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Teaching Reading in Europe:

Contexts, Policies and Practices
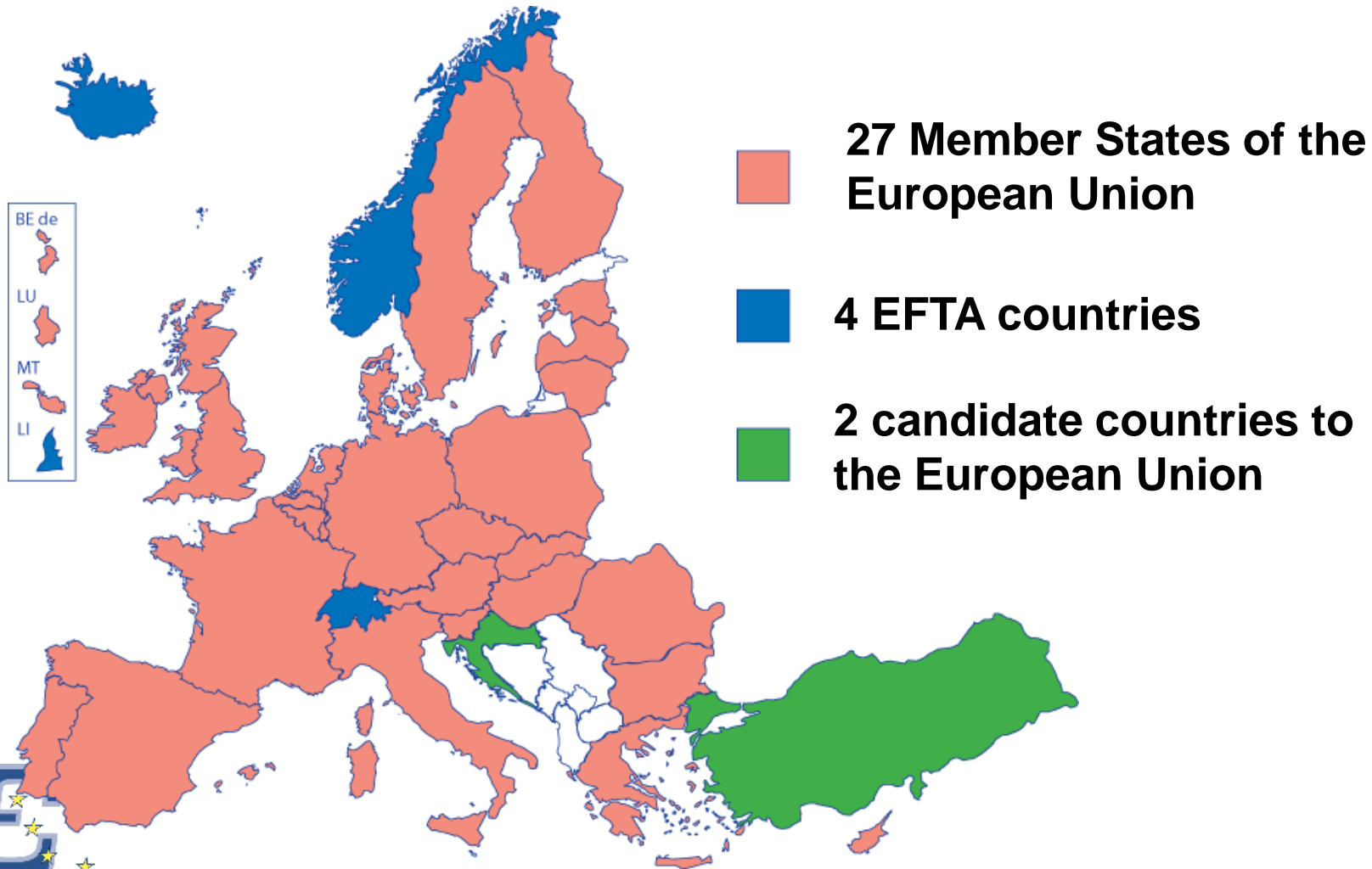
Teaching Reading in Europe:
Contexts, Policies and Practices

European Commission

Conference 'Reading Literacy in Slovenia and Europe'
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Eurydice: A network of 33 countries

