

K12 ACADEMICS — WORLD EDUCATION SERIES

Education Systems of Europe

How school works across 45 countries — structure, exams, higher education & more, in plain English.



Find Your Community
2026 EDITION

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

Education around the world.

This volume covers the education systems of **Europe** — a two-page profile of each country, with structure, compulsory years, curriculum, exams, higher education and more. From K12 Academics, reaching 185 countries every month.

HOW EACH PROFILE WORKS

The left page introduces the system and its structure; the right page covers schools, curriculum, exams and higher education, with the key facts at a glance. Systems evolve, so each links to its full, updated guide online.



Albania

EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

Albania has a centralized, state-supported education system overseen by the Ministry of Education and Sports , with Albanian as the language of instruction in public schools. Literacy is high (around 98–99%), and since joining the Bologna Process in 2003 the country has aligned its universities with the European...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Basic education (9 years)** — Five years of primary + four years of lower secondary — compulsory for all students
- ✓ **Upper secondary — general** — The three-year gymnasium (gjimnaz) , focused on academic preparation for university
- ✓ **Upper secondary — vocational** — Vocational/technical programs lasting two to five years, aligned to the labor market
- ✓ **Graduation exams** — Students sit graduation exams at the end of grade 9 and again at the end of grade 12

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

- ✓ **School year** — Two semesters, September/October to June/July
- ✓ **School week** — Monday to Friday
- ✓ **Preschool** — Non-compulsory early years before primary
- ✓ **School life expectancy** — Around 16 years — high by regional standards

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Albania is developing inclusive education , with growing support for students with disabilities and additional needs as it aligns with European standards. Provision and resources still vary, and support is stronger in urban areas.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Albanian
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State Matura
Currency	Lek (ALL)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The great majority of Albanian students attend free public schools (there are roughly 5,000 schools nationwide), with instruction in Albanian. Many schools have been rebuilt and modernized in recent years, and the state has invested in strengthening vocational education to support the economy.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Albania has a growing private sector , concentrated in Tirana and larger cities, including private K–12 schools and international/foreign-curriculum schools. At the university level, private institutions are numerous — of about 40 higher-education institutions , roughly 26 are private (14 public). Confirm accreditation with the state...

READ THE FULL ALBANIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 02 OF 45

Andorra

EDUCATION IN ANDORRA

Andorra — a small principality of roughly 80,000 people between France and Spain — has one of the world's most distinctive education setups: three publicly funded school systems operate side by side , and families are free to choose among them. All are free, and Catalan (the country's official language) is taught across all three.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Andorran system** — Maternal → primary → secondary, following the Andorran curriculum in Catalan (with strong French, Spanish, and English)
- ✓ **French system** — The French national structure (école → collège → lycée)
- ✓ **Spanish system** — The Spanish structure (primaria → ESO → bachillerato), in state or Congregation (Catholic) schools

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 6 to 16 across all three systems. Because the systems run in parallel, parents effectively choose their child's language of instruction and curriculum pathway from the start.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

All three systems are publicly funded and free . The Andorran system (Escola Andorrana) is the country's own national system; the French and Spanish systems operate through long-standing agreements with France and Spain, which support staffing and curriculum. Together they mean a very small country offers three complete, free educational...



AT A GLANCE

Official language	Catalan
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Systems	3 parallel
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Andorra
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Beyond the three main (publicly funded) systems, the Spanish "Congregation" schools are Catholic institutions within the Spanish pathway, and a limited number of other private options exist. For most families, however, the choice is among the three co-existing systems rather than a separate private sector.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Curriculum depends on the chosen system, but multilingualism is the defining feature : Catalan is taught in all three, and students typically develop strong Catalan, French, Spanish, and English . The Andorran system in particular emphasizes this multilingual, plurinational identity.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Andorra; the three-system choice already offers families substantial flexibility over curriculum and language, so nearly all children attend one of the established systems.

READ THE FULL ANDORRA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 03 OF 45

Austria

EDUCATION IN AUSTRIA

Austria has a well-funded, largely public education system with German as the language of instruction. A defining feature is its early tracking : after four years of primary school, students (around age 10) move into either a more academic or a more general/vocational pathway. Austria is also famous for its dual apprenticeship system...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary — Volksschule (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10, a common foundation
- ✓ **Lower secondary (age ~10+)** — Either the general Mittelschule (MS) or the academic lower Gymnasium (AHS)
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — The academic Gymnasium (AHS) leading to the Matura; vocational colleges (BHS , 5 years, giving both the Matura and a qualification) and schools (...)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

- ✓ **Free** — Public schooling carries no tuition
- ✓ **School year** — September to early July
- ✓ **Early choice** — The academic/vocational direction is chosen around age 10

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The large majority of Austrian students attend free public schools . The system is well-resourced, and its strength in vocational education — both school-based (BHS/BMS) and the dual apprenticeship model — is internationally admired for smoothing the transition from school to work.

AT A GLANCE

Language	German
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	4 + split tracks
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Austria has a modest private sector , including Catholic and other confessional schools and a number of international schools in Vienna and other cities. Many private schools receive public support and follow the national framework.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers German, mathematics, sciences, history and geography, foreign languages (especially English), and the arts , with religious education offered. Vocational tracks add strong technical and professional content aligned to specific fields.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The key qualification is the Matura (Reifeprüfung) , taken at the end of the academic Gymnasium or a vocational college (BHS). The Matura certifies completion of upper secondary and is the general entrance qualification for university . Apprentices complete a final apprenticeship examination in their trade.

READ THE FULL AUSTRIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





Belarus

EDUCATION IN BELARUS

Belarus, a post-Soviet country in Eastern Europe, runs an 11-year general-education system in which both Belarusian and Russian are official languages of instruction (Russian is widely used in practice). Literacy is near-universal, and the system retains strong Soviet-era foundations, particularly in mathematics and the sciences.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Basic secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **General secondary (grades 10–11)** — Upper-secondary study leading to university, alongside vocational and technical options

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

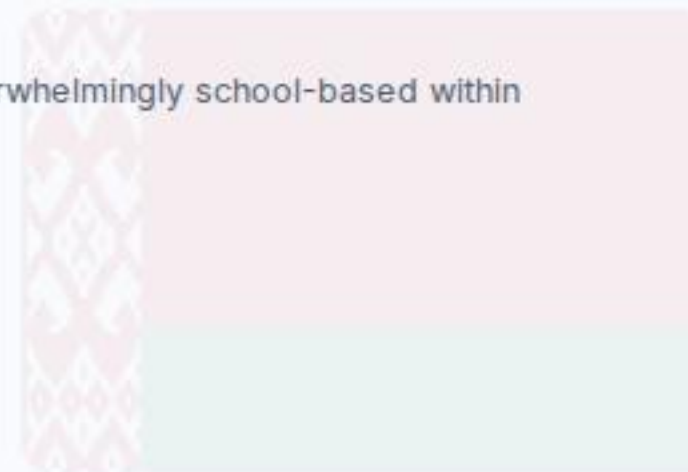
Education is compulsory from age 6 to 15 (grades 1–9). Most students then continue to complete secondary education or enter vocational/technical programs. The school year runs September to June , and public education is free.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Nearly all Belarusian students attend free state schools . The system is centralized and state-run, with a rigorous academic tradition inherited from the Soviet era.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon and tightly regulated in Belarus; education is overwhelmingly school-based within the state system.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Belarusian · Russian
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	4 – 5 – 2
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Belarusian State Univ.
Currency	Ruble (BYN)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Belarus has only a small private-school sector ; education is overwhelmingly public and state-directed, with limited private and international options concentrated in Minsk.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Belarusian and Russian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages . The system is known for its strength in mathematics and the sciences.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

University admission is governed by centralized testing (CT) — standardized national exams in relevant subjects — with results determining placement into state-funded (budget) or fee-paying university places.

READ THE FULL BELARUS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 05 OF 45

Belgium

EDUCATION IN BELGIUM

Belgium has one of Europe's most distinctive setups: there is no single national education system . Instead, education is run by the country's three language communities — the Flemish (Dutch-speaking) , French-speaking , and German-speaking Communities — each with its own ministry, structure, curriculum, and exams. The federal government...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

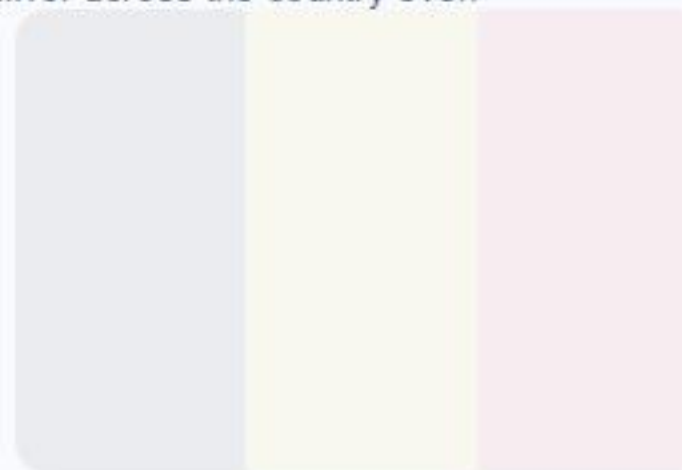
- ✓ **Preschool (maternelle / kleuterschool)** — Ages ~2.5–6; near-universal, and compulsory from age 5
- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages 6–12
- ✓ **Secondary (6 years)** — Ages 12–18, in three two-year stages, with general (academic), technical, vocational, and art streams — plus dual (work-based) learning

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 5 to 18 and free of tuition in public and subsidized schools. The language of instruction follows the region — Dutch in Flanders, French in Wallonia, German in the east — with Brussels offering both, and language-integration support for newcomers.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free community-run or subsidized schools . The subsidized "free" (largely Catholic) network is the largest — a legacy of Belgium's history — yet these schools are publicly funded and open to all. Each community sets its own curriculum, standards, and inspection, so details differ across the country even though...



