



Key Data on Education 2012

Developments in European education systems over the last decade

Key Data on Education 2012 is a Eurydice flagship publication tracing the main developments of European education systems over the last decade. The report combines statistical data with qualitative information to describe the organisation, management and functioning of 37 European education systems from pre-primary to higher education.

The publication covers many of the priority areas for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) and the broader European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth over the coming decade (EU 2020). More specifically, the 95 indicators included in the report address the following topics: *Demographic Context, Educational Structures, Participation, Resources, Teachers and Management staff, Educational Processes and Qualification Levels and Transition to Employment.*

In comparison to the previous edition, *Key data on Education 2012* has been improved through the inclusion of longer time series, making it easier to identify specific developments affecting aspects of education systems and to analyse the present situation in regard to the past.

Key Data on Education 2012 is a joint publication with Eurostat and based on data collected through the National Units of the Eurydice Network, Eurostat, and the PISA 2009 international survey. This leaflet provides a glance of some of the report's key findings.

What is Eurydice

The **Eurydice Network** provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies. As of 2011, it consists of 37 national units based in all 33 countries participating in the EU's Lifelong Learning programme (EU Member States, EFTA countries, Croatia and Turkey) and is coordinated and managed by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels, which drafts its publications and *databases*.



LONGER PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

A clear trend towards longer compulsory schooling becomes evident in almost all education systems across Europe, in line with the aim of reducing early school-leaving rates and, in a few cases, to ensure that all students obtain a certificate of basic education. In ten countries, compulsory education has been brought forward by one year (or even two in the case of Latvia). At the other end of the scale, thirteen countries extended the duration of full-time compulsory education by one to two years and by three in the case of Portugal after recent reforms. In fact, almost 90 % of all 17-year-old Europeans were still in education in 2009.

In addition to longer compulsory schooling, children tend to start formal education at an increasingly early age. Over the period 2000 to 2009, the average participation rate of 3 to 5-year-old children in pre-primary or primary education increased between 6.3 and 15.3 percentage points, reaching between 77 % and 94 % in 2009. The participation of 3-year olds in pre-primary education was almost comprehensive in Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France and Iceland in 2009.

Duration of compulsory education in Europe 1980/81-2010/11



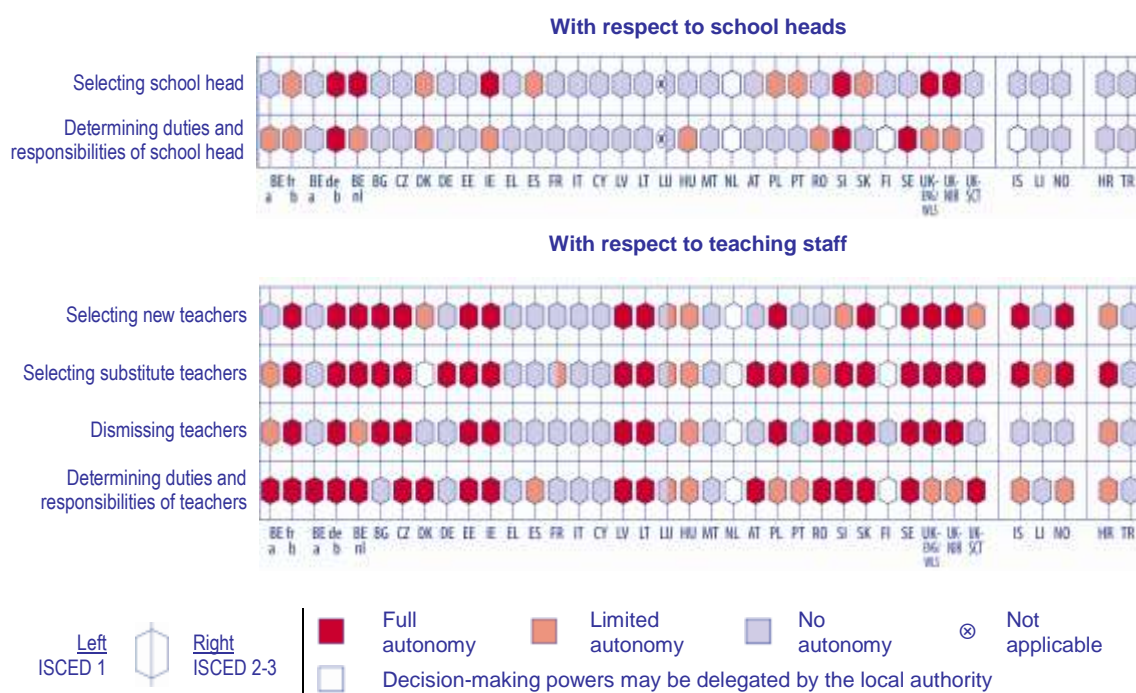
Source: Eurydice.

