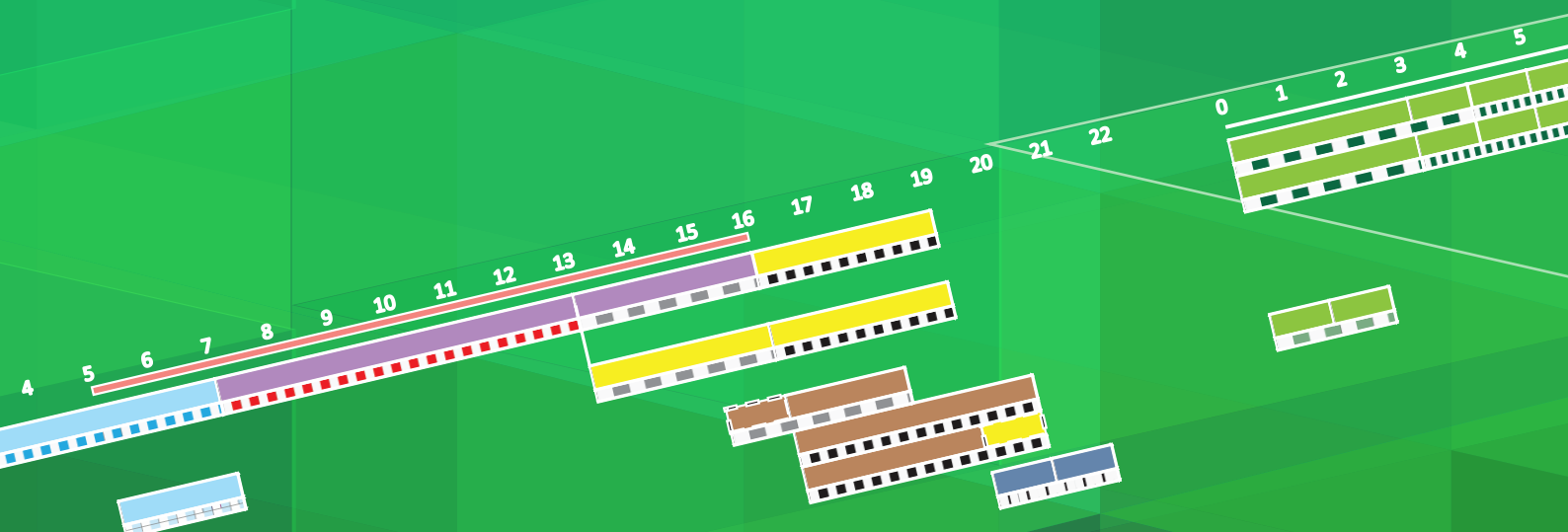


The Structure of the European Education Systems 2020/21

Schematic Diagrams

Eurydice – Facts and Figures





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Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
Education and Youth Policy Analysis
Avenue du Bourget 1 (J-70 – Unit A6)
BE-1049 Brussels
E-mail: eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu
Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>

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INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on the structure of education and training systems from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2020/21 school/academic year. It covers 43 education systems, which corresponds to 38 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme (27 EU Member States, the United Kingdom, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey).

This report has three main sections:

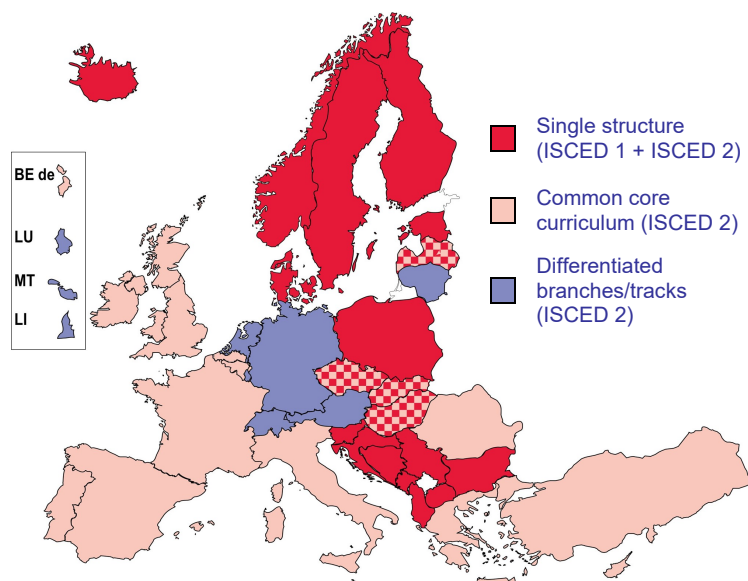
1. A brief presentation of the main organisational models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1-2);
2. A guide to reading the diagrams;
3. The schematic diagrams.

MAIN ORGANISATIONAL MODELS OF PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Three main organisational models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1 and 2) can be identified. These education levels are part of compulsory education in all European education systems.

- **Single structure** education. From the beginning to the end of compulsory education, all students follow a common curriculum providing general education; in addition, there is no transition between primary and lower secondary education.
- **Common core curriculum** provision. After successfully completing primary education (ISCED level 1), all students progress to lower secondary level (ISCED level 2) where they follow the same general common core curriculum.
- **Differentiated** lower secondary education. After successfully completing primary education, students follow distinct educational pathways or specific types of education, which start either at the beginning or in the course of lower secondary education. At the end of their studies, they receive different certificates.

Main models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1-2) in Europe, 2020/21



Source: Eurydice.

Note: In Czechia, Latvia, Hungary and Slovakia, compulsory education is organised in a single structure up to the age of 14, 15, and 16 depending on the country. However, from the age of 10, 11 and 13 (depending on the country), students can enrol in separate educational institutions providing both lower and upper secondary education.

GUIDE TO READING THE DIAGRAMS

This short guide provides the necessary information to understand the diagrams. More specifically, it defines the scope; it presents the main elements of the diagrams and how they are graphically displayed; it provides the definitions as well as the key. Finally, it includes a short description of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011).

Scope

The diagrams show the most representative mainstream education programmes in each education system. They **encompass**:

- Early childhood education and care provided in publicly subsidised and accredited centre based settings for children from the youngest age of enrolment;
- Primary and secondary education programmes;
- Post-secondary non-tertiary programmes;
- Main tertiary level programmes.

The diagrams **do not show**:

- Education provision intended exclusively to adults with low formal educational attainment and/or a low level of basic skills. The diagrams cover only the courses allowing adults to go back to school or to gain further qualifications that are part of mainstream education programmes. Usually, these courses are integrated in the programmes providing competence-based qualifications at secondary education level or allowing access to tertiary education (i.e. post-secondary non-tertiary education level) ⁽¹⁾.
- Separate provision outside mainstream education for children and young people with special educational needs.
- At tertiary level, doctoral studies as well as the specialised studies for regulated professions such as medicine and architecture.

Main elements of the diagrams (and their graphical display)

Age of students and programme duration: two different scales

The schematic diagrams have two distinct graphic areas:

- The left side coloured bars show the main education programmes from pre-primary to post-secondary non-tertiary levels (ISCED levels 0 to 4) in relation to the age of students when they start a particular programme. The ages are notional, i.e. they indicate the theoretical age at which students are supposed to enter an education level or begin a study programme. Early or late entry, grade retention or other interruptions to schooling are not taken into account.
- The right side coloured bars present the main education programmes at tertiary level in relation to the standard number of years necessary to complete these programmes on a full-time basis. The duration of part-time studies or individualised study patterns are not shown.

⁽¹⁾ For more information on main type of educational provision for adults, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities. [Online] Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-europe-widening-access-learning-opportunities_en

Education programmes

The thick coloured bars show education programmes ⁽²⁾; the colours refer to the levels and types of education. Within coloured bars, short vertical lines either show the division into cycles/key stages/education levels, or entry to or leaving ages for study programmes.

The thin bars with coloured stripes indicate the corresponding levels of education as defined by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) (see description below).

In few cases, the diagrams also show transition points between ISCED levels or education programmes. Long vertical lines linking coloured bars (education programmes) show these transition points.

Educational institutions

The terms under the coloured bars refer to the names of the schools or educational institutions providing the education programmes shown. In some cases, however, they might refer to education programmes or types of teaching. In that case, the terms are put in brackets. All terms are provided in the national language(s) of the country.

Definitions

Full-time compulsory education/training refers to a period of full-time education/training that is compulsory for all students. This period is regulated by law and often determined by students' age. Usually, full-time compulsory education/training is provided in formal institutions/schools. However, in some education systems, certain compulsory education/training programmes can combine part-time school-based and part-time workplace courses. In such cases, students are assessed for the work they do in both places (workplace and school). In some countries, under certain conditions, compulsory education/training can be provided at home.

Part-time compulsory education/training may take two forms: before or after full-time compulsory education.

- **Before:** Early childhood education and care programs of 250 or less hours per year;
- **After:** Until a certain age, students are required to participate in additional part-time school-based or workplace education/training.

Additional year: Part of an education programme that is not necessary to complete in order to end an education cycle or level, but may be necessary to access a higher education level or move to a different education pathway.

⁽²⁾ ECEC services outside ISCED classification are also shown.

Key

Levels and types of education	
	Early childhood education and care (for which public education authorities are not responsible)
	Early childhood education and care (for which public education authorities are responsible)
	Primary education
	Single structure
	Secondary general education
	Secondary vocational education
	Post-secondary non-tertiary education
	Tertiary education (full-time)
Allocation to the ISCED 2011 levels (see definitions below)	
	ISCED 0
	ISCED 1
	ISCED 2
	ISCED 3
	ISCED 4
	ISCED 5
	ISCED 6
	ISCED 7
Other keys	
	Full-time compulsory education/training
	Part-time compulsory education/training
	Combined school based and workplace courses
	Possible additional year
	Study abroad
 year	Programme being phased out in (year)
-/n/-	Compulsory work experience + its duration (in years)

Compulsory work experience and its duration

Compulsory work experience is shown when it is required to move to the next education level or to begin a particular education programme; when applicable, its minimum required duration is indicated **(-/n/-)**.

Education programmes being phased out

When reforms change education programmes, new and old programmes are concurrently shown. The year during which the old education programmes are being phased out is indicated (| year).

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011)

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is an instrument suitable for compiling statistics on education internationally. It covers two cross-classification variables: levels and fields of education with the complementary dimensions of general/vocational/pre-vocational orientation and education-labour market destination. The last version, ISCED 2011 distinguishes eight levels of education. Empirically, ISCED assumes that several criteria exist which can help allocate education programmes to levels of education. Depending on the level and type of education concerned, there is a need to establish a hierarchical ranking system between main and subsidiary criteria (typical entrance qualification, minimum entrance requirement, minimum age, staff qualification, etc.).

For the full details on each ISCED level, please consult:

UNESCO, Institute for Statistics, 2012. *International Standard Classification of Education. ISCED 2011*. Available at: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>

ISCED 0: Early childhood education

Programmes at this level are typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and introduce young children to organised instruction outside of the family context. ISCED level 0 refers to early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component.

ISCED 1: Primary education

Programmes at this level are typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy) and establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge, personal and social development, in preparation for lower secondary education.

Age is typically the only entry requirement at this level. The customary or legal age of entry is usually not below 5 years old or above 7 years old. This level typically lasts six years, although its duration can range between four and seven years.

ISCED 2: Lower secondary education

Programmes at this level are typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from ISCED level 1. Students enter ISCED level 2 typically between ages 10 and 13 (age 12 being the most common).

ISCED 3: Upper secondary education

Programmes at this level are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Students enter this level typically between ages 14 and 16.

ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Post-secondary non-tertiary education provides learning experiences building on secondary education, preparing for labour market entry as well as tertiary education. Programmes at ISCED level 4, or post-secondary non-tertiary education, are typically designed to provide individuals who completed ISCED level 3 with non-tertiary qualifications required for progression to tertiary education or for employment when their ISCED level 3 qualifications do not grant such access. The completion of an ISCED level 3 programme is required to enter ISCED level 4 programmes.

ISCED 5: Short-cycle tertiary education

Programmes at this level are often designed to provide participants with professional knowledge, skills and competencies. Typically, they are practically based, occupationally-specific and prepare students to enter the labour market. However, these programmes may also provide a pathway to other tertiary education programmes. Entry into ISCED level 5 programmes requires the successful completion of ISCED level 3 or 4 with access to tertiary education.

ISCED 6: Bachelors' or equivalent level

Programmes at this level are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Entry into these programmes normally requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 3 or 4 programme with access to tertiary education. Entry may depend on subject choice and/or grades achieved at ISCED levels 3 and/or 4. Additionally, it may be required to take and succeed in entry examinations. Entry or transfer into ISCED level 6 is also sometimes possible after the successful completion of ISCED level 5.

ISCED 7: Master's or equivalent level

Programmes at this level, are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. Typically, programmes at this level are theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and other tertiary educational institutions.

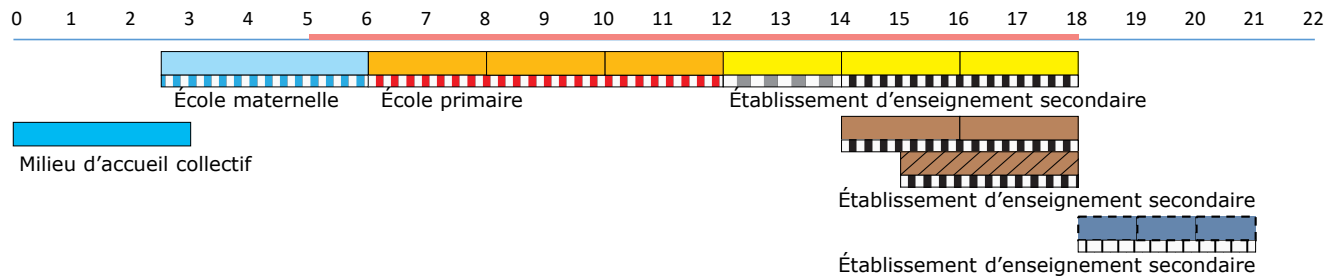
Entry into ISCED level 7 programmes preparing for a second or further degree normally requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 6 or 7 programme. In the case of long programmes that prepare for a first degree equivalent to a Master's degree, entry requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 3 or 4 programme with access to tertiary education. Entry into such programmes may depend on subject choice and/or grades achieved at ISCED levels 3 and/or 4. Additionally, it may be required to take and succeed in entry examinations.

