



# Education Report

Education Policy

Sustainable Governance  
Indicators 2020

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Indicator

## Education Policy

Question

To what extent does education policy deliver high-quality, equitable and efficient education and training?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = Education policy fully achieves the criteria.
- 8-6 = Education policy largely achieves the criteria.
- 5-3 = Education policy partially achieves the criteria.
- 2-1 = Education policy does not achieve the criteria at all.

### Estonia

Score 9

Estonians have traditionally placed a high value on education, which has been a driving force behind the country's excellent educational outcomes (e.g., reflected in PISA results). Particular system strengths include the small number of low achievers and low school-level variance in student achievement. Enrollment rates at various education levels, including lifelong learning courses, are above the international average. Estonia has already reached some of the European Union's Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) benchmarks and is close to achieving other benchmarks.

Municipalities provide preschool education, which is accessible to the great bulk of the population (the enrollment rate is about 95%). Earlier concerns regarding a shortage of places in urban areas and low salary levels for teachers have been solved. Education at public institutions is free at all levels and there are various social support measures for students, such as free school lunches and transport through school buses. Vocational education and training (VET) students have access to subsidized dormitories and there are needs-based allowances for university students.

Interestingly, while tertiary-level education is generally associated with improved employability and higher salaries, this appears less true in Estonia than elsewhere. Recent policy measures strengthening links between education and training and the labor market (e.g., involving companies and social partners in VET curricula development, which includes entrepreneurship skills in university curricula, and providing adults with skill levels better access to lifelong learning) have sought to ensure that the provision of education keeps pace with the changing needs of the economy.

## Canada

**Score 8** Education quality in Canada is high. The country has a number of world-class universities and the average quality of its universities is high. Canadian teachers are well-paid by global standards. The most recent Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, released in December 2019 and covering results for 2018 results, showed that Canadian students score well above the OECD average in reading (fourth place among 77 countries), science (sixth place) and mathematics (10th place).

Equity in access to education is impressive. Canada has the highest proportion of the population aged 20 to 64 with some post-secondary education, thanks to the extensive development of community colleges. There are many educational second chances for Canadian youth. The high school completion rate is also high and rising. Socioeconomic background represents a much lower barrier to post-secondary education in Canada than in most other countries.

Education is under the jurisdiction of the provinces. Allocated resources are reasonable and, in general, efficiently used. The federal government has recently increased grant money for students from low- and middle-income families by 50%.

Despite the strengths of the Canadian education and training system, there are challenges, the biggest of which is the gap in educational attainment between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. Schools on reserves are federally funded through Indigenous Service Canada. A recent evaluation carried out for the ministry found that education opportunities and results are not comparable to those off the reserves, that the comparatively lower quality of teacher instruction and curriculum is affecting student success, and that funding gaps relative to provincially funded regular (off-reserve) schools persist, especially in isolated, low-population communities. The 2019 budget places a new focus on post-secondary education for Indigenous peoples, setting aside CAD 800 million over the next 10 years to enhance post-secondary education strategies.

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Summative Evaluation of the Elementary/Secondary Education Program on Reserve, report prepared for AANDC, June 2012. [http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DA\\_M-INTER-HQ-AEV/STAGING/texte-text/e\\_v\\_else\\_1365173418229\\_eng.pdf](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DA_M-INTER-HQ-AEV/STAGING/texte-text/e_v_else_1365173418229_eng.pdf)

Organization for Economic Development (OECD), “Education at a Glance 2014” OECD Indicators. September 2014.

2016 Federal Budget “Growing the Middle Class,” posted at <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2016/docs/plan/budget2016-en.pdf>

2017 Federal Budget “Building a Strong Middle Class,” posted at: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2017/docs/plan/budget-2017-en.pdf>

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (2019) “Measuring Up: Canadian Results of the OECD PISA Study: The Performance of Canada’s Youth in Science, Reading and Mathematics” [https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/396/PISA2018\\_PublicReport\\_EN.pdf](https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/396/PISA2018_PublicReport_EN.pdf)

## Finland

Score 8

Built on the principle of lifelong learning, education policy in Finland promotes and maintains high educational standards. Teachers are well-trained and teaching is still considered an attractive profession. In comparison with most other countries, teachers in Finland enjoy a high level of autonomy and are not formally evaluated, and there are very few national tests for students. All people by law must have equal access to high-quality education and training, basic education is free, and municipalities are responsible for providing educational services to all local children. By and large, Finland's education system has proved successful and in recent years ranked at the top of the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment. However, while Finland remains among the top performers, the ranking of the country appears to be slipping as gender and regional disparities in student performance significantly grow. The Education and Research Development Plan, revised every four years by the government, directs the implementation of education- and research-policy goals as stated in the government program. Since 2011, the plan has focused on the alleviation of poverty, inequality and exclusion. While Finland's expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP was above the OECD average some years ago, heavy cuts by the government in the education sector have now weakened the financial conditions for designing and pursuing education policy. However, the center-left Rinne government installed in June 2019 proclaimed that education would be one of its key areas of focus. In line with this commitment, the budget proposal for 2020 included increases in funding for education and research.

In 2016, new curricula for compulsory basic education was introduced, designed to increase equality in compulsory education, enhance pupil participation in goal-setting and evaluation, and integrate more technology in teaching. While the curricula reflect more thoroughly the growing needs of a knowledge society, it has been criticized for the short period of transition involved with implementing it and the lack of resources and training for teachers. Additionally, partial restrictions on the right to day care for children whose parents are not participating in the labor market undermine equal access to early education in some communities, especially in socially vulnerable families.

Citation:

Education and Research 2011-2016. A development plan. Reports of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2012:3;

"Education Policy Outlook Finland," [oecd.org/edu/highlightsFinland.htm](http://oecd.org/edu/highlightsFinland.htm);

"The new curricula in a nutshell," [http://www.oph.fi/english/curricula\\_and\\_qualifications/basic\\_education/curricula\\_2014](http://www.oph.fi/english/curricula_and_qualifications/basic_education/curricula_2014); [oecd.org/edu/highlightsfinland.htm](http://oecd.org/edu/highlightsfinland.htm).

"Finnish Teachers and Principals in Figures," [https://www.oph.fi/download/189802\\_finnish\\_teachers\\_and\\_principals\\_in\\_figures.pdf](https://www.oph.fi/download/189802_finnish_teachers_and_principals_in_figures.pdf)

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/rinne/government-programme/finland-that-promotes-competence-education-culture-and-innovation>



## Germany

### Score 8

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is still an important indicator regarding the quality of a country's educational system. Since the first PISA study in 2000, the OECD has often repeated its criticism that access to education in Germany is stratified and educational attainment is dependent on pupils' social backgrounds. Educational opportunities are particularly constrained for children from low-income families and for immigrants. PISA results from 2012, however, had shown significant improvements, reflecting possibly a catalytic effect of the "PISA shock" in the early 2000s. Germany ranked above the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science, and the importance of students' socioeconomic background had lessened. While in 2000, the level of social equity in German education was among the lowest in the OECD, the overall quality of the country's primary and higher education systems showed consistent improvement through 2019. With regard to workforce skills levels, Germany now ranks fifth out of 137 countries (Global Competitive Report 2019: 238).

In contrast to other countries, the proportion of individuals with tertiary education has remained astonishingly low for several decades. The proportion of young people with tertiary education in 2019 still lags behind the OECD average. In 2018, 32% of young adults (aged 25-34) held a tertiary degree, compared to 24% in 2008. Despite this progression, tertiary attainment in Germany remains below the OECD average of 44%, mostly as a result of the country's strong vocational-education system, which offers another reliable path into skilled employment. The share of people with upper-secondary or post-secondary education is high compared to the OECD average (58% as compared to 44%). However, this figure has fallen persistently in the past decades.

A total of 33% of German university graduates hold a degree in one of the science, technology, engineering or mathematics fields that are of particular importance for a country's technological and innovation capacities, compared to a 25% average across the OECD countries. Participation rates in high-quality early-childhood education are high; in 2018, more than one-third (37%) of children under the age of three were enrolled in such programs.

In general, Germany's education system is strong in terms of vocational training, providing skilled workers with good job and income prospects. The rate of post-secondary vocational education and training is about 20%, much higher than the OECD average. All in all, the German education system excels in offering competencies relevant for labor market success, resulting in a very low level of youth unemployment (rank 2 among OECD countries). Thus, defining educational achievement primarily on the criterion of university degrees (as the OECD does) might not do justice to the merits of the segmented German dual education system.

Ensuring that the refugees who arrived in 2015, and to a lesser extent from 2016 to 2019, are sufficiently included in the education system and the labor market will be one of the most challenging tasks in integrating this population successfully. However, this process has proved remarkably successful to date.

Citation:

Global Competitive Report (2019):

<http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2018/05FullReport/TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf>

OECD (2019): Education at a Glance, Country Note: Germany.

[https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019\\_CN\\_DEU.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019_CN_DEU.pdf)

## New Zealand

Score 8

New Zealand's education system performs well on a number of indicators. According to recent OECD Education at a Glance reports, New Zealand is ranked highest in the OECD in terms of educational spending as a percentage of total GDP, national rates of enrollment in early childhood education and care are above the OECD average, the "Not in Employment, Education or Training" (NEET) rate for 18 to 24-year-olds is below the OECD average, and – compared to other OECD countries – New Zealand has an above-average proportion of the population with a bachelor's degree.

However, at the same time, New Zealand has one of the most unequal education systems in the industrialized world. According to UNICEF's 2018 Innocenti Report Card, which analyzes the gaps between the highest and lowest performing pupils in OECD countries, New Zealand ranks 33rd of 38 for educational equality across preschool, primary school and secondary school levels. The reading gap at age 10 for New Zealand's best and worst readers puts the country at 230 points compared to 153 points for the Netherlands, the country with the smallest gap. At age 15, New Zealand's reading gap is 271, 22% greater than the best performing country.

The inequality of the education system has a strong ethnic component, as education outcomes are generally poorer for Māori and Pasifika (Pacific islands) students. In particular, Māori and Pasifika students are significantly less likely than Pākehā (New Zealanders of European descent) or Asian students to leave the education system with a qualification. While around 71% of Māori stay at school until 17, for Pākehā that rate rises to 85%.

Meanwhile, New Zealand's tertiary education system stands out by having the second-highest proportion of international students across the OECD. In addition, public expenditure on tertiary education as a percentage of total public spending remains one of the highest in the OECD – even though an increasing proportion of this money goes to students as loans and grants rather than as direct funding to institutions. During the 2017 election campaign, Labour promised fee-free tertiary education for first-year students, with plans for the policy to be extended to three years' free fees. However, the government reduced funding for programs in 2019

after it was found that the take-up figures had not met projections (lower enrollments at university are also impacted by the size of age cohorts for example). Instead, the government redirected this funding to vocational education reforms, while school donations (from parents) were replaced with increased operational funding from government, and additional funds were provided for learning support and teachers' salaries.

Citation:

Rutherford, Low enrolments sees \$200m clawed back from fees-free scheme, Stuff (<https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/112710129/low-enrolments-sees-200m-clawed-back-from-fees-free-scheme>)

OECD, Education at a Glance 2019: New Zealand ([https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019\\_CN\\_NZL.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019_CN_NZL.pdf))

Free lunches for school kids, Government announces, Stuff (<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/115375000/free-lunches-for-school-kids-government-announces>)

UNICEF, Innocenti Report Card (<https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/series/report-card/>)

## South Korea

Score 8

Education policy is a key priority for the South Korean government. On the positive side, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test results are good, and tertiary enrollment rates are high. Levels of private expenditure on education are exceptionally high, while public expenditure is just about the OECD average (4.1% of GDP). While general access to education is very good, admission processes for elite universities are extremely competitive and unfair, as they favor children from privileged families. Many Koreans spend a large share of their income on private schools and tutoring academies (hagwons), a practice that puts low-income households at a disadvantage. Despite a number of announcements in this area, the new administration has as yet been unable to address the issue successfully. Numerous curriculum-reform efforts have been unable to overcome the reliance on cramming and rote learning over teaching critical thinking, analytic skills, discussion and creativity. Consequently, Korean students do well in PISA tests, but lack critical skills for dealing with the challenges of a fast-changing, increasingly open and democratic society. Recently, the Ministry of Education declared it would change the current university entrance examination system in accordance with President Moon's directives; however, the process was launched without a full process of public discussion or professional consultation, leading to considerable criticism.

