EURYDICE

EACEA
Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency

Key Data on Education 2009: a view on Europe's educational systems

This leaflet highlights key information to be found in the *Key Data on Education in Europe* from the Eurydice Network, which combines statistical data and qualitative information to describe the organisation and functioning of the education systems of 31 European countries. Based on data collected through the national units of the Eurydice Network, Eurostat, and the PISA/PIRLS international education surveys, it provides an insight into how European countries address common challenges in education.

The 121 indicators in the publication provide an overall picture of the education systems and policies in place across Europe, from pre-primary to higher education level. They also address horizontal issues such as demographic trends, financing of education systems, teacher status and training, school autonomy and quality assurance. When appropriate, comparison is provided with the previous edition (published 2005) to show trends in the fast-changing European education landscape.

What is Eurydice?

The Eurydice Network provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies. It consists of 35 national units based in all 31 countries participating in the EU's Lifelong Learning programme (EU Member States, EEA countries and Turkey) and is coordinated and managed by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels, which drafts its publications and databases.

European Commission

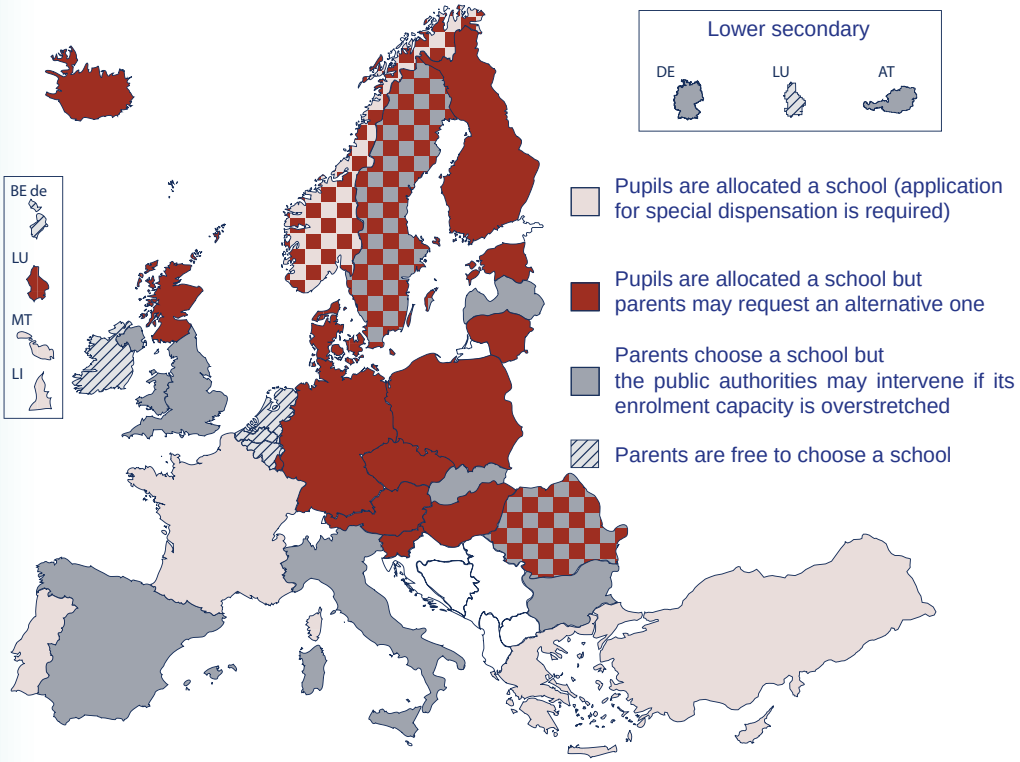
More 4-year olds enrolled in schools across Europe

There is a wide range of facilities that the youngest children in Europe may attend before entering in primary school and most are fee-paying. The age of admission varies from one country to the next, but in general education-oriented institutions enrol children from the age of 3 onwards. Attendance is optional in most countries – compulsory education generally starting at 5 or 6 – and enrolment varies greatly depending on the provisions available but the general trend is towards an increase in the number of 4-year olds enrolled in pre-primary or primary education (over 80 % in a majority of countries).

