



European  
Commission

# Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe 2023

## Key competences at school

Eurydice report



European Education  
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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the 2023 data collection on the structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in the area of key competences.

The report contains indicators on key policies related to:

1. cross-curricular learning at school;
2. active student participation in decision-making at school.

The report contains information for the 2022/2023 school year. Participating countries include the EU Member States, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye <sup>(1)</sup>.

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<sup>(1)</sup> This report is based on information from 38 European education systems. Switzerland does not participate in the project on *Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe*.

## KEY COMPETENCES AT SCHOOL

The indicators in this report provide information on a selection of national policies and structures that contribute to achieving the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (2021–2030) <sup>(2)</sup>. In particular, the strategic framework contains seven EU-level targets. One of these targets relates to basic skills and aims to reduce the proportion of 15-year-olds underachieving in reading, mathematics and science to less than 15 % by 2030 <sup>(3)</sup>.

While low student achievement in basic skills continues to be a concern for many European countries, the earlier structural indicators on achievement in basic skills (that were annually updated in the 2015–2022 period) <sup>(4)</sup> are now extended to the area of key competences as a whole. Therefore, instead of aiming to capture the specificities of each separate key competence domain, the focus of this new set of structural indicators is on **horizontal enablers** that broadly support the development of the key competences.

The following horizontal enablers have been identified based on the annex to the [2018 Council Recommendation](#) on key competences for lifelong learning:

- cross-discipline learning;
- partnerships across levels;
- cross-sectorial cooperation (external actors);
- active participation and decision-making of learners;
- guidance and support for innovative learning methodologies and environments (including access to centres of expertise, tools and materials);
- competence-oriented approaches in initial teacher education (ITE), CPD and staff exchanges/peer learning;
- quality assurance policies (e.g. inspection, school self-evaluation), gauging for example competence development, assessment tools, learning experiences, school climate and well-being).

In the absence of a previous Eurydice report on horizontal enablers, the development of indicators for key competences will be progressive. In 2023 the Eurydice network developed and collected data on two main indicators that each contain several sub-indicators.

The focus of the indicators is primary and general secondary education (ISCED 1, 24 and 34). Where national information differs depending on the education level, figures present the situation at general lower secondary education (ISCED 24) and variations are discussed in the analysis.

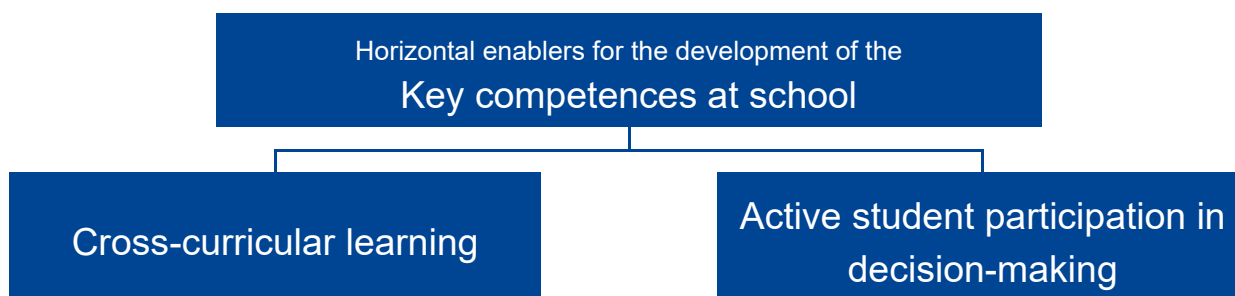
Official documents (legislation, regulations, recommendations, national strategies, action plans, etc.) that have been issued and/or are recognised by top-level authorities are the main sources of information in this report.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Council Resolution of 19 February 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021–2030), 2021/C 66/1.

<sup>(3)</sup> Council Resolution of 19 February 2021 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021–2030). 2021/C 66/1.

<sup>(4)</sup> See for instance, European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2022. *Structural indicators for monitoring education and training systems in Europe – 2022: Overview of major reforms since 2015*. Eurydice background report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union and earlier updates.



## 1. Cross-curricular learning at school

The indicators in this section are concerned with top-level promotion of cross-curricular (or cross-disciplinary, transversal) learning at school. Under this approach, rather than only explicitly mentioned as part of particular subjects, educational content and objectives are understood to be transversal and therefore taught across subjects and curriculum activities.

The indicators explore whether the curriculum or other steering documents contain explicit references to this approach and in relation to which areas/competences. The indicators are also concerned with top-level support for teachers for the delivery of cross-curricular learning and whether there are related criteria in external and internal school evaluations.

Figure 1 shows that in most European education systems the cross-curricular approach to learning is explicitly promoted in the curriculum and/or other steering documents. In general lower secondary education, more than half of all systems promote this approach for all learning content. This means that all subjects or subject areas have to contribute to the teaching and learning of cross-curricular topics. In another eight systems <sup>(5)</sup> the cross-curricular approach is explicitly promoted in relation to only some of the learning content (e.g. in relation to the compulsory curriculum only). In five education systems <sup>(6)</sup> cross-curricular learning is not explicitly promoted by the top-level education authorities. In some of these cases (French Community of Belgium <sup>(7)</sup> and Poland) the issue is subject to local/school autonomy.

