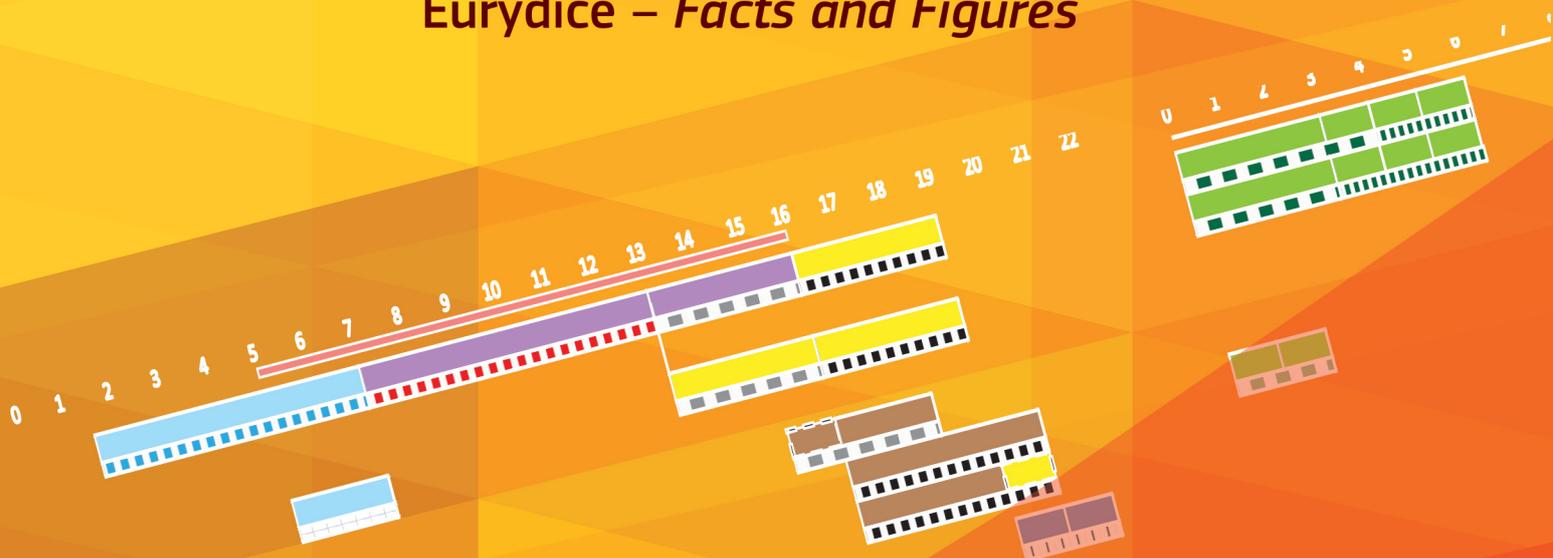




# The structure of the European education systems 2023/2024

*Schematic diagrams*

*Eurydice – Facts and Figures*



Sport  
Jean Monnet  
Youth  
Higher education  
Vocational education and training  
Adult education

**Erasmus+**

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European Education  
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# **The structure of the European education systems 2023/2024**

## **Schematic diagrams**

**Eurydice – Facts and Figures**

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## INTRODUCTION

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This report focuses on the structure of education and training systems from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2023/2024 school/academic year. It covers 39 education systems, which corresponds to 37 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme (27 EU Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey).

This report has three main sections:

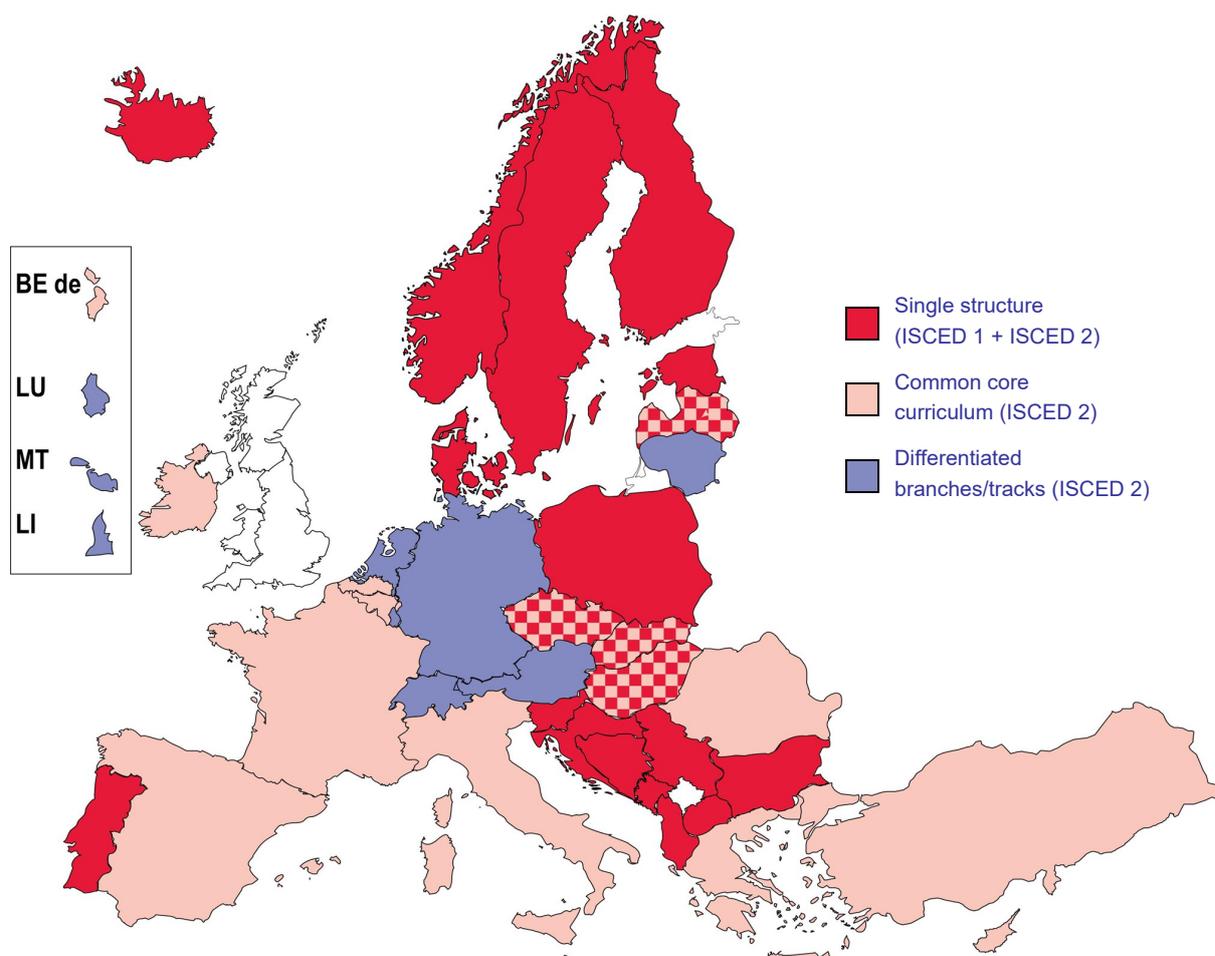
1. A brief presentation of the main organisational models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1-2)
2. A guide to reading the diagrams
3. The schematic diagrams.

## 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, 2023/2024



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 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) <sup>(1)</sup>
- 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.

---

<sup>(1)</sup> For more information on main type of educational provision for adults, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021. *Adult education and training in Europe: Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications* [pdf]. Available Online at: [Adult education and training in Europe: Building inclusive pathways to skills and qualifications | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](https://eurydice.europa.eu/en/adult-education-and-training-in-europe-building-inclusive-pathways-to-skills-and-qualifications) [Accessed 18 July 2023].

## Education programmes

The thick coloured bars show education programmes <sup>(2)</sup>; 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.

**Possible 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.

---

<sup>(2)</sup> 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 <b>not responsible</b> )						
	Early childhood education and care (for which public education authorities are <b>responsible</b> )						
	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 2		ISCED 4		ISCED 6
	ISCED 1		ISCED 3		ISCED 5		ISCED 7
Other keys							
	Compulsory full-time education/training						
	Compulsory part-time 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: [international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org/publications/isc2011/en)

### **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.

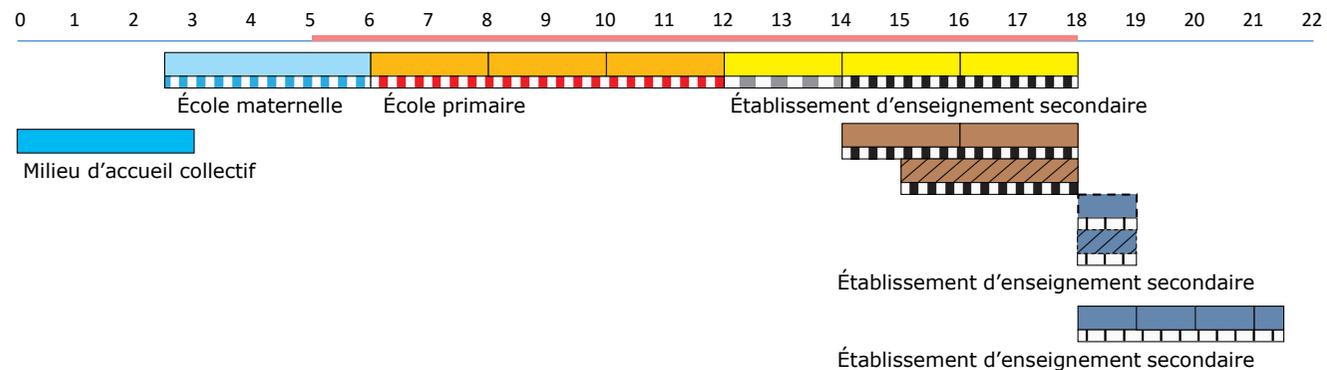
## SCHEMATIC DIAGRAMS

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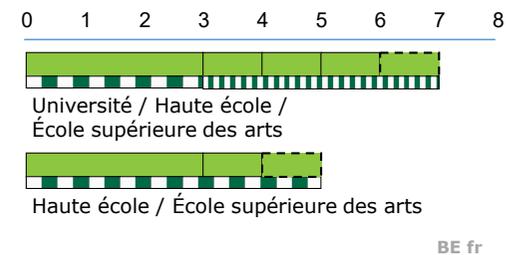
Belgium – French Community	14	Netherlands	24
Belgium – German-speaking Community	14	Austria	25
Belgium – Flemish Community	15	Poland	26
Bulgaria	15	Portugal	26
Czechia	15	Romania	27
Denmark	16	Slovenia	27
Germany	17	Slovakia	28
Estonia	17	Finland	28
Ireland	18	Sweden	29
Greece	18		
Spain	19	Albania	30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

## Belgium – French Community

Age of students

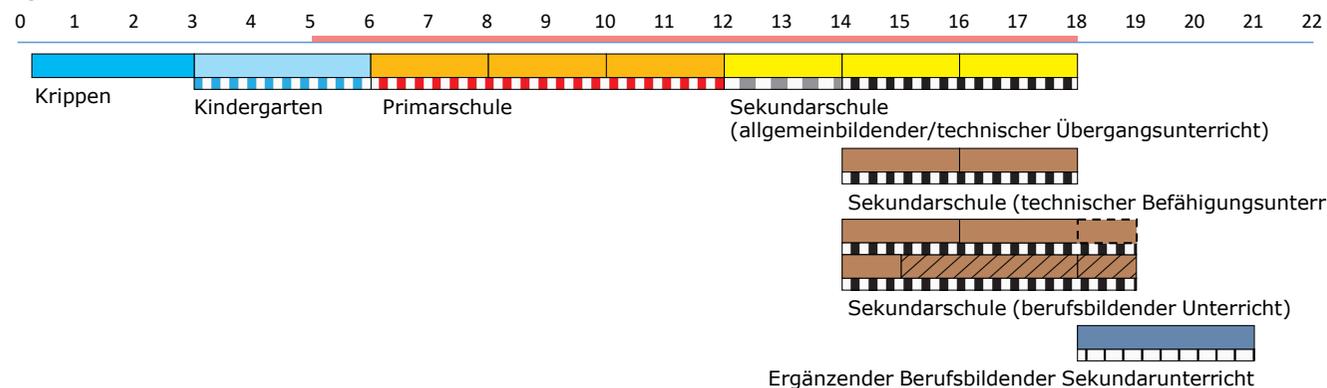


Programme duration (years)

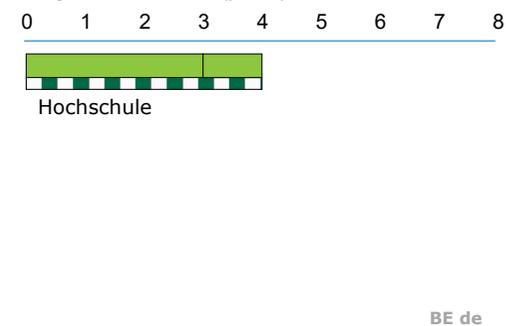


## Belgium – German-speaking Community

Age of students



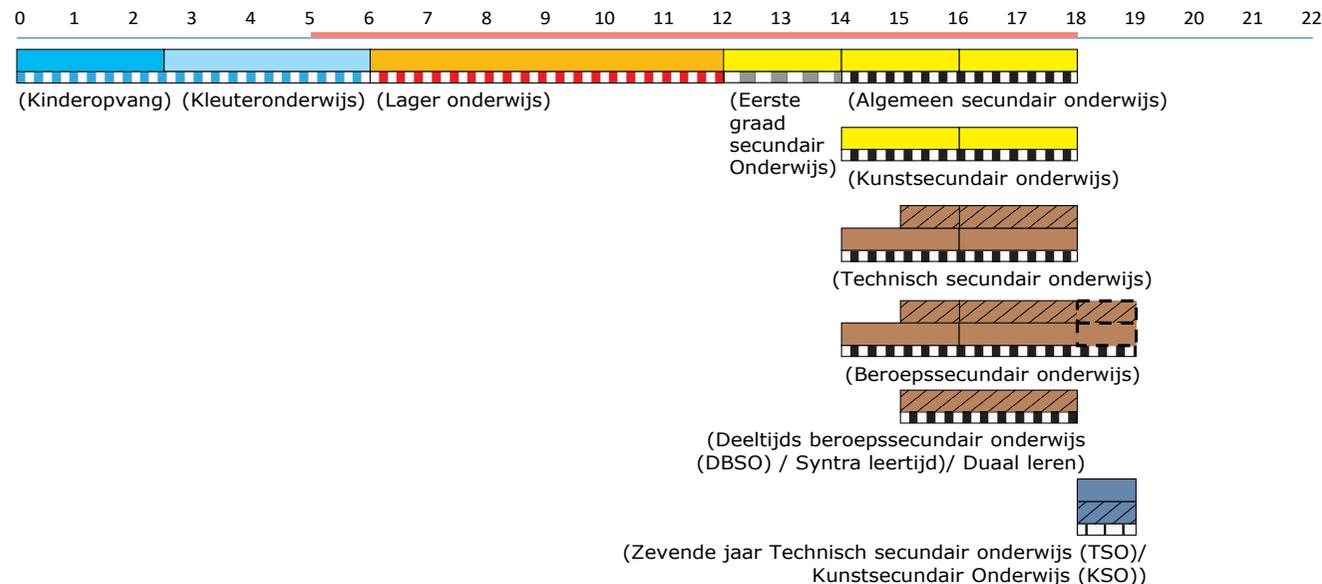
Programme duration (years)



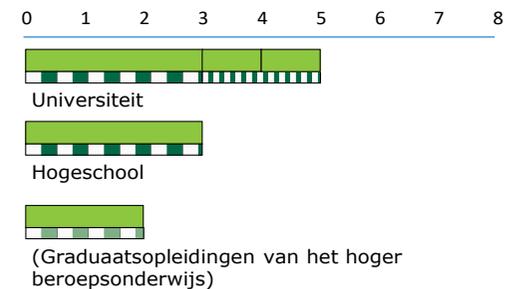
Note. *Krippen* starts from 3 months.

