



PORTRAIT



EDK | CDIP | CDPE | CDEP |

Schweizerische Konferenz der kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren
Conférence suisse des directeurs cantonaux de l'instruction publique
Conferenza svizzera dei direttori cantonali della pubblica educazione
Conferenza svizra dals directurs chantunals da l'educaziun publica

In Switzerland, the main responsibility for education and culture lies with the cantons. They coordinate their work at the national level. To this end, the 26 cantonal ministers of education constitute a political body:

THE SWISS CONFERENCE OF CANTONAL MINISTERS OF EDUCATION (EDK)

In Switzerland, these ministers are known as “directors of education”. They are members of the cantonal governments and preside over the cantonal departments of education, whose remit generally also extends to culture and sport.

The cantonal responsibility for education and culture is an important feature of federally organised, multi-lingual Switzerland.

The Confederation and cantons share responsibility for post-compulsory education (matura schools, vocational education and training and universities). According to the constitution, the federal government and cantons are required to work together in the area of education. (see *Background information I*)

The intercantional Agreement on Education Coordination (dating from 1970) forms the legal foundation for the collaboration between the cantons in the area of education and culture. In addition to this agreement, the work of the EDK is also based on other intercantional agreements. These legally binding intercantional agreements are also referred to as “concordats”. The EDK enforces these agreements and can enact decrees to implement them.

The supreme decision-making entity of the EDK is the plenary assembly (all 26 cantonal ministers of education). The EDK board of directors (12 cantonal ministers of education) is its executive body. The Principality of Liechtenstein is involved in the work of the EDK.



Art. 61a, Federal constitution |

The Confederation and the Cantons shall, within the scope of their powers, jointly ensure the high quality and accessibility of the Swiss Education Area.

Art. 62 para. 1, Const. | The Cantons shall be responsible for the system of school education.

Art. 62 para. 1, Const. | Cultural matters shall be a cantonal responsibility.

Art. 1 Agreement on Education Coordination 1970 | The cantons form an intercantional, public organisation to promote the school system and harmonise the respective cantonal law.

THE EDK COORDINATES EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL POLICY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The EDK has a subsidiary function, fulfilling tasks that cannot be performed by the regions or cantons. It is not a national education ministry but a coordination body.

The 26 cantonal education ministers find national solutions in key areas of education and culture through the EDK. Typical issues that the EDK deals with include the determination of key nationwide parameters for the education system (structures, goals), nationwide mobility in education or nationwide recognition of diplomas (see *B Key ongoing work*). The EDK contributes to the further development of the Swiss education system by concentrating on focal points of development (see *A Key development areas*).

Where necessary, it coordinates its work with the Confederation.

THE EDK EMPLOYS CLEARLY DEFINED INSTRUMENTS

Agreements | The most binding instruments governing intercantional cooperation are agreements between the cantons (intercantional agreements or concordats, see Art. 48 of the Swiss constitution). The individual cantons decide whether to enter into a concordat. A concordat is legally binding for the signatory cantons.

Recommendations | The EDK issues recommendations to the cantons. They do not have a legally binding character. However, they have proven to bring about a high degree of harmonisation as products of a consensus-building process that usually takes several years and that all cantons are involved in.

Statements | The EDK issues statements explaining its positions on current issues pertaining to education policy.

Specialist agencies | The EDK heads national specialist agencies or participates in them. Specialist agencies currently exist in the following areas: education research, special needs education, continued training of general education teachers at upper secondary level, vocational education and training/study and careers counselling and information, and communication technologies (ICT).

