

Languages in Secondary Education

*An Overview of National Tests
in Europe*

2014/15

Eurydice Report





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*Education and
Training*

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CONTENTS

Table of Figures	4
Main Findings	5
Introduction	9
Languages in Secondary Education: An Overview of National Tests in Europe – 2014/15	13
National tests in languages have become increasingly important across Europe over the last two decades	13
The majority of countries administer national tests in languages at both lower and upper secondary levels	15
The majority of national language tests carry high stakes for students	16
High-stakes tests results are often used as a basis for certification	17
The results of half of the low-stakes tests in languages are used at both school and education system levels	19
National tests in languages are mostly administered at the end of an educational level	21
About two thirds of all national tests in languages target all students but only around half are compulsory	22
Nearly all countries have developed at least one national test in English at secondary level	27
Almost half of the national tests in languages administered in Europe assess all four main skills	29
In the majority of countries, all national tests are linked to CEFR levels	31
In lower secondary education, CEFR levels A2 and B1 are usually the highest levels tested	33
In upper secondary education, the majority of national tests are not set above level B2	35
Of the national tests linked to CEFR, about half use its levels to report on student proficiency	37
Tests impacting on student progression are predominantly externally marked	38
Low-stakes tests used only at school level are often internally marked	42
References	45
Glossary	45
Annex	49
Acknowledgements	57

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Year of the first introduction of a national test in languages, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	14
Figure 2:	Number of grades in which different national tests in languages are administered during ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	15
Figure 3:	Distribution of high-stakes and low-stakes tests across countries, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	16
Figure 4:	Use of high-stakes national test results in languages with respect to student progression, ISCED levels 2 and/or 3, 2014/15	18
Figure 5:	Main uses of low-stakes national test results in languages, ISCED levels 2 and/or 3, 2014/15	20
Figure 6:	Times at which national tests in languages are administered at ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	22
Figure 7:	Number of tests and student population targeted, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	26
Figure 8:	Number of languages assessed through national tests, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	28
Figure 9:	Countries with at least one national test in languages at ISCED level 2 or ISCED level 3 which covers all four skills, 2014/15	30
Figure 10:	National tests related to CEFR levels, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	32
Figure 11:	CEFR levels covered by national tests at ISCED level 2, 2014/15	34
Figure 12:	CEFR levels covered by national tests at ISCED level 3, 2014/15	36
Figure 13:	Use of CEFR levels to report on student performance in national tests, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	37
Figure 14:	Marking of written national tests in languages with high stakes for students, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	40
Figure 15:	Marking of written national tests in languages with low stakes for students, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	43
Table 1:	National tests in languages by country, with their name in English and the original language, and the educational grade(s) at which they are administered, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15	49
Table 2:	Use of high-stakes national test results in languages with respect to student progression, ISCED levels 2 and/or 3, 2014/15	53
Table 3:	Main purposes of low-stakes tests in languages, ISCED level 2 and 3, 2014/15	55

MAIN FINDINGS

The main objective of this report is to provide a clear understanding of the current national testing regimes for languages in European countries. National tests are defined as standardised tests/examinations set by central/top level public authorities and carried out under their responsibility. All languages are considered except the languages of instruction, regional languages and ancient languages. In most cases, the languages considered are regarded as foreign languages in national curricula (see Introduction for more precision). There is currently a widespread agreement in Europe on the importance of foreign language teaching at school level and beyond, and on the role of evaluation in improving foreign language teaching and learning. The rise of these issues on the European political agenda has prompted the launch of this Eurydice study.

The report on *National Testing of Pupils in Europe: Objectives, Organisation and Use of Results* published by Eurydice in 2009 highlighted an increase in the number of national tests, in all subjects, especially since the 1990s. This report, which focuses on national tests in languages, also indicates an increase in the number of national tests over recent decades, particularly in the 2000s (see Figure 1). All education systems covered by this report currently have or have recently had national tests for some or all students, at least at one point during secondary education.

Many initiatives and reforms in the area of foreign language teaching were introduced at both European and national levels during the first decade of the century. In 2001, which was the European year of languages, the Council of Europe published the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR); in 2002, the EU Heads of State and Government called for the establishment of a linguistic competence indicator, which marked the beginning of the discussions on the European Survey on language competences. This survey was eventually carried out in 2011. At national level, as shown by several Eurydice publications (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012a), many countries/regions brought forward the start of foreign language teaching to an earlier grade in primary education. These developments in foreign language teaching policy have taken place in the wider context of a growing demand for evidence-based policy and accountability in the delivery of public services, and this can explain the upsurge of new national tests in languages in the 2000s.

The characteristics of national tests are very much shaped by their purposes. For instance, national tests with certification purposes are more likely to be administered at the end of a cycle or stage, and test a relatively wide range of languages and students, while those whose results are mainly used to monitor education systems may only be sample-based and target the most commonly learnt language(s). In the vast majority of cases, national tests in Europe serve various purposes. However, they can all be classified according to their main objective as belonging to one of these two categories: 'high-stakes tests' and 'low-stakes tests'.

High-stakes tests aim to summarise student achievement at the end of a school year or an educational stage/level and often precede the taking of formal decisions on student progression. Apart from Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Germany, Spain, Iceland and Liechtenstein, all countries have at least one high-stakes test at secondary level (see Figure 3). In most of the countries with high-stakes tests, these tests take place in upper secondary education and are used for certification purposes. In about half of these countries, they are also used to select students for higher education institutions or courses. Finally, a minority of the countries with high-stakes tests use them to stream students at lower or upper secondary levels (see Figure 4).

The main objective of low-stakes tests is to evaluate the performance of education systems as a whole, or the performance of schools or individual students in order to inform improvements in teaching and learning. Slightly more than half of the countries/regions have this type of low-stakes

test; in just over three quarters of these (see Figure 3), the tests take place only in lower secondary education. In a dozen countries, the main users of the tests results are stakeholders at both school level (i.e. teachers, students and parents) and national/regional level (mainly policy makers). However, test results are used only by school-based stakeholders in Denmark, Germany ('Comparison tests/learning assessments (VERA)'), Lithuania, Luxembourg ('National Tests'), Malta, Romania and Liechtenstein ('Web-based Adaptive Test System') or by policy makers at national level in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Bulgaria, France, Luxembourg ('Standardised tests') and Iceland. In other words, in this latter case, test results are not reported to teachers and/or students.

The vast majority of countries/regions set national tests to assess language competences in more than one grade during secondary education. Most of them do so at both lower and upper secondary levels (see Figure 2). Furthermore, the majority of the tests are administered at the end of a level or at the end of compulsory education. As expected, the vast majority of high-stakes tests are organised at the end of an educational level or at the end of compulsory education. With regard to low-stakes tests, the picture is more diverse: where they serve only monitoring purposes of the education system as a whole, they are almost all administered at the end of an educational level or at the end of compulsory education. For the remaining low-stakes tests, which aim either at informing improvement on teaching and learning at school and/or individual student level, or combine these purposes with monitoring at system level, they are administered slightly more often during an educational level (see Figure 6).

About two thirds of all national tests under consideration target all students of a specific grade in general and/or vocational education. Around half of these tests, however, are not necessarily compulsory for all students to take. Those that are optional are all high-stakes tests except in Luxembourg ('National Tests' administered in English, French or German to students in general lower secondary education), Lithuania ('Foreign Language Standardised Test') and Montenegro ('End of Third Cycle Assessment of Knowledge'). Eight countries/regions have developed sample-based national tests (Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Slovenia, Finland and Norway). In two others (Spain and Austria), some national tests are administered on a sample basis, depending on the skills tested (see Figure 7).

All countries/regions, except Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), have at least one national test to assess student competences in English. This reflects the particular position of English in national and school curricula (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012b). Indeed it is by far the most learnt foreign language and in some cases, it is a compulsory subject to study. Student competences in the other most learnt foreign languages, such as French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian, are also very often assessed by national tests across Europe. Political, historical and/or geographical considerations must also be taken into account to explain why some countries/regions have developed tests in some less commonly learnt languages in Europe. Poland and Norway, for example, have tests assessing the national languages of their neighbouring countries (Ukrainian and Finnish respectively). Around half of the countries/regions have tests assessing more than five languages. In most cases, these tests take place at upper secondary level. A few countries (Ireland, France, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Norway) have national tests in a very large number of languages (23, 47, 20 and 39 respectively) (see Figure 8).

One of the central goals of foreign language teaching is the acquisition of the four main communication skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Almost half of the national tests in languages in Europe assess all four skills. As expected, given the specific challenges in assessing speaking skills, especially through national tests, speaking is the least assessed language competence. However, nine countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia,

Slovakia, the United Kingdom and Norway) have one or more national tests in which the test items to assess speaking skills are locally designed (see Figure 9).

The Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) published by the Council of Europe in 2001 seems to have had an important impact on national tests across Europe as slightly over half of all national tests refer to the six-level scale developed by the CEFR. In other words, slightly more than half of all national tests in Europe have their test items linked to one or more of the six levels of proficiency defined by the CEFR (see Figure 10). These six proficiency levels correspond to the basic user (A1 and A2), independent user (B1 and B2) and proficient user (C1 and C2). At lower secondary level, A2 and B1 are the highest levels set in most national tests (see Figure 11). At upper secondary level, B2 is the highest level set by the majority of national tests (see Figure 12). CEFR levels, however, are not so widely used to report on student proficiency; only half of the tests linked to CEFR levels use the scale for this particular purpose (see Figure 13).

For the results of national tests to be comparable, scoring procedures need to be reliable and consistent. Tests can be marked internally, i.e. by teachers working in the schools where national tests take place, or externally, i.e. by teachers or other staff external to the schools where the tests take place or by means of automatic optical scanning. Whether internal or external, most markers receive special training or have scoring guidelines available to do this job.

Twenty two countries or regions have the written parts of their high-stakes national language tests fully externally marked (see Figure 14). Furthermore, in four other countries, marking is external for some of the national language tests organised. In the remaining countries or regions, marking is either shared between internal and external markers, or is fully internal. With regard to the parts of high-stakes tests, which assess speaking skills, their marking is centralised less often compared to their written parts.

Most differences in how low-stakes tests are marked are related to their main purposes. The great majority of tests whose purpose is to monitor the whole education system are externally marked, and this applies to all skills assessed. The only countries where the national tests used for monitoring the education system as a whole are internally marked are Hungary and Montenegro. Conversely, most low-stakes tests, which have as their main purpose the evaluation of individual schools, classes or students and not the monitoring of the education system as a whole, are internally marked; the only exceptions being Denmark and Liechtenstein ('Web-based Adaptive Test System') (see Figure 15).

INTRODUCTION

The national assessment of student competences has gained in importance in recent decades (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2009). Traditionally, this type of assessment has been used for recognising student achievement and awarding certificates, but more recently it has become an important tool by which education systems are monitored. In addition, recent EU policy developments have generated new interest in the area of language learning, and, more specifically, in the area of language assessment. In this context, gaining a clear understanding of national testing regimes in languages and analysing their main characteristics is particularly useful as it provides a firm foundation for the development of new policies and initiatives.

Rationale for the report: the policy context

Fostering the learning of languages among European citizens has long been an objective for policy makers at European level. The linguistic and cultural diversity embedded in the European landscape calls for the promotion of language learning. Safeguarding the rich European heritage is not the only concern though. Language learning is needed today to make Europe a living and concrete reality for its citizens. Those who speak languages other than their mother tongue find it easier to cross borders to access educational and work opportunities and as a result are able to benefit from the wider personal, social and cultural experiences available across the European Union.

The Lisbon strategy set ambitious goals for Europe and constituted a real turn in policy making in education at European level. Following its launch, the EU heads of State and Government gathered in Barcelona in 2002 called for further action 'to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age' and for 'the establishment of a linguistic competence indicator' ⁽¹⁾. In the 2000s, other Council Conclusions made language issues more visible on the political agenda in education and training. In 2006, they followed up the idea of creating a linguistic competence indicator by defining the principles of a European Indicator of Language Competence ⁽²⁾. In 2008, they invited Member States to 'enhance European cooperation on multilingualism' and to take actions to 'improve effective language teaching' ⁽³⁾. The key role of language competences was also highlighted in the wider framework of cooperation in education and training (i.e. Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training – ET 2020) ⁽⁴⁾ (2009) and on the broader political agenda (Language competence to enhance mobility) ⁽⁵⁾ (2011).

In 2012, the results of the first ever European survey on language competences launched by the European Commission in 2009 were published (European Commission/SurveyLang, 2012). The survey covered 16 education systems. The results showed great variety in the level of language proficiency across Europe. They provided evidence to policy makers and stakeholders of the need to sustain efforts in promoting and improving the teaching and learning of languages at school in Europe.

⁽¹⁾ Barcelona European Council, 15 and 16 March 2002. Presidency Conclusions. SN 100/1/02 REV 1, p. 19. [pdf] Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/barcelona_european_council.pdf [Accessed 30 April 2015].

⁽²⁾ Council conclusions on the European Indicator of Language Competence. [Online] OJ C172, 25.7.2006. Available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52006XG0725\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52006XG0725(01)&from=EN) [Accessed 30 April 2015].

⁽³⁾ Council Conclusions on multilingualism. 2868th Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting. Brussels, 22 May 2008, p. 4. [pdf] Available at: http://www.eu2008.si/si/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0521_EYC-MULTILIN.pdf [Accessed 30 April 2015].

⁽⁴⁾ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'). OJ C 119, 28.5.2009. [Online] Available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN) [Accessed 30 April 2015].

⁽⁵⁾ Council conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility. 3128th Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting. Brussels, 28 and 29 November 2011. [pdf] Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126373.pdf [Accessed 30 April 2015].

The Council Conclusions on Multilingualism and the development of language competences (2014) acknowledge the complexity and diversity of national settings where language learning and teaching take place. It also stresses the importance of assessment in the promotion of effective teaching and learning of languages at school. It then asks the Commission to 'explore the feasibility of assessing language competences in Member States, including by using national data when available' ⁽⁶⁾.

The compilation of this inventory of existing national tests in languages by the Eurydice Network takes place in this specific context. It aims to provide an overview and comparison of the main features of all national tests designed to assess the language competences of secondary school students in Europe.

Scope of the report and definitions

The report focuses on national tests in languages administered to students at **ISCED levels 2 and 3**, in both **general and school-based vocational programmes**. When the report refers to 'national test', it means 'national test in languages'.

National tests, in this context, refer to standardised tests/examinations set by central/top level public authorities and carried out under their responsibility. Standardised tests/examinations are any form of test that (a) require all test takers to answer the same questions (or questions selected from a common bank of questions) and (b) are scored in a standard or consistent way. International tests or surveys such as SurveyLang are not within the scope of the data collection. Tests designed at school level are also out of the scope of the data collection, even if they are developed on the basis of a centrally designed framework of reference.

The report aims to provide an exhaustive review of all existing national tests as defined above. However, in very exceptional cases, for some national tests, data could not be collected on all the aspects under consideration and consequently these tests are not reported.

The **central level** is the top level education authority, located at national (state) level in the vast majority of countries. In some countries, other levels of authority (Communities, *Länder*, Autonomous Communities, etc.) are competent in some or all areas relating to education. In Belgium, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, each part or region has its own education ministry.

The report covers all **languages**, except the languages of instruction (which are usually national languages), regional languages and ancient languages such as Latin and ancient Greek. English and Irish in Ireland, Finnish and Swedish in Finland, French and German in Luxembourg, and English in Malta are exceptions to the rule. For Ireland, Finland and Luxembourg, the languages mentioned are official languages and either of them can be the main language of instruction in schools, with the other language being taught as a second or in some cases as a foreign language. In Malta, English is both a language of instruction and taught as a second language. As for regional languages, only those in the United Kingdom and Spain are an exception to the rule.

In this report, the term 'languages' refers to the languages included in the scope of the study. In some cases though, when discussing individual national tests, the term 'foreign languages' might also be used as in the vast majority of countries, languages within the scope of the report are regarded in the curriculum as foreign languages.

⁽⁶⁾ Conclusions on multilingualism and the development of language competences. Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting, Brussels, 20 May 2014. [pdf] Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142692.pdf [Accessed 30 April 2015].

The reference year is **2014/15**. When national tests in languages are organised on a rotating basis, the year of reference is the one when the test was last administered. In these cases, the report does not systematically specify the year when languages were last tested. The report covers all EU Members States, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, Montenegro and Serbia.

Content and structure of the report

This short report aims to provide comprehensive information on basic, but key features of national tests in languages. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- Have national tests in languages been administered to students over a long period of time?
- What are their purposes?
- What is the student population tested?
- When are students tested, at which educational level and in what grades?
- What are the languages tested?
- What are the skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) tested?
- Are test items linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) ⁽⁷⁾?
- Are national tests marked internally or externally?

The report is structured around 15 key features of national tests in languages, each with a heading that not only guides readers through the content of the report but also summarises the main findings.

At the beginning of the document, the section 'Main Findings' pulls together the main ideas developed in the comparative analysis.

The annex contains several tables with detailed information, one of which lists all national tests within the scope of this analysis.

Methodology and sources of information

The information has been collected through a short questionnaire completed by national experts and/or the national representative of the Eurydice Network. Official documents issued by central/top level education authorities are the primary sources of information.

A comparative approach is used to describe and analyse the characteristics of national tests in languages.

Conventions

The report makes numerous references to **school grades**. In all countries, grade 1 is taken as the first year of ISCED level 1 ⁽⁸⁾.

The **number of tests** can be counted in various ways. A test can be regarded as distinct when it tests students of different grades, or different languages, or different skills, etc. In this report, conventionally,

⁽⁷⁾ Council of Europe, 2001.

