

2.1 DIVERSITY OF EUROPEAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS (1)

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS GROUNDED IN NATIONAL HISTORIES

Each country's educational system is the result of a singular history, sometimes including a break with the past. Such was the case, for example, in various countries of the former Soviet bloc, which completely revamped their educational systems in the 1990s. An educational system is the reflection and vector par excellence of transmitting a nation's culture and values; the place for defining the major goals of education and the resources for achieving them (educational programmes). With greater or lesser degrees of inertia, the evolutions of a educational system reflect the major changes in society and the production apparatus (by orienting existing programmes and organising streams).

In their institutional diversity (the weight of the public sector, schools' governance modes, the training and recruitment of teachers, etc.), Europe's educational systems are hallmarked by common phenomena such as the progressive massification of education, at different levels of teaching. Although generalised in Europe, this massification has not occurred at the same time in all countries. Thus, for example, the massification in upper secondary education, which was begun in Scandinavia in the 1960s, was only seen later in most of the Mediterranean countries.

Observing the proportion of degree-holders in the young and older age-groups makes it possible to understand this massification of secondary education. In 2016 the proportion of the 55 to 64 year-olds in the EU 28 who held at least a secondary-education degree was 69%, whilst that of the 25-34 year olds was 84%. Only five countries did not attain the 80% threshold among the 25-34 year-olds (Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Spain). Eight countries surpassed the 80% threshold in both age groups: the three Baltic countries, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Poland and Slovakia, with the proportion of people with at least an ISCED-3 degree among the 55-64 year olds being very high, with a 96% spike in Lithuania. In the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Slovakia secondary school degrees are traditionally levers leading to employment, which explains the high rate of these degrees among the older generations. This phenomenon in the Baltic states and Finland is explained more by a long-standing trend for having access to higher education.

LONG COMMON-CORE PROGRAMMES OR EARLY STREAMING

European educational systems predominantly show the existence of a «common-core programme» defined by a structural continuity between primary and lower-secondary education without spe-

cialisation at this level. The eastern European, Mediterranean (including France) and Scandinavian countries all have these common-core programmes (see figures 2.1.1 to 2.2.6). This model was actively promoted in Sweden in the 1960s, then spread to all of Scandinavia. It was introduced to France in 1975. The common-core programmes of the Balkan and Scandinavian countries are notable for the fact that the teaching takes place in a single institution (*Grundskola* in Swedish).

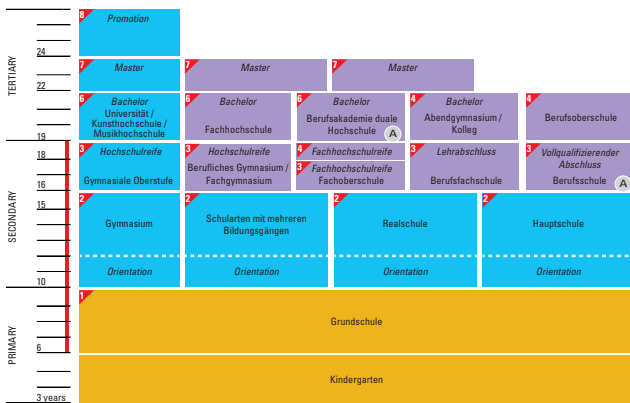
In the 4 European countries where this common-core programme is not used (Austria, Germany, Lithuania and the Netherlands), students are streamed early. Traditionally these are countries with a highly developed apprenticeship system. The Danish exception must however be noted, for the country uses a common-core programme from 6 to 16 and a strong apprenticeship system. Early orientation here is «legitimised» by a lack of ranking in the collective mind, where the trades are highly valued, between the vocational and the education streams. ■

The dual German system

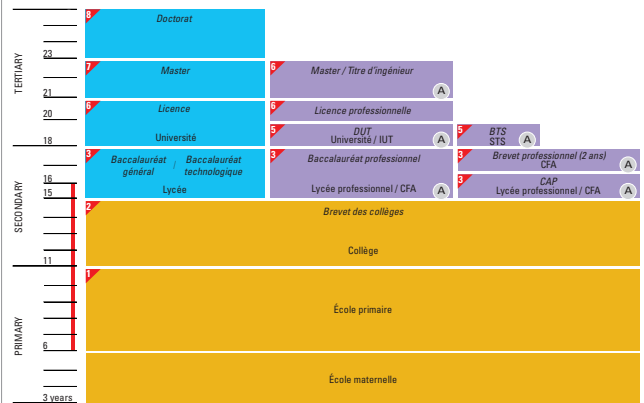
ZOOM

The dual system, unique to Germany, offers combined school- and work-based programmes comprised of at least 12 hours of courses per week in vocational institutions and apprenticeships in companies spread over 3 to 4 days per week. It relies on three key players, i.e. the Federal Institute of Vocational Training (BIBB), which is in charge of defining the training references under the authority of the Department of Education and Research (BMBWF), the *Länders* (regions) and, thirdly, social partners, who are present at all governance levels. Since its founding in 1969, the dual system relies on a strong partnership model where the social partners are responsible for the follow up and quality control of the vocational training institutions and on-the-job training in companies, for advising companies and instructors, for the recording of apprenticeship places available in companies and for setting apprentice-skill examinations. This makes it possible to define education according to the needs of economic sectors and to maintain a sufficient number of training places in a sector even when that sector is undergoing cyclical recession (source: DARES, *Document d'études : le modèle dual allemand*, September, 2014). In 2015 this system in Germany had about 1.4 million young people enrolled in a combined school- and work-based programme cycle. There has, however, been a tangible falling-off of the number of students in this system: in 2010 it contained some 1.6 million students, or a loss of 200,000 students over six years (Source: *Bildung und Forschung in Zahlen, Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*, 2016 and 2017). And although in 2014 Germany had a percentage of ISCED-3 level students in vocational streams identical to that of the European Union, the German students were massively enrolled in apprenticeships, which was not the case of the students in the EU vocational streams (86% compared to 34%) (source: CEDEFOP, *Statistical Overviews on VET – Germany*, 2016).

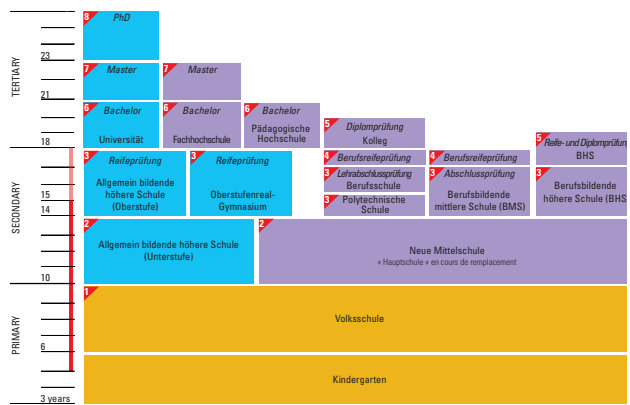
2.1.1 The German education system



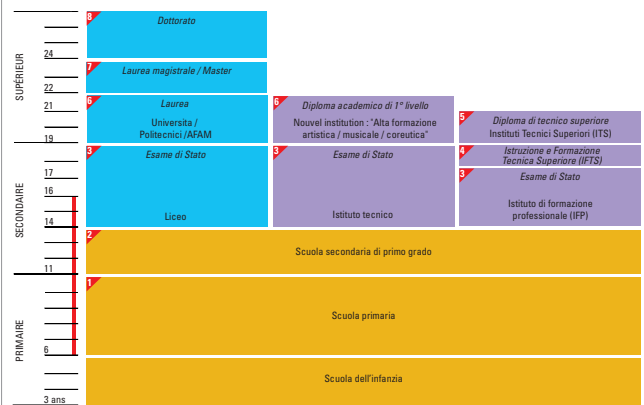
2.1.2 The French education system



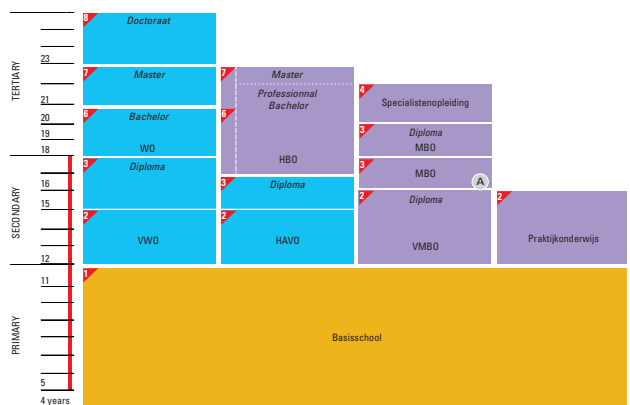
2.1.3 The Austrian education system



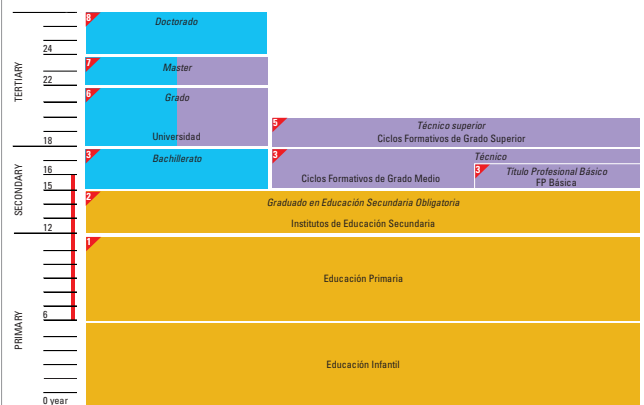
2.1.4 The Italian education system



2.1.5 The Dutch education system



2.1.6 The Spanish education system



- Full-time compulsory education
- Part-time compulsory education
- Apprenticeship available
- Common core curriculum
- General stream
- Vocational stream



© Official national data, Eurydice and Onisep.

