



European
Commission

Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe 2015

*Eurydice Background Report
to the Education and Training Monitor 2015*





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INTRODUCTION

This Eurydice report provides the background information to a number of structural indicators included in the Education and Training Monitor 2015 ⁽¹⁾. The Education and Training Monitor is published annually by the European Commission. It assesses the changes in education and training systems across Europe through the use of targets set at European level, as well as other indicators and reports.

The Joint Assessment Framework (JAF)

The structural indicators in this Eurydice report are part of the Joint Assessment Framework (JAF). The JAF is a monitoring tool developed by the European Commission to follow the progress made by EU Members States towards achieving the targets set by the Europe 2020 and the Education and Training 2020 reform processes ⁽²⁾. The JAF has a quantitative and a more *qualitative* component, which are interrelated and complementary ⁽³⁾.

Selection of Structural Indicators for JAF

Based on several recent Eurydice reports, the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) has identified a limited number of policy relevant indicators in six key areas: early childhood education and care (ECEC), achievement in basic skills, early leaving from education and training, higher education, graduate employability, and learning mobility. These indicators have been discussed with the Eurydice National Units and country representatives in the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB).

Eurydice background report 2015

This report complements the information published in the Education and Training Monitor 2015 ⁽⁴⁾. It contains detailed information on each structural indicator in the Monitor and presents updated figures, definitions, country notes and a short analysis of policy changes and reforms ⁽⁵⁾. A direct comparison with the Eurydice information in the Education and Training Monitor 2014 is not possible due to changes in some indicators and definitions.

2015 is a pilot year for the update of the JAF structural indicators prior to the development of a stable mechanism for annual data collection and analysis. The Eurydice background report 2015 contains five chapters that present five groups of structural indicators:

1. Early childhood education and care
2. Achievement in basic skills
3. Higher education
4. Graduate employability
5. Learning mobility

The reference year for all indicators in this report is the 2014/15 school and academic year.

⁽¹⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor>

⁽²⁾ Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM (2010) 2020 final; Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009

⁽³⁾ For the JAF methodology and its quantitative component see JRC-CRELL (2014), Monitoring the evolution of education and training systems: A guide to the Joint Assessment Framework (<https://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu>).

⁽⁴⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor>

⁽⁵⁾ Further information on national reforms is available in Eurypedia, Chapter 14: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ongoing_Reforms_and_Policy_Developments

Relevant recent Eurydice reports containing earlier versions of the indicators are referenced in each chapter. Within these reports, each indicator has been developed within a larger framework in order to allow readers to better understand a particular topic.

National information on the structural indicators on early leaving from education and training (ELET) for the 2013/14 school year is available in a recent Eurydice report ⁽⁶⁾ and has therefore not been updated in 2015.

Country coverage

This report provides information about all EU Member States, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.

⁽⁶⁾ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/CEDEFOP (2014), Tackling early leaving from education and training in Europe: Strategies, policies and measures.

CHAPTER 1: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Introduction

Early childhood is the stage at which education can effectively influence children's development ⁽⁷⁾. The European Commission therefore wants all young children to be able to access and benefit from high quality education and care ⁽⁸⁾. Reliable information on early childhood education and care (ECEC) systems in Europe is essential in order to understand what challenges are facing European countries, what we can learn from each other, and what new solutions might be developed to meet the needs of the youngest members of society.

The indicators for the Joint Assessment Framework (JAF) provide an overview of key developments in ECEC systems. The choice of structural indicators was underpinned by the guidelines in the 2011 Commission Communication on ECEC ⁽⁹⁾ and the 'Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care' (European Commission, 2014) produced by the ECEC thematic working group under the auspices of the European Commission. In addition, the selection drew on the extensive analysis of the research literature carried out for earlier publications, which helped to identify the main elements in ECEC provision that contribute to providing children with the best possible start in life (for an overview, see EACEA/Eurydice, 2009b; OECD, 2012).

The 'Proposal for key principles' referred to above (European Commission, 2014) identified five main aspects of quality in early childhood education and care: access, workforce, curriculum, evaluation/monitoring and governance/funding. Seeing children as active participants in their own learning, the proposal highlights that parents are the most important partners and their participation is essential if high-quality ECEC is to be delivered. It also stresses that determining what constitutes high-quality ECEC should be a dynamic, continuous and democratic process.

However, considering the vast range of possible system-level information and having in mind the limitations of scope and time, only several essential and robust indicators have been chosen for yearly monitoring. The JAF ECEC indicators therefore examine how countries seek to:

- ensure that the children whose parents request an ECEC place should be able to find one without undue delay and within a reasonable distance of their home;
- build a skilled workforce, which is essential if children are to have the best opportunities for learning and development;
- improve teaching and learning through the provision of educational guidelines or curricula;
- provide the necessary additional (targeted) support in order to guarantee adequate language development;
- foster cooperation between ECEC staff and parents and ensure that parents play a part in the education of their children and understand its importance.

More detailed information on these and other ECEC areas can be found in the recent Eurydice report *Key Data on Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe 2014* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014a), the main findings of which are summarised in the Eurydice policy brief (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014b). More detailed information about the

⁽⁷⁾ Commission Communication 'Efficiency and equity in education and training systems' (COM (2006) 481).

⁽⁸⁾ Communication from the European Commission (2011) — Early childhood education and care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow [COM (2011) 66 final].

⁽⁹⁾ COM (2011) 66 final.

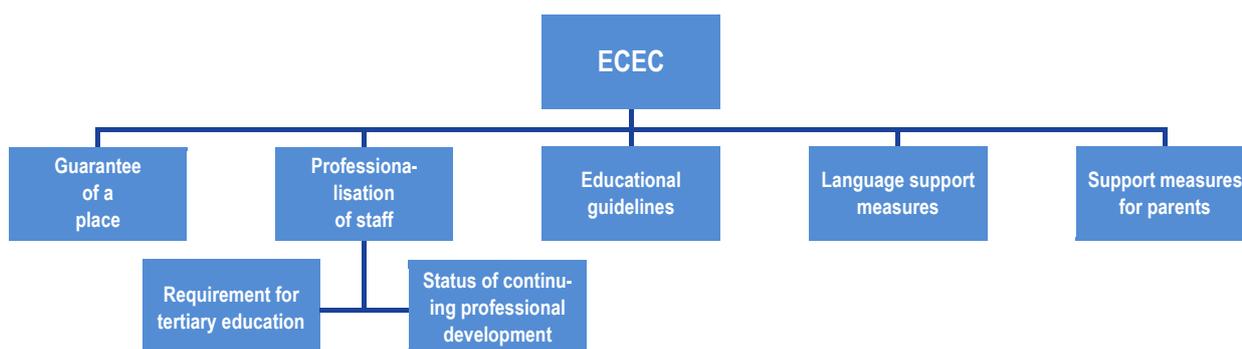
ECEC systems in each country can be found in [Early Childhood Education and Care Systems in Europe: National Information Sheets](#).

The **definition of early childhood education and care (ECEC)** used in JAF is:

'provision for children from birth through to primary education that is subject to a national regulatory framework', i.e., it must comply with a set of rules, minimum standards and/or undergo accreditation procedures. It includes public, private and voluntary sectors. Only centre-based provision is considered.

Many European countries structure ECEC services according to the age of the children. Usually, the transition from one setting to the next takes place when children are around 3 years old. In order to reflect the different regulations, a distinction between provision for 'under 3 year old children' and provision for 'children of 3 years and older' is often made in this chapter. However, it is important to keep in mind that in some countries the transition can be as early as 2½ years or as late as 4 years. National System Information Sheets identify when children move from one phase of ECEC to another phase in each country.

The diagram below indicates the ECEC structural indicators covered in the 2015 JAF data collection.



1.1. Ensuring universal access: legal entitlement and/or compulsory ECEC

In light of the research revealing the numerous benefits of participating in ECEC (Del Boca, 2010; Heckman et al., 2010; Almond and Currie, 2011; Felfe and Lalive, 2011; and Havnes and Mogstad, 2011), there is an overwhelming consensus that ECEC should be available to and affordable for all children⁽¹⁰⁾. The 2011 Communication states that the provision of universally available, high-quality inclusive ECEC services is beneficial for children, parents and society at large⁽¹¹⁾. Moreover, the Communication emphasises that providing universal access to quality ECEC is more beneficial than provision targeted exclusively at vulnerable groups.

Currently, in Europe, there are two approaches to providing universal access to ECEC. Some countries provide a **legal entitlement** to an ECEC place, while others make ECEC attendance **compulsory**.

A **legal entitlement to ECEC** exists when every child has an enforceable right to benefit from ECEC provision. An enforceable right means that public authorities guarantee a place for each child whose parents demand it (in the age-range covered by the legal entitlement), regardless of their employment,

⁽¹⁰⁾ Except the Netherlands, see country specific note to Figure 1.1.

⁽¹¹⁾ COM (2011) 66 final.

socio-economic or family status. It does not necessarily imply that provision is free, only that provision is publicly subsidised and affordable.

It is important to note that a 'right to ECEC for every child' expressed in legislation in general terms, but without adequate funding and the necessary policies to ensure the delivery of sufficient places is not considered a legal entitlement. Similarly, the existence of some publicly subsidised ECEC settings providing places for limited numbers of children is not considered a legal entitlement if public authorities are not obliged to provide a place.

Compulsory ECEC refers to the obligation for children to attend ECEC settings when they reach a certain age.

A targeted legal entitlement or targeted compulsory ECEC that applies only to certain groups of children (e.g. disadvantaged learners, children of parents who are in employment, certain minorities, etc.) are not considered in this report.

Most European countries have committed themselves to providing an ECEC place for all children, (see Figure 1.1) either by establishing a legal entitlement to ECEC or by making attendance compulsory. However, there are significant differences in the age at which children have a guaranteed ECEC place. Only seven EU-28 countries, namely Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden, as well as Norway, guarantee a legal right to ECEC to each child soon after its birth, often immediately after the end of childcare leave. In most of these countries, the entitlement is not phrased in terms of hours of provision, but usually implies a full-time place. Typically, parents are expected to co-finance the provision until the beginning of compulsory education. However, the fees are rather low. Only in Latvia is public ECEC provision free, while other types of ECEC provision are heavily subsidised.

In **Denmark**, since 2001, the regulatory framework obliges municipalities to ensure ECEC provision for all children between the ages of six months and six years (when compulsory primary education begins). Municipalities are sanctioned financially if they fail to comply and therefore all municipalities now meet the requirements. Parents may have to meet up to of 25 % of a centre's operating expenditure.

In **Sweden**, all children from the age of one are legally entitled to ECEC. When parents require a place for their child in ECEC, the municipality should offer one within four months. Parents may choose a place in an ECEC institution run by another organisation or in another municipality. Since 1995, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate may take action against a municipality that does not offer a place within the time limit, for example by imposing a fine. A recent government report (SOU, 2013:41) shows that supply meets demand in most municipalities.

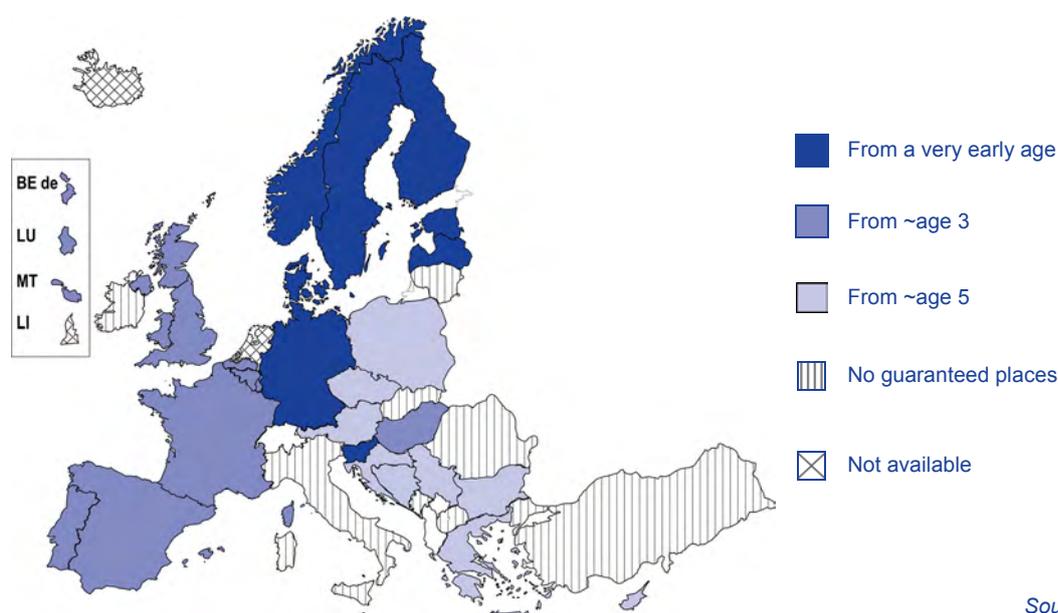
Despite the legal framework that guarantees a place in ECEC for all children from a very early age, in reality some municipalities in some countries still strive to balance supply and demand. In Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia, despite the efforts to widen access to ECEC, the number of places for the youngest children still does not meet parental demand. In Germany, the availability of ECEC services varies significantly between *Länder*.

In around a third of European education systems (three Communities of Belgium, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Portugal and all parts of the United Kingdom), the legal entitlement to publicly subsidised ECEC starts when children are three years old, or a few months earlier. In all of these countries, children are entitled to ECEC free of charge (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014a, Figure D5). Usually, the hours of free ECEC provision correspond to a typical school day, except in the four parts of the United Kingdom, where the free entitlement is between 10 hours (Wales) and 16 hours (Scotland) a week. In most of these countries, supply more or less meets demand from the start of the legal entitlement. Hungary and Portugal face difficulties in providing enough places in certain areas.

In **Belgium (French Community)**, children from birth to three years may attend different types of centre-based settings or regulated home-based care. However, children are only legally entitled to free early childhood education from age two-and-a-half, in the *école maternelle* (23h per week). This provision falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Education. Primary education starts at age six.

Around a quarter of European education systems provide guaranteed places from around age five. In Bulgaria, where primary education starts at the age seven, this implies two years of ECEC. Children have a place guaranteed for the last year of ECEC in the Czech Republic, which provides a legal entitlement. In Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Austria, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Serbia the last year of ECEC (pre-primary classes) is compulsory. The minimum weekly duration of compulsory pre-primary education varies between 15 hours per week in some Austrian *Länder* to 26.5 hours per week in Cyprus.

Figure 1.1: Age at which a place in ECEC is guaranteed, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

	BEfr	BEde	BEnl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
Starting age of legal entitlement (years)	2½	3	2½		5	½	1	1½	-		3	3		-		1.5	-	3	3	2¾
Starting age of compulsory ECEC (years)				5						5			6		4¾	5		4	5	
Weekly entitlement (hours)	23	23	23	20-24	40	40	⊗	40	-	22.5	25	24	(4)	-	26.5	⊗	-	18 [26]	20	30
	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG	UK-WLS	UK-NIR	UK-SCT		BA	ME	MK	NO	RS	TR
Starting age of legal entitlement (years)	:			3	-	11/12	-	¾	1	3	3	3	3		-	-	-	1		-
Starting age of compulsory ECEC (years)		5	5												5				5½	
Weekly entitlement (hours)	:	15-20	25	25	-	40	-	40	40	15	10	12.5	(16)		(10.5)	-	-	40	20	-

⊗ No central regulations

Explanatory note

Where the weekly entitlement is marked in brackets, the figure was calculated by dividing the annual hours of entitlement indicated in regulations by 38 – the most common number of weeks in a school year. Where the weekly entitlement and hours of compulsory ECEC differs, the square brackets indicate the hours of compulsory ECEC. Weekly hours are truncated at 40.

Country specific notes

Belgium: 28 periods of 50 minutes.

Bulgaria: Compulsory ECEC: five-year-olds – 20 hours; six-year-olds – 24 hours.

Netherlands: Stresses the importance of accessibility and freedom of choice for parents in ECEC provision. Universal entitlement and progress towards this goal are not supported as they do not match the Netherlands ECEC system, which combines a demand-driven structure for children under four and supply-side arrangements for all children aged four and up, or for those aged two-and-a-half to four from disadvantaged backgrounds. This combined system has led to a 90 % participation rate for three year old children.

Austria: Weekly hours of compulsory ECEC vary between *Länder*.

United Kingdom: For England, Wales and Scotland, 'legal entitlement' refers to a statutory duty on local authorities; in Northern Ireland, it refers to a commitment made in the Programme for Government but not enshrined in law. In England and Wales, children reach compulsory school age at the start of the school term following their fifth birthday. For autumn- and spring-born children, therefore, part of the reception year (classified as ISCED 0) is compulsory.

In 2014, only five EU-28 countries, namely Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia, as well as, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Turkey had not provided a guarantee to an ECEC place. However, in some of these countries, despite the absence of a legal entitlement or obligation to attend, governments might still make a substantial investment to ensure that all children can access some ECEC provision, at least during the year or two prior to the commencement of primary education. For example:

Ireland has invested in the provision of an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme which was introduced in 2010, and now caters for a significant proportion of pre-school children.

Recent policy developments

Usually, the legal entitlement and/or obligation to attend ECEC have been introduced gradually, lowering the age at which a child is guaranteed a place step-by-step. For example:

In **Germany**, the legal entitlement to a place in an ECEC setting was extended to children aged one and two from August 2013, while all children aged three and over have been entitled to an ECEC place since 1996. In order to establish the basis for fulfilling this new legal right, the Federal Government, *Länder*, and local authorities have expanded the provision of day care places for children under three years old over the last few years to meet the target of providing 750 000 places (i.e. 35 per cent of children under three) as agreed in 2007. However, recent parent surveys reveal that childcare facilities are now required for 41.5 per cent of all infants. The Federal Government which spent EUR 5.4 billion on the expansion of ECEC for children under the age of three between 2008-2014 has thus agreed to provide additional investment funds and financial aid for operating costs to the *Länder* for the extra 60 000 places needed nationwide.

Other countries with recent reforms regarding place guarantees include Croatia, Latvia and the United Kingdom (Scotland).

Croatia introduced compulsory ECEC for one year prior to starting school from 2014/15.

Since September 2013, the **Latvian** government has provided financial support for parents whose children aged 18 months to four years do not have a place in public ECEC (from age five ECEC is compulsory). The state invested EUR 1.7 million in 2013 and EUR 8.8 million in 2014. EUR 6.23 million is invested for the first half of 2015. From January 2016, the local governments that still do not provide enough public ECEC places will cover the expenses for child's enrolment in a private setting in compliance with the Regulation by the Cabinet of Ministers.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, from August 2014, the entitlement for three- and four-year-olds was increased from 475 to 600 yearly hours (from approximately 12.5 to 16 weekly hours).

Three countries have reforms regarding legal entitlement or compulsory ECEC.

Hungary introduced compulsory ECEC for children from the age of three from September 2015.

Poland extended the legal entitlement to four-year-olds from September 2015 and will extend to three-year-olds from September 2017.

Finland introduced compulsory ECEC for one year prior to starting school from August 2015.

1.2. Professionalisation of ECEC staff

ECEC staff have a major role in shaping children's experiences and determining their learning outcomes (Winton and McCollum, 2008). The 2011 Commission Communication ⁽¹²⁾ states that staff competencies are key to high quality ECEC. Recent research conducted within the OECD stresses that there is strong evidence to suggest that better educated staff are more likely to provide high-quality teaching approaches and stimulating learning environments, which lead to better learning outcomes (Lijtens and Taguma, 2010). In this report, progress towards the professionalisation of staff is assessed by looking at initial training requirements and regulations on continuing professional development.

ECEC staff refers here only to those professionals who have regular, daily, direct contact with children and whose duties involve education and care. They have the main responsibility for groups of children in an ECEC setting. Their duties usually include designing and delivering safe and developmentally appropriate activities in accordance with all relevant programmes/curricula.

The term ECEC staff does not include heads of ECEC settings, medical staff (such as paediatricians, physiotherapists, psychomotor therapists, nutritionists, etc. providing support for children's physical development), professional specialists (such as psychologists), assistants/auxiliary staff who perform only domestic or maintenance roles (such as preparing food and cleaning premises).

1.2.1. ECEC staff qualification requirements

The indicator on the requirement for at least one staff member per group of children in ECEC to be qualified to a minimum of Bachelor level in the field of education (i.e. a minimum of three years at ISCED 6 according to the ISCED 2011 classification) aims to show whether education staff in the sector are highly qualified. This is important as staff who are highly qualified in education can provide leadership to other team members when designing and delivering developmentally appropriate activities for children and thus raise the quality of provision.

Programmes at **ISCED level 6, at Bachelor's or equivalent level**, are often designed to provide participants with academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Programmes at this level are typically theoretically-based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions, but do not necessarily involve the completion of a research project or thesis (UNESCO, 2012).

Figure 1.2 shows that in more than a third of European education systems there must be at least one staff member who has tertiary level education in educational sciences for all groups of children across the entire phase of ECEC.

In **Finland**, the minimum requirement for an ECEC teacher is a Bachelor level degree. Other types of staff (child care workers or 'practical nurses') must hold at least a vocational qualification in the field of social welfare and health care (upper secondary education ISCED 3). Legislation requires that a minimum of one in three of the staff in ECEC settings catering for children up to age six must have a higher education degree (Bachelor of Education, Master of Education or Bachelor of Social Services). All teachers in pre-primary education for six-year-olds must have a Bachelor's or Master's level university degree in education.

