



## SUMMARY SHEETS ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

### SPAIN

#### I. Description of education system

##### 1. Education population and language of instruction

In 1997, the number of people aged 29 and under was 15 820 400 (40% of the population) and there were 4 646 000 young people of compulsory education age. According to the Spanish Constitution, Castellano is the official language of Spain. Therefore, all Spanish citizens must know the language and have the right to use it. Together with Castellano, there are other official languages in their corresponding Autonomous Communities. These co-official languages are Catalán, Gallego, Valenciano and Euskera. In those Communities where there is a co-official language, both this and Castellano are considered compulsory teaching languages in all levels of education except university. The use of the Autonomous Community language as a teaching language varies in the different Communities, depending on how widespread that language is and on the linguistic policies each Community is implementing.

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

In 1997, 72,32% of students attended public-sector schools while 27,68% attended private institutions. There are two kinds of compulsory-level establishments that are not in the public sector: *centros concertados*, which are financed by public funds and account for approximately 90% of all private schools, and *centros no concertados* which are totally private.

The central government retains responsibility for the general regulation of the system, but since 1978, certain responsibilities are being devolved to the 17 regional governments (Autonomous Communities), most of which currently exercise full powers over education. In the remaining ones, responsibility rests with the Ministry for Education and Culture. Each school has a council, comprising representatives of the teachers and other staff, parents and students, whose responsibilities include the election of the head teacher.

Each education authority is responsible for the organization and functioning of its own inspection service. The state senior inspection service monitors the structure and organization of education and a technical inspection service operates in each of the Autonomous Communities.

##### 3. Pre-primary education

Up to the age of 6, children can attend *escuelas de Educación Infantil* (pre-primary schools), which are divided into two stages of three years each. There are no tuition fees in the second stage in public establishments, but parents may be expected to contribute to the costs of textbooks, catering or transport, depending on their income.

	Age <1	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5
<i>Educación Infantil</i>	1,1%	5,14%	12,6%	71,5%	98,9%	100%

*Net rate of schooling in pre-primary education per age. School year 1997/1998*

#### 4. Compulsory full-time education

##### (a) Phases

<i>Educación Primaria</i> (primary education)	6-12 years of age
<i>Educación Secundaria Obligatoria</i> (ESO, or lower secondary education)	12-6 years of age

Education is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16, and is divided into two educational levels made up of five stages, each lasting two years – the first three for Primary Education, and the other two for lower secondary.

##### (b) Admissions criteria

To enter primary education, children must be 6 years old. Certain admissions criteria (family income, catchment area, and siblings at school) apply when a school is over-subscribed. Students transfer automatically from primary to lower secondary level. Compulsory education in publicly funded schools is free of charge.

##### (c) Length of the school day/week/year

The school year comprises 180 days at primary level and 175 days at secondary level, between mid-September and late June. Schools open five days a week with 25 lessons at primary level and 30 lessons at secondary level per week. A lesson lasts 60 minutes at primary level and 55 at secondary. The minimum number of annual teaching hours is 810 at primary level and 898 at lower secondary level.

##### (d) Class size/student grouping

The maximum class size is 25 at primary level and 30 at secondary level. Students are grouped according to age. Mixed age groups exist in rural areas where classes are very small. Primary classes have one teacher for all subjects, except for music, physical education and foreign languages; secondary students have separate subject teachers.

##### (e) Curricular control and content

The minimum core curriculum is determined at State level. The Autonomous Communities establish their own curriculum based on the State minimum core curriculum and schools develop and adapt the curriculum to their own context. Compulsory studies at primary level include knowledge of the environment, art education, physical education, Spanish language and literature, the official language and literature of the corresponding Autonomous Community, a foreign language and mathematics. The subject of religion is compulsorily offered by the establishments but is voluntary for the pupils. The lower secondary core curriculum covers Spanish language and literature, the official language and literature of the respective Autonomous Community, a foreign language, mathematics, physical education, natural sciences, plastic and visual education, social studies, geography and history, technology and music. The subject of religion is compulsorily offered by the establishments but is voluntary for the pupils. While in primary education, methodology is global and interdisciplinary and it must be adapted to each pupil's needs as it is in lower secondary education. In lower secondary education, methodology must also foster their ability to learn on their own as well as to work in team. Concerning textbooks, there is no need for approval from any educational authority. Every subject area department is responsible for the choice of its textbooks.

