

National summary sheets on education system in Europe and ongoing reforms

2009 Edition

CYPRUS

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1. Education population and language of instruction

In 2007, in the government controlled areas, the number of people aged 29 or under was 326 821 (41.4 % of the total population). The number of children of compulsory school age (6-15) was 98 906 (12.5 % of the population). The official languages of instruction are Greek and Turkish and they are taught in separate institutions.

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

Most pupils in primary and secondary education (88.4 %, 2006/07) attend public-sector schools, which are set up and funded by the government.

Private-sector schools are mainly self-funded. Those which are recognized as 'non profit-making associations' can be co-funded by the government and other organizations or individuals.

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

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

3. Pre-primary education

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

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

In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Culture took over the responsibility of implementing the Building Programme which began in 2001. According to this, the Ministry of Education covers the operating expenses of all pre-primary schools as well as the expenses for building new nursery schools, providing the schools' equipment and upgrading the existing premises. Moreover, the support of buildings against earthquakes and the upgrading of Pre-Primary Schools are still under effect. During 2006/07 the building of six Pre-Primary Schools was completed. Finally, during the school year 2007/08, six new Pre-primary schools were built.

4. Compulsory education

(i) Phases

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

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

(ii) Admissions criteria

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

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year is divided into three trimesters. In the 2006/07 academic years, it comprised approximately of 180 days at primary level and 161 regular working days at lower secondary level. The periods (35, lasting 40 minutes for pupils at primary level and 45 minutes at lower secondary level) are spread over five days a week. The annual number of hours of teaching in primary and secondary school is an average of around 840 respectively.

The extension of schooling time for children was fully implemented in the school year 2004. This has to deal with the problem of functional illiteracy. This is confined to pupils of both young and

older age through the emphasis given to the objectives regarding the language, mathematics and science subjects as well as the equal treatment of the children of grades 1-6 and the rational staffing of schools.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

In 2007/08 the number of pupils (primary education) per teacher was 12.3. (public 12.4, private 11.3) The average class size for public primary education was 19.1 and for public lower secondary education, 22.5. The law specifies the number of pupils per class as a maximum of 25 pupils for grade 1 and 30 pupils for grades 2-6. The Council of Ministers (Decision No. 65.536/16.5.2007) decided that the maximum number of children in all primary schools should not exceed 25. According to the Decision of the Council, the implementation of this decrease should take place gradually, starting from 2007/08 and ending by the school year 2010/11. In lower and upper secondary education, the maximum number of pupils per class is 25 for all grades.

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

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

(v) Curriculum control and content

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

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

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

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

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

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

At the end of the sixth year, the pupils receive the primary school leaving certificate (*apolytirio*) which is required for enrolment at the gymnasium (*Gymnasio*). The final internal examinations of the *Gymnasio* (*telikes exetaseis*) are compulsory for all pupils. The certificate awarded at the end

of compulsory education is based on the pupil's results in these examinations and on continuous assessment.

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

(i) Types of education

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

(ii) Admissions criteria

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

(iii) Curriculum control and content

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

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

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

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

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

The assessment procedure at Secondary Technical and Vocational Schools (*Technikes kai Epaggelmatikes Scholes*) is similar to that employed at Secondary General Education Schools

(*Eniaio Lykeio*). Criteria to assess pupils include class participation, workshop and laboratory work, written assignments, projects, quizzes, revision tests, class tests and final examinations. Pupils take written examinations at the end of the year in Modern Greek, Mathematics, Physics, Technical Drawing and specialized classes in technology.

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

6. Higher education

(i) Structure

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

1. Universities (*Panepistimia*)

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

B. Private Universities either of a profit or non-profit character are established according to the provisions of Law 109(1) of 2005 approved by the House of Parliament of the Republic in July 2005. Currently, private universities offer 4-year undergraduate courses that lead to the award of Bachelors qualifications (i.e. Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc) and 1-year to 2-year postgraduate programmes of study that lead to the award of Masters qualifications (i.e. Masters of Arts (MA), Masters of Science (MSc)).

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

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

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

(ii) Access

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

For overseas students, usually G.C.E (General Certificate of Education) or G.C.S.E (General Certificate of Secondary Education) credentials are taken into consideration. State Universities may set special examinations for international students. Private Universities and Institutions of Higher

Education require a school-leaving certificate (*Apolytirio*) awarded by a six-year secondary school, and a good knowledge of the language of instruction.

(iii) Qualifications

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

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

7. Special needs

Emphasis is placed on the education of almost all children with special needs within mainstream schools. Many factors have assisted integration, mainly the increased number of special educators and peripatetic teachers, public acceptance campaigns, staff seminars, setting up of special classes in mainstream schools and employment of teaching aids. Special arrangements have also been introduced for pupils with special needs during the final, external examinations organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The percentage of students who fall outside mainstream education is 0.035 %. This percentage concerns only students who receive education at home.

8. Teachers

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

Secondary school teachers have to attend a pre-service training programme.

