



European
Commission

Education and Training Monitor 2019

Latvia



Getting in touch with the EU

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union.

You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696 or
- by email via: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019

© European Union, 2019

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged. The reuse policy of European Commission documents is regulated by Decision 2011/833/EU (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under the EU copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.

PRINT	ISBN 978-92-76-09430-2	ISSN 2466-9989	doi: 10.2766/758447	NC-AN-19-019-EN-C
PDF	ISBN 978-92-76-09433-3	ISSN 2466-9997	doi: 10.2766/81709	NC-AN-19-019-EN-N

Cover image: composition with images © istock.com

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Education and Training Monitor 2019

Latvia

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.

The Education and Training Monitor 2019 was prepared by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), with contributions from the Directorate-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) and the Eurydice Network. DG EAC was assisted by the Education and Youth Policy Analysis Unit from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), Eurostat, Cedefop and the JRC's Human Capital and Employment Unit, Directorate Innovation and Growth. The Members of the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB) were consulted during the drafting phase.

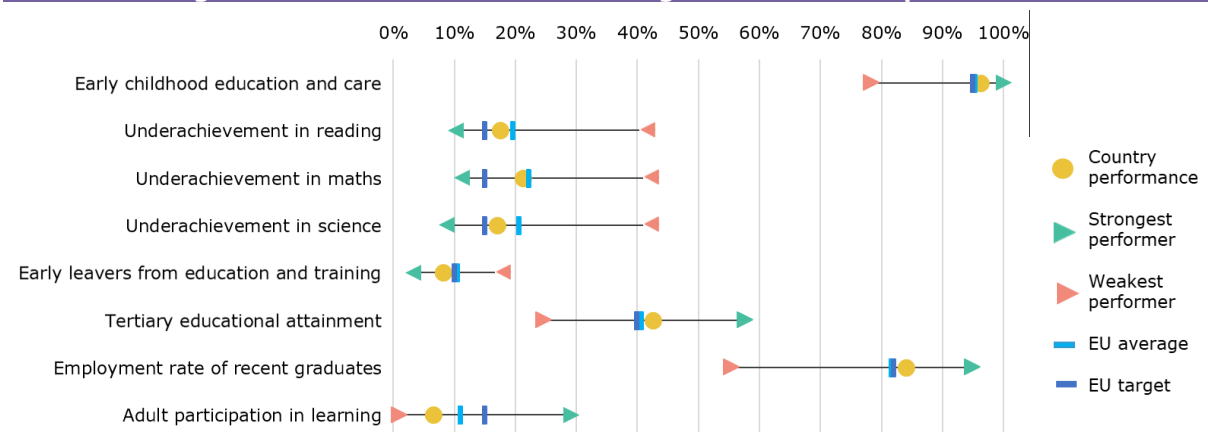
*The manuscript was completed on 26 August 2019.
Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)*

1. Key indicators

		Latvia		EU average		
		2009	2018	2009	2018	
Education and training 2020 benchmarks						
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)		14.3%	8.3%	14.2%	10.6%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)		30.5%	42.7%	32.3%	40.7%	
Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)		91.7%	96.3% ¹⁷	90.8%	95.4% ^{17,d}	
Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:	Reading	17.6%	17.7% ¹⁵	19.5%	19.7% ¹⁵	
	Maths	22.6%	21.4% ¹⁵	22.3%	22.2% ¹⁵	
	Science	14.7%	17.2% ¹⁵	17.7%	20.6% ¹⁵	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-8 (total)	69.7%	84.1%	78.3%	81.6%	
Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	5.6%	6.7%	9.5%	11.1%	
Learning mobility	Degree-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	8.5% ¹⁷	:	3.6% ¹⁷	
	Credit-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	7.2% ¹⁷	:	8.0% ¹⁷	
Other contextual indicators						
	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	6.7%	5.8% ¹⁷	5.2%	4.6% ¹⁷	
Education investment	Expenditure on public and private institutions per student in € PPS	ISCED 0	€4 706 ¹²	€4 055 ¹⁶	:	€6 111 ^{15,d}
		ISCED 1	€5 352 ¹²	€4 693 ¹⁶	€5 812 ^{12,d}	€6 248 ^{15,d}
		ISCED 2	€5 393 ¹²	€4 730 ¹⁶	€6 937 ^{12,d}	€7 243 ^{15,d}
		ISCED 3-4	€5 684 ¹²	€5 135 ¹⁶	:	€7 730 ^{14,d}
		ISCED 5-8	€8 072 ^{12,d}	€5 408 ¹⁶	€10 549 ^{12,d}	€11 413 ^{15,d}
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	14.3%	8.4%	13.1%	9.5%	
	Foreign-born	: ^u	: ^u	26.1%	20.2%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	30.9%	42.4%	33.1%	41.3%	
	Foreign-born	: ^u	50.7%	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	57.7%	75.0%	72.5%	76.8%	
	ISCED 5-8	80.4%	91.3%	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). Notes: The EU's 2009 PISA averages do not include Cyprus; d = definition differs, u = low reliability, := 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).

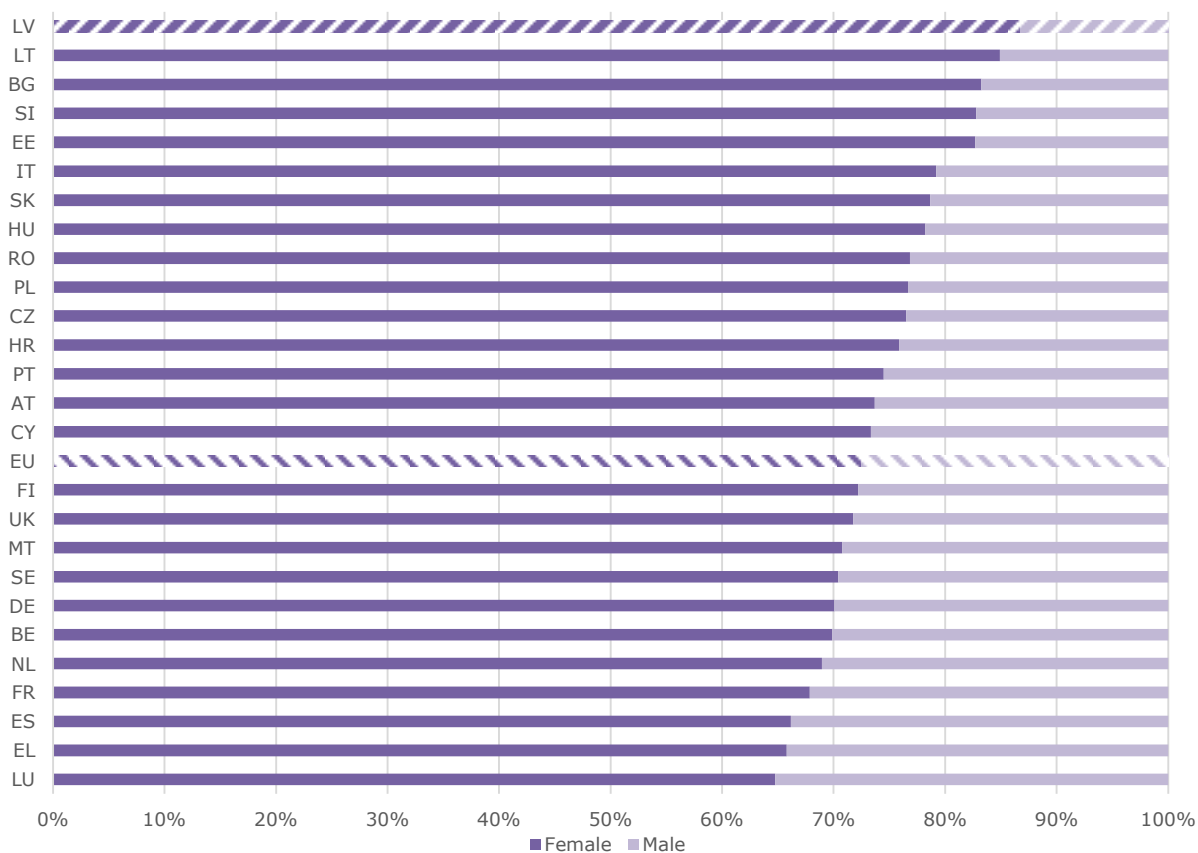
2. Highlights

- 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.

3. A focus on teachers

Latvia's teaching workforce is mostly older and overwhelmingly female. In 2017, women accounted for 87% of primary and secondary teachers, the highest figure in the EU, which has an average of 72%. The percentage of women teachers falls as the level of education rises, a pattern common to all OECD countries: in 2016 the figure ranged from close to 100% in pre-primary education to 80% in upper secondary, and just over 55% in tertiary education (Fig. 2). Women also comprise a significant share of school leaders: 77% of lower secondary schools leaders are women, the highest share across all OECD countries (OECD average: 45%). Latvia's teachers are also among the oldest in the EU. In 2017, almost half (47%) of all school teachers were 50 or over, and only 16% were under 40¹.

Figure 2 Distribution of teachers by sex, primary to upper secondary, 2017



Source: Eurostat, UOE. Online data code: [educ_uae_perp01](#)

¹ Source: Eurostat, UOE, 2017. Online data code: [educ_uae_perp01](#).

Renewing the teaching workforce is a challenge, as young graduates are not attracted to the profession and teacher shortages are becoming apparent, especially in science and maths. In 2015, less than 1% of 15-year-olds aspired to work as a teacher (only 0.2% among boys) (European Commission, 2018). According to the Ministry of Education and Science, out of approximately 1 000 education graduates per year, currently only about 350-400 actually start working as teachers. To promote the quality and relevance of education programmes, the ministry has updated regulations on the financing of higher education institutions (HEIs), to ensure they receive performance-based funding depending on how many of their education graduates enter the teaching profession. Teacher shortages are increasingly being reported: in September 2018, a survey of 200 school leaders by the Society for Independent Education found that 65% of schools had a shortage of teachers². In 2018, the government decided to temporarily ease requirements for teaching scientific subjects by allowing STEM university students to teach for 1 year in primary and secondary school, under the guidance of a mentor teacher (see Box 1).

School leaders are responsible for recruiting teaching and non-teaching staff. Teachers are recruited based on their qualifications and experience. In PISA 2015, Latvian school leaders reported having much greater freedom in hiring teachers (96.8%) than the OECD average (70.3%). Responsibility for recruiting and dismissing school leaders lies with municipalities, as they are the funders of most schools; 662 schools are funded by municipalities as compared to 59, against 58 funded by private individuals, government or other organisations.

Low statutory salaries and long working hours contribute to making teaching unattractive; reforms have not yet brought about the desired improvements. According to the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018³, the proportion of Latvian teachers who believe that teaching is a valued profession in society is higher than the EU average (23.3% v 17.7%). However, only 65.4% of teachers say that if they could decide again, they would still choose to become a teacher (v 77.6% in the EU as a whole). Income reliability and job security appear to be strong influencing factors in choosing teaching as a profession⁴. School teachers in Latvia are trained at tertiary level and can access the profession either through an initial teacher education programme or by combining academic training and in-service training at least 72 hours in pedagogy. Officially, the ratio of teachers' salaries to those of other tertiary graduates in Latvia is comparatively high (OECD), but the relatively large shadow economy means that the actual ratio is probably much lower⁵.

In 2016, the government introduced a new teacher remuneration scheme expressly to promote a transparent wage system and make expenditure more efficient. The minimum monthly salary increased by around 17.6% from EUR 405 (for 21 hours) to EUR 680 (for 30 hours) from 1 September 2016. In January 2018 a gradual increase in teachers' salaries from September 2018 to 2022 was approved. The base monthly salary for teachers rose from EUR 680 to EUR 710 on 1 September 2018 and to EUR 750 on 1 September 2019 — still less than half the EU average (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018).

While starting salaries are fixed by law, top salaries are not pre-defined, however they cannot exceed the lowest salary rate by more than 50%. School leaders have autonomy in deciding on most allowances and salary supplements such as performance-related bonuses, overtime and extra activities, which can amount to 50% of a teacher's basic pay. As a result, lower secondary teachers teach on average 46% more than the 30 hours a week statutory teaching time, the highest difference among OECD countries for which data is available⁶. Working conditions differ greatly depending on a school's location and size. School size matters — state subsidies for municipal schools are based on student numbers, and bigger schools tend to attract better

² Izglītība un kultūra (2018) Aptauja: 65% skolu trūkst pedagogu. <https://www.izglitiba-kultura.lv/zinas/aptauja-65-skolu-trukst-pedagogu>

³ In 2018, 23 Member States participated in TALIS survey: Austria, Belgium fr, Belgium nl, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, England (UK), Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. TALIS 2018 covers lower secondary teachers and school leaders in mainstream public and private schools.

⁴ Income reliability and job stability were considered of high importance by 90% and 93% of TALIS respondents (EU average: 66% and 65.5%).

⁵ Estimated at 24.2% of GDP in 2018, 43.5% of which consisting of under-the-table salary payments, according to the Shadow Economy Index by the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga.

⁶ See Education at a Glance 2018 OECD Indicators, <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=LVA&treshold=10&topic=EO>.

teachers. In addition, the regulations are insufficiently clear on which tasks are to be included in the basic salary and which can be considered additional work and thus subject to possible salary supplements to be determined by the school leader (State Audit Office 2018). The need for more transparent and simpler teacher salary regulations was recently highlighted by the State Audit Office⁷.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is compulsory for teachers of all levels, and is required for promotion to the level of performance-based additional payment system.

Teachers must undergo 36 hours of professional development every 3 years. There are many forms and formats of CPD in use, and their comparative effectiveness has not been measured. The European Social Fund project supporting the development and implementation of a competence-based curriculum (*Skola 2030*) contains a substantial CPD component, preparing teachers to use modern tools and approaches, including digital technologies.

Box 1: Tackling teacher shortages

In September 2018 the government adopted a regulation on the education and qualification requirements for teachers and the development of teachers' professional competences⁸. Among other things, the regulation addresses the shortage of science and maths teachers, by introducing a new path into teaching for STEM graduates who do not possess teaching qualifications. According to the new regulation, a person with degree in a relevant subject can teach for one year in school, provided they are mentored by a qualified teacher. Those who choose to continue teaching in school beyond the one-year term foreseen in the regulation, will have to obtain a full teaching qualification through ITE.

The regulation also eases qualification requirements to teach in the VET system, if the teaching workload is below 360 hours per year. This measure is meant to encourage the involvement of industry professionals in the implementation of vocational education programmes.

4. Investing in education and training

Government expenditure on education is comparatively high at all education levels.

Latvia's general government expenditure on education was well above the EU average in 2017, both as a proportion of GDP (5.8% v 4.6%) and as a proportion of total public expenditure (15.2% v 10.2%⁹). Public spending on education increased by 10% between 2016 and 2017 in real terms, the highest rate of increase in the EU, to compensate for the drastic cuts imposed following the 2008 financial crisis. Employee compensation accounted for 59.8% of total government expenditure on education, below the EU average of 62%¹⁰. Expenditure per student expressed in purchasing power standard (PPS) is comparatively high relative to the country's GDP per capita and has been rising steadily in recent years, but remains below the EU average at all levels of education.

Latvia's population is declining rapidly, driven by negative natural growth and relatively high emigration. The share of the population aged between 3 and 18 is projected to contract by around 20% between 2020 and 2030, as compared to just 2% for the EU as a whole. The average class size in Latvian schools is already the lowest in the OECD: 11 pupils per class in primary and 15 in lower secondary (against OECD averages of 21 and 23 respectively)¹¹. The government is pressing for further streamlining to shift investment away from maintenance of the large school network and towards teaching and learning (see Section 5).

⁷ <http://www.lrvk.gov.lv/en/the-teacher-remuneration-system-should-be-simpler-and-easier-to-understand/>

⁸ Cabinet of Ministers (2018) Regulation Nr 569, *Noteikumi par pedagogiem nepieciešamo izglītību un profesionālo kvalifikāciju un pedagogu profesionālās kompetences pilnveides kārtību*

⁹ Source: Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (COFOG) database.

¹⁰ Source: DG EAC, based on Eurostat data and the Classification of the functions of government (COFOG). Online data code: gov_10a-exp

¹¹ Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators

5. Modernising early childhood and school education

Latvia's early school leaving rate is relatively low, but wide disparities persist between genders and between urban and rural areas. In 2018, the percentage of early leavers from education and training (ESL) in the 18-24 age group was 8.3%, well below the EU average of 10.6%. The ESL rate for men improved somewhat in 2018 (11.4% v 12% in 2017), but was still more than twice that for women, which remained unchanged at 5%. In addition, two out of three grade repeaters at lower secondary level are boys, compared to the OECD average of 60%. The ESL rate is more than twice as high in rural areas as in urban areas (15% v 7%) (European Commission 2019). Planned new measures to improve the individualised approach to students at risk of ESL, and to provide support for the inclusion of students with special educational needs¹² should lead to a further reduction in ESL rates. However, success will depend on sufficient investment to support the new regulatory framework.

The new competence-based curriculum includes education guidelines from pre-primary to upper-secondary levels. The guidelines for pre-primary education include language, social and civic competences, cultural understanding and artistic self-expression, natural sciences, mathematics, technology, health and sport. Transversal competences include critical thinking and problem solving, self-guided learning, creativity and entrepreneurship, cooperation and participation. The new guidelines also strengthen the requirements for Latvian language learning in preschool, and emphasise every child's active engagement in learning.

The shortage of qualified staff and the low capacity of pre-primary schools to implement significant reforms are a concern. Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is almost universal for children between the age of 4 and the starting age for compulsory education (6 years old in Latvia) at 96.3% in 2017, slightly above the EU average of 95.4%. However, Latvia lacks national professional standards for ECEC staff. Preschool teachers responsible for children aged between 1 and a half and 4 earn almost 10% less than school teachers (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018¹³) and work longer hours. Their remuneration is the exclusive responsibility of municipalities. The Education Ministry is encouraging municipalities to re-consider resource allocation, by diminishing the number of primary and secondary schools and increasing the number of students per class. This will enable municipalities to top up teacher salaries.

The trade-off between an extensive school network with a low student-teacher ratio and low teacher salaries that has long characterised the Latvian system is coming under increasing strain. As the number of schoolchildren decreases, the consolidation of Latvia's large and inefficient school network is a priority for the Education Ministry, and is being linked with changes to teachers' pay and education content reform. New rules setting quality criteria for upper secondary education institutions and the minimum number of students per class in general secondary education institutions were adopted in 2018 by the previous government (European Commission 2018). Municipal administrations were given until March to submit to the Education Ministry their plans for optimising the school network in the context of the foreseen territorial reform.

The Education Ministry is developing a new education quality monitoring system to reflect the competence-based curriculum and other reforms at all levels of education. The aim is to improve and streamline the existing education quality evaluation processes (e.g. accreditation) and develop new education quality evaluation criteria, with support from EU funds¹⁴. The evaluation methodology will also be improved. In addition, the new monitoring system would include indicators covering the quality of vocational education and training, not just general secondary education as is currently the case. The ministry has hired a consultancy to develop the quality monitoring system and monitoring instruments on its behalf, with results expected by June 2020.

¹² From September 2020, children and learners with learning disabilities, language disorders, physical disabilities and long-term illnesses should be educated in mainstream settings (European Commission 2018).

¹³ The annual statutory salary, expressed in PPS, is 11 014 for pre-primary teachers and 12 080 for primary and secondary school teachers.

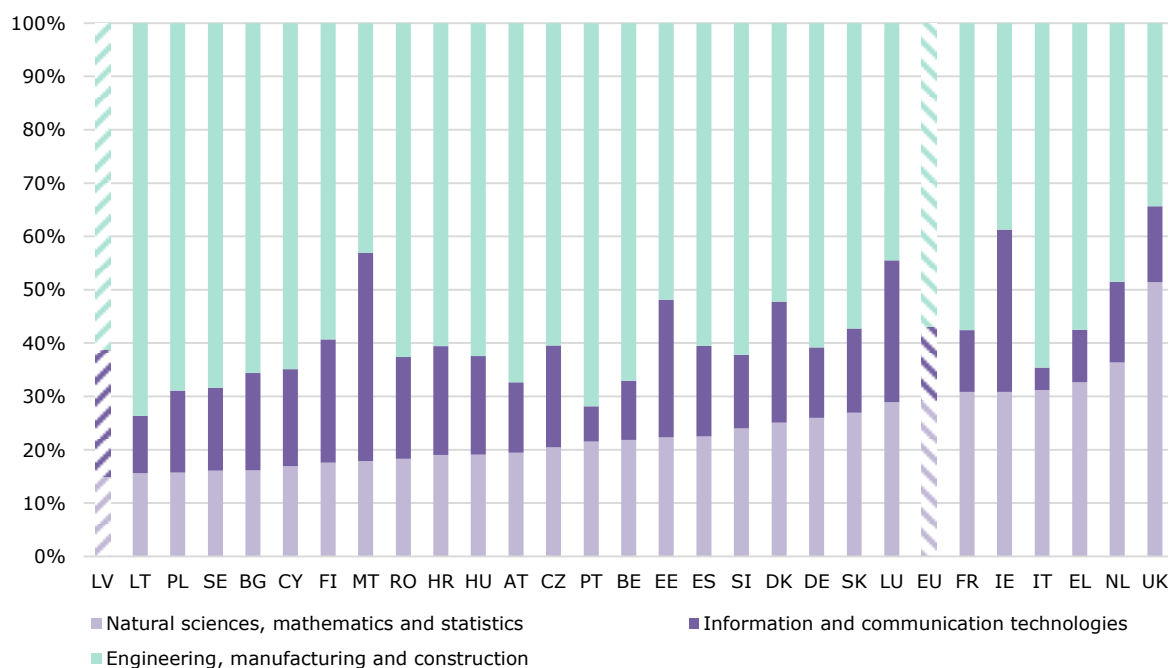
¹⁴ ESF project on the development and implementation of an education quality monitoring system (2018-2021).

The switch to education in Latvian is being implemented. In the 2019/2020 school year, a transition will begin from the five existing minority education models¹⁵ to three new models at the basic education stage. The transition to the new bilingual education model in grades 7-9 will also be initiated, with at least 80% of the curriculum, including foreign languages, taught in Latvian. State examinations in the ninth grade will be taken in Latvian.

6. Modernising higher education

The share of young adults with tertiary education decreased in 2018 compared to the previous year, but remains above the EU average. 42.7% of 30-34 year-olds had a tertiary qualification in 2018, down from 43.8% in 2017. The decrease was more pronounced for men (from 32% to 30.6%), further widening an already significant gender gap (24.6 pps.) STEM graduates represented 21% of all graduates in 2017, well below the EU average of 26%, while the proportion of graduates in natural sciences, mathematics and statistics was the lowest in the EU (3.1%, against an EU average of 7.6% in 2016). On a positive note, the employment rate for graduates in the 20-34 age group rose sharply in 2018 (84.1%, up from 78% in 2017) and now exceeds the EU average of 81.6%.

Figure 3 Distribution of STEM graduates by field of study, 2017



Source: Eurostat, UOE. Online data code: [educ_uae_grad02](#)

The new government has pledged to improve the quality and inclusiveness of higher education. This includes stronger support for students in need and a commitment to ensuring financial support to the three-pillar funding model introduced in 2015. Planned measures include digitalisation in higher education, improving international cooperation, revising academic career policies and simplifying recruitment of international teaching staff. The government's programme sets as a benchmark the inclusion of at least one Latvian university among the top 500 universities globally. It also pledges to continue addressing the fragmentation of higher education programmes. The financing priorities submitted by the Education Ministry for government approval for 2019 include an annual funding increase for study programmes and other quality-related investment in state-funded higher education institutions (HEIs). One of the Education Ministry's proposed financing priorities is financing under the second and third pillars of the model, which includes performance-based funding and funding for innovation and development of HEIs.

¹⁵ National minority education models specify the proportion of subjects taught in Latvian, bilingually and/or in a national minority language.

New regulations on the licensing and accreditation of higher education study programmes came into force on 1 January 2019. These allow HEIs to choose the agency evaluating the quality of their 'study directions'¹⁶. This quality assurance can be provided by the national agency, the Academic Information Centre, or by any other agency included in the European Quality Assurance Register.

New measures to reduce fragmentation of the higher education system and to develop higher quality study programmes are planned, with support from EU funds. While this is a step in the right direction, it remains to be seen whether HEIs can be motivated to reduce the scope and number of programmes as they compete for students. Overall, available research funding in the country is still low, and the amount of performance-based funding for HEIs is limited. The reforms' success will largely depend on more resources for academic research being made available, and on the ability of the government agency responsible for accreditation of study programmes to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the quality offered by HEIs. Several factors will play a key role, including the quality of the new higher education programmes to be developed and the availability of qualified academic staff. Given that research funding is still low, and the amount of performance-based funding for HEIs is limited, additional measures (such as a stricter quality assurance mechanism for the next round of accreditations for HEIs) may be needed to achieve real improvement in the quality of higher education programmes.

7. Modernising vocational education and training

Enrolments in VET are growing, but remain below EU levels. In 2017, nearly 9000 new students entered formal VET programmes in Latvia, an increase of more than 13% on 2016. Total enrolment in upper secondary VET in Latvia also saw a slight increase in 2017, with 38.6% of students enrolled at that level attending vocational programmes. However, the figure is still below the EU average of 47.8%. Students enrolled in VET had exposure to at least some practical work experience – as most educational programmes include some practical elements in the curriculum¹⁷. The employability of recent VET graduates in 2018 saw a notable increase, reaching 75.8% compared to 69.1.8% in 2017, but was still below the EU average of 79.5% in 2018¹⁸. The Council of the European Union has adopted a country specific recommendation to Latvia under the 2019 European Semester to 'increase the quality and efficiency of education and training, in particular of low-skilled workers and jobseekers, including by strengthening the participation in vocational education and training and adult learning' (Council of the European Union, 2019).

Several reforms and initiatives are ongoing to strengthen the VET system, including work-based learning and apprenticeships. In April 2018, 15 sectoral qualification frameworks were officially approved under the current reform of the VET system curriculum (2016-21), 15 sectoral qualifications structures were officially approved in April 2018. They2021). These serve as guidelines for developing and implementing VET programmes. Each framework comprises occupations essential for performing activities in particular sectors, specialisations and levels of qualifications. During 2018, Latvia supported implementation of work-based learning and apprenticeships via a number of projects. These included cross-border mobility for apprenticeship students, continuous professional development for VET teachers and in-company trainers, and support to businesses in implementing apprenticeships. Following the decrease of mandatory training for in-company trainers from 72 to 32 hours, the Employers' Confederation provided training programmes in 2017/18 enabling 440 trainers to work with apprentices in companies. Altogether, more than 1000 sectoral specialists have attended in-service training to acquire pedagogical minimum to work with apprentices in companies.

Some measures have been taken to support teachers in VET. In December 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers amended the regulations equalising salaries of heads of vocational schools to those of heads of colleges. A new regulation simplified the pedagogical qualification requirements for vocational teachers to make it easier to involve industry professionals with a higher education degree but no teacher training.

¹⁶ A 'study direction' can include several programmes.

¹⁷ Source: Eurostat, UOE, 2017.

¹⁸ Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2018.

Box 2: European Social Fund support for integration of disadvantaged groups through vocational training

The State Social Integration Agency, Latvia's only provider of professional rehabilitation services, have developed completely new training programmes with tailor-made education/training content and hands-on experience for people with severe disabilities (the loss of ability to work is in the amount of 60-100%) and persons with mental (psychosocial, intellectual or cognitive) disabilities depending). The training's content depends on each person's abilities and interests. Five professional training programmes ('Clerk', 'Florist', 'Horticulturist', 'Warehouse employee' and 'Carpenter's assistant') and 35 skills training programmes are now available to the target group. The programmes were developed based on a study which identified tasks that are in demand in the labour market and that employers would be willing to delegate to people with disabilities. All programmes include practical training/practice in the company to assist in to help students' employability. After completing a vocational rehabilitation programme (8-18 months), people with severe disabilities receive a document certifying their professional qualification, while people with mental disabilities who complete a skills training programme (4-12 months) receive a document certifying their skills. The plan is to involve 100 people in the training, with the aim that at least 60 of them will be employed, start a job search or continue education 6 months after completing the training programme. In total, EUR 1.252 million is budgeted for the project, with EUR 1.064 million from the ESF.

8. Developing adult learning

The share of the population with low educational attainment is significantly below the EU average. Only a relatively small share of adults in Latvia (9.3%) have at most a low qualification, against an EU average of 21.9%. In addition, the share of low-qualified adults in employment was, at 58.2%, above the EU average of 56.8%. However, the likelihood that adults in Latvia would frequently update their knowledge and skills through adult learning was lower than the EU average. For example, only 6.7% of adults aged 25-64 in Latvia have had a recent learning experience during the last 4 weeks, compared to EU average of 11.1%¹⁹.

The implementation of the 2016-2020 adult learning governance model provides better opportunities for adults to engage in learning, but there is still significant scope for improvement. The main types of provision of adult education were redefined to encompass: provision to raise attainment of basic skills; provision to attain a recognised qualification during adulthood; provision targeting transition to the labour market; provision of non-formal adult education, and other types of publicly subsidised provision for adult learners. . Several new initiatives have been launched since 2018, targeting unemployed persons and young people, fostering employability among the elderly and expanding learning opportunities for adults in general.

Several measures were taken in 2018 to strengthen the professional development of adult educators. New regulations were adopted on the 'necessary academic and professional qualifications of pedagogues and professional competence development procedures for Pedagogues' were adopted in 2018. They set out the requirements to acquire the right to work as an educator. Although these requirements do not apply to non-formal adult education, they affect adult learning policy more broadly by making teacher education more focused on individualisation for personalised learning. Apart from these general requirements for teachers, mandatory pedagogical in-service courses are also required. Furthermore, as part of the national reforms in vocational education and training and adult learning, a methodological guide was drawn up for working with adults in vocational education institutions.

¹⁹ Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, 2018.

9. References

Cedefop (forthcoming). *Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015-19: Latvia*. Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies.

Cedefop (forthcoming). *Vocational education and training in Latvia short description*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

Cedefop ReferNet (2018). *Latvia: sectoral qualifications frameworks support vocational education development*. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/latvia-sectoral-qualifications-frameworks-support-vocational-education-development>

Council of the European Union (2019), *Council Recommendation on the 2019 National Reform Programme of Latvia and delivering a Council opinion on the 2018 Stability Programme of Latvia*.

Daija, Z.; Kinta, G.; Labunskis, E. (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe: Latvia*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports. 2018. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Latvia_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf

European Commission (2018), *Education and Training Monitor 2018 Latvia*. https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/document-library/education-and-training-monitor-2018-latvia-report_en

European Commission (2019), *Country Report Latvia 2019*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/2019-european-semester-country-report-latvia_en.pdf

Delfi, (2019), *Skolu tīkla sakārtošanai IZM piedāvā četrus reģionu blokus* 18.4.2019. <https://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/skolu-tikla-sakartosanai-izm-piedava-cetrus-regionu-blokus.d?id=51006251>

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2018), *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe – 2016/17*. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/teacher_and_school_head_salaries_2016_17.pdf

OECD (2017), *Education Policy Outlook: Latvia*, available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm

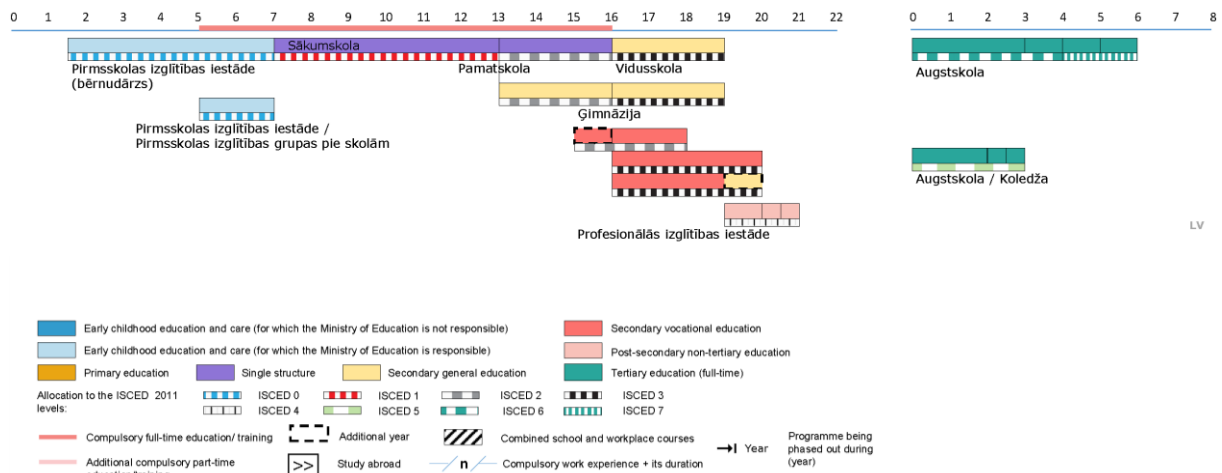
OECD (2019), *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners, TALIS*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en>

State Audit Office (2018) *Kā organizē un apmaksā pedagogu darbu Latvijā*. http://www.lrvk.gov.lv/uploads/reviziju-zinojumi/2018/2.4.1-6_2018/12_10_2018_zinojums_publiskošanai.pdf

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



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

Grazia ROMANI
Grazia.Romani@ec.europa.eu
 or
EAC-UNITE-A2@ec.europa.eu

Executive summary

Highlights of the cross-national analysis
Highlights of the country analysis



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%²⁰ 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

²⁰ 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 2020²¹ 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 Area²². 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

²¹ Data for this benchmark come from the OECD PISA survey. Students scoring below level 2 are considered underachievers.

²² 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.

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications>.

Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en).