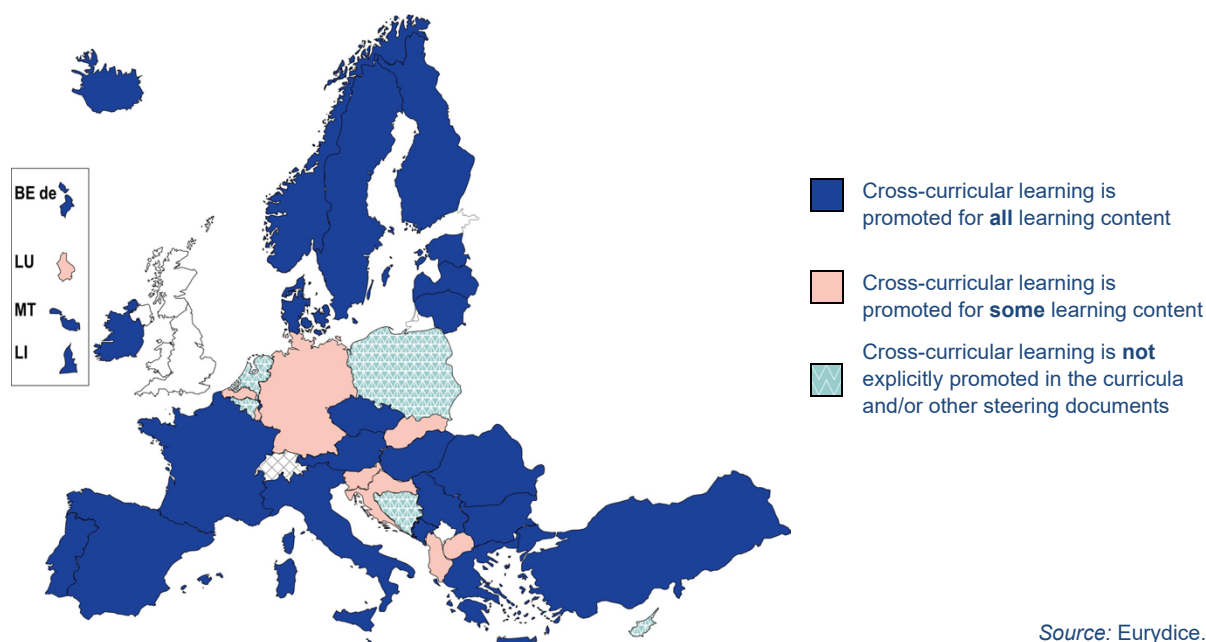
Across education levels, cross-curricular learning where all subjects or subject areas have to include cross-curricular topics is most often promoted in primary education and least so in upper secondary general education.

<sup>(5)</sup> Flemish Community of Belgium, Germany, Croatia, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Slovakia, Albania and North Macedonia.

<sup>(6)</sup> French Community of Belgium, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Poland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>(7)</sup> As part of the ongoing reform 'Pact for Excellence in Teaching' in the French Community of Belgium, the cross-curricular approach to learning is explicitly promoted in the new reference guidelines and is implemented gradually. See the New Reference Guidelines: <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=28597&navi=4920#documents>.

**Figure 1: Explicit promotion of cross-curricular learning in the curriculum and/or other steering documents, general lower secondary education (ISCED 24), 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

Promotion of cross-curricular learning for all or some learning content means that, depending on the education system, either all or only some subjects or subject areas have to include cross-curricular topics.

In many education systems the promotion of the cross-curricular approach to learning is closely linked to the development of the key competences and the fact that these competences are interrelated. Study areas that often have to be taught in a cross-curricular way include personal and social development, environmental education, entrepreneurship, media education, multicultural education, health education and others. In some education systems (e.g. German-speaking community of Belgium and Portugal), while cross-curricular learning is promoted for all subjects, schools choose the themes where they would work in a cross-curricular way.

Some examples that can serve as an illustration of different approaches are given below.

In **Czechia**, the Framework Education Programme for Basic Education (FEP) <sup>(8)</sup> defines seven key competences and emphasises that these competences are interlinked, have a cross-subject nature and can only be acquired as a result of a comprehensive education process. In addition, the same document outlines six cross-curricular topics (personal and social education, democratic citizenship, education towards thinking in European and global contexts, multicultural education, environmental education, and media education). These cross-curricular topics form a compulsory part of education. Schools must gradually offer pupils all the thematic areas of the individual cross-curricular topics set by the FEP. Cross-curricular subjects can be implemented as a part of the educational content of the subjects of instruction, dedicated separate projects, seminars, courses and discussions, among other things, or taught as independent subjects. The scope and method of implementation is determined by the school educational programme (SEP), according to which education is carried out at the school.

In **Estonia**, the national curricula for basic schools and upper secondary schools <sup>(9)</sup> focus on the development of general and subject competences. General competences (value competence, social competence, self-management competence, learning to learn competence, etc.) are shaped through all subjects and in extracurricular and out-of-school activities. The curricula stress the importance of the integration of studies which can be achieved through, inter alia, cross-curricular topics such as the environment and sustainable development, technology and innovation and cultural identity. All subject field syllabuses contain instructions for integrating general competences and cross-curricular topics in the learning process.

<sup>(8)</sup> Framework Education Programme for Basic Education (Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání): <https://www.npi.cz/ramcove-vzdelavaci-programy-zakladni-vzdelavani>.

<sup>(9)</sup> National curriculum for basic schools (see Annex 12 for cross-curricular topics), <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/524092014014/consolide>; National curriculum for upper secondary schools (see Annex 13 for cross-curricular topics, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/524092014009/consolide>; Education Strategy 2021–2035, <https://www.hm.ee/media/1590/download>.



In **Finland**, in addition to individual school subjects, pupils learn broader skills and transversal competences. These competences cross subject boundaries. The National Core Curriculum emphasises the following skills and competences:

- thinking and learning to learn;
- cultural competence, interaction and self-expression;
- taking care of oneself and managing daily life;
- multiliteracy;
- ICT competence;
- working life competence and entrepreneurship;
- participation, involvement and building a sustainable future.

The objectives of the transversal competences are discussed in detail in the National Core Curriculum by grade groups. They are considered when defining the objectives and key content areas of the subjects. The subject descriptions point out the links between the objectives of the subjects and the objectives of the transversal competences <sup>(10)</sup>.

In **Liechtenstein**, cross-curricular learning is an important topic in the curriculum. Intra-subject and cross-subject cross-references show connections between contents of the curriculum that come up in different subject areas and that complement each other. They provide suggestions for cross-curricular work or show where students' existing knowledge and skills can be linked <sup>(11)</sup>.

In **Serbia**, the cross-curricular approach is mentioned in the curriculum and in the Law on the Education System Foundations. The law states that one of the main goals of education in Serbia is the development of key competencies for lifelong learning, cross-curricular competencies and professional competencies. The general cross-curricular competencies are defined for primary and secondary education in Article 12. The cross-curricular approach is used in the teaching of all subjects, through different situations and contexts when pupils are solving different problems and tasks. Additionally, according to the Bylaw on Standards of General Cross-curricular Competences in the End of Secondary Education, 11 general cross-curricular competencies were defined as the most relevant for the preparation of pupils for active participation in society and lifelong learning <sup>(12)</sup>.

In addition to promoting the cross-curricular approach in curricula and other steering documents, top-level authorities may also put in place specific measures to support teachers in delivering cross-curricular learning. Figure 2 shows that such measures exist in the majority of education systems. In terms of the types of support that are widespread, top-level authorities most often support opportunities for CPD on cross-curricular learning. Top-level support for mandatory or non-mandatory ITE courses related to cross-curricular learning and support for teacher networks and collaboration on cross-curricular learning tend to be less common.

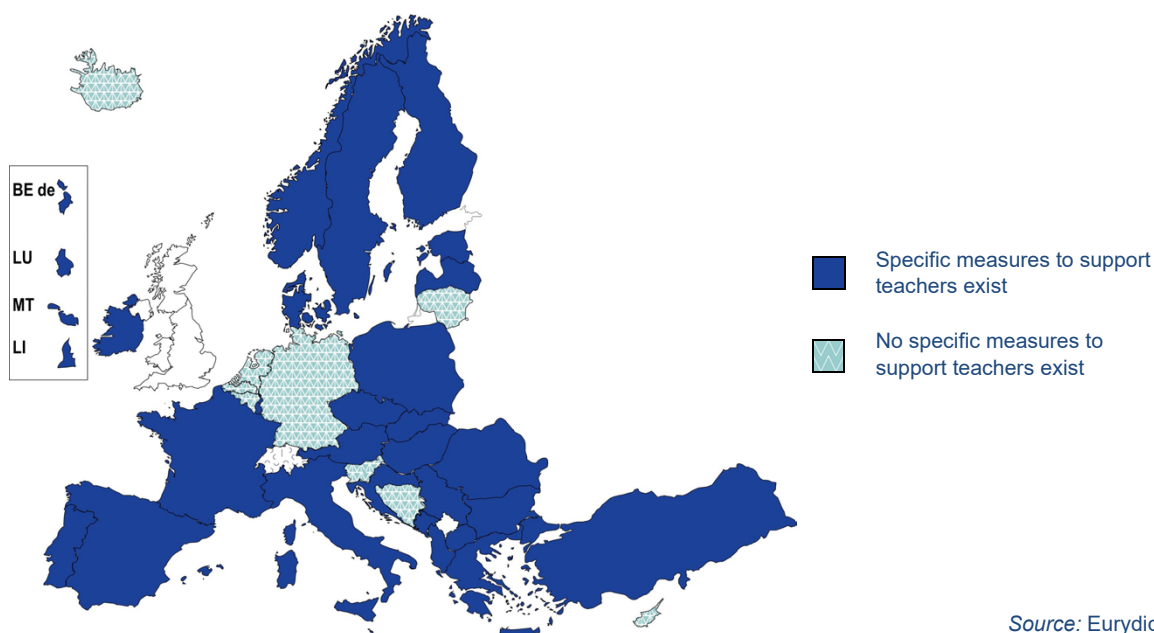
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<sup>(10)</sup> National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 in Finnish  
[https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/perusopetuksen\\_opetussuunnitelman\\_perusteet\\_2014.pdf](https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/perusopetuksen_opetussuunnitelman_perusteet_2014.pdf).

<sup>(11)</sup> <https://fl.lehrplan.ch/index.php?code=e|100|1>.

<sup>(12)</sup> Law on the Education System Foundations (2021):  
<https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2017/88/1/reg>;  
Bylaw on Standards of General Cross-curricular Competences in the End of Secondary Education (2013):  
[https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/obrazovni\\_standardi/Opsti\\_standardi\\_postignuca/MEDJUPREDMETNE%20KOMPETENCIJE.pdf](https://ceo.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/obrazovni_standardi/Opsti_standardi_postignuca/MEDJUPREDMETNE%20KOMPETENCIJE.pdf).

**Figure 2: Top-level measures to support teachers in delivering cross-curricular learning (ISCED 1, 24 and 34), 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

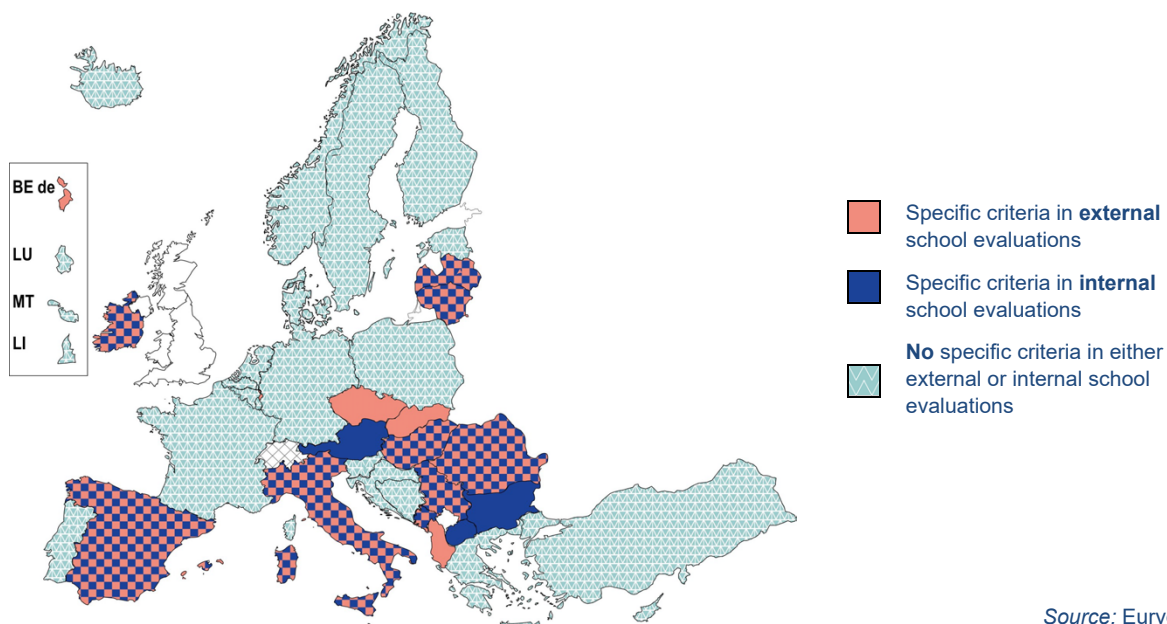
**Explanatory note**

Top-level measures to support teachers include mandatory and non-mandatory ITE courses, development of CPD, support for teacher networks / collaboration on cross-curricular learning and other measures.

Finally, Figure 3 demonstrates that only around one third of all systems have set specific quality criteria relating to cross-curricular learning in external an/or internal school evaluations. In the rest of the systems either such criteria do not exist or, less often, external or internal evaluations do not take place at all.

In Ireland, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania, Montenegro and Serbia, criteria relating to cross-curricular learning exist for both external and internal school evaluations.

**Figure 3: Specific criteria related to cross-curricular learning in external and/or internal school evaluations (ISCED 1, 24 and 34), 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

For instance, in **Ireland**, School Self Evaluation draws on the Quality Framework for Schools, which includes a statement that 'teachers... are able to link curriculum area and subject-specific skills and knowledge across and beyond the curriculum' <sup>(13)</sup>.

In **Italy**, the document 'Inspection visit schedule and protocol' produced by INVALSI (National Institute of Evaluation of Educational System) highlights the overlap between the eight key competences, their cross-curricular aspect and the importance of determining whether the school has developed a 'competence-oriented approach'. The specific quality criteria are defined as follows: 'Learners acquire good levels in citizenship competence, in learning to learn competence, in digital competence, in entrepreneurship competence... The acquisition of the key competences is not directly linked to any specific school subject' <sup>(14)</sup>.

In **Lithuania**, the thematic and risk external assessments of schools evaluate, among other aspects, how the school aims for the meaningful integration and the interdisciplinarity of learning experiences and how the content of education programmes is integrated based on topics, problems, methods and priority educational objectives such as a healthy lifestyle, safety, entrepreneurship and career development <sup>(15)</sup>.

In **Austria**, the 'Quality Framework for Schools' forms the basis for quality development and assurance at schools. Criteria relating to cross-curricular learning are included in section "3.1. Designing learning and teaching processes", which aims to establish whether 'teachers and other pedagogical staff (...) plan and organise their teaching based on the subject-related and interdisciplinary competences laid down in the curricula' <sup>(16)</sup>.

In **Romania**, the classroom observation guidelines in the internal school evaluation methodology note that the teaching process needs to be analysed from the perspective of the inter- and cross-disciplinary approach to teaching <sup>(17)</sup>.

## 2. Active student participation in decision-making at school

The indicators in this section focus on the top-level regulations and recommendations for the involvement of students in school governance and decision-making. They examine the role played by students in school management and the opportunities for them to influence learning content, methods and activities, including through potential student input in external and internal school evaluations and in the elaboration of school development plans.

The indicators are focused on student participation in decision-making at the school level and are therefore not concerned with the various student representative bodies and organisations that are active at the national level.

Figure 4 shows that in the majority of European education systems top-level regulations or recommendations require that students participate in decision-making at the school level. In 10 systems <sup>(18)</sup> these requirements are in force only from general lower secondary education on and do not concern primary education students, even though in some systems, such as the Spanish one, primary students may be involved, under certain conditions.

Despite the existence of laws and other top-level regulations, student involvement in decision-making may be subject to a certain degree of school autonomy. For instance, in Luxembourg, every school has to set up a student council <sup>(19)</sup>. However, it often depends on the individual schools to what extent students get the opportunity to actively participate in any of the areas listed below. Nevertheless,

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<sup>(13)</sup> Guides to Inspection: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/61eafd-guide-to-inspections-in-schools/>. Looking at our School (Quality Framework) <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b1bb3-looking-at-our-school-2022/>.

<sup>(14)</sup> DPR no. 80 2013 (art. 3 e art. 6): [https://www.istruzione.it/valutazione/allegati/DPR\\_%2028\\_03\\_13.pdf](https://www.istruzione.it/valutazione/allegati/DPR_%2028_03_13.pdf)  
'Inspection visit scheduled and protocol' - It: Programma e protocollo visite NEV (<https://www.invalsi.it/snv/docs/0220/Programma%20e%20protocollo%20visite%20valutazione%20esterna.pdf>).  
See also: [https://www.invalsi.it/snv/docs/ccfsnv/Documento\\_divulgativo\\_DEF.pdf](https://www.invalsi.it/snv/docs/ccfsnv/Documento_divulgativo_DEF.pdf).

<sup>(15)</sup> Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministro 2007 m. balandžio 2 d. įsakymas Nr. ISAK-587 „Dėl mokyklų, vykdančių bendrojo ugdymo programas, veiklos išorinio vertinimo organizavimo ir vykdymo tvarkos aprašo patvirtinimo“, <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.68FF0ECA6630/asr>.

<sup>(16)</sup> 'QMS - the Austrian Quality Management System for Schools' and 'Quality Framework for Schools': <https://www.qms.at/english; online-platform IQES Austria: https://www.iqesonline.net/at/>.

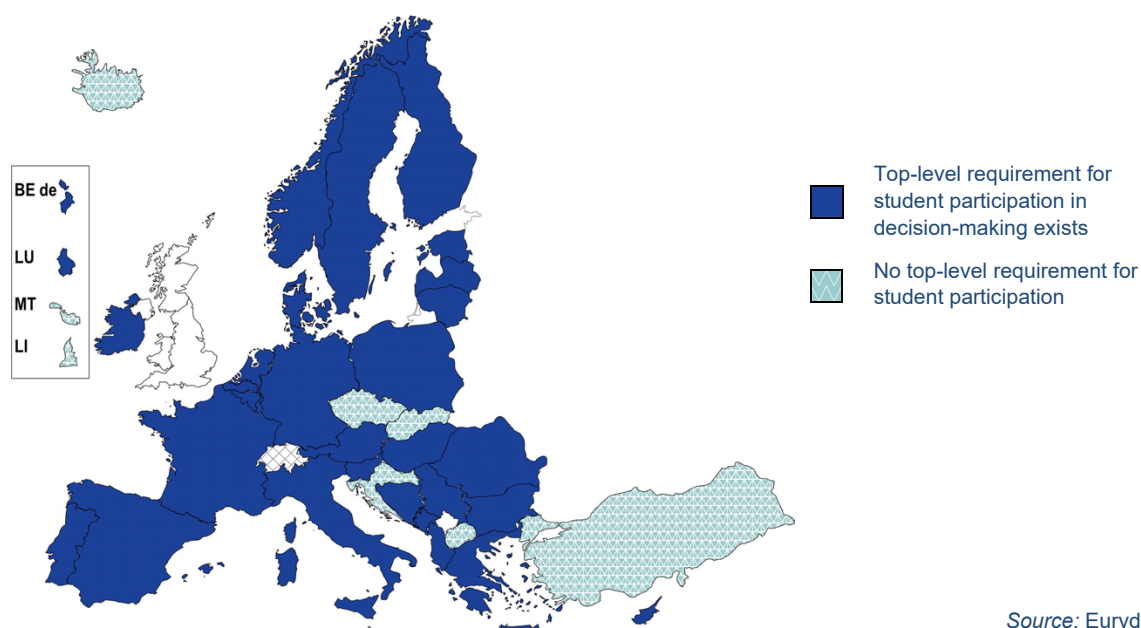
<sup>(17)</sup> See Article 40 of the Inspection Regulation <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/235690>.

<sup>(18)</sup> Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

<sup>(19)</sup> <https://www.cnel.lu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Organisationdescomitesdeleves20082001.pdf>.

students hold two seats on every secondary school council (which also includes members of the school administration, teachers and parents) and can thus actively influence decisions.

**Figure 4: Top-level requirement for student participation in decision-making at school, general lower secondary education (ISCED 24), 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note**

Student participation in decision-making at school refers to participation in school management, design and delivery of learning, the elaboration of school strategies on well-being/anti-bullying and equality, the elaboration of sustainability declarations and actions and other areas.

Student involvement in decision-making at school may concern a range of areas such as:

- school management (budget, decisions on school infrastructure, internal regulations, etc.);
- the design and delivery of learning (choice of study topics, feedback on missing perspectives in the curriculum, feedback on the use of innovative/engaging teaching practices, etc.);
- the elaboration of well-being/anti-bullying strategies at school;
- the elaboration of equality strategies at school;
- the elaboration of sustainability declarations and actions at school;
- various reporting and evaluation activities related to school activities;
- other relevant areas such as school partnerships, extra-curricular activities, allocation of student aid.

Across Europe, student councils, parliaments and other similar bodies formulate opinions and proposals on various issues that relate to school governance and school activities. The degree of student involvement may vary depending on the education level, with older students in secondary education tending to participate in discussions on a wider range of issues and providing more substantial contributions.

For instance, in **Spain**, the School Council brings together the different members of the educational community. Primary students may be represented on the School Council, with voice but no vote under the conditions established by the educational project of the school. At the secondary level, up to four student representatives participate in the School Council, which also includes parents, teachers, administration and local government, and which meets at least once per term. As members of the School Council, students are requested to:

- approve the draft budget of the school and its execution;
- establish the guidelines for the elaboration of the educational project, approve it and evaluate it;
- establish the procedures for its review and evaluation;
- solve conflicts and impose corrections, for pedagogical purposes, that correspond to those behaviours of the students that seriously harm coexistence in the school, in accordance with the rights and duties of students;
- analyse and evaluate the high school, especially the efficiency in the management of resources, as well as the application of the rules of coexistence and prepare a report that will be included in the annual report <sup>(20)</sup>.

In **Finland**, the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education notes that ‘The school respects pupils’ right to participate in decision-making as indicated by their age and level of development. The pupils take part in planning, implementing and evaluating their own learning, joint schoolwork, and the learning environment. (...) By experience, the pupils learn about involvement, decision-making and responsibility’ <sup>(21)</sup>. The national core curriculum for general upper secondary education mentions that ‘The general upper secondary school promotes each student’s participation and creates (...) versatile opportunities for participating in developing the learning environment and school culture. (...) The students’ participation in building the community’s activities and well-being is ensured. The students are encouraged to state their opinions, participate in taking decisions on joint matters [and] act responsibly in communities and society. They are encouraged to be active and participate through channels such as the student association and tutor activities’ <sup>(22)</sup>.

In **France**, at *collège* (lower secondary education) and at *lycée* (upper secondary education), two student delegates are elected in each class at the beginning of the school year. Together with staff members and parents, some student delegates are members of the Council for College Life (CVC) and Council of delegates for lycée life (CVL). These councils allow for exchanges to be had between students and the rest of the school community. Students express their views and make proposals related to the functioning of the school, such as:

- the general principles of the organisation of schooling, the organisation of school time, the preparation of the school project and the rules of procedure, school equipment, catering, etc.;
- the organisation of individual work, support for students and exchange programmes with foreign schools;
- improving students’ well-being and school climate and promoting participatory practices;
- the implementation of the artistic and cultural education pathway, the citizen pathway, the ‘Future’ pathway and the health education pathway;
- orientation activities; organisation of sports, cultural and extracurricular activities; language exchanges; and health, hygiene and safety.

In addition, eco-delegates are elected by the students in their class. These delegates raise awareness about sustainability issues and mobilise students and schools for actions in favour of biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation <sup>(23)</sup>.

Finally, Figure 5 shows that in general lower secondary education half of all education systems do not require that students provide input in quality assurance mechanisms at the school level. For each of the three categories of quality assurance that are considered – external school evaluation, internal school evaluation and elaboration of a school development plan – around a third of all systems require student participation.

For instance, in **Romania**, the methodologies for both external and internal school evaluations include the administration of dedicated student questionnaires. The collected information relates to student opinions about the education process, well-being and the effectiveness of support measures initiated by the school <sup>(24)</sup>.

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<sup>(20)</sup> Royal Decree 82/1996, of 26 January, which approves the Organic Regulation of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education Schools. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1996-3689>.  
Royal Decree 83/1996, of 26 January, which approves the Organic Regulation of the High Schools of Secondary Education. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1996-3834>.

<sup>(21)</sup> National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 in Finnish [https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/perusopetuksen\\_opetussuunnitelman\\_perusteet\\_2014.pdf](https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/perusopetuksen_opetussuunnitelman_perusteet_2014.pdf)  
Perusopetuslaki in Finnish <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1998/19980628>.

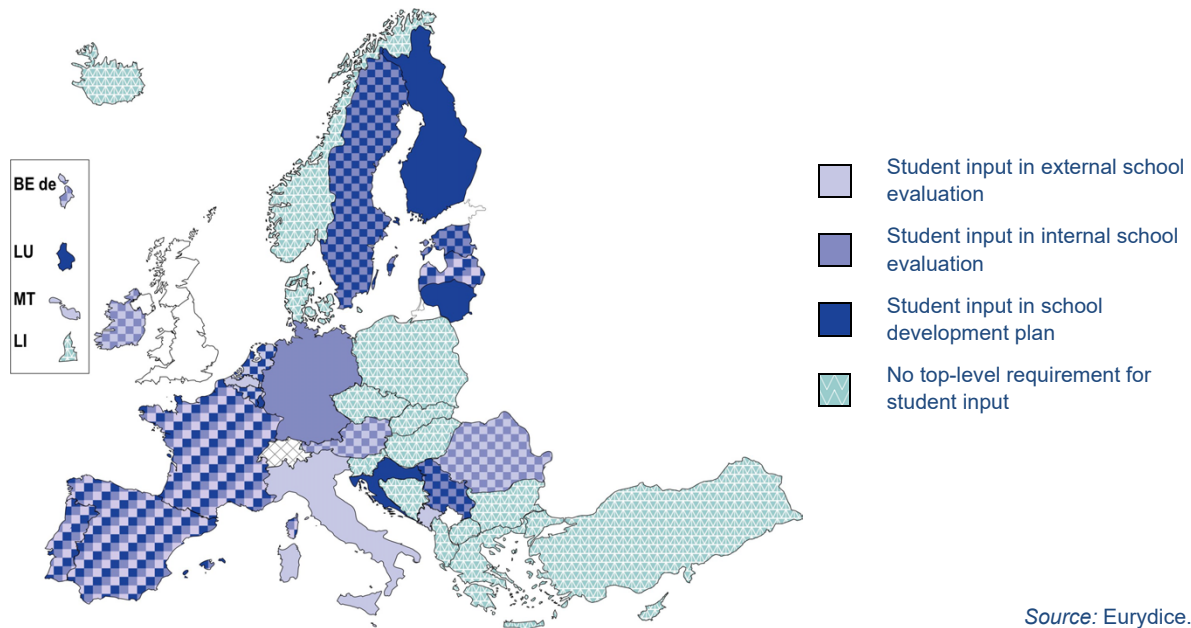
<sup>(22)</sup> National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education 2019 in Finnish [https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/lukion\\_opetussuunnitelman\\_perusteet\\_2019.pdf](https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/lukion_opetussuunnitelman_perusteet_2019.pdf).  
Act on General Upper Secondary Education in Finnish <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2018/en20180714>.

<sup>(23)</sup> <https://www.education.gouv.fr/les-representants-des-eleves-au-college-et-au-lycee-7514>.



Across education levels, there is a slight increase in participation in quality assurance activities as students move from primary to secondary education.

**Figure 5: Top-level requirement for student participation in quality assurance mechanisms, general lower secondary education (ISCED 24), 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

In Spain, France, Latvia and Portugal students are involved in all three quality assurance activities.

In **Spain**, at secondary level, student representatives in the School Council:

- analyse and assess the results of the evaluation of the school carried out by the educational administration or any report referring to its progress;
- analyse and evaluate the evolution of the school's general school performance;
- establish the guidelines for the elaboration of the educational project, approve it and evaluate it;
- establish the procedures for its review and evaluation;
- approve and evaluate the general programming of the school, respecting, in any case, the teaching aspects that are the responsibility of the faculty;
- approve the internal regulations;
- approve and evaluate the general programming of complementary school activities;
- inform the annual report on the activities and general situation of the institute <sup>(25)</sup>.

In some countries such as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, even though there is no top-level requirement, students may participate in interviews and provide feedback as part of external school evaluations. Also, based on school autonomy, schools in some countries may choose to involve students in internal school evaluations and when developing their improvement action plans

<sup>(24)</sup> External evaluation methodology, promoted by the Ministerial Order 3958/2022: <https://aracip.eu/storage/app/media/2022/Diverse/Ordine%20Ministru/Ordin%20nr.%203958%20-%2006.06.2022%20-%20Privind%20aprobarea%20calendarului%20C8%99i%20a%20procedurii%20de%20evaluare%20extern%C4%83%20%C3%AEn%20vederea%20acredit%C4%83rii%20-%20evalu%C4%83rii%20periodice.pdf>. Internal evaluation methodology, County School Inspectorates: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/235690>.

<sup>(25)</sup> Royal Decree 82/1996, of 26 January, which approves the Organic Regulation of Early Childhood Education and Primary Education Schools. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1996-3689>. Royal Decree 83/1996, of 26 January, which approves the Organic Regulation of the High Schools of Secondary Education. <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-1996-3834>.

(as is the case in Norway). However, this may not be systematically done in every school, and, in some cases, the involvement of students may be only indirect.

## MAIN FINDINGS

### 1. Cross-curricular learning at school

Most European education systems explicitly promote the cross-curricular approach to learning in their steering documents. Cross-curricular learning where all subjects or subject areas have to include cross-curricular topics is most widespread in primary education and least so in upper secondary general education.

Study areas that are often taught using the cross-curricular approach to learning include personal and social development, environmental education, entrepreneurship, media education, multicultural education, health education and other areas. In some systems, while cross-curricular learning is required or recommended, schools have a high degree of autonomy and choose the themes where they work in a cross-curricular way. In a few cases, top-level authorities do not explicitly promote cross-curricular learning and this issue is entirely left to the discretion of individual schools.

The top-level authorities in the majority of countries have put in place specific measures to support teachers in delivering cross-curricular learning. Most often top-level support concerns opportunities for CPD, whereas ITE courses related to cross-curricular learning, along with support for teacher networks and collaboration, are less common.

Finally, only around one third of all education systems have set specific quality criteria relating to cross-curricular learning in external and/or internal school evaluations. In the rest of the systems, such criteria either do not exist or, less often, external or internal evaluations do not take place at all.

### 2. Active student participation in decision-making at school

The majority of European education systems require that students participate in decision-making at school, even though in some systems this concerns only secondary education.

Despite the existence of laws and other top-level regulations, the degree of actual student involvement in decision-making, as well as the specific areas where they contribute, may vary depending on the education level and the arrangements made by the individual school.

Student councils, parliaments and similar bodies formulate opinions and proposals on various issues that relate to school management, the design and delivery of learning, the elaboration of well-being/anti-bullying strategies and other issues.

However, only around half of all education systems make sure that students provide input in quality assurance activities. For each of the three categories of quality assurance that are considered – external school evaluation, internal school evaluation and elaboration of a school development plan – around a third of all systems require student participation in lower secondary education.

## GLOSSARY

**Cross-curricular learning.** Under this approach, rather than only explicitly mentioned as part of particular subjects, educational content and objectives are understood to be transversal and therefore taught across subjects and curriculum activities.

**Continuing professional development (CPD).** Refers to the in-service training undertaken throughout a teacher's career that allows them to broaden, develop and update their knowledge, skills and attitudes. It may be formal or non-formal and include both subject-based and pedagogical training. Different formats are offered, such as courses, seminars, workshops, degree programs, peer- or self-observation and/or reflection, support from teacher networks and observation visits. In certain cases, CPD activities may lead to supplementary qualifications.

**Curriculum.** The official programmes of study issued for schools by top-level education authorities. The national curriculum may include learning content, learning objectives, attainment targets, syllabuses or assessment guidelines, and it may be published in any type or any number of official documents. In some countries, the national curriculum is contained in legal decrees. More than one type of curriculum document may contain provisions relating to informatics / computer science, and these may impose different levels of obligation on schools to comply. They may, for example, contain advice, recommendations or regulations. However, whatever the level of obligation, they all establish the basic framework in which schools develop their own teaching to meet their pupils' needs.

**External school evaluation.** Refers to an evaluation conducted by evaluators who report to a local, regional or top-level education authority and who are not directly involved in the activities of the school being evaluated. Such an evaluation covers a broad range of school activities, including teaching and learning and all aspects of the management of the school.

**Initial teacher education (ITE).** Period of study and training which aims to provide prospective teachers with core professional competences and to develop the attitudes needed for their future role and responsibilities. Higher education institutions are the main providers of ITE in most European education systems.

**Internal school evaluation.** Refers to an evaluation undertaken by persons or groups of persons who are directly involved with the school (such as the school head or its teaching and administrative staff and students). Teaching and/or management tasks may be evaluated.

**International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).** The ISCED was developed to facilitate the comparison of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. The coverage of ISCED extends to all organised and sustained learning opportunities for children, young people and adults, including those with special educational needs, irrespective of the institutions or organisations providing them or the form in which they are delivered. Text and definitions have been adopted from UNESCO (1997), UNESCO/OECD/Eurostat (2013) and UNESCO / UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011)).

### ISCED 1: Primary education

Programmes at ISCED level 1, or primary education, provide learning and educational activities typically designed to give students fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy). This level establishes a sound foundation for learning and a solid understanding of core areas of knowledge, and fosters personal development, thus preparing students for lower secondary education. It focuses on learning at a basic level of complexity with little, if any, specialisation.



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 6 years, although its duration can range between 4 and 7 years.

### **ISCED 2: Lower secondary education**

Programmes at ISCED level 2, or lower secondary education, typically build on the fundamental teaching and learning processes that begin at ISCED level 1. Usually, the aim at this education level is to lay the foundations for lifelong learning and personal development, preparing students for further educational opportunities. Programmes at this level are usually organised around a more subject-oriented curriculum, introducing theoretical concepts across a broad range of subjects.

This level typically begins around the age of 10 or 13 and usually ends at age 14 or 16, often coinciding with the end of compulsory education.

The ISCED level 24 denotes general lower secondary education.

### **ISCED 3: Upper secondary education**

Programmes at ISCED level 3, or upper secondary education, are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary or higher education or to provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Programmes at this level offer students more subject-based, specialist and in-depth programmes than in lower secondary education (ISCED level 2). They are more differentiated, with a wider range of options and streams available.

This level generally begins at the end of compulsory education. The entry age is typically 14 or 16. There are usually entry requirements (e.g. the completion of compulsory education). The duration of ISCED level 3 varies from 2 to 5 years.

The ISCED level 34 denotes general upper secondary education.

For more information on the ISCED classification, see ISCED 2011

(<http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>).

**Local/school autonomy.** Refers to the fact that the local authorities/schools alone take decisions within the limits set by top-level/local legislation or regulations. Guidelines can nevertheless be provided by the education authority, but they do not restrict school autonomy.

**School development plan.** Refers to a school's strategic plan for improvement. It should bring together, in a clear and simple way, the school priorities, the main measures it will take to raise standards, the resources dedicated to these, and the key outcomes and targets it intends to achieve.

**Top-level authority.** This is the highest level of authority responsible for education in a given country, usually located at the national (state) level. However, for Belgium, Germany and Spain, the *Communautés*, *Länder*, and *Comunidades Autónomas*, respectively, are either wholly responsible or share responsibilities with the state level for all or most areas relating to education. Therefore, these administrations are considered as the top-level authority for the areas where they hold the responsibility, while for those areas for which they share the responsibility with the national (state) level, both are considered to be top-level authorities.



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