



European  
Commission

# Education and Training Monitor 2019

## Malta



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

# **Education and Training Monitor 2019**

MALTA

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.*

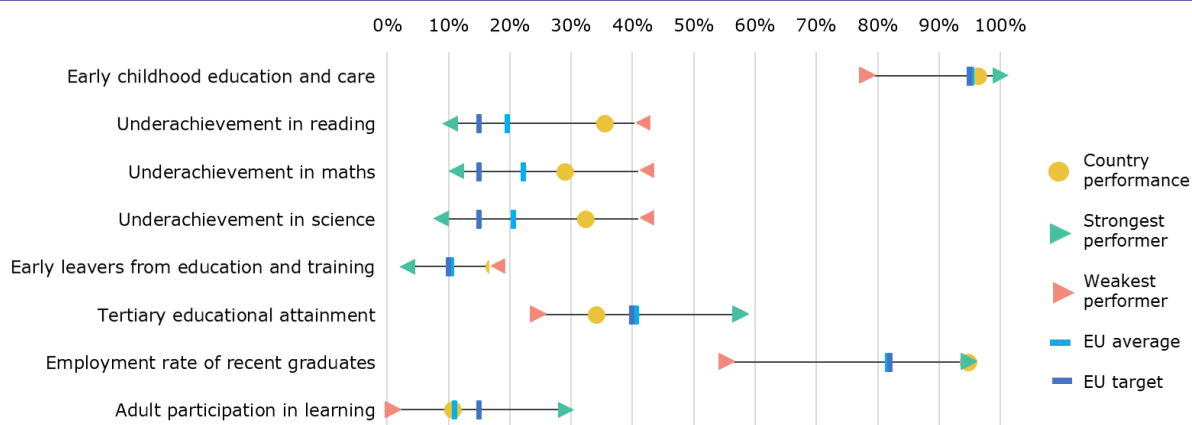
*The manuscript was completed on 26 August 2019.  
Additional contextual data can be found online ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor))*

## 1. Key indicators

		Malta		EU average	
		2009	2018	2009	2018
<b>Education and training 2020 benchmarks</b>					
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)		25.7%	17.5%	14.2%	10.6%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)		21.9%	34.2%	32.3%	40.7%
Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)		94.6%	96.5% <sup>17</sup>	90.8%	95.4% <sup>17,d</sup>
Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:	Reading	36.3%	35.6% <sup>15</sup>	19.5% <sup>EU27</sup>	19.7% <sup>15</sup>
	Maths	33.7%	29.1% <sup>15</sup>	22.3% <sup>EU27</sup>	22.2% <sup>15</sup>
	Science	32.5%	32.5% <sup>15</sup>	17.7% <sup>EU27</sup>	20.6% <sup>15</sup>
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-8 (total)	92.9%	94.8%	78.3%	81.6%
Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	6.2%	10.8%	9.5%	11.1%
Learning mobility	Degree-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	9.0% <sup>17</sup>	:	3.6% <sup>17</sup>
	Credit-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	5.4% <sup>17</sup>	:	8.0% <sup>17</sup>
<b>Other contextual indicators</b>					
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		5.4%	4.9% <sup>17</sup>	5.2%	4.6% <sup>17</sup>
Education investment	ISCED 0	€5 751 <sup>12,p</sup>	€5 813 <sup>15</sup>	:	€6 111 <sup>15,d</sup>
	ISCED 1	€6 563 <sup>12,p</sup>	€5 853 <sup>15</sup>	€5 812 <sup>12,d</sup>	€6 248 <sup>15,d</sup>
	ISCED 2	€9 600 <sup>12,p</sup>	€10 089 <sup>15</sup>	€6 937 <sup>12,d</sup>	€7 243 <sup>15,d</sup>
	ISCED 3-4	€8 301 <sup>12,p</sup>	€7 316 <sup>15</sup>	:	€7 730 <sup>14,d</sup>
	ISCED 5-8	€10 703 <sup>12,p</sup>	€14 913 <sup>15</sup>	€10 549 <sup>12,d</sup>	€11 413 <sup>15,d</sup>
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	26.0%	17.4%	13.1%	9.5%
	Foreign-born	:	19.1% <sup>u</sup>	26.1%	20.2%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	21.9%	29.0%	33.1%	41.3%
	Foreign-born	22.1% <sup>u</sup>	48.2%	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	88.6%	91.1%	72.5%	76.8%
	ISCED 5-8	97.0%	96.7%	83.8%	85.5%

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

- Work is underway to improve the quality of teaching and the attractiveness of the profession.
- Improving the quality of investment in education and enhancing 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.