Citation:

OECD, Education at a Glance 2017

Korea Times. Moon's education pledges under scrutiny. May 10 2017. [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/05/181\\_229082.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/05/181_229082.html)

University World News. Is South Korea in a Higher Education Access Trap? July 14, 2017. <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170711111525929>

Kim, Hyun-bin. 2018. "[Reporter's Notebook] Moon gets 'F' in education policy." The Korea Times, May 18. Retrieved September 19 ([https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/05/181\\_249202.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/05/181_249202.html))

## Switzerland

### Score 8

Switzerland's education system is strongly influenced by the country's federal and decentralized structure, as education policy falls under the jurisdiction of the cantons and municipalities. The system provides a high-quality education. The university system performs very well, as is the case in many other small and open European countries. Vocational training is very solid and seems to be one of the most important factors in the low levels of unemployment, particularly among younger people. The permeability of vocational and tertiary education has improved in comparison to other countries. During the past 20 years, Switzerland experienced very strong growth in tertiary education. The number of students enrolled at the tertiary level more than doubled between 1999/2000 and 2018/2019. This is chiefly due to a growth in colleges of education and universities of applied sciences, which were institutionalized in 1998. Students with vocational training can acquire a diploma to enter these universities of applied sciences either during their training or through a special one-year course after they have finished their apprenticeship. In 2017/2018, almost a fifth of all students were at the tertiary level (compared to 11% in 1999/2000). For the educational year of 2018/19, 60% of all students in tertiary education attended universities, 31% attended universities of applied sciences and 9% professional education institutions. While only 50% of those entitled to attend universities of applied sciences did so in 2000, this share increased to 64% by 2017. The share of female students in tertiary education increased from 39% in 1990 to 52% by 2018. In 2018, 46% of the labor force had completed tertiary education; in 2000, this figure was at 27%.

While women and – with some exceptions – persons from peripheral regions have equal access to higher education, the Swiss education system continues to discriminate at all levels against students from families with low social status. There is no empirical evidence that the education system discriminates against foreigners born in the country. Their lower success rates can be explained as a special case of discrimination against students from families with low social status.

Higher education in Switzerland is affected by the federal system. Whereas cantons such as Geneva, Basel-City and Ticino have followed international trends favoring general qualifications for university entrance, others cantons and in particular the German-speaking parts of the country, have focused on a split system of university and vocational education. Thus, in the canton of Basel-City, 30% of the respective age group acquire the *matura*, a secondary school exit diploma, which allows them to go directly to a university or university of applied sciences. However, in the canton of Obwalden, only 11% gain direct access to a university or university of applied sciences (2016). This involves a strong path dependency: two-thirds of the variation in the 2016 figures can be explained by similar figures from 1980, with some notable exceptions such as the cantons of Lucerne and Glarus. However, the effect of this “federal” discrimination is somewhat reduced by permeability within the school and university systems.



The vocational-training system also offers considerable career prospects. Men with vocational training in particular have similarly high employment rates over the course of their working life as do men with tertiary education. However, there is a significant difference in earnings. At the age of 50, the median annual earnings of a male academic is about CHF 125,000, in contrast to about CHF 80,000 for a male worker with vocational training; average figures indicate that workers with vocational education earn about 60% of that earned by a worker with a university degree (Korber and Oesch, 2016; BASS 2017).

With regard to digital skills (Eurostat and the OECD show 43% of the population having digital skills), Swiss adults lag top performers such as the Netherlands and Norway (around 50%), but are ahead of neighboring countries (Austria: 36%, Germany 37%, France 29%).

Resource allocation within the educational system appears to be very efficient. In general, the quality of the Swiss education system is outstanding. However, given the strong impact of parents' social status on access to higher education, there are questions about overall equity in terms of access.

Citation:

<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/personen-ausbildung/tertiaerstufo-hochschulen.html>

<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/personen-ausbildung.html>

BÜRO FÜR ARBEITS- UND SOZIALPOLITISCHE STUDIEN BASS AG 2017: Analyse der Löhne von Frauen und Männern anhand der Lohnstrukturerhebung 2014, Bern/Neuchatel: Bass & Bundesamt für Statistik.

OECD 2019: Economic Survey Switzerland, November 2019, Paris: OECD

Korber, M. & Oesch, D. 2016: Berufslehre bietet bessere Lohnaussichten für Männer, Die Volkswirtschaft, Nov. 2016, 44-47.

## Cyprus

Score 7

Primary education in Cyprus is almost exclusively public; 80% of secondary students attend public schools. Tertiary education is provided domestically by both public and private institutions, while a significant number of students attend overseas educational institutions. High literacy rates (near 100% for youth), low drop-out rates and high upper-secondary attainment are indicative of a culture that places a high value on education. Reforming education and solving chronic deficiencies remains a challenge. Reform processes initiated by a government are often overturned by their successors. Attaining agreement on reforms is very difficult, as it depends on powerful teachers unions, the involvement of the parliament and sometimes the agreement of parents associations. The implementation of executive decisions or new laws, such as revisions to the teacher appointment system and to semester exams in secondary schools, are often postponed and risk being canceled. Conciliatory talks

between teachers unions and the ministry of education that followed a severe crisis in their relations in 2018 are ongoing.

Schooling from the pre-primary level to the age of 15 is compulsory. Kindergarten schooling is provided by public and communal authorities, while nurseries are mostly private. Vocational schools, apprenticeship programs, and other education and professional training schemes also exist, funded largely by public authorities in addition to educational institutions and other organizations. Tertiary-level students in public and private institutions receive a modest allowance, the provision of which depends on income criteria. While public education is free, various education-related costs are paid by parents.

A significant challenge for the system is providing education to immigrant children and adults to facilitate their social inclusion.

The European Commission observes, and data confirm, overqualification along with limited numbers of students in vocational education. Also, disciplines linked to innovation (ICT and STEM) attract only a small share of students. The Commission further notes that the very high expenditure on education (as a share of GDP) has not matched education outcomes, which are considered poor.

Citation:

1. European Commission, Education and Training Monitor, v. 2, October 2018, <http://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-2-2018-education-and-training-monitor-country-analysis.pdf>

## Denmark

### Score 7

Education spending in Denmark is among highest in the OECD, but educational outcomes are vividly discussed. Traditionally, Danish pupils have not scored well on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) problem-solving tests. However, Denmark made some progress in the 2015 PISA results, scoring above the OECD average in science, mathematics and reading. This was an improvement over the past where Denmark's overall score was around the OECD average. Though there remains scope for improvement.

These improvements are partly attributable to recent reforms, including reforms to the primary and lower-secondary school systems. A major reform in 2013 granted more discretionary power to the school principal to allocate teacher resources and keep pupils in school for more hours. Longer school days, more assisted learning, lessons in Danish and math, and the teaching of foreign languages (English made compulsory from level 1, German and French from level 5) were also part of the policy. To strengthen the continued development of teachers' competencies the government has allocated one billion DKK from 2014 to 2020.

The government set the target that 95% of young Danes should complete a general or vocational upper secondary education program. According to the most recent forecasts, this goal is close to being reached (the prediction is 93% for the current cohort). However, it should be noted that the goal is formulated in terms of education level achieved 25 years after having left primary school, in which sense the target is not very ambitious.

One problem is the fact that immigrant students score markedly lower than Danish students, a problem particularly pronounced among boys. However, second-generation students do relatively better than first-generation students, especially girls.

Vocational and university educations have also been on the political agenda, but challenges remain both in relation to the intake of students and lifelong learning. Universities have been under pressure to shorten the length of study and channel students into educational programs oriented toward business.

Since 2016, the educational sector has been affected by the so-called reprioritizing contribution (omprioritetsbidrag), which has reduced the education budget by 2%. The new Social Democratic government has announced that it would end this annual saving target and transfer the money back to the education system, although the precise mechanism has not yet been determined.

Citation:

Ministry of Education, Improving the Public School – overview of reform of standards in the Danish public school,” <http://eng.uvm.dk/~media/UVM/Filer/English/PDF/140708%20Improving%20the%20Public%20School.pdf> (accessed 17 October 2014)

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Ministry of Finance, “Velfærd først – tryghed, tillid og en grøn fremtid: Finansforslaget 2020, Oktober 2019,” <https://www.fm.dk/publikationer/2019/finanslovspjece-2020> (accessed 15 October 2019)

OECD, “PISA 2012 Results in Focus,” <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf> (Re-accessed 10 October 2018).

Udvalg for Kvalitet og Relevans i de Videregående Uddannelser, 2014, Høje mål – fremragende undervisning i de videregående uddannelser, København.

“Aftale til 2,5 milliarder til voksen- og efteruddannelse,” <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/aftale-til-25-milliarder-til-voksen-og-efteruddannelse-paa-plads> (Accessed 7 November 2017).

## France

Score 7

The French education system can in many aspects be characterized as rather successful, but in contrast to the past, it fails to integrate and promote the weakest segments of society. In the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) study, the country’s results did not improve, but remained slightly above the

OECD average, with France ranked 20th out of 70 countries. Overall spending on educational institutions amounted to 5.2% of GDP in 2016, slightly above the OECD average. Spending at the preschool level is exemplary. A law adopted in 2019 makes preschool attendance mandatory for all children three years old (*écoles maternelles*). France now falls slightly below the OECD average public expenditure at the primary level. However, one alarming finding of the PISA assessment is that, more than in any other OECD country, individual success depends on the student's socioeconomic background. Secondary education is rather good but uneven, excessively costly and, in recent years, has fallen behind other OECD countries. Higher education is dual, with a broad range of excellent elite institutions (prestigious *lycées* and *grandes écoles*) and a large mass university system, which is poorly funded and poorly managed, and does not prepare its students well for a successful entry to the labor market. Spending on universities lies below the OECD average. More importantly, drop-out rates are dramatic: only 40% of registered students obtain a university degree.

One major problem concerns professional training. The transition from education to professional training is poor. Organized by state schools, the system offers only a few alternative training courses in cooperation with businesses and diplomas are often not accepted by companies. This is a major reason for the high rates of youth unemployment in France.

The Macron government is approaching these issues in a more open and pragmatic way by distancing itself from the powerful teaching lobby, which has traditionally co-managed the system with the government (to the main benefit of professors). Many significant measures have been taken and immediately implemented. First, these measures placed greater emphasis on training young people from less affluent backgrounds. In areas with significant social problems, the government has decided to cut the number of students per elementary school class by half immediately, reducing the maximum number of students to 12 per class. Second, most of the disputed reforms put in place by the Hollande-Valls government are being dismantled (for instance the “bi-langues” classes have been reintroduced in secondary schools and more emphasis is put on the fundamentals). Third, international evaluations and rankings (such as the PISA report) have been taken into account and will likely form the basis for further changes. Finally, an immediate action program has been launched, mobilizing €15 billion for job training measures (targeting the long-term unemployed and young people leaving school without diploma), and a far-reaching renewal of the professional training system was passed in 2018. In spite of the hostility of the trade unions, the minister for education has declared that the evaluation of schools and teachers will become normal practice. The government has also succeeded in tackling two “sacred cows” of the education system, which every minister over the past 20 years had failed to reform: the degree obtained at the end of upper secondary education (*baccalauréat*) will become more manageable, integrating a series of successive checks and a final exam; and a new process for registering students at universities has been set up, based on both

students' requests and evaluations by the universities themselves. This system worked well in 2019, and pushes parents, students and professors to develop strategies and make choices well before the final year of secondary school.

Another important development took place in September 2019, following an attempt by the government to increase tuition fees for foreign students. The Constitutional Court declared that this measure was unconstitutional, and affirmed that education should be offered for free at all levels; however, it did state that a "modest" registration fee would be allowable. As of the time of writing, the level of this fee had not been set.

Citation:

OECD: Education at a glance 2019, Country Note France

## Israel

### Score 7

Israel has a heterogeneous education system. From primary to upper-secondary level, students are generally sorted into one of four primary-school streams: three for the Hebrew-speaking community (secular, religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews), and one for the Arabic-speaking community (Arab, Druze, and Bedouin minorities together). Nevertheless, the different streams are not equal in educational achievement or budget. According to the 2018 UNICEF report on inner-country education gaps, Israel has one of the widest gaps between the highest and lowest achieving primary-school students among OECD countries.

