



Compulsory Education in Europe 2016/17

Eurydice – Facts and Figures



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*Education
and Training*

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COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN EUROPE – 2016/17

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

Full-time compulsory education/training, as defined in this publication, refers to a period of full-time educational/training attendance required of all students. This period is regulated by the law and usually determined by the students' age. In general, full-time compulsory education/training is provided in formal institutions/schools. However, in some education systems, certain compulsory education/training programmes can combine part-time school based and part-time workplace courses. In such cases, students are evaluated for both parts. In most countries, under certain conditions, compulsory education/training can be provided at home.

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

Starting age refers to the age at which students start compulsory education/training.

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

In most European education systems, compulsory education/training starts at the beginning of primary education (ISCED 1), usually at the age of 6. In 15 education systems, attendance at last year(s) of pre-primary education, usually at the age of 5, is already compulsory. Hungary has reported the earliest school starting age referring to 3. By contrast, in Estonia and Sweden, compulsory education starts at the age of 7.

In most European education systems, full-time compulsory education/training lasts 9-10 years ending at the age of 15-16. In Belgium, Germany (12 *Länder*), Luxembourg, Portugal, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) and Turkey, the duration of full-time compulsory education/training is 12 years, while in Germany (5 *Länder*), Hungary, the Netherlands and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 13 years' attendance is mandatory. Compulsory education/training period usually covers primary and lower secondary education levels (ISCED 1 and 2) and corresponds to the full-time school attendance. In Belgium, Germany, the Netherland, Portugal and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, it is compulsory to stay in education/training until age of 18-19. However, in these countries, between ages 15-16 and 18-19, students can attend compulsory education/training programmes combining part-time school based and part-time workplace courses. Only programmes where students are evaluated for both school based and workplace courses are considered as 'full-time compulsory education/training'. ⁽¹⁾.

In Austria, Poland and the United Kingdom (England), after the official school leaving age students still have to remain in education or training until their 18 birthday. However, the full-time attendance is not mandatory. Students can fulfil this obligation by participating in either full-time education or training, work-based learning or part-time education or training.

⁽¹⁾ For more details on main organisational models and structure of compulsory education please see: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications:Compulsory_Education_in_Europe_%E2%80%93_2016/17

Duration of compulsory education/training and student's age-groups, 2016/17

| | Full-time education/training | | | | | | | | | | | Duration (in years) | Additional compulsory part-time Ending age |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------|------|------|---|-------------|----|----|-------|----|-------|------------------------|---|
| | Starting age | | | | | Leaving age | | | | | | | |
| | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | |
| BE fr | | | | 6 | | | | | | 18 | | 12 | na |
| BE de | | | | 6 | | | | | | 18 | | 12 | na |
| BE nl | | | | 6 | | | | | | 18 | | 12 | na |
| BG | | | 5 | | 7 | | | 16 | | | | 11 | na |
| CZ | | | | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 9 | na |
| DK | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| DE (12 Länder) | | | | 6 | | | | | | 18 | | 12 | na |
| DE (5 Länder) | | | | 6 | | | | | | | 19 | 13 | na |
| EE | | | | | 7 | | | 16 | | | | 9 | na |
| IE | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| EL | | | 5 | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 10 | na |
| ES | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| FR | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| HR | | | | 6 | 7 | | 15 | | | | | 9 | na |
| IT | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| CY | | 4y8m | 5y8m | | | | 15 | | | | | 10 | na |
| LV | | | 5 | | 7 | | | 16 | | | | 11 | na |
| LT | | | | 6 | 7 | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| LU | | 4 | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 12 | na |
| HU | 3 | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 13 | na |
| MT | | | 5 | | | | | 16 | | | | 11 | na |
| NL | | | 5 | 6 | | | | | | 18 | | 13 | na |
| AT | | | 5 | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 10 | 18 |
| PL | | | | 6 | 7 | | | 16 | | | | 10 | 18 |
| PT | | | | 6 | | | | | | 18 | | 12 | na |
| RO | | | | 6 | | | | | 17 | | | 11 | na |
| SI | | | | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 9 | na |
| SK | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| FI | | | | 6 | 7 | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| SE | | | | | 7 | | | 16 | | | | 9 | na |
| UK-ENG | | | 5 | | | | | 16 | | | | 11 | 18 |
| UK-WLS | | | 5 | | | | | 16 | | | | 11 | na |
| UK-NIR | | 4 | | | | | | 16 | | | | 12 | na |
| UK-SCT | | | 5 | | | | | 16 | | | | 11 | na |
| AL | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 9 | na |
| BA | | | | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 9 | na |
| CH (1 cantons) | | | | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 9 | na |
| CH (8 cantons) | | | 5 | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 10 | na |
| CH (17 cantons) | | 4 | | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 11 | na |
| IS | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| LI | | | | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 9 | na |
| ME | | | | 6 | | | 15 | | | | | 9 | na |
| MK* | | | 5y8m | | | | | | | | 19y6m | 13 | na |
| NO | | | | 6 | | | | 16 | | | | 10 | na |
| RS | | | 5y5m | 6y6m | | 14y5m | | | | | | 9 | na |
| TR | | | 5y6m | | | | | | 17y6m | | | 12 | na |

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

MK*: see 'Country codes'.

Explanatory notes

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

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

Country-specific notes**Germany**

- 12 *Länder*: Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bayern, Hamburg, Hessen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Nordrhein-Westfalen (at *Gymnasium*), Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein.
- 5 *Länder*: Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Nordrhein-Westfalen (at other lower secondary education institutions apart from *Gymnasium*) and Thuringen.

Switzerland

- 1 canton: Graubünden.
- 8 cantons: Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Lucerne, Nidwalden, Obwalden, Schwyz, Uri and Zug.
- 17 cantons: Aargau, Bern, Basel-Landschaft, Basel-Stadt, Fribourg, Geneva, Glarus, Jura, Neuchâtel, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen, Solothurn, Thurgau, Ticino, Valais, Vaud and Zurich.

COUNTRY CODES

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

* ISO code 3166. Provisional code which does not prejudice in any way the definitive nomenclature for this country, which will be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place on this subject at the United Nations.

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Compulsory Education in Europe – 2016/17

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

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

