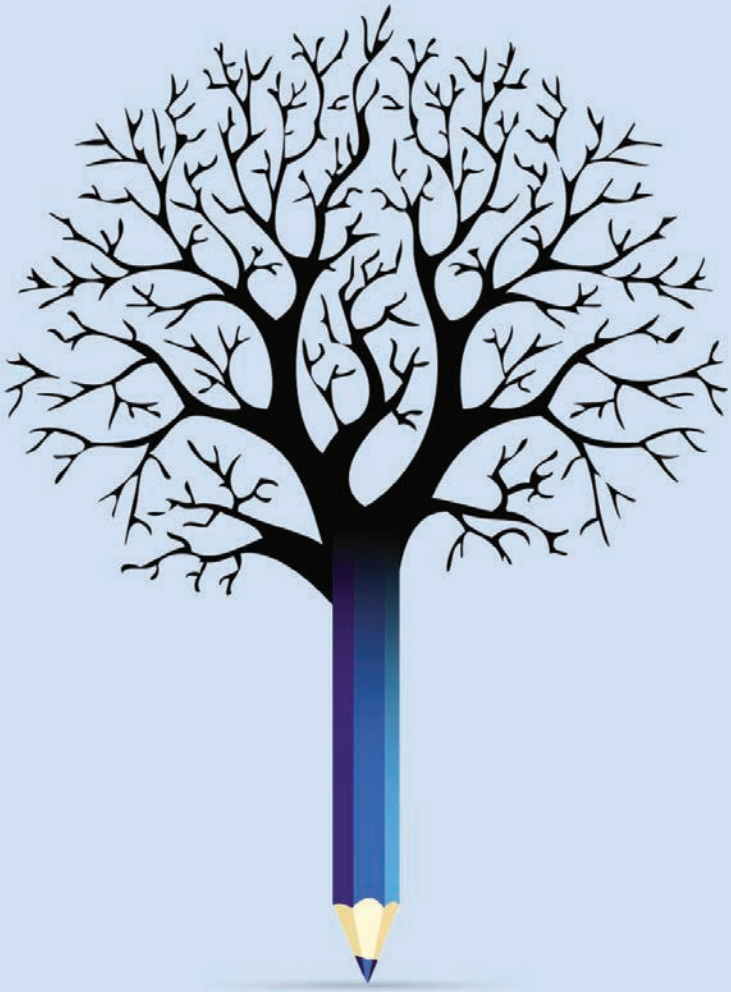
Education Policy Outlook 2018

PUTTING STUDENT LEARNING AT THE CENTRE









OECD

Education Policy Outlook 2018

PUTTING STUDENT LEARNING AT THE CENTRE



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Foreword

Putting student learning at the centre of education systems lies at the heart of social, democratic, cultural and economic prosperity. But that is easy to say and hard to do. To transform schooling at scale, we need not just a clear vision of what is possible, but also smart strategies that help make change in education happen.

Policy makers face tough choices when evaluating policy alternatives; they need to weigh the potential impact against the economic and political cost of change. Should they pursue what is most technically feasible? What is most politically and socially feasible? What can be implemented quickly? What can be sustainable over a sufficient time horizon?

The good news is that our knowledge about what works in education has improved vastly, and this edition of the Education Policy Outlook provides a good reflection of that. It is true that digitalisation has contributed to the rise in populism and "post-truth" societies that can work against rational policy making. But the very same forces, whether in the form of more and better data or new statistical and analytical tools, have also massively expanded the scope and power of social research to create a more evidence-based environment in which policies can be developed. Still, knowledge is only as valuable as our capacity to act on it. The reality is that many good ideas get stuck in the process of policy implementation and the road of educational reform is littered with great ideas that were poorly implemented. Governments are under pressure to deliver results in education services while ensuring that citizens' tax dollars are spent wisely and effectively. They set ambitious reform agendas and develop strategic plans to achieve them. But the challenges are often not about designing reforms, but about how reforms can be put into practice successfully.

The laws, regulations, structures and institutions on which public policy tends to focus are just like the small, visible tip of an iceberg. The reason why it is so hard to move education systems forward is that there is a much larger, invisible part under the waterline. This invisible part is composed of the interests, beliefs and fears of the stakeholders who are involved. This is where unexpected collisions occur, because this part tends to evade the radar of public policy.

The *Education Policy Outlook* therefore does not stop at analysing trends in public policy, but also examines their impact and the challenges involved in implementation. Without exercising judgement on what reforms have been successful and why, it provides an important opportunity for peer learning and collaboration on how to build a shared understanding and collective ownership for change; how to focus resources, build capacity, and create the right policy climate with accountability measures designed to encourage innovation and development, rather than compliance; and how to tackle institutional structures that too often are built around the interests and habits of educators and institutions rather than learners.



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Reader's Guide

The Education Policy Outlook analytical framework

The Education Policy Outlook uses an analytical framework to examine education policy ecosystems. Drawing on OECD work with countries on education policy, this framework serves as a lens through which readers can review education systems from the point of view of *students*, *institutions* and *systems* (see Annex A, Table A A1.1). The OECD Education Policy Outlook has been using this analytical framework since 2012 to carry out comparative and country-based analysis of education policies from early childhood education and care to higher education and lifelong learning.

Coverage by primary source of information

This report features data on education from 43 education systems within and beyond the OECD that participated in a comprehensive survey on education policy and in OECD's ongoing series of Education Policy Outlook Country Profiles (see Annex A, Table A A.2):

The *Education Policy Outlook National Survey for Comparative Policy Analysis 2016-17* (referred to in this report as EPO Survey 2016-17) compares and updates information on countries' education policies and policy priorities collected by the Education Policy Outlook from 2008 to 2013. A total of 26 education systems responded to the survey between 2016 and 2017. In addition to the 2013 survey questions, the 2016-17 survey gathered information on the evidence underpinning the policies and on their life cycle (implementation, evaluation, evolution and completion). The 2016-17 survey also collected evidence on evaluation and implementation processes for key policies implemented since 2000.

Education Policy Outlook Country Profiles: This report draws on information from the Country Profiles published in 2017 (Austria, Belgium, Italy, Latvia and Sweden, which represent a total of seven education systems), as well as the country profile for Greece (2018, forthcoming).

For this report, the OECD also analysed about 150 OECD publications of country-based analysis produced from 2008 until mid-2017. The publications considered for this analysis consist mainly of country and thematic reviews and economic surveys. Although these publications have different scopes and are, in some cases, subject to voluntary participation, they are a valuable source to highlight trends in policy priorities previously identified by the OECD in its work with countries (see Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of these publications).

Policies collected in the 2013 Education Policy Outlook Survey for which the OECD Secretariat was unable to gather updated information are not included in the policy analysis of this report (see Annex B for the list of these policies).

The OECD also analysed national and international evidence for all participant education systems. Such further education data is also included for five OECD education systems (Denmark, Israel, Luxembourg, Poland and the United States), two OECD accession countries (Colombia and Costa Rica) and one OECD partner county (Kazakhstan).

Layout of tables

Chapters 2 and 4 (policy priorities):

- The tables in Chapters 2 and 4 include information on education systems from previous OECD country-based work, as well as the challenges reported by countries in the Education Policy Outlook National Surveys for Comparative Policy Analysis carried out in 2013 and 2016-17, which cover 43 OECD and non-OECD education systems in the period from 2008 to 2017 (see above).
- Belgium, Canada and the United Kingdom are organised into different regions or territories, each with their own government and autonomous education system. Policy priorities for these education systems are dealt with as follows:
  - Belgium: Policy priorities are considered individually for the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community.
  - Canada: Policy priorities are considered as a unit, as Canada's policies are described from a federal perspective in both OECD country-based work and the EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17.
  - United Kingdom: For OECD country-based work, policy priorities are considered individually for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. For the Education Policy Outlook, only policies for England are considered in the EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17.

Chapters 3 and 5 (policy trends):

- The tables in these chapters include information on education policies for which there is available evidence of impact or progress and/or where the policy design is of potential interest to other education systems. Policies are classified according to their scope: *comprehensive* (overarching general strategies using various policy tools); *content* (specifically related to content knowledge); and *targeted* (focused on a specific recipient or approach).

Chapter 7 (country snapshots):

- The tables in Chapter 7 include information on the evolution of key policy priorities identified in selected OECD country-based work (2008-17) and countries' responses to the EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17.

Coverage of statistics

This report is mainly based on OECD and Eurostat data. The main sources of OECD data include *Education at a Glance* (EAG), OECD Economic Surveys, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Starting Strong work on early childhood education and care, and the Survey of Adult Skills of the Programme for the International

Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). In some cases, where no OECD or Eurostat data was available, national data was consulted.

Terminology and classification of policy priorities and policy developments

Chapter 1

- *Policy ecosystems* are the environments within an education system in which different policies interact with one another.
- *Policy priorities* for each country generally reflect:
  - Key challenges: areas where the system is underperforming and which have been identified as a point of concern (such as a high level of student dropout or unemployment)
  - Key contextual issues: particular points of attention that a system needs to keep in mind, given its characteristics (such as demographic change or development of new regional or national industries)
  - Systemic objectives: short-term, mid-term and longer-term goals, as defined by government administrations.

Chapters 2 and 4

- Policy priorities are classified as *persisting* if they continued to be identified by education systems throughout the period from 2008 to 2017.
- Policy priorities are classified as *emerging* if they were identified by education systems only over the period from 2014 to 2017.

Chapters 3 and 5

- Policies classified as *still in place* were first reported in the EPO Survey 2013 or were implemented between 2008 and 2014 and reported in the EPO Survey 2016-17 as having continued since the previous survey.
- Policies classified as *recent* were implemented between 2015 and 2017, after the 2013 policy survey, which covered policies implemented between 2008 and 2014.
- Policies in these chapters are grouped according to common objectives within each priority. A comparative approach is taken to present the life cycle of policies in place since 2008 and those that have been implemented since 2014.

Chapter 7

- *Selected policies* appear in the comparative report in Chapters 3 and 5, as well as in the country snapshots in Chapter 7.
- *Additional selected policies* are considered promising or of potential interest to other education systems due to their design. They do not appear in the comparative sections, but are included in the country snapshots in Chapter 7.
- In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (2012), *adjusted mean proficiency in literacy among adults* includes adults age 16-65 who were not able to provide enough background information because of language difficulties, or learning or mental

disabilities (literacy-related non-response). They are attributed a very low score (85 points), which represents a lower bound for the mean score in each country.

Acknowledging the importance of national and subnational dynamics

The aim of this report is to provide an updated comparative perspective of policy continuity and policy change as part of education policy ecosystems, as well as the evidence available on their implementation outcomes. This overview of policy priorities and policies can serve as a source of inspiration for other education systems that share similar challenges and contextual characteristics. At the same time, this publication acknowledges that national and regional contexts, resources, traditions and institutional settings within OECD countries influence the impact of education policy priorities on their populations. These factors play a key role in the way actors may identify policy priorities for education systems over the short-, mid- or longer term. Differences also emerge in the policies and reforms put into place within education systems to address common key issues. See Chapter 1 for a detailed explanation of the importance of education policy ecosystems to help policies succeed.

A note on policy coverage and timing

This report aims to present a broad range of recent policy responses across different policy contexts. These policies do not represent the totality of ongoing policy activity in participating education systems for the topics analysed. Differences in the number of policies by education system included in this report are a function of the relative capacity to collect information on education policy in a given education system, rather than a measure of the volume of policy activity in the education system over the period.

In the same way, the timescales and processes required for implementation of a new reform can vary considerably between countries and also depend on the scope and intended coverage of the reform. This report focuses on policies which have been implemented since 2000 in the case of certain key evaluated policies or, more generally, since 2008.

It should be borne in mind as well that the term "implementation" can be interpreted differently by different systems. In some cases, an overall strategic plan may have different components which are implemented in stages; in others, it may be necessary to pass legislation before beginning to implement measures. The OECD Secretariat has endeavoured to include the most recent information possible. However, depending on exactly when a country completed the EPO Survey or when its country profile was published, the information presented may not reflect the most recent developments. At the same time, while this report originally only analysed policies implemented before the end of 2017, it was possible to include five policies implemented in 2018.

Further documentation

A follow-up report to be published in 2019, tentatively titled *Education Policy Outlook 2019: Working Together to Help Students Achieve Their Potential* will draw on the same data to examine the remaining areas of the Education Policy Outlook analytical framework: *institutions* (school improvement and evaluation and assessment) and *systems* (governance and funding).

For further information on the overall work of the Education Policy Outlook, please see its web page at www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ACM	*Alto Comissariado para as Migrações* - High Commissioner for Migration (Portugal)
ACSS	After-School Childcare Scheme (Ireland)
AHS	*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule* - General higher secondary schools (Austria)
AIC	Academic Information Centre (Latvia)
ANPAL	*Agenzia Nazionale per le Politiche Attive del Lavoro* - National Agency for Active Labor Policies (Italy)
APJ	Action Plan for Jobs (Ireland)
ARNEC	Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
BiSS	*Bildung durch Sprache und Schrift* - Education through Language and Writing (Germany)
BMBF	*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* - Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Germany)
BMAS	*Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales* - Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (Germany)
BMFSJ	*Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend* - Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Germany)
BOF	*BMBF-Programm Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge* - Extended career orientation programme on VET programmes in the handcraft sector (Germany)
BWINK	*Bundesweite Informatikwettbewerbe* - Nationwide computer science competitions (Germany)
CAL	Canada Apprentice Loan
CCS	Community Childcare Subvention (Ireland)
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CFT	*Centro de Formación Técnica* - Technical training centre (Chile)
CIPO	Context, Inputs, Process, Outcomes
CLEAR	Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results
CONALEP	*Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica* - National College of Technical Education (Mexico)
CPMS	*centre psycho–médico-social* - psycho-social-medical centre (French Community, Belgium)
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs (Ireland)
DEIS	Delivering Equality of opportunity in Schools (Ireland)
DEPP	*Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance* - Department of Evaluation, Foresight and Performance (France)
EASIE	European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
EC	European Commission
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education (Ireland)
ECEC	early childhood education and care
ECVET	European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training
ENICC	*Estratégia Nacional para a Integração das Comunidades Ciganas* - National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (Portugal)
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EPI	Education Policy Institute (England, United Kingdom)
EPO	Education Policy Outlook
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ERO	Education Review Office (New Zealand)
ESCS	economic, social and cultural status
ESF	European Social Fund
ETB	Education and Training Board (Ireland)
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland (national representative body overseeing ETBs)

FÁS	*An Foras Áiseanna Saothair* - former Training and Employment Authority (Ireland), replaced by SOLAS
FEP	Framework Educational Programme (Czech Republic)
FET	Further Education and Training (Ireland)
FINEEC	Finnish Education Evaluation Centre
FINNUT	Programme for Research and Innovation in the Educational Sector (Norway)
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GDP	gross domestic product
GPDS	*Groupe de prévention du décrochage scolaire* - group to prevent school dropout (France)
HBO5	*Hoger beroepsonderwijs* - Higher Vocational Education (Flemish Community, Belgium)
HEA	Higher Education Authority (Ireland)
HEPPP	Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (Australia)
ICT	information and communication technology
IP	*Instituto Profesional* - Professional Institute (Chile)
ISSP	Indigenous Student Success Program (Australia)
ITS	*Istituti Tecnici Superiori* - Higher Technical Institutes (Italy)
IUT	*instituts universitaires de technologie* - university institutes of technology (France)
JASSO	Japan Student Services Organization
KiföG	*Kinderförderungsgesetzes* - Childcare Funding Act (Germany)
KMK	*Kultusministerkonferenz* - Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (Germany)
KQF	Korean Qualifications Framework
LC	Leaving Certificate programme (Ireland)
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied (Ireland)
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (Ireland)
LOMCE	*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa* - Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (Spain)
Lpfö 98	*Läroplan för Förskolan* - Reforms to the ECEC curriculum (Sweden)
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Japan)
MINEDUC	Ministerio de Educación - Ministry of Education (Chile)
MIZS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (Slovenia)
NAHVE	Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education
NAP- I	National Action Plan on Integration (Germany)
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement (New Zealand)
NCS	National Competency Standard (Korea)
NDCO	National Disability Coordination Officer (Australia)
NEET	neither employed nor in education or training
NIFU	*Nordisk institut for studier av innovasjon, forskning og utdanning* - Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (Norway)
NIRN	National Implementation Research Network (United States)
NMS	*Neue Mittelschule* - New Secondary School (Austria)
NP	National Partnership (Agreements) (Australia)
NQF	national qualification framework
NVAO	*Nederlands- Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie* - Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (The Netherlands)
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework
OCEPE	*Orientações Curriculares para a Educação Pré-escolar* - Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (Portugal)
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
P- TECH	Pathways in Technology (Australia)
PAUSE	*Programme d'aide à l'Accueil en Urgence des Scientifiques en Exil* - Programme of Assistance to the Emergency Hospitality of Scientists in Exile (France)
PES	Public Employment Services (Slovenia)
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment

PLC	Post Leaving Certificate Course (Ireland)
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Australia)
PNPSE	*Plano Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar* - National Programme to Promote Educational Success (Portugal)
PPRE	*programme personnalisé de réussite éducative* - personalised programme for educational success (France)
PSU	*Prueba de Selección Universitaria* - university admission exam (Chile)
PROA	*Plan de Refuerzo, Orientación y Apoyo* - Plan for Reinforcement, Guidance and Support (Spain)
QCAA	Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (Australia)
RERS	*Réseaux d'Échanges Réciproques de Savoirs* - Reciprocal Knowledge Exchange Networks (France)
SDGs	(United Nations) Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	State Employment Agency (Latvia)
SEDA	State Education Development Agency (Latvia)
SEN	special education needs
SEP	*Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial* - Preferential School Subsidy (Chile)
SERV	*Sociaal- Economische Raad van Vlanderen* - Social and Economic Council of Flanders (Flemish Community, Belgium)
SMC	Social Mobility Commission (England, United Kingdom)
SN	Snapshots (Please see Chapter 7)
SOK	Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act
SOLAS	*An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna* - Further Education and Training Authority (Ireland)
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
STPs	Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (New Zealand)
SVR	Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration
TEIP3	Third Generation of the Education Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (Portugal)
TLF	Technology and Learning Fund (Ontario, Canada)
TVET	technical and vocational education and training (Chile)
UNESCO UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
VET	vocational education and training
YG	Youth Guarantee

Executive summary

Education can boost the overall quality of life of each individual, as well as help economies to be stronger, fairer and more resilient. Today, globalisation brings new opportunities and challenges in education, as countries must equip students with the necessary skills to live and work in a more interconnected world. Understanding this, OECD education systems strive to implement education policies that can help people in countries around the world to access better life chances.

Taking the students' perspective, *Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre* analyses the evolution of key education priorities and key education policies in 43 education systems. It compares more recent developments in education policy ecosystems (mainly between 2015 and 2017) with various education policies adopted between 2008 and 2014, many of which were included in *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*.

Evolution of key education priorities and policies across participating education systems (2008-17)

This report identifies some common areas of education policy priorities and policy actions to foster equity and quality and prepare students for the future, based on reports from education systems and previous OECD work.

Bridging gaps from early on to increase equity and quality

Education policy priorities

The OECD and several education systems have identified bridging different types of performance gaps as policy priorities. A first group of gaps relates to students' socio-economic, immigrant, minority, special education needs (SEN) and gender-specific background, as well as performance differences among students across regions. The report also identifies education systems' interest in tackling student success through better access to and quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC). The OECD and some OECD education systems have also commented on the need to reduce grade repetition and delay tracking.

Types of education policy measures

Policies to support education success for all are the largest group of policies reported by participating OECD education systems, including Australia, Chile, New Zealand and Slovenia. Education systems reported at least 25 policies still in place (2008-14) aiming, for example, to support students from disadvantaged and immigrant backgrounds and population sub-groups, students with SEN or those living in different regions within a country. Recent policies (2015-17) are fewer in number but highlight similar objectives.

OECD education systems have also worked to increase access to ECEC and to improve both the quality of ECEC and the transition to primary education. While policies reported from 2008 to 2014 tend to be broader in scope, more recent policies collected (2015-17) tend to target children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Compared to other policy areas, participating education systems reported fewer policies specifically targeting system-level practices. Some have taken measures to reduce grade repetition and the stratification of early tracking, as in Austria or Belgium (French Community). In the case of tracking, the low number of policies reported may be because implementing this type of policy can require broader structural changes, more consequent use of additional resources or deeper changes in social conceptions.

Equipping students with essential skills for today and the future

Education policy priorities

Connecting population groups outside of the education system to the labour market appears to remain a policy priority in participating education systems. Policy priorities identified include: 1) reducing high levels of skills mismatch, as well as early school leaving rates; 2) facilitating the school-to-work transition for students; and 3) decreasing levels of youth unemployment and the number of young people neither employed nor in education or training (NEET).

Another focus of policy priorities identified is on improving students' learning opportunities and keeping them longer in the education system. Specifically, policy priorities identified relate to: 1) raising the attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET); 2) creating or strengthening apprenticeship programmes; 3) increasing equal access to and quality of tertiary education; and 4) enhancing the internationalisation of higher education.

Types of education policy measures

Participating education systems have implemented policies to keep students in the system, while improving their learning opportunities, as in Canada (Quebec), France, Italy and Mexico. Advancing student orientation, revising qualifications or updating course curricula are some of the policy options followed by education systems. Recently implemented policies (2015-17) concentrate on similar areas, but also on technology education and support for migrants and refugees.

Regarding VET, reported policies focus on putting in place strategies and tools to improve the quality of VET, support students during their transition into post-secondary education or the labour market, and improve access to and attractiveness of VET. More recent policies (2015-17) have set targets in the same areas, as in Finland and Hungary.

Reported policies targeting tertiary education continue to focus on enhancing access and quality by supporting students from specific population groups, as well as increasing internationalisation in national education systems, as in Australia, Finland and Japan. Education systems have modified higher education frameworks to improve quality, access and relevance of education for more students and to meet the needs of the labour market. More recent policies (2015-17) address similar objectives, as well as quality assurance methods in higher education.

According to information provided by education systems, there has been stability between the policies still in place (2008-14) and those more recently implemented (2015-17) on topics related to enhancing students' transitions across education pathways and the labour market. Policies to improve transitions continue to aim to: 1) strengthen the links between education qualifications and the labour market; 2) foster the connection of employers with job seekers; 3) implement funding techniques to help individuals gain better access to training; 4) reintegrate NEETs into the labour market; and 5) increase general co-operation and co-ordination between tertiary education and stakeholders. More recent policies (2015-17) focus on similar policy areas.

Education policy success through increased knowledge and capacity in the system

Policy success depends on the design and specific features of the policies themselves, but also on the overall complexity of the policy ecosystem at the stage when implementation strategies are being developed. Here, it is important to engage actors, including students, based on a shared understanding and supported by stronger capacities and resources. In the same way, better policy evaluation and contextual understanding should permeate the system. Evaluations can offer both summative and formative perspectives of specific reform implementation and can help identify factors that can promote success in policy implementation. Evidence shows that OECD countries take several measures to improve reform success: enhancing the inclusion of stakeholders, elevating the role of evidence in the reform process, and developing a clear strategic vision for education systems and associated policies.

Chapter 1. Developing tools to explore education policy ecosystems

Better decisions on education policy are needed to respond to the broad challenges that education systems are facing. Reform success depends on much more than the nature and design of reforms. Policy makers need to understand policy ecosystems, which encompass political and economic contexts, systemic policy priorities, key actors and well aligned arrangements conducive to policy implementation. This chapter lays the foundation for policy makers to navigate the knowledge base presented in subsequent chapters on key policy priorities, challenges and recent education policy reforms across these systems.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Introduction

The OECD aims to promote policies that improve economic and social well-being. It helps governments to formulate and implement *better policies for better lives*. The concept of *better lives* goes beyond providing basic services or setting minimum thresholds. It is about empowering people to thrive and fulfil their potential (OECD, 2017a). Better education quality plays a key role in providing individuals with better lives and can help achieve stronger, fairer and more resilient economies. Highly skilled individuals contribute to building more participative and trusting societies, report better health, and are, in general, more satisfied with life (OECD, 2016a). OECD's support of countries thus includes helping them to empower all people to continuously enhance their education, skills and values.

At the same time, education systems need to better prepare students to live in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. Today, people live and work amidst increased cultural, political and linguistic pluralism, and often through rapidly evolving communication technologies. These globalisation-related phenomena bring challenges to education that require coherent and complementary policies – at the level of students, institutions and education systems. Key trends and challenges for education identified by international evidence include evolving skills' needs, demographic change and increasing system complexity.

Rapidly evolving skills' needs can contribute to increasing social and economic disparities if education systems cannot respond quickly. Jobs involving routine cognitive or mechanical tasks are susceptible to substitution by technology, whereas many jobs involving non-routine tasks that cannot yet be carried out by technology occur at either the low or the high end of the skill distribution (Levy and Murnane, 2013; OECD, 2017b). The global economic crisis, with high levels of unemployment, particularly among youth, highlighted the need for education systems to focus on developing non-routine and interpersonal skills for all students, so that they can become more resilient to job loss (EC, 2016). Personality characteristics are gaining increased attention, given their relationship with the development of cognitive capacities, the attainment of educational qualifications and the formation of a family (Kankaraš, 2017).

Demographic change poses challenges on how to distribute limited education resources fairly among heterogeneous school profiles. Some countries face decreasing enrolment in some areas but increasing enrolment in others. Population ageing may result in larger shares of people attending post-secondary education than ever before, which raises the challenge of balancing quality, access and mass education (see, for example, Batljan and Thorslund, 2009; Joung et al., 2000; Riphahn and Trübswetter, 2006; OECD, 2013; OECD, 2008; and UK Government Office for Science, 2016). As migration becomes more prevalent, the student population is also becoming more diverse and multicultural in many countries. This implies rethinking the role of the school and the community in providing the learning environments required for the effective integration of students (OECD, 2017c). It also poses questions on how to best activate the skills of migrants and other at-risk populations and how they could be developed further, to facilitate their integration into the labour market and society.

Increasing system complexity: In terms of the number of actors and relationships, there is greater emphasis on the importance of ensuring coherence in policy design and their implementation processes. Societies have higher expectations than ever on the quality of their education systems, and the number of stakeholders in education systems is also

larger than ever before (Hooge, Burns and Wilkoszewski, 2012). These stakeholders have different needs, visions and levels of decision-making power. With the progress of technology, engagement and accountability mechanisms are also becoming more sophisticated. This makes it essential to find high-quality, evidence-informed criteria to reach the best decisions and to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have a voice in education policy processes. Responding to the dual requirements of involving stakeholders and generating evidence to inform the policy discourse is a key objective for OECD education systems. For example, a 2017 survey conducted among EU education systems found that 18 EU education systems have a legal requirement to involve stakeholders, while 12 have a legal requirement to produce research/statistics or other kinds of data from evidence providers (11 of the 12 are required to produce both) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017).

The Education Policy Outlook is part of the OECD's efforts to address these global challenges that may hinder individuals' opportunities to reach their full potential. Its mandate is to undertake comparative analysis of policies across all levels of education to better understand how policy priorities and approaches are evolving across countries and identify pathways to policy improvement. It does so by reviewing a broad range of international and national evidence on education policies collected through a number of OECD initiatives in recent years, as well as evidence gathered specifically through the Education Policy Outlook project.

Other key OECD initiatives to respond to these challenges on different fronts include:

- The *Getting Skills Right: Assessing and Anticipating Changing Skills Needs* project involves analysis of skills anticipation and assessment systems and how well these systems are informing skills policies and programmes (OECD, 2016b).
- The *OECD Inclusive Growth* project posits that growth goes beyond increasing income levels and that the proceeds of economic growth should be shared among developed and emerging economies. "Inclusive growth" is defined as economic growth that creates opportunities for all population segments and fairly distributes monetary and non-monetary dividends across society (OECD, 2017d).
- Focusing specifically on tackling inequities in education, the *Educational Opportunity for All* project (OECD, 2017e) closely examines the causes and drivers of inequalities in education throughout the life cycle, to identify population cohorts at risk (e.g. low-income groups, migrants and women) and to shed light on government policies and programmes that ensure greater equity.
- The *OECD International Migration Outlook 2017* analyses recent developments in international migration, recent labour market trends and integration policies in OECD countries. It stresses that most migration movements to Europe and the OECD region occur legally and outside of the asylum system (OECD, 2017f). A related project, *Teacher Education for Diversity*, examines how the teaching profession can best respond to the increasing diversity in classrooms (OECD, 2017g). More recently, the *Strength for Diversity Project* has also analysed the resilience of students with an immigrant background (OECD, 2018).
- The Skills for Social Progress project addresses the need to enable children to develop a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills, based on the premise that talented, motivated, goal-driven and collegial children are more likely to weather the storms of life, perform well in the labour market and consequently achieve lifetime success (OECD, 2015a).

- *The School Resources Review* project is high on education policy agendas across the OECD. The projects' focus is on ensuring that resources are directed to those areas where improvements in teaching and learning can best be achieved, to achieve efficiency and equity objectives (OECD, 2016c).

Outside of the OECD, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a notable example of a multilateral effort to improve life chances for people around the world. Building on the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs have an ambitious agenda to eliminate poverty. They also include more demanding targets on health, education and gender equality. The United Nations considers that these objectives apply to all people as a basic right. Goal 4 on education is "to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning opportunities". This goal sees inclusive and quality education as a way of helping individuals to break from the cycle of poverty, to live healthier lives and to contribute to more peaceful societies (UN, 2017a). Specific targets include ensuring that all girls and boys complete free primary and secondary schooling by 2030, providing attractive, high-quality vocational training and eliminating gender and wealth disparities to achieve universal access to quality higher education (UN, 2017b).

Better opportunities for society require better decisions on education policy

Emerging global trends demand urgent and multidimensional responses, and they create both challenges and opportunities for the way in which education systems are organised and governed. Education systems must have the ability to react flexibly to these challenges, with approaches that are evidence-informed, cost-effective and perceived as legitimate by the different actors.

Introducing policies and making them work implies a large effort across education systems. Therefore, constant policy change can be both inefficient and detrimental for the credibility and buy-in of stakeholders. On the other hand, the capacity within education systems to improve policies can help increase their potential success. This capacity can also be helpful when designing new policies, as possibilities for flexibly improving policies to help increase their potential impact can be incorporated into the design.

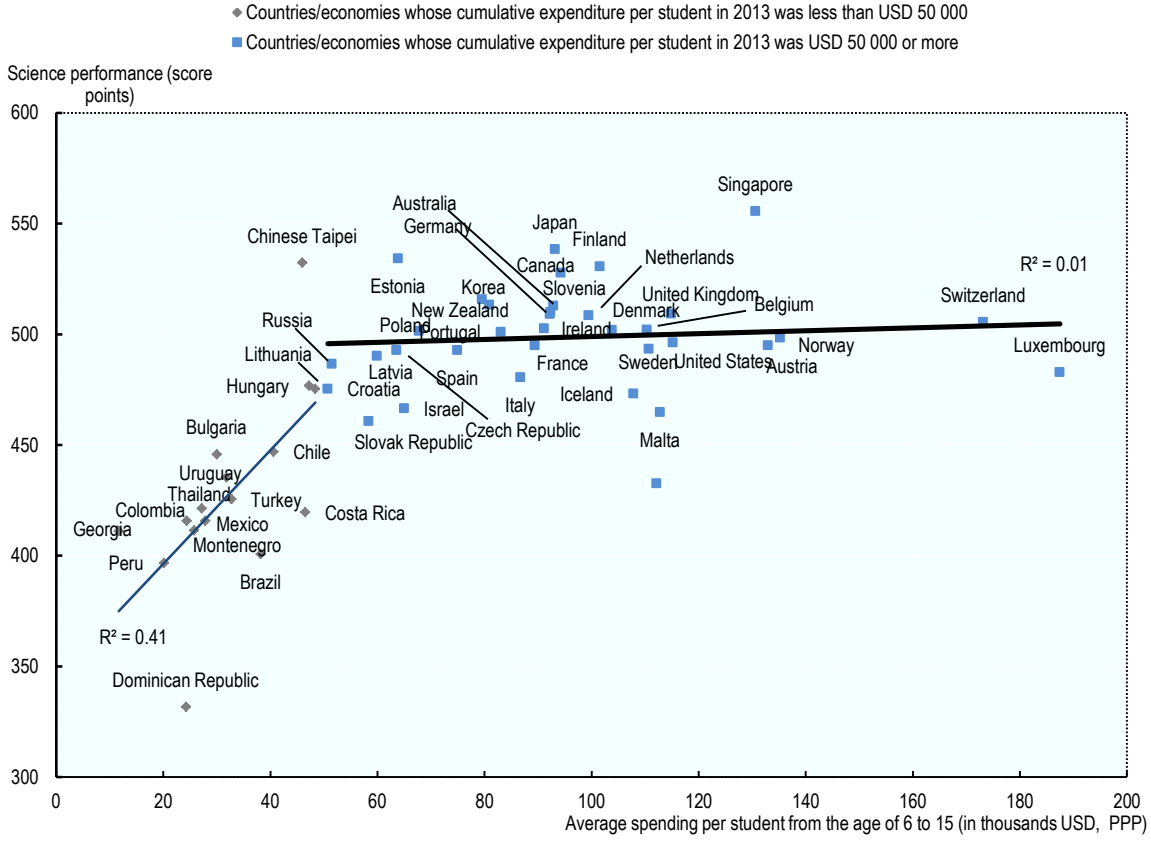
Education policies that succeed can have a long-lasting impact on people's lives. The OECD (2010) estimated, for example, that increasing all countries' scores on the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by a modest 25 points would generate a gain in OECD GDP of USD 115 trillion over the lifetime of the cohort born in 2010. Countries are becoming progressively more aware of the importance of education and are increasingly investing in education. For example, from 2008 to 2014, expenditure per student on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary educational institutions increased by 7% on average across OECD countries, while the number of students decreased by 2%, resulting in an increase of 10% in expenditure per student over the same period.

However, investment needs to be targeted correctly to yield improved outcomes (OECD, 2010). The question of whether the resources devoted to education are providing adequate returns is prominent in public debate (OECD, 2017h). Evidence collected by PISA shows that in countries where cumulative spending for students from age 6 to age 15 is below USD 50 000, increases in spending are strongly associated with improvements in performance. But at higher levels of cumulative spending, performance may differ from one country to another and may not translate into improvements (OECD, 2016a). More

resources, therefore, may not necessarily mean better performance. Evidence suggests that, while it is necessary to ensure a certain threshold of resources, it is possible to achieve better performance without having a high level of resources.

Among the seven top-performing countries in PISA, only Singapore also had one of the top levels of cumulative expenditure per student up to age 15. The remaining six, including Estonia and Korea, achieved high performance in their education systems despite having public spending per student below the OECD average (OECD, 2016a) (Figure 1.1). In the same way, it is possible to achieve sustained student improvement without having a high level of resources. Examples of this are Portugal and Colombia, which are among the few education systems with sustained education improvements across PISA cycles among all participant countries (OECD, 2016a).

Figure 1.1. Science performance in PISA 2015 and spending per student (2013), ages 6 to 15



Notes:
1. Only countries and economies with available data are shown.
2. A significant relationship ($p < 0.10$) is shown by the black line.
3. A non-significant relationship ($p > 0.10$) is shown by the blue line.

Source: OECD (2016d), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools,* PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933436215

It is clear that policies matter and that well-designed policies can make a significant difference in providing better educational opportunities for students. But good policies can fail, if they are not adequately implemented. Failed policies incur high costs, not only in terms of public money spent. Unsuccessful policies imply high opportunity costs for:

- ***Students,*** as they can miss the chance to have better-quality learning as they progress through their education pathways, potentially hindering their opportunities to succeed later in life.
- ***Schools,*** as they have to invest valuable time making sense of a new education policy while implementing others, often while facing numerous competing demands.
- ***Communities,*** as better-quality education is related to more participative societies, better health, less anti-social behaviour and less reliance on social aid (Mincer 1958; Cunha and Heckmann, 2007).
- ***Countries at large,*** as increasing skills for all students is key for equitable economic growth, and resilience to economic change. Higher skills are also linked to the creation of new technologies, and higher-quality research and development, making economies grow (Romer, 1990).

However, the success of reforms depends on much more than the nature and design of the policies introduced into a system (OECD, 2015b). Their success also depends on how well governments consider the policy ecosystem in which policies operate. Policy ecosystems, as defined by the Education Policy Outlook, are the environments within an education system in which different policies interact with one another.

Understanding education policy ecosystems to help policies succeed

Policy ecosystems are comprised of core policy priorities for improvement, the existing context of the system in which policies interact, key actors (through their engagement and capacities) and the key systemic arrangements needed to make policies feasible and effective. These components can come together in different ways across education systems, influencing the potential of success of a policy to varying extents. For example, the level of decentralisation of a system can define the role of actors in an education reform, the number and type of policy priorities established and the arrangements needed to put a reform in place.

That said, examining how education policies have been adopted in one education ecosystem can serve as opportunities for learning for other systems that face similar challenges. This report offers pathways to gain understanding on education policy ecosystems. Understanding policy ecosystems, and how to increase the possibilities of success of a policy within them, is not an easy prospect for policy makers.

Policy priorities

Policy priorities for a particular country generally reflect: 1) key challenges (areas where the system is underperforming and which have been identified as points of concern, such as a high level of student dropout or unemployment); 2) key system-specific contextual issues to keep in mind (such as demographic change or development of new regional or national industries); and 3) systemic objectives (the short-, mid- and long-term goals defined by government administrations). Policy priorities are dynamic and may adapt in scope and focus over time, as contexts and challenges change. Coherent priorities that are

well aligned to challenges and context should be the key to guiding investment of resources. That said, students are the actors most directly affected by successful or failed education policy implementation. How policies influence students' opportunities for quality learning must be at the centre of policy reforms.

Context

The political or economic situation, the institutional settings of each country and its education system, and the current performance of an education system have a strong influence on the way policies are introduced and sustained. Policy outcomes therefore depend on the system's political structure and social, cultural and economic context. Reforms can follow different channels depending on their political context. For example, federal systems have different dynamics than majoritarian or other parliamentary models (OECD, 2012), and local factors (e.g. size and institutional complexity) matter for policy responses (McLaughlin, 1987).

A substantial amount of evidence highlights the importance of contextual factors in policy development and implementation. Policy making therefore needs to be aligned to the governance structure and take into account the respective responsibilities of different actors (Fazekas and Burns, 2012). Looking for general solutions without acknowledging the particular context can lead to incoherent implementation efforts. Policies that can appear similar in design may require different types of efforts to be implemented, depending on the context (Payne, 2008; Cerna, 2013). Implementation plans must also be flexible enough to adapt to issues that policy designers may not have foreseen (Haddad and Demsky, 1995; Barber, 2003).

Actors

Actors need to be engaged effectively in education policy processes, feel a sense of ownership of the process and have willingness and the necessary capacity to make change and implement the reform (OECD, 2015b). Promoting leadership across different groups of actors is important to ensure that all key actors are engaged, not only those with previous mobilisation capacity. Actors with different intentions, interests and interpretations can enter at different points of a reform process and at different levels. There also needs to be awareness that actors may have previously acquired firm beliefs in education that are strongly tied to their identities and experiences. Therefore, high-quality evidence (e.g. indicators, research studies or policy evaluations) needs to be continuously at the core of discussions between actors (Datnow, 2002; Burns and Köster, 2016).

Alignments

For policy implementation to be successful, institutional alignment needs to be ensured, aiming for a shared long-term vision and planning for policy monitoring or evaluation, even at the design stage. For example, in several countries where increased autonomy was granted to local and school levels, tools of accountability (e.g. testing) were also implemented. Institutional alignment can be promoted by defining a few key objectives, removing distractors, and regularly evaluating through available data.

Alignment can be strengthened by effective policy design, implementation and evaluation. Educational evaluation is a rapidly growing professional field, which is developing on the back of other forms of evaluation that have become embedded in education systems over recent years (Kelleghan, Stufflebeam and Wingate, 2003). Good-quality evaluation processes not only serve to aid decision making when different reform

approaches are being considered, but they also provide institutional perspectives on the factors which favour or hinder successful reform implementation. Furthermore, evaluation can provide information to policy makers on the impact of the reform on the system and whether the reform was a good use of resources, thus also informing future policies (Golden, forthcoming).

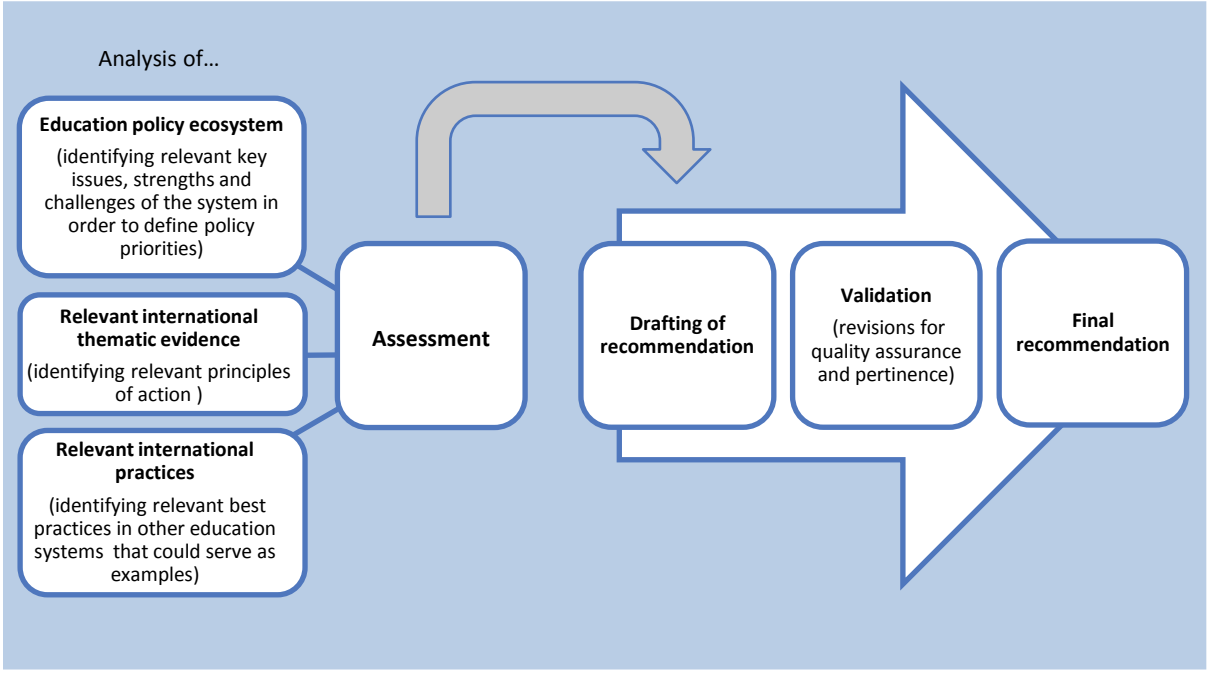
Therefore, when putting policies into action, policy makers should always consider the general policy ecosystem and aim to continuously improve the environment in which policies operate. In today's contexts of greater accountability, the knowledge and ability to do this is increasingly crucial for ensuring the best use of finite resources.

Identifying needs and pathways for improvement

Strengthening the knowledge base

This report aims to support education systems to identify pathways for policy improvement. When the OECD is working to identify such pathways, the key steps undertaken are to assess education policy ecosystems, identify relevant international thematic evidence and international practices and assess how these components come together to inform a final recommendation on education policy (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Components of a recommendation on education policy (OECD)



Source: Analysis by the authors of OECD country-based work between 2000 and 2017.

The *Education Policy Outlook* uses an analytical framework to examine education policy ecosystems. This framework draws on OECD work on education policy carried out with countries (see Annex A for an outline of the main elements). One strand of the work, and the focus of this report, reviews the system from the point of view of *students* – the challenges they face in accessing education, performing well, developing the skills they need and successfully transitioning through the system and on to the next stage of their lives.

Another strand looks at the system from the perspective of *institutions* – how well teachers and education systems are able to structure themselves to deliver the kind of educational environment necessary for success, and what role evaluation and assessment play across the system.

The final strand takes a *systemic* perspective – the point of view of those who govern and resource the system, how the system is governed, the role of different actors across the system and the funding mechanisms in place.

Drawing on this previous work, this report, *Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre*, takes the students' perspective to provide comparative analysis of education policies across OECD countries, taking into account the policy ecosystems in which they are expected to produce positive outcomes. It examines the evolution of key policy priorities in education systems since the publication of the first comparative report, *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen* (OECD, 2015b).

To prepare this report, the OECD Secretariat used international evidence and analysis of literature, as well as key sources of evidence which provide updated education policy insights on 43 education systems (see the Reader's Guide and Annex A for more details).

Structure of the report

This report analyses aspects of policy ecosystems in OECD countries and outlines recent trends in policies aimed at improving outcomes for students. It proceeds as follows:

- Chapters 2 and 4 focus on the **policy priority** aspect of education policy ecosystems. These chapters trace the evolution of education policy priorities of participating education systems between 2008-13 and 2014-17 from a comparative perspective, for Equity and quality (Chapter 2) and Preparing students for the future (Chapter 4). They also examine education policy priorities previously identified by OECD country-based work, as well as broad "principles of action" provided to these countries. Selected education policy examples demonstrate how these principles of action can apply differently because of the varied contexts within different policy ecosystems.
- Chapters 3 and 5 provide a comparative perspective of education policy developments across countries that participated in the EPO Survey 2016-17. They provide a general picture of education policy trends in terms of introduction, continuity and evolution or completion, as well as, in some cases, the impact of policies. These chapters aim to promote deeper insight into **contextual factors** or **arrangements** that can enhance or inhibit policy success. In the same way, Chapter 7 offers some contextual information on education systems.
- Chapter 6 provides a comparative overview of lessons learned on policy implementation, mainly from the perspective of policy evaluations carried out before, during or after implementation. It discusses the importance of **actors** and **arrangements** in order to promote policy success. This can be useful for education systems to inform future implementation plans focused on the topics addressed in this report.
- Chapter 7 presents "snapshots" (brief descriptions) of countries that replied to the EPO Survey 2016-17 or participated in the project through a country profile in 2017. For each country, these snapshots bring together priorities and policy

actions outlined in Chapters 2-5, contextualised with additional information relevant to their policy ecosystem. Some education reforms too recent to show any impact are also included as promising practices.

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Chapter 2. Equity and quality: Trends in evolution of policy priorities

This chapter analyses recent trends in policy priorities related to equity and quality, as defined by the Education Policy Outlook analytical framework, across a variety of OECD and non-OECD education systems and economies. The aim is to show how policy priorities can be shared by different education systems, how common principles of policy action proposed by the OECD can apply differently, depending on the different contexts and the scope of the analysis carried out, and how policy principles recommended in one education system could serve as an inspiration for other systems. Persisting policy priorities to promote equity and quality in education include: bridging performance gaps due to socio-economic background (among students from different population sub-groups and from different regions and among boys and girls); and increasing access to and quality of early childhood education and care. Emerging policy priorities include: integrating immigrant students into the education system; strengthening student performance for all students; and preventing grade repetition and delaying tracking.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Highlights

- Analysis of the period from 2008 to 2017 shows persisting policy priorities in many OECD and non-OECD education systems to bridge performance gaps due to socio-economic background, among students from different population sub-groups and different regions, and among boys and girls.
- OECD recommendations to education systems with these persisting policy priorities include the following key principles for action: 1) targeting educational funding support to students with low socio-economic status; 2) encouraging students from minority backgrounds to go into mainstream education and providing extra support as needed; 3) developing measures to channel resources to the most disadvantaged regions; 4) promoting assessment of the impact of actions in educational institutions on both men and women; and 5) increasing access to and quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) by creating an integrated system to monitor ECEC.
- Emerging policy priorities identified from 2014 to 2017 include: integrating immigrant students into the education system; strengthening student performance for all students; and preventing grade repetition; and delaying tracking.
- OECD recommendations to education systems with these emerging policy priorities include the following key principles for action: 1) intervening as early as possible through language courses for immigrant students; 2) developing specific teacher training and employing better qualified teachers; and 3) establishing educational outcomes as a main target, rather than focusing solely on increasing spending.

Introduction

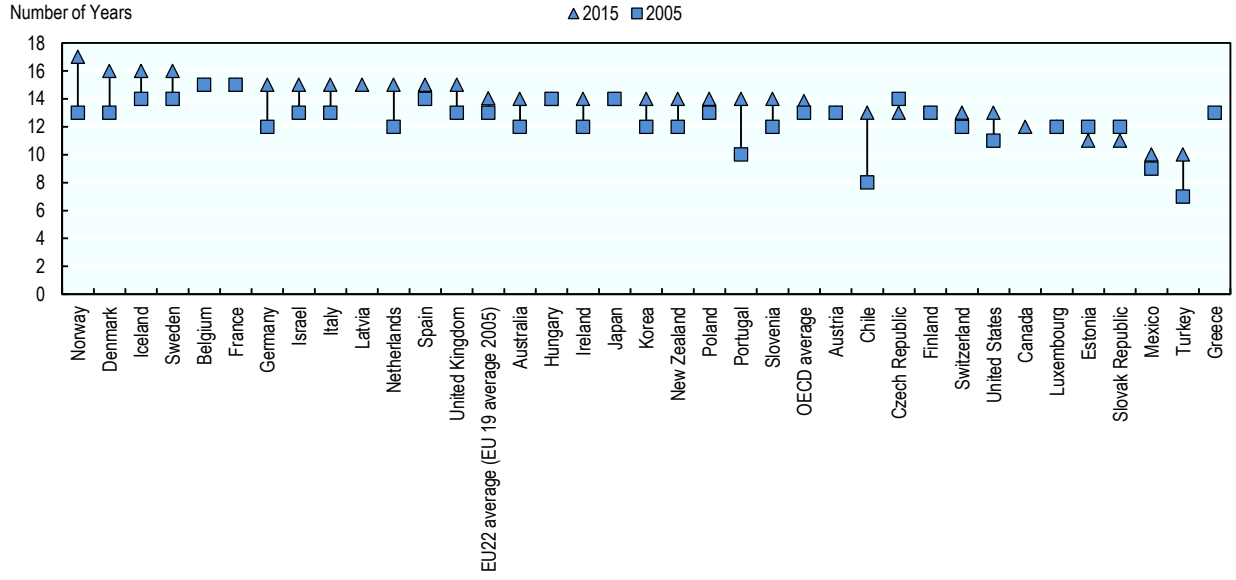
Within policy ecosystems, equity and quality in education are mutually reinforcing priorities. Equity in education means that students' personal or social circumstances (such as gender, ethnic origin or family background) do not hinder them from achieving their potential and obtaining a high-quality education. Quality in education refers to providing students with high-level skills adapted to their individual interests and needs, building the foundation to succeed later in their lives (OECD, 2012). In PISA 2015, eight OECD countries achieved both above-average performance in science and above-average equity in education (OECD, 2016a). The five top-performing OECD countries in science all had a weaker-than-average relationship between student performance and socio-economic status.

According to the findings of the Education Policy Outlook, challenges related to equity and quality and objectives to improve access, value and excellence of education offerings are key features of policy ecosystems across the OECD. During early education and schooling, when children are very young, their capacity for skills acquisition is at its highest. This period forms the bedrock for acquiring basic skills that prepares students for the labour market and further learning throughout their lives. The rate of return on investment in human capital is greater in the earliest years (Carneiro, Cunha and Heckman, 2003; OECD, 2006b). This suggests that resources and policies should be balanced to ensure appropriate priorities between lower and higher levels of the education system. Providing all students with better education opportunities from early in their lives, while they are still in compulsory education, can help them to remain in the

education system for longer and also to better reap the benefits of education or training later in life (OECD, 2012).

Increasing the number of years of compulsory education has become an overall trend in OECD countries. This includes giving children a strong start as well as offering training to develop skills later in life, to increase opportunities to succeed in the labour market or the transition to higher education (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Evolution in the number of years with 90% of the population enrolled in education across OECD countries (2005-15)



Sources: OECD (2007), *Education at a Glance 2007: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2007-en; OECD (2017a), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

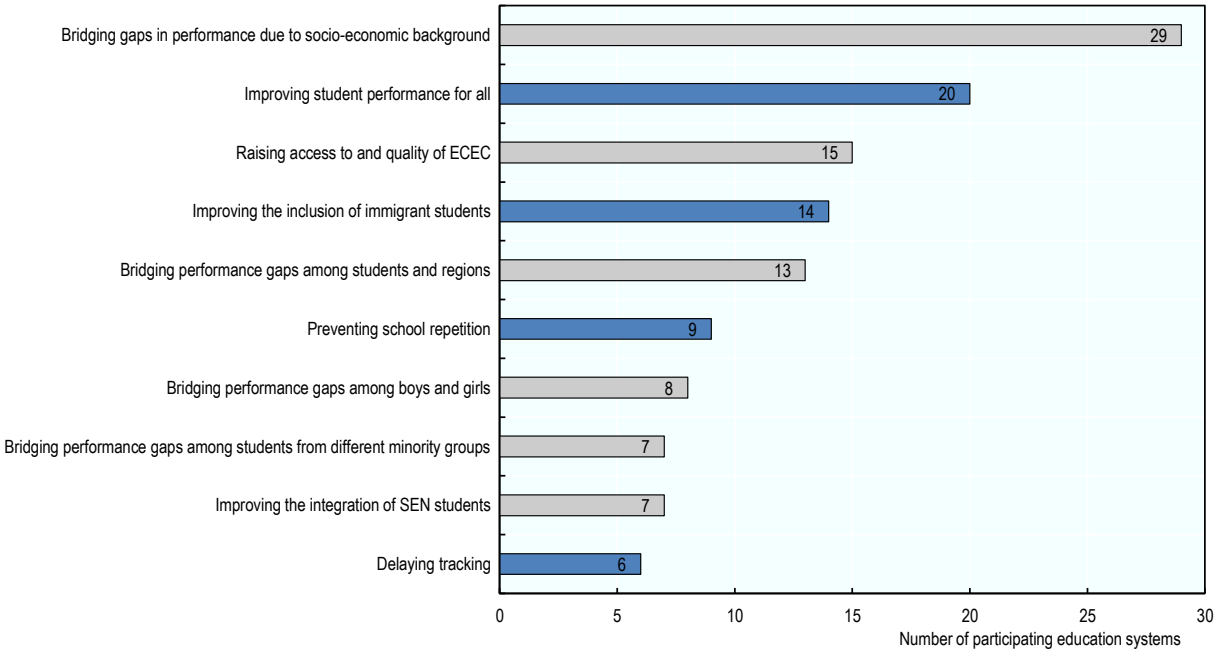
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This chapter provides a comparative overview of the evolution of policy priorities related to equity and quality in education across a variety of OECD and non-OECD education systems, based on the EPO analytical framework. The analysis draws on the review of a collection of OECD country-based work and responses to the EPO National Survey for Comparative Policy Analysis 2016-17 (EPO 2016-17 Survey), which together cover 43 OECD and non-OECD education systems from 2008 to 2017.

Policy priorities encompass what actors involved in an education system define as their key challenges, issues and objectives, based on their own analysis of their system's performance. This chapter aims to show how policy priorities can be shared in different education systems and how general principles of policy action proposed by the OECD in its country reviews can apply differently in different systems, according to the context, the resources available, existing relevant policy initiatives and the relative and perceived importance of the policy priority. Analysis indicates that certain policy principles recommended in one education system can serve as inspiration for other education systems, even though the specifics of implementation may differ. Figure 2.2 presents key trends in the evolution of the policy priorities discussed in this chapter.

Figure 2.2. Key trends in the evolution of policy priorities

Number of education systems where these priorities were identified by the OECD and/or by education systems in self-reports or Country Profiles.



Notes:
1. **Blue** bars represent emerging policy priorities and **grey** bars represent persisting policy priorities, according to education systems' self-reports and previous OECD country-based work. Priorities are ranked by decreasing order of the number of education systems where the policy priority was identified.
2. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
3. Priorities identified by education systems in self-reports are drawn from responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17. Priorities identified were also identified based on the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732764

Analysis carried out for this report identified some topics of education policy that continue to be priorities compared to the previous round of consultation with education systems (2008-13). From 2014 to 2017, participating education systems identified additional emerging policy priorities. In some education systems, these gained importance, according countries' responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17.

In many cases, policy priorities identified in the survey responses had also been noted by the OECD in its work with individual education systems, through education policy country reviews, economic surveys and country reports on specific topics, including quality in ECEC, school resources, and vocational education and training (VET). However, in some cases, the survey responses did not identify policy priorities previously noted by the OECD. This may be because countries have ongoing policies on those priorities, but it may also be because countries lack resources to dedicate to certain priorities. These cases highlight the relevance of education policy priorities for the broader economic and social issues covered in OECD country reviews.

This chapter also identifies some broad principles of action relevant to these policy priorities that the OECD has recommended to education systems. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on

a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally (see the Reader's Guide for more information).

Persisting policy priorities from 2008 to 2017

Bridging performance gaps due to socio-economic background

Both the OECD and education systems have identified persisting policy priorities with regard to equity and quality. Bridging performance gaps due to socio-economic background has remained a high policy priority in at least 23 OECD and non-OECD education systems analysed by the OECD over 2008-17 (Table 2.1). The broad principles of policy action proposed to help reverse this trend include providing more educational and funding support to students of low socio-economic status. As noted in Chapter 1, such principles of policy action apply differently in different education systems.

In the EPO Survey 2016-17, over half of the participating education systems identified reducing the impact of socio-economic background on students' performance and attainment as a policy priority: Australia, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Canada (New Brunswick), Chile, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, Turkey and the United Kingdom (England) (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Decreasing performance and attainment gaps due to socio-economic status

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,5]	Total	
Decreasing performance and attainment gaps due to socio-economic status	Increase educational and funding support for students with low socio-economic status.	AUT, **BEL (Fl, Fr,** Dg), **CHL**, **CZE, DEU,** GRC, HUN, **IRL, JPN**, KOR, LVA, LUX, **MEX,** NOR, PRT, **SVK,** SVN, SWE, **TUR, GBR** (**ENG**, SCT) COL, KAZ	25	**Improving performance of students with low socio-economic status**	AUS, **BEL** (**Fl, Fr**) CAN (NB), **CHL**, **CZE, DEU,** FRA, **IRL, JPN, MEX,** NZL, **SVK, TUR**, **GBR** (**ENG**)	15	29

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO country profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.
5. Responses for Belgium (Fl and Fr) are based on the EPO Country Profile published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

Depending on the context, there are many pathways from identifying policy priorities to developing and actualising principles of action. In 2017, the OECD advised Portugal to provide more and earlier individualised academic support to students with low socio-economic background, as more than 50% of 15-year-olds with a disadvantaged background had repeated a year in 2015, the second highest rate among OECD countries (OECD, 2016b). In 2016, the OECD advised Canada to increase targeted needs-based financial assistance to increase access to tertiary education for disadvantaged students.

Education systems have implemented many different types of initiatives to expand and enhance educational opportunities for all. Providing educational support and reinforcement for students from disadvantaged backgrounds has been a strategy used by

many education systems, including: the Flemish Community of Belgium (Parliamentary Act for Primary and Secondary Education, 2008); the French Community of Belgium (Instrument for Differentiated Support, 2009, 2017); Chile (School Inclusion Law, 2015); and the United Kingdom (England) (Pupil Premium Programme, 2011).

Bridging performance gaps among students from different population sub-groups

According to PISA 2015, students from ethnic minorities are significantly less likely to make the transition from primary to lower secondary school and from lower to upper secondary school, and they are more likely to be delayed in their progression through the grade levels. Participating education systems have identified addressing educational attainment and performance gaps affecting students from different population sub-groups between minorities (such as Indigenous and other students) as a policy priority.

Through its country-based work in some contexts, the OECD has identified addressing education needs for Indigenous students and raising outcomes for ethnic minorities as policy priorities. In some education systems (including the Czech Republic, Israel, and the Slovak Republic), the OECD has recommended further encouraging students from minorities to follow mainstream education by providing extra financial or academic support, as needed. At the same time, in the EPO Survey 2016-17, Australia, Canada, Mexico and New Zealand reported that ensuring quality education opportunities for Indigenous students was a key policy priority.

This common policy priority applies differently depending on the context. For example, in the Czech Republic, a disproportionate share of students from the Roma community attend special schools for children with mental disabilities, and this affects their educational attainment and their labour market prospects. In 2016, as a principle of action, the OECD recommended to the Czech Republic that Roma students should be integrated into mainstream schools where they could receive more adequate support, such as better trained teachers, specialised teaching aid and financial resources. Also in 2016, the OECD advised Israel to improve the quality of education, especially for *Haredim* (ultra-Orthodox Jews) and Israeli Arabs, so they could be better integrated into the labour market. The OECD recommended providing extra financial support and access to more standard, better-quality education to encourage higher educational attainment among these population sub-groups.

Many different policy responses have been put in place by countries to address these policy priorities. For example, New Zealand set up the Māori-medium education sector (1980s) to revitalise *te reo Māori*, and Australia recently implemented the Indigenous Student Success Program (2017). Both of these initiatives were designed to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students (see Chapter 3).

The OECD also identified as a policy priority improved inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN), specifically for Estonia and Latvia. For these two education systems, the OECD recommended expanding access to mainstream education for SEN students and increasing financial support for these students and their teachers. Australia, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities) and the Czech Republic, identified this as a policy priority in the EPO Survey 2016-17, along with Latvia. The initiative on the Promotion of the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs (2011), highlighted in Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020, aims to better accommodate students with special needs in the education system. Australia's National Disability Coordination Officer Programme (2008) aims to include more people with disabilities in tertiary

education, and the M-Decree (2014) in the Flemish Community of Belgium reinforces the right of students with special educational needs to be enrolled in mainstream education.

Table 2.2. Bridging performance gaps among students from different population sub-groups

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Bridging performance gaps between students from different minority groups	Encourage students from minority groups to go into mainstream education and provide them with extra support if needed.	**AUS,** CAN, CZE, ISR, **MEX, NZL,** SVK	7	**Reducing performance gaps between Indigenous and other students**	**AUS,** CAN (NB), **MEX, NZL**	4	7
Improved integration of students with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream education	Expand inclusive education by increasing financial support for students with SEN in mainstream schools and providing support to teachers in those schools.	EST, **LVA**	2	**Expanding access and participation of students with SEN in mainstream education**	AUS, BEL (Fl, Fr), CZE, **LVA**, SVN	6	7

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO country profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Responses for Belgium (Fl and Fr) are based on the EPO Country Profile published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

Bridging performance gaps among students from different regions

Performance gaps across regions were identified recurrently by the OECD over both 2008-13 and 2014-17. OECD recommended as a key principle of action that education systems in Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and accession country Colombia develop measures to channel different types of support to the most disadvantaged regions. Again, broad principles of action were targeted contextually in different ways. In 2015, for example, the OECD Secretariat suggested that Mexico could expand its small VET system to further support learning opportunities in remote regions, especially for students at risk, while the OECD's regional policy recommendations for Poland in 2008 focused on expanding the provision of free preschool education from age 3 to age 5 in poor and rural areas (Table 2.3).

Over the years, education systems also identified reducing performance gaps across regions as a key policy priority, in countries including Estonia, Italy, Latvia and Turkey (Table 2.3). Italy, for example, experiences differences in educational attainment levels across regions (OECD, 2017a). In Latvia, PISA 2015 shows performance differences between urban and rural areas, in a context of significant demographic change in recent years driven by substantial emigration and urbanisation. Portugal also specifically reported developing measures to reduce performance difference between regions with its Third Generation of the Education Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP3) in 2012 (see Chapter 3).

Table 2.3. Bridging performance gaps among students and regions

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,5]	Total	
Decreasing regional gaps in access to education, educational attainment and performance	Develop measures to channel resources to most disadvantaged regions.	CHL, **EST**, HUN, **ITA**, **LVA**, LUX, MEX, POL, PRT, SVN, **ESP**, **TUR** COL	13	**Regional disparities in access to education, educational attainment and performance**	**EST, ITA, LVA, ESP, TUR**	5	13

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO country profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.
5. Responses for Italy are based on the EPO Country Profile published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

Bridging performance gaps among boys and girls

PISA evidence shows that performance differences among boys and girls do not start at birth, but develop at home, at school and in the social context (OECD, 2016a). Over 2014-17, the OECD has identified addressing gaps between boys and girls in performance and specific field-of-study orientation leading to higher gender pay gaps as priority issues. For countries including Austria, Estonia, Iceland and Scotland, the OECD has also identified as a principle of action assessing implications for both women and men of any planned action in educational institutions. This principle of action can also lead to very diverse policy efforts. For example, it can relate to better supporting career choices for girls at the age of first streaming. Evidence from 2015 showed that half of women doing apprenticeships tended to choose among only 3 career choices out of 250 available in Austria, while men tended to choose among professional tracks with higher earning potential (OECD recommended this to Austria in 2015). In the same way, this principle also relates to expanding coverage of day-care centres in Estonia for children age 0-2 and full-day kindergarten for children age 3-5 to support mothers aiming to have full-time jobs (as recommended by the OECD in 2015), among other types of possible efforts to support gender equity (Table 2.4).

In responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17, addressing high levels of gender gaps in performance, education completion and pay was reported as a key policy priority by Finland and New Zealand in 2008-13 and by Latvia in 2014-17. These priorities are viewed in different ways among countries. On the PISA 2015 assessment, boys scored below girls in science by 15 points in Finland and by 11 points in Latvia. On the same assessment, boys scored above girls by 4 points across the OECD and by 5 points in New Zealand. These gender differences highlight that countries' perceptions of this issue as a priority are not always related to the size of the gender gap. Specific examples of policies that aim to bridge performance gaps among boys and girls include the Project for Increasing School Attendance Rates Especially for Girls (IAREFG or KEP-2, 2015-17) in Turkey (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4. Bridging performance gaps among boys and girls

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2]	Total	
Tackling gender-specific choice of orientation leading to higher gender pay gaps.	Promote gender mainstreaming in educational institutions.	AUT, EST, **FIN**, ISL, **LVA**, MEX, **NZL,** GBR (SCT)	8	**Significant gender gaps in performance**	**FIN, LVA, NZL**	3	8

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.

Raising access to and quality of ECEC

The OECD identified raising access to and quality of ECEC as a key policy priority to improve students' future outcomes in 14 education systems. According to PISA 2015 results, the average gap in science scores between students who attended at least more than one year of pre-primary school and those who had attended one year or less was 41 points (OECD, 2017b). This identified difference in performance provides some evidence on how important ECEC can be for the academic success of students (although this may be more difficult to take into account for education systems where children have more recently migrated into the system).

The OECD identified this policy priority in education systems including the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Korea and Portugal. For those education systems, as a principle of action over 2008-17, the OECD recommended creating an integrated system to monitor ECEC standards according to age, among other things, in order to avoid different quality standards and different levels of quality between ECEC institutions. This applied particularly to countries such as Korea Italy, where childcare centres and kindergartens were separate strands of provision at the time of the review (Table 2.5).

Only one of the participating education systems identified access and quality in ECEC as a key priority in the two EPO Surveys (Table 2.5). This may be largely due to the high number of ECEC policies and reforms that were ongoing or recently implemented by countries in 2017.

That being said, countries have been working to expand access to ECEC, improve its quality and enhance children's preparedness for primary education, as explained in Chapter 3. In 2009, for example, Norway extended the legal right to a place in ECEC to start at age 1. More recently, Slovenia introduced Amendments to the Kindergarten Act (2017) to offer short-term state-funded programmes one year before entering primary school for children not enrolled in preschool education. In addition, approaches to promoting education quality and children's preparedness for primary school include Sweden's latest reforms to the ECEC curriculum (*Läroplan för Förskolan – Lpfö 98*) in 2016 (with others planned in 2017) and France's 2013 reform of its school system (*Refondation de l'école de la République*).

Table 2.5. Increase access and quality of ECEC

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2]	Total	
Increase access and quality of ECEC	Create an integrated monitoring system of ECEC	AUS, CZE, DEU, FIN, FRA, ITA, JPN, KOR, LUX, LVA, PRT, SVK, ESP, GBR (ENG)	14	**Increasing coverage of ECEC by providing new infrastructure and programmes**	CHL	1	15

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
3. Responses for Italy are based on the EPO Country Profile published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

Emerging policy priorities identified from 2014 to 2017

In addition to these persisting policy priorities, the OECD has identified other emerging priorities among education systems over 2014-17. Notable emerging policy priorities identified in this analysis include strengthening student performance for all (with a focus on low performing students) and successfully integrating the immigrant population into the education system, although other key emerging priorities became apparent.

Integrating immigrant students into the education system

In recent decades, the demographic landscape has been evolving dramatically in many OECD countries, primarily due to migration. Across OECD countries, the share of the foreign-born population increased from 6% to over 9% over the last two decades (OECD, 2017b). As a result, populations in various education systems have been changing. This poses a challenge as governments seek to effectively integrate young immigrant children into ECEC programmes and schools and to identify and respond to performance gaps between them and their peers. In PISA 2015, almost one in four 15-year-old students in OECD countries reported that they were either foreign-born or had at least one foreign-born parent. In Switzerland and Luxembourg, half the 15-year-old students reported that they were foreign-born or had at least one foreign-born parent (OECD, 2018). Responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17 suggest that integrating immigrant students into the education system has been emerging as a more clearly identified policy priority in a large number of education systems. The issue was already apparent in education systems' responses during 2008-13, but it appears to have become more significant with the high levels of migration experienced across Europe in recent years. High performance and attainment gaps remain between native and immigrant students, as shown in PISA.

The OECD Secretariat identified further integrating immigrant students into education systems as a pressing policy priority in its country-based work in Austria, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Poland and the United Kingdom (England) over 2008-13, and in education systems including Finland, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Turkey over 2014-17. As a core principle of action, the OECD advised education systems to intervene as early

as possible, mainly by providing language courses to immigrant students and developing specific teacher training to guarantee that teachers have the right skills to maximise the integration of students and adults into the education system.

As noted, principles of action are applied differently depending on a country's national context and the priorities its government and education systems identify, as well as on priorities identified by the OECD through country-based work. For example, in Germany in 2016, the OECD recommended providing additional language courses and including refugee children in regular compulsory education as soon as possible to avoid segregation. In 2015, the OECD advised Sweden to encourage language learning in the workplace and to introduce a youth package with enhanced education and training offers for older students.

Education systems that had reported further integrating immigrant students into education as a significant policy priority in 2008-13 included Belgium (Flemish community), Finland and Iceland (Table 2.6). According to PISA 2015, the performance difference between non-immigrant and immigrant students increased between 2006 and 2015 in both Finland and Belgium, while it decreased in Iceland. The importance of the challenge, however, appears to have grown significantly in education systems like Germany, Sweden and Turkey in 2014-17.

Countries have taken a wide range of measures to work towards successful integration of immigrant students, from specific curricula (as in Finland, with its 2015 National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education) to large-scale action plans (as in Germany, with its 2011 National Action Plan on Integration).

Table 2.6. Ensuring success of immigrant students in the education system

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Improving integration of immigrant students into the education system	Early intervention for immigrant students with language courses and specific teacher training.	AUT, **BEL** (**FI**, Fr, Dg)**, DEU**, **FIN**, FRA, **ISL**, LUX, POL, **SWE**, CHE, **TUR**, GBR (ENG)	14	**Reducing performance and attainment gaps between native and immigrant students**	**BEL** (**FI**), **DEU, FIN, ISL, SWE, TUR**	6	14

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Responses for Belgium (Fl, Fr, Dg) and Sweden are based on the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

Strengthening student performance for all

As mentioned earlier, quality education systems help all students develop their full potential regardless of their different interests and skills. However, analysis of the data collected did not find evidence of policies targeting specifically mid-to-high performers in the participating education systems. For a majority of participating OECD education systems, the focus of the key policies reported has been on low educational performance levels.

Over 2014-17, the OECD identified the need to decrease the share of low performers in PISA as a prominent policy priority in 15 OECD education systems: Belgium (Flemish Community), Chile, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden and accession country Costa Rica. EPO Survey responses of 2013 and 2016-17 also suggest that this issue has been a key government priority in Belgium (Flemish Community), Finland, Germany, Iceland, Spain, Sweden and Turkey since 2008 (Table 2.7).

According to studies performed by the OECD in these education systems over 2014-17, principles of action that could be beneficial to raise student performance included employing better qualified teachers and establishing educational outcomes as a main target, rather than focusing solely on increasing spending. In 2015, the OECD advised Mexico to: 1) establish a small number of clear, highest-priority and measurable aims focused on improving the learning of all students; 2) align all efforts towards their achievement; and 3) increase spending efficiency by refocusing such spending on pre-primary, primary and secondary education. In 2016, the OECD recommended that Greece take the following actions to boost performance: 1) improve the quality of teachers by linking teaching evaluation to effective professional development; 2) make schools more autonomous and accountable; and 3) introduce a performance evaluation system for universities. In 2016, the OECD advised Costa Rica to improve efficiency and evaluation mechanisms and enhance accountability across the entire education system, including universities.

Countries' efforts reported to the OECD to improve low student performance include policies that seek to raise outcomes for those coming from less advantaged backgrounds and to strengthen early childhood education and early intervention mechanisms. Policies should also include measures to promote excellence for all students and strengthen the performance of students at higher proficiency levels.

Table 2.7. Ensuring success for all students in the education system

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems [2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2]	Total	
Addressing the specific needs of students based on individual social, economic and cultural contexts	Increase student mobility between tracks, employing better qualified teachers and establishing educational outcomes as a main target rather than focusing on increasing spending.	BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CHL, **CZE**, **DEU**, **FRA**, GRC, HUN, **ISL**, ITA, LUX, **MEX**, SVK, ESP, **SWE**, GBR (SCT) CRI	18	**Increasing student performance**	**CZE**, **DEU**, **FRA**, **ISL**, **MEX**, SVN, **SWE**, GBR (ENG)	8	20

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.

Preventing grade repetition and delaying tracking

Evidence shows that certain system-level policies, such as grade repetition and early tracking, can hinder equity if not managed carefully (OECD, 2016b). Grade repetition has proved to be costly for governments, less efficient in terms of raising students' performance and more likely to increase the likelihood of disengagement and failure. However, many OECD education systems (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mexico, Portugal and Spain) still have relatively high levels of grade repetition, as highlighted by the work carried out by the OECD in these education systems. For example, in PISA 2015, the share of students who reported that they had repeated at least one year of education by the age of 15 was 34% in Belgium, 22.1% in France, 30.9% in Luxembourg, and 31.2% in Portugal, compared to the OECD average of 12%. Over 2014-17, the OECD recommended as a principle of action that these education systems endeavour to avoid grade repetition by replacing it with early and individualised support for students who are lagging behind (Table 2.8).

Over 2008-13, reducing grade repetition was reported to the OECD as a key policy priority by Belgium (French Community), Portugal and Spain (according to PISA 2015, these education systems have the highest share of 15-year-old students who reported having repeated a year). Education systems have developed specific policies targeted towards reducing grade repetition, for example in the French Community of Belgium, as part of the Take-off Project (2012). Portugal is also targeting grade repetition, as well as school dropout, as part of its comprehensive National Programme to Promote Educational Success (2016), which includes preventive measures to reduce the use of grade repetition and to support students who have already repeated a grade with additional specialist tutoring.

The OECD also regularly recommends that education systems make transitions more effective by offering more possibilities for success and decreasing the availability of early tracking, as evidence shows that it can favour the development and perpetuation of inequities within the education system. In recent years, the OECD specifically recommended delaying tracking in work carried out with four education systems: Austria (in 2015 and 2016), Belgium (in 2007 and 2011, particularly to integrate populations from immigrant background), the Czech Republic (in 2011, 2014 and 2016) and Germany (in 2010 and 2016). The first age of selection in the education system was 10 for both Austria and Germany, 11 for the Czech Republic and 12-14 for Belgium (where student tracking takes place for the first time to some extent at the age of 12 in the Flemish Community, but generally begins at age 14). During this period, Austria also implemented an initiative to reduce the stratification effect of early tracking, with its New Secondary School model (*Neue Mittelschule*), which began in 2007/08.

Table 2.8. Reducing grade repetition and delaying tracking

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Reducing high levels of grade repetition	Remove grade repetition and replace it with individualised support for students who are lagging behind.	**BEL** (Fl, **Fr**, Dg), DEU, FRA, LUX, MEX, **PRT**, **ESP**	9	**Reducing grade repetition**	**BEL (Fr), PRT, ESP**	3	9
Delaying tracking of students into the system	Guarantee the same content of education, ensuring high minimum curricular standards in all tracks, with regular performance assessment.	AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CZE, DEU	6	No cases reported			6

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Responses for Belgium (Fr) are based on the EPO Country Profile published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

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Chapter 3. Equity and quality: Policy trends, progress and impact

This chapter examines key education policies implemented in OECD countries between 2008 and 2017 to improve equity and quality for students. Taking a comparative approach, it analyses overall education policy trends, progress and impact since 2008, examining the scope of intervention of key reported policies on this issue. Policies analysed encompass improving early childhood education and care, reducing the impact of system-level practices and providing equal access to all students regardless of socio-economic or cultural background.

Highlights

- Many participating education systems have reported continuity in implementing measures to promote successful outcomes for all students at the school level, but their approach to achieving this goal has changed over the years. Most of the older policies reported (implemented mainly between 2008 and 2014) are general strategies to improve the quality of education for all students, while more recent policies (implemented mainly between 2015 and 2017) tend to be directed at students from specific population groups or with more targeted needs, including immigrant students, Indigenous students and students with special educational needs. The different approaches reported by participating education systems indicate that a range of interventions are required for particular contexts to foster resilience and increase performance of all students.
- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) continues to be an area of policy action reported in many participating OECD countries. Most education systems have identified their main efforts as providing equal or cost-free access to ECEC for all and ensuring the quality of education, as well as the preparedness of students at this level. Most policies reported as still in place are general strategies introduced to improve the coverage and quality of ECEC. More recent policies reported tend to target improving access and coverage for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Another issue identified is addressing the features and practices in education systems that can negatively impact students' ability to succeed throughout their academic pathways. Policies reported as still in place or recently implemented are targeted policies aiming to reduce early tracking and prevent grade repetition, although a small number of education systems reported promoting such policies in the EPO Survey 2016-17.

Introduction

Promoting equity and quality in education systems refers to creating and reinforcing positive conditions for high-quality education provision and equal access across the policy ecosystem, starting in ECEC and continuing through secondary education, vocational education and training (VET) and tertiary education, as noted in Chapter 2. Equity can be achieved in education when personal or social circumstances, such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, do not prevent students from achieving educational potential (*fairness*) and all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (*inclusion*). Quality education is achieved when students learn high-level skills adapted to their individual interests and needs that will give them the foundations to succeed later on in life (OECD, 2012; OECD, 2015a).

As noted in Chapter 2, education systems participating in the EPO Survey 2016-17 continued to report addressing performance gaps as policy priorities: gaps due to socio-economic background, gaps among students from different population sub-groups and different regions, and gaps among boys and girls. At the same time, specific emerging priorities reported to the OECD include the integration of immigrants into education systems, decreasing the high share of low performers, preventing grade repetition and reducing tracking. The OECD Secretariat has identified some correspondence between policy priorities identified and policy developments.

This chapter analyses policy continuity and policy change in 33 OECD education systems between 2008 and 2017, in key education policies on equity and quality (as defined in the EPO analytical framework), along with available evidence on implementation outcomes. It provides a comparative overview of how OECD education systems are: 1) improving access to ECEC; 2) reducing the negative impact of system-level policies on equity and quality; and 3) providing equal access to all regardless of socio-economic or cultural background, specific needs or place of residence (see the Reader's Guide).

Improving early childhood education and care

Box 3.1. Policy pointer: Improving ECEC

High-quality ECEC aids children in their early development and later school performance in several ways, including language use and emerging academic skills, early literacy and numeracy, and socio-emotional skills (OECD *Starting Strong* reports, 2001, 2006, 2011a, 2015b, 2017a; OECD, 2018; Burchinal, Zaslow and Tarullo, 2016; Cappella, Aber and Kim, 2016; Melhuish et al., 2015; Yoshikawa and Kabay, 2015).

- **Policy priority identified (OECD):** Increasing access to and quality of ECEC.
- **Principle of action identified (OECD):** Increase access to and quality of ECEC by, for example, implementing monitoring systems.
- **Summary of policy trend identified:** OECD education systems have worked to increase access to ECEC and improve its quality and the transition from ECEC to primary education. While relatively older policies tend to be broader in scope, more recent policies tend to be targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Examples of policies:**
  - **Access:** AUS, FRA, DEU, HUN, IRL, NOR, SVN
  - **Quality and transitions:** AUT, ITA, NOR, SWE

Note: See Annex C, Box C.1 for a summary of education systems where increasing access to and quality of ECEC is identified as a relevant policy priority, as well as selected related policies.

ECEC includes all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age (typically age 0-6), regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours or programme content (OECD, 2015b). Across OECD countries, the number of children as young as 3 years old who are enrolled in ECEC is increasing (OECD, 2017a).

Provision and delivery of ECEC are among the initial ways in which a country can target equity and quality in its education systems. Evidence shows that investing in early and primary education facilitates students' development and acquisition of skills and knowledge (OECD, 2015a; OECD, 2017b). ECEC can positively impact students' later learning, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds whose environments and interactions outside of school may not provide them with the opportunities and the skills to achieve higher performance at later stages of education (OECD, 2012). Investing in high-quality ECEC is cost-effective for countries, as it yields higher returns later on, when students enter the labour market (OECD, 2012).

Many OECD education systems have expanded access to ECEC, particularly for parents with a greater need for childcare, as result of a desire to join the labour force or provide children with opportunities for development and learning, and in response to the increased entry of women into the workforce (OECD, 2016a). Some policy options adopted by education systems to increase ECEC enrolment include providing legal entitlement to a place in early childcare for children under age 5, or extending compulsory education to lower ages (OECD, 2015a; OECD, 2016a; OECD, 2017c). As

part of these efforts, governments have also expanded funding for these programmes. Between 2000 and 2013, expenditure by OECD countries on ECEC increased on average by 45%, which corresponded to an increase from 0.48% of gross domestic product (GDP) to 0.69% (OECD, 2017b). However, research shows that the discussion on ECEC in recent years has progressively shifted from a focus on increasing access to improving quality, as the quality of ECEC services provided defines the overall benefits for children (OECD, 2018).

Education policy continuity and reform across the OECD, 2008-17

Responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17 and the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 suggest that ECEC remains an important area of policy action for many member countries and that there is continuity in these policies. Survey results show that at least 23 key older education policies on ECEC (i.e. those implemented between 2008 and 2014) are still in place in participating countries. In general terms, these relatively older policies were originally designed or have evolved mainly to expand or modify ECEC coverage to increase access for all children, as in Australia, Belgium (Flemish and German-speaking Communities), the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Korea, Norway, Portugal and Slovenia. At the same time, education systems have put in place policies to improve the quality of ECEC and student preparedness for primary education, as in Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Norway and Sweden.

For more recent key education policies (i.e. those implemented starting in 2015), the primary objective reported by participating education systems is providing equal access to ECEC, as in Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities), Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Slovenia.