INCREASED AUTONOMY FOR SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

School autonomy has increased over the last decade, though autonomy is more likely to be given to schools in some areas than in others. For example, decisions about the management of teaching staff are usually taken at school level while those relating to the post of school head are very often under the control of a higher level education authority. Furthermore, the common compulsory core curriculum is defined at central level in all countries.

However, schools have much more freedom in everyday education activities, such as the choice of teaching methods and textbooks, the grouping of pupils for learning activities and the setting of internal assessment. Within schools, teachers enjoy more autonomy in regard to teaching methods, setting internal assessment criteria and the choice of textbooks compared to decisions about pupil grouping.

**Levels of school autonomy for managing human resources
in primary and general (lower and upper) secondary education (ISCED 1-3), 2010/11**

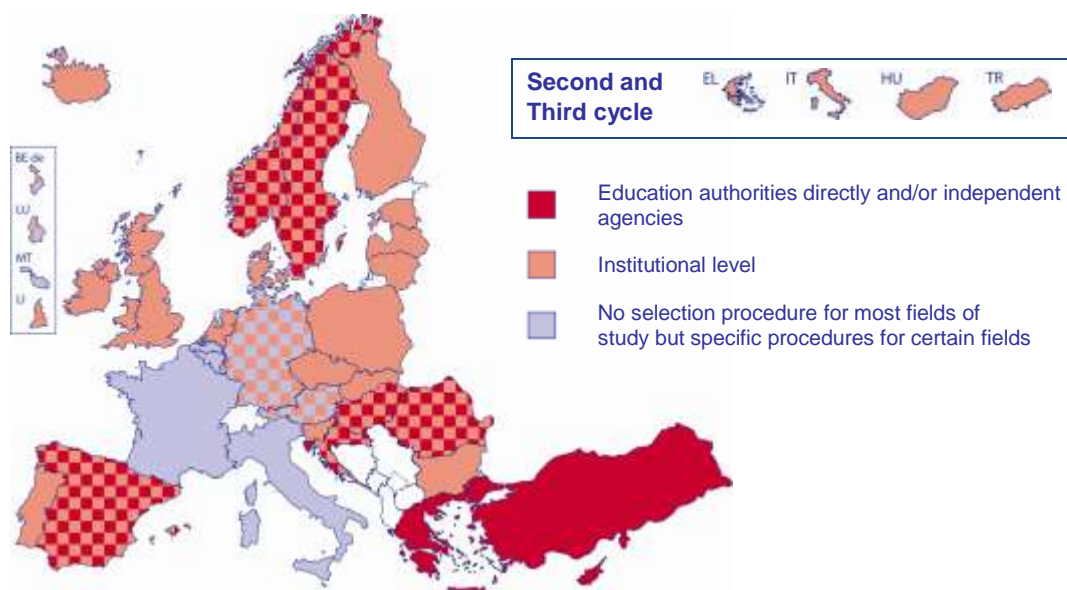


Source: Eurydice.

Increased institutional autonomy can also be seen for the management of academic staff in higher education. For example, institutions are now almost completely responsible for the evaluation and promotion of academic staff.

