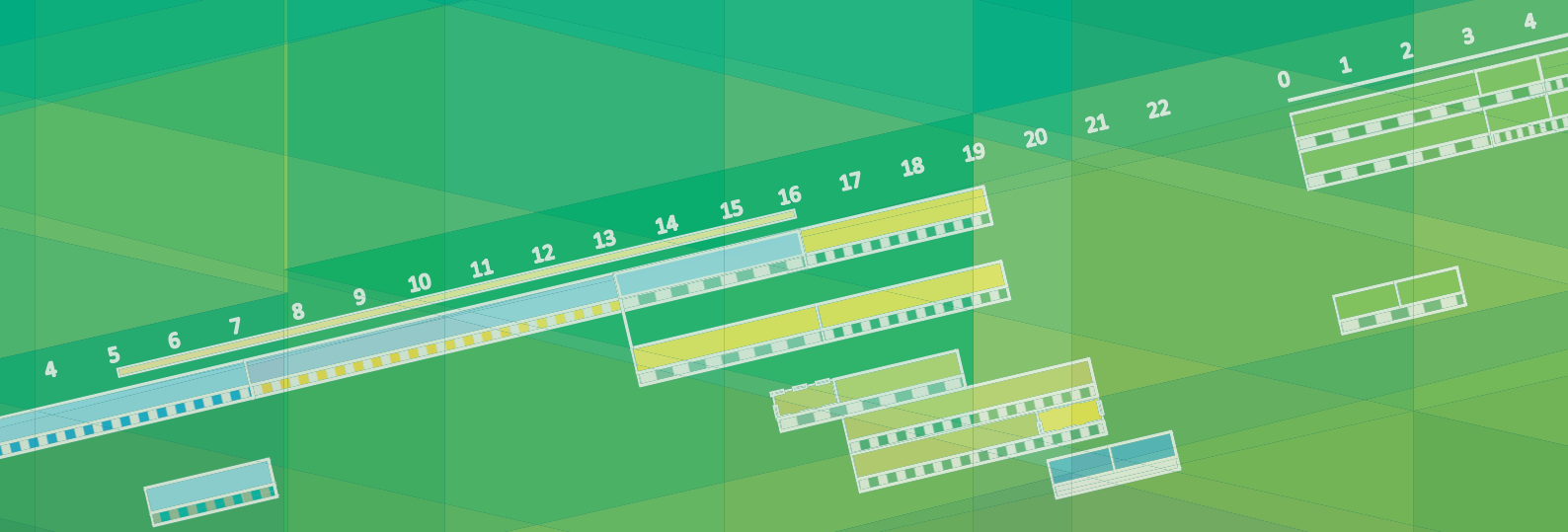
European Commission

The Structure of the European Education Systems 2015/16

Schematic Diagrams

Eurydice – Facts and Figures



Education and Training

The Structure of the European Education Systems 2015/16

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Eurydice – Facts and Figures

Education and Training

This document is published by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA, Education and Youth Policy Analysis).

Please cite this publication as:

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. *The Structure of the European Education Systems 2015/16: Schematic Diagrams.* Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

ISBN 978-92-9492-023-2 ISSN 2443-5333 doi:10.2797/63725 EC-AL-16-001-EN-N

Text completed in November 2015.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 5

GUIDE TO READ THE DIAGRAMS 7

General information 7

Text 7

Levels and types of education 7

Compulsory work experience and its duration 8

Age of students and programme duration scales 8

Key 8

Connections between programmes 9

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) 9

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAMS 11

Belgium – French Community 11
Belgium – German-speaking Community 11
Belgium – Flemish Community 12
Bulgaria 12
Czech Republic 12
Denmark 13
Germany 13
Estonia 14
Ireland 14
Greece 15
Spain 15
France 16
Croatia 16
Italy 17
Cyprus 17
Latvia 18
Lithuania 18
Luxembourg 19
Hungary 19
Malta 20
Netherlands 21
Austria 21
Poland 22
Portugal 22
Romania 23
Slovenia 23
Slovakia 23
Finland 24
Sweden 24
United Kingdom – England 25
United Kingdom – Wales 25
United Kingdom – Northern Ireland 25
United Kingdom – Scotland 26
Bosnia and Herzegovina 26
Switzerland 27
Iceland 27
Liechtenstein 28
Montenegro 28
Former Republic Yugoslav of Macedonia 29
Norway 29
Serbia 29
Turkey 30

INTRODUCTION

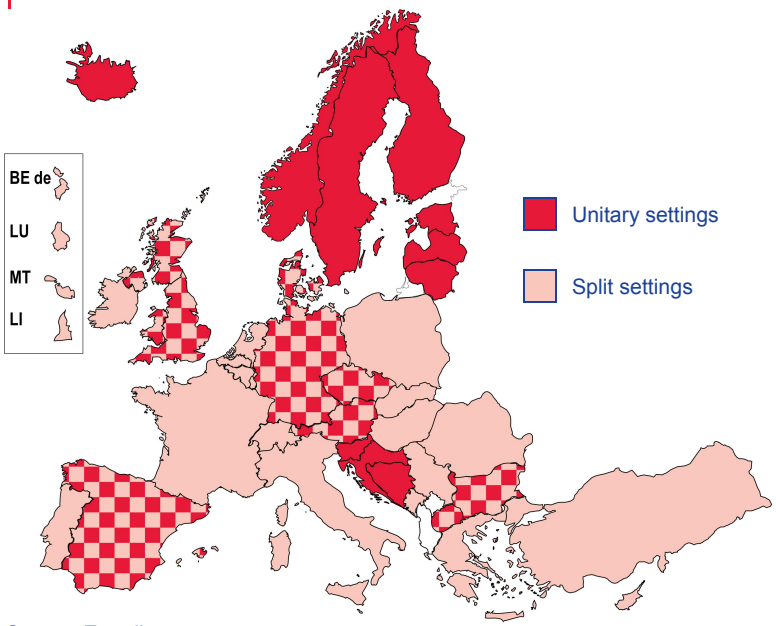
This report focuses on the structure of mainstream education in European countries from pre-primary to tertiary level for the 2015/16 school and academic year. Forty-two education systems are included covering 37 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme (28 Member States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey). The first section of the report sets out the main organisational models of pre-primary and compulsory education. The second one provides a guide on how to read the diagrams. The national schematic diagrams are shown in the third section.

Main organisational models

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Two main forms of ECEC structure can be distinguished in European countries ([1]): unitary and split.

Organisation of centre-based ECEC, 2015/16



Source: Eurydice.

Note: The information on the main form of ECEC structure is not visible in the diagrams of Spain, the United Kingdom, Montenegro and Serbia. For detailed information, please refer to 'Eurydice Policy Brief Early Childhood Education and Care 2014' and 'Early Childhood Education and Care Systems in Europe: National Information Sheets – 2014/15'.

- In the typical **unitary system** provision for all children of pre-school age is organised in a single phase and delivered in settings catering for the whole age range. Children have no breaks or transfers between institutions until they start primary school. The ministry of education is responsible for ECEC governance, regulation and funding. The provision is considered as 'early childhood education and care' services and educational guidelines cover the entire ECEC phase.
- In the typical **split system** provision is delivered in separate settings for younger and older children (usually under and over 3 years). The responsibility for ECEC governance, regulation and funding are usually divided between different authorities. Educational guidelines often apply only to the provision for older children.

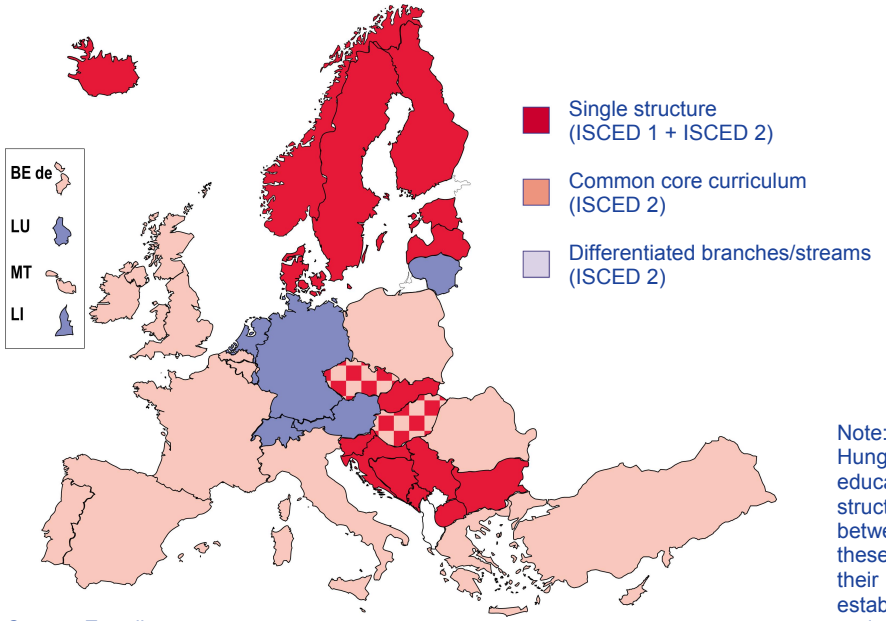
([1]) For more detailed information on the ECEC structure, please see: Eurydice Policy Brief Early Childhood Education and Care 2014 at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications:Eurydice_Policy_Brief_Early_Childhood_Education_and_Care_2014 and
Early Childhood Education and Care Systems in Europe: National Information Sheets – 2014/15 at:
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications:Early_Childhood_Education_and_Care_Systems_in_Europe:_National_Information_Sheets_%E2%80%93_2014/15

Compulsory education

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, 2015/16



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.

GUIDE TO READ THE DIAGRAMS

The Guide to read the diagrams provides necessary information to understand and correctly interpret the content of the diagrams. It includes terminology, definitions, meaning of colours and symbols used for the graphic layout and short description of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011).

General information

The diagrams show the mainstream educational programmes considered to be the most representative in each country. They encompass: 1) early childhood education and care provided in publicly subsidised and accredited centre-based settings for children from the youngest age of enrolment, 2) primary and secondary education programmes including the period of compulsory education, 3) post-secondary non-tertiary programmes and 4) the main programmes offered at tertiary level.

The diagrams cover only the courses allowing adult to turn back to school or to gain further qualifications which are incorporated in mainstream educational programmes. Usually, these courses are integrated in the programmes providing competence-based qualifications at secondary educational level or allowing access to tertiary education (post-secondary non-tertiary educational level) ([2]). Educational provision intended exclusively to adults with low formal educational attainment and/or a low level of basic skills is not shown in the diagrams.

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.

The Diagrams also show the possible current and/or forthcoming changes in the structure of the national education systems and point out the programmes being phased out.