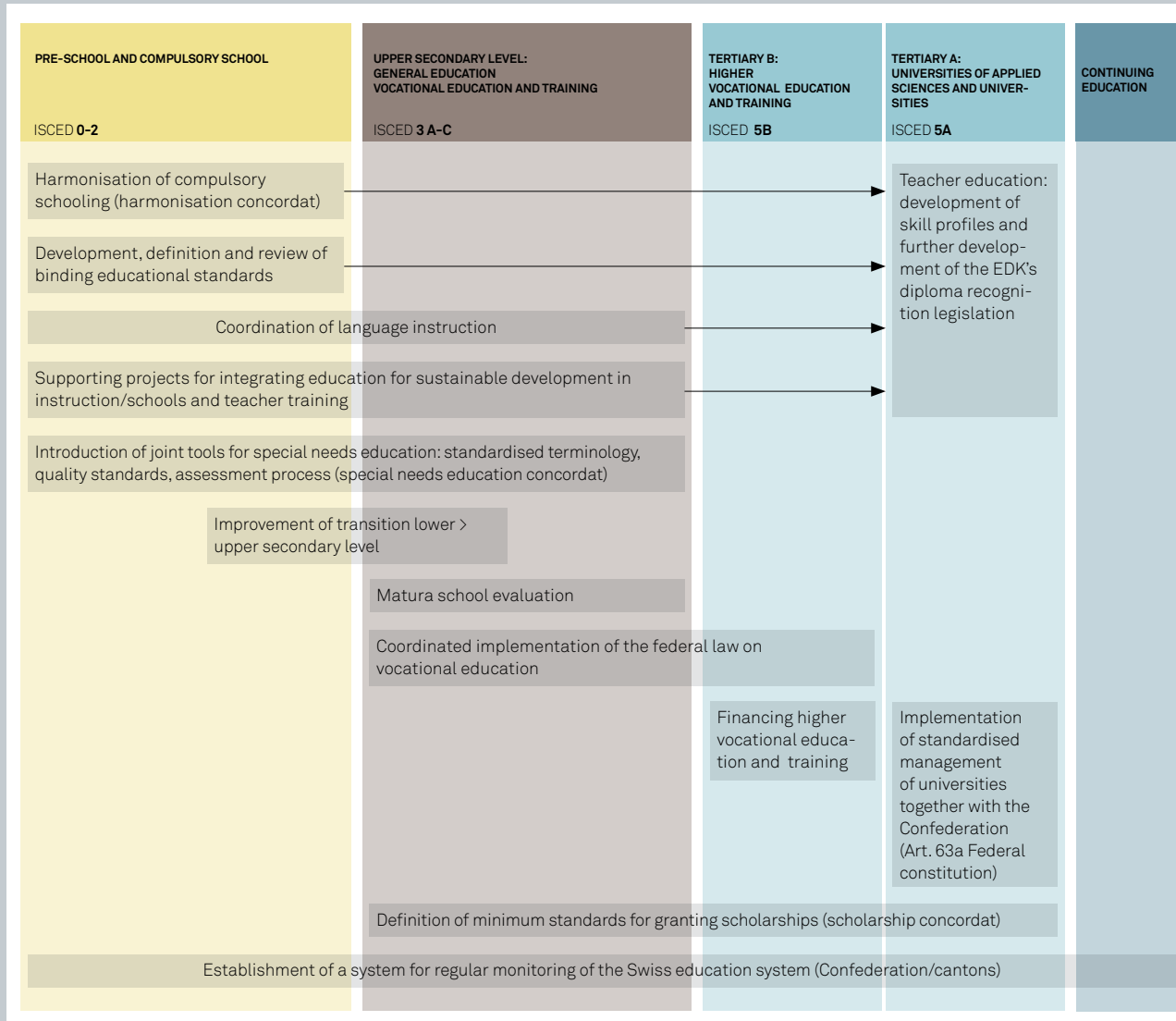


The president of the EDK is Isabelle Chassot (member of the cantonal government canton Fribourg)

The EDK documents its work in its programme of activities. You can find the current version at: www.edk.ch

A

KEY DEVELOPMENT AREAS OF THE EDK IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM 2008-2014



B

KEY ONGOING WORK OF THE EDK

The EDK represents the cantons vis-à-vis the Confederation in the areas of education, culture, sport and youth development. The general secretariat of the EDK works together with the two federal offices responsible for education: the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER) of the Swiss Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) and the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) of the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs (FDEA).

The EDK participates in international cooperation in the areas of education, culture, sports and youth development. It represents the cantons in international organisations (Council of Europe, OECD, UNESCO/IBE, EU and other organisations).

The EDK enforces existing intercantonal agreements: It reviews courses of study and diplomas within its scope of responsibility (teaching certificates, diplomas/degrees in special needs teaching, specialised middle schools) and grants recognition at a national level. The EDK also assesses foreign degrees/diplomas in these areas.

By enforcing several intercantonal agreements related to financing and mobility, it makes it possible for students to freely select their course of study in Switzerland (mobility) and ensures an equitable splitting of costs between the cantons. The two most important agreements concern the universities and the universities of applied sciences.

The EDK operates the information and documentation centre IDES for the Swiss education system.

The EDK heads several agencies working at a national level as well as intercantonal bodies, which makes it possible to coordinate activities in areas like vocational education and training, study and careers counselling, higher education, continuing education, scholarships, culture, youth development, and sports.