2.2 DIVERSITY OF EUROPEAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS (2)

CLASSIFICATION OF ISCED 3 PROGRAMMES

The organisation of educational cycles varies from one country to another, in particular the theoretical age of moving from one cycle to another. If we compare the upper cycle of secondary education in the 12 education systems presented here (graphs 2.1.1 and 2.2.6), it can begin at 14 (Austria, England and Italy), 15 (France, the Netherlands and Romania) or 16 (Estonia, Finland and Germany). The length of the programmes ranked in ISCED 3 also varies in these countries from 2 years (such as the vocational degrees in Spain and the CAP in France) to 5 years (such as the *Maturità* in Italy, which is similar to the French baccalaureate).

If, in the majority of the countries presented, the ISCED 3 degrees certify the end of an educational programme, there can be exceptions. In England, for example, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is taken by students in the middle of the ISCED 3 cycle. Moreover the theoretical age for sitting the ISCED 3 degree exams depends on the age at entry into the programme and its duration. Thus in the Netherlands one of the ISCED 3 vocational degrees is awarded at the age of 20 (2.1.5).

POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

The post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4) aims at students acquiring knowledge, aptitudes and skills the complexity level of which is lower than that of tertiary education. At this level students acquire learning experience that completes secondary education and prepares them for entering the labour market or, as in certain cases, for entering tertiary education.

This type of education exists in France in the forms of the *Diplôme d'accès aux études universitaires* (DAEU – Degree for Access to Higher Education) or the *Capacité en Droit* (Basic Legal Qualification), but it is numerically marginal and falling, i.e. 44,000 students in 2012 and 34,000 in 2015 (Eurostat). Nonetheless it is more frequent in countries where the vocational streams are more developed (with Germany and Poland in the forefront). These two countries on their own accounted for 61% of the European ISCED 4 students in 2015, i.e. 764,000 and 262,000 students respectively (Eurostat). It should be noted that these two countries have also undergone perceptible and opposing changes in their ISCED 4 student demographics, i.e. in 2012, there were 548,000 students in Germany, which represented a rise of nearly 40%. In Poland in 2012 there were 317,000 students, almost a 20% drop.

This high number of ISCED 4 students may go a way to explaining the low percentage of tertiary degrees among the 30 to 34 year-olds in Germany compared to France, the northern European countries and the United Kingdom (cf. 5.3, p. 50). These programmes in fact generally target preparation for directly entering the labour market without pursuing tertiary education.

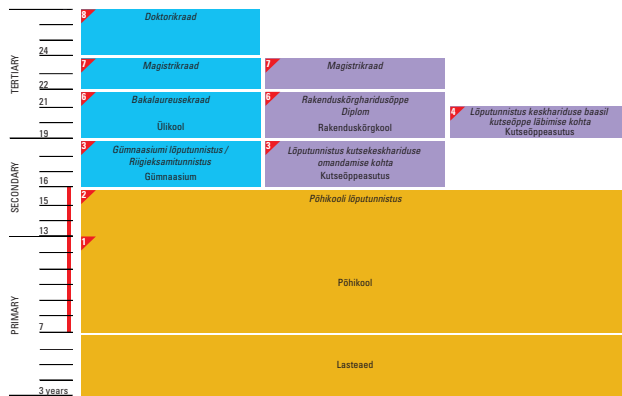
TERTIARY EDUCATION

The increase in the student flows towards tertiary education is a shared trend in the European countries, which the Bologna Process, begun in 1999, contributed to boosting even beyond the European Union framework (46 countries involved). The overall goal of this process is to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which encourages the mobility of students and teachers and the improvement of the quality, attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education in Europe whilst maintaining the diversity of each country's educational systems. Of the six priority goals of the Bologna Declaration, two actively foster the organisation of tertiary education, i.e. adopting a degree system that is «easily readable and comparable» and a system based on «two cycles: undergraduate and graduate». Thus a standardised tertiary education system has been implemented in the countries involved in the stream known as «academic» (BMD), i.e. a 3-year (or 4 in Spain's case) undergraduate degree (often called a «Bachelor» degree as in the British and American systems), a two-year Masters degree and a PhD.

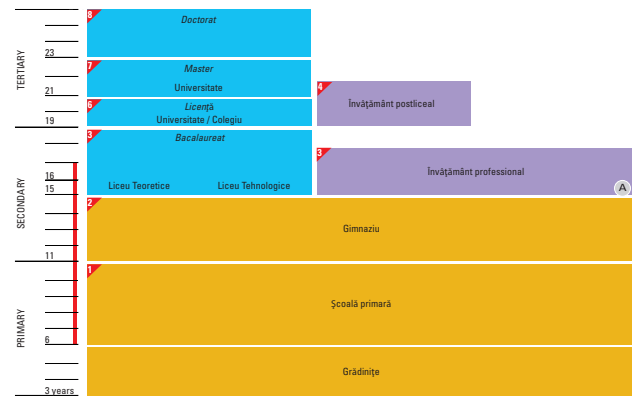
Nevertheless there is great disparity in the distribution between the four different ISCED levels of tertiary education as listed by the 2011 ISCED. The ISCED 5 programmes (short cycle, which in France constitutes an important part of the higher education programmes) are not systematically offered in all the 28 EU-member educational systems, and when they are, their duration is not uniform, e.g. one year in England compared to 3 years in Poland. The ISCED 6 programmes range in duration from one year (as with the vocational undergraduate degree in France which can be prepared after a *DUT* or a *BTS*, which are ISCED 5 level degrees) to 5 years (such as certain ISCED 6 level vocational degrees in Croatia).

One way to realise just how much higher education has expanded is to look at the portion of the population from 55 to 64 with ISCED 5 to -8 degrees, who did their higher-education studies predominantly in the 1970s and 80s, then compare it to the a younger age group. In 2016 in the European Union, the percentage of people with an ISCED 5 to -8 degree was 22% for the 55-64 age-group and 38% for the 25-34 group. In more than half of the European countries the gap in the proportion of degrees between these two age groups doubled (in France 22% among the 55-64 year olds compared to 44% for the 25-34 year olds). ■

