



National system overview on education systems in Europe

2011 Edition



CYPRUS

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1. Education population and language of instruction

In 2009, in the government controlled areas, the number of people aged 29 or under was 325 626 (40.5 % of the total population). The number of children of compulsory school age (6-15) was 93 076 (11.6 % of the population). The official languages of instruction are Greek and Turkish and are taught in separate educational institutions.

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

Most pupils in primary and secondary education (87.1 %, 2009/10) attend public-sector schools, which are set up and funded by the government. Private-sector schools are mainly self-funded. Those which are recognized as 'non profit-making associations' can be co-funded by the government and other organizations or individuals.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the administration, organization and all decisions concerning the use of financial resources by schools. A number of post-secondary institutions offering specialized professional training remain under the authority of various ministries: Labour and Social Insurance, Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment, Justice and Public Order, Commerce, Industry and Tourism, and Health.

The inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Culture has the overall responsibility for supervising the proper functioning of the schools.

3. Pre-primary education

<i>Nipiagogeia</i> (kindergarten)	3 to 4 years and 8 months
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Pre-primary education is part of Basic Education, which includes kindergartens (*nipiagogeia*) and primary schools (*dimotika scholeia*). It falls, in general, into the same legislative frame as that of primary schools with the exception of specific regulations governing the operation of community kindergartens and those of the private sector.

According to the legislation of 1 September 2004, children aged 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months are obliged to attend either public kindergartens, or community or private schools which are however, registered and approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Younger children aged 3 years to 4 years and 8 months take up vacant places in public kindergartens and pay fees as set by the Ministry of Finance. A number of children are released partially or fully of the educational fees. The State is responsible to cover all expenses for the introduction of this innovation; while at the same time will continue to subsidize the functioning of community kindergartens.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Culture took over the responsibility of implementing the Building Programme which began in 2001. According to this, the Ministry of Education covers the operating expenses of all pre-primary schools as well as the expenses for building new nursery schools, providing the schools' equipment and upgrading the existing premises. Moreover, the support of buildings against earthquakes and the upgrading of Pre-Primary Schools are still under effect. During 2009/10 the building of four new Pre-Primary Schools was completed.

4. Compulsory education

(i) Phases

Education in Cyprus is compulsory from 4 years and 8 months until 15 years old or from 4 years and 8 months until the completion of general lower secondary school, whichever of the above comes first.

<i>Prodimotiki</i> (kindergarten) provided at <i>Nipiagogeia</i>	4 years and 8 months – 5 years and 8 months
<i>Dimotiko Scholeio</i> (primary school)	5 years and 8 months – 11 years and 8 months
<i>Gymnasio</i> (general lower secondary school)	11 years and 8 months – 15 years

(ii) Admissions criteria

The age of the pupil is the only admission criterion. Admission to public-sector schools is free of charge for all pupils. Admission to Gymnasia is based on the primary school leaving certificate.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year is divided into 2 semesters. In the 2010/2011 academic years, it comprised approximately of 180 days at primary level and 161 regular working days at lower secondary level. The periods (35, lasting 40 minutes for pupils at primary level and 45 minutes at lower secondary level) are spread over five days a week. The annual number of hours of teaching in primary and secondary school is an average of around 840 respectively.

The extension of schooling time for children was fully implemented in the school year 2004. This has to deal with the problem of functional illiteracy. This is confined to pupils of both young and older age through the emphasis given to the objectives regarding the language, mathematics and science subjects as well as the equal treatment of the children of grades 1-6 and the rational staffing of schools.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

In 2009/10, the number of pupils (primary education) per teacher was 11.5 (public 11.5 and private 11.6) The average class size for public primary education was 18.7 and for public lower secondary education, 21.4. The law specifies the number of pupils per class as a maximum of 25 pupils for

grade 1 and 30 pupils for grades 2-6. The Council of Ministers (Decision No. 65.536/16.5.2007) decided that the maximum number of children in all primary schools should not exceed 25. According to the Decision of the Council, the implementation of this decrease should take place gradually, starting from 2007/08 and ending by the school year 2010/11. In lower and upper secondary education, the maximum number of pupils per class is 25 for all grades.

The classes are mixed and made up of pupils of the same age. In smaller schools at the primary level, several classes can be grouped together.