Background information I

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN A MULTILINGUAL AND FEDERALIST COUNTRY

The supreme authority of the cantons in the area of education and the decentralised organisation of schools are important features of federally organised, multilingual Switzerland.

The cantons are responsible for education in all areas where the federal constitution does not expressly give jurisdiction to the Confederation. The cantons are also responsible for enforcing and managing the schools and their staff, and bear the main burden of financing in areas where the Confederation is the sole regulation authority (vocational education and training, universities of applied sciences) or where the responsibilities are shared with the cantons (matura schools). The municipalities are entrusted with various powers in compulsory schooling. Overall, the cantons and their municipalities finance roughly 87% of public-sector education spending (Federal Statistical Office figures on public-sector education expenditure in 2005, excluding research grants).

On 21 May 2006, the Swiss electorate and all of the cantons voted by a majority of 86% to accept the revised constitutional provisions for education. This vote basically confirmed the distribution of powers that already existed in the education system. According to the constitution, the federal government and cantons are required to work together and define key nationwide parameters. These include school entry, the goals of the educational levels, their duration and structure, the transitions in the education system and the degrees awarded. The Confederation and cantons are now required to jointly manage universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education (Art. 63a of the Swiss constitution). Implementation is scheduled for 2012. The federal government may also now stipulate principles and provide support for continuing education (Art. 64a Swiss constitution).

KEY FIGURES

Cantons	26
Municipalities (2008)	2,715
Population (2006)	7,508,700
Foreign nationals (2006)	20.7%
Population by language*	German (63.7%), French (20.4%), Italian (6.5%), Romansh (0.5%), other (9%)

Students in the education system (2006/2007 school year)

All levels	1,502,863
Pre-school and compulsory schools	951,067

Teachers (2005/2006 school year)

Pre-school and compulsory schools	87,700
Full-time	60,600

Successful completion of education (2006)

Upper secondary level**	89.5% (20-year-olds)
Tertiary level A and B	Tertiary level A: 24.9% Tertiary level B: 11.4% (30- to 34-year-olds, estimate)

Public sector education expenditure, excluding research grants (2005, in billions of Swiss francs)

Total	26.5
Cantons and municipalities	23 (87%)
Federal government	3.5 (13%)
Percentage of gross domestic product (GDP)	6%

***Main language according to 2000 census**

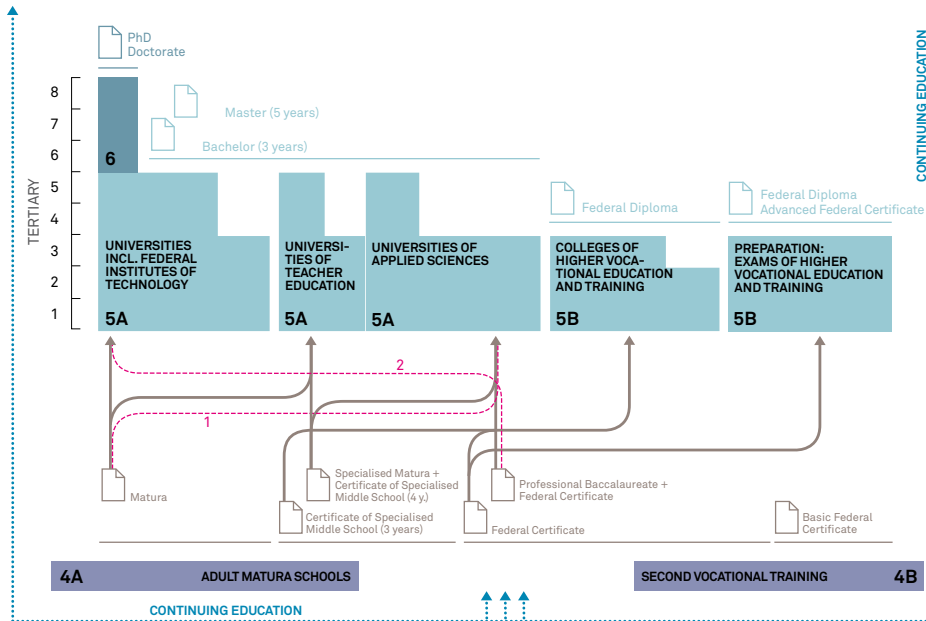
German, French, Italian and Romansh are national languages. They are considered the official language (administration, court), language of instruction and primary language of daily use in their respective region. Special regulations apply to the Romansh-speaking region.

