



The System of Education in Poland

2020

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Abbreviations

CEC:	Continuing education centre
CPD:	Continuing professional development
CRE:	Committee for Research Evaluation
ECTS:	European Credit Transfer System
ECEC:	Early childhood education and care
ENQA:	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR:	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF:	European Qualifications Framework
EU:	European Union
HEI:	Higher education institution
IETP:	Individual education and therapy programme
IQR:	Integrated Qualifications Register
IQS:	Integrated Qualifications System
IRP:	Individual research plan
ISCED:	International Standard Classification of Education
LGU:	Local government unit
LO:	Learning outcome
NACSN&M:	National Accreditation Council for Schools of Nursing and Midwifery
PAC:	Polish Accreditation Committee
PQF:	Polish Qualifications Framework
REA:	Regional education authority
SAA:	Skills assessment and anticipation
SEN:	Special educational needs
VCEC:	Vocational and continuing education centre
VTC:	Vocational training centre

Key figures, school and academic year 2018/2019

Preschool institutions: nursery schools, preschool units and centres, and preschool classes in primary schools

22,157

incl. 7,191 public and 5,344 non-public nursery schools

Schools at all levels, incl. schools for adults

25,895

incl. 20,494 public and 5,401 non-public schools

Higher education institutions

392

incl. 130 public and 262 non-public higher education institutions

Pupils in preschool institutions

1,392,920

Pupils and learners in schools at all levels, incl. schools for adults

4,893,386

incl. 4,380,404 (89.5%) in public schools and 512,982 (10.5%) in non-public schools

Teachers in preschool institutions and schools at all levels, incl. schools for adults

702,595

(701,840 full-time equivalents)

Students in first-, second- and long-cycle programmes

1,230,254

incl. 901,801 (73.3%) in public higher education institutions and 328,453 (26.7%) in non-public higher education institutions

Students in third-cycle programmes

39,269

incl. 36,346 (92.6%) in public higher education institutions and 2,923 (7.4%) in non-public higher education institutions

Academic teachers in HEIs

93,139

incl. 82,759 (88.9%) in public higher education institutions and 10,380 (11.1%) in non-public higher education institutions

1. Legislation and Policy

1.1. Key Legislation

The 1997 **Constitution** of the Republic of Poland guarantees the **right to education for all**, provides for **free access to education** in public schools and higher education institutions (HEIs), and stipulates that **education is compulsory until the age of 18**. Public authorities ensure universal and equal access to education and, to this end, provide financial and organisational support to pupils and students. Citizens and institutions have the right to establish schools and HEIs, and parents are free to choose a public or non-public school for their children. The autonomy of HEIs is ensured in accordance with the principles laid down in the relevant Act of Parliament.

The education system is governed by Acts of Parliament and Regulations adopted, in particular, by the Minister of Education and Science (until October 2020, the Minister of National Education, responsible for school education, and the Minister of Science and Higher Education responsible for higher education). The overarching **Act on the Integrated Qualifications System** (IQS) of 2015 establishes the 8-level Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF), specifies the range of qualifications included in the IQS, and lays down rules for assigning levels to the qualifications awarded and for entering them onto the IQS.

The main Acts concerning **school education**, which covers all levels from preschool to post-secondary non-tertiary education, are the **Law on School Education** and the **Provisions introducing the Law on School Education** of 2016, the **School Education Act** of 1991 and the **Teachers' Charter** of 1982. They regulate key aspects such as: the structure of the school education system; governance and funding; matters related to the organisation of education and curricula; admissions, assessment and certification; support for pupils; education for foreign nationals; and qualification requirements, employment conditions and professional promotion arrangements for teachers. **Regulations** of the minister responsible for school education lay down detailed arrangements in these areas. They establish, for example, core curricula for general and vocational education; outline timetables for public schools; mechanisms for so-called pedagogical supervision, including external and internal evaluation of educational institutions; and frameworks for pupil assessment and promotion, external examinations, and teacher appraisal.

The key Act governing **higher education** is the **Law on Higher Education and Science** of 2018. It covers all main areas of higher education and research activity, including the establishment and liquidation of HEIs; extent of autonomy, types and tasks of HEIs; governance and funding; types of programmes and certification; rights and responsibilities of students, doctoral students and academic staff; financial support for students and doctoral students; qualification requirements and employment conditions for academic staff; student and doctoral student self-government bodies; commercialisation of research output and know-how; award of doctoral and post-doctoral degrees and professorial titles; quality evaluation of programmes, doctoral schools and research activity; access for foreign nationals to higher education and research activity; and national-level bodies within the higher education and science system. **Regulations** of the minister responsible for higher education define, for example, areas of knowledge, fields of science and arts, and scientific and artistic disciplines in which HEIs provide degree programmes; general requirements for the provision of degree programmes and curriculum design; and national standards for degree programmes for regulated professions.

There is **no single Act** of Parliament for **adult education** as a whole. Relevant provisions are included mainly in the legislation on school education and higher education. **Regulations** of the minister responsible for higher education address selected aspects such as continuing education in non-school settings, accreditation of institutions providing continuing education in non-school settings, and outline statutes for public institutions providing continuing education.

1.2. Policy Documents and Measures

The **Strategy for Responsible Development** 2017–2020 (with a 2030 perspective) sets an overall framework for Poland's social and economic development and identifies education among its key elements. The main areas for intervention in the field of education include: changing the **structure of the school education system** to ensure equality of opportunities and high quality, and increasing the **flexibility of the vocational education system** (see Chapter 1.3); adapting **vocational education** and **higher education** to the **needs of the economy** (greater external stakeholder involvement; revised curricula responding to labour market needs and developing practical skills); ensuring the development of **higher education** towards **excellence in science**; the **upskilling** of teaching and non-teaching

staff in educational institutions; and supporting the **third mission of higher education**, with arrangements facilitating the validation of learning outcomes (LOs) for adults.

Objectives:

Measures:

Stimulating creativity and innovation at all levels of education:

School and higher education reforms: **curricula based on LOs**, drawn up since 2009, with emphasis on active learning and problem-solving.

Integrating the national qualifications system:

Establishment of the **PQF** in 2016.

Increasing participation rates in early childhood education and care (ECEC):

Government programme extending the **range** and improving the **quality** of ECEC provision, implemented since 2008.

Adapting education and training to labour market and social needs:

Revised **classification of occupations**, redefined **qualifications** for each occupation and related changes in **vocational exams**; **structural reforms** (see Chapter 1.3); modernised **core curricula** for vocational education (LOs; more robust component developing key competences); **practically-oriented** vs academically-oriented programmes introduced in higher education; and greater **flexibility in continuing education** through wider use of non-school settings.

Introducing a new approach to adult learning based on the recognition of the value of learning in the workplace and as part of structured social engagement:

Mechanisms for the **validation of non-formal and informal learning** introduced as part of vocational exams and in higher education; **National Training Fund** established in 2014 to support employers investing in continuing education of their employees; **trilateral agreements** (between a labour office, employer and training institution) introduced for the training of **adult learners**; **programmes for seniors** launched.

The national lifelong learning policy, which builds on the 2013 **Lifelong Learning Perspective** adopted in response to the European Commission's Europe 2020 Strategy, focuses on five objectives which have been carried forward through a number of measures taken over the years.

As part of the Partnership Agreement for Poland approved by the European Commission in 2017, the Government is developing an **Integrated Skills Strategy 2030**. It draws on the *Lifelong Learning Perspective*, OECD's 2019 *Skills Strategy Poland* report, and the European Commission's *New Skills Agenda for Europe*. The general part of the Strategy, which identifies the main issues, priorities and lines of action, was endorsed by the Government in January 2019. The detailed part, including a more in-depth analysis of the current situation, a set of ongoing and planned activities and detailed implementation arrangements, will be drafted by the end of 2020.

The overall goal of the Strategy is to create opportunities and conditions for the development of skills bolstering social capital, and for social inclusion, economic growth and a high quality of life. The goal will be carried forward through action in six priority areas.

Priorities of the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030

Priority 1.

Improving key skills in children, young people and adults: developing **key competences** for active participation in social and economic life as part of formal, non-formal and informal education; adapting education and training to the needs of diverse learners; developing **ICT skills**; strengthening the **system supporting the development of skills and abilities** in all pupils and students, incl. specific support measures for particularly gifted pupils and students; developing **effective and diverse funding and quality assurance mechanisms** in the area of skills development.

Priority 2.

Fostering a learning culture geared towards active and continuous development of skills: promoting the **learning paradigm**, as opposed to the teaching paradigm, in core curricula, pedagogical approaches and lifelong learning; redesigning **approaches to initial and in-service training, recruitment and performance appraisal of staff** to ensure that they are fully prepared to support lifelong learning; building **organisational culture** of institutions based on collaboration and trust; promoting **lifestyles based on lifelong learning**; promoting lifelong learning through **active participation in social and public life**.

Priority 3.

Increasing employer involvement in the development and better use of skills:

developing mechanisms for better **collaboration between educational and research institutions and employers and employers' organisations**; promoting, developing and recognising forms of **experiential learning**, in particular where it is organised in the workplace; designing and implementing a system to encourage **employers' engagement in skills development**.

Priority 4.

Building an effective system for skills assessment and anticipation (SAA)

and dissemination of related information: integrating and enhancing the **SAA mechanisms** in place; creating a widely accessible, useful and user-friendly **catalogue of skills**; defining **requirements and standards for processing information** based on ongoing assessment, analysis of civilisation trends and development-oriented modelling; designing a mechanism for **sharing skills information in an easily accessible way**; developing an effective **counselling and guidance system** for children, young people and adults in the area of lifelong skills development and use.

Priority 5.

Developing effective and sustainable mechanisms for inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination in the area of skills development:

creating an **integrated system of institutions** involved in education and lifelong learning policies based on SAA; providing **conditions for lifelong learning** as the basis for skills development (arrangements for formal, non-formal and informal education); creating a system for **effective processing of data on formal, non-formal and informal education**; improving **communication among the ministries and various public administration levels concerned** regarding educational and training **needs** of children, young people and adults; developing opportunities, mechanisms and tools for the **validation of skills acquired outside the formal education system**.

Priority 6.

Ensuring equal access to opportunities for the development and use of skills:

identifying and eliminating **access barriers** to high-quality education and training services as part of formal, non-formal and informal education; providing **low-skilled individuals** with customised education and training **opportunities**; combatting **digital exclusion** of particularly disadvantaged groups; improving and promoting **inclusive education**; ensuring that education is based on the **principles of solidarity, democracy, tolerance, justice, freedom and respect for other cultures**; improving **initial and in-service teacher training** in the area of intercultural education and educational needs of migrants; developing **mechanisms for online competence** development (for example, Massive Open Online Courses, MOOCs).

1.3. Ongoing Reforms

A major reform in the **school education system** has been underway since the school year 2017/2018 and will be completed in 2022/2023. It aims to strengthen general education as the basis for further personal development of pupils, to increase the flexibility of the vocational education system, thus extending opportunities for vocational school pupils to continue education, and to address the evolving needs of today's labour market.

The **pre-reform system** comprised 6-year primary schools (ISCED 1), 3-year lower secondary schools (ISCED 2), 3-year (upper secondary) basic vocational schools, 3-year general upper secondary schools and 4-year technical upper secondary schools (ISCED 3), and 1- to 2.5-year post-secondary schools (ISCED 4). The **reform** has transformed the '6+3+3 years' education model into an '8+4 (or +5) years' one, with 8-year single-structure education (ISCED 1 and 2) in the primary school followed by a 4- or 5-year education cycle in a secondary school, and a 1- to 2.5-year cycle in a post-secondary school. Pupils enrolled in pre-reform schools follow programmes based on transitional arrangements. Structural changes in the system are combined with a curricular reform, and new arrangements have been put in place for pre-primary education and vocational education and training.

Key aspects of the school education reform

Six year-olds required to follow a **1-year pre-primary education programme**.

Establishment of **8-year primary school** (ISCED 1 and 2) (2017/2018), integrating the pre-reform 6-year primary school (ISCED 1) and 2 years of the pre-reform 3-year lower secondary school (ISCED 2), with lower secondary school phased out (between 2016/2017 and 2018/2019).

Duration of education in **general and technical upper secondary schools** (ISCED 3) extended by 1 year: transformation of 3-year general upper secondary schools and 4-year technical upper secondary schools into 4- and 5-year secondary schools, respectively (2019/2020).

Phasing out of 3-year basic vocational schools (ISCED 3), and establishment of 3-year **stage I sectoral vocational schools** (ISCED 3) leading to a vocational qualification (2017/2018), and 2 year **stage II sectoral vocational schools** (ISCED 3), where pupils can upgrade their vocational qualifications and prepare for the maturity exam (2020/2021).

Post-secondary schools (ISCED 4) reorganised to fit into the new school system (2017/2018).

New national core curricula established for general and vocational education.

Promotion of **dual vocational training** in collaboration with business partners; greater **employer involvement** in the co-financing of vocational education through the establishment of the Vocational Education Development Fund.

Free textbooks provided to pupils in primary schools.

The school education reform has no implications for the higher education system. Adult education is affected insofar as education provided in schools for adults has been reorganised to fit into the new school education system.

Recently enacted legislation has introduced a number of changes in **higher education**. It makes a distinction between **university-type and non-university HEIs** based on the research grade (the highest three, A+, A or B+, required for the former, and B, C or no grade for the latter) awarded as an outcome of an external quality evaluation of research. Earlier, the distinction was based on authorisations to confer doctoral degrees granted to HEIs which fulfilled certain requirements, including a minimum number of staff with a post-doctoral degree or professorial title.

The Law has introduced two new types of programmes, **dual study programmes** and **specialist programmes** (see Chapter 8.1). The main features of first-, second- and long-cycle programmes have remained unchanged. As a transitional arrangement based on the legislation previously in force, HEIs **autonomously** establish programmes in the fields assigned to disciplines in which they are authorised to award post-doctoral degrees; otherwise, a **permit** from the minister responsible for higher education is required. As of 1 January 2022, the extent of curricular autonomy will be determined by the **research grade** of an HEI in the discipline to which a given field of study is assigned, and the outcome of an external **programme evaluation**. HEIs which have one of the three highest research grades and where outstanding quality of education has been confirmed by an external overall evaluation (see Chapter 12.2) will be free to establish a programme; others will need a permit from the Minister to do so. One of the three highest **research grades** is now required by the new Law for HEIs to be authorised to establish a **doctoral school**, which provides a **new framework for doctoral training**, and to award doctoral and post-doctoral degrees in a given discipline.

The Law has established the Council as a **new collective governing body** of a public HEI, which involves **external stakeholders**, in addition to the rector as the single-person authority and the Senate as the collective

governing body in place earlier. The **powers of the rector** have been extended as compared to the previous arrangements. The new regulations have also extended **organisational and operational autonomy** of HEIs with, for example, an HEI's internal structure and management positions, except for the rector, to be established by the institution's statutes, and decisions on how to allocate the State-budget subsidies for teaching and research taken by each HEI independently. **Additional funding** is now available to HEIs as part of government programmes to foster excellence in research and teaching and the development of disciplines of particular relevance to a given region. Finally, aside from quality evaluation of research, the Law provides for two types of **external quality evaluation**: quality evaluation of education (programme evaluation, and overall evaluation focusing on the effectiveness of internal quality assurance), and evaluation of doctoral schools (see Chapter 12.2). Overall evaluation and evaluation of doctoral schools are new processes.



2. Organisation, Governance and Funding

2.1. Organisation

Institutions for children aged 0 to 3 years, supervised by the Minister of Family and Social Policy, are considered childcare settings and are not part of the education system. The system of education (shown on page 16) comprises a **school education system**, covering preschool / pre-primary education to post-secondary non-tertiary education, and a **higher education system**, each governed by separate legislation. There is no single or integrated adult education system.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Compulsory education is divided into:

- **1-year compulsory pre-primary education** for 6-year-old children;
- **Full-time compulsory education** (obligation to attend school) for children and young people **aged 7 to 15 years**. It starts at the beginning of the school year in the calendar year in which the child reaches the age of 7 and lasts until the completion of single-structure education in the primary school, but not beyond the age of 18;
- **Part-time compulsory education** (obligation to participate in education or training) for young people **aged 15 to 18 years**. It may be provided in a secondary school or a **non-school setting** (for example, as part of vocational training at an employer's organisation).

Levels of Education and Types of Institutions

Early childhood education and care:

- Crèches and kids clubs for children aged 0–3 years;
- Preschool / pre-primary education in a nursery school, a preschool class of the primary school, a preschool unit or preschool centre for children aged 3 to 6 years.

Single-structure education (ISCED 1 and 2):

Eight-year primary schools for pupils aged 7 to 15 years.

Secondary education (ISCED 3) for pupils aged 15 to 18/20 years:

- 4-year general secondary schools;
- 5-year technical secondary schools;
- 3-year stage I sectoral vocational schools;
- 2-year stage II sectoral vocational schools (to be established).

Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4):

Post-secondary schools offering programmes of 1 to 2.5 years.

3-year programmes in colleges of social work (ISCED 5): considered part of the school education system in national legislation and classified as tertiary education for international comparisons.

Higher education (ISCED 5 to 8):

- Specialist programmes of at least 1.5 years leading to a Chartered Specialist or Chartered Specialist–Technologist certificate (ISCED 5), provided by non-university HEIs only.

Degree programmes provided by HEIs:

- First-cycle programmes leading to a Bachelor's degree: 3 to 4 years (*licencjat*) or 3.5 to 4 years (*inżynier*; ISCED 6);
- 1.5- to 2-year second-cycle programmes leading to a Master's degree (*magister*; ISCED 7);
- 4.5- to 6-year long-cycle programmes leading to a Master's degree (*magister*), provided in selected fields of study only (ISCED 7);
- 3- to 4-year third-cycle / doctoral training programmes leading to a doctoral degree (*doktor*; ISCED 8).

Adult education:

- Education provided in primary and secondary schools for adults, stage II sectoral vocational schools and post-secondary schools;
- Various general and vocational courses offered in non-school settings;
- Specialist programmes (ISCED 5) and non-degree postgraduate programmes (leading to partial qualifications at ISCED 6, 7 or 8) provided by HEIs.



Alternative structures within the school education system

Art schools, which take artistically gifted children and young people, form a separate education sector or strand supervised by the Minister of Culture, National Heritage and Sport. They include primary schools (ISCED 1 and ISCED 2) and general secondary schools (ISCED 3) which combine general and art education, and schools at various levels which provide art education only.

Sports schools and sports championship schools, supervised by the minister responsible for school education, take children and young people excelling in sports. They include primary schools (ISCED 1 and 2) and general secondary schools (ISCED 3) which provide general education combined with an extended training programme in one or more sports.

INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM

The IQS has been in place since 2016. It is based on the **8-level PQF**, referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and on the Integrated Qualifications Register (IQR), which includes qualifications awarded in Poland. Qualifications in the PQF are defined in terms of LOs (knowledge, skills and social competences).

The IQS makes a distinction between full, partial, regulated and market qualifications. **Full qualifications** are awarded only within the school education system upon completion of education at a specific level, and within the higher education system upon completion of specialist, first-, second-, long-cycle programmes and doctoral training. **Partial qualifications** may be established within the school education and higher education systems, and as part of non-formal education; the range of LOs to be achieved for a partial qualification is normally narrower than for a full qualification. **Regulated qualifications** are established by specific national regulations and awarded accordingly, except for those awarded within the school education and higher education systems. **Market qualifications** are not regulated by law and are awarded as part of freedom of economic activity.

PUBLIC AND NON-PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Institutions at all levels can be either **public** or **non-public** (except for non-public art schools which may obtain 'public-school status' where fulfilling the requirements laid down by law). Education and/or care is **free** in public institutions. However, public HEIs may charge fees for some education services (see Chapter 2.3).

Main full qualifications, certificates and diplomas

Education system before the ongoing school education reform	Education system after the ongoing school education reform	PQF / EQF Level
6-year primary school leaving certificate		1
3-year lower secondary school leaving certificate	8-year primary school leaving certificate	2
Diploma conferring vocational qualifications obtained after finishing a 3-year basic vocational school	Diploma conferring vocational qualifications obtained after finishing a 3-year stage I sectoral vocational school	3
Diploma conferring qualifications obtained after finishing a 4-year technical upper secondary school or a post-secondary school	Diploma conferring vocational qualifications obtained after finishing a 5-year technical secondary school or a post-secondary school, or a stage II sectoral vocational school	4
Maturity certificate obtained upon passing the maturity exam in a general or technical upper secondary school	Maturity certificate obtained upon passing the maturity exam in a general or technical secondary school, or stage II sectoral vocational school	4
Diploma of a college of social work		5
Chartered Specialist (<i>dyplomowany specjalista</i>) and Chartered Specialist-Technologist (<i>dyplomowany specjalista technolog</i>) certificates awarded by a non-university HEI		
Diploma confirming completion of a first-cycle programme (Bachelor's degree – <i>licencjat</i> or <i>inżynier</i>)		6
Diploma confirming completion of a second- or long-cycle programme (Master's – <i>magister</i> or equivalent degree)		7
Doctoral diploma (doctoral degree – <i>doktor</i>)		8

Public **institutions providing early childhood education and care** and public **schools** are set up mainly by central or local government bodies and non-public ones by legal entities or natural persons. Non-public schools and other non-public institutions should be entered onto the register kept by the competent local government body. Non-public schools are required

by law, in particular, to provide education based on the national core curricula and the outline timetables for public schools; train for occupations included in the Classification of Occupations for Vocational Education where providing vocational education; comply with the national regulations on internal and external assessment and progression of pupils; and employ teachers who hold qualifications required in public schools.

Public **HEIs** are founded by the State as represented by the competent authority or public administration body. Non-public HEIs are established by natural persons or legal entities, except those administered by a central or local government body. They are entered onto the Register of Non-Public HEIs on the basis of an application reviewed by the Polish Accreditation Committee and a permit issued by the minister responsible for higher education (see 'Quality Assurance' in Chapter 12.2).

Except for very few, non-public institutions began to be established in the early 1990s, based on national legislation enacted after the political changes of 1989. Currently (2018/2019), there are 25,895 schools, including 20,494 (79%) public and 5,401 (21%) non-public schools; 90% of all pupils are enrolled in public schools. Among 392 HEIs, 130 (33%) are public and 262 (67%) are non-public. However, students in public HEIs represent 73% of all students enrolled on first-, second-, and long-cycle programmes and 93% of all doctoral students.

2.2. Governance

Central government ministries were restructured in October 2020. As of January 2021, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education have been merged into one Ministry of Education and Science supervised by the Minister of Education and Science.

SCHOOL EDUCATION

The responsibility for school education governance is shared among the national, regional, local and institutional levels. National school education policies are developed centrally, and management and administration are decentralised.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Governance in higher education involves the Minister of Education and Science, several bodies at the national level and governing bodies at the institutional level.

