

# **REGULATIONS CONCERNING COMPULSORY SCHOOLING IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY**



Eurydice



**REGULATIONS CONCERNING  
COMPULSORY SCHOOLING  
IN THE MEMBER STATES  
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY**

Brussels 1987  
3rd edition  
EURYDICE EUROPEAN UNIT

Available in DA - DE - EL - EN - ES - FR - IT - NE - PO

D/1987/4008/20  
ISBN 2-87116-076-7

**EURYDICE EUROPEAN UNIT**  
Rue Archimède 17/Bte 17  
B-1040 Bruxelles  
Tel.: (02) 230 03 82

**Produced by the EURYDICE European Unit for the  
Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs and Education  
of the Commission of the European Communities**

Reproduction in whole or in part of the contents of this publication is  
authorized provided the source is acknowledged.

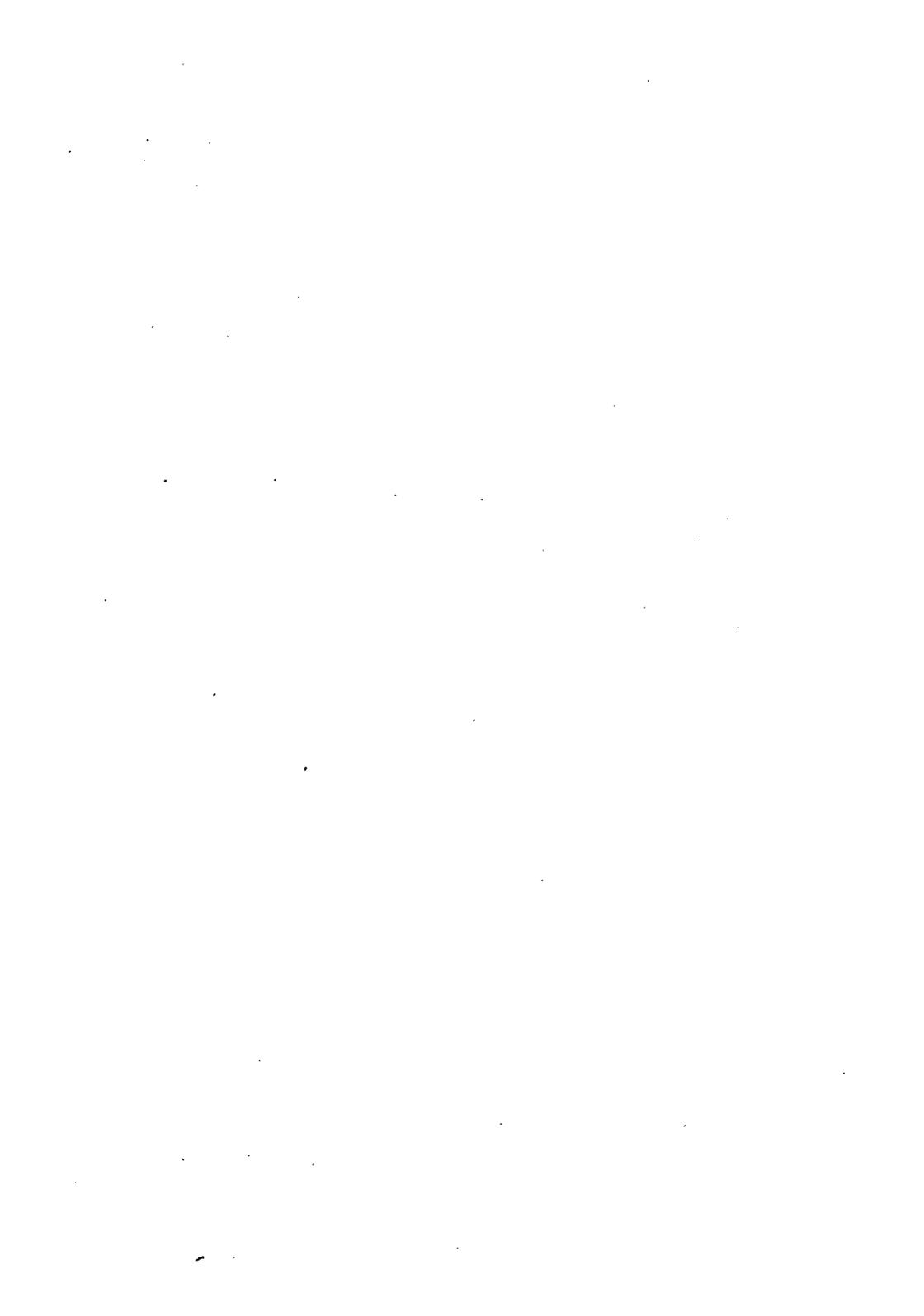
## FOREWORD

\*\*\*\*\*

This is the third edition of a comparative overview which attempts to establish a picture of compulsory schooling in the Member States of the European Community (E.C.). It is a picture concentrating exclusively on facts and quantitative elements : all aspects of qualitative comparison and interpretation as well as questions concerning educational content have deliberately been excluded.

In order to ease comparison between the 12 Member States, the presentation of the information follows the one scheme throughout the text, using the same sub-headings in each chapter.

The overview has been compiled and edited by the EURYDICE European Unit on the basis of information provided by EURYDICE units in E.C. Member States.



