

# The Structure of the European Education systems 2014/15:

## Schematic Diagrams

November 2014

### **The online version of the leaflet**

The structure of the European education systems

2014/15: schematic diagrams can be found at:

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/facts\\_and\\_figures\\_en.php#diagrams](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/facts_and_figures_en.php#diagrams)

---

### **Contact**

Wim Vansteenkiste,  
Communication and Publications:  
+32 2 299 50 58

## The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: schematic diagrams

These diagrams represent the structure of mainstream education from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2014/15 academic year.

Forty-four education systems are included covering 36 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme (EU Member States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey).

November 2014

### Guide to reading the diagrams

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

## Structure of the national educational programmes and ISCED levels

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

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

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

A second thin bar with coloured stripes indicates the corresponding levels of education as defined by the new 2011 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). This classification is used for collecting statistical data for international comparisons.

## Terms

The diagram also shows current and/or forthcoming changes in the structure of the education and training systems such as on compulsory education (Hungary and Poland) and programmes being phased out (Spain and Poland).

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
























### Age of students and programme duration

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

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

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

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

	Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education <b>is not responsible</b> )						
	Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education <b>is 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 levels							
	ISCED 0		ISCED 2		ISCED 4		ISCED 6
	ISCED 1		ISCED 3		ISCED 5		ISCED 7
	Compulsory full-time education						
	Compulsory part-time education						
	Combined school and workplace courses						
	Additional year		Study abroad				
	Programme being phased out during (year)						
	Compulsory work experience + its duration						
Please see definitions of the ISCED levels at the end of this document							

## Connections between programmes

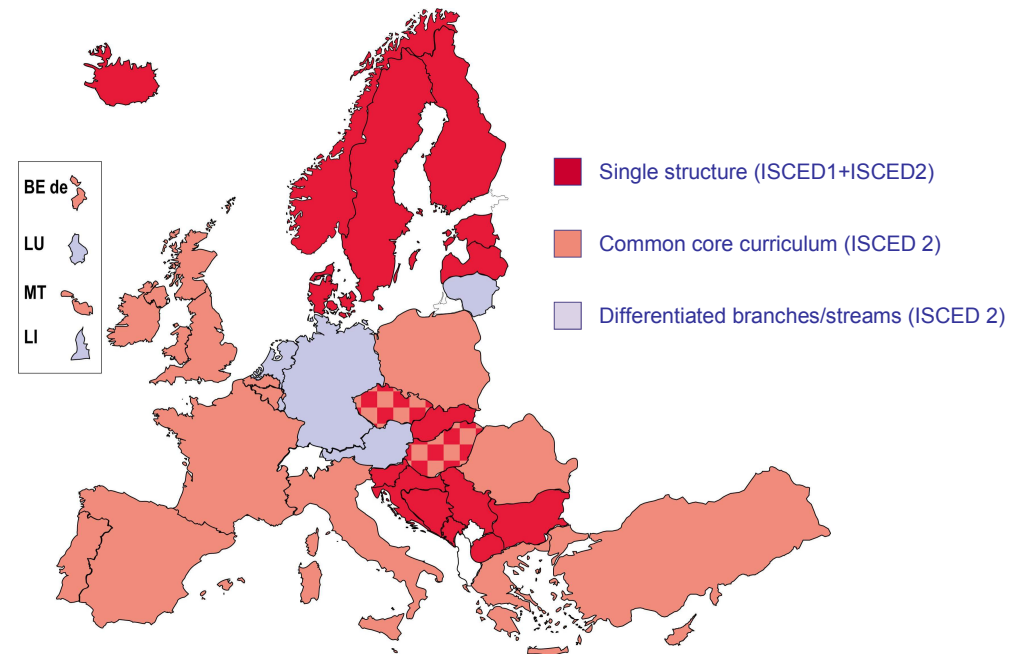
The diagrams also show the points at which students may transfer to a different type of school or education, either within a level or on completion of a level or programme. These transition points are shown by the vertical lines linking to the programmes. However, as the number of possible transition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

## Compulsory education: organisational models

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

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

Main models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1-2) in Europe, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

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

## **International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011)**

### **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 nor 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. Pupils 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**

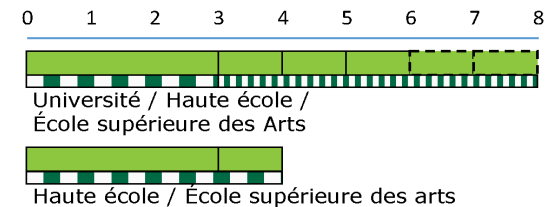
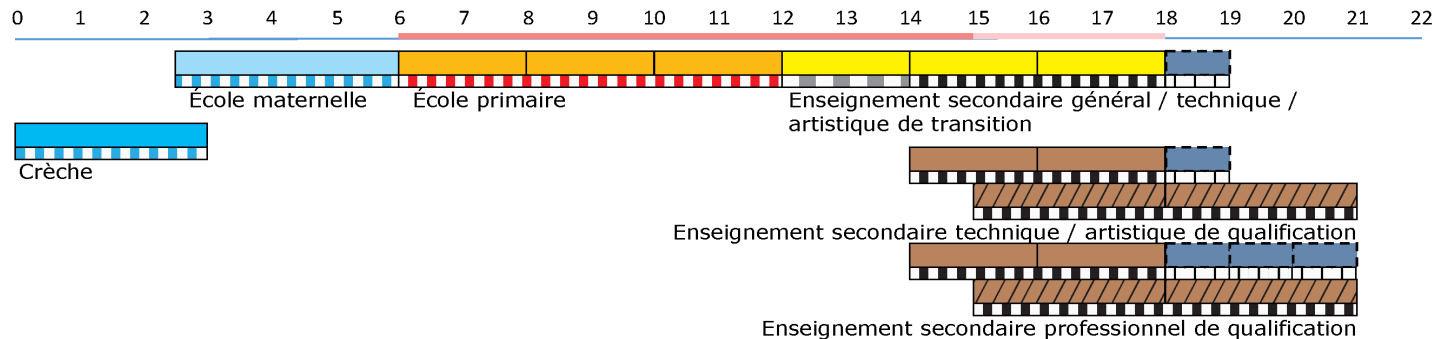
Programmes at this level, are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. Typically, programmes at this level are theoretically-based but may include practical components 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.

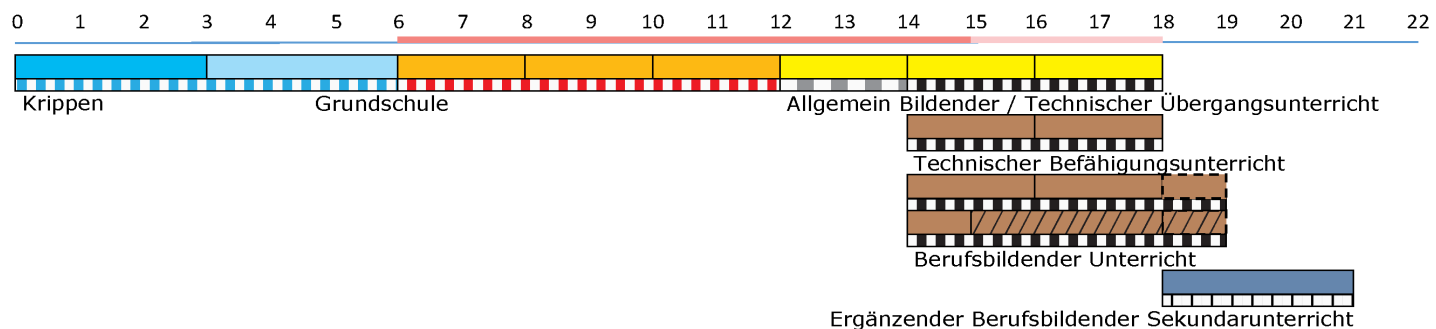
For the full details on each ISCED level, please consult:

UNESCO, Institute for Statistics, 2012. *International Standard Classification of Education. ISCED 2011.* Available at:  
<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>

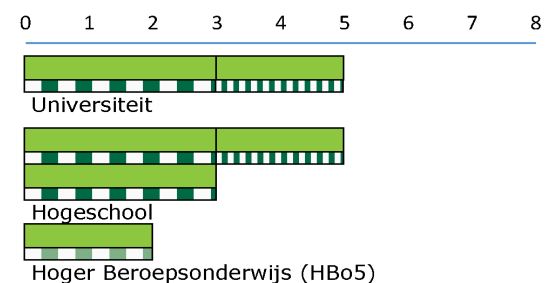
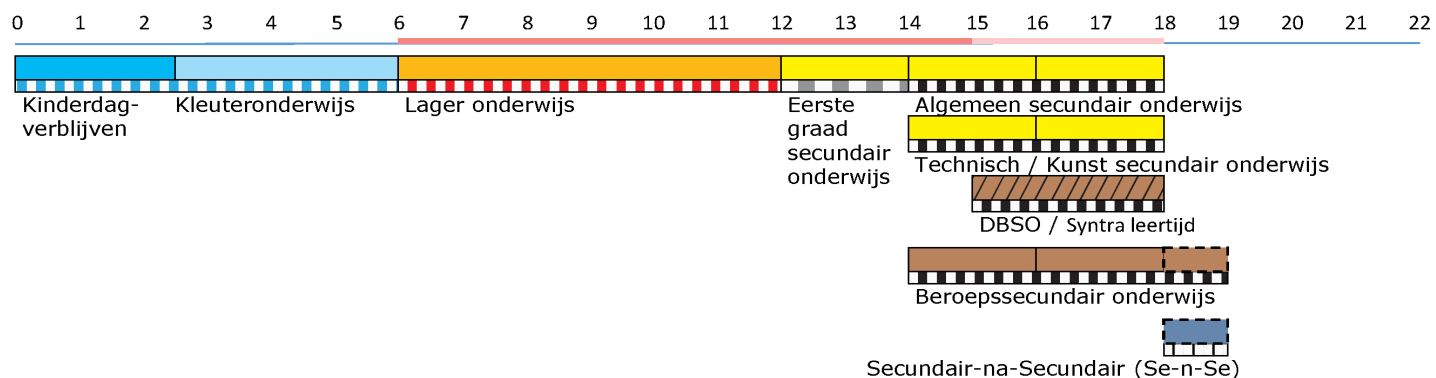
### Belgium – French Community