At primary education level, the same teacher usually teaches all the subjects (except in some cases for Music, Art, Physical Education, Home Economics, Design and Technology, English and Science). At lower and upper secondary level, education is entrusted to specialists.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The Curriculum and the timetable for primary and general lower secondary education schools are scheduled by the Council of Ministers following suggestions given by the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is common for all schools at the same level, but the time allocated to each subject varies, in accordance with the school type (number of teachers).

Religious education, Modern Greek and Mathematics occupy a prominent position in compulsory school. All pupils also study History, Geography, Science, Environmental Studies, English, Art, Music, Physical Education, Design and Technology/Home Economics and Free Activities totalling to 35 teaching periods.

As far as the teaching methods are concerned, these are decided by the teachers in cooperation with the inspectors of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Finally, there is no freedom to choose textbooks, since these are chosen by the Ministry of Education. The textbooks are the same for all primary schools and they are sent to schools at the beginning of each school year.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Teachers are encouraged to adopt a systematic policy in assessing pupils' abilities. Pupil assessment relies to a great extent on teachers themselves who are expected to use a variety of techniques such as written tests, observation, communication and pupils' self-evaluation.

Pupils progress to the next class automatically. Nevertheless, for very special reasons such as immaturity, learning difficulties, etc. and in very rare occasions, children may repeat a class only once during the six years duration of primary education and if the classroom teacher decides so, after the approval of the responsible inspector of the school. It must be mentioned that children can take suspension of attendance once during pre-primary education as well. For general lower secondary education, the practice of repeating a class still exists.

At the end of the sixth year, the pupils receive the primary school leaving certificate (*apolytirio*) which is required for enrolment at the gymnasium (*Gymnasio*). The final internal examinations of the *Gymnasio* (*telikes exetaseis*) are compulsory for all pupils. The certificate awarded at the end of compulsory education is based on the pupil's results in these examinations and on continuous assessment.

5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

(i) Types of education

<i>Eniaio Lykeio</i> (comprehensive upper secondary school)	15-18 years of age
<i>Esperino Gymansio</i> (evening upper secondary education classes)	15-19 years of age
<i>Techniki Scholi</i> (technical and vocational upper secondary school)	15-18 years of age
<i>Systima Mathiteias</i> (Apprenticeship Scheme)	14-18 years of age
<i>Esperini Techniki Scholi</i> (evening technical and vocational upper secondary school)	For adults after the age of 20

(ii) Admissions criteria

The certificate awarded at the end of compulsory education is an entrance requirement for upper secondary education. Pupils can attend the school of their choice within their catchment area. Pupils who have not completed compulsory education successfully can enter the labour market or enrol in the Apprenticeship Scheme (*Systima Mathiteias*).

(iii) Curriculum control and content

In schools that offer courses leading to the leaving certificate (*apolytirio*) the general compulsory subjects are the same for all pupils: Greek, Maths, History, Religion, Foreign Languages, and Physical Education. But each one of the 3 grades of upper secondary education has also its own additional compulsory subjects.

The STVE (Secondary Technical and Vocational Education) curricula (scheduled by the Council of Ministers following suggestions given by the Ministry of Education and Culture) offer balanced programmes of general education, technological education and workshop practice subjects. The subjects can be classified into the following six categories: Common Core Subjects; Related Subjects; Elective Subjects; Technological and Workshop Practice Subjects for the Branch; Technological and Workshop Practice Subjects for the Specialty; Industrial Placement.

The Apprenticeship Scheme (*Systima Mathiteias*) provides practical and theoretical training alternately. Practical training takes place in industry, where apprentices are remunerated for their work, for three days per week. Theoretical training is provided on the premises of Technical Schools for two days per week.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

In *Eniaio Lykeio*, assessment is the same as in compulsory education. At the end of the final year, there are final Pancyprian compulsory examinations organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture in specific examination centres. The pupils are awarded a leaving certificate (*Apolytirio*), which allows them to enter the job market or to be accepted at various schools (colleges and universities) in Cyprus and abroad. The pupils are also awarded a certificate according to which they are ranked based on their marks, which allows them to enrol to the public higher education institutions of Cyprus and Greece.

The assessment procedure at Secondary Technical and Vocational Schools (*Technikes kai Epaggelmatikes Scholes*) is similar to that employed at Secondary General Education Schools (*Eniaio Lykeio*). Criteria to assess pupils include class participation, workshop and laboratory work, written assignments, projects, quizzes, revision tests, class tests and final examinations. Pupils

take written examinations at the end of the year in Modern Greek, Mathematics, Physics, Technical Drawing and specialized classes in technology.