SCHOOL EDUCATION	
NATIONAL LEVEL	MAIN POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Minister of Education and Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Coordinates and implements national school education policy; → Establishes national core curricula for preschool, general and vocational education, and outline timetables for public schools; → Lays down arrangements for admissions, organisation and governance in public nursery schools and schools, organisation of the school year, and pupil assessment and progression; → Establishes detailed qualification requirements, remuneration rules and performance appraisal arrangements for teachers; → Establishes and administers selected types of public schools (for example, schools at diplomatic missions; experimental schools)
REGIONAL LEVEL	MAIN POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Head of the regional education authority (a government administration body)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Implements national school education policy; → Exercises pedagogical supervision (incl. external evaluation as part of external quality assurance) over nursery schools, schools and other educational institutions.
Local government bodies, province level (highest local government level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Administer a small number of public schools and other educational institutions operating at the regional or supra-regional level.



LOCAL LEVEL	MAIN POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Local government bodies, district level (intermediate local government level – <i>powiat</i>)	→ Establish and administer public special primary and post-primary schools, except for those operating at the regional or supra-regional level.
Local government bodies, commune level (lowest local government level – <i>gmina</i>)	→ Establish and administer public nursery schools and special nursery schools, as well as primary schools, except for special schools, art schools and schools within other institutions (such as prisons, youth detention centres); (No responsibility for pedagogical supervision).
INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL	MAIN POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Head of the school / nursery school / another educational institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Manages the nursery school / school / institution; → Provides conditions for the development of pupils, incl. overall responsibility for psychological and educational support; → Exercises pedagogical supervision (incl. evaluation as part of internal quality assurance).
Teaching Council (all teachers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Approves nursery school / school / institutional activity plans; → Takes decisions on the results of pupil assessment and promotion to the subsequent grade, and decisions to strike pupils from the register; → Gives opinions on the organisation of work, draft financial plans and the allocation of tasks and classes among teachers.



<p>Council of the school / nursery school / institution (representatives of teachers, parents, and pupils, except in nursery and primary schools and some special schools)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Adopts the statutes; → Gives opinions on activity and financial plans; → Makes proposals concerning innovations in education, extracurricular activities and optional school subjects; → Submits proposals concerning evaluation of the (nursery) school's / institution's activities to the head of the REA, and evaluates activities on its own initiative.
<p>Parents' Council (parents of all pupils)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Adopts education-and-care and problem prevention programmes in consultation with the Teaching Council; → Gives opinions on financial plans and action programmes to improve performance of the nursery school / school / institution.
<p>Pupil self-government (all pupils)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Makes proposals and gives opinions on all matters, and in particular those related to pupil rights.



HIGHER EDUCATION

NATIONAL LEVEL

MAIN POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Minister of Education and Science

- Develops national higher education and research policies
- Supervises HEIs in respect of compliance with the law, incl. financial regulations, their statutes, and permits for the establishment of non-public HEIs;
- Grants and withdraws permits for the establishment of non-public HEIs and authorisations for public and non-public HEIs to provide first-, second- and long-cycle programmes in cases extending beyond their autonomy.
- Regulates a number of key issues for higher education, including, for example:
 - areas of knowledge, fields of science and scientific disciplines in which HEIs may provide degree programmes;
 - general requirements for HEIs to provide first-, second- and long-cycle programmes and award related degrees;
 - national standards for degree programmes for regulated professions;
 - elements to be included in diplomas and certificates awarded by HEIs;
 - general arrangements for external quality evaluations.



Home

NATIONAL LEVEL	MAIN POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
<p>Representative bodies of the higher education and research community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Council for Science and Higher Education (GCSHE) - Conferences of Rectors (CRs) - Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland (SPRP) - National Representation of Doctoral Students (NRDS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → All bodies: Give opinions on arrangements for the operation of HEIs, guidelines for the development of higher education and research, matters relating to students, doctoral students and academic staff, State-budget funding and draft legislation; → GCSHE and CRs: put forward candidates for Polish Accreditation Committee members; → CRs, SPRP and NRDS: designate representatives to the GCSHE; → SPRP and NRDS: designate representatives to the Polish Accreditation Committee and the Committee for Research Evaluation, respectively.
<p>Polish Accreditation Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Reviews applications for permits to establish non-public HEIs as well as authorisations for HEIs to provide first-, second- and long-cycle programmes; → Conducts periodic programme and overall evaluations; → Gives opinions on draft legislation.
<p>Committee for Research Evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Conducts evaluations of doctoral schools and of the quality of research; → Makes proposals and gives opinions on matters related to the quality of research and doctoral training.



INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL	MAIN POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Rector of an HEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Manages the institution; → Drafts the institution's strategy and reports on its implementation; → Develops and implements a human resources policy, and takes appointment and dismissal decisions for management positions; → Takes decisions on the establishment of first-, second- and long-cycle programmes, non-degree programmes and doctoral schools; → Fulfils labour law and financial management responsibilities; → Ensures compliance of the institution's activities with the regulations in force at the institution.
Senate of an HEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Adopts the institution's statutes, as well as admissions and study regulations; approves the strategy and reports on its implementation; → Appoints and dismisses Council members and gives opinions on candidates for the rector position; → Establishes curricula for all types of programmes offered; → Awards doctoral and post-doctoral degrees; → Conducts evaluations of the institution's performance.
Council of a public HEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Gives opinions on draft statutes, institutional strategy and reports on its implementation, and activity-and-finance plans; → Approves reports on the implementation of activity-and-finance plans and financial statements; → Puts forward candidates for the rector position.

Public and non-public HEIs may establish other governing bodies in addition to those specified in the national legislation.



2.3. Funding

Education is funded primarily from public sources. **Public funds** represent around 91% of funding in school education and around 79% in higher education. The main sources of public funding include general and targeted State-budget subsidies and grants, local government units' own resources, other public funds (for example, the Labour Fund and budgets of central government agencies allocated for the training of specific occupational groups), and European Union (EU) funds.

Public funding is provided to public and non-public institutions which fulfil the requirements set out in the national legislation.

SCHOOL EDUCATION

Funding

School education is funded mainly from the **overall State-budget school education subsidy, targeted State-budget subsidies** (for example, for preschool education, textbooks and learning resources, and financial support for pupils) distributed annually among the relevant local government units (LGUs), and LGUs' own resources. Public and non-public nursery schools and schools may receive both types of State-budget subsidies. There are also multiannual government programmes in specific areas (for example, development of infrastructure and ICT skills of pupils and teachers).

Public expenditure
on school education:

3.7%

of the GDP

Fees

Education and/or care in **public nursery schools and schools** is free, but some financial contributions are required. Parents pay for meals in nursery schools and schools, and for accommodation and meals in a school boarding house. Where children under 6 years of age attend a nursery school for more than 5 hours a day, a fee is usually charged for additional time and classes. Parents of school pupils pay voluntary contributions to the School Council which are used for statutory activities of the school. **Non-public nursery schools and schools** charge full or partial fees for education and/or care (unless they are granted a full or partial subsidy for provision by the relevant LGU) and other services.

Financial support

Families receive support in various forms, including: family and other cash allowances, family tax benefits, and in-kind benefits such as free transport to the nursery school or school where the distance is longer than specified in the legislation; textbooks and other learning resources; and State-funded meals for pupils. The relevant LGUs may waive fees for, for example, classes in nursery schools beyond the above-mentioned 5-hour limit or accommodation and meals in a boarding house for pupils in a difficult financial situation. Additional allowances, benefits and services are provided to families of pupils with special educational needs.

As part of **maintenance-type support**, pupils in a difficult situation may be awarded a school grant or allowance to cover costs related to education. **Incentive-type scholarships**, awarded by school heads, the Prime Minister and/or the ministers responsible for school education and culture, are available to high-achieving and outstandingly gifted pupils.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Funding

State-budget funding is provided to HEIs in the form of a subsidy for the maintenance and development of teaching capacity; a subsidy for the maintenance and development of research capacity (training in doctoral schools); an application-based grant for capital investment projects related to teaching; a grant for student financial support and benefits; and a grant to provide conditions enabling people with a disability to fully participate in education and research. **Public university-**

-type HEIs receive all five types of subsidies and grants, and all except the research capacity subsidy are available to **public non-university HEIs**. **Non-public university-type HEIs** are eligible for all types of funding except the teaching capacity subsidy, and **non-public non-university HEIs** only for the last two types of grants. Like in school education, there are also targeted multiannual government programmes open to both public and non-public HEIs (for example, supporting improvements to achieve excellence in teaching and research, encouraging dissemination of research findings as part of the third mission of HEIs, and co-funding research and development projects carried out under EU and other international programmes).

Public expenditure
on higher education:

1.2%

of the GDP

Fees

There are no tuition fees in **public HEIs** for full-time first-, second- and long-cycle programmes and doctoral training. Public HEIs may charge tuition fees only for part-time degree programmes; courses which are not included in the curriculum or are retaken by students due to academic failure; degree programmes delivered in a foreign language; full-time degree programmes in Polish taken by foreign nationals (for exceptions, see Chapter 13.1); and specialist and non-degree postgraduate programmes. Students also pay fees for admission and the issue of various study-related documents. Places in dormitories and meals in canteens are offered to students on a fee-paying basis. A fee is charged for the validation of LOs. **Non-public HEIs** charge tuition fees, except for doctoral training for which they receive a State-budget subsidy, and fees for other services.

Financial support

Like in school education, students' **families** may be granted a family allowance and family tax relief. **Students** benefit from free medical care and reduced public transport fares.

Students and doctoral students in public and non-public HEIs receive support in cash as grants and credits. **Non-repayable grants** for students, and doctoral students enrolled before the academic year 2019/2020, include: a means-tested maintenance grant; a grant for students with a disability; the rector's scholarships for outstanding learning, research or artistic achievements; the Minister's scholarships for significant academic, artistic or sporting achievements; and an aid payment for students who are temporarily in a difficult financial situation. Newly enrolled doctoral students (in doctoral schools operating since the beginning of the academic year 2019/2020) receive a doctoral scholarship and may be awarded the Minister's scholarship for significant research achievements. **Student loans** are means-tested and available to applicants who have not reached the age of 30 (students) or 35 years (doctoral students). They are offered by commercial banks, with the State-budget contributing towards the interest charged and paying any written-off amount.

ADULT EDUCATION

Funding

There is **no overall or single funding system** for adult education. Adult education in **school settings** is funded from the overall State-budget school education subsidy. Funding for provision in **non-school settings** comes from

the same State-budget subsidy; the Labour Fund, including the National Training Fund; EU and other international sources; central government budgets for the training of specific occupational groups (for example, government officials, medical doctors, teachers); and private funds.

Fees

Education in **public schools** for adults is free; learners may support the statutory activities of their school by paying voluntary contributions to the learner self-government. Training as part of human resources development programmes run by **labour offices** and some EU-supported training courses are, likewise, offered on a fee-free basis. Public providers may charge fees for some continuing education courses provided in **non-school settings** unless learners take such courses to complete part-time compulsory education. Learners normally pay tuition fees for education in **non-public schools** and **non-school settings**, and for specialist and non-degree postgraduate programmes in **public and non-public HEIs**.

Financial support

There is **no single system** of financial support for adult learners. **Learners** in public and non-public **schools for adults** are entitled to the same types of **maintenance- and incentive-type support** as children and young people (see above). Such support is, however, available only until they complete their education or reach the age of 24. Low-income learners may be granted full or partial tuition fee exemption. The **unemployed** can apply to a labour office or the relevant LGU for a **grant** to cover costs of training or of studies in an HEI, and for a Labour Fund grant to follow a programme in a post-primary school, a degree or non-degree postgraduate programme in an HEI or a training course, or to undertake a practical placement. **Employees** may receive in-cash and in-kind support from their employers if they take a programme in a school or participate in a training course at the employer's request.

3. Early Childhood Education and Care

3.1. Organisation

Early childhood education and care is divided into two stages:

- **care for children aged 0 to 3 years** provided in childcare institutions, including crèches and kids clubs, and by day carers and nannies in other settings;
- **preschool education for children aged 3 to 6/7 years** provided in nursery schools, preschool classes in primary schools and other settings, including preschool education units and centres.

Care for children aged 0–3 years (2018)

Types of childcare institutions / settings	Number of institutions	Available places
Crèches and crèche sections	3,144	126,294
Kids clubs	632	11,289
Day carers	1,249	6,459
Total	5,025	144,042

6,969 nannies registered in the national social security system.

Crèches are the main childcare setting; **kids clubs** are smaller establishments, each taking up to 30 children. **Day carers** are hired by a commune, a legal entity or another institution on the basis of a service contract, and nannies by parents on the basis of a civil law contract. Crèches, day carers and **nannies** provide care to children aged between 20 weeks and 3 years, and **kids clubs** to children aged 1 year and above. Care can be provided until the end of the school year in which the child reaches the age of 3 or up to the age of 4 if the child is unable to participate in preschool education (with reasons to be presented in a statement from the parents). The proportion of **children attending childcare institutions** rose from 8.3% in 2015 to **13.0%** in 2018, and of those in care in all settings, including that of nannies, from 12.4% in 2015 to **19.3%** in 2018.

Preschool education is considered the first level of school education. Children **aged 3 to 5** have the statutory right to participate in preschool education and attend preschool institutions on a voluntary basis. Where parents choose to enrol their children, places in institutions have been available to all 4- and 5-year-olds since the school year 2015/2016 and to all 3-year-olds since 2017/2018. Children **aged 6** may either complete **compulsory 1-year pre-primary education** (in a nursery school, a preschool class in a primary school or in another setting) or start single-structure education in the primary school. The choice is left to the parents, but children may enter the primary school at the age of 6 only if they completed 1-year preparatory pre-primary education in the year preceding entry to school or have a school readiness statement issued by a counselling and guidance centre.

Preschool education (2018/2019)

Types of preschool institutions / settings	Number of institutions	Number of pupils
Nursery schools (incl. special nursery schools)	12,535	1,111,595
Preschool education units	74	1,358
Preschool education centres	1,624	32,444
Preschool classes in primary schools	7,924	247,523
Total	22,157	1,392,920

The tasks of a nursery school and related **aims** of preschool education are set out in detail in the national core curriculum. In providing conditions for children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development, preschool education aims, in particular, to support them in independent exploration of the world; improve their sensory integration and ability to use emerging cognitive processes; build their identity, individuality, self-esteem, and sensitivity with regard to many spheres of human activity; prepare them to understand their own and other people's emotions and feelings, strengthen their need to create interpersonal relations, and instil in them values and social norms; help them develop habits and behaviours leading to independence, caring for health, motor fitness and safety; arouse their interest in a modern foreign language and in learning about other cultures; and develop their learning mechanisms so that they achieve school readiness.

In 2018/2019, the **overall enrolment rate** for preschool education was 83.5% for 3- to 4-year-olds, 87.3% for 3- to 5-year-olds and 89.5% for 3- to 6-year-olds. The proportion of children in each age cohort attending preschool institutions is still much larger in urban areas than in rural ones. An overwhelming majority (96%) of 6-year-olds followed the compulsory 1-year pre-primary education programme (rather than starting education in Grade I of the primary school).

Enrolment rates in preschool education by age (2018/2019)

Age cohort	Overall enrolment rate	Enrolment rate in urban areas	Enrolment rate in rural areas
3-year-olds	77.7%	93.5%	55.2%
4-year-olds	89.3%	104.4%*	68.4%
5-year-olds	94.9%	107.9%*	77.3%
6-year-olds	96.0%	107.7%*	80.3%

* Rates exceeding 100% where children from rural areas attend preschool education settings in urban areas.

3.2. Admission

Except for age, the legislation does not specify any conditions or criteria of admission to **childcare institutions and settings**. Parents should, however, provide some basic data, including information on the child's health, diet and psychological and physical development. Conditions of admission are set out by individual institutions and settings.

Public nursery schools enrol children on a free-access basis. Parents normally choose a nursery school within the area of the commune (lowest-level LGU) in which they live. The **age** of the child is the main criterion. Children should have reached the age of 3, but 2.5-year-olds may be enrolled with the consent of the head of a nursery school. Public nursery schools give **priority** to 6-year-olds, who are required to participate in preschool education, and 4- and 5-year-olds living within the area of a given commune. Where the number of applicant children exceeds the number of places available, nursery schools apply additional criteria laid down by the national legislation (for example, difficult family situation or health issues) and the commune (for example, specific needs of the family or local community, or family income).

Non-public nursery schools establish their own admission criteria. Where a commune is unable to provide places to all children who are required or entitled to participate in preschool education, it grants a subsidy to a non-public nursery school, selected on a competitive basis, which should follow the rules laid down for public nursery schools.

3.3. Pupil Grouping for Learning

The **maximum number of children** in care is 8 for a childminder in a **crèche or a kids club** and 5 for a **day carer** (or 5 and 3, respectively, where a group includes a child with a disability, a child requiring special care or a child under 1 year of age).

Children in **nursery schools** are normally grouped according to their **age**. Most nursery schools are divided into four grades (for 3-, 4-, 5- and 6-year-olds). Mixed age groups may be created when other criteria are taken into consideration: children's needs, interests and abilities in mainstream nursery schools, and the extent and type of disability in special nursery schools. Due to a small number of children, nursery schools in rural areas usually have mixed age groups: two classes (6-year-olds and other children) or one class only.

The **number of children per group** in a nursery school **may not exceed 25 except** in integration and special nursery schools and special preschool classes where the limits are lower (20, including up to 5 children with a disability in integration nursery schools and classes, and between 4 and 12 in special nursery schools or preschool classes, depending on the degree and type of disability). Activities in preschool education units and centres are organised for groups of 3 to 25 children.

Two **teachers** working in shifts usually supervise one class (one until and the other after 12 p.m.). They should either work with one age group or follow children throughout the 4-year period in a nursery school. Integration nursery schools and mainstream nursery schools with integration classes also employ additional teachers trained in special education as well as rehabilitation specialists.

3.4. Organisation of Time

Working hours in **crèches and kids clubs** are set in their internal regulations. Crèches and kids clubs provide care for up to 10 hours per day. Activities are suited to children's individual needs and psychomotor abilities. Working hours for day carers are agreed in a contract between the day carer and the employing entity.

Based on the national core curriculum for preschool education, play, learning and leisure in **nursery schools** and other preschool settings are organised so as to follow the rhythm of the day – regularly repeated phases which enable children to gradually understand the concept of time and organisation and give them a sense of security and tranquillity, ensuring their healthy development. The head of a nursery school establishes an overall **timetable** of activities, and the teacher supervising a given group prepares a detailed timetable on this basis, tailored to the needs and interests of the children.

Nursery schools and preschool classes in primary schools:

Open throughout the year, except for breaks in activity, at least 5 hours per day. Most working around 9 hours per day, 5 days per week.

Preschool education units:

Open on some weekdays throughout the year, except for breaks in activity; at least 3 hours per day / 12 hours per week (depending on the number of pupils).

Preschool education centres:

Open on all weekdays throughout the year, except for breaks in activity; at least 3 hours per day / 12 hours per week (depending on the number of pupils).

3.5. Curriculum

Crèches and kids clubs do not follow any specific core curriculum. The national legislation recommends only that activities should serve care and education purposes, involve play with elements of education, and be adequate for the children's level of physical and psychological

development and their age. Children participate in care-related, educational and play activities, and childminders choose aids depending on the children's age, individual development needs and abilities.

All institutions providing **preschool education** are required to follow curricula based on the national core curriculum. A curriculum is approved by the head of a given nursery school or school, or, in the case of alternative preschool settings, by the head of the nursery or primary school which employs teachers who teach classes in such settings.

There are no subjects as understood in school. Education is based mainly on play activities which aim to foster children's individual development and prepare them for school education. Teachers enable children to engage in various forms of activity so as to develop their self-reliance and capability to cooperate and coexist in a group in safe conditions suited to their needs and abilities. Children participate in games designed to improve their speaking, visual and aural skills and arouse their interest in reading. Compulsory and fee-free foreign language classes have been taken by 5-year-olds since the school year 2015/2016 and by all children in preschool education since 2017/2018.

3.6. Assessment

There is no assessment for children in **crèches and kids clubs**. Staff should, however, regularly inform parents about their children's achievements, problems and any possible health issues.

Teachers in **preschool education** settings should observe individual children on an on-going basis and keep records of their achievements. This helps them assess the children's needs, accordingly adapt teaching and learning methods, and collaborate with a counselling and guidance centre and parents in supporting the children's development. If teachers identify any education- or behaviour-related issues, public preschool institutions should provide psychological and educational support to the children concerned. All children with individual development and educational needs are entitled to receive such support, and support is also offered to their parents.

Teachers are also required to assess the school readiness of 6-year-olds (or 5-year-olds at their parents' request) and provide a report to the parents. Aside from giving parents information about their children's school

readiness, the assessment may help teachers develop an individualised programme supporting the child's development and enable specialists in a counselling and guidance centre to conduct a more in-depth assessment, where necessary.

At parents' request, entry into compulsory education in the primary school may be deferred for up to one year. The decision is taken by the head of a primary school after consultation with a counselling and guidance centre. In such cases, children continue preschool education.



4. Single-Structure Education (ISCED 1 and 2)

4.1. Organisation

Single-structure education is part of compulsory education. It is provided by the 8-year **primary school** for children and young people aged **7 to 14 years**. In terms of curriculum design, single-structure education is divided into two stages:

- **Stage I, Grades I to III:** integrated early school education, which corresponds to the first 3 years of primary education (ISCED 1);
- **Stage II, Grades IV to VIII:** subject-based education, which covers the 4th year of primary education (ISCED 1) and 4-year lower secondary education (ISCED 2).

Single-structure education (2018/2019)

Types of schools (excl. schools for adults)	Number of institutions	Number of pupils
Public primary schools	12,938	3,039,768 (incl. 38,707 in special schools)
Non-public primary schools	1,529	
Total	14,467 (incl. 940 special schools)	

Mainstream primary schools include **sports and sports championship schools**, which provide extended sports training in addition to general education. As a **separate strand**, there are **art schools**, jointly classified as grade I art schools. They provide general and art education in parallel (music schools following the mainstream primary school curriculum; music and ballet schools covering several years of mainstream primary and secondary schools) or art education only (music schools), with no vocational qualifications awarded at this level.

The main **aims of general education** in the primary school and key skills which pupils should acquire by the end of the single-structure education cycle are set out in the national core curriculum.

Aims of general education in the primary school:

- to introduce pupils to the world of values (generosity, collaboration, solidarity, altruism, patriotism and respect for traditions);
- to identify models of behaviour and build social relationships to support pupils' development;
- to strengthen pupils' sense of individual, cultural, national, regional and ethnic identity;
- to develop pupils' sense of personal dignity and respect for the dignity of other people;
- to develop competences such as creativity, innovativeness and entrepreneurship;
- to develop critical and logical thinking, reasoning, argumentation and deduction skills;
- to demonstrate the value of knowledge as the basis for the development of skills;
- to encourage intellectual curiosity and the motivation to learn;
- to provide pupils with a body of knowledge and skills so that they understand the world in a more mature and structured way;
- to support pupils in identifying their own aptitudes and future learning paths;
- to ensure comprehensive personal development by enhancing pupils' knowledge and stimulating and satisfying their intellectual curiosity;
- to develop open-minded attitudes towards the world and other people, activity in social life and a sense of responsibility for the community;
- to encourage pupils to undertake structured and purposeful self-education based on the ability to develop one's own working methods; and
- to guide pupils towards values.