⁽⁸⁾ For more information please consult 'European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014'. In this Eurydice document, education structures of countries are put in relation to ISCED levels (ISCED 2011).

a national test is identified as distinct when it tests students of different grades. In some countries, however, the same test, i.e. one testing the same languages and skills at the same level of competence, and for the same purposes can be administered at various grades. This is for example the case at the end of upper secondary education when students are allowed to take their end of cycle examination at different grades. Such a test, albeit administered at various grades, is regarded as one test. Conversely, when at the same grade, more than one test is administered, they are considered as distinct only when their main purposes vary.

These simple and basic rules have for instance the following consequences: when tests at the same grade are considered as distinct at national level because they test different student populations (e.g. those in general/vocational education) or different skills (speaking skills/other skills), they are regarded as one single test in this report if they have the same purpose(s).

In some of the national tests considered in this report, one or more of the four major skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) may be assessed in parts of the test that have not been standardised or set by central education authorities (i.e. in parts of the test set at school level). The comparative analysis does not report systematically on those parts designed at school level.

LANGUAGES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL TESTS IN EUROPE – 2014/15

National tests in languages have become increasingly important across Europe over the last two decades

The report *National Testing of Pupils in Europe: Objectives, Organisation and Use of Results* (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2009) states that national testing is a relatively new form of assessment which has become increasingly important since the 1990s. A 'national test' is understood to mean standardised tests/examinations set by central/top level public authorities and carried out under their responsibility. Standardised tests/examinations are any form of test that (a) requires all test takers to answer the same questions (or questions selected from a common bank of questions) and (b) is scored in a standard or consistent way (see the Glossary for definitions).

This rise in national testing also applies to foreign languages. In some countries, language tests have been firmly embedded in national education systems for many years. For example, the 'Matriculation Examination' assessing languages at the end of ISCED level 3 in Finland was first administered as far back as 1852, and the 'General and Technological 'Baccalaureate' examination at ISCED level 3 was introduced in France in 1853. However, the vast majority of national language tests have been developed over the last twenty years. Indeed, more than half of these tests have been introduced since 2001.

Although, in the majority of cases, the current national tests in languages are the result of new developments, a third of them have, in fact, built on existing school-based assessments in languages. In Bulgaria, for example, a school-based test in languages at ISCED level 2 has been in operation since 1998 and was upgraded to become a national test in 2003.

Some countries also made revisions to their national tests soon after they were introduced – often to extend the scope of the tests to include more languages (see Figure 8), widen the range of skills assessed (Figure 9) or to increase the number of students tested (see Figure 7).

Luxembourg, Malta and Finland provide good examples of countries where the range of languages tested has expanded over the years:

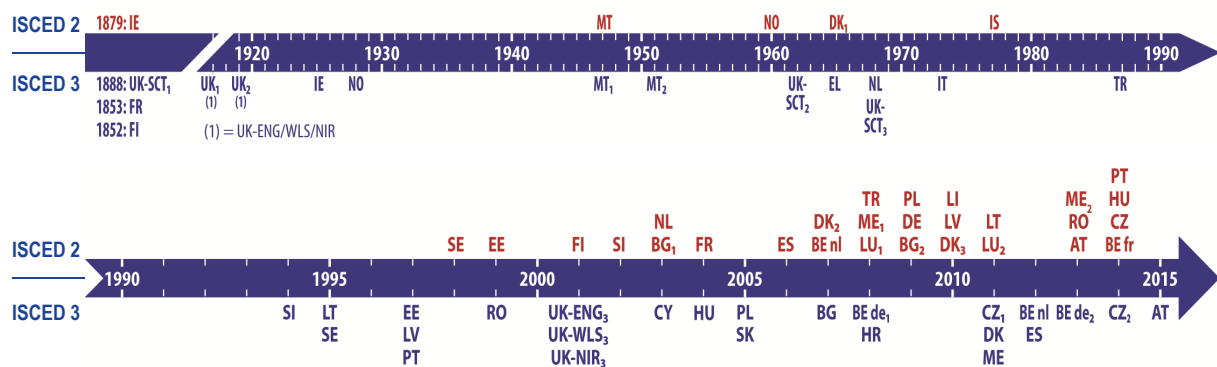
- Luxembourg – a national test assessing French and German at grade 9 was introduced in 2003 and, in 2011, English was also added.
- Malta – the 'Annual Secondary School Examinations' administered at both ISCED levels 2 and 3 have progressively introduced different languages: English in 1947, Italian in 1975, French, German and Arabic in 1976, and Spanish and Russian in 1989. On the other hand, the 'MATSEC Secondary Education Certificate' delivered at the end of general education at ISCED level 3, has allowed for Italian to be tested since 1980, English since 1992, and French, German, Spanish and Russian since 1994.
- Finland – the test 'Foreign Languages in Grade 9' has tested English since 1999 and expanded to cover German, French and Russian in 2003.

Similarly, in some cases, the number of skills assessed in language tests has also progressively increased over the years. In Sweden, in 2008, for example, for Spanish, French and German, which are tested at competence level 2 at ISCED levels 2 or 3, only two skills were assessed, but in 2009, the tests were extended to cover all skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Furthermore, the

level 4 competence test in Spanish (at ISCED level 3) which assessed only one skill in 2010 has, since 2012, covered all skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

Finally, in some countries such as Bulgaria, national tests that initially assessed only one section of the student population have been gradually extended. The 'National External Evaluation' carried out in Bulgaria at ISCED level 2 was established in 2003 to assess general education students but, since 2005, has been extended to grade 8 VET students who have undertaken intensive foreign language courses.

Figure 1: Year of the first introduction of a national test in languages, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This Figure shows the year when national tests in languages were introduced. Regardless of whether the tests are different today, the figure shows the year when national tests in languages with the same purpose as today were administered for the first time.

Countries/regions with more than one test at different years in an educational level are indicated as many times as the number of tests there are. In these cases, countries' acronyms are also numbered.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

Country specific notes

Denmark: The 'Upper Secondary Leaving Examinations' administered at grades 12/13 were first set in 2011 for one of the educational programmes (EUX programme, which is a combination of general education and VET). No information is available for other programmes.

Spain: Data in the Figure concerns the Autonomous Community of Valencia for ISCED level 2 and Catalonia for ISCED level 3. At ISCED level 2, the following Autonomous Communities followed Valencia in the administration of a national test in languages: Navarra and the Basque Country (2009), Extremadura and Murcia (2010) and Madrid (2012). At ISCED level 3, the following Autonomous Communities followed Catalonia in the administration of a national test in languages: Canary Islands (2013) and Cantabria, Extremadura and Madrid (2014).

Austria: The 'Academic Secondary Schools (AHS) Standardised and Competence-oriented Matriculation Examination' is administered at grade 12, and was fully implemented in 2015, although some academic secondary schools started in 2014.

Serbia: Missing data.

The following countries have tests that are not shown in the figure (see Table 1 in the annex):

Lithuania: The 'Foreign Language Speaking Credit' at grade 12 was administered for the first time in 2002.

Luxembourg: The 'National Test in French' and the 'National Test in German' (ISCED level 2) were administered for the first time in 2003.

Hungary: Two more national tests 'Target Language Assessment' (ISCED level 2) were administered for the first time in 2013.

Slovenia: The 'Vocational Matriculation Examination' at grade 13 was administered for the first time in 2002.

Liechtenstein: The 'Web-based Adaptive Test System: Grade 8 pupils' was administered for the first time in 2006.

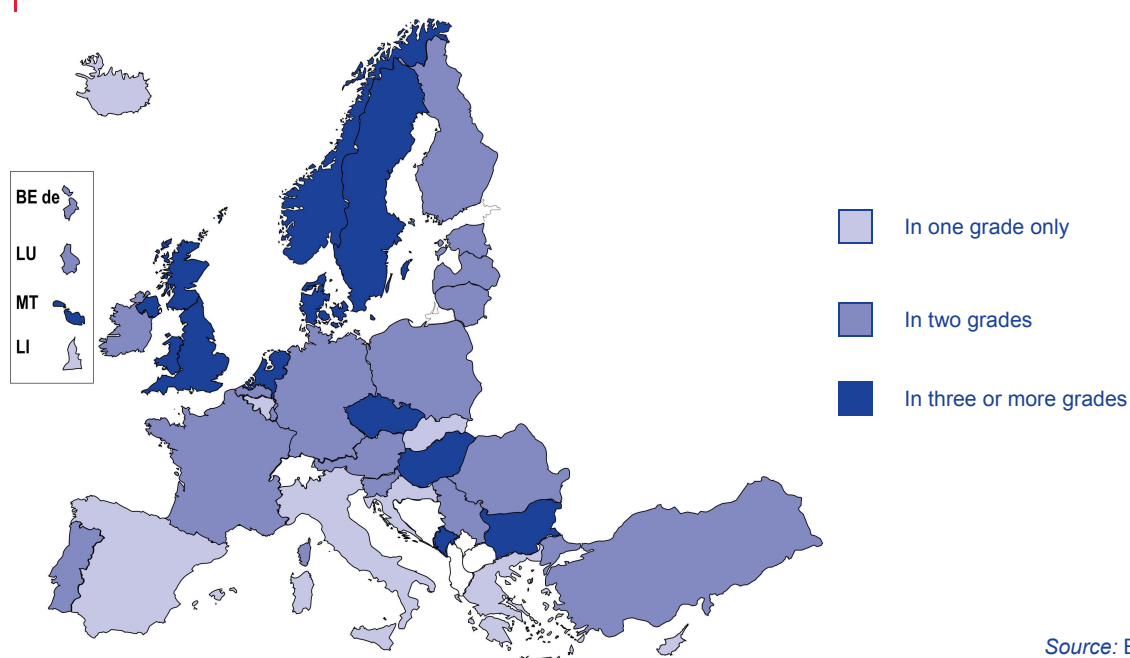
Norway: The 'Examination in Programme Subjects: English and/or Foreign Languages level I, II or III' (grades 12/13) was administered for the first time in 2007.

The majority of countries administer national tests in languages at both lower and upper secondary levels

In Europe, the vast majority of countries/regions set national tests to assess languages skills in more than one grade of secondary education. Most of them do so both at ISCED levels 2 and 3.

As shown in Figure 2, most education systems administer different national tests at least at two different grades in secondary education. This does not mean that every student will take all tests organised by the education system, as the tests might target different student populations for example. Around one quarter of education systems administer a national test in languages in one grade only, while around a dozen do so in three or more grades.

Figure 2: Number of grades in which different national tests in languages are administered during ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The figure shows the number of grades in which national tests are administered. For countries in which the same test can be taken in different grades, the test is considered as being administered in one grade only.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report

Country specific notes

Spain: Students are assessed at grade 8 (ISCED level 2) in the Autonomous Communities of Valencia, Murcia, Navarra and the Basque Country and at grade 10 (ISCED level 3) in the Canary Islands, Cantabria and Catalonia. They are assessed at both grade 8 and 10 in the Autonomous Communities of Extremadura and Madrid.

Luxembourg: The 'National tests in English', administered at ISCED level 2, is taken in grade 9 for technical education students, while general education students take it in grade 8.

Sweden: At ISCED level 3, there are different tests testing different languages at different levels. These tests are administered at different grades.

The most common practice is to test students both at ISCED level 2 and ISCED level 3. Some countries assess students in only one of the two levels, though. In the education systems where students are assessed more than once during the course of one of the two educational levels, three of these administer the tests at ISCED level 2 (Germany, Luxembourg and Serbia), while in the German-speaking Community of Belgium and the United Kingdom, the tests are carried out at ISCED level 3. In the education systems where students are assessed only in one grade, a small majority of them (Greece, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus and Slovakia) do so at ISCED level 3.

The majority of national language tests carry high stakes for students

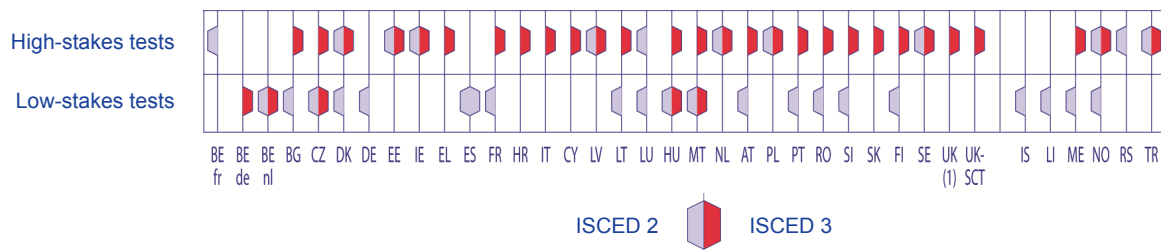
Countries administer national tests in foreign languages for a variety of purposes which have been divided into two main categories in this report.

In the first group, the national tests summarise students' achievements at the end of a school year or an educational stage, prior to taking formal decisions about their future education. The results of the tests are used to award certificates or to inform important decisions concerned with progression such as moving from one year to the next, streaming, selection for higher education courses or institutions, etc. Tests belonging to this group are referred to as **'high-stakes tests for students'**.

The main purpose of the second group of tests is to evaluate the performance of the education system as a whole, or the performance of schools or individual students, in order to inform improvements in teaching and learning. These tests have no formal consequences for student progression and are therefore often referred to as **'low-stakes tests for students'**.

Although the main purpose of national tests in languages may be identified, it should be borne in mind that national tests are often intended to serve several purposes across the two main categories. For instance, the results of tests primarily aimed at informing decisions on student progression are also often used for monitoring the education system or individual schools (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2009, p. 24). However, this particular aspect will not be further investigated in this report. Indeed, with respect to the use of the results of high-stakes tests, the main focus will be on student progression, as can be seen below.

Figure 3: Distribution of high-stakes and low-stakes tests across countries, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Explanatory note

'High-stakes tests' are used to inform decisions on student progression, including the award of certificates, streaming at ISCED levels 2 or 3 (directing students to the appropriate track or educational programme), or selecting students for higher education institutions or courses. See Figure 4 for more information.

'Low-stakes tests' have no formal consequences for student progression. Their main objective is to evaluate the performance of the education system as a whole so that policy can be adapted as necessary, or to evaluate performance and inform improvements in teaching and learning at school or individual student level.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report. For more information on the main purpose(s) of each national language test, please consult Tables 2 and 3 in the annex.

As Figure 3 shows, almost all countries administer national language tests that have an impact on student progression; 16 countries or regions administer this type of test only. Comparatively, a smaller number of countries organise national tests in languages with low stakes for students. This type of test is carried out in slightly more than half of the countries/regions and is the only one carried out in Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Germany, Spain, Iceland and Liechtenstein. However, Belgium (German-speaking Community) plans the introduction of national language tests aimed at certifying student achievement by 2017-19, in accordance with its new Regional Development concept in force since May 2015.

When looking at all the national tests considered in this report (see Table 1 in the annex), it is also evident that the national language tests that carry high stakes for students predominate over the low-stakes tests that have no formal consequences for student progression. Indeed, almost two thirds of tests can be categorised as the former, whereas the latter account for slightly more than a third of national language tests.

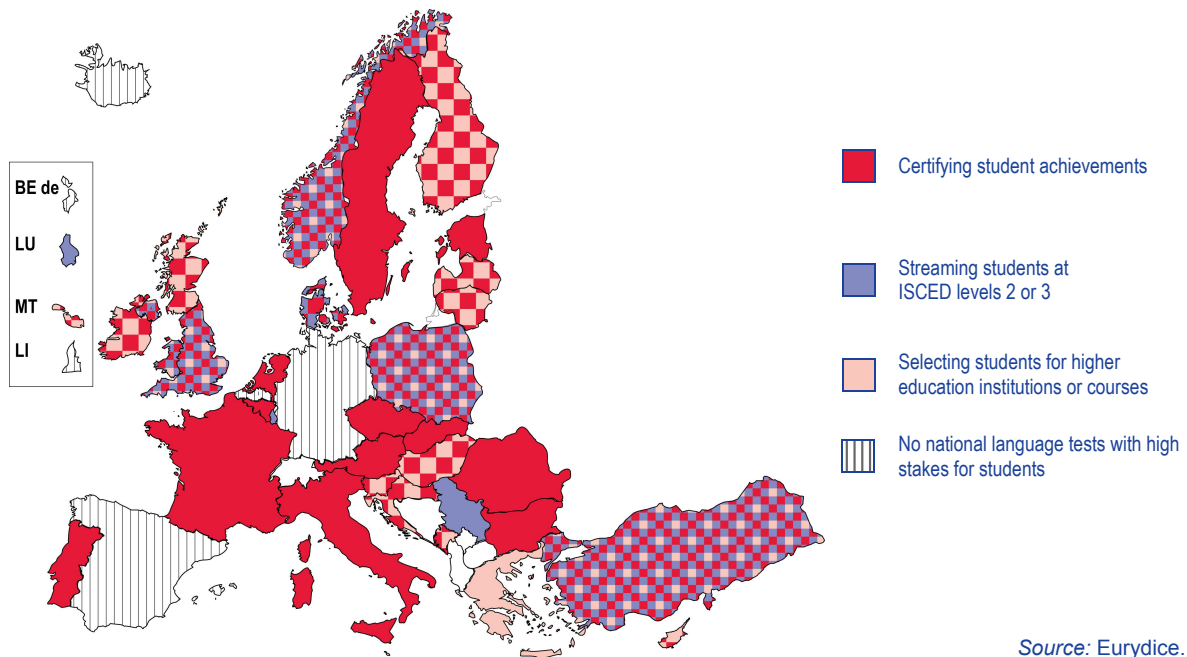
ISCED level 3 seems to be the preferred locus for high-stakes tests. Roughly three quarters of high-stakes tests are administered at this level, while three quarters of low-stakes tests take place at ISCED level 2. Nevertheless, high-stakes tests in languages are administered both at ISCED levels 2 and 3 in nine countries or regions (Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Norway and Turkey) and only at ISCED level 2 in Belgium (French Community), Luxembourg and Serbia. As regards low-stakes tests, five countries or regions organise them at both ISCED levels 2 and 3: Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Spain, Hungary and Malta. Belgium (German-speaking Community) administers low-stakes tests at ISCED level 3 only.