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAMS

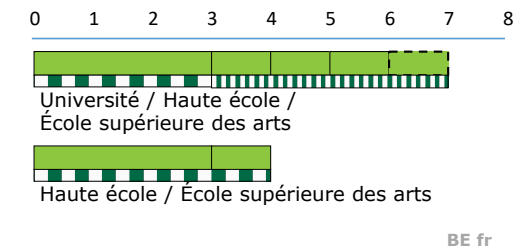
Belgium – French Community	14	Poland	25
Belgium – German-speaking Community	14	Portugal	26
Belgium – Flemish Community	15	Romania	27
Bulgaria	15	Slovenia	27
Czechia	16	Slovakia	27
Denmark	16	Finland	28
Germany	17	Sweden	29
Estonia	17	United Kingdom – England	29
Ireland	17	United Kingdom – Wales	29
Greece	18	United Kingdom – Northern Ireland	30
Spain	19	United Kingdom – Scotland	30
France	19	Albania	31
Croatia	20	Bosnia and Herzegovina	31
Italy	21	Switzerland	32
Cyprus	21	Iceland	32
Latvia	22	Liechtenstein	33
Lithuania	22	Montenegro	33
Luxembourg	22	North Macedonia	34
Hungary	23	Norway	34
Malta	23	Serbia	34
Netherlands	24	Turkey	35
Austria	25		

Belgium – French Community

Age of students

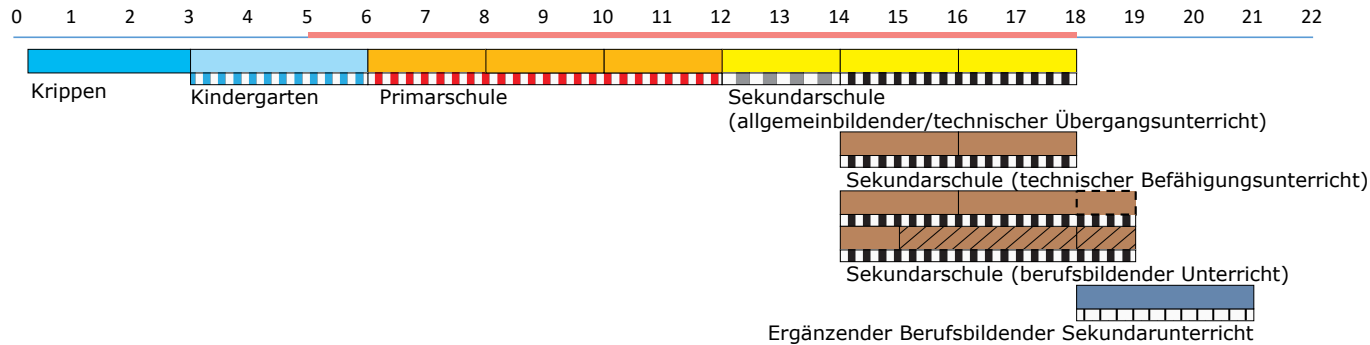


Programme duration (years)

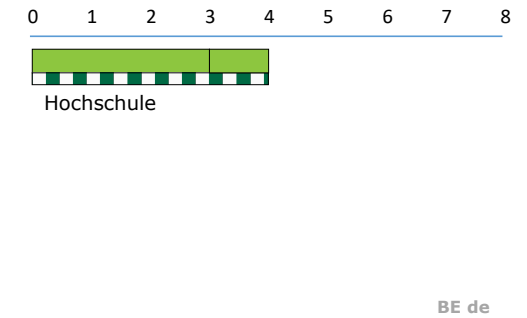


Belgium – German-speaking Community

Age of students



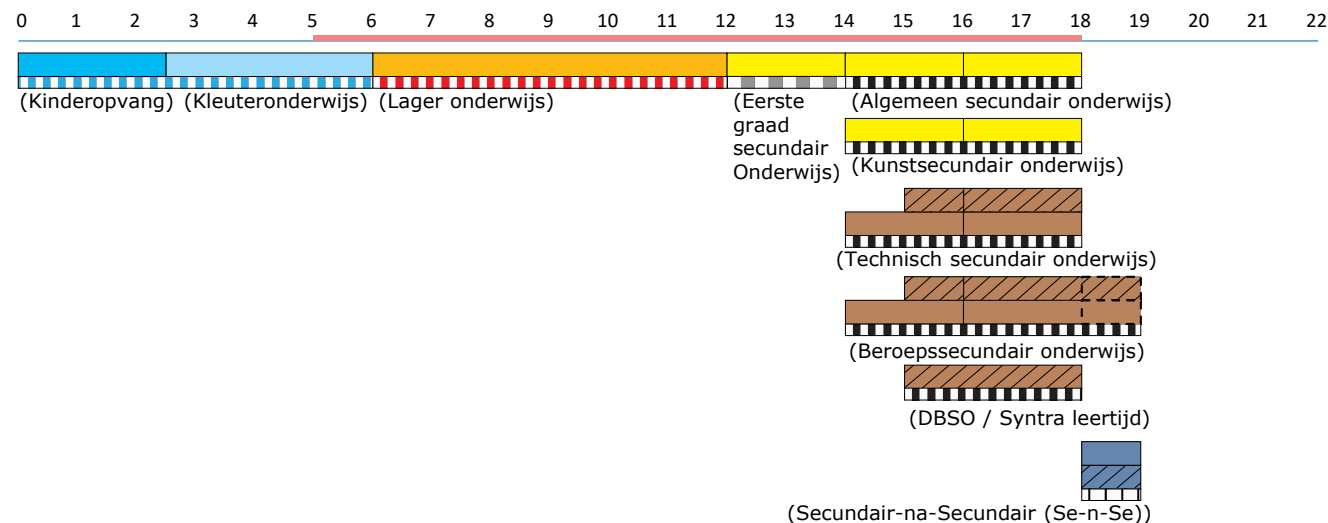
Programme duration (years)



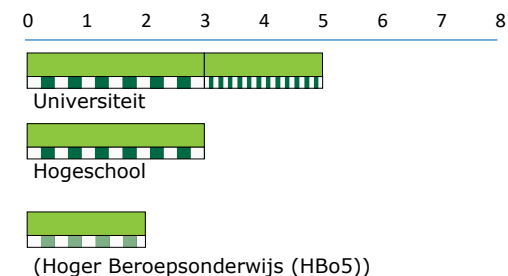
Note: *Krippen* starts from 3 months.

Belgium – Flemish Community

Age of students



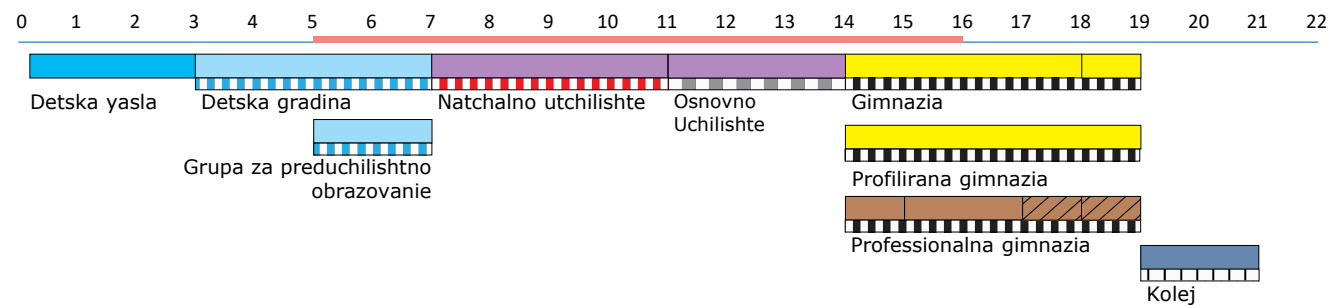
Programme duration (years)



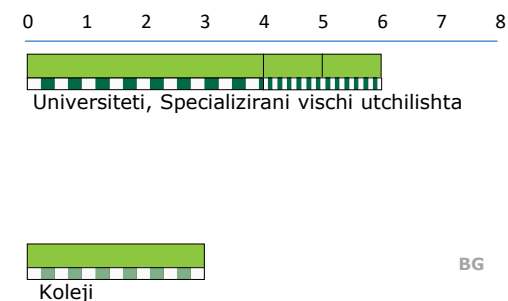
BE nl

Bulgaria

Age of students



Programme duration (years)



BG

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)

Primary education

Single structure

Secondary general education

Secondary vocational education

Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Tertiary education (full-time)

Allocation to the ISCED levels:

ISCED 0

ISCED 1

ISCED 2

ISCED 3

ISCED 4

ISCED 5

ISCED 6

ISCED 7

Compulsory full-time education/training

Additional year

-/n/-

Combined school and workplace courses

Compulsory part-time education/training

Study abroad

-/n/-

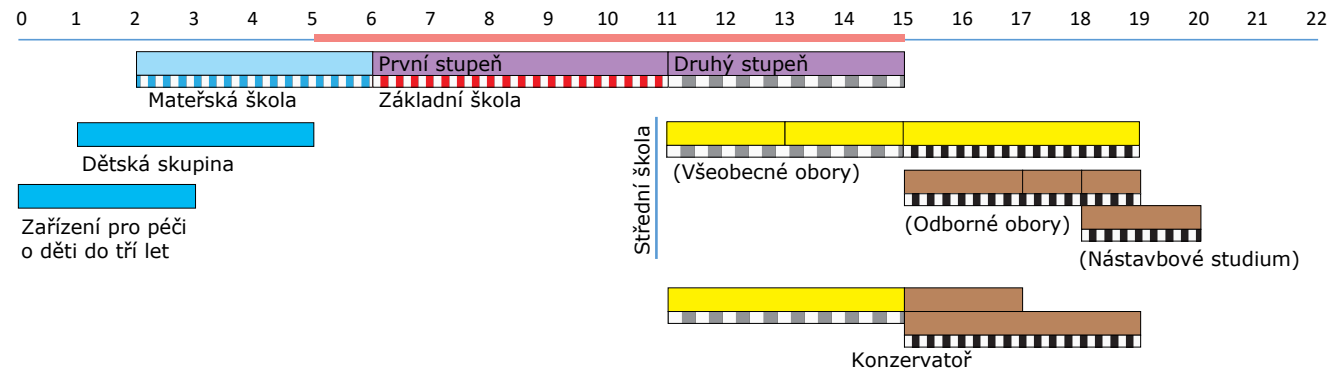
Compulsory work experience + its duration

→ Years

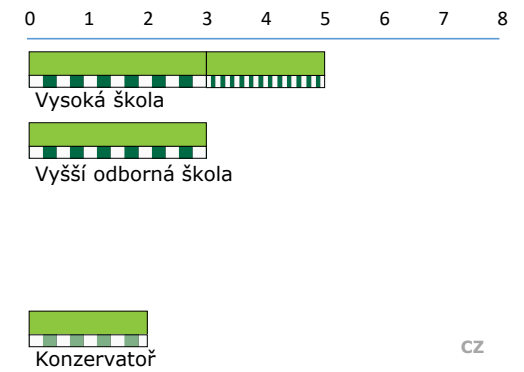
Programme being phased out during (year)

Czechia

Age of students

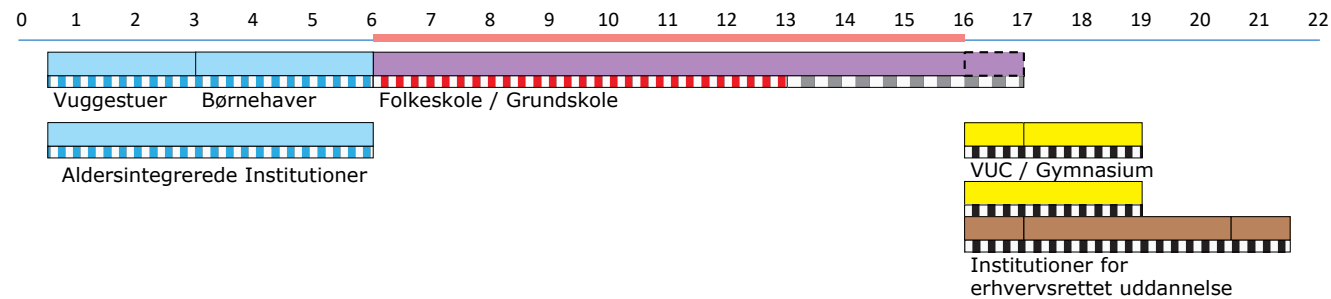


Programme duration (years)

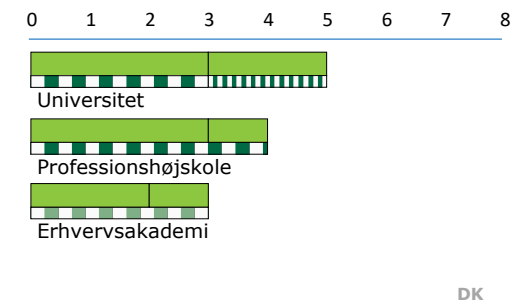


Denmark

Age of students

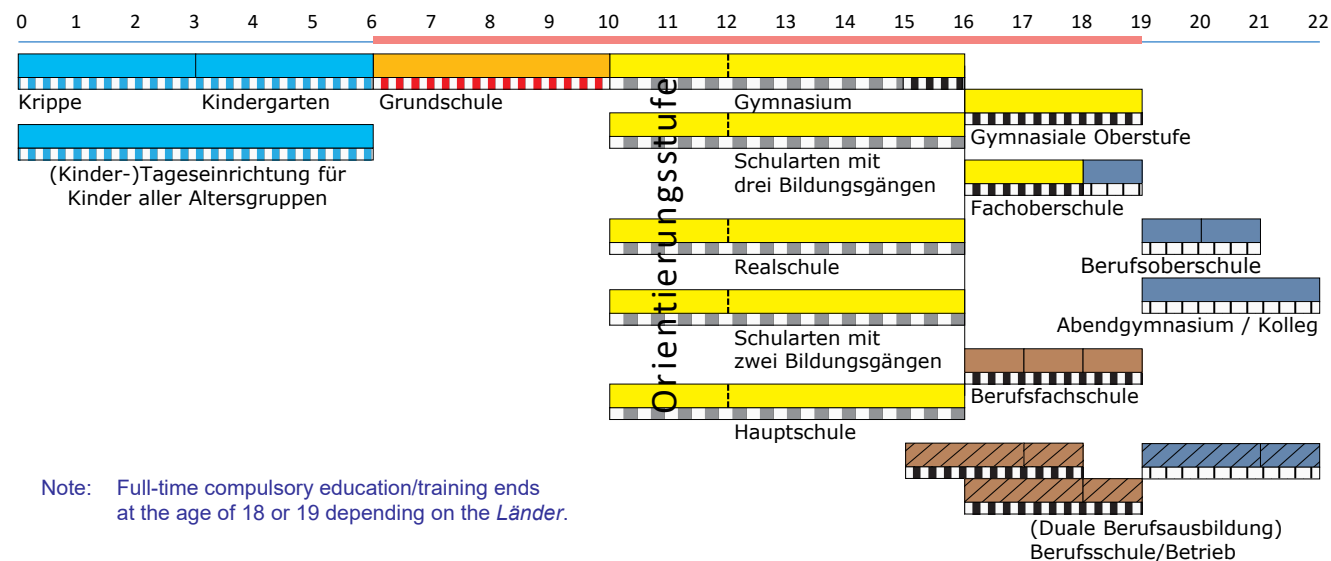


Programme duration (years)

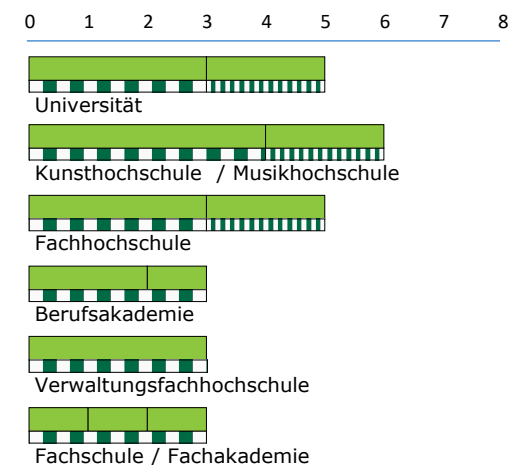


Germany

Age of students



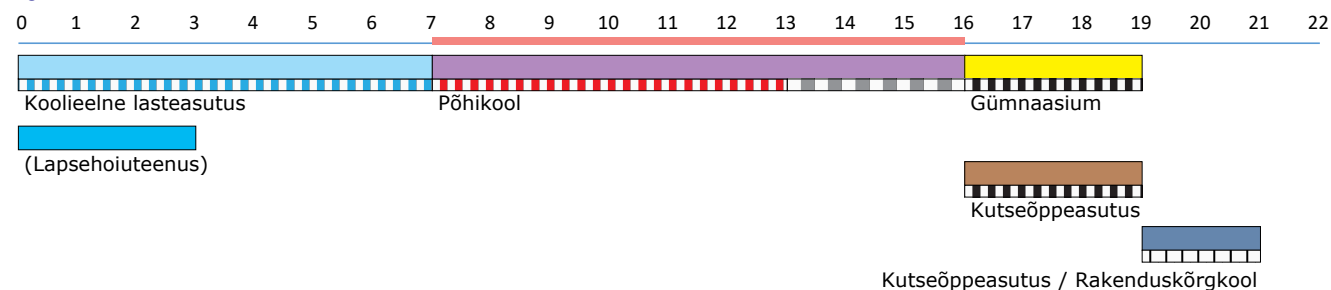
Programme duration (years)