### Belgium – German-speaking Community

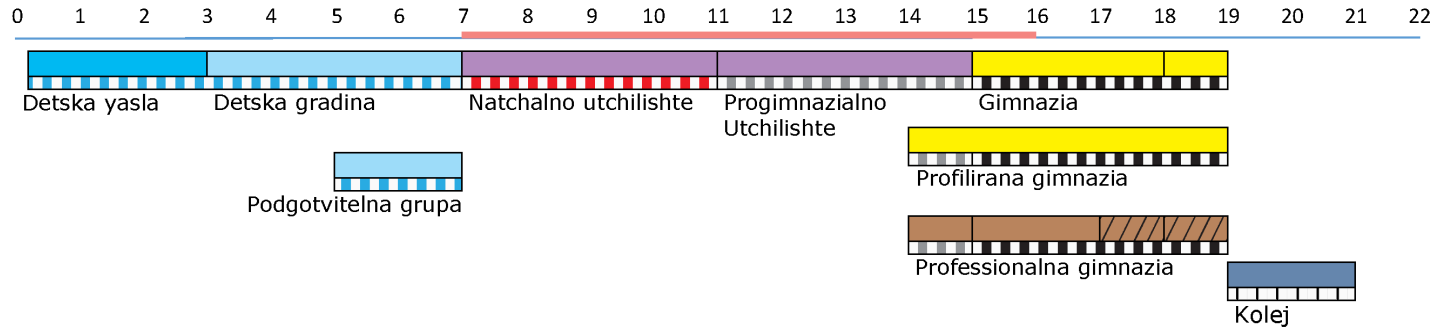


### Belgium – Flemish Community

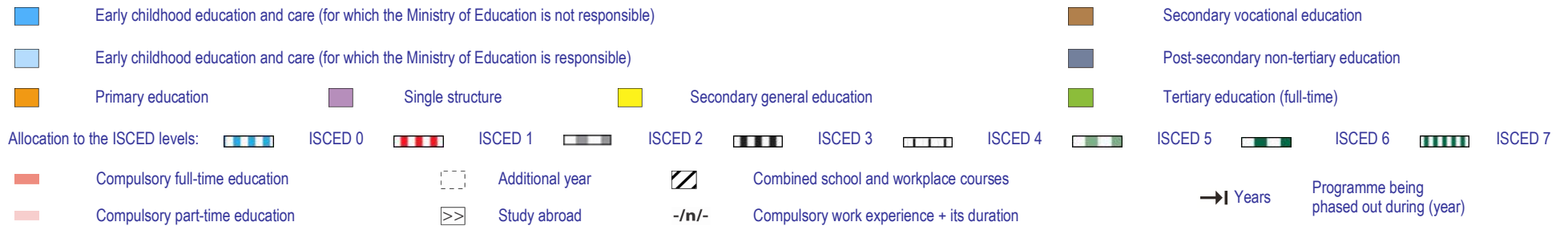
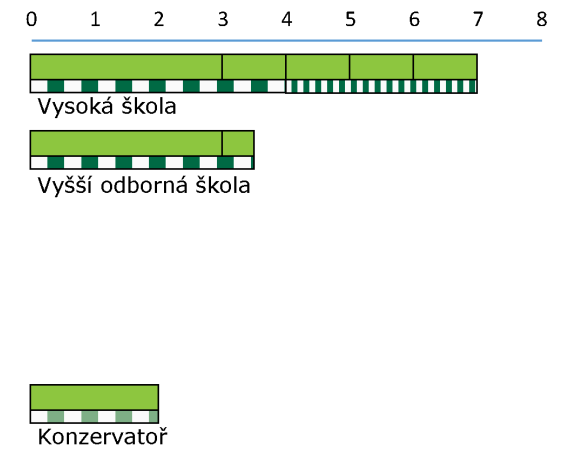
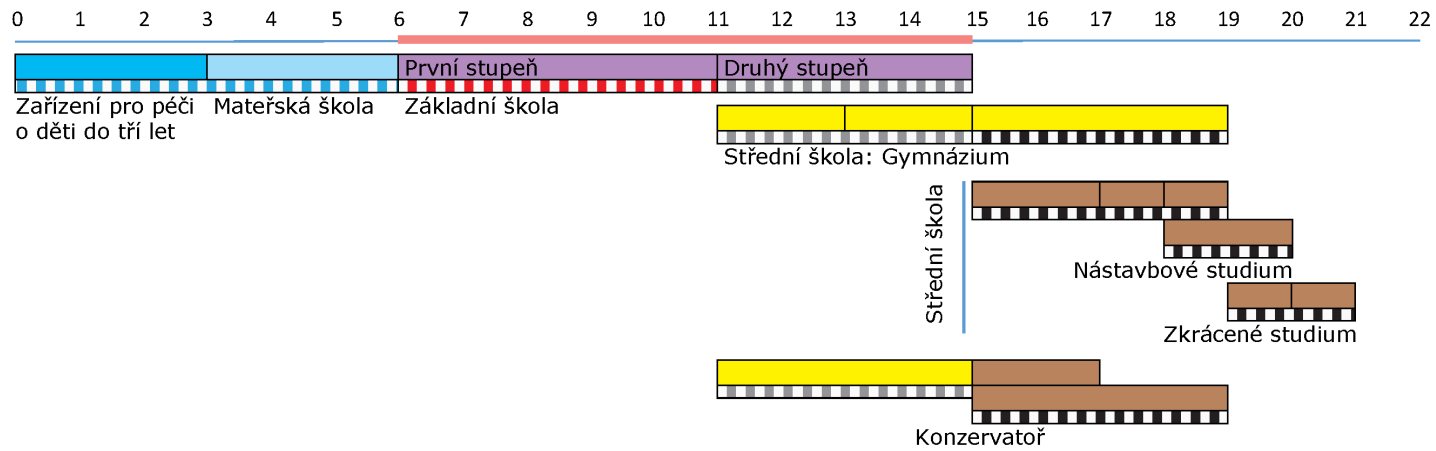




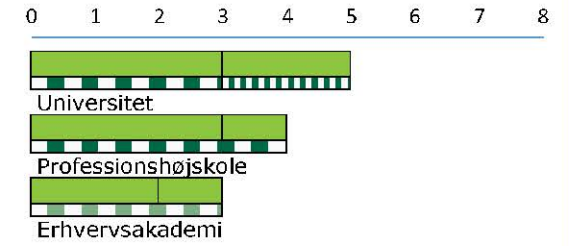
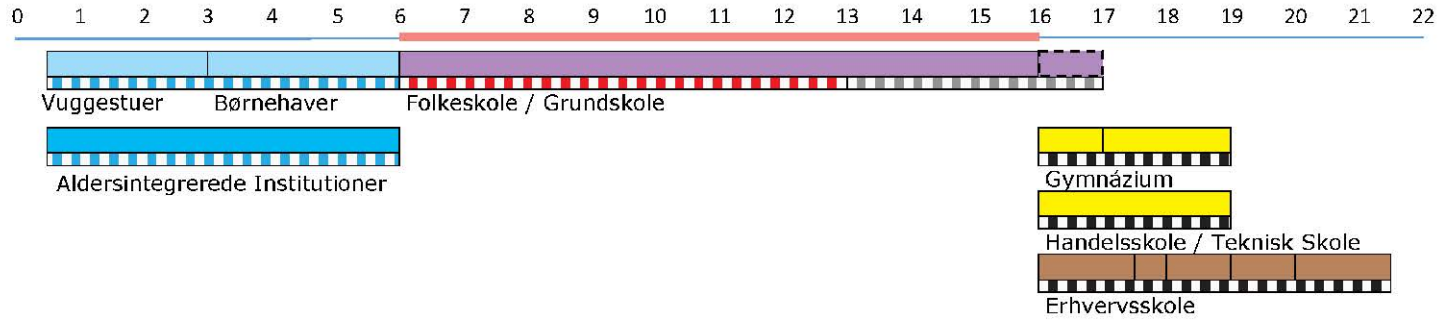
## Bulgaria



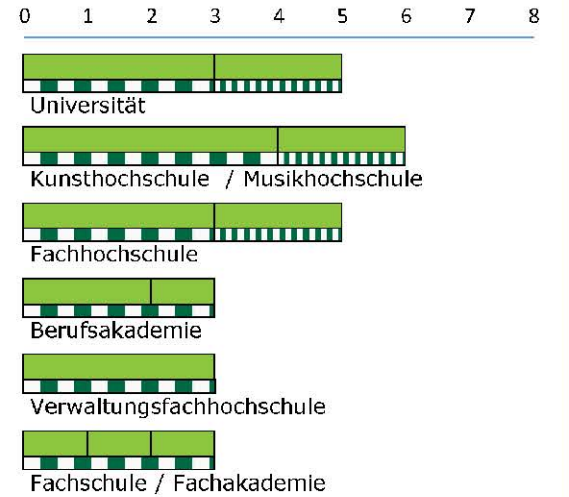
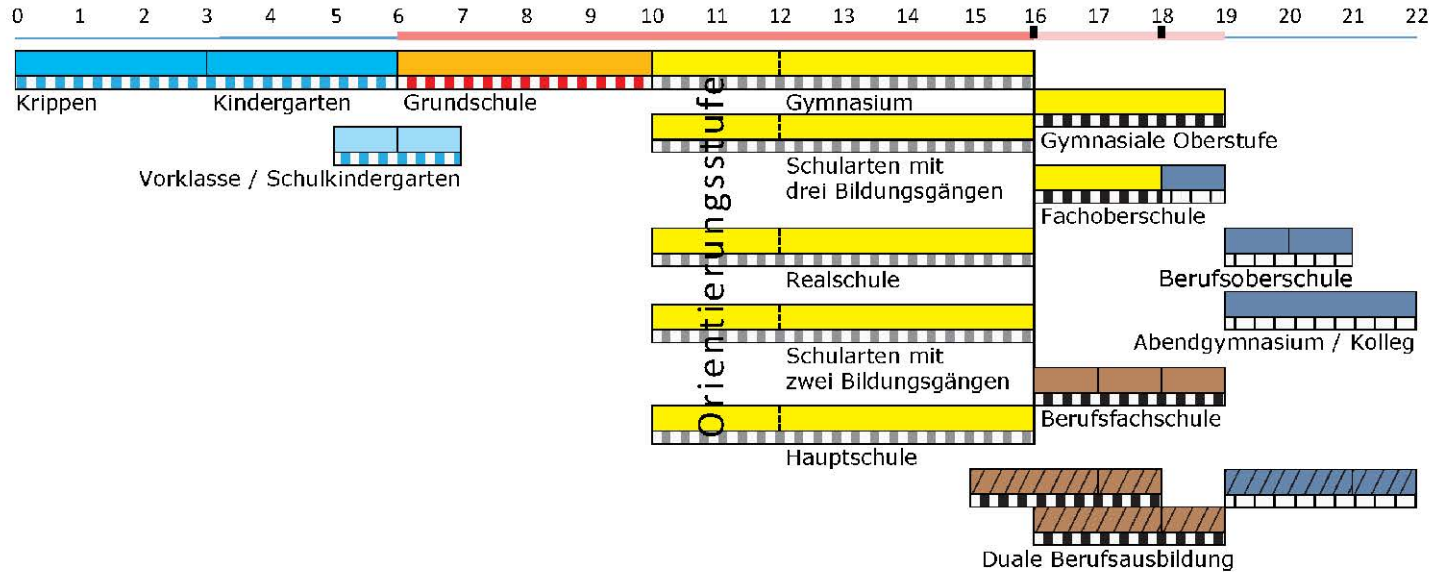
## Czech Republic



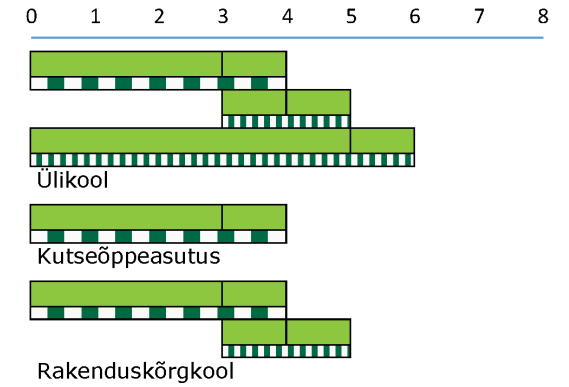
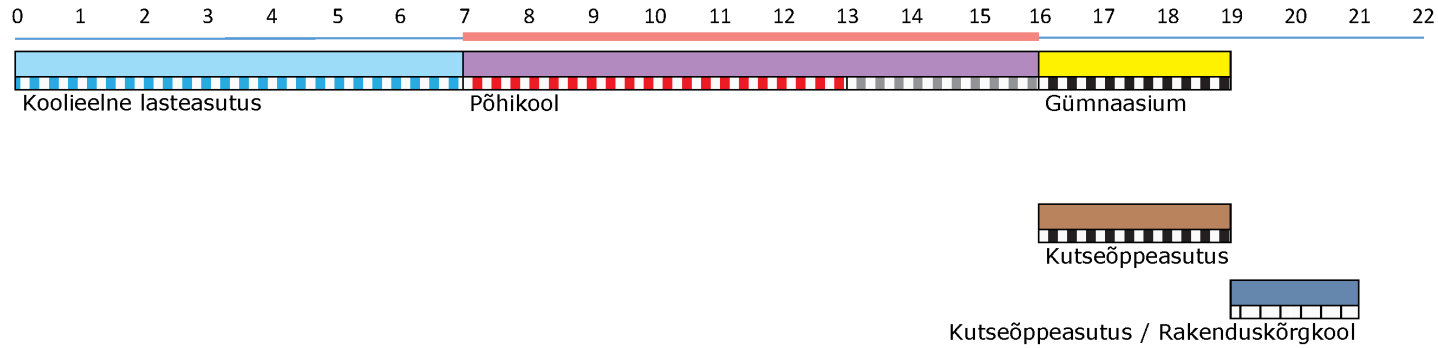
## Denmark



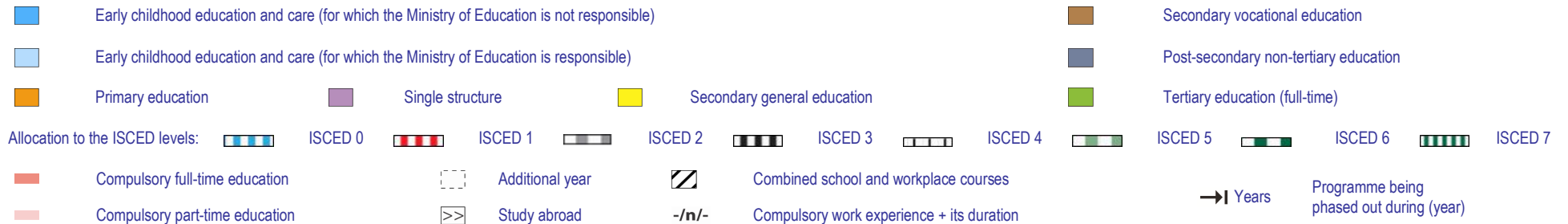
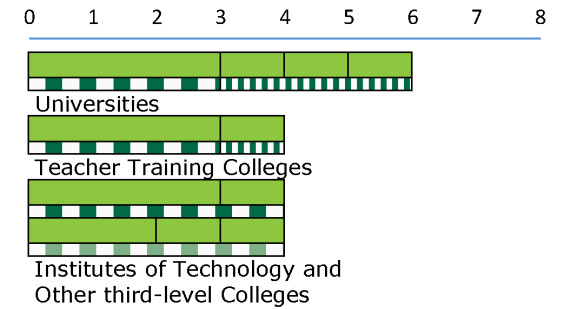
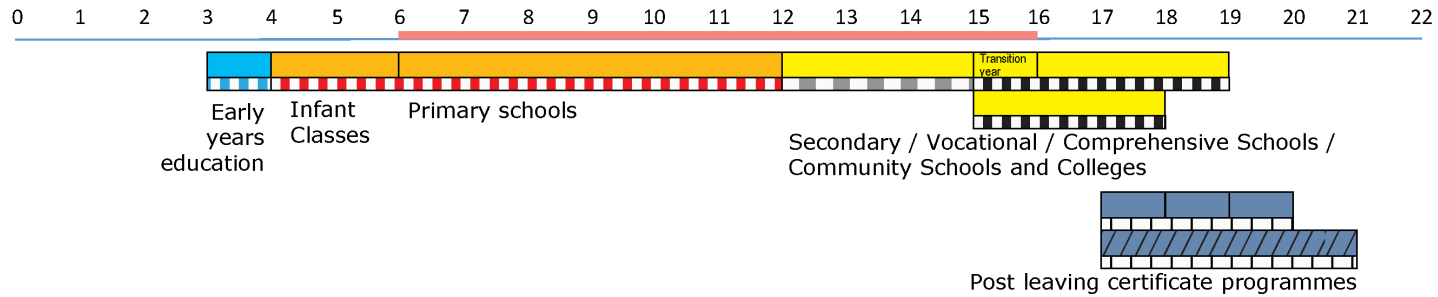
## Germany



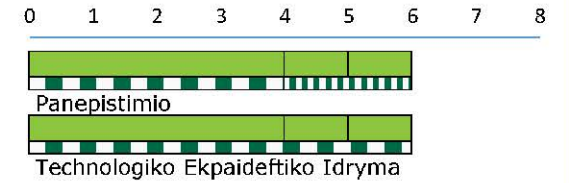
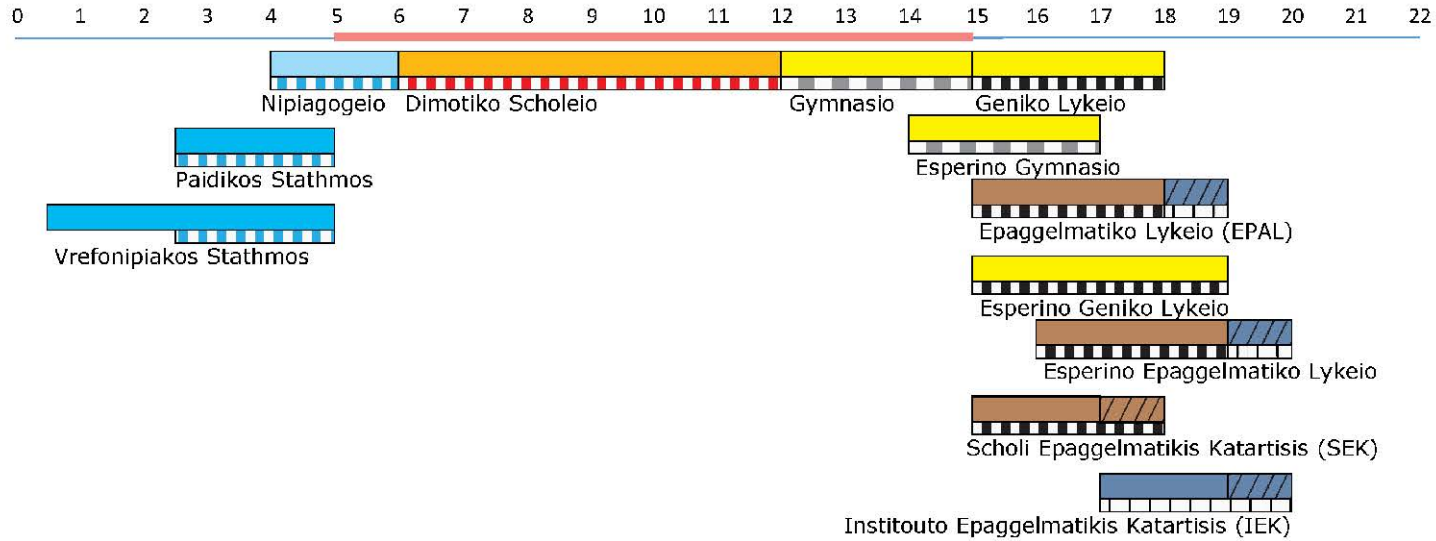
### Estonia



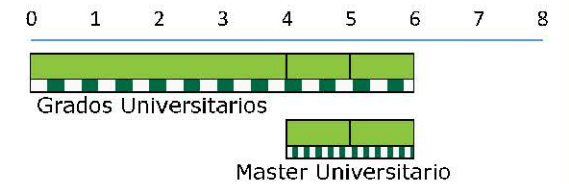
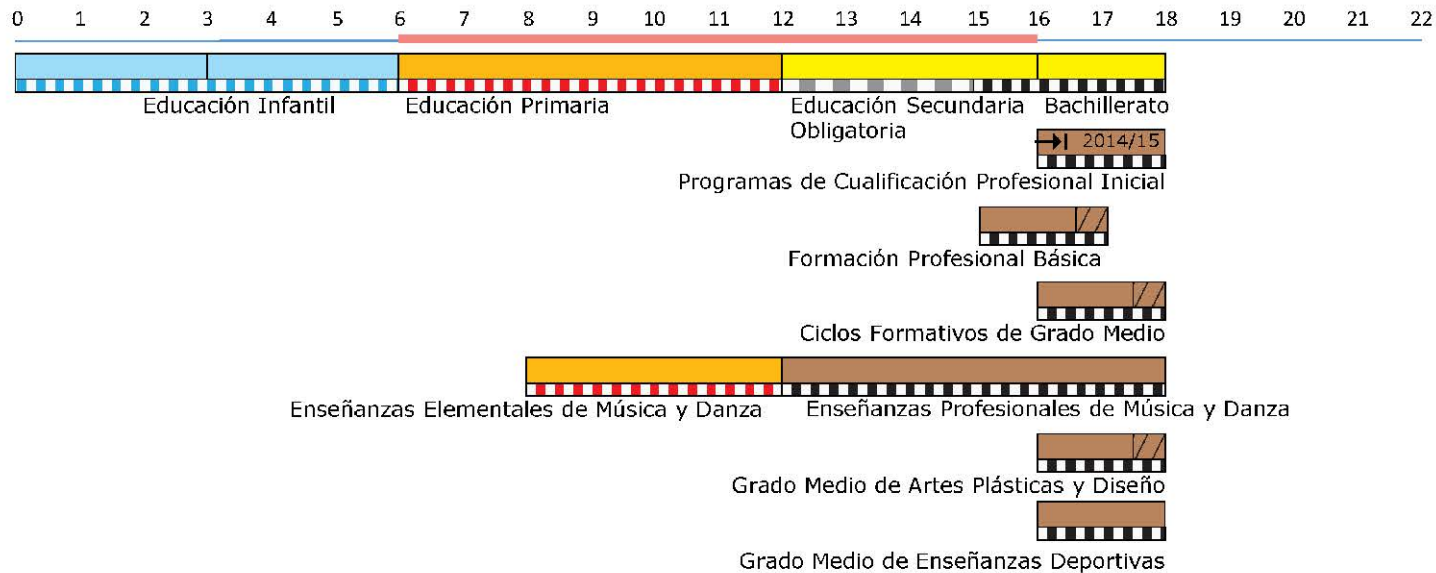
### Ireland



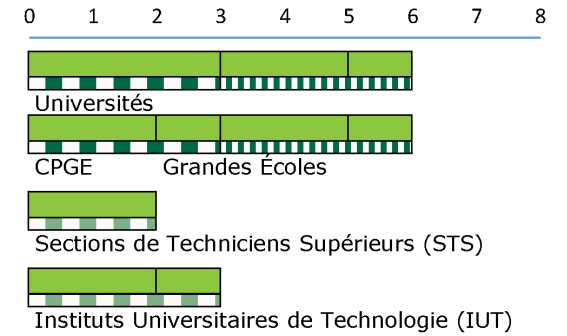
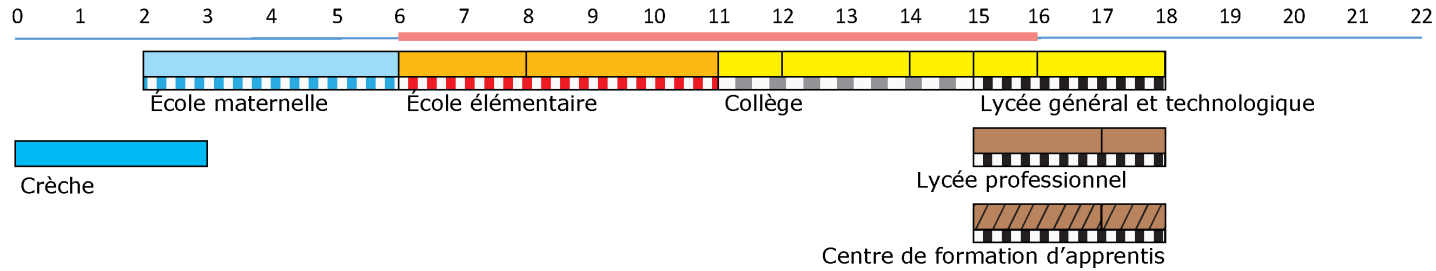
### Greece



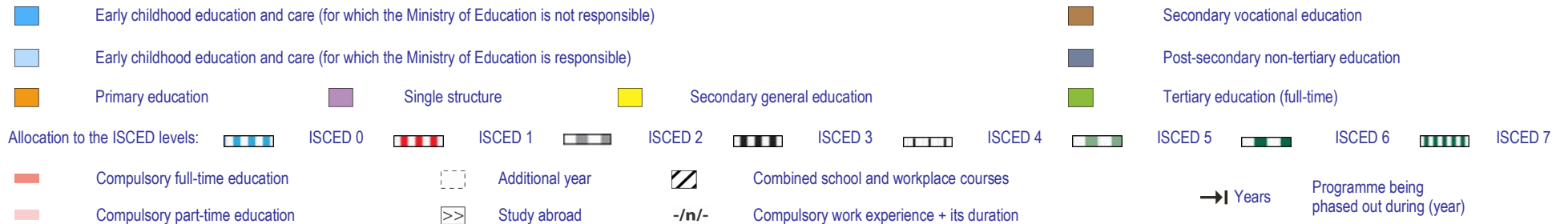
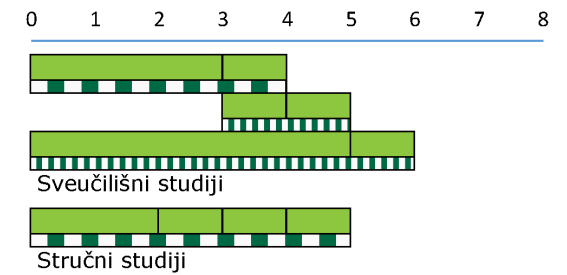
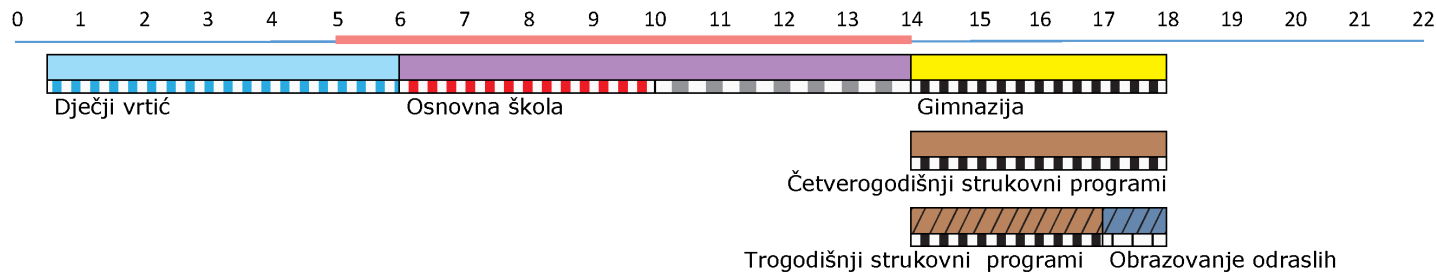
### Spain



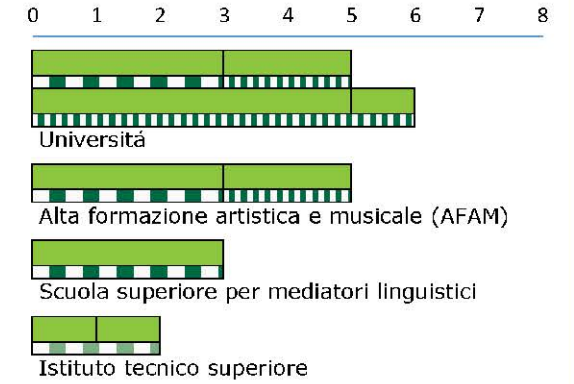
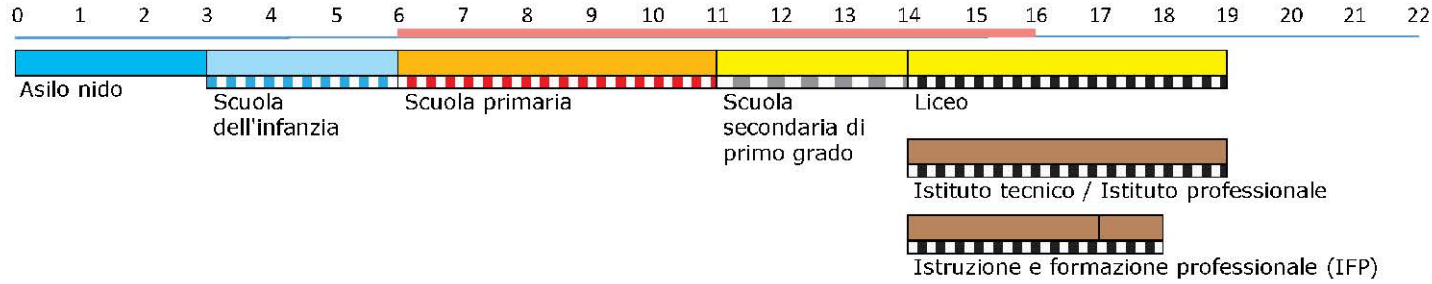
## France



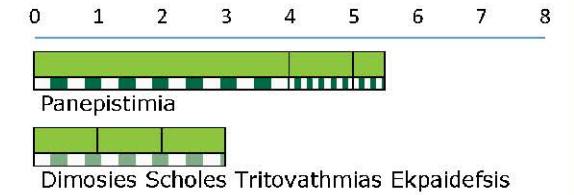
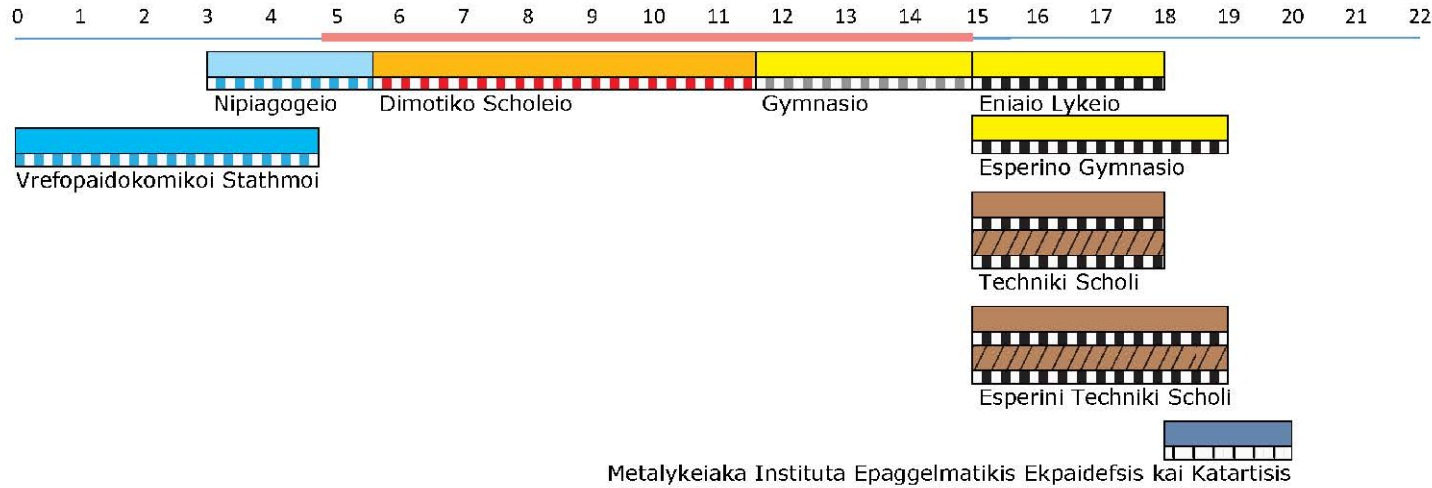
## Croatia



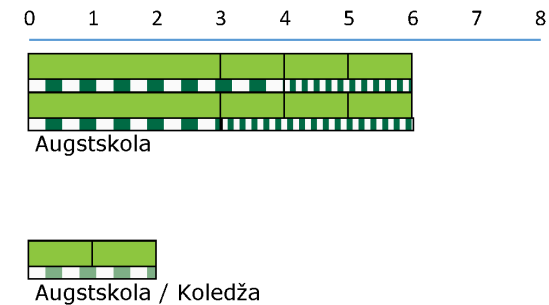
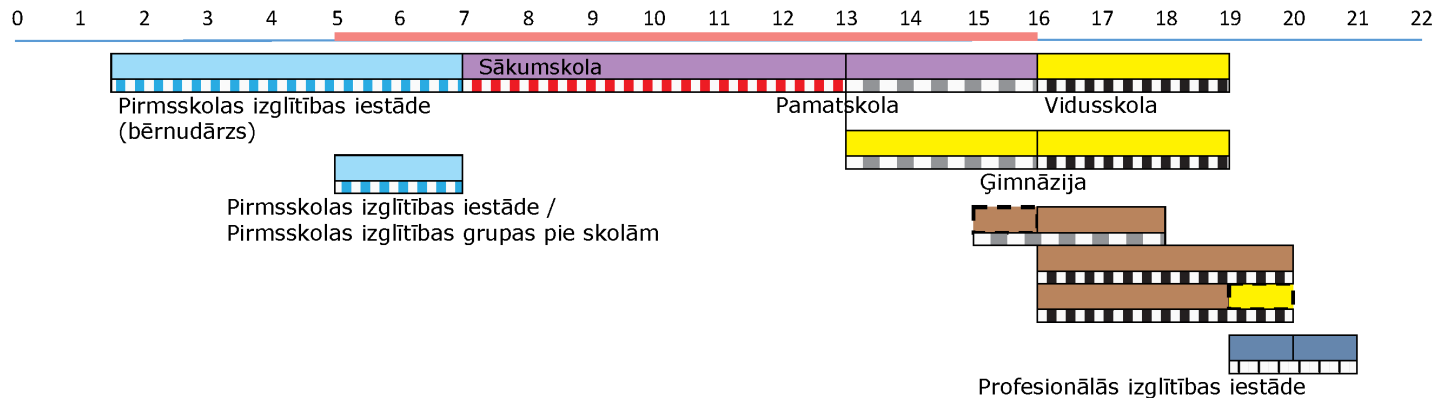
### Italy



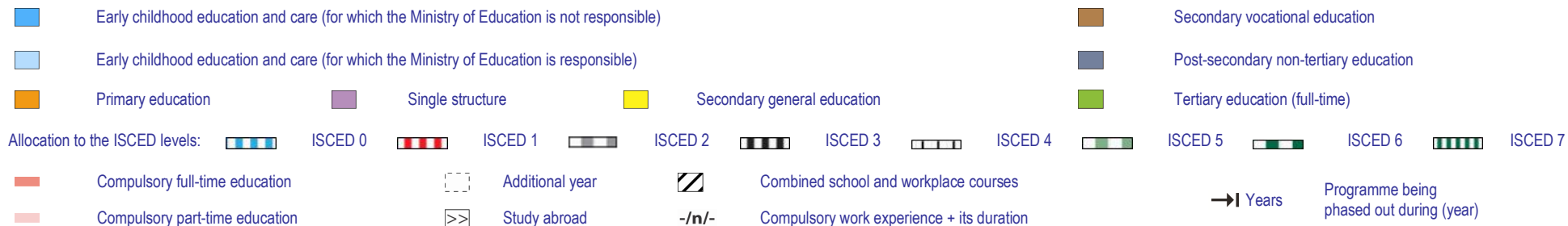
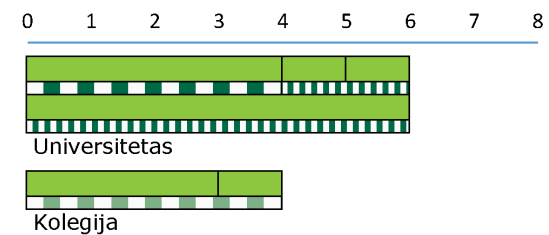
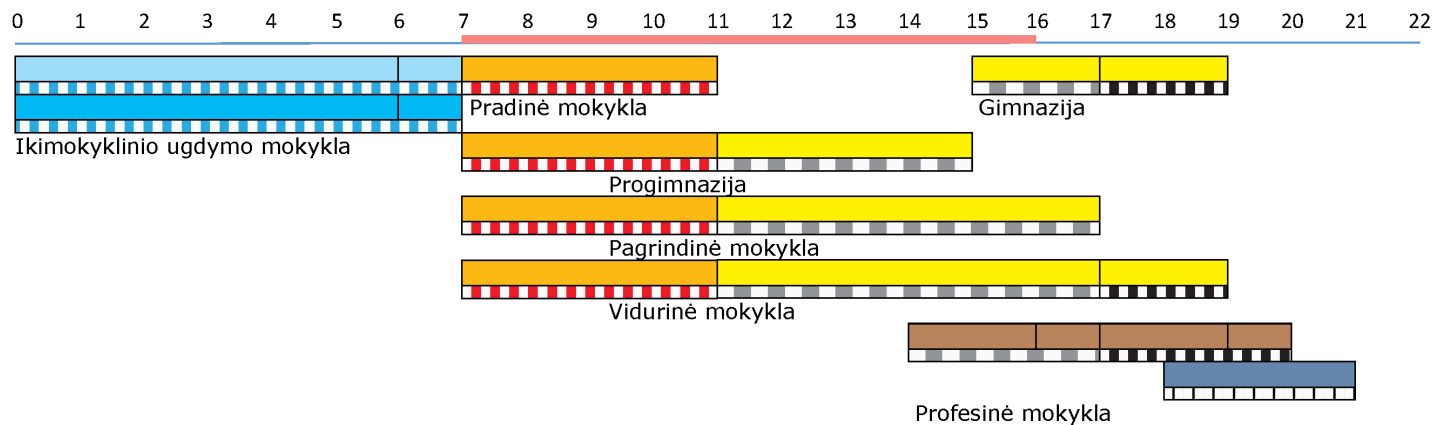
### Cyprus



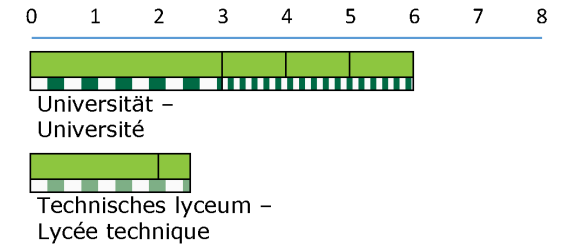
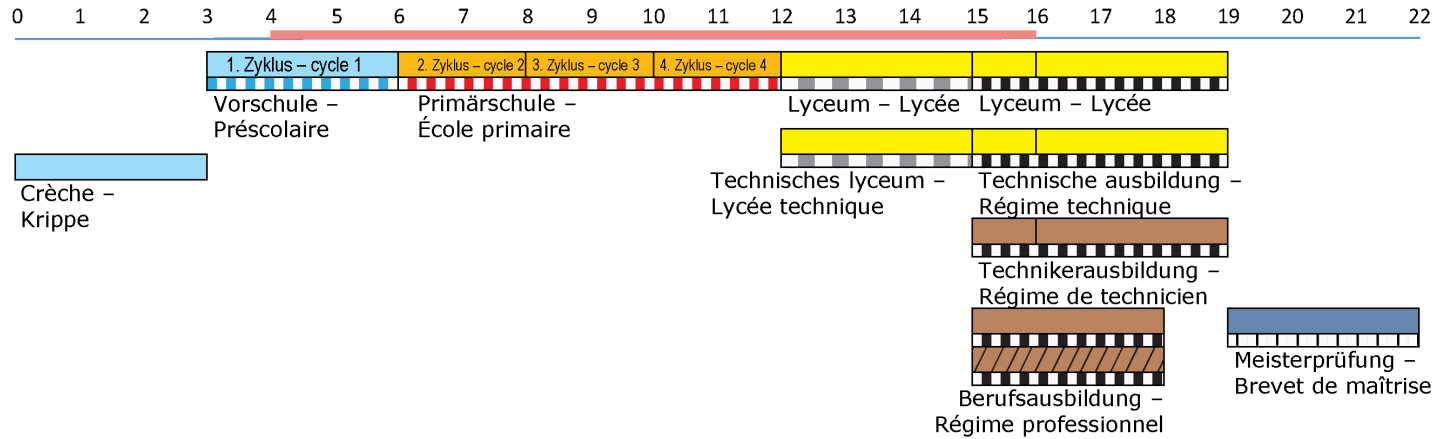
## Latvia



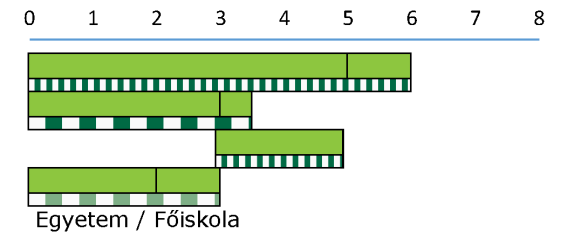
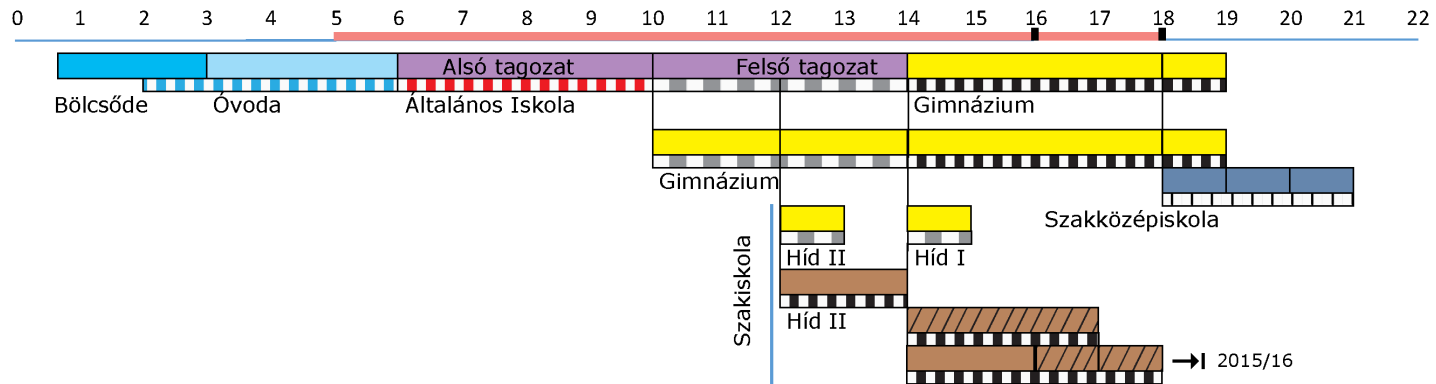
## Lithuania



## Luxembourg



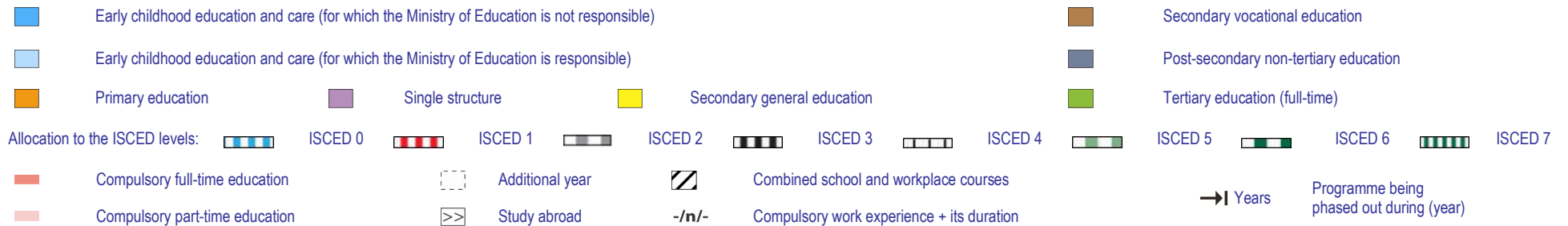
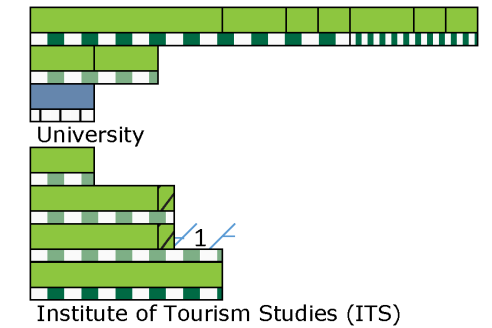
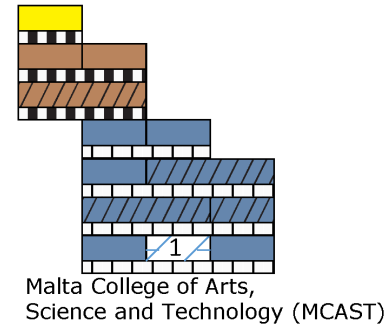
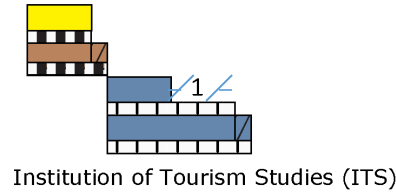
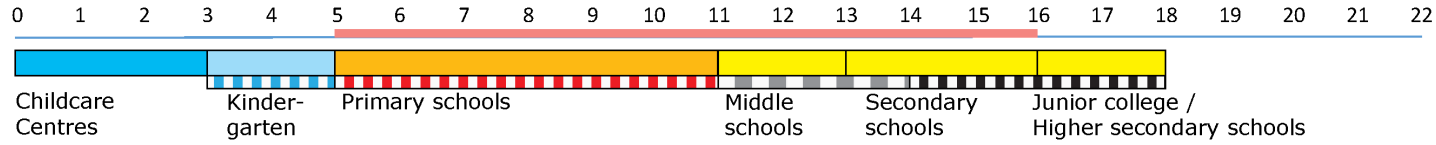
## Hungary



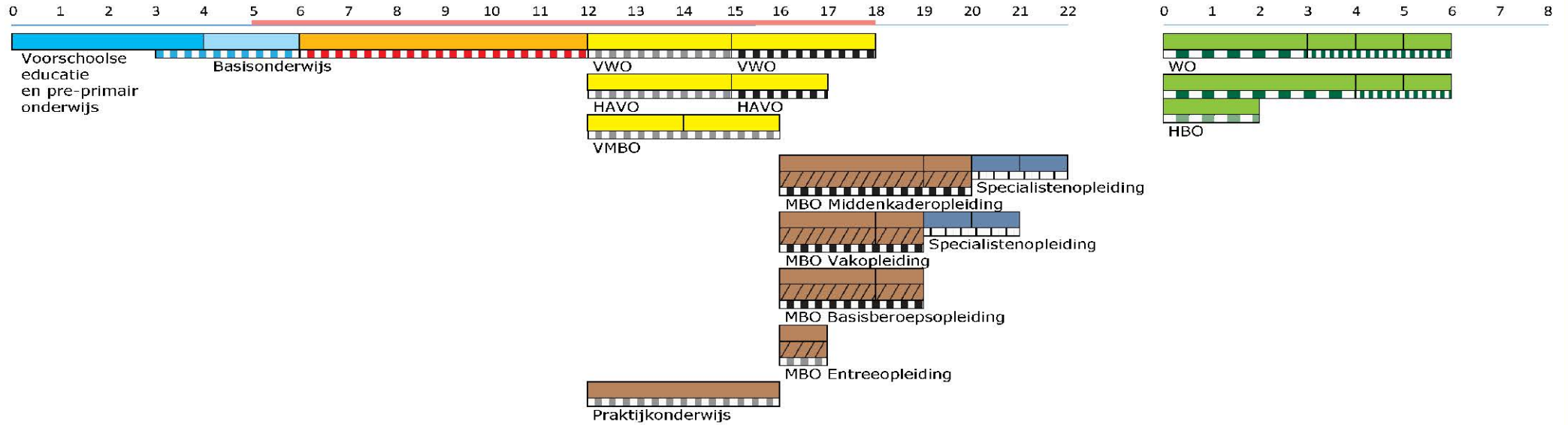
Note: Compulsory education ends at the age of 16 or 18. The lower age limit (16) applies to students in grade 11 and below; the higher school leaving age (18) applies to students in grade 12.



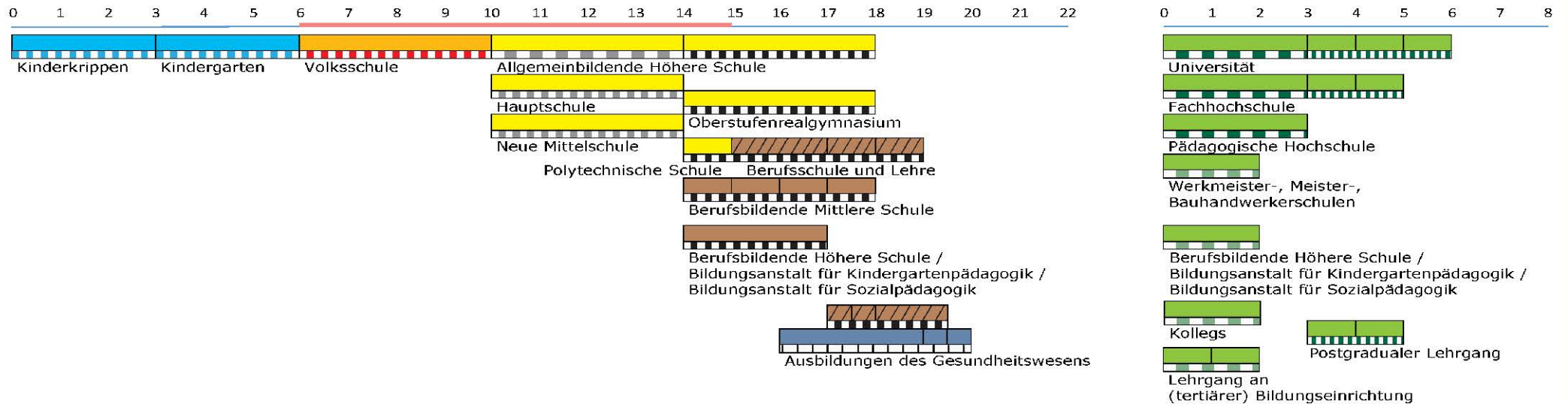
# Malta



## The Netherlands

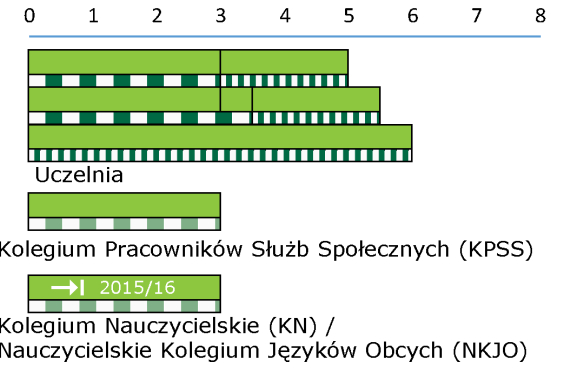
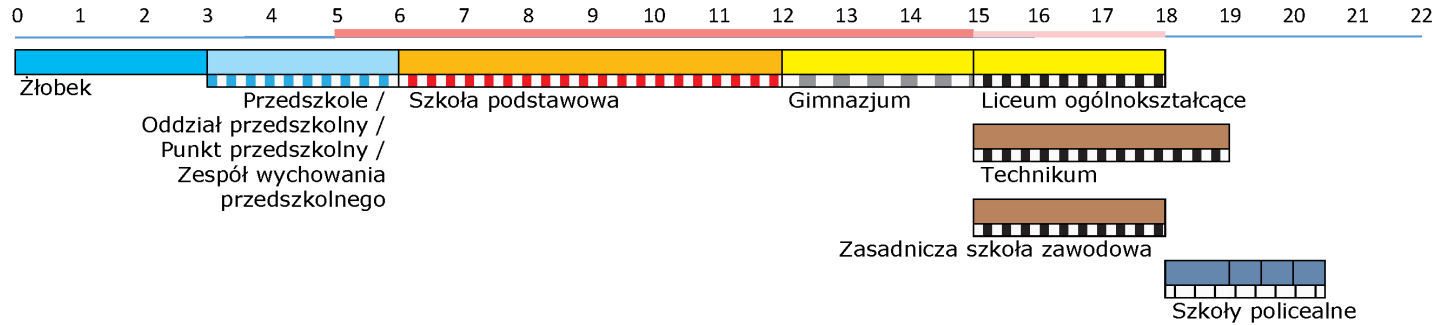


## Austria



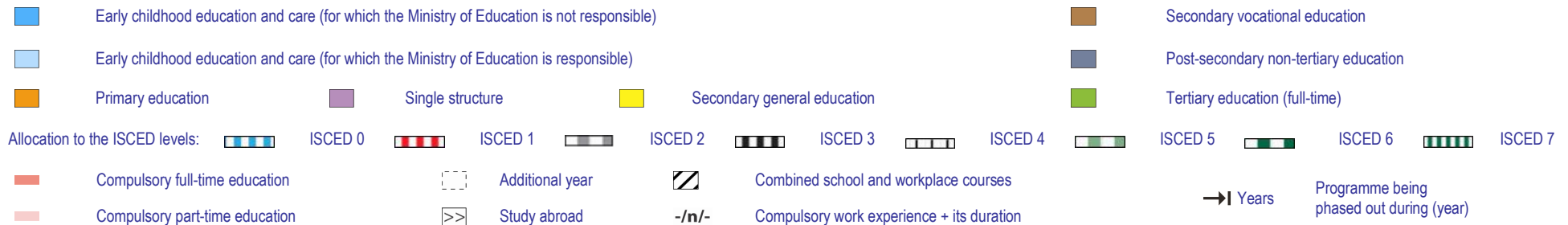
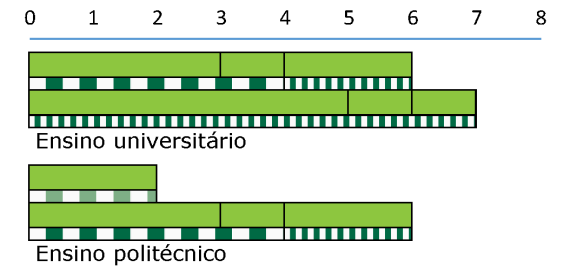
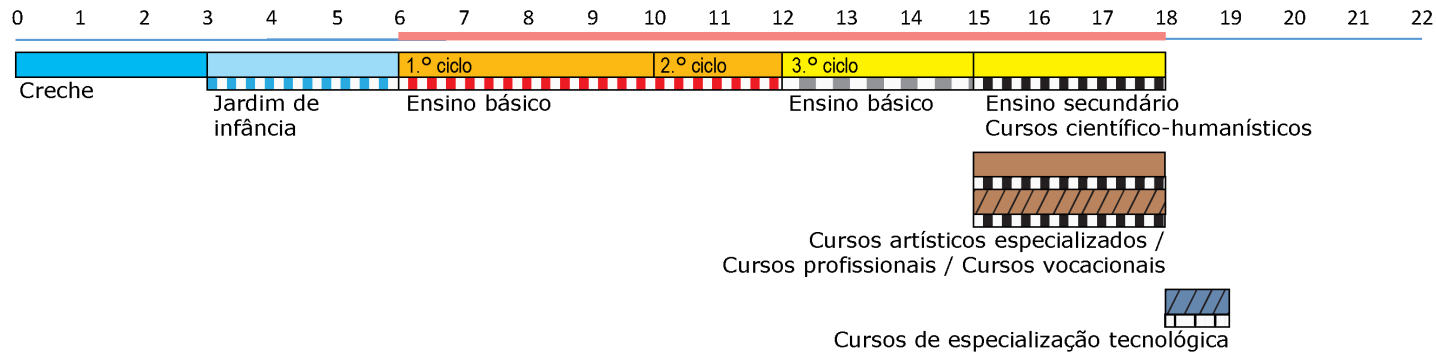
Note: Berufsbildende Höhere Schule / Bildungsanstalt für Kindergartenpädagogik / Bildungsanstalt für Sozialpädagogik deliver continuous programmes i.e. 1st to 3rd year followed by 4th and 5th year.

## Poland

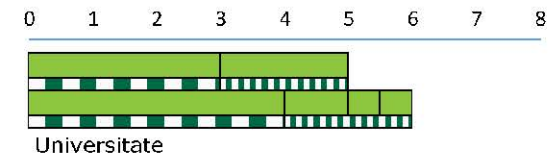
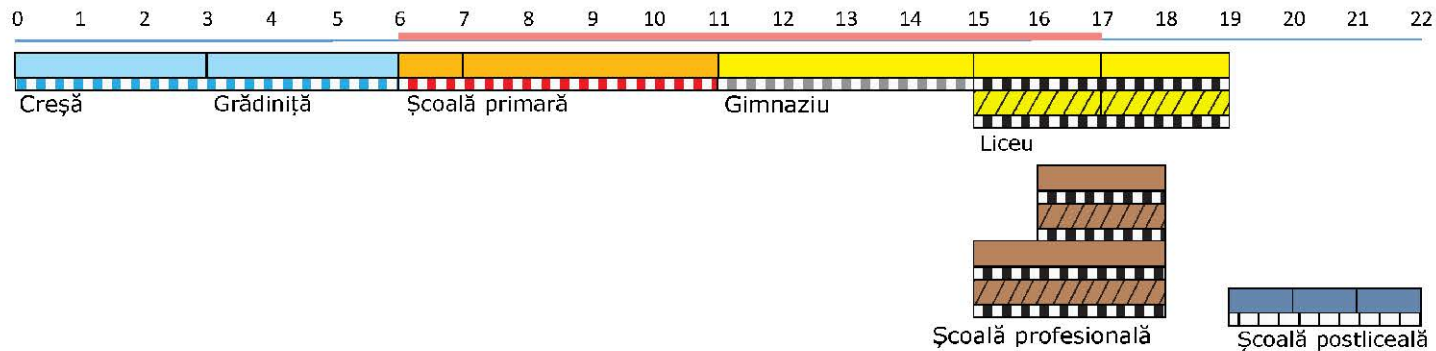


Note: A reform introduced in 2013 led to the gradual lowering of the beginning of compulsory full time education in primary school from 7 to 6 years. Before 2014, admission of 6-year olds to grade 1 of primary school was left to the parents' discretion. In 2014, education in primary schools became compulsory for 6-year old children born in the first half of the year 2008 i.e. children born before the end of June 2008. Starting in 2015, all six-year-olds will commence compulsory schooling.

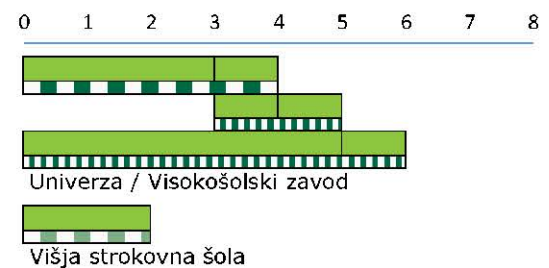
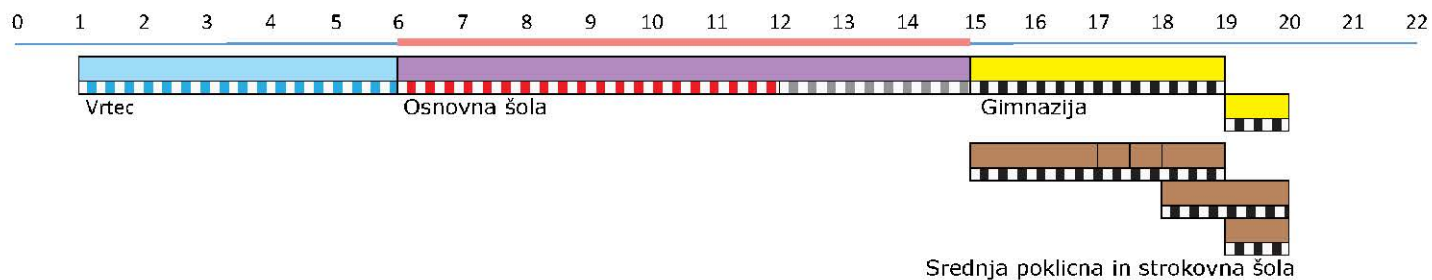
## Portugal



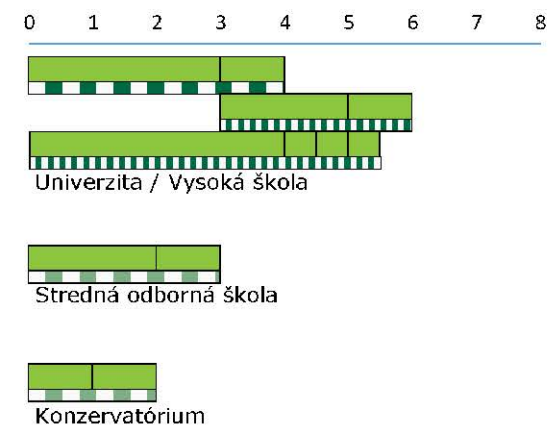
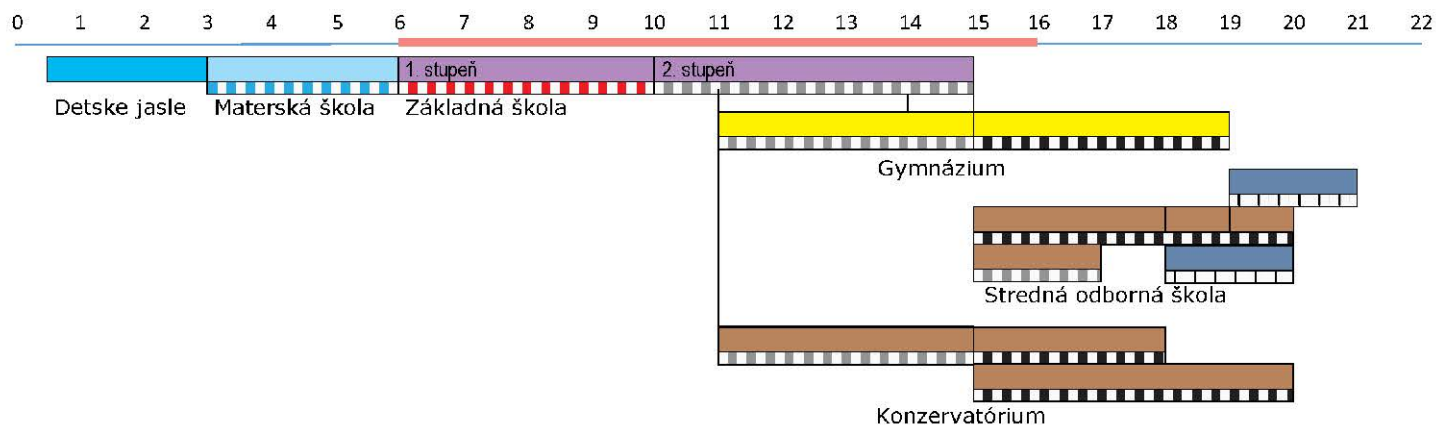
## Romania



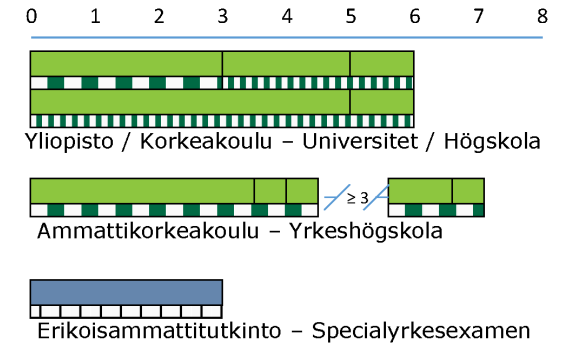
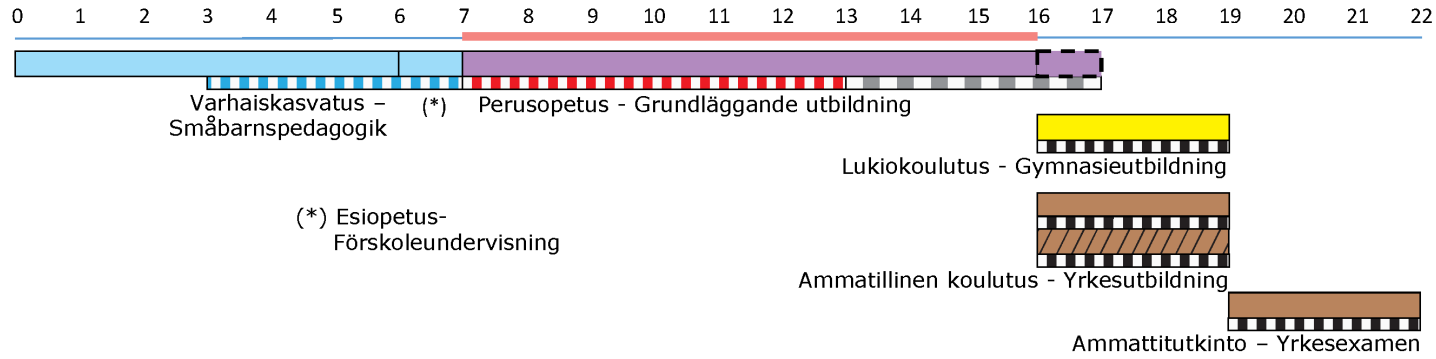
## Slovenia



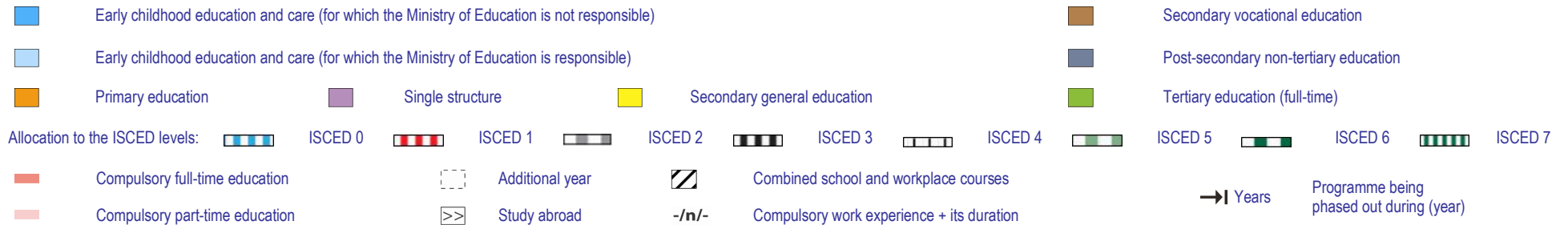
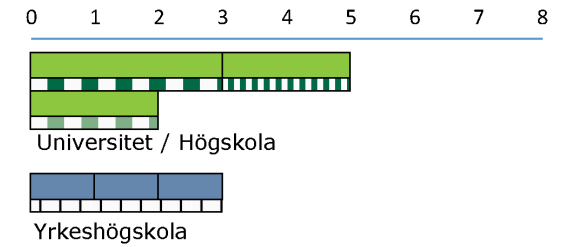
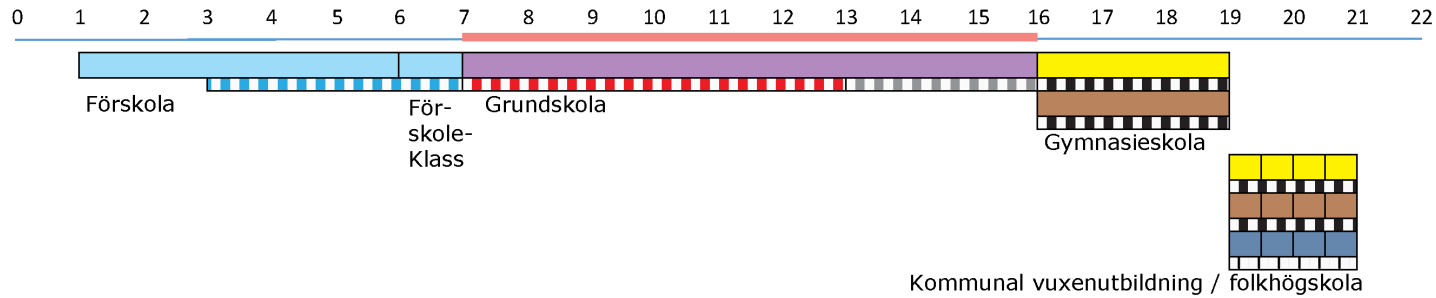
## Slovakia



