



COUNTRY STUDY

SPAIN

Country Monitoring Report

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Recommendations

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- Establish and open up a system of validation of skills that does not require passage through the formal education system.
 - Take solid actions to decrease the early school leaving rate.
 - Promote the access to official documentation and information to educational guidance and strengthen the support for vulnerable groups (NEETs, women...).
 - Develop a comprehensive strategy of integration of education for citizenship.
 - Provide good quality offers of employment, apprenticeships and traineeships for young people and improve the outreach to non-registered unemployed young people, in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee.





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1. Promoting access and participation in LLL

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

Funds (ESIF) for the period 2014-2020.

Adult participation in lifelong learning has remained stable, and above the EU average, in recent years. From 2012 to 2013, the proportion of people aged 25 to 64 who stated that they had recently received education or training increased from 10.7% to 11.1%, compared to the EU average of 10.5 %¹.

In Spain, LLL is seen as one of the fundamental points of support to try to recover the population that has been early separated from the education system, reintegrating the circuit as a support to ensure their access to the labor market on more favorable terms.

Coordination and cooperation between administrations and organizations as social agents, is necessary, as these are closer to citizens. They ensure that the information and guidance flows in all directions, based on the personal diversity and counting special measures of access to information and procedures for disadvantaged groups.

2. Vocational Education and Training

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

With the new Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality Education (LOMCE), Spain has begun reforming the VET system to better adapt young people's skills to labour market needs and to increase the attractiveness and acceptance of VET programmes. The reform created a new basic VET programme, which lasts usually two years and is supposed to give young people aged 15-18 who do not have a basic compulsory education diploma to access

¹ European Commission (2014). *Education and Training Monitoring Report - Spain*.



vocational training. However, only nine regions have developed the relevant legislation to implement the basic initial vocational training, resulting in a provisional enrolment of 34 684 students in the school year 2014/2015, far below the government's initial expectations. According to our Spanish members, there is an ideological approach behind this education reform. It was designed to "promote employability routes and encourage entrepreneurship", to "provide the ability to compete successfully" and to "provide access to highly skilled jobs, which shows a commitment to economic growth." According to these guidelines the educational aspects are subordinated to the demands of the economic system, without any criticism of the inequalities caused by the current model. The goal of education is no longer the development of the person in all its dimensions, but competitiveness and individual success. It contributes to the segregation between those who have resources and those who don't: pupils with more educational difficulties are invited to switch to VET instead of compensating inequalities.

The implemented Royal Decree 1529/2012 introduced measures to develop training and apprenticeship contracts and establish the basis for the dual vocational training approach. During the 2013-14 school year, both the number of schools offering the pilot project for dual vocational education and the number of students choosing this pathway more than doubled compared to the previous year. The number of companies participating in these projects has tripled from just over 500 to over 1.500².

The measures concerning VET seem adequate, but continued work will be required, jointly involving public authorities, education providers and employers, to extend and consolidate the dual VET system in Spain, implementing work-based learning and

² European Commission (2014). *Education and Training Monitoring Report – Spain*.

increasing apprenticeship opportunities.

3. Validation of NFIL

Spain has several validation frames, covering different education levels. One of the main articulations for validation is the Royal Decree 1224/2009 on the recognition of skills acquired through work experience. This Royal Decree established that public administrations (the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment, together with the Autonomous Communities) must establish public calls in order to accredit the professional competences of those individuals who wish to see them recognised. In addition to the Royal Decree 1224/2009, the Spanish education system has other validation tools: access exams to VET and university studies aimed at those people who do not have the required qualifications, with possibility of partial exemption of Modules of a VET Diploma and exams to gain the VET Diploma without having undertaken any formal training course.

Validation in Spain is mainly led by public administrations. When looking at the development and implementation of the Royal Decree 1224/2009, the private sector has mainly had the role of advisor and it has informed and advised individuals on the validation calls.

The main obstacle to further development currently faced seems to be the economic constraints, and therefore the uncertainty about the number of calls that will be set up in the short and long term³. Furthermore, our Spanish members also stress that it is necessary to establish a system of validation of skills that does not require passage through the formal education system, and equates the experience with basic educational levels. The long process outlined for the issuance of Certificates of Competency Validation is a clear disadvantage. It becomes therefore necessary to set a shorter and simpler procedure based on

³ European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Spain*.



the training of the agents involved in the validation process that favours and expedite the procedure. In addition, it is urgent to solve the irregularity of the implementation of the procedure in the Spanish territory, as has been done by entities with different powers in each region.

4. Early-school Leaving

Early school-leaving (ESL) and the mismatch between the education and training programmes and the labour market continue to be two of the main challenges facing education and training. The actions against early school leaving become indispensable as Spain maintains one of the highest rates in Europe, with substantial regional differentiation – from 23.6% in 2013 to 22.3 % in Q3 2014. It has recently decreased, but this is due mostly to the return to school of all those young pupils who decided to abandon education to get a job. With the economic crisis, a big number of them are returning to school as they can no longer work. Further developments are expected through the implementation of the two-year basic vocational training set up by the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education.

Our Spanish members underline that an important fact to be considered is the social background of young people who drop out, since 40.2% of the cases come from homes whose parents have no education or only primary education; 55.1% of the cases from homes whose parents have secondary studies; and only 4.7% are children of parents with higher education. The relationship between the education level of parents and the early abandonment is therefore obvious, as is also the economic level. It is a fact that the dropout rate is three times higher in households with a level of low income regarding families with higher income.