High-stakes tests results are often used as a basis for certification

When the results of national tests in languages influence student progression (see Figure 3), they nearly always serve as a basis for the award of certificates at the end of lower or upper secondary education. Certificates attest to the completion of a level or occasionally a stage of education and usually give access to the next. The importance given to the results of national tests in languages on the award of certificates varies between countries, depending on the culture surrounding student assessment. For instance, test results may be considered in conjunction either with an evaluation of the student's work and the marks obtained over the year, or with the results of a final internal examination. National test results may also be the sole basis for the award of the certificate ⁽⁹⁾.

⁽⁹⁾ For more information on the forms of student assessment on which the award of certificates at the end of ISCED levels 2 and 3 is based, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012a, pp. 163-168.

Figure 4: Use of high-stakes national test results in languages with respect to student progression, ISCED levels 2 and/or 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

'High-stakes tests' are used to inform decisions on student progression, including the award of certificates, streaming at ISCED levels 2 or 3 (directing students to the appropriate track or educational programme), or selecting students for higher education institutions or courses. The latter refers to centralised or nationwide systems where, beyond the requirement to successfully complete upper secondary education, the results of national language tests administered at ISCED level 3 are used to select students for admission to higher education institutions or courses ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report. Depending on the country, high-stakes tests may be organised at either ISCED level 2 or 3, or at both levels. For more information on the ISCED levels involved and how student progression is influenced by the results of all high-stakes national test results in each country, please consult Table 2 in the annex.

Country specific notes

Luxembourg: The use of the results of the 'National Tests' administered in English, French and German to direct students to the appropriate school pathway at ISCED level 3 applies only to students enrolled in technical lower secondary education.

Sweden: Student results in 'National tests' are used to support teachers' holistic assessment and final grading; however, they are not reported on certificates.

In five of the countries where the results of national language tests are used in the award of certificates, they also play a part in streaming students at ISCED level 3. Hence, the marks that students obtain in national tests carried out at the end of lower secondary education (Poland and Turkey), or during ISCED level 3 (United Kingdom – England, Wales and Northern Ireland), provide a basis for directing students to the appropriate track or programme at upper secondary level. In Norway, these marks are used to decide on student access to further education programmes where there are more applicants than available places.

The results of national tests in languages may also have implications for student progression in terms of access to educational pathways at ISCED level 2 or 3, even where they are not taken into account in awarding certificates. In Luxembourg, the results of the 'National Tests' administered in English, French and German are used for directing students in technical lower secondary education to the various school pathways at ISCED level 3. In Serbia, the results of national language tests

⁽¹⁰⁾ Admission requirements to higher education: See the country descriptions of national education systems (Chapter 7) available on the Eurydice website (<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Countries>).

administered in grades 6 and 8 determine student access to bilingual classes or philological gymnasiums and classes.

In 14 countries (see Figure 4), the marks students obtain in national language tests administered at ISCED level 3 for certification purposes influence access to further pathways and course choice. Furthermore, in Greece, upper secondary graduates need to pass the 'Modern Foreign Languages Examination' for entry to certain higher education institution departments, although this national test is not taken into account for the award of the upper secondary education certificate.

The results of half of the low-stakes tests in languages are used at both school and education system levels

The primary purpose of low-stakes tests is that they seek to provide a clear picture of student achievement with a view to improving teaching and learning practices. What further differentiates low-stakes tests is the level at which the information provided is intended to be used: by policy makers for the benefit of the education system as a whole, or at school level by heads, teachers or even individual students and their parents.

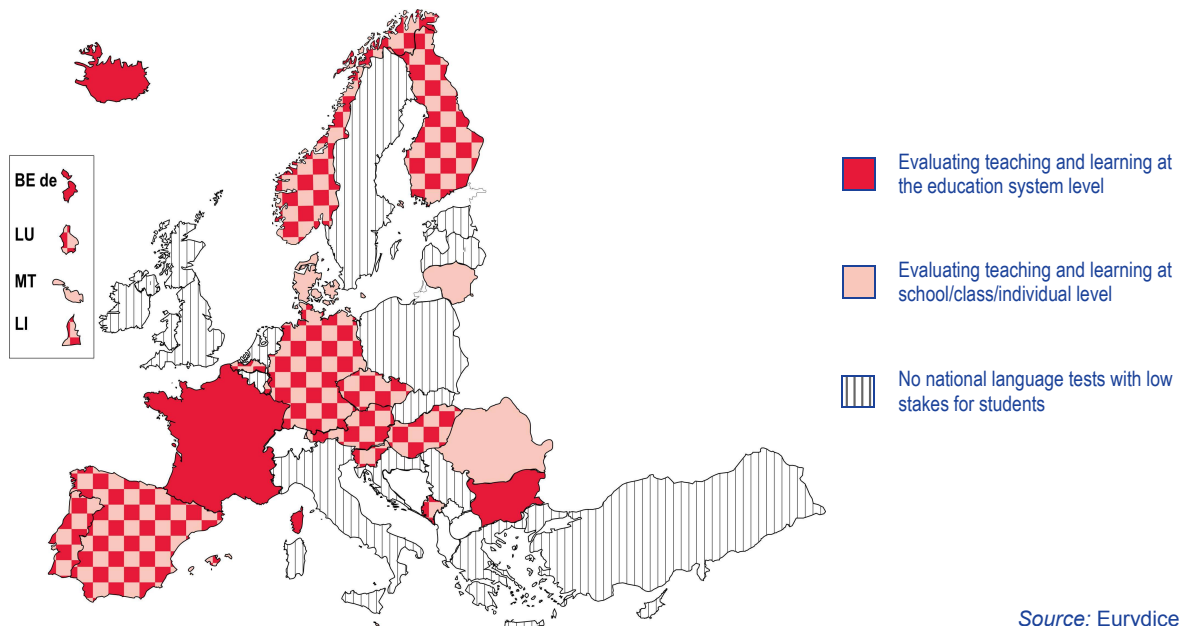
Around two thirds of low-stakes tests in languages are carried out with a view to monitoring the overall effectiveness of the education system. The test results are used to compare the achievement of a specific student cohort against stated curriculum objectives and to inform decisions on national education policy accordingly, particularly in respect to modifying the foreign language curriculum.

Monitoring the education system is the sole purpose of low-stakes tests organised in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Bulgaria, France, Luxembourg ('Standardised tests') and Iceland, where there is no feedback to teachers regarding the level achieved by their class or at school level. Surprisingly, the national tests organised exclusively for monitoring the whole education system are not all sample-based. Whereas Belgium (German-speaking Community) and France administer the monitoring tests on a sample basis, in Bulgaria ⁽¹¹⁾, Luxembourg and Iceland, all students take the test.

In a dozen countries, national language tests are used both for monitoring the education system as a whole and to inform improvements at school level. This is the case of sample-based tests organised in Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic, Germany ('National Assessment Study on Languages'), Slovenia and Finland. Furthermore, in Spain, Hungary, Austria, Portugal, Montenegro, Liechtenstein with the 'Defined Content Standards Tests' and Norway, the results of national language tests administered to the whole student population are also used both at education system level as well as at school level.

⁽¹¹⁾ In Bulgaria, the 'National External Examination' is administered to all students enrolled in grade 7 as well as to all students undertaking intensive studies in foreign languages in grade 8 either in general or vocational education.

Figure 5: Main uses of low-stakes national test results in languages, ISCED levels 2 and/or 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

'Low-stakes tests' have no formal consequences for student progression. Their main objective is to evaluate the performance of the education system as a whole so that policy can be adapted as necessary, or to evaluate performance and inform improvements in teaching and learning at school or individual student level.

The chessboard covers two main situations:

- A) the results of a single low-stakes test organised in a particular country are used to evaluate teaching and learning at both the education system and school/class/individual level,
- B) the results of two or more distinct low-stakes tests organised in a particular country are used to evaluate teaching and learning at either the education system or the school/class/individual level.

Depending on the country, low-stakes tests are organised either at ISCED level 2 or 3, or at both levels.

For full information on the ISCED levels at which low-stake tests are organised in each country and the uses of each low-stakes national language test results, consult Table 3 in the annex.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

Country specific notes

Germany: The *Länder* are responsible for conducting the VERA tests. They each have their own regulations on providing feedback on the results

Liechtenstein: Information in the figure applies to the 'Defined Content Standards Tests', whereas the results of the 'Web-based Adaptative Test System' are used only at school, classroom and individual student levels.

Conversely, the seven countries mentioned below organise low-stakes tests which are not used for monitoring the education system as a whole, since their results are not aggregated at national level. It is at lower levels (individual students, class, school, local authorities) that they are intended to be used.

- In Denmark, the multiple target groups of the 'National Test' include teachers, headteachers, parents and municipalities.
- In Germany, teachers use their students' results in the 'VERA Comparison Tests' in a data-driven development cycle to improve classroom teaching.
- In Lithuania, schools use the results of the 'Foreign Language Standardised Test' at individual, class and whole school level.
- In Luxembourg, in general lower secondary education, 'National Tests' are primarily used for diagnostic purposes in assessing students' individual competences.
- In Malta, schools send student results in the 'Annual Secondary School Examinations' to parents, in order to report progress.

- In Romania, the results of the 'National Evaluation in the Language and Communication Curriculum Area', recorded in students' portfolios, are used by teachers to develop individual learning plans and provide guidance to students.
- In Liechtenstein, the results of the 'Web-based Adaptive Test System' are used for school quality assurance management and identifying individual student learning needs.

National tests in languages are mostly administered at the end of an educational level

In half of the countries/regions in Europe, all national tests in languages are set in the last grade of an educational level or at the end of compulsory education. Almost half of the countries/regions combine this procedure with the administration of tests during the course of a level of education. In only a few cases are all national tests set only during the course of a level of education and not at the end.

The time chosen to administer national tests, whether it is during an educational level or at the end, is usually related to the purposes of these tests. High-stakes tests (see Figure 4) that have an impact on student progression are more likely to be administered at the end of an educational level. Low-stakes tests (see Figure 5), which have as their main objective informing improvement on teaching and learning, may be taken either during the course of a level of education or at the end.

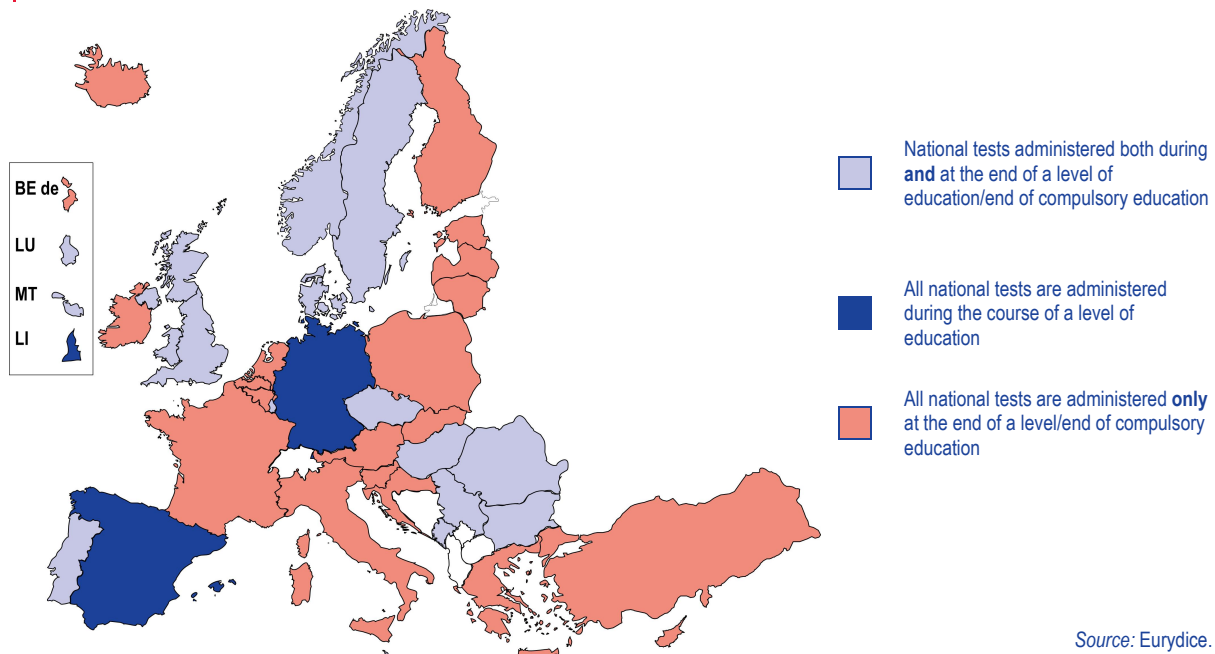
Data show that in the vast majority of cases high-stakes tests are administered at the end of an educational level or at the end of compulsory education – usually at ISCED level 3. At ISCED level 3, educational programmes tend to be more flexible and, consequently, high-stakes national tests, particularly in the northern Europe countries, are not necessarily administered at the end of an educational level:

- Denmark – students sit the 'Upper Secondary Leaving Examinations' that may be taken at grades 11, 12 or 13, which includes the last grade of general upper secondary education.
- Portugal – the 'National Secondary Education Final Test' is administered at grade 11, which is the year before the end of ISCED level 3.
- United Kingdom (Scotland) – the 'National 5' may be taken at grades 11, 12 or 13 and the 'Higher' at grades 12 or 13, where grade 13 is the end of ISCED level 3.
- United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) – the 'General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level' is administered at grade 12 (grade 13 in Northern Ireland), the year before the end of ISCED level 3;
- Sweden – the 'National Test' may be taken at grade 10, 11 or 12, all of them during ISCED level 3;
- Norway – the 'Examinations in Common Core Subjects – English' is taken at grade 12 by students following vocational programmes, and in grade 11 by students following academic programmes, which is not the final grade in either programme.

The picture is more diverse for low-stakes tests and depends to some extent on the objective of the test. In cases where they serve only monitoring purposes at the education system level, they are almost all administered at the end of an educational level or at the end of compulsory education. This is the case for all low-stakes tests administered in Belgium (German-speaking Community), France, Luxembourg and Iceland. In Bulgaria, the 'National External Examination' is administered in grade 7

as well as in grade 8, i.e. during and at the end of an educational level. For the remaining low-stakes tests, whatever the level they are intended to monitor – from education system to individual student – they are administered slightly more often during the course of an educational level.

Figure 6: Times at which national tests in languages are administered at ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Explanatory note

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

Country specific notes

Luxembourg: The 'National Test in English', administered at ISCED level 2, is not taken by all students at the end of the level – only technical education students take the test in grade 9, while general education students take it in grade 8 and, consequently, it has been excluded from the 'administered only at the end of level' category.

Finland: The time at which tests are administered is established every five years in the Evaluation Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The information shown on the map refers to the situation in 2014/15.

About two thirds of all national tests in languages target all students but only around half are compulsory

The range of students targeted by national tests in languages varies between countries. They may be targeted at all students in a particular grade or level of education; they may be directed at students focusing on languages; or they may be administered to only a sample of students. In addition, national tests may be compulsory or optional.

National language tests targeting all students

During secondary education, almost all countries/regions administer at least one national test in languages intended for all students in a particular grade or level of education (see Figure 7). Depending on the education system concerned, this may mean either that testing applies to all students in both general education and VET, or to all students in only one of these types of education. For instance, when there are both general and VET pathways in the grade assessed, only four countries – Spain, Malta, Austria and Finland – do not include VET students in the testing process. However, this is not to say that these VET students are not assessed at all in languages, as this may take place by means of an assessment organised at school level.

National tests targeting all students are not, however, necessarily compulsory for all students to take. In around half of countries, these tests are optional and, with only three exceptions, they are high-stakes tests. These exceptions are to be found in Luxembourg ('National Tests' administered in English, French or German to students in general lower secondary education), Lithuania ('Foreign Language Standardised Test') and Montenegro ('End of Third Cycle Assessment of Knowledge').

Three main situations in which national language tests intended for all students are optional are detailed below. Firstly, foreign languages may be included in a list of elective subjects from which students choose the subject(s) in which they will be assessed. Secondly, there are national tests that only the students wanting to follow an education path specialising in languages at school or higher education level need to take. Thirdly, national language tests may be optional only in some cases, e.g. for students following a particular educational pathway.

The following countries organise national tests for which languages are an elective subject that students may choose to take or not:

- Estonia – in the 'Basic School Final Examinations with standardised assignments' administered at grade 9 students must take three tests: Estonian, mathematics and another subject chosen by the student, which could be a foreign language.
- Bulgaria, Lithuania and Montenegro – in their matriculation examinations, the assessment of foreign languages is one of the options that students have in these tests. However, in Lithuania, reforms are planned to introduce compulsory national tests in languages for the completion of ISCED level 2 (grade 10) by 2017/18.
- The Czech Republic – for the 'School Leaving Examination (common part)' administered at grade 13, students sit two exams: Czech language and literature, which is compulsory, and a second compulsory subject, that is a choice between a foreign language and mathematics.
- Portugal – in the 'National Secondary Education Final Test' administered at grade 11, students can choose to be examined in foreign languages or in other subjects.

National tests taken only by students wanting to enrol in certain university departments specialising in languages are, for instance, the 'Modern Foreign Languages Examinations' and the 'Undergraduate Placement Examination 5', administered at grade 12 in Greece and Turkey respectively. Similarly, in Serbia, only students in grades 6 and 8 who want to access bilingual programmes or 'philological' secondary schools sit the relevant entrance examination in languages.

Examples of where the national tests in languages are optional in some cases only can be found in Estonia, Croatia and Luxembourg. In these countries, this is dependent on the educational pathway followed by students. The 'External School Leaving Examinations' in Estonia and the 'State Matriculation Exam' in Croatia are compulsory for students in general upper secondary education but optional for students in VET. In contrast, in Luxembourg, grade 9 students from technical lower secondary education are obliged to take the 'National Test in English' while it is optional for grade 8 students in general education.