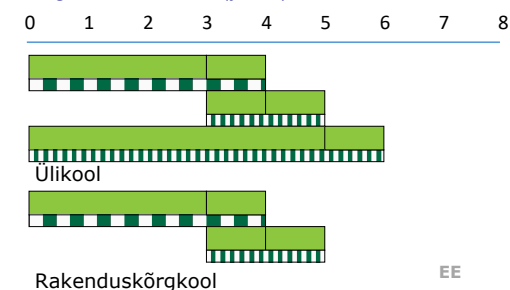
DE

Estonia

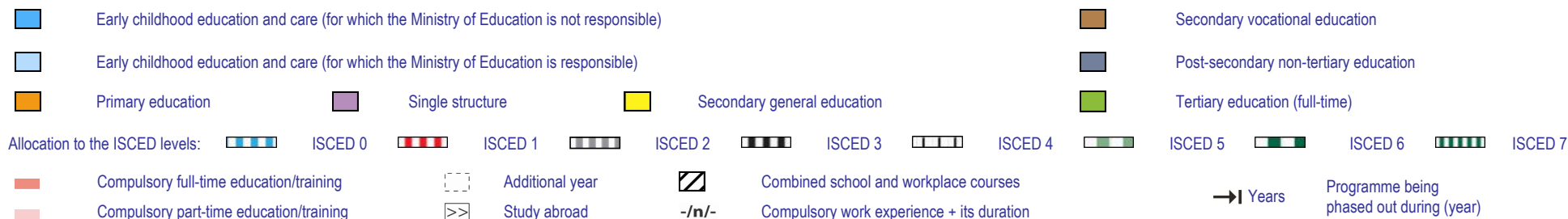
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

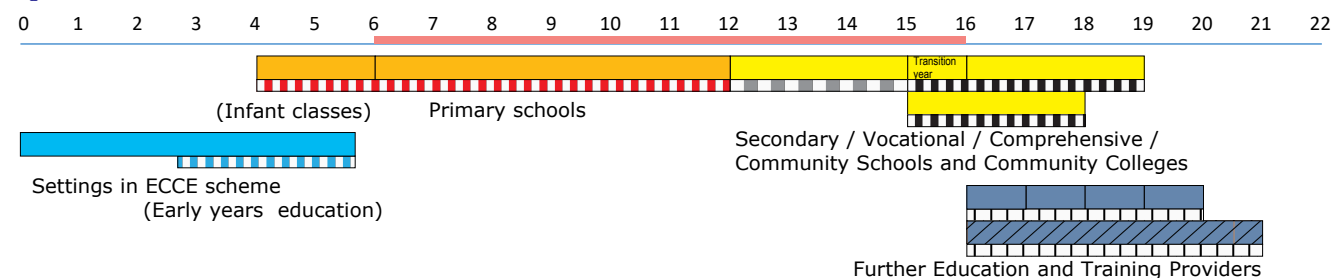


EE

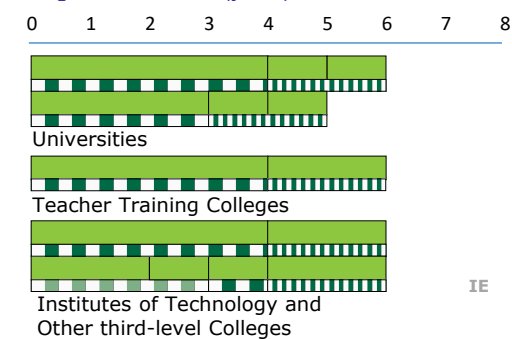


Ireland

Age of students

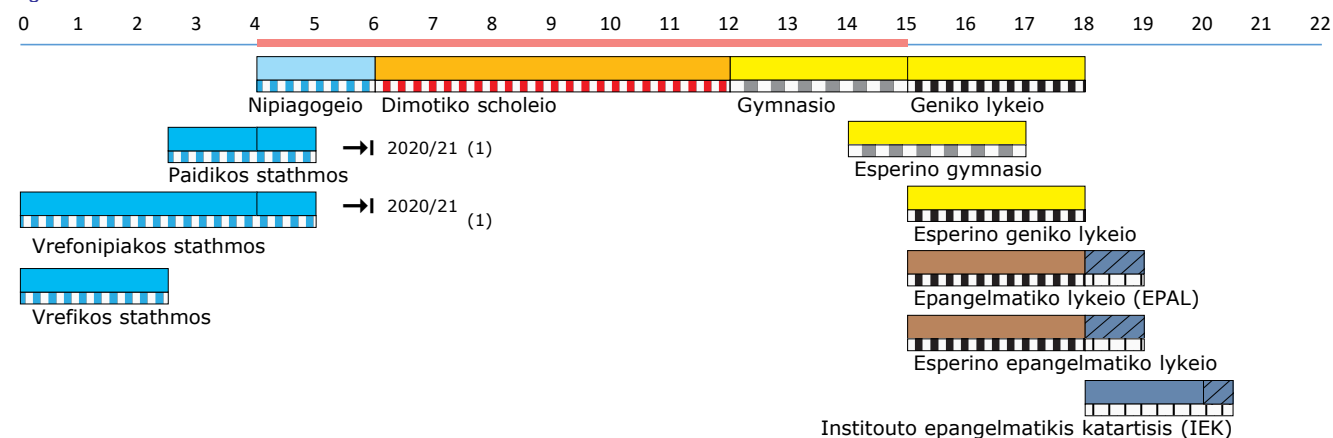


Programme duration (years)

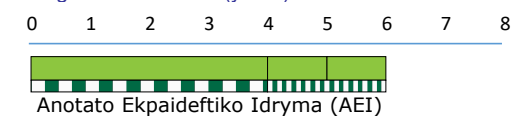


Greece

Age of students



Programme duration (years)

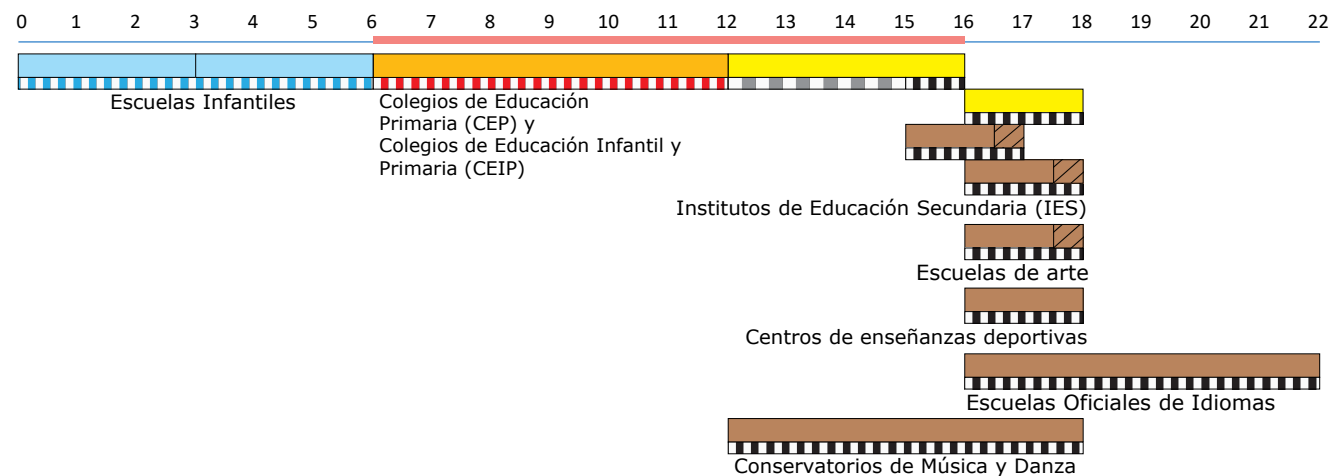


(1) Programme being phased out between 4 and 5 years old as from 2020/21.

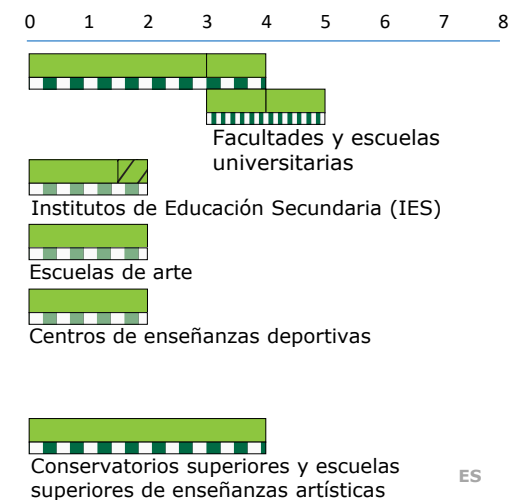
Notes: Law 4521/2018 established the two-year compulsory *nipiagogeio* (pre-primary school). The implementation of the measure spans a 3-year period from 2018 to 2021. School year 2020/21 (third and last year of its implementation) foresees the compulsory attendance of all pre-schoolers in all municipalities of the country. Meanwhile, for one last year, *Vrefonipiakoi stathmoi* and *Paidikoi stathmoi* will continue to accommodate children up to 5 years old.

Spain

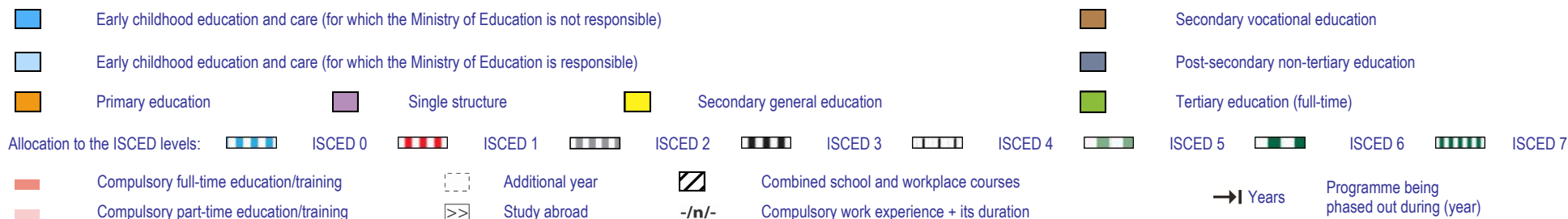
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

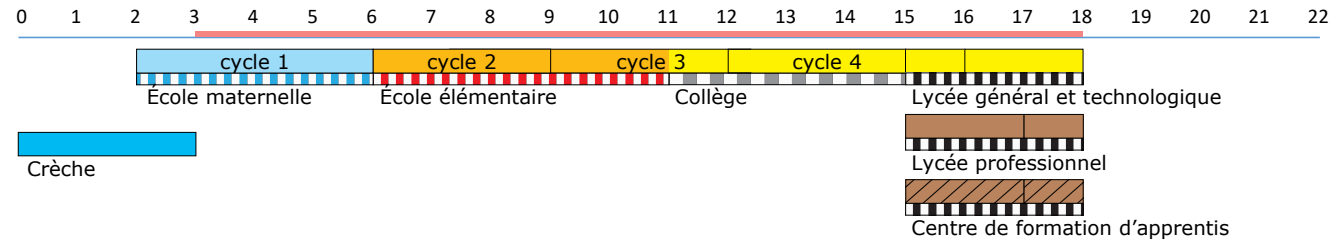


Note: *Escuelas oficiales de idiomas* offer language courses that may last for 11 years. Some of the education provision of *Conservatorios* can be recognised/validated in full-time mainstream education programmes and contribute to the obtaining of *Bachillerato* certificate *Bachiller artístico*.



France

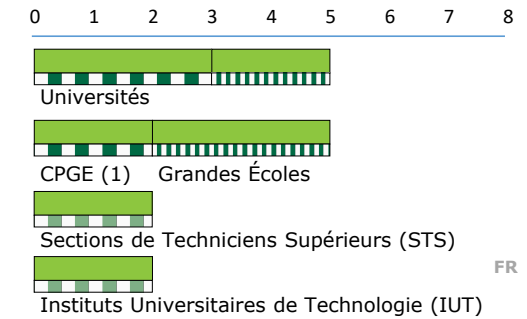
Age of students



(1) CPGE: Classes préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles

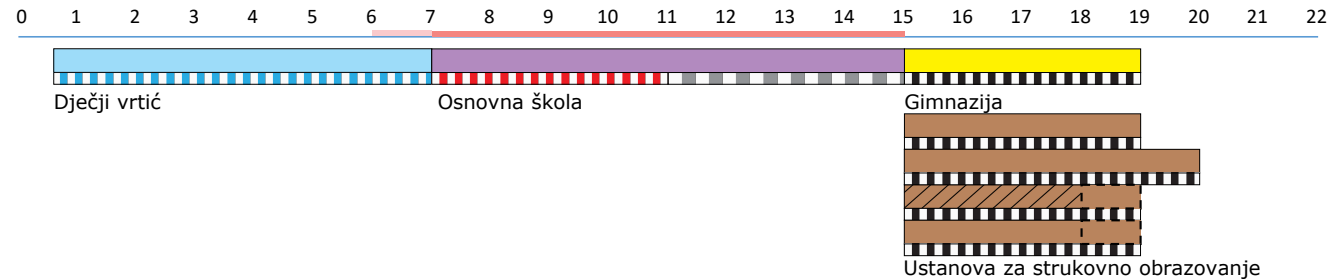
Note: ISCED 4 education covers less than 2 % of the total number of students (all levels). Since September 2020, training has become compulsory for students aged between 16 and 18. Young people will be able to fulfil this compulsory training by several means: schooling, apprenticeship, training courses, civic service, and support system or social and professional integration measures.

Programme duration (years)



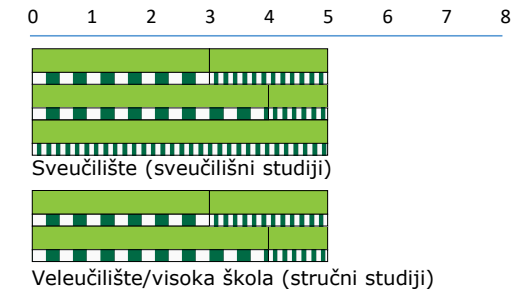
Croatia

Age of students



Note: Start of primary education (ISCED 1) depends on child's birthday. Children born between January and April start primary school in calendar year in which they turn 6; those born from April to December when they are 7 years old.

Programme duration (years)

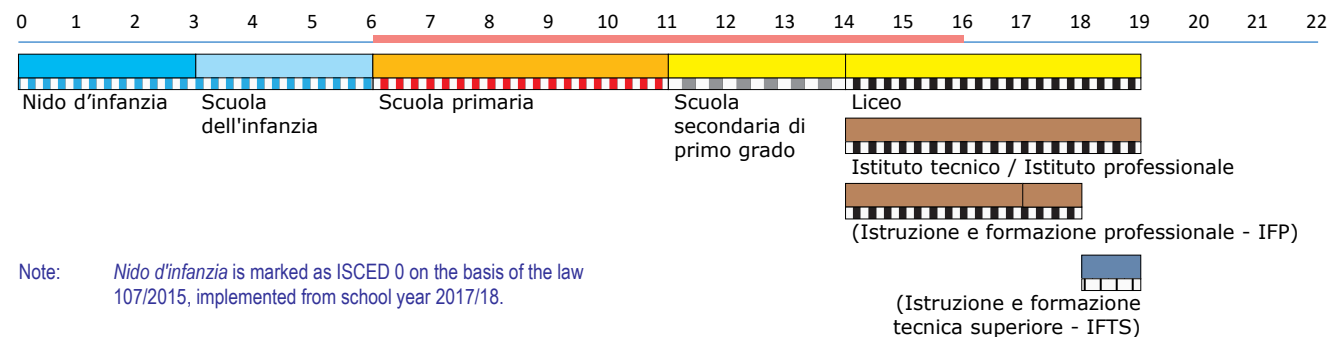


Ustanova za obrazovanje odraslih

HR

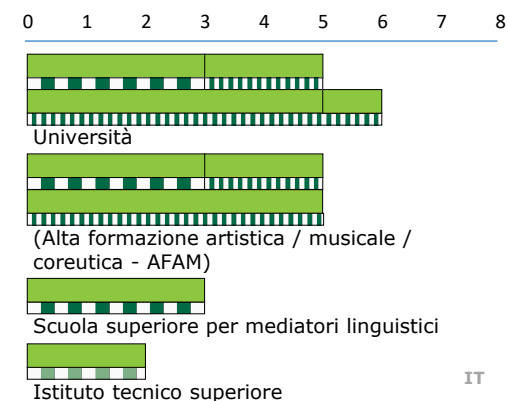
Italy

Age of students



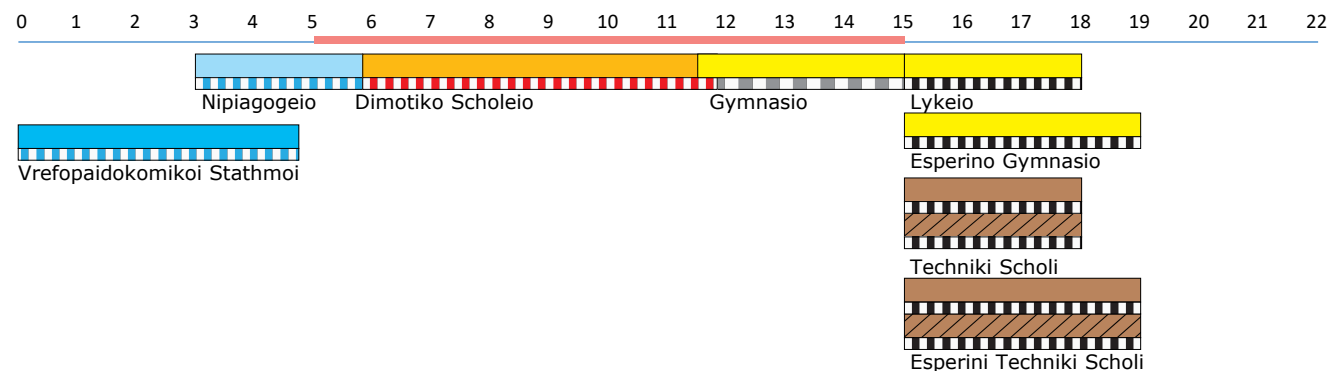
Note: Nido d'infanzia is marked as ISCED 0 on the basis of the law 107/2015, implemented from school year 2017/18.

