



THE
SYSTEM
OF
EDUCATION
IN
POLAND

WARSAW 2010

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INTRODUCTION: GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

Poland is a Parliamentary Republic and a Member of the European Union. The functioning of the Polish state is defined by the Constitution of 2 April 1997. According to the Constitution:

- The legislative power is exercised by the Parliament (*Sejm*) and Senate (*Senat*).
- The executive power is exercised by the President and the Council of Ministers.
- The territorial organization of the Polish state assures the decentralization of the public authorities. Poland is divided into 16 regions (*województwo*), 379 districts (*powiat*), and 2478 communes (*gmina*). The head of region (*wojewoda*) represents the Council of Ministers in the region. The head of region supervises the institutions exercising the powers of the state. The regional educational superintendents' offices (*kuratoria oświaty*) are included in the regional administration and they are responsible for pedagogical supervision in schools. Upon the 1998 reforms of administration and self-government the heads of regions are mainly responsible for supervision. The regional government is the responsibility of self government bodies – the marshal of the region and the regional council.
- The territorial self-government takes part in exercising the public rule. The major part of the regional self-government's tasks is implemented in its own name and on its own responsibility. Starting in 1998 the following three levels of territorial self-government have been operational: *gmina* (commune self-government), *powiat* (district self-government) and *województwo* (regional self-government).

As indicated in the Constitution the *gmina* is the basic self-government body. Its responsibilities include all the public matters of local importance which are not defined as the responsibility of other bodies. *Gminy* are obliged to fulfill the needs of the local community in the following areas: health services, social security, culture and education. They are responsible for running kindergartens, primary schools and gymnasia.

The *powiat* was established in 1998 as a second level of territorial self-government. It supports *gminy* in all the functions that seem too broad for their scope of action. The *powiat* has the following responsibilities: running of post-gymnasium schools, hospitals, and the management of public roads. *Powiaty* are also responsible for counteracting unemployment, and protection of consumers' rights.

Województwo self-government was established in 1998 as a third level of territorial self government. Its responsibilities include the regional economical and social development as well as the establishment and running of public teacher training and in-service training centres, pedagogical libraries, and schools and institutions of regional and supraregional importance. Its scope of activities does not interfere with the independence of the *powiat* and *gmina*.

In Poland 38.2 million people inhabit an area of 312 685 square kilometres. The average density of population is 122 persons per square kilometre.

The current demographic situation is characterised by negative natural growth caused by decline in birthrate and negative net international migration. The birthrate is the lowest among the EU countries and one of the lowest in Europe (2009).

The Polish language is the official language in Poland – this is stated in the Constitution and in the Act on the Polish Language.

If compared to other European countries, Poland is very homogenous as regards nationality. It is estimated that no more than 3% of the total population is constituted by national minorities. The minorities' right to protect, retain and develop their cultural identity is guaranteed by the Constitution and by the Act of 6 January 2005 on Ethnic and National Minorities and on the Regional Language. The Act includes as follows:

- 9 national minorities: Byelorussian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Jewish
- 4 ethnic minorities: Karaim, Lemko, Romany and Tatar
- One community using the regional language of Kashubian.

The implementation of the rights of ethnic and national minorities with respect to learning of the minority language or education in the minority language as well as the right to learn about the history and culture of the minority takes place on the basis of rules defined in the School Education Act of 7 September 1991. Since 1989 the rebirth of national and ethnic identity has been observed among the minorities. The number of schools offering teaching in languages of national minorities or additional classes in these languages for pupils from national minorities has quadrupled since 1990. In total in the school year 2007/08 there were nearly 47 thousand pupils enrolled in schools for national and ethnic minorities and in schools organizing additional classes in the languages of national and ethnic minorities.

The Polish school education system is based on the following legislation (parliamentary acts):

- The School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments)
- The Act of 8 January 1999 on the Implementation of the Education System of the Education System Reform (with further amendments)
- The Act of 26 January 1982 Teachers' Charter (with further amendments)

The higher education system in Poland is based on the following legislation (parliamentary acts):

- The Act of 27 July 2005 "Law on Higher Education"
- The Act of 12 September 1990 on the Academic Title and Academic Degrees (with further amendments)
- The Act of 17 July 1998 on Loans and Credits for Students (with further amendments)

The basic principles of the Polish education system are included in the School Education Act of 7 September 1991 with further amendments. Education is defined as part of "the common welfare of the whole society" (...). *Education and upbringing, respecting the Christian system of values, is based on universal ethical principles. Education and upbringing*

serve the developing of young people's sense of responsibility, admiration of the fatherland and respect for the Polish cultural heritage, while being open, at the same time, to values of European and world's cultures. The objective of the school is to provide each pupil with conditions necessary for his/her development and to prepare him/her for the fulfilment of family responsibilities and civil duties based on the principles of solidarity, democracy, tolerance, justice and freedom.*

This Act regulates the division of competencies in the field of administration of each school (pre-school institution) - according to different state administration levels (central, regional, local). It sets the rules of pedagogical supervision. It is the first time since the Second World War that the legislation (parliamentary act) has regulated the establishment, running and financing of non-state schools. It also defines the rights of school heads, teachers, pupils and parents.

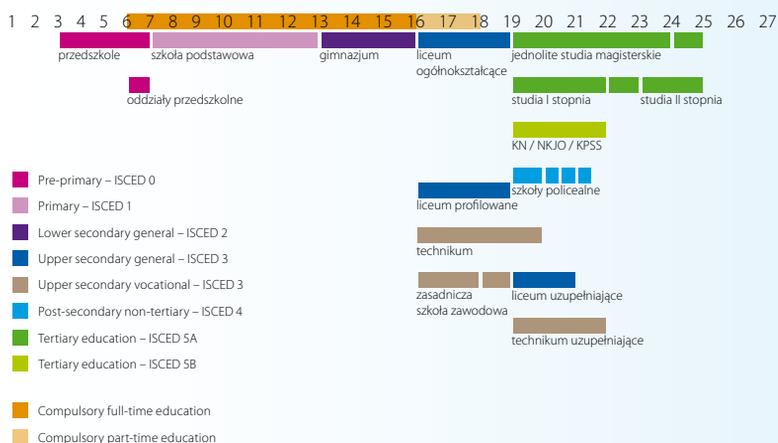
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INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ORGANIZATION, FUNDING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE



1.1

Organization of the initial education and training system



In accordance with Polish law (the School Education Act of 7 September 1991) the education system comprises pre-school institutions, primary schools, gymnasia and post-gymnasium schools. In the light of the existing law, institutions of higher education are excluded from the system as they form a separate higher education system or sector.

A child aged 3 to 5 may receive pre-school education, which is not compulsory, but all six year-old children attend either kindergartens (*przedszkole*) or pre-school classes (*oddziały przedszkolne*) organized in primary schools as the Ministry of Education introduced one year of obligatory pre-school education starting the school year 2004/05.

Starting in the school year 1999/2000 children between the ages of 7 and 13 attend new primary schools for a period of 6 years. (The single continuous 8-year structure ceased to exist in the year 2000). Education in primary schools is divided into two stages: the first stage (grades 1 to 3) offering elementary – integrated learning and the second stage (grades 4 to 6) at which subject teaching is provided. Since 2002, at the end of the 6-year primary school pupils have to take an external test (set by external examination commissions and assessed by examiners selected by these commissions).

From 1999/2000 (based on the Law of 8 January 1999), all the primary school leavers continue their education in a 3-year gymnasium, a lower secondary compulsory school. At the end of this school pupils take a compulsory external examination organized by the regional examination commission.

Gymnasium graduates can continue their education in the following types of schools:

- Basic vocational school with the minimum duration of 2 years and maximum duration of 3 years which leads to obtaining of a diploma confirming vocational qualifications upon passing of an exams as well as further education in supplementary schools.
- 3-year general upper secondary school leading to receipt of the *Matura* certificate upon passing of the *Matura* examination.
- 3-year specialized upper secondary school offering education in specializations of general vocational education which leads to receipt of the *Matura* certificate upon passing of the *Matura* examination.
- 4-year technical upper secondary school leading to receipt of a diploma confirming vocational qualifications upon passing of an examination, and also offering a possibility of receipt of the *Matura* certificate upon passing of the *Matura* examination.
- 3-year special schools preparing pupils with SEN for employment leading to receipt of a certificate confirming preparation for employment.

Graduates from 2 or 3-year basic vocational school also have a possibility of taking the *Matura* examination, upon their successful completion of the 2-year supplementary general secondary school (*uzupełniająca liceum ogólnokształcące*) or a 3-year supplementary technical secondary school (*technikum uzupełniająca*).

Graduates of general upper secondary schools can, after an interview, continue their education in a post-secondary school of maximum 2.5 years duration which

leads to receipt of a diploma confirming vocational qualifications upon passing of an examination.

The new external *Matura* examination introduced in 2005 has gradually replaced entrance examinations to universities.

Graduates of upper secondary schools in Poland, those possessing the *Matura* certificate, have a wide variety of educational possibilities at the level of tertiary education:

- college programmes (ISCED 5B), provided by public and non-public teacher training colleges, foreign language teacher training colleges and colleges of social work, which last 3 years and are classified as tertiary education for international comparisons, but are not recognised as higher education in the national legislation;
- degree programmes (ISCED 5A), provided by both public and non-public university-type and non-university higher education institutions which comply with relevant requirements, including:
 - first-cycle (Bachelor's degree) programmes which last 3 to 4 years and lead to the degree of *licencjat* or 3.5 to 4 years and lead to the degree of *inżynier*, depending on the field of study;
 - second-cycle (Master's degree) programmes which last 1.5 to 2 years and lead to the degree of *magister* or an equivalent degree, depending on the field of study;
 - long-cycle (Master's degree) programmes which last between 4.5 and 6 years and lead to the degree of *magister* or an equivalent degree.

1.2 Distribution of responsibilities

The Ministry of National Education is responsible for nearly the whole system of education, with the exception of higher education which is under the supervision of the Minister of Science and Higher Education. Vocational schools, which in the past were supervised by other ministries, are now the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education. At present only a few schools (artistic – only with respect to artistic subjects, as well as correctional institutions) are under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Justice, respectively.

The reform of the State administration system and the education reform assume that only the national educational policy will be developed and carried out centrally, while the administration of education and the running of schools, pre-school institutions and other educational establishments are decentralised. The responsibility for the administration of public kindergartens, primary schools and gymnasias has been delegated to local authorities (*gminy*). It has become the statutory responsibility of *powiaty* (districts) to administer upper secondary schools, artistic and special schools. The regions (*województwa*) have a co-ordinating function, supervising the implementation of the Ministry's policy and being responsible for pedagogical supervision.

Central level

This is the responsibility of the Minister of National Education, deputy-ministers and the director general. Deputy-ministers are responsible for such matters as e.g. the school system or international co-operation. The Minister of Science and Higher Education is responsible for higher education and scientific research, as well as for formulating educational policy with respect to higher education with the support from the General Council of Higher Education.

The Minister of National Education co-ordinates and carries out the state education policy, partially supervises the work of education superintendents (*kuratoria*) and co-operates with other organizational bodies and units in the field of education.

Moreover, by means of regulations, the Minister defines:

- Requirements and procedures for school admission and transition from one school to another;
- Principles for organizing the education of Polish citizens' children staying temporarily abroad, as well as assistance to Polish emigrants in teaching history, geography and the Polish language;
- The scope of services for Polish teachers working abroad.

The Minister also determines:

- Outline timetables;
- Core curricula for pre-school education, core curricula for general education, specialised education and general vocational education;
- Conditions and procedures for the approval of textbooks for school use; recommendations on teaching aids and on lists of those textbooks and aids;
- Rules for assessing and promoting pupils and for conducting tests and examinations;
- Requirement standards, being the basis for tests and examinations;
- Record-keeping methods concerning the teaching process and educational activities, as well as the types of these records;
- Rules and conditions for implementing innovations and experiments by schools or other institutions;
- Organization of the school year;
- Establishing rules for study courses and national competitions;
- Procedures for organizing correctional gymnastics and optional physical education lessons;
- Rules and conditions for the organization of tourist and sightseeing activities by schools.

The following matters are under the supervision of the Minister of Science and Higher Education: development of research in Poland, studies for degree students and PhD students, and functioning of higher education institutions.

On the 6 of March 2008 the Minister of National Education established the **National Education Council** which has 9 members – former deputy ministers of education. This

council has an advisory capacity only and is the support body to the Minister of National Education.

Regional level

The regional level in Poland is the level of the *województwo*. As from 1999 the number of regions is 16.

The education superintendent (*kurator oświaty*) is the chief educational officer at the regional level. He is responsible for general administration of education in a given region. He is appointed by the Head of Region (*wojewoda*), so he is a regional administration official supervised by the Head of Region (who is subordinated to the Prime Minister). The education superintendent implements the policy of the Minister of National Education.

On behalf of the Head of Region the superintendent is responsible for the implementation of tasks defined in the School Education Act and in the regulations relevant to the given region. The most important task is pedagogical supervision over public and non-public schools and educational institutions, including central in-service teacher training institutions located in the given region.

At the motion of the regional education superintendent, the Head of Region can establish representations, or branches, of the superintendent's office (so-called *delegatury*) for smaller areas of the region. The head of such a branch receives relevant powers from the superintendent.

District level

The district level in Poland is the level of the *powiat* (an intermediate administrative unit between the region and the commune, established as a result of the Act of 24 July 1998 on the introduction of the three-tier administrative division of the country). There are 379 districts.

Powiaty exercise administrative control over upper secondary general (*liceum ogólnokształcące, liceum profilowane*) and vocational (*technikum, zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*) schools, as well as over post-secondary schools (*szkoła policealna*) and public special schools. They are also responsible for the management of artistic schools, sports schools, lifelong education centres, psychological and pedagogical support centres, and out-of-school education centres.

Pedagogical supervision is excluded from their tasks – it is the responsibility of education superintendents (regional level).

Local level

The local level in Poland is the level of the commune (*gmina*). There are 2478 communes, of which most are rural.

Communes are responsible for running the pre-school institutions (including those with integration classes and special kindergartens), primary schools and lower secondary

schools called gymnasias, including those with integration classes (apart from special primary schools and gymnasias as well as artistic schools, schools placed at prisons and correctional institutions). Pedagogical supervision is excluded from their tasks – it is the responsibility of the regional education superintendent.

Educational institutions

School heads are recruited on the basis of an open competition and employed by the body running schools for 5 years. In justified cases this period may be shortened, but not shorter than 1 school year.

In consultation with the body running schools, i.e. the commune or the *powiat*, the school head appoints and dismisses his/her deputy and other executive staff, if those posts are in agreement with the statute of a school (pre-school institution).

In particular, the school head:

- manages the school (institution) and represents it externally;
- exercises pedagogical supervision;
- takes care of pupils and provides background for their harmonious psychological and physical development through various health promoting activities;
- implements the resolutions of the school council or the teachers' council (undertaken in accordance with their competencies);
- is in charge of financial means and is responsible for their proper use;
- co-operates with higher education and teacher training institutions in the field of organizing teacher pedagogical training;
- is responsible for the organization and implementation of the tests and examinations in his/her school.

A pedagogical council should be established in every school (or educational institution) employing at least 3 teachers. This council is a collegial body concerned with the implementation of statutory tasks related to education and care (e.g. approval of the school action plan, approval of decisions related to marking and promotion of pupils, issue opinions on organization of school activities). The pedagogical council includes the following members: teachers employed in the school or institution, staff employed in other institutions offering practical vocational training to pupils of that school, and staff responsible for education and care of pupils in boarding schools who are employed as teachers and care takers. The school head is the head of school's pedagogical council.

The pedagogical council drafts the school statutes or any amendments to such statutes and presents them to the school council. The pedagogical council can apply for dismissal of a teacher from the post of school head, or any other managerial position in that school. The body in charge of appeal has a right to open an investigation procedure and pass the results of such procedure to the pedagogical council within 14 days from the date of appeal. Motions by pedagogical council are passed by the majority of votes in the presence of a minimum of 50% of council members.

Involvement of parents, pupils and social partners

The creation of a National Education Council to advise the Minister of Education has been envisaged by the School Education Act. This council is envisaged as a social opinion-making body in the area of education. The council should consist of regional education councils' representatives, one per regional council and one teachers' union representative. Its term is envisaged as 3 years. No such council has been established to date.

School/institution councils can operate in schools and other educational institutions.

The school council participates in solving school internal problems and is involved in various school internal issues (e.g. approval of school statutes, giving opinions on the school financial plan and school activity plan). The school council includes (in equal numbers) elected teachers, parents and pupils.

School councils in primary schools do not include pupils, and participation by pupils in lower secondary schools is not obligatory. The council should include a minimum of 6 members. The school council decides on its internal regulations and elects its chairman. The school head can participate in the council meetings in an advisory capacity. School councils can cooperate on the basis of jointly established procedures. The council is established by the school head on his/her initiative, upon a motion by the parents' council, and in the case of lower and upper secondary schools, upon a motion by the pupils' self-government.

Parents' councils representing all the pupils' parents operate in schools and institutions. The parents' council establishes its own regulations for activities and it can cooperate on the basis of jointly established procedures. Parents' council can issue motions related to all school matters to the school head and other school bodies, to the school running body or the body responsible for pedagogical supervision. It can also issue opinions on the programme and timetable for improvement of efficiency in teaching or care at the school, and issue opinions on the financial plan proposed by the school head.

Pupils' self-government operates in schools and is established by all pupils in a given school. The rules concerning the election and functioning of self-government bodies are defined in the regulations established by all pupils in an equal, secret and popular vote. The self-government bodies are the only bodies representing all pupils.

The regulations concerning pupils' self-government cannot contradict the school statutes. The self-government can propose motions to the school council, pedagogical council and school head which concern school matters, and in particular those related to the basic rights of pupils (e.g. the right to open and justified assessment of learning and conduct, the right to publish a school newspaper, and organize cultural, educational, sports and entertainment events according to the pupils' needs and the organizational capacity of the school).

The participation of social partners (individuals, institutions and organizations) in the work of schools does not yet occur on a large scale. There are no pupils' organizations

at a level higher than the school. **The National Convention of Parents and Parent's Councils** is an organization representing pupils' parents. However, the legislative framework concedes significant rights to parents and pupils as members of the school councils – they have the same rights as teachers – and all these three groups have equal representations (one third each) in the school councils. In the majority of schools, however, parents are neither able nor willing to co-operate with the school. Although several years have passed since the first school councils were established, and legislators expressed their intention to have regional councils and one national council established, until now no council of this type has been registered at the regional or the national level.

Teachers' Unions play a considerable role in shaping current educational policy. The Minister of National Education is obliged by law to consult the Teachers' Unions regarding drafts of all new regulations.

Distribution of responsibilities in the higher education system

The higher education system in Poland is supervised by the Minister of Science and Higher Education, with some institutions, namely military, public-service, artistic, medical and maritime institutions being supervised on a daily basis by the ministers responsible for the relevant branches of state administration acting on behalf of the minister responsible for higher education.

Higher education institutions in Poland are autonomous in all areas of their operation, subject to rules laid down in the Act "Law on Higher Education" of 2005.

As provided for by the Law on Higher Education, organs within public higher education institutions divide into single-person authorities, i.e., rectors (supreme single-person authorities) and deans; collective bodies, i.e., senates and councils of basic organizational units (these being units offering degree programmes in at least one field of study or doctoral programmes in at least one academic discipline); and the electoral organs. A higher education institution may accord the status of basic organizational unit to its various faculties – and this is what happens in most cases - but it may also opt for a more varied formula. Regardless, however, of the nature of each basic organizational unit, it must be run by a council and a unit head (a function performed by the dean in the case of faculties). The electoral organs are assemblies of electors, either at the institution or faculty level, which conduct elections of single-person authorities and collective bodies, respectively. In addition to their senates, higher education institutions may also appoint a council comprising persons from outside the institutions.

The senate of a public higher education institution is chaired by its rector. Senate sessions are attended also by the institution's chancellor, bursar, main library director and single representatives of each trade union operating in the institution, all of them in an advisory capacity.

In public academic higher education institutions at least 50% but no more than 60% of the statutory composition of the senate must be accounted for by academic teachers holding the academic title of professor or the *doktor habilitowany* degree.

Statutes of non-public higher education institutions have broader regulatory powers. These institutions are not required to have senates, but in such cases they must establish some other supreme collective body. In practice, however, all institutions in this category choose to establish senates. They must appoint a rector, being a single-person authority, and their statutes may provide also for other organs of this kind.

The senate's powers include among others: the adoption of the institution's statute, of study regulations (with separate regulations governing doctoral and post-graduate programmes), admission rules (also to doctoral programmes); definition of the main lines of the institution's operation, the principles of this operation and the formulation of guidelines for councils of basic organizational units; assessment of the institution's performance, approval of the rectors' reports and assessment of the rectors' performance; adoption of resolutions establishing basic organizational units, branches or didactic centres in other locations, and decisions to launch or discontinue degree programmes in the various fields of study.

Rectors head the operations of their higher education institutions and represent them in contacts with the outside world, being also the superiors of the institutions' employees, students and doctoral students. Rectors of public higher education institutions are elected from among their academic staff members holding the scientific title of professor or the scientific higher doctor's degree, and for whom the given institution is their primary place of employment.

The composition of councils of basic organizational units is defined in the statute of the higher education institution. A council is headed by the person in charge of the unit, and since units are usually faculties, this person is usually the faculty dean.

The powers of basic organizational unit councils include in particular the definition of the general lines of the unit's activity and adoption of study plans and study programmes for degree and doctoral programmes.

The powers of basic organizational unit councils and heads are detailed in the given organization's statute.

Collective bodies of higher education institutions and electoral organs in public higher education institutions comprise representatives of academic staff, doctoral students, students and non-academic staff.

In non-public higher education institutions single-person authorities and their deputies are appointed and dismissed by the institution's founder or an organ indicated in the statute, following consultations with the senate. Detailed procedures for such appointment and dismissal of single-person authorities are specified in the statute.

In addition to higher education institutions, the higher education system in Poland includes also a host of organizations performing consultation and advisory functions. The most prominent of these are:

- **the General Council of Higher Education** (*Rada Główna Szkolnictwa Wyższego RGSW*) which volunteers its own opinions and proposals in all matters relating to

higher education and science, and also presents its opinions on the draft state budget and proposed draft legislation;

- **the State Accreditation Committee** (*Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna PKA*) which recommends the acceptance or rejection of applications to accredit programmes in fields of study proposed by higher education institutions or basic units thereof, thereby performing a crucial role in education quality assurance;
- **the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland** (*Konferencja Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich KRASP*) and **the Conference of Rectors of Vocational Schools in Poland** (*Konferencja Rektorów Zawodowych Szkół Polskich KRZaSP*), both of which play a particularly significant role in shaping the entire higher education system in terms of its constituent institutions and of the governance of higher education. The powers of both Conferences in the area of governance are especially important. They also have a say in developing the financing principles and the rules governing the operation of higher education institutions, specifically as regards executive regulations that accompany legal acts;
- **the Parliament of the Students of the Republic of Poland** which focuses on student issues;
- **the National Representation of Doctoral Students** which deals with issues relating to this category of students;
- trade unions operating in higher education institutions, represented by their national sections for higher education. Two unions enjoy a particularly powerful position in the higher education system, namely **the Solidarity National Section for Science** (*Krajowa Sekcja Nauki NSZZ "Solidarność"*) and **the Polish Teachers' Union** (*Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego ZNP*). The trade unions concentrate primarily on pay policy and remuneration rules applicable to employees;
- non-governmental organizations such as **the Polish Rectors Foundation** (*Fundacja Rektorów Polskich FRP*) established by more than 100 rectors and former rectors, the Institute of **the Knowledge Society** (*Instytut Społeczeństwa Wiedzy ISW*) – an independent research institution focusing on issues relating to higher education and science, research centres run by higher education institutions (e.g. **the Centre for Science Policy and Higher Education of Warsaw University**) and **the Institute of Modern Civilization**.

All these bodies have a say in the development of the higher education system in Poland, making use of their right to come forward with recommendations and initiatives, and also to present opinions on draft regulations or legal acts significantly impacting higher education in this country.

1.3 Financing

Financing of Schools

As from 1999, and in its complete form from 2000, all educational tasks carried out by

the three levels of territorial self-government are financed within the framework of a general subsidy from the State Budget.

In the year 2000 a uniform system of allocation of funds with the use of an algorithmic formula based on the number of pupils was adopted for the whole education system.

This formula is based on the real number of pupils, increased by a system of weightings (taking into account specific conditions in which a particular school functions, i.e. rural areas, small towns, as well as specific educational tasks, i.e. special education, integration of SEN pupils (both disabled and socially maladjusted) in mainstream education, vocational education, sports schools). The means of dividing the general subsidy for territorial self-government units is announced once a year (in December) by the Minister of National Education in a regulation.

The territorial self-government unit, as the body running and supporting the school, is responsible for the design of a budget programme (i.e. a plan of expenditure) for all schools and educational institutions in its area.

Educational investments belong among the tasks of self-governments, although they can be also co-financed from the State Budget through the regional authorities.

In line with the School Education Act of 1991, schools can be of two types: public (state) schools, which offer free education within the framework of the core curricula, and non-public schools. The latter can be civic (social), church or private schools. The schools were called "social" or "civic" because of the vast amount of work that was invested in them by people from local communities – mostly parents and teachers.

All these schools may prepare their own curricula. They are financed by fees received from parents. Funds can also come from private enterprises and foundations. Non-public schools with the rights of public schools are eligible for a grant calculated according to the number of pupils, which equals 100% of the average cost of educating those pupils in a public school.

Public spending on education and care in 2007 amounted to 45.3 billion PLN which constituted 3.9% of GNP.

Financing of Higher Education Institutions

Public HEIs receive funding from the state budget mainly for tasks related to:

- Teaching full time students and participants of full time doctoral studies to research staff and maintenance of HEIs including upgrade of premises
- National defence
- Safety of citizens
- Cultural activity
- Maintenance of ships and special training centres for maritime staff and military training of students
- Non-refundable financial support to students and doctoral students
- Co-financing and financing of investment costs including investments implemented with support from the state budget, government target funding or from foreign sources in the framework of regional agreements

- Teaching and medical therapy of disabled students
- Maintenance of aircraft and special training centres for airborne staff trainers
- Health care services provided in the framework of teaching of full time students in a basic organizational unit of a medical HEI or in another HEI
- Offering of post-diploma specialisation-related teaching to physicians, dentists, veterinary staff, pharmacy specialists, nurses and midwives as well as to laboratory diagnosis staff.

The above funds are granted from the part of the state budget which is administered by the minister of higher education and the other ministers responsible for supervision of state HEIs.

An HEI can receive other funds from the state budget and from the budgets of territorial self-government units or their partnerships.

Non-public HEIs can also receive funds for non-refundable financial support for students and doctoral students as well as funds for partial coverage of fees paid by full time students and full time doctoral students. The minister of higher education defines, by means of regulation, the conditions and procedures by which non-public HEIs apply for funds, and the rules for supervision of disbursement of such funds.

In 2008 the expenditure on higher education in Poland amounted to 11 091.01 million PLN (including 11 086.93 million PLN from the state budget and 4.08 million PLN from territorial self-government units), which equalled 0.87% of GDP.

1.4 Quality assurance

Quality assurance in school education

Administrative and pedagogical supervision have been separated. Pedagogical supervision over the school is exercised by regional education authorities: *kurator* (superintendents), while general supervision (organizational, administrative and financial) is carried out by the bodies running schools (commune, district or regional self-government authorities).

The measurement of educational achievements and the partial assessment of school performance are carried out by the Central Examination Commission and eight Regional Examination Commissions.

The external evaluation system supervised by the Central Examination Commission consists of the following external standardized tests and examinations:

- at the end of the 6-year primary school (age 13) – general, obligatory test with no selection function;
- at the end of the 3-year lower secondary school, gymnasium (age 16) – general, obligatory examination;
- at the end of the 3-year upper secondary general school (age 19/20), upper secondary specialized (3-year) or technical (4-year) school (age 19/20), and

2-year supplementary upper secondary general school (age 20/21) or 3-year supplementary *technikum* (age 21/22) on the basis of 2-3-year basic vocational school – general, not obligatory *Matura* (matriculation) examination;

- at the end of the basic vocational school (age 18/19), 4-year upper secondary technical school called *technikum* (age 20), 3-year supplementary *technikum* (age 21/22), and post-secondary non tertiary school – external standardized vocational examination.

The OECD/PISA Programme for International Student Assessment is devoted to the assessment of skills of 15-year-old pupils. The programme runs in 3-year cycles. In the 2006 PISA test, Poland belonged to the small group of countries which improved their results (by 11 points) in tasks related to reading and understanding of texts in humanities (508 points in comparison with the OECD average of 492). The average score in maths by Polish lower secondary school pupils has increased by 5 points since 2003. At the same time the respective average score for OECD countries has gone down by 2 points. As a result Poland has joined the group of countries with a score equal to the OECD average. When comparing the scores achieved by Polish pupils in scientific thinking in 2003 and in 2006, there was no significant improvement.

Quality assurance in Higher Education Institutions

The main Polish institutions in charge of quality assurance in higher education are as follows:

The body responsible for external quality assurance is the **State Accreditation Committee (SAC)** (*Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna*), a national agency established in January 2002 on the basis of the amended 1990 Higher Education Act and currently operating on the basis of the Law on Higher Education (LoHE) 2005. Its members are appointed by the minister responsible for higher education from among candidates proposed by the General Council for Higher Education, the conferences of rectors of university-type and non-university higher education institutions, the Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland, senates of higher education institutions, as well as national academic associations and employers' organizations.

The primary responsibilities of the SAC include: 1) assessing the quality of education in fields of study, including compliance with the requirements for the provision of degree programmes; 2) reviewing applications for the establishment of higher education institutions; and 3) reviewing applications of higher education institutions for the authorisation to provide degree programmes in a given field and at a given level of study. The SAC's opinions and evaluations are submitted to the minister responsible for higher education. Degree programmes to be assessed in individual institutions are identified by the SAC on an annual basis. In justified cases, the minister responsible for higher education may also request the SAC to assess the quality of education in a specific institution.

Evaluation is conducted by a team composed of SAC members and SAC-appointed experts. The evaluation procedure includes: 1) a self-evaluation summarised in a report

by the institution concerned; 2) a site visit; 3) a preliminary evaluation, i.e. a report drafted by the team and provided to the institution for comments; and 4) the SAC's final decision. Degree programmes which have received an outstanding grade are assessed again after 8 years and those which received a positive grade – after 6 years, unless there are reasons justifying another evaluation at an earlier date. If a programme is granted conditional approval, SAC recommendations must be implemented by the institution concerned within a specified time limit, and another site visit may be undertaken. Where a negative evaluation is given, the minister responsible for higher education withdraws or suspends the authorisation of the institution concerned to provide a given degree programme.

The General Council of Higher Education (*Rada Główna Szkolnictwa Wyższego*) is an elective body of the higher education system. The council co-operates with the Minister of Science and Higher Education and with other governmental bodies in the establishment of the state educational policy in the area of higher education: 1) it issues opinions and proposes motions in all matters related to the higher education and science, 2) it issues opinions on legal regulations, 3) it issues opinions on the proposal of the state budget related to the higher education system and on the rules for distributing state subsidy to the higher education institutions, 4) it issues opinions on the proposals of statutes for higher education institutions. It is responsible for the definition of fields of study and the development of standards in education. These standards are implemented in accordance with a separate regulation by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

The Conference of Rectors of the Academic Higher Education Schools (*Konferencja Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich – KRASP*) - is in charge of so-called peer accreditation in Poland. This type of accreditation is voluntary and is carried out by 8 accreditation commissions established by rectors of different types of HEIs involved in the KRASP activities. The 8 commissions are supervised by the KRASP Accreditation Commission which was established in June 2001. Accreditation granted by KRASP commissions is considered as a marker of a high quality of teaching in a given institution/faculty.



According to the School Education Act of 1991, pre-school education is treated as the first level of the education system in Poland.

Pre-school upbringing includes support to a child's development and education starting from age 3 to the commencement of schooling.

The main aim of pre-school education has been defined by the core curriculum for pre-school education in the Regulation of the 23 of December 2008 by the Minister of National Education.

The main aim of pre-school education is as follows:

- To support children in the development of their talents and shaping of intellectual skills necessary for coping with everyday life and further education,
- Building of a system of values including directing children towards better recognition of good and evil,
- Shaping of emotional resistance,
- Development of social skills,
- Creation of conditions for playing and learning of children with different physical and intellectual abilities in one group,
- Care for children's health and their physical development,
- Construction of children's knowledge about the world, development of ability to present their own reflections in an understandable way,

- Introduction of children into the world of aesthetic values and development of self expression through music, drama and visual art,
- Shaping of a sense of belonging in a community, in a family, peer group, national community,
- Provision of better educational chances to children through supporting their curiosity, activity and independence and the skills and knowledge relevant to undertaking school education.

The above-mentioned aims are implemented in 15 areas of pre-school education. Detailed skills characteristic for children who complete pre-school education have been listed and allocated to every area.

The School Education Act of September 7, 1991 (with subsequent amendments) and the Teachers' Charter of 1982 defining teachers' rights and obligations (with further amendments) constitute the main legislative framework. Furthermore, the Act of 1990 on Local Self-Governments (with subsequent amendments) has imposed an obligation on local authorities to organize the pre-school education provision, including the provision of an obligatory one-year school preparatory class for 6-year olds. Therefore public kindergartens are administered and financed by local governments – communes.

A child aged 3 to 5 may receive pre-primary education, which is not compulsory, but all six year-old children attend either kindergartens (*przedszkola*) or pre-primary classes attached to primary schools (*oddziały przedszkolne*), as the Ministry of National Education and Sport has introduced one year of obligatory pre-school education starting with the school year 2004/2005 and therefore the age of commencement of compulsory education has been lowered from 7 to 6. Starting from 1 of September 2009 all 5-year olds have a statutory right to one year of pre-primary education in a kindergarten or in a different type of pre-school institution. Starting from 1 of September 2011 this statutory right will become an obligation. This is due to the new legislation (amendment to the School Education Act) aiming at the gradual lowering of the age of commencement of compulsory education in primary school from the age of 7 to 6.

In 2007/08 the attendance rate for children aged 3 to 5 (pre-school education is obligatory for 6-year olds) amounted to 47.3%. In the same school year 57.7% of all 5-year olds attended pre-primary institutions. At present, the increase in the participation of children in pre-school education is one of the government's priorities.

