



# The organisation of school time in Europe

Primary and general  
secondary education  
2022/2023

Eurydice – *Facts and Figures*



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# **The organisation of school time in Europe**

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**Eurydice – Facts and Figures**

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## INTRODUCTION

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This report gives an overview on the start of the school year and its length as well as the timing and length of school holidays. It covers both primary and general secondary education. The information is available for the 37 countries participating in the EU's Erasmus+ programme (27 EU Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye). The reference year is 2022/2023.

## KEY POINTS

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### **The school year generally starts at the beginning of September**

In the majority of the European education systems, the school year starts in September. In 15 of them, students begin the school year on 1 September <sup>(1)</sup>. Students in Malta are the last to return to school at the end of September. In eight education systems, school starts in August <sup>(2)</sup>. It may start as early as 8 August in Denmark. In some countries, the date for the start of the school year varies across the country <sup>(3)</sup>. In Germany and the Netherlands, students may return to school in August or September (see Figure 3).

### **In the majority of countries, students are on holiday between 100 and 120 days per year**

In primary education, the minimum cumulated length of holidays varies between countries. It lies between 100 and 120 days in the majority of countries. It exceeds 120 days in seven countries <sup>(4)</sup>, with a maximum at 135 days in Malta. In six countries, students have less than 100 days holidays <sup>(5)</sup>, with a minimum of 87 days in Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway.

In general, the minimum cumulated length of holidays is the same in primary and secondary education, but there are a few exceptions: in three countries, students have more holidays in primary than in secondary education: two days in Bulgaria, one week in Serbia and two weeks in Lithuania. In the same way, students in basic education (ISCED 1-2) in Denmark have two more days than those in upper secondary education.

Conversely, in three countries, students have more holidays in secondary education: five days in Cyprus, more than two weeks in Portugal and one month in Ireland. It is the same for general upper secondary education in two other countries: one day for Norway and eight for Iceland.

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<sup>(1)</sup> In Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.

<sup>(2)</sup> In Belgium (French Community), Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

<sup>(3)</sup> In Denmark (ISCED 3 only), Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland, Montenegro and Norway.

<sup>(4)</sup> In Estonia, Greece, France, Italy, Latvia, Malta and Romania.

<sup>(5)</sup> In Bulgaria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Excluding the summer holidays, the minimum cumulated length of holidays varies between 30 and 49 days in the majority of the education systems. It is less than 30 days in eight education systems <sup>(6)</sup> and 50 or more in six other ones <sup>(7)</sup> (see Figure 1).

## **The length of the summer holidays varies a lot across Europe**

In Europe, the summer holidays generally start between the end of May and the second half of July. In the majority of the education systems, students have between 9 and 12 weeks.

However, the length of the summer holidays varies significantly between countries (see Figure 2). They last maximum 6 weeks in Denmark, some German *Länder*, the Netherlands, some Swiss cantons and Liechtenstein. At the opposite, students are on holidays for 13 weeks in most Italian regions, Latvia and Malta.

In some countries, the length of the summer holidays varies depending on the level of education. In Denmark, students in basic education have two more days than those in general upper education. In Lithuania, students in primary education have two more weeks than those in general secondary education.

At the opposite, in Cyprus, students in primary education have one week less for the summer holidays than those in general secondary education; in Portugal, two weeks less; and in Ireland, one month less. It is the same in Iceland for students in basic education who have one week less than those in general upper secondary education <sup>(8)</sup>.

## **Regional and local variations in school holidays exist within some countries**

The periods and dates of school holidays may vary within a country. In some countries, such as Germany <sup>(9)</sup>, Spain <sup>(10)</sup>, Italy, Austria and Switzerland, the decision is taken at regional level. In Sweden and Norway, the responsibility lies with the municipalities. However, in general, the number of days of instruction is fixed at central level.

In Czechia, France, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, the central authorities fix different dates for some periods of holidays according to the geographical area.

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<sup>(6)</sup> In Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Türkiye.

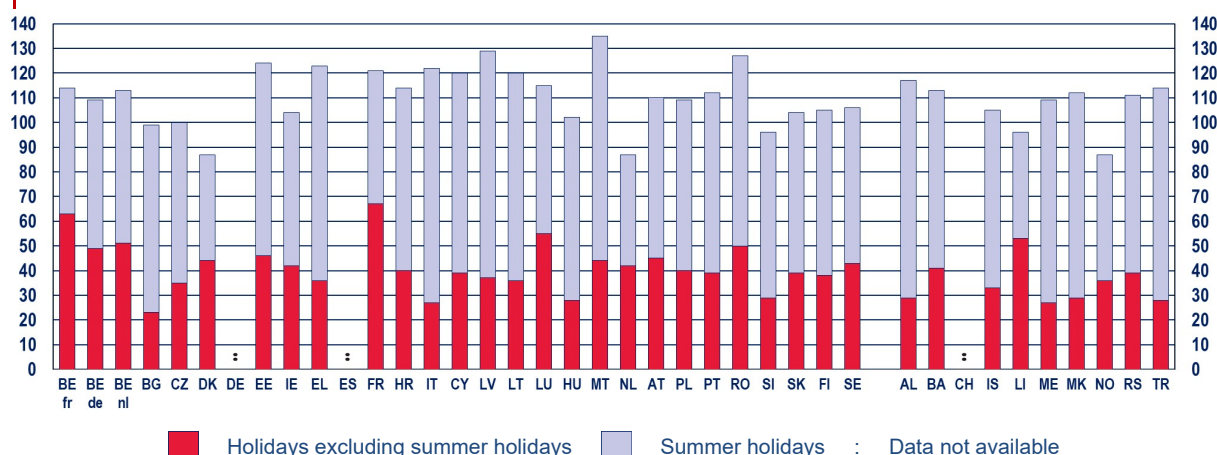
<sup>(7)</sup> In Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), France, Luxembourg, Romania and Liechtenstein.

<sup>(8)</sup> However, all ISCED levels are in the same category in Figure 2.

<sup>(9)</sup> However, the summer holidays in Germany are determined by the Standing Conference.

<sup>(10)</sup> The Spanish autonomous communities are in charge, but there are also variations by provinces (Andalucía), municipalities (Región de Murcia) or schools (País Vasco and Navarra).

**Figure 1: Minimum number of holidays (in days) during the school year in primary education (ISCED 1), 2022/2023**



Source: Eurydice.

**Explanatory note**

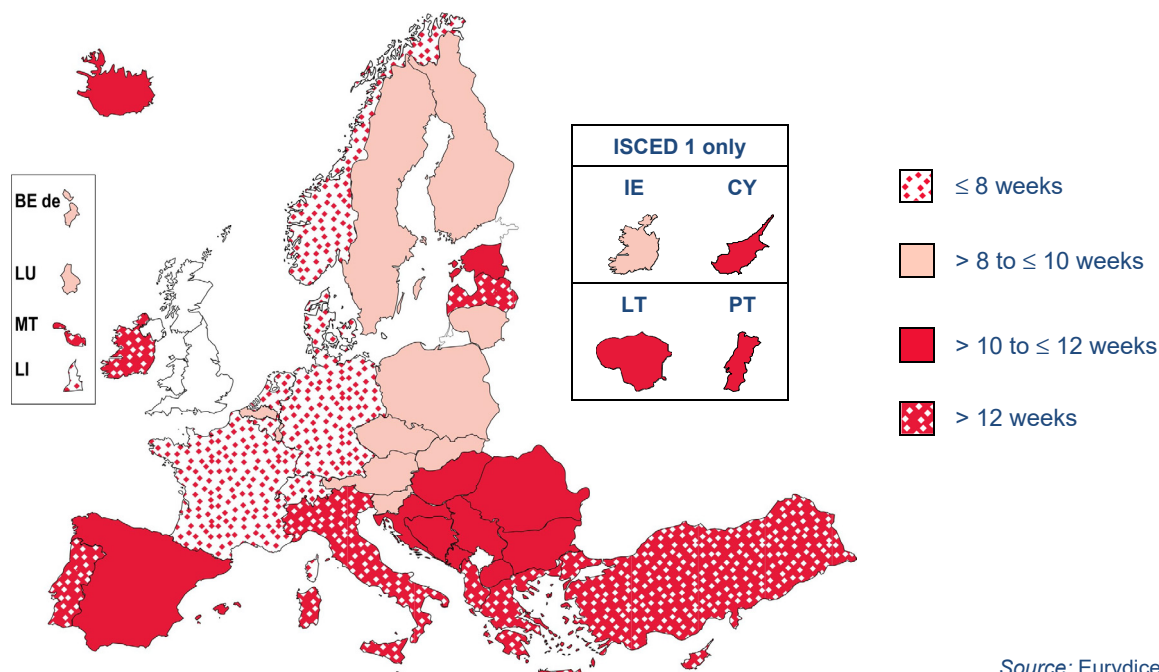
See Figure 3.

**Country-specific notes**

**Germany, Spain and Switzerland:** the length of holiday periods varies across regions (see Figure 3). The minimum cumulated length therefore does not provide an accurate picture of the situation. In Germany, according to the *Agreement of the Länder on the Common Basic Structure of the School System and the National Responsibility of the Länder in Central Questions of Educational Policy*, the cumulated length of holidays is 75 days including 12 Saturdays.

**Spain, France, Croatia and Malta:** the exact dates for the start of the school year in 2023/2024 are not yet available. The summer period is calculated with the assumption that students will come back to school at the same time as in 2022/2023.

**Figure 2: Length of summer holidays (in weeks) in primary and general secondary education (ISCED 1-3), 2022/2023**



**Explanatory note**

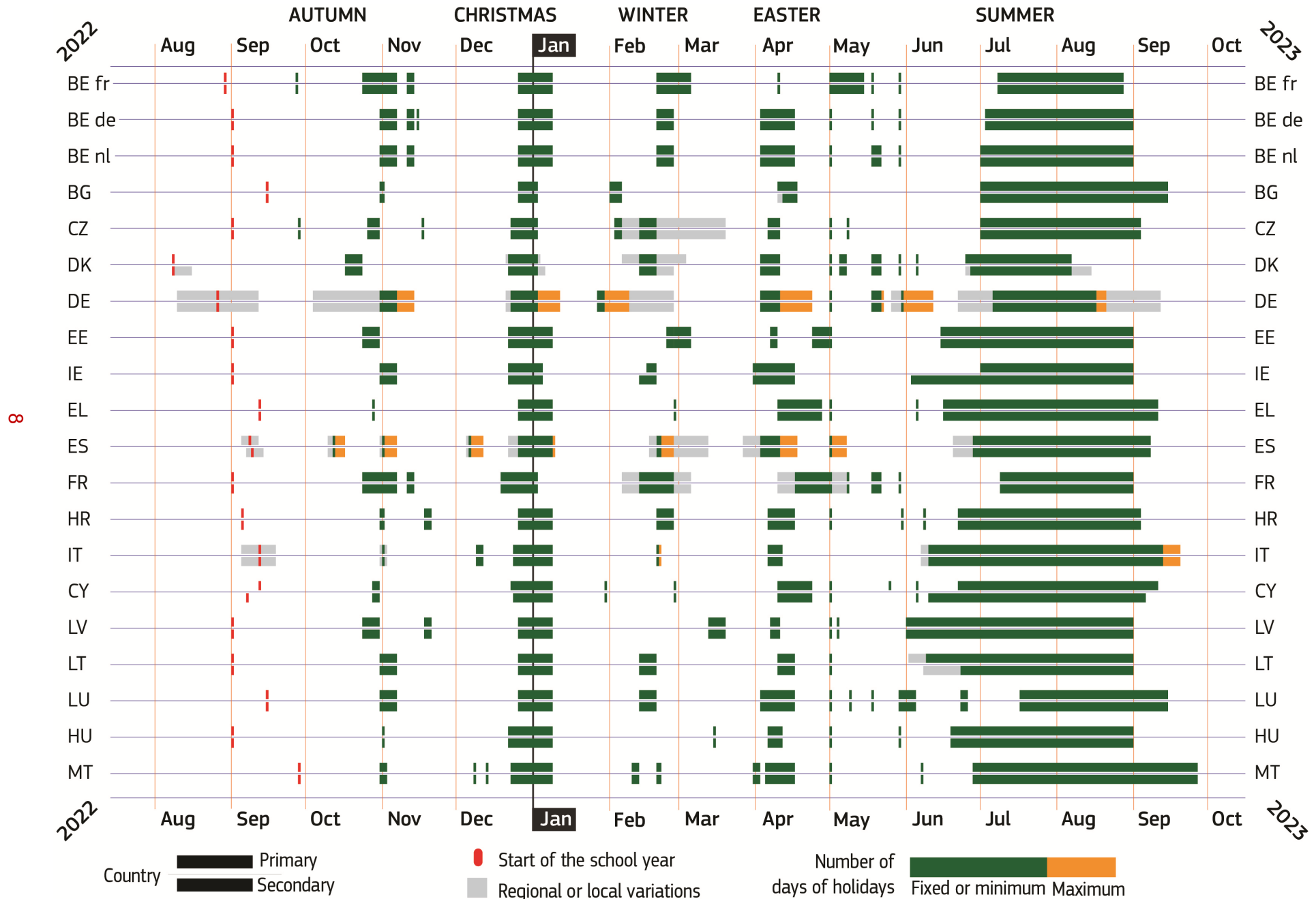
See Figure 3.

