



Cornell University  
ILR School

Cornell University ILR School  
**DigitalCommons@ILR**

---

International Publications

Key Workplace Documents

---

2016

# Establishment Characteristics and Work Practices: Education Sector

Eurofound

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/intl>

**Thank you for downloading an article from DigitalCommons@ILR.**

**Support this valuable resource today!**

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Key Workplace Documents at DigitalCommons@ILR. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@ILR. For more information, please contact [hlmdigital@cornell.edu](mailto:hlmdigital@cornell.edu).

---

# Establishment Characteristics and Work Practices: Education Sector

## **Abstract**

[Excerpt] This paper is one in a series of sector profiles giving an overview of structural characteristics, work organisation practices, human resource management, employee participation and social dialogue in the education sector. It is based on the Third European Company Survey (ECS) which gathers data about companies and establishments with 10 or more employees in all economic sectors except those in the NACE Rev. 2.0 categories A (agriculture and fishing), T (activities of the household) and U (activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies) across all 28 EU Member States as well as Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey. Additional information on the structural characteristics is derived from Eurostat data.

The sector includes all activities related to education (NACE P). The third ECS contains responses from 971 establishments in this sector across the EU28, representing 9% of all EU employees. As distinguished from the private sector information sheets, the numbers presented here are based on employee-weights and not on establishment weights. Proportions, therefore, refer to the proportions of employees covered. The sector profile compares aspects of establishment characteristics with the EU28 as a whole. The methodology used (latent class analysis) was developed in the overview report. Please note that percentages may not total 100 in some figures due to rounding.

## **Keywords**

Europe, structural characteristics, human resource management, employee participation, organizational practices, social dialogue, education sector

## **Comments**

### **Suggested Citation**

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. (2016). *Establishment characteristics and work practices: Education sector*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

# Establishment characteristics and work practices: Education sector



The 2013 European Company Survey data provides policymakers and practitioners with information and analysis on the spread of certain work organisation, human resource and participation practices in European establishments. As employment relations and workplace practices differ substantially between sectors, this profile shows the incidence of those practices within the sector as compared to other economic sectors.

## Introduction

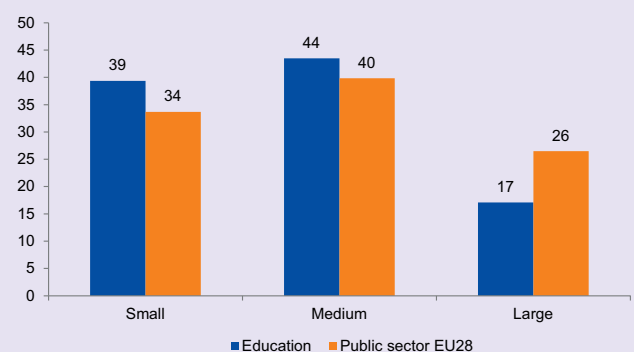
This paper is one in a series of sector profiles giving an overview of structural characteristics, work organisation practices, human resource management, employee participation and social dialogue in the education sector. It is based on the Third European Company Survey (ECS) which gathers data about companies and establishments with 10 or more employees in all economic sectors except those in the NACE Rev. 2.0 categories A (agriculture and fishing), T (activities of the household) and U (activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies) across all 28 EU Member States as well as Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey. Additional information on the structural characteristics is derived from Eurostat data.

The sector includes all activities related to education (NACE P). The third ECS contains responses from 971 establishments in this sector across the EU28, representing 9% of all EU employees. As distinguished from the private sector information sheets, the numbers presented here are based on employee-weights and not on establishment weights. Proportions, therefore, refer to the proportions of employees covered. The sector profile compares aspects of establishment characteristics with the EU28 as a whole. The methodology used (latent class analysis) was developed in the overview report. Please note that percentages may not total 100 in some figures due to rounding.

## Structural characteristics

Small establishments cover 39% of employment in the education sector, which is above the average of 34% in the EU public sector. Medium-sized establishments cover 44% of the sector employees (EU28 40%) and 17% work in large units (EU28 26%).