Surveys indicate that 50.9% of adults (aged 25 to 64) have achieved a tertiary level of education, above the OECD average of 36.9%. Israel spends 6% of its GDP (nearly 11% of the government budget) on education, again higher than the OECD average of 5.2% of GDP. However, expenditure on tertiary education is below the OECD average, at less than 1% of GDP. Three Israeli universities – the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Weizman Institute of Technology – rank within the top 150 universities worldwide according to the Academic Ranking of World Universities list produced by the Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. Primary and secondary teachers' salaries have increased significantly in recent years, and are now well above the national average salary.

However, while the average primary-school class size within the OECD as a whole is 21, the average primary-school class size in Israel is 26.5. This is a much-discussed aspect of the education system, leading to frequent expressions of frustration in the local media, although local research has failed to find significant effects of class size on student achievement. PISA results are also deemed problematic. In the 2015 PISA tests, Israel scored under the OECD average in all fields (science, mathematics and reading), mainly because of low scoring in the Arab-speaking sub-group. Teachers in Israel also score low. In the recent PIAAC (OECD adult skill tests), Israeli teachers' average score was far below the OECD



average. However, Israel is above the OECD average with regard to equity indicators in all fields (boys vs girls, social background, and immigrant students). Moreover, Israel has almost no gender gap in the completion rate of bachelors or equivalent programs.

Despite all the positive progress, Israel still shows gaps in educational performance among subgroups of the student population. For example, average class sizes in the Hebrew-language school streams are lower than in the Arab stream, despite the 2007 policy reform designed to institute changes across all streams.

An additional problem that Israel faces in the field of education is the amount of money invested in preschool and school programs compared to other OECD countries. According to an OECD report published in the last quarter of 2018, Israel is ranked lowest for government investment in preschool and daycare services, equivalent to \$2,100 – \$5,000 per child per year. The rest of the money comes from the parents themselves. Government spending on students in elementary school is also 20% lower than the OECD average, although government spending has increased over the last few years. The average salary of Israeli teachers is also low, with salaries for new teachers among the lowest in the OECD.

Citation:

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## Japan

### Score 7

Japan’s education system, long considered one of the country’s particular strengths, faces a number of challenges. One of these is to deliver adequate quality. Under the LDP-led coalition, renewed emphasis has been placed on reaching the top international tier as well as on improving students’ English-language skills. While the number of students studying abroad has declined for a number of years, this trend seems to have halted recently.

The government is actively promoting reforms. In the context of the Third Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (2018 – 2022), which stresses the development of creativity, policymakers announced in May 2019 that the general curriculum taught at schools would be revamped. A government panel in June 2019 proposed the inclusion of more digital, tech-based elements in the education system.

Another issue is rising income inequality at a time of economic stagnation. Measures providing free early-childhood education and free higher education, as well as additional policies related to the country’s expensive private high schools, have to be implemented.

In terms of efficiency, the ubiquity of private cram schools indicates that the ordinary education system is failing to deliver the desired results. However, the public’s general willingness to spend money for educational purposes reduces the pressure to economize and seek efficiencies.

There is growing concern that reform measures have not achieved their intended goals. Despite major university reforms and the government’s well-publicized intention to place 10 universities among the world’s top 100, the rankings accorded to leading Japanese universities have been disappointing in recent years. In the Times Higher Education 2020 World University Rankings, only two Japanese universities of (Tokyo and Kyoto; down from five in the year before) made it into the global top 200. However, this ranking seems to underrate the country’s university system.

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## Lithuania

### Score 7

The educational system in Lithuania is comprised of the following stages: 1) early childhood education and care (preprimary and preprimary class-based education); 2) compulsory education for children aged seven through 16 (including primary education, lower-secondary general education, vocational lower-secondary education); 3) upper-secondary and post-secondary education (for people aged 17 to 19); and 4) higher education provided by universities (undergraduate, graduate and PhD studies) and colleges (undergraduate studies). Lithuania's high level of tertiary attainment has been gradually increasing further in recent years (58.7% in 2016). Its rate of early school leaving is also below the EU average, at 5.4% in 2016. However, enrollment rates in vocational education and training programs are low.

The reputation of vocational education and training in Lithuania could still be improved. According to an OECD survey of education released in September 2016, only 15% of all students are expected to graduate from vocational training programs compared to an OECD average of 46% and EU average of 50%. Preprimary education attendance is also low, with only 78.3% of Lithuanian children aged four to six attending preprimary education programs, compared to the EU-27 average of 92.3%. Adult participation rates in lifelong learning programs are also comparatively low. Moreover, Lithuania needs to increase the quality of its education programs. In the 2009 and 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports, which evaluate student performance in the areas of reading, mathematics and science, Lithuania was ranked below the OECD average. According to the most recent PISA report, released in early December 2019, Lithuania's students continued to score lower than the OECD average in the areas of reading, mathematics and science. In addition, the share of students in Lithuania performing at the highest level of proficiency in at least in one subject was lower than the OECD average.

A 2017 OECD report on education in Lithuania stated that Lithuania's schools and higher-education institutions would benefit from clarifying and raising performance expectations, aligning resources in support of raised performance expectations, strengthening performance-monitoring and quality-assurance procedures, and building institutional capacity. Furthermore, the country must address mismatches between graduates' skills and labor market needs, as the country's youth-unemployment rate of about 13.3% in 2017 was partly associated with young people's insufficient skills and lack of practical experience. In a staff working

document, the European Commission recommended improving quality and efficiency at all levels of education and training, including adult education.

In terms of equitable access to education, the country shows an urban-rural divide and some disparities in educational achievements between girls and boys. However, there are no significant gaps in access to education for vulnerable groups (with the exception of the Roma population and, to a certain extent, the migrant population). Overall, government spending on education fell somewhat during the financial crisis, with higher education given a higher priority at the outset of the crisis thanks to an ongoing higher education reform. Spending on education in Lithuania has been above the EU average (5.2% of GDP in 2016 compared to an EU average of 4.7%; down from 5.8% of GDP in 2012). However, this expenditure is spread across a large number of institutions, and is often used to maintain buildings instead of to improve education quality. The average salary of a researcher in Lithuania is four times lower than the EU average (adjusted for purchasing power). While the country has a relatively high figure with regard to mean years of schooling (Lithuania was ranked 10th out of 141 countries in the Global Competitiveness Index 2019 in this area), it is relatively difficult to find skilled employees (in the same report, Lithuania was ranked only 124th out of 141 countries in this area). Therefore, Lithuanian authorities should improve the labor market relevance of education and training in order to increase the efficiency of resource allocation.

The total number of school graduates declined significantly in recent years due to demographic changes, from around 29,500 in 2010 to 17,800 in 2018 and estimated to decline further to 14,700 in 2022 – a reduction by half compared to 2010. At the same time, the numbers of foreign students studying in Lithuania remain comparatively low at only 3% compared to an OECD average of 6%. Decreasing student numbers have intensified pressure on the network of higher-education institutions, especially among less popular institutions. For example, in 2016, there were an estimated 2.9 higher-education institutions per 10,000 students in Lithuania, while there were 1.2 per 10,000 students in Finland and 1.1 in Ireland. In addition, more than 50 (out of 614) study programs in Lithuanian universities and colleges failed to attract enough student applications, and thus may be abolished in the future. Although this has led to proposals to consolidate the network of Lithuanian state universities, and vocational education and training institutions, progress in implementing this reform has been slow. The Skvernelis government has recently shifted its initial focus on introducing free undergraduate studies and performance-based funding to concentrate instead on higher-education institutions. The strongest driver for the optimization of the higher-education system is likely to come from declining graduate numbers, higher university-entry thresholds and a new performance-linked funding model (if this winds up being adopted by parliament). However, public protests by teachers and lecturers have also increased pressure to allocate more funding for employee wages, which would not increase the efficiency of the system. With parliamentary elections scheduled for October 2020, it seems unlikely that any major reforms will be adopted by the current government.

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## Norway

### Score 7

Norway has a tradition of very high education attainment. The Norwegian labor force is one of the most educated in the world, as measured by the share of its working population that has completed secondary or tertiary education. Like other Scandinavian countries, the Norwegian government spends a comparatively significant share of its budget on public education. The emphasis of the primarily public school system is on free access and ensuring equal opportunities. Students with difficulties in learning or socialization receive a high level of attention.

In spite of the high levels of educational attainment, there are shortcomings evident within the system. The share of degrees granted in scientific disciplines is low by international standards, which limits the impact of public investment in education on the country's competitiveness and capacity for innovation. It is also worrying that a significant share of youth who start a course of education drop out before completing their degree programs.

Another source of major concern is the quality of education in certain subject areas. In the OECD's PISA study, Norwegian students' performance was below the OECD average in mathematical, problem-solving and scientific knowledge. In order to improve these performances, the country's teaching establishment may need to put greater emphasis on providing students with incentives to achieve, improving teaching quality and instilling a culture of excellence.

## Slovenia

### Score 7

Slovenia has moved relatively rapidly from the socialist curriculum tradition toward a more flexible organization of education. With a high share of the population aged 25 to 64 having completed at least upper secondary education as well as high ranks in international educational achievement tests, the education system fares relatively well by international comparison. The most pressing problems remain the small (but slowly growing) share of pupils enlisted in vocational education, as well as an



underfunded tertiary-education system with high dropout rates and large fictitious enrollment figures.

Like the previous government, the Šarec government has increased spending for education. It also tried to address a five-year old decision of the Constitutional Court on the public funding of accredited private school programs. The Court had ruled that the latter are eligible to the same amount of funding per pupil as public ones and not only to the current 85%. The Šarec government prepared a new act on the organization and financing of education (ZOFVI-L) with the aim of circumventing the court's decision. Despite legal warnings, the act was adopted in the National Assembly on 9 July 2019, only to be vetoed by the National Council, a kind of upper house representing social, economic, professional and local interests. The act then failed to acquire the absolute majority needed in a second vote in the National Assembly on 18 July 2019.

## Spain

### Score 7

Despite the education system's outstanding improvement since the 1980s, Spaniards largely regard educational outcomes within their country as mediocre. In fact, the education system was ranked at only 24th place among OECD countries (based on PISA test results). Reasons for the poor results, although the causes differ strongly across regions, include a curriculum regarded as out of date, poor teaching quality and the large number of students who repeat years. Although early school-leaving rates continue to decrease figures are still very high. Among EU member states, the percentage of early leavers from education and training in 2018 ranged between 3.3% in Croatia and 17.9% in Spain.

In 2017, Spain spent 3.1% of GDP on primary and secondary education, compared to an OCED average of 3.5% of GDP. Private spending on education is significant, while public spending has remained the same compared to GDP. However, spending levels vary across the regions (most public spending on education is managed at the subnational level by the autonomous communities' governments). This diversity is the result of differing orientations on education policy, the financial resources available and number of private centers in each region.

The education system continues to experience challenges related to quality and equity. However, the system has been shaped not only by socioeconomic struggles over distribution, but also by conflicts over religious, linguistic-cultural and national identity issues, as well as political factors. In 2019, the PSOE-government announced that it would provide universal access to preschool education (0-3 years), and would reverse measures implemented during the hardest austerity years, such as the increase in the teacher-student ratio and the increase in instructors' teaching hours. However, at the time of writing, planned reforms, reflecting political uncertainties, have been slowed down. Nevertheless, the process of modernizing vocational education and training is ongoing.

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## Sweden

### Score 7

Education policy remains a subject of heated debate in Sweden. Critics point to how Sweden has slipped in most international comparisons in terms of student knowledge and analytical skills. Sweden now ranks 19th on PISA (up from 32nd in the previous PISA report), which indicates that the decline appears to have been arrested. Notwithstanding, this remains an alarmingly poor ranking for a country relying on knowledge-intensive sectors for its economic growth and competitiveness. Recent studies suggest that Swedish students' knowledge in key subjects are falling behind students in other countries. Some studies attribute the decline to the decentralization of primary education in the early 1990s; others argue that the teaching profession is not held in high enough regard within society and thus fails to attract highly qualified professionals; while yet others suggest that poor performance could in part be attributed to the fact that many teachers lack the formal qualifications needed to teach the subjects they are teaching. Promisingly, all three potential sources of deterioration in primary education are now on the policy agenda. Overall, it remains clear that Swedish schools continue to deliver high-quality education.