Central or regional authorities share powers with higher education institutions in setting student numbers in tertiary education and in many countries institutions organise their own student selection procedures.

Levels of authority involved in the *selection procedures* for the first, second and third cycles of tertiary education, 2010/11



Source: Eurydice.

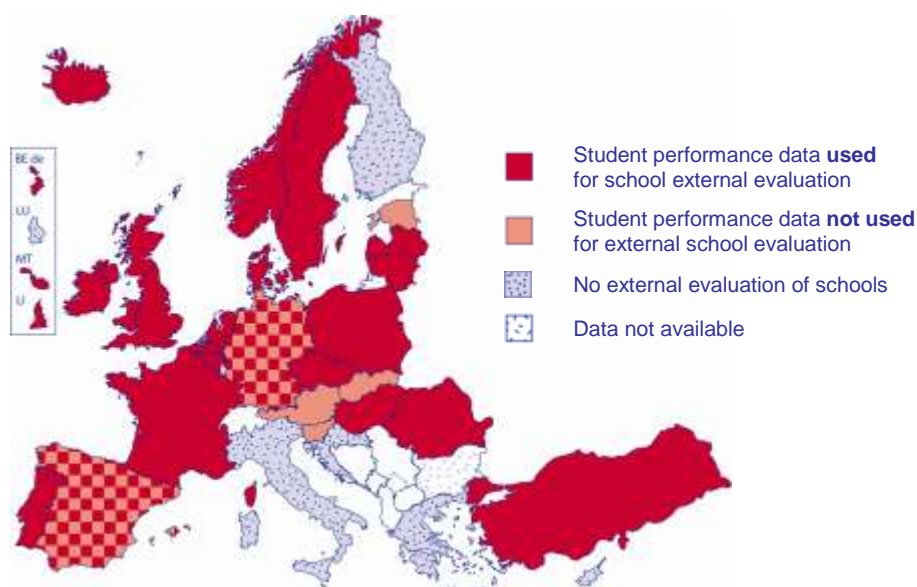
QUALITY ASSURANCE BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

Quality of education is a top priority in Europe and it is increasingly evaluated, whether at school, teacher, or education system level. In a very large number of countries, schools are evaluated externally, generally by an inspectorate, and internally by school staff and sometimes other members of the school community. In most countries, external school evaluation focuses on student performance data such as students' results in national tests or teacher assessments or data in student progression through schools.

In a few countries, individual teacher evaluations have recently been introduced or reinforced (Belgium [Flemish Community], Portugal, Slovenia and Liechtenstein).

The majority of countries use students' results in external tests together with findings from school evaluations in order to monitor the performance of their education systems. Indeed, more than half of European countries administer national tests to pupils with the same aim.

Use of student performance data in the external evaluation of primary and general (lower and upper) secondary schools (ISCED 1-3), 2010/11



Source: Eurydice.

