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Education and Training Monitor 2022

Accompanying the document

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area

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Education and Training Monitor 2022

POLAND



The Education and Training Monitor's country reports present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy development at all education levels in EU Member States. They provide the reader with more in-depth insight of the performance of countries with regard to the EU level targets agreed within the EEA. They are based on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence available.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 focuses on how the Member State has addressed or is addressing one of its education challenges. Section 3 covers early childhood education and care. Section 4 deals with school education policies. Section 5 covers vocational education and training and adult learning. Finally, Section 6 discusses measures in higher education.

The Education and Training Monitor's country reports were prepared by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), with contributions from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL).

The document was completed on 30 September 2022

More background data at:

<https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2022/en/>



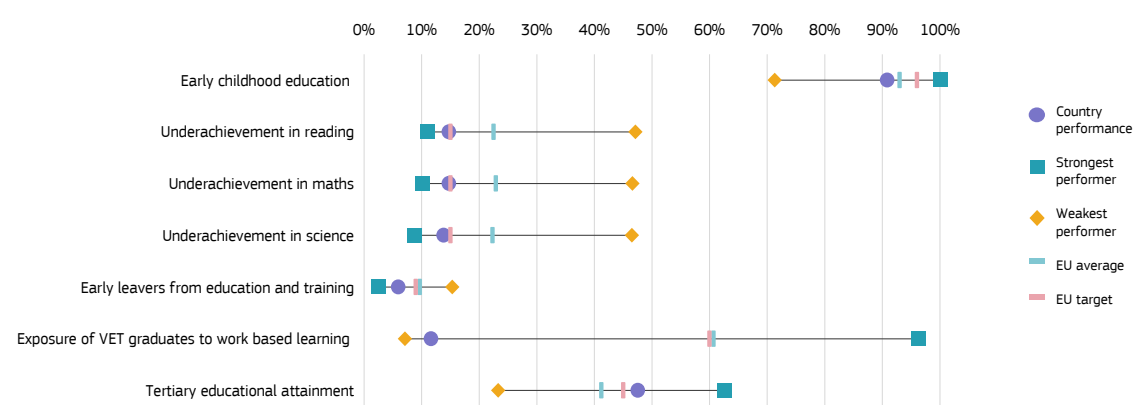
1. Key indicators

Figure 1: Key indicators overview

| | | | Poland | | EU | |
|---|--|-------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | | 2011 | 2021 | 2011 | 2021 |
| EU-level targets | | | 2030 target | | | |
| Participation in early childhood education (from age 3 to starting age of compulsory primary education) | ≥ 96 % | | 76.4% ^{13,d} | 90.8% ²⁰ | 91.8% ¹³ | 93.0% ²⁰ |
| Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills | < 15% | | 25.3% ¹³ | : | : | : |
| Low achieving 15-year-olds in: | Reading | < 15% | 15.0% ⁰⁹ | 14.7% ¹⁸ | 19.7% ⁰⁹ | 22.5% ¹⁸ |
| | Maths | < 15% | 20.5% ⁰⁹ | 14.7% ¹⁸ | 22.7% ⁰⁹ | 22.9% ¹⁸ |
| | Science | < 15% | 13.1% ⁰⁹ | 13.8% ¹⁸ | 18.2% ⁰⁹ | 22.3% ¹⁸ |
| Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24) | < 9 % | | 5.6% | 5.9% ^b | 13.2% | 9.7% ^b |
| Exposure of VET graduates to work-based learning | ≥ 60 % (2025) | | : | 11.6% | : | 60.7% |
| Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34) | ≥ 45 % | | 39.0% | 40.6% ^b | 33.0% | 41.2% ^b |
| Participation of adults in learning (age 25-64) | ≥ 47 % (2025) | | : | : | : | : |
| Other contextual indicators | | | | | | |
| Equity indicator (percentage points) | | | : | 10.6 ¹⁸ | : | 19.30 ¹⁸ |
| Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24) | Native | | 5.6% | 5.9% ^b | 11.9% | 8.5% ^b |
| | EU-born | | : | : | 25.3% | 21.4% ^b |
| | Non EU-born | | 50.2% | : | 31.4% | 21.6% ^b |
| Upper secondary level attainment (age 20-24, ISCED 3-8) | | | 90.1% | 90.6% ^b | 79.6% | 84.6% ^b |
| Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34) | Native | | 39.0% | 40.4% ^b | 34.3% | 42.1% ^b |
| | EU-born | | : | : | 28.8% | 40.7% ^b |
| | Non EU-born | | 50.2% ^u | 63.5% ^b | 23.4% | 34.7% ^b |
| Education investment | Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP | | 5.4% | 5.2% ²⁰ | 4.9% | 5.0% ²⁰ |
| | Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure | | 12.3% | 10.7% ²⁰ | 10.0% | 9.4% ²⁰ |

Sources: Eurostat (UOE, LFS, COFOG); OECD (PISA). Further information can be found in Annex I and at *Monitor Toolbox*. Notes: The 2018 EU average on PISA reading performance does not include ES; the indicator used (ECE) refers to early-childhood education and care programmes which are considered by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to be 'educational' and therefore constitute the first level of education in education and training systems – ISCED level 0; the equity indicator shows the gap in the share of underachievement in reading, mathematics and science (combined) among 15-year-olds between the lowest and highest quarters of socio-economic status; b = break in time series, d = definition differs, u = low reliability, : = not available, 09 = 2009, 13 = 2013, 18 = 2018, 20 = 2020.