Critics also point to the high level of youth unemployment, which suggests that the education system fails to provide skills and knowledge demanded by the contemporary labor market. However, the NEET data provided by the OECD show that the share of Swedes (15-24 years old) who are neither employed nor in education is slightly lower than in Germany. A final criticism is that the skills required to enter into a teachers' education program at universities today are relatively low, hence there is very little competition to enter those programs. As a result, new teachers may have only a limited aptitude to teach successfully.

In its defense, the previous center-right government (2006 – 2014) argued that it was extremely active in reforming education at all levels. The former center-right governments as well as the red-green governments (2014 onwards) have shown strong financial commitments to education. To improve the “fit” between education and the labor market, the current government announced to open alternative education programs that provide an avenue of learning other than to prepare for university studies. There are also plans, as mentioned earlier, to develop apprenticeship programs, which have proven successful in other countries like Germany. Finally, the Social Democratic-Green government intends to raise teachers' salaries and increase the number of the staff present in schools.

A key means of assessing Sweden's education policy involves looking at the extent to which the education system successfully provides a skilled labor force. High youth unemployment could be seen as an indicator of failure in this respect but could also be explained by the performance and the specific demand of the economy. Some education policy experts support a two-tier model where apprenticeships facilitate a smooth transition from work-related secondary education programs into employment in industry, and where students who seek to continue their education arrive at universities well-prepared. This model has not been entirely successful elsewhere, but that may be attributable to economic factors or labor market rigidities. Also, as mentioned earlier, the PISA results substantiate the problems in Sweden's primary education to deliver good quality.

Concerning graduate output of secondary and tertiary education, Sweden's performance in this respect could be seen as good but not great. Sweden is not as high in the rankings as its need for skilled and well-trained students to enter the research sector would require.

A third and final way to assess Sweden's education policy concerns equitable access to education. Education policy has performed rather well in this respect. Coming back to a previous point, if anything, the system is "too equitable" in that requirements to enter some programs in university are so low that basically anyone who applies is admitted, resulting in a "race to the bottom" in tertiary education standards. Nevertheless, equitable access to adult education has been realized to a very large extent. Sweden is rather successfully targeting the ambitious goals of life-long-learning as a high percentage of adults are regularly in contact with further education organizations.

In summary, the data show that resources are not the key problem and public debate shows no shortage of ideas and inclination for reform. In 2017, a major royal commission on education presented its findings and recommendations. The key proposals put forth by the commission are gradually being rolled out. Meanwhile, education remains high on the political agenda, although the political parties differ significantly in their analysis of the problems that the education system is facing and what should be done to address those problems.

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## United Kingdom

Score 7

The Cameron government continued the marketization strategy pursued by the previous coalition and Labour governments. It pursued a policy of liberalizing school regulation to enable non-governmental organizations – such as foundations,

businesses and parent-teacher corporations – to set up their own schools, while also strengthening government powers to intervene in “failing” schools and turn them into sponsored academies. The core of this policy was to improve performance by boosting interschool competition, as measured by performance tables administered by the regulator, Ofsted.

Ongoing programs, such as Pupil Premium, are designed to simultaneously improve educational outcomes and strengthen social cohesion by encouraging well-performing schools to accept disadvantaged children. However, the socioeconomic composition of many of the United Kingdom’s schools still poses a significant challenge for students from disadvantaged and immigrant backgrounds. A Children’s Commission on Poverty inquiry indicated that interschool competition has increased financial costs for pupils and their families, as many schools try to stand out by introducing fancier uniforms, new textbooks or extravagant field trips.

The latest PISA results for 2018 showed some improvement for the United Kingdom, with a jump from 22nd to 14th in reading, from 27th to 18th in science and a slight change from 15th to 14th in maths, and a widening of its advantage compared with the OECD average. Education spending per pupil has not experienced any significant rise since 2009. The Johnson government introduced a spending program of £4.3 billion until 2022. This measure aims to reverse the trend of stagnating education spending.

In the higher education sector, the substantial increase in tuition fees, from £3,300 to levels now in excess of £9,250 per student per year, has been contentious, and there have been suggestions both that fees should fall and that the student loan system needs to be reformed. This could put students off from studying in the most expensive parts of the country, such as London and Oxford. However, so far, there has been no discernible effect on overall student enrollment rates or on access to higher education for students from poorer backgrounds. Though concerns about the level of student debt have prompted renewed debate over the funding of tertiary education. British universities are concerned that the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union will be damaging, especially if accompanied by a clampdown on EU migrants.

Fears that students from other EU member states will be deterred from applying to what is a highly successful sector, that EU nationals will be put off from working in British universities and that participation in EU research programs will become harder have led to demands from university leaders for a “soft” Brexit. There have been reports of EU consortia being reluctant to include British researchers in new research proposals.

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## Australia

### Score 6

The quality of Australia's educational institutions tends to be higher in non-government schools and in major metropolitan regions. Overall the high-school completion rate is around 80%. However, the low level of preschool spending continues to be a weak point: Australia spends one-quarter of the OECD average on preschools and the country has been falling down the PISA ranking lists as compared to the countries in its region.

Regarding equity, the continued high level of government subsidies to non-government schools means that inequity in schooling outcomes is high. Unsurprisingly, given the high levels of government subsidy, private-school enrollment rates are significantly higher in Australia than the OECD average. Despite subsidies, tuition fees at private schools are often beyond the means of less affluent parents, contributing to inequality. Moreover, inequity has increased, as government funding per student in non-government schools has increased at a faster rate than government funding per student in government schools. The 2017 budget took steps toward reducing inequity, boosting funding to government schools and reducing funding to some non-government schools in the 2017 – 2027 period. However, following a backlash from the Catholic school sector, which accounts for approximately half the non-government school sector, the government in September 2018 announced an increase in funding to Catholic schools of AUD 4.5 billion over 10 years.

In the higher-education sector, the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP), introduced in 1989, continues to be an important mechanism for equitably and sustainably funding higher education. The scheme has increased the extent to which students bear the cost of their education without diminishing access to higher education for students from poor families. Several measures in recent years have sought to reduce the cost to government of the higher-education system. For example, since 1 January 2016, Australians living overseas have been required to repay HELP debts on the same terms as those faced by Australian residents.

With regard to efficiency, there is much room for improvement. Australia's educational system is complex, with responsibilities shared between the states and the federal government. Funding for vocational education and training is limited. State and territory governments are highly revenue-constrained, and the federal government has shown little willingness to step up. In recent years, a HELP scheme for vocational training, called VET Student Loans, has been established, but applies only to diploma-level courses.

The higher-education sector is generally efficient, and universities have had to be entrepreneurial to prosper, aggressively marketing to international students and



pursuing independent sources of research funds. However, in the last year, increasing concerns have been expressed about the sector's reliance on fee-paying international students, especially from China. Some Australian universities derive up to 20% of their income from Chinese students, making them very vulnerable to a downturn in this market.

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## Austria

Score 6

The Austrian educational system does not perform to its potential. Considering Austria's economic position, the country should have a significantly higher number of university graduates. The reason for this underperformance is seen by research institutions and experts such as the OECD to lie with the early division of children into multiple educational tracks, which takes place after the fourth grade. Despite the fact that there has been some improvement and partly as a result of the increasing role of the "Fachhochulen" (universities of applied science, polytechnics), the Austrian educational system still is highly socially selective. Parents' social (and educational) status is reflected in students' ability to access higher education, more so than in comparable countries. This state of affairs violates the concept of social justice and time fails to exploit the population's talents to the fullest.

A particular challenge is the significant number of children of first-generation immigrants who don't have German as their mother tongue. The Austrian educational system has not fully succeeded in guaranteeing that immigrant children after nine years of schooling are able to read and write German fluently. As for reading and writing, deficits are not only a problem in immigrant communities, it is obvious that the system's underperformance is not only the result of migration.

The hesitancy to engage in reform results in part from the considerable veto power held by specific groups, including the teachers' union, the Austrian conservative party (ÖVP) and its former coalition partner (the right-wing FPÖ). The teachers' union appears to be first and foremost interested in defending the special status of

high schools and their teachers, and appears worried that this status will be lost if the two-tier organization of schools is changed. The parties on the political right tend to define any structural change that would open up higher education for the children of (culturally, socially, economically) less-privileged families as an agenda of the political left.

Recent reforms of teacher training aim at improving the first three (undergraduate) years of teachers' training. In the medium term, this will result in better-trained teachers for primary and secondary schools, the "Hauptschulen" in particular. The renaming of the Hauptschulen to "Neue Mittelschulen" (new middle schools), meant to encourage the integration of teachers from different systems, has not delivered on expectations. In 2016 – 2017, new reforms concerning full-time schooling and improved competencies for school directors were introduced.

The sensitive issue of integrating children who arrived in Austria between 2015 and 2016 has forced the federal government to talk about introducing (widening) the obligation to send children to pre-school education ("Kindergarten") to prepare them for school.

The Austrian dual system of vocational training, involving simultaneous on-the-job training and classroom education, receives better marks. This system is primarily aimed at individuals who want to take up work at the age of 15, but is accessible up to the age of 18.

Access to the Austrian university system is still highly unequal, with children of parents holding tertiary education degrees and/or having higher incomes enjoying better odds of graduating from university. The introduction of access restrictions for specific careers such as medicine in 2005 has increased the odds of children from high-education backgrounds gaining access to these careers.

The ÖVP-FPÖ government started in 2017 with a "roll back" of some structural elements introduced by former governments to allow a streamlining of the school system. One of the government's first activities within the realm of the school system has been to reduce the significance of the "New Middle Schools," a type of school that was intended to improve access to high schools and university for students from disadvantaged social milieus. It is too early to say what effect this will have on the rather unbalanced social structure of university students.

This "roll back" was clearly unable to improve the underperformance of the Austrian educational system. Compared with other prosperous countries, Austria is still not able to make use of its younger generations' intellectual potential. The probability of an Austrian child graduating from high school and qualifying for post-secondary studies remains significantly less than for children in other countries with a comparable level of economic development.

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also see: <http://gerechthebildung.jetzt>

## Belgium

### Score 6

The OECD deems Belgium's performance to be "top" level with regard to youth skills, despite Belgium investing slightly less than the OECD average in education (OECD 2017, Figure 7). However, an increasingly large set of indicators (e.g., OECD and European Council indicators) show that Belgium's educational performance has weakened over the last decade, in particular regarding inclusiveness, youth integration into the labor market and higher education achievements. OECD assessments of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results highlight the drop in education performance in the French-speaking part of the country.

Over the last decade, the decline in education indicators prompted a flurry of reforms by the respective Flemish and Francophone subnational authorities (as education has been fully federalized), but many of these reforms had negligible or adverse effects. For instance, the French-speaking community government reacted with dynamism and initiated a "Pact for Excellence." Unfortunately, the latter is largely unfunded and this has put significant stress on education teams, with criticism of increasing staff burnout, and the lack of available time and resources.

The tale is similar in higher education, with substantial underfunding translating into a widening skills mismatch. Available job vacancies remain unfilled, while job-seekers cannot find employment (see the Council of the European Union's recommendations for Belgium, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report, and Dumont and Kegels (2016)). The Flemish community is trying to address the mismatch problem by improving the financing of higher education and has initiated a specific science, technology, engineering and mathematics program. Though this approach has not yet produced concrete results.

Lumping the Flemish and French communities together, frontier analysis led by the commission on 2012 data identified inefficiencies in the Belgian education system and stated that, given the resources already available, performance could be improved by about 25%. Achieving this would, however, require tackling political barriers caused by the linguistic barrier (the current policies are poorly coordinated between the Flemish and French-speaking authorities) and by the coexistence of a public network with a "free," publicly funded (Catholic) network. The coexistence of these networks reflects party division lines, with each network having gained a sacred status for a given political faction.

