

Levels of education and training in the EU Labour Force Survey

- **Classification ISCED 1997** (from 1998 data onwards):

ISCED 0 - PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Programs at level 0, (pre-primary) defined as the initial stage of organised instruction are designed primarily to introduce very young children to a school-type environment, i.e. to provide a bridge between the home and a school based atmosphere. Upon completion of these programs, children continue their education at level 1 (primary education).

ISCED 1 - PRIMARY EDUCATION OR FIRST STAGE OF BASIC EDUCATION

Programmes at level 1 are normally designed on a unit or project basis to give students a sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics along with an elementary understanding of other subjects such as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music. In some cases religious instruction is featured. The core at this level consists of education provided for children, the customary or legal age of entrance being not younger than five years or older than seven years. This level covers, in principle, six years of full-time schooling.

ISCED 2 - LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION OR SECOND STAGE OF BASIC EDUCATION

The contents of education at this stage are typically designed to complete the provision of basic education which began at ISCED level 1. In many, if not most countries, the educational aim is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and human development. The programmes at this level are usually on a more subject oriented pattern using more specialised teachers and more often several teachers conducting classes in their field of specialisation. The full implementation of basic skills occurs at this level. The end of this level often coincides with the end of compulsory schooling where it exists.

ISCED 3 - (UPPER) SECONDARY EDUCATION

This level of education typically begins at the end of full-time compulsory education for those countries that have a system of compulsory education. More specialisation may be observed at this level than at ISCED level 2 and often teachers need to be more qualified or specialised than for ISCED level 2. The entrance age to this level is typically 15 to 16 years. The educational programmes included at this level typically require the completion of some 9 years of full-time education (since the beginning of level 1) for admission or a combination of education and vocational or technical experience.

ISCED 3A: Programmes designed to provide direct access to ISCED 5A;
ISCED 3B: Programmes designed to provide direct access to ISCED 5B;
ISCED 3C: Programmes not designed to lead to ISCED 5A or 5B.

ISCED 4 - POST-SECONDARY NON TERTIARY EDUCATION

ISCED 4 captures programmes that straddle the boundary between upper secondary and post-secondary education from an international point of view, even though they might clearly be considered as upper secondary or post-secondary programmes in a national context. These programmes can, considering their content, not be regarded as tertiary programmes. They are often not significantly more advanced than programmes at ISCED 3 but they serve to broaden the knowledge of participants who have already completed a programme at level 3.

Typical examples are programmes designed to prepare students for studies at level 5 who, although having completed ISCED level 3, did not follow a curriculum which would allow entry

to level 5, i.e. pre-degree foundation courses or short vocational programmes. Second cycle programmes can be included as well.

ISCED 4A: See text for ISCED 3

ISCED 4B: See text for ISCED 3

ISCED 4C: See text for ISCED 3

LEVEL 5 - FIRST STAGE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION (NOT LEADING DIRECTLY TO AN ADVANCED RESEARCH QUALIFICATION)

This level consists of tertiary programmes having an educational content more advanced than those offered at levels 3 and 4. Entry to these programmes normally requires the successful completion of ISCED level 3A or 3B or a similar qualification at ISCED level 4A. They do not lead to the award of an advanced research qualification (ISCED 6). These programmes must have a cumulative duration of at least two years.

ISCED 5A: Programmes that are largely theoretically based and are intended to provide sufficient qualifications for gaining entry into advanced research programmes and professions with high skills requirements.

ISCED 5B: Programmes that are practically oriented/ occupationally specific and are mainly designed for participants to acquire the practical skills and know-how needed for employment in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades, the successful completion of which usually provides the participants with a labour-market relevant qualification

ISCED 6 - SECOND STAGE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION (LEADING TO AN ADVANCED RESEARCH QUALIFICATION)

This level is reserved for tertiary programmes which lead to the award of an advanced research qualification. The programmes are therefore devoted to advanced study and original research and not based on course-work only. They typically require the submission of a thesis or dissertation of publishable quality which is the product of original research and represents a significant contribution to knowledge. They prepare graduates for faculty posts in institutions offering ISCED 5A programmes, as well as research posts in government, industry, etc.

These principles were implemented in the EU Labour Force Survey in 1998 in three steps as follows.

- **Codification from 1998 data onwards** (highest education attainment level)

The LFS codification changed significantly in 1998 when ISCED 1997 was introduced in the survey. Slight changes occurred in 2001 and 2003. An harmonised codification has been created as below (variable ISCED2D). A cross shows the availability of codes according to the years. The detailed codifications 1992-1997, 1998-2000, 2001-2002 and 2003 appear in annex 1.

ISCED2D	<i>Highest level of education or training successfully completed</i>	From 2003	2001- 2002	1998- 2000
00	No formal education or below ISCED 1	X	X	
10	ISCED 0-1			X
11	ISCED 1	X	X	
21	ISCED 2	X	X	
22	ISCED 3c (shorter than 3 years)	X	X	X
30	ISCED 3 (without distinction a, b or c possible, 3 y+)	X		
31	ISCED 3c (3 years and more)	X	X	
32	ISCED 3 a,b	X	X	
33	ISCED 3c (3 years or longer) or ISCED 4c			X
34	ISCED 3b or ISCED 4b			X
35	ISCED 3a or ISCED 4a			X
36	ISCED 3 or 4 (without distinction a, b or c possible)		X (1)	X
41	ISCED 4a,b	X		
42	ISCED 4c	X		
43	ISCED 4 (without distinction a, b or c possible)	X		
51	ISCED 5b	X	X	X
52	ISCED 5a	X	X	X
60	ISCED 6	X	X	X
99	Not applicable (child less than 15 years)	X	X	X
Blank	No answer	X	X	X

(1) According to 2001-2002 codification this code contains only ISCED 3 levels without distinction a, b or c possible but of various lengths.

