



European  
Commission

# Compulsory Education in Europe

2018/19

Eurydice – *Facts and Figures*



Education and  
Training





# **Compulsory Education in Europe 2018/19**

**Eurydice – Facts and Figures**

*Education  
and Training*

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Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency  
Education and Youth Policy Analysis  
Avenue du Bourget 1 (J-70 – Unit A7)  
BE-1049 Brussels  
Tel. +32 2 299 50 58  
Fax +32 2 292 19 71  
E-mail: [eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu](mailto:eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu)  
Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>

## COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN EUROPE – 2018/19

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This publication provides concise information on the duration of compulsory education/training in 43 European education systems covering 38 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme (28 Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey).

**Full-time compulsory education/training**, as defined in this publication, refers to a period of full-time educational/training attendance required of all students. This period is regulated by the law and usually determined by the students' age. In general, 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 evaluated for both parts. In most countries, under certain conditions, compulsory education/training can be provided at home.

**Additional compulsory part-time education/training** means that after the end of full-time compulsory education/training period and until a defined age the minimum formal requirement for all young people is to participate in part-time education/training.

**Starting age** refers to the official age at which students start compulsory education/training. The possibility of early entry to primary education is not taken into account nor are the specific admission conditions of pupils officially recognized with special educational needs.

**Leaving age** refers to the statutory age at which students are expected to complete compulsory education/ training.

In most European education systems, compulsory education/training starts at the beginning of primary education (ISCED 1), usually at the age of 6. In 16 education systems, attendance at last year(s) of pre-primary education, usually at the age of 5, is already compulsory. Hungary has reported the earliest school starting age referring to 3. By contrast, in Estonia, compulsory education starts at the age of 7.

In most European education systems, full-time compulsory education/training lasts 9-10 years ending at the age of 15-16. In Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) and Turkey, the duration of full-time compulsory education/training is 12 years, while in Hungary and the Netherlands 13 years' attendance is mandatory for all students. In Germany, the duration varies between the *Länder*. It is 12 years in the majority of them and 13 years in some. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the duration varies between 11 and 13 years depending on the program followed during upper secondary education (see country notes).

Compulsory education/training period usually covers primary and lower secondary education levels (ISCED 1 and 2) and corresponds to the full-time school attendance. In Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia it is compulsory to stay in education/training until age of 18-19. However, in these countries, between ages 15-16 and 18-19, students can attend compulsory education/training programmes combining part-time school based and part-time workplace courses. Only programmes where students are evaluated for both school based and workplace courses are considered as 'full-time compulsory education/training'. In Austria, Poland and the United Kingdom (England), after the official school leaving age, students still have to remain in education or training until their 18 birthday. However, the full-time attendance is not mandatory. Students can fulfil this obligation by participating in either full-time education or training, work-based learning or part-time education or training.

## Duration of compulsory education/training and student's age-groups, 2018/19

	Full-time education/training											Duration (in years)	Additional compulsory part-time Ending age
	Starting age					Leaving age							
	3	4	5	6	7	14	15	16	17	18	19		
BE fr				6						18		12	na
BE de				6						18		12	na
BE nl				6						18		12	na
BG			5		7			16				11	na
CZ			5	6			15					10	na
DK				6				16				10	na
DE (11 Länder)				6						18		12	na
DE (5 Länder)				6				16			19	13	na
EE					7			16				9	na
IE				6				16				10	na
EL		4		6			15					11	na
ES				6				16				10	na
FR				6				16				10	na
HR				6	7		15					9	na
IT				6				16				10	na
CY		5	6				15					10	na
LV			5		7			16				11	na
LT				6	7			16				10	na
LU		4		6				16				12	na
HU	3			6				16				13	na
MT			5					16				11	na
NL			5	6						18		13	na
AT			5	6			15					10	18
PL				6	7		15					9	18
PT				6						18		12	na
RO				6					17			11	na
SI				6			15					9	na
SK				6				16				10	na
FI				6	7			16				10	na
SE				6	7			16				10	na
UK-ENG			5					16				11	18
UK-WLS			5					16				11	na
UK-NIR		4						16				12	na
UK-SCT			5					16				11	na
AL				6			15					9	na
BA				6			15					9	na
CH		4		6				16				11	na
IS				6				16				10	na
LI				6			15					9	na
ME				6			15					9	na
NO				6				16				10	na
RS			5y6m	6y6m		14y6m						9	na
(*)			6								17-19	11-13	na
TR			5y6m							17y6m		12	na

ISCED 2011 level 0 | ISCED 2011 level 1 | na Not applicable

(\*): The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Provisional code).

**Explanatory notes**

In countries where compulsory education starts at pre-primary level (ISCED 0), the starting age of primary education (ISCED 1) is also indicated.