The majority of pre-school institutions are coeducational.

Parents' payments cover children's meals, extra lessons, and a so-called extra fee if a child attends the kindergarten for more than 5 hours a day. The fee is set by the commune. Every commune can organize support to financially disadvantaged families with young children in various forms, e.g. full or partial kindergarten fee waivers, or financial and material support.

2.1 Admission

The enrolment in public kindergartens is provided on the free access basis. The parents decide on the choice of a kindergarten, in most cases taking into consideration local institutions within the area of their own commune. The age of a child is the main criterion – children must have reached 3 years of age. In particular cases it has been made possible to admit children of 2.5 years of age upon the school head's approval (this change was introduced by the amendment of the School Education Act in 2003). In some pre-schools an additional limitation appears when the number of places is not sufficient for the children aged 3 to 5 years.

If a kindergarten is particularly attractive to local parents and the number of applications is higher than the number of places, the six-year-olds and children of single parents should be considered as having priority for admission (Regulation of 20 February 2004 by the Minister of National Education and Sport on admission to public pre-schools). The detailed admission rules for a particular pre-school are defined in its statutes.

2.2 Organization of time, groups and venue

The minimum working time for kindergartens and pre-school classes in schools is 5 hours a day. Most kindergartens work around 9 hours a day and are open 5 days a week. During the day children participate in activities organized or suggested by the teacher and they play spontaneously in the classroom or in the garden. The duration of activities depends on the age of children: for the 5 to 6-year olds it is around 30 minutes. For younger children (3 to 4 years of age) the duration of activities is around 15 minutes. As a rule, two teachers working in shifts take care of one section (group of children).

A kindergarten is open throughout the school year with the exception of breaks established by the running body upon the school head's request, which takes into consideration the parent's needs. Pre-school classes in primary schools function throughout the school year, apart from breaks established by the body running the school.

The number of children in one section cannot exceed 25, with then exception of integration and special pre-school classes, where the limits are lower (15-20, among which 3-5 are SEN children).

The main criterion used for grouping children is age. Most kindergartens are divided into 4 sections (three, four, five and six- year-olds). Use of other criteria is also possible (children's interests, talents or disabilities).

The new core curriculum recommends the following time table for pre-school education and care in kindergartens: one fifth of the total time should be devoted to play, one fifth to outdoor activities, one fifth to educational activities, and the remaining two fifths teachers ought to devote to care and organizational matters.

Other forms of pre-school education, apart from kindergartens and pre-school classes in schools, are as follows: pre-school centre, where classes take place on particular days of the week, and a kindergarten club where classes are offered everyday. The minimum opening time for both forms of pre-school education is 3 hours a day and 12 hours a week. Classes are offered in groups enrolling 3 to 25 children. According to the regulation the school running body in charge of the centre or club decides on the organizational matters, in particular assuring hygienic and safe conditions for educational activities.

2.3 Curriculum

The Regulation of 23 December 2008 by the Minister of National Education includes the current core curriculum for pre-school education, namely the “Core curriculum for pre-school education for kindergartens and pre-school classes in primary schools and other forms of pre-school education and care”.

This document constitutes the basis for preparation of individual curricula (so-called “author’s curricula”), for pre-schools by teachers and other persons, on the basis of which teachers organize their activities with children.

The curriculum considers teacher’s activities as an entity directed at encouraging children to interact with adults and peers. This means defining the aims, topics to be addressed and provision of comments on methodology.

Both kindergartens, pre-school classes and institutions offering other forms of pre-school education are obliged to follow a curriculum based on the core curriculum prepared by an individual teacher, a team of teachers or by other author(s). The selected curriculum has to be approved by the pre-school head.

In pre-school education there are no subjects as the term is understood in the school system. Education is considered globally and it is based on the main activity – play.

One of the important tasks of kindergartens, underlined in the work with six-year-old children, is teaching of basic reading and writing. Children participate in games and tasks aimed at the improvement of speech, visual and aural skills. A kindergarten pupil learns occasionally and spontaneously while playing. Activities aiming at the development of basic reading and writing skills should elicit the children’s interest in texts and motivate them to acquire these skills.

Teaching and upbringing within the framework of the core curriculum in pre-schools is free of charge, and the time devoted to implementation of this curriculum cannot be shorter than 5 hours a day.

Upon their parents’ consent the children can attend additional activities such as foreign language classes for which fees are paid. In some kindergartens, especially in cities, all children aged 5-6 are enrolled in additional English languages classes and the local self-government (*gmina*) pays for it. Such solutions are implemented on the *gmina’s* initiative and not very common.

There are no official recommendations or guidelines with respect to methods. In general, work with children is based on the spontaneous activity of the child. The kindergarten environment stimulates and directs this activity leading to creativity and learning. Play and activities stimulating development are the most common methods here.

2.4 Assessment

There are no formal principles for evaluation or monitoring of the pre-school children. A child graduating from pre-school education does not receive any document with an assessment of his/her knowledge and skills. The only exception is the so-called "balance-sheet of the child aged 6", which is connected with recruitment to primary schools (schools collect information on their future pupils one year in advance). This form of evaluation concerns only the health and physical development of a child. It is aimed at the selection of pupils that ought to be directed to special education.

The decision on the postponement of the start of compulsory education of a 7-year old is taken by the head of the primary school upon the opinion of the psychological-pedagogical support centre.

By force of the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport introducing the statutes of kindergartens, the teacher was made responsible for continuous observation of the child and for keeping up-to-date records of his/her achievements in order to become familiar with the child's needs and to make it possible to co-operate with medical, educational and psychological specialists. The information gathered helps the teacher in his/her daily work with the child and in the co-operation with the child's parents in the support of his/her development.

The new core curriculum defines an obligation for teachers to carry out an assessment of a child's readiness for undertaking school education (pre-school diagnosis). This assessment takes place at the beginning of the school year preceding the child's enrolment in grade 1 of primary school.

2.5 Teachers

Pre-primary school teachers have the same rights, duties and salaries as teachers in primary education (years 1 to 3).

The system of pre-primary teacher education and training is constantly changing. At present, the forms of education and training offered are: three-year teacher training colleges, teacher training higher education institutions (pedagogical academies), and teacher education faculties at universities.

Master's Degree studies seem to be the most popular route of training for teachers in pre-primary education.

2.6 Statistics

Table 1. Pre-school enrolment rate by age (2007/2008)

Age of children	Population	Children in pre-school institutions	% of total
3-6 years	1 416 015	871 918	59.4
3-5 years	1 054 142	528 488	47.3
5 years	351 867	203 196	57.7
6 years	361 873	343 430	94.9

Table 2. Kindergartens and pre-school classes in primary schools in 2007/2008

	Pre-school institutions	Kindergartens	Pre-school classes attached to primary schools
Total	16 902	7 844	9 058
Towns	7 068	5 246	1 822
Rural areas	9 834	2 598	7 236

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office)



The eight-year single structure primary school was the basic element of the Polish education system in the years 1961-1999. Since 1999/2000 children between the ages of 7 and 13 attend new primary schools (*szkoła podstawowa*) for a period of 6 years.

Primary education is comprehensive and obligatory for all pupils. Most primary schools in Poland are coeducational.

All non-public primary schools have to obtain the rights of public schools. At the end of primary school an external compulsory test is carried out.

One-year compulsory pre-school preparation of 6-year-olds has been introduced since the 1 of September 2004 as a part of the reform process. Early support to child's development activities have been also introduced (envisaged for children with diagnosed disabilities below the age of 6). Starting from September 2009 6-year olds can start education in grade one of primary school at their parents' discretion. Starting in 2012 they will start compulsory education in this grade (for details see introduction to chapter 2 and section 3.1).

The basic legislation for primary education is the School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with subsequent amendments). The reformed 6-year primary school, which started functioning in 1999/2000, is based on two new acts of parliament: the Act of 25 July 1998 amending the School Education Act and the Act of 8 January 1999 on the implementation of the reformed education system. The detailed legislative framework

can be found in the regulations issued by the minister of education. These concern, among other things, regulations on the core curricula, outline timetables, organization of the school year, rules of organization and assessment of final tests upon the completion of primary education.

General education in primary school is divided into two stages:

1. first stage of education including grade I to III of primary school – integrated teaching (in new core curriculum defined as early school education)
2. second stage of education including grades IV to VI of primary school.

Before the school year 2009/10 general objectives of the reformed 6-year primary school were included in the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2002 on Core Curricula for General Education (with further amendments). General objectives of the primary school were formulated as follows: to develop in children the ability of self-expression, reading and writing, the ability to solve arithmetic problems, the ability to use simple tools, to develop habits of social life, to develop cognitive abilities enabling mature understanding of the world, to develop conscious motivation to prepare for undertaking tasks requiring systematic intellectual and physical effort, development of the aesthetic and moral sensitivity of children and their creative abilities, etc.

Starting from September 2009 in the first grades of primary school a new core curriculum has been implemented based on the Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 on Core Curricula for Pre-school and General Education in particular types of schools. The main aims of general education in primary school according to the new core curriculum are as follows:

1. Pupils are to acquire a basic set of information/knowledge on facts, theories and practice related in particular to topics and phenomena close to their experience,
2. Pupils are to acquire skills related to the use of knowledge and information in carrying out tasks and solving problems,
3. Pupils are to develop attitudes related to efficient and responsible functioning in the contemporary world.

Public primary schools are free of charge. The parent council established in a given school can collect funds from voluntary donations by parents or from other sources. Such funds can be also spent on statutory school activities (education and care).

Pupils from families with a low monthly income are entitled to various types of support (e.g. financial contribution for purchase of textbooks, financial grant for extra-curricular activities, school grant for pupils in a particularly difficult situation).

3.1 Admission

Children are admitted to primary schools at the age of seven (they must reach 7 years of age during the calendar year in which they start compulsory education).

Before 2009, at the parents' request, a child who reached six before September 1 (the beginning of a school year) could also start education if he/she was mature enough from the psychological and physical points of view. The decision on admission was taken by the school head after consultation with a centre for psychological and pedagogical support.

A new amendment to the School Education Act has been prepared aiming at the gradual lowering of the initial age of starting compulsory education in primary school from the age of 7 to 6. During the following three school years (2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12) the parents can decide whether their 6-year old children commence education in primary school or not. Starting from 1 of September 2012 all 6-year olds will be obliged to start compulsory education in primary school.

In some well-justified cases, the admission may be postponed, but not longer than for one year. As regards children with special educational needs, school attendance may be adjourned up to the end of the calendar year when they have reached the age of 10.

Communes are divided into school districts in order to provide an even access to schools. All changes of school district boundaries require the approval of the Education Superintendent. Children are admitted easily to a school in their district. If there are places in a relevant class, children from another school district may be admitted to a school on their parents' request.

3.2 Organization of time, groups and venue

Lessons start at 8 a.m. and finish at 2 or 3 p.m. in the senior years if a school works in one shift. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. Breaks are considered sufficient if they last at least 5-10 minutes, but no longer than 25 minutes. Pupils attend primary school five days a week, from Monday to Friday.

Schools usually are used for one set of pupils per day – sometimes for two, working in shifts. The length of the school day is determined by legislation (outline timetables are prescribed for each age group).

The organization of the school year is defined by the Ministry of National Education in a separate regulation. The Ministry of National Education issues the calendar for the school year on an annual basis, specifying the dates of the start and the end of the school year and school holidays. The school year (for primary and secondary schools) is divided into two semesters.

Classes are organized:

- by age (1st level of division)
- by subject (foreign languages, computing, physical education – classes are subdivided into smaller groups)
- by level of competence (FL teaching classes are often subdivided).

3.3 Curriculum

The scope of primary education is determined by three elements: the core curriculum, outline timetables and requirement standards.

Core curricula have to be respected by each school.

Education in the 6-year primary school is divided into 2 stages:

- Stage I – grades 1 to 3, called integrated teaching;
- Stage II – grades 4 to 6.

The teaching at Stage 1 is meant to provide a smooth transition from pre-primary to school education. Educational activities are conducted according to a flexible timetable prepared by the teacher, in which the duration of lessons and breaks is influenced by the pupils' activity.

At the level of primary school there are at least 18 compulsory lessons (periods) per week (grades 1-3) and 24 in senior grades (4-6). To these figures 2 hours of religion or ethics classes (non-obligatory) should be added at all levels along with 3 to 4 hours left to the discretion of the school head.

Before September 2009, the core curriculum for this education stage was included in the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2002 on Core Curriculum for Pre-school and General Education. Starting with the school year 2009/10 the new core curriculum based on the Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 on Core Curricula for Pre-school and General Education in particular types of schools has been introduced for grade 1 of primary school. The new curriculum will be gradually introduced in the subsequent grades of primary school in the coming school years.

The outline timetable for this stage is included in the Annex to the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on Outline Timetables for Public Schools (for grades 2 and 3 in the school year 2009/10).

Stage 1 (grades 1-3, primary school)	
Compulsory educational activities	Number of teaching hours per week in a period of 3 years
Integrated teaching	54
Religion/ Ethics	6
Hours left to the school head's discretion	12*
Total	72

* 6 hours are devoted to foreign language teaching starting from 1 September 2008 (on the basis of amended Regulations by the Minister of National Education on Core Curriculum for Pre-school and General Education and on Outline Timetables for Public Schools).

The body running a school is allowed to increase the number of compulsory teaching hours by a number not exceeding 3 hours per week for one grade in one school year. However, the weekly number of compulsory teaching hours, as well as religion/ ethics classes and additional classes cannot exceed a maximum of 23 hours in grades 1 to 3.

Starting from September 2009 a new outline timetable has been introduced in grade 1 of primary school (Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 March 2009 amending the Regulation on Outline Timetables for Public Schools). According to the new regulation the total number of hours in grades 1 to 3 (religion/ethics and hours left to the school head's discretion excluded) will remain the same.

Stage 2 of the 6-year primary school covers grades 4, 5 and 6. Teaching at this stage is arranged by subjects listed in the outline timetable (Polish language, History and civics, Modern foreign language, Mathematics, Natural science, Music, Art, Technology, Computer science, Physical education, Religion/Ethics).

In addition to subjects, the following cross-curricular themes have been introduced at this stage:

1. health education
2. ecological education
3. reading and media education
4. education for society
 - a education for family life
 - b cultural heritage of the region
 - c patriotic and civic education

The school head is responsible for the inclusion of the cross-curricular themes in the school curriculum.

Core curriculum for this education stage is included in the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2002 on Core Curriculum for Pre-school and General Education (with further amendments).

The outline timetable for this stage is included in the Annex of the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on Outline Timetables for Public Schools.

Stage 2 (grades 4-6, primary school)		
No.	Compulsory educational activities	Number of teaching hours per week in a period of 3 years
1.	Polish language	16
2.	History and civics	4
3.	Modern Foreign Languages	8
4.	Mathematics	12

5.	Natural science	9
6.	Music*	2
7.	Art*	2
8.	Technology	2
9.	Computer science	2
10	Physical education	9 + 3
11.	Lessons with Class Tutor	3
Total		72
Religion /Ethics		6
Hours left to the School Head's discretion		9
Total		87

* These subjects can be combined in one art subject

On the basis of the outline timetable, the school head develops the school timetable, divided into school years.

The body running a school is allowed to make an increase in the number of compulsory teaching hours by up to, but not, exceeding 3 hours per week for one grade in one school year. However, the weekly number of compulsory teaching hours, as well as religion/ ethics classes and additional classes, cannot exceed a maximum of 28 hours in grades 4 to 6.

Teachers have the right to choose forms and methods of teaching. Methods depend on the number of pupils per class and on school equipment (e.g. the number of computers, DVD players, etc.). Some lessons require the class to be divided into smaller groups (e.g. foreign languages, technology or computer science).

The teacher chooses a school curriculum and a textbook (textbooks are chosen from the list approved by the Minister of National Education). The teacher has also a right to prepare his/her own curriculum. Every curriculum is approved for the use in school by the respective school head.

3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

The education system reform encompasses the introduction of a new coherent standardized evaluation system. It includes internal evaluation and external evaluation.

Internal evaluation is carried out by school teachers on the basis of requirements defined in relation to the curricula implemented in the given school. This type of evaluation aims at the assessment of educational attainments of pupils, and it focuses on support to the pupil's development.

Within the internal evaluation process pupils are assessed separately in each subject. Evaluation depends entirely on the teacher of the given subject. The results of the assessment carried out during a school year are taken into account in the end-of-year assessment. Assessment is divided into partial, periodical (semester) and annual assessment.

In grades 1-3 of primary school the assessment is descriptive and applies separately to educational attainments and behaviour. Both kinds of assessment are prepared once a year. Starting from grade 4, the teacher has the following scale of marks at his/her disposal: 6 – excellent, 5 – very good, 4 – good, 3 – satisfactory, 2 – acceptable, 1 – unsatisfactory. School marks as well as the criteria on which they are based should be open to the pupil and his/her parents.

Pupils also receive marks for their behaviour (conduct) according to the scale: excellent, very good, good, acceptable, unacceptable, inadmissible. The mark for behaviour (conduct) should not influence subject marks or promotion to a higher grade or graduation. However, under specific circumstances the pedagogical council of the school can decide upon pupil's repetition of a given grade or stop his/her graduation from school due to his/her inadmissible behaviour.

Moreover, pupils may take a verifying examination if the semester or annual mark, given by the teacher, is too low in their or their parents' opinion. This exam is also organized for pupils, whose results cannot be assessed due to other reasons such as an individual study programme, out-of-school study or a long period of illness.

External evaluation is carried out by institutions external to the school itself – the Central Examination Commission and regional examination commissions – and it is based on the national examination standards. These standards are defined by the relevant minister of education and announced in the regulations. This type of evaluation is applied at the end of a particular level of education in order to assess its results. The Central Examination Commission and the 8 regional examination commissions have been established in order to prepare and implement this type of evaluation.

The reform of the school system has introduced an external standardized test upon the completion of the primary school (grade 6). For the first time it was conducted in 2002 by the Regional Examination Commissions. The test is obligatory for all pupils and taking this test is one of the conditions for graduation from primary school. Only pupils with moderate and severe mental handicaps are exempt from this obligation. The test aims at the assessment of skills defined in the national standards. The skills are divided into 5 areas: reading, writing, reasoning, use of information and practical application of knowledge. All pupils take this test, as the results are used for information purposes only, and it does not give the basis for any selection or ranking of pupils. Every pupil who graduated from a primary school has to be admitted to a lower secondary school in his/her school area.

3.5 Guidance and counselling

Institutions of special assistance to pupils (i.e. public centres for psychological and pedagogical support) perform important diagnostic and therapeutic functions. These functions include early detection of psychosomatic disorders, which is a requisite of success when starting primary education, and diagnosing predispositions and contraindications relating to post-primary school selection.

There are 560 public centres for psychological and pedagogical support in Poland (including 29 specialist ones). Their tasks include the following: support to children, youth, parents and teachers in dealing with learning difficulties, and behaviour problems also connected with drugs, alcohol etc; and therapy in the case of development problems and prevention of addictions.

Some large schools employ special teachers, psychologists, or speech therapists who organize special classes and contribute to the solving of individual or internal school problems.

3.6 Teachers

In the grades 1-3, one teacher teaches all subjects (integrated teaching), while in the grades 4-6 each subject is taught by a different teacher and pupils change classroom for each subject. To date, teachers have been prepared to teach one subject. The teacher education and training standards (introduced on the basis of the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 7 September 2004 on teacher training standards) envisage preparation of teachers as specialists in 2 subjects. Acquisition of computing skills and a good command of one foreign language have also become obligatory.

Teacher education and training consists of preparation in subject matter (biology, mathematics, etc.) and pedagogical training (teaching methods, psychology, pedagogy). Teachers may receive their initial education and training in three-year teacher training colleges awarding the title of *licencjat* or a diploma. Graduates with *licencjat* may complement their education with two-year university study courses and obtain a Master's Degree (*magister*).

Many primary school teachers who have completed higher education are graduates of universities or teacher higher education schools (pedagogical academies). Master's Degree studies seem to be the most popular route of training for teachers in primary education.

The legal act defining the professional status and conditions of service of teachers employed in the school education sector is the Act of the 26th of January 1982 – the Teachers' Charter (with further amendments).

According to the Teachers' Charter, the post of teacher may be taken by a person who has completed either a higher education course with appropriate pedagogical preparation or a course of study in a teacher training establishment (college). Any person graduating from a higher education institution with pedagogical preparation or a teacher training college is recognised as a qualified teacher within the specialisation he/she has completed.

A teacher starting his/her first ever job undertakes a year-long *staz* in order to obtain a promotion to contract teacher, and then embarks on another *staz* of 2 years and 9 months leading to promotion to appointed teacher. The appointment does not lose its validity if a break in service has not lasted longer than 5 years.

3.7 Statistics

Table 1. Number of schools and pupils, 2007/08

Type of school	Schools	Pupils
Primary school	14330	2375205

Special education included.

Table 2. Enrolment rates, 2007/08

Type of school	Age group	% of youth population	
		Gross	Net
Primary school	7-12	98.2	96.8

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office)



Before 1999 there was no distinction in the Polish education system between lower and upper secondary schools. The lower secondary level was included in the 8-year single structure school. In the school year 1999/2000 a new type of school, i.e. the *gimnazjum*, was established. This school constitutes lower secondary level (ISCED 2).

Introduction of the lower secondary level resulted in the reform of the upper secondary school system (ISCED 3). As a result the following post-gymnasium schools are open to candidates who have successfully graduated from gymnasias:

- a** *liceum ogólnokształcące* (3-year general secondary school)
- b** *liceum profilowane* (3-year specialised secondary school)
- c** *technikum* (4-year technical secondary school)
- d** *zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa* (2 to 3-year basic vocational school).

At the levels of upper secondary/post-secondary education in Poland there are also the following types of institutions:

- e** *uzupełniająca liceum ogólnokształcące* (2-year supplementary general secondary school)
- f** *technikum uzupełniające* (3-year supplementary secondary technical school)

Secondary education (both lower and upper) is based on the following legislation:

- the School Education Act of 7 September 1991 with further amendments,

- the Act of 8 January 1999 on the implementation of the reformed education system, with further amendments,
- the Teachers' Charter of 26 January 1982 with further amendments.

Moreover, the functioning of secondary schools is based on the regulations by the relevant minister of education. The most important of them are:

- Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 on Core Curricula for Pre-school Education and General Education in particular types of schools
- Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2002 on Core Curricula for Pre-school and General Education with further amendments
- Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on Outline Timetables in Public Schools
- Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 September 2004 on Conditions and Rules for Pupil Evaluation, Eligibility for Assessment, Promotion and Examinations and Tests in Public Schools with further amendments

The most important changes to the structure of secondary education have been introduced by the act amending the following acts: the Teachers' Charter, the School Education Act and the Act on the Implementation of the Education System Reform. As a result the reformed upper secondary schools have become operational since the school year 2002/03.

4.1 Lower secondary education (*gimnazjum*)

The gymnasium is an institution, which was introduced in the school year 1999/2000, offering 3-years of full-time general lower secondary education for pupils who have completed the reformed 6-year primary school. It is compulsory for all pupils. Study covers grades 1 to 3 (pupils aged 13 to 16) and it is not divided into stages. The gymnasium is concluded with an external exam giving access to upper secondary education.

Education in a gymnasium while supporting the pupil's personal development and introducing him/her into active participation in the society aims in particular at:

- Introduction of pupils into science through becoming familiar with the language, notions, definitions and methods relevant to particular subjects at the level making possible their further education,
- Development of pupil's individual interests,
- Introduction of pupils into the world of culture and art,
- Development of pupils' social skills through the acquisition of positive experience in functioning in a peer group.

The Minister of National Education has overall responsibility for these state and municipally funded institutions (local-government authorities, called *gminy* – are responsible for running these schools). They can be public or private establishments. Gymnasias are in most cases co-educational. No tuition fees are payable in public establishments. Non-public gymnasias are run by associations, foundations, religious organizations and

individual persons. Gymnasia can be run as separate institutions or in clusters of schools (together with another school of a different level e.g. with a primary school or general upper secondary school).

Financial support can be offered to pupils (e.g. school social benefit, school support benefit, a school grant for good school or sports results, the Minister of Education's Scholarship granted to a particularly gifted secondary school pupils).

4.1.1 Admission

The only admission requirement is successful completion of the 6-year primary school and the attainment of the primary school leaving certificate. Starting from the year 2003, the primary school leaving certificate has been issued together with the certificate by the Regional Examination Commission of the external standardized test's results. The test is obligatory for all pupils.

4.1.2 Organization of time, groups and venue

See section 3.2 (Primary education).

4.1.3 Curriculum

Core curricula for gymnasia were included in the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2002 on Core Curricula for Pre-school and General Education.

A new core curriculum has been introduced in a Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 on Core Curricula for Pre-School Education and General Education in particular types of schools. It has been introduced starting from 1 September 2009 in grade 1 of the gymnasium. The text below is related to the core curriculum of 2002 (so in the school year 2009/10 – grades 2 and 3 of gymnasium).

The core curriculum has to be respected by every school – but the teachers are free to follow one of the selected curricula or to prepare their own as well as use various textbooks (selected from a list approved by the Minister).

The teaching at this stage is arranged in subjects, taught by specialist teachers.

Beside separate subjects, the following "educational paths" have been introduced at this stage:

- philosophical education
- reading and media education
- health education
- ecological education
- regional education – cultural heritage of the region
- civil defence

- European education
- Polish culture in the context of Mediterranean civilization.

The school head is responsible for the inclusion of these paths in the school curriculum. Implementation of these paths is assured by subject teachers through the inclusion of their content in the subject curricula.

The outline timetable for this stage was included in the Annex of the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on the Outline Timetables for Public Schools with further amendments.

Stage 3 (grades 1-3 of the gymnasium)		
No.	Compulsory educational activities	Number of teaching hours per week over a period of 3 years
	Polish language	14
	History	6
	Civic education	3
	Modern Foreign Language	9
	Mathematics	12
	Physics and astronomy	4
	Chemistry	4
	Biology	4
	Geography	4
	Fine art/ Music*	3
	Technology	2
	Computer studies	2
	Physical education	9 + 3
	Lessons with Class Tutor	3
	Total	82
	Religion /Ethics	6
	Hours left to the School Head's discretion	6
	Total	94

* can be taught as one Art subject

The non-compulsory subjects are as follows: religion or ethics (6 hours) and 6 hours left to the discretion of the school head. These can be devoted to teaching compulsory subjects or educational paths or to the organization of compensation classes for groups of pupils.

On the basis of the outline timetable, the school head develops the school timetable, divided into school years.

The body running the school is allowed to increase the number of compulsory teaching hours by a number not exceeding 3 hours per week for one grade in one school year. The weekly number of compulsory teaching hours, additional teaching hours and religion/ethics classes cannot exceed a total maximum of 31 hours in all grades of the lower secondary school.

Starting from September 2009 a new outline timetable has been introduced in grade 1 of lower secondary school (Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 March 2009 amending the Regulation on Outline Timetables for Public Schools). According to the new regulation the total number of hours (religion/ethics and hours left to the school head's discretion excluded) will be increased from 82 to 88.

For forms and methods of teaching – see section 3.3 (Curriculum in primary education).

4.1.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Internal evaluation is the same as that in primary education (see section 3.4).

A pupil is promoted to a higher grade if s/he has received “acceptable” (2) marks or above for all compulsory subjects at the end of the school year. If s/he receives an “unsatisfactory” mark in one subject, s/he can take a resit examination in this subject. A pupil who has failed the resit is not promoted and remains in the same grade.

The teachers' council of a gymnasium may decide on conditional promotion of a pupil who either has received mark 1 (unsatisfactory) in one subject only, or has not been eligible for assessment having more than 50% absence from school. Pupils can be granted a conditional promotion only once during their time at the gymnasium.

If the pupil has missed more than 50% of compulsory classes and if there is no basis for assessment, s/he can take a so-called classification examination on an agreed day.

At the end of each school year pupils receive certificates in a standardised form.

At the end of the 3rd year of the gymnasium, an external standardised examination has been introduced. For the first time it was conducted in 2002 by Regional Examination Commissions. This examination tests abilities, skills and knowledge in the field of humanities and science. Starting 2009 the examination includes a third part – foreign language proficiency. It is compulsory for all pupils. The results are indicated on the gymnasium leaving certificate. They are comparable on the national scale and have strong bearing on admission to upper secondary schools.

4.1.5 Guidance and counselling

The gymnasium is a compulsory, general education school. It provides education by subjects, in the widest possible variety, but at the basic level. One of the aims of this stage is to identify the abilities and interests of the pupils and to help them make a rational choice of route in further education.

For information on the public centres for psychological and pedagogical support see section 3.5 (Primary education). These centres are also focused on counselling and guidance when a child chooses a post-gymnasium school or his/her future profession.

For information on the psychological support in schools see section 3.5.

Since 2003, School Career Centres (*Szkolne Ośrodki Kariery – SZOK*) have been created in schools at lower (*gimnazjum*) and upper secondary level. Currently, 361 centres are operational. The educational counsellors who work in them are responsible for the implementation of a specific guidance system for each school. Their role is to provide pupils with information on possible educational pathways, the local labour market, labour laws, etc., and to help them acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to make their future career choices. They offer counselling to pupils and parents, individually or in groups.

Vocational guidance is part of the national core curriculum (Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 with further amendments) as a horizontal theme. Schools must integrate it into their detailed curricula in separate subjects such as e.g. civic education.

At the level of ISCED 2 the subject called Civic Education (compulsory; 3 teaching hours per week in a period of 3 years) comprises elements of vocational guidance and consists of three sub-subjects: Family education, Civic Education, and Education for the active participation in the economic life of the country. The latter contains elements of vocational guidance.

The new core curriculum (Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008) also includes elements of vocational guidance in the compulsory subject Knowledge about Society (entrepreneurship, economic activity, choice of future school and profession). This subject is taught for a minimum of 65 hours over the period of 3 years. The new core curriculum has been introduced in grade one of lower secondary school starting in the school year 2009/2010.

4.1.6 Teachers and trainers

Teachers employed in the 3-year gymnasias ought to have – at the minimum – qualifications attested by the title of *licencjat*.

Many gymnasium school teachers who have completed higher education are graduates of universities or teacher higher education schools (pedagogical academies). Master's

Degree studies seem to be the most popular route of training for teachers in lower secondary education.

See also: Section 3.6.

4.1.7 Statistics

Table 1. Number of schools and pupils, 2007/08

Type of school	Schools	Pupils
Gymnasium	7142	1453203

Special education included.

Table 2. Enrolment rates, 2007/08

Type of school	Age group	% of youth population	
		Gross	Net
Gymnasium	13-15	101.0	95.3

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office).

4.2 General upper secondary education

The following general post-gymnasium schools are open to candidates who have successfully graduated from gymnasia:

- *liceum ogólnokształcące* (3-year general secondary school) offering 3 years of full-time general upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 19. It offers the Matura examination necessary for admission to higher education.
- *liceum profilowane* (3-year specialised secondary school) – an institution established in 2002/03 offering 3 years of full-time general and specialised upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 19. It offers the *Matura* examination necessary for admission to higher education.

At the level of upper secondary/post-secondary education in Poland there is also the *uzupełniająca liceum ogólnokształcące* (2-year supplementary general secondary school) – an institution introduced in 2004/05 offering 2 years of full- or part-time general upper secondary education for students aged 18 to 20 in preparation for the *Matura* examination. This school is intended for the leavers of the 2/3-year vocational school. On the basis of the decision by the Ministry of National Education this institution is considered to be at the level ISCED 3.

Upper secondary education is not divided into cycles.

General upper secondary schools are non-compulsory and mostly coeducational.

The main objective of general upper secondary education is to prepare young people for admission to higher education establishments of various types.

Education in public secondary schools is free of charge. In the case of non-public schools the bodies running the schools define the tuition fee. Many schools allow for fee waivers or reductions for the most talented pupils or for those from underprivileged families.

Apart from the financial support offered to pupils in gymnasia (see section 4.1) some additional support is open to pupils in upper secondary schools. The latter includes the Prime Minister's Scholarship for pupils with outstanding results and EU Grants for Pupils awarded to students from rural areas or small towns.

4.2.1 Admission

The number of points indicated on the gymnasium leaving certificate (based on results achieved in chosen areas of study and other achievements) including the points received at the gymnasium examination give the basis for a pupils' admission to an upper secondary school.

The detailed admission rules are defined by each post-gymnasium school which opens admissions to new pupils.

The winners of regional competitions (subject competitions which encompass the curriculum of at least one subject) are admitted to the post-gymnasium school of their choice regardless of the criteria applied to other candidates.

4.2.2 Organization of time, groups and venue

The use of school buildings and the organization of school time are arranged according to the same rules as those established for primary schools (see section 3.2) and lower secondary schools (see section 4.1.2).

4.2.3 Curriculum

Core curricula for general education in all types of upper secondary schools are included in the Annex to the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2002 on Core Curriculum for Pre-school and General Education with further amendments.

They are divided by subjects: Polish Language, Modern Foreign Language, Latin and Ancient Culture, Mathematics, History, Civics, Geography, Biology, Physics and Astronomy, Chemistry, Technology, Information Technology, Art, Music, Defence Training, Physical education, Ethics (optional), Philosophy (optional), Education for Family Life, Cultural Studies, Entrepreneurship, Minority Language.

Beside separate subjects, the following cross-curricular themes have been introduced in the *liceum ogólnokształcące* (general upper secondary school), in the *liceum profilowane* (upper secondary specialized school) and in the *technikum* (upper secondary technical school):

1. reading and media education
2. ecological education
3. European education
4. philosophical education
5. health education
6. regional education – cultural heritage of the region
7. preparation for family life.

In all upper secondary schools there are obligatory core curricula defined for the basic level of teaching. In general upper secondary schools (*liceum ogólnokształcące*), however, starting from grade 1, there are 2 to 4 subjects chosen to be taught at the advanced level. The advanced level of teaching can be implemented for a given class or a group of pupils from different classes.

The curriculum for each subject is structured around the following topics: aims, objectives, content and expected achievements.

The core curriculum has to be respected by the school – but the teachers are free to follow one of the selected curricula with the use of variety of textbooks (selected from the list approved by the Ministry). They can also prepare their own curriculum. Every school curriculum has to be approved by the school head.

The number of teaching hours per week (the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on the Outline Timetables for Public Schools) over a period of 3 years in the general upper secondary school is as follows:

Compulsory subjects	Number of lessons per week over a period of 3 years	
Polish language	14	
2 foreign languages	15	
History	5	
Civic education	2	
Culture studies	1	
Mathematics	9	
Physics and Astronomy	3	+2
Chemistry	3	
Biology	3	

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Geography	3
Introduction to entrepreneurship	2
Information technology	2
Physical Education	9
Defence Training	2
Lessons for Class Tutor	3
Lessons for additional subject teaching envisaged in the curriculum	10
Total	88

Additionally, there are 6 non-compulsory hours of religion or ethics and 4 hours left to the school head's discretion, which gives a total of 98 hours of classes a week in a three-year cycle.

The number of teaching hours in the 3-year specialized lyceum (the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on the Outline Timetables for Public Schools) is as follows:

Compulsory subjects	Number of lessons per week over a period of 3 years	
Polish language	14	
2 foreign languages	15	
History	5	
Civic Education	2	
Culture studies	1	
Mathematics	9	
Physics and Astronomy	3	+2
Chemistry	3	
Biology	3	
Geography	3	
Introduction to entrepreneurship	2	
Information technology	2	

Physical education	9
Defence training	2
Lessons for Class Tutor	3
Lessons for profile teaching	13
Total	91

Additionally, there are 6 non-compulsory hours of religion or ethics and 5 hours left to the school head's discretion, which gives a total of 102 hours of classes a week in a three-year cycle.

The body running the school is allowed to increase the number of compulsory teaching hours by up to but not exceeding 3 hours per week for one grade in one school year in all types of upper secondary schools.

However, the weekly number of compulsory lessons, additional lessons and religion/ethics classes cannot exceed 35 hours in total in all grades of the 3-year upper secondary general school and the 3-year specialized upper secondary school.

For information on forms and methods of teaching see section 3.3.

4.2.4 Assessment, progression and certification

The system of pupil evaluation for all types of upper secondary schools is based on the Act of 25 July 1998 amending the Act on the Education System and Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 7 September 2004 on Conditions and Rules for Pupil Evaluation, Eligibility for Assessment, Promotion and Examinations and Tests in Public Schools with further amendments.

Internal evaluation is the same as that in primary education (see section 3.4).

Progression is the same as in lower secondary schools (see section 4.1.4).

On completion of the 3-year general upper secondary school (*liceum ogólnokształcące*) pupils are awarded a school-leaving certificate (*świadectwo ukończenia liceum ogólnokształcącego*), on the basis of school results, without a final examination. It mentions the subjects and the marks obtained at the end of the final year. It gives access to the *Matura* examination or to post-secondary education.

At the end of upper secondary education (except at basic vocational schools), starting from the school year 2004/05, pupils may sit an *egzamin maturalny (Matura)*, a new external national examination, which is compulsory only for receipt of the *Matura* certificate and to gain access to higher education.

The old type of *Matura* examination consisted of written and oral parts. Topics for the written part were set by regional educational authorities (*kuratoria*), but the assessment was carried out by teachers. The oral parts were wholly the responsibility of teachers.

The new *Matura* examination is held at the end of the 3-year general or specialised lyceum (*liceum ogólnokształcące* or *liceum profilowane*) and at the end of the 4-year *technikum*. It consists of a written part, prepared and assessed by Regional Examination Commissions, and oral examinations, prepared and assessed by school teachers. The new *Matura* examination was introduced in the *liceum ogólnokształcące* and *liceum profilowane* in 2005. It was introduced in 2006 in the *liceum uzupełniające*. The Central Examination Commission and 8 Regional Examination Commissions are wholly responsible for the new *Matura* examination, as well as for all external evaluation in Poland.

All public upper secondary schools, and those non-public schools that possess the rights of public schools, issue certificates in a standardized form (the format of these documents and rules for their completion them in are defined in respective regulations).

A graduate of a post-gymnasium school receives a school-leaving certificate. A graduate who graduated with distinction, receives a school-leaving certificate with distinction.

A graduate of a general post-gymnasium school: general upper secondary school, specialised upper secondary school, and supplementary general upper secondary school, who passed the matriculation exam (*Matura*) receives a *Matura* certificate. The certificate includes the results of the written and oral parts of the *Matura* exam. The *Matura* certificate and its annexes are issued by the regional examination commissions. The *Matura* certificate is a document allowing the holder to apply for admission to higher education institutions.

4.2.5 Guidance and counselling

For information on the public centres for psychological and pedagogical support and on psychological support in schools see section 3.5 (Primary education) and 4.1.5 (Lower secondary education).

For Guidance services at school see section 4.1.5

Apart from the educational assistance and counselling centres supervised by the Ministry of National Education, Centres of Information and Career Planning operate at the district level (under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour) offering job counselling services to the unemployed, job-seekers and also school graduates and school students. Centres of Information and Career Planning are specialised institutions operating within the regional labour offices. They provide information about the labour market and opportunities for acquiring qualifications. They also support their clients in making decisions about their professional careers. Currently 51 such centres are operational in Poland, they employ vocational counsellors, educational counsellors and psychologists.

At the level of ISCED 3 the subject that is most related to vocational guidance is "Introduction to entrepreneurship" (compulsory subject; 2 teaching hours in a period of 3 years).

4.2.6 Teachers and trainers

Upper secondary school teachers should have university education (*magister* degree) or equivalent.

Master's Degree studies seem to be the most popular route of training for teachers in upper secondary education.

See also sections 3.6 and 4.1.6 (Teachers and trainers).

4.2.7 Statistics

Table 1. Number of schools and pupils, 2007/08

Type of school	Schools	Pupils
General upper secondary and supplementary schools	2471	715245
Specialised upper secondary schools	1184	110450

Sports and special upper secondary schools have been included.

Table 2. Enrolment rates, 2007/08

Type of school	Age groups	% of youth population	
		Gross	Net
General and specialised upper secondary schools*	16-18	61.7	50.3

* including post-primary general upper secondary schools for adults and post-gymnasium supplementary general upper secondary schools.

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office)

4.3 Vocational upper secondary education

The main objective of vocational upper secondary education is to prepare young people for the world of work.

For general legislation related to secondary education see section 4 (Secondary education).

The functioning of upper secondary vocational schools is also regulated by the following legislation:

- Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 26 June 2007 (with further amendments) on occupational classification in vocational education
- A series of regulations by the Minister of National Education on core curricula for training in particular occupations (issued gradually)
- Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 1 July 2002 (with further amendments) on practical vocational training
- Regulation by the Council of Ministers of 28 May 1996 (with further amendments) on vocational preparation of youth and their remuneration.

The following post-gymnasium vocational schools are open to candidates who have successfully graduated from gymnasias:

- *technikum* (4-year technical secondary school) – institution offering 4 years of full-time technical and vocational upper secondary education for students aged 16 to 20. It offers the *Matura* examination necessary for admission to higher education and an external vocational examination leading to vocational qualifications.
- *zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa* (2 to 3-year basic vocational school) – institution offering 2 to 3 years of full-time upper secondary vocational education for students aged 16 to 18/19. Upon passing the external vocational examination leavers have access to a trade or occupation or to the *liceum uzupełniające* or *technikum uzupełniające*.

At the level of upper secondary education in Poland there is also the *technikum uzupełniające* – 3-year supplementary secondary technical school – an institution introduced in 2004/05 offering 3 years of full- or part-time vocational upper secondary education for students aged 18 to 21 in preparation for the *Matura* examination. This school is intended for the leavers of the 2/3-year vocational school. On the basis of a decision of the Ministry of National Education this institution is considered to be at the level ISCED 3.

For funding and financial support to pupils see section 4.2 (General upper secondary education).

4.3.1 Admission

See section 4.2.1. (Admission to general upper secondary education).

4.3.2 Organization of time, groups and venue

The use of school buildings and the organization of school time are arranged according to the same rules as those established for primary schools (see section 3.2) and lower secondary schools (see section 4.1.2).

4.3.3 Curriculum

For general information on core curricula, subjects and cross curricular themes see section 4.2.3 (Curriculum for general upper secondary education).

Vocational training in particular occupations listed in the classification of occupations for vocational education is implemented on the basis of core curricula issued separately for every occupation.

The number of teaching hours in the 4-year *technikum* (the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on the Outline Timetables for Public Schools) is as follows:

Compulsory subjects	Number of lessons per week over a period of 4 years	
Polish language	14	
2 modern foreign languages	15	
History	5	
Civic education	2	
Cultural studies	1	
Mathematics	9	
Physics and astronomy	3	+1
Chemistry	3	
Biology	3	
Geography	3	
Introduction to entrepreneurship	2	
Information technology	2	
Physical education	12	
Defence training	2	
Lessons for Class Tutor	2	
Lessons for vocational training according to vocational curriculum for a given profession	50	
Total	129	

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Additionally, there are 8 non-compulsory hours (45-minute periods) of religion or ethics and 5 hours left to the school head's discretion, which gives a total of 142 hours of classes a week in a four-year cycle.

The number of teaching hours in the 2-year basic vocational school (the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on the Outline Timetables for Public Schools) is as follows:

Compulsory subjects	Number of lessons per week over a period of 2 years, grades 1 to 2
Polish language	5
Modern foreign languages	3
History and civic education	2
Mathematics	4
Physics and astronomy	2
Geography with environmental protection	2
Introduction to entrepreneurship	1
Physical education	6
Defence training	2
Lessons for Class Tutor	2
Vocational training according to relevant curriculum	34
Total	63

Moreover, there are 4 non-compulsory hours of religion or ethics and 3 hours left to the school head's discretion, which gives a total of 70 hours of classes a week in a two-year cycle.

The body running the school is allowed to increase the number of compulsory teaching hours by up to, but not exceeding 3 hours per week for one grade in one school year in all types of upper secondary schools.

According to the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002 on the Outline Timetables in Public Schools the weekly number of compulsory lessons, additional lessons and religion/ ethics classes cannot exceed 35 hours in total in all grades of the 4-year upper secondary technical school and basic vocational school.

The proportions between general education and vocational education (including theoretical and practical vocational subjects) are specified in general teaching plans relevant for

the given type of school. The general teaching plans are prepared by the Minister of National Education. In the case of technical secondary schools vocational subjects comprise 36% of all hours envisaged for learning in the entire cycle of education. In basic vocational schools vocational subjects comprise 53% of all hours envisaged for education.

Practical vocational training is organized in the form of practical training classes at school or vocational placements. Practical training classes are aimed at the acquisition of vocational skills necessary for a particular vocational career. They may be carried out in school workshops and laboratories, school farms, continuing education centres or practical training centres. In basic vocational schools practical training accounts for around 50% of all hours envisaged for vocational subjects. In technical secondary schools this proportion varies from 10% to 38%.

As far as the number of occupations and vocational education specialisations is concerned, the 2007 classification of occupations in vocational education includes 202 professions.

In the structure of vocational education as a whole, within seven groups of specialisations in basic vocational schools and within 16 groups of specialisations in secondary vocational schools, the technological-engineering groups dominate (about 25% of pupils), then come the services to population groups (21%), and the economics and administration groups (16% of pupils). These are followed by other groups such as social groups, production and processing, health services, architecture and building.

Subject teachers have the right to choose methods of teaching, depending on the number of pupils per class and on school equipment (e.g. the number of computers, DVDs, specialist equipment, workshops).

Teachers are free to choose textbooks from the list approved by the Ministry.

4.3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Internal evaluation is the same as that in primary education (see section 3.4).

For information on the progression and certification of pupils see section 4.1.4 (Lower secondary school).

At the end of upper secondary technical education (*technikum* and *technikum uzupełniające*) pupils may sit the *egzamin maturalny (Matura)*, a new external national examination, which was introduced in the *technikum* in 2006 and in the *technikum uzupełniające* in 2007.

For detailed information on the *Matura* examination see section 4.2.4.

In all types of vocational upper secondary schools pupils may take an examination confirming vocational qualifications called the vocational examination which is an examination assessing the level of knowledge and skills in the given occupation defined in the examination standards. The examination is not obligatory.

The new external vocational examination has replaced the *egzamin z nauki zawodu* (in basic vocational schools) and the *egzamin z przygotowania zawodowego* (in *technika*).

The vocational examination is held in two forms: written and practical. The examination is organized by the relevant Regional Examination Commission and aims at the assessment of students' knowledge and practical skills related to a given occupation. The scope of the examination is defined in the vocational qualifications examination standards (the Regulation by the Minister of National Education and Sport of 3 February 2003).

A graduate of a vocational post-gymnasium school e.g. a technical upper secondary school, supplementary technical upper secondary school or basic vocational school who passes the vocational examination, receives a diploma confirming vocational qualifications. The diploma includes the name of the occupation for which the qualifications have been confirmed and the results of the vocational examination (both written and practical parts). Diplomas confirming vocational qualifications are issued by regional examination commissions. The diploma confirming vocational qualifications can be accompanied, at the graduate's request, by a supplement describing the graduate's qualifications or by a description of the occupation based on the core curricula for training in a given occupation. The supplement can be issued in a foreign language.

4.3.5 Guidance and counselling

For general guidance and counselling see section 4.2.5.

For guidance services at school see section 4.1.5

For guidance services outside school see section 4.2.5

In vocational education practical vocational training is organized in school workshops, school laboratories, continuing education centres, practical training centres, with employers, and on individual farms; it applies to students of public upper secondary schools offering vocational education as well as to young workers/apprentices undergoing practical training as part of their job preparation course.

Practical training is organized by the school. Training for apprentices is organized by their employers.

Practical vocational training has two forms: traineeships and practical training classes.

Practical training classes are organized in order to teach the students and young workers the vocational skills necessary to start work in a given profession. Traineeships are organized for students to enable them to apply and further develop the acquired skills and knowledge in real working conditions.

4.3.6 Teachers and trainers

Upper secondary school teachers in a *technikum* or *technikum uzupełniające* should have completed a university education (*magister* degree) or its equivalent.

Upper secondary school teachers in basic vocational schools ought to have completed a *licencjat* degree or equivalent.

Master's Degree studies seem to be the most popular route of training for teachers in upper secondary education.

See also sections 3.6 and 4.1.6 (Teachers and trainers).

Practical vocational training is delivered by teachers of practical vocational training. In case of the training provided by an employer, it is delivered by employees having teaching qualifications called instructors of practical vocational training.

Traineeships organized in firms or on farms are supervised by employers or nominated employees of the firm or the individual farmers. The supervisors of traineeships should have teaching qualifications.

4.3.7 Statistics

Table 1. Number of schools and pupils, 2007/08

Type of school	Schools	Pupils
Technical and vocational upper secondary schools*	2557	562590
Basic vocational schools	1769	235647

* This category also includes supplementary secondary technical schools (*technika uzupełniająca*) and special schools.

Table 2. Enrolment rates, 2007/08

Type of school	Age groups	% of youth population	
		Gross	Net
Technical and vocational upper secondary schools*	16-18	37.7	26.0
Basic vocational schools**	16-18	14.7	13.0

*This category also includes including post-primary vocational secondary schools and supplementary secondary technical schools (*technika uzupełniająca*). (Data as presented by the Central Statistical Office.)

** Including special schools preparing for employment

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office)

4.4 Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships are considered to be at the same level as the basic vocational school.

4.4.1 Admission

Since the 1st of September 2002 a person is considered to be a young worker if he/she is over 16 years of age and, has completed a lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*). He/she is obliged to continue the training until the age of 18 and is to undertake work which does not threaten his/her health.

4.4.2 Organization of time, groups and venue

There are two forms of vocational education and training in the form of apprenticeship:

1. The most popular form is based on an employment contract between an employer and a young worker. The employer is responsible for the organization of training. The practical training is organized either at the employers' enterprise or, if the employers cannot assure suitable conditions for such training, at the Continuing Education Centre, Practical Training Centre, at a school farm, school workshop, school laboratory or at an individual farm. The training is implemented on the basis of a contract concluded between the employer and a particular training institution.
2. School based form of training which can be considered as apprenticeship in the case when practical training takes place outside school, at the employer's place and is based on a contract between the employer and the school head. In this case the school is responsible for the organization of training.

The young employee is paid for his/her work and has to comply with the Labour Charter regulations as well as with his/her individual employment contract.

In Poland the majority of young workers are employed in the private sector (e.g. artisans). Vocational training in crafts is supervised by the chamber of artisans and the relevant guild.

The contracts between the employer and the trainee can be concluded for an indefinite or a limited period of time (e.g. for the time required for training in a particular vocational area).

In 2002 a requirement of in-service training was imposed on all workers below the age of 18 since the Polish Constitution requires compulsory part-time education for all citizens below the age of 18.

The signing of the agreement on the co-operation in promoting vocational, continuing and practical education between the Ministry of National Education and Sport with both the Polish Association of Crafts and the Federation of Polish Employers in 2003 created a very important basis for further development of vocational education and training in apprenticeship forms. This agreement has initiated the process of establishing networks of artisan workshops and companies where the practical training of students enrolled in schools and educational institutions take place.

The following institutions organize education and training in apprenticeship forms: vocational schools, out-of-school education institutions and employers. The out-of-school education institutions are: Continuing Education Centres, Practical Training Centres and Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP), which enable people with learning difficulties to obtain vocational qualifications. Continuing Education Centres and Practical Training Centres are public out-of-school educational institutions.

4.4.3 Curriculum

Vocational training is offered in 208 occupations listed in the Classification of Occupations for Vocational Schooling and in non-school occupations covered by the classification of occupations and specializations for the labour market. The most common occupations were: hairdresser, carpenter, baker and confectioner.

4.4.4 Assessment, progression and certification

In the case of young workers (when apprenticeship training is carried out on the basis of an employment contract) there are two kinds of qualifications which can be obtained:

- The title of apprentice – received upon passing the apprenticeship examination and confirmed by the receipt of the apprenticeship certificate.
- The title of master – received upon the passing of the master examination and confirmed by the receipt of the master diploma.

Both the apprenticeship certificate and the master diploma are official documents defined by the Minister of Education.

In the case of pupils vocational qualifications are obtained by taking a vocational preparation examination at the Regional Examination Commission. As in the case of apprenticeship examinations, this examination consists of two parts – theoretical and practical. The examinations are prepared on the basis of examination standards. The graduate receives the title of a skilled worker in a particular vocation.

The examination results (both theoretical and practical) are marked according to the 6-mark scale used in the school system.

4.4.5 Guidance and counselling

Information concerning job vacancies for young workers intending to undergo training in an apprenticeship is passed from the employers to the regional labour offices.

4.4.6 Teachers and trainers

Practical classes carried out at the employer's premises are taught either by teachers or practical vocational training instructors. In both cases pedagogical qualifications as well as specialist knowledge in the given area are required.

Qualifications required in the case of teachers are governed by separate legislation.

For employment as an instructor the following qualifications are required:

- At least the title of “master” in the given vocational area and pedagogical qualifications (either teaching qualifications or a completed pedagogical course organized according to the standards defined by the *kurator*)
- In cases where the instructor has pedagogical qualifications and no title of “master” – the completion of vocational secondary school, as well as a professional title or a title of a skilled worker in the relevant area, together with a suitable professional experience.
- The instructor can also hold professional titles at the higher education level and present suitable professional experience.

4.4.7 Statistics

According to data provided by the Polish Association of Crafts, in the school year 2008/2009, 92 652 juvenile workers were participating in apprenticeship training in 24 815 enterprises.

In the school year 2005/06 52876 young workers commenced education (grade 1) in basic vocational schools providing training in the form of apprenticeships.

Table 1. Participants in education and training organized by Voluntary Labour Corps in the school years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007

School year	Participants	
	Total	Of which girls
2005/2006	32 068	8 502
2006/2007	32 706	8 542

Table 2. Participants in education and training organized by Voluntary Labour Corps in the school years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 – by the type of education

School year	Education at the level of primary and lower secondary school	Vocational education and training
2005/2006	14 731	17 337
2006/2007	14 586	18 120

Source: Refernet

5

POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION



Post-secondary schools (*szkoły policealne*), due to the type of qualifications they offer, are included as part of secondary education in the Polish classification, and assigned to level 4 in the ISCED (Revised Version).

Post-secondary education in Poland is based on the same legislative acts as secondary education (both lower and upper).

Post-secondary schools are organized on the basis of the general post-gymnasium school. They enable their students to acquire vocational qualifications at the level of secondary technical education – namely qualifications in particular occupations at the level of *technikum* (upper secondary technical school) or at the level of basic vocational school. Training in such schools takes no longer than 2.5 years and depends on the occupation as specified in the Classification of Occupations. Post-secondary schools lead to acquisition of a diploma confirming vocational qualifications upon passing an external examination. Graduates of post-secondary schools who hold a *Matura* certificate may apply for admission to higher education institutions according to the general rules.

Post-secondary schools are organized for young people (pupils aged 19-20/21), adults and SEN pupils.

There are 3369 (public or non-public) post-secondary schools with 344.1 thousand pupils enrolled (school year 2008/2009). A significant share of post secondary schools – 75.2% are schools for adults providing education for over 73% of all post-secondary school students.

These schools are managed by units of the central administration, local self-government units, non-governmental organizations and associations.

Education in public post-secondary schools is free of charge. In the case of non-public schools the bodies running the school define the tuition fee.

Non-public post-secondary schools report the greatest share of enrolment. The total number of their students amounts to over 247.6 thousand, making 72% of the total number of pupils in post-secondary schools. In 2008/09 there were 2432 non-public post-secondary schools.

5.1 Admission

Post-secondary schools admit first of all graduates of general upper secondary schools. Most of them require only a secondary school leaving certificate, not the *Matura* certificate.

Students usually start their education in post-secondary schools aged 19–21 years, but every 6th student is over 25.

The detailed admission rules are defined by each post-secondary school which opens admissions to new pupils.

5.2 Organization of time, groups and venue

The School Education Act of 7 September 1991 does not prescribe the duration of courses in individual types of public post-secondary schools. Their duration varies, reflecting the flexibility of curricula – differences in curricula for particular occupations and the relevant outline timetables. Very often modular curricula are used giving more flexibility.

5.3 Curriculum

Post-secondary schools provide courses within more than 20 groups of specialisation: arts, economics and administration, medical studies, technology, agriculture, forestry and fishery, transport and communication, services and others.

Classes devoted to vocational training can be conducted in other organizational entities, such as Practical Training Centres (*CKPs*), employers' companies and in agricultural farms, fulfilling the conditions necessary for proper provision of vocational education and preparation of students for an examination confirming their vocational qualifications and for subsequent employment.

The most popular specialisations include: economics and administration, medical services, services to the population and computing.

5.4 Assessment, progression and certification

For internal assessment of pupils see section 3.4 (Primary education).

For progression see section 4.3.4.

Graduates of post-secondary schools, as in vocational schools, can take an external examination confirming their vocational qualifications. This examination, also referred to as a “vocational examination”, is aimed at the assessment of knowledge and skills related to a given vocation which are defined in the examination standards. The vocational examination has replaced the vocational training examination (*egzamin z nauki zawodu*) and vocational proficiency examination (*egzamin z przygotowania zawodowego*). This vocational examination has been introduced in post-secondary schools in the years 2006-2008. The vocational examination is conducted twice a year – in January (winter session) and June (summer session), the precise dates are decided by the Head of the Central Examination Commission. For detailed information about this examination see section 4.3.4.

A post-secondary school graduate is awarded a school-leaving certificate. A graduate who completed the school with distinction receives a school-leaving certificate with distinction. A post-secondary school graduate who has passed the vocational examination receives a diploma confirming vocational qualifications. For detailed information on the diploma see section 4.3.4 (Certification in upper secondary vocational education).

5.5 Guidance and counselling

Students of post-secondary vocational schools have access to available free assistance services as well as educational and career guidance.

Post-secondary school graduates who are entering the labour market have access to employment services and career guidance offered by the state employment services. They may also use services provided by private employment agencies.

For details see section 4.3.5 (Guidance and counselling in vocational education).

5.6 Teachers and trainers

The teachers at post-secondary schools are recruited from the labour market as well as from secondary and higher education.

5.7 Statistics

Table 1. Post-secondary schools in the school year 2007/08

	Institutions	Pupils
Public schools	1042	103934
Non-public schools	2295	197629
Total	3337	301563

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office)



Tertiary education currently includes the following types of programmes:

- college programmes (ISCED 5B), provided by public and non-public teacher training colleges, foreign language teacher training colleges and colleges of social work, which last 3 years and are classified as tertiary education for international comparisons, but are not recognised as higher education in the national legislation;
- degree programmes (ISCED 5A), provided by both public and non-public university-type and non-university higher education institutions which comply with relevant requirements, including:
 - first-cycle (Bachelor's degree) programmes which last 3 to 4 years and lead to the degree of *licencjat* or 3.5 to 4 years and lead to the degree of *inżynier* depending on the field of study;
 - second-cycle (Master's degree) programmes which last 1.5 to 2 years and lead to the degree of *magister* or an equivalent degree, depending on the field of study;
 - long-cycle (Master's degree) programmes which last between 4.5 and 6 years and lead to the same degree of *magister* or the same equivalent degree as second-cycle programmes; however, long-cycle programmes may be offered exclusively in 16 fields of study (listed in the 13 June 2006 regulation on the names of fields of study) as of the academic year 2007/08;

- third-cycle or doctoral programmes (ISCED 6) which last up to 4 years and are provided by: units of university-type higher education institutions authorised to confer either the post-doctoral academic degree of *doktor habilitowany* or the academic degree of *doktor* in at least two different disciplines of a given area of science; and research institutions other than higher education institutions (units of the Polish Academy of Sciences and research and development institutions) authorised to confer the post-doctoral academic degree of *doktor habilitowany*.

6.1 College programmes

College programmes (ISCED 5B) offered in all three types of colleges prepare students for employment. Teacher training colleges prepare teachers for pre-primary (nursery) schools, primary schools and education-and-care establishments. Foreign language teacher training colleges train teachers of foreign languages for all levels of school education – from pre-primary to post-secondary schools and other establishments providing education or training below the higher education level. Both types of colleges may also be authorised to provide courses leading to a pedagogical qualification, required to practise the teaching profession, and in-service teacher training courses. Colleges of social work train prospective social workers, and may also offer in-service training courses in the areas of welfare and social work.

Legislation concerning colleges (teacher training colleges, foreign language teacher training colleges and colleges of social work) which are classified as ISCED 5B institutions for international comparisons, but are not recognised as HEIs in the national legislation is as follows:

- School Education Act of 7 September 1991, as amended
- Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 12 August 1997 on initial teacher training institutions, as amended,
- Regulation of the Minister of Social Policy of 24 March 2005 on colleges of social work,
- Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 30 June 2006 on the programme requirements for initial teacher training in teacher training colleges and foreign language teacher training colleges,
- Regulation of the Minister of Social Policy of 7 April 2005 on the programme requirements for initial training in colleges of social work.

All three types of colleges provide 3-year programmes leading to a diploma. Teacher training colleges and foreign language teacher training colleges specialise in teacher training, and thus are also referred to in the legislation as “initial teacher training institutions”. Colleges of social work specialise in the training of social workers.

Public teacher training and foreign language teacher training colleges are established and administered by regional self-government units. Public colleges of social work are established and administered by the local government body at the regional level. The establishment of a public college requires a favourable opinion to be given by the minister responsible for

school education in the case of teacher training and foreign language teacher training colleges or the minister responsible for social security in the case of colleges of social work.

Each teacher training college, foreign language teacher training college and college of social work is supervised academically by an HEI which offers Master's degree programmes in the field of study corresponding to the field of specialisation in a given college. Detailed arrangements concerning such academic supervision are laid down in an agreement obligatorily concluded between the body administering a given college and a given HEI. Moreover, pedagogical supervision is exercised by the minister responsible for school education in the case of teacher training and foreign language teacher training colleges, and by the educational superintendent (head of the regional educational authorities) in a given region in the case of colleges of social work.

6.1.1 Admission

College programmes provided in all three types of colleges, including teacher training colleges, foreign language teacher training colleges and colleges of social work, are open to holders of an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Matura* certificate). Applicants are also required to obtain a positive result in the admission procedure. Admission rules and procedures are adopted by the Programme Council, a collective body established in each college. Moreover, those applying for admission to a teacher training college or a foreign language teacher training college must have a medical certificate confirming that they fulfil health requirements for the teaching profession.

6.1.2 Students' contributions and financial support

No tuition fees are charged by public colleges for courses taught as part of full-time programmes, except when courses are repeated by college students as a result of their unsatisfactory learning achievements. Tuition fees may be charged for part-time programmes. The level of such fees is determined by the director of a given college, in consultation with the body administering a given college, on the basis of expected teaching costs.

College students are covered by the legislation concerning financial support from the State budget or local government budgets for pupils and other learners in schools and establishments providing education below the higher education level (1991 Act on the Education System, as amended). They are entitled to receive non-refundable financial support until the completion of their college programme, but not longer than up to the age of 24 years. Two types of financial support are available: maintenance support, including school grants and school aid benefits, and incentive support, including school scholarships for learning and sporting achievements.

School grants may be awarded in the following forms: fully or partially covered costs of participation in extracurricular educational activities and educational activities organized outside a given college; fully or partially covered costs related to education received away from the student's place of residence; in-kind educational support, in particular the purchase

of textbooks. School aid benefits may be awarded to students who are temporarily in a difficult financial situation for reasons beyond their control. Such benefits may be granted in the form of an in-cash benefit to cover costs related to education or in-kind educational support, once or several times in a year, independently of a school grant.

Scholarships for learning achievements may be awarded to students who have a high average mark in a semester preceding the one in which it is awarded. Scholarships for sporting achievements may be awarded to students who have ranked high in sport competitions at least at an inter-school/college level.

6.1.3 Organization of the academic year

The duration of the academic year in teacher training colleges, foreign language colleges and colleges of social work is specified in the statutes of individual colleges. The school year in teacher training colleges usually lasts between 1 October and 30 September in the following year, and includes 2 semesters of classes, winter and summer examination sessions, public holiday breaks and winter and summer holidays.

6.1.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Each course is completed on the basis of an oral or written examination or the assessment of the work of a student during a course; the coursework is assessed by various methods, including papers/essays or projects. The grading scale is as follows: excellent – 6, very good – 5, good – 4, sufficient – 3, insufficient – 2. These marks, except the highest mark, 'excellent', may be upgraded by 0.5 ("+"). Student performance during a course is assessed by the teacher responsible for a given course. Examinations are also conducted by the teacher responsible for a given course. The performance of students during practical training (a practical placement) is assessed by the teacher responsible for practical training in a given college and the supervisor in the institution where the placement takes place. Student learning achievements are recorded in students' record books.

Detailed rules for taking examinations, progression to the next semester and year, repetition of a year and admission to the final (diploma) examination are laid down in the study regulations adopted by individual colleges. However, all college students are allowed to retake an examination, including the final examination, and an examination following a failed repeat, conducted by an examination review board after an appeal made by a student to such a board. In order to be admitted to the final examination, students are required to complete all courses and practical placements as provided for in the curriculum, and to submit a diploma thesis which must then receive a positive assessment.

The director of a given college may remove a student from the register of college students in cases specified in the statutes of the individual college.

College programmes end with a final (diploma) examination taken before an examination board established by the director of a given college. College graduates are awarded a college diploma (*dyplom ukończenia kolegium*).

College students may also supplement their study programme and take a Bachelor's degree examination before an examination board established by the rector of the HEI responsible for academic supervision over a given speciality field in their college. Upon passing such an examination, students are awarded a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat*) by the supervising HEI.

6.1.5 Guidance and counselling

Practical placements are organized as an integral part of training programmes in all three types of colleges. Teacher training colleges and foreign language teacher training colleges organize practical placements for their students in schools and other educational establishments. Colleges of social work organize practical placements for their students in welfare services, non-governmental organizations, associations and other institutions and organizations involved in social work. Practical placements are organized on the basis of agreements concluded between a given college and the institution/organization where placements will take place.

There are no special arrangements concerning career guidance in colleges. However, college students and graduates may obtain information and assistance from career advisors working in public employment services and private employment agencies.

6.1.6 Academic staff

Teachers in all types of colleges are employed on the same basis as teachers in school education. Qualification requirements are the same as in the case of teachers employed in general upper secondary schools. For details see sections 3.6 (Primary education) and 4.2.6 (Upper secondary education).

6.1.7 Statistics

Table 1. Number of students and teachers (FTE) in colleges, 2007/08

Type of college	Number of students		Number of teachers
	Public	Non –public with the rights of public	
Teacher training colleges	6208	810	507,17
Foreign language teacher training colleges	19373	4648	1372,96
Colleges of social work	1909	261	149,19

Data concerning teacher training colleges refers to 20 teacher-training colleges, 75 foreign language teacher training colleges and 14 colleges for employees of the social services existing in the academic year 2007/08..

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office),

6.2 Degree programmes

Legislation concerning higher education:

- Article 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland
- Act of 27 July 2005 – The Law on Higher Education
- Act of 8 October 2004 on the Rules for Financing Research
- Act of 14 March 2003 on Academic Degrees and Title and on Degrees and Titles in Art
- Act of 17 July 1998 on Loans and Credits for Students.

Main regulations adopted by the minister responsible for higher education:

- Regulation by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 19 December 2008 on types of vocational titles awarded to graduates and the pattern for diplomas and certificates awarded by HEIs
- Regulation by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 21 September 2007 on criteria and procedure for granting and accounting for financial resources for science for academic stipends for outstanding young scientists.
- Regulation by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 12 July 2007 on the degree programme requirements for individual fields of study and levels of study, and on the procedure for the establishment of interdisciplinary degree programmes and degree programmes in macro-fields of study and the requirements to be fulfilled by higher education institutions in order to provide such programmes;
- Regulation by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 3 October 2006 on the requirements and procedures for the transfer of student achievements;
- Regulation by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 27 July 2006 on the requirements to be fulfilled by organizational units of higher education institutions in order to provide degree programmes in a given field and at a given level of study;
- Regulation by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 13 June 2006 on the names of fields of study;

Until 2005, HEIs were divided into “higher education schools” and “schools of higher vocational education” (or “higher vocational education schools”). Higher education schools and higher vocational education schools were established and operated on the basis of separate legislation. The Act “Law on Higher Education” of 27 July 2005, which repealed the legislation previously in force, distinguishes university-type HEIs and non-university HEIs.

University-type HEIs are those in which at least one organizational unit (e.g. faculty) is authorised to provide degree programmes (ISCED 5A), including first-cycle programmes

leading to a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*) and/or second-cycle or long-cycle programmes leading to a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree), and doctoral programmes (ISCED 6).