# Belgium – Flemish Community

Age of students



Programme duration (years)

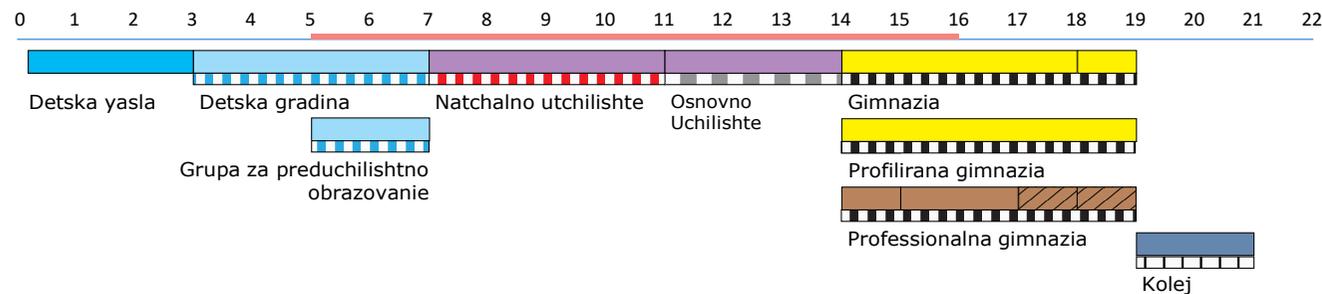


BE nl

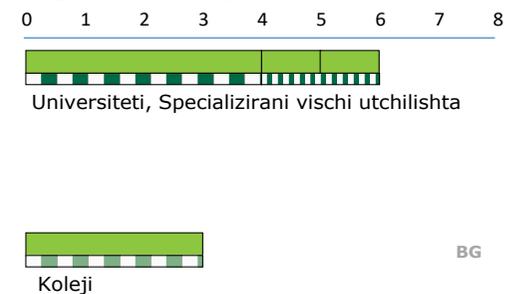
15

# Bulgaria

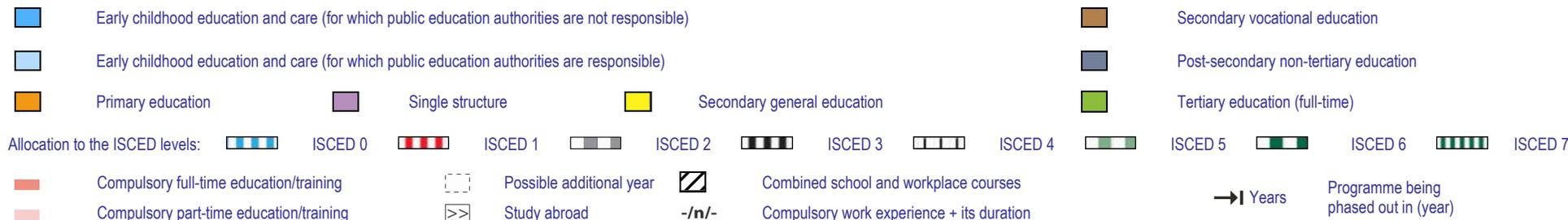
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

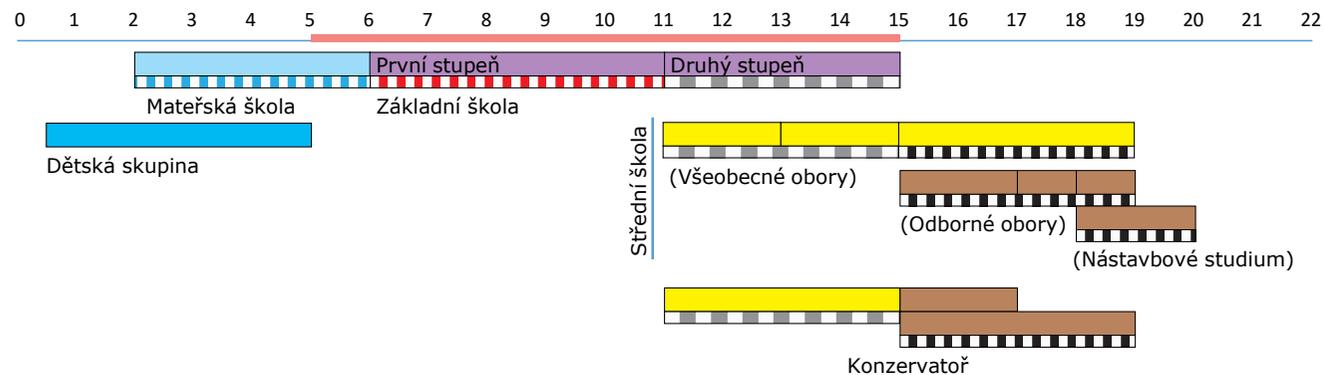


BG



## Czechia

Age of students



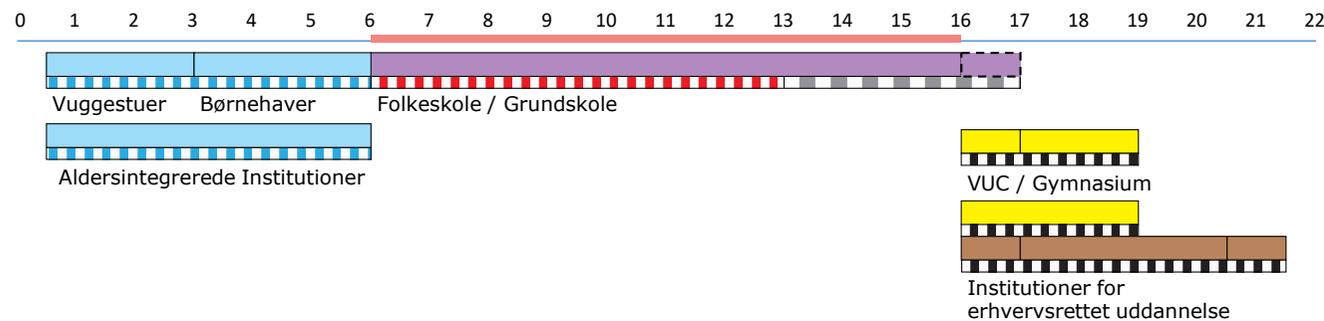
Programme duration (years)



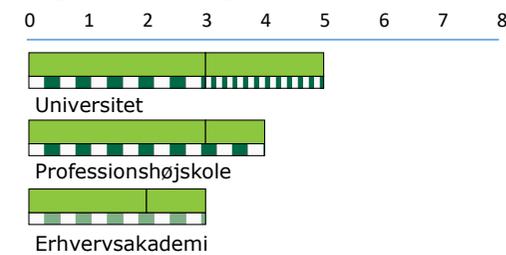
CZ

## Denmark

Age of students



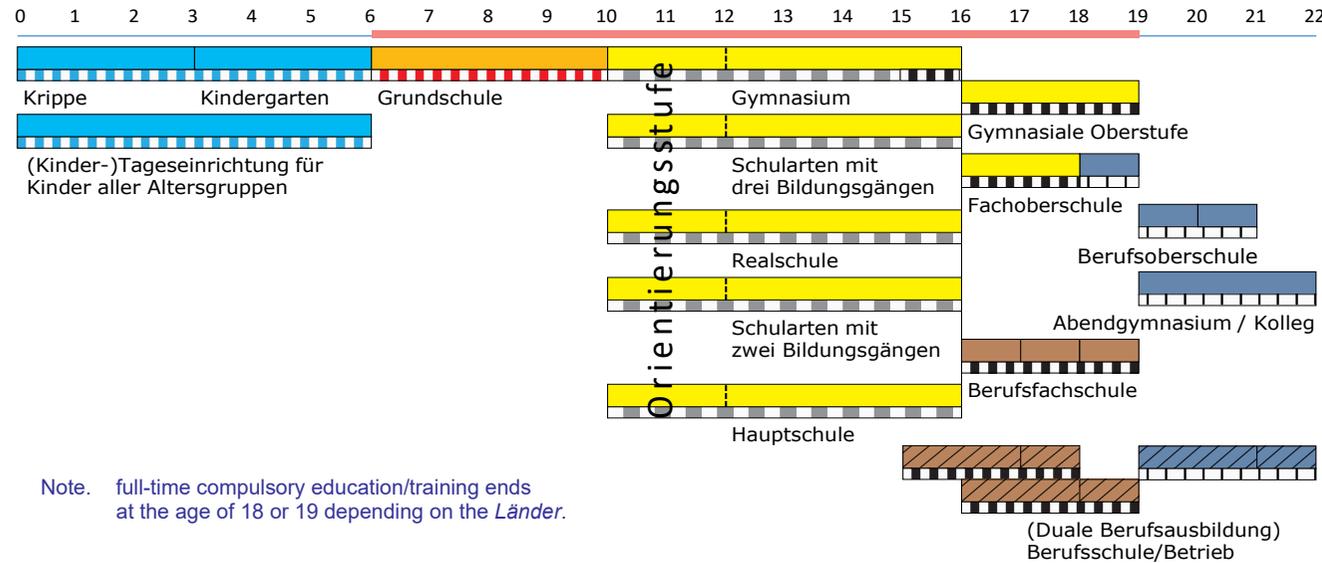
Programme duration (years)



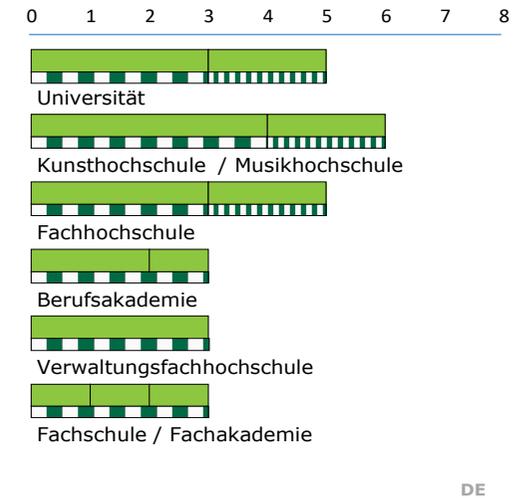
DK

# Germany

Age of students



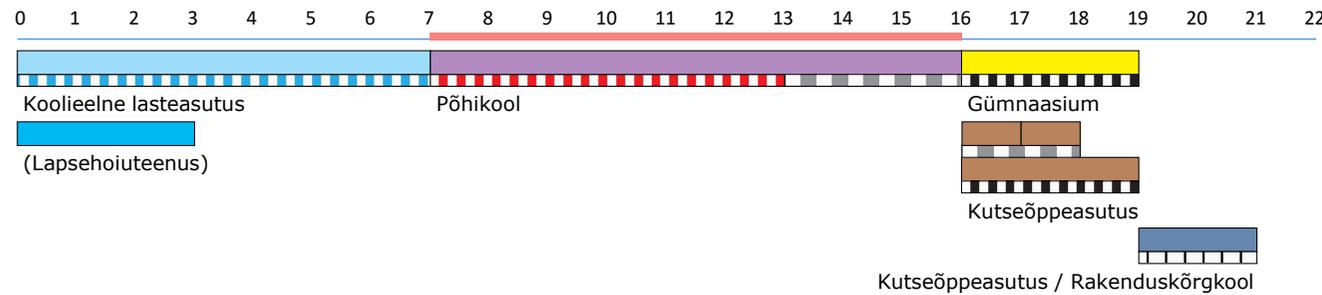
Programme duration (years)



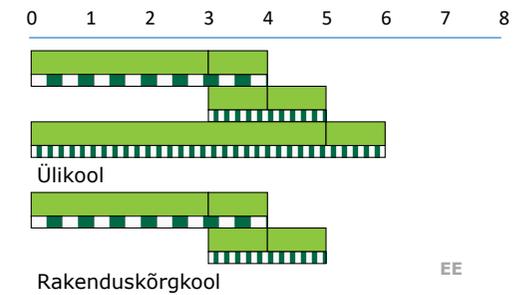
DE

# 17 Estonia

Age of students



Programme duration (years)



EE

	Early childhood education and care (for which public education authorities are not responsible)		Secondary vocational education
	Early childhood education and care (for which public education authorities are responsible)		Post-secondary non-tertiary education
	Primary education		Single structure
	Secondary general education		Tertiary education (full-time)

