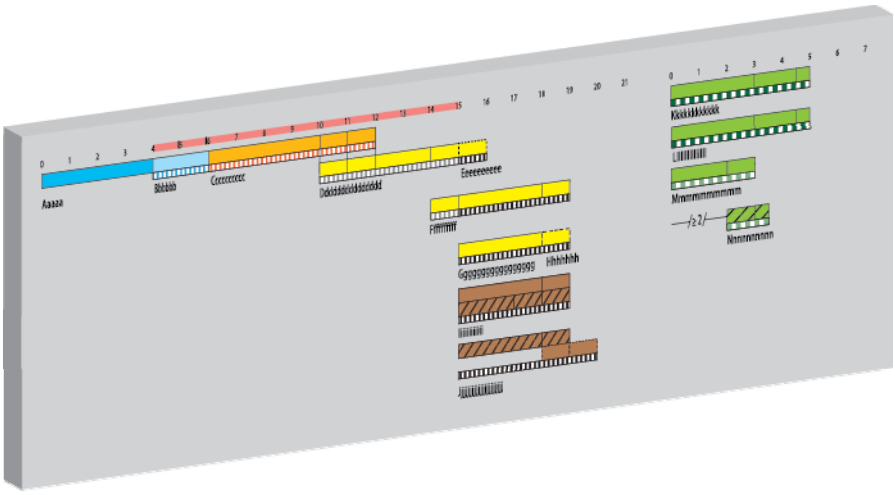
European Commission

What is Eurydice

The Eurydice Network provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies. It consists of 38 national units based in all 34 countries participating in the EU's Lifelong Learning programme and is coordinated and managed by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels, which drafts its publications and databases.

The structure of the European education systems 2012/13: schematic diagrams



These diagrams represent the structure of mainstream education from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2012/13 academic year.

Thirty-nine education systems are included covering all 34 countries of the Eurydice Network: the 27 EU Member States, the EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) as well as the candidate countries (Croatia, Serbia and Turkey).

The online version of the leaflet

The structure of the European education systems 2012/13: schematic diagrams can be found at:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/facts_and_figures_en.php#diagrams

Printed copies of the leaflet

are available upon request at:
eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu

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6 December 2012

Eurydice

Guide to reading the diagrams

These explanatory notes are intended to help readers explore the full potential of the information provided in the diagrams. The key explains the meaning of the symbols and colours used, and these notes provide the additional information necessary to allow readers to understand and correctly interpret the content of the diagrams.

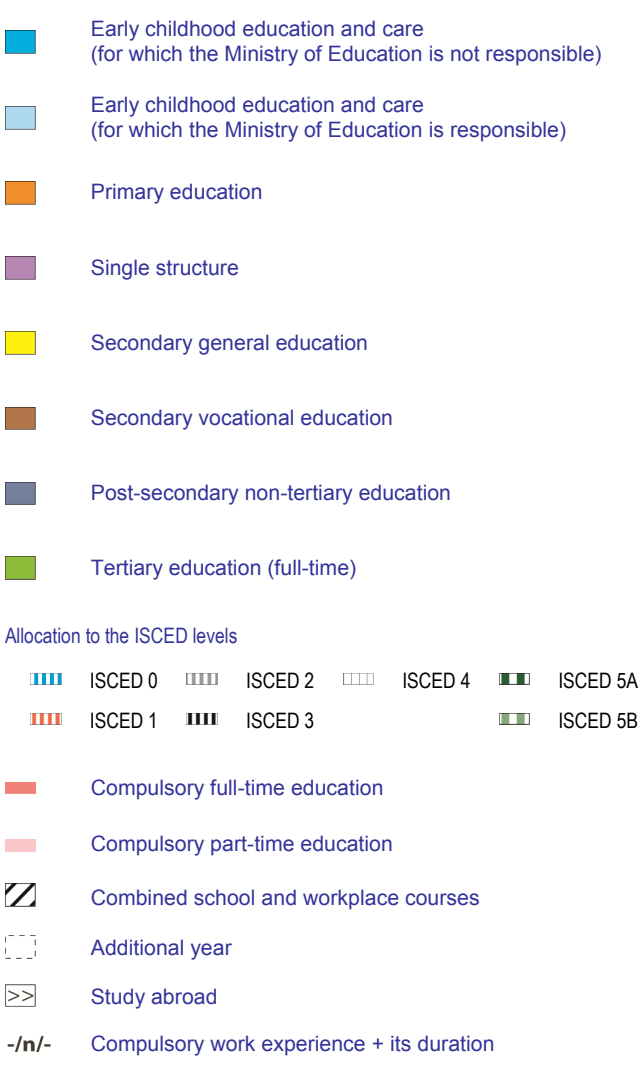
Structure of the national educational programmes and ISCED levels

The diagrams show the mainstream educational programmes considered to be the most representative in each country. This encompasses early childhood education provided in publicly subsidised and accredited centre-based settings for children from the youngest age. Primary and secondary education programmes follow and these largely comprise the period of compulsory education in all countries. Finally, the diagrams show post-secondary non-tertiary programmes as well as the main programmes offered at tertiary level.

The main bar of the diagrams shows each national educational system; different colours represent the different levels and types of education. The small vertical lines within the levels represent the division into cycles or key stages for primary and secondary education, as well as the duration of qualifying programmes in post-secondary and tertiary education.

Separate provision outside mainstream education for children and young people with special educational needs is not included. At tertiary level, doctoral studies as well as the specialised studies for the regulated professions such as medicine and architecture are excluded.

A second thin bar with coloured stripes indicates the corresponding levels of education as defined by the 1997 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). This classification is used for collecting statistical data for international comparisons.



Please see definitions of the ISCED levels at the end of this document

Terms

For the vast majority of countries, the term relating to the type of institution is shown on the diagram. However, the type of education or programme is considered to be more important in some countries, and so these terms are given where appropriate. All terms are provided in the official national language(s) of the country. ➔

Age of students and programme duration

The 'age of students' scale starts on the left side of the diagram and shows the age of pupils and students when they start each level of education from pre-primary onwards (ISCED levels 1 to 4). These ages are notional and give an indication of the official age at which children might begin early childhood education and care or compulsory education.

However, situations such as early or late entry, year repetition or other interruptions to schooling are not taken into account.

More detailed recent information on ages and levels of education is available in the report *Key Data on Education in Europe 2012*: participation in pre-primary and primary education (Figure C2) and lower secondary education to tertiary education (Figures C3, C8 and C10).

Lifelong learning programmes are gaining more and more importance across Europe and adults are given opportunities to retake courses they have previously left or to undertake further educational qualifications. These courses are covered in the diagrams by educational programmes such as those providing competence-based qualifications or bridging courses that allow access to tertiary education. Usually these are classified as ISCED level 4, i.e. post-secondary non-tertiary education.

As students might enrol in tertiary education programmes or in post-secondary education at different ages in some countries, a 'programme duration' scale for these levels of education is provided on the right side of the diagram. Moreover, as students can also take different amounts of time to complete the programmes, for instance, where students undertake part-time studies whilst also working, the scale refers to the standard number of years allowed for completing studies at different stages on a full-time basis. The duration of part-time studies or individualised study patterns are not shown.

