



European
Commission



Education and Training Monitor 2014

Spain

1. Key indicators and benchmarks

	Spain		Trend	EU28 average		Europe 2020 target /
	2010	2013		2010	2013	Benchmark
<i>Europe 2020 headline target</i>						
1. Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	28.2%	23.6%	▼	13.9%	12.0%	EU target: 10% National target: 15%
2. Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	42.0%	42.3%	▲	33.6%	36.9%	EU target: 40% National target: 44%

ET 2020 Benchmarks

3. Early childhood education and care (4-years-old until the starting age of compulsory education)	98.4% ⁰⁹	97.4% ¹²	▼	92.1% ⁰⁹	93.9% ¹²	95%	
4. Basic skills Low achievers (15 year-olds; Level 1 or lower in PISA study)	Reading	19.6% ⁰⁹	18.3% ¹²	▼	19.7% ⁰⁹	17.8% ¹²	15%
	Mathematics	23.7% ⁰⁹	23.6% ¹²	=	22.3% ⁰⁹	22.1% ¹²	15%
	Science	18.2% ⁰⁹	15.7% ¹²	▼	17.8% ⁰⁹	16.6% ¹²	15%
5. Learning mobility	Initial vocational training (IVET)	1.1%	0.9% ¹²	▼	0.6%	0.7% ¹²	
	Higher Education	-	2.0% ¹²	:	-	1.2% ¹²	
6. Employment rate of recent graduates (age 20-34) having left education 1-3 years before reference year	ISCED 3-6	70.6%	59.9%	▼	77.4%	75.5%	82%
	ISCED 3-4	60.4%	40.9%	▼	72.1%	69.5%	
	ISCED 5-6	74.7%	66.8%	▼	82.7%	80.9%	
7. Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)	11.0%	11.1%	=	9.1%	10.5% ^b	15%	

Other ET 2020 Indicators

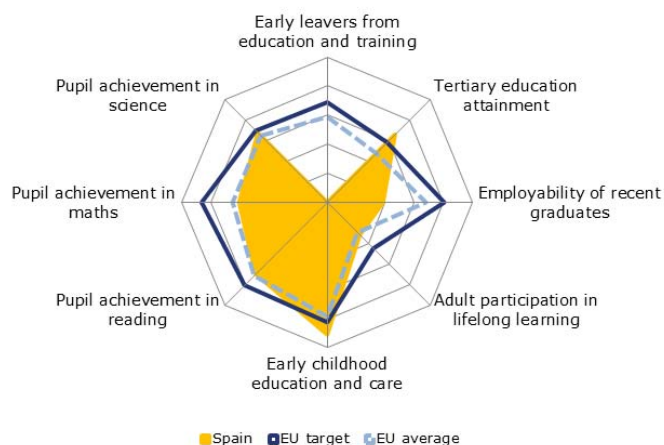
8. Investment in education and training	a. General government expenditure on education (% of GDP)	4.9%	4.5% ¹²	▼	5.5%	5.3% ¹²	
	b. Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil/student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€ 6,176	€ 6,093 ¹¹	▼	€6,063.74 ^e	€6,297.16 ^{11, e}
		ISCED 3-4	€ 7,898	€ 7,590 ¹¹	▼	€7,022.35 ^e	€6,650.87 ^{11, e}
	ISCED 5-6	€ 10,255	€ 9,909 ¹¹	▼	€9,764.30 ^e	€9,474.80 ^{11, e}	
9. Transversal competences	Digital competences	a. Pupils in grade 4 (ISCED 1) using computers at school	: ⁰⁷	60.7% ¹¹	:	60.7% ⁰⁷	64.7% ¹¹
		b. Individuals aged 16-74 with high computer skills ¹	28.0% ⁰⁹	35.0% ¹²	▲	25.0% ⁰⁹	26.0% ¹²
	Problem solving in technology rich environments	c. Low achievers (no or insuff. computer experience) ²	:	23.2% ¹²	:	:	16.9% ^{12, EU17}
		d. High achievers (PAAAC level 2 and above)	:	: ¹²	:	:	33.2% ^{12, EU13}
	Entrepreneurial competences	e. Individuals aged 18-64 who believe to have the required skills and knowledge to start a business	:	48.0%	:	:	42.3% ^{a, EU18}
	Foreign language skills	f. ISCED 2 students at proficiency level B1 or higher in first foreign language ³	:	26.7% ¹¹	:	:	43.5% ^{11, EU13}
g. ISCED 2 students learning two or more foreign languages		39.4%	41.9% ¹²	▲	60.6%	63.0% ¹¹	
10. Basic skills of adults	Literacy	Low achievers (< PAAAC proficiency level 2)	:	27.5% ¹²	:	:	19.9% ^{12, EU17}
		High achievers (PAAAC proficiency level 3 and >)	:	32.6% ¹²	:	:	43.3% ^{12, EU17}
	Numeracy	Low achievers (< PAAAC proficiency level 2)	:	30.6% ¹²	:	:	23.6% ^{12, EU17}
		High achievers (PAAAC proficiency level 3 and >)	:	28.5% ¹²	:	:	40.9% ^{12, EU17}
11. Skills for future labour market Projected change in employment 2010-2020 in %	High qualification	:	+16.2%	:	:	+12.4%	
	Medium qualification	:	+19.2%	:	:	+2.1%	
	Low qualification	:	-23.1%	:	:	-13.2%	
12. Teachers	a. Teachers aged >50 teaching in public and private at ISCED 2-3 - as % of total teachers teaching in ISCED 2-3 ⁴	29.3%	31.9% ¹²	▲	:	: ¹²	
	b. Percentage of teachers who undertook some professional development activities in the previous 12 months	:	84.3%	:	:	84.6% ^{EU19}	
13. Vocational education and training	Percentage of vocational students at ISCED 3	44.6%	45.5% ¹²	▲	50.1%	50.4% ¹²	

