The political, social and economic background of Spain, as well as its territorial organisation, determine the configuration of its education system.

Spain is a **State under social and democratic rule of law**, which advocates justice, equality and political pluralism as the highest values of its legal system. Its political structure is that of a parliamentary monarchy. The King is Head of State and there is division between the legislative, executive and judicial powers.

Spain signed the Accession Treaty to the European Economic Community, at present European Union, in June 1985, which came into force on 1st January 1986.

The 1978 Constitution is the supreme law of the Spanish legal order, which sets out the right to education and academic freedom in its article 27.

One of the features of the **territorial organisation of the State** is decentralisation, which implies the entitlement to autonomy, recognised by the Constitution of the autonomous communities, provinces and municipalities. The State shall act as guarantor, with appropriateness and fairness, of the principle of solidarity and economic balance amongst the different areas of the Spanish territory, taking account of the circumstances of insularity.

The decentralisation of the State has led to a major transformation of its territorial organisation, which, in the field of education, involves:

- the distribution of educational powers between the State General Administration (Ministry of Education) and the Autonomous Communities (Departments for Education). The process of devolved administrations from the State towards the Autonomous Communities concluded in the year 2000
- the education authorities delegate to municipalities the exercise of powers in areas which directly relate to the latter's interests, and which they manage through municipal education departments or institutes for education.

The **demographic make up** of Spain is characterised by the ageing of the population. Unemployment, which is one of the other major social problems, particularly affects youngsters and those over 45 years of age, thus having an impact on the loss of population. Regarding migratory flows, Spain has changed from being a host country for immigration to registering a negative migration balance.

Demographic changes with regards to the population pyramid, migratory flows and the labour market have affected the composition of students in different ways. The education system is faced with challenges such as the reduction of early leaving from education and training, the increase in the school enrollment age and educational achievement of students at the age of 16 and over, since
schooling is not compulsory from that age onwards.

Spain is a **multilingual country**, where apart from Spanish as the official language, certain Autonomous Communities have other languages with co-official status: Catalan, Occitan (Aranese), Valencian, Galician and Basque.

Spanish is the vehicular language and the language of instruction throughout the country, as well as co-official languages in those Autonomous Communities and other territories where they have traditionally been spoken. For this reason, there exist different linguistic models which organise the teaching of the official languages according to the language mostly spoken in the Autonomous Community in question.

The Spanish Constitution guarantees the ideological freedom, as well as freedom of worship and religion of all individuals and communities. There shall be no State religion.

Spain is a multy-party country. The following parties are represented in the Congress of Deputies: Socialist Party (PSOE), Popular Party (PP), Vox, Unidas-Podemos (United-We Can), Ciudadanos (Citizens Party), Más País and up to nine other parties at the regional level. The rotation of different governments and their own initiatives in education policies have influenced the education system.

The economic situation of Spain has experienced a long period of expansion followed by stagnation and then recession since 2008. During those years, economic adjustment was applied to many areas, education included: public expenditure on education was reduced as well as its weight in relation to GDP. Although the economic recovery started in 2014 and the expenditure on education grew in absolute terms, the percentage of the expenditure on education in relation to GDP was lower in 2018 than in 2010.