



# Freedom of Education Index 2023

A quantitative analysis of educational pluralism worldwide

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# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.I. Freedom of education in international human rights law

In 1948, the international community agreed on an unprecedented document: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In it, the right to education was acknowledged as an essential right to grant human dignity, and freedom of education was recognized as a cornerstone of the right to education in article 2. Later, freedom of education was later recognized in the main binding human rights treaties. In 1976, the UN General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICESCR acknowledges in article 13 the freedom dimension of the right to education (State obligation to grant freedom of education) alongside the provision dimension (State obligation to grant education for everybody). This covenant establishes freedom of education on two pillars: the liberty of parents to choose for their children's schools (art. 13.3), other than those established by the public authorities and the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions (art. 13.4). Article 18 of the ICCPR recognizes freedom of education as a critical right for the realization of the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

In the last few years, the international community has rediscovered freedom of education in the context of the vindication of cultural rights. In 2001, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was adopted. Article 5 of that declaration says that "all persons should be entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity". This article links the freedom dimension of the right to education with the notion of quality and inclusion (OIDEL, 2016). Since then, the notion of cultural rights has appeared in different human rights discussions and relevant documents on the right to education.

The main human rights UN treaties do not explicitly mention the positive obligations of the State. Yet, we can certainly draw conclusions from the human rights treaty bodies, which have developed the content of these rights by developing a corpus of soft law through General Observations. General Observations are not binding. Nonetheless, they can be a useful tool to interpret and fulfill the content of the human rights treaties.

In this regard, according to the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, "*State party has no obligation to fund institutions established in accordance with article 13 (3) and (4)*" (COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 1999). While this seems to indicate that States have no obligations to grant freedom of education, the same General Observation offers important nuance. Concerning the right to education, the CESCR establishes in the same document certain positive obligations to assist individuals and communities in exercising this right (COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 1999). The question arises: Under which circumstances *must* the State fund non-governmental schools?

According to different UN Human Rights instruments, the right to education requires States to grant education that is available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable. The notion of acceptability implies that "*the form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods, have to be acceptable (e.g. relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality) to students and, in appropriate cases, parents*". Education has to "*be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities*". (COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 1999). Acceptability and adaptability of education have also been pointed out by the first UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katerina Tomasevski (TOMASEVSKI, 1999).

## 1.II. State Funding of Non-Governmental Education

In order for States to provide a culturally appropriate and quality education that responds to the needs of all the communities, public authorities cannot be the sole provider of education. Other stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, must be able to provide education, also. Moreover, it would be inequitable if minorities, especially those more vulnerable, had to pay tuition to access an education respectful of their convictions and cultural identity. Hence, States should fund governmental schools as well as non-governmental schools (this is why the term "educational pluralism" is often used in freedom of education conversations). State obligations defined in the field of cultural rights further reveal the nature of the State obligations needed for granting educational pluralism.

The CESCR establishes clearly that the realization of cultural rights requires both negative obligations (i.e. non-interference with the exercise of cultural practices and with access to cultural goods and services) and positive obligations (ensuring preconditions for participation, facilitation, and promotion of cultural life, and access to and preservation of cultural goods) (COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 2009). For instance, the CESCR points that State parties have *“to facilitate the right of everyone to take part in cultural life by taking a wide range of positive measures, including financial measures, that would contribute to the realization of this right”*. States have positive obligations, including financial obligations, to grant cultural rights. This is important for the realization of the right to education, a right that is closely linked to the realization of cultural rights.

The CESCR highlights that *“The right of everyone to take part in cultural life is also intrinsically linked to the right to education”* (COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 2009). In terms of State obligations, the committee then points out that States have *“To respect and protect the right of everyone to engage in their own cultural practices, while respecting human rights which entails, in particular, respecting (...) freedom to choose and set up educational establishments”* (COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 2009). Communities have the right to set up and choose non-governmental schools. Or else put, States have no grounds for preventing communities

and parents from freedom of education (be it explicitly or by lack of support).

Respect for the liberty of parents does not entail a global obligation for the State to fund each and every educational option that a parent may desire. Nevertheless, since parents’ educational choices are essential to fulfill education as a cultural right, the State might have positive obligations when it comes to financing (COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 2009)<sup>1</sup>. This sort of obligation is reflected in various ways at international, regional, as well as national levels.