Connections between programmes

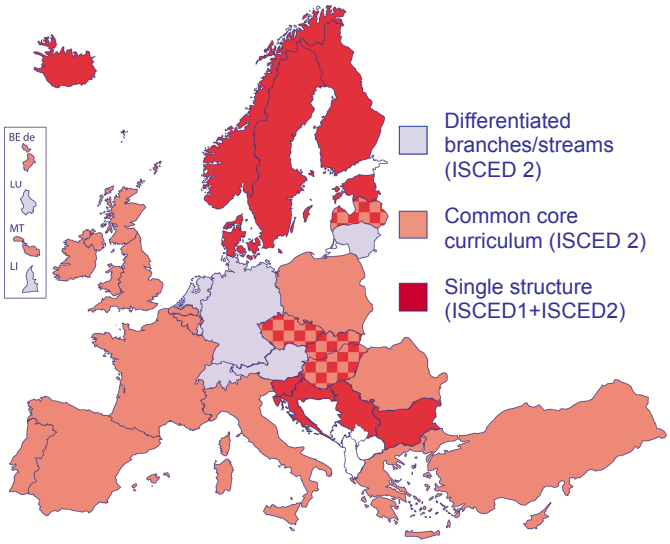
The diagrams also show the points at which students may transfer to a different type of school or education, either within a level or on completion of a level or programme. These transition points are shown by the vertical lines linking to the programmes. However, as the number of possible transition routes increases in some countries as students progress through the system, the pathways from secondary/post-secondary education to tertiary education programmes are not represented on the diagram. Therefore, the conditions of entry to tertiary education, even in the case of automatic progression, are not shown.

Compulsory education: organisational models

The diagrams reveal three main models of organisation within compulsory education in European countries:

- Single structure education. Education is provided in a continuous way from the beginning to the end of compulsory schooling, with no transition between primary and lower secondary education, and with general education provided in common for all pupils.
- Common core curriculum provision. After completion of primary education (ISCED 1), all students follow the same common core curriculum at lower secondary level (ISCED 2).
- Differentiated lower secondary education. After primary education, either at the beginning or some time during lower secondary education, students are enrolled in distinct educational pathways or specific types of schooling.

Main models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1-2) in Europe, 2012/13

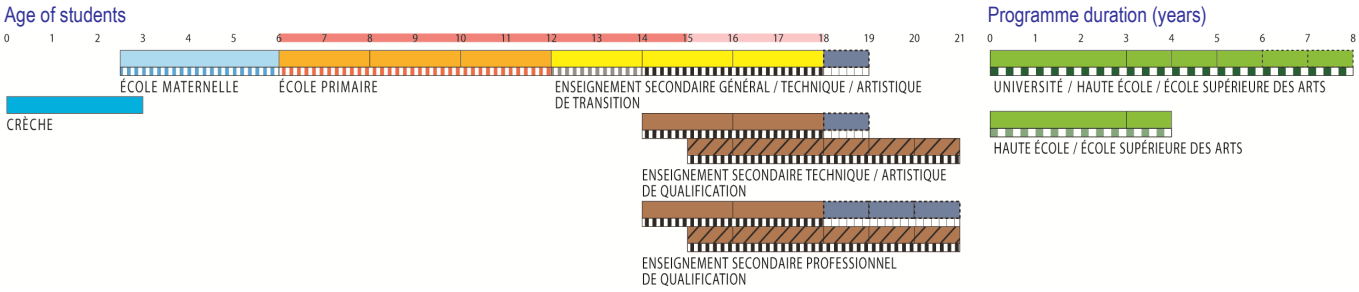


Source: Eurydice.

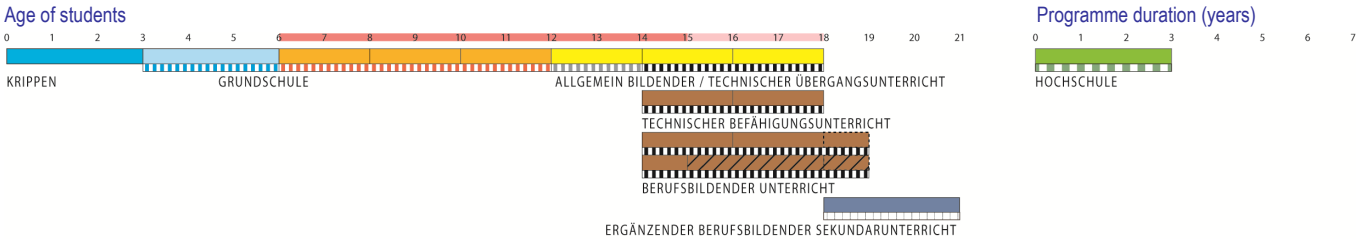
In the Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary and Slovakia, compulsory education is organised in a single structure up to ages 14 to 16. However, from ages 10 to 13, students in these countries can, at certain stages in their school career, enrol in separate establishments providing both lower and upper secondary education.