The starting and leaving ages presented in this report are notional; early or late entry, grade retention or other interruptions to schooling are not taken into account.

**Country-specific notes**

**Germany:** 11 *Länder*: Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bayern, Hamburg, Hessen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein.

5 *Länder*: Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Nordrhein-Westfalen and Thuringen.

In Nordrhein-Westfalen, the duration of full-time compulsory education is nine years for the *Gymnasium*, and ten years for other general education schools.

**Greece:** Since school year 2018/19 and according to Law 4521/2018, compulsory attendance of pre-primary school (*Nipiagogeio*) lasts two years. The implementation of the measure will be progressive and in any case, it will take place within a three-year period.

**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:** 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*).

## COUNTRY CODES

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<b>BE</b>	Belgium	<b>CY</b>	Cyprus	<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>BE fr</b>	Belgium – French Community	<b>LV</b>	Latvia	<b>UK-ENG</b>	England
<b>BE de</b>	Belgium – German-speaking Community	<b>LT</b>	Lithuania	<b>UK-WLS</b>	Wales
<b>BE nl</b>	Belgium – Flemish Community	<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg	<b>UK-NIR</b>	Northern Ireland
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria	<b>HU</b>	Hungary	<b>UK-SCT</b>	Scotland
<b>CZ</b>	Czech Republic	<b>MT</b>	Malta	<b>AL</b>	Albania
<b>DK</b>	Denmark	<b>NL</b>	Nederland	<b>BA</b>	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>DE</b>	Germany	<b>AT</b>	Austria	<b>CH</b>	Switzerland
<b>EE</b>	Estonia	<b>PL</b>	Poland	<b>IS</b>	Iceland
<b>IE</b>	Ireland	<b>PT</b>	Portugal	<b>LI</b>	Liechtenstein
<b>EL</b>	Greece	<b>RO</b>	Romania	<b>ME</b>	Montenegro
<b>ES</b>	Spain	<b>SI</b>	Slovenia	<b>NO</b>	Norway
<b>FR</b>	France	<b>SK</b>	Slovakia	<b>RS</b>	Serbia
<b>HR</b>	Croatia	<b>FI</b>	Finland	<b>(*)</b>	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (provisional code)
<b>IT</b>	Italy	<b>SE</b>	Sweden	<b>TR</b>	Turkey



**EDUCATION, AUDIOVISUAL AND CULTURE  
EXECUTIVE AGENCY**

**Education and Youth Policy Analysis**

Avenue du Bourget 1 (J-70 – Unit A7)  
B-1049 Brussels  
(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>)

**Managing editor**

Arlette Delhaxhe

**Authors**

Agathina Sicurella

**Graphics and layout**

Patrice Brel

**Cover**

Virginia Giovannelli

**Production coordinator**

Gisèle De Lel

## EURYDICE NATIONAL UNITS

---

### ALBANIA

Eurydice Unit  
European Integration and International Cooperation  
Department of Integration and Projects  
Ministry of Education and Sport  
Rruga e Durrësit, Nr. 23  
1001 Tiranë

---

### AUSTRIA

Eurydice-Informationsstelle  
Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und  
Forschung  
Abt. Bildungsentwicklung und -monitoring  
Minoritenplatz 5  
1010 Wien

---

### BELGIUM

Unité Eurydice de la Communauté française  
Ministère de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles  
Direction des relations internationales  
Boulevard Léopold II, 44 – Bureau 6A/008  
1080 Bruxelles

Eurydice Vlaanderen  
Departement Onderwijs en Vorming/  
Afdeling Strategische Beleidsondersteuning  
Koning Albert II-laan 15  
1210 Brussel

Eurydice-Informationsstelle der Deutschsprachigen  
Gemeinschaft  
Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft  
Fachbereich Ausbildung und Unterrichtsorganisation  
Gospertstraße 1  
4700 Eupen

---

### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Ministry of Civil Affairs  
Education Sector  
Trg BiH 3  
71000 Sarajevo

---

### BULGARIA

Eurydice Unit  
Human Resource Development Centre  
Education Research and Planning Unit  
15, Graf Ignatiev Str.  
1000 Sofia

---

### CROATIA

Eurydice Unit  
Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes  
Frankopanska 26  
10000 Zagreb

---

### CYPRUS

Eurydice Unit  
Ministry of Education and Culture  
Kimonos and Thoukydidou  
1434 Nicosia

---

### CZECH REPUBLIC

Eurydice Unit  
Centre for International Cooperation in Education  
Dům zahraniční spolupráce

Na Poříčí 1035/4  
110 00 Praha 1

---

### DENMARK

Eurydice Unit  
Ministry of Higher Education and Science  
Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education  
Bredgade 40  
1260 København K

---

### ESTONIA

Eurydice Unit  
Analysis Department  
Ministry of Education and Research  
Munga 18  
50088 Tartu