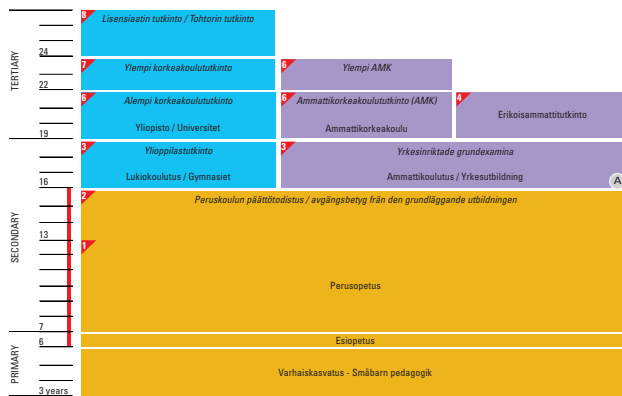
2.2.1 The Estonian education system



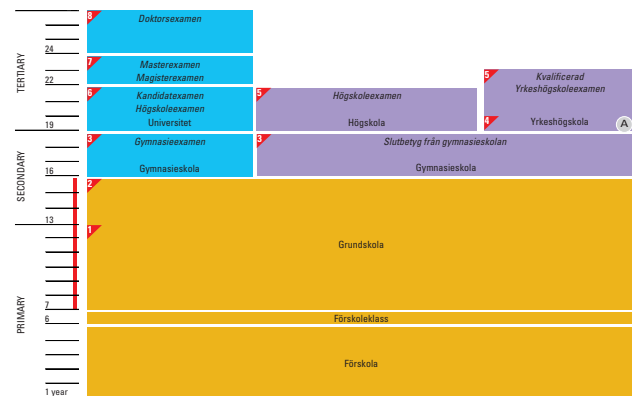
2.2.2 The Romanian education system



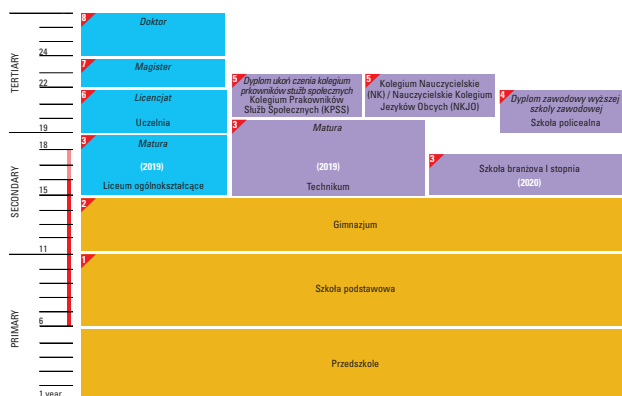
2.2.3 The Finnish education system



2.2.4 The Swedish education system

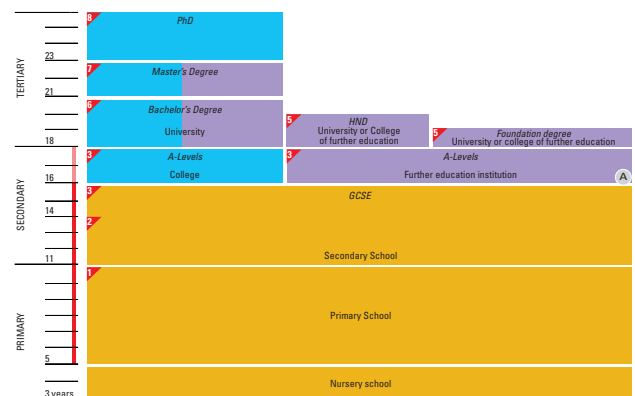


2.2.5 The Polish education system



Note: progressive changes have been implemented starting September 2017.

2.2.6 The English education system



- Full-time compulsory education
- Common core curriculum
- ▬ Part-time compulsory education
- General stream
- A Apprenticeship available
- Vocational stream

↻ Official national data, Eurydice and Onisep.



2.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

THE ECEC'S REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN EUROPE

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

ZOOM

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) covers, on the one hand, all conditions of the child's care from their earliest years in an authorised centre, more often than not under the authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs (collective nurseries, kindergartens, family day care and authorised child-minders) and, on the other, all the pre-elementary education curricula offered to children in a dedicated facility up to the age of compulsory education.

Only eight countries in Europe guarantee by law a place in a facility, usually immediately after the post-natal parental leave period. Those countries are Estonia, Germany (since August, 2013, for children over a year old), Malta (since April, 2014, if both parents are working or in training), the Scandinavian nations, pioneers in the matter (in Sweden the first law on compulsory enrolment by municipalities occurred in 1985) and Slovenia. In the other countries the time lapse between the end of post-natal parental leave and the legally guaranteed enrolment of children is greater than two years. In certain countries (Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) three-year-old children have a right to free access to the ECEC in a public framework. In France this legal access occurs at 2 (although not systematically guaranteed) and at 2.5 in Belgium.

PATERNITY LEAVE IS NOT OFFERED TO ALL MEN IN EUROPE

In 2016 in the EU-28 the average length of time of **paid leave for the birth of a child**[■] was 22 weeks for mothers and one week for fathers (2.3.1). For mothers the length of maternity leave varied from 6 weeks in Portugal to 59 weeks in Bulgaria. In the vast majority of countries (19 including Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France and Sweden), this leave was 20 weeks or less. As for the situation of fathers, 5 of the EU-28 countries had established one week or less of paternity leave; 7 countries (including Austria, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Malta) offer none.

21 of the EU-28 countries offered paid education leave to at least one of the parents, and 11 of them including France, offered it to both. Of the countries granting education leave to mothers, 4 (Estonia, Finland, Hungary and Slovakia) grant more than 130 weeks. The rate of replacement connected to this optional leave nonetheless varies widely from country to country. In Finland it is 15% of the mother's salary for 144 weeks. In Austria it climbs to 80% for 44 weeks. The countries that grant the shortest education leave to mothers are also those that grant the longest to fathers. It is worth noting that the birth and education leave combined for fathers to devote time to parenting is the longest in France.

[■] See definition p. 74.

RATES OF EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT DURATION FOR WOMEN: CONTRASTING SITUATIONS IN THE EU

The European Union has made the development of young children's care a core issue in terms of support for birth rates, but also in terms of the participation of women in employment and the development of all children's cognitive and conative skills.

The **rate of employment**[■] of child-bearing age parents varied tangibly between the genders and from country to country in 2016 (2.3.2). In the EU-28 countries, the employment rate of childless adults was on average 80% for men and 78% for women. For adults living with children the employment rate was 89% for men and 70% for women. The employment rate was systematically higher for men – and the amount of part-time employment lower – when there was at least one child in the household. The situation was the exact opposite for women, i.e. the employment rate was systematically lower – and the amount of part time employment higher – when there was at least one child at home. The arrival of one or several children seemed however to have less of an impact on the professional situation of women in France than in the other EU countries.

TWO KINDS OF NATIONAL FACILITIES FOR YOUNG-CHILDREN CARE

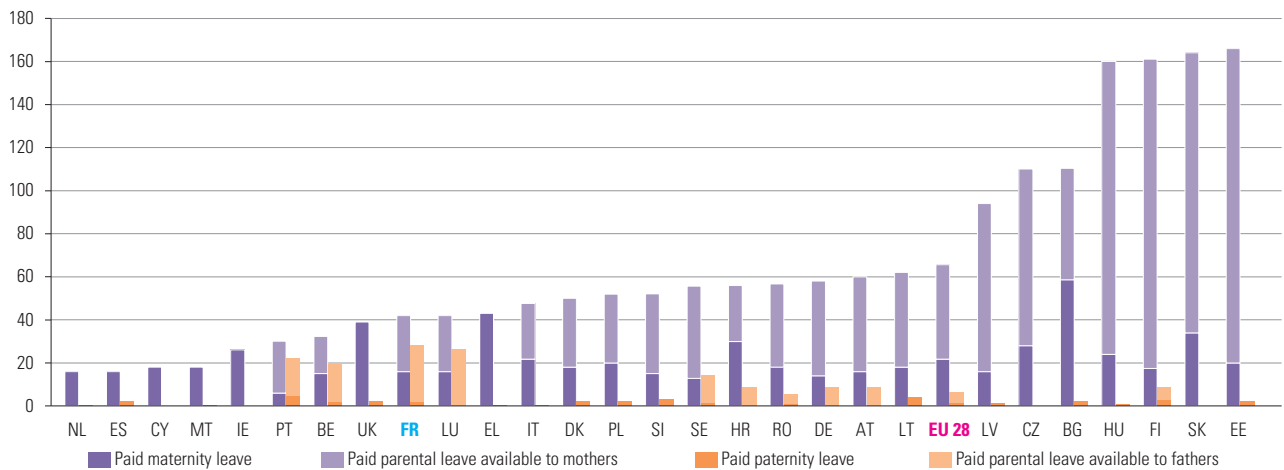
Every national configuration is unique, but it is possible to distinguish two models of ECEC organisation (2.3.3). The first is the integrated model. This is a single facility for all pre-primary-school-age children, i.e. a single administration for children of all age groups, the same qualification level of staff (generally university educated) and the same source of funding. Generally speaking these centres enrol children from under one to six. This first model is found in the Baltic and Nordic countries, likewise in Croatia and Slovenia.

The second is the juxtaposed model and is the most widely adopted in Europe, offering two kinds of facilities, more often than not successive, each under different authorities according to the children's age group, i.e. the first covering children from 0 to 3 or 4 (except France, 2 year-olds, and Belgium 2.5 year-olds), most often under the authority of Social Affairs, with the second facility receiving children from 3 (or 2, even 2.5) to 5 or 6 years under the authority of the Department of Education. Lastly Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom have both models where families can choose between the integrated or the juxtaposed models. ■

2.3.1 Paid maternity, paid paternity and parental leave available to parents in 2016

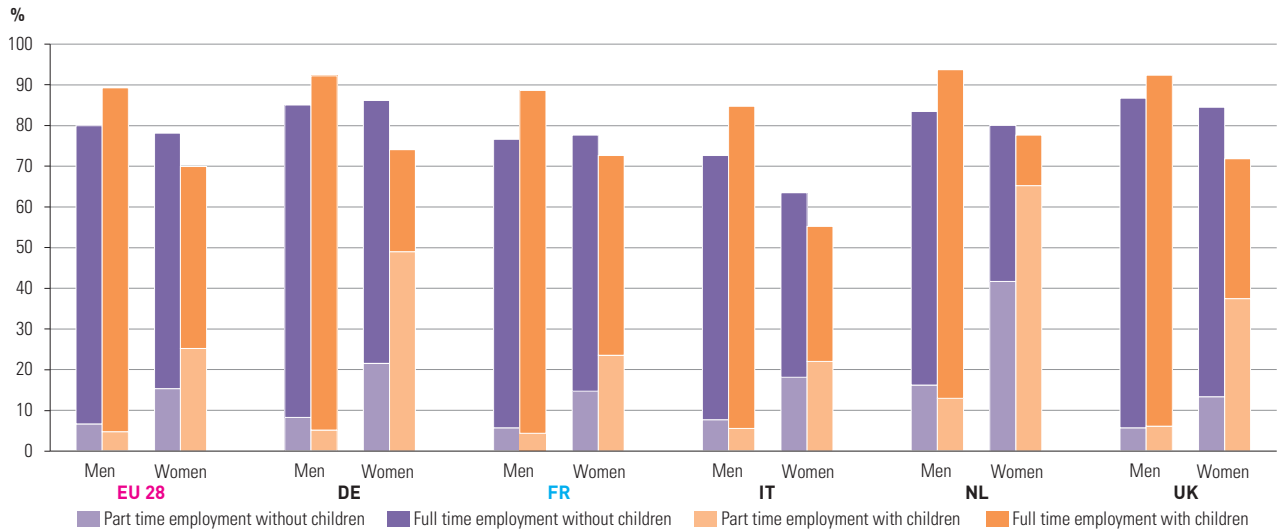
OECD, family database.

