



# SPAIN

## INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

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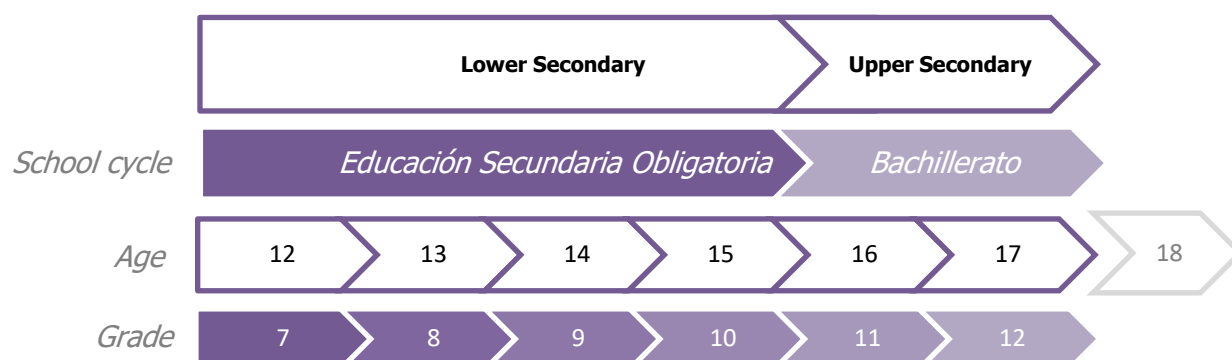
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The information below gives an overview of procedures<sup>1</sup> for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on data gathered in February 2021.

## GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. General upper Secondary School (*Bachillerato*) has three branches<sup>2</sup>, with the first two being the ones most commonly offered: Science and Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences (divided into two tracks), Arts.

### Graduation and Certification

Pupils who pass all the subjects of the *Bachillerato* are awarded the *Bachillerato* certificate. The certificates are issued by the relevant education authority in the Autonomous Community where the school is located<sup>3</sup>. Certificates include the following information:

- The specific branch or branches studied that have been passed in the final assessment by teachers at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of *Bachillerato* (12<sup>th</sup> grade).
- The final mark for the *Bachillerato*, which is based on the average of the grades obtained in the different subjects in the two last school years.

The *Bachillerato* certificate provides access to higher education studies, although pupils may have to pass specific entrance examinations: A-levels (EBAU).

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

<sup>2</sup> This is valid until the school year 2021/2022. As from 2022/2023 there will be four branches: Sciences and Technology; Humanities and Social Sciences; Arts; General.

<sup>3</sup> Only for Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish schools abroad and CIDEAD (national online school) certificates are issued directly by the Minister for Education and Vocational Training.

## INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM SPAIN

### Age and grade

Most pupils participate in mobility in grade 11 (age 16-17), although some may go in grade 10.<sup>4</sup> Pupils do not generally go on an exchange in grade 12 because they need to take the entrance exams for university.

### Registration in the sending school

If you take part in a mobility programme outside of a school-to-school partnership, you are not enrolled in your home school, which therefore cannot guarantee that you will be readmitted, although most schools would be able to accept pupils upon their return. If there is no place available in the school of origin, you need to apply for a place through the Education Inspection office (*Inspeccion educativa*), a public institution which ensures that the education law is respected, including the fact that all pupils in compulsory education age attend school, i.e until grade 10. If you go on exchange during the 11th or 12th grade, which are not part of compulsory education, the government will not be able to help you in finding a place in an upper secondary school on your return.

### Funding for the sending school

Public schools do not lose funding for individual pupils while they study abroad, as public funding is based on a given range of pupils enrolled in the school.

## RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either less than a school year, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information on recognition procedures for periods abroad shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year in Spain. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered.

The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

*Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>5</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than a full school year. In the case of a full school year abroad the procedure described below applies, on the top of a possible learning agreement.*

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<sup>4</sup> E. Briga, 'Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning', EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

## Periods abroad until grade 9

There is no need for official recognition if you are in the first three years of compulsory secondary education (grade 7-9). In these cases, the school decides on your admission based on applicable national regulations (e.g. age, academic level, course done abroad, etc.) and therefore you are re-integrated in your class on return after the period spent abroad which is usually less than a school year.

## Periods abroad in grades 10-12

### Periods of between 2 month and less than a full school year

If you enrol in a mobility for periods of between 2 and 6 months you can be re-integrated in your class on return, although the longer the period abroad, a catch up plan might be needed and the reintegration process might be difficult.