## CONTENTS

\*\*\*\*\*

1. BELGIUM	1
2. DENMARK	4
3. FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	6
4. GREECE	9
5. SPAIN	11
6. FRANCE	13
7. IRELAND	15
8. ITALY	17
9. LUXEMBURG	19
10. THE NETHERLANDS	21
11. PORTUGAL	23
12. UNITED KINGDOM	25
a) England, Wales and Northern Ireland	25
b) Scotland	26



1. BELGIUM

=====

Number of compulsory years

In Belgium, the laws and administrative rules governing compulsory schooling are similar for both the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking parts of the country.

From the school year 1983-1984, the duration of compulsory schooling was extended by the entry into force of the law of 29 June 1983 on compulsory schooling.

Previously, compulsory schooling lasted for eight years and children aged 6 to 14 were obliged to attend.

Under the new general provisions, children must attend school for twelve years beginning with the school year in which they reach the age of six and ending with the year in which they reach the age of eighteen.

School must be attended full-time up to the age of fifteen, including a maximum of seven years of primary education and at least the first two years of full-time secondary education; in all cases, the requirement to attend school full-time ceases at the age of sixteen.

The period of compulsory full-time schooling is followed by a period of compulsory part-time schooling. This obligation may be fulfilled either by attending secondary school on a full-time basis or by following a part-time course or a training course recognized as meeting the requirements of compulsory schooling.

All young people born since 1 January 1970 are covered by the new provisions on compulsory schooling. Young people born before 1 January 1970 may be allowed to derogate from these rules, while those born before January 1968 do not fall within the scope of the law.

The school year

In Belgium, the school year begins during the first week in September and ends in the last week in June of the following year. In addition to the summer holidays (2 months) pupils are accorded two weeks' holiday in winter (Christmas), two weeks in spring (Easter) and a certain number of rest days granted at regular intervals during the school year.

Although most sectors of education are the responsibility of the national authorities, the holidays are fixed by the respective language community executives. For the school year 1984/1985 the school calendar is virtually identical for French-speaking and Dutch-speaking pupils. In the current school programme, the calendar year is divided in both communities into 182 days of school and 183 days of holiday.

Certain differences nevertheless exist : under an order by the French language community executive, the Easter holidays take place in the first two full weeks of April, irrespective of the date of Easter itself. In Dutch-speaking education, the Easter holidays are always determined according to the day on which Easter falls. Depending on the year, the Easter holidays are either 2 weeks before, 1 week before and 1 week after, or 2 weeks after Easter.

At national level, the Fête de la Dynastie (Belgian public holiday) on 15 November and the commemoration of the end of the second world war on 8 May are no longer school holidays. However, pupils and students are taught about the significance of these dates for their country and in history. A proposal for the reform of the school calendar put forward by the Minister for Education of the French language community executive is at present under discussion. Under this proposal, the school year would be divided into six-week periods of tuition each of which would be followed by rest periods or holidays. The proposal's intention is to bring about a better balance between work and rest for pupils and students.

#### Number of hours taught

In primary school, weekly teaching time is divided into 28 periods of 50 minutes each, giving a total of 23 hours 20 minutes.

In State secondary schools, the maximum number of weekly teaching periods has been fixed at 32. These periods are also of 50 minutes, giving a total maximum of 26 hours 40 minutes. In certain cases, especially in sections comprising periods of practical work (technical and vocational education), this maximum may be raised to 34 or 36 fifty-minute periods. In State schools offering advanced vocational secondary education, tuition is given for a maximum of 36 periods weekly. These provisions also apply in the subsidized sector.

In connection with the extension of compulsory schooling, a shorter timetable has been provided for, comprising 360 hours per year for pupils aged 15 to 16 and 240 hours for those aged 16 to 18.

In Belgian schools, classes are held on 5 mornings (from Monday to Friday) and 4 afternoons (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) per week.

## 2. DENMARK

\*\*\*\*\*

### Number of compulsory years

Pre-school education in Denmark is voluntary and is offered to all five- and six-year-old children in all Danish municipalities. Compulsory schooling generally starts during the year of a child's seventh birthday and lasts for a period of nine years. A tenth year is offered on a voluntary basis.

If the parents so desire children may be allowed to start school at the beginning of the school year in which they reach the age of 6½.

The Danish folkeskole is a comprehensive school comprising both primary and lower secondary education.

### The school year

According to the "Act on the Folkeskole", the school year begins the 1st of August and comprises normally 200 school days. In reality, the school year usually begins in the second week of August.

Each year the Minister of Education lays down rules for the number of holidays and other days off, for the date of the beginning of the summer holidays, and also issues guidelines on the holiday plan.

With the exception of the first day of the summer holidays, local education authorities can make their own decisions as to holiday dates and also shorten holiday periods, provided that the total number of holidays during the school year remains unchanged.

For the school year 1984-1985, the total number of days spent on holiday must not exceed 168, including Saturdays and Sundays, national holidays, as well as summer, autumn, Christmas and Easter holidays.

Number of hours taught

The number of lessons (1 lesson = 45 minutes) in the Danish folkeskole is fixed for both the daily and the weekly lessons. The number of daily lessons must not exceed four lessons for the first form, five for the second and third forms, six for the fourth and fifth forms, seven for the sixth and seventh forms and eight for the following forms.

