

European Unit of EURYDICE

**REGULATIONS CONCERNING
COMPULSORY SCHOOLING**

**in the Member States
of the European Community**

1991



**Published for the
Task Force: Human Resources, Education, Training, Youth of the
Commission of the European Communities by the
European Unit of EURYDICE**

**Available in EN - FR
DE in preparation**

**D/1991/4008/19
ISBN 2-87116-170-4**

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**European Unit of EURYDICE
Rue d'Arlon 15
B-1040 Brussels**

**Tel. 2-238.30.11
Fax 2-230.65.62**

PREFACE

This document is an up-dated version of a comparative overview intended to establish a picture of compulsory education in the Member States of the European Community.

It provides information on the provision of compulsory education and the organisation of the school day, week and year during such education. This new edition includes information on the supervision of pupils outside of formal lesson time and on the organization of leisure or extra-curricular activities, and this information is included under the heading "extra-curricular facilities".

For further detailed information on curricula and methods of pupil assessment, the reader is referred to the EURYDICE publication entitled "Structures of the Education and Initial Training Systems in the Member States of the European Community".

The information presented below has been provided by the EURYDICE Units in the Member States of the European Community, whose collaboration is gratefully acknowledged.

Document prepared in the
EURYDICE European Unit
by A. BARRIUSO-DE CEUSTER

November 1991

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BELGIUM

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

Since 1 January 1989, responsibility for educational matters has been transferred to the Communities. There are three Communities in Belgium corresponding to each of the three official national languages: the French-speaking Community, the Dutch-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community.

Only three matters remain the responsibility of the Central State, and the fixing of the beginning and end of compulsory education is among them.

As from the 1983-1984 school year, the duration of compulsory education was extended on the coming into force of the Law of 29 June 1983 on Compulsory Education.

Previously, compulsory education lasted 8 years and applied to children from 6 to 14.

Under the new provisions in force, children must attend school for 12 years beginning in the school year which commences in the year in which they reach the age of six and ending at the end of the school year in the year in which they reach the age of eighteen.

Education is obligatorily full-time up to the age of 15/16; thereafter, up to age 18, it may be pursued on a part-time basis.

Compulsory education does not only extend over a period of life, it also includes a minimum content of full-time education, namely primary education, which must be completed in a maximum period of 7 years (exceptionally 8 years) and the first two years of secondary education.

Only those who do not complete the first two years of secondary education by the age of 15 are required to remain in full-time education until the age of 16.

The school year

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

In general, 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 tuition and 183 days of holiday.

Certain differences can nevertheless occur. In the French-language sector, for example,

unless alternative arrangements are made for 1991/92, the "Easter holidays" are fixed for the first two full weeks of April, irrespective of the date of Easter itself. In the Dutch-speaking sector, the Easter holidays are always determined by the date of Easter.

At national level, 15 November (*fête de la Dynastie*) and 8 May (commemoration of the end of the Second World War) are no longer school holidays. However, pupils and students are taught the national and historic significance of these dates.

The school week/school day

The school week is a five-day week. In Belgian schools, tuition is provided on five mornings (from Monday to Friday) and four afternoons (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday). In primary education, pupils attend school for a minimum of twenty-six hours per week. In practice they have at least 28 class periods, each lasting a minimum of 50 minutes. In the first and second years, the 50-minute periods are split into two lessons of 25 minutes each. There are short breaks of a maximum of 15 minutes morning and afternoon.

Starting and finishing times are determined by the competent education authority. Tuition is usually given between 8.30 am and 12 noon and between 1.30 pm and 4 pm, with 8.30 am and 4 pm constituting the outside starting and finishing times respectively. The lunch-time break must be at least one and a half hours. So as not to disrupt family life, the starting and finishing times are the same every day.

Full-time secondary education consists of a minimum of 28 class periods per week over 40 weeks. The maximum number of weekly periods of 50 minutes is fixed at 32. For sections comprising periods of practical work (technical and vocational education), the maximum may be increased to 34 or 36.

