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LITERACY IN SPAIN

COUNTRY REPORT

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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1 Introduction

This report on the state of literacy in Spain is one of a series produced in 2015 and 2016 by ELINET, the European Literacy Policy Network. ELINET was founded in February 2014 and has 78 partner organisations in 28 European countries[1]. ELINET aims to improve literacy policies in its member countries in order to reduce the number of children, young people and adults with low literacy skills. One major tool to achieve this aim is to produce a set of reliable, up-to-date and comprehensive reports on the state of literacy in each country where ELINET has one or more partners, and to provide guidance towards improving literacy policies in those countries. The reports are based (wherever possible) on available, internationally comparable performance data, as well as reliable national data provided (and translated) by our partners.

ELINET continues the work of the European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (HLG) which was established by the European Commission in January 2011 and reported in September 2012[2]. All country reports produced by ELINET use a common theoretical framework which is described here: "ELINET Country Reports – Frame of Reference"[3].

The Country Reports about Children and Adolescents are organised around the three recommendations of the HLG´s literacy report:

- Creating a literate environment
- Improving the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion (and equity[4]).

Within its two-year funding period ELINET has completed Literacy Country Reports for all 30 ELINET member countries. In most cases we published separate **Long Reports** for specific age groups (Children / Adolescents and Adults), in some cases comprehensive reports covering all age groups. Additionally, for all 30 countries, we published **Short Reports** covering all age groups, containing the summary of performance data and policy messages of the Long Reports. These reports are accompanied by a collection of good practice examples which cover all age groups and policy areas as well. These examples refer to the **European Framework of Good Practice in Raising Literacy Levels;** both are to be found in the section "Good Practice"[5].

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[1] For more information about the network and its activities see: www.eli-net.eu.
[2] In the following, the final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy is referenced as "HLG report". This report can be downloaded under the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf.
[3] See: http://www.eli-net.eu/research/country-reports/.
[4] "Equity" was added by ELINET.
[5] See: http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/.

2 Executive Summary

LITERACY PERFORMANCE DATA

Spain participated in IEA's PIRLS (4th graders reading comprehension) in 2006 and 2011, in OECD's PISA (15 year-olds' reading literacy) since 2000, and in OECD's PIAAC (adults' reading literacy) in 2012. This means it is possible to describe the changes over time in average reading proficiency, according to different characteristics of the readers, and to compare relative reading levels of proficiencies for different age groups.

Spain performed significantly below the EU average in PIRLS 2011 (513 vs 535 EU-average) and very close to it in PISA 2012 (488 vs 489 EU average). While the performance in PIRLS remained quite stable in 2006 and 2011, it slightly decreased in PISA between 2000 and 2012 (by 5 score-points).

The proportion of pupils who can be considered as low-performing readers reached 28% in PIRLS, which was much higher than in EU countries on average (20%). In PISA, the percentage of low performers was close to the EU mean (18.3% vs 19.7%). These students can read simple texts, retrieve explicit information, or make straightforward inferences, but they are not able to deal with longer or more complex texts, and are unable to interpret beyond what is explicitly stated in the text. The proportion of low-performing readers remained stable in PIRLS between 2006 and 2011. It has slightly increased in PISA between 2000 and 2012 (by 2%). Among girls, an increase of 1.6% was observed while among boys the increase reaches 3%.

The proportion of top-performing readers was under the EU average in PIRLS (4% vs 9% in EU) and in PISA (5.5% vs 7% in EU).

The gap according to the pupils' socioeconomic background was lower than the EU average in PIRLS (48 vs 76 on average). In PISA, it was below the EU countries on average as well (82 vs 89 on average). So, the Spanish educational system seems slightly more equitable than the European countries on average. However, the indices of socioeconomic background are not the same in PIRLS and PISA, so the comparison should be taken with caution.

In PISA 2009, the gap between native students and students with a migrant background was higher than in EU countries on average (56 vs 38 EU-average). In PIRLS, the mean score difference between those who always spoke the language of the test at home, and those who sometimes or never did so, was slightly lower than in EU countries (23 vs 26). In PISA, the difference between students who spoke the test language at home and those who spoke another language was much lower than in the EU on average (13 vs 54%). This might be due to the fact that about 18.1% of the students reported that they speak another language at home (vs 13.3% in EU) but most of these students do not have an immigrant background (as there were only 9.5% of non-natives, see table 9). Most of them possibly speak a regional variation of Spanish at home which is not the Spanish language of instruction (castellano), but is close to it.

In Spain, the gender gap (in favour of girls) was lower than the corresponding EU average differences both in PIRLS (5 vs 12 on average) and in PISA (29 vs 44 on average). The gender difference in Spain was very small in both cycles of PIRLS Spain participated in (respectively 5 and 4 score-points). In PISA, the reading performance remained more stable between 2000 and 2012 among girls (-2 score-points) but decreased more among boys (-7 score points), resulting in a small increase of the gender gap.

In conclusion, in Spain, performance in reading remained stable between the two cycles of PIRLS this country was involved in. Spain performed worse than EU countries on average in PIRLS, just at the same level in PISA, showing a slight decline. Spain showed a very high proportion of low-performing readers, higher than the EU on average. Among 15 year-old students, this proportion of low performers is slightly lower than in the EU. The spread of achievement (gap between low and top performing readers) is smaller in Spain than in the EU on average at both levels. The gap according to socioeconomic status, and language spoken at home tends to be somewhat lower in Spain than in the EU on average. However, the gap according to the migration background is above the EU average, although the distribution of native/immigrant is close to the EU's. This gap is equivalent to nearly one and a half years of schooling.

KEY LITERACY POLICY AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT (AGE-SPECIFIC AND ACROSS AGE-GROUPS)

Creating a Literate Environment

The EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy stated the following in relation to **creating a more literate environment**:

> "Creating a more literate environment will help stimulate a culture of reading, i.e. where **reading for pleasure** is seen as the norm for all children and adults. Such a culture will fuel reading motivation and reading achievement: people who like to read, read more. Because they read more, they read better, and because they read better they read more: a virtuous circle which benefits individuals, families and society as a whole." (HLG report 2012, p. 41).

Parents play a central role in children's emergent literacy development. They are the first teachers, and shape children's language and communication abilities and attitudes to reading by being good reading role models, providing reading materials, and reading to the child.

Schools play an important role in offering a literate environment for students. Schools may foster reading motivation and reading for pleasure in many ways. However, schools do not have sole responsibility. A broad range of actors may shape literacy motivation, from parents and peers to libraries. Particularly this is true in adolescence, as it is a crucial phase in life where young people develop long-term *identities and self-concepts* related to reading and media use (Cf. ELINET Country Reports, Frame of Reference, pp. 29ff, 45f).

Pre-Primary Years

Creating a literate environment at home: The home learning environment, particularly in the first three years, is extremely important (Taggart et al. 2015; UNICEF 2001b). It determines the quantity and quality of interactions between the infant and the primary caregivers, who are the most powerful agents of language development, both receptive and expressive, in the context of everyday activities and experiences. During these years, experience-dependent creation of synapses is maximal. We know that the more words the children are exposed to, the more they can learn. Caregiver-child relations in their turn strongly influence the ability to learn, by influencing self-esteem, general knowledge and motivation.

Compared to the European average, Spain has similar scores, as the PIRLS data show. Most parents have a positive attitude towards reading; however, 13.5 percent of students have parents who do not like reading. The availability of children's books in the households is high; yet 9% of students in Spain have 10 or fewer books at home and 14% have 200 or more books.

Early Literacy Activity Scale by PIRLS 2011 reports that in Spain, 44% of parents often engage in literacy-relevant activities with children before primary school and only 1% never participate in this type of activities. This means that in Spain there are slightly more parents who often engage in the nine activities, compared with the EU-24. The Early Literacy Activity Scale correlates then with later reading performance in grade 4.

The increasing number of parents who participate in literacy-relevant activities is a **challenge** due to pressures on provision: keeping the initiatives offered by the different institutions (schools, libraries, bookstores, cultural centers, etc.) in order to change the reading dynamics of citizenship from the younger generations must be continued and encouraged.

Children and Adolescents

Creating a literate environment in school: According to PIRLS 2011, 91% of pupils in Spain were in classrooms which had class libraries, and 37.6% of them were in classrooms where there were at least 50 library books, which compares favourably with the EU-24 average of 32.1%. These findings show the particular interest of the different developments on treating reading as an important objective of the education school system in Spain. However only 51% of students in Spain had teachers who reported that they brought them to a library other than the class library at least monthly, below the average across EU-24 countries (65%). This shows that even though the regulatory law LOMCE has established that all students in primary education should devote a daily school time to reading and schools must develop a Reading Plan to encourage them to do so, there is still a need for more. Further actions are consequently needed to provide models for schools and to train teachers for the Reading Plan not to be a mere reading time, but a real cohesive plan that structures the reading activity in schools.

Supporting reading motivation, especially among boys and adolescents: In Spain, the Ministry of Education supports different activities to promote books, reading and Spanish literature among boys and adolescents. The Observatory of Reading and Books is the national branch under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport at the helm of fostering reading, especially among children and adolescents. It conducts various activities through grants aimed at public libraries, organisation of meetings with authors, research, analysis and awareness campaigns. Some of its most important lines of action are for instance:

María Moliner Competition: This contest aims to promote reading among children and the youth in towns of less than 50,000 inhabitants. It rewards the best projects or activities carried out by public libraries. The three best projects receive cash prizes to invest in the libraries.

Schools literary activities in Secondary Education schools, as for instance Literary Meetings with authors chosen by the high school, followed by an open discussion with students.

All these initiatives are not widely known by all the educative sectors, as implied in their application and distribution along the country. In order to have a broader impact, all these campaigns, activities, grants etc. should be widely advertised, using all the social media available nowadays, so they would be active forces of reading motivation among the youngsters.

Strengthening the role of public libraries in reading promotion: Public libraries are a determining factor of reading promotion in Spain as they facilitate the access of every citizen in the country through their reading plans to information of all sorts. Their different reading plans and initiatives are coordinated and improved by the Libraries Cooperation Council, created to foster the cooperation on these matters between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the different Autonomous Communities. This coordination is nevertheless a complex one, due to the fact that the different Autonomous Communities have freedom to develop the Acts regulated by the Ministry. Consequently, the different Autonomous Communities´ public libraries play similar but not equal roles in reading promotion, and their mechanisms in order to implement it vary to different degrees.

A stronger commitment on the Autonomous Communities side to get to unified actions to promote equal reading promotion in all public libraries in the country is needed.

Offering digital literacy learning opportunities at school: Students in Spain perform significantly below the OECD average in digital reading with 4.6% not navigating at all to find the information needed, and those who did navigate getting lost more often than students in other countries.

According to the regulatory law LOMCE, ICT are mandatory to work with on every single subject in Primary and Secondary Education. Additionally, a specific subject to work with literacy learning is established as obligatory following Article 25. In order to meet all requirements, the different Autonomous Communities develop several programmes to provide ITC technologies as well as trained teachers and coordinators in their schools. However, there are different levels of support, depending on the Autonomous Community and the budget they have agreed to spend on ICT materials and professional development courses for their teachers. A stronger investment on high-speed connectivity for all schools as well as on ICT resources would be then strongly needed in order to offer quality digital literacy learning opportunities to all Spanish students.

Improving the Quality of Teaching

The quality of teaching consists of several aspects:

- the quality of preschool
- coherent literacy curricula
- high-quality reading instruction,
- early identification of and support for struggling literacy learners
- highly qualified teachers (cf. Frame of Reference for ELINET Country Reports).

Particularly crucial is the quality of teaching and of teachers, as the McKinsey report *How the world best performing school systems come out on top* (McKinsey et al. 2007) states: "The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers".

Pre-Primary Years

Improving the quality of preschool education: Pre-Primary Education is the earliest stage in the Spanish education system and, therefore, it is imbued with more innovation. Therefore, there is a strong presence of teachers who recognise and identify levels of conceptualisation in the writing system shown by children. However, there is a tendency to teach from didactic approaches that decontextualise language use and focus on the use of book selling material. Moreover, the methodology based on projects or tasks is well established and has advanced considerably in recent years. Finally, although the model based on competences is not mandatory at this stage, many teachers incorporate it in the curriculum development (D´Angelo and Medina, 2011).

Considering that, in Spain, there are differentiated steering documents for young children and adolescents, central steering documents serve as a guideline containing general principles and objectives for Early Childhood Educational Care (ECEC). These may serve as a basis for the specific steering documents issued by the different Autonomous Communities.

Improving early language and literacy screening and training: The evaluation of Pre-Primary Education has a global, continuous and educational nature. Evaluation at this early stage helps to

identify and assess pupils' developmental processes and learning according to their personal characteristics. To that end, the evaluation criteria for each curricular area of the second cycle are established at a central level and completed by the Autonomous Communities in their respective regions. These are used as reference points and the evaluation process itself is considered as a means to assess, review and improve teaching processes, so that they are better adapted to pupils' needs.

> **Challenges:** There is a need to extend the implementation of didactic approaches that use language in a contextualised way.

Children and Adolescents

Ensuring adequate time for language and literacy instruction in primary and secondary schools: Conforming to PIRLS 2011, the average number of hours allocated to teaching reading in Spain as part of language instruction is below the EU-24 average. However, teachers report allocating about the same amount of time to teaching reading across the curriculum and in reading classes than on average across EU countries.

Improving the quality of literacy instruction: Although literacy according to the Spanish curriculum is one of the key competences and different types of actions are taken from schools in order to develop it conveniently, PIRLS 2011 shows that in Primary, an important number of skills are left unattended whereas in Secondary, PISA data highlights the need for explicit instruction in reading strategies. These findings emphasise the need for a revision of the existent actions in order to update them to meet these demands.

Improving the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training: In Spain, Primary education teachers need to complete a four year´s bachelor´s degree while Secondary ones, apart from holding a Bachelor´s degree need to obtain a Masters´ degree on Teachers´ education. Depending on the University, courses - elective or optional- are available specifically designed to tackling reading, reading difficulties and their assessment.

With regards to in-service training and as part of the national strategy developed by the Ministry of Education on improving reading and literacy skills, courses as well as seminars and working groups or training projects are organised, either at national or regional levels.

Nevertheless, the importance of revising the need to establish reading and its variations as elective courses within universities plans is recognised, as well as an emphasis on designing development in-service training courses based on difficulties, remedial teaching and helping struggling readers.

Improving the quality and quantity (participation rates) of continuing professional development (CPD): Teachers' participation in Continuing Professional Development is not obligatory in Spain but is linked to progression salary-wise. This means that the attendance of teachers at these professional courses is guaranteed since their completion up to a certain number every six years is compulsory to get a pay rise. However and according to PIRLS 2011, 38% of students had teachers who had spent no time on professional development courses in reading in the previous two years. Improving the mechanisms through which teachers learn about these courses and making them more accessible and compatible to all are measures to be contemplated.

Extending systematic assessment of literacy skills: Following the most recent organic law in Education in Spain from 2013, LOMCE, and as can be seen in Eurydice from the academic year 2015/2016, students at the end of the different stages in Primary, Secondary and Upper-Secondary

Education are expected to take in their schools external exams with the aim of objectively checking their degree of attainment in the different skills and competences. Among these competences, the area of linguistic communication takes a predominant position with written or oral examinations in Spanish Language and Literature and in a first Foreign Language.

The general characteristics of these exams as well as their evaluation criteria are designed by the Ministry of Education with the consent and advice of the different Autonomous Communities with the final aim of adopting measures to improve learning[6].

Building a stronger focus on literacy into curricula: The curriculum in Spain promotes the development of literacy from a communicative approach. That is, the curriculum promotes its contextualised use in teaching situations, so students can develop their linguistic communication competence. In this line, Autonomous Communities have organised Early Intervention Teams that perform curricular intervention in stage 0-6. These teams are made out of different specialists in charge of identifying potential learning difficulties so they can be given a stronger focus into the design of the curricula.

Increasing Participation, Inclusion and Equity

The High Level Group of Experts on Literacy drew attention to persistent gaps in literacy, namely the gender gap, the socio-economic gap, and the migrant gap (HLG Final report 2012, pp. 46–50). These gaps derive from the reading literacy studies that repeatedly show unequal distribution of results among groups of children and adolescents (PIRLS, PISA).

Performance gaps in Spain and on average across the EU-24 are shown in Figures 1 and 2. The figures show a below-average socio-economic gap and an above-average gender gap on both primary and post-primary level. The language gap is close to average at primary level but at post-secondary level, the gap between native students and migrants as well as second language learners is above the average.

Figure 1: Performance Gaps – Gender, Education and Language Spoken at Home
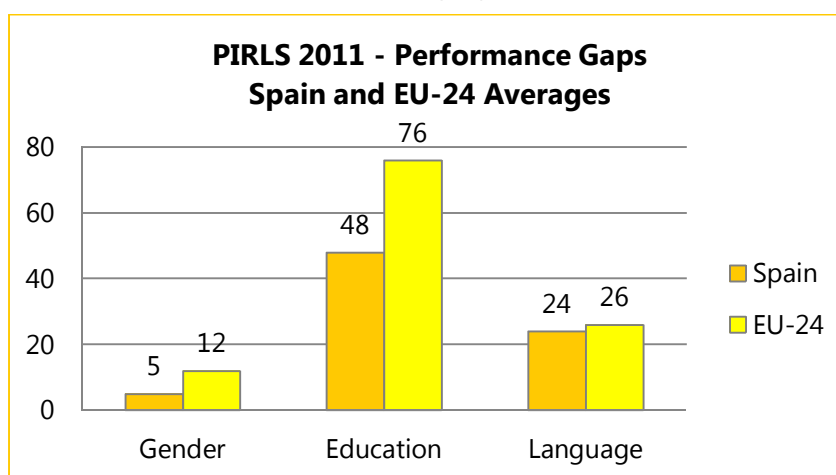
Education: Parent has University vs. Lower Secondary/Primary education; Language: Student speaks language of the test at home always vs. sometimes/never; Gender: Girls – boys;

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[6] Eurydice, see: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Spain:National_Reforms_in_School_Education#Design_of_external_evaluations_at_the_end_of_the_stage.2C_to_be_implemented_from_the_2015.2F16_academic_year.

Figure 2: Performance Gaps – SES, Migration, Language Spoken at Home and Gender
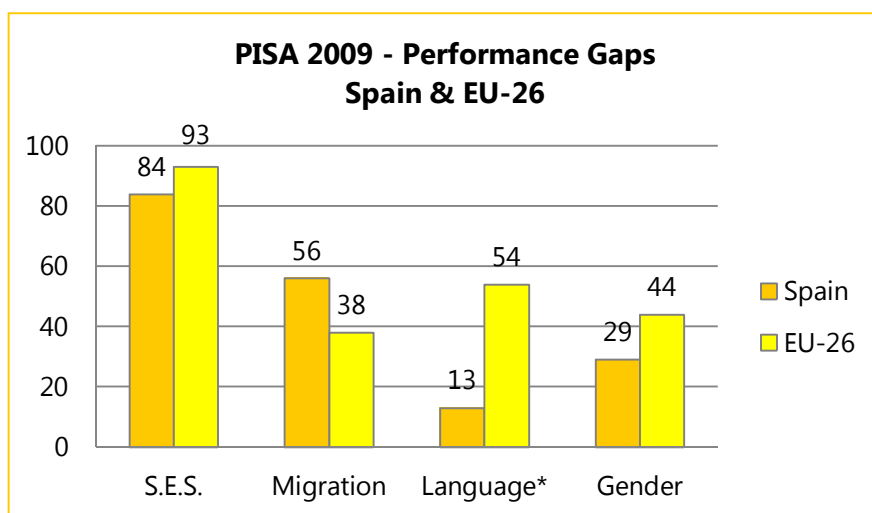
PISA 2009 - Performance Gaps
Spain & EU-26

SES: Top – Bottom national quarters of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status; Migration: Native - Students with an immigrant background; Language: Speak test language at home – speak other language at home (Language* - PISA 2012); Gender: Girl - Boy

Pre-Primary Years

Encouraging preschool attendance, especially for disadvantaged children: In Spain, the participation rate among 3 to 5 year olds is around the 100% mark. The second cycle of preschool education is free and there is special attention paid to children with poor language development (second-language speaking children and those from a low socio-cultural background, as well as others in trouble with learning language). There is an important development around Early Attention in Spain in the last decades for all children alike, and especially for those who have special difficulties (cognitive, sensory or low weight).