****Vocational education and training and general education**

Source: Federal Office of Statistics

Background information II

THE SWISS EDUCATION SYSTEM



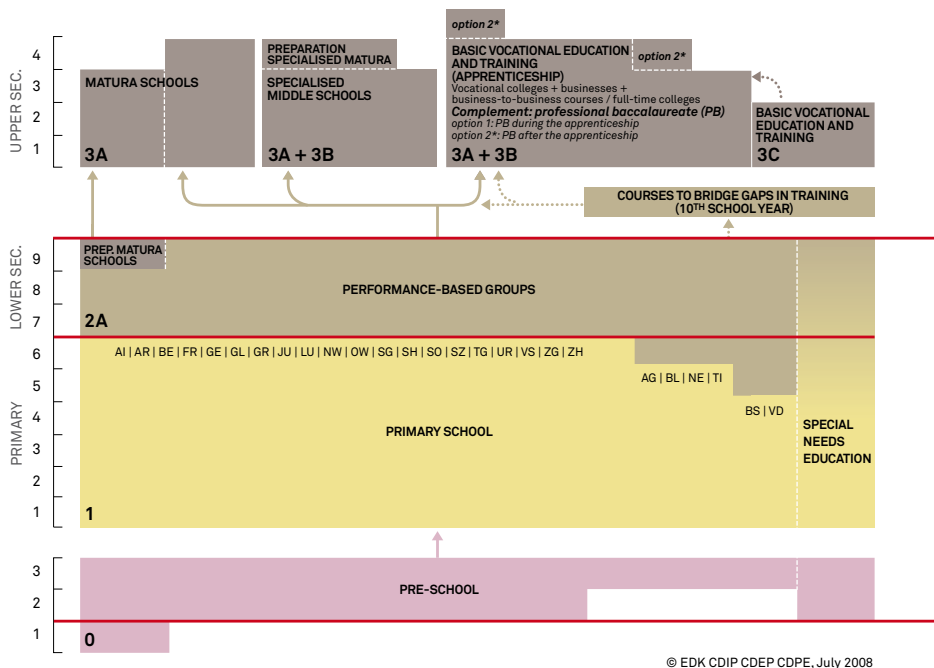
ISCED | The diagram contains a link to the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education www.uis.unesco.org). The ISCED assigns an internationally defined code (ISCED 0 to ISCED 6) to each educational level. This ensures international comparability of educational levels.

- ISCED 6
- ISCED 5A + 5B
- ISCED 4A + 4B
- ISCED 3A–C
- ISCED 2A
- ISCED 1
- ISCED 0

📄 Degree

— Transition: 1 Matura → Universities of applied sciences (practical training) 2 Professional Baccalaureate → Universities (additional qualifications)

3
2
1
Number of years



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Compulsory schooling | The diagram shows the present structure of the education system. Based on the intercantonal agreement on harmonisation of compulsory schooling (harmonisation concordat), the cantons aim at harmonising the structure of compulsory schooling: two years of kindergarten are compulsory. Hence, compulsory schooling takes eleven years: primary level including kindergarten lasts eight years, the lower secondary level three years. One exception is the canton of Ticino, which will retain its four-year scuola media system. You can find more information on the harmonisation concordat at www.edk.ch

Kindergarten | In the majority of cantons the local municipalities are legally bound to offer two years of kindergarten. As a matter of fact a vast majority of children (about 86%) attend two years of kindergarten (2007/2008).

THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT PREPARES AND MANAGES THE BUSINESS OF THE EDK

The administrative office of the EDK is the general secretariat in Berne. It prepares the business of the political bodies and manages the business in accordance with the EDK programme of activities. In doing so, it works in close consultation with the cantons. The General Secretariat draws on the expertise from the cantonal administrations, the educational practice and education research. It heads the intercantonal specialist and coordination committees of the EDK.

The IDES information and documentation centre is affiliated with the EDK general secretariat. It collects information about the Swiss education system, collates it and makes it accessible to the general public.

The division of work responsibilities within the EDK general secretariat is as follows (as of 2008):

Administration Agreement on Education Coordination: 21 positions

Enforcement of the agreement on recognition of diplomas (4 positions) and mobility agreements (2 positions)
IDES (incl. translation): 9 positions

SBBK (Enforcement vocational training legislation): 3 positions

Temporary projects: 3



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