This means that weekly teaching involves 15-20 lessons for the first and second forms, 18-23 lessons for the third form, 20-25 lessons for the fourth form, 23-29 for the fifth form, 24-30 for the sixth and seventh forms and 24-34 for the final two forms covered by the period of compulsory education.

Instruction is given in Danish schools from Monday to Friday. Danish schools are normally open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Timetables are planned locally.

3. FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

=====

Number of compulsory years

Although the responsibility for the school-system and the organization of the school calendar is mainly the responsibility of the 11 "Länder" of the Federal Republic, there is a common frame for compulsory schooling in Germany.

Every German child that reaches 6 years before the end of June has to enter school after the summer break of that year. Those children whose 6th birthday falls into the second half of a year may also start their school career then, if the result of a special maturity-test is positive.

In the German educational system compulsory schooling lasts for 12 years and is differentiated in the following way :

- 9 years full-time compulsory schooling;
- 3 years part-time compulsory schooling in vocational schools.

Full-time compulsory education

In most of the eleven "Länder" full-time compulsory education covers nine years. Two of the Länder (Berlin and North Rhine-Westphalia) have introduced a tenth year of full-time education. The first four years of full-time compulsory schooling are given in primary schools, the rest in the various types of secondary schools (orientation stage, main school, secondary modern school, grammar school).

The Land Berlin has extended primary education over the first six years. The total number of years in full-time compulsory schooling remains unchanged.

### Part-time compulsory education

Those young people leaving school after the minimum length of full-time compulsory schooling (i.e. at the age of 15 or 16) without continuing their educational career in another institution of general secondary education and without enrolling for a full-time vocational school are obliged to attend vocational schools on a part-time basis (usually 12 lessons a week) during an additional period of usually 3 years.

This rule applies for young people undergoing initial vocational training (e.g. apprenticeship in a firm), for those in employment without vocational training as well as those without employment.

### The school year

According to an agreement between the 11 Länder, signed in 1964, aiming at a standardization of the school systems, the administrative beginning of the school year in all of the Länder is 1 August. The actual beginning of teaching depends on the duration of the summer vacation the beginning of which varies from Land to Land according to a rotating system agreed upon by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers of the Länder.

The six week's summer vacation is part of an overall sum of 75 holidays, common to institutions of compulsory education in all 11 Länder. In addition to these 75 holidays, twelve extra free days (national holidays, religious feasts, etc.) can be awarded, so that the average number of school days per year is about 226 (365 minus 75 holidays, minus 12 extra free days, minus 52 Sundays). Since in some of the Länder teaching is given every second Saturday only, others having introduced the five-day-week in school, the total number of school days per year may also be 200 (226 minus 26) or 174 (226 minus 52) only.

These regulations do not however affect the total quantity of lessons taught.

Number of hours taught

In primary schools, children are taught 17-28 hours per week. In most of the Länder, the number of lessons for children in the first year is close to 20, reaching 24-28 in the fourth (final) year of primary education. The standard for teaching in institutions of compulsory secondary education is that the number of lessons given per week varies between 29 and 33 according to educational level and to some particularities of Länder legislation.

Teaching in German schools is usually given in morning sessions, six days a week. During recent years some of the Länder have introduced the five-day-week, others have introduced free Saturdays twice a month. Whole-day schooling has been introduced in many of the comprehensive schools which in most of the Länder are working on an experimental basis. These rules apply for full-time compulsory schooling only.

Part-time compulsory schooling usually means that pupils receive up to 12 hours teaching weekly, the rest of the week being devoted to practical training on apprenticeships, or employment as a young worker.

4. GREECE

=====

Number of compulsory years

According to the Greek constitution, compulsory education covers nine years and is divided into two stages, primary (Démotikon) and lower secondary (Gymnasion) education.

Primary education lasts for six years, lower secondary for three. Greek children enter compulsory education at the age of five and a half years, which means in practice that all children who reach the age of five years and six months by 1 October of the first year of attendance are compelled to go to school.

Accordingly the average school leaving age of Greek children is fourteen and a half years.

The school year

For administrative purposes, the school year in Greece for both primary and secondary schools starts on 1 September and ends on 31 August of the following year. This period is called "Sholiko etos", that is, school year.

The exact dates specifying the beginning and end of instruction for the different school levels is regularly fixed by the Ministry of Education with Presidential Decrees.

Primary schools open on 1 September and close on 20 June. This period is called "Didaktiko etos", that is, instructional year.

Actual teaching is usually fixed for the period between 11 September and 10 June. The time between September 1-11 and June 10-20 is devoted to administrative matters.

In lower secondary education the instructional year (didaktiko etos) starts on 1 September and runs through 30 June of the following year. Lessons take place from 11 September until 30 May. June is devoted to examinations and administrative matters. In June, examinations are

organised for past lower secondary school leavers who do not have a lower secondary school leaving certificate. Current pupils do not take examinations, since they are awarded their certificates on the basis of 3 monthly tests.

The major vacation periods for Greek schools are the following : two weeks each for Christmas and Easter, almost three months summer-vacation for pupils in primary and secondary schools, and two months for teachers.

In addition to these holiday periods there are eight national and religious holidays on which there are no lessons.

#### Number of hours taught

Teaching in Greek schools takes place five days a week Monday through Friday. Since most school buildings house more than one school, instruction is given in morning and afternoon sessions. It is a common practice for Greek pupils of a particular school to have morning lessons one week and afternoon sessions the following week.

