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# The German language in education in France (Alsace) (3rd Edition)

Dominique Huck, Pascale Erhart

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# GERMAN

## The German language in education in France (Alsace)

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition



Regional Dossier series

The German language in education  
in France (Alsace)

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

Dominique Huck  
Pascale Erhart  
*University of Strasbourg, France*

**Edited by**  
Katharina Thomas  
Jan Ybema  
Martine Jansen  
Charlie Robinson-Jones

*Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning*

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## Foreword

### *background*

Regional and minority languages are languages that differ from the official state language. The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning uses the following definition for these languages, as stated in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML):

Regional and minority languages are languages traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population; they are different from the official language(s) of that state, and they include neither dialects of the official language(s) of the state nor the languages of migrants.

The Mercator European Research Centre aims to acquire, apply, and circulate knowledge about these regional and minority languages in education. An important means to achieve this goal is the Regional Dossier series: documents that provide the most essential features of the education system of regions with a regional or minority language.

### *aim*

The aim of the Regional Dossier series is to provide concise descriptions of regional or minority languages in education, mainly in Europe but also in other parts of the world. Aspects that are addressed include features of the education system, recent educational policies, main actors, legal arrangements, and support structures, as well as quantitative aspects such as the number of schools, teachers, and pupils, and financial investments. This fixed structure allows easy comparison between the Regional Dossiers in the series.

### *target group*

The Regional Dossiers several purposes and are relevant for policymakers, researchers, teachers, students, and journalists who wish to explore developments in regional or minority language schooling in Europe. They can also serve as a first orientation towards further research, or function as a source of ideas for improving educational provisions.

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## ***link with Eurydice***

The Regional Dossiers follow the format of Eurydice – the information network on education in Europe – in order to link the regional descriptions with those of national education systems. Eurydice provides information on the administration and structure of national education systems in the member states of the European Union.

## ***contents***

Every Regional Dossier begins with an introduction about the region in question, followed by six chapters that each deal with a specific level of the education system (e.g. primary education). Chapters 8 and 9 cover the main lines of research on education of the minority language under discussion, and the prospects for the minority language in general and in education in particular, respectively. Chapter 10 provides a summary of statistics. Lists of (legal) references and useful addresses regarding the minority language are given at the end of the Regional Dossier.

## ***Mercator's Wiki on Minority Language Learning***

Mercator's Wiki on Minority Language Learning serves as an online information platform for regional and minority languages with limited or no presence in the education system, complementing the Regional Dossier series. While sharing a similar aim and target audience as the Regional Dossiers, the Wiki on Minority Language Learning has a more flexible structure to accommodate educational arrangements that are susceptible to change. Contributions to the online platform are managed by the main editor at the Mercator European Research Centre.

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## Regional Dossier series

# The German language in education in France (Alsace)

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

**Dominique Huck**  
**Pascale Erhart**  
*University of Strasbourg*

### Summary

#### **German and its status in education in France (Alsace)**

In France, including the region of Alsace, German is taught as a foreign language. German is also taught as the regional language in Alsace and is presented in the following two forms in the national education legislation: the Alemannic and Franconian dialects (known as Alsatian), and Standard German. The latter is considered the written form of the regional language, although Alsatian can also be written. German in Alsace therefore has a dual status as both a modern foreign language, like in the rest of France, and as a regional language. Bilingual curricula start at the beginning of compulsory education (age 3) and continue until age 16. Since neither Standard German nor the Alsatian dialects have a legal status in the education system, bilingual programmes are only offered upon parental request.

#### **German in educational research**

Fundamental and applied research on language education in Alsace is primarily conducted by researchers in the research unit LiLPa (UR 1339 Linguistique, Langues, Parole) at the University of Strasbourg. The main focus is typically on French-German education at the (inter)national level, with less emphasis on the regional level. Publications in Standard German are intended for German-speaking audiences. At the time of writing this Regional Dossier, there were no publications available in Alsatian.

#### **Prospects for German in France (Alsace)**

French-German bilingual teaching undoubtedly equips many children and young people with valuable skills. However, in its current form, it fails to revitalise the use of Alsatian. Historically, Alsatian has been part of the German language, but Standard German has never been, nor is it currently, used for everyday oral communication. The links between Alsatian and German remain unclear to users. The matter of whether Alsatian should be taught is dependent upon the desires of Alsatian society and the decisions made by elected officials.



## Die deutsche Sprache im französischen Bildungswesen (Elsass)

3. Auflage

**Dominique Huck**

**Pascale Erhart**

*Universität Straßburg*

### Zusammenfassung

#### **Deutsch und sein Status im Bildungswesen in Frankreich (Elsass)**

In Frankreich, auch in der Region Elsass, wird Deutsch als Fremdsprache unterrichtet. Deutsch wird im Elsass ebenfalls als Regionalsprache gelehrt und ist in der nationalen Bildungsgesetzgebung in den folgenden zwei Formen vertreten: alemannische und fränkische Dialekte (meistens als „Elsässisch“ bezeichnet) und Standarddeutsch. Letzteres gilt als die schriftliche Form der Regionalsprache, obwohl auch Elsässisch geschrieben werden kann. Deutsch im Elsass hat also einen Doppelstatus als moderne Fremdsprache, wie im übrigen Frankreich, und als Regionalsprache. Der zweisprachige Unterricht beginnt mit dem Beginn der Schulpflicht (3 Jahre) und dauert bis zum Alter von 16 Jahren. Da jedoch weder das Hochdeutsche noch die elsässischen Dialekte einen *gesetzlichen* Status im Bildungssystem haben, werden zweisprachige Programme nur auf Antrag der Eltern angeboten.

#### **Deutsch in der Bildungsforschung**

Die grundlegende und angewandte Forschung zur Sprachausbildung im Elsass wird hauptsächlich von Forschern der Forschungseinheit LiLPa (UR 1339 Linguistique, Langues, Parole) an der Universität Straßburg durchgeführt. Der Schwerpunkt liegt in der Regel auf dem deutsch-französischen Unterricht auf (inter)nationaler Ebene, weniger auf der regionalen Ebene. Die Veröffentlichungen in Standarddeutsch richten sich an ein deutschsprachiges Publikum, nicht an ein französisches. Zum Zeitpunkt der Erstellung dieses Regionaldossiers gab es keine Veröffentlichungen in elsässischer Sprache.

#### **Perspektiven für das Deutsche in Frankreich (Elsass)**

Der deutsch-französische zweisprachige Unterricht vermittelt zweifellos vielen Kindern und Jugendlichen wertvolle Kompetenzen. In seiner jetzigen Form gelingt es ihm jedoch nicht, den Gebrauch des Elsässischen wiederzubeleben. Historisch gesehen ist das Elsässische ein Teil der deutschen Sprache, aber das Standarddeutsche wurde nie und wird auch heute nicht für die alltägliche mündliche Kommunikation verwendet. Die Verbindung zwischen Elsässisch und Deutsch bleibt für die Benutzer unklar. Die Frage, ob Elsässisch unterrichtet werden soll, hängt von den Wünschen und dem Willen der elsässischen Gesellschaft und den Entscheidungen ihrer gewählten Vertreter ab.

# D ditsch Sproch im Bildungsbereich in Frànkriich (Elsàss)

3. Ufflàà

**Dominique Huck**  
**Pascale Erhart**  
*Strossburier Universität*

### Zàmmefàssung

#### **S Ditsche un de Stàtus vom Ditsche im Bildungsbereich in Frànkriich (Elsàss)**

In Frànkriich, un au im Elsàss, word Ditsch àls Fremdsproch unterricht. Ditsch word im Elsàss àwer au àls Regionàlsproch gelehrt und isch in de nàtionàl Bildungsgesetzgawung in zwei Forme vetratete: d àlemànische un frànkische Dialekte (bekànt àls Elsassisch) un Stàndàrdditsch. Zall gilt àls schriftliche Form von de Regionàlsproch, obwohl àss Elsassisch au gschriwwe kànn ware. Ditsch het àlso im Elsàss e doppelter Stàtus àls moderni Fremdsproch, wie im Rascht von Frànkriich, un àls Regionàlsproch im Elsàss. De zweisprochig Unterricht fàngt àm Ànfàng von de Schuelpflicht (mit 3 Jahr) àn, un düürt bis zuem Àlter von 16 Jahr. Mitdem àss s Ditsche un s Elsassische im Bildungssystem kenn gsetzlicher Stàtus hàn, isch de zweisprochig Unterricht kenn Pflicht und word numme àngebote, wenn er von de Eltere velàngt word.

#### **Ditsch in de Bildungsforschung**

D Sprocheforschung un d Sprochüssbildung im Elsàss ware hauptsachlich von de Forscher in de Forschungseinheit LiLPa (UR 1339 Linguistique, Langues, Parole) àn de Strossburier Universität gfuehrt. De Schwerpunkt lejt gewöhnlich uff'm ditsch-franzeesche Unterricht uf (inter)nàtionaler Ewene, un wenjer uf de regionàl Ewene. D Vereffentlichunge uff Hochditsch sin fer e ditschsprachiges Publikum gschriwwe, un nit fer s frànzeesche Publikum. Bis jetzt gibt's kenn wisseschaftliche Vereffentlichung uff Elsassisch.

#### **Perspektive fer s Ditsche in Frànkriich (Elsàss)**

De ditsch-frànzeesch zweisprochig Unterricht bringt bstimmt in viel Kinder un jüengere Litt wartvollli Kompetenze, àwer in sinere aktuelle Form halft er nit, fer s Elsassische làwandig ze hálte oder wider uflawe lon. Üss ere historische Sicht isch s Elsassische e Teil von de ditsch Sproch, awer s Stàndàrdditsche isch noch nie in de àlltájliche Kommunikàtion benutzt wore un word s àls nocht nitt. D Vebindung zwishe Elsassisch un Ditsch isch fer viel Elsasser nit klàr. D Fröj, ob Elsassisch-Unterricht gan soll ware, hangt vom Wille von de elsassische Gsellschàft und von de Entscheidung von ihre gewählte Vetrater àb.

## Série des dossiers régionaux

# La langue allemande dans l'enseignement en France (Alsace)

3ème édition

**Dominique Huck**

**Pascale Erhart**

*Université de Strasbourg*

### Résumé

#### **Statut de la langue allemande dans l'enseignement en France**

En France, y compris en Alsace, l'allemand est enseigné comme langue étrangère. L'allemand est également enseigné comme langue régionale en Alsace et se présente sous les deux formes suivantes dans la réglementation de l'éducation nationale: les dialectes alémaniques et franciques (appelés « alsacien ») et l'allemand standard. Ce dernier est considéré comme la forme écrite de la langue régionale, bien que l'alsacien puisse également être écrit. L'allemand en Alsace a donc un double statut de langue vivante étrangère, comme dans le reste de la France, et de langue régionale. Les cursus bilingues commencent dès le début de la scolarité obligatoire (3 ans) et se poursuivent jusqu'à l'âge de 16 ans. Cependant, comme ni l'allemand standard ni les dialectes alsaciens n'ont de statut légal dans le système éducatif, les programmes bilingues ne sont proposés qu'à la demande des parents.

#### **Recherche à propos de l'enseignement de la langue allemande**

La recherche fondamentale et appliquée sur l'enseignement des langues en Alsace est principalement menée par les chercheurs de l'unité de recherche LiLPa (UR 1339 Linguistique, Langues, Parole) de l'Université de Strasbourg. L'accent est généralement mis sur l'enseignement franco-allemand au niveau (inter)national, et moins sur le niveau régional. Les publications en allemand standard sont destinées à un public germanophone plutôt qu'à un public français. Au moment de la rédaction de ce Dossier régional, aucune publication n'était disponible en alsacien.

#### **Perspectives pour la langue allemande en France (Alsace)**

L'enseignement bilingue français-allemand permet sans aucun doute à de nombreux enfants et jeunes d'acquérir des compétences précieuses. Cependant, dans sa forme actuelle, il ne parvient pas à revitaliser l'utilisation de l'alsacien. Historiquement, l'alsacien est apparenté à la langue allemande, mais l'allemand standard n'a jamais été, ni n'est actuellement, utilisé pour la communication orale quotidienne. Les liens entre le dialecte et l'allemand restent flous pour les locuteurs. La question de l'enseignement de l'alsacien dépend des souhaits de la société alsacienne et des décisions prises par ses élus.



## List of Abbreviations

<b>ATSEM</b>	Agent Territorial Spécialisé des Écoles Maternelles (Territorial agent specialised in nursery schools)
<b>CAP</b>	Certificat d’Aptitude Professionnelle (Certificate of professional competence)
<b>CAPES</b>	Certificat d’Aptitude au Professorat de l’Enseignement du Second degré (Secondary School Teaching Certificate)
<b>CE1</b>	Cours Élémentaire 1 <sup>ère</sup> année (Elementary Course 1; Primary school 2, ages 7–8)
<b>CE2</b>	Cours Élémentaire 2 <sup>e</sup> année (Elementary Course 2; Primary school 3, ages 8–9)
<b>CeA</b>	Collectivité européenne d’Alsace (European Collectivity of Alsace)
<b>CFA</b>	Centre de Formation d’Apprentis (Vocational Training Centre)
<b>CM1</b>	Cours Moyen 1 <sup>ère</sup> année (Middle Course 1; Primary school 4, ages 9–10)
<b>CM2</b>	Cours Moyen 2 <sup>e</sup> année (Elementary Course 2; Primary school 5, ages 10–11)
<b>CP</b>	Cours préparatoire (Preparatory course; Primary school 1, ages 6–7)
<b>DASEN</b>	Directeur Académique des Services de l’Éducation Nationale (Academic Director of National Education Services)
<b>GS</b>	Grande Section de maternelle (Nursery school 3, ages 5–6)
<b>INSPÉ</b>	Institut Supérieur du Professorat et de l’Éducation (Faculty of Education and Lifelong learning)
<b>MEEF</b>	Masters Métiers de l’Enseignement de l’Éducation et de la Formation (Master’s in Teaching, Education and Training)
<b>MS</b>	Moyenne Section de maternelle (Nursery school 2, ages 4–5)
<b>PS</b>	Petite Section de maternelle (Nursery school 1, ages 3–4)



## Glossary

Académie de Strasbourg	School administrative unit encompassing the whole of Alsace (the two departments of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin).
Agrégation	Competitive examination for becoming a secondary school teacher in the French public education system. <i>Professeurs agrégés</i> are distinguished from <i>professeurs certifiés</i> recruited through the CAPES training programme.
Collectivité européenne d'Alsace	Political and territorial authority that unites the departments (territorial units) of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin, which overlap with the <i>Académie de Strasbourg</i> .
Collège	Schooling for 11–15-year-olds (= secondary I).
DASEN	The <i>Directeur Académique des Services de l'Éducation Nationale</i> (DASEN; Academic Director of National Education Services) represents the Minister of National Education and the <i>Recteur d'Académie</i> in a department and directs the education services in that department.
Lycée	Schooling for 15–18-year-olds (= secondary II).
Préfet	Representative of the State in a department.
Préfet de région	Representative of the State in a region.
Recteur d'académie	Chief education officer who represents the Minister of Education in an Académie and leads the Académie.