Source: Cedefop: 11 / EAC: 5ab / European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC): 9f / Eurostat (COFOG): 8a / Eurostat (ISS): 9b / Eurostat (LFS): 1, 2, 6, 7 / Eurostat (UOE): 3, 5, 8b, 9g, 12a, 13 / Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 9e / IEA TIMSS: 9a / OECD (PIAAC): 9cd, 10 / OECD (PISA): 4 / OECD (TALIS): 12b

Notes: ⁰⁷ = 2007, ⁰⁸ = 2008, ⁰⁹ = 2009, ¹⁰ = 2010, ¹¹ = 2011, ¹² = 2012, a = unweighted average, b = break, e = estimate, p = provisional.

¹ = having carried out 5-6 specific computer related activities. Caution is advised when interpreting comparability over time, due to developments in the implementation of questions related to computer skills, ² = results cover people who have no computer experience or failed the ICT test, ³ = average of skills tested in reading, listening, writing, ⁴ = in some Member States, ISCED 3 includes level 4 (CZ, EE, ES, IE, NL, FI, UK), while in others (IT, LU, NL) only public institutions figures are reported.

Figure: Position in relation to highest (outer ring) and lowest performers (centre)



Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2013 and UOE 2012) and OECD (PISA 2012). 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 chart).

2. Main challenges

In Spain, participation in early childhood education and care is almost universal. However, and despite recently positive trends, the Spanish education system faces a persistently high rate of early school leavers, low achievement in basic skills and an inefficient transition from education and training to the labour market. There has been some progress on implementing vocational education and training (VET) reforms, but links between education and labour market policies still need to be improved. Tertiary educational attainment continues to be among the highest in Europe, but the high levels of unemployment of university graduates and skills mismatches in higher education remain a concern. Education and training reforms are part of an overall programme to address the wider economic context of high youth unemployment, slow recovery and fiscal consolidation.

The 2014 European Semester country-specific recommendation (CSR) on education and training focused on: (i) continuing with efforts to increase the quality of primary and secondary education by effectively implementing the new educational schemes; (ii) providing enhanced support to groups at risk of early school leaving, while addressing regional disparities; (iii) increasing the labour market relevance of vocational education and training and higher education, in particular by enhancing the cooperation with employers and supporting the training of trainers and tutors.¹

3. Improving resource efficiency and effectiveness

3.1 Investment in education

General government expenditure on education as percentage of GDP in Spain is below the EU average and has been decreasing since 2009. From 2011 to 2012 it decreased from 4.82% to 4.57%, reaching 4.55% in 2013, compared to the EU average of 5.3%².

Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil is higher than the EU average at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels of education, but lower for primary education (ISCED 1).³ However, from 2009 to 2010, expenditure per pupil decreased for all levels except tertiary education and by 2011, expenditure at all education levels was cut relative to the previous year⁴. Teachers' salaries were cut by 5% in 2010 and frozen in 2011 and 2012. The number of teaching hours and the ratio of students per teacher increased (although the latter remains below the EU average).