The apprentices who complete the Apprenticeship Scheme successfully are awarded a professional certificate, which entitles them to enter the labour market as semi-skilled workers. This certificate is not equivalent to the Leaving Certificate (*Apolytrion*) awarded to graduates of upper secondary education (general or technical/vocational) and does not entitle apprentices to pursue further studies at Institutions of Higher and Tertiary Education.

6. Higher education

(i) Structure

Higher Education in Cyprus is provided by different types of state and private institutions at university and non-university level.

1. Universities (*Panepistimia*)

A. State Universities offer programmes of study at the first (*Ptychio* – Bachelors), second (Masters) and third (Doctorate) cycle level. The ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) is applied to all programmes of State Universities.

B. Private Universities are established according to the provisions of Law 109(1) of 2005 approved by the House of Parliament of the Republic in July 2005. Currently, private universities offer:

- a) 4-year undergraduate courses that lead to the award of Bachelors qualifications (i.e. Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc),
- b) 1-year to 2-year postgraduate programmes of study that lead to the award of Masters qualifications i.e. Masters of Arts (MA), Masters of Science (MSc) and
- c) 3-year to 4-year Doctorate programmes of study that lead to the award of a PhD qualification.

2. Non-University Institutions (*Mi-Panepistimiaka Idrymata*)

A. Public Institutions of Higher Education (*Dimosies Scholes Tritovathmias Ekpaidefsis*), none of which has university status, are funded by the state and offer vocational programmes of study with a duration ranging from one to three academic years. These programmes do not provide access to second cycle programmes.

B. Private Institutions of Higher Education (*Idiotikes Scholes Tritovathmias Ekpaidefsis*) offer a wide range of academic as well as vocational programmes of study. As regards to the vocational qualifications awarded, these vary depending on the length of studies (1 to 3 academic years). Private institutions of higher education offer 4-year undergraduate courses that lead to the award of Bachelors qualifications (i.e. BA, BSc) and 1-year to 2-year postgraduate programmes of study that lead to the award of a Masters qualification (i.e. MA, MSc).

(ii) Access

Access to the undergraduate programmes of study at the University of Cyprus, the Cyprus University of Technology and to the majority of public non-university institutions is granted upon success in the Pancyprian Examinations which are used to rank candidate students.

For overseas students, usually G.C.E (General Certificate of Education) or G.C.S.E (General Certificate of Secondary Education) credentials are taken into consideration. State Universities may

set special examinations for international students. Private Universities and Institutions of Higher Education require a school-leaving certificate (*Apolytirio*) awarded by a six-year secondary school, and a good knowledge of the language of instruction.

(iii) Qualifications

Cyprus higher education system is based on three distinct cycles: the 4-year undergraduate cycle, leading to the award of the *Ptychio* or Bachelors, the 1 to 2-year postgraduate cycle, leading to the Masters Degree, and the third cycle leading to a Doctorate Degree – *Didaktoriko* Diploma.

Following the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Culture, for a 'common language' in qualifications, all private and public institutions of higher education have adopted the following framework of qualifications: 1-year, Certificate; 2-year, Diploma; 3-year, Higher Diploma; 4-year, Bachelor.

7. Special needs

Emphasis is placed on the education of almost all children with special needs within mainstream schools. Many factors have assisted integration, mainly the increased number of special educators and peripatetic teachers, public acceptance campaigns, staff seminars, setting up of special classes in mainstream schools and employment of teaching aids. Special arrangements have also been introduced for pupils with special needs during the final, external examinations organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

8. Teachers

Teachers in state schools have civil servant status. Teachers who work in pre-primary and primary education are University graduates who attended four year studies. Teachers who work in secondary education are also University graduates who have completed their studies either abroad (the number of years depends on the country) or at the University of Cyprus (four years). Secondary school teachers have to attend a pre-service training programme.

According to the recent, in-service training program launched in 2010, beginning teachers benefit from an induction phase. In school, they cooperate with a mentor-teacher during morning hours. They observe the mentor's classes, have time set aside for discussion between the two, share ideas and materials and generally get as much guidance as possible. The mentor-teacher is able to guide, assist and supplement the beginning teacher.

Information provided and drafted by the Eurydice Unit in Cyprus.

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult EURYPEDIA which provides descriptions of educational systems and policies in the Eurydice network countries: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurypedia>