

**National summary sheets on
education system in Europe
and ongoing reforms**

2009 Edition

GREECE

OCTOBER 2009

1. Education population and language of instruction

More generally, in 2008 the population aged 0 to 29 years numbered 3 675 596 individuals who comprised 33 % of the total population. At the beginning of the 2007/08 school year there were 1 074 031 students enrolled in compulsory education (primary and lower-secondary school levels). The language of instruction is Greek.

2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

In 2007/08, 94 % of the students enrolled in primary and secondary education attended public schools, which provide free education. Private schools are not grant aided; they are fully self-financed. Private primary and secondary schools are under the supervision and inspection of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. The university level is comprised exclusively of state institutions.

Administrative control remains focused at the central level, while measures have been taken in recent years to devolve responsibilities to the regional level. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs formulates and implements legislation, administers the budget, coordinates and supervises its decentralized Services, approves primary and secondary school curricula and appoints teaching staff. There are thirteen Regional Education Directorates under the Minister of Education that implement educational policy and link local agents to central services and organizations. They are responsible for the administration and supervision of the other decentralized services in their area, as well as for coordinating local School Advisors. At the next level of the administrative structure, Education Directorates (in each prefecture) and district Offices provide administrative support, supervise operation of area schools and facilitate co-ordination and cooperation between schools. School Directors serve as the administrative and educational heads of their school unit; they coordinate and guide teachers in their work and make provision for in-service training.

Teachers' Councils implement program and curricular regulations and monitor student attendance and discipline. School Committees, which include parent and local representatives, manage budgets for heating, lighting, maintenance, equipment etc.

The Education Directorates and Offices are responsible for monitoring the operation of schools within their area. According to current legislation, evaluation of schools is to be carried out at the local level with the Teachers' Councils drawing up a self-evaluation report and regional centres conducting an appraisal of school operations in their area; these reports will then be analyzed at the national level by the Education Research Centre (K.E.E.).

Higher education institutions are funded by the State. They are self-governing under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

3. Pre-primary education

Children aged 4 to 6 years may attend public or private kindergartens (*nipiagogeia*). Kindergarten attendance is compulsory for all 5 year olds; it remains optional, however, for four year olds.

Public state-run kindergartens do not charge any fees. Parents pay full tuition fees for their child to attend private kindergartens. Children enrol in *nipiagogeia* according to the family's place of residence.

Administratively, *nipiagogeia* are considered part of primary education. They follow national curricula for the kindergarten level that have been developed by the Pedagogical Institute. The maximum class size is limited to 25 students. The students have a 9 month school year (11 Sept. to 15 June) and a daily program lasting from 8:15 to 12:15; unless they attend all day kindergartens (*Oloimera Nipiagogeia*) where children may arrive as early as 7:00 and leave as late as 16:00.

Education and care for children 4 years of age and under is provided at child centres (*paidikoi stathmoi*) and at «infant» centres (*vrefonipiaki stathmoi*) – the latter from 6 months of age – that are municipal, i.e. public, or private. Attendance is optional for this age group. Municipal/community child centres are run by the local municipalities and communities. Parents pay a small fee for these child centres, though fees can be waived for certain categories of families. Private child centres charge full fees.

During the 2007/08 school year, there were 143 770 youngsters enrolled in public kindergartens and 5 342 private ones. Of children attending public and private kindergartens, 37 % were 4 years old and 63 % were 5 years old.

4. Compulsory education

(i) Phases

Education is compulsory for the age cohort 5-15 years and is divided into the following levels:

<i>Nipiagogeio</i> (pre-primary education)	5-6 years of age
<i>Dimotiko scholeio</i> (primary education)	6-12 years of age
<i>Gymnasio</i> (lower secondary general education)	12-15 years of age

There are also 3 years of lower secondary education provided by Evening Gymnasias (*Esperina Gymnasia*) that are geared to the needs of working students and enrol students from the age of 14 years.

(ii) Admissions criteria

Enrolment in public primary education is based solely on the pupil's place of residence. The same rule applies to the lower secondary school level, with the prerequisite that the student has obtained a school-leaving certificate from primary school. Education in Greece for all levels of public education is provided free of charge and all costs (transportation, books etc.) are covered by the state budget. Families may choose to enrol their children in private schools where full tuition fees are charged. Increases in school tuition fees by private schools are negotiated with the Ministry of Education.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year is comprised of 175 days from the 11th of September to the 15th of June for primary schools and the 31th of May for lower secondary schools. Schools are open five days a week for 35 weeks per year. Instructional hours per week are from 23 to 35 depending on the grade or level. Each instructional hour lasts from 40 to 50 minutes. The number of instructional hours for the two first grades of primary education is 25 per week, reaching 30 hours in the next four grades and 35 hours for all three grades of lower secondary education.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

According to Ministerial Decisions, primary classes may have up to a maximum of 25 students; at the secondary education level, classes may have up to 30 students. Students are grouped by age, thus creating six grade levels in primary education and three in secondary. All schools are mixed gender.

Primary classes have one teacher for all subjects, with the exception of physical education, foreign languages and music which are taught by subject specific teachers. Secondary education students have different teachers for each subject.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The national curricula for primary and secondary education are developed by the Pedagogical Institute and approved by the Ministry. The current Cross-Thematic Curricular Framework for compulsory education and accompanying subject syllabi reflect a more inter-disciplinary approach to knowledge. At the primary school level the national curriculum covers religion, Greek language, mathematics, history, environmental studies, geography, science, social and civic studies, arts studies (music et al.), two foreign languages and physical education. The program also includes a "Flexible Zone" for the development of cross-curricular themes and creative activities.

The above subjects, except for environmental studies, are included in the lower secondary school curriculum which also covers ancient Greek, chemistry, biology, information and computer technology, home economics, technology and school vocational guidance.

Teachers are required to follow the national curriculum and to use the approved textbook for each subject; taking into account, however, the particular needs and features of their classes as far as teaching methods are concerned. At the beginning of each school year, the Pedagogical Institute issues directions for teachers on teaching approaches and aims according to subject area. The school textbooks, written according to the criteria set in Cross-Thematic Curricular Framework, are evaluated by the Pedagogical Institute and recommended to the Ministry for final approval.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

At the primary school level, students are assessed by their teachers throughout the school year. Periodical and annual assessments are descriptive and also include letter grades from the third year of primary school. Students are generally promoted to the next grade, except in cases of insufficient attendance. In the rare case where a student might need to repeat a grade – based on teacher assessment – a strict process of consultation precedes this outcome. Students completing the sixth grade (end of primary school) receive the primary school leaving certificate (*Apolytirio Dimotikou*) which serves for admission to lower secondary school (*gymnasio*).

In lower secondary schools teachers assess students based on daily work, written tests, assignments and end-of-year written review examinations, *Graptos Anakefalaiotikes Exetaseis*. Promotion is based on achievement. Students who achieve an overall passing grade, at the end of the third year of lower secondary school receive a school-leaving certificate (*Apolytirio Gymnasiou*), which grants access to senior high school.

5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level**(i) Types of education**

<i>Geniko Lykeio</i> – G.L. (general upper secondary schools)	15-18 years of age
<i>Epangelmatiko Lykeio</i> – EPA.L. (vocational upper secondary schools)	15-18 years of age
<i>Epangelmatikes Scholes</i> – EPA.S (vocational training schools)	16-18 years of age
<i>Instituta Epangelmatikis Katartisis</i> or I.E.K. (Post-secondary non-tertiary institutes)	18 + years of age

Lyceums (*Lykeia*) offer a three year course and are of two types: the *Geniko Lykeio* (G.L.) that provides general/academic studies and the *Epangelmatiko Lykeio* (EPA.L.) that combines general education with technical-vocational studies. In 2007/08 of all first and second year *Lykeio* students, 23 % enrolled in vocational *Lykeia* and 77 % in general *Lykeia*. There are also evening lyceums (*Esperino Geniko Lykeio* and *Esperino Epangelmatiko Lykeio*) that offer a 4 year part-time course (15-19 years of age) and in 2007/08 enrolled about 5 % of *Lykeio* students.

The *Epangelmatikes Scholes* (EPA.S.) offer a two-year course organized according to occupational area, which may extend to three years if on-the-job training is provided. Other Ministries besides the Ministry of Education also operate such vocational training schools providing courses in their area of responsibility.

The post-secondary *Instituta Epangelmatikis Katartisis* (I.E.K.) offer 4 semesters of initial vocational training, or in the case of vocational education graduates who followed a similar course, 2 semesters of further training. Certain courses of the I.E.K. can also enrol *Gymnasio* graduates. Currently there are 114 public I.E.K. (no fees) and 53 private I.E.K. (fee paying).

The recent Law 3696/2008 provides for *Colleges* which are private institutes of Non-typical Post-secondary Education and Training. Licenses for their establishment and operation are granted by the Ministry of National Education; while the study or other certificates they provide do not constitute titles equal to those granted within the framework of the Greek Post-secondary System of Typical Education. The abovementioned law provides ground for *Laboratories of Liberal Studies* which offer non-typical vocational studies of a shorter period.