In weeks



2.3.2 25-49 year-olds full time and part time employment rates by gender and household composition in 2016

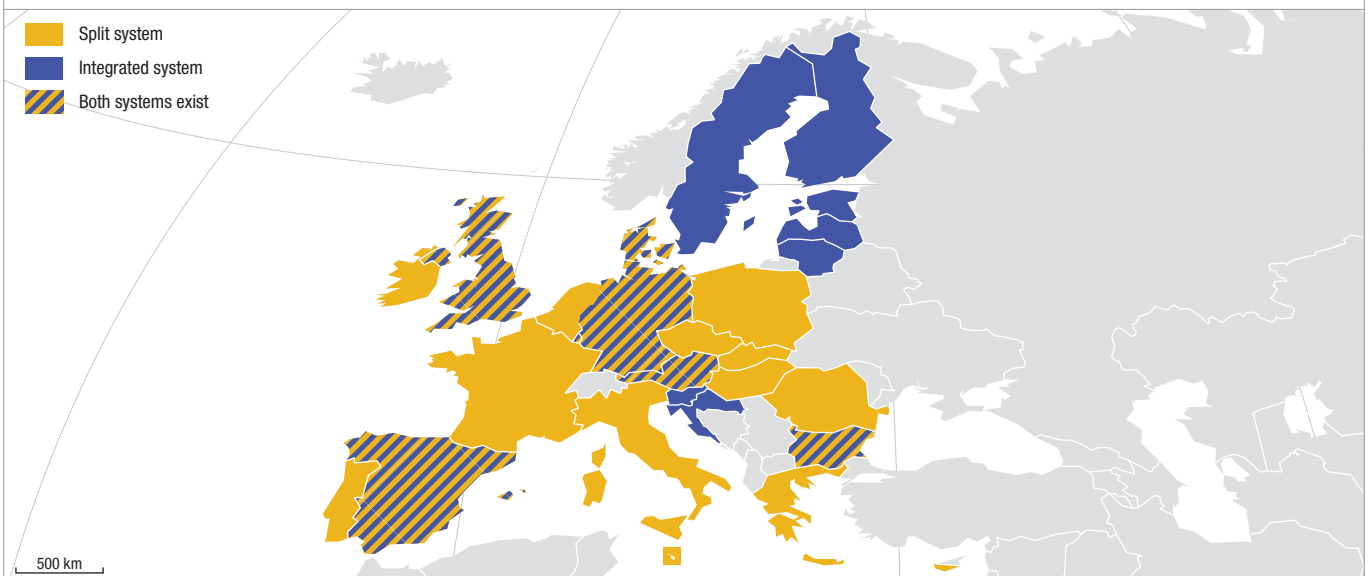
Eurostat, lfst_hhindws ; own calculation.



2.3.3 Organisation of centre-based early childhood education and care in Europe

Eurydice, Key data ECEC, 2014.

- Split system
- Integrated system
- Both systems exist



2.4 SCHOOL EXPECTANCY AND INSTRUCTION TIME

UP TO 13 YEARS OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Like the structure of an education system, the compulsory length of education varies from one country to another. Figure 2.4.1, detailing the compulsory length of education according to a student's age in 2016, highlights several reasons for these differences. The first among them, which is notable, was the student's age at the start of their compulsory education, which varied from 3 years-old (Hungary) to 7 (Estonia and Sweden). 8 countries (including England, Greece and the Netherlands) started students' compulsory education at the age of five, and more than half of the countries (16 of 28, including France, Germany, Italy and Spain) started it at 6.

Over half of the EU-28 countries (15, including Estonia, France, Ireland and Sweden) set the end of compulsory education at 16 years, with its varying from 15 (Croatia) to 19 (Germany). In the Netherlands, school is compulsory up to 18 years of age, unless the pupil obtains one of the three basic qualifications, in which case she or he may leave the education system from the age of 16. Moreover, it should be noted that the legal age for the end of compulsory education occurs at the end of ISCED 2 in numerous countries (Denmark, Finland, Greece and Latvia), whereas it is set during ISCED 3 in England, France and Italy. In all the length of compulsory education varies from 9 years (Croatia, Finland and Slovenia) to 13 years (Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands in the particular case of those without degrees at 16).

In 5 countries (Austria, Belgium, England, Germany and Poland), the period of full-time compulsory education is extended by a period of part-time compulsory education. This period makes it possible to follow a vocational training programme for a period of time that varies according to the country. It lasts for 3 years in Austria (since the 2016/2017 school year), Belgium and Germany and for 2 years in England and Poland where students have a choice between studying for an apprentice degree, combining part-time education with a professional activity or public service (volunteer) or simply remaining in full-time education.

AN EDUCATION CYCLE ISN'T OF UNIFORM LENGTH IN EVERY COUNTRY

Primary education does not contain the same number of years from one country to another. Figure 2.4.2 shows instruction time in annual volume hours, accumulated on the length of primary-

school education. The issue of instruction time can be more fully assessed in time over the entire educational level. The average of the European Union OECD member countries is 775 hours per year, at the rate of 182 days of instruction per year over an average length of 5.6 years. Latvia has the fewest instruction hours per year with an average of 599 hours, and Denmark the most with 1,051 hours per year. France has the lowest number of instruction-days per year (162), whilst Denmark and Italy have 200 days of instruction.

It should be noted that the very structure of ISCED levels (cf. 1.1) vary widely from country to country. Indeed when Hungarian students end their primary education, French students end their *CM1* year (fourth year of primary education). Inversely, when Danish students end their primary-school education, French students end their *Cinquième* (second year of lower secondary education). In all, Hungarian students end the ISCED level after 2,260 hours of instruction distributed over 724 days of instruction and 4 years of school, while French students do likewise in 4,320 hours distributed over 648 days and 5 years of schooling, and Danish students finish the the same ISCED after 7,357 hours distributed over 1,400 days and 7 years of schooling. Timewise ISCED 1 varies from one to three within the European Union.

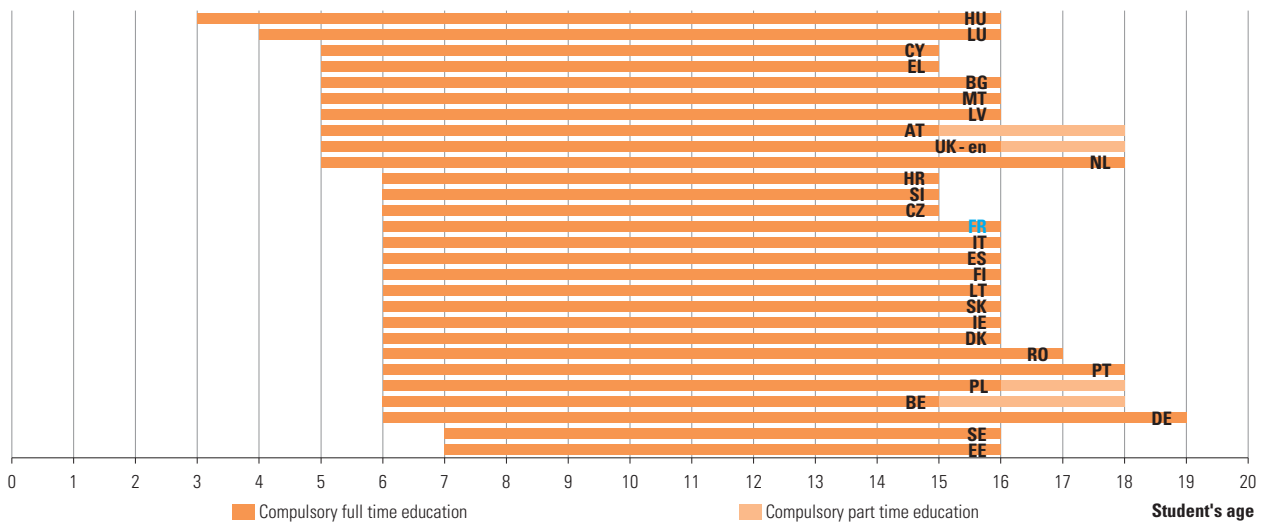
THE LEARNING OF BASICS ACCOUNTS FOR A MINIMUM OF A THIRD OF INSTRUCTION TIME

In the context of international comparisons the «basics» are composed of, on the one hand, reading, writing and literature and, on the other, mathematics. What portion do they occupy in the entire instruction time in ISCED 1 and ISCED 2? Figure 2.4.3 shows only the eight countries in which the breakdown of instruction time is strictly comparable.

The learning of the basics accounts for between 30 and 50% of instruction time in the countries presented here, ranging from 32% in Hungary to 46% in France. France places the greatest importance in the reading, writing and literature grouping as well in mathematics. Only Estonia devotes relatively more time to the natural sciences and foreign languages (26% of curriculum time on ISCED levels 1 and 2) than France and Germany (22%). Hungary devotes 54% of instruction time to «other subjects», whilst France devotes only 32% to them (sports, art, technology, computer science and the social sciences). ■

2.4.1 Compulsory education in Europe in 2016

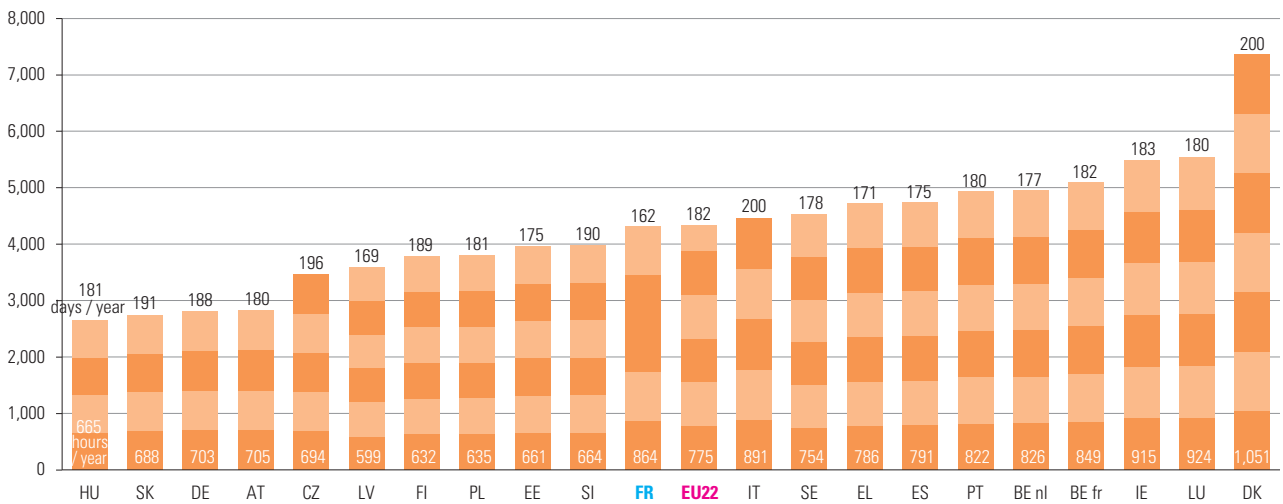
↳ Eurydice, *The structure of the European Education Systems 2016/2017, 2016.*



2.4.2 Cumulated instruction time at ISCED level 1 in 2015/2016

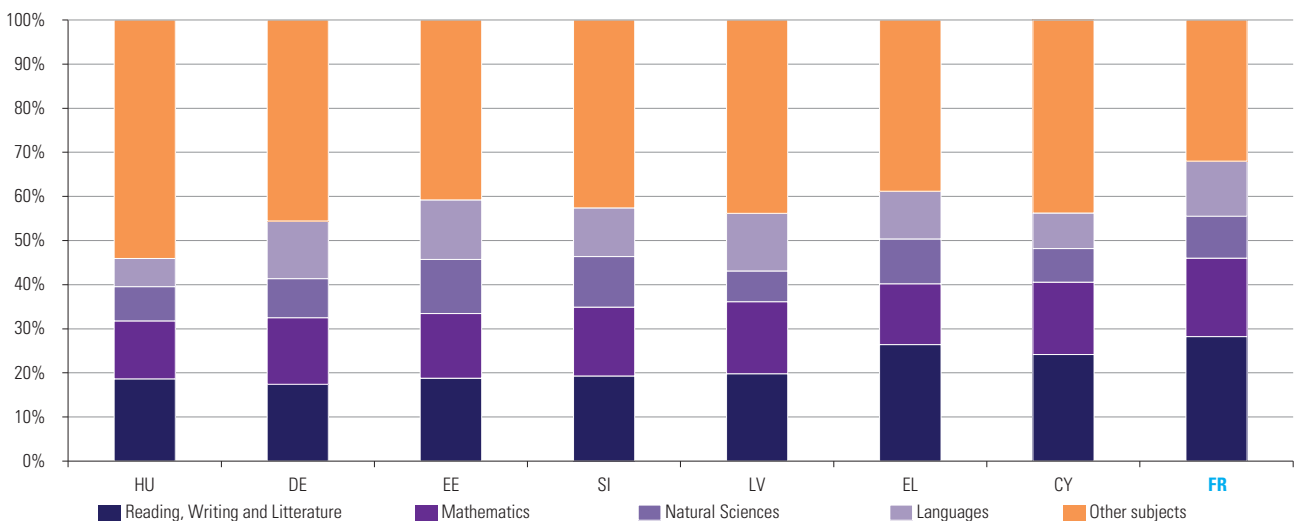
↳ OECD, *EAG 2016, 2016.*

Cumulated hours



2.4.3 Distribution of instruction time by subject at ISCED level 1 and ISCED level 2 in 2016

↳ Eurydice, *Recommended annual instruction time in full-time compulsory education in Europe 2016/2017, 2017.*



2.5 ENROLMENT RATES

A DOUBLE EUROPEAN GOAL FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

In matters of **early childhood education and care**[□] (cf. graph 2.3), the European Union has set two quantified goals, i.e. offering care for at least 33% of the children under 3 and ensuring pre-primary education for at least 95% of children between 4 and the age of compulsory education. This latter goal is, moreover, one of the reference goals of the *Education and Training 2020 strategy*. Seven countries attained both goals in 2015, i.e. Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden (2.5.1), and nine countries attained one of the two goals, i.e. Austria, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

The 4 year-old-and-over goal was attained on average in the EU (95% in 2015), and the observed enrolment rates ranged from 74% (Croatia) to 100% (France, Malta and the United Kingdom). On the other hand, the goal of the first age category revealed greater variation between the countries. Whilst 77% of the under-threes attended institutions in Denmark, a mere 1% attended in Slovakia. Moreover it is appropriate to stress – a cause or a consequence of the low-care rate of young children? – that in some eastern European countries, post-natal parental or education leave was especially long, e.g. over 100 weeks in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania (cf. 2.3).

A HIGH ENROLMENT RATE IN THE ENTIRE EUROPEAN UNION

What is the **enrolment rate of students**[□] at the end of compulsory education? First of all it is important to remember that the age at the end of compulsory education varies between 15 and 18 years old depending on the country (cf. 2.4, p. 22). What's more, the enrolment rate indicator contains certain methodological limitations that explain, for example, why the observed rates can be higher than 100% in some cases, which calls for cautious interpretation. Nonetheless it is possible to draw a few general and comparative conclusions.

Generally speaking, given the massification of secondary education in Europe (cf. 2.1), very high enrolment rates were observed at the age of the end of compulsory education in the EU-28 in 2015 (2.5.2). Only 5 countries did not attain 90% enrolment at this age, i.e. Bulgaria, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta and Romania. In contrast 7 countries attained a rate of 100%.

UNEVEN ATTENDANCE IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Observing attendance in tertiary education in the two successive age groups (20-24 year-olds and 30-34 year-olds) makes it possible to take note of both the intensity of continuing studies and the different ages at which this education takes place in each of the European countries. Indeed young adults do not necessarily continue their tertiary studies immediately after completing their secondary cycle. Civic and military duties, long internships or gap years carried out before or during tertiary education are common constraints or practices in the European Union.

In 2015, the attendance rates of the 20-24 year-olds in tertiary education in the EU-28 varied from 9% in Luxembourg to 48% in Slovenia (2.5.3). Luxembourg's low rate can be explained in particular by the relatively recent creation of the University of Luxembourg (2003) and the high level of Luxembourg students enrolling in foreign tertiary education systems. In the EU-28 18 countries, including Belgium, France and Spain saw attendance rates higher than or equal to 30%, and 4 others (Ireland, Lithuania – the data for which are from 2014, Poland and Slovenia), with a rate greater than 40%. The attendance rates for the 30-34 year-olds varied from 2% in 5 countries (France, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) to 11% in Finland. Fewer than half of the EU's countries had a rate higher than or equal to 5% attendance in the age group (2.5.4).

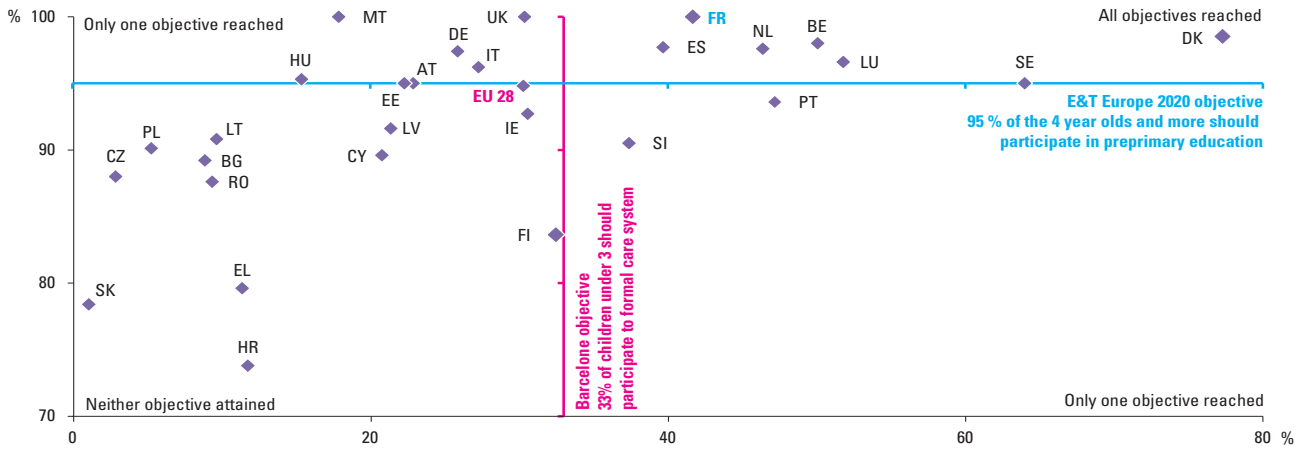
Does participation to tertiary education lead to a higher rate of graduates among the 30-34 age-group (cf. 5.3, p. 50)? It is interesting to note that it is not necessarily the countries with the highest attendance in tertiary education that record the highest number of advanced degrees. In 2015 in Luxembourg, the attendance rate of the 20-24 year-olds in higher education was 9%, whereas 52% of the 30-34 year-olds held advanced degrees with a large number of the latter having done their tertiary education abroad. To a lesser extent the United Kingdom was in a similar situation. The opposite was also seen, i.e. the Czech Republic with a high attendance rate (37% of the 20-24 year-olds) had a 30-34 year-old population with fewer degree-holders than the EU-28 average (30% of tertiary education degrees in 2015 compared to 38% for the EU-28). Other than the fact that students may have left the country where they obtained their degrees, the two following factors are likely to explain this gap:

- A time lag: a recent increase in higher education attendance which has not yet translated into the number of degrees attained by the 30-34 year-old age group;
- Abandonment: a portion of the students enrolled in tertiary education programmes not attaining a degree. ■

[□] See definition p. 74.

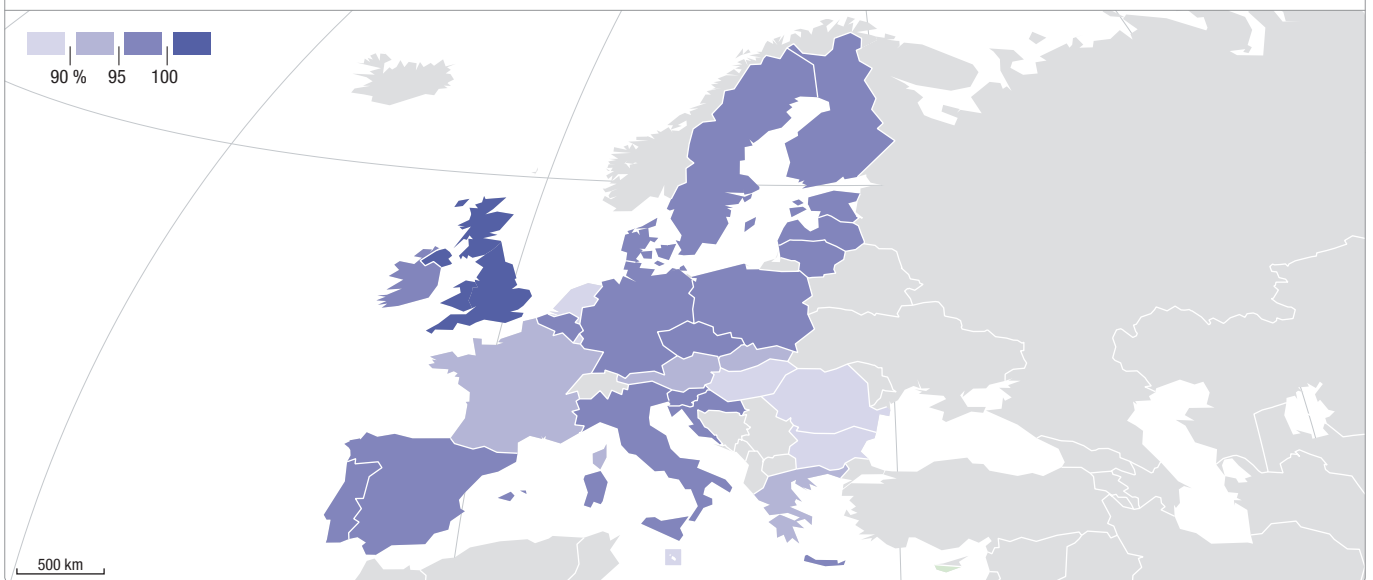
2.5.1 Enrolment of less than 3 year olds and of 4 to 6 year olds in educational programmes in Europe in 2015

Source: Eurostat, *ilc_caindformal* and *educ_uoe_enrtao*.



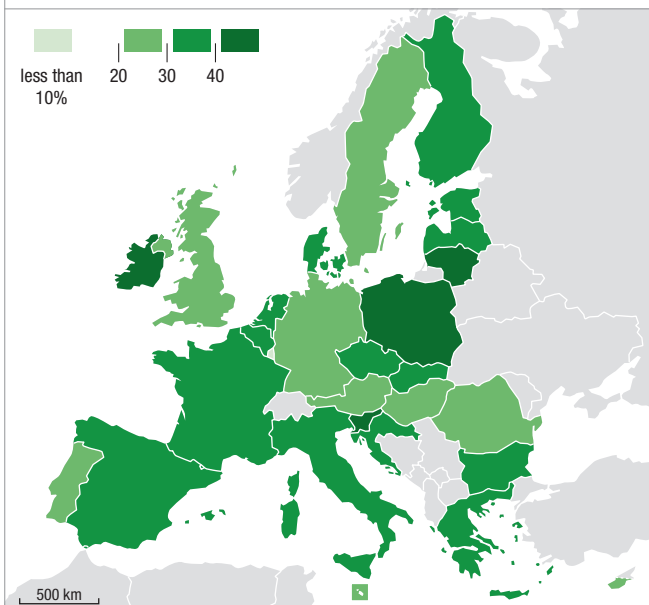
2.5.2 Enrolment rate and the age at the end of compulsory education in Europe in 2015

Source: Eurostat, *educ_uoe_enrao9*.



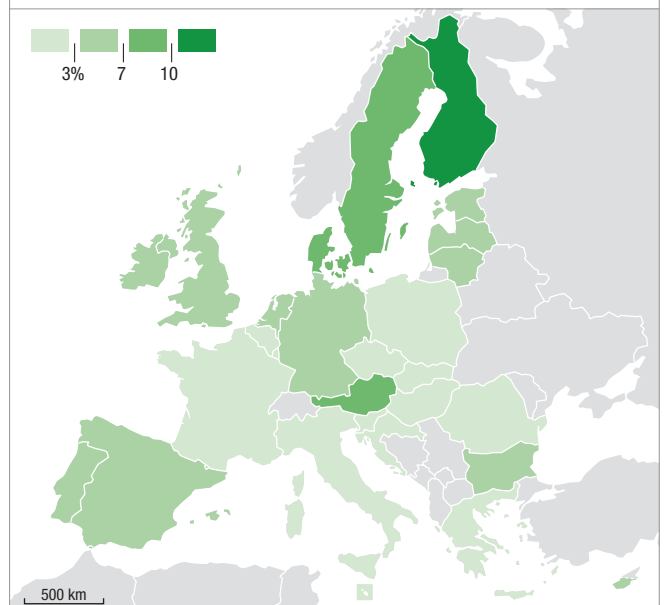
2.5.3 20-24 year olds participation rates to tertiary education in 2015

Source: Eurostat, *educ_uoe_enrto8*.



2.5.4 30-34 year olds participation rates to tertiary education in 2015

Source: Eurostat, *educ_uoe_enrto7*.



