

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

ICE 2008

NATIONAL REPORT:

GREECE

1. General background

Greece is located in south-eastern Europe and covers an area of 131,957 sq. km. According to the data from the last census in 2001 provided by the National Statistical Service of Greece, its population is now 10,934,080. Since the beginning of the 90's there has been a large immigration influx mainly from the Balkan and Eastern European countries. According to the 2001 census, immigrants comprise 761.813 of the total number of the country's inhabitants.

Greece is a Presidential Parliamentary Republic. In accordance with the Greek Constitution, which was last revised in 2001, the prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ. The official language of the country is Greek. It is used throughout the Greek territory and taught at all levels of education.

Education policy in the Greek Republic is mainly implemented by the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (YPEPTH), which is assisted in its work by several supervised bodies with specific goals, jurisdictions and responsibilities.

2. Main goals of the education system

According to the Greek Constitution, education is one of the basic missions of the State and every Greek citizen is entitled to it free of charge at all levels. It should be noted that foreign and repatriated students (migrants / refugees) enjoy the right to free education exactly as natives do. Every child living in Greece is entitled to education regardless of their parents' / guardians' legal status in the country. Therefore, minor aliens who reside on Greek territory are entitled to a 10-year minimum compulsory education, just like their Greek peers.

With regard to primary and secondary education, it aims at contributing "to the complete, harmonious and balanced development of the intellectual, psychological and physical potential of the pupils".

3. Education population and schools

During school year 2006/07 there were 1, 071, 784 students enrolled in compulsory education (primary and lower-secondary schools). 93.8 % of the students enrolled in primary and secondary education attended public schools, which provide free education. Private schools are not grant aided; they are fully self-financed. Private primary and secondary schools are under the supervision and inspection of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. There is also a category of foreign private schools catering to resident foreign nationals.

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

The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs drafts and implements educational legislation, administers budgets, coordinates and supervises its decentralized services, approves primary and secondary school curricula and appoints teaching staff.

There are thirteen Regional Education Directorates under the Ministry of Education that implement educational policy and link local agents to central services and organizations. They are responsible for the administration and supervision of the other decentralized services in their area, as well as for coordinating local School Advisors.

At the next level of the administrative structure, Education Directorates (in each prefecture) and district Offices provide administrative support, supervise operation of area schools and facilitate co-ordination and cooperation between schools. School Directors serve as the administrative and educational heads of their school unit; they coordinate and guide teachers in their work and make provision for in-service training. Teachers' Councils implement programme and curricular regulations and monitor student attendance and discipline. School Committees, which include parent and local representatives, manage budgets for heating, lighting, maintenance, equipment etc.

The Education Directorates and Offices are responsible for monitoring the operation of schools within their area. According to current legislation, evaluation of schools is to be carried out at the local level with the Teachers' Councils drawing up a self-evaluation report and the Regional Support and Educational Planning Centers (PE.KE.S.E.S.) conducting an appraisal of school operations in their area; these reports will then be analyzed at the national level by the Education Research Centre (K.E.E.).

Higher education institutions are funded by the State. They are self-governed entities under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

5. Pre-primary education

Children aged 4 to 6 years may attend public or private kindergartens (*nipiagogeia*). Public state-run kindergartens do not charge any fees. Parents pay full tuition fees for their child to attend private kindergartens only.

From the 2007/08 school year on, kindergarten attendance is compulsory for all 5 year olds; it remains optional, however, for four year olds. *Nipiagogeia* are part of primary education. They follow national curricula for the kindergarten level that have been developed by the Pedagogical Institute. The maximum class size is limited to 25 students. The students have a 9 month school year (1 September to 15 June) and a daily programme lasting from 8:15 to 12:15 unless they attend all day kindergartens (*Oloimera Nipiagogeia*) where children may arrive as early as 7:00 and leave as late as 16:00.

Children 4 years of age and under may attend child centers (*paidikoi stathmoi*) and infant centres (*vrefikoi stathmoi*) – the latter from 8 months of age – that are either municipal, i.e. public, or private. Municipal child centers are run by the local municipalities and are open 11 months out of the year and from 7:00 to 16:00 daily. Attendance is optional for this age group. Parents pay a small fee for the municipal

child centers; Private child centers charge full fees. Child and infant centers are under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity.