The general affordability of education helps render access to education largely equitable. University fees remain quite low (€35 per year in French-speaking

universities, about €40 in Flemish universities). De facto discriminatory factors include the minimal study grants for poorer students, and the increasingly overcrowded classrooms. As reported by Vanden Bosch (2014), the European Commission has also pointed to the “lack of coherence between education and employment policies, given the specific needs of the migrant population.”

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## Czechia

### Score 6

Educational outcomes in Czechia are good, graduates with a secondary-level education are quite employable and the employment premium to tertiary-level education is among the highest in the EU. However, the Czech education system faces challenges in terms of producing an adequately skilled labor force and ensuring equity among social groups. These two issues are in fact linked, as the low levels of educational attainment among some people implies a loss of potential. The shortage of qualified teachers has been identified as a key problem, which the government promised to begin addressing with a 15% pay increase in 2018. However, this was postponed, eventually to November 2019, and then reduced to a 10% increase, with teachers’ resulting strike dismissed as showing them to be “ungrateful and unreasonable.” While still relatively low from an international perspective, the school drop-out rate has continued to rise, with the national target of 5.5% for 2020 unlikely to be met. Socioeconomic inequalities in school outcomes are also rising. There are wide regional disparities, and educational inequalities are quite often passed through the generations. For example, only 18% of children whose parents did not obtain tertiary education obtain a tertiary degree themselves. Roma children continue to be marginalized, and are disproportionately educated in special schools (Roma children represent about one-third of the pupils; 10.3% of Roma children are educated in special schools, compared to 2% of overall children). Participation in early childhood education has increased, but some conservative political forces are opposing measures that would enable enrollment for two-year olds, arguing for the “indispensability of maternal care.” Tertiary-education attainment rates continue to rise, but completion rates remain low. Financial support is limited, with only 1% of

students receiving financial aid. The share of publicly funded Ph.D. fellowships is also below the EU average. The rate of absorption of EU funds within the education sector is excellent. However, implementation of some programs (e.g., digital literacy) has been delayed, mainly because school equipment is outdated, and many teachers lack relevant skills and training.

## Iceland

### Score 6

Public expenditure on education was curtailed after 2008. In 2016, public expenditure on high schools, colleges and universities was almost 12% lower than in 2008 and has remained at this level since then.

Municipalities are responsible for primary schools. After the 2008 collapse, considerable cutbacks and rationalization measures were introduced, including a shortening of the school year. Upper secondary schools and public universities are the responsibility of the central government. The government in office between 2013 and 2016 managed to shorten the duration of upper secondary matriculation from four years to three. This means that students now enter university at the age of 19 rather than 20.

Iceland's universities have been seriously underfunded for a long time. However, the government that came to office in late 2017 revised the state budget and raised funding for universities by 3%. In the state budget for 2019, universities received a 5% raise compared with the year before, but no further increase is budgeted for 2020. In 2019, Iceland's music schools, once the pride of Iceland's education system due to their unique model of private and public funding, continued to fight for their survival, with no end to the struggle in sight.

The OECD, among other institutions, has long highlighted the relatively low proportion of Iceland's labor force with secondary or tertiary level qualifications – a key factor in explaining Iceland's low productivity, long working hours and high rates of labor force participation. Statistics Iceland recently published new figures that purport to show that Icelanders do not work longer hours than workers in neighboring countries, but these new figures have been met with skepticism.

Iceland's low PISA scores, which have declined since 2000 and are now well below average in the OECD region, remain a source of concern.

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## Ireland

### Score 6

The evidence indicates that the Irish education system is average or slightly above average by western European standards. The most-frequently voiced concerns relate to levels of mathematical skills and lack of proficiency in foreign languages, as well as an overemphasis on the Irish language.

Some employers claim that the output of suitably qualified and skilled graduates from the second and third levels of the education system is inadequate, especially in the high-tech areas. Nonetheless, many firms that invest in Ireland list the quality of the education system and the skills of the labor force among the principal attractions for relocating here.

The fairness of the allocation of public resources for education is open to question. The resources allocated per pupil or student increase steadily the higher up the educational scale one goes, but access becomes more dependent on social class.

The two-tier structure of the secondary education system is controversial. A minority of pupils (about 10%) attend fee-paying schools where state support is augmented by the revenue from fees that can amount to €6,000 a year. These schools are socially exclusive and achieve higher academic results and higher progression rates to tertiary education than non-fee-paying schools. It is argued that the state should not subsidize institutions that perpetuate inequality in the education system. Most of these schools face excess demand for places, and have come under pressure to establish more transparent and equitable criteria for selection of pupils for entry.

Irish students at tertiary institutions are not charged fees for most undergraduate courses. However, the “student contribution” charged rose from €2,500 in 2014 to €3,000 in 2015. There is also a lack of investment in pre-primary education.

Teachers’ and university lecturers’ salaries are relatively high in Ireland by international standards. However, class sizes tend to be large and the education system is somewhat biased toward lower-cost areas, such as liberal arts, law and business studies, and away from higher-cost areas, such as engineering and science.

## Luxembourg

### Score 6

The country’s education policy must deal with the challenges of a multilingual society and a high proportion of migrant students. After six years of elementary school, students must choose one of two tracks, a general (former: *secondaire technique*) or an academic (*classique*) one. The number of students who must repeat a whole academic year is among the highest in the European Union; more than 50% repeat one or more academic years. Although Luxembourg has the highest

percentage of university graduates and smallest class sizes in Europe, about 25% of students do not achieve sufficient basic skills in math (range 33), science (range 33) and reading (range 36) to complete their education successfully, according to the PISA study.

The assessment notes that only 40% of the students graduate in the prescribed timespan. This places Luxembourg well below the OECD average, behind France, Belgium and Germany. In addition, the government has decided not to participate in all PISA studies which was criticized in Luxembourg's media.

There is a marked division between Luxembourg nationals and migrant students, as migrants (especially the Portuguese minority) generally struggle with the country's three languages and often end up in the technical track (*secondaire technique*), which affects their progress toward a university education. Recent studies have shown that migrant students are four times less likely to transfer to the higher-level university-oriented early school track (*enseignement secondaire*) than Luxembourgish nationals. To counter this, more affluent migrants often send their children to international schools. This leads to yet another division between high-income and low-income migrants. A further reform with more permeable structures (including a more open guidance procedure with parent input) to avoid early tracking is being tested.

In general, university students in Luxembourg are very mobile and often study abroad, acquiring new knowledge and language skills. Overall, 75% of tertiary-level students study abroad (2016), while 58% of all students in Luxembourg are foreign. According to the OECD, Luxembourg has the highest level of education expenditure per student (,435 per student in 2016) and the smallest average class size (15 primary school students per class and 19 secondary school students per class).

With 4,525 students in 2018, Germany is the primary destination for Luxembourg's university students. This number has grown by 300 people over the previous year (2017) and is a new record. In second place is the University of Luxembourg with 3,723 students. The University of Luxembourg sees itself as a multilingual university, with courses taught in English, German and French. Other destinations are Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Austria and the Netherlands. Nevertheless, "German universities are in vogue," concludes the Luxembourg newspaper *Tageblatt*: "Luxembourg students prefer to find their way into German-speaking countries."

Relatively few Luxembourgers enroll at the state university. This is due to the fact that some subjects, such as medicine, are not yet fully offered, and that Luxembourg didn't have a state university for a long period of time.

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## Malta

### Score 6

Due to a lack of natural resources in Malta, economic growth is intrinsically linked to human resources. Attracting investment and sustaining employment depend very much on the skill and education levels of the workforce. In this, the results are mixed.

The government has implemented a number of programs since 2013 seeking to encourage more students to pursue educational opportunities. Some of these have entailed fiscal support, such as the provision of support for students at risk of failing and/or who have failed admission to higher-education institutions, as well as the extension of services and facilities at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) in order to better address learning challenges at different educational levels. The Malta Visual and Performing Arts School was officially inaugurated in 2018, catering specifically to secondary students with special talents in the arts. A secondary school for students gifted in various sports disciplines is also operational. New vocational subjects have been introduced in schools with the aim of complementing the traditional academic route. A “One Tablet per Child” scheme is in place. New schools have been built and others modernized. To eliminate possible financial obstacles, exam fees were eliminated in 2019.

Malta currently has the EU’s second-highest school drop-out rate, while 31.1% of adults aged 25 – 54 have a tertiary level of education (compared to the EU average of 35.2%). This latter figure indicates growth as compared to previous years. The government has continued with its efforts to reduce the drop-out rate, but has not always been supported by the strongly unionized teachers. In 2019, Maltese students took second place among the 45 countries participating in the annual Supertmatic Mental Maths challenge. The island’s 2018 PISA scores remain relatively unchanged from previous years, with Malta falling within the lower range of the middle 33% due to scores lower than the OECD average in the reading, mathematics and science sections. However, the mean performance level in mathematics has improved relative to 2010. The country’s gender gap (in favor of girls) in reading, mathematics and science was higher than the average OECD gap. Some 13% of disadvantaged students in Malta were able to score in the top quartile in terms of reading performance (OECD average 11%). A number of reforms aimed at improving the education system are being contemplated, including the replacement of benchmarking at the end of primary school with continuous assessment, with the aim of smoothing the transition from primary school to secondary school; the introduction of bilingual exam papers for mathematics; and a reform of the post-

secondary exams and matriculation certificate system to include a continuous assessment system. A reading recovery program recently introduced by the education authorities ensured that four out of every five students who attended the course went from having weak to strong reading and writing skills in 20 weeks.

Malta provides a high level of equitable access to education at all levels. A total of 80% of all schools are free, and various measures exist to support students who need help. Access to higher education is open to all due to the absence of tuition fees and the availability of stipends for students. The provision of free state preschool facilities for children three years and over has been greatly expanded. Changes to the education system outlined in 2018 and 2019 attempted to address the lack of alignment between education and the needs of the economy in various sectors. These include the introduction of Education-Business Encounters, the enactment of the Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act, and the validation of informal and non-formal learning processes. Nevertheless, the education sector continues to fail to meet the needs of the economy in various sectors. Other challenges have also slowed reform, including difficulties with teacher recruitment, high student-teacher ratios, expanding student populations due to relatively high birthrates among the migrant communities that make up 9% of the school population, and delays in the building of new schools. However, school principals in Malta have reported fewer staff shortages and materials shortages than the OECD average. In Malta, 32% of students recently reported being bullied at least a few times a month, compared to an average of 23% across the OECD as a whole.

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## Netherlands

Score 6

In terms of quality, the average education attainment level for the population is high, somewhat exceeding the OECD average in 2017 and in 2018. The Ministry of Education follows a policy in which individual schools publish their pupils'

performance (as measured by the School Inspectorate), enabling parents to choose the best or most appropriate school for their children. Quality-improvement policies – including CITO testing, performance monitoring, efforts to intensify and improve teacher professionalization programs, better transition trajectories between school types, and quality-management systems at school level – do not yet appear to be effective. The shift seen in recent years toward a focus on systemic issues – streaming at an early age, efficiency of centralized testing, inclusive education and so on – seemed in 2019 to be replaced by efforts to address the acute shortage of teachers and to reform education-funding models, particularly for higher education.

The Netherlands continues to struggle with achieving equity in educational access. Although the school performance of pupils of non-Dutch origin has improved over time (in part due to a rise in non-native adults' educational achievements), these children on average do far less well in science, reading and math than their Dutch-origin peers. Moreover, the gap in this regard is considerably larger than the average within OECD countries. Social background and parents' level of educational attainment are increasingly predictive of students' educational achievements. For all pupils, socioeconomic/cultural background determines school performance to a degree above OECD averages; this is particularly true for secondary education (i.e., after pupils have been tracked at age 12). The growing gap between higher education and secondary-level vocational education reflects differences in socioeconomic status and ethnic backgrounds. The issue of school segregation is still on the agenda. The protected status accorded religious education in the Netherlands (under which religious schools are financed as public schools) again became a point of discussion due to serious problems with several Islamic schools.

Equitable access to education for minority ethnic groups has not been achieved and is worsening at the university level. There remain considerable gender gaps in education. The teaching workforce is primarily female, except in tertiary education. The proportion of women studying science, technology, engineering, mathematics, manufacturing and construction is low, while women are overrepresented in the education, healthcare and welfare sectors. In an attempt to close this gap, the University of Eindhoven announced a controversial temporary policy under which it would only hire women to fill academic staff vacancies.