Figure 2: Position in relation to strongest and weakest performers



Source: DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2021, UOE 2020) and OECD (PISA 2018).

2. A focus on quality inclusive education

Despite some improvements, a high proportion of students with disabilities remain in segregated educational settings.

Current legislation¹ ensures the right of all children, including those with disabilities, to attend any type of school, while the education system should ensure support adapted to children's needs, including targeted approaches. While the proportion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools increased between 2010 and 2018, the level of segregation and disparities in educational attainment remains high. The related urban-rural divide is also stark: in 2018, 12.2 % of people with disabilities of working age living in cities completed higher education compared to 3.9% of those living in rural areas (European Commission, 2021a). In 2018/2019, 46% of pupils with special educational needs in primary schools attended mainstream classes, 19% were in inclusive classes², and 33% in special primary schools. While 32.2% of people with disabilities completed tertiary or equivalent education, slightly above the EU average, the disability equality gap is wider, at 17.7 pps (EU 14.4 pps). Furthermore, the European Disability Expertise report highlights the outstanding recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities concerning quality inclusive education (European Commission, 2021a).

Supported by sound evidence, Poland is taking steps to improve the quality of inclusive education. Supported by the European Commission's structural reform support programme, the Ministry of Education and Science (the Ministry) has developed, in cooperation with the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, solutions for improving the

quality of inclusive education, based on a list of recommendations and priority actions³. According to the baseline report prepared for the Ministry, the most acute problems are the lack of specialists, mainly psychologists and psychiatrists, cooperation models between relevant institutions, low awareness of special needs and inclusive education, including among parents, and teachers' need for support and knowledge about children's most common disorders (Podgorska-Jachnik, 2021). The draft law on inclusive education⁴ aims to develop a cross-disciplinary support system for children, students and families, a three-level system of early development support, and a new special needs diagnostics system, including monitoring and evaluation of individual support measures. The role of special education institutions will be expanded to support inclusive mainstream education. New supervisory measures are proposed to ensure the quality of and support for developing teaching staff's skills in inclusive education. Given different organisational challenges schools have faced in recent years, implementing all the changes will require careful planning. An information campaign was recently launched⁵, but a long-term inclusive education strategy, including monitoring and evaluation measures, would enable greater stakeholder involvement and continuous quality improvement.

New legislation aims to increase the number of specialist support staff in mainstream kindergartens and schools. The Act of 17 May 2022 amending the Education Law and other acts^{6,7} establishes the minimum number of

¹ Polish Constitution, Act of 16.12.2016 of Education Law, Children's Rights Convention, Convention on Persons with Disabilities.

² Mainstream classes with three to five students with special educational needs.

³ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/projekt-realizowany-w-ramach-program-wsparcia-reform-strukturalnych>

⁴ <https://edukacjawzasiegureki.pl/edukacja-wlaczajaca/projekt-ustawy-o-wsparciu-dzieci-uczniow-i-rodzicow-glowne-rozwiazania/> ;

⁵ <https://edukacjawzasiegureki.pl/kategoria/edukacja-wlaczajaca/>

⁶ <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20220001116/T/D20221116L.pdf> ; <https://www.prawo.vulcan.edu.pl/przegdok.asp?qdatprz=a&t&qplikid=4186>

⁷ <https://www.ore.edu.pl/2022/06/edukacja-wlaczajaca-odpowiedzia-na-potrzeby-wszystkich-polskich-uczniow/>

specialists⁸ and a new special educational needs teaching post in mainstream kindergartens and schools. The total number of these specialists in mainstream settings should increase from 22 000 in September 2022 to 51 000 in September 2024. To support the first stage of this, around EUR 110 million has been allocated to local governments. Earlier, as of 1 March, the Ministry allocated an additional around EUR 39 million for psychological and teaching support in kindergartens and schools, which can also be used to support displaced children from Ukraine.

Poland has been implementing projects on inclusive education supported by EU funds at all levels, but evaluation of the quality of support provided is essential for optimal policymaking. Since 2018, the European Social Fund (ESF) project ‘Accessible School Space’ has supported school accessibility⁹. With further ESF support¹⁰, Poland plans to train 28 000 teachers and specialists, introduce student assistants¹¹, develop functional assessment, and establish 23 support centres for inclusive education (Box 1). In 2022, it has launched research projects on integrated support for and postgraduate studies in early developmental support, to address special educational needs. At tertiary level, 21 higher education institutions (HEIs) participated in a project on integrating autistic students¹², and 32 projects on universal design¹³ were implemented

by HEIs. The programme ‘Accessible Universities’ supports organisational changes at 199 HEIs¹⁴. The evaluation of these projects was launched in 2021¹⁵.



Box 1: A model for specialised support centres for inclusive education supported by the ESF

The aim of the project (1.1.2020 – 30.6.2023) is to develop solutions to support mainstream schools in providing high-quality inclusive education. A network of 23 centres will be piloted, building on the expertise and resources of special education bodies. Experts will develop a model and training materials for the centres, selected under the grant award procedure. The pilot implementation of the centres will enable the evaluation of the model assumptions and contribute to improving teachers’ skills.

The grant will cover additional specialists, equipment and teaching materials for the kindergartens, schools and special institutions that will become inclusive education support centres. The equipment will be made available to mainstream schools as necessary. The centres’ activities will be monitored, and reports on the pilot implementation and the monitoring results will be published.