Compulsory schooling lasts longer

The great majority of pupils across Europe attend public institutions except in Belgium and the Netherlands where more pupils attend the government-funded private sector. The degree to which parents may choose the school their children attend varies greatly across Europe, from complete freedom in some countries to no scope for parental intervention in others (except where they may request a special dispensation).

Figure 1: Parental freedom in choice of schools, 2006/07



Source: Eurydice. This concerns compulsory education in the public sector.

In primary education, most pupils tend to attend small schools (between 200 and 400 pupils). Schools are even smaller in France and Austria (below 250 pupils per school on average) but much larger for nine countries: Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, Latvia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Iceland. This is partly explained by the fact that some countries have separate schools for primary and secondary education while others regroup all compulsory education levels into one school. On average in primary and secondary education, there are 10-15 pupils per teacher, but as a rule class sizes are always greater since some teachers are dedicated to providing support to children with special education needs. In fact, there are around 23 pupils per class in primary education (from 20 in Norway to 29 in the United Kingdom).

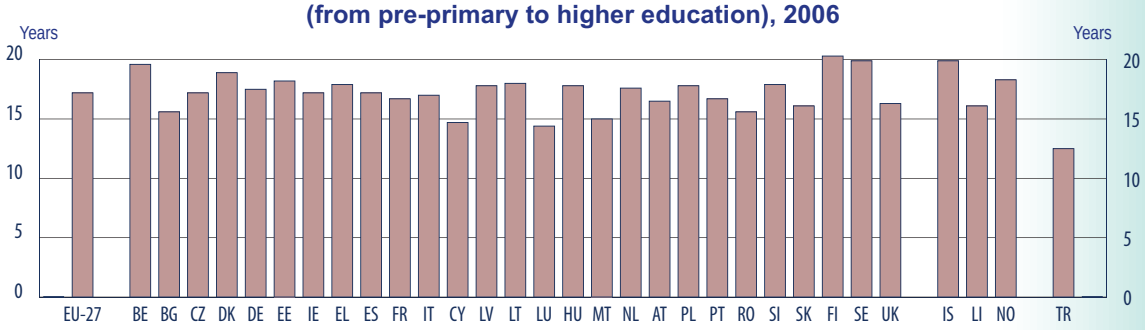
Significant reforms relating to extending compulsory schooling and/or the organisation of the school career (including (pre)vocational education) have been undertaken in several countries during recent years:

- Full-time **compulsory schooling** has been extended by one year and now corresponds to 10 years in Cyprus and in Poland since 2004/05 and in Denmark since 2008.
- Depending on the country, the reforms of the **school career** affect different levels of education. In Lithuania, the pre-primary level was extended by one year in 2006/07 and the compulsory education lasts for 9 years. In Turkey, reforms affecting mainly the nature and duration of upper secondary

education have gradually been implemented since 2005/06.

In parallel, some countries have introduced reforms aimed at reducing school-leaving rates. In Italy and the Netherlands, for example, pupils up to the age of 18 may not leave school until they obtain a certificate of basic education. This measure, in effect from the school year 2007/08, also replaces part-time compulsory education.

Figure 2: School expectancy for 5-year-olds (from pre-primary to higher education), 2006