#### (f) Assessment, progression and qualifications

There is no national or regional system of testing. The minimum core curriculum includes basic guidelines for assessment, which is an integral part of the curriculum and must be global and continuous. While in primary education, the form teacher is responsible for decisions on promotion, in lower secondary, all the pupil's teachers have to decide on promotion collectively. Promotion between primary education stages depends on students meeting curricular objectives; students can repeat a year if necessary. In the first stage or in each of the two academic years of the second stage of lower secondary education, students may stay one more year if they do not attain the objectives although, in principle, they may only repeat one year throughout the entire stage.

On completion of compulsory schooling, students receive the certificate of secondary education (*Graduado en Educación Secundaria*), which grants access to general upper secondary education (*Bachillerato*) or intermediate level specific vocational training (*Formación Profesional Específica de grado medio*).

### 5. Upper secondary and post-secondary education

#### (a) Types of education

<i>Bachillerato</i> (general upper secondary education)	Age 16-18
<i>Formación Profesional Específica de grado medio</i> (intermediate-level specific vocational training)	Age 16-18 (usually one and a half years)

These two types of post-compulsory education may be provided separately or in the same establishment.

#### (b) Admissions criteria

Students must hold a *Graduado en Educación Secundaria* (certificate of secondary education) to access either of the two types of education mentioned above. There are no tuition fees in publicly funded establishments but parents may be required to pay for materials, transport or meals, depending on their level of income. Parents have freedom of choice.

#### (c) Curricular control and content

The *Bachillerato* minimum core curriculum is determined at national level, but the Autonomous Communities educational authorities and the schools develop and adapt the curriculum to their own context. There are four kinds of *Bachillerato*: arts, natural science and health, humanities and social studies, and technology. Spanish language and literature, official language and literature of the corresponding Autonomous Community, history, philosophy, a foreign language and physical education are compulsory subjects for all pupils. Teachers are to follow the teaching principles underlying the core curriculum and to use the specific teaching methods that are most appropriate for the subject areas they cover.

The basic national guidelines of vocational training are laid down by the Autonomous Communities education authorities and the curriculum includes theoretical and practical training organized on a modular basis, while core subjects vary according to the module. Teaching methods in specific vocational training in general should afford pupils a coordinated view of the productive processes in which they are to participate. They should also encourage teamwork and the ability of pupils to learn on their own.

#### (d) Assessment, progression and qualifications

*Bachillerato* students are subject to continuous assessment throughout the course. Those who fail more than two subjects in the first year, or more than three subjects in the second year, must repeat the year. Successful students receive the *Bachiller* diploma. Continuous assessment also applies to the vocational course and successful students receive the *Técnico* certificate.

## 6. Higher education

### (a) Types of institution

Higher education includes university, advanced-level art education (*Enseñanzas Artísticas de grado superior*), advanced-level specific vocational training (*Formación Profesional Específica de grado superior*), and other very specific specialized institutions.

University-level education is offered in *Facultades Universitarias* (university faculties), *Escuelas Técnicas Superiores* (higher technical education centres), and *Escuelas Universitarias* (university centres for first-stage studies). *Conservatorios Superiores* (higher music academies) and *Escuelas Superiores* (higher schools) are the public institutions that deliver advanced-level artistic education. The establishments teaching *Formación Profesional Específica de grado superior* (advanced-level specific vocational training) are the same as the ones giving intermediate level training. There are courses provided at non-university institutions, which are comparable in content and level to university courses.

### (b) Access

There are two ways of accessing advanced-level specific vocational training: direct access with the *Bachiller* certificate, and access through a test. Entry to all other courses requires the *Bachiller* diploma as a minimum. Access to two-stage university studies also requires a pass in the university entrance examination (PAU). This University entrance exam, which is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture and administered by the Autonomous Communities, is organized and planned jointly by the universities and *Bachillerato* teachers. Advanced-level art students must also pass a specific exam.

### (c) Qualifications

*Diplomado*, technical architect and technical engineer degrees are earned after completing one-cycle university studies (three years), and *Licenciado*, architect and engineer degrees after two-cycles studies (two to three extra years). Doctorates are awarded to students who pass the third-cycle courses and successfully defend their theses (minimum two years). Different certificates are awarded to students after completing the various specialities of arts education. After completing advanced-level music and dance studies, and dramatic arts, students are awarded a higher certificate, equivalent to a university *Licenciado* degree. Students finishing advanced-level plastic arts and design earn a *Técnico Superior* certificate; and after completing arts conservation and restoration courses, students obtain a certificate equivalent to a university *Diplomado*. Students successfully completing advanced-level specific vocational training are awarded the *Técnico Superior* certificate. Students in non-university higher education courses prepare for qualifications that are equivalent to those of *Licenciado* or *Diplomado*.

