



**National summary sheets on
education systems in Europe
and ongoing reforms**

2008 Edition



SPAIN

JULY 2008

1. Education population and language of instruction

The total population registered in Spain on 1 January 2008 was 45 283 529. Women accounted for 50.62 % of the population. The number of people under 24 was 11 068 372 (22.44 % of the population), of whom 48.66 % were women ⁽¹⁾. The number of students enrolled at some educational level in the school year 2007/08 was 8 587 639 ⁽²⁾. In Spain, 61.1 % ⁽²⁾ of people between 0 and 29 years are engaged in some form of studies.

Spanish, also known as Castilian, is the official language in Spain. Therefore, it is every Spanish citizen's duty to know this language and their right to use it. Apart from Castilian, there are other co-official languages in six Autonomous Communities. In those Communities, both Castilian and the co-official language are taught compulsorily at non-university levels of education. The use of the Autonomous Community language as a language of instruction varies in the different Communities, depending on their respective linguistic policies.

2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

In the school year 2007/08, 67.4 % of students at non-university levels (around 65 % of those in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education and around 75 % of those in vocational training and general upper secondary education) and 89.7 % of university students attended publicly funded educational institutions ⁽²⁾.

A private party, either a person or a legal entity, may own educational institutions. Private schools may be financially independent or government dependent and may offer any level of education.

Publicly funded private schools are funded via educational agreements, which are established with the education administration of the corresponding Autonomous Community. Schools may sign these agreements provided that the requirements laid down in the educational legislation are met.

⁽¹⁾ Data of the National Statistics Institute. Population estimates.

⁽²⁾ Data of the Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport. Estimate.

In Spain, the decentralized model of education administration distributes the responsibilities among the State, Autonomous Communities, local administrations and schools. The responsibilities corresponding to each of these levels are set out in the following table:

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN EDUCATION	
Central government	General organisation of the education system, minimum requirements for schools, international cooperation in education, policies to encourage and coordinate research, general planning of education and regulation of academic and professional qualifications, High Inspectorate, policies on financial support for studies, ownership and administration of public institutions abroad, establishment of the legal basis for foreign institutions in Spain, education statistics for state purposes, etc.
Autonomous Communities	Administrative responsibility within their territories, creation and authorization of institutions, staff management, curriculum development, student guidance and support, financial support and aids, etc.
Local Administrations	Provision of sites for building public institutions, maintenance and refurbishment of pre-primary and primary schools, planning extra-curricular and supplementary activities, monitoring compulsory schooling, etc.
Schools	Schools are autonomous in organisational, educational and financial matters. The aim of such autonomy is to achieve a better adaptation and better use of allocated resources, as well as facilitate a model of educational action which best meets the students' needs and the characteristics of the school environment.

Source: CIDE on the basis of legislation, 2008.

Universities are autonomous as regards their general management, as well as in academic and financial matters, including the management of their own resources. They are also autonomous concerning staff management (including recruiting, hiring and promoting teaching staff), student admission procedures and the design and submission of the syllabuses.

The central government is responsible for the educational High Inspectorate of Education, whose task is to ensure that the common requirements established by the central government are met throughout the whole country. The education authorities of the Autonomous Communities, for their part, are responsible for the education inspectorate within their territories. The inspection duty applies to all elements of the education system.

3. Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is conceived as a single education-oriented level with a structural and curricular development similar to the rest of educational levels. It caters for children from 0 to 6 years and it is divided into two three-year stages. The first stage is provided in pre-primary education institutions and the second stage can be provided in both pre-primary or pre-primary and primary schools. Although this level is not compulsory, it is free of charge during the second stage (children aged 3 to 6) both in public and publicly funded private schools.

In 2007/08, the net enrolment rates in pre-primary education is 19.1 % for the under 3 years and concerns 98.3 % of children aged from 3 to 5 years.

4. Compulsory education

(i) Phases

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16, and is divided into two educational levels: Primary education, which consists of three stages, each of them lasting two years, and lower secondary education, which consists of four school years.

STRUCTURE OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION	
Primary education (3 two-year stages) (<i>Educación Primaria</i>)	Ages 6-12
Lower secondary education (4 years) (<i>Educación Secundaria Obligatoria – ESO</i>)	Ages 12-16

(ii) Admissions criteria

Parents or legal guardians may choose any school they wish for their children, either public or private. If there are insufficient places in the public or publicly funded private school chosen by the parents, the following criteria are applied to establish admission priorities: annual family income, proximity of home (or workplace of one of the parents), enrolment of siblings in the same school, or parents/legal guardians working in it, and a disability of the pupil or of either of their parents or siblings. The Autonomous Communities and schools themselves may establish yet other supplementary criteria. Non-publicly funded private schools are free to establish their own pupils' admission criteria.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

Each Autonomous Community establishes the school calendar every year, following general guidelines set up by the central government to ensure homogeneity in the national territory. The school year comprises a minimum of 175 days both at primary level and lower compulsory secondary level, between the first fortnight of September and late June. Schools operate five days a week on an average of 25 lessons a week at primary level and 30 lessons at secondary level. The minimum number of annual teaching hours is 875 at primary level and 1,050 at lower secondary level.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

At primary level classes are limited to 25 pupils, and to 30 at secondary level. Classes including pupils with special educational needs are further limited at a rate of two pupils less for each pupil with special needs. Students are grouped according to age. Mixed age groups exist in some rural areas where classes are very small. In primary education, a class teacher teaches most areas of knowledge, except for Music, Physical Education and Foreign Languages, which are taught by specialist teachers. Secondary school students have different specialist teachers for the different subjects.

(v) Curriculum control and content

Curriculum development occurs at three levels. The central government fixes the national core curriculum, which amounts to 55 % of the timetable in the Autonomous Communities with a second official language and to 65 % in the rest. Each Autonomous Community develops this core curriculum in order to establish its own curriculum (first level of curricular development). In addition, each school adapts and expands upon this basic curriculum in the so-called second level of curricular development. The third level corresponds to classroom programming drawn up by the teacher for each group of pupils, and includes a set of teaching units.

In primary education the following content areas are compulsory: Natural, Social and Cultural Environment; Artistic education; Physical education; Spanish Language and Literature; the co-official Language and the Literature of the Autonomous Community (if applicable); Foreign Language and Mathematics. The lower secondary education curriculum includes the following: Natural Science; Social Studies; Geography and History; Physical education; Plastic and Visual education; Spanish Language and

Literature; the co-official Language and Literature of the Autonomous Community (if applicable); Foreign Language; Mathematics; Music and Technology. Likewise, in one of the first three years of this stage, all pupils are to take Citizenship and Human Rights education. Religion is compulsorily offered by schools in both primary and lower secondary education, but it is voluntary for pupils.

The methodology in primary education is global and interdisciplinary. Its purpose is to integrate pupils' experiences and learning processes and must be adapted to their personal characteristics. In lower secondary education, methodology must also be adapted to each pupil's needs, foster both independent learning and teamwork, as well as promote creativity and dynamism. It must also integrate ICT resources into the learning process.

Schools are free to choose their own textbooks and other teaching materials. Publishers are responsible for devising these books with due regard for the principles and content of teaching laid down by legislation, without requiring any further authorisation from education authorities. The supervision of textbooks and other teaching materials as elements of the teaching-learning process is one of the responsibilities of the inspectorate.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

In primary education, assessment must take into account pupils' progress in all areas with a global and continuous approach. The teachers make the decisions on their promotion taking special account of the information and criteria of the class teacher. Promotion is automatic within the same cycle of primary education but progression from one cycle to the next is contingent upon meeting the curricular aims for that particular cycle. A pupil may repeat a year only once throughout the primary level. Pupils who promote to the next cycle, but who are negatively assessed in one or more areas must receive appropriate support to help them catch up. Likewise, special attention is paid to the early detection of learning difficulties and to the prevention of school failure at an early age. An official academic certificate is not awarded at the end of primary education; but it is awarded at the end of the basic education, which includes primary and lower secondary education.

In lower secondary education, assessment is continuous and separate for each subject. At the end of each year of this level, all the teachers of the group jointly decide on each pupil's promotion after considering the attainment of the objectives of the year. Pupils may take a special examination in subjects they have not passed at the end of the school year. Those who still have not passed three or more subjects after the special examinations may not promote and have to repeat the whole year. Each year can only be repeated once, taking into account that students can only repeat twice through compulsory education. If, after repetition, a pupil does not meet the requirements for promotion to the next year, the assessment team will decide on their promotion and on individual reinforcement measures to be adopted.