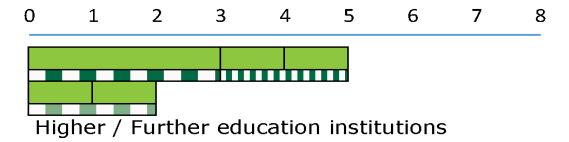
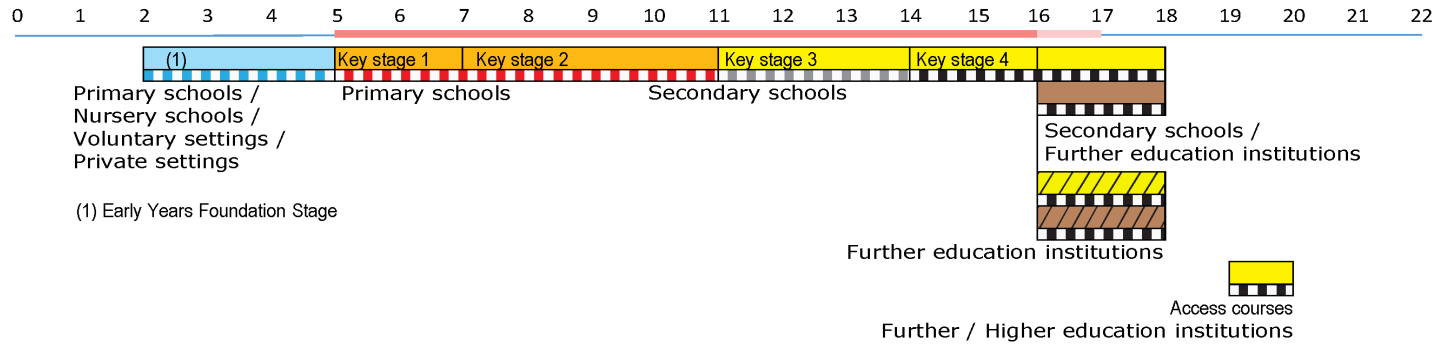
## Finland



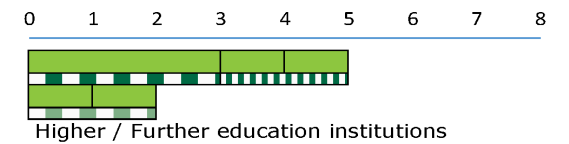
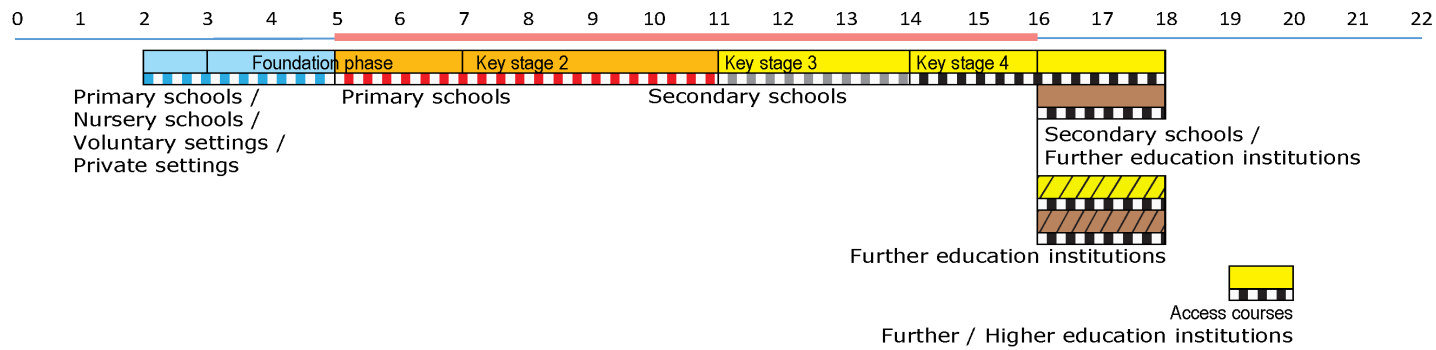
## Sweden



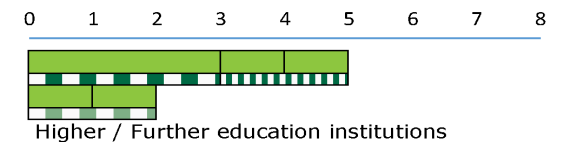
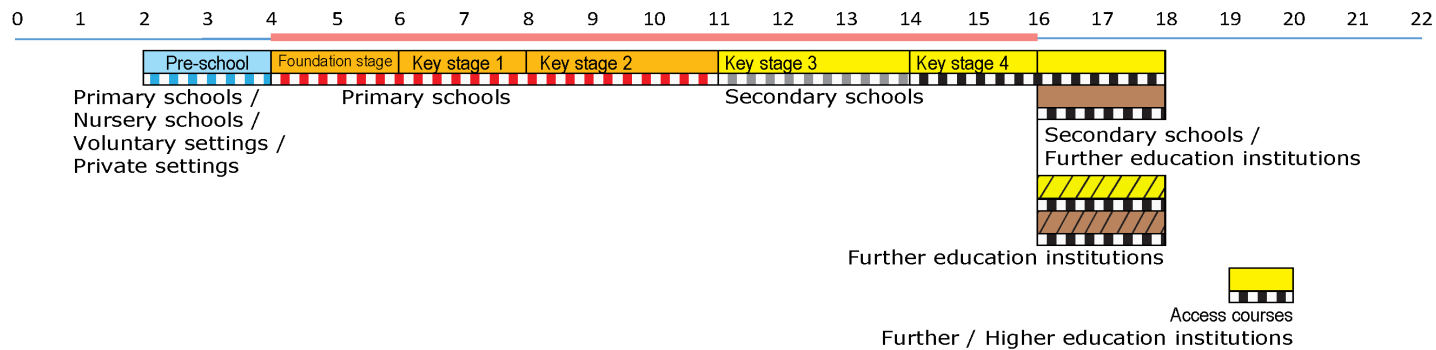
### United Kingdom – England



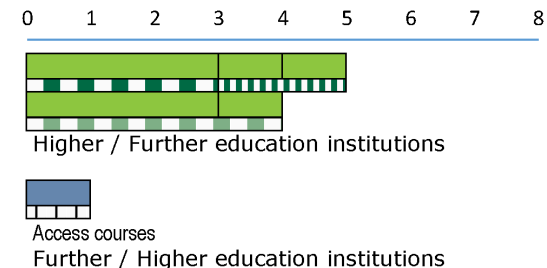
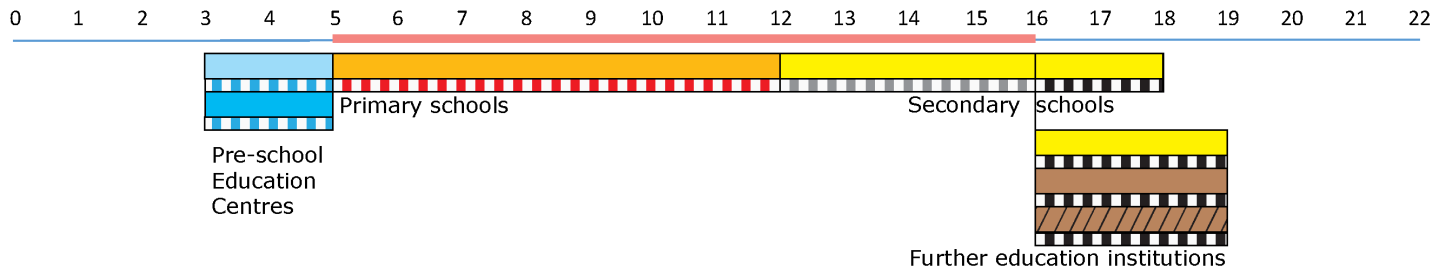
### United Kingdom – Wales



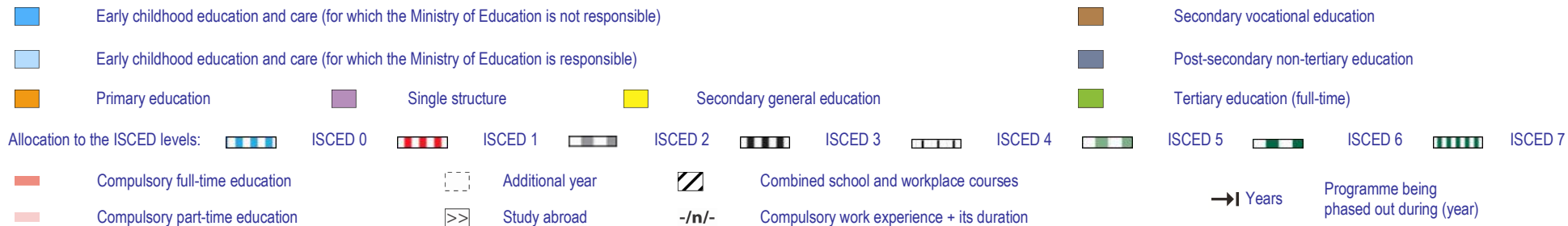
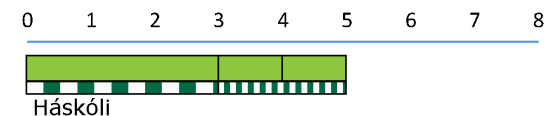
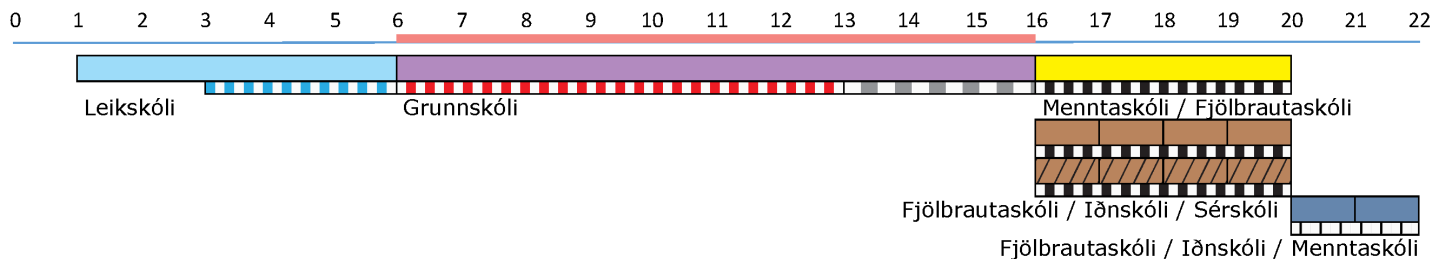
### United Kingdom – Northern Ireland



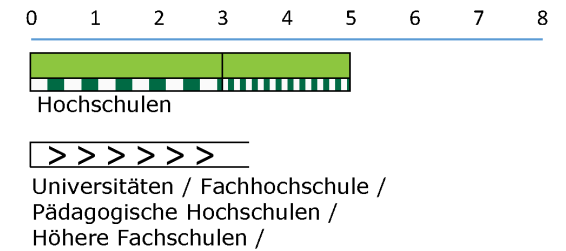
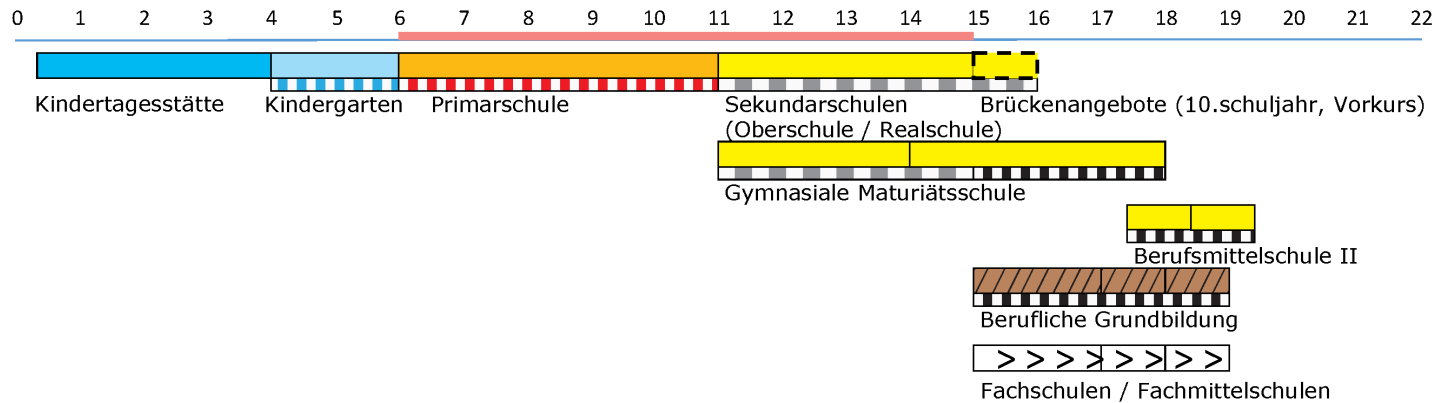
### United Kingdom – Scotland



### Iceland

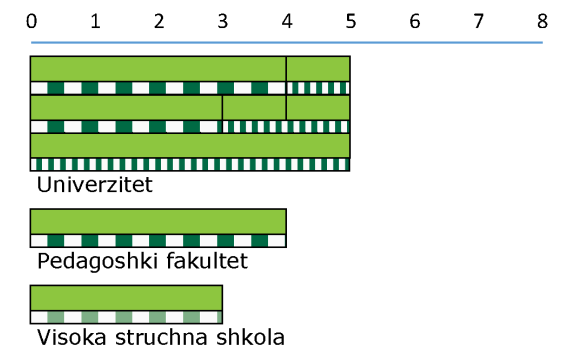
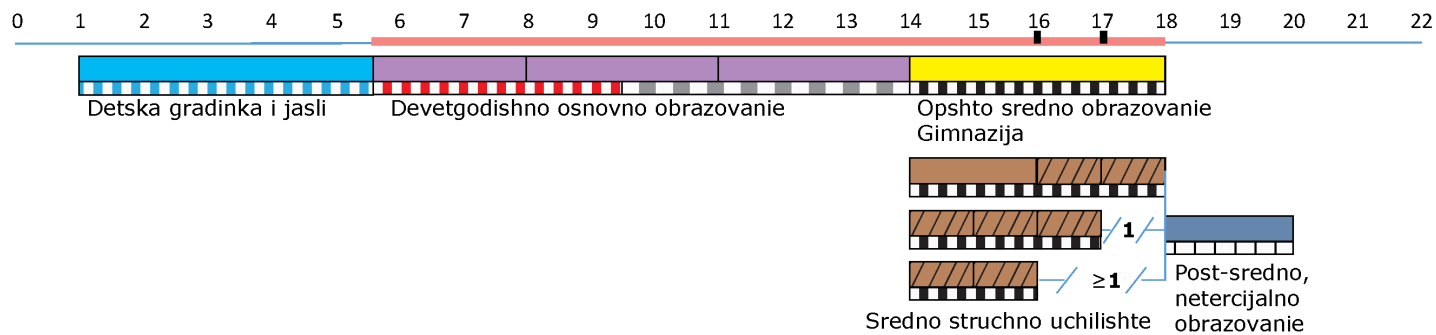


## Liechtenstein



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

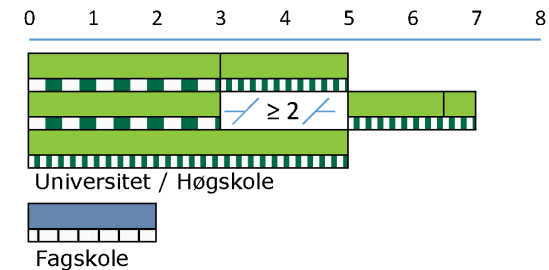
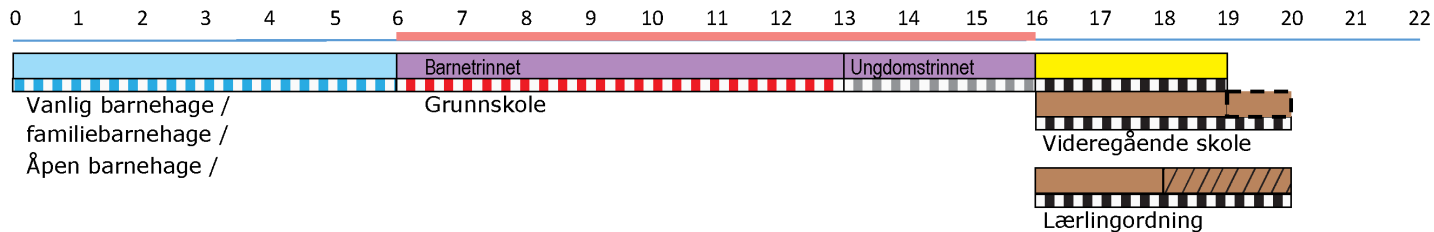
## Former Republic Yugoslav of Macedonia



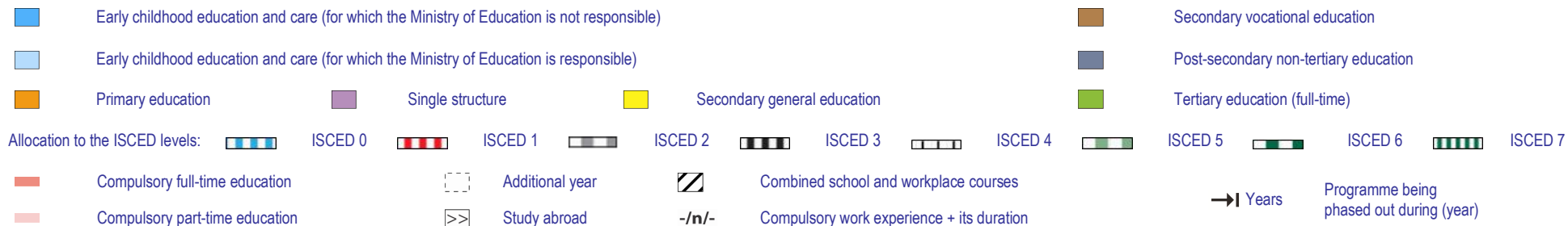
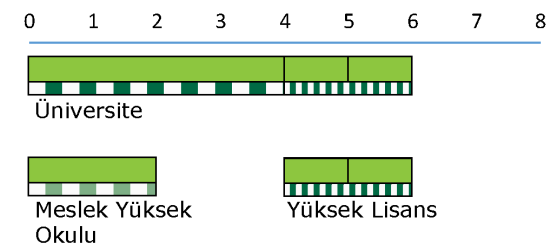
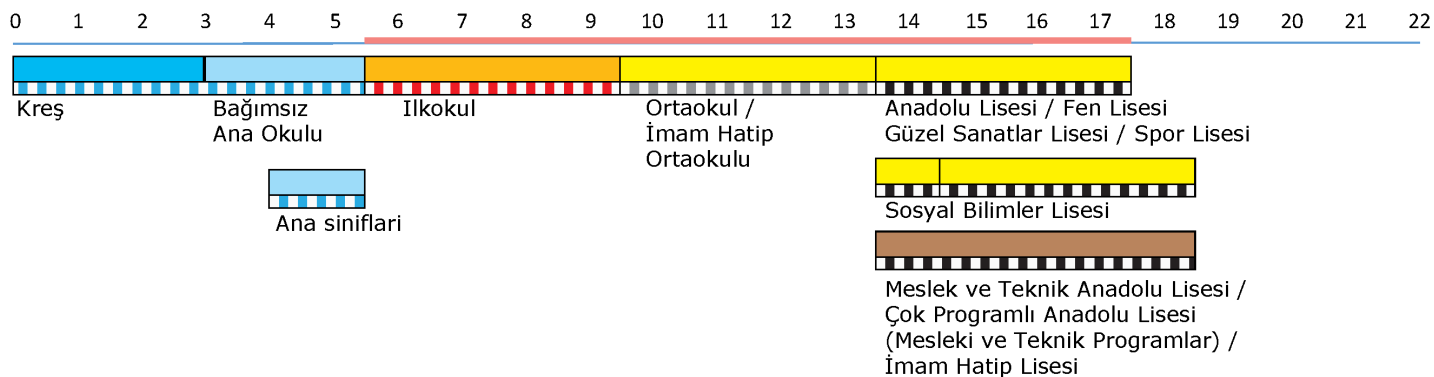
Note: The ending age for compulsory education may vary from 16 to 18 years age depending on the type of programme. The lowest ending age (16) applies to students attending the two years vocational programme *strucno osposobuvanje* while the ending age of 17 applies to those attending the three years vocational programme *strucno obrazovanie za zanimanja*. The highest ending age of 18 applies to students attending general secondary education or a four years programme of vocational education.



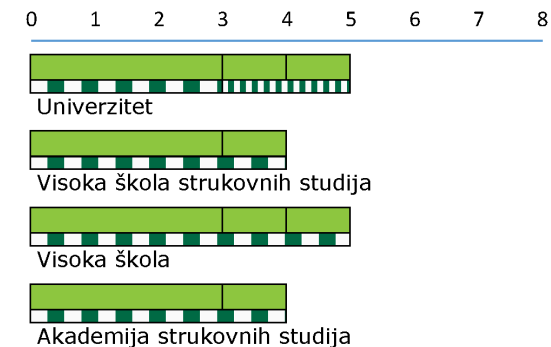
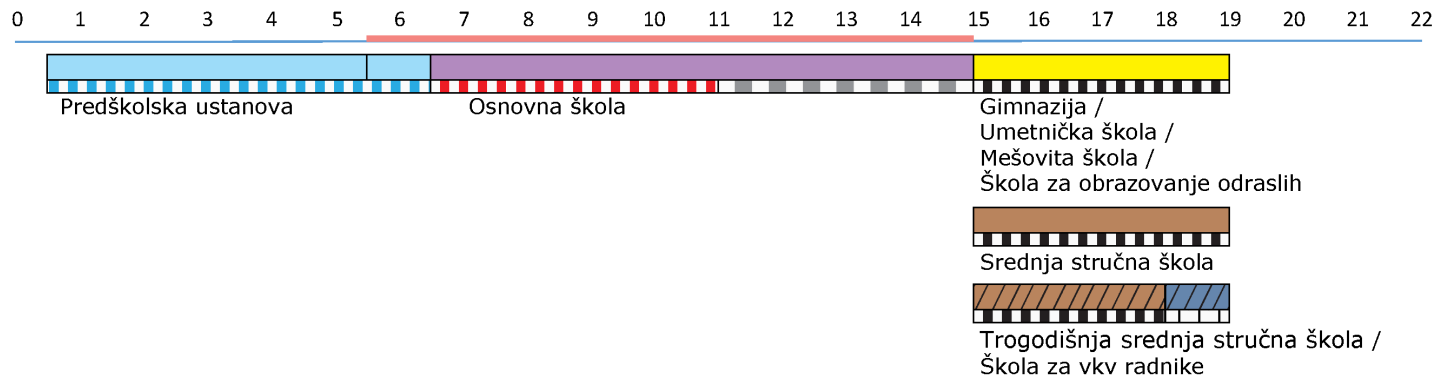
## Norway



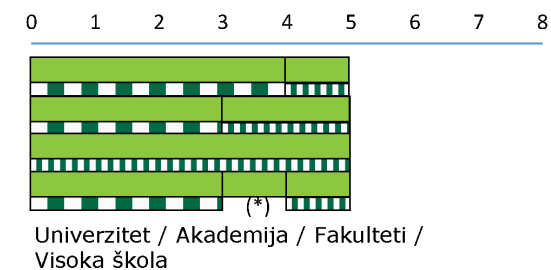
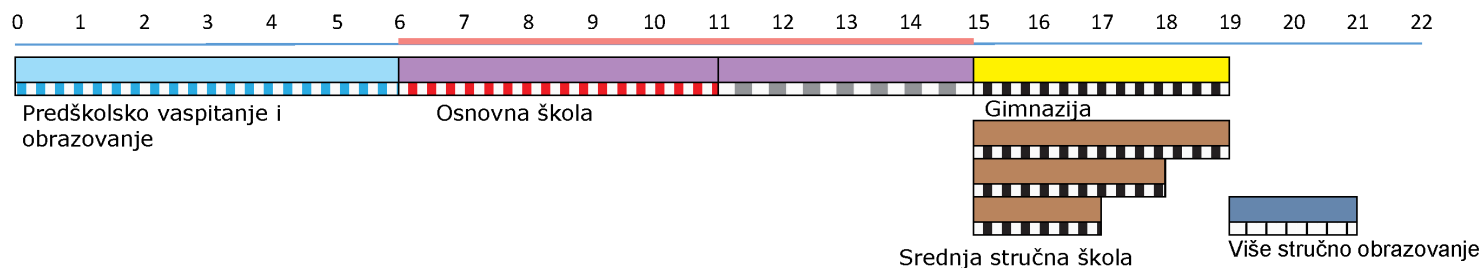
## Turkey



## Serbia

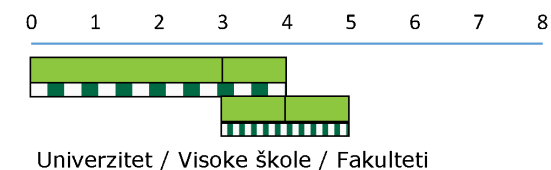
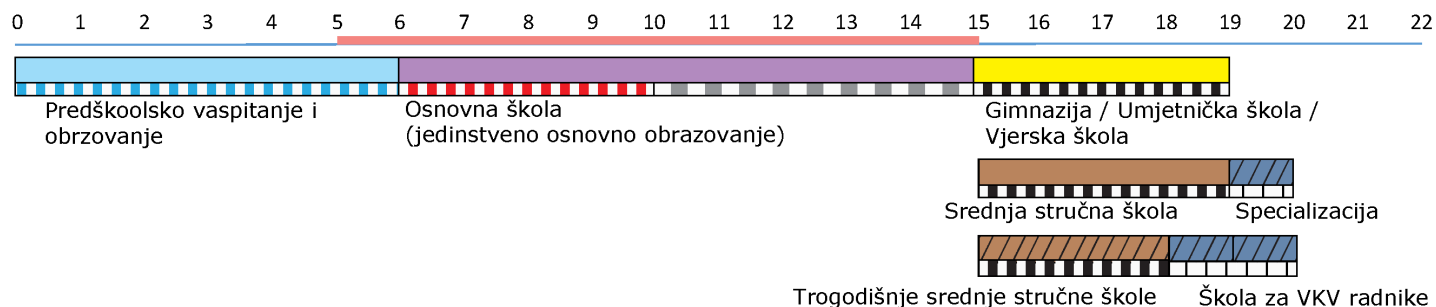










## Montenegro



















(\*): Postgraduate specialist studies (*postdiplomske specijalističke studije*) are not classified under the 2011 ISCED. Students can enrol in postgraduate specialist studies upon completion of three year long undergraduate studies (Bachelor degree). After completing the postgraduate specialist studies students are eligible to be enrolled in one-year long master studies.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina



	Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)		Secondary vocational education
	Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is 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		Additional year		Combined school and workplace courses		Years		Programme being phased out during (year)
	Compulsory part-time education		Study abroad		Compulsory work experience + its duration				



## **Further information on national education systems and related policies**

**EURYPEDIA, the European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems** provides up-to-date and comprehensive information by country and level of education.

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurypedia>

The **Eurydice website** offers comparative reports and indicators on a wide range of topics on education.

To see the latest reports, please consult <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>