



**Figure B7: Specific foreign languages which are either mandatory or may be offered in full-time compulsory education, according to documents issued by the central education authorities, 2002/03**

	BE		BE	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK		IS	LI	NO	BG	RO		
	n	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	0	1	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	0	2	2	1	2	2	
Arabic																																				
Czech																																				
Danish																																				
German																																				
Greek																																				
English																																				
Spanish																																				
Estonian																																				
Finnish																																				
French																																				
Irish																																				
Gaelic																																				
Modern Hebrew																																				
Croatian																																				
Hungarian																																				
Italian																																				
Japanese																																				
Latvian																																				
Dutch																																				
Norwegian																																				
Polish																																				
Portuguese																																				
Romany																																				
Russian																																				
Slovak																																				
Slovene																																				
Swedish																																				
Turkish																																				
Urdu																																				
Chinese																																				
Ancient Greek																																				
Ancient Hebrew																																				
Latin																																				

	Specific mandatory foreign language	<b>1 2 3</b>	These numerals indicate the order in which the specific mandatory foreign languages have to be learnt
	Foreign languages on offer	<b>n</b>	Number of languages compulsory for everyone

Source: Eurydice.

#### Additional notes

**Belgium (BE fr):** Pupils in Brussels have to learn Dutch as a first foreign language.

**Belgium (BE de):** The French-speaking minority who are taught in French in primary education are obliged to learn German as a first foreign language.

**Germany:** The regulations may differ from one *Land* to the next. Generally, pupils can choose English or French when they first have to learn a foreign language, but they are obliged to study English at some stage during compulsory education.

**Estonia:** Schools in which Russian is the language of instruction have to teach Estonian from the first year of primary education.

**Spain:** There is no self-contained list and, in principle, schools may offer any language. The languages indicated are examples of those that may be taught in secondary education.

**France:** Curricula also refer to the following languages: Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Creole, Gallo, the Melanesian languages, the regional languages of Alsace, the regional languages of Moselle, Occitan and Tahitian.

**Ireland:** The official languages of English and Irish are taught to all pupils, but are not foreign languages. During the first year of upper secondary education (the final year of compulsory education), Arabic, Japanese and Russian may also be offered.

**Italy:** Since 2003/04, pupils have been obliged to learn English from the first year of primary education onwards.

**Latvia:** The data relate to schools with Latvian as the language of instruction.

**Lithuania:** In addition to the languages referred to, schools are free to offer any other language as the second compulsory foreign language.

**Hungary and Bulgaria:** No precise list of foreign languages is provided. Theoretically, schools may offer any language.

**Netherlands:** VWO pupils are obliged to learn English, French and German. Pupils who attend the VWO *gymnasium* also have to learn ancient Greek and Latin (neither of which however are regarded as foreign languages in the curriculum).

**Austria:** In *Allgemeinbildenden höheren Schulen*, pupils learn Latin as a second compulsory foreign language but many schools now teach a second modern language at this stage.

**Slovenia:** Schools are obliged to offer at least two of the languages referred to: the first as a compulsory subject and the second as a core curriculum option.

**Finland:** The legislation does not prescribe the range of foreign languages to be offered. The second state language (Swedish or Finnish depending on the mother tongue of the pupil concerned) has to be learnt as a compulsory subject.

**Sweden:** The ordinance for compulsory education states that any other language in addition to those referred to may be offered by schools, provided that it remains on offer in upper secondary education.

**United Kingdom (ENG/WLS):** The *National Curriculum* requires schools at secondary level to offer at least one of the official working languages of the European Union. (Since August 2004 in England, the nine new official languages of the European Union have been included.) Only then may they offer other languages as a choice. Pupils may study any modern foreign language that the school offers. In Wales, all pupils must learn Welsh. The curriculum does not consider Welsh to be a foreign language.

**United Kingdom (NIR):** The Northern Ireland Curriculum requires schools at secondary level to offer at least one of French, German, Italian or Spanish; only then may they offer Irish as a choice. Pupils must learn at least one of these five languages.

**Iceland:** Swedish and Norwegian may be offered in place of Danish, outside school hours, for pupils who have lived in Sweden or Norway or whose parents are from these countries.

**Norway:** Pupils of Finnish origin living in the two northernmost counties are entitled to learn Finnish as a second foreign language.

#### Explanatory note

This Figure deals only with languages described as 'foreign' (or 'modern') in the curriculum/official documents. Regional or ancient languages are included solely when the curriculum regards them as alternatives to foreign languages.