Pupils who complete lower secondary education having passed all subjects in this level are awarded the *Graduado en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* (Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education). This gives access to *Bachillerato* (general upper secondary education) or *Formación Profesional Específica de grado medio* (intermediate specific vocational training). This certificate may also be awarded to those pupils who finish the year with one, two and exceptionally three subjects negatively assessed, as long as the teaching team considers that their nature and weight in the stage has not prevented from the acquisition of the basic competences and its objectives. Pupils who are not awarded this certificate receive a *Certificado de Escolaridad* (Certificate of School Attendance), which shows the years and the subjects they have completed.

5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

(i) Types of education

Post-compulsory secondary education comprises two branches: an academic one, *Bachillerato* which lasts two years, and a vocational one, *Formación Profesional Específica de grado medio*, the duration of which may vary from one-and-a-half to two years, depending on the professional profile.

STRUCTURE OF POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION	
<i>Bachillerato</i> (general upper secondary education) 2 years	Ages 16-18
<i>Formación Profesional Específica de grado medio</i> (intermediate specific vocational training) 1½ to 2 years	Ages 16-18

(ii) Admissions criteria

Students must hold a *Graduado en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* certificate to access either branch of post-compulsory secondary education. Students without this certificate may be admitted to *Formación Profesional Específica de grado medio* if they are 17 or older and they pass an entry examination.

(iii) Curriculum control and content

As in compulsory education, *Bachillerato* minimum core curriculum is established by the central government although both the Autonomous Communities and the schools develop and adapt the curriculum to their own context. Four modalities of *Bachillerato* are being currently provided: Arts, Natural and Health Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Technology. The *Bachillerato* curriculum comprises common subjects, specific subjects of each modality and optional subjects. The subjects that are common to all four modalities are: Philosophy, Spanish Language and Literature, the co-official Language and Literature of the Autonomous Community and Foreign Language. In addition, Physical Education is a common subject in the first year and History in the second year.

Formación Profesional Específica de grado medio is structured in different *ciclos formativos* (modular studies of variable duration) classified into 22 trade sectors. These *ciclos formativos* consist of modules with both theoretical and practical content, and can be of two types: associated with a proficiency unit (the most specific modules) or cross-curricular basic ones (aimed to develop basic cross-curricular skills for professional competence in the corresponding course). Furthermore, all *ciclos formativos* include a module on Training and Guidance in the Labour Market (offering guidance on the labour market, understanding relevant legislation, compliance with basic health precautions and identifying the most common hazards) and another module concerning On-the-Job Training.

Bachillerato is offered in secondary education institutions, which may also offer vocational education and lower secondary education. The *Formación Profesional de grado medio*, in turn, may be taken in these institutions, in national reference centres or in vocational training integrated institutions.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

In *Bachillerato*, assessment is continuous and is carried out separately for each subject. Those who fail a subject at the end of the year can take a special examination. First-year students who fail more than two subjects must repeat the whole year. Similarly, second year students failing more than three subjects must repeat this year, whereas those who fail up to three subjects only have to take those subjects. Students may spend no more than four years in this level. Successful students receive the *Bachiller* diploma.

Assessment is also continuous in vocational training and, after passing all the modules in a course, students receive the *Técnico* (technician) certificate in the relevant area of specialisation. Students who have failed modules with a timetable allocation equivalent to up to 25 % of the duration of all first-year

modules at the end of the first year may progress to the following year following a programme of remedial activities. If the total is higher than 25 %, students have to complete again all curricular activities corresponding to the failed modules. Students attending on-site classes may follow curricular activities in the same module no more than three times. Likewise they can take examinations for final assessment and qualification for a given module no more than four times.

6. Higher education

(i) Structure

Higher education comprises the following provisions: university education, *Formación Profesional de grado superior* (advanced vocational training), *Enseñanzas Artísticas Superiores* (higher Artistic education), *Ciclos formativos de Artes Plásticas y Diseño de grado superior* (advanced training cycles in Plastic Arts and Design) and advanced Sports education.

University education is structured in different cycles. Studies may fall into the following categories: first cycle (lasting three years), first and second cycle (lasting five or six years), only second cycle (lasting two years), and third cycle studies (lasting one or two years). University education is provided by University Faculties, *escuelas técnicas superiores* (Higher Technical Schools, providing all cycles in studies of a technical nature) and *escuelas universitarias* (University Schools, providing only first-cycle studies). The integration of Spanish universities into the European Higher Education Area has brought about the creation of a new legislative framework; it establishes a new structure of university education organised in three cycles, namely Graduate, Master and Doctorate. This new regulation is already in force in Spain, though it might not be fully implemented until 2010 (see section 9 for more information on new developments).