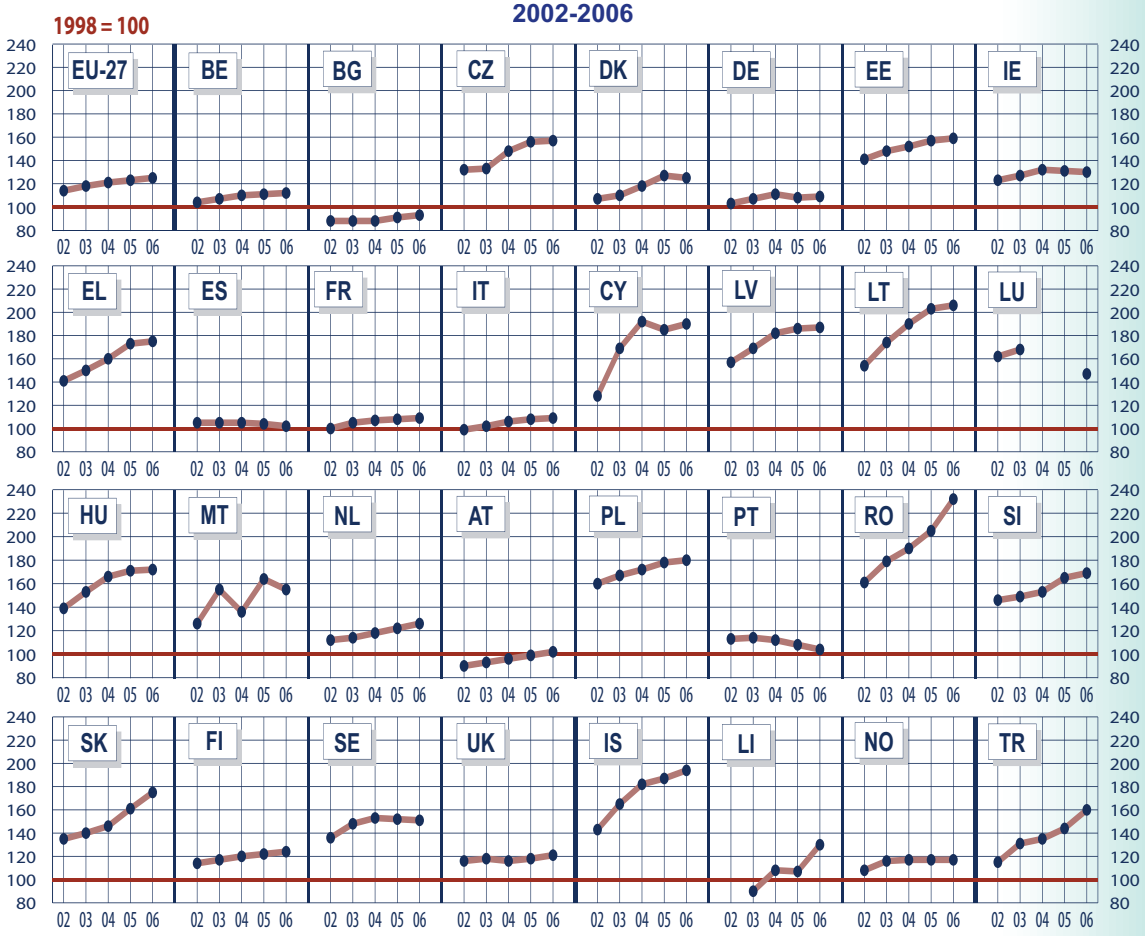
EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO	TR
17.2	19.6	15.6	17.2	18.9	17.5	18.2	17.2	17.9	17.2	16.7	17.0	14.7	17.8	18.0	14.4	17.8	15.0	17.6	16.5	17.8	16.7	15.6	17.9	16.1	20.3	19.9	16.3	19.9	16.1	18.3	12.5

Source: Eurostat, UOE and population statistics (July 2008).

The changing face of the European Higher Education Area

Between 1998 and 2006, the higher education student population rose continuously in the European Union to reach over 18 million (a 25 % increase in eight years). A third of all 20-22 year-olds now participate in a higher education course. A stable trend since 2002, women's participation in higher education is higher than men's overall (123 women enrolled for 100 men) but significant imbalances depending on the field of study still remain. In addition, participation of older students is a growing trend in line with the aim of a lifelong learning approach to knowledge, but with important variations between countries.