---

### FINLAND

Eurydice Unit  
Finnish National Agency for Education  
P.O. Box 380  
00531 Helsinki

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### FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

National Agency for European Educational Programmes  
and Mobility  
Porta Bunjakovec A2-1  
1000 Skopje

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### FRANCE

Unité française d'Eurydice  
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale (MEN)  
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

---

### 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 Bonn

---

### GREECE

Eurydice Unit  
Directorate of European and International Affairs  
Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs  
37 Andrea Papandreou Str. (Office 2172)  
15180 Maroussi (Attiki)

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### HUNGARY

Hungarian Eurydice Unit  
Educational Authority  
19-21 Maros utca (room 517)  
1122 Budapest

**ICELAND**

Eurydice Unit  
The Directorate of Education  
Víkurbær 3  
203 Kópavogur

**IRELAND**

Eurydice Unit  
Department of Education and Skills  
International Section  
Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1 – DO1 RC96

**ITALY**

Unità italiana di Eurydice  
Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e  
Ricerca Educativa (INDIRE)  
Agenzia Erasmus+  
Via C. Lombroso 6/15  
50134 Firenze

**LATVIA**

Eurydice Unit  
State Education Development Agency  
Valņu street 1 (5th floor)  
1050 Riga

**LIECHTENSTEIN**

Informationsstelle Eurydice  
Schulamt des Fürstentums Liechtenstein  
Austrasse 79  
Postfach 684  
9490 Vaduz

**LITHUANIA**

Eurydice Unit  
National Agency for School Evaluation of the Republic of  
Lithuania  
Geležinio Vilko Street 12  
03163 Vilnius

**LUXEMBOURG**

Unité nationale d'Eurydice  
ANEFORÉ ASBL  
eduPôle Walferdange  
Bâtiment 03 – étage 01  
Route de Diekirch  
7220 Walferdange

**MALTA**

Eurydice National Unit  
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and  
Employability  
Ministry for Education and Employment  
Great Siege Road  
Floriana VLT 2000

**MONTENEGRO**

Eurydice Unit  
Vaka Djurovica bb  
81000 Podgorica

**NETHERLANDS**

Eurydice Nederland  
Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap  
Directie Internationaal Beleid  
Rijnstraat 50  
2500 BJ Den Haag

**NORWAY**

Eurydice Unit  
Ministry of Education and Research  
Kirkegata 18  
P.O. Box 8119 Dep.  
0032 Oslo

**POLAND**

Eurydice Unit  
Foundation for the Development of the Education System  
Aleje Jerozolimskie 142A  
00-551 Warsaw

**PORTUGAL**

Unidade Portuguesa da Rede Eurydice (UPRE)  
Ministério da Educação e Ciência  
Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência  
(DGEEC)  
Av. 24 de Julho, 134  
1399-054 Lisboa

**ROMANIA**

Eurydice Unit  
National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field  
of Education and Vocational Training  
Universitatea Politehnică București  
Biblioteca Centrală  
Splaiul Independenței, nr. 313  
Sector 6  
060042 București

**SERBIA**

Eurydice Unit Serbia  
Foundation Tempus  
Ruze Jovanovic 27a  
11000 Belgrade

**SLOVAKIA**

Eurydice Unit  
Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation  
Křížkova 9  
811 04 Bratislava

**SLOVENIA**

Eurydice Unit  
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport  
Department of Educational Development and Quality  
Education Development Office  
Masarykova 16  
1000 Ljubljana

**SPAIN**

Eurydice España-REDIE  
Centro Nacional de Innovación e Investigación Educativa  
(CNIIE)  
Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional  
c/ Torrelaguna, 58  
28027 Madrid

---

**SWEDEN**

Eurydice Unit  
Universitets- och högskolerådet/  
The Swedish Council for Higher Education  
Box 450 93  
104 30 Stockholm

---

**SWITZERLAND**

Eurydice Unit  
Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education  
(EDK)  
Speichergasse 6  
3001 Bern

---

**TURKEY**

Eurydice Unit  
MEB, Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı (SGB)  
Eurydice Türkiye Birimi, Merkez Bina 4. Kat  
B-Blok Bakanlıklar  
06648 Ankara

---

**UNITED KINGDOM**

Eurydice Unit for England, Wales and Northern Ireland  
Centre for Research Planning and Knowledge  
Management  
The Mere, Upton Park  
Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ

Eurydice Unit Scotland  
Learning Directorate  
Scottish Government  
2-C (North)  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ



## Compulsory Education in Europe – 2018/19

This publication focuses on the duration of compulsory education/training in Europe. It highlights the starting and leaving ages and distinguishes the notions of full-time and part-time compulsory education/training. The information is available for 43 European education systems covering 38 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme.

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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 coordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>.

