

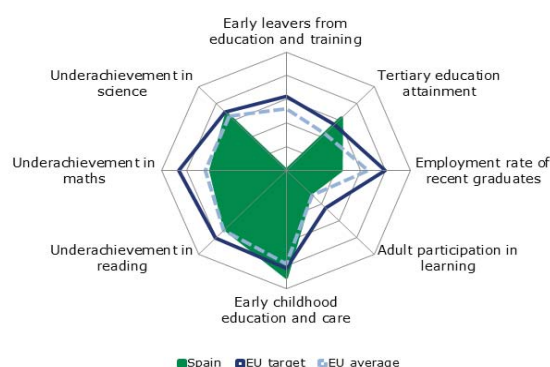
# Spain

## 1. Key Indicators and Benchmarks

		Spain		EU average	
		2011	2014	2011	2014
<b>Educational poverty and spending cuts: challenges for the education sector</b>					
Share of 15 year-olds with underachievement in:	Reading	:	18.3% <sup>12</sup>	:	17.8% <sup>12</sup>
	Maths	:	23.6% <sup>12</sup>	:	22.1% <sup>12</sup>
	Science	:	15.7% <sup>12</sup>	:	16.6% <sup>12</sup>
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	4.4%	4.0% <sup>13,p</sup>	5.1%	5.0% <sup>13</sup>
	Public expenditure on education as a share of total public expenditure	9.6%	9.1% <sup>13</sup>	10.5%	10.3% <sup>13</sup>
<b>Education attainment levels of young people across Europe</b>					
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Men	31.0%	25.6% <sup>u</sup>	15.2%	12.7%
	Women	21.5%	18.1% <sup>u</sup>	11.5%	9.5%
	Total	• 26.3%	21.9% <sup>u</sup>	13.4%	11.1%
Tertiary education attainment (age 30-34)	Men	37.2%	36.8%	31.0%	33.6%
	Women	46.7%	47.8%	38.7%	42.3%
	Total	• 41.9%	42.3%	34.8%	37.9%
<b>Policy levers for inclusiveness, quality and relevance</b>					
Early childhood education and care (participation from age 4 to starting age of compulsory education)	•	97.7%	97.1% <sup>13</sup>	93.2%	93.9% <sup>13</sup>
Teachers' participation in training	Any topic (total)	:	84.3% <sup>13</sup>	:	84.6% <sup>13</sup>
	Special needs education	:	19.6% <sup>13</sup>	:	32.4% <sup>13</sup>
	Multicultural settings	:	25.1% <sup>13</sup>	:	13.2% <sup>13</sup>
	ICT skills for teaching	:	68.2% <sup>13</sup>	:	51.0% <sup>13</sup>
Foreign language learning	Share of ISCED 2 students learning two or more foreign languages	40.3%	41.9% <sup>12</sup>	63.0%	: <sup>12</sup>
Share of ISCED 3 students in vocational education and training (VET)		45.3%	33.5% <sup>13,b</sup>	50.4%	48.9% <sup>13</sup>
Employment rate of recent graduates by education attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4	51.9%	54.7%	71.3%	70.8%
	ISCED 5-8	72.5%	68.6%	82.5%	80.5%
	ISCED 3-8 (total)	• 67.1%	65.1%	77.1%	76.1%
Learning mobility	Inbound graduates mobility (bachelor)	:	0.6% <sup>13</sup>	:	: <sup>13</sup>
	Inbound graduates mobility (master)	:	4.7% <sup>13</sup>	:	: <sup>13</sup>
Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	• 11.0%	9.8% <sup>b</sup>	8.9%	10.7%

Sources: Eurostat (LFS, UOE, GFS); OECD (PISA, TALIS). Notes: • ET 2020 benchmark; data refer to weighted EU average, covering a different number of Member States depending on the source; b= break in time series, d= definition differs, p= provisional, u= low reliability, <sup>12</sup>= 2012, <sup>13</sup>= 2013. Further information is found in the respective section of Volume 1 ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)).