27 Member States of the European Union

4 EFTA countries

2 candidate countries to the European Union

Eurydice network

- An instrument for European cooperation in the field of education

- Aims to provide those responsible for education systems and policies in Europe with European-level analyses and information which will assist them in their decision making

Four types of products:

1. Comparative studies

2. Harmonised descriptions of national education systems (the Eurypedia database)

3. Publications on indicators

4. Reference materials: glossaries, thesaurus

- European target of reducing the number of low achieving 15-year-olds in reading to below 15 % by 2020.
- Comparative analysis of important factors impacting on the acquisition of reading skills:

  Approaches to teaching reading

  Tackling reading difficulties
  Teachers' knowledge and skills
  Reading promotion in the society

- Comparing national policies and guidelines regarding and reviewing whether they reflect latest research results

- Investigating whether current practices reflect recommendation from education authorities and scientific literature

- Describing successful or promising strategies and reforms at national level

I. Approaches to teaching reading according to national curricula

- Aim to develop reading literacy
- Contain cognitive (decoding, text comprehension) and motivation aspects
- Coverage from pre-primary to lower secondary education

Cognitive aspects: reading instruction organised schematically into three critical stages

- Development of emergent literacy skills
- Basic reading instruction
- Teaching of reading comprehension strategies

Development of emergent literacy skills

In a majority of countries, recommendations to teachers to organise activities enabling children to build foundations skills for learning to read (understanding about print; phonological awareness)

to primary teachers and pre-primary teachers

- In nearly all European countries, pre-primary education is not compulsory

  86% of EU pupils aged 4 attend pre-primary education (2009/10)

- Recent reforms emphasizing the importance given to pre-primary education (LT, RO and UK (ENG)

- Recent reforms specifically encouraging the development of emergent reading skills at that level (DK, IT, AT, PT, UK-ENG)

Basic reading instruction

- Developing word recognition
- Use of grapheme-phoneme correspondences
- Reading fluency

In the majority of countries, recommendations relating to these three dimensions

Main difference between countries: phonics instruction (primary level)

Teaching phonics:

- 2/3 of curricula indicate that phonics knowledge should continue to be developed until the end of primary education

- In countries with orthographically complex languages: teaching of phonics not stopped to early (DK, IE, FR, PT, UK)

Comprehension strategies

- Drawing inferences
- Summarizing texts
- Making connection between parts of a text
- Using background knowledge
- Monitoring own comprehension
- Construction visual representation

Pupils reflecting on their own reading process?

Reading comprehension strategies in national curricula, primary and lower secondary, 2009/10
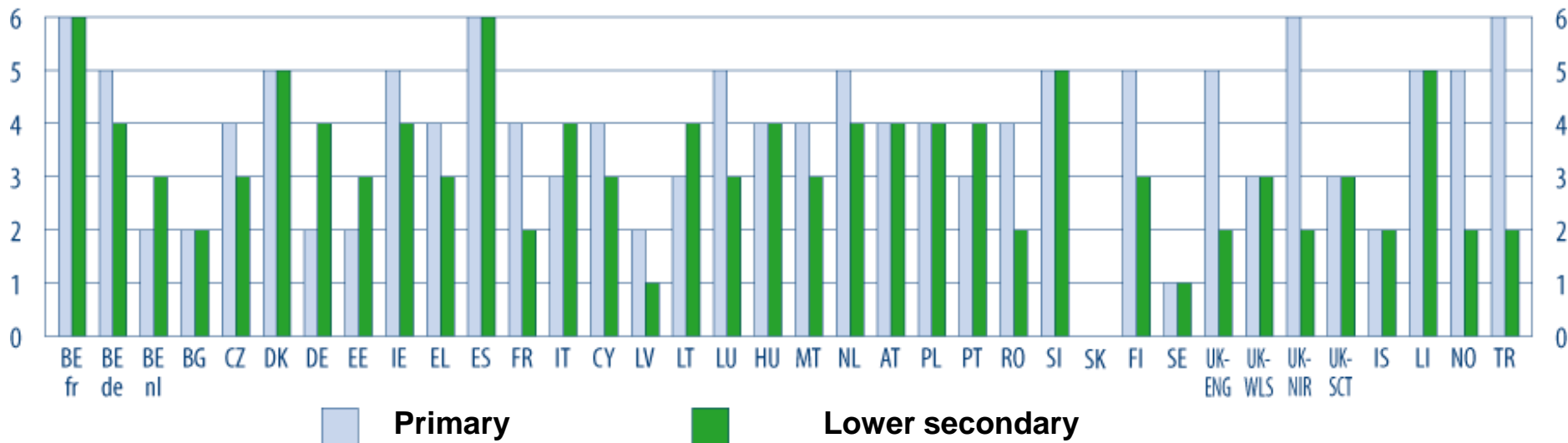
Supporting pupils' engagement in reading

