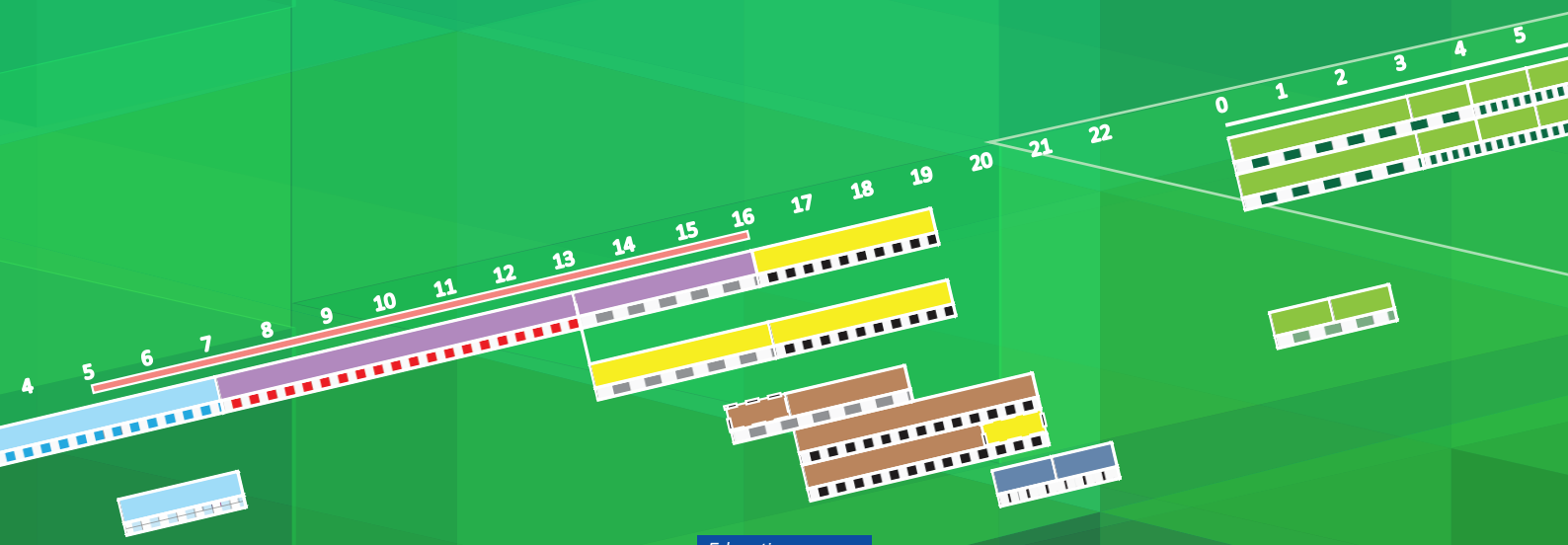
European Commission

The Structure of the European Education Systems 2020/21

Schematic Diagrams

Eurydice – Facts and Figures



Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

The Structure of the European Education Systems 2020/21

Schematic Diagrams

Eurydice – Facts and Figures

Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

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INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on the structure of education and training systems from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2020/21 school/academic year. It covers 43 education systems, which corresponds to 38 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme (27 EU Member States, the United Kingdom, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey).

This report has three main sections:

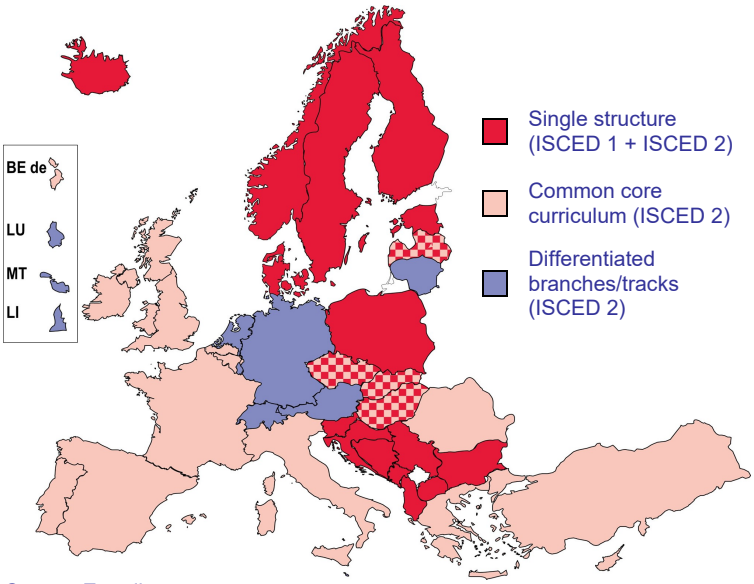
1. A brief presentation of the main organisational models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1-2);
2. A guide to reading the diagrams;
3. The schematic diagrams.

MAIN ORGANISATIONAL MODELS OF PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Three main organisational models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1 and 2) can be identified. These education levels are part of compulsory education in all European education systems.

- **Single structure** education. From the beginning to the end of compulsory education, all students follow a common curriculum providing general education; in addition, there is no transition between primary and lower secondary education.
- **Common core curriculum** provision. After successfully completing primary education (ISCED level 1), all students progress to lower secondary level (ISCED level 2) where they follow the same general common core curriculum.
- **Differentiated** lower secondary education. After successfully completing primary education, students follow distinct educational pathways or specific types of education, which start either at the beginning or in the course of lower secondary education. At the end of their studies, they receive different certificates.

Main models of primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1-2) in Europe, 2020/21



Source: Eurydice.

Note: In Czechia, Latvia, Hungary and Slovakia, compulsory education is organised in a single structure up to the age of 14, 15, and 16 depending on the country. However, from the age of 10, 11 and 13 (depending on the country), students can enrol in separate educational institutions providing both lower and upper secondary education.

GUIDE TO READING THE DIAGRAMS

This short guide provides the necessary information to understand the diagrams. More specifically, it defines the scope; it presents the main elements of the diagrams and how they are graphically displayed; it provides the definitions as well as the key. Finally, it includes a short description of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011).

Scope

The diagrams show the most representative mainstream education programmes in each education system. They **encompass**:

- Early childhood education and care provided in publicly subsidised and accredited centre based settings for children from the youngest age of enrolment;
- Primary and secondary education programmes;
- Post-secondary non-tertiary programmes;
- Main tertiary level programmes.

The diagrams **do not show**:

- Education provision intended exclusively to adults with low formal educational attainment and/or a low level of basic skills. The diagrams cover only the courses allowing adults to go back to school or to gain further qualifications that are part of mainstream education programmes. Usually, these courses are integrated in the programmes providing competence-based qualifications at secondary education level or allowing access to tertiary education (i.e. post-secondary non-tertiary education level) ([1]).
- Separate provision outside mainstream education for children and young people with special educational needs.
- At tertiary level, doctoral studies as well as the specialised studies for regulated professions such as medicine and architecture.

Main elements of the diagrams (and their graphical display)

Age of students and programme duration: two different scales

The schematic diagrams have two distinct graphic areas:

- The left side coloured bars show the main education programmes from pre-primary to post-secondary non-tertiary levels (ISCED levels 0 to 4) in relation to the age of students when they start a particular programme. The ages are notional, i.e. they indicate the theoretical age at which students are supposed to enter an education level or begin a study programme. Early or late entry, grade retention or other interruptions to schooling are not taken into account.
- The right side coloured bars present the main education programmes at tertiary level in relation to the standard number of years necessary to complete these programmes on a full-time basis. The duration of part-time studies or individualised study patterns are not shown.

([1]) For more information on main type of educational provision for adults, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities. [Online] Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-europe-widening-access-learning-opportunities_en

Education programmes

The thick coloured bars show education programmes ([2]); the colours refer to the levels and types of education. Within coloured bars, short vertical lines either show the division into cycles/key stages/education levels, or entry to or leaving ages for study programmes.

The thin bars with coloured stripes indicate the corresponding levels of education as defined by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) (see description below).

In few cases, the diagrams also show transition points between ISCED levels or education programmes. Long vertical lines linking coloured bars (education programmes) show these transition points.

Educational institutions

The terms under the coloured bars refer to the names of the schools or educational institutions providing the education programmes shown. In some cases, however, they might refer to education programmes or types of teaching. In that case, the terms are put in brackets. All terms are provided in the national language(s) of the country.

Definitions

Full-time compulsory education/training refers to a period of full-time education/training that is compulsory for all students. This period is regulated by law and often determined by students' age. Usually, full-time compulsory education/training is provided in formal institutions/schools. However, in some education systems, certain compulsory education/training programmes can combine part-time school-based and part-time workplace courses. In such cases, students are assessed for the work they do in both places (workplace and school). In some countries, under certain conditions, compulsory education/training can be provided at home.

Part-time compulsory education/training may take two forms: before or after full-time compulsory education.

- **Before**: Early childhood education and care programs of 250 or less hours per year;
- **After**: Until a certain age, students are required to participate in additional part-time school-based or workplace education/training.

Additional year: Part of an education programme that is not necessary to complete in order to end an education cycle or level, but may be necessary to access a higher education level or move to a different education pathway.

([2]) ECEC services outside ISCED classification are also shown.

Key

Levels and types of education

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

Allocation to the ISCED 2011 levels (see definitions below)

ISCED 0 ISCED 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

Other keys

- Full-time compulsory education/training
- Part-time compulsory education/training
- Combined school based and workplace courses
- Possible additional year >> Study abroad
- →| year — Programme being phased out in (year)
- -/n/- — Compulsory work experience + its duration (in years)

Compulsory work experience and its duration

Compulsory work experience is shown when it is required to move to the next education level or to begin a particular education programme; when applicable, its minimum required duration is indicated **(-/n/-)**.

Education programmes being phased out

When reforms change education programmes, new and old programmes are concurrently shown. The year during which the old education programmes are being phased out is indicated (→| year).

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011)

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is an instrument suitable for compiling statistics on education internationally. It covers two cross-classification variables: levels and fields of education with the complementary dimensions of general/vocational/pre-vocational orientation and education-labour market destination. The last version, ISCED 2011 distinguishes eight levels of education. Empirically, ISCED assumes that several criteria exist which can help allocate education programmes to levels of education. Depending on the level and type of education concerned, there is a need to establish a hierarchical ranking system between main and subsidiary criteria (typical entrance qualification, minimum entrance requirement, minimum age, staff qualification, etc.).

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

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

ISCED 0: Early childhood education

Programmes at this level are typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and introduce young children to organised instruction outside of the family context. ISCED level 0 refers to early childhood programmes that have an intentional education component.

ISCED 1: Primary education

Programmes at this level are typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy) and establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge, personal and social development, in preparation for lower secondary education.

Age is typically the only entry requirement at this level. The customary or legal age of entry is usually not below 5 years old or above 7 years old. This level typically lasts six years, although its duration can range between four and seven years.

ISCED 2: Lower secondary education

Programmes at this level are typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from ISCED level 1. Students enter ISCED level 2 typically between ages 10 and 13 (age 12 being the most common).

ISCED 3: Upper secondary education

Programmes at this level are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Students enter this level typically between ages 14 and 16.

ISCED 4: Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Post-secondary non-tertiary education provides learning experiences building on secondary education, preparing for labour market entry as well as tertiary education. Programmes at ISCED level 4, or post-secondary non-tertiary education, are typically designed to provide individuals who completed ISCED level 3 with non-tertiary qualifications required for progression to tertiary education or for employment when their ISCED level 3 qualifications do not grant such access. The completion of an ISCED level 3 programme is required to enter ISCED level 4 programmes.

ISCED 5: Short-cycle tertiary education

Programmes at this level are often designed to provide participants with professional knowledge, skills and competencies. Typically, they are practically based, occupationally-specific and prepare students to enter the labour market. However, these programmes may also provide a pathway to other tertiary education programmes. Entry into ISCED level 5 programmes requires the successful completion of ISCED level 3 or 4 with access to tertiary education.

ISCED 6: Bachelors' or equivalent level

Programmes at this level are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Entry into these programmes normally requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 3 or 4 programme with access to tertiary education. Entry may depend on subject choice and/or grades achieved at ISCED levels 3 and/or 4. Additionally, it may be required to take and succeed in entry examinations. Entry or transfer into ISCED level 6 is also sometimes possible after the successful completion of ISCED level 5.