Key skills to be developed as part of general education in the primary school:

- efficient **communication** in Polish and modern foreign languages;
- efficient **use of mathematical tools** in everyday life, and mathematical thinking;
- searching, sorting out, and critical analysis and use of information from various sources;
- creative **solving of problems** in various areas, while using purposefully ICT-based methods and tools, including programming;
- **solving problems** with the use of mediation techniques;
- **teamwork** and **societal engagement**;
- **active participation** in the cultural life of the school, local community and country.



4.2. Admission

Education in the primary school is compulsory for all children from the **age of 7** (with the school starting age raised from 6 to 7 years in 2016/2017). Where their parents wish, **6-year-olds** may enter the primary school if they have completed 1-year preparatory pre-primary education or hold a school readiness statement from a counselling and guidance centre. Where justified, entry into the primary school may be **deferred** for up to one year (in exceptional cases for a longer period, due to the pupil's disability confirmed by a **decision on special education**); the decision is taken by the head of the school upon consultation with a counselling and guidance centre.

Communes are divided into **catchment areas** to provide even access to schools. Primary schools are required to take children living in their catchment area. Where places are available, the school can additionally take children living outside a given catchment area at their parents' request. Admission criteria for vacant places in primary schools are defined by the relevant LGU.

4.3. Pupil Grouping for Learning

Pupils are grouped into **Grades I to VIII** according to their **age**. Each **class** is supervised by a class tutor (home room teacher). Teachers usually hold this function throughout a given stage of single-structure education.

The legislation does not set a minimum or maximum **number of pupils per class**. There are, however, some exceptions – for example, the maximum number per class is 25 for Grades I to III, and 20, including up to 5 pupils with a disability, for integration classes (attended by pupils with a disability or those who are socially maladjusted and their peers without a disability) in mainstream schools and in integration schools.

Pupils are further subdivided into **groups** for some school activities or classes. In Grades IV to VIII, this is obligatory for: compulsory ICT and foreign language lessons where a class has more than 24 pupils; for no more than half of compulsory general education classes which, as set out in the curriculum, should comprise a practical component (including lab work) where a class has more than 30 pupils; and physical education classes. Detailed arrangements are laid down by individual schools.

4.4. Organisation of Time

Pursuant to the national legislation, the **school year** starts on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year. Classes in a school year last from the first working day of September until the first Friday after 20 June. The school year is divided into **two semesters**, which are separated by a winter break. The dates of the two-week **winter break** are set between mid-January and the end of February and vary between the provinces. The **summer break** begins on the Saturday following the final day of classes and ends on 31 August.

Classes are normally conducted **5 days per week** (Monday to Friday), but some schools (in particular, those providing vocational education) are allowed by law to extend the working week to 6 days where this is justified by specific working conditions. Decisions are taken by individual schools.

Classes normally start at **8 a.m.** and finish around **2–3 p.m.** in upper grades where the school works in one shift (and last longer where the school works in two or three shifts). The duration of the school day also depends on the size of the school building, as well as the number of classrooms and other facilities for after-school activities. Each **lesson** (teaching hour) lasts **45 minutes**, except in Grades I to III where this is determined by the teacher. Breaks usually last from 5 to 25 minutes.

Detailed timetables are established by individual schools on the basis of national outline timetables (see pages 41–43).

4.5. Curriculum

An overall framework for single-structure education is set by the national **core curriculum** for general education and **outline timetables**. The core curriculum defines the aims of education, curricular contents, and knowledge, skills and competences which pupils are expected to acquire by the end of the education cycle. The outline timetable specifies the **number** of hours per week to be allocated to classes / subjects in individual grades, in particular to compulsory general education classes. Curricula adopted by individual schools should be based on the core curriculum.

New core curricula and outline timetables, established for the new 8-year primary school as part of the ongoing school education reform (see Chapter 1.3), have gradually been implemented since 2017/2018. There is one

outline timetable (see pages 41–43) for **mainstream and special schools**, except for schools for pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability.

Stage I of the primary school, **Grades I to III**, is designed to ensure smooth transition from preschool to school education and is organised on an integrated basis. Classes are taught according to a timetable developed by the teacher, with the duration of lessons and breaks depending on pupils' activity. Education at **stage II, Grades IV to VIII**, is based on subjects.

Outline timetable for 8-year primary school

Stage I, Grades I to III

- **Compulsory integrated education:** Polish, Mathematics, Social Education, Natural Sciences, Technology, ICT Education, Art Education, Music Education, Modern Foreign Language and Physical Education;
- Hours distributed among the individual types of classes by the teacher conducting lessons.

Grades I–III				
Compulsory classes	Number of hours per week by grade			Total in the 3-year cycle
	I	II	III	
Early school education	20	20	20	60
Hours to be allocated by the school head	3			3
Total	63			63

→ 3 hours per week to be allocated to **Physical Education** as part of compulsory classes.

Other classes / activities (not included in the number of hours for compulsory classes):

- The number of hours for the following classes is specified in separate regulations: Religion or Ethics; national or ethnic minority language, or regional language, and history and culture of a national / ethnic minority or regional language community; geography of the country a national minority identifies with; sports activities; and classes / activities as part of psychological and education support;
- A number of hours for additional classes / educational activities and sign language classes may be allocated by the body administering a given school;
- **Rehabilitation classes** / activities for pupils with a disability: 12 class hours per class per week in each year for a special class; 2 class hours per pupil per week in each year for mainstream and integration classes;
- **Hours allocated by the school head:** to be allocated on an annual basis to classes / activities developing pupils' interests, abilities and aptitudes, and, in particular, activeness and creativity.

Stage II, Grades IV to VIII

Grades IV–VIII								
No.	Compulsory classes	Number of class hours per week by grade					Total in the 5-year cycle	
		IV	V	VI	VII	VIII		
1	Polish	5	5	5	5	5	25	
2	1 st Modern Foreign Language	3	3	3	3	+2 ⁽¹⁾	3	15
3	2 nd Modern Foreign Language	-	-	-	2		2	+2 ⁽¹⁾
4	Music	1	1	1	1	-	4	
5	Art Education	1	1	1	1	-	4	
6	History	1	2	2	2	2	9	
7	Civic Education	-	-	-	-	2	2	
8	Natural Sciences	2	-	-	-	-	2	
9	Geography	-	1	1	2	1	5	
10	Biology	-	1	1	2	1	5	
11	Chemistry	-	-	-	2	2	4	
12	Physics	-	-	-	2	2	4	
13	Mathematics	4	4	4	4	4	20	
14	Computer Science	1	1	1	1	1	5	
15	Technology	1	1	1	-	-	3	
16	Physical Education	4	4	4	4	4	20	
17	Safety Education	-	-	-	-	1	1	



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18	Lessons with the class tutor	1	1	1	1	1	5
Total for compulsory classes and lessons with the class tutor		24	25	25	32 (+2) ⁽¹⁾	31 (+2) ⁽¹⁾	137 (+4) ⁽¹⁾
Hours to be allocated by the school head		4					4
Total		141 (+4) ⁽¹⁾					

⁽¹⁾ Additional hours for a **foreign language** which is the second language of tuition in **bilingual classes / schools**.

Other classes / activities (not included in the number of hours for compulsory classes):

- **Career guidance**: min. 10 class hours per year in Grades VII and VIII (min. 20 hours in 2 years);
- The number of hours for the following **subjects / classes** is specified in separate regulations: Religion or Ethics; Family Education; national or ethnic minority language, or regional language, and history and culture of a national / ethnic minority or regional language community; geography of the country a national minority identifies with; sports activities; and classes / activities as part of psychological and educational support;
- A number of hours for additional classes / educational activities and sign language classes may be allocated by the body administering a given school;
- **Rehabilitation classes** / activities for pupils with a disability: 12 class hours per class per week in each year for a special class; 2 class hours per pupil per week in each year for mainstream and integration classes;
- **Hours allocated by the school head**: to be allocated on an annual basis to classes / activities developing pupils' interests, abilities and aptitudes, and, in particular, activeness and creativity.



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4.6. Assessment and Certification

Internal assessment is conducted by school teachers, and external assessment by institutions external to the school: the Central Examination Board and regional examination boards.

Internal assessment

Each school adopts its own detailed assessment system based on the national legislation. Pursuant to the legislation, both **learning achievements and conduct** are subject to assessment. Pupils are assessed by teachers throughout the school year.

Learning achievements are assessed by the general teacher in Grades I to III and, separately for each subject, by the subject teachers in Grades IV to VIII. Mid-year (semester) and end-of-year marks are based on all the marks given during the semester or year. Pupils in **Grades I to III** receive one end-of-year mark for educational activities / classes and one end-of-year mark for conduct. Marking is **descriptive**. In **Grades IV to VIII**, teachers use a **marking scale** of 1 to 6 to assess learning achievements: 6 – excellent, 5 – very good, 4 – good, 3 – satisfactory, 2 – acceptable, and 1 – unsatisfactory. Starting from Grade IV of the primary school, teachers may also use descriptive assessment in compulsory or optional subjects if this is provided for in the assessment system of the school.

Conduct is assessed on the following **scale**: excellent, very good, good, acceptable, unacceptable and inadmissible. The mark for conduct should not influence subject marks, promotion to the subsequent grade or completion of single-structure education. However, in specific cases, the teaching council of the school may decide that the pupil cannot be promoted to the subsequent grade or complete single-structure education due to their inadmissible behaviour.

Promotion to the subsequent grade is automatic in **Grades I to III**. Pupils may repeat a year only in exceptional cases where this is justified by the level of their development, achievements or health. For promotion in **Grades IV to VIII**, pupils should receive an end-of-year mark higher than 'unsatisfactory' for each compulsory subject. Those who have received (an) 'unsatisfactory' mark(s) can take a resit exam. In principle, if they fail this exam, they are not promoted to the subsequent grade. However, the teaching council may conditionally promote a pupil who has received an 'unsatisfactory' mark in one subject only. Pupils **graduate** if they have received marks higher than

'unsatisfactory' for all compulsory subjects, and have taken the eighth-grader exam (see below).

External assessment

All pupils in Grade VIII take a compulsory written **eighth-grader exam** (introduced in the school year 2018/2019 for the new primary school, and replacing an external test taken earlier at the end of the pre-reform 6-year primary school). The exam aims to assess the extent to which pupils meet the requirements set out in the national core curriculum. Results of the eighth-grader exam have no impact on completion of single-structure education. However, they serve as one of the criteria in the process of admission to post-primary schools.

Certification

Pupils receive end-of-year certificates and a **school leaving certificate** upon completion of single-structure education, all issued by the school, and a **certificate** with results of the **eighth-grader exam** issued by the relevant regional examination board.

5. Secondary Education (ISCED 3)

Secondary education is provided by four main types of schools:

→ **4-year general secondary schools**, including sports and sports championship schools with an extended sports training programme;

and vocational secondary schools, including:

→ **5-year technical secondary schools**;

→ **3-year stage I sectoral vocational schools**; and

→ **2-year stage II sectoral vocational schools** (established in 2020/2021).

There are also 3-year special schools preparing for employment, which take pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability and multiple disabilities and which are classified as ISCED 2 schools (see Chapter 10). As a separate strand, art schools, jointly classified as grade II art schools and leading to vocational qualifications, provide combined general and art education or art education only. Among the former are schools of visual arts based on a curriculum for general secondary schools, and music and ballet schools where programmes cover several years of general single-structure and secondary education. Among the latter are music schools, schools of dance arts and schools of circus arts. Art schools train pupils for the occupations of musician, visual artist, dancer, music theatre actor and circus performer.

Secondary education (2018/2019)

Type of schools (excl. schools for adults)	Number of schools	Number of pupils
<i>Lower secondary schools*</i>	1,640	350,587
Secondary schools		
Public secondary schools	5,396	1,145,516 (incl. 22,116 in special schools and special schools preparing for employment)
Non-public secondary schools	940	
Total	6,336 (incl. 497 special schools and 522 special schools preparing for employment)	

* Schools phased out by the end of 2018/2019 as part of the ongoing reform.

Roughly 40% of pupils are enrolled in general secondary schools and around 60% in schools leading to vocational qualifications. However, pupils can take the maturity exam and obtain a maturity certificate, which gives access to degree programmes in HEIs, not only in general schools but also in technical secondary schools, stage II sectoral vocational schools to be established, and some types of art schools (music, visual arts and ballet schools).

Secondary education by type of school (2018/2019)

Type of schools (excl. schools for adults)	Number of schools	Number of pupils
Lower secondary schools*	1,640	350,587
Secondary schools		
General secondary schools**	2,235	470,301 (41%)
Stage I sectoral vocational schools**	1,578	146,216 (13%)
Technical secondary schools**	1,879	505,576 (44%)
Art schools	122	12,886 (1%)
Special schools preparing for employment	522	10,537 (1%)
Total	6,336	1,145,516

* Schools phased out by the end of 2018/2019 as part of the ongoing reform.

** Including special schools.

5.1. General Secondary Education

5.1.1 Organisation

Four-year general secondary schools take young people **aged 15 to 19** years.

The **aims of general education** in the general secondary school and key skills which pupils should acquire by the end of the education cycle are set out in the national core curriculum.

Aims of general education in the general secondary school:

- to impart structured and systematic knowledge as the basis for the development of skills;
- to improve thinking and language skills (for example, reading comprehension, creative writing, formulating questions and problems, using criteria, substantiating judgements, explaining, classifying, reasoning, defining, using examples);
- to develop personal interests and integrate knowledge gained in various disciplines;
- to develop skills to form independent and considered judgments, and substantiate one's own and other people's judgments in the process of dialogue within a community of enquiry;
- to combine critical and logical thinking skills with imagination and creativity;
- to develop social, moral and aesthetic sensitivity;
- to develop thinking tools which enable pupils to commune with, and understand, culture;
- to develop respect for knowledge, arouse passion for exploring the world, and encourage practical application of the knowledge gained.

Key skills to be developed as part of education in the general secondary school:

- **thinking skills**, incl. deduction, abstract thinking, reasoning, imagining, problem solving and creativity;
- **reading skills**, incl. understanding senses and symbolic meanings;
- **communication** in the mother tongue and foreign languages, incl. both speaking and writing skills;
- creative **solving of problems** in various areas, with the use of ICT-based methods and tools;
- **ICT skills**, incl. respect for copyrights and cyber-safety skills;
- **skills** necessary to retrieve, select, link and judge the value of information and use sources in a reliable way;
- **learning skills**, incl. habits of systematic learning, and arranging and broadening the knowledge acquired;
- **teamwork skills** and skills necessary to take individual action.



5.1.2. Admission

There are no restrictions regarding the choice of a school and no catchment areas. However, since most (around 90%) of general secondary schools are located in urban areas, **accessibility** depends on the distance between the place of residence and the nearest city or town.

Admission is based on the number of **points for marks** which applicants have received in the **eighth-grader exam** taken at the end of primary school, and for marks in their primary school leaving certificate for **Polish, Mathematics and two subjects** selected by the head of a given general secondary school. Heads usually select the two subjects in line with the specialism or 'profile' of education provided (for example, science or humanities) and related subjects taught at the advanced level. Other achievements (for example, volunteer work) are also taken into consideration in admission criteria. The system for converting the criteria into points and admission arrangements are laid down in the national legislation.

Winners of national- and regional-level competitions which cover or extend beyond the contents of the core curriculum for at least one subject are given priority in the admission process.

5.1.3. Pupil Grouping for Learning

Like at the single-structure education stage, the basic criterion for grouping into grades / classes is the **age** of pupils, and each class is usually supervised by the same class tutor / teacher throughout the 4-year education cycle.

The minimum or maximum **size of the class** is not defined in the legislation. As an exception, for example, the number of pupils per class in integration classes (attended by both pupils with a disability or those socially maladjusted and pupils without a disability) in mainstream schools and in integration schools should range between 15 and 20, including 3 to 5 pupils with a disability. For some activities / classes, however, pupils should be subdivided into **groups**, based on the same arrangements as for the primary school (see Chapter 4.3).

5.1.4. Organisation of Time

The school year calendar for the general secondary school is the same as for the primary school. The school year lasts from 1 September till 31 August

of the following year, and classes start on the first working day of September and end on the first Friday after 20 June. However, as Grade IV pupils take the maturity exam after completion of the final year, classes for Grade IV end on the last Friday in April. The school year is divided into **two semesters**, with a **winter break** in-between and the dates of the break varying among the provinces. The **summer break** begins on the Saturday following the final day of classes and ends on 31 August (for the organisational arrangements for the school day and week, see Chapter 4.4).

5.1.5. Curriculum

Curricula adopted by general secondary schools should be based on the national **core curriculum** and **outline timetable**. The core curriculum defines the aims of education, curricular contents, and knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired by pupils. The **outline timetable** specifies the number of class hours per week to be allocated to compulsory classes in the 4-year education cycle.

The **new outline timetable** for the 4-year general secondary school, shown on pages 52–53, is gradually being implemented, starting in 2019/2020. There is one timetable for **mainstream schools** and **special schools** for pupils with normal-range intellectual ability, pupils with a disability, those socially maladjusted and those at risk of social maladjustment. Pupils enrolled in pre-reform schools continue education based on the timetables established earlier (available online on the Eurydice website on National Education Systems, Poland).

5.1.6. Assessment and Certification

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Internal assessment and promotion to the subsequent grade are based on the same rules as in Grades IV to VIII of the primary school (see Chapter 4.6).

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Pupils who have finished Grade IV of the general secondary school may take the external **maturity exam**. The exam assesses the extent to which pupils fulfil the requirements set for each subject in the national core curriculum. It has replaced entrance exams to HEIs where results of the maturity exam are the key admission criterion.

The maturity exam consists of **two parts**:

- a written exam, which is external, set by the Central Examination Board and assessed by examiners included in the registers kept by regional examination boards; and
- an oral exam, which is internal and assessed in school.

The **written part** consists of **compulsory exams** at the **basic level** in Polish, Mathematics and a modern foreign language (and in a national minority language for pupils in schools and classes where a given national minority language is the language of tuition). Additionally, pupils should choose at least one (and may choose up to 5) additional subjects for an exam at the **advanced level**. These include: Biology, Chemistry, Philosophy, Physics, Geography, History, History of Music, History of Art, Information Technology, Latin and Ancient Culture, a minority language (ethnic or national), a modern foreign language, Polish, a regional language, Mathematics, and Civic Education.

The **oral part** comprises **compulsory exams** in Polish and a modern foreign language (and in a national minority language for pupils in schools and classes where a given national minority language is the language of tuition). Pupils also obligatorily take one **additional exam**, choosing the subject from among modern foreign languages, a national or ethnic minority language or the regional language (Kashubian). The **level** (basic or advanced) of the exam is not pre-defined.

There are six modern foreign languages that pupils may choose from for the maturity exam: English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

To **pass the maturity exam**, pupils should score at least 30% of points in each compulsory subject in both the written and oral parts, and take at least one exam in an additional subject at the advanced level in the written part; there is no pass threshold for the exam in an additional subject. Those wishing to improve their results may resit the relevant part of the maturity exam.

CERTIFICATION

Pupils receive end-of-year certificates and a **school leaving certificate** upon completion of education in the general secondary school. The school leaving certificate, which does not include results of the maturity exam, gives access to a post-secondary school. Those who have passed the maturity exam

Outline timetable for 4-year general secondary school

No.	Compulsory classes	Number of class hours per week by grade								Total in the 4-year cycle	
		I		II		III		IV			
		Subjects taught at the basic level									
1	Polish	4		4		4		4		16	
2	1 st Modern Foreign Language	3	+3 ⁽¹⁾	3	+3 ⁽¹⁾	3	+3 ⁽¹⁾	3	+2 ⁽¹⁾	12	+11 ⁽¹⁾
3	2 nd Modern Foreign Language	2		2		2		2		8	
4	Philosophy, Visual Arts, Music, or Latin and Ancient Culture ⁽²⁾	1		-		-		-		1	
5	History	2		2		2		2		8	
6	Civic Education	1		1		-		-		2	
7	Introduction to Entrepreneurship	-		1		1		-		2	
8	Geography	1		2		1		-		4	
9	Biology	1		2		1		-		4	
10	Chemistry	1		2		1		-		4	
11	Physics	1		1		2		-		4	
12	Mathematics	3		4		3		4		14	
13	Computer Science	1		1		1		-		3	
14	Physical Education	3		3		3		3		12	
15	Safety Education	1		-		-		-		1	
16	Lessons with the class tutor	1		1		1		1		4	



Total for compulsory subjects taught at the basic level and lessons with the class tutor	26 (+3) ⁽¹⁾	29 (+3) ⁽¹⁾	25 (+3) ⁽¹⁾	19 (+2) ⁽¹⁾	99 (+11) ⁽¹⁾
Subjects taught at the advanced level	4	5	7	6	22
Total for compulsory classes and lessons with the class tutor	30 (+3) ⁽¹⁾	34 (+3) ⁽¹⁾	32 (+3) ⁽¹⁾	25 (+2) ⁽¹⁾	121 (+11) ⁽¹⁾
Hours to be allocated by the school head	3				3
Total	124 (+11) ⁽¹⁾				

⁽¹⁾ Additional hours for a **foreign language** which is the second language of tuition in **bilingual classes / schools**.

⁽²⁾ The school head selects **one of the subjects** to be taught in **Grade I**.

Other classes / activities (not included in the number of hours for compulsory classes):

- **Career guidance classes:** min. 10 hours in the 4-year cycle;
- The number of hours for the following **subjects / classes** is specified in separate regulations: Religion or Ethics; Family Education; national or ethnic minority language, or regional language, and history and culture of a national / ethnic minority or regional language community; geography of the country a national minority identifies with; sports training for sports and sports championship schools and classes; and psychological and educational support classes / activities;
- A number of hours for additional classes / educational activities and sign language classes may be allocated by the body administering a given school;
- **Rehabilitation classes / activities** for pupils with a disability: 12 class hours per class per week in each year for a special class; 2 class hours per pupil per week in each year for mainstream and integration classes.

Hours allocated by the school head: to be allocated on an annual basis to classes / activities developing pupils' interests, abilities and aptitudes, and, in particular, activeness and creativity.

Subjects taught at the advanced level:

The school head selects a **set of subjects** to be taught at the advanced level after consultation with the relevant internal school bodies, and each pupil chooses **2 or 3 subjects** from the set. Subjects included in the core curriculum for general education should be allocated the following **number of class hours** (in addition to those taught at the basic level) in the 4-year cycle:

- Polish, Civic Education, History of Music, History of Art, Latin and Ancient Culture, and Philosophy – 8 hours per week for each;
 - Modern Foreign Language, History, Geography, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and Computer Science – 6 hours per week for each.
- The teaching of History of Music, History of Art, Latin and Ancient Culture, and Philosophy at the advanced level can start in **Grade I, II or III**. Other subjects are taught at the advanced level in **Grades I to IV**.