In Malta, whether the language test is compulsory or not depends on the languages tested. For example, high-stakes national tests in languages are compulsory in English while they are optional for other languages. Furthermore, in Lithuania, whether the 'Foreign Language Standardised Test' administered at grade 10 is compulsory or optional is left to the school to decide.

Poland offers still another example of national language tests that are optional in some cases only. For the 'End of Lower Secondary Education Language Examination (Basic, Extended Level)', administered

at grade 9, it is compulsory for students who started learning the language at ISCED level 2 to take it at basic level (however they can take it also at extended level if they wish), and for those who continued learning the language from ISCED level 1 throughout ISCED level 2 it is compulsory to take it at extended level (in the same language). For those taking the 'Matriculation Language Examination' (Basic, Extended, Bilingual Level)', administered at grades 12/13, it is compulsory to take it at basic level but optional to take it at extended or bilingual level (in the same language and/or other languages – students can choose to take more than one language exam at extended level).

National language tests targeting particular groups of students

Some tests are, from the outset, targeted at particular groups of students – normally those focusing on language learning in their educational pathway. This is the case for language students taking the:

- 'National External Examination' administered at grade 8 in Bulgaria;
- 'CLIL Students Accreditation Test in 10th – GESE Exams Trinity College' of the Canary Islands and the 'Integral Evaluation of Bilingual Sections' of Extremadura at grade 10 in Spain.
- 'National Examinations: Second Written Paper' administered at grade 13 in Italy;
 - 'Pancyprian Examination' administered at grade 12 in Cyprus;
 - 'Target Language Assessment' administered at grades 6, 8 and 10 in Hungary;
- 'General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)', the 'General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level' and the 'General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)' administered at ISCED level 3 in the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland);
- 'National 5', 'Higher' and 'Advanced Higher' administered at ISCED level 3 in the United Kingdom (Scotland).

These tests are high stakes, except in Bulgaria, Spain and Hungary. Almost all of these tests are compulsory for students. However, there are some exceptions. In Cyprus, students can choose whether or not to sit the 'Pancyprian Examinations' administered at grade 12. In the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), there is an expectation that students having chosen to study a language beyond age 14 will be entered for the appropriate test, however this is not compulsory.

National language tests administered to a sample of students

Finally, there are tests designed to be taken by only a sample of students. This is the case for all tests in Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities (2007; 2012)) and some tests in the Czech Republic (2013/14), Germany, France, Slovenia, Finland and Norway (see Figure 7).

Sample-based national tests in languages are low stakes, with the exception of those administered in Norway. In this country, for the 'Lower Secondary School Leaving Examination – English' administered at grade 10, a third of students are randomly selected to take the written examination in English, while the other two thirds are also randomly selected to take the written examination either in mathematics or Norwegian. At ISCED level 3, students may be selected to take examinations in English and/or foreign languages level I, II and III both as core subjects and/or programme subjects. For these tests administered at ISCED level 3, schools, under the supervision of local authorities, decide in which subjects students will take the sample-based tests.

Sample-based tests are generally compulsory, although in Belgium (Flemish Community) schools participated on a voluntary basis in the 'National Assessment Programme – French: Reading, Listening and Writing' administered in 2007 at grade 8, and in 2012 in the 'National Assessment Programme – French: Listening and Speaking' at grade 12.

Data shows that sample-based tests are usually administered to students at ISCED level 2, although in a few cases they are either administered at both ISCED levels 2 and 3 (Belgium (Flemish Community) (2007; 2012), the Czech Republic (2013/14) and Norway), or only at ISCED level 3 (Belgium – German-speaking Community).

Finally, national language testing in some countries relies only partly on sample-based tests, depending on the skills being assessed. This is the case in Spain (Extremadura) and Austria, where tests at grade 8 are administered to all students for all skills except speaking; students are assessed in this skill in only a sample of schools.

Figure 7: Number of tests and student population targeted, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15

		BE fr	BE de	BE nl	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT
ISCED 2	All	1			1		3	1	1	1		1					1	1	2	2	3
	Some				1																
	Sample			1		1		1					1								
ISCED 3	All				1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1	4
	Some														1	1				1	
	Sample		2	1		1															
		NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK- ENG	UK- WLS	UK- NIR	UK- SCT		IS	LI	ME	NO	RS	TR
ISCED 2	All	1	1	1	1	1				1						1	1	2	1	2	1
	Some																				
	Sample						1		1										1		
ISCED 3	All	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1								1			1
	Some										3	3	3	3							
	Sample																		2		

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This table identifies the range of students targeted by national tests in languages in lower secondary (ISCED 2) and upper secondary (ISCED 3) education. 'All' refers to students in general and/or vocational education/training (VET), meaning that tests targeting either students from one of the two pathways only or students from both pathways are equally considered under this category; 'Some' refers to students focusing on learning languages in their respective educational pathway; 'Sample' refers to the selection of a representative sample of students to undertake the tests.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

Country specific notes

Spain: The test administered at grade 8 targets all students in the Autonomous Communities of Extremadura, Murcia, Navarre, the Basque Country and Valencia, and some students in the Autonomous Community of Madrid. The test administered at grade 10 targets all students in the Autonomous Communities of Cantabria and Catalonia and some students in the Autonomous Communities of the Canary Islands, Extremadura and Madrid.

Netherlands: The Figure shows the student population targeted for a national examination in English (students in grade 10 of VMBO, in grade 11 of HAVO and in grade 12 of VWO). The situation varies according to educational pathways as far as the second language is concerned.

Sweden: The Figure shows the student population targeted by the compulsory national tests in English. In addition, schools may decide to administer national tests in Spanish, German and French to those of their students studying one of these second foreign languages.

The following country has a test that is not shown in the figure (see Table 1 in the annex):

Hungary: The 'Target Language Assessment' administered at grades 6 and 8 targets some students only.

Nearly all countries have developed at least one national test in English at secondary level

Policy makers in the field of language learning, as well as test developers, are particularly interested in identifying which languages are tested in European countries/regions, as well as the number of languages tested. The answer is largely dependent on the foreign languages taught in schools, which in turn is influenced by the geographical location of a country, as well as its social and linguistic characteristics. These aspects are in part interrelated.

Figure 8 shows that around half of the countries/regions set tests in more than five languages. In most cases, these tests take place at ISCED level 3. The figure shows that, in most countries, tests at ISCED level 2 cover fewer languages than those administered at ISCED level 3. Two interrelated reasons can explain this fact. Firstly, the range of languages offered in the curriculum is usually broader at ISCED level 3 than at ISCED level 2 (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012b, p. 48) and as most national tests at ISCED level 3 are for certification purposes, all the languages taken by students should, in theory, be tested. Secondly, and in contrast, most national tests at ISCED level 2 are largely intended to evaluate the performance of schools, individual students or the education system as a whole in order to inform improvements in teaching and learning (see Figure 3). Therefore it is not as important that there is testing in the full range of languages in the curriculum.

A few countries/regions (Ireland, France, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Norway) have developed national tests in a large number of languages. This is the case in the 'General and Technological Baccalaureate' administered in France at grade 12, where as many as 47 languages are assessed. Similarly, the national tests in languages administered at grades 12/13 in Norway cover 39 languages, and 23 in Ireland for the 'Leaving Certificate Examination' at grade 14. Finally, there are assessments available in 20 languages in the various national tests in the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). All of the above are high-takes tests and are administered at ISCED level 3.

In nine countries/regions, there are national tests in one language only. This is English in all cases except in Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), where the language assessed is French (one of the three official languages of Belgium, alongside Dutch and German), as it is the first foreign language taught.

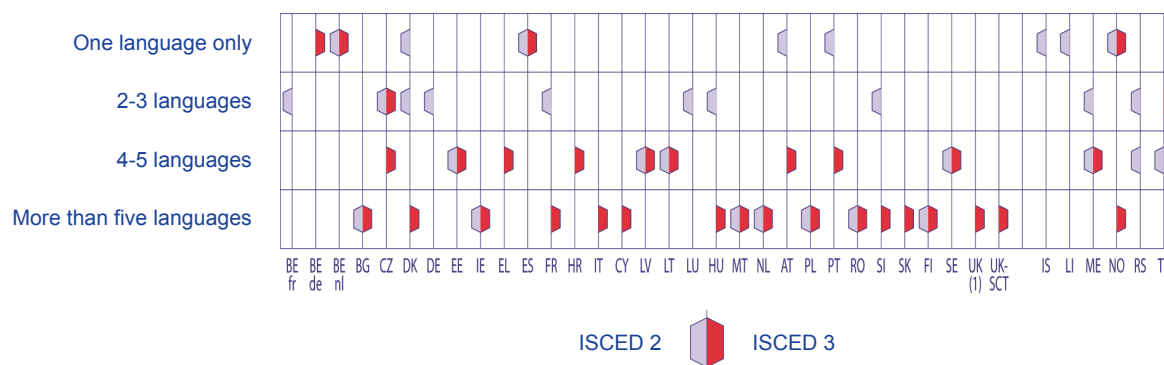
English is indeed the most commonly tested language both at ISCED levels 2 and 3, and all countries/regions have national tests in English, except, as mentioned above, Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities). In some countries/regions, however, there are tests which do not include English, such as the 'Examination in Common Core Subjects – Foreign Languages' levels I or II, in Norway. In these cases, there are other national tests at the same grade or at other grades, which do test students' skills in English.

In addition to English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian are the languages for which there is usually a national test. These languages are also the most widely learnt foreign languages in European countries (EACEA/Eurydice, 2012b, p. 73). National tests in Russian are more common in Eastern European countries, while Spanish and Italian are more usual in southern Europe.

Political, historical and/or geographical considerations can help explain why some countries have developed national tests in less commonly learnt languages. Countries such as Poland and Norway, for example, have tests in the national languages of their neighbouring countries (Ukrainian and Finnish respectively). Some countries have also developed tests for the languages of recent or longstanding immigrant communities. This is, for example, the case in the Netherlands with the testing

of Turkish and Arabic; in the United Kingdom with the testing of Chinese (Mandarin/Cantonese), Bengali and Urdu; and in Norway with the assessment of Somali and Urdu.

Figure 8: Number of languages assessed through national tests, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

Explanatory note

This figure takes account of all national tests in languages which meet the scope of the report (see Table 1 in the annex, for details of all tests under consideration). For countries with more than one test, information is presented the following way:

- Where individual tests assess the same number of languages, one symbol only appears in the appropriate language number category.
- Where individual tests assess different numbers of languages, a symbol appears for each test in the appropriate language number category; country specific notes provide the necessary information to distinguish between the tests.

In Luxembourg, Portugal and Finland, when there is more than one test per grade, data on the number of languages are aggregated rather than reported separately (for more information, see Country specific notes).

Country specific notes

Czech Republic: The 'School Leaving Examination (common part)' administered at grade 13 assesses five languages.

Denmark: The 'National Test' administered at grade 8 assesses one language only.

Spain: Almost all the Autonomous Communities assess only one language in their national tests: six Autonomous Communities (Murcia, Navarra and the Basque Country, in grade 8; Canary Islands and Cantabria, in grade 10; and Madrid, in grades 8 and 10) assess English and two Autonomous Communities (Catalonia and Extremadura) assess English or French (depending on which of these two languages is the first foreign language taught in the respective schools). The only Autonomous Community in which two languages (English and French) are assessed is the Autonomous Community of Valencia, both at grade 8.

Luxembourg: Data concern the 'Standardised Tests' and the three 'National Tests', in English, German and French, all administered at grade 9 (general education students take the 'National Tests in English' at grade 8).

Portugal: Data concern the 'National Secondary Education Final Test' administered at grade 11.

Finland: Data concern the 'Second National Language: Swedish as B-language, grade 9; Finnish as A-language; or Native-speaker Level, grade 9' and the 'Foreign Languages in Grade 9', both administered at grade 9.

Montenegro: The 'End of Second Cycle Assessment of Knowledge' administered at grade 6 assesses in three languages while the 'End of Third Cycle Assessment of Knowledge' administered at grade 9 assesses in five languages.

Norway: The 'Examination in Common Core Subjects – English' administered at grades 11/12 assesses in one language only.

Serbia: The 'Entrance Examination for Bilingual Classes in Primary Schools' administered at grade 6 assesses in two languages while the 'Entrance Examination for Bilingual Classes in Gymnasiums' administered at grade 8 assesses in four languages.

The following countries have tests that are not shown in the figure (see Table 1 in the annex):

Slovenia: The 'Vocational Matura' administered at grade 13 assesses in three languages.

Liechtenstein: The 'Web-based Adaptive Test System: grade 8 pupils' assesses in two languages.

Norway: The 'Examination in Programme Subjects: English and/or Foreign Languages Level I, II or III' administered at grade 12/13 assesses in more than five languages.

Serbia: The 'Entrance Examination for philological gymnasiums and classes' administered at grade 8 assesses in four languages.

Almost half of the national tests in languages administered in Europe assess all four main skills

The extent to which the different language skills are assessed varies. Indeed, the four main skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are not always examined in all national tests. Differences appear mostly in relation to speaking skills. While the other three main skills are usually tested, the assessment of speaking skills sometimes depends on the languages tested or the educational pathway. Furthermore, in some cases, the test for speaking skills is not designed centrally but at school level.

Reading is the most commonly assessed skill, while writing and listening are both tested to a similar extent; speaking is the least tested skill. Nearly all countries/regions assess students' reading skills in all their national tests in languages, with or without the other skills. The exceptions are found in Belgium (Flemish Community), where the 'National Assessment Programme – French: Listening and Speaking' (2012) administered at grade 12 assesses oral skills; and in Denmark, where the Examination after 10th form 'administered at grade 11 assesses only writing and speaking skills, while the 'Upper Secondary Leaving Examinations' administered at grades 12 and 13 also assesses listening.

Tests in only a few countries/regions assess reading skills only:

- Denmark – the 'National Tests' administered at grade 8;
- Luxembourg – the 'Standardised Tests' administered at grade 9;
- Romania – the first foreign language studied for the 'National Evaluation: Test in the Language and Communication Curriculum Area' administered at grade 6;
- Turkey – the '8th Grade Joint Examinations' and the 'Undergraduate Placement Examination 5' administered respectively at grades 8 and 12.

Three countries organise national language tests to assess the receptive skills (reading and listening skills) only. This is the case in:

- The Czech Republic – the 'Sample survey on pupils' results in the 4th and 8th grade of basic schools and pupils in the 2nd year of upper secondary vocational schools' (2013/14);
- Germany – the 'Comparison tests/learning assessments (VERA)' administered at grade 8 and the 'National Assessment Study on Languages' administered at grade 9;
- Hungary – the 'Foreign Language Assessment' administered at grades 6 and 8.

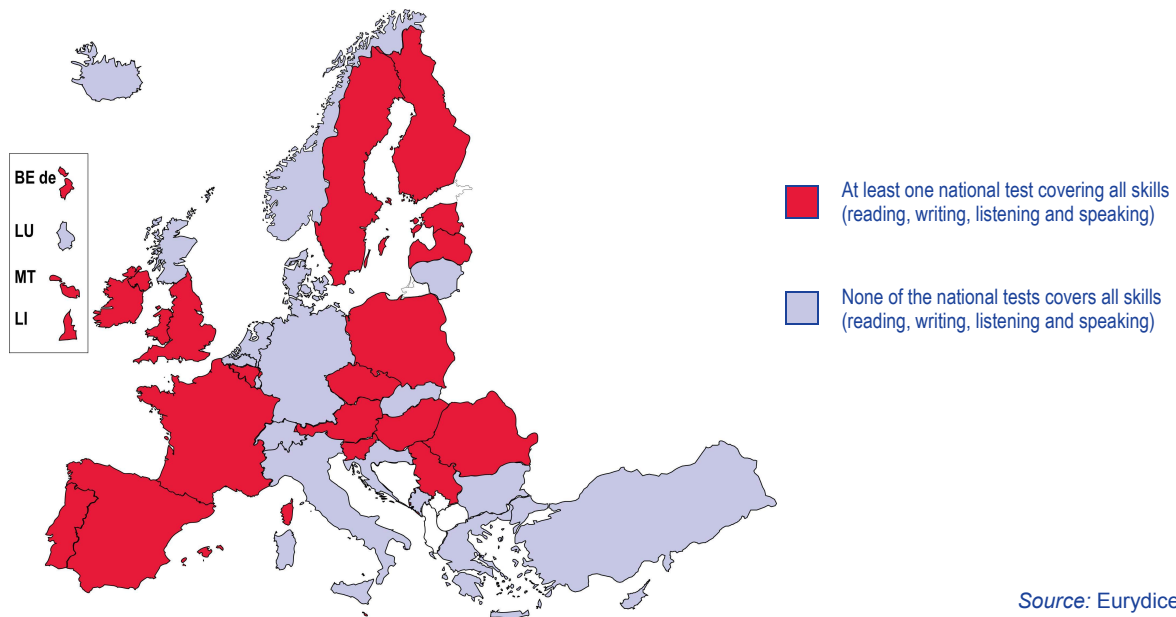
Almost half of the national tests administered in Europe assess all skills through centrally designed tests (see Figure 9). When speaking skills are assessed, in two thirds of cases, the tests concerned are high-stakes tests for students, in the sense that their results will inform decisions on student progression.

In contrast to the other three skills (reading, writing and listening), the test in speaking skills is more often designed at school level. This is the case in tests administered in nine countries:

- Bulgaria – the 'National External Examination' administered at grade 8;
- Denmark – the 'Examination after 9th form' administered at grade 10 and the 'Examination after 10th form ' administered at grade 11;
- Italy – the comprehensive oral examination of the national examinations administered at grade 13;

- The Netherlands – the 'National Examination VMBO', the 'National Examination HAVO' and the 'National Examination VWO' administered at grades 11, 12 and 13 respectively;
- Austria – the 'Academic Secondary Schools (AHS) Standardised and Competence-oriented Matriculation Examination') administered at grade 12;
- Slovenia – the 'Vocational Matriculation Examination' administered at grade 13;
- Slovakia – the internal oral part of the school leaving examination administered at grade 13;
- The United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) – the 'General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)', administered at grade 11 in England and Wales and at grade 12 in Northern Ireland, in several languages, including in the main languages taken.
- The United Kingdom (Scotland) – the 'National 5', administered at grades 11-13, the 'Higher', administered at grades 12/13 and the 'Advanced Higher' administered at grade 13;
- Norway – the 'Lower Secondary School Leaving Examination – English' administered at grade 10, the 'Examination in Common Core Subjects – English' administered at grades 11/12, the 'Examination in Common Core Subjects – Foreign Languages Level I or Level II' administered at grades 12/13 and the 'Examination in Programme Subjects: English and/or Foreign Languages Level I, II or III' administered at grades 12/13 too.

Figure 9: Countries with at least one national test in languages at ISCED level 2 or ISCED level 3 which covers all four skills, 2014/15



Explanatory note

National tests: Standardised tests/examinations set by central/top level public authorities and carried out under their responsibility (see Introduction). Countries in red are countries where at least one centrally designed test assesses all skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

Countries in the category of 'none of the national tests is covers all skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)' may have tests assessing all four skills, but not all skills are tested by means of a centrally designed test.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

Country specific notes

Spain: For the test administered at grade 10, the Autonomous Communities of Canary Islands, Cantabria, Extremadura and Madrid assess all skills using a centrally designed test, while in Catalonia speaking is not assessed. For the test administered at grade 8, the Autonomous Communities of Extremadura and Madrid assess all skills using a centrally designed test (in Extremadura speaking skills are only assessed in a random sample of schools), while in the Autonomous Communities of Valencia, Murcia, Navarre and the Basque Country only three skills are assessed using a centrally designed test (reading, writing and listening).

France: Only students on the literary track of the 'General and Technological Baccalaureate' have their speaking and listening skills tested as part of their centrally standardised final exams.

The following country has a test that is not shown in the figure (see Table 1 in the annex):

Lithuania: The centrally designed 'Foreign Language Speaking Credit' test assessing speaking skills in grade 12.

Apart from the fact that in some countries speaking tests are not centrally designed, other differences exist with respect to the testing regime for speaking skills compared to the three other skills.

In some countries, the range of the student population tested in speaking skills differs from that assessed in reading, writing and listening. In Spain (Extremadura) and Austria, speaking is assessed in only a random sample of schools and students, while the reading, writing and listening skills of all grade-eight students are tested. In Austria, for the 'Academic Secondary Schools (AHS) Standardised and Competence-oriented Matriculation Examination' administered at grade 12, students are obliged to be assessed in the three other skills, but the test in speaking is optional. In the 'National External Examination' administered in Bulgaria at grade 8, only general education students take the test in speaking skills while all students are assessed in the other three skills.

Another particularity of the testing of speaking skills is that not all languages are assessed. For example, in Ireland, while all skills are generally tested for all languages for the 'Leaving Certificate Examination', this does not apply to Arabic and other non-curricular languages. Similarly, in the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), speaking skills are not tested in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew (modern), Japanese, Panjabi, Persian, Polish, Portuguese or Turkish as part of the 'General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level' or the 'General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level or A2)'.

In the majority of countries, all national tests are linked to CEFR levels

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was published by the Council of Europe in 2001 – the European year of languages. It is 'designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials and the assessment of foreign language proficiency' ⁽¹²⁾. The CEFR has been translated into 39 languages. It is built on an action oriented approach to languages, i.e. 'it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of a society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances in a specific environment and within a particular field of actions' ⁽¹³⁾. The CEFR's six-level scale is familiar to a wider public than just language teaching professionals, as it is often used to report learners' language proficiency.

The Council of the European Union has invited Member States and the Commission to consider promoting 'closer links between the CEFR and the National European Qualification Frameworks and widen opportunities for the certification of language competences of students' ⁽¹⁴⁾.

⁽¹²⁾ Council of Europe, 2001.

⁽¹³⁾ Ibid.

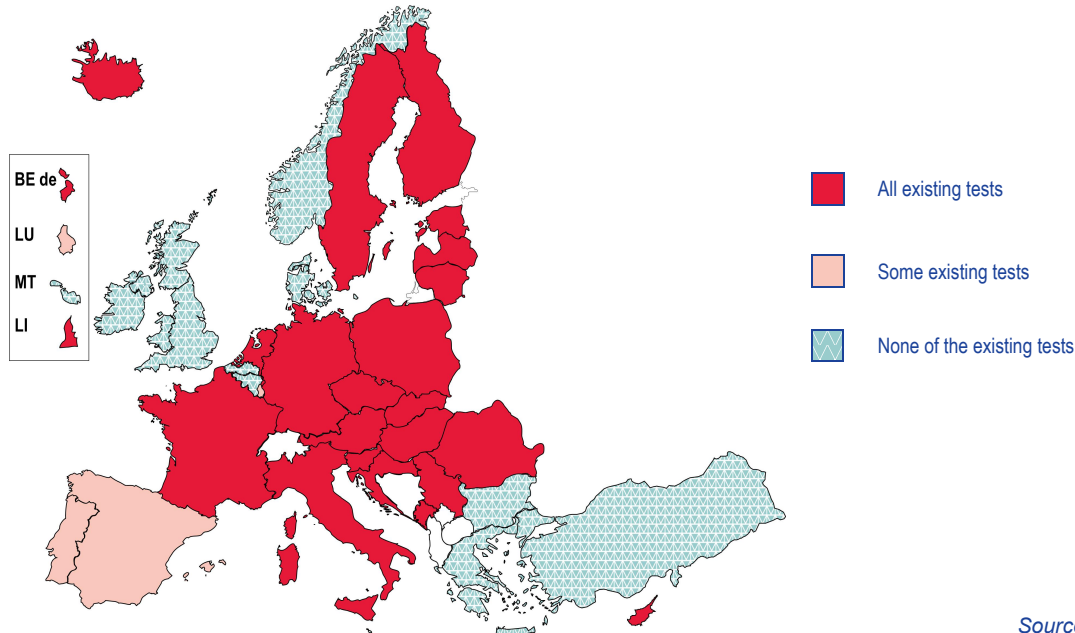
⁽¹⁴⁾ Council conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility. 3128th Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting. Brussels, 28 and 29 November 2011. [pdf] Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126373.pdf [Accessed 30 April 2015].

In 2006, the Council of Europe conducted a survey to collect information on the use of the framework at national level in the then 46 members of the Council of Europe. The results of the survey, published in 2007, show that the CEFR has had a major impact on language education. With respect to the planning and development of curricula, teacher education and testing, this influence has not been the same in all countries though.

Respondents emphasise that some elements of the CEFR (the learner-centred action-oriented approach, the lifelong learning concept, the ways to diversify the languages on offer and the promotion of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism) are mostly used to plan and develop curricula. In the area of teacher education, the levels, scales and descriptors were found to be particularly useful. With regard to testing, a shared recognition scheme for qualifications and a single reference system enabling a clear communication of learning objectives and achievements are seen as huge benefits for the community of language learners.

The main issues of concern highlighted by respondents are: the need to define additional sublevels to the six-level scale, the lack of precision in some descriptors, and the difficulty in linking tests to the CEFR. While the CEFR is well known and used by test and curriculum developers, this is, however, not the case among teachers. Furthermore, the whole document is seen as rather complex which means that making full use of it is quite challenging. Initiatives taken at national level such as creating sublevels or organising training sessions has helped improve the use of the CEFR by practitioners. The Council of Europe also took action following this survey and, most notably, issued a recommendation (2008) on the use of the CEFR and the promotion of plurilingualism ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Figure 10: National tests related to CEFR levels, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This figure shows whether test items in national tests are linked to CEFR levels. Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Council of Europe, 2008. Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)7 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism. [Online] Available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1318855> [Accessed 19 May 2015].

This Eurydice report focuses on the use of the CEFR in two respects only; it seeks to identify which countries relate their national tests to CEFR levels; and which use the six-level scale to report on students' proficiency in languages.

In the majority of countries, all existing national tests are related to the CEFR levels. The countries which do not link any of their tests to these levels are two Nordic countries (Denmark and Norway), some countries of south-east Europe (Bulgaria, Greece, Malta and Turkey), Belgium (with the exception of the German-speaking Community), Ireland (currently under review) and the whole of the United Kingdom.

In three countries (Spain, Luxembourg and Portugal), only some of the tests refer to the six-level scale.

- Spain offers a quite complex picture as each Autonomous Community develops its own tests. Four Autonomous Communities ⁽¹⁶⁾ organise a national test in grade 10, which is linked to CEFR levels. In contrast, in five of the six Autonomous Communities ⁽¹⁷⁾, the national tests did not refer to CEFR levels in assessing grade 8 students in 2014/15.
- In Luxembourg, 'the Standardised Test' (testing reading skills of students in grade 9 with a view to monitoring the education system) is not linked to CEFR levels. However, the 'National Tests' (except for the test in German) are related to CEFR levels ⁽¹⁸⁾.
- Finally, in Portugal, the 'National Secondary Education Final Test' in reading and writing skills for students in grade 11 does not refer to CEFR levels while the 'Preliminary English Test' testing grade 9 students in all skills is linked to CEFR levels.

When considering all national tests, slightly more than half of them refer to CEFR levels. CEFR-related tests are distributed fairly evenly between ISCED levels 2 and 3. However, they form a slightly higher proportion of the tests at ISCED level 2, as there are fewer national tests at this level.

In lower secondary education, CEFR levels A2 and B1 are usually the highest levels tested

The CEFR defines six levels of proficiency A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 (where A corresponds to a basic user, B to an independent user and C to a proficient user), enabling the progress of foreign language learners to be measured. In order to be more precise, some CEFR users have also introduced sublevels into the original scale such as A1.1 or A 1+.

It is to be expected that there will be significant differences between countries in their use of CEFR levels in their testing regimes both within the same ISCED level and within similar grades. This is because, as previous Eurydice reports have consistently showed, unlike mathematics or reading and writing for example, students start learning foreign languages at different grades in Europe ⁽¹⁹⁾. Other considerations, such as differences in the linguistic context of each country, also play a part in helping to explain the differences in curriculum objectives and, ultimately, variations in the levels of proficiency tested.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Canary Islands, Cantabria, Extremadura and Madrid.

⁽¹⁷⁾ The six Communities are the Valencian Community, Extremadura, Madrid, Murcia, Navarre and the Basque Country. Only in Madrid is the test linked to CEFR levels.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Tests in English are administered in grade 8 for general education.

⁽¹⁹⁾ European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012b and European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015.

At ISCED level 2, a minority of the tests linked to CEFR cover one level only and this applies to all skills, languages and students tested. The level of test used is usually A1 or A2, but A2 (or sublevels of A2) is more common. Iceland stands out with the highest level of test (B2). It is also the country where the students tested are in the highest grade (grade 10).

In the countries where national tests have items at more than one proficiency level, the range of levels varies from A2 to C1. These tests can be divided into four groups according to the range of levels covered. The first group comprises tests at A2 and its sublevels; the countries concerned include Poland and Slovenia.

Figure 11: CEFR levels covered by national tests at ISCED level 2, 2014/15

	Test name (in English)	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
CZ	Sample survey on pupil results in the 4th and 8th grade of basic schools and pupils in the 2nd year of upper secondary vocational schools		●				
DE	Comparison tests/learning assessments (VERA)	●	●	●	●	●	
	National Assessment Study on Languages	●	●	●	●	●	
EE	Basic School Final Examinations with standardised assignments		● 2	● 1-2			
ES	Grade 8 National Tests		●	●	●		
FR	CEDRE Assessment (Grade 9 sample-based subject evaluations)	●	●	●			
LT	Foreign Language Standardised Test		●	●			
LU	National Tests in English		●	●			
HU	Foreign Language Assessment	●					
	Foreign Language Assessment		●				
NL	National Examination VMBO	●	●	●			
AT	Assessment of National Education Standards		●	●			
PL	End of Lower Secondary Education Language Examination (Basic, Extended Level)		● ●+				
PT	Preliminary English Test		●	●	●		
RO	National Evaluation: Test in the Language and Communication Curriculum Area	●+					
SI	National Assessment of Knowledge		● ●+				
FI	Second National Language: Swedish as B-language, grade 9; Finnish as A-language; or Native Level, grade 9	● 1-2-3	● 1-2	● 1-2			
SE	National Test	● 2	● 1-2	● 1-2	● 1-2		
IS	Icelandic National Examinations				●		
LI	Defined Content Standards Tests		● 1-2	● 1-2			
ME	End of Second Cycle Assessment of Knowledge		● 1.1				
	End of Third Cycle External Assessment of Knowledge		●+				
RS	Entrance Examination for Bilingual Classes in Primary Schools		●				
	Entrance Examination for Bilingual Classes in Gymnasiums		●				
BE de, EL, HR, IT, CY, SK, UK and TR:		No national tests at ISCED level 2					
BE fr, BE nl, BG, DK, IE, LV, MT and NO:		National test(s) at ISCED level 2 not using the CEFR levels					

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The symbol ● indicates which of the six CEFR levels are covered by the test with the appropriate sublevel alongside (where relevant) in digit form e.g. ● 1. Where a test covers more than one CEFR level, the figure does not indicate on which level(s), if

any, the test mainly focuses. Where the level of test varies between languages, skills or student population tested, this information is provided in the country specific notes.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

Country specific notes

Czech Republic: The data are valid for the sample based testing organised in the 2013/14 school year.

Estonia: 'Basic School Final Examinations with standardised assignments' test English as first learnt foreign language at level B1.2 and other languages at level B1.1. English as second learnt foreign language is tested at level B1.1 (for listening, speaking and reading), and level A2.2 (for writing); other languages are tested at level A2.2.

Spain: Among the six Autonomous Communities organising a test at grade 8 only the Autonomous Community of Madrid links the test to the CEFR.

Lithuania: In 2015, English will be tested at level B1 only and German, Russian and French at level A2 only.

Netherlands: CEFR levels vary depending on the languages and educational programmes followed by students.

Poland: The basic level is tested at A2, and the extended level at A2+.

Liechtenstein: B1.2, B1.1 and A2.2 for reading and listening; B1.1, A2.2 and A2.1 for speaking and writing.

Serbia: 'Entrance Examination for philological gymnasiums and classes' tests level A2.2.

The following countries have tests that are not shown in the figure (see Table 1 in the annex):

Luxembourg: 'National Test in French' tests levels B1 and B2.

Hungary: 'Target Language Assessments' test grade 6 and 8 students in bilingual programmes at levels A2 and B1 respectively.

Finland: The test assessing foreign language competences at grade 9 covers the same CEFR levels as the test for the second national language (either Swedish or Finnish).

Liechtenstein: The 'Web-based Adaptive Test System: Grade 8 pupils' assesses listening and reading skills at levels between A1.2 and B1.2. There is no reference to CEFR levels for writing skills.

The second category groups together the tests assessing students at level B1 and below. This is the group with the largest number of national tests and involves Estonia, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland and Liechtenstein. In Estonia, the levels vary depending on the languages tested and their position in the curriculum. In the Netherlands, the languages tested and the tracks followed by students explain the variety of levels. Skills are tested at different levels in Liechtenstein.

Tests at level B2 and below form the third category, which includes national tests in Spain (Autonomous Community of Madrid), Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden. In Luxembourg, French, an official language, is tested at B2 and B1 levels, while English is assessed at B1 and A2 levels.

Finally, the last group includes tests in Germany where the two existing national tests cover all levels up to C1.

In upper secondary education, the majority of national tests are not set above level B2

At ISCED level 3, tests focusing on one level also constitute a minority of the tests linked to CEFR. In Belgium (German-speaking Community), the tests at grades 9 and 12 test students at levels B1 and B2 respectively. In the Czech Republic, the sample survey on pupils' results is conducted at level A2, while grade 13 students are tested at level B1 for their School Leaving Examination (common part). Two Autonomous Communities in Spain (Cantabria and Extremadura) test grade 10 students at level A2 and B1 respectively. In Hungary, grade 10 students attending bilingual programmes are tested at level B2. In Slovenia and Montenegro, students in general education are tested at level B2 while those in vocational programmes are tested at level B1. In Slovakia, Gymnasium students are tested at level B2 while students of upper secondary vocational schools and conservatoires can choose between B1 and B2.

Most tests at ISCED level 3 have items linked to more than one CEFR level. This group of tests can be subdivided into two: in the first subgroup, the largest, students are tested at level B2 and below; in the second, they are assessed at level C1 and below. Five of the six countries (France, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Finland) in the C1 subgroup administer their tests to grade 12 students.

Spain (Autonomous Community of Madrid) is the only exception as the test targets grade 10 students. In Poland, the C1 items are intended for those in bilingual schools or any student wishing to be tested at the 'bilingual level' for their matriculation exam. In France, only students taking the literary track of the Baccalaureate and studying language 1 to an advanced level are tested to level C1. In the Netherlands, high level tests are aimed at the *Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs* (VWO) (the most academic track), and in Finland at students in general education.

As already highlighted (see Figure 11), in some countries, the languages tested and/or their position in the curriculum account for the differences in the CEFR levels covered. This is the case in Italy, Cyprus, the Netherlands (for both tests) and Austria (see Country specific notes).

Figure 12: CEFR levels covered by national tests at ISCED level 3, 2014/15

	Tests' Names (in English)	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
BE de	Certificate in French Language Studies B1			●			
	Certificate in French language Studies B2				●		
CZ	Sample survey on pupils' results in the 4th and 8th grade of basic schools and pupils in the 2nd years of upper secondary vocational schools		●				
	School Leaving Examination (common part)			●			
EE	External School Leaving Examinations			● 1-2	● 1-2		
ES	Grade 10 National Tests		●	●	●	●	
FR	General and Technological Baccalaureate		●	●	●	●	
HR	State Matriculation Exam			●	●		
IT	National Examinations: Second Written Paper			●	●		
CY	Pancyprrian Examinations		●	●	●		
LV	Centralised Secondary School Leaving Examination in Foreign Languages			●	●	●	
LT	State Matriculation Examination in Foreign Languages			●	●		
HU	Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination		●	●	●		
	Target Language Assessment				●		
NL	National Examination HAVO		●	●	●		
	National Examination VWO		●	●	●	●	
AT	Academic Secondary Schools (AHS) Standardised and Competence-oriented Matriculation Examination			●	●		
PL	Matriculation Language Examination (Basic, Extended, Bilingual level)			●	●	●	
RO	National Baccalaureate Examination: Test C – Assessment of language skills in a foreign language	●	●	●	●		
SI	General Matriculation Examination				●		
SK	School Leaving Examination: External and Internal Written Parts				●		
FI	Matriculation Examination (General Upper Secondary Education only)	● 1-2-3	● 1-2	● 1-2	● 1-2	● 1	
		● 2	● 1-2	● 1-2	● 1-2		
SE	National Test						
ME	Matriculation Examination				●		

BE fr, DE, LU, IS, LI and RS: No national tests at ISCED level 3

BE nl, BG, DK, IE, EL, MT, PT, UK, NO and TR: National test(s) at ISCED level 3 not using the CEFR levels

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

The symbol ● indicates which of the six CEFR levels are covered by the test with the appropriate sublevel alongside (where relevant) in digit form e.g. ● 1. Where a test covers more than one CEFR level, the figure does not indicate on which level(s), if any, the test mainly focuses. Where the level of test varies between languages, skills or student population tested, this information is provided in the country specific notes.

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

Country specific notes

Czech Republic: The data for the sample-based testing are valid for 2013/14.

Spain: In the Canary Islands, levels B1 and B2 are tested; in Cantabria, level A2 is tested; in Extremadura, level B1 is tested, in Madrid levels A2, B1, B2 and C1 are tested.

France: Students on the literary track of the Baccalaureate are tested to level C1 for the first language, and to level B2 for the second language, if they choose to study one of these languages to an advanced level.

Italy: The first and second learnt foreign languages are tested at level B2 while the third learnt foreign language is tested at level B1.

Cyprus: English is tested at level B2. French is tested at level B1. Other languages are tested at level A2.

Lithuania: The 'State Matriculation Examination in Foreign Languages' does not assess speaking skills, which are assessed by school teachers (Foreign Language speaking credit) and tested at levels B2 and B1. In 2016, there should be only one examination testing all skills.

Hungary: The advanced level is tested at B2 and the standard level at B1 and A2.

Netherlands: CEFR levels vary depending on the languages tested.

Austria: The first learnt foreign language is tested at level B2; the second learnt foreign language is tested at level B1 (and B2 for reading if the second foreign language is studied for 6 years).

Poland: C1 corresponds to the bilingual level, B2 corresponds to the extended level and B1 corresponds to the basic level.

Slovenia: Data only concerns English and students following general education programmes. Students in vocational education are tested at level B1. Tests for other languages will be linked to CEFR levels in 2017.

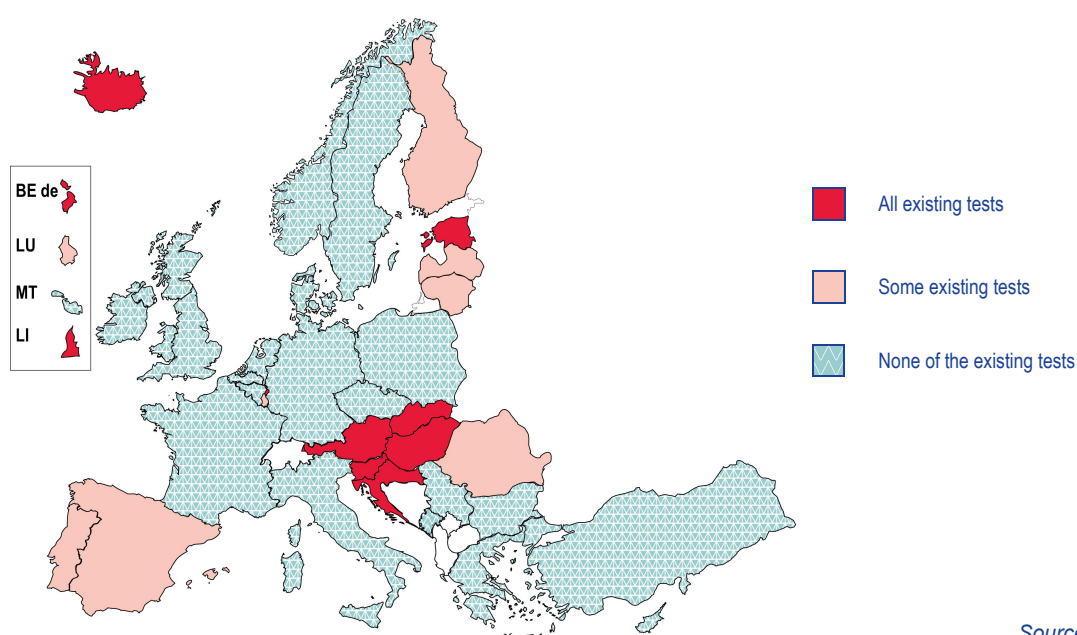
Slovakia: Gymnasium students are tested at level B2 while students of upper secondary vocational schools and conservatoires can choose between B1 and B2.

Montenegro: Data concerns students following general education programmes. Students in vocational education are tested at level B1.

Of the national tests linked to CEFR, about half use its levels to report on student proficiency

CEFR levels are used to rate student proficiency in 16 education systems. In about half of this group of countries, all national tests rely on this method of reporting; in the remaining countries only some tests do so.

Figure 13: Use of CEFR levels to report on student performance in national tests, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

In seven countries (see Figure 13), CEFR levels are used to report on student proficiency for some tests and not others; in some cases, it depends on the purpose of the test and in others on the languages tested.

- In Portugal and Finland, only national tests serving monitoring purposes use CEFR levels to rate student proficiency. The 'Preliminary English Test' in Portugal, provides a reference to CEFR levels when reporting student achievements. In Finland, tests administered to students in grade 9 to test the second national language (either Swedish or Finnish) and foreign languages rate students using the CEFR proficiency scale.
- In Romania, the results of the 'National Baccalaureate Examination: Test C – Assessment of language skills in a foreign language' are expressed in the form of CEFR levels (from A1 to B2), while the results of the 'National Evaluation in the Language and Communication Curriculum Area' administered to grade 6 students are recorded in students' portfolios in the form of a description of their proficiency. Its purpose is to provide a formative assessment of students' linguistic competences and provide some feedback to teachers.
- In the two Baltic countries where the reporting method differs according to the test, CEFR levels are used to report on student proficiency in combination with another scoring method. In Latvia, since 2013, the results of the 'Centralised Secondary School Leaving Examination in Foreign Languages' have been provided to students in the form of CEFR levels as well as in the traditionally used percentage format. In Lithuania, the 'Foreign Language Standardised Test' for grade 10 students uses both a 60-point scale and the A2 and B1 levels to report on student proficiency. The 'State Matriculation Examination in Foreign Languages' expresses student results as points associated with CEFR levels, except for the speaking skills test which uses only a 10-point scale.
- In Luxembourg, the results of 'National Tests' assessing student competences at grade 9 (or 8) in the three compulsory languages (German, French and English) of the curriculum are reported as a score between 0 and 60. Students can only receive feedback on their proficiency at level A2 in the English test.

When considering national tests, it seems that slightly more than a quarter use CEFR levels to rate student proficiency. This represents approximately half of all national tests linked to CEFR levels (see Figure 10).

Two thirds of all the tests using the CEFR scale to report student results are administered at ISCED level 2. Tests using CEFR levels for rating and reporting purposes seem to pursue slightly different objectives to other national tests: proportionally, they are used less often to certify student competences; more often for monitoring purposes, and even more frequently for diagnostic purposes at school level (see Figure 2).

Tests impacting on student progression are predominantly externally marked

As with any national testing, the organisation of national language tests poses significant challenges in terms of ensuring their reliability. Indeed, national testing implies that questions, conditions for administering, and scoring procedures are consistent and comparable for all students. In this respect, the identification of those responsible for marking national language tests may be very helpful in addressing the issues of consistency and comparability. This is important in language testing as these tests very often cover the assessment of productive skills (writing and speaking) involving open questions. The assessment of speaking skills in particular seems to be the most difficult one to

organise in a consistent manner for all students. Indeed, in several countries, the part of the tests which assesses speaking skills is not centrally designed. Furthermore, in a few countries where high-stakes national language tests include the assessment of speaking skills, these skills are marked differently from others in that they are more often marked internally. For these reasons, this section deals with the written parts of national language tests separately from those assessing speaking skills. It must also be borne in mind that the skills covered by the written parts of national language tests (reading, writing and/or listening) vary according to country and test (see Figure 9).

National language tests can be scored by internal or external markers. Teachers scoring tests taken by students of the school in which they teach are considered as internal markers for the purpose of this report. External markers are teachers or other school staff scoring tests taken by students of schools other than the one in which they are employed, or other people appointed by the body responsible for setting the test. As a matter of course, computer-based tests are externally marked. Tests for which student answers are scanned and reported using computer software which calculates the results are also considered to be externally marked. However, only a minority of high-stakes language tests are computerised or marked by means of automatic optical scanning. Those marking tests, whether internal or external, usually receive special training or do it according to standardised scoring guidelines and models.

Twenty two countries or regions have the written parts of their high-stakes national language tests fully externally marked (see Figure 14). This accounts for two thirds of both the countries/regions and national tests concerned. Furthermore, in four other countries, marking is external for some of the national language tests organised. In the remaining countries or regions, marking is either shared between internal and external markers, or it is fully internal.

In several countries where the marking of all national language tests is external, parts of these tests are electronically scored. Indeed, closed tasks are electronically scored in Croatia, Latvia ('Centralised Secondary School Leaving Examination in Foreign Languages'), Lithuania, Poland ('End of Lower Secondary Education Language Examination'), Turkey and Montenegro. In addition, Denmark intends to increase the use of electronic testing for certifying language competences (this currently depends on the school's capacity), meanwhile Slovakia is carrying out a pilot project on the computerisation of national testing.

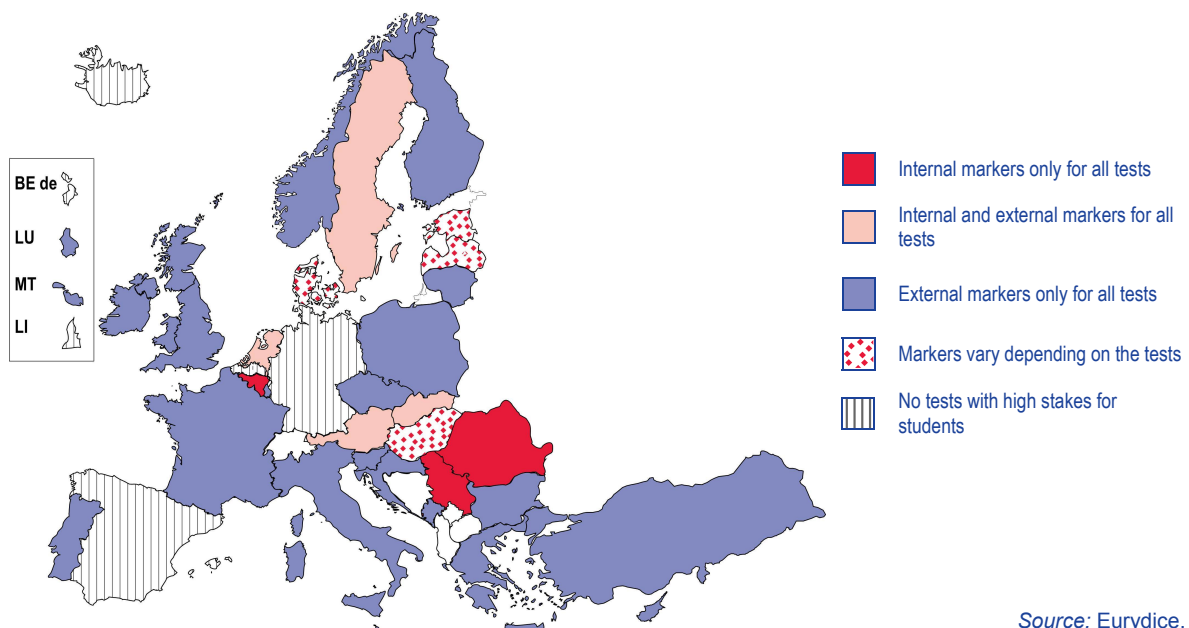
In the remaining countries where the written parts of high-stakes national language tests are centrally marked, external markers are usually teachers from other schools or other external examiners. In Italy, whether the marker is a teacher from the school in which the test takes place or from another school depends on the composition of the examination board, as decided annually by the minister responsible for education. In contrast with the usual situation for standardised tests, the assessment criteria in Italy are not centrally set but proposed by the marker and decided by the school examination board on the basis of the annual school policy on teaching and assessment.

In a dozen countries, the written parts of national language tests are not exclusively centrally marked. Indeed, in five countries, teachers from the school where the national language test takes place share the responsibility for marking with external examiners. In four other countries or regions, teachers alone are entrusted with marking the tests administered in their own schools. In all these cases, the teachers mark tests against centralised scoring guidelines.

Among the five countries where responsibilities are shared between internal and external markers, their respective roles in this process vary.

- In Denmark ('Examinations after 9th and 10th forms') and the Netherlands, the final score awarded to a written examination is obtained following a consultation involving an internal and an external marker.
- In Austria, the scores teachers assign to written exams administered in their own schools are submitted for validation to the exam committee, which is chaired by an inspector or an external headmaster.
- In Slovakia, multiple choice tasks are centrally marked whereas tasks with long answers are scored internally by teachers, under the supervision of the school-leaving examination commission.
- In Sweden, the marking of the 'National tests' carried out by the teachers of the school in which they take place is sometimes complemented with peer marking by teachers from different schools. Furthermore, a sample of 'National tests' scored by teachers are marked a second time by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate.

Figure 14: Marking of written national tests in languages with high-stakes for students, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

This categorisation is based on the written parts of high-stakes national language tests. The skills (reading, writing and/or listening) covered by the written parts of national language tests vary between countries and tests (see Figure 9). Oral examinations in which speaking and sometimes listening skills are assessed are not taken into account.

'All tests' can refer to one or more high-stakes national language test, depending on the country. Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

'High-stakes tests' are used for taking decisions on student progression, including the award of certificates, streaming at the end of ISCED level 2 or 3, or selecting students for higher education institutions or courses. See Figure 4 for more information on high-stakes national tests.

Teachers scoring national language tests taken by students of the school in which they teach are considered as internal markers for the purpose of this report. External markers are teachers scoring tests taken in schools other than the one in which they teach, or other people centrally appointed. Those marking tests, whether internal or external, usually receive special training or do it according to standardised scoring guidelines and models.

Country specific notes

Italy: The figure shows the situation for 2014/15. However, the markers can vary depending on the composition of the examination board, which is decided annually by the minister responsible for education.

Latvia: The organisation of the 'Grade 9 Foreign Language Examination' varies across regions. In regions with schools in remote areas, the tests are scored by the same teacher who teaches the students. In the other regions, scoring is done centrally as teachers of several schools come together to mark the papers.

Hungary: Marking is not differentiated according to tests but at the level at which students choose to take the 'Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination'. See below for more information.

In the four countries or regions where the marking of national language tests is exclusively entrusted to teachers of the school in which the tests take place, the impact of the results on student progression varies between countries. In Serbia, these tests in languages have a particular role within the education system, since they serve as entrance examinations for highly specialised language studies. In Belgium (French Community) and Estonia, internally marked national language tests are used for the award of certificates attesting student completion of ISCED level 2, while in Romania such tests are used in relation to student completion at ISCED level 3.

In four countries, marking procedures differ between the various high-stakes national tests. In Denmark, Estonia and Latvia, the marking is not organised in the same way for ISCED levels 2 and 3. In these three countries, the upper secondary leaving examinations are always externally marked, while this is not necessarily the case for the final external examinations taking place at ISCED level 2. Indeed, in Denmark, the written parts of the 'Examinations after 9th and 10th forms' are jointly scored by internal and external markers. In Estonia, the 'Basic School Final Examinations with standardised assignments' are scored internally by teachers. In Latvia, the 'Grade 9 Foreign Language Examination' can be scored internally or externally depending on the region. In Hungary, the differences in marking procedures are not related to the educational level concerned, but to the level of competence tested. While the marking of the 'Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination' taken at 'standard level' is widely internal, a centralised committee of language teachers ensures marking of the 'advanced level', the attainment of which increases students' chances to be accepted in the higher education course of their choice. All these four countries try to ensure greater reliability for the tests which carry the highest stakes for students.

In around two thirds of countries with high-stakes national language tests, speaking skills are assessed through an oral examination which can be centrally set (see Figure 9) or is designed at school level.

When the assessment of speaking skills is prepared at school level, some form of external supervision of the marking carried out internally by teachers usually exists, the Netherlands being one exception. In Denmark and Norway, an external examiner assists teachers in scoring the oral parts of the high-stakes national language tests. In Austria and Slovenia, teachers must follow central rules or instructions when scoring the oral examination associated respectively with the 'Academic Secondary Schools Standardised and Competence-oriented Matriculation Examination' and the 'Vocational Matriculation Examination'. In Slovakia, the assessment and marking of students' speaking skills is ensured by the school leaving commission on languages, which is headed by an external teacher nominated by a regional authority.

In the United Kingdom also, the marking of the speaking tasks when set at school level is externally supervised. Indeed, in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the speaking components of the 'General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)' in French, German and Spanish (among the most commonly assessed languages) and in Italian, Chinese, Urdu and Welsh Second Language, are marked by teachers and sent to the external exam board for moderation. In Scotland, in the case of the 'National 5' and 'Higher' tests, the assessment of student speaking skills is carried out by teachers of the school where the tests take place, and further verified by the Scottish Qualifications Authority

(SQA). For the 'Advanced Higher', the test component assessing speaking skills is overseen and marked by external assessors appointed by SQA.

When the oral part of national language tests (that assessing speaking skills) is centrally designed, in the vast majority of cases, the marking follows the same pattern (internal or external) as the corresponding written part. Speaking examinations are hence externally marked in all high-stakes national language tests organised in Malta by a team of professionals consisting of education officers, teachers and university lecturers. Speaking examinations are also fully externally marked in the:

- upper secondary school leaving examinations held in Ireland and Latvia;
- advanced level of the 'Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination' administered in Hungary;
- 'General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level' and 'General Certificate of Education Advanced level (A level or A2)' administered in the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

However, in six countries, where the assessment of speaking skills is centrally designed, there tends to be a greater emphasis on internal marking than there is for the other skills. Indeed, in France, for students taking the 'General and Technological Baccalaureate' (except for those on the literature track), the speaking test is internally overseen and scored, while scoring for reading and writing skills is done by teachers working outside of the school in which the test takes place. Furthermore, in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia, only the written parts of the upper secondary school leaving examinations are fully externally marked.

- In the Czech Republic, the assessment of students' speaking skills in the 'School Leaving Examination (common part)' is scored internally by teachers and subsequently approved by the school examining board, which is chaired by a teacher from another school.
- In Estonia, the speaking part of the 'External School leaving Examinations' is scored by teachers who do not teach the students being tested and may be working inside or outside the school in which the test takes place.
- In Lithuania, the oral part of the 'State Matriculation Examination in Foreign Languages' assessing speaking skills is scored by school teachers.
- In Poland, the speaking exam administered to students for the 'Matriculation Language Examination' is scored by an examination board which includes an external examiner in addition to teachers of the school where the exam takes place.
- In Slovenia, the oral exams of the 'General Matriculation Examination' are marked internally by the members of the school examination board.

Low-stakes tests used only at school level are often internally marked

In most countries, the written parts of tests with low stakes for students are marked either exclusively internally or externally. These two main patterns are in turn linked to the purposes of the tests, i.e. whether they aim at supporting the monitoring of the whole education system or whether their results are exclusively used at school level, by teachers, students and/or parents (see Figure 5).

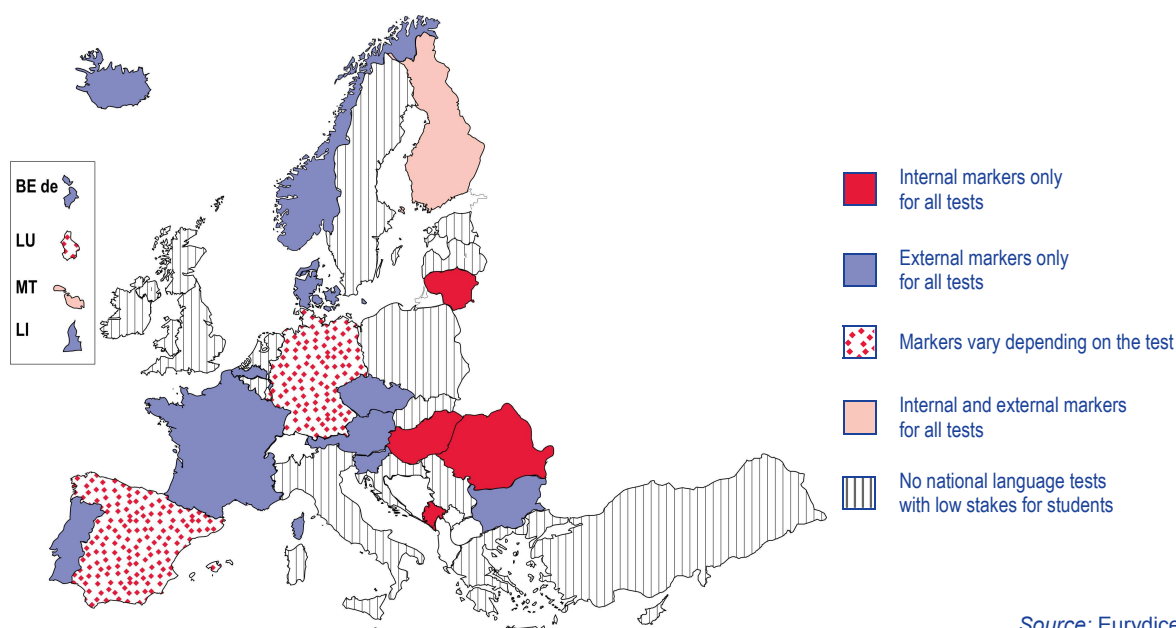
As with high-stakes tests (see Figure 14), in the majority of cases, the written parts of low-stakes tests are externally marked (see Figure 15). In the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany ('National assessment Study on languages'), Luxembourg ('Standardised Tests'), Liechtenstein ('Web-based

Adaptive Test System') and Norway, low-stakes tests focusing on students' receptive skills are administered electronically or are paper-based and electronically scored. In Belgium (Flemish Community), Spain (the Basque Country and Catalonia), France, Austria and Iceland, multiple choice questions testing receptive skills are also marked electronically by means of automatic optical scanning; open questions are scored by external examiners. In Bulgaria and Portugal, the paper-based components of the low-stakes tests covering reading, listening and writing skills are electronically scored. However in Bulgaria, students' answers are not scanned but are loaded into a special computer programme by their teachers. In Slovenia, the 'National Assessment of Knowledge' is also marked externally by centrally appointed teachers who correct anonymous paper tests. The low-stakes tests administered in Spain (Madrid and Canary Islands) as well as the 'Defined Content Standards Tests' organised in Liechtenstein are scored by external examiners.

Interestingly, when the written part of low-stakes tests is externally marked, so are the speaking skills. Indeed, this applies to Belgium (German-speaking and Flemish Communities), Spain (Canary Islands and Madrid), Austria, Portugal and Liechtenstein ('Defined Content Standards Tests'). For instance:

- in Belgium (German-speaking Community), accredited staff members of a university are in charge of administering and scoring the part of the 'Certificates in French Language Studies B1 and B2' assessing speaking skills;
- in Belgium (Flemish Community), in the context of the 2012 sample-based 'National Assessment Programme – French: Reading, Listening and Writing', speaking tests organised individually in schools were recorded and evaluated by external evaluators at a later stage;
- in Austria, the components of the 'Assessment of National Education Standards' assessing student speaking skills in a random sample of schools, are administered and scored by teachers from other schools who received special training;
- in Portugal, the speaking component of the test is scored by teachers working in schools other than the school where it takes place.

Figure 15: Marking of written national tests in languages with low-stakes for students, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15



Explanatory note

This categorisation is based on the written parts of low-stakes national language tests. The skills (reading, writing and/or listening) covered by the written parts of national language tests vary between countries and tests (see Figure 9). Oral examinations where speaking and sometimes listening skills are assessed are not taken into account.

'All tests' can refer to one or more low-stakes national language test, depending on the country. Table 1 of the annex lists all the national tests included in this report.

'Low-stakes tests' have no formal consequences for student progression. Their main objective is to evaluate the performance of the education system as a whole so that policy can be adapted as necessary, or to evaluate performance and inform improvements in teaching and learning at school or individual student level. See Figure 5 for more information on the main uses of low-stakes tests.

Teachers scoring national language tests taken by students of the school in which they teach are considered as internal markers for the purpose of this report. External markers are teachers scoring national tests taken in schools other than the one in which they teach, or other people centrally appointed. Those marking tests, whether internal or external, usually receive special training or do it according to standardised scoring guidelines and models.

Country specific notes

Germany: The *Länder* are responsible for conducting the 'VERA Comparison Tests'. They each use their own regulations to organise the way they prepare, run and analyse tests and give feedback on the results.

Spain: Each Autonomous Community develops its own tests and establishes the marking procedures. Except for the tests administered in grade 8 in Extremadura which are internally marked, either the marking of tests is exclusively entrusted to external markers or it is shared between the teachers of the school where it takes place and external examiners.

In the nine countries where internal markers, alone or under the supervision of external examiners, score low-stakes tests, they will have received centralised scoring guidelines, as is the case for high-stakes tests.

In Lithuania, Hungary, Romania and Montenegro, the written parts of the low-stakes tests are marked by teachers of the school where the tests take place. This also applies in Spain, for the 'EDEX Diagnostic Evaluation' administered in Extremadura in grade 8, as well as in Luxembourg for the 'National Tests' administered in English, French and German. In Montenegro, anonymous paper tests are scored by teachers who do not teach the students being tested, or sometimes by external teachers.

Only in Spain, Malta and Finland, is the marking of low-stakes tests shared between teachers of the school in which they takes place and external examiners. In Murcia and Cantabria in Spain, marking is assured internally; however, a sample of paper tests is either scored directly by external examiners or subject to a second scoring process by external specialists. In Navarre and for the 'Integral Evaluation of Bilingual Sections' in Extremadura, closed questions are electronically scored and open-ended questions are scored internally. In Malta and Finland, external examiners check a sample of examinations papers following the internal marking.

Most differences in how low-stakes tests are marked can be linked to their purpose (see Figure 5). The great majority of tests aimed at monitoring the whole education system are externally marked for all the skills assessed. The only countries where the national tests used for monitoring the education system as a whole are internally marked are Hungary and Montenegro. Conversely, most low-stakes tests, which have evaluating individual schools, classes or students as their main purpose rather than the monitoring of the education system as a whole, are internally marked; the only exceptions being Denmark and Liechtenstein ('Web-based Adaptive Test System'). Finally, the relationship between the purpose of the test and how it is marked is well illustrated by the case of Luxembourg. In this country, whereas the 'Standardised Tests', exclusively used for monitoring the whole education system, are computer-based, the 'National tests', primarily aimed at diagnostic purposes in assessing students' individual competences, are internally marked.

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GLOSSARY

Definitions

Central level: Top education level of education authority, located at national (state) level in the vast majority of countries. In some countries, however, other levels of authority (Communities, *Länder*, Autonomous Communities, etc.) are responsible for some or all areas relating to education. In Belgium, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, each part or region has its own education ministry.

High-stakes tests: National tests that summarise students' achievements at the end of a school year or an educational stage, prior to taking formal decisions about their future education. The results of these tests are used to inform decisions on student progression, including the award of certificates, streaming at ISCED levels 2 or 3, or selecting students for higher education institutions or courses. The latter refers to centralised or nationwide systems where, beyond the requirement to successfully complete upper secondary education, the results of national language tests administered at ISCED level 3 are used to select students for admission to higher education institutions or courses.

Languages: In this report, 'languages' refer to all languages except: the languages of instruction (which are usually national languages); regional languages; and ancient languages such as Latin and ancient Greek. English and Irish in Ireland, Finnish and Swedish in Finland, French and German in Luxembourg, and English in Malta are exceptions to the rule. For Ireland, Luxembourg and Finland, the languages mentioned are official languages and either of them can be the main language of instruction in schools, with the other language being taught as a second or in some cases as a foreign language. In Malta, English is both a language of instruction and taught as a second language. Also, given the level of decentralisation in education matters to the separate parts of the United Kingdom and the Autonomous Communities in Spain, the regional languages in these countries are considered to be within the scope of the report.

In this report, the term 'language' refers to the languages included in the scope of the study. In some cases though, when discussing individual national tests, the term 'foreign language' is also be used as in the vast majority of countries, languages within the scope of the report are regarded as foreign languages in the curriculum.

Low-stakes tests: National tests that have no formal consequences for student progression. Their main objective is to evaluate the performance of the education system as a whole so that policy can be adapted as necessary, or to evaluate performance and inform improvements in teaching and learning at school, class or individual student level.

National tests: Standardised tests/examinations set by central/top level public authorities and carried out under their responsibility. Standardised tests/examinations are any form of test that requires all test takers to (a) answer the same questions (or questions selected from a common bank of questions) and (b) is scored in a standard or consistent way. International tests or surveys such as SurveyLang are out of the scope of the data collection. Tests designed at school level are also out of the scope of the data collection, even if they are developed on the basis of a centrally designed framework of reference.

Country codes

EU	European Union	MT	Malta
BE	Belgium	NL	The Netherlands
BE fr	Belgium – French Community	AT	Austria
BE de	Belgium – German-speaking Community	PL	Poland
BE nl	Belgium – Flemish Community	PT	Portugal
BG	Bulgaria	RO	Romania
CZ	Czech Republic	SI	Slovenia
DK	Denmark	SK	Slovakia
DE	Germany	FI	Finland
EE	Estonia	SE	Sweden
IE	Ireland	UK	United Kingdom
EL	Greece	UK-ENG	England
ES	Spain	UK-WLS	Wales
FR	France	UK-NIR	Northern Ireland
HR	Croatia	UK-SCT	Scotland
IT	Italy	IS	Iceland
CY	Cyprus	LI	Liechtenstein
LV	Latvia	ME	Montenegro
LT	Lithuania	NO	Norway
LU	Luxembourg	RS	Serbia
HU	Hungary	TR	Turkey

* ISO code 3166. Provisional code which does not prejudice in any way the definitive nomenclature for this country, which will be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place on this subject at the United Nations (http://www.iso.org/iso/country_codes/iso_3166_code_lists.htm [accessed 25.9.2014]).

Statistical codes

: Data not available (–) Not applicable

Abbreviations and acronyms

CEFR The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

VET Vocational Education and Training

ISCED International Standard Classification of Education

Classifications

International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011)

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is an instrument suitable for compiling statistics on education internationally. It covers two cross-classification variables: levels and fields of education with the complementary dimensions of general/vocational/pre-vocational orientation and education-labour market destination. The last version, ISCED 2011 distinguishes eighth levels of education. Empirically, ISCED assumes that several criteria exist which can help allocate education programmes to levels of education. Depending on the level and type of education concerned, there is a need to establish a hierarchical ranking system between main and subsidiary criteria (typical entrance qualification, minimum entrance requirement, minimum age, staff qualification, etc.).

In the report, the ISCED 2011 classification is used, unless specified otherwise.

ISCED 2: Lower secondary education

Programmes at this level are typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from ISCED level 1. Students enter ISCED level 2 typically between ages 10 and 13 (age 12 being the most common).

ISCED 3: Upper secondary education

Programmes at this level are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Pupils enter this level typically between ages 14 and 16.

ANNEX

Table 1 lists all national tests by country. It also provides the number of tests and their names in English and in the original language. Finally, the educational grade(s) at which they are administered is (are) indicated.

Although the number of tests can be counted in various ways, e.g. they may be regarded as a separate test if they test students of different grades, or in different languages, or different skills, etc., in this report, **conventionally**, national tests are identified as being distinct only when they test students of different grades. In some countries, however, the same test, i.e. a test testing the same languages and skills at the same levels of competence, and for the same purposes can be administered at various grades. This is, for example, the case at the end of upper secondary education when students are allowed to take their end of cycle examination at different grades. Such a test, albeit administered at various grades, is regarded as one test. Conversely, when at the same grade, more than one test is administered, they are considered as distinct only when their main purposes vary.

Table 1: National tests in languages by country, with their name in English and the original language, and the educational grade(s) at which they are administered, ISCED levels 2 and 3, 2014/15

	Number of tests	Test name in English	Test name in original language	Grades
BE fr	1	Certificate of First Stage of Secondary Education	Certificat d'études du premier degré de l'enseignement secondaire	8
BE de	2	Certificate in French Language Studies B1	Nachweis grundlegender Kenntnisse in der Französischen Sprache, Niveau B1	9
		Certificate in French Language Studies B2	Nachweis grundlegender Kenntnisse in der Französischen Sprache, Niveau B2	12
BE nl (²⁰)	2	National Assessment Programme – French: Reading, Listening and Writing	Peilingen – Frans: lezen, luisteren en schrijven	8
		National Assessment Programme – French: Listening and Speaking	Peilingen – Frans: luisteren en spreken	12
BG	3	National External Examination	Национално външно оценяване (nacionalno vunshno ocenavane)	7
		National External Examination	национално външно оценяване (nacionalno vunshno ocenavane)	8
		National External Evaluation/Matriculation	национално външно оценяване (nacionalno vunshno ocenavane) / матура (matura))	12
CZ	3	Sample survey on pupils' results in the 4th and 8th grade of basic schools and pupils in the 2nd year of upper secondary vocational schools (²¹)	Výběrové ověřování výsledků žáků na úrovni 4. a 8. ročníků základních škol a 2. ročníků středních odborných škol	8
		Sample survey on pupils' results in the 4th and 8th grade of basic schools and pupils in the 2nd year of upper secondary vocational schools (²²)	Výběrové ověřování výsledků žáků na úrovni 4. a 8. ročníků základních škol a 2. ročníků středních odborných škol	11
		School Leaving Examination (common part)	Maturitní zkouška (společná část)	13
DK	4	National Test	Nationale test	8
		Examination after 9th form	Folkeskolens prøver Folkeskolens 9.-klasseprøve	10

(²⁰) Tests carried out within the framework of the National Assessment Programme (NAP). The focus of these tests varies as the subjects and skills tested as well as the age of the student population and the courses of study tested change across the years. The NAP was introduced in 2002 and since then it has focused on foreign languages only in 2007 (ISCED level 2) and 2012 (ISCED level 3). There are no plans for the NAP to focus again on foreign languages in secondary education until 2017 at the earliest.

(²¹) Last sample surveys testing foreign language competences were carried out in 2013/14.

(²²) Last sample surveys testing foreign language competences were carried out in 2013/14.