Total budget: around EUR 7.5 million

ESF support: around EUR 6.36 million

Link: <https://www.ore.edu.pl/2020/01/pilotazowe-wdrozenie-modelu-specjalistycznych-centrow-wspierajacych-edukacje-wlaczajaca-scwew/>

⁸ Psychologists, teachers, speech therapists, pedagogical therapists and special educators.

⁹ <https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/strony/o-funduszach/fundusze-europejskie-bez-barier/dostepnosc-plus/aktualnosci/wystartowal-konkurs-przestrzen-dostepnej-szkoly/>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/edukacja-wlaczajaca-nowa-jakosc-w-rozwoju-polskiego-systemu-edukacji---debata-z-udzialem-wiceminister-marzeny-machalek>

¹¹ <https://efs.mein.gov.pl/ogloszenia-nabory/konkurs-asystent-uczni-ze-specjalnymi-potrzebami-edukacyjnymi-2/>

¹² <https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony/studenci-z-zaburzeniami-ze-spektrum-autyzmu-asd-z-szansa-na-lepsza-aktywizacje>

¹³ <https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr/projektowanie-uniwersalne-w-programach-studiow-ncbr-przekaze-uczelniom-40-mln-zl-na-zajecia-zwiakszajace-dostepnosc>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr/uczelnia-dostepna-iii>

¹⁵ <https://archiwum.ncbr.gov.pl/o-centrum/aktualnosci/szczegoly-aktualnosci/news/fundusze-europejskie-wspieraja-dostepnosc-uczelni-65265/>

3. Early childhood education and care

Participation of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) continues to increase, but provision gaps persist in rural areas and some regions. In 2020, the rate reached 90.8%, up by 0.5 pps from 2019. Over the past decade, the rate increased by 14.4 pps from 2011, being now closer to the EU average (93%). The participation of 5- and 6-year-olds is high at 97%, but the rate for 3-year-olds (78.5%) is still below the EU average despite an increase of 11.4 pps since the introduction of the entitlement to a place in a kindergarten (2017). The rate is particularly low in rural areas, where provision is insufficient (NIK, 2019), and in some regions (*Warminsko-Mazurskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie*). In October 2022, over 41 000 displaced children from Ukraine were enrolled in kindergartens. The size of groups could be increased by maximum 3 displaced children arriving from Ukraine after 24 February. The sector is facing staff shortages and low salaries, and working hours are higher than the international average (OECD, 2021c).

Poland has launched new support schemes to improve the affordability of ECEC under 3. In 2020, the enrolment rate was 11.2%, an increase of 8.2 pps compared to 2011, but far below the EU average (35.3%) (Figure 3). The programmes (Toddler, Toddler+), implemented since 2011, support the creation of new places and reduce the fees for parents. On 1 January, the new family care capital programme subsidising childcare fees for parents was launched¹⁶. The maximum subsidy is around EUR 2 500 per second and subsequent child between 12 and 35 months old. On 1 April, a complementary programme was launched¹⁷, which

provides for the subsidy of EUR 89 a month for each first and only child. By the end of May, 78 500 children had been supported with a total amount of around EUR 20.2 million¹⁸, transferred directly to childcare facilities. Displaced children from Ukraine are also entitled to this support.

Poland plans to improve the accessibility and quality of ECEC under 3 under the national recovery and resilience plan (RRP) and the ESF+ programme. It aims to create 102 517 places (47 500 new places until 2026 from the RRP and 55 017 from the ESF+ until 2029), and to streamline the financing system for running childcare facilities. By 2023, it is committed to reviewing the current childcare standards to develop comprehensive quality standards, including educational guidelines, taking into account the Council Recommendation on High-Quality ECEC Systems (2019/C 189/02)¹⁹.

4. School education

Long periods of school closures due to COVID-19 have been a key challenge for students and teachers, but the achievement gap has not yet been measured. Between January 2020 and May 2021, schools taught remotely much longer than in other OECD countries. Overall, learning in upper secondary general education was disrupted for 272 days, including full and partial school closures (OECD, 2021c). Despite significant support for remote education from the Ministry, the evaluation of the education process between January 2020 and August 2021 by the Supreme Audit found negative impacts on the education process, leading to learning losses and affecting students' and teachers' well-being (NIK, 2022). While Poland has not carried out an assessment of the impact