Within the new in-service training program, new teachers are in a school, cooperating with a mentor- teacher during morning hours. The new teacher observes the mentor's classes, has time set aside for discussion between the two, shares ideas and materials and generally gets as much guidance as possible. The mentor- teacher is able to guide, assist and supplement the new teacher.

9. Current reforms and priorities

Primary Education

Promotion and Implementation of the All day Voluntary School

After years of careful study and decision No 48.695 (dated 18.11.98) of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Education and Culture proceeded with progressive implementation of the 'All-Day school' (*oloimero sholeio*). Between 2001 and 2006 there was a significant increase in the number of All-Day Schools which reached that of 150 schools in total. (126 for grades four, five and six and 24 for grades one to six). In 2007, the number of schools was 120. In school year 2008/09 the number of All Day Voluntary Schools was 118. These schools operate as All-Day Schools on a voluntary basis for grades 4, 5 and 6 and in some cases for grades 1 to 6. The All-Day schools function from October to May of each school year with three additional periods (until 4:00 pm), four

times a week. Since school year 2008/09 children have been entitled to leave school, either at 15:00 or at 16:00.

The future aim is to increase the number of all day voluntary schools that will accept students from the 1st until the 6th grade (until today, 24 schools out of 120 have operated according to the above status).

All Day Compulsory Schools

The Ministry of Education and Culture in the academic year 2006/07 advanced in the reconstruction of the Voluntary All-Day School applying, on a pilot base, the institution of All-Day Compulsory School in nine public primary schools in all the districts of Cyprus. In 2007/08, the number of schools increased to fifteen (15). The pilot program lasted for three years and it was evaluated by a special Committee of Evaluation. Based on the comments of the Evaluation Committee, the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced an improved framework of All Day Compulsory Schools which will be adopted in 2009-10 by the schools already participating in the programme. The improvements have been approved by the Council of Ministers (Decision No 617/2009) and they will constitute the second phase of the pilot programme.

The second phase will last for one school year (2009-10). During this phase, a special committee will decide about the final form of the institution and the way it will be expanded to the primary schools of Cyprus.

The main objective of the establishment of the All Day Compulsory School in primary Education is the gradual extension upon completion of the programme, to a considerable number of primary schools all over Cyprus.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

1. The Ministry of Education and Culture has obtained suitable educational software for standalone use when installed on school computers, while it has proceeded to prepare Digital Educational Content (DEC), for the DIAS project. The DIAS project promotes ICT in all schools. Under DIAS (*Diadiktiako Scholeio*-Internet School) a Learning Management System has been developed, which will cover all services for students, teachers and parents. More specifically, the following services will be provided: Digital Educational Content for all subjects, which will be accessible both from school and home; Personal e-mails and websites for students and teachers; Accessibility to parents for the educational progress of their children; Ethernet connectivity in all schools. DIAS will begin its pilot phase in November 2008 in eight schools and it will gradually expand in all schools until 2014.

2. Distance Learning for Lifelong Learning using ICT. This affects the Evening Secondary Schools and Evening Technical and Vocational Schools for Adults. The idea is to offer classes using ICT, so that adults can study at home and attend school less frequently. This will make it possible for more people to attend evening schools. The ICT Distance Learning proposal may be included in the Cyprus proposal for Lifelong Learning for the period 2007-2013. A learning system will have been created by the end of 2009.

3. School Management System is at its initial stage. All procedures involving schools and the Ministry will be performed using ICT, aiming at decentralization, more efficiency and more accountability. Data Warehouse technology will be used. SMS is now in the process of tenders and is foreseen to begin operation by 2011.

Multicultural Education

In recent years, a growing number of pupils from other countries (mainly from countries of the former Soviet Union) have enrolled in primary education in Cyprus. The percentage concerning the above children was 8.8 % in 2008/09.

In July 2008 the Council of Ministers approved the 'Policy Report of the Ministry of Education and Culture for Multicultural Education'. According to the relevant suggestions of the Report of the Educational Reform and within the framework of the creation of a democratic school that will incorporate and include all students, the following measures, that aim towards the rapid and smooth induction of foreign students to the school system and the Cyprus society have been promoted:

Parallel classes for fast acquisition of the Greek language through intensive instruction.

In service training seminars of the teachers for teaching Greek as a second or/and a foreign language.

Preparation of a test that will be used by all schools in order to rank and classify students to the appropriate level.

Preparation on an induction guide for the new coming foreign students which is translated in eight languages, with basic information for the students and the parents about the educational system of Cyprus. The languages are: English, Turkish, Russian, Georgian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Ukrainian and Arabic.

Addition of intercultural elements to the new Curriculum and the school textbooks that will be prepared within the framework of the changes on the structure and the content of education.

Production and creation of appropriate educational and pedagogical material, as well as the usage of material that has been produced in Greece.

Other reforms that took place in primary education during the school year 2008/09

1. A Scientific Committee was established and took over the design of the new National Curriculum which covers pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Since this reform needs a lot of preparation (new structures, new textbooks) it is foreseen that the whole effort will have been completed by the school year 2010/11.