The morning session begins at 8.30 in all schools. It ends between 12.10 and 13.50 depending on the organisation of the school.

The afternoon session begins at 14.00 or 15.00 and ends at 18.10 or 19.10 depending on the season.

The total amount of weekly teaching for primary and lower-secondary education varies between 23 and 30 lessons per week, depending on the organisation and type of school.

## 5. SPAIN

### Number of compulsory years

Compulsory schooling in Spain covers a period of eight years and is described as Basic General Education (EGB - integrated primary and lower secondary education). Schooling is provided free and covers the age range 6 to 14 years.

Compulsory schooling is divided into three stages :

- 1) stage 1 covering the first and second years;
- 2) stage 2 covering the third, fourth and fifth years;
- 3) stage 3 covering the sixth, seventh and eighth years.

Teaching during the first two stages is provided by a single class-teacher covering all subjects. Efforts are made to stimulate and develop the pupils' intellectual faculties and particular stress is laid on teaching the techniques necessary for and encouraging the development of all forms of self-expression (spoken and written language, physical activities, plastic arts, etc.).

In the third stage a measure of diversification by subject areas (taught by different teachers) comes into play and greater importance is accorded to the acquisition and systematization of knowledge, although the techniques of self-expression continue to occupy a central position.

At the end of EGB, pupils who have successfully completed the full eight-year course receive a certificate of lower secondary education ("Graduado Escolar"). Those who have failed to reach the required academic levels receive a certificate of attendance ("Certificado de Escolaridad").

This latter certificate qualifies pupils solely for admission to centres for stage 1 vocational education. Pupils obtaining a certificate of lower secondary education may proceed to the upper secondary leaving certificate.

### The school year

The school year begins on 15 September and ends during the last fortnight in June.

The school holidays are as follows :

- Christmas, running from 21 December to 8 January;
- Easter, amounting to approximately 10 days, the dates being fixed locally;
- Summer, covering the period from the end of one school year to the beginning of the next, i.e. normally two and a half months.

In addition to weekends, schools are generally closed for a further 9 days each year; the dates being set by the Ministry of Education each year in line with local public holidays.

#### Number of hours taught

Teaching takes place five days a week, from Monday to Friday, for a total of 25 hours in all three stages of integrated primary and lower secondary education.

Lessons are given in the mornings from 6 to 12 and in the afternoons from 3 to 5, except during the first two weeks in June and the final two weeks in September when lessons are given each day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Pupils must attend either religious instruction classes in the relevant faith or non-denominational ethics classes. Religious instruction/ethics classes occupy a total of one and a half hours each week.

In certain regions the curriculum also includes teaching of the local language.

6. FRANCE

=====

Number of compulsory years

In France compulsory schooling comprises ten years. Children start their school career after the summerbreak if they are six years old or will be before the end of the calendar year. In exceptional circumstances 5 year olds may also be enrolled for the first year. Compulsory school leaving age is between 15½ and 16.

The first five years of compulsory education are given in primary schools. These five years are subdivided and structured into 3 cycles : the first year (level) is a preparatory cycle, the second and third years (level) form the elementary, the fourth and fifth years (level) the final cycle. Secondary education is given in three types of establishment : collèges (lower secondary schools), lycées (upper secondary schools) and lycées d'enseignement professionnel (intermediate vocational schools). All children who have completed primary education go on to a collège. The course comprises two 2-year stages : the "cycle d'observation" and the "cycle d'orientation". The intermediate vocational schools accept pupils either on completion of the second stage of collège education or on completion of the first stage provided they are at least fourteen years old. The lycées accept lower secondary school leavers.

School year

In France the school year usually begins during the first week of September.

For children in primary school, the school timetable comprises 316 half days. At secondary level, the timetable can be more flexible depending on the subjects chosen.

At primary level teaching is given on five days per week : Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (morning and afternoon) and Saturday (mornings only).

Lycée pupils also attend school on Wednesday mornings.

The dates of school holidays are fixed every year by Ministerial Order. For this purpose France is divided into three different zones, between which holiday periods rotate from year to year.

At present, there is a tendency to shorten summer holidays for the benefit of the short intermediate holidays, although the months of July and August remain free for all schools.

The first school holiday (of slightly more than one week) is granted around 1 November (All Saints holidays) and the second around Christmas (approximately two weeks). The Christmas holiday period is the same for the three zones. The winter holidays in February (approximately ten days) begin on a different date from zone to zone. The two-week spring holiday takes place around Easter. The summer holidays are virtually identical for the three zones and begin towards the end of June. In Corsica and the Overseas Departments the school timetable is decided locally.

#### Number of hours taught

As far as the weekly quantity of teaching in French schools is concerned, Ministerial Decrees state that throughout primary education there must be 27 hours per week of teaching.

In the first stage (cycle d'observation) of secondary education the weekly timetable comprises 24 hours, to which may be added 3 hours of supplementary tuition of various kinds in French, mathematics and modern languages.

The weekly timetable in the second stage (cycle d'orientation) comprises 24½ hours plus 2 or 3 hours of compulsory tuition in optional subjects.

In the vocational lycées, teaching is given for 31 to 36 hours per week.

