



European  
Commission

# Education and Training **MONITOR 2018** Spain



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

# **Education and Training Monitor 2018**

Spain

*Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2018 includes twenty-eight individual country reports. It builds on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence to present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy measures in each EU Member State, with a focus on developments since mid-2017. 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 looks at investment in education and training. Section 4 focuses on citizenship education. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise school education. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and training, while section 8 covers adult learning.*

*The manuscript was completed on 1 September 2018.*

*Additional contextual data can be found online ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor))*

## 1. Key indicators

		Spain		EU average		
		2014	2017	2014	2017	
<b>Education and training 2020 benchmarks</b>						
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)		21.9%	18.3%	11.2%	10.6%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)		42.3%	41.2%	37.9%	39.9%	
Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)		97.1% <sup>13</sup>	97.3% <sup>16</sup>	94.2% <sup>13</sup>	95.3% <sup>16</sup>	
Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:	Reading	18.3% <sup>12</sup>	16.2% <sup>15</sup>	17.8% <sup>12</sup>	19.7% <sup>15</sup>	
	Maths	23.6% <sup>12</sup>	22.2% <sup>15</sup>	22.1% <sup>12</sup>	22.2% <sup>15</sup>	
	Science	15.7% <sup>12</sup>	18.3% <sup>15</sup>	16.6% <sup>12</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)	65.1%	71.9%	76.0%	80.2%	
Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	10.1%	9.9%	10.8%	10.9%	
Learning mobility	Degree mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	1.4% <sup>16</sup>	:	3.1% <sup>16</sup>	
	Credit mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	7.7% <sup>16</sup>	:	7.6% <sup>16</sup>	
<b>Other contextual indicators</b>						
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	4.1%	4.0% <sup>16,p</sup>	4.9%	4.7% <sup>16</sup>	
	Expenditure on public and private institutions per student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€5 465	€5 837 <sup>15</sup>	€6 494 <sup>d</sup>	: <sup>15</sup>
		ISCED 3-4	€6 391	€6 925 <sup>15</sup>	€7 741 <sup>d</sup>	: <sup>15</sup>
		ISCED 5-8	€9 170	€9 350 <sup>15</sup>	€11 187 <sup>d</sup>	: <sup>15</sup>
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	18.9%	15.6%	10.4%	9.6%	
	Foreign-born	37.8%	31.9%	20.2%	19.4%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	46.5%	45.6%	38.6%	40.6%	
	Foreign-born	26.9%	26.2%	34.3%	36.3%	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4	54.7%	57.9%	70.7%	74.1%	
	ISCED 5-8	68.6%	76.6%	80.5%	84.9%	

Sources: Eurostat (see section 10 for more details); OECD (PISA).

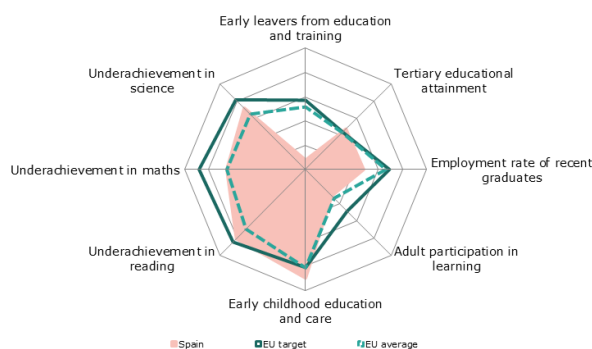
Notes: data refer to weighted EU averages, covering different numbers of Member States depending on the source;

d = definition differs, 12 = 2012, 13 = 2013, 15 = 2015, 16 = 2016.

On credit graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by DG EAC on the available countries; on degree graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by JRC over Eurostat and OECD data.

Further information can be found in the relevant section of Volume 1 ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)).

**Figure 1. Position in relation to strongest (outer ring) and weakest performers (centre)**



Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2017, UOE 2016) and OECD (PISA 2015). Note: all scores are set between a maximum (the strongest performers represented by the outer ring) and a minimum (the weakest performers represented by the centre of the figure).