(ii) Admissions criteria

Holders of a lower secondary school-leaving certificate (*Apolytirio Gymnasiou*) may enrol in a *Geniko* or an *Epangelmatiko Lykeio* according to catchment area. Students who have successfully completed the entry year of *Lykeio* may then enrol in the first year of *Epangelmatikes Scholes* (EPA.S.); while *Epangelmatiko Lykeio* students can also opt to enrol in a school outside their catchment area when it offers a special field they are interested in. Students are also able to transfer between *Geniko* and *Epangelmatiko Lykeio* at the beginning of year two.

Graduates of any type of post-compulsory secondary school, including vocational training schools, may enrol in the post-secondary *Instituta Epangelmatikis Katartisis* (IEK). Adult graduates of compulsory education may also enrol in an *IEK*, but only for certain courses.

(iii) Curriculum control and content

The Pedagogical Institute sets national curricula for all upper secondary schools. The curriculum for the *Geniko Lykeio* includes general education subjects (modern and ancient Greek language and literature, history, mathematics, sciences, religion, a foreign language, technology, social sciences, physical education) as well as electives and specialization subjects from year two which depend on the 'stream' followed (theoretic, scientific, technological). The curriculum of the *Epangelmatiko Lykeio* includes general education subjects similar to the above, as well as technical – vocational subjects that vary according to stream followed (technological, service, maritime).

EPA.S. (Vocational School) curricula include technical – vocational subjects and workshop courses. Class size in vocational education is limited to 25 students.

The curricula of the *Instituta Epangelmatikis Katartisis* (IEK) include both theoretical and practical components and emphasize new methods and skills that broaden the occupational options of adult students. Course offerings are the result of an ongoing process of consultation with social partners and are based on the recommendations of the Tri-party Consultative Committees of OEEK (the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training), comprised of representatives of OEEK, employers and employees, that consider regional labour market needs and trends.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Geniko and *Epangelmatiko Lykeio* students are assessed by teachers on the basis of their participation in daily classroom work, their performance on tests and on end of the year final examinations. To be promoted and to receive a Lyceum Diploma (*Apolytirio Lykeiou*), an average general mark of 9.5 out of 20 is required.

Besides the Lyceum Diploma, a prerequisite for admission to tertiary education is achievement score on the 'Certificate' (*Bebaiosi*) which includes grades in six general education and 'stream' subjects that are examined at the national level. The general achievement score on this Certificate takes into account final year school grade, (school level evaluation) and grades on the six subjects of the national level examinations.

Epangelmatiko Lykeio graduates acquire, in addition to the above, a level 3 vocational education certificate (*Ptychio Epangelmatikis ekpaidefsis, epipedou 3*) based on school level examinations.

Assessment for promotion and graduation from the *Epangelmatikes Scholes* is conducted at the school level, and upon successful completion of their course, students receive a level 3 vocational education certificate (*Ptychio* as above), which in addition to employment, allows them to enrol in post secondary IEK.

Trainees at IEK (Post Secondary non-Tertiary Education) are assessed by their instructors during and upon completion of their training. Students who successfully complete an IEK course are awarded an Attestation of Training (*Bebaiosi Epangelmatikis Katartisis*) and then participate in external examinations conducted by the competent national or local committees to obtain a post-secondary level Diploma of Vocational Training (*Diploma Epangelmatikis Katartisis, epipedou Metadeuterobathmias epangelmatikis katartisis*).

6. Higher education

(i) Structure

According to the Framework Law (2007), higher education consists of two parallel sectors: the University sector (Universities, Polytechnics, Fine Arts Schools, the Open University) and the Technological sector (Technological Education Institutions (TEI) and the School of Pedagogic and Technological Education).

The same law regulates issues concerning governance of higher education along the general lines of increased participation, greater transparency, accountability and increased autonomy.

Current legislation establishing the International University of Greece aims at facilitating student mobility and increasing the number of places offered in higher education, especially for foreign students. This University will also offer distance learning courses.

There are also State Non-university Tertiary Institutes offering vocationally oriented courses of shorter duration (2 to 3 years) which operate under the authority of other Ministries.

(ii) Access

Entrance to the various Schools of the Universities (*Panepistimio*) and Technological Education Institutions (*Technologiko Ekpaideftiko Idryma – TEI*) depends on the general score obtained by Lyceum graduates on the Certificate, as described above (Section 5.iv), on the number of available places (*numerus clausus*) and on the candidates' ranked preferences among schools and sections.

(iii) Qualifications

Students who successfully complete their studies in universities and TEI are awarded a *Ptychio* (first cycle degree). First cycle programmes last from four years for most fields to five years for engineering and certain other applied science fields and six years for medicine. The *Ptychio* leads to employment or further study at the post-graduate level that includes the one year second cycle leading to the second degree, *Metaptychiako Diploma Eidikefsis* – equivalent to the *Master's* degree – and the third cycle leading to the doctorate degree, *Didaktoriko Diploma*.

Recent legislation on quality assurance in Higher Education, the Credit Transfer System and the Diploma Supplement defines the framework and criteria for evaluation of university departments and for certification of student degrees. These measures aim at promoting student mobility and contributing to the creation of a European Higher Education Area.

7. Special needs

Law 3699, passed in the fall of 2008, establishes the compulsory nature of education for students with disabilities and special educational needs, affirming that it is an integral part of public free education and promoting the principle of integrated education.

Education for students with disabilities and special educational needs is provided in either mainstream or special schools and extends from the preschool years to the age of 23.

Diagnosis and assessment of special educational needs is provided by the interdisciplinary staff of the local Centres for Differential Assessment, Diagnosis and Support of Special Educational Needs (KEDDY) who are also responsible for recommending the most appropriate schooling type for students and drawing up an individualized educational program. The staff of these Centres cooperates closely with teachers of special needs students and provide a range of support services for the students and the schools.

According to the above assessment on the type and the degree of disability that a student has, they may be enrolled in: a) mainstream schools attending either the regular classroom with parallel support or special sections/classes of the school, or b) Special Education Schools. The Special Education Schools cover pre-school, primary and secondary education levels including vocational education.

In the 2007/08 school year, there were 23,470 students enrolled in programs of special education, of whom 16,118 (72 %) attended mainstream schools (special sections and regular classrooms) while 6,659 (28 %) attended Special Education Schools (of all levels and types).

8. Teachers

Pre-primary and primary school teachers are degree (*Ptychio*) holders from a four-year university-level course, primarily from Pedagogic Schools. Lower and upper secondary education teachers hold university degrees, *Ptychia*, in their specialist subject after completing a four-year course and take a three-month introductory teacher training course upon appointment. Access to teaching posts in the state sector (pre-primary to secondary level) is determined by competitive examinations administered by Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (*ASEP*). Teachers at all levels of the state sector are civil servants.

9. Current reforms and priorities

The most recent reforms have focused on the modernization of the institutional frameworks supporting Special Education, Research and Technology and Postgraduate Studies, and also on expanding access to tertiary education for graduates of the Vocational Lyceum.

Regarding **tertiary education**, the emphasis has been on promoting changes that reflect the priorities of Bologna Process within the context of broader reforms affecting the whole of education. Most recently, Law 3794 – passed in September 2009 – on the "Regulation of issues of the university and technological sectors of higher education" fully harmonizes the operation of the two parallel sectors and finalizes the process of integrating the technological sector into the higher education structure.

The National Council of Primary and Secondary Education convened in March of 2009 with an agenda to conduct a public dialogue leading to proposals on the development of **secondary education** – with the reform of the Lyceum and the system of entry to tertiary education as priorities.

The Ministry of National Education and Religions, under its latest Operational Program for the period 2007-2013, has planned a series of measures that aim at creating a **system of education and life long learning** that will provide the resources and skills necessary for active participation in society, for unimpeded access to the labour market and for completion of school education –

especially regarding at risk populations – and which promote the reduction of regional educational disparities.

Among the key priorities of the Ministry of Education is the creation of ‘Smart Schools’; that is, on the one hand to improve the quality of educational provision at schools, and on the other, to remedy long standing school building problems incorporating bio-climatic principles and modern energy practices in their solutions.

More specifically, the **current policies and goals** of the Ministry of Education rest on five pillars:

- **human-centred education**, in the context of which measures for the support and integration of at risk social groups will be taken
- **environmental education** for sustainable growth
- **digital convergence** (equality of access, reducing digital illiteracy, developing new technology distance teaching, etc.) – noting in this regard the current initiative of the Ministry of National Education to provide all entering lower secondary school students with a free laptop computer at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.
- **multilingualism** and language learning and the promotion of learning of the Greek language abroad
- and **connecting education to culture** in order to reinforce and update our cultural consciousness and strengthen values.

<p>For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (http://www.eurydice.org)</p>
