on tertiary education is the lowest in the EU, at just 0.3% of GDP in 2017, well below the EU average of 0.7%. The Council of the European Union adopted a country-specific recommendation for Italy under the 2019 European Semester to 'improve educational outcomes, also through adequate and targeted investment, and foster upskilling, including by strengthening digital skills.' (Council of the European Union, 2019). At 77%, the share of government education expenditure for the compensation of employees is among the highest in the EU.

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Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. TALIS 2018 covers lower secondary teachers and school leaders in mainstream public and private schools.

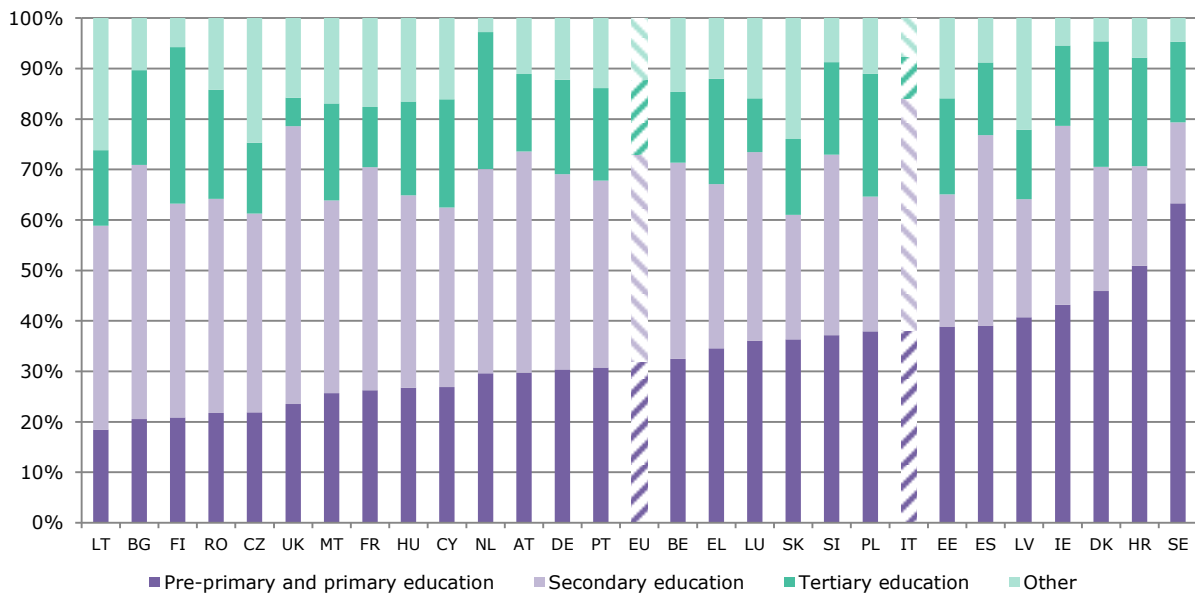
<sup>5</sup> Italian teachers report that they spend on average 17 hours per week teaching and 5 hours preparing lessons (TALIS). There are no statutory hours to be spent in school beyond teaching hours.

<sup>6</sup> Source: MIUR statistical office.

<sup>7</sup> See Eugenio Bruno e Claudio Tucci, *Quota 100, fuga dalla scuola: a settembre serviranno 140mila docenti*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 7 March 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (COFOG).



**Figure 2 Expenditure by education level, 2017**


Source: Eurostat, COFOG.

**The share of GDP spent on education is projected to fall over the next 15 years according to the government's own forecasts.** The Ministry of the economy and finances (MEF) estimates that the share of GDP spent on education will fall from 3.5% in 2019 to 3.1% in 2035, reflecting demographic decline (MEF, 2019). Among the priorities for 2019, the Minister of Education has announced an increase in resources for universities and research centres, through centrally-funded plans for the recruitment of assistant professors (*ricercatore di tipo B*, a tenure-track position of associate professorships) and for attracting Italian academics working abroad back to Italy.