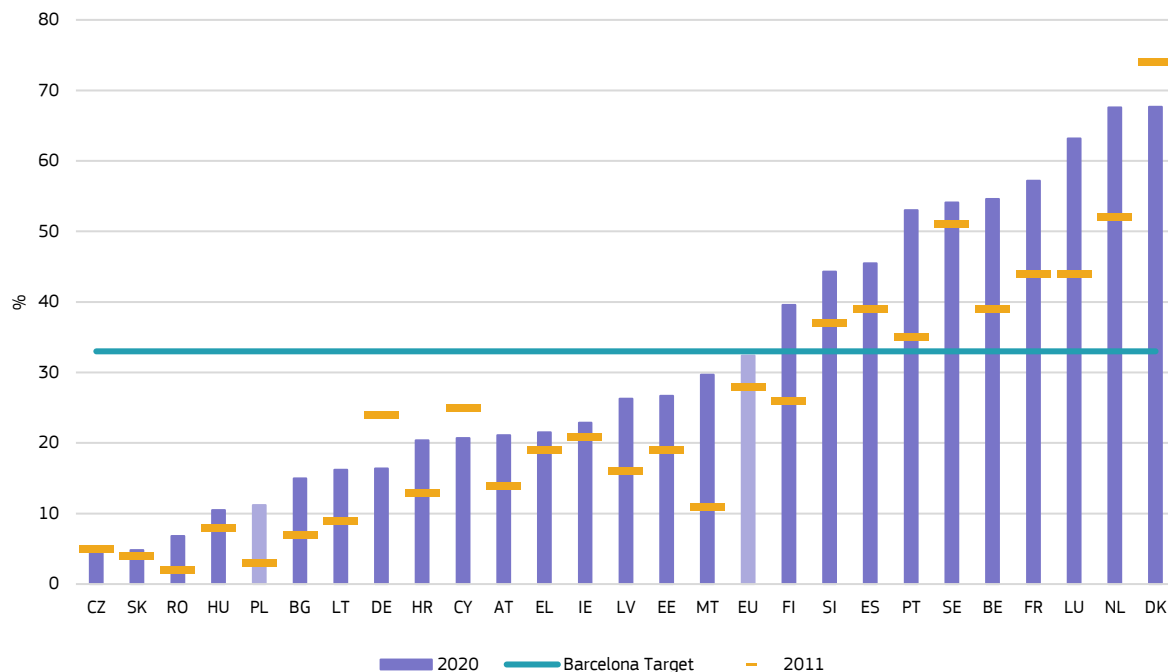
¹⁶ <https://www.gov.pl/web/polski-lad/rodziny-kapital-opiekunczy>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/rzad-dofinansuje-pobyt-dziecka-w-zlobku-klubie-dzieciwym-u-dziennego-opiekuna-rodzicu-sprawdz-jakie-nalezny-splnic-formalnosci-by-skorzystac-z-tej-formy-wsparcia>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/dofinansowanie-pobytu-dzieci-w-zlobkach-do-placowek-trafilo-juz-95-mln-zl>

¹⁹ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(01)&from=EN)

Figure 3: Participation in formal childcare or education below 3, 2011 and 2020, (%)



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC), [ilc_caindformal]. Notes: 2020 data for IT not available

of COVID-19 on students' learning outcomes, a survey run in upper secondary schools in Warsaw indicates that the pandemic, combined with the changes in the education system, has led to a significant reduction in students' learning outcomes (Jakubowski, M. et al., 2022). The results of the compensatory programme implemented during the 2021/2022 school year are not yet known. In July 2022, the Ministry launched a new programme worth around EUR 2.2 million to enhance digital skills, entrepreneurship, patriotic, and sports education²⁰, but no longer addressing learning losses. Also in 2022, the requirements for external exams both after primary and upper-secondary education were reduced, which could also lead to lowering students' achievements. In 2022/2023, due to an increased cohort of primary school graduates by around 50%²¹, upper secondary schools, mainly in cities, are at risk of overcrowding, further affecting their teaching and learning conditions. Monitoring of learning outcomes would be

necessary to identify problems and introduce corrective measures.

Curricular changes and new school subjects will be introduced, some despite widespread criticism. Poor social communication in education, curriculum overload and an insufficient focus on key competences were identified by the Supreme Audit as the education system's general weaknesses (NIK, 2022). From September, in the 'Safety Education' curriculum for eighth graders and first year upper secondary students, the mental health component was replaced with defense and shooting practice induced by the war in Ukraine²². Although health education remains present in other subjects in general education, the change gave psychologists²³ and some stakeholders²⁴ cause for concern. At upper secondary level, the new subject 'History and the Present', which integrated the current 'Civics'

²⁰ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/wystartowal-program-wsparcia-edukacji>

²¹ As a result of the 2009 reform lowering the primary school entry age to 6 from 7. The reform was abolished in 2016.

²² <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/edukacja-dla-bezpieczenstwa--rozporzadzenia-podpisane>

²³ <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,28602291,nauka-o-zdrowiu-na-bok-najpierw-budowa-broni-a-gdzie-prewencja.html>

²⁴ <https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12360100/katalog/12882014#12882014>

subject, aims to expand the teaching of modern history. It started in September²⁵ with a controversial textbook approved by the Ministry despite criticisms from numerous organisations²⁶, the public, teachers²⁷ and scientists²⁸. They bemoan largely reduced civic education, hasty preparation and consultation process, factual errors, homophobic statements, and a focus on knowledge at the expense of competences^{29,30}. Although two other textbooks were approved later, the concerns regarding the new subject persist. The introduction of 'Business and Management' is planned for September 2023, as a subject for the school-leaving exam as of 2027. The report from the public consultation on the curriculum content of this subject has been published³¹.

In 2021, the rate of early leaving from education and training was comparatively low. The overall rate remains significantly below the EU average (5.9 vs EU 9.7%). The gender gap stands at 2.8 pps: the rate for boys was 7.2%, for girls 4.4%.

The controversial amendment to the Criminal Code also contains stricter measures for school-age children, including penalties now imposed by schools. On 1 September, the Act of 9 June 2022 on the support and rehabilitation of minors entered into force, which replaced the Act of 26 October 1982 on proceedings in juvenile cases. For cases committed in schools school heads now have the power to impose measures which are set out in the law or in the school's

statute, without the need to notify the police and the Family Court unless the guardians of the minor do not agree with the proposed measures. The Act allows for the application of penalties defined in the school's statute which do not pose a threat to 10-year-olds. According to some educators^{32,33} the changes can also aggravate the school climate and the parent-teacher relations. Different organisations have criticised the overall amendment, which makes the penalty measures stricter as of the age 13³⁴, also indicating they are inconsistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Schools integrate large numbers of displaced children from Ukraine, which is a new challenge. Following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, around 528 000 school-going Ukrainian children and young people arrived in Poland. In October 2022, 192 278 were enrolled in educational settings from pre-primary up to upper secondary education³⁵. The law of 12 March³⁶ on assistance to Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war included measures on integrating children and students into education, psychological support, and facilitating the employment of Ukrainian citizens in schools. Guidance³⁷ and educational materials for teaching Ukrainian students³⁸ have been developed and Polish language courses for school staff were launched³⁹. To fulfil the obligation of compulsory education, the parents of