## 7. IRELAND

=====

### Number of compulsory years

The Irish Constitution recognises that parents are free to provide for the education of their children "in their homes or in private schools or in schools recognised or established by the State". Parents may not be compelled in violation of their conscience to send their children to any particular type of school but the State as guardian of the common good must see that the children receive a certain minimum education.

This minimum education is compulsory for children between the ages of six and fifteen years. Children may however, be enrolled in national (i.e. primary) schools at the age of four years and the majority of children are availing of this arrangement at present. The age of entry has been the subject of widespread debate in recent years. Following consideration of submissions received in response to the discussion paper "The Ages of Learning" which was published in June, 1984 the Minister for Education has decided that as from 1 September, 1987 no child will normally be admitted to the first class in primary schools unless it has attained the age of six years by 1 September of the year in which it is enrolled in that class. However, a child may continue to be enrolled in infant classes as from four years of age. The length of primary schooling is eight years, so that the majority of pupils transfer to second-level schools at about twelve years of age. The last three years of compulsory education (12-15 year olds) usually takes place in the Junior Cycle of one of the four main types of post-primary schools, Secondary, Vocational, Comprehensive or Community schools. From September, 1987 onwards pupils may only transfer to post-primary school when they have completed the primary school course up to and including sixth standard or its equivalent. This will mean that pupils will normally be twelve years of age by 1 September of the year of entry to post-primary school.

Post-primary courses will also be developed so as to enable pupils to spend up to six years overall in a post-primary school. The Junior Cycle will be of three years duration in all post-primary schools as from 1 September, 1986.

The school year

The school year in Irish schools starts in September after a two or three months summer vacation.

Primary schools have a two months vacation (schools must remain closed during the months of July and August), second-level schools have one of three months (June, July and August). All schools take around 10 days vacation at Christmas and Easter. The general regulations for the annual school calendar prescribe a minimum number of 184 teaching days per year for primary schools and 180 days for second-level schools. This rule applies to schools operating for five days each week. Schools open for six days a week (only possible at second-level) have to teach at least 200 days per year.

Number of hours taught

The organisation of the school day is not centrally regulated for all schools in the field of compulsory education : it is left to the discretion of the Board of Management of each school to decide how the teaching is organised.

Normally, National schools are in operation five days a week and should be open to receive pupils not later than 9.30 a.m.. The period of secular instruction to be provided for in the time-table must be at least four hours and ten minutes per day. An additional period of thirty minutes each day is devoted to religious instruction.

The vast majority of second-level schools operate on a five-day week basis, providing instruction for six hours each day from approximately 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., with a one-hour break for lunch. A number of schools, however, remain open for six days per week.

The time period for classes in second-level schools is approximately forty minutes. A minimum of 28 hours class contact is required under the regulations.

## 8. ITALY

=====

### Number of compulsory years

In Italy, compulsory education starts at the age of six and lasts eight years, which means that the average school leaving age is fourteen. A proposal to raise the school leaving age to 16 has been introduced as part of the proposed reform of upper secondary education. These proposals are still being discussed in political circles.

The first five years of schooling are provided in elementary (primary) schools ("Scuola elementare").

Primary education is divided into two cycles. The "first cycle" covers the first two years of primary education and the "second cycle" the following three years.

At the end of the two cycles a final examination is held for the primary school leaving certificate (Licenza elementare) which gives access to secondary education.

The following three years of compulsory education are provided in intermediate (lower secondary) schools ("Scuola media").

### The school year

For establishments covering the period of compulsory education, the general legal rule is that the school year begins on 10 September and ends on 9 September.

Every three years, a Ministerial Decree fixes the school timetable for the following three years, always setting the dates for the beginning of classes somewhere between 10 and 20 September and for the end between 10 and 30 June.

Apart from the summer holidays, Italian schools are closed for Christmas (around two weeks) and Easter (around one week) and on national holidays. The minimum annual number of teaching days is 200.

During the period between 1 September and the date on which lessons begin, the teachers deal with questions relating to the organization of classes and curricula.

Number of hours taught

The primary school timetable provides for 24 hours of lessons per week, six days of four hours each. Lessons are generally given in the morning except in the case of "two shift" schooling where the number of classrooms available is insufficient to accommodate all the pupils in a particular area. In the case of classes receiving lessons in the morning, the school system also provides for the possibility of organizing supplementary or "full-time" activities in the afternoon. Where this is the case, the number of hours spent by pupils on school activities may reach 44 per week, including lunch-hours.

For the three years of compulsory secondary education, when lessons are given in the morning only, the number of hours of teaching per week is set at 30. It is also possible to extend the timetable into the afternoon at the parents' request, up to a maximum of 40 hours per week. The school week is six days.

9. LUXEMBURG

=====

Number of compulsory years

Luxemburg is the only country of the European Community which has introduced one year of compulsory education in pre-primary schools for all five-year olds. The respective law explicitly states that pre-school education should not involve formal teaching.

Compulsory education in the usual sense of the word covers nine years. Children start their primary education at the age of six and leave primary schools after six years.

Education beyond primary level is given in complementary courses, in secondary education or in vocational training and secondary technical education - according to the abilities and interests of the pupil.

The minimum length of this period of post-primary education is three years of compulsory courses, which means that children who have reached the age of 15 have usually completed their compulsory schooling.

The school year

The school holidays were changed on 31 July 1980. Since then, the official school year begins on 15 September and ends on 15 July.