## 5. Modernising early childhood and school education

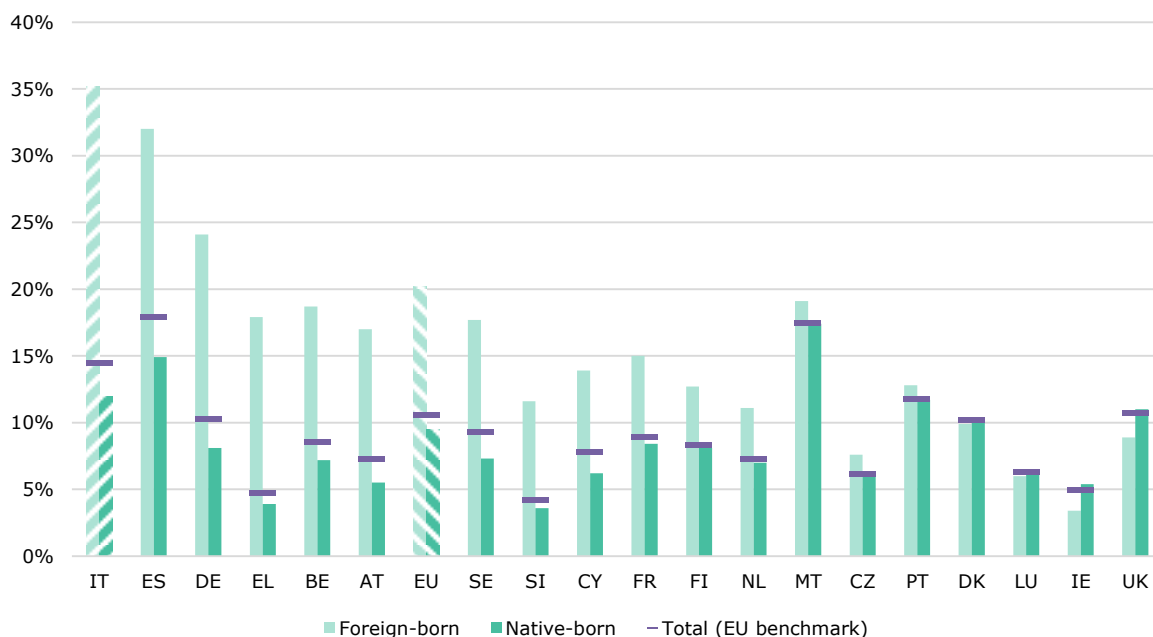
**Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is almost universal for 4- to 6-year-olds, but access for younger children is low and uneven across the country.** At 96%, participation in ECEC for children aged between 4 and 6 in 2017 exceeded both the EU average (95.4%) and the EU benchmark of 95%. For children below three, in 2016/17 there were 13 147 ECEC institutions offering around 354 000 places, just over half of them public. This represents a coverage of 24% of 0-3 year-olds, well below the EU target of 33% coverage. The ECEC offer and average spending by municipalities vary significantly across the country. Coverage ranges from 7.6% of eligible children in Campania to 44.7% in Valle d'Aosta. Spending per child varies from EUR 88 per year in Calabria to EUR 2 209 per year in the autonomous province of Trento. The 2015 school reform signalled a change in perspective on ECEC, shifting the focus from labour market and social policy objectives to education through an 'integrated education system from 0 to 6'. The reform is being implemented, with funding of EUR 209 million in 2017, EUR 224 million in 2018 and EUR 239 million in 2019.

**After falling steadily for a decade, the early school leaving (ESL) rate rose slightly in 2018, mostly due to a sharp increase among foreign-born people.** The total share of early school leavers among 18-24 year-olds in 2018 was 14.5%, up 0.5 pps from 2017. This is below Italy's Europe 2020 target but above the EU average of 10.6%. Although the early school leaving rate for native-born people was unchanged since the previous year (12%), the rate for foreign-born people rose from 30% in 2017 to 35% in 2018, well above the EU average of 20.2%. This is due to the growth of foreign-born students enrolled in the Italian educational system (+1.9%), balancing the decline in native students (-1.2%)<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> MIUR, *Gli alunni con cittadinanza non italiana A.S. 2017/2018*, July 2019



Figure 3 Early school leaving rate by country of birth, 2018



Source: Eurostat, LFS.

**Regional differences are marked.** At 19%, the ESL rate in the south and in the islands is significantly higher than in the north (11%). A similar gap can be observed in basic skills proficiency as measured by the 2015 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the annual standardised student tests by the National Agency for School Evaluation (INVALSI), with the north consistently and significantly outperforming the south (European Commission 2018). Many factors contribute to these gaps, including differences in student socio-economic background and different returns to education between regions.