Both the legal recognition of freedom of education and also public funding of non-governmental education are essential to make pluralism possible for all. Only this way can all families – not only wealthy families – access schools that reflect their cultural community. This is especially critical for non-mainstream groups. As OECD has stated, in countries where NGS receive higher shares of public funding, the socio-economic profiles of publicly and privately managed schools show less disparity (OECD, 2017). UNESCO has stated that governments need to see all education institutions, students, and teachers as part of a single system (GEM Report team, 2022). In that way, granting educational pluralism should not be seen in opposition to a solid and inclusive public system but rather as a cornerstone of the whole educational system. Despite the above mentioned advancements, freedom of education is not fully implemented (and sometimes even contested) in different political settings.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information: GRAU, I. (2021) *WP 24: What is the scope of the “respect of the liberty of parents”?*, OIDEL, Geneva. Available at: <https://www.oidel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/wp24.pdf>



## 2. PURPOSE

The present research is designed to analyze the state of recognition and implementation of this freedom of education in countries around the world. It seeks to be of support for governments as they ensure the right to cultural identity and the freedom of education for all. It also seeks to bring awareness to civil society and to provide them with a tool useful for holding States accountable and claiming their rights.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

We use the term “governmental schools” when referring to schools managed by the State, irrespective of the funding source. We refer to all other schools as “non-governmental schools”, such as - but not exclusively - private schools, charter schools, free schools, or independent schools. These schools are usually established and managed by civil society. The abbreviation “NGS” is used for non-governmental schools.

The 2023 report covers a large number of countries, 157 in total, from all geographic regions. We have made the effort to increase this number from previous editions to get a global panorama of the current landscape.

We consider four indicators: (1) The legal possibility to establish and manage NGS, (2) Public funding of NGS, (3) Net enrolment rate in primary education (%), and (4) Enrolment Rate in NGS as percentage of total (primary education) (%)

### 3.1. Index Calculation

The Freedom of Education Index ranks States on a 0-100 scheme. The following formula is applied to establish the index mark:

$$Points = \frac{Indicator\ 1 + (Indicator\ 2 \cdot (1 + Indicator\ 4)) + Indicator\ 3}{3.95}$$



## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Global ranking

Rank	Country	Indicator 1: The legal possibility to establish and manage NGS (2023)	Indicator 2: Public funding of NGS (2023)	Indicator 3: Net enrolment rate in primary education (%) (2023)	Indicator 4: Enrolment Rate in NGS as percentage of total (primary education) (2023)	FEI 2023
1	Ireland	100,00	100,00	99,96	0,990	99,990
2	Netherlands	100,00	100,00	99,71	0,700	92,659
3	Belgium	100,00	100,00	98,86	0,542	88,486
4	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	100,00	100,00	98,02	0,342	83,263
5	Chile	100,00	70,00	99,39	0,630	78,569
6	Finland	100,00	100,00	98,30	0,020	75,263
7	Malta	90,00	70,00	99,83	0,420	72,489
8	Lebanon	90,00	60,00	98,00	0,680	72,381
9	Papua New Guinea	90,00	100,00	97,57	0,012	72,373
10	Mauritius	90,00	70,00	99,67	0,369	71,554
11	Thailand	100,00	70,00	99,73	0,222	71,496
12	Denmark	100,00	70,00	99,31	0,177	70,602
13	Spain	90,00	70,00	98,14	0,315	70,223
14	Australia	90,00	70,00	98,54	0,296	69,990
15	Hungary	100,00	70,00	94,50	0,185	69,536
16	Israel	90,00	70,00	99,50	0,235	69,160
17	Poland	100,00	70,00	99,83	0,072	68,890
18	Peru	90,00	70,00	98,43	0,222	68,664
19	United States of America	100,00	70,00	97,99	0,083	68,622
20	Lithuania	100,00	70,00	99,89	0,047	68,466
21	Singapore	100,00	70,00	99,88	0,042	68,376
22	France	90,00	70,00	99,86	0,151	67,777
23	Montenegro	100,00	70,00	99,51	0,005	67,634
24	Luxembourg	90,00	70,00	99,32	0,120	67,098
25	Canada	100,00	70,00	91,67	0,064	66,704
26	Georgia	90,00	70,00	98,66	0,105	66,669
27	Slovakia	90,00	70,00	97,10	0,083	65,892
28	Sierra Leone	90,00	70,00	98,09	0,065	65,825

Rank	Country	Indicator 1: The legal possibility to establish and manage NGS (2023)	Indicator 2: Public funding of NGS (2023)	Indicator 3: Net enrolment rate in primary education (%) (2023)	Indicator 4: Enrolment Rate in NGS as percentage of total (primary education) (2023)	FEI 2023
29	Norway	90,00	70,00	99,84	0,037	65,772
30	Germany	90,00	70,00	97,94	0,052	65,559
31	Iceland	90,00	70,00	99,58	0,027	65,531
32	New Zealand	90,00	70,00	99,95	0,019	65,484
33	Dominican Republic	90,00	70,00	89,47	0,165	65,419
34	Czech Republic	90,00	70,00	98,68	0,032	65,393
35	Slovenia	100,00	60,00	99,96	0,013	65,348
36	Russian Federation	100,00	60,00	99,93	0,008	65,266
37	Croatia	90,00	70,00	97,96	0,009	64,810
38	Estonia	100,00	60,00	93,70	0,068	64,607
39	Sweden	80,00	70,00	99,90	0,112	64,596
40	Andorra	90,00	70,00	92,92	0,036	64,020
41	Argentina	80,00	60,00	99,81	0,258	63,982
42	Austria	100,00	60,00	88,60	0,063	63,253
43	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	90,00	60,00	95,10	0,105	63,008
44	Republic of Korea	80,00	70,00	98,60	0,015	62,569
45	Malawi	80,00	70,00	98,14	0,021	62,559
46	Romania	90,00	70,00	87,63	0,016	62,343
47	Uganda	90,00	60,00	86,09	0,196	62,118
48	Latvia	80,00	60,00	98,70	0,028	60,246
49	Burkina Faso	90,00	60,00	75,14	0,234	59,945
50	Ecuador	100,00	30,00	98,62	0,225	58,990
51	Portugal	100,00	30,00	99,96	0,128	58,596
52	Indonesia	100,00	30,00	94,38	0,229	57,957
53	Mongolia	100,00	30,00	99,26	0,064	57,940
54	India	90,00	30,00	97,43	0,451	57,885
55	Malaysia	100,00	30,00	98,40	0,078	57,830
56	Republic of Moldova	100,00	30,00	99,74	0,022	57,744
57	Namibia	100,00	30,00	98,59	0,059	57,734
58	Timor-Leste	100,00	30,00	94,94	0,128	57,338
59	Togo	90,00	30,00	98,38	0,330	57,213
60	Bangladesh	90,00	30,00	98,96	0,239	56,674
61	Bulgaria	100,00	30,00	95,48	0,019	56,654
62	Italy	100,00	30,00	95,80	0,006	56,637

Rank	Country	Indicator 1: The legal possibility to establish and manage NGS (2023)	Indicator 2: Public funding of NGS (2023)	Indicator 3: Net enrolment rate in primary education (%) (2023)	Indicator 4: Enrolment Rate in NGS as percentage of total (primary education) (2023)	FEI 2023
63	Nepal	90,00	30,00	97,64	0,254	56,456
64	Uruguay	90,00	30,00	99,73	0,168	56,333
65	Morocco	90,00	30,00	99,64	0,162	56,266
66	Benin	90,00	30,00	96,92	0,250	56,246
67	Philippines	100,00	30,00	91,25	0,095	56,165
68	Botswana	100,00	30,00	91,60	0,069	56,058
69	Ghana	90,00	30,00	94,02	0,298	55,880
70	Costa Rica	90,00	30,00	99,93	0,090	55,797
71	Cyprus	90,00	30,00	99,59	0,101	55,794
72	Greece	90,00	30,00	99,56	0,062	55,494
73	Brazil	90,00	30,00	95,48	0,186	55,404
74	Sri Lanka	90,00	30,00	99,46	0,032	55,243
75	Côte d'Ivoire	90,00	30,00	94,84	0,179	55,190
76	Mozambique	90,00	30,00	99,13	0,020	55,070
77	Nicaragua	90,00	30,00	95,00	0,156	55,058
78	Myanmar	90,00	30,00	98,05	0,049	55,018
79	Cameroon	90,00	30,00	91,67	0,240	54,855
80	Jordan	100,00	30,00	79,54	0,294	54,727
81	South Africa	10,00	30,00	85,80	0,053	54,484
82	Albania	90,00	30,00	92,20	0,092	53,875
83	El Salvador	100,00	30,00	81,00	0,123	53,807
84	Congo	90,00	30,00	81,70	0,427	53,762
85	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	80,00	30,00	99,86	0,155	53,762
86	Central African Republic	90,00	30,00	89,48	0,167	53,757
87	Rwanda	90,00	30,00	92,90	0,049	53,727
88	Zambia	100,00	30,00	83,20	0,032	53,674
89	Guatemala	90,00	30,00	90,57	0,116	53,647
90	Paraguay	90,00	30,00	87,20	0,210	53,509
91	Honduras	100,00	30,00	80,00	0,107	53,436
92	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	90,00	30,00	87,40	0,191	53,416
93	Chad	100,00	30,00	77,74	0,173	53,366
94	Switzerland	80,00	30,00	99,89	0,055	53,018
95	Burundi	90,00	30,00	89,89	0,022	52,769