**Figure 1. Position in relation to highest (outer ring) and lowest performers (centre)**



Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2014 and UOE 2013) and OECD (PISA 2012, TALIS 2013). Note: all scores are set between a maximum (the highest performers visualised by the outer ring) and a minimum (the lowest performers visualised by the centre of the figure).

## 2. Main strengths and challenges

Participation in early childhood education and care is almost universal for children aged 3 to 6. Spain has one of the highest tertiary education attainment rates in Europe, and enrolment in vocational education and training increased by 13% between 2013/14 and 2014/15 with a particular expansion of the 'dual model' of work-based training combined with vocational school training.

Despite a steady fall in early school leaving over the past six years, Spain still has the highest rate in Europe, with significant differences between regions. There are also great disparities in the performance of school students in basic skills between cohorts, schools and regions, mostly linked to socioeconomic background. Recent reform of the education and training system is expected to reduce the early school leaving rate still further while improving the level of basic skills of low performers. The reform is being implemented at different paths across the different autonomous communities. Employability of higher education graduates, particularly in certain disciplines, remains a major challenge as well as the significant proportion of graduates employed in jobs that do not require a university degree.

## 3. Investing in education and training

After falling since 2010, general government expenditure on education as a share of GDP stood at 4% in 2013, below the EU average of 5%. As a share of total public expenditure it has slightly decreased from 9.6% in 2011 to 9.1% in 2013.<sup>244</sup>

The 2015 State Budget provides for a nominal increase in expenditure on education of 4.5% compared with 2014. While the budget for pre-primary and primary school fell by 0.3% compared with 2014, the budget for secondary education increased by 135.2%, mainly to set up a new initial vocational education programme (*Formación profesional básica*).<sup>245</sup>

After two years in which expenditure on grants and scholarships fell, financial support to vulnerable families increased by 0.2% in 2014.<sup>246</sup> A change in the selection criteria led the number of those eligible to fall by 6.7% between 2013/14 and 2014/15,<sup>247</sup> although the number of applicants increased due to overall economic circumstances. The 2016 State budget proposal foresees an increase of 0.2% in the financial allocation to scholarships and grants and restores the financial support programme for school books.

## 4. Tackling inequalities

The early school leaving rate continued to fall, from 23.6 in 2013 to 21.9% in 2014. However, Spain still has the highest rate in Europe, well above the Europe 2020 national target of 15%. The problem is made particularly complex by great disparities in dropout rates between male and female students, between students with different social, cultural and economic backgrounds and between regions. The rate fell from 38% in 2008 to 25.6% in 2014 for males and from 25.1% to 18.1% for females. Early school leaving among foreign-born students, at 37.8%, is twice as high as the rate among those born in Spain (18.9%). Since a lot of early school leaving was encouraged in the past by the 'pull effect' of the labour market on low-skilled workers, mainly male, e.g. of the building industry, the fall in recent years has been partly due to the fall in that labour market demand. Some is also accounted for by the positive impact of specific regional programmes (in Extremadura, for example, early school leaving fell by 5 percentage points in 2013). Finally, great disparities between the regions (from a rate of 14% in the north-east to more than 28% in the south) mirror the different economic structures and labour markets of the regions and their impact on the socioeconomic situation of the student population (Figure 2).

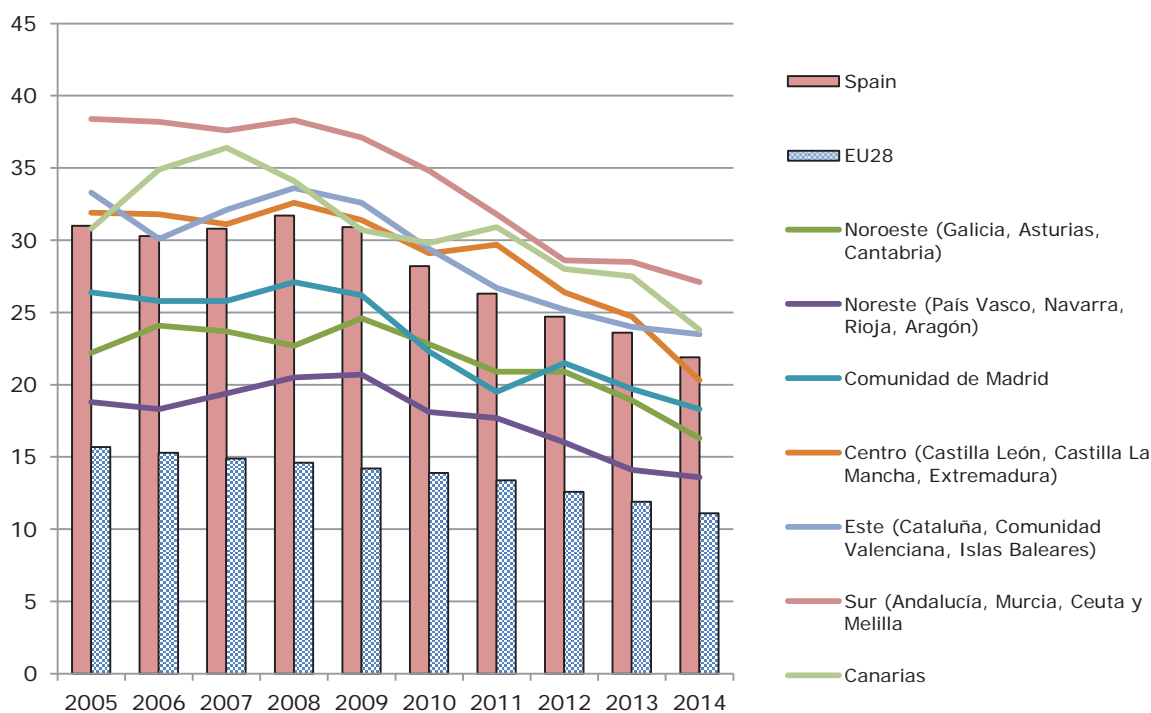
<sup>244</sup> Source: Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (COFOG) database.

<sup>245</sup> All data are reflected in the National Budget - Presupuestos Nacionales del Estado. El Libro amarillo.

<sup>246</sup> MECD, Datos y Cifras curso escolar 2014/2015.

<sup>247</sup> MECD, Datos y Cifras curso escolar 2014/2015.

Figure 2. Early school leaving rates per regions in Spain



Source: Eurostat

Low performance and the risk of academic failure have also proved to be critical factors (OECD 2014a). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2012) shows that Spain's performance in mathematics and reading remains steady at just below the EU average and, here again, there are great disparities between students, schools and regions, correlated with socioeconomic background and early school leaving rates. The PISA survey shows that the proportion of low achievers in mathematics is 23.6% and 18.3% in reading, above the EU average of 22.1% and 17.8%. Yet Spain scores better than average in sciences, with the proportion of low achievers at 15.7%, compared with the EU average of 16.6% (OECD 2013).

Participation by children aged three to six years in early childhood education and care is almost universal and average participation by three-year-olds is 95.8%, far above the EU average of 85.3%. Also the participation rate for children less than three years old more than doubled in the last 10 years, to 39%, quite above the EU average of 30% (Eurydice 2014). There is also a significant percentage of children under three attending non-statutory childcare provisions (over 20%) (Aguilar et al. 2011).

The 2014/2015 school year marked the first implementation phase of the Organic Law for Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE). The law aims to improve student performance and curb early school leaving, which is a proven obstacle to the country's competitiveness and youth employment. The success of this reform will hinge on effective implementation by the Spanish Government and the regional authorities.