Programme duration (years)

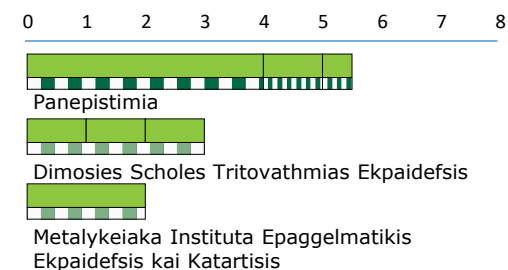


Cyprus

Age of students



Programme duration (years)



Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)

Primary education

Single structure

Secondary general education

Secondary vocational education

Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Tertiary education (full-time)

Allocation to the ISCED levels:

ISCED 0

ISCED 1

ISCED 2

ISCED 3

ISCED 4

ISCED 5

ISCED 6

ISCED 7

Compulsory full-time education/training

Additional year

Combined school and workplace courses

Compulsory part-time education/training

Study abroad

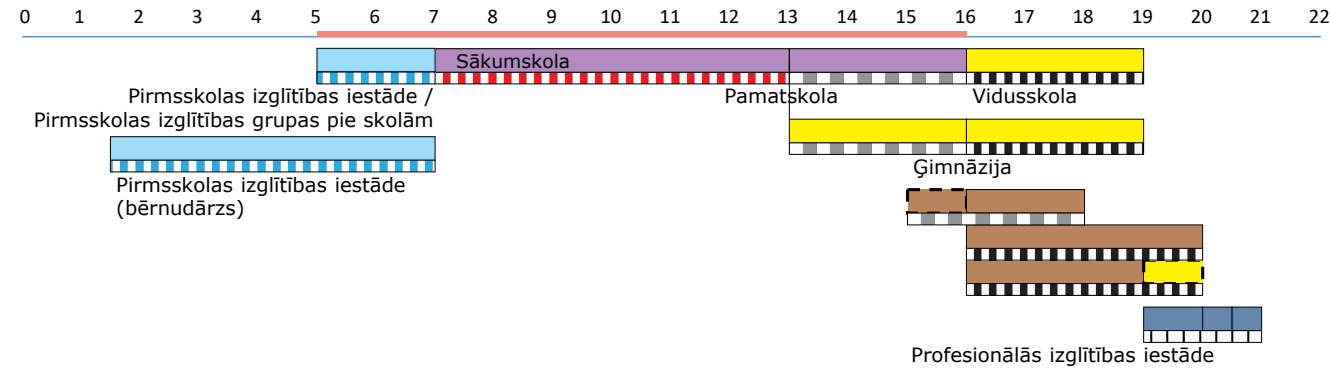
-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

→ Years

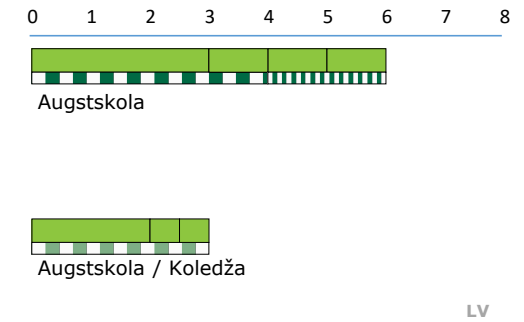
Programme being phased out during (year)

Latvia

Age of students



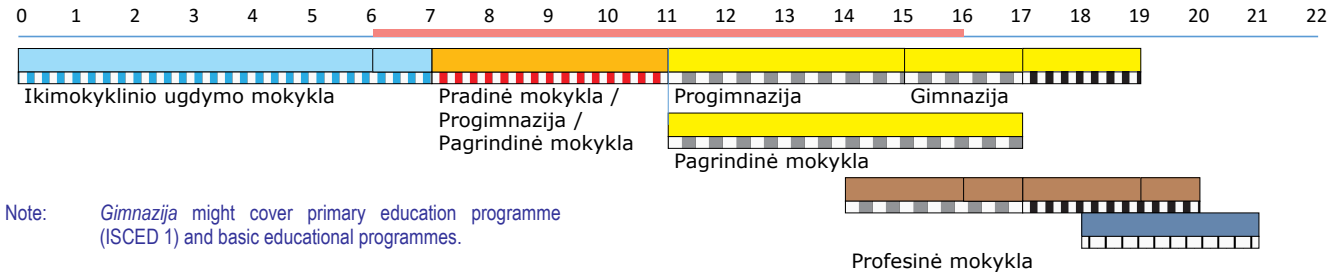
Programme duration (years)



LV

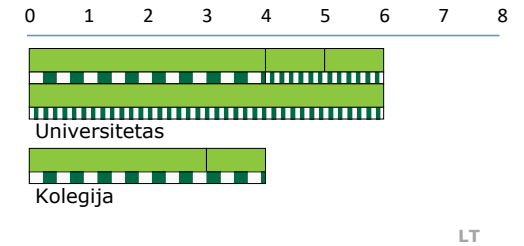
Lithuania

Age of students



Note: *Gimnazija* might cover primary education programme (ISCED 1) and basic educational programmes.

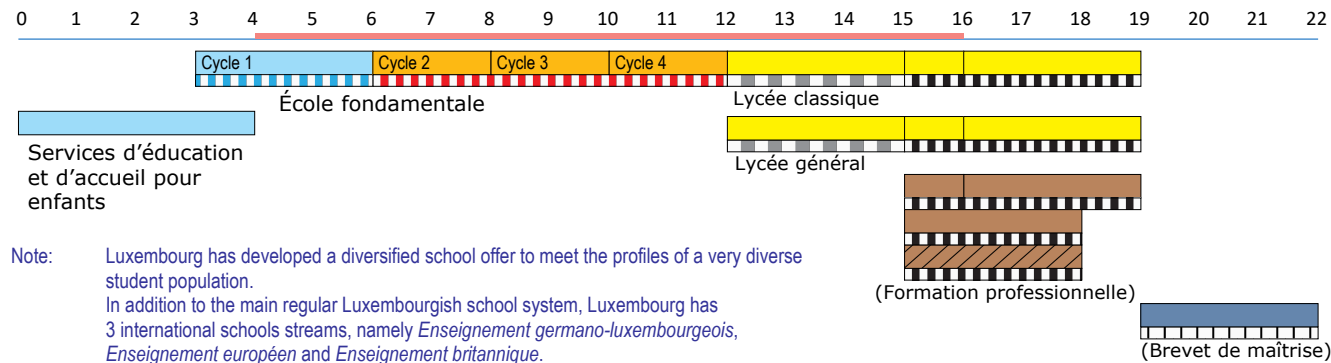
Programme duration (years)



LT

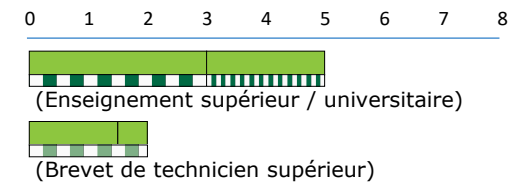
Luxembourg

Age of students



Note: Luxembourg has developed a diversified school offer to meet the profiles of a very diverse student population. In addition to the main regular Luxembourgish school system, Luxembourg has 3 international schools streams, namely *Enseignement germano-luxembourgeois*, *Enseignement européen* and *Enseignement britannique*.

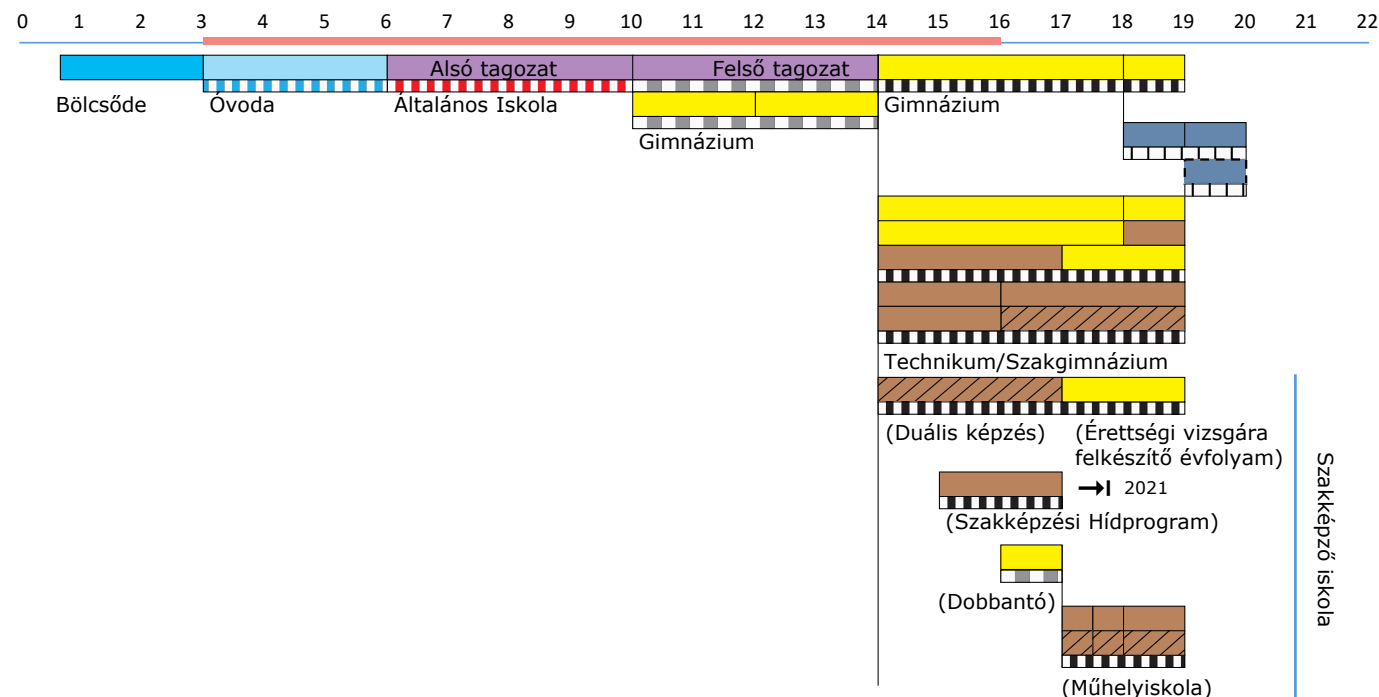
Programme duration (years)



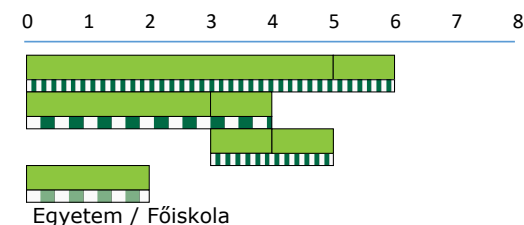
LU

Hungary

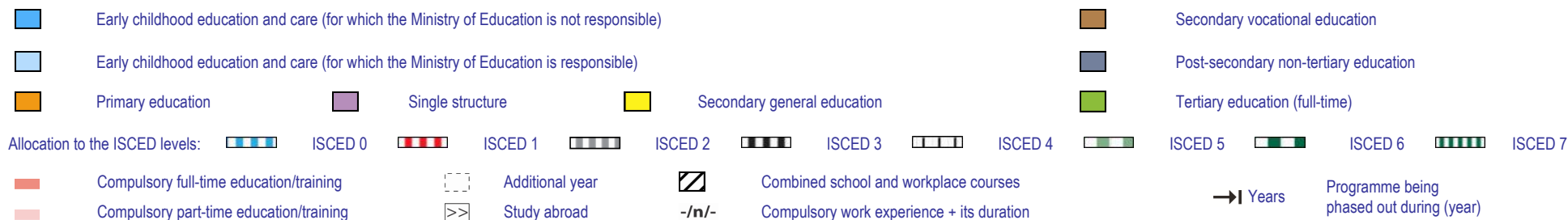
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

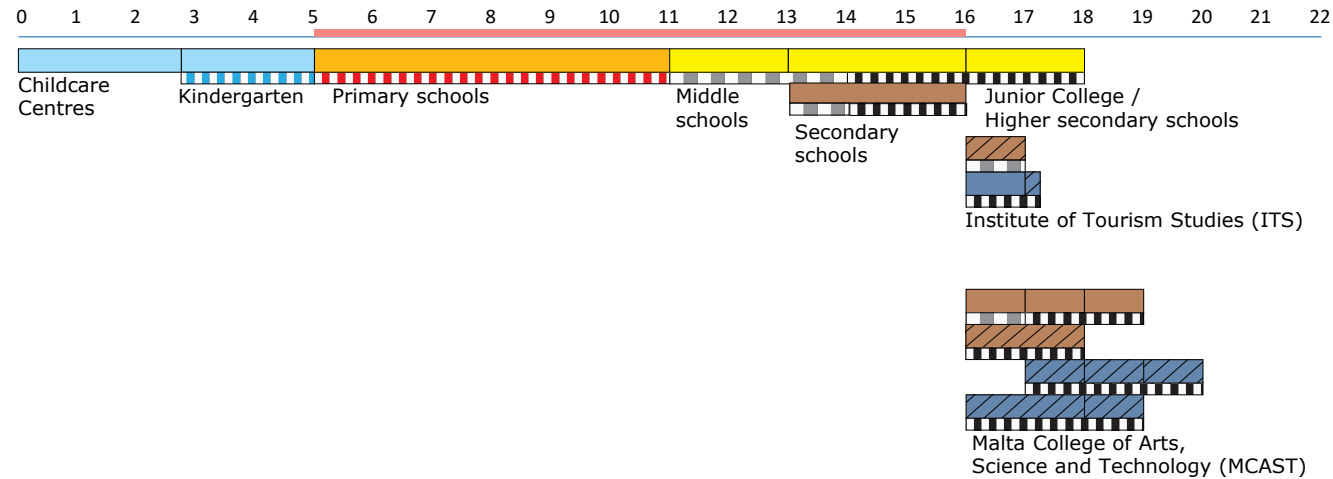


Note: There is a new type of institution called 'Technikum'. In order to follow 'Szakképzési Hídprogram', students must have at least completed grade 6, but must be older than 15, this programme is phasing out. 'Műhelyiskola' and the final years of 'Technikum' may be organised as dual programmes.