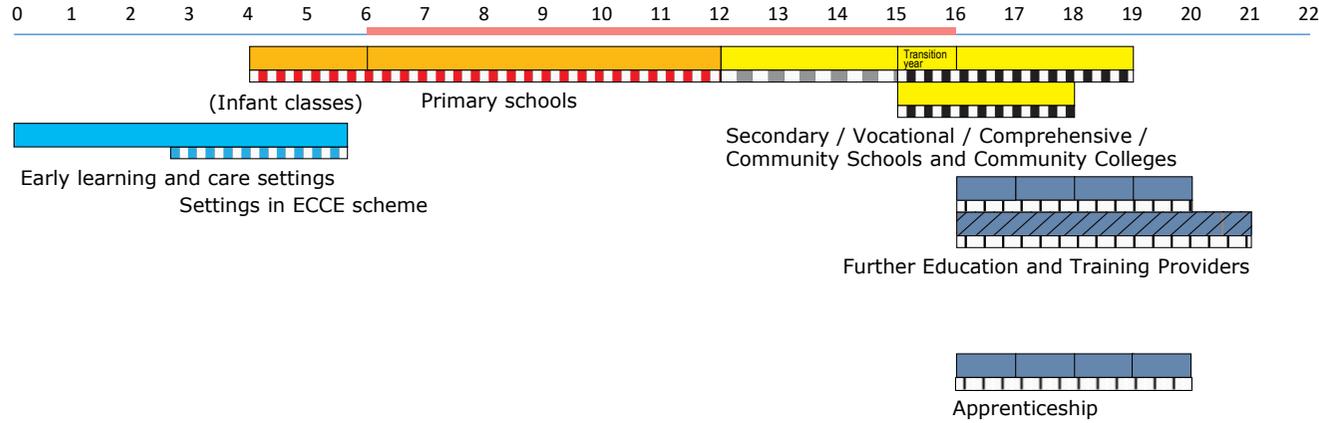
Allocation to the ISCED levels: ISCED 0 ISCED 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

	Compulsory full-time education/training		Possible additional year		Combined school and workplace courses
	Compulsory part-time education/training		Study abroad		Compulsory work experience + its duration

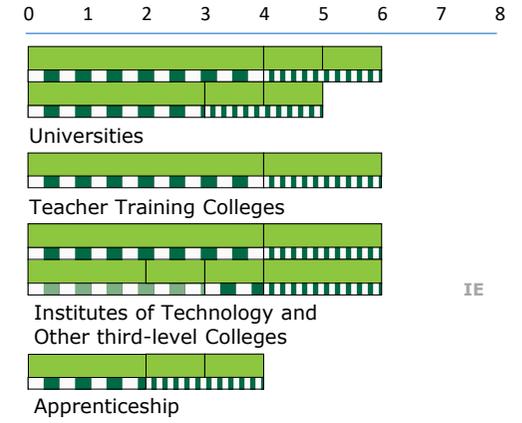
Years Programme being phased out in (year)

# Ireland

Age of students



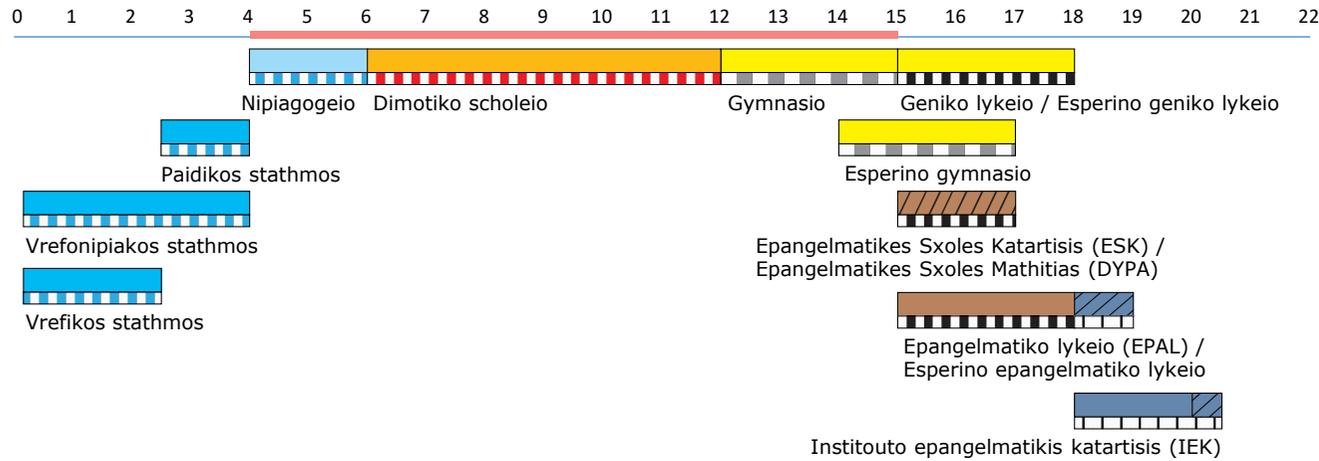
Programme duration (years)



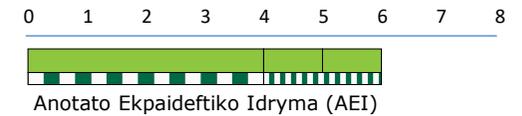
IE

# Greece

Age of students



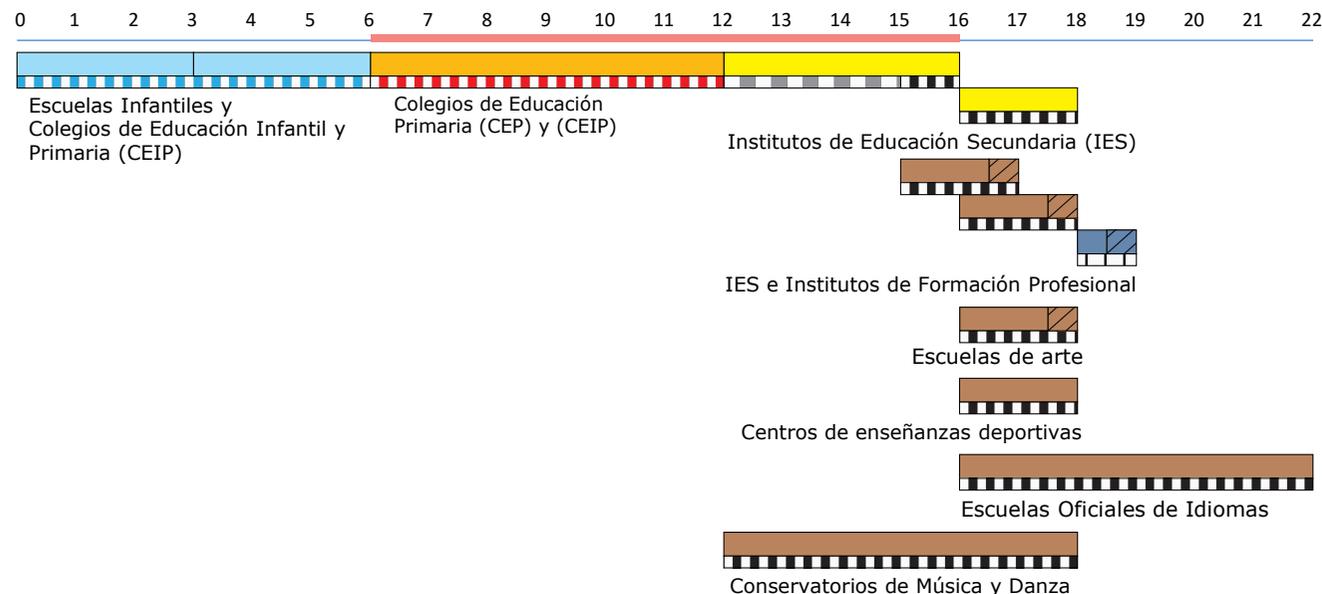
Programme duration (years)



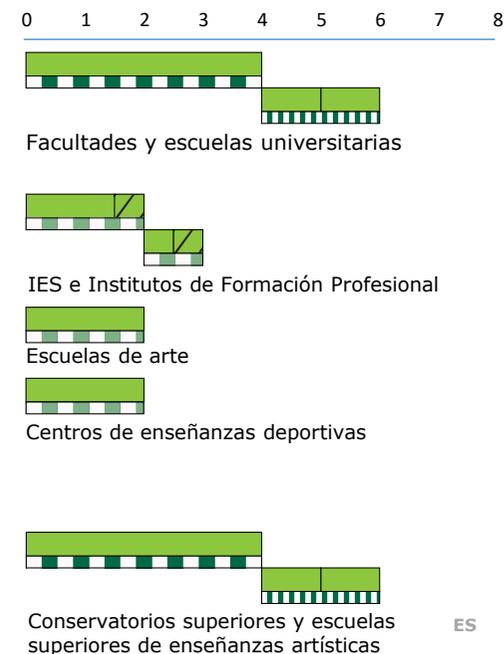
EL

# Spain

Age of students

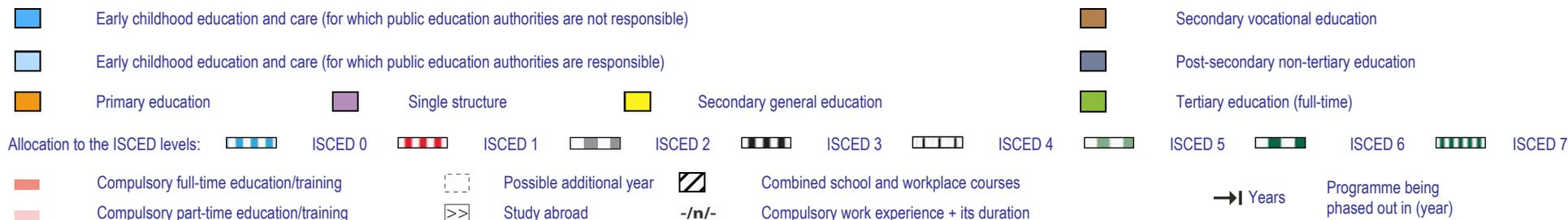


Programme duration (years)



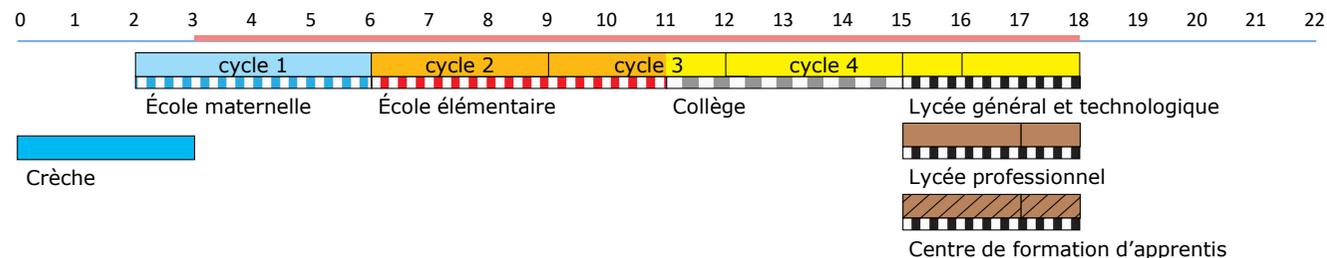
19

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 obtaining the *Bachillerato* certificate, *Bachiller artístico*.

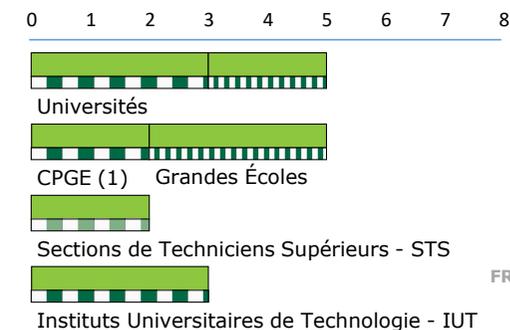


## France

Age of students



Programme duration (years)



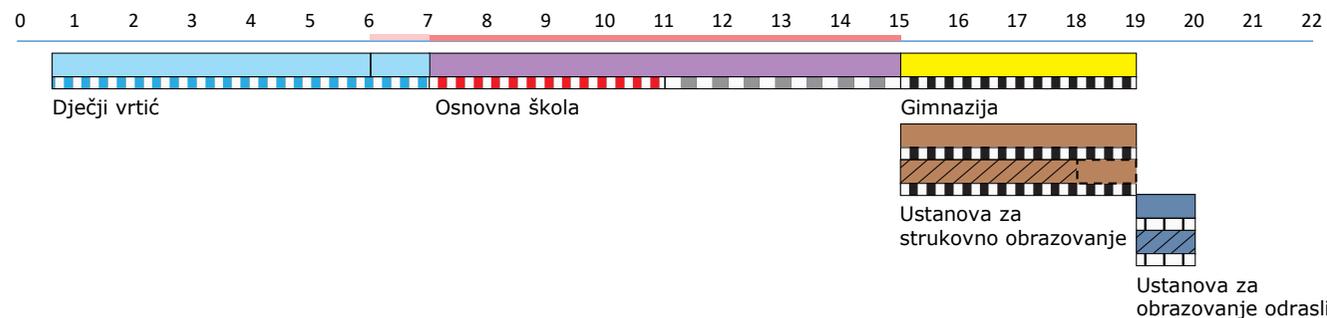
(1) CPGE: Classes préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles

Note. ISCED 4 education covers less than 2 % of the total number of students (all levels).

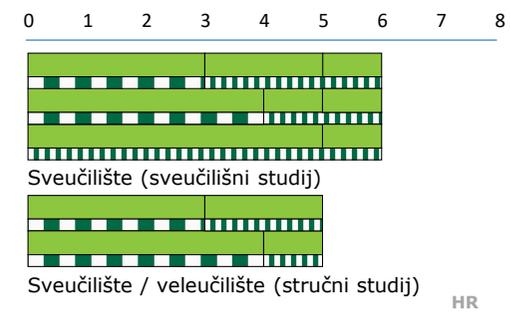
Young people aged between 16 and 18 can fulfil the obligation for compulsory training in different ways: schooling, apprenticeship, training courses, civic service, and support system or social and professional integration measures.