Languages are listed in accordance with the alphabetical order of their ISO 639 code (see the list of codes and abbreviations).

In the case of specific mandatory languages, only situations applicable to all pupils, irrespective of their area of study, are shown in the Figure. Where foreign languages are indicated in official documents as those on offer, all these languages are indicated, regardless of the ages or areas of study of the pupils concerned.

Where no numeral in white print is shown, either the language concerned is the only specific mandatory language, or the order in which it and other specific mandatory languages have to be learnt is not specified.

The small numerals in row **n** correspond to the maximum number of compulsory foreign languages that any one pupil will be obliged to study simultaneously at any given point in compulsory education.

**Specific mandatory foreign language:** See definitions.

## **A specific foreign language has to be learnt in almost half of all countries**

In over half of the EU-15 Member States, the first foreign language that pupils study as a compulsory subject is a specific mandatory language. No other language can therefore be chosen. Some countries insist that two or – in the case of Luxembourg – even three such specific languages have to be learnt. This trend is not characteristic of central and eastern Europe, and only in Latvia are pupils required to learn a specific language. In the great majority of countries, this language is English. In most cases, French is more commonly a second mandatory foreign language. Several countries insist on the study of certain languages for historical or political reasons as for example in Belgium (in the German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Luxembourg, Finland and Iceland.

In the EU-15, the great majority of languages referred to in official documents, which may theoretically be offered by schools, belong essentially to the Germanic group (English, German and much less frequently Dutch) and the Latin (Romance) group (with first and foremost French followed by Spanish and Italian). Official documents in some countries also refer to Russian. Furthermore, several countries include ancient languages, such as Latin and ancient Greek, in their foreign language curricula. In relation to these specifications, two particularities are characteristic of countries in central and eastern Europe. First, Russian is included in most curricula and, secondly, ancient languages are rarely regarded as alternative options to foreign languages.

Over and above these general trends, the curricula of some countries offer a fairly wide variety of languages. Regional or minority languages, or those in neighbouring countries feature in some curricula, as in the case of Czech in Germany and Austria, Dutch in France, Croatian in Slovenia, and Finnish in Norway. Languages of immigrant populations are also sometimes specified in official documents. Examples are Arabic in the French Community of Belgium, France and the Netherlands, Turkish in Germany and the Netherlands, and Urdu in the United Kingdom (Scotland). Curricula in Germany and France also refer to languages such as Chinese and Japanese. These languages, which according to the curriculum may be taught in principle, are not always offered by schools because of inadequate human and financial resources, or lack of interest on the part of pupils. Neither is each school necessarily required to offer all languages referred to in curricula since these are drawn up for an entire area in which contexts and needs may vary from one region to the next.

In Spain and Sweden, and Lithuania in the case of the second compulsory foreign language, and in the United Kingdom (England and Wales) provided certain conditions are complied with, schools may in principle offer those languages they wish. And in Hungary, Poland, Finland and Bulgaria, curricula or official documents relating to full-time compulsory education contain no list of specific foreign languages.

Provision for foreign languages in the curriculum offers a basis for considering the issue of linguistic diversity in education. Certain statistical data (Figures C4 and C7) also provide information of special interest on this matter by enumerating the percentages of pupils learning foreign languages. A general overview of indigenous languages taught inside or outside the normal school curriculum in primary and general secondary education is given in the 'Supplementary Information'. In some cases such languages have to be learnt, as in the case of Welsh in Wales. They vary enormously in number from one country to the next in a way that depends first and foremost on linguistic circumstances in each country, and more particularly on whether it is home to regional or minority languages.

## Supplementary Information

Main indigenous languages taught in European education systems, 2002/03																			
	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	
Belorussian														B1	B1				be
Bulgarian																			bg
Breton										B1									br
Catalan									B2	B1		B2							ca
Valencian									B2										cat
Corsican										B1									co
Creole										B1									cpf
Czech				A															cs
Kashubian																			csb
Welsh																			cy
Danish					A	B2													da
German	B1	A		B1	B1	A						B2			B1	A	B1		de
Greek								A				B2	A						el
English											A								en
Castilian									A										es
Estonian							A							B1					et
Basque									B2	B1									eu
Finnish																			fi
French	A	B2	B1							A		B2				A			fr
Frisian						B1													fy
Irish											A								ga
Scottish gaelic																			gd
R. L. of Alsace										B1									ger
L. Moselle reg.										B1									ger
Galician									B2										gl
Croatian												B2						B1	hr
Hungarian																	A		hu
Icelandic																			is
Italian												A							it
Letzeburgesch																A			lb
Lithuanian														B1	A				lt
Latvian														A					lv
Maltese																		A	mt
Dutch	B1		A																nl
Norwegian																			no
Occitan										B1		B2							oc
Polish				B1										B1	B1				pl
Portuguese																			pt
Romanian																		B1	ro
Mirandês																			roa
Ladin												B2							roa
Romany														C1			C2		rom
Russian				B1			B1							B1	B1				ru
Slovak																		B1	sk
Slovene												B2						B1	sl
Sami (Lapp)																			smi
Serbian																		B1	sr
Swedish																			sv
Turkish								B1					A						tr
Ukrainian														B1				B1	uk
Ruthenian																			ukr
Sorbian						B2													wen
	BE fr	BE de	BE nl	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	
A	State language									Source: Eurydice.									
B1	Recognised minority/regional language <b>without</b> official language status									C1	Non-territorial language								
B2	Recognised minority/regional language <b>with</b> official language status									C2	Non-territorial language recognised as a minority language								



Main indigenous languages taught in European education systems, 2002/03																		
	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK ENG	UK NIR	UK WLS	UK SCT	IS	LI	NO	BG	RO	
be			B1															Belorussian
bg																A		Bulgarian
br																		Breton
ca																		Catalan
cat																		Valencian
co																		Corsican
cpf																		Creole
cs		B2															B1	Czech
csb			B1															Kashubian
cy											B2							Welsh
da																A		Danish
de		A	B1			B1											B1	German
el																		Greek
en									A	A	A	A						English
es																		Castilian
et																		Estonian
eu																		Basque
fi							A	B1									B1	Finnish
fr																		French
fy	B2																	Frisian
ga										B1								Irish
gd												B2						Scottish gaelic
ger																		R. L. of Alsace
ger																		L. Moselle reg.
gl																		Galician
hr		B2															B1	Croatian
hu		B2			B2	B1											B1	Hungarian
is														A				Icelandic
it					B2													Italian
lb																		Letzeburgesch
lt			B1															Lithuanian
lv																		Latvian
mt																		Maltese
nl	A																	Dutch
no																A		Norwegian
oc																		Occitan
pl			A			B1												Polish
pt				A														Portuguese
ro																	A	Romanian
roa				B1														Mirandês
roa																		Ladin
rom		C2	C1		C1	C1	C1	C2								C1	C1	Romany
ru																		Russian
sk		B2	B1			A											B1	Slovak
sl		B2			A													Slovene
smi								B2	B1						B2			Sami (Lapp)
sr																	B1	Serbian
sv							A	A										Swedish
tr																	B1	Turkish
uk			B1			B1											B1	Ukrainian
ukr			B1			B1												Ruthenian
wen																		Sorbian
	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK ENG	UK NIR	UK WLS	UK SCT	IS	LI	NO	BG	RO	
A	State language												Source: Eurydice.					
B1	Recognised minority/regional language <b>without</b> official language status										C1	Non-territorial language						
B2	Recognised minority/regional language <b>with</b> official language status										C2	Non-territorial language recognised as a minority language						

Additional notes

**Belgium:** There are three linguistic regions (**Dutch-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking**) each with a **single** 'state language' and a region (Brussels-Capital) which is officially a bilingual linguistic region with French and Dutch as 'state languages'. The minority languages referred to by each of the Communities only have official status (i.e. regulated by law) in the German-speaking Community and a few communes in the French and Flemish Communities, in accordance with a list drawn up by the linguistic legislation of 1963.

**Spain:** According to the Constitution, the languages that have joint official status with Spanish in their Autonomous Communities are Basque, Catalan, Galician and Valencian.

**Malta:** Even though English is a state language, it is not an indigenous language in the strict sense.

**Sweden:** In the case of Finnish, Tornedalen Finnish (*meänkieli*).

Explanatory note

By taught languages are meant languages – whether the language of instruction or a foreign language – taught inside or outside the normal school curriculum.

Languages are listed in accordance with the alphabetical order of their ISO 639 code (see the list of codes, abbreviations and acronyms).

**State language; indigenous language; non-territorial language; minority or regional language; official language:**  
See definitions.