ISCED 7: Master's or equivalent level

Programmes at this level, are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. Typically, programmes at this level are theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and other tertiary educational institutions.

Entry into ISCED level 7 programmes preparing for a second or further degree normally requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 6 or 7 programme. In the case of long programmes that prepare for a first degree equivalent to a Master's degree, entry requires the successful completion of an ISCED level 3 or 4 programme with access to tertiary education. Entry into such programmes may depend on subject choice and/or grades achieved at ISCED levels 3 and/or 4. Additionally, it may be required to take and succeed in entry examinations.

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAMS

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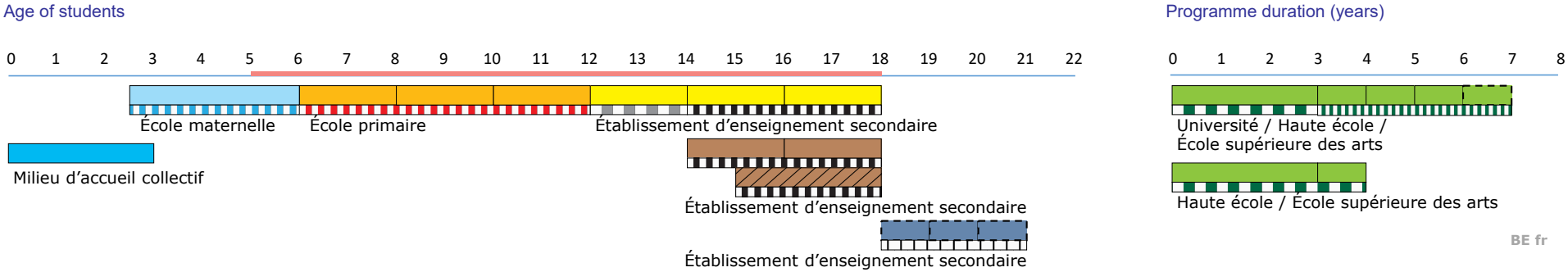
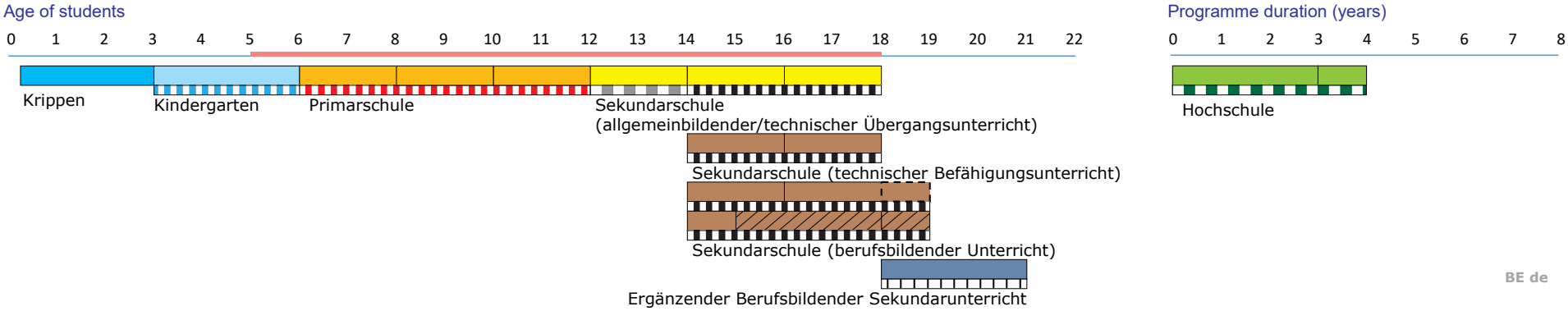
Belgium – French Community

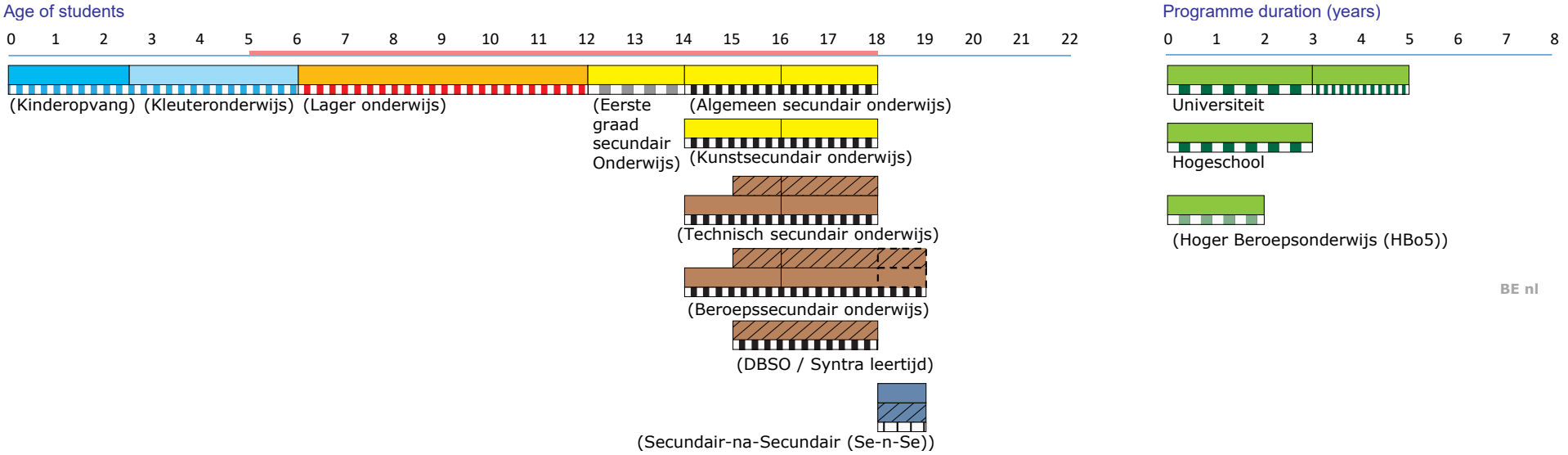


Belgium – German-speaking Community

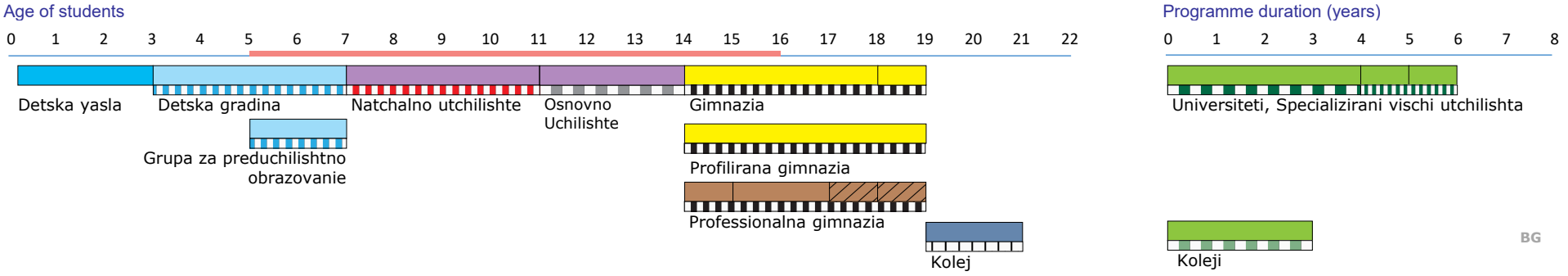


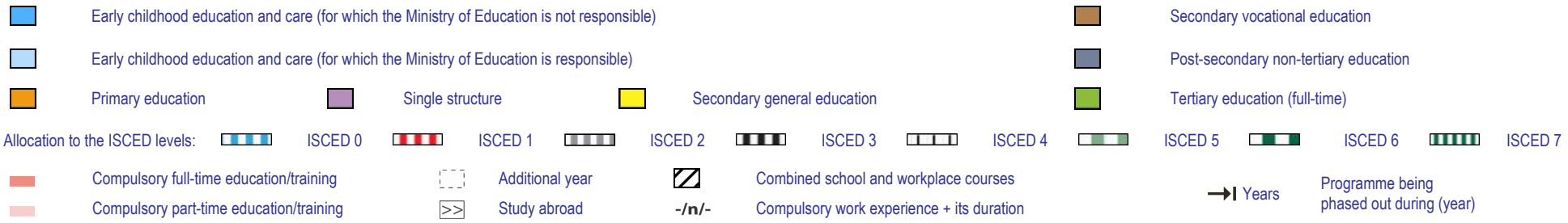
Note: *Krippen* starts from 3 months.

Belgium – Flemish Community

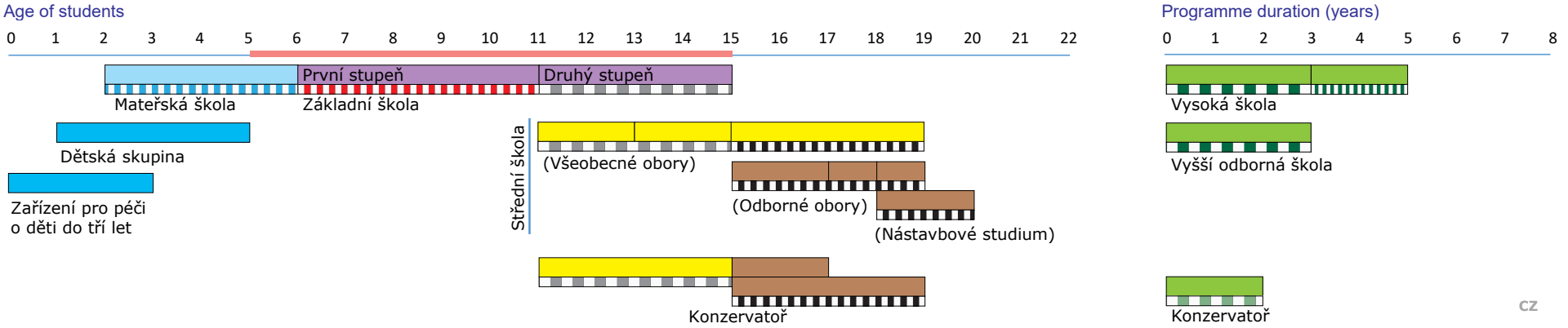


Bulgaria



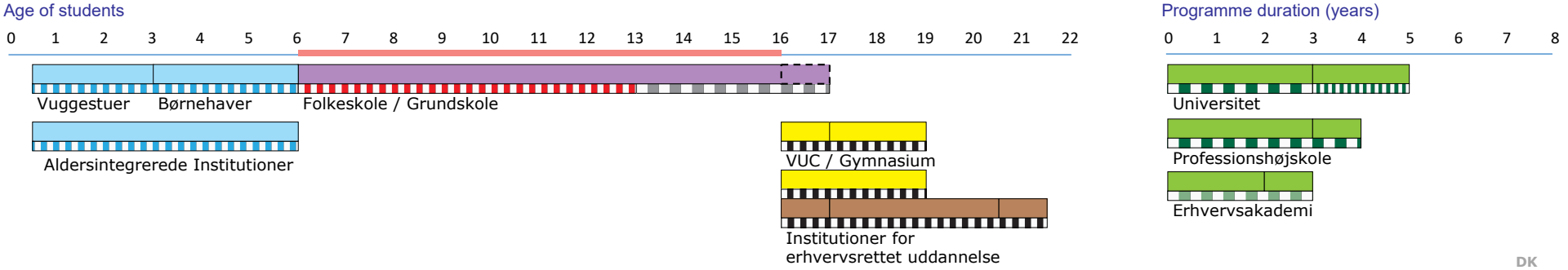


Czechia



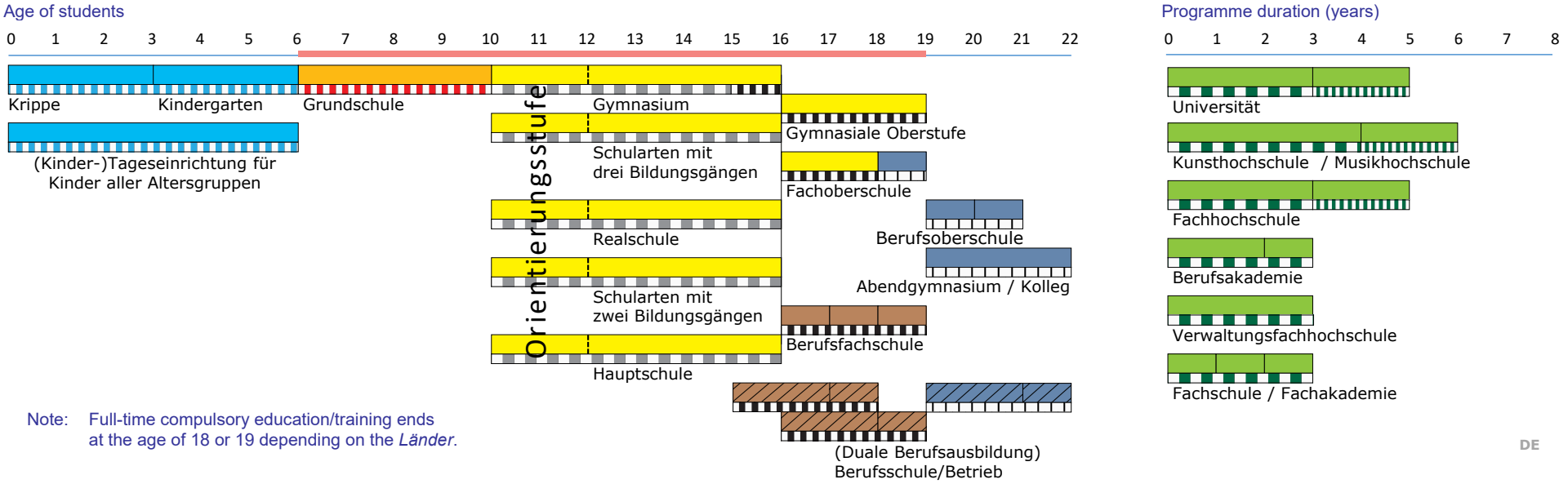
CZ

Denmark



DK

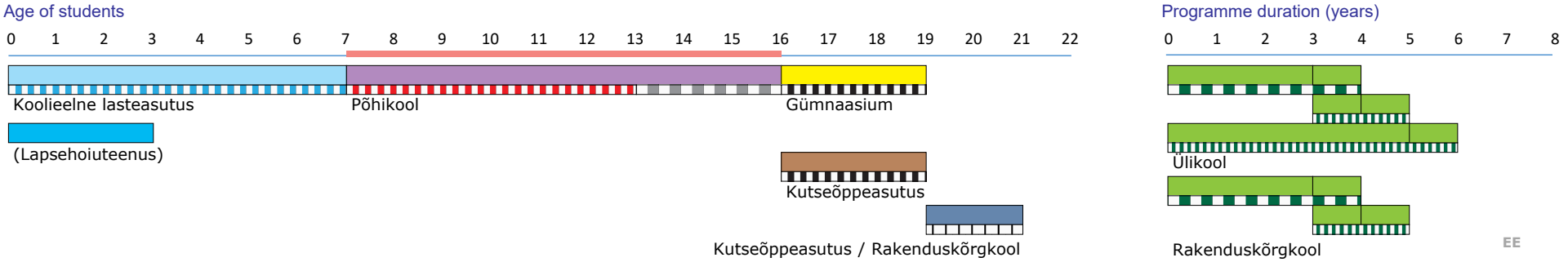
Germany



Note: Full-time compulsory education/training ends at the age of 18 or 19 depending on the *Länder*.

DE

Estonia



EE

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)

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 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

Compulsory full-time education/training

Compulsory part-time education/training

Additional year

Study abroad

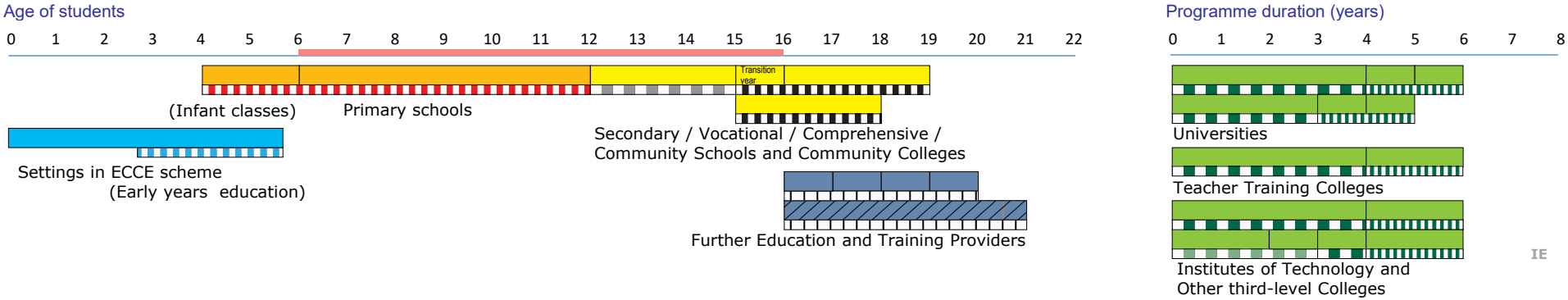
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

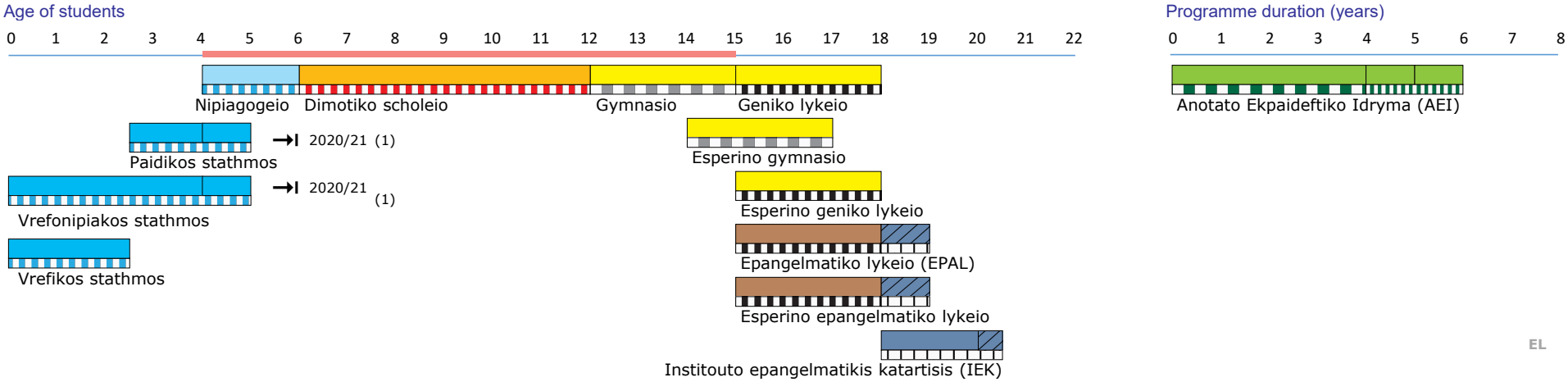
Years

Programme being phased out during (year)

Ireland



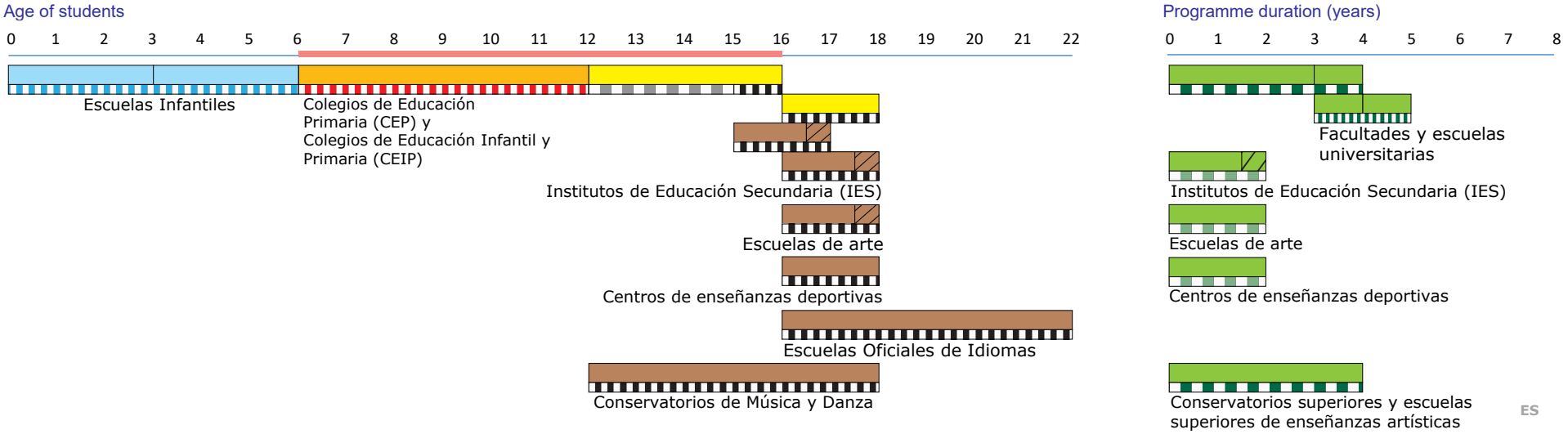
Greece



(1) Programme being phased out between 4 and 5 years old as from 2020/21.

Notes: Law 4521/2018 established the two-year compulsory *nipiagogeio* (pre-primary school). The implementation of the measure spans a 3-year period from 2018 to 2021. School year 2020/21 (third and last year of its implementation) foresees the compulsory attendance of all pre-schoolers in all municipalities of the country. Meanwhile, for one last year, *Vrefonipiakoi stathmoi* and *Paidikoi stathmoi* will continue to accommodate children up to 5 years old.

Spain



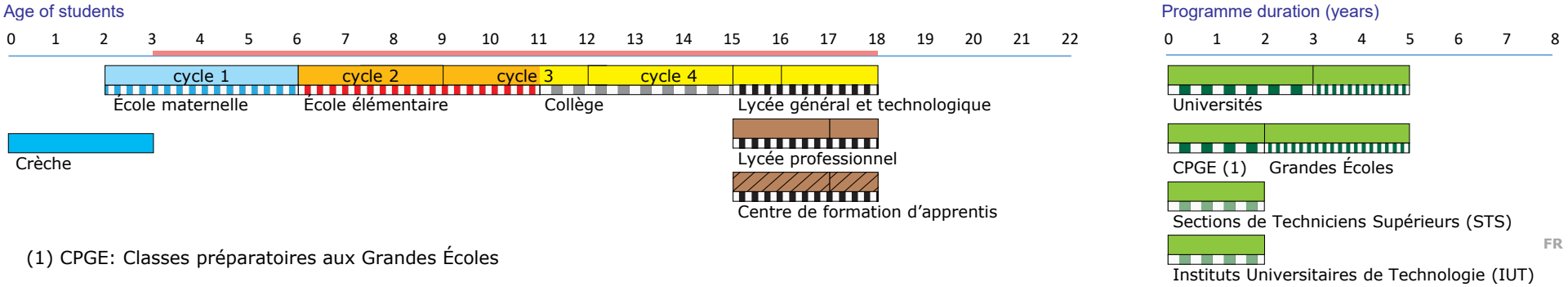
Note: *Escuelas oficiales de idiomas* offer language courses that may last for 11 years.
Some of the education provision of *Conservatorios* can be recognised/validated in full-time mainstream education programmes and contribute to the obtaining of *Bachillerato* certificate *Bachiller artístico*.

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)
Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)
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 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

Compulsory full-time education/training
Compulsory part-time education/training
Additional year
Study abroad
Combined school and workplace courses
-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration
Years
Programme being phased out during (year)

France

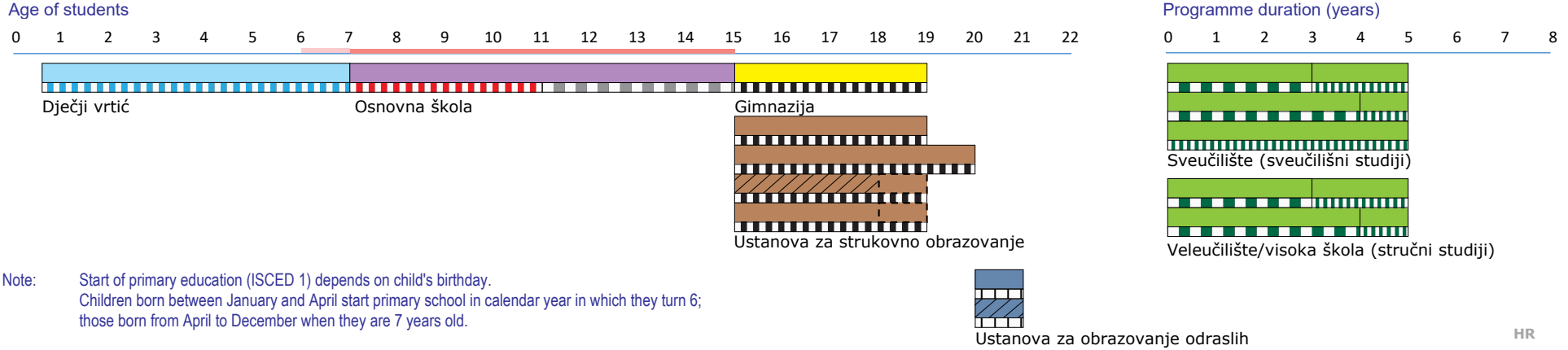


(1) CPGE: Classes préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles

FR

Note: ISCED 4 education covers less than 2 % of the total number of students (all levels). Since September 2020, training has become compulsory for students aged between16 and 18.
Young people will be able to fulfil this compulsory training by several means: schooling, apprenticeship, training courses, civic service, and support system or social and professional integration measures.

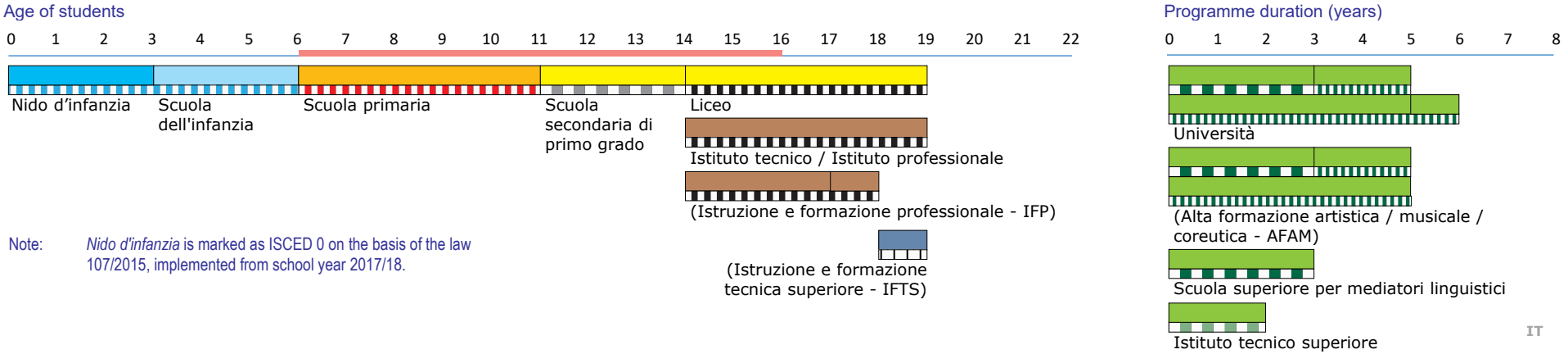
Croatia



HR

Note: Start of primary education (ISCED 1) depends on child's birthday.
Children born between January and April start primary school in calendar year in which they turn 6;
those born from April to December when they are 7 years old.

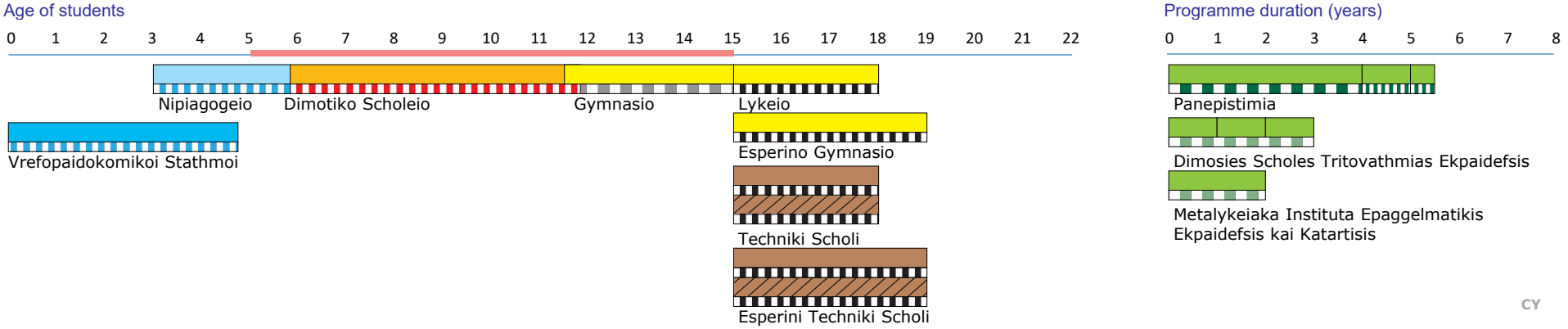
Italy



Note: *Nido d'infanzia* is marked as ISCED 0 on the basis of the law 107/2015, implemented from school year 2017/18.

IT

Cyprus



CY

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)

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 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

Compulsory full-time education/training

Compulsory part-time education/training

Additional year

>> Study abroad

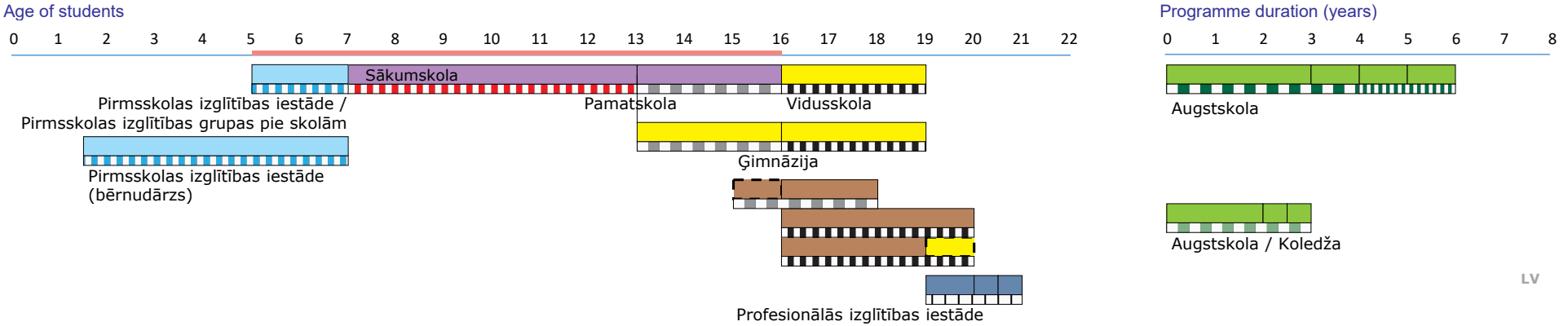
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

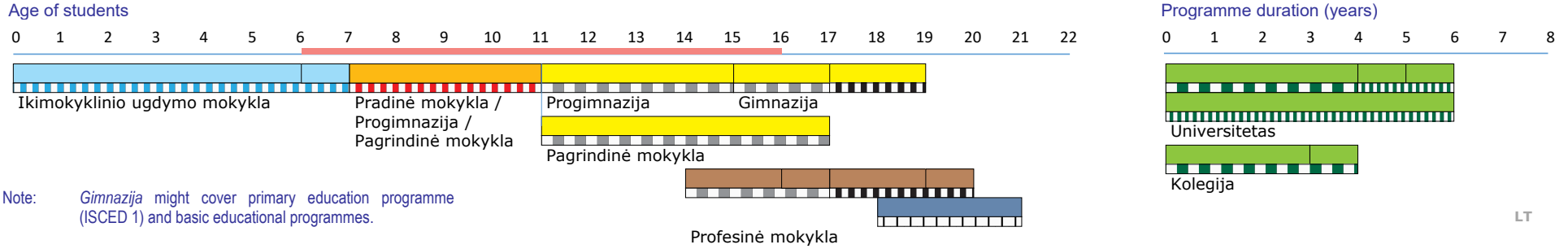
Years

Programme being phased out during (year)

Latvia

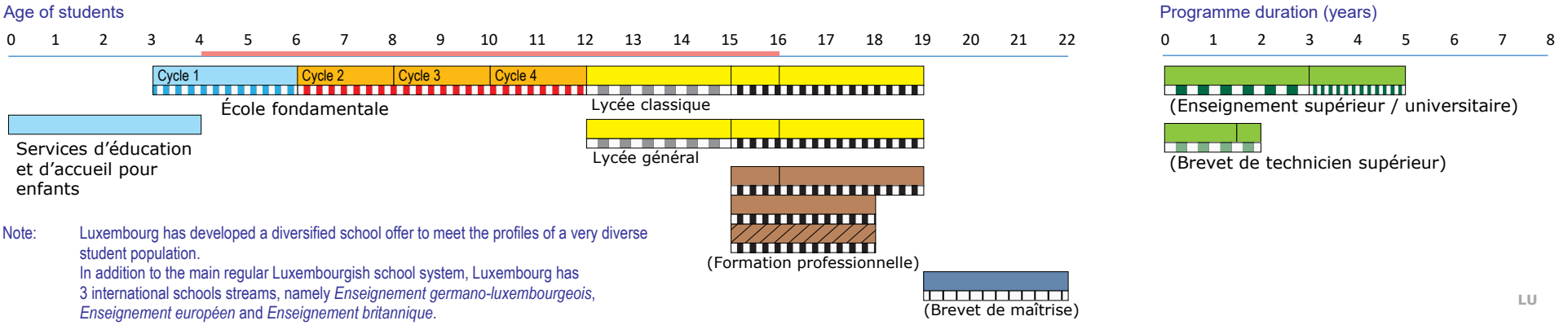


Lithuania



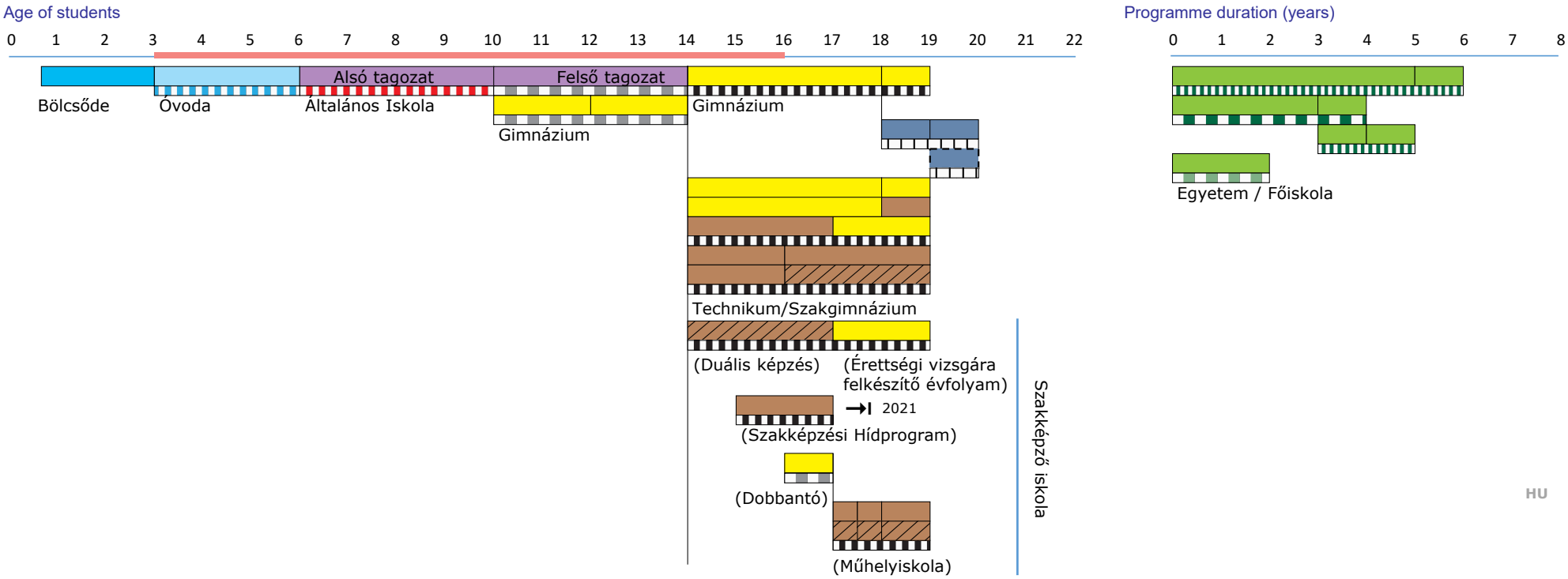
Note: *Gimnazija* might cover primary education programme (ISCED 1) and basic educational programmes.

Luxembourg



Note: Luxembourg has developed a diversified school offer to meet the profiles of a very diverse student population.
In addition to the main regular Luxembourgish school system, Luxembourg has 3 international schools streams, namely *Enseignement germano-luxembourgeois*, *Enseignement européen* and *Enseignement britannique*.

Hungary



Note: There is a new type of institution called 'Technikum'. In order to follow 'Szakképzési Hídprogram', students must have at least completed grade 6, but must be older than 15, this programme is phasing out. 'Műhelyiskola' and the final years of 'Technikum' may be organised as dual programmes.

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)

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 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

Compulsory full-time education/training

Compulsory part-time education/training

Additional year

Study abroad

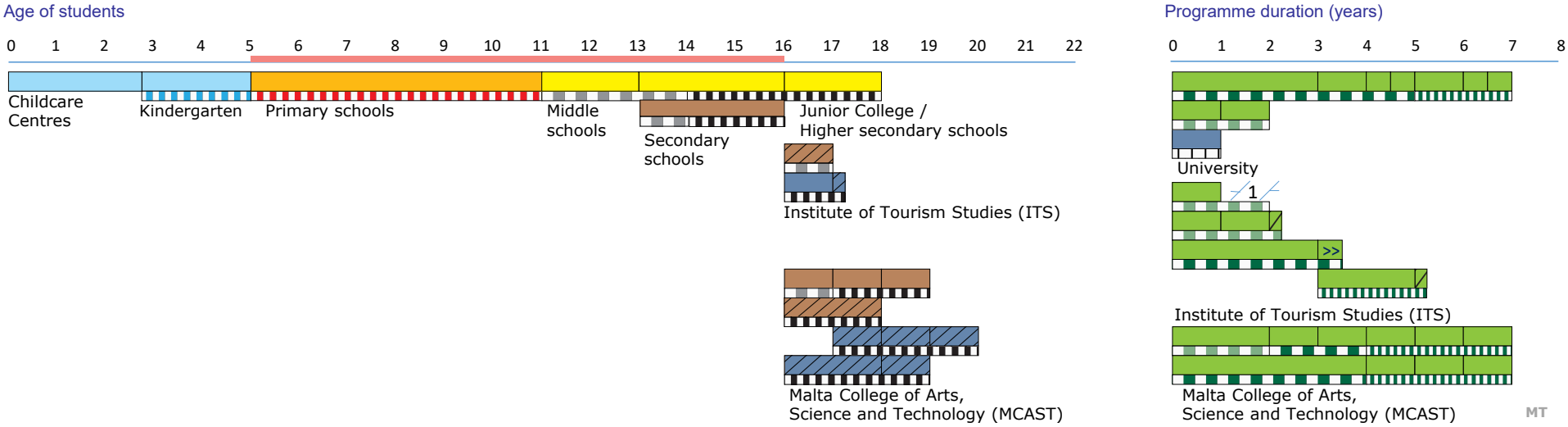
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

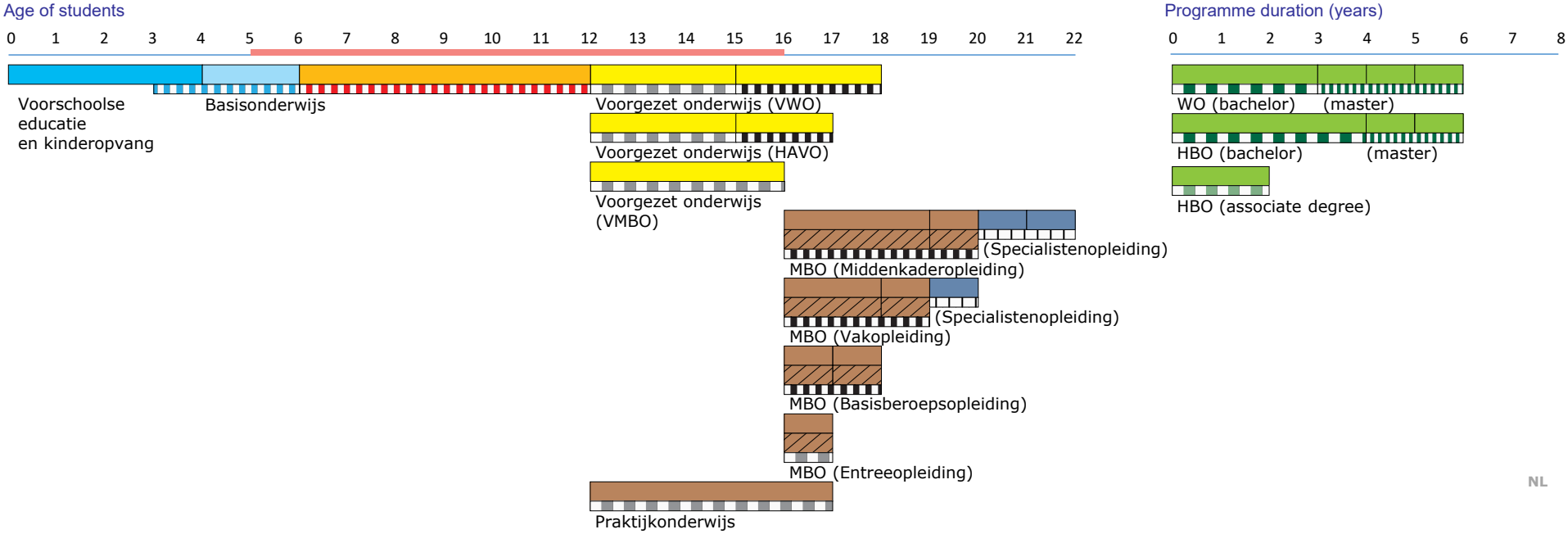
Years

Programme being phased out during (year)

Malta

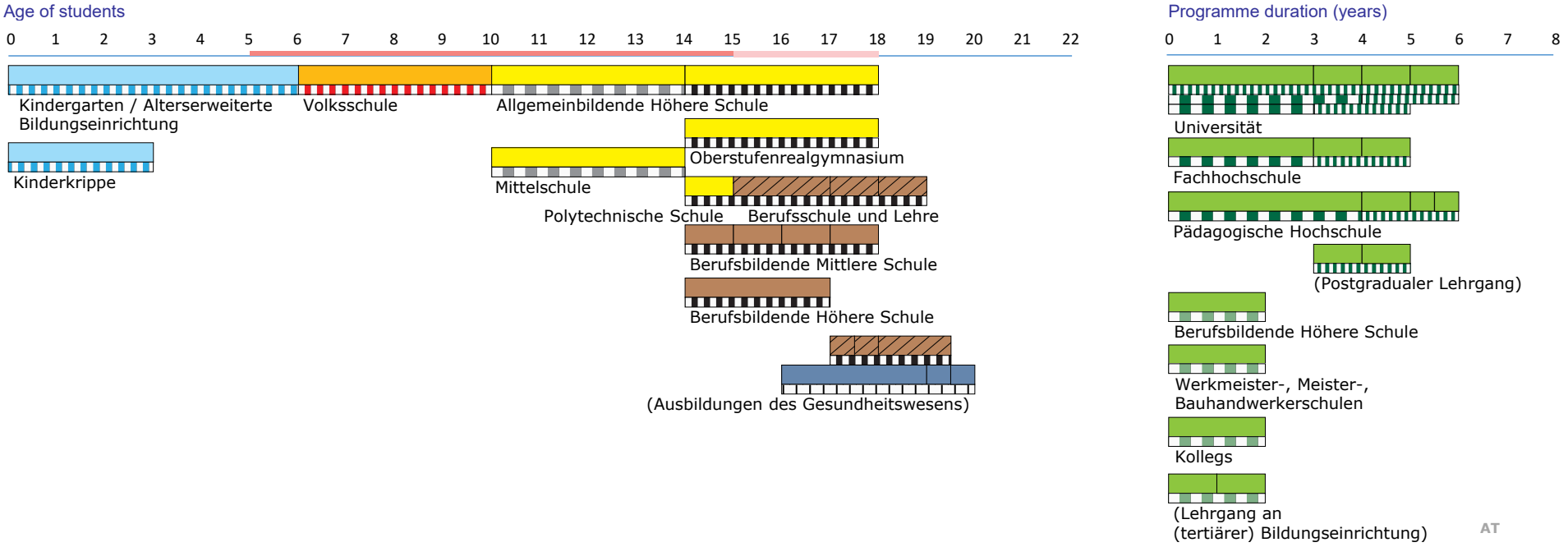


Netherlands



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

Austria



Note: *Berufsbildende Höhere Schulen* offer education programmes lasting 5 years: the first three years are classified as ISCED level 3 while the last two years belong to ISCED level 5.

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)

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 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

Compulsory full-time education/training

Compulsory part-time education/training

Additional year

Study abroad

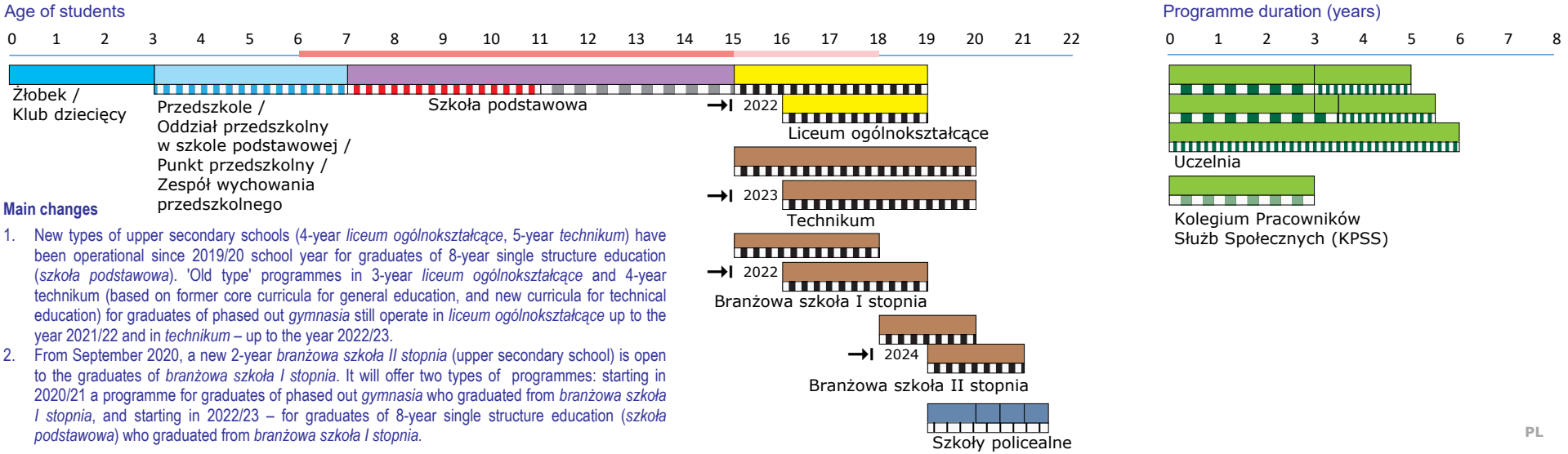
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

Years

Programme being phased out during (year)

Poland



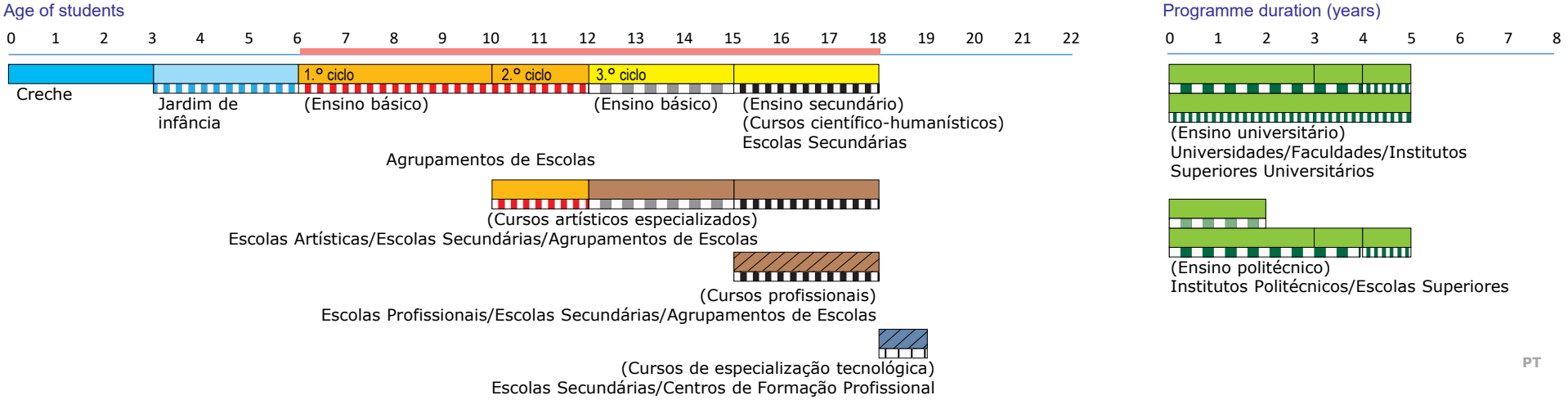
Main changes

1. New types of upper secondary schools (4-year *liceum ogólnokształcące*, 5-year *technikum*) have been operational since 2019/20 school year for graduates of 8-year single structure education (*szkoła podstawowa*). 'Old type' programmes in 3-year *liceum ogólnokształcące* and 4-year technikum (based on former core curricula for general education, and new curricula for technical education) for graduates of phased out *gymnasia* still operate in *liceum ogólnokształcące* up to the year 2021/22 and in *technikum* – up to the year 2022/23.
2. From September 2020, a new 2-year *branżowa szkoła II stopnia* (upper secondary school) is open to the graduates of *branżowa szkoła I stopnia*. It will offer two types of programmes: starting in 2020/21 a programme for graduates of phased out *gymnasia* who graduated from *branżowa szkoła I stopnia*, and starting in 2022/23 – for graduates of 8-year single structure education (*szkoła podstawowa*) who graduated from *branżowa szkoła I stopnia*.

PL

Note: Major changes at different education levels gradually take place between 1 September 2017 and the school year 2022/23 (Act of 14 December 2016 'Law on School Education' and an Act 'Legislation introducing the Act – Law on School Education').

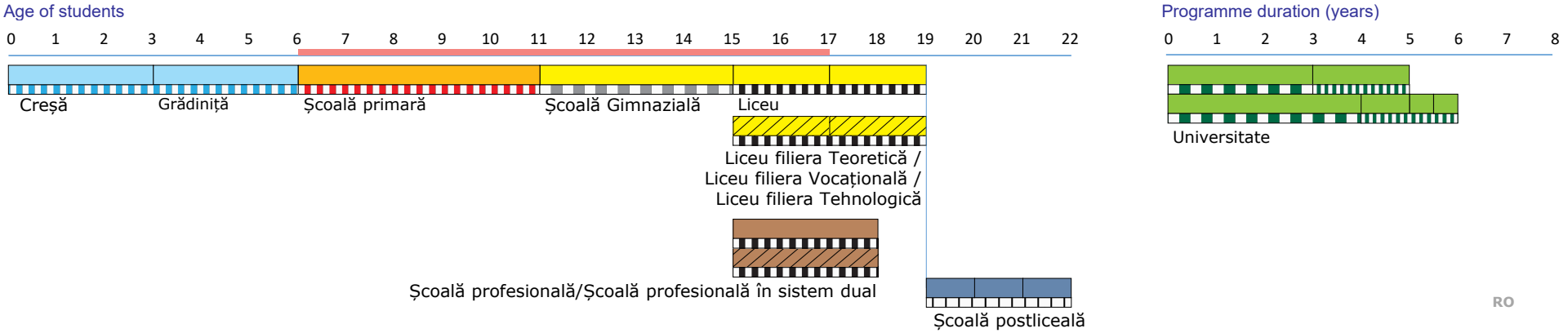
Portugal



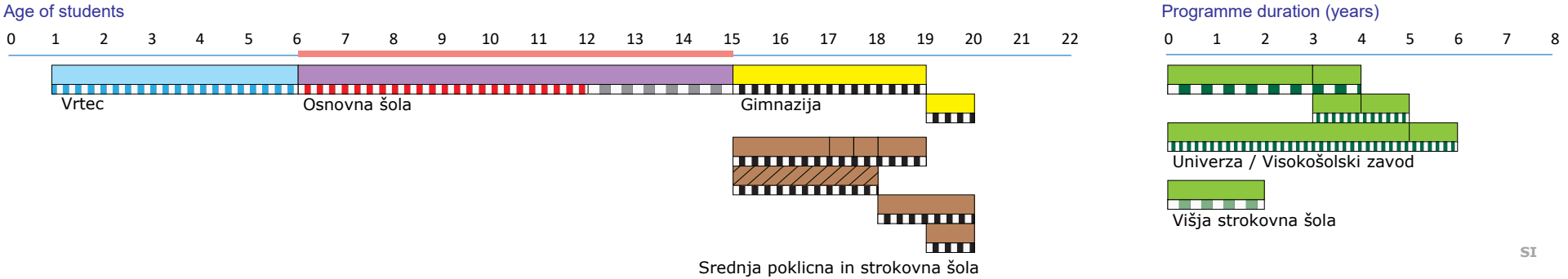
PT

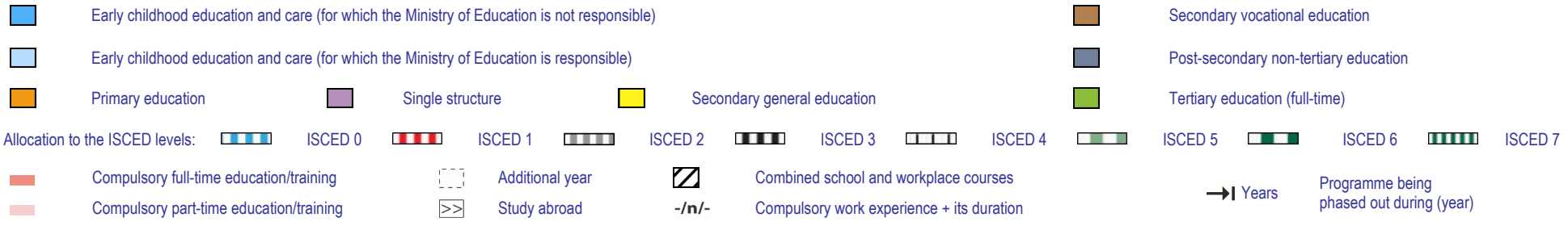
Note: *Agrupamentos de Escolas* (School Clusters) are organisational units that can encompass several schools and learning cycles, from kindergarten to upper secondary education.
The institutions in the diagram are examples of some of the learning spaces where each type of education is offered; the diagram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