The graphic layout of the diagrams is divided in two parts. The first part (left side bar) shows educational programmes from pre-primary to post-secondary non–tertiary levels. The second one (right side bar) explains the main programmes at the tertiary level.

Text

All terms are provided in the official national language(s) of the country. For most of the countries the type of institution is indicated. For other countries, where the same educational program(s) can be provided by different types of institution, the type of education or programmes is specified. All country notes are in English.

Levels and types of education

The main bars of the diagrams show the national educational systems; 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. A second thin bar with coloured stripes indicates the corresponding levels of education as defined by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) (see description below).

([2]) 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://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Publications:Adult_Education_and_Training_in_Europe:_Widening_Access_to_Learning_Opportunities

Compulsory work experience and its duration

The diagrams highlight the countries in which compulsory work experience is required to move to the next educational level or to begin a particular qualification and show its minimum required duration where applicable.

Age of students and programme duration scales

The **'age of students'** scale shows the age of pupils and students when they start each level of education from pre-primary onwards (ISCED levels 0 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. Early or late entry, grade retention or other interruptions to schooling as well as adult learning are not taken into account.

The **'programme duration'** scale applies to tertiary level programmes and refers to the standard number of years necessary to complete studies at different stages on a full-time basis. The duration of part-time studies or individualised study patterns is not shown.

The 'programme duration' scale is used to show tertiary level programmes taking into account that students might enrol in tertiary education programmes or in post-secondary education at different ages and take different amounts of time to complete the programmes, for instance, combing part-time studies with work.

Key

Levels and types of education

- 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 2011 levels (see definitions below)

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

Other keys

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

Connections between programmes

The diagrams also show the stages at which students may move 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. Therefore, the conditions of entry to tertiary education, even in the case of automatic progression, are not shown.

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.).

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. 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

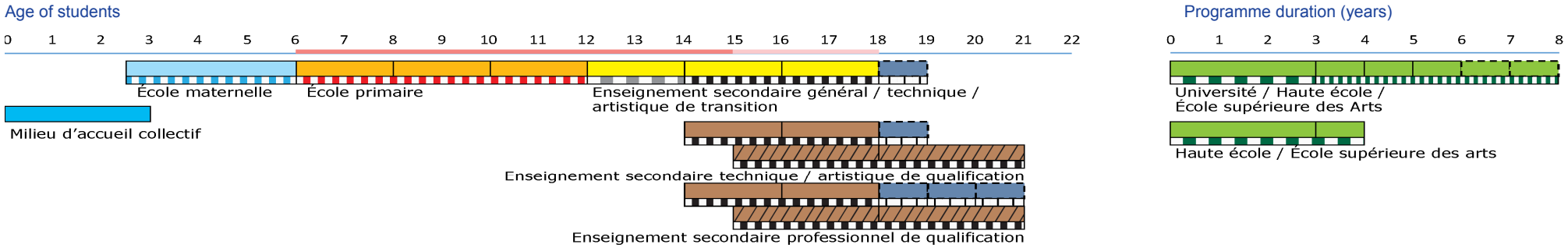
Programmes at this level, are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. Typically, programmes at this level are theoretically-based but may include practical components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

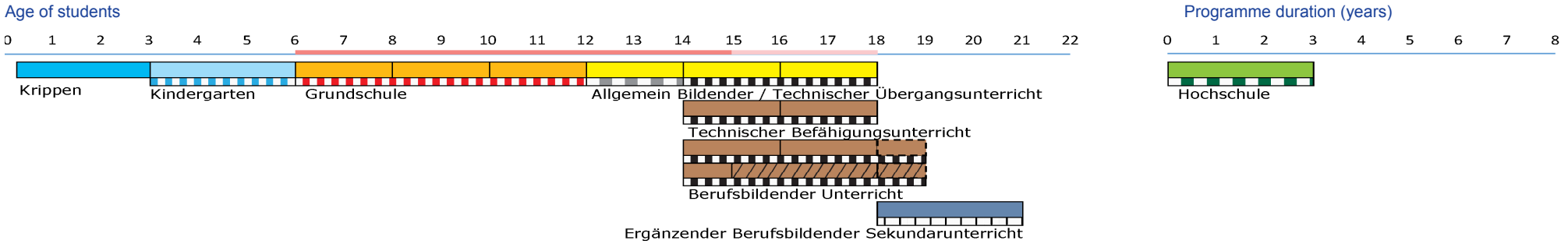
For the full details on each ISCED level, please consult:

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

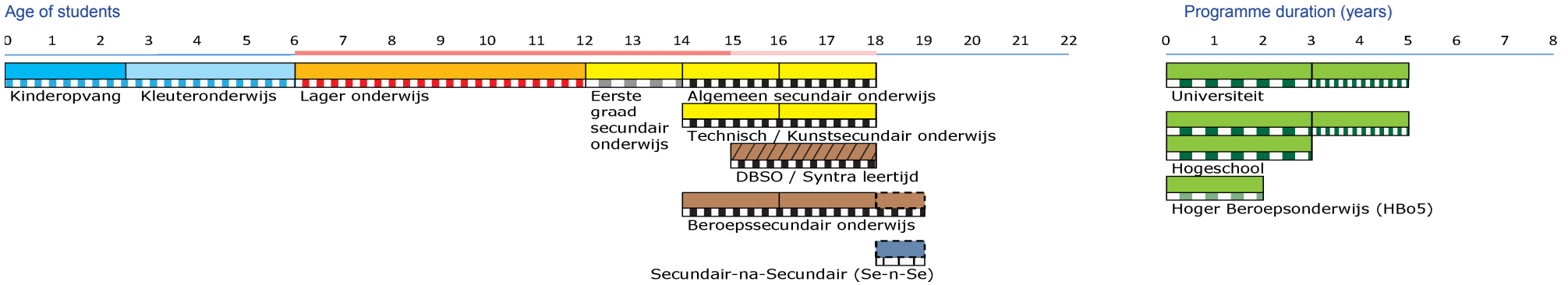
Belgium – French Community



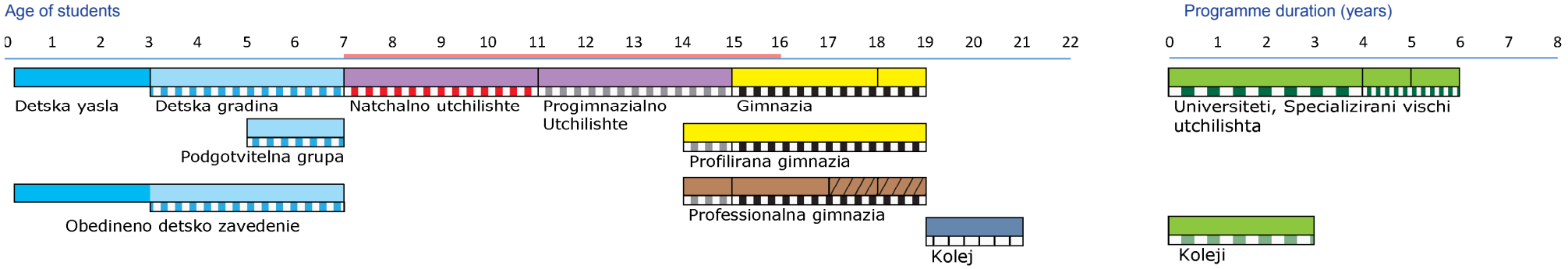
Belgium – German-speaking Community



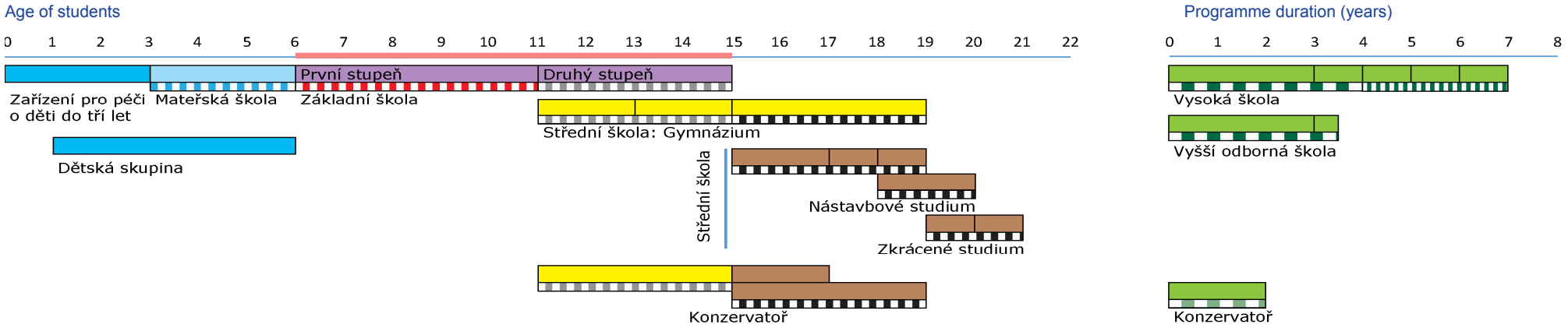
Belgium – Flemish Community



Bulgaria



Czech Republic



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

Compulsory part-time education

Additional year

>> Study abroad

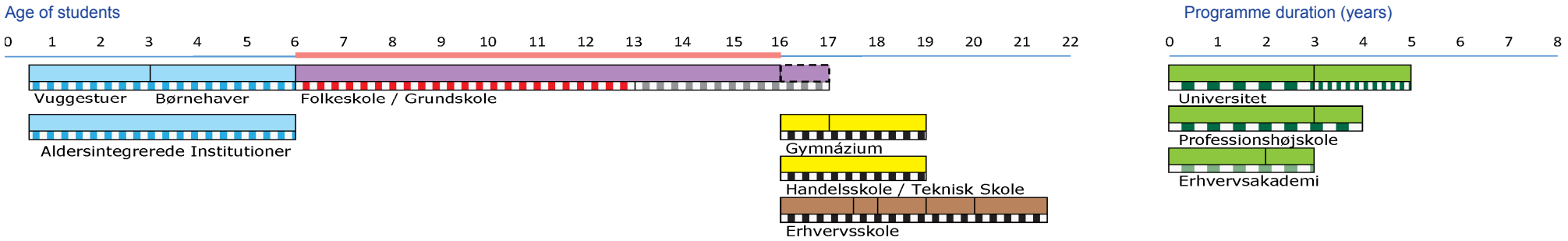
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