Table 3.1 classifies the key education policies reported to the OECD according to their scope of intervention: 1) **Comprehensive** (overarching general strategies using various policy tools); 2) **Content** (specifically related to content knowledge); and 3) **Targeted** (focused on a specific recipient or approach). It also indicates whether policies are: 1) **S**till in place (continued since the 2015 Education Policy Outlook comparative report and/or policies implemented between 2008 and 2014); 2) **M**odified (e.g. content, scope, coverage and/or replacing an older policy); or 3) **R**ecent (implemented as of 2015).

Promoting greater access to ECEC

Across education systems, there is currently a trend towards providing universal early education for children as young as age 3, and more and more children are participating (OECD, 2015b). On average across OECD education systems, enrolment of younger children in ECEC programmes has been increasing. Between 2005 and 2015, enrolment of 3-year-olds increased from 54% to 73% and enrolment of 4-year-olds rose from 73% to 86% (OECD, 2017a). At the same time, education systems have reported policies that are still in place, or have recently been modified or implemented, targeting increased participation of specific population groups at this level of education.

Among the education systems that participated in the EPO Survey 2016-17, approaches to achieve access to ECEC range from promoting universal measures for all children to providing specific types of support for children and their families. In Australia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Portugal and Slovenia, for example, policies aim to ensure more universal access to ECEC for all children, although the starting age for legal entitlement to ECEC can vary (it starts at age 1 in Norway and Slovenia). Australia, Belgium (Flemish Community), Germany, Ireland, Italy and Norway have also

implemented supporting policies to provide additional services that specifically target disadvantaged families, in order to improve children's learning opportunities at future stages of education. These range from providing financial aid (Ireland and Norway) to also providing practical and emotional support (Australia). Norway, Ireland and Slovenia also took measures to make ECEC costs more affordable.

Table 3.1. Policies to consolidate ECEC, 2008-17

Code	Comprehensive policies	Code	Content	Code	Targeted
	GENERAL STRATEGY and STRUCTURE		**CURRICULUM**		**DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS**
S	**Australia**: Series of National Partnership Agreements on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (2008-19)	S	**Finland** [SN]: National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (2014)	S	**Belgium (Fl)** [SN]: Priority access to ECEC for children under 3 for single parents and/or low-income parents (2009)
R	**Austria**: School Entry and Primary School package of the 2015 education reform (2016)	R	**Finland** [SN]: National Core Curriculum for ECEC (2016)	R	**Germany**: Programme on language education (2016)
R	**Austria** [SN]: Expansion of all-day schooling (2017-25)	S	**France**: New curriculum for all levels of compulsory education (2013/14)	R	**Germany**: Programme on building bridges to early education for families with refugee background and low socio-economic status (2017)
R	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Pact for Excellence in Teaching (2015-30)	S	**Iceland** [SN]: National curriculum guidelines for pre-primary (2011)	R	**Hungary**: Lowering the age of compulsory participation in kindergarten from age 5 to age 3 (2015-16) as part of the National Public Education Act
S	**Belgium (Dg)** [SN]: Decree on childhood care (2014) providing priority access to ECEC for children under 3.	S M	**Italy**: National Curriculum Guidelines Reform for ISCED levels, including pre-primary education (2012, revised 2018) (Ministerial Decree No. 254/2012)	S	**Ireland**: After-School Childcare Scheme (ACSS, 2013) for low-income families
S	**Canada** [SN]: CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework (2014)	S M	**Korea** [SN]: Nuri curriculum (2012)	R	**Ireland**: Community Childcare Subvention (CCS, 2016) for low-income families
R	**Canada** [SN]: Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework (2017)	S M	**Norway**: Revised Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (2017) (replaced the Framework Plan of 2006)	R	**Norway**: New regulation and a subsidy scheme for parental fees for ECEC (2016)
S	**Chile** [SN]: Series of measures to improve coverage and equity in ECEC (2014-18)	S M	**Portugal** [SN]: Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (2012, 2016)	S M	**Slovenia**: Kindergarten Act 2008; Amendments to the Kindergarten Act (2010, 2017)
R	**Czech Republic** [SN]: Amendment to the Education Act (2016) making preschool education compulsory (2017-20)	S M	**Sweden**: ECEC curriculum (1998, revised 2016)		
S	**France**: Reform of the Republic's Schools (2013)				
S	**Germany**: Legal entitlement to an ECEC place to children age 1 and 2 (2013)				
S	**Germany**: Childcare Funding Act (2014)				
S	**Germany** [SN]: Process to improve the quality of ECEC and negotiate national quality goals (2014) through the				

	Guidelines for the promotion of quality development for good education in early childhood (2017) and the ECEC Prize (2018)
S	**Hungary**: Decree on the Basic National Programme of Kindergarten Education (2012)
S M	**Ireland**: Early Childhood Care and Education "free preschool" programme (2010, expanded in 2016)
R	**Italy**: Larger structures providing more integrated services for children aged 0-6 (2015, 2017)
S M	**Korea** [SN]: After-school childcare for 3-5 year-olds (2013)
S M	**Norway**: Legal right to a place in ECEC from age 1 (2009)
R	**Portugal** [SN]: Universal free preschool for children age 3-5 by 2019 (2017-19)

Notes:
1. [SN]: Policy information was only included as an additional policy of potential interest to other countries in the country snapshots (Chapter 7).
2. See Annex B for information on policies reported in the previous cycle for which no further details were available.
Sources: EPO Survey 2016-17 and EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 for Austria, Belgium (Fl, Fr and Dg), Italy and Sweden (see the Reader's Guide).

Policy focus

Australia's series of National Partnership (NP) Agreements on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (2008-19) began in 2008, following a joint Commonwealth, State and Territory action in Australia to improve early childhood education programmes and care services. This series of agreements was also put in place to ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood education programmes for 15 hours per week (for a total of 600 hours) during the year before they attend primary school. Since 2013, the NP Agreements have focused on participation of disadvantaged children in ECEC, as well as providing programmes delivered by qualified early childhood teachers (Australian Government Council on Federal Financial Relations, 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** By 2016, all jurisdictions in Australia had exceeded the benchmark of 95% of children enrolled in quality early childhood education programmes. A majority of districts also exceeded this benchmark for the enrolment of Indigenous children. Nationally, 93% of the children enrolled in a preschool programme were enrolled for 600 hours or more. Although one in ten children participating in quality early childhood education were still not enrolled for 600 hours or more, this figure represented a significant overall increase compared to 2008, when only 12% of children were enrolled for the same number of hours (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2015).

France's 2013 Reform of the Republic's Schools (*Refondation de l'école de la République*) included additional elements to redefine the goals of preschools and to welcome more children below age 3 into ECEC facilities. These modifications were implemented following a decrease in the number of 2-year-olds attending preschool, from 34.6% in 1999 to around 11% in 2012 (DEPP, 2014). As a result, more than 1 100 classes were created and opened to children in this age group to encourage especially disadvantaged families to enrol their children in ECEC. This corresponded to 25 000 new spots in ECEC facilities. France also implemented a new curriculum during 2013/14 for all levels of compulsory education, including ECEC. The new curriculum, based on a common framework of knowledge, skills and culture, aims to provide students with the necessary tools to achieve their ambitions.

- **Progress or impact:** Although many of the new spaces remained vacant at the beginning of the school year 2013/14, the number of 2-year-olds in preschools increased for the first time in ten years (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017; DEPP, 2014). Overall enrolment of 2-year-olds increased in 2013 to 11.7% (and 20.6% in high-priority schools) (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017). Also, at the beginning of the 2017/18 school year, enrolment for children 2 years of age and older in high-priority preschools (REP and REP+) was 20.5%, much higher than the 9.7% in non-priority schools. More than 30% of 2-year-olds enrolled attend high-priority schools (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2018).

Germany extended childcare extensively from 2008 to 2015, as part of the Childcare Funding Act (*Kinderförderungsgesetzes*, KiföG). In 2014, at least 41% percent of parents with children under age 3 stated that they needed a childcare place. As a result of this growing need, the fourth federal investment programme is being made for 2017 to 2020, to provide places to implement the legal entitlement of parents to an ECEC place for children who are 1 and 2 years old, which was initially approved in 2013. The federal investment programme will contribute to the creation of 100 000 additional ECEC places for children from birth to school entry (BMFSJ, 2015).

- **Progress or impact:** The 2014-16 evaluation of the Childcare Funding Act (*Kinderförderungsgesetzes*, KiföG) assessed the period from 2008 to 2015. It highlights the programme's impact on children and parents whose children benefitted from childcare, as well as on actors from children's care facilities and others affiliated with ECEC. Overall, childcare for children under age 3 rose from 17.6% in 2008 to 32.3% in 2014, and then to 32.7% in 2016 (BMFSJ, 2015; Destatis, 2016). The need for ECEC differs across the German *Länder*, and as the report points out, some have displayed better capacity than others at providing ECEC for children at this age. As a result, although the ratio of childcare needed compared to the childcare rate fell from 13 to 9.2 between 2012 and 2014, at least 185 000 children across the country still did not have a spot in childcare by

2014. At the same time, parents whose children participated in ECEC were satisfied with the childcare they received. Most sought places in children's day nurseries for children under age 3. Overall, most parents easily found a childcare location for children age 1 and older. More than half reported having already found childcare for children six months after birth (BMFSJ, 2015).

Germany established various programmes to foster equity of access to ECEC services, such as the programmes on building bridges to early education for families with refugee background and low socio-economic status (*Kita-Einstieg: Brücken bauen in frühe Bildung*, 2017) and focusing on emergent literacy (*Sprach-Kitas: Weil Sprache der Schlüssel zur Welt ist*, 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** With a view to the recent challenge of integrating children from refugee families, a representative survey among ECEC services carried out in March 2016 showed that one in three ECEC centres participating in the survey had received children from refugee families (Baisch et. al, 2017).

Hungary's Decree on the Basic National Programme of Kindergarten Education came into force in 2013, outlining the principles and tasks of kindergarten education. Also, starting in 2015, participation in ECEC became mandatory from age 3, with minimum attendance of four hours per day. Compulsory kindergarten education is expected to improve the chances of disadvantaged children and may reduce early selection and early school leaving (in 2016, the share of 18-24 year-olds who had either dropped out of school or left work reached 12.4%, the highest share since 2007) (Eurostat, 2017).

- **Progress or impact:** In 2012, the enrolment rates of 3-year-olds were at 74%, with an increase to 81% by 2015 (OECD, 2014; OECD, 2017a). In 2015, 94.7% of Hungarian children between age 4 and the starting age of compulsory education were participating in ECEC, compared to 94.5% in 2012. By 2016, enrolment for children from age 4 to the starting age of compulsory education had increased to 95.3%, above the European benchmark of 95% (EC, 2016a). The ECEC participation rate of Roma children of the same age is 91%, the highest in the region (FRA, 2016).

Since 2010, **Ireland** has either implemented or expanded three ECEC policies to increase coverage, especially to benefit low-income families, by providing childcare subventions and an after-school childcare programme (ACSS, 2013). The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) or "free preschool" programme was implemented in 2010 and expanded in 2016 to facilitate access to childcare for all children between age 3 and age 5.5. The government also implemented the Community Childcare Subvention Programme (CCS) for qualifying parents to reduce the burden of financial costs for disadvantaged families who would like childcare for children at any age while pursuing training or education courses (DCYA, 2014).

- **Progress or impact:** A total of 104 441 children benefitted from at least one of the following three Irish programmes for ECEC: ECCE, CCS, and Training and Employment Childcare programmes, which include after-school childcare (ACSS). The number of children registered in 2015/16 represented an 8% increase from the 96 508 children enrolled in these programmes during the 2014/15 school year. Specifically regarding the ECCE programme, 73 964 children took part in it in the 2015/16 school year, at a total cost of EUR 178 million. Compared to the 2014/15 school year, this is an increase of almost 13% in participation and 28% in costs. According to the report, the increase can be partly attributed to the announcement of extra entitlements in the 2016 budget (Pobal, 2016).

Norway extended the legal right to a place in ECEC from age 1 in 2009. This implies that a child's right to a kindergarten place is independent of the parents' labour-force participation and the child is to be granted access to a place as well as quality education (OECD, 2015c). In addition, a new regulation and a programme of subsidies for parental fees were implemented in 2015 and 2016, to prevent financial burdens for families whose children would otherwise be unable to participate in education at this level (Norway Ministry of Education and Research, 2014). In particular, the government hopes that these measures will help to increase the proportion of minority-language children attending

kindergarten, as their participation rate in ECEC lags behind that of students who are native speakers.

- **Progress or impact:** In 2015, the participation gap in kindergarten remained between minority-language children and children who are native speakers, but the gap had almost disappeared for children by age 5. The impact of the programme for parental fees is being closely monitored. Overall, the real costs paid by parents for kindergarten had been significantly reduced in 2015 compared to a decade ago (OECD, 2015c). The proportion of childcare operating costs paid by parents decreased from 37% in 2002 to 15% in 2012. In addition, municipalities are legally required to offer reduced fees for siblings and to put in place additional subsidies for low-income families. In 2015, Norway implemented national measures to reduce fees. No families are to pay more than 6% of their yearly family income (limited by the nationally set maximum fee). From 2016, all 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds in low-income families (as defined in the state budget) have the right to 20 hours per week of free kindergarten.

In **Slovenia**, the Kindergarten Act (2008) and the Exercise of Rights to Public Funds Act (2012) grants payments to parents with two or more children enrolled in preschool education in order to improve access to ECEC. Parents only pay 30% for the second child and no fee for younger siblings. The amount of the fee is determined according to a grid of nine levels of income, with no fees for those with the lowest income and no parents who pay the full fee. Parents with the highest level of income in the grid (99% of the net average salary) pay 77% of the fee. Municipalities can also further reduce these fees, according to their policies in this area. An amendment to the Kindergarten Act (2010) allows municipalities to provide ECEC in buildings not constructed for this purpose. Further Amendments to the Kindergarten Act (2017) allow for increased flexibility in providing a public network of kindergartens, which might include units or sections of a public kindergarten in enterprises. The amendments also provide for new types of short, entirely state-funded programmes to be organised by kindergartens for children not enrolled in preschool education one year before entering primary school.

- **Progress or impact:** Evidence shows that the Kindergarten Act has made ECEC more affordable, with enrolment rates above the OECD average (OECD, 2015d). The 2010 amendment has enabled municipalities to solve spatial issues rapidly with relatively little funds (MIZS, 2015). However, it has since been advised that excess teaching resources could be transferred into locations facing stronger demand (OECD, 2015d).

Promoting education quality and children's preparedness for primary school

Implementing policies that ensure quality in ECEC and managing transitions into primary education are ways in which education systems can begin preparing children for school and for life and can improve their educational outcomes (OECD, 2017b). This includes modifications to what children are expected to learn at this stage of education, as well as how they are expected to learn it. For example, Austria reported an education reform plan to improve children's transition from ECEC into kindergarten, and Sweden expressed an interest in establishing more student-centred guidelines for curricula in order to better prepare students for the transition to primary schools. In 2016, Portugal presented revised Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education, which take an integrated approach to different content areas and link to the curriculum of the first cycle of basic education. In 2017, as part of the Good School reforms package, Italy implemented larger structures providing more integrated ECEC services for 0-6 year-olds (*Poli per l'Infanzia*). This reform aims to streamline the delivery of services, while the government also works to improve quality and accessibility (for example, since 2017, childcare vouchers for EUR 1 000 are provided to children born since 2016 and under age 3).

Policy focus

Austria is in the process of comprehensively reforming its education system, through the framework of the 2015 education reform plan. In 2015, representatives of the federal government and the provinces presented a proposal for education reform in Austria. Based on the work of an expert commission, it included a roadmap for implementation. The first reform package, entitled School Entry and Primary School (*Schulrechtsänderungsgesetz*), was adopted in 2016. To improve the transition between ECEC and primary school and strengthen students' competencies, it will unify the last year of kindergarten and the first two years of primary school into a single school-entry phase. This change aims to allow for easier early identification of learning difficulties, as well as an exchange of teachers between kindergarten and primary schools. To maximise integration of students, especially those with an immigrant background or who have recently arrived in the country, the package also promotes measures to foster the learning of German starting in kindergarten.

- **Progress or impact:** The School Entry and Primary School package was implemented nationwide in 2016/17. A further package of reforms, related to school autonomy and simplifying school administration (Bildungsreformgesetz) was implemented in 2017. Further measures to be legislated as part of the 2015 reform include an innovation package to provide broadband to schools, establishment of a foundation to support innovative projects in schools, and piloting of an "education compass" to monitor the development of 3-year-olds.

In 2018, **Italy** reformed its national curriculum guidelines for pre-primary education (Ministerial Decree No. 254/2012) to include a focus on active citizenship for children in kindergarten and the first cycle of education.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2012 guidelines for pre-primary schools and the first cycle of education were followed by three years of pilot programmes assisted by the Italian National Scientific Committee. The participating networks of schools discussed the impact of the implementation of the guidelines on the curriculum, didactic tools and learning environments. It resulted in much research and debate. However, it also revealed the persistence of situations of disorientation and uncertainty among the participating schools, as well as resistance to abandoning traditional didactic models. Testimonials gathered from territories highlighted the difficulty of integrating into the teaching profession the proposals, learning environments and levels of organisation that enhance autonomy and responsibility among students and help them to successfully acquire knowledge and develop relevant skills (*Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca*, 2018).

In **Norway**, the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (2017), a regulation of the Kindergarten Act (2005), replaces the 2006 Framework Plan that prescribed a similar regulatory framework for kindergartens (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a). The current Framework Plan describes the transition from kindergarten to school and stipulates that kindergarten should accommodate the transition. In collaboration with schools, kindergartens are responsible for facilitating the transition of children from kindergarten to Year 1 of compulsory education and to after-school groups, all in close collaboration with their families. Co-operation between kindergartens and schools is not regulated at the national level. It is managed by local authorities, in this case municipalities, and kindergarten owners (public and private) (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017b).

- **Progress or impact:** National evidence stated that the Framework Plan could be more specific on the content of school preparatory activities, by including social competence and communication, children's active participation and co-operation to a larger extent. It also identified a need for a good transition and coherence between kindergarten and school. Both assessments led to the revised Framework Plan implemented in 2017. Also, because co-operation between kindergartens and schools is regulated at the local level, it is expected that there will be differences in how this is managed and solved. This may result in unwanted local variations in quality and systems for transitions (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a).

In 1998, **Sweden** introduced a new ECEC curriculum (*Läroplan för Förskolan – Lpfö 98*) designed to put children and play at the centre by: 1) ensuring continuous child development through the use of one national framework plan for ECEC; 2) balancing content by addressing academic and socio-emotional development; 3) reflecting on parental opinions and expectations; and 4) addressing respect for cultural values. Since 2010, this policy has gone through various revisions to improve the quality of education for all students. In 2010, the policy was subjected to revisions in order to improve the learning and social development of children and help them develop an interest in school. In 2016, a new round of policy revisions aimed to improve transitions and co-operation between primary schools, schools and leisure centres to create context, continuity and progression in children's development and learning. In 2017, the government asked the National Agency for Education to propose amendments to the curriculum (*läroplan*) of pre-primary education to clarify its educative role and improve its quality (Regeringen, 2018).

- **Progress or impact:** The ECEC reform was reviewed in 2002 and 2008, and both evaluations indicated that the new curriculum had a strong, positive impact on schools. The 2008 results revealed that the significance of the reform had grown for schools in the ten years following its implementation, reinforcing the importance of preschool learning in education, as well as fostering and reinforcing connections between the various levels of actors (municipal, national) in the country's ECEC system. The evaluation also highlighted the increased coordination between preschools in the preparedness of children for later education (Skolverket, 2008). The 2018 quality review by the Swedish School Inspectorate indicates that there are challenges in the quality of preschools and the achievement of objectives, particularly regarding the educational assignment of pre-primary education (Regeringen, 2018).

Reducing the negative impact of system-level policies and practices on equity and quality

Box 3.2. Policy pointer: Reducing the negative impact of system-level policies and practices

System-level policies, such as grade repetition and early tracking, can hinder equity and quality in education system (OECD, 2012; OECD, 2015a). PISA results show that the later students are tracked into different pathways and the less prevalent the incidence of grade repetition, the more equitable will be the school system, or the weaker the association between students' socio-economic status and their performance in science (OECD, 2016b; OECD, 2016c). At the same time, the negative effects of early tracking can be addressed, for example, through well-structured and well-resourced system-level policies (OECD, 2015a; OECD, 2016b; OECD, 2016c).

- **Policy priorities identified (OECD):** Reducing high levels of grade repetition. Delaying tracking of students into the system.
- **Principles of action identified (OECD):** Remove grade repetition and replace it with individualised support for students who are lagging behind. Guarantee the same content of education, ensuring high minimum curricular standards in all tracks, with regular performance assessment.
- **Summary of policy trend identified:** Compared to other policy areas, participating education systems reported fewer policies specifically targeting system-level practices, despite the evidence available on the effects of some of them. Some participating education systems have taken measures to decrease grade repetition and the stratification of early tracking. In the case of tracking, for example, the low number of reported policies might be because implementing these types of policies can require larger structural changes, a more consequent use of additional resources or deeper changes in social conceptions.
- **Examples of policies:**
  - **Delaying tracking:** AUT
  - **Decreasing grade repetition:** BEL (Fr), PRT

Note: See Annex C, Boxes C.9 and C.10 for a summary of education systems where reducing high levels of grade repetition and delaying tracking of students are identified as a relevant policy priority, as well as selected related policies.

The policies and practices of an education system determine the quality of education that students receive. If not carefully designed, system-level policies and practices, such as grade repetition, student tracking, school choice and school funding strategies, can exacerbate inequalities and result in school failure (OECD, 2012; OECD, 2015a).

Grade repetition occurs when a student is held back at the same grade level for an additional year following a formal or informal assessment (OECD, 2012). According to the 2015 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), grade repetition is still practiced in many OECD countries: 11.3% of 15-year-olds have repeated a grade in either primary, lower secondary or upper secondary education. Although grade repetition aims to raise student outcomes, evidence suggests it does not improve results and, instead, causes financial strain for schools and delays students' entry into the labour market (OECD, 2012; OECD, 2013a; OECD, 2015a).

Early tracking can also negatively impact equity and quality in education. Education systems establish early tracking systems to assign students to different education options at early ages (OECD, 2015a). Education tracks may be primarily academic or vocational, or they may offer a combination of academic and vocational courses (Kerckhoff, 2000; LeTendre, Hofer and Shimizu, 2003). On average across OECD education systems, the first age of selection is 14, the age at which most students start lower secondary education. In about two-thirds of OECD countries (23 of 35), students are first selected at the age of 15-16, although tracking can start as early as age 10-11 in a smaller share (6 countries) (OECD, 2016b). Evidence from PISA 2015 also shows that the later students are first selected into different schools or education programmes and the less prevalent is the incidence of grade repetition, the more equitable will be the school system, or the weaker the association between students' socio-economic status and their performance in science. At the same time, the potential negative effects of early tracking can be mitigated if the system is well structured and well resourced, or can provide multiple effective opportunities throughout students' academic pathways from ECEC to tertiary education to correct some obvious socio-economic imbalances (OECD, 2016b; OECD, 2016c).

Education policy continuity and reform across the OECD, 2008-17

Few policies specifically targeting system-level practices were reported by education systems participating in the EPO Survey 2016-17 and the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017, compared to the number of policies described for ECEC (Table 3.1) and for success of all students (Table 3.3). In the case of tracking, for example, this might be because implementing these types of policies requires structural changes or rearrangements of strategies and programmes that have been in place for a long time and are, therefore, expensive and might lack public support (OECD, 2015a).

Survey results show that at least two key education policies on system-level practices are still in place in participating countries: Austria's lower secondary school model to reduce early tracking, and further efforts in the French Community of Belgium to prevent grade repetition among primary school students. Recent key policies reported in Portugal also target reducing grade repetition, as well as preventing school failure.

Although few system-level policies and practices were reported overall, some OECD education systems highlighted an ongoing need to address these issues within their education systems, as noted in Chapter 2. Other policies targeting these practices may exist in participating education systems, but only system-level policies reported in the EPO Survey 2016-17 were considered for this analysis.

Table 3.2 classifies the key education policies reported to the OECD according to their scope of intervention: 1) **Comprehensive** (overarching general strategies using various policy tools); 2) **Content** (specifically related to content knowledge); and 3) **Targeted** (focused on a specific recipient or approach). It also indicates whether policies are: 1) **S**till in place (continued since the 2015 Education Policy Outlook comparative report and/or policies implemented between 2008 and 2014); 2) **M**odified (e.g. content, scope, coverage); replacing an older policy); or 3) **R**ecent (implemented as of 2015).

Table 3.2. Policies tackling system-level practices that hinder equity, 2008-17

Code	Targeted policies	Code	Targeted policies
	REDUCE EARLY TRACKING		**GRADE REPETITION AND SCHOOL FAILURE**
S	**Austria**: New Secondary School (2007/08)	**S**	**Belgium (Fr)**: Take-off Project (2012)
		R	**Portugal:** National Programme to Promote Educational Success (2016)
		R	**Portugal [SN]**: Series of policies to promote student success, including a new framework of competences, a National Plan for School Success (PNPSE), tutoring for students who repeat two grades and the Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy Programme

Notes:
1. **[SN]**: Policy information was only included as an additional policy of potential interest to other countries in the country snapshots (Chapter 7).
2. See Annex B for information on policies reported in the previous cycle for which no further details were available.
Sources: EPO Survey 2016-17 and EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 for Austria, Belgium (Fl, Fr and Dg), Italy and Sweden (see the Reader's Guide).

Reducing grade repetition and preventing school failure

Evidence suggests that although the short-term effects of grade repetition can be positive, as it theoretically gives low performers more time to learn coursework, these effects decline over time, and the practice risks generating negative feelings among students who are forced to repeat (OECD, 2012). It may even lead to early school leaving (OECD, 2016b).

PISA 2015 found that grade repetition was used less frequently in 2015 than in 2009 in 30 countries and economies, and increased in only 5 countries during this period (OECD, 2016c). Across OECD countries, grade repetition decreased by 7% between 2009 and 2015 across all education levels (OECD, 2016b).

As reported in the EPO Survey 2016-17, policies to reduce grade repetition at all levels of school were recently implemented in the French Community of Belgium, where children in participating schools are only to be held back under special circumstances, and in Portugal, where the government is aiming, through a "zero retention" target, to eliminate grade repetition for all students, as part of a comprehensive policy approach aimed at promoting school success.

Policy focus

In 2016, the **French Community of Belgium** introduced a further series of measures aimed specifically at reducing the prevalence of children repeating the third pre-primary year. These measures are part of the Take-off Project, initiated in 2012 to prevent grade repetition among children age 2.5 to 8. These recent measures require that children be held back only in exceptional circumstances, following an assessment by the school leader and a psycho-social-medical centre (CPMS). They also introduce a skills

assessment for children for early identification of learning difficulties and disabilities. Depending on the child's outcomes on this assessment, a remediation plan can be put in place by the school, in partnership with the CPMS involved in the assessment, to increase the chances for a successful transfer to primary education. In additional, new curriculum standards were introduced for pre-primary schools to define core initial competence bases and promote smoother transitions from pre-primary to primary education.

- **Progress or impact:** As of 2010, grade retention occurred for students as early as in pre-primary education and through secondary education. In fact, as students got older, they were more and more likely to repeat a grade in both primary and secondary education (*Enseignement en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles,* 2014). However, between 2009 and 2015, grade retention rates decreased for primary students from 18% to less than 15%. Between 2012 and 2015, grade retention for upper secondary students decreased from almost 52% to less than 50% (*Enseignement en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, 2016). Following implementation of the initiative in 2012, at least 160 schools and 45 CPMS joined. By 2014, more than 290 schools and 75 CPMS were participating in the Take-off Project. Between 2012 and 2014, 847 children were enrolled in the project, through 61 CPMS and 215 schools (*Enseignement en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, 2014).

Portugal has introduced a comprehensive national strategy with a focus on combating school failure and grade repetition, the National Programme to Promote Educational Success (*Plano Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar*, PNPSE, 2016). The Plan takes a preventive approach, promoting academic success and the improvement of learning, particularly in the early years of schooling. It aims to support schools to develop improvement plans, based on the principle that educational communities can better understand their contexts, difficulties and capabilities and are better prepared to design plans for strategic action. The Plan also aims to examine individual students' competences more comprehensively across a range of disciplines, including the introduction of a basic student profile, and to support students who have already repeated grades through additional tutoring. School autonomy is also reinforced, especially on pedagogic issues, through the Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy programme.

- **Progress or impact:** The coverage of the PNPSE is high, with 663 schools developing a strategic plan around the framework for their schools. The PNPSE, combined with the schools that are already participating in similar activities through the Third Generation of the Education Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP3), now covers almost 99% of Portugal's 811 schools. According to a recent European Commission report, the success of the plan in raising performance will depend on capacity to provide technical support and ensure regular monitoring of actions and overall coherence of the different projects (EC, 2017a). In addition, the Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy programme is also currently active in 235 schools.

Reducing early tracking

Across OECD education systems, assigning students to academic or vocational tracks (or a combination of the two) can take place as early as primary school. In Austria, students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 10, which is the earliest age of tracking across OECD countries. More recently, Austria has made efforts to reduce the stratification of early tracking.

Policy focus

Austria implemented a new lower secondary school model, the New Secondary School (*Neue Mittelschule*, NMS) in 2007/08 to provide students with basic, comprehensive education. The NMS did not replace lower secondary academic education; it continues to be provided as a separate track. NMS students are not grouped by ability in core subjects in the first years (Years 5 and 6). After that, de facto streaming takes place through a differentiated grading system for students in Years 7 and 8, based on student ability. The new model features innovative teaching methods, including team teaching in some mathematics, English and German lessons with teachers from general higher secondary

schools (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule*, AHS), and aims to have curriculum and educational goals closer in content to the AHS. The total amount of investment for the introduction of the NMS is estimated at between EUR 164 million and EUR 250 million per year. The additional funding is intended to introduce new pedagogical methods, such as team teaching, to better respond to the needs of the heterogeneous population targeted by the NMS.

- **Progress or impact:** The new schools now cover over 60% of all students transferring from primary school. By the start of the 2015/16 school year, they had completely replaced general secondary schools for new entrants, with complete replacement expected by 2018/19. According to the summative evaluation of the NMS pilot in 2015, the introduction of the NMS has had mixed results. Compared to general secondary schools, the new schools appeared to provide slightly more positive learning environments overall and higher levels of student support. However, the report also found deficiencies in the implementation process, with interpretations of the model varying between schools. At the time of the report, students' overall levels of achievement had not yet improved in the NMS. Given the recent rollout of the system, further research and a full evaluation of NMS will be required to fully assess its impact (OECD, 2017d)

Promoting education success for all

Box 3.3. Policy pointer: Promoting education success for all students

Every child is different, and every child can learn. Equity and quality in education are achieved when all individuals can reach at least a minimum level of skills (*inclusion*), but also when personal or social circumstances, such as socio-economic background, gender, ethnic origin or family background, do not hinder achieving education potential (*fairness*) (OECD, 2015a).

- **Policy priorities identified (OECD):** 1) Improving student performance for all; 2) Bridging performance gaps due to socio-economic backgrounds; 3) Improving the inclusion of immigrant students; 4) Bridging performance gaps among students from different minority groups; 5) Improving the integration of special education needs (SEN) students; 6) Bridging performance gaps among students across regions; 7) Tackling gender-specific choice of orientation leading to higher gender pay gaps.
- **Principles of action identified (OECD):** 1) Increase student mobility between tracks, employing better qualified teachers and establishing educational outcomes as a main target rather than focusing on increasing spending; 2) Increase educational and funding support for students with low socio-economic status; 3) Ensure early intervention for immigrant students with language courses and specific teacher training.; 4) Encourage students from minority groups to go into mainstream education and provide them with extra support if needed; 5) Expand inclusive education by increasing financial support for students with SEN in mainstream schools and providing support to teachers in those schools; 6) Develop measures to channel resources to most disadvantaged regions; and 7) Promote gender mainstreaming in educational institutions.
- **Summary of policy trend identified:** Policies to support education success for all are the largest group of policies collected. Education systems reported at least 25 policies still in place aiming, for example, to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds, immigrant backgrounds and population sub-groups, students with SEN or those living in different regions within a country. Although fewer in number, more recent policies highlight similar objectives.
- **Examples of policies:**
  - **Expanding and enhancing educational opportunities:** DEU, ITA
  - **Providing educational support and reinforcement for students from diverse backgrounds:** AUS, BEL (FI), CHL, DEU, FIN, NZL, PRT, SVN, GBR (ENG)
  - **Supporting students with SEN:** AUS, BEL (FI), EST, LVA, SVN

Note: See Annex C, Boxes C.2-C.8 for a summary of education systems where promoting students success for all students, regardless of previous performance levels, socio-economic or cultural background, specific needs or place of residence, is identified as a relevant policy priority, as well as selected related policies.

While students' personalities and interests matter, quality education systems should also be able to cater to students' differences in terms of previous performance, background (e.g. socio-economic status, gender or ethnic origin), or personal circumstances (e.g. possible special education needs), so they can receive more equitable opportunities to reach their full potential. As part of these efforts, schools (particularly those at greater disadvantage) also need to be able to establish links with families and the community, or with other schools at the regional level, to provide better opportunities to students.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, persisting and emerging priorities reported by participating countries include reducing performance and attainment gaps among students of different groups (including gender, socio-economic background, minority and ethnic groups) and national regions, and sufficiently integrating immigrants into education systems.

Many OECD education systems reported policies that promote the success of disadvantaged students and other population groups within their education systems. In fact, most policies reported correspond to this priority group.

Education policy continuity and reform across the OECD, 2008-17

The EPO Survey has been able to collect a wide array of policies targeting success of students regardless of socio-economic or cultural background, specific educational needs or place of residence. Education systems reported at least 25 key policies still in place to support students from disadvantaged groups, immigrant backgrounds and population sub-groups, as well as students with special educational needs and those living in different regions within a country. These policies include: 1) Germany and Japan's attempts to enhance education quality for all students, notably by improving students' competencies across subjects; 2) improving student outcomes in Canada (Nova Scotia) and New Zealand by engaging with stakeholders, including students' families and communities; 3) initiatives for the inclusion of students with special education needs in Australia, Iceland and Latvia; 4) additional support and resources to improve the performance and participation of girls, Indigenous and Roma students, and students from immigrant or disadvantaged backgrounds, as in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Turkey and the United Kingdom (England); and 5) Portugal's aim to bridge performance gaps between its regions.

Although fewer in number, recently implemented policies highlight similar objectives: 1) support for Indigenous students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds in Australia; and 2) policies promoting the inclusion of students with special education needs in mainstream schools in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities) and Slovenia.

Table 3.3 classifies the key education policies reported to the OECD according to their scope of intervention: 1) **Comprehensive** (overarching general strategies using various policy tools); 2) **Content** (specifically related to content knowledge); and 3) **Targeted** (focused on a specific recipient or approach). It also indicates whether policies are: 1) **S**till in place (continued since the 2015 Education Policy Outlook comparative report and/or policies implemented between 2008 and 2014); 2) **M**odified (e.g. content, scope, coverage); replacing an older policy); or 3) **R**ecent (implemented as of 2015).

Table 3.3. Policies to support education success for all, 2008-17

Code	Comprehensive policies	Code	Targeted policies
	GENERAL STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE		**STUDENTS FROM SPECIFIC POPULATION GROUPS**
R	**Austria** [SN]: Language support for non-native German speakers 2016/17	S	**Australia**: National Disability Coordination Officer Program (NDCO, 2008)
S	**Belgium (Fl)**: Funding based on socio-economic background of school and students as part of the Parliamentary Act for primary and secondary education (2008)	S	**Australia (Queensland)**: National Indigenous Reform Agreement (2008)
S	**Canada (Nova Scotia)**: SchoolsPlus programme (2008)	R	**Australia** [SN]: Smith Family's Learning for Life Program (from 2016-17 to 2019-20)
S	**Chile:** Preferential School Subsidy (SEP, 2008)	R	**Australia** [SN]: Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP, 2017)
R	**Chile** [SN]: School Inclusion Law (2015)	R	**Belgium (Fl)**: M-Decree (2015)
R	**Chile** [SN]: New Public Education Law (2017)	S M	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Instrument for differentiated support (2009, 2017)
S M	**Estonia** [SN]: Reform of the national curriculum for basic schools and upper secondary (2010, 2014)	R	**Czech Republic** [SN]: Revision of the Framework Educational Programme (2015)
R	**France** [SN]: School of Confidence (2017)	S M	**Estonia**: Amendments (2017) to the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act (2000) and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (2010) to support students with special educational needs
S M	**Germany**: Education Alliances (2012) supporting out-of-school programmes	R	**Japan** [SN]: Grant-type scholarship system (2017)
S	**Germany**: Reform measures resolved by all *Länder* in the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (2013)	S	**Mexico** [SN]: National Scholarship Programme (2014)
S	**Germany**: Education Through Language and Writing (BiSS, 2013-19)	S	**New Zealand**: Māori-medium education (1985)
S	**Germany** [SN]: Support strategy for poorer-performing pupils (2010)	S	**New Zealand**: Pasifika Education Plan (2013-17)
S M	**Hungary** [SN]: 2017 Revision of the National Core Curriculum (2012)	S	**Slovenia:** Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2013)
S	**Iceland** [SN]: Regulation for students with special needs in public and private upper secondary schools (No. 230/2012, based on Article 34 of the Upper Secondary Act, No. 92/2008)	R	**Slovenia** [SN]: Act on comprehensive special treatment of preschool children (2017)
R	**Italy**: Good School Reform (Law 107/2015) (2015)	R	**Turkey** [SN]: Project for Increasing School Attendance Rates Especially for Girls (KEP-2, 2015-17) (replaced Project for Increasing Enrolment Rates Especially for Girls ([KEP-1, 2011-13])
S	**Japan** [SN]: Third Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (2018-22) (replaced the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education [2013-17])		

S	**Japan** [SN]: Comprehensive After-School Plan for Children (2014)		**STUDENTS FROM IMMIGRANT OR ROMA BACKGROUNDS**
R	**Japan** [SN]: Project for Promoting Community Co-operation Activities for Learning and Education (2017)	**R**	**Belgium (Fl)** [SN]: Special measures to enhance the integration of refugees in the education system (2015-16)
S	**Latvia:** Education Development Guidelines 2014-20, through the Promotion of the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs (2011)	**S M**	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: DASPA Decree (2012, 2015)
R	**Mexico** [SN]: New Educational Model for Compulsory Education: Education for Freedom and Creativity (2017)	**S M**	**Finland**: National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education (2015); National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for General Upper Secondary Education (2015); Preparatory Education for Vocational Training (2015)
S	**Norway** [SN]: Homework assistance programme (2010)	**R**	**France** [SN]: National action plan to support migrants (2017), including the "Welcome-refugees" information portal (2015)
S M	**Portugal**: Third Generation of the Education Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP, 2012)	**S**	**Germany**: National Action Plan on Integration (NAP-I, 2011)
S	**United Kingdom (England)**: Pupil Premium (2011)	**S**	**Portugal**: National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (ENICC, 2013-20)
		S	**Slovenia**: Series of projects to promote successful integration of Roma students in schools (2008-21)
		R	**Slovenia**: Special model to enhance the integration of refugee children and students in the Slovenian education system (2015)

Notes:
1. [SN]: Policy information was only included as an additional policy of potential interest to other countries in the country snapshots (Chapter 7).
2. See Annex B for information on older policies reported in the previous cycle for which no further details were available.
Sources: EPO Survey 2016-17 and EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 for Austria, Belgium (Fl, Fr and Dg), Italy and Sweden (see the Reader's Guide).

Expanding and enhancing educational opportunities

OECD countries have been working to expand access to educational programmes for young children to ensure greater equity in educational outcomes for all students. Since 2010, the governments in Germany and Italy have implemented new measures to offer educational and support options to raise outcomes for students in all levels of education. Germany has also implemented an initiative to further develop language programmes for children and monitor the effectiveness of similar projects across the country. Monitoring the quality of available opportunities provides valuable information that could result in their enhancement.

Policy focus

In 2013, **Germany** launched a research and development programme (2013-19) known as Education through Language and Writing (*Bildung durch Sprache und Schrift*, BiSS), a joint initiative of the federal level and the *Länder*. This initiative aims to scientifically evaluate and, based on the results of the evaluations, further develop the emergent literacy education of children and young people. The evaluations assess the effectiveness and efficiency of current measures introduced in the *Länder* for language and literacy promotion and language diagnostics from primary to lower secondary education. Over 600 educational institutions participate in BiSS at both elementary and secondary levels, including 200 kindergartens and 400 schools (BMBF, 2018; BMFSJ, 2018).

- **Progress or impact:** The Evaluation of selected BiSS Measures indicates that more than 40 networks of kindergartens and/or schools affiliated with the programme have participated in external evaluations. The results of the evaluations are used to further improve literacy education in the institutions. Kindergartens and schools are also instructed to independently check and optimise the quality of their practices through self-evaluations. Regular workshops for teachers and educators from the participating networks help to implement good practice in kindergartens and schools, so kindergartens and schools participating in the programme benefit from support for the planning, implementation and evaluation of their literacy education practices. This evaluation reported that between 2014 and 2016, at least four two-day workshops were held in the areas of concept development and self-evaluation (BiSS, 2017).

In **Germany**, reform measures by all *Länder* in the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, KMK), as well as measures adopted by the federal government aim to: 1) expand full-day educational offers to extend educational and support options; 2) raise the educational level of disadvantaged students; and 3) improve school education, including reading and linguistic competences and the understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts (e.g. the recently developed Education in the Digital World strategy). Some related measures include the Education through Language and Writing programme (2013) to further develop linguistic education of children by evaluating the policies in place, the Educational Chains Initiative (2010) and the Alliance for Education and Training 2015-18 to place more disadvantaged youth into vocational education and training and apprenticeships.

- **Progress or impact:** So far, the reforms have had an overall positive impact. According to available evidence, 60% of schools in Germany offered all-day schooling programmes in 2016, and more than one-third of all students participated in them (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2016). This is an increase from 16% in 2002. Most programmes are non-mandatory and do not require attendance. Still, in 2014, a provision of EUR 260 million had been budgeted for the period through the end of 2017 to extend all-day schooling (EC, 2017b). Efforts have also been made to increase the participation rate of all students in school, which is similar to that of migrant and non-migrant students at preschool age and for those aged 16-30. As of 2016, the development of all-day school programmes and the creation of inclusive education systems are still among the core challenges for Germany. These aim to tackle increasing segregation based on socio-economic status, as non-native German-speaking students are finding themselves attending schools in which most of the students

do not have German as their primary family language. National sources indicate that the population's level of education has significantly improved in recent years, as more and more students are achieving general and vocational qualifications (BMBF, 2016). At the same time, in the KMK's 2016 education monitoring (*IQB-Bildungstrend*), results showed negative trends in the competence levels of fourth graders in mathematics (Stanat et al., 2016). Another report also shows that the number of students who only reach a *Hauptschulabschluss* (lower secondary school qualification) or enter the labour market without vocational qualifications continues to be too high (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2016).

In **Italy,** Law 107/2015, also referred to as the Good School Reform (*La Buona Scuola*), is a comprehensive reform covering many aspects of the education system, with an overarching aim of improving overall educational quality (OECD, 2017e). Legislation implementing many aspects of the reform was enacted in April 2017. Examples of specific measures targeted directly at students include the introduction of integrated ECEC for children age 0-6, curricular revision for certain school subjects and a three-year National Plan for Digital Education which aims to improve digital skills across the system.

- **Progress or impact:** According to 2015 projections from the Italian Ministry of Finance, the school reform was predicted to have the "largest positive impact on GDP in the long term" (MEF, 2015 as referenced in OECD, 2017e). Further evidence shows that the 2015 reform has the potential to improve school outcomes (EC, 2016b).

Providing educational support and reinforcement for students from diverse backgrounds

Performance disparities can exist between students from diverse backgrounds, such as lower socio-economic status or ethnic background, as a result of a distribution of educational resources and practices that does not succeed in levelling the field to provide greater equity in opportunities to learn (OECD, 2016d).

PISA 2015 results on science performance show that, on average, 13% of the test result variation can be attributed to students' socio-economic status. Students with an immigrant background are also twice as likely to score below proficiency Level 2 in science compared to students without an immigrant background, after taking their socio-economic status into account. This is especially important as almost one in four 15-year-old students in OECD countries stated in the 2015 PISA study that they were either foreign-born or had at least one foreign-born parent (OECD, 2016d). Furthermore, taking into consideration the needs of and educational opportunities available to students who belong to minority or ethnic groups compared to their peers can result in higher levels of equity and quality in education systems.

OECD education systems are seeking more targeted solutions to boost the potential of students from different backgrounds, especially those faced with significant adversity (OECD, 2011a). For example, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Germany, Hungary and the United Kingdom (England) are promoting policies to support disadvantaged students. Policies in Finland, Germany and Slovenia have aimed to reinforce support for students with immigrant backgrounds, and in Italy and Slovenia, policies are targeting better education and living conditions for Roma students and their communities. Finally, Australia and New Zealand have implemented policies specifically targeting Indigenous students, although with different approaches.

In the same way, policies that promote academic achievement and resilience in education systems benefit all students. Efforts to ensure students' achievement in schools, with a particular emphasis on fostering resilience (the ability to achieve a high performance despite socio-economic or cultural barriers) for disadvantaged students can help increase

student performance overall and boost their potential (OECD, 2011a). In the case of immigrant students, it will enable them to make contributions to their host countries (OECD, 2016d).

Students with low socio-economic status

Students with low socio-economic status remain three times more likely to not attain the baseline level of proficiency in science in comparison to their more advantaged peers, according to PISA 2015 (OECD, 2016d). Several OECD countries have policies in place that aim to reduce the impact of socio-economic background on students' education outcomes, such as in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Chile, Germany and the United Kingdom (England).

Policy focus

As part of the Parliamentary Act for primary and secondary education (2008) in the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, additional financial resources are provided to schools to compensate for socio-economic disadvantage. In fact, the Flemish school-financing system is designed to support equal access to educational opportunities for all students and compensate for differences in student backgrounds. To help schools meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, school operating grants are weighted for socio-economic status. This is intended to account for the influence of key differentiating variables: the mother's educational level, foreign language spoken at home, the family's financial capacity, and the student's neighbourhood characteristics. Student socio-economic characteristics are also used in the calculation, and elementary schools and secondary schools receive a top-up of teaching hours based on school concentrations of such characteristics. Differential weighting recognises the adverse impact on student learning of specific student background characteristics. For elementary education, characteristic-based funding amounted to 14% of the overall budget in 2012 and it is being increased gradually to reach 15.5% by 2020. For secondary education, the share of the budget amounted to 10% in 2008-09 and it is gradually being increased to 11% by 2020 (Flemish Department of Education and Training, 2015). This additional funding may make it possible to run remedial classes, split classes, and release teachers for a range of pedagogical and support activities. In these ways, the Flemish authorities seek to balance choice and autonomy with equity.

- **Progress or impact:** PISA 2015 data show that larger-than-average gaps remain in performance between students of different socio-economic backgrounds, as well as between immigrant and non-immigrant students (OECD, 2016d). An OECD review of school resources in the Flemish Community found that, the system is well resourced, but to fully understand the impact of targeted funding, it would be necessary to have more empirical data available in the system on resource outputs and resource utilisation, as schools have autonomy to disburse the extra funding in different ways according to local needs. The review also proposed shifting more of the budget to lower levels, as evidence shows this provides a higher rate of return (Nusche et al., 2015). The Flemish Community has already begun to make some changes to funding structures in response to the review, such as investing more in areas of high need (for example integrating new immigrants and funding new school infrastructure in densely populated urban areas), as well as redistributing funds to lower education levels (OECD, 2017f).

Through the Preferential School Subsidy (*Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial*, SEP, 2008) in **Chile**, primary schools receive additional funding for enrolment of socio-economically disadvantaged students. These funds are in addition to the baseline funding that public and government-subsidised private schools receive for each enrolled student. In 2008, the introduction of the preferential education subsidy modified this scheme to make it more equity-oriented. It allocates a large share of expenditure on a per-student

basis (topping up the flat-rate voucher) and provides an additional amount for schools that enrol a significant proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Acceptance of these funds is voluntary. Concretely, schools that receive the supplement have to sign an agreement, elaborate a plan for education improvement, set objectives and define measures to support students with learning difficulties. Schools are categorised as autonomous, emerging or recovering, based on criteria such as their results in the national standardised assessment of student performance (*Sistema de Medición de Calidad de la Educación*). Depending on their category, schools either design their own educational improvement plan, receive support from the Education Ministry to draft their progress plans or get external technical assistance. Struggling schools that fail to improve after receiving assistance risk losing their licence or their eligibility for the subsidy (OECD, 2013b).

- **Progress or impact:** SEP resulted in important changes in the Chilean school system. Although the programme is voluntary, around 85% of the 9 000 eligible schools participated in 2011. All municipal schools and about 66% of private subsidised schools are actively engaged. This high coverage has changed the relationship between schools and the Ministry of Education and has helped improve its regressive funding structure. Although some schools were reticent to accept the conditions imposed by the agreement, most schools have welcomed the new resources, as well as the clear pedagogical goals and diagnostic tools tailored to help meet them. Studies show positive effects on student performance. In 2015, SEP served 94% of all municipal schools (including 99% of those providing basic education) and 50% of private subsidised schools (including 75% of those providing basic education). It is not possible to convincingly estimate the effects on student learning in public schools, since participation in SEP is almost universal. However, research has found some positive effects of SEP on private subsidised schools, such as an increase in standardised student assessment scores on average and larger increases for schools with more significant enrolment of low-income students (OECD, 2013b; Santiago, 2017). In recent years, the SEP Law increased its resources by 20% for the education of the most vulnerable students of the system (defined as "priority students"). In addition, the preferential school subsidy was created for "preferential students". Schools that are in SEP and do not charge a co-payment receive it for each student who belongs to the poorest 80% of the country and is not "priority" (MINEDUC, 2015).

Since 2013, Education Alliances (*Kultur macht stark - Bündnisse für Bildung*) have supported out-of-school programmes in **Germany** for educationally disadvantaged children and teenagers. Starting in 2013, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung,* BMBF) allocated annual funding of EUR 30 million for this programme, to be increased to EUR 50 million in the following four years. The Education Package (*Bildungspaket*) (by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2011) aims to give 2.5 million children from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to participate in activities such as school excursions, sports, and musical and cultural activities, to boost their motivation and sense of belonging.

- **Progress or impact:** A 2016 evaluation found overall positive results for the policy. By 2016, 11 500 measures had been taken, and 4 700 alliances had been funded across the country. The main target group of educationally disadvantaged children and teenagers benefitted from at least 90% of the measures taken. Between 2013 and 2016, 223 000 children and teenagers as well as 28 000 relatives benefitted from out-of-school programmes. The main geographical focus is on regions with a high percentage of the main target group. Success factors identified include easy access to the programmes for children and teenagers, as well as content tailored to conditions on the ground. Other factors are the possibility to gain social and cultural awareness and skills: 90% of the alliances include volunteers. An important target is also the establishment of long-term co-operation. Of the co-ordinators interviewed, 65% stated they intended to reapply for funding. In addition, 90% of the alliances anticipated continuing the co-operation independently of the federal programme (Prognos, 2016). The programme will be extended from 2018 to 2022, and interested local partners can begin applying for 2018 funding at the end of 2017 (BMBF, 2017).

The Pupil Premium programme (2011) in **England (United Kingdom)** aims to reduce inequities between students by providing additional school funding to support disadvantaged students and close attainment gaps. The Pupil Premium is available to

students who have received free school meals at any point in the last six years. Schools decide how to use this funding. The Pupil Premium Programme (worth almost GBP 2.5 billion in each year from 2014/15 to 2017/18) increased student funding from GBP 488 per pupil in 2011/12, to GBP 1 320 per primary pupil and GBP 935 per secondary pupil in 2014/15. In comparison, funding for the programme in 2013/14 was GBP 1.875 billion (GBP 900 per disadvantaged student). In 2014/15, the government introduced different Pupil Premium rates for primary and secondary pupils. In addition, while eligible looked-after children previously qualified for the same Pupil Premium amount as deprived children (GBP 900 prior to 2014). Under "Pupil Premium Plus", introduced in 2014/15, current and previously looked-after children each qualify for funding of GBP 1 900 for the period 2014/15 to 2017/18. This amount will increase to GBP 2 300 as of April 2018. The eligibility criteria for the Service Premium have been broadened since 2011/12, with the rate has increased from GBP 200 to GBP 300.

- **Progress or impact:** Between 2015 and 2017, the UK Government and various national institutions, including the Education Policy Institute (EPI) and the Social Mobility Commission (SMC), reported on the outcomes of the Pupil Premium. In their most recent reports, both published in 2017, EPI indicated there had been some success in closing the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students across the United Kingdom. The report submitted by the SMC suggested that local authorities develop better practices and strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children (Foster and Long, 2017). In 2016, the SMC reported that although evidence suggested that the policy had had a positive effect on closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers, this "is not definitive, because it cannot definitely say what would have happened to attainment had it not been introduced" (SMC, 2016). Other reports were released by the National Audit Office and the Public Account Committee (2015), the Education Policy Institute and Social Mobility Commission (2016), and Sutton Trust (2017) (Foster and Long, 2017).

Students with immigrant or Roma backgrounds

As noted, in recent years, education systems in OECD countries have become more diverse in terms of the backgrounds of students they serve. This increased diversity is also related to the growing number of immigrant students enrolling in their schools.

Immigration does not touch all OECD countries in the same way, and their approaches to providing support for immigrant students vary. However, policies in Finland, Germany and Slovenia all aim to integrate students with immigrant backgrounds into mainstream education and training and at the level of higher education. The higher education system also aims to provide support to newly arrived students (Ministry of Education and Culture [Finland], 2017). In Germany, an action plan for the integration of immigrants into education and training has been modified to ensure that policies are effective and efficient. In 2016, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (*Kultusministerkonferenz,* KMK) passed a Declaration on the Integration of Young Refugees through Education. In Italy, Portugal and Slovenia, policies currently target improved support of Roma communities and better integration of Roma students into schools.

Policy focus

In 2015, **Finland** implemented the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education to respond to the need to better integrate immigrant students. It outlines key strategic areas in education, including securing equal opportunity in education and culture and promoting participation and inclusion. At least 32 500 refugees arrived in Finland in 2015. By the end of that year, almost 3 500 students were attending preparatory courses for basic education. To respond to the needs of this new refugee population, the government established 50 new groups of preparatory studies for basic

education in municipalities. In 2015, at least 200 immigrant students were preparing for upper secondary education. Students have access to courses in either Finnish or Swedish, or they can attend classes in their native language. Students aged 6-10 receive at least 900 hours of instruction, and older students are eligible to receive at least 1 000 hours. However, no national syllabus has been designed for the curriculum. Students who are able to keep up with the instruction are eligible to transfer to basic education regardless of whether they have completed the required hours (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). In 2015, the government also implemented the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education, the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for General Upper Secondary Education, and Preparatory Education for Vocational Training. These three policies include measures for students from immigrant backgrounds originally included in the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing Immigrants for Basic Education (2009), which has been discontinued.

- **Progress or impact:** As of 2016, around 12% of immigrant students had classes in Finnish or Swedish as a second language, while 25% did not have separate language classes. The 2016 report by the working group of the Ministry of Education and Culture on immigrant issues states that it is important to their language development to grant separate Finnish or Swedish language classes as well as to aid the development of immigrant students' mother tongues. In fact, in 2014, more than 16 000 students participated in courses taught in their own mother language, resulting in a total of 53 different languages being taught (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016).

Germany's National Action Plan on Integration (NAP-I, 2011, previously the National Integration Plan [2007]) was created to improve equity and boost participation and success of students of migrant background. It was developed in collaboration with civil society stakeholders, including immigrant organisations (Federal Government, 2012). One of the main aspects was the integration of students with a migrant background into the education system and the labour market. Education also encompasses initial training and continuous training, which also forms the main part of national monitoring (BMBF, 2013). National sources indicate that the primary purpose of this transformation was to ensure, by means of measurable policies, that the integration of immigrant students in the *Länder*'s education systems was irreversible (Federal Government, 2012).

- **Progress or impact:** As of 2013, the number of adolescents with a migrant background who leave school without a diploma was decreasing, and the number of those who leave school with a higher-education entrance diploma was increasing (BMBF, 2013). However, by 2016, the rate of early school leaving among students with a migrant background (23.1%) was almost three times higher than that of their native-born peers (8.2%) (EC, 2017c). Furthermore, access to education for children and adolescents without resident status has been widened by easing legislation (BMBF, 2013). The action plan was subject to constant monitoring. According to national information, the departments in charge of the 11 dialogue fora were asked to submit an evaluation report by June 2016 on the state of implementation of the measures. The report on the Dialogue Forum 2 "Education, Training, Further Education" was prepared by the BMBF. The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration observed that the evaluation focused solely on integration into the education systems and labour market and should also measure social and cultural integration (SVR, 2017). According to national information, the NAP-I was only valid for one legislation period (2012 to 2016), although it was initially designed to be a process surpassing legislative periods, with regular examinations of the set targets. Partially due to the increase in the number of refugees arriving in Germany, the NAP-I had no successor in the following legislative period. However, the action plan is likely to be picked up again in coming legislation.

Portugal's National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (*Estratégia Nacional para a Integração das Comunidades Ciganas*, ENICC, 2013-20) aims to ensure access of children from Roma communities to pre-primary education, as well as to increase their completion of compulsory education and access to tertiary education. In 2013, the Ministry of Education created a database of students from itinerant families to monitor school attendance and help ensure completion of compulsory education. The

strategy has been implemented following collaboration between the High Commissioner for Migration (*Alto Comissariado para as Migrações*, ACM), the Ministry of Education, Civil Society organisations, Roma communities and experts. An Advisory Group for Roma Communities was created to monitor this Strategy.

- **Progress or impact:** As ENICC national co-ordinator, the ACM produced a report to evaluate implementation of this plan in 2013-14. The strategy's actions revolve around five axes. The report found that, during the period analysed, the overall execution rate of actions associated with ENICC was 81%, including 59% for transversal initiatives, 23% for education, 10% for employment and training, 6% for housing and less than 1% for the health axis. The report identified budgetary and legal issues, including concerns about the collection of specific information on Roma communities and the need to involve a wide range of public and private actors in order to achieve the various priorities in each axis. This led the ACM, to create the "FAPE - ENICC Support Fund" which will, through a line of project financing, highlight the priorities set out in the plan. The first year of implementation of the FAPE in 2015 aimed to improve the success of some of the priorities in 2013-14 (High Commissioner for Migration and Government of Portugal, 2014).

In 2008, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports in **Slovenia**, with the help of the European Structural Funds, implemented the Project for the Successful Integration of Roma Students in Schools (2008-15). It aimed to share national best practices of inclusive teaching among kindergartens and schools and teachers in areas with little or no such experience. One of the most important measures was providing a Roma assistant in Roma settlements and schools attended by Roma pupils. Following promising results of this policy, the government later implemented a series of projects to expand support to Roma communities. The project on Raising the Social and Cultural Capital in Areas Inhabited by Members of the Roma Community (2011-13) aimed to work with Roma children, youth and parents in Roma settlements to increase the participation and success of Roma children in education. More recently, the Together for Knowledge (2016-21) programme aims to supply educational support in preschools for Roma communities, through the inclusion of Roma parents in educational activities, as well as coaching sessions and after-school activities for children (Council of Europe, 2017).

- **Progress or impact:** The Project for the Successful Integration of Roma Students in Schools was identified by the Council of Europe as a demonstrated good practice (observing the Municipality of Murska Sobota). As reported by the Roma Union, results achieved by the end of 2010 included higher attendance of Roma children in educational institutions, improved co-operation between Roma parents and educational institutions, increased awareness among Roma of the importance of learning and education, and more successful co-operation between teaching assistants, teachers and Roma parents in the education of Roma children (Council of Europe, 2011). The Council of Europe also identified the importance of the project on Raising the Social and Cultural Capital in Areas Inhabited by Members of the Roma Community (2011-13), particularly its contributions to the design of innovative and creative educational practices in Roma communities (Council of Europe, 2017).

In 2015, **Slovenia** implemented a special model to enhance the integration of refugee children and students in the Slovenian education system. The main objective is to assure adequate professional support for the integration of children and students (those with international protection and those seeking international protection) into their new linguistic and cultural environment, by enhancing activities in social, linguistic and cultural domains. This policy was developed to advise kindergartens and schools on application of a model providing introductory or preparatory classes (*pripravljalnica*) before children enter school and continuing or advanced classes (*nadaljevalnica*) after that. The continuing classes take place during the school year, and children have an individual programme or plan of activities, receive additional learning support for lessons in Slovenian and may also join remedial and supplementary classes, morning care and after-school classes. Students are integrated into mainstream classes with their peers. The state also funds supplementary language lessons at upper secondary and university level,

where a special protocol has been developed to facilitate the integration of non-documented students.

- **Progress or impact:** According to Slovenia's survey responses, the policy, more widely introduced in 2016, has not yet been comprehensively evaluated. Nevertheless, according to national sources, there are individual cases that demonstrate successful integration of children and young people from immigrant backgrounds into the Slovenian educational system by the achieved standards of knowledge. One of the important achievements of the process is the establishment of good co-operation and links between the various actors to ensure the protection of children's rights and an inclusive school environment.

Indigenous students

Across OECD countries, many initiatives have been maintained or implemented since 2008 to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students. In Australia, where Indigenous peoples represented 3% of the total population in 2014, a recently implemented policy reinforces support for Indigenous students attending university (OECD, 2017g). In New Zealand, efforts at the local and national levels have been made since the 1980s to provide Māori-medium education to children from preschool through tertiary education. In 2013, Indigenous peoples represented 15.6% of the total population in New Zealand (OECD, 2017g).

Policy focus

Since 2007, the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, also known as *Close the Gap*, in **Queensland (Australia)** has aimed to reduce the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students achieving Year 12 Certification (Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2017). Measures were taken at the central, regional and local level. The central office's Department of Education provided each region with disaggregated data to quantify the number of Indigenous students needed to fill the gap. This helped regions to visualise the objectives. Other measures included raising awareness of the importance of change among school leaders and regional staff, through workshops and leadership sessions. In addition, Queensland's educational regions provided support to schools (for example, by appointing coaches for the Queensland Certificate of Education), and schools set up multidisciplinary case-management teams to aid students (Button et al., 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** The government reports that between 2006 and 2015, the proportion of Indigenous 20-24 year-olds with Year 12 or equivalent attainment increased from 45.4% to 61.5%. Improvements were also identified in the retention rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in high school in Queensland. In 2015, almost 60% of Indigenous students stayed in school until Year 12. Improvements were also identified for preschool enrolment, which had increased to 87% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by 2015 (Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2017). The number of Indigenous students with a Year 12 Certification increased from 42.1% in 2008 to 97% by 2016 (QCAA, 2017). The success of the programme to reduce the gap can be attributed to the alignment across schools, regional offices and central office; a clear line of sight to individual schools and students; and intensive case management (Button et al., 2016).

In **New Zealand**, the Māori-medium education sector was established in the 1980s by Māori *whānau* (families) and communities to help preserve *Te reo Māori*, an official language of New Zealand, and Māori culture. Māori-medium education is provided in and through the Māori language 51-100% of the time. It is available from early childhood education in *kōhanga reo* through to tertiary level in *wānanga.*

- **Progress or impact:** National sources report that as of 2017, there were 19 438 students enrolled in Māori-medium education, representing 2.4% of the total school population. This number was an increase of 0.1 percentage points over the previous year. Of the students who were involved in Māori-medium education,

97.7% identified as Māori, and 57.6% attended a school where all students were enrolled in Māori medium. These students were enrolled in one of the 277 schools affiliated with the programme in 2017. Students enrolled in Māori-medium education who successfully complete upper secondary school gain university entrance equal to or in higher proportions than the general school population. Students in Māori-medium education also have strong National Certificate of Educational Attainment (NCEA) achievement. In 2016, 79.2% of school leavers from Māori medium left with NCEA level 2 or above. This is on par with all students in the total school population (80.3% of these school leavers left with NCEA level 2 in 2016), unlike Māori students in English medium who typically achieve 15-20 percentage points lower (66.1% of these school leavers left with NCEA level 2 in 2016). Only 5.7% of all Māori secondary students participated in *wharekura*, or Māori-medium secondary schooling in 2017. Māori medium also has higher retention rates of senior secondary students. In 2016, 77.6% of Māori school leavers from Māori medium stayed in school until their 17th birthday, compared to 70.9% of Māori school leavers nationally. Research shows that retention at senior secondary school is an important factor towards educational achievement and a range of other positive life outcomes.

Students with special education needs

Students with special education needs may require schools and teachers to adapt their classroom strategies by providing different resources or adjusting their syllabus or learning objectives. Modifications to teaching strategies may be the result of students' physical, behavioural, intellectual, emotional and social incapacities (UNESCO UIS, 2013). Policies that take these disadvantages into account and facilitate their learning can improve their educational opportunities and outcomes and produce more inclusive learning environments.

Some OECD countries have been making adjustments to their educational systems to accommodate more students with special education needs. The Australian Government has been targeting access to tertiary education and the labour market, while policies in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia focus on improving the inclusion of students with special education needs in compulsory education.

Policy focus

The **Australian** Government's National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO, 2008) Programme assists people with disability to access and participate in tertiary education and subsequent employment, through a national network of NDCOs (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017). In response to a 2011 evaluation, the programme was reformed to take a more strategic approach to service provision, rather than focusing on individualised services. A travel and accommodation subsidy was also introduced for NDCOs operating in non-metropolitan areas.

- **Progress or impact:** An evaluation found that the programme was consistent with government policy with respect to people with disability and addressed critical needs that warrant ongoing support. A second evaluation, published in 2017, examined the policy rationale for the programme and its operation to date, and made recommendations for the future of the programme (including its appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and intersection with other government policies and programmes). The overall NDCO objectives were considered to be fulfilled in 2013 to 2016 in terms of stronger engagement between education and employment stakeholders and service providers, as well as better transitions for people with disability from school/community to tertiary education and subsequent employment. While the improvement in educational and employment outcomes since 2013 cannot be ascribed directly to the programme, local stakeholders assert that the programme remained the best way to facilitate the activities (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017).

After the Flemish Parliament ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, the **Flemish Community of Belgium** legally reinforced the right of students with special educational needs to be enrolled in mainstream education, through the passing of the M-Decree in 2014. Its measures include: 1) updating the definition

categories for students with special educational needs, including a category for children with autism; 2) requiring mainstream schools to make reasonable adjustments (such as providing specialist equipment and support staff to accommodate students with special education needs in the mainstream system) and requiring mainstream schools to only refer a student to special education once all such "reasonable adaptations" have been tried; and 3) providing the right to appeal to a Student Rights Commission (*Commissie inzake leerlingenrechten*) to parents of a child with special educational needs who disagree with a school's refusal to enrol their child. This commission, created by the Parliamentary Act of 2002 on Equal Educational Opportunities, is comprised of experts in equality and education law. In 2017, the government reached an agreement regarding the allocation of EUR 103 million for updating classrooms and training teachers for special needs students (EC, 2017c).

- **Progress or impact:** The measures imposed in the M-Decree were implemented in 2015-16. National sources indicate that there is already a noticeable decrease in the number of primary students in special education in the first school year under the new measure (Vlaanderen, 2017).

In 2017, **Estonia** implemented amendments to the Preschool Childcare Institutions Act and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act. These policies now also include a focus on the inclusion and state support of municipalities to create better educational opportunities for children with special needs in kindergartens and schools.

- **Progress or impact:** National data indicates that, in 2012, access to support systems in preschool childcare institutions (including speech therapy and special education therapists) was made available to almost 14% of children attending preschool childcare institutions. The same data also revealed that nearly 11% of children attending preschool childcare institutions in 2012 had special needs. At that time, local governments and preschool childcare institutions were also using the special education services provided by regional counselling centres that receive state support (speech therapists, special education teachers, psychological and social-pedagogical counselling) (Republic of Estonia Ministry of Education and Research, 2014).

Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2014-20 provide an approach to the improvement of the quality of education and include various initiatives that have been launched for the promotion of the inclusion of students with special needs (2011). In 2003, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted new regulations creating special needs education development centres. The aim was to convert the best performing special needs schools into centres of expertise for mainstream schools integrating special needs students. In 2018, there are 12 special education institutions with the status of special education development centre. The aim of these centres is to provide methodological and consultative support for children and students with special needs who are integrated in preschool education institutions and mainstream schools. The regulations set the following targets for the main outputs of each development centre: 1) ensure pedagogical and methodological support to at least 50 teachers from the region per year; 2) provide consultation to at least 50 students with special needs (or their legal representatives) per year; and 3) organise at least two informative events per year on inclusive education and ensure that highly qualified staff is involved in consultations and information events (EC, 2016c). Also, with the support of the European Regional Development Fund, Latvia modernised the infrastructure of education institutions for all educational tracks, including adjusting premises for those with functional disorders. All 59 special education schools were modernised and adjusted as part of these efforts.

- **Progress or impact:** National sources indicate that Latvia offers two trends in special education, depending on the child's condition and abilities: 1) special education institutions for children with severe mental and physical disabilities; or 2) within mainstream schools, in either special education classes or special education programmes in regular classes (OECD, 2016e). In 2015/16, 51% of students with special needs were in mainstream schools (in both general education and special education classes). In 2015, Latvia was commended by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for its ongoing

dedication to ensuring the rights of people with disabilities (OHCHR, 2017). In particular, the Latvian Government was recognised for its efforts to provide inclusive education to students with special education needs.

The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2013) in **Slovenia** applies to: 1) children who are blind and partially sighted, deaf and hard of hearing; 2) children with speech, language and movement impairments, chronic diseases, deficiencies in individual fields of learning; and 3) children with mental development and behavioural disorders. With support from the European Social Fund, the Ministry initiated a set of projects to support implementation of the Act. These include: 1) the Network of Professional Institutions for Support to Children with Special Needs and their Families, which aims to create contact points of professional (special pedagogical) support for parents and professional staff in schools (EUR 4 million for the period of 2017-20, with an additional EUR 1.8 million earmarked for professional training); 2) enhancing a comprehensive approach in working with children with emotional and behavioural disorders to support development of new programmes and adapting or upgrading existing methods and forms of work in special educational institutions (EUR 2.8 million between 2017-19; and 3) enhancing social inclusion of SEN children and youth in the local environment, aiming to develop modular and other forms of education and training, targeting in particular children and youth who are completing or leaving formal education (EUR 2.8 million over the course of 2017-22). At the higher-education level, the Student Regulation Act (2017) defines students with special needs, students with special status and their rights.

- **Progress or impact:** A child qualifies for placement in specific educational settings after undergoing relevant activities co-ordinated by the Special Education Needs Guidance Commission in Slovenia. In the 2014/15 school year, there were 117 461 children with special educational needs in primary education in Slovenia and 55 362 in lower secondary education. Almost all of these students were enrolled in mainstream education with their non-disabled peers for at least 80% of the time (EASIE, 2018). At the upper secondary level, final state (*matura*) exams were made more inclusive in 2015, as a result of legislation guaranteeing special conditions for children with autistic spectrum disorders and visual impairments (EC, 2015).

Engaging with families and communities to improve learning outcomes

Developing connections with the community beyond the normal barriers of the learning environment should include parents, families and communities (OECD, 2015a). Engaging families and communities in the services and programmes offered by schools and other learning environments exposes children to the expertise, knowledge partners, and synergies that come from working in partnership with others.

Various approaches have been taken by at least two OECD countries to engage families and communities in educational systems. In Canada (Nova Scotia), designating schools as service providers to engage and support families and children is seen a way to help prevent youth and their families from becoming at-risk. In New Zealand, increased community engagement is a strategy for increased accountability for Pasifika students' success.

Policy focus

The SchoolsPlus programme, launched in 2008 in **Nova Scotia (Canada)**, is an interagency approach to support children and families by appointing the school as the centre of service delivery. The programme's core focus continues to be the creation of "communities of care" to help students foster resilience and prevent more children, youth and families from becoming at-risk. Ultimately, the programme aims to reach and support the 5-10% of children and youth in Nova Scotia who are at risk of marginalisation. The

policy has expanded every year, with sites in all eight school boards. Each school board now has a SchoolsPlus facilitator and Community Outreach Workers who act as the liaison between the school and the community, and each board has established a SchoolsPlus Advisory Committee, which identifies opportunities to enhance and expand the array of services and programmes for children, youth and their families.

- **Progress or impact:** A 2013 report highlighted that the SchoolsPlus programme had achieved provincial coverage, after establishing 95 sites in all eight school boards. Although the service provided by the programme had resulted in an increase in interdepartmental service co-operation and the introduction of mental health services, the report suggested that a "mid-term correction" should be made to ensure that the policy achieves its ultimate goal. However, the report states that the programme has been more successful at "co-ordinating existing public social services" than achieving its original mission (Bennett, 2013).

Between 2013 and 2017, the Pasifika Education Plan in **New Zealand** sought to personalise all the work of the Ministry of Education and Education Partner Agencies to Pasifika learners. The plan, set for an initial five years, aims to increase accountability for Pasifika students' success by addressing underperformance and making improvements in practice, through increased use of achievement information as part of more effective community engagement. Progress is monitored annually.

- **Progress or impact:** There has been a significant increase in the number of Pasifika children and students who are participating, engaging and achieving well in education since the Plan's implementation. The national data shows 1.1% more new entrant students in early childhood education in 2016 (7 467 students) than in 2015. Also, in 2016, the proportion of Pasifika children who participated in ECEC prior to starting school rose to 92.9%, a 1.1% increase from the year before. More students are also achieving key secondary school qualifications. In 2016, Pasifika students in compulsory education Years 1-8 achieved the National Standard for reading (66%), mathematics (62.7%) and writing (60.5%). Also in 2016, the proportion of Pasifika 18-year-olds who attained NCEA Level 2 or above was 78.7%, compared to 77.6% the year before. More students are also enrolling in tertiary education. The number of domestic Pasifika students studying at degree level or higher rose from 29 800 in 2008 to 34 800 in 2014 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017). Despite these positive increases, responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17 indicate that the pace of progress could be faster for some Pasifika students. For example, Pasifika students are achieving the key secondary school qualification, NCEA Level 2, at 5.7 percentage points lower than the national average.

Regional intervention

Achieving equity and quality in education systems also requires reducing performance gaps between territories or regions within a country, a priority identified for some OECD education systems, including Portugal and Chile (see Chapter 2). Some OECD countries have large educational variations between different regions (OECD, 2016f). In the majority of OECD countries, the regional gap in terms of secondary attainment between the highest and lowest proportions of the workforce had decreased to below 10% by 2014 (OECD, 2015e; OECD, 2016g). Yet, in some OECD countries, the gap has begun to grow as higher-performing regions have been able to increase the number of highly educated individuals. As of 2014, seven OECD countries recorded regional differences of over 20% (OECD, 2016f).

Territorial intervention in Portugal serves as a mechanism to reduce early school-leaving and contribute to educational success for students from all regions of the country. In Chile, a recent policy has created new delivery points for the distribution of education services and to strengthen the quality of public education.

Policy focus

Portugal has developed one of the most prominent and stable educational policies covering territorial intervention among OECD countries. Originally designed in 1996, with further editions in 2006 and 2012, the Third generation of the Education Territories

of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP3, 2012) aims to promote educational success and reduce early school leaving rates within geographical areas in the country with higher-than-average socially disadvantaged populations. While its main principles, goals and methodologies have remained the same since the first edition, the scope of the recent generation of the policy has expanded slightly. It has a greater emphasis on preventing early leaving and improving learning quality, which is deeply connected to the change of the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, since the 2015/16 school year, schools have been asked to design and implement multi-annual improvement plans to strengthen the ability of schools to develop strategic and sustainable actions within the scope of three school years.

- **Progress or impact:** Between 2012 and 2016, the percentage of Portuguese school clusters (schools grouped under centralised leadership) covered by TEIP increased from 1% to 17% overall, or 137 school clusters, including approximately 16% of students from primary to secondary level. School clusters evaluate progress annually through a formative first semester report and a final report. Cluster reports feed into the programme's evaluation of results at the national level (EC School Education Gateway, 2017). A recent synthesis of results suggests that dropout has reduced and results have improved in TEIP schools, but gaps remain between TEIP and non-TEIP schools (Dias, 2014). A fourth generation of the programme, currently in preparation, will be informed by analysis from the OECD School Resources Review project

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Chapter 4. Preparing students for the future: Trends in evolution of policy priorities

This chapter analyses recent trends in policy priorities related to preparing students for the future, as defined by the Education Policy Outlook's analytical framework, across a variety of OECD and non-OECD education systems and economies. The aim is to show how policy priorities can be shared by different education systems, how common principles of policy action proposed by the OECD can apply differently, depending on the different contexts and scope of the analysis carried out, and how policy principles recommended in one education system could serve as an inspiration for other systems. Persisting policy priorities to better prepare students for the future include: addressing skills mismatch; decreasing early school leaving rates; and improving the attractiveness and relevance of vocational education and training. Emerging policy priorities include: increasing the quality and relevance of tertiary education, and managing the internationalisation of the higher education sector.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Highlights

- This chapter identified some persisting policy priorities to better prepare students for the future from 2008 until 2017. These include addressing skills mismatch, reducing early school leaving rates, improving the attractiveness and relevance of vocational education and training (VET), or increasing equal access to education.
- In its previous work with countries, the OECD identified some principles of action to help education systems address these policy priorities, such as: 1) making VET more relevant to labour market needs by involving stakeholders from the private sector; 2) providing more and earlier individualised support to students at risk of falling behind and eventually dropping out; or 3) making VET more attractive by facilitating pathways to tertiary education.
- Analysis for this chapter also identified some policy priorities emerging from 2014 to 2017, which include: increasing the quality and relevance of tertiary education, and managing the internationalisation of the higher education sector.
- Key principles of action included in OECD recommendations to education systems with these emerging policy priorities include: 1) favouring policies that encourage students to go back to school; 2) providing students with more guidance; 3) boosting funding, quality standards and teaching quality in tertiary education; and 4) further encouraging internationalisation of the higher education sector as a way to improve its quality.

Introduction

Preparing students for the future goes beyond the prime objective of developing skills for successful entrance into the labour market. It is also about how education systems can provide the necessary range of skills beyond compulsory education so that people can become active players in their country's economic, social and democratic development over the short-, mid- and longer term. Preparing students for the future is, therefore, inherently linked to how education systems enable the population to become resilient to external and internal changes and continue moving towards greater social prosperity.

Many young people leave school-based education with a deficit of basic knowledge and skills compared to their peers. That has a major impact on their transition to the labour market, their potential income and various other social outcomes. In many countries, low skills levels become embedded in a proportion of the population during the early years and throughout compulsory schooling and can persist through adulthood. Without intervention and a successful transition out of compulsory education, this inequity can deepen and broaden over time (Borgonovi et al, 2017; Heckman, 2008).

Policies are also needed to ensure that young and older adults have the opportunity to re-engage in education or training to acquire the skills they missed out on earlier in life. The capacity for lifelong learning is a vital requirement for those working in increasingly knowledge-based economies (OECD, 2013).

Evidence shows that what people know and what they do with this knowledge can have a major impact on their life chances. As labour markets evolve, individuals can lose the skills they do not use, or the skills they have acquired may lose their relevance for labour market needs. A concerted effort is needed by governments, education systems,

employers, labour unions and individuals to ensure that people can acquire the right skills throughout their lives and that economies and societies make good use of those skills.

In the 2016 OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)[1], mismatches between adults' skills and what is required or expected of them at work were found to be pervasive (OECD, 2016). On average, about 22% of workers reported that they are overqualified (i.e. that they have higher qualifications than those required to get their job), and 13% reported that they are underqualified (i.e. that their qualifications are lower than those required to get their job). Moreover, 11% have higher literacy skills than those typically required in their job (over-skilled), and 4% are under-skilled. Finally, some 40% of workers reported being employed in an occupation that is unrelated to their field of study (Figure 4.1) (OECD, 2016).

Furthermore, while education policy initiatives have traditionally tended to focus on the development of cognitive skills and vocational/occupation-specific skills, there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of non-cognitive skills, including social and emotional skills. Evidence is beginning to highlight these as being just as important for lifelong success as cognitive and vocational skills (OECD, 2015). Fostering non-cognitive skills will also be a key requirement to drive future growth and innovation in a scenario of increasing automation of many tasks. Therefore, it is expected that many new initiatives, both nationally and internationally, will focus on development of social and emotional skills to help prepare students for future work and life (Kautz et al., 2014).

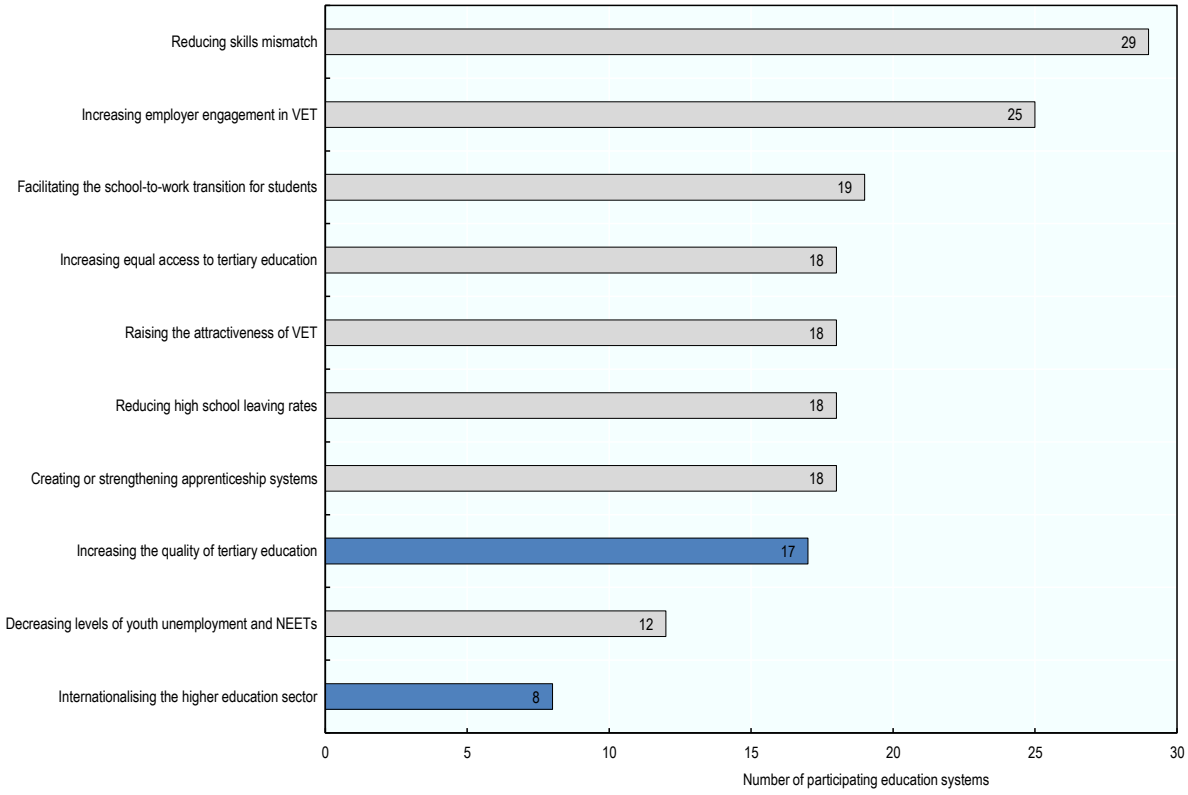
This chapter analyses trends in the evolution of policy priorities related to preparing students for the future, as defined by the Education Policy Outlook (EPO) analytical framework, across a variety of OECD and non-OECD education systems and economies. As outlined in Chapter 1, policy priorities encompass the challenges, key issues and objectives of an education system.