For a class where the number of hours for subjects taught at the advanced level is lower than 22 per week, the school head, upon consultation with the pupils, may either increase the number of hours allocated or allocate hours for **additional / supplementary subjects** which are not included in the core curriculum but are included in the school's set of curricula. Additional subjects are selected by the head after consultation with the pupils. Each such subject should be allocated at least 2 class hours per week in the 4-year cycle.



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receive a **maturity certificate**, with results of both the written and oral parts of the exam, issued by the regional examination board, which gives access to degree programmes in an HEI.

5.2. Vocational Secondary Education

Major reforms undertaken in vocational education and training since 2011 have aimed to improve its quality and effectiveness and its relevance to labour market needs. The **Classification of Occupations for Vocational Education** has been revised and aligned with the Classification of Occupations for the Labour Market. Descriptions of occupations in the Classification are now based on qualifications. The Classification includes around **200 occupations**. They comprise over 250 qualifications, with one, two or three qualifications identified per occupation. Seven artistic occupations are identified with no qualifications specified. New **national core curricula** have been developed for vocational education or, more precisely, for the training for individual occupations. Qualifications identified within individual occupations are defined as a set of LOs (knowledge, vocational / occupational skills, and personal and social competences).

Pupils (including adult learners) can acquire **individual qualifications throughout the learning process**. Vocational qualification exams may be taken not only at the end of education in school but also at other stages of education or after the pupil has obtained a specific qualification. Upon passing an exam for a single qualification, pupils receive a relevant certificate. A diploma conferring qualifications for a given occupation is awarded when pupils have passed exams for all the qualifications required to practise a given occupation.

The system of vocational qualification exams is now flexible enough to accommodate **validation of non-formal and informal learning** (see also Chapter 9.4). Since 2012, the system has been open to individuals who have acquired vocational knowledge, skills and experience outside vocational schools.

As part of the ongoing school education reform (see Chapter 1.3), changes in vocational education and training aim, in particular, to extend the range of learning paths available, make the vocational education and training system more flexible and, thus, make it easier for school graduates to obtain higher-level qualifications.

5.2.1. Organisation

The main types of vocational schools include:

- 5-year **technical secondary schools** for pupils aged **15 to 20 years**;
- 3-year **stage I sectoral vocational schools** for pupils aged **15 to 18 years**;
- 2-year **stage II sectoral vocational schools** for pupils aged **18 to 20 years**.

All three types of schools combine general and vocational education.

Stage I sectoral vocational school graduates can be awarded a vocational diploma upon passing the exams (see 'Certification' below) and take up employment. They can also continue education either in a stage II sectoral vocational school training for an occupation which embraces a common qualification for stage I and stage II schools, or in a general secondary school for adults, started in Grade II. Since **stage II sectoral vocational schools** (which started operating in 2020/2021) take pupils above the compulsory education age of 18 years, they offer not only full-time day programmes (classes held 5 days per week) but also other full- and part-time programmes (3 or 4 days per week and 2 days every 2 weeks, respectively). Pupils in **stage II sectoral vocational schools** and **technical secondary schools** can obtain a vocational diploma and take up employment, and a maturity certificate upon passing the maturity exam, thus additionally gaining access to degree programmes in HEIs.

The **aims** of, and **skills** to be developed through, general education in **technical secondary schools** are the same as for general secondary school (see Chapter 5.1.1).

General education in **stage I sectoral vocational schools** aims to provide pupils with a body of knowledge covering facts, rules, theories and practices; develop their ability to use the knowledge acquired in carrying out tasks and solving problems; and develop attitudes necessary to efficiently and responsibly function in today's world. **Stage II sectoral vocational schools** seek to achieve the same aims of general education as defined for general and technical secondary schools (see Chapter 5.1.1).

Pupils in stage I and stage II sectoral vocational schools should develop the following skills through general education: **reading** (ability

to understand, use and reflectively process texts); **mathematical thinking** (ability to use mathematical tools in everyday life and formulate conclusions based on mathematical thinking); **scientific thinking** (ability to use scientific knowledge for identifying and solving problems, and formulate conclusions based on empirical observation); **communication** in the mother tongue and foreign languages, including both speaking and writing skills; **ICT skills**; the **ability to retrieve, select and analyse information** in a critical way; and **teamwork skills**. Additionally, the set includes **learning skills** (ability to identify one's own educational needs and to learn) for stage I schools, and **creative solving of problems** in various areas, with the use of ICT-based tools, for stage II schools.

5.2.2. Admission

The basic admission criteria for technical secondary schools and stage I sectoral vocational schools are the same as for general secondary school (see Chapter 5.1.2). The main documents to be required for admission to a stage II sectoral vocational school are a stage I school leaving certificate, and a certificate confirming correspondence between the occupation for which a pupil was trained in the stage I school and the one for which they will be trained in a given stage II school. Additionally, a medical certificate confirming fitness for practical vocational training is required for admission to all types of schools providing vocational education.

5.2.3. Pupil Grouping for Learning

See Chapter 5.1.3.

5.2.4. Organisation of Time

Arrangements are essentially the same as for general secondary schools (see Chapter 5.1.4). However, classes in stage I and II sectoral vocational schools can also run from the first working day of February till the last Friday of January the following year. Additionally, stage II sectoral vocational schools will be an exception insofar as they will offer day programmes, full- and part-time programmes (for the distinction between the three types, see above).

5.2.5. Curriculum

Like for other education levels and types of schools, curricula adopted by vocational schools should be based on the national core curriculum

and outline timetables. The former defines the aims of education, curricular contents and knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired by pupils; the latter specify the number of class hours per week to be allocated to compulsory classes in the entire education cycle.

The **new outline timetables** presented on pages 58–65 are gradually introduced for pupils enrolled in post-reform vocational schools. For each type of school, there is one timetable for **mainstream schools** and **special schools** for pupils with normal-range intellectual ability, pupils with a disability, those who are socially maladjusted and those who are at risk of social maladjustment. Pupils enrolled in pre-reform schools continue education based on the timetables established earlier (available online on the Eurydice website on National Education Systems, Poland).

The new outline timetable for the 5-year **technical secondary school** is gradually being implemented, starting in the school year 2019/2020 (see pages 58–60).

The new outline timetable for the **3-year stage I sectoral vocational school** is gradually being implemented, starting in the school year 2019/2020, for pupils enrolled from the school year 2019/2020 (see pages 61–62).

The two **new outline timetables** for the **2-year stage II sectoral vocational school** are designed for pupils who moved on to a stage I sectoral vocational school after finishing the pre-reform lower secondary school, and those who moved on to a stage I sectoral vocational school after finishing the new 8-year primary school (for ongoing reforms, see Chapter 1.3). These new outline timetables will gradually be implemented starting in 2020/2021 and 2022/2023, respectively (see pages 63–65).

Outline timetable for 5-year technical secondary school

No.	Compulsory classes	Number of class hours per week by grade										Total in the 5-year cycle	
		I		II		III		IV		V			
		Subjects taught at the basic level											
1	Polish	3		3		3		3		4 ⁽¹⁾		16	
2	1 st Modern Foreign Language	2	+2 ⁽²⁾	2	+2 ⁽²⁾	2	+2 ⁽²⁾	3	+2 ⁽²⁾	3	+2 ⁽²⁾	12	+10 ⁽²⁾
3	2 nd Modern Foreign Language	2		2		2		1		1		8	
4	Philosophy, Visual Arts, Music, or Latin and Ancient Culture ⁽³⁾	1		-		-		-		-		6	
5	History	2		2		2		1		1 ⁽¹⁾		8	
6	Civic Education	1		1		1		1		1 ⁽¹⁾		2	
7	Introduction to Entrepreneurship	-		1		1		-		-		2	
8	Geography ⁽⁴⁾									-		16	
9	Biology ⁽⁴⁾									-			
10	Chemistry ⁽⁴⁾									-			
11	Physics ⁽⁴⁾									-			
12	Mathematics	2		2		3		3		4 ⁽¹⁾		14	
13	Computer Science	1		1		1		-		-		3	
14	Physical Education	3		3		3		3		3		15	
15	Safety Education	1		-		-		-		-		1	
16	Lessons with the class tutor	1		1		1		1		1		5	



Total for subjects taught at the basic level and lessons with the class tutor	22 (+2) ⁽²⁾	21 (+2) ⁽²⁾	22 (+2) ⁽²⁾	20 (+2) ⁽²⁾	18 (+2) ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	103 (+10) ⁽²⁾
Subjects taught at the advanced level	1	1	2	2	2 ⁽¹⁾	8
Vocational training ⁽⁵⁾	11	13	12	13	7 ⁽¹⁾	56
Total for compulsory classes and lessons with the class tutor	34 (+2) ⁽²⁾	35 (+2) ⁽²⁾	36 (+2) ⁽²⁾	35 (+2) ⁽²⁾	27 (+2) ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	167 (+10) ⁽²⁾
Hours to be allocated by the school head	4					
Total	171 (+10) ⁽²⁾					

⁽¹⁾ The school head determines the weekly number of hours for individual compulsory classes, while keeping the number of hours allocated to compulsory classes in Grade V.

⁽²⁾ Additional hours for a **foreign language** which is the second language of tuition in **bilingual classes / schools**.

⁽³⁾ The school head selects **one of the subjects** to be taught in **Grade I**.

⁽⁴⁾ The school head determines the number of hours for **grades** in which the subject will be taught, while keeping the weekly number of hours for the subjects taught at the basic level and lessons with the class tutor as specified for each grade. The subject is allocated 4 hours in the 5-year cycle. It can be taught in Grade I, II, III or IV.

⁽⁵⁾ The hours for compulsory **vocational training** are distributed by the school head, but the number of hours allocated to **practical training** may not be lower than 50% of the total number of hours for vocational training.

Other classes / activities (not included in the number of hours for compulsory classes):

→ **Career guidance classes**: min. 10 hours in the 5-year cycle;

→ The number of hours for the following **subjects / classes** is specified in separate regulations: Religion or Ethics; Family Education; national or ethnic minority language, or regional language, and history and culture of a national / ethnic minority or regional language community; geography of the country a national minority identifies with; sports training for sports and sports championship schools and classes; and psychological and educational support classes / activities;

→ A number of hours for additional classes / educational activities and sign language classes may be allocated by the body administering a given school;

→ **Rehabilitation classes** / activities for pupils with a disability: 8 class hours per class per week in each year for a special class; 2 class hours per pupil per week in each year for mainstream and integration classes.

Hours allocated by the school head: to be allocated on an annual basis to classes / activities developing pupils' interests, abilities and aptitudes, in particular, activeness and creativity, and vocational competences.



Subjects taught at the advanced level:

The school head selects a **set of subjects** to be taught at the advanced level after consultation with the relevant internal school bodies, and each pupil chooses **1 subject** from the set. Subjects included in the core curriculum for general education should be allocated the following **number of class hours** (in addition to those taught at the basic level) in the 5-year cycle:

- Polish, Civic Education, History of Music, History of Art, Latin and Ancient Culture, and Philosophy – 8 hours per week for each;
- Modern Foreign Language, History, Geography, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and Computer Science – 6 hours per week for each.

The teaching of History of Music, History of Art, Latin and Ancient Culture, and Philosophy at the advanced level can start in **Grade I, II or III**. Other subjects are taught at the advanced level in **Grades I to V**.

For a class where the number of hours for subjects taught at the advanced level is lower than 8 per week, the school head, upon consultation with the pupils, may either increase the number of hours allocated or allocate hours for **additional / supplementary subjects** which are not included in the core curriculum but are included in the school's set of curricula. Additional subjects are selected by the head after consultation with the pupils. Each such subject should be allocated at least 2 class hours per week in the 5-year cycle.

Practical training:

The number of hours to be allocated to practical placements is specified in the core curriculum for a given occupation. The school head chooses the grade(s) / year(s) in which placements are undertaken and may spread placements over time.



Outline timetable for 3-year stage I sectoral vocational school

No.	Compulsory classes	Number of class hours per week by grade			Total in the 3-year cycle
		I	II	III	
1	Polish	2	2	2	6
2	Modern Foreign Language	2	2	1	5
3	History	1	1	1	3
4	Civic Education	-	-	1	1
5	Introduction to Entrepreneurship	2	-	-	2
6	Geography				6 ⁽¹⁾
7	Biology				
8	Chemistry				
9	Physics				
10	Mathematics	2	2	1	5
11	Computer Science	1	-	-	1
12	Physical Education	3	3	3	9
13	Safety Education	1	-	-	1
14	Theoretical and Practical Vocational Training ⁽²⁾	12	18	20	50
15	Lessons with the class tutor ⁽³⁾	1	1	1	3
Total for compulsory classes and lessons with the class tutor		29	31	32	92
Hours to be allocated by the school head			3		3
Total				95	



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- ⁽¹⁾ From among Geography, Biology, Chemistry and Physics, the school head selects **two subjects** to be taught in **Grades I to III**, with **1 hour** allocated per week in each grade.
- ⁽²⁾ The hours for compulsory **vocational training** are distributed by the school head, but the number of hours allocated to **practical training** may not be lower than 60% of the total number of hours for vocational training. For pupils who are **juvenile workers**, the head distributes the hours in consultation with employers and in line with the relevant provisions of the Labour Code. However, the number of hours for **practical training** may not be lower than 60% of the total number of hours for vocational training.
- ⁽³⁾ The weekly number of hours for compulsory classes and lessons with the class tutor for pupils in individual grades is not applicable to pupils who are **juvenile workers**. However, the timetable for juvenile workers should cover the total number of hours allocated to individual compulsory classes and lessons with the class tutor in the 3-year education cycle.

Where **pupils** who are **juvenile workers** are instructed by the school to follow additional theoretical vocational training, the training cycle lasts for 4 weeks in each grade, with 34 hours of classes per week. For pupils who are juvenile workers, the school head determines, for each grade, the number of days per week to be allocated to on-the-job practical vocational training at the employer's organisation.

Other classes / activities (not included in the number of hours for compulsory classes):

- **Career guidance classes**: min. 10 hours in the 3-year cycle;
- The number of hours for the following **subjects / classes** is specified in separate regulations: Religion or Ethics; Family Education; national or ethnic minority language, or regional language, and history and culture of a national / ethnic minority or regional language community; geography of the country a national minority identifies with; sports training for sports and sports championship schools and classes; and psychological and educational support classes / activities;
- A number of hours for additional classes / educational activities and sign language classes may be allocated by the body administering a given school;
- **Rehabilitation classes** / activities for pupils with a disability: 10 class hours per class per week in each year for a special class; 2 class hours per pupil per week in each year for mainstream and integration classes.

Hours allocated by the school head: to be allocated on an annual basis to classes / activities developing pupils' interests, abilities and aptitudes, in particular, activeness and creativity, and vocational competences.



Outline timetable for 2-year stage II sectoral vocational school (for stage I school graduates who finished the new primary school)

No.	Compulsory classes	Full-time day programmes		Total in the 2-year cycle	Other full-time programmes		Total in the 2-year cycle	Part-time / Extramural programmes				Total in the 2-year cycle
		Number of class hours per week (in each semester) by grade			Number of class hours per week (in each semester) by grade			Number of hours per semester				
		I	II	I	II	I	II	III	IV			
1	Polish	5	5	10	5	4	9	40	40	40	40	160
2	Modern Foreign Language	4	3	7	4	3	7	27	27	27	27	108
3	Mathematics	5	4	9	4	4	8	33	33	32	32	130
4	Computer Science	1	1	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	9
5	Civic Education	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	9	-	-	9
6	Vocational Training ⁽¹⁾											
Total		19 ⁽²⁾	16 ⁽²⁾	36 ⁽²⁾	14 ⁽²⁾	12 ⁽²⁾	26 ⁽²⁾	109 ⁽²⁾	109 ⁽²⁾	99 ⁽²⁾	99 ⁽²⁾	
Hours to be allocated by the school head		3		3	1		1	18				18
Total		38 ⁽²⁾			27 ⁽²⁾			434 ⁽²⁾				



Outline timetable for 2-year stage II sectoral vocational school (for stage I school graduates who finished the pre-reform lower secondary school)

No.	Compulsory classes	Full-time day programmes		Total in the 2-year cycle	Other full-time programmes		Total in the 2-year cycle	Part-time / extramural programmes				Total in the 2-year cycle
		Number of class hours per week (in each semester) by grade			Number of class hours per week (in each semester) by grade			Number of hours per semester				
		I	II	I	II	I	II	III	IV			
1	Polish	4	3	7	3	3	6	30	30	30	30	120
2	Modern Foreign Language	3	2	5	2	2	4	18	18	18	16	70
3	Mathematics	3	3	6	3	2	5	22	21	21	20	84
4	Computer Science	1	1	2	-	1	1	14	-	-	-	14
5	Physical Education	3	3	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	Vocational Training ⁽¹⁾											
Total		14 ⁽²⁾	12 ⁽²⁾	26 ⁽²⁾	8 ⁽²⁾	8 ⁽²⁾	16 ⁽²⁾	84 ⁽²⁾	69 ⁽²⁾	69 ⁽²⁾	66 ⁽²⁾	288 ⁽²⁾
Hours to be allocated by the school head		3		3	1		1	18				18
Total		29 ⁽²⁾			17 ⁽²⁾			306 ⁽²⁾				



⁽¹⁾ Vocational training is provided as part of vocational qualification courses; the number of hours is specified in the core curriculum for vocational education. The hours for compulsory **vocational training** are distributed by the school head, but the number of hours allocated to **practical training** may not be lower than 50% of the total number of hours for vocational training. The duration of **practical placements** as part of practical training is 4 weeks (140 hours). Placements are undertaken in the grade chosen by the school head and may be spread over time.

⁽²⁾ The number of hours does not include vocational training.

Other classes / activities (not included in the number of hours for compulsory classes):

- The number of hours for the following **subjects** / classes is specified in separate regulations: national or ethnic minority language, or regional language, and history and culture of a national / ethnic minority or regional language community, and geography of the country a national minority identifies with (**taught only as part of day programmes**); and psychological and educational support classes / activities;
- A number of hours for additional classes / educational activities and sign language classes may be allocated by the body administering a given school;
- **Rehabilitation classes** / activities for pupils with a disability: 8 class hours per class per week in each year for a special class; 2 class hours per pupil per week in each year for mainstream and integration classes.

Hours allocated by the school head: to be allocated on an annual basis to classes / activities developing pupils' interests, abilities and aptitudes, in particular, activeness and creativity, and vocational competences.



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5.2.6. Assessment and Certification

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Most arrangements for internal assessment and promotion to the subsequent grade in 5-year technical secondary schools and stage I sectoral vocational schools are the same as for Grades IV to VIII of the primary school as well as for general secondary school (see Chapters 4.6 and 5.1.6). However, to be promoted to the subsequent grade, **technical secondary school** pupils should additionally take an **external vocational exam** (see below), if scheduled for a given year. To **finish the school**, pupils in both **stage I sectoral vocational schools** and **technical secondary schools** should receive marks higher than 'unsatisfactory' for all compulsory subjects. Additionally, the former are required to have taken an **external vocational exam** for **one qualification** within a given occupation which is specified in the national core curriculum for vocational education; the latter are required to have taken (an) external vocational exam(s) covering **all qualifications** identified within a given occupation.

Like other types of schools, each **stage II sectoral vocational school** adopts its own detailed assessment system based on the national legislation. Pursuant to the legislation, only learning achievements are subject to assessment; conduct is not assessed. **Learning achievements** are assessed by teachers of individual courses. Pupils receive individual, end-of-semester and final marks. End-of-semester assessment is based not only on individual marks but also on marks for **internal exams**, which pupils take in all **compulsory subjects**. Those who have failed may resit an exam. A scale for individual marks is adopted by each school. For end-of-semester and final marks, stage II sectoral vocational schools use the same **scale** of 1 to 6 as other types of schools: 6 – excellent, 5 – very good, 4 – good, 3 – satisfactory, 2 – acceptable, and 1 – unsatisfactory.

Promotion in stage II sectoral vocational schools is semester-based. Pupils are promoted to the subsequent semester if they have received end-of-semester marks higher than 'unsatisfactory' for all compulsory subjects, and have taken an **external vocational exam** for a qualification identified within the occupation they are trained for, if scheduled for a given semester. If they are not promoted, pupils are struck from the register. Based on a decision of the school's teaching council, pupils may be allowed to repeat a semester (only once in the entire education cycle) if they have failed to complete it for reasons beyond their control or due to health issues. To **graduate**, pupils should receive marks higher than 'unsatisfactory'

in the final assessment, based on final marks for all compulsory subjects, and take (an) **external vocational exam(s)** for all **qualifications** identified within a given occupation.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Maturity exam

Currently, the maturity exam can be taken by pupils graduating **technical secondary school**. In the future, this option will also be available to pupils in **stage II sectoral vocational schools** (which will begin to operate in 2020/2021), in which stage I school graduates will be able to continue their education. The arrangements for the exam are the same as for general secondary schools (see Chapter 5.1.6).

Vocational exams

Vocational exams are compulsory for pupils of **technical secondary schools** and **stage I sectoral vocational schools** (and can also be taken by individuals who finished vocational schools earlier, and other adult learners who meet requirements laid down in the national legislation). In the future, they will also be taken obligatorily by pupils in **stage II sectoral vocational schools**.

Exams are based on the requirements set in the national **core curriculum** for vocational education (training for specific occupations). An exam assesses the extent to which a pupil has acquired the **knowledge and skills** required for a **qualification** as identified within an occupation. A vocational exam is conducted for **each qualification separately**. Thus, the number of exams which an individual should pass in order to be qualified to practise a given occupation depends on the number of qualifications identified within the occupation in the Classification of Occupations. In practice, there may be one to three qualifications per occupation.

An exam consists of:

- a written part and
- a practical part.

The **written part** (45 to 90 minutes) is a test with questions which assess knowledge and skills required for a qualification within a given occupation. Questions are drawn by lots electronically. In the **practical part** (120 to 240 minutes), which assesses practical skills required for

a qualification, pupils perform a task. Exam tasks are published. The exact duration of the written and practical parts is set separately for each occupation. To **pass the exam**, pupils should score at least 50% of the total number of points in the written part, and at least 75% of the total number of points in the practical part.

CERTIFICATION

Pupils in technical secondary and stage I sectoral vocational schools receive end-of-year certificates, and pupils in all types of vocational schools are awarded a **school leaving certificate** if they have fulfilled the requirements for graduating the school (see above).

Pupils who have passed the maturity exam are awarded a **maturity certificate**, which includes the results of the written and oral parts of the exam, in addition to a school leaving certificate. The maturity certificate, issued by the regional examination board, gives access to degree programmes in HEIs.