Figure 3: Trends in number of students in higher education, 2002-2006



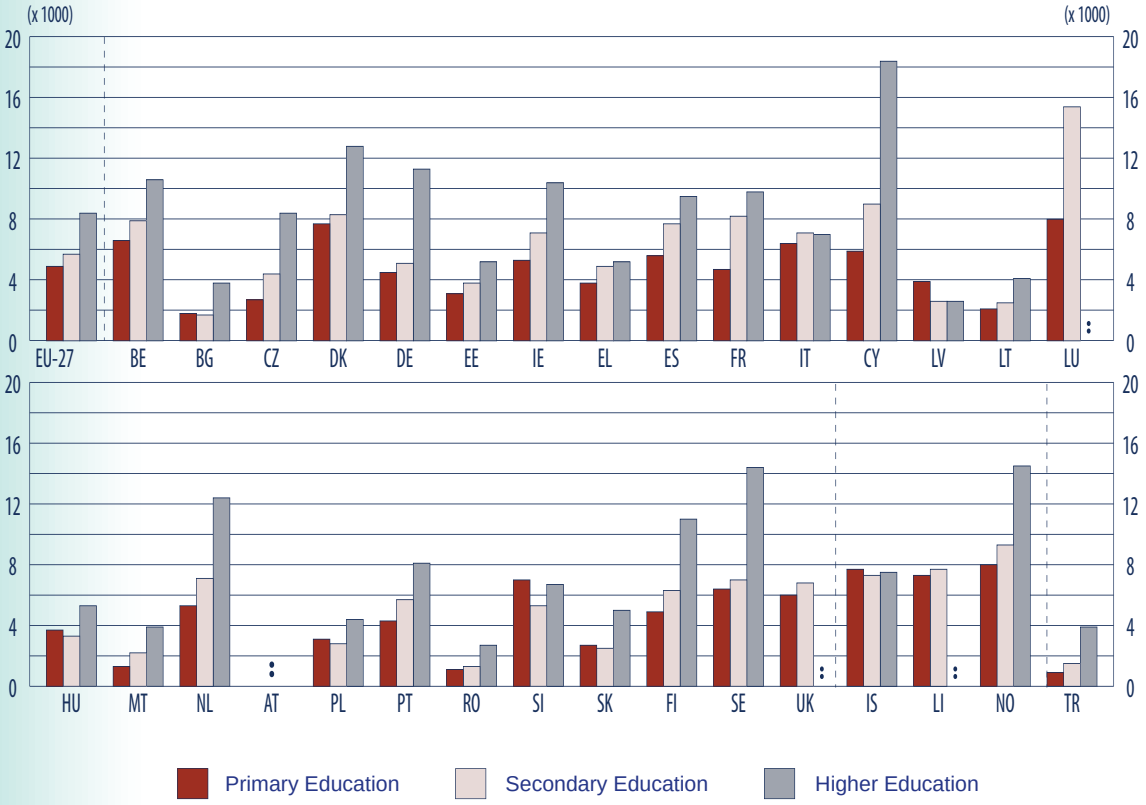
Source: Eurostat, UOE (July 2008).

Stable average funding for all levels of education, but wide disparities between countries

In the period 2001-2006, the overall proportion of EU-27 GDP dedicated to education remained stable at around 5.1 %. However, this average rate hides disparities between countries, some of which experienced significant changes during the period. Education expenditure in 2006 accounted for 11 % of total public expenditure. A breakdown of annual expenditure per pupil/student by educational level reveals two additional points: in almost all countries the unit cost increases with the educational level (on average a higher education student costs twice as much as a primary school pupil), and the disparities between countries widen with the educational level ([1]). Private funding sources and parent contributions vary greatly according to the level and the country while a variety of support measures exist for families (allowances, grants, tax relief) which can act as an incentive to continue studies beyond compulsory schooling.

([1]) Purchasing Power Standard is used so as to eliminate the effect of price differences between countries.

Figure 4: Annual expenditure in public-sector institutions by pupil/student and educational level (PPS EUR) in thousands, 2006