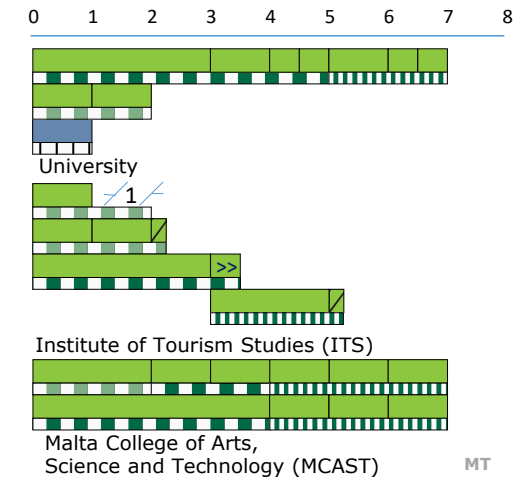


Malta

Age of students

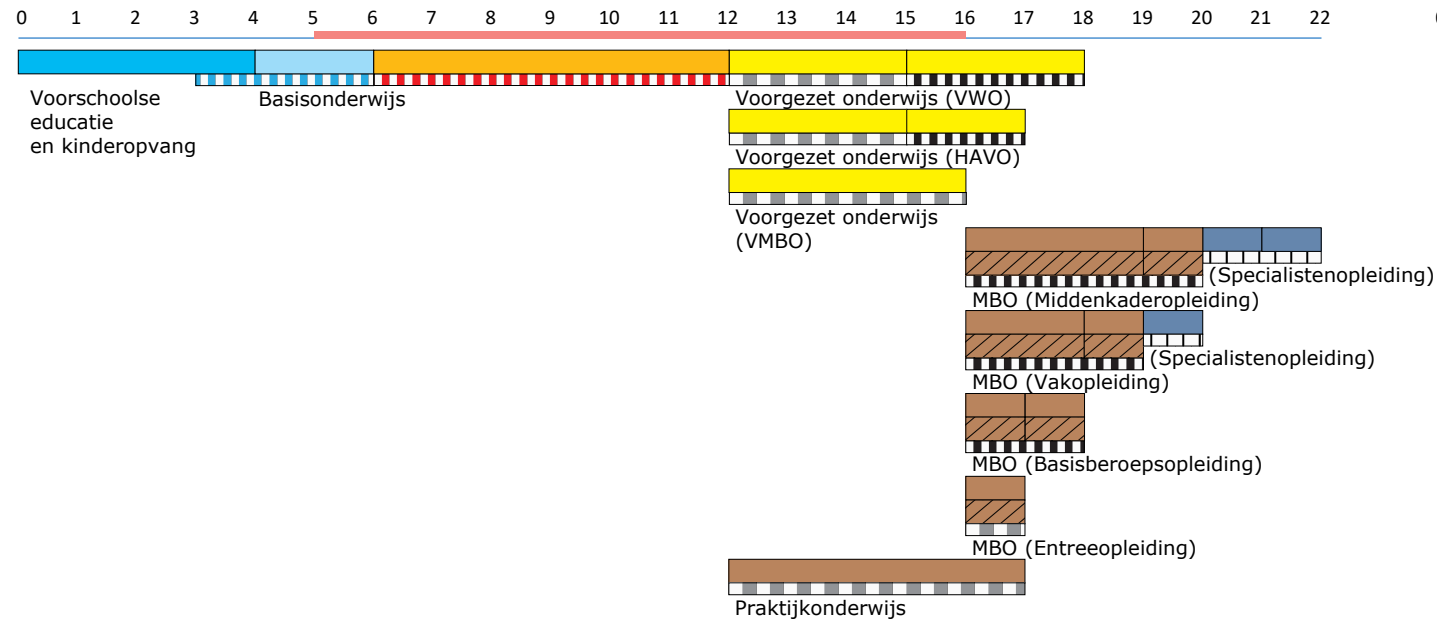


Programme duration (years)

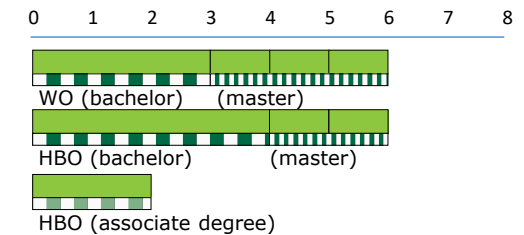


Netherlands

Age of students



Programme duration (years)

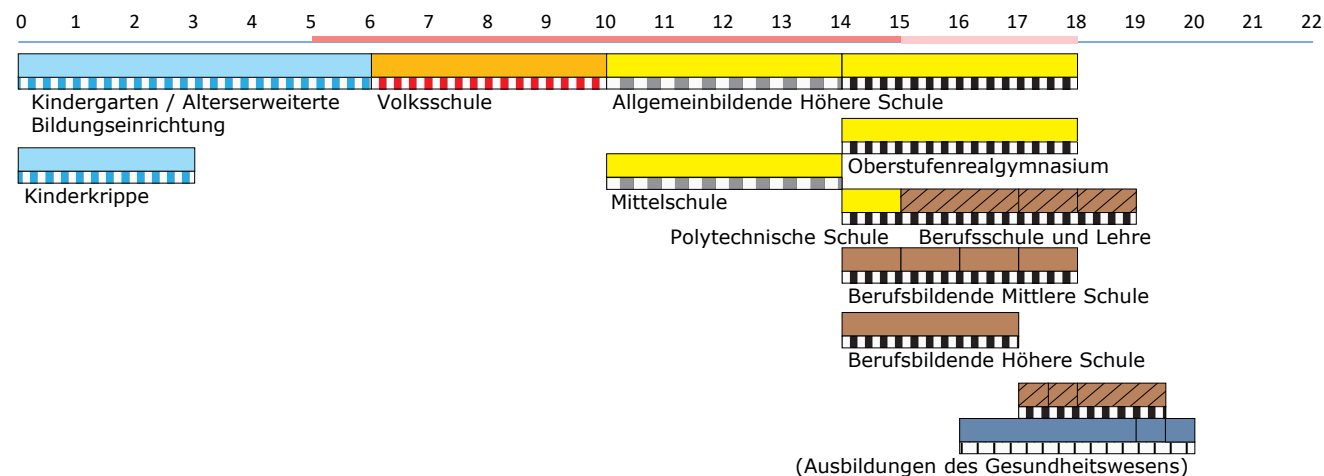


NL

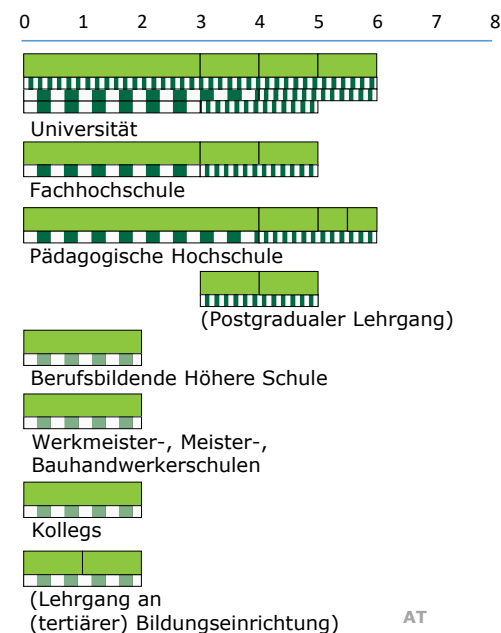
Note: At 16, students who have not obtained a basic qualification (*Startkwalificatie*) have to continue their education/training until they turn 18 or get a senior general secondary (HAVO) or pre-university (VWO) or VET (at least MBO 2) diploma.

Austria

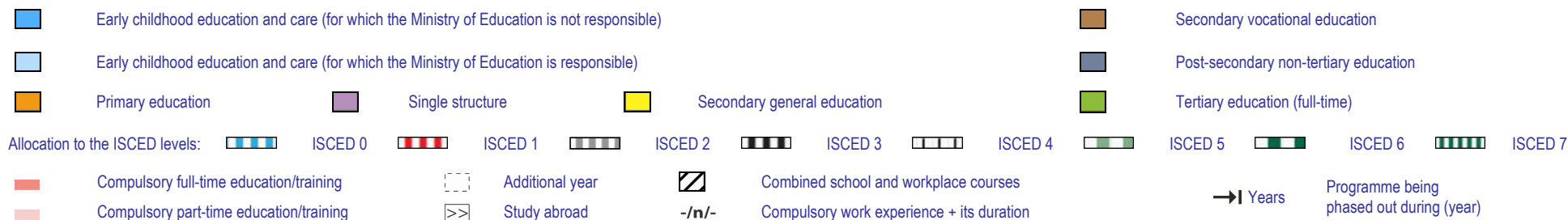
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

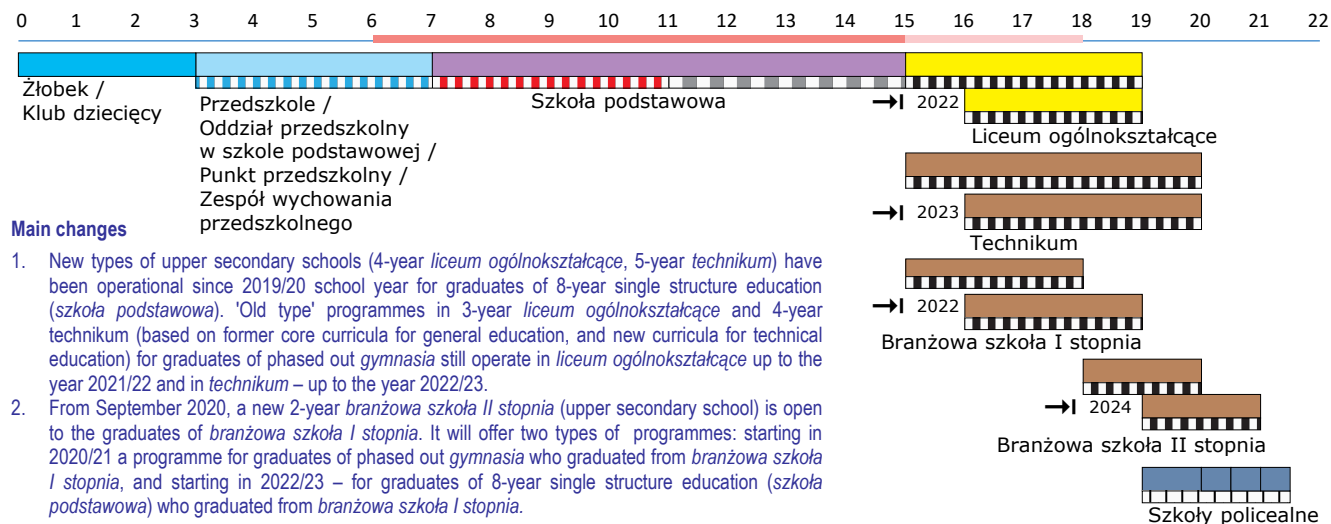


Note: Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen offer education programmes lasting 5 years: the first three years are classified as ISCED level 3 while the last two years belong to ISCED level 5.

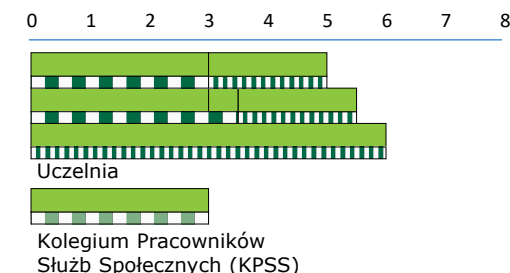


Poland

Age of students



Programme duration (years)

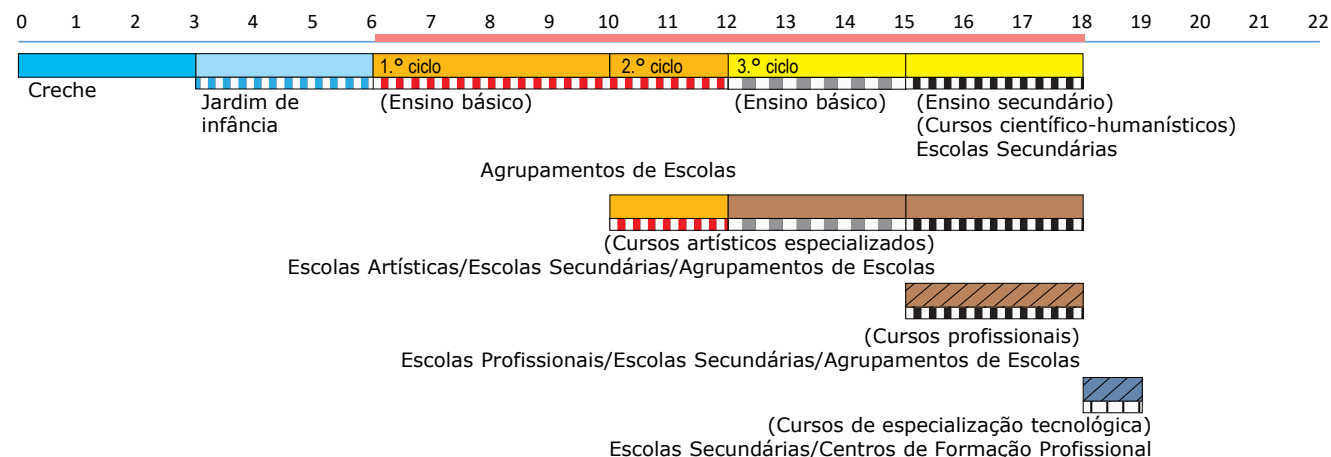


PL

Note: Major changes at different education levels gradually take place between 1 September 2017 and the school year 2022/23 (Act of 14 December 2016 'Law on School Education' and an Act 'Legislation introducing the Act – Law on School Education').

Portugal

Age of students



Programme duration (years)

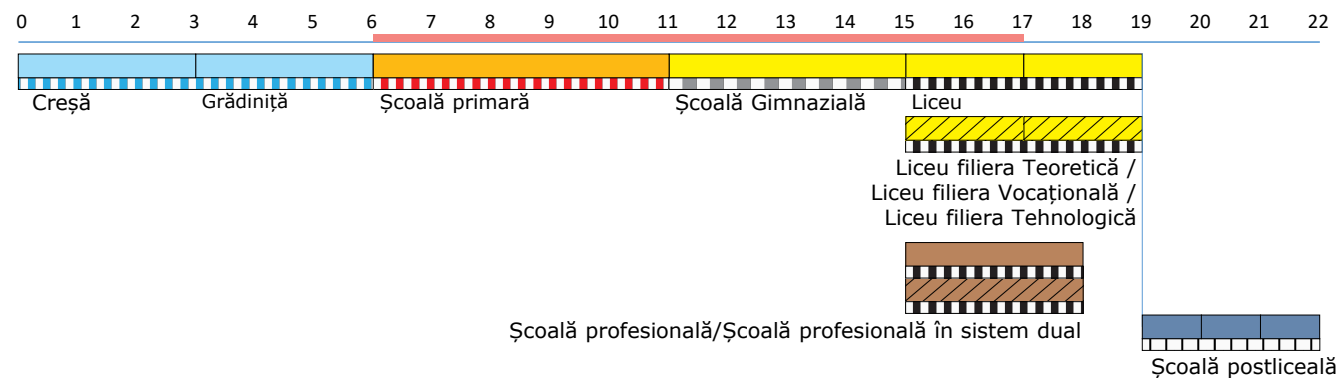


PT

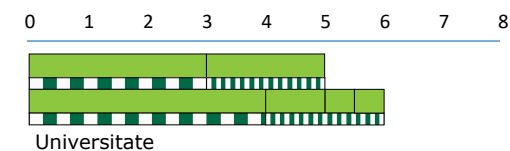
Note: *Agrupamentos de Escolas* (School Clusters) are organisational units that can encompass several schools and learning cycles, from kindergarten to upper secondary education. The institutions in the diagram are examples of some of the learning spaces where each type of education is offered; the diagram does not indicate all educational institutions existing in the Portuguese system.