**The government continues to revise the measures introduced by the 2015 Education Act (*la Buona Scuola*).** It put in place a revised system of teacher recruitment (see Section 3), reduced work-based learning to sharpen its focus on the competences required by the labour market, and postponed by one year the planned introduction of a final competence test at the completion of grade 13, with participation to remain voluntary (making it unrepresentative and therefore unusable for evaluation purposes). The content of teaching has been enriched by hiring extra music and gym teachers, with the stated aim of reducing early school leaving. More resources (EUR 35 million) have been invested in implementing the National Plan for Digital Schools, to create new digital learning environments (EUR 22 million), additional teacher training (EUR 7.5 million), and funding for problematic areas (EUR 2 million for 60 schools in the most deprived areas). Further measures target the two national agencies for evaluating the school system (Invalsi) and higher education and research (ANVUR), which will be integrated into the MIUR in a move which, by curtailing their independence, risks jeopardising all previous efforts to create an evaluation culture in the education system.

**Negotiations are underway between the government and three northern regions on an agreement which would decentralise responsibility for some public services, including education.** Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna have applied for full responsibility for a number of functions currently coordinated by central government, including education. The applications were made under a provision (*autonomia differenziata*) in the Italian constitution never previously applied. The implications of this are as yet unclear, but there are concerns it might exacerbate the north-south educational divide. A key issue will be funding: autonomous regions would receive a standard student cost per pupil from the central budget multiplied by the relevant population, but a standard budget allocation per pupil has yet to be set. Given economies of scale in more populous areas and the financial support granted to schools by municipalities, there is a concern that pupils in the north would benefit from more resources (e.g. better infrastructure, better-paid teachers) than pupils in the south, compromising the equal right to good quality education enshrined in the constitution.

### Box 1: Measuring student competence levels over time with European Social Fund support

INVALSI, Italy's national institute for the evaluation of the education and training system, runs a project on 'Diachronic and longitudinal measurement of students' competence levels'. The aim is to evaluate the competence levels of pupils in Italian and maths. The new feature of this project is its aim to go beyond the standard one-off yearly evaluations that only allow comparisons the yearly average to build a system that evaluates pupils' progress over time, from the start of primary to the completion of upper secondary education. The project will collect data both at a) micro-social level, so that each school can draw information on the effectiveness of their pedagogical and organisational systems, and b) macro-structural level, on the whole education system, to support policy makers by providing them with a solid evidence base.

Number of recipients:

- pupils and students: 50 000
- classes: 3 500
- schools: 1 300
- teachers: 3 500

Funding: EUR 14 760 930 from the National operational programme 'Per la Scuola'

Launch and duration: from 16/12/2015 to 31/12/2023

Website: <https://invalsi-pon1420.cineca.it/index.php?get=progetto>

## 6. Modernising higher education

**Despite improvements in completion rates and in the average duration of studies<sup>10</sup>, Italy's tertiary educational attainment rate continues to lag significantly behind the rest of the EU.** In 2018, the share of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment was the second-lowest in the EU at 26.9%, well below the EU average of 39.9%. It is particularly low among the foreign-born population, at 14% against the EU average of 37.8%. Family background is a determining factor: 30% of those who graduated in 2018 have at least one tertiary-educated parent, a proportion that rises to 43% for five-year degree courses (e.g. medicine, engineering and law) (AlmaLaurea 2019).

**It is difficult for highly qualified people to find employment, resulting in a growing number of university graduates emigrating.** The employment rate of recent tertiary graduates<sup>11</sup>, which fell sharply during the economic crisis<sup>12</sup>, has been slowly recovering since but remains one of the lowest in the EU at 62.8% in 2018, well below the EU average of 85.5%. Italian graduates increasingly seek employment abroad: in 2017, 28 000 university graduates moved abroad, up 3.9% since 2016 (and up 41.8% since 2013)<sup>13</sup>.