Schematic diagrams:
Structure of the European education systems 2012/13

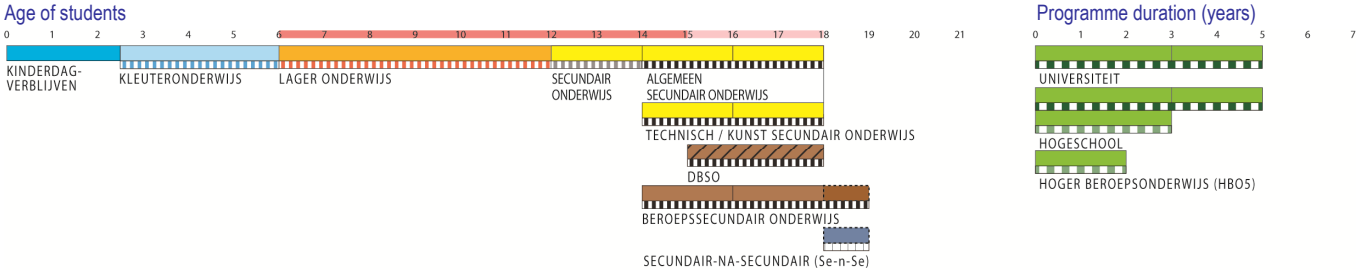
Belgium – French Community



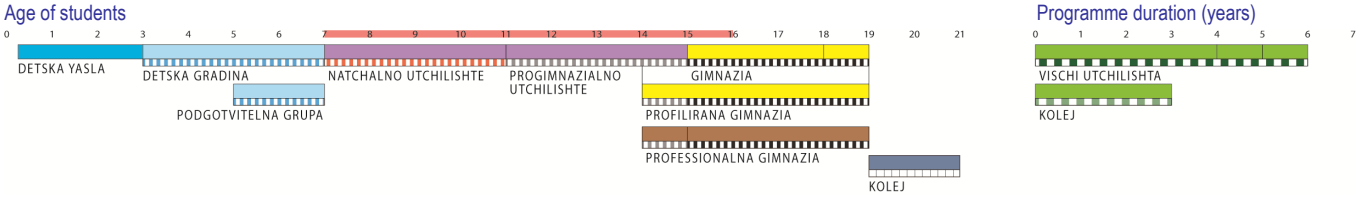
Belgium – German-speaking Community



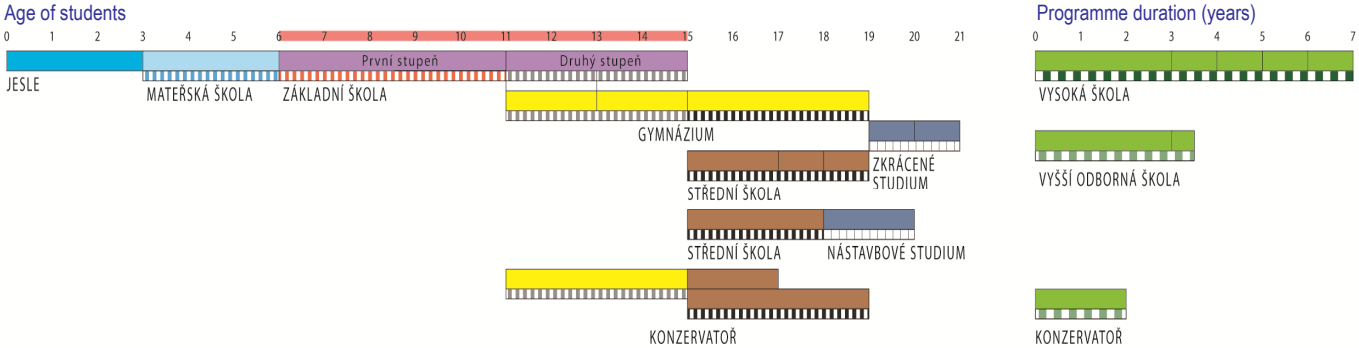
Belgium – Flemish Community



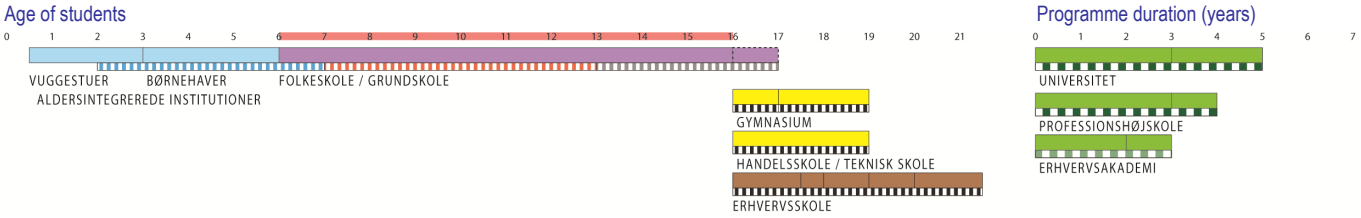
Bulgaria



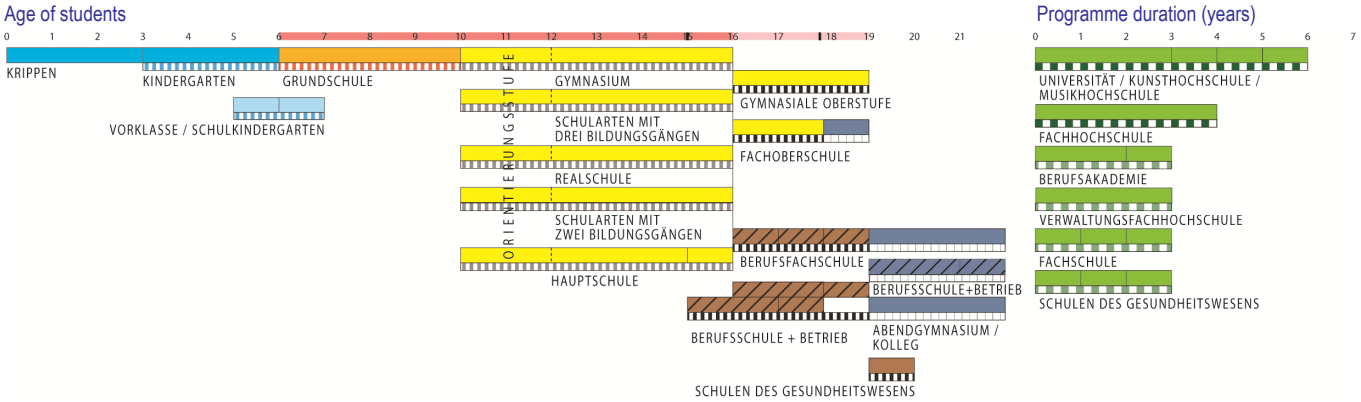
Czech Republic



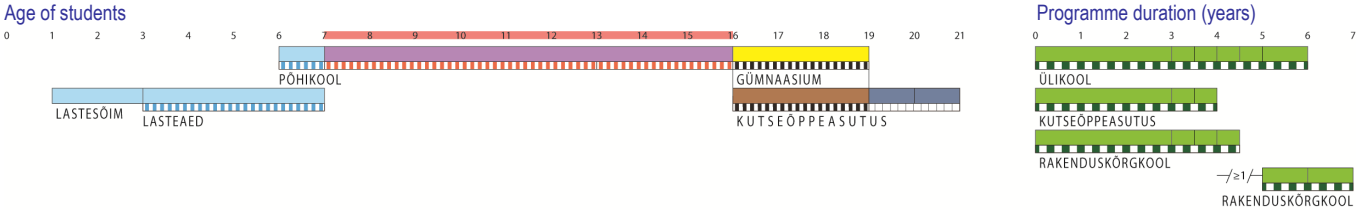
Denmark



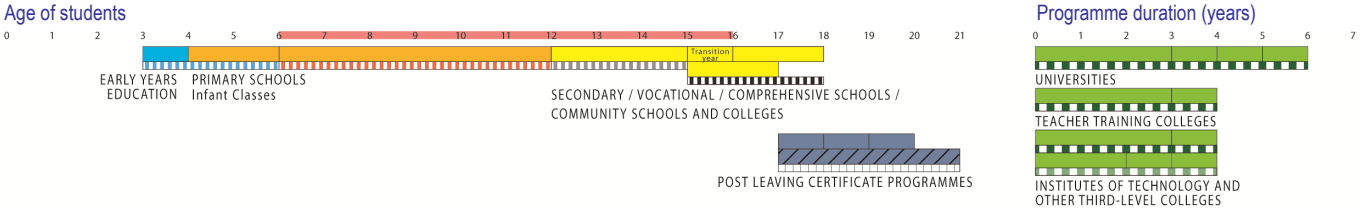
Germany



Estonia



Ireland



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 5A ISCED 5B

Compulsory full-time education

Compulsory part-time education

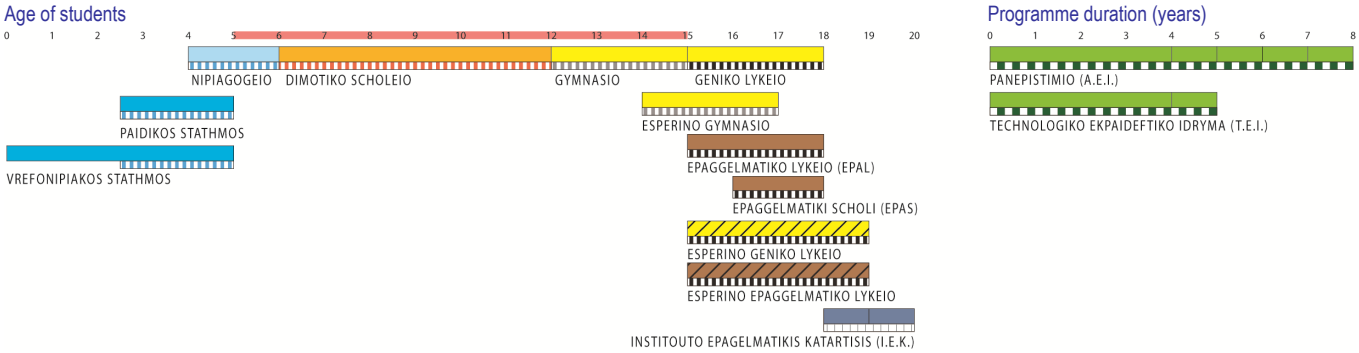
Additional year

>> Study abroad

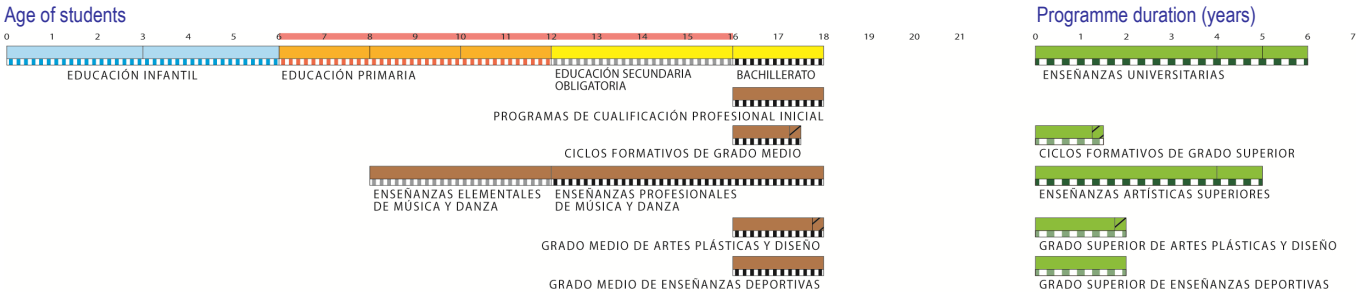
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