On passing a vocational exam for a single qualification, pupils obtain a **certificate** for the qualification concerned, issued by the regional examination board. Once they have passed exams for all the qualifications within a given occupation, obtained the related certificates, and completed the relevant level of education, they are awarded a **vocational diploma** issued by the regional examination board. A diploma (technician diploma for technical secondary and stage II sectoral vocational school graduates) confers qualifications required to practise a given occupation.

Upon request, a diploma is issued together with a **Europass Certificate Supplement**, which follows the structure adopted by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The Supplement provides more details about the qualifications, as well as the knowledge, skills and competences of the diploma holder.

6. Post-Secondary Education (ISCED 4)

6.1. Organisation

Post-secondary education is considered a part of secondary education in the Polish classification of education but classified at ISCED Level 4. Post-secondary schools provide programmes of **1 to 2.5 years** leading to vocational qualifications. They take mainly learners **aged 19 to 20/21 years** who have finished a general secondary school. The number of post-secondary schools and learners has been declining in recent years, which can be explained by wider access to higher education combined with growing ambitions of young people.

Post-secondary education (2018/2019)

Types of schools	Number of schools	Number of learners
Public post-secondary schools	373	218,358 (incl. 319 in special schools)
Non-public post-secondary schools	1,604	
Total	1,977 (incl. 21 special schools)	

Like stage II sectoral vocational schools, post-secondary schools offer full-time day programmes (classes conducted 5 days per week), other full-time programmes (3 to 4 days per week) and part-time programmes (2 days every 2 weeks). Most learners (89.6%) are enrolled on part-time programmes.

Training programmes in post-secondary schools, like in secondary vocational schools, are based on the Classification of Occupations (see Chapter 5.2). Schools offer programmes in more than 20 groups of subject areas, including, for example, fine arts, economics and administration, medical areas, engineering and technology, agriculture, forestry and fishery, transport and communication, and services. The most popular ones are economics and administration, medical areas, services and ICT.

6.2. Admission

Post-secondary schools are open to learners who have finished a general or vocational secondary school and have a medical certificate confirming fitness for practical vocational training. Most post-secondary schools require only a school leaving certificate rather than a maturity certificate.

6.3. Pupil Grouping for Learning

As at lower education levels, learners in post-secondary schools are grouped into grades / classes. The national legislation does not pre-define the size of a class. Learners should be split into groups for the same subjects / classes as in other types of schools (see Chapter 4.3).

6.4. Organisation of Time

Post-secondary schools normally follow the same school year calendar as schools at lower levels(see Chapter 5.1). However, classes may also start on the first working day of February in a given year and end on the last Friday of January the following year.

6.5. Curriculum

Like at lower education levels, curricula adopted by post-secondary schools should be based on the national core curricula and outline timetable. There is one outline timetable for **mainstream schools** and **special schools** for learners with normal-range intellectual ability, learners with a disability, those socially maladjusted and those at risk of social maladjustment. The **new outline timetable** for schools for young people presented on page 71 is gradually being introduced in post-secondary schools, starting from the school year 2019/2020. Learners enrolled in pre-reform schools continue education based on timetables established earlier.

The timetable specifies the number of class hours to be allocated to compulsory subjects taught as part of **2-year programmes**. For 1-year, 1.5-year and 2.5-year programmes offered by post-secondary schools, the number of hours is adjusted accordingly.

Outline timetable for post-secondary schools (2-year programme / education cycle)

No.	Compulsory classes	Full-time day programmes		Total in the 2-year cycle	Other full-time programmes		Total in the 2-year cycle	Part-time / Extramural programmes				Total in the 2-year cycle
		Number of class hours per week (in each semester) by grade			Number of class hours per week (in each semester) by grade			Number of hours per semester				
		I	II	I	II	I	II	III	IV			
1	Vocational Training ⁽¹⁾	25	25	50	18	19	37	165	165	175	175	680
2	Physical Education	3		6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Introduction to Entrepreneurship ⁽²⁾	-	-	-	1	-	1	10	10	-	-	20
Total		28	28	56	19	19	38	175	175	175	175	700

⁽¹⁾ The hours for compulsory **vocational training** are distributed by the school head, but the number of hours allocated to **practical training** may not be lower than 50% of the total number of hours for vocational training. **Practical training**: the duration of practical placements is specified in the national core curriculum for vocational education.

⁽²⁾ The subject is taught to learners who did not take it at an earlier education stage.

Other classes / activities (not included in the number of hours for compulsory classes):

- A number of hours for **additional classes / educational activities** and **sign language classes** may be allocated by the body administering a given school;
- The number of hours for psychological and educational support classes / activities is specified in separate regulations;
- **Rehabilitation classes** / activities for learners with a disability: 8 class hours per class per week in each year for a special class; 2 class hours per learner per week in each year for mainstream and integration classes.



6.6. Assessment and Certification

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Like schools at lower education levels, each post-secondary school adopts its own detailed assessment system based on the national legislation. The national arrangements for internal assessment and promotion in post-secondary schools are the same as for stage II sectoral vocational school (see Chapter 5.2.6).

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Like those in secondary vocational schools, learners in post-secondary schools are required to take **vocational examinations** (see Chapter 5.2.6).

CERTIFICATION

Upon completion of the education cycle, learners receive a school leaving certificate. Those who have passed all exams for qualifications required to practise a given occupation are awarded a vocational **diploma** and may receive a **Europass Certificate Supplement** upon request (see Chapter 5.2.6).

7. Colleges (ISCED 5)

The education system also includes **colleges of social work**, which are classified as part of the school education system in the national legislation and as part of tertiary education for international comparisons. There are **4 public colleges** with **222 students** (2018/2019).

ORGANISATION

Colleges offer 3-year programmes in the area of social work to students usually **aged 19 to 21 years** who hold a maturity certificate. In academic terms, each college is supervised by an HEI based on an individual agreement. College graduates may enter the labour market as fully qualified social workers. As part of an agreement between a college and a supervising HEI, they may also take the final / diploma exam at the supervising HEI and be awarded a Bachelor's degree (*licencijat*). Though part of the school education system, colleges are not affected by the ongoing school education reform.

ADMISSION

A maturity certificate is required for admission to colleges. Applicants should also obtain a positive result in the admission process. Detailed admission procedures are adopted by individual colleges.

STUDENT GROUPING FOR LEARNING

Pursuant to the national legislation, college students are divided into learner groups. The maximum number of students in a group is 20; groups may be combined for lectures.

ORGANISATION OF TIME

The academic year starts on 1 October and ends on 30 September the following year. It is divided into two semesters which end with winter and summer examination periods and are separated by winter and summer breaks.

CURRICULUM

Curricula should be based on the national standards established by the minister responsible for social policy. The standards specify the courses to be included in a programme and the number of hours to be allocated to courses and practical placements, curricular contents, and the knowledge and skills that students should acquire by the end of the training cycle.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

Colleges adopt their own internal regulations for assessment and progression to the subsequent year. They use a **marking scale** of 2 to 6: 6 – excellent, 5 – very good, 4 – good, 3 – satisfactory, and 2 – unsatisfactory. Marks are given by teachers of individual courses. Students receive marks for **coursework** and/or **examinations** taken as part of individual courses. Upon completion of the 3-year cycle, they take the **final diploma examination**. To take the exam, students are required to have completed all courses and practical placements included in the curriculum, and to submit their diploma thesis which should receive a mark higher than 'unsatisfactory'. The final exam is conducted by a board appointed by the director of a given college.

Upon passing the final exam, graduates are awarded a **diploma** which confers the qualifications required for social workers.

As mentioned above, college students may take additional courses and an exam for a **Bachelor's degree** (*licencjat*). It is taken before an examination board established by the rector of the HEI responsible for academic supervision over a given college. A Bachelor's degree is awarded by the supervising HEI.

8. Higher Education (ISCED 5 to 8)

The higher education sector expanded massively during the first two decades after 1990. The **number of HEIs** grew from 112 (105 public and 7 non-public) in 1990/1991 to 461 (131 public and 330 non-public ones) in 2009/2010, which was the peak year. The total **student population** increased steadily from less than 400,000 in 1990/91 to over 1.9 million in 2005/2006 (peak year). Recent years have seen a significant drop in the total number of students to 1.2 million in 2018/2019, reflecting a steady decline in the population aged 19–24 years and a marked decrease in the number of non-public HEIs. The gross and net **enrolment rates** in higher education rose from 12.9% and 9.8%, respectively, in 1990/91 to 53.8% and 40.8% in 2010/2011, and over the following years fell to **46.2%** and **35.6%**, respectively, in 2018/2019.

Higher education (2018/2019)

Types of HE institutions	Number of institutions	Students in first-, second- and long-cycle programmes	Students in third-cycle programmes
Public HEIs	130	901,801 (73.3%)	36,346 (92.6%)
Non-public HEIs	262	328,453 (26.7%)	2,923 (7.4%)
Total	392	1,230,254	39,269

8.1. Organisation

HEIs provide the following types of programmes:

- **specialist programmes** (ISCED 5) leading to a Chartered Specialist or Chartered Specialist-Technologist certificate; at least **1.5 years**;
- **first-cycle programmes** (ISCED 6) leading to a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*, depending on the field of study); at least **3 years (180 ECTS¹)** for *licencjat*, and at least **3.5 years (240 ECTS)** for *inżynier*;
- **second-cycle programmes** (ISCED 7) leading to a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree, depending on the field of study); **1.5 to 2 years (90 to 120 ECTS)**;

¹ Based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. 1 ECTS credit corresponds to 25–30 hours of student work, incl. contact / class hours and individual study.

- **long-cycle programmes** (ISCED 7) leading, like second-cycle programmes, to a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree); **4.5 to 5 years (300 ECTS) or 5.5 to 6 years (360 ECTS)**;
- **third-cycle / doctoral training in doctoral schools** (ISCED 8), leading to a doctoral degree (*doktor*); **3 to 4 years**;
- **non-degree postgraduate programmes** leading to a certificate of completion, equivalent to a partial qualification at ISCED level 6, 7 or 8; at least **1 year** and at least **30 ECTS**.

Specialist programmes, offered only by non-university HEIs (for the distinction, see below), are practically-oriented programmes below a degree level, developing knowledge and skills in a specific area; they are discussed as part of adult education in Chapter 9. **First-cycle programmes** aim to provide knowledge and skills in a particular field of study, preparing students for work in a given profession. First-cycle graduates have access to second- and long-cycle programmes. **Second-cycle** and **long-cycle programmes** aim to provide specialist knowledge in a specific field of study, preparing students for creative work in a particular profession. Second- and long-cycle graduates can move on to third-cycle / doctoral training. Only **long-cycle programmes** can be offered in the fields of medicine, dentistry, medical analysis, pharmacy, physiotherapy, veterinary medicine, preschool and early school education, special education, law and canon law. As an alternative to two-cycle programmes, long-cycle programmes may also be offered in the fields of architecture, psychology, theology, acting, art conservation and restoration, moving image production and photography, directing, stage design, graphic design, painting and sculpture. First-, second- and long-cycle programmes can be offered as **joint programmes**, leading to a joint degree, together with other Polish and foreign institutions.

Polish HEIs offer, in total, over **900 programmes** delivered in **foreign languages**, mainly in English. These include nearly 700 programmes in fields other than language studies. Most of them are first- and second-cycle programmes, and only a few are long-cycle programmes.

First-, second- and long-cycle programmes can be offered as **full-time** or **part-time programmes**. The distinction is based on whether at least half (full-time programmes) or less than half of the ECTS credits (part-time programmes) covered by the curriculum are earned as part of classes directly involving academic teachers (or other staff conducting classes) and students.

The new legislation (see 'Ongoing Reforms', Chapter 1.3) has established **doctoral training** in place of **third-cycle programmes**. For newly enrolled students, doctoral training is provided only in **doctoral schools** established since the academic year 2019/2020 within university-type HEIs (and other research institutions) which have been awarded one of the three highest **research grades** (A+, A or B) as an outcome of an external evaluation of research. **Joint doctoral training** may be provided by HEIs and other institutions, including foreign HEIs. Doctoral training aims to provide advanced knowledge in a specific area or discipline of science or arts, preparing students for independent research and creative activity, and for the process leading to the award of a doctoral degree. Doctoral training is based on a **curriculum** and an **individual research plan**. While the legislation does not make a distinction between full- and part-time training, no tuition fees can be charged in doctoral schools. Doctoral degree holders may continue their research career to obtain first a post-doctoral degree (*doktor habilitowany*) and subsequently a professorial title (*profesor*).

Students in higher education by mode of study (2018/2019)

Students	Full-time programmes	Part-time programmes	Total
First-, second- and long-cycle students	809,259 (65.8%)	420,995 (34.2%)	1,230,254
Third-cycle students	35,110 (89.4%)	4,159 (10.6%)	39,269

Non-degree postgraduate programmes are offered by HEIs (and other research institutions) to holders of a Bachelor's or Master's degree. Like specialist programmes, they are considered part of adult education and are discussed in Chapter 9. Learners in these programmes are not taken into consideration in the higher education statistics above.

Aside from the distinction between public and non-public ones (see Chapter 2.1), HEIs are divided by the legislation into university-type ('academic') and non-university ('professional' or 'professionally-oriented') institutions. A **university-type HEI** conducts research activity and has one of the three highest research grades (A+, A or B+) in at least 1 discipline of science or arts. It may provide first-, second- and long-cycle programmes and doctoral training in a doctoral school. The names 'university', 'technical university' / 'university

of technology' and 'academy' are reserved for university-type HEIs. Most public HEIs are university-type institutions. A **non-university HEI** offers programmes responding to the needs of the socio-economic environment and does not fulfil the criteria for a university-type HEI. It provides first-cycle programmes and may also provide specialist, second- and long-cycle programmes. Non-university HEIs offer only practically-oriented (as opposed to academically-oriented) programmes (for the distinction, see Chapter 8.4).

Traditional universities, technical HEIs and HEIs specialising in economics and related fields attract the **largest numbers of students** (30%, 19% and 14% of all students, respectively, in 2018/2019). The highest proportion of students take programmes in fields related to business and administration (18%), medicine (11%), engineering and technology (10%), and social sciences (10%). The biggest HEIs have between 20,000 and over 43,000 students. These include: the University of Warsaw, the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Warsaw University of Technology, Wrocław University of Science and Technology, the University of Łódź, the University of Wrocław, the Academy of Mining and Metallurgy in Krakow, the University of Gdańsk, Silesian University in Katowice, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin.

8.2. Admission

General admission requirements are laid down in the national legislation and are the same for all types of HEIs.

First-cycle and long-cycle programmes are open to applicants who hold a maturity certificate, and the admission process is based on results achieved in the maturity exam (see Chapter 5.1.6). HEIs are not allowed to conduct entrance exams in the subjects taken by applicants in the maturity exam. However, each HEI may specify which results of the maturity exam provide the basis for admission. Entrance exams may be conducted by HEIs only when it is necessary to assess knowledge and/or skills which are not covered by the maturity exam (for example, artistic or other specific aptitudes or physical fitness required in some fields of study). For arrangements for non-Polish nationals, see Chapter 13.1.

To be enrolled on a **second-cycle programme**, applicants should hold a Bachelor's (*licencjat* or *inżynier*), a Master's (*magister*), or an equivalent

degree. HEIs may lay down additional requirements regarding, for example, the correspondence between the degree held and the field of study chosen for a second-cycle programme.

Each HEI may define its own additional admission conditions and procedures, including the number of places available to students, except in **medical fields** (medicine, dentistry, midwifery and nursing). The maximum numbers of students to be enrolled in these fields are specified for each HEI concerned by the national legislation.

Access to **doctoral training** is open to applicants who hold a Master's degree or an equivalent degree and fulfil any additional entry requirements which may be set by individual HEIs. In exceptional cases, where this is justified by highest-quality research achievements, a doctoral school may enrol a first-cycle degree holder or a student who has completed the third year of a long-cycle programme.

8.3. Organisation of Time

The academic year runs from 1 October till 30 September of the following year, with classes conducted until the end of June. It is divided into two semesters, each ending with an examination period. Semesters are separated by a winter break (1 to 2 weeks in the first half of February) and a summer break. There are also two shorter, Christmas and Easter, breaks. Detailed arrangements are laid down by each HEI.

8.4. Curriculum

FIRST-, SECOND- AND LONG-CYCLE PROGRAMMES

First-, second- and long-cycle programmes are provided in **fields of study**, within areas and disciplines of sciences and arts predefined in the national legislation. Each field should be assigned to at least one discipline. National regulations also specify general **requirements** for curriculum design (for example, necessary elements to be included: mode of study, number of semesters, total ECTS value and the degree awarded; courses / classes and related LOs; total course load; methods for assessing the LOs achieved; total ECTS value of classes directly involving teaching staff and students; ECTS value of courses / classes in humanities and social sciences; duration of practical placements).

Until the end of 2021, the extent of **curricular autonomy** is determined by an authorisation to confer post-doctoral degrees. HEIs are free to establish new programmes in fields assigned to disciplines in which they are authorised to confer post-doctoral degrees; otherwise, they need a permit granted by the minister responsible for higher education. As from January 2022, the extent of autonomy will depend on the **research grade** awarded to an HEI and the quality of programmes. A programme will be autonomously established if an HEI has one of the three highest research grades (A+, A or B+) in the discipline to which a given field of study is assigned, and if the discipline concerned is part of an area where the quality of education is particularly high, as confirmed by the Polish Accreditation Committee in an external evaluation (see also Chapters 1.3 and 12.2). Otherwise, HEIs will need to obtain a permit from the Minister.

Programmes in several fields where students are trained for a **regulated profession** should be based on **national standards**. These fields include medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, midwifery, veterinary medicine and architecture (corresponding to the seven professions covered by EU Directives), medical analysis, physiotherapy, emergency medical services and teacher training (for professions regulated in Poland). The national standards, laid down by the Minister, define detailed programme **requirements**, incl. total duration, number of class hours, ECTS value and the discipline to which the field is assigned; courses / classes together with the minimum number of hours and ECTS value; scope, duration and ECTS value of practical placements; requirements for teaching / learning facilities; staff conducting classes; LOs and methods for assessing the LOs achieved; requirements for staff and facilities.

In terms of their orientation or '**profile**', programmes are divided into **academically-oriented**, where more than half of the ECTS credits are allocated to courses / classes related to research activity conducted by an HEI, and **practically-oriented**, where more than half of the ECTS credits are allocated to courses / classes developing practical skills. The minimum duration of a compulsory **practical placement** in a practically-oriented programme is 6 months for first- and long-cycle programmes, and 3 months for second-cycle programmes. Recently enacted legislation has additionally introduced **dual study programmes**, which are practically-oriented programmes delivered jointly with an employer, with organisational arrangements to be laid down in a written agreement.

THIRD-CYCLE / DOCTORAL TRAINING

Doctoral training is based on a **curriculum** and an **individual research plan (IRP)**. The two components should be designed primarily so that a doctoral student prepares a **dissertation** which complies with the requirements laid down by the legislation and achieves the **LOs defined for a doctoral degree**.

A **curriculum** is adopted by the Senate of an HEI (or the research board of a research institute). A doctoral school may have more than one curriculum in place. The legislation does not pre-define the duration of training in terms of the number of hours or ECTS value, and the decision on whether or not ECTS is used is taken independently by the institution operating a doctoral school. A curriculum can include a practical placement of up to 60 hours per year. An **IRP** is developed by a doctoral student in consultation with the supervisor(s); it includes the timeframe for the submission of a dissertation and is subject to an interim assessment (see below). Detailed requirements for IRPs can be defined at the institutional level for all doctoral schools within an HEI.

8.5. Assessment and Certification

FIRST-, SECOND- AND LONG-CYCLE PROGRAMMES

National regulations specify only the minimum number of ECTS credits for each degree and aspects which should be addressed in internal regulations adopted by HEIs. Detailed arrangements concerning student assessment, progression and graduation are laid down by HEIs individually.

Student performance in courses is assessed by teachers responsible for individual courses. LOs achieved by students are assessed in **coursework** and written and oral **examinations**. Coursework assessment methods include, for example, papers, midterm essays, research or laboratory class reports, presentations, individual and group projects, portfolios, tests, as well as peer and self-assessment. Students who fail an exam may take a resit exam, and an exam conducted by an examination review board if they fail the resit exam. HEIs usually use a **marking scale** of 2 to 5! (2 – unsatisfactory, 3 – satisfactory, 4 – good, 5 – very good, and 5! – excellent). Where a **practical placement** is part of a programme, assessment is descriptive and covers not only knowledge but also skills and social competences.

In order to **graduate**, students should achieve the **LOs** defined in the curriculum, with the required **number of ECTS credits** (see above) earned,

pass the **final exam** and receive at least a 'satisfactory' mark for the **final thesis** (in second- and long-cycle programmes; and where provided for in the curriculum for a first-cycle programme). The final exam is conducted by an examination board composed of academic teachers of the faculty / department which offers a given programme. Students who fail the final exam may take a resit exam and, if they fail again, an exam conducted by an examination review board. Where a programme does not provide for the final thesis (for example, in medical areas) and/or the final exam, students are required only to complete all courses and practical placements and pass all exams included in the curriculum.

Upon passing the final exam, students are awarded a higher education **diploma** which confirms the completion of a given programme and confers a degree. In the case of a joint programme, HEIs award a joint diploma which should, however, include all elements specified in the national legislation. In addition to a diploma, all students receive a **Diploma Supplement**, based on the format adopted by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES, which provides more detailed information about the qualification awarded, programme contents and results achieved.

THIRD-CYCLE / DOCTORAL TRAINING

The national legislation lays down only some general assessment arrangements for doctoral training (applicable to students enrolled in newly established doctoral schools). A **supervisor** or supervisors should be appointed for each doctoral student. Progress in the implementation of the student's IRP is subject to mandatory **interim assessment** at the mid-point of the training period as specified in a curriculum (or during the 4th semester where the duration of training is 6 semesters). It is conducted by a board of 3 members, including at least one who is external to a given doctoral school, and may not include the student's supervisor(s). An interim assessment ends with a positive or negative outcome. Where the outcome is positive and the student continues to fulfil internal requirements for progression, doctoral training ends with the submission of a **doctoral dissertation**. Where the outcome is negative, the student is struck from the register. Detailed regulations on assessment and progression are adopted by individual HEIs (or research institutions other than HEIs) providing doctoral training.

A **doctoral degree** may be awarded to a doctoral student who has completed structured training in a doctoral school and to an 'external' candidate. The same **requirements** are in place for candidates taking both paths.

A doctoral degree may be awarded to a candidate who:

- holds a **Master's** or an equivalent degree;
- has achieved the **LOs** defined for the qualification to be awarded (which is verified for external candidates by the awarding HEI (or research institution) in accordance with its internal assessment arrangements);
- has at least minimum **research achievements** (one research article in a scientific journal or peer-reviewed international conference proceedings, or one monograph or chapter in a monograph issued by a publishing house which is included in the list of the ministry responsible for higher education, or one significant artistic work);
- has submitted and successfully defended a **doctoral dissertation**;

and

- has fulfilled any other **requirements** set by the awarding HEI (research institution).