Romania

Age of students



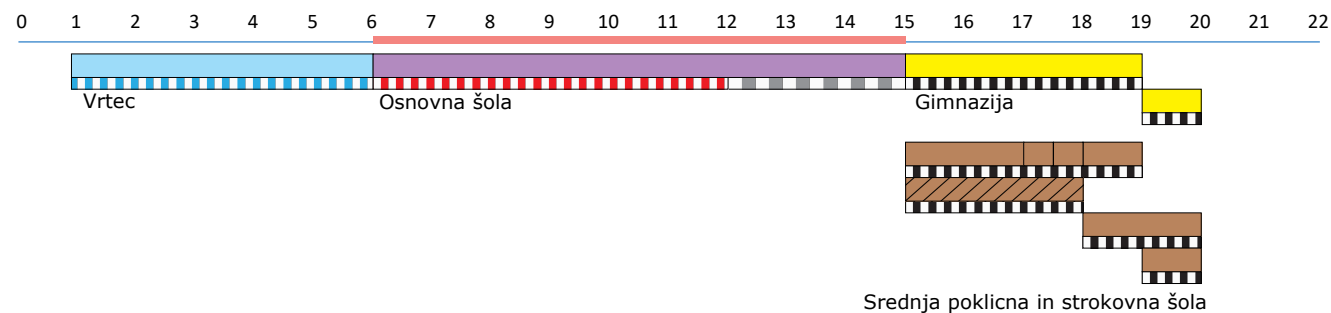
Programme duration (years)



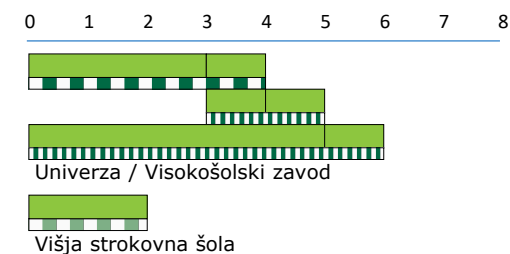
RO

Slovenia

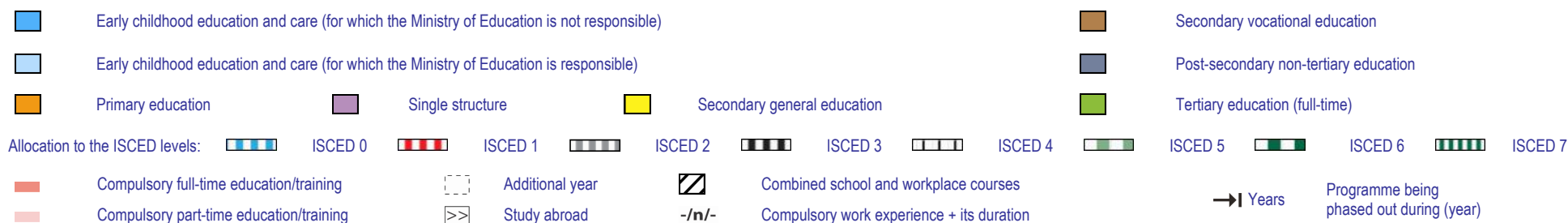
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

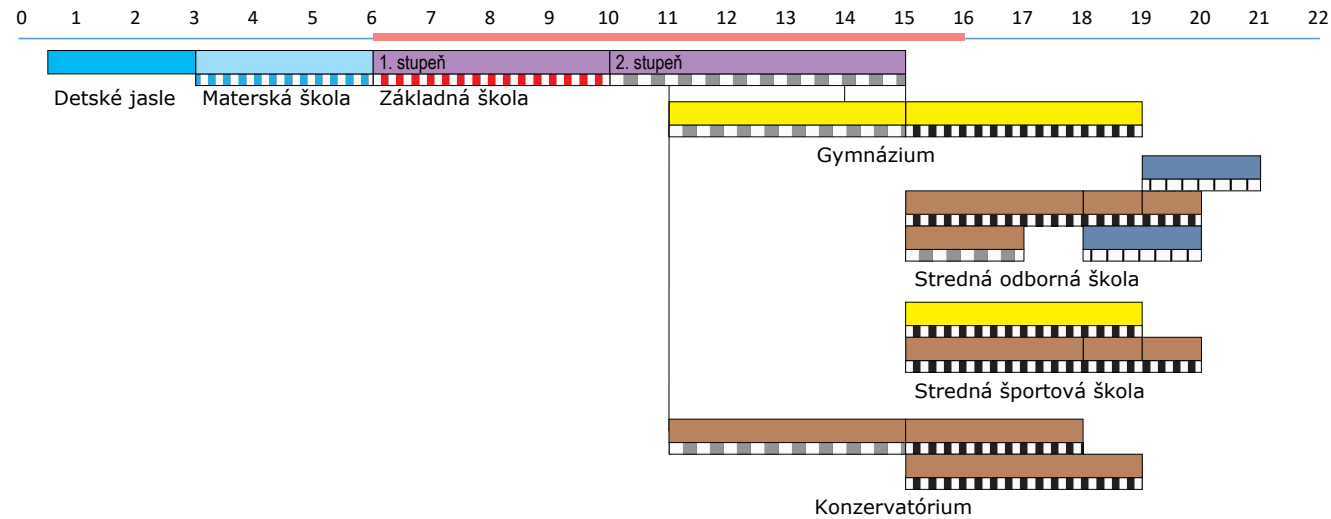


SI

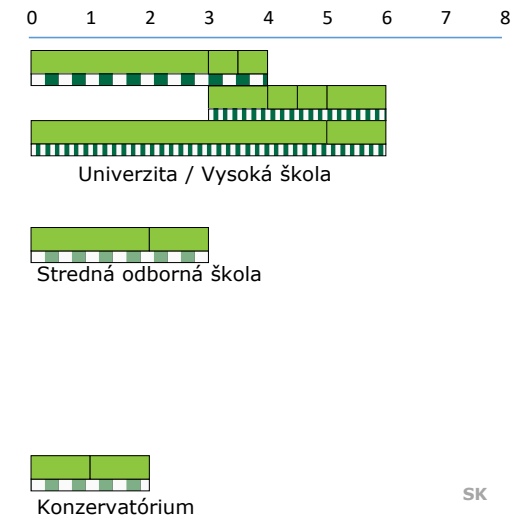


Slovakia

Age of students

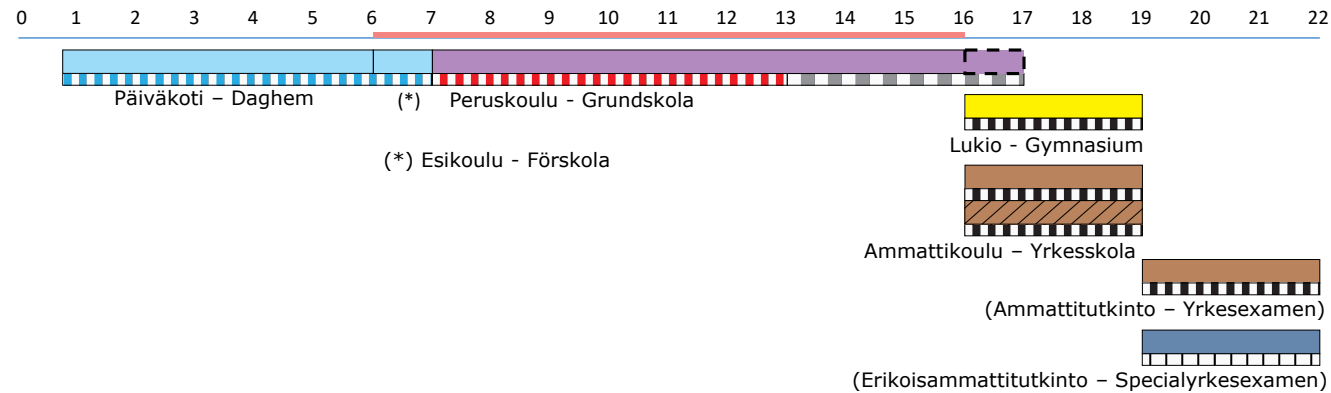


Programme duration (years)

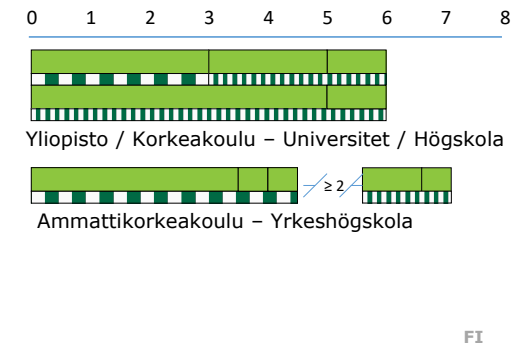


Finland

Age of students



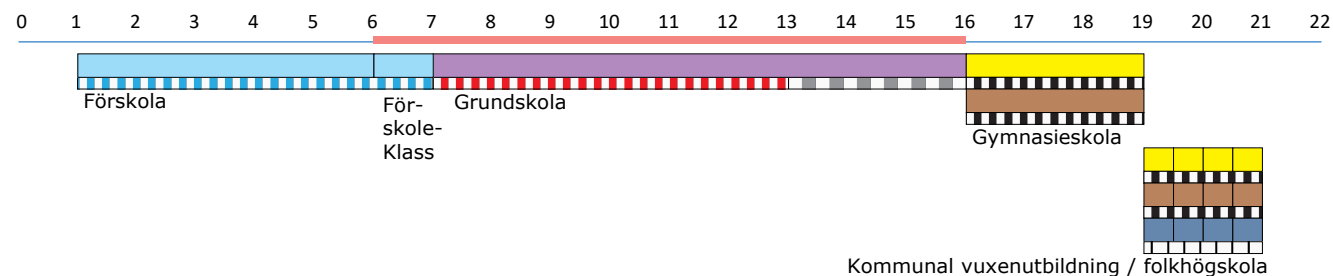
Programme duration (years)



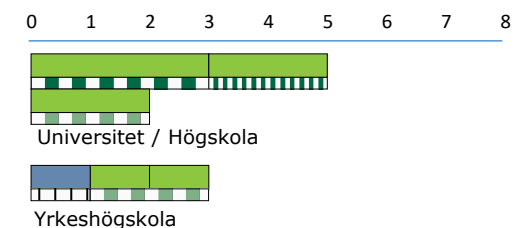
Note: Students can join ISCED 4 programmes at different ages.

Sweden

Age of students



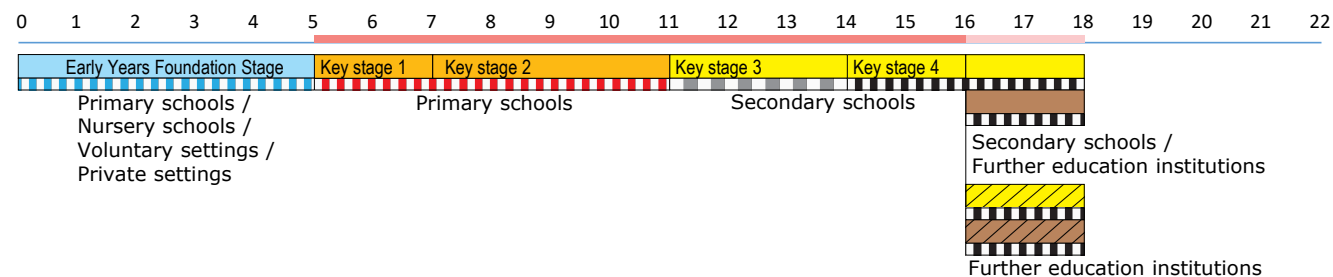
Programme duration (years)



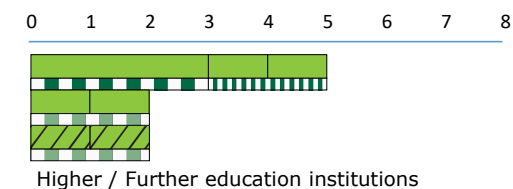
SE

United Kingdom – England

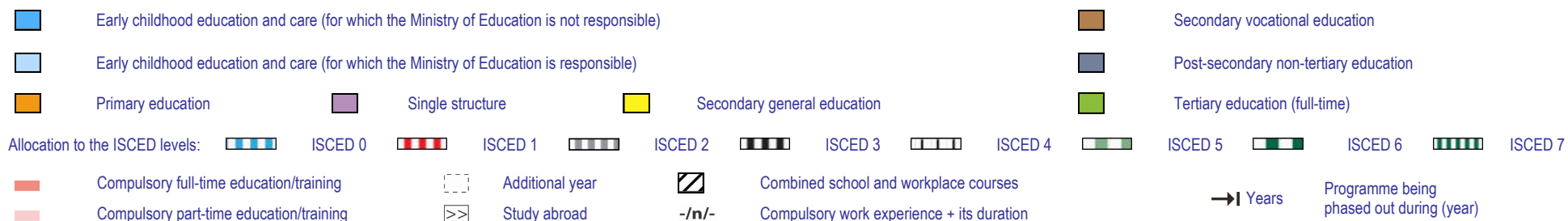
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

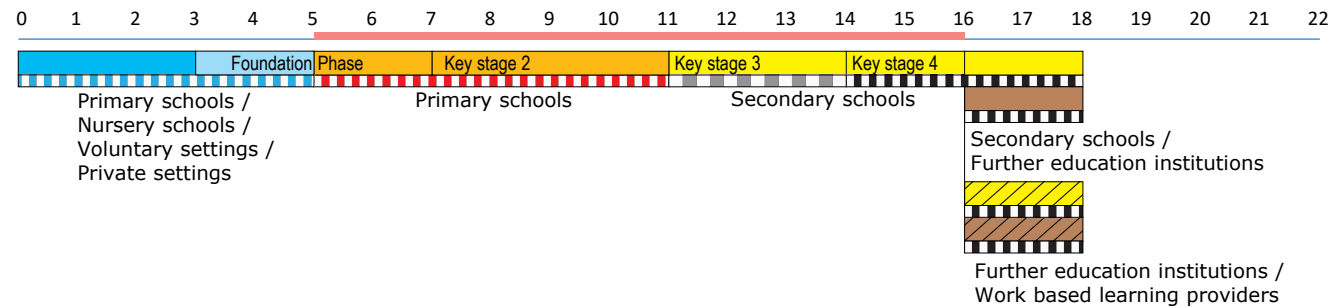


UK-ENG

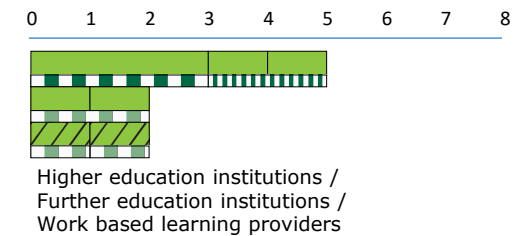


United Kingdom – Wales

Age of students



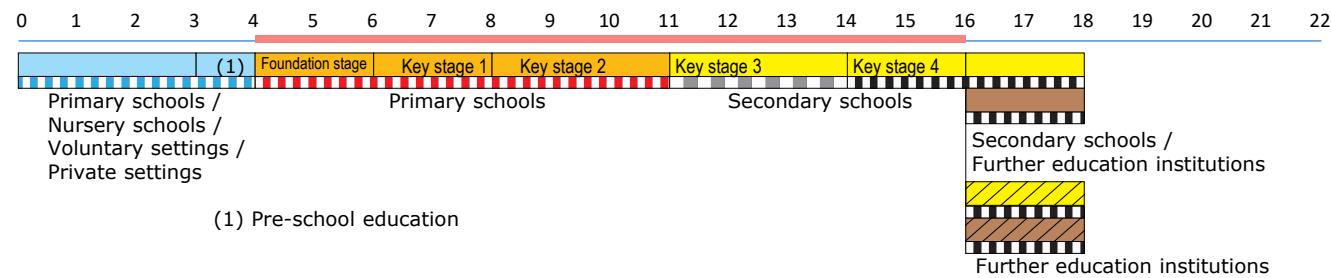
Programme duration (years)



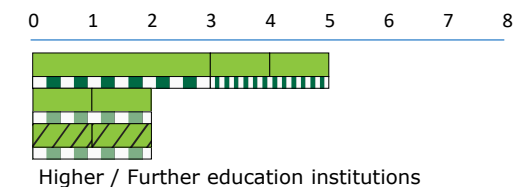
UK-WLS

United Kingdom – Northern Ireland

Age of students



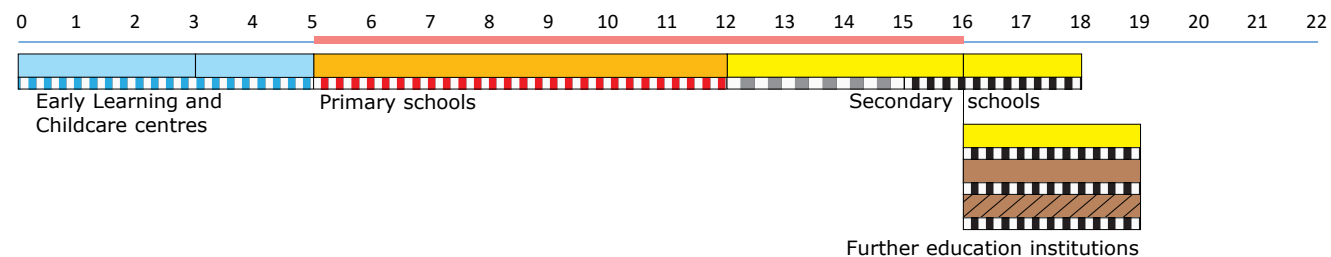
Programme duration (years)