## Croatia

Age of students



Programme duration (years)

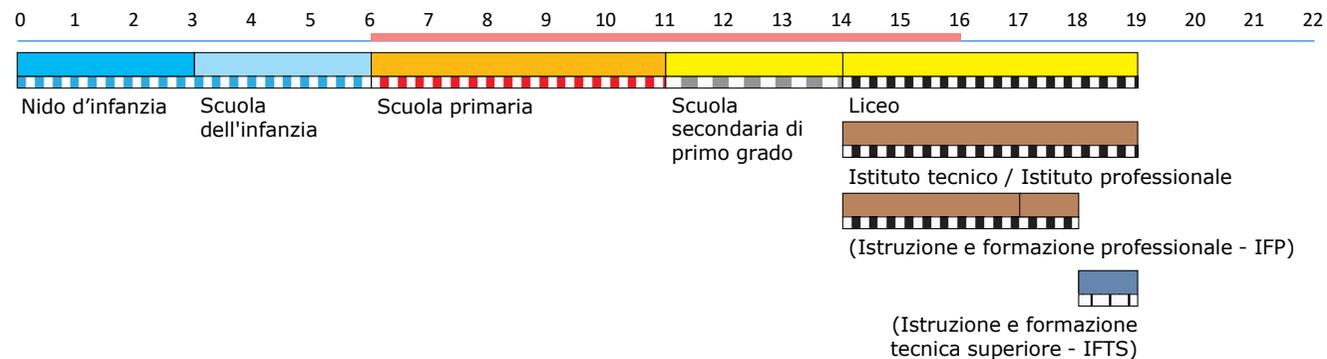


Note. Start of primary education (ISCED 1) depends on child's birthday.

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.

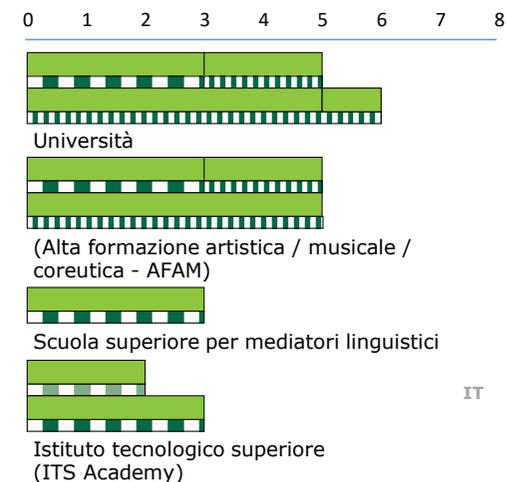
# Italy

Age of students



Note: In 2022, the law no. 99 has reformed the Istituto tecnico superiore (ITS). The name was changed to Istituto tecnologico superiore (ITS Academy). In addition to 2-year ISCED 5 courses, it now offers 3-year ISCED 6 programmes. Implementation decrees are still under development.

Programme duration (years)

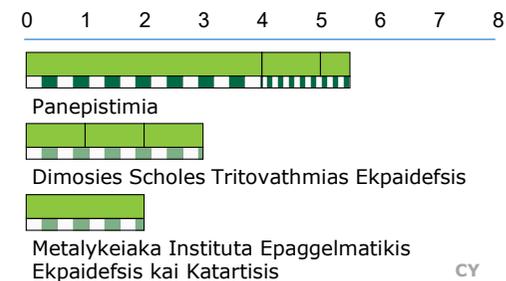


# Cyprus

Age of students



Programme duration (years)



	Early childhood education and care (for which public education authorities are not responsible)		Secondary vocational education
	Early childhood education and care (for which public education authorities are responsible)		Post-secondary non-tertiary education
	Primary education		Single structure
	Secondary general education		Tertiary education (full-time)

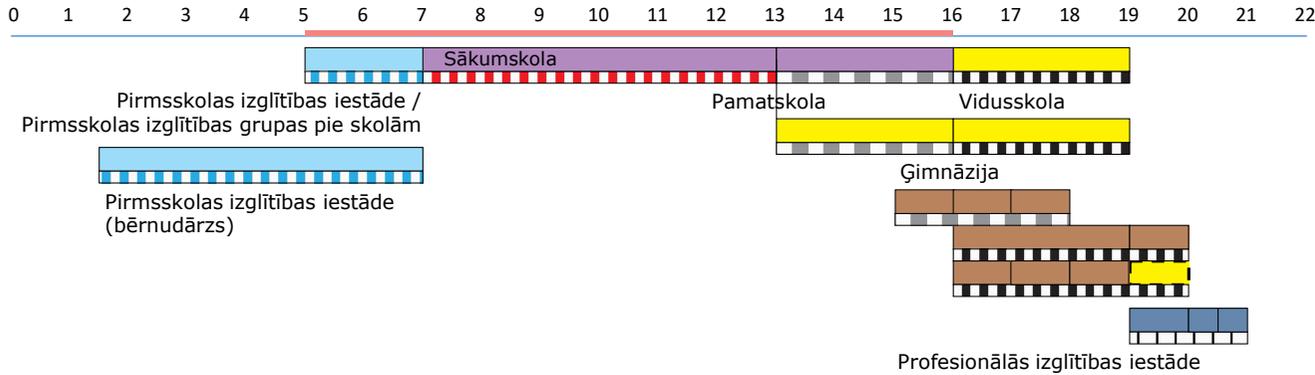
Allocation to the ISCED levels: ISCED 0 ISCED 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

	Compulsory full-time education/training		Possible additional year		Combined school and workplace courses
	Compulsory part-time education/training		Study abroad		Compulsory work experience + its duration

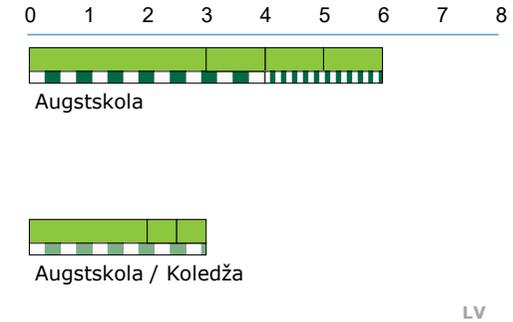
Years Programme being phased out in (year)

# Latvia

Age of students

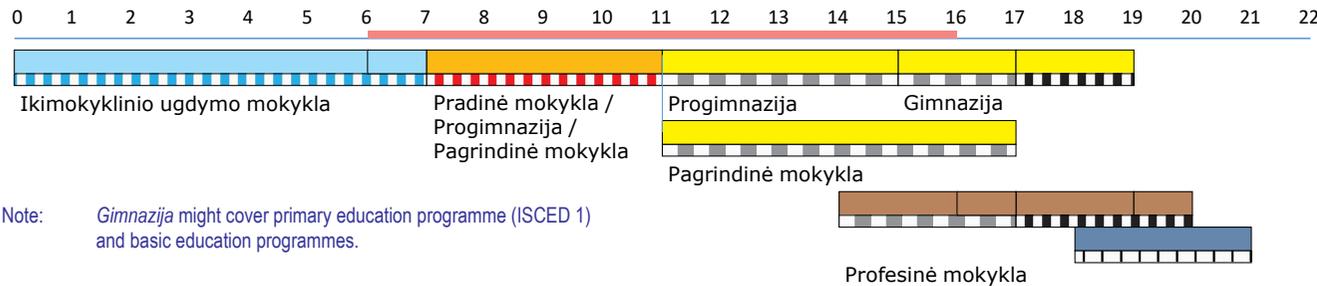


Programme duration (years)



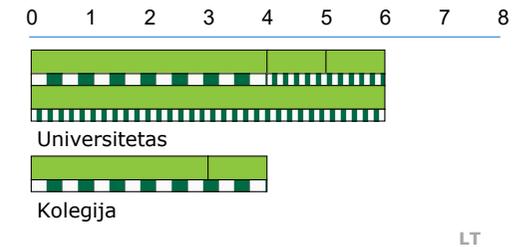
# Lithuania

Age of students



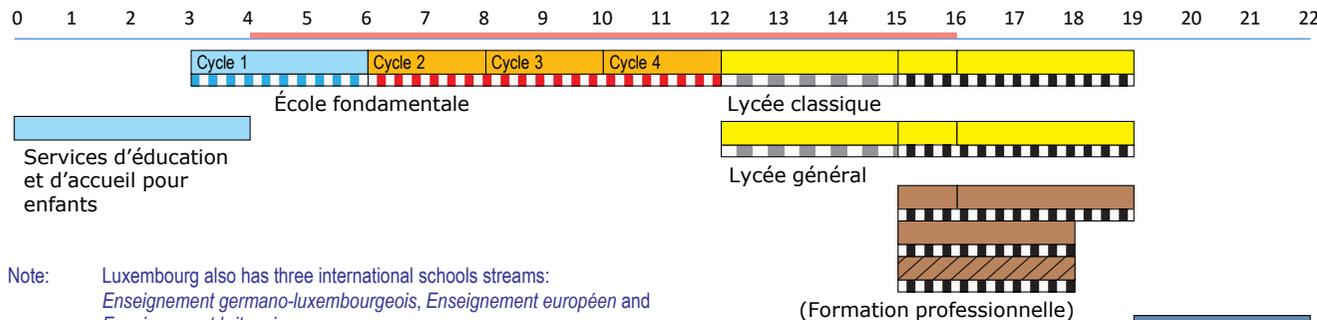
Note: *Gimnazija* might cover primary education programme (ISCED 1) and basic education programmes.

Programme duration (years)



# Luxembourg

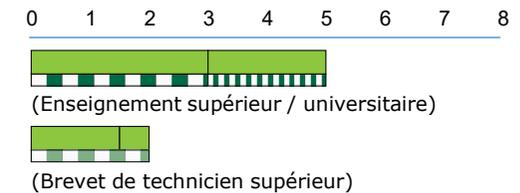
Age of students



Note: Luxembourg also has three international schools streams: *Enseignement germano-luxembourgeois*, *Enseignement européen* and *Enseignement britannique*.

A new law voted on July 13 June 2023 extended compulsory education to the age of 18 years. This law will come into force at the start of the 2026 school year. This will give the education and training sector time to develop new education provision for the students who currently leave schools at 16.

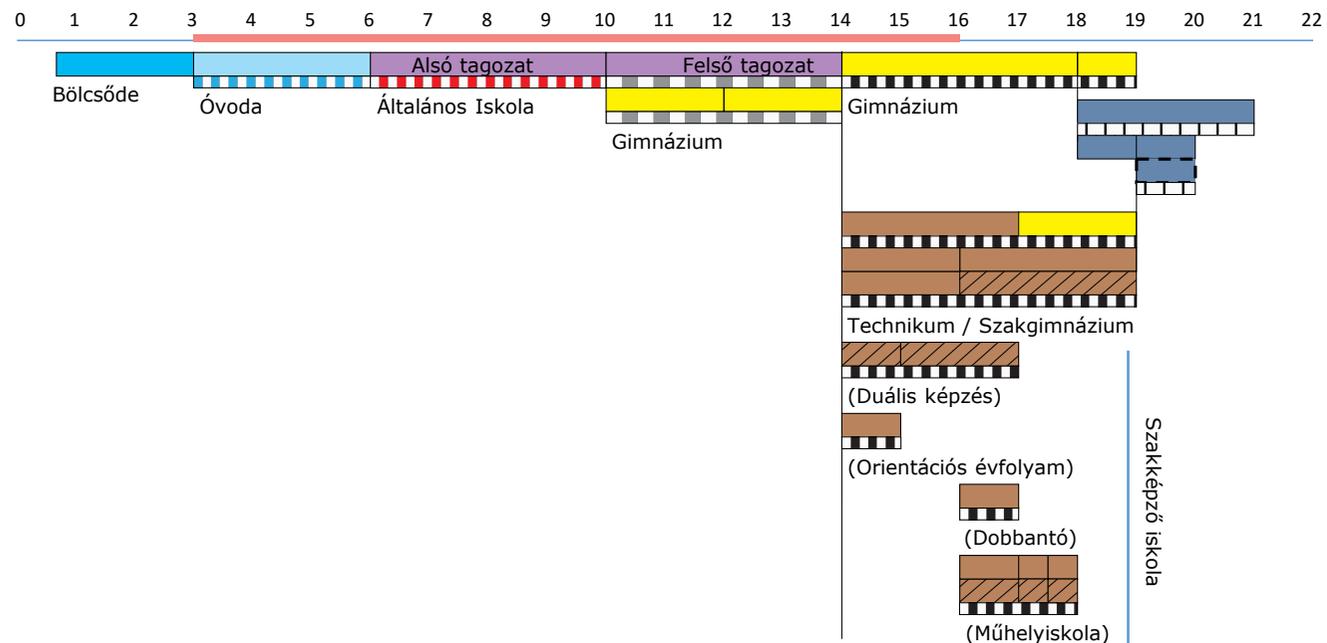
Programme duration (years)



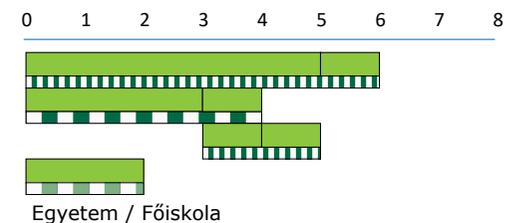
(Brevet de maîtrise)

# Hungary

Age of students

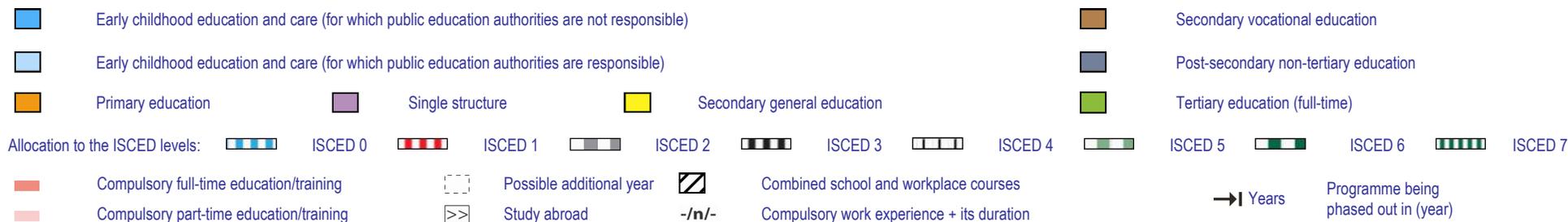


Programme duration (years)