Rank	Country	Indicator 1: The legal possibility to establish and manage NGS (2023)	Indicator 2: Public funding of NGS (2023)	Indicator 3: Net enrolment rate in primary education (%) (2023)	Indicator 4: Enrolment Rate in NGS as percentage of total (primary education) (2023)	FEI 2023
96	Gabon	90,00	30,00	76,70	0,439	52,599
97	Azerbaijan	90,00	30,00	88,77	0,001	52,331
98	Cambodia	90,00	30,00	86,54	0,057	52,193
99	Japan	80,00	30,00	97,79	0,012	52,168
100	Tajikistan	80,00	30,00	95,99	0,011	51,709
101	Gambia	80,00	30,00	85,96	0,334	51,624
102	Lao People's Democratic Republic	80,00	30,00	92,35	0,074	51,271
103	Jamaica	90,00	30,00	81,00	0,099	51,120
104	Guinea	80,00	30,00	82,70	0,355	50,965
105	Kuwait	80,00	30,00	80,78	0,384	50,702
106	Angola	90,00	30,00	78,00	0,141	50,684
107	Haiti	90,00	30,00	58,00	0,767	50,378
108	Armenia	80,00	30,00	89,34	0,026	50,155
109	Guinea - Bissau	90,00	30,00	71,00	0,277	49,952
110	Mexico	100,00	0,00	99,22	0,099	49,930
111	Ethiopia	90,00	30,00	77,70	0,044	49,880
112	Kyrgyzstan	100,00	0,00	98,46	0,031	49,739
113	Libya	100,00	0,00	98,00	0,047	49,624
114	Senegal	90,00	30,00	72,59	0,179	49,614
115	Serbia	100,00	0,00	96,25	0,002	49,185
116	Bosnia and Herzegovina	80,00	30,00	85,14	0,019	49,050
117	Tanzania (United Republic of)	80,00	30,00	83,92	0,045	48,940
118	Kenya	80,00	30,00	80,00	0,160	48,822
119	Zimbabwe	100,00	0,00	93,83	0,131	48,579
120	Iraq	100,00	0,00	93,00	0,000	48,371
121	Mauritania	80,00	30,00	76,86	0,160	48,035
122	Mali	90,00	30,00	59,01	0,399	47,865
123	Nigeria	90,00	30,00	64,00	0,197	47,596
124	Oman	90,00	0,00	99,91	0,151	47,596
125	Algeria	90,00	0,00	99,82	0,013	47,574
126	United Arab Emirates	90,00	0,00	99,76	0,763	47,559
127	Panama	100,00	0,00	89,49	0,113	47,491
128	Egypt	90,00	0,00	99,27	0,094	47,436