A doctoral **dissertation** should demonstrate the candidate's general theoretical knowledge in the discipline(s) concerned and the skills required for independent research or artistic work. It should be devoted to an original solution of a research problem, an original solution where findings from the candidate's own research are applied in the economic or social sphere, or an original artistic achievement. A dissertation can be a written work, including a research monograph, a collection of published and thematically related research papers, a project, design, engineering or artistic work, or an independent and separate part of a collective work. It should be submitted together with a positive opinion from the candidate's supervisor(s) and 3 reviews, including at least 2 positive ones.

The decision to award a doctoral degree is taken by a board appointed by the Senate of an HEI or another body (of an HEI or research institution) identified in internal regulations. Successful candidates are awarded a doctoral **diploma**, which includes the exact name of the doctoral degree (a degree in science or arts; the area and discipline of science or arts).

9. Adult Education

9.1. Providers and Programmes

Adult education is a highly diversified sector in terms of both target groups and providers, and does not form an integrated sector within a common legislative or institutional framework. It is provided by various public and non-public institutions both within and outside the formal education system.

The national legislation does not provide a comprehensive definition of **adult education**, which may be explained by the vast area covered by such forms of education and by difficulties in assigning the responsibility for this type of provision to a single administrative structure. **Continuing education** is defined as education / training in schools for adults, stage II sectoral vocational schools and post-secondary schools, and as acquisition of new and supplementary knowledge, skills and vocational qualifications in specific non-school settings (see below) by learners who have completed part-time compulsory education (after completion of full-time compulsory education).

MAIN PROVIDERS	MAIN TYPES OF PROVISION
Public and non-public schools, incl. primary and general secondary schools for adults, and stage II sectoral vocational schools and post-secondary schools	The same education cycles as in school education for children and young people Vocational qualification courses, vocational skills courses, and supplementary theoretical vocational training for juvenile workers
Public and non-public continuing education centres (CECs), vocational training centres (VTCs), and vocational and continuing education centres (VCECs), combining a vocational school and a CEC. All part of the school education system	Vocational qualification courses, vocational skills courses, general competences courses (CEC, VTC and VCEC); practical training for learners in vocational schools, and supplementary theoretical vocational training for juvenile workers (VTC); and other courses providing or upgrading knowledge, skills and vocational qualifications (CEC, VTC, VCEC)
Public and non-public HEIs, and research institutions	Specialist programmes (HEIs only) and non-degree postgraduate programmes

Training institutions included in the National Training Register kept by Regional Labour Offices	Vocational qualification courses and various training courses for the unemployed and for job seekers
Entities providing education and training as part of their economic activity	Vocational qualification courses (only entities accredited by the school education authorities), and various general and area-specific courses (for example, foreign language or ICT courses) for the general public
Various institutions and organisations (HEIs, cultural institutions, NGOs, civic organisations) providing non-formal education (incl. open universities and third-age universities)	Courses and other learning opportunities for specific groups (for example, seniors) and the general public
Labour Offices	Training courses and practical placements for the unemployed and for job seekers
Employers and employers' organisations	Courses and on-the-job training for employees

Various aspects of provision are **regulated** by the national legislation only for education in schools, four types of courses covered by the definition of continuing education (vocational qualification, vocational skills and general competences courses, and supplementary theoretical training for juvenile workers), and specialist and non-degree postgraduate programmes.

Adult education, schools for adults (2018/2019)

Types of schools	Number of schools	Number of learners
Public schools for adults	556	37,023
Non-public schools for adults	915	101,912
Total	1,471	138,935

Currently, there are only primary and general secondary **schools** (and no stage I sectoral vocational or technical secondary schools) for adults. Stage II sectoral vocational schools and post-secondary schools (both types taking learners aged at least 18) are not divided into those for young people and adults. Like school education for children and young people, school education for adults has been restructured as part of the ongoing reform (see Chapter 1.3)

Adult education, schools for adults by education level (2018/2019)

Types of schools	Number of schools	Number of learners
Primary schools	117	3,394
<i>Lower secondary schools (phased out by the end of 2018/2019)</i>	55	4,122
General secondary schools	1,299	131,419
Total	1,471	138,935

Vocational qualification and vocational skills

courses are both based on the relevant national core curriculum for vocational education. A **vocational qualification course** covers one qualification as part of a given occupation. A **vocational skills course** focuses on one section of the LOs defined for a given qualification or the LOs corresponding to additional vocational skills. **General competences courses** cover a selected part of the national core curriculum for general education. Juvenile workers may be instructed to follow **supplementary theoretical training** by their employers or the school which they attend. The types of classes to be taken and the duration of training are agreed between employers or schools and providers.

Specialist programmes

, offered by non-university type HEIs only, are practically-oriented programmes of at least 1.5 years which develop knowledge and skills in a specific area and lead to a qualification at Level 5 of the PQF (for PQF, see Chapter 2.1) / ISCED. **Non-degree postgraduate programmes**, provided by HEIs and research institutions, last for at least

1 year and lead to a partial qualification at PQF / ISCED Level 6, 7 or 8. They include, for example, teacher training programmes for those who have

Adult education, non-school settings within the school education system (2018/2019):

839 public institutions and 2,054 non-public institutions (incl. continuing education centres, vocational and continuing education centres, practical training centres and further and in-service training centres operating till the end of 2018/2019)

Adult education, non-formal education settings (2019):

11,110 training institutions in the Register of Training Institutions offering 141,671 courses in 34 areas



**Adult education, non-degree
postgraduate programmes
(2018/2019):**

**161,236 learners enrolled in higher
education institutions**

completed a degree programme in a given field and wish to obtain a teaching qualification (required to work as a teacher in the school education system) or a qualification to teach another school subject.

Arrangements for other types of adult education courses, provided as part of non-formal education in non-school settings, are adopted by institutions individually.

Based on Eurostat data, the **rate of participation** in adult education (adults aged 25–64 years) in Poland is 5.7% (as compared to the EU-28 average of 11.2% in 2018). The low participation rate is addressed by the *Lifelong Learning Strategy* and the *Integrated Skills Strategy* (currently being developed) and related measures (see Chapter 1.2).

9.2. Admission

Primary schools for adults take learners **aged 18 and above** or those who will reach the age of 18 in the year in which they are enrolled. To enter a **general secondary school** for adults, learners should be **aged 18 years or above** and should have finished the 8-year primary school (single-structure education). For vocational secondary schools and post-secondary schools (see Chapters 5.2 and 6, respectively).

Learners wishing to attend a **vocational qualification course** should be aged **at least 18 years** and have a medical certificate confirming fitness for practical vocational training. There are no national regulations or recommendations concerning admission requirements for various types of **other courses** offered below the higher education level in non-school settings.

Admission requirements for **specialist programmes** are laid down by individual HEIs; the minimum requirement at HEIs which have already established such programmes is a secondary school leaving certificate. To be enrolled on a **non-degree postgraduate programme**, applicants should hold at least a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*), awarded upon completion of a first-cycle programme. Individual HEIs and research institutions may lay down additional admission criteria.

9.3. Curriculum

Like in schools for children and young people, curricula adopted by **schools for adults** should be based on the national core curricula and outline timetables. As part of the ongoing school education reform, new outline timetables have been established for Grades VII and VIII of the new 8-year primary school for adults as well as for the new general secondary schools for adults. For outline timetables for stage II sectoral vocational schools and post-secondary schools, see Chapters 5.2.5 and 6.5.

Vocational qualification courses and **vocational skills courses** are based on the national core curricula for vocational education (for each occupation identified within the Classification of Occupations). **General competences courses** follow the national core curricula for general education in primary and post-primary schools.

The legislation lays down only general requirements for specialist and non-degree postgraduate programmes. Curricula for **specialist programmes** should define the LOs covering the 'first-grade' (universal) descriptors and 'second-grade' descriptors (which expand on the universal ones) set out in the PQF, include courses developing practical skills, and lead to a qualification at Level 5 of the PQF (ISCED Level 5). Curricula for **non-degree postgraduate programmes** should be based on the LOs for partial qualifications which cover 'second-grade' descriptors of the PQF at Level 6, 7 or 8 (ISCED Level 6, 7 or 8) and enable learners to earn at least 30 ECTS credits. There are also national standards, established by the minister responsible for higher education, for initial teacher training programmes (for national standards, see Chapter 8.4; for initial teacher training, see Chapter 11.1.1).

Curricula for other types of courses are developed by individual providers and based on their internal regulations.

9.4. Assessment and Certification

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION FOR PROGRAMMES / COURSES OFFERED WITHIN THE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Assessment and certification arrangements for **schools for adults** are the same as for other types of schools, except that assessment does not cover conduct. For details, see Chapters 4.6 (single-structure education),

5.1.6 (general secondary education), 5.2.6 (vocational secondary education) and 6.6 (post-secondary education).

Vocational qualification courses, vocational skills courses and **general competences courses** end with an assessment whose form is defined by the provider. Successful learners receive a certificate of completion of the course. Those who have completed a vocational qualification course may take a vocational exam for one qualification; for vocational exams, see Chapter 5.2.6.

Assessment methods for learners taking **specialist** and **non-degree postgraduate programmes** are established by individual HEIs, but usually combine coursework and examinations. Those who have completed a specialist programme receive a Chartered Specialist or Chartered Specialist-Technologist certificate, classified as an ISCED Level 5 or PQF Level 5 qualification. A certificate of completion of a non-degree postgraduate programme is considered a partial qualification within the IQS (for information about the IQS, see Chapter 2.1).

VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND FORMAL LEARNING

The national legislation lays down separate validation and certification arrangements for **qualifications** awarded within the school education and higher education systems, and for those awarded outside the formal education system.

The **nationally regulated mechanisms** for the validation of LOs at the **school education** level include external ('extramural') exams. They may be taken by individuals aged at least 18 years as 'externals' rather than upon completion of a formal education programme or course. **External exams** cover the scope of compulsory subjects / classes included in the **outline timetables** for primary and general secondary schools for adults or **requirements** set out in the national **core curricula** for general education in stage I and stage II sectoral vocational schools. **External vocational exams**, based on the core curricula for vocational education, assess knowledge and skills required for a given qualification as part of an occupation included in the Classification of Occupations for Vocational Education. Upon passing the relevant exams, adults receive a primary or post-primary school leaving certificate (see Chapters 4.6 and 5.1.6), or certificates for individual vocational qualifications and a vocational diploma for all qualifications required to practise a given occupation (see Chapter 5.2.6). Like for school pupils, external exams are administered by the Central and regional examination boards.

Pursuant to the national legislation on **higher education**, an HEI may validate LOs achieved outside the degree system for individuals applying for admission to a degree programme if the HEI has received one of the three highest research grades (A+, A or B+) in the discipline to which the field of study concerned is assigned, and the degree programme concerned has been accredited (based on a positive outcome of an external evaluation). LOs are validated to the extent to which they are covered by a curriculum for a given programme. LOs can be validated for applicants who meet the following conditions:

- for enrolment on a first- or long-cycle programme: they have a maturity certificate or an equivalent document and at least 5 years of work experience;
- for enrolment on a first- or long-cycle programme: they have a full qualification at PQF Level 5 or a qualification awarded within a foreign higher education system corresponding to Level 5 of the EQF;
- for enrolment on a second-cycle programme: they have a full qualification at PQF Level 6 and at least 3 years of work experience gained after completion of a first-cycle programme;
- for enrolment on an additional first-, second- or long-cycle programme: they have a full qualification at PQF Level 7 and at least 2 years of work experience gained after completion of a second- or long-cycle programme.

As a result of the validation process, an HEI may recognise up to **50% of the ECTS credits** allocated to classes covered by a curriculum. Students enrolled on the basis of a validation process may represent up to **20% of all students** enrolled on a given programme. Within this national framework, HEIs establish their own detailed validation arrangements.

Recently enacted legislation establishing the **IQS** lays down validation and certification arrangements for qualifications which are included in the IQS and awarded **outside the formal education system**. Validation verifies whether, regardless of the learning setting, an applicant has achieved certain or all LOs required for a qualification to be awarded; this covers the recognition of LOs achieved in non-formal and informal learning. Certification is a process in which, based on a positive outcome of validation, an applicant receives a document conferring a given qualification from

an authorised certifying institution. Validation and certification are separated as in some cases (for example, a driving licence) different institutions are responsible for each process.

As explained in Chapter 2.1, in addition to full and partial qualifications awarded within the school education and higher education systems, the IQS comprises **regulated qualifications** (established by law and awarded accordingly, aside from those awarded within the school education and higher education systems) and **market qualifications** (not regulated by the law and awarded as part of the freedom of economic activity). Qualifications of both types are entered into the IQR on the basis of a decision of the minister responsible for a given sector. A qualification included in the IQR may be awarded only by an **authorised certifying institution**. An authorisation is granted either by law or by the competent minister. An entity engaged in economic activity may apply for such an authorisation if it meets certain requirements laid down in the legislation. A certifying institution conducts the validation and certification processes in accordance with the legislation but has some autonomy in how the processes are designed and conducted.

Aside from the nationally regulated mechanisms, institutions and organisations involved in adult education have in place various mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning. These include, for example, international methods adapted by individual providers for specific settings and innovative methods developed within internationally recognised or adopted procedures.

10. Education for Pupils with Special Needs

The national legislation does not define **special educational needs** (SEN). The term is, however, understood broadly as depending on individual needs of a pupil. The need to offer support may result from, for example, a disability, specific learning difficulties, social maladjustment, behavioural or emotional disorders, long-lasting illness, traumatic situations or special talents.

Psychological and educational support is offered to all pupils with SEN, as well as to their parents, both within nursery schools and schools and by other institutions in the school education system, including counselling and guidance centres. Aside from specific arrangements as part of special needs education (see below), support may include, for example: classes developing aptitudes, learning skills or emotional and social competences; corrective and compensatory or remedial classes; speech therapy classes; an individualised learning path or programme or individual teaching organised at home for pupils who cannot attend school due to their health.

Special education, i.e. special organisation of teaching including the use of relevant teaching methods, is an integral part of the school education system. It is provided to the following groups of children and young people on the basis of a **decision** on special education (SE decision), issued by a counselling and guidance centre:

- **pupils with disabilities:** with mild, moderate and severe intellectual disabilities; deaf and with hearing impairment; blind and with visual impairment; with a motor disability, including aphasia; with autism, including Asperger's syndrome; and with multiple disabilities;
- **socially maladjusted pupils;** and
- **pupils at risk of social maladjustment.**

At each education stage and in any type of school, particularly **gifted pupils** may follow:

- an **individualised study programme** for one or more subjects / types of classes included in the school curriculum for a given year;

- an **individual learning path** leading to completion of education within a shorter period.

10.1. Organisation

The school education system offers **early development support** to youngest children from the time when a disability is diagnosed till enrolment in the primary school. It aims to stimulate children's psychological, motor and social development.

Special education is provided in:

- **mainstream nursery schools** within:
 - » **mainstream groups**,
 - » **special groups** only for disabled children with an SE decision (except children with a mild intellectual disability),
 - » **integration classes** for children with an SE decision and their peers without a disability;
- **other preschool education settings**;
- **special nursery schools** only for disabled children with an SE decision (except children with a mild intellectual disability);
- **special schools**: primary schools, including primary schools for pupils with a mild, moderate or severe intellectual disability; 3-year (secondary) schools preparing for employment (for pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability, or multiple disabilities); general and vocational secondary schools and post-secondary schools;
- **mainstream schools** at all levels where pupils may attend:
 - » a **mainstream class**,
 - » a **special class** only for pupils with an SE decision,
 - » an **integration class** for pupils with an SE decision and their peers without a disability.

Nursery schools and schools which have only integration classes are referred to as integration nursery schools or schools.

Other institutions providing education to pupils with SE certification include, for example, youth education centres, youth social therapy centres, special education and care centres and special educational centres.

Special nursery schools, special schools, special groups and special classes in mainstream settings are attended only by those with an SE decision. Special pre-primary groups in mainstream settings are not organised for children with a mild intellectual disability.

Special nursery schools and schools (2018/2019)

Types of special schools	Number of schools
Nursery schools	286
Primary schools	940
<i>Lower secondary schools phased out by the end of 2018/2019</i>	285
Secondary schools preparing for employment	522
Stage I sectoral vocational schools	365
General secondary schools	95
Technical secondary schools	36
Post-secondary schools	21
Total	2,550

Parents are free to choose a setting for their children.

Where necessary, **entry into the primary school** may be deferred for children with a disability until they reach the age of 9. The **duration** of education may be **extended** for them by one year in Grades I to III and by 2 years in Grades IV to VIII of the primary school, and by 1 year in a post-primary school. Pupils with a disability and those with social maladjustment or at risk of social maladjustment may attend **primary school** until the end of the school year in the calendar year in which they reach 20 years of age or 24 years of age in the case of **post-primary school**. For pupils with social maladjustment and at risk of social maladjustment who attend stage I sectoral vocational schools in youth education centres, youth social therapy centres, correctional facilities and youth hostels, the duration of education may be reduced from three to two years. In such a case the hours of compulsory educational classes scheduled for the three-year period should be maintained, except physical education classes for which the number of hours is established in the legislation.

In total, children and young people in special education represent **3.5% of the school population**. The proportion of pupils enrolled in special schools, as opposed to mainstream schools, varies depending on the level of education and type of school.

Number of pupils in special needs education provided in mainstream and special nursery schools and schools, 2018/2019

Education level	Number of pupils	Pupils in mainstream schools	Pupils in special schools
Primary schools	115,985	77,278 (67%)	38,707 (33%)
<i>Lower secondary schools phased out by the end of 2018/2019</i>	18,179	9,268 (51%)	8,911 (49%)
Special schools preparing for employment	10,537	-	10,537 (100%)
Stage I sectoral vocational schools	13,511	3,894 (29%)	9,617 (71%)
Technical secondary schools	4,796	3,945 (82%)	851 (18%)
General upper secondary schools	5,914	4,803 (81%)	1,111 (19%)
Post-secondary schools	372	53 (14%)	319 (86%)
Total	169,294	99,241 (59%)	70,053 (41%)

The **maximum size of an integration class** is 20 pupils, including up to 5 with a disability, in an integration nursery school or school and an integration class of a mainstream nursery school or school. There are also upper limits for the size of a **special class** depending on the type of disability; for example, up to 4 pupils with autism, including Asperger's syndrome; up to 8 and 16 pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability and a mild intellectual disability, respectively; and up to 16 socially maladjusted pupils or those at risk of social maladjustment.

10.2. Curriculum

MAINSTREAM NURSERY SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLS

Pupils with SEN – except those with a moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability – follow the national **core curricula** for preschool education, general education and, where appropriate, vocational education,

in schools at all levels (for the **outline timetables**, see Chapters 3.5, 4.5, 5.1.5, 5.2.5 and 6.5). Pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability follow a separate core curriculum in primary schools and special schools preparing for employment. For those with a profound intellectual disability, mainstream nursery schools and schools organise compulsory education in the form of group or individual rehabilitation and education classes. For pupils who are unable to attend a nursery school or school due to their health condition **individual teaching** may be organised.

Each pupil in special education has an **individual education and therapy programme** (IETP), based on the SE decision and developed by a team of teachers and specialists, where necessary in collaboration with a counselling and guidance centre. It specifies, for example, special classes or activities appropriate for the individual's developmental and the educational needs and psychophysical abilities of the pupil including, in particular, rehabilitation classes for a pupil with a disability, social rehabilitation classes for a socially maladjusted pupil, or social therapy classes for those at risk of social maladjustment. These are designed so as to improve the functioning of pupils and enhance their participation in the life of their nursery school or school and/or in the family and social environment. An IETP is revised where necessary based on a periodic multi-faceted specialist **assessment** of the pupil's functioning.

Rehabilitation classes for pupils with a disability include therapy and rehabilitation activities. Depending on the pupils' needs, they may be conducted for a group or on an individual basis; in the case of preschool institutions, the number and duration of such classes should be adjusted to individual needs. For the **minimum number** of such classes in schools per week, see the **outline timetables** in Chapters 3.5, 4.5, 5.1.5, 5.2.5 and 6.5.

SPECIAL NURSERY SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Education provided to all three groups of pupils with an SE decision, except for those with a moderate or severe intellectual disability, in special nursery schools and special schools is based on the same **core curricula and outline timetables as in mainstream settings** (see Chapters 3.5, 4.5, 5.1.5, 5.2.5 and 6.5). Thus, in general, pupils attend the same compulsory classes as their peers without a disability, but may be exempt from taking some subjects / classes (for example, a 2nd Foreign Language, Computer Science, Physical Education).

Like in mainstream schools, pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability follow **separate core curricula and outline timetables**. The outline timetables include **compulsory classes** in personal care and social functioning, communication skills, creativity and physical education in special primary schools for pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability, as well as training for employment in special (secondary) schools preparing for employment. For pupils who are unable to attend a special nursery school or a special school due to their health an **individual teaching programme** is organised.

As in mainstream settings, each pupil in a special nursery school or special school has an **IETP** which specifies, for example, any classes appropriate for their individual developmental and educational needs and psychophysical abilities, including rehabilitation classes. The number of hours for **rehabilitation classes** in special nursery schools should be determined by children's individual needs. For the **minimum number of rehabilitation classes per week** for pupils with disabilities, except for those with a moderate or severe intellectual disability, see the **outline timetables** in Chapters 3.5, 4.5, 5.1.5, 5.2.5 and 6.5. In both special primary schools for pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability and special secondary schools preparing for employment for pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability or multiple disabilities, the number of hours for rehabilitation classes is 10 per week in each grade of the education cycle.

10.3. Assessment and Certification

Overall, the rules for **internal and external assessment** of pupils in special education are the same as for their peers without disabilities (see Chapters 3.6, 4.6, 5.1.6, 5.2.6 and 6.6). However, assessment is descriptive for pupils with a moderate or severe intellectual disability, and those with multiple disabilities in special schools preparing for employment. Pupils with multiple disabilities may be, and those with a moderate or severe intellectual disability are, exempt from taking external exams. For others, where necessary, special arrangements may be put in place for external exams; for example, separate examination sheets suitable for a given type of disability; extended duration of an exam; specialised equipment and aids; assistance from a teacher during the exam; or rules for assessing exercises amended according to the abilities of the exam taker.

Regardless of the setting, all pupils in special education, except those with a moderate or severe intellectual disability, receive the same types of **school certificates** and **external exam documents** as in mainstream education. Regardless of the type of school, end-of-year and school leaving certificates for pupils with a moderate or severe disability are issued in a special format and include descriptive assessment. Pupils finishing a special school preparing for employment receive a certificate confirming preparation for work.



11. Teachers

The national legislation makes a distinction between teachers working in the school education system, which comprises early childhood and school education and adult education in school settings and other educational institutions, and academic teachers in the higher education system. Separate regulations and different arrangements are in place for school education and academic teachers.