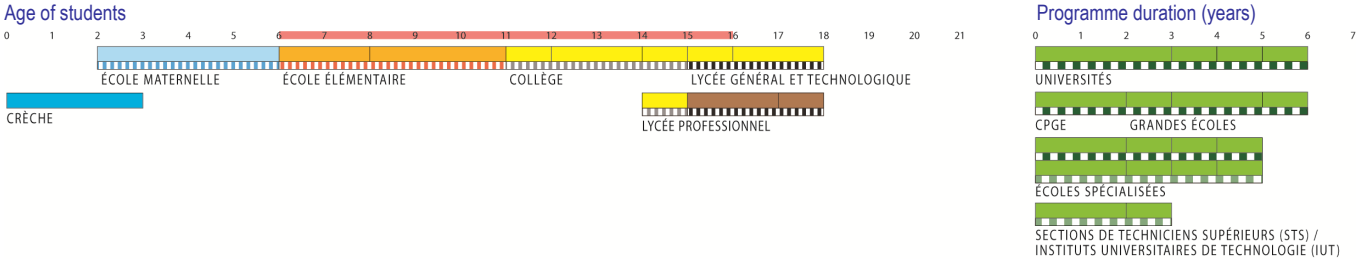
Greece



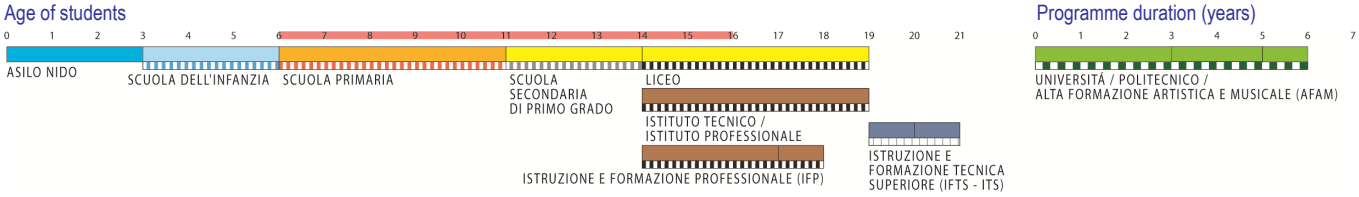
Spain



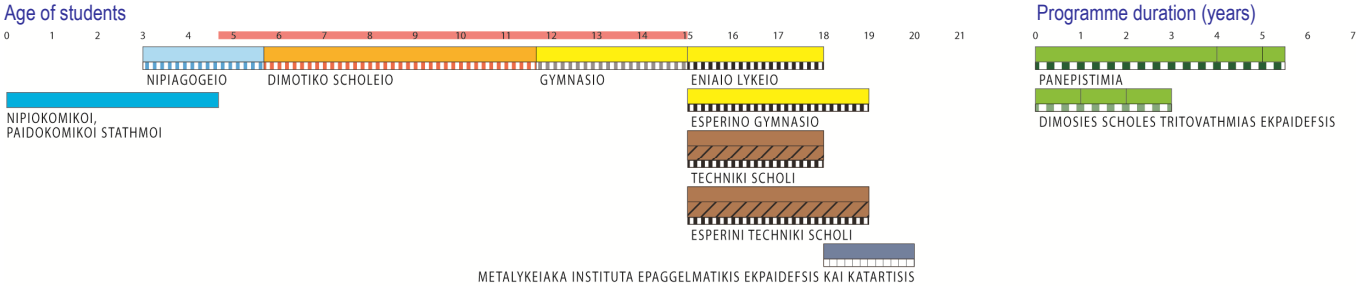
France



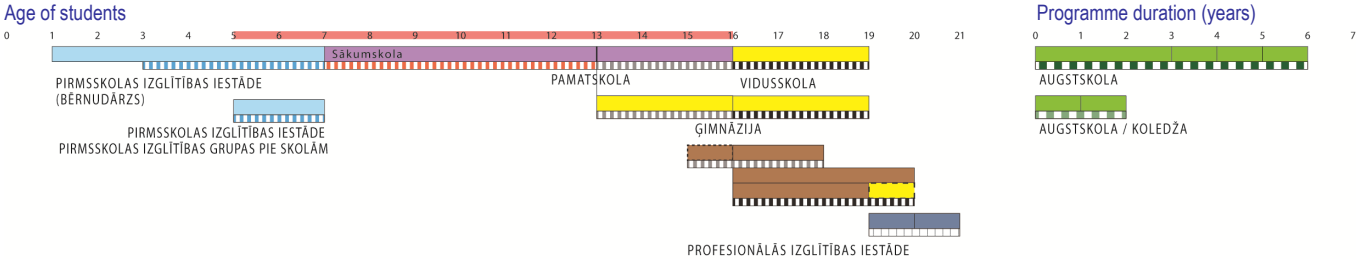
Italy



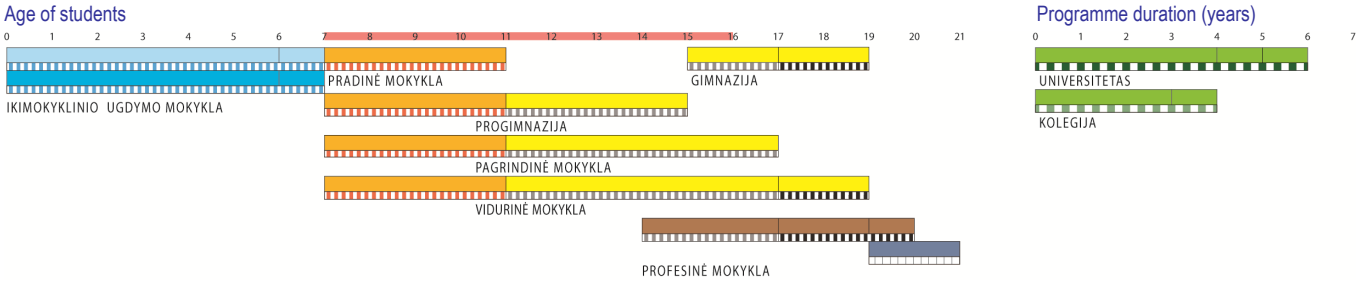
Cyprus



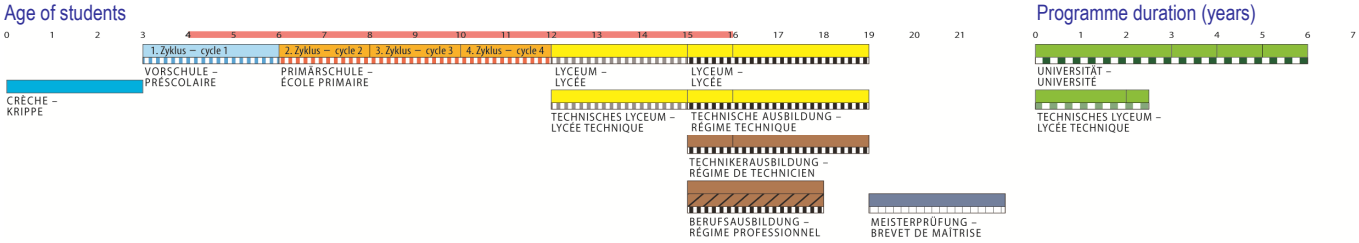
Latvia



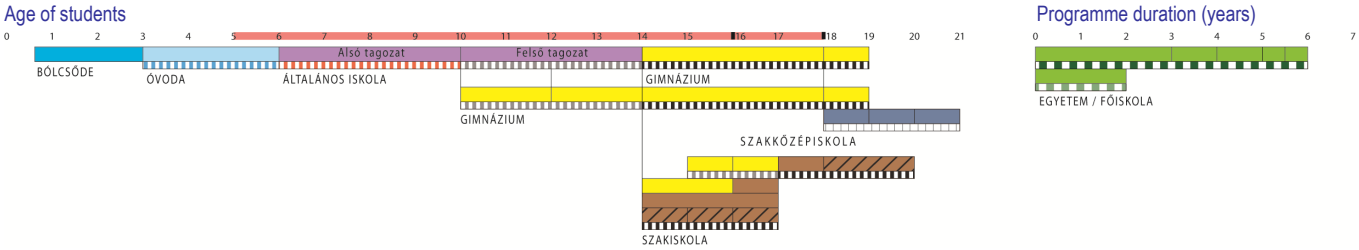
Lithuania



Luxembourg

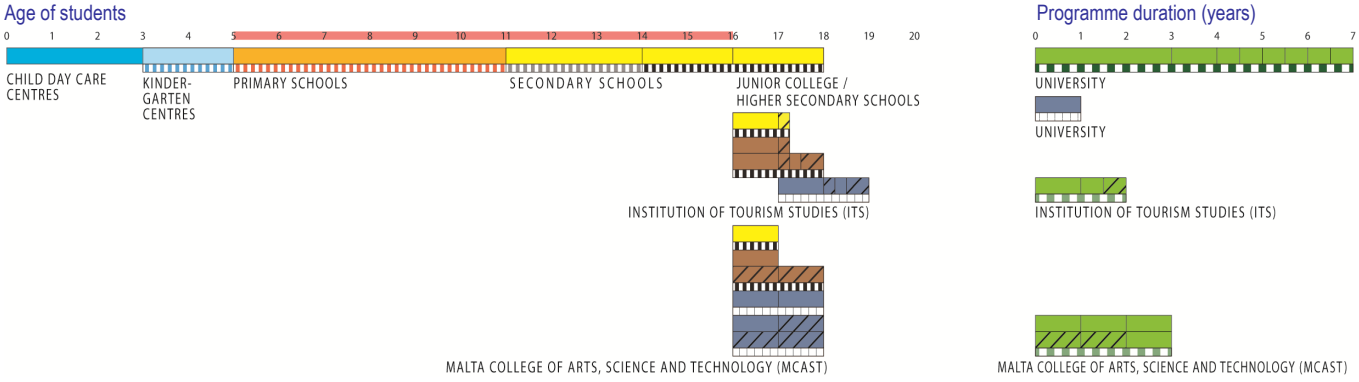


Hungary



Note: Under the Public Education Act of 2011, education will be compulsory only until the age of 16. The change is being phased in: the new lower age (16) will be applied to students starting in grade 9 from the 2012/13 school year; the higher school leaving age (18) will continue to apply to students in the grades above.