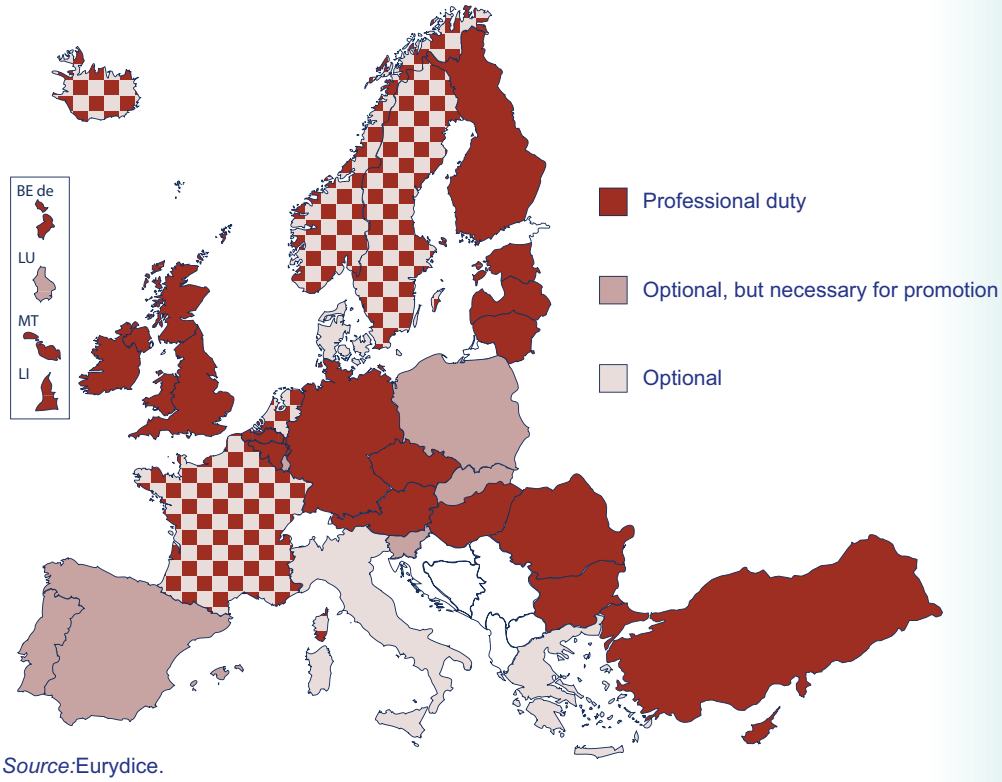
Source: Eurostat, UOE and National Accounts (June 2009).

Disparities in teachers' status and conditions but a trend towards better qualifications and training

Disparities remain between formal requirements for teacher education on the one hand and the everyday reality and the means made available on the other. A coherent overall strategy on teachers and teacher education, taking account of the range of teachers' duties and increasing responsibilities, can contribute to improving the overall quality of teaching The status, working conditions and support provided to teachers are essential elements to consider within such an overall strategy. In many countries, continuing professional development of teachers is considered as an integral part of the professional duties of teachers but in practice often optional. On the other hand, special support for new teachers is becoming more widespread.

As key players in education, in nearly all European countries teachers' working time is not defined only in terms of teaching hours but as overall working time, including elements such as availability at school and preparation for classes.

Figure 5: Status of continuing professional development for teachers in primary and general secondary education, 2006/07