In order to make a vocational education and training path more attractive as an alternative to leaving school early, Spain is introducing two-year initial vocational training programmes (*Formación profesional básica FPB*) at lower secondary education level (fourth grade) for students aged 15. This should give students more options in education and upgrade the quality of basic vocational education and training on the basis of three changes: (1) improving the level of basic skills in the FPB curriculum compared with the previous programmes (*PCPI – programas de cualificación profesional inicial*); (2) reducing the number of different teachers per

class group to encourage personal tutoring and follow-up; and (3) introducing teaching through a 'project' approach. The regional administrations have two years in which to adapt their education systems to this new scheme. So far, 59 346 students have enrolled in such programmes or the equivalent (representing 92%<sup>248</sup> of the initial estimate).

The LOMCE also introduces measures to improve performance in basic skills and key competencies, such as a new design for curricula and the introduction of new assessments to detect difficulties at an earlier stage.

Teachers are encouraged to follow trainings to improve the teaching of basic skills, based on the PISA tests. Regional administrations request specific training to improve teachers' teaching skills and tackle learning difficulties related to the students' socioeconomic background. Spain has one of the highest rates of lower secondary education teachers reporting having undergone professional development to teach in multicultural and multilingual settings, with a rate of 25.1% according to the OECD's TALIS survey (OECD 2014b). This is well above the OECD average of 16%.

The LOMCE provisions on early childhood education and care took effect in 2014/15. They establish new governmental responsibilities regarding the objectives, skills and evaluation criteria for the core curriculum in early childhood education and care, and the promotion of multilingual education.

The introduction of the LOMCE in 2014/15 spawned disagreements between the national government and a number of Autonomous Communities. However, all regional governments are applying the LOMCE in 2015/16 while adapting their regional laws to their specific needs.

## 5. Modernising school education

According to the TALIS 2013 survey (OECD 2014b), the proportion of Spanish teachers undergoing professional development is around the EU average, at 84.3%, while the proportion of teachers undergoing information and communication technology (ICT) training is among the highest in Europe, at 68.2%. Finally, 37% of teachers use ICT frequently in their classes, which is above the EU average (34%).

Spain is implementing a national plan to promote the digital culture in schools, based on four pillars:

1. Improving connectivity in education centres;
2. Developing digital educational resources and learning communities;
3. Developing operational standards;
4. Training teachers on teaching using ICT.

