



'RIGHT TO EDUCATION'

Submission to the Universal
Periodic Review of the United
Nations Human Rights Council

4th Cycle – 43rd Session

Country Review: France

October 2022
by Faical Al Azib



**BROKEN
CHALK**

Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR
Amsterdam, Netherlands

+31685639758 | info@brokenchalk.org |

www.brokenchalk.org

[@brokenchalk](https://twitter.com/brokenchalk)

<https://www.youtube.com/brokenchalk>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/brokenchalk>

[@brokenchalk](https://www.facebook.com/brokenchalk)

**Submission to the
Universal Periodic Review of the
United Nations Human Rights Council
4th Cycle – 43rd Session
Country Review: France
October 2022
by Faical Al Azib**

Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020, which focuses on monitoring and minimizing human rights violations in education all around the world. Our goal is to contribute to promoting universal and equal access to education for all.

Together with our international sponsors and partners, we encourage and support achieving societal peace by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarization, and tackling inequalities in the field of education.

Content

0. Introduction.....	2
I. Analysis of Educational Issues to be Resolved.....	3
The Quality, Access, and Outcomes from French Educational System.....	3
II. Discrimination & Exclusion.....	4
III. Recommendations.....	5

0. Introduction

1. Broken Chalk is a non-profit organisation that focuses on developing each country's educational system to improve the level of human rights on the global level. Therefore, this report will focus on education. By drafting this report, Broken Chalk intends to assist with France's 4th Universal Periodic Review [UPR]. First, the report will analyse the most important issues that France faces regarding the Right to Education. Then, it will shed light on some issues that should be solved by the French government. Finally, Broken Chalk will provide a few recommendations to France to further improve education.
2. In the last review of France of 2017, the Republic of France received 89 recommendations and observations from 7 different human rights mechanisms, that focused on education and other issues such as gender gap, discrimination and human trafficking, which affect education's access, outputs, and outcomes.
3. The French educational system is based on the principles of the 1789 revolution. Indeed, the structure of the French educational system can be traced back to Napoleon's First Empire (1804-1815)ⁱ. The educational system is divided into three stages: primary education, secondary education, and higher education. In France, most of its elementary and secondary schools, as well as its universities, are public institutions that have highly centralized administrationsⁱⁱ. Moreover, the curricula at primary and secondary schools are standardised across all schools, for a given grade.
4. The Preamble to the French Constitution stipulates that it is the "state's duty to provide free, non-religious public education at every level"ⁱⁱⁱ. Therefore, the state must develop a clear roadmap for the training routes, national programmes, organisation and content of curricula. It must also lead and evaluate education policies to ensure overall consistency of the education system.

I. Analysis of Educational Issues to be Resolved

The Quality, Access, and Outcomes from French Educational System

5. Free schooling is provided through public education institutions, in which 83% of all pupils are enrolled. The principle of freedom of education is a key component in the French educational system, which is protected by law. There are also a number of private fee-paying institutions. Having signed contracts with the Ministry of Education, the vast majority of these institutions also support the national public education curriculum. In the 2019–2020 school year, around 12,380,300 primary and secondary school pupils were enrolled^{iv}. Of these, 10,233,400 were enrolled in publicly owned establishments (Statistical Surveys no. 3 and 12, French Ministry of Education)^v.
6. The French Constitution asserts that all children aged 3 to 16 years in France must be provided with education. Law 2019-791 Pour une école de la confiance of 26 July 2019 changed the mandatory starting age of education from six to three years old starting from September of 2019^{vi}. It reaffirmed the pedagogical importance of the pre-school in the French educational system. It also reinforced the role of pre-primary education in reducing inequalities from a very early age, particularly with linguistic inequalities. The law also introduced an obligation for all learners to receive training until they are 18 years old. This training could be in a higher education institution, an apprenticeship or vocational training, working or performing a civic service, or a social or professional placement.

7. The majority of young people coming out of compulsory education enrol in vocational education and training [VET], which provides them with a solid foundation in a given occupation (there are about 230 professions to choose from). Around one-third of students opts for continuing education at an upper secondary specialised or baccalaureate school, which prepare them for tertiary education at a university.
8. In the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA], as in 2015, students in France scored a higher performance rate in reading, mathematics and science, but with lower equity indicators than on average across the OECD. In France, about 9.2% of students were high performers (PISA level 5 or above) in reading, which was slightly above the OECD average share of 8.7%^{vii}. Conversely, 21% of students in France did not achieve minimum proficiency (below PISA Level 2) in reading, which was below the average of 23%. Average performance in reading and science in France has not changed significantly since the first edition of PISA in 2000; in mathematics, average performance stabilised between 2006 and 2018, having decreased between 2003 and 2006^{viii}. More than 90% of all young people graduate with a certificate or diploma at upper secondary level, which facilitates direct entry into the job market or enables them to continue education at tertiary level.

II. Discrimination & Exclusion

9. In terms of system-level policies, students in France are first tracked into different educational pathways for upper secondary education (theoretical starting age of 15); the average age among OECD countries is 16. The PISA 2018 isolation index for high-performing students, for France, which indicates the extent to which high-performing students are concentrated in certain schools, was within the OECD average.
10. Significant differences in educational achievement may lead to starker earnings inequality in many countries. According to PISA 2018, the quality of teaching resources and infrastructure in schools in France varies less according to the socio-economic background of students than on average across the OECD^{ix}. Indeed, at 5.3%, the difference in the share of school leaders from disadvantaged and advantaged French upper secondary schools (lycées) reporting a shortage of educational materials is much smaller than the OECD average difference of 13.5%. On the other hand, according to the Teaching and Learning International Survey [TALIS] of 2018, disadvantaged lower secondary schools in France tend to have less experienced teaching staff with a higher rate of turnover than in other schools: 21.5% have less than five years' experience and stay for 8.2 years, on average, compared to 12.1% and 10.2 years in other schools^x. This may inhibit the impact of budgetary and other policy efforts to target resources towards disadvantaged areas, such as reducing class sizes.
11. Furthermore, low-performing students are generally from the same schools in France, with an isolation index of 0.29 compared to 0.22 on average^{xi}. This often occurs in vocational upper secondary institutions, for example. Previous OECD evidence suggests that grade repetition can lead to student disengagement and early school leaving. According to PISA 2015, 22% of 15-year-olds in France had repeated at least one grade during their education, double the OECD average. France reduced this share considerably between 2009 and 2015 (from 38% to 22%), although this has not yet had a positive impact on PISA performance, which has remained stable^{xii}.
12. In France, skill levels among adults (16-65 year-olds) were among the lowest of countries participating in the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

[PIAAC] of 2012. This can be explained with the comparatively low performance of older adults (45–65-year-olds), while 16–44-year-olds scored closer to, but still below, average. In France, labour market integration is facilitated by educational attainment, and employment prospects for those who drop out of school can be precarious. The share of young adults (25–34-year-olds) who have not achieved an upper secondary qualification in France is slightly below the OECD average, at 13% in 2018, compared to 15%^{xiii}. However, the unemployment rate for those who have not reached this level of education is one of the highest in the OECD at 25% compared to an average of 14%. To a certain extent, unemployment rates are also high for those with an upper secondary qualification at 12% compared to 7%^{xiv}. Furthermore, 18% of 18–24-year-olds in France are not employed, nor in education or training [NEETs], compared to the OECD average of 14%.

III. Recommendations

13. Broken Chalk recommends that the government of France address the experiencing problems in gaining access to secondary education for asylum seekers and undocumented children.
14. France should strengthen public policies to ensure that children of foreign origin enjoy the best possible level of teaching and that child asylum seekers and undocumented children are given access to education, particularly at secondary level.
15. It should further strengthen programmes and awareness-raising activities against violence, abuse and bullying in schools.
16. France should strengthen its efforts to address the high rates of repetition and school dropout, in particular in secondary education, and introduce concrete measures to better prepare teachers to support students at risk of grade repetition.
17. Broken Chalk recommends France to assign better qualified teachers to more challenging environments, this should be a priority for France in the future.
18. France must guarantee that education is accessible, inclusive, of high-quality, and free for all.

ⁱ Educational Policies: France (2014)

ⁱⁱ French Ministry of Education

ⁱⁱⁱ European Agency; Fundamental principles of the French educational system

^{iv} European Agency; Fundamental principles of the French educational system

^v European Agency; Fundamental principles of the French educational system

^{vi} French Ministry of Education

^{vii} OECD, Education Policy Outlook

viii OECD, Education Policy Outlook

ix OECD, Education Policy Outlook

x OECD, Education Policy Outlook

xi OECD, Education Policy Outlook

xii OECD, Education Policy Outlook

xiii European Agency; Fundamental principles of the French educational system

xiv European Agency; Fundamental principles of the French educational system

Educational Policies: *France* (2014); last researched on September 2022 from [https://splash-db.eu/policydescription/educational-policies-france-2014/#:~:text=The%20French%20educational%20system%20is,Empire%20\(1804%2D1815\)](https://splash-db.eu/policydescription/educational-policies-france-2014/#:~:text=The%20French%20educational%20system%20is,Empire%20(1804%2D1815))

European Agency; *Fundamental principles of the French educational system* (2021); last researched on September 2022 from <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/france/legislation-and-policy> Education at a Glance (2021)

OECD, *Education Policy Outlook (2020)*; last researched on September 2022 from <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-France-2020.pdf>

Official website of the French Ministry of Education, last researched on September 2022 from <https://fulbright-france.org/en/study-france/understanding-french-education-system>



**BROKEN
CHALK**

Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR

Amsterdam, Netherlands

+31685639758 | info@brokenchalk.org | www.brokenchalk.org

[@brokenchalk](https://twitter.com/brokenchalk)

<https://www.youtube.com/brokenchalk>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/brokenchalk>

[@brokenchalk](https://www.facebook.com/brokenchalk)