Focusing on preparing students for the future, this chapter uses a structure similar to that of Chapter 2 (on equity and quality), covering 43 OECD and non-OECD education systems from 2008 to 2017. It shows how some policy priorities can be shared among different education systems and how common principles of policy action proposed by the OECD can apply differently depending on the contexts and scope of the analysis carried out.

As in Chapter 2, the analysis shows that some policy priorities continue to be prominent in education systems since the previous round of consultation in 2013, which examined policy developments in OECD education systems from 2008 to 2013. Over 2014-17, new policy priorities have emerged more clearly, while others appear to have reduced in relative importance, according to responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17. In many cases, similar policy priorities had also been identified in OECD country-based work over the same period, such as education policy country reviews, country reports in thematic reviews and economic surveys. Figure 4.1 shows key trends in the evolution of the policy priorities discussed in this chapter.

Figure 4.1. Key trends in the evolution of policy priorities

Number of education systems where these priorities were identified by the OECD and/or by education systems in self-reports or EPO Country Profiles



Notes:
1. **Blue** bars represent emerging policy priorities and **grey** bars represent persisting policy priorities, according to education systems' self-reports and previous OECD country-based work. Priorities are ranked by decreasing order of the number of education systems where the policy priority was identified.
2. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
3. Priorities identified by education systems in self-reports are drawn from responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17. Priorities were also identified based on the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

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This chapter also identifies some broad principles of action relevant to these policy priorities that the OECD has recommended to education systems. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally (see the Reader's Guide for more information).

Persisting policy priorities from 2008 to 2017

Addressing skills mismatch

Over 2008-17, the OECD identified different manifestations of skills mismatch in country-based work carried out in several education systems. In addition, according to the responses of participating education systems to the EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17, making education more relevant in order to reduce skills mismatch was a widespread

policy priority in many countries, including Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Korea, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England) (Table 4.1). In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills, some education systems that reported a need to reduce skills mismatch on the EPO Survey experienced higher levels of skills mismatch than the OECD average (including Estonia, Italy and Norway). Other education systems, however, such as the Czech Republic, Korea, Slovenia and Spain, had comparatively lower levels of total mismatch, but still considered decreasing skills mismatch a policy priority.

Between 2008 and 2013, OECD recommendations to Austria, Korea, Poland, Slovenia and the accession country Colombia, among others, included principles of action for making VET more relevant to labour market needs by further involving stakeholders from the private sector (such as employers), thus more closely matching skills to jobs. In 2013, the OECD advised Austria to better reflect labour market demand by building on existing initiatives to develop institutional mechanisms to ensure that the mix of provision in *Fachhochschulen* and VET colleges takes account of employers' needs along with student demand. Also in 2013, the OECD found that Colombia could reach a better match between employers' needs and institutions' outputs by giving more weight to regional employment offices and the existing sectoral roundtables organised by the government with the private sector. The OECD also advised Colombia to include private actors in the governing boards of education centres. Between 2014 and 2017, the OECD suggested the same principle of action to Korea for the second time, and to the Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia for the first time.

Concurrently, many education systems have been implementing policies to respond to skills mismatch that focus on establishing new possibilities for retraining and reactivating the skills of adults. These include, for example, Ireland with its Springboard programme (2011).

Table 4.1 Addressing skills mismatch

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Reducing high levels of skills mismatch	Make vocational education and training more relevant to labour market needs by building stronger links between employers and education providers. Ensure and support possibilities for lifelong learning.	AUT, **BEL** (**FI**, Fr, Dg), **CHL**, **CZE**, **EST**, FRA, **ISL,** IRL, ISR, **ITA**, KOR, MEX, POL, **PRT**, **SVK**, SVN**, ESP**, **SWE**, TUR, GBR (NIR) COL, CRI, KAZ **SWE**	25	**Skills mismatch**	**BEL** (**FI**), CAN,**CHL**, **CZE**, **EST**, FIN, **ISL**, **ITA**, LVA, **PRT**, **SVK**, **ESP**, **SWE**, GBR (ENG)	14	29

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO country profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.
5. Responses for Belgium (Fl), Italy and Sweden are based on the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

Decreasing early school leaving rates

Education systems need to ensure that students remain in education in order to reap its benefits and have better chances later in life. However, the share of students leaving school early remains high in certain OECD countries.

The OECD identified decreasing early school leaving as a persisting policy priority in its work with Iceland, Portugal and Spain over 2008-17. More recently, the OECD also identified this as a policy priority in education systems including Estonia, Italy, the Slovak Republic and accession country Colombia. In essence, the OECD advised these education systems to opt for policies providing more and earlier individualised support to students at risk of falling behind. Given the specific contexts in these countries, these policies were considered potentially more useful than measures to promote employment opportunities and income support for drop outs over their working lives, as such measures can be more costly and less effective.

A number of education systems (including the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden) had reported reducing early school leaving as a policy priority during 2008-13. However, in the EPO Survey 2016-17, some of these systems did not report this same policy priority in their responses covering 2014-17. One reason for this may be that reducing early school leaving is already considered an agreed target for EU countries (aiming to reduce it to less than 10% by 2020) (EC, n.d.). Across Europe, early school leaving rates of 18-24 year-olds have tended to decline over 2008-16. For example, Eurostat data for 2017 show that from 2008 to 2017, early school leaving rates dropped from 19.6% to 14% in Italy, from 17% to 10.4% in Norway, from 34.9% to 12.6% in Portugal, and from 31.7% to 18.3% in Spain (Eurostat, 2017a).

Efforts to decrease early school leaving can relate to a variety of measures, which include providing more transparency and flexibility on what students are being able to learn. In the Flemish Community of Belgium, related policy actions include providing targeted information to specific schools on their performance and tracking of study trajectories of individual students from school to school and programme to programme. Norway's 2008 proposed pilot project on the Certificate of Practice Scheme (*Praksisbrev*) aimed to facilitate certification of students who are otherwise at risk of leaving without a qualification. In Italy, recent policy actions aim to broaden VET pathways to provide students in upper secondary education with a greater variety of learning options and flexibility and to increase interaction between school and work settings. Furthermore, Italy's National Reform Programme aims to reduce early school leaving to below 16%. That same objective is also a cornerstone of Italy's National Operational Programme for Schools (2014-20).

Table 4.2. Reducing high early school leaving rates

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2.,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Reducing high early school-leaving rates	Provide more and earlier individualised support to students at risk of falling behind. Measures to promote employment opportunities and income support for drop outs later on in their working lives may be more costly and less effective than strengthening the education system. Favour policies that encourage students to go back to school.	**BEL** (**Fl**, **Fr**, Dg), CHL, **DEU**, EST, **FRA**, ISL, **ITA, LVA**, MEX, **PRT**, SVK, SVN, **ESP**, **SWE** COL	17	**Reducing early school leaving rates**	**BEL** (**Fl**, **Fr**), **DEU**, **FRA**, **ITA**, **LVA**, NOR, **PRT**, **ESP**, **SWE**	10	18

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO country profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.
5. Responses for Belgium (Fl and Fr), Italy and Sweden are based on the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

Improving the attractiveness and relevance of VET and apprenticeships and promoting successful transitions

From 2008 to 2017, the OECD has repeatedly identified the need to improve the attractiveness of VET as a policy priority, in countries including the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Mexico, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. This has also been identified as a key target in responses to the EPO Surveys in both 2013 and 2016-17. Between 2008 and 2013, Belgium, Canada, Germany and the Slovak Republic expressed the need to tackle this issue, while Spain and Sweden did so between 2014 and 2017.

Recommended principles of action include making programmes more relevant to the labour market, facilitating pathways to tertiary education or higher-level VET and further involving employers in establishing the curriculum. In 2016, the OECD advised Estonia (where only 36% of students of all ages were enrolled in VET in 2015) to employ a holistic strategy involving more funding to VET institutions, improved career guidance for students and a deeper engagement from employers. In 2012, the OECD advised Iceland (where the share of students of all ages enrolled in VET in 2015 was 33%) to boost the status of VET by emphasising the importance of modern careers in the technical and innovation sectors and ensuring that equipment is modern and teachers are up to date.

In terms of policy efforts, Portugal, for example, has revised curricula at upper secondary education and created Qualifica Centres (2016). Improving the quality and relevance of VET and access to it has also been an area of effort in countries such as Belgium (Flemish Community), especially for students at risk of early school dropout, and Spain, where the new Dual Vocational Training Model has improved outcomes (2012).

Table 4.3. Raising the attractiveness of VET

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Need to raise the attractiveness of VET	Make vocational education a more attractive option by making programmes more relevant to the labour market, facilitating pathways to tertiary education or higher-level VET (if at upper secondary level) and further involving employers in the establishment of curriculum.	**BEL** (Fl, **Fr,** Dg), CZE, **DEU**, DNK, EST, FRA, GRC, IRL, ISR, MEX, **PRT**, SVN, **ESP**, **SWE**	16	**Improving attractiveness of VET**	**BEL** (**Fr**), CAN (federal view), **DEU**, **PRT**, SVK, **ESP**, **SWE**	7	18

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profilespublished in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Responses for Belgium (Fl and Fr) and Sweden are based on the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

OECD country-based work has also identified facilitating school-to-work transition for students as a policy priority in 13 education systems, including Austria in 2013, Belgium (Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities) in 2015, Greece in 2013 and 2016, the Slovak Republic in 2014 and accession country Colombia in 2016 and 2017. Diverse principles of action proposed by the OECD to achieve this include increased employer engagement, improved work-based training to better bridge the transition from education to the labour market, and providing students with more information about education pathways and labour market needs.

In 2015, the OECD identified several options for Mexico to improve the VET sector. These included: 1) establishing a formal consultation framework between employers, unions and the VET system; 2) adopting quality standards and apprenticeships to support and expand workplace training as an integral part of vocational programmes; and 3) developing the capacity to analyse and use data on labour market needs to guide the design of policies and improve decision making. In 2015, the OECD advised Ireland to ensure that students receive appropriate information on all educational options available to them after school (including vocational and technical options), to facilitate transitions to work and to reduce skill mismatches.

In the EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17, countries such as Belgium (Flemish Community), Canada, England, France, Japan, the Slovak Republic and Spain also identified this as a policy priority. These education systems had also identified this as a policy priority over 2008-13, except for Canada, which highlighted it for the first time in the EPO Survey 2016-17. In a majority of these education systems, as in Canada, France and Spain, employment rates of 25-34 year-olds who had attained upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education as their highest level of education were lower than the OECD average.

Measures to facilitate transitions to the labour market in OECD countries include: 1) the implementation or revision of national qualifications frameworks, as in Iceland (which adopted the National Qualifications Framework for all school levels in 2016); and 2) the

updating of curricula in upper secondary education, as in Italy (which reformed the upper secondary curriculum in 2010 and modernised and streamlined the VET offering to students in 2017) and Japan (which revised its National Curriculum Standard in 2009).

Table 4.4. Improving transitions to the labour market

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Facilitating school-to-work transition for students	Ensure more employer engagement and work-based training to better bridge the transition from education to the labour market, and provide students with more information about education pathways and labour market needs.	AUT, **BEL** (**Fl**, Fr, Dg), EST, GRC, HUN, ISL, IRL, ITA, MEX, **SVK**, **ESP** COL	14	**Making transition from school to the labour market more successful**	**BEL** (**Fl**), CAN (federal view), FRA, JPN, **SVK,** SVN, **ESP**, GBR (ENG)	8	19

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO country profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.
5. Responses for Belgium (Fl) are based on the EPO country profile published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).

The OECD identified strengthening apprenticeship systems as an important policy priority in its work with Australia, Austria, Belgium, Ireland, the Slovak Republic, and the United Kingdom from 2008 to 2013, and with France, Italy, Latvia (regarding work-based learning), Mexico and accession country Costa Rica from 2014 to 2017. Principles of action proposed to tackle this policy priority include: 1) providing an apprenticeship system with VET programmes that reflect student preferences and employer needs; 2) improving financial support for students in vocational education; 3) strengthening collaboration of businesses and schools at the local level; and 4) increasing work-based learning.

In 2010 and 2013, the OECD encouraged Austria to enhance quality and ensure minimum standards in apprenticeships through effective monitoring and support to training firms. The OECD also proposed that Austria use different self-assessment tools as a way to strengthen the apprenticeship system. In 2015, reflecting a different contextual starting point, the OECD recommended that accession country Costa Rica use new legislation to pilot and develop an apprenticeship system, developing it carefully to take account of international experience and the need to fully involve and engage the social partners. Canada (Alberta), Estonia and Spain reported changes to apprenticeship systems as a policy priority in their responses to the EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17.

The OECD also identified improving employer engagement as a policy priority in Australia, Chile, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Korea and Slovenia from 2008 to 2013, and in Austria, Israel and Latvia, among others, from 2014 to 2017. OECD recommendations to governments included providing incentives, such as tax exemptions, to promote increased employment engagement.

In 2012, the OECD advised Korea to promote industry involvement in VET by creating a high-profile national body including industry, government and other stakeholders, with either an influential advisory role or decision-making power in relation to VET policy. In 2016, the OECD recommended that the Czech Republic encourage employers to provide training to young, unskilled workers through either tax subsidies or targeted reductions in social security contributions.

In the EPO Survey 2016-17, just three education systems reported increasing employer engagement in VET as a policy priority: Belgium, Canada (Alberta) and Estonia. Canada (Alberta) reported specific initiatives in 2016 to increase employer engagement as a way to improve job opportunities and outcomes for apprentices.

Table 4.5. Strengthening apprenticeships and employer engagement

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Create or strengthen apprenticeship systems	Provide an apprenticeship system with VET programmes that reflect student preferences and employer needs. Improve financial support for students in vocational education, and strengthen collaboration of businesses and schools at the local level.	AUS, AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), FRA, IRL, ITA, LVA, MEX, SVK, GBR (ENG, WLS) CRI	14	**Strengthening the apprenticeship system**	CAN (Alberta), EST, ISL, SVN	4	18
Increase employer engagement in VET	Encourage employer engagement by giving them more incentives, such as tax exemptions.	AUS, AUT, **BEL** (**Fl**, Fr, Dg), CHL, CZE, DEU, **EST**, GRC, ISL, IRL, ISR, ITA, KOR, LVA, MEX, POL, SVK, SVN, ESP, USA COL, CRI	24	**Increasing engagement in VET**	**BEL** (**Fl**), CAN, **EST**	3	25

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.

Promoting equal access to tertiary education

Analysis of this report on OECD work from 2008 to 2017 has identified the need to increase access to tertiary education for some groups as a persisting policy priority across OECD countries. Evidence shows that parental education is still a strong predictor of their children's educational attainment in many contexts. In countries with available data,

the proportion of adults (age 30-44) with tertiary education whose parents do not hold a tertiary-level qualification is 20% (OECD, 2017a).

From 2012 to 2017, the OECD advised 16 education systems (including Australia, Chile, Estonia, Germany, Israel, Japan, Slovenia, Portugal, accession country Colombia and partner country Kazakhstan) to: 1) boost access to tertiary education by reducing financial barriers to education, especially for disadvantaged students; and 2) develop a strong, reliable and well-disseminated system of labour market information that reports on the outcomes of higher-education graduates, to help students make well-informed decisions about their orientation and career.

In 2016, the OECD advised accession country Colombia to remove financial obstacles to enrolment for low-income students, in order to promote equitable access for less-advantaged students. The OECD also recommended that Colombia ensure that students have easy access to adequate information to support their decisions, as helping students make the right choices about further education and the labour market is vital in a country where half the student cohort drops out and pathways between institutions and programmes tend to be unclear.

In Portugal in 2017, the OECD highlighted the strong relationship of students' socio-economic backgrounds with access to tertiary education. According to the evidence collected by the OECD, young people from families with high levels of education have a much higher probability of reaching a higher level of education. Along with other analysis, this strengthened the case for providing more generous support to tertiary students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which would likely prove a powerful tool to reduce inequalities.

In country responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17, three education systems identified increasing equal access to tertiary education as a policy priority: Australia, Japan and Turkey. Other education systems have also taken action in this regard. Policies to improve access to tertiary education have been implemented in New Zealand, as part of its 2014-19 Tertiary Education Strategy, and in Belgium's Flemish Community, with its National Qualifications Structure (2009-13).

Table 4.6. Increasing equal access to tertiary education

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2]	Total	
Increase equal access to tertiary education	Reduce financial barriers to education, especially for disadvantaged students, and increase career guidance so students can make well-informed decisions about their orientation and career.	**AUS**, AUT, CAN (federal view), CHL, DEU, EST, ISL, ISR, ITA, **JPN**, PRT, SVN, CHE COL, CRI, KAZ	16	**Increasing equal access to tertiary education**	**AUS**, **JPN**, TUR	3	18

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries (see the Reader's Guide).

Decreasing youth unemployment and the share of NEETs

From 2014 to 2017, some policy priorities have emerged more strongly among education systems, including decreasing youth unemployment and the share of 15-29 year-olds who are neither employed nor in education or training (OECD, 2017a). This was a policy priority for Estonia, Italy, Korea, the Slovak Republic and accession country Colombia.

In 2012, the OECD advised Estonia to consider moving towards a model similar to those implemented in Austria, Finland and the United Kingdom, which require the employment office to offer formal education or apprenticeships to youth who are not in employment, education or training, at least until the age of 18 (often called youth guarantees). The OECD proposed these measures in combination with financial incentives offered to employers for developing apprenticeship places, a measure that has proven to be effective in Denmark.

Between 2008 and 2013, Ireland and Italy reported decreasing high levels of youth unemployment and NEETs as a policy priority. The rate of NEETs reached a peak of over 20% for Ireland in 2010 (decreasing to 16.3% in 2016) and rose to a high of 27.4% in Italy by 2015 (decreasing to 26% in 2016) (Eurostat, 2017b). According to the EPO Survey 2016-17, this was first identified as a policy priority in Portugal in 2014-17. Over the same period the share of NEETs peaked in Portugal at 17.1% of the age cohort in 2013, before dropping to 13.3% in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017b).

To decrease youth unemployment and the share of NEETs, some countries have implemented policies focused on connecting employers with job seekers. Some examples include Canada and its Job Bank website (2014) and Ireland's 2012 Action Plan for Jobs.

Table 4.7. Decreasing levels of youth unemployment and NEETs

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Decreasing levels of youth unemployment and NEETs	Facilitate the transition from education to work, give students more orientation guidance and favour policies that encourage students to go back to school.	EST, FRA, GRC, **IRL**, **ITA**, KOR, SVK CRI	8	**High levels of youth unemployment and NEETs**	FIN, **IRL**, **ITA**, JPN, PRT, SVN	6	12

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.

Emerging policy priorities identified from 2014 to 2017

Increasing the quality of tertiary education

Increasing the quality of tertiary education is a policy priority that emerged more clearly in the analysis OECD's work with individual countries carried out from 2014 to 2017, with 16 OECD education systems where this was identified (Table 4.8). The Czech Republic and Germany also specifically noted this as a policy priority in the EPO Survey

2016-17. General principles of action proposed by the OECD in this area include raising education funding and quality standards, improving teaching quality and making tertiary education more responsive to labour market needs. In 2016, the OECD advised the Czech Republic to introduce output-based accreditation criteria and student fees to increase resources for the provision of public tertiary education, accompanied by a mixed system of means-tested grants and income-contingent repayment loans.

Reflecting the growth in importance of this topic in recent years, initiatives are underway at an international level to set quality standards for higher education. For example, the European Higher Education Area (the group of 48 countries working to implement the Bologna Process of instituting internationally comparable higher education standards) published a first set of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area in 2005 and updated them in 2015 (ENQA, 2015). National agencies which meet these standards are registered with the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). The OECD project on Enhancing Higher Education System Performance is also working towards establishing international benchmarks to assess performance, policies and practices of higher education systems in OECD countries (OECD, 2017b).

Many national initiatives which aim to improve quality in higher education are also underway or have recently been implemented, often with the aim of ensuring coherence with international standards. The Slovak Republic, for example, has developed a strategy to increase internal quality controls, with its 2012 amendment to the Higher Education Act. In Latvia, the Academic Information Centre has been operating as an independent national agency for licensing and accreditation and quality assurance of higher education study programmes since 2015, and it is aiming for inclusion in the EQAR in 2018. The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, an independent agency established in 2010, was included in EQAR in 2013 and became a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 2015.

Table 4.8. Increasing the quality of tertiary education

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Increase the quality of tertiary education	Raise education funding and quality standards, improve teaching quality, and make tertiary education more responsive to labour market needs.	AUS, CHL, **CZE**, **DEU**, GRC, IRL, ITA, JPN, KOR, **LVA**, NOR, POL, SVK, TUR COL, CRI	16	**Increasing the quality of tertiary education**	**CZE, DEU,** FIN, **LVA**	4	17

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017.
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.

Internationalisation of the higher education sector

From 2014 to 2017, as comparability of higher education qualifications between countries becomes clearer and common international standards are adopted, a related policy priority has come to the fore more clearly: an increasing focus on internationalisation of the higher education sector. By 2025, demand for international education is expected to be almost four times higher than 2000 levels (Knight, 2015).

Many OECD governments are now working to increase internationalisation in the student population. Only Slovenia specifically referenced it as a policy priority in the EPO Survey 2016-17. However, in its work with seven member countries (Finland, Japan, Latvia, Norway, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia) and partner country Kazakhstan, the OECD encouraged internationalisation of the higher education sector as a way to boost its quality, through increased exchanges of best practices. The share of international or foreign students for all levels of tertiary education in these countries was below the OECD average of 5.6%, except for Latvia (6.1% in 2015) , the Slovak Republic (5.9% in 2015) and Kazakhstan (2.1% in 2014) (OECD, 2017a; OECD, 2017c).

In 2015, the OECD indicated that accelerating the internationalisation of tertiary education in Japan could help attract outstanding students to leading graduate schools. Slovenia also adopted measures on internationalisation, including the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education (2016-20), which includes an Action Plan with over 50 measures and a web page to promote Slovenia as a study destination.

In Kazakhstan, state initiatives such as the *Bolashak* programme, the adoption of the Bologna Process and the establishment of Nazarbayev University have all had an impact on the level of internationalisation in higher education. In 2017, the OECD advised Kazakhstan to review these initiatives to ensure that they are having the desired impact and support system improvement (OECD, 2017c).

Table 4.9. Internationalisation of the higher education sector

Previous OECD analysis				Country responses to EPO Surveys in 2013 and 2016-17			Total number of education systems
Policy priority identified	Principles of action[1]	Education systems[2,3,4]	Total	Policy priority identified	Education systems[2,4]	Total	
Increasing internationalisation of the higher education sector	Further encourage internationalisation of the higher education sector as a way to improve its quality.	**FIN**, JPN, LVA, NOR, SVK, **SVN**, CHE KAZ	8	**Fostering internationalisation of higher education through the adoption of national strategies**	**FIN, SVN**	2	8

Notes:
1. Principles of action are the component of a recommendation that draws from international evidence produced on a specific topic, either by the OECD or externally.
2. Education systems highlighted **in bold** are those where the policy priority was identified by both the OECD and the education system, in either the EPO Survey 2016-17 or the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 (see the Reader's Guide).
3. See Annex A, Table A A.3, for the year of the country study considered.
4. Education systems listed in the final row refer to OECD accession or partner countries.

Notes

[1] Countries participating in PIAAC (* indicates OECD partner countries):

Round 1 (2008-13): Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation*, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England and Northern Ireland) and the United States.

Round 2 (2012-16): Chile, Greece, Indonesia*, Israel, Lithuania*, New Zealand, Singapore*, Slovenia and Turkey.

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Chapter 5. Preparing students for the future: Policy trends, progress and impact

This chapter examines key education policies implemented in OECD countries between 2008 and 2017 to better prepare students for the future. Taking a comparative approach, it analyses overall education policy trends, continuity and change since 2008 related to this issue. Policies analysed encompass increasing completion of upper secondary education, developing quality vocational education and training, strengthening accessibility and quality of tertiary education, and improving the transitions between upper secondary and tertiary education to the labour market.

Highlights

- Policies reported to reduce early school leaving include a variety of approaches, such as to improve student orientation by revising the content of courses and the curriculum and improving qualification frameworks. Education systems have also introduced policies to promote participation in fields related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and to develop inclusive learning environments to support migrants and refugees.
- Key education policies reported to develop quality vocational education and training (VET) include objectives such as improving apprenticeship systems, diminishing high levels of skills mismatch and advancing employer co-operation in VET programmes. Education systems also reported policies to improve the quality of student experience in these programmes and the transition to the labour market or further education.
- To strengthen access to and quality of tertiary education, many countries have adopted policies to expand funding for students, implement quality assurance measures and modify higher education frameworks. The majority of the policies reported are targeted. Some promising policy practices include improving access to tertiary education for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The majority of key education policies reported to improve the transitions between upper secondary and tertiary education to the labour market are comprehensive in scope. Education systems have implemented policies to establish better links between educational levels and the labour market and to connect employers with job seekers.

Introduction

Preparing students for the future implies that young people should be educated to be active citizens who are capable of participating fully in the economy and society through diversified cognitive and non-cognitive capacities and specific skills relevant to the labour market. Upper secondary education, VET, and tertiary education are key education sectors in which students can benefit from targeted initiatives to prepare them for further education or the labour market (OECD, 2015). Lifelong learning has also increasingly become a priority and an important element in society today.

Chapter 4 analysed the evolution of education policy priorities to better prepare students for the future. Persisting education policy priorities identified include: 1) reducing skills mismatch and early school leaving rates; 2) improving the attractiveness of VET; 3) facilitating transitions of VET students to the labour market; and 4) increasing employer engagement. Emerging policy priorities identified include: 1) increasing the quality and relevance of tertiary education, and 2) the internationalisation of higher education.

As for equity and quality, the OECD Secretariat has also identified some correspondence between policy priorities identified and policy developments in education systems' efforts to prepare students for the future. This chapter analyses policy continuity and policy change of key education policies implemented in 33 OECD education systems between 2008 and 2017 to better prepare students for the future (as defined in the EPO analytical framework). It examines four policy areas: 1) increasing completion of upper secondary education; 2) developing quality VET options; 3) strengthening access to and quality of

tertiary education; and 4) improving student transition between upper secondary and tertiary education and to the labour market. (See Annex A, Table A A.1 for detailed information on the structure of the EPO analytical framework and the list of participating education systems.) All policies examined in this chapter are also included in the country snapshots in Chapter 7.

Increasing completion of upper secondary education

Box 5.1. Policy pointer: Increasing completion of upper secondary education

Upper secondary education is an essential part of students' education pathways. In a well-designed system, students obtain and enhance basic skills and knowledge that can be used to enter either post-secondary education or the labour market, and they simultaneously evolve into active citizens (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2017a). Factors identified by previous OECD evidence that help keep students in the system longer include: 1) career guidance and counselling; 2) additional learning support at the end of upper secondary; and 3) greater flexibility in course curricula to address various student skills and needs, especially for students at risk of dropout, (OECD, 2008; OECD, 2017b). Furthermore, the development of qualification frameworks can allow for more transparency on the knowledge and skills that secondary students need to obtain during study programmes, and they can help offer students better accessibility and smoother transitions across education systems (OECD, 2013; OECD, 2011).

- **Policy priority identified (OECD):** Reducing high early school leaving rates.
- **Principle of action identified (OECD):** Provide more and earlier individualised support to students at risk of falling behind. Measures to promote employment opportunities and income support for drop-outs later on in their working lives may be more costly and less effective than strengthening the education system. Favour policies that encourage students to go back to school.
- **Summary of policy trend identified:** OECD education systems have implemented policies to keep students in the system, while improving their learning opportunities. Policy options reported include advancing student guidance, revising qualifications, updating course curricula and increasing participation in STEM-related fields. Recently-implemented policies concentrate on similar areas, but also on technology education and support for migrants and refugees.
- **Examples of policies:**
  - **Reducing early school leaving and increasing students' participation and achievement:** BEL (Fl), CAN (Quebec), FRA, DEU, ITA, LVA, NZL, NOR
  - **Student orientation:** ISL, ITA, JPN, NZL

Note: See Annex C, Box C.11 for a summary of education systems where reducing high early school leaving rates is identified as a relevant policy priority, as well as selected related policies.

Upper secondary education was compulsory in at least 20 OECD countries in 2017 (OECD, 2018). Across OECD countries, a total of 17% of 25-34 year-olds who had education attainment below upper secondary education were unemployed in 2017. In comparison, the rate of unemployment among the same age cohort with completed upper secondary education was 9% during the same year (OECD, 2017a).

Education policy continuity and reform across the OECD, 2008-17

Responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17 and the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 suggest that upper secondary education completion remains a priority for many member countries and, as explained in Chapter 4, there appears to be some continuity in these policies. At least two-thirds of the older key education policies on upper secondary education (i.e. those implemented between 2008 and 2014) are still in place, aiming to keep students in the system while improving their learning opportunities. For Belgium (Flemish Community), Canada (Quebec), France, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Mexico,

Slovenia and Spain, key education policies remain in place to reduce early school leaving. Other education systems reported different approaches to provide better student orientation and learning: revising qualification frameworks (in Mexico and New Zealand) and updating course curricula (in Italy, Japan and Norway). In addition, Australia and Canada (Ontario) reported policies specifically promoting increased participation in STEM-related fields.

Education systems also reported some recently implemented key education policies in this area (i.e. starting in 2015). Some countries have implemented policies with a similar focus to those described above. Key policies aim to provide better student guidance by revising the qualification framework, as in Belgium (French Community) and Iceland, and new course curricula, as in Mexico. Many key policies also focus on reducing early school leaving, as in Austria, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Hungary, Italy and Latvia. Other participating education systems have implemented policies that aim to highlight more targeted issues: technological education in Ireland, and support for migrants and refugees in France and Germany.

Table 5.1 classifies the key education policies reported to the OECD according to their scope of intervention: 1) **Comprehensive** (overarching general strategies using various policy tools); 2) **Content** (specifically related to content knowledge); and 3) **Targeted** (focused on a specific recipient or approach). It also indicates whether policies are: 1) **S**till in place (continued since the 2015 Education Policy Outlook comparative report and/or policies implemented between 2008 and 2014); 2) **M**odified (e.g. content, scope, coverage); replacing an older policy); or 3) **R**ecent (implemented as of 2015).

Table 5.1. Policies to increase completion of upper secondary education, 2008-17

Code	Comprehensive policies	Code	Content	Code	Targeted policies
	GOVERNANCE AND GENERAL STRATEGY		**CURRICULUM AND QUALIFICATIONS**		**STUDENT DROPOUT**
S	**Australia** [SN]: Policies to strengthen STEM (2014-26)	R	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Decree mandating work experience in the third year of secondary education (2016)	R	**Austria** [SN]: Apprenticeship until 18 (2017)
R	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Pact for Excellence in Teaching (2015-30)	S	**Canada (Ontario)** [SN]: Technology and Learning Fund (2014-17)	S	**Belgium (Fl)** [SN]: Master plan for secondary education and policy measures for the reduction of early school leaving (2013)
R	**France** [SN]: National action plan to support migrants (2017)	S	**Iceland** [SN]: Reforms on upper secondary education (2011)	S M	**Belgium (Fl)**: Together against Early School Leaving (2015), previously Action Plan on Early School Leaving (2013) and *Spijbelplan* (2012))
S	**Germany**: Qualification Initiative Getting ahead through education (2008)	R	**Iceland**: National Qualifications Framework for all school levels (2016)	R	**Belgium (Fl)**: Early School Leaving Monitor (2016)
S	**Iceland** [SN]: White Paper on Education Reform (2014)	R	**Ireland** [SN]: Digital Strategy for Schools (2015-20)	S	**Canada (Quebec)**: I Care about School strategy (2009)
S	**Italy**: Reform of upper secondary education (2010-15)	S	**Japan**: National Curriculum Standard for high school (2009)	S	**France**: United Against School Dropout (2014)
R	**Italy:** Good School Reform (2015) (April 2017 implementing Decree No. 63. on the right to study)	S	**New Zealand**: National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) (2009), part of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQA)	S M	**Germany**: Educational Chains Initiative (2010) for career support
S	**Mexico** [SN]: Compulsory upper secondary education (2012)	S	**Norway**: Certificate of Practice Scheme (2008)	S	**Germany**: VerA programme (2010-20)
R	**Mexico** [SN]: New Educational Model (2017)			R	**Germany**: Career orientation programme (2016), part of the Ways to Education for Refugees programme
				R	**Hungary** [SN]: Public Education Bridge Programme (2016)
				R	**Hungary** [SN]: VET Bridge Programme (2016)
				S M	**Latvia**: Support to students at risk of social exclusion (2007-13, 2014-20)
				S	**Latvia**: Regulation for absent students (2011)
				S	**Latvia**: Educational Development Guidelines 2014-2020
				R	**Latvia**: National Reform Programme (2016)
				S M	**Mexico** [SN]: Constructing Yourself (2008)
				S	**Mexico** [SN]: Movement against school dropout (2013/14)
				S	**New Zealand:** Achievement Retention Transitions programme (2013), within the Youth Guarantee (2010)
				S	**Slovenia** [SN]: CroCooS (2014-17)
				S	**Spain**: Programme to Reduce Early Dropout in Education and Training (2014-20)

Notes:
1. [SN]: Policy information was only included as an additional policy of potential interest to other countries in the country snapshots (Chapter 7).
2. See Annex B for information on policies reported in the previous cycle for which no further details were available.
Sources: EPO Survey 2016-17 and EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 for Austria, Belgium (Fl, Fr and Dg), Italy and Sweden.

Reducing early leaving rates, and increasing students' participation and achievement in upper secondary education

Combating high early school leaving rates in upper secondary education remains a policy priority for several OECD education systems (see Chapter 4). Many factors, including students' socio-economic status, demographics and educational backgrounds play an important role can that can determine whether students are potentially at risk of dropping out (OECD, 2017a).

As student dropout has multiple causes in different contexts, education systems' approaches are also diverse. Some education systems address this issue through policies directly targeting students, such as improving their motivation in Canada (Quebec), providing individual support and orientation to students in Germany and Latvia, or identifying the different profiles of students at risk and monitoring those who leave education, as in the Flemish Community of Belgium and New Zealand. To ensure access to secondary education, some systems, such as Italy and Latvia, provide direct financial support to students. Policies in Spain aim to directly target students at risk of early drop out, for example with scholarships and by awareness campaigns. In Italy, national and regional authorities are responsible for assuring the right to study, by providing financial support to students needing assistance for school fees, textbooks or transportation to school. Systems including Germany, Italy and Norway and are working on providing more flexible pathways that facilitate certification or other financial support.

Developing more comprehensive measures and establishing partnerships with the private sector or local and regional authorities are among current approaches in France and Germany. This is also an important area of action in more recent policy developments. For example, preventing dropout is an important component of the Pact for Excellence in Teaching (2017) in the French Community of Belgium, which aims to reduce school dropout by 50% by 2030. Its key elements include data collection, a data definition of roles and tasks for actors, instruments, and a co-ordination framework for different actors (see Chapter 7).

Policy focus

In 2015, the parliament of the **Flemish Community of Belgium** launched the action plan "Together against Early School Leaving" (previously the Action Plan on Early School Leaving [2013] and *Spijbelplan* [2012]). It targets different types of populations at risk: early school leavers (emigrants with low education level); truants; NEETs; and general youth at risk (SERV, 2015). The policy guidelines in the Action Plan outline actions that have been completed, are in operation and are about to begin. Local actions are aligned to the European reference framework of prevention, intervention and compensation (*Vlaanderen Department Onderwijs en Vorming*, 2017). Furthermore, the action plan includes monitoring, identification and co-ordination. In 2016, the government set up the Early School Leaving Monitor to monitor and track the outcomes, socio-economic characteristics and study progression of young people who leave education without an upper secondary qualification.

- **Progress or impact:** As of 2017, 52 actions have been completed, 51 are still in operation and 4 are about to begin. Actions and results on the four levels include reporting recurrent absences of students and addressing students directly in case of truancy, in order to make schools more responsive. The group of measures also includes setting up a plan to combat bullying. Another completed action is the appointment of a Flemish truancy officer who is in charge of accompanying, following up and evaluating the implementation plan. (*Vlaanderen Department Onderwijs en Vorming*, 2017)

In 2009, the province of **Quebec (Canada)** introduced the "I Care about School" strategy (*l'École, j'y tiens!*), aiming to reach a student completion rate of 80% in secondary education by 2020, through reduced class size, after-school care and reintegrating students who have dropped out of the system.

- **Progress or impact:** A 2012 evaluation of the programme found that the participants of the experimental study group increased their commitment after the programme's intervention. The assessment suggests that this might be attributed to one part of the curriculum of the programme, the media project, which particularly motivated the participants (Lalande Charlebois, 2012).

France implemented the action plan *Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage scolaire* in 2014. It integrates previous educational support measures geared towards students at the lower secondary education level (*dispositifs relais*) and focuses on the prevention of early school leaving and school retention. It also aims to develop partnerships, in particular with local and regional authorities, to target young people who have already left education. It is built on three pillars, mobilisation of all to overcome school dropout (*Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage scolaire*), choosing prevention (*faire le choix de la prévention*), and a new opportunity to qualify (*une nouvelle chance pour se qualifier*) (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017a). In 2017/18, the plan will continue to address prevention measures, such as education alliances and the right to redo an exam, as well as remediation, which includes personal activity accounts, an information system to track school dropouts and structures to facilitate the return to school. Several measures will continue to be implemented to prevent school dropout, such as educational and personalised support, a personalised programme for educational success *(programme personnalisé de réussite educative*, PPRE), internships and tutoring, and a group to prevent school dropout (*groupe de prévention du décrochage scolaire*, GPDS).

- **Progress or impact:** A 2014 evaluation report found that school dropout is a complex multifactor process. The report found that policies on reducing dropout were in the development phase. The phase of construction with modest means and policy steering, was in its early stages, with unequal progress across the country. Some recommended measures included implementing a more global and integrated political approach with components of prevention, intervention and remediation, as well as a strong focus on the prevention of early school leaving. The report also recommended establishing a more systematic alliance among schools, classes and prevention actions for the personnel working for *l'Éducation nationale*. The measures may have had a positive impact on the overall reduction in school dropout, which has dropped significantly over the last decade. On average, between 2013 and 2015, 13% of students left school without a diploma or just the 10th grade diploma, compared to 17 % from 2007 to 2009 (RERS, 2011; RERS, 2017). Also, 9% of 18-24 year-olds do not have a diploma, compared to an average of 11% in the European Union. Success factors identified include: 1) the priority accorded by the government to combating school dropout; 2) the implementation of tools, including the extension of the interministerial system of information exchange; 3) a human resource management system; and 4) a systematic evaluation of the devices and experimentation. The actions of the plan completed in 2015 and 2016 were evaluated in 2016. The objective was to improve information systems and design new digital tools for tracking and monitoring young people who are at risk of dropping out (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017b).

Germany's overarching Qualification Initiative "Getting ahead through education" (*Aufstieg durch Bildung*) operated from 2008 to 2015 and then was superseded by several programmes on the federal and *Länder* levels. It addressed all areas of education, from ECEC to VET and (continuing) higher education, as well as lifelong learning. In 2008, the target was set to spend 10% of gross domestic product on education, science and research. The objectives corresponding to upper secondary education and beyond include: 1) increasing the number of students in academic and vocational education; 2) making vocational education more attractive; 3) facilitating transfer opportunities between VET and academic education; and 4) improving equity and access to education (such as by integrating young people with a migration background). One programme helps refugees during their studies at institutions of higher education. The Qualification Initiative also

aims to increase students' interest and enthusiasm for scientific and technical vocations. For example, Girls' Day is targeted at young female students to raise their interest in pursuing studies in STEM subjects (BMBF, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** According to the 2015 report on implementation of the Initiative, the targets were about to be reached or had already been surpassed. For example, the target of increasing the participation rate in additional training to 43% from 2006 to 2015 was surpassed in 2014, with a record high of 51% (KMK and GWK, 2015). Further evidence on the overall objectives identified several developments. The number of young people without vocational education dropped to 13.8% in 2013, and the number of women in STEM careers is increasing. Also, further financial investments have been made, such as allocating EUR 100 million to help refugees to study in universities. In addition, the ministry has been allocating an extra EUR 130 million for the acquisition of the German language, the identification of competences and potential of refugees and their integration into training and occupations (BMBF, 2017b).

Germany's Educational Chains Initiative (*Initiative Bildungsketten*, 2010) aims to ensure a better transition into VET and the labour market. Under this Initiative, vocational trainers and senior experts are engaged to give guidance to youth. The Initiative is also part of the Alliance for Education and Training 2015-18 (*Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung*) (BMBF and BMAS, 2017), which brings together federal and regional governments, and social partners to improve the attractiveness of VET. The Initiative has been enhanced to extend counselling and coaching and to operate in 11th grade of secondary schools (*Gymnasien*). The government is also reinforcing collaboration between municipal youth, social services and employment agencies to aid young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (EC, 2016a). As part of the Initiative, the government also developed the VerA Programme (2010-20), which provides free-of-charge support to prevent early leaving in apprenticeships.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2014 external evaluation of the Initiative focused on the core elements of potential assessment, practical occupational orientation and mentoring of the transition to the labour market. Experts have stated that assessment of students is a good basis to move to the practical occupational guidance. Among practical occupations, internships were most positively evaluated by both students and other stakeholders. The importance of having internships as part of the programme was especially stressed by staff of special needs' schools (*Förderschulen*). Outcomes on mentoring of the transition to the labour market have been mixed, as the initial and overall conditions varied immensely. For example, half of the mentors operated only at one school, while the others had to work at several schools simultaneously (RMC, IES and ISM, 2014).

In 2016, **Germany** established an extended career orientation programme on VET programmes in the trade sector (*BMBF-Programm Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge*) for asylum seekers, young refugees or those with temporary residence status who are allowed to access the labour market and are beyond the age of compulsory education, as part of the Ways to Education for Refugees initiative (*Wege in Ausbildung für Flüchtlinge*) (BMAS, 2016). The programme is also part of the Education Chains Initiative (2010). The programme set the goal to train and bring into trade training up to 10 000 refugees by 2018 (BMBF, 2016). The target group is those who have already completed an integration course, have a good competency in German and have previously completed a first orientation in trades (BMBF, 2016; BMAS, 2016). Participants can test apprenticeships in up to three different trades (BMBF, 2016). In response to first experiences, several adjustments were implemented in 2017 to make the programme more flexible (BMBF, 2017c). For example, instead of limiting the programme to a maximum of 13 weeks, it was increased to up to 26 weeks, and the length of time a participant can spend in an enterprise was doubled to 8 weeks (BMBF, 2017c).

- **Progress or impact:** A case example of the city of Duisburg shows that as of April 2017, 11 people had completed the programme and some of them had already started an apprenticeship in a trade. By then, 33 people were participating in the programme. The overall completion rate is high: within four rounds, only 6.5% of the participants dropped out (BMBF, 2017d).

In **Italy**, legislative Decree No. 63 of 13 April 2017 concerning the right to study provides for the allocation of financial aid to students to complete secondary education and thereby intends to improve learning outcomes (EC, 2017a). Special focus is put on students in the final (Grades 12 and 13) (EC, 2017b). Over EUR 40 million was spent in 2017 and will be spent annually on tuition fees, purchasing textbooks and tablets, mobility and transport of low-income students (EC, 2017a; EC, 2017b). Students will be exempted from fees (EC, 2017b). The Decree also provides local authorities with the possibility of entering into specific agreements with public and private entities for the provision of additional benefits.

- **Progress or impact:** According to additional evidence, the supplementary funds are now almost EUR 40 million per year. Besides that, each Italian student is granted a gift of EUR 500 on his/her 18th birthday as a "*bonus culture*" intended for cultural consumption (EC, 2017b).

In **Latvia**, students at risk of social exclusion due to their poor financial or social situation are eligible to receive a scholarship for successful learning in vocational education. From 2007 to 2013, this scholarship programme was funded by a contribution from the European Commission's European Social Fund (ESF). As the ESF did not renew the funding for its 2014-20 funding cycle, since 2015 the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science has increased the funding paid from the state budget for scholarships (Metis GmbH, Fondazione Brodolini and Panteia, 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** According to an evaluation of ESF funding in Latvia, between 2004 and 2012, the share of vocational education students increased from 26% to 39%. Data of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia show the share of students in vocational education (after the 9th grade) was 35.9% in 2011/12 and 36.6% in the 2016/17 school year. The ESF scholarships for VET led to an increase in enrolment and attendance in VET education and courses, a sign of its success. Between 2007 and 2013, 71 284 students had benefitted from a scholarship (67% of the total number of VET students). This was far more than the targeted 40 000 students. As a result of its success and since the scholarship programme did not continue beyond 2015, the state budget amount for VET scholarships was increased (Metis GmbH, Fondazione Brodolini and Panteia, 2016). Also, the OECD identified the need to increase the mean-tested scholarship to a level that allows students to concentrate on completing VET programmes and to make it compatible with state family benefits (OECD, 2017c). As of 2018, the government provides additional support, funded by EU structural funds, which allows families to receive both the family allowances and the VET stipend.

Latvia has implemented several policies to address early school leaving. A 2011 regulation allows educational institutions to inform parents, municipal or state institutions if a student is not attending school without an appropriate reason. It also promotes the accounting of compulsory school age children who are not registered in any education institution. The Education Development Guidelines 2014-20 aim to reduce the number of early school leavers through, for example, a 2017 ESF project that supports students in general education institutions (Grades 5-12) and vocational education students (Years 1-4). Students at risk get individual support (such as compensation for public transport expenses, consultations and support by specialists). A prevention system has also been developed. The overall goal is to have systematic support implemented in 665 education institutions by 2022. In addition, the measures of the 2016 National Reform Programme also address reducing early school leaving by, for example, improving career guidance to students and quality assurance in general and vocational education (EC, 2016b). Initially, the target of the National Reform Programme of Latvia was to reduce the share of early school leavers (aged 18-24) to 13.4% by 2020 (Government of Latvia, 2017).

- **Progress or impact:** Overall, the early school leaving rate has been decreasing in recent years, from as high as 15.5% in 2008 (Eurostat, 2016). The early school leaving rate of those aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training has risen slightly, from 8.5% in 2014 to 10% in 2016, but it remains below the EU average of 10.7% in 2016 and has reached the Europe 2020 target of 10% (Eurostat, 2016; EC 2017c). Disparities remain between genders and rural and urban areas (EC, 2017c).

The Achievement Retention Transitions programme was implemented between 2013 and 2017 as part of **New Zealand**'s Youth Guarantee (2010). The initiative collaborates with local secondary schools to identify young people at risk of not achieving National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) level 2. There was a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika students. The initiative also aimed to generate higher levels of NCEA achievement and support the government's Better Public Services target of 85% of 18 year-olds achieving NCEA level 2 or equivalent by 2017.

- **Progress or impact:** The initiative built on a 2012 pilot programme that led to significant improvement in the numbers of students achieving NCEA level 2. While this specific initiative had not been evaluated, the overall estimations for 2016 were positive, as the NCEA level 2 attainment rate for all 18-year-olds was expected to increase to 85.5% (a 10.9% increase since 2011), which is above the Better Public Service target of 85% by 2017. In addition, the achievement rates of Māori students (66.5%) and Pasifika (74.7%) students had risen in 2016 with the highest increase among Māori students (3.3 percentage points) since 2015 followed by Pasifika students (0.6 percentage points) (Education Counts, 2018).

Norway's 2008 proposed pilot project on the Certificate of Practice Scheme (*Praksisbrev*) aims to reduce dropout in upper secondary education. In 2014, the scheme was developed into a permanent arrangement where, by law, the regional authorities (owners of upper secondary schools) are obliged to offer a Certificate of Practice. This certificate is a two-year practical education programme after which students can apply for an ordinary vocational education apprenticeship to obtain a VET certificate.

- **Progress or impact:** According to a 2008-11 evaluation, 49% of the students enrolled in this programme obtained an apprenticeship after completion, whereas only 29% of students who attended ordinary vocational upper secondary education succeeded in finding an apprenticeship (NIFU, 2011). Success factors of the programme include centring education around practical job experiences instead of school-focused education and providing participants with placements in companies, which increased their chances to move on to an apprenticeship afterwards. Other important factors were evaluation of applicants to the programme before acceptance, proactive involvement of the schools in the programme, and the possibility of moving on to a trade or journeyman's certificate after completion of the certificate (CEDEFOP, 2017a).

In **Spain**, the Programme to Reduce Early Dropout in Education and Training (2014-20) provides funding for preventive measures, such as external evaluations in certain grades to detect early difficulties in learning and minimise the risk of dropout. In addition, a royal decree regulates the general system of scholarships and study aids annually. Studies are conducted to identify areas with high school dropout rates to analyse causes and profiles and thereby evaluate and design specific intervention pathways. Awareness campaigns are targeted at students and their families to ensure the best possible use of training. Specific programmes are implemented in areas and groups with the highest dropout risk through co-operation and co-ordination with different institutions and local and regional authorities. Also, to facilitate reintegration, young people from age 16 to age 24 who drop out are supported through adult education institutions and local authorities.

- **Progress or impact:** Evaluation has shown that programmes on second-chance opportunities and vocational training measures offered by adult education institutions have contributed to the reduction of dropout rates in Spain. Early school leaving rates of 18-24 years-olds have declined from 31.7% in 2008 to 18.3 % in 2017(Eurostat, 2016).

Better student orientation through improved qualifications frameworks and more engaging and relevant course offerings.

Establishing and developing qualification frameworks can help to provide greater clarity of the knowledge and skills that students can expect to acquire through an academic programme, as well as provide students at the secondary level with greater accessibility and smoother transitions across different options of an education system. Moreover,

qualifications frameworks are quality-assurance mechanisms that outline what is expected from specific training programmes (OECD, 2013; OECD, 2011). In response to an increase in the number of students in upper secondary education, course curricula have become more flexible to cater to students' diverse skills and needs (OECD, 2017b).

Qualifications frameworks

Some OECD education systems, such as Chile, Iceland and New Zealand, have implemented and revised their national qualification frameworks (NQF) to improve student orientation. Revisions aim to ensure that qualifications are relevant and sufficient, or to facilitate student transfer between education providers, as in New Zealand.

Policy focus

The National Qualifications Framework for all school levels in **Iceland** was adopted in 2016. As of 2018, the Directorate for Education is preparing a review of the national curriculum guidelines for compulsory education.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2016 analysis of the NQF in Iceland by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) found that as of 2016 the framework had advanced to the "early operational stage". All qualifications at upper secondary level, including general and vocational education, contain the NQF and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels. The different stakeholders from education, training and the labour market recognise the framework as a positive development. This can probably be explained by their close involvement during the development and ongoing reforms of the NQF. At the same time, the report stressed, among other points, that continuing engagement of stakeholders in the future is one of the main challenges and, thus, it is important to clarify their role in the implementation process. Also, the report recommends implementing a co-ordination committee to facilitate the exchange of information with stakeholders (CEDEFOP, 2017b).

The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA, 2009) covers levels 1 to 3 of the **New Zealand** Qualifications Framework (NZQF). At secondary school, students work towards one of these three qualifications. After secondary school, students who want to continue at the tertiary level can choose from a number of education options, ranging from universities to polytechnics, private training establishments, industry training organisations and further learning on the job. Students need to obtain NCEA level 2 or its equivalent to continue studying at higher levels.

- **Progress or impact:** Several reviews of aspects of the NZQF were undertaken from 2011 to 2016 that aimed to reduce duplication, ensure qualifications are relevant and fit-for-purpose, and make it easier for students to transfer between providers offering programmes towards the same New Zealand qualification. As pointed out by New Zealand in the EPO Survey 2016-17, the reviews led to an overall 74% reduction in the number of qualifications at levels 1-6 (measured at the approval-to-develop stage). Previous national and provider-developed qualifications at levels 1-6 are being replaced with new qualifications.

Course curricula

Another approach taken to facilitate better student orientation is to revise the curricula in upper secondary education. In Italy and Japan, policy reforms aim to respond to the changes in competencies required by the labour market and ease transition pathways through upper secondary education.

Policy focus

Italy has been reforming offerings at upper secondary education level since 2010, when the upper secondary curriculum was revised to improve student choices for optional subjects. In 2014/15 to enhance participation in work-based learning, 10% of registered

upper secondary students participated in a pilot programme for combined school-based and work-based traineeships (*alternanza scuola-lavoro*). These traineeships became compulsory for all pathways at upper secondary level in 2015, thus institutionalising work-based learning in the upper secondary curriculum. Further reform of the VET offering has been legislated in 2017 as part of the 2015 Good School Reforms (April 2017 implementing Decree No. 61 on vocational educational reform) (see the section on developing quality VET).

- **Progress or impact:** In the 2015/16 school year, 652 641 students in upper secondary schools participated in mandatory *alternanza scuola-lavoro* compared to 273 000 in the 2014/15 pilot phase. The traineeships are now mandatory, following the 2017 legislation. As of September 2017, approximately all 1.5 million students enrolled in the last three years of upper secondary education are expected to engage in *alternanza scuola-lavoro* experiences.

In 2009, **Japan** revised the National Curriculum Standard for upper secondary education, which serves as the fundamental standard of curriculum for students at this level. In general, it is revised once every ten years. The current National Curriculum Standard aims to allow students to acquire and use fundamental knowledge and skills and develop abilities and attitudes to proactively deal with various problems and solve them by thinking, making judgements and expressing themselves ("solid academic ability"); to cultivate self-discipline, empathy and co-operative spirit for others, and a rich sensibility ("richness in mind"); and to foster health and fitness for living a vigorous life ("healthy body"). The government aims to balance these elements to nurture students' "competencies for living". In the revision of the National Curriculum Standard, the declining results in the OECD's Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) from 2000 to 2006 were seriously taken into account (Nakayasu, 2016). The focus was put on aligning the skills taught to children to the key competences measured in PISA (MEXT, 2017; Nakayasu, 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** Evidence shows that overall, the adjustments made help promote school climate development, give teachers greater autonomy in designing the school curriculum, concentrate on "learning-centred education" and widen learning on the global and community scale (Aranil and Fukuya, 2010).

Developing quality vocational education and training

Box 5.2. Policy pointer: Developing quality vocational education and training

VET systems can boost economic development and help countries remain competitive in the globalised world by adapting to evolving skills' needs, through the expansion of a workforce with mid-level trade or technical and professional skills (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2011). Evidence shows that strong VET systems can help reduce youth employment and help economies become more resilient (OECD, 2011). In order to improve the overall quality of VET programmes, education systems must align the skills taught in VET systems with labour market demands, provide young people with sufficient career guidance, or also improve teacher quality through education, experience and increased workplace training (OECD, 2010; OECD, 2014a; OECD, 2015). In order to cater for lifelong learning and foster occupational mobility, it is essential as well that VET systems train young people to obtain generic and transferable skills (OECD, 2011).

- **Policy priorities identified (OECD):** 1) Raising the attractiveness of VET. 2) Creating or strengthening apprenticeship systems. 3) Encouraging employer engagement.
- **Principles of action identified (OECD):** 1) Make vocational education a more attractive option by making programmes more relevant to the labour market, facilitating pathways to tertiary education or higher-level VET (if at upper secondary level) and further involving employers in the establishment of curriculum. 2) Provide an apprenticeship system with VET programmes that reflect student preferences and employer needs, improve financial support for students in vocational education and strengthen collaboration of businesses and schools at the local level. 3) Encourage employer engagement by giving them more incentives, such as tax exemptions.

- **Summary of policy trend identified:** OECD education systems have implemented strategies and tools to improve the quality of VET programmes and policies to support students during their transition into post-secondary education or the labour market and to improve access to VET and its attractiveness. More recently implemented policies address targets in the same areas.
- **Examples of policies:**
  - **Improve quality of VET programmes:** IRL, ITA, LTV, NZL, PRT
  - **Support students' transitions into post-secondary education or the labour market:** ITA, NZL, SVN
  - **Improve access and attractiveness:** BEL (Fl), CAN, HUN, ITA, ESP

Note: See Annex C, Boxes C.12, C.13 and C.14 for a summary of education systems where increasing the attractiveness of VET, creating or strengthening apprentice systems and increasing employer engagement in VET are identified as relevant policy priorities, as well as selected related policies.

VET starts at age 15 in most OECD countries and includes education and training programmes created at upper secondary (initial) or post-secondary level that generally lead to a specific job or type of job. Unlike traditional academic paths in upper secondary and tertiary education, VET combines learning relevant theory with practical training. VET is confronted with the challenge of providing a good combination of specific and broader skills that allow students to enter the labour market, while enabling them to continue learning and evolve professionally later in life. Governments are increasingly considering VET a policy priority, although it is still viewed as having lower social status in some countries (OECD, 2011; OECD, 2017a). In several OECD countries, for example, VET has been insufficiently addressed in policy discussions, as more emphasis has been put on general academic education (OECD, 2011; OECD, 2017a).

Furthermore, some VET systems struggle to provide sufficient numbers of workplace training and trainers (OECD, 2011). Yet, in some OECD countries, VET has become an essential part of upper secondary education. The benefits of VET are manifold: qualifying young people for the labour market; equipping adults with essential skills; and filling the gap between high-level skills and low-level skills by developing a labour force with the mid-level trade, technical and professional skills needed to be competitive in the globalised world (OECD, 2011; OECD, 2015; OECD, 2017a). In some cases, a specific VET system is essential, as companies often only train their employees in their specific field, and employers might be unwilling to hire young people who are not immediately ready for the job (OECD, 2011).

VET can also help to decrease inequalities, as it provides alternative pathways to education and can foster economic development, through its capacity to adopt to evolving skills needs.

Education policy continuity and reform across the OECD, 2008-17

Responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17 and the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 show that the development of quality VET remains a policy priority for many OECD education systems. More than half of the older key education policies (i.e. those implemented between 2008 and 2014) are still in place, addressing strategies and tools to improve the quality of VET programmes, as in Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Other policies aim to support students during their transition into post-secondary education or the labour market, as in Australia, Belgium (Flemish Community), New Zealand and Slovenia. In Belgium (Flemish Community), Italy, Mexico, Norway and Spain, policies focus on improving access to VET and its overall attractiveness for potential students.

Education systems have also reported some recently implemented policies (i.e. starting in 2015) that aim to improve strategies and tools to enhance the quality of VET programmes, as in Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Chile, Germany, Italy, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. Further key policies recently implemented include those to support students' transitions into post-secondary education or the labour market, as in Canada, Finland, Italy and Slovenia, and to improve access to VET and its attractiveness, as in Australia, Canada, Hungary, Ireland, Japan and Latvia.

Table 5.2 classifies the key education policies reported to the OECD according to their scope of intervention: 1) **Comprehensive** (overarching general strategies using various policy tools); 2) **Content** (specifically related to content knowledge); and 3) **Targeted** (focused on a specific recipient or approach). It also indicates whether policies are: 1) **S**till in place (continued since the 2015 Education Policy Outlook comparative report and/or policies implemented between 2008 and 2014); 2) **M**odified (e.g. content, scope, coverage); replacing an older policy); or 3) **R**ecent (implemented as of 2015).

Table 5.2. Policies to develop quality vocational education and training, 2008-17

Code	Comprehensive policies	Code	Content	Code	Targeted policies
GENERAL STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE		**CURRICULUM AND QUALIFICATIONS**		**ACCESS**	
S	**Australia** [SN]: Preparing Secondary Students for Work framework (2014)	S	**Estonia** [SN]: Reforms of the VET system (Vocational Educational Institution Act, [2013], Vocational Education Standards [2013])	R	**Australia** [SN]: Smith Family's Learning for Life Program (2016-17 to 2019-20)
S	**Belgium (Fl)** [SN]: Ethical Trading Initiative for Young People Programme (2013)	S	**Latvia**: Reform of vocational education curricula (2008-20)	R	**Canada**: Canada Apprentice Loan (2015)
R	**Belgium (Fl)**: New model of dual learning (dual vocational learning) (2015/16)	S	**New Zealand**: Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (STPs, Trades Academies, 2009)	R	**Hungary**: Szabóky Adolf vocational scholarship programme (2016), formerly known as the Vocational School Scholarship Scheme
R	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Pact for Excellence in Teaching (2015-30)	S	**New Zealand** [SN]: Service Academies (2009)	R	**Ireland** [SN]: Action plan for apprenticeships (2016-20)
R	**Canada** [SN]: Harmonise apprenticeship training for 30 Red Seal trades by 2020 (2016)	S	**New Zealand**: Vocational Pathways as part of the Youth Guarantee (2010)	S	**Mexico** [SN]: Dual training system (2013)
R	**Chile** [SN]: National VET Policy (2016)	S M	**Norway** [SN]: Working Life Course for lower secondary students (2009)		
R	**Finland** [SN]: Reform of vocational upper secondary education (2018)	S	**Portugal**: Reforms to the VET offering at secondary level (2012-17)	**QUALITY ASSURANCE**	
R	**Germany** [SN]: Vocational training initiative (2016)	R	**Portugal** [SN]: National Credit System (2016)	S	**Sweden** [SN]: Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (2009)
S	**Ireland**: Education and Training Boards Bill (2012)	S	**Slovenia:** Reform of vocational education and training (2008-11)		
S	**Ireland**: SOLAS - Further Education and Training Authority (2013)	R	**Slovenia** [SN]: Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act (2015)		
S	**Ireland**: Further Education and Training Strategy (2014-19)	S	**Spain** [SN]: Under the Organic Law on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE, 2013), optional vocational pathways and new VET diploma		
S M	**Italy**: Higher Technical Institutes (2011)				
R	**Italy**: Jobs Act (2015)				
R	**Italy**: Decree No. 61 of 13 April 2017 (2017) modernising and streamlining				

	vocational educational offering
R	**Japan** [SN]: Partial amendment to the School Education Act to implement new higher education institutions (2017)
R	**Latvia** [SN]: Action Plan for 2016-2020 Development of Adult Education Provision and its Governance Model
R	**Portugal** [SN]: Qualifica Programme (2016)
R	**Slovak Republic** [SN]: National project for the support of dual education (2016)
R	**Slovak Republic** [SN]: Amendment on VET (2018)
R	**Slovenia** [SN]: VET modernisation measures (2016-21) (Apprenticeship Act, [2017], Amendments to the Vocational and Technical Education Act [2017])
S	**Spain:** Dual Vocational Training Model (2012)

Notes:
1. [SN]: Policy information was only included as an additional policy of potential interest to other countries in the country snapshots (Chapter 7).
2. See Annex B for information on policies reported in the previous cycle for which no further details were available.
Sources: EPO Survey 2016-17 and EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 for Austria, Belgium (Fl, Fr and Dg), Italy and Sweden (see the Reader's Guide).

Strategies and tools to improve quality of VET programmes

Improving the quality of VET programmes can help to position the VET educational pathway as an equivalent option to academic programmes (CEDEFOP, 2016). According to OECD evidence, overall quality of VET programmes can be improved by: 1) aligning the skills of VET systems to labour market demands; 2) equipping young people with enough career guidance; 3) advancing teacher quality by improving education and experience; and 4) enhancing workplace training (OECD, 2010; OECD, 2014a; OECD, 2015).

Some reported policy efforts have focused on reforming the VET structure. These include implementing guiding frameworks for students, as in Latvia and New Zealand, and revising current VET programmes to avoid overlap with other programmes, as in Italy. Portugal discontinued VET policies at the lower secondary level due to risks of early segregation and low-skilling, but continued its efforts to increase coverage and quality in VET at the upper secondary level. Policy efforts in other OECD countries, including Ireland, aim to align skills taught in education with those sought in the labour market.

Policy focus

As part of the ongoing VET reforms, **Ireland** implemented the Education and Training Boards Bill (2012), which aims to better integrate skills and training into education by replacing the 33 Vocational Education Committees with 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Implemented in 2013, the ETBs are overseen by a national representative body, Education and Training Boards Ireland. The services of the further education and training sector (FET) are mainly provided by the ETBs (ETBI, 2017). The programmes

develop skills for employed and unemployed individuals, assist students' transition into the workplace and provide literacy and numeracy skills to disadvantaged adults.

- **Progress or impact:** By mid-2014, the training centres previously operating under the Further Education and Training Authority (*An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna,* known as SOLAS) were transferred to one of the ETBs. The annual FET services plan outlines, among other elements, the programmes and courses to be delivered by the 16 ETBs (EC, 2015a).

Under the FET Act, the Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS) took effect in **Ireland** in 2013, replacing the previous authority (*An Foras Áiseanna Saothair*, known as FÁS). SOLAS is tasked with proposing a five-year strategy on FET, operating under the Department of Education and Skills. In co-operation with the 16 ETBs, SOLAS works on the integration, co-ordination and funding of several FET programmes (SOLAS, 2014). The first FET five-year strategy (2014-19) aims to meet the skills needs of the economy and to increase active inclusion, quality provision, integrated planning and funding, and the standing of FET (SOLAS, 2014). SOLAS has published annual FET services plans since 2014. Further FET strategies to improve the quality of VET include the FET Professional Development Strategy (2017-19), the Technology-Enhanced Learning in FET Strategy (2016-19) and a series of FET programme evaluations that are underway.

- **Progress or impact:** Regarding the 2014-19 strategy, 231 234 new entrants were registered in 2015, and 369 523 beneficiaries were reached in 19 career clusters. The overall investment was EUR 643.5 million (SOLAS, 2015). By 2016, the number of beneficiaries had increased to 339 283 and the number of new entrants to 245 400, while the budget decreased to EUR 634 million (SOLAS, 2016). The overall budget increased slightly to EUR 638 million in 2017. The number of beneficiaries decreased slightly, to 323 308, with 230 641 new entrants recorded in 33 skills clusters (compared to 19 skills clusters in 2016 (SOLAS, 2017a). As outlined in the 2017 service plan, the focus remained on long-term unemployed persons with low work intensity or limited working hours and the barriers to employment faced by those groups (SOLAS, 2017b).

Italy's Decree No. 61 of 13 April 2017 aims to enhance vocational education by innovating and revising the current programme offerings to avoid overlap between technical paths and regionally organised vocational training. Starting in the 2018/19 school year, the pathways offered in vocational institutes will be increased from 6 to 11, with the various curricula being aligned to sector priorities. The percentage of time dedicated to branch-related learning will increase to 40% in the first two years of study and to 50% in the last three years. Vocational institutes and regional VET providers will be part of the national network of vocational schools, to provide a more streamlined, efficient vocational offer (EC 2017b).

- **Progress or impact:** In 2017, an additional EUR 25 million was assigned to the dual system. In addition, the tax incentives for private employers were prolonged to 2018 in order to enhance youth employment (EC, 2017b).

The reform of vocational education curricula (2008-20) in **Latvia** aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of vocational education in accordance with the needs of the economy. **Latvia** is currently promoting sectoral qualifications structures and is restructuring the vocational educational curricula. Overall, it will develop or restructure occupational standards and qualification requirements to facilitate outcomes-based VET programmes, enhance the examination system and improve assessment of knowledge, skills and competences acquired beyond the formal education system. In 2016, Latvia made amendments to the state vocational secondary education standard to introduce a technical approach to general subjects. These measures aim to reduce contradictions between general subjects in general secondary education and vocational secondary education, as well as to strengthen STEM subjects in vocational education.

- **Progress or impact:** According to Latvia's survey responses regarding the reform of vocational education curricula (2008-20), the government has updated 80 out of 240 occupational standards and basic qualification requirements, has introduced a third of modular programmes and has formulated 13% of the examination content.

In **New Zealand**, Vocational Pathways, part of the Youth Guarantee set of initiatives, were launched in 2010. They provide a framework for students to show how their learning and achievement is valued in the workplace, by aligning learning to the skills needed for six broad industry areas. New Zealand has also introduced more information tools, including the Occupation Outlook, which contains information on education, employment and income for 60 key occupations, as well as FindMyPath, which helps students plan employment and qualification pathways.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2013 Youth Guarantee policy monitoring report for 2010-12 states that Vocational Pathways allow students, education providers and employers to visualise the importance of their education to the job market and future studies. By 2013, five pathways were ready to be put into practice the following year (Earle, 2013). Since 2014 there have been six pathways: construction and infrastructure; manufacturing and technology; primary; service industries; social and community services; and creative industries. Further online tools have been added, including Career Quest and Skill Matcher. The Vocational Pathways are renewed every year (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017a).

Portugal has introduced a number of reforms to the VET offering at secondary level. The reform of the VET upper secondary syllabus (2013) aimed to improve transitions between VET, general education and tertiary education (OECD, 2014b). In 2014, Portugal also established the legal framework for a model of Vocational Business Reference Schools (*Escolas de Referência do Ensino Profissional*), which aim to focus on priority sectors of the economy and contain a strong technical element (OECD, 2017c). At primary and lower secondary level, the pilot Specific Vocational Programmes initiative (2012) was discontinued, due to identified risks of causing early segregation and low-skilling. Portugal has also taken steps to improve the flexibility, mobility and quality of its VET programmes, by reorganising VET curricula (2016) to align with the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and developing a quality assurance framework for VET courses (2017) to align with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET).

- **Progress or impact:** The reform of the VET upper secondary syllabus, allows students to get a more work-based education by participating in vocational programmes. This has been achieved by increasing co-operation with the private sector (EC, 2015b). The offer of programmes has been expanded significantly and now encompasses a wide range of higher-skilled occupations, such as electronics and automation, information and communication technologies, and renewable energies. The ongoing VET development has changed the traditional bias in Portugal towards general programmes (OECD, 2017c). In 2015, 45% of upper secondary students in Portugal were enrolled in vocational programmes, close to the OECD average of 46% (OECD 2017b). The VET quality-assurance system was in the process of being implemented, starting in 2017. It is expected that from 2017/18 onwards, school networks will incorporate the quality-assurance status of dual vocational courses as part of the criteria for selecting course offers.

The Qualifica Programme (2016) builds upon previous efforts from **Portugal** in the area of adult education. It represents an increased focus on improving the education and skills of adults following a period of reduced resources for investment between 2011 and 2015. Qualifica Centres aim to provide more effective and broader response to adults' qualification needs by: 1) increasing the number of education centres to improve national coverage; 2) introducing a digital platform (Passport Qualifica), which records the academic achievements of adult and also recognises prior work-related or non-formal learning; and 3) aligning the qualifications to ECVET. The Qualifica network replaces the Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (*Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional*, 2012-14) which had replaced the previous network of New

Opportunities Centres (*Centros Novas Oportunidades*, 2005). With the Qualifica Centres now implemented as the specialised structures for adult education and training, the key objective of the enhanced programme is to establish upper secondary education as the minimum threshold of attainment.

- **Progress or impact:** Investment on adult education from 2011 to 2015 declined compared to previous levels, and opportunities for adults had decreased, but the launch of the Qualifica Programme in late 2016 has reversed this situation. In 2017, the number of Qualifica Centres increased to a total of 303, with 40 new centres established to achieve national coverage. In 2017, 125 893 adults participated, a 42% increase over 2016. Compared to 2015, an increase was achieved in the number of adults in training (88%), recognition of prior learning (125%) and those who had passed the final stage in training and received certification (282%).

Supporting students' transitions into post-secondary education or the labour market

Well-established VET systems can aid in the transition to the labour market by giving young people opportunities to gain professional experience, and also by providing them with a combination of specific and general skills that will help them to evolve professionally according to changes in their own interests and labour market needs (OECD, 2017a). Italy, New Zealand and Slovenia reported examples of policies aiming to strengthen these synergies.

Policy focus

Italy has implemented a major labour market reform (Jobs Act, 2015) which includes measures to support more effective transitions and support the labour market (OECD, 2017e; OECD, 2017f). Notably, a new regulation has been implemented for apprenticeships leading to qualifications awarded in the education system at upper secondary and tertiary level, with a national framework for off-the-job education and training at school. Courses leading to a professional certificate or a diploma will be integrated in regional VET systems of three and four years duration, as a dual system involving both schools and companies. With an additional year of apprenticeship, these courses will give access to VET-oriented tertiary education (OECD, 2017e). Higher training and research apprenticeships, which have been recently been reformed under the Jobs Act, can be also an opportunity to increase access to tertiary-level education while strongly connecting universities and non-academic higher-education institutions with the labour market (OECD, 2017g). To stimulate development of apprenticeships, a major reduction of the costs of labour has been enhanced. Two national pilot projects, promoted by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research and the Ministry of Labour, support implementation of this reform, especially for young people who want to acquire an upper secondary level qualification together with a regional VET professional qualification.

- **Progress or impact:** The OECD identified challenges ahead of the implementation, such as, the delivery of active labour market policies to increase the skills of unemployed in order to match the needs of firms (OECD, 2017f). To meet challenges of access to higher education, the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research has recently begun to increase the funds allocated to universities and is currently working to improve career guidance and strengthen the relevance of tertiary education. According to OECD evidence, the recent increase in spending on scholarships (the Stability Pact 2017) goes in the right direction to improve access to tertiary education. Overall, despite labour market reforms (such as the Jobs Act, and the improved employment situation), a great number of people still are out of employment or the labour force for longer periods (OECD, 2017g).

In **New Zealand**, several programmes are operating as part of the Youth Guarantee initiatives that aim to improve the transition from education to the labour market. Among

these are the Secondary-Tertiary Programmes or Trade Academies (2009) (STPs), which provide senior secondary school students with the opportunity to combine study at school with study in tertiary settings and/or in the workplace. STPs target upper secondary students interested in careers in trades or technology, by collaborating with schools, tertiary institutions, industry training organisations and employers. Students are enrolled in school full time, but typically spend three days per week at school and two days at a tertiary provider, doing an integrated learning programme towards NCEA level 2, which is often seen as a requirement for entry-level jobs (see NZQA, 2017), and industry-related certificates.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2015 STP examination report found that the programmes aid in maintaining students in learning and achieving. More than 80% of the students who graduated from the programme in 2013, had an attendance rate of 80% or more, obtained a minimum of NCEA level 2, and successfully transferred from secondary school. Aspects for improvement include developing an integrated STP curriculum and advancing the partnerships (ERO, 2015). The 2014 Youth Guarantee Monitoring Report, which monitored the education and employment outcomes of participants in programmes including the STPs, also found that a higher share of participants attained NCEA level 2 or equivalent than a group of non-participants with similar demographic and educational backgrounds. The programme aided in the process of employment. It also had a great effect on helping young people to avoid become NEETs at the beginning, and the effect was maintained for STPs one to two years after programme completion. As of 2016, STPs provided 6 190 available places for students, a tenfold increase since 2011 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017b).

As part of the reform of VET (2008-11), **Slovenia** introduced a competence-based approach in VET curricula (2008/11), with a modular structure in teaching and learning, and increased the share of practical training. The updated subject curricula in general upper secondary schools (*gimnazija*) (2008/09) and the updated curricula in basic schools (2011/12) also introduced core competencies in general education. Following the reform of vocational education (2008-11), practical training in the workplace increased, and 20% of the curriculum can now be designed in co-operation with social partners, particularly local companies.

- **Progress or impact:** The overall results of the Practical Training with Work programme in the period from 2008 to 2015 were positive. More than 26 000 students participated, and around 12 000 employers provided work placements. This all contributed to improved links between education institutions, employers and students, as well as better quality of training and matches between labour market needs and supply (Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, 2018). The total number of upper secondary students in VET increased above the EU average in 2015, and pilot apprenticeships were planned for 2017 (EC, 2017d).

Improving access to VET and its attractiveness

Several OECD education systems have implemented programmes to reform dual vocational learning, as in Belgium (Flemish Community) and Spain, or to provide financial support to students pursuing VET, as in Canada, Hungary and Italy.

Policy focus

In the **Flemish Community of Belgium**, a new model of dual vocational learning (*Schoolbank op de werkplek*) is underway, with pilots running since 2015/16 and general implementation starting during 2018/19. Students are trained in the workplace and in a centre for part-time education (CEDEFOP, 2017c). One component is an online tool (*werkplek duaal*) where companies can upload requests for getting their apprenticeship place accredited (Syntra Vlaanderen, 2017a). The tool started operating in 2016, and 8 938 accreditations were verified by 2017 (Syntra Vlaanderen, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** According to CEDEFOP (2017c), the reforms have already shown positive results. During the pilot stage, 34 schools took part, with 7 operating pathways and 126 apprentices. Also, 25 pioneers of the programme graduated in chemical process techniques. The number of approved accreditations on the *werkplek duaal* website increased to more than 10 000. In addition, 12 sectoral partnerships were active by then (Syntra Vlaanderen, 2017b).

The **Canada** Apprentice Loan (CAL), launched in 2015, provides interest-free loans of up to CAD 4 000 per period of technical training to help register apprentices in Red Seal trades with the costs of training (Government of Canada, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** The June 2017 evaluation report on the first phase of implementation of the programme found that there is demand for the programme, as otherwise employers provide little to no financial support to apprentices. As of 2015, 41% of eligible students took up a CAL. From 2015 to 2016, the administrative costs were CAD 4.2 million. Challenges remain in raising awareness among the target group and clarifying the terms of repayment, as they have not been clear to some recipients. The report indicates that the impact of the loans on completion rates will be addressed in the second phase of the evaluation, as more time is needed for data collection (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2017).

In 2016, the Szabóky Adolf vocational scholarship scheme (*Szabóky Adolf Szakképzési Ösztöndíj*) replaced the Vocational School Scholarship programme in **Hungary**. It aims to make more attractive to students the VET occupations and careers of skilled workers that the government has classified as being in high demand in the labour market. It also aims to prevent grade repetition and early school leaving of at-risk students. The programme is financed by the training sub-fund of the National Employment Fund. Merit-based scholarships are granted to students enrolled in full-time education for an occupation with shortages on the labour market. Eligible students are required to: 1) obtain training in 1 of the 20 shortage occupations, as defined each school year by the government and the development and training committees established in Hungary; 2) achieve a minimum grade-point average of 2.51 (5 is the highest) for vocational secondary school students and 3.01 for vocational grammar schools students; and 3) have less than seven hours of unjustified absence from school. If students fulfil the requirements, they receive EUR 32 per month in the first semester, which may be increased by EUR 32 to EUR 160 in the following semesters, depending on performance and type of vocational school attended. If their average falls below 2.51, secondary vocational school students have to take a catch-up course to improve their results and regain eligibility for the scholarship.

- **Progress or impact:** VET participation has been low in Hungary. In 2015, the overall participation of students in VET programmes was 23.2% in upper secondary VET, less than half the EU average of 47.3% (Eurostat, 2017a). Yet, at around 70%, Hungary has a comparatively high percentage of VET students in work-based learning compared to other EU countries, considering all programmes with a practical element taking place at a company or at a school (EC, 2017b). The programme, implemented in 2016, can potentially have a positive impact on early school leaving rates, which peaked at 12.4% in 2016, the highest rate since 2007 (Eurostat, 2017b). In 2014, almost half of the overall student dropout was students from vocational secondary school, which represented only 21% of the overall school population (Fehérvári, 2015). The programme has also the potential to improve the employment rates of VET graduates, which are generally high (84.4% in 2016). But VET graduates who complete the vocational secondary school track (*szakközépiskola*) are more prone to unemployment than students in vocational grammar schools (*szakgimnázium*) (EC, 2017e). Also, additional EU evidence asserts that the curricula revision potentially will not improve the level of basic skills and competencies (EC, 2017f). Adult participation rates in lifelong learning increased from 3.0% in 2011 to 6.3% in 2016, but remained below the EU average of 10.8% in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017c).

To better prepare students for rapid entry into the labour market, **Italy** created new Higher Technical Institutes (*Istituti Tecnici Superiori*, ITS, 2011) for short-cycle tertiary programmes, in close collaboration with employers and existing tertiary institutions. The 2015 Good School reform introduced measures to further boost the ITS, including: 1) increasing the share of performance-related funding to 30%; 2) enabling students with

four-year upper secondary vocational qualification to access ITS after completing a foundation year; 3) increasing permeability between ITS and academic higher education; and 4) simplifying administrative procedures.

- **Progress or impact:** Although, the data on employability of ITS graduates is encouraging (with 81% employability within 12 months of graduation according to national evidence), only 8 000 students followed an ITS programme in 2014, with an increase to 8 230 in 2017. This suggests an education pathway that could be capitalised on further. The OECD found that this policy is a good example of innovation, as represented in the positive outcomes of graduates' employability, especially in dynamic business districts. A further development is the establishment of a new university track, a three-year tertiary professional pathway (*Lauree Professionalizzanti*). As of 2018, this track is offered to students alongside the ITSs (OECD, 2017g).

Since 2012, **Spain** has promoted the Dual Vocational Training Model, with entrepreneurs co-responsible not only for the design of the training offer, but also for its implementation. Since its first year of implementation in 2012/13, the number of students has increased fourfold to 24 000, and the number of interested companies has increased to more than 10 000. This training model is proving effective for transferring knowledge between educational institutions and companies and, therefore, for improving the quality of training, the innovative potential of enterprises and students' employability.

- **Progress or impact:** According to a 2016 evaluation, the outcomes of this model have so far been positive. In the first year of implementation (2012-13), 173 schools, 513 companies and 4 292 students were involved in the programme. In 2016, 17, 854 schools, more than 10 000 companies and more than five times as many students (24 000) have participated (Government of Spain, 2017). At the same time, a 2016 evaluation of the Alliance for Dual Vocational Training (a private, non-governmental organisation) identified several challenges, including: 1) increasing the scale, while ensuring quality; 2) developing knowledge and awareness about the model to avoid the emergence of divergent VET models; 3) increasing co-operation among the different stakeholders; and 4) implementing a framework to guide the development of all regional models that clarifies all the elements essential to Dual VET (Bassols and Salvans,2016).

Improving the quality of tertiary education

Box 5.3. Policy pointer: Enhancing the quality of tertiary education

Expanding access to tertiary education has changed in scope and importance, and this has resulted in a greater diversity of study programmes offered in both higher education (tertiary-type A programmes) and vocational or professional programmes delivered by polytechnics, university colleges or technological institutions (tertiary-type B programmes) (OECD, 2008; OECD, 2015; OECD, 2017a). Given such great diversity, increasing quality and relevance to the labour market are key issues, as is ensuring that tertiary education can support and guide the country's mid-term and long-term needs for economic, social and cultural development.