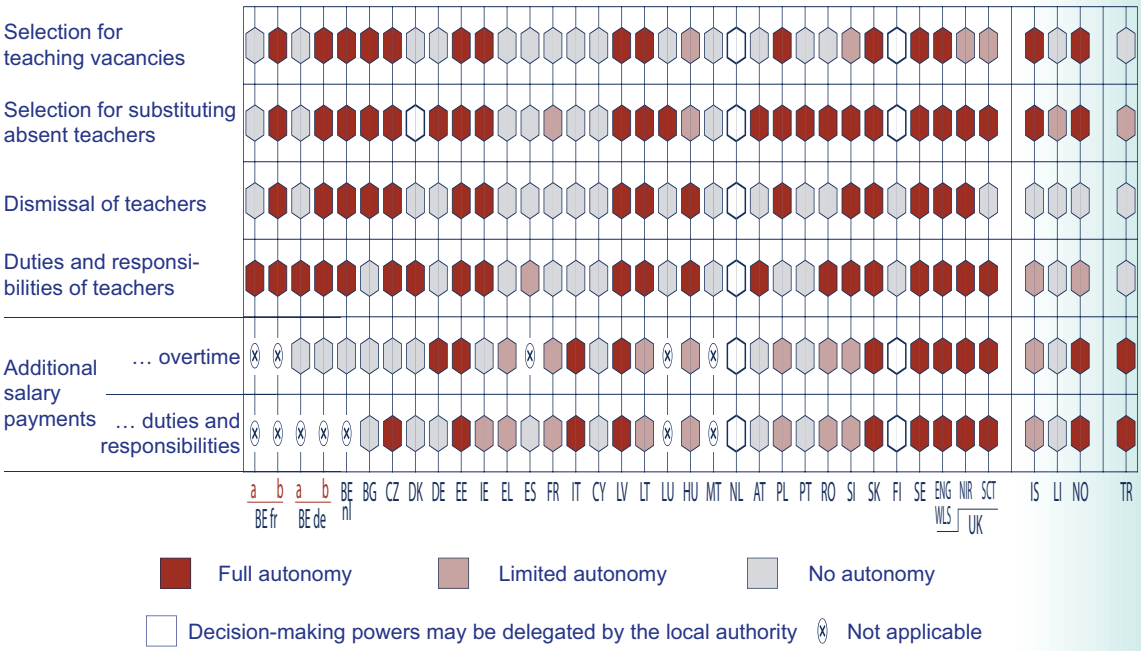


*Source:*Eurydice.

More responsibilities for schools, school heads, teachers and parents

School autonomy has come to be a widespread policy in Europe. Initially pursued as a basic principle in order to guarantee teaching freedom, to strengthen local school democracy and to complete the process of decentralisation, school autonomy has today, in most countries, become an instrument to achieve primarily educational goals: in other words, more freedom is given to schools and teachers in order to improve the quality of education. Although all countries now view the purpose of school autonomy largely in educational terms, there remain marked differences across Europe in the implementation of the school autonomy process as well as in the extent and nature of autonomy. Differences in the implementation of school autonomy policies also exist with regard to the body or individuals to whom powers are devolved.

Figure 6: School autonomy relating to human resources in the public sector compulsory education, 2006/07