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Dutch · French · German
Compulsory	Ages 5–18
Communities	3 systems
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	KU Leuven, UCLouvain
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Because the subsidized (including Catholic) schools are publicly funded, the genuinely private/fee-paying sector is small — mainly international schools serving expatriate and diplomatic families, concentrated in and around Brussels (an EU and NATO capital). International curricula such as the IB are available there.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Curriculum is set by each community but broadly covers the community language, mathematics, sciences, humanities, and foreign languages — with strong emphasis on multilingualism (Belgians commonly learn Dutch, French, and English). Upper-secondary streams range from general/academic through technical, vocational, and art education, with...

READ THE FULL BELGIUM GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





Bosnia and Herzegovina

EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina has one of Europe's most decentralized and complex education systems — a legacy of its post-war political structure. There is no single national ministry running schools; instead, responsibility is split among the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's ten cantons (each with its own education authority), the...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary education (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary education (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational/technical schools (3–4 years)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

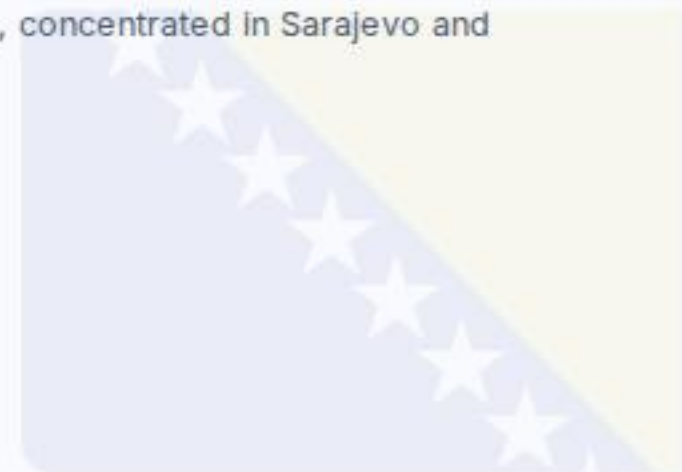
Education is compulsory from age 6 to 15 (nine years of primary education). The school year runs roughly September to June , and public education is free — though specifics are set by each cantonal or entity authority.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , governed by their canton, entity, or district. The exact curriculum, textbooks, and language emphasis depend on the governing authority and local community.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a growing private and international-school sector , concentrated in Sarajevo and larger cities, offering alternatives including international curricula.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Bosnian · Croatian · Serbian
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Sarajevo
Currency	Mark (BAM)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Curricula are set at the entity/cantonal level and cover language and literature, mathematics, sciences, history, and foreign languages . Because of the decentralized structure, content — particularly in subjects like history and language — can differ across communities.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete a Matura (school-leaving examination) at the end of academic secondary school. University admission typically involves entrance examinations set by faculties, sometimes combined with secondary results.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education includes the University of Sarajevo (the largest and oldest), the University of Banja Luka , the University of Mostar, and others, plus a growing private sector. The system follows the European Bologna Bachelor–Master–Doctorate structure.

READ THE FULL BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 07 OF 45

Bulgaria

EDUCATION IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria, a European Union member, runs a state-centered education system with Bulgarian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Its universities are EU-recognized and Bologna-aligned, and — importantly for international audiences — several medical universities offer English-taught programs that attract students from...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1-4)** — Ages ~7-10
- ✓ **Lower secondary (grades 5-7)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary (grades 8-12)** — Including general and specialized/vocational schools, ending with the Matura

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 7 to 16 (with a compulsory pre-school year before that). The school year runs September to June , and public education is free.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Bulgaria has strong traditions in mathematics and the sciences, and offers specialized language and profile-based secondary schools alongside general ones.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Bulgaria has a growing private and international-school sector , concentrated in Sofia and larger cities, offering international curricula alongside the national system.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Bulgarian
Compulsory	Ages 7–16
Structure	4 – 3 – 5
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Lev → Euro 2026

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Bulgarian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught). Specialized language high schools offer intensive foreign-language instruction.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Matura (state matriculation examination) at the end of secondary school, which certifies completion and is used for university admission; universities may add their own entrance requirements for some programs.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Bulgaria's flagship is Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (the oldest and largest), alongside numerous public and private universities. Higher education is Bologna-aligned (Bachelor–Master–Doctorate) and EU-recognized. Medical universities in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, and Pleven are especially prominent internationally.

READ THE FULL BULGARIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 08 OF 45

Croatia

EDUCATION IN CROATIA

Croatia, a European Union member, runs a state-centered education system with Croatian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Its universities are EU-recognized and Bologna-aligned, and a growing number of English-taught programs (notably in medicine) attract international students.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (osnovna škola, 8 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~7–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (gimnazija) , leading to the Matura, or vocational/technical schools (3–4 years)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory through the eight-year primary school (roughly ages 7–15). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June . Most students continue to secondary school, and the gymnasium track leads toward university.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Croatia has strong traditions in mathematics and the sciences, and offers general (gymnasium) and a wide range of vocational secondary programs.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Croatia has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in Zagreb and along the coast, offering alternatives including international curricula.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Croatian
Compulsory	Ages ~7–15
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Croatian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught). Gymnasiums offer general, language, and science-oriented programs.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the State Matura (državna matura) at the end of gymnasium — standardized national exams that both certify completion and serve as the basis for university admission .

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Zagreb (founded in the 17th century, the largest and oldest), along with universities in Split, Rijeka, Osijek, and others. The system is Bologna-aligned and EU-recognized, and several universities offer English-taught programs , including in medicine.

READ THE FULL CROATIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





Cyprus

EDUCATION IN CYPRUS

Cyprus, an EU member in the eastern Mediterranean, has an education system rooted in the Greek language and tradition in the Republic of Cyprus (the internationally recognized government), with high literacy. The island is politically divided: this guide focuses on the Republic of Cyprus; the Turkish-speaking north operates a separate...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-primary + Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~5/6–12
- ✓ **Lower secondary — Gymnasium (3 years)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary — Lyceum (3 years)** — Academic, or technical/vocational, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from around age 5 to 15 and free in public schools. The school year runs September to June . Instruction is in Greek in the Republic of Cyprus.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , following a Greek-based national curriculum closely linked to Greece. The system is centralized and academically oriented.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Greek language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught), closely aligned with the Greek system.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Greek · Turkish
Compulsory	Ages ~5–15
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Cyprus
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Cyprus has a significant private and international-school sector (including English-language and other international curricula), popular with expatriate families and Cypriots seeking English-medium or international pathways.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

University admission for public universities is based on the Pancyprian Examinations , taken at the end of the Lyceum; Cypriot students also compete for places at universities in Greece through a shared examination system. Private universities set their own admission requirements.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Cyprus supports inclusive education , integrating students with additional needs into mainstream schools with support, alongside special provision.

READ THE FULL CYPRUS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 10 OF 45

Czechia

EDUCATION IN CZECHIA

Czechia (the Czech Republic), a European Union member in Central Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Czech as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. It is home to one of the oldest universities in the world, and — notably for international students — public universities are free for study in Czech...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Basic school (základní škola, 9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15, combining primary and lower secondary
- ✓ **Secondary (typically 4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (gymnázium) , leading to the Maturita, or secondary technical and vocational schools

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 15 (nine years of basic school), with a compulsory pre-school year beforehand. Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Czechia has strong traditions in mathematics, the sciences, and technical education, and offers general (gymnasium) and extensive vocational secondary pathways.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Czechia has a private and international-school sector , concentrated in Prague and larger cities, offering alternatives including international curricula.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Czech
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Maturita
Currency	Koruna (CZK)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Czech language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught, often alongside German). Gymnasiums provide broad academic preparation for university.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Maturita (maturitní zkouška) at the end of academic and many vocational secondary programs — the school-leaving examination that is required for university admission. Individual universities and faculties may add their own entrance exams.

STUDYING IN CZECHIA FROM ABROAD

- ✓ **Free Czech-taught study** — Public universities are tuition-free for programs taught in Czech (open to international students who study in Czech) — many learn the language to...
- ✓ **English programs** — A wide range of English-taught degrees, including six-year Medicine programs at Charles University and others, attract international students (these...
- ✓ **EU recognition & visa** — Degrees are EU-recognized; EU students enjoy free movement, and non-EU students need a student visa/residence permit

READ THE FULL CZECHIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 11 OF 45

Denmark

EDUCATION IN DENMARK

Denmark has one of the world's most admired — and most generous — education systems. Tuition is free at every level for Danish and EU/EEA students , and, remarkably, the state pays students a monthly grant (the SU) to study. Instruction is in Danish (with English very widely spoken), literacy is near-universal, and the system emphasizes...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Folkeskole** — A single municipal school covering pre-school class through grade 9 (a 10-year compulsory span), ages ~6–16
- ✓ **Optional 10th year** — Around 45% of students take an extra year — at a folkeskole, an efterskole (residential folk boarding school), or a focused program
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Either an academic gymnasium — in four programs (STX general, HHX business, HTX technical, and HF) — all leading to university, or vocational...

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory for 10 years (roughly ages 6 to 16) . Public schooling is free, and the school year runs roughly August to June . Because the duty is to educate rather than to attend a specific school, families may choose public, private, or home education as long as standards are met.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend the free municipal folkeskole , run under the national Folkeskole Act, which sets shared aims while giving municipalities flexibility. Places are generally allocated by where a family lives. Danish schools are known for a collaborative, discussion-based culture and strong pupil well-being.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Danish
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	Folkeskole + 3 yr
School year	Aug – June
Student grant	SU
Currency	Krone (DKK)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

About 18% of Danish students attend private schools (friskoler / privatskoler) — including small independent, religious (Christian, Jewish, Muslim), and progressive "free" schools. These receive substantial state subsidies (around 75% of costs) , with parents paying the remainder, and must meet the same standards as the folkeskole....

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Danish, mathematics, the sciences, humanities, English (from early grades), and additional languages , with a strong emphasis on project work, interdisciplinary learning, and student participation . Well-being and social development are treated as core aims alongside academics.

READ THE FULL DENMARK GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 12 OF 45

Estonia

EDUCATION IN ESTONIA

Estonia has quietly built one of the best education systems in the world — its students top the PISA rankings in Europe and rank among the global best in reading, mathematics, and science, an extraordinary achievement for a country that regained independence only in 1991. The system is comprehensive and equitable (strong results across...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Preschool** — Municipalities guarantee a place from age 4 to 7; participation is very high (around 94%)
- ✓ **Basic school (põhikool, grades 1–9)** — Compulsory comprehensive education, ages ~7–16
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Either the academic gymnasium (gümnaasium, grades 10–12) leading to university, or vocational education

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 7 through the nine-year basic school (to around age 16). Estonia has a legal guarantee of free education — the state covers teachers' salaries and textbooks, and families typically only buy supplies. The school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools within a comprehensive system designed to give every child a high-quality education regardless of background. A national curriculum sets standards, but schools enjoy wide autonomy to shape their own curriculum and focus — a distinctive feature credited for Estonia's success. Russian-medium schools...

AT A GLANCE

Language	Estonian
Compulsory	Ages 7–16
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State exams
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Estonia has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in Tallinn and Tartu, offering alternatives including international curricula.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Estonian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history and social studies, foreign languages, the arts, and physical education — with a strong, early emphasis on digital literacy . Estonia was an early adopter of education technology (a factor in its seamless shift online during the pandemic), and...

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Estonia supports inclusive education through dedicated national curricula for special needs and the option to study in mainstream schools, special classes, or special schools, with support from specialists; parents have a strong say in placement.

READ THE FULL ESTONIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 13 OF 45

Finland

EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Finland's education system is one of the most admired and studied in the world — a model built not on testing and competition but on equity, trust, teacher expertise, and student well-being . Instruction is in Finnish (with a parallel Swedish -language system for the Swedish-speaking minority), and everything from meals to university is...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Early childhood education and care (ECEC)** — Ages 0–5, play-based
- ✓ **Pre-primary** — One compulsory year at age 6
- ✓ **Basic education (peruskoulu, 9 years)** — A single comprehensive school, ages ~7–16, with no tracking or streaming
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Either the academic general upper secondary (lukio) , leading to the Matriculation Examination, or vocational education and training

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

- ✓ **Free everything** — No tuition at any level; free hot school meals since 1948 , plus free materials and transport in basic education
- ✓ **Late start, gentle pace** — Basic education begins at 7, with short days and frequent breaks
- ✓ **School year** — Runs roughly August to early June

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The private-school sector is very small ; even independent schools are publicly funded and cannot charge tuition or select students by ability, preserving the system's strong equity. Some international and language schools serve expatriate families.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Finnish · Swedish
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Matriculation Exam
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Almost all Finnish students attend free public schools within a decentralized system: a national core curriculum sets goals, but municipalities and schools design their own local curricula, and teachers have wide pedagogical autonomy . There are no league tables and no inspectorate — quality is maintained through teacher professionalism...

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum is broad and balanced — languages (Finnish/Swedish plus foreign languages), mathematics, sciences, humanities, arts, crafts, and physical education — with an emphasis on learning, well-being, collaboration, and phenomenon-based (cross-subject) learning . Assessment through the nine years is continuous and teacher-led , not...

READ THE FULL FINLAND GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 14 OF 45

France

EDUCATION IN FRANCE

France runs a highly centralized education system: the national Ministry of Education sets the curriculum, and the country is organized into regional académies that administer it. Instruction is in French , the system is strongly shaped by the principle of laïcité (secularism) , and it is defined by two landmark features — the...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **École maternelle** — Nursery school, compulsory from age 3 (since 2019)
- ✓ **École élémentaire (5 years)** — Primary — CP, CE1, CE2, CM1, CM2, ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Collège (4 years)** — Lower secondary — 6e to 3e, ending with the brevet
- ✓ **Lycée (3 years)** — Upper secondary — seconde, première, terminale, ending with the Baccalauréat (general, technological, or professional)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 3 to 16 (instruction from age 3 since 2019), with a training/education obligation continuing to age 18. Public education is free and secular. The school year runs roughly September to early July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most French students attend free public schools , which follow the national curriculum and uphold laïcité (for example, restrictions on conspicuous religious symbols in public schools). The centralized system aims for consistency nationwide, administered through the académies.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 3–16
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

France has a substantial private-school sector , most of it under contract with the state (sous contrat) — largely Catholic schools that follow the national curriculum and are largely state-funded, charging modest fees — alongside a smaller number of fully independent and international schools.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The national curriculum covers French, mathematics, sciences, history-geography and civic education, foreign languages, the arts, and physical education , organized into learning cycles. A 2019 reform reshaped the general Baccalauréat around a common core plus student-chosen specialty subjects (spécialités) , replacing the former fixed...

READ THE FULL FRANCE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 15 OF 45

Germany

EDUCATION IN GERMANY

Germany runs a federal education system: the country's 16 states (Länder) each control their own schools , so structures, school types, and even holiday dates vary across the country (coordinated nationally by the standing conference of education ministers). Instruction is in German , and the system is known for three defining features...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Grundschule (primary, 4 years)** — Ages ~6–10 (6 years in Berlin and Brandenburg)
- ✓ **Gymnasium** — The academic track, to grade 12 or 13, leading to the Abitur and direct university entry
- ✓ **Realschule** — An intermediate track to grade 10, awarding the Mittlere Reife (Realschulabschluss) — a route to vocational training or further schooling
- ✓ **Hauptschule** — A more practical track to grade 9, awarding the Hauptschulabschluss , geared to apprenticeships
- ✓ **Gesamtschule** — A comprehensive school combining all tracks — and, increasingly, many states use combined two-tier models (Oberschule, Sekundarschule) alongside the...

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory for roughly ages 6 to 18 : full-time schooling for 9 years (Gymnasium track) or 10 years (other tracks), followed by part-time education (typically within the dual vocational system) up to age 18. Public education is free, and the school year runs roughly August/September to June/July , varying by state.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Germany provides special education through both special schools (Förderschulen) and growing inclusion of students with additional needs in mainstream schools, with approaches varying by state.

AT A GLANCE

Language	German
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	4 + tracks
School year	Aug/Sept – June/July
University entry	Abitur
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The vast majority of students attend free public schools, run by each state. Because education is a state responsibility, the number and names of school types, the length of the Gymnasium (the "G8/G9" debate — most states returned to nine-year Gymnasium by 2019), and curricula all differ across Germany.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Germany has a private-school sector (including church-run, Waldorf, Montessori, and international schools), most of which are state-recognized and follow state curricula; fees are often modest. Homeschooling, however, is effectively banned — all children of compulsory-school age must attend a public or state-approved school, except in...

READ THE FULL GERMANY GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 16 OF 45

Greece

EDUCATION IN GREECE

Greece runs a centralized, Greek-language education system with high literacy and a strong classical heritage. Public education is free at every level, university admission is decided by the fiercely competitive Panhellenic Examinations , and a defining feature of Greek life is the frontistiria — private after-school "cram schools" that...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Nipiagogeio (kindergarten)** — Compulsory pre-primary years (from age 4)
- ✓ **Dimotiko (primary, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Gymnasio (lower secondary, 3 years)** — Completing compulsory education
- ✓ **Lykeio (upper secondary, 3 years)** — General (Geniko Lykeio) or vocational (EPAL), leading to the Panhellenic exams

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 4 to 15 (kindergarten through the gymnasio). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , following a national curriculum. Because university places are allocated purely by exam performance, families widely supplement schooling with frontistiria tutoring, especially in the final years of the lykeio.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Greek
Compulsory	Ages 4–15
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Panhellenic Exams
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Greece has a private-school sector at the primary and secondary levels, concentrated in Athens and Thessaloniki, including international schools. Historically, private universities were constitutionally prohibited — but a 2024 reform now permits branches of foreign universities to operate in Greece, a major and debated change.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Modern Greek language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, ancient Greek and history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught). The classical tradition — ancient Greek and history — features prominently.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Greece supports inclusive education , integrating students with additional needs into mainstream schools with support, alongside special schools.

READ THE FULL GREECE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 17 OF 45

Hungary

EDUCATION IN HUNGARY

Hungary, an EU member in Central Europe, runs a mostly public, Hungarian-language education system with near-universal literacy. Kindergarten is compulsory from age 3, students attend a long single-structure general school before choosing a secondary path, and university admission hinges on the *érettségi* (matriculation) exam. Hungary has...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Óvoda (kindergarten)** — Ages 3–6, compulsory from age 3
- ✓ **Általános iskola (general school, 8 years)** — A single-structure primary + lower secondary, ages ~6–14, in two stages (grades 1–4 and 5–8)
- ✓ **Upper secondary (typically 4 years)** — The academic *gimnázium* (leading to the *érettségi*), a *technikum* / *szakgimnázium* (vocational grammar), or a vocational school — with some 6- and 8-year...

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 3 to 16 . Public education is free for Hungarian students, and the school year runs September to June . National competency tests are taken in grades 6 and 8.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . After the eight-year general school, students choose among academic, technical, and vocational secondary paths — a decision point that shapes their route to university or the workforce.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Hungary has a private, church-run, and international-school sector , concentrated in Budapest, including IB and foreign-language schools.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Hungarian
Compulsory	Ages 3–16
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Érettségi
Currency	Forint (HUF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Hungarian language and literature, mathematics, foreign languages, the sciences, history, ethics/religious studies, the arts, and physical education . The gimnázium provides broad academic preparation for the érettségi.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The key qualification is the érettségi (matriculation / school-leaving examination), taken at the end of upper secondary. It certifies completion and serves as the university entrance examination ; universities may weight specific subjects for competitive programs.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is Bologna-aligned and led by universities such as Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) , the University of Szeged, the University of Debrecen, and the medical Semmelweis University in Budapest. State-funded (free) university places are available to Hungarian and many EU students by merit, while others pay tuition.

READ THE FULL HUNGARY GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 18 OF 45

Iceland

EDUCATION IN ICELAND

Iceland runs a Nordic-model education system — free, comprehensive, and focused on equity and well-being — with Icelandic as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Children attend a single compulsory school covering primary and lower secondary, before choosing an upper-secondary path leading to the matriculation exam...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Leikskóli (preschool)** — Early-childhood education, widely attended
- ✓ **Grunnskóli (compulsory school, 10 years)** — A single-structure school covering ages ~6–16
- ✓ **Framhaldsskóli (upper secondary, 3–4 years)** — Academic or vocational, leading to the matriculation examination (stúdentspróf)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 (the ten-year grunnskóli). Public education is free, and the school year runs roughly August to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , run largely by municipalities, within a comprehensive system emphasizing inclusion and student well-being — hallmarks of the Nordic approach.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Iceland has a small private and independent school sector , concentrated in the Reykjavík area; education is overwhelmingly public.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Icelandic
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	10 + 3/4
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Matriculation
Currency	Króna (ISK)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Icelandic, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, foreign languages (English and Danish), and the arts , with an emphasis on equality, creativity, and well-being.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Assessment through compulsory school is largely school-based and continuous . At the end of upper secondary, students earn the matriculation examination (stúdentspróf) , which qualifies them for university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Iceland (Háskóli Íslands) in Reykjavik (founded 1911, the largest and oldest), along with Reykjavik University and others. Public universities are effectively tuition-free — students pay only a modest annual registration fee — and the system is Bologna-aligned within the EEA.

READ THE FULL ICELAND GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 19 OF 45

Ireland

EDUCATION IN IRELAND

Ireland runs an English-language education system (with Irish / Gaeilge a compulsory subject and Irish-medium Gaelscoileanna available), known for the high-stakes Leaving Certificate and its CAO points system for university entry. A distinctive feature: most schools are state-funded but privately managed, historically by the Catholic...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (8 years)** — Junior and Senior Infants plus 1st–6th class, ages ~4/5–12
- ✓ **Junior Cycle (3 years)** — Ending with the Junior Certificate
- ✓ **Transition Year (optional)** — A largely exam-free year for broader learning and work experience
- ✓ **Senior Cycle (2 years)** — Ending with the Leaving Certificate

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 (though most children start at 4 or 5). Public schooling is free, teaching is in English (with Irish a compulsory subject), and the school year runs September to June.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend state-funded schools that are privately managed by patron bodies — predominantly the Catholic Church, but increasingly multi-denominational patrons (such as Educate Together) as demand for secular and diverse options grows. There are also all-Irish Gaelscoileanna.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Irish
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	8 + 3(+1)+2
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Leaving Cert / CAO
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Ireland has a fee-paying private school sector alongside the state system, plus a small number of international schools. Even many state schools have a religious ethos, so families seeking secular or particular options should check a school's patron.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum (set by the NCCA) covers English, Irish, mathematics, sciences, history, geography, languages, and the arts . Irish is compulsory in most state schools (with exemptions for some newcomers), reflecting its status as the first official language.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- ✓ **Junior Certificate** — Taken at the end of the Junior Cycle
- ✓ **Leaving Certificate** — The final secondary exam and the university matriculation exam — students' best six subjects convert to CAO points (max 625), which determine...

READ THE FULL IRELAND GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 20 OF 45

Italy

EDUCATION IN ITALY

Italy runs a centralized, Italian-language education system with a deep academic heritage — it is home to the University of Bologna (founded 1088), the oldest university in the world , and the Bologna Process that shaped European higher education is named for it. Schooling leads to the Maturità state exam, public universities charge low...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Scuola dell'infanzia** — Pre-school, ages 3–6
- ✓ **Scuola primaria (primary, 5 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Scuola secondaria di primo grado (lower secondary, 3 years)** — Ages ~11–14
- ✓ **Scuola secondaria di secondo grado (upper secondary, 5 years)** — Either an academic liceo (classico, scientifico, linguistico, artistico, and more) or a technical/vocational institute , leading to the Maturità

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 . Public schooling is free, and the school year runs roughly September to June . Students choose their upper-secondary track (academic vs. technical/vocational) around age 14, shaping their path toward university or the workforce.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public (state) schools , following a national curriculum set by the Ministry of Education. The choice of liceo type — for example, the classical liceo (with Latin and Ancient Greek) or the scientific liceo — is a significant decision in a student's education.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Italian
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	5 + 3 + 5
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Maturità
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Italy has a private and religious (largely Catholic) school sector , plus international schools, concentrated in the larger cities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Italian, mathematics, the sciences, history, geography, foreign languages, and (in the classical liceo) Latin and Greek . Upper-secondary content varies substantially by track, with the liceo emphasizing academic depth and the institutes emphasizing technical or vocational skills.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The key qualification is the Esame di Stato , commonly called the Maturità — the state examination at the end of upper secondary (around age 19). It certifies completion and is the basis for university admission, though some competitive faculties (like medicine) also use national entrance tests.

READ THE FULL ITALY GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 21 OF 45

Latvia

EDUCATION IN LATVIA

Latvia, an EU and Baltic state, runs a state-centered education system with Latvian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Its universities are EU-recognized and Bologna-aligned, and — notably for international audiences — Latvia offers English-taught programs, including in medicine , that attract students from...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pre-school** — Compulsory from age 5
- ✓ **Basic education (grades 1–9)** — A single-structure school, ages ~7–16
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 10–12)** — General (gymnasium) or vocational, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 5 (pre-school) through basic education (to around age 16). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June . Latvia has been transitioning its schools toward Latvian-only instruction (phasing out Russian-medium teaching).

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Latvia has strong foundations in mathematics and the sciences and offers general (gymnasium) and vocational secondary pathways.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Latvia has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in Riga.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Latvian
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State exams
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Latvian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught), with a recent competency-based reform ("Skola2030").

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take centralized state examinations at the end of secondary school, which certify completion and are used for university admission.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Latvia (Riga, founded 1919, the largest), Riga Technical University, and Rīga Stradiņš University (a major medical university), among others. The system is Bologna-aligned and EU-recognized, and several universities offer English-taught programs.

READ THE FULL LATVIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 22 OF 45

Liechtenstein

EDUCATION IN LIECHTENSTEIN

Liechtenstein — a tiny alpine principality between Switzerland and Austria — runs a German-language education system closely modeled on its neighbors, with early tracking into different secondary school types and a strong tradition of vocational apprenticeship. Literacy is universal, and, given the country's small size, most higher...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (Primarschule, 5 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Secondary tracks** — The Oberschule, Realschule, or academic Gymnasium (leading to the Matura)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

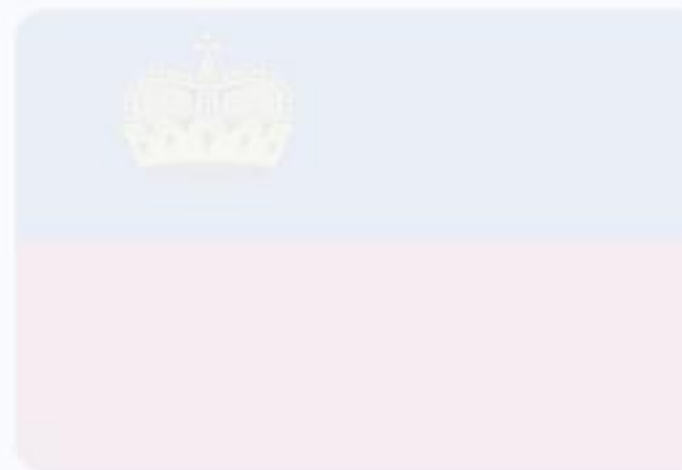
Education is compulsory from age 6 to 15 (nine years). Public education is free, and the school year runs roughly August to July , closely aligned with the Swiss/Austrian model.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Almost all students attend free public schools . As in Switzerland and Austria, the dual vocational (apprenticeship) route is well developed and respected alongside the academic Gymnasium track.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Given the country's size, the private-school sector is very small; education is overwhelmingly public.



AT A GLANCE

Language	German
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	5 + tracks
School year	Aug – July
University entry	Matura
Currency	Swiss Franc (CHF)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers German, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (especially English and French) , following a model close to that of neighboring Switzerland.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students in the Gymnasium earn the Matura , the qualification for university entry, while those in vocational tracks complete apprenticeship qualifications.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Liechtenstein has a small University of Liechtenstein (focused on architecture, business, and finance), but because of the country's size, most students pursue higher education abroad — typically in Switzerland, Austria, or Germany, using the Matura.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon and restricted ; education is school-based.

READ THE FULL LIECHTENSTEIN GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 23 OF 45

Lithuania

EDUCATION IN LITHUANIA

Lithuania, an EU and Baltic state, runs a state-centered education system with Lithuanian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. It is home to one of the oldest universities in the region, its universities are EU-recognized, and — notably — it offers English-taught programs, including in medicine , that attract...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6/7–10
- ✓ **Basic (grades 5–10)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 11–12)** — General (gymnasium) or vocational, leading to the Matura

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory to age 16 (through basic education). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June . Pre-school participation is high.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Lithuania has strong foundations in mathematics and the sciences and offers general (gymnasium) and vocational secondary pathways.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Lithuania has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in Vilnius.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Lithuanian
Compulsory	Ages 6/7–16
Structure	4 – 6 – 2
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Lithuanian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Matura (maturity examinations) at the end of secondary school, which certify completion and are used for university admission .

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by Vilnius University (founded 1579, the oldest in the Baltics and one of the oldest in Eastern Europe), Kaunas University of Technology, Vytautas Magnus University, and the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (a major medical university), among others. The system is Bologna-aligned and EU-recognized.

READ THE FULL LITHUANIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 24 OF 45

Luxembourg

EDUCATION IN LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg runs one of the most distinctive education systems in the world: a genuinely trilingual public system in which Luxembourgish, German, and French are each taught and used as languages of instruction at different stages. Children move through the languages as they progress — an ambitious model that produces multilingual...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Éducation précoce & préscolaire** — Early and pre-school, compulsory from age 4
- ✓ **Fundamental (primary, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Secondary (up to 7 years)** — Either classique (academic, leading to university) or général (technical/vocational), ending with a secondary-leaving diploma

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 4 to 16 . Public education is free, and the school year runs roughly September to July . The trilingual progression is central to the whole system.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , working through the trilingual model. Because a large share of the population is foreign-born, the language demands are significant, and Luxembourg has introduced more flexible and international tracks (including European School and international programs) to widen options.

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Luxembourgish · German · French
Compulsory	Ages 4–16
Structure	6 + 7
School year	Sept – July
Higher ed	Univ. of Luxembourg
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Luxembourg has private and international schools (including European Schools serving EU-institution families and English-language international programs), offering alternatives to the trilingual national track.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Beyond the trilingual languages, the curriculum covers mathematics, the sciences, social studies, and further foreign languages (often English) . The classique track emphasizes academic preparation; the général track blends general and vocational education.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students earn a secondary-leaving diploma (diplôme de fin d'études secondaires) at the end of upper secondary, which qualifies them for university.

READ THE FULL LUXEMBOURG GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 25 OF 45

Malta

EDUCATION IN MALTA

Malta, an EU island nation in the Mediterranean and a former British colony, runs a bilingual education system in Maltese and English (both official). Public education is free, English is widely used (making Malta a popular place to learn English), and higher education at the University of Malta is free for Maltese and EU students, who...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~5–11
- ✓ **Secondary (5 years)** — Ages ~11–16, leading to the SEC examinations
- ✓ **Post-secondary** — Sixth form / MCAST (vocational) leading to Matriculation and university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 5 to 16 . The school year runs roughly September to June . Both Maltese and English are used across schooling.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free state schools , alongside significant Church schools (largely state-funded, reflecting Malta's Catholic tradition) and independent schools. Instruction blends Maltese and English.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Malta has Church and independent (private) schools , plus international schools and a large sector of English-language schools (ELT) that attract students from around the world to learn English.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Maltese · English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Sept – June
University entry	MATSEC
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Maltese, English, mathematics, the sciences, and other subjects , taught bilingually, geared toward the MATSEC examinations.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Secondary certification is run by the MATSEC board: the SEC (Secondary Education Certificate) at the end of secondary school (≈ O-Levels/GCSE), followed by Matriculation (Advanced and Intermediate levels) for university entry.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education centers on the University of Malta (with roots to 1592, one of the oldest in the Commonwealth), which teaches in English, along with the vocational MCAST . University is free for Maltese and EU students , who also receive a maintenance stipend.

READ THE FULL MALTA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 26 OF 45

Moldova

EDUCATION IN MOLDOVA

Moldova, a small Eastern European country, runs a post-Soviet education system with Romanian (also called Moldovan) as the main language of instruction and Russian used by a significant minority. Literacy is near-universal, the country is EU-aspiring and Bologna-aligned, and — notably — Moldova offers English-taught programs, including...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6/7–10
- ✓ **Gymnasium (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Lyceum (grades 10–12)** — General or vocational, leading to the Baccalaureate

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory to age 16 (through gymnasium/grade 9, with most continuing). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , taught in Romanian or Russian. The system retains Soviet-era strengths in mathematics and the sciences and has been modernizing since independence.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Moldova has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in Chişinău.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Romanian · Russian
Compulsory	Ages 6/7–16
Structure	4 – 5 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalaureate
Currency	Leu (MDL)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Romanian (or Russian) language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English increasingly emphasized).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Baccalaureate (Bacalaureat) at the end of the lyceum — the school-leaving examination used for university admission.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education includes Moldova State University, the Technical University of Moldova, and medical and economic universities, among others. The system is Bologna-aligned, and several universities — particularly in medicine — enroll international students in English-taught programs.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in Moldova; education is overwhelmingly school-based.

READ THE FULL MOLDOVA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 27 OF 45

Monaco

EDUCATION IN MONACO

Monaco — a tiny, wealthy principality on the French Riviera — runs an education system that closely follows the French curriculum , taught in French , with distinctive Monégasque additions such as the history and language of Monaco. Public education is free and well-resourced, and literacy is universal.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **École maternelle** — Nursery/pre-school
- ✓ **École élémentaire** — Primary
- ✓ **Collège** — Lower secondary
- ✓ **Lycée** — Upper secondary, leading to the Baccalauréat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 , closely aligned with France. Public schooling is free, and the school year runs roughly September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , following the French national curriculum with added teaching of Monégasque history, culture, and language . Schools are well-funded, reflecting the principality's resources.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Monaco has a small number of private and religious schools alongside the public system.

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	French model
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum is essentially the French national curriculum — French, mathematics, the sciences, history-geography, and languages — supplemented with Monégasque history and the Monégasque language, and strong provision for English and other languages.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students earn the French Baccalauréat (with Monaco-specific arrangements) at the end of the lycée, which qualifies them for university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Monaco hosts the private, business-focused International University of Monaco (IUM), but because of its size, most students pursue higher education abroad — typically in France, using the Baccalauréat.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Monaco provides inclusive education and support within its small, well-resourced system, coordinated with French provision.

READ THE FULL MONACO GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 28 OF 45

Montenegro

EDUCATION IN MONTENEGRO

Montenegro, a small Balkan country and EU candidate, runs a state-centered education system with Montenegrin as the main language of instruction (Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian, and Albanian are also used by communities). Literacy is near-universal, and the system is Bologna-aligned. Montenegro uses the Euro , though it is not (yet) an EU...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational schools

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory through the nine-year primary school (roughly ages 6–15). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , following a national curriculum. The gymnasium track prepares students for university, while vocational schools offer technical pathways.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Montenegro has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in Podgorica and along the coast.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Montenegrin
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Matura (school-leaving examination) at the end of the gymnasium, which is used for university admission .

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the public University of Montenegro (Podgorica), along with private institutions. The system is Bologna-aligned and EU-recognized.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Montenegro supports inclusive education , integrating students with additional needs into mainstream schools with support, alongside special provision.

READ THE FULL MONTENEGRO GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 29 OF 45

Netherlands

EDUCATION IN NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands runs a high-quality education system defined by early tracking : after eight years of primary school, students are directed at around age 12 into one of three secondary routes based on a national test and teacher recommendation. Instruction is in Dutch , but the country is a global leader in English-taught higher...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (basisschool, 8 years)** — Ages ~4-12; children may start at 4 and must attend from 5
- ✓ **VMBO (4 years)** — Pre-vocational secondary → MBO (vocational education)
- ✓ **HAVO (5 years)** — Senior general secondary → HBO (universities of applied sciences)
- ✓ **VWO (6 years)** — Pre-university secondary → WO (research universities)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 5 to 16 , followed by a "qualification duty" for 16- and 17-year-olds until they earn a basic qualification (a HAVO, VWO, or MBO-level-2 diploma). Public schooling is free, and the school year runs roughly August/September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free, publicly funded schools . Distinctively, the Netherlands funds public, religious, and other "special" (private-but-publicly-funded) schools on an equal basis under "freedom of education," so parents choose among many school types at no tuition cost. Each secondary track has its own curriculum, duration, and...

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Dutch · English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	8 + tracks
School year	Aug/Sept – Jul
University entry	VWO / HAVO diploma
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Beyond the publicly funded system, there is a small genuinely private/international-school sector , including international schools serving expatriate families (offering the IB or foreign curricula), concentrated in Amsterdam, The Hague, and other cities.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Dutch, English (from an early age), mathematics, the sciences, humanities, and the arts . Upper-secondary students choose "profiles" (subject clusters, such as Nature & Technology or Economics & Society). The Dutch are among the most proficient non-native English speakers in the world.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

The Netherlands supports students with additional needs through "appropriate education" (passend onderwijs) , aiming to place children in mainstream schools with support where possible, alongside special schools.

READ THE FULL NETHERLANDS GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 30 OF 45

North Macedonia

EDUCATION IN NORTH MACEDONIA

North Macedonia, a Balkan country and EU candidate, runs an education system in which Macedonian is the main language of instruction and Albanian is used for the country's large Albanian-speaking community (and is official where communities meet a population threshold). Literacy is near-universal, and the system is Bologna-aligned.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — Also compulsory — the academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational schools

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory through both primary (nine years) and secondary school . Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June . Instruction is provided in Macedonian and, for Albanian-speaking communities, in Albanian.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , in Macedonian or Albanian depending on the community, following a national curriculum. The gymnasium track prepares students for university, while vocational schools offer technical pathways.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

North Macedonia has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in Skopje.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Macedonian · Albanian
Compulsory	Primary + Secondary
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State Matura
Currency	Denar (MKD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers language and literature (Macedonian or Albanian), mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the State Matura at the end of the gymnasium — a standardized examination used for university admission .

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (the oldest and largest), along with other public universities and the South East European University in Tetovo (which teaches in Albanian and English and serves the Albanian community). The system is Bologna-aligned.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschooling is uncommon in North Macedonia; education is overwhelmingly school-based.

READ THE FULL NORTH MACEDONIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 31 OF 45

Norway

EDUCATION IN NORWAY

Norway runs a free, comprehensive Nordic-model education system built on equity and inclusion , with Norwegian (in its Bokmål and Nynorsk forms) as the language of instruction and Sami taught and used in Sami areas. Public education is free at every level, the early years emphasize well-being over testing, and Norway's oil-funded welfare...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

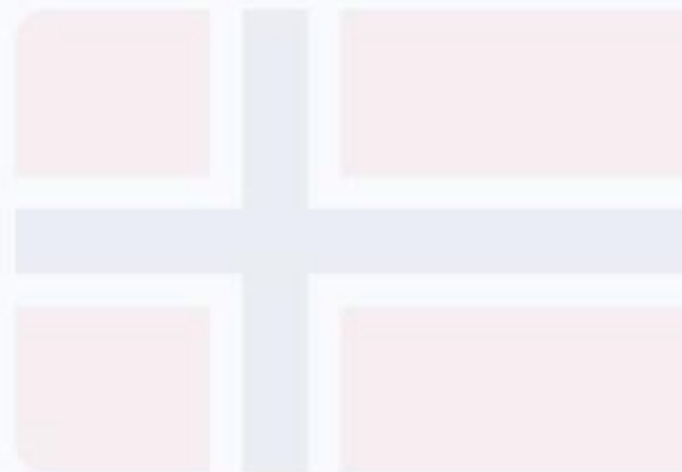
- ✓ **Barneskole (primary, 7 years)** — Ages ~6–13 — with little formal grading in the early years
- ✓ **Ungdomsskole (lower secondary, 3 years)** — Ages ~13–16 — completing the compulsory grunnskole
- ✓ **Videregående skole (upper secondary, 3 years)** — Academic (studieforberedende) or vocational (yrkesfaglig), a legal right for all who complete grunnskole

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 (the ten-year grunnskole), and public schooling is free. The school year runs roughly August to June . Early schooling deliberately avoids high-stakes testing, focusing on well-being, play, and social development.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Almost all students attend free public schools within a comprehensive, mixed-ability system designed to give every child an equal, high-quality education. Sami-medium and Sami-language education is provided for the indigenous Sami population.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Norwegian · Sami
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	10 + 3
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Upper-sec. diploma
Currency	Krone (NOK)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Norway has only a small private-school sector (mostly religious or alternative-pedagogy schools), which is regulated and largely publicly subsidized; education is overwhelmingly public.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Norwegian, mathematics, the sciences, social studies, English (from an early age), and the arts , with an emphasis on inclusion, critical thinking, and pupil well-being. Both written standards of Norwegian (Bokmål and Nynorsk) are taught.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Assessment through the grunnskole is largely continuous and low-stakes . At the end of upper secondary, students earn a diploma (vitnemål) combining coursework and some exams, which — with the required subjects — qualifies them for higher education.

READ THE FULL NORWAY GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 32 OF 45

Poland

EDUCATION IN POLAND

Poland, a large EU country in Central Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Polish as the language of instruction, near-universal literacy, and strong international test results. Its universities include one of the oldest in the world, and — notably for international audiences — Poland offers many English-taught programs...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (szkoła podstawowa, 8 years)** — Ages ~7–15, ending with the eighth-grade exam
- ✓ **Secondary** — The four-year general liceum (leading to the Matura), the five-year technical technikum , or vocational schools

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory to age 18 (schooling through primary and into secondary/vocational). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Poland performs strongly on international assessments (PISA), particularly in reading and mathematics, and offers general (liceum) and extensive technical/vocational secondary pathways.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Poland has a private and international-school sector , concentrated in Warsaw, Kraków, and other cities.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Polish
Compulsory	Ages 7–18
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Złoty (PLN)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Polish language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Two key assessments mark the path: the eighth-grade exam (egzamin ósmoklasisty) at the end of primary, and the Matura (maturity examination) at the end of the liceum — the basis for university admission .

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the historic Jagiellonian University in Kraków (founded 1364, one of the oldest universities in the world), the University of Warsaw , and many other public and private universities. The system is Bologna-aligned. Polish-taught study at public universities is free for Polish and EU students, while...

READ THE FULL POLAND GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 33 OF 45

Portugal

EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL

Portugal, an EU country in the Iberian Peninsula, runs a state-centered education system with Portuguese as the language of instruction. It has made strong gains on international assessments in recent decades, extends compulsory education all the way to age 18 , and is home to one of the world's oldest universities. Portugal has become...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Pré-escolar** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Ensino Básico (9 years)** — Three cycles — 1st (4 years), 2nd (2 years), and 3rd (3 years), ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Ensino Secundário (3 years)** — Scientific-humanistic (academic) or professional (vocational), ending with national exams

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 18 (through the end of secondary), one of the more extensive compulsory ranges in Europe. Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , following a national curriculum. Portugal's significant improvement on international assessments over recent decades is often cited as an education success story.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Portugal has a private and international-school sector , concentrated in Lisbon, Porto, and the Algarve (popular with expatriate and internationally mobile families).



AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	National exams
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Portuguese, mathematics, the sciences, history and geography, and foreign languages (English is widely taught). The scientific-humanistic secondary track prepares students for university.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take national examinations (exames nacionais) at the end of secondary school, whose results — combined with school grades — determine university admission through a national competition run by the DGES.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the historic University of Coimbra (founded 1290, one of the oldest in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage site), the University of Lisbon, and the University of Porto, among public universities and polytechnics, plus a private sector. The system is Bologna-aligned and EU-recognized.

READ THE FULL PORTUGAL GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 34 OF 45

Romania

EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

Romania, an EU country in Southeastern Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Romanian as the main language of instruction (Hungarian and other minority languages are used by communities). Literacy is near-universal, its universities are EU-recognized and Bologna-aligned, and Romania offers many English-taught programs...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (preparatory year + grades 1-4)** — Ages ~6-10
- ✓ **Lower secondary / gymnasium (grades 5-8)** — Ending with the National Evaluation
- ✓ **Upper secondary / high school (liceu, grades 9-12)** — Ending with the Bacalaureat

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from the preparatory year into upper secondary (through at least grade 10). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , following a national curriculum. Romania offers general (liceu) and vocational/technical secondary pathways, with minority-language schooling for communities such as Hungarians.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Romania has a private and international-school sector , concentrated in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, and other cities.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Romanian
Compulsory	to grade 10+
Structure	4 – 4 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Bacalaureat
Currency	Leu (RON)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Romanian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Two key assessments mark the path: the National Evaluation (Evaluarea Națională) at the end of gymnasium (grade 8), and the Bacalaureat at the end of high school — the basis for university admission .

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Bucharest and Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, the largest), among others, plus prominent medical universities (such as Carol Davila in Bucharest). The system is Bologna-aligned and EU-recognized.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Romania supports inclusive education , integrating students with additional needs into mainstream schools with support, alongside special schools.

READ THE FULL ROMANIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 35 OF 45

Russia

EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

Russia runs a large, centralized education system with Russian as the language of instruction (regional languages are also used in the republics) and near-universal literacy. It inherited a strong Soviet tradition in mathematics and the sciences — reflected in consistently high performance at international science olympiads — and today...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~7–11
- ✓ **Basic general (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (grades 10–11)** — Often with a "profile" specialization (natural sciences, humanities, technology), leading to university — or students may enter vocational education...

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory for grades 1–9 (basic general education). Public education is free, and the school year runs roughly September (starting on "Knowledge Day," 1 September) to May . After grade 9, students continue to upper secondary or enter a vocational college (kolledzh) or technical school (tekhnikum).

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free state schools , which follow a national curriculum set by the Ministry of Education. Specialized schools — gymnasiums, lyceums, and profile schools — offer more advanced or focused programs, concentrated in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other large cities.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Russian
Compulsory	Grades 1–9
Structure	4 – 5 – 2
School year	Sept – May
University entry	EGE
Currency	Ruble (RUB)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Russia has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in the major cities and popular with internationally mobile families.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Russian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, social studies, and foreign languages , with a strong emphasis on mathematics and the sciences. Upper-secondary students often follow a profile track aligned to their intended university field.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

- ✓ **OGE** — The Basic State Exam at the end of grade 9
- ✓ **EGE** — The Unified State Exam at the end of grade 11 — a standardized national exam (compulsory in Russian and mathematics, plus optional subjects) that...

READ THE FULL RUSSIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 36 OF 45

San Marino

EDUCATION IN SAN MARINO

San Marino — a tiny landlocked republic surrounded by Italy — runs an Italian-language education system closely modeled on Italy's , with which it maintains close ties. Public education is free, literacy is universal, and, given the microstate's size, most higher education takes place in Italy.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Nursery & primary** — Early and primary education
- ✓ **Lower secondary** — Middle school
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Leading to a school-leaving diploma and university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 , closely aligned with Italy. Public schooling is free, and the school year runs roughly September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Almost all students attend free public schools , following an Italian-modeled curriculum supplemented with San Marino's own history and civic education.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Given the size, there is little private-school provision; education is overwhelmingly public.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Italian
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	Italian model
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Diploma
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum follows an Italian-influenced model — Italian, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages — with added teaching of San Marino's history and institutions.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students earn a school-leaving diploma at the end of upper secondary, on the Italian model, which qualifies them for university.

HIGHER EDUCATION

San Marino has a small University of the Republic of San Marino , but because of the microstate's size, most students pursue higher education in Italy .

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

San Marino provides inclusive education and support within its small system, coordinated with Italian provision.

READ THE FULL SAN MARINO GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 37 OF 45

Serbia

EDUCATION IN SERBIA

Serbia, a Balkan country and EU candidate, runs a state-centered education system with Serbian as the main language of instruction (minority languages are used by communities). Literacy is near-universal, its universities are Bologna-aligned, and Serbia offers some English-taught programs, including in medicine , that attract...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (8 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6/7–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational/technical schools

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory through the eight-year primary school (with a compulsory pre-school year before it). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , following a national curriculum. Serbia has strong foundations in mathematics and the sciences and offers general (gymnasium) and vocational secondary pathways.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Serbia has a growing private and international-school sector , concentrated in Belgrade and Novi Sad.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Serbian
Compulsory	Ages 6/7–15
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura / entrance
Currency	Dinar (RSD)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Serbian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students complete a final exam at the end of primary (for secondary placement) and a school-leaving Matura at the end of the gymnasium. University admission typically combines these with faculty entrance examinations .

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Belgrade (founded 1808, the oldest and largest) and the University of Novi Sad, among others. The system is Bologna-aligned, and several universities — particularly in medicine — offer English-taught programs.

READ THE FULL SERBIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 38 OF 45

Slovakia

EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA

Slovakia, an EU country in Central Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Slovak as the main language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Its universities are Bologna-aligned and EU-recognized, and Slovakia offers English-taught programs, including in medicine , that attract international students.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (základná škola, 9 years)** — A single-structure school (a 4-year first stage and a 5-year second stage), ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Maturita) or vocational/technical schools

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory to age 16 . Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June . A compulsory pre-primary year precedes primary school.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , following a national curriculum. Slovakia offers general (gymnasium) and vocational secondary pathways, with minority-language schooling for communities such as Hungarians.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Slovakia has a private and international-school sector , concentrated in Bratislava and Košice.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Slovak
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Maturita
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Slovak language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Maturita (school-leaving examination) at the end of the gymnasium — the basis for university admission (faculties may add their own entrance requirements).

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by Comenius University in Bratislava (the largest and oldest), along with the Slovak University of Technology and universities in Košice and elsewhere. The system is Bologna-aligned, and several universities offer English-taught medical programs .

READ THE FULL SLOVAKIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 39 OF 45

Slovenia

EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA

Slovenia, an EU country in Central Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Slovene as the main language of instruction, near-universal literacy, and strong international test results. Public education is free, and the system is Bologna-aligned.

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Basic school (osnovna šola, 9 years)** — A single-structure school, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational/technical schools

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

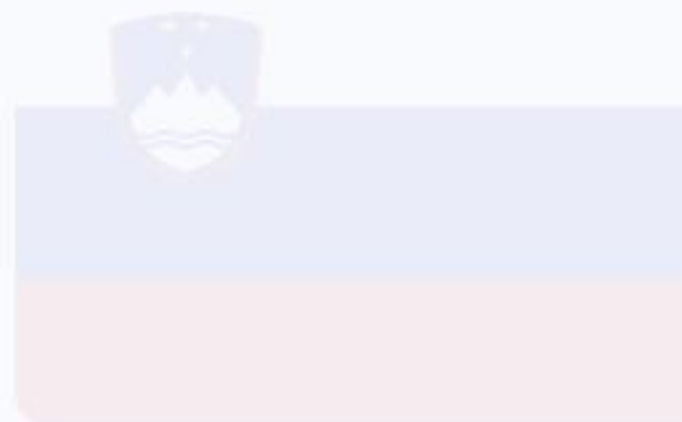
Education is compulsory through the nine-year basic school (ages ~6–15). Public education is free, and the school year runs September to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools . Slovenia performs strongly on international assessments and offers general (gymnasium) and vocational secondary pathways.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Slovenia has a small private and international-school sector , concentrated in Ljubljana.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Slovene
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Slovene language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Students take the Matura at the end of the gymnasium — the school-leaving examination used for university admission .

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is led by the University of Ljubljana (founded 1919, the oldest and largest) and the University of Maribor, among others. The system is Bologna-aligned, and Slovene-taught study at public universities is free for Slovenian and EU students.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Slovenia supports inclusive education , integrating students with additional needs into mainstream schools with support, alongside special schools.

READ THE FULL SLOVENIA GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 40 OF 45

Spain

EDUCATION IN SPAIN

Spain runs a decentralized education system: national law sets the framework, but the 17 autonomous communities administer schooling — and several teach in a co-official regional language (Catalan, Basque, Galician, or Valencian) alongside Spanish (Castilian) . Compulsory education runs to age 16, university admission hinges on a...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

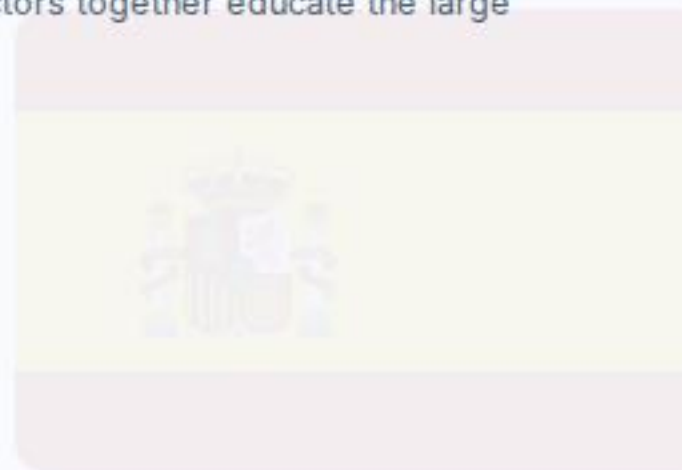
- ✓ **Educación Infantil** — Pre-school (0–6)
- ✓ **Educación Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **ESO — Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (4 years)** — Ages ~12–16, ending with the ESO certificate
- ✓ **Post-16** — The academic Bachillerato (2 years, leading to university) or vocational training (Formación Profesional, FP)

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory and free from age 6 to 16 (Primaria plus ESO). Public schooling is free, and the school year runs September to June . In bilingual communities, instruction is delivered in both Spanish and the co-official language.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Spanish students attend free public schools , state-subsidized "concertado" schools (privately run but publicly funded, often Catholic), or fully private schools. The public and concertado sectors together educate the large majority of students.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish + regional
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 + 4 + 2
School year	Sept – June
University entry	EvAU / Selectividad
Currency	Euro (EUR)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Beyond concertado schools, Spain has fully private and international schools (offering British, American, IB, and other curricula), concentrated in Madrid, Barcelona, and along the coasts.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Spanish language and literature (and the co-official language where applicable), mathematics, the sciences, social sciences, and foreign languages (English is widely taught; many schools are bilingual Spanish–English). The Bachillerato offers specialization tracks (sciences, humanities/social sciences, and arts).

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Completing ESO earns the ESO certificate; completing the Bachillerato leads to the university-entrance examination — the EvAU/EBAU (long known as the Selectividad) — whose results, combined with Bachillerato grades, determine university admission and program access.

READ THE FULL SPAIN GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 41 OF 45

Sweden

EDUCATION IN SWEDEN

Sweden runs a free, comprehensive Nordic-model education system built on equity and inclusion , with Swedish as the main language of instruction (national minority languages, including Sami and Finnish, are also supported). A distinctive feature sets Sweden apart from its Nordic neighbors: a far-reaching school-choice (voucher) system in...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

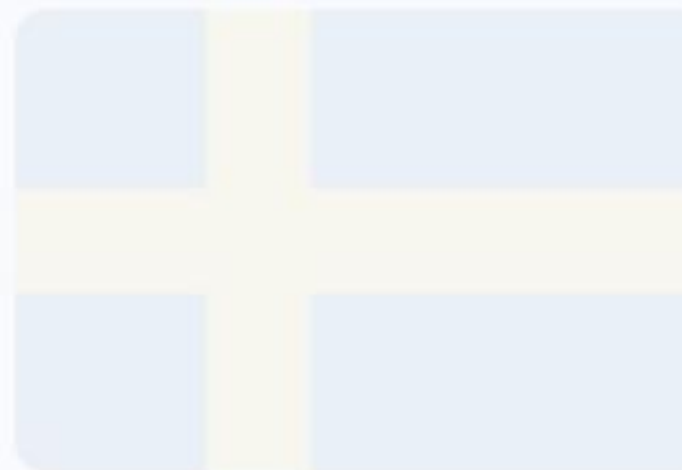
- ✓ **Förskola (preschool)** — Widely used early-childhood education
- ✓ **Grundskola (compulsory school, 10 years)** — Including a compulsory pre-school class from age 6, then grades 1–9, ages ~6–16
- ✓ **Gymnasium (upper secondary, 3 years)** — Academic (higher-education preparatory) or vocational programs — not compulsory, but attended by almost all students

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 (the pre-school class plus the nine-year grundskola). Public schooling is free — including school meals — and the school year runs roughly August to June .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free schools run by their municipality . Distinctively, Sweden also funds independent "free schools" (friskolor) on the same per-pupil basis — they cannot charge tuition or select by ability — giving families broad choice. This voucher-style system is unusual internationally and much debated at home.



AT A GLANCE

Language	Swedish
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	10 + 3
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Gymnasium grades
Currency	Krona (SEK)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Because friskolor are publicly funded and free, the genuinely fee-charging private sector is very small , mainly international schools serving expatriate families. The IB is offered at some schools.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Swedish, English (from an early age), mathematics, the sciences, social studies, and the arts , with an emphasis on student participation, democratic values, and well-being . Sweden's strong English proficiency is notable.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Sweden has no single high-stakes exit exam . Students sit national tests at certain grades, and grades from the grundskola and gymnasium (a merit-rating system) are used for onward admission. For university, applicants use their gymnasium grades or the optional Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (Högskoleprovet).

READ THE FULL SWEDEN GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 42 OF 45

Switzerland

EDUCATION IN SWITZERLAND

Switzerland runs a highly decentralized, federal education system: the country's 26 cantons are responsible for schooling, coordinating through intercantonal agreements. It is genuinely multilingual — instruction is in German, French, Italian, or Romansh depending on the region — and it is renowned worldwide for two things: an...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Compulsory education (~11 years)** — Starting with kindergarten at age 4, through primary and lower secondary (with performance-level tracking that varies by canton)
- ✓ **Upper secondary — academic** — The Gymnasium , leading to the Matura and university (chosen by roughly a quarter to a third of students)
- ✓ **Upper secondary — vocational** — The dual VET system : an apprenticeship combining paid work at a company with part-time vocational school — chosen by about two-thirds of young people

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory for about 11 years , starting at age 4 with kindergarten and running through lower secondary (to about age 15). Public schooling is free, and the school year runs roughly August to July . The system is prized for its permeability — students can move between vocational and academic routes later on.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Almost all students attend free public schools run by their canton and commune. Because education is cantonal, curricula, school names, transition procedures, and the language of instruction differ across the country, within a nationally coordinated framework.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	German · French · Italian
Compulsory	~11 years
Structure	Primary + tracks
School year	Aug – July
University entry	Matura
Currency	Swiss Franc (CHF)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Switzerland is also home to some of the world's most prestigious private international boarding schools , serving a global clientele, alongside the dominant free public system.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Curriculum is set at the cantonal/regional level (coordinated through frameworks like Lehrplan 21 in German-speaking cantons) and covers the regional language, mathematics, the sciences, humanities, and additional national languages plus English — reflecting Switzerland's multilingual character.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

The key academic qualification is the federal Matura (Maturité) , earned at the Gymnasium — it grants direct admission to Swiss universities without a separate entrance exam . Vocational students earn a Federal VET Diploma (and can add a Federal Vocational Baccalaureate to access universities of applied sciences).

READ THE FULL SWITZERLAND GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 43 OF 45

Ukraine

EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

Ukraine runs a state-centered education system with Ukrainian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. It has been modernizing through the "New Ukrainian School" reform (extending general schooling and shifting toward competency-based learning), and it long attracted international students, especially to English-taught...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Basic secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the core cycle
- ✓ **Specialized/upper secondary (grades 10–12)** — Being extended to a three-year senior stage, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory through completion of secondary school . Public education is free, and the school year traditionally runs September to June — though delivery has been heavily affected by the war.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free public schools , taught in Ukrainian. The New Ukrainian School reform has changed curricula and teaching methods; since 2022, schools have relied heavily on online and hybrid learning , shelters, and flexible arrangements.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Ukraine has a private and international-school sector , concentrated in Kyiv and other cities (also affected by the war).

AT A GLANCE

Language	Ukrainian
Compulsory	to grade 11/12
Structure	4 – 5 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	NMT
Currency	Hryvnia (UAH)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers Ukrainian language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, history, and foreign languages (English is widely taught), with the reform emphasizing competencies over rote learning.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

University admission is governed by the NMT (National Multi-subject Test) — a standardized entrance test introduced during the war to replace the earlier external independent evaluation (ZNO), designed to be administered flexibly (including abroad and online) for displaced students.

STUDYING IN UKRAINE FROM ABROAD

- ✓ **English-taught medicine** — Ukrainian medical universities historically drew many international students (notably from India and Africa) to English-medium programs
- ✓ **Current situation** — The war has forced relocations, online study, and departures; prospective students should verify the status of any program directly
- ✓ **Travel advisories** — Check your government's advisory before considering any travel

READ THE FULL UKRAINE GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 44 OF 45

United Kingdom

EDUCATION IN UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom is not one education system but four : England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland each run their own. Instruction is in English (with Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, and Irish also used). The UK's qualifications — GCSEs and A-Levels (and Scotland's distinctive Highers) — and its world-renowned universities make it one of...

STRUCTURE & STAGES

- ✓ **Primary (Reception + Years 1-6)** — Ages ~4/5-11
- ✓ **Secondary (Years 7-11)** — Ages ~11-16, ending with GCSEs
- ✓ **Post-16 (Years 12-13 / "sixth form")** — A-Levels, T-Levels, or vocational qualifications, leading to university

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Education is compulsory from age 5 (4 in Northern Ireland) to 16 ; in England , young people must stay in education or training until 18 . Public ("state") schooling is free, and the school year runs roughly September to July .

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Most students attend free state schools — including academies and, in some areas, grammar schools (selective by exam). Schools follow the national curriculum (in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland; Scotland has its own Curriculum for Excellence).



AT A GLANCE

Languages	English + regional
Compulsory	to 16 (18 in England)
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Sept – July
University entry	A-Levels / Highers
Currency	Pound (GBP)

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The UK has a famous independent (private) school sector — confusingly, the oldest and most prestigious are called "public schools" (such as Eton and Harrow) — educating a minority of students, alongside international schools.

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The curriculum covers English, mathematics, the sciences, humanities, languages, and the arts . At GCSE (usually taken in around 8–10 subjects at 16), students then specialize into a small number of A-Level subjects (typically three) for university preparation.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Two qualifications dominate the English/Welsh/Northern Irish path: GCSEs (taken around age 16) and A-Levels (around age 18), the standard basis for university admission. Scotland uses National 5s, Highers, and Advanced Highers instead. Applications to (nearly all) UK universities go through the centralized UCAS system.

READ THE FULL UNITED KINGDOM GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com





EUROPE — 45 OF 45

Vatican City

EDUCATION IN VATICAN CITY

Vatican City — the world's smallest sovereign state, and the seat of the Roman Catholic Church — is a genuinely unusual case. With a tiny resident population of only a few hundred (mostly clergy, officials, and Swiss Guards) and effectively no resident children in the ordinary sense, it has no conventional national school system

STRUCTURE & STAGES

There is no K-12 school system within Vatican City. Any children of the small number of lay staff attend schools in surrounding Rome (Italy) , within the Italian system. The Vatican's educational institutions are almost entirely at the higher (ecclesiastical) level .

COMPULSORY EDUCATION & ENROLMENT

Compulsory-schooling rules do not apply in the ordinary sense , given the absence of a resident school-age population; families connected to the Vatican rely on schools in Italy.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Vatican City has no public primary or secondary schools of its own. The Holy See instead operates and oversees institutions of higher ecclesiastical learning.

PRIVATE & INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Not applicable in the usual sense; the relevant institutions are the Holy See's pontifical universities and colleges , which serve students (largely seminarians, priests, and religious) globally.



AT A GLANCE

Languages	Italian · Latin
Compulsory	n/a
Structure	Ecclesiastical
School year	—
Higher ed	Pontifical universities
Currency	Euro (EUR)

CURRICULUM & LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

Study centers on theology, philosophy, canon law, scripture, church history, and related disciplines , taught often in Italian and Latin (with other languages). The Vatican also maintains world-renowned scholarly institutions such as the Vatican Apostolic Library , the Vatican Apostolic Archive, and the Vatican Observatory.

EXAMS & QUALIFICATIONS

Ecclesiastical degrees (the baccalaureate, licentiate, and doctorate in fields such as theology and canon law) are awarded by pontifical universities under the authority of the Holy See.

STUDYING IN VATICAN CITY FROM ABROAD

- ✓ **Global student body** — Seminarians, priests, religious, and lay students from many countries study at the pontifical institutions in Rome
- ✓ **Languages** — Italian and Latin feature prominently, with programs in other languages
- ✓ **Practicalities** — Study is arranged through the specific pontifical university, with residence typically in Rome (Italy)

READ THE FULL VATICAN CITY GUIDE
tools.k12academics.com



KEEP EXPLORING

Find Your Community.

One of six regional volumes covering **195 country education guides**.
Explore them all — plus 1,297 free guides and the largest education directory online.

tools.k12academics.com →