As indicated in the 2014 State Budget, in order to limit public spending, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport intends to concentrate its financial resources on strategic programmes for the education system, such as on the scholarships and grants programs to students and the budgetary program for early childhood and

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2014/csr2014_council_spain_en.pdf

² Eurostat — General government expenditure by function: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=gov_a_exp&lang=en

³ Value in Purchasing Power Standards

⁴ Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil/student: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&pcode=tps00067&language=en>

education (ECEC).⁵ Central and regional expenditure on education policies in 2014 amounts to EUR 2150.05 million. This represents an increase of 10.6% compared to the budget for 2013, while the proportion of education spending out of the total budget remains stable at 0.6%.⁶ In turn, the State Budget for 2015 was approved in September 2014 and foresees EUR 2 273 million to education policies in 2015, both at central and regional level. This represents an increase of 4.5% compared to 2014, but the share of education in the total budget (EUR 440 074 million) decreased 0.1 p.p. to 0.5%.⁷

3.2 A focus on teachers

The 2013 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)⁸ provided the following main findings for Spain:

- The proportion of teachers who feel they can motivate students that show a low interest in school work is relatively high (74.1% compared to an EU average of 71%) and the proportion of teachers taking part in a formal induction programme during their first regular employment is below the EU average (35.3% compared to 48%).
- Spanish school leaders seem to have relatively low levels of autonomy, as only 33% of teachers work in schools where the school leader reports having considerable responsibility for determining course content.
- Regarding information and communication technologies (ICT) usage, only 14.1% of Spanish teachers reported a high need to develop their ICT skills for teaching, compared to the EU average of 17.8%, while the proportion of teachers who undertook some professional development activities in the last 12 months is around the EU average of 85%.
- Feedback and appraisal mechanisms are rare in Spain. One third of teachers (32%) report never having received feedback in their current school, and 36% of teachers work in schools where the principal reports that teachers are generally never formally appraised (compared to EU averages of 14% and 8.9%).
- Spain is one of the five countries where teachers have the worst perception of their value to society, with only 8.5% thinking the teaching profession is valued in society (compared to an EU average of 19%).

Teachers' career pathways and salary progression is based on seniority, with rather limited prospects in terms of professional development and a low comprehensive assessment of performance.

A new education law establishes greater autonomy for schools and more decision-making capacity for school leaders in terms of curriculum and schedules, within a national framework. Recruitment processes for school leaders have been modified to prioritise academic merit and professional experience and to give candidates from different schools the same opportunity in selection processes.

In November 2013 the Ministry of Education and Culture committed to presenting a new teachers' statute — based on a draft drawn up in 2007 — by January 2014. However, in April 2014 only a new draft proposal to improve access to the teaching profession was published. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) has already held various meetings with representatives of teachers' unions as a first step towards an agreement on the teaching staff statute, but negotiations are still on-going.

In February 2014, the draft for a common framework for teachers' digital competence was debated and approved by representatives of the Autonomous Communities, experts and stakeholders in the education field. The initial draft was a version of the framework proposed by the European Commission for all European citizens in relation to the Digital Agenda 2020, particularly adapted to suit teachers' needs.

⁵ Presupuestos Generales del Estado 2014 — Informe Económico y Financiero: <http://www.sepg.pap.minhap.gob.es/sitios/sepg/es-ES/Presupuestos/InformeEconomicoFinanciero/Documents/Informe%20economico%20financiero%202014.pdf>

⁶ Around 67.4% of the total education budget is allocated to scholarships, an increase of 21.4% relative to last year. Erasmus scholarships saw an increase of around 142% compared to 2013.

⁷ Presupuestos Generales del Estado 2015: <http://www.sepg.pap.minhap.gob.es/sitios/sepg/es-ES/Presupuestos/ProyectoPGE/Documents/LIBROAMARILLO2015.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/talis.htm>

4. Increasing employability

4.1 Work-based learning, apprenticeships and adult learning

Despite an increasing trend, upper secondary students' participation in VET in 2013 was still below the EU average of 50.4 %, at 45.5 %. The employment rate for recent upper secondary graduates in Spain has consistently decreased since 2009. From 2012 to 2013, the employment rate decreased 4 percentage points, to 59.9 %.

According to the OECD's Adult Skills Survey⁹ the mean proficiency in literacy and numeracy of 16-65 years olds is significantly below the OECD average. Younger adults (aged 16-24) score higher in numeracy and literacy than older adults (aged 55-65), but still perform significantly below the OECD average. The gap between the skills proficiency of the youngest and oldest adults in Spain is the second largest in the survey. Adult participation in lifelong learning has remained stable, and above the EU average, in recent years. From 2012 to 2013, the proportion of people aged 25 to 64 who stated that they had recently received education or training increased from 10.7% to 11.1%, compared to the EU average of 10.5%.

Spain has begun 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. The new Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) created a new basic VET programme, which consists of a two-year course that will allow people who do not have a basic compulsory education diploma to access vocational training. The reform also introduces entrepreneurship-related content into the secondary school curriculum. In addition to LOMCE, Royal Decree 1529/2012 introduced measures to develop training and apprenticeship contracts and establish the basis for dual vocational training (work-based training for multiple careers). The Royal Decree has been agreed between the Ministries of Education and Labour; however the authority to implement these measures sits with the 17 Autonomous Communities.

The number of yearly contracts concluded on these basis were 60 584 by the end of 2012, 106 101 in 2013 and already reached 90 881 by august 2014, an increase of 38.9% compared to the homologous month of last year¹⁰. During the 2013-14 school year, the number of schools offering the pilot project for dual vocational education more than doubled compared to the previous year (from 172 to 375) and the number of students choosing this pathway also doubled, from nearly 4 300 to over 9 500. The number of companies participating in these projects has tripled from just over 500 to over 1 500. The measures concerning VET seem adequate, but continued work will be required, jointly involving public authorities, education providers and employers, to extend and consolidate the dual VET system in Spain, implementing work-based learning and increasing apprenticeship opportunities.

The preparation of the Strategic Plan for Life Long Learning for Spain is well advanced and the draft proposition has already been agreed with all the Autonomous Communities. The plan focuses on increasing access to information and quality of lifelong learning, as well as improving the professional, social and personal skills. Its implementation shall count on support from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for the period 2014-2020.

Spanish universities also allow undergraduates to follow unofficial degrees — known as *master propios* — which offer more flexible and diversified training and academic or professional specialisation. Although they are not officially recognised, if they provide a link with the labour market, these degrees could be included in the lifelong learning strategy as a measure to reduce the risk of unemployment.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport is currently working on a standard to set out and harmonise criteria for recognising learning outcomes between university and non-university-based higher education. The new law also plans to change the curriculum and teaching methods for adult basic education and promote flexibility measures, adapted to special social and work conditions and training needs.

In December 2013, Spain approved the national plan to implement the youth guarantee that promises to provide a good quality job offer, apprenticeship, traineeship or continuing education for all people aged under 25 in the four months after they finish formal education or become unemployed. This implementation strategy builds on the youth entrepreneurship and employment strategy and comprises a national catalogue of measures to improve intermediation and employability, promote hiring and encourage entrepreneurship for young people not

⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/>

¹⁰ Dirección General de Servicio Público de Empleo – Evolución del contrato para la formación e el aprendizaje (Agosto 2014)

in employment, education or training. The main challenges to be addressed include developing outreach mechanisms for young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and who are not registered with the public employment service, and providing personalised guidance and individual action planning. As the autonomous regions will be responsible for implementation, close monitoring of policy interventions both at national and regional levels will be necessary, outcome indicators and target values must be clearly defined, and good coordination between all levels of government must be ensured. A Royal Decree on regulating the national youth guarantee system was confirmed in July 2014. This regulation includes new benefits and tax breaks for companies that permanently hire young people covered by the Youth Guarantee, more fiscal benefits for traineeship contracts, the launch of the Youth Guarantee Portal and the creation of a national online register.

4.2 Modernising and internationalising higher education

Spain's tertiary education attainment rate in 2013 was 42.3%, above the EU average of 36.9%. This represents an increase of 0.8 percentage points compared to 2012, and is a step closer to the achievement of the 2020 national target of 44%. Compared to 2012, participation in tertiary education increased for all sub-groups¹¹, but there remains a need to increase the number of foreign-born students between 30 and 34 years old in tertiary education, the only sub-group with an attainment level below the EU average.¹² The employment advantage for people aged 24-60 who had completed tertiary education, compared to those who had completed upper secondary education, increased between 2012 and 2013 and is higher than the European average.

This increase may be due to the impact of younger people increasing their educational attainment levels. Indeed, 65% of Spain's 25-34 year-olds have attained at least an upper secondary education, a significant increase compared to the 37 % of older adults (55-64 year-olds) with the same level of attainment.¹³

The Spanish labour market now faces issues of lack of employability, with particularly concerning impacts on young workers, and a skills mismatch that is jeopardising the employability of the most qualified. The employment rate for recent upper secondary graduates in Spain has consistently decreased since 2009, reaching 59.9 % in 2013, compared to an EU average of 75.4%. According to the most recent information from Eurostat's Labour Force Survey series, 36% of the population with a college degree or vocational training certificate in 2011 held a job they were overqualified for, compared to the EU average of 20%.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport has launched a dialogue with the university community and other education stakeholders on the reform of Spanish universities.¹⁴ The proposals focus on five main aspects including governing bodies of the universities, professors and academic career, funding, degrees and titles and quality evaluation. Also under development is the internationalisation strategy for Spanish universities to increase the attractiveness of Spanish universities for foreign talent at a European and international level. To prepare this strategy, a University Internationalisation Working Group was set up, comprising agents of the Spanish university system (universities, business organisations, foundations, associations, etc.) and the competent ministries in this matter (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Finance and Competitiveness, ICEX, Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism and Ministry of Employment and Social Security), as well as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Universidad.es, OAPEE and ANECA¹⁵.

In order to improve knowledge on professional employment of university graduates in Spain, the Ministry has also started publishing data on graduates' employment by type of university degree.

4.3 Transversal competences, skills relevance and learning mobility, new ways of teaching and new technologies

According to the 2012 results of the European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC), Spain has the 5th lowest share of students achieving the level of independent users (B1/B2) in English among European countries, 15 percentage points below the ESLC average of 42%.¹⁶ On the other side, from 2011 to 2012 the share of pupils in lower secondary education learning at least one second foreign language increased from 40.3% to 41.9%.¹⁷ A specific programme to improve foreign language learning was approved by the government at end-

¹¹ Male, female, native and foreign-born students.

¹² See additional contextual indicators at: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor>

¹³ *Education at a Glance (2013)*, OECD.

¹⁴ This process started with the publication in 2013 of proposals to reform and improve the quality and efficiency of the Spanish university system (*Propuestas para la reforma y mejora de la calidad y eficiencia del sistema universitario español*), by the commission of experts for the reform of the Spanish university system (*Comisión de Expertos para la Reforma del Sistema Universitario Español*).

¹⁵ Autonomous Agency for European Educational Programmes and National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (*Organismo Autónomo Programas Educativos Europeos and Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación*)

¹⁶ First European Survey on Language Competences — Final report.

¹⁷ Eurostat database — Language learning: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=educ_ilang&lang=en

2012 and is being implemented by the Autonomous Communities. The educational reform of 2013 considers the first foreign language as a core subject and the second foreign language is offered as a specific subject to be chosen by students in each year of lower secondary education. In 2013, the share of Erasmus inbound students relative to the total student population in higher education was 1.9 %, higher than the Europe average of 1.1 %. In terms of financial allocation, the share per student of the national Erasmus scholarship grant in Spain was the lowest in Europe (EUR 143 per month compared to the EU average of EUR 272); however, the scholarship program is topped up with national funds by EUR 100 more per student (EUR 243 per month) and EUR 233 more for students from low socioeconomic background (EUR 376 per month).

The promotion of digital competences has been developed by means of Territorial Cooperation Programmes to integrate ICT in publicly-funded schools. According to Eurostat, in 2011 only 11% of individuals aged 16 to 74 indicated having carried out specific tasks related to computer use, which is 5% less than the EU27 average. Still in 2011, only 21% of individuals claim to have attained IT skills through formalised education institutions, against 28% in Europe.¹⁸ LOMCE establishes that ICT is one of the areas playing a major role in the transformation of the education system. The same law also expresses the aim to develop ICT as complementary learning tools, considering them useful for supporting students with great performance and provide unlimited exchanges of knowledge in the classrooms. ICT will also have to be a key tool in teacher training and lifelong learning, allowing citizens to combine training with their personal and work obligations, as well as in the management of processes. The development of digital literacy and ICT skills is one of the priorities for the ESIF allocation for the programming period 2014-2020.

Regarding entrepreneurship competences, the percentage of 18-64 year olds who believe to have the required skills and knowledge to start a business is above the EU average. On 12 March 2013, the Spanish government published the 2013-16 entrepreneurship and youth employment strategy. In this context, in May 2013 the government approved a draft law to encourage the creation of businesses and jobs and to provide measures to support entrepreneurs as autonomous workers to start new activities, particularly in the difficult context of the economic crisis. Moreover, an introduction to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activity and technology is now offered in secondary education as an optional course and initiatives have been carried out to promote entrepreneurship also in higher education. The Autonomous Communities have set up entrepreneurship workshops for their primary and secondary schools and have developed education laws that include these subjects in the curriculum at education levels where, traditionally, they had not been covered.