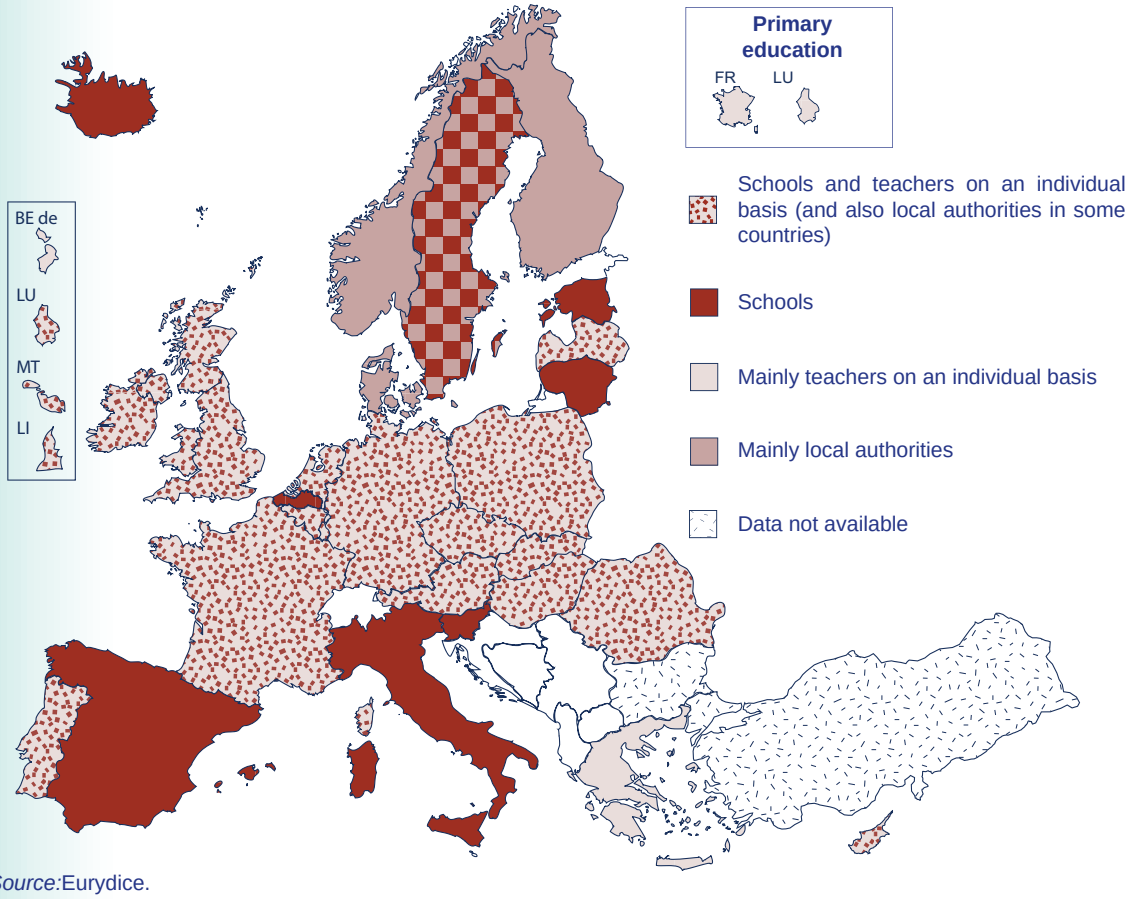


*Source:*Eurydice.

A changing culture to ensure quality in education

In parallel with the development of policies for school autonomy in European countries, various measures have emerged that allow for a regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation of education systems. Among other objectives, such monitoring and evaluation usually aims to strengthen accountability measures and enable adjustments to improve performance. It may take place at school level, or at local, regional or national levels. Across Europe, centrally standardised criteria for external evaluation of schools or standardised tests that are specifically designed for monitoring the education system are increasingly used as a tool for measuring and monitoring the quality of education. They are often used in combination with other information sources, such as national testing of pupils e.g. in the form of external examinations for certified assessment. The ultimate goal is to obtain a better picture of the performance of education systems in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Figure 7: Components of the education system subject to evaluation compulsory general education, 2006/07

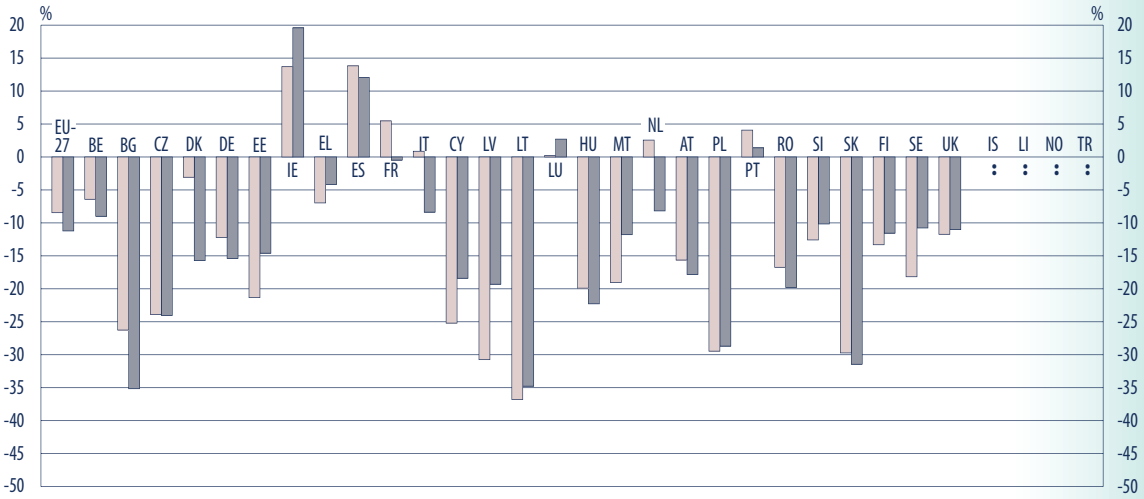


*Source:*Eurydice.

2020: how demography will change European education

Long-term demographic projections show a fall of around 11 % among those aged 5-9 in the EU-27 by 2020. For the 10-14 age groups the projections show even more extreme situation with some countries set to experience a decline in the population of more than 40 %. Despite significant regional differences, these projections point towards a general tendency of significant reduction in the total number of pupils in compulsory education. Meanwhile, population forecasts concerning the distribution of teachers in Europe show that as the age groups of teachers closest to retirement are over-represented, many countries will experience teacher retirement on a very large scale in the near future. While these projections will affect pupil participation and teacher demand in compulsory as well as post-compulsory education, they are also an opportunity to adapt and plan the human and material resources required to improve the quality and effective functioning of education systems.