The requirement for at least one member of staff to have a tertiary qualification in educational sciences applies only to groups of children aged three years and over in about a third of European

⁽¹²⁾ COM (2011) 66 final.

education systems (Belgium (French and Flemish Communities) ⁽¹³⁾, Bulgaria, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia).

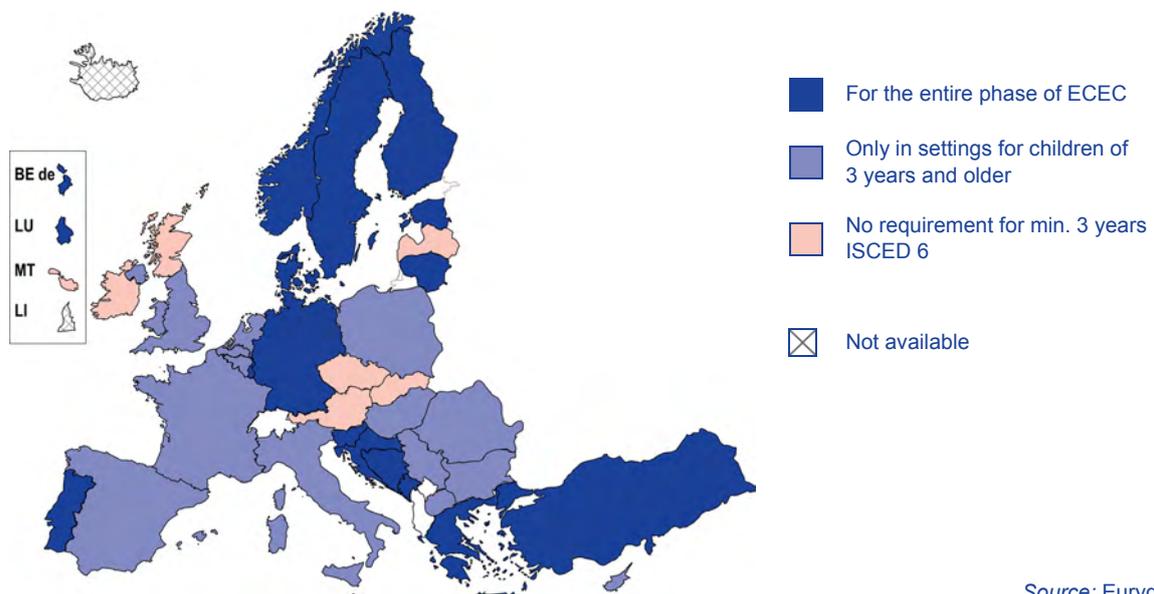
In **Italy**, ECEC teachers working with children aged three years and over are required to have at least five years of university education, which corresponds to ISCED 7 (Master's degree level). The minimum qualification requirement for educational staff working with younger children is set at upper secondary (ISCED 3), but some regions employ educators (*educatore dell'infanzia*) with tertiary education degrees. In settings for children under three, regional regulations make provision for auxiliary staff (*educatore, operatore*) and their requisite qualifications.

For the entire phase of ECEC, there is no requirement for one member of staff per group to have a minimum of three years' tertiary education in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Austria, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (Scotland). However, in some of these countries, vocational training or short-cycle (college) ECEC related tertiary education is required instead.

In **Latvia**, ECEC staff are required to have completed a first level tertiary education (ISCED 5) study programme or second level (ISCED 6) higher pedagogical education programme and have a pre-school teacher qualification.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, ECEC practitioners must hold at least a recognised vocational qualification at ISCED level 3. Although there is no longer a requirement for qualified teachers to be based full-time in ECEC settings, the government has a policy that all pre-school children should receive access to a qualified teacher. Access to a teacher can be considered either as teacher involvement in a specific centre on a full/part time basis or sustained peripatetic support that contributes positively to the learning experience for children (The Scottish Government, 2009). Moreover, all managers of ECEC centres are required to have, or be working towards, a BA in Childhood Practice (ISCED level 6), which has content on both early education and care.

Figure 1.2: Requirement for at least one staff member per group of children in ECEC to have a tertiary qualification in education (minimum 3 years ISCED 6), 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Country specific note

France: For under 3-year olds in *crèches et autres structures collectives*, no qualified staff member is required in settings catering for 24 or less children. In settings with 25 to 49 children, at least 0.5 staff member with a tertiary qualification in education (minimum 3 years ISCED 6) is required. In settings with 50-69 children, one educational staff member is required. For each additional up to 20 children capacity, at least 0.5 additional post of educational staff is added. For all children attending *école maternelle* (from age 2), at least one staff member with tertiary qualification in education is required for each group.

⁽¹³⁾ In settings for children from 2½ years.

Recent policy developments

A few education systems have introduced reforms to staff qualifications, or qualification levels have changed as a result of the revised ISCED classification system.

In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, the Government Order of 22 May 2014 stipulates that the social-pedagogical employer in *Kinderkrippe* (settings for children under three) must hold a corresponding higher education diploma.

In **Germany**, according to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), vocational training for Kindergarten teachers is considered equivalent to a Bachelor's degree (ISCED 6).

In **Malta**, from 2015/16, the required level of qualification for staff working in kindergarten centres will be raised to Bachelor's degree level with four years of study or two years of study for holders of the MCAST Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in Early Years (and which would have been preceded by a two-year MCAST Advanced Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development).

1.2.2. Continuing professional development of ECEC staff

Establishing the initial qualification requirements for staff working with children is only the starting point for ensuring a well-qualified workforce. Continuing professional development (CPD) is an important means by which employees can upgrade their knowledge and skills throughout their career. In certain cases, participating in training also allows staff to upgrade their qualifications. The 'Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care' (European Commission, 2014) highlights that continuing professional development has a huge impact on the quality of staff, the teaching methods and approaches used and on children's outcomes.

Continuing professional development is defined as participation in formal and non-formal professional development activities, which may, for example, include subject-based and pedagogical training. In certain cases, these activities may lead to further qualifications.

Professional duty means a task described as such in working regulations/contracts/legislation or other regulations on the teaching profession.

Although continuing professional development might in some cases compensate for a lack of initial training, European countries usually regard CPD as a professional duty and/or necessary for the promotion of staff who already hold higher-level qualifications, namely ECEC teachers. In many countries, CPD is an integral part of teacher profession, including ECEC (or pre-primary) teacher profession. However, for the categories of staff who are not required to have a minimum of three years' training in education at ISCED level 6, CPD is often optional. As shown in Figure 1.3, continuing professional development is a professional duty and/or necessary for promotion for staff working in settings for children under three years of age in only half of European countries. For example:

In **Malta**, there is no obligatory or specifically organised continuous professional development for staff working with children under three years of age in childcare settings. However, for ECEC staff working with children aged three years or older, CDP sessions are held once per term after school hours (three two-hour sessions per school year).

In **Poland**, CPD is necessary for promotion for all teachers in pre-school and school education, but CPD is not required for staff working with children under three years old.

In **Slovakia**, all pedagogical employees are obliged to develop their professional competences through continuing education and self-education. CPD is necessary for promotion and allows teachers to reach higher salary scales. For ECEC staff working with children under three years old no formal teacher qualification is required and CPD is optional.

In many countries, however, pre-primary teachers work throughout the entire ECEC phase and CPD is a professional duty and/or necessary for promotion.

In **Lithuania**, according to the Law on Education (2011), each teacher must upgrade his/her qualification. Each teacher is entitled to at least five days paid annual leave of absence for his/her continuing professional development.

In **Slovenia**, CPD is a professional duty and a right according to the Organisation and Financing of Education Act and the Collective Agreement for Education. Pedagogical staff have the right to five days of in-service training a year or 15 days over three years.

In several education systems, CPD is required of all ECEC staff regardless of the level and type of their education.

In **Slovenia**, CPD is also a professional duty for assistants.

The **Scottish** Social Services Council, which is responsible for registering people who work in social services and regulating their education and training, stipulate that all workers in day care services for children must engage in 10 days or 60 hours of CPD over the course of their five-year registration.

For ECEC staff working with children aged 3 years and up, CPD is a professional duty and/or necessary for promotion everywhere except in Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. However, even in these education systems CPD may be required of certain types of ECEC staff, for example:

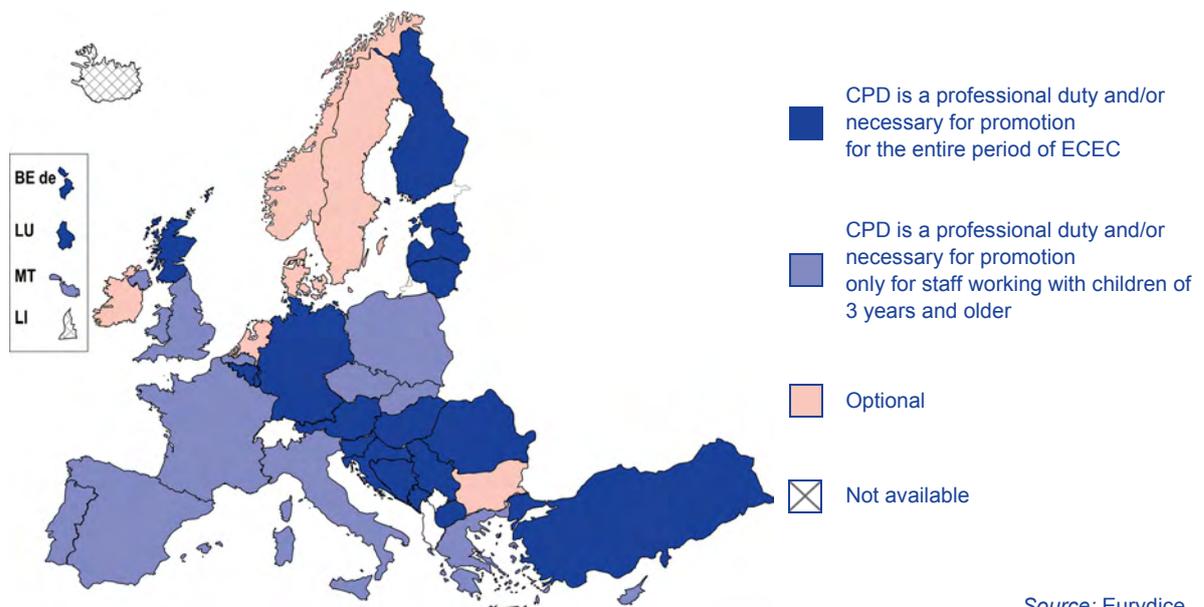
In the **Netherlands**, staff working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds in pre-school educational programmes within childcare and playgroup settings are obliged to undertake CPD once every five years.

Recent policy developments

Only one country reported any reforms regarding CPD for ECEC staff.

In **Estonia**, the state regulated system of teacher promotion became obsolete on 1 January 2014 and has been replaced by school-based evaluation and promotion systems.

Figure 1.3: Status of continuing professional development (CPD) for ECEC staff, 2014/15



1.3. Educational guidelines

The effectiveness of the teaching and learning process largely determines the quality of ECEC provision. Appropriate teaching approaches, learning activities based on well-defined objectives, good communication between children and staff, follow-up of progress towards the desired learning outcomes, as well as the involvement of stakeholders such as parents and the local community, all contribute to the delivery of high quality education and care (see EACEA/Eurydice, 2009b and European Commission, 2014). At national level, policy-makers seek to influence the quality of teaching and learning by issuing a detailed ECEC curriculum or outlining the main principles in educational guidelines.

The **ECEC curriculum** as defined in the EC quality framework (European Commission, 2014) covers developmental care, formative interactions, learning experiences and supportive assessment. It promotes young children's personal and social development and their learning as well as lays the foundations for their future life and citizenship. The ECEC curriculum is set out in formal documentation issued by the responsible authorities.

Learning opportunities to be provided to young children can also be formulated as **educational guidelines**. Regulations on ECEC content and teaching approaches may be incorporated into legislation as part of an education programme, as a reference framework of skills, care and education plans, educational standards, and criteria for developing local curricula or practical guidelines for ECEC practitioners.

All European countries issue official educational guidelines to help settings improve their provision. However, in around a quarter of European countries educational guidelines or curricula are not provided for settings for children under three years old (see Figure 1.4).

Depending on how formal or binding they are, educational guidelines allow varying degrees of flexibility in the way they are applied in ECEC settings. There may be more than one document applicable to the phase in a particular country or region within a country, but they all contribute to establishing the basic framework in which ECEC staff are required (or advised, where mandatory requirements do not exist) to develop their own practice to meet children's needs. Recommendations are usually quite broad, and often institutions are free to develop their own curricula and choose their own methods.

In federal systems with significant regional autonomy, as is the case in Germany and Spain, the central recommendations contain general principles and objectives, but the education authorities of the *Länder* and the Autonomous Communities are responsible for providing more detailed programmes of study for ECEC including objectives, content and assessment methods, etc. For example:

In **Germany**, a Common Framework for Early Education in Childcare Centres defines general goals, principles, developmental areas, conditions for the implementation of educational objectives and facilitation of transition to primary school. The 16 curricular frameworks of the federal states (*Bundesländer*) further specify and elaborate the overall ECEC goals, pedagogical practices and learning areas stated in the Common Framework.

In other countries (e.g. Estonia, Denmark, Lithuania (ages 0-5), Sweden and Finland), the guidelines and principles established in the national framework provide a reference point for producing local curricula at the municipal level or within ECEC settings.

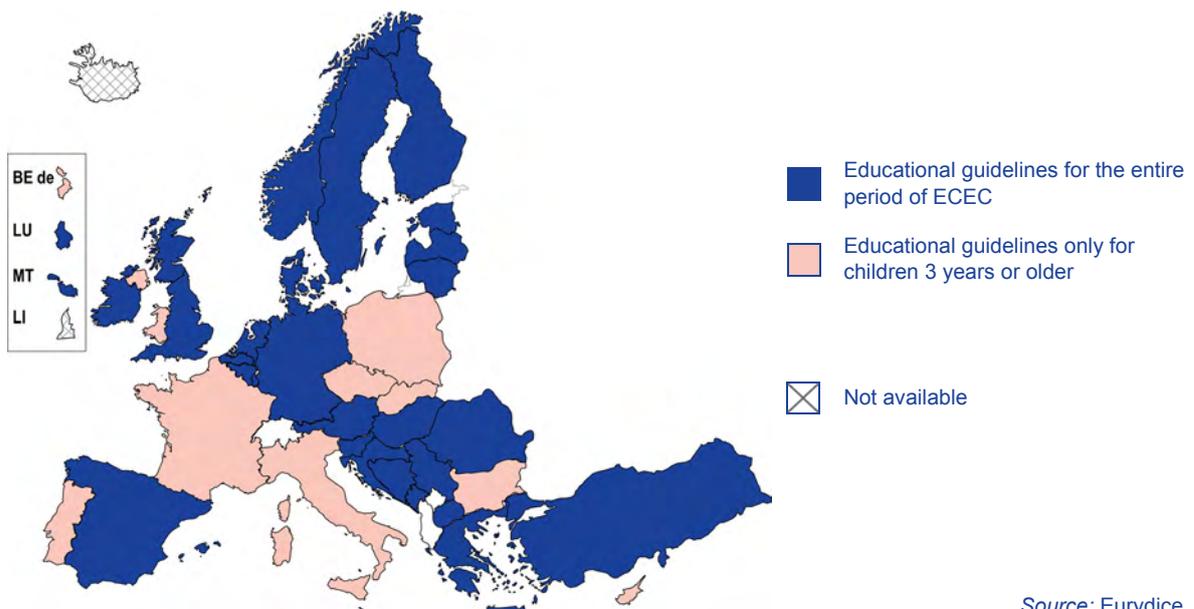
Often the curriculum is more detailed at the later stages, i.e. the last one or two pre-primary years. For example:

In **Bulgaria**, educational guidelines cover only the compulsory pre-primary preparation for school (last two years of ECEC). There is a detailed programme based on a modular system, which offers content suited to the educational needs of: children who have been attending kindergarten; children who have not attended kindergarten prior to their enrolment in the preparatory group; and children whose mother tongue is other than Bulgarian and who have not attended kindergarten. The programme includes the following educational fields: the Bulgarian language, mathematics, the social world, the natural world, play culture, arts and literature for children, music, technology and every-day life, and physical education.

Every setting in **Lithuania** develops its own curricula (pre-school programme) on the basis of the Outline of Criteria for Pre-school Education Curriculum. The Ministry of Education also provides detailed recommendations on how to prepare such curricula. However, for the last year of ECEC, there is a detailed pre-primary curriculum.

Even when there are no official guidelines at central level, often ECEC providers are required to draw up their own education and care plan in order to become accredited. Settings are required to outline, for example, their proposed socio-pedagogic activities, the education and support provided for children, and information about their cooperation with parents.

Figure 1.4: ECEC educational guidelines, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Recent policy developments

Educational guidelines are being introduced for the youngest children in two education systems.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, a pedagogical framework for work with children under two-and-a-half years has been available since 2014. It has been commissioned by the Agency for Child and Family Policies (*Kind en Gezin*) and developed by two university research teams. The framework outlines pedagogical practice, describes what is understood by pedagogical quality and provides points of departure to develop appropriate pedagogical activities. The framework should help ECEC settings to check and improve how they work.

In **Portugal**, a set of educational guidelines for *crèches* (ECEC settings for under-threes) is in preparation and will be gradually available during 2015/16.

Several countries have updated their ECEC curricula or have introduced new areas of instruction.

In January 2015, the **Croatian** Ministry of Science, Education and Sports published the new National Curriculum for Early and Pre-primary Education. This document provides additional operational details for the National Framework Curriculum for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education (accepted in 2011).

Lithuania updated its pre-primary curriculum (for the last year of ECEC) in 2014; the implementation started in 2015. Moreover, in 2015, a requirement to describe the achievements of pre-school age children was added in the 'Outline of criteria for the pre-school education curriculum' and a detailed guideline on 'Pre-school age children's achievements' was provided.

In **Poland**, in 2014, a new area of instruction 'Preparation to use a modern foreign language' was added to the core curriculum for children aged three and over.

In **Slovakia**, a new State Educational Programme for Pre-primary Education has entered into force on 1 September 2015. In the academic year 2015/16 the new state educational programme will be implemented on a voluntary basis. It will be applied in all ECEC facilities for three- to five-year-olds from 1 September 2016.

In **Finland**, a new national core curriculum for pre-primary education was adopted in December 2014 and local curricula based on the new core curriculum will be implemented by August 2016. In August 2015, the Finnish National Board of Education assumed the duties of the national development agency in ECEC. At the same time, preparation started for a national core curriculum for ECEC that will replace the current national ECEC curriculum guidelines.

1.4. Specific language support measures

Some children at certain developmental stages might need additional support measures in order to reach their full potential. Language is essential for interaction and it forms a foundation for learning, therefore children who face difficulties in their language development need to get timely additional support. There are many varied language support measures available in European countries, often tailored to meet the specific needs of certain linguistic groups or even specific children. Three types of language support measures were considered in Figure 1.5:

- a) programmes to improve the language of instruction for children who speak other languages at home,
- b) programmes for children who are late in developing speaking skills in their mother tongue (language of instruction),
- c) programmes to improve children's skills in the language they speak at home where it is not the language of instruction.

The limitation of this indicator relates to the fact that only central level recommendations are reported, therefore regional and local practices are not reflected even when they are widespread. Languages spoken in a country often vary in different regions and localities, therefore many measures are taken at these levels. Nevertheless, most European countries have introduced some language support measures in ECEC at central level. In some countries, these language programmes are funded at the central level, providing additional/specialist staff or grants to settings implementing these programmes. Learning guidelines and materials are often provided, as well as language assessment tools and training for staff.

Although many European countries provide central language support measures for the entire period of ECEC, some countries specifically target children only from the age of three (Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities), Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, France, Italy, Cyprus, Hungary and Poland). There are no central level language support measures in Belgium (Flemish Community), Ireland, Slovakia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

The first group of measures – support for learning the language of instruction – is intended to help children adjust and integrate into school life, and also to enable them to access the wider curriculum.

Germany is a typical example of a country providing language support to migrants or children from disadvantaged areas. A number of different initiatives (at central and regional level) seek to develop children's language skills and give them daily practice in the language of instruction. The national programme *Offensive Frühe Chancen*, for example, funds additional staff in settings operating in disadvantaged areas to support children's language development.

The second group of language support measures is designed for all children who need help in developing speech and language skills in their mother tongue. For example:

In **Portugal**, speech therapy may be provided under the National System for Early Intervention, targeted at children aged 0-6 years old that are at risk of poor outcomes in their education and who need additional support in order to achieve their full potential.

The third group of language measures focuses on supporting migrants and minorities in learning their mother tongue. The objective is to give these children an opportunity to keep their identity and grow up in a bilingual environment. For instance:

In **Finland**, specific measures are decided locally: they may include support for learning Finnish as a second language; interpreter services to assist communication with parents; specific learning and teaching materials; additional training for staff or the recruitment of staff from a minority background.

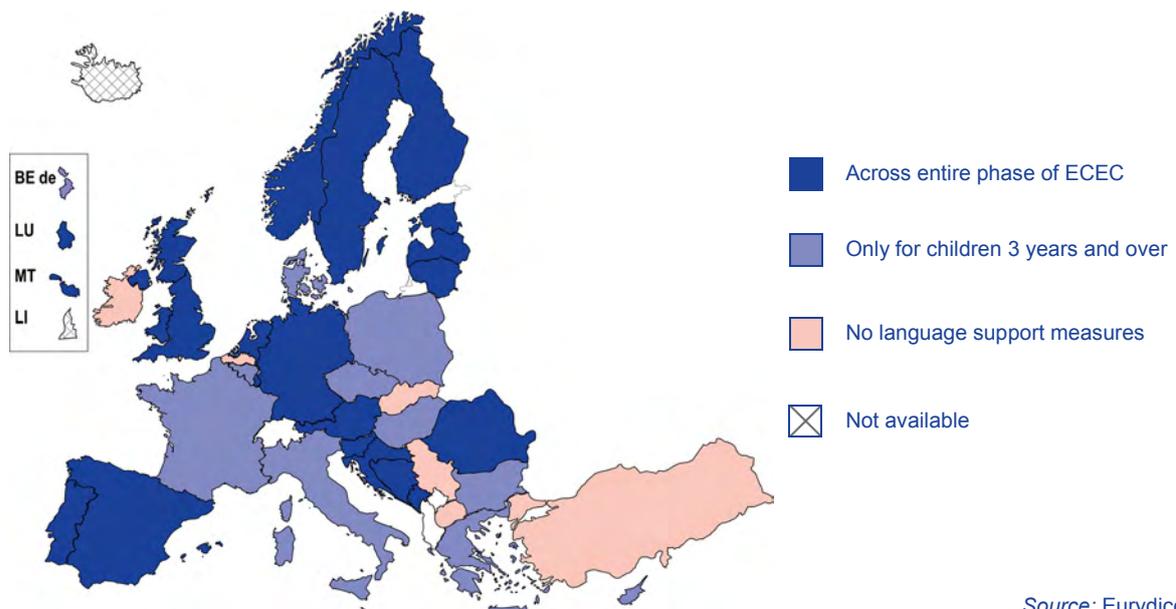
Recent policy developments

Two countries are introducing language support.

In **Poland**, in 2014, a new area of instruction 'Preparation to use a regional or ethnic language' (for children from regional and ethnic minorities) was added to the core curriculum for children aged three and over.

In **Portugal**, guidelines on Portuguese as a second language for pre-school education are in preparation.

Figure 1.5: Provision of language support measures in ECEC, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Country specific note

United Kingdom (Scotland): Instead of targeted programmes, the measures taken are individually tailored. Children for whom English is a second language receive additional help.

1.5. Support measures for parents

Parent participation in their children's education is essential; therefore, parents are the most important partners in striving for high-quality ECEC, according to the 'Proposal for the key principals of a quality framework for early childhood education and care' (European Commission, 2014). The Proposal also states that the 'family should be fully involved in all aspects of education and care for their child. ECEC services can complement the family and offer support as well as additional opportunities to parents and children'.

Most European countries emphasise the importance of partnership with parents and encourage settings to include specific measures in their planning. Moreover, many countries recommend the types of support that settings should provide to parents. Figure 1.6 shows whether central regulations/recommendations and/or curriculum for ECEC specify the following support measures for parents:

- a) Information sessions and bilateral parent-teacher meetings in the ECEC setting.
- b) Home learning guidance, which refers to fostering the child's learning at home, by providing information and ideas to families about how to help their children with curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning. ECEC services can inspire parents to offer their children all kinds of learning situations at home, both implicit and explicit, e.g. by involving children in daily routines (meals, phone calls, making grocery lists, getting dressed, etc.) and enriching these routines with stimulating discussions. With the aim of boosting children's language development, cognitive development and academic achievement, this is sometimes referred to as the 'home curriculum' (OECD, 2012).
- c) Parenting programmes refer to formal parenting classes to help families establish home environments that support children as learners. Parents attend formal courses covering a variety of topics related to children's education and development (i.e. speech/language and reading development).
- d) Home visits.

The most common form of cooperation between parents and settings is through **information sessions and bilateral parent-teacher meetings**, which should form the basis of a regular dialogue between families and ECEC practitioners. Parents receive information on their child's progress and development as well as advice on their child's education. Some countries specify the frequency of such meetings, for example:

In **Austria**, so called *Elternabende* (parents' evenings), are required by most of the provincial laws twice a year. Many services offer meetings and guidance more often than required by law.

In the countries which have no specific recommendations on the forms of support to be provided to parents, informal meetings between staff and parents are also common practice.

Home-learning guidance is centrally recommended in more than a third of European education systems.

The **Irish** curriculum framework for ECEC contains information not only for ECEC practitioners but also for parents. The information is intended to help parents 'plan and provide challenging and enjoyable learning experiences enabling children to grow and develop as competent and confident learners'.

Parenting programmes have similar objectives to those set for guidance on home learning. The main distinction between these two types of support lies in their organisation: in the case of parenting

programmes, parents attend formal courses covering a variety of topics related to children's education and development.

In **Estonia**, for instance, within the framework of the Strategy for Children and Families and its associated development plan, parenting programmes have been operating since 2012 covering such topics as child health and development, bullying in ECEC settings, and children's and parents' rights. Some training courses are provided within ECEC settings.

A few countries/regions specify that parenting programmes are often directed at the most vulnerable groups.

Home visits involving ECEC staff (teachers or specialists) are recommended in 12 European education systems. These visits are mostly intended to support families from disadvantaged backgrounds, but they are also often available for parents of children with learning difficulties. The purpose of such visits is twofold: on the one hand, staff provide advice to parents, while on the other hand, staff learn more about a child's family environment, and can therefore improve their understanding of the child's needs.

In **Romania**, home visits may be carried out when a child has difficulties in adapting to a new ECEC setting and/or communicating with staff or other children.

In **Slovenia** and **Slovakia**, home visits are mostly targeted at Roma families with a view to creating links with the Roma community and promoting the importance of using ECEC services.

Where no central recommendations exist, local authorities and/or ECEC services are free to choose their own ways of cooperating with and providing assistance to families. For example:

In the **Czech Republic**, according to the curriculum, teachers should regularly inform parents about their children's achievements and progress, and nursery schools (*mateřské školy*) should support family education and provide guidance. However, the ways this should be done are not prescribed and systematic support is not usually provided in practice.

In **Italy**, in keeping with the principle of schools' organisational autonomy, central guidelines may not set down which measures schools should implement. In addition to regularly held mandatory class councils with parent representatives to discuss children's overall development and the work being carried out by ECEC teachers, many schools also organise individual and/or group meetings with parents.

In the **Netherlands**, ECEC settings are not obliged to involve parents in their work but the inspectorate of educational programmes monitors ECEC settings in this respect.

In **Norway**, the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergarten, which is a regulation of the Kindergarten Act, states that parents and ECEC staff are to have regular contact for information exchange and discussion. Even though it is not regulated in detail by law, the majority of ECEC settings organise information sessions and bilateral parent-teacher meetings at least twice a year.

It is important to note that ECEC settings are not the only providers of support.

In several **German Länder**, family centres (*Familienzentren* or *Eltern-Kind-Zentren*) as well as ECEC settings offer other family-oriented services including, for instance, parenting programmes and counselling for parents.

In **Cyprus**, various bodies (government organisations such as pedagogical institutes or non-governmental organisations such as parent's unions (locally financed)) run educational seminars for parents.

In **Austria**, different bodies (mostly non-governmental organisations) run centrally financed education projects for parents.

In **Finland**, the tasks of municipal child health clinics also include monitoring the wellbeing of the whole family and supporting parenting.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, within the framework of the National Parenting Strategy launched in 2012, all parents, regardless of whether their children are enrolled in ECEC services, benefit from support through parenting clubs and courses, and have access to books, toys and web-based resources to encourage development through play.

CHAPTER 2: ACHIEVEMENT IN BASIC SKILLS

Introduction

Low student achievement in the basic skills of literacy/mother tongue, mathematics and science is a concern for many European countries⁽¹⁴⁾. It is an issue associated not only with the effectiveness of teaching and learning, but also with providing an equitable system of education. Moreover, becoming fully integrated into society and being able to respond to the changing demands of the competitive global economy is a significant challenge for many young people who have not yet acquired the key basic competences. Recognising the need for targeted action, in 2008 the Council adopted an EU-wide benchmark related to basic skills, which aims to reduce the proportion of 15-year-olds underachieving in reading, mathematics and science to less than 15 % by 2020⁽¹⁵⁾.

However, low achievement, defined as performing below Level 2 in the PISA test, continues to be a serious challenge across Europe. The latest PISA results from 2012 show that 22.1 % of European students had low achievement in mathematics, 17.8 % in reading, and 16.6 % in science⁽¹⁶⁾.

The analysis of results of international surveys, as well as other research evidence, point to the complexity of the problem. The importance of out-of-school factors, including students' socio-economic background and the educational level of parents or the language spoken at home cannot be overstated. Significantly reducing the proportion of low achievers, therefore, would require a combined approach that simultaneously targets a range of factors both in and out of school. The following 2015 JAF indicators, however, concentrate primarily on factors that can be directly influenced by education policies. These indicators focus on a limited number of education policies relating to the availability and use of information on student performance at national level, and on the preparation of future teachers to tackle low achievement. The 2015 JAF indicators on achievement in the basic skills concentrate on whether countries have put policies in place to:

- organise nationally standardised tests in literacy, mathematics and science;
- provide for the production of national reports on achievement in key basic competences;
- use student performance data in external school evaluation;
- encourage higher education institutions to include the issue of tackling low achievement in initial teacher education programmes

These structural indicators concern compulsory education, which in the majority of countries corresponds to ISCED 1 and 2. The indicators build on several recent Eurydice reports which include extensive reviews of academic research and policy evidence and provide further information on national policies in teaching the basic skills in Europe⁽¹⁷⁾.

A number of constraints need to be taken into account when constructing the structural indicators on achievement in the basic skills for the purposes of the JAF exercise.

⁽¹⁴⁾ In this report, low achievement refers to student performance that is below the expected level of attainment. It does not address the provision of support exclusively related to special needs education.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009.

⁽¹⁶⁾ See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/pisa2012_en.pdf.

⁽¹⁷⁾ EACEA/Eurydice, *Teaching reading in Europe: Contexts, policies and practices* (2011d), EACEA/Eurydice, *Mathematics education in Europe: Common Challenges and National Policies* (2011a), EACEA/Eurydice, *Science education in Europe: National policies, practices and research* (2011c), European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Developing key competences at school in Europe: Challenges and opportunities for policy* (2012a), European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, *Key data on education in Europe* (2012b).

In the majority of European countries, central education authorities prescribe or recommend measures to tackle low achievement in a range of subjects. However, the level of this involvement varies, ranging from compulsory, comprehensive national programmes to support for a limited number of activities such as teacher training courses, research projects or data banks of learning resources. In some countries, in line with the high degree of decentralisation of the school system and teaching autonomy, the design and implementation of measures to tackle low achievement are left entirely to the discretion of teachers, schools and school providers. In addition, when examining national policies to tackle low achievement, it is often difficult to distinguish between measures to improve the performance in the basic skills specifically and performance in general (across all subject areas).

The selected indicators concern three distinct competences, i.e. literacy, mathematics and science. These are often treated separately and given different emphasis in national policies. Evidence shows that usually there is more focus on literacy and numeracy, than on science.

Moreover, national policies on measures to tackle low achievement, curriculum development, teaching approaches, assessment and teacher education and training are often non-prescriptive and can lack detail. This is often a direct consequence of the significant degree of school and teacher autonomy, as well as the autonomy of teacher training institutions ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Therefore, no indicators on curriculum development or teaching approaches have been proposed at this stage. General national guidelines in these areas are not a good indicator of actual practice in the classroom and country averages – on which the JAF exercise is built – do not capture the relevant variations. Moreover, most guidelines on curricula and teaching approaches are specific to each basic skill and therefore have a limited use for JAF purposes.

The diagram below indicates the qualitative indicators covered in the 2015 JAF data collection.



2.1. Nationally standardised tests in literacy, mathematics and science

National tests used for either summative or formative purposes, or for system monitoring, provide comparable and standardised information about the performance of students, schools and education systems. The information gathered is used to measure and monitor progress and to design improvement measures. This indicator examines the extent to which the three basic competences are assessed in national tests during compulsory education.

In this report **national testing** is defined as 'the national administration of standardised tests and centrally set examinations'. These tests are standardised by the national education authorities or, in the case of Belgium, Germany and Spain, by the top-level authorities for education – referred to here as the 'central level'. The procedures for the administration and marking of tests, as well as the setting of content and the interpretation and use of results are decided at central level. National testing is

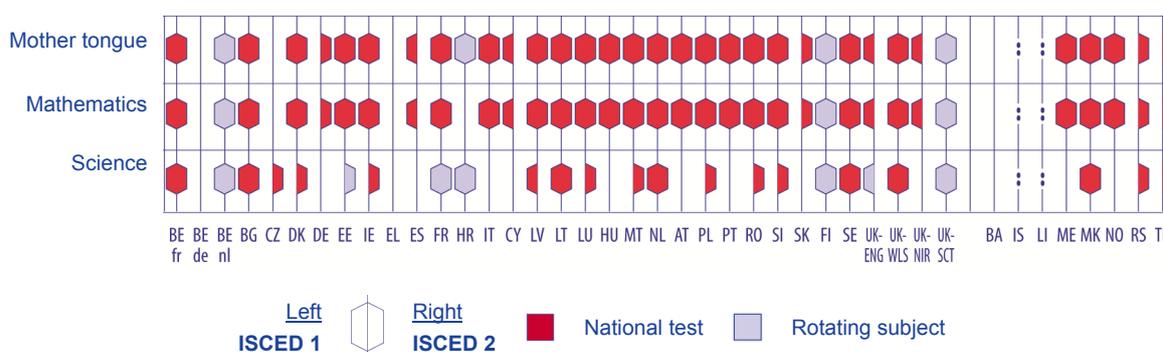
⁽¹⁸⁾ For further information on policies on the teaching profession, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015c), *The teaching profession in Europe: Practices, perceptions and policies*.

carried out under the authority of a national or centralised body and all examinees take the tests under reasonably similar conditions. Tests for detecting developmental problems, which are administered to certain children at the beginning of compulsory education, as well as tests organised for admission to secondary schools that specialise in the teaching of certain specific subjects, are not included. Various standardised guidelines and other tools designed to assist teachers in undertaking forms of pupil assessment other than national testing are not included ⁽¹⁹⁾.

This indicator includes national testing for both summative and formative purposes. Both compulsory and optional tests are considered, as are sample-based national tests.

The national testing of students has emerged as an important instrument of education policy. It is a widespread practice in Europe but takes different forms. The national information collected for the 2015 JAF exercise shows that all European education systems, except Belgium (German-speaking Community) ⁽²⁰⁾, Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina organise nationally standardised tests in compulsory education (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Standardised national tests in literacy, mathematics and science (ISCED levels 1 and 2), 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The figure refers to the national administration of standardised tests and centrally set examinations.

The science tests and examinations under consideration cover integrated science subjects and/or the separate subjects of chemistry, biology and physics.

Rotating subjects are not tested on an annual basis but according to a system of rotation determined by the central authorities.

Country specific notes

Spain: The tests reported in this figure are administered throughout the whole country. However, the Autonomous Communities may administer additional tests in which science may be assessed.

Cyprus: At ISCED 2, the mother tongue, mathematics, science and history are assessed at school level at the end of each school year. Although these tests are not fully nationally standardised, they are prepared following central guidelines on content, duration and assessment by class teachers.

United Kingdom (ENG/WLS/NIR): At key stage 4 (pupils aged 14-16 – this stage is still part of compulsory education but classified as ISCED 3), English, mathematics, and science are compulsory subjects. For most pupils, assessment is through the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

In the majority of European countries, standardised national assessments in compulsory education focus on the mother tongue (or language of instruction) and mathematics, and to a much lesser extent on science. While only the Czech Republic does not organise a national test in either the mother

⁽¹⁹⁾ For further information on national tests see Eurydice, *National testing of pupils in Europe: Objectives, organisation and use of results* (2009a).

⁽²⁰⁾ In 2014/15, in Belgium (German-speaking Community), all fourth year students participated in the *Vergleichsarbeiten* (VERA) test in the German language (reading and spelling) and half of all 15-year-old students participated in the PISA 2015 test.

tongue or mathematics and Croatia is the only country not to organise a national test in mathematics, around a third of all countries do not organise national tests in science. Moreover, a number of countries administer science tests only in lower secondary education (ISCED level 2) or as a rotation subject (see definition under Figure 2.1) which is not tested annually.

Indeed, national tests in some education systems (Belgium (Flemish Community), Croatia, Finland and the United Kingdom (Scotland)) are exclusively based on the rotation of subjects. This policy is linked to the specific objectives of each test, as well as concerns for balancing the need for performance data with keeping the burden of testing to a minimum.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, the National Assessment Programme (NAP) collects system level information on the share of pupils who reach the attainment targets and developmental objectives. Schools participate in sample-based tests on a voluntary basis. The tested subjects (science for school year 2014/15) are determined according to a rotation principle determined by the central authorities.

In **Finland**, student achievement tests in compulsory education involve 5-10 % of all basic education schools. Tests usually cover only one subject on a rotating basis, either mother tongue, or mathematics, or less often, a third subject or cluster of subjects according to national priorities.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) is a voluntary annual sample survey which monitors national performance in literacy and numeracy in alternate years. The survey involves 8 % of pupils at two stages within ISCED 1 (P4 and P7) and one stage within ISCED 2 (S2).

Recent policy developments

National tests are shaped by and evolve in accordance with national policy agendas and educational structures. In the past few years, national authorities in some European countries have moved from pilot national tests to the establishment of regular testing systems (the Czech Republic, Spain and Austria), others have shifted from a formative to a summative approach to national testing (Portugal). Other countries have added new tests in specific years (Lithuania, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England and Wales)) and/or plan to do so in the coming years (Ireland, at ISCED 2), and the United Kingdom (England)).

In the **Czech Republic**, the new testing system was introduced in 2013/14. This system includes annual sample tests (Sample survey on pupils' results) organised by the Czech School Inspectorate. The subject areas and school years to be tested are determined every year. In addition, in the period 2011-13, national pilot tests in the Czech language and mathematics was organised in grades 5 and 9.

Ireland currently tests Language 1 (mother tongue), mathematics and science in its Junior Certificate examination only at the end of ISCED 2. It is proposed to expand this in the coming years by the introduction of national standardised tests in Language 1, mathematics and science (for all students) outside of these State Examinations, at a different point within ISCED 2, whilst retaining State certified externally assessment examinations in these subject areas at the end of Junior cycle.

In **Spain**, the 2013 Organic Law for the Improvement of Education Quality establishes a system of assessments of all students in the key basic competencies at years 3 and 6 of primary education and year 4 of lower secondary education. This assessment system is gradually being implemented since school year 2014/15.

In **Lithuania**, new national sample tests in mathematics and reading and writing in Lithuanian were organised in 2012 and 2014 for students in years 4 and 8. Similar tests in natural sciences and social sciences are planned for 2015. These tests aim to assess student achievement and to monitor performance at system level.

In **Austria**, the comprehensive system of national tests has been fully implemented since 2011/12. For students in year 8, the first standard test was held in 2012 in mathematics, and in 2015/16 it will be held in German. For students in year 4, the first test was held in 2013 in mathematics and in 2015 it will be held in German (Reading/Writing). This will complete the first test cycle.

In **Portugal**, in 2012/13 national high stakes exams (mother tongue and mathematics), have been introduced in years 6 and 4 respectively, to replace the earlier proficiency tests which were used for formative purposes and system level monitoring.

The sources, scope and content of recent reports vary greatly. The following country examples provide illustrations of some of the existing practices in European education systems.

In **Latvia**, based on the diagnostic national tests in the three basic competences, the National Centre for Education publishes analyses of results, practical recommendations for teachers and examples of tasks that can be used in the teaching process. Recommendations refer to, for instance, the use of digital resources in literacy classes, the need to encourage pupils to reflect on their mistakes, and the link between mathematics and science learning and reading comprehension.

In **Poland**, a number of recent reports have provided analyses of national performance data. For instance, the report 'Does school matter?' (*Czy szkoła ma znaczenie?*)⁽²¹⁾ uses the results of the Longitudinal School Effectiveness study to explain the differences in learning outcomes in mathematics, reading and language awareness between schools and classes. This longitudinal study has followed a representative sample of primary school students for a period of four years.

In **Slovenia**, a number of reports based on PISA and TIMSS results have been published in recent years. Topics that have been addressed include the strongest predictors of achievement; motivational factors; gender issues; performance differences according to type of education programme; the impact of the school climate; teachers' characteristics; teaching approaches; and learning practices. However, in Slovenia there are no reports based on nationally standardised tests and student performance data is not taken into account in the external evaluation of schools.

In **Finland**, the results of the sample national tests have been presented in several reports. They refer to the level of achievement and learning outcomes in mathematics in the 5th year of compulsory basic education and in the mother tongue and literature most commonly in the 9th (final) year of compulsory education. These reports are complemented by analyses based on data about the performance of Finnish students in international surveys.

2.3. Use of student performance data in external school evaluation

Across Europe, the evaluation of schools has become increasingly important for monitoring the overall quality of education. In most cases, school evaluators examine a variety of data from different sources, which could include different types of student performance data. The evaluation process usually results in evaluators issuing a set of judgements and recommendations. Depending on the national context, this may trigger the implementation of a variety of remedial and supporting actions to help schools address any shortcomings or weaknesses⁽²²⁾.

The **external evaluation of schools** is conducted by evaluators who report to a local, regional or central/top level education authority; they are not directly involved in the activities of the school under evaluation. This type of evaluation covers a broad range of school activities, including teaching and learning and/or all aspects of school management. Evaluation which is conducted by specialist evaluators and concerned solely with specific administrative tasks (related to accounting records, health, safety, archives, etc.) is not regarded as external school evaluation⁽²³⁾.

In the vast majority of countries where the external evaluation of schools is practised, evaluators take student performance data into account in order to form their judgement on school quality (see Figure 2.3). This is not the case in Estonia, Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia and Slovakia, where external school evaluation is concerned with school processes and compliance with regulations. Moreover, a number of countries do not carry out any external school evaluation (Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Finland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Norway).

The **student performance data** used in external school evaluation may include students' results in centrally set examinations and nationally standardised assessments. Also used are student results in

⁽²¹⁾ Vol.1 http://eduentuzjasci.pl/images/stories/publikacjeSUEK/Czy_szkola_ma_znaczenie%20tom%201.pdf
Vol.2 http://eduentuzjasci.pl/images/stories/publikacjeSUEK/Czy_szkola_ma_znaczenie%20tom%202.pdf

⁽²²⁾ For further information on national policies on school evaluation, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, *Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe* (2015).

⁽²³⁾ *Ibid*, p. 54.

teacher assessment; data on student progression through school; student results in international surveys; as well as, although less frequently, outcomes in the job market and student or parent satisfaction.

In **Denmark**, information used in school inspections includes, amongst other things, each school's pupil achievement results, including performance in national tests and final examinations and statistics on the transition to secondary education; these are benchmarked against national averages.

In **Ireland**, for ISCED 1, performance data includes the results of standardised tests and data on student progression. For ISCED 2, this data consists of results in centrally set examinations, results in teacher assessment; and data on student progression. None of this data is published in any evaluation reports but may be used to inform the evaluation.

In **Portugal**, the key data in the external evaluation of schools is student performance in nationally standardised examinations. Attainment targets are determined using contextual variables such as the age of the students; parents' educational background, socio-economic status, stability of teaching staff, and class size.

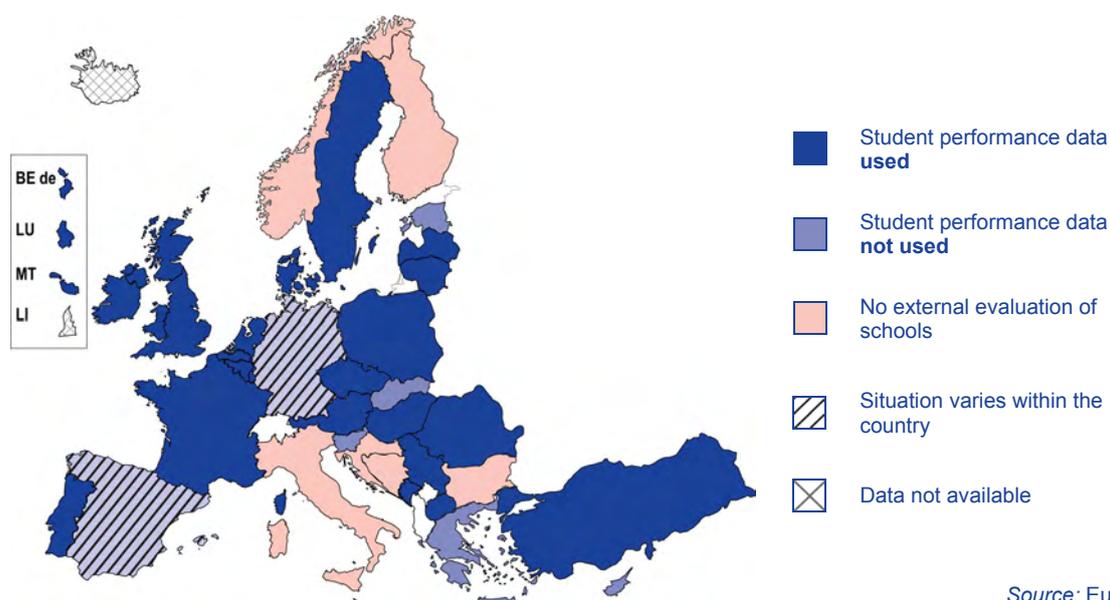
Recent policy developments

The majority of European countries do not report any recent policy developments in this area, except for the rolling out of new national evaluation systems in Italy and Hungary.

In **Italy**, as from the 2014/15 school year, schools are required to undertake self-evaluation, with student performance data being one of the elements taken into consideration. Starting in the 2015/16 school year, the school self-evaluation report will form the basis of external evaluation.

In **Hungary**, the 'pedagogical/professional' inspection (*Pedagógia- szakmai ellenőrzés*) is due to be launched in 2015, at the end of its three-year pilot programme. It is a comprehensive evaluation process regulated by law, which covers the evaluation of teachers, school heads and the school itself.

Figure 2.3: Use of student performance data in external school evaluation, 2014/15



Explanatory note

The figure shows whether student performance data is used as an information source in external school evaluation.

Country specific notes

Germany: School inspectors use student performance data in 5 of the 16 *Länder*.

Spain: Use of student performance data by inspectors varies between the Autonomous Communities.

Central level involvement in determining the content of initial teacher education programmes varies between countries. The diverse approaches are reflected in the differing degrees of detail in guidance documents and the variety of practices both at national level and at the level of individual higher education institutions.

In **Belgium (French Community)**, the central authorities prescribe the minimum amount and content of courses in initial teacher education. Prospective teachers are required to take a course of 30 hours on differentiated learning, detection of learning difficulties and remedial action. In addition, some higher education institutions offer related training.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, central level regulations stipulate the competences that a beginning teacher should possess according to the level of education. Each set of competences consists of ten 'job components', which include competences to deal with student difficulties, although none of them is written in a subject specific context.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) publishes the Guidelines for initial teacher education programmes in Scotland. The guidelines state that: 'Programmes must prepare teachers to be responsive to the range and diversity of the needs of all pupils including those with additional support needs. ITE programmes will therefore develop in student teachers broad knowledge of the nature and range of additional support needs, effective ways of supporting those with such needs and knowledge of inclusion and equalities legislation' ⁽²⁵⁾.

Recent policy developments

In terms of recent policy developments, in some countries the central guidelines on initial teacher education and teacher competences generally are being updated to take into account new policy documents and reforms. However, apart from developments in Ireland and Poland, these changes rarely concern specific recommendations for the areas or topics to be covered in initial teacher education programmes.

In **Ireland**, in light of the implementation of the 2011 *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People*, central guidance and requirements are being extended across teacher education at ISCED levels 1 and 2 and in pre-school contexts also. Many initial teacher education programmes have had an additional year provided, which will lead to an extra focus on teaching for literacy and numeracy, though not science.

In **Poland**, the central guidelines for teacher training standards are stipulated in the Regulation by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 17 January 2012 on initial teacher training standards. This Regulation defines both general and detailed learning outcomes for initial teacher education. Among others, the regulation refers to competences related to:

- diagnosis of pupils' individual needs;
- learning difficulties and underachievement at school;
- undertaking individual work with pupils including those with SEN;
- adapting teaching to pupils' needs and abilities including the specific progress of pupils with SEN and or those with a different ethnic or national background, immigrants and others;
- learning difficulties – prevention, diagnosis, psychological and pedagogical support.

⁽²⁵⁾ Guidelines for initial teacher education programmes in Scotland (2013): <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/about-gtcs/guidelines-for-ite-programmes-in-scotland.pdf>

CHAPTER 3: HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

In 2008, the Council adopted an EU-wide benchmark on tertiary education, stating that by 2020 at least 40 % of 30-34 year-olds should have a tertiary or equivalent level qualification⁽²⁶⁾. This benchmark has since become part of the double headline target on education within the Europe 2020 growth strategy.

The following structural indicators have been developed in relation to this headline target, and guided by the Commission's communication, 'Supporting growth and jobs: An agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems'⁽²⁷⁾. Among the Communication's main objectives are two key inter-linked policy goals: increasing and widening participation, and improving the quality and relevance of higher education.

In light of the widening participation agenda in higher education, the selected indicators seek to show how different countries are pursuing this goal in terms of target setting, the implementation of systematic monitoring procedures and the efforts made to broaden entry qualifications. The last two indicators look at both inputs (the social dimension of funding mechanisms) and outputs (the requirement to monitor **completion rates**). The latter is particularly important as the successful completion of programmes is a pre-requisite for meeting the national higher education attainment targets.

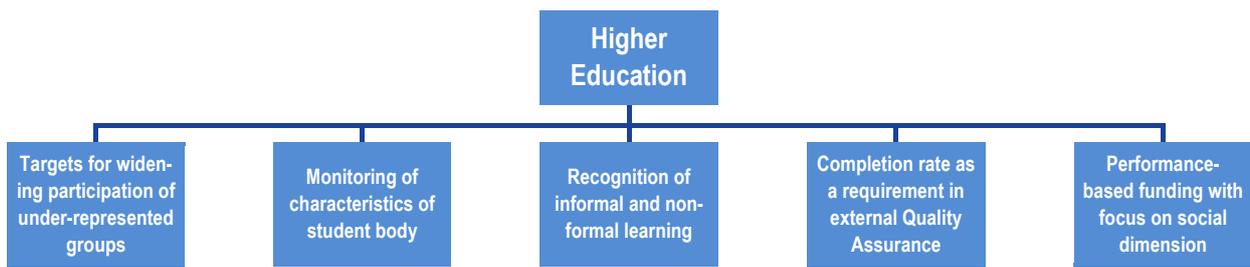
Some constraints need to be borne in mind when interpreting these qualitative indicators on higher education. National policies on the issues surrounding the social dimension of higher education need to be understood in context, as the same measure in different countries may have a different purpose, and consequently may lead to different outcomes. Any indicator therefore has limited power to shed light on reality. The JAF indicators in this chapter are based on two Eurydice reports (EACEA/Eurydice, 2011b; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014c). Within these reports, rather than providing stand-alone indicators, each one has been developed within a larger framework, with a view to providing a better understanding of the particular issues involved.

The structural indicators selected for the 2015 Eurydice data collection for JAF examine whether and how countries:

- attempt to widen participation in higher education through quantitative targets for under-represented groups of students;
- monitor the composition of the student body to identify the socio-economic characteristics of students;
- recognise prior non-formal and informal learning on entry to higher education in order to attract non-traditional students;
- measure completion rates through external Quality Assurance processes;
- have performance-based funding systems focusing on the social dimension of higher education.

⁽²⁶⁾ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), OJ C 119, 28.5.2009.

⁽²⁷⁾ Communication from the European Commission, 2011. 'Supporting Growth and Jobs: an Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems'. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities [COM (2011) 567 final].



Recent policy developments

As part of the 2015 JAF exercise, member states have very few policy developments to report in this area. The policies reported have been in place for at least several years at the time of writing this report.

3.1. Quantitative targets relating to the social dimension of higher education

In a social and economic environment where the skills and competences acquired and refined through higher education are becoming increasingly important (European Commission, 2010), it is a societal imperative to expand opportunities to higher education as broadly as possible, by providing, 'equal opportunities for access to quality education, as well as equity in treatment, including adapting provisions to individuals' needs', so that 'equitable education and training systems ... are aimed at providing opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes that are independent of socio-economic background and other factors which may lead to educational disadvantage' ⁽²⁸⁾.

In recent years, European policy has increasingly stressed the social dimension of higher education, with countries making commitments to develop strategies and define measurable targets through the Bologna Process, the modernisation agenda and the EU 2020 strategy. In order to achieve the EU-level 'headline' target mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, EU countries have set their own national participation and attainment targets to be reached by 2020.

This indicator encompasses quantitative targets which focus on **widening or increasing participation** among the groups currently under-represented in higher education. However, as mentioned above, equity in treatment is also important, so targets related to **improving completion rates** for these groups are also considered here. Examples of under-represented groups might include people with disabilities, migrants, ethnic groups, lower socio-economic status groups, women/men, etc.

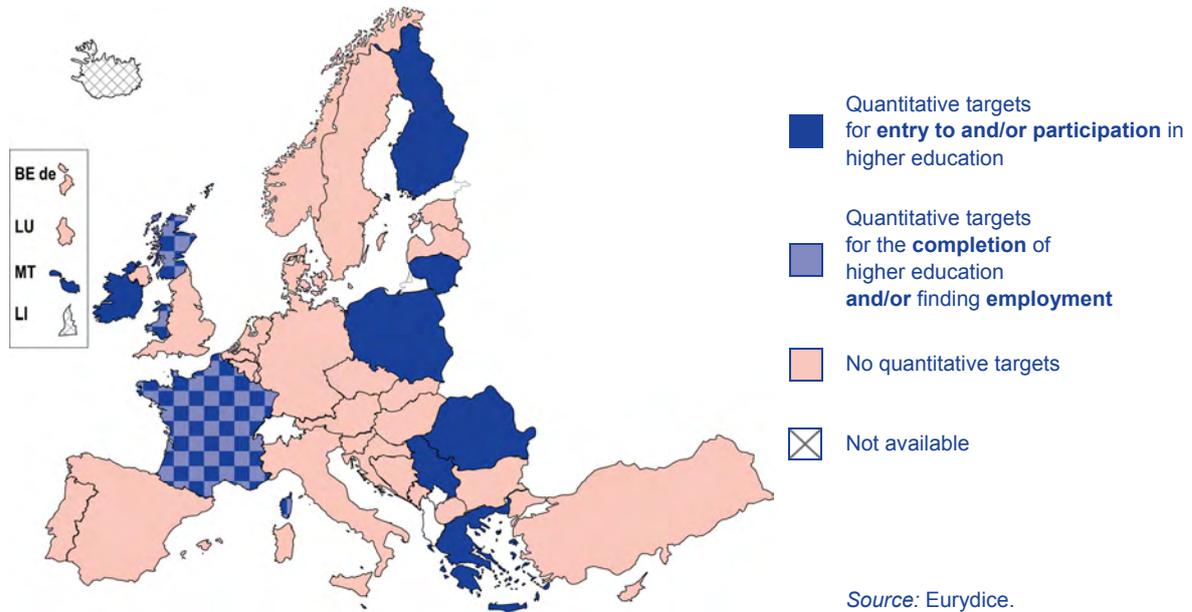
While this indicator focuses on the quantitative targets for increasing the number of students from under-represented groups, it must be underlined that many countries have other types of policy measures and financial support systems to support the widening participation agenda, as was reported in the 'Modernisation of higher education report' (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014c). Figure 3.1 shows that less than a third of countries have quantitative targets directed at under-represented groups. Where such quantitative targets do exist, they are aimed specifically at entry to or participation in higher education (Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Finland and Serbia), but in some countries these are combined with targets for the completion of higher education or finding employment (France and United Kingdom (Wales and Scotland)).

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, Outcome Agreements between the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and individual universities set out agreed aims for widening access to higher education, for example to increase the proportion of students who come from

⁽²⁸⁾ Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training, OJ C 135, 26.05.2010, p. 2.

areas that have a high score in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), from under-represented groups (for example, no prior family experience of higher education) and from schools with a low rate of higher education progression. In addition, Scotland has established a Commission on Widening Access, which, as part of its work, will propose a national target for participation in higher education for those from under-represented socioeconomic groups.

Figure 3.1: Quantitative targets for widening participation in and/or completion of higher education by under-represented groups, 2014/15

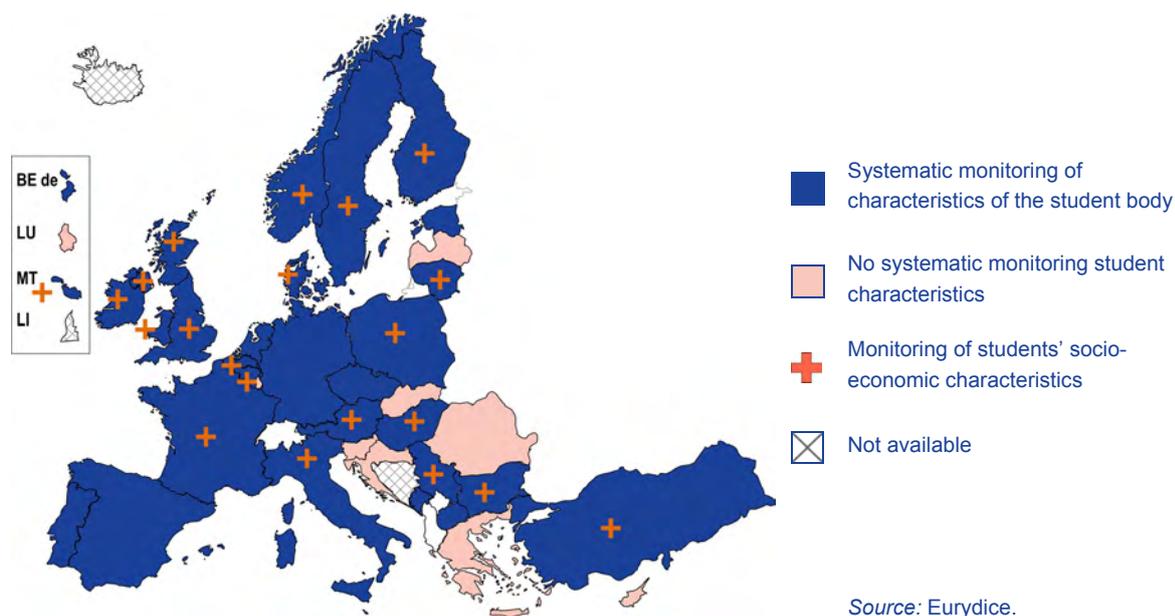


3.2. Systematic monitoring of the socio-economic characteristics of the student body

For this indicator, **systematic monitoring** refers to the process of systematic data gathering, analysis and use of data to inform policy. It aims to capture how the higher education system operates and whether it is reaching its objectives and targets. It can take place at various stages: on entry to higher education, during studies (refers to student retention), at graduation (refers to completion rates) and after graduation (refers to graduate destinations – employment or further study). Systematic monitoring must include mechanisms for cross-institutional data gathering and allow cross-institutional data comparability.

This indicator focuses on the systematic monitoring of the **socio-economic status of students**, defined as a combined measure of students' or their families' economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. When analysing a family's socio-economic status, the household income (combined and individual) is examined as well as the education and occupation of earners. Parents' educational attainment is often taken as a proxy measure for socio-economic status.

As can be seen in Figure 3.2, the systematic monitoring of some characteristics of the student body (for example, in terms of disability, ethnic status, and qualification achieved before entry to higher education) is very common in Europe. However, systematically monitoring socio-economic characteristics is less common, and is carried out in slightly less than half of all higher education systems.

Figure 3.2: Monitoring the socio-economic characteristics of the student body, 2014/15

3.3. Recognition of informal and non-formal learning on entry to higher education

The recognition of prior learning has been addressed in various policy documents on higher education, including the Bologna communiqués and the European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning (EUA, 2008). According to these documents, prior learning refers to any type of learning – be it formal, non-formal or informal. However, while higher education institutions are relatively open to recognising prior formal learning, in particular studies at other higher education institutions, the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning remains underexploited.

In 2012, the EU institutions provided support for further developments in this field, adopting a recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁽²⁹⁾. This recommendation covers all sectors of education and training, including the higher education sector, and invites Member States to 'have in place, no later than 2018, in accordance with national circumstances and specificities, and as they deem appropriate, arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning'⁽³⁰⁾.

This indicator focuses on prior informal and non-formal learning. **Informal learning** means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective. Examples of informal learning outcomes are skills acquired through life and work experiences such as project management or ICT skills acquired at work; languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country; ICT skills acquired outside work; skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports and youth work; and through home-based activities (e.g. taking care of a child).

⁽²⁹⁾ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽³⁰⁾ Ibid.

Non-formal learning means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives and learning time), where some form of learning support is present (e.g. from a tutor); it may cover programmes to deliver work skills, adult literacy, and basic education for early school leavers. Very common examples of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target groups or the general public.

As Figure 3.3 shows, informal and non-formal learning are recognised for entry in all institutions in ten education systems (Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, Montenegro and Norway), and in some institutions (two or more) in six countries (France, Spain, Ireland, Italy Poland and the United Kingdom).

In the **United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)**, each individual institution has autonomy over the qualifications that it will accept for entry to its courses. They generally welcome applications from mature candidates who have had appropriate experience but may lack formal qualifications. Institutions may give credit for prior study and informal learning acquired through work or other experiences: Arrangements for assessment of prior learning vary between individual higher education institutions.

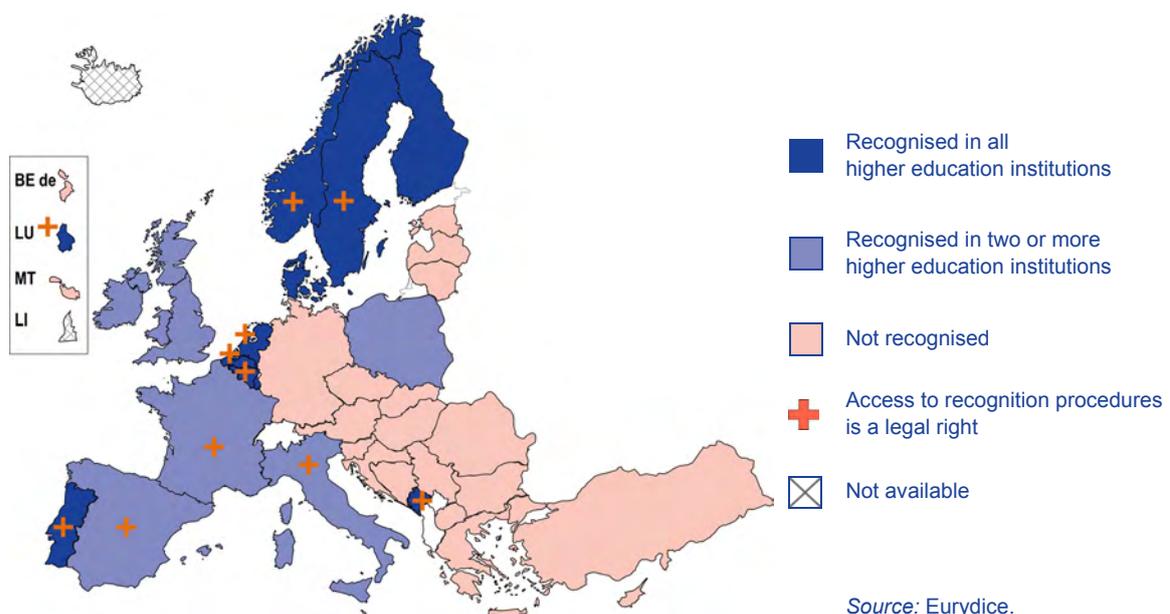
In the majority of countries, however, prior informal or non-formal learning is not recognised for entry to higher education, which is the case mostly in Eastern Europe. However, in countries where recognition occurs in all or in some institutions, access to these procedures is a legal right in 11 education systems (Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Montenegro and Norway).

Recent policy developments

Most of the countries that recognise prior learning at entry to higher education have had their system in place for several years. However, there has been one recent reform.

In **Poland**, the 11 July 2014 amendment to the Law on Higher Education (introduced starting 1 October 2014) allows higher education institutions to recognize knowledge and skills acquired outside the higher education system, e.g. during courses, professional activity or voluntary work, to enter the higher education system.

Figure 3.3: Recognition of informal and non-formal learning for entry to higher education, 2014/15



3.4. Completion rates as a requirement in external quality assurance

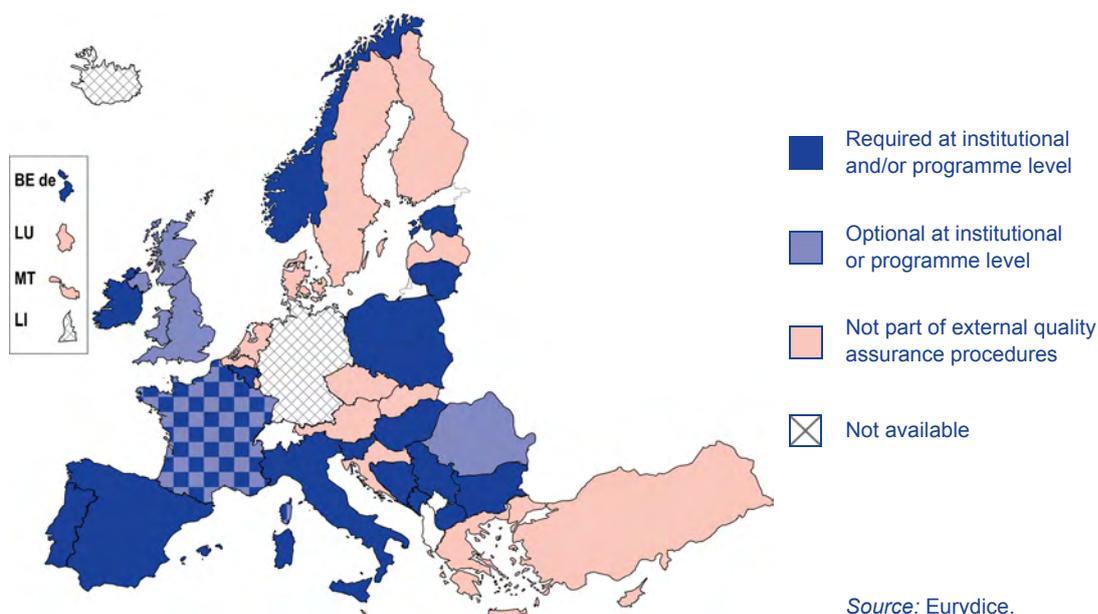
This indicator focuses on the use of completion rates as one of the criteria included in external quality assurance procedures for higher education institutions/programmes. Where the monitoring of completion rates is a requirement, it gives a good indication that they are measured in practice and that the information is likely to be used in policy making. The completion rate indicates the percentage of students who complete the higher education programme they have started.

Figure 3.4 shows that the monitoring of completion rates is a requirement either at institutional and/or programme level in about half of European countries. Furthermore, in Belgium (French Community), Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, monitoring completion rates is a requirement at both levels.

In France, the monitoring of completion rates is a requirement only at programme level but optional at institutional level, while in Lithuania, the situation is the other way around. No data is available for Germany.

In **Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities)**, the evaluation framework of the independent quality assurance agency includes a dimension related to the efficiency and equity of programmes. Through this dimension, the QAA evaluates the processes and mechanisms in place within programmes to monitor student progress, including whether they successfully complete their studies.

Figure 3.4: Requirement to monitor completion rates as part of external quality assurance procedures, 2014/15

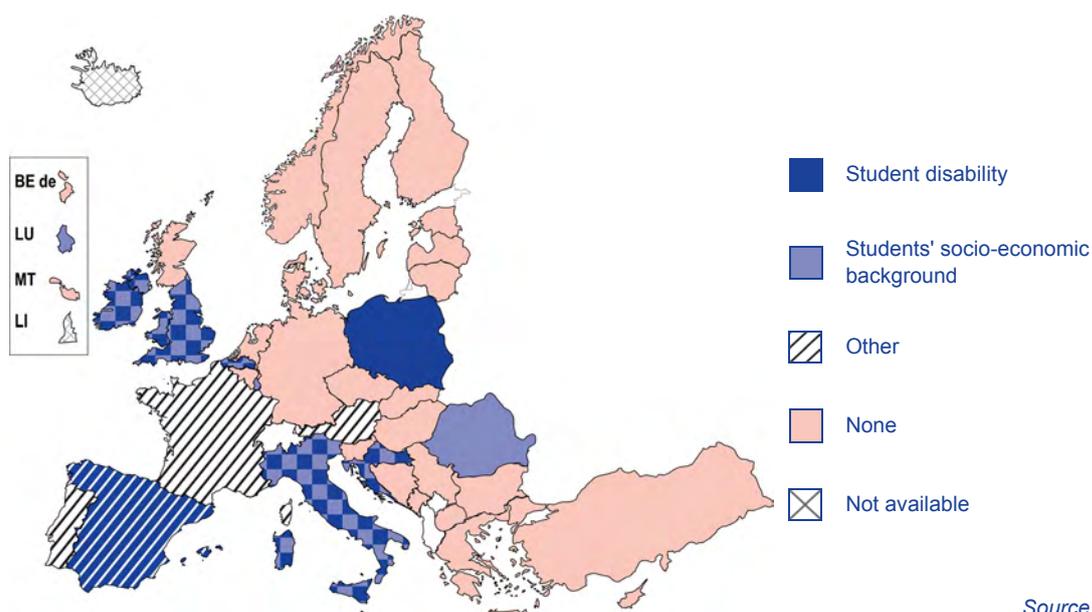


3.5. Performance-based funding mechanisms with a social dimension focus

Performance-based funding mechanisms with a **social dimension focus** enable funding to be provided to higher education institutions if they meet a defined level of performance in relation to social objectives. The performance may refer to people – staff or students – with defined characteristics in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, migrant status, etc.

Figure 3.5 shows that performance-based funding mechanisms, which give institutions extra funding if certain targets are met, exist in only 12 countries. The group which most commonly attracts extra funding is students with disabilities (Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain, Croatia, Italy, Ireland, Poland and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)). Socio-economic background is also a common area of interest (Belgium (Flemish Community), Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Romania and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)). Examples of other criteria on the basis of which extra funding is awarded (not necessarily shown on the map) are gender (Ireland, Spain and Austria), returning to study (Portugal), geographical location (Luxembourg) and age (Ireland and Croatia). Few countries reported performance-based funding mechanisms related to staffing, namely France for staff with disabilities and Spain and Austria for gender of staff.

Figure 3.5: Performance-based funding mechanisms with a social dimension focus (students and staff), 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

CHAPTER 4: GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Introduction

Employability plays a central role in the Europe 2020 strategy as well as in the Education and Training 2020 ('ET 2020')⁽³¹⁾ and higher education modernisation strategies (European Commission, 2011). Within the ET 2020 strategy, the Council of the European Union adopted a benchmark on graduate employability in 2012⁽³²⁾. According to this benchmark, 'by 2020, the share of employed graduates (20-34 year-olds) having left education and training no more than three years before the reference year should be at least 82 %'⁽³³⁾. In this context, the term 'graduates' refers not only to those finishing higher education (HE) but also to those graduating with upper secondary or post-secondary, non-tertiary qualifications. Public authorities and higher education institutions have a major role to play in achieving this goal.

European Commission policy stresses the role of higher education in equipping graduates with the knowledge and core transferable competences they need to succeed in high-skill occupations. It also underlines the importance of involving employers in the design and delivery of higher education programmes, and ensuring that programmes include an element of practical work experience. Furthermore, the monitoring of graduates' career development by higher education institutions (HEIs) has also been identified as crucial in increasing the relevance of programmes (European Commission, 2011).

The issues being addressed therefore extend beyond the simple monitoring of graduate employment rates. At a time where the economic crisis has had a very significant impact on youth unemployment, there are many areas of action which can help countries regain ground, and support young people in finding employment. The proposed selection of structural indicators for the Joint Assessment Framework (JAF) is an illustration of the broad range of policy measures that can help improve graduate employability.

In the context of the JAF exercise, many structural indicators could be considered relevant, and the formulation, development and use of indicators for this purpose is challenging. In the 2015 JAF data collection, the chosen qualitative indicators describe whether:

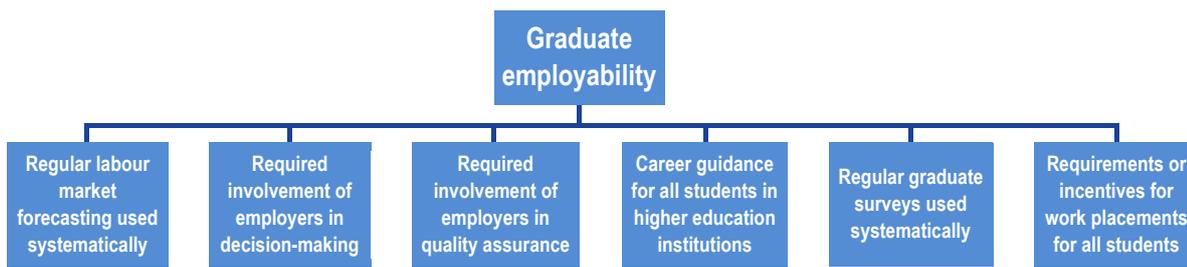
- countries regularly conduct labour market forecasting and use it systematically in policy planning;
- employers are required to participate in the governing bodies of higher education institutions;
- employers are required to participate in external quality assurance;
- career guidance is available to all students in higher education institutions throughout their studies;
- graduate surveys are conducted regularly and used systematically by education authorities; and
- education authorities offer incentives (financial or other) or impose regulations on HEIs to incorporate work placements into some or all higher education programmes.

These indicators are also depicted in the diagram below.

⁽³¹⁾ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), OJ 2009/C 119/02, 28.5.2009.

⁽³²⁾ Council conclusions of 11 May 2012 on the employability of graduates from education and training, OJ 2012/C 169/04, 15.6.2012.

⁽³³⁾ Ibid., p. 10.



Though the benchmark on graduate employability concerns both higher education graduates and those with upper secondary or post-secondary, non-tertiary qualifications, the indicators selected for the JAF exercise are related to *higher education graduates only*. The information presented in this section is also limited in terms of scope; further details on these policy areas can be found in the 'Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Access, Retention and Employability' report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014c) as well as in the recently published 'Bologna Process Implementation Report' (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015b).

4.1. Labour market forecasting

The first indicator linked to graduate employability concerns labour market forecasting. This process involves

estimating the expected future number of jobs available in an economy [in the medium or long term] and their particular skill or qualification requirements. Skills needs forecasts are complemented by forecasts of the number of people (supply) with particular skills. The comparison of demand and supply can indicate potential imbalances or skill mismatches in future labour markets (Cedefop 2012, pp. 11-12).

This indicator looks specifically at whether:

- 1) Countries carry out regular labour market forecasting; and
- 2) Educational authorities and recognised stakeholders make systematic use of information from labour market forecasts through established mechanisms.

Despite its limitations (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014c), labour market forecasting is a common way of anticipating labour market needs in terms of the demand and supply of skills. This process is usually carried out in order to help different stakeholders – employees, employers, students and parents, social partners, and policy makers – to take informed decisions and appropriate actions with respect to the labour market. On the one hand, labour market forecasting can inform policy planning relating to, for example, the planning and designing of study programmes, determining the number of state-funded places, or the allocation of public funding. On the other hand, guidance and information services can use labour market information to guide (potential) students towards fields in which there are skills shortages. Labour market forecasting is usually conducted according to occupation and qualification levels (Cedefop, 2012). Regular labour market forecasting is conducted repeatedly, at regular intervals.

As Figure 4.1.a shows, in the majority of education systems (23), labour market forecasting is conducted regularly. Ad hoc forecasting takes place in 17 education systems. Labour market forecasting is not conducted in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Croatia or Serbia. Nevertheless, in Serbia, a survey addressing future labour market needs is conducted regularly among employers.

Figure 4.1.a: Labour market forecasting, 2014/15

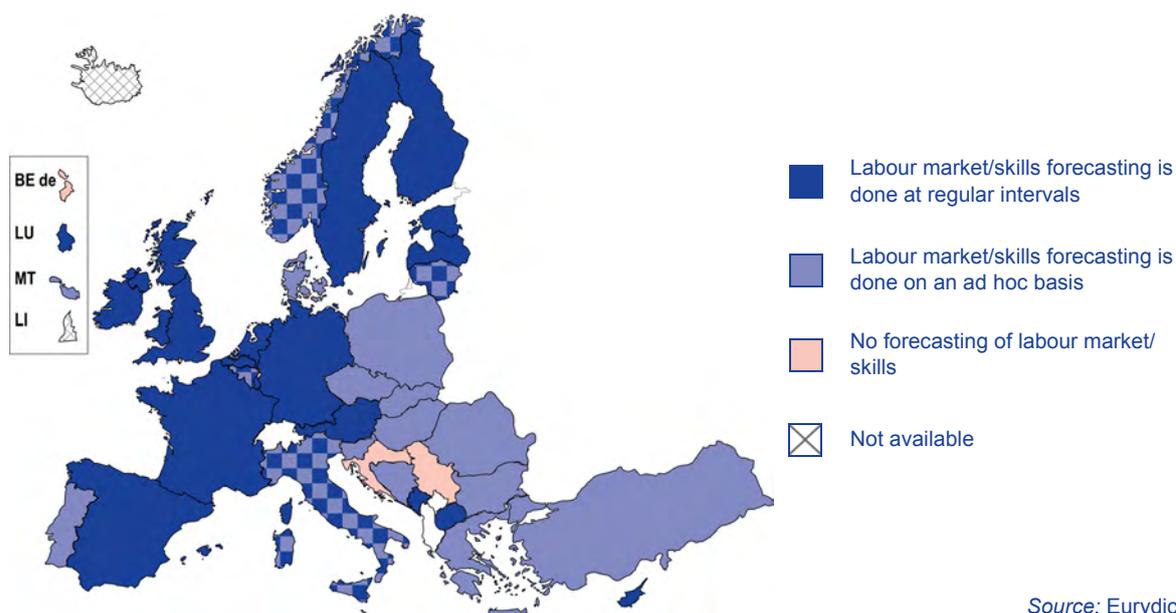
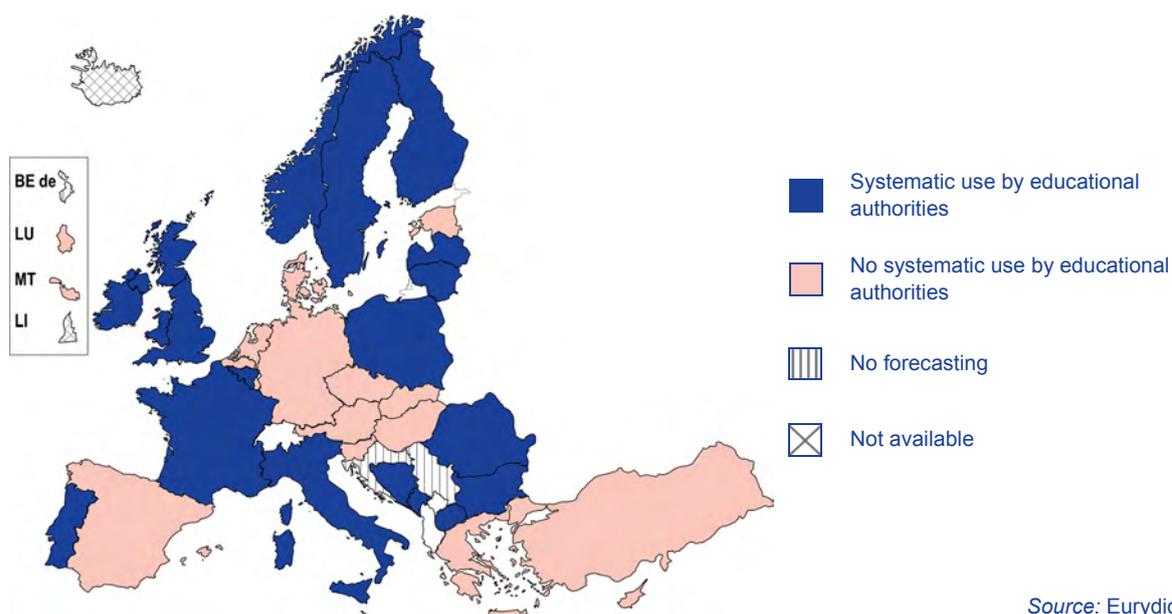


Figure 4.1.b: Using labour-market and skills forecasting in central planning, 2014/15



Around half of the countries conducting labour market forecasts take the results into account in higher education planning at central level (Figure 4.1.b). In Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, the United Kingdom (Scotland), Norway, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, labour market information is used to determine enrolment quotas or the number of state-funded places in some or all fields of higher education. In Belgium (French Community), France⁽³⁴⁾, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the forecasts are taken into account when setting up or accrediting new study programmes, and/or when adapting the content of existing programmes to labour market

⁽³⁴⁾ In France, this is limited to professionally-oriented programmes.

needs. Some countries also reported that labour market forecasts are used to identify priority areas for additional funding (e.g. in Bulgaria and Ireland). Nevertheless, while central authorities do not always use labour market information systematically, higher education institutions (sometimes in cooperation with central authorities) can still use them in planning programmes or career guidance provision (e.g. in Belgium (Flemish Community) and Estonia).

Recent policy developments

Establishing regular labour market forecasting is becoming a priority in an increasing number of countries.

Currently, **Portugal** is making efforts to establish regular labour market forecasting at national level, replacing the existing ad hoc forecasting practice.

In addition, under the order No. 5204/2014, **Romania** has recently introduced an accreditation requirement for new study programmes: higher education institutions now have to provide evidence that proposed study programmes respond to labour market needs.

In addition, countries are also making efforts to use labour market forecasting in central planning.

In **Bulgaria**, a draft Amendment and Supplement to the law on higher education envisages additional funding for areas defined as priorities for the socio-economic development of the country. Two kinds of priority areas will be identified: 'priority work areas', which are areas where there is a need for the training of highly qualified specialists; and 'protected programmes/specialties', which are also necessary for the economic and social development of Bulgaria, but there is a shortage of people studying in these fields.

4.2. Involving employers in higher education institutions' governing bodies

Consulting or involving employers, employers' organisations and business representatives in the planning, development and evaluation of higher education programmes is a direct and more decentralised method of ensuring that the needs of the labour market are reflected in higher education provision. Employers and business representatives are aware of the skills graduates need when entering the labour market, and higher education institutions can use this knowledge when designing degree programmes.

Therefore, this indicator examines whether there is a requirement for higher education institutions to have employer representatives on their governing bodies. In some education systems such requirements do exist but they do not apply to all types of tertiary education. A distinction is usually made between vocational and academic strands, with employer involvement more common in vocational or professionally-oriented programmes. Since this indicator aims to cover all higher education programmes, where differences exist between the different strands, the requirements applying to the academic strand of tertiary education are taken into account.

As Figure 4.2 shows, employers participate in the governing bodies of all higher education institutions in a large majority of education systems. In 14 education systems, there are formal requirements, while in 16 others, employer participation is common practice (with or without more specific regulations concerning vocational higher education institutions). Employers are normally not involved in higher education institutions' governing bodies in nine education systems: Germany, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey.

Figure 4.2: Involvement of employers in higher education institutions' governing bodies, 2014/15

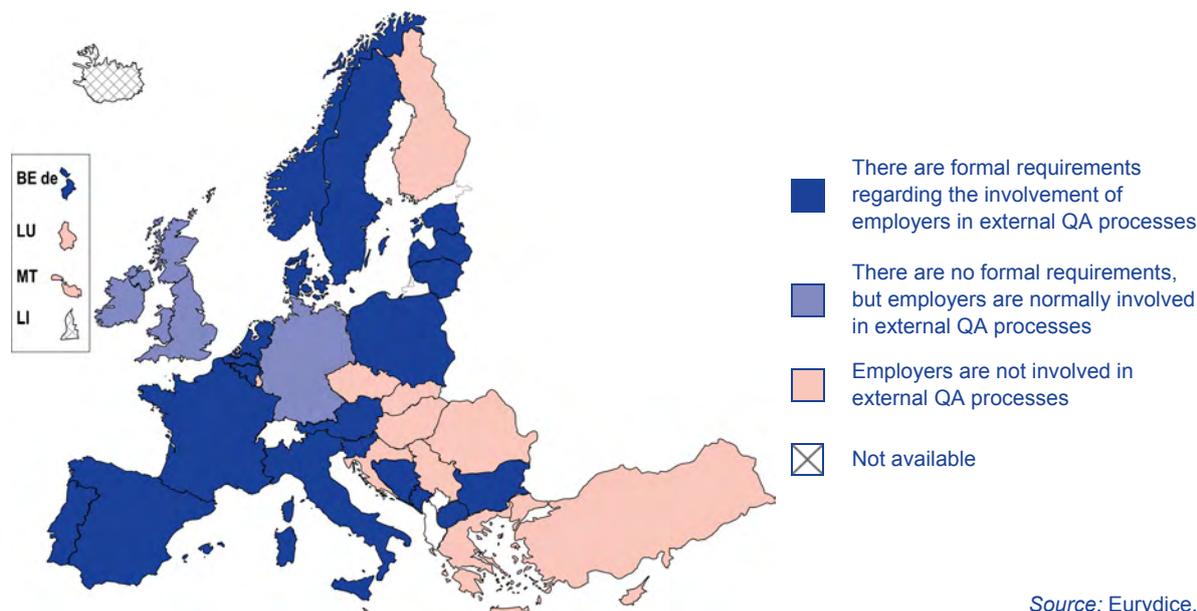
4.3. Involving employers in external quality assurance (QA) procedures

Quality assurance is the most common mechanism to evaluate and monitor the employability performance of higher education institutions in the EHEA. Through quality assurance, education authorities can encourage HEIs to be responsive to the needs of the labour market. Nevertheless, some countries have also established other procedures through which the employability performance of higher education institutions can be assessed. For example, in some countries, employability criteria form part of performance agreements between education authorities and higher education institutions. Or else, in a few countries, the employability performance of higher education institutions influences the level of funding they receive (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015b).

Employer involvement in quality assurance procedures is a relatively common way of ensuring that study programmes provide graduates with the skills they need in the workplace. Therefore, the third indicator developed for the JAF exercise shows whether employers are required to be involved in quality assurance in higher education.

As with the previous indicator, regulations may vary according to the strand of tertiary education (vocational or academic) and so the same pattern is followed here; where differences exist, the requirements that apply to the academic strand of tertiary education are taken into account.

As Figure 4.3 depicts, employers are involved in external QA procedures in the majority of education systems. Moreover, this is usually because they are required to participate. There are three countries (six education systems) where employers are normally involved in external QA without it being a requirement: Germany, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Employers do not participate in quality assurance procedures in 12 education systems.

Figure 4.3: Involvement of employers in external quality assurance processes, 2014/15

4.4. Career guidance for higher education students

In the context of employability, an important role of higher education institutions is to provide graduates with the work skills that will enable them to find jobs after graduation. One common way to ensure that graduates gain the necessary competences is to include work placements as part of higher education programmes (see Section 4.6). In addition, career guidance services can help students acquire the job-hunting skills they need to find work. Career guidance is regarded as particularly important for non-traditional learners, especially if it is provided throughout their course of study, not only in their last year(s).

Indicator 4 therefore looks at whether career guidance is available to all home ⁽³⁵⁾ students in higher education institutions throughout their course of study. Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to support students in making educational, training and occupational choices and to help them manage their careers (OECD 2004, p.10). Career guidance is regarded as being *available* if students are able to access the services throughout their course of study (after entering tertiary education until the completion of studies). However, it does not necessarily mean they have used the services. Information on the proportion of students actually using these services is, in fact, limited.

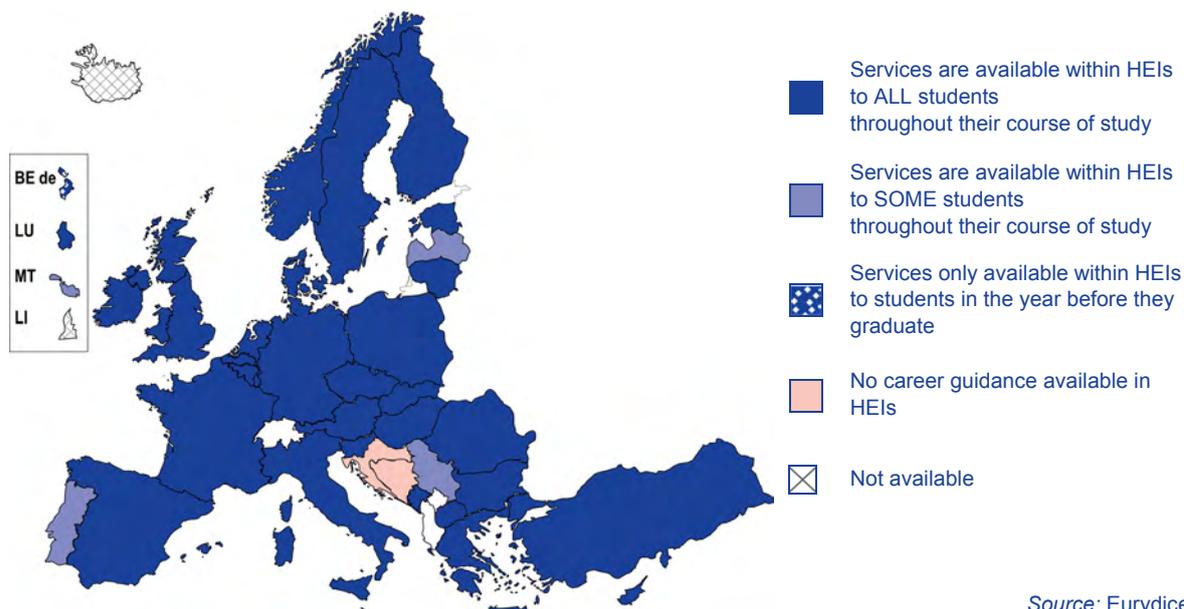
As with previous indicators, requirements and practices may differ between the vocational and academic strands of higher education. The same approach will therefore be used: where differences exist, the requirements and practices applying to the academic strand are considered.

Figure 4.4a shows the availability of career guidance services across Europe. As the figure depicts, career guidance services are available to all students in higher education institutions throughout their course of study in the vast majority of education systems. These services are available only to some students in Latvia, Malta, Portugal and Serbia. In Latvia, in the institutions which have career guidance centres (they do not exist in all higher education institutions), the services are available to all students. In Belgium (German-speaking Community), career guidance services are available only to students in

⁽³⁵⁾ Home students are students that are either nationals of a country or are treated in the same manner from a legal perspective (e.g. EU citizens studying in another EU Member State).

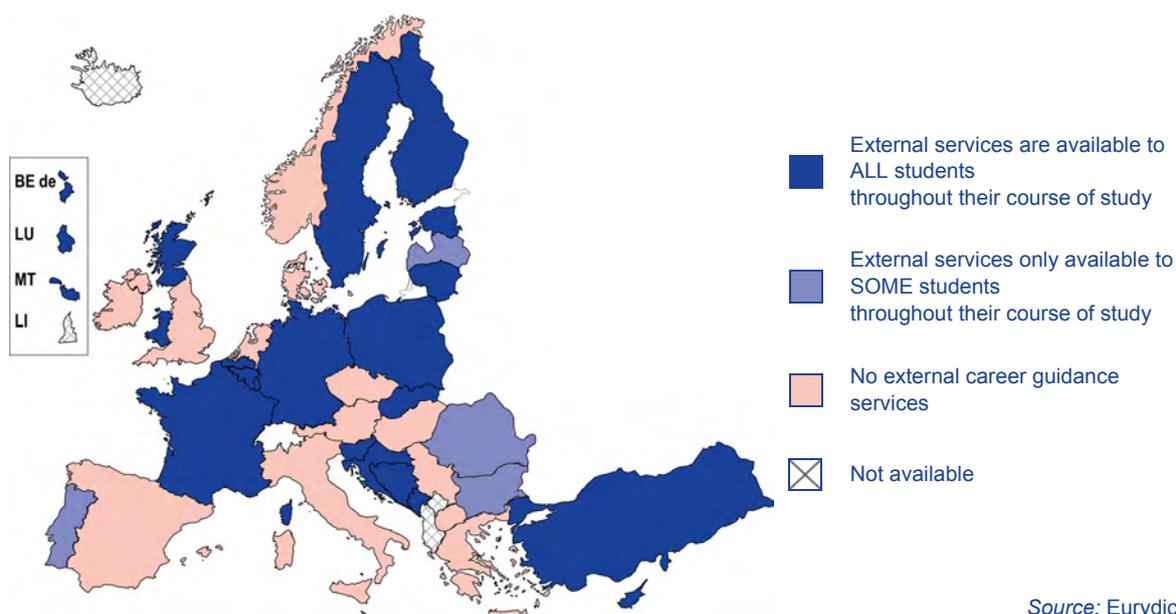
the year before they graduate. There are no career guidance services available in higher education institutions in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Figure 4.4.a: Availability of career guidance services within higher education institutions, 2014/15



In addition to the career guidance services within higher education institutions, students may also have access to external career services. However, since links between internal and external services are rare, students might find this difficult due to lack of information. External guidance services exist in more than half of all education systems, and in most cases they are, in principle, accessible to all higher education students (see Figure 4.4.b). External services are available to some students only in Bulgaria, Latvia, Portugal and Romania.

Figure 4.4.b: Availability of external career guidance services, 2014/15

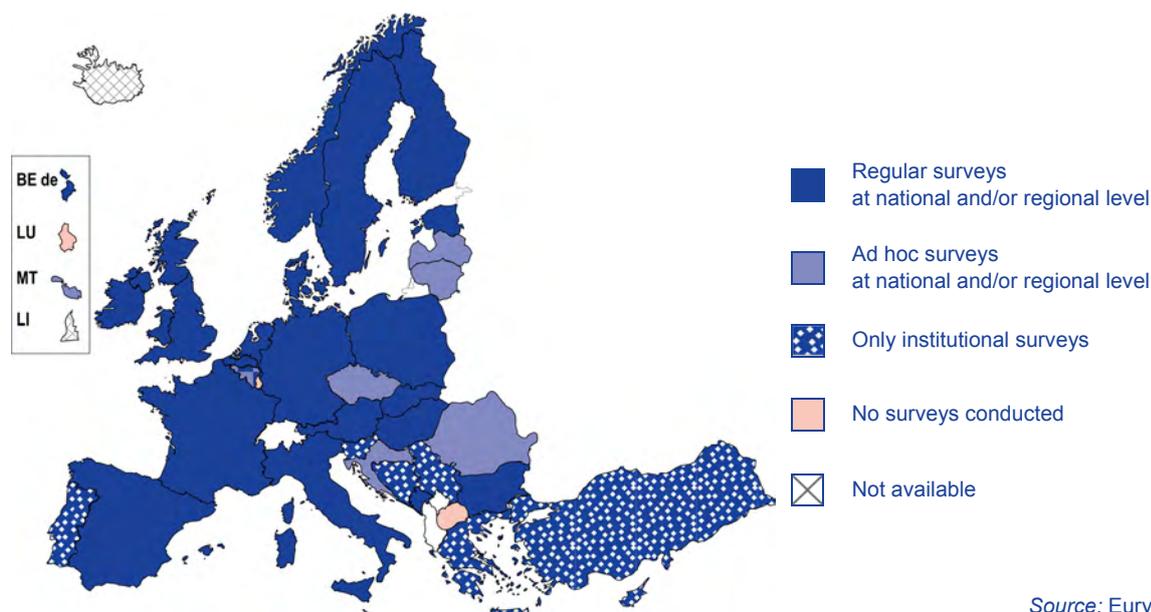


4.5. Graduate tracking surveys

Graduate tracking surveys seek to track the employment destinations and early careers of higher education graduates (Schomburg, 2003). Relying on the self-assessment of graduates, these surveys are valuable tools for evaluating graduate employability. They not only provide the means to measure the percentage of graduates finding employment after graduation, but they are also able to describe the quality of jobs, the time it took to find a job, graduates' job satisfaction, and the match between graduates' skills and job requirements (see Teichler, 2011). Furthermore, based on graduate surveys, it is possible to conduct analyses on the relative impact of graduates' individual characteristics and the higher education programme they attended (Ibid.). In this way, these surveys are useful tools for a multi-dimensional evaluation of employability in higher education, particularly when there are established mechanisms by which both education authorities and HEIs can make use of the information gathered.

Figure 4.5.a shows the nature and availability of graduate tracking surveys across Europe. As the figure depicts, regular graduate surveys are conducted at national and/or regional level in the majority of the education systems covered. Ad hoc graduate surveys take place in seven education systems (Belgium (French Community), the Czech Republic, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Romania), while only institutional surveys are conducted in another seven (Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey). However, institutional surveys may be widespread and the data may also be used by education authorities. For example, in Portugal, while there is no national system of graduate tracking, all higher education institutions conduct their own surveys, which are used in the quality assurance procedure. There are no graduate surveys in Luxembourg or the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Figure 4.5.a: Graduate tracking surveys, 2014/15



However, only 15 education systems make systematic efforts to use the information from graduate tracking surveys (see Figure 4.5.b). Graduate surveys are most often used in quality assurance procedures. Alternatively, graduate surveys can be used to make employability-related information on

higher education study programmes accessible to the public. This can inform current and future students on their potential career prospects.

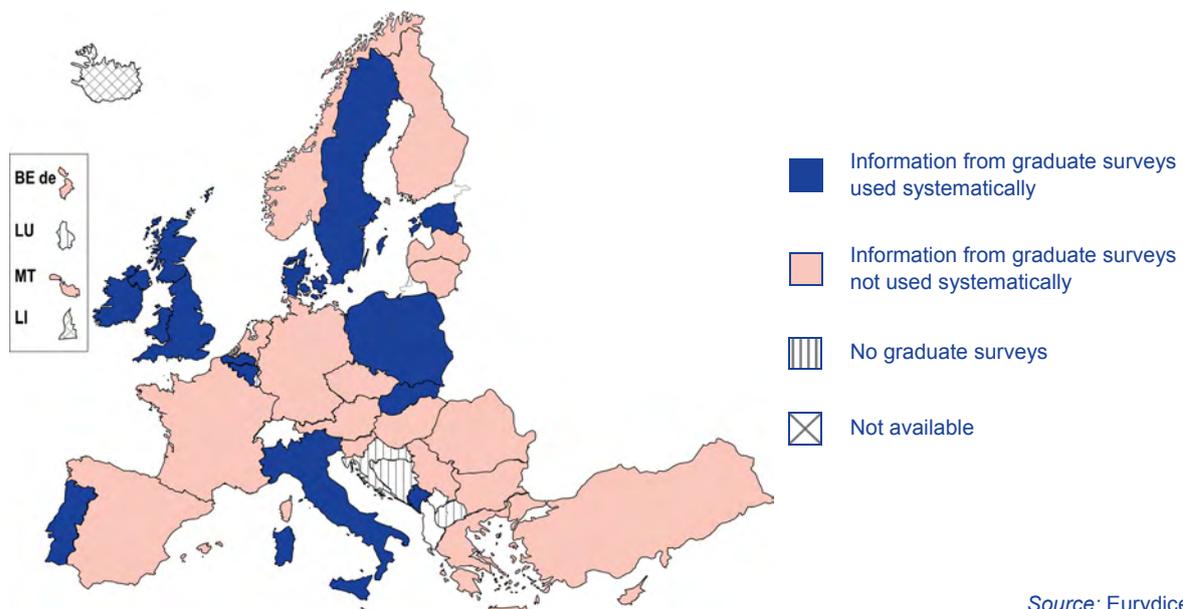
Bulgaria has established a University Ranking System ⁽³⁶⁾, where graduate employment and income form part of the composite indicator on 'career and relevance to labour market'.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Unistats ⁽³⁷⁾ website compares higher education course data, enabling prospective students to compare information on a course by course basis. Information includes previous students' satisfaction, professional body accreditation, graduate employment destinations and salary, as well as higher education institutions' employability statements.

Graduate surveys can also help educational authorities to monitor specific fields of study.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, educational authorities use student tracking surveys within the framework of the STEM Action Plan to monitor how far it contributes to an increase in the number of pupils and students in secondary and higher education opting for programmes within the fields of science, technology, engineering and/or mathematics. Data are also used for the further development of the STEM Action Plan and for determining additional (strategic and operational) objectives and actions.

Figure 4.5.b: Systematic use of graduate tracking surveys by educational authorities, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Recent policy developments:

More and more countries are seeking to establish regular graduate surveys at education system level. At the European level, the Eurograduate feasibility study is currently exploring whether a study on Europe's higher education graduates could be sustained ⁽³⁸⁾.

In **Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities)**, a cooperation agreement between the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, the Walloon Region, the Brussels Region, the German-speaking Community as well as training, education and labour statistical bodies, was adopted in spring 2014 to enable systematic tracking of learners during and after their course of study.

In **Spain**, the National Statistics Office – with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education – has launched a survey on the employment of university graduates. The first survey is being conducted in 2015, and the agreement on its frequency is due to be signed.

⁽³⁶⁾ See: <http://rsvu.mon.bg/>

⁽³⁷⁾ See: <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

⁽³⁸⁾ The report is expected to be completed by October 2015. See more information at: <http://www.eurograduate.eu/>

In **Lithuania**, in 2014, the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) started implementing a longitudinal ad hoc survey of graduates at national level. In particular, the longitudinal survey will be implemented by MOSTA in four stages: just after graduation, six months after graduation (both these surveys were conducted in 2014), one year after graduation and two years after graduation. The aim of the survey is to track graduates' career paths and to gather information about their education, further studies undertaken, skills gained, employability, attitudes and aspirations. The results are important in order to improve the quality of studies and study programmes; and they might also be helpful for providing career management services in higher education institutions. In addition, a career management information system (KVIS) that will include surveys of graduates is being set up. It is planned to provide tools for systematic graduate surveys and will be used both by national and institutional authorities.

In **Poland**, the amendment of the Law on Higher Education 2005, adopted in 2014, introduced a new central tracking system (operating in parallel to the tracking carried out individually by HEIs since 2011 as an element of the internal quality assurance system). The system will be based on administrative data, matching the graduate database with anonymised data from the social security system, run centrally by the Ministry. It will provide for comparable and objective data on graduate employment outcomes. It will be operational by the end of 2015.

In **Portugal**, the planned regular forecasting system also includes graduate tracking.

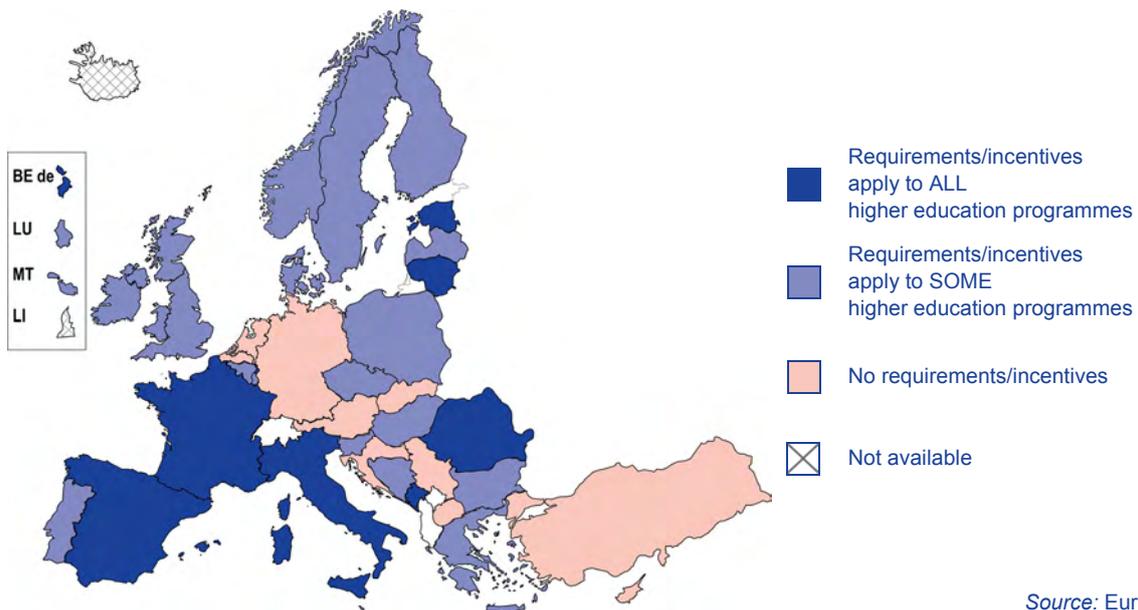
4.6. Requirements or incentives to include work placements in higher education programmes

Practical training is regarded as a key element in enhancing employability as it helps graduates acquire the work-related skills demanded by employers. Data from both European comparative studies and national reports show that students who participated in practical training before graduation are more likely to find jobs than their counterparts without relevant work experience (see e.g. Blackwell et al., 2001; Garrouste and Rodrigues, 2012; Mason, Williams and Cranmer, 2009; van der Velden and Allen, 2011). Thomas and Jones (2007) also emphasise the importance of work experience for non-traditional learners. Therefore, it is important to examine whether there are systems in place (by means of regulations or incentives) to extend the provision for structured work placements or practical training as part of higher education programmes.

The term 'work placement' refers to two types of experience in a working environment. Firstly, it is the placement of students in supervised work settings (e.g. through internships) so they can apply the knowledge and skills learned during their studies. Secondly, it refers to a period of voluntary work (also referred to as 'student-community engagement') that is intended to allow students to become familiar with the working environment in general, whilst also conveying some benefit to the community (Bourner and Millican, 2011). Nevertheless, this latter type of placement should also be integrated into tertiary programmes in order to have a positive impact on graduate employability (Ibid.).

This last indicator linked to the employability of graduates thus looks at whether public authorities in European countries have taken steps to ensure that higher education institutions include work placements/practical experience as part of their education programmes. Figure 4.6 includes both regulations and incentives (financial or otherwise).

Figure 4.6: Requirements or incentives to include work placements/practical training in higher education programmes, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

The strongest regulatory approaches require higher education institutions to include work placements in all study programmes. For example, in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Estonia and Spain, work placements are regarded as integral parts of all higher education programmes. However, in Estonia, the requirement for a minimum proportion of a programme to be allocated to work placement applies only to vocational higher education (15 %). In Lithuania and Romania, all first cycle students are required to undergo practical training. Montenegro has also recently introduced this requirement for all first cycle students and students in vocational programmes. In addition, as part of the accreditation process for new study programmes, higher education institutions are obliged to conclude cooperation agreements with businesses to ensure practical training for students.

In the European Union (EU), Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications⁽³⁹⁾ regulates the embedding of practical training into certain, professionally oriented programmes of study (e.g. for medical or pharmaceutical studies). However, in most countries, beyond these regulated professions, higher education institutions are generally free to decide whether to include such structured work experiences in their programmes.

Nevertheless, some countries make the inclusion of work placements compulsory for certain types of institutions. For example, in Denmark, practical training is required at Business Academies and University Colleges for both first and second cycle students. Similar regulations exist in Greece (regarding Technological Educational Institutions), in Austria (regarding *Fachhochschulen* (Universities of Applied Sciences)), in Malta (in the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology) and in Finland (for first cycle Polytechnic degrees). In other countries, practical training is required for certain degree types (e.g. for professionally-oriented and/or short-cycle programmes, as in Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia).

⁽³⁹⁾ Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, OJ L 255, 30.9.2005.

Apart from using a regulatory framework, education authorities in some countries also use financial incentives to encourage institutions to include work placements as part of study programmes by funding the costs of these placements either in full or in part. This occurs even in countries where work placements are not compulsory (e.g. in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Finland, the United Kingdom and Norway).

In addition to the measures outlined above, several countries have also established 'dual' degrees that combine theoretical studies in higher education institutions with professional experience gained at work. Under this system, higher education institutions and enterprises share the responsibility for equipping students with the relevant skills and competences. Dual degree programmes exist, for example, in Belgium (French and German-speaking Communities), Germany, Hungary and Poland.

Recent policy developments:

Work placements and on-the-job training have been growing in importance in recent years. The latest developments have taken place in Romania and Montenegro, and plans also exist in Malta to introduce work-based learning in higher education. In addition, France and Lithuania passed laws in 2014 to create better conditions for young people to gain practical work experience.

In **Romania**, Law No. 9 adopted on 7 January 2015 ensures that organisers of work placements, education units and institutions, benefit from additional funds, equivalent to 5 % of the annual allowance for each pupil or student. This funding is provided by the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research for the specialisations in which practical training is a mandatory curriculum requirement.

In **Montenegro**, under the new Law on Higher Education (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 44/2014) adopted in October 2014, practical work experience became compulsory for all first cycle students as well as for students of vocationally-oriented programmes. Practical knowledge, skills and competences can be acquired either in an institution's laboratories or workshops or through on-the-job training.

CHAPTER 5: LEARNING MOBILITY

Introduction

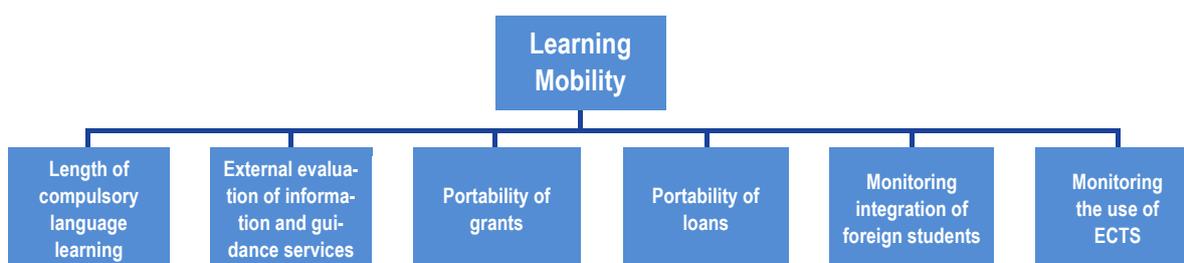
Improving learning mobility is a key policy priority at both European and national levels. Work on measuring mobility flows and on developing qualitative support has intensified in recent years, and within the 2011 Council Recommendation on learning mobility⁽⁴⁰⁾ the Eurydice Network was requested to work on the development of a methodological framework to compare country conditions supporting learning mobility. This has since become known as a Mobility Scoreboard. The feasibility study for the Mobility Scoreboard was published in 2013, and the next edition of the Mobility Scoreboard will be published in 2016.

The structural indicators presented are based on those developed from the Mobility Scoreboard, and relate primarily to higher education. The intention is for CEDEFOP to develop indicators to cover Vocational Education and Training (VET) in future updates of the Mobility Scoreboard, and this work is currently in a pilot phase.

The structural indicators examined in this chapter are summarised in the diagram below. They are:

- Length of compulsory first foreign language for all students
- Length of compulsory second foreign language for all students
- External evaluation of information and guidance services
- Portability of grants
- Portability of loans
- Monitoring of services to support the integration of foreign students
- Monitoring the correct implementation of ECTS

The first two indicators consider linguistic preparation before higher education, as language is an important pre-condition for mobility. Information and guidance services for students are then examined from the perspective of measures to ensure and improve the quality of these services. Supporting students through enabling grants and loans to be taken abroad is the focus of the two indicators on portability. External monitoring of services to support the integration of foreign students is then considered, and the chapter closes with an examination of whether the correct use of ECTS is considered, as it is a key tool to support learner mobility in Europe. Very few member states have reported any recent policy developments. Rather, it appears to be the case that policies are either well-established or are absent from the national system.



⁽⁴⁰⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on 'Youth on the move' – promoting the learning mobility of young people, OJ C199, 7.7.2011.

5.1. Length of compulsory first foreign language for all students

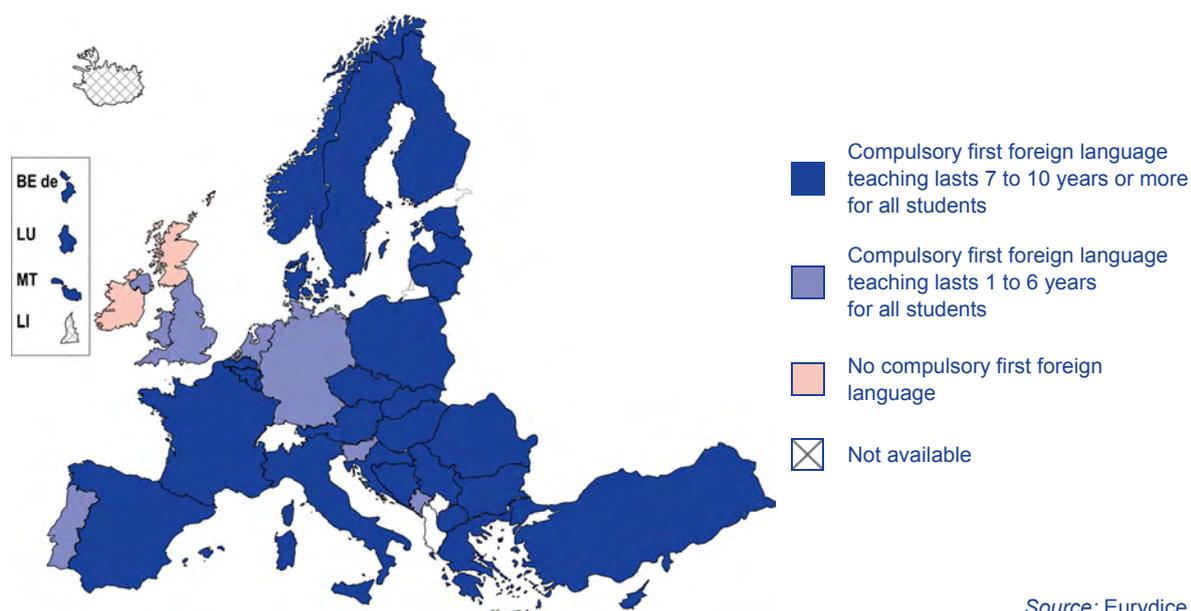
The 2011 Council Recommendation requests Member States to acknowledge the importance of language learning and acquiring intercultural competences starting at early stages of education, by encouraging quality linguistic and cultural preparation for mobility in both general and vocational education.

Following the logic of the recommendation, it was agreed in the context of the JAF to use indicators that focus on national approaches to compulsory foreign language learning in schools. This information on compulsory language learning in schools is relatively simple to obtain and compare. There are a number of elements that could be considered: the number of foreign languages offered in the school curriculum; whether languages are compulsory for some or all students, the age at which compulsory language learning begins and its duration.

Within the JAF, the decision was taken to focus on compulsory language learning for all school students. The issue that is given particular prominence in these indicators is therefore the length of time that first and second compulsory foreign languages are taught until the end of compulsory schooling.

In a large majority of European countries, foreign language learning is compulsory for all school students. Most pupils in European countries are taught a first foreign language for at least 7 to 10 years. All pupils in 23 systems are required to learn a first foreign language for at least 7 years, and in a further 9 systems compulsory first foreign language teaching lasts between 1 and 7 years. As in 2010/11, Ireland and the United Kingdom (Scotland) are the only countries where there is no obligation to teach a first foreign language to all pupils. However, in Ireland pupils at ISCED 1 study two national languages. In the case of Scotland, the Scottish Government is making a significant commitment to improve language learning for the long term in Scotland, currently promoting a language, with a policy model aimed at ensuring that young people learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue. Scottish local authorities have the autonomy to devise their own curricular models based around the central tenets of Curriculum for Excellence, within which the study of at least one modern language is an entitlement for all pupils from Primary 1 (around age 5) until the end of Secondary 3 (around age 15).

Figure 5.1: Length of compulsory first foreign language for all students, 2014/15



Recent policy developments

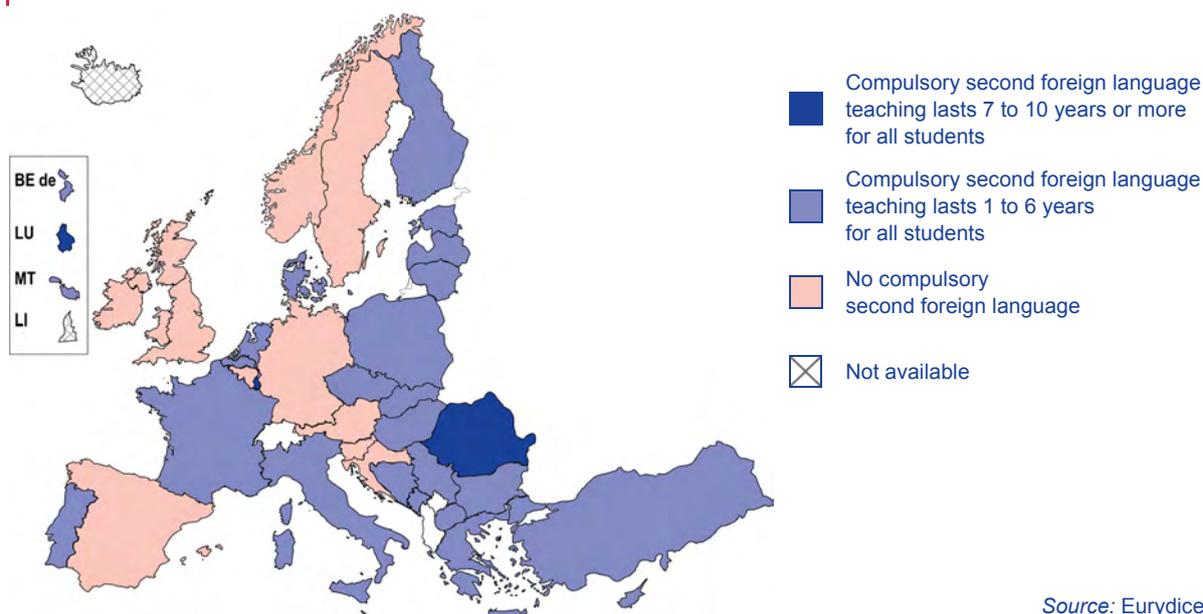
In some countries, recent policy changes aim to extend and strengthen first foreign language learning. In Poland, compulsory language lessons have been introduced in 2015 for all 5-year olds as a part of one-year compulsory pre-primary education. France, Denmark, Slovenia and Turkey have made changes to the introduction of a first foreign language in primary school. Two countries (Cyprus and the Czech Republic) have recently introduced compulsory second foreign language teaching. Other countries have also considered language teaching in the course of recent reforms.

5.2. Length of compulsory second foreign language for all students

Figure 5.2 on the length of compulsory second foreign language learning is also based on the notion of duration of compulsory language teaching for all pupils in full-time compulsory education. It considers language learning in pre-primary, primary and general secondary education until the end of compulsory education.

Although in the majority of European countries learning a second foreign language is compulsory for all school students, the duration of compulsory second foreign language teaching remains shorter than for the first foreign language. Romania is the only country where a second foreign language is taught to all pupils for more than 7 years. There are 19 systems where a second foreign language is compulsory for 1 to 6 years, and 15 where there is no compulsory second foreign language. In Spain, although a second foreign language is not compulsory nationwide, it is in the Canary Islands in some grades of ISCED 1 and in the Region of Murcia in some grades of ISCED 1 and 2.

Figure 5.2: Length of compulsory second foreign language for all students, 2014/15



5.3. External evaluation of Information and Guidance services

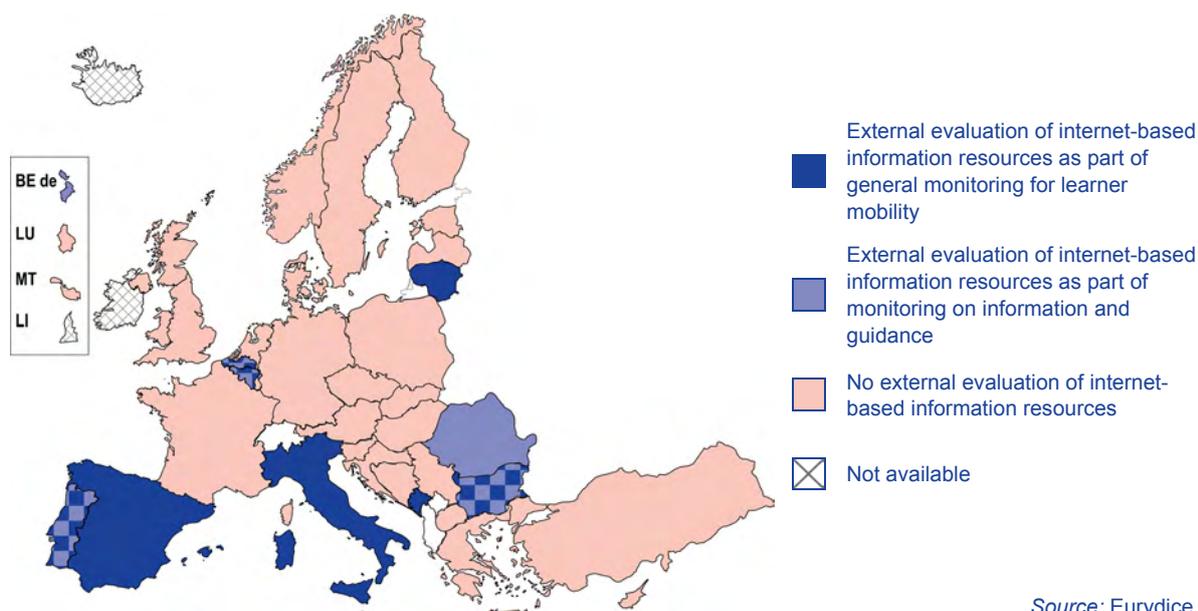
5.3.1. External evaluation of internet-based information resources

As stressed by the Eurydice report 'Toward a Mobility Scoreboard: Conditions for Learning Abroad in Europe' (2013), the two most significant aspects of Member-State responsibility concern the quality of information and guidance provided to young people and access to it. Figure 5.3 focuses on external evaluation of internet-based information resources, irrespective of the number and nature of activities that a country may offer. External evaluation refers to an evaluation process which is undertaken by a body external to the organisation responsible for providing the services, e.g. a higher education institution or a centre providing counselling services. It therefore excludes any system of internal self-monitoring. External evaluation can be viewed as a key element of quality assurance, aiming to improve, in this case, the quality of information and guidance services.

The reason for examining external monitoring, rather than simply the existence of online information resources, is that this gives an indication that quality of service is a matter of importance. In an era where online information can be found about practically everything, the key issue is whether information is trustworthy. Quality assurance does not guarantee this objective, but it is a necessary condition for it to be achieved. Figure 5.3 distinguishes between monitoring that is undertaken in the context of learner mobility, or more specific monitoring on information and guidance services. This distinction does not imply that one approach is favoured over the other.

Belgium (all three communities), Bulgaria, Portugal, Romania and Norway undertake external evaluation of internet-based resources as part of monitoring on information and guidance. In addition, Spain, Italy, Lithuania and Montenegro undertake monitoring within a general monitoring framework on learner mobility. However, the vast majority (26 systems) have no external monitoring, indicating that this is still an area where there is considerable potential for countries to consider their practice.

Figure 5.3: External evaluation of internet-based information resources, 2014/15



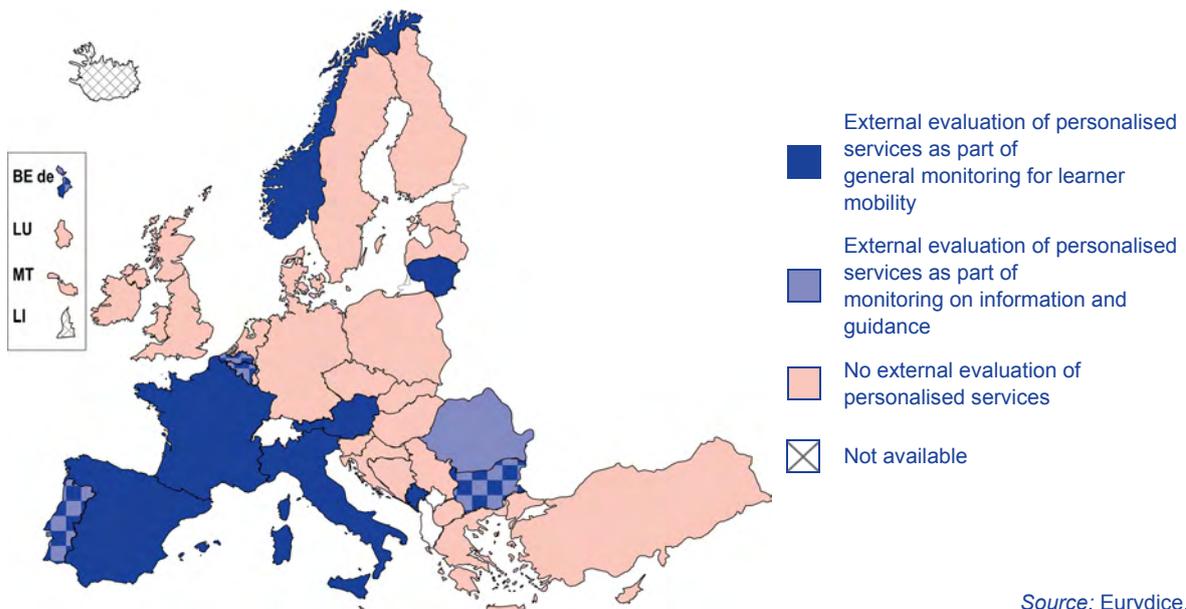
5.3.2. External evaluation of Information and Guidance services

Figure 5.4 focuses on a complementary aspect of external evaluation to online information services, this time examining personalised guidance and information services. Again the indicator is constructed irrespective of the number and nature of activities that a country may offer, and as with the previous indicator, external evaluation refers to an evaluation process which is undertaken by a body external to the organisation responsible for providing the services.

The justification for considering the question of external monitoring is that this gives an indication of concern to maintain a high level of quality of service. While there is a distinction drawn between monitoring undertaken in the context of learner mobility or more specifically on personalised information and guidance services, this is not a matter where one approach is favoured over the other.

Eleven systems report that external evaluation of personalised services is undertaken as part of general monitoring for learner mobility, while a further six undertake monitoring of personalised services as part of monitoring on information and guidance. However, the vast majority of countries do not require their personalised guidance services to be evaluated within the context of quality assurance processes.

Figure 5.4: External evaluation of personalised services providing guidance and information, 2014/15



5.4. Portability of grants

5.4.1. Public financial support in the form of grants/scholarships 1st and 2nd cycle

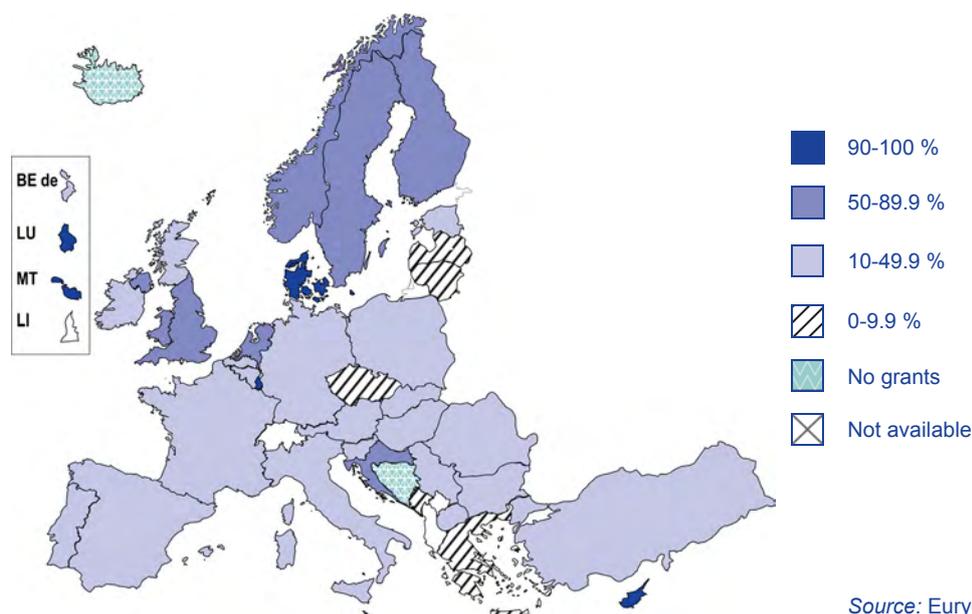
The 2011 Council Recommendation stressed the importance of portability of grants and loans in facilitating the learning mobility of young people. This is also a policy priority that has been highlighted in the framework of the Bologna process, and which the European Commission has consistently supported over the last decade, and which is underlined in the feasibility study for the Mobility Scoreboard as a topic where countries have room to improve.

The issue is not, however, completely straightforward. In order to assess the impact of portability, information is also required on the proportion of students receiving public grants and/or publicly-subsidised loans, and in which higher education cycles such support is available.

5.4.2. Proportion of grants 1st and 2nd cycle

Countries were asked to report on grants, defined as non-repayable public financial support provided directly to students. In all countries except Iceland, some students are awarded grants to support their higher education studies. However, the proportion of students receiving grants varies quite significantly. As illustrated in Figure 5.5, grants are universal in Cyprus, Denmark, Luxembourg and Malta, and also awarded to a very significant proportion of students in a further nine systems. However, in all the other systems less than half of the student population receives a grant.

Figure 5.5: Proportion of students receiving grants/scholarships 1st and 2nd cycle, 2014/15



Country specific note

United Kingdom: Proportions for 1st cycle only; in the 2nd cycle, there is no universal support package.

5.4.3. Portability of grants and requirements

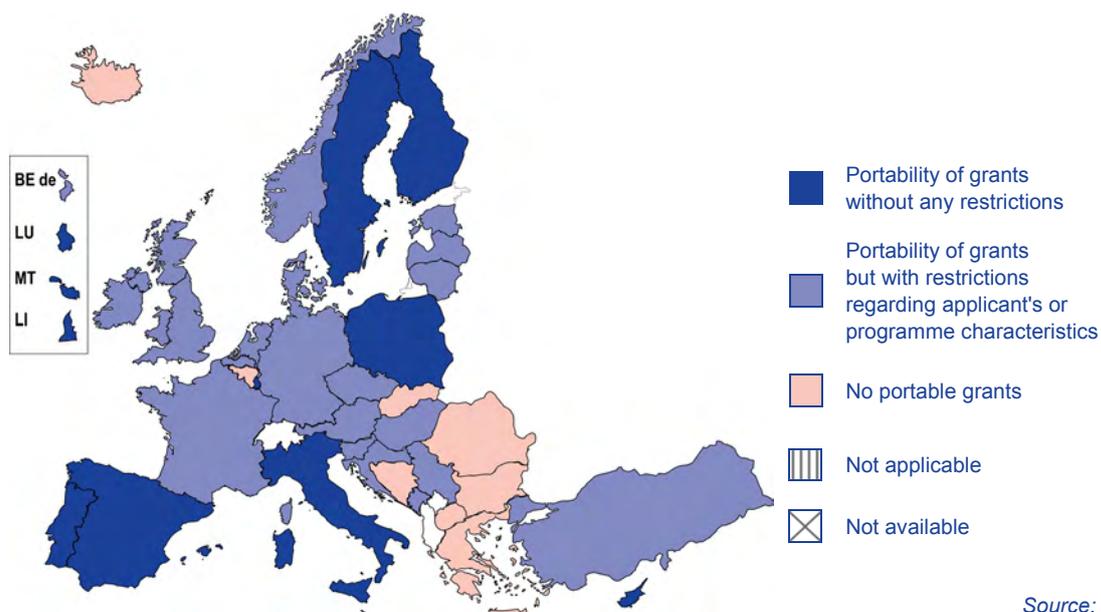
Figure 5.6 illustrates the main characteristics of portability in the case of grants. It distinguishes restrictions on portability in terms of additional requirements that students and/or the chosen study programme abroad need to fulfil for the grant to become portable. Such restrictions include, for

example, the definition of countries where students can take their grants (e.g. portability within the EEA only), limits on the time spent abroad, or the requirement that students need to study full time. The most severe restriction is when students can only take their grants abroad to study if no equivalent programme is available in the home country. Since this means that portability is allowed only in exceptional cases, countries applying this condition are listed as having 'no portability'.

Ten systems enable full portability of grants. In these cases, all students who receive grants are able to study in a recognised higher education institution of their choice either within the country or abroad. There are no additional requirements or conditions regarding the portability of grants, and grants are issued independently of the place of study.

A further 18 systems also enable students to use grants abroad, but impose some conditions – either related to the applicant or to the programme of study. In the case of the Czech Republic, although there is no restriction to portability for credit mobility from the government, the higher education institutions may restrict portability in their internal scholarship and bursary regulations, and there is no possibility for students to use their support for the study of a full degree abroad. Ten systems do not allow students to use national grants for study abroad.

Figure 5.6: Portability of grants and restrictions, 2014/15



Recent policy developments

Germany and Estonia are the only countries reporting developments related to portable grants.

Germany: All grants/loans are portable with additional requirements. The 'residency' criteria as an additional requirement for portable support (BAföG) was expanded by a legal amendment from residency to 'residency or other similar proven link to Germany' ('25 Bafög-Änderungsgesetz', effective as of 1 January 2015). This means that support for degree or credit mobility can only be granted when the applicant is a resident of Germany or can demonstrate a link to Germany.

Estonia: Since the academic year 2013/14, new need-based study allowances have been granted to students. Students can also use this grant for studying abroad.

5.5. Portability of loans

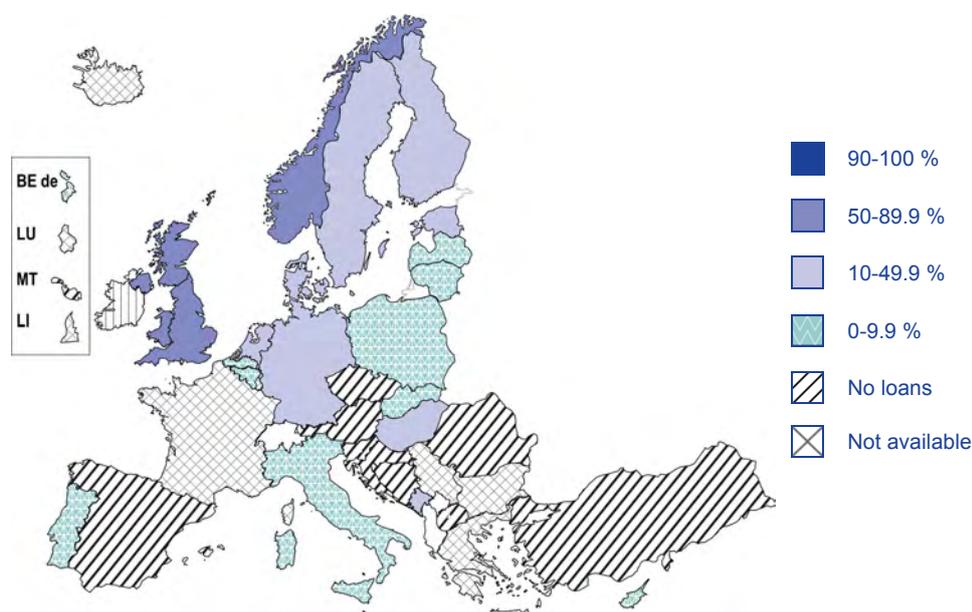
5.5.1. Publicly subsidised or guaranteed student loans to cover their expenses during their higher education studies

Publicly subsidised loans are repayable financial aid. Student loan models differ in many aspects – such as eligibility requirements and repayment obligations – but are considered to be subsidised when the government assumes part of the costs. This may take the form of a government guarantee with regard to interest rates or government assuming the risk of default. Publicly subsidised loan schemes are less widespread than grants.

5.5.2. Proportion of students receiving loans 1st and 2nd cycle

The proportion of students actually receiving loans also shows considerable variation. In addition to the ten systems without a student loan scheme, there are another ten systems where the take-up of loans is very low – less than 10 %. In some of these countries, loans are not considered by students as part of the student support even if the possibility to take out a loan exists. For example, in the German Community of Belgium it is a theoretical possibility, but in the reference year, no students actually took out a loan, and similarly in the French Community of Belgium the percentage of students taking loans is 0.0001 % – indicating a number of actual students below three figures. Norway and the United Kingdom are the only countries where more than 50 % of students take out a loan.

Figure 5.7: Proportion of students receiving loans 1st and 2nd cycle, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Country specific note

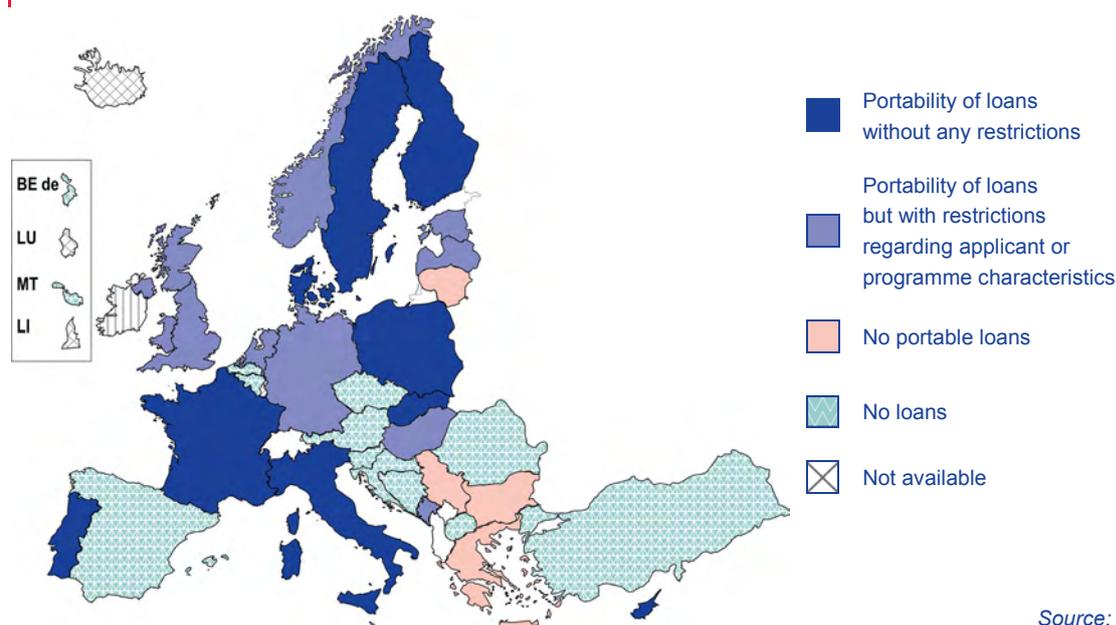
United Kingdom: Proportions for 1st cycle only; in the 2nd cycle, there is no universal support package.

5.5.3. Portability of loans and requirements

Figure 5.8 shows whether publicly-subsidised loans are portable and, when they are, whether or not there are restrictions. Information is thus structured using the same categories as was in the case of grants. A country is considered as having loans only if more than 1 % of students actually take out a loan.

A higher number of countries (9) enable portability without restrictions despite the fact that there are fewer countries with student loan schemes.

Figure 5.8: Portability of loans and restrictions, 2014/15



Recent policy developments

Developments have recently taken place in two systems – the United Kingdom (Scotland) and Germany: For Scottish students, from academic year 2014/15, the Scottish Government is operating a pilot scheme in partnership with a number of higher education institutions in the EU to make living cost support portable for the whole first cycle degree. In the case of Germany, eligibility conditions for portable support have been amended from the beginning of 2015 in relation to ECJ judgements. Plans are also in place in Poland for a new student loan programme to enable tuition fees to be paid for study abroad for outstanding candidates. The programme will begin in 2016, and participants will not be required to repay loans if they return to Poland to complete third cycle studies or if they pay social security contributions for five years during the decade after their studies.

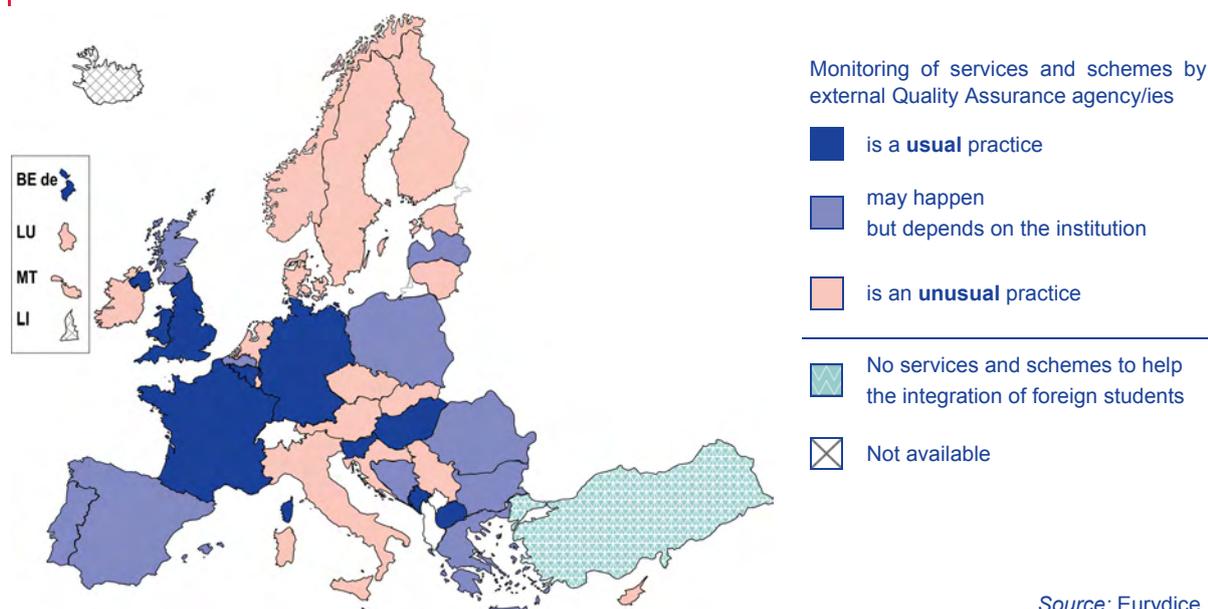
5.6. Quality assurance monitoring of integration of foreign students

Ensuring that services are provided to support incoming foreign students is an important aspect of supporting positive conditions for learner mobility. However, the issue is not only that services should be available, but that the services should be of good quality. While the quality of services cannot be compared across countries, the fact of requiring services to be considered by external quality assurance is a significant proxy for quality.

5.6.1. Services and schemes to help foreign students integrate into the host institution

Figure 5.9 shows clearly whether or not external quality assurance systems take account of schemes that are designed to help the integration of mobile learners from other countries. External monitoring is an indication that these services play an important role in supporting learner mobility, and therefore this is a strong indicator of the priority attached to internationalisation. The countries where such monitoring takes place are, however, outnumbered by a ratio of approximately two to one by those countries where no such monitoring can be found. There is no clear geographical pattern that might explain the findings on the map. However, in countries in central and Eastern Europe, at best monitoring would occur only if requested by a higher education institution. More surprisingly, perhaps, quality assurance agencies in Nordic countries do not consider this issue.

Figure 5.9: Monitoring of services and schemes to help the integration of foreign students by external Quality Assurance agency/ies, 2014/15



5.7. Monitoring of ECTS by external Quality Assurance

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is recognised as one of the most important instruments designed to facilitate recognition and enhance mobility in higher education. ECTS was mentioned in the 1999 Bologna Declaration in the context of credit transfer, 'as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility' with a view to assign credits to foreign students ⁽⁴¹⁾ (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012c).

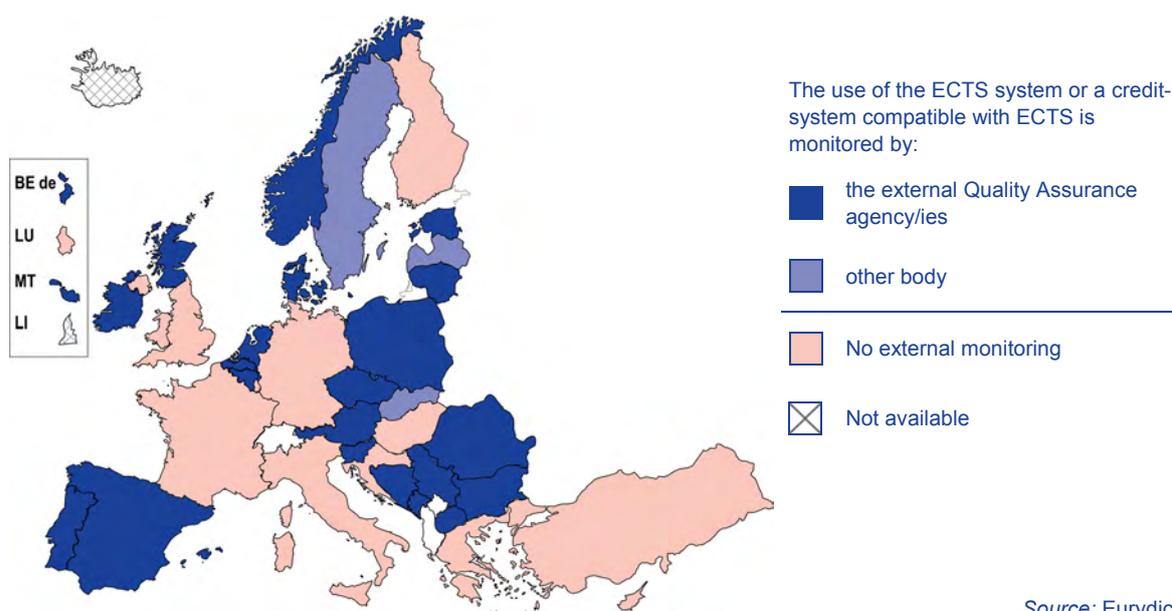
The difficulty with assessing the use of ECTS is that implementation depends on the actions of autonomous higher education institutions. National authorities do, however, have a responsibility to ensure that such a tool is correctly used, and that support is provided to higher education institutions in the implementation and use of ECTS. It is recognised good practice to monitor implementation at national level and hence the focus is on whether or not there is a systematic approach to monitoring the implementation and impact of ECTS. This responsibility is most commonly exercised by external quality assurance agencies.

5.7.1. Use of ECTS and bodies responsive of monitoring

In around half of the countries, quality assurance plays little or no role with regard to the use of ECTS – despite this being a key tool for institutions in constructing curricula and promoting mobility. Greece, Italy, Slovakia and Turkey report that higher education institutions are responsible for evaluating their own use of credits. Similarly, in Germany, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Finland, the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Northern Ireland), there is no monitoring of the use of the ECTS system or a credit-system compatible with ECTS.

In **Cyprus**, the official 'Bologna Experts' (who work within a European community of higher education reform experts under a European Commission project) are given the responsibility to advise and guide institutions concerning the correct implementation of the ECTS system – and this is not followed up in quality assurance evaluations.

Figure 5.10: External monitoring of the use of ECTS/national credit system, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Towards the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, Prague, 19 May 2001.

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Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe – 2015

This report contains more than 30 structural indicators that focus on country progress and key policy developments in five areas: early childhood education and care, achievement in basic skills, higher education, graduate employability, and learning mobility. It provides background and complementary information to a number of structural indicators included in the *Education and Training Monitor 2015*.

Information covers all the EU Member States as well as most other countries participating in the Eurydice network. The reference year is 2014/15.

The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>.