Malta



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
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Secondary general education
Secondary vocational education
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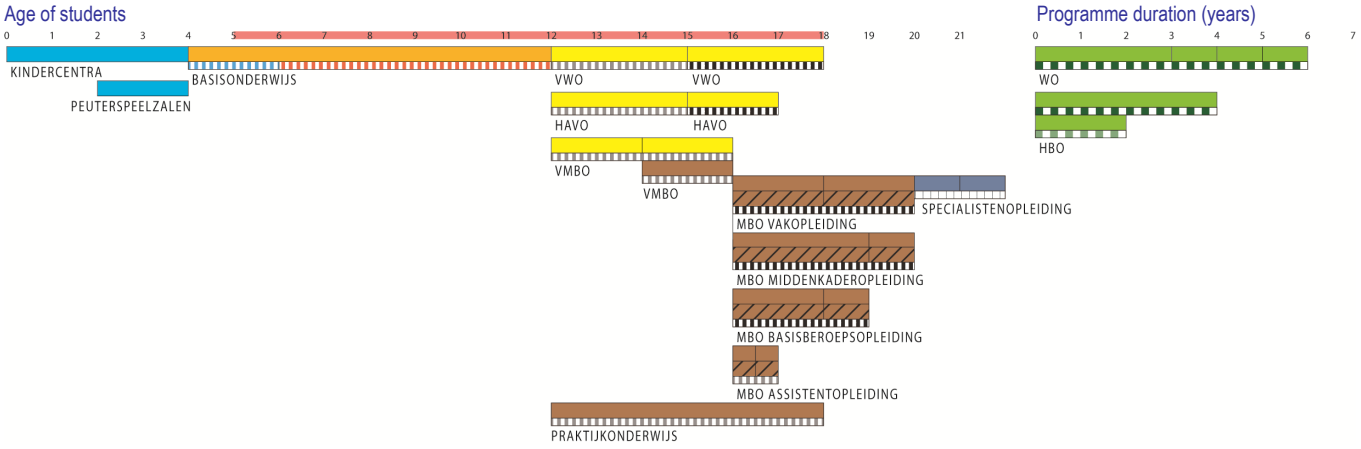
Tertiary education (full-time)

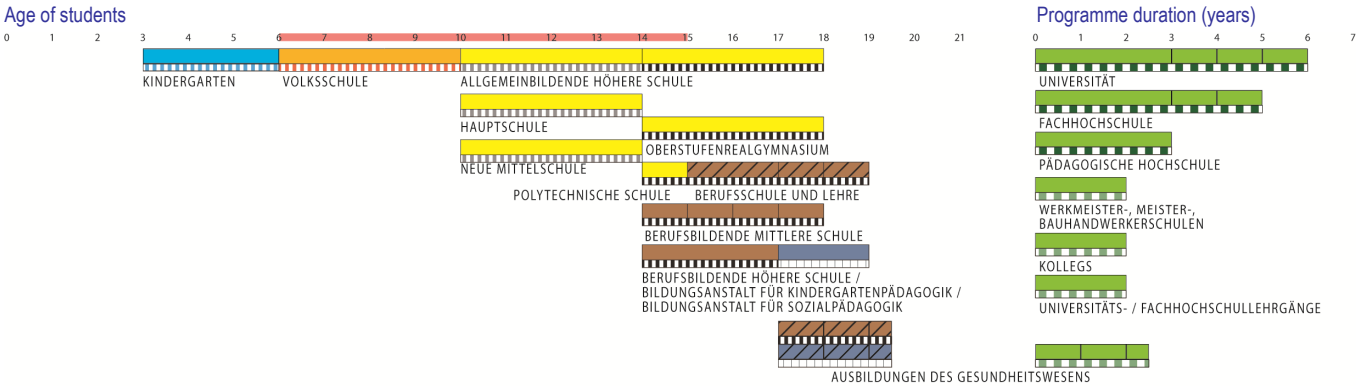
Allocation to the ISCED levels: ISCED 0 ISCED 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5A ISCED 5B

Compulsory full-time education
Compulsory part-time education
Additional year
>> Study abroad
Combined school and workplace courses
-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