# 1 Introduction

## *language*

The very title of this Regional Dossier raises a problem in defining the “regional language” on which it focuses. A survey conducted in 2022 revealed that 73% of the Alsatian population considers Alsatian to be the “regional language of Alsace”, 15% thinks that the regional languages are Alsatian and German, and 1% thinks that it is German (CeA, 2022). This highlights a dissensus between the opinion of the population and the politically formulated definitions, particularly in the field of education. From an institutional point of view, German is considered a “regional language” in education in Alsace. Nevertheless, for the population, German is only very partially a “regional language” and sometimes also a cross-border standard language of proximity (Germany and Switzerland). In fact, German is, to a greater or lesser degree, only seen as a foreign language by the inhabitants of Alsace, where it is in fact taught as a foreign language, even if it is a close one.

Historically, the generic term by which Alsatians referred to their language was “Ditsch/Deutsch” (“German”) until the beginning of the 20th century, then it became more identity-based, changing to “Elsasserditsch” (“Alsatian German/German spoken in Alsace”) and then into “Elsassisch”. “Ditsch” or “Hochditsch” refer to German (standard or written) as it is spoken in Germany. In everyday language today, a distinction is generally made between the oral dialectal varieties called “Alsatian” (“Elsassisch”) or “dialect” on the one hand, and “German” (“Ditsch” or “Hochditsch”) the standard variety, written and spoken in Germany, on the other.

In political or media discourse, the term “regional language” is frequently used, with the context determining whether “Alsatian” or “German” is being referred to. In the educational context, “regional language” almost always means “German” (when it is Alsatian, it is explicitly stated). In this Regional Dossier, any mention of the regional language in schools should be understood as “German”, whether as the language taught or the language of instruction. Any reference to Alsatian will be explicitly stated.

Alsatian is the hyperonym for the Alemannic and Franconian dialects used in Alsace. It was through the arrival of the Alamans and the Franks in today’s Alsatian area (see [Figure 1](#)) at the end of the 5th and beginning of the 6th centuries that these languages were introduced into Alsace and supplanted the varieties of Gallo-Romance that were being used. While these Germanic languages have changed over time, they have always been used by the inhabitants as a language for interaction and communication, even today.

**Figure 1** Alsace in Europe.



*Note.* Adapted from Alexrk2 (2010) and TUBS (2011).

Alsace consists of two departments (French: *départements*), namely Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin, and was an autonomous region until 2015. In 2016, a single region called Région Grand Est was created, encompassing the former regions of Alsace, Lorraine, and Champagne-Ardenne. In 2021, the two departments merged to become the European Collectivity of Alsace (French: *Collectivité européenne d'Alsace* – CeA; Alsatian: *D'Europäischa Gebiatskärwerschäft Elsàss*; German: *Europäische Gebietskörperschaft Elsass*), although they continue to exist as separate administrative districts of the state.

Geographically, the Alsatian area is situated at the heart of Europe, in the north-eastern corner of France, and in the southwest of the German-speaking area (see Figure 1). This situation is the result of a series of historical events (see Table 1 for a historical overview).

Throughout the Holy Roman Empire, of which much of Alsace had been a part since its creation in 962, writing in the language of the people (as opposed to Latin) accelerated during the Middle Ages, particularly in literature, but also in city administrations. With the Reformation, there was a disjunction between the Alemannic and Franconian oral and written languages, on the one hand, and the written language strongly influenced by Luther, on the other, which was based on languages located geographically in a much more northeastern

part of the Empire. This written language, used by writers close to the Reformation, contributed greatly to the constitution of a common German written language, along with all the literary writings that were to be disseminated on a large scale since the invention of the printing press.

From a geopolitical perspective, Alsace was integrated into the Kingdom of France at the end of the 17th century, after the Treaties of Westphalia (1648) were signed and the capture of Strasbourg in 1681. French was not widely adopted by the inhabitants until the middle of the 19th century, and it was mainly the dominant strata who learned it if they did not already know it. After the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the German Empire incorporated Alsace and part of Lorraine as an “Empire Land” (Reichsland) where German became the official language.

During the 20th century, after Alsace became a part of France again following World War I, French began to be reintroduced in schools, particularly after World War II, during which Alsace was integrated de facto and not de jure into Nazi Germany (1940–1945). Until the middle of the 20th century, German dialects were used in Alsace (with French from 1918 onwards, but as a much less known and used language), while standard German, with French, depending on the writers' proficiency, were used for writing.

**Table 1** Brief history of the political and state affiliation of today's Alsace.

Period	Approximate duration	Political sphere	State framework
5th–10th centuries	500 years	Germanic	Merovingian dynasty, Carolingian dynasty, etc.
10th–17th centuries	700 years	Germanic	Holy Roman Empire
17th century–1870	200 years	French	French Monarchy, French Republic
1870–1918	48 years	German	German Empire ( <i>Reichsland Elsaß-Lothringen</i> )
1918–1940	22 years	French	French Republic
1940–1945	5 years	German	The Third <i>Reich</i>
1945–present day		French	French Republic

**population**

The total population of Alsace in 2022 was 1.92 million inhabitants, with 1.16 million in Bas-Rhin and 760,000 in Haut-Rhin (Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques, 2023).



### *self-reported knowledge and use of Alsatian*

In the most recent study conducted in 2022, 46% of the 4,001 respondents reported that they could speak Alsatian very well (36%) or fairly well (10%; CeA, 2022). To carry out this survey, 70,000 people aged 18 and over were contacted throughout Alsace, using INSEE databases, taking into account the demographics of seven living areas. However, the rate of reported knowledge by geographic and demographic sub-areas is not indicated in the survey results. Among 18–24-year-olds, 9% claimed they speak Alsatian very well (3%) or fairly well (6%), while 19% of 25–34-year-olds reported that they speak Alsatian very well (11%) or fairly well (8%). Regarding children, 8% of children's parents reported their child speaks Alsatian very or fairly well. This rate was clearly higher in the north of Alsace (Haguenau-Wissembourg) at 18% and in the northwest of Alsace (Saverne-Molsheim) at 12%, which are small regions where the rate of declared knowledge of Alsatian has always been high in the past, for historical and socio-economic reasons.

In response to the question “In what situation(s)/with whom do you speak Alsatian, and how often?” in the family environment, 39% of respondents stated they always or often speak Alsatian (39%) with their parents, 38% with their spouse, 16% with their child, and 5% with their grandchild (5%). When the interactants are not family members, the results are more contrasted: the use of Alsatian was reported to be most frequent with friends at 39%. As in previous studies (EDInstitut & OLCA, 2012; Keiflin, 2001), it is therefore within the family and friend circles, which are considered the most private, that the use of Alsatian is always indicated as the most frequent.

Regarding written Alsatian (a graphically non-standardised variety), among those who speak or understand it, 40% reported that they read it easily, 33% with difficulty, and 27% not at all. As for writing Alsatian, 15% of those who speak or understand it claimed to write it easily, 23% with difficulty, and 62% not at all (CeA, 2022).

Furthermore, 28% of respondents who reported being able to speak or understand the dialect indicated that they receive messages in Alsatian through the internet or smartphones (emails, SMS, or social networks), with a higher rate reported among the 18–24 age group at 46%. Similarly, 22% stated that they send messages in Alsatian via the internet or smartphones (email, SMS, or social networks), with a much higher rate among 18–24-year-olds at 34% (CeA, 2022). For this last aspect, two types of skills are required, namely the ability to put Alsatian into writing and the ability to read it.

### *self-reported knowledge and use of (Standard) German*

In 2022, 54% of the 4,001 people surveyed living in Alsace declared that they could speak German, with 27% claiming to speak it very well and another 27% fairly well; CeA, 2022). It should be noted that around 67,000 Alsatians, known as *frontaliers*, commute to work in Germany or Switzerland every day (Héraud & Aubry, 2021), indicating a need for German language skills or dialect proficiency. In the same way, there is a real porosity between Alsace and the neighbouring regions, insofar as their inhabitants often cross borders for shopping, entertainment, or leisure in the neighbouring region.

The declared practice of German is of a relative frequency. Of those who reported they could speak or understand German, 4% reported using it always and 13% often with friends, but 24% only occasionally. Moreover, 11% reported using it always and 13% often at work, with 16% only occasionally (CeA, 2022).

**language status**

There is no specific legislation regarding Alsatian or German in Alsace. However, these varieties were included in the French Constitution (Constitution du 4 octobre, 1958) through the Constitutional Law on the Modernisation of the Institutions of the Fifth Republic (Loi constitutionnelle n° 2008-724, 2008). Article 75-1 of the Constitution states that “regional languages belong to the heritage of France” (see Table 2 for an overview of the administrative structure of France).

**Table 2** Administrative structure of France directed towards the historical Alsace region.

Administrative entity	Political entity		Person(s) in charge
State	France		President, the cabinet of the prime minister, and ministers.
Region	Grand Est*		Regional president ( <i>président de la région</i> ). The <i>préfet</i> represents the State; however, the Ministry of Education is represented by the <i>Recteur</i> of the Grand Est administrative region.
Collective	Collectivité européenne d’Alsace (CeA)		President of the CeA ( <i>président du conseil départemental</i> ). The state is represented by the <i>préfet</i> , the Ministry of Education by the <i>Recteur</i> of the Académie de Strasbourg.
Departments	Bas-Rhin	Haut-Rhin	Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin still exist as administrative subdivisions, but they merged on the political level into the CeA in 2021.
Districts	5 <i>arrondissements</i>	4	The <i>sous-préfet</i> (subprefect).
Municipalities	517 <i>communes</i>	366	Each municipality elects a council, which then appoints a mayor.

\* Since 2016 (encompassing the former regions of Alsace, Lorraine, and Champagne-Ardenne).

The 2021 Law on the protection of the heritage of regional languages and their promotion (Loi n°2021-641 du 21 mai 2021) supplements the Constitution (Constitution du 4 octobre, 1958). Article 1 stipulates that “the State and the local authorities shall contribute to the teaching, dissemination and promotion of these languages” and specifies that the provisions of the 1994 Law on the use of the French language “shall not hinder the use of regional languages and the public and private actions carried out in their favour” (art. 3).

Laws, decrees, and other essential regulatory texts regarding education are gathered in the Education Code (Code de l'éducation, 2023). Changes or additions to the articles of the Education Code can be made through laws voted in the National Assembly or decrees issued by the Minister of National Education.

Article 7 of the 2021 Law on the protection of the heritage of regional languages and their promotion (Loi n°2021-641 du 21 mai 2021) provides for the insertion of the following in the Education Code: without prejudice to Article L. 312-11-1, within the framework of agreements between the State and the regions, the Corsican collectivity, **the European Collectivity of Alsace** (emphasis added by the authors) or the territorial collectivities governed by Article 73 of the Constitution (Constitution du 4 octobre, 1958), the regional language is a subject taught as part of the normal timetable of nursery and primary schools, middle schools, and high schools in all or part of the territories concerned, with the aim of offering the teaching of the regional language to all pupils.

In primary education, this regional language teaching is part of the compulsory modern language teaching. Since in Alsace the choice was made to offer German as the regional language, this means that offering the teaching of German is mandatory for primary schools. As no other language is offered in Alsace, the learning of German is de facto compulsory for pupils in primary education. In secondary education, the offering of German is compulsory too, but learning German becomes optional alongside other languages, like everywhere else in France (see *legislation* in [Primary education](#) and [Secondary education](#)).

Similarly, Article 8 of the 2021 law states that “public services may ensure, in all or part of their territory, the display of translations of the French language into the regional language or languages in use on inscriptions and signs affixed to public buildings, public roads, waterways, transport infrastructures and the main institutional communication media, when they are installed or renewed” (Loi n°2021-641 du 21 mai 2021). Regarding the practical implementation, Articles 7 and 8 show that this is a possibility, not an obligation.

All other provisions, especially those relating to education, are not covered by legislation, but by regulatory texts such as orders or circulars.

In addition, the public services under the authority of the State use only French. Public services at other levels may occasionally use Alsatian: relations with citizens are officially in French, while Alsatian may be used in practice, depending on the negotiation of the parties involved. For written communication, the name signs of the municipalities at their entrances and exits as well as the street name signs may be bilingual. This is a rather

symbolic use, which reflects the will of a municipality, with the French language always coming first, insofar as the rest of the signs are exclusively in French.

In their discourse, the political institutions of the State and of the CeA say that they want to promote bilingualism in Alsace (generally French-German), for example (without it being necessarily clear whether it is German as a written endogenous language or German as the language of neighbouring countries), or that they support the transmission of Alsatian, but there is neither a global linguistic policy nor practical measures outside the educational system. Thus, there is no regional language policy, but only isolated measures in favour of the standard German language or, more rarely, of Alsatian.

### ***status of language education***

Regarding legislative texts, the Law of orientation and programming for the refoundation of the school of the republic (Loi n° 2013-595 du 8 juillet 2013) had, in Article 40, fixed a certain number of principles for the teaching of regional languages but also in regional languages. Since then, however, apart from the Law on the protection of the heritage of regional languages and their promotion (Loi n°2021-641 du 21 mai 2021; see *language status*), there are only regulatory texts regarding or regulating the teaching of German in primary school in Alsace. Thus, German is always the language of choice in the education system. In the rare cases where Alsatian is used, this is specified in the texts.