## 2. Highlights

- Spending on education remains stable but is below the EU average. The 2018 budget increases funding for study grants.
- There are regional differences in how citizenship education is provided. While the subject is not compulsory across the country, there is an increasingly strong focus on training teachers in how to address challenges such as racism and xenophobia.
- While there is good progress in reducing early school leaving, rates still vary between regions. The problem of grade repetition persists.
- In higher education, there are high rates of initial dropout and slow progress in completing bachelor's studies. The qualification mismatch remains high and there are strong skills imbalances.
- The 2015 vocational education and training (VET) reform is still under way, with new initiatives introduced on dual VET schemes, access to VET and expansion of higher VET to address low participation and low employment rates. Measures in adult learning have focused on ensuring that both employed and unemployed adults upgrade their skills and acquire new ones.

## 3. Investing in education and training

**Spending on education remains stable, but is below the EU average.** Although there was a slight increase in the share of total public spending on education in 2016 (to 9.5 %) it decreased slightly as a share of GDP (to 4.0 %). Both remain below the EU average (10.2 % and 4.7 % respectively). Education spending has not yet recovered to the pre-crisis level of 2009, (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2018). The biggest share of total government spending goes towards pre-primary and primary education (39.2 %), followed by secondary education (37.5 %) and tertiary education (14.1 %). Education expenses incurred by families increased by 34 % between 2009 and 2015 (National Institute of Statistics, 2017). As private expenditure goes towards extracurricular activities and supplementary tuition, the rise of such spending may negatively affect educational equity.

**Spending on education has been the subject of strong political discussions in the context of the Social and Political Pact in education.** Left-wing parties are pushing for an increase in spending to 5 % of GDP, while the centre-right parties would prefer incremental yearly rises to reach 4.7 % GDP by 2025. Views differ on whether budget commitments should be expressed as a percentage of GDP or as spending per student. The possible political and social agreement on education, noted in last year's Monitor, has not happened and its future is unclear in the context of the new Government.

**The budget for study grants has increased in 2018.** The general budget for 2018 sets out a 3.5 % increase in the amount allocated to study grants, which had been practically frozen since 2014. Grants for compulsory education can cover meals, transport, school books and manuals. In higher education (HE), they can also cover fees, foreign language studies, traineeships and students mobility activities<sup>1</sup>. The majority of grants are paid to HE students (50.1 %), 27.8 % of grants are for post-compulsory education (medium-level VET and general upper secondary education) and 22.1 % are for early childhood education and care (ECEC), primary education and lower secondary education.

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus+ internships, short stays, exchange programmes and master studies abroad.

## 4. Citizenship education

**Citizenship education is taught as a cross-curricular theme integrated into other compulsory subjects at each ISCED level of general education** (Eurydice, 2017a). In the basic curriculum, the subjects 'civic and social values' and 'ethical values' are offered as an optional alternative to religion (Catholic) nationwide. The latest figures (for both public and private schools) show that in the 2015/2016 school year 'civic and social values' was chosen by around 33 % of primary students while 46 % of secondary students chose 'ethical values' (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2018). Citizenship is not included in VET curricula. Some Spanish regions (known as 'autonomous communities') complement citizenship education or even include it as a separate compulsory subject. In Andalusia, Aragon, the Canary Islands and Cantabria, 'citizenship education and human rights' is offered in addition to 'civil and social values'. Furthermore, in late 2017 a political agreement was reached — in the context of the Social and Political Pact on education — to introduce 'human rights and civic and constitutional values' as a new subject in school curricula.

**Measures to fight racism and xenophobia include teachers' training on civic and intercultural values, initiatives to fight anti-Semitism and courses on the Islamic religion.** The National Institute of Education and Training Technologies for Teachers provides online citizenship courses. Several autonomous communities offer complementary training to teachers on topics such as inclusive education and gender equality (Extremadura), sexual, family and gender diversity, democracy and coeducation (Valencia), and intercultural respect and equity education (Madrid). Measures are also being taken to fight against anti-Semitism and to better integrate Islamic communities into the education system - the Ministry of Education, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain and some Jewish foundations are in discussions with a view to signing I agreements. Islamic religion courses are offered in schools in some autonomous communities (Andalusia, Aragon, Canary Islands, Castile and León, Valencia, and the Basque Country) and in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla. . Since 2015-2016, the Ministry of Education has implemented the National Strategic Plan on School Life, which promotes values to stimulate democratic citizenship, solidarity, tolerance, equity, respect, justice, and eliminate all kinds of discrimination.