### A full school year

Official recognition of studies for grades 10-12 is managed by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) or Regional Authorities<sup>6</sup> and is applicable only to periods of at least one full school year abroad<sup>7</sup>. You need to meet the requirements set out in the Tables of Equivalence approved by the Ministry of Education according to bilateral agreements and treaties with the other countries<sup>8</sup>. These tables set out the specific criteria for each country (e.g. subjects to take, minimum number of credits, level of enrolment, examinations, etc.). Therefore, recognition of study abroad is based on harmonising the sending and host school curricula and the transcript of marks, and depends on the bilateral agreement with the host country.

The few pupils who spend their last year of upper secondary school abroad may still access the recognition procedure. However, if you wish to enrol in university and need to take an entrance exam, you can do it in June or in September<sup>9</sup>. If you have not returned to Spain by the time the entrance exams are due to take place, you can take the exam through the UNED (Universidad a distancia)<sup>10</sup>. This timing of the university entrance exam can be an obstacle if you chose to go on exchange in your last year of general schooling.

The criteria set by the Table of equivalence might not be easy to meet. It is easier to achieve recognition of study periods abroad if you spend a full school year either in a host country where schools offer a multitude of subjects (e.g. US) or in a country with a similar distribution of subjects

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<sup>6</sup> The Ministry is ultimately the authority which validates the recognition of learning periods abroad. The Ministry manages also the recognition procedure besides three specific cases: Catalonia, Galicia and Madrid, where it can be managed through the Subdelegación de Gobierno (which is the institution that represents the central government at the province level).

<sup>7</sup> Law issued originally in 1988 and addressed in the Law of Education of 2006 100.

<sup>8</sup> Country specific regulations in relation to recognition of learning periods abroad and diplomas  
<http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/dam/jcr:e3542474-9d1d-4f61-88ca-cb194ff8da05/norm-paises.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The second convocation is in September in all Autonomous communities except for Navarre, Basque Countries and Asturias which hold it at the end of July.

<sup>10</sup> Resolution of 13 March 2020, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2020-3950>

(e.g. some Länder in Germany): this allows you to build your study plan in order to match the requirements.

## INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN SPAIN

### Registration in the host school

As a hosted pupil, you are enrolled as a regular pupil. In the case of exchanges outside the school-to-school partnerships, you need to bring documentation from the sending school, such as marks and a certificate of completion of the previous school years.

You are usually placed in classes according to your age. Sometimes, if there are subjects you study at your sending school which are not offered at the same grade in the host country, you may attend those subjects in a lower or higher grade. Individualised schedules are therefore drawn up which do not necessarily align with a given grade: you may attend some lessons from grade 11 and some from grade 10 or 12<sup>11</sup>. You can also attend the 12th grade.

Hosted pupils can be enrolled in the so-called Aulas de enlace (Bridge classes) which are mainly designed to help migrant pupils with languages (Basque, Catalan, Galician, Spanish...) or with some specific subjects they may be weaker at.

### Funding for the host school

The funding of the school is not impacted by the presence of the hosted pupil.

### Certification for hosted pupils

You obtain a certificate with your marks and subjects at the end of the school year.

### Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

You can obtain a *Bachillerato* certificate only if you have obtained recognition of your previous studies (corresponding to grade 11th) from the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP) and have passed all the subjects of 12th grade in Spain. However, this is a rare practice.

## TESTIMONIAL

### Luciana from Spain: 3 months to Germany

*"Learning about different cultures helped me better understand the world."*

I went on exchange to live an adventure and learn about diversity, and I did. It was interesting to see whether the stereotypes about that culture were real or not. For example, in Germany it was very weird for me not to hug people when I first met them because that is not so usual there as it is in Spain.

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<sup>11</sup> This is possible because usually compulsory Secondary (ESO) and General Upper Secondary (Bachillerato) are in the same school building.

Before leaving I took some German classes and used some apps to learn some vocabulary.

I was lucky enough not to encounter any major problems, and if I did, while travelling for example, I would ask my host family for help.

Talking about travelling, the day I arrived in Germany there were hundreds of students at the airport and we all had to get on the train to reach our host families. Everybody had at least two heavy suitcases and getting them on the train wasn't easy. Suddenly a volunteer from the exchange organisation realised that we were on the wrong train, so we had to take the suitcases off the train and luckily nobody got lost in the process.

### *The exchange recognition with a change of plans*

Upon return, I was able to enrol back in my class and it was easy to catch up with all the subjects except for Mathematics, Biology, Physics and Chemistry. However, during the Christmas holidays I realised I wanted to study International Relations, and didn't need to catch up with Maths etc., so in January I switched my curriculum and added Latin and Economy. I found these easier and I got good grades.

The decision to change the curriculum was influenced by the exchange, as it increased my interest in history, art, and languages. Thanks to this experience, I also made many friends and understood better the world I live in...definitely recommended!

*The information and views set out in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in it. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.*