Until the 19th century, despite Alsace being part of France, the language of education was mainly German. French started to become increasingly widespread between 1855 and 1870 due to a local linguistic policy. During the Reichsland period (1871–1918), Standard German replaced French as the language of instruction. After World War I, French took over again, and became the only language in primary education for all pupils. From 1920 onwards, German was re-introduced as a school subject in primary education for 2 to 3 hours per week. During the annexation of Alsace to the Third Reich, Standard German became the only language of instruction again (see [Table 1](#) for a historical overview).

After its suspension in the aftermath of World War II (Rector of the Academy of Strasbourg, 1945), the teaching of German was gradually reintroduced in the Académie de Strasbourg after 1952. The Decree No. 52-1347 (Décret n° 52-1347, 1952) allowed the optional teaching of German in the school administrative unit encompassing the whole of Alsace. At first, this was carried out as optional teaching for 2 hours per week during the last 2 years of compulsory schooling, in municipalities where the usual language was the Alsatian dialect. At that time, the standard structure of primary school was the following: (1) Preparatory Course (6 to 7 years old); (2) Elementary Course 1 and 2 (7 to 9 years old); (3) Middle Course 1 and 2 (9 to 11 years old); (4) Senior Course 1 and 2 (11 to 13 years old); and (5) Final Course (13 to 14 years old).

At the start of the school year 1972/73, the decision was taken to organise an experiment in an introduction to German, in 30 CM1 classes (15 in the Bas-Rhin and 15 in the Haut-Rhin department) and in as many CM2 classes at the start of the school year 1973/74 (Minister of National Education, 1972). In 1976, this optional teaching of German was included in the timetable and syllabus of the CM1 and CM2 (see Table 3 for definitions), at a rate of 30 minutes per day (2.5 hours per week; Minister of National Education, 1976). This was an exception since the teaching of a language other than French was not yet provided for in primary schools at the national level. For more regulatory texts about teaching in Alsace, see *Further reading*.

It was not until 1982 and the implementation of the "regional languages and cultures" programme at national level that German was taught officially as a regional language (before 1982, there was no other framework than a ministerial authorisation). The Ministerial circular on the teaching of regional cultures and languages in the public service of National Education (Circulaire ministérielle n°82-261, 1982) and n°83-547 of 30 December 1983 (Circulaire ministérielle n°83-547, 1983) also authorise, as a possibility, teaching in regional languages, as do the rectorial circulars organising bilingual teaching in Alsace from 1991 onwards. All the regulations, in particular the ministerial and rectorial circulars, including the ministerial circulars that also authorise, as a possibility, teaching in regional languages, as well as the rectorial circulars organising the bilingual teaching in Alsace from 1991 onwards, can be found in Deyon (1991) and Gaudemar (1996).

Subsequently, a whole series of decrees was issued between 2001 and 2003 at national level to organise the teaching of and in regional languages in secondary schools (e.g. Circulaire n°2001-166, 2001). In an order of 30 May 2003, the *Programme d'enseignement des langues étrangères ou régionales à l'école primaire* was published, completed by a section entitled "V. Langue régionale d'Alsace et des pays Mosellans" (Arrêté du 30 mai 2003).

The latest national circulars regarding the teaching of regional languages and cultures were published in April 2017 (Circulaire n° 2017-072, 2017) and December 2021 (Circulaire ministérielle du 14 décembre 2021). They consolidate, confirm, and sometimes extend the existing provisions. They also apply to Alsace, and simply reinforce the existing provisions.

Almost 100% of the public and private schools under contract in the Académie de Strasbourg offer the teaching of German in some form. This represents 1,307 primary schools in the Académie de Strasbourg, 170 *collèges*, 46 general and technological *lycées*, 28 polyvalent *lycées*, and 22 vocational *lycées* (Académie de Strasbourg, 2023a, p. 7). In fact, there is no substantive difference in the teaching of German as a "regional language" or as a "modern foreign language" as it is taught throughout France. The categorisation is based on a difference in administrative status. It is only possible to have bilingual classes in primary schools because German is considered a "regional language"; if it were not a "regional language", there could not be bilingual classes. This is also true for bilingual sections in secondary schools.

German can also be chosen as a foreign language throughout France, especially in secondary education, but the teaching of German is much more widespread in Alsace than in the rest of France due to its “double” status of “foreign language” at the national level and “regional language” in the Académie de Strasbourg. Alsace is the only region in France in which the language that is taught as a regional language is also taught as a foreign and national language of other countries.

## ***education system***

In France, education for children is compulsory (and free, for public education) from the age of 3 to 16. It is important to note that primary school in France also includes nursery school (i.e. pre-primary education), unlike most European countries. In 2019, compulsory schooling was brought forward from age 6 years to 3 years (Eurydice, 2023a). The education system provides for the following: primary education (3–11 years), which includes nursery school (French: *école maternelle*), from 3 to 6 years, and primary schools, from 6 to 11 years, as well as secondary education, with two main parts, namely *college* (secondary I) from 11 to 15 years, and *lycée* (secondary II) in different forms, from 15 to 18 years. In parallel, there is short vocational training for students from the age of 15, lasting 2 years, which is often delivered in a *Centre de Formation d'Apprentis* (CFA; Vocational Learning Centre). For an overview of the structure of primary and secondary education in France, see [Table 3](#) and [Education system in France](#).

At the end of upper secondary education pupils can obtain the *baccalauréat* (baccalaureate; see [Table 3](#)), which is required to enter higher education. In France, there are different institutions for higher education, including universities, *grandes écoles*, and higher schools and institutions outside of universities. Some institutions like the *grandes écoles* have additional admission requirements next to the *baccalauréat* (Eurydice, 2023b, 2023c). Higher and adult education start at the age of 18.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for school curricula, setting them by subject and in a cross-curricular manner (citizenship, etc.). The implementation of these curricula is monitored by inspection bodies. The minister of education consults the *Conseil supérieur des programmes* (Higher Programmes Council) for guidance on the educational programmes and may or may not follow its advice. The role of the *Conseil supérieur des programmes* is to issue opinions and make proposals in four major fields of competence that correspond to its permanent missions, which are as follows: the general conception of the teaching provided from nursery school to the final year of general, technological, and vocational higher secondary schools (*lycées*), the content of the common core of compulsory schooling and the definition of school curricula, the examinations leading to the national diplomas of secondary education and the *baccalauréat*, and finally, the examinations for the recruitment of teachers of primary and secondary education (*Conseil supérieur des programmes*, 2022).

**Table 3** Primary and secondary education in France.

				Name of the school year	Age (years)		
Early child-hood educa-tion and care	Nursery school (= pre-primary education)	École maternelle	Cycle 1	Petite section	3-4		
			First learning cycle	Moyenne section	4-5		
				Grande section	5-6		
Primary education	Primary education	École élémentaire	Cycle 2 Fundamental learning cycle	Cours préparatoire (CP)	6-7		
				Cours élémentaire 1 (CE1)	7-8		
				Cours élémentaire 2 (CE2)	8-9		
			Cycle 3 Consolidation cycle	Cours moyen 1 (CM1)	9-10		
				Cours moyen 2 (CM2)	10-11		
				Sixième (6 <sup>e</sup> )	11-12		
Secondary education	Lower secondary education (= secondary I)	Collège	Cycle 4 Deepening cycle	Cinquième (5 <sup>e</sup> )	12-13		
				Quatrième (4 <sup>e</sup> )	13-14		
				Troisième (3 <sup>e</sup> )	14-15		
			Diplôme national du brevet				
			Upper secondary education (= secondary II)	Lycée (general or technological high school; vocational high school) or vocational training center (CFA; 2 years; preparation of CAP – certificat d’aptitude professionnelle or BP – brevet professionnel diploma)	/	Seconde (2 <sup>nde</sup> )	15-16
						Or CFA 1st year	
	Première (1 <sup>ère</sup> ) (general or technological; vocational)	16-17					
				Or CFA 2nd year			
				Terminale (general or technological; vocational)	17-18		
At the end of the <i>Terminale</i> year: <i>baccalauréat</i> , final examination of secondary school and first university grade.			baccalauréat général baccalauréat technologique baccalauréat professionnel				



All teaching content is defined nationally and applied nationwide. Teacher training is also nationally defined by the Ministry of National Education. The municipalities are responsible for the material aspects of primary education (buildings, maintenance, etc.), the departments are responsible for collèges, and the regions have the same material responsibilities for lycées. The Education Code (Code de l'éducation, 2023) defines the general objectives as follows: schools, collèges, lycées, and institutions of higher education are responsible for transmitting and acquiring knowledge and working methods. These educational institutions contribute to the promotion of gender diversity and equality, particularly in the area of educational guidance. Moreover, they contribute to education in civic responsibility, including the use of the Internet and online public communication services, and participate in the prevention of delinquency. They provide training in the knowledge and respect of human rights as well as in the understanding of concrete situations that infringe upon them. They provide training adapted in its content and methods to the economic, social, and cultural changes of the country and its European and international environment. This training may include the teaching, at all levels, of regional languages and cultures.

Artistic and cultural education as well as physical education and sports contribute directly to the education of all students. In higher education, physical and sports activities are offered to students. Schools, collèges, and lycées provide information on (online) violence and education on sexuality, as well as have an obligation to raise the awareness of teaching staff on gender-based and sexual violence, female genital mutilation, and training on respect for non-consent (Chapter I: General provisions. Title II: Objectives and missions of the public education service: article L121-1, modified by Loi n° 2021-1109 du 24 août 2021).

### ***private and public***

In Alsace, private schools are primarily religious (Catholic) and are more or less the same as public schools in terms of teaching in German. While they are largely in the minority in the region, they have frequently set up a full or partial bilingual parity curriculum, with equal instruction in French and German (12 hours each).

Private schools may sign a contract with the State, which allows them to benefit from subsidies for the running costs of the school. These are referred to as “private schools under contract” (French: *écoles privées sous contrat*), as opposed to “non-contract private schools” (French: *écoles privées hors contrat*). In 2022, there were 159,962 pupils enrolled in public primary schools, and 9,606 pupils attended private schools under contract (see Académie de Strasbourg, 2022; Table 6).

### ***bilingual education forms***

Bilingual teaching was first introduced in Alsace in 1991, initially with 6 hours of teaching of and/or in German per week, and its current form (“parity”, i.e. the same number of hours in each language, that is 12 hours in French and 12 hours in German) was introduced in 1993.



Following the principle of “one person, one language”, one teacher is dedicated to teaching French and another to teaching German. However, due to a shortage of qualified staff, the same teacher sometimes teaches both languages and in both languages. Nowadays, public education, particularly in primary education, has bilingual teaching sites with equal hours, affecting approximately 18% of pupils (around 30,000 children). References to “site” mean a continuity in the primary school, from the kindergarten section (3 years old) to CM2 (11 years old). In fact, there are no “bilingual schools”, only “bilingual classes”.

For a “bilingual site” to be opened in a school or collège, a request may be made by elected officials, by a group of parents from the relevant municipalities, or by the national education services (Académie de Strasbourg, [n.d.-a](#)). The decision to open a bilingual class or site is, however, taken by an academic body for the programming, development, and monitoring of bilingual centres, placed under the authority of the rector, composed of members of the National Education services and representatives of the local authorities that are co-signatories of an operational agreement on the regional multilingual policy in the education system in Alsace (Académie de Strasbourg & Préfet de la Région Grand Est, [2018a](#)), which studies the applications submitted and proposes to the rector the list of instructions to be carried out, according to defined criteria. In light of the information gathered during the investigation carried out by the district inspectors in conjunction with the mayors of the municipalities concerned, the commission issues an opinion and makes proposals to the rector for opening up the school site (Académie de Strasbourg, [n.d.-a](#)).

In nursery schools, all activities are conducted in both French and German.

In primary schools, subjects other than French language study and German language study are taught half in French and half in German, as follows:

- in Cycle 2 (see [Table 4](#)): mathematics, “questioning the world” (which is a broader term to allow children to find their bearings in space and time but also in society), physical and sports education, visual arts, musical education, and moral and civic education; and
- in Cycle 3 (see [Table 4](#)): mathematics, history and geography, science and technology, art history, physical and sports education, visual arts, music education, and moral and civic education (see Académie de Strasbourg, [n.d.-a](#); [Primary education](#)).

In collège, students in the bilingual curriculum have 4 hours of German, and a variable number of hours of subjects (usually 2) taught in German. These subjects may be different (mathematics, life and earth sciences, history-geography, physical education and sports, etc.) depending on the human resources available in each school.

In lycée, there is no longer a specific curriculum linked to German as a regional language, but to German as a foreign language: “Abibac sections” or “European sections”, with a smaller amount of teaching time in a German subject. These types of sections are often intended for “good” students (see [Secondary education](#)).

In 2022, the *A.B.C.M. Zweisprachigkeit* association (association for French-German bilingualism starting in nursery school) had 11 private schools in Alsace (and two in the immediately neighbouring Moselle department). During that year, they had more than 1,200 pupils aged between 3 and 11, half of them in nursery and half in primary schools. The association aims at regional language immersion from 3 to 7 years old (1st year of primary school included), but at the time of writing this Regional Dossier (2023), only 7 schools were using the immersion principle, the others still relying on the time parity (Geiger-Jaillet & Schlemminger, 2023). One of the characteristics of the immersion system is that half of the school time is spent in standard German and the other half in Alsatian.

### ***administration***

For the whole of public education and for private and voluntary education, whether under contract with the State or not, the Ministry of National Education sets the timetables, programmes, and general objectives. It is therefore also the Ministry of National Education that determines the place and role of languages, whatever they may be, in this system. Only the heads of collèges and lycées have a real but relatively narrow room for manoeuvre in this matter, particularly in allocating hours, depending on their budget and the pressure from their boards, in one direction or another.

At the State level, the minister of national education is in charge of the education system. At the level of the French regions, the *Recteur d'académie* represents the minister. In Alsace, this is the Rector of the Académie de Strasbourg. The regions are composed, administratively, of one or more departments, each headed by a *Directeur académique des services de l'Éducation nationale* (DASEN; see *Glossary*) who is responsible for education in a department. The two departments in Alsace, Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin, each have one DASEN. The DASEN represent the Rector of the Académie and the Recteur of the Academic region in the department (see *Table 2* for an overview of the administrative structure of France).