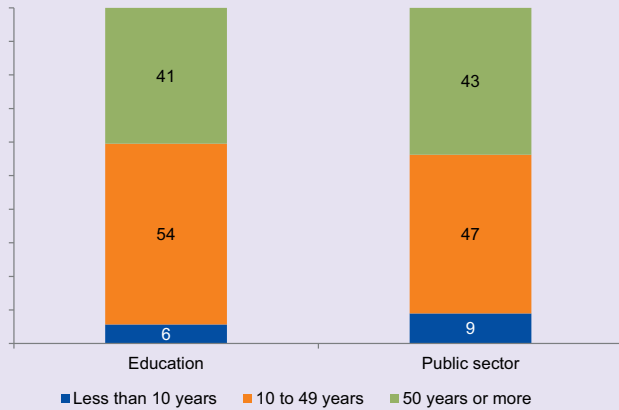
Figure 1: Establishment type by size (%)



Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

In the education sector, establishments that have been in operation for 50 years or more cover 41% of employment, which is in line with the EU public sector overall (Figure 2). Most employment is covered by companies that have been in operation between 10 and 49 years in the sector (54% compared to EU28 47%). Only 6% of employees work in education establishments that have been operating for less than 10 years (EU28 9%)

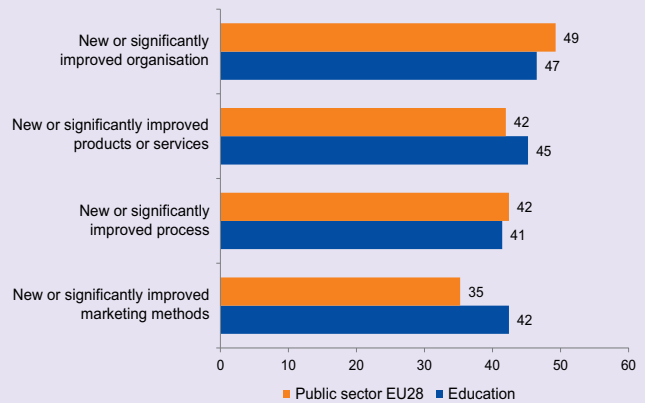
**Figure 2: Years of operation by size (%)**



Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

Of staff in this sector, 47% are employed in companies that have introduced new or significantly improved organisational settings (Figure 3). This closely reflects the 49% EU public sector average. A higher proportion of employment (45%) is covered by companies that introduced new products or services, compared to the EU public sector average (42%). Establishments in the sector that introduced new marketing methods cover 42% of the employed in the sector, again more than the 35% of the EU public sector average.

**Figure 3: New or improved products, processes and marketing methods and organisational change (%)**



Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

Establishments that collaborate in design or development of new goods or services account for 42% of the sector, above the EU average of 34%. Collaboration in the production of goods and services is, however, more likely across the EU as a whole than in the sector (35%, compared to 30%). More employees in the education sector actually work in establishments that are not in any way involved in production activities (54%) than the public sector EU average (46%).

Outsourcing is generally less likely in the sector than on average. Some 15% of employment is covered by companies outsourcing the production of goods and services, as compared to 22% of the EU public sector average.

## Work organisation practices

### Collaboration and outsourcing

Differences in terms of collaboration are observed between the education sector and the EU public sector overall (Table 1).

**Table 1: Profiles of establishment types – Collaboration and outsourcing (%)**

		Education				Public sector EU28			
		Moderate	Extensive	Limited	Overall	Moderate	Extensive	Limited	Overall
<b>Group size</b>		<b>49</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>
Design or development of new products or services	In-house with collaboration	19	83	23	42	12	70	15	34
	In-house, no collaboration	6	4	58	13	5	4	58	13
	No design/development	75	13	19	45	83	26	27	53
Outsourcing design or development of new products or services	Yes	3	30	6	13	3	38	13	17
	No	97	70	94	87	97	62	87	83
Production of goods or services	In-house with collaboration	9	66	12	30	15	71	12	35
	In-house, no collaboration	6	9	65	16	11	7	72	19
	No production	85	25	23	54	73	22	16	46
Outsourcing production of goods or services	Yes	1	34	18	15	4	47	20	22
	No	99	66	82	85	96	53	80	78
Sales or marketing of goods or services	In-house with collaboration	5	55	8	24	6	50	7	22
	In-house, no collaboration	14	17	56	22	10	12	51	17
	No sales/marketing	80	28	36	55	84	38	42	61
Outsourcing sales or marketing of goods or services	Yes	2	34	11	15	3	29	18	15
	No	98	66	89	85	97	71	82	85

Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

**Table 2: Profiles of establishments - Internal organisation and information management (%)**

		Education			Public sector EU28		
		Highly structured	Moderately structured	Overall	Highly structured	Moderately structured	Overall
<b>Group size</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
Use information systems to minimise supplies or work-in-process	Yes	44	17	32	52	19	39
	No						
Monitoring quality of production	Yes, on a continuous basis	89	64	78	85	59	75
	Yes, on an intermittent basis	9	64	13	13	22	17
	No	2	85	9	2	19	9
Monitoring external ideas or developments	Yes, using staff assigned specifically to this task	35	17	27	43	15	31
	Yes, as part of the responsibilities of general staff	55	45	51	44	33	40
	No	9	38	22	14	52	29
Keeping records of good work practices	Yes	89	78	84	86	66	78
Teamwork	No team	9	17	13	6	23	13
	Most of them work in more than one team	42	39	41	49	45	48
	Most of them work in a single team	49	44	47	44	32	39
Departments based on function	Yes	83	45	66	85	47	70
	No	17	55	34	15	53	30
Departments dealing with different types of products or services	Yes	67	20	46	77	31	59
	No	33	80	54	23	69	41
Departments dealing with specific geographical areas	Yes	25	4	15	38	9	26
	No	75	96	85	62	91	74

Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

The extensive collaboration and outsourcing type of establishment is characterised by comparatively high proportions of collaboration in all areas (Table 1). Furthermore, outsourcing is above average in this cluster.

In the moderate type, a huge majority of the workforce is employed in establishments that are not involved in design, development or the production of goods and services.

The limited type is characterised by very little collaboration at all.

### Internal organisation and information management

Table 2 shows that establishments that use information systems to minimise supplies or work-in-process cover 32% of employment in the education sector (EU28 39%); 84% are establishments that keep records of good work practices (EU28 78%), and most employees work in establishments where external ideas are monitored either using assigned staff (27% compared to 31% EU28) or as part of general responsibilities (51% compared to 40% EU28).

Staff in this sector are less likely to be employed in establishments with departments based on functions (66% compared to 70%), dealing with different types of products/services (46% compared to 59%) or dealing with specific geographical areas (15% compared to 26%).

Highly structured establishments (in terms of internal organisation and information management) cover 55% of the sector workforce (EU28 60%). A majority of establishments in this group monitor the quality of the production on a continuous basis, keep records of best practice and have departments that are based on function.

The moderately structured type of establishments employ the remaining 45% of employees in the sector, and are dominated by establishments that do not use any information systems for minimising supplies or work-in-process/process and little teamwork.

### Decision-making on daily tasks

More than half of employees (55%) work in establishments where managers and employees decide together on the planning and execution of tasks, in line with the EU public sector average (Table 3). Team members are, however, more likely to decide among themselves on the distribution of tasks (38%) compared to the EU average (30%).

**Table 3: Profiles of establishments – Task autonomy (%)**

		Education			Public sector EU28		
		Joint	Top-down	Overall	Joint	Top-down	Overall
<b>Group size</b>		<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100</b>
Task autonomy (who decides planning and execution of daily tasks)	The employee undertaking the tasks	15	1	8	15	1	7
	Managers or supervisors	19	55	37	18	53	37
	Both employees and managers or supervisors	66	44	55	68	46	56
Team autonomy (who decides by whom the tasks are to be performed)	Team members decide among themselves	65	9	38	57	6	30
	Tasks are distributed by a superior	24	77	50	31	80	57
	No team	11	14	13	12	14	13

Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

Approximately half of sector employees (49%) work in establishments following a top-down approach to decision-making (EU28 53%). The remaining 51% of employees are covered by establishments with a joint approach. In terms of task autonomy, establishments where decisions are taken jointly cover 66% of employment in this group. Another 15% are covered by establishments where team members make their own decisions.

## HR practices

### Recruitment, employment and change

Most employment in the education sector is covered by establishments that saw no need to reduce staff (81%, above the EU public sector average of 74%), had no problems in retaining workforce (93%, compared to EU28 90%) or did not change recruitment policies (80%, compared to EU28 75%). However, more than a third of

sector employees (34%) worked in establishments that had difficulties finding skilled workers, below the EU public sector average of 38% (Table 4).

The ‘business-as-usual’ cluster (in terms of recruitment and employment) covers a majority of employment in the sector (69%), more than the EU28 average (62%). This group is characterised by little change in recruitment policies, and few problems in finding skilled employees or in retaining them in the workforce. Likewise, the need to reduce staff was rarely perceived in this cluster.

Establishments that reported a ‘shortage of matching skills’ covered a further 17% of employment (EU28 20%) and were characterised by severe difficulties in finding skilled employees and frequently reported changes in recruitment policies. Establishments that were generally under pressure to reduce the workforce cover 14% of sector employment, below the EU28 average of 18%.

**Table 4: Profiles of establishments – Recruitment, employment and change (%)**

		Education				Public sector EU28			
		Business-as-usual	Shortage of matching skills	Reduction in workforce	Overall	Business-as-usual	Shortage of matching skills	Reduction in workforce	Overall
<b>Group size</b>		<b>69</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>
Change in recruitment policies	Yes	15	32	33	20	17	40	39	25
	No	85	68	67	80	83	60	61	75
Difficulties in finding employees with the required skills	Yes	22	82	34	34	25	85	33	38
	No	78	18	66	66	75	15	67	62
Difficulties in retaining employees	Yes	2	27	10	7	2	31	12	10
	No	98	73	90	93	98	69	88	90
Need to reduce staff	Yes	7	20	78	19	10	23	84	26
	No	93	80	22	81	90	77	16	74
Changes in the number of employees	Increased	33	49	9	33	35	48	8	32
	Stayed about the same	50	39	26	44	50	39	26	43
	Decreased	17	12	65	23	15	13	67	24

Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

**Table 5: Profiles of establishments – Training (%)**

		Education					Public sector EU28				
		Selective	Encompassing	No training	On-the-job training only	Overall	Selective	Encompassing	No training	On-the-job training only	Overall
<b>Group size</b>		<b>74</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100</b>
Time off provided by the employer for training (proportion of workforce)	No	14	4	99	79	17	7	3	99	76	10
	Yes	86	96	1	21	83	93	97	1	24	90
On-the-job training provided by employer (proportion of workforce)	No	27	0	98	0	22	24	0	98	0	19
	Yes	73	100	2	100	78	76	100	2	100	81

Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

## Training

The education sector workforce is slightly less likely to be employed in establishments that offer paid time off for training or on-the-job training (Table 5). However, the selective training type covers more employment of the sector (74%) than overall (67%), while fewer employees work in encompassing establishments (21%) than the EU public sector average (28%). In such establishments, which both types of training are offered to the majority of staff.

## Working time flexibility

Employees of the education sector are less likely to enjoy working time flexibility than the average EU public sector employee (Table 6). A third of the sector's staff (33%) are employed in establishments that do not allow for flexibility in starting and finishing times (EU28 24%). Likewise, 34% of

sector employees work in establishments where accumulation of overtime is not possible compared to 21% of employees in the EU28 public sector.

Consequently, employees of the sector are more likely to work in establishments that make up the 'limited' working-time flexibility cluster (41% compared to EU28 35%) characterised by a high proportion with no working time flexibility and a relatively high proportion of employees working in establishments where time cannot be accumulated (42%).

The selective flexibility type also covers 41% of employees, offering flexi-time to most, but only a small proportion offer flexi-time to 80% or more of the workforce.

Employees of the encompassing group (18%) enjoy flexi-time schemes in most establishments (EU28 21%).

**Table 6: Profiles of establishments – Working time flexibility (%)**

		Education				Public sector EU28			
		Encompassing	Limited	Selective	Overall	Encompassing	Limited	Selective	Overall
<b>Group size</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>
Flexibility in starting and finishing times	No	1	59	21	33	1	49	15	24
	Yes	99	41	79	67	99	51	85	76
Accumulation of overtime	No	10	58	21	34	7	41	12	21
	Yes	90	42	79	66	93	59	88	79
Part-time work	No	26	29	18	24	30	34	19	27
	Yes	74	71	82	76	70	66	81	73

Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

**Table 7: Profiles of establishments – Variable pay-schemes (%)**

		Education				Public sector EU28			
		Extensive	Limited	Moderate	Overall	Extensive	Limited	Moderate	Overall
<b>Group size</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>
Payment by results	Yes	39	2	19	9	52	2	21	11
	No	61	98	81	91	48	98	79	89
Individual performance based payment following management appraisal (bonuses)	Yes	74	14	77	40	85	13	76	38
	No	26	86	23	60	15	87	24	62
Group-performance based pay	Yes	87	2	36	17	87	1	36	17
	No	13	98	64	83	13	99	64	83
Profit-sharing	Yes	88	3	13	9	91	4	17	11
	No	12	97	87	91	9	96	83	89
Share-ownership	Yes	24	0	4	2	31	0	3	2
	No	76	100	96	98	69	100	97	98

Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire

## Variable pay

The various forms of variable pay are as likely to be prevalent in the education sector overall as the EU public sector average (Table 7).

Education sector establishments in the cluster of ‘limited’ variable pay cover 59% of employment. Within this cluster, there are practically no share ownership or group-performance based pay schemes in place.

The moderate range of variable pay schemes type covers a further 39% of employees. Payments for individual results (bonuses) are paid in most establishments of this group (77%).

Only 2% of the education sector employees work in firms that offer them an extensive range of variable pay schemes; for instance, most (88%) offer profit-sharing.

## Employee participation and social dialogue

### Direct employee participation

Companies where employees were involved in joint decision-making on important or major changes accounted for 35% of the workforce in the sector (EU28 31%, see Table 8). Another 9% work in establishments that consult employees on major decisions; establishments which only inform employees about such changes accounted for 20% of employment (EU28 23%).

The ‘extensive and supported’ type of direct employee participation covered more than three quarters of employees (76%), a higher proportion than the EU average (72%). A positive attitude towards employee involvement was generally prevalent in this type of establishment (91%).

Establishments of the ‘low effort and little change’ cluster counted for 12% of sector employees, below the EU

**Table 8: Profiles of establishments – Direct employee involvement (%)**

		Education				Public sector EU28			
		Low effort and little change	Moderate and unsupported	Extensive and supported	Overall	Low effort and little change	Moderate and unsupported	Extensive and supported	Overall
<b>Group size</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>
Management attitude toward direct employee participation (%)	Positive attitude	67	46	91	83	61	43	91	81
Level of direct involvement of employees in decision-making in most important change in past 3 years according to management	Not involved	5	9	4	5	6	9	4	5
	Informed only	11	46	18	20	12	52	19	23
	Consulted	0	17	9	9	0	17	12	11
	Involved in joint decision-making	2	27	42	35	2	21	39	31
	Not applicable (no major change happened)	81	1	28	31	80	1	26	31

Source: ECS 2013 – Management questionnaire



**Table 9: Profiles of establishments – Workplace social dialogue %**

		Education					Public sector EU28				
		Extensive and trusting	Moderate and trusting	Extensive and conflictual	Limited and conflictual	Overall	Extensive and trusting	Moderate and trusting	Extensive and conflictual	Limited and conflictual	Overall
<b>Group size %</b>		46	20	21	13	100	42	20	26	12	100
Resources (score 0–100)	Average score	64	48	52	34	54	69	54	64	45	62
Available information (score 0–100)	Average score	86	73	65	37	73	87	72	68	29	72
Employee representation influence on decision making (score 0–100)	Average score	63	23	47	17	46	65	24	48	15	47
Employee representation involvement in decision making (in %)	Not involved	0	22	8	68	15	0	13	4	59	11
	Informed	1	36	19	18	14	2	34	20	24	16
	Consulted	4	25	28	14	15	11	31	30	15	20
	Involved in joint decision-making	95	17	45	0	56	87	23	45	2	53
Trust in management (score 0–100)	Average score	85	78	67	49	75	84	78	62	47	73
Trust in employee representation (0–100)	Average score	73	68	60	62	68	72	68	62	63	68
Industrial action since 2010 %	Occurred	27	32	60	64	40	23	20	59	57	36

**Source:** ECS 2013 – Management and employee representative questionnaires

average of 15%. Most employees of this group had no opportunity to be involved as no major changes took place.

‘Moderate and unsupported’ type establishments cover the remaining 12% of sector workforce, largely informing employees about major changes.

### Workplace social dialogue

Employee representatives are worse resourced in the education sector than the EU public sector average, but have more or less the same level of information available to them. Few differences are reported in terms of influence on decision making (Table 9).

Establishments involving employee representatives in joint decisions on major changes cover more than half of sector employees (56% compared to EU28 53%), with another 15% employed in establishments where employees are generally consulted on major changes, below the EU public sector average of 20%.

The ‘extensive and trusting’ cluster comprises 46% of all education sector employees (EU28 42%). Employee representatives are comparatively well resourced and enjoy a very high level of provision of information. The management is highly trusted in this cluster and in most of the establishments employees are involved in joint-decision making.

The ‘moderate and trusting’ cluster accounts for both 20% of sector employment and the EU28 public sector overall. Compared to the extensive and trusting cluster, the perception of employee representatives is that they are less-well resourced, get less information and are far less likely to be involved in joint decision-making. Nevertheless, a relatively high level of mutual trust is reported in this cluster, coupled with a low incidence of industrial action.

The extensive and conflictual group comprises 21% of employees. Employee representatives are involved in decision making in just under half of all establishments and they feel they have more influence on decisions taken in the establishment than the average. Nonetheless, the mutual trust between management and representatives is lower.

A small proportion of education employees (13% compared to 12% overall) work in establishments of the limited and conflictual group, characterised by lower mutual trust levels, a higher likelihood of industrial action, and a high proportion of establishments that do not involve their employees in decision-making at all.

#### Further information

The report *Third European Company Survey: Overview report* is available at: <http://bit.ly/3ECS2015/>

For more information, contact Franz Eiffe, Research Officer at [fei@eurofound.europa.eu](mailto:fei@eurofound.europa.eu)