- **Policy priorities identified (OECD):** 1) Increasing access to and quality of tertiary education. 2) Increasing internationalisation of the higher education sector.
- **Principles of action identified (OECD):** 1) Reduce financial barriers to education, especially for disadvantaged students, and increase career guidance so students can make well-informed decisions about their orientation and career. 2) Raise education funding and quality standards, improve teaching quality, and make tertiary education more responsive to labour market needs. 3) Further encourage internationalisation of the higher education sector as a way to improve its quality.
- **Summary of policy trend identified:** Reported policies targeting tertiary education continue to focus on enhancing access to and quality of tertiary education, by supporting students from specific population groups as well as increasing internationalisation in national education systems. Higher education frameworks have been modified to improve quality, access and relevance of education for more students and meet the needs of the labour market. More recent policies reported address similar objectives, as well as quality assurance methods in higher education.
- **Examples of policies:**
  - **Access for young people with a disadvantaged background:** AUS, NZL

– **Improving quality and access for all, labour market relevance, and internationalisation:** BEL (Fl), FIN, JPN, LVA, SVK, SVN

Note: See Annex C, Boxes C.15, C.16 and C.17 for a summary of education systems where increasing access, quality and internationalisation of higher education are identified as relevant policy priorities, as well as selected related policies.

As noted in Chapter 4, OECD countries continue to set policy priorities on increasing access, quality and internationalisation of tertiary education. The benefits of tertiary education are manifold, including higher employment rates and wages and quicker recovery rates after economic downturns in comparison to those who did not attain tertiary education (OECD, 2017a). In 2016, the OECD average of 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education was 43%, up from 26% in 2000 (OECD, 2017a).

Tertiary education systems are facing dramatic overhauls, with a trend towards mass participation and increasingly diversified and flexible types of programmes. In this context, broad participation in tertiary education is only one side of the coin. The quality and relevance of education are equally important to ensure that tertiary graduates are effectively equipped to participate in the new economy and society at large, and that they are prepared to subsequently engage in lifelong learning activities to update their knowledge and skills as the knowledge frontier moves on.

Furthermore, in a globalised world, the internationalisation of education is increasingly important. However, on average, only 5.6% of those enrolled in tertiary programmes in OECD countries are international students (OECD, 2017a). At the doctoral level, international students make up more than 25% of all students. This has been attributed to the fact that some countries have more appealing doctoral programmes than others (OECD, 2017a).

Education policy continuity and reform across the OECD, 2008-17

Responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17 and the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 suggest that improving the quality of higher education continues to be an area of policy action and that there is continuity in these policies. Almost half of the reported older key education policies in this area (i.e. those implemented between 2008 and 2014) can be considered as still in place. These policies, mostly targeted, focus on access, internationalisation or quality assurance to strengthen accessibility and quality of tertiary education. For example, Australia, New Zealand and Turkey have policies in place that aim to improve access to tertiary education for young people with disadvantaged backgrounds. Some education systems have reported more content-related strategies, which include implementation of tertiary education frameworks and strategy modifications to improve quality and access, labour market relevance and internationalisation, as in Australia, Belgium (Flemish Community), Ireland, Japan, and the Slovak Republic.

In addition to these areas of policy action, education systems also reported some recently implemented key education policies (i.e. starting in 2015) on quality and access, although the scope and approaches vary across countries. Germany, Latvia, Slovenia and Sweden reported policies on quality assurance methods. Other policies focus on improving access to tertiary education for young people with disadvantaged backgrounds, as in Chile and France, or granting alternative study programmes, as in Belgium (French Community). Another important policy area also remains the internationalisation of higher education, as in Latvia and Slovenia.

Table 5.3 classifies the key education policies reported to the OECD according to their scope of intervention: 1) **Comprehensive** (overarching general strategies using various policy tools); 2) **Content** (specifically related to content knowledge); and 3) **Targeted** (focused on a specific recipient or approach). It also indicates whether policies are: 1) **S**till in place (continued since the 2015 Education Policy Outlook comparative report and/or policies implemented between 2008 and 2014); 2) **M**odified (e.g. content, scope, coverage); replacing an older policy); or 3) **R**ecent (implemented as of 2015).

Table 5.3. Policies to strengthen quality and access in tertiary education, 2008-17

Code	Comprehensive policies	Code	Content	Code	Targeted policies
	GENERAL STRATEGY		**STRUCTURE**		**ACCESS**
R	**Germany** [SN]: Treaty on the accreditation of higher education (2018)	S	**Belgium (Fl)**: Short-cycle tertiary education as part of the national qualifications process (2009)	S M	**Australia**: Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP, 2010)
S	**Ireland** [SN]: Surveys for the improvement of quality (2014, 2015, 2017)	R	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Decree that implements dual vocational education in higher education for certain fields of study and programme types (2016)	R	**Chile** [SN]: New Access System for higher education
R	**Latvia**: Strategy for improving higher education system (2014-20)	S M	**Slovak Republic**: Amendment to the Higher Education Act (2013)	R	**Chile** [SN]: Tuition-free higher education (2016)
S M	**New Zealand**: Tertiary Education Strategy (2010-15 and 2014-19)			R	**France** [SN]: Programme of Assistance to the Emergency Hospitality of Scientists in Exile (PAUSE, 2017)
R	**Sweden** [SN]: National system for quality assurance of higher education (2017)			S	**Turkey** [SN]: Facilitation of Procedures for Equivalence of Diplomas for Syrian students (2013)
			GOVERNANCE		**INTERNATIONALISATION**
		R	**Latvia**: Academic Information Centre (AIC, 2015)	S	**Australia** [SN]: New Colombo Plan (2013)
				S M	**Finland:** International strategy for higher education and research (2017-25) (previously Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions, 2009-15)
				S	**Japan** [SN]: 300 000 International Students Plan (2008)
			QUALIFICATIONS	C	**Japan**: Go Global Japan (2012)
		S	**Belgium (Fl)**: A national qualifications' structure (2009-13)	S M	**Japan**: Revitalisation Strategy (2013)
		R	**Slovenia**: Amendments to the Higher Education Act (2016)	S	**Japan**: Top Global University Project (2014)
				R	**Latvia**: Internationalisation Strategy (2015)
				R	**Slovenia**: Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education (2016-20)

Notes:
1. [SN]: Policy information was only included as an additional policy of potential interest to other countries in the country snapshots (Chapter 7).
2. See Annex B for information on policies reported in the previous cycle for which no further details were available.
Sources: EPO Survey 2016-17 and EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 for Austria, Belgium (Fl, Fr and Dg), Italy and Sweden (see the Reader's Guide).

Improving access to tertiary education for young people with a disadvantaged backgrounds

Although access to tertiary education has increased remarkably across OECD countries in recent years, gaps remain in terms of access for young people with disadvantaged backgrounds. Overall, adults are better educated today, but some are still left behind. If at least one parent achieved tertiary education, adults aged 30-59 continue to have a greater likelihood of completing tertiary education than adults of the same age group with no parent having attained tertiary education. Today, the gap in returns is increasing between highly educated workers and those with low levels of education. It is therefore essential that education policies help to bridge the gap. (OECD, 2017a)

As access possibilities are still limited for certain student population groups, Australia, Chile and New Zealand reported that they have programmes in place to aid students from disadvantaged backgrounds (see Chile country snapshot in Chapter 7).

Policy focus

In **Australia**, the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP, 2010) aims to ensure that Australians from low socio-economic backgrounds who have the ability to study at university have the opportunity to do so. Through its Participation and Partnerships components, HEPPP provides funding to assist universities to undertake activities and implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low socio-economic backgrounds, as well as improving the retention and completion rates of those students. Partnerships are created with primary and secondary schools, VET institutions, universities and other stakeholders to raise the aspirations and build the capacity of disadvantaged students to participate in higher education. Funding for these two components is provided to universities based on the number of enrolled students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The third component, that National Priorities Pool, funds projects that target and support building an evidence base for future equity policies, testing new equity interventions at the national and institutional levels, and improving implementation of HEPPP at these levels (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017a; Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2018).

- **Progress or impact:** A 2016 evaluation found that HEPPP is positively influencing the quantity and rigour of higher education equity activities and policies overall. It concluded that HEPPP has provided wide-ranging support to a large number of students and institutions between 2010 and 2015. Some 2 679 projects were implemented at the 37 eligible universities. Over 310 000 students have participated in HEPPP projects, with additional students supported in schools and other institutions. At least 2 913 partner organisations participated in HEPPP outreach activities (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017).

The 2014-19 Tertiary Education Strategy in **New Zealand** and the previous 2010-15 Tertiary Education Strategy help to guide tertiary education investment decisions. Priority areas in the 2014-19 strategy remained boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika students and strengthening research-based institutions. The 2010-15 strategy focused on increasing the number of young people moving successfully from school into tertiary education and increasing the number of people under 25 who achieve national qualifications at level 4 and above. The 2014-19 strategy covers these policy areas by focusing further on increasing education outcomes by getting at-risk young people into a career. Compared to the 2010-15 strategy, its focus has moved from improving literacy, language and numeracy skills outcomes in lower-level study to improving adult literacy and numeracy. The 2010-15 priority area of improving educational and financial

performance of providers was dropped, but there are two new policy areas: 1) delivering skills for industry so that students can smoothly transfer to the labour market; and 2) increasing international connections (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2013; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017c).

- **Progress or impact:** The 2017 evaluation and monitoring report specifies achievements and challenges on the six priority areas up to 2015. On Priority 1 (delivering skills for industry), the number of apprenticeships has increased through the New Zealand Apprenticeship scheme. In 2015, 42 000 students took part in an apprenticeship, with the government aiming to increase the number to 50 000 by 2020. Also, the overall number of NEETs aged 15-19 dropped to 7% in 2015 from 8% in 2014, while the rate of NEETs aged 20-24 stayed at 18%. Furthermore, the share of 18-year-olds who graduated with NZQF level 2 qualifications increased by 4.7% from 2013 to 2015, with a completion rate of 83.3% in 2015. Also, the share of 25-34 year-olds, with a level 4 qualification and above rose from 53.6% in 2013 to 57.1% in 2016. Overall completion rates at level 4 and above have increased for Māori and Pasifika students. But some challenges remain. For example, the overall percentage of those with a bachelor degree remains below the general population (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017c).

Tertiary education frameworks and strategy modifications: Improving quality and access for all, labour market relevance and internationalisation

Today's economies face the challenge of becoming innovation-driven, skills-based and globalised. As tertiary education aims to equip students with the skills needed for the labour market, education systems must also support students to develop transversal skills, which will help them better adapt to a diversity of contexts, as well as provide clarity for students, employers and society on what these skills are. Furthermore, while studying abroad can help students gain skills needed in the labour market, it remains difficult to establish regular interactions between local and international students so that both can benefit from mutual exchanges (OECD, 2017h).

Countries are working to address the relevance of tertiary-level qualifications in different ways. For example, the Slovak Republic has been reforming its accreditation system for tertiary education, while Belgium (the Flemish Community) has implemented a new pathway for students at the tertiary level. Latvia has implemented policies to align its higher-education system with the labour market, as well as to promote mobility activities to attract students and academic personnel from abroad. Slovenia has implemented a strategy that addresses a broad range of internationalisation aspects, such as international mobility.

Japan has put in place a policy that aims, among other things, to provide incentives to international students to study in Japan and remain in the country after graduation. Finland has also implemented measures to make Finnish higher education more attractive to international students.

Policy focus

Between 2009 and 2013, **Belgium's Flemish Community** implemented a national qualifications' structure that includes measures such as short-cycle tertiary education (*Hoger beroepsonderwijs* [Higher Vocational Education], HBO5 or SCHE EQF level 5). This new level was added to expand access to higher education and meet labour market needs. The qualifications structure will be further expanded with the systematic definition of the competences of professional qualifications to be obtained through schooling. This process is carried out by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training in co-operation with employers and representatives of the different business and industry sectors.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2011 results of the pilot project pointed out that the new level corresponds to a paradigm shift, which requires major efforts to move from adult education to a higher education programme at SCHE level 5 (Kirsch and Beernaert, 2011). In 2016, a concept note was put forward by the Flemish government on the expansion of the HBO5 (short-cycle/associate degree). In 2017, a framework on the new HBO5 education transformation (*Kader Toets Nieuwe HBO-5 Opleiding Omvorming*) was published. It aims to provide clarity on the quality guarantees, standards and criteria, which should be used as a basis to judge the quality of converted HBO-5 programmes. More specifically, the framework includes all the criteria for a HBO-5 decree: educational content and process, material facilities, quality of staff and internal quality assurance (NVAO, 2017).

In recent years, **Finland** has been working on strategies for internationalisation to further improve its position in the global market for higher education. The goals outlined in the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland (2009-15) include increasing the quality and attractiveness of institutions. Targets include almost doubling the number of non-Finnish students enrolled in higher education over the period of the plan (from 3.5% in 2007 to 7% by 2015), and increasing mobility of teachers and researchers (Ministry of Education, 2009). The new International Strategy for Higher Education and Research (2017-25), published in 2017, aims to strengthen the quality, visibility and attractiveness of Finnish higher education and research by introducing new measures, such as a programme to enhance international interest in Finnish research, and facilitating access to education and employment in Finland (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017, 2018).

- **Progress or impact:** According to evidence from the Finnish National Agency for Education, total numbers of international degree students have been increasing annually, from 10 066 in 2006 to 21 061 in 2016, and the target of a 7% overall share of international students in higher education degree programmes was achieved in 2016.

Japan has been undertaking different efforts for the internationalisation of its Higher Education sector. In 2014, the Government of Japan issued the Report by the Commission on Improving Living Environment for International Students, with the target of having 300 000 international students in Japan. The Revitalisation Strategy, implemented in 2013 and revised in 2015, aims to increase the numbers of overseas students in Japan and Japanese students studying abroad. Based on these reports and strategic plans, the government is providing support to international students to find accommodation, communicate with Japanese students and find employment after graduation. It is also increasing scholarships to make studying in Japan more attractive. The government also targeted worldwide strategic priority regions from which to attract promising international students. The Go Global Japan programme (2012) and the Top Global University Project (2014) also provided priority support and financial assistance to universities that are making thorough efforts to encourage internationalisation.

- **Progress or impact:** From 2016 to 2017, the number of international students increased by 11.6% to 267 042 (JASSO, 2017).

Latvia is working on its higher education system to promote conformity with labour market needs (including STEM) and employability of students. This is primarily being done by modernising the technical base of higher education institutions and making more effective use of resources. Financial support is provided by EU funds from 2014 to 2020 for the promotion of appropriate and modern study environments for STEM subjects and the development of joint doctoral study programmes and study programmes in the EU languages. The Latvian Government also recognises the importance of reducing the fragmentation of study programmes, promoting the consolidation of resources, and developing joint study programmes and strategic specialisation of higher education institutions.

- **Progress or impact:** In order to introduce the new competence-based education standard, a total of five computer science programme pilot projects were offered to schools for trial during the 2015/16 school year, and 157 schools participated. The pilot project on computer science was successful for all participating schools during the first academic year and stimulated significant interest among pupils and teachers. The launch and implementation of the computer science education programme are supported both financially and in terms of organisation by Foundation IT Education Fund, with the international company Accenture (Latvian branch). Within this project, a portal, Start(it), was created that provides learning and methodological material for each class that can be used by any education institution. The computer science programme will be implemented in all schools during the 2018/19 school year (Government of Latvia, 2017).

In 2015, to further strengthen the quality assurance of the higher education system, **Latvia** passed a regulation to transfer the function of accreditation and licensing to the Academic Information Centre (AIC), which has established the Quality Agency for Higher Education to carry out these functions in Latvia. The AIC ensures licensing and accreditation of study programmes and monitoring and evaluation of their quality (EC, 2017c). The Centre intends to be included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education by 2018, before the next large accreditation round scheduled for 2019 (EC, 2016b). The overall budget was set at EUR 1.5 million for capacity building with a contribution of EUR 1.27 million from the European Structural and Investment Funds (Government of Latvia, 2015).

- **Progress or impact:** This is part of the World Bank's evaluation of internal governance, funding systems and human resources policies of higher education institutions. The World Bank will make recommendations for the design of structural fund programmes, which then may allow for more qualitative tertiary education in the future. The World Bank study is to be completed in April 2018 (EC, 2017g).

As part of its Internationalisation Strategy (2015), **Latvia** aims to attract academic personnel from abroad. For example, it plans to develop joint programmes in the EU languages and joint doctoral programmes. The 2015 Erasmus+ activity for International mobility of students and personnel includes mobility activities of 3-12 months for students, and from five days to two months for academic and general personnel of higher-education institutions. To improve visibility and promote Latvian higher education abroad, the government has set up websites (www.studyinlatvia.eu and www.studyinlatvia.lv), and Latvia is represented at different venues abroad designed to attract potential foreign students.

- **Progress or impact:** In 2016/17, 8 137 foreign students were in Latvia, and 1 738 Latvian students participated in exchange programmes. Twelve joint programmes were developed with higher education institutions from abroad, and the number of foreign academic personnel working in Latvia increased to 244. EC evidence indicates that in 2016, the share of foreign-born graduates of tertiary education (62.4%) was much higher than the share of native-born graduates, which was (42%), compared to the EU averages of 35.3% of foreign-born graduates of tertiary education and 39.9% of native-born graduates) (EC, 2017c).

A reform is expected to enter into force in 2018 to provide greater flexibility to the higher education system in the **Slovak Republic**. The 2013 amendment to the Higher Education Act resulted in stricter rules for reaccreditation of most universities within the "complex accreditation" process. It also took into account internal systems of quality control. Complex accreditation is a process under which, every six years, the Accreditation Commission reviews and evaluates education and research and development activities of individual universities, along with corresponding personal, material and technical information. The intention of the next reform is to simplify the accreditation process, opening it up to applicants from abroad or to those who have been professionally active in the industry segment relevant to the field of study, and to reinforce the staff and competence of the Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is proposed to be awarded based on fields of study rather than programmes of study. Academic titles will be cancelled, and only the corresponding functional positions retained (OECD, 2015).

- **Progress or impact:** In 2017, reforms to the Accreditation Committee were put forward: to fulfil international standards; to become a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); and to increase the transparency and independence of accreditation (granting accreditation to study fields rather than study programmes) (EC, 2016c; EC, 2017h). According to the European Commission, aiding the Commission to become a member of the ENQA could help to improve the work of the Commission (EC, 2015c). It was found that, although there is consensus on the need to fulfil European guidelines on accreditation, stakeholders have divergent perspectives on how to approach it. The Higher Education Council and the Rectors Conference have expressed dissatisfaction with the legislative proposal (EC, 2017h).

In 2016, **Slovenia** adopted the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education (2016-20) with five key areas: international mobility; quality international co-operation in research and development; promotion of intercultural competences; targeting priority regions and countries; and promotion, support and monitoring of implementation of the Strategy.

- **Progress or impact:** According to government information, the implementation action plan covers 25 goals and over 50 measures, with a total budget of EUR 57 million, of which EUR 18 million is dedicated to international co-operation in research and development. An example of the measures is the Study in Slovenia webpage (www.studyinslovenia.si), which aims to promote Slovenia as a study destination.

Improving student transitions across education pathways and the labour market

Box 5.4. Policy pointer: Supporting transitions across education pathways and the labour market

Successful transition of students from education into the labour market can be achieved by addressing the length and quality of schooling, labour market conditions, the economic environment and culture (OECD, 2017a). Countries are increasingly confronted with changes in skills needs that, if left unaddressed, can leave students facing skills mismatch and employment shortages (OECD, 2016a). Education systems therefore need to design systems that establish links with the labour market to equip students with relevant skills demanded by employers and society (OECD, 2017a).

- **Policy priorities identified (OECD**): 1) Reducing high levels of skills mismatch. 2) Facilitating school-to-work transition for students. 3) Decreasing levels of youth unemployment and NEETs.
- **Principles of action identified (OECD):** 1) Make vocational education and training more relevant to labour market needs by building stronger links between employers and education providers and ensuring and supporting possibilities for lifelong learning. 2) Ensure more employer engagement and work-based training to better bridge the transition from education to the labour market, and provide students with more information about education pathways and labour market needs. 3) Facilitate the transition from education to work, give students more orientation guidance and favour policies that encourage students to go back to school.
- **Summary of policy trend identified:** There has been stability in terms of the topics addressed by the policies still in place and those more recently implemented. Policies to improve transitions have intended to strengthen the links between education qualifications and the labour market, foster the connection of employers with job seekers, implement funding techniques to help individuals gain better access to training, reintegrate NEETs into the labour market, and generally increase co-operation and co-ordination between tertiary education and stakeholders. More recent policies focus on similar policy areas.
- **Examples of policies:**
  - **Establishing new possibilities for training and reactivating the skills of adults:** AUS, FIN, IRL, ITA, LVA, NZL, SVN
  - **Connecting employers with job seekers:** CAN, IRL, SVN

Note: See Annex C, Boxes C.18, C.19 and C.20 for a summary of education systems where addressing skills mismatch, decreasing levels of youth unemployment and NEETs and improving transitions to the labour market are identified as relevant policy priorities, as well as selected related policies.

Evidence shows that some factors that influence student success in the transition from education into the labour market are the length and quality of schooling, labour market conditions, the economic environment and culture (OECD, 2017a).

Today, countries are faced with considerable changes in skills needs, which can evolve into skills mismatch and shortages if left unaddressed (OECD, 2016a). As discussed in Chapter 4, international evidence and countries' responses on policy priorities show the importance of addressing skills mismatch to facilitate transitions. Among the participating countries in the 2016 OECD Survey of Adult Skills (OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), the OECD average on field-of-study mismatch was 40%, while qualification mismatch was below 40% and literacy mismatch was below 20% (OECD, 2016b). In another OECD study in 29 countries in 2016, the majority of employers reported that they were unable to find workers with the skill sets needed by their companies (OECD, 2016a). At the same time, a considerable share of graduates in these countries reported having difficulties finding jobs that fit their qualifications (OECD, 2016c). Education systems therefore need to design systems that equip students with the skills demanded by the labour market and society (OECD, 2017b).

As previously discussed, policies on student dropout, improving VET education and enhancing tertiary education are also related to improving transitions. However, the focus of this section is on policies aimed at facilitating transitions by offering incentives to pursue further education, and engaging with relevant stakeholders by connecting employers with the potential job seekers.

Education policy continuity and reform across the OECD, 2008-17

Responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17 and the EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 demonstrate that improving student transitions across education pathways and the labour market also continue to be an area of policy action for many OECD countries, with comprehensive policies reported across the period analysed. Two-thirds of the reported key education policies are still in place in the participating countries. Overall, the policies aim to increase engagement between students, employers and other stakeholders, improve curriculum and standards to reflect student and labour market needs, and emphasise careers in technical and innovative sectors.

Older key education policies (i.e. those implemented between 2008 and 2014) reported as still in place aim to strengthen links between education qualifications and the labour market, as in Belgium (Flemish Community), France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Korea and New Zealand. In the same way, Canada, Ireland and Finland are also working to strengthen the connection of employers with job seekers. Australia has implemented funding techniques to help individuals gain better access to training. Other policies focus on the reintegration of NEETs into the labour market, as in Italy, Latvia, Portugal and Slovenia. Another policy focus is increasing co-operation and co-ordination between tertiary education and stakeholders, as in Ireland and Slovenia. Austria has a policy in place to keep students in the system, while also preparing them for higher education.

Other participating OECD education systems reported some recently implemented key education policies (i.e. starting in 2015) that address the establishment of better links between educational levels and the labour market, as in Belgium (French Community), Canada, Finland and France. The French Community in Belgium also allocated funding to support projects related to both professional teaching skills and students transitioning into the labour market. Other policies focus on updating qualifications to provide education orientation to adults to allow for lifelong learning, as in Austria, Latvia and Portugal, or transitions from lower to upper secondary education, such as in Turkey.

Table 5.4 classifies the key education policies reported to the OECD according to their scope of intervention: 1) **Comprehensive** (overarching general strategies using various policy tools); 2) **Content** (specifically related to content knowledge); and 3) **Targeted** (focused on a specific recipient or approach). It also indicates whether policies are: 1) **S**till in place (continued since the 2015 Education Policy Outlook comparative report and/or policies implemented between 2008 and 2014); 2) **M**odified (e.g. content, scope, coverage); replacing an older policy); or 3) **R**ecent (implemented as of 2015).

Table 5.4. Policies to improve transitions between education and the labour market, 2008-17

Code	Comprehensive policies	Code	Comprehensive policies	Code	Comprehensive policies
	GENERAL STRATEGY		**YOUTH GUARANTEE**		**QUALIFICATIONS**
S	**Australia**: National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform (2012-17)	S	**Finland**: Youth Guarantee (2013)	S	**Austria** [SN]: New Upper Level Scheme (2012)
S	**Belgium (Fl)** [SN]: An Agreement between the Flemish Government and the Social Partners on Professional Careers (2012)	S M	**Italy**: Youth Guarantee (2014)	R	**Austria** [SN]: Federal Act on the National Qualifications Framework (2016)
R	**Canada** [SN]: Increase employer engagement for improved job opportunities and outcomes for apprentices (2016)	S M	**Latvia**: Youth Guarantee (2013)	R	**France** [SN]: Reforms of upper secondary education terminal examination in general and technological tracks and the transformation of upper secondary education (2018)
S	**Germany** [SN]: Education Offensive in the Digital Agenda (2014-17)	S	**New Zealand**: Youth Guarantee (2010)	S	**Korea** [SN]: The National Competency Standards (2013)
S	**Iceland** [SN]: Adult Education Act (2010)	S M	**Portugal** [SN]: Youth Guarantee (2013, 2016- 20)	R	**Portugal** [SN]: The Passport Qualifica (2016)
S	**Ireland**: Springboard programme (2011)	S M	**Slovenia:** Youth Guarantee (2014)	R	**Turkey** [SN]: New system for transitioning to upper secondary education (2017/18)
S M	**Ireland**: Action Plan for Jobs (2012)				**ACCESS AND LABOUR MARKET RELEVANCE**
S	**Ireland**: Regional clusters (2014)			R	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Allocation of funds to projects aiming to equip young people with relevant skills and support their transition into the labour market (2015)
R	**Latvia** [SN]: Action Plan for 2016-20 Development of Adult Education Provision and its Governance Model			R	**Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Decree on higher education defined an alternative pathway for the acquisition of higher education qualifications in specific areas leading to jobs where there are skills shortages (2016)
				S	**Canada:** Job Bank website (2014)
				R	**Finland** [SN]: 19 measures to promote the well-being of children and young people, prevent exclusion and reduce the number of NEET youths (part of the Government Action Plan 2017-19)
				S	**Slovenia:** Creative Path to Practical Knowledge (2007-13, 2014-20)

Notes:
1. [SN]: Policy information was only included as an additional policy of potential interest to other countries in the country snapshots (Chapter 7).
2. See Annex B for information on policies reported in the previous cycle for which no further details were available.
Sources: EPO Survey 2016-17 and EPO Country Profiles published in 2017 for Austria, Belgium (Fl, Fr and Dg), Italy and Sweden (see the Reader's Guide).

Establishing new possibilities for training and reactivating the skills of adults

Some OECD education systems have implemented comprehensive policies to train people with the skills needed in the labour market, as in Ireland, and to align overall qualifications to the labour market, reduce duplication and facilitate transfers between programmes, as in New Zealand. Other programmes aim to advance access to training and participation in the labour market, as in Australia, Finland, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia. The Youth Guarantee has also been implemented as a policy across EU countries (based on a commitment of EU countries in 2013) in order to provide the population under age 25 with better opportunities for employment, continued education, apprenticeships and traineeships within the first four months after leaving formal education or becoming unemployed (EC, 2018).

Policy focus

Australia's National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform (NP, 2012-17) aimed to improve access to training and participation in the labour market. The NP outlined the targets and structures of intergovernmental VET funding and reform, from 2012-13 to 2016-17 (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015). Under the NP, all jurisdictions were required to provide access to training subsidised by the government at Australian Qualifications Framework level 3 to unqualified working Australians of any age. All jurisdictions were also required to support the expansion of the Commonwealth's income-contingent loan policy, which helps to reduce tuition costs. The Australian Government provided funding to state and territory government training systems through funding associated with this agreement. The NP expired in June 2017, and discussions are underway with the states and territories on a new National Partnership Agreement for the Skilling Australians Fund (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017b).

- **Progress or impact:** Performance reporting on the NP states that it was on track in 2016 (PM&C, 2017). The 2015 Review of the NP identified results, such as increased accessibility and choice, compared to the baseline years of 2008-09, while course numbers declined (the improvements seem partly due to the establishment of entitlements in every state and territory). Positive developments were also identified in transparency actions, although it was found that further data has to be collected in future to achieve significant advantages. At the same time, some difficulties were encountered in assuring quality, as the number of training sessions increased. In regard to VET training outcomes, the national target of 375 000 completions was already surpassed in 2013. Recommendations for reforms in training systems include implementation based on industry and student demand (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015).

Finland's Youth Guarantee (2013) aims to help young people complete post-basic qualifications and find employment. The guarantee provides everyone under age 25 and recent graduates under age 30 a job, a traineeship, a study place, a workshop or a labour market placement within three months of becoming unemployed. Finland presented the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in 2014. A key feature was the rollout across the country, starting in 2015, of One-Stop Guidance centres for young people, which provide all relevant assistance in one location (EC, 2017i).

- **Progress or impact:** According to EC evidence, results of monitoring show that the scheme reached 71.2% of all NEETs under age 25 in 2015, an improvement of more than 4 percentage points over 2014 (67.1%). While the share of NEETS in Finland increased between 2013 and 2015, there was a decrease in the rate of inactive NEETs, which may have been as a result of engagement with the Youth Guarantee process. Finland's remaining challenges include ensuring stable funding and further improving the skills and employability of young people (EC, 2017i). In 2016, NEET rates decreased by more than 1 percentage point over 2015 levels (13.2% in 2016 compared to 14.3% in 2015).

Since 2011, the Springboard Programme in **Ireland** has funded free part-time courses in higher education for unemployed individuals in areas with labour market skills shortages.

As of the academic year 2017-18, homemakers and employed people can also participate in the programme (HEA and Department of Education and Skills, 2017). Since 2015, the programme also includes skills conversion courses in information and communication technology (ICT), as well as Springboard courses under the umbrella of Springboard+ (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). The ICT Conversion Courses were introduced under the joint Government-Industry ICT Action Plans. The Action Plans, published in 2012 and 2014, contain a range of measures to build the domestic supply of ICT graduates, including the roll out of a full-time intensive ICT skills conversion programme designed and delivered in partnership with industry. Since 2016, the ICT skills conversion programme is available on a part-time basis, enabling those in employment to upskill or reskill in this area. In addition, employed people who wish to upskill or reskill in the Biopharma/Med-tech sector, as well as homemakers, are eligible to apply to participate in Springboard+ 2017. Further expansion to allow all those in employment to access Springboard courses on a free or heavily subsidised basis is planned under Springboard+ 2018.

- **Progress or impact:** An evaluation of the Springboard+ programme of 2011-16, states that since 2011 the average participation rate per year was 6 129, with 88% of the available places taken. Springboard+ 2016 provided an additional 5 825 places, and 6 471 places were provided under Springboard+ 2017. From 2011 to 2014, the completion rate of Springboard+ courses was 72%. A significant proportion of the 28% who did not complete courses did so due to taking up employment. The outcomes of 2011-14 show that of the 76% reported outcomes of participants 3-6 months after graduation, 53% were in employment, 19% pursued further study and 28% were looking for work. The highest employment rates were found among participants of the ICT skills conversion classes of 2013 (78%) and 2014 (73%) (HEA, 2016a). The number of graduates from ICT-related programmes at levels 8 to 10 increased from 2 362 in 2012 to 3 341 in 2014, as reported in the 2nd System Performance Report for Higher Education. Also, through Springboard+ and ICT Conversion Courses, more than 3 500 graduates achieved ICT qualifications at levels 6 to 9 in 2014 and 2015 (HEA, 2016b).

As part of the Youth Guarantee initiative (*Garanzia giovani*, 2014), which aims to provide a good quality offer of employment, education or training to young people who are not in employment or education, **Italy** is aiming to re-engage 15-18 year-olds into education and training, with a focus on those who have left school without qualifications, by consolidating their basic knowledge and fostering their subsequent integration into the labour market. Approximately EUR 1.5 billion has been allocated for this objective (OECD, 2017g) to further stimulate incentives for labour market activation of youth in Italy. This is in addition to social insurance exemptions already in place for employers to hire young people who meet certain criteria, such as those participating in the Youth Guarantee, those from certain regions that are lagging behind, or those who have completed compulsory internship periods and work-based learning in upper secondary education (OECD, 2017f). Starting in 2018, high tax incentives will be granted to private employers to enhance employment of youth on permanent contracts (EC, 2017b).

- **Progress or impact:** Recent evidence suggests that the Youth Guarantee has triggered positive developments, such as standardisation and more individualised tailoring of many services, and has lowered barriers to companies employing young people. Registration and take-up of available training, employment opportunities and other active employment policies has increased from 900 000 young people registered by the end of 2015 to 1 205 000 in 2017. By 2017, 982 000 of those registered in the programme had received an offer. According to OECD evidence, in 2017, despite recent improvements to the apprenticeship system, no specific criteria existed to evaluate the quality of apprenticeship training offered by companies (OECD, 2017g). The 2017 OECD report further found that these issues could be addressed through stronger engagement and collaboration with employers, and also that, although better co-ordination had improved implementation at the regional level, regional differences persisted, and information was not always available on the number and quality of measures delivered at the local level (OECD, 2017g). Aside from the challenges identified then, the number of measures delivered at local level stabilised around the national average of 81.5%. (ANPAL, 2017; EC, 2017j; OECD, 2017g)

In 2013, **Latvia** began participating in the Youth Guarantee to provide free training opportunities in more than 90 different careers to young people until 2018. Since 2014, it has implemented various initiatives to target young people, particularly NEETs age 15-24. Youth registered with the State Employment Agency (SEA) and working with a counsellor or another specialist can learn more about their strengths and relevant employment opportunities based on their individual profiles. A State Education Development Agency (SEDA) project offers short vocational education programmes (1-1.5 years) that give young people the opportunity to acquire qualifications in 68 professions. KNOW and DO, a project of the Agency for International Programmes for Youth 2014 aims to develop the skills of socially at-risk young people and to facilitate their involvement in education and/or vocational learning, Youth Guarantee activities, active employment, or preventive unemployment reduction measures provided by SEDA or in non-governmental organisations or youth centres. The total 2014-18 total funding amounts to EUR 72.9 million, primarily financed by the ESF and the Youth Employment Initiative. Funding for the Youth Employment Initiative will continue until the end of 2018 (Government of Latvia, 2017).

- **Progress or impact:** In its most recent progress report submitted to the EC, Latvia reported that from 2014 to 2016, all youths aged 15-29 that obtained registered unemployed status from the SEA in Latvia (111 000) received support as a part of the Youth Guarantee programme. During the same period, 92 400 youths were engaged in the employment-seeking support measures within the Youth Guarantee programme, and 65 000 youths found employment (58% of all the unemployed youths registered with the SEA). Also, between 2014 and 2016, of all the participants in the Youth Guarantee programme aged 15-24 (60 890), 27% (14 932) found employment within the first four months from the date they received unemployment status or submitted application to Youth Guarantee, and 20% (12 429) started training (Government of Latvia, 2017). EC evidence also shows positive results attributed to this: the share of young NEETs decreased significantly (to 13.8% in 2017, below the EU average of 14.7%) (Eurostat, 2018). The Latvian Government acknowledges, however, that challenges persist. The programme has been slow to start up, and its visibility across the target group remains low. The government intends to tackle these challenges by reaching out to young NEETs who are not registered at the public employment service. Support measures are also being provided to imprisoned youth, allowing them to acquire skills and competences that are necessary for successful employment.

New Zealand's Youth Guarantee (2010) also focuses on improving transitions. Overall, it includes a suite of initiatives developed and progressively implemented since 2010, mainly to provide a wider range of learning opportunities, better use of the education network and clearer pathways from school to work and further study. Some specific programmes target students who are at risk of not achieving in school or making poor transitions after leaving school or those interested in VET.

- **Progress or impact:** The overall participation rate of 18-year-olds in Youth Guarantee programmes was 16.3% in 2014. Of this, 12.1% were in fee-free places and 4.9% were in secondary-tertiary programmes. From 2011 to 2014, the overall participation rate increased by 5.3% (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2016). As can be seen in the policy sections below regarding VET and tertiary education, the different Youth Guarantee programmes aid in the transition from education to the labour market.

In **Slovenia**, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities set up the Youth Guarantee (YG, 2014) to guarantee a job, formal education or a training opportunity to any 15-29 year-old registering in Slovenia's Employment service. Slovenia has allocated EUR 87.7 million for the YG programme for 2014-15 and plans to allocate EUR 300 million for 2016-20. The target population comprises those who are currently unemployed, as well as the 37 000 people in that age range who register annually for this service. In 2016, Slovenia adopted a second Youth Guarantee Action Plan for the period 2016-20. It includes new measures to combat age segmentation in the labour market, based on the proposal of youth representatives (e.g. information and guidance activities and strengthening the capacities of supervisory authorities). In addition to fast activation,

another new element is a special focus on long-term unemployed youth. Moreover, the lifelong career orientation has been strengthened within the Public Employment Services (PES), not only for those registered as unemployed, but also in primary and secondary schools, with the aim of offering early career guidance.

- **Progress or impact:** A European Commission study found that youth unemployment decreased the most when compared to other age groups in Slovenia. Thanks to the Youth Guarantee programme, outflows from unemployment to employment increased. Compared to those who did not participate in this programme, participants were found to receive 40% more referrals for job vacancies, ten times more meetings with employers and 70% more involvement in training (EC, 2017k). The 2016 Youth Guarantee Action Plan (2016-20) was adopted based on an update of the 2013 PES analysis, Youth on the labour market 2015. In co-operation with the working group for monitoring, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities prepared a report on the results of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan for 2014-15 (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2018).

Connecting employers with job seekers

OECD education systems have taken multiple measures to improve the connection between employers and job seekers, such as establishing job bank partnerships, as in Canada. Similarly, programmes have been put in place in Ireland to create jobs by improving connections with employers and, more specifically, reviewing the current apprenticeship training model. An additional policy in Ireland aims to facilitate co-operation between higher education and relevant stakeholders. Slovenia implemented an initiative that allows students to engage in practical challenges in work environments.

Policy focus

The Job Bank website in **Canada** replaced "Working in Canada" in 2014. It is the country's national online employment service to connect employers with job seekers. Through partnerships with many of the largest third-party job boards, the Job Bank aims to post a consolidated view of available jobs searchable by occupation, location and other factors. It also permits job seekers to register their skills and employers to register their requirements. This enables automated matching and notification. The site also features a comprehensive section on the labour market that combines information from over 30 sources, where users can explore careers by learning about trends in the labour market, as well as details on specific occupations. Information available includes wages, outlooks, skills, training, licensing and certification requirements, and training and education options.

- **Progress or impact:** In October 2017, the Job Bank website listed more than 95 000 jobs (Government of Canada, 2017b).

Ireland's Action Plan for Jobs (APJ), introduced in 2012, is the government's annual plan to rebuild the economy and create jobs. With over 270 actions by 15 government departments and 36 state agencies, it presents a number of measures to strengthen education and its links to the labour market, including a review of the apprenticeship training model initiated in 2012. This plan is ongoing, with updates published annually, as well as quarterly progress reports. The latest APJ, introduced in 2017, focuses on seven strategic goals covering regional development, boosting innovation and productivity, and attracting high-quality talent to the Irish labour market, with the aim of having up to 45 000 additional people at work in Ireland by the end of 2017 (Irish Department of Business, Enterprises and Innovation, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** In 2014, the OECD published a preliminary review of the APJ. By then, it was found that both the APJ target of 100 000 new jobs by 2016 and the long-term goal of 2.1 million people employed by

2020 were within reach (OECD, 2014c). The employment rate has been increasing in Ireland. Over 2 800 actions were implemented during the previous APJ of 2012-16. Also, Ireland created more than 200 000 jobs from 2012 to 2017. The 2017 report of the Monitoring Committee stated that 81% of all projects slated to be completed in the first quarter of 2017 were accomplished (Irish Department of Business, Enterprises and Innovation, 2017b).

In 2012, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in **Ireland** proposed regional clusters of higher education institutions to increase collaboration and co-ordination between higher education institutions and engagement with stakeholders, with implementation beginning from 2014. The first priorities of this strategy are improved academic planning and student pathways. Ireland implemented nine regional Skills Fora to increase engagement and improve matching between skills needs and education provisions. These involve further education and training and higher education providers, as well as other government departments and agencies and employer representatives (HEA, 2016b).

- **Progress or impact:** The Higher Education System Performance 2014-2016 report points out that progress has been made in academic and student pathways, with variations in performance between the different clusters of institutions in the country. In 2015, the HEA engaged in consultation with the institutions to discuss future steps. (HEA, 2016b).

In **Slovenia**, the Creative Path to Practical Knowledge initiative was carried out with the support of the European Social Fund from 2007 to 2013. It encouraged students to become team members in small interdisciplinary research projects to develop creative and innovative solutions to practical challenges in the corporate sector. Mentors from the education and corporate sectors offered support to each team during implementation of the projects. The teams carried out projects in various working environments, such as medical and chemical laboratories, classrooms and production facilities. By directly participating in the work process, students gained specific professional and generic experience, as well as social competences, which are important for employability.

- **Progress or impact:** From 2013 to 2015, more than 3 400 students and over 500 organisations participated in this programme. Co-operation between education institutions and employers improved, as did students' employability. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport will invest an additional EUR 11.7 million in a similar programme and EUR 7.3 million to further strengthen co-operation between higher education institutions and local communities from 2014 to 2020.

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Chapter 6. Policy implementation and evaluation: Learning from experience and evidence

This chapter examines the emerging policy evaluation culture across OECD countries through the lens of countries' experiences in implementing key policies and evidence from OECD country reviews, as well as from the perspective of policy evaluators reflecting on policy implementation processes ex post. It identifies four key principles that can assist countries in promoting policy improvement: 1) involve all stakeholders, including students, and ensure their continued engagement; 2) elevate evidence and use data strategically in the policy implementation and evaluation process; 3) develop a common understanding of concepts and shared goals and standards; and 4) ensure a fair distribution of resources and equal capacity to use them on the ground. The chapter also highlights the vital role that strengthening evaluation capacity can play in improving implementation.

Highlights

- The story of a successful policy goes beyond design and specific features. To promote true change and learning, it is crucial to fully understand the complexity of the surrounding policy ecosystem when developing implementation strategies.
- Policy evaluation is an emerging instrument across the OECD to promote policy success. Evaluations can offer both summative and formative perspectives of the implementation of specific reforms and can help us understand some of the factors that promote success in policy implementation.
- According to evidence from the Education Policy Outlook National Survey for Comparative Policy Analysis 2016-17, as well as national policy evaluations, OECD countries are working to improve reform success by promoting greater inclusion of stakeholders, elevating the role of evidence in the reform process and developing a clear strategic vision for education systems and associated policies.

Introduction

This chapter explores policy implementation and evaluation in education systems and the relationship between them. It identifies an incipient policy evaluation culture in some education systems and provides examples of how education systems are building policy implementation and evaluation capacity to support policy improvement and success.

There is an emerging climate in which more is being demanded of the public sector, and the public sector is moving towards a culture of greater openness, innovation and transparency. In that climate, it is increasingly challenging for governments to spend large sums of public funds to implement policies if they are not demonstrably based on sound analysis of evidence and a clear understanding of the policy context. New modalities of getting better value for money, such as the social investment model (Morel, Palier and Palme, 2012), which has already been adopted in some OECD countries (Hemerijck, 2017) also imply taking a much more structured approach to evaluating different investment alternatives to achieve the goal of social cohesion, in which education plays a definitive role (Gradstein and Justman, 2002). Evaluation and performance measurement have also become integrated into the budget allocation process and public finances of OECD countries (OECD, 2015a).

Improving policy implementation has become an increasingly important topic in the work of the OECD, for example in the 2007 horizontal project, Making Reform Happen (OECD, 2010), and initiatives such as the Education Policy Outlook, Improving Schools and the National Skills Strategies. OECD Country Reviews and Thematic Reviews also often make recommendations to countries on implementation processes. The Education Policy Outlook National Survey for Comparative Policy Analysis 2016-17 (EPO Policy Survey 2016-17) was the first systematic collection of countries' perspectives on implementing prominent recent education policies, and the OECD has recently proposed a framework to analyse implementation of education policy (Viennet and Pont, 2017).

The importance of policy evaluation is also increasingly recognised in OECD countries, as regulatory policy and constrained resources in recent years make it imperative to ensure that policies are delivering as intended. An analysis of more than 80 recent policy evaluations compiled within the Education Policy Outlook evidence base provides a vision of the education policy evaluation landscape in OECD countries. Policy evaluations are defined as assessments undertaken as specific initiatives or projects, as

opposed to ongoing informal monitoring. This database provides insights into *how many times* key policies are evaluated, *who* is evaluating them, *when* in the policy cycle they tend to be evaluated, *how* they have been evaluated and *for what purpose* these evaluations are used (Golden, forthcoming).

In order to be included in the database, the evaluation must meet the following conditions: 1) it must have been in relation to a specific new policy or reform implementation in the country; 2) it must have been reported to the Education Policy Outlook (EPO) team in the EPO Surveys carried out in 2013 and 2016-17 or included in an EPO country profile; and 3) there must be at least one published report of the evaluation. Each evaluation in the database contains key features of the policies along with additional variables describing evaluation methodology, outcomes and implementation perspectives.

International organisations such as the OECD can help countries to improve implementation and to embed policy evaluation in education by providing data, sharing knowledge and creating international benchmarks that can channel peer pressure (OECD, 2010). Given the failure of many reforms to take hold in the classroom, OECD education systems have highlighted their need for deeper understanding and guidance on education policy implementation and evaluation. This can help them to increase the number and quality of reform evaluations and to generate the vital insights and evidence needed on whether, how and why reforms are succeeding or failing (OECD, 2015b). This chapter therefore also outlines some of the key principles that can encourage successful implementation in the field of reforms targeted at students.

These key principles presented are based on analysis of:

- recommendations made in previous OECD country-based work related to implementation processes (see Annex A, Table A A.3);
- responses of education systems to the EPO Survey 2016-17, which sought specific perspectives on implementation; and
- findings from analysis of a database of more than 80 policy evaluations carried out recently in OECD countries, in which evaluators identified the factors possibly influencing policy success.

Implementation success in the education policy ecosystem

Policy implementation can be defined as "a specific set of strategies to put into practice an activity or programme of known dimensions" (NIRN, n.d.). There are many different explanatory models for how policy is implemented on the ground and how it can become embedded successfully (Spillane, Reiser and Reimer, 2002). However, even the definition of success in policy implementation can often be contested (Marsh and McConnell, 2010), and most policy implementation processes in truth neither completely succeed nor completely fail, but instead fall somewhere along a success-failure spectrum (McConnell, 2010). Classifying a policy as successful can, therefore, depend on the criteria established to define or monitor a policy, or even the particular perspectives that different education stakeholders may adopt on it. A recent OECD literature review (Viennet and Pont, 2017) characterises policy implementation as:

- *Purposeful,* to the extent that the process is supposed to change education, according to some policy objectives.

- *Multidirectional*, because it can be influenced by actors at various points in the education system.
- *Contextualised,* as institutions and societal shocks and trends (in culture, demography, politics and economy) affect education systems and the ways in which policies are shaped and translate in the education sector.

It follows that while it is important to design education reforms to properly meet key challenges, the cornerstone of creating greater policy success is careful implementation, based on thoughtful evaluation of context and evidence. Policies that are well designed and well resourced can still fail, due to poor execution on the ground, insufficient consideration of context and the loss of vital opportunities to learn when policies are not evaluated or evaluations are not well designed (OECD, 2015b). Much evidence highlights the importance of individual contextual factors and the relationships and dependencies between them in influencing policy development and implementation (Howlett, 2004; Butler and Allen, 2008). In other words, as discussed in Chapter 1, the whole policy ecosystem – not just the immediate issue at hand – must be considered when developing education reforms. This implies careful analysis of the ways in which a policy can interact with its ecosystem before, during and after reform implementation.

It is clear that effective policy implementation requires access to knowledge about the ecosystem and the capacity to interpret and apply it. Useful knowledge for policy implementation is increasingly accessible from many sources, such as analysis by international organisations, best practices and benchmarks, and research and statistics produced by government bodies and academia, as well as consultations with experts and stakeholders' evidence through dialogue (Burns and Köster, 2016).

However, this increased access to information also brings the challenge of ensuring that the new information available can be analysed and translated into useful policy lessons. These policy lessons should not only help the system know what it needs to improve, but also offer pathways that are feasible and cost-effective. As discussed in the next section, the policy evaluation process can act as the lynchpin for creating and using knowledge to make key decisions on assessing the value of policy reforms, monitoring their implementation or even indicating when they have failed and need to be abandoned or retooled. Policy evaluations often create valuable insights into the implementation process of the reform and offer an opportunity to learn lessons that apply beyond the immediate context of the reform at hand. Thus, the policy evaluation process can support implementation of education reforms in general, as well as acting as a means to judge the implementation of a specific policy.

Policy evaluation is an emerging instrument which can promote more successful system reforms

Evaluation is relevant at all stages of the policy process (Fischer, Miller and Sidney, 2007; Stufflebeam and Coryn, 2014). It is the mechanism by which countries can look forward to recognise a challenge and weigh response options and can look backward to identify what worked to ameliorate the situation. A well-established culture of policy evaluation can, therefore, act as the bridge between evolving challenges in education systems and how countries eventually respond to them.

OECD education systems have significantly expanded evaluation and assessment capacities across their education systems in recent years, with new mechanisms for evaluating schools, teachers and students introduced in many countries. Evaluations can

take many different forms and use many different methods. Diverse examples from the Education Policy Outlook database of recent evaluations include:

- *Longitudinal tracking of implementation and outcomes*, such as the phased monitoring programme for the Action Plan of the Indigenous Student Success Programme (2013-17) in **Australia**, which included a survey of school leaders, case studies in schools, interviews with key stakeholders and a review of available outcomes data in each evaluation phase.
- *Evaluating externally shortly after implementation*, such as the schedule of implementation for the Organic Law for Improvement of Education (2014) in **Spain**, in which the schedule of implementation includes an external evaluation after the first year it is implemented in every grade.
- *Ex ante reviews to support decision making*, such as the ex ante study carried out in the **Slovak Republic** to underpin the decision process for a reform to expand childcare facilities, which constructed a number of efficiency and characteristic indices to allow for a structured decision on where and how childcare provision should be expanded, using a comprehensive evidence base.

Some countries have started to lay the groundwork for building a stronger education policy evaluation system, through legislation, new evaluation frameworks or new institutional arrangements. Recent developments at the country level include the following:

New legislation

- Reform of the Republic's Schools (*Refondation de l'école de la République*, 2013) in **France** makes provisions for improvement of evaluation of the education system.
- In **Mexico**, the Law of the National Institute for Education Evaluation (*Instituto Nacional para la Evaluacion de la* Educación, 2013) granted independence to the national educational evaluation institute.

New evaluation frameworks

- In 2010, **Korea** began broadening its evaluation and assessment framework to encompass the whole education system (student assessment, school evaluation, teacher appraisal, evaluation of principals, evaluation of local education authorities, evaluation of research institutes and evaluation of education policies).
- In 2016, **Norway** introduced a revised set of instructions for official reports and studies which sets the standards for how official studies must be carried out and reported. It specifies minimum requirements for evaluations in a clear and concrete manner, as well as setting out the requirements for early stakeholder involvement and proportionality of the review process to the size or scope of the initiative under consideration.
- In 2017, **Slovenia** adopted a National Framework for Quality Assessment and Assurance in Education and Training as a basis for setting up a coherent system of quality assessment and assurance in this area. The framework aims to link different evaluation activities on the level of educational institutions (kindergartens, basic and upper secondary schools) and the system. It provides for

the creation of special professional bodies *(strokovna jedra*) to support kindergartens and schools in the processes of assessment (monitoring and evaluation) and quality assurance (planning and implementation of policies). An analytical centre is being set up in the Directorate for Development and Quality in Education of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport to assure overall co-ordination of the related activities.

New institutional arrangements

- In 2013, **Portugal** created the Educational Evaluation Institute (*Instituto de Avaliação Educativa*), an independent autonomous institute specialising in external evaluation. It replaced the Office for Educational Evaluation (*Gabinete de Avaliação Educacional)*, which reported directly to the minister.

In **Finland**, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) started operations on 1 May 2014. It was formed by combining the evaluation activities of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the Finnish National Board of Education. Since the beginning of 2018, FINEEC has been operating as an independent unit under the Finnish National Agency for Education.

Despite these recent developments, regular evaluation of all policies is not yet the norm across the OECD. To improve policy success, there is a need to enhance the robustness of evaluations and demonstrate causal links between reforms and outcomes (Cook, 2002), and also to understand why and how the impacts have occurred. The following section outlines some fundamental concepts for countries to consider in building a strong culture of policy evaluation.

Broad and robust methodologies and evaluative thinking

Many of the reports in the Education Policy Outlook evaluations database highlight changes in outcomes which occurred over the period of policy implementation, with implied links to reform efficacy. The vast majority of educational evaluations are not designed to directly attribute changes in the outcomes of a policy to the policy itself. That makes it difficult to disentangle the impacts of a policy from other policies which operate in parallel or events which might have occurred as a natural consequence of the context and situation, even without the policy implementation.

Demonstrating a causal relationship empirically requires the use of robust methodologies, using experimental approaches, such as randomised controlled trials. In recent years, many have argued in favour of institutionalising such approaches in public policy, and they are considered best practice in causally evaluating the outcomes of policy initiatives (Cook, 2002; Haynes, Goldacre and Torgerson, 2012). As ethical considerations can often prohibit or at least discourage randomised controlled trials, public sectors in the OECD are increasingly developing accessible tools and environments to allow such testing to be carried out on a quasi-experimental basis or to mine for other contextual factors. For example, administrative microdata and specific models and tools constructed around them, are increasingly used to generate evidence relevant for policy evaluation. Many OECD countries have already developed such initiatives for simulating policy experiments and quasi-causal education policy evaluation. These include **Denmark**'s DREAM model for educational forecasting, **New Zealand**'s Integrated Data Infrastructure and **Canada**'s longitudinal LifePaths database, which includes transitions between education levels and sectors and the labour market.

On their own, outcomes of randomised controlled trials and other experimentally-focused evaluations are not considered sufficient evidence for judging policy efficacy in education. This is because they cannot always take into account other important or valuable contextual information, cannot build into their design the viewpoint of education as a complex system and can generally only answer very specific research questions (Morrison, 2001). In terms of policy learning, the results of experiments can determine if a reform has had impact, but not necessarily why or how. The depth of understanding required for such insights often can come from qualitative evidence (Dumas and Anderson, 2014). Ideally, education systems would have the capacity to conduct experimentally-focused evaluations but would also take into account other types of evaluation which give weight to the explanatory power of qualitative analysis, which is particularly relevant in the context of education.

Box 6.1. Evaluations of the Programme for Reinforcement, Guidance and Support in Spain

Spain's Programme for Reinforcement, Guidance and Support (PROA) is a school support programme directed at educational centres with students of lower socio-economic status, which includes additional tutoring, support, mentoring and programmes to change school culture and expectations. Since its inception in 2006, PROA has been evaluated regularly according to a CIPO (Context, Inputs, Process, Outcomes) framework. This provided a range of evidence on the success of the programme, based on questionnaires aimed at students, their families and practitioners that gathered both quantitative and qualitative information. Evaluations show general positive perceptions outcomes of the policy (Manzanares Moya and Ulla Diez, 2012).

Evidence of programme efficacy was further strengthened by a 2014 causal evaluation by Universidad Pablo de Olavide (Seville), which performed an exercise matching the individuals, centres and students of the treatment group with individuals of a control group similar in observable characteristics. Individual characteristics considered included gender, immigrant status, whether or not the student had repeated a grade, as well as parental education and occupation. Centre variables included whether the centre was public or private, and the percentage of students whose parents had tertiary education. Results showed that the effect of PROA is positive, with a particularly strong effect on reading. Furthermore, the evaluation showed that the effects of the programme were cumulative and significant in both the short and long term.

In addition to ensuring capability to carry out broad-ranging and robust evaluation, there must be capacity to ensure that evaluation results meet the needs of policy makers for insight into their system and reform context and that the results of policy evaluations are fed back effectively into the system for future learning. Having the ability to judge the quality of evidence from policy evaluations and ensure its application implies the development of evaluative thinking across education systems. Buckley et al., (2015) define evaluative thinking as:

> *... critical thinking applied in the context of evaluation, motivated by an attitude of inquisitiveness and a belief in the value of evidence, that involves identifying assumptions, posing thoughtful questions, pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and perspective taking, and informing decisions in preparation for action.*

While evaluation can be considered as a process or activity, evaluative thinking is a "way of doing business", and embedding such thinking across an organisation is the opposite of treating evaluation as a simple box-ticking exercise (CLEAR, 2013). Instead, it implies an approach of constant search for improvement by questioning and analysing the assumptions, theories and evidence surrounding an educational reform. Developing effective evaluation capacity, therefore, goes beyond integrating evaluation as a process

into more of the policy cycle, but making evaluative thinking a default setting at all stages of the policy cycle to help turn the information and feedback emerging from the system into usable knowledge that can help to continuously improve interventions (Earl and Timperley, 2015).

Box 6.2. Moving towards evaluative thinking in the European Commission

In 2013, the European Commission developed a new approach to policy evaluation that aims to link ex ante and summative evaluation in a more structured way, to close the policy cycle. "Strengthening the foundations of Smart Regulation: Improving evaluation" (EC, 2013) called for a number of measures to improve the policy evaluation framework across the policy cycle, including the "evaluate first" principle: before moving forward with a new policy, making it standard practice where possible to first ensure that previous actions and current policies have been thoroughly evaluated and lessons learned. There should be a continuous loop between ex ante impact assessments and summative evaluations, with the summative evaluation influenced by the framework set out in ex ante evaluation, and ex ante evaluations for new policies fed with strong evidence from previous summative evaluations.

The European Commission further strengthened its commitment to the "evaluate first" principle in revised regulation guidelines published in 2015 (EC, 2015) that apply the principle to both spending and non-spending EU activities with impact on society and the economy.

Promoting policy improvement and success: Principles derived from OECD and national evidence

As noted earlier, lessons to promote policy improvement come from both thematic and country-specific work that OECD has carried out with different education systems. Countries also often identify issues that can positively influence policy success, as they conduct policy evaluations or reflect on implementation experiences. This section brings together the most prominent of these lessons, organised under four key principles for policy success. Table 1.4 summarises these principles and identifies countries the OECD advised to adopt them. The subsequent sections examine each principle in detail and describe recent reflections and practices by countries that have taken these principles into account in their policy development processes.

Table 6.1. Key principles for successful education policy implementation

	Key principles	Countries
1	Involve all stakeholders (including) students and ensure their continued engagement.	CAN, CHL, IRL, NZL, PRT, SVN, SWE, , GBR, GBR (Wales)
2	Elevate evidence and use data strategically in the policy implementation and evaluation process.	AUS, CZE, FRA, GRC, LUX, NOR, SVK, GBR (Wales)
3	Develop a common understanding of concepts and shared goals and standards.	AUS, MEX, NOR, SWE
4	Ensure a fair distribution of resources and equal capacity to use them on the ground.	AUS, CAN, TUR, NOR, ESP, GBR (Scotland)

Note: See Table A A.3 in Annex A for the list of OECD publications consulted.
Source: OECD reviews of countries' education policies (2000-17)

Key principle 1. Involve all stakeholders (including students) and ensure their continued engagement

Involving all stakeholders (including students) and ensuring their continued engagement can pay off for policy success, as suggested in comments by evaluators in Canada (Ontario), Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Canada (Ontario) Student Success/Learning to 18 Evaluations	"Although most student respondents were familiar with at least one of the components or elements of the Strategy, many remain unaware of the various programs and supports available to them." (Canadian Council of Learning, 2008)
Ireland Review of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools	"Stakeholder consultations have identified the role of Home School Community Liaison in the Department of Education and Skills as being particularly significant and effective. Schools report better relations with parents and greater involvement by them in school life and in the education of their children." (Department of Education and Skills, 2017)
New Zealand Check and Connect evaluation report	"Student accounts and comments provide some vivid testimony to the 'life-changing' difference [participation in the programme] could make to their engagement and achievement in school, and their capacity to live more purposefully, confidently, and contentedly in and out of school." (Wylie and Felgate, 2016)
United Kingdom Mapping user experiences of the Education, Health and Care process	"There has to be a genuine desire to listen to the views of parents – good and bad – and a culture of critical appraisal/self-evaluation for services to use the evidence from parental feedback to really influence improvements in service delivery. It should not be consultation for consultation's sake." (Skipp and Hopwood, 2016)

Three main factors underlie the increased attention to stakeholder engagement in implementation of education reform: 1) societies today are more democratic and participative; 2) there is a greater awareness of the importance of education quality for the future of a country; and 3) evolving technologies now allow populations to be more vocal about policy matters (OECD, 2016). As a result, stakeholder engagement has become an integral part of education processes in many countries, with stakeholder consultation now commonplace at the inception of new reforms. From an implementation perspective, the involvement of key stakeholders in education policy development can help to cultivate a sense of joint ownership over policies and hence build more effective and relevant reforms (Finlay, 1998).

Education stakeholders need adequate knowledge of educational policy goals and consequences, and the tools to implement a reform as planned (Hooge, Burns and Wilkoszewski, 2012; OECD, 2015b). Continuous reference and integration of evidence as part of the dialogue between stakeholders during policy design and implementation can help to build a strong and informed consensus on the path forward. This is particularly vital in situations where stakeholders may have strong a priori beliefs tied both to their identities and experiences (Burns and Köster, 2016).

Education systems in many countries have involved a significant number of actors at different levels of governance in recent policy development and implementation processes, either by engaging them in shaping policy or by developing policy specifically in response to stakeholder feedback. Some examples:

- **Mexico's** most recent pedagogical plan**,** the New Education Model (2017), was elaborated according to suggestions and comments from more than 300 000 stakeholders, feeding into the new model as well as its implementation plan.
- **Portugal**'s Promote Educational Success programme (2016), which aims to increase retention rates, was also developed using a bottom-up strategy. Schools were invited to present individual strategic action plans listing measures ranked in priority order, allowing for identification and consideration of each school's specific needs during the policy design process.

- The **Slovak Republic's** New State Curriculum (2015) and Dual VET System (2015) were both adopted as a direct response to reports from employers of insufficient levels of labour supply.
- In 2016, **Latvia** formed an inter-institutional working group to develop proposals for complex solutions and an "ideal" mapping of school networks that promotes education quality. Ongoing discussions involving various stakeholders will inform a new arrangement of the network of general schools in Latvia. An independent research report, Development of an Optimal Model of General Education Institutions Network (2017), is also used for discussions with municipalities regarding the optimisation of the school network. It includes analysis from a geospatial planning platform on demographic and migration tendencies and forecasts, availability and quality of education institutions, social and economic profiles of municipalities and transport conditions.

Of course, students themselves are the key stakeholders in reforms aimed at improving their educational outcomes. As education systems move towards putting students and their learning at the centre of policy development (OECD, 2015b), one way for policy reforms to promote student learning is to give students a voice and ensure that reforms meet their needs and enhance their well-being (Mitra, 2007; Simmons, Graham and Thomas, 2015). Students have unique perspectives of their learning environments, and their views should be sought and considered, recognising that students themselves have a diversity of views on requirements of the education system, based on their background and experiences (Cook-Sather, 2006).

In the Education Policy Outlook evaluations database, a majority of reported policy evaluations did not directly attempt to evaluate reforms from the point of view of students. Most qualitative reform evaluations focused on practitioners and, to a lesser extent, on parental perspectives on implementation. The literature on the effect of parental involvement on children's education outcomes in general does not always show positive impact (Fan and Chen, 2001), but there is evidence suggesting that well-designed home-school interventions can lead to improved outcomes (Cox, 2005). Evidence also suggests that fostering and motivating parental engagement and partnerships between home, school and community can be an effective component of successful educational reform (Barton et al., 2004; Bryan, 2005).

The attitudes and beliefs of students, as well as their home lives, form a crucial part of the education policy ecosystem. Deeper analysis of the relationships between students' life satisfaction, their home context, their sense of belonging at school, their classroom climates and their performance and outcomes is becoming increasingly available (e.g. OECD, 2017a). In the context of implementing successful reforms in increasingly complex systems, it is likely to become more important that policy evaluations related to student outcomes include consideration of the direct experience of students, both in and out of school, to ensure that the policies implemented can adequately meet their needs.

Key principle 2. Elevate evidence and use data strategically in the policy implementation and evaluation process

As the comments of evaluators in Canada, Norway and the United Kingdom (Scotland) demonstrate, elevating evidence and using data strategically in the policy implementation and evaluation process can improve results.

Canada Summative Evaluation of the Budget 2008 Canada Student Loans Programme Enhancements	"The purpose of the literature and file review was to provide an overview of the information already available in the public domain and internal Employment and Social Development Canada documents, completed surveys and research papers, and then compile the information (from over 40 documents) in order to provide evidence for a series of evaluation questions. This review demonstrated that much information was already available in the literature." (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2016)
Norway Evaluation of upper secondary changes as part of the Knowledge Promotion Reform	"We are able to comfortably conclude that the structural measures implemented have not led to fundamental changes in the programmes offered, and have not changed students' preferences or completion in any decisive way… We cannot exclude the possibility that the financial crisis that occurred while the Knowledge Promotion Reform was being implemented may have made the transition from school to apprenticeship harder than it would otherwise have been, thus masking the possible positive effects of broader courses." (NIFU, 2012)
United Kingdom (Scotland) Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective	"Evaluative evidence did need to be gathered that would serve to inform future direction…The proposed National Improvement Framework has the potential to provide robust evaluative evidence to complement the inspection reports and other forms of evaluation." (OECD, 2015c)

Along with the increased importance that societies are conferring on education, there is also a heightened awareness of the importance of developing education policies and practices through evidence, as well as a greater call globally for all education policies and practices to be evidence-based (Slavin, 2002; Wiseman, 2010, Aarons, Hurlburt and Horwitz, 2011). Robust evidence helps to convince voters and stakeholders that a reform is needed and allows for well-informed decisions based on the best available evidence (Davies, 1999). At the same time, there is a greater public demand for evidence on the effectiveness of education systems. This draws on growing concern for student outcomes, the increase of available data (thanks to greater use of testing and assessment) and wider access to information via new technologies (OECD, 2007). As reported in the Education Policy Outlook Survey 2016-17, countries have worked to strengthen the role of evidence in reform processes:

By developing or using national capacities for designing evidence-informed policies…

- **Japan**'s formulation of its Third Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (2018) was based on a comparative analysis of Japan's strengths and weaknesses from an international perspective. This plan allows the continuity of current principles while solving the issues based on its progress, as well as the anticipated social changes beyond 2030.
- **Latvia** has committed to the promotion of evidence-informed policy planning and implementation. While the country is working to develop its national data capacities, the use of data from previous cycles of international studies is also becoming more widespread, which helps to identify trends and areas to improve.
- **Spain**'s Programme to Reduce Early Dropout in Education and Training (2008) was built based on the study of data that define where Spain stands in comparison to other countries, members of the European Union or the OECD, aiming to establish an unbiased overview of where Spain ranks.
- The Updating of Programmes in **Turkey** in response to changing needs in the labour market was based on a series of questionnaires published on website of the Ministry of National Education, face-to-face interviews with principals, teachers and students, and articles, papers, reports, brochures and Internet sites. Opinions and recommendations on the weekly course schedule and curriculum were also requested from all education faculties in the country and carefully analysed by the government.

By drawing on other international experiences…

- **Portugal**'s *Sistema Nacional de Creditos* (2017) established credit systems based on the experiences of other countries. Thanks to several exchanges between the Finnish and Portuguese governments, the Finnish model was chosen as the main example to define the Portuguese model.
- Anti-Segregation Measures (2016) were adopted in the **Slovak Republic** following a United Nations Development Programme survey on the living conditions of the Roma people which found that that most students from the marginalised Roma community were over-represented in the system of special education.

However, the growing role of evidence in the education policy process also presents difficulties. Ever-increasing volumes of often conflicting data and information pose challenges in assessing relevance and quality and convincing stakeholders of the legitimacy of an evidence-informed approach. Education systems need to increase systemic capacity to curate and synthesise evidence effectively for different audiences in order to properly integrate it into the policy implementation process (Slavin, 2002). This also covers evidence from policy evaluations. There is a need to adequately mine the evaluative information available and make judgements as to the quality and meaning of evaluation results. As the volume of policy evaluations carried out continues to grow, this "meta-evaluation imperative" is also likely to become stronger (Stufflebeam, 2001; Stufflebeam, 2010).

Such institutionalised educational evidence evaluation and dissemination infrastructures do not yet appear to be the norm across the OECD area, but some have been developed in recent years. Examples include the Educational Endowment Foundation, part of the UK Government "What Works" network, which conducts research and extracts information to present as toolkits. These toolkits summarise evidence in a dashboard style, showing the comparative cost, evidence strength and measured impact on a visual scale, covering a wide range of policy reform options and initiatives. The Danish Clearinghouse for Educational Research analyses educational research and attempts to identify meaningful lessons, through its systematic mappings (which aim to compile relevant research for a particular policy area) and its systematic reviews (which compile, analyse and synthesise relevant evidence to tackle a specific research question). The Norwegian Knowledge Centre for Education conducts systematic evidence reviews and analyses, as well as state-of-the-field reviews, which summarise major international developments in a given educational field since the beginning of the century. Through its web portal, the Centre publishes summary overviews of its research that explicitly state who the research is primarily aimed at (policy makers, practitioners etc.).

Finally, the acknowledged requirement for greater productivity and efficiency across education systems, along with the need to ensure that education offerings remain relevant in a rapidly changing society, creates a strong innovation imperative for education policy. As the emphasis on evidence-informed culture grows, it is important to ensure that there is still room for innovation to flourish. Evaluation practices need to be synergistic with innovation, while also striving to be robust enough to underpin the decision process (Earl and Timperly, 2015).

In support of this notion, there are nascent indications that OECD countries are developing mechanisms for balancing funding and support for education policy according to the level of evidence available. For example, in the **United States**, many federal grants

for educational programmes are awarded according to a tiered-evidence system which awards funding based on the levels of evidence of efficacy of the programme. Untested programmes for which there is little evidence are funded on a smaller scale, with increasing levels of funding made available according to the strength of the supporting evidence, thus balancing between supporting evidence-informed policy and allowing for innovation. In **Norway**, a dedicated Programme for Research and Innovation in the Educational Sector (FINNUT) awards funding for projects focused on compiling knowledge and evidence on current systemic contexts and practices and those that propose innovations in key identified priority areas of education.

Key principle 3. Develop a common understanding of concepts and shared goals and standards

As the comments of evaluators in Australia, Iceland and the United Kingdom (England) demonstrate, developing a common understanding of concepts and shared goals and standards can help navigate bumpy implementation processes.

Australia Final report of the evaluation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education action plan 2010-14	"Stakeholders consistently reported that the Action Plan has helped to create a common language and understanding across school sectors about needs and activities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students… The common language has also aided the sharing of practice within and across school sectors in each of the domains." (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2014)
Iceland External Audit of Inclusive Education	"A key finding was that there appeared to be many different understandings of inclusive education – hence the urgent need for further clarification of this policy." (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017)
United Kingdom (England) Pupil Premium Evaluation Report	"There is a tension between the criteria that are used to allocate Pupil Premium funding and the criteria that have been used by schools to define and respond to educational disadvantage more generally…..schools could be given clearer messages about the distinction between the two." (Carpenter et al, 2013)

Effective policy implementation requires a whole-system approach with aligning roles, and having shared values and a shared mission can foster the collaborative processes essential for success (Huffman, 2003; Innes and Booher, 2010). In many school systems, this may require a greater focus on long-term goals in school systems in order to meet the immediate challenges a reform may bring (Duckworth, Quinn and Seligman, 2009). In addition, regardless of the level of decentralisation of a system, national leadership to "co-ordinate through partnership", by developing clear guidelines and goals and providing feedback on progress, remains very important to support stakeholders in implementation processes (Burns and Köster, 2016). A recipe of clear leadership forged in a context of strong relationships with stakeholders, along with a shared and articulated vision for the future of the system, can help organisations become truly committed to consistent improvement and learning (Huffman and Hipp, 2001).

As discussed earlier, there is extensive evidence that consensus between stakeholders is an important factor for successful implementation of policy reforms (Corrales, 1999; Connell and Klem, 2000). Enabling this consensus to extend to a sense of shared values and shared mission can improve educational outcomes. An additional point highlighted in many reviewed policy evaluation reports and supported by evidence (Kania and Kramer, 2011; Penuel et al., 2011) is the need for stakeholders in education reform to also have shared knowledge and understanding of the challenges they are seeking to address and the meaning of the different facets or tools of the reform.

Evaluation reports highlighted a number of instances where definitions and understandings differed across the system. Even well-recognised key terms are not always understood in the same way. The Pupil Premium evaluation in the **United Kingdom (England)** noted that each school worked according to its own definition of

educational disadvantage. In some cases, allowing for autonomy of interpretation can be beneficial in adapting educational offerings to individual students, but competing understandings of a reform's purpose and intended operation can lead to dilemmas. For example, the evaluation of the introduction of Individual Student Plans in **Denmark** found that while differentiation of plans for each student was the desirable ideal, differences still arose between the expectations of teachers and parents as to what should be covered in the student plans. Developing modalities for ensuring that policies are well understood and not taking for granted that understanding of phenomena and specific challenges will be the same across the system can help avoid problems in implementation processes.

Countries' reports on recent policies show many examples of shared engagement by governments across the OECD to build a common, coherent strategy at the different levels of governance in order to optimise implementation processes. Actions focusing on promoting consistency of vision in policy implementation are evident in many countries' policy reports:

By seeking and adapting to feedback from different levels of the system…

- When **Germany**'s Educational Chains project (2012) was first implemented, with the goal of connecting the various steps in a person's education career and providing a structured approach to transition, the multiplicity of actors (including the federal government, the Federal Employment Agency and the *Länder*) and the various types of funding and structures did not initially lead to coherent operation. When this dysfunction in the implementation process was identified, the different stakeholders combined their efforts to develop specific contracts for each *Land*.
- **Estonia** is implementing a new approach to learning focusing more on 21st century skills and life skills. The main tools are providing training to teachers, applying a variety of assessment methods (including formative assessment), and introducing new concepts of learning to local communities and parents. This requires more complex policy efforts, involving different stakeholders, and new initiatives are added over time as the system learns more from feedback about the actual needs of education institutions.
- **Ireland** has established regional clusters of higher education institutions to set joint priorities, support increased collaboration and co-ordination between higher education institutions and also to support increased engagement with stakeholders. The first priorities set for the clusters are improved academic planning and student pathways. A network of nine regional Skills Fora, which involve further education and training and higher education providers as well as government departments and agencies and employer representatives, has also been established to increase engagement with employers in each region.

By setting common standards and targets…

- **Japan**'s Go Global project (2012), which aimed to raise the competitiveness of selected Japanese universities, set common universal quantitative and qualitative targets, and programmes were implemented to reach them.
- **Mexico**'s New Education Model (2017) defines the learning objectives and outcomes expected at the end of each education level, as stakeholders demanded a basic quality threshold that education authorities should enforce in all schools and

better alignment across education levels in terms of definition of competencies, skills and outcomes.

- In **Spain**, the Organic Law for Improvement of Education Quality (2014) aims to tackle the large differences in students' outcomes across regions by defining core common basic education throughout the country, while taking into account the special requirements of regional governments.

Key principle 4. Ensure a fair distribution of resources and equal capacity to use them on the ground

As the comments of evaluators for Australia, Turkey and the United Kingdom (Scotland) demonstrate, ensuring a fair distribution of resources and equal capacity to use them on the ground can help to fully engage all targeted students and practitioners.

Australia Review of the National Partnership System for Early Childhood Education	"While future funding should be governed by who should pay rather than who can pay, the latter cannot be ignored and fiscal capacity will be an important consideration." (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015)
Turkey World Bank evaluation of the Secondary Education Project	"The specific needs for improving learning conditions vary greatly between schools and can best be identified at the local level…..After finding in the course of implementation that real priorities varied greatly between schools, more [expenditure] discretion was given to the school in the revised Operational Manual for subsequent projects." (World Bank, 2012)
United Kingdom (Scotland) Review of Further Education Governance	"…some Colleges serve areas of considerably greater social disadvantage than others. While this would probably always be the case no matter how the sector was constructed, the way in which these differences are dealt with by individual Colleges varies greatly." (Griggs, 2012)

Education policy makers can often focus more on design aspects and give less consideration to the capacity for implementation at the level of individual institutions (OECD, 2010, Viennet and Pont, 2017). Regional and local education authorities and education institutions can differ with regard to their capacity to implement policy reforms, if they do not have access to the same resources or cannot use those resources effectively. In schools, the capacity to implement reforms can depend on the funding base of the school, which can differ due to its location and socio-economic profiles (Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey and Crowley, 2006; Rubenstein et al, 2007) and the ability of the school to convert funding into productive resources (Grubb, 2009; OECD, 2017c). Similarly, funding difficulties and uneven capacity across tertiary education institutions of many OECD countries have led to initiatives to raise additional private-sector funding and enhance performance and resource efficiency in individual institutions.

Differences in baseline levels of productive resources across the system can lead to differences in implementation, as evaluation reports often show. For example:

- **Norway**'s evaluation of free kindergarten in targeted areas noted that different resource levels among childcare centres led to different approaches by the centres in childcare provision.
- **Spain** noted in the mid-term evaluation of the Second National Strategic Plan for Children and Adolescents (2013-16) that almost daily monitoring of the implementation of the Plan has been very positive, in terms of effectively mobilising resources.

While financial resources can often be allocated quickly in a crisis situation or when an issue assumes high political importance, ensuring the competencies to capitalise fully on financial resources within individual institutions for the benefit of students is a longer-term objective. Recent OECD research (OECD, 2017b) has strongly highlighted the need

to ensure that school funding policies are well designed and combined with effective institutional governance arrangements to maximise equity, quality and efficiency. In a reform context, this entails ensuring that there is fiscal sustainability to support higher-need institutions and sectors, effective budget management skills at the appropriate levels of the system, and a strong regulatory framework to ensure that public funds are well-targeted and achieve maximum impact.

Other possible inequities in resources which act as barriers to policy success may be less obvious. For example, the inequity may be present at the level of individual students rather than at the level of the institution. In Ontario's Student Success programme, evaluators noted that not all students were able to physically access programmes locally and thus were required to travel, with the cost of transport in some areas acting as a barrier to participating in the programme. The government responded by allocating additional funding for subsidised transport. Therefore, a wide range of potential barriers to policy success often must be considered when implementing reforms, and a proactive approach to mitigate these barriers can help to further policy success.

Looking to the future

Implementing policies and having the knowledge and capacity to improve them are becoming critical in increasingly accountable education systems, where more advanced skills needs and greater social diversity are creating growing demand for greater policy efficacy.

Two key points for reflection can be drawn from this chapter:

- **Engage actors, including students, based on a shared understanding and supported by strong capacities and resources:** Actors do not necessarily share the same understanding of aspects as basic as the need for a policy, key concepts underpinning it or even the processes or objectives it entails. Policy implementation processes need to aim for transparency (i.e. clarity in language and objectives) and foster a shared ability to relate to the policy. Students and their parents should have a voice in this process, to ensure that the system can address their needs. Developing clear implementation strategies, a transparent vision and communicating priorities to stakeholders at all levels of governance are key at every stage of the process. To make this engagement possible, there must also be a fair distribution of resources and equal capacity to use them on the ground.
- **Ensure that conditions for better evaluation and contextual understanding are present throughout the system:** Policy evaluation for the purpose of learning and policy improvement need to become an inherent part of the education system. This requires developing a mindset of evaluative thinking for all everyday processes and a capacity to generate and evaluate evidentiary material from a variety of sources. Building this culture of evidence and creating the conditions to use data strategically can also be supported by incentives to manage information and implement greater accountability and efficiency mechanisms. Education systems need to be broad and robust, taking care before making causal associations and considering a variety of tools to generate evidence. But as evidence-based policy making becomes more commonplace and policy evaluation culture becomes embedded, it is also important to always make room for innovation to flourish in education systems.

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Chapter 7. Education policy country snapshots

This chapter contains snapshots of education policy developments in 26 OECD countries. Designed for policy makers, analysts and practitioners, these snapshots bring together the priorities and policy actions outlined in Chapters 2-5, contextualised with additional information relevant to policy ecosystems, as well as selected additional education policies of potential interest to other countries. The information is drawn mainly from country responses to the Education Policy Outlook National Surveys for Comparative Policy Analysis in 2013 and 2016-17, Education Policy Outlook Country Profiles, and OECD comparative and country-specific analysis and statistics on education systems. The snapshots are based on the analytical framework developed for the Education Policy Outlook, with special attention to equity and quality and preparing students for the future. The reforms presented were generally introduced between 2008 and 2017.

Australia

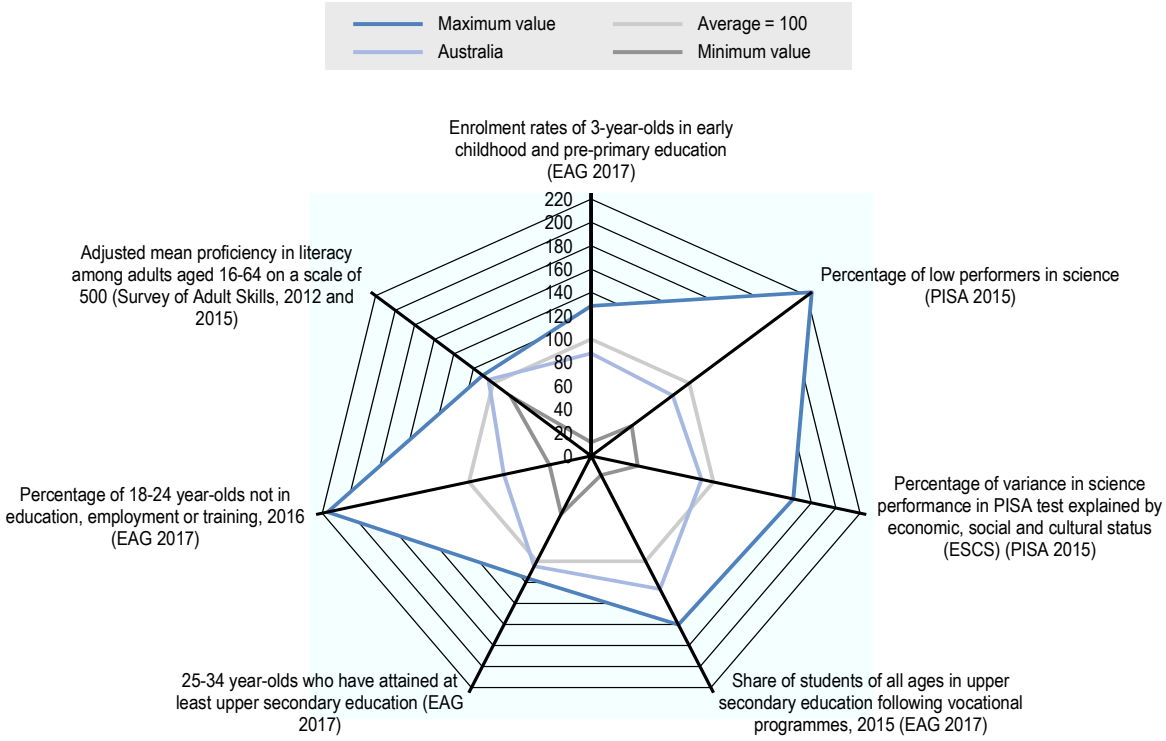
Context

In the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Australia scored higher than the OECD average in science, with a mean score of 510 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science declined across PISA cycles between 2006 and 2015, with an average three-year change of -5.7 score points. Performance in reading and mathematics has also declined across PISA cycles. Socio-economic status had lower-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 11.7% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 25% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Australia, a proportion which is among the highest in the OECD (OECD average: 12.5%). Unlike in many OECD countries, in PISA 2015, there was no significant performance gap between immigrant and non-immigrant students in science, with a score difference of just -5 points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in early childhood education and care (ECEC) was 68.4%, (OECD average: 77.8%). However, participation rates in pre-primary education at age 4 have risen from 53% in 2005 to 90% in 2015. This was 3 percentage points above the OECD average of 87%, representing the fourth-highest increase in the OECD. Preschool programmes are delivered in education institutions or long-day-care settings. Children typically begin preschool education at around age 4 and attend a one-year programme. A national set of standards and a framework are in place to monitor education and care for children aged 0-5. Both education-only and integrated education and care pre-primary programmes exist nationally. Compulsory education in Australia begins at around age 5 or 6 (with minor variations between the states and territories) and ends at age 17, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. Students who complete high school can advance to senior high school or college, or vocational education and training (VET). However, upper secondary education is not compulsory in Australia. The two upper secondary programmes lead to two different certificates, one for senior high school and the other for vocational courses. Completion of vocational education only allows access to a professional vocational course, while completion of senior high school allows access to both professional vocational courses and university.