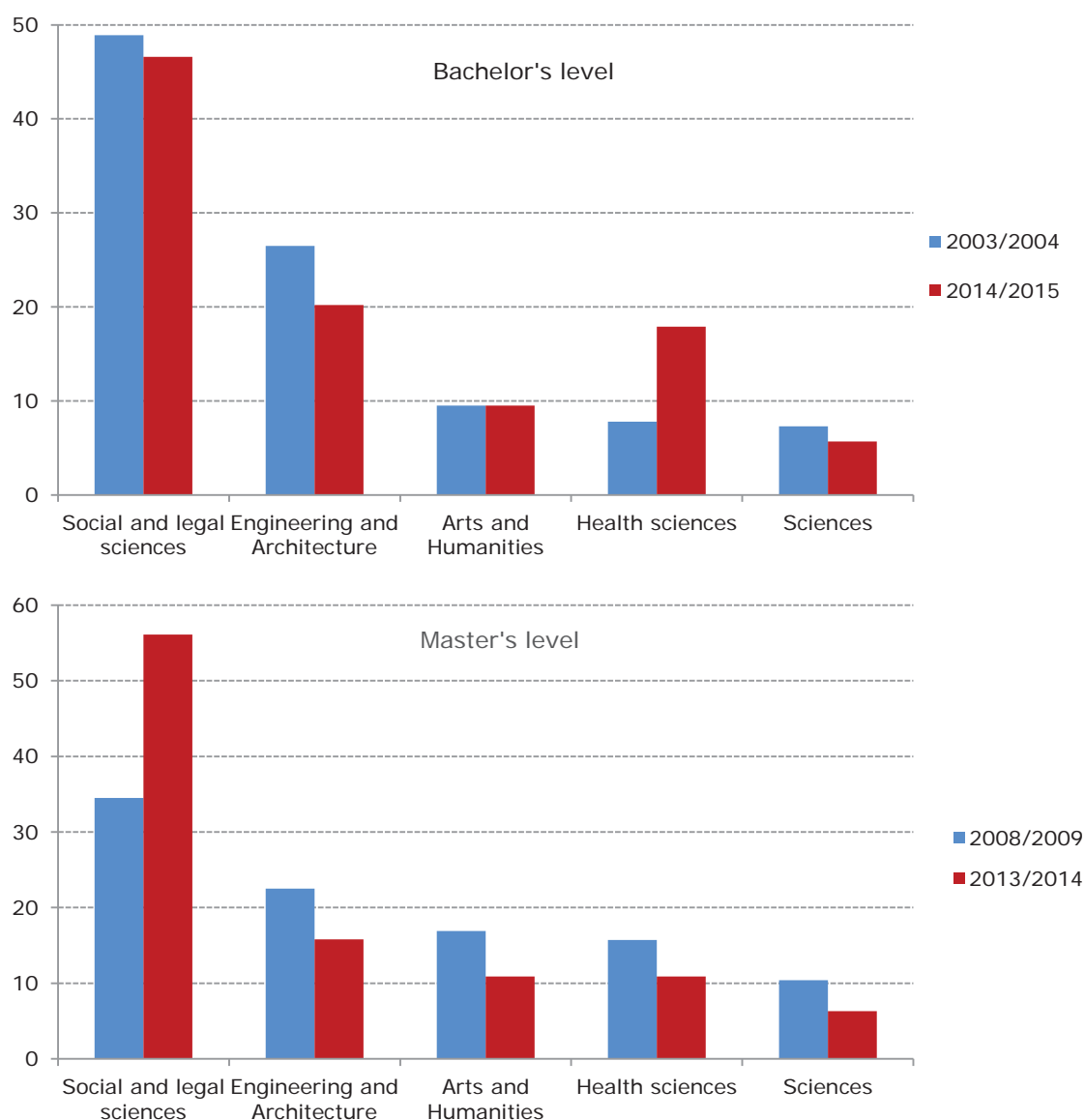
More generally, the LOMCE introduces a new approach promoting skills-based teaching and learning. A State Order of January 2015 spells out the objectives, methodologies, means of evaluation and key skills involved. Teachers are asking for specific training to implement it, and teaching conditions better adapted to the project approach. The new legal framework establishes new requirements and mechanisms to upgrade school leaders' management skills and eventually provide greater autonomy for schools. Discussions between the ministry and teacher unions on new conditions of employment for teachers are still ongoing. The revised conditions would provide for merit-based and performance-based recruitment and promotion of teachers.

<sup>248</sup> The estimate was 63 923 students, based on the enrolment rate in PCPIs in 2013/2014.

## 6. Modernising higher education

Spain has a tertiary education attainment rate of 42.3% for 30-34 year-olds, above the EU average of 37.9% but still below the Europe 2020 national target of 44%. The attainment rate shows a significant gender gap, with the female rate surpassing the male rate by more than 10 percentage points (at 47.8%, compared with 36.8%), and an even wider gap between Spanish-born cohorts, with a tertiary education attainment rate of 46.5%, and foreign-born cohorts, with a rate of only 26.9%. The employability rate of recent tertiary graduates<sup>249</sup> is one of the lowest in Europe at 68.6%.

**Figure 3. Enrolment in university programmes by field of study (% of total students)**



Source: Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD)

The Spanish university system comprises 83 universities and 243 campuses, offering 2 534 registered bachelor's degrees, 3 306 registered master's degrees and 1 751 registered doctorates. In 2014/15, 29.4% of the population aged 18-24 years was enrolled in university programmes at bachelor or master level. Since 2003, the enrolment rate in engineering and

<sup>249</sup> People aged 20-34 who left education between one and three years before the reference year.

sciences has fallen by about 24%, while enrolment in health studies has increased by more than 80%. Enrolment in humanities and social sciences has remained stable.