²⁵ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/historia-i-terazniejszosc--nowy-przedmiot-w-szkolach-ponadpodstawowych-od-1-wrzesnia-2022-r>

²⁶ <https://glos.pl/kontrowersyjny-podrecznik-do-przedmiotu-historia-i-terazniejszosc-autorstwa-prof-rozkowskiego-zatwierdzony-do-uzyciu>

²⁷ <https://www.onet.pl/informacje/onetwiadomosci/ktory-podrecznik-do-hit-u-wybrala-twoja-szkola-sprawdz-to-na-tej-mapie/wry9842,79cfc278>

²⁸ <https://dokumenty.uw.edu.pl/dziennik/DWHis/Lists/Dziennik/Attachments/147/DWHIST.2022.104.URW.06.pdf>

²⁹ <https://glos.pl/uniwerytet-warszawski-pan-i-ptk-krytykuja-propozycje-zmian-w-podstawach-w-zakresie-historii-hit-i-wos>

³⁰ <https://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/projekt/12354559/katalog/12839792#12839792>

³¹ <https://www.gov.pl/web/biz/raport-z-konsultacji2>

³² <https://glos.pl/mieszanie-szkoly-z-systemem-resocjalizacji-prof-marek-konopczynski-tlumaczy-dlaczego-to-zla-ustawa>

³³ <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/2169335,1,szkola-jak-areszt-w-wersji-light-ziobro-z-czarnkiem-zaprowadza-porzadek.read>

³⁴ <https://www.hfhr.pl/zmiany-w-kodeksie-karnym-odejscie-od-resocjalizacji-drakonskie-kary-i-bezwzgladna-karadozywotnego-wiezienia/>

³⁵ Polish Education Information System (SIO)

³⁶ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/ustawa-o-pomocy-obywatelom-ukrainy-w-zwiazku-z-konfliktem-zbrojnym-na-terytorium-tego-panstwa--juz-obowiazuje>

³⁷ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/szkola-dla-was>

³⁸ <https://www.ore.edu.pl/2022/03/materialy-edukacyjne-do-pracy-z-ukrainskimi-uczniami-w-polskich-szkolach/>

³⁹ <https://www.ore.edu.pl/2022/03/intensywny-kurs-jezyka-polskiego-na-poziomie-podstawowym-dla-nauczycieli-oraz-osob-zwiazanych-z-oswiata-pochodzacych-z-ukrainy>

Ukrainian children can decide whether to enroll their children in Polish schools or have them follow Ukrainian online education. To facilitate the integration of Ukrainian students, the Ministry cooperates with UNICEF Poland⁴⁰. Relevant provisions on admitting students from abroad into schools have been present in the Polish legislation⁴¹, however, better policy coordination and systemic solutions are needed, in particular support for teachers (NIK, 2020; CCE, 2022).

The new tax reform is likely to aggravate local governments' difficulties in financing.

Local governments receive educational subvention from the state budget to support the cost of functioning of schools and pre-schools, but they also add their own funds for this purpose. The proportion of spending in education covered by local governments has increased significantly over time. In 2020, they covered 43.3% of spending on pre-primary and primary school education for which they are responsible (Statistics Poland, 2021). Since the new tax reform under the 'Polish Deal' reform programme reduces local governments' own income from taxes⁴², financing of pre-primary and primary school education, including teachers' salaries, is likely to be further affected. Although the ministerial subvention for 2022 grew by 7.1% compared to 2021⁴³, the Polish Cities Union have called for an increase of the educational subvention as underfinancing affects the quality of education⁴⁴. In July 2022, the Minister allocated an additional around EUR 34 million to support schools managed by non-

governmental organisations (NGOs)⁴⁵, independent from local governments. The controversial bill to remove school autonomy, strengthen the role of regional educational authorities and limit the support of NGOs for schools was vetoed by the President in early 2022.

Teacher shortages are severe, and the recent salary increases and proposed changes to the Teachers' Charter raise concerns.

The teaching profession has faced many challenges, including low status and salaries, leading to shortages (Supreme Audit, 2021; European Commission, 2021b; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021, 2022). In April 2022, a 4.4% increase in teachers' average salaries as of 1 May was approved⁴⁶. This is, however, below the current inflation rate (June: 15.6%) and teachers' expectations^{47,48}. From 1 September, the amendment to the Teachers' Charter⁴⁹ reduces the career progression steps, changes the assessment of teachers' performance and increases novice teachers' (former trainee and contract teachers') statutory salaries to 120% of the salary base. Teachers' representatives have criticised the amendment for the lack of consultation, no strategic or qualitative approach to improving teachers' status⁵⁰. Given the unsatisfactory progress in negotiations and the overall challenges in education, teachers' representatives have announced protests⁵¹.

Poland plans to develop a digital strategy for schools and digital competences, enhancing digital inclusiveness.

Over the past decade, supported by EU funds, Poland has

⁴⁰ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/minister-przemyslaw-czarnek-i-unicef-podpisali-memorandum-o-porozumieniu-ws-przeciwdzialania-wykluczeniu-edukacyjnemu-dzieci-i-mlodziezy-z-ukrainy>

⁴¹ Art. 165 and Art. 166 of Education Law; the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of August 23, 2017
<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20170001655>

⁴² <https://www.pit.pl/aktualnosci/polski-lad-2-0-z-poprawkami-komisji-finansow-publicznych-1006952> ; <https://metropolie.pl/arttykul/walczymy-o-wyzsze-udzialy-samorzadow-w-dochodach-z-calego-pit>

⁴³ the Ministry of Education and Science's own information

⁴⁴ <https://www.miasta.pl/edukacja/aktualnosci/stanowisko-zarzadu-zwiazku-miast-polskich-w-sprawie-sytuacji-w-oswiacie>

⁴⁵ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/program-wsparcia-i-edukacji-i-program-inwestycje-w-oswiacie--konferencja-prasowa-szefa-mein>

⁴⁶ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/prezydent-podpisal-nowelizacje-ustawy-karta-nauczyciela>

⁴⁷ <https://www.prawo.pl/oswiata/podwyzki-dla-nauczycieli-od-1-maja-2022-r,514177.html>

⁴⁸ <https://glos.pl/apel-znp-i-fzz-o-wspoldzialanie-zwiazkow-na-rzecz-wzrostu-wynagrodzen-w-oswiacie>

⁴⁹ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/wdrazanie-nowego-systemu-awansu-zawodowego-nauczycieli-w-swietle-przepisow-przejscowych>

⁵⁰ <https://znp.edu.pl/karta-nauczyciela-w-senacie-i-poprawki-znp/>

⁵¹ <https://glos.pl/znp-oglaszamy-pogotowie-protestacyjne>

invested in ICT infrastructure and the connectivity of schools⁵², digital educational materials⁵³ and the digital skills of teachers. However, despite recent support, remote education has exacerbated digital exclusion among students and teachers (connectivity, skills, equipment), and teachers lack training in digital teaching methods (NIK, 2022). In its RRP, Poland plans to develop a national digital skills programme, and for schools, a national digitalisation strategy and minimum standards for ICT equipment. All primary and secondary schools across Poland will receive multimedia equipment for teachers' and students' use, including 1.2 million laptops, a high-speed internet connection, and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and artificial intelligence laboratories.



Box 2: The National Recovery and Resilience Plan

The Polish RRP⁵⁴ is worth EUR 23.9 billion in grants and EUR 12.1 billion in loans. Poland plans reforms to improve digital education and invest EUR 1.4 billion in digital infrastructure and equipment for schools, as well as digital competences. It also plans to modernise vocational learning by setting up sectoral skills centres for upskilling and reskilling, and to develop regional skills policies. The childcare financing system, quality and accessibility are to be improved. Poland plans to develop an incentive programme for medical students, increase admission to medical HEIs, and improve the energy efficiency of schools. Planned reforms and investments in education and training aim to address the 2019 and 2020 country-specific recommendations calling on Poland to 'foster quality education and skills relevant to the labour market, especially through adult learning', and to 'improve digital skills'.

⁵² <https://ose.gov.pl/internet-ose>

⁵³ <https://zpe.gov.pl/>

⁵⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility/recovery-and-resilience-plan-poland_en

5. Vocational education and training and adult learning

Poland plans to establish a network of skills centres. Many Polish companies say they have difficulties recruiting employees with the necessary skills. Additionally, a deficit of transversal skills affects professional performance on the labour market, contributing to the skills mismatch, including digital skills (MoNE, 2019). While participation in upper secondary VET is comparatively high⁵⁵ (53.1% in 2020 vs EU 48.7%), only 11% of VET graduates aged 20-34 (ISCED 3 and 4) participated in work-based learning in 2020, the second lowest figure in the EU⁵⁶. Under the RRP, Poland plans to create 120 sectoral skills centres, which will provide space for knowledge and technology transfers between business and education, a holistic approach to vocational and lifelong learning, helping students and adults obtain new professional qualifications. The centres will also support teachers and cooperate with researchers to provide expertise in specific sectors of the economy.

Poland plans to improve the regional coordination of skills and lifelong learning policies. In 2021, participation in adult learning increased to 5.4% (over the past four weeks), remaining below the EU average (10.8%). However, according to the national survey the participation is higher⁵⁷. Coordination of skills and adult learning policies is challenging. Responsibility for adult learning is shared between the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Social Policy and Family, and the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. Regional governments' role in the system is not well defined. In its RRP, Poland

⁵⁵ Eurostat, educ_uae_enrs05.

⁵⁶ Eurostat, edat_lfs_9919. However, 11.6% may be understated as work-based learning is an obligatory element of VET curricula in Poland.

⁵⁷ <https://www.parp.gov.pl/component/publications/publication/rozwoj-kompetencji-uczenie-sie-doroslych-i-sektor-rozwojowy>

plans to develop a regional coordination and monitoring system for vocational training, higher education and lifelong learning policies. The regional ('voivodship') coordination teams for vocational education and lifelong learning will be created, consisting of representatives from educational institutions, regional authorities and social partners. They will develop regional skills policies and implementation plans (with the objective of developing one per 'voivodship') tailored to the needs of local economies. The Polish 2030 target of 51.7% adults in learning every year involves more than doubling the 20.9% rate of 2016.

Integrating displaced people from Ukraine into the labour market requires targeted measures, long-term planning and policy coordination. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, around 4.24 million (June 2022) people crossed the Polish border. They start to integrate into the labour market. They largely perform unskilled jobs, although more than 60% have a tertiary degree. Insufficient Polish proficiency hampers employment (EWL, 2022). Within the ESF project 'Chance – new opportunities for adults'⁵⁸, an additional around EUR 3 million has been allocated for language training, upskilling and overall integration. However, there is an urgent need for systemic support, including access to language courses, reskilling, upskilling and the recognition of qualifications and skills.

6. Higher education

Poland's tertiary educational attainment rate has dropped below the EU average, and the proportion of STEM graduates has

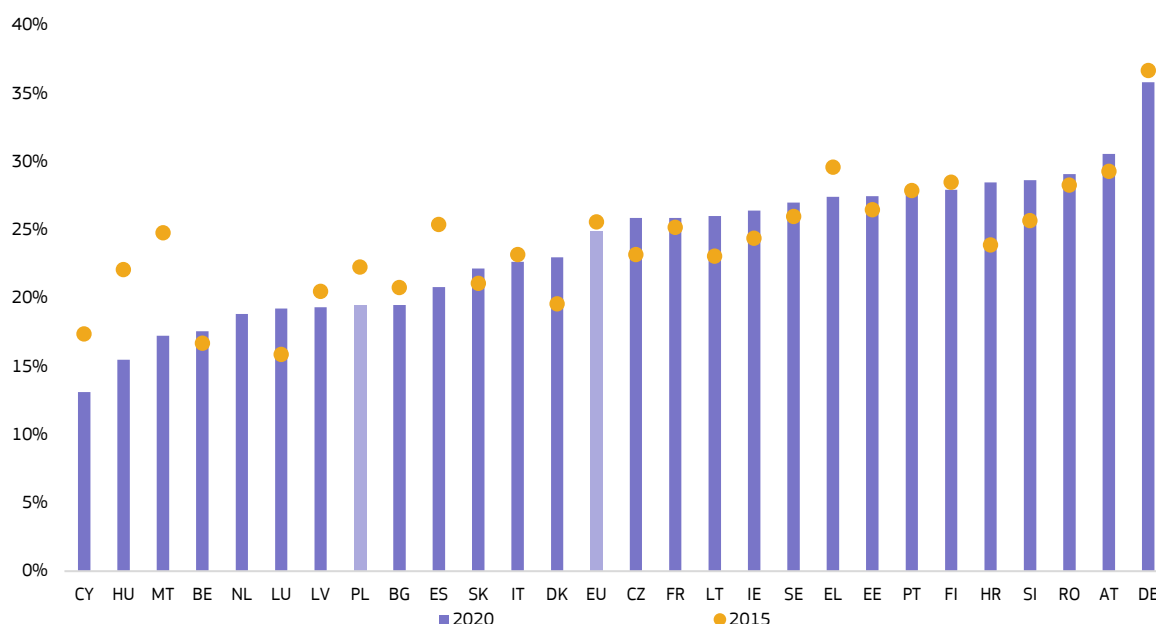
decreased further. In 2021, the tertiary educational attainment rate of people aged 25-34 was 40.6% (EU 41.2%), dropping by 1.8 pps compared to 2020 and 2.9 pps compared to 2019. The reasons for the decrease are not fully clear, but they could be associated with the 33.8% decrease in the number of students over the past 10 years (Statistics Poland, 2022). At 19 pps, the gender gap in favour of women remains significantly above the EU average (11.1 pps). The overall proportion of STEM graduates continues to decrease, falling to 19.4% (EU 24.9%) in 2020 (Figure 4). The proportion of graduates in natural sciences, maths and statistics is particularly low at 3.2% (EU 6.2%), and that of ICT graduates is slightly below the EU average (3.7% vs 3.9%). The overall gender gap and low proportion of science graduates can be explained by the high drop-out rate among men (by 15 pps higher than women), and science students (51%), the highest of all areas of study (OPI, 2021). The proportion of female graduates among all STEM graduates is comparatively high at 42% (EU 32.4%), but the proportion of female ICT graduates in total graduates is low (0.6% vs EU 0.7%)⁵⁹. In 2021, the employment rate of recent university graduates was higher than the EU average (89.4% vs EU 84.9%).

Higher education institutions have undergone the first scientific evaluation according to the new rules; last-minute changes may have further undermined the credibility of the evaluation process. In December 2021, the Minister published an amendment to a citation index, a key reference component of the evaluation process, increasing the number of points for citation in 237 journals without consulting the relevant bodies. The change

⁵⁸ <https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony/fundusze-europejskie-na-nauke-jezyka-polskiego-dla-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy>

⁵⁹ Eurostat, educ_uae_grad02

Figure 4: STEM graduates over total tertiary graduates in 2015 and 2020, (%)



Source: Eurostat (UOE), [educ_uae_grad02]. Note: 2015 Data for NL not available.

was strongly criticised by the scientific community⁶⁰. The first evaluation results have been published⁶¹. The evaluation process continues as HEIs and scientific institutes can still appeal. Some concerns refer to disproportionately better results for small HEIs in a specific discipline or those with new faculties than for the more experienced institutions⁶².

Poland has launched a support programme and an admission system for students from Ukraine. As of April, almost 5 700 students from Ukraine expressed an interest in continuing their studies in Poland⁶³. In consultation with academia,

the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA) established the 'Solidarity with Ukraine' programme⁶⁴ to enable Ukrainian students and doctoral candidates to continue their studies or research, participate in preparatory courses and receive psychological and legal support free of charge. Around EUR 5.2 million provided by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health should support 1 947 students. On the initiative of HEIs, an online admission system has been developed for candidates from Ukraine⁶⁵, and some HEIs have created additional places for Ukrainian candidates, bilingual studies, etc. Ukrainian and Belarussian students constitute the highest proportion of international students in Poland. During 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, around 1 200 Belarussian students have benefited from the government programme 'Solidarity with Belarus'. Over 80 students received an EU4Belarus scholarship to study in Poland⁶⁶.