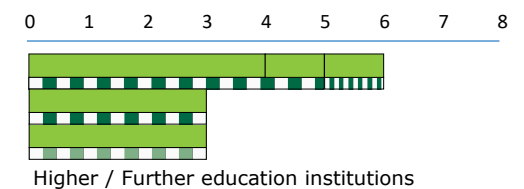
UK-NIR

United Kingdom – Scotland

Age of students



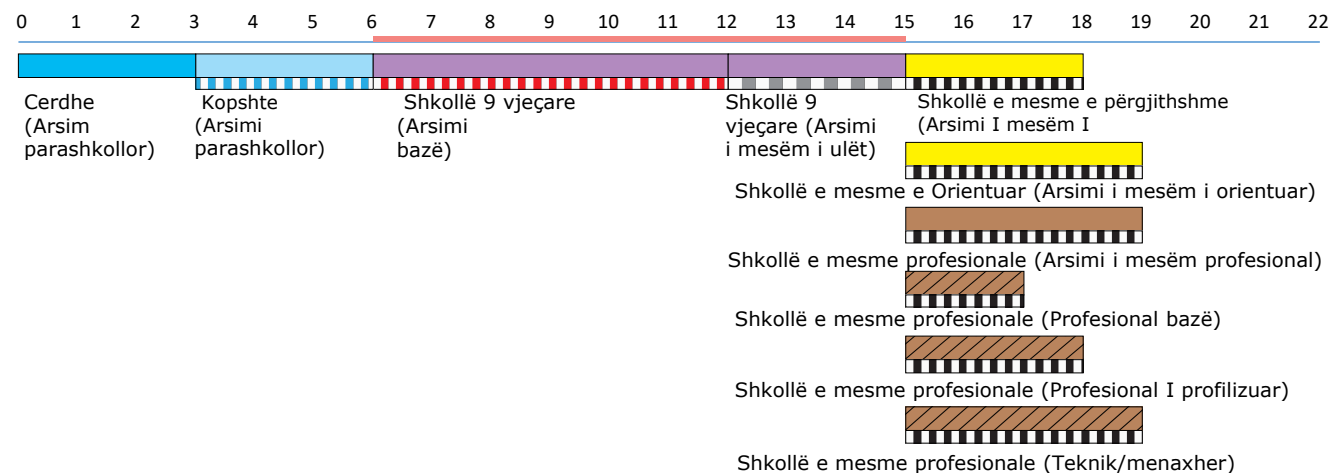
Programme duration (years)



UK-SCT

Albania

Age of students



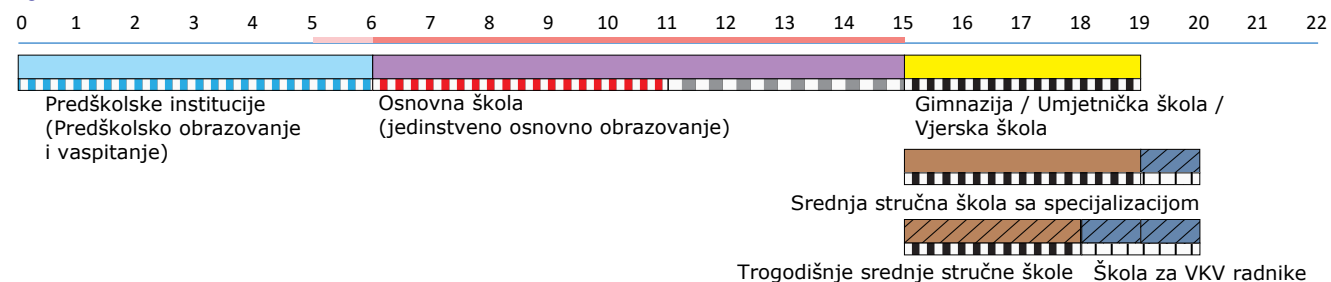
Programme duration (years)



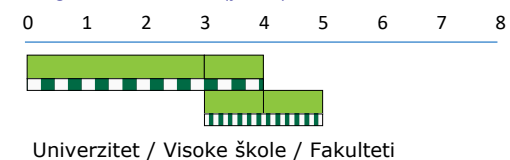
AL

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Age of students

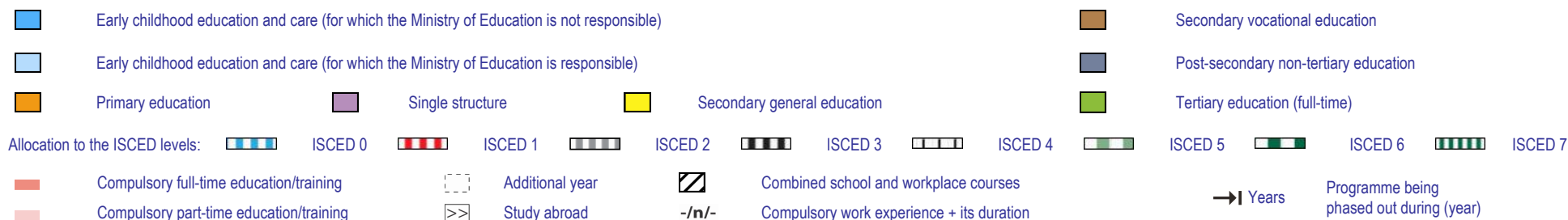


Programme duration (years)



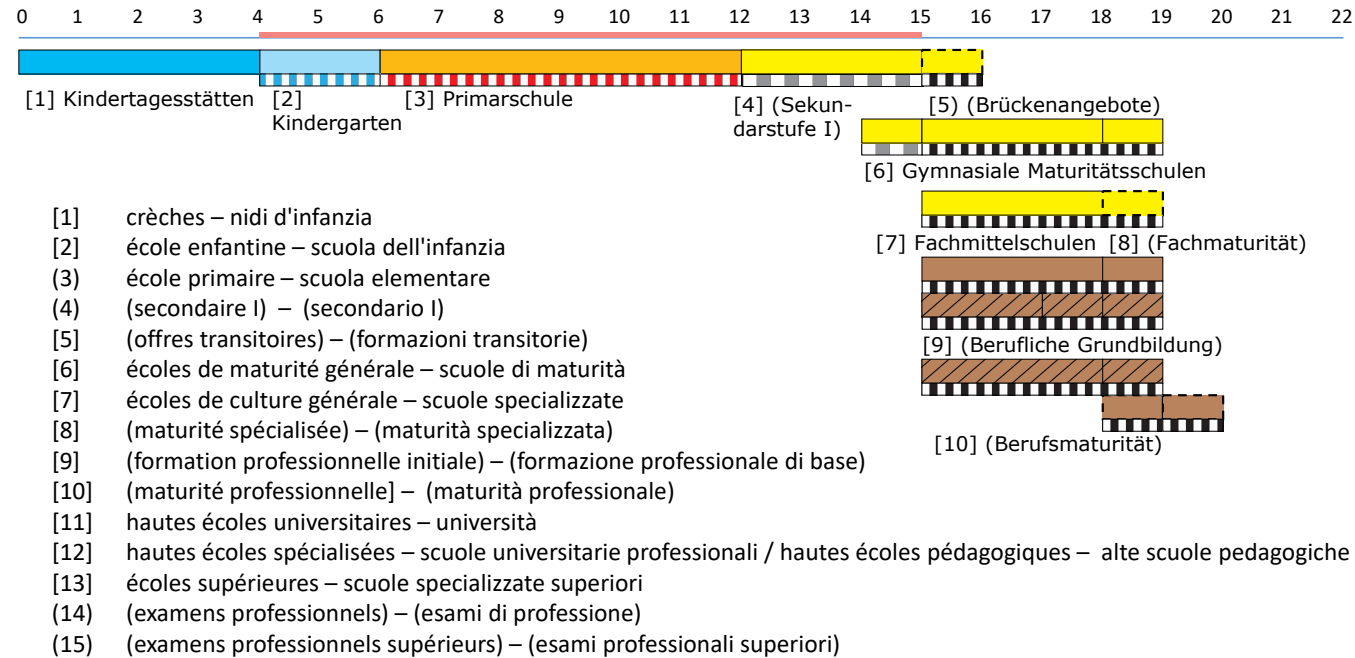
BA

Note: Education between 5 and 6 is only compulsory on a part-time basis in the Federation of BiH and the Brčko District but it is implemented in the Republika Srpska on the same basis, although it is not mandatory.



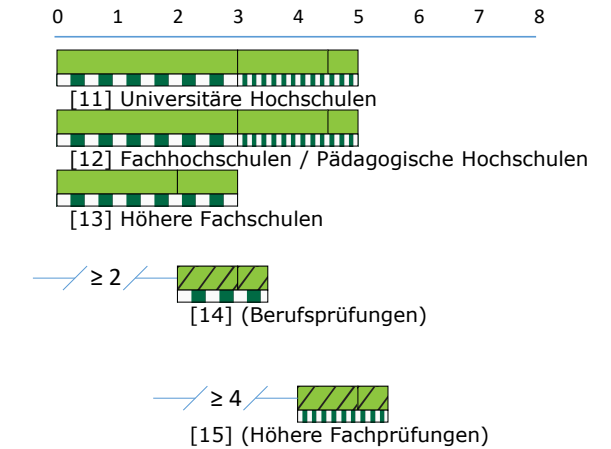
Switzerland

Age of students



Note: In most cantons, compulsory education starts at age 4 (in a few at ages 5 or 6).

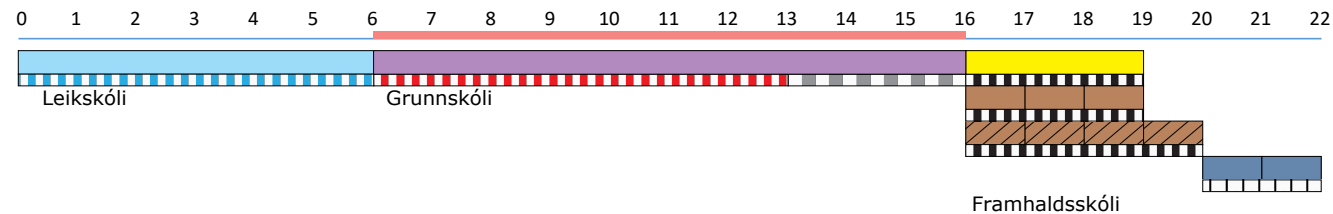
Programme duration (years)



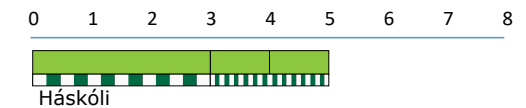
CH

Iceland

Age of students



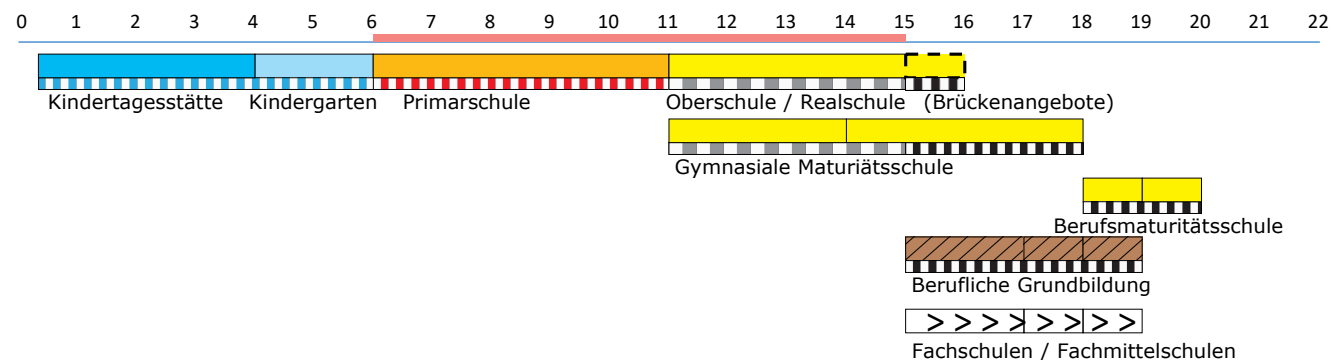
Programme duration (years)



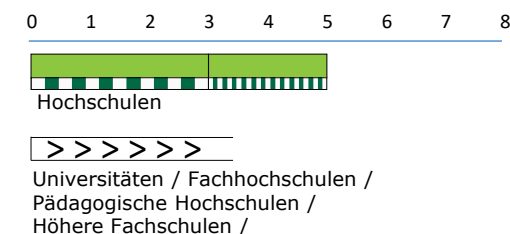
IS

Liechtenstein

Age of students



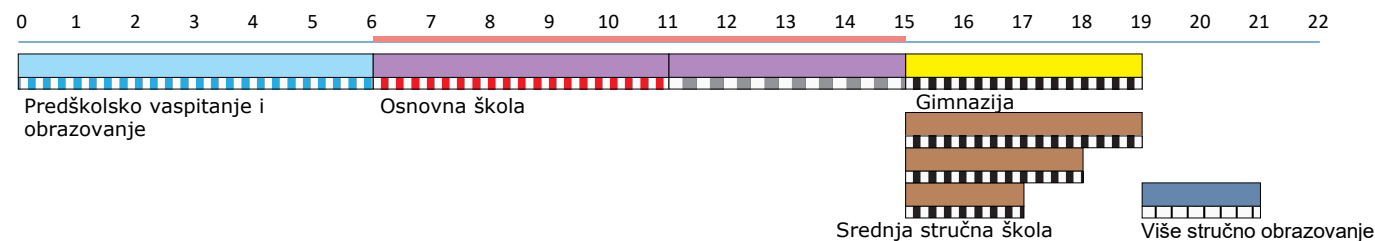
Programme duration (years)



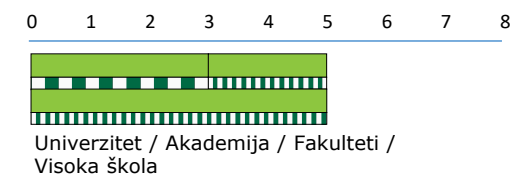
Note: Students in vocational education and the majority of students in higher education attend educational institutions in Switzerland.

Montenegro

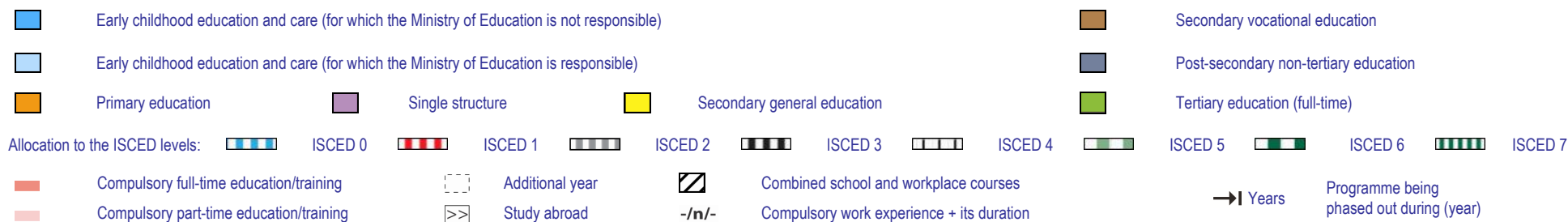
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

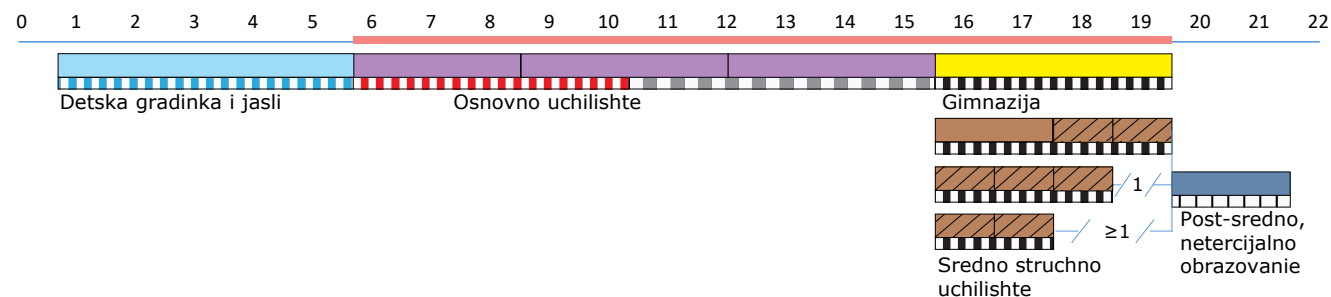


Note: Starting from the academic year 2017/18, public HEIs started enrolling perspective undergraduate students in 3+2(+3) (undergraduate + master + PhD) study programmes (private institutions no later than in 2020/21). All HEIs will harmonize their study programmes by the end of the 2019/20 academic year.