Romania

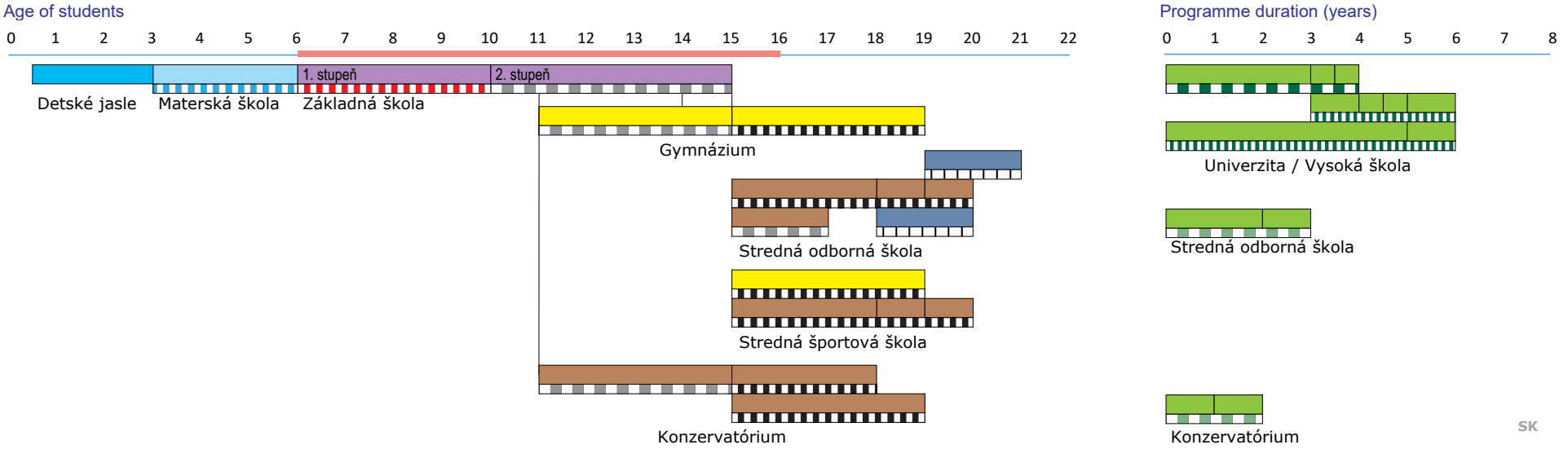


Slovenia

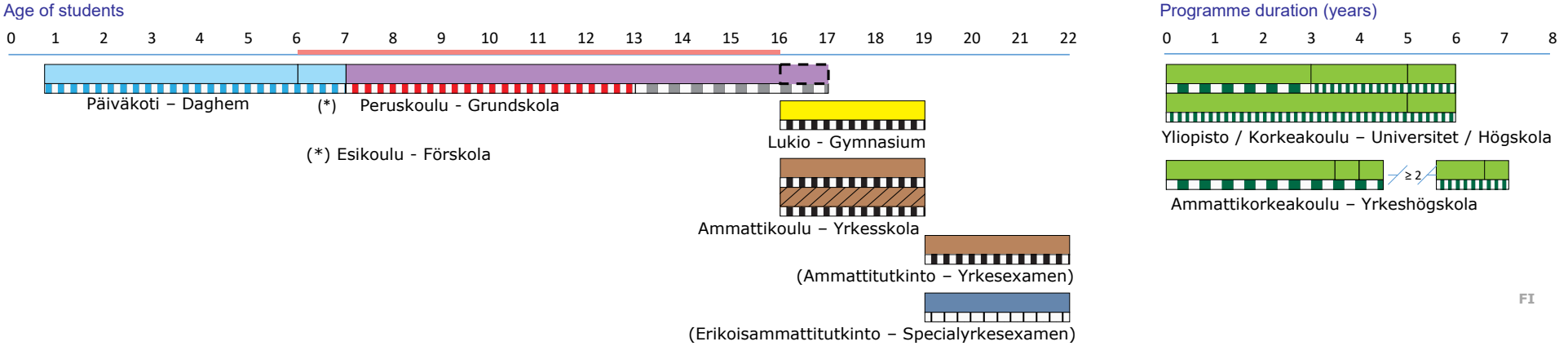




Slovakia

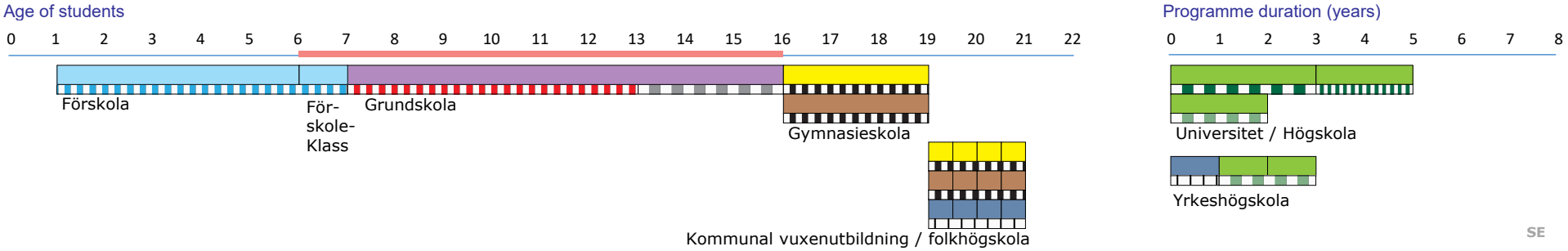


Finland

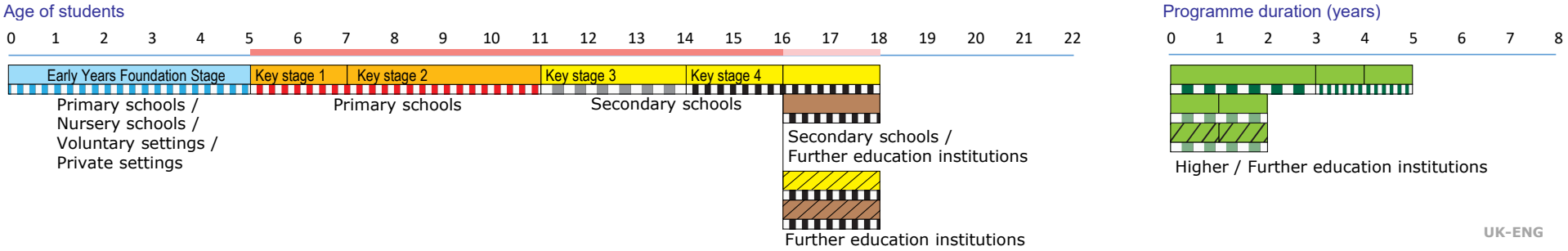


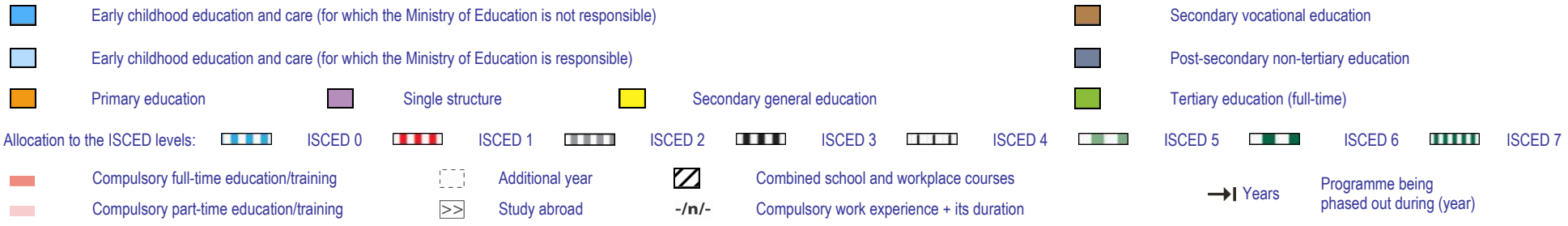
Note: Students can join ISCED 4 programmes at different ages.

Sweden

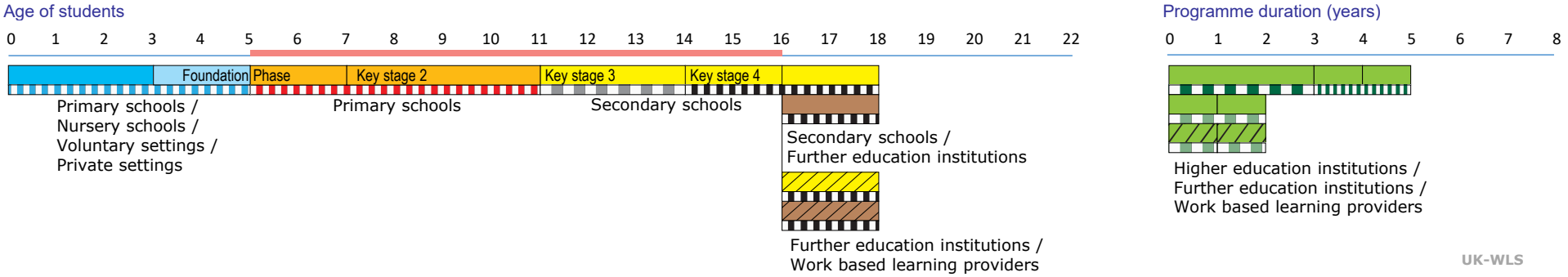


United Kingdom – England



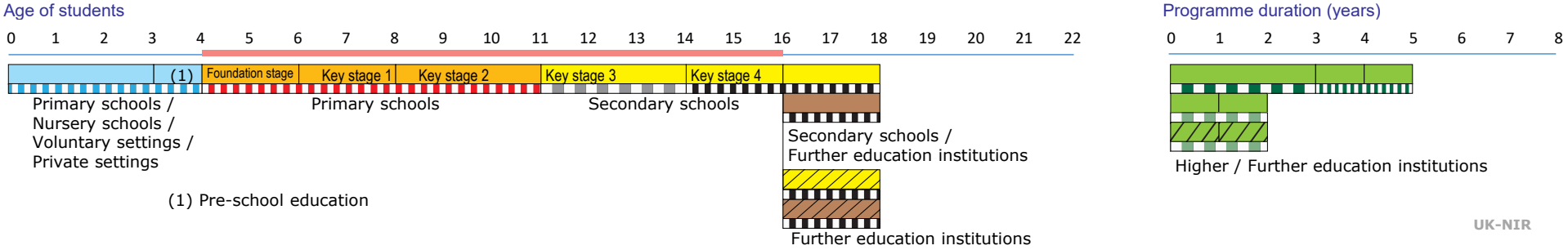


United Kingdom – Wales



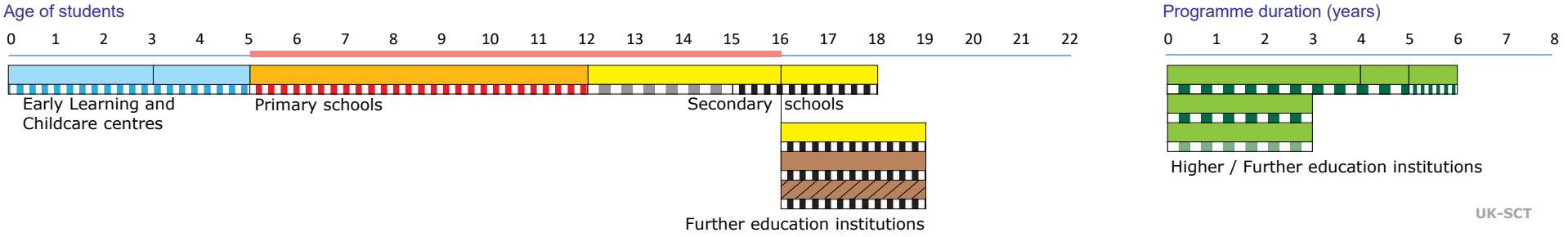
UK-WLS

United Kingdom – Northern Ireland



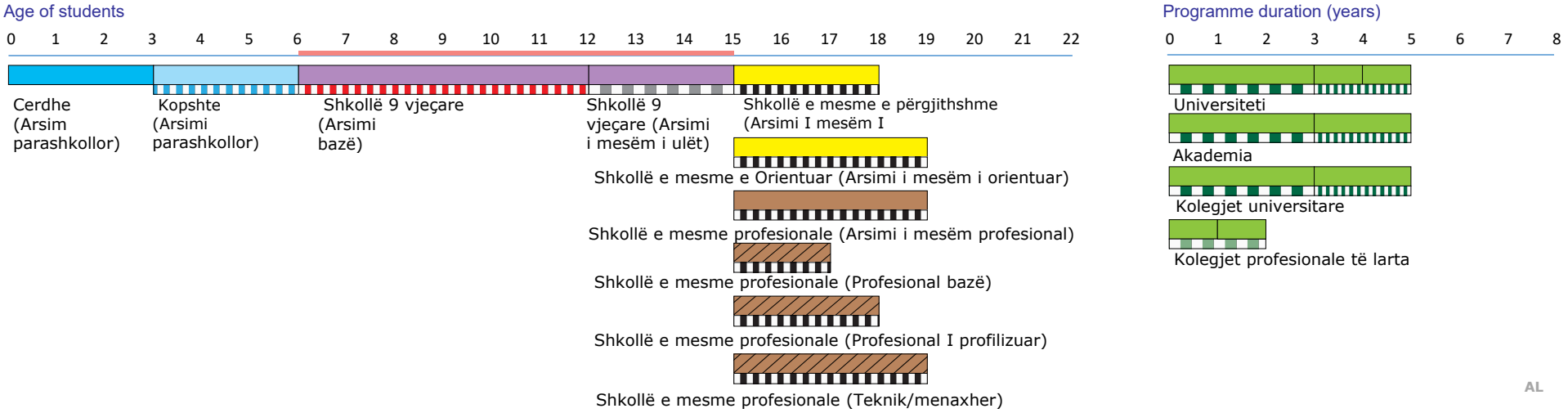
UK-NIR

United Kingdom – Scotland



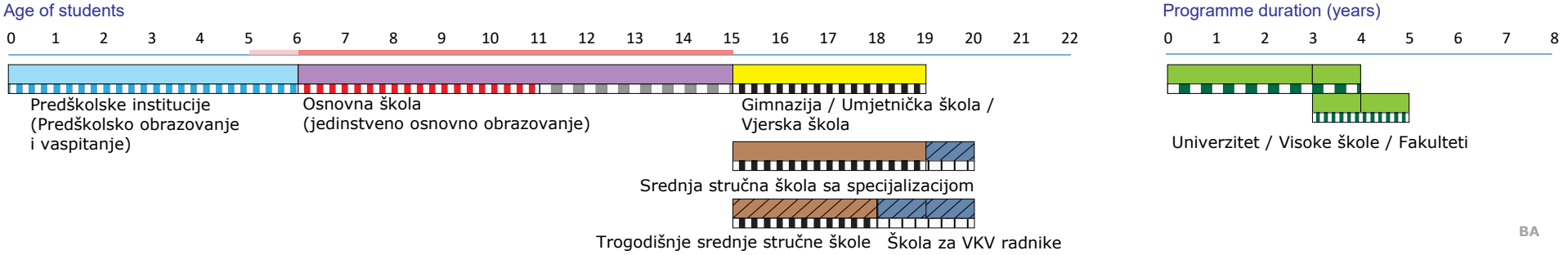
UK-SCT

Albania



AL

Bosnia and Herzegovina



BA

Note: Education between 5 and 6 is only compulsory on a part-time basis in the Federation of BiH and the Brčko District but it is implemented in the Republika Srpska on the same basis, although it is not mandatory.

- Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)
- Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)
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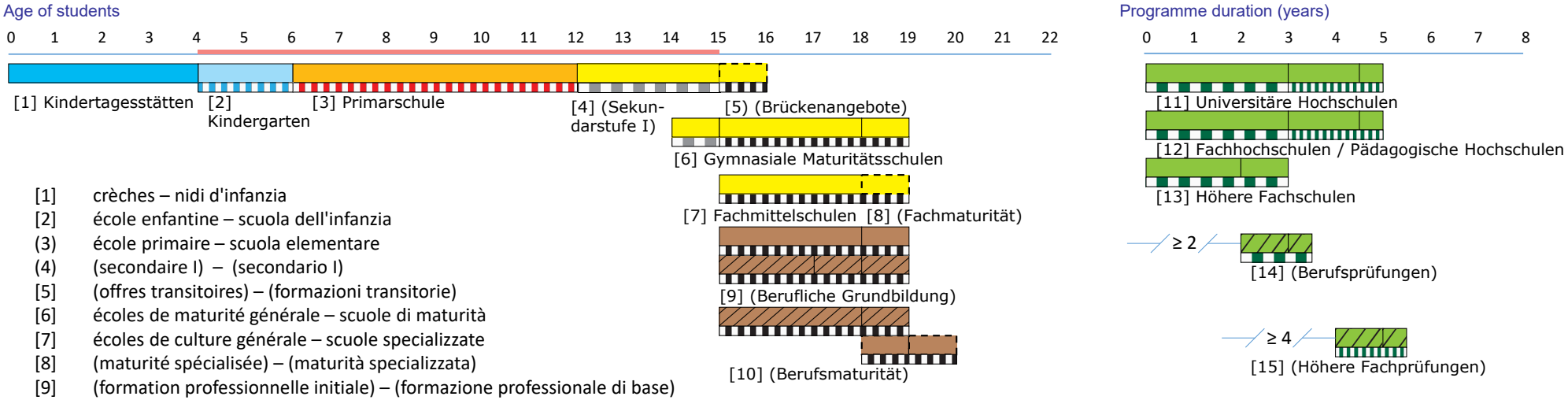
- Single structure
- Secondary general education
- Secondary vocational education
- Post-secondary non-tertiary education
- Tertiary education (full-time)

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

- Compulsory full-time education/training
- Compulsory part-time education/training
- Additional year
- >> Study abroad
- Combined school and workplace courses
- -/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration
- → Years
- Programme being phased out during (year)

Switzerland

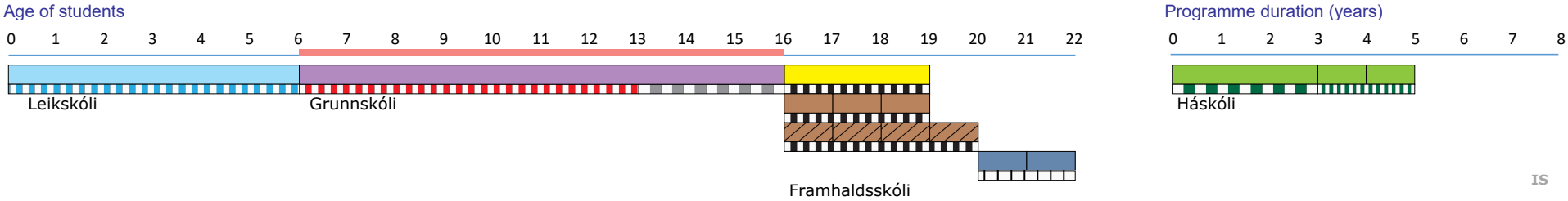


[1] crèches – nidi d'infanzia
[2] école enfantine – scuola dell'infanzia
(3) école primaire – scuola elementare
(4) (secondaire I) – (secondario I)
[5] (offres transitoires) – (formazioni transitorie)
[6] écoles de maturité générale – scuole di maturità
[7] écoles de culture générale – scuole specializzate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

CH

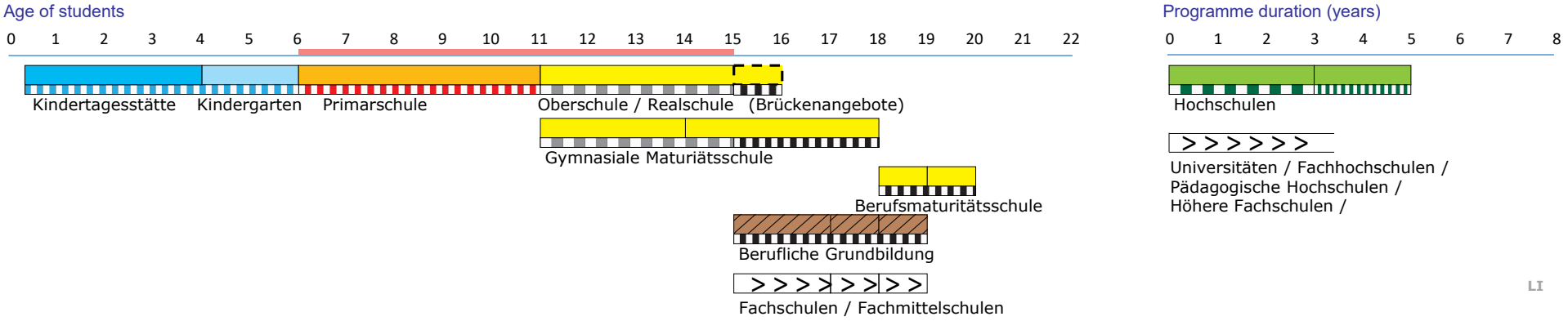
Note: In most cantons, compulsory education starts at age 4 (in a few at ages 5 or 6).

Iceland



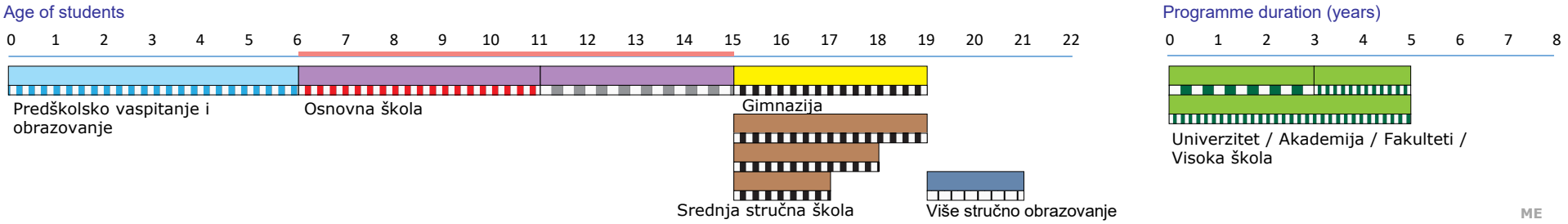
IS

Liechtenstein



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

Montenegro



Note: Starting from the academic year 2017/18, public HEIs started enrolling perspective undergraduate students in 3+2(+3) (undergraduate + master + PhD) study programmes (private institutions no later than in 2020/21). All HEIs will harmonize their study programmes by the end of the 2019/20 academic year.

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)

Primary education

Single structure

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Secondary vocational education

Post-secondary non-tertiary education

Tertiary education (full-time)

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

Compulsory full-time education/training

Compulsory part-time education/training

Additional year

Study abroad

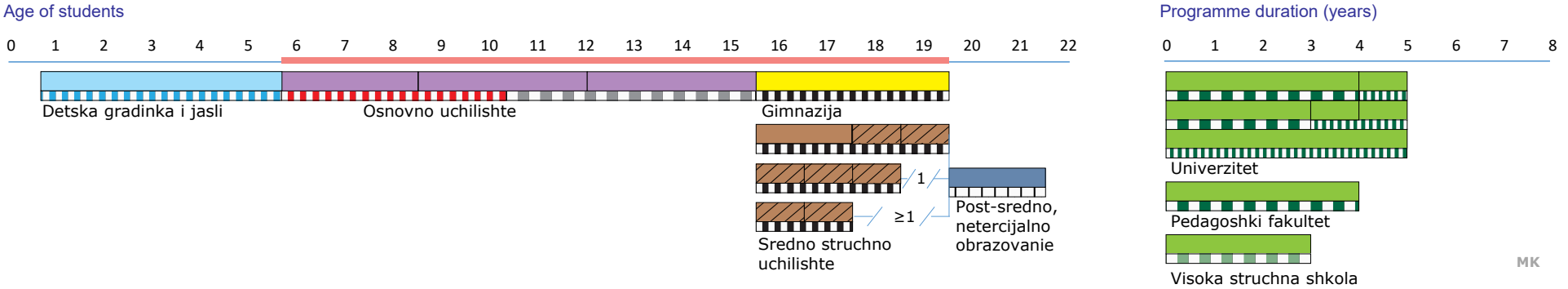
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

Years

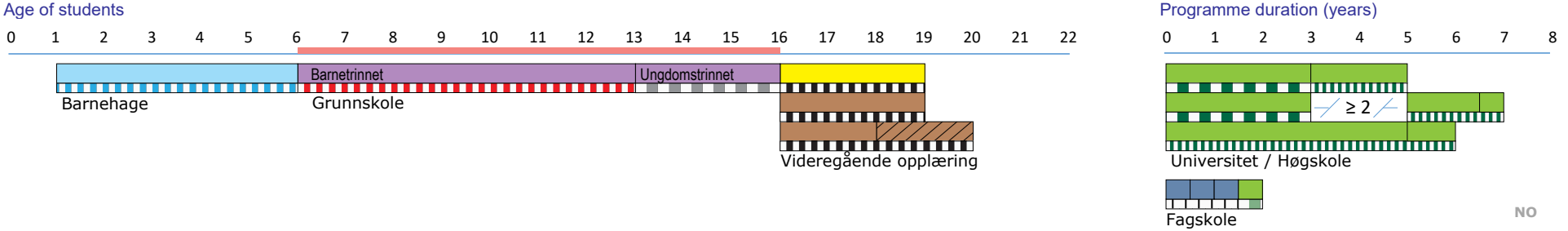
Programme being phased out during (year)

North Macedonia

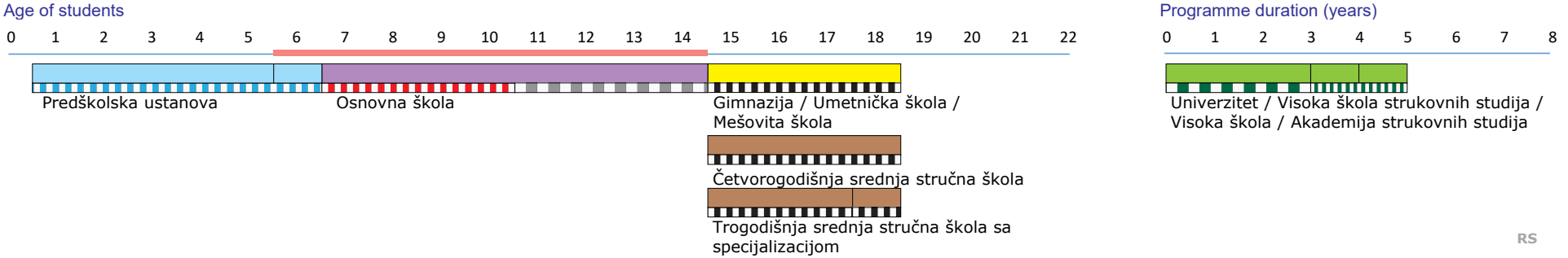


Note: The leaving age for compulsory education may vary from 17 to 19 years and 6 months depending on the type of programme. The lowest leaving age (17) applies to students attending the two years vocational programme (*strucno osposobuvanje*) while the ending age of 18 applies to those attending the three years vocational programme (*strucno obrazovanie za zanimanja*). The highest leaving age of 19 years and 6 months applies to students attending general secondary education (*gimnazisko obrazovanie*) or a four years programme of vocational education (*chetirigodishno struchno obrazovanie*).

Norway



Serbia



Turkey

TR

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)

Early childhood education and care (for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)

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 1 ISCED 2 ISCED 3 ISCED 4 ISCED 5 ISCED 6 ISCED 7

Compulsory full-time education/training

Compulsory part-time education/training

Additional year

Study abroad

Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

Years

Programme being phased out during (year)

EDUCATION, AUDIOVISUAL AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY

Education and Youth Policy Analysis

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The Structure of the European Education Systems 2020/21: Schematic Diagrams

This report provides information on the structure of mainstream European education systems, from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2020/21 school and academic year. It includes national schematic diagrams and a guide to reading the diagrams. It also contains a map visually showing the main organisational models of primary and lower secondary education in Europe: 'single structured education', 'common core curriculum provision' and 'differentiated lower secondary education'. The information is available for 43 European education systems covering 38 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme.

The report's content is in line with the Eurydice Network's task: understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work.

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.

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