⁶⁰ https://perspektywy.pl/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5566&catid=24&Itemid=119

<https://www.rp.pl/edukacja-i-wychowanie/art19194031-zmiany-w-punktacji-czasopism-naukowych-sa-nielegalne>

⁶¹ <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/wyniki-ewaluacji-dzialalnosci-naukowej-za-lata-2017-2021>

⁶² <https://serwisy.gazetaprawna.pl/edukacja/artykuly/8511517,edukacja-uczelnie-ewaluacja-zastrzezenia-ocena-dzialalnosci.html>

⁶³ <https://naukawpolsce.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C92274%2Cmein-od-24-lutego-blisko-57-tys-obywateli-ukrainy-zglosilo-sie-na-polskie>

⁶⁴ <https://nawa.gov.pl/solidarni-z-ukraina/ogloszenie>

⁶⁵ <https://ukraina.irk.edu.pl/en-gb/>

⁶⁶ <https://nawa.gov.pl/nawa/aktualnosci/unia-europejska-nie-zapomina-o-bialoruskich-studentach>

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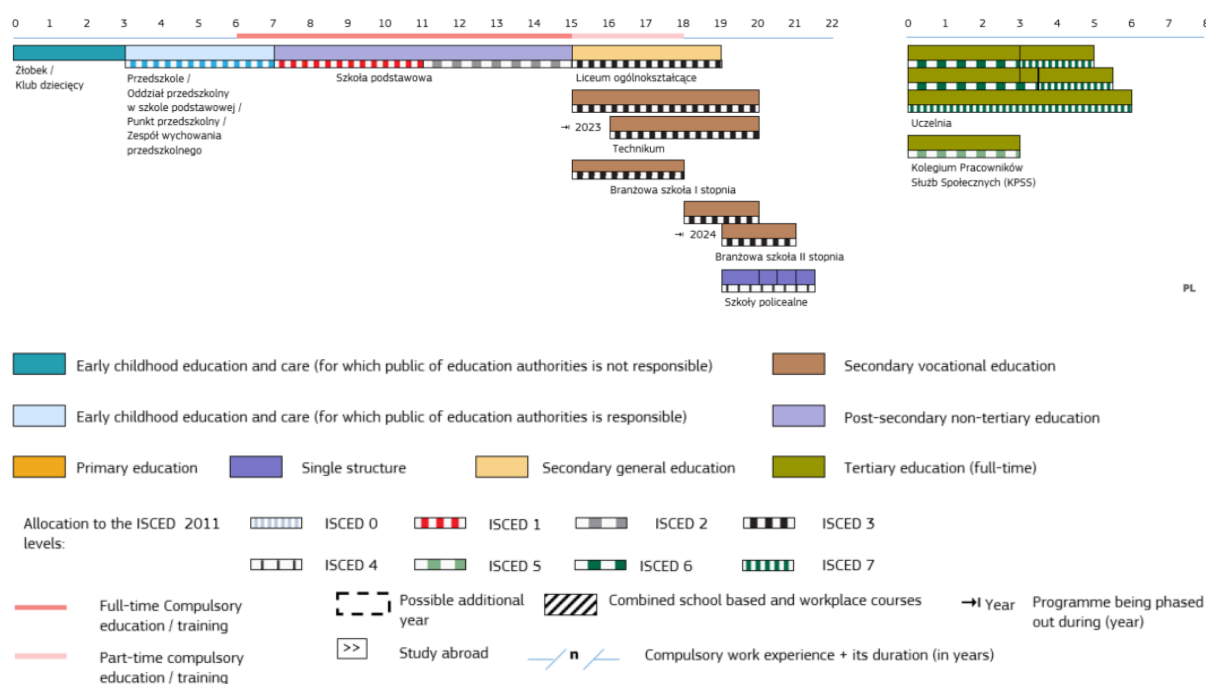
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Annex I: Key indicators sources

| Indicator | Source |
|--|---|
| Participation in early childhood education | Eurostat (UOE), educ_uoe_enra21 |
| Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills | IEA, ICILS |
| Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science | OECD (PISA) |
| Early leavers from education and training | Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_14 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_02 |
| Exposure of VET graduates to work based learning | Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfs_9919 |
| Tertiary educational attainment | Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_9912 |
| Participation of adults in learning | Data for this EU-level target is not available. Data collection starts in 2022. Source: EU LFS. |
| Equity indicator | European Commission (Joint Research Centre) calculations based on OECD's PISA 2018 data |
| Upper secondary level attainment | Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03 |
| Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP | Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp |
| Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure | Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp |

Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022. The Structure of the European Education Systems 2022/2023: Schematic Diagrams. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Notes: Major changes at different education levels gradually take place between 1 September 2017 and the school year 2022/23 (Act of 14 December 2016 'Law on School Education' and an Act 'Legislation introducing the Act – Law on School Education'). A pre-reform programme for graduates of phased out *gymnasia* still operates in 4-year *technikum* up to the year 2022/23. In 2022/23 the 2-year *branżowa szkoła II stopnia* (secondary school) offers a new programme to graduates of *branżowa szkoła I stopnia*.

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