The Netherlands

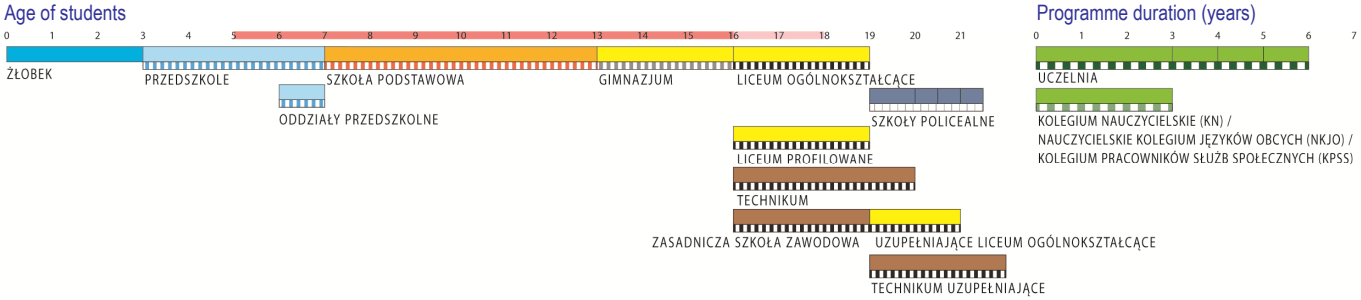


Austria

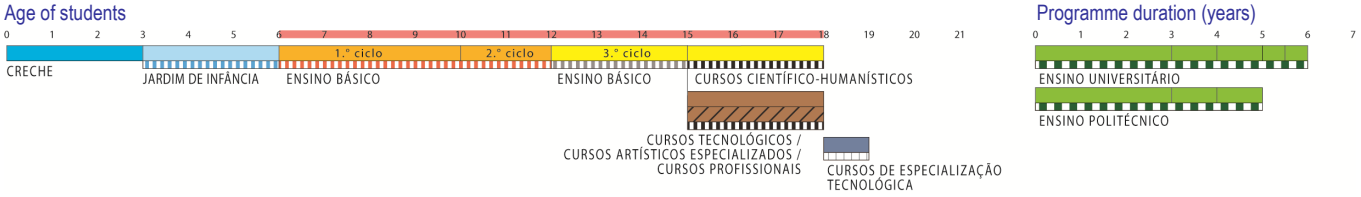


Note: Hauptschule is to be phased-out in the 2014/15 school year

Poland

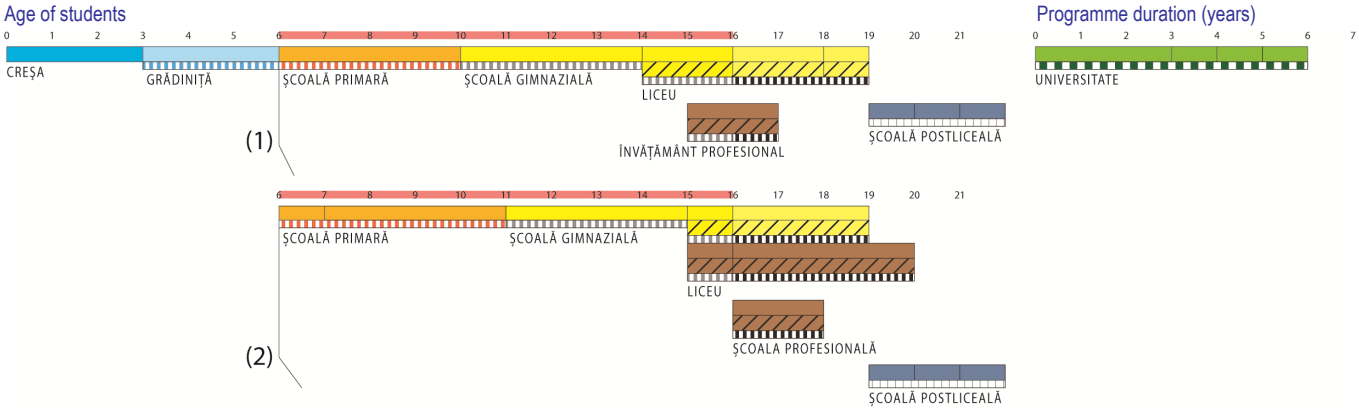


Portugal



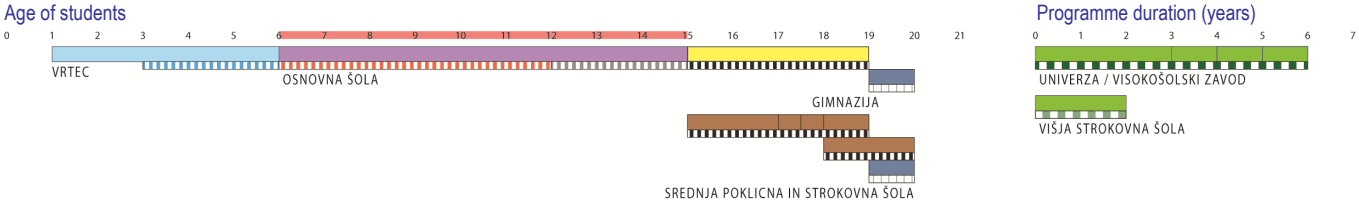
Note: *Cursos tecnológicos* are no longer provided to new students. However, students enrolled in the 11th and 12th grades are still able to complete the courses

Romania

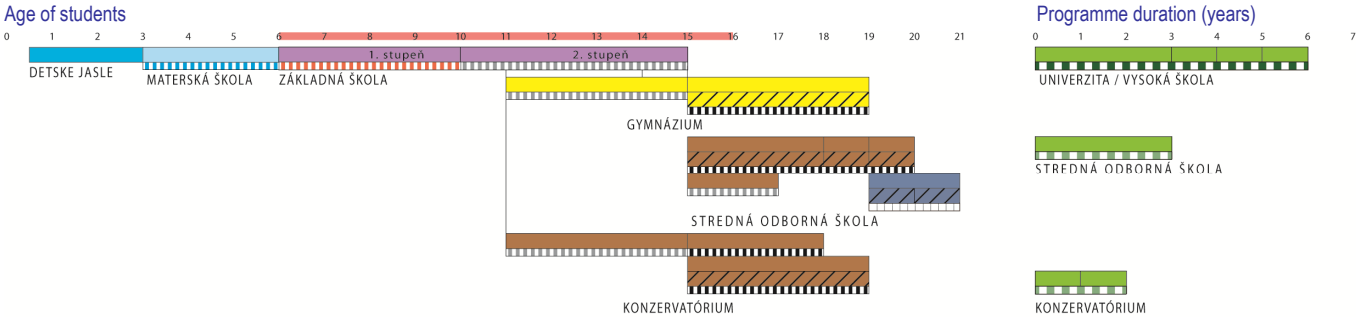


Note: 2012/13 is a transition year.
(1) System being phased out for the students enrolled from the 9th grade of secondary education upwards.
(2) New system being phased in whereby pupils aged 6 enter the preparatory year of primary education.

