

What is Eurydice

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>

The full study

Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe can be found in English on the Eurydice website http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_reports_en.php

Printed copies of the report

are available upon request at: eacea-eurydice@ec.europa.eu

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Eurydice Highlights

Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe



Schools are the basic building blocks of education and training systems and key actors of education policy. School evaluation is an important way to improve school organisation and functioning as well as to enhance the quality of education provision.

Improving the quality of education and training is a constant concern in the policy debate on education both at national and EU level. It is one of the four major objectives for education systems in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).

To assist this process, the report *Assuring Quality in Education: Policies and Approaches to School Evaluation in Europe* takes stock of the structures and organisation of school evaluation at primary and compulsory secondary level education in all EU Member States, as well as Iceland, Norway, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey.

The report examines the two major types of school evaluation: external evaluation, conducted by evaluators who are not directly involved in school activities, and internal evaluation, where most evaluators are members of the examined school's staff. The report contains both country-specific and comparative reviews of school evaluation in Europe and refers to the year 2013/14.

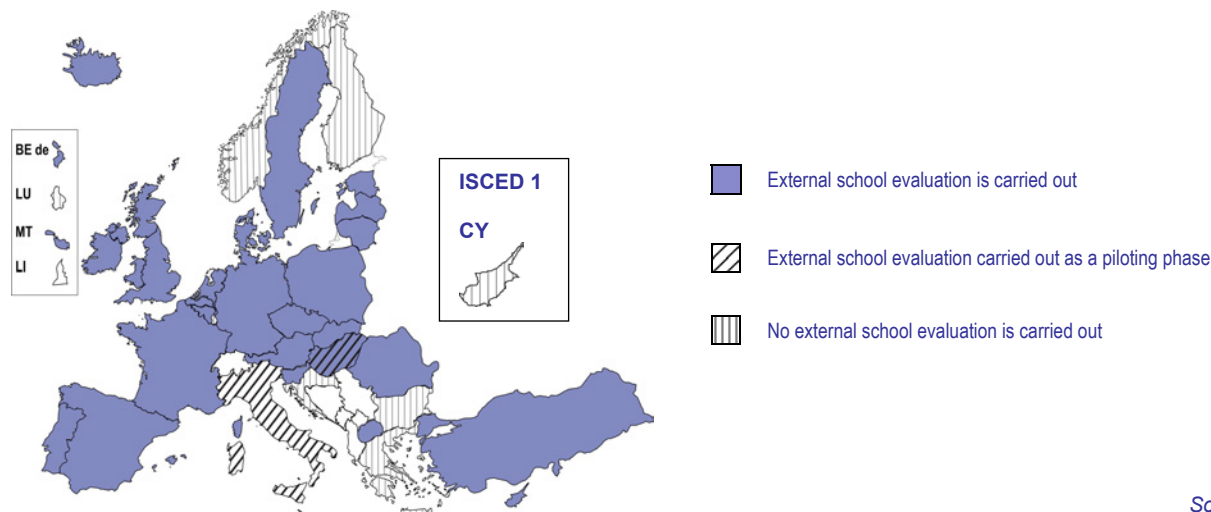
These Highlights provide a snapshot of some the most important findings in the report.

External school evaluation is carried out in 26 European countries

External evaluation of schools is currently carried out in 31 education systems located in 26 countries. External evaluation focuses on the school as an entity and essentially aims to monitor and improve its quality. In most cases, external school evaluation assesses a broad range of school activities, such as educational and management tasks, student outcomes, the quality of

teaching, and compliance with regulations. The exact areas monitored differ from one country to the next. In most systems, evaluation criteria are set at central level and outline not only what the external evaluation should focus on but also define what a 'good' school would look like according to a set of standards.

Status of external school evaluation according to central/top level regulations, full-time compulsory general education, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

The main steps of the external school evaluation process are the same in all European countries

While the scope and range of activities evaluated can differ from one country to the next, the implementation aspects of external school evaluation are very similar across Europe. The process is largely based on a three step approach: (1) preliminary analysis, (2) site visits, and (3) reporting. Six education systems (Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom – England and Northern Ireland) incorporate a risk assessment as a very first step with the aim of focusing evaluation efforts on schools that seem to perform below