- Absolutely crucial

- All national curricula refer to the importance of promoting pupils' interest in reading

- Organising text-based collaborative learning
- Using diverse reading materials

  Also encourage positive attitude towards literature (IT)

  Literary canon (DK)

- Inviting pupils to express their preference for particular books (IE)
- Providing them free time to read books they like (CY)
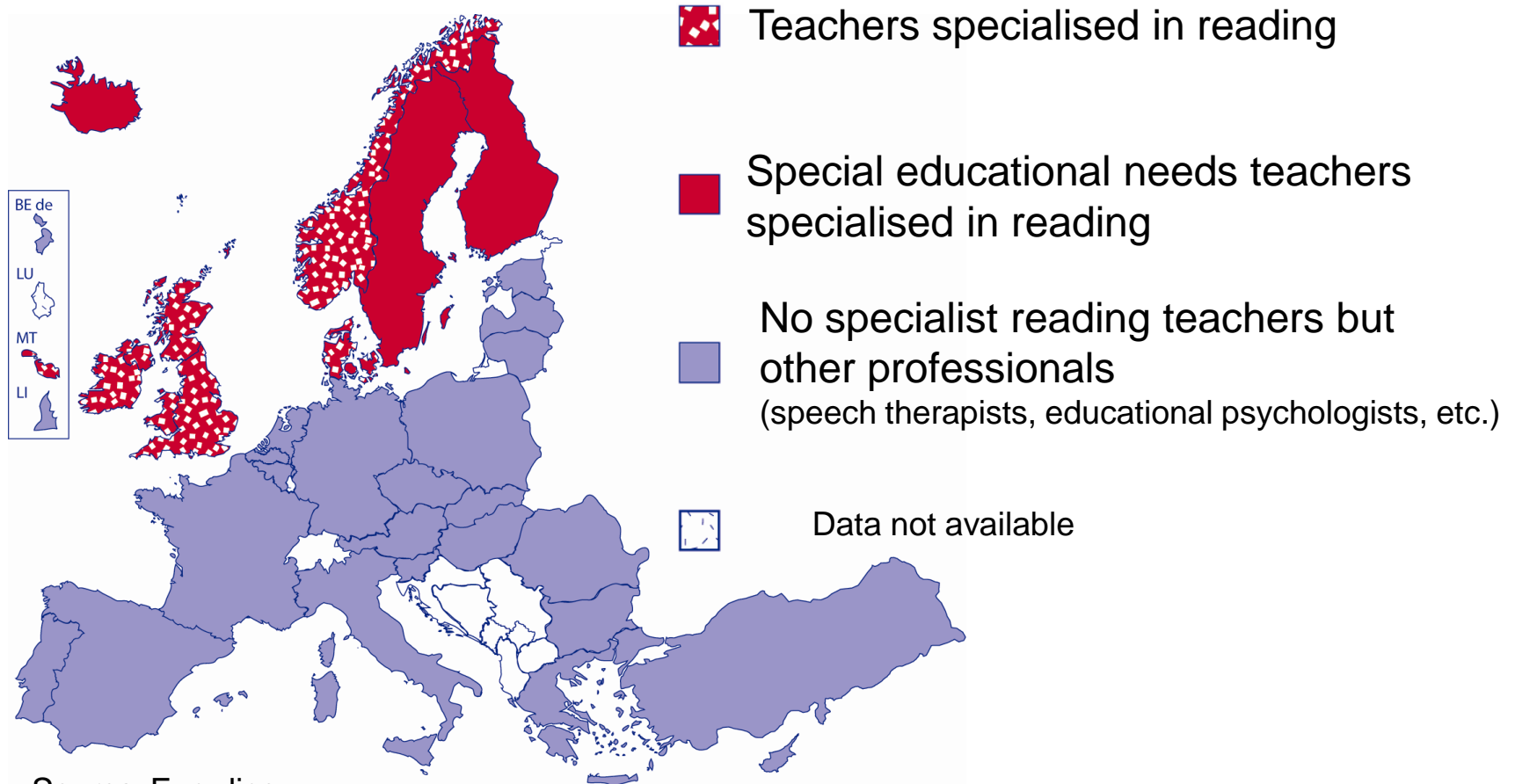- Inviting writers, visiting libraries (ES, LU)