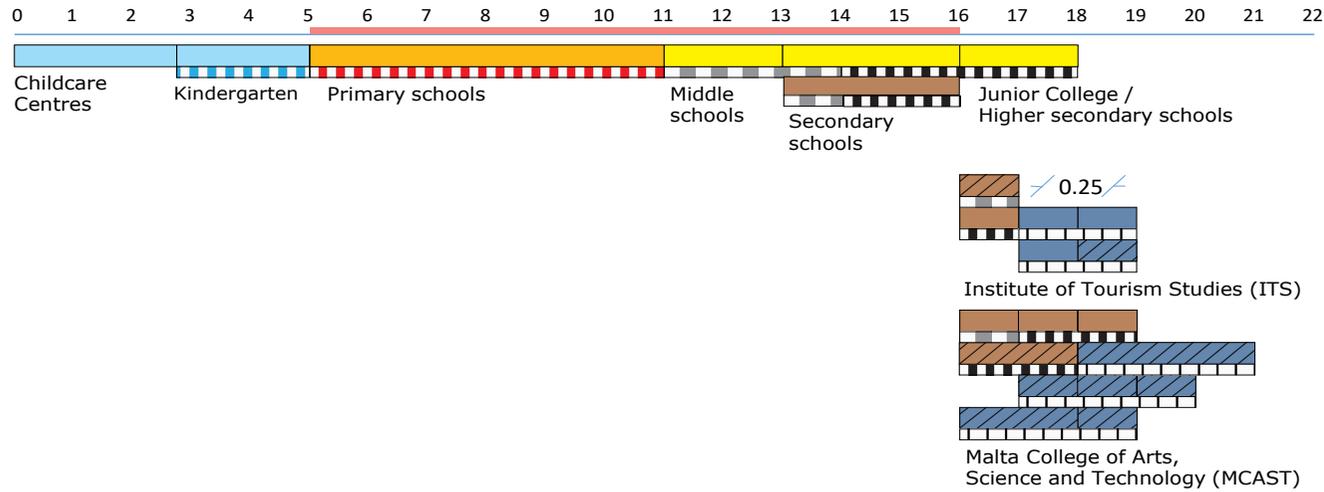
23

Note. Every student under 18 who has completed compulsory education, but dropped out afterwards without completing any other courses has to continue her/his education and training until the acquisition of at least one partial VET qualification.

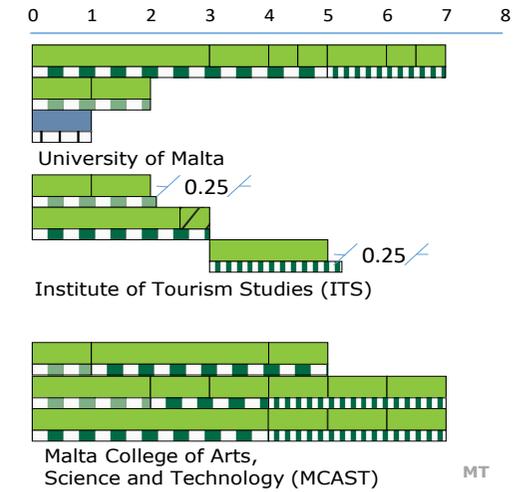


# Malta

Age of students



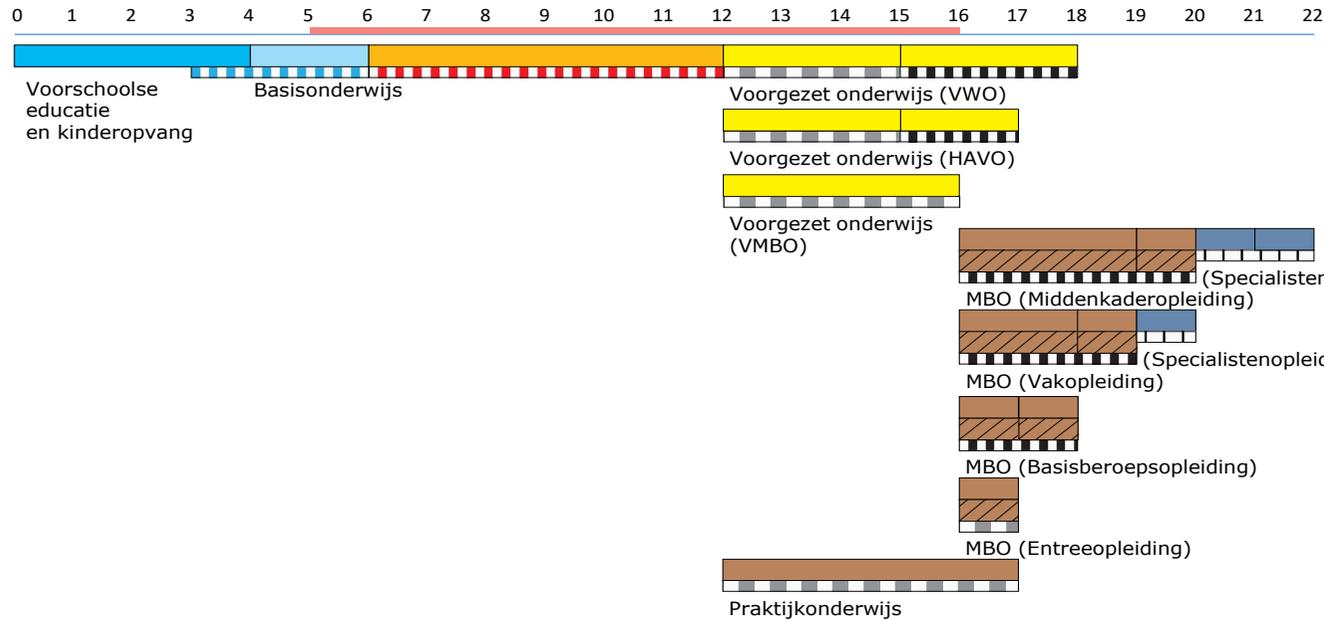
Programme duration (years)



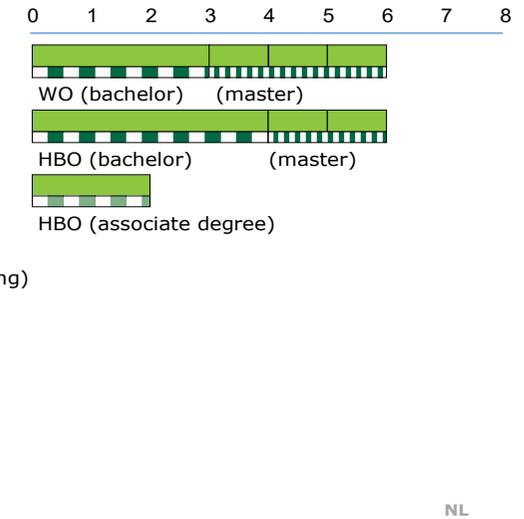
# Netherlands

24

Age of students



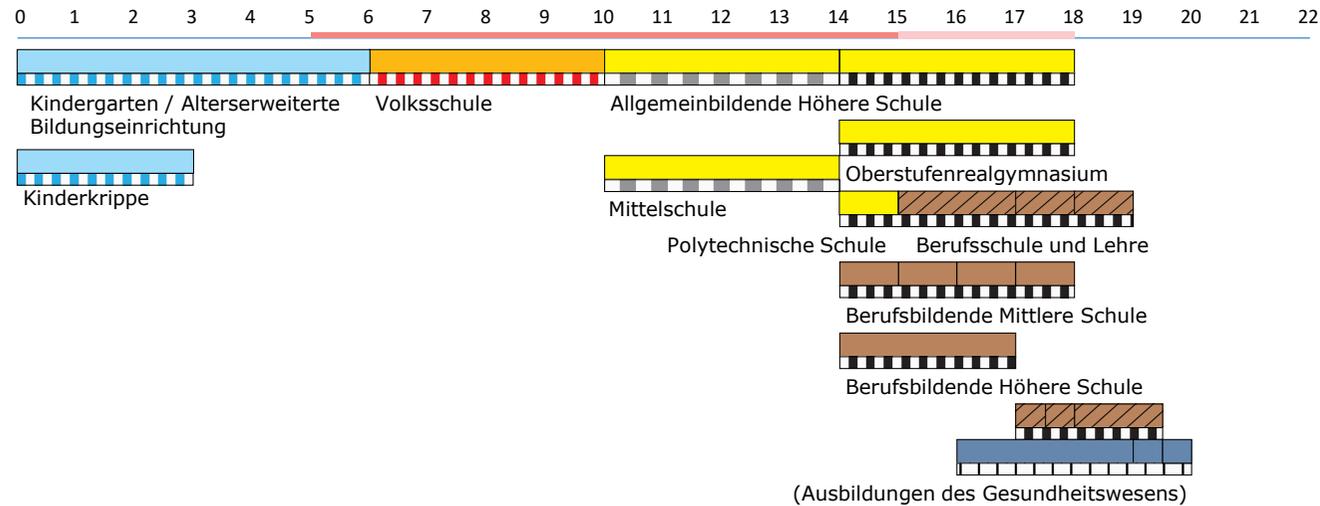
Programme duration (years)



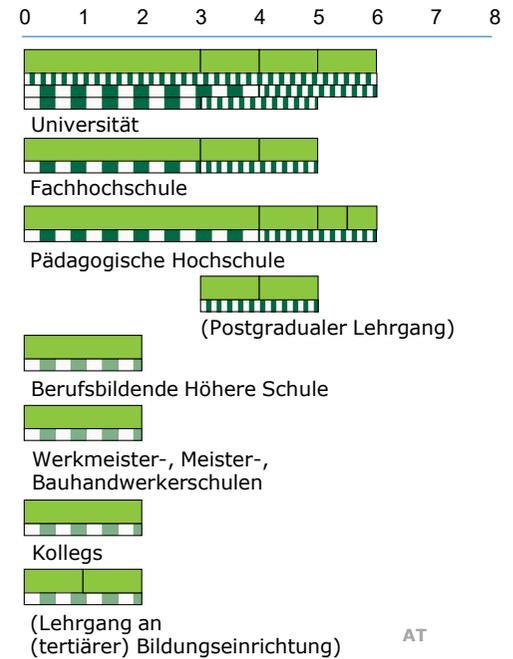
Note. At 16, students who have not obtained a basic qualification (*Startkwalificatie*) have to continue their education/training until they turn 18 or get a senior general secondary (HAVO) or pre-university (VWO) or VET (at least MBO 2) diploma.

# Austria

Age of students

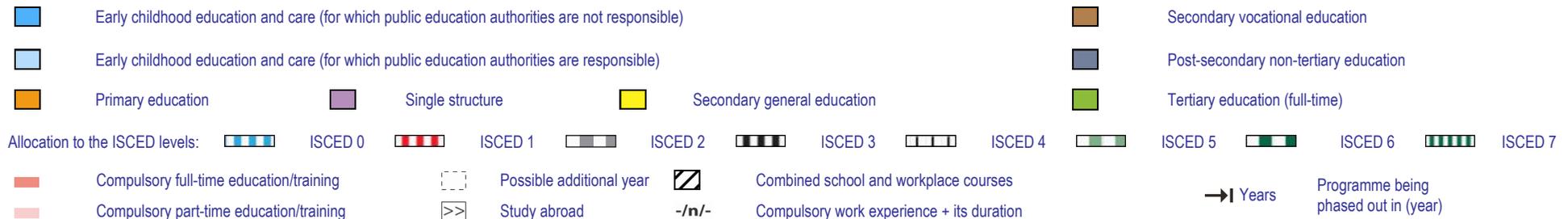


Programme duration (years)



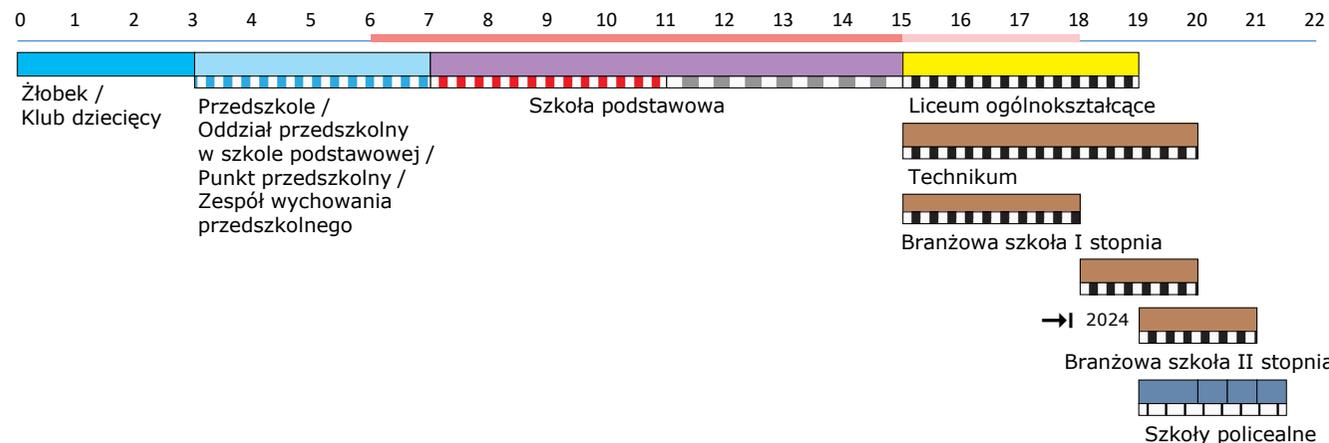
25

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.