The benefits of attending preschool institutions have been proven in many studies. The duration of attendance is associated with a greater academic improvement (Mullis et al. 2012b). PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, Exhibit 4.7, p. 128) provides information about the relationship between the length of preschool education attendance and average reading score in grade 4.

The benefit of preschool attendance in Spain is exemplified by the fact that there is a significant difference in reading competence at grade 4: the reading score of pupils who attended pre-primary education for 3 years and more was 29 points higher than that of pupils who did not attend at all.

On the other hand, no child should be excluded from preschool because parents cannot afford to send their children to preschool/kindergarten institutions if they have to pay. In Spain, the second cycle of pre-primary education for children from 3-6 years old is free[7].

Identification of and support for preschool children with language difficulties: Literacy competence strongly builds on oral language proficiency, word knowledge, and syntactic knowledge. Measures must be taken by governments and institutions to ensure that children with poor language development (second-language speaking children and those from a low socio-cultural background, as well as others who experience difficulty in learning the language) acquire adequate levels of oral language in kindergarten, preschool institutions and in the school itself. The Standing Conference of

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[7] EURYPEDIA. See: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Spain:Overview.

Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs suggested in 2001 (among other measures) to take *measures for the improvement of language proficiency in pre-schools* as for instance *furthering the development of educational concepts for pre-school lessons with particular attention to language development; language level assessment etc*.

Primary language spoken at home different from language used at school: According to PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, exhibit 4.3, p. 118) in Spain, 69% of pupils reported that they always spoke the language of the PIRLS reading test at home – below the corresponding EU-24 Average (80%). Thirty-one percent reported that they sometimes/never speak the test language at home. The difference in achievement between pupils in Spain reporting that they always or sometimes/never spoke the language of the test was 23 score points – about the same as the corresponding EU-24 average difference (26).

Challenges: The PROA Plan (Reinforcement, Guidance and Support), conceived as a territorial cooperation project between the Ministry of Education and the Autonomous Communities, aims to address the needs associated with the socio-cultural environment of students through a set of programs to support schools.

The education disadvantage of some students often comes from personal or cultural circumstances often associated with situations of risk or marginalisation in the environment in which they live. A quality education requires all the efforts both from members of the educational community directly involved and from the social environment in which education takes place, as education is increasingly a collective responsibility, developed over a lifetime and with a strong influence of territorial and social context in which we live.

The PROA Plan provides resources to schools so that together with the other actors involved in education they work in two directions. On the one hand, contributing to weaken the factors generating inequality, and on the other, to ensure care for the most vulnerable groups to improve their training and prevent the risk of social exclusion. The Plan pursues three strategic objectives: Gaining access to quality education for all, enriching the educational environment and involving the local community.

A lot of efforts and financial investment have been invested in this programme and different measures have been implemented in the Autonomous Communities under its auspices. However, Spain still has high rates of dropout and early school leaving that are proportionally higher among students coming from disadvantaged areas and backgrounds. Consequently, more efforts are still needed to address this population which faces special risks.

Children and Adolescents

Supporting struggling literacy learners: According to PIRLS 2011, in Spain 27.6% of students in Fourth grade performed at or below the PIRLS low benchmark on overall reading. This represents among the EU-24 one of highest proportions of students performing at or below the PIRLS low benchmark. Notwithstanding, the percentage of teacher aides to work with primary children with reading difficulties in classes is relatively higher, 55% compared to a 34% in EU.

As regards teachers´ support to struggling learners, 49% of students in Spain are in classes where the teacher arranges for students falling behind in reading to work with a specialised professional, with the corresponding EU average being higher at 55%. Also, the amount of time spent on reading individually with the student is reported as shorter (80%) than the EU-24 average (90.1%).

Groups at risk of falling behind in literacy are well identified in Spain by PIRLS and PISA literacy studies, showing that the socio-economic gap, the migrant and the gender difference are responsible for the unequal distribution of results among groups of children and adolescents. In order to meet these challenges, different changes have been introduced in the most recent educational law (LOMCE), reinforcing Primary reading by increasing the instruction time a week for this subject, and also including a daily compulsory time devoted to reading in Primary, and work on reading in all subjects in Secondary.

Moreover, particular actions aimed at disadvantaged students in literacy are implemented in every Autonomous Community and they are regulated through the curriculum of Primary and Secondary. There are though important differences among the Autonomous Communities in the possibilities and the extension of the actions they offer to these students. Providing these students, regardless where they live, with equal opportunities of improving their reading skills must be the objective to implement and develop in the forthcoming years.

3 General Information about the Spanish Education System

The Spanish education system is regulated by the 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE), which modifies certain aspects of the 2006 Education Act (LOE). Both Acts constitute the legal framework regulating the general organisation of the education system. The educational provision established by LOMCE is gradually being introduced (and expected to be completed in the 2016/17 school year), guided by the principles of quality and equity, cooperation, participation of the education community, educational and vocational guidance, the increase of school autonomy, the reinforcement of the management capacity of school leaders, the external evaluations at the end of each stage, the rationalisation of the education provision and the increase in the flexibility of pathways. Moreover, the transmission and implementation of values which promote personal freedom, responsibility, democratic citizenship, solidarity, tolerance, equality, respect and justice, as well as helping to overcome discrimination of any kind are paramount.

The main **aims** of the system as stated by LOMCE[8] are: Reducing the early school leaving rate in education and training; improving the educational results according to international criteria (for which basic instrumental subject areas are reinforced); improving employability; and stimulating the students' entrepreneurial spirit.

The **competences** in terms of Education are shared between the State General Authority (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport) and the Autonomous Communities (Regional Ministries or Departments of Education). The role of local authorities is focused on educational management through the Education Departments or Municipal Education Institutes. Educational institutions also collaborate thanks to their pedagogic, organisational and managerial autonomy.

Educational provision is organised in the following **stages**:

- Pre-primary education (up to 6 years). It is not compulsory and organised in two cycles: 0-3 and 3-6 years. The second cycle is free in all publicly-funded schools and participation rate virtually reaches 100% from the age of 3.

- Basic education is compulsory and free in publicly-funded schools. It lasts ten years and it is divided into Primary Education (6 to 12 years) and Lower Secondary Education –ESO- (12 to 16 years). At the end of this stage, students receive the first official certificate, the Lower Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate, which allows them to have access to upper secondary education or to employment.

- Upper Secondary Education, which lasts 2 years, offers two possibilities: Baccalaureate (general branch) and intermediate vocational training (professional branch).

- Higher education comprises university and professional studies (Advanced vocational training). University education is organised into Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees.

- Adult education and training covers different types of provision offered by the education and employment authorities, provided by different institutions. Classroom-based education
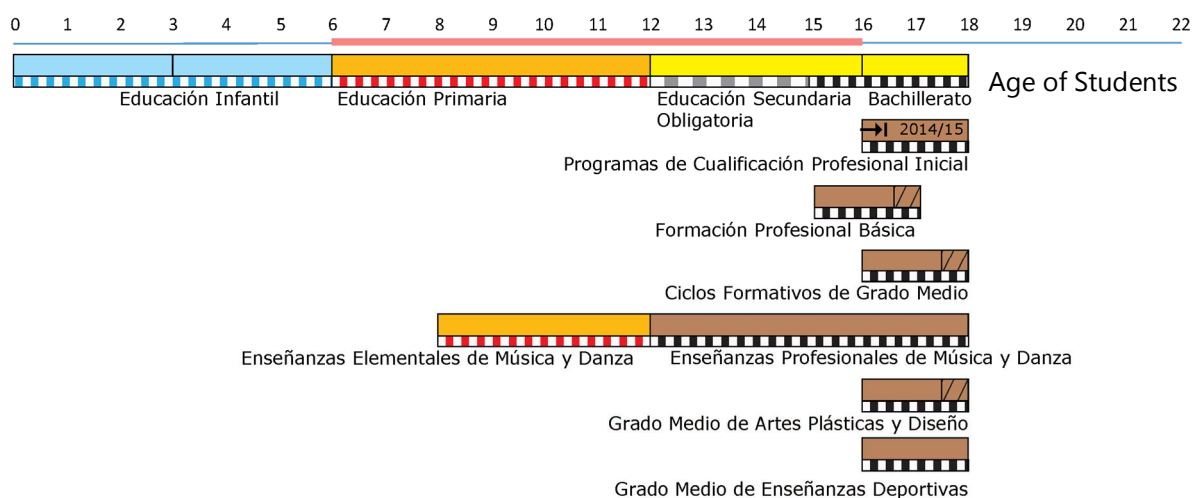
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[8] See: http://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2013-12886.

leading to the award of official degrees of the education system is provided in ordinary schools or specific schools for adults. Adult education and training is aimed at people aged over 18.

Figure 1: Structure of the Spanish School System[9]

Apart from these studies, the Spanish education system offers **specialised education**, consisting of Language education (provided at Official Language Schools), Artistic education (including elementary Music and Dance education, professional artistic education and advanced artistic education), and Sports education.

There are three different types of schools, according to their ownership and source of funding:

- Public schools (*colegios públicos*), owned by the Education Authority and publicly-funded.
- Publicly-funded private schools (*colegios concertados*), privately owned but publicly funded through a regime of agreements.
- Private schools (*colegios privados*), privately owned and privately-funded.

According to the decentralisation model, the **curriculum** is defined at three different levels: the central government establishes the national core curriculum, the Autonomous Communities the Official curricula and schools the school development plans (in which they adapt the official curriculum to their specific needs).

The **initial teacher education** is adapted to the two-cycle system of the European Higher Education Area, and differs depending on the different education levels. Teachers of Pre-primary and Primary Education must hold a Bachelor degree in School Teacher of Pre-Primary/Primary Education (concurrent model, 4 years); teachers of compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education must hold a Bachelor degree and a Master degree in Teachers' Education of ESO and Bachillerato, Vocational Training and Language Education.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) constitutes a right and a duty for teachers. The LOMCE set a series of guidelines that must be respected by the CPD programmes offered by the education authorities of the Autonomous Communities, responsible for planning and organising CPD in their jurisdiction. Both the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD) and the education institutions establish every year the priority lines to which the Teachers' CPD plans must adapt and make the

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[9] See: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf.

appropriate arrangements with other institutions to this end. They must provide teachers with a diversified offer of activities and attend their training needs, while also establishing other training priority guidelines.

Public schools are **governed** by two mixed-membership governing bodies (the School Council and the Teachers' Assembly) and a management team (made up of the headteacher, the head of studies and the secretary), who are responsible for the administration, financial management and pedagogical organisation of the school. In publicly-funded private schools, the compulsory governance structures are the head teacher, the School Council and the Teacher's Assembly. Private schools have the autonomy to determine their organisation, making them free to establish their own governance structures and participation mechanisms.

Educational **inspection** is conducted on all elements and aspects of the education system, in order to ensure compliance with the law, the guarantee of rights and duties of those participating in the teaching and learning processes, the improvement of the education system and the quality and equity of education. The High State Inspection Service supervises all non-university and university studies, guaranteeing that all Autonomous Communities comply with the State legislation. The regional Educational Authorities order, regulate and carry out inspection within their territorial area through the Education Inspectorates.

The **evaluation of the education system** is carried out at three levels. The general evaluation of the education system is the responsibility of the State, which works in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities. The Autonomous Communities are in charge of the evaluation of the education system and educational institutions within their respective territory. Finally, educational institutions develop internal evaluation mechanisms with the support of the education authorities.

4 Literacy Performance Data for Children and Adolescents

4.1 Performance Data for Primary Children

The performance data for primary children are derived from the IEA´s PIRLS studies.

Inaugurated in 2001 and conducted every 5 years, **PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)** is an assessment of pupils' reading achievement at fourth grade organized by the Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The survey was administered in 35 countries in 2001, 45 education systems in 2006, and 50 in 2011. PIRLS assesses different purposes for reading (literary and informational) and different reading processes (retrieve explicit information, make inferences, interpret and integrate ideas and information, examine and evaluate content, language, and textual elements). Both multiple choice and open-ended questions are used.

Combining newly developed reading assessment passages and questions for 2011 with a selection of secure assessment passages and questions from 2001 and 2006, PIRLS 2011 allowed for measurement of changes since 2001. PIRLS 2011 also examined the national policies, curricula and practices related to literacy in participating countries, and included a set of questionnaires for students, parents/caregivers, teachers, and school principals to investigate the experiences that young children have at home and school in learning to read, in particular their attitudes and motivation towards reading.

For all PIRLS data used in this report, detailed tables with data for all participating countries in ELINET are provided, together with the EU averages (see Appendix C: ELINET PIRLS 2011 Data, Appendix D: ELINET PIRLS 2001 and 2006 Data).

4.1.1 Performance and variation in reading: proportion of low and high performing readers

Pupils in Spain achieved an overall mean reading score of 513 in PIRLS 2011 (Table 1). This is significantly below the EU-24 average of 535. Performance in Spain was marginally higher on Literary texts (516) than on Informational texts (512), and on Retrieve & Infer (516) compared with Interpret, Integrate & Evaluate (510) (Appendix C, Tables A.2-A.5).

Table 1: Overall Performance on PIRLS 2011 – Spain and EU-24 Average

	Overall Reading – Mean Score
Spain	**513**
EU-24	535

Significant differences (relative to the EU-24 Average) are shown in **bold**.

Spain did not participate in PRILS 2001 so a comparison between 2001 and 2011 cannot be drawn. However, in PIRLS 2006 students in Spain achieved a mean score of 513 on the overall reading scale – the same as in 2011 (Table 2). This indicates that performance in Spain was largely consistent across the 2 rounds of testing. A similar pattern was observed for EU average performance, which was also largely consistent between 2006 and 2011.

Table 2: Trends in Performance 2001-2011 (Overall Scale) – Spain and EU Average

	2001	2006	Change (2006-2001)	2006	2011	Change (2011-2006)	2001	2011	Change (2011-2001)
Spain	-	513	-	513	513	1	-	513	-
EU-24 Avg.	534	534	0	534	535	1	534	535	1

Significant differences in **bold**

In Spain, 28% of students performed at or below the Low benchmark on overall reading. This is higher than the EU average of 20%, and considerably higher than countries such as Finland (8%), the Netherlands (10%) and Croatia (10%) (see Appendix C, Table A.6). In Spain, only 4% of students achieved at the Advanced benchmark. This is less than half the EU average of 9% and well behind countries such as Northern Ireland (19%), England (18%) and Finland (18%).

Table 3: Performance by Overall PIRLS Reading Benchmarks 2011 - Percentages of Pupils – Spain and EU Average

	Below 400	400-475 Low	475-550 Intermediate	550-625 High	Above 625 Advanced
Spain	6	22	42	27	4
EU-24	5	15	36	35	9

Spain's standard deviation of 68 was only 2 points below the corresponding EU-24 average, indicating a similar spread of achievement (Table 4). The difference between the scores of students at the 10th and 90th percentiles in Spain – 175 points – is only 5 points below the corresponding EU-24 average of 180, indicating a marginally narrower range in performance.

Table 4: Spread of Achievement – Standard Deviation, 10th, 90th Percentiles, and Difference between 90th and 10th Percentiles on Overall Reading – Spain and EU-24 Average

	Standard Deviation	10th Percentile	90th Percentile	90th-10th
Spain	68	422	597	175
EU Avg	70	441	621	180

In 2011, girls in Spain achieved a mean score on overall reading that was significantly higher than boys, by 5 score points. The EU-24 average difference was higher at 12 points (Table 5). Unlike 2011, the gender difference in Spain in 2006 (4 points) was not statistically significant.

Table 5: Trends in Performance by Gender 2001-2011 (Overall Scale) – Spain and EU-24 Average

	Spain			EU		
	Girls	Boys	Girls-Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls-Boys
2011	516	511	**5**	541	529	**12**
2006	515	511	4	541	528	**13**
2001	-	-	-	542	525	**17**

Significant differences in **bold**

4.1.2 Gaps in reading

As in every European country there are achievement gaps between different groups.

Parent's educational achievement

In PISA 2011, students in Spain whose parents attended University or higher achieved a mean score (541) that was some 48 points higher than students whose parents completed Lower Secondary or below (492) (Table 6). The average difference across the EU-24 was greater at 76 points, indicating a relatively weaker relationship between parents' educational level and performance in Spain. The proportion of students in Spain whose parents' highest level of education is lower secondary or below (18%) is some 10% higher than the EU average.

Table 6: Percentages of Parents Whose Highest Level of Education was Lower Secondary, and Percentages who Finished University or Higher, and Mean Score Differences – Spain and EU-24 Average

Level of Education	Lower Secondary or Below		University or Higher		Difference (Univ or Higher – Lower Sec)
	%	Mean	%	Mean	
Spain	28	492	33	541	**48**
EU-24	18	495	30	571	**76**

Statistically significant mean score differences in **bold**.

Primary language spoken at home different from language used at school

In Spain, 69% of pupils reported that they always spoke the language of the PIRLS reading test at home, which is below the corresponding EU-24 Average (80%) (Table 7). Thirty-one percent said that they sometimes or never spoke the test language at home. The gap in reading achievement between students in Spain reporting that they always or sometimes/never spoke the language of the PIRLS test at home was 24 points, compared with an EU-24 average difference of 26 points.

Table 7: Percentages of Students Reporting that They Always or Sometimes / Never Speak the Language of the PIRLS Test at Home, and Associated Mean Score Differences – Spain and EU-24 Average

Language of the Test Spoken at Home	Always		Sometimes /Never		Mean Score Difference (Always – Sometimes/Never)
	%	Mean	%	Mean	
Spain	69	521	31	498	**24**
EU-24	80	541	20	519	**26**

Statistically significant mean score differences in **bold.**

Gender

The gender gap in Spain, in favour of females, (5 score points) is statistically significant, but lower than the corresponding EU-24 average (12). The gender gap has widened marginally in Spain, from 4 points in 2006 to 5 in 2011.

Table 8: Trends in Performance by Gender 2001-2011 (Overall Scale) – Spain and EU-24 Average

	Spain			EU		
	Girls	Boys	Girls-Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls-Boys
2011	516	511	**5**	541	529	**12**
2006	515	511	4	541	528	**13**
2001	-	-	**-**	542	525	**17**

Significant differences in **bold**

Performance gaps in Spain are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Performance Gaps – Gender, Education and Language Spoken at Home
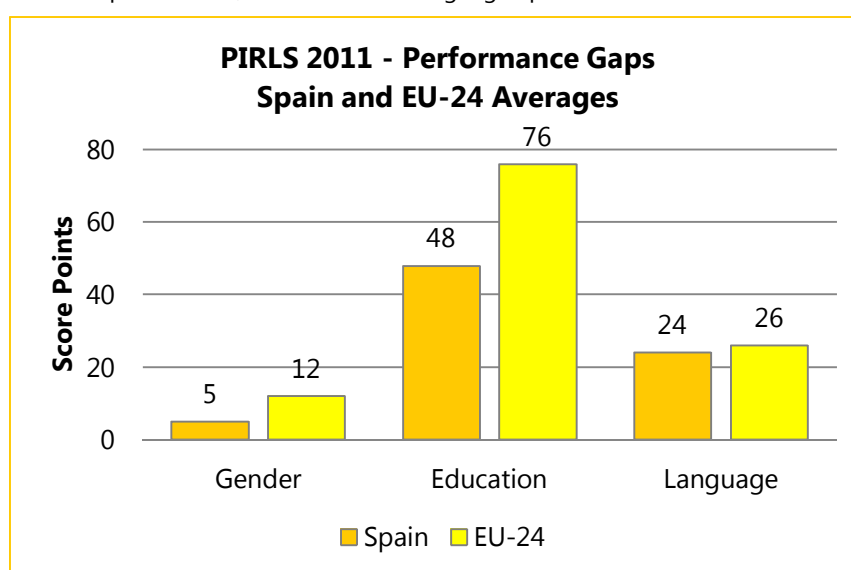
Gender: Girls – boys; Education: Parent has University vs. Lower Secondary/Primary education; Language: Student speaks language of the test at home always vs. sometimes/never

Attitudes to reading

There was a difference of 47 points between the top and bottom quartiles of the PIRLS Like Reading scale in Spain in 2011 (Table 9). On average across the EU-24, the difference was 52 points, indicating a similar relationship between liking reading and performance to that of Spain.