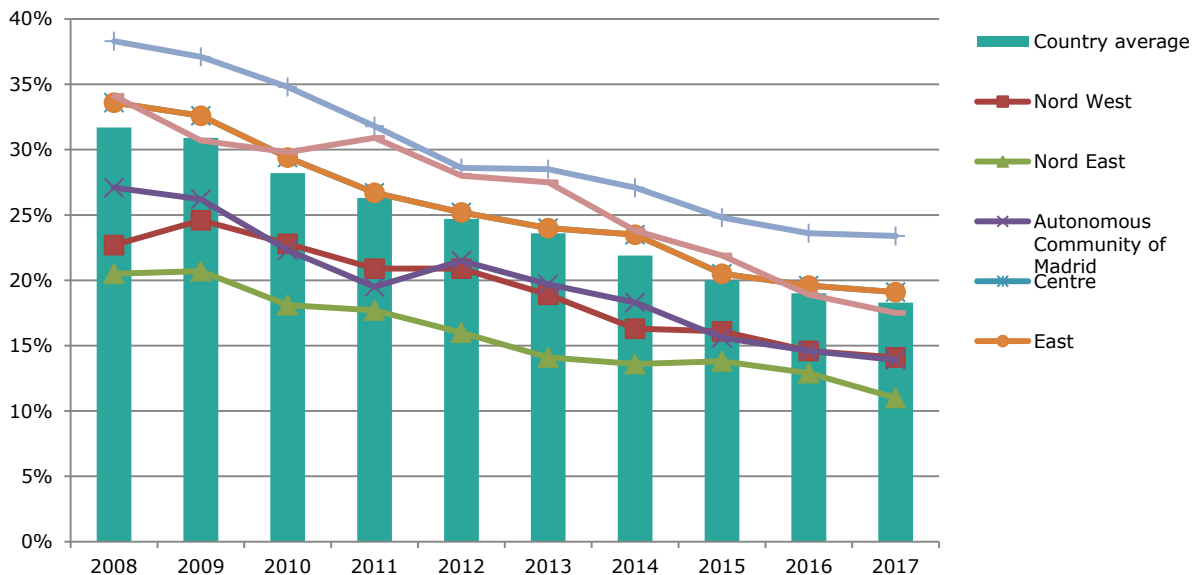
## 5. Modernising school education

**Spain performs well in early childhood education and care, but lacks nationally harmonised standards on quality and on the availability of public pre-schools.** Preschool education is free from 3 to 6 and taught by graduate teachers. There is a national framework curriculum. The ECEC enrolment rate from age 4 to the starting age of compulsory education (97.3 %) exceeds the 'Education and Training 2020' target (95 %). For 2 year-old children, the 55 % enrolment rate is also above the EU average (OECD, 2017a). According to the latest data, 67.4 % of children aged 3-6 attend public centres, whereas for children aged 0-3 the percentage is 46 % (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2018). In 2017, the State School Council recommended that the Ministry of Education harmonise and establish basic minimum requirements in ECEC centres. In addition, the State School Council has called for an increase in the number of public pre-school places for children aged 0-3 and stressed the need for agreements with local authorities and other administrations to meet demand.

**Spain is making very good progress in reducing early school leaving (ESL).** The ESL rate has decreased progressively (23.6 % in 2013, 20 % in 2015 and 18.3 % in 2017). If the trend continues, Spain will have reached the national target of 15 % by 2020. The progress made since 2008 is particularly high in autonomous communities such as Rioja (-24.2 pps), Murcia (-17.5 pps) and the Canary Islands (-16.6 pps). In contrast, in Andalusia, the Balearic Islands, Castile-La Mancha, Valencia and the Region of Murcia the ESL rate remains above 20 %. In Cantabria and the Basque Country the rate is below 10 % (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2018). The level of parents' educational attainment, students' socio-economic status, migrant background and gender all strongly influence ESL rates. A further explanation for high ESL rates in certain regions could be the high demand for low-skilled workers in sectors such as tourism and construction.