	Number of tests	Test name in English	Test name in original language	Grades
		Examination after 10th form	Folkeskolens 10. Klasseprøve Folkeskolens 10.-klasseprøve	11
		Upper Secondary Leaving Examinations	No common name, as occurs at different years in different upper secondary tracks	11,12,13
DE	2	Comparison tests/learning assessments (VERA)	Vergleichsarbeiten/ Lernstandserhebungen (VERA)	8
		National Assessment Study on Languages	Ländervergleich Sprachen	9
EE	2	Basic School Final Examinations with standardised assignments	Ühtsed põhikooli lõpuksamid	9
		External School Leaving Examinations ⁽²³⁾	Gümnaasiumi lõpuksamid	12
IE	2	Junior Certificate Examination	Junior Certificate Examination	11
		Leaving Certificate Examination	Leaving Certificate Examination	14
EL	1	Modern Foreign Languages Examination	Ειδικό Μάθημα Ξένης Γλώσσας	12
ES	2	Grade 8 National Tests (Valencia, Extremadura, Madrid, Murcia, Navarre and the Basque Country):		8
		Valencia: Diagnostic Assessment: Language Competence Test	Comunidad Valenciana: Evaluación de Diagnóstico: Prueba de Competencia en Comunicación Lingüística	
		Extremadura: EDEX Diagnostic Evaluation	Extremadura: Evaluación de Diagnóstico EDEX	
		Madrid: Test of Oral and Written Skills (CEFR A2, B1 and B2)	Madrid: Prueba Oral y Escrita (MCER A2, B1 y B2)	
		Murcia: Regional Diagnostic Evaluation	Murcia: Evaluación de Diagnóstico Regional	
		Navarre: Diagnostic Evaluation: Language competence in English	Navarra: Competencia lingüística en inglés. Evaluación diagnóstica	
		The Basque Country: Diagnostic Evaluation	El País Vasco: País Vasco: Evaluación Diagnóstica	
		Grade 10 National Tests (Canary Islands, Cantabria, Catalonia, Extremadura and Madrid):		10
		Canary Islands: CLIL students Accreditation Test in 10th – GESE Exams Trinity College	Islas Canarias: Pruebas de acreditación alumnado CLIL de 4º ESO – GESE Exams Trinity College	
		Cantabria: Standardised English Tests	Cantabria: Pruebas Estandarizadas de Inglés	
FR	2	CEDRE Assessment (Grade 9 sample-based subject evaluations)	Cycle des évaluations disciplinaires réalisées sur échantillons	9
		General and Technological Baccalaureate	Baccalauréat général et technologique	12
HR	1	State Matriculation Exam	Ispit državne mature	12
IT	1	National Examinations: Second Written Paper	Seconda prova scritta dell'Esame di Stato	13
CY	1	Pancyprrian Examinations	Παγκύπριες Εξετάσεις	12
LV	2	Grade 9 Foreign Language Examination	Eksāmens svešvalodā 9.klasei (angļu, vācu, krievu, franču val.)	9
		Centralised Secondary School Leaving Examination in Foreign Languages	Centralizētais eksāmens par vispārējās vidējās izglītības apguvi svešvalodā (angļu, vācu, krievu, franču val.)	12
LT	2	State Matriculation Examination in Foreign Languages	Užsienio kalbos valstybinis brandos egzaminas	12

⁽²³⁾ Since 2014, examinations in French, German and Russian have been replaced by international examinations leading to international certification. The National School Leaving Examination in English is still designed by a team of Estonian teachers, researchers and testing specialists.

	Number of tests	Test name in English	Test name in original language	Grades
LU		Foreign Language Speaking Credit*	Užsienio kalbos (anglų, prancūzų, rusų, vokiečių) įskaita*	12
		Foreign Language Standardised Test	Užsienio kalbos lygio nustatymo testas	10
	2	Standardised Tests	Epreuves Standardisées	9
		National Tests in English	Epreuves Communes Anglais	8 (at grade 9 for technical secondary education)
		National Tests in French*	Epreuves Communes Français*	9
		National Tests in German*	Epreuves Communes Allemand*	9
HU	4	Foreign Language Assessment	Idegen nyelvi mérés	6
		Foreign Language Assessment	Idegen nyelvi mérés	8
		Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination	Érettségi	12
		Target Language Assessment*	Célnyelvi mérés*	6
		Target Language Assessment*	Célnyelvi mérés*	8
		Target Language Assessment	Célnyelvi mérés	10
MT	7	Annual Secondary School Examinations	Annual Examinations for Secondary Schools	7
		Annual Secondary School Examinations	Annual Examinations for Secondary Schools	8
		Annual Secondary School Examinations	Annual Examinations for Secondary Schools	9
		Annual Secondary School Examinations	Annual Examinations for Secondary Schools	10
		Annual Secondary School Examinations	Annual Examinations for Secondary Schools	11
		MATSEC Secondary Education Certificate	MATSEC Secondary Education Certificate	11
		MATSEC Matriculation Certificate	MATSEC Matriculation Certificate	13
NL	3	National Examination VMBO	Centraal examen VMBO	10
		National Examination HAVO	Centraal examen HAVO	11
		National Examination VWO	Centraal examen VWO	12
AT	2	Assessment of National Education Standards	Überprüfung der Bildungsstandards	8
		Academic Secondary Schools (AHS) Standardised and Competence-oriented Matriculation Examination	Standardisierte kompetenzorientierte Reifeprüfung	12
PL	2	End of Lower Secondary Education Language Examination (Basic, Extended Level)	Egzamin gimnazjalny z języka obcego nowożytnego (poziom podstawowy lub poziom rozszerzony)	9
		Matriculation Language Examination (Basic, Extended, Bilingual level)	Egzamin maturalny z języka obcego nowożytnego (poziom podstawowy, poziom rozszerzony lub poziom dwujęzyczny)	12 (13 for end of technical upper secondary)
PT	2	Preliminary English Test ⁽²⁴⁾		9
		National Secondary Education Final Test	Exame Final Nacional do Ensino Secundário	11
		National Secondary Education Final Test*	Exame Final Nacional do Ensino Secundário*	11
RO	2	National Evaluation: Test in the Language and Communication Curriculum Area	Evaluarea Națională: test din aria curriculară "Limba și comunicare"	6
		National Baccalaureate Examination: Test C – Assessment of language skills in a foreign language	Examenul de bacalaureat național: proba C – Evaluarea competențelor lingvistice într-o limbă de circulație internațională	12, 13
SI	2	National Assessment of Knowledge	Nacionalno preverjanje znanja (NPZ)	9
		General Matriculation Examination	Splošna matura	13
		Vocational Matriculation Examination*	Poklicna matura*	13

⁽²⁴⁾ This test can lead to the award of an international proficiency certificate in English.

	Number of tests	Test name in English	Test name in original language	Grades
SK	1	School Leaving Examination: External and Internal Written Parts	Externá časť maturitnej skúšky a písomná forma internej časti maturitnej skúšky	13
FI	2	Second National Language: Swedish as B-language, grade 9; Finnish as A-language; or Native Level, grade 9	Toinen kotimainen kieli, ruotsi B-kielenä 9. vuosiluokalla, Toinen kotimainen kieli, suomi A-kielenä ja äidinkielenomainen suomi 9. vuosiluokalla	9
		Foreign Languages in Grade 9*	Vieraat kielet 9. Vuosiluokalla*	9
		Matriculation Examination (General Upper Secondary Education only)	Ylioppilastutkinto	12
SE	2	National Test	Nationellt prov	9
		National Test ⁽²⁵⁾	Nationellt prov	10-12
UK-ENG	3	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	11
		General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	12
		General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	13
UK-WLS	3	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	11
		General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	12
		General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	13
UK-NIR ⁽²⁶⁾	3	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	12
		General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	13
		General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	14
UK-SCT	3	National 5	National 5	11 (12-13 last year of upper sec. educ.)
		Higher	Higher	12 (13 last year of upper sec. schools)
		Advanced Higher	Advanced Higher	13
IS	1	Icelandic National Examinations	Sæmræmd könnunarpróf	10
LI	1	Defined Content Standards Tests	Standardprüfung	8
		Web-based Adaptive Test System: Grade 8 pupils*	Stellwerk 8*	8
ME	3	End of Second Cycle Assessment of Knowledge	Eksterno-interna provjera znanja na kraju drugog ciklusa	6
		End of Third Cycle Assessment of Knowledge	Eksterna provjera znanja na kraju trećeg ciklusa	9
		Matriculation Examination	Maturski ispit	13
		Professional Exam*	Stručni ispit*	13

⁽²⁵⁾ Different tests testing different languages exist at different levels of competence. These tests are administered at different grades.

⁽²⁶⁾ Students take their exams at the same age as those in Wales and England. They are however in different grades due to differences in the structure of the education systems.

	Number of tests	Test name in English	Test name in original language	Grades
NO	4	National Test – English	Nasjonale prøve - engelsk	8
		Lower Secondary School Leaving Examination – English	Grunnskole eksamen - engelsk	10
		Examination in Common Core Subjects - English	Fellesfag engelsk	11 (12 for VET)
		Examination in Common Core Subjects – Foreign Languages Level I or Level II	Fellesfag fremmedspråk nivå I eller nivå II	12 (13 last year of upper sec. educ.)
		Examination in Programme Subjects: English and/or Foreign Languages Level I, II or III*	Programfag engelsk og/eller fremmedspråk*	12 and/or 13 last year of upper sec. educ.)
RS	2	Entrance Examination for Bilingual Classes in Primary Schools	Пријемни испит за двојезична одељења у основној школи	6
		Entrance Examination for Bilingual Classes in Gymnasiums	Пријемни испит за двојезична одељења у гимназији	8
		Entrance Examination for Philological Gymnasiums and Classes*	Пријемни испит за филолошке гимназије и одељења*	8
TR	2	8th Grade Joint Examinations	Ortak sınav	8
		Undergraduate Placement Examination 5	Lisans Yerleşirme Sınavı LYS 5	12

National tests marked with an asterisk (*) are not considered as distinct and are thus not counted, as similar tests with the same purposes already exist at the same grade. This means that these tests are not included in the figures and not considered when tests are counted in the analysis. However, information on them is still provided in the notes or in the text when it is relevant.

Table 2: Use of high-stakes national test results in languages with respect to student progression, ISCED levels 2 and/or 3, 2014/15

		Selecting students for higher education institutions or courses			
		Streaming students at ISCED level 2 and/or 3		Certifying student achievement	
		ISCED level of test			
	Test name				
BE fr	Certificate of First Stage of Secondary Education	2	v		
BG	National External Evaluation/Matriculation	3	v		
CZ	School Leaving Examination (common part)	3	v		
DK	Examination after 9th form	2	v	v	
	Examination after 10th form	2	v	v	
	Upper Secondary Leaving Examinations	3	v		
EE	Basic School Final Examinations with standardised assignments	2	v		
	External School Leaving Examinations	3	v		
IE	Junior Certificate Examination	2	v		
	Leaving Certificate Examination	3	v		v
EL	Modern Foreign Languages Examination	3			v
FR	General and Technological Baccalaureate	3	v		
HR	State Matriculation Exam	3	v		v
IT	National Examinations: Second Written Paper	3	v		
CY	Pancyprion Examinations	3	v		v
LV	Grade 9 Foreign Language Examination	2	v		
	Centralised Secondary School Leaving Examination in Foreign Languages	3	v		v
LT	State Matriculation Examination in Foreign Languages	3	v		v
	Foreign Language Speaking Credit*	3	v		v
LU ⁽²⁷⁾	National Tests in English	2		v	
	National Tests in German*	2		v	
	National Tests in French*	2		v	

⁽²⁷⁾ The use of the results of the 'National Tests' administered in English, French and German to direct students to the appropriate school pathway at ISCED level 3 applies only to students enrolled in technical lower secondary education.

		Selecting students for higher education institutions or courses			
		Streaming students at ISCED level 2 and/or 3			
		Certifying student achievement			
		ISCED level of test			
	Test name				
HU	Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination	3	v		v
MT	MATSEC Secondary Education Certificate	3	v		v
	MATSEC Matriculation Certificate	3	v		v
NL	National Examination VMBO	2	v		
	National Examination HAVO	3	v		
	National Examination VWO	3	v		
AT	Academic Secondary Schools (AHS) Standardised and Competence-oriented Matriculation Examination	3	v		
PL	End of Lower Secondary Education Language Examination (Basic, Extended Level)	2	v	v	
	Matriculation Language Examination (Basic, Extended, Bilingual level)	3	v		v
PT	National Secondary Education Final Test	3	v		
	National Secondary Education Final Test*	3	v		
RO	National Baccalaureate Examination: test C – Assessment of language skills in a foreign language	3	v		
SI	General Matriculation Examination	3	v		v
	Vocational Matriculation Examination*	3	v		v
SK	School Leaving Examination: External and Internal Written Parts	3	v		
FI	Matriculation Examination	3	v		v
SE	National Test	2	v		
	National Test	3	v		
UK- ENG	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	3	v	v	v
	General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	3	v	v	v
	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	3	v		v
UK- WLS	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	3	v	v	v
	General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	3	v	v	v
	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	3	v		v
UK- NIR	General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)	3	v	v	v
	General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level	3	v	v	v
	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level, or A2)	3	v		v
UK- SCT	National 5	3	v		v
	Higher	3	v		v
	Advanced Higher	3	v		v
ME	Matriculation Examination	3	v		v
	Professional Exam*	3	v		v
NO	Lower Secondary School Leaving Examination – English	2	v	v	
	Examination in Common Core Subjects – English	3	v		v
	Examination in Common Core Subjects – Foreign Languages Level I or Level II	3	v		v
	Examination in Programme Subjects: English and/or Foreign Languages Level I, II or III*	3	v		v
RS	Entrance Examination for Bilingual Classes in Primary Schools	2		v	
	Entrance Examination for Bilingual Classes in Gymnasiums	2		v	
	Entrance Examination for Philological Gymnasiums and Classes*	2		v	
TR	8th Grade Joint Examinations	2	v	v	
	Undergraduate Placement Examination 5	3	v		v

Table 3: Main purposes of low-stakes tests in languages, ISCED level 2 and 3, 2014/15

	Test name	Evaluating teaching and learning at school/ class/		
		ISCED level of test	Evaluating the education system	student level
BE de	Certificate in French Language Studies B1	3	v	
	Certificate in French Language Studies B2	3	v	
BE nl	National Assessment Programme – French: Reading, Listening and Writing	2	v	v
	National Assessment Programme – French: Listening and Speaking	3	v	v
BG	National External Examination	2	v	
	National External Examination	2	v	
CZ	Sample survey on pupils' results in the 4th and 8th grade of basic schools and pupils in the 2nd year of upper secondary vocational schools	2	v	v
	Sample survey on pupils' results in the 4th and 8th grade of basic schools and pupils in the 2nd year of upper secondary vocational schools	3	v	v
DK	National Test	2		v
DE	VERA Comparison Tests	2		v
	National Assessment Study	2	v	v
ES	Grade 8 National Tests (Valencia, Extremadura, Madrid, Navarre, Murcia and the Basque Country): Valencia: Diagnostic Assessment: Language Competence Test Extremadura: EDEX Diagnostic Evaluation Madrid: Test of Oral and Written Skills (CEFR A2, B1 and B2) Murcia: Regional Diagnostic Evaluation Navarre: Diagnostic Evaluation: Language Competence in English The Basque Country: Diagnostic Evaluation	2	v	v
	Grade 10 National Tests (Canary Islands, Cantabria, Catalonia, Extremadura and Madrid): Canary Islands: CLIL Students' Accreditation Test in 10th Grade – GESE Exams Trinity College Cantabria: Standardised English Tests Catalonia: Lower Secondary Education Evaluation Extremadura: Integral Evaluation of Bilingual Sections Madrid: Test of Oral and Written Skills (CEFR A2, B1, B2 and C1)	2	v	v
FR	CEDRE Assessment	2	v	
LT	Foreign language Standardised Test	2		v
LU	Standardised Tests	2	v	
	National Tests in English	2		v
	National Tests in French*	2		v
	National Tests in German*	2		v
HU	Foreign Language Assessment	2	v	v
	Foreign Language Assessment	2	v	v
	Target Language Assessment*	2	v	v
	Target Language Assessment*	2	v	v
	Target Language Assessment	3	v	v
MT	Annual Secondary School Examinations	2		v
	Annual Secondary School Examinations	2		v
	Annual Secondary School Examinations	2		v
	Annual Secondary School Examinations	3		v
	Annual Secondary School Examinations	3		v
AT	Assessment of National Educational Standards	2	v	v
PT	Preliminary English Test	2	v	v

	Test name	Evaluating teaching and learning at school/ class/		
		ISCED level of test	Evaluating the education system	student level
RO	National Evaluation: Test in the Language and Communication Curriculum Area	2		v
SI	National Assessment of Knowledge	2	v	v
FI	Second National Language: Swedish as B-language, Grade 9; Finnish as A-language; or Native Level, Grade 9	2	v	v
	Foreign Languages in Grade 9*	2	v	v
IS	Icelandic National Examinations	2	v	
LI	Defined Content Standards Tests	2	v	v
	Web-based Adaptive Test System: Grade 8 pupils*	2		v
ME	End of Second Cycle External/Internal Assessment	2	v	v
	End of Third Cycle External Assessment	2	v	v
NO	National Test – English	2	v	v

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Languages in Secondary Education: An Overview of National Tests in Europe – 2014/15

This Eurydice report provides a comparative overview of the national tests in Europe assessing the language competences of secondary school students. The analysis covers aspects such as the increasing importance of national tests in languages, the objectives of the tests, the skills tested, the means developed by countries aiming at ensuring consistent and reliable scoring procedures, and the influence of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages on the national tests.

The report includes the 28 EU Member States as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, Montenegro and Serbia. The reference year is 2014/15.

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://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>.