Figure 8: Projection of growth rates of the population in the 5-9 age group

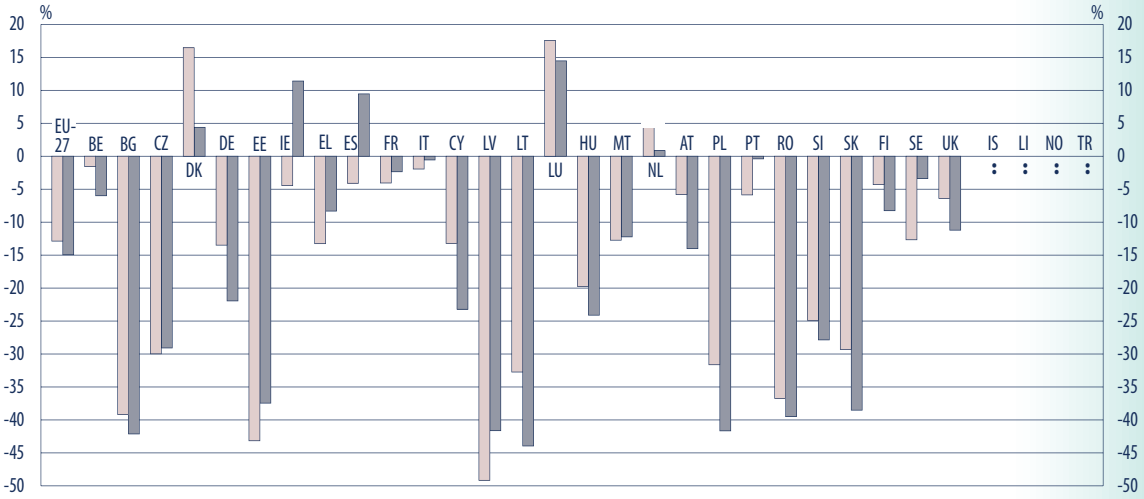


	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
	-8.5	-6.4	-26.3	-23.9	-3.1	-12.2	-21.3	13.7	-7.0	13.8	5.5	0.9	-25.2	-30.7	-36.8	0.2
	-11.2	-9.0	-35.2	-24.0	-15.7	-15.4	-14.6	19.6	-4.1	12.0	-0.5	-8.4	-18.4	-19.3	-34.8	2.7

	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO	TR
	-19.9	-19.0	2.6	-15.6	-29.5	4.1	-16.7	-12.6	-29.7	-13.3	-18.2	-11.7	:	:	:	:
	-22.3	-11.8	-8.2	-17.8	-28.7	1.4	-19.8	-10.2	-31.4	-11.6	-10.8	-11.0	:	:	:	:

Source: Eurostat, population statistics (July 2008).

Figure 9: Projection of growth rates of the population in the 10-14 age group



	EU-27	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
	-12.9	-1.6	-39.2	-30.0	16.5	-13.5	-43.2	-4.5	-13.3	-4.1	-4.1	-1.9	-13.2	-49.2	-32.7	17.6
	-14.9	-6.0	-42.1	-29.1	4.4	-21.9	-37.5	11.4	-8.3	9.5	-2.4	-0.6	-23.2	-41.6	-44.0	14.5

	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	LI	NO	TR
	-19.7	-12.7	4.5	-5.8	-31.6	-5.9	-36.7	-24.9	-29.3	-4.3	-12.7	-6.4	:	:	:	:
	-24.1	-12.2	0.9	-14.0	-41.7	-0.4	-39.5	-27.9	-38.5	-8.3	-3.4	-11.2	:	:	:	:

Source: Eurostat, population statistics (July 2008).

The full report

Key Data on Education in Europe 2009

is available in French and English on the **Eurydice website**:

http://www.eurydice.org

Printed copies of the study

in English and French will be available from October 2009.

The German translation will be available afterwards.

Other key documents of interest:

- **Key Data on Higher Education – 2007 edition**

  http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/088EN.pdf

- **Key Data on Teaching Languages at Schools in Europe 2008**

  http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/095EN.pdf

- **Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities**

  http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/098EN.pdf