Spain's national qualifications framework (NQF) is delayed. It was originally expected at the beginning of 2013, but is now expected to be aligned with the European framework in the 2014/2015 school year. The proposal foresees a comprehensive 8-level NQF which aims to include all formal qualifications awarded by education and labour authorities covering compulsory, post-secondary and higher education (general and VET). Nevertheless, the education system is clearly organised in levels. VET Diplomas are based on learning outcomes and support lifelong learning by including the possibility of acquiring the Diplomas through validation procedures of non-formal and informal learning.

5. Tackling inequalities

5.1 Starting strong: improving early childhood education and care and tackling early school leaving

The early school leaving (ESL) rate has consistently fallen in Spain but since 2009 it remains way above the EU average, at 24.7% in 2012 — one in five young people — and 23.6% in 2013, and is still far from the national target of 15%.¹⁹ The employment advantage of an upper secondary degree is lower than the EU average.^{20 21} Although they are increasing, VET opportunities in Spain are lower than the EU average.

In recent years, measures to fight ESL were put in place at national and regional level, including the 'plan to fight ESL' (which included preventive and intervention measures such as analysis, awareness-raising, and follow-up with early school leavers to support their reintegration into the education and training system), PROA (a guidance and support programme) and PCPI (an initial professional qualification programme). Cuts in the education budget and the reforms to education programmes affected these measures negatively in 2012 (at regional level) and in 2013 (at both regional and central level).

¹⁸ Digital Agenda Scoreboard key indicators- Eurostat — ICT Households survey.

¹⁹ See additional contextual indicators at: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor>.

²⁰ Employment disadvantage according to the difference in the employment rate between individuals with lower and individuals with upper secondary education.

²¹ See additional contextual indicators at: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor>

Reducing ESL is one of the main objectives of the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE), which was approved by the Spanish Parliament in November 2013. The LOMCE offers flexibility in pathways and aims to increase the percentage of students completing upper secondary education and obtaining initial vocational training diplomas through creating a two-year course of basic VET.

The LOMCE also introduces formative and diagnostic internal assessment after primary school, which serves as an early detection system, and external high-stakes student assessments at the end of lower and upper secondary education. To support school improvement, Spain has piloted the PISA-based test for schools (*PISA para centros educativos*), aiming to have it available for schools at the end of 2014. This test is a student assessment tool to be used by schools and networks of schools to support research, benchmarking and school improvement efforts. It involves contextual questionnaires, information about students' socio-economic backgrounds, their attitudes and interests in reading, science and mathematics and the learning environment at school.

Spain reached a 100% participation rate in early childhood education and care in 2011 but still needs to set out specific quality-focused measures to prevent ESL from an early age.

5.2 Basic skills of students

Since 2006, the performance of Spanish 15-year-olds in mathematics, reading and science has remained very close to the EU average in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Between 2009 and 2012, the percentage of low achievers decreased slightly in every subject, particularly in science. Although there has been a positive trend in recent years, with 23.6% of low-performing students in 2012, Spain is some way away from its best scores, which were back in 2003 and 2000 (23% and 16.3% respectively).²² The regional break-up of PISA statistics for the country shows a concerning situation in several regions, reflecting the geographical distribution of early school leaving.²³

Given the political and administrative decentralisation of the country into 17 Autonomous Communities, plus the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, there is a particular need to develop a coordinated education policy to uniformly improve quality, and tackle regional disparities.

LOMCE contributes to the acquisition of key skills by reinforcing the learning of core subjects at all stages. The reform of the educational system foresees a simplification of the curricular development, a further interdisciplinary vision of the contents and greater teaching autonomy, towards a more personalised education. In addition, the Law recommends the educational authorities to conduct an individualised evaluation of students already after the completion of the 3rd year of primary education, to assess the level of linguistic and mathematical competences acquired²⁴.

Specific programmes in compulsory secondary education target students with learning difficulties aiming to improve their learning and performance. Programmes can be put into place from the second year, allowing students to complete the four years of lower secondary education and obtain the Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate. These programmes also enable students with disabilities to have access to this support.

²² <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm>.

²³ <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

²⁴ Approximately 7% of the total allocated budget for education in 2014 is allocated to early childhood education and care. Please see *Presentación del Proyecto de Presupuestos Generales del Estado 2014*.