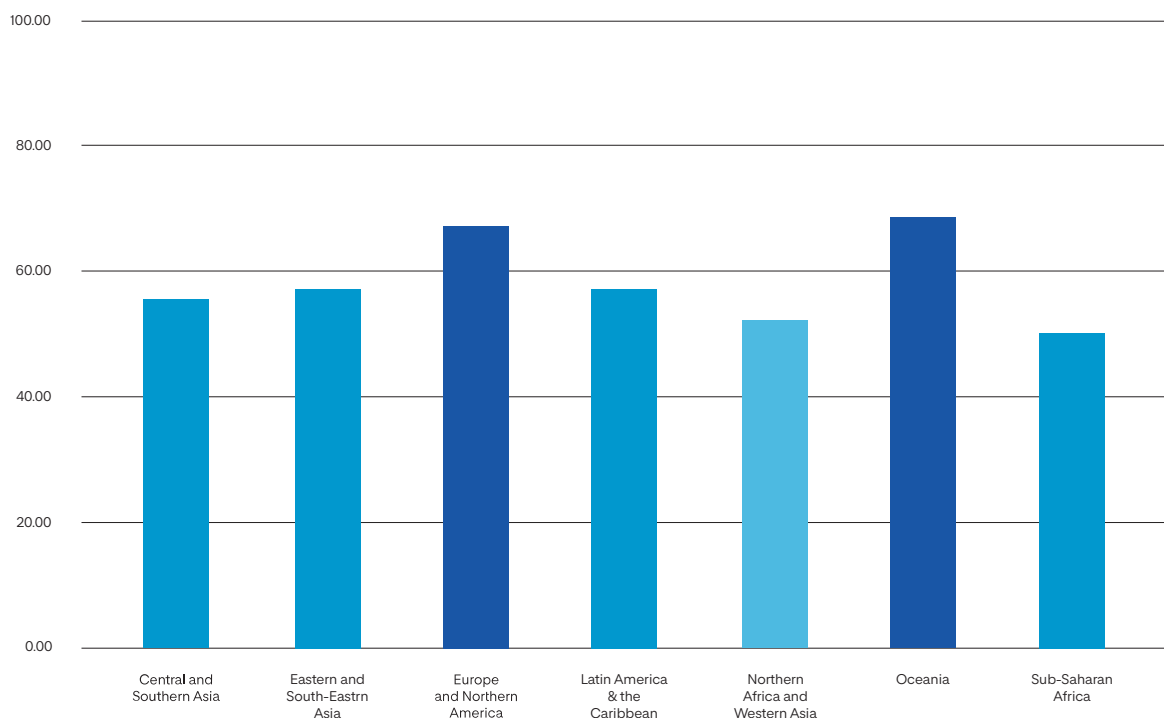
Rank	Country	Indicator 1: The legal possibility to establish and manage NGS (2023)	Indicator 2: Public funding of NGS (2023)	Indicator 3: Net enrolment rate in primary education (%) (2023)	Indicator 4: Enrolment Rate in NGS as percentage of total (primary education) (2023)	FEI 2023
129	Colombia	90,00	0,00	98,82	0,198	47,323
130	Pakistan	80,00	30,00	68,00	0,343	47,190
131	Madagascar	90,00	0,00	97,68	0,209	47,038
132	Bahrain	90,00	0,00	97,66	0,372	47,033
133	Uzbekistan	90,00	0,00	96,07	0,006	46,634
134	Turkey	90,00	0,00	95,11	0,052	46,393
135	Ukraine	90,00	0,00	91,70	0,014	45,539
136	Equatorial Guinea	90,00	30,00	43,00	0,587	45,266
137	Kazakhstan	90,00	0,00	90,39	0,016	45,211
138	Turkmenistan	80,00	0,00	99,47	0,01	44,980
139	China	90,00	0,00	89,00	0,090	44,862
140	Qatar	80,00	0,00	98,64	0,635	44,772
141	Tunisia	80,00	0,00	98,40	0,078	44,712
142	Viet Nam	80,00	0,00	97,70	0,015	44,536
143	Yemen	90,00	0,00	84,40	0,05	43,709
144	Belarus	80,00	0,00	93,61	0,002	43,511
145	Niger	80,00	30,00	57,74	0,038	42,326
146	Democratic Republic of the Congo	90,00	30,00	37,00	0,113	40,198
147	Syrian Arab Republic	90,00	0,00	68,00	0,039	39,599
148	South Sudan	80,00	30,00	35,20	0,27	38,421
149	Liberia	80,00	0,00	73,15	0,496	38,383
150	Somalia	90,00	0,00	14,00	0	26,065
151	Cuba	0,00	0,00	98,81	0	24,764
152	Saudi Arabia	0,00	0,00	97,30	0,141	24,386
153	North Macedonia	0,00	0,00	95,18	0,008	23,855
154	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	0,00	0,00	94,00	0	23,559
155	Eritrea	0,00	0,00	52,24	10,6	13,093
156	Afghanistan	0,00	0,00	27,00	0,073	6,767

## 4. II. Overall

Europe and Northern America and Oceania are the two regions where freedom of education is best protected. Ireland, the Netherlands and Belgium are the top three countries, scoring 100, 92 and 88 on the index respectively. Especially the Netherlands and Belgium serve as examples of good practice

when it comes to freedom of education. Northern Africa and Western Asia is the region where freedom of education is protected the least. The countries that scored the lowest on the index are Eritrea and Afghanistan even though freedom of education is not explicitly prohibited in those countries.