As a general rule, the first term ends before Christmas and is followed by a two-week holiday; the second term ends before Easter and is also followed by a two-week holiday.

Each of the three terms of the school year is divided into two periods of approximately the same length with one week's holiday in between. These holidays are taken around the dates of All-Saints Day, Shrovetide and Whitsun.

The average school year therefore covers 36 weeks. The exact dates of the holidays are fixed every year by Ministerial Order.

Number of hours taught

In Luxemburg schools, the number of class hours is identical in primary school and the first stage of secondary school - i.e. 30 hours a week (including rest periods). Classes are held six days a week in the morning (from Monday to Saturday) for four hours and three days a week in the afternoon (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) for two hours.

The relatively high number of lessons given even to children in the initial phase of primary education arises from the fact that Luxemburg is a bilingual country where from the very first step two languages are taught equally.

10. THE NETHERLANDS

=====

Number of compulsory years

Compulsory schooling begins at the age of five, on the first school day of the month following the child's fifth birthday, and ends :

- either after 12 complete school years (e.g. 8 years of primary education plus four years of secondary education);
- or at the end of the school year in which the child reaches the age of 16.

This is followed by a further year of compulsory part-time schooling.

This means that for a year the child must attend an establishment for part-time education for two days a week.

On completion of primary schooling, secondary courses may be followed at schools providing :

- pre-university secondary education;
- general secondary education;
- vocational education.

With all these forms of education, the pupil's first year is a bridging year. This gives pupils a year to acclimatize before making a final decision on which type of course to follow.

The school year

As far as the structure of the school year is concerned, the Netherlands is divided into three regions in which the beginning and end of the six-week summer holidays are staggered over a period of four weeks.

As a consequence, the beginning of the school year usually varies between the beginning of August and the first two days of September depending on the region.

The alternation of the arrangements between these regions is governed by circulars issued by the Ministry of Education and Science. The arrangements for the remaining school holidays are generally applicable in all three regions and for all types of school : a minimum of two weeks at Christmas, a minimum of half a week spring half term in February or March and a minimum of one and a half weeks Easter holiday.

There is also a holiday in the autumn (usually a week in October; only the first day is fixed in each region, not the length) and other additional holidays (e.g. the national holidays).

In primary schools, pupils with a five-day school week have lessons on at least 200 days per year and those with a six-day school week on at least 240 days.

In secondary schools, a maximum of sixty school days are given as holidays in the case of a five-day school week and a maximum of seventy school days in the case of a six-day school week.

"School day" means every day of the week except Sunday in the case of a six day school week and every day except Saturday and Sunday in the case of a five day week.

Generally, pupils attend school for five days a week.

#### Number of hours taught

Under the new law on primary education, which enters into force on 1 August 1985, the timetable is arranged in such a way that in the first four school years, pupils have at least 22 lessons per week, spread over five or six days, and at least 25 lessons in the remaining years.

Each day pupils have a minimum of 2.5 and a maximum of 5.5 hours of lessons, with care being taken to ensure that the balance of subjects is correct.

In the first stage of secondary education the total number of lessons varies between 960 and 1,280 per year, which corresponds to 24 to 32 lessons per week. A school lesson lasts 50 minutes.

## 11. PORTUGAL

=====

### Number of compulsory years

Until the application of the Comprehensive Law on the Education System (Law 46/86 of 14 October 1986), the period of compulsory schooling covers the age range 6 to 14 years. During this period, pupils must complete at least six years of study, divided into two stages : primary education and preparatory education.

Primary education covers four years, divided into two two-year substages, and is provided in primary schools by single class-teachers.

Preparatory education constitutes the second stage of compulsory schooling and takes two forms :

- direct preparatory education, provided on the basis of actual attendance at preparatory schools (one teacher for each of nine compulsory subjects);
- TV preparatory education (Telescola), provided in State and private centres using a system combining televised lessons with backup and follow-up work by tutors (normally primary teachers).

Continuous assessment is used and a certificate is awarded to pupils successfully completing the two stages of compulsory schooling.

The latter is provided purely as a means of supplementing direct preparatory education to make up for gaps in the school network.

The Comprehensive Law on the Education System provides for compulsory schooling to be extended to nine years ("Basic education is universal, compulsory and free and lasts for nine years" - Art. 6, N° 1).

The new provisions relating to the length of compulsory schooling apply to pupils enrolled in the first year of basic education for the 1987/1988 school year and to those who enrol for the following school years.

With the new law, basic education is compulsory for children who are more than 6 years of age on 15 September. Compulsory schooling will end when they reach 15 years of age.

Article 8 of the Comprehensive Law on the Education System stipulates:

"Basic education consists of three consecutive cycles. The first lasts for four years, the second for two years and the third for three years.

They are organized as follows :

- a) In the first cycle education is global and is provided by a single teacher who may be assisted in specialized areas;
- b) In the second cycle teaching is organized according to interdisciplinary areas of basic education and is mainly provided by teachers specializing in a particular area;
- c) In the third cycle teaching is organized according to a unified curriculum including various vocational areas and is provided by a teacher responsible for each subject or group of subjects."

### The school year

The school year begins on 21 September. Primary and preparatory education end in the final week of June. TV preparatory education (Telescola) ends on 25 June.

The school calendar is laid down each year by decision of the Minister of Education.