**Grade repetition rates are not improving.** The 'suitability rate'<sup>2</sup> of students decreases as their age increases (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2017a). At 15 years-old it is only 63.9 %, whereas at 8, 10, 12 and 14 years-old is 93.7 %, 89.5 %, 85.3 % and 71.7% respectively. The grade repetition rate is very high: 12.3 % students repeat the first grade of lower secondary school; 10.7 % the second grade; 11 % the third grade; and 9.5 % the fourth grade. In 2018, Spain received a country-specific recommendation to 'reduce early school leaving and regional disparities in educational outcomes, in particular by better supporting students and teachers' (Council of the European Union, 2018).

**Figure 2. Early leavers from education and training by NUTS 1 regions (2017)**



Source: DG EAC, based on data from Eurostat. Online data codes: *edat\_ifse\_14* and *edat\_ifse\_30*. The indicator is defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the 4 weeks preceding the survey. The indicator is based on the EU Labour Force Survey. NB: NUT 1 regions for Spain correspond to the following Autonomous communities: North West: Galicia, Asturias and Cantabria; North East: Basque Country, Navarre, Rioja and Aragon; Centre: Castile and León, Castile-La Mancha and Extremadura; East: Catalonia, Valencia and Balearic Islands; and South: Andalusia, Region of Murcia, and the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

**The teaching profession, including means of entering the profession, needs reform.** There is a high number of non-permanent teaching staff in the Spanish education system. On average, 1 out of 4 teachers is temporary (the range is 14-32 % across regions). The 2006 Royal Decree that determines access to the teaching profession was slightly amended in 2018 to favour the recruitment as permanent staff of temporary teachers. Around 130 000 new permanent teachers are expected to be recruited by 2020 and 200 000 by 2022.

**Less than half of students learn a second foreign language, with significant variation between the autonomous communities.** A first foreign language (mainly English) is compulsory from age 6, but students start learning earlier (3 or 4 years-old) in some regions (Eurydice, 2017b). From 12-18 years-old (11 in some regions) all school children can opt for a second foreign language, most commonly French. On average, 43.3 % of lower secondary students opt for a second foreign language, with much higher rates in some autonomous communities (68.5 % in Galicia, 66.9 % in the Canary Islands and 62.2 % in Asturias). For some autonomous communities (Canary Islands, Cantabria, Galicia and the Region of Murcia), the second foreign language is compulsory from age 10 or 12. The share of upper secondary school students who study a second foreign language also varies widely — from 64 % in Andalusia to below 25 % in the other autonomous communities. All students in autonomous communities with a co-official language must learn that language and VET students must also learn one foreign language for at least 10 years (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2017a).

<sup>2</sup> Suitability rate ('tasa de idoneidad' in Spanish) refers to the percentage of students who are enrolled in the course that theoretically corresponds to their age.



### Box 1: The prize-winning Second Chance Schools for young people<sup>3</sup>

The Second Chance Schools (E2O) of Gijón's City Council (Asturias region, north of Spain) support young people aged 14-25 with insufficient skills and/or associated difficulties (absenteeism, ESL, poor family support, health problems, non-EU migrants, etc.). The programmes also support organisations that work with such young people.

These schools try to adapt to the needs of these young people, offering practical training activities. The activities aim to develop soft skills and abilities essential for young people to return to education or to get jobs. Areas of assistance include:

- educational support: secondary education, English, Spanish for foreigners;
- career and job orientation;
- artistic activities (crafts, theatre, creative writing, dance);
- health (cooking, sport, yoga, personal image, social skills);
- citizen participation; and
- ICT (computer, audio-visual and radio).

Courses are tailored to the needs of each individual and are under constant review.

The project is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), which finances the wages of social educators, tutors, mediators and teachers. The City Council hires unemployed people in the areas of socio-cultural animation, social integration, social education and teaching (physical education and sport, primary education, English, etc.). Some of these people work in the second chance schools programme.

For more information: <https://empleo.gijon.es/page/3872-escuela-de-segunda-oportunidad>

## 6. Modernising higher education

**Spain has a high early dropout rate and many students are slow to complete their degrees** (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2017b). Spain's rate of tertiary educational attainment (41.2 %) is consistently high and above the EU average (39.9 %). However, the employment rate of recent tertiary graduates (76.6 %) is below the EU average (84.9 %). The dropout rate in the first year of bachelor's programmes is 21.8 % (25 % for men and 19 % for women). Furthermore, 8.3 % of students change degrees (9.9 % of men and 6.9 % of women). Similarly, the 'suitability rate'<sup>4</sup> is very low, with only 34.9 % of students graduating after 4 years of study (the normal length of a bachelor's degree). For master's degrees, the dropout rate is comparably low (13.3 %) and only 2 % change their course once started. The suitability rate is 72.7 % for one-year master's programmes and 70.5 % for two-year programmes.

**University students benefit from a generous public grant policy.** The Ministry of Education provides 70 % of all public grants, which are awarded according to certain academic and economic criteria (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2017c). While 26.5% of students receive a grant for the entire (4-year) term of the bachelor's degree, in the first year up to 40% receive one.

**Less than 10 % of Spanish higher education graduates participate in mobility programmes abroad.** In 2016, almost 33 500 graduates at ISCED 5-8 spent 3 months studying abroad (7.6 % of all graduates). Of these, 87 % participated in EU mobility programmes such as Erasmus+, 58 % of them at bachelor's level or equivalent. The main destination countries were other EU countries (80 % of graduates).

<sup>3</sup> This project won first prize in the category 'technologies and work with young people from education and training in order to promote innovation and inclusion' in the Global Junior Challenge (organised by the 'Fondazione Mondo Digitale') in October 2017 in Rome (<http://2017.gjc.it/en/node/2387>).

<sup>4</sup> The 'suitability rate' measures the share of students who graduate in the normal amount of time allocated for the course.

**The qualifications mismatch in Spain remains high and there are significant skills imbalances.** In 2015, 19.2 % of Spanish workers were underqualified for their jobs, 22.4 % were overqualified and a further 34.6 % were mismatched, i.e. employed in a different field from that which they had studied (OECD, 2015). Several studies are being conducted to measure skills imbalances. The OECD's 2017 'Getting Skills Right' report has suggested a number of policies to prevent skills imbalances, targeting skills development and investment for individuals and employers. These include on-the-job learning, getting employers involved in dual higher VET<sup>5</sup>, encouraging them to participate in curricula design, and offering them financial incentives to promote apprenticeship schemes. All Autonomous Communities, and also the Ministry of Education, have implemented specific programs to develop dual VET. In 2018, Spain received a country-specific recommendation in the context of the European Semester to 'increase cooperation between education and businesses with a view to mitigating existing skills mismatches' (Council of the European Union, 2018).

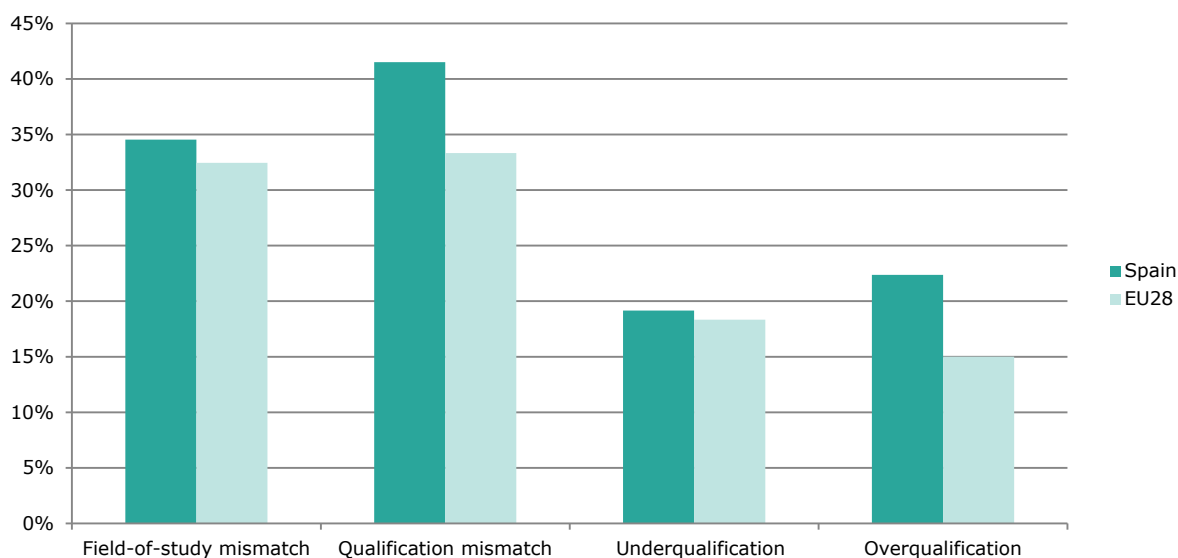
**The role and challenges of higher education institutions (HEIs) in addressing skills mismatches have been examined in a number of studies.** The 2016 barometer on higher education by the Knowledge and Development Foundation (CYD, 2016) highlights the main challenges in this respect. The findings stress the need to: (i) strengthen university-business collaboration on research and technology; (ii) provide more internship opportunities in companies for students and graduates; and (iii) develop university graduates' key competences such as management, teamwork, problem-solving, analytical and language skills. In addition, the 2017 barometer by the Spanish Observatory for University Employability and Employment (OEEU, 2018) notes that the competences most necessary for work (problem-solving, adaptability and resilience) are in general those encouraged by universities during master's studies. Furthermore, according to the OEEU survey: (i) 65 % of masters students consider their latest job to be very much related to their field of study; (ii) 85 % are in jobs that match their qualifications; and (iii) 7 out of 10 students are quite or very much ready to look for a job.

### Box 2: Fostering university-business cooperation, mainly with SMEs

In 2017, Santander Bank, CRUE (Conference of Principals of Spanish Universities), and CEPYME (the association of SMEs in Spain) signed an agreement for the seventh call of the well-established 'Scholarships Santander-CRUE-CEPYME Practices in Companies' programme. During 2018, scholarships for paid internships in Spanish SMEs will be offered to 5 000 university students in Spain thanks to a EUR 2 250 000 investment by Santander Bank. So far, 25 915 university students have had their first work experience in 15 837 SMEs and half of them continued working with the company. Similarly, CRUE and Gas Natural Fenosa signed a two-year agreement at the end of 2017 to offer university students extracurricular hands-on experience at the company.

For more information: <https://www.bancosantander.es/es/universidades/becas/crue-cepyme>; <http://www.crue.org/Comunicacion/Noticias/Firma%20convenio%20pr%C3%A1cticas%20Crue-Gas%20Natural%20Fenosa.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Higher vocational education and training performed in two learning places: at an enterprise and at the vocational school.

**Figure 3. Field-of-study and qualification mismatches (2015)**


Source: DG EAC, based on data from OECD. The indicator is based on the EU Labour Force Survey. The EU average is missing data from some countries. This dataset uses the following definition of mismatch: qualification mismatch arises when workers have an educational attainment that is higher or lower than that required by their job. If their education level is higher than that required by their job, workers are classified as overqualified; if the opposite is true, they are classified as underqualified. Field-of-study mismatch arises when workers are employed in a different field from the one they specialised in.

## 7. Modernising vocational education and training

**Spain continues to implement the 2015 VET reform and has new initiatives to further develop dual VET, improve access and expand higher VET.** At 35 % in 2016, the share of upper secondary Spanish students (ISCED 3) in VET is still far below the EU average (49 %). The employment rate of recent upper secondary VET graduates dropped from 61.3 % in 2016 to 58.5 % in 2017 and is well below the EU average of 76.6 %. The newly approved 2017-2020 employment activation strategy aims to improve the VET system, particularly in dual training. In addition, in 2017, the Ministry of Education allocated EUR 392 million to regional measures for new initial VET programmes (developed under the 2015 VET Reform).