2.6 PLACE OF STUDENTS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

A PREDOMINANCE OF BOYS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

General and vocational education in each country does not have the same relative weight and is not seen in the same light. Although in some countries vocational education has been developed and valued for a long time, in other countries it developed later and initially suffered from lower esteem, which can have an impact on the distribution of students the streams. In 2015 in the 28-member European Union 53% of the ISCED level 3 students studied in the general stream and 47% in the vocational stream (2.6.1). Tangible distribution gaps between the two streams could be seen from country to country. In the Czech Republic, which has the lowest enrolment rate in general education in Europe only 27% of the ISCED level-3 students studied in a general programme. At the other end of the scale Malta had a rate of 87%. Poland is the only EU country with equal distribution between the two streams in ISCED 3.

The distribution between the general and vocational streams is also subject to gender. In 2015 in the EU-28 there were more girls in general education (28% of all ISCED 3 students were girls in ISCED 34 whilst the boys accounted for 24%), and there were more boys in vocational education (21% of all students were girls in ISCED 35, and 27% were boys). Within the EU-28 only three countries (Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) had a larger proportion of girls as students in ISCED 35. Even in Poland, where near equality was seen in the distribution between the streams, girls accounted for 3/5 of the students in ISCED 34, whereas boys accounted for the same proportion in ISCED 35.

GREATER RECOURSE TO PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Categorising public/private is not self-evident ZOOM
The relative weight of public or private education in each country often depends on the history of the relationships maintained by the state with religious institutions. Education given in “private institutions independent of public authority” is still not very wide-spread in the EU-28 (2.6.2 and 2.6.3). Private education is most often given in “private institutions under public authority”. These Eurostat categories refer to a clear partition in France. Categorisation is not, for all that, so self-evident in certain countries. In the United Kingdom, for example, the rate of students enrolled in private education undermines the influence of the Academies, which, although under the authority of the Ministry and most often funded by the state with frequent support from private sponsors and willing parents, enjoy wide-ranging autonomy in how they are run.

In 2015 in the EU-28 the portion of students attending public institutions in primary education stood at 87%, whilst this portion was 76% in secondary education. Indeed it is easy to see in graph 2.6.2 that only Malta and Spain had enrolment rates in private education in ISCED 1 that are higher than 20%. A more frequent recourse to private institutions in ISCED 2 and 3 was observable. The clear-cut advance of private education in the United Kingdom was notable with 66% of students being enrolled in private institutions known as “dependent” (cf. box). The percentage of students in “private institutions independent” of the public authorities, however, remained limited, whatever the ISCED level, with a maximum of 11% in Portugal.

BIGGER CLASS SIZES IN LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION THAN IN PRIMARY

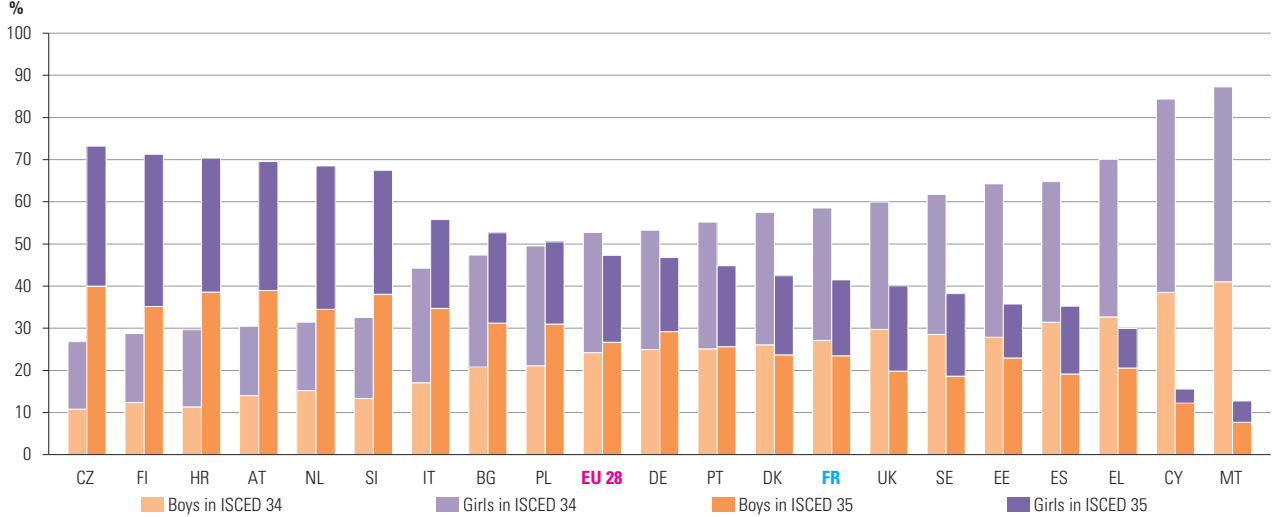
Average class sizes in primary and lower secondary education varied significantly within the European Union. Of the 19 countries presented here (2.6.4), 15 (including France, Germany and Italy) had smaller average class sizes in primary education than in the lower secondary education. The average class size in the United Kingdom was the highest at 26 students per class, with the lowest being Luxembourg at an average of 16 students per class. These two countries were also the ones with the widest extremes of student numbers at this educational level, with 36,000 students in Luxembourg and 4,600,000 in the United Kingdom.

In lower secondary education, France and Spain had the largest classes in 2015 with an average of 25 students or more per class. The smallest classes were found in Latvia (14 students per class). Luxembourg had the lowest number of ISCED 2 students with 22,000 in 2015, compared to Germany’s 4,500,000 students, the EU country with the highest number of students in ISCED 2.

The Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal and Spain were the only EU-28 countries with over 20 students on average per class in primary education and lower secondary education. Lastly, the 5 most populated countries in the European Union (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom) contained 60% of the EU-28 students on these two educational levels with 18 and 13 million students respectively in ISCED 1 and ISCED 2. This makes it possible to put the challenges faced by these countries into perspective in terms of material (buildings, etc.) and human (teaching and administrative staff) resources. ■

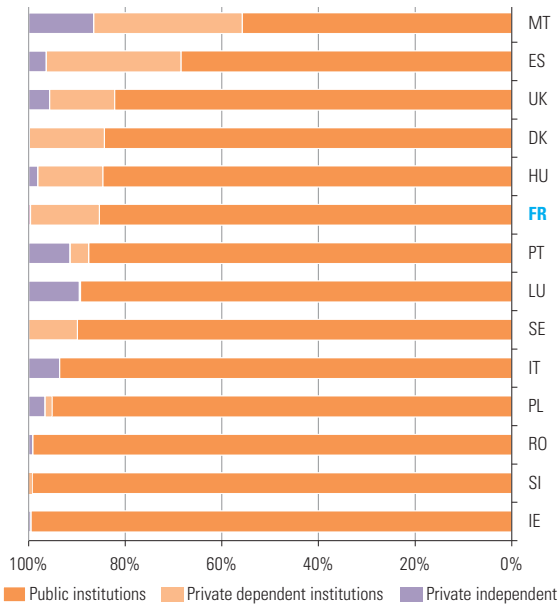
2.6.1 ISCED 3 students' distribution between general and vocational programmes by gender in 2015

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enra16.



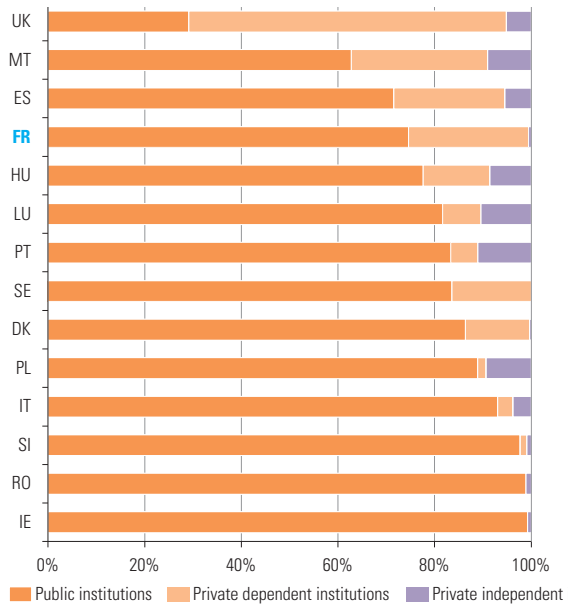
2.6.2 ISCED 1 students' distribution by type of institution in 2015

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enra01.