During the 2006/07 school year, there were 138, 608 youngsters enrolled in public kindergartens and 4, 489 in private ones. Of the children attending public kindergartens, 41 % were 4 year olds and 59 % were 5 year olds.

6. Compulsory education

(i) Levels

Education is compulsory for the age cohort 5-15 years and is divided into the following levels:

<i>Nipiagogeio</i> (kindergarten)	5-6 years of age
<i>Dimotiko scholeio</i> (primary school)	6-12 years of age
<i>Gymnasio</i> (lower secondary school)	12-15 years of age

(ii) Admissions criteria

Enrolment in public primary education is based solely on the pupil's place of residence. The same rule applies to the lower secondary school level, with the prerequisite that the student has obtained a school leaving certificate from primary school. Education in Greece for all levels of public education is provided free of charge and all costs (transportation, books etc.) are covered by the state budget. Families may choose to enroll their children in private schools where full tuition fees are charged.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year is comprised of 175 days and extends from the 10th of September to the 13th of June. Schools open five days a week for 35 weeks per year. Instructional hours per week are from 23 to 35 depending on the grade or level. Each instructional hour lasts from 40 to 50 minutes.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

Classes may have up to a maximum of 25 students. Primary classes have one teacher for all subjects, with the exception of physical education, foreign languages and music which are taught by subject specific teachers. Secondary education students have different teachers for each subject. All schools are mixed gender.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The national curricula for primary and secondary education are developed by the Pedagogical Institute and approved by the Ministry of Education. At the primary school level the national curriculum covers Greek language, mathematics, history, environmental studies, geography, science, social and civic studies, arts studies (music et al.), two foreign languages, physical and religious education. The programme also includes a “Flexible Zone” for the development of cross-curricular themes and creative activities.

The above subjects, except for environmental studies, are included in the lower secondary school curriculum which also covers ancient Greek, chemistry, biology, information and computer technology, home economics, technology and school vocational guidance.

Reflecting a more inter-disciplinary approach to knowledge, the Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework for compulsory education and accompanying subject syllabi were adopted in 2003. New school textbooks written in line with the revised curricula have been introduced into schools from 2006/07. Teachers are required to follow the national curriculum and to use the approved textbook for each subject taking into account the particular needs and features of their classes as far as teaching methods are concerned. Textbooks are evaluated by the Pedagogical Institute and recommended to the Ministry for final approval.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

At the primary school level, students are assessed by their teachers throughout the school year. Periodical and annual assessments are descriptive and also include letter grades in the later years of primary school. Students are generally promoted to the next grade, except in cases of insufficient attendance. In the very rare case where a student might need to repeat a grade – based on teacher assessment – a strict process of consultation precedes this outcome. Students completing the sixth grade (end of primary school) receive the primary school leaving certificate (*Apolytirio Dimotikou*) which serves for admission to lower secondary school (*gymnasio*).

In lower secondary schools teachers assess students based on daily work, written tests, assignments and end-of-year examinations. Promotion is based on achievement. Students who pass the examination at the end of lower secondary school receive a school-leaving certificate (*Apolytirio Gymnasiou*), which grants access to senior high school. The examination for this certificate is organised at the school level and can be re-taken without having to repeat the year.

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

(i) Types of education

<i>Geniko Lykeio</i> (general upper secondary school)	15-18 years of age
<i>Epaggelmatiko Lykeio</i> or EPA.L. (upper secondary vocational school)	15-18 years of age
<i>Epaggelmatikes Scholes</i> or EPA.S (upper secondary vocational training schools)	16-18 years of age
<i>Institouta Epaggelmatikis Katartissis</i> or I.E.K. (post-secondary vocational training institutes)	18-19 years of age

There are both day and evening upper secondary schools – the latter enrolling about 4 % of students. Commencing in 2006/07, a new structure of vocational education at the

upper secondary level consisting of the upper secondary vocational school (*Epaggelmatiko Lykeio*) and the upper secondary vocational training schools (*Epaggelmatikes Scholes*) have replaced the former technical-vocational educational institutes (TEE).