**A new regulation to access VET studies is being prepared.** In 2017, the government tabled a new Royal Decree on access and admission to VET. This aims to establish a basic framework and harmonised criteria in all regional educational administrations for the entrance exams for the three VET levels (basic, intermediate and higher). The allocation of places in intermediate VET programmes (where demand is higher than availability) will be as follows: 50 % to 75 % for compulsory secondary education graduates; 10 % to 40 % for basic VET graduates; and 10 % to 30 % for students who pass an admission test for VET. For higher VET programmes, the target allocation of places is: 50 % to 70 % for students with a baccalaureate certificate; 0 % to 40 % for intermediate VET graduates; and 10 % to 30 % for students who have passed an entrance exam for higher VET (or other higher qualifications). The proposed Decree also sets out the criteria for assessment, competence requirements, learning standards and content and learning outcomes. The text has already undergone consultation since September 2017 and, if approved, will be implemented as of the 2018/2019 academic year.

**The higher VET catalogue has been updated.** In 2017, the government updated the catalogue of higher level vocational qualifications in collaboration with its social partners. This version of the catalogue aims to better match the relevance and transparency of vocational and professional training with the needs of the labour market. This is important for comparing the qualifications attained across regions and their relevance for the available jobs.

## 8. Promoting adult learning

**Measures on adult learning have focused on ensuring that both employed and unemployed adults upgrade their skills and acquire new ones.** Adult participation in learning rose slightly from 9.4 % in 2016 to 9.9 % in 2017 but is still below the EU average of 10.9 %. In 2017, 56 % of people aged 25-64 possessed basic or above basic overall digital skills (EU average: 59 %). According to the Continuing Vocational Training Survey, in 2015, 55.4 % of employees participated in on the job training (EU average: 40.8 %). In 2015, the majority of Spanish companies considered teamwork, customer service skills and technical, practical and job-specific skills to be the most important skills for business development. SEPE, Spain's national public employment service has started the process to put in place nationwide training programmes to improve professional skills in line with technological change and digital transformation, thereby improving the performance and employability of adults. The call covers digital skills identified by Joint Sectoral Commissions. One of the pillars of the forthcoming national digital strategy ('Estrategia para una España inteligente') is likely to be entitled 'Citizenship, Education and Digital Employment' and would focus on the need to improve the digital skills, competences and ICT training of individuals in general and of people in the workforce (Ministry of Economy and Business, 2017).

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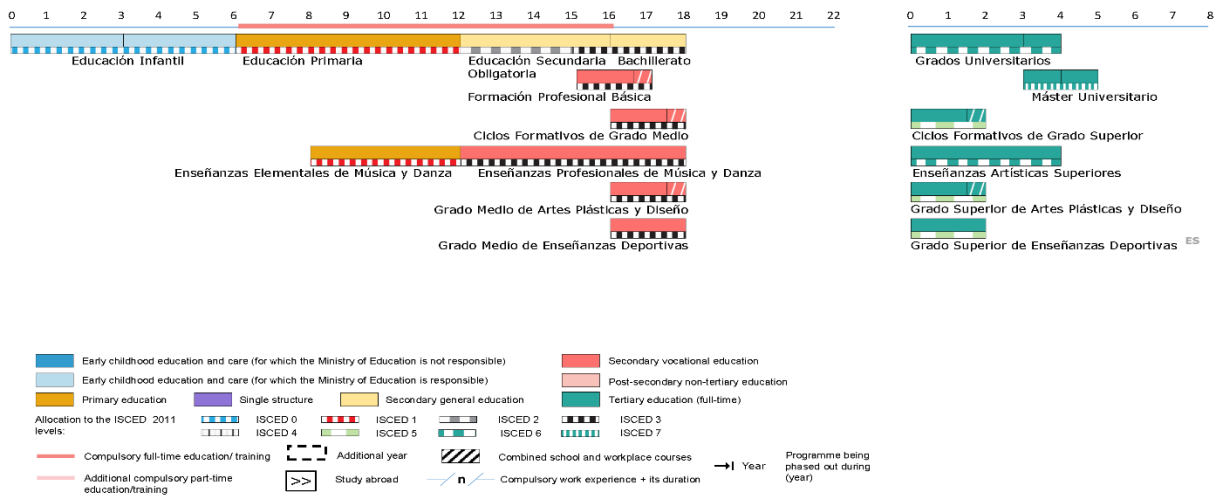
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## 10. Annex I: Key indicator sources

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	educ_uoe_mobc02

## 11. Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017. *The Structure of the European Education Systems 2017/18: Schematic Diagrams*. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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