VET is provided at the general secondary and tertiary levels in Australia, through work-study programmes, Technical and Further Education institutes and private Registered Training Organisations. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Australia were among the highest in the OECD, at 280 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was lower than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Australia was close to the OECD average, at 15% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that was neither employed nor in education or training) was lower than the OECD average, at 10.9%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is among the highest in the OECD, at 49.3% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%.

Figure 7.1. Selected indicators compared with the average: Australia



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732802

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.1. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Australia (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified the need to improve ECEC to help parents combine work and family life [2017].	The OECD found that apprenticeships were rigid and seemed to depend on duration rather than competence, and that skills forecasting caused difficulties in the education system. [2008] The OECD also identified the need to improve competition, access and choice in higher education, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds [2014].
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Australia previously stated that challenges remained in reducing inequities, which persisted as of 2016. Australia reported more recent efforts to ensure that more financial support is targeted to the families who need it most to access child care [2013; 2016-17].	Australia had reported the need to improve access to higher education for students with low socio-economic status, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders', and to support them once they have entered university. In 2016, granting equal access for all students remained a challenge. In addition, the participation rate in higher education of students with a disadvantaged background has been increasing in recent years [2013; 2016-17]. Australia also identified a persistent skills mismatch, as it encounters difficulties in setting incentives to obtain skills that are needed in the labour market [2013; 2016-17].

Note: 1. See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Australia's series of National Partnership (NP) Agreements on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (2008-19) began in 2008, following a joint Commonwealth, State and Territory action in Australia to improve early childhood education programmes and care services. This series of agreements was also put in place to ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood education programmes for 15 hours per week (for a total of 600 hours) during the year before they attend primary school. Since 2013, the NP Agreements have focused on participation of disadvantaged children in ECEC, as well as providing programmes delivered by qualified early childhood teachers (Australian Government Council on Federal Financial Relations, 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** By 2016, all jurisdictions in Australia had exceeded the benchmark of 95% of children enrolled in quality early childhood education programmes. A majority of districts also exceeded this benchmark for the enrolment of Indigenous children. Nationally, 93% of the children enrolled in a preschool programme were enrolled for 600 hours or more. Although one in ten children participating in quality early childhood education were still not enrolled for 600 hours or more, this figure represented a significant overall increase compared to 2008, when only 12% of children were enrolled for the same number of hours (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2015).

Since 2007, the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, also known as *Close the Gap*, in Queensland (Australia) has aimed to reduce the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students achieving Year 12 Certification (Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2017). Measures were taken at the central, regional and local level. The central office's Department of Education provided each region with disaggregated data to quantify the number of Indigenous students needed to fill the gap. This helped regions to visualise the objectives. Other measures included raising awareness of the importance of change among school leaders and regional staff, through workshops and leadership sessions. In addition, Queensland's educational regions provided support to schools (for example, by appointing coaches for the Queensland Certificate of Education), and schools set up multidisciplinary case-management teams to aid students (Button et al., 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** The government reports that between 2006 and 2015, the proportion of Indigenous 20-24 year-olds with Year 12 or equivalent attainment increased from 45.4% to 61.5%. Improvements were also identified in the retention rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in high school in Queensland. In 2015, almost 60% of Indigenous students stayed in school until Year 12. Improvements were also identified for preschool enrolment, which had increased to 87% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by 2015 (Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2017). The number of Indigenous students with a Year 12 Certification increased from 42.1% in 2008 to 97% by 2016 (QCAA, 2017). The success of the programme to reduce the gap can be attributed to the alignment across schools, regional offices and central office; a clear line of sight to individual schools and students; and intensive case management (Button et al., 2016).

The Australian Government's National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO, 2008) Programme assists people with disability to access and participate in tertiary education and subsequent employment, through a national network of NDCOs (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017a). In response to a 2011 evaluation, the programme was reformed to take a more strategic approach to service provision, rather than focusing on individualised services. A travel and accommodation subsidy was also introduced for NDCOs operating in non-metropolitan areas.

- **Progress or impact:** An evaluation found that the programme was consistent with government policy with respect to people with disability and addressed critical needs that warrant ongoing support. A second evaluation, published in 2017, examined the policy rationale for the programme and its operation to date, and made recommendations for the future of the programme (including its appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and intersection with other government policies and programmes). The overall NDCO objectives

were considered to be fulfilled in 2013 to 2016 in terms of stronger engagement between education and employment stakeholders and service providers, as well as better transitions for people with disability from school/community to tertiary education and subsequent employment. While the improvement in educational and employment outcomes since 2013 cannot be ascribed directly to the programme, local stakeholders assert that the programme remained the best way to facilitate the activities (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017a).

In Australia, the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP, 2010) aims to ensure that Australians from low socio-economic backgrounds who have the ability to study at university have the opportunity to do so. Through its Participation and Partnerships components, HEPPP provides funding to assist universities to undertake activities and implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low socio-economic backgrounds, as well as improving the retention and completion rates of those students. Partnerships are created with primary and secondary schools, VET institutions, universities and other stakeholders to raise the aspirations and build the capacity of disadvantaged students to participate in higher education. Funding for these two components is provided to universities based on the number of enrolled students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The third component, the National Priorities Pool, funds projects that target and support building an evidence base for future equity policies, testing new equity interventions at the national and institutional levels, and improving implementation of HEPPP at these levels (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017a; Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2018).

- **Progress or impact:** A 2016 evaluation found that HEPPP is positively influencing the quantity and rigour of higher education equity activities and policies overall. It concluded that HEPPP has provided wide-ranging support to a large number of students and institutions between 2010 and 2015. Some 2 679 projects were implemented at the 37 eligible universities. Over 310 000 students have participated in HEPPP projects, with additional students supported in schools and other institutions. At least 2 913 partner organisations participated in HEPPP outreach activities, (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017b).

Australia's National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform (NP, 2012-17) aimed to improve access to training and participation in the labour market (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015). The NP outlined the targets and structures of intergovernmental VET funding and reform from 2012-13 to 2016-17 (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015). Under the NP, all jurisdictions were required to provide access to training subsidised by the government at Australian Qualifications Framework level 3 to unqualified working Australians of any age. All jurisdictions were also required to support the expansion of the Commonwealth's income-contingent loan policy, which helps to reduce tuition costs. The Australian Government provided funding to state and territory government training systems through funding associated with this agreement. The NP expired in June 2017, and discussions are underway with the states and territories on a new National Partnership Agreement for the Skilling Australians Fund (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017c).

- **Progress or impact:** Performance reporting on the NP states that it was on track in 2016 (PM&C, 2017). The 2015 Review of the NP identified results, such as increased accessibility and choice, compared to the baseline years of 2008-09, while course numbers declined (the improvements seem partly due to the establishment of entitlements in every state and territory). Positive developments were also identified in transparency actions, although it was found that further data has to be collected in future to achieve significant advantages. At the same time, some difficulties were encountered in assuring quality, as the number of training sessions increased. In regard to VET training outcomes, the national target of 375 000 completions was already surpassed in 2013. Recommendations for reforms in training systems include implementation based on industry and student demand (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2015).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The Australian Government is funding the expansion of The Smith Family's Learning for Life Program from 2016-17 to 2019-20, to support disadvantaged students to achieve improved educational outcomes. In addition to the around 32 000 students the Program has already supported with this expansion, it aims to support another 24 000 disadvantaged students and their families in some 90 communities. The services provided include financial, practical and emotional support from the early years of learning through to Year 12 (or equivalent) and through transition from school to work or to further education and training.
- The Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP, 2017) provides funding to universities to offer scholarships, tutorial assistance, mentoring and other personal support. Funding is based on enrolment, unit success rates and course completion of Indigenous students. The Program provides an extra loading for Indigenous students from regional and remote areas. It replaced the Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships Program, the tutorial assistance offered under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, and the Indigenous Support Program.

Australia has implemented several recent policies to strengthen science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in early learning and schools. The Restoring the Focus on STEM measure (2014-15 to 2017-18) aims to increase student numbers in STEM subjects in primary and secondary schools. Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) focuses on education-industry collaboration to support the transition of young people from school to work and is part of a broader plan (2015-16 to 2020-21) to help them develop skills for jobs of the future. The Inspiring all Australians in Digital Literacy and STEM measure under the National Innovation and Science Agenda (2016-17 to 2019-20) aims to improve STEM teaching and learning. Finally, the National STEM School Education Strategy 2016-26 aims to strengthen students' foundations in STEM, inspire them to take on more challenging STEM subjects, and sharpen the focus on areas where national and collaborative action can deliver STEM improvements. Australia's government also defined completion objectives for VET and ways to strengthen apprenticeships to develop the skills of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, through The Smith Family's Learning for Life Program (2016-17 to 2019-20).

- The 2014 Preparing Secondary Students for Work framework updated the New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools (2001), with the goal of ensuring that vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students reflects modern schools and workplaces. It focuses on four components (clarity, collaboration, confidence and core systems) to help all students have access to quality vocational learning and VET integrated into secondary schooling and ensure that students can gain an understanding of the world of work.
- To promote internationalisation at the tertiary level and increase collaboration in the region, the New Colombo Plan (2013) provides funding for Australian students to study or intern in the Indo-Pacific region.

Austria

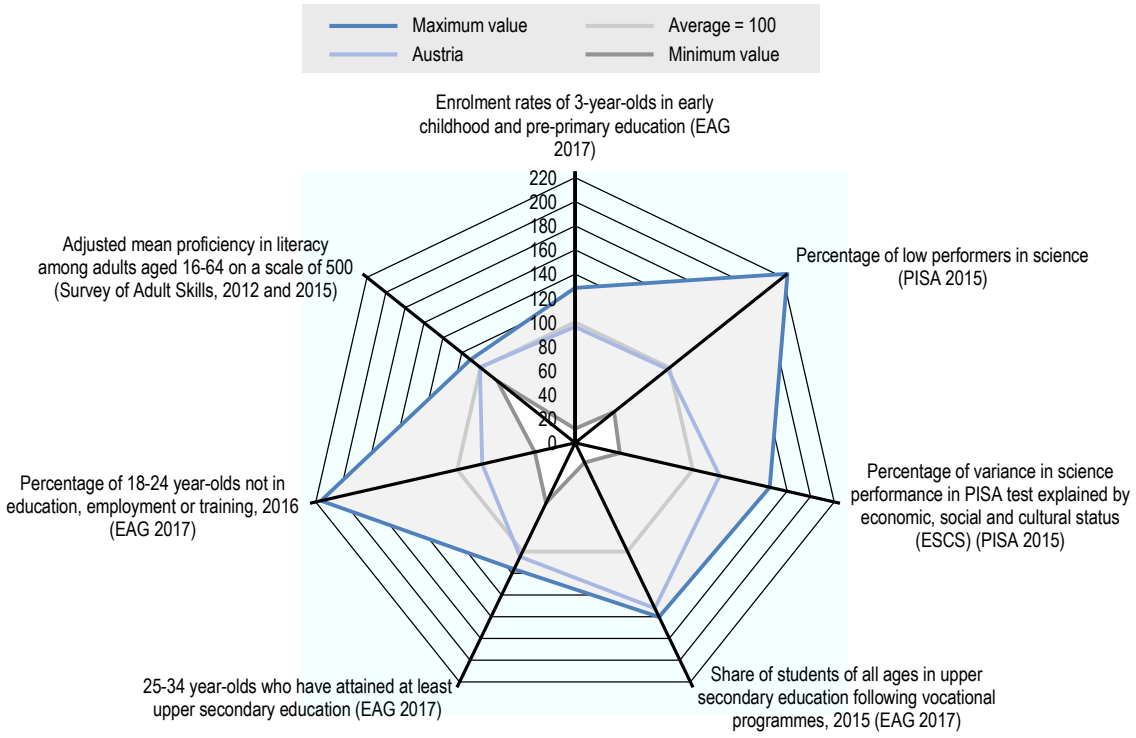
Context

Austria scored higher than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 495 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science in Austria has declined across PISA cycles, with an average score change of -4.9 score points, while performance in reading and mathematics has stayed the same. Socio-economic status had higher-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 15.9% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were highest in the OECD in Austria, with a difference between boys and girls of 19 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 20.3% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Austria, higher than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are higher than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 46 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was close to the OECD average in 2015, at 74.9% (OECD average: 77.8%). Pre-primary education (kindergarten) generally begins at age 3 in Austria and is a three-year programme. In 2010, obligatory kindergarten attendance was introduced for 5-year-olds (one year before school entry). Compulsory education in Austria begins at age 6 and ends at age 15, shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 10, the earliest age in OECD countries. Students can advance into one of four upper secondary programmes. Each programme lasts between one and five years. There are four upper secondary programmes, including an academic track, as well as three tracks for vocational education. Only students who have completed academic and higher vocational education may advance to university and post-secondary vocational education. Students who have completed intermediate vocational education may apply for further educational courses or post-secondary vocational education.

Austria has one of the highest enrolment rates in VET among OECD countries. VET offers part-time and full-time programmes. Upper secondary students who complete these programmes can either advance to university or choose between courses in education institutions, technical and vocational education or schools for master craftsmen. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Austria were close to the OECD average, at 269 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was among the highest in the OECD. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Austria is close to the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 14.6% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 12.1%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The share of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is lower than the OECD average in 2016 (39.7%, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%). Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are among the highest in the OECD. In 2016, 87.7% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.2. Selected indicators compared with the average: Austria



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.
Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732821

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.2. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Austria (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified a need to reduce performance and attainment gaps due to socio-economic status. Early streaming was found to increase inequalities within the educational system, such as a larger gender gap (due to major differences in professional specialisation) and earnings gap. Austria has one of the largest population groups with immigrant origin among OECD countries, but education and labour market outcomes of some of these groups are weaker than those of native Austrians. [2015]	The OECD found indications of skills mismatch in the Austrian labour market. VET programmes are developed to respond to student preferences, rather than to demand from the labour market. But as training provision is largely funded from public funds, it should reflect the wider interests of society, including labour market actors as well as students. The apprenticeship system should be strengthened through more employer engagement, and the school-to-work transition must be facilitated. [2010; 2013; 2015]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Austria had previously reported a need to increase the participation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in pre-primary education and to reduce the achievement gap between students from disadvantaged or immigrant backgrounds and their peers. In 2017, these challenges remain. [2013; 2017]	As reported by Austria, challenges remain in decreasing early dropout rates, improving the transition to higher levels of education (e.g. from VET to tertiary education) and widening the access to universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*). As of 2017, decreasing early dropout and improving transitions continue to be challenges. [2013; 2017]

Note: 1. See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Austria is in the process of comprehensively reforming its education system, through the framework of the 2015 education reform plan. In 2015, representatives of the federal government and the provinces presented a proposal for education reform in Austria. Based on the work of an expert commission, it included a roadmap for implementation. The first reform package, entitled School Entry and Primary School (*Schulrechtsänderungsgesetz*), was adopted in 2016. To improve the transition between ECEC and primary school and strengthen students' competencies, it will unify the last year of kindergarten and the first two years of primary school into a single school-entry phase. This change aims to allow for easier early identification of learning difficulties, as well as an exchange of teachers between kindergarten and primary schools. To maximise integration of students, especially those with an immigrant background or who have recently arrived in the country, the package also promotes measures to foster the learning of German, starting in kindergarten.

- **Progress or impact:** The School Entry and Primary School package was implemented nationwide in 2016/17. A further package of reforms, related to school autonomy and simplifying school administration *(Bildungsreformgesetz)* was implemented in 2017. Further measures to be legislated as part of the 2015 reform include an innovation package to provide broadband to schools, establishment of a foundation to support innovative projects in schools, and piloting of an "education compass" to monitor the development of 3-year-olds.

Austria implemented a new lower secondary school model, the New Secondary School (*Neue Mittelschule*, NMS) in 2007/08 to provide students with basic, comprehensive education. The NMS did not replace lower secondary academic education; it continues to be provided as a separate track. NMS students are not grouped by ability in core subjects in the first years (Years 5 and 6). After that, de facto streaming takes place through a differentiated grading system for students in Years 7 and 8, based on student ability. The new model features innovative teaching methods, including team teaching in some mathematics, English and German lessons, with teachers from general higher secondary

schools (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule*, AHS), and aims to have curriculum and educational goals closer in content to the AHS. The total amount of investment for the introduction of the NMS is estimated at between EUR 164 million and EUR 250 million per year. The additional funding is intended to introduce new pedagogical methods, such as team teaching, to better respond to the needs of the heterogeneous population targeted by the NMS.

- **Progress or impact:** The new schools now cover over 60% of all students transferring from primary school. By the start of the 2015/16 school year, they had completely replaced general secondary schools for new entrants, with complete replacement expected by 2018/19. According to the summative evaluation of the NMS pilot in 2015, the introduction of the NMS has had mixed results. Compared to general secondary schools, the new schools appeared to provide slightly more positive learning environments overall and higher levels of student support. However, the report also found deficiencies in the implementation process, with interpretations of the model varying between schools. At the time of the report, students' overall levels of achievement had not yet improved in the NMS. Given the recent rollout of the system, further research and a full evaluation of NMS will be required to fully assess its impact (OECD, 2017a).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The government is investing heavily in expanding all-day schooling, aiming to have 40% of schoolchildren attending all-day schooling by 2025. These expanded offerings include morning and afternoon courses and aim to make it easier for people to combine family responsibilities and work, especially for women. All-day schooling can be integrated by the school or offered by external providers.
- The federal government provides language support courses for non-German speakers, additional support to non-German-speaking students during the first two years of school and specialised language support staff in schools. In addition, targeted support for refugees, in the form of beginner language groups and/or language support classes, was introduced in 2016/17.
- Starting in 2017, the Apprenticeship until 18 programme (*AusBildung bis 18*) requires all students under age 18 to engage in education or training after completion of compulsory education. In addition, a New Upper Level Scheme (2012), in place in all schools from 2017/18, has a competence-based syllabus to better prepare students for higher education, as well as more frequent assessments to detect learning deficits at an earlier stage and reduce school dropout.
- In 2016, the Austrian National Council (*Nationalrat*) adopted a Federal Act on the National Qualifications Framework (*Bundesgesetz über den Nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen*) to classify qualifications, promote transparency and international comparability, and encourage lifelong learning.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Belgium

Context (national)

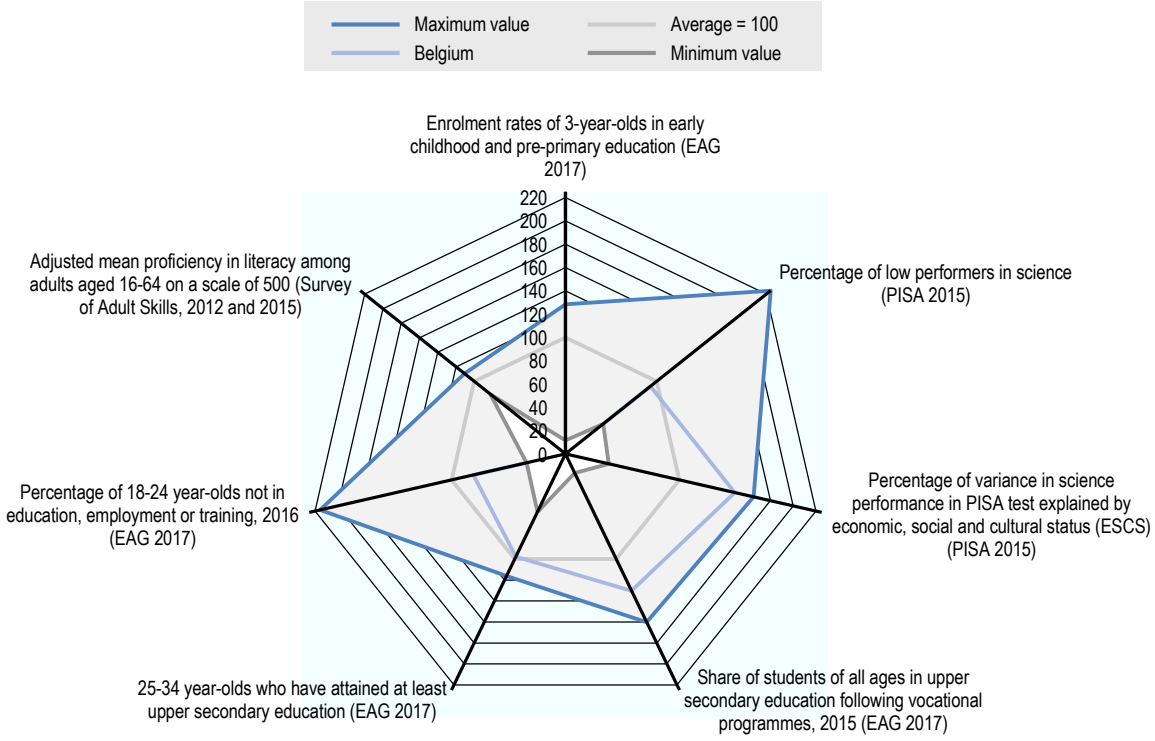
Belgium scored higher than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 501 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of -2.7 score points, while reading performance has stayed the same and mathematics performance has decreased. Socio-economic status had one of the largest impacts among OECD countries on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 19.3% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were among the highest in the OECD, with a difference between boys and girls of 12 points, compared to the OECD average difference of 4 points. Immigrant students made up 17.7% of the student population of 15-year-olds in 2015, higher than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are higher than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 43 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Education-only pre-primary programmes with no tuition fees exist in each community of Belgium. A formal curriculum for these programmes is delivered by qualified teachers. Compulsory education in Belgium begins at age 6 and ends at age 18, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are typically first tracked into different educational pathways at age 14, but in some cases as early as age 12, which is earlier than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education has a wide diversity of streams in all education systems in Belgium. All three Communities offer four-year general, technical and vocational streams of education, and the Flemish and French Communities also offer an art education stream. In general, students can access higher education after attending a general, technical or art education upper secondary programme. Vocational streams require the completion of a seventh year of secondary education to receive a secondary school leaving certificate. In the Flemish and French Communities, secondary vocational education can be followed in two strands: purely school-based or dual school- and work-based. All five upper secondary education programmes, including dual vocational education, lead to a diploma for secondary education. Only completion of general, arts, and technical secondary programmes provides access to higher education, after four years of upper secondary education. Students in the Flemish and French Communities who complete vocational secondary education receive a secondary school leaving certificate and have access to associate degree programmes only if they complete an extra year, which then can grant access to all strands of higher education, universities and university colleges. In the German-speaking Community, students who complete secondary school receive a leaving certificate and have access to higher education, regardless of the education stream they have completed.

Overall, Belgium has a higher-than-average enrolment rate in school-based VET among OECD countries, with 57% of students aged 15-19 following a VET programme (compared to the OECD average of 40%). The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Belgium is higher than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 16% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training), are lower than the OECD average, at 12.4%,

compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The share of population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is higher than the OECD average, at 44.3% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are higher than the OECD average. In 2016, 86.8% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.3. Selected indicators compared with the average: Belgium



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732840

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.3. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Belgium (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The socio-economic background and immigrant status of students have a higher impact on student performance than in other OECD countries. In the case of immigrants, explaining variables are the level of education on arrival in the country and lower enrolment rates in ECEC, which have an impact on early assimilation of the language. [2007; 2011; 2015]	Persisting difficulties were identified in filling some job vacancies, especially in technical areas. Young people in secondary vocational studies are often unable to find employment, as they lack technical skills. This can partially be explained by the marginal training received in the workplace. As a result, a severe skills mismatch has developed on the labour market. Also, a high share of immigrants pursue VET, with fewer opportunities to pursue further studies afterwards. [2011; 2015]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	The **Flemish Community** has reported difficulty in integrating students with disadvantaged backgrounds and limited knowledge of Dutch into mainstream education, which has increased dramatically due to the acceleration of immigration within the last few years. In the **French Community**, grade repetition remains the highest among countries participating in PISA 2015. The integration of students with special needs into mainstream education must also be improved. According to the Community's reports, major school reforms have been launched recently, aiming to improve equity, key competences, and the quality and relevance of VET. [2013; 2016-17]	The **Flemish Community** had previously reported a need to adjust adult education to facilitate effective transitions to the labour market, as well as to reduce numbers of students leaving secondary education without a qualification. In the **French Community**, similar policy priorities remain with regard to early school leaving. It has also been reported that VET lacks attractiveness and student preference should be further taken into account when improving the VET system. [2013; 2016-17]

Note: 1. See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Flemish Community

After the Flemish Parliament ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, the Flemish Community of Belgium legally reinforced the right of students with special educational needs to be enrolled in mainstream education, through the passing of the M-Decree in 2014. Its measures include: 1) updating the definition categories for students with special educational needs, including a category for children with autism; 2) requiring mainstream schools to make reasonable adjustments (such as providing specialist equipment and support staff to accommodate students with special education needs in the mainstream system) and requiring mainstream schools to only refer a student to special education once all such "reasonable adaptations" have been tried; and 3) providing the right to appeal to a Student Rights Commission (*Commissie inzake leerlingenrechten*) to parents of a child with special educational needs who disagree with a school's refusal to enrol their child. This commission, created by the Parliamentary Act of 2002 on Equal Educational Opportunities, is comprised of experts in equality and education law. In May 2017, the government reached an agreement regarding the allocation of EUR 103 million for updating classrooms and training teachers for special needs students (EC, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** The measures imposed in the M-Decree were implemented in 2015-16. National sources indicate that there is already a noticeable decrease in the number of primary students in special education in the first school year under the new measure (Vlaanderen, 2017).

As part of the Parliamentary Act for primary and secondary education (2008) in the Flemish Community of Belgium, additional financial resources are provided to schools to

compensate for socio-economic disadvantage. In fact, the Flemish school-financing system is designed to support equal access to educational opportunities for all students and compensate for differences in student backgrounds. To help schools meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, school operating grants are weighted for socio-economic status. This is intended to account for the influence of key differentiating variables: the mother's educational level, foreign language spoken at home, the family's financial capacity and the student's neighbourhood characteristics. Student socio-economic characteristics are also used in the calculation, and elementary schools and secondary schools receive a top-up of teaching hours based on school concentrations of such characteristics. Differential weighting recognises the adverse impact on student learning of specific student background characteristics. For elementary education, characteristic-based funding amounted to 14% of the overall budget in 2012, and it is being increased gradually to reach 15.5% by 2020. For secondary education, the share of the budget amounted to 10% in 2008-09, and it is gradually being increased to 11% by 2020. For secondary education, the share of the budget amounted to 10% in 2008-09 and is gradually being increased to 11% by 2020 (Flemish Department of Education and Training, 2015). This additional funding may make it possible to run remedial classes, split classes, and release teachers for a range of pedagogical and support activities. In these ways, the Flemish authorities seek to balance choice and autonomy with equity.

- **Progress or impact:** PISA 2015 data show that larger-than-average gaps remain in performance between students of different socio-economic backgrounds, as well as between immigrant and non-immigrant students (OECD, 2016a). An OECD review of school resources in the Flemish Community found that the system is well resourced, but to fully understand the impact of targeted funding, it would be necessary to have more empirical data available in the system on resource outputs and resource utilisation, as schools have autonomy to disburse the extra funding in different ways according to local needs. The review also proposed shifting more of the budget to lower levels, as evidence shows this provides a higher rate of return (Nusche et al., 2015). The Flemish Community has already begun to make some changes to funding structures in response to the review, such as investing more in areas of high need (for example integrating new immigrants and funding new school infrastructure in densely populated urban areas), as well as redistributing funds to lower education levels (OECD, 2017b).

In 2015, the parliament of the Flemish Community of Belgium launched the action plan "Together against Early School Leaving" (previously the Action Plan on Early School Leaving [2013] and *Spijbelplan* [2012]). It targets different types of populations at risk: early school leavers (emigrants with low education level); truants; NEETs; and general youth at risk (SERV, 2015). The policy guidelines in the Action Plan outline actions that have been completed, are in operation and are about to begin. Local actions are aligned to the European reference framework of prevention, intervention and compensation (*Vlaanderen Department Onderwijs en Vorming*, 2017). Furthermore, the action plan includes monitoring, identification and co-ordination. In 2016, the government set up the Early School Leaving Monitor to monitor and track the outcomes, socio-economic characteristics and study progression of young people who leave education without an upper secondary qualification.

- **Progress or impact:** As of 201752 actions have been completed, 51 are still in operation and 4 are about to begin. Actions and results on the four levels include reporting recurrent absences of students and addressing students directly in case of truancy, in order to make schools more responsive. The group of measures also includes setting up a plan to combat bullying. Another completed action is the appointment of a Flemish truancy officer who is in charge of accompanying, following up and evaluating the implementation plan. (*Vlaanderen Department Onderwijs en Vorming*, 2017).

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, a new model of dual vocational learning (*Schoolbank op de werkplek*) is underway, with pilot projects running since 2015/16 and general implementation starting during 2018/19. Students are trained in the workplace

and in a centre for part-time education (CEDEFOP, 2017a). One component is an online tool (*werkplek duaal*) where companies can upload requests for getting their apprenticeship place accredited (Syntra Vlaanderen, 2017a). The tool started operating in 2016, and 8 938 accreditations were verified by 2017 (Syntra Vlaanderen, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** According to CEDEFOP (2017a), the reforms have already shown positive results. During the pilot stage, 34 schools took part, with 7 operating pathways and 126 apprentices. Also, 25 pioneers of the programme graduated in chemical process techniques. The number of approved accreditations on the *werkplek duaal* website increased to more than 10 000. In addition, 12 sectoral partnerships were active by then (Syntra Vlaanderen, 2017b).

Between 2009 and 2013, Belgium's Flemish Community implemented a national qualifications structure that includes measures such as short-cycle tertiary education (*Hoger beroepsonderwijs* [Higher Vocational Education], HBO5 or SCHE EQF level 5). This new level was added to expand access to higher education and meet labour market needs. The qualifications' structure will be further expanded with the systematic definition of the competences of professional qualifications to be obtained through schooling. This process is carried out by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training in co-operation with employers and representatives of the different business and industry sectors.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2011 results of the pilot project pointed out that the new level corresponds to a paradigm shift, which requires major efforts to move from adult education to a higher education programme at SCHE level 5 (Kirsch and Beernaert, 2011). In 2016, a concept note was put forward by the Flemish government on the expansion of the HBO5 (short-cycle/associate degree). In 2017, a framework on the new HBO5 education transformation (*Kader Toets Nieuwe HBO-5 Opleiding Omvorming*) was published. It aims to provide clarity on the quality guarantees, standards and criteria, which should be used as a basis to judge the quality of converted HBO-5 programmes. More specifically, the framework includes all the criteria for a HBO-5 decree: educational content and process, material facilities, quality of staff and internal quality assurance (NVAO, 2017).

French Community

In 2016, the French Community of Belgium introduced a further series of measures aimed specifically at reducing the prevalence of children repeating the third pre-primary year. These measures are part of the Take-off Project, initiated in 2012 to prevent grade repetition among children age 2.5 to 8. These recent measures require that children be held back only in exceptional circumstances, following an assessment by the school leader and a psycho-social-medical centre (CPMS). They also introduce a skills assessment for children for early identification of learning difficulties and disabilities. Depending on the child's outcomes on this assessment, a remediation plan can be put in place by the school, in partnership with the CPMS involved in the assessment to increase the chances for a successful transfer to primary education. In additional, new curriculum standards were introduced for pre-primary schools to define core initial competence bases and promote smoother transitions from pre-primary to primary education.

- **Progress or impact:** As of 2010, grade retention occurred for students as early as in pre-primary education and through secondary education. In fact, as students got older, they were more and more likely to repeat a grade in both primary and secondary education (*Enseignement en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, 2014). However, between 2009 and 2015, grade retention rates decreased for primary students from 18% to less than 15%. Between 2012 and 2015, grade retention for upper secondary students decreased from almost 52% to less than 50% (*Enseignement en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, 2016). Following the initiative's implementation in 2012, at least 160 schools and 45 CPMS joined. By 2014, more than 290 schools and 75 CPMS were participating in the Take-off Project. Between 2012 and 2014, 847 children were enrolled in the project, through 61 CPMS and 215 schools (*Enseignement en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, 2014).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

Flemish Community:

- The Flemish Community gives priority access to childcare for children under age 3. Beneficiaries are single parents and/or low-income parents who are unable to care for their children during the day due to their work or study, or for whom childcare can facilitate socio-economic integration and increased labour market participation. Schools receive extra funding (EUR 950 per year) at pre-primary education level for each newly arrived child from the age of 2.5 whose native language is not Dutch.
- In 2015 and 2016, a series of special measures were passed by the Flemish Parliament to enhance integration of refugees in the education system. These include: 1) new funding initiatives for language support in pre-primary schools; 2) an increase of resources for welcoming classes in school education; and 3) further supporting previously existing measures, such as adult linguistic integration and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Centre) for recognising refugees' qualifications. In addition, special admission procedures and financial support measures are applied for refugee students in universities and university colleges (OECD, 2017b).
- The 2013 Master Plan for secondary education and related policy measures aim to reduce early school leaving by integrating existing initiatives and closely linking to other reform processes (such as the rationalisation of school governance), updating educational objectives and developing a new system of dual learning. The first stage, outlined in three concept notes approved by the government in 2016 and 2017, includes measures for pre-primary, primary and secondary education to ease students' transition into secondary education. Legislative work is underway to assure gradual implementation of these measures, starting in 2018.
- The Ethical Trading Initiative for Young People Programme (2013) was developed as part of VET education to prepare students for the transition to the labour market and equip them with key competencies, such as ownership, responsibility, creativity, innovation, and critical thinking (Syntra Vlaanderen, 2014).
- A 2012 Agreement between the Flemish Government and the Social Partners on Professional Careers encompasses measures to facilitate transition from education to the labour market. It was the framework for action under the previous administration (2009-14). In the current administration (2014-19), the measures continue under different umbrellas, such as the Action Plan on STEM, for which first pilot projects have started, and the planned reform of work-based vocational secondary programmes in close co-operation with industry, for which parliamentary work is still underway.

French Community:

- The French Community has progressed with the Pact for Excellence in Teaching (*Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence*, 2015-30) for ECEC and across all levels of compulsory education. It was developed to define action priorities with a 15-year horizon to strengthen quality, equity and efficiency in education on the basis of an implementation plan. It has five strategic goals: 1) teach the

knowledge and skills required for 21st century society (by strengthening ECEC and ensuring a common base learning from ECEC until Year 3 of Secondary education); 2) mobilise education stakeholders within a framework of school autonomy and accountability; 3) make the vocational pathway a stream of excellence (e.g. through career advice and a reform of study pathways; 4) promote inclusive education, and strengthen the fight against school failure, dropout and grade repetition (with the target of decreasing grade repetition by 50% in 2030); and 5) ensure the well-being of each child in a quality school, favouring a democratic school (*La Fédération de Wallonie-Bruxelles*, 2017; OECD, 2017b).

- The DASPA decree (*Dispositif d'accueil et de scolarisation des élèves primo-arrivants*, 2012, further strengthened in 2015) provides for a series of measures to support the integration of newly arrived children and those with a linguistic background other than the language of instruction (French), such as special reception classes and tailored pedagogical support.
- Modifications were proposed in 2017 for the Instrument for Differentiated Support (*Dispositif d'encadrement différencié*), which was first implemented in 2009. This policy provides additional human and financial resources to schools catering to a larger share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as a specific pedagogical project to help bridge gaps in opportunities for quality education. Under the new approach, a socio-economic index is used to estimate the need for resources based on the socio-economic background of the student and the community. Elements such as household revenue, educational attainment or unemployment are part of this index, which contains information for all schools in the French Community. Schools where 25% of students score as most disadvantaged by this index can benefit from this instrument. The index is updated every year, but the decision to allocate differentiated support is made on a six-year basis (Eurydice, 2017; Internal Communication).
- The 2016 Decree (*Arrêté du Gouvernement de la Communauté française fixant le modèle du document explicatif des types de stage et des attentes de l'enseignement secondaire vis-à-vis du milieu professionnel*) mandates work experience in different jobs in the third year of secondary education. It allows students to gain information, access training courses, and have immersion as well as experience in the socio-professional world.
- In 2016, the French Community approved a decree that implements dual vocational education in higher education for certain fields of study and programmes leading to jobs where there are skills shortages (including science fields, information technology and building and town planning) and for new and evolving professions, such as those related to sustainable development or linked with the economic recovery. This new option intends to expand access to higher education, meet labour market needs, ease the transition between education and the workplace for students, and allow students to develop practical skills while still in education. It makes it possible to acquire some higher education degrees dually in an institution-based setting and workplace. Dual vocational education will be permitted in short-cycle programmes and vocational certificates, as well as masters' degrees. These programmes combine a minimum of 40% of workplace training and a minimum of 40% institution-based teaching (OECD, 2017b).

- In 2015, the Governments of the French Community and the country's Walloon Region supported the allocation of funds to projects aiming to equip young people with relevant skills and to support the transition to the labour market. Almost 400 projects were selected, with a total budget of EUR 800 million as part of the 2014-20 European Social Fund (ESF) programme.

German-speaking Community:

- In 2014, the Parliament of the German-speaking Community adopted a decree on childhood care covering this Community's ECEC system. The aim of the decree is to provide a framework for all ECEC support measures in the German-speaking Community and to regulate the basic provisions in childhood care.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Canada

Context

Canada scored among the highest in science, reading and mathematics in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 528 points in science, 527 in reading and 516 in mathematics (compared to the OECD averages of 493 points in science, 493 in reading and 490 in mathematics). Performance in science remained stable between PISA 2006 and PISA 2015, as did performance in reading. Performance in mathematics, on the other hand, declined by 4.3 score points on all assessments between 2003 and 2015. In Canada, the strength of the relationship between science performance and socio-economic status of students was among the weakest across OECD countries, with 8.8% of the variation in student performance in science attributed to differences in students' socio-economic status (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 30.1% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Canada, a proportion which is among the highest in the OECD (OECD average: 12.5%). Unlike most OECD countries, there was no significant performance gap in PISA 2015 between immigrant and non-immigrant students in science, with a score difference of just -2 points.

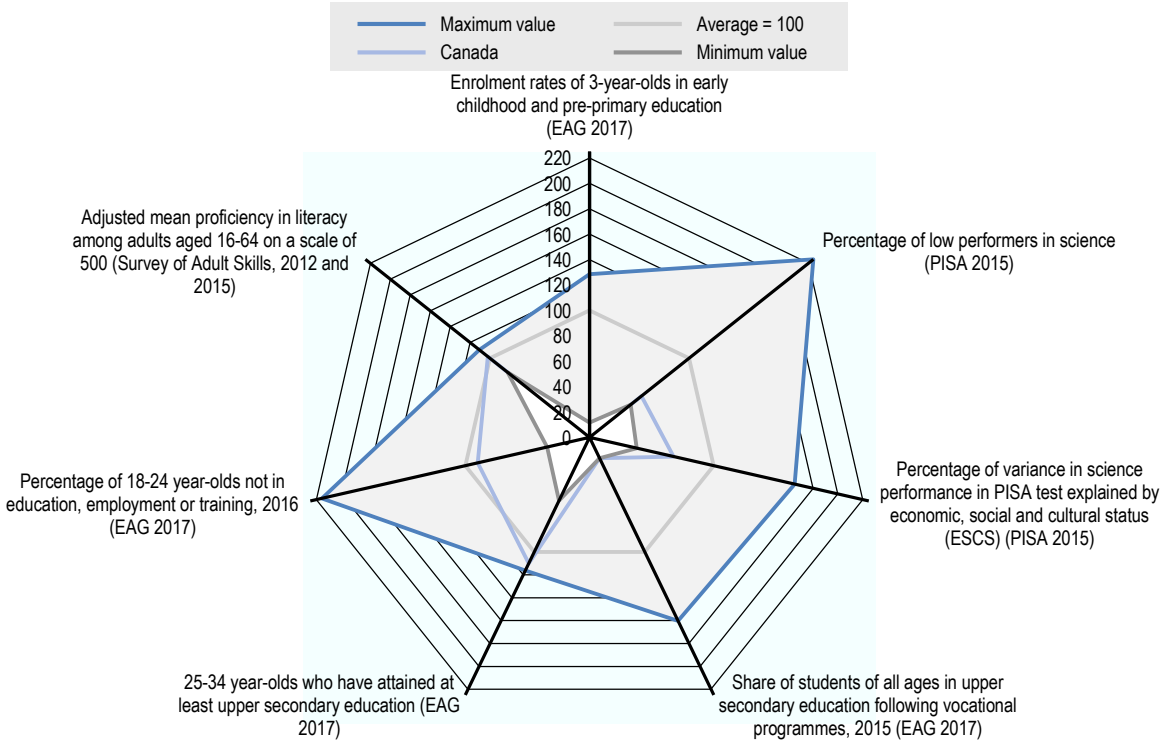
Pre-elementary education (kindergarten) is a one-year programme that children typically start between age 4 and age 5. Both education-only and integrated education and care pre-primary programmes exist nationally. Qualified teachers are responsible for the formal curricula in place for both programmes. Compulsory education in Canada begins at age 6 and ends at age 16-18, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education is divided between general programmes and VET. Depending on the province or territory in Canada, students attend four to six years of compulsory upper secondary education. All general upper secondary programmes lead to college and university education, as well as apprenticeship and post-secondary non-tertiary programmes. In most cases, VET only allows students to advance to apprenticeship or post-secondary non-tertiary streams.

VET is primarily offered at the post-secondary level in public or private technical and vocational institutes or colleges, rather than at upper secondary level. At upper secondary level, only a small proportion of students (primarily in Quebec) are enrolled in pre-vocational/vocational programmes (6%, compared to 44% on average in OECD countries in 2012). The apprenticeship system plays an important role in the provision of trade skills, as it is a source of workplace training.

In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Canada were higher than the OECD average, at 273 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was lower than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Canada is among the lowest in the OECD, with an attainment rate of 6.9% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 13.8%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is among the highest in the OECD, at 60.6% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with

tertiary education are close to the OECD average. In 2016, 85.3% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.4. Selected indicators compared with the average: Canada



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732859

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.4. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Canada (2008-17)

Identified by:	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work 2008-17[1]	Canada needs to make ECEC more accessible from early ages and improve outcomes for minority-language and Aboriginal students. [2015]	The OECD identified challenges facing disadvantaged groups in accessing tertiary education. The OECD also found that integration of students into the labour market needs to be encouraged. To improve the quality of education, research has to be fostered. Weak numeracy or literacy skills pose a barrier to post-secondary education completion for some students. [2016]

Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Canada reported challenges in improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal, first-generation immigrants, low-income learners and students with disabilities. [2013; 2016-17]	According to survey responses, difficulties remain in developing the apprenticeship system due to, among others, the low perception of the system by students and low employer engagement. As the need for an ever more highly skilled and flexible workforce is growing, employers face difficulties in finding people with the right skills. Creating quality experiential learning experiences in post-secondary education is therefore of prime importance. [2013; 2016-17]

Note: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot

Selected education policy responses

The SchoolsPlus programme, launched in 2008 in the province of Nova Scotia, is an interagency approach to support children and families by appointing the school as the centre of service delivery. The programme's core focus continues to be the creation of "communities of care" to help students foster resilience and prevent more children, youth and families from becoming at-risk. Ultimately, the programme aims to reach and support the 5-10% of children and youth in Nova Scotia who are at risk of marginalisation. The policy has expanded every year, with sites in all eight school boards. Each school board now has a SchoolsPlus facilitator and Community Outreach Workers who act as the liaison between the school and the community, and each board has established a SchoolsPlus Advisory Committee, which identifies opportunities to enhance and expand the array of services and programmes for children, youth and their families.

- **Progress or impact:** A 2013 report highlighted that the SchoolsPlus programme had achieved provincial coverage, after establishing 95 sites in all eight school boards. Although the service provided by the programme had resulted in an increase in interdepartmental service co-operation and the introduction of mental health services, the report suggested that a "mid-term correction" should be made to ensure that the policy achieves its ultimate goal. However, the report states that the programme has been more successful at "co-ordinating existing public social services" than achieving its original mission (Bennett, 2013).

In 2009, the province of Quebec introduced the "I Care about School" strategy (*l'École, j'y tiens!*), aiming to reach a student completion rate of 80% in secondary education by 2020, through reduced class size, after-school care and reintegrating students who have dropped out of the system.

- **Progress or impact:** A 2012 evaluation of the programme found that the participants of the experimental study group increased their commitment after the programme's intervention. The assessment suggests that this might be attributed to one part of the curriculum of the programme, the media project, which particularly motivated the participants (Lalande Charlebois, 2012).

The Canada Apprentice Loan (CAL), launched in 2015, provides interest-free loans of up to CAD 4 000 per period of technical training to help register apprentices in Red Seal trades with the costs of training (Government of Canada, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** The June 2017 evaluation report on the first phase of implementation of the programme found that there is demand for the programme, as otherwise employers provide little to no financial support to apprentices. As of 2015, 41% of eligible students took up a CAL. From 2015 to 2016, the administrative costs were CAD 4.2 million. Challenges remain in raising awareness among the target group and clarifying the terms of repayment, as they have not been clear to some recipients. The report indicates that the impact of the loans on completion rates will be addressed in the second phase of the evaluation, as more time is needed for data collection (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2017).

The Job Bank website in Canada replaced "Working in Canada" in 2014. It is the country's national online employment service to connect employers with job seekers.

Through partnerships with many of the largest third-party job boards, the Job Bank aims to post a consolidated view of available jobs searchable by occupation, location and other factors. It also permits job seekers to register their skills and employers to register their requirements. This enables automated matching and notification. The site also features a comprehensive section on the labour market that combines information from over 30 sources, where users can explore careers by learning about trends in the labour market, as well details on specific occupations. Information available includes wages, outlooks, skills, training, licensing and certification requirements, and training and education options.

- **Progress or impact:** In October 2017, the Job Bank website listed more than 95 000 jobs (Government of Canada, 2017b).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

The Early Learning and Development Framework of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (2014) presents a pan-Canadian vision for early learning to be adapted to the unique needs and circumstances of each province and territory. It supports the development of policies and initiatives that enhance the quality and continuity of the learning experience in the early years and beyond. The principles guiding this framework are: 1) the child is integral to policy and programme development; 2) the family is central to a child's development; 3) honouring the diversity of children and families is integral to equity and inclusion; 4) safe, healthy and engaging environments shape lifelong learning, development, behaviour, health and well-being; 5) learning through play capitalises on children's natural curiosity and exuberance; and 6) the educator, or the extended family as educator, is central to supporting learning and development through responsive and caring relationships.

- In 2017, the Government of Canada announced an agreement with provincial and territorial governments on a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework. It will be seeking to increase the quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and inclusivity in ECEC, in particular for families that need childcare the most. The federal government will work with each province and territory to enter into three-year bilateral agreements outlining their specific ECEC needs and the funding allocation for each jurisdiction. Through these agreements, the provinces and territories will receive CAD 1.2 billion over the next three years for ECEC programmes and will report annually on progress made in relation to the Framework and bilateral agreements. The Framework will complement the development of a separate Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework between the Government of Canada and Indigenous partners.
- The province of Ontario invested CAD 150 million in a Technology and Learning Fund (TLF, 2014-17) to modernise classrooms and bring more innovation to learning. The TLF funds local innovation projects, the acquisition of technology and software for Ontario classrooms, and related professional learning for educators. The updated TLF implementation plan (2017) aims to support stakeholders with implementation, including a first draft of "Celebrating Ontario's Innovation Journey – An Iterative Rubric", which aims to communicate best practices and track projects in process (Council of Ontario Directors of Education, 2017). A new Innovation in Learning Fund was was also introduced to enhance innovation in learning and teaching to assist students in obtaining "global

competencies", with an ongoing investment of CAD 10 million per year (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017).

- In 2016, Canada's labour market ministers agreed to explore innovative approaches to increase employer engagement for improved job opportunities and outcomes for apprentices. Federal, provincial and territorial governments in most jurisdictions also reconfirmed their commitment to harmonise apprenticeship training for 30 Red Seal trades by 2020, with an effort to harmonise training for two-thirds of Red Seal apprentices by 2017 (Government of Canada, 2017c).

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Chile

Context

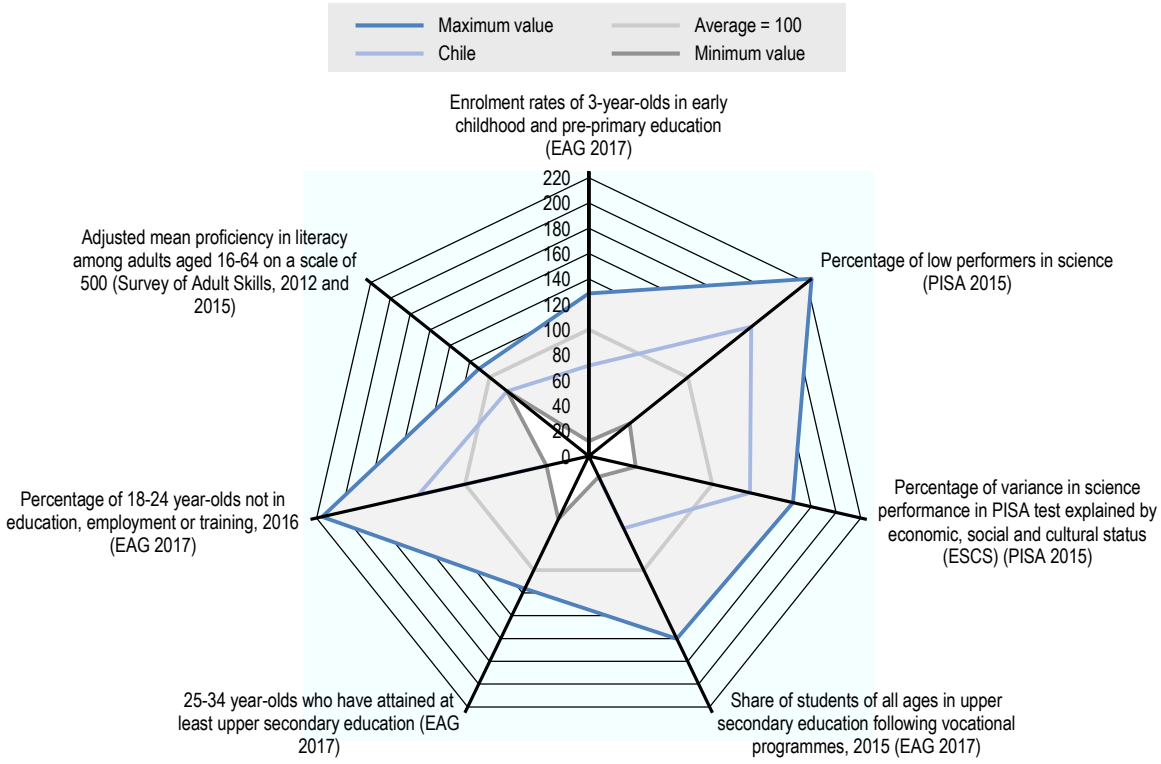
In PISA 2015, Chile scored among the lowest in the OECD in science, with a mean score of 446 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of 2.4 score points, while reading performance has increased and mathematics performance has stayed the same. Socio-economic social and cultural status had one of the largest impacts in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 16.9% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). However, equity in science performance has increased significantly since PISA 2006. Gender differences in science performance were among the highest in the OECD, with a difference between boys and girls of 15 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 2.1% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Chile, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are lower than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 23 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was lower than the OECD average in 2015 (at 55.6%, compared to the OECD average of 77.8%. However, at age 4, Chile's enrolment rate is 86%, close to the OECD average of 87%. Pre-primary education (*Educación parvularia*) is organised by levels, with day care and a lower middle level (*sala cuna y nivel medio menor*) for children age 0-2, and upper middle and lower and upper transition levels (*nivel medio mayor, nivel de transición 1 y nivel de transición 2*) for children age 3-5. A national curriculum for early childhood education is in place for children age 0-5. Also, education-only and integrated education and care pre-primary programmes exist nationally. Both offer formal curricula that are delivered by qualified teachers. Compulsory education in Chile begins at age 6 and ends at age 18, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education is a four-year programme with a choice of three streams. Students can choose between general, artistic and technical education. Virtually all upper secondary graduates who expect to continue education take an entry exam (*Prueba de Selección Universitaria*, PSU). This exam, introduced in 2004, is an important gatekeeper into higher education, as the scores determine access to tertiary academic (type-A) programmes. Upon completion of each education stream, students receive a high school certificate, which allows them to advance to university, a professional institute (*Instituto Profesional,* IP), or a technical training centre (*Centro de Formación Técnica,* CFT).

VET is included in the technical professional education stream of the formal education system, where it is taught in technical and professional schools. After 12 years of compulsory education, students receive a secondary school leaving certificate (*licencia de enseñanza media*) and can obtain the title of middle-level technician if they complete workplace training (*práctica profesional*). Tertiary-level technical and vocational education and training (TVET) includes two-year programmes offered in CFTs, and four-year programmes in IPs, where students can develop high-level technical skills in fields like technology, agriculture or commerce. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Chile were relatively low, at 220 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The proportion of the population age 25-64 with lower

secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Chile is among the highest in the OECD, with an attainment rate of 22.2% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (those aged 18-24 that are not employed or in education or training) are also higher than average, at 21.1% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%.

Figure 7.5. Selected indicators compared with the average: Chile



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732878

Evolution of key policy priorities

Table 7.5. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Chile (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD considered that providing better-quality education that is accessible to all needs to remain a national imperative. OECD evidence found that it is a priority for Chile to continue improving quality and coverage of ECEC. In the same way, addressing low student performance and the high student segregation that exists in the education system is also paramount for Chile. [2017]	According to the OECD, enabling Chileans to develop skills as they age is also key for the country's future prosperity. This relates to developing quality and relevance of VET, as well as good career advice for students. Improving the higher education system was also found to be a key area for Chile. This entails developing a vision, a strategy and effective quality-assurance mechanisms, as well as strengthening equity in access to higher education of the best quality and strengthening the relevance of higher education.
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Both equity and quality remain challenges in the Chilean educational system. New key challenges identified at the school level include reducing inequalities and segregation among students, strengthening public education across the country and strengthening the quality and coverage of ECEC. [2013; 2016-17]	A new challenge identified by Chile is ensuring that young people and adults have opportunities to develop work and training trajectories according to their expectations and abilities, and that these are also aligned with the development needs of the country. [2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Through the Preferential School Subsidy (*Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial*, SEP, 2008) in Chile, primary schools receive additional funding for enrolment of socio-economically disadvantaged students. These funds are in addition to the baseline funding that public and government-subsidised private schools receive for each enrolled student. In 2008, the introduction of the preferential education subsidy modified this scheme to make it more equity-oriented. It allocates a large share of expenditure on a per-student basis (topping up the flat-rate voucher) and provides an additional amount for schools that enrol a significant proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Acceptance of these funds is voluntary. Concretely, schools that receive the supplement have to sign an agreement, elaborate a plan for education improvement, set objectives and define measures to support students with learning difficulties. Schools are categorised as autonomous, emerging or recovering, based on criteria such as their results in the national standardised assessment of student performance (*Sistema de Medición de Calidad de la Educación*). Depending on their category, schools either design their own educational improvement plan, receive support from the Education Ministry to draft their progress plans or get external technical assistance. Struggling schools that fail to improve after receiving assistance risk losing their licence or their eligibility for the subsidy (OECD, 2013).

- **Progress or impact:** SEP resulted in important changes in the Chilean school system. Although the programme is voluntary, around 85% of the 9 000 eligible schools participated in 2011. All municipal schools and about 66% of private subsidised schools are actively engaged. This high coverage has changed the relationship between schools and the Ministry of Education and has helped improve its regressive funding structure. Although some schools were reticent to accept the conditions imposed by the agreement, most schools have welcomed the new resources, as well as the clear pedagogical goals and diagnostic tools tailored to help meet them. Studies show positive effects on student performance. In 2015, SEP served 94% of all municipal schools (including 99% of those providing basic education) and 50% of private subsidised schools (including 75% of those providing basic education). It is not possible to convincingly estimate the effects on student learning in public schools, since participation in SEP is almost universal. However, research has found

some positive effects of SEP on private subsidised schools, such as an increase in standardised student assessment scores on average and larger increases for schools with more significant enrolment of low-income students (OECD, 2013; Santiago, 2017). In recent years, the SEP Law increased its resources by 20% for the education of the most vulnerable students of the system (defined as "priority students"). In addition, the preferential school subsidy was created for "preferential students". Schools that are in SEP and do not charge a co-payment receive it for each student who belongs to the poorest 80% of the country and is not "priority" (MINEDUC, 2015).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- Chile has been seeking to strengthen the ECEC system (2014-18) by updating curricula and setting quality standards, increasing coverage capacity, improving teaching and adopting new standards for infrastructure. Other important elements related to ECEC are that educators will be considered part of the general teaching body as of 2025 and Chile has created the Undersecretariat of Early Childhood Education and the Intendancy of Preschool Education (*Intendencia de Educación Parvularia*).
- The School Inclusion Law (*Ley de Inclusión Escolar*, LIE Law No. 20.845, 2015) ends for-profit operation, student selection and tuition fees in primary and secondary education in schools that receive public subsidies. It regulates the administration of schools managed by private third parties and creates conditions that ensure equal access for students, focusing on the preferences of families, not their income. This law will be implemented over a period of four years (2016-20).
- The New Public Education Law (*Nueva Educación Pública*, 2017), aims to create and consolidate a national public education system through the development of 70 local education services. These education services will be in charge of technical-pedagogical and administrative-financial matters related to schools and early childhood education centres managed by municipalities. Their main areas of work will include: student learning, teacher quality, curriculum implementation and innovation, school environments and the development of tools for different contexts. They will also be charged with linking education to the social context and developing specific skills that may be needed regionally and may be connected to higher education (OECD, 2017c).

Tuition-free higher education (Gratuidad) began in 2016, giving free tuition to students in the lowest five income deciles who enrol in the 25 universities of the Consejo de Rectores de las Universidades Chilenas (CRUCH). In 2017, over 250 000 students from the first five income deciles did not pay tuition in high-quality higher education institutions. This includes students from VET institutions, which tend to concentrate a higher proportion of low-income students. In 2018, Gratuidad was expanded to students from the lower six income deciles. In 2018, the new law to reform higher education guaranteed institutional financing for Gratuidad and mandated a gradual increase of its coverage, subject to economic growth and an increase in tax collection. The law indicates that only higher education institutions that meet certain criteria will be eligible for Gratuidad (accreditation at an advanced level, being a non-profit legal entity, being part of the Access System, and implementing inclusion policies). An OECD review recommended that efforts should focus on evidence-based measures and should target support to students facing greater barriers. According to this review, steps should be taken as well to strengthen recruitment and admissions processes at higher education institutions, and to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds so that they can be successful during their studies. In order to continue strengthening access to and quality of higher education,

the OECD recommended that the government ensures in the medium-to-long term that the free tuition Gratuidad programme will complement investments to strengthen earlier levels of education without diverting resources and addresses cost control challenges – and without limiting the number of places for students in participating higher education institutions or introducing crowding and new forms of student segregation. In addition, the Chilean government should work to help students to access financial aid more easily, strengthen need-based targeting and ensure that more students receive sufficient resources to cover their costs (OECD, 2017c).

- The reform also established a new Access System (*Sistema de Acceso*) for higher education. This new system is meant to be objective and transparent and will operate through a dedicated electronic platform, administrated by the Undersecretary of Higher Education. It is comprised of two technical committees (one for universities and one for VET institutions), which include the rectors of different types of higher education institutions and the Undersecretary of Higher Education. These committees will define the processes and instruments to be applied. However, the higher education institution will be able to set the admission and selection requirements in each programme. In order to participate in the *Gratuidad* programme, universities and VET institutions (both IPs and CFTs) will have to be part of this Access System, but institutions that are not in Gratuidad can choose to participate.
- The National VET Policy (*Política Nacional de Formación Técnico-Profesional*, 2016) aims to develop a VET system that is better linked to social, productivity and labour needs in each region and in the country overall. The VET policy also links with enterprises and training institutions. Four key elements define this policy: 1) increasing VET quality through the creation of 15 CFTs across the country, learning assessments at upper secondary VET institutions and guidelines for equipment needed for specific courses; 2) focusing on competitiveness, entrepreneurship and innovation, through the creation of centres for technological learning and a VET qualifications framework; 3) developing successful education and labour pathways through the *+Capaz* programme, the Programme for Support and Effective Access (which primarily works with universities and some VET higher education institutions), as well as forging better connections between upper secondary VET and regional CFTs; and 4) improving governance of the VET system, by defining an institutional framework for VET in the Education Ministry, creating an advisory board for VET and public and private boards (*directorios*) in state technical training centres.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Czech Republic

Context

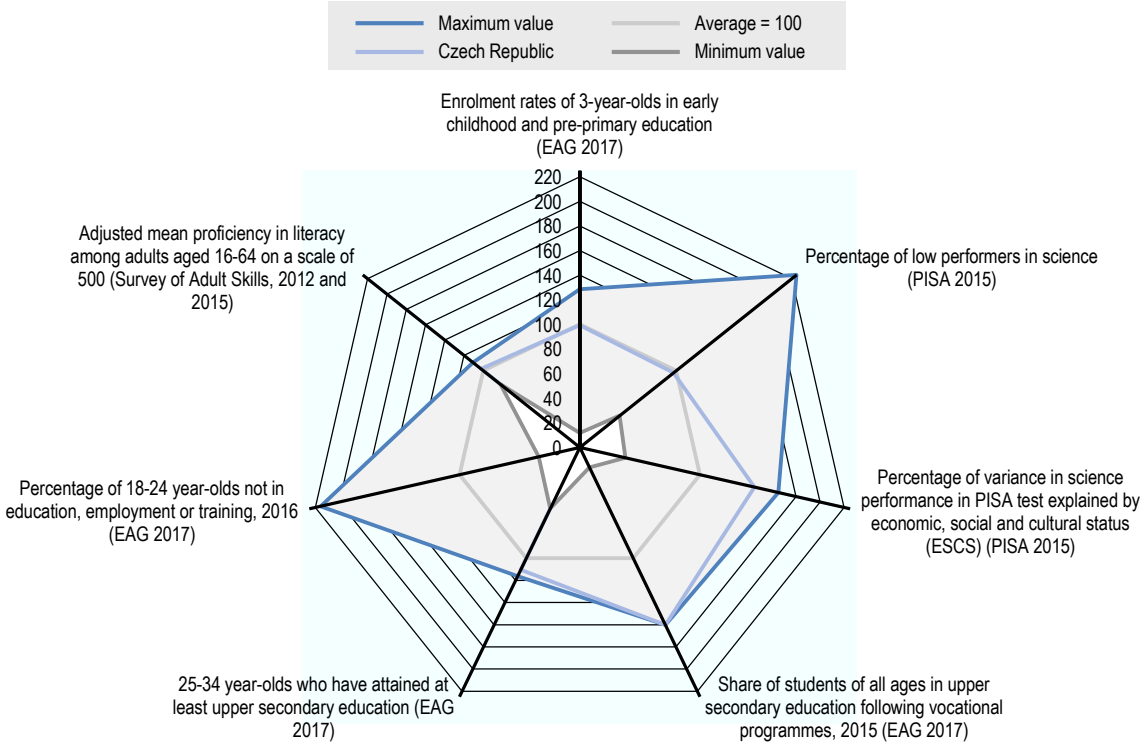
The Czech Republic scored close to the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 492 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science in Czech Republic has declined across PISA cycles, with an average score change of -5.2 score points, while reading performance has stayed the same and mathematics performance has decreased. Socio-economic status had one of the largest impacts in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 18.8% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were higher than the OECD average in the Czech Republic, with a difference between boys and girls of 9 points compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 3.4% of the student population of 15-year-olds in the Czech Republic, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are lower than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 24 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was close to the OECD average in 2015, at 77.3% (OECD average: 77.8%). At age 3, children typically begin pre-primary education (kindergarten). This programme lasts three years. Starting at age 6, children can either attend a one-year preparatory class for socially disadvantaged children or a preparatory stage of special basic school. The latter is a three-year programme. A national curriculum framework (Framework Educational Programme for Preschool Education) is in place to monitor the education of children from age 3 to age 5. As of 2017, children must attend preschool for at least one year before attending primary school. By 2020, children as early as age 2 will be able to attend preschool. Education-only programmes exist nationally, and qualified teachers deliver the formal curriculum in place for them. Integrated programmes, which include education and childcare services, do not exist nationally. Compulsory education in the Czech Republic begins at age 5, as of the school year 2017/18, and ends at age 15, which is shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 11, earlier than the OECD average of age 14. In upper secondary education, students can choose between general programmes, professional education in a lyceum, technical and vocational education, apprenticeships and art education. The length of these programmes ranges from two to four years. All students must complete a school leaving exam to advance to university or tertiary professional school.

About three-quarters of upper secondary students enrol in VET, one of the highest proportions in OECD countries. These programmes include apprenticeships and also a technical pathway that leads to a school leaving examination. Once finished, students can access tertiary vocational education, a 3.5-year programme that offers graduates a professional diploma and helps ease them into the labour market. The government has expressed concern that occupational fields previously covered by the apprenticeship track will have difficulty finding skilled workers in the future. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in the Czech Republic were higher than the OECD average, at 274 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment is among the lowest in the OECD, with an attainment rate in 2016 of

6.4%, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is lower than the OECD average, at 32.6% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are lower than the OECD average. In 2016, 77.6% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.6. Selected indicators compared with the average: Czech Republic



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732897

Evolution of key policy priorities

Table 7.6. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Czech Republic (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD found that the socio-economic background of students has a great impact on later education outcomes. Practical special schools, early streaming, difficulties in transferring between education tracks and elitism in secondary education were among factors identified. Roma students are particularly affected by this, as they disproportionally go to special schools. In addition, there is a shortage of affordable ECEC places. The curriculum should be aligned and updated regularly to ensure continuous child development, which has to be better embedded in a curriculum alignment. [2012; 2016]	On the labour market, a skills mismatch seems to persist, as only 16% of the workforce is over-skilled, while the percentage of under-skilled workers is much higher. Identified challenges remain to attract more students into VET, strengthen the link between employers and education institutions, improve the curriculum of VET programmes and increase student performance, which is significantly lower than in education programmes that are completed with the Maturita exam. [2010; 2012; 2016]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	The Czech Republic reported that it continues to face difficulties in accelerating overall student performance while simultaneously tackling and lowering the rate of underperforming students. Steps have been taken to support students with special educational needs by amending the Education Act, but challenges were reported to remain in the co-operation of schools and counselling centres. [2013; 2016-17]	As reported by the Czech Republic, skills mismatch seems to be persisting, which reflects the need to improve the quality of tertiary education. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- An amendment to the Education Act will make preschool education compulsory as of 2017. Children must attend preschool for at least one year before attending elementary school. The amendment will allow families to choose between attending a preschool facility and receiving individual education. Acceptance to preschools has been modified and will be introduced in three phases, prioritising the acceptance of a different age group each year (2017: age 4 and older; 2018: age 3 and older; 2020: age 2 and older).
- A Revision of the Framework Educational Programme (FEP) took place according to the amendment of School Act no. 61/2004 (Article 16. Support of education of children, pupils and students with special education needs). Common education (inclusion) is supported to a higher extent, and supportive measures are listed more specifically. Based on the FEP, every school develops its own School Educational Programme that must be in compliance with the FEP.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Estonia

Context

In PISA 2015, Estonia scored among the highest in the OECD in science, with a mean score of 534 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of 2.2 score points, while reading performance has increased and mathematics performance has stayed the same. Socio-economic status had one of the lowest impacts in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 7.8% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 10% of the student population of 15-year-olds, a slightly lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are at the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 31 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

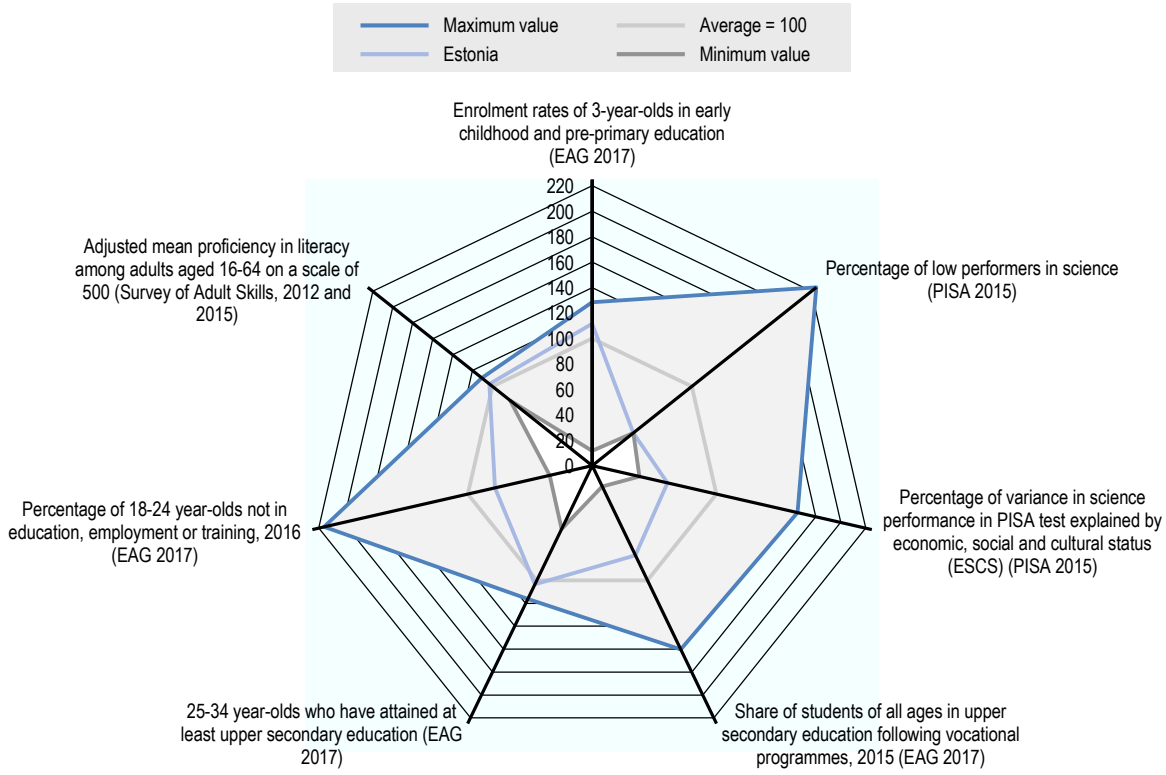
Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was higher than the OECD average in 2015 at 86.9% (OECD average: 77.8%). Municipalities have to guarantee a place in pre-primary education (*alusharidus*) to all children between age 1.5 and age 7, but universal coverage has not yet been reached. Integrated programmes, which include education and childcare services, exist nationally. They offer a formal curriculum that is delivered by qualified teachers. Education-only programmes do not exist nationally. Compulsory education in Estonia begins at age 7, and students must attend school until they acquire basic education or reach age 17. This is shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students can follow different educational pathways after completion of basic school, usually at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education is divided into general secondary education (provided by upper secondary schools) and vocational secondary education (provided by vocational educational institutions). Students attending the general upper secondary track receive a school leaving certificate and a state examination certificate, which gives them access to tertiary education.

Vocational training is organised by vocational educational institutions and professional higher education institutions. Formal VET leads to four qualification levels (2 to 5) that are the same as in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Most VET is provided at upper secondary (Level 4 at EQF) and post-secondary levels (level 5 at EQF). VET programmes are also available for learners who have not completed basic education (Levels 2 and 3 at EQF). Upper secondary vocational education programmes last from three to four years. Graduates receive a Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education and a State Examination Certificate that allows them to attend university or professional higher education institution or continue in post-secondary VET (Level 5 programmes). Vocational programmes at Level 4 that do not contain general subjects and do not lead to upper secondary education are also available. Such programmes last up to 2.5 years and are popular among adult learners. The duration of post-secondary VET programmes (Level 5 programmes) is up to 2.5 years.

In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Estonia were higher than the OECD average, at 276 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was close to the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment is lower than the OECD

average, with an attainment rate of 10.3% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 12% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is lower than the OECD average, at 41% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are lower than the OECD average. In 2016, 81% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.7. Selected indicators compared with the average: Estonia



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732916

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.7. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Estonia (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified a need to address some inefficiencies in the provision of education services, demographic changes and the successful implementation of the school network. In addition, Estonia's progress in integrating students with special education needs into mainstream schools was found to be very slow. Students who lack proficiency in Estonian, especially those from the Russian- speaking minority, are more likely to encounter academic failure, barriers and high costs for advancing through education. [2012; 2015; 2016]	The OECD found that Estonia is adequately placing increased emphasis on strengthening the mechanisms for the VET system to adjust to changing labour market needs. However, it also considered that the VET system has encountered difficulties, such as a need to strengthen quality, low popularity among good students, high dropout rates, and few opportunities for students to engage in work-based learning and apprenticeships. [2012; 2016]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	A priority reported by Estonia is ensuring that all students have access to a "basic school" close to home and an upper secondary school offering high-quality study choices that meet the student's needs in the closest regional centre. [2013; 2016-17]	To equip students with skills demanded on the labour market, Estonia reported addressing the need to improve the VET and higher education systems. The challenge of co-operation with employers persists, according to Estonia's self-report, as it is essential to involve them in development of the content and design of the VET system. Estonia also reported that it needs to assess different apprenticeship systems to improve implementation of the Estonian apprenticeship model for the Estonian context. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

In 2017, Estonia implemented amendments to the Preschool Childcare Institutions Act (2014) and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act. These policies now also include a focus on the inclusion and state support of municipalities to create better educational opportunities for children with special needs in kindergartens and schools.

- **Progress or impact:** National data indicates that, in 2012, access to support systems in preschool childcare institutions (including speech therapy and special education therapists) was made available to almost 14% of children attending preschool childcare institutions. The same data also revealed that nearly 11% of children attending preschool childcare institutions in 2012 had special needs. At that time, local governments and preschool childcare institutions were also using the special education services provided by regional counselling centres that receive state support (speech therapists, special education teachers, psychological and social-pedagogical counselling) (Republic of Estonia Ministry of Education and Research, 2014).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The reform of the national curriculum for basic schools and upper secondary in 2010 and 2014 aimed to improve integration between subject areas, allow for the use of a more individual approach for each student, decrease the volume of the curriculum and allow for more flexibility in developing a school identity. Policy adjustments are made based on analytical work. No major changes have been made since the reforms took place.
- Reforms of the VET system started with the implementation of the Vocational Educational Institution Act (2013), a legal framework to improve VET teaching quality and practical training, implement distributive leadership in VET institutions, and modernise funding and infrastructures. Vocational Education

Standards (2013) were also put into place. The reform also created an output-based curriculum and new method for awarding course credits, introduced a new generation of study programmes in upper secondary VET (with full rollout by 2017) and intensified and shortened study programmes. Schools receive professional support for new forms of evaluation and assessment where needed. Other changes include introducing professional examinations *(kutseeksamid*) as a prerequisite for completion of vocational studies and establishing a set of "qualification requirements for teachers" based on "professional standards" in legislation (EC, 2015a).

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Finland

Context

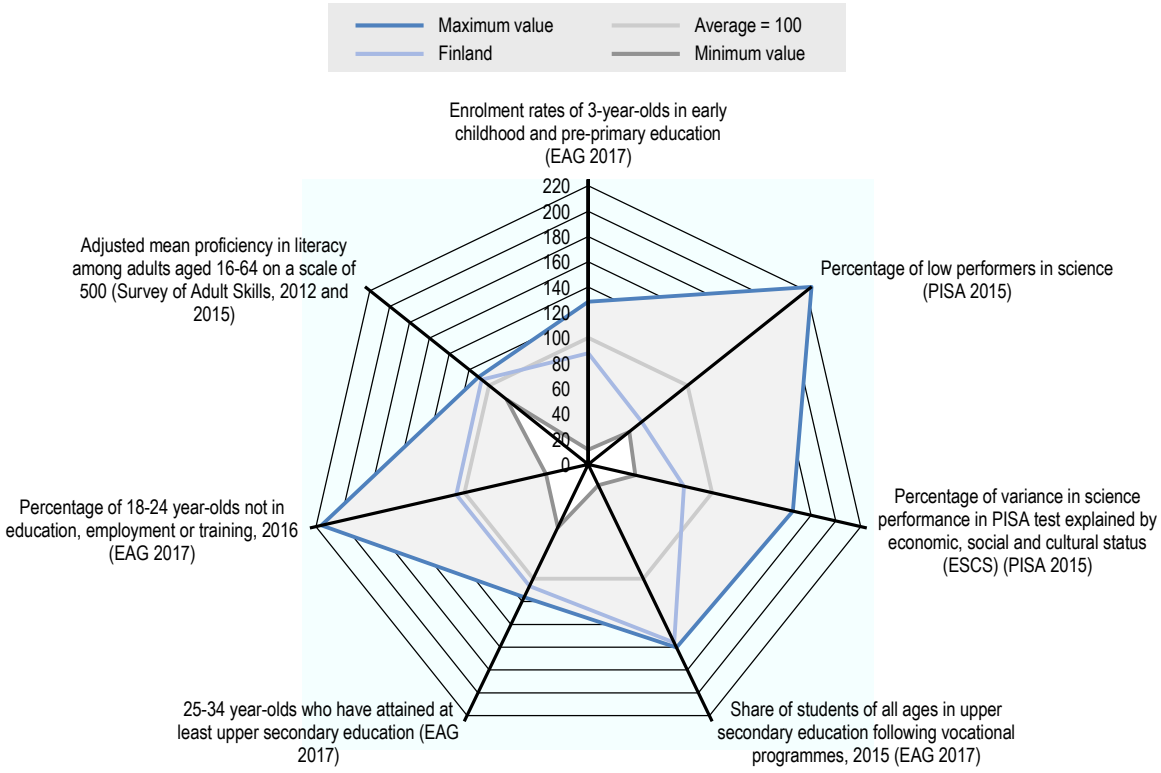
In PISA 2015, Finland scored among the highest in the OECD in science, with a mean score of 530 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. According to evidence from PISA 2015, performance in science in Finland has declined across PISA cycles, with an average score change of -10.6 points, while performance in reading and mathematics has also decreased. Socio-economic status had lower-than-average impact on science performance, explaining 10% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%), and the impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed significantly since 2006. Finland's performance gap between boys and girls was -19 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 4% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Finland, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are among the highest in the OECD.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was lower than the OECD average in 2015, at 68.4% (OECD average: 77.8%). Children age 0-6 can attend ECEC programmes in either ECEC centres or family day care until they start compulsory school. ECEC services include special education programmes. At age 6, children typically attend a one-year programme in ECEC centres and comprehensive schools. The National Core Curriculum (2016) is used as a set of guidelines in early childhood education for children age 0-5. Education for 6-year-olds is subject to new curriculum guidelines (Core Curriculum for Pre-primary education, 2014). At pre-primary level, children have the right to attend ECEC programmes before and/or after pre-primary hours. Qualified teachers and other ECEC staff are responsible for implementing the formal curricula in place for both programmes. Pre-primary education is compulsory at age 6, and compulsory schooling starts at age 7 and ends at age 16, shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. Students can choose between two three-year programmes for upper secondary education (with flexible length), either a general programme or vocational upper secondary education and training. At the end of the three-year general education curriculum for upper secondary education, students can take the national matriculation examination, which provides eligibility to access tertiary education. A modular structure allows students to combine general education and VET studies.

Students can pursue VET in upper secondary or can have professionally-oriented education in universities of applied sciences at tertiary level. Initial vocational-training programmes take three years to complete, including at least half a year of on-the-job learning in workplaces. VET providers organise the training, which can be in vocational institutions or apprenticeships. Upon completion, the qualification provides eligibility for tertiary education. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Finland were among the highest in the OECD, at 288 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was the highest in the OECD. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment is relatively low, with an attainment rate of 9.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are higher than average, at 16.3% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%.The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a

tertiary-level qualification is lower than the OECD average, at 41.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are lower than the OECD average. In 2016, 80.9% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.8. Selected indicators compared with the average: Finland



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933732935

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.8. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Finland (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	Reading performance in Finland still depends on students' backgrounds; students of the first and second immigration population have lower performance. Overall education performance is excellent, but it has been weakened in recent years. This makes it necessary to compensate for further budget cuts by efficiency gains, to maintain world-class results. [2012; 2016]	The OECD identified the need for Finland to accelerate employment and increase skill levels. VET graduates have been found to be less adaptable to structural change, due to slim qualifications and an absence of foundation skills. Also, income inequality can still be mainly explained by problems among those with lower skills to access the labour market. [2016]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Finland reported difficulties in reducing gender-based and immigration-based performance gaps. [2013; 2016-17]	Demographic changes continue to cause challenges as well as mismatches in the demand and supply of study places and labour market needs. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

In 2015, Finland implemented the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education, to respond to the need to better integrate immigrant students. It outlines key strategic areas in education, including securing equal opportunity in education and culture and promoting participation and inclusion. At least 32 500 refugees arrived in Finland in 2015. By the end of that year, almost 3 500 students were attending preparatory courses for basic education. To respond to the needs of this new refugee population, the government established 50 new groups of preparatory studies for basic education in municipalities. In 2015, at least 200 immigrant students were preparing for upper secondary education. Students have access to courses in either Finnish or Swedish, or they can attend classes in their native language. Students age 6-10 receive at least 900 hours of instruction, and older students are eligible to receive at least 1 000 hours. However, no national syllabus has been designed for the curriculum. Students who are able to keep up with the instruction are eligible to transfer to basic education regardless of whether they have completed the required hours (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016). In 2015, the government also implemented the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education, the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for General Upper Secondary Education, and Preparatory Education for Vocational Training. These three policies include measures for students from immigrant backgrounds originally included in the National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing Immigrants for Basic Education (2009), which has been discontinued.