In 2018, because of the increased demand for technically educated professionals, secondary professional schools received extra financing, while measures to improve the image of the schools and the status of the students were introduced.

Children with minor learning disabilities often get caught in a bureaucratic back-and-forth between mainstream schools and specialized youth-care services. Since both sectors have struggled with financial cuts and staff shortages, cooperation between the schools and youth services has left considerable room for improvement.

At the tertiary level, the system of equal access through study grants has been abolished and every student now pays for university education, with low-interest

loans available to students. Calculations suggest that university fees will result in an average lifetime income loss of 0.2% for tertiary-level students. The deterrence effect of the new student loan system has proven to be more substantial among lower-income families, particularly at the higher-professional level. The trend of growing student debt continues this year as well.

The Dutch school system stresses efficiency in terms of resource allocation. Expenditure for education is below the average for OECD countries. Among primary and secondary-level school teachers, following massive strikes in 2017, salaries were significantly increased in 2018, and will be further increased in 2019 and 2020. However, this does not seem to be enough to meet the substantial shortage of teachers. The Council of Education suggested that the system of teacher certification needs to be drastically changed to address the issue. For now, the government has invested an additional €460 million in primary and secondary education, without making systemic changes.

Relatively high levels of education attainment and school performance in the Netherlands should theoretically have a positive impact on the country's competitiveness. However, although the Netherlands remains competitive in certain areas, the country's track-based school system makes it difficult to adapt quickly to changing labor-market needs. As a result, the country faces a shortage of skilled technical workers. Lifelong learning is poorly supported by the government. Moreover, the growing gap between higher education and secondary-level vocational education reflects differences in students' socioeconomic status and ethnic backgrounds. This gap results in stagnating salaries for persons with vocational educations as opposed to increasing incomes for specialists with higher-level educational qualifications.

In January 2016, the national dialogue on a reformed "curriculum for the future" for primary and secondary education received substantial input. Teachers and school managers worked together on a new curriculum. The ambition to establish three broad knowledge domains was watered down to a collaborative development of specific teaching material in the third phase of the process in the fall of 2018. In a new initiative, participating teachers produced a number of plans and suggestions that were presented to the minister of education in October 2019, along with advice for a thorough revision of the main objectives of education.

In the higher-level vocational training and university education sectors, inadequate government funding exacerbates existing challenges resulting from increasing student numbers (particularly of international students), work pressures and quality issues. In September 2019, a committee recommended reform of the higher-education financing model. The most controversial aspect of this report was the recommendation to increase funding of the sciences and technical studies, with perceived negative consequences for the humanities and medical and social studies.

As in other countries, teacher shortages are producing substantial problems. This problem even worsened in 2019 (despite efforts to reverse the trend), particularly at the primary level, and in certain lower-level vocational education settings (VMBO/MBO).

In the years ahead, many teachers will be retiring, while the number of new teachers being trained is declining (especially in the hard sciences). Over time, this will exacerbate existing shortages.

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## Portugal

### Score 6

Education policy is a field in which results only come to fruition long after their implementation. In the case of Portugal, we can see a steady improvement in educational attainment since the beginning of the new millennium. At the same time, these improvements have been insufficient to reverse a historic pattern of low overall and unequal levels of educational attainment.

In terms of the three criteria under analysis, we can point to inequality in the quality of education obtained and generally low levels of efficiency. Though these have been improving, the unstable policy framework has meant that these improvements are arguably taking place at a slower rate than would otherwise be possible.

In terms of educational attainment, Portugal continues to present low and unequal levels of educational attainment. The country remains firmly anchored at the bottom



of the OECD in terms of the proportion of the population having completed upper secondary education. Less than 25% of the population aged between 25 and 64 had attained this level in 2018, although this was 0.9 percentage point improvement vis-à-vis 2017. While Portugal fares comparatively better in terms of tertiary education (25% in 2018, a one percentage point improvement vis-à-vis 2017), it is still 12 percentage points below the OECD average.

At the same time, earlier policies are now paying off. In 2009, the country extended compulsory education until the end of secondary school (12th grade). Almost a decade later, the proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds leaving school without completing secondary school dropped from 30.9% in 2009 to 12.6% in 2017 to 11.8% in 2018. Equally, the proportion of the population aged over 15 that has completed secondary school increased from 14.5% to 21.1% in 2017 to 21.9% in 2018, a 7.4 percentage point increase (whereas from 2001 to 2009, this increase was 2.8 percentage points). PISA assessment results for Portugal also show a steady improvement over time, with Portugal emerging as one of the most improved countries since the first round in 2000.

These improvements are also observable in higher education. In the 2006 Academic Ranking of World Universities, Portugal was the only EU-15 country not to have at least one institution in the top 500 (excluding Luxembourg, which has a limited higher education structure). Since 2017, Portugal has had at least four universities in the top 500. The four universities ranked in the top 500 in 2019 – and an additional two ranked between 501 and 700 – puts Portugal ahead of Ireland in this regard.

However, there remains room for improvement, on at least four grounds.

First, there is significant variation in the quality of education between schools. The average school score in the 2018 national exams ranged from 12.77 (out of 20) for the highest rated public school to 7.88 in the lowest rated public school. The variance is even greater when we consider private schools also, with the best performing school presenting an average of 15.32 – almost twice the average for the lowest rated school. Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests that the quality of education is often unequal within schools.

Second, these differences reflect policy failures, including the lack of effective accountability mechanisms and incentives, weak lifelong training and inefficient management systems.

Third, considerable instability in the sector – with substantial changes from year to year – means that the educational system is unpredictable, and that the impact of changes is limited. The previous SGI report noted how the adoption of a new system for special needs education in July 2018, decree-law 54/2018, reflected this instability. The legislation appears to have resulted in shortages in the provision of necessary support, at least in the short run. This pattern of not allowing sufficient time for policies to consolidate was again evidenced in the period under review, with

decree-law 54/2018 being revised by parliament to Law 116/2019, which introduced further changes to the system for special needs education. Needless to say, the constant changes pose a significant challenge for schools and teachers in terms of implementation.

Finally, the failure to recruit new teachers, not least as a result of austerity-driven public sector hiring freezes, should be noted. Portugal now has one of the oldest teaching populations in the OECD. In 2007, there were 102 teachers aged 50 or over per every 100 teachers aged under 35, across all levels from primary to secondary. In 2018, there were a staggering 1,358 teachers aged 50 or over for every 100 teachers aged under 35.

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## United States

### Score 6

The performance of primary and secondary education in the United States has long been disappointing. Historically low high school graduation rates significantly improved over the last two decades, reaching a record high of 82% in 2016, but which is a low rate for a wealthy country. The education system largely lacks

vocational alternatives to high school education. High school students' performance in science, math and reading remains below most wealthy OECD countries. Yet the educational system is generously funded. Its shortcomings are the result of several factors, including the impact of deficiencies in the home environments of many children in low-income/minority neighborhoods, severe inequalities in school quality between wealthy and low-income areas, a lack of accountability for outcomes in the fragmented system, and effective resistance to school reforms by powerful teachers' unions.

Whereas federal engagement became more extensive and ambitious during the Obama administration, the Trump administration cut federal education programs by more than \$10 billion. Under Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, the administration has redirected funding to support school-choice initiatives, which seek to improve education by shifting responsibility for a child's education to parents while reducing the power of teachers' unions and state-level education bureaucracies – a conservative strategy that has significant support in research findings. In 2019, the administration imposed new cuts in programs for disadvantaged students.

As college and university costs have increased, financial aid for low-income students has failed to keep up. As a result, students from the top income quintile are now at least three times as likely to graduate as those from the lowest quintile. Trump has cut budgets for college loan programs and has relaxed accreditation requirements for the often-predatory for-profit higher education sector. In 2019, the Trump administration canceled an Obama-administration directive that had weakened traditional due-process protections in university proceedings on sexual assault accusations while instituting new requirements for the protection of freedom of speech on campus.

Citation:

<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/09/charter-schools-losing-the-narrative-but-winning-the-data.html>

## Chile

### Score 5

Chile's school and education attainment levels are very mixed and generally much lower than the OECD average. Pre-primary education coverage is still low, but rising. Primary and secondary education coverage is high, reaching nearly 100% of current age cohorts. Tertiary-education coverage is moderate but increasing; however, the quality of universities and private sector technical institutions varies significantly. Former governments were not able to reduce the qualitative and social gap between the private and public systems; this failure has led to strong public protests that have endured since 2010, with peaks in 2011 and 2012.

Traditionally, high-quality education in Chile has been accessible only to those able to afford it. There is a huge quality gap deriving in part from a significant financial divergence between the private- and public-education systems, with per month

spending per public-system pupil averaging CLP 40,000 (approximately \$60), and private-schooling fees averaging about CLP 300,000 (approximately \$450). Chile used to have a broad public-education system, but as a result of the poor quality of the public schools, the share of students attending public institutions has declined to approximately 40%. In general, Chile's education system – with the exception of a few top universities – fails in the task of enabling students to acquire the knowledge and skills required for the country to make a quantum leap in economic development and growth. This hampers labor-productivity growth and undermines efforts to diminish poverty rates.

There is a basic ideological disagreement between the government and opposition regarding the respective roles of the free market and the state in the education system. Moreover, a strong teachers lobby has made it more difficult to pass reforms. In addition, there have been conflicts between teachers' boards and the corporations or enterprises offering private-education services. The latest significant changes to the education system were introduced in March 2016 by the enactment of Law No. 20,845 (Ley de Inclusión Escolar), which increased subsidies for the most vulnerable students in primary and secondary education. At the same time, public subsidies for providers of education are now granted only to private entities that legally count as non-profit organizations. Additionally, financial contributions (copagos) by families whose children attend a public school have been lowered. Prior to this latest reform, Law No. 20.882 (Ley de Presupuestos del Sector Público), enacted in December 2015, introduced subsidies for the tuition fees paid by the most vulnerable students attending higher-education institutions (about 25% of the newly matriculated students in 2017).

In summary, the education reform of 2015 – 2016 aimed at eliminating profit, selection and copayments within the private-education sphere, and was based on four fundamental principles:

- 1) Ensuring that institutions provide a strong education and protect families' financial security;
- 2) Creating a high-quality public-education system;
- 3) Providing for a modern, well-paid, highly skilled teaching profession; and
- 4) Creating a free (no-fee) higher-education system of high quality.

In line with these goals, the budget proposal submitted by former President Michelle Bachelet to Congress on 1 October 2014 included a 27.5% increase in public investment. Public education received a funding increase of 10.2%, largely dedicated to nurseries, kindergartens, public-school infrastructure and training programs for teachers. In keeping with one of the programmatic focuses of President Bachelet's government, recent national budgets included an increase in educational spending. In 2018, the current government under President Piñera continued this trend with an increase of 5.9% in comparison with the fiscal year 2017. However, a significantly lower increase of 2.9% (roughly equal to inflation) was slated for educational spending in 2019.

In January 2018, the Congress adopted a tuition-free policy for university education (“*gratuidad*”), professional institutes and technical training centers after some modifications to Bachelet’s original initiative made by the Senate and Constitutional Court objections to one article were resolved. Thanks to the new law, 60% of students from lower-income families who study in institutions covered by the measure will not have to pay tuition fees.

The effects of the latest reforms, especially regarding higher-education access and the public-education quality, will be reliably measurable in the medium and long term. Nonetheless, they can today be seen as an important step toward more equitable access to (higher) education and as an improvement in the quality of the country’s public-education system.

Citation:

Education budgeting

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## Croatia

### Score 5

As a percentage of GDP, public expenditure on education aligns with the EU average. Pupil to teacher ratios in both the primary and secondary education system are even lower than in most other EU member states. Still, educational performance is relatively weak. A greater proportion of Croatian 15 year olds underachieve in mathematics (31%) compared to the OECD average (24%), according to the PISA 2018 tests, while performance is rather similar to the OECD average in reading and science. Since 2006 when Croatia joined the PISA program, average performance in reading and mathematics has been relatively stable. The mean score in reading has increased slightly from 477 in 2006 to 479 in 2018 (OECD average is 487), while the mean score in mathematics has fallen slightly from 467 to 464 (OECD average is 489). However, there was a significant deterioration in the average score in science from 493 in 2006 to 472 in 2018 (OECD average is 489).