Table 9: Mean Overall Reading Scores of Students in the Top and Bottom Quartiles of the PIRLS Like Reading Scale – Spain and EU-24 Average

Like Reading	Overall Reading Score		
	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile	Difference(Q4-Q1)
Spain	540	494	**47**
EU-24	563	511	**52**

Significant differences in **bold**

Students in Spain in the top quartile of the Confidence in Reading scale achieved a mean score (546) that was some 70 points higher than students in the bottom quartile (476) (Table 10). The average difference across the EU-24 was marginally higher at 80 points.

Table 10: Mean Overall Reading Scores of Students in the Top and Bottom Quartiles of the PIRLS Confidence in Reading Scale – Spain and EU-24 Average

Confidence in Reading	Overall Reading Score		
	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile	Difference(Q4-Q1)
Spain	546	476	**70**
EU-24	570	490	**80**

Significant differences in **bold**

National literacy surveys at primary level

The Spanish Institute of Evaluation in the 2011 edition of *State system of education indicators* shows that in linguistic communication competence, the average percentages of students in the fourth year of primary education across regions performing at the lowest achievement levels (at or below Level 1) is 17. In four autonomous communities and two autonomous cities, significantly more students perform at these levels than on average. In general in Spain 15% of students are in these lower levels of performance.

Seventy-five percent of students on average across regions, and 77% across Spain are concentrated in the three intermediate performance levels (levels 2, 3 and 4). Both the average and the total percentages of students at the highest level of performance (level 5) is 8; eight autonomous communities have a higher than average percentage of Spanish students at this level (Figure 4).

Figure 4: percentage of students by level of performance in linguistic competence in communication, by Autonomous Communities., 2009.
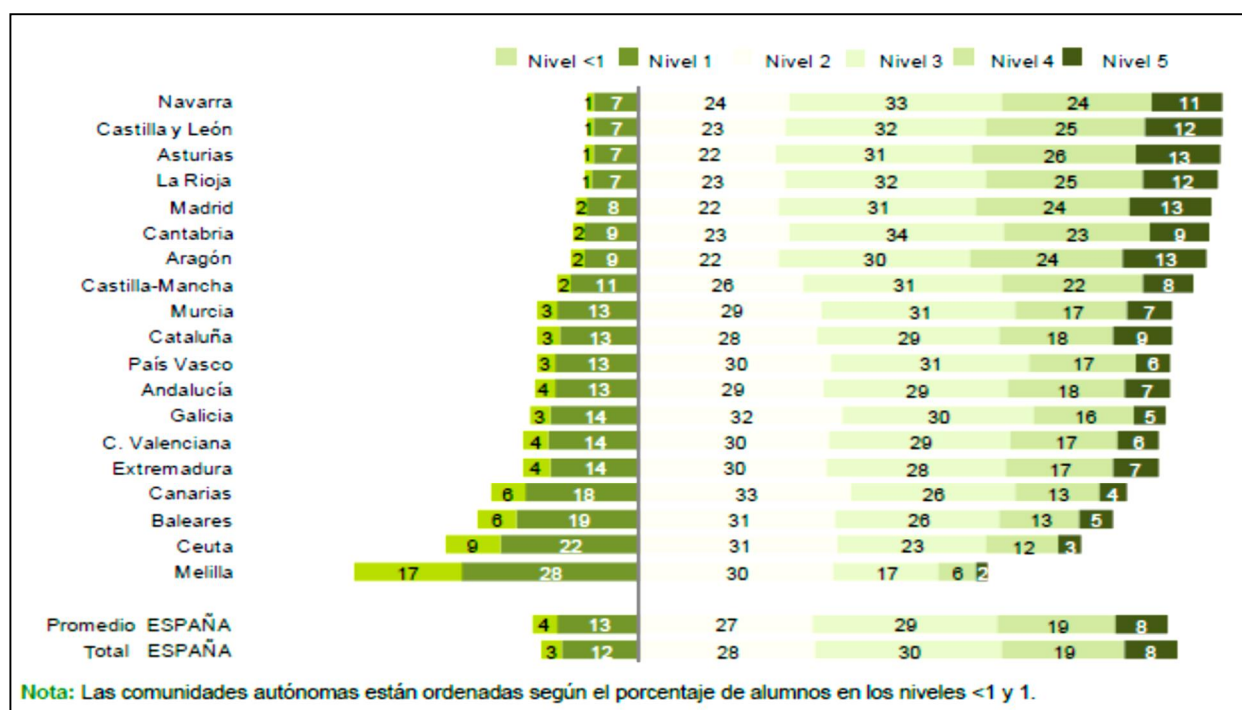
4.2 Performance Data for Adolescents

The performance data are derived from the OECD PISA study.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) led by OECD[10] **assesses the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students every three years in all OECD countries and** in a number of partner countries.

Since 2000, PISA has been testing students in reading, mathematics and science. The OECD assessment also collects information on students' backgrounds and on practices, motivational attributes and metacognitive strategies related to reading.

The PISA tests assess different aspects of reading literacy – retrieve information, interpret, reflect and evaluate on texts – and use a variety of texts – continuous (prose) and non-continuous (texts including graphs, tables, maps...). About half of the questions are multiple-choice, the other half open-ended (short or constructed answers). Results are reported on scales defining different levels of proficiency ranging from 1 (low performing) to 6 (high performing). Level 2 is considered as the level all 15 year-olds should reach, and will enable them to participate effectively to society. Since 2015, PISA has been administered on computers only in most participating countries.

The follow-up of students who were assessed by PISA in 2000 as part of the Canadian Youth in Transition Survey has shown that students scoring below Level 2 face a disproportionately higher risk of poor post-secondary participation or low labour-market outcomes at age 19, and even more so at age 21, the latest age for which data from this longitudinal study are currently available. For example, of students who performed below Level 2 in PISA reading in 2000, over 60% did not go on to any post-school education by the age of 21; by contrast, more than half of the students (55%) whose highest level was Level 2 attended college or university (OECD 2010, S. 52).

4.2.1 Performance and variation in reading: proportion of low and high performing readers

In PISA 2012, students in Spain achieved an overall mean reading score of 488 points, similar to the average across participating EU countries (489) (Table 11).

Table 11: Reading performance in PISA 2012

	Mean	S.E.
Spain	488	(1.9)
EU-27	489	(0.6)

S. E. = standard error; Significant differences between the country and the EU average are shown in **bold**

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[10] See: http://www.pisa.OECD.org.

Reading performance of students in Spain has declined marginally but not significantly between 2000 and 2012 (Table 12). On average across EU countries, performance has increased between these years, though not to a significant extent.

Table 12: Trends in reading performance - PISA 2000-2012

	2000		2009		2012		Change 2000–2009		Change 2009–2012		Change 2000–2012	
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.
Spain	493	(2.7)	481	(2.0)	488	(1.9)	-12	(6.0)	7	(3.8)	-5	(6.8)
EU-27	489*	(0.7)	486**	(0.6)	489***	(0.6)	-3*	(5.0)	**5****	(2.7)	3*	(6.0)

Significant differences between assessment cycles in **bold** *EU21 **EU26 ***EU27

In PISA 2012, the spread of achievement between those students who performed at the 10th and 90th percentiles in Spain was 234 score points, which was less than the average across the participating EU countries. For girls, the spread was 217 points, compared with 230 for the EU-27 countries. The spread of achievement for boys in Spain was slightly higher (244) than for the girls, but still significantly lower than that of the EU-27 (259).

Table 13: Spread of achievement. Difference between 10th and 90th percentiles on the reading scale, all students and by gender – PISA 2012

	Difference 90th–10th for all students		Difference 90th–10th for girls		Difference 90th–10th for boys	
	Score diff.	S.E.	Score diff.	S.E.	Score diff.	S.E.
Spain	**234**	(3.5)	**217**	(4.1)	**244**	(5.6)
EU-27	251	(1.3)	230	(1.2)	259	(1.6)

Significant differences between the country and EU in **bold**

In Spain the proportion of both low-performing and high-performing students (19.3%) is a little lower than in the EU countries on average (19.7%). The proportions of higher performers in Spain (those performing at Levels 5 and 6) (6%) is also marginally lower than the corresponding EU average (7.0%).

Table 14: Percentage of low-performing (below level 2) and high-performing (levels 5 and 6) students - PISA 2012

	Below level 2		Levels 5 and 6	
	%	S.E.	%	S.E.
Spain	18.3	(0.8)	5.5	(0.3)
EU-27	19.7	(0.2)	7.0	(0.1)

Significant differences between the country and EU in **bold**

Between 2000 and 2012, the proportion of low-performing readers in Spain has increased marginally, by 2%. This smaller increase can be seen among both girls, by under 2%, and boys, by 3% (Table 15).

Table 15: Trends in the proportion of low-performers (below level 2) in reading, all students, and by gender – PISA 2000-2012

	All students		Girls		Boys	
	%	S.E.	%	S.E.	%	S.E.
2000	16.3	(1.1)	11.5	(1.1)	20.4	(1.4)
2009	**19.6**	(0.9)	**14.6**	(0.9)	**24.4**	(1.0)
2012	18.3	(0.8)	13.1	(0.8)	23.4	(1.0)

Significant differences between assessment cycles in **bold**

2.2. Gaps in reading performance

Socio-economic status

In Spain, the gap in reading performance according to the students' socio-economic background (84 points) is slightly less pronounced than in the participating EU countries on average (93). This indicates that Spain is a little more equitable in terms of reading outcomes than an average across the EU-26.

Table 16: Difference in reading performance between bottom and top national quarters of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status – PISA 2009

	Score diff.	S.E.
Spain	**84**	(4.4)
EU-26	**93**	(1.1)

Significant differences in reading performance between bottom and top national and EU quarters in **bold**

Migration

In PISA 2009, the percentage of students in Spain with an immigrant background was 9.5%, which is slightly higher than the average of the EU-26 countries (8.3). The gap between native students and those with an immigrant background is higher in Spain (56 score points) than in the EU countries on average (38 score points).

Table 17: Percentage of students and reading performance by immigrant status – PISA 2009

	Native students				Students with an immigrant background (first- or second-generation)				Difference in reading performance between native and students with an immigrant background	
	Percentage of students	S.E.	Performance on the reading scale		Percentage of students	S.E.	Performance on the reading scale			
			Mean	S.E.			Mean	S.E.	Score dif.	S.E.
Spain	90.5	(0.5)	488	(2.0)	9.5	(0.5)	432	(3.8)	**56**	(3.6)
EU-26	91.7	(0.02)	490	(0.4)	8.3	(0.02)	452	(6.4)	**38**	(6.4)

Significant differences between native and students with an immigrant background in **bold.**

Language spoken at home

In PISA 2012, 18% of students in Spain did not speak the test language at home, compared to 13% on average across the EU-27. However, the gap in performance between those who did and did not speak the test language at home was considerably lower in Spain (13 score points) than the EU-27 average (54). Since the proportion of immigrant students in Spain (8.3% is lower than the proportion who speak a different language at home, it may be that some student with regional dialects declared themselves to have a different language, even though they may have been able to communicate in the dialect of standard Spanish.

Table 18: Percentage of students and reading performance by language spoken at home – PISA 2012

	Speak test language at home				Speak another language at home				Difference in reading according to language spoken at home	
	Percentage of students	S.E	Performance on the reading scale		Percentage of students	S.E.	Performance on the reading scale		Score dif.	S.E.
			Mean	S.E.			Mean	S.E.		
Spain	81.9	(1.0)	484	(1.9)	18.1	(1.0)	471	(3.8)	13	(3.6)
EU-27	86.7	(0.02)	494	(0.4)	13.3	(0.02)	441	(5.4)	**54**	(5.4)

Significant differences according to language spoken at home in **bold**

Gender

In PISA 2009, the gender difference in reading performance was lower in Spain than in the participating EU countries on average, by 15 points (Table 19).

Table 19: Mean reading performance by gender and gender differences – PISA 2009

	Boys		Girls		Difference (G-B)	
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Score diff.	S.E.
Spain	467	(2.2)	496	(2.2)	**29**	(2.0)
EU-26	463	(0.5)	506	(0.4)	**44**	(0.5)

Significant differences between boys and girls in **bold**

In Spain, between 2000 and 2012, the performance of girls stayed relatively constant, decreasing by 2 score points, while the performance of boys decreased somewhat more, by 7 score points. The trend is different to that of the participating EU countries on average during the same period: girls' performance increased by 5 score points while boys' decreased by the same value (Table 20).

Table 20: Trends in reading performance by gender – PISA 2000-2012

	Spain				EU-27			
	Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys	
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.
2000	505	(2.8)	481	(3.4)	506*	(0.8)	473*	(0.9)
2009	496	(2.2)	**467**	(2.2)	507**	(0.7)	464**	(0.8)
2012	503	(1.9)	474	(2.3)	511***	(0.6)	468***	(0.8)

Significant differences between assessment cycles in **bold** *EU21 **EU26 ***EU27

Performance gaps for socioeconomic status, migration status, language spoken and gender are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Performance Gaps – SES, Migration, Language Spoken at Home and Gender
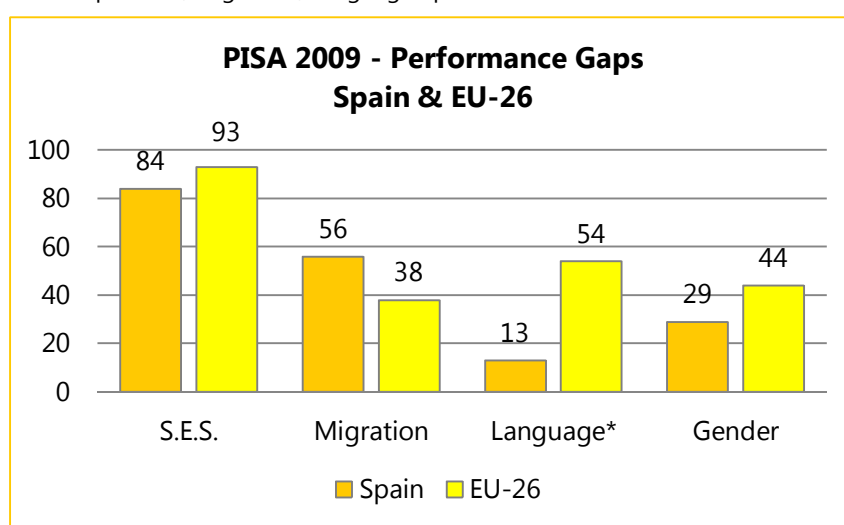
SES: Top – Bottom national quarters of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status; Migration: Native - Students with an immigrant background; Language: Speak test language at home – speak other language at home (Language* - PISA 2012); Gender: Girl - Boy

Engagement and metacognition

In PISA 2009, the gap between the students in Spain reporting being highly engaged (top quarter), and those reporting being poorly engaged (bottom quarter) in reading was 96 score points – which is equivalent to almost two and a half years of schooling. Not surprisingly, students who report being engaged in reading perform better in the PISA test. The difference between the most and the least engaged readers in Spain was close to the average across the participating EU-26 average.

Table 21: Mean reading scores between students poorly engaged and highly engaged in reading – PISA 2009

	Low quarter		Top quarter		Difference
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Spain	439	(2.6)	535	(1.9)	**96**
EU-26	444	(0.8)	543	(0.8)	**99**

Significant differences according to the level of reading engagement in **bold**.

In Spain, data from PISA 2009 showed that there was a gap of 64 score points between the students who know which strategies are the most efficient to understand and remember a text, and those who have a limited knowledge of these metacognitive activities (Table 22). On average across the participating EU countries, the gap is higher (98 score points).

Table 22: Mean reading scores between students in low and top quarters of understanding and remembering strategies

	Low quarter		Top quarter		Difference
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Spain	446	(2.7)	510	(1.9)	**64**
EU-26	433	(0.8)	531	(0.8)	**98**

Significant differences according to the degree of awareness of efficient reading strategies (understanding and remembering strategies) in **bold**.

Similarly, students in Spain who were aware of efficient use of summarising strategies perform 73 score points above those who were not aware (Table 23). The gap on average for the EU countries is slightly higher (90 score points). The difference in performance between those who use efficient strategies to aid reading comprehension and those who do not reflects the close relationship between reading proficiency and awareness of efficient reading strategies.

Table 23: Mean reading scores between students in low and top quarters of the summarising strategies scale

	Low quarter		Top quarter		Difference
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Spain	440	(2,2)	514	(1,9)	**73**
EU-26	440	(0.8)	530	(0.7)	**90**

Significant differences according to the degree of awareness of reading strategies (summarising strategies) in **bold.**

4.2.2 National literacy surveys

The most recent literacy survey at national level is the 'Evaluación General de Diagnóstico 2010. Educación Secundaria Obligatoria. Segundo curso' (General Diagnostic Evaluation. Lower Secondary Education, 2nd year), carried out by the Institute of Evaluation in collaboration with all the Autonomous Communities.

The competences assessed in this diagnostic evaluation were linguistic communication, mathematical literacy, competence in knowledge and interaction with the physical world, and the social and civic competence.

Data of the overall results achieved in each of the competences assessed are expressed on a continuous scale on which the average mean is equivalent to 500 points and the standard deviation is 100 points. The Spain Mean is therefore an average rate of the average results of the Autonomous Communities.

It should be noted that the results of the Autonomous Communities are in a range whose difference does not exceed, in general, about 50 points above or below the Spanish average. Moreover, the distance between some Communities is much lower and, in many cases, not significant. For this reason,

it may be wrong to consider the results only by the order of the average scores of the different Autonomous Communities.

In the linguistic communication competence, there are five Autonomous Communities whose averages are in the range between 480 and 520 points, that is, they differ in less than 20 points (a fifth of a standard deviation) from the Spain Average.

Figure 5: Mean scores on the Evaluación General de Diagnóstico 2010 Linguistic Communication Competence test (grade 8), by Autonomous Community
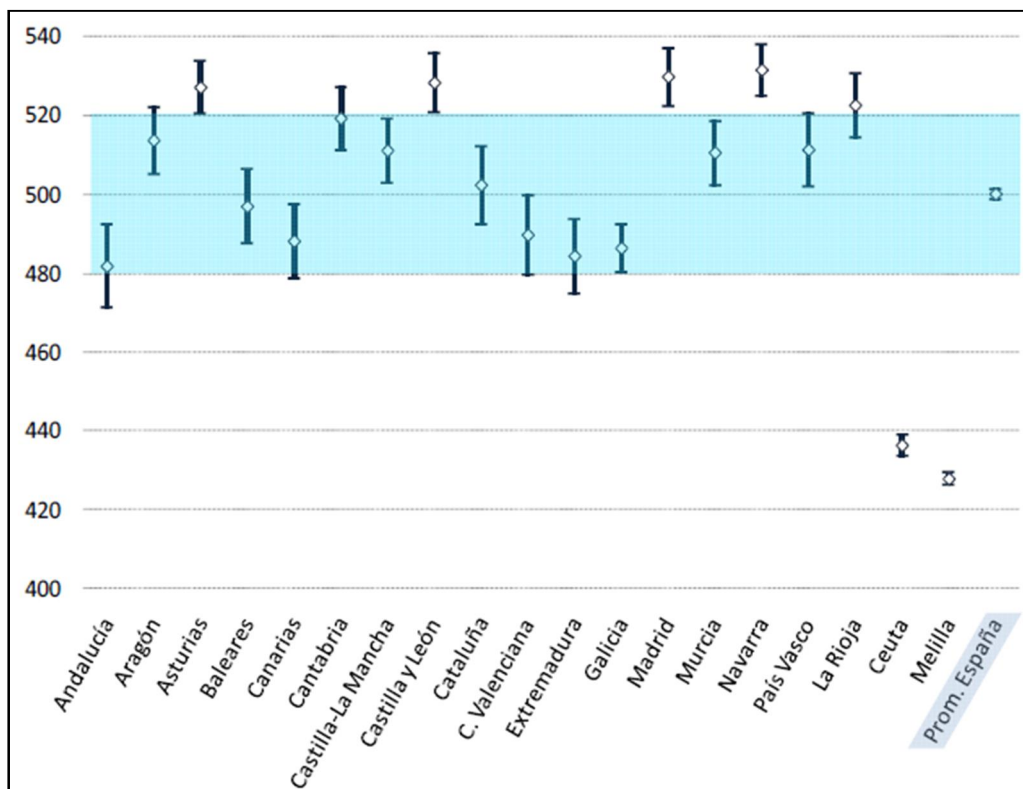
The average of four Communities does not differ significantly from the score 480 points and the score of another four Communities, of 520 points. Four Communities have averages significantly higher than 520 points.