**The relatively high cost of tertiary education coupled with low returns on education discourages many from pursuing higher education studies.** University fees in Italy are high by EU standards, and student support is low. About 90% of students pay fees averaging EUR 1 345 per year for first-cycle studies and EUR 1 520 for second-cycle studies. In the academic year 2016/17 the share of students who received grants based on economic need and academic merit was 11.6% of the total. Although publicly-financed study loans are available, take-up is negligible at about 1% (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2018a). To raise tertiary attainment levels, the government is considering widening the fee-exemption system introduced in 2017 for students with an ISEE<sup>14</sup> declaration of up to EUR 13 000. In the same vein, it announced its intention to abolish selective admissions (*numero chiuso*) in several faculties, starting with medicine, and to

<sup>10</sup> The average age at graduation in 2018 was 26, down from 27 in 2008. 54% of graduates completed their studies within the prescribed timeframe (up from 39% in 2008).

<sup>11</sup> People aged 20-34 who left education between one and three years before the reference year.

<sup>12</sup> From 70.5% in 2008 to 52.9% in 2014 (source: Eurostat).

<sup>13</sup> Istat.

<sup>14</sup> The Equivalent Economic Condition Indicator to assess a family's economic condition.

reorganise arts and musical education (AFAM-*Alta Formazione Artistica e Musicale*), which will require a formal reorganisation of the recruitment system for teachers.

**The fall in academic staffing levels shows no sign of reversal.** With over a fifth of academic staff over the age of 60 (and only 14% under 40)<sup>15</sup>, further increases in enrolments in higher education will also depend upon the capacity to renew the teaching body. In 2019 the government has allocated additional funding for 1 500 tenure-track positions for assistant professors (*ricercatore universitario di tipo B*), to be distributed among public universities based on their size and, to a lesser extent, on the quality of their research<sup>16</sup>. In addition, turn-over limitations were eased for financially robust universities. Institutions with a salary expenditure below 80% of the budget and with a positive income/salary expenditure ratio can recruit up to 110% of the previous year's retirements. These measures may help, but are too limited in scope to effectively address low teaching staff levels over the longer term. A more substantial reversal may start as of 2020, when the government plans to increase funding to universities by EUR 100 million a year (equivalent to 1 000 new positions a year).

**The government is taking steps to expand the non-academic tertiary sector.** Extra funding of EUR 23 million has been allocated to expand the course offer of *Istituti Tecnici Superiori* (ITS), tertiary-level vocational institutions that offer better employment prospects (European Commission 2018) but which, with around 13 400 students, remain a *niche* phenomenon. The first vocational university degrees (*lauree professionalizzanti*) were launched in 2018 alongside the ITS (see Box 2).

#### Box 2: New vocational tertiary degree courses

A new type of vocational tertiary degree (*lauree professionalizzanti*) is being piloted in Italian universities as of 2018/19. Fourteen three-year degree courses were launched in as many universities, evenly distributed across the country, offering 700 places in total. The objective is to train tertiary-educated highly specialised professionals in engineering, construction and the environment, and energy and transport, in close cooperation with professional associations. The courses are modelled on the German *Fachhochschule*. They consist of two years of academic studies plus one year of work-based learning. Universities can offer from a minimum of three courses to a maximum not exceeding 10% of their total course offer. The number of available places (maximum 50 per course) is set on a local basis. With their strong vocational orientation, the new *lauree professionalizzanti* are a positive step towards creating a non-academic tertiary education sector, which Italy has lacked. Currently, 42% of Italian university students graduate with no practical training or work experience (Almalaurea 2019). By opening new paths into tertiary education, particularly for upper secondary VET graduates, the new degrees could also help lower Italy's early school leaving rate and raise the tertiary educational attainment rate.

## 7. Modernising vocational education and training

**Enrolment in upper secondary VET remained fairly stable in 2017 compared with previous years.** 55.3% of upper secondary students were enrolled in vocational programmes, above the EU average of 47.8%<sup>17</sup>. The level of employability of recent VET graduates rose slightly in 2018, to 53.9% vs. 50.8% in 2017 but is still substantially below the EU average of 79.5% in 2018<sup>18</sup>. A first analysis by the regions of the pilot projects for compulsory dual work-based learning in VET shows that participants are mostly final-year students and, to a limited extent, apprentices. While it is too early to draw conclusions, the pilot projects might ease the transition from education to the labour market and provide a more structured training offer for apprentices.

**Following the adoption of the Italian Qualifications Framework (QNQ) in January 2018, a new classification of qualifications was developed.** The National Repertory of Education and Training Qualifications and Professional Qualifications was created, covering qualifications from general education, higher education and VET qualifications administered at regional level.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Eurostat.