The PISA tests also reveal substantial inequalities in educational attainment at the end of compulsory education. In reading performance, socioeconomically advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged students by 63 score points, although this was a smaller gap in comparison to the 2009 PISA. In addition, while 10% of advantaged students achieved the highest grade in reading, only 2% of disadvantaged students achieved this level of attainment. The PISA results reveal a strong relationship between socioeconomic status, and performance in mathematics and science, although this relationship is somewhat weaker in Croatia than on average among OECD countries.

The poor quality of and inequity in primary education carry over into a high degree of selectivity in upper (post-compulsory) secondary education. Over 70% of upper-secondary students attend vocational schools, a greater proportion than elsewhere in the European Union, while 30% attend general secondary schools (gymnasias). Whichever type of school is attended, entry to the labor market is problematic following completion of studies. In 2019, according to Eurostat, the unemployment rate of people with a general secondary school background who had graduated within the previous five years was 36.5%, while it was 26.4% for people with a vocational education background (compared to an average of 22.3% for all education system graduates within five years of graduation). The share of the population aged 30 – 34 years old who have completed higher education was 34.1% in 2018, substantially below the EU average of 40.7%.

Access to higher education is unequal, as students from better-educated family backgrounds are over-represented in higher education. However, this outcome is not caused by the presence of burdensome tuition fees acting as a barrier to entry, especially since higher education is overwhelmingly financed out of the public purse. This has more to do with the cost of living for students in major cities and the lack of private scholarships for students from poorer families. The employment rate for recently graduated students is far below the EU average. It is very common that employers in the private and even public sector complain of the lack of necessary skills on the part of recent graduates.

Education policy reform has suffered from a lack of continuity. In 2014, the Milanović government charged an expert team headed by education policy scholar Boris Jokić with providing a proposal for a new curriculum. Blaženka Divjak, minister of science and education, launched an experimental curriculum reform in September 2018. The reform comprises all subjects in the first and fifth primary-school grades, science (i.e., chemistry, biology, physics) in the seventh primary-school grade, all subjects in the first secondary-school grade and general subjects in four-year vocational schools. The Croatian National Center for External Evaluation of Education's recent evaluation of teachers and pupils exposed to the experimental curriculum found that outcomes were poor and satisfaction with the way experimental classes worked was very low. After organizing the longest strike in Croatian history (more than 35 days), teachers' unions succeeded in pressuring the

government into granting teachers more than a 10% salary increase in 2020. However, it is unlikely that there will be a significant improvement in educational outcomes unless a meritocratic system for compensating and promoting staff, paired with political accountability at the highest level, is established.

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## Italy

### Score 5

The Italian education system is a predominantly public system headed at the national level by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR). MIUR dominates education policy, including hiring and funding. Though regional and municipal school authorities have some power with respect to the curricula, physical infrastructure and resource management. Private education in Italy is limited and consists primarily of religious schools. Italy also has a handful of private universities with a prestigious reputation (e.g., Bocconi, LUISS, Cattolica). The education system is, in principle, open to everybody without discrimination. Tuition fees are excised only at the tertiary level and are comparatively low. However, given the scarce amount of resources allocated for scholarships or similar support mechanisms for financially needy students, access is socially discriminatory at the upper secondary and tertiary levels. The share of individuals who do not complete their studies is above the OECD average.

Per student spending at all levels of education is close to the OECD average, but due to the smaller percentage of students, the global expenditure as a share of GDP is significantly lower than the OECD average. Moreover, the level of expenditure has been almost flat for the past 10 years. When education expenditure is measured as a percentage of total public expenditure, Italy shows one of the lowest rates among OECD countries. The number of university students did not drop very significantly during the economic crisis years; however, attendance levels have yet to regain their pre-2008 highs.

In terms of tertiary education spending, Italy lags behind even more significantly. The share of education expenditure allocated to the salaries of teachers, professors and technical staff compared to the share for capital expenditures and research funds, is above average. This is not because salaries are particularly high, but because capital and research funds are very limited. Selection of school personnel is still not sufficiently meritocratic. Although there are significant areas of high-quality



education at both the secondary and tertiary levels, overall quality could be improved.

The allocation of public resources to universities has increasingly incorporated a mechanism linking government funding to academic research and teaching results. This has had significant effects with regard to stimulating a more competitive and quality-oriented university system.

The first Conte government gave no sign of having any significant interest in this policy field. The education minister of the second Conte government has asked for an increased endowment for schools and universities, but had obtained little as of the end of the review period.

Citation:

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## Latvia

### Score 5

Latvia has a relatively well-educated population and performs reasonably well in international comparisons, such as PISA. The 2015 – 2019 PISA results show that performance in the most significant indicators is now at the OECD average or below.

While successful in making upper secondary education nearly universal (88% of adults have attained an upper secondary level of education) and exceeding the EU 2020 education target of 40% of 30 to 34 year olds holding a university-level qualification, Latvia lags behind other OECD countries in vocational education. In addition, the IMF has warned that the current system is unsustainable due to a disproportionately high number of institutions, limited financing and falling student numbers. In 2017, the Bank of Latvia recommended a drastic reduction in the number of higher-education institutions, from 56 to 20, as well as a reduction in the number of study programs, from over 900 to less than 500. There is some limited evidence that the process of downsizing the large body of higher-education institutions has begun. For example, the Riga Pedagogical Academy was recently merged with the University of Latvia. In addition, steps were taken to close a number of rural schools.

Tertiary attainment among 25 to 34 year olds has improved in Latvia, from 29% in 2018 to 42% in 2018. Nevertheless, a wide gender gap exists, with 54% of women and only 30% of men holding a tertiary-level qualification. Furthermore, for 25 to 64 year olds, 34% of the population had attained tertiary education in 2018, 3% lower than the OECD average.

Latvia has undertaken comprehensive reforms in both general and vocational education, switching to a competence-based educational approach. The reforms will be introduced gradually between 2019 and 2023. Furthermore, in 2018, amendments to the Education Law and the Law of General Education were also approved, which

will gradually change the language of instruction for ethnic minority upper-secondary education programs to Latvian only in 2021/2022. For grades 1 – 9, a bilingual education model will be introduced.

In general, education reform has been high on the government's agenda. Nevertheless, there are still challenges to address in the education system – a shrinking population, a high rate of early retirement among teachers and a level of public funding that is significantly lower than the OECD average. Furthermore, around 45% of primary to upper secondary school teachers are at least 50 years old in Latvia. Combined with low salaries, the aging teacher population will constitute a significant future challenge. Some steps were taken in 2018 and 2019 to increase the minimum wage for teachers (from €680 to €750 per month), but longer-term plans remain unclear.

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## Mexico

### Score 5

Mexico's education system is relatively weak despite significant public investment in the sector. According to the 2017 OECD's Overview of the Education System, education spending in Mexico in 2014 (last year with available data) was 5.4% of the country's GDP. While this is slightly over the OECD's average of 5.2%, it is below other Latin American countries like Argentina, Chile and Colombia. Moreover, the per student expenditure of Mexico (,611 in 2015) is the lowest of all OECD countries. This can explain to a great extent why student performance is lower than in most other OECD countries, including Chile (the other Latin American OECD member). Also, there are strong regional differences in education and some states (e.g., Guerrero) are continuously failing to cope with national minimum standards in education at the primary and secondary levels.

The problem, therefore, appears to be related to resource allocation rather than funding per se. Too much is spent on salaries in contrast to capital spending, where

further investment in different types of infrastructure is urgently needed. Aiming to mitigate the strong political influence of the teachers' union on the Education Ministry, the outgoing Peña Nieto government's recent reforms aimed at facilitating a meritocracy in the teaching profession. However, the reform still lags behind expectations. It created the Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (INEE), a national organization that would implement periodic teacher performance evaluations. Some critics argued that the reform's goal was to undermine teachers' unions across the country and further centralize education. On the other hand, the teachers' union has been criticized for its control over the allocation of teaching positions. What is clear is that rising student numbers will require an increase in overall funding.

There is evidence of the union collecting salaries for nonexistent teachers. One of the provisions of the reform requires the National Statistics Institute to ascertain how many teachers are actually employed by the Mexican state. Mexico's new president, López Obrador, promised during his campaign that he would replace the current reform proposal with his own and increase public education spending. Nevertheless, the new draft of the education reform retained a major part of his predecessor's reform. As a result, he made the powerful Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE), which had supported him in the election campaign, a political opponent. Elba Esther Gordillo, the long-time president of the other major teachers' union Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), described the new reform as "old wine in a new bottle." After lengthy negotiations, however, the education reform was passed in May 2019. The reform eliminates the INEE, it establishes that initial education (from 0 to 3 years) is mandatory and that the state must guarantee access to higher education.

Higher education is faces several major challenges. Mexico's student population increased from 2 million students in 2001 to 4.5 million in 2018. Universities need to adapt to this higher demand, and align study programs with the needs of a developing and diversifying economy. Nevertheless, the tertiary enrollment rate is still far below those of other major Latin American countries. As in most other countries in the region, private education is generally of much higher quality in Mexico. At every level, privately educated students typically outperform students enrolled in public schools.

Citation:

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## Bulgaria

### Score 4

The Bulgarian education system is dominated by government-owned institutions and government-set standards at all levels. From a comparative perspective, public spending on education is relatively low. It is projected to increase from 3.7% of GDP in 2017 to 4.0% in 2021, while subsequently falling back to 3.7% in 2022.

The quality of education in Bulgaria falls short of the needs of a modern competitive economy. While the PISA, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) scores have improved since 2006 in absolute terms, as have the PISA background indicators, they are still low relative to comparable countries. With respect to higher education, the QS World University Ranking features only one Bulgarian university, Sofia University, among the world's top universities. However, it is not among the top 800 universities covered.

The level of equity in the Bulgarian education system is average to low. Many children in upper-income families are able to attend private schools, which show better results in the external evaluations after fourth, seventh and 12th grades. In addition, the school dropout rate among minorities, especially Roma, is significantly higher than the average, meaning that schools do not provide the same opportunities for all ethnic groups. Finally, geographic variance in the quality of the education provided by secondary and tertiary schools is very large, with schools in smaller towns and villages and in less populated areas unable to attract high-quality teaching staff.

Citation:

World University Ranking: <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2019>

## Greece

### Score 4

Greece performs well with regard to tertiary attainment (the share of the population holding university-level degrees) compared to other OECD countries, and generally has good primary education with low school drop-out rates. However, it is a laggard with regard to upper-secondary attainment and its PISA results. In other words, while primary schools and universities may not show an outstanding performance, they function somewhat better than the high schools. This is the result of many factors, including the Greek population's fascination, fueled by successive governments, with being admitted to any university, and any department or school, by passing the competitive entrance examinations. These traditionally require memorization rather than critical thinking on the part of the pupils examined, and are conducted every June on a nationwide scale through a centralized examination mechanism. As a result, teaching and learning in high schools is oriented toward the requirements of exam preparation, a task is in fact far better organized by the

country's innumerable fee-supported private cramming schools than by state or private high schools.

Educational outcomes in Greece are close to the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science. However, students' PISA test performance has not shown any significant improvement over the last decade.

Tertiary institutions are nominally autonomous, but the Ministry of Education is responsible for their funding, as well as for the distribution of students across undergraduate programs. Since the mid-1990s, governments have promoted a policy of open university access, in part by opening admissions to universities and establishing new universities and departments. In the period under review, the Syriza-ANEL government merged the country's 14 state polytechnics (technological educational institutes, TEI) with the 22 state universities. This measure, taken without prior planning, let alone an evaluation of the polytechnics, should be interpreted in the context of that government's faltering populism. The measure was completed almost overnight, making it impossible for the successor to Syriza-ANEL, the New Democracy government (in power since July 2019), to overturn it. The Ministry of Education also introduced several measures during the review period that further reduced the autonomy of higher-education institutions.