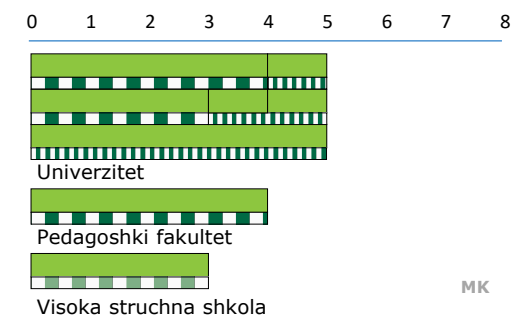


North Macedonia

Age of students



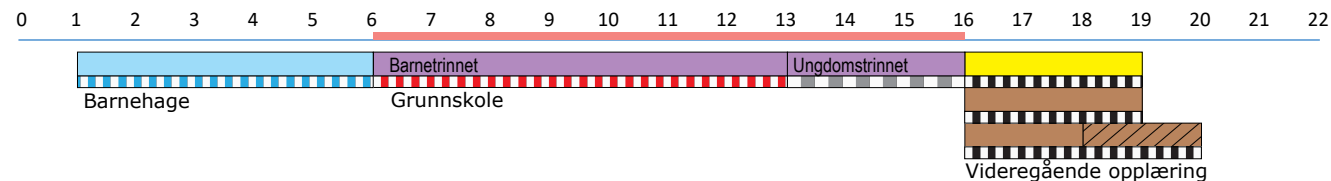
Programme duration (years)



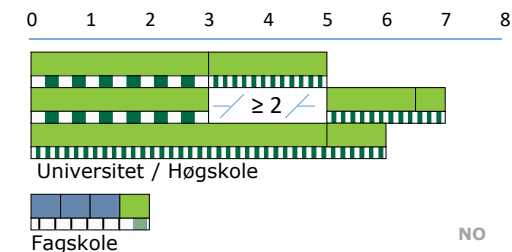
Note: The leaving age for compulsory education may vary from 17 to 19 years and 6 months depending on the type of programme. The lowest leaving age (17) applies to students attending the two years vocational programme (*strucno osposobuvanje*) while the ending age of 18 applies to those attending the three years vocational programme (*strucno obrazovanie za zanimanja*). The highest leaving age of 19 years and 6 months applies to students attending general secondary education (*gimnazisko obrazovanie*) or a four years programme of vocational education (*chetirigodishno struchno obrazovanie*).

Norway

Age of students

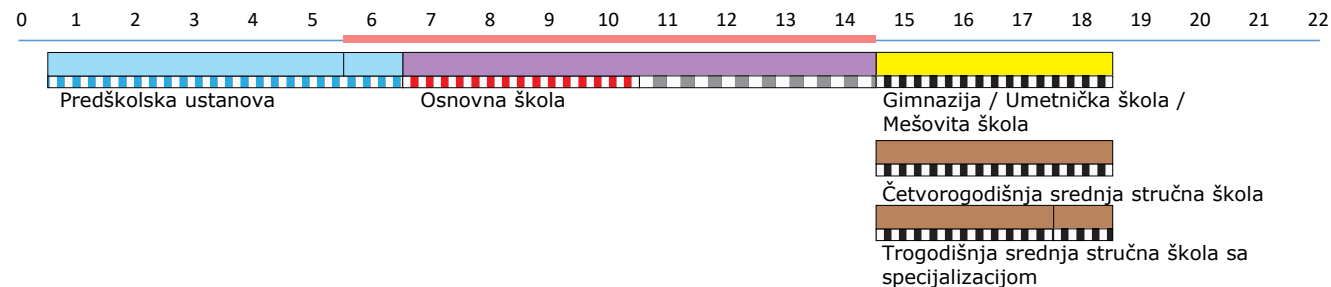


Programme duration (years)

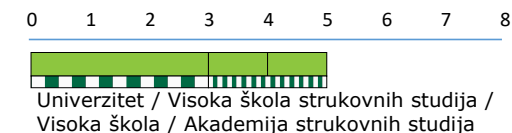


Serbia

Age of students



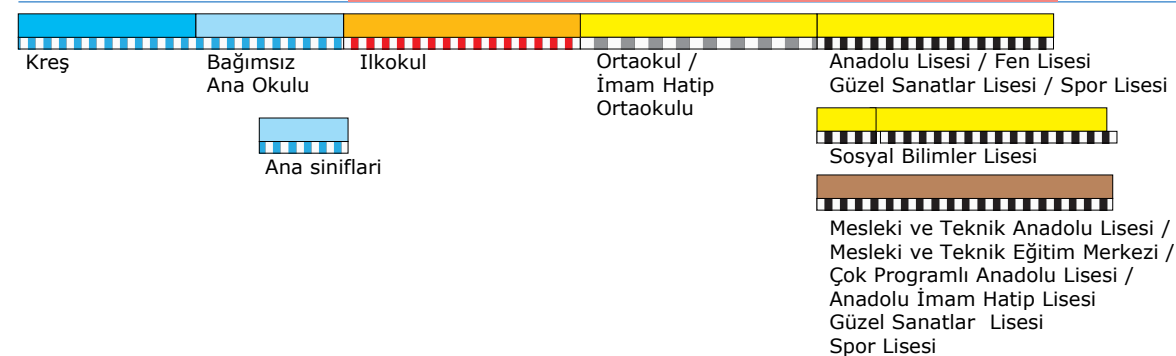
Programme duration (years)



Turkey

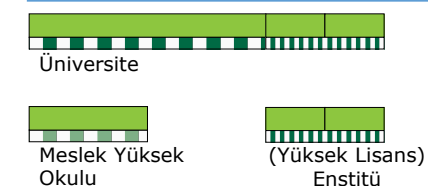
Age of students

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22



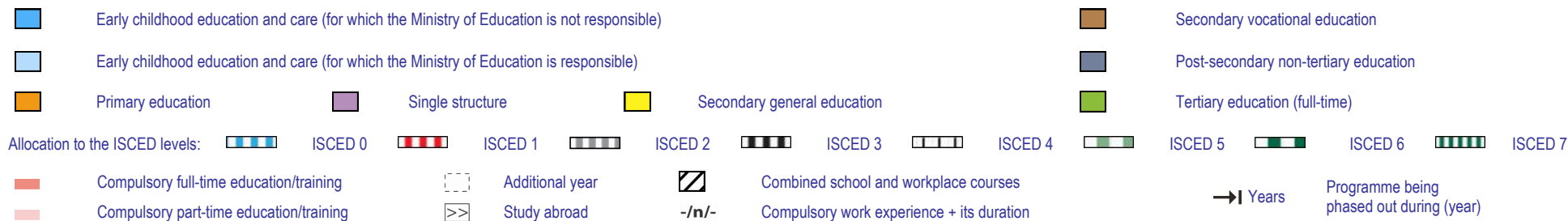
Programme duration (years)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



TR

35



EDUCATION, AUDIOVISUAL AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY

Education and Youth Policy Analysis

Avenue du Bourget 1 (J-70 – Unit A6)
B-1049 Brussels
(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>)

Authors

Nathalie Baïdak, Jari Matti Riiheläinen (coordinator), Agathina Sicurella

Graphics and layout

Patrice Brel

Cover

Virginia Giovannelli

Production coordinator

Gisèle De Lel

EURYDICE NATIONAL UNITS

ALBANIA

Eurydice Unit
European Integration and Projects Department
Ministry of Education and Sport
Rruga e Durrësit, Nr. 23
1001 Tiranë
Contribution of the Unit: Egest Gjokuta

AUSTRIA

Eurydice-Informationsstelle
Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und
Forschung
Abt. Bildungsstatistik und –monitoring
Minoritenplatz 5
1010 Wien
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

BELGIUM

Unité Eurydice de la Communauté française
Ministère de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles
Direction des relations internationales
Boulevard Léopold II, 44 – Bureau 6A/001
1080 Bruxelles
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

Eurydice Vlaanderen
Departement Onderwijs en Vorming/
Afdeling Strategische Beleidsondersteuning
Hendrik Consciencegebouw 7C10
Koning Albert II-laan 15
1210 Brussel
Contribution of the Unit: Sanne Noël

Eurydice-Informationsstelle der Deutschsprachigen
Gemeinschaft
Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft
Fachbereich Ausbildung und Unterrichtsorganisation
Gospertstraße 1
4700 Eupen
Contribution of the Unit: Clara Jacquemart

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Ministry of Civil Affairs
Education Sector
Trg BiH 3
71000 Sarajevo
Contribution of the Unit: in cooperation with experts from the
Ministries of Education of Republika Srpska, 10 cantons in
Federation of B&H and Divisions for the Education of the
Brcko District

BULGARIA

Eurydice Unit
Human Resource Development Centre
Education Research and Planning Unit
15, Graf Ignatiev Str.
1000 Sofia
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

CROATIA

Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes
Frankopanska 26
10000 Zagreb
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

CYPRUS

Eurydice Unit
Ministry of Education and Culture
Kimonos and Thoukydidou
1434 Nicosia
Contribution of the Unit: expert: Antonis Antoniou

CZECHIA

Eurydice Unit
Czech National Agency for International Education
Dům zahraniční spolupráce
Na Poříčí 1035/4
110 00 Praha 1
Contribution of the Unit: Andrea Turynová

DENMARK

Eurydice Unit
Ministry of Higher Education and Science
Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education
Haraldsgade 53,
DK-2100 Copenhagen: Joint responsibility

ESTONIA

Eurydice Unit
Analysis Department
Ministry of Education and Research
Munga 18
50088 Tartu
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

FINLAND

Eurydice Unit
Finnish National Agency for Education
P.O. Box 380
00531 Helsinki
Contribution of the Unit: Hanna Laakso

FRANCE

Unité française d'Eurydice
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des
Sports (MENJS)
Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et
de l'Innovation (MESRI)
Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la
performance (DEPP)
Mission aux relations européennes et internationales
(MIREI)
61-65, rue Dutot
75732 Paris Cedex 15
Contribution of the Unit: Anne Gaudry-Lachet

GERMANY

Eurydice-Informationsstelle des Bundes
Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e. V. (DLR)
Heinrich-Konen Str. 1
53227 Bonn

Eurydice-Informationsstelle der Länder im Sekretariat der
Kultusministerkonferenz
Taubenstraße 10
10117 Berlin
Contribution of the Unit: Thomas Eckhardt

GREECE

Hellenic Eurydice Unit
 Directorate for European and International Affairs
 Directorate-General for International and European Affairs,
 Hellenic Diaspora and Intercultural Education
 Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs
 37 Andrea Papandreou Street (Office 2172)
 15180 Amarousion (Attiki)
 Contribution of the Unit: Nicole Apostolopoulou

HUNGARY

Hungarian Eurydice Unit
 Educational Authority
 19-21 Maros Str.
 1122 Budapest
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

ICELAND

Eurydice Unit
 The Directorate of Education
 Víkurhvarfi 3
 203 Kópavogur
 Contribution of the Unit: Hulda Skogland

IRELAND

Eurydice Unit
 Department of Education and Skills
 International Co-operation Unit
 Marlborough Street
 Dublin 1 – DO1 RC96
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

ITALY

Unità italiana di Eurydice
 Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca
 Educativa (INDIRE)
 Agenzia Erasmus+
 Via C. Lombroso 6/15
 50134 Firenze
 Contribution of the Unit: Erica Cimò

LATVIA

Eurydice Unit
 State Education Development Agency
 Valņu street 1 (5th floor)
 1050 Riga
 Contribution of the Unit: Viktors Kravcenko

LIECHTENSTEIN

Informationsstelle Eurydice
 Schulamt des Fürstentums Liechtenstein
 Austrasse 79
 Postfach 684
 9490 Vaduz
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

LITHUANIA

Eurydice Unit
 The National Agency for Education
 Katkausk str. 44
 09217 Vilnius
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

LUXEMBOURG

Unité nationale d'Eurydice
 ANEFORE ASBL
 eduPôle Walferdange
 Bâtiment 03 - étage 01
 Route de Diekirch
 7220 Walferdange
 Contribution of the Unit: national expert: Patrick Hierthes
 (MENJE)

MALTA

Eurydice National Unit
 Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and
 Employability
 Ministry for Education and Employment
 Great Siege Road
 Floriana VLT 2000
 Contribution of the Unit: Joanne Bugeja

MONTENEGRO

Eurydice Unit
 Vaka Djurovica bb
 81000 Podgorica
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

NETHERLANDS

Eurydice Nederland
 Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap
 Directie Internationaal Beleid
 Rijnstraat 50
 2500 BJ Den Haag
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

NORTH MACEDONIA

National Agency for European Educational Programmes and
 Mobility
 Boulevard Kuzman Josifovski Pitu, No. 17
 1000 Skopje
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

NORWAY

Norway
 Eurydice Unit
 Diku - Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and
 Quality Enhancement in Higher Education
 Fortunen 1
 P.O. Box 1093
 5809 Bergen
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

POLAND

Polish Eurydice Unit
 Foundation for the Development of the Education System
 Aleje Jerozolimskie 142A
 02-305 Warszawa
 Contribution of the Unit: Magdalena Górowska-Fells and
 Michał Chojnacki in consultation with the Ministry of National
 Education

PORTUGAL

Unidade Portuguesa da Rede Eurydice (UPRE)
 Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência
 (DGEEC)
 Av. 24 de Julho, n.º 134
 1399-054 Lisboa
 Portugal
 Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

ROMANIA

Eurydice Unit
National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of
Education and Vocational Training
Universitatea Politehnică Bucureşti
Biblioteca Centrală
Splaiul Independenţei, nr. 313
Sector 6
060042 Bucureşti
Contribution of the Unit: Veronica – Gabriela Chirea in
cooperation with expert Ciprian Fartuşnic (Institute of
Science Education)

SERBIA

Eurydice Unit Serbia
Foundation Tempus
Ruze Jovanovic 27a
11000 Belgrade
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

SLOVAKIA

Eurydice Unit
Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation
Křížkova 9
811 04 Bratislava
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

SLOVENIA

Eurydice Unit
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport
Department of Educational Development and Quality
Masarykova 16
1000 Ljubljana
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

SPAIN

Eurydice España-REDIE
Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa (INEE)
Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional
Paseo del Prado, 28
28014 Madrid
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

SWEDEN

Eurydice Unit
Universitets- och högskolerådet/
The Swedish Council for Higher Education
Box 4030
171 04 Solna
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

SWITZERLAND

Eurydice Unit
Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)
Speichergasse 6
3001 Bern
Contribution of the Unit: Alexander Gerlings

TURKEY

Eurydice Unit
MEB, Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı (SGB)
Eurydice Türkiye Birimi, Merkez Bina 4. Kat
B-Blok Bakanlıklar
06648 Ankara
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

UNITED KINGDOM

Eurydice Unit for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Department for Education (DfE),
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London, SW1P 3BT
Contribution of the Unit: Joint responsibility

Eurydice Unit Scotland
Learning Directorate
Scottish Government
2-C North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
Contribution of the Unit: Alina Dragos

The Structure of the European Education Systems 2020/21: Schematic Diagrams

This report provides information on the structure of mainstream European education systems, from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2020/21 school and academic year. It includes national schematic diagrams and a guide to reading the diagrams. It also contains a map visually showing the main organisational models of primary and lower secondary education in Europe: 'single structured education', 'common core curriculum provision' and 'differentiated lower secondary education'. The information is available for 43 European education systems covering 38 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme.

The report's content is in line with the Eurydice Network's task: understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work.

The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>.