TEACHING PROFESSION SEEMS TO LACK ATTRACTIVENESS DESPITE GROWING SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

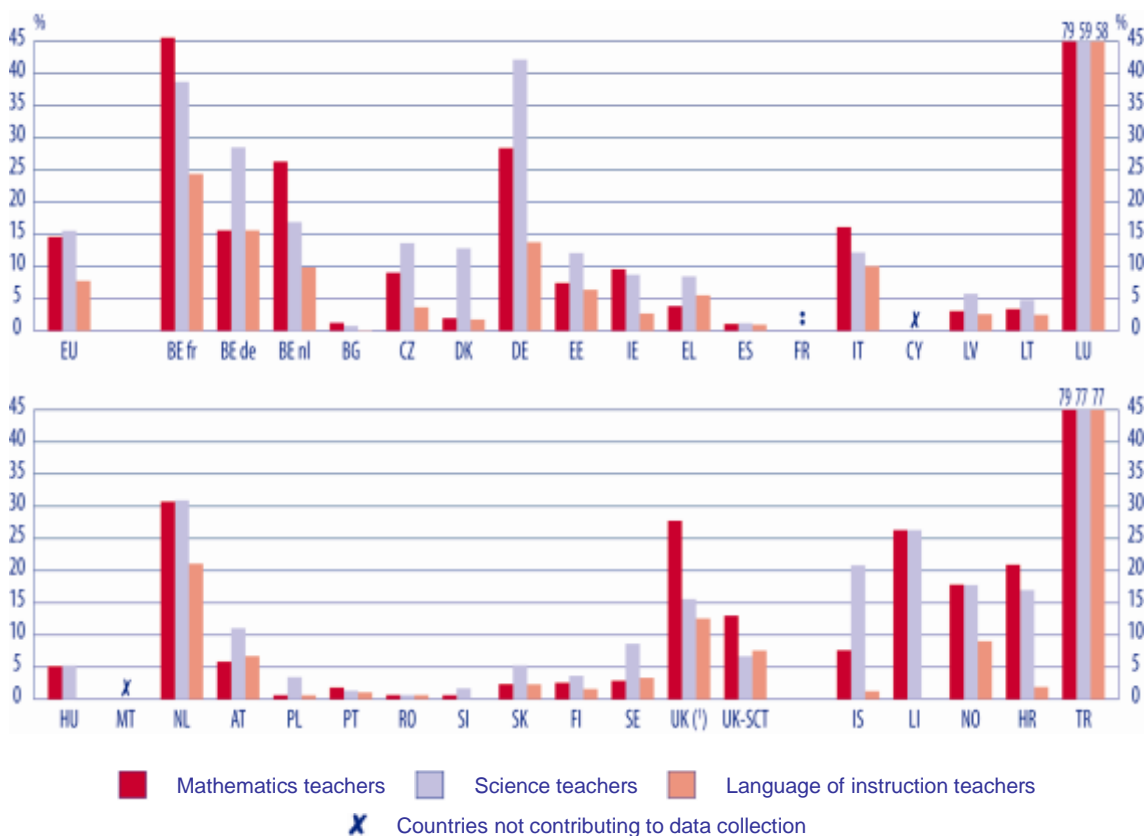
Support measures for new teachers have become more widespread in recent years. While in 2002/03 only 14 countries offered formal, centrally regulated assistance, in 2010/11, 21 countries reported that central guidance on support measures for new teachers existed (for example, mentoring, guidance for assessment and classroom observation). In addition, continuing professional development (CPD) has gained importance. While in 2002/03 it was optional for teachers to participate in CPD activities in around half of European countries, it is now considered a professional duty in 26 countries or regions.

Teachers' salaries have risen in Europe over the past decade – in some cases by more than 40 %. However, increases were not always sufficient to maintain teachers' purchasing power due to a faster rise in cost of living.

Along the same lines, while the overall working hours for teachers have not changed, the average number of active teaching hours has increased in the last years.

These trends coincide with a significant fall in the proportion of graduates in the field of education and training. Such decreases could contribute to possible teacher shortages in the near future, especially since in many European countries, the majority of currently employed teachers are close to retirement. In addition, although since 2001/02 the retirement age has increased in around one third of all European countries, the majority of teachers retire from the profession as soon as they become eligible. In fact, in some European countries, significant teacher shortages in core subjects were already recorded in 2009.

Percentages of students aged 15 attending schools where teaching is affected by a lack of qualified teachers in the core subjects, 2009



Source: OECD, PISA 2009.