## 7. Special Needs

Recent legislation has established the principle of the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream schooling. Special schools or units still exist for those whose needs cannot be met in mainstream education. In 1997/98, fewer than 0.4% of all primary and secondary students attended separate schools.

## 8. Teachers

Pre-primary and primary teachers must have a *Maestro* teaching diploma, gained after three years at a university-level teacher training college. Secondary school teachers must have a *Licenciado*, or architecture or engineering degree, gained after four to six years' study plus a teaching course lasting on average 300 hours. Primary school teachers are trained to teach all subjects except music, physical education and foreign languages, for which specialist teachers are employed. Primary teachers are generalists and secondary teachers are specialists in one subject. University professors must hold a doctorate; other types of university teachers are not required to have it, although they must have a *Licenciado*, or architecture or engineering degree. In public establishments teachers are usually civil servants.

## II. Ongoing Reforms and Topics of Debate in Education

Nowadays, Spain is finishing a process of reform of its education system. The enactment of the 1990 Organic Act on General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE) as the basic legal text on education entailed the repeal of the 1970 General Act on Education (LGE). The new structure and organisation of non-university education level will be definitively implemented in school year 2002-2003. Therefore, along these years the greater effort of the teachers, the establishments and the educational organisation set up by the LOGSE.

The centralised model of administration of the education has been adapted to a new decentralised model that divides educational powers into those reserved to the State, those entrusted to the Autonomous Communities and those commissioned to municipal governments. Therefore, the new Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) has changed its structure in order to achieve new aims: to lead cooperation among the Autonomous Communities; to give cohesion to the actions of the various Autonomous Communities and to foster dialogue with all the Administrations, institutions and social agents in order to establish basic rules for our education system.

The decentralisation process has also reached the educational establishments themselves. The LOGSE and more specifically the 1995 Organic Act on Participation, Evaluation and Administration of Educational Establishments (LOPEG) have granted non-university establishments autonomy to define their own model of organisational and pedagogical administration. The public centres also have some autonomy for economic management. Recently, the criteria for admission of pupils in over-subscribed publicly funded schools have been changed, reinforcing the principle of establishment's autonomy, and, consequently, of free election by the parents.

In order to improve the present education system, the new Government intends to alter some aspects of the three Organic Acts that rule the Spanish Education System: Organic Act on the Right to Education (LODE), LOGSE and LOPEG. Also with the aim of improving the education system, a number of measures will be implemented:

- Concerning the different education levels:
  - Pre primary education: to extend cost-free status from 3 to 6 years.
  - Primary education: to improve the teaching of foreign languages, mathematics and Spanish languages, as well as to promote information and communication technologies.
  - Compulsory secondary education: to strengthen common subjects, rationalise the offer of optional subjects; emphasise the importance of instrumental subjects such as Spanish language, mathematics and foreign languages; define a new context where sciences and humanities are considered part of the integral education of pupils; foster the use of information and communication technologies; give a new orientation to the subject area of technology; modify the second cycle of secondary education, establishing different branches; alter the current system of promotion while strengthen the evaluation system.
  - Upper secondary education: to strengthen the subjects corresponding to humanities.
  - Vocational training: a new law will be passed for its consolidation as a modern and quality level.
- Teacher training: the *Instituto Superior del Profesorado* (High Teaching Staff Institute) will be created in order to offer in-service high level scientific and pedagogic training, always in contact with other European countries and international forums.

- Education Inspection: since it is a key factor in the improvement of the education system, the MECD will establish the procedure for access to it, taking into account the required specialisation to carry out pedagogical counselling in the different subjects. The MECD will also implement improvement systems in order to enhance the in-service training and update of the inspectorate.
- The right to education and equal opportunities: the present regulations on grants and aids for all levels of the education system will be revised annually. Impulse will be given to aids for the purchase of textbooks and other school materials.
- Early teaching of reading: the early teaching of comprehensive reading is also considered a means to combat school failure.
- Evaluation: the *Instituto Nacional de Calidad y Evaluación* - INCE (National Institute of Quality and Evaluation) will carry out tasks of evaluation and forward planning for the various education administrations.
- Immigrant pupils: measures will be taken to prevent school failure of immigrant pupils, such as the creation of an interdepartmental technical committee between the Ministries of Education, Work and Social Affairs and the newly founded *Delegación de Gobierno para la Extranjería y la Inmigración*. The aim of this Committee is to analyse, plan and design future policies concerning immigration, so that education services can be geared to estimates of future needs of schooling.

*Unrevised English*

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