Upper secondary schools offer a three year course and are of two types: the General Lykeio (G.L) that provide general/academic studies and the Vocational Lykeio (EPA.L.) that combine general education with technical-vocational studies. In 2006/07 of all first year upper secondary education students, 25 % enrolled in Vocational Upper Secondary Schools and 75 % in General Upper Secondary Schools.

The Upper Secondary Vocational Training Schools (EPA.S.) offer a two-year course organized according to vocational area, which may extend to three years if on-the-job training is provided. Other Ministries, besides the Ministry of Education, also operate Vocational Training Schools providing courses in their domain.

The post-secondary Vocational Training Institutes (I.E.K.) offer 4 semesters of initial vocational training or 2 semesters of further training in the case of vocational education graduates who followed a similar course. Currently there are 114 public I.E.K. and 52 private I.E.K.

(ii) Admissions criteria

Holders of a lower secondary school-leaving certificate may enroll in a General or a Vocational Upper Secondary School. Students who have successfully completed the entry year of Upper Secondary School may then enroll in the first year of Upper Secondary Vocational Training Schools. Students are also able to transfer between General and Vocational School at the beginning of year two.

Graduates of any type of post-compulsory secondary school, including vocational training schools, may enroll in the Post-secondary Vocational Training Institute (IEK). Adult graduates of compulsory education may also enroll in an *IEK*, but only for certain courses.

(iii) Curriculum control and content

The Pedagogical Institute sets national curricula for all upper secondary schools. The curriculum for the General Upper Secondary School includes general education subjects (modern and ancient Greek language and literature, history, mathematics, sciences, a foreign language, technology, social sciences, physical and religious education) as well as optional and specialization subjects from the second year of studies which depend on the ‘stream’ followed (theoretic, scientific, or technological). The curriculum of the Vocational Upper Secondary School includes general education subjects similar to the above, as well as technical – vocational subjects that vary according to stream followed. Upper Secondary Vocational Training schools curricula include technical – vocational subjects and workshop courses. Class size in vocational education is limited to 25 students.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

General and Vocational Upper Secondary Schools students are assessed by teachers on the basis of their participation in daily classroom work, their performance on tests and on end of the year final examinations. To be promoted and to receive an Upper Secondary School Leaving Certificate (*Apolytirio Lykeiou*) an average general mark of 9.5 out of 20 is required.

Besides the Upper Secondary School Leaving Certificate, a prerequisite for admission to tertiary education is achievement score on the ‘Certificate’ (*Vevaiossi*) which includes grades in six general education and ‘stream’ subjects that are examined at the national level. The general achievement score on this Certificate takes into account final year school grade, (school level evaluation) and grades on the six subjects of the national level examinations.

Vocational Upper Secondary School graduates acquire, in addition to the above, a level 3 vocational education certificate (*Ptychio epaggelmatikis ekpαιdefsis, epipedou 3*) based on school level examinations.

Assessment for promotion and graduation from the Upper Secondary Vocational Training Schools (EPA.S) is conducted at the school level, and upon successful completion of their course students receive a level 3 vocational education certificate (*Ptychio* as above), which in addition to employment allows them to enroll in post secondary IEK.

Trainees at IEK (post-secondary vocational training institutes) are assessed by their instructors during and after their training. Students who successfully complete an IEK course are awarded a Certificate of Training (*Vevaiossi Epaggelmatikis Katartissis*) and can then participate in external examinations conducted by the competent national or local committees to obtain a post-secondary level Diploma of Vocational Training (*Diploma Epaggelmatikis Katartissis, epipedou metadefterovathmias epaggelmatikis katartissis*).

8. Higher education

(i) Structure

According to the Greek Constitution, Tertiary Education falls exclusively under the jurisdiction of the state and is provided free of charge at the undergraduate level. Tertiary education institutions are fully self-governed legal entities of public law and are supervised by the National Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

According to the recent Framework Law (2007), higher education consists of two parallel sectors: the University sector (Universities, Technical Universities, and Fine Arts Schools) and the Technological sector (Higher Education Technological Institutions and the School of Pedagogic and Technological Education). The same law regulates issues concerning governance of higher education along the general lines of increased participation, greater transparency and increased autonomy.