Normally, pupils have two weeks' holiday at Christmas and Easter and five days' at Lent.

In primary and preparatory education, teaching generally takes place five days a week, from Monday to Friday. However, where a shortage of premises necessitates the operation of a three-shift system in primary education or a two-shift system in direct preparatory education, classes may also be held on Saturday mornings.

### Number of hours taught

In primary schools operating under the normal system lessons are provided for a total of 23 3/4 hours per week, split into two sessions per day. When a two-shift system is operated, the total remains 23 3/4 hours per week but there is only one session each day - either morning or afternoon. Where, exceptionally, a three-shift system is operated, the total is 20 hours a week with one session per day.

In direct preparatory education lessons are provided for 30 hours each week, plus an optional 1 hour per week for religious instruction.

The number of hours taught may be increased in order to assist pupils with learning difficulties or recognized handicaps or to make up for earlier teaching staff shortages.

The weekly timetable for TV preparatory education is 24 hours.

12. UNITED KINGDOM

=====

a) England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Number of compulsory years

The law requires that every child of statutory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs (s)he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child does not attend school, then such alternative provision as is made for him/her is subject to the approval of the local education authority (LEA).

Statutory school age is from 5 to 16, which generally means from the beginning of the school term next after the child's fifth birthday until the school leaving date next after his/her sixteenth birthday. The two school leaving dates are :

- i) the end of the spring term
- ii) the Friday before the last Monday in May

The 1944 Act requires that there should be two stages of education : primary and secondary. A junior pupil is one who has not attained the age of 12; a senior pupil is a person who has attained the age of 12 but has not attained the age of 19. In 1964 legislation permitted the establishment of middle schools, for children aged under 10½ to those aged over 12. Normally middle schools provide a four year course for pupils aged between eight years to twelve, or nine years to thirteen.

The two-tier (Primary and Secondary school) and three-tier (First, Middle and Secondary school) systems exist side by side, according to the provision within each individual LEA. Secondary education is provided in non-selective comprehensive schools, or in grammar schools where selection takes place according to ability, and secondary modern schools. As an indication, in England in 1984, the percentage of pupils in each type of school were 89 %, 3% and 5% respectively.

### The school year

The school year consists of 400 sessions, of which 20 may be taken as "occasional holidays". The school day is divided into two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The school week usually runs from Monday to Friday, with two sessions per day.

The school year, for the purposes of calculating "statutory school age" begins on 1 September, although the first day of the autumn term may not be until a few days later. The year is usually divided into three terms : Autumn (September - December), Spring (January - Easter) and Summer (Easter - late July).

There are holidays lasting from two to three weeks between the autumn and spring, and the spring and summer terms. The summer holidays last about six weeks. In many schools, there are also short half-term breaks.

The actual dates of terms and holidays are determined annually by the LEA Education Committee in consultation with the teachers' associations.

### Number of hours taught

Children under eight years of age must receive at least three hours of secular instruction per day, divided into two sessions. For children aged eight and over, the minimum is four hours of secular instruction. In addition provision must be made for a single act of collective worship at the beginning of the school day, and for religious instruction. However, a parent may request that his/her child be wholly or partly excused from the act of worship and/or from religious instruction.

## b) Scotland

### Number of compulsory years

In Scotland, children normally start school at about the age of five. Parents may educate their children by means other than sending them to school, although in accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 the education authority must be satisfied that the education provided is adequate and efficient. Most children attend state schools which are comprehensive and co-educational.

Children in Scotland usually spend 7 years at the primary stage. Schools vary in size according to the area they serve : a one-teacher rural school may serve a much bigger area than a larger city primary school.

The compulsory part of secondary education covers 4 years until the pupils are approximately 16 years of age. More than 90 % of pupils in education authority secondary schools attend schools with a comprehensive intake and about 90 % of these schools provide education on an all-through basis covering the 6 stages of secondary education.

#### The school year

There are limited administrative regulations for the organisation of the school year in Scotland. Education authorities are free to fix any term or holiday dates they choose throughout the year, provided that every school under their management is open for at least 200 days (excluding Saturdays and Sundays) in the school year. There is, however, provision under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 for education authorities to seek the Secretary of State's approval to enable reductions in the prescribed number of days to be made in exceptional circumstances. At present there is little variation in the school term dates operated by education authorities in Scotland, all of whom keep fairly closely in step, allowing approximately 2 weeks at the end of the Autumn Term (Christmas), between 2 and 3 weeks at the end of the Spring Term (around Easter), around 6 weeks at the end of the Summer Term, (normally starting around the beginning of July) and one week in the late autumn.

#### Number of hours taught

There are no statutory requirements in Scotland as to the times at which a school day should begin, or end, and educational authorities have the discretion to determine suitable school hours for their respective areas according to circumstances.



# **Eurydice The Education Information Network in the European Community**

## **Educational cooperation in the Community**

The educational systems in Community countries vary considerably and this variety, which is the result of historic and cultural factors, itself constitutes a great wealth which should be preserved.

On the other hand it is in the interest of everyone to draw benefit from the experiences and projects of partner countries within the Community.

Educational policy makers in the European Community have long been aware of the value of information concerning innovations and changes introduced in other Member States in order that their own decisions might be well founded on the knowledge of alternative possibilities of practice, and the Member States agreed to promote close cooperation in the field of education at Community level.

In February 1976 the Council of the European Communities and the Ministers of Education adopted an action programme in the field of education. They agreed among other things to set up an information Network in order to increase and improve the circulation of information in the area of education policy\*.

This information Network, known as EURYDICE, is designed therefore to underpin the developing programme of educational cooperation within the European Community.

The Education Committee of the European Community which has the task of coordinating and monitoring the action programme recommended that the use of Eurydice should in the first phase be limited to those in policy making positions. The Education Committee consists of representatives of the Member States and of the Commission.

In accordance with their own distinctive education structures, each Member State has designated at least one National Unit to participate in the Network and the Commission of the European Communities has arranged with the European Cultural Foundation the establishment of the European Eurydice Unit, which is part of the Network. Eurydice is based on the mutual cooperation of the national units and the European Unit. In addition the latter coordinates and animates the network.

\* Official Journal n°C38, 19.02.1976, P1



**Eurydice's kontoror**  
**Eurydice - Informationsstellen**  
**Eurydice Information Units**  
**Unités du Réseau Eurydice**  
**Unità di Informazione Eurydice**

**EUROPEAN COMMUNITY**

The Eurydice European Unit  
Rue Archimède 17/B 17  
B-1040 Bruxelles  
Tel.: 230.03.82/230.03.98  
Telex: 65398 eurydi b  
Telefax: 230.65.62

**BELGIQUE/BELGIE**

Unité francophone d'Eurydice  
Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale  
Organisation des Etudes  
Boulevard Pacheco 34  
B-1000 Bruxelles  
Tel.: 219.45.80 (poste 199 + 102)

**Nederlandstalige nationale dienst van Eurydice**

Ministerie van Onderwijs  
Informatie- en documentatiedienst  
Departement van onderwijs  
Koningsstraat 138, 2°, lokaal 210  
B-1000 Brussel  
Tel.: 219.34.20 (ext. 122)

**DANMARK**

Eurydice's Informationskontor i Danmark  
Undervisningsministeriet  
Frederiksholms Kanal 25 D  
DK-1220 København K  
Tel.: 92.52.01  
Telex: 22275  
Telefax: 92.55.47

**BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND**

Eurydice Informationsstelle beim  
Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft  
Heinemannstrasse 2  
D-5300 Bonn 2  
Tel.: 57.21.91  
Telex: 885660  
Telefax: 57.20.96

**Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder**

Nassaustrasse 8  
D-5300 Bonn 1  
Tel.: 50.12.70  
Telex: 886587  
Telefax: 50.13.01

**ESPAÑA**

Unidad Nacional de Eurydice  
Centro Nacional de Investigación  
y Documentación Educativa  
Ciudad Universitaria s/n  
E-28040 Madrid  
Tel.: 449.66.81/449.77.00

**FRANCE**

Unité Nationale d'Eurydice  
Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale  
D. C. R. I.  
110, rue de Grenelle  
F-75007 Paris  
Tel.: 45.39.25.75 (poste 3799 + 3585)  
Telex: 270925  
Telefax: 45.44.57.87

**Eurydice Informatiediensten**  
**Μονάδες του Δικτύου Πληροφοριών Ευρυδική**  
**Unidades de la Red Eurydice**  
**Unidades da Rede Eurydice**

**HELLAS**

Evydiki  
Ypourgio Paidias ke Thriskevmaton  
Diefhinsi Evropaikis Kinitotias  
Mitropoleos 15  
GR-10185 Athens  
Tel.: 323.74.80  
Telex: 216270  
Telefax: 322.52.59

**IRELAND**

National Eurydice Unit  
Department of Education  
Room 210  
Marlborough Street  
IRL-Dublin 1  
Tel.: 74.02.07  
Telex: 31136  
Telefax: 72.95.53

**ITALIA**

L'Unità Nazionale di Eurydice  
Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione  
Biblioteca di Documentazione Pedagogica  
Palazzo Gerini, Via Buonarroti, 10  
I-50122 Firenze  
Tel.: 241.187/241.188

**LUXEMBOURG**

Unité Nationale d'Eurydice  
Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse  
Boulevard Royal, 6  
L-2910 Luxembourg  
Tel.: 46.802.551  
Telex: 3311 MENJ LU

**NEDERLAND**

Nationale dienst van Eurydice  
Centrale Directie Documentatie  
Ministerie van Onderwijs en Wetenschappen  
Postbus 25.000  
NL-2700 LZ Zoetermeer  
Tel.: 53.19.11 (poste 3497)  
Telex: 32636  
Telefax: 51.26.51

**PORTUGAL**

Unidade Nacional de Eurydice  
Ministério da Educação e Cultura  
Gabinete de Estudos e Planeamento  
Av. Miguel Bombarda, 20  
P-1093 Lisboa Codex  
Tel.: 73.60.9576.20.66  
Telex: 63553 GEFMEC P  
Telefax: 73.45.38

**UNITED KINGDOM**

Eurydice Unit London  
National Foundation for Educational Research  
The Mere, Upton Park  
GB-Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ  
Tel.: 74.123  
Telefax: 69.16.32  
  
Eurydice Unit Edinburgh  
Scottish Council for Research in Education  
15 St John Street  
GB-Edinburgh EH8 8JR  
Tel.: 557.29.44  
Telefax: 556.94.64





CAT. NUMBER  
**UU1087019ENC**



