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POLAND'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

DESCRIPTION OF THE POLISH EDUCATION SYSTEM COMPETENCIES

The education system in Poland is managed at different levels. The Ministry of National Education coordinates and develops state education policy from the central government; it supervises the work of the inspectorate (kuratoria) and cooperates with other bodies in the field of education.

The regional education administration is the responsibility of each of the 16 regions into which the country is divided, each of which is headed by a regional education delegate (kurator), appointed by the regional government delegate (wojewoda), who is responsible for implementing the department's policy within his or her geographical area.

The Polish term powiat is an intermediate administrative unit between the region and the commune or municipality. There are currently 379 educational districts in the country, each of which is responsible for the management and administration of upper secondary schools, administration of upper secondary and vocational schools or other special public schools.

The local education administration corresponds to the 2,478 communes or gmina spread throughout the State. Its competences include the management of pre-primary schools, primary schools and lower secondary schools or gymnasiums (gimnazjum).

In the day-to-day management of a school, the competences of school heads should be emphasised.

In addition to recruiting teachers and non-teaching staff, they have the power to award certain salary supplements, determine disciplinary rules and sanctions, supervise the teaching work of the teaching staff, propose awards, etc.

COMPULSORY NATURE AND STAGES OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The non-university education system comprises pre-primary, primary, secondary and special education.

Full-time compulsory education begins in the calendar year in which a schoolchild reaches the age of 6 and lasts until the age of 16. It lasts 10 years and comprises the preparatory course or year zero, six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education in the gymnasium.

Indicative table of the stages of the Polish education system

	Specific Title	Levels			Age	Education Authority
E. Infant Education	Infant Education	3 years			3-6	Local government (commune or gmina)
Basic Education	AÑO "0"	Year Zero			6-7	Local government (commune or gmina) Ministry of National Education
	Primary Education	1st Cycle			7-10	
		2nd Cycle			10-13	
	Compulsory Secondary Education	1st Gymnasium			13-14	
		2nd Gymnasium			14-15	
		3rd Gymnasium			15-16	
Upper Secondary Education[1]	General High School	1st Lyceum G	1st Lyceum E	1st School T	16-17	Administración del District administration (district or powyat) Ministry of National Education
		2nd Lyceum G	2nd Lyceum E	2nd School T	17-18	
		3rd Lyceum G	3rd Lyceum E	3rd School T	18-19	
	Specialised High School			4th School T	19-20	
	Technical School	Examen de Matura o reválida				
Higher Education	Diplomatura	*Licencjat* 3 years		*Inzynier* 4 years	+20	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
	Bachelor's degree	*Magister (complementary or uniform)*				
	Doctorate and postgraduate	*Doktor* y *Doktor habilitowany*				

[1] The table does not include Basic Vocational Schools (zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa) and post-secondary schools (szkoły policealne) which will be referred to below

Early Childhood Education

The main objective of pre-primary education is to facilitate and stimulate children's development up to the age of 6, the age at which the first literacy and numeracy activities are introduced during year zero, which, given its recent compulsory nature, should no longer be included in this category.

With regard to the qualifications required for teachers, early childhood education is taught by specialists with at least three years of specific training.

Primary education

Primary education is divided into two cycles of equal length. During the first cycle, elementary content is taught in an integrated manner. From the second cycle onwards, basic education is organised into compulsory subjects (Polish language, history, mathematics, foreign language, science, music, art, technology, computer science, physical education and religion/ethics) with a teaching load ranging from 23 to 28 hours per week depending on the cycle.

Secondary Education and Baccalaureate

Basic Secondary Education

After obtaining the certificate of Primary Education, the pupil enters a gymnasium (lower secondary school). Over three years, formal and scientific knowledge is introduced through the specific methodology of the different subjects.

The subjects mentioned above for primary education are completed at this stage with civics, physics and astronomy, chemistry and geography, to which a total of 31 hours per week are devoted.

At the end of the stage, pupils take an external final examination, the marks of which, together with their academic record, determine entry to an upper secondary school.

Teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree.

Upper secondary education

Upper secondary education provides preparatory training for entry to tertiary education, following the Matura examination or baccalaureate revalida.
Institutions offering this type of education may be:

- General secondary schools (liceum ogólnokształcące).
- Specialised secondary schools (liceum profilowane)
- Technical secondary schools (technikum)

The teaching is subject-based and, irrespective of the form, all secondary schools are guided by the established core curriculum comprising the traditional disciplines. The weekly teaching load is 32-33 hours.

In general, regardless of the stage of education, all subjects must be passed in order to progress to the next grade.

Teachers must hold a magister degree.

Vocational education

At the end of Compulsory Secondary Education, the educational offer is completed by a wide range of centres where it is possible to study vocational training belonging to a field included in the catalogue of professions in force.

Basic vocational education (zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa) lasts from a minimum of two years to a maximum of three years. The certificate attests to the technical skills required to perform an occupation. It also enables pupils to subsequently attend upper secondary education in supplementary secondary schools (uzupełniające liceum ogólnokształcące) or in supplementary technical lycées (technikum uzupełniające) and, at the end of these studies, to take the Matura examination.

Finally, the role of post-secondary schools (szkoły policealne) should be emphasised. Lasting more than six months and less than two and a half years, their aim is to broaden the technical education of all those who hold a Matura degree and do not plan to pursue higher education.