## 3. A focus on teachers

**Teachers do not have a very high status in Malta.** Data from the 2018 OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) shows that only 14.5% of lower secondary teachers believe that their profession is valued in society, compared to an EU average<sup>1</sup> of 17.7%. Teachers are quite often criticised in local media as failing to serve the changing needs of society while benefiting from favourable working conditions (Attard Tonna and Calleja, 2018). This perception has the potential to increase the challenge to recruit and retain good teachers and may further fuel gender imbalances. 99% of teachers in pre-primary education are women and their proportion remains very high at primary (86%) and secondary levels (64%). At tertiary level, the proportion of women falls to 36% (2017 data).

**Although teachers' motivation is high at the beginning of their careers, this tends to decrease over time.** According to TALIS 2018, 66% of teachers say that if they could decide again, they would still choose to become a teacher, compared with an EU average of 77.6%. Fewer teachers (63.7% v 76.4% at EU level) with more than 5 years of work experience report feeling this way than newly qualified teachers (73.0% v 83.7%). Teachers have opportunities to move into management and other educational roles (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). Those who have not less ten years teaching experience can take on assistant head of school or department head responsibilities – and after that they can apply to become head teachers<sup>2</sup>. Class teachers can also become mentors and/or have pedagogical or methodological roles outside the classroom. Teachers' individual performance is formally assessed only at the end of their induction programme. Appraisals and feedback on teachers' performance could be used to recognise good teaching and thus positively impact on job satisfaction, while challenging teachers to address issues with their performance.

**There have been measures to increase salaries, but challenges remain.** Limited salary progression throughout the teaching career may make it more difficult to draw people into the profession and to ensure that they remain satisfied and sufficiently motivated. The starting statutory salary for teachers at lower general secondary level is around the EU average (PPS 24 494 vs 25 946) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). However, salary progression is very limited after 10 years of service and the top salary, reached after an average of 19 years, is 26% lower than the EU average at secondary level. The sectoral agreement signed in 2017 includes an increase in class allowances for teachers, in line with their length of employment and the introduction of new allowances<sup>3</sup>.

**An expected increase of the school-age population calls for an enhanced system to monitor and address teacher shortages.** Even though the proportion of teachers aged over 50

<sup>1</sup> In 2018, 23 Member States participated in TALIS: Austria, Belgium fr, Belgium nl, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, England (UK), Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. TALIS 2018 covers lower secondary teachers and school leaders in mainstream public and private schools.

<sup>2</sup> For further details on teacher career progression, see Ministry for Education and Employment, (2017). Agreement between the Government of Malta and the Malta Union of Teachers, Malta: Ministry for Education and Employment.

<sup>3</sup> For further details, see European Commission, (2018). Education and Training Monitor – Volume 2 – Malta, Box 1: New collective agreement for the teaching sector.

was the second lowest in the EU at primary level (11.5% v 32.8% at EU level) and the lowest at secondary level (15.2% v 39.3% at EU level) in 2017, teacher shortages tend to be a recurrent problem. There was a significant teacher shortage in the 2017/2018 school year. In 2018/2019, the situation improved and schools opened with minimal shortages<sup>4</sup>. Shortages happen for several reasons: teachers may find better paid jobs in private schools or outside their sector, or take non-teaching duties or leave due to family responsibilities. Teacher shortages are addressed by either offering temporary contracts to qualified teachers or by employing supply teachers<sup>5</sup>. The resultant high turnover may have adverse effects on teacher collaboration and student outcomes (OECD, 2018). Improvements to monitoring manpower needs and increases to the attractiveness of the profession could be particularly important in future given that the school-age population is expected to grow over the next years, according to Eurostat.

**Malta has taken steps to improve teacher education.** Initial teacher education has been extended from bachelor's degree to master's level to provide higher teaching quality. The teaching qualification does not fully qualify graduates as teachers, as they need also 2 years of teaching experience. In 2018, the Institute of Education started offering initial teacher education in primary education and some areas of secondary education on a part-time basis to supply teachers, using a blended learning approach. This has been done to support supply teachers who want to improve their qualifications and have the possibility to improve their salary by becoming formally qualified teachers. These courses will also assist those who want to make a career change and obtain the necessary teaching qualification to become teachers and take on a leadership role.

**Measures have been put in place to support a professional learning community.** TALIS 2018 highlights that a high proportion of teachers (60.7% v 51.9% at EU level) consider that they do not receive sufficient incentives to participate in continuing professional development (CPD). In addition, around half of them report that they are unlikely to participate in CPD because of family responsibilities and schedule conflicts. The sectoral agreement signed by the government and the Malta Union of Teachers in 2017 tried to address these challenges. It widened the concept of CPD to include all types of learning opportunities (within schools, externally designed and based on self-development) and allowed teachers to receive a salary increase in 6 years rather than 8, if they complete 360 hours of CPD. Between October 2018 and February 2019, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST – a provider of advanced vocational training) provided CPD sessions for teachers, which included workshops with a special focus on innovative teaching techniques and digital literacy (use of social media in classrooms, innovative teaching techniques, using technological tools in the classroom). The agreement requires teachers and school heads to draw up a school development plan to respond to the changing environment in schools and changes in school composition. The number of foreign-born students aged under 15 increased by 67% between 2014 and 2017, with an impact on teachers' working environments, (OECD, 2019). According to TALIS 2018, one in five (20.4%) of teachers report that they need a higher level of CPD in this area and this is above the EU average (13.4%). Measures are being implemented to provide CPD to improve teachers' level of preparedness.

## 4. Investing in education and training

**Comparatively high levels of spending on education are not leading to better educational outcomes for all.** In 2017, Malta's general government expenditure on education was at 4.9% of GDP (compared with 4.6% at EU level). As a proportion of total public expenditure, spending is among the highest in the EU (13.9% v 10.2% at EU level). Although positive results have been recorded such as the decline in the rate of early leavers from education and training and increases in tertiary education attainment, educational outcomes and attainment rates are generally lower in EU comparison (see section 5 and 6). This suggests some challenges in efficiency of spending. Spending per student across all education levels (ISCED 02-8) is also among the highest in the EU (PPS 8 261 2015) and particularly high in tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) (PPS 14 913 v 11 413 at EU level). Compensation of employees represents the main budget item (63.5%) and is close to the EU average (62.0%), while nearly 20% of expenditure in the education sector is spent on a variety of transactions, including payments to private schools and subsidies.

<sup>4</sup> In the scholastic year 2017/18, there was a shortage of about 70 teachers; and in the scholastic year 2018/19, there was a shortage of about 3 teachers. Data provided by the Minister of Education and Employment in July 2019.

<sup>5</sup> In May 2019 supply teachers represented 6% of total teachers, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Education and Employment.

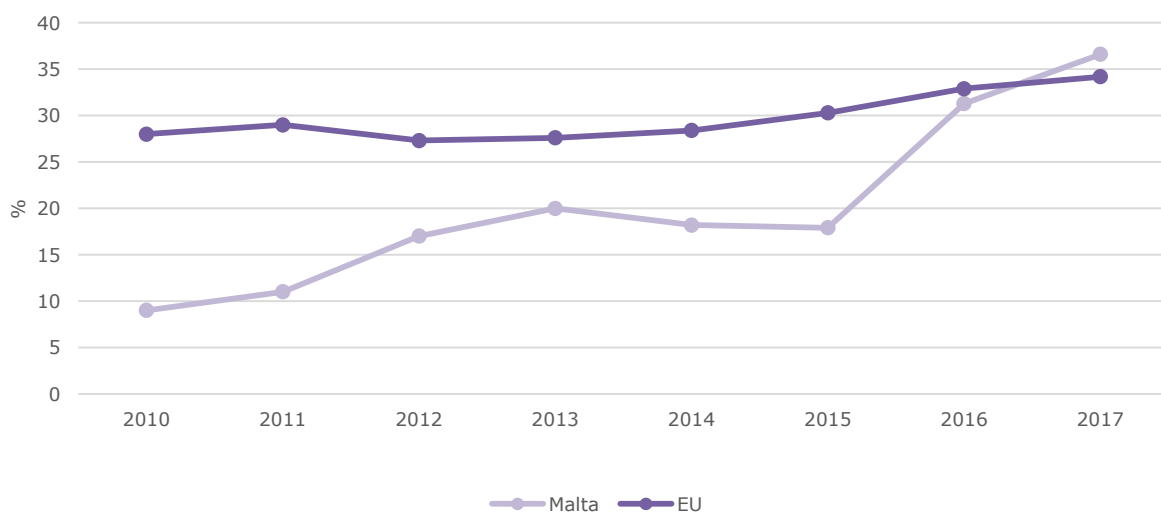
**The expected increase in student numbers is a challenge for school infrastructure.** Some new schools have been opened or existing schools extended<sup>6</sup> and pre-fabricated classrooms have been used to make up for a lack of space in the area of St. Paul's Bay, which has seen increasing numbers of migrants arrive. However, the pressure on school infrastructure is expected to persist over the next years due to demographic trends. The primary student population increased by 6.4% between 2013 and 2016 and the student population (5-16 year-olds) is expected to increase by 12.7% between 2019 and 2025, according to Eurostat baseline projections.

## 5. Modernising early childhood and school education

### Participation in early childhood education continues to increase for children under three.

The proportion of children below 3 in formal childcare (full or part-time) doubled in 2 years (from 17.9% in 2015 to 36.6% in 2017) and is now above the EU average of 34.2% (Figure 2). The Free Childcare Scheme was launched in 2014 to increase participation in childcare by children aged between 3 months and 3 years of age, with the objective of increasing the number of women working. The scheme offers free childcare services to all parents who are working or studying full or part-time, provided either directly through government services or via registered childcare centres. Although it has decreased by 2.1 pps since 2010, participation in early childhood education and care for 4 year-olds in 2017 is very high (96.5% v EU average 95.4%).

**Figure 2 Participation in formal childcare of children aged under 3, 2010-2017**



Source: Eurostat, EUSILC, 2017

**Work is being done to improve quality in early childhood education and care.** From 2015/2016, the required qualification level for staff working with 3 and 5 year-olds was raised to bachelor's degree with 4 years of study, or 2 years of study for holders of the MCAST Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in Early Years. However, this requirement is still being phased in and the target of all groups of children having at least one staff member with a tertiary qualification has not yet been reached. The big increase in participation in childcare for children aged under 3 in recent years has required a new national policy for early childhood education and care and a revision of national standards for the age group 0-3. A public consultation is expected to be launched by the end of the year. High quality early childhood education and care may help prevent later early school leaving.

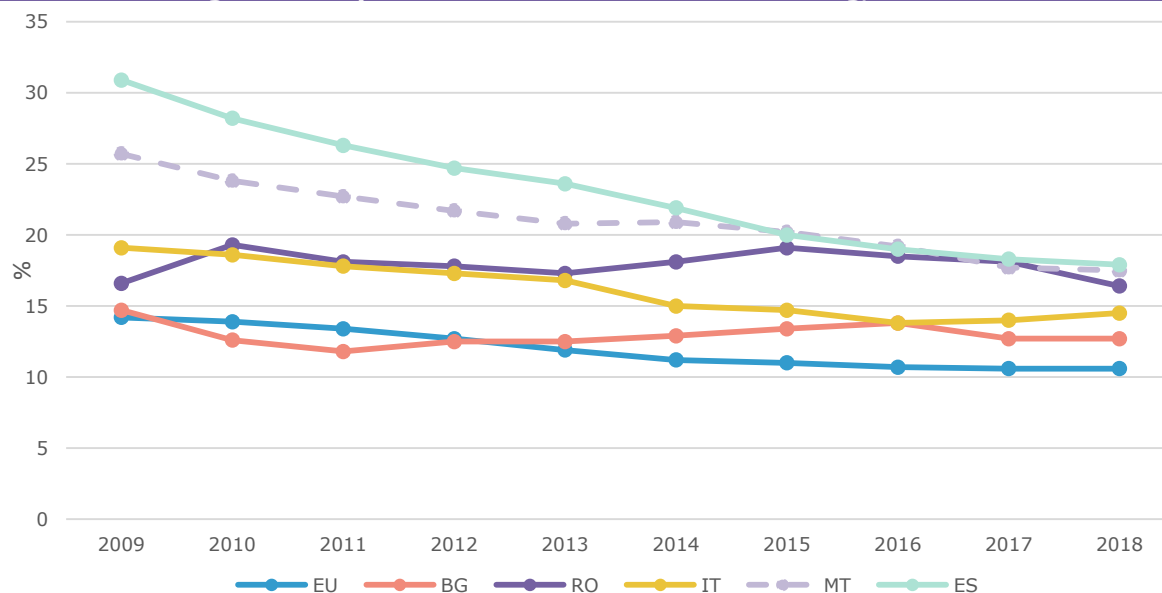
**Reducing early school leaving remains a priority.** Although it has declined since 2010, the proportion of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 is still markedly above the EU average (17.5% v 10.6% in 2018) and the national Europe 2020 target of 10% (Figure 3). The

<sup>6</sup> A new primary school in Qawra, announced in the 2015 budget, will open in 2019/20. In 2018/19 a new primary school in Marsascula was opened and the Pembroke Primary school was extended in 2018. The planning process for two new primary schools and the extension and modernisation of another two primary schools has started (Information provided by the Ministry in July 2019).



decline may be fuelled by a reduction in secondary school absenteeism (from 30.0% in 2012/2013 to 21.6% in 2016/2017<sup>7</sup>) and improvements in vocational education (see section 7). Despite their low education levels, the employment rate of early school leavers was the highest in the EU in 2017 (71.7% v an EU average of 44.8%), reflecting easy access to employment in industries such as tourism. Since low-qualified people are less likely to participate in adult learning (see section 9), early school leavers nevertheless face a higher risk of future unemployment and social exclusion.

**Figure 3 Early leavers from education and training, 2009-2018**



Source: Eurostat, LFS.

**A new lower secondary school system aims to tackle drop-out rates, focusing on improving employability.** As of September 2019, through the 'MyJourney' reform<sup>8</sup>, secondary school students are allowed to choose between general, vocational or applied subjects, in addition to the core curriculum. The aim is to respond to different educational needs and give parity of esteem to less academic paths. Following compulsory education, students may opt to continue their studies at the University of Malta, MCAST and Institute of Tourism Studies or another higher education institution of their choice. While welcome, the possibility of choosing a less academic path at the age of 12 may lead to later social exclusion and limited employment opportunities. Students may leave compulsory education not being well equipped with fundamental competences that could allow later reskilling and upskilling. Measures are being taken to establish partnerships with post-secondary and vocational institutions and industry to provide quality education and training to all students. Teachers have been provided with training and professional support to teach the new nine applied subjects. The major challenge that government has faced is to ensure there are enough qualified teachers. The Malta Union of Teachers has raised concerns about this and the insufficient provision of teacher training and has warned about the possibility that students at risk of dropping out with low skills may end up having unqualified teachers (Times of Malta, 2019).

**Measures are being implemented to improve student outcomes<sup>9</sup>.** Implementation of the learning outcomes framework started in 2018/2019 with the development of new syllabi. Gradual implementation will continue until 2022/2023 when these new learning programmes will be available throughout the compulsory education system. The curriculum reform is accompanied by the introduction of continuous assessment instead of half-yearly examinations in both primary and secondary schools. While these reforms are a further step towards a higher quality of education,

<sup>7</sup> Data provided by the Minister of Education and Employment in March 2019.

<sup>8</sup> This project is co-financed by the European Social Fund. For further details, see <https://www.myjourney.edu.mt/> and <http://exploremoreproject.eu/en/option-form-en.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> For further details on PISA 2015 results, please see European Commission (2017), Education and Training Monitor – Volume 2 - Malta.

their effective implementation may mean teachers need new skills in assessment and more guidance on how to carry out this assessment. Teachers are using the 40 hours of paid CPD to update their skills. In addition, primary students with low literacy skills are being given additional support by support staff who take them out of class during school hours. An evaluation of this new approach has not been carried out yet.

### Box 1: Towards a more inclusive education

Student performance is strongly influenced by socio-economic status, the type of school - with pupils from private schools performing best, followed by church schools and then state schools - and by disability status. The Council of the European Union addressed a country-specific recommendation to Malta in 2019, calling on the country to 'focus investment-related economic policy on [...] inclusive education and training' (Council of the European Union, 2019).

A policy on inclusive education in schools<sup>10</sup> and a national inclusive education framework were published at the beginning of April 2019. A public consultation has recently been concluded. A strategic plan has been drawn up to guide schools on implementing the inclusion policy and framework in 2019/2020. The aim is to guide teachers, school heads, and all other stakeholders in implementing equitable opportunities and inclusive practices in public schools. Training sessions have already been delivered to educators and senior management teams on how to do so. This may help put in place a less fragmented approach to tackling social exclusion and early school leaving.

The policy adopts a wide definition of inclusion which covers learners: with special needs; with different sexual orientations; from ethnic minorities and different religions; and high ability learners.

Schools are encouraged to change existing pedagogical approaches and redesign practices, where needed, to ensure that all students have access to quality education. The framework provides school communities with tools to identify areas in need of improvement and to monitor progress.

## 6. Modernising higher education

**The increase in tertiary education student numbers is accelerating.** From 2010 to 2017 the number of students in higher education increased by 33.1%. This is due to a combination of demographic factors and measures to ease access introduced in this period. This has contributed to a rise in the proportion of people aged 30-34 with tertiary-level qualifications, which has increased by 12.1 pps since 2010. It remains, nevertheless, below the EU average (34.2% v EU 40.7%) despite reaching the national ET2020 target of 33%. This positive trend may help to address labour market challenges: employment growth is expected to remain strong up to 2030 and the proportion of job openings requiring high-level qualifications is expected to be 36% by 2030, 7 pps below the EU average (Cedefop, 2019).

**Skills shortages and mismatches remain a challenge.** Despite the highest employment rate in the EU of recent tertiary graduates (96.7% v EU 85.5%), the skills of tertiary education graduates do not sufficiently match the needs of the labour market. When asked to explain the causes of hard-to-fill vacancies, employers indicated that a small number of applicants with the required skills, in particular transversal skills, was the most common cause. This may explain the high reliance on foreigners to fill skills shortages. Only a small proportion of the employers surveyed had been involved in formal cooperation programmes with education providers (Jobsplus, 2017). Improving cooperation between employers, stakeholders and higher education institutions could help ensure that students are better equipped with relevant skills.

**A more coordinated and effective approach is needed to map and anticipate skills needs.** In 2017, the Maltese government collaborated with the Slovak Academy of Sciences to develop a mid-term skills and occupational forecasting model for Malta. The model is still being set up. In 2018, Malta joined the pilot of the first European graduate tracking survey to collect data on transition to the labour market and monitor the labour market relevance of tertiary education.

<sup>10</sup> 'A policy on inclusive education in schools: Route to quality inclusion'.

Initial results will be published by the end of 2019. The National Skills Council announced in 2018 that it was drafting a national skills strategy. The final text will be aligned with the Digital and Artificial Skills Strategy and will identify individual transversal skills to be integrated into education and training. It is expected to be published by the end of 2019.

## 7. Modernising vocational education and training

### **Malta continued to implement the 2018 Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Act.**

The numbers enrolled in upper secondary vocational education and training (VET) decreased from 28.8% in 2016 to 27.1% in 2017. The MCAST worked with local industry to update its programmes in a large number of sectors. Partnership agreements with companies will provide for work-based learning opportunities in three different forms: apprenticeships, work placements, and internships. Courses are offered at level 3, 4 and 6 of the Maltese Qualification Framework (MQF).

**In 2018 MCAST launched an internal audit to review all programmes delivered and assessed by its institutions.** The audit will review the educational and operational processes in line with the national quality assurance framework and the way these impact on training. Industry, MCAST staff and students are being consulted to ensure high quality of programmes.

#### **Box 2: Improving attractiveness of vocational education and training**

The European Structural Fund project '*Achieving vocational excellence through enhanced work-based learning*' aims to build on MCAST's work-based learning with the aim of making VET more attractive to students, while providing a more competent workforce that can meet current and future industrial requirements.

The project will involve developing and delivering a mentoring training programme for MCAST lecturers and staff. Training and information sessions will also be organised for industry sponsors. MCAST will map the number of apprenticeships per area and the learning outcomes which can be offered by each participating employer. This monitoring will be achieved through the development of a comprehensive competency framework and use of an analysis tool.

It is estimated that around 600 MCAST students who follow an apprenticeship programme will benefit from the project. Implementation began in 2019 and is expected to be completed by 2022.

## 8. Developing adult learning

**In Malta, the proportion of low-qualified adults is still high but there is a gradual improvement.** The overall proportion of adults aged 25 to 64 who have low qualifications was down from 48.9% in 2017 to 46.7% in 2018, and their employment rate increased over that year from 58.6% to 60.9%. The case for further upskilling and reskilling is strong, since the 125 800 low-qualified adults largely exceed the 19 100 thousand elementary jobs available. There was a slight increase in adult learning participation, which rose from 10.6% in 2017 to 10.8% in 2018, still 4 pps below the EU 15% benchmark, but close to the EU average of 11.1%. While participation for people with tertiary qualifications has increased by 6.2 pps and is now above the EU average (22.6% v EU 19.0% in 2018), for low-qualified adults who are more in need of upskilling and reskilling, this has only increased by 0.7 pps (from 3.4% to 4.1%) since 2010.

**Malta continued its work to implement the Council Recommendation on upskilling pathways.** The 'Schools as Community Learning Spaces' programme promotes an informal community learning space which allows adults (including parents and guardians) to gain useful skills. '*Check in, Take off*', an Erasmus+ policy experimentation project with Ireland and Norway, will develop a skills checker tool that enables individuals to carry out an initial assessment of their literacy, numeracy and digital skills and provide options for flexible learning opportunities as well as a pathway to recognise these skills.

**Malta is making efforts to improve the quality of adult learning.** In 2016, the University of Malta created the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education. It has taken responsibility for the Higher Diploma in the Teaching of Adults - a two-year evening diploma course in adult education, training and development, which is now a prerequisite for people engaged by the Ministry in teaching adults (currently 150) as part of its broad adult education programme. In

2018, the department launched the Recognition of Prior Learning programme for holders of qualifications and experience in adult education and training. This year-long programme has been developed for those holding qualifications in adult education or an equivalent who wish to pursue the master's degree course in adult education, which will open in February 2020.

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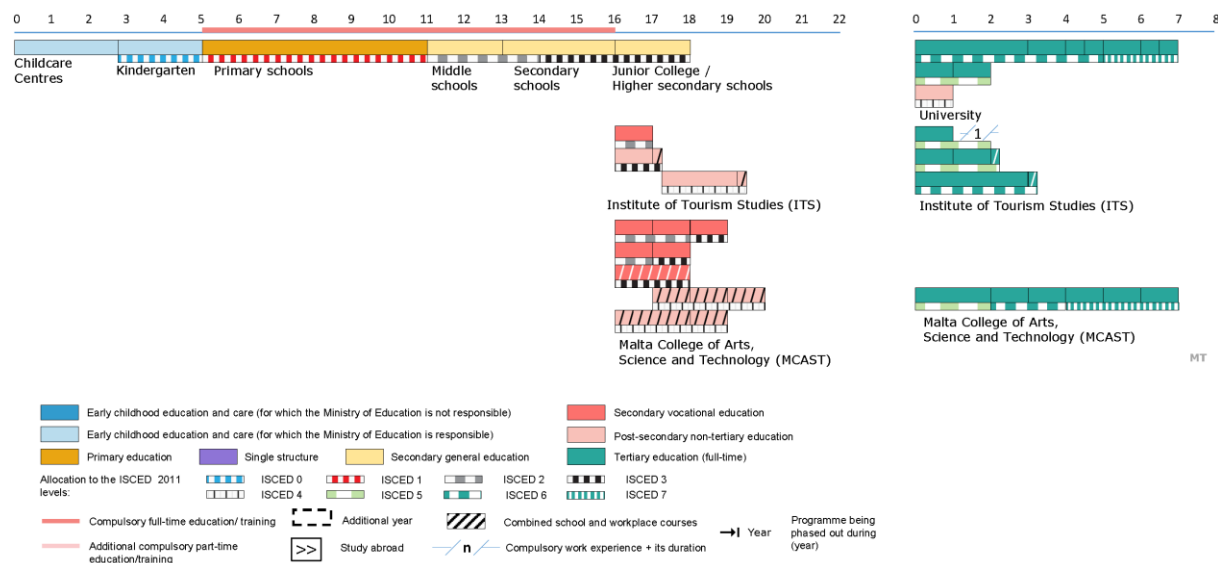
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## Annex I: Key indicator sources

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

## Annex II: Structure of the education system



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

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# 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%<sup>11</sup> of public expenditure in education in the EU is spent on teachers. Any policy effort seeking to improve educational outcomes – or the efficiency of education and training – is bound to take a close look at the role of teachers and look for ways to help teachers excel in their demanding profession. New evidence from the OECD TALIS survey sheds more light on teachers. The recent survey data inform the 2019 Education and Training Monitor, which contains a dedicated analysis of school teachers in the EU. Being a unique source of information on teachers' motivations, lifelong learning and careers, the new evidence from TALIS 2018 can help policy-makers harnessing the full potential of teachers by preventing and addressing challenges.

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

### At the core of learning: the teachers

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>11</sup> DG EAC calculation on Eurostat's general government finance statistics, reference year 2017 ([gov\\_10a\\_exp](#)).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



target of less than 15% by 2020<sup>12</sup> remains a challenge, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Failing to achieve basic mathematics, reading or science tasks at the age of 15 impacts on individuals' chances to continue studying, find and maintain employment later in life, cope with fast-paced technological change, and develop as citizens. Between 2012 and 2015, the EU has actually moved further away from meeting this target. Approximately one fifth of pupils in the EU cannot complete basic reading tasks, and the share is slightly higher for science and maths (2015 data). Despite less favourable or sometimes adverse background conditions, around a quarter of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils born in another country are considered academically resilient. Individual factors associated with higher resilience include high academic expectations, and not repeating grades; while disengagement from school (for example skipping classes, and abusing substances) has a negative association with resilience. At school level, the use of school evaluations, connecting the students' test results to teachers' performance, adequate provision of study rooms and being surrounded by pupils with higher socio-economic status are all factors correlating positively with resilience.

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

## Developing competences for future life and employment

Research has long established the positive outcomes of being able to study abroad. Transnational learning mobility is associated with future mobility, higher earnings, and lower risk of unemployment. 'Making learning mobility a reality for all' is one of the objectives of the European Education Area<sup>13</sup>. In 2017, 11.6% of higher education graduates 'were mobile', meaning that they studied partially or entirely abroad. About 8% of them were abroad for short-term periods, while 3.6% graduated in another country. The Erasmus+ programme supported about half of the short-term study periods spent abroad by EU graduates. Overall, Luxembourg, Cyprus, the Netherlands, and Finland (in descending order) have high shares of mobile graduates. As to inward mobility, capturing the volume of students coming into a country for a period of study, it can be read as a measure of the attractiveness of the education system. On this indicator the United Kingdom leads the way – both in percentage of inward graduates and in absolute numbers.

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

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

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<sup>12</sup> Data for this benchmark come from the OECD PISA survey. Students scoring below level 2 are considered underachievers.

<sup>13</sup> In November 2017, EU leaders met in Gothenburg to discuss the social dimension of Europe, including education and culture. As part of the debate on the Future of Europe, the Commission set out its vision and concrete steps to create a European Education Area by 2025. One of the main objective of the European Area of Education is 'making mobility a reality for all', by building on the positive experiences of the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps and expanding participation in them, as well as by creating an EU Student Card to offer a new user-friendly way to store information on a person's academic records. Other measures to boost mobility under the European Education Area include initiating new processes to ensure the mutual recognition of diplomas; improving language learning; creating a network of European universities; and supporting teachers and their mobility.

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

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

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

## Public investment in education

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

## Highlights of the country analysis

### Austria

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

### Belgium

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

### Bulgaria

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

### Croatia

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

### Cyprus

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

### Czechia

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

### Denmark

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

### Estonia

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

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

### **Finland**

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

### **France**

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

### **Germany**

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

### **Greece**

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

### **Hungary**

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

### **Ireland**

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

### **Italy**

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

### Latvia

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

### Lithuania

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

### Luxembourg

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

### Malta

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

### Netherlands

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

### Poland

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

### Portugal

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

### Romania

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

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

### **Slovakia**

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

### **Slovenia**

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

### **Spain**

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

### **Sweden**

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

### **United Kingdom**

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

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