Although National Statistical Institutes should theoretically collect detailed education levels as above, it is advised to use aggregated levels (variable ISCED1D). Even though, some comparability issues remain with the following countries:

- In the UK, GCSE levels are included under ISCED 3 since 1998, which hampers the comparability with 1992-1997 series.
- In Lithuania, the comparability of the levels 'Medium' and 'High' with other countries can be made difficult since technicum programs are included under ISCED 5 until 2000 (in ISCED 4 from 2001).

- **Dissemination and comparability across countries and time** (especially with 1992-1997 data)

Since the variable ISCED2D is available from 1998 only and often lack comparability across countries, it is advised to use the variable ISCED1D. From 1992 to 1997, highest education attainment level was collected through distinct variables (see annex 1). Comparability with 1998 data onwards is also ensured through the variable ISCED1D.

ISCED1D	<i>Highest level of education or training successfully completed</i>	From 2003	2001- 2002	1998- 2000
L	Low – At most lower secondary (ISCED 0-2)	X	X	X
M	Medium – Upper secondary (ISCED 3-4)	X	X	X
H	High – Tertiary (ISCED 5-6)	X	X	X
9	Not applicable (child less than 15 years)	X	X	X
Blank	No answer	X	X	X

Annex : code list used for “highest education attainment level” since 1992

Highest education attainment level was collected since 1992 using 4 distinct codifications:

- From 1998 onwards, through the columns 107/108 (in 1998-2000), 109/110 (in 2001-2002) and 307/308 (from 2003) based on ISCED 1997.
- From 1992 to 1997, through the columns 86 and 87 below (former ISCED). The main changes compared to ISCED 1997 concern the level ISCED 3c.

Comparability of both sets is ensured through the variable ISCED1D.

- Codification from 2003 onwards

Column 307/308	<i>Highest level of education or training successfully completed</i>
00	No formal education or below ISCED 1
11	ISCED 1
21	ISCED 2
22	ISCED 3c (shorter than 3 years)
31	ISCED 3c (3 years and more)
32	ISCED 3 a,b
30	ISCED 3 (without distinction a, b or c possible, 3 y+)
41	ISCED 4a,b
42	ISCED 4c
43	ISCED 4 (without distinction a, b or c possible)
51	ISCED 5b
52	ISCED 5a
60	ISCED 6
99	Not applicable (child less than 15 years)
Blank	No answer

- Codification 2001-2002

Column 109/110	<i>Highest level of education or training successfully completed</i>
00	No education
01	ISCED 1
02	ISCED 2
11	ISCED 3c (without distinction a, b or c possible)
03	ISCED 3c (shorter than 3 years)
04	ISCED 3c (3 years of more)
13	ISCED 3b
14	ISCED 3a
15	ISCED 4
08	ISCED 5b
09	ISCED 5a
10	ISCED 6
99	Not applicable (child less than 15 years)
blank	No answer

- Codification 1998-2000

Column 107/108	<i>Highest level of education or training successfully completed</i>
	01 ISCED 0-1
	02 ISCED 2
	03 ISCED 3c (shorter than 3 years)
	04 ISCED 3c (3 years or longer) or ISCED 4c
	05 ISCED 3b or ISCED 4b
	06 ISCED 3a or ISCED 4a
	07 ISCED 3 or ISCED 4 without distinction a,b or c possible
	08 ISCED 5b
	09 ISCED 5a
	10 ISCED 6
	99 Not applicable (child less than 15 years)
	blank No answer

- Codification 1992-1997:

Column 86	<i>Highest completed level of general education</i>
	1 Less than first stage of secondary level education (that is, completed only primary education (ISCED 1) or none)
	2 Completed first stage of secondary level education (ISCED 2) but not second stage
	3 Completed second stage of secondary level education (ISCED 3) but not third stage
	4 Completed recognised third level education
	5 Other general education
	9 Not applicable (child less than 15 years)
	Blank No answer

Column 87	<i>Highest completed level of further education or vocational training</i>
	1 No further education or vocational training (only general education or none at all)
	2 Completed a course (minimum one year) at a school providing specific vocational training
	3 Completed a course (minimum one year) of specific vocational training in a working environment (without complementary instruction at a school or college)
	4 Completed a course of specific vocational training within a system which provided both work experience and complementary instruction elsewhere (any form of 'dual system' including apprenticeship)
	5 Received a third-level qualification which is not a university degree
	6 Received a university degree (initial) or recognised equivalent
	7 Received a university higher degree or post-graduate qualification
	8 Received some vocational qualification not covered above
	9 Not applicable (child less than 15 years)
	Blank No answer

- Comparability of 1992-1997 series with 1998-2003 series (variable ISCED1D):