- **Progress or impact:** As of 2016, around 12% of immigrant students had classes in Finnish or Swedish as a second language, while 25% did not have separate language classes. The 2016 report by the working group of the Ministry of Education and Culture on immigrant issues states that it is important to their language development to grant separate Finnish or Swedish language classes as well as to aid the development of immigrant students' mother tongues. In fact, in 2014, more than 16 000 students participated in courses taught in their own mother language, resulting in a total of 53 different languages being taught (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016).

In recent years, Finland has been working on strategies for internationalisation to further improve its position in the global market for higher education. The goals outlined in the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland (2009-15) include increasing the quality and attractiveness of institutions. Targets include almost

doubling the number of non-Finnish students enrolled in higher education over the period of the plan (from 3.5% in 2007 to 7% by 2015), and increasing mobility of teachers and researchers (Ministry of Education, 2009). The new International Strategy for Higher Education and Research (2017-25), published in 2017, aims to strengthen the quality, visibility and attractiveness of Finnish higher education and research by introducing new measures, such as a programme to enhance international interest in Finnish research and facilitating access to education and employment in Finland (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018a).

- **Progress or impact:** According to evidence from the Finnish National Agency for Education, total numbers of international degree students have been increasing annually, from 10 066 in 2006 to 21 061 in 2016, and the target of a 7% overall share of international students in higher education degree programmes was achieved in 2016.

Finland's Youth Guarantee (2013) aims to help young people complete post-basic qualifications and find employment. The guarantee provides everyone under age 25 and recent graduates under age 30 a job, a traineeship, a study place, a workshop or a labour market placement within three months of becoming unemployed. Finland presented the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in 2014. A key feature was the rollout across the country, starting in 2015, of One-Stop Guidance centres for young people, which provide all relevant assistance in one location (EC, 2017b).

- **Progress or impact:** According to EC evidence, results of monitoring show that the scheme reached 71.2% of all NEETs under age 25 in 2015, an improvement of more than 4 percentage points over 2014 (67.1%). While the share of NEETS in Finland increased between 2013 and 2015, there was a decrease in the rate of inactive NEETs, which may have been as a result of engagement with the Youth Guarantee process. Finland's remaining challenges include ensuring stable funding and further improving the skills and employability of young people (EC, 2017b). In 2016, NEET rates decreased by more than 1 percentage point over 2015 levels (13.2% in 2016 compared to 14.3% in 2015).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- Finland adopted revisions to the Act on Early Childhood Education in 2015. As a result, the Finnish National Agency for Education (previously the Finnish National Board of Education) became the national expert agency for ECEC in 2015. It issued the new National Core Curriculum for ECEC, which came into effect in fall 2017. The Finnish National Agency for Education approved the new National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education in 2014. Local curricula in accordance with the core curriculum were introduced for Grades 1-6 in 2016. The curriculum will be introduced to Grades 7-9 in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools was reformed in 2015, and local curricula based on the new national core curriculum came into effect in 2016.
- In the Mid-term Review Session (2017-19), Finland launched new measures to promote the well-being of children and young people, prevent exclusion, and reduce the number of young people neither employed nor in education or training (NEET). The action plan to reduce the number of NEETs includes 19 measures. Preventive measures cover all education and training from early childhood education to higher education. Remedial actions focus on the most vulnerable children and adolescents and their families. The measures will be funded within the ministries own administrative branch budgets and key government projects currently underway. EUR 45 million in funding will be allocated to these measures in 2018 and 2019 (Prime Minister's Office Finland, 2017).

- The reform of vocational upper secondary education, which came into force in 2018, aims to improve completion rates and transitions into the labour market. The most extensive VET reform in almost 20 years, it is a shift from the previous supply-oriented approach to a demand-oriented approach. Overall, education is to be competence-based and customer-oriented, aiming to develop and increase apprenticeship training and other forms of work-based learning. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018b). A new funding model encourages education providers to improve the effectiveness and quality of education. The aim is to have every young person complete at least a secondary qualification.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

France

Context

France scored close to the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 494 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. On average, across three-year PISA cycles, performance in science has remained stable since PISA 2006. Reading performance has remained stable since PISA 2000. On average, mathematics performance has decreased since PISA 2003, but has stabilised across more recent cycles. Socio-economic status had one of the largest impacts in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 20.3% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015 at a general level. Immigrant students make up 13.2% of the student population of 15-year-olds in France, close to the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are also close to the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 32 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points with an equivalent socio-economic background.

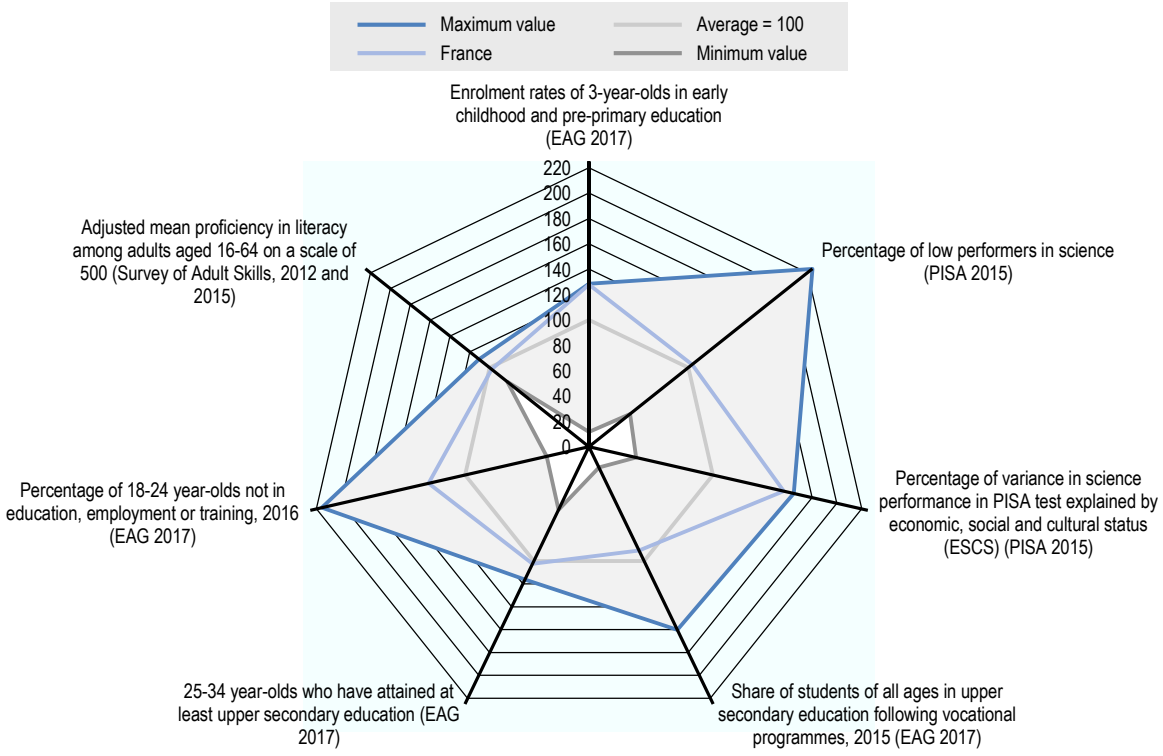
Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC and pre-primary education was among the highest in the OECD in 2015, at 99.5% (OECD average: 77.8%). Pre-primary education (*Enseignement pré-élémentaire*) is a three-year programme that children typically begin between age 2 and age 3. The national standards for pre-primary education are organised by age group: age 0-2 (*Orientations code de la santé publique et projets d'établissements*) and age 3-5 (*L'école maternelle : un cycle unique, fondamental pour la réussite de tous*). Education-only programmes exist nationally, and qualified teachers deliver the formal curriculum in place for them. Integrated programmes, which include education and childcare services, do not exist nationally. Compulsory education begins at age 6 and ends at age 16, shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Generally, students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 15, later than the OECD average of age 14. Pupils can choose between two educational streams: the general and technological stream or the vocational stream. Both streams last three years. At the end of each programme, students can take the corresponding leaving examination, the general *baccalauréat* or the vocational *baccalauréat*. Graduates receive a diploma or vocational certificates and other qualifications. Both educational streams provide students with access to higher education.

At the upper secondary level, students can pursue a three-year VET programme. VET is also available at the tertiary level in the undergraduate degree cycle, as in the university institutes of technology (*instituts universitaires de technologie*, IUT).

In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in France were lower than the OECD average, at 262 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was higher than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in France is close to the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 14.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are higher than the OECD average, at 19.8% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is higher than the OECD average, at 44% in 2016,

compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are higher than the OECD average. In 2016, 86% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.9. Selected indicators compared with the average: France



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

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Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.9. Evolution of key education policy priorities, France (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified a need to improve equity and quality of the overall education system, as well as increase individual student support. [2015]	According to OECD evidence, the VET system has to be improved and students need to be more easily integrated into the labour market. Basic skills and lifelong learning have to be improved. Providing quality VET education and adult training to the disadvantaged part of the population has been identified as especially important. [2015]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	France stated that school performance could be improved by better tackling inequalities. The government is also working on policy developments to make some classes smaller during the first year of primary education at schools catering to students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. [2013; 2016-17]	France previously reported a need to improve the mechanisms for guidance and transitions between education and the labour market. In 2016, these challenges persisted, with important reforms planned by the government on upper secondary education and the quality of learning provided in VET in 2018. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

France's 2013 Reform of the Republic's Schools (*Refondation de l'école de la République*) included additional elements to redefine the goals of preschools and to welcome more children below age 3 into ECEC facilities. These modifications were implemented following a decrease in the number of 2-year-olds attending preschool, from 34.6% in 1999 to around 11% in 2012 (DEPP, 2014). As a result, more than 1 100 classes were created and opened to children in this age group to encourage especially disadvantaged families to enrol their children in ECEC. This corresponded to 25 000 new spots in ECEC facilities. France also implemented a new curriculum during 2013/14 for all levels of compulsory education, including ECEC. The new curriculum, based on a common framework of knowledge, skills and culture, aims to provide students with the necessary tools to achieve their ambitions.

- **Progress or impact:** Although many of the new spaces remained vacant at the beginning of the school year 2013/14, the number of 2-year-olds in preschools increased for the first time in ten years (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017a; DEPP, 2014). Overall enrolment of 2-year-olds increased in 2013 to 11.7% (and 20.6% in high-priority schools) (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017a). Also, at the beginning of the 2017/18 school year, enrolment for children 2 years of age and older in high-priority preschools (REP and REP+) was 20.5%, much higher than the 9.7% in non-priority schools. More than 30% of 2-year-olds enrolled attend high-priority schools (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2018a).

France implemented the action plan *Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage scolaire* in 2014. It integrates previous educational support measures geared towards students at the lower secondary education level (*dispositifs relais*) and focuses on the prevention of early school leaving and school retention. It also aims to develop partnerships, in particular with local and regional authorities, to target young people who have already left education. It is built on three pillars, mobilisation of all to overcome school dropout (*Tous mobilisés pour vaincre le décrochage scolaire*), choosing prevention (*faire le choix de la prévention*), and a new opportunity to qualify (*une nouvelle chance pour se qualifier*) (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017b). In 2017/18, the plan will continue to address prevention measures, such as education alliances and the right to redo an exam, as well as remediation, which includes personal activity accounts, an information system to track school dropouts and structures to facilitate the return to school. Several measures will continue to be implemented to prevent school dropout, such as educational and

personalised support, a personalised programme for educational success *(programme personnalisé de réussite educative*, PPRE), internships and tutoring, and a group to prevent school dropout (*groupe de prévention du décrochage scolaire*, GPDS).

- **Progress or impact:** A 2014 evaluation report found that school dropout is a complex multifactor process. The report found that policies on reducing dropout were in the development phase. The phase of construction, with modest means and policy steering, was in its early stages, with unequal progress across the country. Some recommended measures included implementing a more global and integrated policy approach with components of prevention, intervention and remediation, as well as a strong focus on the prevention of early school leaving. The report also recommended establishing a more systematic alliance among schools, classes and prevention actions for the personnel working for *l'Éducation nationale*. The measures may have had a positive impact on the overall reduction in school dropout, which has dropped significantly over the last decade. On average, between 2013 and 2015, 13% of students left school without a diploma or just the 10th grade diploma, compared to 17 % from 2007 to 2009 (RERS, 2011; RERS, 2017). Also, 9% of 18-24 year-olds do not have a diploma, compared to an average of 11% in the European Union. Success factors identified include: 1) the priority accorded by the government to combating school dropout; 2) the implementation of tools, including the extension of the interministerial system of information exchange; 3) a human resource management system; and 4) a systematic evaluation of the devices and experimentation. The actions of the plan completed in 2015 and 2016 were evaluated in 2016. The objective was to improve information systems and design new digital tools for tracking and monitoring young people who are at risk of dropping out (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017c).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- Support for migrants (*l'accueil et l'accompagnement des publics migrants*) is carried out through a national action plan, which reinforces the supervision of education for recent immigrant students. It mobilises inspection units and specialist academic centres (CASNAV, 2012) and ensures timely reception and support, with particular attention to children in vulnerable situations, such as unaccompanied minors. Migrants can access information on their rights on the "Welcome refugees" information portal (*Welcome refugees*, 2015) and academic courses offered in French as a foreign language. The plan also aims to strengthen recognition of foreign qualifications (ENIC-NARIC centres). Also, the Programme of Assistance to the Emergency Hospitality of Scientists in Exile (PAUSE, 2017) allocates grants for higher education and public research institutions planning to host scientists and doctoral students in emergency situations (EPO Survey 2016-17; *Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation* and *les Crous*, 2016).

As part of the School of Confidence *(l'École de la confiance*), new measures in 2017 aim to address the difficulties faced in the first years of schooling and to support students at risk. Classes will be split at cours préparatoire (CP) level in enhanced priority education networks (REP+) to concentrate efforts in less-favoured areas. The complete split of the classes of CP and cours élémentaire 1 (CE1) in REP and REP+ will be effective by 2019. In middle schools, the homework programme (*Devoirs faits*) intends to decrease inequalities by offering each student free access to appropriate help to carry out the personal work expected of the student, if desired. The reform for *collèges* (lower secondary schools) gives more freedom, autonomy and power to educational teams to cater to local and student needs. This includes providing greater autonomy to the framework of interdisciplinary teaching, strengthening personalised support, and reinstating bilingual classes and the teaching of Latin and Greek. In kindergarten and elementary school, the organisation of school time is eased, with possible exceptions to the four-day calendar where local education stakeholders reach a consensus (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017d).

- In 2018, the government announced reforms of the upper secondary education final examination in general and technological tracks, and the transformation of upper secondary education (*la réforme du baccalauréat général et technologique et l'évolution du lycée*), which are to be aligned to measures to promote student success in higher education and integration into the labour market (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2018b). Also, the evolution of the vocational school pathway (*l'évolution de la voie professionnelle scolaire*) is carried out in conjunction with the reform of the upper secondary education final examination as well as ongoing consultations on apprenticeships, which aim to make the VET sector more attractive, efficient and open to the world (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale*, 2017e).

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Germany

Context

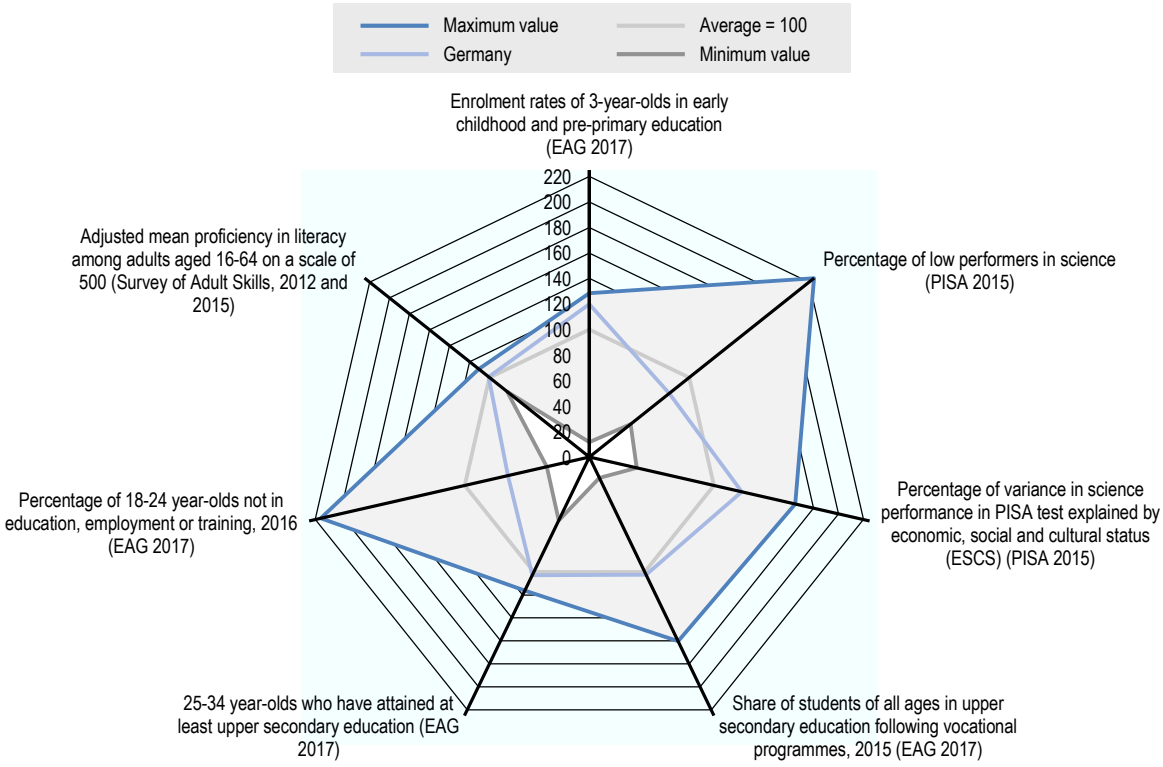
Germany scored higher than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 509 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of -1.7 score points, while reading performance has increased and mathematics performance has stayed the same. Socio-economic status had higher-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 15.8% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were higher than the OECD average, with a difference between boys and girls of 10 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 16.9% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Germany, a higher proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are higher than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 50 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was higher than the OECD average in 2015, at 93.3% (OECD average: 77.8%). ECEC is organised as an integrated system for children from birth to school entrance. Since 2005, the supply of ECEC has strongly expanded for children under age 3, and attendance increasingly starts at an earlier age. In addition to ECEC services, some *Länder* also run preschool classes that children can attend alternatively at age 5. ECEC programmes are considered education-only programmes and are delivered by qualified ECEC teachers according to *Länder* curricula. Children who have reached compulsory school age but have not yet attained an adequate level of development to start school may take part in preschool educational programmes (*Schulkindergarten, Vorklasse, Grundschulförderklasse*). Compulsory education in Germany begins at age 6 and ends at age 18, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 10, which is earlier than the OECD average of age 14. General upper secondary education (*gymnasiale Oberstufe*) is offered by academic high schools (*Gymnasien*) and comprehensive high schools (*Gesamtschulen*). Students can also choose a vocational track, which is divided into six occupational areas. The upper secondary general school leaving certificate (*Abitur*) constitutes a general higher education entrance qualification permitting the graduate to study any subject at any higher education institution. It is obtained after 12 or 13 years of education. A higher education entrance qualification is required for graduates from general and vocational upper secondary education who wish to continue. Students from the dual system (first cycle) and specialised vocational schools must obtain an occupational qualification before continuing to specialised vocational high schools (*Berufsoberschulen*), the dual system (second cycle), or health and social sector programmes).

VET is provided at upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels, and dual programmes are offered in over 300 trades, with an exit exam for the dual system that does not count school performance. Although very few VET graduates continue to tertiary education, there are short and long programmes they can attend in trade and technical schools. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Germany were higher than the OECD average, at 270 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower

secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Germany is relatively low, with an attainment rate of 10.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 10%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is lower than the OECD average, at 30.5% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are also relatively high. In 2016, 87% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.10. Selected indicators compared with the average: Germany



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

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Evolution of policy priorities

Table 7.10. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Germany (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified the need to help integrate children, especially those with an immigrant background, to improve the quality of ECEC, to guarantee high quality and equity across all levels of the education system and to reduce stratification in the school system. [2016]	According to OECD evidence, a challenge for Germany has been that globalisation and technological progress have increased the relative demand for high-skilled labour and the need for a more flexible workforce that can retrain easily in response to changing economic conditions. Additional challenges have been identified in improving the transitions from post-secondary VET to academic higher education, improving the transparency and varying course quality of preparatory courses for examinations, and making full use of workplace training in support of learning goals. [2010; 2013]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Germany reported that the challenge of supporting students with disadvantaged and migrant backgrounds and efforts to diminish the impact of socio-economic background on students' outcomes have been exacerbated by the increase in immigration. This has led to further challenges of integration at school, as students with an immigrant background have poor German skills and lower education levels, due to interrupted school paths. [2013; 2016-17]	Germany had reported the objective of improving performance in academic and VET provision. As of 2016, challenges remain in lowering the VET dropout rate of students with a disadvantaged background and enhancing the rate of high-performing students in VET. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Germany extended childcare extensively from 2008 to 2015, as part of the Childcare Funding Act (*Kinderförderungsgesetzes*, KiföG). In 2014, at least 41% of parents with children under age 3 stated that they needed a childcare place. As a result of this growing need, the fourth federal investment programme is being made for 2017 to 2020, to provide places to implement the legal entitlement of parents to an ECEC place for children who are 1 and 2 years old, which was initially approved in 2013. The federal investment programme will contribute to the creation of 100 000 additional ECEC places for children from birth to school entry (BMFSJ, 2015).

- **Progress or impact:** The 2014-16 evaluation of the Childcare Funding Act (*Kinderförderungsgesetzes*, KiföG) assessed the period from 2008 to 2015. It highlights the programme's impact on children and parents whose children benefitted from childcare, as well as on actors from children's care facilities and others affiliated with ECEC. Overall, childcare for children under age 3 rose from 17.6% in 2008 to 32.3% in 2014, and then to 32.7% in 2016 (BMFSJ, 2015; Destatis, 2016). The need for ECEC differs across the German *Länder*, and as the report points out, some have displayed better capacity than others at providing ECEC for children at this age. As a result, although the ratio of childcare needed compared to the childcare rate fell from 13 to 9.2 between 2012 and 2014, at least 185 000 children across the country still did not have a spot in childcare by 2014. At the same time, parents whose children participated in ECEC were satisfied with the childcare they received. Most sought places in children's day nurseries for children under age 3. Overall, most parents easily found a childcare location for children age 1 and older. More than half reported having already found childcare for children six months after birth (BMFSJ, 2015).

Germany established various programmes to foster equity of access to ECEC services, such as the programmes on building bridges to early education for families with refugee background and low socio-economic status (*Kita-Einstieg: Brücken bauen in frühe*

Bildung, 2017) and focusing on emergent literacy (*Sprach-Kitas: Weil Sprache der Schlüssel zur Welt ist*, 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** With a view to the recent challenge of integrating children from refugee families, a representative survey among ECEC services carried out in March 2016 showed that one in three ECEC centres participating in the survey had received children from refugee families (Baisch et. al, 2017).

In 2013, Germany launched a research and development programme (2013-19) known as Education through Language and Writing (*Bildung durch Sprache und Schrift*, BiSS), a joint initiative of the federal level and the *Länder*. This initiative aims to scientifically evaluate and, based on the results of the evaluations, further develop the emergent literacy education of children and young people. The evaluations assess the effectiveness and efficiency of current measures introduced in the *Länder* for language and literacy promotion and language diagnostics, from primary to lower secondary education. Over 600 educational institutions participate in BiSS at both elementary and secondary levels, including 200 kindergartens and 400 schools (BMBF, 2018; BMFSJ, 2018).

- **Progress or impact:** The Evaluation of selected BiSS Measures indicates that more than 40 networks of kindergartens and/or schools affiliated with the programme have participated in external evaluations. The results of the evaluations are used to further improve literacy education in the institutions. Kindergartens and schools are also instructed to independently check and optimise the quality of their practices through self-evaluations. Regular workshops for teachers and educators from the participating networks help to implement good practice in kindergartens and schools, so kindergartens and schools participating in the programme benefit from support for the planning, implementation and evaluation of their literacy education practices. This evaluation reported that between 2014 and 2016, at least four two-day workshops were held in the areas of concept development and self-evaluation (BiSS, 2017).

In Germany, reform measures by all *Länder* in the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, KMK), as well as measures adopted by the Federal Government aim to: 1) expand full-day educational offers to extend educational and support options; 2) raise the educational level of disadvantaged students; and 3) improve school education, including reading and linguistic competences and the understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts (e.g. the recently developed Education in the Digital World strategy). Some related measures include the Education through Language and Writing programme (2013) to further develop linguistic education of children by evaluating the policies in place, the Educational Chains Initiative (2010) and the Alliance for Education and Training 2015-18 to place more disadvantaged youth into vocational education and training and apprenticeships.

- **Progress or impact:** So far, the reforms have had an overall positive impact. According to available evidence, 60% of schools in Germany offered all-day schooling programmes in 2016, and more than one-third of all students participated in them (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2016). This is an increase from 16% in 2002. Most programmes are non-mandatory and do not require attendance. Still, in 2014, a provision of EUR 260 million had been budgeted for the period through the end of 2017 to extend all-day schooling (EC, 2016a). Efforts have also been made to increase the participation rate of all students in school, which is similar to that of migrant and non-migrant students at preschool age and for those aged 16-30. As of 2016, the development of all-day school programmes and the creation of inclusive education systems are still among the core challenges for Germany. These aim to tackle increasing segregation based on socio-economic status, as non-native German-speaking students are finding themselves attending schools in which most of the students do not have German as their primary family language. National sources indicate that the population's level of education has significantly improved in recent years, as more and more students are achieving general and vocational qualifications (BMBF, 2016a). At the same time, in the KMK's 2016 education monitoring (*IQB-Bildungstrend*), results showed negative trends in the competence levels of fourth graders in mathematics (Stanat et al., 2016). Another report also shows that the number of students who only reach a *Hauptschulabschluss* (lower secondary school qualification) or enter the labour market without vocational qualifications continues to be too high (Authoring Group Educational Reporting, 2016).

Since 2013, Education Alliances (*Kultur macht stark - Bündnisse für Bildung*) have supported out-of-school programmes in Germany for educationally disadvantaged children and teenagers. Starting in 2013, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung,* BMBF) allocated annual funding of EUR 30 million for this programme, to be increased to EUR 50 million in the following four years. The Education Package (*Bildungspaket*) (by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2011) aims to give 2.5 million children from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to participate in activities such as school excursions, sports, and musical and cultural activities, to boost their motivation and sense of belonging.

- **Progress or impact:** A 2016 evaluation found overall positive results for the policy. By 2016, 11 500 measures had been taken, and 4 700 alliances had been funded across the country. The main target group of educationally disadvantaged children and teenagers benefitted from at least 90% of the measures taken. Between 2013 and 2016, 223 000 children and teenagers as well as 28 000 relatives benefitted from out-of-school programmes. The main geographical focus is on regions with a high percentage of the main target group. Success factors identified include easy access to the programmes for children and teenagers, as well as content tailored to conditions on the ground. Other factors are the possibility to gain social and cultural awareness and skills: 90% of the alliances include volunteers. An important target is also the establishment of long-term co-operation. Of the co-ordinators interviewed, 65% stated they intended to reapply for funding. In addition, 90% of the alliances anticipated continuing the co-operation independently of the federal programme (Prognos, 2016). The programme will be extended from 2018 to 2022, and interested local partners can begin applying for 2018 funding at the end of 2017 (BMBF, 2017a).

Germany's National Action Plan on Integration (NAP-I, 2011, previously the National Integration Plan [2007]) was created to improve equity and boost participation and success of students of migrant background. It was developed in collaboration with civil society stakeholders, including immigrant organisations (Federal Government, 2012). One of the main aspects was the integration of students with a migrant background into the education system and the labour market. Education also encompasses initial training and continuous training, which also forms the main part of national monitoring (BMBF, 2013). National sources indicate that the primary purpose of this transformation was to ensure, by means of measurable policies, that the integration of immigrant students in the *Länder*'s education systems was irreversible (Federal Government, 2012).

- **Progress or impact:** As of 2013, the number of adolescents with a migrant background who leave school without a diploma was decreasing, and the number of those who leave school with a higher-education entrance diploma was increasing (BMBF, 2013). However, by 2016, the rate of early school leaving among students with a migrant background (23.1%) was almost three times higher than that of their native-born peers (8.2%) (EC, 2017a). Furthermore, access to education for children and adolescents without resident status has been widened by easing legislation (BMBF, 2013). The action plan was subject to constant monitoring. According to national information, the departments in charge of the 11 dialogue fora were asked to submit an evaluation report by June 2016 on the state of implementation of the measures. The report on the Dialogue Forum 2 "Education, Training, Further Education" was prepared by the BMBF. The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration observed that the evaluation focused solely on integration into the education systems and labour market and should also measure social and cultural integration (SVR, 2017). According to national information, the NAP-I was only valid for one legislation period (2012 to 2016), although it was initially designed to be a process surpassing legislative periods, with regular examinations of the set targets. Partially due to the increase in the number of refugees arriving in Germany, the NAP-I had no successor in the following legislative period. However, the action plan is likely to be picked up again in coming legislation.

Germany's overarching Qualification Initiative "Getting ahead through education" (*Aufstieg durch Bildung*) operated from 2008 to 2015 and then was superseded by several programmes on the federal and *Länder* levels. It addressed all areas of education, from ECEC to VET and (continuing) higher education, as well as lifelong learning. In 2008, the target was set to spend 10% of gross domestic product on education, science and research. The objectives corresponding to upper secondary education and beyond include:

1) increasing the number of students in academic and vocational education; 2) making vocational education more attractive; 3) facilitating transfer opportunities between VET and academic education; and 4) improving equity and access to education (such as by integrating young people with a migration background). One programme helps refugees during their studies at institutions of higher education (BMBF, 2017b). The Qualification Initiative also aims to increase students' interest and enthusiasm for scientific and technical vocations (BMBF, 2017b). For example, Girls' Day is targeted at young female students to raise their interest in pursuing studies in STEM subjects (BMBF, 2017b).

- **Progress or impact:** According to the 2015 report on implementation of the Initiative, the targets were about to be reached or had already been surpassed. For example, the target of increasing the participation rate in additional training to 43% from 2006 to 2015 was surpassed in 2014 with a record high of 51% (KMK and GWK, 2015). Further evidence on the overall objectives identified several developments. The number of young people without vocational education dropped to 13.8% in 2013, and the number of women in STEM careers is increasing (BMBF, 2017b). Also, further financial investments have been made, such as allocating EUR 100 million to help refugees to study in universities (BMBF, 2017c). In addition, the ministry has been allocating an extra EUR 130 million for the acquisition of the German language, the identification of competences and potential of refugees and their integration into training and occupations (BMBF, 2017c).

Germany's Educational Chains Initiative (*Initiative Bildungsketten*, 2010) aims to ensure a better transition into VET and the labour market. Under this Initiative, vocational trainers and senior experts are engaged to give guidance to youth. The Initiative is also part of the Alliance for Education and Training 2015-18 (*Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung*) (BMBF and BMAS, 2017), which brings together federal and regional governments, and social partners to improve the attractiveness of VET. The Initiative has been enhanced to extend counselling and coaching and to operate in 11th grade of secondary schools (*Gymnasien*). The government is also reinforcing collaboration between municipal youth, social services and employment agencies to aid young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (EC, 2016a). As part of the Initiative, the government also developed the VerA Programme (2010-20), which provides free-of-charge support to prevent early leaving in apprenticeships.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2014 external evaluation of the Initiative focused on the core elements of potential assessment, practical occupational orientation and mentoring of the transition to the labour market. Experts have stated that assessment of students is a good basis to move to the practical occupational guidance. Among practical occupations, internships were most positively evaluated by both students and other stakeholders. The importance of having internships as part of the programme was especially stressed by staff of special needs' schools (*Förderschulen*). Outcomes on mentoring of the transition to the labour market have been mixed, as the initial and overall conditions varied immensely. For example, half of the mentors operated only at one school, while the others had to work at several schools simultaneously (RMC, IES and ISM, 2014).

In 2016, Germany established an extended career orientation programme on VET programmes in the trade sector (*BMBF-Programm Berufsorientierung für Flüchtlinge*) for asylum seekers, young refugees or those with temporary residence status who are allowed to access the labour market and are beyond the age of compulsory education, as part of the Ways to Education for Refugees initiative (*Wege in Ausbildung für Flüchtlinge*) (BMAS, 2016). The programme is also part of the Education Chains Initiative (2010). The programme set the goal to train and bring into trade training up to 10 000 refugees by 2018 (BMBF, 2016b). The target group is those who have already completed an integration course, have a good competency in German and have previously completed a first orientation in trades (BMBF, 2016b; BMAS, 2016). Participants can test apprenticeships in up to three different trades (BMBF, 2016b). In response to first experiences, several adjustments were implemented in 2017 to make the programme more flexible (BMBF, 2017d). For example, instead of limiting the programme to a

maximum of 13 weeks, it was increased to up to 26 weeks, and the length of time a participant can spend in an enterprise was doubled to 8 weeks (BMBF, 2017d).

- **Progress or impact:** A case example of the city of Duisburg shows that as of April 2017, 11 people had completed the programme and some of them had already started an apprenticeship in a trade. By then, 33 people were participating in the programme. The overall completion rate is high: within four rounds only 6.5% of the participants dropped out (BMBF, 2017e).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The federal government and the *Länder* started a process to improve the quality of ECEC and to negotiate national quality goals in 2014. More recent efforts include the guidelines for the promotion of quality development for good education in early childhood (*Richtlinie zur Förderung der "Qualitätsentwicklung für gute Bildung in der frühen Kindheit"*), announced in 2017 (BMBF, 2017f). During the same year, the German federal government and the *Länder* reached an agreement on the structure of a future law on quality development. The ECEC prize (*Deutscher Kita-Preis*) is another measure to improve quality. The prize will be awarded to five kindergarten and local alliances for the first time in 2018 (*Deutscher Kita-Preis*, 2018).

In 2010, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs adopted a targeted support strategy for poorer-performing pupils (*Förderstrategie für* leistungsschwächere *Schülerinnen und Schüler*), which includes measures on prevention, intervention and compensation.

- The treaty on the accreditation of higher education (*Staatsvertrag über die Organisation eines gemeinsamen Akkreditierungssystems zur Qualitätssicherung in Studium und Lehre an deutschen Hochschulen* [*Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag*]) entered into force in 2018. This treaty reorganises the relations between the federal and state levels. Another major change is the involvement of (private) accreditation agencies, which will, for example, evaluate programmes and quality management systems (EC, 2017c).

In 2014, the German federal government announced a new Education Offensive in the Digital Agenda (2014-17). In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Research published a strategy paper on the Education Offensive for a Digital Society (*Bildungsoffensive für die digitale Wissensgesellschaft Strategie des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung*). This strategy lays out the framework for action of the education offensive. Part of the strategy is the DigitalPact Schools (*DigitalPakt Schule*), which is a joint initiative between the federal and *Länder* level. It aims to improve general digital education at all school levels (primary to upper secondary and VET schools) by preparing for the challenges of the digital future and strengthening interoperability of the technical infrastructure. Specific measures include improving the technical preconditions and adapting curricula and further education and training for teachers (BMBF, 2016c). The federal level and the *Länder* have reached a common understanding on which aspects of digitisation to include in the programme and which additional activities the *Länder* could be required to undertake to ensure that the digital change reaches all schools and all subject areas. The vocational training initiative (*Berufsbildung 4.0*, 2016) aims to modernise occupational profiles and support the use of digital media in vocational training (BMBF, 2017g). The Youth Informatics Competition (*Jugendwettbewerb Informatik*) was launched in 2017 to increase students' interest in programming (BWINF, 2018).

Hungary

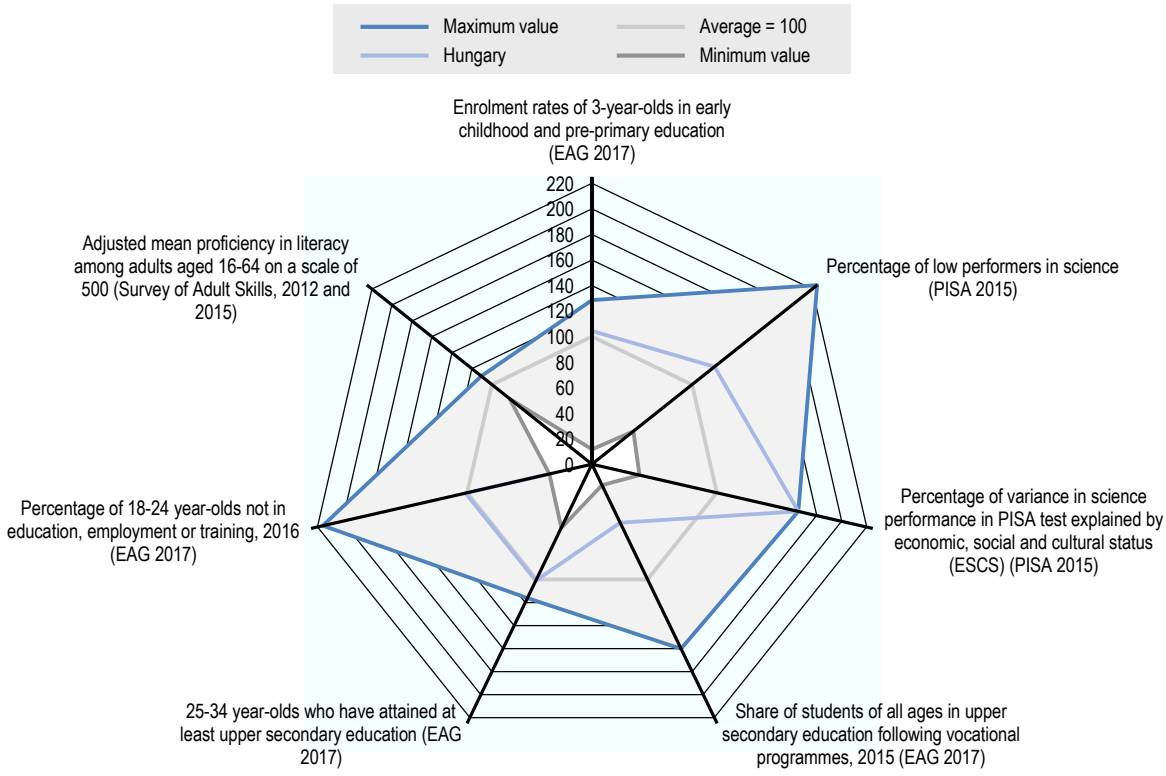
Context

Hungary scored lower than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 476 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science in Hungary has declined across PISA cycles, with an average score change of -8.9 score points, while reading performance has stayed the same and mathematics performance has decreased. Socio-economic status had the largest impact in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 21.4% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 2.7% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Hungary, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Unlike in many OECD countries, there was no significant performance gap in PISA 2015 between immigrant and non-immigrant students in science, with a score difference of just -4 points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC and pre-primary education was above the OECD average in 2015, at 81.2% (OECD average: 77.8%). Children begin kindergarten at age 3. Generally the programme lasts three years. Education-only programmes do not exist nationally, but there are nationwide integrated programmes. The formal curriculum used for integrated programmes (which include education and childcare services) is delivered by qualified teachers. Compulsory education in Hungary begins at age 3 in kindergarten, continues in school at age 6 or 7 and ends at age 16, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. A small share of students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 11, which is earlier than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education is divided into four-year, six-year and eight-year upper secondary general school (*gimnázium*), upper secondary vocational school (*szakközépiskola*), and vocational school (*szakiskola*). As of 2016, all programmes prepare students for the secondary school leaving exam, which provides entry into tertiary education. Since 2016, the two VET pathways are called vocational grammar school (*szakgimnázium*) and vocational secondary school (*szakközépiskola*).

Students in vocational secondary schools can obtain a vocational qualification and enter the labour market at the end of the third year or stay in school for an additional two-year period to complete the secondary school leaving exam. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Hungary is higher than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 15.5% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are not employed or in further education or training) are close to the OECD average, at 15.5%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is among the lowest in the OECD, at 30.4% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are close to the OECD average. In 2016, 82.4% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.11. Selected indicators compared with the average: Hungary



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

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Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.11. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Hungary (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified the need to tackle school segregation between regions. Overall PISA scores have been declining, and they have fallen below the OECD average in all assessed subjects. [2016]	The OECD identified persisting challenges in improving the overall quality of VET and decreasing the high unemployment rate among VET graduates. The enrolment rates in tertiary education have been increasing, with uneven labour market outcomes and skills mismatch, as students graduate in fields with only low employment growth. [2016]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Hungary previously reported the challenge of reducing inequities in students' knowledge and skills. The PISA 2015 results revealed an increase in the performance gap between low and high achievers. In 2017, this challenge persists, and early school leaving was identified as an additional challenge. [2013; 2016-17]	Hungary previously reported the challenge of broadening access to higher education. It also stated challenges in meeting labour market needs in certain professions, which persisted in 2017. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Hungary's Decree on the Basic National Programme of Kindergarten Education came into force in 2013, outlining the principles and tasks of kindergarten education. Also, starting in 2015, participation in ECEC became mandatory from age 3, with minimum attendance of four hours per day. Compulsory kindergarten education is expected to improve the chances of disadvantaged children and may reduce early selection and early school leaving (in 2016, the share of 18-24 year-olds who had either dropped out of school or left work reached 12.4%, the highest share since 2007) (Eurostat, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** In 2012, the enrolment rates of 3-year-olds were at 74%, with an increase to 81% by 2015 (OECD, 2014a; OECD, 2017d). In 2015, 94.7% of Hungarian children between age 4 and the starting age of compulsory education were participating in ECEC, compared to 94.5% in 2012. By 2016, enrolment for children from age 4 to the starting age of compulsory education had increased to 95.3%, above the European benchmark of 95% (EC, 2016b). The ECEC participation rate of Roma children of the same age is 91%, the highest in the region (FRA, 2016).

In 2016, the Szabóky Adolf vocational scholarship scheme (*Szabóky Adolf Szakképzési Ösztöndíj*) replaced the Vocational School Scholarship programme in Hungary. It aims to make more attractive to students the VET occupations and careers of skilled workers that the government has classified as being in high demand in the labour market. It also aims to prevent grade repetition and early school leaving of at-risk students. The programme is financed by the training sub-fund of the National Employment Fund. Merit-based scholarships are granted to students enrolled in full-time education for an occupation with shortages on the labour market. Eligible students are required to: 1) obtain training in 1 of the 20 shortage occupations, as defined each school year by the government and the development and training committees established in Hungary; 2) achieve a minimum grade-point average of 2.51 (5 is the highest) for vocational secondary school students and 3.01 for vocational grammar schools students; and 3) have less than seven hours of unjustified absence from school. If students fulfil the requirements, they receive EUR 32 per month in the first semester, which may be increased to as much as EUR 160 in the following semesters, depending on performance and type of vocational school attended. If their average falls below 2.51, secondary vocational school students have to take a catch-up course to improve their results and regain eligibility for the scholarship.

- **Progress or impact:** VET participation has been low in Hungary. In 2015, the overall participation of students in VET programmes was 23.2% in upper secondary VET, less than half the EU average of 47.3% (Eurostat, 2017b). Yet, at around 70%, Hungary has a comparatively high percentage of VET students in work-based learning compared to other EU countries, considering all programmes with a practical element taking place at a company or at a school (EC, 2017d). The programme, implemented in 2016, can potentially have a positive impact on early school leaving rates, which peaked at 12.4% in 2016, the highest rate since 2007 (Eurostat, 2017a). In 2014, almost half of the overall student dropout was students from vocational secondary school, which represented only 21% of the overall school population (Fehérvári, 2015). The programme has also the potential to improve the employment rates of VET graduates, which are generally high (84.4% in 2016). But VET graduates who complete the vocational secondary school track (*szakközépiskola*) are more prone to unemployment than students in vocational grammar schools (*szakgimnázium*) (EC, 2017d). Also, additional EU evidence asserts that the curricula revision potentially will not improve the level of basic skills and competencies (EC, 2017e). Adult participation rates in lifelong learning increased from 3.0% in 2011 to 6.3% in 2016, but remained below the EU average of 10.8% in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017c).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- In 2017, as a result of declining performance in PISA 2015, Hungary started a Revision of the National Core Curriculum (2012), which entails curricular regulatory instruments. It was to be completed by the end of 2017 but has been delayed (see EC, 2018). Implementation is planned to start in 2019.
- In 2016, the Public Education Bridge Programme and the VET Bridge Programme replaced the previous HÍD I and HÍD II (Bridge) programmes (2011). Like the previous programmes, their aim is to assist students who did not complete primary education to enrol in upper secondary education or obtain the knowledge necessary to enter the labour market, in line with the overall EU strategic objectives. The programmes include complex pedagogical activities, with learning assistance, social and cultural support, and skills and personality development. The new Public Education Bridge Programme targets early school leavers from primary school who are over age 16 or those not admitted to any secondary school after completion of primary education. It intends to fill the gaps in primary school by helping students to continue and finish primary school and to enrol in vocational education, as well as offering individual, differentiated development programmes to strengthen self-confidence and motivation. The VET Bridge Programme also provides help to continue and finish primary school, but it introduces students to VET at the same time. It stresses the importance of providing educational foundations and further developing students' competencies and motivation for lifelong learning. The VET Bridge Programme aims to provide students with the opportunity to either enter the labour market with a partial qualification or continue their VET training in secondary school.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Iceland

Context

Iceland scored below the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 473 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science has declined across PISA cycles, with an average score change of -7 score points, while performance in reading and mathematics has also decreased. At the same time, socio-economic status had the lowest impact in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 4.9% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Iceland's performance gap between boys and girls in science was -3 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 4.1% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Iceland, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are among the highest in the OECD. Immigrants scored on average 66 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was among the highest in the OECD in 2015, at 96.5% (OECD average: 77.8%). Children can attend preschool education (*Leikskóli*) as early as the age of 12 months and for up to five years. Education and care are seen as integrated in the national regulation of preschools (*Leikskóli*), and a national curriculum framework is in place that is delivered by qualified teachers and assistants (Icelandic national curriculum guide for preschool, 2011).

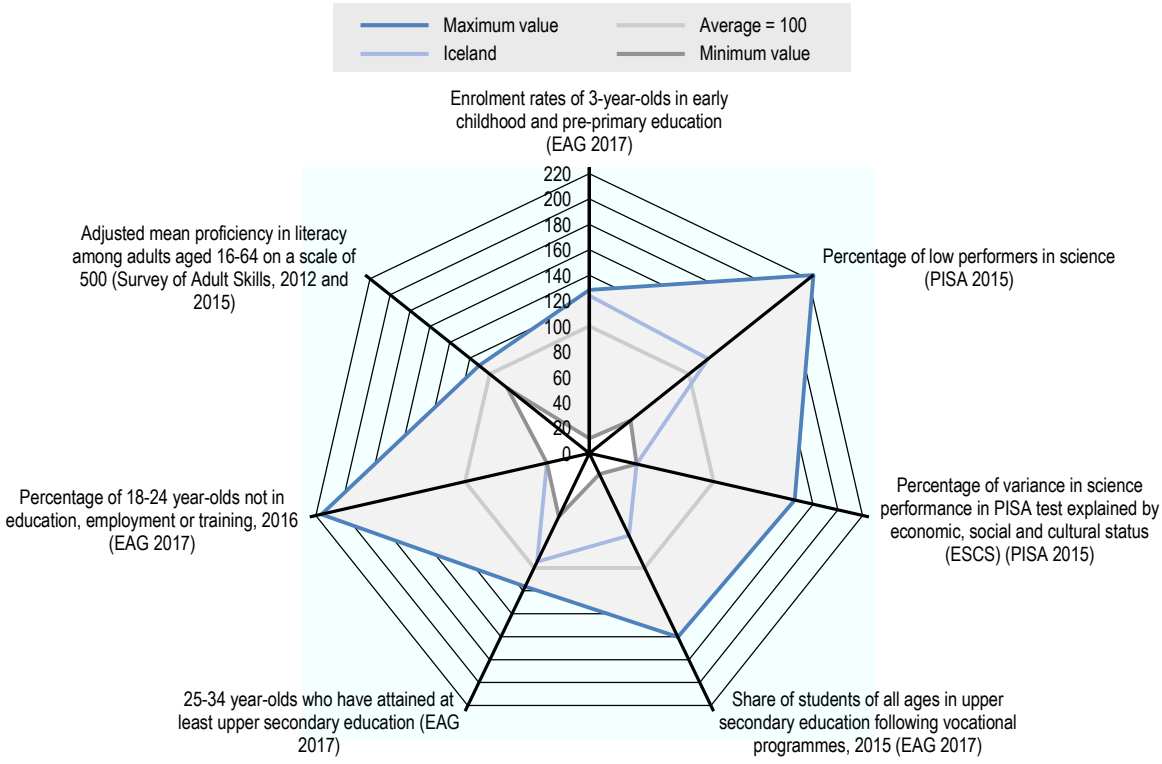
Compulsory education in Iceland begins at age 6 and ends at age 16, shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of 14. Anyone who has completed compulsory education, has equivalent basic education, or is at least 16 years old, can enrol in upper secondary education. After completing compulsory education, students can choose between three streams: general academic programmes, vocational education and certified indentured trades. The streams last from three to five years. Students who have completed a general programme or a general programme building on vocational education take a matriculation examination and gain access to a higher education institution or a specialised tertiary-level institution.

Students who complete vocational programmes that include general education are awarded either a vocational certificate or a diploma of competences. With this, students can advance to programmes at the post-secondary-level or transition into the labour market. Students with a school certificate for a certified indentured trade can transition directly into the labour market or advance to a trade master's programme to become a master craftsperson.

Vocational programmes are the most diverse programmes in upper secondary education in Iceland. They can last from one to five years and are also provided in non-formal settings, such as adult education centres, evening schools and workplaces. They aim to prepare students for work or further study and can lead to professional qualifications. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level attained is among the highest in the OECD, with an attainment rate of 21.7% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion 18-24 year-olds neither employed nor in education or training) are among the lowest in the

OECD, at 5.2%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is close to the OECD average, at 43.3% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are relatively high. In 2016, 91.7% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.12. Selected indicators compared with the average: Iceland



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

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Evolution of key policy priorities

Table 7.12. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Iceland (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-171	The OECD identified the need for Iceland to increase the educational attainment rate of students. [2013]	Iceland faces challenges in delaying students' school-to-work transition, according to OECD evidence, as dropout rates remain high in Iceland, where many students do not complete upper secondary education. The underlying reasons for this, as identified by the OECD, include the duration of studies, lack of relevant curricula, a schooling system that does not respond well enough to the needed skills, flaws in the VET system and the marginal wage differentials between high-skilled and low-skilled jobs. Those factors negatively impact overall labour market performance. [2012; 2015]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Although policy measures have been taken, Iceland continues to face challenges in improving literacy in compulsory education and particularly in raising literacy and educational attainment among immigrant students. Another challenge is to make its education system more inclusive from pre-primary to upper secondary level. [2013; 2016-17]	In 2016, the focus reported by Iceland remains on increasing the number of students taking part in VET and ensuring that the VET system responds to the requirements of industry and the labour market. The emphasis is now more on improving the quality and accessibility of VET and apprenticeships, rather than just increasing student numbers. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

The National Qualifications Framework for all school levels in Iceland was adopted in 2016. As of 2018, the Directorate for Education is preparing a review of the national curriculum guidelines for compulsory education.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2016 analysis of the NQF in Iceland by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) found that as of 2016 the framework had advanced to the "early operational stage". All qualifications at upper secondary level, including general and vocational education, contain the NQF and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels. The different stakeholders from education, training and the labour market recognise the framework as a positive development. This can probably be explained by their close involvement during the development and ongoing reforms of the NQF. At the same time, the report stressed, among other points, that continuing engagement of stakeholders in the future is one of the main challenges and, thus, it is important to clarify their role in the implementation process. Also, the report recommends implementing a co-ordination committee to facilitate the exchange of information with stakeholders (CEDEFOP, 2017b).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The National guidelines for pre-primary education, implemented in 2012, were among the new education guidelines put into place in Iceland between 2011 and 2013. At pre-primary level, for example, the National Curriculum Guide sets out the learning objectives for children at pre-primary schools and describes the core competencies and basic principles that should guide school activities: broad literacy, creative thought, equality, democracy and human rights, health and welfare, and sustainability (OECD, 2015a).
- A regulation for students with special needs in public and private upper secondary schools (No. 230/2012, based on Article 34 of the Upper Secondary Act, No. 92/2008), intends to ensure that all students have equal opportunities in education

and that their educational, physical, social and emotional needs are met. It also aims to offer students with special education needs sufficient learning opportunities, mentoring and support in stimulating learning environments and adequate infrastructure. The overall System for Inclusive Education was reformed based on an external report of the European Agency of Special Needs, Evaluation of the implementation of inclusive education policy in Iceland (*Úttekt á framkvæmd stefnu um menntun án aðgreiningar á Íslandi*) (EASIE, 2017). As a follow up, multi-stakeholder co-operation was established, including the main education actors in education (EASIE, 2017).

- Iceland has taken steps in recent years to reduce dropout from upper secondary education. It released the White Paper on Education Reform (2014), which spells out two main goals for the Icelandic education system: to increase attainment in reading and to increase the rate of on-time graduation.
- As part of the National Curriculum Guidelines (2011), Iceland reformed upper secondary education by reducing the length of upper secondary schooling in 2014, allowing students to graduate a year earlier. Most upper secondary schools are now credit-based and allow students to organise their progression through their chosen programme. In addition, efforts to support all students entering secondary education to be suitably prepared seem to be helping to reduce dropout rates among vulnerable groups.
- In 2010, the Adult Education Act was introduced to provide those who have a short formal education or have dropped out of upper secondary schools with opportunities to increase their vocational skills and adult education that takes their competencies and work experience into account.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Ireland

Context

Ireland scored higher than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 502 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles with an average score change of -0.4 score points, while performance in reading and mathematics stayed the same. Socio-economic status had an impact close to the OECD average on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 12.7% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were among the highest in the OECD in Ireland, with a difference between boys and girls of 11 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 14.4% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Ireland, close to the OECD average of 12.5%. Unlike in many OECD countries, there was no significant performance gap in PISA 2015 between immigrant and non-immigrant students in science, with a score difference of just 8 points.

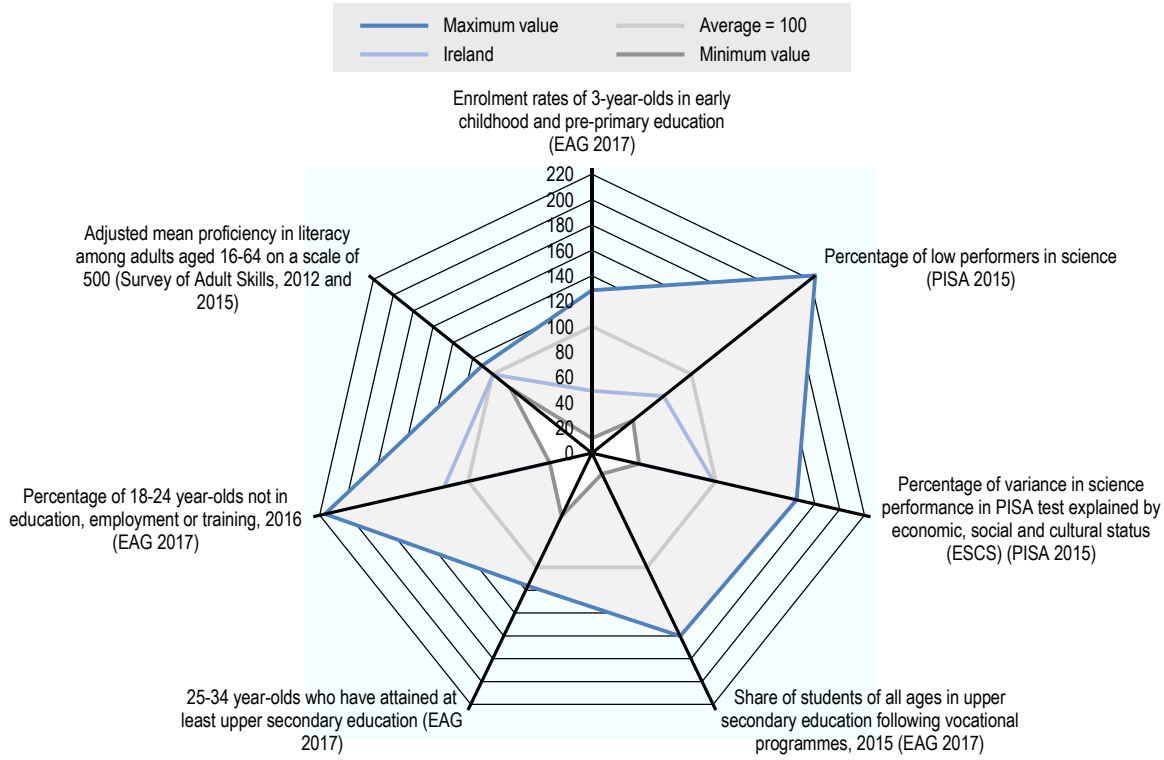
Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was lower than the OECD average in 2015, at 38.3% (OECD average: 77.8%). Pre-primary education is largely provided in private institutions, although from the age of 3 years and 2 months onwards, children are entitled to two years of free pre-primary education, which is funded through government subsidies. Special preschools also exist for children in urban disadvantaged areas (known as the Early Start programme) and for Irish Traveller children. A national curriculum is in place (*Aistear*) and a set of standards (*Síolta*) which aim to monitor the quality of education and care provision for those aged 0-6. Compulsory education in Ireland begins at age 6 and ends at age 16, shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 15, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education in Ireland is a two-year programme with a choice of three streams: the general Leaving Certificate programme (LC); the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), which has some vocationally oriented subjects; and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), which is oriented towards preparation for labour market entry. All three upper secondary programmes lead to the final award of a Leaving Certificate, although the LCA award does not provide direct access to higher education.

VET in Ireland is offered at post-secondary level through apprenticeships and traineeships, specific skills training and alternative or second-chance education. Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs) form a key part of the VET offering. The majority of courses have a duration of one academic year. They offer a combination of general education, vocational training and opportunities for work experience in over 60 subject areas, with the aim of developing specific vocational skills and vocationally oriented further and higher education progression. Around 30 000 students enrol annually in PLCs.

In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Ireland were 267 points, close to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was lower than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment is lower than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 12.4% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or

training) are higher than the OECD average, at 18.2% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%.

Figure 7.13. Selected indicators compared with the average: Ireland



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733030

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.13. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Ireland (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	Education outcomes are closely linked to socio-economic status in Ireland. In 2015, 80% of children with an immigrant background were enrolled in 23% of schools. The budget of DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) was cut in recent years. [2013, 2015]	The overall situation of youth has improved, but unemployment and NEET rates remain above OECD and EU averages, as of 2015. Also, high long-term unemployment rates persist, and there seems to be a general under-representation of people with low levels of education and women over 30 in the labour market. The OECD identified the need to provide further training to the former group and to raise the attractiveness of the VET system. Finally, the OECD has reported frequent inequalities in higher education, as young people of working class background are less likely to continue higher education than their peers of middle-class background.[2013; 2015]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Socio-economically disadvantaged students are facing academic challenges. [2013; 2016-17]	As previously reported, in 2016, during the economic crisis, Ireland was confronted with an increasing youth unemployment rate, which has now started to decline. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Since 2010, Ireland has either implemented or expanded three ECEC policies to increase coverage, especially to benefit low-income families, by providing childcare subventions and an after-school childcare programme (ACSS, 2013). The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) or "free preschool" programme was implemented in 2010 and expanded in 2016 to facilitate access to childcare for all children between age 3 and age 5.5. The government also implemented the Community Childcare Subvention Programme (CCS) for qualifying parentss to reduce the burden of financial costs for disadvantaged families who would like childcare for children at any age while pursuing training or education courses (DCYA, 2014).

- **Progress or impact:** A total of 104 441 children benefitted from at least one of the following three Irish programmes for ECEC: ECCE, CCS, and Training and Employment Childcare programmes, which include after-school childcare (ACSS). The number of children registered in 2015/16 represented an 8% increase from the 96 508 children enrolled in these programmes during the 2014/15 school year. Specifically regarding the ECCE programme, 73 964 children took part in it in the 2015/16 school year, at a total cost of EUR 178 million. Compared to the 2014/15 school year, this is an increase of almost 13% in participation and 28% in costs. According to the report, the increase can be partly attributed to the announcement of extra entitlements in the 2016 budget (Pobal, 2016).

As part of the ongoing VET reforms, Ireland implemented the Education and Training Boards Bill (2012), which aims to better integrate skills and training into education by replacing the 33 Vocational Education Committees with 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Implemented in 2013, The ETBs are overseen by a national representative body, Education and Training Boards Ireland. The services of the further education and training sector (FET) are mainly provided by the ETBs (ETBI, 2017). The programmes develop skills for employed and unemployed individuals, assist students' transition into the workplace and provide literacy and numeracy skills to disadvantaged adults.

- **Progress or impact:** By mid-2014, the training centres previously operating under the Further Education and Training Authority (*An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna,* known as SOLAS) were transferred

to one of the ETBs. The annual FET services plan outlines, among other elements, the programmes and courses to be delivered by the 16 ETBs (EC, 2015b).

Under the FET Act, the Further Education and Training (FET) Authority (SOLAS) took effect in Ireland in 2013, replacing the previous authority (*An Foras Áiseanna Saothair*, known as FÁS). SOLAS is tasked with proposing a five-year strategy on FET, operating under the Department of Education and Skills. In co-operation with the 16 ETBs, SOLAS works on the integration, co-ordination and funding of several FET programmes (SOLAS, 2014). The first FET five-year strategy (2014-19) aims to meet the skills needs of the economy and to increase active inclusion, quality provision, integrated planning and funding, and the standing of FET (SOLAS, 2014). SOLAS has published annual FET services plans since 2014. Further FET strategies to improve the quality of VET include the FET Professional Development Strategy (2017-19), the Technology-Enhanced Learning in FET Strategy (2016-19) and a series of FET programme evaluations that are underway.

- **Progress or impact:** Regarding the 2014-19 strategy, 231 234 new entrants were registered in 2015, and 369 523 beneficiaries were reached in 19 career clusters. The overall investment was EUR 643.5 million (SOLAS, 2015). By 2016, the number of beneficiaries had increased to 339 283 and the number of new entrants to 245 400, while the budget decreased to EUR 634 million (SOLAS, 2016). The overall budget increased slightly to EUR 638 million in 2017. The number of beneficiaries decreased slightly, to 323 308, with 230 641 new entrants recorded in 33 skills clusters (compared to 19 skills clusters in 2016 (SOLAS, 2017a). As outlined in the 2017 service plan, the focus remained on long-term unemployed persons with low work intensity or limited working hours and the barriers to employment faced by those groups (SOLAS, 2017b).

Since 2011, the Springboard Programme in Ireland has funded free part-time courses in higher education for unemployed individuals in areas with labour market skills shortages. As of the academic year 2017-18, homemakers and employed people can also participate in the programme (HEA and Department of Education and Skills, 2017). Since 2015 the programme also includes skills conversion courses in information and communication technology (ICT), as well as Springboard courses under the umbrella of Springboard+ (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). The ICT Conversion Courses were introduced under the joint Government-Industry ICT Action Plans. The Action Plans, published in 2012 and 2014, contain a range of measures to build the domestic supply of ICT graduates, including the roll out of a full-time intensive ICT skills conversion programme designed and delivered in partnership with industry. Since 2016, the ICT skills conversion programme is available on a part-time basis, enabling those in employment to upskill or reskill in this area. In addition, employed people who wish to upskill or reskill in the Biopharma/Med-tech sector, as well as homemakers, are eligible to apply to participate in Springboard+ 2017. Further expansion to allow all those in employment to access Springboard courses on a free or heavily subsidised basis is planned under Springboard+ 2018.

- **Progress or impact:** An evaluation of the Springboard+ Programme of 2011-16, states that since 2011 the average participation rate per year was 6 129, with 88% of the available places taken. Springboard+ 2016 provided an additional 5 825 places, and 6 471 places were provided under Springboard+ 2017. From 2011 to 2014, the completion rate of Springboard+ courses was 72%. A significant proportion of the 28% who did not complete courses did so due to taking up employment. The outcomes of 2011-14 show that of the 76% reported outcomes of participants 3-6 months after graduation, 53% were in employment, 19% pursued further study and 28% were looking for work. The highest employment rates were found among participants of the ICT skills conversion classes of 2013 (78%) and 2014 (73%) (HEA, 2016a). The number of graduates from ICT-related programmes at levels 8 to 10 increased from 2 362 in 2012 to 3 341 in 2014, as reported in the 2nd System Performance Report for Higher Education. Also, through Springboard+ and ICT Conversion Courses, more than 3 500 graduates achieved ICT qualifications at levels 6 to 9 in 2014 and 2015 (HEA, 2016b).

Ireland's Action Plan for Jobs (APJ), introduced in 2012, is the government's annual plan to rebuild the economy and create jobs. With over 270 actions by 15 government departments and 36 state agencies, it presents a number of measures to strengthen education and its links to the labour market, including a review of the apprenticeship training model initiated in 2012. This plan is ongoing, with updates published annually, as well as quarterly progress reports. The latest APJ, introduced in 2017, focuses on seven strategic goals covering regional development, boosting innovation and productivity, and attracting high quality talent to the Irish labour market, with the aim of having up to 45 000 additional people at work in Ireland by the end of 2017 (Irish Department of Business, Enterprises and Innovation, 2017a).

- **Progress or impact:** In 2014, the OECD published a preliminary review of the APJ. By then, it was found that both the APJ target of 100 000 new jobs by 2016 and the long-term goal of 2.1 million people employed by 2020 were within reach (OECD, 2014c). The employment rate has been increasing in Ireland. Over 2 800 actions were implemented during the previous APJ of 2012-16. Also, Ireland created more than 200 000 jobs from 2012 to 2017. The 2017 report of the Monitoring Committee stated that 81% of all projects slated to be completed in the first quarter of 2017 were accomplished (Irish Department of Business, Enterprises and Innovation, 2017b).

In 2012, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in Ireland proposed regional clusters of higher education institutions to increase collaboration and co-ordination between higher education institutions and engagement with stakeholders, with implementation beginning from 2014. The first priorities of this strategy are improved academic planning and student pathways. Ireland implemented nine regional Skills Fora to increase engagement and improve matching between skills needs and education provisions. These involve further education and training and higher education providers, as well as other government departments and agencies and employer representatives (HEA, 2016b).

- **Progress or impact:** The Higher Education System Performance 2014-2016 report points out that progress has been made in academic and student pathways, with variations in performance between the different clusters of institutions in the country. In 2015, the HEA engaged in consultation with the institutions to discuss future steps (HEA, 2016b).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- Ireland's Digital Strategy for Schools (2015-20) provides over EUR 200 million in investment in digital technology for schools and is rolling out new initiatives to promote technological education. These include introducing a new computer science subject in upper secondary education in 2018 and adding coding and computational thinking in primary school.
- In 2015, the Minister for Education and Skills announced 25 new apprenticeship programmes, following a call for proposals from industry partners. It was expected that up to 15 of these new apprenticeships would be introduced by the end of 2017, providing more than 800 additional places. To refresh the pipeline of apprenticeship proposals, a second call for proposals was held in 2017. Arising from this, the Minister for Education and Skills announced 26 additional programmes for further development into national apprenticeships in 2017. A new Action plan for apprenticeships 2016-20 intends to continue to expand apprenticeship training.
- A new annual Survey of Student Engagement will provide data to inform institutions about continuous-improvement initiatives. A pilot Employer Survey was conducted in 2014 and a National Employer Survey in 2015. A new Graduate Outcomes Survey is being developed, which intends to incorporate all education

institutions, as the current survey only relates to universities and colleges. The new survey will include a longitudinal dimension, and Institutes of Technology will pilot it in 2017.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Japan

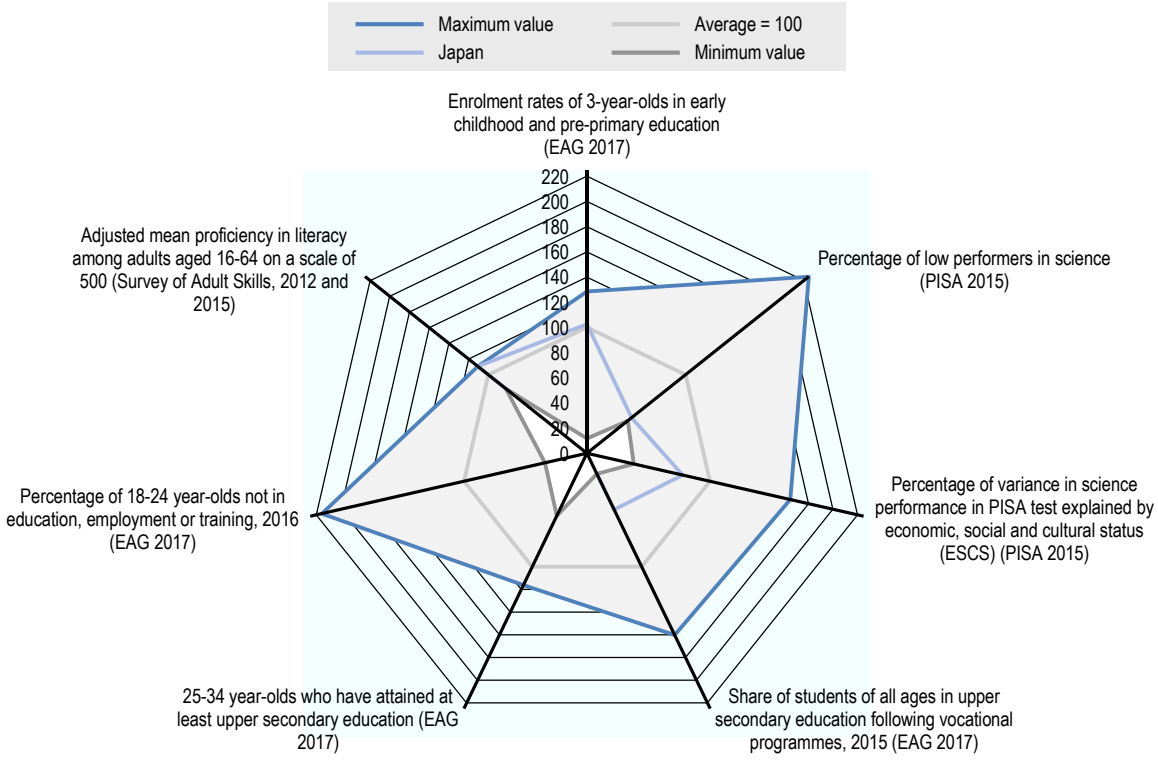
Context

Japan scored the highest in the OECD in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 538 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of 2.8 score points, while reading performance has increased and mathematics performance has stayed the same. Socio-economic status had lower-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 10.1% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were among the highest in the OECD, with a difference between boys and girls of 14 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 0.5% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Japan, a proportion which is among the lowest in the OECD (OECD average: 12.5%).

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC and pre-primary education was close to the OECD average in 2015, at 79.8% (OECD average: 77.8%). Pre-primary education is organised by categories: integrated centre for ECEC (*Yohorenkeigata-Nintei-Kodomo-En*), kindergarten (*Yochien*), kindergarten division of school for special needs education (*Tokubetsu-shien-gakko Yochi-bu*) and day nursery (*Hoikusho*). Each programme lasts from one to three years. Children can begin attending these programmes as early as age 3 and as late as age 5. A set of national standards is in place for the education of 3-5 year-olds (National Curriculum Standard for Kindergarten). Both education-only and integrated programmes exist nationally. A formal curriculum is in place for education-only programmes and is delivered by qualified teachers. This varies for integrated programmes. Compulsory education in Japan begins at age 6 and ends at age 15, shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 15, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education is divided into four streams: general programmes (three years), specialised programmes (three years), integrated programmes (three years) and upper secondary specialised training school (not less than one year). All programmes award students either a certificate of graduation (general, specialised and integrated programmes) or a certificate of completion (upper secondary specialised training school) and provide access to higher education (except for upper secondary specialised training school programmes of less than three years).

VET in Japan is provided at the upper secondary and tertiary levels. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Japan were the highest in the OECD, at 296 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was among the highest in the OECD. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is among the highest in the OECD, at 60.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are higher than the OECD average. In 2016, 85.4% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.14. Selected indicators compared with the average: Japan



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733049

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.14. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Japan (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	In 2011, the OECD identified a need to expand access to student loans and reduce dependence on *juku*, in order to enhance equity while easing burdens on families. In 2017, the OECD still considered that Japan could benefit from reducing reliance on private, after-school lessons, particularly in *juku*, in part by increasing school quality, and increasing the access to after-school lessons for students from low-income families. The OECD reported a significant shortage of childcare capacity in major urban areas, and government spending on ECEC, representing 0.5% of GDP as of 2017, is too low. Japan was advised to take further measures to provide a high-quality early-learning environment to all children in ECEC [2011, 2017].	The high level of tuition in Japan is an obstacle to university for students from low-income households. [2011].
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	The Japanese government has stated its goals to address the levels of child poverty and educational disparities. It also wants to ensure that students are able to receive the kind of high-quality education they desire, regardless of their home financial situation [2016-17].	Japan reported challenges in the transition from school to work, as high rates of highly skilled people are neither in employment nor in education or training. Japan also identified continuing to train future skilled workers in a context of globalisation and a decreasing working-age population as a policy priority [2013; 2016-17].

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

In 2009, Japan revised the National Curriculum Standard for upper secondary education, which serves as the fundamental standard of curriculum for students at this level. In general, it is revised once every ten years. The current National Curriculum Standard aims to allow students to acquire and use fundamental knowledge and skills and develop abilities and attitudes to proactively deal with various problems and solve them by thinking, making judgements and expressing themselves ("solid academic ability"); to cultivate self-discipline, empathy and co-operative spirit for others, and a rich sensibility ("richness in mind"); and to foster health and fitness for living a vigorous life ("healthy body"). The government aims to balance these elements to nurture students' "competencies for living". In the revision of the National Curriculum Standard, the declining results in PISA from 2000 to 2006 were seriously taken into account (Nakayasu, 2016). The focus was put on aligning the skills taught to children to the key competences measured in PISA (MEXT, 2017; Nakayasu, 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** Evidence shows that overall, the adjustments made help promote school climate development, give teachers greater autonomy in designing the school curriculum, concentrate on "learning-centred education", and widen learning on the global and community scale (Aranil and Fukuya, 2010).

Japan has been undertaking different efforts for the internationalisation of its Higher Education sector. In 2014, the Government of Japan issued the Report by the Commission on Improving the Living Environment for International Students, with the target of having 300 000 international students in Japan. The Revitalisation Strategy, implemented in 2013 and revised in 2015, aims to increase the numbers of overseas students in Japan and of Japanese students studying abroad. Based on these reports and strategic plans, the government is providing support to international students to find accommodation, communicate with Japanese students and find employment after graduation. It is

increasing scholarships to make studying in Japan more attractive. The government also targeted worldwide strategic priority regions from which to attract promising international students. The Go Global Japan programme (2012) and the Top Global University Project (2014) also provided priority support and financial assistance to universities that are making thorough efforts to encourage internationalisation.

- **Progress or impact:** From 2016 to 2017, the number of international students increased by 11.6% to 267 042 (JASSO, 2017).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The Third Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (2018-22) draws on education policy priorities, including the universal mission of education, current issues, and the need to provide better opportunities for each and every person through education. This plan implements principles from the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (2013-17), while also aiming to solve issues based on its progress and concerns in anticipation of social changes beyond 2030. It adopts a long-term outlook for society from 2030 through five basic policy directions: 1) fostering the necessary skills for students to have the aspiration and ambition to reach their potential; 2) developing the various skills to lead sustainable development of society; 3) preparing an environment conducive to lifelong learning and activity; 4) building a learning safety net by which anyone can play an active role in supporting society; and 5) building the foundation to carry out these education policies. The Plan establishes targets and sets measures for each policy direction.
- Japan has implemented the Project for Promoting Community Co-operation Activities for Learning and Education, based on the amended Social Education Act (2017). Policies that are part of this initiative on collaboration and co-operation between schools and communities include the After-School Classes for Children programme, which supports extracurricular learning, and experiential activities for children after school, provided by local residents. This programme is based on the Comprehensive After-School Plan for Children (2014) that aims to provide a place for all school children, so they can spend after-school time in safety.
- In order to support and enable students who, despite having the motivation and ability, may be forced to abandon their education due to financial difficulties, Japan established its first grant-type scholarship system in 2017, through the Japan Student Services Organisation. These scholarships target university students from households that are exempt from residence taxes and students who need welfare care. In the same year, the Japanese government also increased interest-free scholarship loans, which are now provided to all applicants who satisfy the loan criteria. In addition, Japan eliminated all academic requirements for students from low-income households and is providing interest-free scholarship loans to all students who need them.
- In 2017, a partial amendment to the School Education Act was enacted to implement new higher education institutions within the university system, starting in 2019. It is based on a 2014 proposal from the government's Education Rebuilding Council to bolster vocational education at universities, colleges of technology (*koto senmon gakko),* professional training colleges (*senmon gakko*), high schools, and similar schools, while also systematising new higher education

institutions that provide practical vocational education. These new higher education institutions, *senmonshoku daigaku* (provisional translation: professional universities) and *senmonshoku tanki-daigaku* (provisional translation: professional junior colleges), will train and educate specialist professionals. The institutions are expected to: 1) contribute to more robust training and education of specialist professionals through close partnerships with industry; 2) expand the options for young students with specialist aspirations; and 3) offer a broader range of lifelong learning options for older adults who want to advance or change their careers.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Korea

Context

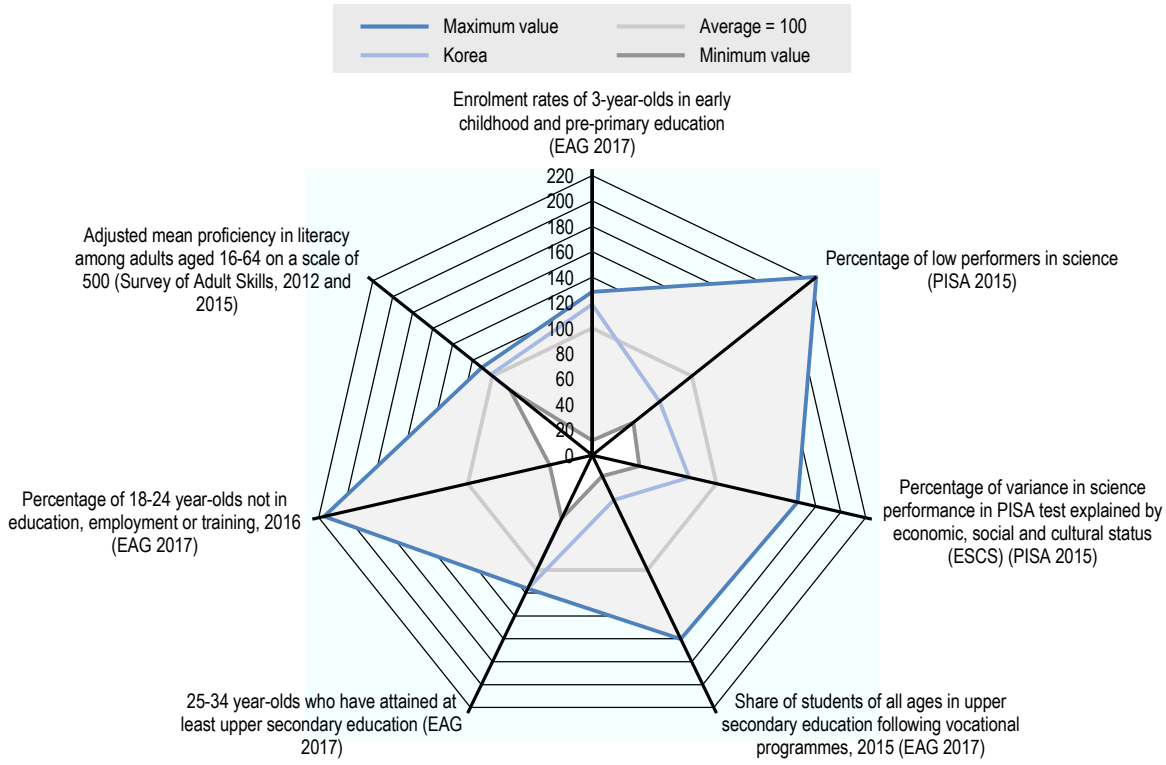
Korea scored among the highest in the OECD in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 516 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of -1.9 score points, while performance in reading and mathematics has stayed the same. Socio-economic status had lower-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 10.1% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 0.1% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Korea, the lowest rate in the OECD (OECD average: 12.5%).

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was higher than the OECD average in 2015, at 92.3%, (OECD average: 77.8%). Pre-primary education is divided into three programmes that children may attend as early as age 3 and as late as age 5: a kindergarten course in a childcare centre (*Eorinyijip*), kindergarten (*Yuchiwon*), and a kindergarten course in a special school (*Teuksu-hakgyo, Yuchiwon-kwajeong*). Each programme lasts from one to three years. A national set of childcare standards (Standardised Childcare Curriculum) is in place for 0-2 year-olds. Compulsory education in Korea begins at age 6 and ends at age 14, shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 15, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education in Korea lasts three years and consists of general, vocational and specialist streams. Enrolment rates in general programmes are among the highest in the OECD, with 82% of students enrolled in upper secondary general programmes in 2014, compared to the OECD average of 56%. All upper secondary programmes provide students with a diploma and access to higher education.

VET consists of specialised high schools, which offer curricula based on preparing students for specific sectors of the labour market, and Meister schools, which train master craftspeople. Post-secondary VET graduates can advance to higher education, although the proportion choosing this option has been falling in recent years, with more graduates choosing to directly enter the labour market.

In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Korea were higher than the OECD average, at 273 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was higher than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment is lower than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 8.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is the highest in the OECD, at 70% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are lower than the OECD average. In 2016, 75.2% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.15. Selected indicators compared with the average: Korea



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.
Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733068

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.15. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Korea (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified a need to better define the goals and content of ECEC in order to improve its quality [2008].	The youth (15-29) employment rate is one of the lowest in the OECD, while the share of NEETs is high, reflecting a high level of labour market mismatch [2016].
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	The expansion of the private education sector (tutoring), continues to negatively impact education equity. Korea reported in 2016 that it has resulted in an education gap [2013; 2016-17].	Korea reported a need to respond to the challenge of establishing stable qualification and training system levels [2013; 2016-17].