The *Formación Profesional de grado superior* is usually offered in the same institutions as the *Formación Profesional de grado medio*.

Advanced Artistic education (ISCED 5A) is provided at public institutions called *Conservatorios Superiores* and *Escuelas Superiores* (Higher Music Conservatories and Higher Schools of Art).

Finally, Sports education is offered in public or private training institutions, authorised by the corresponding education authority, and in educational institutions within the military education system, in accordance with the agreements signed by the Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport and the Ministry of Defence.

(ii) Access

The following may access university education: pupils with the *Bachiller* certificate who have passed the *Prueba de Acceso a la Universidad, PAU* (university entrance examination); pupils holding a *Técnico Superior* certificate in any advanced vocational training specialisation (only for those university studies relating to their certificate); and adults over 25 who may access university without holding a degree as long as they pass an entrance examination specially designed for this purpose. Likewise, in order to access certain university studies (Fine Arts, Translation and Interpreting, Physical Activity and Sports Sciences and certain second cycle studies) an additional personal aptitude test must be passed.

Students who are going to take Artistic or Sports education must hold the *Bachiller* certificate and also pass a specific examination.

There are two ways of enrolling in *Formación Profesional de grado superior*: direct access, for holders of the *Bachiller* certificate and access through a test for students not meeting academic requirements, on condition they are 19 years old or over, or else 18 years old and holders of the *Técnico* certificate in the same professional area.

(iii) Qualifications

Diplomado, *Arquitecto Técnico* and *Ingeniero Técnico* degrees are earned after completing first cycle university studies (3 years), and *Licenciado*, *Arquitecto* and *Ingeniero* degrees after first and second cycle university studies (4-6 years). The degree of *Doctor* is awarded following completion of third cycle university studies and successfully defending a thesis. Regarding the adaptation of the Spanish university system to the EHEA, Spanish universities may award the Diploma Supplement (DS) to official university degrees, to provide information about the level and the contents of the provision the degree certifies. Likewise, the requirements and procedures to award the official Graduate, Master and Doctorate degrees have been regulated.

Students completing advanced Music and Dance Studies and Dramatic Arts are awarded a *Título Superior* (higher diploma) equivalent to a university *Licenciado*.

Students successfully completing *Formación Profesional de grado superior* are awarded the *Técnico Superior* (Advanced Technician) certificate. Students finishing the *ciclos formativos* of advanced Plastic Arts and Design earn a *Técnico Superior de Artes Plásticas y Diseño* certificate for their respective speciality. Advanced courses in Conservation and Restoration of Artistic Objects, in Ceramics, in Design and in Glasswork lead to the *Título Superior en Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales, Cerámica, Diseño and Vidrio*, respectively. All these diplomas are equivalent for all intents and purposes to a university *Diplomado*. Upon satisfactorily completing advanced Sports education, the *Técnico Deportivo Superior* (Advanced Sports Technician) certificate is obtained in the corresponding type or speciality. This certificate is equivalent to all intents and purposes to the *Técnico Superior* certificate of specific vocational training.

7. Special needs

Pupils with special educational needs are those who need, at a certain point in their education or permanently, special support and specific educational attention as a result of disabilities or severe behavioural disorders. The specific criteria to be recognised as a pupil with special educational needs and the professionals in charge of this appraisal are determined by each Autonomous Community. It is a widespread policy to educate these pupils alongside their peers in mainstream schools. Only when their needs cannot be reasonably met in mainstream schools they do attend special education schools or classes. In the 2007/08 school year, only 0.3 % of all pupils attended special schools (45.8 % of SEN-children are in private institutions) ⁽¹⁾.

8. Teachers

Three teaching bodies can be distinguished: pre-primary and primary education teachers, secondary education teachers and higher education teachers (university and non-university education).

Pre-primary and primary education teachers are required to hold a *Maestro* teaching diploma and their initial training lasts three years. These teachers are considered generalists, as they are competent in all areas except for Music, Physical education and Foreign Languages, which are taught by specialist teachers.

Teaching secondary education requires a university degree (*Licenciado*, *Arquitecto* or *Ingeniero* degree) plus the pedagogic and didactic training required. Secondary teachers only teach subjects of their field of specialisation or considered closely related to it.

In the case of university teaching staff, regulations establish different requirements depending on the category they belong to. Thus, *Catedráticos de Universidad* or *Catedráticos de Escuela Universitaria* and *Profesores Titulares de Universidad* must hold a Doctorate. *Profesores Titulares de Escuela Universitaria* as

⁽¹⁾ Data of the Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport.

well as other university teaching staff are required to hold a *Licenciado*, *Arquitecto* or *Ingeniero* degree or, in the case of certain specific fields, *Diplomado*, *Arquitecto Técnico* or *Ingeniero Técnico* degree.

In publicly funded institutions, teaching staff both in higher education and at lower levels, usually have permanent civil servant status. Candidates to teaching posts are generally selected by means of a selection process which also involves competitive examinations, established specifically for each teaching level.

In the private sector, candidates to teaching posts sign a labour contract with the management of the teaching institution.

9. Current reforms and priorities

The ongoing process for the general reform of the education system started with the 2006 *Ley Orgánica de Educación*, LOE (Act on Education). Accordingly, the main aspects reformed are the following:

- The core curricula for the second cycle of pre-primary education, primary education, compulsory secondary education and *Bachillerato*.
- The general organisation of the vocational training in the education system.
- Basic aspects of the curriculum for specialised Language education.
- Basic aspects of the curriculum for professional Music and Dance education.
- The general organisation of professional Plastic Arts and Design education.
- The general organisation of the specialised Sports education.
- The implementation of the LOE and the corresponding regulations will gradually take place from the academic year 2006/07 till the 2009/2010.

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR OF THE LOE (MAIN MEASURES)

2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation and management of schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Election of headteacher - School Council • Schooling of immigrants • New system of access for official teachers • Extension of voluntary retirement • School libraries • Annual report on indicators of the education system before the Chamber of Deputies • Extension of curricular diversification programmes in compulsory secondary education (ESO) • Setting-up of the Supreme Council for Artistic education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of early implementation of the first cycle of pre-primary education¹ • 1st and 2nd years of primary education • 1st and 3rd years of ESO • Evaluation, promotion and certification in ESO • Elementary and intermediate levels of Language education • Elementary Music and Dance education • 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years of professional Music and Dance education • Intermediate professional Plastic Arts and Design education • New entrance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First cycle of pre-primary education • 3rd and 4th years of primary education • 2nd and 4th years of ESO • 1st year of <i>Bachillerato</i> • Pre-primary education • Diagnostic evaluation on completion of the 4th year of primary education and 2nd of ESO • Advanced level of Language education • New adult education examinations to obtain ESO and <i>Bachillerato</i> qualifications • Initial vocational qualification programmes • 5th and 6th years of professional Music and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5th and 6th years of primary education • 2nd year of <i>Bachillerato</i> • New university entrance examinations • Advanced professional Plastic Arts and Design education

Artistic education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning report at the end of primary education 	examinations for vocational training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of early implementation of initial vocational qualification programmes² • Access to university of foreign students • New admission criteria for students 	professional Music and Dance education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate professional Plastic Arts and Design education 	
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¹ Autonomous Communities have the possibility of introducing the first cycle of pre-primary education prior to this date.

² Autonomous Communities have the possibility of introducing initial vocational qualification programmes prior to this date.

Drawn up by the Spanish Eurydice Unit.

Source: June 30 Royal Decree 806/2006. July 14 2006. Spanish Official Gazette, No. 167.

Regarding the adaptation of university education to the EHEA, both the April 2007 Act which modifies the LOU, and the October 2007 Royal Decree on the organisation of official university provision establish the new legislative framework for university education. The main new features are the following:

To establish a new structure of this provision organised in three cycles (Graduate, Master and Doctorate) and the official university degrees.

To grant universities the responsibility of designing and submitting the syllabuses they consider more attractive and adjusted to their resources and interests.

To create the General Assembly of University Policy and to set up the University Council to strengthen both the role and the responsibility of all the players involved in university issues as well as to organise the relationship between the State, the Autonomous Communities and universities. These bodies will replace the current University Coordination Council.

To draw up a student statute and to set up the Council of University Students to organise student participation and representation as a major part of the university system.

Regarding teaching staff, the Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport (MEPSYD) and the unions are immersed in a process of negotiations to draw up the first Statute of Non-university Teaching Staff in the Civil Service. The objective of this Statute is to clarify existing regulations by the provision of a career-based professional model. Likewise, the statute concerning university teaching and research staff is under debate.

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (<http://www.eurydice.org>)