II. Tackling reading difficulties

- Widespread educational concern in Europe

- Need for timely targeted & intensive interventions

- Availability of specialist reading teachers?

Availability of specialist reading teachers for helping teachers tackle pupils' reading difficulties in primary schools, 2009/10

- **Teachers specialised in reading**

- **Special educational needs teachers specialised in reading**

- **No specialist reading teachers but other professionals**
  (speech therapists, educational psychologists, etc.)

- **Data not available**

Source: Eurydice.

Specialist reading teachers : Widespread in NO and DK (*Laesevejleder*)

- In DK:

➢ More than 85% of schools

➢ Support and guidance on methods and materials for tacking reading difficulties

➢ University programme leading to such qualifications

In **IE** and **UK**: Reading Recovery teachers

- Teachers trained to provide selected children with daily half-hour one-to-one lessons tailored to their needs

- Schools capitalising on the professional development provided to teachers

In **MT**: Literacy support teachers

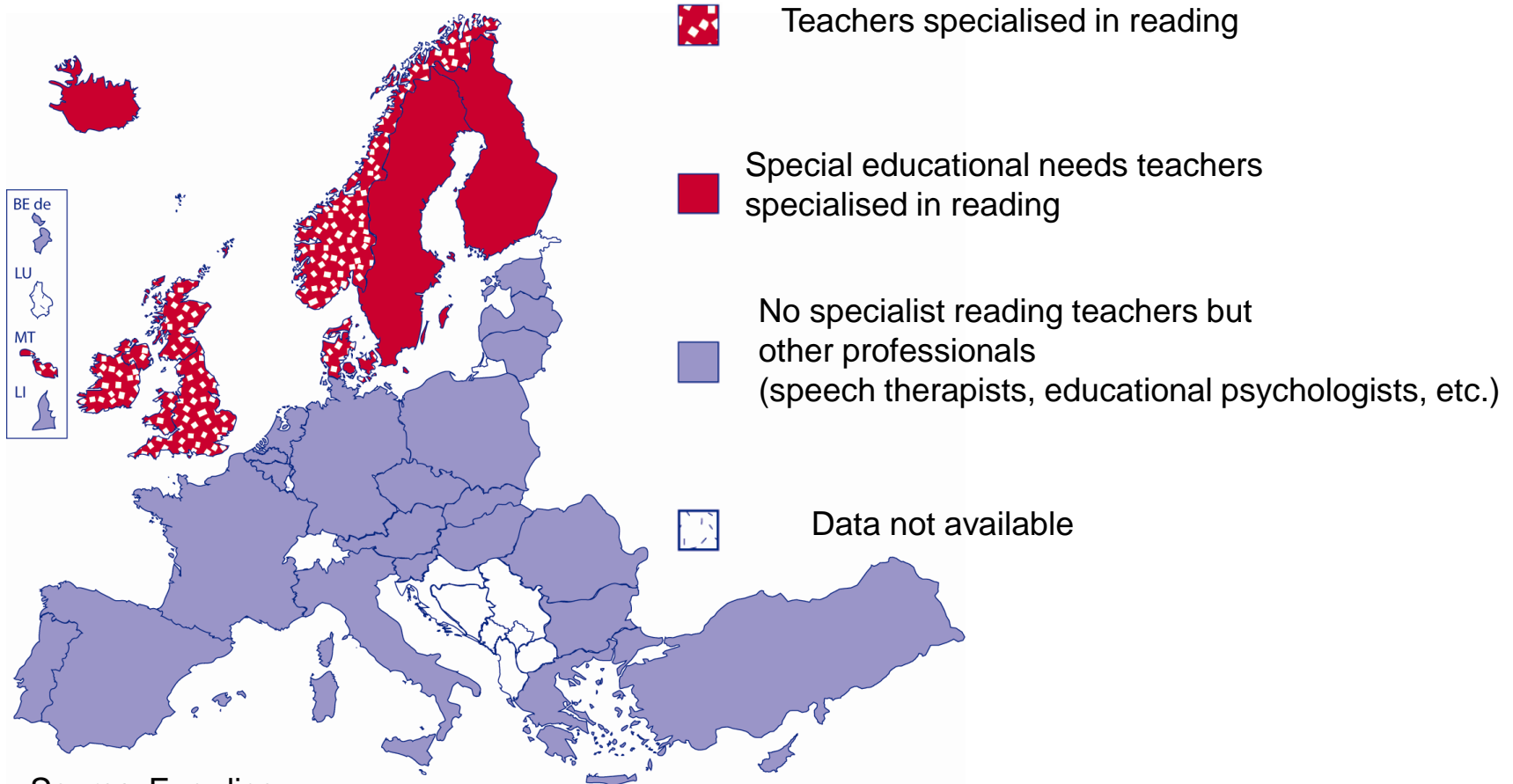- About 15 supporting networks of schools