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- In 2014, Korea extended after-school childcare for 3-5 year-olds (2013) to provide up to five hours a day of care for children. The Nuri Curriculum (the nationally-recognised universal curriculum for early childhood education) was applied to these additional childcare hours. Introduced in 2012 for all 5-year-olds, it was first expanded in 2013 for 3-4 year-olds, before being applied to these additional hours in 2015. Also, after-school childcare classes are provided at primary schools, especially for children in Grades 1 and 2 from dual-earner, low-income, and single-parent households. As of 2017, 24% of all children in Grades 1 and 2 participate in after-school childcare classes (ARNEC, 2016).
- Korea developed a National Competency Standard (NCS) and an NCS learning module (first implemented in 2013) to identify and standardise the competencies needed to successfully perform a job. These are constantly enhanced. A new curriculum based on the NCS has introduced vocational junior colleges, specialised high schools (which offer curricula based on preparing students for specific sectors of the labour market) and Meister schools (which train master crafts-persons). A Korean Qualifications Framework (KQF) has been established, which links levels of education, qualifications, field experiences and results of training based on the NCS.
- The government has established a programme of Employment First-University Later to reduce the high rate of advancement to higher education, facilitate lifelong learning and resolve the mismatch between the supply of students and labour market demands for particular skill sets. Measures under this system include restructuring the vocational education sector to better meet the needs of employers and offering more financial support to students in the vocational stream (OECD, 2016b).

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Latvia

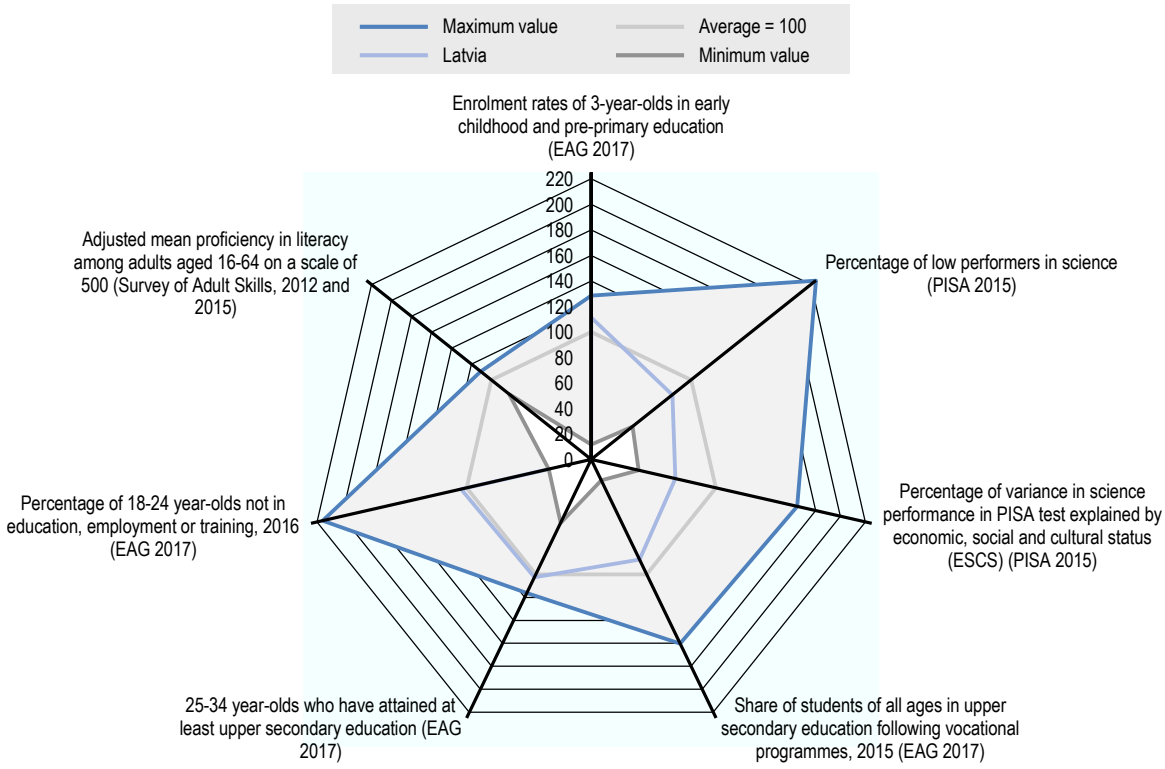
Context

Latvia scored lower than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 490 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of 1.1 score points, while reading performance has increased and mathematics performance has stayed the same. Socio-economic status had one of the lowest impacts in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 8.7% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance in Latvia were among the largest in the OECD in favour of girls, with a difference between boys and girls of -11 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 5% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Latvia, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are lower than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 20 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was higher than the OECD average in 2015, at 86.6%, (OECD average: 77.8%). Pre-primary education programmes (*Pirmskolas izglitibas programmas*) are offered for children between age 1 and age 6. Children are typically enrolled at age 3. Compulsory education in Latvia begins at age 6-7 (although preparation for school is compulsory for children aged 5-6) and ends at age 16, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education is not compulsory in Latvia. A large number of students follow a general upper secondary programme, which lasts three years. There are two vocational upper secondary programmes. Graduates from general upper secondary education receive a certificate of completion and can access both academic and vocational education at the tertiary level. The second programme of vocational education provides graduates with a certificate of vocational qualification but does not grant access to higher education. Students who have completed the second programme and want to enter higher education must complete an extra one-year general secondary education bridge programme.

In Latvia, the term "vocational education" is generally used, rather than "vocational education and training (VET)". This is because most vocational education is implemented through school-based programmes that include practical learning at schools and in enterprises, although work-based learning is also part of VET. Latvia's post-secondary non-tertiary education programmes are considered part of the upper secondary level. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Latvia is lower than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 8.9% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are close to the OECD average, at 16% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is close to the OECD average, at 42.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are higher than the OECD average. In 2016, 87.2% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.16. Selected indicators compared with the average: Latvia



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733087

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.16. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Latvia (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified a need to continue expanding ECEC services, in particular in rural areas and for the youngest children. Also, although Latvia has made good progress in expanding access and improving learning outcomes, the data suggest that there are marked differences in student performance between rural and urban schools in Latvia and that students with special education needs and/or at risk of social exclusion do not equally benefit from quality learning opportunities. [2016]	The OECD recognises the improved quality and attractiveness of the VET system in Latvia. Progress is still needed on VET curricula reform, which is expected to be finalised in 2020. Further efforts should be made to reduce the shortage of relevant skills and to encourage lifelong learning for increased adult participation rates in education and training [2015; 2016; 2017]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Providing equal education opportunities in the whole country and closing the education performance gap between genders, and rural and urban areas remain challenges, as reported by Latvia. To respond to this, it is necessary to increase the number of ECEC places in urban areas, raise the outcomes for rural students and optimise the school network to respond to the changing demographics of the country. The percentage of early school leavers increased from 8.5% in 2014 to 10% in 2016. Latvia should continue to address this issue [2013; 2016-17].	Challenges persist in adopting the education system to wider development priorities, labour market needs and fiscal and demographic developments. Latvia's upper secondary system (Grades 10-12) is largely school-based and is characterised by a stark divide between general and vocational pathways [2013; 2016-17].

Note 1: See Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2014-20 provide an approach to the improvement of the quality of education and include various initiatives that have been launched for the promotion of the inclusion of students with special needs (2011). In 2003, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted new regulations creating special-needs education development centres. The aim was to convert the best-performing special needs schools into centres of expertise for mainstream schools integrating special needs students. In 2018, there are 12 special education institutions with the status of special education development centre. The aim of these centres is to provide methodological and consultative support for children and students with special needs who are integrated in preschool education institutions and mainstream schools. The regulations set the following targets for the main outputs of each development centre: 1) ensure pedagogical and methodological support to at least 50 teachers from the region per year; 2) provide consultation to at least 50 students with special needs (or their legal representatives) per year; and 3) organise at least two informative events per year on inclusive education and ensure that highly qualified staff is involved in consultations and information events (EC, 2016c). Also, with the support of the European Regional Development Fund, Latvia modernised the infrastructure of education institutions for all educational tracks, including adjusting premises for those with functional disorders. All 59 special education schools were modernised and adjusted as part of these efforts.

- **Progress or impact:** National sources indicate that Latvia offers two trends in special education, depending on the child's condition and abilities: 1) special education institutions for children with severe mental and physical disabilities; or 2) within mainstream schools, in either special education classes or special education programmes in regular classes (OECD, 2016c). In 2015/16, 51% of students with special needs were in mainstream schools (in both general education and special education classes). In 2015, Latvia was commended by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for its ongoing dedication to ensuring the rights of people with disabilities (OHCHR, 2017). In particular, the Latvian

Government was recognised for its efforts to provide inclusive education to students with special education needs.

In Latvia, students at risk of social exclusion due to their poor financial or social situation are eligible to receive a scholarship for successful learning in vocational education. From 2007 to 2013, this scholarship programme was funded by a contribution from the European Commission's European Social Fund (ESF). As the ESF did not renew the funding for its 2014-20 funding cycle, since 2015 the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science has increased the funding paid from the state budget for scholarships (Metis GmbH, Fondazione Brodolini and Panteia, 2016).

- **Progress or impact:** According to an evaluation of ESF funding in Latvia, between 2004 and 2012, the share of vocational education students increased from 26% to 39%. Data of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia show the share of students in vocational education (after the 9th grade) was 35.9% in 2011/12 and 36.6% in the 2016/17 school year. The ESF scholarships for VET led to an increase in enrolment and attendance in VET education and courses, a sign of its success. Between 2007 and 2013, 71 284 students had benefitted from a scholarship (67% of the total number of VET students). This was far more than the targeted 40 000 students. As a result of its success and since the scholarship programme did not continue beyond 2015, the state budget amount for VET scholarships was increased (Metis GmbH, Fondazione Brodolini and Panteia, 2016). Also, the OECD identified the need to increase the mean-tested scholarship to a level that allows students to concentrate on completing VET programmes and to make it compatible with state family benefits (OECD, 2017e). As of 2018, the government provides additional support, funded by EU structural funds, which allows families to receive both the family allowances and the VET stipend.

Latvia has implemented several policies to address early school leaving. A 2011 regulation allows educational institutions to inform parents, municipal or state institutions if a student is not attending school without an appropriate reason. It also promotes the accounting of compulsory school age children who are not registered in any education institution. The Education Development Guidelines 2014-20 aim to reduce the number of early school leavers through, for example, a 2017 ESF project that supports students in general education institutions (Grades 5-12) and vocational education students (Years 1-4). Students at risk get individual support (such as compensation for public transport expenses, consultations and support by specialists). A prevention system has also been developed. The overall goal is to have systematic support implemented in 665 education institutions by 2022. In addition, the measures of the 2016 National Reform Programme also address reducing early school leaving by, for example, improving career guidance to students and quality assurance in general and vocational education (EC, 2016d). Initially, the target of the National Reform Programme of Latvia was to reduce the share of early school leavers (aged 18-24) to 13.4% by 2020 (Government of Latvia, 2017).

- **Progress or impact:** Overall, the early school leaving rate has been decreasing in recent years, from as high as 15.5% in 2008 (Eurostat, 2016). The early school leaving rate of those aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training has risen slightly, from 8.5% in 2014 to 10% in 2016, but it remains below the EU average of 10.7% in 2016 and has reached the Europe 2020 target of 10% (Eurostat, 2016; EC, 2017f). Disparities remain between genders and rural and urban areas (EC, 2017f).

The reform of vocational education curricula (2008-20) in Latvia aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of vocational education in accordance with the needs of the economy. Latvia is currently promoting sectoral qualifications structures and is restructuring the vocational educational curricula. Overall, it will develop or restructure occupational standards and qualification requirements to facilitate outcomes-based VET programmes, enhance the examination system and improve assessment of knowledge, skills and competences acquired beyond the formal education system. In 2016, Latvia made amendments to the state vocational secondary education standard to introduce a technical approach to general subjects. These measures aim to reduce contradictions

between general subjects in general secondary education and vocational secondary education, as well as to strengthen STEM subjects in vocational education.

- **Progress or impact:** According to Latvia's survey responses regarding the reform of vocational education curricula (2008-20), the government has updated 80 out of 240 occupational standards and basic qualification requirements, has introduced a third of modular programmes and has formulated 13% of the examination content.

In 2015, to further strengthen the quality assurance of the higher education system, Latvia passed a regulation to transfer the function of accreditation and licensing to the Academic Information Centre (AIC), which has established the Quality Agency for Higher Education to carry out these functions in Latvia. The AIC ensures licensing and accreditation of study programmes and monitoring and evaluation of their quality (EC, 2017f). The Centre intends to be included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education by 2018, before the next large accreditation round scheduled for 2019 (EC, 2016d). The overall budget was set at EUR 1.5 million for capacity building with a contribution of EUR 1.27 million from the European Structural and Investment Funds (Government of Latvia, 2015).

- **Progress or impact:** This is part of the World Bank's evaluation of internal governance, funding systems and human resources policies of higher education institutions. The World Bank will make recommendations for the design of structural fund programmes, which then may allow for more qualitative tertiary education in the future. The World Bank study is to be completed in April 2018 (EC, 2017g).

Latvia is working on its higher education system to promote conformity with labour market needs (including STEM) and employability of students. This is primarily being done by modernising the technical base of higher education institutions and making more effective use of resources. Financial support is provided by EU funds from 2014 to 2020 for the promotion of appropriate and modern study environments for STEM subjects and the development of joint doctoral study programmes and study programmes in the EU languages. The Latvian Government also recognises the importance of reducing the fragmentation of study programmes, promoting the consolidation of resources and developing joint study programmes and strategic specialisation of higher education institutions.

- **Progress or impact** In order to introduce the new competence-based education standard, a total of five computer science programme pilot projects were offered to schools for trial during the 2015/16 school year, and 157 schools participated. The pilot project on computer science was successful for all participating schools during the first academic year and stimulated significant interest among pupils and teachers. The launch and implementation of the computer science education programme is supported both financially and in terms of organisation by Foundation IT Education Fund with the international company Accenture (Latvian branch). Within this project, a portal, Start(it), was created that provides learning and methodological material for each class that can be used by any education institution. The computer science programme will be implemented in all schools during the 2018/19 school year (Government of Latvia, 2017).

In 2013, Latvia began participating in the Youth Guarantee to provide free training opportunities in more than 90 different careers to young people until 2018. Since 2014, it has implemented various initiatives to target young people, particularly NEETs age 15-24. Youth registered with the State Employment Agency (SEA) and working with a counsellor or another specialist can learn more about their strengths and relevant employment opportunities based on their individual profiles. A State Education Development Agency (SEDA) project offers short vocational education programmes (1-1.5 years) that give young people the opportunity to acquire qualifications in 68 professions. KNOW and DO, a project of the Agency for International Programmes for Youth 2014 aims to develop the skills of socially at-risk young people and to facilitate their involvement in education and/or vocational learning, Youth Guarantee activities,

active employment, or preventive unemployment reduction measures provided by SEDA or in non-governmental organisations or youth centres. The total 2014-18 total funding amounts to EUR 72.9 million, primarily financed by the ESF and the Youth Employment Initiative. Funding for the Youth Employment Initiative will continue until the end of 2018 (Government of Latvia, 2017).

- **Progress or impact:** In its most recent progress report submitted to the EC, Latvia reported that from 2014 to 2016, all youths aged 15-29 that obtained registered unemployed status from the SEA in Latvia (111 000) received support as a part of the Youth Guarantee programme. During the same period, 92 400 youths were engaged in the employment-seeking support measures within the Youth Guarantee programme, and 65 000 youths found employment (58% of all the unemployed youths registered with the SEA). Also, between 2014 and 2016, of all the participants in the Youth Guarantee programme aged 15-24 (60 890), 27% (14 932) found employment within the first four months from the date they received unemployment status or submitted application to Youth Guarantee, and 20% (12 429) started training (Government of Latvia, 2017). Eurostat data also shows positive results attributed to this: the share of young NEETs decreased significantly (to 13.8 % in 2017, below the EU average of 14.7%) (Eurostat, 2018). The Latvian Government acknowledges, however, that challenges persist. The programme has been slow to start up, and its visibility across the target group remains low. The government intends to tackle these challenges by reaching out to young NEETs who are not registered at the public employment service. Support measures are also being provided to imprisoned youth, allowing them to acquire skills and competences that are necessary for successful employment.

As part of its Internationalisation Strategy (2015), Latvia aims to attract academic personnel from abroad. For example, it plans to develop joint programmes in the EU languages and joint doctoral programmes. The 2015 Erasmus+ activity for International mobility of students and personnel includes mobility activities of 3-12 months for students, and from five days to two months for academic and general personnel of higher-education institutions. To improve visibility and promote Latvian higher education abroad, the government has set up websites (www.studyinlatvia.eu and www.studyinlatvia.lv), and Latvia is represented at different venues abroad designed to attract potential foreign students

- **Progress or impact:** In 2016/17, 8 137 foreign students were in Latvia, and 1 738 Latvian students participated in exchange programmes. Twelve joint programmes were developed with higher education institutions from abroad, and the number of foreign academic personnel working in Latvia increased to 244. EC evidence indicates that in 2016, the share of foreign-born graduates of tertiary education (62.4%) was much higher than the share of native-born graduates, which was (42%), compared to the EU averages of 35.3% of foreign-born graduates of tertiary education and 39.9% of native-born graduates) (EC, 2017f).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other counties

- Latvia's Action Plan for 2016-20 on Development of Adult Education Provision and its Governance Model, financially supported by the ESF, aims to increase Latvia's participation rate in adult education from 5.7% in 2015 to 15% by 2020. As part of the Action Plan, vocational education will become a strategic priority in the provision of adult education. The Governance Model establishes lines for a division of functions, exchange of information and regular communication among involved stakeholders, to eliminate the existing fragmentation of current adult education. An Adult Education Governance Council, a consultative inter-sectoral body, has been established to ensure implementation of the Action Plan. The Council includes representatives from different ministries within the government and other social actors. For the set period, the budget allocation is EUR 27 million (CEDEFOP, 2016). The rate of adult participation in learning increased to 7.3% in 2016. The ESF project started operation in 2017, aiming to have around 36 000 adult participants of which 12 000 are anticipated to be low-qualified adults (EC, 2017f).

Mexico

Context

In PISA 2015, Mexico performs below the OECD average in science (416 score points), reading (423 score points) and mathematics (408 score points). Mexico has had an increase in mathematics performance across PISA cycles, while reading and science performance have remained stable, with an average score change of 1.7 score points. This was achieved while nearly 600 000 new 15-year-old students from disadvantaged backgrounds joined lower and upper secondary education in 2015.

The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Socio-economic status had lower-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 10.9% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). This is also because in Mexico, the most advantaged students perform below their peers with similar socio-economic background across OECD countries (an average of 446 score points for the most advantaged Mexican students, compared to 540 score points for their peers in other OECD countries on average). Boys outperform girls in science by an average of 8 score points, above the OECD average. Immigrant students make up 1.2% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Mexico, a proportion which is among the lowest in the OECD (OECD average: 12.5%).

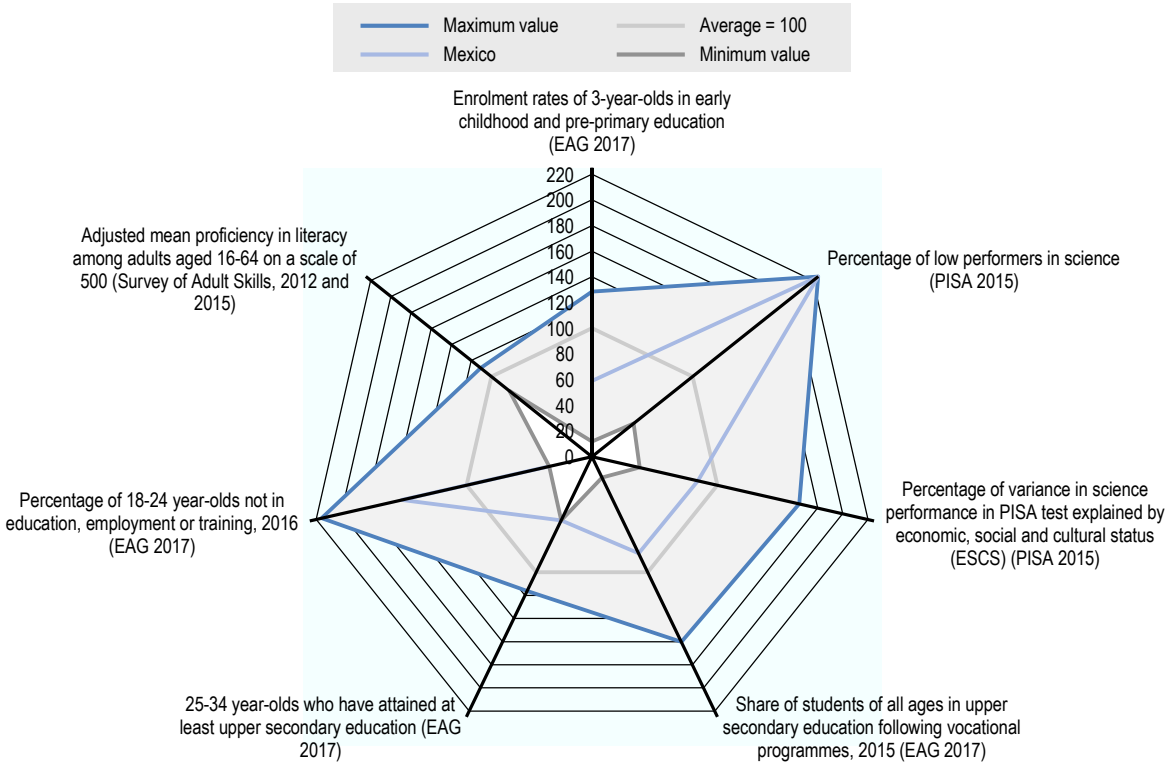
Over the past decade, Mexico has caught up in terms of enrolment in ECEC for 4-year-olds. Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC increased to 45.8% in 2015, compared to 40% in 2014, but remained lower than the OECD average in 2015, at 45.8% (OECD average: 77.8%). Pre-primary education (*educación preescolar*) typically begins at age 3 and lasts for three years. Both education-only and integrated education and care pre-primary programmes exist nationally, and separate formal curricula are in place for ECEC and pre-primary education, which are delivered by qualified teachers. Compulsory education in Mexico begins at age 3 and ends at age 17, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 15, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education students in Mexico can go through one of three streams, an academic stream (*Bachillerato general*), a technical vocational stream (*técnico profesional*), and a stream which combines both general and vocational education. All three streams lead to the award of an upper secondary diploma (*certificado*).

VET in Mexico (*Educación Profesional Técnica*) plays an important social role by providing learning opportunities to students at risk of dropping out. The VET system at secondary level includes various initiatives, such as mobile training units (*unidades móviles*) for remote regions where learning opportunities are fewer, while VET at post-secondary level is provided through short-duration courses in specialised technical professional institutes. Mexico has been undertaking extensive efforts to boost VET, but coverage in Mexico remains below the OECD average.

The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Mexico is among the highest in the OECD, with an attainment rate of 25.8% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are among the highest in the OECD, at 23.2% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is among the lowest in the OECD, at 21.8% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of

43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are slightly lower than the OECD average. In 2016, 79.9% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.17. Selected indicators compared with the average: Mexico



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

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Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.17. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Mexico (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	OECD evidence shows that Mexico has a challenge and priority to improve the overall quality and equity of education. Access to quality education remains closely linked to students' socio-economic background, but overall student performance remains low. In 2015, dropout rates were at almost 50%, with the majority of those students stating a lack of interest in schooling as the main reason for dropping out. The number of students graduating from secondary school also needs to be increased. [2015]	Gender inequalities in labour market participation also remain high, as found by OECD evidence. The large increase in demand for low-skilled workers for manufacturing activities in recent years increased the opportunity cost of staying in school and contributed to the low graduation rates Mexico is currently experiencing. [2015]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	According to Mexico's reports, performance and completion gaps persist, especially for Indigenous students and students with low socio-economic status. [2013; 2016-17]	Challenges in performance and completion gaps persist, as reported by Mexico. [2013; 2016-17]

Note: 1. See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- Disadvantaged students also have access to scholarships offered by the government, through the National Scholarship Programme (*Programa Nacional de Becas*, 2014). This programme acts as an umbrella for different scholarship programmes that cover primary, secondary and tertiary education. During 2016/17, the programme catered to about 30% of students in public schools, providing around 7.7 million scholarships of different types. In 2014, the government developed an online platform where users can find information on over 200 different scholarships.
- In 2017, Mexico introduced the New Educational Model for Compulsory Education: Educating for freedom and creativity (*Modelo Educativo para la Educación Obligatoria: Educar para la libertad y la creatividad*). The proposal was shared with the public between 2014 and 2016 through 18 consultation forums. It received over 300 000 comments and suggestions from different stakeholders, including teachers, parents and entrepreneurs. In 2017, Mexico produced the Roadmap for the Implementation of the Education Model (*Ruta para la implementación del Modelo Educativo*), which aims to establish and clarify the next steps for its implementation.
- Mexico made upper secondary education compulsory in 2012, with the initial goal of attaining universal coverage by 2022. Enrolment rates have already increased, from 65.9% (2012-13) to 76.6% for the 2016/17 school year, according to national data. To encourage students to stay in upper secondary and reduce the risk of social exclusion, the Movement against School Dropout (*Movimiento Contra el Abandono Escolar*) (2013/14) focuses on information dissemination, participatory planning and community outreach.
- Constructing Yourself (*Construye T*, 2008) aims to foster the development of social and emotional skills in upper secondary public schools. It includes teacher training, support to prepare a diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses, a

school project to respond to their challenges and provide guidance. The Secretariat of Public Education has implemented this programme in almost 33% of schools, assisted by UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO and 39 NGOs. Over 20 000 teachers and principals have received capacity-building training since 2013 (*Subsecretaría de Educación Media Superior*, 2014).

- Mexico has been strengthening the dual training system, which was fully introduced in 2014. In 2016/17, over 2 939 students, 482 firms and 149 schools participated in the programme. SEP is also increasing the supply of training and vocational programmes (e.g. National College of Technical Education [*Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica,* CONALEP, *Bécate, Modelo de Emprendedores de Educación Media Superior*), while at the same time making them more relevant by expanding the involvement of the private sector, increasing the number of apprenticeships in each company and strengthening the vocational component of this model. The National Productivity Committee has led efforts to facilitate the immersion of students in the labour market and the development of skills required by productive sectors and major clusters, such as the aerospace and automotive industry, through technological and polytechnic institutes that provide vocational training.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

New Zealand

Context

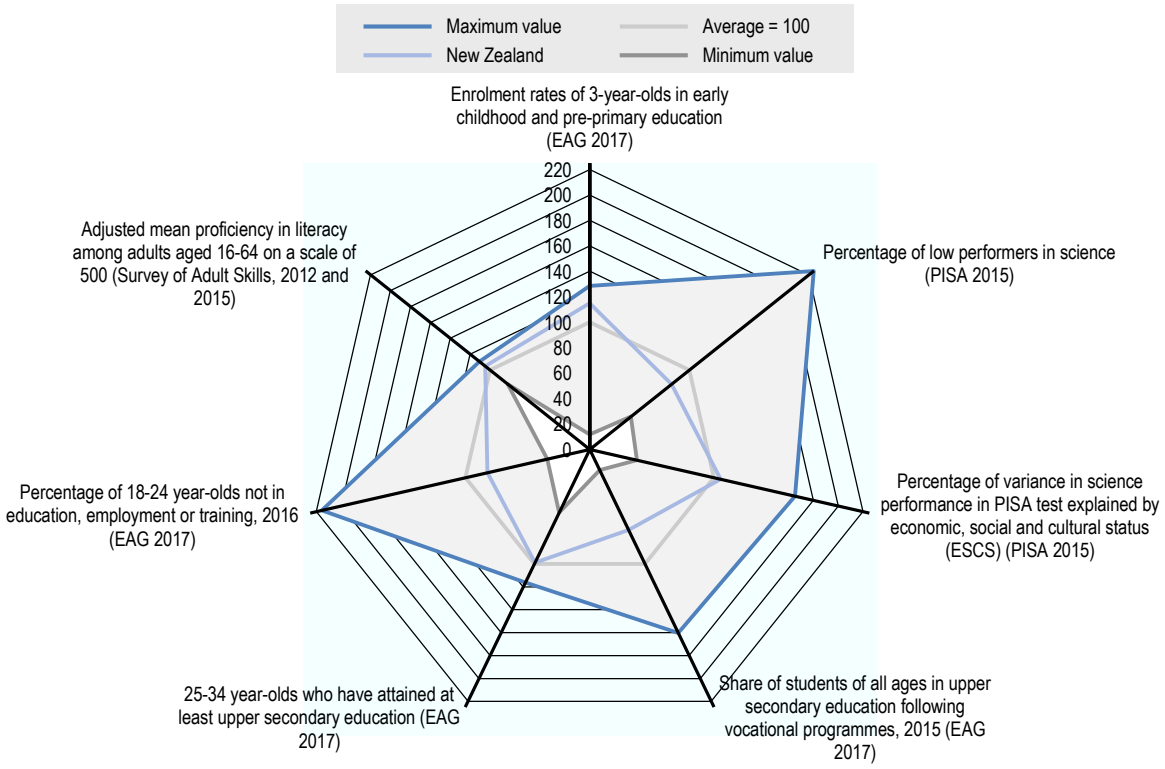
New Zealand scored among the highest in the OECD in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 513 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science has declined across PISA cycles by 17 points between PISA 2006 and PISA 2015, and performance in reading and mathematics has also decreased. Socio-economic status had a higher-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 13.6% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 27.1% of the student population of 15-year-olds in New Zealand, a proportion which is among the highest in the OECD (OECD average: 12.5%). Unlike many OECD countries, New Zealand had no significant performance gap in PISA 2015 between immigrant and non-immigrant students in science, with a score difference of only 6 points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC and pre-primary education was higher than the OECD average in 2015, at 89.4%, (OECD average: 77.8%). Children typically begin early childhood education at age 3, in a programme that lasts two years. A national set of standards for the provision of education and care (*Te Whāriki*) is in place for 0-5 year-olds. Education-only programmes do not exist nationally. Integrated programmes do exist nationally and have a formal curriculum in place that is delivered by qualified teachers. Compulsory education begins at age 6 and ends at age 16, similar to the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. At age 16 (Year 11), students have flexibility to choose subjects of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) based on their interest and ability. Achieving NCEA 3 level of qualifications provides access to post-secondary or tertiary education, as does passing exams or direct entry after age 21.

VET offers various options in post-compulsory education. The New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) allows students to earn credits towards vocational qualifications in both schooling and tertiary contexts. Upper secondary students can explore vocational courses in an integrated general academic programme. Students in tertiary education can study vocational programmes at 16 institutes of technology and polytechnics, three Māori tertiary institutions (*wānanga*), and private training establishments.

In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in New Zealand were among the highest in the OECD, at 281 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was lower than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment is among the highest in the OECD, with an attainment rate of 23.4% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 12.6%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is close to the OECD average, at 43.4% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are higher than the OECD average. In 2016, 86.2% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.18. Selected indicators compared with the average: New Zealand



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733125

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.18. Evolution of key education policy priorities, New Zealand (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD has identified that education outcomes for individuals of disadvantaged groups are still lagging behind: large performance and completion gaps persist within the student population, according to gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity. [2015]	With an increased demand for higher skills, the OECD has identified a need to continuously upskill the labour force, facilitating the acquisition of skills in demand in the labour market and, if necessary, addressing any adverse distributional consequences that may result from technical progress, in order to help New Zealanders adjust to labour market changes. [2017]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	As reported by New Zealand, funding of ECEC is not always matched to the size of the educational challenge in different schools and services. Also, current funding systems are complex and have developed in ad hoc ways over time, focusing on inputs to the education system rather than educational outcomes. [2016-17]	New Zealand has reported achieving better structured pathways to further education, training and employment, as a policy priority, which is part of the effort on centralising student pathways. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

In New Zealand, the Māori-medium education sector was established in the 1980s by Māori *whānau* (families) and communities to help preserve *Te reo Māori*, an official language of New Zealand, and Māori culture. Māori-medium education is provided in and through the Māori language 51-100% of the time. It is available from early childhood education in *kōhanga reo* through to tertiary level in *wānanga*.

- **Progress or impact:** National sources report that as of 2017, there were 19 438 students enrolled in Māori-medium education, representing 2.4% of the total school population. This number was an increase of 0.1 percentage points over the previous year. Of the students who were involved in Māori-medium education, 97.7% identified as Māori, and 57.6% attended a school where all students were enrolled in Māori medium. These students were enrolled in one of the 277 schools affiliated with the programme in 2017. Students enrolled in Māori-medium education who successfully complete upper secondary school gain university entrance equal to or in higher proportions than the general school population. Students in Māori-medium education also have strong National Certificate of Educational Attainment (NCEA) achievement. In 2016, 79.2% of school leavers from Māori medium left with NCEA level 2 or above. This is on par with all students in the total school population (80.3% of these school leavers left with NCEA level 2 in 2016), unlike Māori students in English medium who typically achieve 15-20 percentage points lower (66.1% of these school leavers left with NCEA level 2 in 2016). Only 5.7% of all Māori secondary students participated in *wharekura*, or Māori-medium secondary schooling in 2017. Māori medium also has higher retention rates of senior secondary students. In 2016, 77.6% of Māori school leavers from Māori medium stayed in school until their 17th birthday, compared to 70.9% of Māori school leavers nationally. Research shows that retention at senior secondary school is an important factor towards educational achievement and a range of other positive life outcomes.

Between 2013 and 2017, the Pasifika Education Plan in New Zealand sought to personalise all the work of the Ministry of Education and Education Partner Agencies to Pasifika learners. The plan, set for an initial five years, aims to increase accountability for Pasifika students' success by addressing underperformance and making improvements in practice, through increased use of achievement information as part of more effective community engagement. Progress is monitored annually.

- **Progress or impact:** There has been a significant increase in the number of Pasifika children and students who are participating, engaging and achieving well in education since the Plan's implementation. The national

data shows 1.1% more new entrant students in early childhood education in 2016 (7 467 students) than in 2015. Also, in 2016, the proportion of Pasifika children who participated in ECEC prior to starting school rose to 92.9%, a 1.1% increase from the year before. More students are also achieving key secondary school qualifications. In 2016, Pasifika students in compulsory education Years 1-8 achieved the National Standard for reading (66%), mathematics (62.7%) and writing (60.5%). Also in 2016, the proportion of Pasifika 18-year-olds who attained NCEA Level 2 or above was 78.7%, compared to 77.6% the year before. More students are also enrolling in tertiary education. The number of domestic Pasifika students studying at degree level or higher rose from 29 800 in 2008 to 34 800 in 2014 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017a). Despite these positive increases, responses to the EPO Survey 2016-17 indicate that the pace of progress could be faster for some Pasifika students. For example, Pasifika students are achieving the key secondary school qualification, NCEA Level 2, at 5.7 percentage points lower than the national average.

The Achievement Retention Transitions programme was implemented between 2013 and 2017 as part of New Zealand's Youth Guarantee (2010). The initiative collaborates with local secondary schools to identify young people at risk of not achieving National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) level 2. There was a particular focus on Māori and Pasifika students. The initiative also aimed to generate higher levels of NCEA achievement and support the government's Better Public Services target of 85% of 18 year-olds achieving NCEA level 2 or equivalent by 2017.

- **Progress or impact:** The initiative built on a 2012 pilot programme that led to significant improvement in the numbers of students achieving NCEA level 2. While this specific initiative had not been evaluated, the overall estimations for 2016 were positive, as the NCEA level 2 attainment rate for all 18-year-olds was expected to increase to 85.5% (a 10.9% increase since 2011), which is above the Better Public Service target of 85% by 2017. In addition, the achievement rates of Māori students (66.5%) and Pasifika (74.7%) students had risen in 2016 with the highest increase among Māori students (3.3 percentage points) since 2015 followed by Pasifika students (0.6 percentage points) (Education Counts, 2018).

The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA, 2009) covers levels 1 to 3 of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF). At secondary school, students work towards one of these three qualifications. After secondary school, students who want to continue at the tertiary level can choose from a number of education options, ranging from universities to polytechnics, private training establishments, industry training organisations and further learning on the job. Students need to obtain NCEA level 2 or its equivalent to continue studying at higher levels.

- **Progress or impact:** Several reviews of aspects of the NZQF were undertaken from 2011 to 2016 that aimed to reduce duplication, ensure qualifications are relevant and fit-for-purpose, and make it easier for students to transfer between providers offering programmes towards the same New Zealand qualification. As pointed out by New Zealand in the EPO Survey 2016-17, the reviews led to an overall 74% reduction in the number of qualifications at levels 1-6 (measured at the approval-to-develop stage). Previous national and provider-developed qualifications at levels 1-6 are being replaced with new qualifications.

In New Zealand, Vocational Pathways, part of the Youth Guarantee set of initiatives, were launched in 2010. They provide a framework for students to show how their learning and achievement is valued in the workplace, by aligning learning to the skills needed for six broad industry areas. New Zealand has also introduced more information tools, including the Occupation Outlook, which contains information on education, employment and income for 60 key occupations, as well as FindMyPath, which helps students plan employment and qualification pathways.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2013 Youth Guarantee policy monitoring report for 2010-12 states that Vocational Pathways allow students, education providers and employers to visualise the importance of their education to the job market and future studies (Earle, 2013). By 2013, five pathways were ready to be put into practice the following year (Earle, 2013). Since 2014 there have been six pathways: construction and infrastructure; manufacturing and technology; primary; service industries; social and community services; and creative industries. Further online tools have been added, including Career Quest and Skill Matcher. The Vocational Pathways are renewed every year (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017b).

In New Zealand, several programmes are operating as part of the Youth Guarantee initiatives that aim to improve the transition from education to the labour market. Among these are the Secondary-Tertiary Programmes or Trade Academies (2009) (STPs), which provide senior secondary school students with the opportunity to combine study at school with study in tertiary settings and/or in the workplace. STPs target upper secondary students interested in careers in trades or technology by collaborating with schools, tertiary institutions, industry training organisations and employers. Students are enrolled in school full time, but typically spend three days per week at school and two days at a tertiary provider, doing an integrated learning programme towards NCEA level 2, which is often seen as a requirement for entry-level jobs (see NZQA, 2017), and industry-related certificates.

- **Progress or impact:** The 2015 STP examination report found that the programmes aid in maintaining students in learning and achieving. More than 80% of the students who graduated from the programme in 2013, had an attendance rate of 80% or more, obtained a minimum of NCEA level 2, and successfully transferred from secondary school. Aspects for improvement include developing an integrated STP curriculum and advancing the partnerships (ERO, 2015). The 2014 Youth Guarantee Monitoring Report, which monitored the education and employment outcomes of participants in programmes including the STPs, also found that a higher share of participants attained NCEA level 2 or equivalent than a group of non-participants with similar demographic and educational backgrounds. The programme aided in the process of employment. It also had a great effect on helping young people to avoid become NEETs at the beginning, and the effect was maintained for STPs one to two years after programme completion. As of 2016, STPs provided 6 190 available places for students, a tenfold increase since 2011 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017c).

The 2014-19 Tertiary Education Strategy in New Zealand and the previous 2010-15 Tertiary Education Strategy help to guide tertiary education investment decisions. Priority areas in the 2014-19 strategy remained boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika students and strengthening research-based institutions. The 2010-15 strategy focused on increasing the number of young people moving successfully from school into tertiary education and increasing the number of people under 25 who achieve national qualifications at level 4 and above. The 2014-19 strategy covers these policy areas by focusing further on increasing education outcomes by getting at-risk young people into a career. Compared to the 2010-15 strategy, its focus has moved from improving literacy, language and numeracy skills outcomes in lower-level study to improving adult literacy and numeracy. The 2010-15 priority area of improving educational and financial performance of providers was dropped, but there are two new policy areas: 1) delivering skills for industry so that students can smoothly transfer to the labour market; and 2) increasing international connections (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017d; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2013).

- **Progress or impact:** The 2017 evaluation and monitoring report specifies achievements and challenges on the six priority areas up to 2015. On Priority 1 (delivering skills for industry), the number of apprenticeships has increased through the New Zealand Apprenticeship scheme. In 2015, 42 000 students took part in an apprenticeship, with the government aiming to increase the number to 50 000 by 2020. Also, the overall number of NEETs aged 15-19 dropped to 7% in 2015 from 8% in 2014, while the rate of NEETs aged 20-24 stayed at 18%. Furthermore, the share of 18-year-olds who graduated with NZQF level 2 qualifications increased by 4.7% from 2013 to 2015, with a completion rate of 83.3% in 2015. Also, the share of 25-34 year-olds, with a level 4 qualification and above rose from 53.6% in 2013 to 57.1% in 2016. Overall completion rates at level 4 and above have increased for Māori and Pasifika students. But some challenges remain. For example, the overall percentage of those with a bachelor degree remains below the general population (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017d).

New Zealand's Youth Guarantee (2010) also focuses on improving transitions. Overall, it includes a suite of initiatives developed and progressively implemented since 2010, mainly to provide a wider range of learning opportunities, better use of the education network and clearer pathways from school to work and further study. Some specific

programmes target students who are at risk of not achieving in school or making poor transitions after leaving school or those interested in VET.

- **Progress or impact:** The overall participation rate of 18-year-olds in Youth Guarantee programmes was 16.3% in 2014. Of this, 12.1% were in fee-free places and 4.9% were in Secondary-Tertiary Programmes. From 2011 to 2014, the overall participation rate increased by 5.3% (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2016). As can be seen in the policies above regarding VET and tertiary education, the different Youth Guarantee programmes aid in the transition from education to the labour market

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- Service Academies (2009) is an initiative with military-style programmes to encourage students with limited success at school to stay in education and training or enter the labour market. The 2011 evaluation of the Service Academies programme found that the majority of the academies supplied high-quality education and support to participating students. Students' overall achievements improved due to the programme. Initial shortcomings were overcome by guaranteeing students that the schooling was included in their credits for the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (New Zealand Education Review Office, 2011).

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Norway

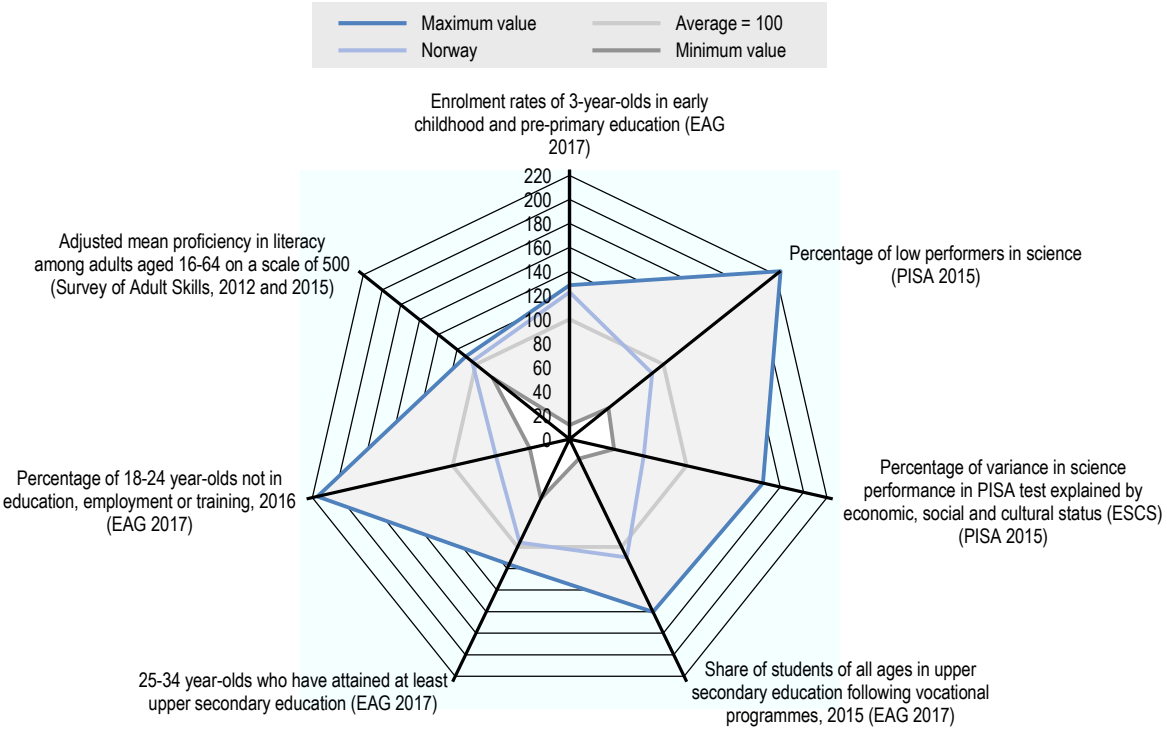
Context

Norway scored higher than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 498 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of 3.1 score points, while performance in reading and mathematics has also stayed the same. Socio-economic status had one of the lowest impacts in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 8.2% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 12% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Norway, close to the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are slightly higher than the OECD average. Immigrant students scored on average 35 score points lower than native students in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 points.

Education and care are seen as integrated in the national pedagogical framework in Norway. Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was among the highest in the OECD in 2015, at 95.5% (OECD average: 77.8%). Kindergarten (*Barnehage*) covers the age span of 0-5 years, and children typically attend beginning at age 1, when they become entitled to a place. Kindergartens have a formal curriculum framework in place that is delivered by qualified teachers and assistants (Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergarten). Compulsory education in Norway begins at age 6 and ends at age 16, similar to the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. A comprehensive upper secondary system combines academic education and vocational training, offering students three general academic programmes and nine vocational programmes. After two years of vocational studies, or after completing the four-year vocational studies programme, students can enter university if they complete a supplementary year.

The majority of students enter vocational upper secondary education (53% in 2011, compared to the OECD average of 44%), but completion rates are below the OECD average. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Norway were higher than the OECD average, at 278 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was higher than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Norway is higher than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 17.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 9.7% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is higher than the OECD average, at 48.6% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are higher than the OECD average. In 2016, 86.6% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.19. Selected indicators compared with the average: Norway



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733144

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.19. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Norway (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD identified a need to improve quality at all levels of education and to ensure that the resources invested in student learning can be matched by the expected student outcomes. Also, Norwegian adolescents do not feel sufficiently engaged with learning in schools. Studies have shown that there is a decline in student motivation in lower secondary schools. According to PISA 2009 results, too many students are still entering lower secondary with weak basic skills and decreased motivation for learning. [2010; 2016]	According to OECD evidence, Norway also needs to strengthen the link between skills development and economic growth. Reorganising the higher education system in Norway is also considered a policy priority by the OECD. [2016]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Norway reported its intention to continue addressing challenges related to promoting social equity and reducing barriers to access to kindergarten. [2013; 2016-17]	Norway reported that challenges remain in guaranteeing that students finish upper secondary education and in promoting equity while stimulating student motivation and excellence. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Norway extended the legal right to a place in ECEC from age 1 in 2009. This implies that a child's right to a kindergarten place is independent of the parents' labour-force participation and the child is to be granted access to a place as well as quality education (OECD, 2015b). In addition, a new regulation and a programme of subsidies for parental fees were implemented in 2015 and 2016 to prevent financial burdens for families whose children would otherwise be unable to participate in education at this level (Norway Ministry of Education and Research, 2014). In particular, the government hopes that these measures will help to increase the proportion of minority-language children attending kindergarten, as their participation rate in ECEC lags behind that of students who are native speakers.

- **Progress or impact:** In 2015, the participation gap in kindergarten remained between minority-language children and children who are native speakers, but the gap had almost disappeared for children by age 5. The impact of the programme for parental fees is being closely monitored. Overall, the real costs paid by parents for kindergarten had been significantly reduced in 2015 compared to a decade ago (OECD, 2015b). The proportion of childcare operating costs paid by parents decreased from 37% in 2002 to 15% in 2012. In addition, municipalities are legally required to offer reduced fees for siblings and to put in place additional subsidies for low-income families. In 2015, Norway implemented national measures to reduce fees. No families are to pay more than 6% of their yearly family income (limited by the nationally set maximum fee). From 2016 all 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds in low-income families (as defined in the state budget) have the right to 20 hours per week of free kindergarten.

In Norway, the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (2017), a regulation of the Kindergarten Act (2005), replaces the 2006 Framework Plan that prescribed a similar regulatory framework for kindergartens (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a). The current Framework Plan describes the transition from kindergarten to school and stipulates that kindergarten should accommodate the transition. In collaboration with schools, kindergartens are responsible for facilitating the transition of children from kindergarten to Year 1 of compulsory education and to after-

school groups, all in close collaboration with their families. Co-operation between kindergartens and schools is not regulated at the national level. It is managed by local authorities, in this case municipalities, and kindergarten owners (public and private) (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017b).

- **Progress or impact:** National evidence stated that the Framework Plan could be more specific on the content of school preparatory activities, by including social competence and communication, children's active participation and co-operation to a larger extent. It also identified a need for a good transition and coherence between kindergarten and school. Both assessments led to the revised Framework Plan implemented in 2017. Also, because co-operation between kindergartens and schools is regulated at the local level, it is expected that there will be differences in how this is managed and solved. This may result in unwanted local variations in quality and systems for transitions (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017a).

Norway's 2008 proposed pilot project on the Certificate of Practice Scheme (*Praksisbrev*) aims to reduce dropout in upper secondary education. In 2014, the scheme was developed into a permanent arrangement where, by law, the regional authorities (owners of upper secondary schools) are obliged to offer a Certificate of Practice. This certificate is a two-year practical education programme after which students can apply for an ordinary vocational education apprenticeship to obtain a VET certificate.

- **Progress or impact:** According to a 2008-11 evaluation, 49% of the students enrolled in this programme obtained an apprenticeship after completion, whereas only 29% of students who attended ordinary vocational upper secondary education succeeded in finding an apprenticeship (NIFU, 2011). Success factors of the programme include centring education around practical job experiences instead of school-focused education and providing participants with placements in companies, which increased their chances to move on to an apprenticeship afterwards (CEDEFOP, 2017c). Other important factors were evaluation of applicants to the programme before acceptance, proactive involvement of the schools in the programme, and the possibility of moving on to a trade or journeyman's certificate after completion of the certificate (CEDEFOP, 2017c).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The Homework Assistance programme (2006-08) tried out models and methods of homework assistance in primary and lower secondary school. Following an evaluation of the programme, a regulation to the Education Act was introduced (2010) that includes the obligation for municipalities to offer eight hours per week of homework assistance to students in Grades 1 to 4. In 2014, the regulation was extended to apply to all levels of compulsory school (Grades 1-10). The regulation aims to reduce the impact of parents' education on student achievement and enable more learning to take place at school. Practical implementation is up to the municipalities as school owners and also applies to private school owners.
- The Working Life Course (*Arbeidslivsfaget*, 2009) was piloted as a new subject in some lower secondary schools in 2009 and 2010. This practically oriented course aims to help students experience work life by developing products and services. It gives students an opportunity to explore their interest in vocational training and is seen as an alternative way to enhance academic motivation. The 2013 evaluation did not show evidence of increased student motivation, but the course became popular among students and teachers. Based on this and the evaluator's recommendation, the course was incorporated as a permanent part of the curriculum for lower secondary school (2016), as a subject schools can choose to offer as an alternative to a second foreign language or in-depth studies in mathematics or Norwegian. Since it was introduced, it has become increasingly popular.

Portugal

Context

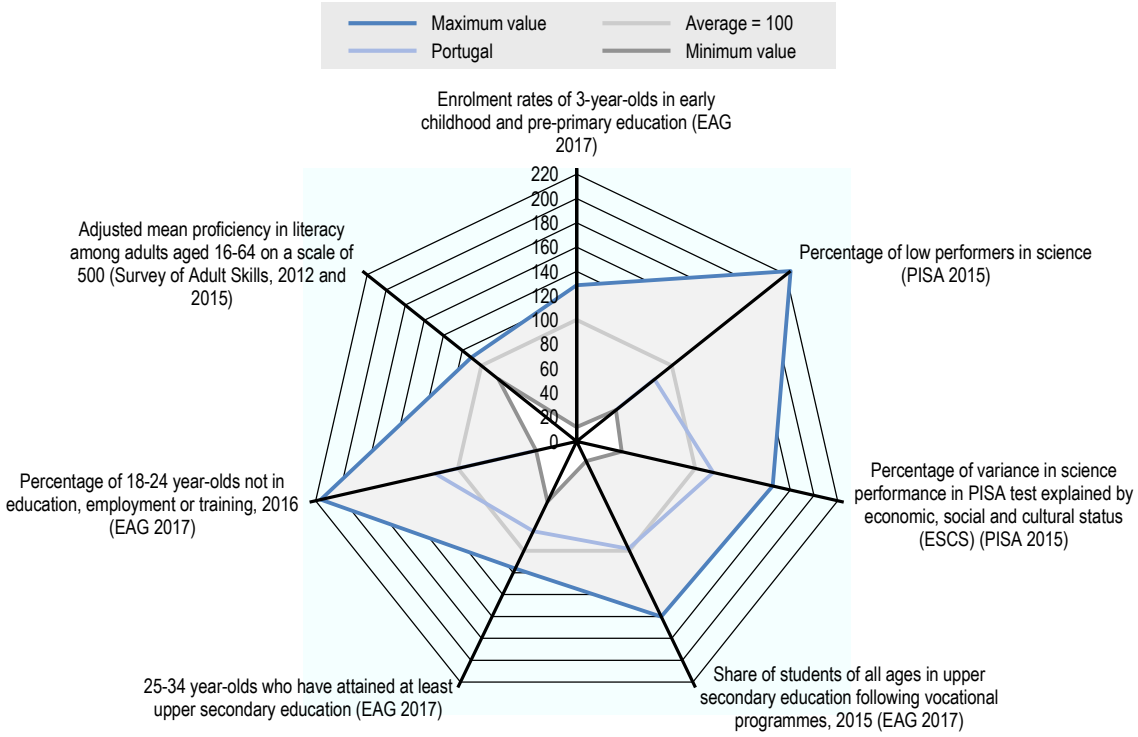
Portugal scored higher than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 501 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science has improved substantially across PISA cycles, with an average score change of 7.6 score points, and performance in reading and mathematics has also increased. Socio-economic status had a higher-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 14.9% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were higher than the OECD average in Portugal, with a difference between boys and girls of 10 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 7.3% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Portugal, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are lower than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 16 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Children can begin pre-primary education (*Educação pré-escolar*) between age 3 and age 5, and around 80% of children typically enrol at age 3. Pre-primary education lasts three years and follows the national Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-school Education. Compulsory education begins at age 6 and ends at age 18 or upon completion of upper secondary education, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways typically at age 15, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education lasts three years and offers a range of programmes, including science-humanities courses, technological courses, specialist artistic courses and a large choice of dual-certification vocational courses.

VET in upper secondary education is available for those who have completed at least nine years of schooling or equivalent training. VET programmes in upper secondary education play an important role in Portugal and are primarily school-based (non-dual) programmes offered in comprehensive public schools or specialised professional schools. The Vocational Training Centre network, governed by a national agency responsible for employment policies, provides apprenticeship programmes (with both theoretical and practical training) to assist young people under age 24 to find employment or continue their education. Transition pathways from VET programmes to tertiary education are available, although entrance into academic programmes is subject to the same requirements as for those enrolled in general programmes.

The proportion of the population aged 25-64 in Portugal with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment is higher than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 20.4% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are not employed or in further education or training) are higher than the OECD average, at 18.2%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The share of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is relatively low, at 35% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are similar to the OECD average. In 2016, 82.3% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.20. Selected indicators compared with the average: Portugal



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.
Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733163

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.20. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Portugal (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	OECD findings show that frequent grade repetition harms learning outcomes in Portugal and exacerbates inequalities. In Portugal, 31% of students had repeated a grade at least once by the age of 15 in 2015, compared to the OECD average of 12%. At the same time, more than 50% of socio-economically disadvantaged 15-year-olds reported having repeated a grade at least once, compared to the OECD average of 20%. Grade repetition is a strong predictor for early school dropout in Portugal. [2017]	According to OECD evidence, lower qualification levels remain a challenge, including for young adults, where the share of those who have completed upper secondary was the third-lowest in the OECD in 2015. Private returns to tertiary education are high, but in 2015 only 33% of young adults held a tertiary degree, compared to the OECD average of 42% (although this had risen to 35% by 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43%). Low levels of skills are an obstacle to higher productivity, and low skills also affect the well-being of Portuguese citizens and hinder reduction of income inequality, as higher skills are often a prerequisite for higher job quality and earnings opportunities. [2017]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Portugal reported that ensuring the completion of compulsory education, increasing the attainment rates in upper secondary and tertiary education, and establishing an overall high-quality, inclusive education system remain policy priorities. [2013; 2016-17]	In the 2016-17 EPO Survey, Portugal reported new measures on two challenges which had been ongoing for several years: 1) the extension of compulsory schooling, involving different educational offers and paths at the upper secondary level, which brings about challenges such as defining the curriculum, key skills and the transitions between education stages; and 2) reskilling initiatives aiming to combat the high rate of youth unemployment. [2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

Portugal has introduced a comprehensive national strategy with a focus on combating school failure and grade repetition, the National Programme to Promote Educational Success (*Plano Nacional de Promoção do Sucesso Escolar*, PNPSE, 2016). The Plan takes a preventive approach, promoting academic success and the improvement of learning, particularly in the early years of schooling. It supports schools to develop improvement plans, based on the principle that educational communities best understand their contexts, difficulties and capabilities and are better prepared to design plans for strategic action. The Plan also aims to examine individual students' competences more comprehensively across a range of disciplines, including the introduction of a basic student profile, and to support students who have already repeated grades through additional tutoring. School autonomy is also reinforced, especially on pedagogic issues, through the Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy programme.

- **Progress or impact:** The coverage of the PNPSE is high, with 663 schools developing a strategic plan around the framework for their schools. The PNPSE, combined with the schools that are already participating in similar activities through the Third Generation of the Education Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP3), now covers almost 99% of Portugal's 811 schools. According to a recent European Commission report, the success of the plan in raising performance will depend on capacity to provide technical support and ensure regular monitoring of actions and overall coherence of the different projects (EC, 2017h). In addition, the Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy programme is also currently active in 235 schools.

Portugal's National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (*Estratégia Nacional para a Integração das Comunidades Ciganas*, ENICC, 2013-20) aims to ensure access of children from Roma communities to pre-primary education, as well as to

increase their completion of compulsory education and access to tertiary education. In 2013, the Ministry of Education created a database of students from itinerant families to monitor school attendance and help ensure completion of compulsory education. The strategy has been implemented following collaboration between the High Commissioner for Migration (*Alto Comissariado para as Migrações*, ACM), the Ministry of Education, Civil Society organisations, Roma communities and experts. An Advisory Group for Roma Communities was created to monitor this Strategy.

- **Progress or impact:** As ENICC national co-ordinator, the ACM produced a report to evaluate implementation of this plan in 2013-14. The strategy's actions revolve around five axes. The report found that, during the period analysed, the overall execution rate of actions associated with ENICC was 81%, including 59% for transversal initiatives, 23% for education, 10% for employment and training, 6% for housing and less than 1% for the health axis. The report identified budgetary and legal issues, including concerns about the collection of specific information on Roma communities and the need to involve a wide range of public and private actors in order to achieve the various priorities in each axis. This led the ACM to create the "FAPE - ENICC Support Fund" which will, through a line of project financing, highlight the priorities set out in the plan. The first year of implementation of the FAPE in 2015 aimed to improve the success of some of the priorities in 2013-14 (High Commissioner for Migration and Government of Portugal, 2014).

Portugal has developed one of the most prominent and stable educational policies covering territorial intervention among OECD countries. Originally designed in 1996, with further editions in 2006 and 2012, the Third generation of the Education Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP3, 2012) aims to promote educational success and reduce early school leaving rates within geographical areas in the country with higher-than-average socially disadvantaged populations. While its main principles, goals and methodologies have remained the same since the first edition, the scope of the recent generation of the policy has expanded slightly. It has a greater emphasis on preventing early leaving and improving learning quality, which is deeply connected to the change of the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, since the 2015-16 school year, schools have been asked to design and implement multi-annual improvement plans to strengthen the ability of schools to develop strategic and sustainable actions within the scope of three school years.

- **Progress or impact:** Between 2012 and 2016, the percentage of Portuguese school clusters (schools grouped under centralised leadership) covered by TEIP increased from 1% to 17% overall, or 137 school clusters, including approximately 16% of students from primary to secondary level. School clusters evaluate progress annually through a formative first semester report and a final report. Cluster reports feed into the programme's evaluation of results at the national level (EC School Education Gateway, 2017). A recent synthesis of results suggests that dropout has reduced and results have improved in TEIP schools, but gaps remain between TEIP and non-TEIP schools (Dias, 2014). A fourth generation of the programme, currently in preparation, will be informed by analysis from the OECD School Resources Review project.

The Qualifica Programme (2016) builds upon previous efforts from Portugal in the area of adult education. It represents an increased focus on improving the education and skills of adults following a period of reduced resources for investment between 2011 and 2015. Qualifica Centres aim to provide more effective and broader response to adults' qualification needs by: 1) increasing the number of education centres to improve national coverage; 2) introducing a digital platform (Passport Qualifica), which records the academic achievements of adult and also recognises prior work-related or non-formal learning; and 3) aligning the qualifications to ECVET. The Qualifica network replaces the Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (*Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional*, 2012-14) which had replaced the previous network of New Opportunities Centres (*Centros Novas Oportunidades*, 2005). With the Qualifica Centres now implemented as the specialised structures for adult education and training, the key

objective of the enhanced programme is to establish upper secondary education as the minimum threshold of attainment.

- **Progress or impact:** Investment on adult education from 2011 to 2015 declined compared to previous levels, and opportunities for adults had decreased, but the launch of the Qualifica Programme in late 2016 has reversed this situation. In 2017, the number of Qualifica Centres increased to a total of 303, with 40 new centres established to achieve national coverage. In 2017, 125 893 adults participated, a 42% increase over 2016. Compared to 2015, an increase was achieved in the number of adults in training (88%), recognition of prior learning (125%) and those who had passed the final stage in training and received certification (282%).

Portugal has introduced a number of reforms to the VET offering at secondary level. The reform of the VET upper secondary syllabus (2013) aimed to improve transitions between VET, general education and tertiary education (OECD, 2014b). In 2014, Portugal also established the legal framework for a model of Vocational Business Reference Schools (*Escolas de Referência do Ensino Profissional*), which aim to focus on priority sectors of the economy and contain a strong technical element (OECD, 2017f). At primary and lower secondary level, the pilot Specific Vocational Programmes initiative (2012) was discontinued, due to identified risks of causing early segregation and low-skilling. Portugal has also taken steps to improve the flexibility, mobility and quality of its VET programmes, by reorganising VET curricula (2016) to align with the European credit system (ECVET) and developing a quality assurance framework for VET courses (2017) to align with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET).

- **Progress or impact:** The reform of the VET upper secondary syllabus, allows students to get a more work-based education by participating in vocational programmes. This has been achieved by increasing co-operation with the private sector (EC, 2015c). The offer of programmes has been expanded significantly and now encompasses a wide range of higher-skilled occupations, such as electronics and automation, information and communication technologies, and renewable energies. The ongoing VET development has changed the traditional bias in Portugal towards general programmes (OECD, 2017f). In 2015, 45% of upper secondary students in Portugal were enrolled in vocational programmes, close to the OECD average of 46% (OECD, 2017d). The VET quality-assurance system was in the process of being implemented, starting in 2017. It is expected that from 2017/18 onwards, school networks will incorporate the quality-assurance status of dual vocational courses as part of the criteria for selecting course offers.

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- Portugal is rolling out universal free pre-primary education for 3-5 year-olds, aiming for full implementation by 2019. As of 2018, 3-year-olds can participate in preschool education on a voluntary basis, while coverage has already been extended to all 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds. In addition, the new Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-School Education (*Orientações Curriculares para a Educação Pré-escolar*, OCEPE), presented to the public in 2016, are the result of the review and update of the guidelines in liaison with the curricular steering documents for the first cycle of basic education. This new version of the OCEPE aims to present an integrated and globalising approach of the different content areas, introducing the learning processes to be developed, with practical examples and suggestions to staff.
- Portugal adopted the Innovative Schools Project (*Escolas Inovadoras*, 2017*)* as part of a broad policy approach to reduce grade repetition, prevent school failure at all educational levels and promote student success. The approach also includes: 1) a new framework of competences for the whole education system (Students' Profile at the End of Compulsory Education, 2017); 2) the National Plan for

School Success (2016), which is in place in the majority of public schools and municipalities; 3) specific tutoring to all students who repeat two grades (2016/17); and 4) the Curriculum Autonomy and Flexibility Programme (2017), which is currently in place in 235 schools. The Innovative Schools Project is is oriented towards models of enhanced autonomy and combines the goal of Retention 0 (zero) with flexible management instruments (curriculum, spaces, organisation of classes and school calendar).

- The *Passaporte Qualifica* (Passport Qualifica, 2016), part of the Qualifica reform in Portugal, is integrated with the National Credit System and aligned with the principles of the European Credits VET (ECVET) framework. It is composed of a digital platform where students' academic paths and the competences acquired in either work-related or non-formal learning contexts are recorded. This instrument makes it possible to orient adults towards training paths within the framework of lifelong learning that reinforce their employability conditions.
- As part of the recent reforms made to the VET system, Portugal revised the Decree-Law of the National Qualification System to create a National Credit System (*Sistema Nacional de Créditos*). Adopted in 2016, it allows the reorganisation of VET courses curriculum, based on the ECVET framework. To achieve the mapping, the design of non-dual vocational courses is based on learning outcomes. The new national system aims to promote the permeability of training paths, the return of adults to previously interrupted qualification processes and the capitalisation of training actions for the continuation of new qualification paths. Portugal took into account experiences of other countries, notably the Finnish model, for the implementation of credit systems.
- Portugal developed the National Plan for Youth Guarantee (*Plano Nacional do Programa Garantia Jovem,* 2013) to help youth under age 25 to find employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving the formal education system. This policy was positively evaluated, and it was extended for 2016-10 under the title of Youth Guarantee Strategy (*Estratégia Garantia Jovem*). This strategy is based on the development of two key resources: the local partners' network and the *Garantia Jovem* (GJ) electronic platform. Both are boosted by public campaigns. The main goal is to identify, register and guide young people, especially long-term NEETs, towards education, training, apprenticeship and job opportunities.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Slovak Republic

Context

The Slovak Republic scored below the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 460 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science has declined across PISA cycles with an average score change of -10.2 score points, and performance in reading and mathematics performance has also decreased. Socio-economic status had higher-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 16% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 1.2% of the student population of 15-year-olds in the Slovak Republic, a proportion which is among the lowest in the OECD (OECD average: 12.5%). At the same time, performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are among the highest in the OECD. Immigrants scored on average 73 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

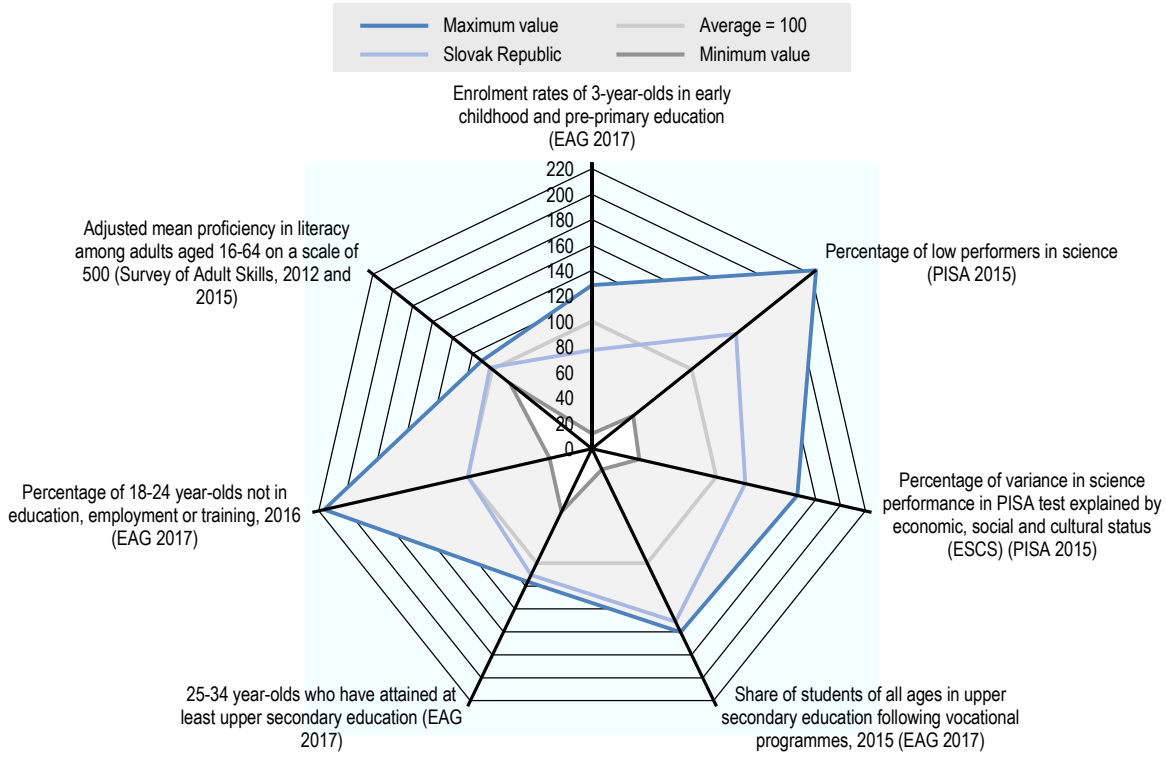
Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC and pre-primary education was lower than the OECD average in 2015, at 60.3% (OECD average: 77.8%). At age 3, children can attend either kindergarten (*Materská škola*) or special kindergarten (*Špeciálna materská škola*). Both programmes last three years. At age 6, children from socially disadvantaged families can attend a "year zero" in basic school to achieve school readiness (*Nultý ročník*). Children age 6 with a health disability can also attend a one-year preparatory class in special schools (*Prípravné triedy v špeciálnej škole*). The National Education Programme provides a set of curriculum guidelines for the provision of education and care for 3-5 year-olds. Compulsory education in the Slovak Republic begins at age 6 and ends at age 16, shorter than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 11, earlier than the OECD average of age 14. General upper secondary education in the Slovak Republic is offered in gymnasiums (*gymnáziá*) in four-year or eight-year programmes. Gymnasiums are highly selective. Their programmes lead to the Maturita, the secondary leaving certificate that provides access to tertiary education.

VET is offered by secondary vocational schools (*stredná odborná škola*), which specialise in different fields of study, ranging from traditional industrial fields and crafts to economics and management. Individual programs lead to either Maturita (ISCED 3A), Maturita and an apprenticeship certificate (ISCED 3A), or an apprenticeship certificate only (ISCED 3C). Students who do not successfully complete basic school may continue their studies in a secondary vocational school and receive a lower secondary vocational education certificate (ISCED 2C).

In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in the Slovak Republic were higher than the OECD average, at 274 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was lower than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in the Slovak Republic is lower than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 7.6% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are close to the OECD average, at 15.3%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is lower than the OECD average,

at 33.4% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are lower than the OECD average. In 2016, 77.4% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.21. Selected indicators compared with the average: Slovak Republic



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733182

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.21. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Slovak Republic (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD found that efficiency in the provision of education services could be improved and also noted issues related to ongoing demographic changes and general low equity performance of schools. Regional disparities in student outcomes are among the highest in OECD countries. Students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, especially in the Eastern part of the country, have among the lowest education outcomes in the OECD. [2015]	Evidence indicates large regional variations in the proportions of NEETs, with certain regions having relatively high levels of NEETs compared to Bratislava. A weak link between VET and businesses has been identified by employers as an important barrier to regional development. Tertiary attainment is rising but remains below average. Measures are needed to further increase the quality and attractiveness of tertiary education, in order to produce more graduates with the high-level job skills needed to sustain the income convergence process and better adapt to rapid labour market changes. [2014; 2017]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds still encounter challenges in accessing quality education. In 2015, the European Commission initiated an infringement proceeding against the Slovak Republic for breaching EU anti-discrimination legislation in regard to the treatment of Roma children in school. [2013; 2016-17]	Challenges persist in the quality of the VET system, and the school-to-work transition of students. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

A reform is expected to enter into force in 2018 to provide greater flexibility to the higher education system in the **Slovak Republic**. The 2013 amendment to the Higher Education Act resulted in stricter rules for reaccreditation of most universities within the "complex accreditation" process. It also took into account internal systems of quality control. Complex accreditation is a process under which, every six years, the Accreditation Commission reviews and evaluates education and research and development activities of individual universities, along with corresponding personal, material and technical information. The intention of the next reform is to simplify the accreditation process, opening it up to applicants from abroad or to those who have been professionally active in the industry segment relevant to the field of study, and to reinforce the staff and competence of the Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is proposed to be awarded based on fields of study rather than programmes of study. Academic titles will be cancelled, and only the corresponding functional positions retained (OECD, 2015c).

- **Progress or impact:** In 2017, reforms to the Accreditation Committee were put forward: to fulfil international standards; to become a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); and to increase the transparency and independence of accreditation (granting accreditation to study fields rather than study programmes (EC, 2017i; EC, 2016e). According to the European Commission, aiding the Commission to become a member of the ENQA could help to improve the work of the Commission (EC, 2015d). It was found that, although there is consensus on the need to fulfil European guidelines on accreditation, stakeholders have divergent perspectives on how to approach it. The Higher Education Council and the Rectors Conference have expressed dissatisfaction with the legislative proposal (EC, 2017i).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The National project for the support of dual education (2016) aims to implement a dual education system in the relevant curricula and study fields. It aims to: 1) deepen the interconnection between employers and secondary school students; 2) create a unified information environment for the dual education system; and 3) enhance implementation processes, VET and the preparation of instructors, masters and teachers to perform these tasks. It is co-financed by the ESF.
- An amendment on VET is set to enter into force in 2018. It contains a number of measures to enhance the dual system and align study offer and learning paths of students with labour market needs. It aims to support small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in dual VET and to create conditions for eDffective career guidance. It seeks to tackle financial disincentives that discourage schools from getting involved in Dual VET. Regulation of study places in VET schools better reflecting labour market needs and co-operation of schools with employers are planned.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Slovenia

Context

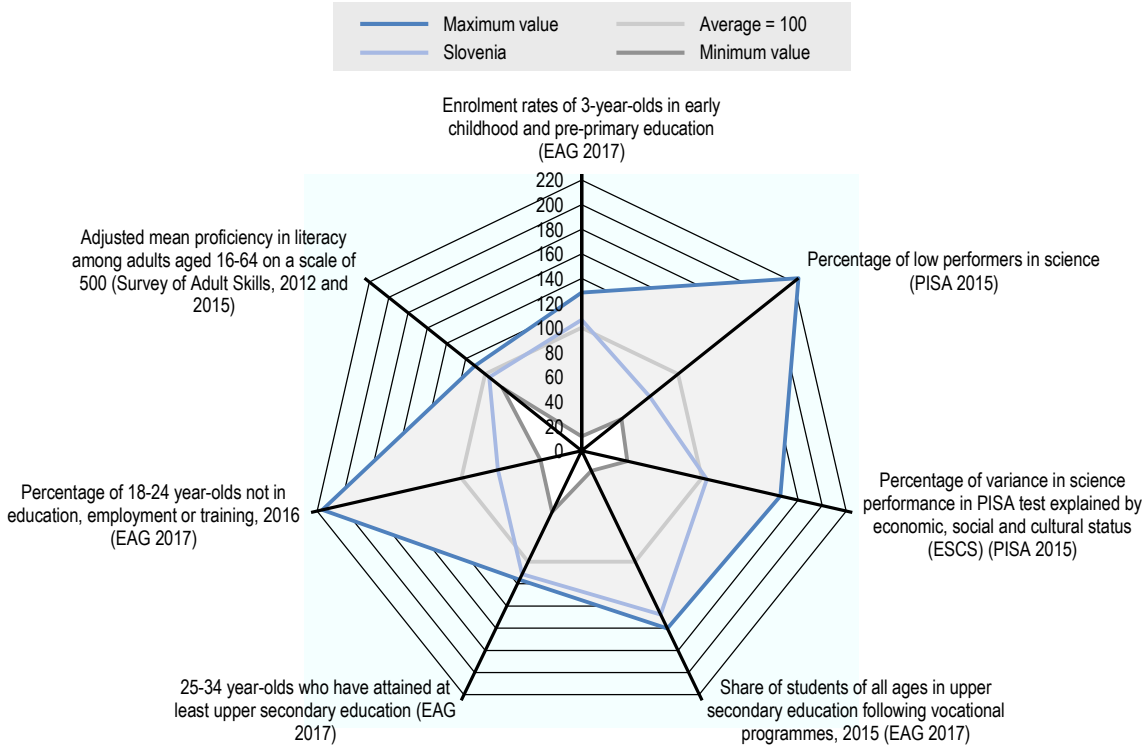
Slovenia scored higher than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 513 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles with an average score change of -1.5 score points, while performance in reading and mathematics has stayed the same. Although there were significant changes between cycles in reading, the overall average of these changes up to 2015 is not significant. Socio-economic and cultural status had an average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 13.5% of the variance in performance (the difference with the OECD average of 12.9% is not statistically significant). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has declined since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were 6 points in favour of girls, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points in favour of boys. Immigrant students make up 7.8% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Slovenia, a lower proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are higher than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 45 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC and preschool education was higher than the OECD average in 2015, at 82.8%, (OECD average: 77.8%). Slovenia has an integrated preschool system that combines education and care for children from age 1 to age 6. Preschool education in kindergartens is provided in two age groups: children age 1-3 and children age 3-6 or until they start school. Preschool education is covered by the Kindergarten Curriculum, a national curriculum in place that provides a framework for education and care for 1-6 year-olds. Compulsory education in Slovenia is organised in a comprehensive structure called basic school that caters to students from age 6 to age 15. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 15, later than the OECD average of age 14. Upper secondary education in Slovenia consists of general education and vocational-technical education, and schools can offer both types of programmes. General education is provided in four-year *gimnazija* programmes. Transfers between vocational and general education tracks are enabled by special one-year courses (*Matura* courses and vocational courses) funded by the state. General upper secondary programmes lead to the general upper secondary leaving certificate (*Matura*), which provides direct entry to tertiary education. All tracks lead to qualifications to enter the labour market in specific occupations, to the vocational upper secondary leaving certificate (vocational *Matura*), or to a school leaving exam.

VET is offered in three tracks at upper secondary level. All tracks lead to qualifications to enter the labour market in specific occupations, to the vocational upper secondary leaving certificate (vocational *Matura*), or to a school leaving exam. Students with a vocational *Matura* can pass additional exams in general *Matura* subjects to access academic higher education. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Slovenia were lower than the OECD average, at 256 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was close to the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Slovenia is lower than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 11.8% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-

24 that are not employed or in further education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 10.6%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is close to the OECD average, at 43.0% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are lower than the OECD average. In 2016, 81.4% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.22. Selected indicators compared with the average: Slovenia



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733201

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.22. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Slovenia (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	OECD findings have shown a need to ensure the availability and quality of childcare places and to decrease inequities within the education system. A further policy priority identified by the OECD is for Slovenia to help its people to develop a portfolio of cognitive, socio-emotional and discipline-specific skills that equip them to learn throughout life, interact effectively with others, and solve complex problems. [2011; 2013; 2015; 2017]	The OECD identified a need to raise the employment rates of youth and reduce barriers to entrepreneurship, as the lack of entrepreneurship education may also affect entrepreneurial activity. In regard to VET, OECD evidence shows a need to make vocational secondary school education more attractive to students and more relevant to labour-market conditions. OECD evidence also shows a need to improve accessibility of adult education, as the labour-force participation rate of older population is still very low by international comparison, despite some recent improvements. Participation in adult education programmes is relatively high, but it is concentrated in the best-educated and prime-age workers. Evidence also shows that there is scope to increase tertiary education attainment of students whose parents have low education. According to the an opinion survey of employers, the tertiary system does not produce workers with the skills in demand. [2009; 2011; 2014; 2015]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Slovenia reported a need to address achievement gaps between sub-groups of the student population. Key targets are access and quality in the education system in a globalised society of the 21st century, enhancing excellence and raising the level of general competencies of students. Another focus is the integration of children and students with special education needs in mainstream classes in kindergarten and schools. Due to increased migration flows to Europe, Slovenia faces challenges in assuring successful integration in the education system of children and students with international protection and those seeking international protection. [2016-17]	A challenge is to improve the responsiveness of the education system to the changing needs for skills of the labour market, the economy and society. [2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected policy responses

In Slovenia, the Kindergarten Act (2008) and the Exercise of Rights to Public Funds Act (2012) grants payments to parents with two or more children enrolled in preschool education in order to improve access to ECEC. Parents only pay 30% for the second child and no fee for younger siblings. The amount of the fee is determined according to a grid of nine levels of income, with no fees for those with the lowest income and no parents who pay the full fee. Parents with the highest level of income in the grid (99% of the net average salary) pay 77% of the fee. Municipalities can also further reduce these fees according to their policies in this area. An amendment to the Kindergarten Act (2010) allows municipalities to provide ECEC in buildings not constructed for this purpose. Further Amendments to the Kindergarten Act (2017) allow for increased flexibility in providing a public network of kindergartens, which might include units or sections of a public kindergarten in enterprises. The amendments also provide for new types of short, entirely state-funded programmes to be organised by kindergartens for children not enrolled in preschool education one year before entering primary school.

- **Progress or impact:** Evidence has found that the Kindergarten Act has allowed making ECEC more affordable, with enrolment rates above the OECD average (OECD, 2015d). The 2010 amendment has enabled municipalities to solve spatial issues rapidly with relatively little funds (MIZS, 2015). However, it has since been advised that excess teaching resources could be transferred into locations facing stronger demand (OECD, 2015d).

In 2008, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports in **Slovenia**, with the help of the European Structural Funds, implemented the Project for the Successful Integration of Roma Students in Schools (2008-15). It aimed to share national best practices of inclusive teaching among kindergartens and schools and teachers in areas with little or no such experience. One of the most important measures was providing a Roma assistant in Roma settlements and schools attended by Roma pupils. Following promising results of this policy, the government later implemented a series of projects to expand support to Roma communities. The project on Raising the Social and Cultural Capital in Areas Inhabited by Members of the Roma Community (2011-13) aimed to work with Roma children, youth and parents in Roma settlements to increase the participation and success of Roma children in education. More recently, the Together for Knowledge (2016-21) programme aims to supply educational support in preschools for Roma communities through the inclusion of Roma parents in educational activities, as well as coaching sessions and after-school activities for children (Council of Europe, 2017).

