

IN SWITZERLAND THE MAIN
RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATION
AND CULTURE LIES WITH THE
CANTONS.
EDK IS THEIR COORDINATION
BODY AT NATIONAL LEVEL.

A PORTRAIT

The EDK's administrative office is the general secretariat in Berne. It prepares business for the political bodies, manages ongoing tasks in accordance with the EDK programme of activities and leads the EDK's work groups, committees and specialist conferences.

IDES, the information and documentation centre with regard to the Swiss education system, is affiliated with the general secretariat.

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EDK | CDIP | CDPE | CDEP |

Schweizerische Konferenz der kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren
Conférence suisse des directeurs cantonaux de l'instruction publique
Conferenza svizzera dei direttori cantonali della pubblica educazione
Conferenza svizra dals directurs chantunals da l'educaziun publica

THE SWISS CONFERENCE OF CANTONAL MINISTERS OF EDUCATION (EDK)

In Switzerland, these ministers are known as “directors of education”. They are members of the cantonal governments and preside over the cantonal departments of education, whose remit generally also extends to culture and sports.

The cantonal responsibility for education and culture is an important feature of federally organised, multilingual Switzerland.

The intercantonal Agreement on Education Coordination (dating from 1970) forms the legal foundation for the collaboration between the cantons in the area of education. In addition to this agreement, the work of the EDK is also based on other intercantonal agreements. These legally binding intercantonal agreements are also referred to as “concordats”.

The supreme decision-making entity of the EDK is the plenary assembly, which comprises all 26 cantonal ministers of education. The EDK executive committee, consisting of 12 cantonal ministers of education, prepares its agenda. The Principality of Liechtenstein is involved in the work of the EDK.



THE EDK AS COORDINATION BODY

The cantons strive to achieve and maintain high quality, permeability and mobility in the Swiss education system. Whenever this requires cooperation, the cantons collaborate within the framework of the EDK.

The EDK has a subsidiary function, fulfilling tasks that cannot be performed by the regions or cantons. It is not a national education ministry but a coordination body.

The EDK is convinced that decentralised responsibility for education is the appropriate system for Switzerland as a multilingual and federally structured country. However, nobody should be disadvantaged as a result of this decentralised educational system.

At the EDK, the 26 cantonal education ministers jointly elaborate solutions that enable a harmonisation of important structures and goals at the various educational levels and foster mobility within the country as a whole.

In the field of post-compulsory education (baccalaureate schools, vocational education and training, and tertiary education), the EDK coordinates its work with the Confederation.

Together with the Confederation, the EDK runs the Swiss education monitoring. Based on the resulting education report published once every four years, the federal authorities concerned and the EDK work out joint targets for education in Switzerland. Each then implements these targets in their respective area of responsibility.

Art. 61a Federal Constitution | The Confederation and the Cantons shall, within the scope of their powers, jointly ensure the high quality and accessibility of the Swiss Education Area.

Art. 62 para. 1 Const. | The Cantons shall be responsible for the system of school education.

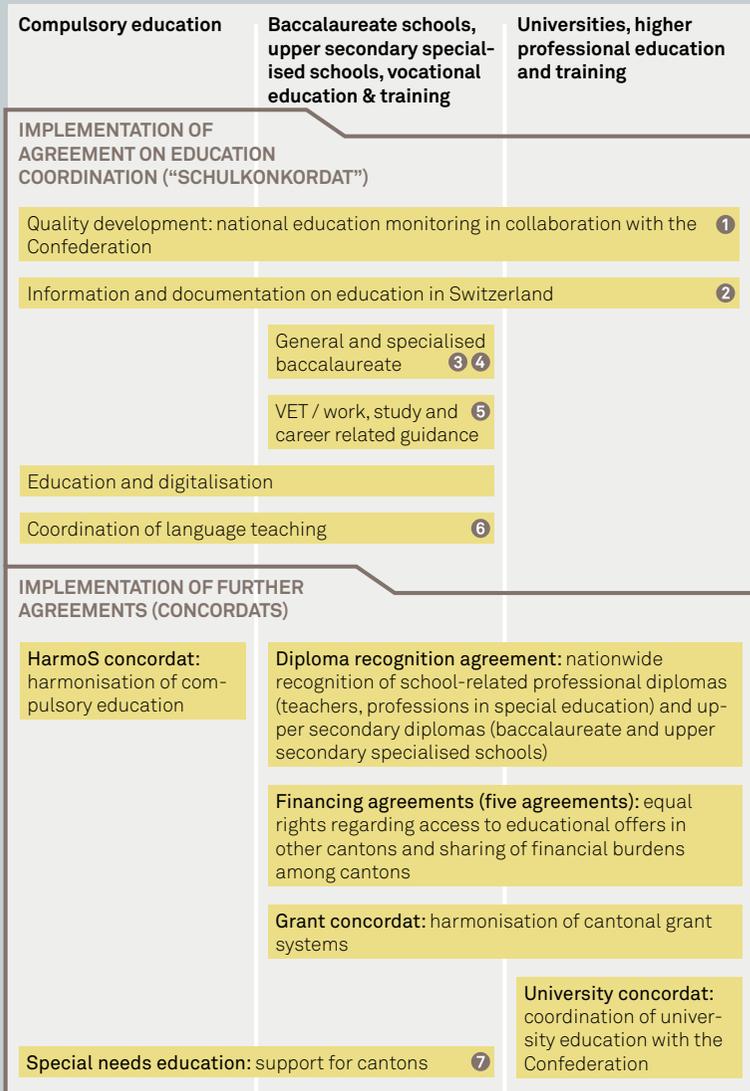
Art. 62 para. 1 Const. | Cultural matters shall be a cantonal responsibility.

Art. 1 Agreement on Education Coordination 1970 | The cantons form an intercantonal, public organisation to promote the school system and harmonise the respective cantonal law.



Current EDK President is Ms Silvia Steiner, Minister of Education of the Canton of Zurich.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES 2015–2019 (OVERVIEW)



Culture Sports

Accompanying the enforcement of the Federal act on the promotion of sports and the Federal act on the promotion of culture

The EDK is responsible for implementing **11 intercantional agreements (concordats)**. Its work is described in the programme of activities, which is tailored to the implementation of these agreements. An overview is provided in the diagram on the left-hand side.

Based on the Agreement on Education Coordination ("Schulkonkordat"), the EDK represents the interests of the cantons vis-à-vis the **Confederation**, participates in **international cooperation**, creates and sustains **links** to other political domains (e.g. migration, social issues) and provides **support and administrative assistance** (e.g. negotiating copyright fees for schools).

1–7: The EDK heads **specialist agencies** for the fulfilment of tasks concerning Switzerland as a whole, or participates in institutions for this purpose. These specialist agencies operate in the following fields:

- 1** Education research
- 2** Information & documentation
- 3** General education at upper secondary level
- 4** School evaluation at upper secondary level
- 5** Vocational education and training / work, study and career related guidance
- 6** Information and communication technologies ICT
- 7** Special needs education

Two other nationally operating specialist agencies are run by foundations and focus on exchange and mobility (movetia) and education for sustainable development (éducation21).



THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN A MULTILINGUAL AND FEDERALIST COUNTRY

Cantonal autonomy in the education system and the decentralised organisation of schools are important features of the education system in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, education is government responsibility. This responsibility lies first and foremost with the country's 26 cantons. Compulsory education is largely rooted in the cantons and local municipalities. With regard to post-compulsory education (upper secondary general education, vocational and professional education and training, universities), the cantons and the federal government each have their own areas of responsibility. Overall, the cantons and their municipalities finance 90% of public-sector education spending (excluding research grants).

Compulsory education: Responsibility for compulsory education lies with the cantons. The local municipalities run the schools. Because education is locally rooted, tailor-made solutions can be implemented. 95% of students in Switzerland complete compulsory education at a state school in the municipality in which they live. Roughly 5% attend a private school. In accordance with the federal constitution, the cantons are obliged to ensure nationwide harmonisation of important targets and structures.

Upper secondary level: After the end of their compulsory school years, roughly two-thirds of adolescents in Switzerland switch to a form of education which combines classroom instruction at a vocational school with an apprenticeship in a company (dual-track system). This provides them with a VET (vocational education and training) diploma and can also be concluded with a federal vocational baccalaureate. Around one-third opts for continuing school education at an upper secondary specialised or a baccalaureate school, which prepare them for tertiary education at a university. Altogether, more than 90% of all adolescents acquire a certificate or diploma at upper secondary level. 37.5% acquire a baccalaureate certificate (general, specialised or vocational baccalaureate).

Tertiary level: The tertiary level comprises universities (incl. universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education) and, as a second important pillar, institutions providing professional education. The latter is aimed at people with professional experience, enabling them to gain specialist education and additional qualifications. The graduation rate at tertiary level comes to over 45%, with around two-thirds of these graduates gaining a university degree and roughly one-third a degree in professional education.

KEY FIGURES

Cantons	26
Municipalities (2016)	2,294
Population (2015)	8,327,100
Foreign nationals (2015)	24.6%
Population by main language (2015) ¹	German / Swiss German (63.3%), French (22.7%), Italian (8.1%), Romansh (0.5%), other (20.9%)

Students (2014/2015 school year)

There were around 1.5 million pupils, students and apprentices in the 2014/2015 school year. This is equivalent to almost one-fifth of the Swiss population.

	2014/2015	Scenarios 2016 to 2025
Compulsory education ²	920,958	↗
Upper secondary level	366,140	until 2019 → from 2020 ↗
Tertiary level	294,774	↗

Teachers (2014/2015 school year)

All levels	207,774 (FTE ³ : 133,304)
Compulsory education ²	88,598 (FTE: 57,282)
Upper secondary level	28,845 (FTE: 17,098)
Tertiary level	90,331 (FTE: 58,924)

Graduation rates

Upper secondary level (2012)	General education: 23.1%, vocational education and training: 71.6%, total: 94.7%
Baccalaureate rate (2015)	Baccalaureate: 20.1%, specialised baccalaureate: 2.7%, federal vocational baccalaureate: 14.7%, total: 37.5%
Tertiary level (2012)	University: 30.6%, professional education: 14.2%, total: 44.8%

Public sector education expenditure, excluding research grants (2014)