In October 2014, the Ministry of Education presented the first report on the employability of university graduates, drafted with institutional partners. The report is based on the social security enrolment rates and shows that 56% of graduates are unemployed one year after graduation and 35% four years after graduation, while 44.5% of the graduates employed four years after graduation have jobs that do not require a university degree (MECD 2014a). The figures are particularly poor for the humanities and social sciences, whose enrolment rates have changed little over the past 10 years (Figure 3). The publication of the report is expected to raise awareness among university applicants and attract their interest to higher education programmes with greater labour market relevance.

In February 2013, the Commission of Experts for the Reform of the Spanish University System<sup>250</sup> presented *Proposals for the Reform and Improvement of the Quality and Efficiency of the Spanish University System* to the Ministry (MECD 2013). The text presents the experts' analysis of: the selection of teaching and research staff, quality assurance, university governance, university funding, and university studies and degrees.

University tuition fees have significantly increased in some regions since 2012/2013 as Royal Decree-Law 14/2012 adjusted the fee thresholds and linked them to the cost of provision. At the same time, the eligibility criteria for grant awards became stricter. These public spending reforms could cause university enrolment to fall in the next few years unless new programmes with better job prospects are proposed (Albert Verdú and Roig Cotanda 2013).

For vocationally oriented tertiary education, the trend is in the other direction, with a 5.5 percentage point increase in the enrolment rate of the population aged 18-24 years over the past five years, to 29.9% in 2012/2013, slightly above the university rate.

### Box 1. Progressive reform of the university system

Since the new law on education (the LOMCE) was approved, the government has progressively reformed key aspects of the Spanish university system.

1. **Access:** The LOMCE removes the university entrance examination for official bachelor degree programmes, instead favouring candidates' qualifications. Each university will set its own admission procedures as long as they meet certain criteria set in the LOMCE. The grants system has also been reformed to take account of students' performance.

2. **Internationalisation:** The 2015-2020 strategy (MECD 2014b) aims to build a strong, internationally attractive university system and to promote mobility among the best students, teachers and researchers. As a cornerstone of the reform, in February 2015 the government approved a Royal Decree-Law that allows universities to adjust the credits given for degree courses and at master's level in order to move to the 3+2 years scheme (from the current 4+1) in line with the prevailing standard in Europe. This '3+2 decree' triggered strong protests leading to a general strike in March 2015. University governing boards complain of the difficulty of adapting study plans to continuous reforms. Students' unions complain about the impact on the cost of studying, particularly at master's level, while the government argues that on the contrary, degree courses could be shorter and thus cheaper. The decisive factor seems to be employability, i.e. whether the new three-year degree will be seen as a 'good enough' qualification for access to a job requiring higher education.

In addition, the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education was amended in 2014 to include some particular bachelor degrees at level 3 (master — ISCED 7) of the framework and thus give Spanish graduates access to doctoral programmes abroad. Moreover, in January 2015 the Ministry of Education agreed on the equivalence of the levels of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and the European Qualifications Framework.

<sup>250</sup> This expert working group was appointed in April 2012 by the Minister's Cabinet.

3. **Improved quality:** The government is exploring the scope for introducing performance criteria in the internal governance system and financial support for higher education institutions. In May 2014, two more legislative initiatives were approved: the Royal Decree 415/2015 that simplifying the accreditation procedure for university teachers, with more objective criteria and more transparency, and the Royal Decree 420/2015 simplifying the procedure for founding and recognising public and private universities.

4. **Increased usefulness and relevance of university outcomes:** Together with the OECD and the European Commission, the Ministry of Education has launched the initiative 'Building up a National Skills Strategy', which has brought together seven different ministries and opened a multisectoral dialogue between central government, regional authorities and social and economic stakeholders. A skills strategy diagnostic report was presented in September 2015 (OECD 2015). A decision on action to be taken, based on the report, is to be taken at a later stage.

The wider aim of the employability report (see section 6) is to promote better decision making among future university students. However, whether the outputs can be put to real use to foster employability and in particular to better align teaching provision to labour market needs remains unclear.

The Spanish university system needs to improve the labour market relevance of its outcomes, foster mobility among teachers and students, and rationalise the over-wide scope of study programmes to favour greater quality. This will require consensual, comprehensive and gradual change in the system beyond one-off reforms.

## 7. Modernising vocational education and training and promoting adult learning

The introduction of basic VET opportunities at an early age (see section 4) might result in greater participation in upper secondary VET, as well as better tutoring and career guidance services at school level. The employment rate for recent upper secondary graduates<sup>251</sup> in Spain has fallen by 50% since 2009 reaching its lowest rate of 40.9% in 2013. In 2014, the employment rate for upper secondary graduates has grown again to 54.7%. The participation of adults in lifelong learning stood at 9.8% in 2014, slightly below the EU average of 10.7%.

Spain is reforming the VET system to better adapt young people's skills to labour market needs and to increase the attractiveness and acceptance of VET programmes, by reforming the catalogue of diplomas offered both for medium-level and high-level VET and increasing the flexibility of the curricula of medium-level VET programmes.

Royal Decree 1529/2012 introduced measures to develop training and apprenticeship contracts (of one to three years depending on the qualifications) and established the legal basis for dual vocational training (work-based training and vocational school training, for a range of careers) whereas the implementation rests with the 17 autonomous communities. In 2014/15, dual VET programmes were run in all autonomous communities. The number of educational institutions (728) and companies (4 878) has risen dramatically since the beginning of implementation and the number of students enrolled in dual VET (16 199) has quadrupled since 2012. Integration of work-based components into school-based programmes is ensured through periods in real businesses and by other means such as on-site labs, workshops and business simulations. In 2014, new financial incentives to enterprises (public calls for expressions of interest) have been offered to support participation in dual training under the strategy for entrepreneurship and youth employment. Dual training via distance learning is facilitated by e-learning platforms developed with quality criteria common to those of traditional learning.

The measures on VET seem appropriate, but continued work will be required, jointly involving public authorities, education providers and employers, to extend and consolidate the dual VET

<sup>251</sup> People aged 20-34 who left education between one and three years before the reference year.



system in Spain, implementing work-based learning and increasing apprenticeship opportunities. Clarification of the roles of all stakeholders in work-based learning needs to be sought to match the positive rapid extension of this approach. The Chambers of Commerce are getting progressively involved in the scheme at national and regional level to encourage participation by local businesses, but the low capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to absorb trainees and the lack of training for tutors in companies are still obstacles to building good-quality dual VET and ensuring greater employability of students. Finally, better coordination between labour market policies and education policies would boost the effectiveness of the reforms.

In September 2015, Spain finalised the reform of the training for employment subsystem (the TES — *subsistema de formación para el empleo*) started in March 2015. The recent Law 30/2015 (9 September) does not make significant changes to the aims of the system. The key point is the change in governance. The new model leaves the system basically in the hands of the public employment service, thus substantially reducing the influence of social stakeholders — both trade unions and employers' associations. Nevertheless, their participation in the consultative General Council of the Employment National System (*Consejo General del Sistema Nacional de Empleo*) (Royal Decree 1722/07) is guaranteed. The Training for Employment Tripartite Foundation is now called the Training for Employment State Foundation (*Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo*) as the public employment service now has a majority on its management board, rather than workers' and employers' representatives. It is still responsible for technically helping the public employment service to design and implement training for the employment subsystem.

Other changes introduced by the reform in 2015 are linked to the last 2012 labour market reform (Law 6/2012) to boost lifelong learning programmes targeted at employed workers, such as the right to a 20-hour period of training leave for all workers with at least one year of seniority, and the option of introducing an individual training account for workers.

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