



## PRESS RELEASE

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### PUBLIC ENTITIES AND POLICIES

## THE COST OF THE LYCÉE

Following on from its reports from 2010 (*L'éducation nationale face à la réussite de tous les élèves*), 2013 (*Gérer les enseignants autrement*) and 2015 (*Le suivi individualisé des élèves*), the *Cour des comptes* hereby publishes a thematic report on the subject of France's upper secondary education system, with a focus on the "lycée", the main secondary educational establishment in France.

Created in 1802 to mold the Nation's elite, the "lycée" now educates 80% of each year group to baccalaureate level. This quantitative target has been reached. However, although the average cost of a French lycée pupil is 38% higher than that of other OECD countries, in qualitative terms, outcomes in France in terms of success in higher education or inclusion in the labour market of holders of the vocational baccalaureate turn out to be very average.

The *Cour des comptes*, having analysed the component parts of this cost, with a breakdown by pathway, by stream, and by discipline, has identified a number of drivers that could potentially lower this cost, and finance the reforms needed to improve overall education system performance.

### A particularly heavy financial burden at national level

In 2012, domestic education spending totalled €139.5bn or 6.9% of GDP. Lycées accounted for 18.6% of this total, or €25.9bn, with €17.5bn borne by the State.

Within the OECD, the allocation of France's spending on pupils is atypical: the cost per primary school pupil is below average, whilst that of a lower secondary school pupil is close to average and that of a lycée pupil is far higher than average. This variation is explained for lycées by the much higher instruction time received by pupils, even though teaching hours imparted by teachers are lower, and by the smaller average size of establishments, whether in terms of groups of pupils or school sizes. On the other hand, the relatively lower pay of teachers in France partially offsets the variation in overall cost.

As far as teaching costs are concerned, group size is the key factor explaining the major differences between disciplines. As a result, the average cost of optional subjects is far higher than the cost of compulsory subjects. Lower pupil numbers and the smaller size of vocational establishments explain why a lycée pupil on the vocational pathway costs more than a lycée pupil on the general and technological pathway. Furthermore, the cost of administrative and technical support is determined to a great extent by the size of an establishment.

### Drivers for rebalancing expenditure within the education system

Lycées typically provide a very diverse learning offer, governed by the way the final baccalaureate examination is structured. A reduction in the range of options in the general pathway and of special subjects in the vocational pathway would limit the profusion of learning combinations which exerts a general upwards pressure on the cost of the education system.



The high per-pupil instruction time is spread over a small number of weeks and is provided by teachers whose regulatory service obligations are rigidly determined on a strictly weekly basis. Reducing the volume of instruction and spreading it over a longer annual period would therefore be an effective driver reducing the cost of lycée education. The *Cour des comptes* also recommends a review of the targets set for school sizes, and a reconfiguration of the dense network of establishments.

The current institutional framework and joint running of the state education system by the State and the regions fail to promote better management of lycées: resource allocation leaves room for improvement, pooling is inadequate, contractual mechanisms are complex and the ambiguous role of establishment heads also gives rise to management difficulties. It would therefore be necessary to review the allocation process, to simplify and rationalise management mechanisms and to increase the autonomy of establishments.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The *Cour des comptes* takes the view that significant improvement in the efficiency of lycées is possible. With this in mind, it proposes two strategies:

- simplify the overall architecture of the general and technological pathways;
- make the vocational pathway, for which major financial investment has already been made, more efficient.

and sets out the following 10 recommendations:


1. bring the instruction time for lycée pupils into line with that of comparable countries, and distribute this more evenly across a longer academic year;
2. reduce the scattered nature of the learning offer, particularly in terms of options;
3. simplify the baccalaureate format;
4. set optimal establishment size targets, particularly by making use of the possibilities offered by distance learning technologies;
5. review methods for the allocation of resources to establishments whilst neutralising the bias towards small establishments with low staff numbers;
6. base education expenditure per lycée pupil on a documented standard shared by both the State and the regions;
7. develop a tool for analysing the consolidated cost per lycée pupil at establishment level using a representative sample;
8. implement a single programming and contracting plan at local education authority and regional level;
9. roll out tripartite contracting between lycées, the State and the regions to increase the autonomy of establishments and the responsibilities of establishment heads;
10. spread the pooling of establishment management between the regional councils.


**[To read the full report click here](#)**

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