Five levels of performance have been established (plus another one under the minimum level 1). The following figure shows the percentage of pupils and students from each Community in the interval that defines each performance level. In linguistic communication, the average percentages of students in the second year of secondary school in the lowest achievement levels (level less than 1 and level 1) is 18%; four Autonomous Communities have higher percentages than the Spanish average at these levels. The average percentages of students at the highest level of performance (level 5) is 8%; nine Communities have a higher percentage of students at this level than the Spanish average.

Figure 6: Levels of linguistic competence, by region (Spain)
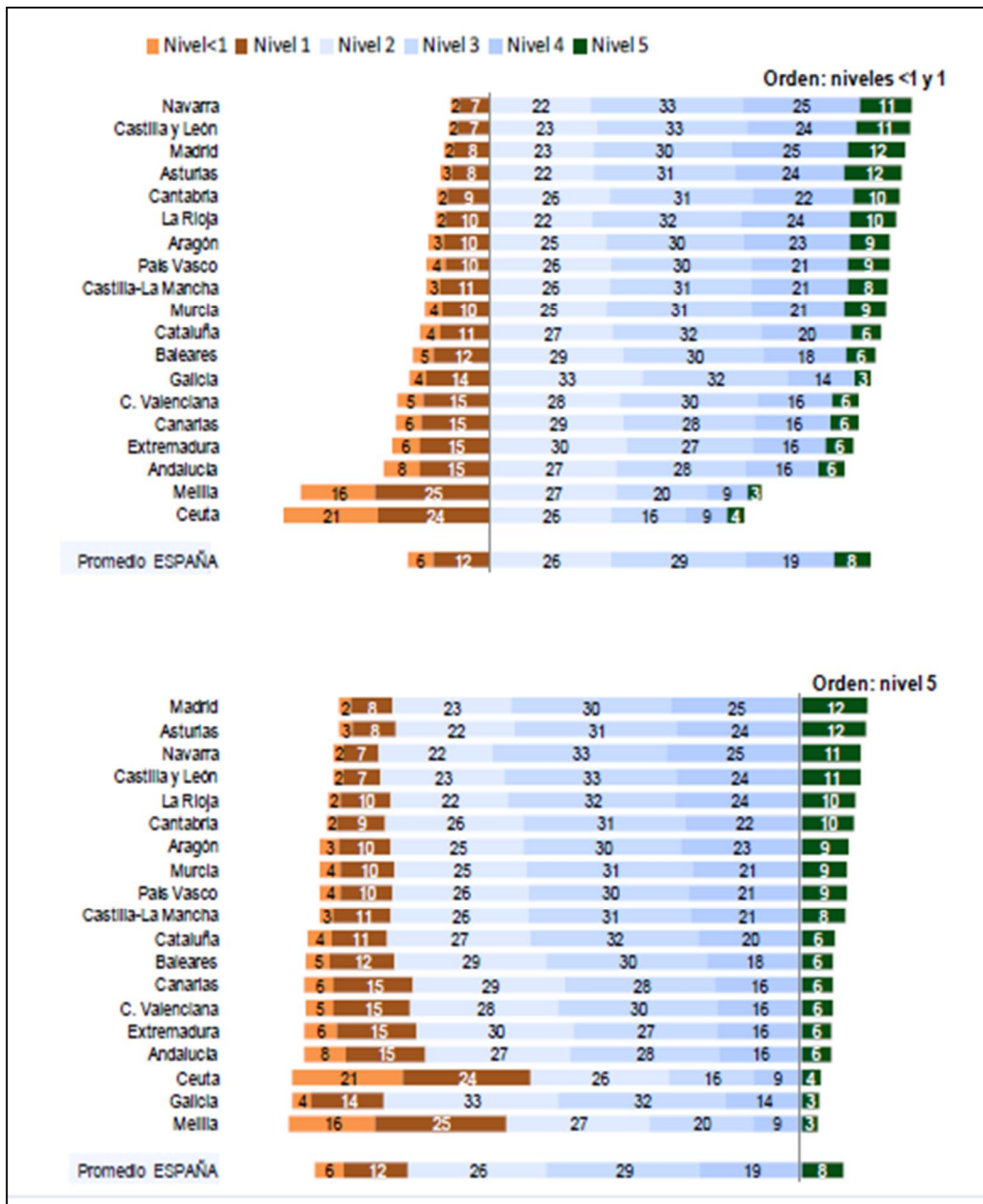
Challenges:

The performance of students in Grade 4 in Spain on PIRLS 2011 overall reading was below the corresponding EU average. There is a need to raise the average performance of primary-level students. A realistic target would be for Spain to perform at the EU average by PIRLS 2021. Stronger performance at primary level could also contribute to higher average performance at post-primary level.

Overall performance on PISA 2012 reading literacy was not significantly different from the EU average. However, performance did not change significantly since 2000. There is a need to raise average performance of adolescents. A reasonable target would be to perform at a level that is significantly above the EU average by 2021.

PIRLS 2011 identified 28% of students as performing below the Low PIRLS overall reading benchmark (indicating low performance). There is a need to reduce the proportion of lower-achieving students. A reasonable target would be to reduce the proportion to 20% or fewer by 2021. While 18% of students in Spain performed at or below Level 1 on PISA 2012, this represents a small increase since 2000. Again, a policy goal should be to reduce the proportion of lower-achieving adolescents.

In both PIRLS 2011 and PISA 2012, fewer students in Spain achieved the highest reading proficiency levels than on average across EU countries. In addition to raising the average performance of students in general, and lowering the proportion of lower-achieving students, there is a need to raise the performance of higher achievers.

There may be value in implementing a national literacy strategy in Spain to raise overall performance levels, and reduce the proportions of lower-achieving students. Such a strategy might cover a 5 year period, and address a broad range of factors that contribute to low performance including teaching and learning, student gender, migrant/language status and socioeconomic status.

5 Policy areas

The High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (2012, p. 38) recommended that all EU Member States should focus on the following areas as they craft their own literacy solutions:

1) Creating a more literate environment
2) Improving the quality of teaching
3) Increasing participation, inclusion and equity (the term "equity" was added by ELINET).

The following parts refer to these three key issues, though some overlap may occur.

In order to achieve as much comparability as possible across countries, quantitative and qualitative indicators for which information from international data are available are reported. Appendix A provides more information on criteria for the choice of indicators and the chosen indicators for the pre-primary age group. For each of these indicators Appendix B contains a table with numbers of the European countries participating in ELINET. Appendix C has been created using the international database for PIRLS 2011 – and contains separate tables for all information reported. If countries did not participate in PIRLS 2011, data for PIRLS 2006 are referred to. Appendix D offers this information for the PIRLS 2006 data.

5.1 Creating a literate environment for children and adolescents

The EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy stated the following in relation to **creating a more literate environment**:

> Creating a more literate environment will help stimulate a culture of reading, i.e. where **reading for pleasure** is seen as the norm for all children and adults. Such a culture will fuel reading motivation and reading achievement: people who like to read, read more. Because they read more, they read better, and because they read better they read more: a virtuous circle which benefits individuals, families and society as a whole. (HLG report 2012, p. 41).

Parents play a central role in children's emergent literacy development. They are the first teachers, and shape children's language and communication abilities and attitudes to reading by being good reading role models, providing reading materials, and reading to the child.

Schools play an important role in offering a literate environment for students. Schools may foster reading motivation and reading for pleasure by establishing school and classroom libraries, offering a wide variety of books and other reading material in different genres, providing sheltered and comfortable spaces for individual reading activities (like reading clubs), and leaving it up to children as to whether they wish to express and exchange their individual (intimate) reading experiences.

However, schools do not have sole responsibility. A broad range of actors may shape literacy motivation, from parents and peers to librarians. Parents may provide role models and influence children's attitudes towards literacy practices. Also, libraries have a vital role to play if they offer free books, especially for families who cannot afford to buy books. Regional or national campaigns may inspire children and their parents to engage in reading activities. (Cf. ELINET Country Reports, Frame of Reference, pp. 29ff.)

Adolescence is a crucial phase in life where young people develop long-term *identities and self-concepts* which include media preferences and practices (*media identity*). In this perspective, it is of great importance that families, schools and communities offer young people rich opportunities to encounter the *culture of reading* and develop a stable *self-concept as a reader/writer* and member of a literary culture. This includes access to a broad variety of reading materials (in print and electronic forms) and stimulating literate environments in and outside of schools; it also includes opportunities to get actively involved in engaging with texts, and communicating, reflecting on and exchanging ideas about texts with peers and ´competent others´, such as teachers or parents (Ibid., pp. 45f) .

5.1.1 Providing a literate environment at home

The **home learning environment**, particularly in the first three years, is extremely important (Brooks et al. 2012). It determines the quantity and quality of interactions between the infant and the primary caregivers, who are the most powerful agents of language development, both receptive and expressive, in the context of everyday activities and experiences. During these years, experience-dependent creation of synapses is maximal. We know that the more words the children are exposed to, the more they can learn. Caregiver-child relations in their turn strongly influence the ability to learn, by influencing self-esteem, general knowledge and motivation.

Several indicators are used to describe the literate home environment of very young children in this report, drawing on data from international sources (PIRLS) that are comparable across countries. It is important to acknowledge that some of the PIRLS data are self-reported and may be biased by social desirability and the ways in which questions are interpreted by parents within countries.

Parental attitudes to reading

PIRLS 2011 used the "Parents Like Reading Scale" based on parents' responses to seven statements about reading and how often they read for enjoyment. The figures are presented below with the percentage of students whose parents "like", "somewhat like" or "do not like" reading" for Spain, as reported by PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, Exhibit 4.4 – Parents Like Reading, p. 120), and on average across EU countries.

- Like: 33.5% (EU Average, 35.3%)
- Somewhat like: 53.0% (EU average, 52.6%)
- Do not like: 13.5% (EU average, 17.9%)
  (For an overview of European countries see table B1 in Appendix B.)

The proportion of pupils in Spain whose parents have positive attitudes toward reading is close to the EU average The importance of parental attitudes to reading is shown by the fact that in Spain there is a significant difference in reading performance at grade 4 between children whose parents like to read (average achievement 546) and those who do not (average achievement 499).

Home Educational Resources

Students in Spain at the bottom quartile of the PIRLS home resources scale (which is based on number of books at home, number of children's books at home, access to a quiet room to study, Internet access, and parent education and job status) had a mean score on PIRLS reading literacy that was significantly lower, by 61 points, compared with those in the top quartile. The corresponding difference on average across the EU-24 was 79, again indicating that the association between home resources and reading achievement is somewhat weaker in Spain than on average across the EU-24.

Table 24: Mean overall reading scores by quartile of pupils whose parents reported having few or many home resources for learning on the PIRLS Index of Home Education Resources – Spain and EU-24 average

Level of Home Resources	Few Resources		Many Resources		Difference (Many - Few)
	%	Mean	%	Mean	
Spain	25	487	25	548	**61**
EU-24	25	495	25	573	**79**

Statistically significant mean score differences in **bold**.

In Spain, 9% of pupils reporting having 10 or fewer books at home, compared with an EU-24 average of 11% (Table 25). Proportionately more students in Spain (14%) reported having over 200 books, than on average across EU countries (12%). The mean score difference in favour of students with 200 books, compared with those who had 10 or fewer books, was 69 points in Spain, compared with an average of 82 across the EU-24 (Appendix C, Table E1). Hence, the relative association between number of books and reading achievement in Spain is somewhat weaker than on average across the EU-24.

Table 25: Mean Overall Reading Scores of Pupil with 0-10 books at Home, and those with More than 200 Books – Spain and EU-24 Average

Books in the Home	None or Few Books (0-10)		More than 200 Books		Mean Score Difference (More than 200 – None or few)
	Percent of Students	Mean Reading Score	Percent of Students	Mean Reading Score	
Spain	9	466	14	535	**69**
EU-24	11	482	12	563	**82**

Statistically significant mean score differences in **bold**.

Number of children's books in the home

The PIRLS 2011 database provides the figures below about the number of children's books in the home, based on parents' reports. Compared to the average across the participating EU countries (for an overview of European countries see table B2 in Appendix B), the availability of children's books in the home is close to the EU average. The distribution of students reporting having varying amounts of children's books in the home was also similar in Spain and on average across the EU countries:

- 0-10: 11.3% (EU average 11.8%)
- 11-25: 19.4% (EU average 19.7%)
- 26-50: 31.5% (EU average 29.4%)
- 51-100: 25.5% (EU average 23.4%)
- >100: 12.4% (EU average 15.7%).

Early Literacy Activity Scale

PIRLS 2011 reports the percentages of students whose parents (often, never or almost never) engaged in literacy-relevant activities with them before the beginning of primary school (Mullis et al. 2012a, exhibit 4.6 - Early Literacy Activities Before Beginning Primary School, p. 126). Nine activities are considered: reading books, telling stories, singing songs, playing with alphabet toys, talking about

things done, talking about things read, playing word games, writing letters or words, reading signs and labels aloud.

The figures for Spain in the composite score for all these activities are below (for an overview of European countries see table B3 in Appendix B):

- Often: 44.0% (EU average 40.7%)
- Sometimes: 55.0% (EU average 57.4)
- Never or almost never: 1.0% (EU average 1.9%).

This means that, in Spain, there are slightly more parents who often engage in the nine activities, compared with the EU-24. The Early Literacy Activity Scale correlates with later reading performance in grade 4.

While the Early Literacy Activity Scale is a composite score it is of interest to look at single items. If only the category "often" is considered, the percentage of pupils in Spain whose parents engaged in literacy-related activities with them before the beginning of primary school is comparatively high compared with the European average:

- read books to them often: 68.4% (EU average, 58.4 %)
- told stories to them often: 60.3% (EU average, 51. 5%)
- sang songs to them often: 57.3% (EU average, 50.6%)
- played games involving shapes (toys and puzzles) with them often: 64.7% (European average 63.5%).
  (For more details and an overview of European countries see table B4-B7 in Appendix B).

5.1.2 Providing a literate environment in school

Availability and use of classroom library

Based on data provided by their teachers, PIRLS shows that 91% of pupils in Spain were in classrooms which had class libraries – well above the corresponding EU-24 average of 73% (Appendix C, Table H2). In Spain, 37.6% of pupils were in classrooms in which there were at least 50 library books. Again, this compares favourably with the EU-24 average of 32.1% (ibid.). Slightly fewer students in Spain (24%) had access to at least three magazines in their class library compared to the average across participating EU countries (28%). Just over three-quarters of students in Spain (78%) were given class time on a weekly basis to use the classroom library, compared with an EU-24 average of 61%. Across all classrooms (including those with no library), 51% of students in Spain had teachers who reported that they brought them to a library other than the class library at least monthly, below the average across EU-24 countries (65%) (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 8.13, p.240; EU averages from PIRLS 2011 database, see Table H2 in Appendix C). According to Article 113 of the Organic Law on Education, every school must have a school library.

Challenges: An important objective of the education school system in Spain is to train competent people in the efficient use of information. To achieve this, the treatment of reading as a transverse axis and an adequate conceptualisation of the school library are now more necessary than ever and, indeed, they are areas in which hard work has been done in recent years. There have been regulatory developments (such as the Education Act 2006 -LOE-, the Law Amending the Education Act 2013 -LOMCE-, the Law of Reading, Book and Libraries, 2007 and other regulations of the Autonomous

Communities), along with the intensification of the training of teachers to incorporate plans and programs of reading and school libraries in schools.

However, greater impetus and support for school libraries requires them to acquire the necessary visibility and further advance towards a model of library understood as a learning space around which both teachers and students commit to reading and accessing information in different formats, from which knowledge is built.

LOMCE (the School Law) has established that all students in primary education should devote daily school time to reading, for which schools must develop a Reading Plan. In lower secondary education, some time must also be devoted to reading in all subjects. Thus, regular and daily contact with reading and coexistence with books is compulsorily ensured in schools, both inside and outside the classroom. Further work is needed, however, to provide models to schools and to train teachers for the Reading Plan not to be a mere reading time, but a real cohesive plan that structures the reading activity in schools.

Different agencies and levels of government are also working to further develop and equip school libraries as hubs of educational innovation in schools.

5.1.3 Providing a digital environment

A literate environment can also be created by incorporating digital devices into the school environment.

The country note for Spain of the OECD study "Students, Computers and Learning" (OECD, 2015) (based on PISA 2012 data) confirms this relevant information related to students and computers in Spain:

- Schools in Spain had almost one computer available for every two 15-year-old students.
- Students in Spain performed significantly below the OECD average in digital reading (466 points on the PISA digital reading scale). In the PISA assessment of digital reading, about one in 20 students in Spain (4.6%) did not navigate at all to find the information needed to answer a question, and those who did navigate got lost more often than students in other countries, on average.
- Students in Spain also performed below the OECD average in computer-based mathematics (475 points on the PISA mathematics scale).
- Students in Spain browse the Internet for schoolwork, at or outside of school, more often than students in other OECD countries, on average.
- Regardless of socio-economic status, students in Spain spend about 2 hours and 20 minutes online every weekend day, on average.

According to LOMCE, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are one of the main factors that will transform the educational system. They are considered as a key factor for lifelong learning, so they have to be used and taught by every teacher and to every student. Teachers must use them to customise education according to students' needs, such as low performance learning or enhancing research. ICT is specified as a mandatory topic to work on every subject in Primary and Secondary Education in Articles 18 and 24 respectively. Additionally, a specific subject to work on this topic is outlined in Article 25. Regarding ICT resources, in Article 111, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport establishes the use of virtual learning environments to enhance objectives and achievement of competences. Digital platforms will be available for educational communities in order to share

information and digital resources, and their use will be promoted and supported in each Secondary and Primary School.

As regards computer equipment, Spanish secondary schools are provided with computer rooms with Internet connectivity as well as interactive whiteboards. Most of them are digitally supported with ICT-trained teachers and ICT coordinators. However, there are different levels of support depending on each Autonomous Community and their investments in ICT materials and staff.

Autonomous Communities develop several programmes to enhance ITC skills in students, such as reading digital books or researching in public-trusted websites.

On the other hand, the Government developed the Project 'Conectividad de Centros Escolares' (Connectivity at School), that is currently in progress. This project is being supported by three different Ministries: Education, Culture and Sports; Industry, Energy and Tourism, as well as Economy and Competitiveness. The target is to provide each public primary and secondary school with an ultra-high-speed broadband connection as it is the most suitable type of connection to fulfil schools' connectivity requirements in case they use web 2.0 tools. The deadline to reach this target is 2017.

Challenges: Students need to improve their digital skills, including digital literacy, by means of training at school or as part of homework, as digital literacy is a key element of the curriculum in the Spanish Education System (Act 8/2013).

There are different levels of ICT support at secondary schools depending on each Autonomous Community and their investments in ICT materials and staff, which is not always enough to support all ICT requirements in a modern secondary school.

Many secondary schools still depend on the "Conectividad de Centros Escolares" project to improve their internet connection.

5.1.4 The role of public libraries in reading promotion

Public libraries are an important agent in reading promotion. They are governed by Act 10/2007 – Reading, Books and Libraries in Spain[11].

There are several types of libraries such as public, school or university ones. All of them are given a key role in reading promotion, as they facilitate the access of every citizen in the country to culture. Autonomous Communities and Town Councils have to reach agreement on managing these libraries. Furthermore, there are reading plans that have to take into account services and library resources in order to grant access to information and create suitable environments to promote readers' training.

In this context, the Consejo de Cooperación Bibliotecaria (Libraries Cooperation Council[12]) was created to coordinate the different reading promotion plans, to improve and promote all kinds of libraries, to write Acts related to libraries and library initiatives, in which Autonomous Communities and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport work cooperatively.

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[11] See: http://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2007-12351.
[12] See: http://www.mecd.gob.es/cultura-mecd/areas-cultura/bibliotecas/mc/consejocb/presentacion.html.

Cooperation between secondary schools, families, libraries and other agents in literacy promotion for adolescents

A software programme (ABIES 2.0) was been created by the National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teachers' Training INTEF to interconnect school libraries. Ultimately, this is expected to interconnect school libraries and public libraries. Most schools have a library in which this specific software is used to manage borrowed and catalogued books, with databases locally stored at a local computer. In order to share this information and to promote the use of school libraries, the Government developed new specific software that is regularly updated (ABIESWEB[13]). This is a digital platform developed by the INTEF to interconnect public schools and secondary schools via centralized databases in Spain. The deployment of this software depends on each Autonomous Community, so that each Primary and Secondary school is expected to be connected to a centralised server in that Community, in order to share information and physical resources such as books, CD-ROMs, etc. Its main goal is to facilitate lending books to students, as well as collecting statistics on catalogued and borrowed books.

The first stage is to deploy this system in each school. The desired objective is to also include public libraries databases, so that students and families may search the book they prefer at any kind of library.

A good practice in cooperation among public libraries in reading promotion is the public website 'Pregunte: Las Bibliotecas Responden'[14], that offers an online library service. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports brings public libraries closer to families, students and citizens, who may request information related to any topic via e-mail or chat, as well as search digital documents available on this website. Library staff of several public libraries offer an answer in a maximum of two days.

> **Challenges**: The co-ordination between the Autonomous Communities and the Ministry is complex. The Ministry writes the Act, and every Autonomous Community creates new regional Acts to develop the general Ministry Act. Consequently, depending on each Autonomous Community, public libraries play similar but not equal roles in reading promotion. Similarly, cooperation between secondary schools, families and libraries is also run at Autonomous Communities level.
>
> ABIESWEB (Sistema de Gestión de Bibliotecas Escolares), a digital platform that connects schools, has been successfully implemented -at different levels- in different Autonomous Communities, depending on investments in this platform that are directly related to Communities' budgets. More work is required to complete this deployment in the field of teacher training, Internet connectivity and overall investment.

5.1.5 Improving literate environments for children and adolescents: Programmes, initiatives and examples

Family literacy programmes

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, as well as the educational administrations of some Autonomous Communities, have made useful materials to improve children's literacy available to families, and also tools that would facilitate effective collaboration between families and schools in the development of the reading process. This commitment has been materialised, for example, in the

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[13] See: http://www.abies.es/web/.
[14] See: http://www.pregunte.es/consulta/consulta.cmd.

collection 'Reader Families'[15], a multimedia digital publication of the Community of Andalusia made of ten books that address reading from different formats and different points of view. This programme aims to boost collaboration between families and schools to improve reading comprehension of students, develop their reading habits and improve their language skills. It is also intended as an instrument to assist parents and other family members to develop their educational work, so that, in collaboration with the school, they are encouraged to promote an interest in reading in their children, improve their reading comprehension and strengthen the habit of reading. They have also published the guide 'Reading to children, with children, in children's presence'[16].

In the Autonomous Community of Extremadura, the Campaign 'Family reading' is developed yearly and several resources provided on the program website: Leer en Familia | Bibliotecas Escolares de Extremadura[17].

In Galicia, the initiative of the education authorities 'Travelling bagpacks'[18] offers traveling suitcases to schools in order to meet the needs of teachers who request materials to support their own initiatives in the field of reading promotion. These bags, full of books (tales, poetry or comics), travel from school to school and children can bring the books home.

In addition, there are different organisations, associations, websites and foundations that have reading promotion programmes and activities aimed at families. For example, the Foundation Germán Sánchez Ruipérez is dedicated to the implementation of educational and cultural programs. It has focused most on its activity on the publication and dissemination of the culture of books and reading, in printed and digital formats. Among many other actions to promote family reading, they have published a book including advice and resources for families. This Foundation has also created the website Reading Lab[19,] where a wide range of content and materials created with the intention to help develop the reading habit as a family can be found, as well as tips and advice that are regularly updated.

Finally, some publishing houses have their own web sites and/or newsletters in which they bring recommendations of books for family reading as well as advice to parents. For example: Lectura en Familia | Ediciones SM[20].

The Spanish Confederation of Associations of Parents of Students has also published its own guide 'Animación a la lectura desde la familia'[21].

The Spanish Reading and Writing Association (AELE) develops different reading and writing activities between children and their parents, grandparents and others family members. In addition, this association has a specific website aimed at families: "Escribir como lectores en familia" (Write as readers in family)[22].

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[15] See: http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/webportal/web/lecturas-y-bibliotecas-escolares/lectura/familias-lectoras.

[16] See: http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/webportal/ishare-servlet/content/2563ec02-f12d-4453-a8f8-5b632518ff65.

[17] See: http://bibliotecasescolares.educarex.es/principal-leer-en-familia/.

[18] See: https://www.edu.xunta.es/biblioteca/blog/?q=node/302.

[19] See: http://cilij.fundaciongsr.com/uploads/contenidos/doc/242-1-lectura%20y%20familia.pdf.

[20] See: http://ediciones-sm.com.mx/lectura-familia.

[21] See: https://www.ceapa.es/sites/default/files/Documentos/Guia%20animacion%20a%20la%20lectura%20CEAPA.pdf.

[22] See: http://www.escribircomolectores.org/.

Programmes for introducing parents and children to libraries and bookshops

The main roles of libraries in Spain are to inform, educate and entertain. The vast majority of them offer the users a space to read, borrow, gain quick access to information, access effective advice, obtain assistance for self-education. Libraries offer a friendly atmosphere, a place for socialisation and meeting people, an open space for everyone's collaboration and a platform which enhances the cultural life of the neighborhood.

More and more, public libraries consider themselves as spaces dedicated to democracy and firmly believe that informed citizens create successful communities and individuals. They ensure access to material in printed and digital form and aim to be centres of communication in the community, connecting people, places and ideas. They also support the discovery of information and ideas that lead to learning, innovation and growth within the community, and are places that help the community to become content creators.

Therefore, in their effort to get closer to the community they serve, they organise activities aimed at different audiences: children, youth, adults... In their annual plans of activities, they schedule storytelling, book clubs, writing workshops, training for users etc.

In some communities, libraries work with social workers to help the homeless. Others focus on helping the educational community to build successful literacy programmes. Many of them are associated with local government programmes to help people start their first business. Libraries also offer job seekers the resources and programmes to build skills they need to find employment.

On the other hand, public libraries offer programmes and services that meet local needs of families. Parents and caregivers can bring their children to storytelling programmes to help them build up early literacy and school readiness. There are also materials and support groups available for caregivers of older people in the family. Libraries are spaces for families to read, learn and grow together.

Apart from just loan collections of books, music and movies, they often lend resources that the community members would like to share with others. This type of loan can be quite varied: construction tools, kitchen utensils, experts in a particular subject, etc.

Public libraries also support lifelong learning. They offer classes and personal assistance around literacy of life, including technology, finance and health. People can use computers for online courses, projects and class work. Those who need help with homework can get online access with tutors.

Public libraries are adapting to the changing needs of the community, which includes increased use of mobile devices. These needs include access to digital collections of electronic books, music, historical documents, letters, photos and more. Libraries continue to create more and build these collections to ensure that users have access in any format that suits their needs.

As regards bookshops, more and more small and big ones offer presentations of books and/or cultural activities. Roundtables, lectures, talks, storytelling, conferences, signatures or meetings with authors, bookcrossing, poetry reading, literary competitions, theatre for children or initiatives like asking visitors to be booksellers for a day often transform these stores into cultural entertainment spaces that are much appreciated by readers. Every year, bookshops organise special activities for November 29th, the day of bookshops in Spain.

Initiatives to foster reading engagement among children and adolescents

In the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport there is a Sub-directorate General for the Promotion of Books, Reading and Spanish Literature (under the Directorate General for Books, Archives and Libraries).

The Observatory of Reading and Books (Observatorio de la Lectura y el Libro) is a national committee under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport through the Directorate General of Cultural and Book Policy and Industries. It conducts various activities to promote reading, through grants aimed at public libraries, organisation of meetings with authors, research, analysis and awareness campaigns. Its main lines of action, carried out over several years, are the following:

A) *Campaña María Moliner* (María Moliner Campaign)
    This campaign to encourage reading in municipalities of less than 50,000 inhabitants is, since 1998, a competition to reward the best projects or activities carried out by public libraries, which aim to promote the reading among different social groups, especially among children and youth. The award-winning libraries receive a bibliographic batch of 180 books, and since 2002, the three best projects also receive cash prizes. This programme has a great strategic importance, since about half of the Spanish population lives in municipalities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants; this is why this initiative has a major impact.

B) Over the recent years, other projects have been developed with the support of the SG Book through **grants**. Grants (on a competitive basis) are offered to promote reading and Spanish literature; they are aimed at supporting projects submitted by non-profit entities. In 2015, this line of support has had a budget of 840,000 EUR.
    Through these grants, projects aimed at groups with specific needs, festivals, book fairs, research projects or analysis, dissemination projects of reading through digital media, etc. are supported.
    Some of the organisations or projects which have traditionally participated are: Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez (Channel Reader), Association of Friends of the Residencia de Estudiantes, CEGAL activities, OEPLI (International Book Day, Lazarillo Prize, etc.), Hay Festival, Eñe Madrid, Getafe Black, Literary Association La Risa de Bilbao booksellers Association Viejo, AFAMMER, Romani Union, Integral Action with Migrants Foundation, Federation of Romanians in Spain, CNSE Foundation; Anade Foundation; ADEPS, Spanish Reading and Writing Association (AELE), etc.

C) **Schools literary activities** (programmes in secondary education schools with the aim of publicising our authors and promoting the habit of reading, with the participation of Spanish writers of all genres and in the various official languages):

    - Literary Meetings. An author chosen by the high school gives a lecture about his/her work, followed by a dialogue with students about their own creation and other aspects of reading poetry and fiction.
    - *Why should we read the classics?* The school requests the presence of a Spanish writer who chooses a classic author or a literary classic work that is one of his/her favourite works as a reader, to present it to the students and discuss it. This programme has a second phase consisting of a creative writing contest for reprocessing work by the students who took part in those sessions. Finally, prizes are awarded to the winners of the literary contest in the form of a bibliographic batch and also lots of books are donated to reviewer's schools.

D) Reports and other resources to meet and promote the reading habit offered by the **Observatory of Reading and Books**:

- Social-Networks: twitter from various "campañas observalibro", especially coinciding with the Day of Libraries, the Book Day, etc.
- "Survey of cultural habits and practices", General survey on cultural habits with a specific section dedicated to reading.
- "Reading habits and buying books in Spain 2012" survey conducted by the Federation of Publishers' Association of Spain, traditionally collaborating with the Ministry.
- Virtual Centre Leer.es, website dependent on the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports with abundant resources and information about reading and literacies.
- In the 'Studies and Reports' section of its website, the Observatory of Books and Reading includes several reports on reading by national or international institutions.
- Other activities of interest: "Course on Multiple Literacies", organised by MECD and UIMP, held in La Coruna, (aimed at training advisers and teachers, and a project on reading and libraries); "Latin American Meeting of Managers' Reading Plans" held in Medellin, (reflection on policies promoting reading and comparison of national reading plans in Latin America under the CERLALC).

Some Autonomous Communities also have their own Reading Engagement Programmes.

Offering attractive reading material for children and adolescents in print and non-print

Regarding schools, the situation is heterogeneous, depending on the Autonomous Community and on the different schools in the same region.

Public libraries normally offer very attractive reading material for children and adolescents in print and gradually also in non-print.

Fostering digital literacy in and outside schools

As explained in section 5.1.3 (providing a digital environment), the country note for Spain of OECD study "Students, Computers and Learning" (OECD, 2015) shows relevant information regarding ICT usage habits among Spanish students. In general, inside schools, students regularly use ICT; however, the number of computers per student seems to be insufficient in many cases, despite the fact that digital literacy is fostered by Act LOMCE 8/2013 as a part of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools, in which ICT is a transversal topic that must be present throughout the education system and in every subject.

Digital literacy is also promoted outside schools. Apart from numerous private initiatives, different administrations at different levels of responsibility provide numerous resources and training opportunities for people of all ages to reach competences related to digital literacy.

A good practice of outside digital literacy training is the digital platform provided by INTEF (Teachers Training and Education Technologies National Institute[23]) of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, where teachers may train in several ICT tools used to create pedagogical materials and resources.

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[23] See: http://educalab.es/intef/formacion/formacion-en-red/materiales-cursos-autoformacion.

The website leer.es[24], an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, offers pedagogical and reading resources to teachers, students and families. Since 2009, its purpose has been to offer new materials to foster all kinds of literacies, including digital ones. In fact, there are awards named 'Sellos de buenas prácticas iberoamericanas', whose winners offer reading-fostering projects by means of ICT such as blogs, social networks or other type of digital media in different contexts (primary schools, secondary schools, school libraries, collaborative projects and other areas).[25]

Challenges/Need for Action: More effort is needed to ensure that digital resources such as computers and internet connections are sufficient, so ICT can become a teaching and learning tool that is regularly used by all teachers and students. Further improvement of ICT infrastructure as well as enhanced training for teachers and increased levels of self-confidence among teachers and students is required to improve students' use of digital literacy skills.

5.2 Improving the quality of teaching

To improve the quality of teaching, important aspects need to be considered:

- The quality of preschool,
- coherent literacy curricula,
- high-quality reading instruction,
- early identification of and support for struggling literacy learners; and
- highly qualified teachers (cf. Frame of Reference for ELINET Country Reports).

Especially crucial is the quality of teaching and of teachers, as the McKinsey report "How the world best performing school systems come out on top" (McKinsey et al. 2007) states: "The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers." (McKinsey et al. 2007)

5.2.1 Quality of preschool

While early childhood education has long been neglected as a public issue, nowadays early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been recognized as important for "better child well-being and learning outcomes as a foundation for lifelong learning; more equitable child outcomes and reduction of poverty; increased intergenerational social mobility; more female labour market participation; increased fertility rates; and better social and economic development for the society at large" (OECD 2012 *Starting Strong III,* p. 9). In all European countries pre-primary education is an important part of political reflection and action.

The EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy stated:

> Increasing investment in high-quality ECEC is one of the best investments Member States can make in Europe's future human capital. 'High quality' means highly-qualified staff and a curriculum focused on language development through play with an emphasis on language, psychomotor and social development, and emerging literacy skills, building on children's natural developmental stages (High Level Group Report, 2012a, p. 59).

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[24] See: http://leer.es/.
[25] The different initiatives awarded can be seen by following the link: http://leer.es/buenas-practicas.

While there is no international or Europe-wide agreed concept of ECEC quality, there is agreement that quality is a complex concept and has different dimensions which are interrelated. In this report we focus on *structural quality*, which refers to characteristics of the whole system, e.g. the financing of pre-primary education, the relation of staff to children, regulations for the qualifications and training of the staff, and the design of the curriculum. There are some data concerning structural quality, but there is a lack of research and data about process quality, practices in ECEC institutions, the relation between children and teachers, and what children actually experience in their institutions and programmes.

Annual expenditure on pre-primary education

According to Eurostat (2014, Figure D3), the total public expenditure per child in pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP in Spain is 0.7%. The range is from 0.04% in Turkey and 0.1% in Ireland to 1.01% in Denmark (for an overview of European countries see table D1 in Appendix B).

Pre-primary education is not compulsory and is organized in two cycles: 0-3 and 3-6 years. The second cycle is free in all publicly-funded schools and participation rate virtually reaches 100% from the age of 3.

Ratio of children to teachers in pre-primary school

According to Education at a Glance 2014 (OECD 2014, p. 451) the student/teacher ratio in pre-primary schools for children at the age of four in Spain is 12.8. For the other European countries, the OECD (2014 p. 324) provides information about the student/teacher ratio in pre-primary schools (see table D2 in Appendix B).

Percentage of males among preschool teachers

According to Pordata (2014), 4.8% of the pre-primary teachers in Spain are males. The range is from 0.2% in Bulgaria and Hungary to 17.7% in France (for an overview of European countries see table D3 in Appendix B).

Preschool teachers' qualifications

The minimum required level to become a qualified teacher (Educational staff) in Spain is Bachelor´s level (ISCED 5). Length of training is 4 years (European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat 2014, p. 100). For education and care staff working with younger children in Spain, it is necessary to have completed upper-Secondary level (2 years).

For educational and care staff working in settings for older children, Continuing Professional Development is considered both a professional duty and a prerequisite for promotion for educational and care staff working with children of all ages (Eurostat 2014, pp. 104–105).

Preschool language and literacy curriculum

The design of the kindergarten curriculum is an important aspect of quality. Therefore it is included in this section and not in the next section "Literacy curricula in schools". It also takes into consideration that young children have learning needs than are sometimes different to those of school children. Pre-school programs should focus on developing children's emergent literacy skills through playful experience rather than systematic training in phonics or teaching the alphabet. There is no evidence that systematic instruction of reading in preschool has any benefit for future learning (Suggate, 2012).

Fostering the development of emergent literacy skills through playful activities is an important function of pre-school institutions, providing a basis for formal literacy instruction in primary school. We consider the following to be key components: oral language development, including vocabulary learning and grammar, familiarisation with the language of books (e.g. through hearing stories read and told), being engaged and motivated in literacy-related activities, experiencing a literacy-rich environment, developing concepts of print, and language awareness (for more information see the frame text of country reports).

Pre-Primary Education is the earliest stage of the Spanish educational system and, therefore, it is imbued in more innovation. There is a strong presence of teachers who recognize levels of the conceptualization of the writing system in children. However, there is a tendency to teach from didactics plans which decontextualize language use and focus on the use of tightly-edited material. Moreover, the methodology for projects or tasks taking hold and it has advanced considerably in recent years. Finally, although the competence model is not mandatory, at this stage many teachers incorporate it in curriculum development (D´Angelo & Medina, 2011).

In Spain there are separate steering documents for younger and older children but it is important to note that these central steering documents contain general principles and objectives for Early Childhood Educational Care (ECEC) and these may serve as a basis for steering documents issued at Autonomous Communities. They are responsible for providing more detailed programmes containing objectives, content and assessment methods, etc. (European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice/ Eurostat, 2014. Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe. 2014 Edition). These documents highlight that the content must be taught through meaningful activities using experiences and play. Therefore, most kindergarten teachers try to provide a literacy environment where children learn and engage in the communicative functions of reading and writing with the aim of developing curiosity and motivation to learn to read and write in school. These include reading books aloud, telling stories, presenting picture books, using writing in communicative contexts, etc. In Spain, these are included in the intercultural skills and cultural diversity objectives of this educational period.

Improving early language and literacy screening and training

The evaluation at the pre-primary stage has a global, continuous and educational nature. Evaluation at this stage helps to identify and assess pupils' development processes and their learning, always according to their personal characteristics. To that end, the evaluation criteria for each curricular area of the second cycle, established at central level and completed by the Autonomous Communities for their respective regions, are used as reference points.

Similarly, the Education Authorities define pupils' evaluation processes for their respective regions, although some Autonomous Communities do it for the two cycles and some others only regulate evaluation in the second cycle. In any case, the Autonomous Communities consider the evaluation process as a means to assess, review and improve teaching processes, so that they are better adapted to pupils' needs.

The evaluation process has an initial individual evaluation, which starts during the adaptation period of each child to the school and is defined by each school in its school development plan. In addition, the continuous evaluation implies monitoring each child on a daily basis according to the objectives and evaluation criteria set. Lastly, the final evaluation specifies to what degree abilities and basic skills have been acquired by the end of the school year. In this evaluation, special attention is accorded to language skills and early literacy development.

The Education Authorities establish at least three formal evaluation sessions per school year. Results are expressed in qualitative terms, including the progress made by pupils and, where appropriate, the remedial and adaptation measures introduced. At the end of each evaluation session, families receive a written report. These reports, together with the different evaluation documents, help to improve coordination between the two cycles of the stage. Lastly, in order to ensure a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary education, schools providing pre-primary education also establish mechanisms to coordinate with the new schools[26].

5.2.2 Literacy curricula in schools

Curricula provide a normative framework for teachers and a guideline for their teaching aims, methods, materials and activities. However, one should keep in mind that there is a difference between the intended curriculum, as outlined in official documents, and the implemented curriculum – what actually happens in the schools.

Primary schools curricula

The main goal of instruction in the area of Castilian Language and Literature is for students to achieve competence in the linguistic skills of speaking, listening, interacting, reading, and writing. The language curriculum also introduces students to reading and understanding literary texts, as well as reflecting on the language itself. The starting point for linguistic education is the use of language that students have already acquired at the beginning of the primary level. Primary education aims to broaden this linguistic and communicative competence so that students are able to participate in the different social spheres in which they will become involved.

The core curriculum of Castilian Language and Literature focuses on the social use of language in different contexts—private, public, family, and school.

Around this common thread, the content is organised in sections that try to bring order to the complexity of language learning. These sections or blocks, developed throughout the three cycles of primary education, are as follows:

- Listening, speaking, and interacting;
- Reading and writing;
- Literary education (e.g. promoting reading for enjoyment, introducing students to acting and role playing, reading for personal and group experiences, and fostering positive reading habits); and
- Knowledge of language and linguistic features, including content related to reflection on language, which traditionally has had a strong presence in the language curriculum.

Once each autonomous community has defined the general curriculum, school teaching teams arrange the sequence of content throughout the cycles and select the instructional materials and activities. Teachers then receive manuals, instructional materials, and resources for illustrative purposes.

The Ministry of Education and the autonomous communities develop specific plans for the promotion of reading and the development of reading comprehension to support schools, especially schools with

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[26] more details in https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Spain:Assessment_in_Early_Child hood_Education_and_Care.

students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Domínguez, J; González, M. y Pérez Esteve, P. (2012). Spain. In I. V.S. Mullis, M. O. Martin, Ch. A. Minnich (Eds.), PIRLS 2011 Encyclopedia. *Education Policy and Curriculum in Reading*. Boston: TIMMS and PIRLS).

Reading for pleasure

According to PIRLS 2011 Encyclopaedia, four of the EU-24 countries in PIRLS 2011 reported that reading for pleasure was given a little or no emphasis and 11 countries that it had some emphasis (Mullis et al. 2012b, Vol.1, exhibit 9, p. 36). Spain belongs to the group of countries where reading for enjoyment has a major emphasis in the intended language or reading curriculum.

Contents of literacy curricula

The Eurydice report "Teaching Reading in Europe" offers a broad range of information about the content of reading literacy curricula and official guidelines (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice 2011). In order not to duplicate this work, only two aspects were addressed in the ELINET country reports whose importance might not yet be acknowledged and therefore might be missing in the literacy curricula and official guidelines: explicit instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (phonics), and reading strategies.

Explicit instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondences

The Eurydice (2011) report on reading literacy indicates that 7 different indicators for word identification, phonics and fluency skills out of a possible 15 are taught at preschool level in Spain. This increases to 9 at primary level, including:

- Linking sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet
- Using knowledge of letters, sounds and words when reading
- Understanding that the same sound can have different spellings and
- Using knowledge of letters, sounds and words when writing (p. 56).

Also included are all four skills related to fluency, including:

- Reading simple sentences or simple texts independently
- Repeated practice of reading aloud
- Gradual shift from reading aloud to reading silently
- Reading various kinds of texts fluently, without mistakes and with correct intonation (p. 56).

Along with France and Portugal, Spain is identified as a country in which phonics instruction is developed throughout primary schooling (p. 58). In a number of countries, including Finland and Italy, phonics instruction is discontinued after the first cycle of primary schooling.

Teaching of reading strategies in primary schools

While literacy instruction in the early years is more focused on code-based skills, in later stages it is important to develop and foster a wide range of comprehension strategies with all children. Explicit teaching of comprehension strategies is effective for improving reading comprehension among readers with different levels of ability. These strategies include:

- Drawing inferences or interpretations while reading text and graphic data
- Summarising text and focusing selectively on the most important information
- Making connections between different parts of a text

- Using background knowledge
- Checking/monitoring own comprehension
- Constructing visual representations
- Pupils reflecting on their own reading process (Eurydice 2011, p. 55).

According to the Eurydice (2011) report on reading, steering (curriculum) documents in Spain include attention to six comprehension strategies during primary schooling (and also at lower secondary level): summarising texts, making connections between parts of a text, using background knowledge, monitoring own comprehension, and constructing visual representations (p. 60). However, Spain is identified as a country in which official curricula in reading do not include a focus on students reflecting on their own reading processes at primary and post-primary levels.

Literacy curricula in secondary schools

The Education Act (LOMCE) sets out seven key competences that students must acquire and develop throughout their academic life. Competence in linguistic communication is one of them. It is defined as the result of the communicative action within certain social practices, in which the individual acts with other partners and through texts in multiple modalities, formats and media (BOE- RD 1105/2014-art. 1.2.a et alia). It requires the interaction of different skills, as it occurs in multiple communication modes and in different media. From oral communication and literacy to more sophisticated forms of audio-visual communication, the individual participates in a complex net of communication possibilities and through it expands their competence and ability to interact with others. It is essential for socialisation and use of the educational experience, as a privileged path to knowledge within and outside school.

In addition, it is recommended that the school is the unit of action for the development of the linguistic communication competence. In this respect, actions such as the design of a Language Project that is part of the Educational Project itself, a Reading Plan or strategies for the use of the school library as a place of learning and pleasure allow for a more comprehensive and effective treatment of the linguistic competence (Order ECD/65/2015, of January 21st, describing the relationship between competences, contents and evaluation criteria of primary education, lower secondary education and baccalaureate).

5.2.3 Reading Instruction

While most literacy researchers have clear concepts about effective literacy instruction, we do not know much about what is actually going on in classrooms in Spain or other European countries. In order to describe the practice of reading instruction we would need extensive observational studies. However, there are only rare observational studies (Philipp 2014). There is a noteworthy shortage of data on actual reading instruction in school. Only PIRLS offer some data for primary schools, albeit based on self-reports by teachers (PIRLS) which might not be valid and may be biased by social desirability.

In PIRLS 2006, fourth-grade reading teachers reported about instructional materials, strategies and activities. In a latent class analysis, Lankes and Carstensen (2007) identified 5 types of instruction:

Type 1: Teacher-directed instruction in the whole class without individual support
Type 2: Individualized child-centred instruction, seldom whole-class instruction
Type 3: Whole-class instruction with little cognitive stimulation and little variety in methods, without individual support

Type 4: Variety of methods with high individual support

Type 5: Highly stimulating whole-class instruction with didactic materials.

There were significant differences between countries concerning these types of instruction (Lankes and Carstensen 2007, Figure 2). Also, the analysis of PIRLS 2011, teacher self-reports revealed differences between the approaches to reading instruction in European countries (Mullis et al. 2012a, Tarelli et al. 2012). Unfortunately, Spain was not included in this analysis.

In PIRLS 2011 principals and teachers provided some information on language and reading instruction. Concerning the **instructional time spent on language and reading**, the following results are of interest. In 2011, students in Spain spent 884 instructional hours school, compared with students on average across EU-24 countries (850 hours). The time allocated to teaching the language of the PIRLS test in Spain - (197.5 hours) - is less than the average across EU countries (241 hours), and, at 22% of total instructional time, comes in below the recommended level in Spain of 25%. The average number of hours allocated to teaching reading in fourth grade each year in Spain as part of language instruction (59.9 hours) is below the EU-24 average (68), though the EU average is itself low relative to, for example, the United States and New Zealand (both 131 hours). Teachers in Spain report allocating about the same amount of time to teaching reading across the curriculum and in reading classes (150.1 hours) than on average across EU countries (147 hours) (Mullis et al. 2012a, Exhibit 8.4. p. 214. EU averages from PIRLS 2011 database, see ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table I3).

According to Domínguez, González and Perez Esteve (2012), Article 19 of the Organic Law of Education mandates that time be devoted each day to reading instruction to enforce positive reading habits. They note that, while the recommended proportion of instructional time for language is 25%, this increases to 36% in Autonomous Communities that have their own language. The same law requires that 30 minutes per day be allocated to reading across the curriculum.

Activities of teachers to develop student's comprehension skills and to engage them

PIRLS 2011 provides information on the frequency with which teachers in Spain engage students in specific reading comprehension activities. The following are the percentages of students in Grade 4 in Spain and on average across the EU-24 who engage in specified comprehension activities 'every day or almost every day':

- Locate information within the text: 74.6% (EU-24 = 65.5%)
- Identify main ideas of what they have read: 37.0% (EU-24 = 55.5%)
- Explain or support their understanding of what they have read: 61.4% (EU-24 = 61.6%)
- Compare what they have read with experiences they have had: 39.3% (EU-24 = 34.7%)
- Compare what they have read with other things they have read: 19.7% (EU-24 = 22.4%)
- Make predictions about what will happen next in the text: 6.7% (EU-24 = 22.4%)
- Make generalisations and inferences: 25.1% (EU-24 = 36.5%)
- Describe the style or structure of the text: 5.4% (EU-24 = 22.7%)
- Determine the Author's Perspective or Intention: 4.2% (EU-24 = 21.0%)
  (Source: PIRLS 2011 database. See Mullis et al. 2012a, Exhibit 8.8, p. 226 for data for 'at least weekly', s. also Table I.1 in Appendix C).

Although the percentage of students in Spain whose teachers engage students in locating information within a text is above the EU-24 average, Spain is below the EU-24 average on the frequency with which students engage in activities such as identifying main ideas of what they have read, comparing

what they have read to other texts and making generalisations and inferences. Less than 10% of students in Spain engage in activities such as making predictions, describing the style or structure of the texts and determining the author's perspective.

In PIRLS 2011, teachers were asked a series of questions designed to ascertain the extent to which students are engaged in learning in their reading lessons (for an overview of responses in Spain and other European countries see Table I.2 in Appendix C). These included: "I summarise what students should have learned from the lesson"; "I relate the lesson to students' daily lives" and "I use questions to elicit reasons and explanations". Based on a scale summarising frequencies across all six items 66% of students in Spain were deemed to be taught by teachers who implemented instructional practices to engage learning in "most lessons". The corresponding EU-24 average was 70% (Appendix C, Table I2).

PIRLS also examined engagement in reading lessons from the perspective of students (for an overview of responses in Spain and other European countries see Table I.7 in Appendix C).

> 46% of students in Spain 'agree a lot' that they like what they read about in school. This is the same as the corresponding EU-24 average of 46%.

> 58% of students in Spain 'agree a lot' that their teacher gives them interesting things to read, compared with 48% on average across EU countries.

It is well documented in research studies that explicit teaching of comprehension strategies may improve reading comprehension among readers with different levels of ability. While there are no data available for secondary schools, data on students' awareness of reading strategies from PISA (see above) also suggest that there is a need for explicit instruction of reading strategies.

> **Challenges / Need for Action:** Although key reading comprehension strategies appear in curriculum documents, there is evidence from PIRLS and PISA that fewer student in Spain use many of these strategies with the same frequency as their counterparts on average across EU countries. There is a need to focus more strongly on the teaching and application of reading comprehension strategies, in the context of students' interactions with texts.

Digital literacy part of the curriculum for primary and secondary schools

In Spain digital literacy is part of the curriculum. There are national strategies covering training measures in ICT in schools. There are central steering documents for all ICT learning objectives and for developing programming skills at secondary education level. According to these official steering documents, students and teachers should use ICT in all subjects in class and for complementary activities. The societal impact of ICT is an additional ICT learning objective in their curricula. At secondary level, ICT is also taught as a separate subject and also included within technology as a selective subject.

According to the ESSIE Study (European Schoolnet & University of Liege, 2013), students at Grades 8, 11 (general) and 11 (vocational) in Spain engage in ICT activities in lessons (across all subjects) at levels that are slightly higher than corresponding EU country average frequencies (Figures 3.8a, 3.8b and 3.8c). In Spain, almost all schools have an ICT coordinator, which provides pedagogical as well as ICT support (p. 19).

According to the Royal Decree 1105/2014, establishing the national core curriculum for Lower Secondary Education and Baccalaureate[27], students must acquire the digital competence as it is considered as one of the key competences. In Secondary Education, digital tools are used to enhance different skills such as native language skills or arts and graphic expression in each subject. The main objective is to improve the use of office automation tools, multimedia edition tools as well as research techniques, in order to consolidate critical thinking and communication skills. Furthermore, simple programming techniques are taught in subjects such as Technology and Information and Communication Technology, at different levels. Additionally, each Autonomous Community, based on the national core curriculum, is responsible for developing specific contents and assessment criteria for each subject, depending on their specific needs and priorities. As a result of this, Communities such as Madrid have included robotics and 3D printing in Technology subject syllabi.

5.2.4 Early identification of and support for struggling literacy learners

Effective assessment tools upon entry to primary school will help teachers identify literacy skills from the very beginning of formal education. Regular formative assessment throughout primary school will ensure that literacy problems do not continue to go unrecognised, and that students receive the support they need through education that matches their learning needs. This should prevent children leaving school with unrecognised literacy problems (EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy 2012a, p. 67).

Standards as basis of assessment of reading difficulties

Standards of reading achievement allowing teachers, parents and school leaders to understand the rate of progress of learners and to identify individual strengths and needs should be integrated in the curriculum and should be the basis of assessments. The High Level Group pointed out that there is a need to establish minimal standards of literacy achievement (benchmarks) for each grade, and to administer regular tests based on these standards, to allow for identification of struggling readers/writers (EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy 2012a, p. 43).

All EU countries have defined learning objectives in reading to be reached at the end of primary and secondary education cycles. However, only a few Member States have detailed standards (benchmarks) at each grade (school year) which form the basis of assessments allowing for early identification of reading difficulties and subsequent allocation of attention and resources. These standard-based assessments allow teachers and school leaders to judge children's progress and to target additional reading support.

Screenings for reading competence to identify struggling readers

Assessment standards and methods are prescribed by the language/reading curriculum (Mullis, Martin, Minnich et al., 2012, Vol. 1, p. 99, Exhibit 7) in half of the European countries that participated in PIRLS 2011. Spain is identified as a country in which goals and objectives of the curriculum and assessment standards and methods are specified.

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[27] See: https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2015/01/03/pdfs/BOE-A-2015-37.pdf.

This is confirmed by two of the general principles of the Act on Education which must guide the teaching practice in Compulsory Secondary Education:

- Measures regarding attention to diversity seek to meet the specific educational needs of students and ensure that all of them achieve the basic skills and objectives of compulsory secondary education. In no case whatsoever should discrimination prevent them from achieving those objectives and the relevant qualification.
- Work on reading comprehension, oral and written expression, audio-visual communication, information and communication technologies (ICT) and values education is included in all the subjects since they are considered cross-curricular. These aspects may be treated more specifically in some of the subjects.

According to this, at the beginning of school year, students take an initial test which provides information to teachers about possible difficulties in reading and writing. Based on the results of these tests, regular support measures are taken. Moreover, all schools must carry out the relevant procedures when necessary to make significant adjustments to the elements of the curriculum to cater for pupils with special educational needs, pursuing the maximum development of key skills. Ongoing evaluation and promotion take as reference the elements fixed in such adaptations.

Apart from the adaptation of the curriculum, struggling readers receive support (inside and/or outside the regular class) in reading and writing from specialised teachers.

According to Domínguez, González and Perez Esteve (2012), classroom teachers in Spain handle assessment and make initial diagnoses of reading difficulties, based on observations and specific tests. Moreover, an educational psychologist intervenes when a reading difficulty (or disability) is considered serious. They also note that the evaluation of student achievement in reading is ongoing and global and takes into account student progress in elements of reading and writing. Teachers draw on criteria specified in curriculum documents as a basis for determining levels of competence. Primary teachers use qualitative grades and report to parents on a termly basis. Moreover, when a student's progress is inadequate, schools must adopt remedial measures as soon as the difficulties are detected. According to Domínguez et al., "Schools use assessment results to plan interventions to guarantee student achievement in key competencies. . ." (p. 632). Domínguez et al. also note that a General Diagnostic test, based on acquisition of key competencies, is administered by some autonomous communities to a census of students at Grade 4 (and 8), and sometimes at other grade levels. The outcomes of this test can be used to interpret individual student performance. They are also used to evaluate instruction and teacher performance.

Challenges: More efforts are needed for the early and quick identification of **all** children and adolescents with literacy/reading difficulties. This needs to be done in conjunction with developments that are being planned to guarantee the provision of specialised support adequate to the specific difficulties of each student.

Supporting struggling literacy learners

According to the 2006 Education Act, modified by the 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, students with the specific need of educational support are those who show:

- Special education needs related to physical, psychic or sensory disability, or serious conduct disorder.
- Specific learning difficulties.

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- High intellectual capacities.
- Needs resulting from a late entry into the education system.

In line with the guidelines established by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, the Autonomous Education Authorities prepare Plans on Attention to Diversity. Their purpose is to implement education measures and actions allowing the maximum adaptation of the teaching-learning processes to the whole students' characteristics. These plans include both ordinary and extraordinary measures.

There are ordinary measures that include the prevention and detection of learning difficulties, among which the following stand out:

- The implementation of reinforcement and support mechanisms.
- The individualised attention.
- The adaptation to the different learning rhythms.
- The support in the classroom, groups splitting and flexible grouping.
- The selection and implementation of different resources and methodological strategies.
- Non meaningful curricular adaptations.
- Curricular material adaptation.

Depending on their autonomy for establishing their own organisation and running, schools adapt these guidelines to students' needs and to the characteristics of their environment, preparing their own Plans on Attention to Diversity.

Number of struggling readers receiving remedial instruction

PIRLS offers some data concerning issues of remedial instruction in primary schools. One question was whether all pupils receive remedial instruction when needed. Based on a question that class teachers answered in PIRLS 2011, it is estimated that 18.4% of students in fourth grade in Spain are considered to be in need of remedial reading instruction. It is also estimated by teachers that 14.5% are in receipt of remedial reading instruction (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table K1). Hence, there is a shortfall of 3.9% between those in need and those in receipt. On average across EU-24 countries, 18.1% of students in grade 4 are identified by their teachers as being in need of remedial teaching, while 13.3% are identified as being in receipt of such teaching.

In Spain, 27.6% of students in Fourth grade performed at or below the PIRLS low benchmark on overall reading. This is one of the highest proportions of students performing at or below the PIRLS low benchmark among the EU-24 (Appendix C, Table A.6.). Hence, the percentages of students in Spain in receipt of remedial reading instruction (14.5%) is also below the percentage who performed poorly on PIRLS.

Kinds of support offered

It is crucial that teachers provide support measures to help struggling readers. European Countries differ widely in their approaches, from in-class support with additional support staff (reading specialists, teaching assistants or other adults) working in the classroom together with a teacher, to out-of-class support where speech therapists or (educational) psychologists offer guidance and support for students with reading difficulties.

Primary education

Based on teacher responses to a series of questions in PIRLS 2011, it is estimated that 28% of students in Spain were in classes where there was always access to specialised professionals to work with students who were having reading difficulties, compared with an EU-24 average of 25% (Table 26). Thirteen percent of students in Spain were in classes where there was always access to teacher aides to work with children with reading difficulties, while a further 55% were in classes where there was access sometimes. Corresponding EU averages were 13% and 34%, indicating relatively greater use of teacher aides in Spain. Less than 10% of students in Spain (9.4%) always or sometimes had access to volunteers to work with children with reading difficulties, less than the corresponding EU-24 average (20.3%).

Table 26: Percentages of Students in Classrooms with Access to Additional Personnel to Work with Children with Reading Difficulties, Spain and EU Average

Access to...	Spain			EU-24 Average		
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Always	Some-times	Never
Specialised professional	28.4	46.0	25.6	24.9	41.8	33.3
Teacher aide	12.8	55.2	31.9	13.2	33.6	53.2
Adult/parent volunteer	0.7	8.7	90.6	2.8	17.5	79.7

Source: ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Tables K2-K4

According to responses provided by teachers in PIRLS 2011, 49% of students in Spain are in classes where the teacher arranges for students falling behind in reading to work with a specialised professional such as a reading professional (Table 27). The corresponding EU average is higher at 55%. A larger proportion of students in Spain (59%) than on average across the EU-24 (37%) are taught by teachers who wait to see if performance improves with maturation. Four in five students in Spain (78%) are taught by teachers who spend more time working on reading individually with a student who falls behind – below the EU-24 average (90%). Finally, almost all students in Spain (100%) and on average across the EU-24 are taught by teachers who ask parents to provide additional support to a student who falls behind in reading.

Table 27: Percentages of Students in Classrooms Where Teachers Engage in Specified Activities to Support Students Who Begin to Fall Behind in Reading, Spain and EU Average

	Spain (Yes)	EU-24 Average (Yes)
I have students work with a specialised professional	48.7	55.2
I wait to see if performance improves with maturation	58.8	36.6
I spend more time working on reading individually with the student	78.0	90.1
I ask the parents to help the students with reading	99.6	96.9

Source: ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Tables K5-K8.

Secondary education

Article 19 of the Royal Decree 1105/2014, establishing the national core curriculum for lower secondary education, states that programmes to improve learning and performance will be implemented from the 2nd year of compulsory secondary education.

These programmes use a specific methodology through the organisation of content, practical activities and, where appropriate, different subjects from the ordinary ones, in order that the students can attend the 4th year in mainstream secondary education and obtain the Certificate in Secondary Education (School Leaving Certificate).

These programmes are mainly aimed at those students who present no significant learning difficulties that do not come from lack of study or effort. These programmes are implemented during the regular school time, so no additional time is provided.

The teaching team may propose to the parents that students will join a programme to improve the learning and performance of those students who have repeated at least one year at any stage, and once they have completed the 1st year of Lower Secondary Education, are unable to move to the 2nd year, or, once completed the second year, are unable to move on the 3rd year. The programme will be developed along the 2nd and 3rd years in the first case, or only in the 3rd year in the second case.

Those students who, having completed the 3rd year of secondary school, are not able to move on to the 4th year, may, in exceptional circumstances, be included in a programme to improve learning and performance that involves repeating the 3rd year.

Admission to these programmes requires a pedagogical and psychological evaluation and the intervention of the educational administration, and the students, their parents and the head teacher, before taking a decision.

The education authorities may choose to organise these programmes in an integrated manner, or in subjects other than those established in general.

Each programme should specify the methodology, the organisation of content and the subjects and practical activities to ensure the achievement of the objectives of this educational stage and the acquisition of competences that allow the students promote to the 4th year grade at the end of the programme and get the Certificate in Secondary Education.

Support for struggling readers – a legal right?

As indicated in the paragraphs above, the support for struggling readers is a legal right in Spain as stated in the different acts and regulations in force both at national and regional level.

Challenges / Need for Action: Although a guaranteed legal right, there is still room for strengthening the remedial support received by students who struggle in reading, and for adapting this support to the specific and changing needs of each one.

5.2.5 Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Teachers

Entry requirements for Initial Teacher Education

Spain belongs to the majority of European countries which do not use specific selection methods. Only a third of all European countries have specific selection methods for admission to initial teacher education in place, such as satisfactory performance on a specific aptitude test or interviews in which candidates are asked about their motivations to become teachers (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2013, Fig. A5, p. 32).

In fact, the requirement for accessing Bachelor studies for teaching in primary education is similar to the rest of university studies: having obtained a final mark in the university entrance examination equal to or greater than the minimum average mark needed for the relevant degree.

As for the admission in the university Master of Teacher Education of Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, Vocational Training and Language Education, some specific requirements are established:

- Accreditation of mastering the competences concerning the targeted specialisation by taking a test designed by universities for this purpose, being exempted are those holding some university degrees corresponding the chosen specialisation. Universities can establish a maximum number of accepted students to the different specialities of the Masters.
- Accreditation of mastering a foreign language equivalent to the level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
- In those Autonomous Communities with a co-official language, the accreditation of mastering the co-official language and Castilian language is required as a general rule.

Finally, in the admission to pedagogic and didactic education equivalent to the mentioned university Master, the following access requirements are set:

- To hold a degree of Professional training or Sports Education equivalent with teaching purposes and not to be able to access to the studies of the university Master on Teachers Education of Lower Compulsory Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, Vocational Training and Language Education.
- From September 1st 2015, the accreditation of mastering a foreign language equivalent to the level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

> **Challenges:** The aim of having high quality teachers requires selective teacher recruitment policies (cf. OECD recommendations, 2005). These do not exist in Spain at present, although this is a mid-term objective of the education authorities and some initiatives have already been put in place, such as reforms in the initial training of teachers (specially for secondary education) and in the recruitment procedures for the teaching civil service.

Level of qualification and length of the required training for primary teachers

Spain requires primary teachers to have a bachelor's degree which takes four years' study. Typically, primary teachers' education routes are through a four-year university bachelor's degree programme in primary education. In ten European countries – Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, France, Iceland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia – initial education for primary teachers is at master's level and usually takes five years. In recent years an increase in the minimum length of initial teacher education can be noted for many countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2012, Fig. E2, p. 112).

More information about reading teachers' formal education is offered by PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2011, exh. 7.1, p. 188). Two percent of fourth grade students in Spain were taught by teachers who had completed a Postgraduate University Degree, while 98% had teachers who completed a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent but not a Postgraduate Degree.

Length of required training of secondary teachers

To become a Secondary Education teacher, apart from holding a Bachelor degree, it is necessary to obtain the degree of university Master on Teachers Education of Lower Compulsory Secondary Education and Bachillerato, Vocational Training and Language Education, or other equivalent degrees.

The role of literacy expertise in Initial Teacher Training

Important teacher competences are a) the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student they teach, b) selection of appropriate instructional methods and c) instruction in an effective and efficient manner. These topics should therefore be addressed in teacher training.

Primary education

In PIRLS 2011, primary teachers were asked to indicate the level of emphasis given to a number of topics deemed relevant to teaching literacy in their pre-service teacher education (Table 29). In Spain, 88% of the fourth grade students were taught by teachers who reported that the test language was an area of emphasis during their initial teacher training, compared with the average across the participating EU countries (74%). A similar proportion of students in Spain (53%) and on average across the EU-24 (59%) had teachers who reported that Reading Pedagogy was an area of emphasis. According to an analysis of guidelines for Initial Teacher Education institutions, generic skills or methodology for teaching reading is a topic in ITE in Spain (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, Fig. 2.5, p. 99). Slightly fewer students in Spain (21%), than the EU-24 average (30%), were taught by teachers whose initial teacher training placed an emphasis on Reading Theory.

According to an analysis of guidelines for ITE institutions, tackling reading difficulties is a topic in Initial Teacher Training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, Fig. 2.5, p. 99). In Spain, Belgium (German-speaking Community), and Cyprus, courses for prospective primary teachers cover the methodology for teaching the language of instruction (or teaching reading) and this includes how to address reading difficulties. In Spain (some universities), Malta and Lithuania, the ITE of prospective primary teachers includes courses specifically dedicated to tackling reading difficulties. Some Spanish universities offer optional subjects specifically related to learning difficulties in reading instruction (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, p. 100). However, according to PIRLS 2011, only 30% of students in Spain are taught by teachers who report that remedial reading was an area of emphasis in their initial teacher education. The corresponding EU-24 average is 22%.

The data also suggest that initial teacher education in Spain places marginally less emphasis on the assessment of reading (25% of students in Spain are taught by teachers who identify it as an area of emphasis), than the EU-24 average (27%). According to an analysis of guidelines for ITE institutions, assessing pupils' reading skills is a topic in Initial Teacher Training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, Fig. 2.5, p. 99). In Spain, Romania and Slovenia, prospective teachers of reading are trained in assessment methods specific to the subject(s) they intend to teach (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, p. 100). Despite the guidelines for ITE institutions in relation to Remedial Reading and Assessment Methods in Reading as topics in initial teacher training, data from PIRLS 2011 suggest that less than one-third of students in Spain are taught by teachers who reported that they were areas of emphasis.

Table 28: Percentages of students taught by teachers who reported each of several topics to be areas of emphasis during Initial Teacher Education

Topic	Test Language	Reading Pedagogy	Reading Theory	Remedial Reading	Assessment Methods in Reading
Spain	88	53	21	30	25
EU-24	74	59	30	22	27

Source: PIRLS 2011 Database (see Mullis et al., 2011, Exhibit 7.2, p. 190 and Appendix C, Table J2 – J3).

Secondary education

The initial teacher training of secondary teachers (Master's degree) must include, as a minimum, modules and content that are established for all of Spain, while respecting the autonomy of universities. Among these minimum requirements there is no 'content area literacy' as such as a compulsory constituent, but among the skills that students should acquire by the end of Master's degree studies in every specialisation area is:

> *"Search for, obtain, process and communicate information (oral, printed, audiovisual, digital or multimedia), transform it into knowledge and apply it in the teaching and learning processes, in the specific skills of their specialization area"* (España: Formación inicial del profesorado de Educación Infantil, Primaria y Secundaria - Eurydice)

Challenges / Need for Action: Initial teacher education needs to strengthen its focus on developing literacy expertise among future primary and secondary teachers as well as increasing the emphasis on early identification of difficulties, remedial teaching, helping struggling readers and assessment.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Lifelong training constitutes a right and a duty for teachers of non-university education, yet attendance at a specific CDP activity is voluntary. Teachers might perceive CPD as mandatory since it is linked to a pay bonus called the 'continuing teacher training complement'

The Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD), through the National Institute for Education Technologies and Teachers Training (INTEF), establishes every year the priority lines to which teachers' Continuing Professional Development plans must adapt. It also offers State Continuing Professional Development programs and it establishes the appropriate agreements with other institutions to this end.

In addition, the Education Act (LOE) and the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE) set a series of guidelines that must be respected by the Continuing Professional Development programs offered by the Education Authorities responsible of planning and organizing them in their jurisdiction. They must provide teachers with a diversified offering of activities and attend to their training needs, while also addressing other training priority guidelines.

In Spain, the development of CPD programmes on literacy-related topics is currently part of an overall national strategy on improving reading and literacy skills. Most Autonomous Communities have their own Reading Engagement Programme, including CPD activities. At a national level, the Multiliteracy Programme (Proyecto de alfabetizaciones múltiples – CNIIE) organises CPD activities related to this topic yearly.

The training offered by public institutions is free of charge. The teachers are rewarded for taking part in CPD with merits in public competitive examinations or additional rewards. Participation in CPD is, moreover, a prerequisite for career advancement and salary increases for teachers. The Education Authorities of some of the Autonomous Communities encourage the development of paid study leave.

Time frame and quality standards of CPD

Continuing professional development can be implemented through in-person or on-line courses, seminars and working groups or training projects in educational institutions. Teachers can take part in these activities out of their teaching hours, during the hours spent in the school or during working hours if they are carried out outside the educational institution. To take part in some of these activities, teachers may have to comply with several admission requirements usually related to their university qualifications or teaching experience in certain educational levels (Eurypedia Reports on CPD).

The quality of CPD is assured by the top-level education authority, an independent body working on behalf of the public authority, or another body (Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2013, Fig. C6, p. 64).

The Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD), through the Spanish Institute for Education Technologies and Teacher Training (INTEF), annually determines the priority guidelines of in-service teachers training programmes. It also offers in-service training programmes at State level and establishes the relevant agreements with other institutions to this end. In their turn, the Autonomous Communities are also free to establish their own priority guidelines, taking into account the training needs of the teaching staff within their jurisdiction. This implies that both the content of the training and the institutions in charge of its provision differ from one Autonomous Community to another.

There are there no national standards regarding CPD.

Time spent on professional development related to literacy

Concerning the participation rate of primary school teachers in literacy-related professional development, two sources are available: In PIRLS 2011 teachers were asked how much time they had spent on reading professional development in the past two years before the study. In Spain, 33% of the students have teachers who spent 16 hours or more (EU-24 average: 18%), 29% had teachers who spent some time but less than 16 hours (EU-24 average 53%), and 38% had teachers who spent no time (EU-24 average 29%) (Mullis et al. 2012a, exh. 7.4, p. 196; Appendix C, Table J4).

Furthermore, PIRLS 2011 asked teachers how often they Read Children's Books for Professional Development. In Spain, a slightly lower proportion of students (62%) were taught by teachers who read children's books at least once a month as part of their professional development, compared with the corresponding EU-24 average (68%) (see Table J4 in Appendix C).

Challenges:

Improving the quality and participation rates in continuing professional development targeted at building literacy expertise of teachers, especially of those who are not specialists in languages, remains a significant challenge.

The evaluation of the impact of CPD activities on the teaching practice should also be intensified.

The Teachers' Continuing Professional Development Plan of the Ministry is of high interest and quality; however, teachers are not always aware of it, so more effort needs to be made to publicise it in order to increase participation.

The Autonomous Communities also offer to teachers different online and classroom courses in their area of competence, focused on different topics, including use of ICT to create pedagogical materials. Often, however, the schedule for this training is not easily compatible with teachers' working time.

There have also been issues with limited numbers of places on online courses.

5.2.6 Digital literacy as part of initial teacher education

As noted in 'Key Data on Learning and Innovation through ICT at School in Europe, 2011'[28] (European Commission, 2011), in the Spanish Education System, there are not clear recommendations, suggestions or support for the use of ICT for teachers in official documents. There is also a lack of support for teachers regarding methodology in the use of ICT as a pedagogical tool.

In Spain, candidates who wish to become teachers in Secondary schools must hold a Bachelor's degree and then follow Master's studies to acquire pedagogical skills. This Master's includes ICT as a transversal topic, although there are no specific subjects related to editing and creating new pedagogical materials or working with interactive digital whiteboards. In general, students learn how to create a blog for students and how to use office automation tools. Typically, they do not learn other more sophisticated digital tools which could be useful for teaching purposes.

Regarding Continuing Professional Development, there are two possibilities in Spain. On the one hand, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports offers a wide range of online courses focused on digital training through the National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teachers Training (INTEF) website[29], including network training courses as well as classroom training. The courses related to ICT are classified into two groups:

- Introductory courses: including courses focused on teachers who are getting started in ICT to become basic users of computers, as well as courses focused on teachers who are getting started in ICT as a pedagogical tool.
- Advanced courses: including courses for teachers who need to learn a specific tool to improve their digital pedagogical expertise, as well as courses for teachers who are trained in ICT as a pedagogical tool and need to learn about digital teaching methodology.

Autonomous Communities offer teachers different online and classroom courses in their area of competence focused on different topics, including ICT to create pedagogical materials. The main problem to participate in them is that they are usually held in the evening (e.g. between 17:00 and 20:00).

Challenges: In the initial education of teachers, more emphasis should be placed on training them in the use of ICT as a pedagogical tool; such training should not involve the use of sophisticated digital tools which cannot easily be used for teaching purposes.

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[28] See: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/129en.pdf.
[29] See: http://educalab.es/intef/formacion/formacion-en-red/materiales-cursos-autoformacion.

5.2.7 Improving the quality of literacy teaching for children and adolescents: Programmes, initiatives and examples

The curriculum for early childhood education in Spain promotes the development of literacy from a communicative perspective. That is, the curriculum promotes contextualised use of language in teaching situations that allow children to develop their competence in linguistic communication. Therefore, although there are still traditional initiatives of language learning (based on emphasising prerequisites for language from a clinical perspective), more and more teachers recognise that the children have primitive knowledge about language. Teachers seek to organise learning on this basis.

Among Autonomous Communities, there are Early Intervention Teams (with different names in each region) who perform curricular intervention (non-therapeutic) in stage 0-6. This teams (comprising different specialists: psychologists, counsellors, specialist teachers, social workers, etc.) identify potential learning difficulties in all students (especially those that present risk situations).

Moreover, as noted earlier, at this stage of education, it is very important family work and there are many national, regional and local initiatives that develop family activities.

5.3 Increasing participation, inclusion and equity

The High Level Group of Experts on Literacy drew attention to persistent gaps in literacy, namely the gender gap, the socio-economic gap, and the migrant gap (HLG Final report 2012, pp. 46–50). These gaps derive from the reading literacy studies that repeatedly show unequal distribution of results among groups of children and adolescents (PIRLS, PISA).

The **socio-economic gap** in literacy refers to the fact that children and adolescents from disadvantaged families have lower mean performance in reading than students from more advantaged families. However, the degree to which family background relates to reading literacy performance varies from one country to another even in Europe. Family background measured as parents' educational level and/or occupation or measured as economic, social and cultural status is one of the most important predictors of reading literacy performance. Family background also explains some of the performance differences between schools.

The **migrant gap** refers to unequal distribution of learning outcomes between native students and immigrant students who, in most countries, have lower levels of performance in reading than native students. In many countries, the migrant gap is associated with the socio-economic gap but this explains only a part of it, because the migrant gap is also associated with home language differing from the language of instruction at school, which increases the risk of low performance in reading. It is noteworthy that even language minorities with high status in society (and above-average socioeconomic background) show below average performance if the language of school is not supported at home. This signals the importance of a good command of the language used at school.

Another alarming gap in reading literacy in many countries is the **gender difference,** which is greater for adolescents than for younger children. In all PISA studies, 15-year-old girls outperformed boys in reading in all the European countries, and boys are frequently overrepresented among the low performers. PISA 2009 results showed that these differences are associated with differences in student attitudes and behaviours that are related to gender, i.e. with reading engagement, and not gender as such. Therefore the gender gap is also related to growing up in a family or in a school environment that values reading and learning and considers reading as a meaningful activity.

To achieve fairer and more inclusive participation in literacy learning we need to close these gaps, which already start in early childhood, by supporting children, adolescents and adults "at risk". The groups of students "at risk" must have access to language screening and flexible language learning opportunities in school, tailored to individual needs. Furthermore early support for children and adolescents with special needs is necessary.

In the section below we address the following issues:

- Compensating socio-economic and cultural background factors
- Support for children with special needs
- Promoting preschool attendance, especially among disadvantaged children
- Provisions for preschool children with language difficulties
- Support for children and adolescents whose home language is not the language of school.
- Preventing early school leaving
- Addressing the gender gap among adolescents

This section refers to children and adolescents who, for different reasons, can be considered as a group "at risk" (from disadvantaged homes, those whose home language is not the language of school, or those with "special needs"). The focus is on preventing literacy difficulties among members of these groups. There is a certain overlap with the topic "Identification of and support for struggling literacy learners", dealt with in the section, "Improving the quality of teaching", which is concerned with those who have already developed literacy difficulties.

5.3.1 Compensating socio-economic and cultural background factors

The child's **socio-economic and cultural background** has a strong impact on literacy. Material poverty and educational level, particularly of the mother, are well-recognized main factors influencing literacy (World Bank 2005; Naudeau et al. 2011). Socio-economic background also influences biological risks to children, by determining early exposure to risk factors and increasing susceptibility (Jednoróg et al. 2012). The primary language spoken at home also influences literacy development (Sylva et al. 2004).

In order to describe the socioeconomic and cultural factors that influence emergent literacy, several indicators were used which stem from international surveys, thus providing comparability across Europe (for more information concerning the concepts and indicators s. Appendix A).

Gini index

The Gini index is the most commonly used measure of inequality, and represents the income distribution of a nation's residents with values between 0 (maximum equality) and 100 (maximum inequality). In the European countries participating in ELINET the range is from 22.6% in Norway to 35% in Spain (for an overview of European countries see table A1 in Appendix B). With 35.0 % Spain has the maximum level of inequality among ELINET countries.

Child poverty

An indicator of child poverty is the percentage of children living in a household in which disposable income, when adjusted for family size and composition, is less than 50% of the national median income (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 2012). With 17.1% Spain is at the lower end of distribution.

The range is from 4.7% in Iceland to 25.5% in Romania (for an overview of European countries see table A2 in Appendix B).

Mother's education level

The PIRLS 2011 database offers information about mother's level of education referring to ISCED levels. The figures for Spain are presented below: the proportion of mothers with no schooling (0.7%) is slightly below of the average of the European countries participating in PIRLS, while the proportion with primary education only (9.0%) is higher (shown in parentheses) (for an overview of European countries see table A3 in Appendix B).

No schooling: 0.7% (0.6%)
ISCED 1: primary education: 9.0% (5.3%)
ISCED 2: Lower secondary education: 26.1% (16.7 %)
ISCED 3: Upper secondary education: 34.6% (36.1%)
ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education: 6.5% (7.1 %)
ISCED 5B: Tertiary education (first stage) with occupation orientation: 3.7% (9.5%)
ISCED 5A: Tertiary education (first stage) with academic orientation 13.4% (13.9%)
BEYOND: 15.0% (10.1%)
Not applicable: 0.7% (0.9%).

Teenage mothers

According to UNICEF (2001) the percentage of teenage mothers is 7.9 for Spain. The range is from 5.5% in Switzerland to 30.8% in United Kingdom (for an overview of European countries see table A4 in Appendix B).

Single parent

According to Eurostat (2012, Figure A 7), in Spain the percentage of children living mainly with a single parent is 5.1%. The range for the European countries participating in ELINET is from 1.4% in Croatia to 30% in Denmark (for an overview of European countries see table A5 in Appendix B).

Migrant parents

According to PIRLS 2006 (Mullis et al. 2007, Exhibit 3.12 – Students' Parents Born in Country), in Spain the proportion of children with parents born outside the country (10%) or only one parent born outside the country (8%) is close to the average of the European countries participating in ELINET (for an overview about European countries see table A6 in Appendix B).

Primary language spoken at home different from language used at school

According to PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, exhibit 4.3, p. 118) in Spain, 69% of pupils reported that they always spoke the language of the PIRLS reading test at home – below the corresponding EU-24 Average (80%). Thirty-one percent reported that they sometimes/never speak the test language at home. The difference in achievement between pupils in Spain reporting that they always or sometimes/never spoke the language of the test was 23 score points – about the same as the corresponding EU-24 average difference (26). As noted earlier, the percentages for Spain may include students who speak a regional variation of Spanish, yet communicate in Spanish quite well.

5.3.2 Support for children with special needs

Not only are children from culturally disadvantaged families "at risk" in their literacy development, but also those with very low birth weight and severe prematurity, factors that are associated with developmental disabilities, including reading and writing disabilities. Cognitive and sensory disabilities must also be considered.

Very low birth weight and severe prematurity

According to PERISTAT (2010, Figure 7.11, p.149) the percentage of live births with a birth weight under 2500 grams in Spain was 7.7%. The range is from 3.0% in Iceland to 8.8% in Cyprus (for an overview of European countries see table E1 in Appendix B). Furthermore, according to the same report (PERISTAT 2010, Figure 7.14, p.155), the percentage of live births with a gestational age <32 weeks is 1.1% in Spain (with a range from 0.7% in Iceland to 1.4% in Hungary). The percentage of live births with a gestational age between 32 and 36 weeks was 6.9% (with a range from 4.5% in Lithuania to 7.5% in Hungary (for an overview of European countries see table E2 in Appendix B).

Cognitive or sensory disabilities

According to the "Encuesta de Discapacidad, Autonomía Personal y Situaciones de Dependencia (EDAD, 2008) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, in Spain there are 60,400 children with limitations in the age group between 0 and 5 years. 36,400 are boys and 24,000 girls; and 78,300 children with disabilities, between 6 and 15 years, of which 50,600 are boys and 27,000 girls.

This study shows that the 83% of children between 0 and 5 years received Early Attention (Figure 7, INE. EDAD 2008. Limitaciones de la población de 0 a 5 años).

Figure 7**:** Early attention: children between 0 and 5 years (by gender) (2008)
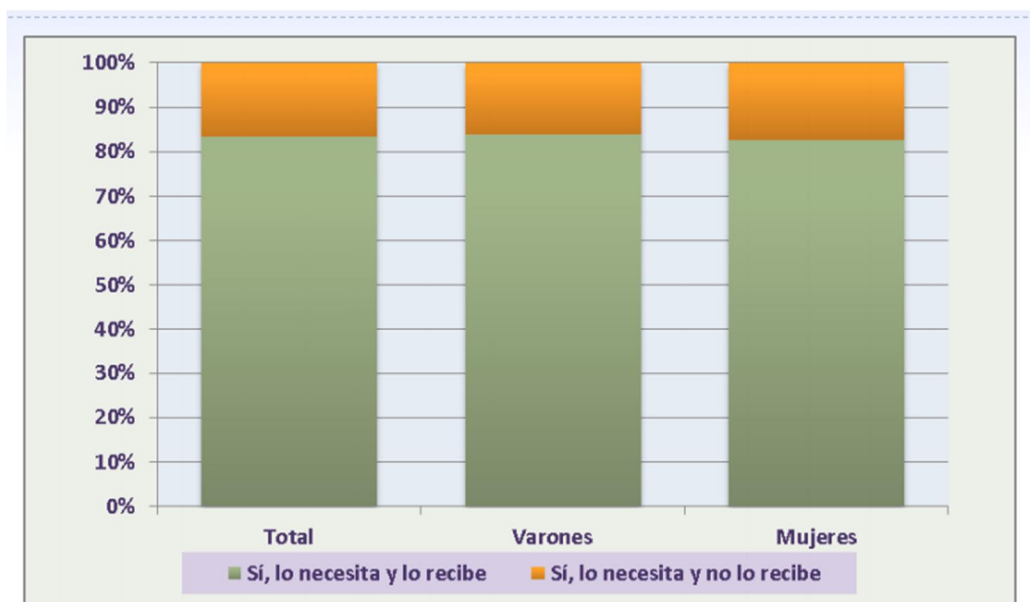
Fuente: INE. EDAD 2008. Limitaciones de la población de 0 a 5 años.

In Spain there are not enough data about cognitive and sensory disabilities. The council of Ministers Agreement (April 5, 2013) approved The II National Strategic Plan for Children and Adolescents 2013-2016 (PENIA). –with the following specific objectives:

- "Knowledge of the reality of the Child" (objective 1.1)
- "Promote and develop multilateral cooperation with all stakeholders (Autonomous Communities, local corporations, associations, experts) in sharing studies, awareness, disseminating information and good practice especially in groups with different needs such as minors with disabilities, training of professionals and promotion of specialized social services" (objective 2.2.1).

The assessment of students with special educational needs is based on the evaluation criteria established and the significant curricular adaptations designed for each individual. Tutors provide specific information that helps to provide guidelines to facilitate catch up and progress in learning when the situation requires, or when families demand it.

5.3.3 Promoting preschool attendance, especially among disadvantaged children

According to European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat (2014, Figure C1 p.62), the enrolment rate at age 4 is 100%. OECD Family Database (2014) offers more differentiated figures of participation rates at age 3, 4 and 5. According to 2010 statistical data, the participation rate is 100% for 5-year-olds, 99.4% for 4-year-olds, and 98.3% for 3-year-olds (OECD 2014) (for an overview of European countries see table C2 in Appendix B).

The benefits of attending preschool institutions have been proven in many studies. The duration of attendance is associated with greater academic improvement (Mullis et al. 2012b). PIRLS 2011 (Mullis et al. 2012a, Exhibit 4.7, p. 128) provides information about the relationship between the length of preschool education attendance and average reading score in grade 4. These are the figures:

- 3 years and more: 66.0% (average reading score 522)
- Between 1 and 3 years: 28% (average reading score 505)
- 1 year or less: 4% (average reading score 494)
- Did not attend: 3% (average reading score 493)
  (For an overview of European countries s. table C3 in Appendix B).

The benefit of preschool attendance in Spain is suggested by the fact that there is a significant difference in reading competence at grade 4 among children who have attended for differing amounts of time: the reading score of pupils who attended pre-primary education for 3 years and more was 29 points higher than that of pupils who did not attend at all.

No child should be excluded from preschool because parents cannot afford to send their children to preschool/kindergarten institutions if they have to pay. In Spain the second cycle of pre-primary education, which covers children from 3-6 years old, is free (EURYPEDIA[30]).

5.3.4 Provisions for preschool children with language problems

Literacy competence strongly builds on oral language proficiency, word knowledge, and syntactic knowledge. Measures must be taken by governments and institutions to ensure that children with poor language development (second-language speaking children and those from a low socio-cultural

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[30] See: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Spain:Overview.

background, as well as others who experience difficulty in learning language) acquire adequate levels of oral language in kindergarten, pre-school institutions and in school.

5.3.5 Support for children and adolescents whose home language is not the language of school

The education authorities have the responsibility to support the entry into the education system of the students coming from other countries. Plans and programmes are designed and measures are developed to ensure that the education of these students respond to their specific circumstances, knowledge, age and educational background, so they can enter the most appropriate course according to their characteristics and prior knowledge.

In general, the measures offered by the education system for these students are integrated into specific programmes aimed at meeting their linguistic deficiencies in the language of instruction, key competences or knowledge, and are simultaneous to their education in mainstream schools.

Programmes and plans include:

- **Programmes and plans for teaching the language of the host society.** They include two types of measures: on one hand, language courses, which aim to provide students with the necessary linguistic competence to enter the mainstream classroom. Their stay in these classes is flexible, depending on their needs and learning pace, so the student does not attend them for the whole day. On the other hand, linguistic and curricular reinforcement measures, which support and facilitate the study of all areas or subjects, are implemented.
- **Programmes for teaching the language and culture of the country of origin.** These programmes are targeted to students from other countries to continue studying their native language, while studying the host language. They are sometimes implemented in collaboration with the country of origin and with public non-profit organisations. Usually, the courses are developed outside school hours, although in some Autonomous Communities initiatives are being considered for including these contents in the curriculum. In addition, some Communities encourage all students, not just immigrants, to attend them.

Challenges: There are important differences among the Autonomous Communities in the possibilities they offer to the students whose home language is not the language of instruction to learn this language. These opportunities depend also on the availability of sufficient resources to provide this language training.

On the other hand, organisational reasons sometimes prevent a well-organised and gradually scheduled transition of these students to the mainstream classes.

5.3.6 Preventing early school leaving

Literacy provision and participation in secondary schooling: What is the rate of early school leavers?

One important, but certainly not sufficient, precondition for raising performance levels in literacy for adolescents is literacy provision during secondary schooling, as functional literacy is mainly acquired in school-based learning. Thus, the provision of secondary education for all adolescents and the prevention of early school leaving may serve as indicators for the opportunities of adolescents to improve their literacy performance, especially as it relates to basic functional literacy.

The duration of compulsory education in Spain is 10 years. Children start school at the age of 6; compulsory schooling ends at 16 years.

According to Eurostat, in Spain, the rate of early school leavers was 23.6 % in 2013, down from 24.7% a year before. The target value of the early school leaving (ESL) rate set for 2020 is 15%.

Concerning young people aged 15-24 years, in Spain 62.4% of this age cohort were in some form of education in 2011, which was just slightly above the average EU-27 value of 61.9%. This indicator is on an increasing trend: by 2012 it stood at 64.9%.

The percentage of 18-year olds in education was 79.8% in 2011, the proportion in Spain was close to the EU-27 average (80.7%). In 2012, no change was registered for this indicator.

> **Challenges:** Spain has high rates of dropouts and early school leaving, which are proportionally higher among students coming from disadvantaged areas and backgrounds. The educational disadvantage of some students often comes from personal or cultural circumstances, often associated with situations of risk or marginalisation in the environment in which they live.
>
> The PROA Plan (Reinforcement, Guidance and Support), conceived as a territorial cooperation project between the Ministry of Education and the Autonomous Communities, aims to address the needs associated with the socio-cultural environment of students through a set of programmes to support schools. The PROA Plan provides resources to schools so that, together with the other actors in education, they work in two directions: to mitigate factors generating inequality and to ensure care for the most vulnerable groups to improve their training and prevent the risk of social exclusion. The Plan pursues three strategic objectives: Gaining access to quality education for all, enriching the educational environment and involving the local community.
>
> A lot of effort and financial investment has been invested in this programme and the different measures implemented in the Autonomous Communities under it; however, still more efforts are needed to address the disadvantaged student population, which is particularly at-risk.

5.3.7 Addressing the gender gap among adolescents

The average performance in reading of 15 years old Spanish girls is higher than the boys' average; however, the gender gap in Spain is lower than the corresponding EU average difference both in PIRLS (5 vs 12 on average) and in PISA (29 vs 44 on average). In fact, the gender difference in Spain was very small in both cycles of PIRLS Spain participated in (5 and 4 score-points, respectively).

As well as in other countries, the gender gap in PISA is higher than among primary education students as the Spanish 15 years old girls got an average score of 505 points in reading in PISA 2000 while boys scored 481 (-14 points); in PISA 2012 girls scored 503 points and boys 474 (-29 points). This also reflects the fact that the reading performance remained more stable between 2000 and 2012 among girls (-2 score-points) but decreased more among boys (- 7 score points), resulting in a small increase in the gender gap.

There is no specific action to address this specific problem in the Spanish education system; the approach is, however, to reinforce the reading and linguistic skills in all students, not specifically in one gender.

Various changes have been included in the recent educational reform (LOMCE) to reinforce the linguistic competence of Spanish students - among others, the reinforcement of instrumental skills,

especially reading (increasing the instruction time for this subject, as well as including a daily compulsory time devoted to reading in Primary Education and work on reading in all subjects in secondary education). There is also external evaluation in the 3rd grade of Primary Education to detect early problems in students.

Moreover, other initiatives have been put in place, such as a new education program which provides 22 million euros for university graduates with the best records to go to classrooms as support staff.

5.3.8 Increasing participation, inclusion and equity for children and adolescents: Programmes, initiatives and examples

Programmes against poverty

With the purpose of applying the principle of equality in the exercise of the right to Education, the Education Authorities provide the economic resources and the necessary support for developing compensatory actions which will prevent future inequalities among students.

The adjustments required by these compensatory measures implemented in the Education System are a part of the continuous attention to diversity measures developed in schools. For this reason, most of the measures for meeting students' educational needs in mainstream education can also respond to disadvantaged students.

The actions aimed at disadvantaged students are implemented in every Autonomous Community and they are regulated through the curriculum of Primary and Secondary Education. Some Education Authorities also develop specific regulations in this field, both at general level and related to specific groups. Some of those measures are:

- Enrolment: there are measures aimed at assuring the most suitable conditions for attending school in Pre-Primary Education. Besides, there is a provision of schools with higher levels of human and material resources in order to compensate the situation of disadvantaged students.
- Scholarships and study grants: students with disadvantaged economic conditions have the right to obtain study grants and scholarships. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport establishes a general grants system for covering expenses related to travelling, urban transport, residence, teaching material and tuition fees, as well as grants and aid for compensating for the lack of income. Funding comes from the State General Budget; also, other types of grants are available, such as grants for young people at risk of dropping out of the education system.

Family literacy programmes for migrant parents

The education authorities are responsible for supporting the entry into the education system of the students and their families. With this purpose, they have developed the following types of measures:

- **Information for immigrant families on the Spanish Education System in several languages**, aimed at both students and families. In this way, they are also informed about their rights, duties and opportunities, not only relating to education but also to other environmental resources that could be of use.

- **Support services for intercultural mediation, and translating and interpreting services.** These are often external services. Their work and approach depend on regional and local resources, and on the needs of schools.

Policies / programmes to prevent early school leaving

There is concern that percentage of young people aged 18 to 24 whose highest qualification achieved is that corresponding to Lower Secondary Education and do not continue education or training to achieve what for the XXI century has been defined as desirable: upper secondary (general upper secondary or intermediate vocational training).

In Spain this rate reached 28.4% in 2010, far away from the EU target figure of less than 10% outlined in the Education and Training 2020 Strategy.

Since the adoption of the LOE in 2006, one of the main objectives of the Spanish education system is to raise the levels of school success in compulsory education and extend permanence in the educational system. The result of this effort is the 'Plan to Reduce Early Leaving from Education and Training', agreed by all education authorities in November 2008.

The Plan proposes measures related to schools, teachers, families and young people. It also boosts the initial vocational training programs as a way to access Vocational Training and promotes actions in the field of work. It aims at coordinating the actions of the different education authorities on this matter. It is a general Plan that establishes the strategic lines of action and some indicators to assess the progress made. These lines of action are:

1) Create the conditions that ensure permanence and success in the education system, in particular for citizens in vulnerable situations.
2) Improve the conditions that promote permanence in training activities where students can achieve levels that are, at least, equivalent to the standards established according to European parameters.
3) Encourage second chance systems and mechanisms to support the acquisition of lifelong learning habits in adult life.
4) Identify, analyse and provide an early intervention in factors leading to school failure.
5) Expand access to information and quality academic and professional guidance and advice, in order to facilitate citizens' personal decision-making regarding their training, educational and vocational qualification processes.
6) Raise the awareness and train the professionals who may work with citizens who are at risk of early school leaving.
7) Promote systems for the recognition of key skills for lifelong learning.
8) Make access to education and training more flexible.

The Plan is organised into three types of action: prevention, intervention and compensation measures. The actions financed under this program are:

a) Analysis, awareness and dissemination measures.

- Preparation of studies to identify areas with high dropout rates, understand and analyse its causes and profile students who leave the system, in order to assess and devise specific ways of intervention.

- Awareness campaigns, general and specific for different groups, addressing both students and their families.

b) Preventive measures aimed at reducing the number of pupils at risk of exclusion in an inclusive context in Lower Secondary Education:

- Establishment of specific strategies in schools for identification of students at risk of dropping out and implementing measures specifically aimed at attaining academic success of these students, strengthening the activities of the Guidance Departments of Orientation and the support and monitoring programmes.
- Specific programmes in those areas and groups with the largest dropout rates (immigrants, ethnic minorities, especially depressed areas), fostering cooperation and coordination with different organisations and local and regional administrations.

c) Guidance and monitoring measures aimed at recovering the students who have left the education system.

- Guidance Units for monitoring and support young people between 16 and 24 years, through the adult education schools and local authorities to promote their reintegration into the system.
- Collaboration agreements with organisations and other institutions for specific projects (classrooms recreational sports and healthy leisure, pre-employment workshops, etc.) on areas of greatest risk of social exclusion and dropout, favouring recruitment of these young people and their reintegration into the education system.

d) Educational offers for young people who have left the education system, aimed at obtaining a formal education and qualification in upper secondary education.

- Shared education programmes through partnerships with the business sector, to facilitate the training and qualifications of young workers with low qualifications or without any qualification.
- Face formal education programmes that address the flexibility and suitability of school organization to promote retention and / or continuity in studies of young people with temporary or intermittent employment.
- Non-formal training programmes which promote the reintegration of young people into the education system.

At present, the specific plans of regional educational authorities, as well as their evaluation, are yet to be developed. They will provide continuity to the experience gained with the previous Plan to Reduce Early School Leaving, implemented and developed since 2013.

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