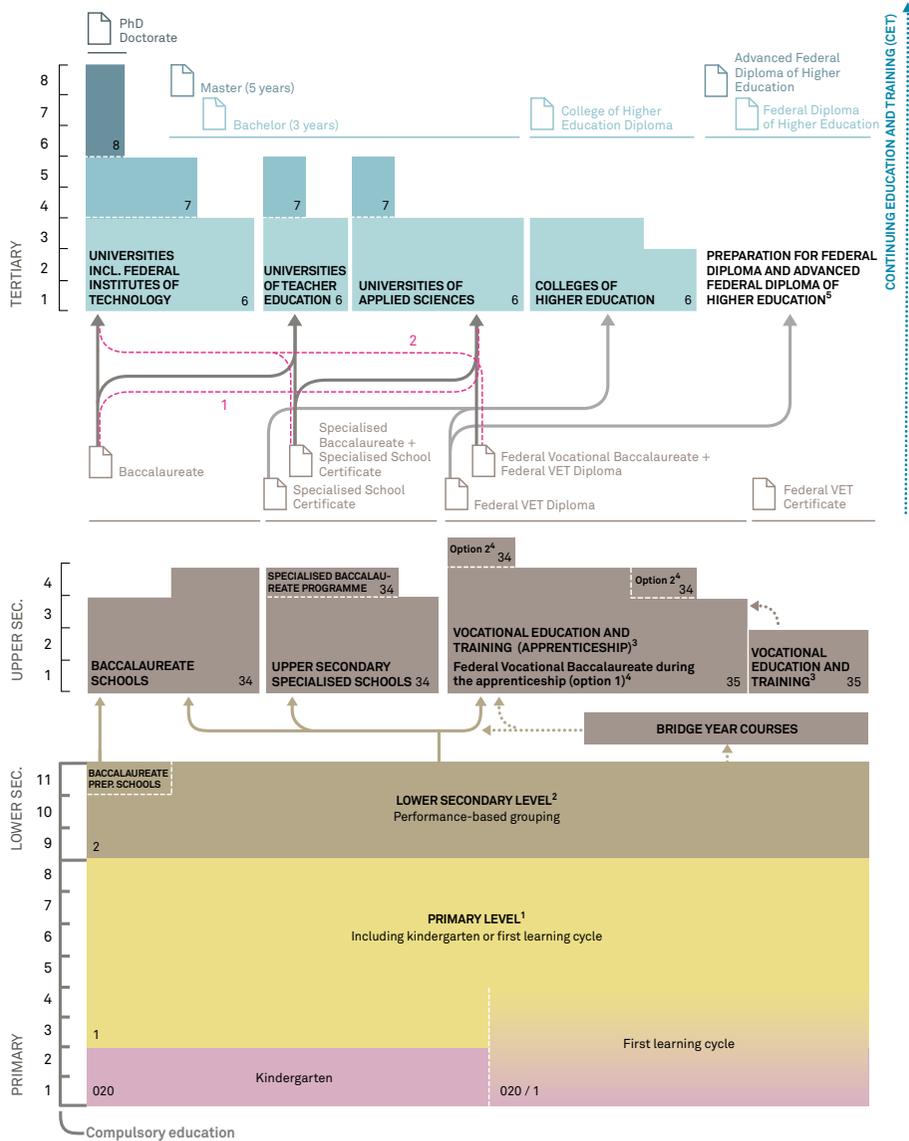
Total	CHF 36.0 billion
Cantons and municipalities	CHF 32.6 billion (90%)
Federal government	CHF 3.4 billion (10%)

¹ German, French, Italian and Romansh are national languages. They are considered the official language (administration, court), the language of instruction and the primary language of daily use in their respective region. Special regulations apply to the Romansh-speaking region.

² Incl. kindergarten / first learning cycle

³ Full Time Equivalents

THE SWISS EDUCATION SYSTEM



ISCED | International Standard Classification of Education 2011

- ISCED 8
- ISCED 7
- ISCED 6
- ISCED 4
- ISCED 34 + 35
- ISCED 2
- ISCED 1
- ISCED 020

- 2 Transition 2: vocational or specialised baccalaureate → universities (additional exam)
- 1 Transition 1: general baccalaureate → universities of applied sciences (practical training)

- 1 Two years of kindergarten or the first two years of a first learning cycle: included in compulsory education in the majority of cantons
- 2 Lower secondary level: 4-year scuola media in the Canton of Ticino (pursuant to exception clause in Art. 6 HarmoS concordat)
- 3 Vocational education and training (apprenticeship): training company + VET school + intercompany courses; full-time school education possible
- 4 Federal Vocational Baccalaureate: combined with an apprenticeship (option 1) or after an apprenticeship (option 2); duration option 2: full-time 1 year, part-time 1.5 – 2 years
- 5 Federal examination / Federal diploma of higher education = ISCED 6; Advanced federal examination / Advanced federal diploma of higher education = ISCED 7

Children and adolescents with special educational needs receive support through special measures from birth up to age 20. The responsibility for the precise arrangement of special needs education during compulsory education (special schools, special classes, special support integrated in regular classes, etc.) lies with the cantons and is not shown on the chart.