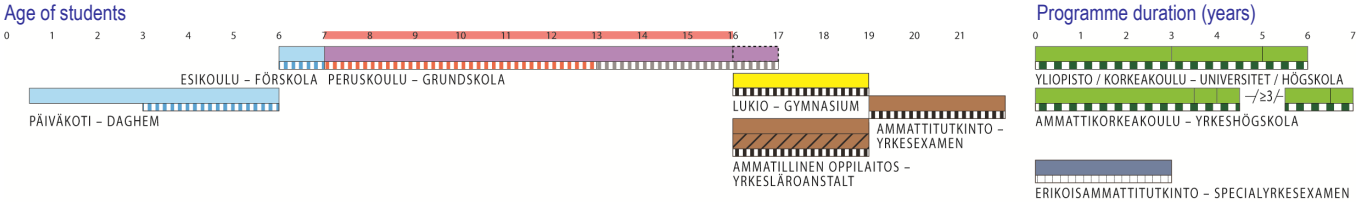
Slovenia



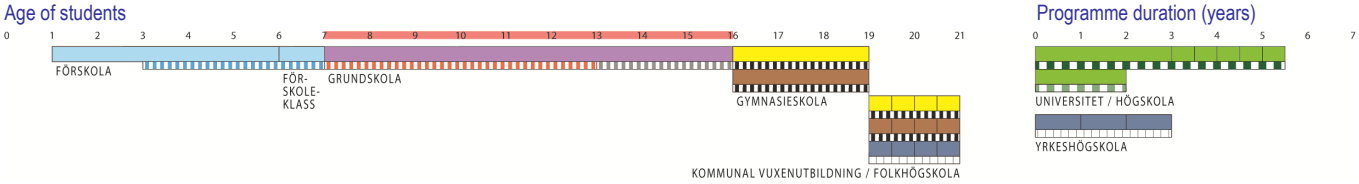
Slovakia



Finland



Sweden



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Compulsory part-time education
Additional year
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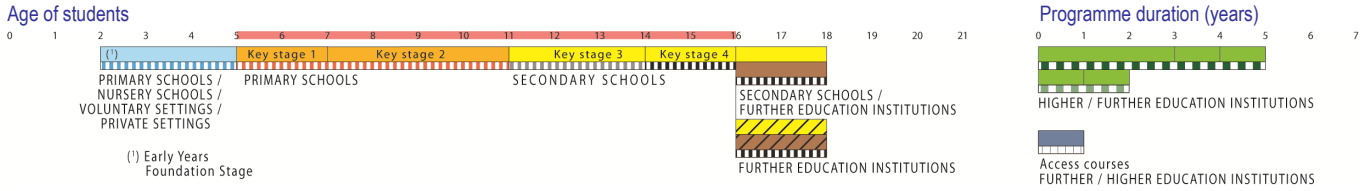
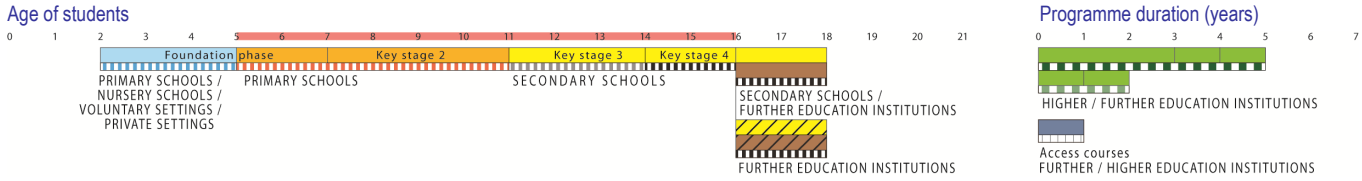
Combined school and workplace courses
-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