### ***inspection***

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for the inspection of the entire public education system and the private education system under contract, in particular through the General Inspectorate of Education, Sport and Research (French: *Inspection générale de l'Éducation, du Sport et de la Recherche* – IGÉSR), which conducts missions of inspection, control, audit, evaluation, expertise, support, and advice in the fields of education, higher education, research, youth, and sports. The General Inspectorate of Education was created by the General Law on Public Education of 1 May 1802 (11 Floréal Year X; *Loi générale sur l'instruction publique du 1er mai 1802*). Article 25 of Decree no. 89-833 of 9 November 1989 (*Décret n° 89-833, 1989*), relating to the special status of Inspectors-General of the French Ministry of Education, established this body and its missions. Some articles of this text have been amended up to 2019. In the case of non-contractual education, the Ministry of National Education also checks that the common core of knowledge, which is compulsory for all pupils, is taught in these schools.

There are specific inspection bodies for primary education (National Education Inspectors for primary education; French: *Inspecteurs de l'éducation nationale du premier degré*), for general secondary education by school discipline (Academy Inspectors – Regional Educational Inspectors; French: *Inspecteurs d'académie – Inspecteurs pédagogiques régionaux*) and for vocational secondary education by school discipline (National Education Inspectors; French: *Inspecteurs de l'éducation nationale*, qualified for one or two subjects or a specific teaching sector). Each National Education Inspector for primary education is in charge of a constituency (French: *circonscription*). There are 35 constituencies in Alsace: 20 in Bas-Rhin and 15 in Haut-Rhin. The National Education Inspectors assist the DASEN and represent them in a constituency of primary education. Inspectors of secondary and technical education are responsible for one or more specific subjects throughout the académie. They are civil servants of the State and are responsible for the supervision of the schools, and, as such, state officials.

### ***support structure***

For primary education (i.e. nursery and primary schools), there are specific pedagogical advisers for regional language and culture. These are teachers who have passed a certificate of aptitude for the functions of teacher or master trainer (French: *Certificat d'aptitude aux fonctions d'instituteur ou de professeur des écoles maître-formateur*), and are no longer in charge of a class. They are often the ones who collect teaching materials created by teachers and make them available to other teachers (on platforms) or who also create materials that they make available to their colleagues, in the form of a pedagogical portal and resources for the continuity between nursery and primary school by the advisers in the departments of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin. These materials, as well as those intended for secondary education, are also collected and distributed by the regional structure of a national institution, Réseau Canopé (*Réseau de création et accompagnement pédagogiques*; Network for educational creation and support), in the form of catalogues. For example, in September 2023, the 2023/24 catalogues were available (Réseau Canopé, [2023a](#), [2023b](#)). Teachers, whose job it is to collect all this information and disseminate it, are given time off work for this purpose.

At the secondary level, the teachers are educational advisers who are appointed by the rector, on the proposal of the inspectors and the heads of the schools concerned, from among the teachers working in the schools. They generally remain teachers in charge of classes, with time off for their work as educational advisers.

There are specific pedagogical advisers in regional language and culture in primary school who also collect pedagogical materials created by teachers to make them available to other teachers (on departmental platforms) or who also create materials and resources for primary education that they make available to their colleagues of each department, in the form of online pedagogical portals (for Bas-Rhin, see CPD67, [n.d.](#), and Haut-Rhin, CPLV68, [n.d.](#)).

An online database called **PlaReLa** (French: *Plateforme de ressources en langue et culture régionales*; Platform of regional linguistic and cultural resources in German and Alsatian) was also created by Réseau Canopé in order to provide the educational community (teachers, mediators, parents, etc.) with easy access to teaching resources. With financial support from the CeA, the Région Grand Est, the Rectorat de l'académie de Strasbourg, and the Université de Strasbourg, this platform offers resources from the collections of Réseau Canopé and the Strasbourg and Colmar education libraries. It also includes contributions from teachers, cultural organisations, and associations.

There are also many informal networks, often invisible to all the teachers potentially concerned, created on the initiative of a teacher or a group of teachers, which distribute materials but without the control of the educational authority.

## 2 Pre-school education

### *target group*

In France, compulsory education begins at the age of 3. Consequently, only the very early years (0–3 years) would be part of pre-school education, strictly speaking. However, this period of childhood is not covered by education, except in cases where a nursery school integrates, for social reasons, for example, a *Section de Tout-Petits* (2–3 years). In this Regional Dossier, only children aged 3–6, who attend nursery school, are discussed.

### *structure*

Administratively, nursery school (3–6 years) is included in primary school (3–11 years). Nursery school (often called *école maternelle*) is for children aged 3–6 and is subdivided into the following three classes: *petite section* (3–4 years), *moyenne section* (4–5 years) and *grande section* (5–6 years; see [Table 2](#)).

These classes form school cycle 1 (*cycle des apprentissages premiers*; early learning cycle). The Ministry of National Education assigned the following general objectives to nursery school in the teaching programme of June 2021 (Arrêté du 2 juin 2021): its main mission is to make children want to go to school to learn, affirm, and develop their personality. It is a school where children learn together and live together. They develop their oral language and begin to discover the written word, numbers, and other areas of learning. They learn by playing, thinking and problem solving, practising, remembering, and memorising. Instruction is organised into the following five areas of learning:

- mobilising language in all its dimensions;
- acting, understanding, and expressing themselves through physical activity;
- acting, understanding, and expressing themselves through artistic activities;
- building the first tools to structure their thinking; and
- exploring the world.

As a basic rule, children attend classes on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, for approximately 6 hours per day. Since nursery school is part of the education system, it is schoolteachers (civil servants or contractual) who teach, helped by specialised nursery school agents (French: *agent territorial spécialisé des écoles maternelles* – ATSEM) for the practical aspects in class (reception, preparation of material, help the teacher in class, hygiene of the children and materials, sometimes animation of workshop, etc.). The ATSEMs depend on the municipality, which recruits and pays them.

The application of the programme as well as the pedagogy is the responsibility of the teachers, who can be checked by an Inspector of National Education of the school district where the school is located.

## ***legislation***

The latest voted modifications that changed some provisions of the Education Code (Code de l'éducation, 2023) come from Law n° 2021-1109 of 24 August 2021 (Loi n° 2021-1109 du 24 août 2021) reinforcing the respect of the principles of the Republic and apply to the whole French education system. As nursery school is part of the compulsory education system, the Ministry of National Education defines all decisions regarding the school system by decree, circular, or other regulatory text. These decisions may be supplemented by circulars or other regulatory texts issued by the Recteur d'Académie (for a whole académie) or the DASEN (for a department). In Alsace, the teaching of German in nursery school is the subject of the multilingual regional policy defined for the period 2015–2030 (Académie de Strasbourg, 2015). This teaching can have the following two forms: the “regular” teaching of German (up to 3 hours a week) and the bilingual teaching (12 hours in French and 12 hours in German; Académie de Strasbourg, 2015). There is, however, no steering committee for the implementation of German language teaching in the Académie de Strasbourg, which makes it difficult to carry out a differentiated analysis by teaching form or by pupil profile.

## ***language use***

In nursery schools, in principle, all children should be taught German for at least 1.5 hours per week where possible (Académie de Strasbourg & Préfet de la Région Grand Est, 2018a). It is, however, difficult to verify that this principle is applied in all classes since it is not taught everywhere it should be, or sometimes not according to the timetable.

In bilingual schools, German is the target language and at the same time the language of instruction for half of the school week (12 hours per week; see also *Primary education*).

In some classes, teachers may teach nursery rhymes or songs in Alsatian to the children – which is provided for in the rectorial circulars – without it being a matter of systematic language learning.

French remains the almost exclusive language during non-academic time at school, with the nuance that teachers, ATSEMs, or other staff may address the children or families in Alsatian. During the extracurricular time, when the children have lunch at school, it may happen that some of the municipality's staff address certain children in Alsatian, according to their known or presumed customs.

In most cases, French (or possibly another family language) is the usual language in which adults address the children.

## ***teaching materials***

Approximately 700 resource materials (songs, stories, picture books, etc.) are listed on the PlaReLa database (Platform of regional linguistic and cultural resources in German and Alsatian), of which only around 20 are for Alsatian. For learning German, there are a few “methods” available for nursery schools, published mainly in Germany. For learning Alsatian, there is only one “method” (*J'apprends l'alsacien avec Tommy et Louise* – I learn Alsatian with Tommy and Louise), which is published by a private editor in Alsace, specialised in the production of books for children aged up to 7 years (see also [Primary education](#)).

## ***statistics***

In the school year 2022/23, parity bilingual education was provided in 557 nursery classes in public schools and private schools under contract, representing 12,905 pupils (3,588 in PS, 4,589 in MS, and 4,728 GS), which accounts for 21.2% of the total number of pupils in public nursery schools in the Académie de Strasbourg (Académie de Strasbourg, [2022](#); see also [Table 5](#)).

In theory, all other classes should have 1.5 hours of German instruction per week. In reality, this is not always the case, depending on the German language skills of the teachers.

## 3 Primary education

### *target group*

Administratively, primary education includes nursery school (3–6 years) and primary school (6–11 years; see [Table 4](#)).

Primary school is for children from 6 to 11 years old and is divided into the following five classes: *Cours Préparatoire* (CP; 6–7 years old), *Cours Élémentaire 1* (CE1; 7–8 years old), *Cours Élémentaire 2* (CE2; 8–9 years old), *Cours Moyen 1* (CM1; 9–10 years old), and *Cours Moyen 2* (CM2; 10–11 years old).

Primary school classes constitute the second and third school cycles. Cycle 2 (cycle of basic learning) includes CP, CE1, and CE2, and Cycle 3 (consolidation cycle) includes CM1, CM2, and the first class of collège (6<sup>e</sup>), which is the first year of secondary education.

### *structure*

Like other levels of compulsory education, the structure of the organisation of education, the curricula, and the organisation of teaching are set by the Ministry of National Education for the whole country. Depending on the size of the school, there may be several classes of the same level, but also classes with two or three levels (CP/CE1, CE2/CM1/CM2, etc.) depending on the number of pupils. The Ministry of National Education, through various mechanisms, also sets a minimum number of pupils per class; article D. 211-9 of the Education Code (Code de l'éducation, [2023](#)) states that “the average number of pupils per class and the number of teaching positions per school are defined annually by the Academic Director of National Education Services (DASEN) acting on the authority of the *Recteur d'Académie*, taking into account the general guidelines set by the Minister of Education, according to the characteristics of the classes, the number of pupils and the budgetary posts delegated to them, and after consultation with the departmental joint technical committee”. For the youngest students (CP–CE 1), classes should not exceed 24 pupils, but the number of pupils per class can vary greatly depending on the location of the schools.

The duration of the school timetable is set at 24 hours per week, generally spread over 4 days (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday). The school year consists of 36 weeks, divided into five working periods, which are interspersed with school holidays. The latest programmes for cycles 2 and 3 were published in the *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale* n°31 of 30 July 2020 (Enseignement primaire et secondaire. Programmes d'enseignement, [2020](#)).



The following subjects are taught in primary schools: French, mathematics, a language (foreign or regional; in Alsace, de facto and not de jure: German), physical education and sports, artistic subjects (visual arts and musical education), moral and civic education (which may be replaced, only in Alsace and the Moselle department, by religious education), a subject called “Questioning the world” (with a broader approach to enable children to find their bearings not only in space and time but also in society) in cycle 2 and “History and geography” in cycle 3, and in cycle 3 only, science and technology. Schoolteachers teach, in principle, all subjects.

### *legislation*

Primary education is ruled by the Education Code (Code de l'éducation, 2023). As for the whole compulsory education system, it is regulated by the State through the Ministry of National Education and its representatives. The regional and departmental state officials (*Recteur d'académie* and DASEN) and their administrations, as well as the National Education Inspectors for primary education (see *inspection*), are responsible for the proper application of laws and regulations.

As the teaching of a foreign language is compulsory in primary education in France, all classes should have at least 1.5 hours of foreign or regional language teaching (Arrêté du 9 novembre 2015). In the Académie de Strasbourg, there could be languages other than German (there are some marginal ones), but only German is provided. In Alsace, the teaching of German in primary school is the subject of the multilingual regional policy defined for the period 2015–2030 (Académie de Strasbourg, 2015). This teaching can have the following two forms: the “regular” teaching of German (up to 3 hours a week) and the bilingual teaching (12 hours in French and 12 hours in German; Académie de Strasbourg & Préfet de la Région Grand Est, 2018a). There is, however, no steering committee for the implementation of German language teaching in the Académie, which makes it difficult to carry out a differentiated analysis by teaching form or by pupil profile.

### *language use*

French is the main language of instruction in primary schools. In Alsace, a large majority of classes at this level of education receive German language instruction (max. 3 hours per week), the other subjects being taught in French. At the end of primary school, the target language levels in German are A2 in the maximum number of language activities according to the levels of competence described by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

In bilingual public and private schools, pupils receive 12 hours of teaching of and in French and 12 hours of teaching of German and subject teaching in German in all areas of education (Académie de Strasbourg, n.d.-a).

In primary school, subjects other than the study of French and the study of German are taught half in French and half in German, as follows (Académie de Strasbourg & Préfet de la Région Grand Est, 2018a):

- Cycle 2: mathematics, questioning the world, physical and sports education, visual arts, musical education, and moral and civic education.
- Cycle 3: mathematics, history and geography, science and technology, art history, physical education and sports, visual arts, music education, and moral and civic education.

For pupils in the bilingual course, the target levels in German at the end of primary school are level A2 in the language activities of speaking, reading, and writing, and level B1 in the language activities of listening and understanding.

### ***teaching materials***

Teaching materials are collected and distributed by the regional structure of a national institution, Réseau Canopé, in the form of catalogues (Réseau Canopé, 2023a, 2023b). Overall, 2,700 resources of all types and levels are offered in the PlaReLa database (see [support structure](#)).

It should be noted that the majority of the publications are also intended for pupils for whom German is simply a “foreign language”. None of those publications show any regional or endogenous indications.

The titles include:

- books by teachers in the Académie de Strasbourg, whose design and production have been commissioned by Canopé;
- fiction books with two versions, French and German, in one volume, published by private editors, either local, such as Kidikunst (Strasbourg) or national (Auzou, which publishes the stories of a wolf in French (*P'tit loup* – Little Wolf) and has translated them into German);
- numerous books for learning German: *Auf in den Zirkus!* (Let's go to the circus!), published by the German editor Klett, with translations of the teacher's guide and the pupil's workbook into French by authors working for Canopé; *Luftballons* (Balloons) CP, CE1, CE2 and *Komm, wir spielen!* (Come to play!) CE2, CM1, CM2 published by the French editor Philipus-Education (where German is clearly a foreign language and the cultural reference is in German-speaking countries). Canopé also plays a role as an editor, for example with the *Mach mit!* (Join in!) series or the *Über neue Brücken* (Over new bridges) textbooks; and
- subject books such as the MATHS collection, published by Accès (6 volumes from CP to CM2, bilingual).

The resources in Alsatian are hardly visible and require a search that is not efficient: 516 resources are indicated, but in the section “study of the dialect”, only 40 deal with Alsatian at the primary school level and 2 are expressly designed for learning Alsatian. Resources worth mentioning include those by Friedrich et al. (2002), Rieger et al. (2022), and Troxler-Lasseaux et al. (2021).

There is a significant quantitative disproportion between books intended for learning German and those intended for learning Alsatian.

### *statistics*

During the school year 2022/23, German language teaching was organised as follows for the 171,667 pupils attending primary school (including both nursery and primary schools):

- 140,163 pupils (81.6%) followed 3 hours of German classes per week (Académie de Strasbourg, 2023a).
- 31,504 pupils (18.4%) followed the bilingual curriculum (Académie de Strasbourg, 2022, 2023a), of whom 17,209 (54.6%) did so in Bas-Rhin, and 14,295 (45.4%) in Haut-Rhin (Académie de Strasbourg, 2022; see also Table 4).
- In total, 17.1% of the pupils in Bas-Rhin and 20.8% of the pupils in Haut-Rhin followed a bilingual curriculum in primary school (Académie de Strasbourg, 2022; see also Table 4).

Compared to the figures of previous years, there is a quantitative progression for the percentage of schoolchildren in the bilingual curriculum:

- During the school year 2012/13, there were 21,428 children enrolled (12% of public and private primary schoolchildren; Académie de Strasbourg, 2013);
- between 2000 and 2012, the number of bilingual parity classes increased from 319 to 913 and the number of schoolchildren increased from 6,731 to 21,418 (Académie de Strasbourg, 2013).

These rising figures are contradictory to the trend that young people are less likely than older people to have Alsatian as their home language; standard German was never used as a home language, except of course for people with German origins. The popularity of bilingual curricula suggests that bilingual education is not chosen as a means for transmitting or revitalising the regional language, but much more because pupils and/or their parents consider this extra language to be an asset. Regarding the choice of this extra-language, there is no other option than German in the Académie de Strasbourg.

## 4 Secondary education

### *target group*

Within secondary education, there are the following two different structures that should be distinguished:

- *collège* (11–15 years old), with the classes of 6<sup>e</sup> (11–12 years old), 5<sup>e</sup> (12–13 years old), 4<sup>e</sup> (13–14 years old), and 3<sup>e</sup> (14–15 years old), where 6<sup>e</sup> is part of Cycle 3, while Cycle 4 includes the classes of 5<sup>e</sup>, 4<sup>e</sup>, 3<sup>e</sup> (see [Table 4](#)).
- the general, technological or vocational *lycée* (15–18 years), with the classes of *Seconde* (15–16 years), *Première* (16–17 years), and *Terminale* (17–18 years).

Instead of attending *lycée*, it is also possible to follow a vocational training programme in a CFA and in a company, which lasts 2 years. The CAP (*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*; vocational aptitude certificate) mainly leads directly to working life. The vocational baccalaureate (*baccalauréat professionnel*) allows students to enter the workforce or to continue their studies in a higher technician section (see [Vocational education](#)).

### *structure*

As for all education levels, the State, through the Ministry of National Education and the minister's representatives at the regional (*Recteur d'Académie*) and departmental (DASEN) levels, is responsible for secondary education. The minister publishes the teaching programmes (also called school programmes), that is, the essential knowledge, skills, and methods that students must acquire, in the official organs of the Ministry National Education, in particular the *Bulletin officiel de l'Éducation Nationale* (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, [n.d.](#)).

### *Collège (= secondary I)*

The teaching programmes are, for the class of 6<sup>e</sup>, those defined for Cycle 3 (consolidation cycle) and for the other classes of the *collège* those of Cycle 4 (in-depth cycle). They include the following subjects, with the indication of the weekly hours to be devoted to them: French (4.5 hours), mathematics (4.5 hours in 6<sup>e</sup>, 3.5 hours for the other levels), history and geography with moral and civic education (3 to 3.5 hours), modern language 1 (3 hours, except for 4 hours in 6<sup>e</sup>), modern language 2 (2.5 hours, no second language teaching in 6<sup>e</sup>), life and earth sciences (French: *sciences naturelles*; 1.5 hours, except in 6<sup>e</sup> where this teaching is combined with physical sciences and technology, totalling 4 hours), physical sciences (1.5 hours), technology (1.5 hours), physical and sports education (3 hours, 4 hours in 6<sup>e</sup>), visual

arts (1 hour), and musical education (1 hour). Of the 26 hours of compulsory teaching, supplementary teaching represents 3 hours in 6<sup>e</sup> (Cycle 3) and 4 hours in the other classes (Cycle 4). The allocation of supplementary lessons is determined by the school's board of directors after consulting the pedagogical council (Arrêté du 19 mai 2015).

Collège classes comprise, in principle, 30 pupils.

At the end of collège, pupils can take the *Diplôme national du brevet*, a diploma that attests to the knowledge and skills acquired at the end of collège, but it is not necessary to obtain this diploma to progress to a lycée. It is the completion of collège that provides access to either vocational education or the upper level of secondary education (lycée).

### *Lycée (= secondary II)*

For the *Seconde générale et technologique* class, the programme provides for the following subjects to be taught to all pupils, according to the weekly number of hours indicated: French (4 hours); history and geography (3 hours); foreign languages A and B (in total: 5.5 hours); economic and social sciences (1.5 hours); mathematics (4 hours); physics and chemistry (3 hours); life and earth sciences (1.5 hours); physical and sports education (2 hours); numerical sciences and technology (1.5 hours); and moral and civic education (18 hours per year), as well as hours of accompaniment and hours of class life. In addition, pupils can choose an optional course (3 hours).

For the Première and Terminale classes, the structure is more complex. In the Première class, the common weekly lessons are French (4 hours), history and geography (3 hours), foreign languages A and B (4.5 hours), science (2 hours), physical education and sport (2 hours), and moral and civic education (18 hours per year). For each pupil, there are three specialised courses (of their choice) of 4 hours each, and optional courses.

In the Terminale class, the common weekly lessons are philosophy (4 hours), history and geography (3 hours), foreign languages A and B (4 hours), science (2 hours), physical education and sport (2 hours), and moral and civic education (18 hours per year). For each pupil, there are two specialised courses (of their choice) of 6 hours each, and two optional courses of 2 hours.

In principle, lycée classes comprise 35 students.

At the end of secondary education, pupils can obtain the *Baccalauréat*, a national diploma marking the end of general, technological, or vocational secondary studie. This constitutes the first higher education degree in France, which allows students to pursue tertiary education. The Baccalauréat juries are always chaired by a university lecturer (Eurydice, 2023b).

## **legislation**

With the introduction of Law No. 75-620 on education in 1975 (Loi n° 75-620 du 11 juillet 1975), all pupils receive the same education in collège. The latest regulations to enter into force are Decree No. 2015-544 on the organisation of teaching in lower secondary schools (Décret n° 2015-544, 2015) and Decree No. 2018-614 amending the provisions of the education code relating to courses leading to the general baccalauréat and to technological courses leading to the technological baccalauréat (Décret n° 2018-614, 2018). Changes are regularly undertaken for secondary education, with, for example, the decree cited was modified to renovate the technological series “techniques of music and dance” (Arrêté du 19 juillet 2019). The collèges have the status of local public institutions. All pupils attending collège have 26 hours of compulsory lessons per week, to which optional lessons can be added. The service of certified secondary schoolteachers is 18 hours of weekly lessons. The lycées are non-compulsory secondary schools, which lead to a baccalauréat, and they provide admission to higher education. Weekly teaching time is around 27–28 hours or more, depending on the type of lycée, and this can vary with optional lessons.

As for the entire education system, collège and lycée are ruled by the legal and regulatory provisions contained in the Education Code (Code de l'éducation, 2023), which is regularly updated in line with legislative decisions taken in the National Assembly and the decrees issued by the Minister of National Education to implement them. The provisions regarding lycée have been modified several times in recent years, mainly with regard to certain types of teaching and the modalities of the Baccalauréat examination (Décret n° 2018-614, 2018). The latter are currently quite unfavourable, from a practical point of view, to languages other than the first foreign language, which is never a regional language, except for German, which is a foreign language in Alsace at this education level.

The teaching of a modern foreign language is mandatory in secondary education but there is no obligation for students to choose German. This is quite difficult for local school authorities to articulate with the regional language policy in which German is also presented as the regional language in secondary education (Académie de Strasbourg & Préfet de la Région Grand Est, 2018a).

## **language use**

German can be studied as a foreign language in all years of college and lycée. The target level at the end of the cycle is A2 in the maximum number of language activities and B1 in at least two of them.

Pupils at the end of the collège (and also those in the first year of general or technical lycée or in the second year of vocational lycée) can be registered by their school for the *Deutsches Sprachdiplom 1* (DSD1), that is, for the certification offered by the KMK (German: *Kultusministerkonferenz*; Conference of German Ministers of Education). The DSD1 certification of the KMK aims at level B1 in all language activities. Successful completion of this certification leads to a diploma issued by the KMK.

In collège, from 6<sup>e</sup> to 3<sup>e</sup>, there is a bilingual curriculum that includes 4 hours of German and two subjects taught in German, which may vary from one collège to another and from one level to another. The subjects may be art, music, physical education and sports, history and geography, mathematics, physics and chemistry, and life sciences and technology. In this case, the target language levels in German (at the end of the collège) correspond to level B1 in all language activities and to level B2 in at least two of them.

There is no real continuation of this bilingual teaching at the lycée. At the lycée, German is only taught as a foreign language and not as a regional language. Pupils who have completed the bilingual curriculum in lycée can enrol in a general or technological lycée, some of which offer “Abibac” sections: these are aimed at pupils who perform well in German as well as in French and mathematics. This curriculum leads to the dual award of the French *Baccalauréat* and the German *Abitur* (*Allgemeine Hochschulreife*). Abibac is thus a bi-national diploma, the preparation of which is offered in many high schools in France (in 2021: nearly 90 high schools, of which about 20 are in the Académie de Strasbourg; Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, 2023). It includes 6 hours of German language, literature, and civilisation teaching and 3 to 4 hours of history and geography teaching in German per level. The offer is therefore not specific to Alsace but is present throughout France. It generally only concerns “good” pupils, insofar as they have to apply, usually with a letter of motivation, and a committee decides which pupils will be admitted. The official guidelines specify that the Abibac section is open at the start of the *Seconde* year to pupils likely to reach level B1 before entering the *Première* and that the teaching of this training aims at the following levels of competence of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: C1 in the language activities of oral and written comprehension, and at least B2 for the other skills.

There are also European sections open to students who wish to improve their knowledge of a foreign language (in the Académie of Strasbourg, in German, English, Spanish, Italian, or Portuguese). One or more subjects are taught partly in the language of the section (in this case, German). German is therefore only present as a foreign language and not as a regional language. In 2021, 41% of pupils in general and technological lycées in the Académie de Strasbourg (vs. 20% for students in all high schools in France in 2020; Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports & Direction de l'évaluation de la prospective et de la performance, 2021, p. 2) were studying German as a foreign language in some respect, in the Académie de Strasbourg.

The optional “Regional Language of Alsace” course is taught at lycée, with the status of a third language (“language C”). It is taught in Alsatian and is based on the national programme common to all languages taught (Arrêté du 17 janvier 2019; Note de service du 29 juillet 2021). However, there is no information available on the actual implementation of this teaching in the Académie de Strasbourg, probably because the instructions for teachers in the Académie de Strasbourg only date from September 2021 (Académie de Strasbourg, 2021).



## ***teaching materials***

The Réseau Canopé (see [support structure](#)), an institution of the French Ministry of National Education, produces materials for this teaching in the form of catalogues of “Resources for teaching regional language and culture”. For example, there is the database PlaReLa (Platform of regional linguistic and cultural resources in German and Alsatian; 2,768 resources) or, for secondary education, the 2023/2024 catalogue (Réseau Canopé, [2023b](#)). Teachers, whose task it is, are responsible for collecting all this information and distributing it.

## ***statistics***

In the school year 2022/23, 100% of public schools and private schools under contract in the Académie de Strasbourg offered the teaching of German at secondary level, in reinforced German, as a first or second foreign language studied, in bilingual curricula and in various forms, in 170 collèges, 46 general and technological lycées, 28 polyvalent lycées and 22 professional lycées (Académie de Strasbourg, [2023a](#)). There were 97 public and private collèges that offered a bilingual curriculum to 7,492 pupils (i.e. 8.66% of the collège students in the Académie de Strasbourg; see also [Table 9](#)), and 18 public and private lycées offered the Abibac to 1,730 pupils (Académie de Strasbourg, personal communication, December 5, 2022).

In the school year 2022/23, 85.0% of collège pupils and 75.5% of lycée pupils were studying German (Académie de Strasbourg, [2023a](#)). By way of comparison, in the school year 2012/13, 76.7% of secondary school pupils were studying German, compared to 15.3% in the rest of France (Académie de Strasbourg, [2013](#)). In fact, there is no substantive difference in the teaching of German as a “regional language” or as a “modern foreign language” in secondary education. The categorisation is based on a difference in administrative status: as for primary education, it is only possible to have bilingual sections in secondary schools because German is considered a “regional language” there; if this were not the case, there could not be bilingual sections.



## 5 Vocational education

### *target group*

Depending on the subjects and the students, there may be introductory parts of vocational education as early as the 3rd year of secondary school (4<sup>e</sup>), for students who are already 15 years old. In general, they can attend a CFA (*Centre de formation d'apprentis*) to prepare for a CAP (*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* – vocational aptitude certificate), or to a *lycée professionnel* (vocational secondary school) to prepare for the *Baccalauréat professionnel* (vocational baccalaureate, also called “*bac pro*”; Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, 2022). The CAP mainly leads directly to working life, while the vocational baccalauréat allows for integration into working life or further study in a higher technician section.

### *structure*

The CAP is awarded after 2 years of training. The courses for an agricultural CAP are given in an agricultural school. After the CAP, students may apply to transfer to a vocational secondary school to take a vocational baccalauréat after 1 year.

In vocational secondary schools, the classes of *Seconde* are grouped in 14 “profession families”, each of which includes between 2 and 10 vocational baccalaureate specialities. There are currently around 100 specialities in the vocational baccalauréat.

### *legislation*

The Ministry of National Education, through the Education Code (Code de l'éducation, 2023), regulates vocational education, as for the other levels of the education system. Since July 2022, the Ministry of Labour has been co-responsible for this education level. There is no specific legislation for the teaching of German in vocational education in Alsace.

### *language use*

In vocational education, all courses leading to the CAP or the vocational baccalaureate offer a foreign language as a compulsory subject, but no subject teaching in a foreign language. Students in vocational secondary schools can, however, benefit from enhanced foreign language teaching, for example in the framework of “European sections”, through a subject taught partly in the foreign language. As a rule, this is a vocational subject.

In vocational lycées, the Azubi-Bacpro curriculum, which has existed since 2014 and is particularly well established in Alsace where it was devised (there are three other lycées offering it in the rest of France), allows students to enrich and consolidate their skills in German. There are eight schools in the Académie de Strasbourg that offer this qualification. The training is based on a partnership of the training course (3 years) with a training institution in a neighbouring country (Baden, Germany). This partnership is also based on relations with the economic world. It allows the acquisition of intercultural, linguistic, and professional skills.

For students to have a good knowledge of the language of professional communication, the training provides for:

- 3 hours per week of teaching in German for the speciality;
- 1.5 hours per week of language study; and
- 20 hours per year devoted to the acquisition of the necessary intercultural skills for successful integration into a company.

The training periods in the workplace take place in the partner country for 8 weeks. The following four branches offer this programme: marketing and services in catering and cooking; commerce; electrical engineering and communications equipment; and wood-working. German is seen here as a “neighbouring language” and not as a regional language. Since this is a bi-national programme, only German is required for this degree and Alsatian does not play any role in it (Académie de Strasbourg, [n.d.-b](#)).

### ***teaching materials***

There are no specific teaching materials for the teaching of German in vocational training: the materials for secondary II education are all the same.

For the Azubi-Bacpro track, there are no materials at all, due to the specificity of the training and the small number of students in this track. Teachers create their own resources and materials.

### ***statistics***

In the school year 2023/24, 53% (8,582) of students in vocational schools in Alsace were studying German as a foreign language (Académie de Strasbourg, [2023a](#), p. 28). This figure has remained stable compared with 20 years ago, when nearly 8,500 pupils received education in German at the vocational lycées (van der Schaaf & Morgen, [2001](#)).

Among the 13,185 students enrolled in the professional baccalaureate in 2022/23, 1,118 (6.8%) took the subject “German in a professional environment” and 211 (1.6%) students were enrolled in the Azubi-Bacpro curriculum at 8 schools (Académie de Strasbourg, [2023a](#), p. 28).

## 6 Higher education

### *structure*

For higher education, as for the other education levels, the State (in this case, through the Ministry of Higher Education and Research), is responsible for the structuring of training, the recognition of diplomas, the financing of training, and the remuneration of permanent staff (Code de l'éducation, 2023, articles D111-1–D977-2). Universities have a certain form of autonomy (Loi n° 2007-1199 du 10 août 2007), though it is highly regulated.

France implemented the *licence-master-doctorat* structure for the higher education system after signing the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The first cycle is the licence (bachelor's), which lasts 3 years and leads to 180 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits, the second cycle is the master (master's), lasting 2 years and leading to 120 ECTS credits, and the third cycle is the doctorat (PhD), which takes 3 years and leads to 180 ECTS credits (Loi n°2016-1828 du 23 décembre 2016).

There is also a system of *grandes écoles* in France, such as the *Ecole Polytechnique*, the *Ecoles Normales Supérieures*, and the *Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Economiques et Commerciale* (ESSEC), which are authorised to award certain degrees like the universities. To enter one of the 222 *grandes écoles* (of which 140 were public and 82 private in 2023), students have to pass a very selective competitive examination, that is, only students who are considered to be the best among the candidates are admitted. Some of these *grandes écoles* train future executives of the State or large companies in many fields (literature, languages, business and management, political science, veterinary science, engineering, architecture, etc.). This implies a form of competition with the universities, insofar as potentially good students in German, who, since they are recruited in these *grandes écoles*, are de facto absent from the German studies courses offered in the universities. Only at the doctorate level is there no competition, since doctorates can only be obtained at the university.

### *legislation*

The functioning of universities, established by several laws (Loi n° 68-978 du 12 novembre 1968; Loi n° 84-52 du 26 janvier 1984; Loi n° 2007-1199 du 10 août 2007; Loi n° 2013-660 du 22 juillet 2013), is governed by the articles of the Education Code (Code de l'éducation, 2023). Universities enjoy pedagogical, scientific, administrative, and financial autonomy and are linked to the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

In principle, teaching is given in the official language, French. There is no specific legislation regarding the use of other languages in French universities. Some courses may require exemptions, in particular to provide teaching in English or to award a bi-national degree. There are also some training courses in two languages, but this is not related to the issue of German in Alsace.

### *language use*

In the higher education institutions of the Académie de Strasbourg, mainly the University of Strasbourg and the University of Haute-Alsace (Mulhouse), there are, for instance, programmes in German language, literature and culture, Germanic language courses, of which German and sometimes Alsatian may be a part, applied foreign language courses (with German), curricula of excellence (with German), and bilingual (Franco-German) curricula. In the case of bilingual curricula, German is also the language of instruction. For example, in the “Humanities” bachelor’s degree (*Licence Humanités*) at the University of Strasbourg, there are courses in history, two languages, one of which must be German or English, literature, an ancient language (Latin or Greek), and philosophy.

One language (e.g. German) is very frequently present in bachelor’s degree courses, especially in the humanities, since many bachelor’s degrees include the study of a modern language in addition to the main subject. However, in all these courses, German is learned and/or used as a foreign language, without any regional dimension, as it is in other French universities where German is taught. It goes without saying that some research is published in German, but as a foreign language.

The *Département de dialectologie alsacienne et mosellane* (Department of Alsatian and Moselle Dialectology) of the University of Strasbourg is the only institutional area where a systematic teaching of Alsatian is offered, among other dialectology and sociolinguistic courses. Students enrolled in a bachelor’s degree at the University of Strasbourg can choose Alsatian among the modern languages offered by the university in addition to their main subject. These language courses are offered on four levels, starting from the introductory level (French: *initiation à l’alsacien*) and are 3 ECTS credits each. Alsatian is only the language of instruction in Alsatian courses for advanced students (French: *pratique de l’alsacien – niveau 2*).

The University of Strasbourg has also delivered a university diploma in Alsatian since 2020 to every graduate who applies for it. As a diploma issued by the University of Strasbourg, it does not have the same value as a bachelor’s degree and is not recognised at the national or international levels.

Optional teaching of Alsatian is also offered by the University de Haute-Alsace in Mulhouse.

There are no published research works in Alsatian.

## ***teacher training***

In terms of teacher training, the Académie de Strasbourg, like all other académies in France, has an *Institut National Supérieur du Professorat et de l'Éducation* (INSPÉ), which is part of one of the universities in the académie, and whose purpose is to train primary and secondary school teachers. The INSPÉ of the Académie de Strasbourg is part of the University of Strasbourg.

Students have access to the INSPÉ when they have a bachelor's degree (or equivalent), regardless of the specialty or discipline of the degree, to study for 2 years and obtain a master's degree in teaching, education and training (French: *Métiers de l'enseignement, de l'éducation et de la formation* – MEEF). However, to teach a subject in secondary education, it is generally necessary to have obtained a bachelor's degree in the subject.

Depending on the type of teaching level chosen, students must enrol in the MEEF *Premier degré* (primary education, to become a schoolteacher) or *Second degré* (secondary education, to train as a secondary school teacher). In primary education, teachers teach all subjects, while in secondary education, they teach one subject (or sometimes two subjects, such as French and classical languages, history and geography, physics, and chemistry).

The training of each type of teacher is framed by the Ministry of National Education, and each INSPÉ must then periodically propose detailed training, which must be approved by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

### ■ *pre-school and primary training*

The training for nursery and primary school teachers is common, insofar as they can teach at either level. Students intending to become primary school teachers (= nursery + primary) enrol in a master's degree programme that prepares them for the competitive examination for the recruitment of schoolteachers. The aim of the training programme is to acquire the skills common to all teachers and education staff, as pedagogues and educators, in the interests of the success of all pupils. During the first year of the training, the study of a language (German or English) and its didactics is compulsory (48 hours), since the teaching of a language is compulsory in primary school. German, however, is not compulsory, even though it is the only language taught in primary school in Alsace.

At the Inspé de l'Académie de Strasbourg, the "Bilingual French-German Teaching" (*enseignement bilingue français-allemand*) course is offered to students intending to become teachers at schools in bilingual classes and to take the special competitive examination for the regional recruitment of teachers. Successful candidates are then allowed to teach in French and/or German in bilingual classes in primary schools. In the first year of training, students complete two observation and practical training periods of two and a half consecutive weeks each, lasting approximately 120 hours. Some of the training periods are in bilingual classes and in German schools.

In 2022, 149 positions were offered in the competition for the recruitment of schoolteachers in the Académie de Strasbourg. There were 386 candidates for this competition and 195 were admitted (Académie de Strasbourg, 2023b). In addition, 53 positions were offered in the special external competitive examination for the recruitment of schoolteachers (regional language), but only 20 people took the tests and 14 were admitted. The shortage of schoolteachers who are sufficiently competent to teach in the bilingual curriculum is therefore particularly acute: only 14 of the 53 positions planned were filled. This means that there was a shortage of at least 39 teachers for that year alone (Académie de Strasbourg, 2023b). This is a long-standing trend that seems bound to continue.

### ■ secondary training

The German section of the MEEF aims to train future teachers of German at secondary level, in particular by preparing them for the CAPES recruitment exam (French: *Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat de l'Enseignement du Second degré*). The disciplinary component of the training courses is mainly provided by teachers and researchers in the discipline concerned (German). The training programme must also develop the general skills necessary for teaching. For the whole training programme, German is seen as a foreign language and not as a regional language. The courses at the INSPÉ do not include any specific training for teaching German in a bilingual class at the secondary level in the Académie de Strasbourg.

The CAPES examination is not specific to the Académie de Strasbourg and those who pass it can teach German anywhere in France. The Ministry of National Education decides on their assignment to a collège or lycée. It is therefore German as a foreign language. Moreover, teachers can be assigned anywhere in France and not specifically in Alsace. When a shortage of German teachers is noted, the observation is made at the national level, independently of the situation in Alsace.

The German section of the MEEF offered by the University of Strasbourg includes a preparation for an optional qualification for Alsatian, which is added to the CAPES examination. Holders of this qualification may be asked to take part in the regional language and culture courses offered in secondary schools.

According to the professional competency framework for teaching and education professions (Arrêté du 1er juillet 2013), the aim is to acquire the competencies common to all teachers and education personnel, actors in the public education service, as well as the competencies common to all teachers and education personnel, pedagogues and educators at the service of the success of all pupils, which are as follows:

1. to know the students and the learning process;
2. to take into account the diversity of pupils;
3. support pupils in their educational journey;
4. act as a responsible and ethical educator;
5. master the French language for communication purposes;

6. use a modern foreign language in the situations required by their profession;
7. integrate the elements of digital culture necessary for the exercise of one's profession; and
8. acquire the skills common to all teachers and educational staff, actors of the educational community.

All of the training content is based on the research activities of teacher-researchers and teachers affiliated with university research units. It should be noted that not all candidates for the competition are students at INSPÉ, as the competition is open to free applications.

### ■ *in-service training*

A multi-annual plan to develop and strengthen teachers' language skills in German was put in place in the framework of the 2018–2022 operational agreement between the Académie de Strasbourg and the regional authorities (Académie de Strasbourg & Préfet de la Région Grand Est, 2018a). This plan was renewed for 2023–2024, including the two Alsatian universities (Académie de Strasbourg & Préfet de la Région Grand Est, 2023). There is only state institutional in-service training between France and Germany or Austria (language training courses, professional stays, and cross-border observation courses in Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, and the northern cantons of Switzerland) and no specific training is provided for the teaching of German in Alsace as a regional language.

### *statistics*

In the academic year 2022/23, at the University of Strasbourg, 59 students were enrolled in the German bachelor's degree course (101 in 2016) and 85 students followed the same programme in distant learning (111 in 2016). Moreover, there were around 200 students who were studying German with another language in the bachelor's degree programme *Langues étrangères appliquées* and around 40 who were studying German with two languages in the bachelor's degree programme *Langue et Interculturalité*. German was studied as a (optional) language in other bachelor's degree programmes by around 2,000 students.

In the academic year 2022/23, the Alsatian courses were taken by 75 students for all levels, and 7 were applying for the *Diplôme universitaire d'alsacien* (Université de Strasbourg, personal communication, July 20, 2023).

Moreover, there were 29 students enrolled in the 1st year of the MEEF *1er degré Enseignement bilingue français-allemand* and 23 in the 2nd year (Université de Strasbourg, personal communication, July 20, 2023). There were 13 students enrolled in the 1st year of the MEEF *2d degré Enseigner l'allemand* (CAPES) and 12 in the 2nd year, and 5 were preparing for the optional qualification for Alsatian (Université de Strasbourg, personal communication, July 20, 2023).



## 7 Adult education

### *structure and language courses*

Adult education is mainly based on private initiatives that are sometimes integrated into associative activity programmes. All those initiatives are listed on the LEHRE website managed by the Office for the Language and Cultures of Alsace and Moselle (OLCA). The OLCA is in charge of the promotion of Alsatian in all fields and supports the initiatives of associations, local authorities, administrations and companies. Additionally, it serves as a centre for information and documentation in the fields of regional language and culture, aligning its actions with the policies initiated by the Grand Est Region and the CeA.

As part of vocational training, adult education is co-ordinated by a regional network for adult education in Alsace called GRETA (French: *Groupement d'Etablissements*). GRETA is a grouping of local public educational institutions that share their skills and resources to offer continuing education for adults. German is offered in this context, but Alsatian is also taught as a professional language (introduction to the language and maintenance of the language). The *Groupement d'Intérêt Public Formation Continue et Insertion Professionnelle* (GIP FCIP; Public Interest Group for Adult Education and Professional Integration Alsace) and GRETA have responded to a request from the Grand Est region by setting up a language learning platform called *Plateforme Linguistique Innovante* (Innovative Language Platform) for jobseekers in the Grand Est region.

The *Université Populaire Européenne* (European People's University), an associative structure considered as an "university extension" to take culture to the various regions of Alsace, both to promote French culture and to combat ignorance, offers language courses for adults in 19 different languages.

### *language use*

All the GRETA centres in the Académie de Strasbourg are qualified to prepare candidates for a "Language Skills Diploma" (*Diplôme de Compétences Linguistiques*) in German (according to the type of situation to be validated, from level A1 to C1).

They also offer tailor-made training in Alsatian, when requested by a company for example, to help trainees acquire the first language elements necessary for use in a professional context and specific vocabulary in the fields of health and personal services.

At the *Université Populaire Européenne* (European People's University), German and Alsatian are taught among many other language courses, from A1 to B2.2. for German, and from A1.1. to C1 for Alsatian.



## ***statistics***

In 2022/23, there were 1,202 people registered on the Innovative Language Platform in German training and 10 people were registered in Alsatian training (GRETA, personal communication, October 5, 2023).

Standard statistics are not available for the *Université Populaire Européenne* (European People's University).

## 8 Educational research

Fundamental and applied research on language education in Alsace is mainly conducted at the University of Strasbourg by researchers in the research units LiLPa (UR 1339 *Linguistique, langues, parole*) and the LISEC (UR 2310 *Laboratoire interuniversitaire des sciences de l'éducation et de la communication*). The position of German and Alsatian in schools has been the subject of numerous articles (e.g. Huck, 1999, 2006, 2018a). Several researchers from the LiLPa research unit have participated in the elaboration of models for the teaching of regional languages (e.g. Geiger-Jaillet & Schlemminger, 2023) while others worked on the foundations of cross-border didactics (e.g. Putsche, 2016). Some researchers are specialised in the study of the Alemanic and Franconian dialects spoken in Alsace (Huck & Erhart, 2020).

Since all the teacher training content is based on the research activities of the teachers and researchers affiliated with the research units of the universities, many observations are conducted by MA students during their training and discussed in their master's theses.

Recent PhD theses on bilingual education have mainly focused on the French-German dimension of teaching, not on the regional one. Faucompré (2018) notes that despite the fact that the Upper Rhine cross-border region seems to offer the ideal conditions for the optimal teaching/learning of the neighbour's language, systematic learning of the language spoken on the other side of the Rhine does not seem to take into account either the regional specificities of this particular geographical context. Feig (2021) focused on the acquisition of linguistic and cultural interaction competences in bilingual German-French day-care centres in the Upper Rhine region, which overlook the potential endogenous French-Alsatian bilingualism and only aim to develop language skills in the standard languages of the two states, namely German and French.

Although the regional dimension of language teaching in Alsace is rarely dealt with, it is apparent from most of the studies that the teaching of German is perceived as the teaching of a foreign language in Alsace, regardless of the actors involved (Erhart & Putsche, 2022; Huck, 2018b).

## 9 Prospects

German has been taught as a “regional language” in Alsace since 1982. In 1992, the first public bilingual classes were created and since then, all efforts have been focused on increasing the number of these classes. French/German bilingual teaching (with or without parity) certainly brings skills to many children and young people, but, in this form, it does not revitalise the use of Alsatian in society. Since Alsatian, though it is still in use and spoken in different areas and situations, is less and less transmitted in the private sphere (family and friends), the question of its teaching in schools may be raised, depending on what Alsatian society wants and the decisions that elected officials will take. A qualitative evaluation of both the results of this teaching and the adequacy of the teaching to the objectives set by the regional language policy should be carried out as a matter of necessity.

In the last opinion survey (CeA, 2022), Alsatian seems to be considered an important language by the respondents. However, it is not certain that, in practice, there would be a mobilisation other than verbal to preserve its use. Learning Alsatian would interest 29% of those who do not speak or understand it, while learning German would interest 66% of those who do not speak or understand it. Nevertheless, almost half of the inhabitants (48%) would like to see Alsatian become more important in everyday life, while 1% reported being against Alsatian and 6% would not be bothered by the disappearance of Alsatian. It should be noted, however, that only 38% of the 18 to 24-year-olds believe that Alsatian should have a greater place in everyday life.

While 76% of respondents considered that Alsace would lose its identity if Alsatian were to disappear, the majority of respondents do not believe that Alsatian should be used in everyday life. However, 73% of the respondents declared that more should be done to promote and highlight Alsatian, and finally, 83% were in favour of learning Alsatian in school. Alsatian seems to have a high symbolic value for most of the respondents, even if they do not speak it. Yet, 61% of households with a child(ren) were opposed to the idea of immersive teaching in primary school (Alsatian + German only from Petite section to CP), with French only being present from the fifth school year (CE1). This would seem to indicate that while parents are generally in favour of teaching the regional language (German and/or Alsatian), this should not be at the expense of the teaching of French, which remains the priority for them.

All of these quantitative elements based on self-reporting, which must certainly always be recontextualised, do not really seem to encourage the political actors, from the Recteur of the Académie de Strasbourg representing the State to the departmental and regional elected officials, to act more energetically in favour of the various aspects mentioned by the people interviewed. As a result, there is no real language policy that seems to be taking shape. There are, of course, language policy measures regarding the educational field in

the agreements referred to in this Regional Dossier, but, on the one hand, it remains to be seen to what extent they will be implemented and maintained over time, and what qualitative effects they will have on pupils, students, and future adults, on the other.

As a result, Alsatian (i.e. the dialectal oral variety still spoken in Alsace) is largely absent from the school environment and from Canopé publications, and its presence is not even foreseen, although the reason for this is unknown. Though the use of Alsatian has been “authorised” in primary schools since the Rector’s Circular of June 1982 (Deyon, 1991), neither its use at school nor the possibility of transmitting knowledge in Alsatian is envisaged. An overview of the media produced recently confirms this observation. The PlaReLa database does not allow for searching for resources specifically in Alsatian, but a more detailed search will quickly reveal that there are very few of them. On OLCA’s LEHRE website, there are a number of fingerplays, songs, nursery rhymes, and holiday books in Alsatian that can be downloaded. In fact, these are more play tools than school activities for pupils. The rest of the production focuses on songs (Huck & Geiger-Jaillet, 2020).

In practice, it is volunteer teachers, mainly in primary schools, who will (or not) use Alsatian with children who still understand and/or speak it in order to activate and diversify their dialect skills or to contrast the dialect with German. Their number, probably modest, is not known. If there are any teachers who make the Alsatian dialect a subject of teaching and learning or who “expose” their pupils to dialects, particularly at nursery school, they must be very few in number (Huck & Geiger-Jaillet, 2020).

For German, the logic is not the same insofar as it is not an endangered language. The majority of respondents do not feel that German is a language of identity, but rather that it is a useful language (in their professional life, economic life, cultural life, etc.; CeA, 2022). As such, and despite all the efforts made by political actors, it is not taught nor learnt as a regional language, but as a foreign language as any other.

Ultimately, the use of Alsatian is turning into a cultural identity marker while becoming lost as an everyday life community language, while German remains popular in education as an asset in professional life. However, this popularity is all relative: due to the regional language policy, there is no other possibility for bilingual education in Alsace than a French-German one. If other languages were offered, it is not certain at all that German would have the same success.

The difficulty in recruiting German teachers over the last several years reveals the almost total absence of a proactive language policy, both in favour of more regular use of Alsatian in public and private contexts, and in favour of a modern teaching and learning of German, which would be rooted in the lives of its learners and in the societies that use it.

## 10 Summary of statistics

**Table 4** Overview of primary bilingual education (nursery and primary education) in the Académie de Strasbourg in the school year 2022/23.

		Total number of schools	Of which bilingual schools	% <i>bilingual schools</i>	Number of bilingual classes	Total number of pupils	Of whom in bilingual schools	% <i>pupils in bilingual schools</i>
Bas-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	748	189	25.2	733	95,735	16,622	17.4
	<i>Private under contract</i>	23	6	26.1	28.5	5,128	587	11.5
	<i>Total</i>	771	195	25.3	761.5	100,863	17,209	17.1
Haut-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	522	180	34.5	579	64,227	13,256	20.6
	<i>Private under contract</i>	14	5	35.7	40	4,478	1,039	23.2
	<i>Total</i>	536	185	34.5	619	68,705	14,295	20.8
Académie	<i>TOTAL</i>	1,307	380	29.1	1,380.5	169,568	31,504	18.6

*Note.* Data for total number of schools and total number of pupils (adapted) from Académie de Strasbourg (2023a); data for of which bilingual schools, % bilingual schools, number of bilingual classes, of whom in bilingual schools, and % pupils in bilingual schools from Académie de Strasbourg (2022).

**Table 5** Overview of bilingual primary education in the Académie de Strasbourg by level (nursery and primary) in the school year 2022/23.

		Nursery			Primary		
		Bilingual classes	Pupils	% pupils in bilingual classes	Bilingual classes	Pupils	% pupils in bilingual classes
Bas-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	298	6851	19.5	435	9771	16.1
	<i>Private under contract</i>	7	142	12.09	21	445	11.26
	<i>Total</i>	305	6,993	19.24	456	10,216	15.83
Haut-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	243	5,655	23.8	336	7,601	18.8
	<i>Private under contract</i>	9	257	33.33	31	782	21.04
	<i>Total</i>	252	5,912	24.82	367	8,383	20.74
Académie	<i>Public</i>	541	12,506	21.20	771	17,372	17.2
	<i>Private under contract</i>	16	399	20.51	52	1,227	16
	<i>TOTAL</i>	557	12,905	21.18	823	18,599	17.11

*Note.* Data from Académie de Strasbourg (2022).

**Table 6** Overview of the number of pupils in bilingual primary education (nursery and primary) in the Académie de Strasbourg in the school year 2022/23.

		PS	MS	GS	CP	CE1	CE2	CM1	CM2	TOTAL
Bas-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	1,927	2,437	2,487	2,294	1,999	2,068	1,775	1,635	16,622
	<i>Private under contract</i>	44	41	57	97	82	90	85	91	587
	<i>Total</i>	1,971	2,478	2,544	2,391	2,081	2,158	1,860	1,726	17,209
Haut-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	1,535	2,031	2,089	1,781	1,620	1,504	1,412	1,284	13,256
	<i>Private under contract</i>	82	80	95	177	164	153	139	149	1,039
	<i>Total</i>	1,617	2,111	2,184	1,958	1,784	1,657	1,551	1,433	14,295
Académie	<i>Public</i>	3,462	4,468	4,576	4,075	3,619	3,572	3,187	2,919	29,878
	<i>Private under contract</i>	126	121	152	274	246	243	224	240	1,626
	<i>TOTAL</i>	3,588	4,589	4,728	4,349	3,865	3,815	3,411	3,159	31,504

*Note.* Data from Académie de Strasbourg (2022).

**Table 7** Overview of the number of teachers in bilingual primary education in the Académie de Strasbourg in the school year 2022/23.

	Total	Full-time teachers	Trainee teachers	German exchange teachers	Temporary teachers
Bas-Rhin	366.5	326	9.5	3	28
Haut-Rhin	289.5	250.5	3.5	2.5	39
Académie	656	576.5	13	5.5	67

*Note.* Data from Académie de Strasbourg (personal communication, December 5, 2022).

**Table 8** Overview of bilingual secondary education (collèges and lycées) in the Académie de Strasbourg in the school year 2022/23.

School year 2022/23	Collèges with bilingual curricula		Lycées		
	Number of collèges	Percentage of total	Abibac Number of lycées	Azubi-bacpro Number of lycées	
Bas-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	52	58.4	9	5
	<i>Private under contract</i>	3	25.0	1	0
	<i>Total</i>	55	54.5	10	5
Haut-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	37	64.9	7	4
	<i>Private under contract</i>	5	41.7	1	0
	<i>Total</i>	42	60.9	8	4
Académie	<i>Public</i>	89	61.0	16	9
	<i>Private under contract</i>	8	33.3	2	0
	<i>TOTAL</i>	97	57.1	18	9

*Note.* Data from Académie de Strasbourg (personal communication, December 5, 2022).

**Table 9** Overview of the number of pupils per level in secondary bilingual education (collèges) in the Académie de Strasbourg in the school year 2022/23.

Collèges	Number of pupils per level					% of bilingual / total	
	6e	5e	4e	3e	TOTAL		
Bas-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	1,103	963	890	763	3,719	8.27
	<i>Private under contract</i>	91	113	115	85	527	7.87
	<i>Total (67)</i>	1,194	1,076	1,005	848	4,246	8.22
Haut-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	787	628	598	553	2,566	9.22
	<i>Private under contract</i>	179	187	168	146	680	9.60
	<i>Total (68)</i>	966	815	766	699	3,246	9.30
Académie	<i>Public</i>	1,890	1,591	1,488	1,316	6,285	8.64
	<i>Private under contract</i>	270	300	283	231	1,207	8.76
	<i>TOTAL</i>	2,160	1,891	1,771	1,547	7,492	8.66

*Note.* Data from Académie de Strasbourg (personal communication, December 5, 2022).

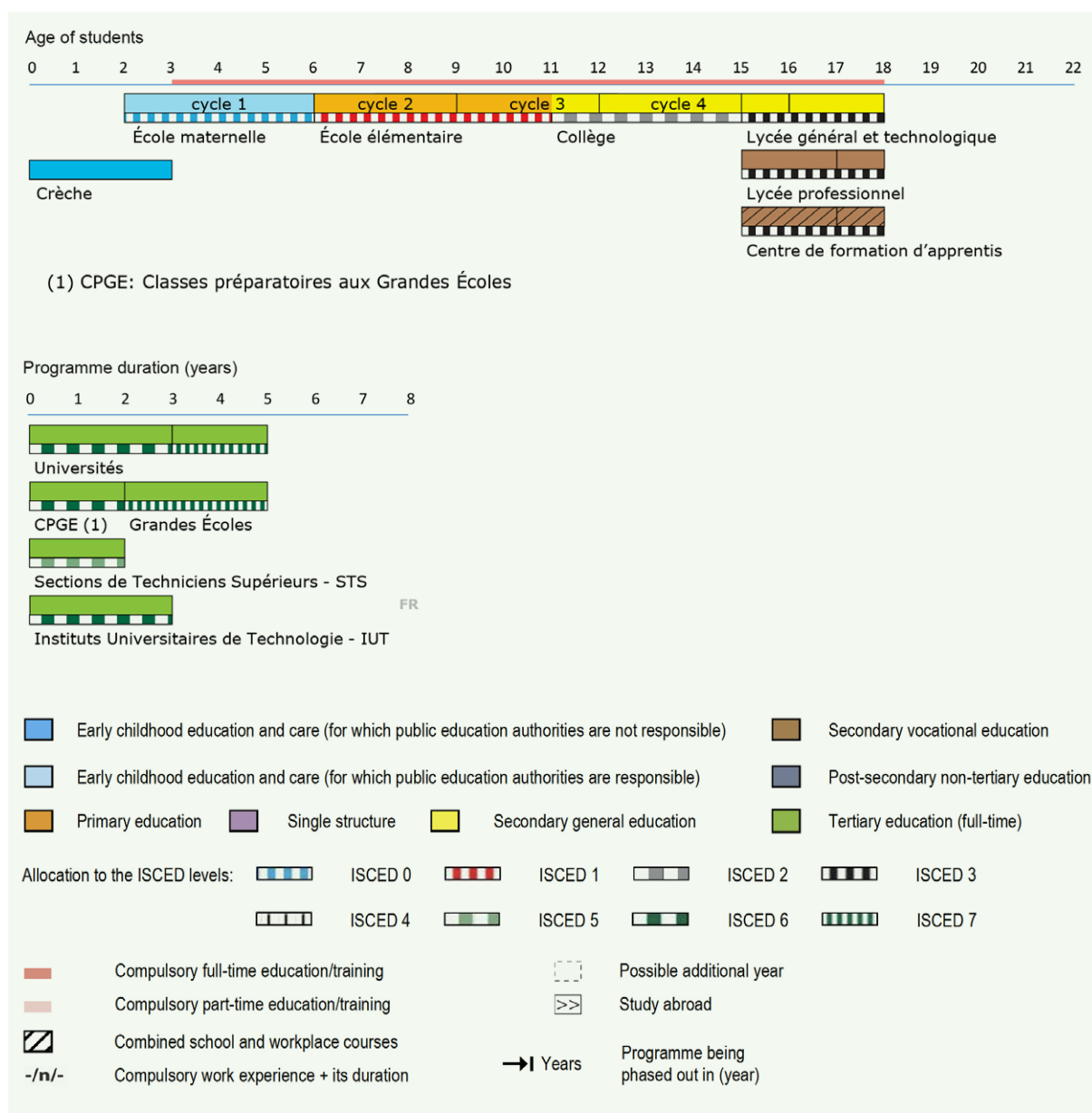


**Table 10** Overview of the number of pupils per level in secondary bilingual education (lycées) in the Académie de Strasbourg in the school year 2022/23.

Lycées Abibac		Number of pupils per level				Total number of pupils in general and technological lycées	% of Abibac / total
		2e	1ère	Term	TOTAL		
Bas-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	314	249	224	787	22,382	3.51
	<i>Private under contract</i>	30	34	26	90	3,951	2.27
	<i>Total (67)</i>	344	283	250	877	26,333	3.33
Haut-Rhin	<i>Public</i>	279	254	254	787	14,437	5.45
	<i>Private under contract</i>	15	22	29	66	2,833	2.32
	<i>Total (68)</i>	294	276	283	853	17,270	4.93
Académie	<i>Public</i>	593	503	478	1,574	36,819	4.27
	<i>Private under contract</i>	45	56	55	156	6,784	2.29
	<i>TOTAL</i>	638	559	533	1,730	43,603	3.96

*Note.* Data from Académie de Strasbourg (personal communication, December 5, 2022).

# Education system in France



*Note.* ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) 4 education covers less than 2% of the total number of students (all levels). Young people aged between 16 and 18 can fulfil the obligation for compulsory training in different ways: schooling, apprenticeship, training courses, civic service, and support system or social and professional integration measures. Reprinted from European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, & Eurydice (2023, p. 20).

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## Further reading

### Legal materials

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## Book chapter

- Huck, D. (2008). L'évaluation de l'enseignement-apprentissage de l'allemand-langue régionale dans les sites bilingues à parité horaire de l'école primaire de l'académie de Strasbourg (1992–2002). Éléments critiques pour un bilan qualitatif et quantitatif [Evaluating the teaching and learning of German as a regional language in the time-parity bilingual primary school sites of the Académie de Strasbourg (1992–2002)]. In G. Schlemminger (Ed.), *Erforschung des bilingualen Lehrens und Lernens* (pp.151–170). Schneider-Verlag Hohengehren.





## Useful addresses

### **A.B.C.M. Zweisprachigkeit**

A.B.C.M. Bilingualism

T: +33 3 88 72 60 37

F: +33 3 88 72 64 25

W: [www.abcmzwei.eu/abcm-zweisprachigkeit/](http://www.abcmzwei.eu/abcm-zweisprachigkeit/)

The A.B.C.M. Zweisprachigkeit schools were founded in 1991 and are part of a network of schools run by the *Association pour le Bilinguisme en Classe dès la Maternelle* (Association for Bilingualism starting from Pre-Elementary School).

### **GRETA (GRoupement d'ETablissements)**

T: +33 3 88 14 10 10

W: [www.greta-alsace.fr](http://www.greta-alsace.fr)

### **Office pour la Langue et les Cultures d'Alsace et de Moselle (OLCA)**

The Office for the Language and Cultures of Alsace and Moselle

11a, rue Edouard Teutsch, 67000 STRASBOURG

T: +33 3 88 14 31 20

W: [www.olcalsace.org/fr/](http://www.olcalsace.org/fr/)

[www.lehre.olcalsace.org/apprendre-et-enseigner/ou-apprendre-l-alsacien](http://www.lehre.olcalsace.org/apprendre-et-enseigner/ou-apprendre-l-alsacien)

### **Rectorat de l'Académie de Strasbourg**

Administrative headquarters of the Académie de Strasbourg

6, rue de la Toussaint, 67975 Strasbourg Cedex

T: +33 3 88 23 37 23

W: [www.ac-strasbourg.fr](http://www.ac-strasbourg.fr)

### **Université de Haute Alsace, Faculté des Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines de Mulhouse (FLSH)**

University of Haute Alsace, Mulhouse Faculty of Arts, Languages and Humanities

10 rue des Frères Lumière, 68100 Mulhouse

T: +33 3 89 33 63 87

E: [contact.lc@uha.fr](mailto:contact.lc@uha.fr)

W: [www.flsh.uha.fr](http://www.flsh.uha.fr)

## **Université de Strasbourg**

University of Strasbourg

4, rue Blaise Pascal, 67081 Strasbourg Cedex

T: +33 3 68 85 00 00

W: [www.unistra.fr](http://www.unistra.fr)

[www.langues.unistra.fr](http://www.langues.unistra.fr) (Faculté des Langues)

[www.inspe.unistra.fr](http://www.inspe.unistra.fr) (INSPÉ de l'Académie de Strasbourg)

## **Université populaire européenne (UPE)**

Palais universitaire, 9 place de l'Université, 67084 Strasbourg Cedex

T: +33 3 88 36 32 10

E: [strasbourg@upe-alsace.fr](mailto:strasbourg@upe-alsace.fr)


W: [www.strasbourg.upe-alsace.fr/index.html](http://www.strasbourg.upe-alsace.fr/index.html)






## About this Regional Dossier

### *author biographies*

*Dominique Huck* , PhD, is professor emeritus at the University of Strasbourg. His work is rooted in the fields of dialectology, sociolinguistics, and language policies, particularly in the field of education and in the Alsatian area. He is the author of *Une histoire des langues de l'Alsace* (2015), La Nuée Bleue.

*Pascale Erhart* , PhD, is senior lecturer (*Maître de Conférences*) in dialectology and sociolinguistics, and Head of the Alsatian and Mosellan dialectology section of the University of Strasbourg. Her research focuses on the use of dialects in the Alsatian media, as well as on language attitudes and ideologies in general. She is also in charge of promoting the training in standard and dialectal German for students who want to become teachers in primary schools in Alsace, since teaching German is mandatory for them.

### *previous editions*

The first edition (1988) of this Regional Dossier was written by Dominique Huck. The second edition (2001) was written by Alie van der Schaaf and Daniel Morgen (Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres, Centre de formation aux enseignements bilingues).

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## Other websites on minority languages

### **Mercator European Research Centre**

[www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu)

Homepage of the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. The website contains the Regional Dossier series, the Wiki on Minority Language Learning, publications, information on current activities and projects, and many links to relevant websites.

### **Mercator Network**

[www.mercator-research.eu/en/about/partnerships/](http://www.mercator-research.eu/en/about/partnerships/)

General information about the Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres.

### **Mercator's Wiki on Minority Language Learning**

[www.wiki.mercator-research.eu](http://www.wiki.mercator-research.eu)

Managed by the Mercator European Research Centre, this online platform complements the Regional Dossier series by providing up-to-date information on the education of regional and minority languages with limited or no presence in the education system.

### **European Commission**

[www.education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/multilingualism/linguistic-diversity](http://www.education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/multilingualism/linguistic-diversity)

The website of the European Commission gives information about the EU's support for language diversity.

### **Council of Europe**

[www.conventions.coe.int](http://www.conventions.coe.int)

*European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (1992) and *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995). European Treaty Series 148 and 157, Strasbourg.

### **Eurydice**

[www.eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu](http://www.eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu)

Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The site provides information on all European education systems and education policies.

### **European Parliament Committee – supporting analyses database**

[www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/home](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/home)

This database contains research papers produced by the European Parliament's research service. A study for the CULT Committee, conducted by the Mercator European Research Centre, was published in 2017: *Minority Languages and Education: Best Practices and Pitfalls*.

**NPLD**

[www.npld.eu](http://www.npld.eu)

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) is a European-wide network working in the field of language policy and planning for Constitutional, Regional and Small-State Languages (CRSS) across Europe.

**FUEN**

[www.fuen.org](http://www.fuen.org)

The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) is the umbrella organisation of the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups in Europe and represents the interests of European minorities at the regional, national, and European levels.

**ELEN**

[www.elen.ngo](http://www.elen.ngo)

The European Language Equality Network (ELEN) is a non-governmental organisation that has as its goal the promotion and protection of European lesser-used (i.e. regional, minority, endangered, indigenous, co-official, and smaller national) languages, to work towards linguistic equality for these languages, and multilingualism, under the broader framework of human rights, and to be a voice for the speakers of these languages at all levels.

**YEN**

[www.yeni.org](http://www.yeni.org)

Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) is the largest network of youth organisations of autochthonous, national, and linguistic minorities in Europe.



## About the Mercator European Research Centre

### *mission & goals*

The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, hosted by the Fryske Akademy, addresses the growing interest in multilingualism and endeavours to promote linguistic diversity within and outside Europe. The Mercator European Research Centre focuses on research, policy, and practice in the fields of multilingualism and language learning. Through the acquisition, application, and circulation of knowledge regarding language learning at school, at home, and through cultural participation, the Mercator European Research Centre aims to provide for language communities' increasing need to exchange experiences and to cooperate, not only in the European context but also beyond the borders of Europe. Although the main focus lies in the field of regional and minority languages, immigrant languages are also topics of study.

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The Mercator European Research Centre is the leading partner of the European Mercator Network, which was initiated by the European Commission in 1987. The Mercator Network partners are the following: Mercator Media, hosted at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David; Mercator Legislation, hosted at the CIEMEN Foundation; the Centre de Recerca en Sociolingüística i Comunicació (University of Barcelona); the Institute for Slavic and Baltic languages, Finnish, Dutch and German (Stockholm University); and the HUN-REN Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics (HUN-REN NYTK). The Mercator European Research Centre also works closely with a large number of research organisations and universities. This cooperation includes partners in the province of Fryslân and other parts of the Netherlands, as well as partners across Europe and beyond. The main funding body of the Mercator European Research Centre is the provincial government of Fryslân. The EU and regional authorities in Europe also regularly fund projects and activities.

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The research activities of the Mercator European Research Centre focus on various aspects of bilingual and trilingual education such as language proficiency in different languages, interaction in the multilingual classroom, and teacher qualifications for working in a multilingual classroom. Latest developments look at how educational models for minority languages can also cater for pupils with a migrant background. Whenever possible, research is carried out in a comparative perspective. Results are disseminated through publications and conferences, often in collaboration with the Mercator European Research Centre's partners.

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## ***contact***

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**Nenets, Khanty and Selkup:** The Nenets, Khanty and Selkup languages in education in the Yamal Region in Russia (2016; [Russian translation available](#))

**North Frisian:** The North Frisian language in education in Germany (2015, 3rd ed.)

**Occitan:** The Occitan language in education in France (2019, 2nd ed.)

**Polish:** The Polish language in education in Lithuania (2006)

**Romani and Beash:** The Romani and Beash languages in education in Hungary (2020, 2nd ed.)

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**Serbian:** The Serbian language in education in Hungary (2014)

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The Slovene language in education in Italy (2020, 3rd ed.)

**Sorbian:** The Sorbian language in education in Germany (2016, 2nd ed.)

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**Ukrainian and Ruthenian:** The Ukrainian and Ruthenian languages in education in Poland (2006)

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T: 0031 (0) 58 - 234 3027  
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