Obtaining a high-school diploma (rather than a vocational-school qualification) is an aim sought by almost all families. Such a diploma, combined with success in the aforementioned nationwide university examinations, provides access to tertiary education. However, such access is not equitable, as students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds are more likely to pass entrance examinations successfully. Moreover, to the extent their parents can afford it, Greek high-school students receive extensive private tutoring in the cramming schools noted above. This reflects a cultural contradiction. While tertiary education is an entirely public sector activity (i.e., university students pay neither tuition fees nor textbook costs, and private universities are officially banned), success in entering universities depends on private tutoring.

Under the Syriza-ANEL government (2015 – 2019), competency tests to pass a class (or grade) in elementary and high school were all but been abolished; timid teacher-evaluation efforts were largely abandoned; and the status of vocational training (in technical and professional high schools) was further downgraded to the benefit of general education in high schools (this latter trend has persisted for decades).

Meanwhile, the age-old patronage-based allocation of education resources continued. The Greek state spends less on education (3.9% of GDP) than the EU-28 average (4.6% in 2017; latest Eurostat figures). In addition, public funds are misspent: the allocation of teachers in public schools and lecturers in university departments is often uneven, university libraries are under-resourced and housing for students is far from adequate. The distribution of infrastructure among university departments is generally unequal and academic and administrative staff are underpaid.

The education system is extremely top-heavy, with public resources channeled to sustain a large number of state universities and polytechnics. It is unsurprising that Greece is ranked among the lowest in the OECD with regard to expenditure on pre-primary education. However, there is a positive development underway, as pre-primary education in Greece has become compulsory for all four-year-old children as of the 2018 – 2019 school year. Over the span of three years, the two-year preschool education will become compulsory in all municipalities of the country, and all children will enroll in pre-primary schools (Nipiagogeia) at the age of four.

The quality of education across Greek universities is very uneven. Some university departments have a long tradition of excellence, such as the Athens Law School and most of the engineering departments of the National Technical University of Athens. Many other schools, however, including most former polytechnics (given university status overnight), are at a considerably lesser level.

In summary, Greece's education system is one of the most centralized among OECD countries, with education policy suffering from politicization and a lack of policy continuity. The economic crisis and government policy have further exacerbated the mismatch between the allocation of resources and actual needs. Thus, the divergence between employment and education trends has worsened (for more, see "Labor Market Policy").

Citation:

Information on the performance of Greece's educational system is based on data provided on this SGI platform. Data on public expenditure on education is drawn on Eurostat, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Main\\_indicators\\_for\\_public\\_expenditure\\_on\\_education\\_\(excluding\\_early\\_childhood\\_educational\\_development\),\\_2015\\_ET18.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Main_indicators_for_public_expenditure_on_education_(excluding_early_childhood_educational_development),_2015_ET18.png)

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## Poland

### Score 4

In the period under review, conflicts over education policy continued. In 2019, the abolition of the lower-secondary (i.e., middle) schools, which were introduced in 1999, and the return to the traditional two-tier school system (i.e., eight years of primary school followed by upper-secondary school for four years or vocational education) was eventually implemented. The change was badly prepared, the costs of which became visible to local administrations at the lowest (gmina) level – as well as teachers, parents and students – when the number of school children taking exams doubled. In spring 2019, the majority of teachers went on strike. Minister for Education Anna Zalewska was criticized for her poor handling of the teachers' protests, even by members of her party. Eventually the strikes faded out and Zalewska's successor, Dariusz Piatkowski, reached an agreement to raise salaries for teachers in August 2019. However, teachers have remained dissatisfied.

The content of school education has also been criticized. First, due to the government's attempts to change the curricula with a view to rewriting Polish history, removing many liberal and cosmopolitan texts and values from core teaching programs, and returning to old-fashioned teaching methods. In autumn 2019, the Sejm discussed a controversial draft law aimed at abolishing sex education in schools and threatening teachers with prison sentences. In October 2019, the European Parliament took up the issue and passed a resolution asking the Polish government to reconsider the bill.

As for higher education, Minister of Science and Higher Education Jarosław Gowin is eager to further improve the system of higher education in Poland. The laws he made in 2017 and 2018 are supposed to reduce the overall number of university students, to promote the so-called STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), and reorganize the system of funding universities and students (through loans). These changes have been accompanied by protests from teachers and university personnel, who consider the reform to be ill-conceived, poorly prepared and expensive.

Citation:

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## Romania

### Score 4

Romania's education system continues to face serious challenges inhibiting its ability to deliver high-quality, equitable and efficient education and training. Despite moderate improvements in recent years, Romania continues to underperform in indicators including 15-year-olds' performance in math, science, and reading, attendance in early childhood education, tertiary educational attainment, and proportions of early leavers. At 2.8% of the country's GDP, Romania's public expenditure on education is the lowest in the EU, with recent legislative measures postponing a legal requirement to allocate 6% of GDP annually until 2022. Access to education is unequal, and there are particular challenges for low-income, Roma, and rural children, including but not limited to staff shortages in rural areas.

Policy developments related to education in the year under review include mandatory vocational training for eighth graders failing to achieve a certain grade on their national examination, the signing of financing contracts for nearly €100 million for two IT projects to digitalize the country's education system, and plans for reforms shortening school vacations and reducing class hours. Plans have also been made or steps taken toward increasing training for specialized staff and teachers, improving curricula, pursuing a project identifying students at risk of dropping out, and



monitoring and preventing school segregation; however, delays have hindered many of these endeavors. All told, while both the Ministry of Education and the Presidential Administration have forwarded visions for comprehensive education and training reforms, investments remain too low for these visions to be realized. This is further complicated by a lack of capacity and consistency within the ministry, with the former education minister dismissed by the prime minister in August 2019, and Monica Anisie appointed only in November.

In part because of the education system, Romania continues to have labor and skills supply that are not keeping up with the fast-changing needs of the economy.

## Slovakia

### Score 4

The Slovak education system has suffered from a number of weaknesses. While public spending on education has risen, its level is still among the lowest in the European Union. The teaching profession is unattractive, therefore the graduates tend to opt for different, better paid jobs. There are huge regional disparities in teaching outcomes, and students from socially disadvantaged groups tend to achieve only half the points of their peers from socially more favorable environments. Vocational education has been neglected since the fall of communism and universities focus on non-technical education. As a result, the education system is insufficiently geared to increasing Slovakia's economic potential in that Slovakia faces a shortage of skilled workers needed for its industry-oriented economy. In 2015, Slovakia reintroduced a dual vocational education training system, but the implementation is slow and interest among potential participants remains limited. At the beginning of 2018, there were only 2,500 students and 70 companies involved. Tertiary educational attainment has improved, but remains below EU average and quality control in higher education does not meet international standards. The implementation of the anti-segregation legislation adopted mid-2015 in order to improve education for Roma children has been hindered by low teacher participation and a lack of teachers able to teach in multicultural settings.

While the Pellegrini government increased teacher salaries by 10% and updated its education development strategy in 2019, the government has largely failed to address structural problems in the education system. Martina Lubyová, minister of education, science, research and sport since September 2017, remains a controversial figure. In February 2019, the opposition tried, but failed to recall her because of the allocation of state R&D stimuli to companies not entitled to receive funding. Moreover, Lubyová was criticized for trivializing the issue of Andrej Danko, the speaker of parliament and leader of Lubyová's party, plagiarizing content for his thesis. In March 2019, teachers at more than 1,100 schools symbolically dressed in black to protest against the low quality of education and insufficient recognition of teachers' status. In October 2019, the European Commission sent a reasoned opinion to Slovakia urging the country to comply with EU rules on the equal treatment of Roma

school children. The European Commission conceded that Slovakia has taken measures in recent years, but argued that the measures have not been sufficient to resolve the segregation of Roma children in schools.

Citation:

European Commission (2019): Education and Training Monitor 2019: Slovakia. Luxembourg ([https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-factsheet-2019-slovakia\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-factsheet-2019-slovakia_en.pdf)).

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OECD (2020): OECD Skills Strategy Slovak Republic: Assessment and Recommendations. Paris.

## Turkey

### Score 4

In Turkey, children typically attend pre-primary education starting at age three, and the programs last between one and three years. Compulsory education begins at age five/six and ends at age 17. Turkey has made significant progress in increasing access to education. In the 2018 – 2019 school year, although the pre-primary education enrollment rate, according to Ministry of Education, was quite low at 39.1%, Turkey achieved almost universal primary-school enrollment (91.9%). Lower secondary-school enrollment was 93.3% and upper secondary-school enrollment was 84.2% during the same period. The government is actively seeking to expand secondary-school enrollment to comply with the new “4+4+4” law on education. Vocational education and training (VET) programs are available to students who leave the education system after primary school. The standard length of VET programs is four years, with most of the four years spent in workplaces. Finally, the percentage of the population aged 25 – 34 with a tertiary level qualification was 44.1% in 2018 – 2019.

The gender-based enrollment gap has nearly disappeared for primary education and has narrowed significantly for secondary education. The Gender Gap Report 2018 emphasized that 93.6% of women and 98.8% of men are literate, the enrollment rate in primary education is 93.9% for women and 94.7% for men, the enrollment rate in secondary education is 85% for women and 86% for men, and the enrollment rate in tertiary education is 96.5% for women and 110.7% for men. Furthermore, pre-primary education and higher education enrollment rates are increasing rapidly. However, according to Gender Gap Report, Turkey ranked only 106 out of 149 countries for educational attainment.

Based on PISA 2019 results, Turkey showed some improvements compared to previous years, and thus signs of effective policymaking and implementation. However, Turkey still ranks at the bottom of the table, suggesting serious issues with the overall quality of education.

- Turkey recorded a 10-point improvement in reading, eight-point improvement in mathematics and 15-point improvement in science scores in 2018 compared to 2015.

Turkey recorded the highest increase in mathematics and science scores between 2015 and 2018 out of the 36 OECD countries.

- Only 3% of Turkish students aged 15 have a high level of reading skills; 63% of Turkish students have attained a secondary education in mathematics (compared to an OECD average of 76%).

Despite announcements on the issue, the government continued to refrain from strengthening universities' autonomy, which had deteriorated after the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016. The aftermath of the failed coup attempt had a severe impact on academic freedoms. During this period, according to the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, a large number of academics were dismissed through appended lists in emergency decrees, without any due process or judicial remedy.

Citation:

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Ministry of National Education (2019) National Education Statistics, Ankara.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017) 'PISA 2015 Key Findings for Turkey,' Paris: OECD.

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World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2018, Geneva.

## Hungary

### Score 3

Since the second Orbán government assumed office in 2010, the education system has undergone major changes. Spending has been cut, competencies and monitoring duties have been centralized, private and religious schools have been strengthened, and secondary education has been restructured with a view to strengthening vocational education. Education outcomes are below the EU average, show wide disparities and the education system obstructs social mobility. The salaries of teachers are still low compared to other tertiary education graduates. The regular PISA surveys have shown a marked decline in the quality of education in Hungary. According to the latest PISA survey, Hungary ranks 38th worldwide for education. At the same time, the content of school textbooks has been increasingly influenced by ideology. Pupils are educated in a nationalistic fashion, which celebrates the greatness of the Hungarian people and their "historic suffering," while often denying historical facts. This ideological infiltration begins at kindergarten level, and is a common feature in primary and secondary education. While the quality of public education has drastically declined, the children of the "royal court" have attended expensive private schools that remain out of the financial reach of average citizens.

The government's efforts to exercise control over universities has proceeded over a series of several steps. Under the second Orbán government, the University of Public Service (NKE) was established and tasked with controlling public administration and, to some extent, legal education. In addition, the government appointed "chancellors" in all universities. The third Orbán government passed a new act on higher education in April 2017 that targeted the Central European University (CEU), the most prestigious institute of higher education in Hungary, which eventually moved a major part of its activities to Vienna. Under the fourth Orbán government, government control over the higher education sector has continued with the transfer of the prestigious Corvinus University from the Ministry of Human Resources (which is the successor to the Ministry of Education), to the newly created the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, which has controlled the entire higher education system since September 2019. The goal here is to transform Corvinus University into a "private" university for a new business elite that is loyal to the government. The privatization of higher education has also been favored by the establishment of a new system of "private" universities with a clear pro-government profile that derives its resources from various foundations established by the Hungarian National Bank. So far, the Orbán government's impact on universities has had a negative effect on teaching and research quality and on Hungarian higher education's international reputation.

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