School and academic teachers (2018/19)

Teachers	Total number	Full-time teachers	Part-time teachers	FTE	Sector
School teachers	702,595	595,736	106,859	701,840	87% in public schools 13% in non-public schools
Academic teachers	93,139	89,091	4,048	-	89% in public HEIs 11% in non-public HEIs

11.1. School Education Teachers

11.1.1. Initial Training, Qualification Requirements and In-Service Training

INITIAL TRAINING

Currently, initial teacher training is provided only by HEIs. Until 2016, prospective early childhood and school education teachers were also trained in teacher training colleges and foreign language teacher training colleges, referred to as initial teacher training institutions and classified as post-secondary non-tertiary institutions in the national legislation.

Initial teacher training comprises compulsory subject-specific training and training in psychology, pedagogy and teaching methodology. **Two models** of initial training exist side by side:

- a **concurrent model**, which is the predominating one: students following a degree programme in a given field of study can choose a teacher specialisation track; in this way, they complete professional teacher training, and acquire a teaching qualification, as part of their degree programme, in parallel to their subject-specific training;

- a **consecutive model** available to those who have not taken a teacher specialisation track as part of a degree programme in a given field of study and choose the teaching profession later; they may obtain a teaching qualification upon completion of a non-degree postgraduate programme or a qualification course.

Aside from transitional arrangements for other HEIs, initial teacher training can now be provided only by HEIs which have been awarded at least **research grade B** (on a scale ranging from A+ to C) in the discipline to which a given field of study is assigned (for more information about grades, see Chapter 1.3). This new requirement aims to ensure that results of good-quality research are used in teacher training and enhance its quality. HEIs offer the following types of programmes which may be taken by prospective teachers:

- **degree programmes**: first-cycle programmes leading to a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*); second- and long-cycle programmes, both leading to a Master's (*magister*) or an equivalent degree;
- **non-degree postgraduate programmes** leading to a certificate of completion.

For more details about higher education programmes, see Chapters 8 and 9. As an exception, the only option available since 2019/2020 to prospective teachers of nursery schools and Grades I to III of the primary school is a long-cycle programme in the field of preschool and early school education; there is also a narrower range of degree programme options for several categories of teachers involved in special needs education. Non-degree postgraduate programmes may be taken by those who intend to:

- acquire a teaching qualification by completing initial teacher training, while already holding a degree in a given subject area; or
 - acquire a qualification to teach another subject, while already being qualified teachers;
- or
- complete training in (an additional area of) special education, while already being fully qualified teachers.

Qualification courses, as an alternative to non-degree postgraduate programmes in the consecutive model, are offered by accredited in-service teacher training institutions.

National standards are in place for initial teacher training as part of both degree programmes and non-degree postgraduate programmes. They specify, in particular, the total duration, ECTS value and number of class hours for a programme; courses, their ECTS value and LOs; general arrangements for internships; and requirements for teaching staff and teaching / learning facilities. Training covers subject-area training; teacher training, including psychology and pedagogy; and teaching and learning processes, including basics of teaching and learning; voice production; training for the teaching of the main or an additional subject or conducting the main or additional type of classes. Compulsory internships are undertaken in schools, counselling and guidance centres and other institutions of the school education system. There are also similar national outline programmes for qualification courses offered by in-service teacher training institutions.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR ENTRY TO THE PROFESSION

Teachers are required to hold a **qualification at a relevant level** and in the relevant **subject area**, and a **teaching qualification** confirming completion of initial teacher training (a diploma or certificate awarded by an HEI; a diploma from an initial teacher training institution; or a certificate of completion of a qualification course from an in-service teacher training institution). Teachers working in special nursery schools and schools and integration schools are required to hold a qualification at a relevant level and a qualification corresponding to a given type of disability.

The level of the qualification required depends on the level of education at which teachers intend to teach. Teachers in **preschool institutions and primary schools** should hold at least a **Bachelor's degree** or a diploma from an initial teacher training institution. A **Master's degree** is required at all higher levels of education. At present, teachers who hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree represent **98%** of all teachers working in the school education system.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Pursuant to the legislation, teachers should continuously develop their professional competence in line with the needs of their schools. Theoretical vocational subject and practical vocational training teachers should take

'sector-specific' training courses run in 3-year cycles. For all teachers, participation in continuing professional development (CPD) activities is also a precondition for professional promotion (see below) as the process includes an assessment of the teacher's professional achievements, based on the implementation of a professional development plan.

The **CPD system** covers **three levels**:

- national level (ministry responsible for school education): support for in-service teacher training institutions and teacher training projects;
- regional level (provinces): support measures for teachers in the area of teaching methodology, and for the implementation of national-level teacher training projects;
- local level (LGUs): support measures focusing on the development of the local school education system and on school development plans.

In-service training is provided mainly by **in-service teacher training institutions** and **HEIs**. An amount of CPD **funding** (equal to a fixed number of average salaries for a chartered teacher; for teacher grades, see below) is set aside annually in the budget of the Ministry for national-level teacher training programmes and tasks assigned to HEIs and other institutions, and in the budgets of province governors for methodological guidance services. The CPD funding allocated to LGUs as the bodies administering schools (in total, 0.8% of the forecast annual budget for teacher salaries) is distributed among schools based on their **CPD plans**. Funding can be used, for example, to cover costs for teachers taking degree and non-degree postgraduate programmes in HEIs and training courses in in-service teacher training institutions and other institutions; teachers participating in other CPD activities (conferences, seminars, etc.); and costs of support measures for schools and cooperation and self-study networks for teachers operated by in-service teacher training institutions, counselling and guidance centres and educational resources centres.

11.1.2. Conditions of Service

EMPLOYMENT

Graduates who hold a degree and a teaching qualification (or a teacher training college diploma, where appropriate) are recognised as fully qualified teachers within the field or specialism of the degree programme completed.

Teachers are employed by the head of a nursery school or school. Entrants to the teaching profession are awarded the grade of trainee teacher on the date of entering into an employment relationship with a nursery school or school.

There are **four professional promotion grades** for teachers:

- trainee teacher,
- contract teacher,
- appointed teacher,
- chartered teacher,

and the honorary title of school education professor awarded to outstanding chartered teachers.

Teachers are employed on the basis of an **employment agreement** or so-called **appointment** (a different type of employment agreement ensuring greater job security and legal protection). The employment relationship with trainee and contract teachers may be based only on an employment agreement. Trainee teachers have an agreement for one school year to complete a probation period for promotion to the contract teacher grade. An agreement with a contract teacher is signed for an indefinite period. Appointed and chartered teachers employed on the basis of appointment are not covered by the legislation on civil service, but in performing their duties they are entitled to protection provided to civil servants.

Teachers may **retire** in accordance with the general legislation on retirement, at the age of 60 for women and 65 for men, but can also remain in service after reaching the statutory pension age. Several early retirement options are available to teachers who meet specific requirements (for example, age combined with the length of service and a fixed period of work in specific types of institutions).

WORKING TIME

The **total working time** for teachers may not exceed **40 clock hours per week**, spread over 5 working days. This includes the teaching time, allocated for teaching classes and other educational and/or care-related activities in direct contact with pupils, and the time for **other activities**

related to the statutory tasks of the nursery school or school, and activities as part of the preparation for classes, self-study and CPD. The teaching time or **compulsory teaching load** for a full-time teacher varies from **18 to 30 contact hours** (45 minutes each) **per week**, depending on the education level, the type of institution and the type of classes or activities. For example, it is 18 hours for teachers in special nursery schools, special schools, primary and general secondary schools, and for theoretical subject teachers in vocational schools; 20 hours for practical vocational training teachers in all types of schools; 25 hours for nursery school teachers, and 22 hours for nursery school teachers and teachers in other institutions working with 6-year-olds.

Teachers with 18 class hours per week may have their weekly teaching load increased to 27 hours. The weekly teaching load of **18 hours** provides the basis for a **full-time teacher's salary**. Teachers receive overtime pay for hours extending beyond the 18-hour weekly teaching load.

Teachers are entitled to **paid holiday leave** during school and public holidays. **Other types of paid leave** available include health leave, maternity leave and related additional leave, parental leave, and training leave for full-time teachers. Teachers may also be granted paid or unpaid leave for research, artistic or educational activities, and unpaid leave for other important reasons.

SALARIES

The salary of a teacher consists of the **basic pay** (depending on the qualifications held, promotion grade and teaching load), a number of **allowances**, including length-of-service, motivation, function-related and conditions-of-service allowances, pay for overtime and ad-hoc replacement hours, and awards and other benefits as provided for in the employment relationship.

The **average salary** of teachers should be equal to the following percentages of the reference amount set annually for public sector employees: 100% for a trainee teacher; 111% for a contract teacher; 144% for an appointed teacher; and 184% for a chartered teacher.

Detailed information on teacher salaries is available in the Eurydice publication *Teachers' and School Heads' Salaries and Allowances in Europe 2018/2019*.

11.1.3. Assessment and Promotion

Two types of appraisal or assessment are in place for teachers: performance appraisal and assessment of professional achievements. **Performance appraisal** covers the performance of a **teacher's duties** as defined by law; this includes, in particular, the performance of teaching as well as education- and care-related duties; preparation for classes; participation in CPD activities, including self-study; and involvement in other statutory activities of the nursery school or school. It is conducted only for **contract, appointed and chartered teachers** and is not mandatory. A performance appraisal may be conducted at any time, but not earlier than one year after the previous performance appraisal or assessment of professional achievements. It is undertaken at the request of the teacher, the pedagogical supervision body (in most cases, the regional education authority, REA), the body administering a given (nursery) school, the (nursery) school council or the parents' council (for the bodies concerned, see Chapter 2.2). The process is conducted by the **head of the school** (or nursery school), who consults the relevant internal bodies, and ends with one of the following outcomes: outstanding, very good, good or negative. Teachers may appeal against the outcome to the head of the REA. The employment relationship is terminated where the final outcome of an appraisal is negative.

Assessment of professional achievements is an **integral part** of the process leading to the **promotion** of a teacher to a higher professional grade. It is conducted by the **head of the school** (nursery school) and covers the extent to which the teacher has implemented a **professional development plan** agreed between the teacher and the head for a 'probation period' (a period of work preceding promotion to the higher professional grade). An assessment ends with a positive or negative outcome. Teachers may appeal against the outcome to the head of the REA.

To be **promoted to the higher grade**, a teacher should:

- have the qualifications required (see above);
- complete a probation period (9 months for trainee teachers; 2 years and 9 months for teachers holding the remaining grades) with a positive outcome of an assessment of professional achievements;

and

- for a trainee teacher: obtain approval from a qualifying board;
- for a contract teacher: pass an exam conducted by an examination board;
- for an appointed teacher: obtain approval from a qualifying board, based on its analysis of the teacher's professional achievements and an interview.

Promotion is an internal process in the case of a trainee teacher and involves bodies external to the (nursery) school for teachers holding higher grades.

Promotion	Board appointment and composition	Body awarding the grade
Trainee teacher → Contract teacher	Qualifying board appointed by the school head: (deputy) head, leader of the teacher team, and a probation period mentor	Head of the school
Contract teacher → Appointed teacher	Examination board appointed by the body administering the school: representatives of the school administering body and the pedagogical supervision body (head of the REA in most cases), the school head and 2 external experts	Body administering the school
Appointed teacher → Chartered teacher	Qualifying board appointed by the pedagogical supervision body (head of the REA in most cases): a representative of the pedagogical supervision body, the school head and 3 external experts	Pedagogical supervision body

11.2. Academic Teachers

Academic staff are divided in the national legislation into teaching staff, research staff and research-and-teaching staff. Only **teaching staff** and **research-and-teaching staff** are statutorily required to teach students or train doctoral students.

11.2.1. Initial Training, Qualification Requirements and In-Service Training

Unlike for school education teachers, **no initial training paths** for academic staff are pre-defined by the legislation, and **no teaching qualification** is required to become an academic teacher. Specific **qualification requirements** are laid down by law for individual positions which may be taken by teaching and research-and-teaching staff.

Position	Qualification required
Professor	Title of professor
University Professor	At least a doctoral degree and: → for teaching staff – significant teaching or professional achievements; → for research-and-teaching staff – significant research, artistic or teaching achievements
Assistant Professor	At least a doctoral degree
Assistant	A Master's or equivalent degree

Academic staff are explicitly required by law to develop their professional competence. HEIs lay down detailed CPD arrangements in their internal regulations.

11.2.2. Conditions of Service

Academic staff are employed on the basis of an **employment agreement**. The first employment agreement with an academic teacher at a given public HEI is concluded for an indefinite period or for 4 years; the second one may but does not have to be concluded for an indefinite period; after the expiry of the third agreement for a definite period, one for an indefinite period should be concluded.

Public HEIs should hold an **open recruitment competition** if the first employment agreement with an academic teacher is concluded for an indefinite period or for a definite period longer than 3 months, and for a working time which exceeds 50% of full-time employment. Competition procedures are set out in internal regulations of a public HEI. Recruitment arrangements in non-public HEIs are laid down in their internal regulations.

The **working time** of academic teachers is task-based or, in other words, determined by the scope of teaching, research and organisational duties assigned to a teacher. The working time includes the **annual teaching load** (number of **class hours** for teaching duties, with one class hour lasting 45 minutes).

The annual teaching load for academic staff in a public HEI is:

- up to 240 class hours for research-and-teaching staff;
- up to 180 class hours for research-and-teaching staff holding the position of Professor;
- up to 360 class hours for teaching staff;
- up to 540 class hours for teaching staff holding the position of Foreign Language Teacher or Instructor if such a position is provided for in the internal regulations of an HEI.

Where this is justified by the need to implement a curriculum, academic teachers may be required to teach overtime classes. The additional teaching load may not exceed half of the annual teaching load for teaching staff, and one-fourth of the annual teaching load for research-and-teaching staff. With their consent, academic staff may teach overtime hours whose number does not exceed their double annual teaching load. Internal regulations of a non-public HEI may define a different teaching load for its academic staff.

Academic teachers are entitled to paid **holiday leave**, and to health leave under conditions specified by law. The rector of an HEI may also grant **paid sabbatical leave** to staff holding a doctoral degree or preparing a doctoral dissertation; and paid leave to undertake a **training** period, **research** or **teaching** placement abroad, attend a conference abroad or participate in joint research based on a research cooperation agreement with a foreign institution.

The **salary** of a teacher in a public HEI consists of the **basic salary**, determined by the position held, and a length-of-service allowance. Additionally, like non-academic staff, academic staff may be granted other **allowances**, including a function-related allowance (for managing a team); a task-related allowance (for temporarily extended responsibilities); overtime pay; a hardship allowance for work in hazardous or difficult conditions; and any

other allowances specified in the internal regulations of a given HEI. All employees of a public HEI are also entitled to anniversary awards for a long period of service (20 to 45 years). The level of the monthly **basic salary** for a Professor is established by the minister responsible for higher education. The basic salary of a teacher in a public HEI may not be lower than 50% of the salary of a Professor. And the basic salary of a University Professor and an Assistant Professor may not be lower than 83% and 73%, respectively, of the salary of a Professor.

Remuneration arrangements for academic teachers in **non-public HEIs** are laid down in institutional regulations. The level of the salary is normally negotiated between individual teachers and the founder of an HEI or a body specified in its internal regulations.

The legislation does not lay down any specific **retirement** arrangements for employees of an HEI. Academic teachers may retire at the statutory pension age of 60 for women and 65 for men, but they usually work longer.

11.2.3. Assessment and Promotion

All academic teachers, except for the rector of an HEI, undergo a **mandatory performance appraisal** at least every 4 years or at the request of the rector. It covers, in particular, the performance of teaching and/or research duties and the observance of intellectual and industrial property rights. The criteria, procedure and entity / unit conducting appraisal are specified by the rector after consultation with the relevant bodies of an HEI. Appraisal takes into consideration outcomes of student evaluation of teaching, conducted at least once a year by students and doctoral students. Appraisal ends with a positive or negative outcome. Teachers may appeal against the outcome to the rector. The rector may terminate the employment agreement with a teacher after one negative assessment and is required by law to do so when two consecutive assessments have ended with a negative outcome.

A distinction is made in an academic **career** between degrees / titles (a Master's degree as the minimum qualification requirement, doctoral and post-doctoral degrees and the title of Professor) and positions (see above). Teachers holding the required degree or title may be promoted to a higher position. The national legislation lays down the requirements for the award of degrees / titles and, as explained above, the minimum level of qualifications required for each position. Detailed criteria for promotion to particular positions are set by individual HEIs in their internal regulations.

Academic teachers who hold a higher education qualification (or at least a doctoral degree in a public HEI) and have not reached the age of 67 may be put forward by the relevant governing body of an HEI as candidates for the position of rector. They may also apply for other management positions established by the internal regulations of an HEI.



12. Quality Assurance

12.1. School Education

Uniform quality assurance arrangements are in place for the entire school education system. External and internal quality assurance is primarily part of the **pedagogical supervision system**, which covers both public and non-public institutions, including nursery schools and other preschool settings, schools and other educational institutions. The system consists of four elements: evaluation, legal compliance auditing, support, and monitoring. **Evaluation** of institutions, geared towards quality improvement, is the main quality assurance mechanism. Legal compliance audits or inspections aim to check whether the activities of institutions comply with legislation. Support covers various activities (for example, staff training) aimed at improving institutional performance. As part of monitoring, information is collected and analysed to ensure that institutions carry out their tasks properly.

External pedagogical supervision is the responsibility of the **Minister of Education and Science** and other competent ministers, and of the **heads of REAs** (see also Chapter 2.2.), with external evaluations of institutions conducted by REA inspectors. **Internal pedagogical supervision** is exercised by the **head of the institution** (nursery school, school or another institution) in cooperation with other management staff, and with teachers also involved in internal evaluations.

The other two elements which can be considered part of quality assurance are teacher appraisal and external examinations taken by pupils. For further details, see Chapters 11.1.3 (Teachers) and 4.6, 5.1.6 and 5.2.6 (External exams in school education).

EVALUATION

External evaluation

External evaluations are conducted according to the national education policy priorities and a **pedagogical supervision plan** established annually by the Minister of Education and Science, and detailed plans prepared on this basis by the heads of REAs. While the legislation does not specify the frequency of external evaluations, they are obligatorily carried out **every school year**, but their scope and the proportion of schools concerned vary between years.

Evaluations are conducted against **9 requirements** set in the legislation (see the table on page 112), each with a more detailed description of issues to be addressed. In terms of scope, a distinction is made between overall evaluation, which covers all of the requirements, and **problem-specific** evaluation, which focuses on selected ones. Annual pedagogical supervision plans adopted by the Minister and heads of REAs address both overall and problem-specific evaluations.

As a result of an evaluation, underperforming institutions should put in place a **programme improving the effectiveness of education**. Where the programme does not take into consideration evaluation findings or is not implemented within the timeframe set, the head of the REA submits a binding motion to dismiss the head of the institution to its administering body. This may provide the basis for striking a non-public institution from the register of non-public institutions.

Internal evaluation

Internal evaluation is conducted in accordance with an annual **pedagogical supervision plan**, developed by the head of the institution and presented to its teaching council. It is undertaken every year on a mandatory basis, but its scope may vary depending on the needs of a given institution.

The legislation does not predefine the scope or procedure of internal evaluations. Evaluations should focus on **issues** which are **considered relevant** to the activities of a given institution. The only **tool** referred to in the legislation is observation. In practice, observation may cover both classes and other activities, such as teachers' meetings with parents.

Results of internal evaluation are taken into consideration in external evaluation.

External evaluation in the school education system – requirements (criteria) for institutions

No.	Nursery schools	Schools and other institutions
1	Processes supporting the development and education of children are organised so as to enhance learning.	Educational processes are organised so as to enhance learning.
2	Children acquire knowledge and skills defined in the national core curriculum.	Pupils acquire knowledge and skills defined in the national core curriculum.
3	Children are active.	Pupils are active.
4	The nursery school shapes social attitudes and respects social norms.	The school / institution shapes social attitudes and respects social norms.
5	The nursery school supports children's development, taking into consideration their individual circumstances.	The school / institution supports pupils' development, taking into consideration their individual circumstances.
6	Parents are partners of the nursery school.	Parents are partners of the school / institution.
7	The nursery school collaborates with the local community for their mutual development.	The school / institution collaborates with the local community for their mutual development.
8	In planning its work, the nursery school takes into consideration findings from analysis of external and internal evaluations.	In organising its educational processes, the school / institution takes into consideration findings from analysis of results achieved in external exams and from other external and internal evaluations.
9	Management of the nursery school is geared towards its development.	Management of the school / institution is geared towards its development.



Home

12.2. Higher Education

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

External quality assurance comprises the following processes:

- **initial institutional accreditation:** assessment of applications for registration and the granting of permits for non-public HEIs to be established and to operate;
- **institutional re-accreditation:** assessment of applications and renewal of registration / permits for non-public HEIs to operate;
- **initial programme accreditation:** assessment of applications for, and the granting of, authorisations to establish and provide first-, second- and long-cycle programmes in all fields of study; and additional accreditation of new first- and second-cycle programmes in the fields of nursing and midwifery;
- **periodic programme accreditation:** evaluation and accreditation of ongoing first-, second- and long-cycle programmes in all fields of study and, additionally, of ongoing first- and second-cycle programmes in the fields of nursing and midwifery;
- **overall or comprehensive evaluation:** a process focusing on internal quality assurance at the institutional level, to be put in place pursuant to the legislation entering into force in October 2020; and
- **evaluation of doctoral schools:** a process evaluating the quality of doctoral training, to be put in place for doctoral schools established since 2019/2020.

All processes are **mandatory** where applicable to a given type of institution or programme.

The responsibility for institutional accreditation and accreditation of first-, second- and long-cycle programmes in all fields of study is shared between the **Minister of Education and Science** and the **Polish Accreditation Committee** (PAC). The Minister grants, withdraws and renews operating permits for non-public HEIs as part of initial institutional accreditation and institutional re-accreditation, grants authorisations for HEIs to provide programmes as part of initial programme accreditation, and withdraws

and re-grants such authorisations. PAC reviews eligible applications in the three processes, issuing opinions which provide the basis for the Minister's decisions. It also conducts periodic programme evaluations and takes related accreditation decisions, and will conduct overall evaluations to be put in place. Initial and periodic accreditation of nursing and midwifery programmes involves the **Minister of Health**, who grants and withdraws accreditation, and the **National Accreditation Council for Schools of Nursing and Midwifery** (NACSN&M), which carries out evaluations as part of the accreditation process. Evaluation of doctoral schools will be conducted by the **Committee for Research Evaluation** (CRE). Evaluation decisions will be taken by CRE and communicated to the Minister of Education and Science.

The Polish Accreditation Committee is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Initial institutional accreditation and institutional re-accreditation

The Polish Accreditation Committee reviews applications which have not been rejected by the Minister of Education and Science for formal or legal reasons (relating, for example, to the financial standing of, or a valid court judgement for an offence against, the founder of a non-public HEI). Evaluations as part of initial institutional and programme accreditation are **combined** for non-public HEIs to be established as they apply at the same time for registration / a permit to operate and an authorisation to provide (a) programme(s). They are conducted against the criteria for initial programme evaluation (see below). Based on a positive or negative opinion from PAC, the Minister grants or refuses to grant an operating permit and/or an authorisation to provide a programme. An **operating permit** is granted for **6 years**.