Non-university HEIs provide the same types of degree programmes as university-type HEIs, i.e. first-cycle, second-cycle and/or long-cycle programmes, but are not authorised to award the academic degree of *doktor* or provide doctoral programmes.

Degree programmes (ISCED 5A), which are provided by both university-type and non-university HEIs, include first-cycle (Bachelor's degree) programmes, second-cycle (Master's degree) programmes and/or long-cycle (Master's degree) programmes. First-cycle programmes aim to provide knowledge and skills in a specific area of study, preparing students for work in a specific profession. Graduates of first-cycle programmes have access to second-cycle programmes. Second-cycle and long-cycle programmes aim to provide specialist knowledge in a specific area of study, preparing students for creative work in a specific profession. The completion of both second-cycle and long-cycle programmes provides access to third-cycle (doctoral) programmes.

The duration of degree programmes in both university-type and non-university HEIs is as follows:

- first-cycle programmes leading a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*): 3 to 4 years when leading to *licencjat* or 3.5 to 4 years when leading to *inżynier*, depending on the field of study;
- second-cycle programmes leading to a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree): 1.5 to 2 years, depending on the field of study;
- long-cycle programmes leading to a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree): 4.5 to 6 years, depending on the field of study.

All three types of degree programmes, including first-cycle (Bachelor's degree), second-cycle (Master's degree) and long-cycle (Master's degree) programmes, are offered by HEIs in officially recognised fields of study. Fields of study are the same for university-type and non-university HEIs. All 119 currently existing fields are listed in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 13 June 2006 on the names of fields of study. At present, degree programmes in most fields of study may be offered as first-cycle programmes, second-cycle programmes and/or long-cycle programmes; with the exception of 11 fields of study including acting, art conservation and restoration, canon law, dentistry, law, medical analysis, medicine, moving image production and photography, pharmacy, psychology and veterinary medicine, where programmes are provided only as long-cycle studies.

In the academic year 2008/09, Poland had a total number of 456 HEIs, including 131 public institutions. The following types of HEIs may be currently distinguished:

- universities (*uniwersytety*) (18),
- technical HEIs (*wyższe szkoły techniczne*) (22),
- agricultural HEIs (*wyższe szkoły rolnicze*) (8),
- HEIs for Economics (*wyższe szkoły ekonomiczne*) (95),

- pedagogical HEIs (*wyższe szkoły pedagogiczne*) (17),
- medical universities/academies (*akademie medyczne*) (9),
- schools/universities of maritime studies (*wyższe szkoły morskie*) (2),
- universities/academies of physical education (*akademie wychowania fizycznego*) (6),
- schools/academies of art studies (*wyższe szkoły artystyczne*) (21),
- HEIs for Theology (16)
- military higher education institutions (*uczelnie wojskowe*) (5),
- government service higher education institutions (*uczelnie służb państwowych*) (2),

Around 70% of public HEIs are university-type HEIs which provide Bachelor's and Master's degree and doctoral programmes, with the remaining 30% being non-university HEIs which provide both Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes.

The Bologna Process in Poland

The Law on Higher Education of 2005 (LoHE 2005) takes full account of the recommendations of the Bologna Process.

In order to follow up and support the Bologna Process, the Ministry of Education established the Bologna Promoters Team in 2004.

As from 1 January 2005, all higher education institutions issue a Diploma Supplement (DS) for all graduates of Bachelor's degree and Master's degree (both long- and second-cycle) programmes.

ECTS has been introduced voluntarily by higher education institutions since the mid- 1990s. In October 2006, the Minister of Science and Higher Education adopted the Regulation on the requirements and procedures for the transfer of student achievements, whereby all institutions are required to use ECTS for both credit transfer and accumulation in their Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes. The Regulation entered into force on 1 January 2007.

The body responsible for external quality assurance is the State Accreditation Committee (SAC) (*Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna*), national agency established in January 2002. For further information on the State Accreditation Committee see section 1.4 (Quality assurance in HEIs).

Teaching standards are being adjusted to qualifications requirements already implemented in the EU countries for regulated professions. This is to ensure that people who undertake studies in Poland will have qualifications comparable to those acquired in the other EU countries, and will be able to undertake employment in any EU member state. The National Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning is currently being elaborated. A special Inter-ministerial Group for Lifelong Learning, with, among others, the task of preparing the National Qualifications Framework was established on the basis of the Ordinance by the Prime Minister of 17 February 2010. The Group is chaired by the Minister of Science and Higher Education.

The majority of Polish universities have adjusted their study structure to the 3+2+3 (years)

model, namely Bachelor (*licencjat, inżynier*) studies, Master Degree (*magister*) studies and doctoral studies. The Act "Law on Higher Education" prepared the conditions for introduction of 3-cycle studies while the decision of the Minister of Science and Higher Education in 2006 placed an obligation on HEIs to introduce such a structure in higher education. At present 102 of 119 existing fields of study are conducted exclusively as 2-cycle studies, 4 fields are offered exclusively as first cycle studies, 11 fields are offered exclusively as unified *magister* studies and in 5 fields students are able to choose between 2-cycle studies and unified *magister* studies.

The Act "Law on Higher Education" (LoHE 2005) provides a legal basis for the award of diplomas confirming the completion of jointly provided Bachelor's degree and Master's degree (both long- and second-cycle) programmes offered in cooperation with various – including foreign – higher education institutions and other academic or research institutions. No such regulations have been adopted for doctoral programmes.

6.2.1 Admission

General requirements for admission to degree programmes, which are provided by higher education institutions (HEIs), are the same for both university-type and non-university HEIs.

Access to first-cycle programmes, leading to a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*), and long-cycle programmes, leading to a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree), is open to holders of an upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Matura certificate*). After the introduction of a new upper secondary-school leaving examination (*Matura* examination) in 2005, admission to first-cycle and long-cycle degree programmes must be based on the results of this examination. Thus, HEIs may not organize entrance examinations in the subjects taken by student applicants at the maturity examination. However, each HEI may specify which results of the *Matura* examination provide the basis for admission to first-cycle and long-cycle programmes. Additional entrance examinations may be conducted by HEIs, upon the consent of the minister responsible for higher education, but only when it is necessary to assess knowledge or skills which are not assessed by the *Matura* examination or when an applicant holds an upper secondary school leaving certificate obtained abroad.

Access to second-cycle programmes is open to holders of a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*), a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree) or an equivalent degree.

While respecting these general admission requirements, each HEI may define its own additional admission conditions and procedures, including the number of places available to students, except in medical fields of study (*numerus clausus*). Admission conditions and procedures may be similar across an HEI or may vary according to the field of study. Different conditions and procedures may be applied by different HEIs for the same fields of study. Admission conditions and procedures must be published by each HEI not later than by 31 May of the year preceding the academic year to which they refer.

In HEIs where applicants must meet any additional conditions, student enrolment is carried out by admissions committees appointed by the head of a given organizational unit (e.g. faculty) or other body indicated in the statutes of a given HEI. Admissions committees take decisions in any matters related to student enrolment. Applicants may appeal against decisions of an admissions committee to the institutional admissions committee; decisions in such cases are taken by the rector and are final.

6.2.2 Students' contributions and financial support

No tuition fees are charged by public HEIs for full-time degree programmes (first-cycle, second-cycle or long-cycle programmes). However, public HEIs may charge fees for:

- specific courses provided as part of full-time degree programmes which are repeated by students as a result of their unsatisfactory learning achievements;
- programmes or courses taught in a foreign language;
- courses which are not included in a study programme;
- part-time degree programmes.

The amount of such fees is determined by the rector of a HEI, but it may not exceed the costs incurred by a given HEI in order to launch and provide programmes or courses. Detailed rules for charging fees, including the procedure and conditions for partial or full exemption from such fees, are laid down by the senate of a given HEI.

There are no registration fees. However, public HEIs charge fees related to the process of admission to degree programmes. The maximum amount of such fees is determined annually in a regulation of the minister responsible for higher education.

In accordance with the 2005 Law on Higher Education, students enrolled on degree programmes in all types of HEIs may apply for non-refundable State-budget financial support in the following forms: a maintenance grant, a special grant for disabled persons, a meals grant, an accommodation grant, a scholarship for learning or sporting achievements, a scholarship for learning achievements awarded by the minister, a scholarship for outstanding sporting achievements awarded by the minister, and an aid payment. Students may receive financial support in several forms at the same time.

Refundable financial support is granted to students under 25 years of age enrolled on all types of degree programmes in all types of HEIs in the form of student credits and loans on the basis of the Act of 17 July 1998 on Student Loans and Credits. Student credits and loans are financed from the financial resources of commercial banks, with the costs of interest partly covered from the State budget.

6.2.3 Organization of the academic year

The academic year in higher education institutions begins on 1 October and lasts until the end of September. It is divided into two semesters. There are two examination periods – in the winter and in the summer. Apart from the summer holidays, there are also the following breaks: two weeks of winter holidays (first half of February) and two shorter

breaks at Christmas and Easter. Detailed arrangements concerning the academic year are laid down by individual HEIs.

6.2.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Courses end with an oral or written examination or a pass based on the work of a student during a course, including papers/essays or projects. A pass is always given together with a mark (except for information classes and practical training/placements). Passes are obtained on the basis of the assessment carried out by the academic teacher responsible for a given course. An examination is also carried out by the academic teacher responsible for a given course. The performance of students during practical training (a practical placement) is assessed by the academic teacher responsible for practical training in a given HEI and the supervisor in the institution where the placement takes place. Students' learning achievements are recorded in their student record books.

Detailed arrangements concerning student assessment, including the grading scale applied, the frequency of assessment and the requirements for obtaining passes and taking examinations, are laid down in the study regulations of individual institutions.

Detailed rules for taking examinations, progression to the next semester and year, repeating a year and admission to the final (diploma) examination are laid down in the study regulations adopted by individual HEIs. However, all students are allowed to take a resit examination, including the final examination, and an examination following a failed resit examination, conducted by an examination review board after an appeal made by a student to such a board. In order to be admitted to the final examination, students are required to complete all courses and practical placements provided for in the curriculum, and to submit their final thesis (except in medical fields) which must then receive a positive assessment. If the study programme does not provide for the preparation of a thesis and sitting a final examination, students are only required to complete all the courses and practical placements foreseen in the curriculum.

In accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 3 October 2006, which entered into force on 1 January 2007, students are required to obtain a minimum number of ECTS credits, specified on the basis of the study regulations, in order to progress to the next semester or academic year and to complete a degree programme.

All three types of degree programmes offered in university-type and non-university HEIs, including first-cycle, second-cycle and long-cycle programmes, end with the final (diploma) examination, except in medical fields. The examination is conducted by an examination board composed of academic teachers of the organizational unit of a HEI (e.g. faculty or department) which provides a given programme.

Students who have passed the final examination are awarded a higher education diploma (*dyplom ukończenia studiów wyższych*) which confirms the completion of a given type of degree programme and the award of a relevant degree in a given field of study. If the study programme does not provide for the final examination, students are only required to have

completed all courses and practical placements in order to obtain a diploma confirming the award of a relevant degree (the overall mark equals to the average mark for all the courses). The same diplomas and degrees are awarded by university-type and non-university HEIs. Diplomas are issued in accordance with specimens defined in a regulation by the minister responsible for higher education and are officially recognised documents. At the graduate's request, an HEI is obliged to issue a copy of a diploma in English.

A Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*) entitles its holder to practise a given profession and provides access to second-cycle (Master's degree) programmes. A Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree) entitles its holder to practise a given profession and provides access to doctoral programmes.

6.2.5 Guidance and counselling

Practical placements for students are organized as an integral part of degree programmes in some fields of study.

A large number of HEIs have already established careers services/offices, drawing on the experience of their partner HEIs in other EU countries or more experienced HEIs in Poland, and/or in co-operation with the Labour Offices. Careers services provide information about jobs available for professionals in a given area, guidance in the choice of career paths and training for students or graduates as prospective job applicants. Moreover, students and graduates may obtain information and guidance from careers advisors working in public employment services and private employment agencies.

Co-operation between the higher education sector and the labour market is also supported by job fairs organized in many HEIs where employers present their job offers.

6.2.6 Academic staff

The faculties are entitled to decide on appointments and competitions for research-and-teaching posts.

According to the Act of 27 July 2005 "Law on Higher Education" the following types of employees in higher education institutions are considered to be academic staff: research and teaching staff, teaching staff, research staff, qualified librarians and qualified scientific documentation and information staff. An academic teacher can be employed at any one time in only one institution as the place of their primary employment. It is necessary to acquire the rector's consent for additional employment in more than one additional institution. The employing institution decides if employment is permanent or for fixed duration. Research and teaching staff and teaching staff are employed at the following levels: professor, associate professor, visiting professor, lecturer (*adiunkt*) and assistant.

The research and teaching staff are obliged to teach and educate students, to carry out research and development work, develop their research or artistic activities, and to participate in the performance of the organizational tasks in the institution.

Teaching staff are employed at the following levels: senior lecturer, lecturer, language teacher, or instructor. Persons holding the professional degree of *magister* or equivalent can be employed at the levels for teaching staff. Teaching staff are obliged to teach and educate students, to upgrade their professional skills and participate in organizational tasks in the institution

6.3 Doctoral programmes

Doctoral (third-cycle) programmes (ISCED 6), which are offered by university-type HEIs and research institutions, aim to provide advanced knowledge in a specific area or discipline of science, preparing students for independent research and creative activity and for the award of the academic degree of *doktor*. Holders of the academic degree of *doktor* may continue their research career to obtain first the academic degree of *doktor habilitowany* and subsequently the academic title of *profesor*.

For legislative framework see section 6.2.

Apart from the legislation listed in section 6.2 the Regulation by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 19 December 2006 on doctoral programmes provided by organizational units of higher education institutions is related in particular to the organization of doctoral programmes.

Doctoral programmes may be provided either by HEIs or by units of research institutions other than HEIs (Polish Academy of Sciences and research and development institutions) which are authorised to award the academic degree of *doktor habilitowany*. As in the case of HEIs, authorisations to award the academic degree of *doktor habilitowany* are granted by the State Commission for Academic Degrees on the basis of the quality of research and the number of staff (12) employed holding the academic title of *profesor* or the academic degree of *doktor habilitowany*.

Doctoral programmes in both HEIs and research institutions other than HEIs last between 3 and 4 years, the predominant model being a four-year programme. The exact duration of a doctoral programme is determined in regulations establishing such a programme in a given unit of an HEI or other research institution.

6.3.1 Admission

Access to doctoral programmes, which are provided by university-type higher education institutions (HEIs) and research institutions other than HEIs, is open to applicants who hold a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree) and fulfil admission conditions laid down by a given institution. Detailed admission conditions are defined by the board of the organizational unit authorised to provide doctoral programmes in a given institution, and must be published not later than by 31 May of the year preceding the academic year to which they refer.

6.3.2 Students' contributions and financial support

No tuition fees are charged by public HEIs for full-time doctoral programmes. However, public HEIs may charge fees for:

- specific courses provided as part of full-time doctoral programmes which are repeated by students as a result of their unsatisfactory learning achievements;
- programmes or courses taught in a foreign language;
- courses which are not included in a study programme;
- part-time doctoral programmes.

The level of tuition fees is determined on the same basis as in the case of degree programmes – for details see section 6.2.2.

In accordance with the 2005 Law on Higher Education, doctoral students may be awarded State-budget financial support in the form of a maintenance grant, meals grant, accommodation grant, scholarship for learning achievements and aid payment, and special grant for disabled persons.

Doctoral students may be awarded a doctoral scholarship if they teach classes as part of their practical training or carry out research which is of major importance to the development of the institution or to the accomplishment of its mission.

Refundable financial support is granted to students under 25 years of age enrolled on doctoral programmes in the form of student credits and loans on the basis of the Act of 17 July 1998 on Student Loans and Credits.

6.3.3 Organization of the academic year

See section 6.2.3.

6.3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Doctoral students in HEIs and research institutions other than HEIs are required to attend courses and take examinations provided for in the doctoral study regulations, to conduct research and submit reports on the progress in research, and to prepare their doctoral dissertation. Doctoral students in HEIs are also required to teach classes in a given organizational unit of their HEI. Examinations are conducted by the academic teacher (in HEIs) or research staff member (in other research institutions) responsible for a given course/type of classes. Progress in research and the preparation of a doctoral dissertation is assessed by the doctoral student's tutor (an academic teacher/researcher holding the academic degree of *doktor habilitowany* or the academic title of *profesor* in a given or related area). The teaching of classes by doctoral students in HEIs is assessed by the supervising academic teacher. Detailed arrangements are laid down in doctoral study regulations adopted by the unit in a HEI/research institution providing a given doctoral programme.

Detailed rules for progression and taking of examinations are laid down in the doctoral study regulations by the units of HEIs and research institutions other than HEIs which provide doctoral programmes. In order to be admitted to the final stage leading to the award of the academic degree of *doktor*, applicants (students following a doctoral programme or other applicants as enrolment on a doctoral programme is not a precondition for the award of this degree) are required to pass doctoral examinations as decided by the board of a given unit and to submit their doctoral dissertation.

Upon completion of a doctoral programme, students are awarded a certificate (*świadectwo ukończenia studiów doktoranckich*). However, enrolment on a doctoral programme is not a precondition for the award of the academic degree of *doktor*. It may be awarded to a person who fulfils the following conditions:

- holds a Master's degree (*magister* or an equivalent degree);
- has successfully passed doctoral examinations, the precise scope of which is determined by the board of a given organizational unit; such examinations cover the core discipline corresponding to the topic of the doctoral dissertation, an additional discipline and a modern foreign language;
- has submitted and successfully defended a doctoral dissertation (public defence).

The academic degree of *doktor* (or the equivalent degree of *doktor sztuki* for artistic areas) is awarded in a given area and discipline. All proceedings leading to the award of the degree are conducted, and the degree is awarded, by the faculty board in an HEI or the academic board in another research institutions.

6.3.5 Guidance and counselling

See section 6.2.5 (Guidance and counselling for degree programmes).

6.3.6 Academic staff

See section 6.2.6 (Academic staff in degree programmes).

6.4 Statistics (Degree and doctoral programmes)

Table 1. Higher education institutions by type and the number of students in the academic year 2008/09*

Higher education institutions by type	Institutions	Students in '000
Universities	18	526.4
Technical universities	24	322.1
Agricultural schools	8	87.6

Tertiary Education

Schools of economics	83	356.6
Teacher education schools	18	107.7
Medical academies	9	58.0
Maritime schools	2	10.1
Academies of physical education	6	28.2
Schools of arts	21	15.7
Schools of theology	15	7.4
Military schools and schools of internal affairs and public administration	7	16.2
Other	245	391.8
Total	456	1927.8

*) Figures include non-public higher education institutions.

Table 2. Numbers of doctoral students in HEIs, research institutes and other units in 2008/09

Name of unit	
HEIs	30057
Polish Academy of Sciences	1780
Research institutes (other than the Polish Academy of Sciences)	627
Medical Centre for Postgraduate Training of Physicians	30
Total	32494

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office)



In accordance with the School Education Act, continuing education may be organized and conducted in schools for adults, continuing education units, practical education units and in-service training centres.

In 2008/2009 more than 282 000 students were enrolled in all types of schools for adults (excluding post-secondary schools), an increase in comparison with the 263 000 students enrolled in the previous year.

Participation of the adult population in continuing education in out-of-school forms is relatively low (in comparison with other EU countries) at 5.6%. The low level of involvement in learning mostly concerns the part of the population aged 45-64, namely persons who have completed their education in the previous system. Shortcomings in their education are related to language and ICT skills, and as well as to the skills demanded by the labour market (Report on Poland's Intellectual Capital, 2008).

7.1 Policy and legislative framework

„Adult education” and „continuing education” are often used interchangeably. The term „continuing education” is defined as „education in schools for adults as well as the development of general knowledge, vocational skills formation and ability development in out-of-school forms by persons who have graduated from compulsory education”.

The following legal regulations define main tasks of continuing education:

- The School Education Act of September 7, 1991, with subsequent amendments, together with executive regulations, defines that continuing education can be provided on daily, extra-mural, and distance-learning bases. These tasks are carried out by centres for continuing education, practical training centres, and other institutions for in-service training. Institutions providing continuing education in out-of-school forms can be run by e.g. associations, foundations and religious organizations. Folk universities are also considered to be providers of out-of-school type continuing education.
- An important change in the functioning of adult schools was introduced by the Act of 21 November 2001 "Regulations introducing the reform of school system" which introduced the new types of post-gymnasium schools.
- The amended version of the School Education Act (amendment of the 27 June 2003) introduced vital changes to adult education in Poland. A new rule was introduced which separated the continuing education centres (CKU) and practical training centres (CKP) from schools as institutions with statutory aims different from those of schools. This new position of CKUs and CKPs allows them to integrate actions undertaken by various continuing education institutions and to create regional or national networks of continuing education institutions.
- The Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market of 20 April 2004 includes legal regulations concerning institutions of the labour market, e.g. public employment services, training institutions, social dialogue institutions and local partnership institutions. According to the act a Register of Training Institutions was established as a labour market tool. It includes public and non-public bodies offering education in out-of-school forms and registered as training institutions with the regional authorities, such institutions are considered to be institutions eligible to offer training to the unemployed. Such registration is open to, among others, institutions with accreditation from the regional educational superintendents. The register has been established in order to disseminate and improve access to training activities and in order to improve the quality of such training. Public employment services co-ordinate activities in the area of continuing education and training of the unemployed and job seeking persons.
- The Act "Law on Higher Education" of 27 July 2005 includes legal regulations regarding post-graduate studies and training courses offered to adults by higher education institutions.

The detailed rules and conditions for improvement of vocational qualifications and of general education of adults are included in the regulations by the Council of Ministers and by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Labour.

7.2 Distribution of responsibilities

The Minister of National Education is responsible for co-ordination in the field of adult education, in particular through the activities of the Department of Vocational and

Continuing Education. The Minister of Education co-operates with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage and the Minister of Health in the area of vocational and continuing education.

The *powiat* (district) authorities are responsible for running of post-gymnasium schools including those for adults, continuing education centres and practical training centres and other non-school institutions.

The *gmina* authorities are in charge of primary and lower secondary schools for adults (apart from special schools). The school head is responsible for a school's management.

All public schools for adults are organized and run by territorial self-government units.

Non-public schools for adults are organized and run by individual persons or by bodies such as associations, social and religious organizations, etc.

7.3 Financing

Adult education in public schools is financed from the resources of territorial self-government.

According to the School Education Act of September 7, 1991 with subsequent amendments, education in public adult schools is free of charge. However, due to insufficient financial resources in of public schools, it is possible for students' self-government (on a voluntary basis), to cover some of the expenses (except teachers' salaries) from its funds. The amount to be paid is defined by the self-government.

Education in non-public schools is paid for. Non-public schools with the rights of public schools receive a refund from the state budget.

Fees are also charged in out-of-school adult education institutions, e.g. the examination fee is calculated on the basis of the level of an average monthly salary.

Resources for continuing education in out-of-school forms can come from:

- State budget;
- Employers;
- Own income of students;
- Structural funds.

According to research conducted by the Ministry of National Education in 2005 (see www.men.gov.pl) the majority of training courses are financed from the students' own funds. 1/3 of funds come from the European Social Fund while employers contribute the smallest share.

Training and re-training leading to an increase in chances of finding employment, improvement of vocational qualifications or to an increase in professional activity can be financed from the Labour Fund. The *powiat* labour offices are responsible for offering training schemes and other forms of professional activity to the unemployed and other job seeking persons.

There is no model for finance of adult education on a national scale. The only regulated system of finance for adult education is connected with the area of training for the unemployed who are seeking work. Its basis is to be found in the law on promotion of employment and institutions of the labour market.

7.4 Programmes and providers

Adult vocational training and adult general education can be provided both in the school and out-of-school forms.

Adult education in school forms is provided in primary schools, gymnasia, basic vocational schools, upper secondary and post-secondary schools, and in higher education establishments.

In the school year 2008/09 in 3662 schools for adults (all types) there were nearly 282.2 thousand students enrolled. The number of general upper secondary schools for adults is increasing, while the number of basic vocational and upper secondary vocational schools for adults is going down. Primary schools for adults are very rare, there are only 5 of them in Poland.

Vocational training and general education for adults in out-of-school forms (except post-graduate studies) can be organized in different forms by:

- public education institutions;
- non-public education institutions.

Continuing education centres, practical training centres and in-service training centres are the most common public continuing education institutions. Continuing education centres can operate schools for adults. In 2008 (according to data from the SIO Education Information System) there were 109 continuing education centres which included schools, and 198 continuing education centres working on an out-of-school basis. In the same register are 148 practical training and 507 in-service training centres. Additionally, there are 836 non-public centres of continuing and practical education.

Non-public education institutions can be organized by:

- Social organizations and associations;
- Religious organizations;
- Individuals.

A double system of registration and accreditation of training institutions is in operation. One system is operated by local government units on the basis of the law on education. The second, functioning as the Register of Training Institutions (RIS), is operated by regional labour offices. At the end of 2007 there were 7599 training institutions registered in RIS (8589 together with branches) 25% of which were institutions also registered with local governments (SIO Education Information System).

Postgraduate studies, considered to be a form of continuing education, are organized by public and non-public higher education institutions, research units and by units of the Polish Academy of Sciences (for statistics see section 7.8 table 2).

According to the Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market of 20 April 2004 the district authorities (*starosta*) organize and fund (from the Labour Fund) education for the unemployed. This training is organized by training institutions which are considered to be institutions of the labour market. Organization of such training is considered to be one of the most important services on the labour market offered by public employment institutions and employment agencies. Also the unemployed themselves can organize such training.

7.4.1 Objectives of the programmes

Continuing education aims at the acquisition and extension of general knowledge, and upgrading of vocational skills and qualifications needed for a given occupation, job or post. Vocational training aims at the adjustment of the knowledge and skills to developing technologies and work organization, as well as to job mobility.

The main objective of the training of the unemployed is to react quickly to current local market needs and to help the unemployed to adjust their qualifications to these needs.

7.4.2 Admission requirements

Everybody who is over 18 years of age can attend schools for adults. An 18-year old person can also enter for an extramural examination in all subjects included in curricula of all types of schools for adults. In out-of-school forms the admission requirements are defined by the education providers, and usually depend on the aims of training.

The unemployed are directed to courses by labour offices on the basis of criteria agreed by the training institution and the employer (if a course is provided on an employer's direct order). Qualifications required by the employer should be taken into consideration while preparing the training programme. The level of education completed, psychological and physical dispositions, work experience and some additional skills are, among others, taken into account as main admission requirements. While directing staff to training the rule of equal opportunity should be respected – this applies to the employee's gender, age, disability, political views and religion. Training can also take place on the unemployed person's request.

At the unemployed person's suggestion, or with his/her approval, the district labour office can send him/her to a job practice. This applies to the unemployed in a particular situation, e.g. persons under the age of 25, with no qualifications, or having been unemployed for a long period of time. This period of special training should not exceed 12 months and it is held on the basis of a contract signed by the district labour office and the employer. During this period the unemployed person receives a scholarship.

7.4.3 Modes of delivery

Education in post-gymnasium schools can be organized in day or extramural forms. Day classes are held 3 to 4 times a week while extramural classes are organized as consultations. It is possible to organize two teaching sessions – one as an introduction to the semester's work and the other – as a preparation for examinations.

Teachers employed in both the school and out-of-school systems have a right to choose the teaching methods depending on the level of education, type of curriculum, numbers of students, their age, professional experience and available resources. In out-of-school forms of continuing education, as RIS data show, among the methods most often applied are: courses (constituting nearly 37 % of the offer) workshops, over 22%; seminars and conferences, 20%; practical placements and vocational preparation 14%, post-diploma studies 1.6%.

Workshops are considered to be the most efficient method of teaching in the case of courses organized by large companies with considerable experience in in-service training (the number of institutions offering this type of training has grown slightly since last year). In the case of made to measure courses, the teaching methods can be defined by the employer ordering the course. Traditional teaching methods are often supplemented by ICT.

Module based curricula are often encountered in continuing education. The completion of every module is confirmed with a relevant certificate. The completion of the full set of modules leads to graduation from training in a given vocation. Module-based curricula lead to more flexible timetables for students and support the individual learning very important in continuing education.

In schools for adults teachers choose curricula and textbooks on the same basis as their colleagues in schools for youth.

7.4.4 Assessment, qualifications, certificates

In schools for adults, as in schools for children and young people, two evaluation systems are implemented: internal and external. The internal student assessment system includes grades from 1 to 6 (1 – insufficient to 6 – excellent). In schools for adults students are promoted to a higher level after every completed semester of study. A student graduates from the school (primary, lower secondary or upper secondary) if at the end of the last semester he/she has received marks higher than insufficient for all the obligatory subjects. Moreover, in order to graduate from a primary school the student has to take a test, and to graduate from a lower secondary school he/she has to take an examination. The test/examination results have no influence on the student's graduation. Both the test and examination are external and obligatory, based on the central examination standards for this particular level and on the standardised tools. The test/ examination results can be compared at the central level.

Assessment and promotion in the extramural type of school is based on the examination system. This system includes examinations in all the obligatory subjects defined in the school teaching programme. In basic vocational and upper secondary vocational schools students take vocational examinations as well. The organization of semester examinations in extramural schools is defined in the school statutes.

By completing a public school adults gain the opportunity to obtain a certificate or a state diploma. Secondary general and vocational schools give the opportunity to obtain a *Matura* certificate and to continue education at a higher education institution. School leaving certificates for primary, as well as lower and upper secondary education can also be obtained on the basis of extramural examinations.

External vocational exam aims at the assessment of skills and knowledge related to a given vocation as defined in the examination standards. It is open to adult students in basic vocational schools, upper secondary technical schools, supplementary upper secondary schools and in post-secondary schools. For information on vocational examination see section 4.3.4 (Assessment in vocational upper secondary education).

Specimens of certificates and other related documents are defined by the Minister of National Education in a separate regulation. This applies also to public and non-public schools and centres for adults operating on the basis of the School Education Act.

The Management Board of the Federation of Scientific-Technical Associations (NOT) and the Management Board of the Polish Economic Society are entitled to confer vocational specialisation degrees to people with higher or secondary education.

7.5 Quality assurance

7.5.1 Quality assurance in formal adult education

In the system supervised by the Minister of National Education, which includes schools for adults, continuing education institutions, practical training centres and further training centres, pedagogical supervision is performed by school heads and education superintendents (*kuratorzy*) according to the same regulations as in schools for young people.

The quality of education in the schools for adults which educate in a specific vocation is also assured within the framework of the external assessment system, as in the school system for young people. External vocational examinations aim at confirming vocational qualifications acquired during the course of school education. They are based on examination requirement standards established by the Central Examination Commission and implemented by Regional Examination Commissions.

7.5.2 Quality assurance in non-formal adult education

Institutions and centres of continuing education which provide non-formal education can obtain accreditation which confirms that they meet specific requirements and assure quality of education. Accreditation can be given to the entire set of courses or to part only (on the basis of the School Education Act). According to the provisions included in the Act, both public and non-public institutions can apply for accreditation related to all or some of the courses provided. Accreditation is awarded by the education superintendent (*kurator*) supervising the area in which the institution is located. Educational institutions may also be registered at the regional employment office. However, the accreditation introduced in 2003 is voluntary, therefore the out-of-school establishments providing education in compliance with the principles of free business activity are able to avoid any quality related supervision.

In December 2009 there were 473 institutions with accreditation offering continuing education in out-of school forms.

7.6 Guidance and counselling

Public employment services are in charge of co-ordination of activities in the field of continuing education and training of the unemployed and job-seeking persons, of diagnosing the needs of the labour market with respect to the continuing education and training of the unemployed and job-seeking persons, defining and implementation of tools leading to coherence between the needs of the labour market and areas of training and vocational training, and of initiation of the social dialogue on employment policy and continuing education of the unemployed and job seeking persons.

Advisory and professional guidance activities can be organized by public educational institutions (centres for psychological-pedagogical support, career guidance officers in schools) and in the labour sector (advisers in labour offices and in Voluntary Labour Corps). These activities aim at the provision of suitable employees for the labour market and at the upgrading of employees' skills in the light of changes observed in enterprises.

The training-employment relationship can be based on the following examples: training of employers and employees, co-operation between employers and training units, organization of practical placements in enterprises for students in school and out-of-school education programmes, employment service and advice for professionally active persons, job seekers and the unemployed.

The Operational Programme Human Capital is designed to support social groups disadvantaged on the labour market.

7.7 Teachers and trainers

In the school year 2006/2007 there were 6519 full and part time teachers (in full time equivalents) employed in all schools for adults.

There is no data available on the numbers of teachers and trainers employed in the out-of-school system.

According to the RIS data (Register of Training Institutions, Report 2007) 1/5 of the trainers/lecturers in training institutions were employed on a full-time, and the remaining 4/5 on a part-time basis. In 2006 a growth of 2% in the number of trainers/lecturers employed on a part-time basis was observed. This is the result of implementation of training (a cycle of training) in the framework of the EFS which leads to employment of specialists for the needs of particular training events which are not to be repeated.

The National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education (KOWEZIU) is in charge of the preparation and co-ordination of activities in the area of training and in-service training of teachers working in schools for adults and in continuing education. It co-operates with CKUs (Continuing Education Centres) and CKPs (Practical Training Centres). The National Centre organizes meetings and seminars disseminating most recent developments in the area of vocational and continuing education, as well as research results, publications and pedagogical innovations. It also co-operates with social partners with respect to quality assurance in the area of vocational and continuing education.

Some universities provide training for future specialists in the area of continuing and adult education at their teacher training faculties.

Continuing Education Centres are in charge of providing advice to teachers and lecturers employed in adult education. The centres can also employ professional advisers specialising in adult education. Practical Training Centres are also involved in in-service training programmes for youth and adult school teachers.

7.8 Statistics

Table 1. Number of schools for adults and students in schools for adults in 2008/09.

Type of school	Number of schools	Number of students in '000
Primary school	5	0.1
Gymnasium	130	12.3
General upper secondary school	2449	201.0
Basic vocational school	103	5.3
Upper secondary vocational/general vocational school	975	63.5

Table 2. Numbers of postgraduate students in HEIs, research institutes and other units in 2008/09

Name of unit	Students	Diplomas
HEIs	144093	106108
Polish Academy of Sciences	949	530
Research institutes (other than the Polish Academy of Sciences)	128	484
State School of Public Administration	157	54
Medical Centre for Postgraduate Training of Physicians	23 111	17 735
Total	168 438	124911

Source: GUS (Central Statistical Office).

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