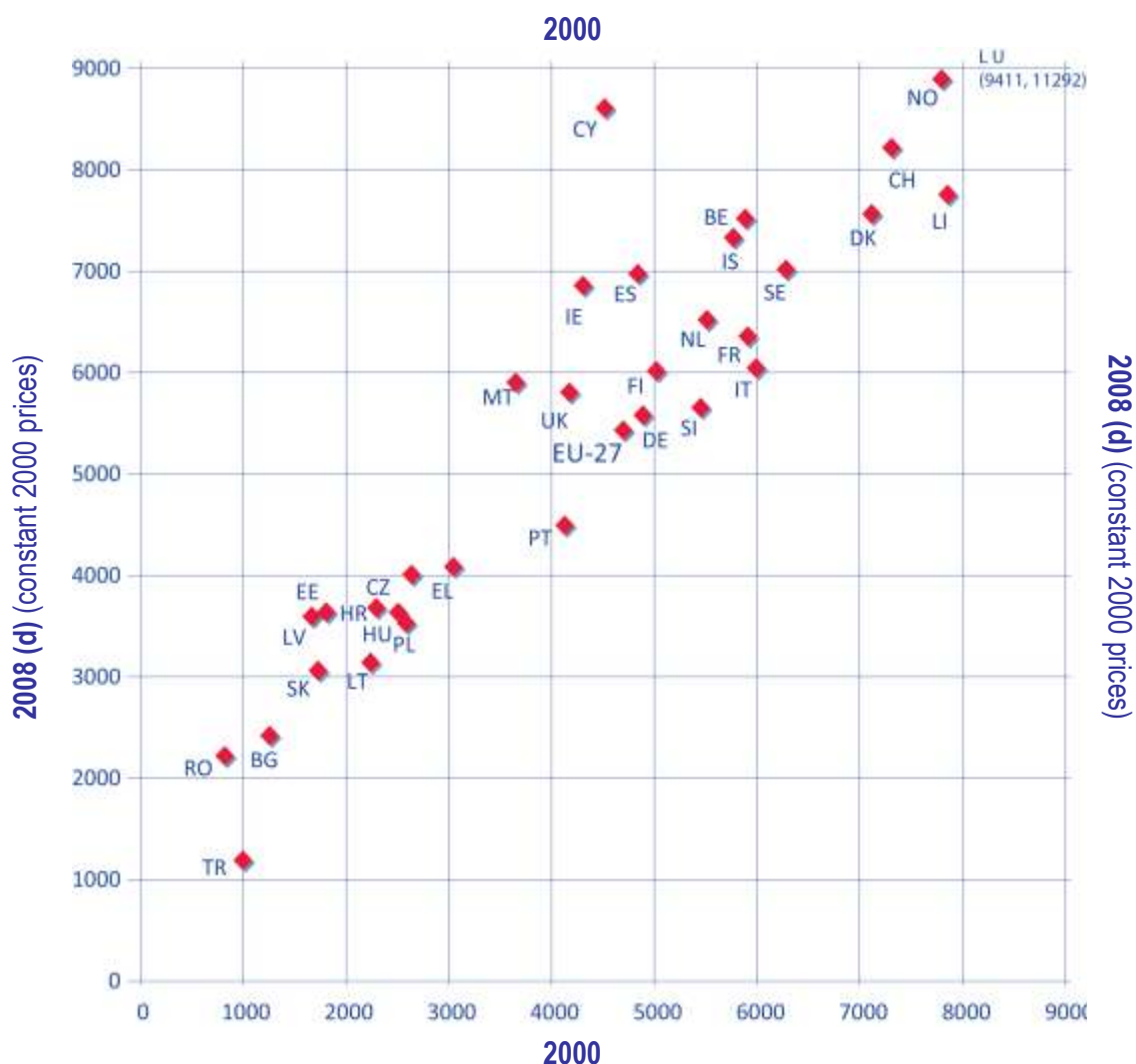
FINANCING OF EDUCATION – A MAJOR CHALLENGE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In the majority of countries, investment in education has remained largely unchanged during the last decade up until 2008 just before the economic downturn. In response to the crisis, some governments have taken specific steps to ensure that existing funding arrangements have not been changed in order to guarantee the continued functioning of the system and to safeguard the reforms implemented over the last decade. Non-compulsory pre-primary education is increasingly provided free of charge. This clearly facilitates access to pre-primary education for all children and especially for those who belong to low income families. In addition, countries also often adjust the fees paid for non-compulsory pre-primary education according to family income and other criteria. All these measures may explain the increasing participation in this level.

While total public expenditure on education remained stable at the EU-27 level between 2001 and 2008, as a positive tendency the total annual investment per student increased.