<sup>16</sup> Ministerial Decree n. 204/2019.

<sup>17</sup> Source: Eurostat, UOE, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2018.

**Italy is updating its recruitment system of VET teachers.** New requirements include knowledge of psychological and pedagogical disciplines, didactic methodologies and technologies, certified by specific university exams. Initial training for VET trainers is not regulated at national level and Italy lacks a nationally recognised register of trainers or formal recruitment procedures. The National Collective Labour Contract sets minimum requirements for access to the training profession: a degree or upper-secondary school diploma plus related professional experience in the relevant sector.

## 8. Developing adult learning

**The share of adults without an upper secondary qualification is high, and participation in adult learning is low.** In 2018, 38.3% of Italian adults aged 25-64 had at most a lower secondary qualification, compared with the EU average of 21.9%<sup>19</sup>, and only 8.1% of adults aged 25-64 had a recent learning experience (in the previous 4 weeks), compared with the EU average of 11.1% (LFS, 2018). The low participation rate of low-qualified adults to training (2%) is a concern given the mismatch between the number of jobs requiring low qualifications (2.5 million in 2017) and the number of low-qualified adults (over 12 million)<sup>20</sup>.

**Italy is fostering training schemes for the unemployed.** The most relevant policy measure for adult learning is the anti-poverty strategy, designed to promote social inclusion<sup>21</sup>. So far around 800 000 people have applied for the scheme (April 2019). Connected to it, the government plans to invest in developing the public employment services (PES). Recipients must follow training activities during the unemployment period. The implementation of this measure involves the recruitment of 10 000 'navigators' (career counsellors); selection procedures for the first navigators are ongoing. In parallel, new policy measures were developed to train adult educators<sup>22</sup>, introducing the qualification of 'socio-pedagogical professional educator'. Universities are directly involved in planning and managing the training offer.

**Italy lacks a common regulatory framework for adult learning professionals.** The adult educators' category comprises a wide range of professions, divided into numerous professional sectors in different fields: education, adult vocational training, continuing training of adults for and in organisations, non-formal educational schemes, and social-sector and public-sector services.

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<sup>19</sup> Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Decree n.4/2019, *Disposizioni urgenti in materia di reddito di cittadinanza e di pensioni*, GU Serie Generale n.23 del 28-01-2019.

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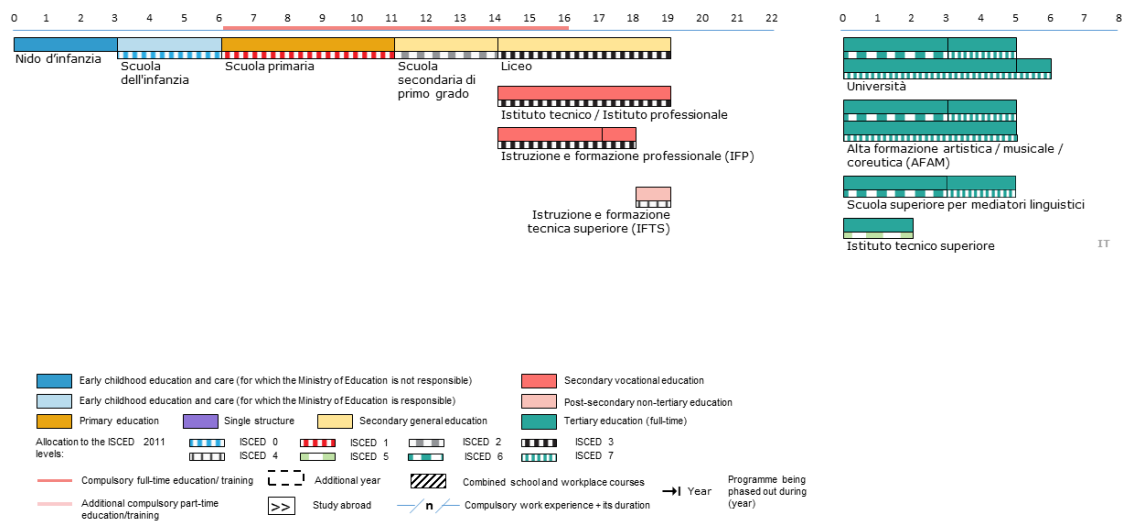
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## Annex I: Key indicator sources