Special educational needs teachers specialised in reading: FI, SE and IS

In FI:

•specific training on reading difficulties as part of their compulsory programme

•Assist teachers in various tasks: assessing pupils' reading skills, providing learning support in the form of individualised tasks, etc

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Preparing teachers to teach reading
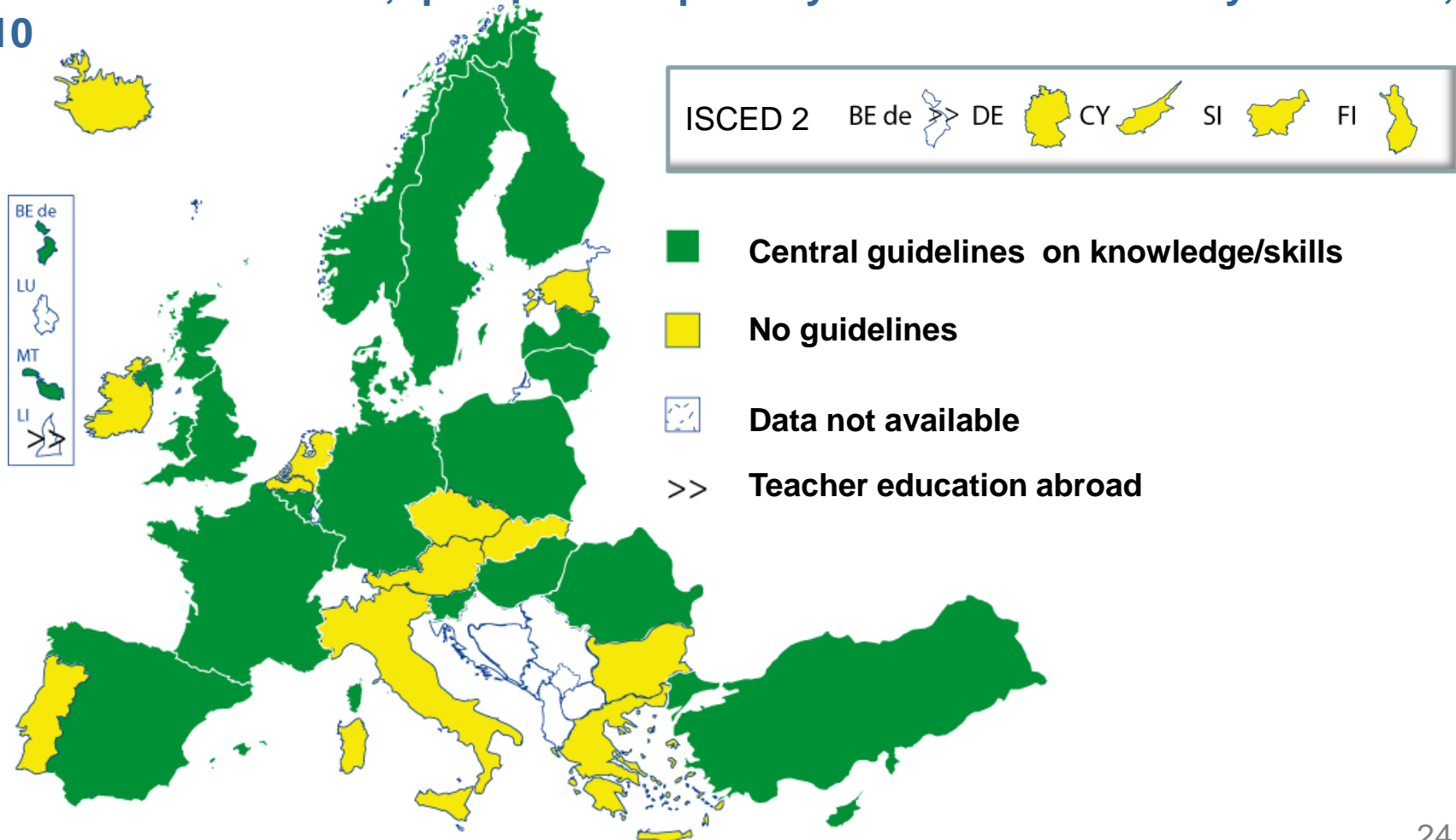
Teaching reading is a particularly complex task