According to the Spanish expert group, it is particularly essential to improve and extend orientation, strengthen its support, especially to youth, women and vulnerable groups. Additionally, it is also important to promote the access to official

documentation and information to educational guidance teams from Secondary Schools.

5. NEETs

NEETs in Spain continue to be considered one of the biggest societal challenge as the rate of young people in this situation is unacceptably high. Even though Spain has made a little step in the right direction, as for the first time since 2008, youth unemployment has started to decline, it remains at exceptionally high levels. As of Q4-2014, the unemployment rate for the 15-24 age group stood at 51.8 %, down from 54.9 % in 2013, and a more consistent decrease of unemployment has been recorded for the 25-29 age group. However, unemployment continues to particularly affect young people with low education attainment (60.4 % in Q4-2014). In addition, the rate of NEETs remained stable during 2013 and 2014, with more than 71.2 % of them actively looking for a job, and 35.5 % declaring themselves not to be registered in the employment services⁴.

Although many programs, tools and mechanisms at EU level have been activated to try to help these young people (such as the Youth Guarantee, skill validation systems, specific occupational integration programs, etc.), a large number of young people are not responding to these interventions because they are socially excluded and cannot be reached as they are not registered at public employment services. The national Youth Guarantee scheme for instance was only able to reach 4.2% of the 706.900 young people under 25 considered as NEETs in 2014.

Although some actions have been taken at regional level to improve outreach to non-registered young people not in employment, education or training and regional employment services are expected to scale-up their involvement, delays in the implementation of these measures raise strong concerns about the coverage of the national Youth Guarantee system.

⁴ European Commission (2015). *Commission Staff Working Document, Country Report Spain 2015 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances.*



Additionally, the lack of complementary national funding to the European Social Fund and the European Employment Initiative could undermine the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the medium and long-term.

According to our Spanish members, it is necessary to set up a real coordination and cooperation between administrations, organizations and social agents, to help improve the employability of a group of young NEETs. It is particularly important to tackle this problem from a cross-sectoral perspective, and the role of non-governmental organizations can be a key to reaching them.

6. Citizenship education

By the introduction of the Education reform (LOMCE) in December 2013, the civic education subject 'Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights' (EfC) taught in Elementary, secondary, and baccalaureate programs dropped out. Instead, the LOMCE introduced the subject of Social and Civic Values (SCV) for six levels of the Elementary School, and Ethical Values or Religion subjects, for four levels of Secondary School. LOMCE also introduced the subject of Religion, as a plenty academic value, and established it as an alternative to Citizenship Education. Consequently, students should choose Social and Civic Values or Religion.

Several Regional Governments showed their disagreement with the measure and announced that they would take compensatory measures. Andalusia announced that the contents that the Ministry had cut would be introduced in the autonomous curriculum making use of their legislative quota. Later, when the LOMCE established the new subjects of Social and Civic Values, Andalusia announced that it would introduce EfC as an alternative subject.

Education for citizenship in Spain has been used by various governments as a political weapon. After autonomous elections were held in March 2015, and with the Popular Party (PP) losing power in some

autonomous communities, the new governments announced that they will reintroduce 'Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights' in their curricula. The next general elections on December may change again the situation if the Popular Party loses its absolute majority.

In short, it is therefore essential that Spain moves forward to develop a comprehensive strategy of integration of education for citizenship and peaceful coexistence, which focuses on students and not on the political interests of the parties, regulated by law and sustained with the necessary resources.

7. Council recommendations

The Council recommendations for 2015 stress Spain's very high youth unemployment and early school leaving rate. Spain is also encouraged to implement the dual vocational training scheme across all the regions, as there are considerable differences. Moreover, the country specific recommendations invite Spain to take steps to increase the quality and effectiveness of job search assistance and counselling, including as part of tackling youth unemployment⁵.

⁵ European Council (2015). *Council Recommendation of 14 July 2015 on the 2015 National Reform Programme of Spain and delivering a Council opinion on the 2015 Convergence Programme of Spain.*

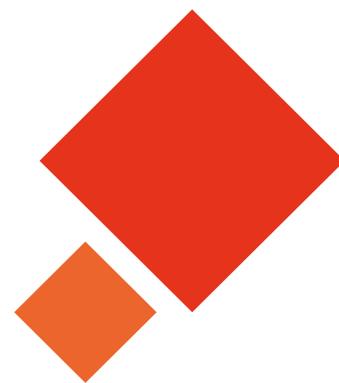






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SOLIDAR, together with our national members and partners, has developed 15 case studies in 2014, presenting innovative, effective, sustainable and tailor made models to promote social inclusion, the social economy and quality job creation by adapting a social investment approach. In their daily work, SOLIDAR members and partners anticipate new or unmet needs of socio-economically vulnerable people and empower them to actively participate in society and to access the labour market.

These case studies gather strong evidence of the social impact of the activities undertaken by our members and partners to help Member States making progress towards the achievement of the social and employment objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the implementation of the Social Investment Package.

SOLIDAR Foundation in cooperation with national members and partners has gathered an examples of national programmes and initiatives that present the innovative and successful approaches that contribute to the process of building inclusive learning societies. The case studies are centred on themes of lifelong learning, civic and citizenship education, the validation of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, and NEETs (young people Not in Employment, Education or Training).



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