Over the last decade, an increasing number of countries introduced different types of fees to be paid by tertiary education students. At the same time, the provision of targeted financial support to particular students mitigated the effects of universal schemes for charging administrative and/or tuition fees. Grants and loans for students at tertiary level are a major strand of public expenditure on education and account for more than 16.7 %.

Trends in the annual expenditure on public education institutions (ISCED 0 to 6) by pupil/student, in PPS EUR (thousands), 2000 and 2008 (constant prices)



Source: Eurostat, UOE and national accounts statistics (data extracted June 2011).

TERTIARY EDUCATION GRADUATES FIND EMPLOYMENT TWO TIMES FASTER THAN PEOPLE WITH LOWER QUALIFICATIONS

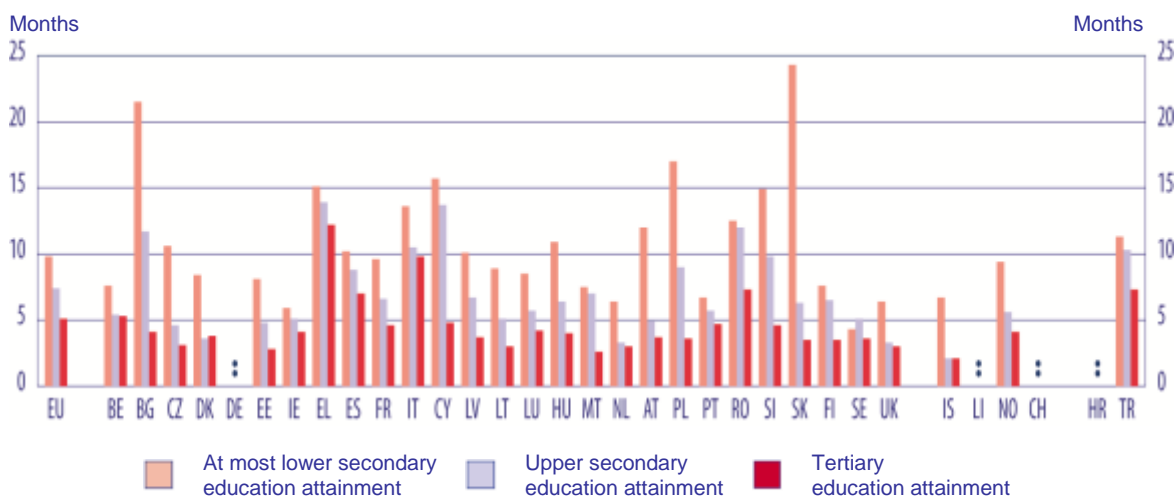
79 % of young people in Europe aged 20-24 successfully completed upper secondary education in 2010, confirming the upward trend shown across Europe since 2000. The EU average percentage of persons with a tertiary qualification has increased for all age groups since 2000, although imbalances in student participation in the various academic disciplines still exist. In science, mathematics and computing, as well as in the field of education, for example, the proportion of graduates has dropped.

Tertiary education graduates integrate into the job market two times more quickly than people with lower qualifications. On average, it takes 5 months for tertiary education graduates to enter the job market, as opposed to 9.8 months for people

with lower attainment levels. At EU level, the average duration for finding the first significant job was close to 6.5 months in 2009 for all educational levels.

Despite the overall increase in the number of people with tertiary attainment, a growing proportion appears to be overqualified for the type of employment they find. In fact, more than one in five tertiary graduates are over-qualified for their job, and this proportion has increased since 2000. In addition, although the gender gap has narrowed since 2000, women graduates still remain on average more likely to be unemployed than men despite the fact that women outnumber men in almost all academic fields of study.

**Average length of transition from education to work
by educational attainment level, 2009**



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey-ad-hoc module (data extracted July 2011)

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The full study

Key Data on Education in Europe 2012

can be found in English, French and German on the Eurydice website:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/key_data_en.php



Printed copies of the report

are available upon request at

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