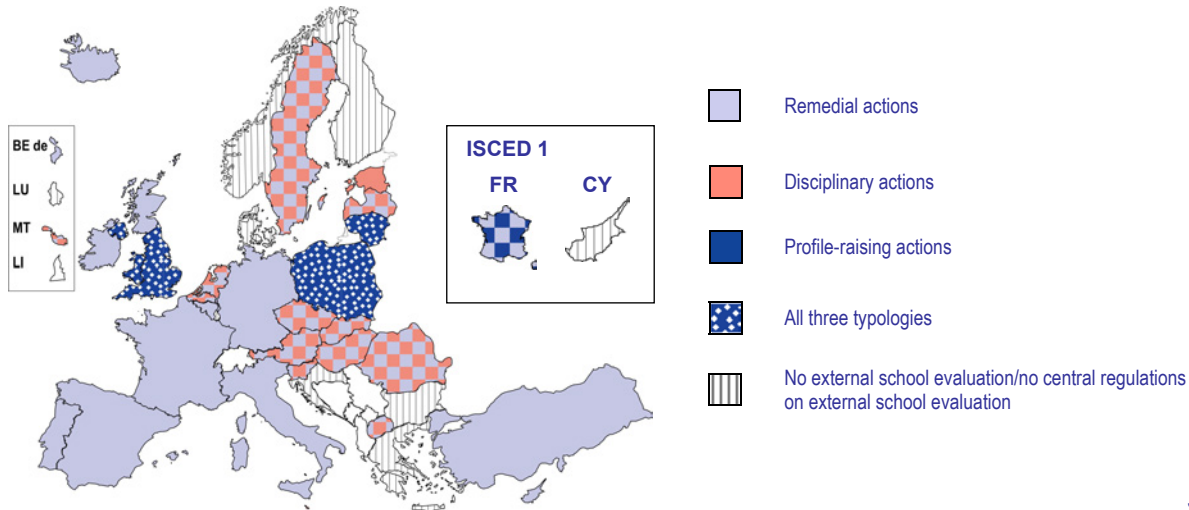
standard or choosing among different typologies of inspection. 'Site visit' are a common pattern to all external school evaluation processes and are meant to provide evaluators with first-hand evidence of school performance and functioning. During such visits evaluators consult school documents, observe teaching practices, and discuss with in-school actors and, if foreseen, with external stakeholders. The third 'reporting' phase consists of preparing a final school evaluation report.

Remedial actions are the most common outcome of external school evaluation

Outcomes of external school evaluation can be slotted into three broad categories: remedial actions, disciplinary actions, and profile-raising actions. Of the three, remedial actions are by far the most common. They aim at addressing weaknesses found or at rectifying breaches in the regulations. In some systems, when remedial actions do not reach their goal, education authorities apply disciplinary measures which can target the school as a whole or in rare cases specific individuals. In six

education systems (France, Lithuania, Poland, and the United Kingdom – England, Wales, Northern Ireland) external evaluations are used not only to find flaws in schools performances, but also to identify strengths and good practices, and to make them visible to the larger education community. This profile-raising approach supports a culture of positive feedback, visibility of what works, and can initiate a mechanism of peer-learning with positive returns on the entire education system.

Outcomes of external school evaluation, full-time compulsory general education, 2013/14



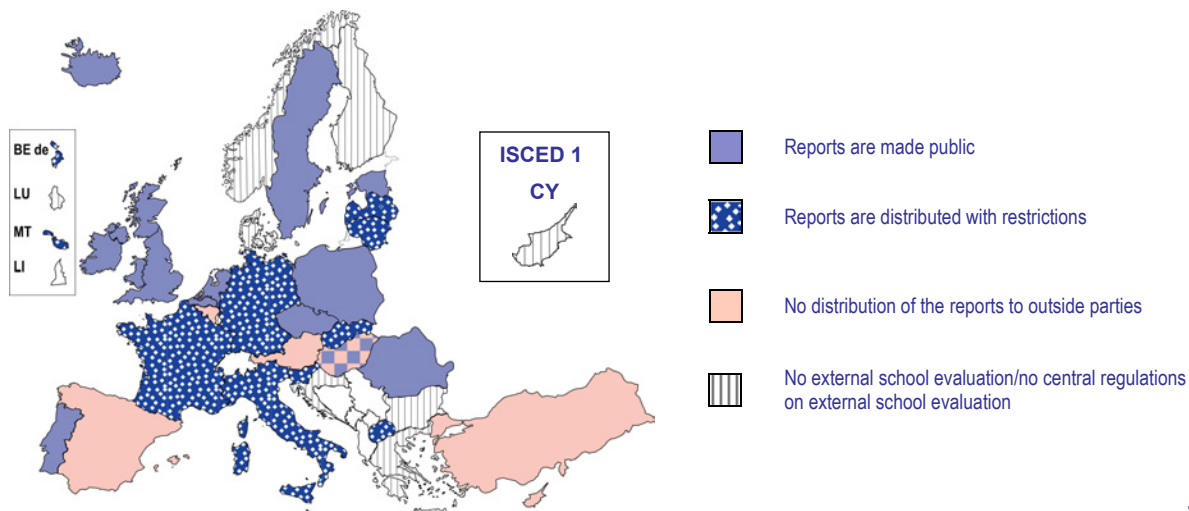
Source: Eurydice.

Most countries make their final external evaluation reports public

External evaluation reports are handled in one of three ways across Europe: (1) the final report is made public, (2) the report is distributed with certain restrictions (e.g. only upon request), or (3) it is not made public. While only a few systems (Belgium – French Community, Denmark, Spain, Cyprus for lower secondary education, Hungary, Austria, and Turkey) do not make their reports public, all others fall into one of the first two categories. Publishing school evaluation reports provides an important source of information for school stakeholders,

which may contribute to generate quality improvement. Besides, in systems where parents and pupils have the right to choose their school, as for example in the Netherlands or some parts of the UK, publishing school evaluation reports allows parents and pupils to access data on the school and make an informed choice. However, this can also trigger market-like dynamics by enhancing competition for students among schools. In fact, in most countries free school choice and publication of external evaluation findings do not coexist.

Distribution of external evaluation reports of single schools, full-time compulsory general education, 2013/14



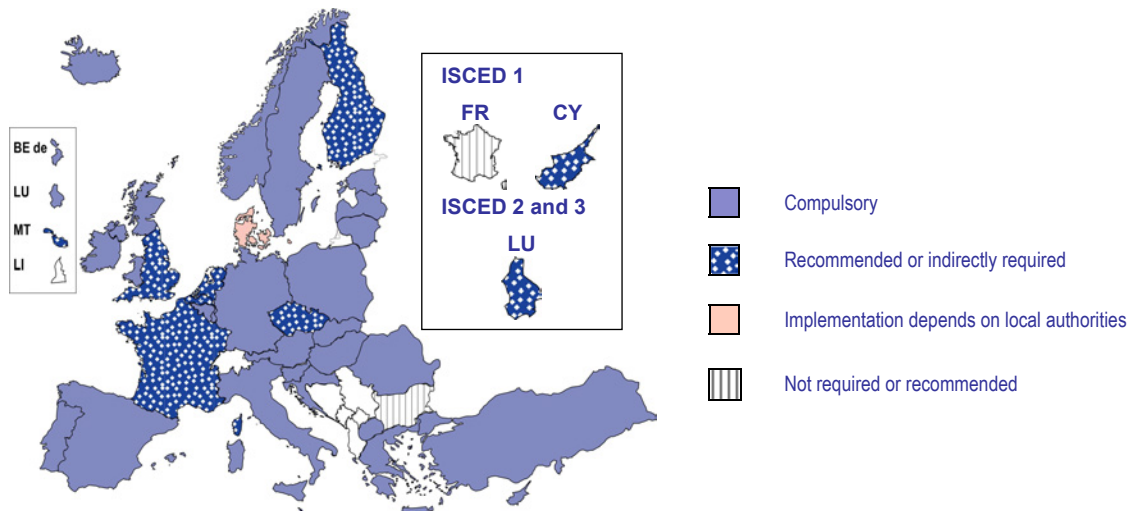
Source: Eurydice.

Internal school evaluation is compulsory in 27 education systems

Internal school evaluation is a process initiated and carried out by schools themselves to evaluate their own quality. It is primarily performed by members of school staff, and, in some cases, in collaboration with other school stakeholders, such as students, parents, or members of the local community. Internal school evaluations can deal with any aspect of school life, from the school's pedagogical approach to its administration.

Over the past decade, a number of countries have shifted from recommending internal school evaluation to making it compulsory. As a result, internal school evaluation is now obligatory in 27 education systems. Where it is not compulsory, it is generally recommended, with the exception of Bulgaria and France (primary school level) where it is neither recommended nor compulsory.

Status of internal school evaluation according to central/top-level regulations, full-time compulsory general education, 2013/14



Source: Eurydice.

Almost all countries provide support to schools to carry out internal evaluation

All countries, with the exception of Bulgaria, employ at least one or more supporting measures to help schools carry out internal evaluations. These include: specialist training in internal evaluation, use of external evaluation frameworks, indicators enabling schools to compare with

other schools, specific guidelines and manuals, online forums, advice from external specialists, and in some cases financial support. The most common way to provide support to schools across Europe is the provision of guidelines and manuals.

Many countries use internal school evaluation results to inform the external evaluation process

In 31 education systems, schools undergo both external and internal evaluations. In most cases, internal evaluation findings are used by external evaluators as a source of information that allows them to better understand the school and eventually identify certain areas that need special attention. When external

evaluators do not use internal evaluation reports as a source of information, it is often due to the fact that the two processes do not share purpose or scope, or that the internal evaluation process is not compulsory or not yet fully implemented.

School stakeholders play a large role during school evaluation

Participation of school stakeholders during school evaluation is highly recommended by the European Parliament and the Council. In their recommendation on 'European cooperation in quality evaluation in school education', the Parliament and the Council endorse a shared responsibility for the improvement of schools with

the participation of school staff, parents, pupils, and members of the local community. Many European countries request the participation of school stakeholders during both types of school evaluation, although there is great variety in how, for what, and to what extent they are consulted or involved.

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For additional information see: Eurypedia: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurypedia_en.php