Before the expiry of the initial accreditation period and after consultation with PAC, the Minister **renews** the registration / permit for **an indefinite period** or refuses to do so. A **negative decision** is taken in the case of gross violations of the law by an HEI or its founder; where at least half of the programmes provided by the HEI have not been accredited by PAC as part of periodic programme accreditation; or for any of the formal or legal reasons which justify refusal to issue an initial permit.

Initial programme accreditation

All programmes

Initial programme accreditation is required for both public and non-public HEIs to establish and provide a programme in any field in cases extending beyond their **curricular autonomy** (see Chapter 8.4) and, additionally, for all new programmes in the fields of nursing and midwifery. The criteria used by PAC in reviewing applications are essentially the same as for periodic programme evaluations (see below), covering aspects related to the programme and its curriculum, student admission, progression and graduation, organisation, staff and facilities, except for those which are not applicable to new programmes. Based on a positive or negative opinion from PAC, the Minister of Education and Science grants or refuses an authorisation to establish a programme. For programmes in the fields of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, the Minister also obligatorily consults the Minister of Health as these are programmes for regulated professions (see also Chapter 8.4).

Programmes in the fields of nursing and midwifery

The NACSN&M assesses the extent to which new programmes in the fields of **nursing and midwifery** and the organisational units of HEIs which intend to establish them comply with the national standards laid down by legislation (see also Chapter 8.4). Evaluation is based on the same criteria as for periodic programme accreditation (see below). Where granted by the Minister of Health, accreditation is valid for 3 years or a longer period, depending on evaluation findings.

All newly accredited programmes are subject to periodic accreditation.

Periodic programme accreditation

All programmes

Programmes are evaluated by PAC against **10 criteria** (see below). The criteria are identical for academically- and practically-oriented programmes (for the distinction, see Chapter 8.4), but detailed standards for each criterion, available on PAC's website, reflect the specificity of a given type of programme.

Periodic programme evaluation criteria:

1. Programme design: concept and aims of education, LOs;
2. Programme delivery: programme contents; implementation timetable; types and organisation of courses / classes; teaching and learning methods; student practical placements; organisation of the teaching and learning processes;
3. Student admission; verification of LOs achieved by students; student progression between semesters; graduation;
4. Competence, experience, qualifications and number of teaching staff, and staff development;
5. Teaching / learning facilities and resources used in the delivery of the programme and their enhancement;
6. Cooperation with social and business partners in programme design, delivery and enhancement, and its impact on the development of the programme;
7. Conditions for, and methods of, internationalisation of the programme;
8. Support for learning, social, academic and professional development of students and their entry onto the labour market; development and enhancement of support measures;
9. Public access to information about the programme, conditions for its delivery and achieved results;
10. Quality assurance policy; design, approval, monitoring, review and improvement of the programme.

The **frequency** of evaluations depends on the outcome of the previous evaluation, which can be positive or negative. A **positive decision** is issued by PAC for **up to 6 years**. Where the validity period is up to 2 years, a follow-up evaluation ends with a positive decision valid for 6 years or a negative decision. Programmes which have received a positive decision are automatically considered accredited. Where PAC has issued a **negative decision**, a given programme **ceases to be provided** if it was established autonomously by an HEI (see Chapter 8.4) or the Minister may **withdraw the permit** to establish the programme and, thus, it may no longer be provided.

Programmes in the fields of nursing and midwifery

Evaluations are conducted at least every **3 years**, depending on the validity period of the previous accreditation decision. They are based on four blocks of **criteria**, integrating the national standards for programmes, which concern programme design and delivery, teaching staff, learning and teaching facilities, and internal quality assurance. Accreditation for a period longer than 3 years is awarded to HEIs which comply with additional criteria in each of the four blocks.

Overall / comprehensive evaluation

The process will be introduced based on the regulations coming into force on 1 October 2020. It will focus on the **effectiveness of internal quality assurance** measures in all areas where an HEI provides first-, second- and/ or long-cycle programmes. Detailed criteria are yet to be established. Evaluations will be conducted by PAC at the request of an HEI where all programme evaluations (or, in the future, a previous overall evaluation) ended with a positive decision. The process will end with a **positive decision** issued for a period of **3 to 8 years** or **refusal** to issue a positive decision. During the validity period of a positive decision, PAC will not conduct programme evaluations in the fields of study assigned to the disciplines within the areas concerned, unless it is instructed to do so by the Minister of Education and Science. Where PAC refuses to issue a positive decision, the HEI concerned will be eligible to re-apply for an overall evaluation after 5 years, unless PAC sets a shorter timeframe.

Evaluation of doctoral schools

The first cohort of students took up training in doctoral schools (as a new structure for doctoral training; see Chapter 8.1) in 2019/2020, and the first evaluation may be conducted at least 5 years after the start date of training at a given school or earlier at the request of the Minister of Education and Science. Evaluation **criteria** will address the relevance of the training programme and IRPs to the LOs defined for qualifications at PQF Level 8, and the implementation of the programme and IRPs; methods for verification of the LOs achieved by students; qualifications of academic staff; quality of the admissions process; quality of academic tutoring and support in research activities; reliability of interim assessment; internationalisation; and effectiveness of training. Detailed criteria are yet to be established. Evaluations will be conducted by CRE at least **every 6 years** and will end with a **positive or negative decision**. Where a negative decision is taken, the HEI (or another research institution) concerned will no longer be authorised to operate a given doctoral school.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Internal quality assurance is integrated into the mission of the higher education and research system which, pursuant to the legislation, is to provide highest-quality education and conduct highest-quality research, shape civic attitudes, and contribute to societal development and the creation of an innovation-based economy. The legislation does not pre-define the scope or elements of internal quality assurance, except for general arrangements for programmes and teacher appraisal.

HEIs should regularly evaluate and improve **programmes**. Programmes should integrate findings from an analysis of the relevance of LOs to labour market needs, and findings from the career tracking system, managed by the Minister of Education and Science, for first-, second- and long-cycle students and graduates and individuals who apply for, and are awarded, doctoral degrees.

All **academic teachers**, except for the rector of an HEI, undergo a mandatory **performance appraisal**. For further details, see Chapter 11.2.3.

Detailed internal quality assurance arrangements are adopted by HEIs in their internal regulations. They are taken into consideration by the external quality assurance bodies in their evaluations.

12.3. Adult Education

Adult education is provided, as explained earlier, both in schools for adults and institutions training adults in non-school settings which are part of the school education system and subject to the school education legislation, and by entities operating outside the school education system on the basis of the legislation on economic activity. The arrangements in place are different for the two 'sub-sectors'.

INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

External and internal quality assurance arrangements for schools for adults and other institutions in the school education system are the same as for **school education for young people** (see above).

Additionally, institutions providing adult education in **non-school settings** (for example, continuing education or vocational training centres) may **voluntarily** apply for **accreditation** granted by the head of the REA. Accreditation may be granted to an institution which meets predefined requirements or criteria concerning qualified staff, methodological and teaching or training materials, and adequate facilities. Evaluation is carried out by a panel appointed by the head of the REA and including REA inspectors and representatives of relevant external institutions or organisations. A decision granting or refusing accreditation is made by the head of the REA, who takes into consideration the evaluation report and findings from pedagogical supervision (see Chapter 12.1). Accreditation may be withdrawn where a provider no longer fulfils the requirements and does not eliminate shortcomings when instructed to do so by the head of the REA.

INSTITUTIONS OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are no national quality assurance requirements for institutions providing adult education in non-school settings outside the school education system as part of economic activity. However, like institutions within the school education system, they may apply on a **voluntary** basis for **accreditation** granted by the head of the REA. All the arrangements are the same except that an accreditation decision of the head of the REA does not take into consideration findings from pedagogical supervision as no such supervision is exercised over institutions outside the school education system. Only accredited entities are authorised to provide vocational qualification courses (see Chapter 9.1).



13. Practical Information for International Learners and Education Staff

13.1. Access to Education and Financial Support

Conditions of access for non-Polish nationals vary depending on the level of education, the country of origin and specific status granted to individuals. Pursuant to the national legislation, foreign national children and young people, regardless of their nationality, have access to preschool and compulsory education in public institutions under the same conditions as Polish nationals, except for the age limit for those in part-time compulsory education.

Preschool and school education for all foreign nationals under the same conditions as for Polish nationals:

- preschool education in public preschool institutions and primary schools, and state-subsidised non-public preschool institutions and primary schools;
- education in public primary schools for children of full-time compulsory education age;
- education in public post-primary schools for young people of part-time compulsory education age until they reach the age of 18 or finish the school.

Under the same conditions as for Polish nationals, specific groups of foreign nationals also have access to **adult education** in public institutions within the **school education system**, including stage II sectoral vocational schools, post-secondary schools, colleges of social work and schools for adults, and to vocational qualification courses offered as part of continuing education. This is the case for nationals of EU Member States, member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) which are signatories of the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and of the Swiss Confederation; individuals who have been granted a permanent residence permit or long-term EU-resident permit, or a specific status or rights, for example, refugee status or temporary or subsidiary protection.

Other foreign nationals may attend the types of public institutions mentioned above and take vocational qualification courses:

- as holders of a **scholarship** awarded by the Minister of Education and Science, the body administering a given educational institution or the head of an educational institution;
- on a **fee-paying basis**.

Where tuition and/or other **fees** are charged, the level of fees is determined, and fees may be fully or partially waived by the body administering a given institution.

Foreign nationals can follow **higher education** programmes (specialist, first-, second- and long-cycle programmes, non-degree postgraduate and other programmes; and doctoral training), take up a teaching assignment and/or participate in research on the basis of:

- international **agreements** and inter-institutional agreements between Polish HEIs and foreign institutions; and
- a **decision of the competent body** (for example, the Minister of Education and Science, the Director of the National Agency for Academic Exchange, the rector of an HEI).

While some education services can be offered by public HEIs on a fee-paying basis, **no tuition fees** may be charged for **full-time first-, second- or long-cycle programmes** conducted in Polish in the case of nationals of the countries mentioned above, holders of a permanent residence permit or long-term EU-resident permit, and some groups of individuals with a specific status or rights (similar to those mentioned above). Where charged from foreign nationals, some **tuition fees** (for a full-time first-, second- or long-cycle programme conducted in Polish, a specialist or non-degree postgraduate programme) may be **waived**, based on an international or inter-institutional agreement, or a decision of the competent body.

Foreign nationals may be awarded a **scholarship** by the Minister of Education and Science to fully or partly cover tuition fees and travel, accommodation and subsistence costs. Access to means-tested **maintenance grants and student loans** is restricted to groups of individuals with a specific status (for example, those holding the Polish Charter, permanent residence permit, long-term EU-resident permit or refugee status). However, all international students are eligible to apply for other types of grants and scholarships available to Polish students (see Chapter 2.3).

13.2. Learning Support and Other Services

All pupils in preschool and school education are entitled to learning support when they need it. In addition to what is available to all, the **school education** system offers some specific support and services to foreign national children and young people of the compulsory education age (and to Polish national children who attended a school abroad). Depending on their needs, they can:

- attend a preparatory class;
- take additional or remedial classes covering the subjects taught;
- attend an additional Polish language course;
- follow a course in the language and culture of their country of origin;
- take external exams adapted to their specific needs and abilities.

A school may establish a **preparatory class** for pupils in compulsory education who have no or insufficient knowledge of Polish to follow a mainstream education programme; have language communication problems resulting, in particular, from crises or traumatic situations (for example, armed conflicts or disasters); and/or have adaptation difficulties due to cultural differences or a change of the learning environment. Teaching is based on the curricula implemented in a given school and grade, but methods are adjusted to individual needs. Teachers may be supported by an assistant speaking the language of the learner's country of origin. **Additional or remedial classes for subjects included in the curriculum** may be taken by pupils who need to fill in gaps in knowledge resulting from curricular differences. Classes are conducted as additional lessons in a given school subject, on an individual basis or in a group.

Where their knowledge of Polish is insufficient to follow a mainstream programme, pupils in compulsory education are entitled to take a fee-free **Polish language** course. Classes are conducted on an individual basis or in a group. A diplomatic mission or consulate of the country of origin located in Poland or a cultural or educational association for a given nationality may offer courses in the **language and culture of the country of origin** to foreign nationals in full-time compulsory education. A hosting school provides premises and educational resources free of charge.

Like Polish nationals, foreign national pupils and students take **external exams**. Where their knowledge of Polish, culture and traditions is insufficient and they have attended a Polish school for a short time, they may use adapted examination sheets and aids such as bilingual dictionaries, and have the duration of the exam extended.

The national legislation does not refer to any specific types of support for foreign nationals taking **higher education** programmes. However, Polish HEIs offer a range of support services to international students on a regular basis. These include, for example, Polish language courses; orientation programmes or cultural preparation courses, and integration weeks and events; support in practical matters (visa- and stay-related formalities, accommodation, etc.); academic tutors supervising a group of international students, and mentors or buddies assisting individual international students.

13.3. Recognition of Qualifications

Recognition of qualifications, including certificates, diplomas and degrees, is regulated by national legislation in accordance with EU legislation and international conventions.

QUALIFICATIONS AWARDED IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

Pursuant to the national legislation, the following documents confirming completion of secondary education and providing access to higher education are **recognised automatically**, by virtue of law:

- **certificates** which are awarded by schools or other educational institutions in **EU Member States** and **EEA and OECD** (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) **member states** and provide access to higher education in the awarding country;
- **International Baccalaureate diplomas** awarded by the International Baccalaureate Organisation in Geneva, Switzerland;
- **European Baccalaureate diplomas** awarded by the European Schools in accordance with the Convention laying down the statutes of the European Schools, adopted in Luxembourg in 1994;
- **certificates** covered by **international agreements** signed by Poland.

Other certificates and documents can be recognised as confirming completion of primary or secondary (general or vocational) education on a case-by-case basis through an **administrative process** conducted by the head of the REA in a given province. However, where incoming pupils intend to **continue** education in a primary or secondary school, recognition of foreign end-of-year certificates or school leaving certificates is not required. Applicants should contact directly the head of the school which they wish to attend.

Bilateral agreements can be found in the database of treaties and agreements managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and on the website of the ministry responsible for school education. More detailed information on the relevant national regulations and procedures is available on the website of the ministry responsible for school education (see 'Useful Links').

QUALIFICATIONS AWARDED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Like in other countries, a distinction is made between:

- **academic recognition:** for individuals wishing to continue or begin studying or use an academic degree; and
- **professional recognition:** for individuals wishing to practise a profession.

Academic recognition

Like school education certificates, a diploma awarded abroad upon completion of a degree programme may be recognised as equivalent to a Polish one based on an international agreement or – in the absence of such an agreement – through a recognition process established by law.

Bilateral agreements signed by Poland can be found in the database of treaties and agreements run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and on the website of the ministry responsible for higher education (see 'Useful Links').

In the absence of such an agreement, higher education diplomas awarded in other countries are recognised on a case-by-case basis through a **recognition process** where individual HEIs identify a Polish qualification corresponding to a foreign one. The process can be conducted only by HEIs which have one of the three highest research grades (A+, A or B+) awarded as an outcome of an external quality evaluation of research in the discipline concerned.

Professional recognition

Procedures vary depending on whether a given profession is regulated in Poland. If a profession is **not regulated**, the decision to recognise a foreign qualification is taken by the **employer**. The employer may require confirmation of the equivalence of a foreign certificate or diploma (based on an international agreement or through the official recognition procedure; see above).

In Poland, **regulated professions** include so-called sectoral professions (doctor, dentist, pharmacist, nurse, midwife, veterinary surgeon and architect) and other professions such as teacher (working in the school education system) and lawyer. Qualifications obtained in **EU and EFTA/EEA countries** and Switzerland are recognised in accordance with the national legislation based on the relevant EU Directives. Since the national standards for programmes (see also Chapter 8.4) for **sectoral professions** are based on EU legislation, a qualification may be recognised automatically if its holder provides proof of qualification to the competent Polish body. Qualifications for professions such as **teacher** are recognised under the so-called general recognition system in the EU. A competent Polish body recognises a qualification when the scope of education or the profession in the applicant's home country does not differ significantly from that in Poland and the level of the qualification is at least equivalent to the level immediately below that required in Poland. Otherwise, the applicant may need to undertake an adaptation period of up to 3 years or take an aptitude test. Recognition of qualifications for **legal and other professions** is governed by separate regulations.

For qualifications obtained in **other countries**, applicants should first apply for academic recognition of a qualification (see above) and, subsequently, for an authorisation to practice a given profession in accordance with the legislation applicable to this profession.

A list of professions which are regulated in Poland is available in the EU database of regulated professions. Foreign nationals may seek detailed information and advice on both academic and professional recognition from the National Agency for Academic Exchange, which is the Polish ENIC-NARIC centre (see 'Useful Links').

13.4. Programmes and Other Initiatives

Supporting International Learning Mobility

Learning mobility to and from Poland takes place mainly within **EU programmes**, in particular **Erasmus+** (2014–2020), which offers mobility opportunities to pupils, students and learners, school and academic teachers, trainers and other education staff. Detailed information is available on the websites of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency and the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, which manage the Programme, respectively, at the EU level and in Poland².

Pupil / student / learner and staff mobility within EU programmes (1998/1999–2016/2017)			
204,031 outgoing pupils / students / learners	113,702 incoming pupils / students / learners	65,075 outward staff mobility flows	32,789 inward staff mobility flows

There are also multilateral and bilateral programmes (co-)funded by Poland and other countries or international organisations and national programmes, targeted specifically at **higher education** students and academic staff. **Multilateral programmes** include, in particular, the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS) and the International Visegrad Fund. They offer project grants and/or scholarships for study visits, study periods and practical placements to higher education students and academic teachers to support cooperation among Central European countries and Western Balkan and/or Eastern Partnership countries.

International students following a degree programme in Polish higher education institutions for at least 1 year (2018/2019)

78,259

As part of **bilateral agreements** signed with EU Member States and other countries in Europe, North and South America, Asia and Africa, government-funded scholarships are awarded to academic staff and students. The main bilateral programmes are the Fulbright Programme and the Lane Kirkland

² More recent data on EU programme mobility is not available as projects are underway.

Scholarship Programme. The former, funded by the Polish and US Governments, offers scholarships to US and Polish students and graduates for studies and research stays in the US or Poland. Under the latter, funded by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, students coming mainly from former Soviet Union countries can follow a degree programme at Polish HEIs.

A number of **national programmes** and projects, (co-)funded by the Polish Government and/or the European Social Fund, are run by the National Agency for Academic Exchange and the ministry responsible for higher education. Grants available to Polish students are awarded to, for example, those who are outstandingly gifted for participation in international conferences and contests, and doctoral students for research projects and teaching assignments at international institutions. Aside from exchanges under bilateral agreements, several programmes offer grants, for example, to students from developing countries in Asia, Central and South America, and Africa wishing to take a full degree programme in Poland. Programmes for Polish academic staff provide support for, for example, various types of research mobility to institutions across the world or for professional development activities in priority medical areas to be undertaken in the best medical centres in the United States.

International students interested in studying in Poland may wish to access the **multilingual 'Go! Poland' portal** managed by the National Agency for Academic Exchange. It provides information on the higher education system, including tuition fees and scholarships, practical information on how to enter and live in Poland, and various materials. It also has a search engine for programmes by field and level of study and language of instruction.

More detailed information is available on the websites of the individual programmes and institutions; see also 'Useful Links'.

Data Sources

- Education in the 2018/2019 school year (*Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2018/2019*), Central Statistical Office (Executive summary and statistical data available in English)
- Higher education institutions and their finances in 2018 (*Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse w 2018 r.*), Central Statistical Office (Executive summary and statistical data available in English)
- Eurydice Website on National Education Systems, Poland, 2019
- 2019 Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland (*Rocznik statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2019*), Central Statistical Office (General notes and statistical data available in English)
- School Education Information System (*System Informacji Oświatowej*) (Online database managed by the ministry responsible for school education) (Data available in Polish only; source of data only on school education teachers)
- Report of the Council of Ministers on the implementation of the Act of 4 February 2011 on the care for children aged up to 3 years, 2018 (*Sprawozdanie Rady Ministrów z realizacji ustawy z dnia 4 lutego 2011 r. o opiece nad dziećmi do lat 3, 2018*) (Data available in Polish only; source of data only on childcare)

Useful Links

Institutions

- Ministry of Education and Science:
<https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka>
- General Council for Science and Higher Education:
<http://www.rgnisw.nauka.gov.pl> (in Polish only)
- Polish Accreditation Committee: <http://www.pka.edu.pl/en>
- Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland:
<http://www.krasp.org.pl/en>
- Conference of Rectors of Polish Professional Higher Education Schools:
<https://www.krzasp.pl> (in Polish only)
- Conference of Rectors of Public Professional Higher Education Schools:
<http://www.krepsz.pl> (in Polish only)
- Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland: <https://psrp.org.pl>
(in Polish only)
- National Representation of Doctoral Students: <http://krd.edu.pl>
(in Polish only)
- Foundation for the Development of the Education System:
<http://www.frse.org.pl/en>
- National Agency for Academic Exchange: <https://nawa.gov.pl/en>
- Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency:
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/homepage_en

Recognition of qualifications

- School education qualifications: <https://prk.men.gov.pl/en/3en>
- Higher education qualifications: <https://nawa.gov.pl/en/recognition>
- Database of treaties and agreements: <https://traktaty.msz.gov.pl>
(English version available)
- Bilateral agreements: <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/umowy-dwustronne> (for school education); <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/wspolpraca-dwustronna> (for higher education; both in Polish only)
- EU database of regulated professions: <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof>

Funding programmes and other initiatives supporting international mobility

- 'Go! Poland. Study in Poland' portal for international students: <http://www.go-poland.pl/pl>
- Erasmus+ Programme: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) and <http://www.frse.org.pl/en> (Foundation for the Development of the Education System)
- Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies: <https://www.ceepus.info/#nbb>
- International Visegrad Fund: <https://www.visegradfund.org>
- Fulbright Programme: <http://en.fulbright.edu.pl>
- Lane Kirkland Scholarship Programme: <http://www.kirkland.edu.pl/en>
- National programmes and projects: <https://nawa.gov.pl/en/nawa-programmes> (National Agency for Academic Exchange); <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/wspolpraca-miedzynarodowa> and <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/programy-i-przedsiwzięcia> (Ministry responsible for higher education; in Polish only)



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Eurydice is a network of 43 national units based in 38 countries of the Erasmus+ programme. Its task is to explain how education systems are organised in Europe and how they work. Eurydice publishes descriptions of national education systems, comparative reports devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. Eurydice reports show how countries tackle challenges at all education levels: early childhood education and care, primary and secondary education, higher education and adult learning.

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