Freedom of Education Index - Regions - Means (2023)



## 4. III. Constitutional and Legal Recognition

Freedom of Education is recognized in the main universal human rights mechanisms. Our findings show that, at the national level, this freedom is recognized in most of the countries by law. There are only six exceptions, the most unambiguous being Cuba, Eritrea, and North Korea. The most severe decrease in educational freedom has been observed in Afghanistan, where the overall human rights situation has deteriorated, especially for girls.

101 countries recognize freedom of education in their constitutions under different forms and terminologies. Some explicitly recognize the freedom of education, others explicitly recognize the rights of parents to choose, and still others acknowledge the existence of private schools.

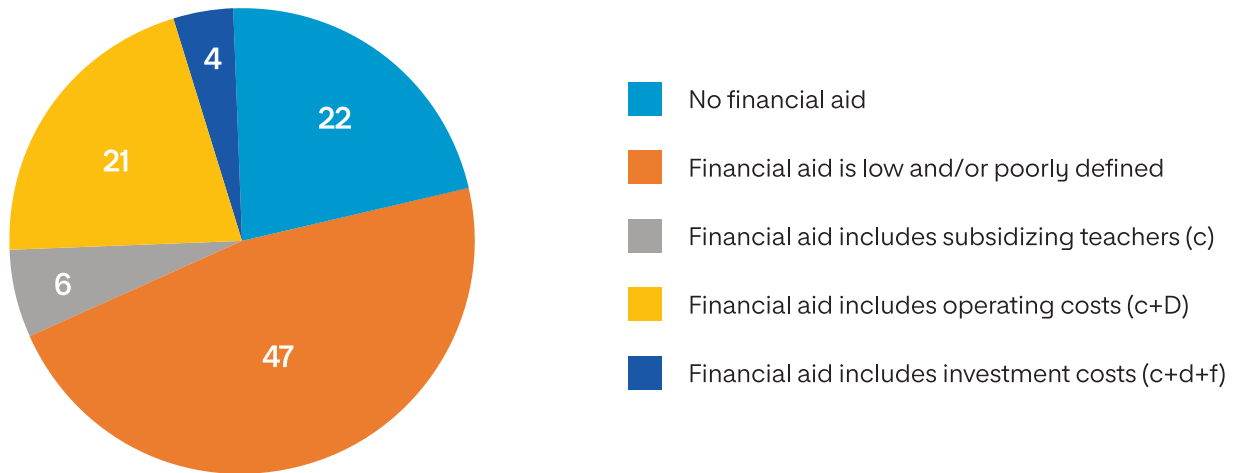
Regionally speaking, as can be observed in the below tables, Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates

the most consistent positive trend. In this region, we observe an increase in educational freedom both from 2002 to 2016 and also from 2016 to 2023.

## 4. IV. Funding

Concerning the funding of NGS, public authorities in 78% of the countries we studied grant some sort of financial aid. 47% of the countries assessed grant aid that can be qualified as “weak” or “not well-defined by law”. 31% of the 157 assessed countries consistently fund NGS. We must underline that 6 countries cover all the costs of NGS with public funds, including the investment costs. We draw two conclusions from these numbers. First, from an international perspective, it is not unusual to grant public funding to NGS.

### States according to public funding of NGS (%)



Many civil society organizations have pointed out that the management of the COVID crisis in the field of education has caused some new tensions surrounding the support for NGS by public authorities.<sup>2</sup> While UNESCO recommended in the GEM report that governments need to see all education institutions, students, and teachers as part of a single system (UNESCO, 2021/22), the reality during the COVID crisis did not always live up to this.

Comparing the different regions, Europe and Northern America and Oceania grant the most public support to NGS, while Sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa show more difficulty in doing so. This finding holds, despite the growth of NGS in Sub-Saharan Africa. By the fact that the regions

granting more public funding to NGS are among the wealthiest and the ones granting less support are among the poorest, we can affirm that the support to NGS might be dependent on the GDP and strength of national economies. However, in the top ten list of countries with the highest GDP per capita, we can see exceptions such as Qatar or Switzerland.

Overall, we can observe that public financial support for NGS grew between 2002 and 2016 and again between 2016 and 2023. These positive tendencies have been consistent throughout these years in regions such as Europe and Northern America and Sub-Saharan Africa. The only region with a consistent negative trend is Central and Southern Eastern Asia.

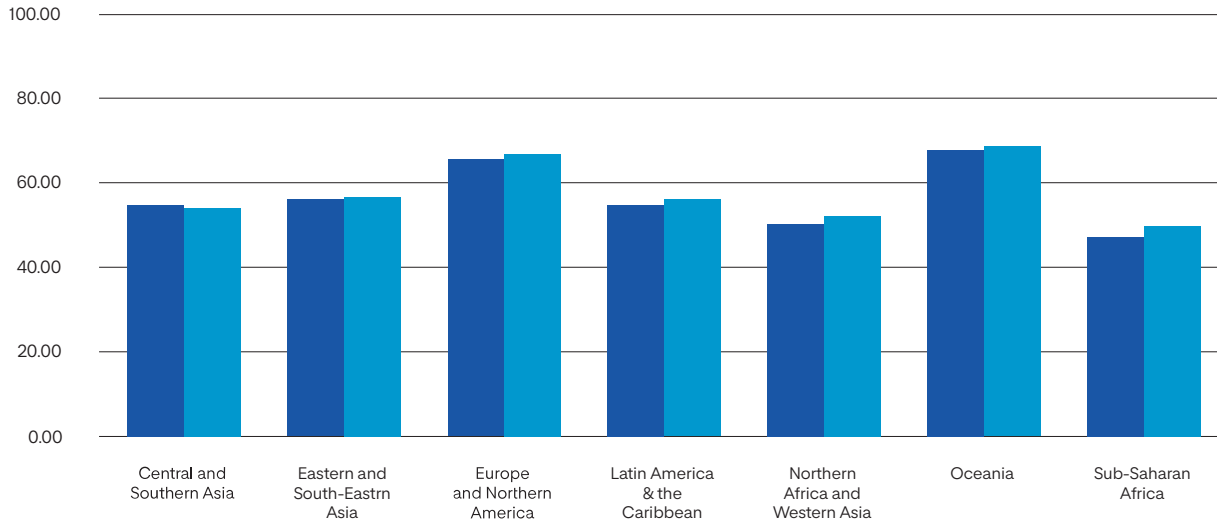
<sup>2</sup> For more information, see [https://www.oidel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OIDEL\\_COVID\\_IMPACT\\_ON\\_EDUCATION\\_7-2.pdf](https://www.oidel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OIDEL_COVID_IMPACT_ON_EDUCATION_7-2.pdf)

## 4.V. Enrolment rates

The increase or decrease of students in NGS has not been significant in any region. This is interesting to notice, as in international debates certain actors claim that education is becoming a “privatized” good<sup>3</sup>. Among the countries with the biggest

increase of NGS, we count India (28%), Angola (12%), Nigeria (11.7%), and Hungary (9,5%). This increase can partially be explained by the emergence of low-fee private schools.

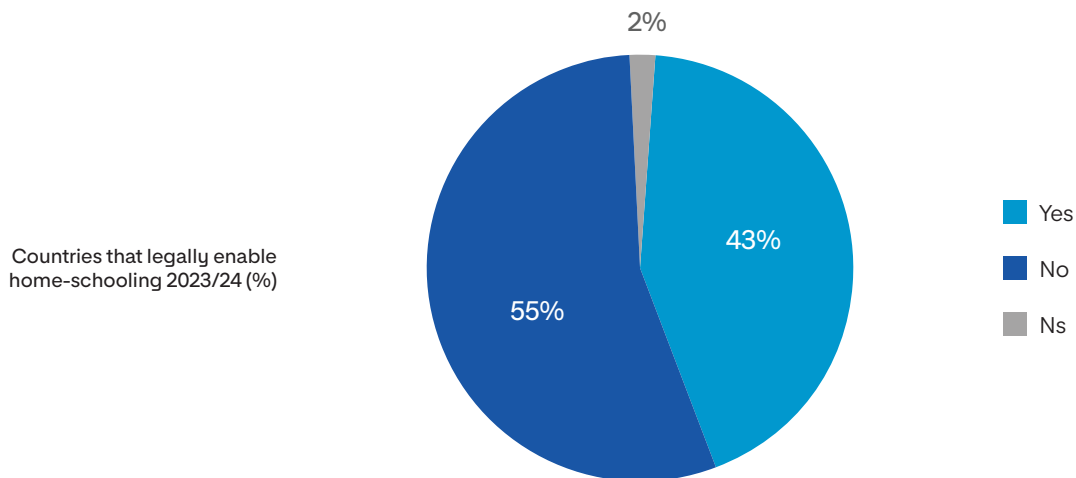
Evolution Freedom of Education Index - States that fund NGS (2016-2023)



## 4.VI. Home-schooling

In 2016, we pointed out that home-schooling was growing around the world. Since then, the number of countries enabling this modality of education continued to grow. Before getting into the details on home-schooling, we need to mention that one of our main challenges in assessing home-schooling was the unspecific – or altogether

absent – legal provisions on the topic in many countries. Governments seem to have become more open to home-schooling in the wake of COVID-related school closures. This new public tolerance partially explains the recent growth in home-schooling.



<sup>3</sup> For more information on the current debates on privatization: [https://www.oidel.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/WP-26\\_Human-Rights-considerations-to-tackle-privatization-respecting-freedom-of-education.pdf](https://www.oidel.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/WP-26_Human-Rights-considerations-to-tackle-privatization-respecting-freedom-of-education.pdf)

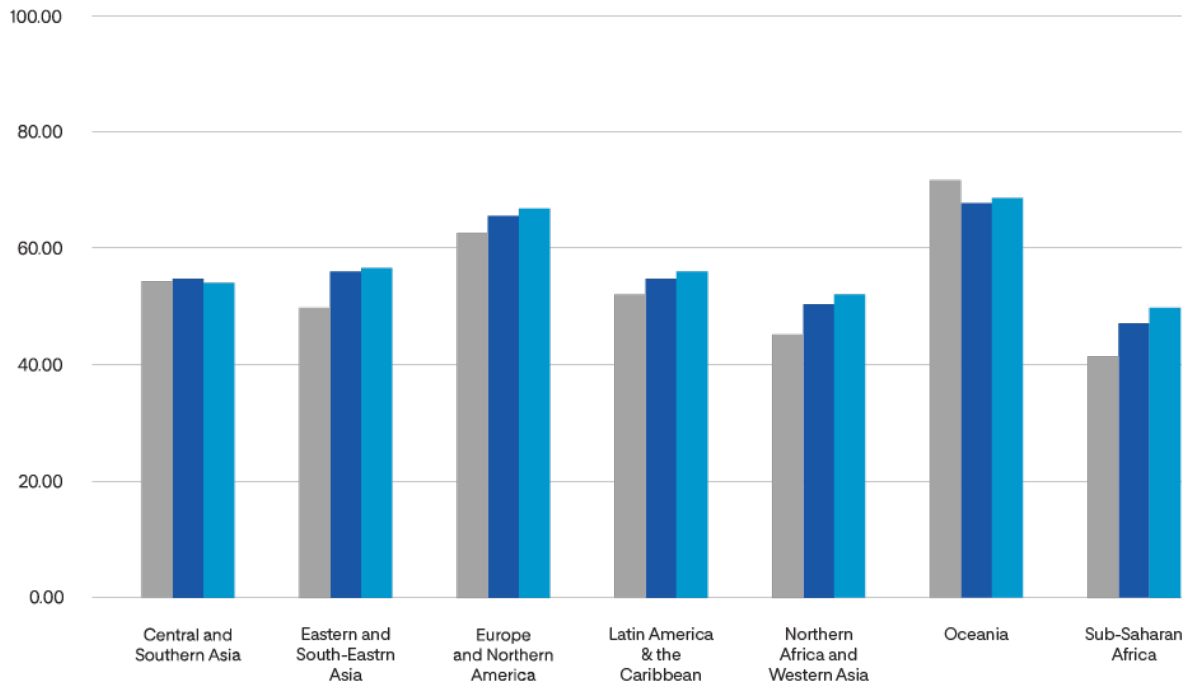
#### 4.VII. For future consideration: Curriculum restriction

A question that arose from this research concerns curriculum restrictions. The nature of these restrictions are differ from region to region. During the research process, many civil society organizations from around the world expressed their struggle for freedom of education as governments aim to interfere with the curriculum of NGS. In Western countries, but not exclusively, States require comprehensive models of sexual education which can conflict with faith-based education. Whereas in certain countries with Islamic backgrounds, such as Bahrain, Oman, or Qatar, freedom of education is only granted as far as Islamic content is taught. The relationship between curriculum restrictions and freedom of education is worth exploring further.

#### 4.VIII. Evolution and trends

We conclude that in 2023, the freedom of education is better protected than it was in 2016 and 2002. Policy recognition of this freedom and the support for parents to choose education other than the one offered by the State has slightly increased. This has led to a growth in the percentage of children attending NGS. Despite this good news, we are alarmed by the growing polarization in political conversations regarding freedom of education. The objects of polarization are many, and they include public funding, minimum educational standards, and home-schooling.

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