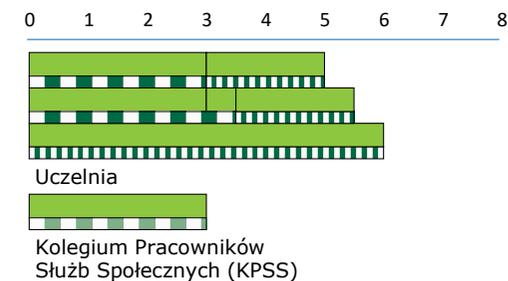


## Poland

Age of students



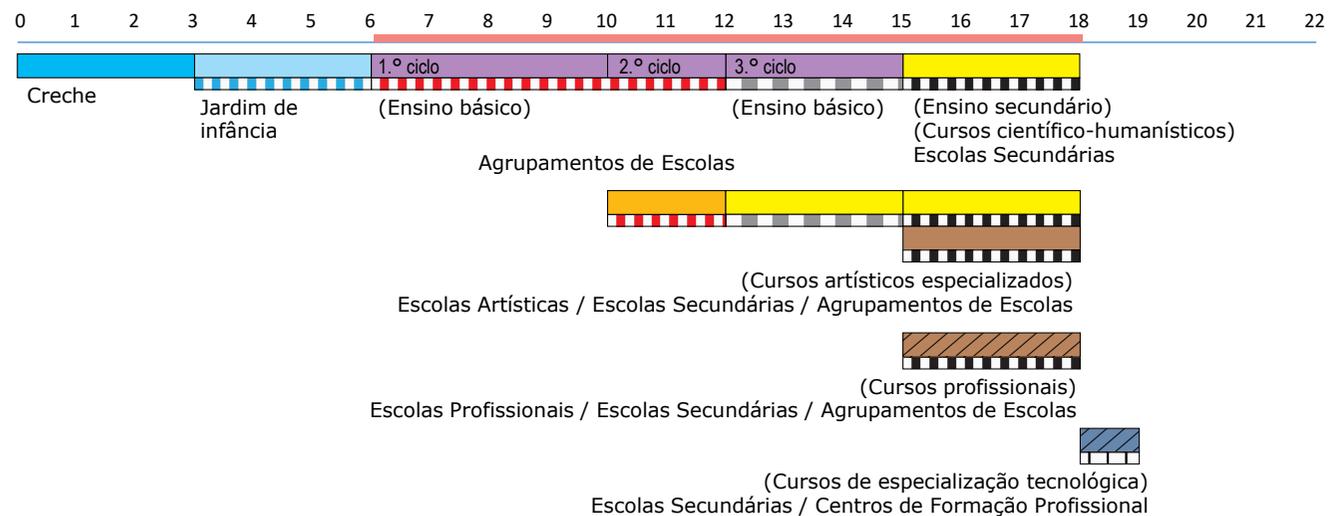
Programme duration (years)



PL

## Portugal

Age of students



Programme duration (years)

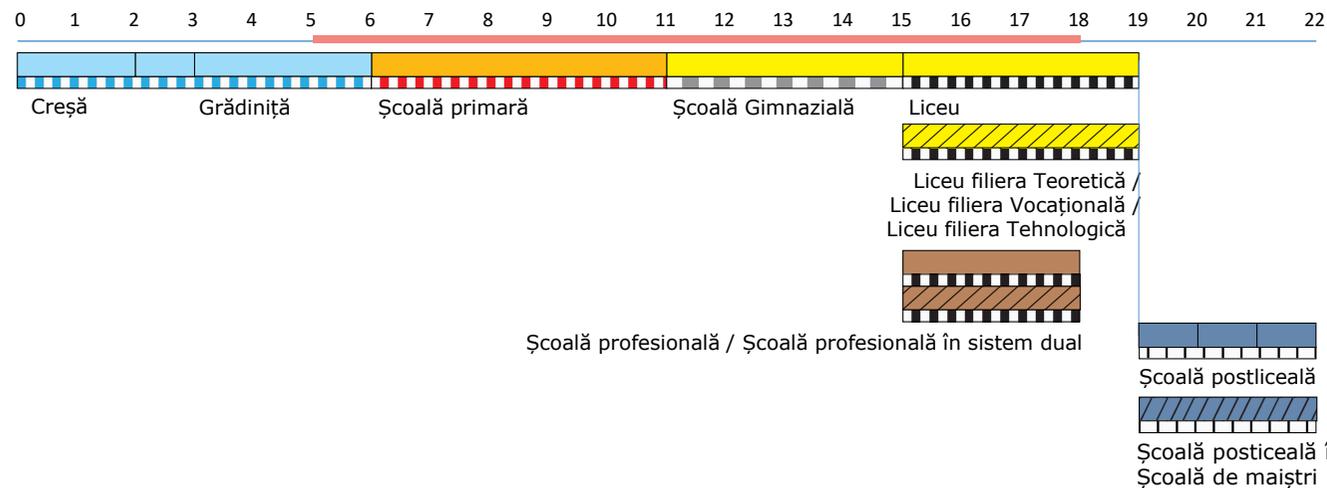


PT

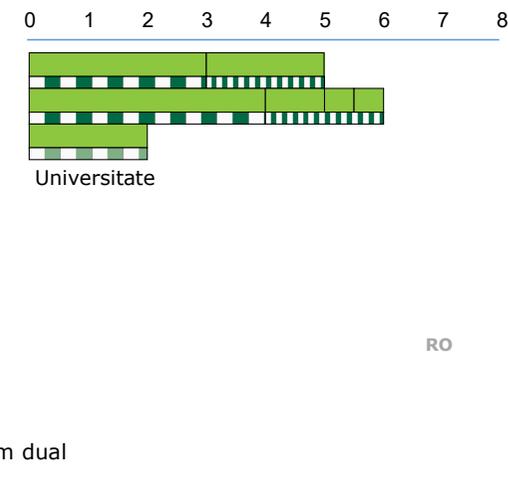
Note. *Agrupamentos de Escolas* (School clusters) are organisational units that can encompass several schools and learning cycles, from kindergarten to upper secondary education. The institutions in the diagram are examples of some of the learning spaces where each type of education is offered; the diagram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

# Romania

Age of students



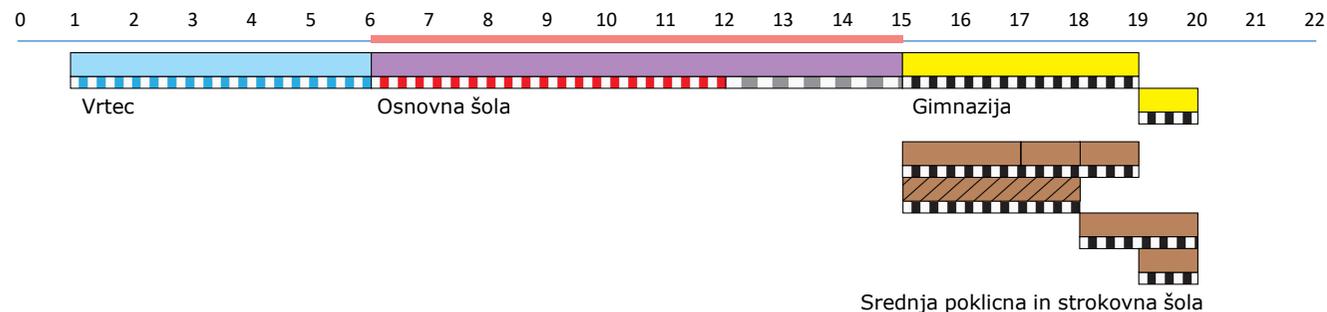
Programme duration (years)



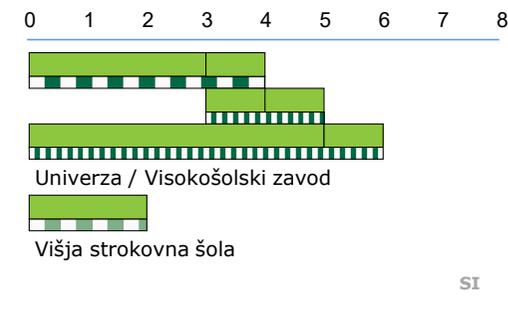
RO

# Slovenia

Age of students

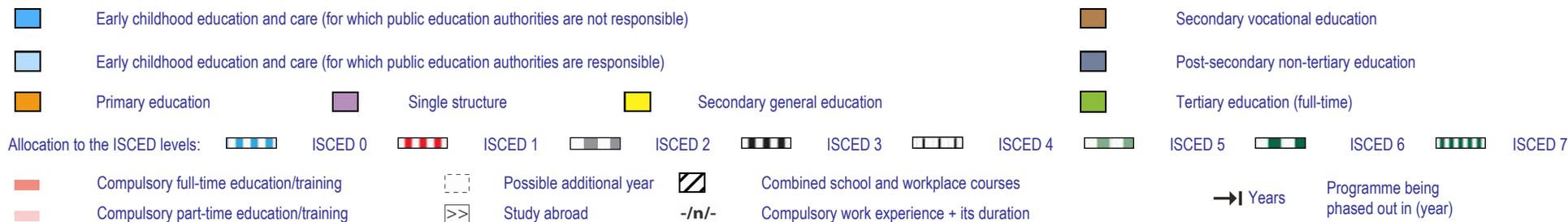


Programme duration (years)



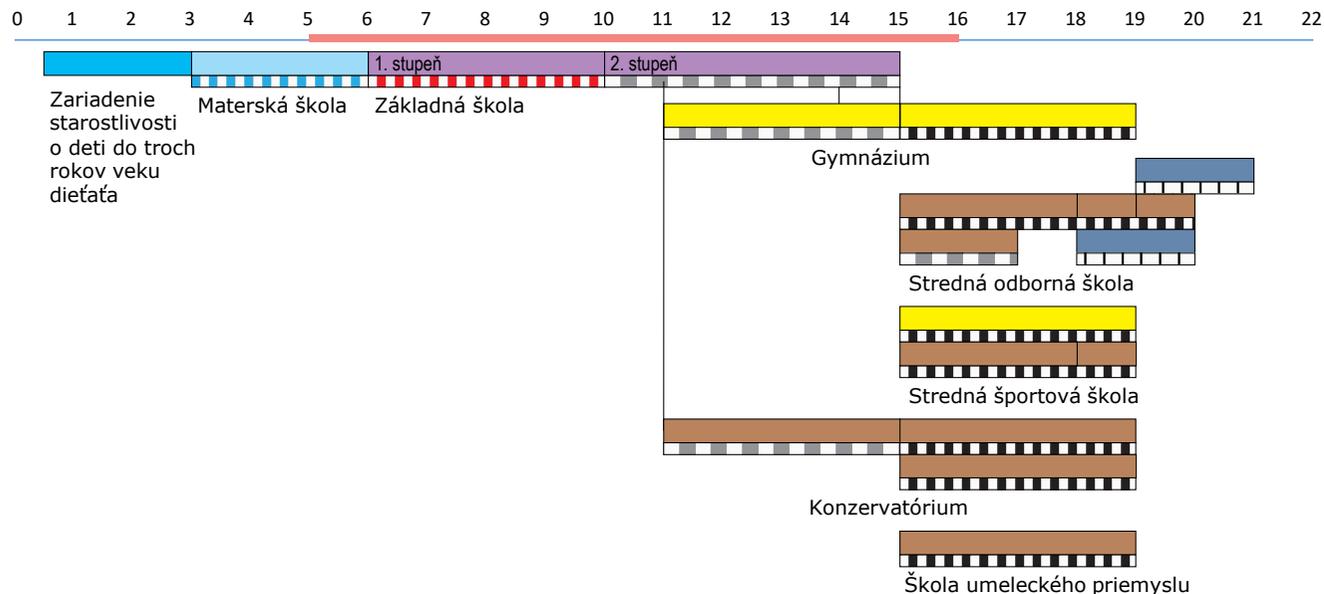
SI

27

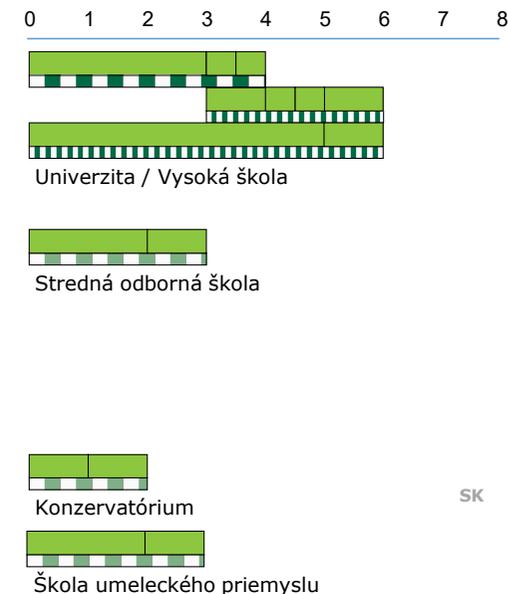


# Slovakia

Age of students



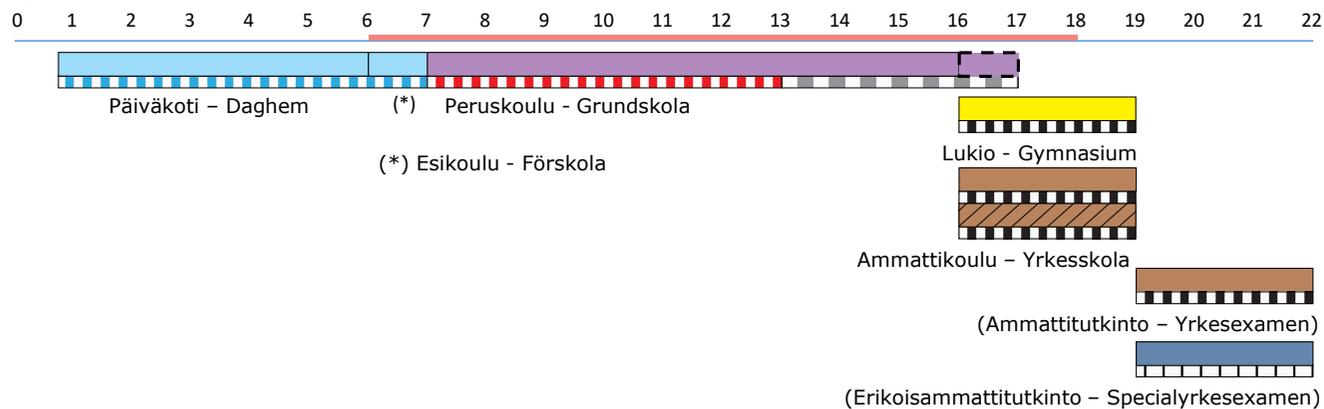
Programme duration (years)