Teaching reading demands a broad range of skills:

✓Language and reading development

✓Multiple strategies to teach reading

✓Use appropriate assessment techniques

✓Select teaching material

✓Adaptative quality to the widening context of literacy

✓Adopt a research-oriented attitude

✓Links between knowledge and field experience

Central guidelines on knowledge/skills in reading instruction to be developed in initial teacher education, prospective primary & lower secondary teachers, 2009/10

Legend:
- **Central guidelines on knowledge/skills**
- **No guidelines**
- **Data not available**
- >> **Teacher education abroad**

ISCED 2: BE de >> DE, CY, SI, FI

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Central guidelines on knowledge/skills in ITE

- Most commonly: methods for teaching reading
- More rarely: assessment in the field of reading instruction, teaching to read online texts, tackling reading difficulties

In 8 countries explicit recommendations that skills relating to the teaching of reading should be practised (CY, LV, LT, HU, RO, UK, NO and TR)

In the majority of countries, development of student's knowledge and skills relating to educational research

In FR, SE and UK: all newly qualified teachers are expected to be able to develop pupils' reading literacy skills

- SCT: Standard for Initial Teacher Education
- ENG: The Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (+ testing teachers' literacy skills)

FR and UK: development of reading literacy skills a cross-curricular task

26

Continuing professional development for teachers of reading

- Important key to improving teachers' skills
- Professional duty for teachers on a majority of countries
- Across countries, diverse strategies and actions for CPD programmes focused on teaching reading

Most effective forms of CPD:

long-term perspective,

opportunities for reflecting on teacher's own work,

collective approach

Most common form: **short**, one-off courses, workshops or conferences (TALIS data)

IV. Promotion of reading outside of school

- Many reading activities take place outside the formal school context
- Parental literacy activities with children are fundamental
- Certain types of parental literacy activities are more effective than others

European countries invest a lot of efforts in promoting reading:

> » National bodies for coordinating and funding actions in the field
> » Specific strategies for reading promotion
> » Reading promotion programmes

30

Conclusions: some key issues for further research or policy development:

- National curricula: comprehension strategies not so varied and decrease at lower secondary level
- Teacher education: broad guidelines often only for teachers in the language of instruction
- Few specialist reading teachers
- The most common form of professional development for teachers of reading: short, one-off courses, workshops or conferences
- Promoting reading in society

Thank you for your attention

http://www.eurydice.org

III. Teachers' knowledge and skills

- Knowledge and skills required for teaching reading?

- National policies for initial teacher education and continuing professional development?