Current legislation establishing the International University of Greece aims at facilitating student mobility and increasing the number of places offered in higher

education, especially for foreign students. This University will also offer distance learning courses.

(ii) Access

Entrance to the various Schools of Higher Education Institutions depends on the general score obtained by Upper Secondary School graduates on the Certificate, as described above.

(iii) Qualifications

Students who successfully complete their studies in Higher Education Institutions are awarded a *Ptychio* (degree) which leads to employment or further study at the post-graduate level.

Recent legislation on quality assurance in Higher Education, the Credit Transfer System and the Diploma Supplement defines the framework and criteria for evaluation of higher education institution departments and for certification of student degrees. These measures aim at promoting student mobility and contributing to the creation of a European Higher Education Area.

9. Education for children with special needs

Education for students with disabilities and special educational needs may extend from the ages of 4 to 22 years and is provided in either mainstream or special schools. Regional Centers of Diagnosis, Evaluation and Support (KDAY) are responsible for screening students and recommending the most appropriate programme for them. The teachers and counselors of these Centers also provide a range of specialized support services for the students and the school units.

Students attending mainstream schools can either be in the regular classroom with parallel support from specialists (KDAY staff) or in Special Classes within the school. According to the type and the degree of disability that a student has, there are also

independent Special Education Schools or branches within institutions. The independent Special Education Schools provide primary and secondary education that includes the pre-primary level and vocational education (Workshops for Special Vocational Education and Training, EEIEEK).

In 2005/06, the number of special needs students attending the Special Classes within mainstream schools was 13, 618 while 5, 842 attended Special Education Schools of all types and levels. An additional 2, 789 students were enrolled in private special needs schools.

A new law to ensure equal opportunities and equitable access for people with disabilities or special educational needs has only recently come into force (Law 3699/2008). Among others, the said law makes special education compulsory for the students concerned.

10. Teachers

Pre-primary and primary school teachers are degree holders from a four-year university-level course, primarily from Pedagogic Schools. Lower and upper secondary education teachers hold university degrees in their specialist subject and take an introductory teacher training course upon appointment. Access to the profession of teacher is determined by competitive examinations administered by Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (*ASEP*). Teachers at all levels of the state sector are civil servants.

11. Current reforms and priorities

Reforms and changes in 2007 refer to the implementation of the new law for upper secondary vocational education, the new framework law for higher education and the expansion of compulsory education to include one year of pre-primary education.

In 2007/08 school year the former technical-vocational educational institutes (TEE) were replaced by the new system of post-compulsory secondary education consisting of the Upper Secondary Vocational School and the Upper Secondary Vocational Training Schools.

In 2007 an important legislation passed that provides a new framework for the operation of higher education institutions emphasizing broad participation, transparency and self-governance.

The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, under its latest Operational Programme for the period 2007-2013, has planned a series of measures that aim at creating a system of education and lifelong learning that will provide the resources and skills necessary for active participation in society, for unimpeded access to the labour market as well as for reduction of school drop-outs – especially regarding vulnerable populations – and which further promote the reduction of educational inequalities.

Among the key priorities of the Ministry of Education is the creation of ‘Smart Schools’; that is, on the one hand to improve the quality of educational provision at schools, and on the other, to remedy long standing school building problems incorporating bio-climatic principles and modern energy practices in their solutions.

All in all, the current policies and goals of the Ministry of Education rest on five pillars:

- **human-centred education**, in the context of which measures for the support and integration of vulnerable social groups will be taken;
- **environmental education** for sustainable development;
- **digital convergence** (equality of access, reducing digital illiteracy, developing new technology distance teaching and learning, etc.);
- **multilingualism** and language learning and the promotion of learning of the Greek language abroad;

- **connecting education to culture** in order to reinforce cultural consciousness and values.

12. Inclusive Education

With regard to Inclusive Education, the term is used by the Greek Ministry of National Education to denote an all-inclusive approach to it by which not only children with special needs are catered for, but also all other cases of children who ought to be dealt with by implementing special measures in order for their needs to be faced.

With the aim of a) ensuring high-quality educational services that are accessible to all, b) of catering for every child's specific educational needs, while respecting their diversity and c) of combating educational exclusion, a line of measures has already been taken by the Greek Ministry of National Education and its related bodies.

By law, all students living in Greece enjoy the right and are entitled to free education. With regard to children with special needs the line of measures that have been taken so far has always constituted an on-going process. But the major challenge that has been posed in recent years to the Greek educational system derives from the rapid increase in the number of foreign and repatriate students in schools due to the large influx of immigration after the mid- '90s, which has significantly changed the demographic composition in them. In particular, according to data foreign and repatriate students that attend Primary and Secondary education schools nowadays, comes up to almost 9,5% of the total number of students.

Because of the frequent, special conditions of migration, administrative adaptations have been made to facilitate the registration of foreign students who at the time of registration do not possess the official required documents. If upon completion of the school year those documents have not been submitted the student is given a certificate

of attendance instead of an annual school report. That certificate facilitates the promotion of the child to the next grade level.

In view of the growing number of students with multicultural characteristics, the Ministry of National Education drafted Law 2413, which came into force in 1996. The said law sets the basis for intercultural education and for action with regard to the educational needs of groups with different social, cultural or religious characteristics.

Valuable aid for foreign and repatriate pupils has been offered since 1998 through the project “Education of Immigrants and Repatriate Pupils”. Among others, special innovative teaching material has been designed with the aim of fostering children’s integration as well as enabling them to develop their skills in the new school environment.

But, on the whole, the key-concepts and principles of intercultural education are now included in the new cross-thematic school curricula. School books in both primary and secondary education have been and continue to be revised to reinforce understanding and respect for the “different”, to enhance interest in other people’s beliefs, way of living and thinking. The basic principles underlying them include among others:

- ensuring equal chances and learning opportunities for all students;
- reinforcing the cultural and linguistic diversity in the framework of a multicultural society;
- sensitizing students on issues of human rights, world peace, respect for diversity as well as on issues of democratic citizenship.

Furthermore, in an ongoing effort to promote human rights education, at the beginning of this school year the Greek Ministry of National Education in cooperation with the Pedagogical Institute decided to distribute to all students of the 5th and 6th Grade of Elementary Schools a booklet on the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which the Articles of the Convention are described and analysed.

Teachers are encouraged and instructed to use the content of the booklet in many different ways with the aim of sensitizing students further on issues related to human rights in several places around the world and finally engage them in thematic HR projects in a cross-thematic, cross-curricular approach.

Additionally, the Pedagogical Institute has been running a successful teacher-training programme on “Managing Problems in the School Classroom”. The aim of the programme is that teachers of both Primary and Secondary Education enrich their knowledge and improve their practices so that they become more effective in dealing with conflict and problems arising in the classroom.

Special emphasis is placed on experiential learning, on the practical use of methods to deal with problems, as well as on case studies. The thematic units of the programme include, among others, training on how to manage cultural diversity by following the latest pedagogical methods.

It is worth mentioning at this point that a Committee for Human Rights has been established in the Pedagogical Institute.

Moreover, since the school year 2006-2007 and with a view to promoting education on equality issues in society, the “Kallipateira” project has been put into practice in primary and secondary education. The aim of it is to encourage students to actively participate in thematic mini-projects dealing mainly with issues of:

- human rights
- diversity and multiculturalism
- gender equality in education and in society
- facing xenophobia and racism
- social solidarity

In the framework of Council of Europe programme “Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights” a network of participating schools has been

established which have already produced through projects material related to human rights, social inclusion and intercultural understanding. Also, a considerable number of teaching tools has been translated and are available for use to schools.

The education of the children of the Muslim minority in the region of Thrace constitutes a matter of high priority as well, in the framework of the general national policy for the social and economic integration of Greeks of the Muslim minority in Thrace into the contemporary Greek reality. Another vulnerable group whose education is in the priority list is that of the Roma children living in urban areas or scattered in the province.

For the implementation of all measures underlied by the principles of inclusive education to come to fruition in the framework of the classroom teachers play a key role. In Greece, teachers-training and sensitization has so far included a considerable amount of induction in the theoretical background and philosophy of intercultural education, as well as on the use of the new teaching material for foreign students.