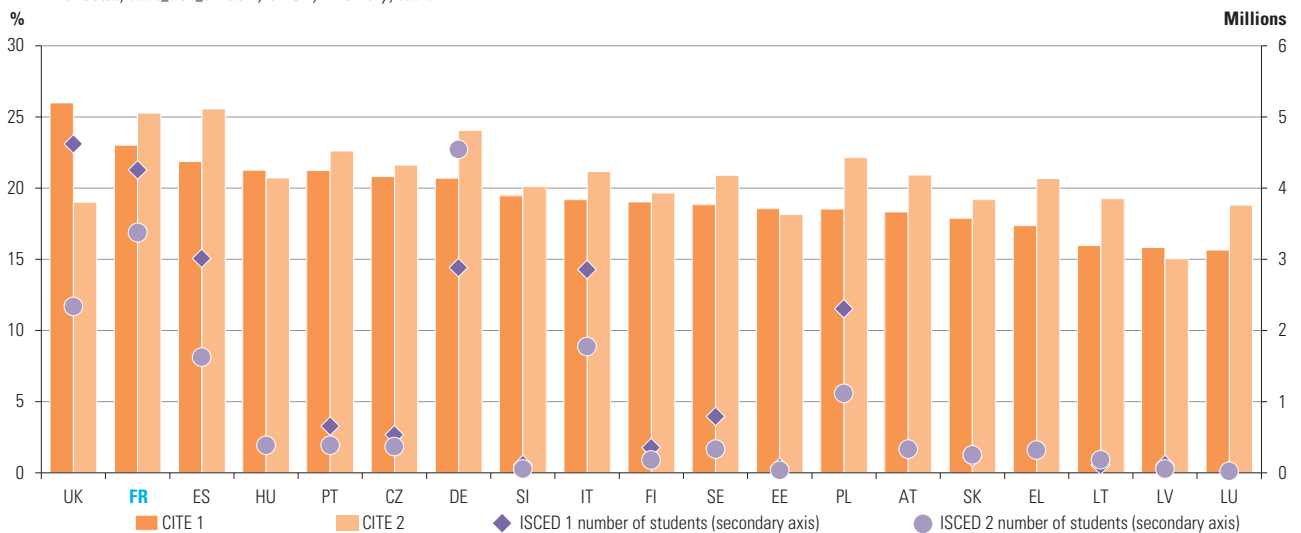
2.6.3 ISCED 2 and ISCED 3 students' distribution by type of institution in 2015

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enra01.



2.6.4 Average class size and total student population in ISCED 1 and ISCED 2 in 2015

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enra02; OECD, EAG 2017, table D2.1.



2.7 LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES BEGINS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Since 2003 a majority of European Union countries (16 out of 28) have lowered the age for beginning the compulsory learning of the first modern foreign language (MFL). Learning earlier explains in part the increase in the average study time of the first compulsory MFL in the EU, increasing from 9.9 years in 2003 to 11.3 years in 2015. Belgium (the German-speaking community), Cyprus, France (where learning now starts at 6 years old rather than 8), Poland and Romania are typical. In Cyprus and Poland, this lowering of the starting age was especially significant over the period, falling from 9 to 3 years of age in Cyprus's case and from 10 to 5 in Poland's. Moreover these are the only two countries where the teaching of a foreign language begins in pre-primary education (2.7.1, cf. MENESER-DEPP, *Note d'information*, no. 17.15).

In 2015 the students in the EU-28 countries were in general between 6 and 8 years old and were in primary education when they began to learn a foreign language. Six countries (Austria, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Romania and Spain) began learning at 6, whilst in the other 19 EU countries for which data are available it began later. Only Scotland and Ireland did not require learning an MFL. Nonetheless all Irish students were already learning the two official languages of their country, i.e. English and Gaelic.

THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES TAKES PLACE ABOVE ALL IN THE SECONDARY

In 2015 the **cumulated compulsory instruction time**[□] devoted to learning a foreign language in ISCED 1 and ISCED 2 varied significantly from one EU country to the next. Among the countries for which data are available this instruction time varied from 407 hours in Hungary to 1,278 hours in Malta. With 1,008 hours devoted to foreign languages, France was one of only 3 countries (along with Germany and Malta) to devote more than 1,000 cumulated hours to MFL in ISCED 1 and ISCED 2

Although the first modern language is introduced in ISCED 1 in most of the European countries, the instruction time devoted to it remains relatively small. In the great majority of countries it varies from 5% to 10% of the overall instruction time in ISCED 1, whereas ISCED 2 remained central in learning a foreign language. Among the 17 countries presented here, 10 (including Finland, France and Germany) concentrated over 60% of cumulated instruction time to learning foreign languages in ISCED 2 alone. This is explained mainly by the introduction of the second MFL at this educational level. In ISCED 3, moreover, the instruction time devoted to languages is often dependent on diversified

options and pathways, which explains the lack of international statistics at this level.

And among the countries presented, only 5 (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece and Latvia) began compulsory learning of a second foreign language in ISCED 1. The instruction time devoted to it varied from 45 hours in Latvia to 102 in Greece. It is interesting to note that in Estonia, the second most studied MFL in ISCED 1 was Estonian as it is considered a foreign language by the large Russian-speaking community in the country.

FRENCH AND GERMAN ARE THE SECOND MOST STUDIED LANGUAGES IN EUROPE

Of the 24 official languages in the EU in 2014, English continued to progress and was the leading foreign language studied in Europe with 97% of the ISCED 2. French was in second place as the most studied language in the EU where an average of 34% of ISCED 2 students studied it. French was followed by German which was studied by 23% of ISCED 2 students, which in turn was followed by Spanish at a rate of 13%. However it should be noted that these percentages were sensitive to the class in which learning a second modern language began in the ISCED involved. Other languages than English, French, German and Spanish were studied by a minority of European students (4% of the students in ISCED 2 in 2014). In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania where significant Russian-speaking communities live, Russian was an exception for it was selected by a majority of the students in ISCED 2. Two other languages stood out, i.e. Italian in Malta and Swedish in Finland. Geographical proximity and historical ties are often the explanations.

Graph 2.7.3 shows this «neighbouring» effect, i.e. all the countries neighbouring France mostly chose to study French, just as German and Russian were respectively predominant in Central Europe and the Baltic countries. Two types of countries stood out. First of all, the countries that promote and disseminate their language beyond their own borders (English, French, German, etc.), in particular by establishing sometimes secular institutions to develop their linguistic and cultural influence (*Alliance Française/AEFE*, the British Council and the *Goethe Institut*). They also happen to be the most populous nations in the EU. The second group includes countries that, by their size or history, are more open to the influence of foreign languages such as Luxembourg and Malta. The coexistence in Malta of three languages bears witness to various influences: Maltese and English (remnants of the British Empire) replaced Italian in 1934, which was until then the official language. Yet over half of the island's population still speaks Italian. ■

[□] See definition p. 74.

2.7.1 Starting age and learning time of the first compulsory modern foreign language per ISCED level in 2015

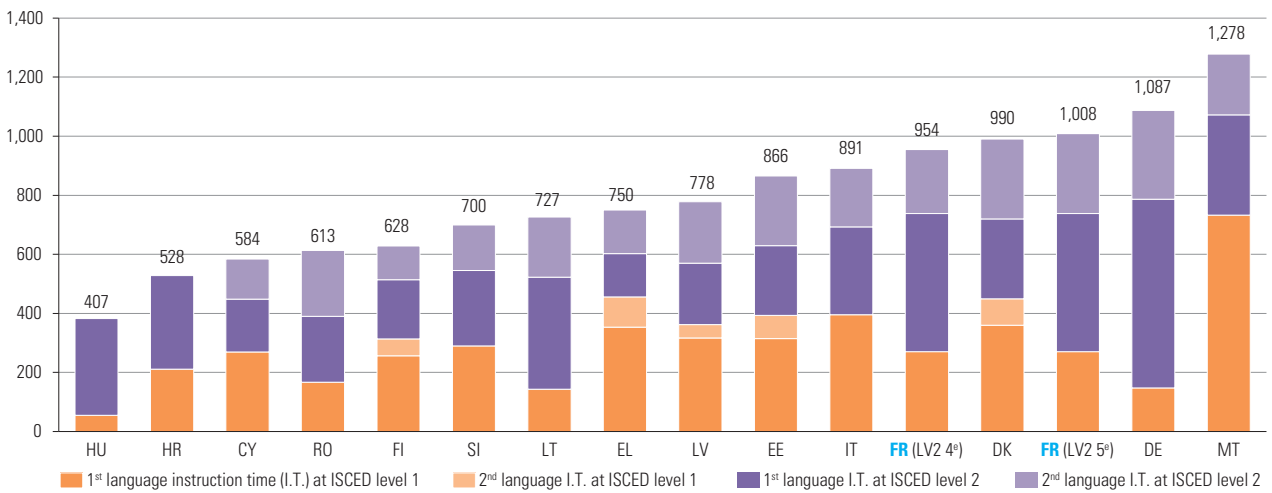
↳ Eurydice, Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe 2017 Edition, 2017.



2.7.2 Cumulated compulsory instruction time devoted to foreign languages at ISCED level 1 and ISCED level 2 in 2016/2017

↳ Eurydice, Recommended Annual Instruction Time in Full-time Compulsory Education in Europe 2016/2017, 2016.

Cumulated hours



2.7.3 The second most studied foreign language by ISCED 2 students in 2014

↳ Eurostat, educ_uae_lango1.