- **Progress or impact:** The Project for the Successful Integration of Roma Students in Schools was identified by the Council of Europe as a demonstrated good practice (observing the Municipality of Murska Sobota). As reported by the Roma Union, results achieved by the end of 2010 included higher attendance of Roma children in educational institutions, improved co-operation between Roma parents and educational institutions, increased awareness among Roma of the importance of learning and education, and more successful co-operation between teaching assistants, teachers and Roma parents in the education of Roma children (Council of Europe, 2011). The Council of Europe also identified the importance of the project on Raising the Social and Cultural Capital in Areas Inhabited by Members of the Roma Community (2011-13), particularly its contributions to the design of innovative and creative educational practices in Roma communities (Council of Europe, 2017).

In 2015, Slovenia implemented a **s**pecial model to enhance the integration of refugee children and students in the Slovenian education system. The main objective is to assure adequate professional support for the integration of children and students (those with international protection and those seeking international protection) into their new linguistic and cultural environment, by enhancing activities in social, linguistic and cultural domains. This policy was developed to advise kindergartens and schools on application of a model providing introductory or preparatory classes (*pripravljalnica*) before children enter school and continuing or advanced classes (*nadaljevalnica*) after that. The continuing classes take place during the school year, and children have an individual programme or plan of activities, receive additional learning support for lessons in Slovenian and may also join remedial and supplementary classes, morning care and after-school classes. Students are integrated into mainstream classes with their peers. The state also funds supplementary language lessons at upper secondary and university level, where a special protocol has been developed to facilitate the integration of non-documented students.

- **Progress or impact:** According to Slovenia's survey responses, the policy, more widely introduced in 2016, has not yet been comprehensively evaluated. Nevertheless, according to national sources, there are individual cases that demonstrate successful integration of children and young people from immigrant backgrounds into the Slovenian educational system by the achieved standards of knowledge. One of the important achievements of the process is the establishment of good co-operation and links between the various actors to ensure the protection of children's rights and an inclusive school environment.

The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2013) in **Slovenia** applies to: 1) children who are blind and partially sighted, deaf and hard of hearing; 2) children with speech, language and movement impairments, chronic diseases, deficiencies in individual fields of learning; and 3) children with mental development and behavioural disorders. With support from the European Social Fund, the Ministry initiated a set of projects to support implementation of the Act. These include: 1) the Network of Professional Institutions for Support to Children with Special Needs and their Families, which aims to create contact points of professional (special pedagogical) support for parents and professional staff in schools (EUR 4 million for the period of 2017-20, with an additional EUR 1.8 million earmarked for professional training); 2) enhancing a comprehensive approach in working with children with emotional and behavioural disorders to support development of new programmes and adapting or upgrading existing methods and forms of work in special educational institutions (EUR 2.8 million for 2017-19; and 3) enhancing social inclusion of SEN children and youth in the local environment, aiming to develop modular and other forms of education and training, targeting in particular children and youth who are completing or leaving formal education (EUR 2.8 million over the course of 2017-22). At the higher-education level, the Student Regulation Act (2017) defines students with special needs and students with special status and their rights.

- **Progress or impact:** A child qualifies for placement in specific educational settings after undergoing relevant activities co-ordinated by the Special Education Needs Guidance Commission in Slovenia. In the 2014/15 school year, there were 117 461 children with special educational needs in primary education in Slovenia and 55 362 in lower secondary education. Almost all of these students were enrolled in mainstream education with their non-disabled peers for at least 80% of the time (EASIE, 2018). At the upper secondary level, final state (*matura*) exams were made more inclusive in 2015, as a result of legislation guaranteeing special conditions for children with autistic spectrum disorders and visual impairments (EC, 2015e).

As part of the reform of VET (2008-11), Slovenia introduced a competence-based approach in VET curricula (2008/11), with a modular structure in teaching and learning, and increased the share of practical training. The updated subject curricula in general upper secondary schools (*gimnazija*) (2008/09) and the updated curricula in basic schools (2011/12) also introduced core competencies in general education. Following the reform of vocational education (2008-11), practical training in the workplace increased, and 20% of the curriculum can now be designed in co-operation with social partners, particularly local companies.

- **Progress or impact:** The overall results of the Practical Training with Work programme in the period from 2008 to 2015 were positive. More than 26 000 students participated, and around 12 000 employers provided work placements. This all contributed to improved links between education institutions, employers and students, as well as better quality of training and matches between labour market needs and supply (Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, 2018). The total number of upper secondary students in VET increased above the EU average in 2015, and pilot apprenticeships were planned for 2017 (EC, 2017j).

In Slovenia, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities set up the Youth Guarantee (YG, 2014) to guarantee a job, formal education or a training opportunity to any 15-29 year-old registering in Slovenia's Employment service. Slovenia allocated EUR 87.7 million for the YG programme for 2014-15 and plans to allocate EUR 300 million for 2016-20. This policy targets those who are currently unemployed, as well as the 37 000 people in that age range who register annually for this service. In 2016, Slovenia adopted a second Youth Guarantee Action Plan for the period 2016-20. It includes new measures to combat age segmentation in the labour market, based on the proposal of youth representatives (e.g. information and guidance activities and

strengthening the capacities of supervisory authorities). In addition to fast activation, another new element is a special focus on long-term unemployed youth. Moreover, the lifelong career orientation has been strengthened within the Public Employment Services (PES), not only for those registered as unemployed, but also in primary and secondary schools, with the aim of offering them early career guidance.

- **Progress or impact:** A European Commission study found that youth unemployment decreased the most when compared to other age groups in Slovenia. Thanks to the Youth Guarantee programme, outflows from unemployment to employment increased. Compared to those who did not participate in this programme, participants were found to receive 40% more referrals for job vacancies, ten times more meetings with employers and 70% more involvement in training (EC, 2017k). The 2016 Youth Guarantee Action Plan (2016-20) was adopted based on an update of the 2013 PES analysis, Youth on the labour market 2015. In co-operation with the working group for monitoring, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities prepared a report on the results of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan for 2014-15 (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2018).

In 2016, Slovenia adopted the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education (2016-20) with five key areas: international mobility; quality international co-operation in research and development; promotion of intercultural competences; targeting priority regions and countries; and promotion, support and monitoring of implementation of the Strategy.

- **Progress or impact:** According to government information, the implementation action plan covers 25 goals and over 50 measures, with a total budget of EUR 57 million, of which EUR 18 million is dedicated to international co-operation in research and development. An example of the measures is the Study in Slovenia webpage (www.studyinslovenia.si), which aims to promote Slovenia as a study destination.

In Slovenia, the Creative Path to Practical Knowledge initiative was carried out with the support of the European Social Fund from 2007 to 2013. It encouraged students to become team members in small interdisciplinary research projects to develop creative and innovative solutions to practical challenges in the corporate sector. Mentors from the education and corporate sectors offered support to each team during implementation of the projects. The teams carried out projects in various working environments, such as medical and chemical laboratories, classrooms and production facilities. By directly participating in the work process, students gained specific professional and generic experience, as well as social competences, which are important for employability.

- **Progress or impact:** From 2013 to 2015, more than 3 400 students and over 500 organisations participated in this programme. Co-operation between education institutions and employers improved, as did students' employability. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport will invest an additional EUR 11.7 million in a similar programme and EUR 7.3 million to further strengthen co-operation between higher education institutions and local communities from 2014 to 2020

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- For students with special educational needs, Slovenia has adopted the Act on Comprehensive Special Treatment of Preschool Children (2017). This model for early treatment is being tested with the support of a pilot project entitled "A comprehensive early treatment of children with special needs and their families and strengthening the competencies of professionals", in line with the guidelines of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASIE). The project will help establish professional centres (for multidisciplinary teams and assistance in kindergartens) within child development units (*razvojne ambulante*).
- CroCooS (2014-17), financed under the Erasmus+ Programme, aims to identify means to prevent early school leaving in Slovenian VET schools, with emphasis on cross-sectorial co-operation and early warning systems. Further VET

modernisation measures (2016-21) in Slovenia focus on the development and implementation of adequate models of practical (work-based) training. The Apprenticeship Act (2017) combines regulations on VET, the labour market and adult education regarding work-based learning, and sets the legal framework for the implementation of the apprenticeship system (CEDEFOP, 2017d). Overall, it aims to facilitate relations between education systems and the labour market, better matching the needs of employers and bringing more young people into VET. To assure the possibility of transitions between different tracks, at least 50% of the education is to be completed in the workplace and at least 40% of education programmes are to be reserved for general subjects,. Also, Slovenia made amendments to the Vocational and Technical Education Act (2017) (Eurydice, 2018). Slovenia will support the introduction of apprenticeships in upper-secondary vocational education through European Funds. In 2017, the Ministry of Education decided to start trial apprenticeships in four VET programmes at seven upper secondary vocation schools, for a trial plan to widen the scope of VET programmes. The first pilot started in 2017/2018. An important reference for the Slovenian work-based learning model in VET was the CEDEFOP Thematic Country Review (CEDEFOP, 2017d).

- The Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act (SOK, 2015) entered into force in 2016. It is the legal basis for the implementation of a comprehensive national qualifications framework, based on learning outcomes, that covers all types and levels of qualifications.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Spain

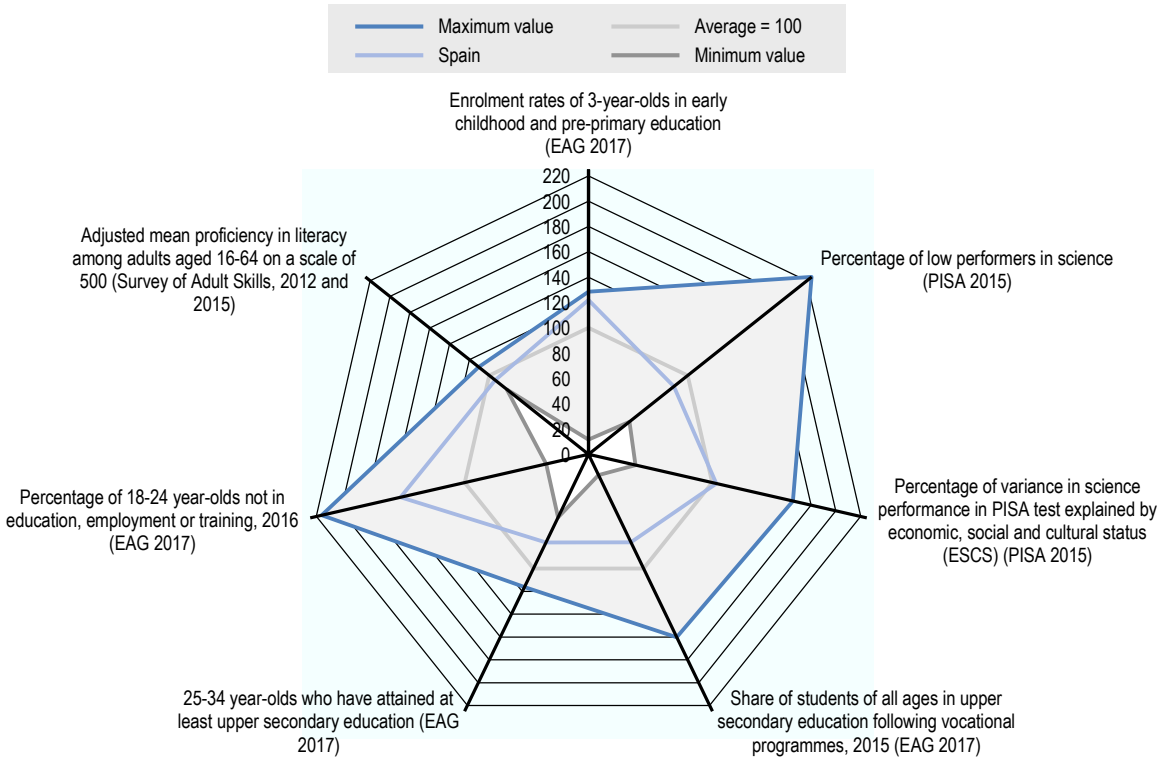
Context

Spain scored close to the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 493 points, equal to the overall OECD average. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles. Mathematics performance also remained stable, while performance in reading has improved, with an average rate of change of 6.6 score points. Socio-economic status had an impact close to the OECD average on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 13.4% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. Gender differences in science performance were higher than the OECD average, with a difference between boys and girls of 7 points, compared to the average difference across the OECD of 4 points. Immigrant students make up 11% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Spain, close to the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are lower than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 28 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC and pre-primary education was higher than the OECD average in 2015, at 94.9% (OECD average: 77.8%). Pre-primary education (*Educación infantil segundo ciclo*) lasts for three years, with a formal curriculum that is delivered by qualified teachers. Children generally begin this programme at age 3. Compulsory education in Spain begins at age 6 and ends at age 16, similar to the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14.

In Spain, VET is offered in upper secondary and tertiary education. To improve the system, Spain has recently sought to make access to post-secondary education more flexible and to align VET diplomas to individual competences defined by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of the Presidency. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Spain were lower than the OECD average, at 252 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was among the highest in the OECD. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Spain is among the highest in the OECD, with an attainment rate of 30.6% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are among the highest in the OECD, at 23.2%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is lower than the OECD average, at 41% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are lower than the OECD average. In 2016, 75.9% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.23. Selected indicators compared with the average: Spain



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

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Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.23. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Spain (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-171	The OECD identified the need to increase performance and graduation rates in secondary education. [2014]	The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Spain is among the highest in the OECD, and NEET rates are significant as well. The main reason for the still large share of poorly qualified youth is that the dropout rate from secondary school remains too high. Spain also seems to be underutilising the skills that do exist, with a high proportion of workers in occupations for which they are over-skilled. The proportion of tertiary graduates employed in jobs that do not require this type of qualification has been consistently higher than most of the rest of Europe over the past decade, indicating that this is a structural problem. [2014]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Spain reported a persistently high share of grade repetition, although it had decreased from 34% in 2012 to 31% in 2015. The social and economic costs of grade repetition are high, as results obtained in subsequent years of students repeating a class tend to be negative. Also, it impairs equity and can cause student dropout. It has a large impact on spending on students, as a significant part of the education budget is devoted to it. [2013; 2016-17]	Challenges remain in tackling high dropout rates and youth unemployment. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected policy responses

In Spain, the Programme to Reduce Early Dropout in Education and Training (2014-20) provides funding for preventive measures, such as external evaluations in certain grades to detect early difficulties in learning and minimise the risk of dropout. In addition, a royal decree regulates the general system of scholarships and study aids annually. Studies are conducted to identify areas with high school dropout rates to analyse causes and profiles and thereby evaluate and design specific intervention pathways. Awareness campaigns are targeted at students and their families to ensure the best possible use of training. Specific programmes are implemented in areas and groups with the highest dropout risk through co-operation and co-ordination with different institutions and local and regional authorities. Also, to facilitate reintegration, young people from age 16 to age 24 who drop out are supported through adult education institutions and local authorities.

- **Progress or impact:** Evaluation has shown that programmes on second-chance opportunities and vocational training measures offered by adult education institutions have contributed to the reduction of dropout rates in Spain. Early school leaving rates of 18-24 years-olds have declined from 31.7% in 2008 to 18.3 % in 2017 (Eurostat, 2016).

Since 2012, Spain has promoted the Dual Vocational Training Model, with entrepreneurs co-responsible not only for the design of the training offer, but also for its implementation. Since its first year of implementation in 2012/13, the number of students has increased fourfold to 24 000, and the number of interested companies has increased to more than 10 000. This training model is proving effective for transferring knowledge between educational institutions and companies and, therefore, for improving the quality of training, the innovative potential of enterprises and students' employability.

- **Progress or impact:** According to a 2016 evaluation, the outcomes of this model have so far been positive. In the first year of implementation (2012-13), 173 schools, 513 companies and 4 292 students were involved in the programme. In 2016, 17 854 schools, more than 10 000 companies and more than five times as many students (24 000) participated (Government of Spain, 2017). At the same time, a 2016 evaluation of the Alliance for Dual Vocational Training (a private, non-governmental organisation) identified several challenges, including: 1) increasing the scale, while ensuring quality; 2) developing knowledge and awareness about the model to avoid the emergence of divergent VET models; 3) increasing co-operation among the different stakeholders; and 4) implementing a framework to guide the development of all regional models that clarifies all the elements essential to Dual VET (Bassols and Salvans, 2016).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (*Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa*, LOMCE, 2013) intends to raise students' outcomes by defining core basic education countrywide, while considering the special requirements of regional governments.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Sweden

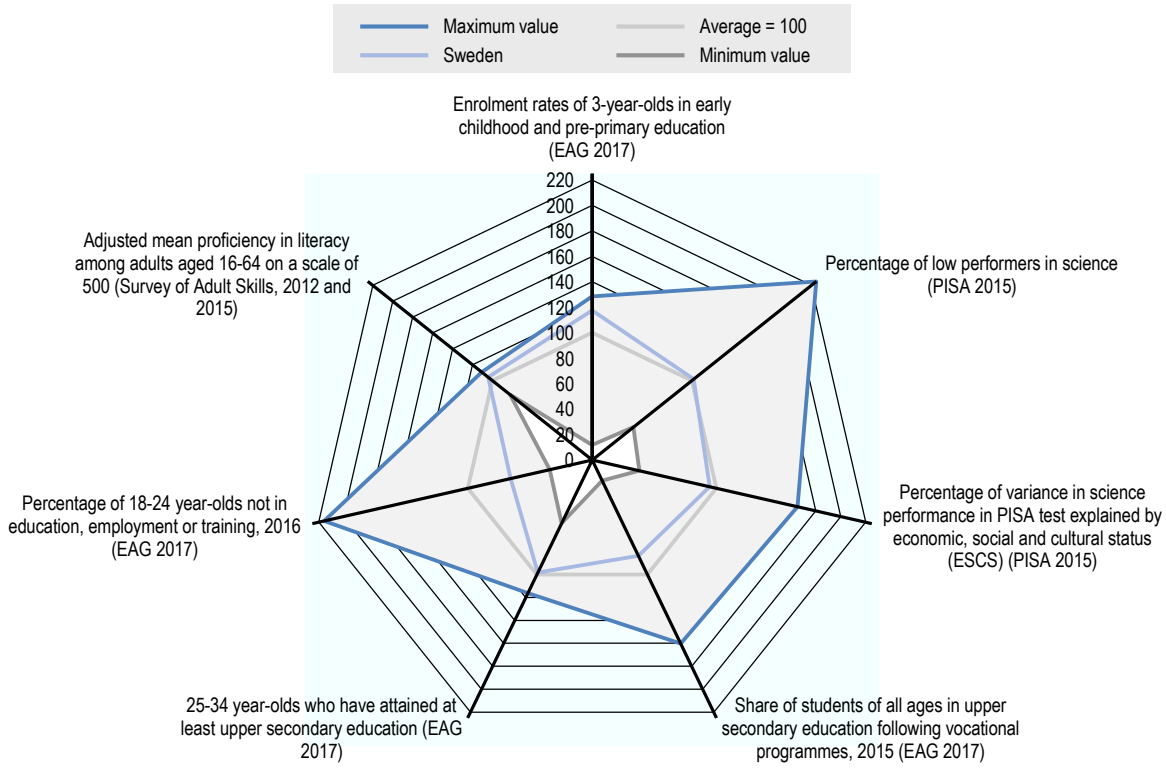
Context

Sweden scored close to the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 493 points, equal to the OECD average of 493 points. From a position well above average in PISA 2000, Sweden's performance had fallen by 2012. On average, Sweden's three-year performance has declined across PISA cycles in science, mathematics and reading. However, compared to PISA 2012, Sweden's performance stabilised in science and increased in reading and mathematics in PISA 2015, putting Sweden around or above the OECD average in all three domains tested in PISA 2015. Socio-economic status had lower-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 12.2% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 17.4% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Sweden, a higher proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are higher than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 49 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was higher than the OECD average in 2015, at 91.4% (OECD average: 77.8%). A national curriculum is in place for 1-5 year-olds (Curriculum for the Preschool class and the Out-of-school centre [Lgr 11]). Starting at age 6, children attend a one-year preschool programme (*Förskoleklass*), which is compulsory beginning in 2018. Compulsory education in Sweden begins at age 6 and ends at age 16, the same as the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. Around age 16, students can choose from a total of 18 upper secondary programmes, of which 12 are of vocational orientation. Students who do not achieve the necessary lower secondary grades to meet entrance requirements for national general or vocational upper secondary programmes can complete one of five different introductory programmes.

In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Sweden were among the highest in the OECD, at 279 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was close to the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Sweden is lower than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 12.1% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18¥24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 10%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is higher than the OECD average, at 47.2% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are higher than the OECD average. In 2016, 86.6% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.24. Selected indicators compared with the average: Sweden



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733239

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.24. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Sweden (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	The OECD has identified two main policy priorities that Sweden should address. Better curriculum alignment should be developed to guarantee continuous child development. Also, struggling students and immigrants need to be better supported and well integrated in the education system. [2013; 2015]	OECD evidence also shows skills mismatch in terms of employment in Sweden (for example, according to the field of study, type of qualifications or level of skills). Also, about one-third of firms surveyed reported difficulties in filling vacancies due to the lack of workers with adequate skills, with emerging wage pressures in sectors requiring high skills. Raising educational attainment and skills outcomes and ensuring attractiveness of VET have also been identified by the OECD as important for Sweden [2016]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Key targets reported by Sweden include increasing students' performance and reducing dropout rates to achieve greater equity and quality in education. Also, since 2015, an increase in the number of asylum seekers raises new challenges, such as improving outcomes for immigrant students and ensuring speedy integration. [2013; 2016-17]	Sweden has identified raising the attractiveness of VET among students as a policy priority. Sweden expressed concern that it might encounter a shortage of VET teachers caused by future needs. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

In 1998, Sweden introduced a new ECEC curriculum (*Läroplan för Förskolan – Lpfö 98*) designed to put children and play at the centre by: 1) ensuring continuous child development through the use of one national framework plan for ECEC; 2) balancing content by addressing academic and socio-emotional development; 3) reflecting on parental opinions and expectations; and 4) addressing respect for cultural values. Since 2010, this policy has gone through various revisions to improve the quality of education for all students. In 2010, the policy was subjected to revisions in order to improve the learning and social development of children and help them develop an interest in school. In 2016, a new round of policy revisions aimed to improve transitions and co-operation between primary schools, schools and leisure centres to create context, continuity and progression in children's development and learning. In 2017, the government asked the National Agency for Education to propose amendments to the curriculum (*läroplan*) of pre-primary education to clarify its educative role and improve its quality (Regeringen, 2018).

- **Progress or impact:** The ECEC reform was reviewed in 2002 and 2008, and both evaluations indicated that the new curriculum had a strong, positive impact on schools. The 2008 results revealed that the significance of the reform had grown for schools in the ten years following its implementation, reinforcing the importance of preschool learning in education, as well as fostering and reinforcing connections between the various levels of actors (municipal, national) in the country's ECEC system. The evaluation also highlighted the increased co-ordination between preschools in the preparedness of children for later education (Skolverket, 2008). The 2018 quality review by the Swedish School Inspectorate indicates that there are challenges in the quality of preschools and the achievement of objectives, particularly regarding the educational assignment of pre-primary education (Regeringen, 2018).

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- Since 2017, a new national system for quality assurance of higher education has been in place. It is no longer linked to a previously introduced additional resource

allocation. From 2016 onwards, university chancellors and the National Authority for Higher Education remain responsible for evaluating higher education institutions, but also have responsibility to ensure that universities develop their own system of quality control.

- The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (NAHVE, 2009) administers a common framework of publicly funded vocational education at the post-upper secondary level. It decides which programmes will receive public funding and be included in the framework, audits the quality and outcomes of the courses, and analyses and assesses the demand for qualified labour and trends in the labour market.

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

Turkey

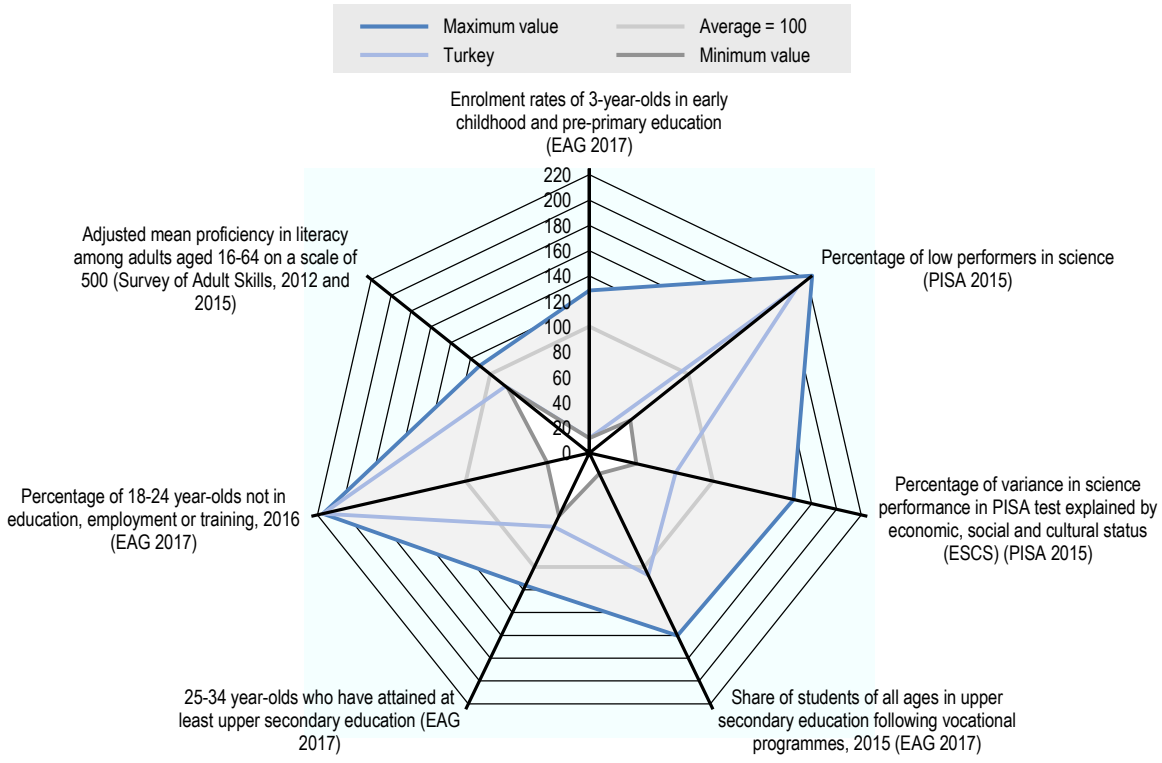
Context

Turkey had a mean score of 425 points in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science has remained stable across PISA cycles, with an average score change of 1.5 score points, while performance in reading and mathematics has stayed the same. Compared to other countries and economies participating in PISA variation in science performance in Turkey associated with the socio-economic status of students, as measured by the PISA index of ESCS decreased strongly between 2006 and 2012 (-6.1%). Socio-economic status had one of the lowest impacts in the OECD on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 9% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%), and there was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 0.8% of the student population of 15-year-olds in Turkey, a proportion which is among the lowest in the OECD (OECD average: 12.5%). Performance differences between immigrant and non¥immigrant students are close to the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 31 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

Enrolment of 3-year-olds in ECEC was lower than the OECD average in 2015, at 11.74%, (OECD average: 77.8%). Children typically attend pre-primary education (*Okul Öncesi Eğitim*) starting at age 3. The programmes last between one and three years. Education-only programmes exist nationally. There is a formal curriculum in place for these programmes, and it is delivered by qualified teachers. Integrated programmes, which include education and childcare services, do not exist nationally. Compulsory education in Turkey begins at age 5-6 and ends at age 17, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 11, earlier than the OECD average of age 14.

VET is offered in four-year VET programmes, and apprenticeships. Apprenticeship programmes are available to students who left the education system after primary education. Since 2016 all apprenticeship programmes are compulsory, and the standard length is four years (compared to the previous duration of two to three years), with most of the time spent in the workplace. In the OECD Survey of Adult Skills in 2012 and 2015, adult literacy scores in Turkey were lower than the OECD average, at 227 points, compared to the OECD average of 268 points. The gap in literacy skills between older adults (age 55-65) and younger adults (age 25-34) was higher than the OECD average. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in Turkey is lower than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 13.7% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18-24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are the highest in the OECD, at 33%, compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is among the lowest in the OECD, at 30.5% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are among the lowest in the OECD. In 2016, 74.1% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.25. Selected indicators compared with the average: Turkey



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.

Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

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Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.25. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Turkey (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	Turkey has made substantial progress in the area of education and human capital, but gaps vis-à-vis OECD benchmarks remain very large. This is partly due to the quality of education lagging behind quantitative changes in school years. [2016]	According to OECD evidence, Turkey needs to address high levels of skills mismatch, and many small entrepreneurs and workers need basic upskilling, as low skills inhibit the growth of productivity and incomes. [2016]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Equity and quality in education continue to be seen as a challenge by Turkey, which has set several key priorities, such as improving access and completion of upper secondary education, addressing the needs of disadvantaged students and improving equity between regions (especially between urban and rural areas). Providing education facilities and services to Syrians with temporary protection in Turkey is another key target reported. [2013; 2016-17]	Improving access to both VET and tertiary education is reported as a key policy target for Turkey. [2013; 2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries

- The Project for Increasing Enrolment Rates Especially for Girls (ISEG or KEP-1, 2011-13) aimed to increase primary and secondary school participation, as well as improve family educational awareness and labour market linkages. It was piloted in the 16 provinces with the lowest enrolment rates. The outcomes of the pilot provided the basis for a follow-up Project for Increasing School Attendance Rates Especially for Girls (IAREFG or KEP-2, 2015-2017), which had similar objectives to ISEG and also aimed to improve the professional skills and competencies of the labour force in the provinces. This project is co-funded by the Turkish government and the European Union (Ministry of Labour and Social Security and EU Coordination Department, 2012). Evaluation of the KEP-2 shows that 12 977 students and 9 424 families were reached and 5 022 students continued to attend school.
- A new system for transitioning to upper secondary education is implemented as of the 2017/18 school year. The Ministry of National Education announced in 2017 that a limited number of lower secondary schools will offer students the opportunity to take a central exam. Students who successfully pass the exam will receive a place in an upper secondary school based on their preferences.
- The Facilitation of Procedures for Equivalence of Diplomas for Syrian students, headed by the Higher Education Council, aims to ensure their integration into the education system. The Council had facilitated the procedures for diploma equivalency of Syrian students by means of placement examinations to promote participation in the education system, grant access to quality education and hinder exclusion from learning processes.

United Kingdom

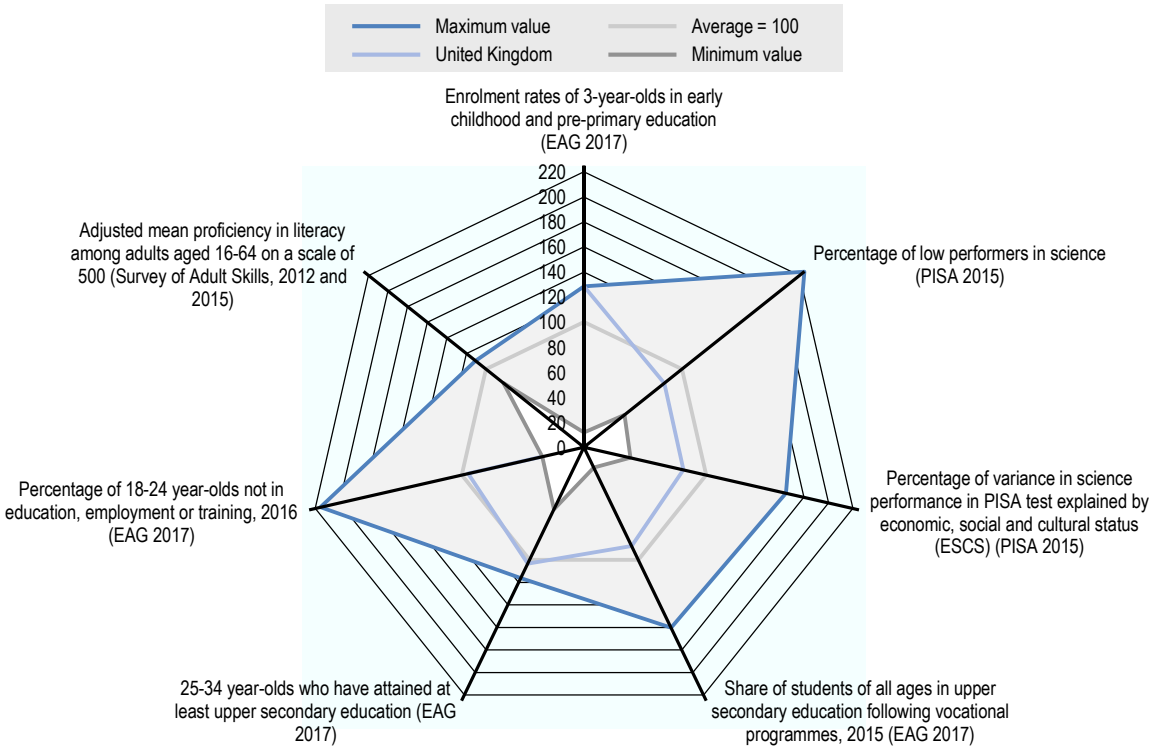
Context (national)

The United Kingdom scored higher than the OECD average in science in PISA 2015, with a mean score of 509 points, compared to the OECD average of 493 points. Performance in science remained stable across PISA cycles with an average score change of -1.5 score points, while performance in reading and mathematics has stayed the same. Socio-economic status had lower-than-average impact on science performance in PISA 2015, explaining 10.5% of the variance in performance (OECD average: 12.9%). The impact of ESCS on performance in science has not changed since 2006. There was no significant gender difference in science performance in PISA 2015. Immigrant students make up 16.7% of the student population of 15-year-olds in the United Kingdom, a higher proportion than the OECD average of 12.5%. Performance differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students are lower than the OECD average. Immigrants scored on average 18 score points lower than non-immigrants in science in PISA 2015, compared to the OECD average of 31 score points.

At age 3, children typically attend some form of early education and childcare, for around one to two years before beginning the first year of primary school. Children in England and Wales also attend an initial "reception year" in primary school before proceeding to Year 1. There is no clear distinction between education-only and integrated programmes in England and no formal curriculum, although the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile does set guidelines. In England, there should be at least one qualified teacher in any nursery class in a school or nursery-school setting. The presence of a qualified teacher varies in private and voluntary provision. Compulsory education in England begins at age 5 and ends at age 18, longer than the typical duration across the OECD. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 16, later than the OECD average of age 14. Participation in upper secondary education is compulsory until age 16 in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and until age 18 in England.

In most cases, general and vocational programmes in the United Kingdom are offered in upper secondary schools. Successful completers are awarded different types of upper secondary qualifications, including various types of vocational and academic qualifications. These qualifications aim to reflect what students need to know to succeed in further education or for employment. The proportion of the population aged 25-64 with lower secondary education as the highest level of attainment in the United Kingdom is higher than the OECD average, with an attainment rate of 17.8% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 14.3%. NEET rates (the proportion of those aged 18¥24 that are neither employed nor in education or training) are lower than the OECD average, at 14.5% compared to the OECD average of 15.3%. The percentage of the population aged 25-34 with a tertiary-level qualification is among the highest in the OECD, at 52% in 2016, compared to the OECD average of 43.1%. Employment rates for 25-34 year-olds with tertiary education are higher than the OECD average. In 2016, 87% were employed, while the OECD average rate was 82.9%.

Figure 7.26. Selected indicators compared with the average: United Kingdom



Note: For each indicator, the absolute performance is standardised (normalised) using a normative score ranging from 0 to 220, where 100 was set at the average, taking into account all OECD countries with available data in each case.
Sources: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en; OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en; OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933733277

Evolution of key education policy priorities

Table 7.26. Evolution of key education policy priorities, United Kingdom (2008-17)

Identified by	Equity and quality	Preparing students for the future
Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-17[1]	According to OECD evidence, enrolment rates in ECEC need to be increased, and the high disparities in attainment and performance according to socio-economic status should be addressed. [2015]	Key policy priorities identified by the OECD include better preparing students for labour market needs and increasing the attractiveness of VET. [2015]
Evolution of responses to EPO Surveys, 2013 and 2016-17	Boosting student performance and reducing performance gaps between students with different socio-economic backgrounds continue to be priorities, as reported by the United Kingdom. [2013; 2016-17]	In 2016, the United Kingdom identified the need to reform the skills system, as a more highly skilled population is required to help make the economy grow and raise productivity. [2016-17]

Note 1: See Annex A, Table A A.3 for the list of OECD publications consulted for this snapshot.

Selected education policy responses

The Pupil Premium programme (2011) in England (United Kingdom) aims to reduce inequities between students by providing additional school funding to support disadvantaged students and close attainment gaps. The Pupil Premium is available to students who have received free school meals at any point in the last six years. Schools decide how to use this funding. The Pupil Premium Programme (worth almost GBP 2.5 billion in each year from 2014/15 to 2017/18) increased student funding from GBP 488 per pupil in 2011/12, to GBP 1 320 per primary pupil and GBP 935 per secondary pupil in 2014/15. In comparison, funding for the programme in 2013/14 was GBP 1.875 billion (GBP 900 per disadvantaged student). In 2014/15, the government introduced different Pupil Premium rates for primary and secondary pupils. In addition, while eligible looked-after children previously qualified for the same Pupil Premium amount as deprived children (GBP 900 prior to 2014). Under "Pupil Premium Plus", introduced in 2014/15, current and previously looked-after children each qualify for funding of GBP 1 900 for the period 2014/15 to 2017/18. This amount will increase to GBP 2 300 as of April 2018. The eligibility criteria for the Service Premium have been broadened since 2011/12, with the rate has increased from GBP 200 to GBP 300.

- **Progress or impact:** Between 2015 and 2017, the UK Government and various national institutions, including the Education Policy Institute (EPI) and the Social Mobility Commission (SMC), reported on the outcomes of the Pupil Premium. In their most recent reports, both published in 2017, EPI indicated there had been some success in closing the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students across the United Kingdom. The report submitted by the SMC suggested that local authorities develop better practices and strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children (Foster and Long, 2017). In 2016, the SMC reported that although evidence suggested that the policy had had a positive effect on closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers, this "is not definitive, because it cannot definitely say what would have happened to attainment had it not been introduced" (SMC, 2016). Other reports were released by the National Audit Office and the Public Account Committee (2015), the Education Policy Institute and Social Mobility Commission (2016), and Sutton Trust (2017) (Foster and Long, 2017).

More information available at: www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm.

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Syntra Vlaanderen (2017b), "Rapport: 1 jaar duaal leren" [One year dual learning], Syntra Vlaanderen, Brussels, www.syntravlaanderen.be/rapport-1-jaar-duaal-leren (accessed 24 November 2017).

Syntra Vlaanderen (2014), *Innovation in VET: Belgium (BEFL)*, Cedefop's ReferNet network, Brussels, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/2014_Innovation_in_VET_BEFL.pdf.

Vlaanderen (Flanders) (2017), *General Overview: School Population*, http://ebl.vlaanderen.be/publications/documents/95793.

Vlaanderen Departement Onderwijs en Vorming (2017), "*Samen tegen schooluitval*" [Together against school dropout], https://assets.vlor.be/www.vlor.be/attachment/sts_standvanzaken_publiek.pdf.

Annex A. Coverage by topics, education systems and previous OECD country-based work

Table A A.1. Education Policy Outlook analytical framework

Policy Issue	Definition	Levers	Evidence for country analysis	
Students: Raising outcomes				
Equity and quality	Policies to ensure that personal or social circumstances do not hinder achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion)	Investing early on	Providing quality early childhood education and care.	
		Tackling system-level policies	Avoiding grade repetition, early tracking and student selection; managing school choice; developing funding strategies to address the needs of students and schools; designing upper secondary pathways to ensure completion; fostering opportunities for all, including underrepresented population sub-groups; improving the inclusion of migrant communities.	
		Supporting low-performing disadvantaged schools	Supporting school leadership; stimulating positive school climates; strengthening the quality of teachers; ensuring effective classroom learning strategies; linking schools with parents and community.	
Preparing students for the future	Policies to help prepare students for further education or the labour market	Upper secondary	Offering flexible choices; ensuring quality across programmes; strengthening the specific needs of the profession at this level; engaging communities, parents and the private sector; ensuring effective transition into the labour market or further education; ensuring timely access to relevant labour market information.	Ensuring lifelong learning through relevant and accessible training opportunities and timely access to relevant labour market information; tackling evolution of skills and labour market needs.
		Vocational education and training (VET)	Matching skills offered by VET programmes with labour market needs; offering adequate career guidance; ensuring quality of teachers; providing workplace training; ensuring timely access to relevant labour market information; developing tools for stakeholder engagement.	
		Tertiary education	Steering tertiary education; matching funding with priorities; assuring quality and equity; enhancing the role of tertiary education in research and innovation; strengthening links with the labour market; shaping internationalisation strategies; ensuring timely access to relevant labour market information.	

Institutions: Enhancing quality			
School improvement	Policies to strengthen delivery of education in schools that can influence student achievement	High-quality teachers	Recruitment, selection and induction; salary and working conditions; initial training; professional development opportunities and career paths.
		School leaders	Attracting, developing and retaining school principals in the profession; developing support mechanisms or actors to distribute leadership at schools.
		Learning environments	Class size, instruction time, learning strategies and interactions in schools.
Evaluation and assessment	Policies to support the measurement and improvement of school systems' outcomes	System evaluation	Evaluation of the system as a whole, of subnational education systems, programme and policy evaluation.
		School evaluation	Internal school evaluation, external school evaluations, and school leadership.
		Teacher appraisal	Probationary periods, developmental appraisal, performance management, appraisal for accountability and improvement purposes.
Systems: Governing effectively			
Governance	Ensuring effective planning, implementation and delivery of policies	Formal structures	Type of government; organisation of education system; locus of decision making.
		Setting objectives	Definitions of national education goals or priorities.
		Stakeholder process	Relevant institutions and engagement with stakeholders at all levels of education.
Funding	Policies to ensure effective and efficient investment in education systems	Economic resources in the education system	Public expenditure, GDP and share by education level.
		Use of resources at the school level	Time resources, human resources, material resources.

Source: Education Policy Outlook.

Table A A.2. Overview of education systems included in the report and key sources

	Coverage by education system					Primary sources		
	Equity and quality		Preparing students for the future					
	Chapter 2 (policy priorities)	Chapter 3 (policy trends)	Chapter 4 (policy priorities)	Chapter 5 (policy trends)	Chapter 6 (policyimplementation and evaluation)	EPO Survey 2016-17	Country Profile	OECD country-based work
Australia (AUS)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Austria (AUT)	X	X	X				X	X
Belgium (BEL)								
Flemish Community (BFl)	X	X	X	X			X	X
French Community (BFr)	X	X	X	X			X	X
German-speaking Community (BDg)	X	X	X				X	X
Canada (CAN)								X
New Brunswick	X					X		
Saskatchewan						X		
Ontario				X		X		
Federal view	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Chile (CHI)	X	X	X	X		X		X
Colombia (COL)	X		X					X
Costa Rica (CRI)	X		X					X
Czech Republic (CZE)	X	X	X	X		X		X
Denmark (DNK)			X		X			X
Estonia (EST)	X		X	X	X	X		X
Finland (FIN)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
France (FRA)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Germany (DEU)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Greece (GRC)	X		X				X	X
Hungary (HUN)	X	X	X	X		X		X
Iceland (ISL)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

	Coverage by education system					Primary sources		
	Equity and quality		Preparing students for the future					
	Chapter 2 (policy priorities)	Chapter 3 (policy trends)	Chapter 4 (policy priorities)	Chapter 5 (policy trends)	Chapter 6 (policyimplementation and evaluation)	EPO Survey 2016-17	Country Profile	OECD country-based work
Ireland (IRE)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Israel (ISR)	X		X					X
Italy (ITA)	X	X	X	X			X	X
Japan (JPN)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Kazakhstan (KAZ)	X		X					X
Korea (KOR)	X	X	X		X	X		X
Latvia (LVA)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Luxembourg (LUX)	X							X
Mexico (MEX)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Netherlands (NLD)								X
New Zealand (NZL)	X	X		X	X	X		X
Norway (NOR)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Poland (POL)	X		X					X
Portugal (PRT)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Slovak Republic (SVK)	X		X	X	X	X		X
Slovenia (SVN)	X	X	X	X		X		X
Spain (ESP)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Sweden (SWE)	X	X	X	X			X	X
Turkey (TUR)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
United Kingdom (GBR)					X			
England (ENG)	X	X	X			X		X
Northern Ireland (NIR)			X					X
Scotland (SCT)	X							X
Wales (WLS)			X					X
United States (USA)			X		X			

Table A A.3. List of publications consulted by country (last update June 2017)

AUSTRALIA

OECD (2008), OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: A Learning for Jobs Review of Australia 2008

OECD (2011), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Australia* 2011

OECD (2014), *OECD Economic Surveys: Australia 2014*

OECD (2016), *Starting Strong IV : Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care,* Country Note: Australia

OECD (2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Australia 2017*

AUSTRIA

OECD (2010), *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: A Learning for Jobs Review of Austria 2010*

OECD (2013), *A Skills beyond School Review of Austria*

OECD (2015), *OECD Economic Surveys: Austria 2015*

OECD (2016), *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Austria 2016*

OECD (2017), *Education Policy Outlook: Austria*

BELGIUM

OECD (2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Belgium*

OECD (2017), *Education Policy Outlook: Belgium*

BELGIUM (FLEMISH COMMUNITY)

OECD (2011), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: School Evaluation in the Flemish Community of Belgium 2011*

OECD (2015), *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Flemish Community of Belgium 2015*

OECD (2010), *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: A Learning for Jobs Review of Belgium Flanders 2010*

CANADA

OECD (2000, 2012, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Canada*

COLOMBIA

OECD (2013, 2015, 2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Colombia*

OECD (2016), *Education in Colombia*

CHILE

OECD (2004), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Chile 2004*

OECD (2009), *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: A Learning for Jobs Review of Chile 2009*

OECD (2013), Reviews of National Policies for Education: Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Chile 2013

OECD (2015), *OECD Economic Surveys: Chile 2015*

OECD (2015), "Better Policies" Series: *Chile Policy Priorities and more Equitable Growth 2015*

OECD (2017), Education in Chile

Santiago, P., Fizbein, A., García Jaramillo, S. and T. Radinger (2017), *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Chile 2017*

COSTA RICA

OECD (2015), *A Skills Beyond Schools Review of Costa Rica*

OECD (2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Costa Rica 2016 : Economic Assessment*

CZECH REPUBLIC

OECD (2010), *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: A Learning for Jobs Review of the Czech Republic 2010*

OECD (2012), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Czech Republic 2012*

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Czech Republic 2012*

OECD (2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Czech Republic 2016*

DENMARK

OECD (2005), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: University Education in Denmark 2005*

OECD (2011), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Denmark 2011*

OECD (2012), *A Skills beyond School Review of Denmark*

OECD (2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Denmark 2016*

ESTONIA

OECD (2012,), *OECD Economic Surveys: Estonia 2012*

OECD (2016), *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia*

FINLAND

OECD (2003), *Reviews of National Policies for Education, Finland 2003*

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Finland 2012*

OECD (2016), *Starting Strong IV : Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Country Note: Finland*

OECD (2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Finland 2016*

FRANCE

OECD (1998, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015), *OECD Economic Surveys: France*

OECD (2016), *Starting Strong IV : Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Country Note: France*

GERMANY

OECD (1998 2004, 2010, 2013, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Germany*

OECD (2013), *A Skills beyond School Review of Germany*

OECD (2016), *Starting Strong IV : Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Country Note: Germany*

GREECE

OECD (2002, 2007, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Greece*

HUNGARY

OECD (1999, 2005, 2007, 2012, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Hungary*

ICELAND

OECD (1998, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2015), OECD Economic Surveys: Iceland

OECD (2012), OECD-Iceland Improving Schools Review: Towards a Strategy to Prevent Dropout in Iceland, Result of the OECD-Iceland Workshop Preventing Dropout in Upper Secondary Schools in Iceland

IRELAND

OECD (1999, 2009, 2013,2015, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland*

OECD (2006), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Higher Education in Ireland 2006*

ISRAEL

OECD (2009, 2013, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Israel*

OECD (2014), *A Skills beyond School Review of Israel*

ITALY

OECD (1998), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Italy 1998*

OECD (2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2015, 2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Italy*

OECD (2017), *Starting Strong IV : Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Country Note:, Italy*

OECD (2017), *Education Policy Outlook: Italy*

JAPAN

OECD (2000, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2017*), OECD Economic Surveys: Japan*

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Japan 2012*

KAZAKHSTAN

OECD/The World Bank (2015), OECD Reviews of School Resources: Kazakhstan 2015

OECD (2017), *Higher Education in Kazakhstan 2017*

KOREA

OECD (1998), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Korea 1998*

OECD (2000, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Korea*

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Korea 2012*

OECD (2012), *A Skills beyond School Review of Korea*

OECD (2016), *Starting Strong IV : Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Country Note: Korea*

LATVIA

OECD (2001), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Latvia 2001*

OECD (2015, 2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Latvia*

OECD (2015), *Investing in Youth: Latvia*

OECD (2017), *Education Policy Outlook: Latvia*

LUXEMBOURG

OECD (2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2015, 2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Luxembourg*

OECD (2012), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Luxembourg 2012*

OECD (2017),*Starting Strong IV : Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care,Country Note: Luxembourg*

MEXICO

OECD (2002, 2005, 2007, 2015, 2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Mexico*

OECD (2010), *Improving Schools : Strategies for Action in Mexico*

OECD (2012), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Mexico 2012*

NETHERLANDS

OECD (2000, 2004, 2008, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Netherlands*

OECD (2014), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Netherlands 2014*

OECD (2014), *A Skills beyond School Review of the Netherlands, The Netherlands, 2014*

OECD (2016), *Starting Strong IV : Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Country Note: the Netherlands*

NEW ZEALAND

OECD (2000, 2004, 2005, 2015), *OECD Economic Surveys: New Zealand*

OECD (2011), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand 2011*

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood and Care: New Zealand 2012*

NORWAY

OECD (2002), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Lifelong Learning in Norway 2002*

OECD (2011), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Improving Lower Secondary Schools in Norway 2011*

OECD (2011), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Norway 2011*

OECD (2013), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Norway 2013*

OECD (2015), *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Review: Norway*

OECD (2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Norway 2016*

POLAND

OECD (2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Poland*

PORTUGAL

OECD (2001, 2004, 2014, 2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Portugal*

OECD (2007), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Tertiary Education in Portugal 2007*

OECD (2012), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Portugal 2012*

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood and Care: Portugal 2012*

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

OECD (2002, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014), *OECD Economic Surveys: Slovak Republic*

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Slovak Republic 2012*

OECD (2014), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Slovak Republic 2014*

OECD (2015), *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Slovak Republic 2015*

SLOVENIA

OECD (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015), *OECD Economic Surveys: Slovenia*

SPAIN

OECD (2003, 2007, 2010, 2014, 2017), *OECD Economic Surveys: Spain*

SWEDEN

OECD (2001, 2004, 2007, 2011), *OECD Economic Surveys: Sweden*

OECD (2011), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Sweden 2011*

OECD (2013), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Sweden 2013*

OECD (2015), Improving Schools in Sweden: An OECD Perspective

OECD (2015), *Education Policy Outlook: Sweden*

OECD (2016), *Getting Skills Right: Sweden*

SWITZERLAND

OECD (2003), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Tertiary Education in Switzerland 2003*

OECD (2013), *A Skills beyond School Review of Switzerland*

OECD (2015), *OECD Economic Surveys: Switzerland 2015*

TURKEY

OECD (2001, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016), *OECD Economic Surveys: Turkey*

UNITED KINGDOM

OECD (2000, 2004, 2007, 2011, 2015), *OECD Economic Surveys: United Kingdom*

UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND)

OECD (2012), *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: United Kingdom (England) 2012*

OECD (2013), *A Skills beyond School Review of England*

UNITED KINGDOM (ENGLAND & WALES)

OECD (2009), *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training: A Learning for Jobs Review of England and Wales 2009*

UNITED KINGDOM (NORTHERN IRELAND)

OECD (2014), *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Northern Ireland, United Kingdom*

UNITED KINGDOM (SCOTLAND)

OECD (2007) *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Scotland 2007 : Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*

OECD (2015), Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective

UNITED KINGDOM (WALES)

Annex B. **Previous policies collected, but not included in this report**

This annex includes policies from education systems participating in the 2016-17 policy collection exercise that had been collected by the Education Policy Outlook team up to 2015, for which it was not possible to obtain sufficient information on their evolution up to 2016-17. They are listed by country under the two topics of this report: 1) Equity and quality; and 2) Preparing students for the future. For further information on these policies, see *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen* (OECD, 2015).

1) Equity and quality

Australia

- Smarter Schools National Partnership on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities (2008-13)
- Australian Early Development Index (2009)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (2010-14)
- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (2012)

Austria

- Free compulsory year of pre-primary education (2010)

Chile

- Initiatives within the General Education Law (2009)

Czech Republic

- Inclusive Education Support Centres (2009-10)
- National Action Plan for Inclusive Education (2010)

Estonia

- Amendments to the Preschool Act of 2000 (2010)

Finland

- ECEC administration moved from Ministry of Social Affairs to Ministry of Education and Culture (2013)
- An Action Programme for Equal Opportunities in Education (2013)

France

- Primary and Secondary Schools for Ambition, Innovation and Success programs (ÉCLAIR, 2011)
- Priority Education Networks (2014)

Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia)

- Come along! – Promotion instead of retention initiative (2008)

Greece

- Under the Law on Development of Lifelong Learning, Zones of Education Priority (2010)

Ireland

- Intercultural Education Strategy (2010)

Italy

- National Curriculum for ECEC (2012)

New Zealand

- Ka Hikitia – Accelerating the Success: Education Strategy (2013-17), previously Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: the Māori Education Strategy (2008-12)
- Tataiko: Cultural integration of Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners (2012)
- An Early Learning Taskforce (2013)
- Partnership Schools/Kura Hourua Programme within the Education Amendment Act (2013)

Portugal

- Evaluation and monitoring guidelines for preschool education (2011)

Slovenia

- Raising the Social and Cultural Capital in Areas Inhabited by Members of the Roma Community project (2011-13)
- Liven Up the School initiative (2011-14)
- Measures and Guidelines for immigrant children in kindergartens and schools (2012)
- Programme of Education for Professionals' Skills Improvement for the Successful Integration of Immigrant Students in Education (2013)

Spain

- Programmes for Reinforcement, Guidance and Support (2010)

Turkey

- Preschool Education Project (2010-13)
- International Inspiration project (2011)
- Education Transport Programme (2011-13)
- 4+4+4 Policy (2012)

2) Preparing students for the future

Australia

- National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development (2009)
- National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (2009-13)
- Skills Quality Authority (2011)
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (2011)
- MyUniversity website (2011)
- Australian Qualifications Framework (2011)
- Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) (2014)
- Advancing Quality in Higher Education (2012)

Austria

- Apprenticeships and upper secondary certificate (2008)
- Mapping Process for the Austrian Higher Education System (2011)
- Quality Management System – (QIBB, 2012)
- National Strategy against Early School Leaving (2012)
- Additional places in universities of applied sciences (2012-15)

Belgium (Fl)

- Parliamentary Act (2012)

Belgium (Fr)

- The Landscape Decree (2014)
- Reorganisation of curriculum by units of study (2010)
- Canada (New Brunswick)
- Labour Force and Skills Development Strategy (2013)

Chile

- Superintendent of Higher Education (2011)

Czech Republic

- National System of Occupations (NSO) and National Qualifications System (NQS) (2011)
- Strategic Plan for the Scholarly, Scientific, Research, Development, Innovation, Artistic and Other Creative Activities of Higher Education Institutions (2011-15)

Finland

- Universities Act (2009)
- Reform of student admissions and the central government transfer system (2011)
- Polytechnics reform (2011-14)
- National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning (2012)

France

- Reforms of VET at upper secondary levels (2009)
- Law of 22 July 2013 to promote integration in the labour market
- University Communities (2013)

Germany

- New regulations (2009)
- Information campaign (2011)
- Recognition Act (2012)
- German Qualifications Framework (DQR, 2013)
- Länder Recognition Acts (2014)

Greece

- Law on the Structure, Operation, Quality-Assurance of Studies and Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions (2011)
- Law on Organisation and Operation of the Institute of Youth and Lifelong Learning and of the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance and Other Provisions – accreditation of non-formal learning (2013)

Hungary

- System-level reforms (2011-13)

Iceland

- Quality Council for Universities (2010)

Ireland

- National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (2011)

Italy

- University Reform – Law No. 240 (2010)
- Agreement between the State and Regions (2010)

Japan

- Guidelines for developing VET education (2011)

Korea

- Learning Accounts (2009)

Norway

- National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (2009)
- New Possibilities-Ny GIV- initiative (2010-13)
- National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2011)

Portugal

- Programme to Combat School Failure and Early School Leaving (2012)

Slovenia

- Updated subject curricula (2008)
- Competence-based approach in VET curricula (2008-11)
- Electronic higher education information system (2012)
- Central Register of Participants in Education Institutions (CEUVIZ) (2011), Higher Vocational Education Database

Spain

- National Reform Plan (2012)
- Proposals for reform and improvement of quality and efficiency of the Spanish university system (2013)

Sweden

- New upper secondary VET system, including apprenticeships (2011)
- A new curriculum for upper secondary education (2011)

Turkey

- Vocational Education Project for Employment (2009)
- New Trends in Illumination Project (2009)
- Two-stage university exams (2010)
- National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (2010)
- Specialised Vocational Training Centres Project (2010-15)
- Railway Operation in European Credit System (2011-13)
- Consultation on restructure and redesign of tertiary education system (2012)
- Vocational and Technical Education Strategy Paper and Action Plan (2013-17)
- Law No. 29072 to increase access and coverage for preschool students (2014)

United Kingdom (Wales)

- Review of Qualifications for 14-19 year-olds (2011)

United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)

- Entitlement Framework (2013)

Annex C. **Policy lenses by policy priority**

Based on findings of this report, the following boxes list education systems where specific education policy priorities have been identified by either the OECD or the education system, as well as selected related policies in those systems.

Equity and quality

Box A C.1 Policy priority: Increasing access to and quality of ECEC

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUS, CZE, DEU, FIN, FRA, ITA, JPN, KOR, LUX, LVA, PRT, SVK, ESP, GBR (ENG)
- **EPO Survey:** CHL
- **Total number of education systems:** 15

Selected related policies:

- **Australia:** Series of National Partnership Agreements on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (2008-19)
- **Austria:** School Entry and Primary School package of the 2015 education reform (2016)
- **Belgium (Fl)** [SN]: Priority access to ECEC for children under 3 (2009) for single parents and/or low-income parents
- **Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Pact for Excellence in Teaching (2015-30)
- **Belgium (Dg)** [SN]: Decree on childhood care (2014) providing priority access to ECEC for children under 3
- **Canada**: [SN]: CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework (2014); [SN]: Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework (2017)
- **Chile** [SN]: Series of policies to improve coverage and equity in ECEC (2014-18)
- **Czech Republic:** Innovation of the Framework Educational Programme of Pre-primary education (2012); [SN]: Amendment to the Education Act (2016) making preschool education compulsory (2017-20)
- **Finland:** [SN]: National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education (2014); [SN]: National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2016)
- **France:** Reform of the Republic's School (2013); New curriculum for all levels of compulsory education (2013/2014)
- **Germany:** Legal entitlement to an ECEC place to children aged 1 and 2 (2013); [SN]: Process to improve the quality of ECEC and negotiate national quality goals (2014) through the Guidelines for the promotion of quality development for good education in early childhood (2017) and the ECEC Prize (2018)
- **Hungary:** Decree on the Basic National Programme of Kindergarten Education (2012); Lowering the age of compulsory participation in kindergarten from age 5 to 3 (2015-16) as part of the National Public Education Act
- **Iceland** [SN]: National curriculum guidelines for pre-primary (2011)
- **Ireland:** Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) "free preschool" programme (2010, expanded in 2016);

After-School Childcare Scheme (ACSS, 2013); Community Childcare Subvention (CCS, 2016) for low-income families

- **Italy:** National Curriculum Guidelines Reform for ISCED levels, including pre-primary education (2012, revised 2018) (Ministerial Decree No. 254/2012); Larger structures providing more integrated services for children aged 0-6 (2015, 2017)
- **Korea:** [SN]: After-school childcare for 3-5 year-olds (2013); [SN]: Nuri curriculum (2012)
- **Norway:** New regulation and a subsidy scheme for parental fees for ECEC (2016); Revised Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (2017) (replaced The Framework Plan of 2006); Legal right to a place in ECEC from age 1 (2009)
- **Portugal:** [SN]: Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (2012, 2016); [SN]: Universal free preschool for children aged 3-5 by 2019 (2017-19)
- **Slovenia:** Kindergarten Act 2008; Amendments to the Kindergarten Act (2010, 2017)
- **Sweden:** ECEC curriculum (1998, revised 2016)

Box A C.2. Policy priority: Bridging performance gaps between students from different minority groups

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUS, CAN, CZE, ISR, MEX, NZL, SVK
- **EPO Survey:** AUS, CAN (NB), MEX, NZL
- **Total number of education systems:** 7

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia:** [SN]: Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP, 2017); (Queensland): National Indigenous Reform Agreement (2008)
- **Canada (Nova Scotia):** SchoolsPlus (2008)
- **New Zealand:** Māori-medium education (1985); The Pasifika Education Plan (2013-17)
- **Portugal:** National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities (ENICC, 2013-20)
- **Slovenia:** Series of projects to promote successful integration of Roma students in schools (2008-21)

Box A C.3. Policy priority: Decreasing performance and attainment gaps due to socio-economic status

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CHL, CZE, DEU, GRC, HUN, IRL, JPN, KOR, LVA, LUX, MEX, NOR, PRT, SVK, SVN, SWE, TUR, GBR (ENG, SCT); COL, KAZ
- **EPO Survey:** AUS, BEL (Fl, Fr), CAN (NB), CZE, DEU, FRA, IRL, JPN, MEX, NZL, SVK, TUR, GBR (ENG)
- **Total number of education systems:** 29

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia:** [SN]: Smith Family's Learning for Life Program (from 2016-17 to 2019-20)
- **Austria:** School Entry and Primary School package of the 2015 education reform (2016); [SN]: Expansion of all-day schooling (2017-25)
- **Belgium (Fl):** Funding based on socio-economic background of school and students as part of the Parliamentary Act for primary and secondary education (2008)
- **Belgium (Fr):** [SN]: Instrument for differentiated support (2009, 2017)
- **Canada (Nova Scotia):** SchoolsPlus (2008)
- **Chile:** Preferential School Subsidy (SEP, 2008); [SN]: School Inclusion Law (2015)
- **Czech Republic** [SN]: Amendment to the Education Act (2016) making preschool education compulsory (2017-20)
- **England:** Pupil Premium Programme (2011)
- **France:** [SN]: School of Confidence (2017)
- **Germany:** Education Alliances (2012) supporting out-of-school programmes (including the Education Package [2011]); Education through Language and Writing (2013-19); Reform measures resolved by all *Länder* in the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (2013)
- **Hungary:** [SN]: 2017 Revision of the National Core Curriculum (2012)
- **Japan:** [SN]: Grant-type scholarship system (2017)
- **Mexico:** [SN]: National Scholarship Programme (2014)
- **Norway:** [SN]: Homework assistance programme (2010)
- **United Kingdom (England):** Pupil Premium (2011)

Box A C.4. Policy priority: Improving integration of students with special educational needs into mainstream education

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** EST, LVA
- **EPO Survey:** AUS, BEL (Fl, Fr), CZE, LVA, SVN
- **Total number of education systems:** 6

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia:** National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program (2008)
- **Belgium (Fl):** M-Decree (2015)
- **Estonia:** Amendments (2017) to the Preschool Child Care Institutions Act (2000) and the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (2010) to support students with special educational needs
- **Iceland:** [SN]: Regulation for students with special needs in public and private upper secondary schools (No. 230/2012, based on Article 34 of the Upper Secondary Act, No. 92/2008)
- **Latvia:** Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020, through the Promotion of the inclusion of students with special needs (2011)
- **Slovenia:** Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2013); Act on comprehensive special treatment of preschool children (2017)

Box A C.5. Policy priority: Bridging performance gaps among students and regions

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** CHL, EST, HUN, ITA, LVA, LUX, MEX, POL, PRT, SVN, ESP, TUR; COL
- **EPO Survey:** EST, ITA, LVA, ESP, TUR
- **Total number of education systems:** 13

Selected key related policies:

- **Portugal:** Third Generation of the Education Territories of Priority Intervention Programme (TEIP, 2012)

Box A C.6. Policy priority: Bridging performance gaps among boys and girls

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUT, EST, FIN, ISL, LVA, MEX, NZL, GBR (SCT)
- **EPO Survey:** FIN, LVA, NZL
- **Total number of education systems:** 8

Selected key related policies:

- **Turkey:** [SN]: Project for Increasing School Attendance Rates Especially for Girls (KEP-2, 2015-17) (replaced Project for Increasing Enrolment Rates Especially for Girls [KEP-1, 2011-13])

Box A C.7. Policy priority: Ensuring success of immigrant students in the education system

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), DEU, FIN, FRA, ISL, LUX, POL, SWE, CHE, TUR, GBR (ENG)
- **EPO Survey:** BEL (Fl), DEU, FIN, ISL, SWE, TUR
- **Total number of education systems:** 14

Selected key related policies:

- **Austria:** School Entry and Primary School package of the 2015 education reform (2016); [SN]: Language support for non-native German speakers 2016/17
- **Belgium (Fl):** [SN]: Special measures to enhance the integration of refugees in the education system (2015-16)
- **Belgium (Fr):** [SN]: DASPA Decree (2012)
- **France:** [SN]: National action plan to support migrants (2017) (including the "Welcome-refugees" information portal (2015))
- **Finland:** National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for Basic Education (2015), National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing for General Upper Secondary Education (2015), Preparatory Education for Vocational Training (2015)
- **Germany:** Qualification Initiative “Getting ahead through education” (2008); National Action Plan on

Integration (NAP-I, 2011); Programme on language education (2016); Programme on building bridges to early education for families with refugee background and low SES (2017)

- **Slovenia:** Special model to enhance the integration of refugee children and students in the Slovenian education system (2015)

Box A C.8. Policy priority: Decreasing the share of low performers in the education system

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CHL, CZE, DEU, FRA, GRC, HUN, ISL, ITA, LUX, MEX, SVK, SWE, ESP, GBR (SCT); CRI
- **EPO Survey:** CZE, DEU, FRA, ISL, MEX, SVN, SWE, GBR (ENG)
- **Total number of education systems:** 20

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia:** [SN]: Smith Family's Learning for Life Program (from 2016-17 to 2019-20)
- **Austria:** School Entry and Primary School package of the 2015 education reform (2016)
- **Canada:** [SN]: CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework (2014); [SN]: Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework (2017)
- **Belgium (Fl):** Priority access to ECEC for children under 3.
- **Belgium (Fr):** [SN]: Pact for Excellence in Teaching (2015-30)
- **France:** Reform of the Republic's Schools (2013)
- **Germany:** [SN]: Support strategy for poorer-performing pupils (2010); Education Through Language and Writing (2013-19)
- **Hungary:** Decree on the Basic National Programme of Kindergarten Education (2012); 2017 Revision of the National Core Curriculum (2012)
- **Ireland:** Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) "free pre-school" programme (2010, expanded in 2016); After-School Childcare Scheme (ACSS) (2013); Community Childcare Subvention (CCS, 2016) for low-income families
- **Japan:** [SN]: Comprehensive After-School Plan for Children (2014); [SN]: Project for Promoting Community Cooperation Activities for Learning and Education (2017)
- **Mexico** [SN]: New Educational Model for Compulsory Education: Education for Freedom and Creativity (2017)
- **Spain** [SN]: Under the Organic Law on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE, 2013), optional vocational pathways and new VET diploma
- **Sweden:** ECEC curriculum (1998, revised 2016)
- **United Kingdom (England):** Pupil Premium (2011)

Box A C.9. Policy priority: Reducing high levels of grade repetition

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), DEU, FRA, LUX, MEX, PRT, ESP
- **EPO Survey:** BEL (Fr), PRT, ESP
- **Total number of education systems:** 9

Selected key related policies:

- **Belgium (Fr):** Take-off Project (2012)
- **Portugal** [SN]: Series of policies to promote student success, including a new framework of competences, a National Plan for School Success, tutoring for students who repeat two grades and the Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy Programme

Box A C.10. Policy priority: Delaying tracking of students into the system

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CZE, DEU
- **EPO Survey:** No cases reported
- **Total number of education systems:** 6

Selected key related policies:

- **Austria:** New Secondary School (2007/08)

Preparing students for the future

Box A C.11. Policy priority: Reducing high early school leaving rates

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CHL, DEU, EST, FRA, ISL, ITA, LVA, MEX, PRT, SVK, SVN, ESP, SWE; COL
- **EPO Survey:** BEL (Fl, Fr), DEU, FRA, ITA, LVA, NOR, PRT, ESP, SWE
- **Total number of education systems:** 18

Selected key related policies:

- **Austria** [SN]: Apprenticeship until 18 (2017)
- **Belgium (Fl):** [SN]: Master plan for secondary education and policy measures for the reduction of early school leaving (2013); "Together against Early School Leaving" (2015) (previously Action Plan on Early School Leaving [2013] and 'Spijbelplan' [2012]); Early School Leaving Monitor (2016)
- **Belgium (Fr):** [SN]: Decree mandating work experience in third year of secondary education (2016); [SN]: Pact for Excellence in Teaching (2015-30)
- **Canada (Quebec):** I Care about School strategy (2009)
- **France:** United Against School Dropout (2014)

- **Germany:** Qualification Initiative Getting ahead through education (2008); Educational Chains Initiative (2010) for career support; VerA programme (2010-20); Career orientation programme (2016) part of the Ways to Education for Refugees' programme
- **Hungary:** [SN]: Public Education Bridge Programme (2016); [SN]: VET Bridge Programme (2016)
- **Iceland** [SN]: White Paper on Education Reform (2014)
- **Italy:** Reform of upper secondary education (2010-15)
- **Latvia:** Support to students at risk of social exclusion (2007-13; 2014-20); Regulation for absent students (2011); Educational Development Guidelines (2014-20); National Reform Programme (2016)
- **Mexico:** [SN]: Constructing Yourself (2008); [SN]: Compulsory upper secondary education (2012); [SN]: Movement against school dropout (2013/14)
- **New Zealand:** Achievement Retention Transitions programme (2013), within the Youth Guarantee (2010)
- **Norway:** Certificate of Practice Scheme (2008)
- **Slovenia** [SN]: CroCooS (2014-17)
- **Spain:** Programme to Reduce Early Dropout in Education and Training (2014-20)

Box A C.12. Policy priority: Raising the attractiveness of VET

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CZE, DEU, DNK, EST, FRA, GRC, IRL, ISR, MEX, PRT, SVN, ESP, SWE
- **EPO Survey:** BEL (Fr), CAN (federal view), DEU, PRT, SVK, ESP, SWE
- **Total number of education systems:** 18

Selected key related policies:

- **Belgium (Fl):** New model of dual learning (dual vocational learning) (2015)
- **Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Pact for Excellence in Teaching (2015-30)
- **Canada:** Canada Apprentice Loan (2015)
- **Chile** [SN]: National VET Policy (2016)
- **Germany:** Qualification Initiative "Getting ahead through education" (2008); [SN]: Vocational training initiative (2016)
- **Hungary:** Szabóky Adolf vocational scholarship programme (2016) formerly known as the Vocational School Scholarship Scheme
- **Italy:** Higher Technical Institutes (2011) and short-cycle tertiary programmes
- **Portugal:** Reforms to the VET offering at secondary level (2012-17); [SN]: Qualifica Programme (2016) including Qualifica Centres; [SN]: National Credit System (2016)
- **Slovenia** [SN]: VET modernisation measures (2016-21) (Apprenticeship Act [2017], Amendments to the Vocational and Technical Education Act [2017])
- **Spain:** Dual Vocational Training Model (2012)

Box A C.13. Policy priority: Creating or strengthening apprenticeship systems

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUS, AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), FRA, IRL, ITA, LVA, MEX, SVK, GBR (ENG, WLS); CRI
- **EPO Survey:** CAN (Alberta), EST, ISL, SVN
- **Total number of education systems:** 18

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia:** [SN]: Preparing Secondary Students for Work framework (2014); [SN]: Smith Family's Learning for Life Program (2016–17 to 2019–20)
- **Belgium (Fl):** New model of dual learning (dual vocational learning) (2015/16)
- **Canada** [SN]: Harmonise apprenticeship training for 30 Red Seal trades by 2020 (2016)
- **Chile:** National VET Policy (2016)
- **Estonia** [SN]: Reforms of the VET system (Vocational Educational Institution Act [2013], Vocational Education Standards [2013])
- **Finland** [SN]: Reform of vocational upper secondary education (2018)
- **Hungary:** Szabóky Adolf vocational scholarship programme (2016) formerly known as the Vocational School Scholarship Scheme
- **Ireland:** Education and Training Boards Bill (2012); SOLAS - Further Education and Training Authority (2013); Further Education and Training Strategy (2014-19); [SN]: Action plan for apprenticeships (2016-2020)
- **Italy:** Good School Reform (2015) (April 2017 implementing Decree No 63. on the right to study); Jobs Act (2015); Decree No. 61 of 13 April 2017 (2017) modernising and streamlining vocational educational offering
- **Japan** [SN]: Partial amendment to the School Education Act to implement new higher education institutions (2017)
- **Latvia:** Reform of vocational education curricula (2008-20); [SN]: Action Plan for 2016-20 Development of Adult Education Provision and its Governance Model
- **Mexico** [SN]: Dual training system (2013)
- **New Zealand:** Secondary-Tertiary Programmes (STPs, Trades Academies, 2009); [SN]: Service Academies (2009); Vocational Pathways as part of the Youth Guarantee (2010)
- **Norway** [SN]: Working Life Course for lower secondary students (2009)
- **Portugal:** Reforms to the VET offering at secondary level (2012-17); [SN]: National Credit System (2016)
- **Slovak Republic:** [SN]: National project for the support of dual education (2016); [SN]: Amendment on VET (2018)
- **Slovenia:** [SN]: VET modernisation measures (2016-21) (Apprenticeship Act [2017], Amendments to the Vocational and Technical Education Act [2017]); Reform of vocational education and training (2008-11); [SN]: Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act (2015)
- **Spain:** Dual Vocational Training Model (2012); Under the Organic Law on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE, (2013), optional vocational pathways and new VET diploma
- **Sweden** [SN]: Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (NAHVE, 2009)

Box A C.14. Policy priority: Increasing employer engagement in VET

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUS, AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CHL, CZE, DEU, EST, GRC, ISL, IRL, ISR, ITA, KOR, LVA, MEX, POL, SVK, SVN, ESP, USA; COL, CRI
- **EPO Survey:** BEL (Fl), CAN, EST
- **Total number of education systems:** 25

Selected key related policies:

- **Canada:** Increase employer engagement for improved job opportunities and outcomes for apprentices (2016); [SN]: Harmonise apprenticeship training for 30 Red Seal trades by 2020 (2016)
- **Chile:** National VET Policy (2016)
- **Japan:** Partial amendment to the School Education Act to implement new higher education institutions (2017)
- **Slovak Republic** [SN]: Amendment on VET (2018)
- **Slovenia** [SN]: VET modernisation measures (2016-21) (Apprenticeship Act [2017], Amendments to the Vocational and Technical Education Act [2017])
- **Spain:** Dual Vocational Training Model (2012)

Box A C.15. Policy priority: Increasing equal access to tertiary education

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUS, AUT, CAN (federal view), CHL, DEU, EST, ISL, ISR, ITA, JPN, PRT, SVN, CHE; COL, CRI, KAZ
- **EPO Survey:** AUS, JPN, TUR
- **Total number of education systems:** 18

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia:** Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (2010)
- **Belgium (Fl):** Short-cycle tertiary education as part of the national qualifications process (2009); A national qualifications' structure (2009-13)
- **Belgium (Fr)** [SN]: Decree that implements dual vocational education in higher education for certain fields of study and programme types (2016)
- **Chile:** [SN]: Tuition-free higher education (2016); [SN]: New Access System for higher education
- **France** [SN]: Program of Assistance to the Emergency Hospitality of Scientists in Exile (PAUSE, 2017)
- **Germany:** Qualification Initiative Getting ahead through education (2008)
- **Mexico:** National Scholarship Programme (2014)
- **New Zealand:** Tertiary Education Strategy (2010-15; 2014-19)
- **Turkey** [SN]**:** Facilitation of Procedures for Equivalence of Diplomas for Syrian students (2013)

Box A C.16. Policy priority: Increasing the quality of tertiary education

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUS, CHL, CZE, DEU, GRC, IRL, ITA, JPN, KOR, LVA, NOR, POL, SVK, TUR; COL, CRI
- **EPO Survey:** CZE, DEU, FIN, LVA
- **Total number of education systems:** 17

Selected key related policies:

- **Germany** [SN]: Treaty on the accreditation of higher education (2018)
- **Ireland** [SN]: Surveys for the improvement of quality (2014, 2015, 2017)
- **Latvia:** Strategy for improving higher education system (2014-20); Academic Information Centre (AIC, 2015)
- **Slovak Republic:** Amendment to the Higher Education Act (2013)
- **Sweden** [SN]: National system for quality assurance of higher education (2017)

Box A C.17. Policy priority: Internationalisation of the higher education sector

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** FIN, JPN, LVA, NOR, SVK, SVN, CHE; KAZ
- **EPO Survey:** FIN, SVN
- **Total number of education systems**: 8

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia** [SN]: New Colombo Plan (2013)
- **Finland:** International strategy for higher education and research (2017–25) (previously Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions [2009-15])
- **Japan:** [SN]: 300 000 International Students Plan (2008); Go Global Japan (2012); Revitalisation Strategy (2013); Top Global University Project (2014)
- **Latvia:** Internationalisation Strategy (2015)
- **Slovenia:** Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education (2016-20)

Box A C.18. Policy priority: Addressing skills mismatch

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), CHL, CZE, EST, FRA, ISL, IRL, ISR, ITA, KOR, MEX, POL, PRT, SVK, SVN, ESP, SWE, TUR, GBR (NIR); COL, CRI, KAZ
- **EPO Survey:** BEL (Fl), CAN, CZE, EST, FIN, ISL, ITA, LVA, PRT, SVK, ESP, SWE, GBR (ENG)
- **Total number of education systems: 29**

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia:** National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform (2012-17)
- **Finland:** Youth Guarantee (2013)
- **Ireland:** Springboard programme (2011)
- **Italy:** Youth Guarantee (2014)
- **Latvia:** Youth Guarantee (2013)
- **New Zealand:** Youth Guarantee (2010)
- **Slovenia:** Youth Guarantee (2014)

Box A C.19. Policy priority: Decreasing levels of youth unemployment and NEETs

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** EST, FRA, GRC, IRL, ITA, KOR, SVK; CRI
- **EPO Survey:** FIN, IRL, ITA, JPN, PRT, SVN
- **Total number of education systems:** 12

Selected key related policies:

- **Canada:** Job Bank (2014)
- **Finland:** Youth Guarantee (2013); 19 measures to promote the well-being of children and young people, prevent exclusion and reduce the number of NEET youths (part of the Government Action Plan [2017–19])
- **Ireland:** Action Plan for Jobs (2012)
- **Italy:** Youth Guarantee (2014)
- **Slovenia:** Youth Guarantee (2014)

Box A C.20. Policy priority: Improving transitions to the labour market

Identified in education systems according to:

- **OECD:** AUT, BEL (Fl, Fr, Dg), EST, GRC, HUN, ISL, IRL, ITA, MEX, SVK, ESP; COL
- **EPO Survey:** BEL (Fl), CAN (federal view), FRA, JPN, SVK, SVN, ESP, GBR (ENG)
- **Total number of education systems: 18**

Selected key related policies:

- **Australia:** [SN]: Smith Family's Learning for Life Program (2016–17 to 2019–20); [SN]: Policies to strengthen STEM (2016-2026) (Restoring the Focus on STEM measure [2014-15 to 2017-18], Pathways in Technology [2015-16 to 2020-21], Inspiring all Australians in Digital Literacy and STEM measure under the National Innovation and Science Agenda [2016-17 to 2019-20], National STEM School Education Strategy [2016-2026]); National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform (2012)
- **Austria:** [SN]: New Upper Level Scheme (2012); [SN]: Federal Act on the National Qualifications Framework (2016)
- **Belgium (Fl):** [SN]: An Agreement between the Flemish Government and the Social Partners on Professional Careers (2012); [SN]: Ethical Trading Initiative for Young People Programme (2013)
- **Belgium (Fr):** [SN]: Allocation of funds to projects aiming to equip young people with relevant skills and support their transition into the labour market (2015); [SN]: Decree on higher education defined an alternative pathway for the acquisition of higher education qualifications in specific areas leading to jobs where there are skills shortages (2016)
- **Canada:** Job Bank website (2014); [SN]: (Ontario) Technology and Learning Fund (2014-2017); [SN]: Increase employer engagement for improved job opportunities and outcomes for apprentices (2016)
- **Czech Republic** [SN]: Revision of the Framework Educational Programme
- **Chile:** National VET Policy (2016)
- **Finland:** Youth Guarantee (2013); [SN]: 19 measures to promote the well-being of children and young people, prevent exclusion and reduce the number of NEET youths (part of the Government Action Plan 2017–2019)
- **France** [SN]: Reforms of upper secondary education terminal examination in general and technological tracks,

and the transformation of upper secondary education (2018)

- **Germany** [SN]: Education Offensive in the Digital Agenda (2014-17)
- **Iceland:** [SN]: Adult Education Act (2010); [SN]: Reforms on upper secondary education (2011); National Qualification Framework (NQF) for all school levels (2016)
- **Ireland:** Springboard programme (2011); Action Plan for Jobs (2012); Regional Clusters (2014); [SN]: Digital Strategy for schools (2015-2020)
- **Italy:** Youth Guarantee (2014); Decree No. 61 of 13 April 2017 (2017) modernising and streamlining vocational educational offering
- **Japan:** National Curriculum Standard for high school (2009); Revision of the National Curriculum Standard (2009); [SN]: Third Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (2018-22) (replaced the Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education [2013-17])
- **Korea** [SN]: The National Competency Standards (2013)
- **Latvia:** Youth Guarantee (2013); Strategy for improving higher education system (2014-20); [SN]: Action Plan for 2016-2020 Development of Adult Education Provision and its Governance Model
- **Mexico:** New Education Model (2017)
- **New Zealand:** National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA, 2009), part of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQA); Youth Guarantee (2010)
- **Portugal:** [SN]: Youth Guarantee (2013; 2016-20); [SN]: The Passport Qualifica (2016); [SN]: National Credit System (2016)
- **Slovenia:** Youth Guarantee (2014)
- **Turkey** [SN]: New system for transitioning to upper secondary education (2017/18)

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