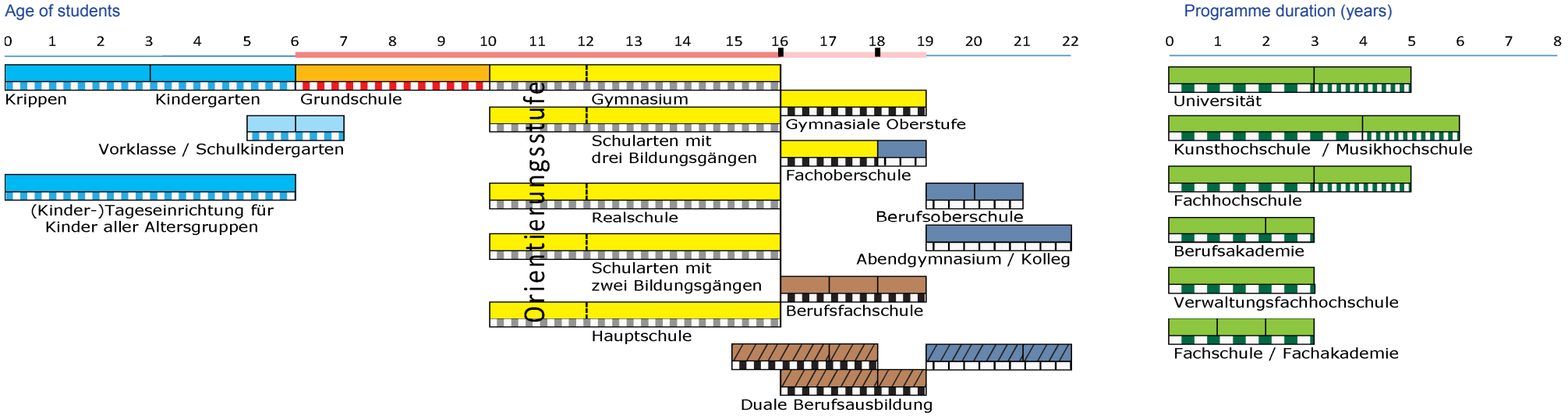
→| Years

Programme being phased out during (year)

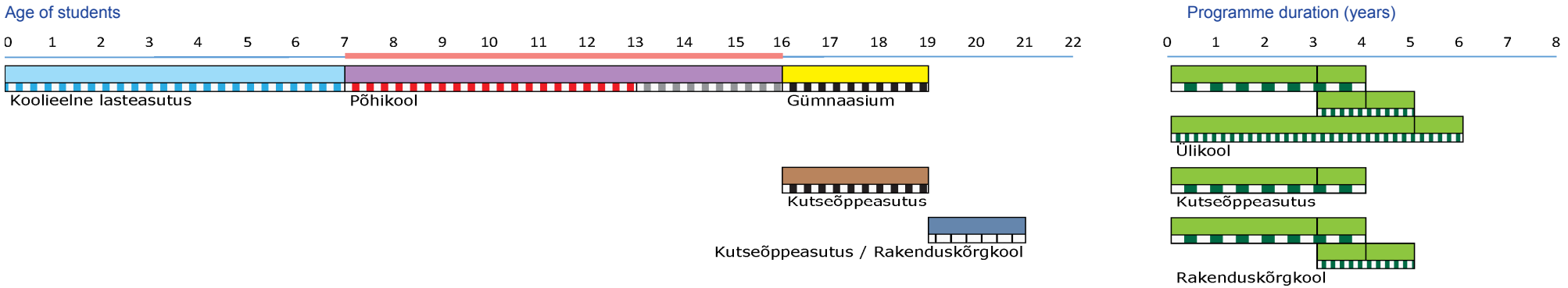
Denmark



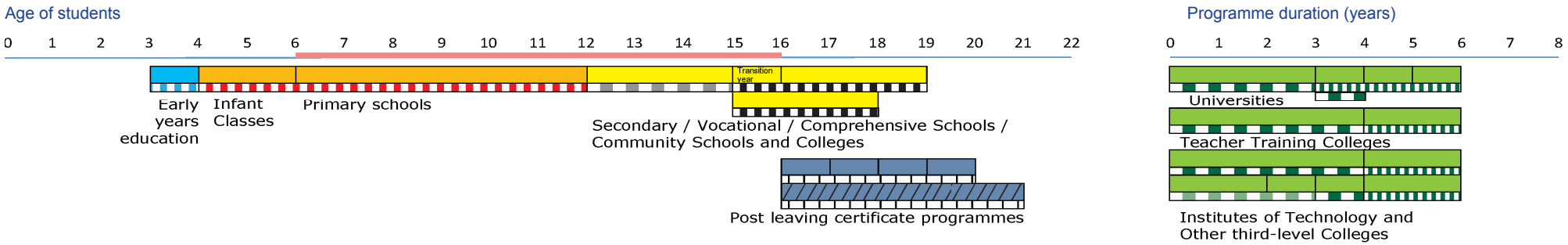
Germany



Estonia



Ireland



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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

Compulsory part-time education

Additional year

>> Study abroad

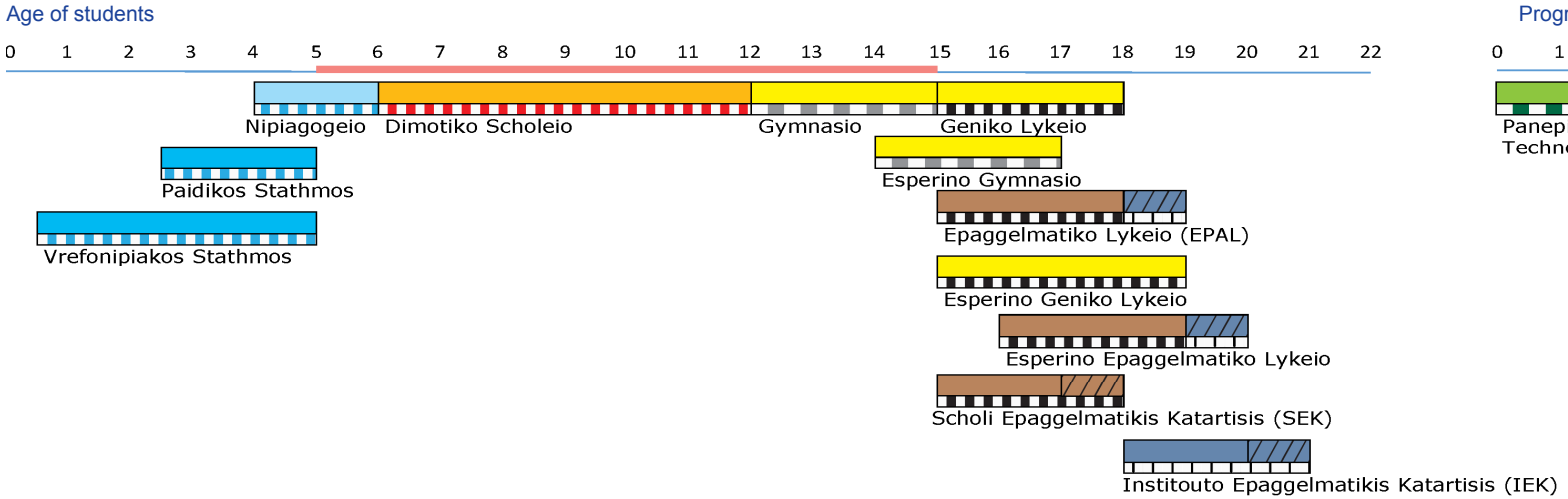
Combined school and workplace courses

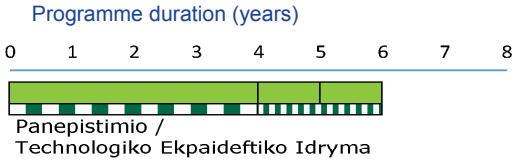
-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

→| Years

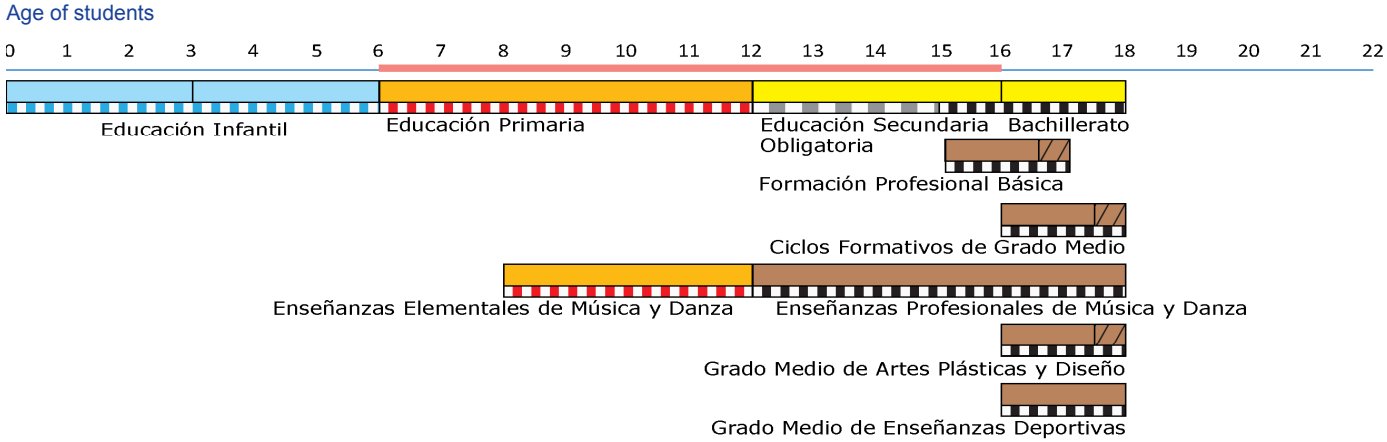
Programme being phased out during (year)

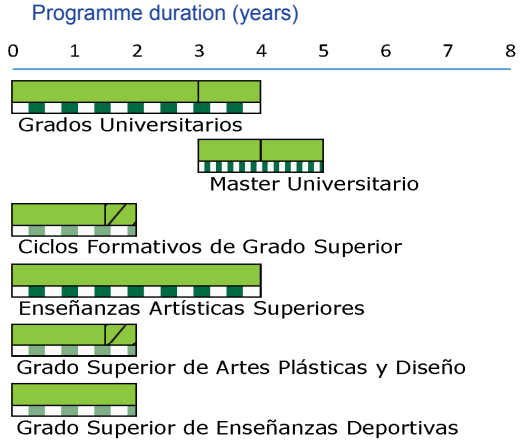
Greece



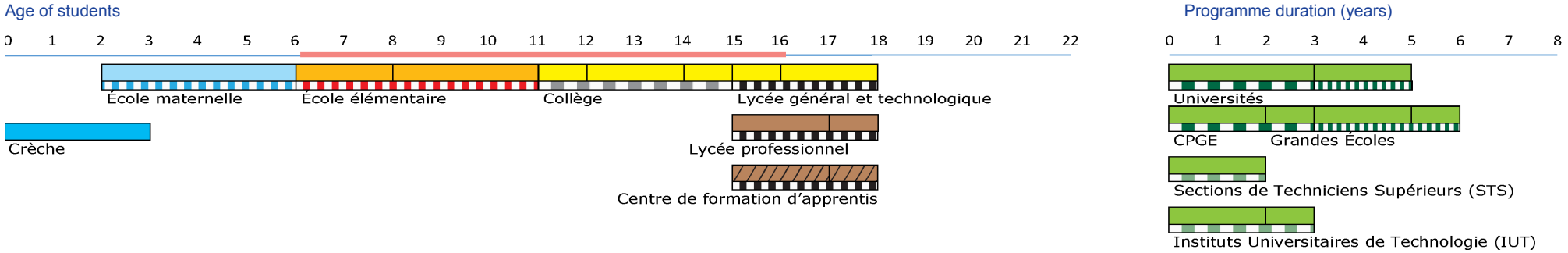


Spain

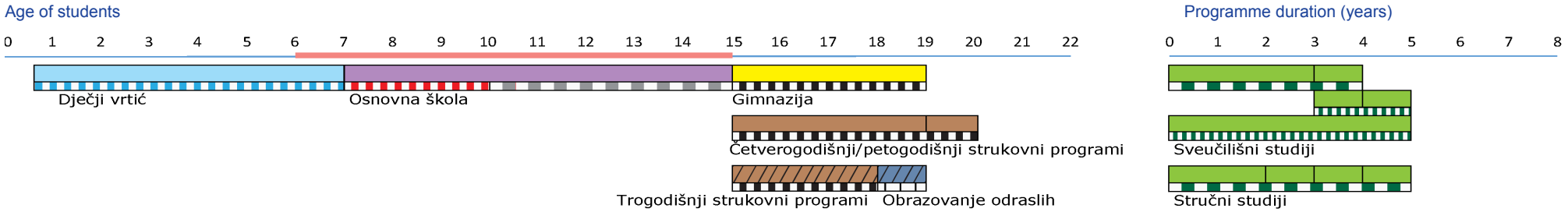




France



Croatia



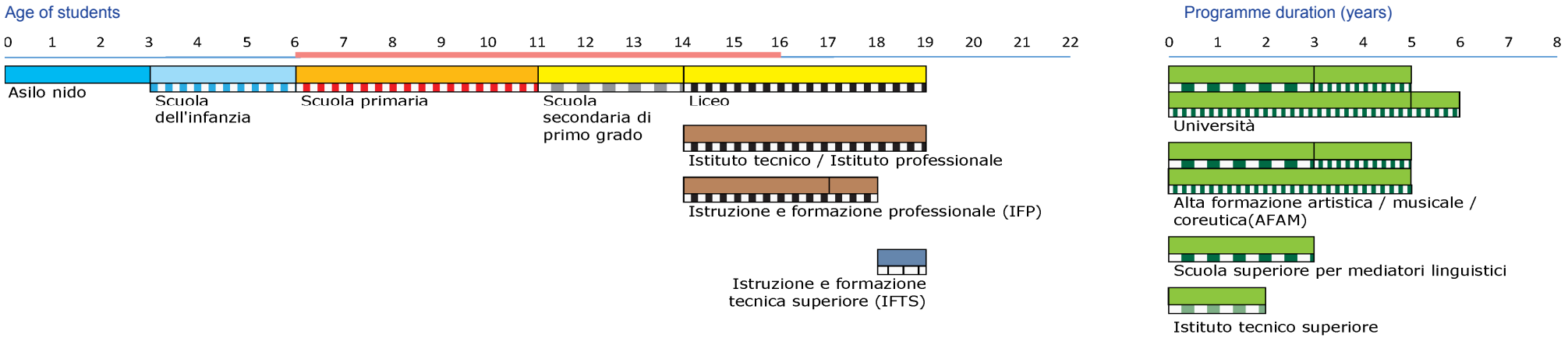
Note: Start of primary education (ISCED 1) depends on child's birthday. Children born between January and April start primary school in calendar year in which they turn 6, those born from April to December when they are 7 years old.

- 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)

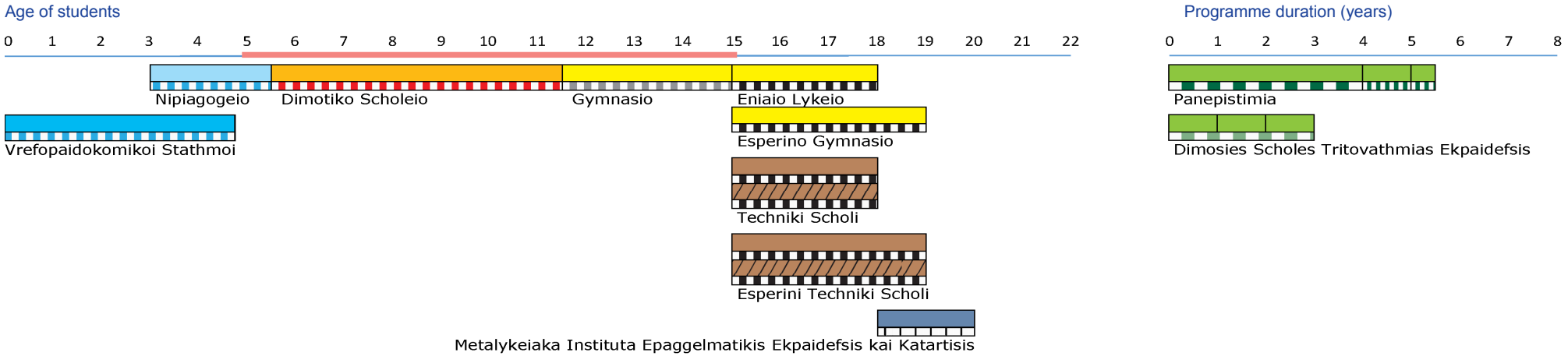
Allocation to the ISCED levels: ISCED 0, ISCED 1, ISCED 2, ISCED 3, ISCED 4, ISCED 5, ISCED 6, ISCED 7

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

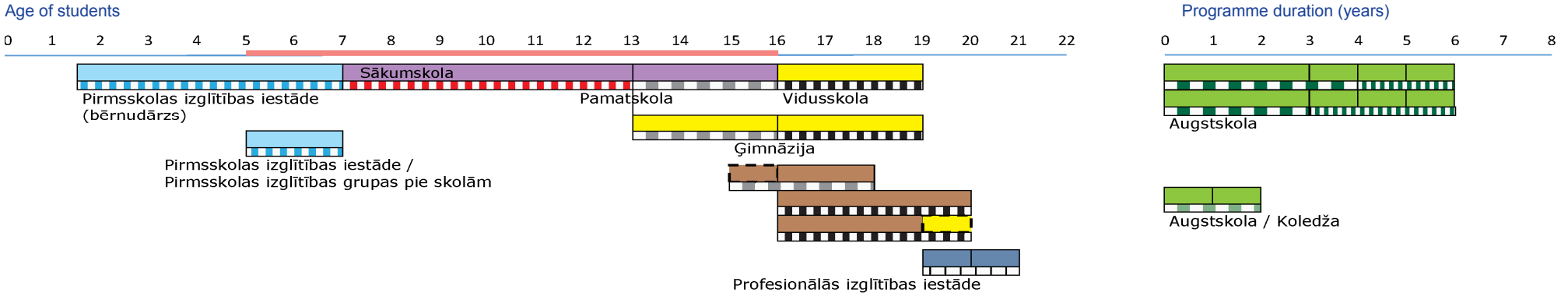
Italy



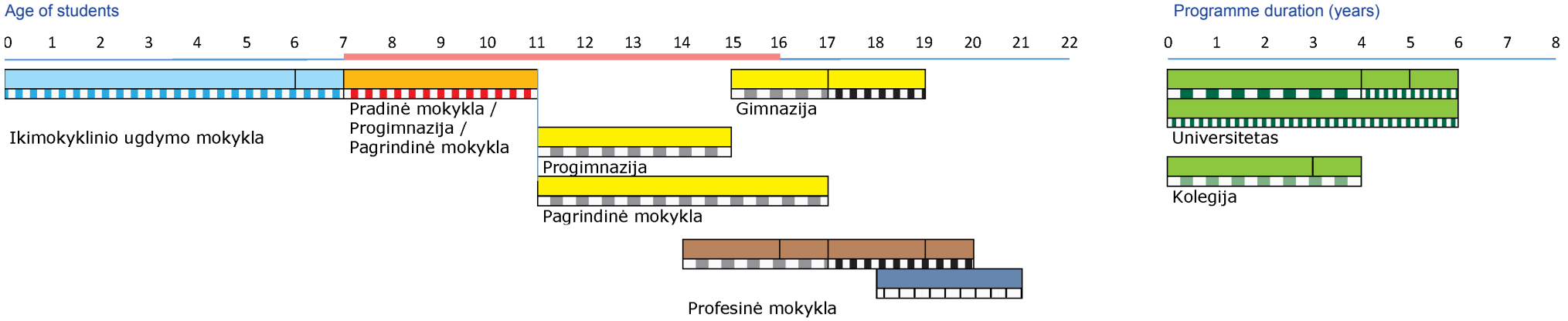
Cyprus



Latvia



Lithuania



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

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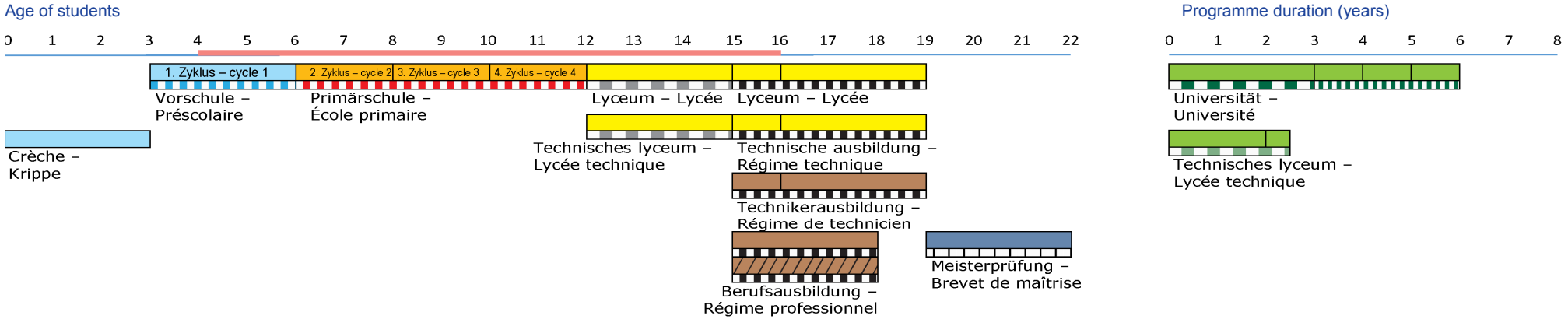
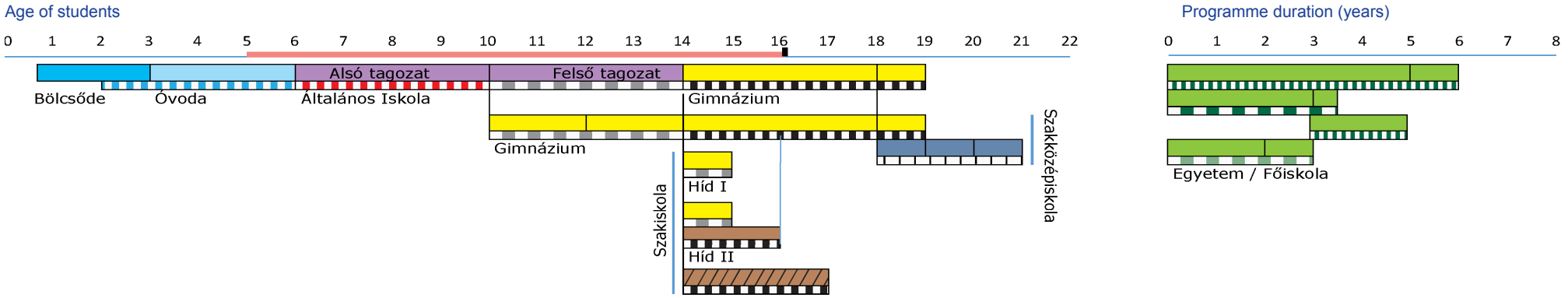
- Additional year
- >> Study abroad
- Combined school and workplace courses
- -/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration
- → I Years
- Programme being phased out during (year)

Luxembourg

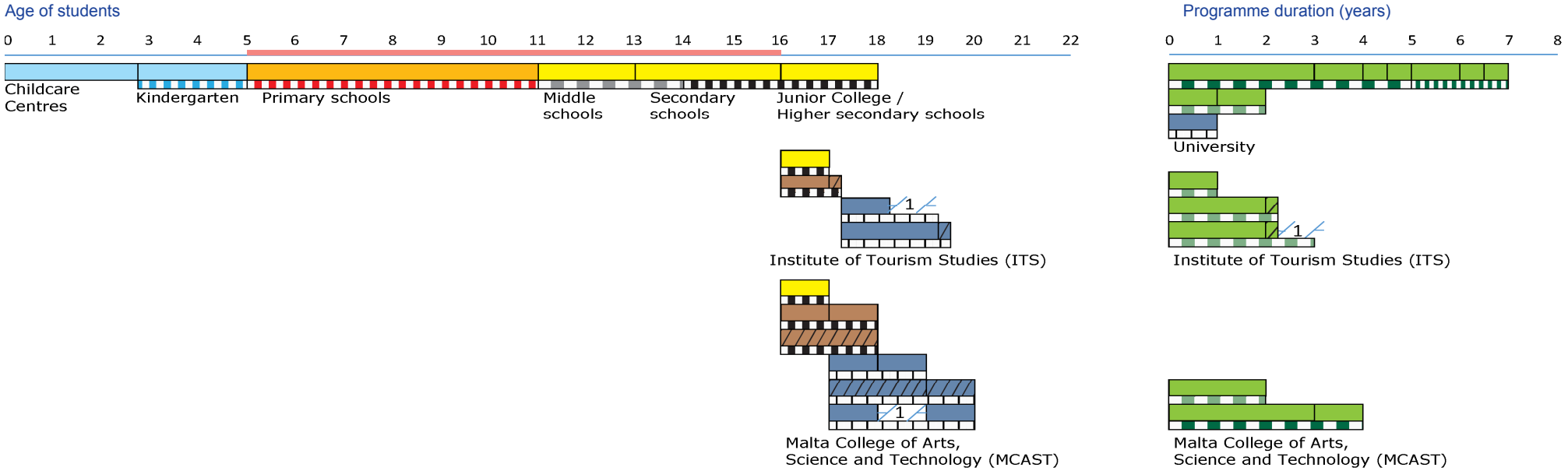


Hungary



Note: HÍD II may start in grade 7; HÍD I may start in grade 9 but the theoretical starting age is 14 in both cases.

Malta



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

Compulsory part-time education

Additional year

Study abroad

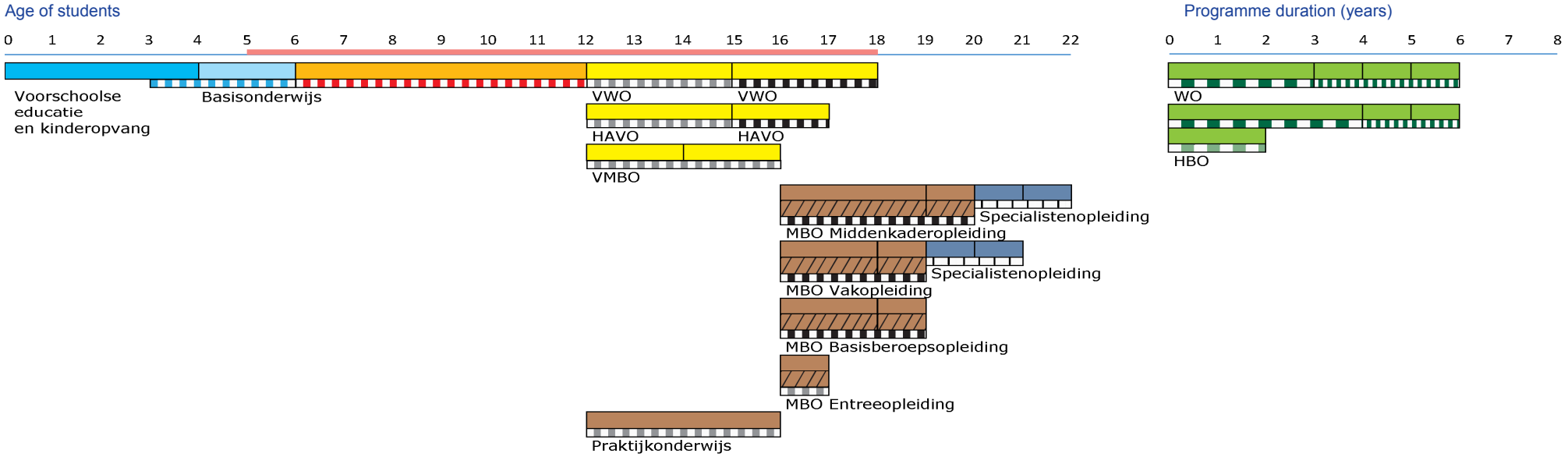
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

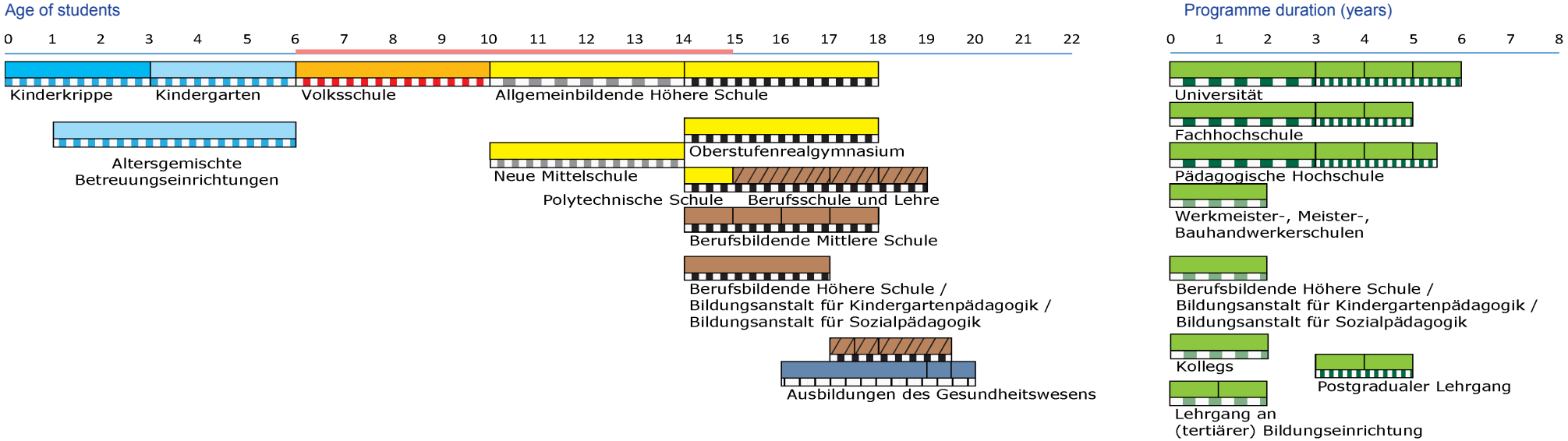
Years

Programme being phased out during (year)

Netherlands

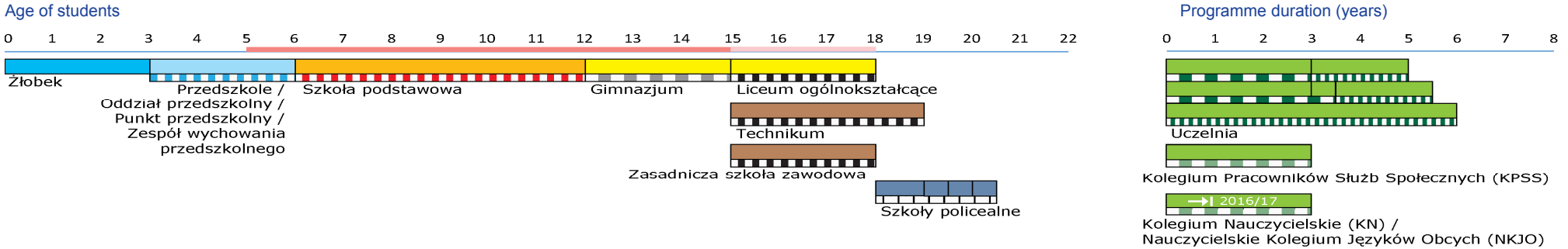


Austria



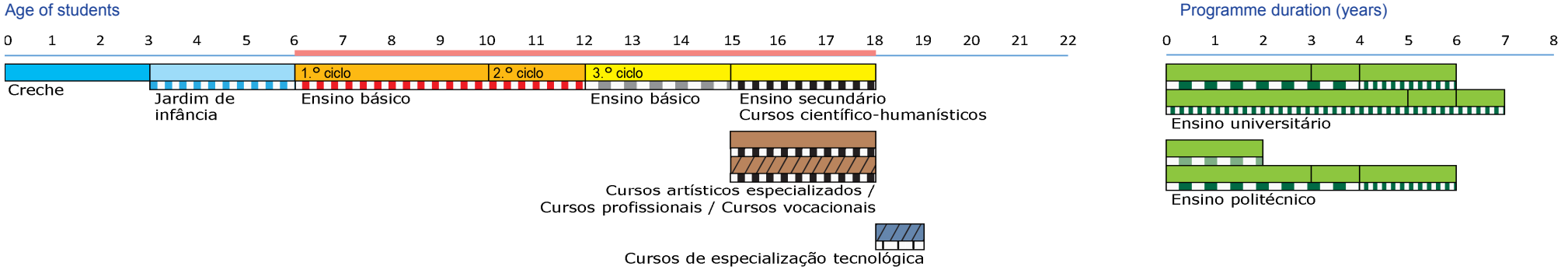
Note: *Berufsbildende Höhere Schule / Bildungsanstalt für Kindergartenpädagogik / Bildungsanstalt für Sozialpädagogik* deliver continuous programmes i.e. 1st to 3rd year followed by 4th and 5th year.

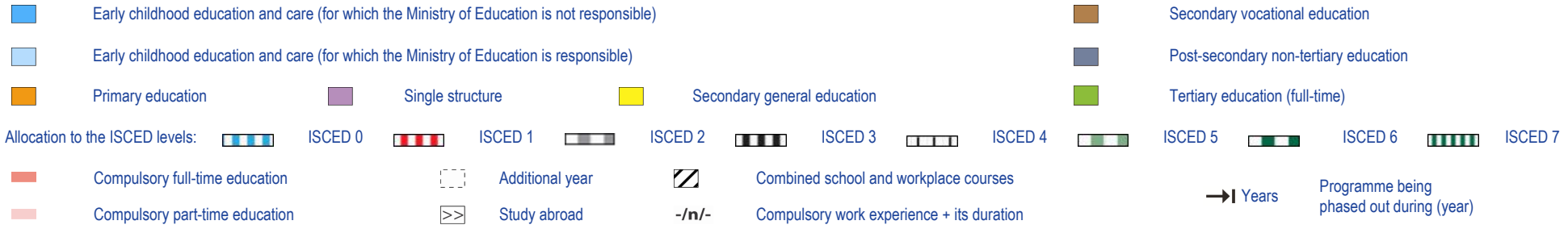
Poland



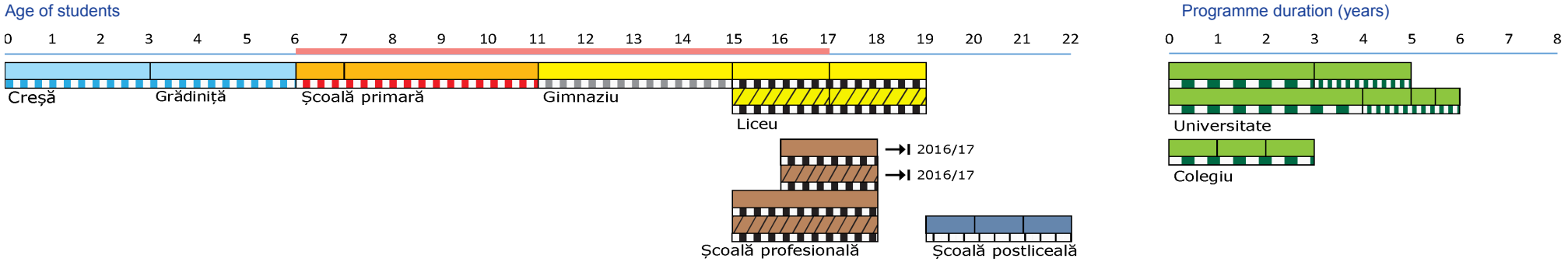
Note: A reform introduced in 2013 led to the gradual lowering of the beginning of compulsory full-time education in primary school from 7 to 6 years. Before 2014, admission of 6-year olds to grade 1 of primary school was left to the parents' discretion. In 2014, education in primary schools became compulsory 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

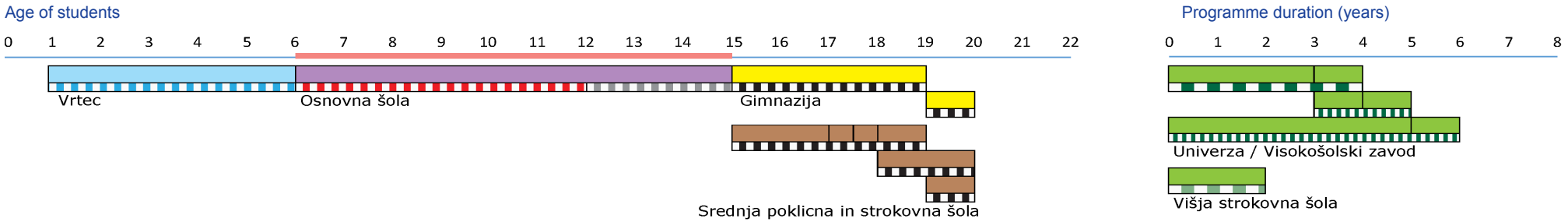




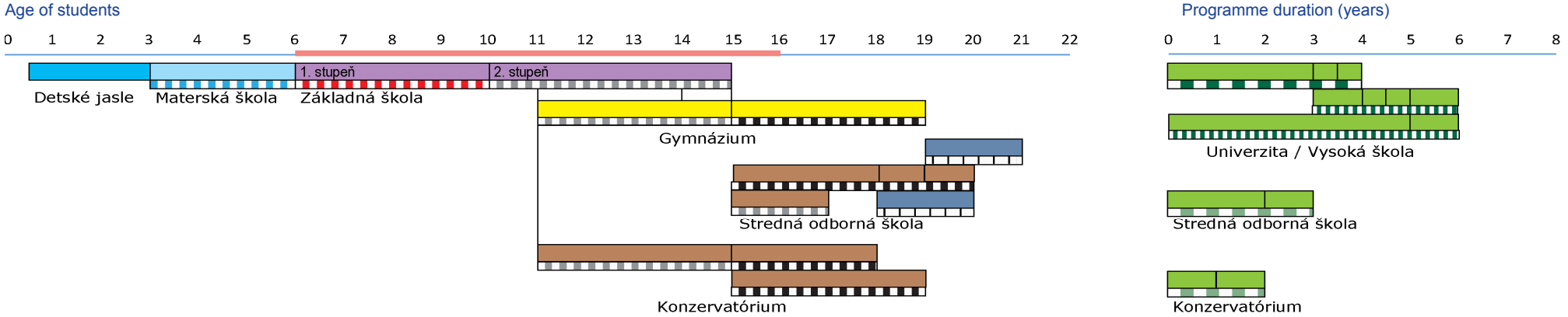
Romania



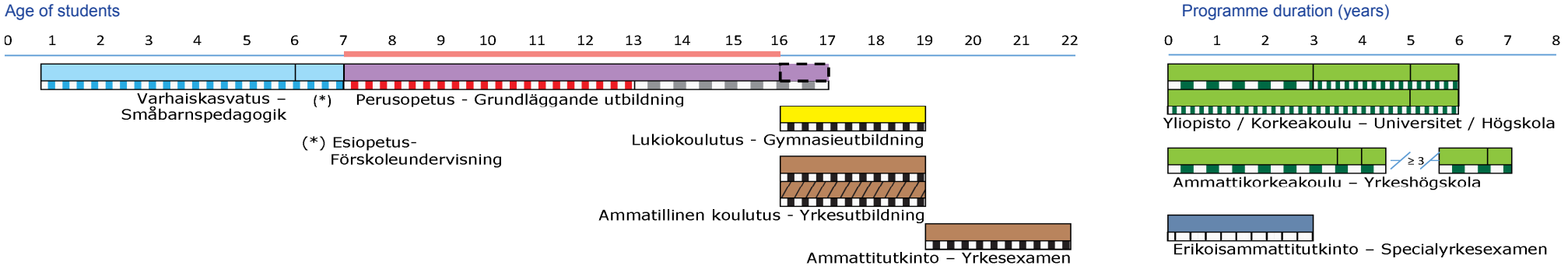
Slovenia



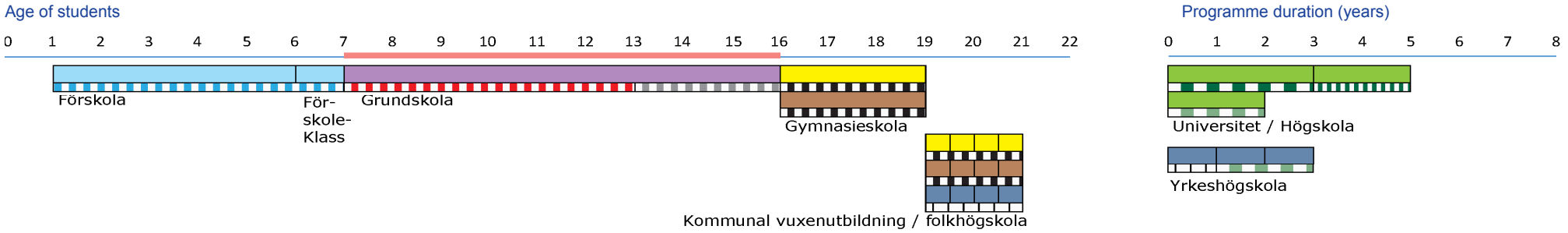
Slovakia

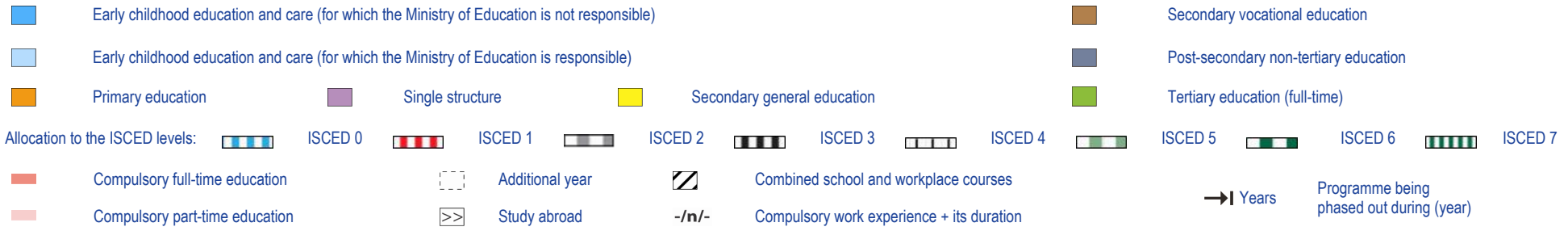


Finland

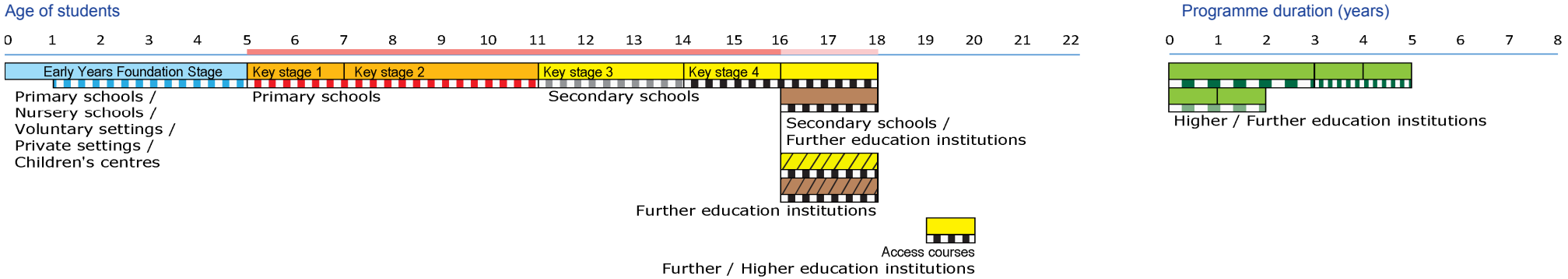


Sweden

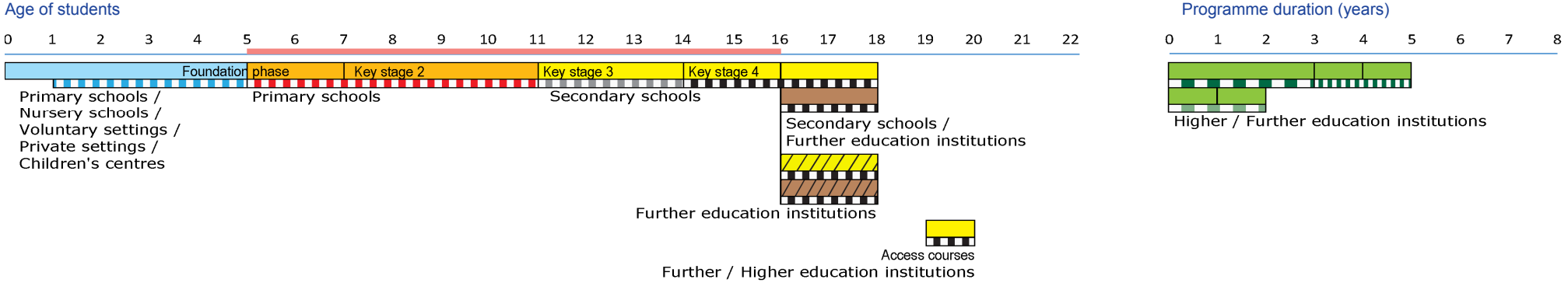




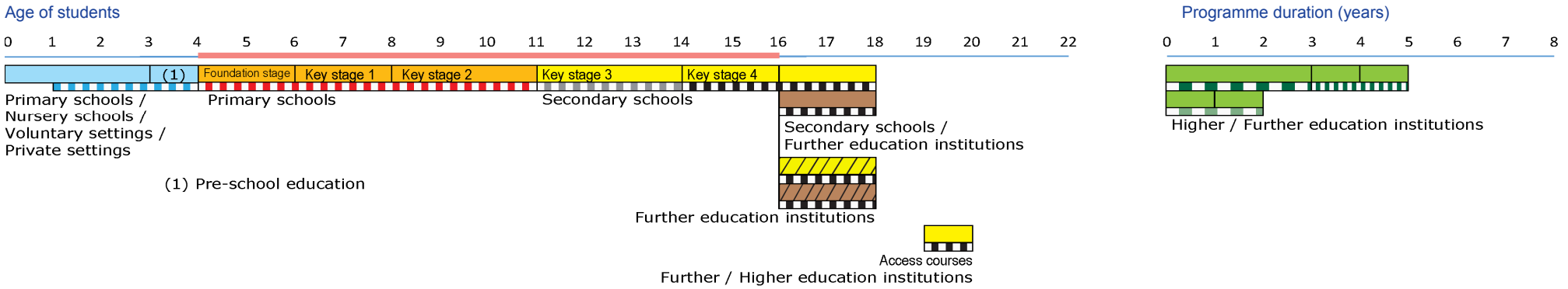
United Kingdom – England



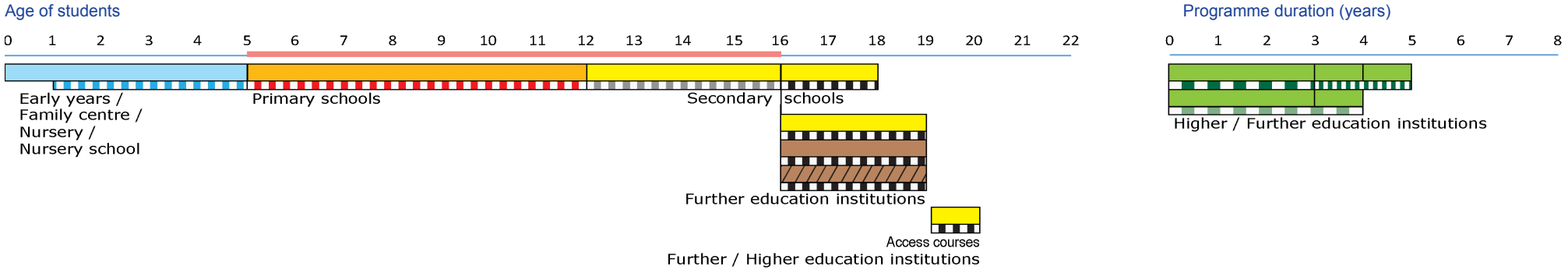
United Kingdom – Wales



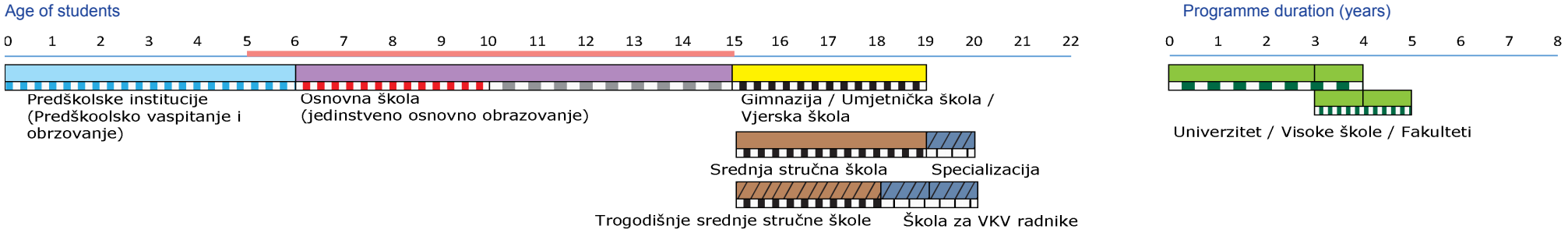
United Kingdom – Northern Ireland



United Kingdom – Scotland



Bosnia and Herzegovina



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Compulsory part-time education

Additional year

>> Study abroad

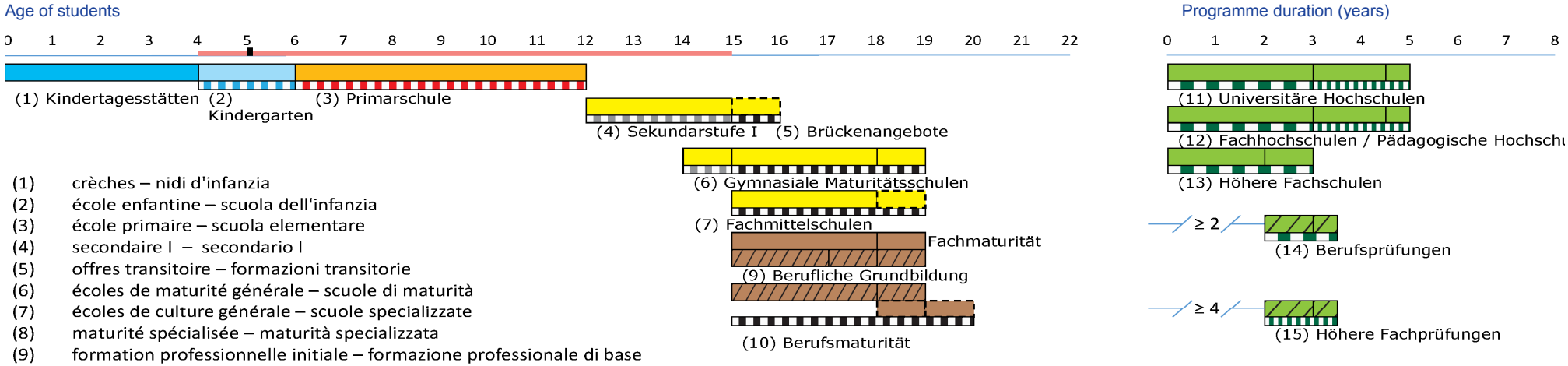
Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

→| Years

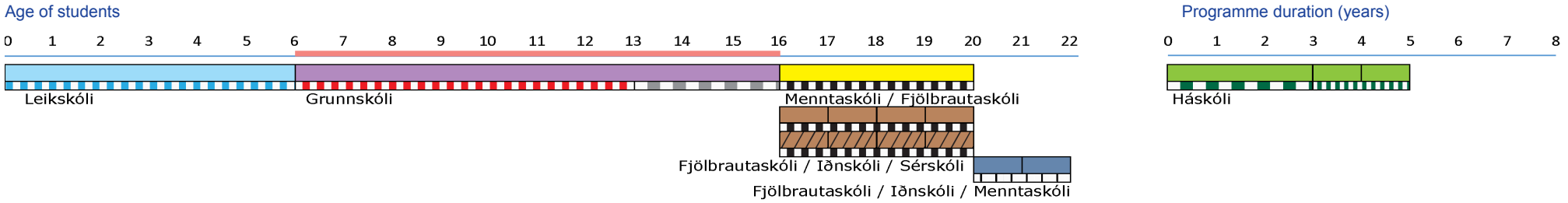
Programme being phased out during (year)

Switzerland

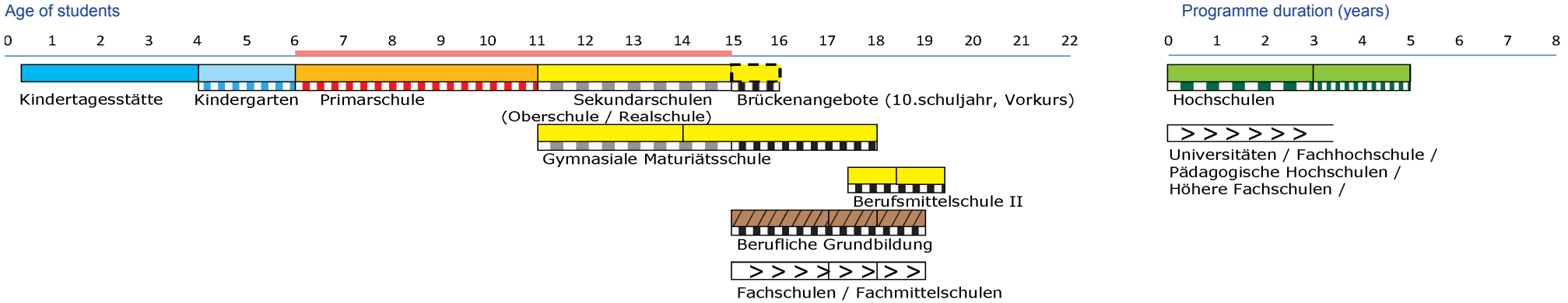


(1) crèches – nidi d'infanzia
(2) école enfantine – scuola dell'infanzia
(3) école primaire – scuola elementare
(4) secondaire I – secondario I
(5) offres transitoire – formazioni transitorie
(6) écoles de maturité générale – scuole di maturità
(7) écoles de culture générale – scuole specializzate
(8) 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

Iceland

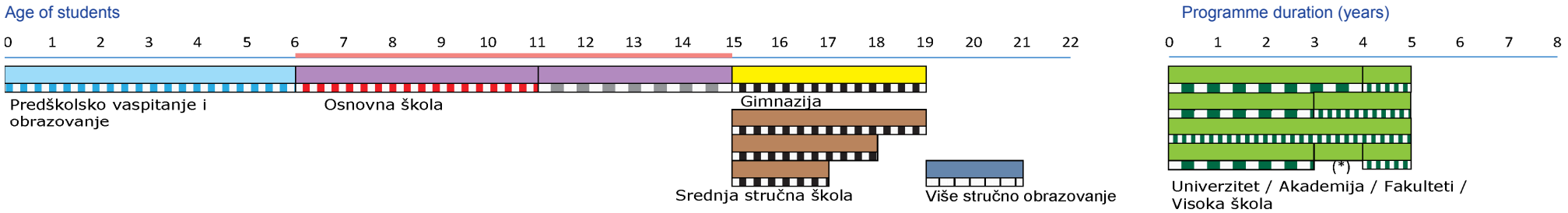


Liechtenstein

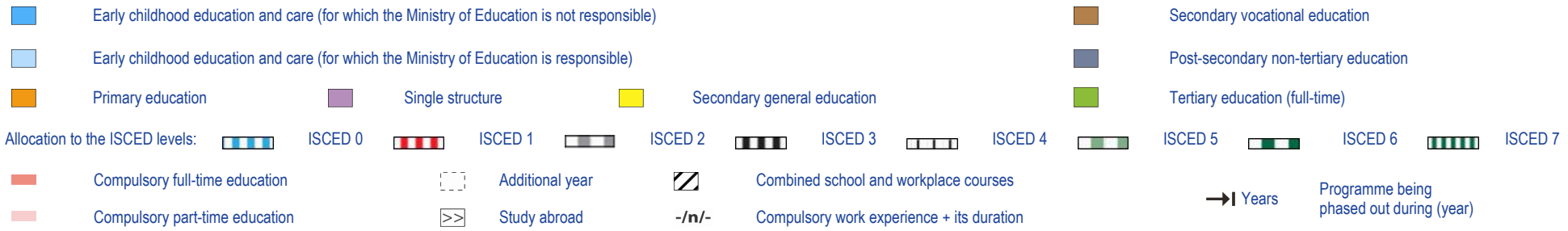


Note: Students in vocational education and the majority of students in higher education attend educational institutions in Switzerland.

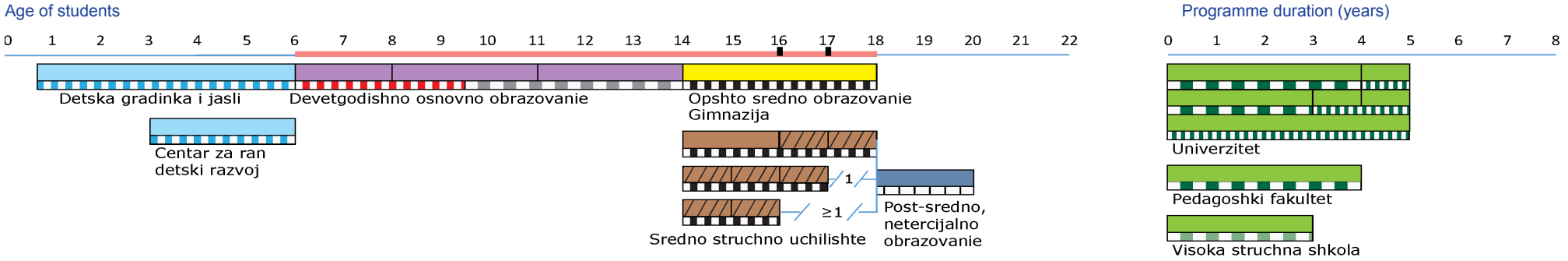
Montenegro



(*): Spec Studies – Students have the right to be enrolled in the postgraduate specialist studies after completing undergraduate studies lasting 3 years (Bachelor Degree). Specialist studies are organized for a period of one year. After completion of specialist study, students have the right to be enrolled in master studies lasting one year. Specialist studies can be treated as II1 (second 1) cycle of the postgraduate studies, while II2 (second 2) cycle relates to the master studies.

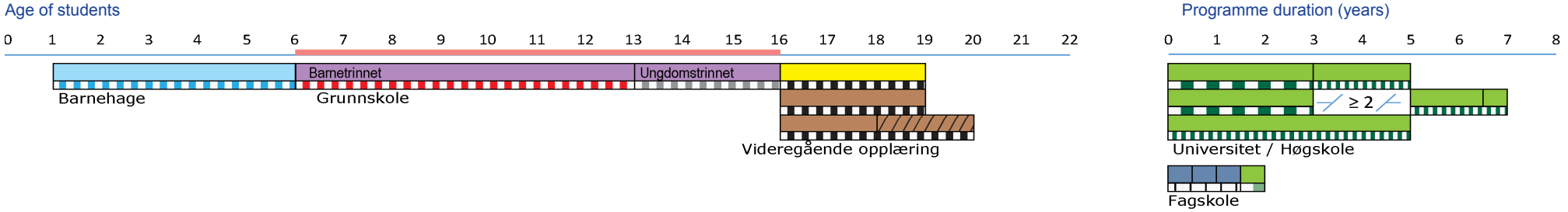


Former Republic Yugoslav of Macedonia

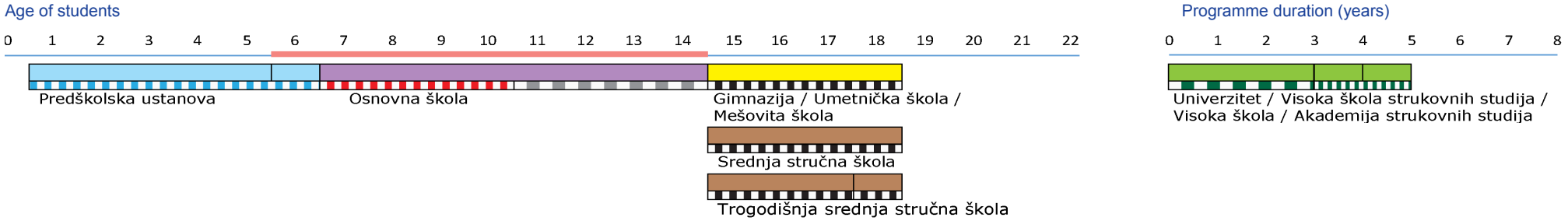


Note: The ending age for compulsory education may vary from 16 to 18 years age depending on the type of programme. The lowest ending age (16) applies to students attending the two years vocational programme *strucno osposobuvanje* while the ending age of 17 applies to those attending the three years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

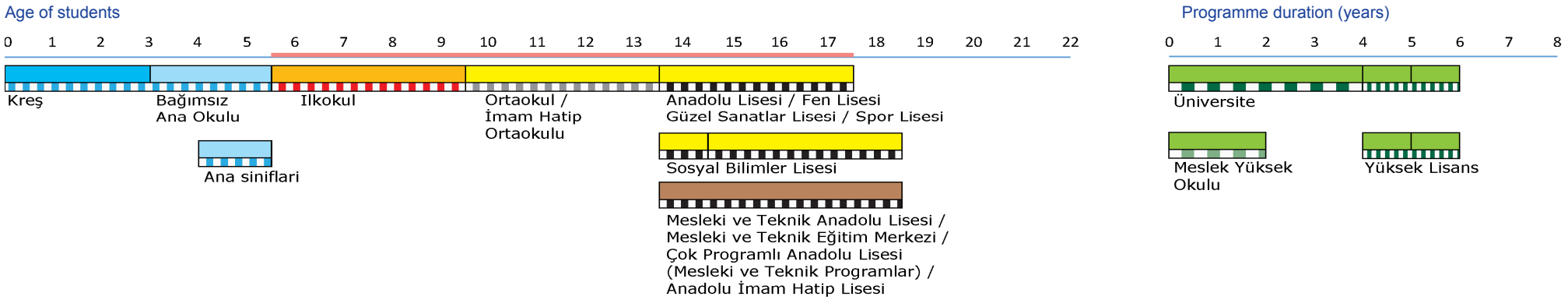
Norway



Serbia



Turkey



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Additional year

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Combined school and workplace courses

-/n/- Compulsory work experience + its duration

Years

Programme being phased out during (year)

EC-AL-16-001-EN-N

The Structure of the European Education Systems 2015/16: Schematic Diagrams

This report provides an overview of the structure of education systems in Europe for 2015/16. In total, 42 education systems are represented. Information covers the 28 EU Member States as well as other countries participating in the Eurydice network.

For each country, diagrams show how the national education system is organised at five education levels: early childhood education and care, primary and secondary education programmes, post-secondary non-tertiary programmes, and the main programmes offered at tertiary level.

For further information on national education systems and related policies: http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice - 'Countries' section.

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.

Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-9492-023-2