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

## Annex II: Structure of the education system



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

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## Highlights of the cross-national analysis

Among all factors in the school environment, teachers are considered to have the greatest impact on students' learning outcomes. At the same time, more than 60%<sup>23</sup> of public expenditure in education in the EU is spent on teachers. Any policy effort seeking to improve educational outcomes – or the efficiency of education and training – is bound to take a close look at the role of teachers and look for ways to help teachers excel in their demanding profession. New evidence from the OECD TALIS survey sheds more light on teachers. The recent survey data inform the 2019 Education and Training Monitor, which contains a dedicated analysis of school teachers in the EU. Being a unique source of information on teachers' motivations, lifelong learning and careers, the new evidence from TALIS 2018 can help policy-makers harnessing the full potential of teachers by preventing and addressing challenges.

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

### At the core of learning: the teachers

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>23</sup> DG EAC calculation on Eurostat's general government finance statistics, reference year 2017 ([gov\\_10a\\_exp](#)).



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

target of less than 15% by 2020<sup>24</sup> remains a challenge, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Failing to achieve basic mathematics, reading or science tasks at the age of 15 impacts on individuals' chances to continue studying, find and maintain employment later in life, cope with fast-paced technological change, and develop as citizens. Between 2012 and 2015, the EU has actually moved further away from meeting this target. Approximately one fifth of pupils in the EU cannot complete basic reading tasks, and the share is slightly higher for science and maths (2015 data). Despite less favourable or sometimes adverse background conditions, around a quarter of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils born in another country are considered academically resilient. Individual factors associated with higher resilience include high academic expectations, and not repeating grades; while disengagement from school (for example skipping classes, and abusing substances) has a negative association with resilience. At school level, the use of school evaluations, connecting the students' test results to teachers' performance, adequate provision of study rooms and being surrounded by pupils with higher socio-economic status are all factors correlating positively with resilience.

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

## Developing competences for future life and employment

Research has long established the positive outcomes of being able to study abroad. Transnational learning mobility is associated with future mobility, higher earnings, and lower risk of unemployment. 'Making learning mobility a reality for all' is one of the objectives of the European Education Area<sup>25</sup>. In 2017, 11.6% of higher education graduates 'were mobile', meaning that they studied partially or entirely abroad. About 8% of them were abroad for short-term periods, while 3.6% graduated in another country. The Erasmus+ programme supported about half of the short-term study periods spent abroad by EU graduates. Overall, Luxembourg, Cyprus, the Netherlands, and Finland (in descending order) have high shares of mobile graduates. As to inward mobility, capturing the volume of students coming into a country for a period of study, it can be read as a measure of the attractiveness of the education system. On this indicator the United Kingdom leads the way – both in percentage of inward graduates and in absolute numbers.

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

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

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<sup>24</sup> Data for this benchmark come from the OECD PISA survey. Students scoring below level 2 are considered underachievers.

<sup>25</sup> In November 2017, EU leaders met in Gothenburg to discuss the social dimension of Europe, including education and culture. As part of the debate on the Future of Europe, the Commission set out its vision and concrete steps to create a European Education Area by 2025. One of the main objective of the European Area of Education is 'making mobility a reality for all', by building on the positive experiences of the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps and expanding participation in them, as well as by creating an EU Student Card to offer a new user-friendly way to store information on a person's academic records. Other measures to boost mobility under the European Education Area include initiating new processes to ensure the mutual recognition of diplomas; improving language learning; creating a network of European universities; and supporting teachers and their mobility.

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

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

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

## Public investment in education

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

## Highlights of the country analysis

### Austria

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

### Belgium

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

### Bulgaria

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

### Croatia

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

### Cyprus

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

### Czechia

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

### Denmark

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

### Estonia

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

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

### **Finland**

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

### **France**

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

### **Germany**

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

### **Greece**

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

### **Hungary**

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

### **Ireland**

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

### **Italy**

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

### Latvia

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

### Lithuania

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

### Luxembourg

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

### Malta

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

### Netherlands

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

### Poland

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

### Portugal

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

### Romania

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



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

### **Slovakia**

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

### **Slovenia**

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

### **Spain**

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

### **Sweden**

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

### **United Kingdom**

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



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