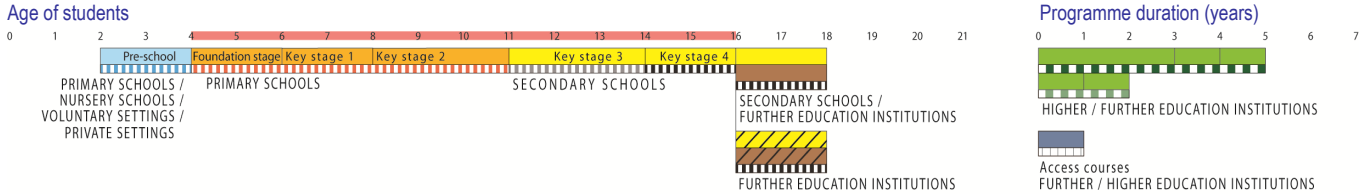
United Kingdom – England



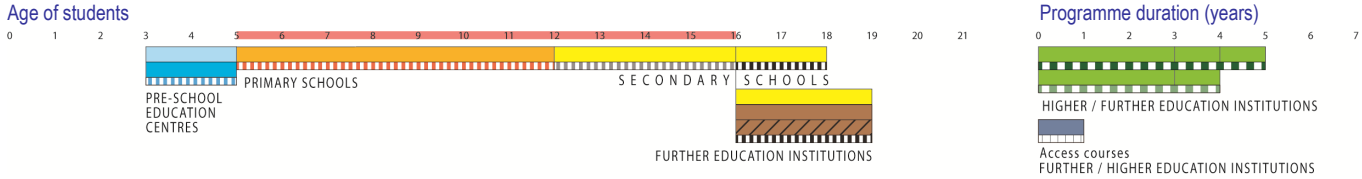
United Kingdom – Wales



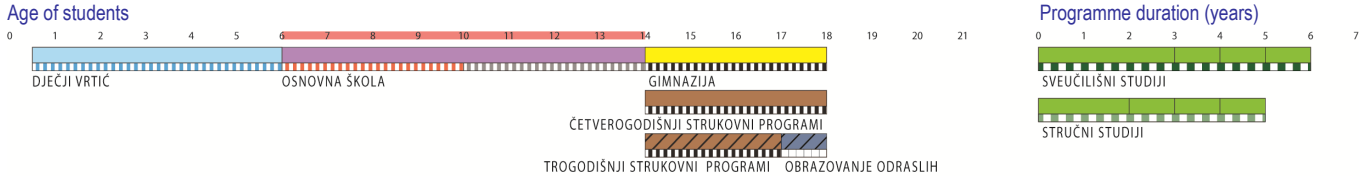
United Kingdom – Northern Ireland



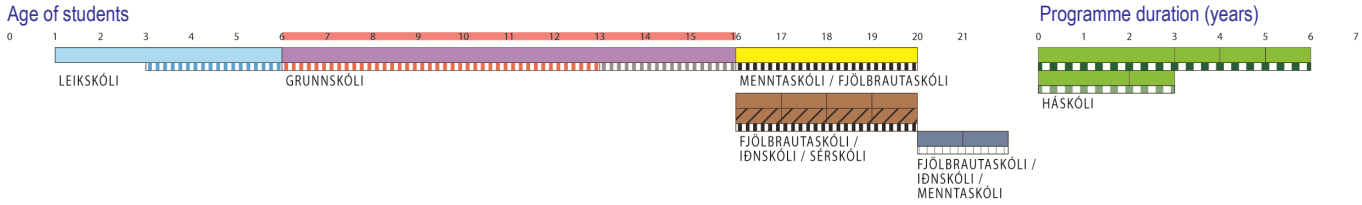
United Kingdom – Scotland



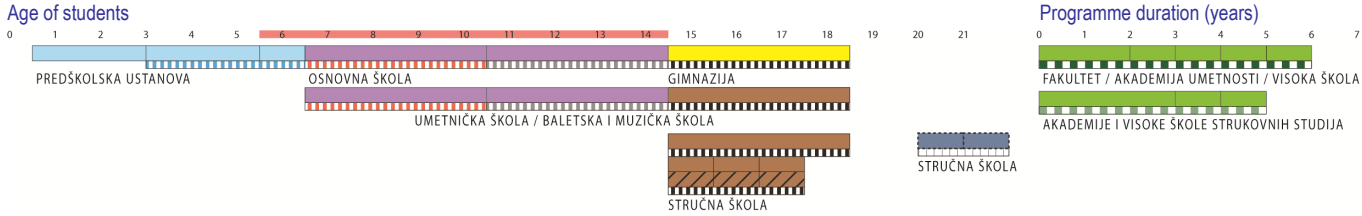
Croatia



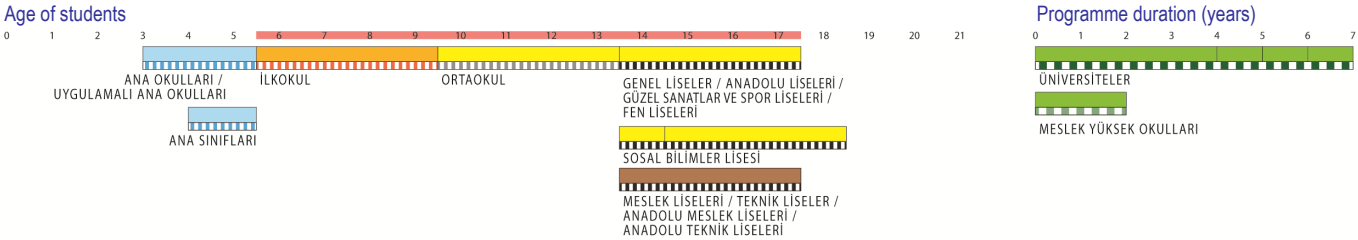
Iceland



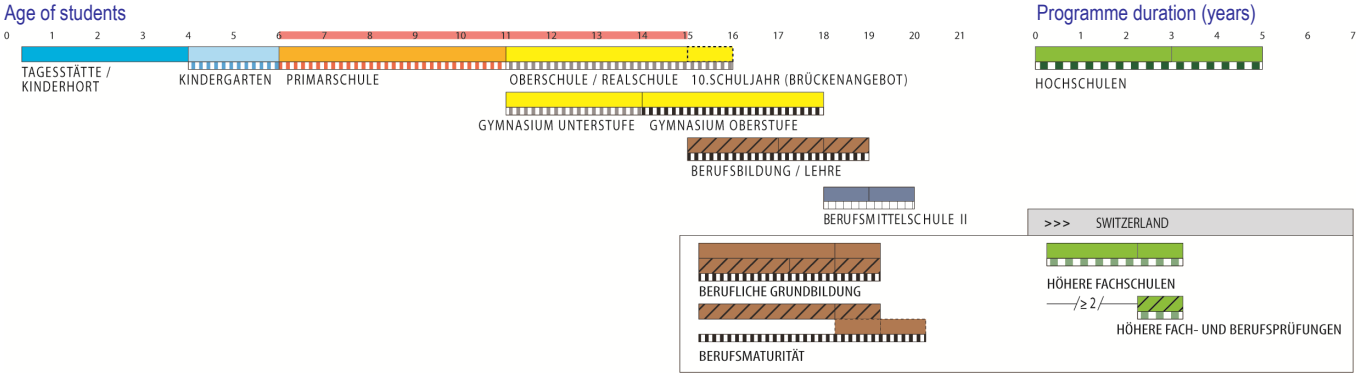
Serbia



Turkey

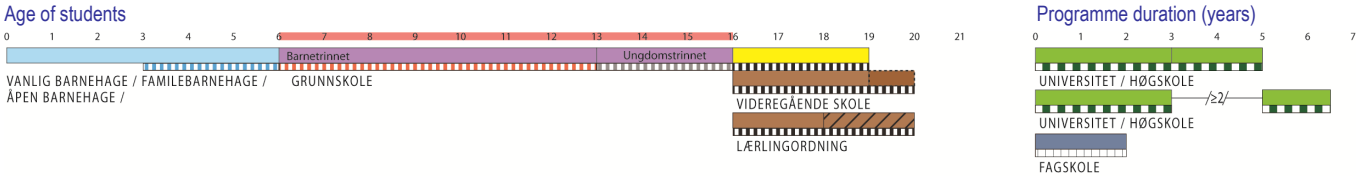


Liechtenstein

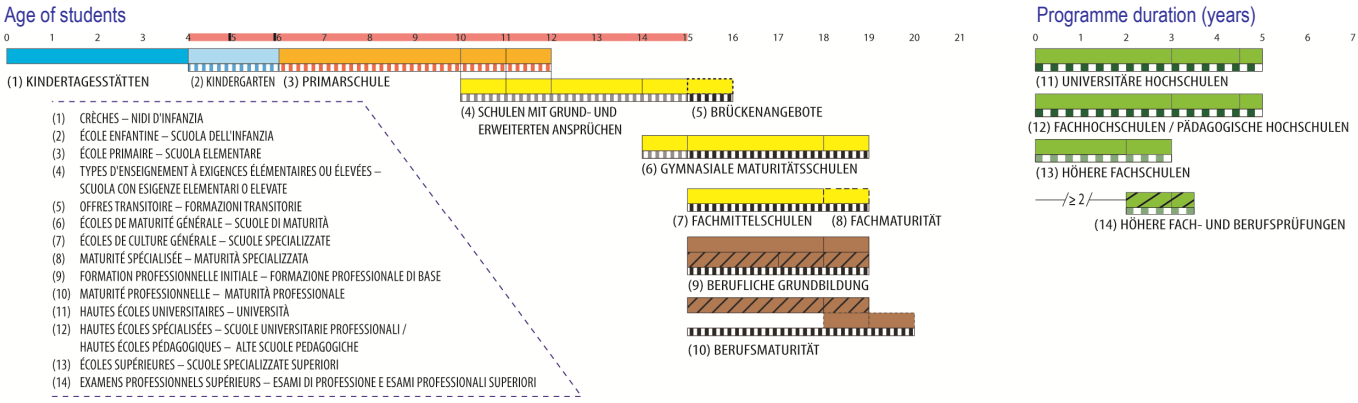


Most students follow their sutdies in Switzerland.

Norway



Switzerland



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 5A ISCED 5B

Compulsory full-time education

Compulsory part-time education

Additional year

>> Study abroad

Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997)

ISCED 0: Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education is defined as the initial stage of organised instruction. It is school-based or centre-based and is designed for children aged at least 3 years.

ISCED 1: Primary education

This level begins between 5 and 7 years of age, is compulsory in all countries, and generally lasts from four to six years.

ISCED 2: Lower secondary education

Lower secondary education continues the basic programmes started at primary level although teaching is typically more subject focused. Usually, the end of this level coincides with the end of compulsory education.

ISCED 3: Upper secondary education

This level generally begins at the end of compulsory education. The entry age is typically 15 or 16 years. Entrance qualifications such as completion of compulsory education or other minimum entry requirements are usually needed. Instruction is often more subject-oriented than at ISCED level 2. The typical duration of ISCED level 3 varies from two to five years.

ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

These programmes straddle the boundary between upper secondary and tertiary education. They serve to broaden the knowledge of ISCED level 3 graduates. Typical examples are programmes designed to prepare students for studies at level 5, or those designed to prepare students for direct entry to the labour market.

ISCED 5: Tertiary education (first stage)

Entry to these programmes normally requires the successful completion of ISCED level 3 or 4. This level includes tertiary programmes with academic orientation (type A), which are largely theory-based; and tertiary programmes with occupation orientation (type B), which are typically shorter than type A programmes and geared for entry into the labour market.

Eurydice products giving further information on national education systems and related policies

Key data on education 2012 is the most up-to-date report on the main developments in the education systems of the Eurydice network countries; it provides statistical data combined with qualitative information. Available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/134EN.pdf

For a better understanding of how the system of tertiary education is organised in different countries (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate level), please consult the report *Focus on higher education in Europe 2010: The impact of the Bologna Process*. Available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/122EN.pdf

Please also consult Eurypedia for additional information on specific countries: Eurypedia provides descriptions of the education systems and policies of network countries: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurypedia