



European
Commission

Education and Training Monitor 2019

Slovenia



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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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.

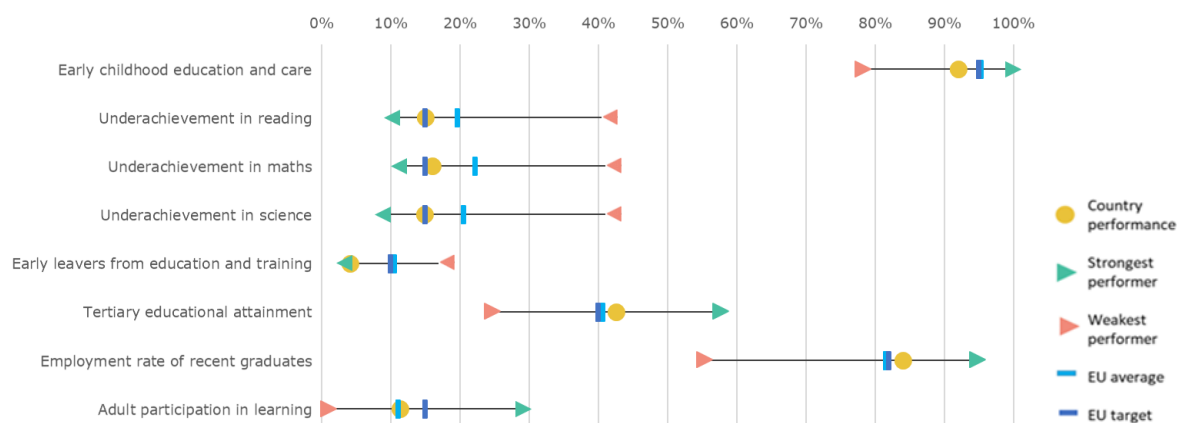
*The manuscript was completed on 26 August 2019.
Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)*

1. Key indicators

		Slovenia		EU average	
		2009	2018	2009	2018
Education and training 2020 benchmarks					
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)		5.3%	4.2%	14.2%	10.6%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)		31.6%	42.7%	32.3%	40.7%
Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)		87.7%	92.1% ¹⁷	90.8%	95.4% ^{17,d}
Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:	Reading	21.2%	15.1% ¹⁵	19.5% ^{EU27}	19.7% ¹⁵
	Maths	20.4%	16.1% ¹⁵	22.3% ^{EU27}	22.2% ¹⁵
	Science	14.8%	15.0% ¹⁵	17.7% ^{EU27}	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)	82.3%	84.2%	78.3%	81.6%
Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	14.8%	11.4%	9.5%	11.1%
Learning mobility	Degree-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	3.6% ¹⁷	:	3.6% ¹⁷
	Credit-mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	2.8% ¹⁷	:	8.0% ¹⁷
Other contextual indicators					
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		6.6%	5.4% ¹⁷	5.2%	4.6% ¹⁷
Education investment	ISCED 0	€6 968 ¹²	€6 157 ¹⁶	:	€6 111 ^{15,d}
	ISCED 1	€7 014 ¹²	€7 496 ¹⁶	€5 812 ^{12,d}	€6 248 ^{15,d}
	ISCED 2	€7 597 ¹²	€9 113 ¹⁶	€6 937 ^{12,d}	€7 243 ^{15,d}
	ISCED 3-4	€5 353 ¹²	€5 343 ¹⁶	:	€7 730 ^{14,d}
	ISCED 5-8	€8 359 ¹²	€8 839 ¹⁶	€10 549 ^{12,d}	€11 413 ^{15,d}
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	5.0%	3.6%	13.1%	9.5%
	Foreign-born	13.0%	11.6%	26.1%	20.2%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	32.2%	45.3%	33.1%	41.3%
	Foreign-born	21.0%	22.1%	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	73.3%	82.4%	72.5%	76.8%
	ISCED 5-8	88.7%	85.3%	83.8%	85.5%

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

- 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.

3. A focus on teachers

The teaching profession is predominantly female. Slovenia has 42 166 teachers across the different educational levels¹. The profession is overwhelmingly female: 97% of teachers in early childhood education and care (ECEC), 88% of primary and lower secondary school teachers and 67% of upper secondary school teachers are women. These percentages are slightly higher than the EU average in ECEC and primary schools, but significantly higher for secondary schools (the EU average for lower secondary school is 68% and for upper is 61%). Men are in a majority only in tertiary education (57%)². There are no policies to address this imbalance.

Teachers' required qualifications vary between educational levels; continuous professional development (CPD) is needed for career progression. Primary and secondary teachers need to have at least a master's degree, ECEC teachers at least a bachelor's degree and ECEC teaching assistants at least upper secondary education (ZOFI, 2018). CPD takes place at various public institutions and at private providers. Participation in CPD is a requirement for career advancement. Career progression is possible to three higher grades, after 5, 10 and 15 years of experience. The proportion of teachers who feel well or very well prepared in using information and communications technology (ICT) for teaching (67%) is much higher than the EU average (39.4%) (OECD, 2019)³.

Teachers' salaries are relatively low, but on the rise. Funding cuts in education led to reductions in and later a freezing of teachers' salaries (ZUJF, 2012), which are still considerably lower than those of other workers with tertiary education (ranging from 69% for ECEC teachers to 94% for upper secondary school teachers) (OECD, 2018). They are also significantly lower than the average salaries of EU teachers covered by OECD data. Teacher dissatisfaction led to strikes in 2018. The new government agreed a three-step increase in salaries in the public sector over the next 2 years, by 4% each time. The differential between starting and maximum salaries over the career is higher than the EU average: for lower secondary teachers, pay rises by 79.6% over the career compared to the EU average of 64% (Eurydice, 2018).

Currently there are enough new entrant teachers, but the teaching workforce is ageing and shortages exist in certain categories. More than 50% of tertiary education teachers are over 50 years old. The proportion of teachers over 50 is lower for secondary and primary school and ECEC teachers, at 38 %, 34% and 24%, respectively⁴. There are shortages, particularly in rural areas, of special education experts, support teachers, art teachers, primary education class teachers and teachers of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) (Prijave, 2018/2019; Prosta delovna mesta, 2019). While the profession is well regarded, and teachers are trusted (Toš, 2004, 2016), it seems that teaching is less attractive to men: 75.4% of male teachers report that teaching was their first choice as career, compared to 83.4% of female teachers. The percentage of teachers who believe that teaching is a valued profession in society

¹ Eurostat, UOE, 2017.

² Ibid.

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 Ibid.

(5.6%) is the second lowest in the EU (EU average: 17.7%) (OECD, 2019). Teachers are highly unionised and very concentrated in one union, which covers teachers from all levels of education.

There are enough applicants for the school principal positions available. Principals attend a one-year programme in the National School for Leadership in Education covering instructional leadership and managerial tasks, and take annual skills upgrading programmes. They also participate in annual meetings with the Minister of Education.

Box 1: 'The first job in education' project

This project (Slovenian: *Prva zaposlitev na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja*) helps graduates who are finishing their teacher education to find their first jobs. They are provided with practical training in competencies for independent educational work that enables them to pass a professional examination and become fully qualified teachers. This project is important because it provides young people with practical in-school training and enables their early activation.

Persons wishing to participate cannot apply to the scheme directly. Institutions (schools, kindergartens or other educational institutions) apply⁵ to train and temporarily employ beginner teachers and must confirm an offer of further employment after they finish the project.

The project is financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport under the EU's Operational Programme for 2014-2020 and the Youth Guarantee. This is the fourth year of implementation, at a total cost so far of just over EUR 8 million. Between 2016 and 2019, 658 beginner teachers and teaching assistants were trained. Funding for 2019 amounts to EUR 1.5 million (EUR 1.2 million of it from the ESF)⁶.

4. Investing in education and training

Slovenia invests more in education and training than the EU average, even though spending was cut sharply during the economic downturn. In 2017, Slovenia spent 5.4% of its GDP on education, compared to the EU average of 4.6%; the share of total general government expenditure spent on education (12.6%) is also above the EU average (10.2%). Nevertheless, before the crisis, education accounted for 6.5% of GDP. Education sector suffered the largest public spending cuts, from which it has still not recovered, with decreases falling most heavily on the secondary and tertiary education sectors⁷, though tertiary education spending has started to recover in the last 3 years. The new government has promised to restore the share of GDP allocated to education to 6% (Collective Agreement, 2018) and increases are planned in the 2019 Budget (Proračun, 2019).

Decision of the Constitutional Court on the issue of public funding for private primary schools upheld by the Parliament. In 2015, the Constitutional Court decided that all private primary school programmes should be fully funded by the government, not 85%-funded as now. This decision caused extensive debate, as opponents argue that spending more on private schools will reduce spending on the public network. A draft bill in response to the judgement was submitted to the Parliament. Parliament vetoed changes that would cut state funding for private primary schools, arguing that it would be in opposition to the Constitutional Court decision.

5. Modernising early childhood and school education

Participation in early childhood education and care has grown rapidly; a new programme offers free ECEC in the last year before compulsory school. From 2007/2008 to 2018/2019, the number of children enrolled in ECEC (aged 1-5) increased by more than 41% (from 61 359 to 89 600 children) (SORS 2018, MZŠŠ 2018, 2019). ECEC attendance by children under 3 is high, at 44.8% in 2017 (EU average: 34.2 %) ⁸. Participation between age 4 and the beginning of

⁵ See: http://www.mizs.gov.si/si/javne_objave_in_razpisi/okroznice/arhiv_okroznic/okroznice_razpisi_in_javna_narocila/javni_razpisi/?tx_t3javnirazpis_pi1%5Bshow_single%5D=1653

⁶ See: <http://www.eu-skladi.si/sl/aktualno/novice/evropska-sredstva-za-prvo-zaposlitev-na-podrocju-vzgoje-in-izobrazevanja-3>

⁷ Eurostat, COFOG, 2017

⁸ Eurostat, DESI, 2017

compulsory education stood at 92.1% in 2017, still below the EU benchmark for 2020 of 95% and the EU average of 95.4%. However, it has improved by 2.3 pps since 2013. Participation is low among children from low socio-economic background and from migrant families, exactly those who could benefit the most from it, as it would help their socioeconomic and cultural integration and provide them with long-term educational benefits⁹. Since autumn 2018 kindergartens can apply for state funds to offer children who have not participated in ECEC before free attendance of short programmes of 240 hours per year in the last year before primary education. However, applications are currently very low.

Educational performance in Slovenian schools is comparatively good. Slovenia's early school leaving rate of only 4.2% is significantly better than both the EU average of 10.6% and its Europe 2020 national target of 5%. PISA results show good average skills in maths, reading and science among Slovenian 15 year-olds. The share of low achievers in all three fields is close to the Education and Training 2020 benchmark of less than 15% (only mathematics is slightly higher at 16.1%). There are concerns over the big gender gap in performance, with boys performing significantly worse in reading (OECD, 2016).

Two pilot projects are exploring further improvement to primary education. Experimental re-introduction of external examination after the third year of primary school is taking place in 20 schools. The aim is to help teachers plan their future teaching and improve its quality. Another pilot project involves the introduction of an obligatory second foreign language in 7th grade, and teaching of the first foreign language from 1st grade in 20 schools.

Digital skills are below the EU average. The digital skills of employed people aged 25-64 are slightly below the EU average, as are the percentages of individuals aged 16-74 who regularly use the internet (79% compared to 83%) or have basic or above-basic digital skills¹⁰. In the last International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) survey Slovenian students recorded good overall results. However, a high proportion, 36%, did not achieve the second difficulty level (i.e. they have low digital skills) and 8% did not reach the first level (i.e. they have very low digital skills) (IEA, 2014).

Box 2: 'Only (with) others are we'

The 'Only (with) others are we'¹¹ project (in Slovenian *Le z drugimi smo*) aims to train 10 000 expert workers and leaders at all levels in social and civic intercultural competencies in order to boost the integration of migrants and the acceptance of diversity, to support faster identification of potential conflict situations and to develop intercultural relations and conflict resolution. The participants are taught how to include this approach in any lesson to help the integration of migrant students and to help students adopt the attitude that diversity is enriching.

The project is part of a larger project to strengthen the social and civic competencies of education staff that is funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the European Social Fund (ESF). The budget is EUR 1 million, of which EUR 800 000 is from the ESF.

'Only (with) others are we' is running from 2016/2017 to 2020/21. The Slovenian Migration Institute and the Educational Research Institute carry out, with external help, five free 16-hour professional training courses with the following titles:

- 1) Living the Diversity: Immigrant Inclusion and Slovene Language;
- 2) Zero tolerance for violence: Challenges and Issues;
- 3) Respectful communication and Conflict Management;
- 4) The Challenges of modern Society in Education;
- 5) Intercultural Relations and Integration in Education Practice.

⁹ Education and Training Monitor Volume I.

¹⁰ Eurostat, DESI, 2017.

¹¹ See: <https://isim.zrc-sazu.si/en/programi-in-projekti/only-with-others-are-we> and <https://lezdrugimismo.si/sl/predstavitev-projekta-katalog-zgibanka>

Seminars cover both theoretical information about appropriate pedagogical approaches and strategies, and active learning through discussions, workshops, role-play, problem solving and case studies.

Training is being carried out at three levels:

- 1) regional training in all 12 regions – carried out once a year per region, for two days (Friday and Saturday);
- 2) national training at the premises of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, twice a year;
- 3) training for all preschool/primary/secondary school teaching staff in individual schools, which is then adapted to their needs and carried out in 2, 3 or 4 days, at their request.

6. Modernising higher education

Tertiary attainment is high and the targets have been achieved, but a sharp decline in the last year and the big differences between men and women and between native-born and foreign-born raise concerns. Slovenia already achieved its national target of 40% tertiary educational attainment in 2013. The percentage of people with tertiary qualifications continued to grow until 2017, when at 46.4% it was significantly above the EU average (39.9%). In 2018, however, there was a sharp drop to 42.7%. While this fall occurred among both men and women, it is more pronounced in men, from 34.7% in 2017 to 31.6% in 2018. This drop might be partially due to all the older graduates who had to complete the pre-Bologna programmes by 2016. The difference between the tertiary attainment of women and men is the largest in the EU (56.3% as compared to 31.6%)¹². There is also a very big difference between the native-born (45.3%) and foreign-born population (22.1%), and even more so for foreign-born people from non-EU countries (only 12.9%).

Figure 2 Tertiary educational attainment by gender, 2018



Source: Eurostat, LFS.

¹² This gender difference seems set to continue. Almost two thirds of students in Slovenia in 2017 were female (61.3%, compared to 38.7% of males).

Big decrease in the number of students enrolling in tertiary education in the recent years is slowing down. While the total decline in student numbers in the last 5 years amounts to 18 159 students, this decline has significantly decreased in the last year (it was 4 818 students less from 2015 to 2016 and 1 251 students from 2016 to 2017)¹³. In addition to demographic trends, one of the reasons for the drop in the number of enrolments is the introduction, in 2012, of measures to prevent fictitious enrolment. One possible factor might be that the employment rate of recent higher education graduates (85.3%) is only slightly higher than for graduates from vocational secondary schools (84.5%), the smallest difference between them in the EU. The employment rate of all recent graduates (ISCED 3-8) in Slovenia (84.2%) is above both the EU benchmark for 2020 (82%) and the EU average (81.6%) in 2018. It declined from 2010 (80.7%) to 2014 (70.1%), but since then it has been rising and is currently at its highest point since 2010.

Figure 3 Employment rate of recent graduates by ISCED level, 2018



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey.

Slovenia has developed a graduate tracking mechanism. This has been developed as an additional module to the existing e-VŠ electronic student data registry. It should allow for the career monitoring of students graduating from higher education institutions (MIZS, 2019b) and provide positive input on the labour market's needs for tertiary graduates. It should thus help inform policy makers, universities and students about the employability of graduates from different studies.

Slovenia continues to refine its financing mechanisms for higher education. Having introduced performance-based funding of higher education institutions in 2016, Slovenia in 2018 analysed its implementation and identified issues for improvement in the next round of negotiations of performance agreements. In spring 2019 it invited the European Commission and peers from six countries who had previously advised on the creation of the new system to a follow-up event to review its initial implementation. The event was attended by national stakeholders and addressed how to improve the negotiation of performance agreements, allocation mechanisms, the definitions of priorities and indicators, and monitoring of implementation.

¹³ Eurostat, UOE, 2017.

7. Modernising vocational education and training

Both the proportion of upper secondary students in VET and the employment rate of VET graduates are very high. In 2017, 21 378 new students entered formal VET programmes in Slovenia, a decline of almost 9% from 2016 due to demographic reasons. However, total enrolment in upper secondary VET saw a slight increase in 2017 from previous years, with 70.9% of students at the upper secondary level attending vocational programmes; this is among the highest shares in the EU and well above the EU average (47.8%). Students enrolled in VET had limited exposure to work-based learning – none of the VET educational programmes are reported to combine school and work-based programmes (however, see the pilot action described below), but all VET programmes include practical lessons at school. The employment rate among recent VET graduates in 2018 saw a notable increase, to 84.5% from 62.4% in 2015 and well above the EU average of 79.5% in 2018.

Amendments to the Vocational Education Act entered into force in September 2018. They focus on: quality evaluation of learning at the workplace; establishing a register of learning places at national level; and introducing a certificate providing detailed, uniform and internationally comparable information to employers on vocational qualifications, in line with the Europass Certificate Supplement. Other amendments aim to ease the integration of migrants into secondary education by giving those without proof of former education the possibility of enrolling in upper secondary education by taking an examination, and by having schools provide intensive Slovenian courses during their first year. There is currently no legal obligation to track vocational graduates, but it is part of the national quality assurance indicators.

Following the adoption of the Apprenticeship Act in 2017, Slovenia has continued strengthening apprenticeships and considerably increased the number of apprentices in 2018-2019. The ESF-funded 'Reform of vocational upper secondary education' project started in 2017 in four vocational programmes. In 2018/2019 it was extended with four additional programmes (glassmaker, papermaker, painter-letterhead, machine mechanic); four more will be added in 2019-2020, to be offered in 21 upper secondary schools. In 2018, the VET Institute (CPI) conducted the first evaluation of the pilot phase, showcasing positive feedback from apprentices and companies and identifying some areas for improvement related to support mechanisms for companies and the status of the apprentice. As a result, the CPI drafted the 'Framework model of further development of modern apprenticeship' and will prepare practical guidelines on planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeships and on training of in-company trainers.

Several initiatives support the professional development of VET teachers and trainers. A three-year ESF project called 'Strengthening the competences of education staff in the field of managing an innovative educational institute' was completed in 2018 (an upgrade of ESF project has recently been launched). Activities included the development of quality assurance in vocational schools, the promotion of entrepreneurship, innovative methods of teaching and further development of teachers' pedagogical skills. In addition, CPI analysed VET teachers' knowledge, attitudes and use of ICT in designing and implementing digital competences in VET programmes. The results fed into the training of about 70 teachers in 12 vocational schools in 2018-2019, helping them to develop learners' digital competencies.

8. Developing adult learning

The proportion of low-qualified adults is small while participation in adult education is just above the EU average. A relatively small percentage of adults (11.9%) have at most a lower secondary qualification, compared to an EU average of 21.9%. The share of low-qualified adults in employment (51.3%) is below the EU average (56.8%). 11.4% of adults aged 25-64 in Slovenia have had a learning experience during the last 4 weeks (EU average: 11.1%). However, this participation rate has dropped significantly since 2010, when it was 16.4%. Only 70 000 jobs are categorised as belonging to elementary occupations which can be filled by those with only low skills; this highlights the need for a more substantial upskilling and reskilling effort, given that the total number of low-qualified adults is around 140.000 and only around 1000 adults are acquiring an upper-secondary qualification each year. In 2019, Slovenia received from the Council of the EU a country-specific recommendation to 'Increase the employability of low-skilled and older workers by improving labour market relevance of education and training, lifelong learning and activation measures, including through better digital literacy.' (Council of the EU, 2019).

Support for building up skills frameworks and for skills development, including for the low-skilled, is continuing. Slovenia has finished the second phase of its National Skills Strategy in co-operation with OECD and got 8 recommendations to improve governance in adult learning. Regarding the recommendations Slovenia started the process of the new Master Plan for Adult Education (2021-2030). Over 2018-2022 several projects are supporting the upskilling of low-skilled adults and helping to increase their employability (Munera, Panup and Atena projects).

The new Adult Education Act defines the provision of adult education programmes and supporting activities that will be provided as a public service. The most important current activity is the design of the new National Master Plan for Adult Education which will define the national policy for adult education, form the basis for concrete planning and supplement the Adult Education Act. The target groups are lacking key competences, life skills and job-specific skills. The implementation will require additional staff with different profiles.

Currently, the supply of adult educators is barely in balance with the demand, while sufficiently qualified trainers and educators for CVET are lacking. It is expected that more adult educators with different profiles will be needed in the future. Adult educators either follow a university programme at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana or graduate from other university programmes in social or human sciences and then enrol in the special one-year programme of pedagogic andragogic training. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education supports the implementation and provision of literacy courses for different target groups of adults, quality assurance, guidance for adult learners, self-directed learning, promotional activities and evaluation studies.

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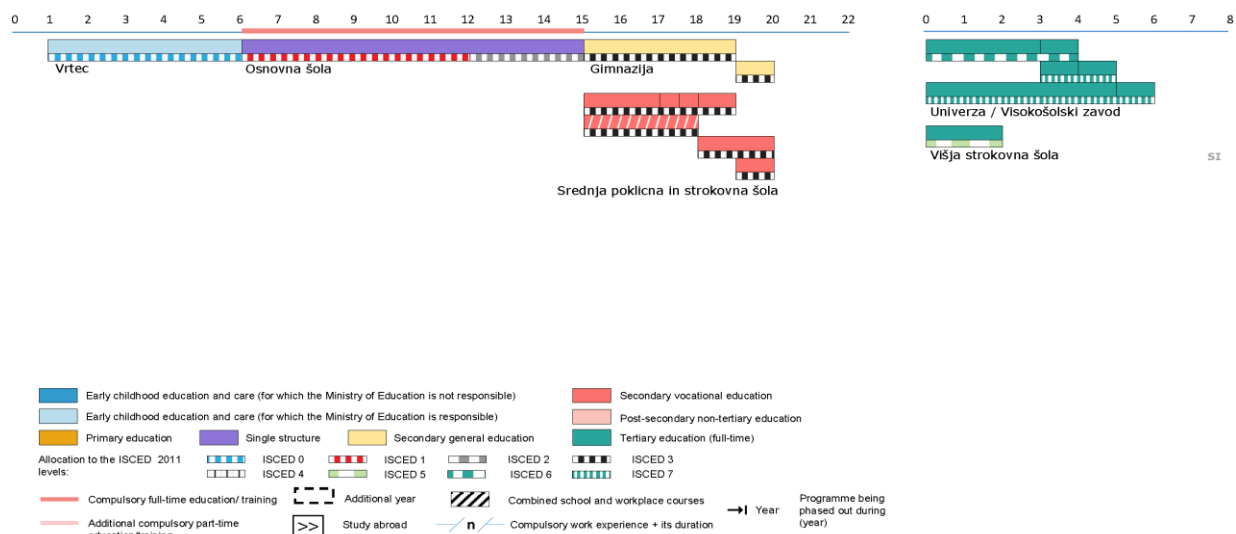
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Annex I: Key indicator sources

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	JRC computation based on Eurostat / UIS / OECD data

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%¹⁴ 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

¹⁴ 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 2020¹⁵ 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 Area¹⁶. 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

¹⁵ Data for this benchmark come from the OECD PISA survey. Students scoring below level 2 are considered underachievers.

¹⁶ 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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