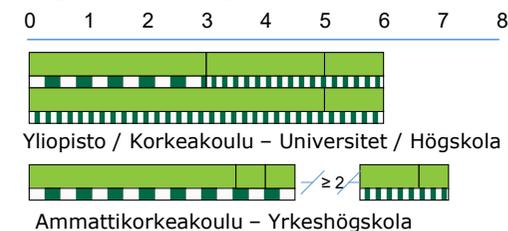
28

# Finland

Age of students



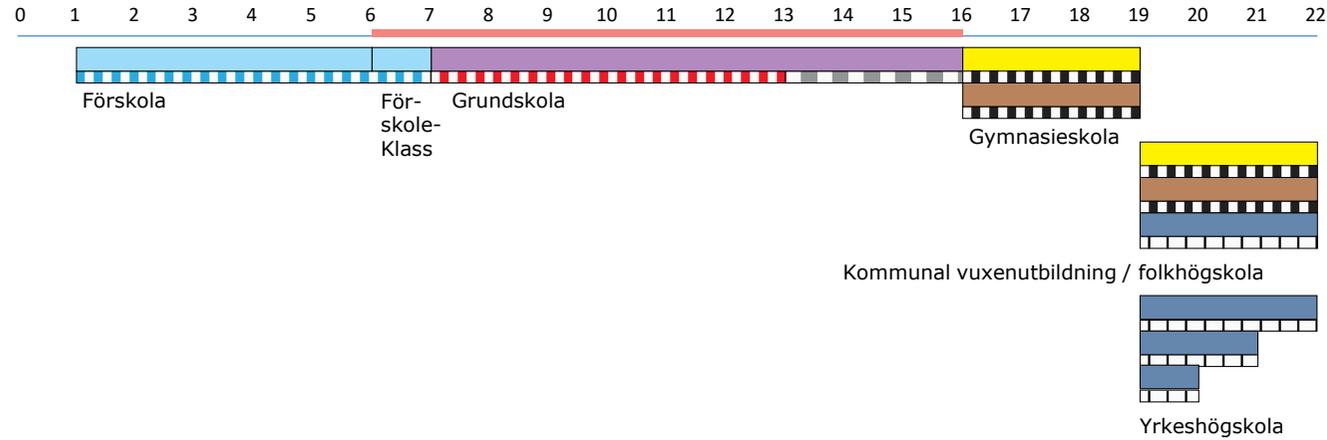
Programme duration (years)



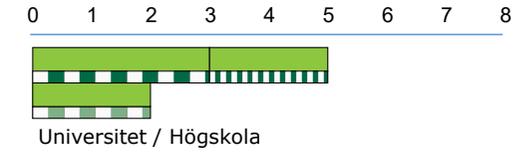
Note. Students can join ISCED 3 and 4 programmes at different ages.

# Sweden

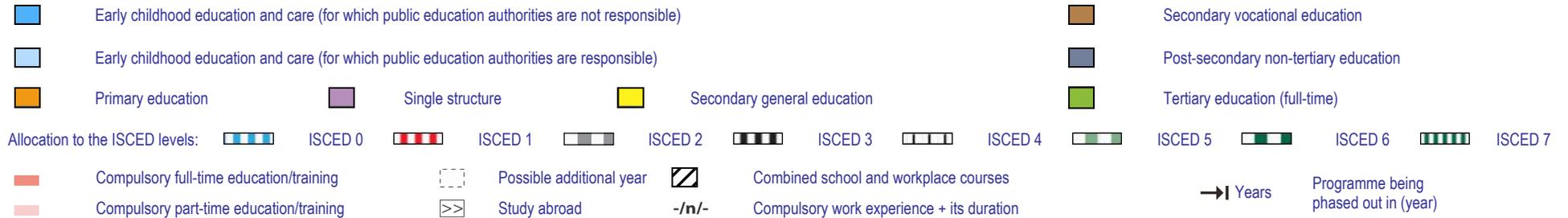
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

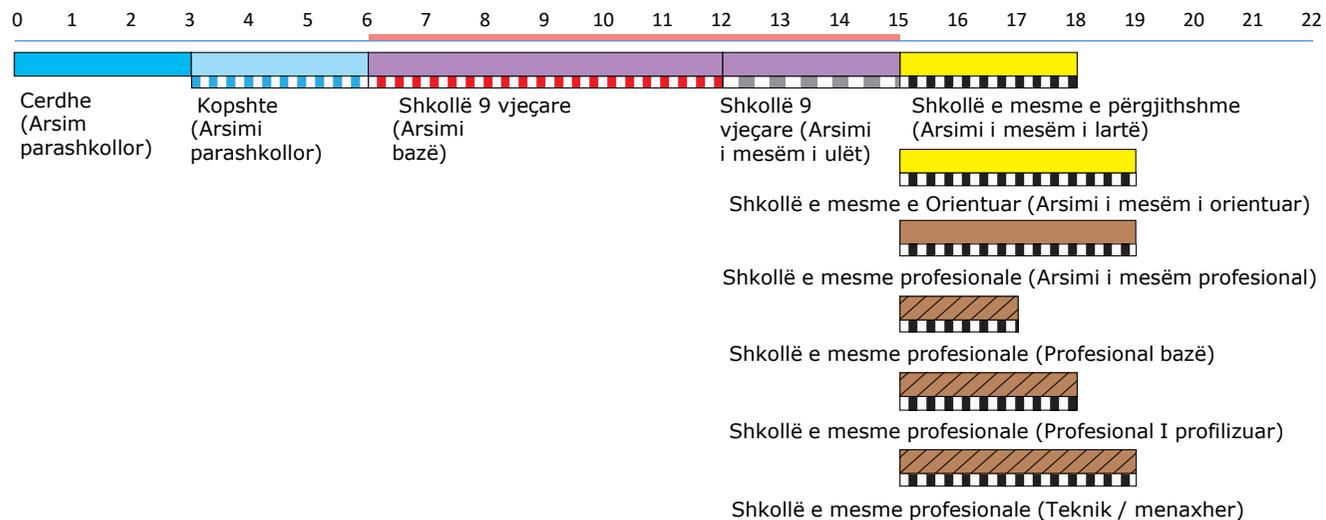


SE

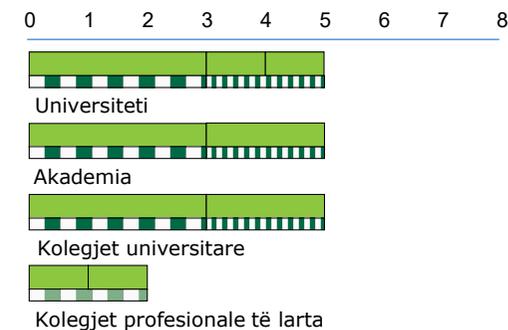


## Albania

Age of students



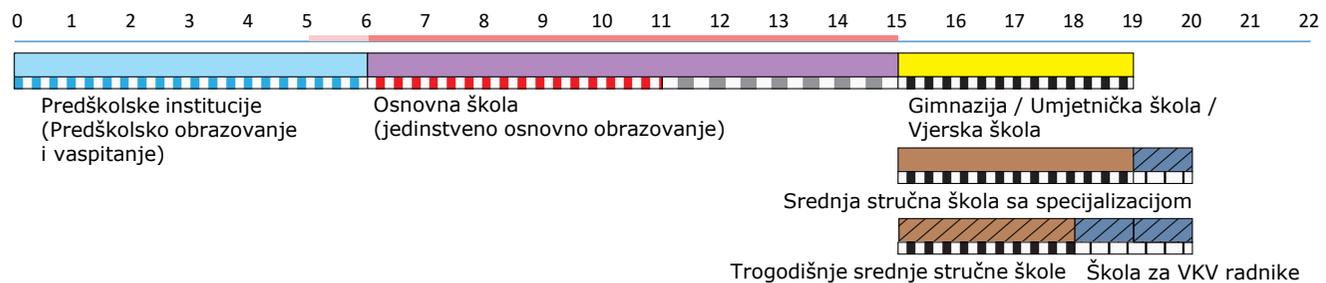
Programme duration (years)



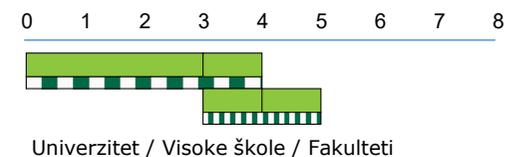
AL

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

Age of students



Programme duration (years)



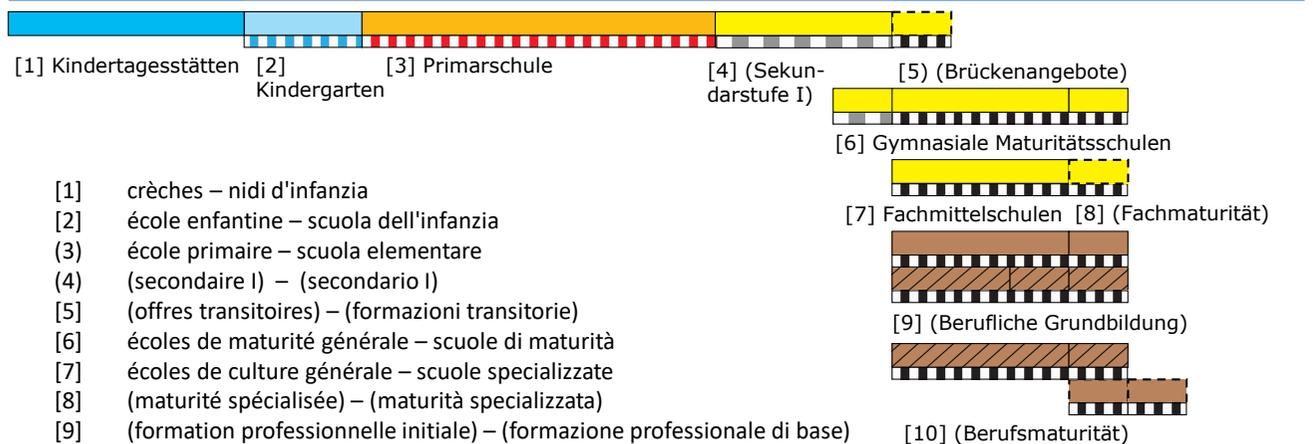
BA

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

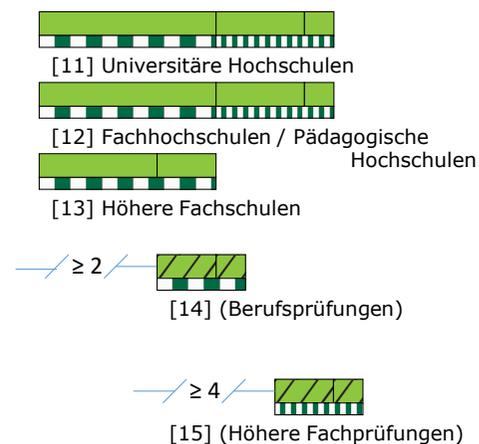
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22



- [1] crèches – nidi d'infanzia
- [2] école enfantine – scuola dell'infanzia
- (3) école primaire – scuola elementare
- (4) (secondaire I) – (secondario I)
- [5] (offres transitoires) – (formazioni transitorie)
- [6] écoles de maturité générale – scuole di maturità
- [7] écoles de culture générale – scuole specializzate
- [8] (maturité spécialisée) – (maturità specializzata)
- [9] (formation professionnelle initiale) – (formazione professionale di base)
- [10] (maturité professionnelle) – (maturità professionale)
- [11] hautes écoles universitaires – università
- [12] hautes écoles spécialisées – scuole universitarie professionali / hautes écoles pédagogiques – alte scuole pedagogiche
- [13] écoles supérieures – scuole specializzate superiori
- (14) (examens professionnels) – (esami di professione)
- (15) (examens professionnels supérieurs) – (esami professionali superiori)

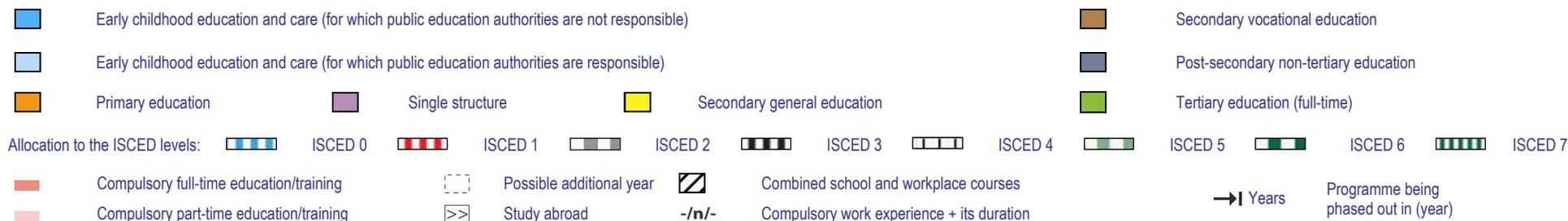
Programme duration (years)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



31

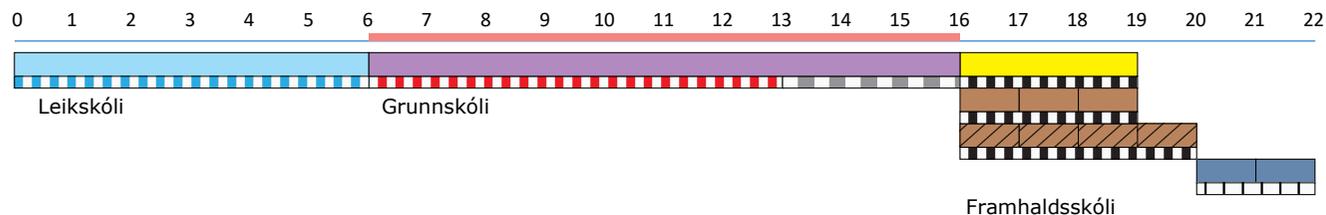
Note. In most cantons, compulsory education starts at age 4 (in a few at ages 5 or 6).



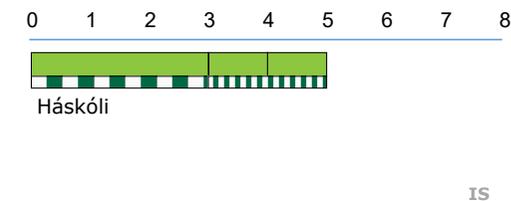
CH

## Iceland

Age of students

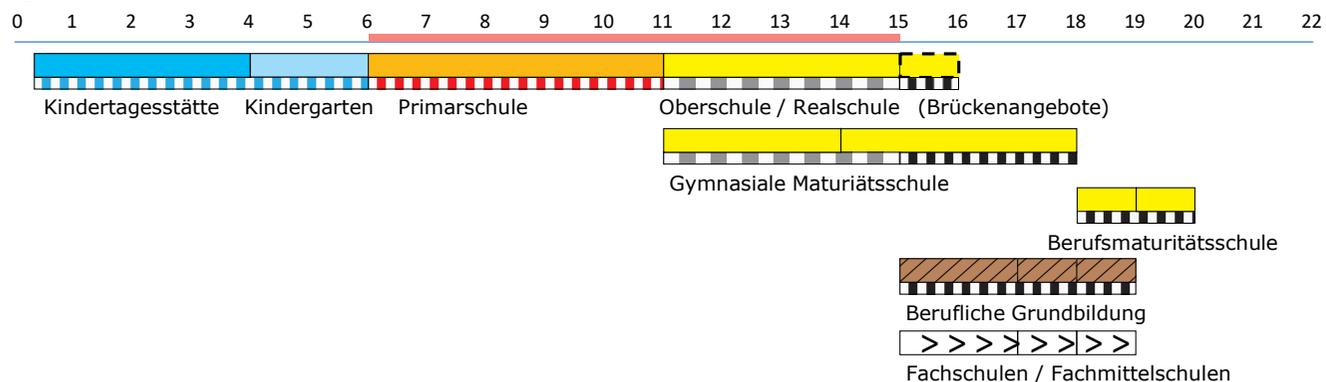


Programme duration (years)

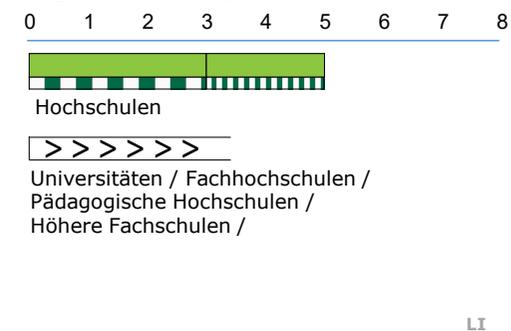


## Liechtenstein

Age of students



Programme duration (years)

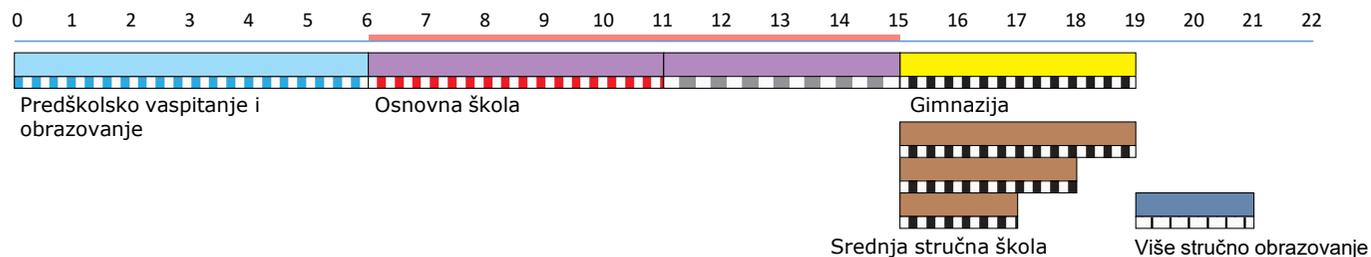


32

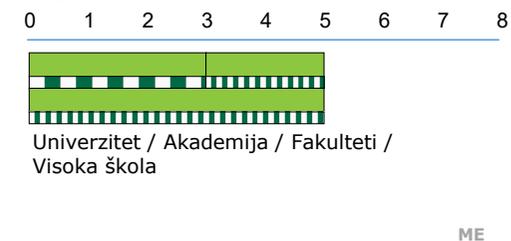
Note. Students in vocational education and the majority of students in higher education attend educational institutions in Switzerland.

## Montenegro

Age of students

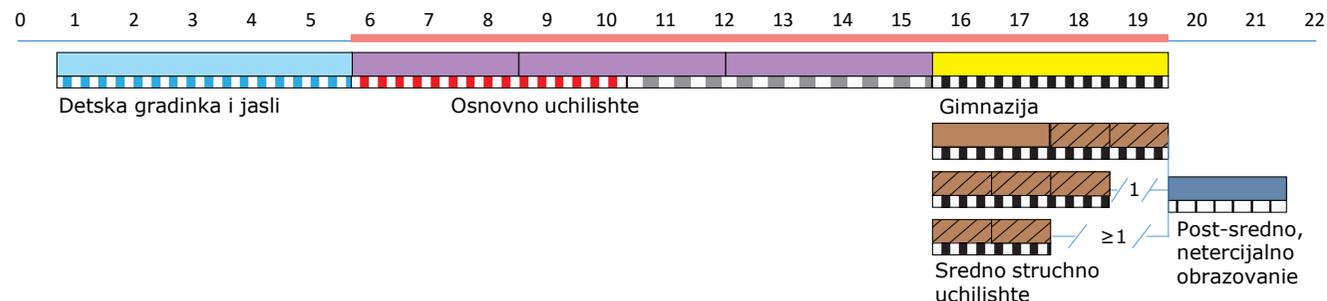


Programme duration (years)

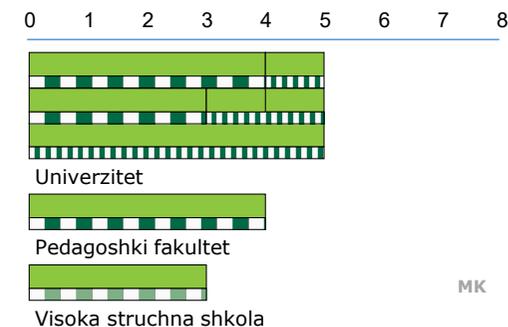


## North Macedonia

Age of students



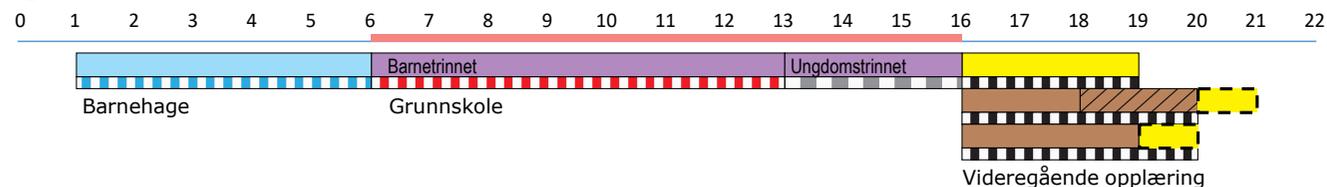
Programme duration (years)



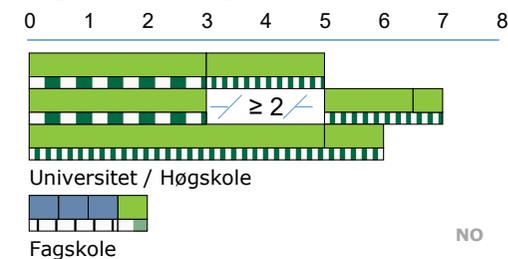
Note. The leaving age for compulsory education may vary from 17 to 19 years and 6 months depending on the type of programme. The lowest leaving age (17) applies to students attending the two years vocational programme (*strucno osposobuvanje*) while the ending age of 18 applies to those attending the 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 strucno obrazovanie*).

## Norway

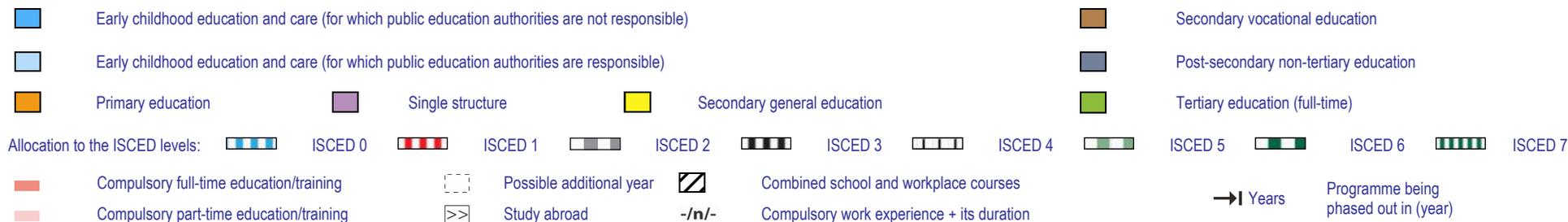
Age of students



Programme duration (years)

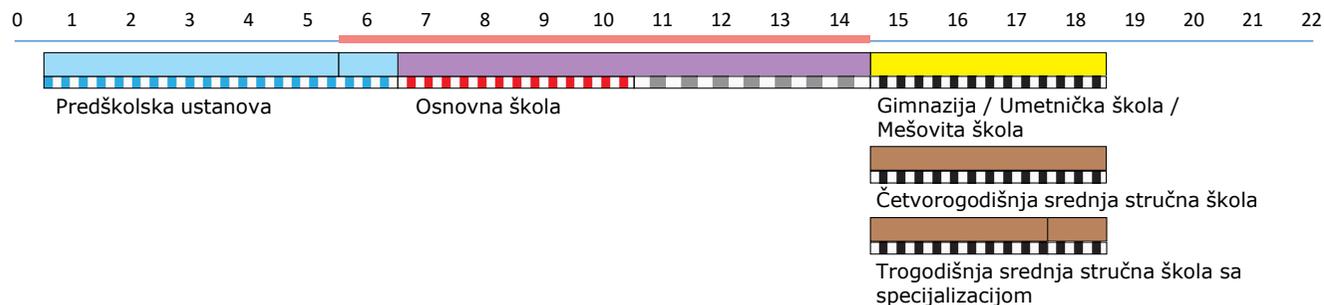


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# Serbia

Age of students



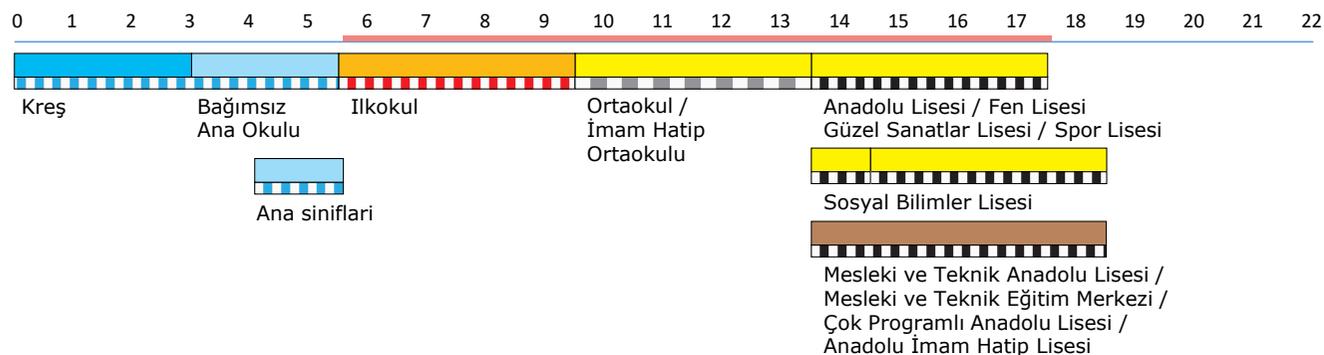
Programme duration (years)



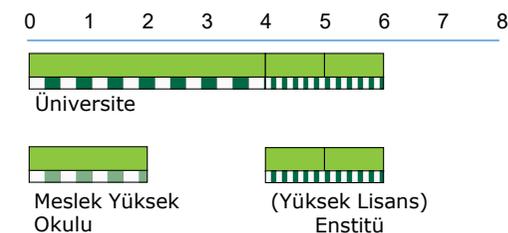
RS

# Turkey

Age of students

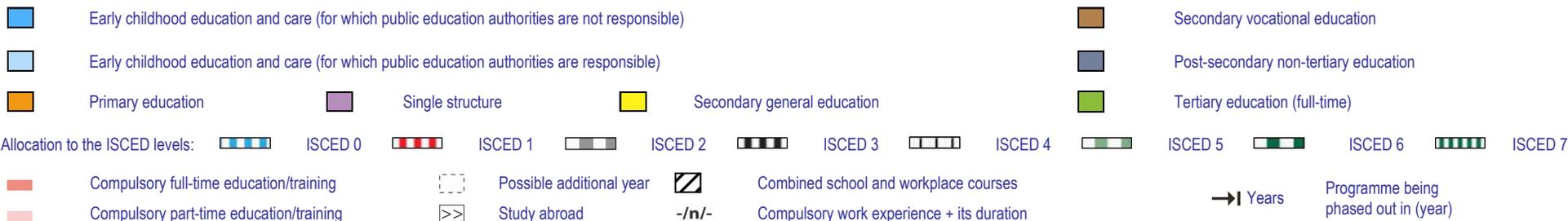


Programme duration (years)



TR

34



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SLOVAKIA

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This report provides information on the structure of mainstream European education systems, from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2023/2024 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 39 European education systems covering 37 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 European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). For more information about Eurydice, see:

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