**Country-specific notes**

**Denmark, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland and Norway:** the distinction is made between primary and lower secondary education (single structure) on one hand and upper secondary on the other hand.

**Spain, France, Croatia and Malta:** the exact dates for the start of the school year in 2023/2024 are not yet available. The summer period is calculated with the assumption that students will come back to school at the same period as in 2022/2023.

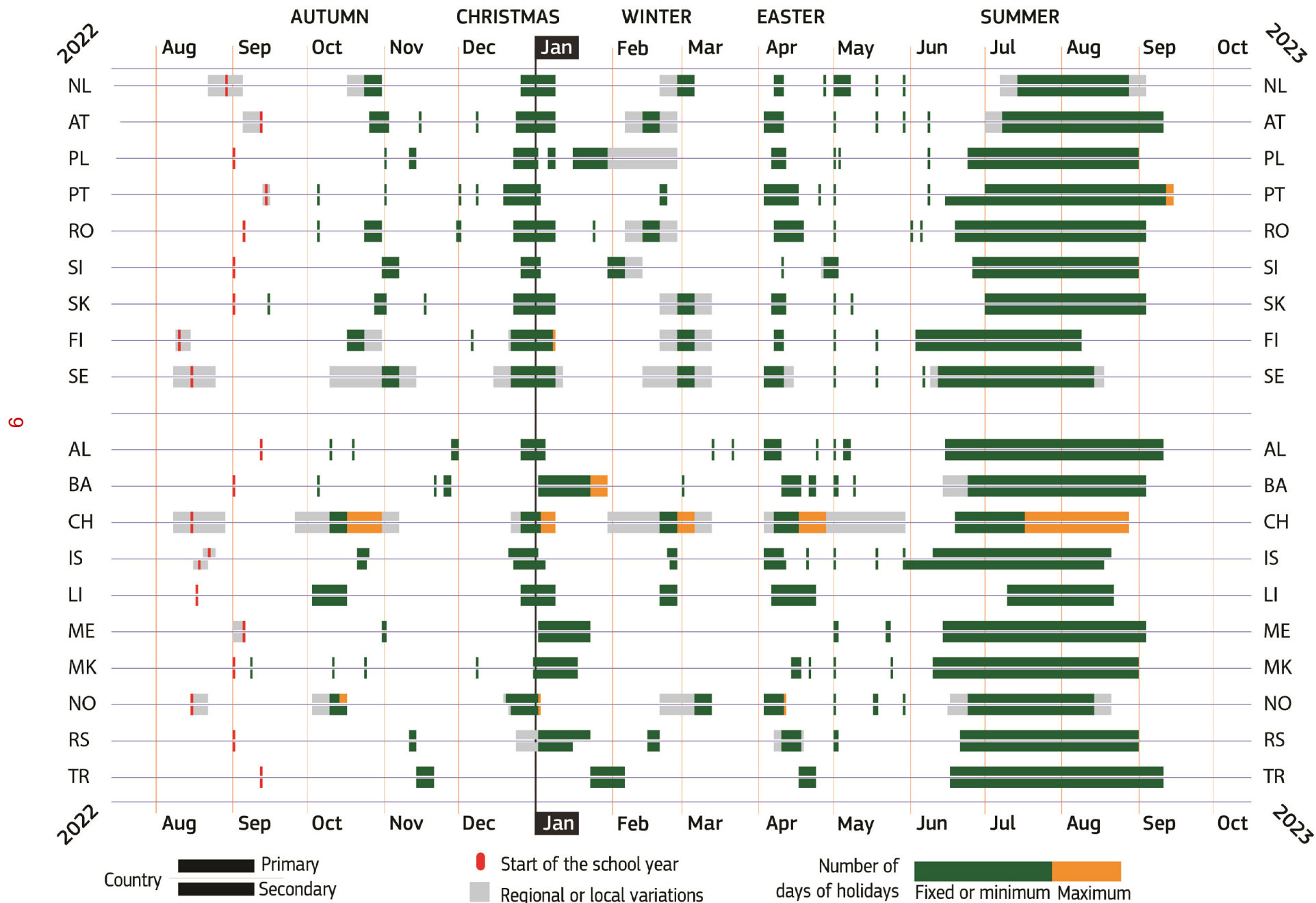
Figure 3: Length of the school year and distribution of holidays in primary and general education (ISCED 1-3), 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.



Figure 3 (continued): Length of the school year and distribution of holidays in primary and general education (ISCED 1-3), 2022/2023



Source: Eurydice.

### **Explanatory note (Figures 1-3)**

**Beginning of the school year:** the first day when students are meant to resume school activities, usually after the longest holiday period. It is the day that is indicated in official documents even if it is not an instruction day.

**Holiday period:** days when students are not required to be present at school (compared to usual school week). This includes public holidays. Examination periods (even if taken outside the schools), school trips when some or all students are not present at school are not considered, even if only some students are required to attend.

When there is a holiday period immediately before a weekend, the days of the weekend that follows are included as part of the holiday period.

When a holiday period lasts for a week or more, the weekends during the holiday period and at the end of the holiday period are included. However, the weekend before is not included even if the holiday period is starting on a Monday. When a holiday period lasts for less than a week and starts on a Monday, the weekend before this Monday is not included.

The figure does not take into account specific minimum number of days for students in the final grade of an education cycle.

Longer holiday periods for specific regions or tracks, indicated as 'maximum duration' in Figure 3, are not considered.

The figure does not take into account specific minimum number of days for students in the final grade of an education cycle.

### **Country-specific notes (Figure 3)**

**Denmark, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland and Norway:** the distinction is made between primary and lower secondary education (single structure) on one hand and upper secondary on the other hand.

**Spain, France, Croatia, Malta and Sweden:** the exact dates for the start of the school year in 2023/2024 are not yet available. The summer period is calculated with the assumption that students will come back to school at the same period as in 2022/2023.

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## **The organisation of school time in Europe. Primary and general secondary education – 2022/2023**

This report provides an overview of the school calendars for primary and general secondary education in 37 European countries. It presents information on the start of the school year and its length as well as the timing and length of school holidays.

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