2. Expansion of the Zones of Educational Priority with one gymnasium, two primary schools and two pre-primary schools in the Larnaca district. This was applied in school year 2008/09.

3. Upgrade of playgrounds in all kindergartens. This reform will be implemented gradually within the three coming years.

4. Expansion of the number of All Day Voluntary Pre-Primary schools from twenty to thirty. The institution covers pre-primary school from all the districts of Cyprus.

5. Upgrade of the equipment and the infrastructure of special schools, special units and rooms of special education in order to meet the needs of students with special needs in a more effective way.

6. Introduction of the in-service training program of new coming teachers and mentors.

Cyprus Pedagogical Institute introduced for the year 2008/09 Induction Programmes for the newly qualified teachers (primary, secondary and vocational education). The aim of these Programmes is to enable the induction of newly appointed teachers by providing support to their

personal/emotional needs; their professional and practical needs/solving problems and the development of their critical reflection in relation to their teaching practice.

The satisfaction of the novice teachers needs is also succeeded through the support they get from their mentor who works with them at the same school. The mentors attend special training Programmes offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, in order to be able to meet the novice teachers' needs.

7. Improvement of school infrastructure: The Ministry of Education and Culture promotes the building of new school units in order to face the congestion of large school units.

8. Supportive instruction to illiterate students from 2nd to 6th class, through additional teaching periods.

Secondary General and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education

Upgrading and supporting of the practice of Form Teacher

The practice of Form Teacher has been expanded to cover the first grade classes of lower secondary education as of September 2008. Up to now the practice has been implemented for the third grade classes of the gymnasium and all classes of upper secondary education. The responsibilities of the Form Teacher include the surveillance of absences, performance and behaviour of pupils of each class. For every class a teacher is appointed as a Form Teacher, he/she gets a two hour release of teaching hours per week.

Implementation of a Local Area Network (LAN) aiming at introducing modern technology in education. The action aims at reforming the curricula of subjects with activities using ICT providing schools with suitable ICT equipment and completing the infrastructure installations. The Ministry of Education and Culture has obtained ready-made software for the needs of some of the subjects taught at the Lyceum and Technical/Vocational level and started the procedures to obtain e-learning software for these subjects. The procedure to obtain ready-made software for the remaining subjects taught at Gymnasium has already been started and is expected to be completed by October 2009. The design of the LAN for another 20 schools is under development.

Learning Management System (LMS)

The Learning Management System Platform is under installation and configuration. The LMS Platform will have the following capabilities: Learning material according to the curriculum, email and calendar facilities for the students, the teachers and the parents, space for personal WebPages for the students and the teachers, lessons in synchronous and asynchronous mode. A pilot use of the LMS at 4 Lyceums and 3 Technical/Vocational schools is expected to begin in November 2008.

Organizing short term classes for foreign students

The purpose of the short-term classes is to help foreign students whose native language is other than Greek to learn the Greek language within a short time and to accelerate their inclusion to the educational system. This pilot program has been implemented at 15 schools of Secondary General Education and one school of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education.

Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education

Secondary Technical and Vocational Education in Cyprus is currently in the process of revising, modernizing and upgrading the curricula it offers, while at the same time modernizing the teaching and learning processes employed at Technical Schools. A study evaluating the organization of

Secondary Technical and Vocational Education, which was co-financed by the European Social Fund with the amount of £348 000 (*Measure 2.2.2 Improvement and Reinforcement of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education*) was completed in July 2007. The STVE curricula were revised taking into account the conclusions reached by this study.

In addition to the above, a study evaluating the provision of the Apprenticeship Scheme was completed in July 2007. The study was also co-financed by the European Social Fund, with the amount of £980 000 (*Measure 2.2.3 Reform of the Apprenticeship Scheme*). The findings of the study will contribute towards the Reform of the Apprenticeship Scheme, which is currently underway.

Higher Education

Government policy regarding higher education aims to fulfil the local needs for higher education and to establish Cyprus as a Regional Education and Research Centre. In order to enhance access to Higher Education the Ministry of Education and Culture will take a series of measures to expand higher education provided in Cyprus. The following are the most important of these measures:

Expansion of state universities.

Ongoing registration of new programmes of study at private institutions of higher education (total number of registered programmes: 515).

Ongoing Evaluation – Accreditation of new programmes of study offered by private institutions of higher education (total number of evaluated-accredited programmes: 179).

Strategic measures for the gradual increase of students at public universities: In the academic year 2008/09 students at the University of Cyprus will increase by 18 % and students at the Cyprus University of Technology will increase by 15 %.

The Council of Ministers has proceeded with the establishment of the Cyprus Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency for Higher Education with its decision No. 66010 dated 5 September 2007. Following this decision, a draft legislative decree was finalised and presented to the House of Parliament.

The Minister of Education and Culture has appointed a specialist committee of university professors and high rank administrators with the objective of proposing a new unified Law for Higher Education. The specialist committee has already submitted its recommendations.

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