In advanced vocational secondary education, the maximum number of weekly periods is 36. In connection with the extension of compulsory education, there is also provision for a shortened form of education with 360 hours per year for pupils aged 15 to 16 and 240 hours for those aged 16 to 18.

Extra-curricular facilities

Schools have playgrounds, assembly halls, sports grounds or halls, libraries and multi-purpose rooms for periods of free time.

Frequently, in primary education, teachers are responsible for supervising breaks. However, the lunch-time break may be supervised by outside personnel, such as assistants or auxiliaries, parents or other persons paid for this purpose. In secondary education, supervision is frequently delegated to auxiliary staff such as "surveillants".

Educational activities vary from one school to another, depending on the school's infrastructure and facilities.

Thus some schools organize sports activities, computer courses, handicrafts, supervised study for pupils encountering difficulties, etc.

Primary schools may call upon the services of a remedial teacher, whose task it is to help pupils with temporary learning difficulties through specific activities tailored to each individual's needs.

Furthermore, in schools in which there are at least ten pupils of foreign nationality who do not have an adequate knowledge of the language used for teaching, a special adjustment course may be organized up to a maximum of three periods per week. "Homework schools" for supervised study also operate both within and outside primary and secondary schools in the form of *ASBLs* (non-profit making associations).

The cost of provision outside the official timetable is frequently borne by parents, the local authorities, parents' associations or by voluntary groups.

Schools can organize educational trips to the seaside, forests, the countryside or to a foreign country.

During the school year, twinning arrangements enable schools to combine educational activities, extra-curricular activities and language learning. Twinning is aimed at exchanges of classes, with pupils spending half their time in the ordinary classes of another school and the remainder of their time in school-related activities and in family, school and social life in a new environment.

DENMARK

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

In Denmark, compulsory education follows on after a period of optional pre-school education available to all 5 and 6-year-olds in all local government districts. Compulsory education does not begin until age seven and it lasts for a period of nine years, up to the age of 16. An optional tenth year may also be taken.

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 6 1/2.

The Danish *Folkeskole* is a comprehensive school embracing both primary and lower secondary education.

The school year

In accordance with the *Act on the Folkeskole*, the school year should in principle begin on 1 August and include 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 relating to the total number of holidays and other days off, and the date of the beginning of the summer holidays; he also issues guidelines on the overall scheduling of holidays.

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

For the 1990-1991 school year, the total number of holidays was not to exceed 167, including Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays as well as summer, autumn, Christmas and Easter holidays.

The school week/school day

Instruction is given in Danish schools from Monday to Friday. Schools are generally open from 8 am to 4 pm. Time-tables are fixed locally.

The number of lessons in the Danish *Folkeskole* (primary level and secondary up to 16 years) is fixed on a daily and weekly basis. The number of lessons per day must not exceed five for the first, second and third years, six for the fourth and fifth, seven for the sixth and

seventh and eight for the rest.

This means that the minimum number of lessons per week is 15 in the first and second years, 18 in the third, 20 in the fourth, 23 in the fifth and 24 in each of the sixth to tenth years.

Each lesson lasts 45 minutes and, in principle, each day's lessons are separated by ten-minute breaks. There is a thirty minute lunch break.

Extra-curricular facilities

When the lessons of the day are over (e.g. in the first year at 12 noon, 9th at 2.15 pm or 4 pm), pupils can leave the school. Most of the youngest pupils go to a recreation centre or similar kind of institution, where they can stay until their parents return home from work. However, in recent years, there has been a trend towards establishing leisure-time activities in school, to allow pupils to stay in the same surroundings after school hours.

The Ministry of Education has also issued guidelines on the provision of leisure activities in schools:

"The *Folkeskole* may offer facilities for play and activities outside school hours. It is up to the local authorities to decide on the introduction of such programmes which are optional for the children.

The municipalities may, in cooperation with the parents, organize leisure activities in schools in accordance with local wishes. It is a prerequisite that these schemes be established in such a way as to guarantee the children's safety.

The head teacher is responsible for administrative and educational oversight of the scheme at the individual school."

In recent years, a number of schools have organized their own canteens where pupils and teachers can buy something to eat, but there are no hot meals. However, at most schools, the pupils eat their lunch in the class room.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

For all children in the Federal Republic of Germany, compulsory education starts at the age of six. For all children who are six before 30 June of a given school year, compulsory education begins on 1 August of that year. At the request of their parents, children who are six in the second half of the year may be enrolled early, provided that they have attained the necessary level of intellectual and physical development. On the other hand, some children may wait a further year before starting school if they do not yet have the necessary maturity. Maturity tests are often used to determine a child's readiness for school. Children who have reached school age but who are not yet ready can attend nursery school or preparatory classes which have different names in the different *Länder*. In most *Länder*, attendance at nursery school or preparatory classes can be prescribed by law for six year olds.

In general, compulsory education lasts twelve years, including nine years full-time and three years part-time with vocational training. The *Länder* of Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia require ten years of full-time general education. Part-time compulsory education depends on the length of the apprenticeship required for any given recognized occupation. Some of the *Länder* have extended full-time compulsory education for young people who, after completing nine years of full-time education, neither attend a general education secondary school nor have concluded a contract of vocational training. Moreover, most *Länder* offer an optional tenth year for the acquisition of additional school leaving certificates providing higher qualifications.

The school year

The school year begins on 1 August and ends on 31 July of the following year. The actual beginning and end of the school year depend on the dates of the summer holidays. For educational, practical and climatic reasons, the summer holidays are confined to the period from mid-June to mid-September. By agreement of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, the six-week summer holidays are taken during this period in rotation among the *Länder* (regulations may be adopted as from the beginning of 1994). At present, the *Länder* are divided into six groups, each representing an equivalent number of pupils. In addition to the summer holidays, there are also shorter holiday periods in October (autumn holidays), and at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun. The total number of school holidays is 75 days, to which are added another 12 public and religious holidays. Pupils therefore attend school for an average of 226 days a year (365 days less 75 days' holiday, less 12 additional free days, less 52 Sundays). Depending on whether the five-day

school week has been introduced, pupils may attend school for less than 226 days per year (approximately 200 days). However this does not reduce the total annual number of hours of tuition, since the classes previously held on Saturday are given on the other days of the week.

The school week/school day

In most *Länder*, schools are closed on one or two Saturdays each month and some *Länder* have introduced the five-day school week.

Primary school pupils attend school between 20 and 27 hours a week. In most *Länder*, first-year pupils have approximately 20 hours of tuition and this increases to 27 in the fourth (final) year of the primary level. At the lower secondary level, (years five to ten), the number of class periods per week in compulsory subjects varies between 30 and 34 depending on the type of school: *Hauptschule* (compulsory general secondary education leading mainly to vocational training), *Realschule* (general secondary education giving access to various types of general and vocational senior secondary education), *Gymnasium* (general secondary education including the senior level and leading to a university entrance qualification) or *Gesamtschule* (school incorporating the *Hauptschule*, the *Realschule* and the *Gymnasium*). The number of class periods per week and their allocation to the different subjects vary according to the curricula of the different types of schools and classes. In the general secondary schools, a daily minimum of six consecutive class periods, in exceptional cases 7 consecutive class periods, are given. Each class period lasts 45 minutes. Tuition is generally provided in the morning, with the exception of special lessons (for example, sports, crafts, etc) and special activities.

Pupils undergoing vocational training in the dual system (concurrent general and vocational education in schools and training on the job) or in regular employment after completing the ninth or tenth grade are still subject to compulsory education. They attend a part-time vocational school (*Berufsschule*) for up to twelve class periods on one or more days a week.

Extra-curricular facilities

All-day schools (*Ganztagschulen*), where tuition is spread throughout the whole day and attendance is required from 8 am to 4 pm is still quite rare in the Federal Republic of Germany. Traditionally, in Germany, tuition is given in the morning. Only 3% of all schools are all-day schools and only 4% of pupils attend schools of this type.

In the light of changes which have taken place in family structures and in the living environment of children and given the significant increase in women engaging in outside employment, all *Länder* are currently engaged in expanding arrangements for the all-day supervision of pupils at half-day schools. To meet the growing demand for such facilities, the *Länder* offer a great variety of extra-curricular activities. Two possible types of provision

of all-day supervision are:

- extended versions of the half-day school (compulsory courses in the morning, optional supervision at midday and in the afternoon):
- all-day supervision of children through co-operation or co-ordination between schools and non-school institutions (e.g.: between schools and day-care centres, schools and boarding schools, schools and youth centres).

In the context of the extension of half-day schools, provision may be made for pupils - particularly at primary level - from 7.30 am to 2 pm and even until 5 pm. The public authorities responsible for schools offer lunch, supervised study hours, recreational activities and, occasionally, special group activities. However, contrary to the practice in all-day schools, no additional tuition is offered. Non-school institutions, the most important of which are day-care centres (*Horte*) set up at the school or separately, have an independent socio-educational role aimed, above all, at complementing and supporting the child's education within the family. Day-care centres generally offer lunch, supervised study hours and recreational activities which help to develop social skills. By law, the public youth welfare service, which is run by independent agencies responsible for youth work, is also responsible for setting up non-school institutions for children of school age. Depending on the *Länder* involved and on whether such supervision is provided by a school or a non-school body, the additional staff and material costs incurred in the various forms of all-day supervision are borne in differing proportions by the *Land*, the local authorities (as the bodies responsible for the schools and youth welfare services), and the parents. As regards staff costs, a distinction must be made between supervision provided by additional teachers and that provided by members of the youth welfare service (social workers, instructors, etc).

The forms of provision on a full-time basis described above, other than all-day schools, are most likely to be developed since the *Länder* are not planning a general extension of all-day schools. The education acts of the five new *Länder* also include in quantitative terms the necessary provisions for day-care centres to be set up for years one to four of primary schools and all-day supervision may be provided for years five to ten.

GREECE

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

Compulsory education begins for Greek children at the age of five and a half, which means in practice that all must enrol at school in the year in which they reach the age of five years and six months by 1 October.

According to the Greek Constitution, compulsory education covers nine years: six years in primary school (*Demotiko Scholio*) and three years in the secondary school (*Gymnasio*). Pupils who have completed the six years of primary education are automatically enrolled in the *Gymnasio* without examination. Compulsory education ends on average, for Greek children, at the age of fourteen years and six months.

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 *Skoliko etos*, that is, administrative school year.

The exact dates for the beginning and end of the teaching period for the various school levels are fixed annually by the Ministry of Education by Presidential decree.

Primary schools open on 1 September and close on 20 June. This period is called *Didaktiko etos*, that is, the school year. The actual teaching period usually runs from 1 September to 15 June. The periods from 1 to 11 September and from 10 to 20 June are devoted to administrative matters.

In the *Gymnasio*, the school year begins on 1 September and ends on 30 June of the following year. Classes are held from 11 September until 30 May. June is devoted to examinations and administrative matters. *Gymnasio* pupils move up from year to year and at the end of the cycle receive their school leaving certificate on the basis of the results obtained in quarterly tests.

Examinations are organized only for pupils who leave the *Gymnasio* without obtaining a school leaving certificate.

The main holiday periods for Greek schools are as follows: two weeks each at Christmas and Easter; almost three months' summer holiday for pupils in primary and secondary schools and two months for teachers.

In addition to these holiday periods, there are approximately ten national and religious holidays on which Greek schools are closed.

The school week/school day

Greek schools operate a five-day week, from Monday to Friday. Since most school buildings house more than one school, tuition is given alternatively in morning and afternoon sessions. It is common practice for Greek pupils in a particular school to have morning sessions one week and afternoon sessions the following week.

The morning session begins at 8.30 am in all schools. It ends between 12.10 pm and 1.50 pm depending on the organization of the school. The afternoon session begins at 2 pm or 3 pm and ends at 6.10 pm or 7.10 pm depending on the season.

In primary schools, pupils have 23 lesson periods per week in the first and second years; and 25 during the following years. In the *Gymnasio*, there are 30 lesson periods per week.

Extra-curricular facilities

Before lessons start or during breaks, pupils can use the school playground as well as the school's sports facilities or library, according to availability. Teachers designated by the school's headmaster, are responsible for the supervision of pupils during recreation.

In the *Gymnasio*, sports activities subsidized by the Ministry of Education are organized between schools at inter-regional or national level. These include, for example, athletics events, basket ball and volley ball championships, football matches and gymnastic competitions.

Cultural activities such as the organization of theatrical performances, exhibitions, visits to museums, to archaeological sites ... are also organized in many schools on the initiative of pupils', teachers', or parents' associations. These activities are either self-financing or subsidised by the associations which organize them.

SPAIN

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

In Spain, compulsory education lasts 8 years and is called Basic General Education (*Educación General Básica - E.G.B.*). Compulsory education is free for all children, begins at age 6 and ends at 14.

Compulsory education is divided into three cycles:

- 1) the lower cycle, consisting of the first and second years;
- 2) the intermediate cycle, consisting of the third, fourth and fifth years;
- 3) the upper cycle consisting of the sixth, seventh and eighth years.

In the lower and intermediate cycles, education is global (provided by one teacher). During this period, efforts are made to stimulate and develop the pupil's intellectual faculties, and particular stress is laid on teaching the basic skills and encouraging the development of all forms of self-expression (spoken and written language, physical activities, plastic arts, etc). In the third cycle, the programme is divided up by subjects (teaching is provided by several teachers) and more weight is given to acquiring knowledge in a systematic way although the techniques of self-expression continue to occupy a central position.

At the end of General Basic Education, pupils who have successfully completed the eight years are awarded the School Graduate Certificate (*Graduado Escolar*). Those who fail to reach the required standard are awarded the School Attendance Certificate (*Certificado de Escolaridad*).

The School Attendance Certificate only gives access to the lower level vocational training institutions. The School Graduate Certificate, on the other hand, gives access to upper secondary education and the *Bachillerato*.

In October 1990, a new Basic Law on the General Structure and Organization of the Education System (*LOGSE*) was passed in Spain. This aims at a reform of the whole non-university education system which will be implemented progressively over a ten-year period.

This Law extends compulsory education to ten years, beginning at six years of age and continuing until the age of sixteen. This basic education should cover two educational stages: primary education (6-12 years) and compulsory secondary education (12-16 years).

Primary education will comprise three cycles of two school years each and include compulsory subjects on a global and integrated basis.

Compulsory secondary education will be divided into two cycles of two years each and will be subject specific.

Those who complete compulsory secondary education successfully will receive the Certificate of Secondary Education (*Graduado en Educación Secundaria*). This certificate will enable the student to proceed to the *Bachillerato* and to intermediate vocational training. There will be only one form of certificate.

The school year

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

The school holidays are as follows:

- Christmas, from 21 December to 8 January;
- Holy Week (week before Easter), for 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 Sundays, there are generally a further nine holidays a year, the dates being set each year, taking account of local festivities, by the Ministry of Education and Science and by the autonomous Communities with full responsibility for education.

The school week/school day

Schools operate a five-day week, from Monday to Friday, for a total of 25 hours of tuition in all three cycles of General Basic Education.

Classes are generally held in the morning from 9 am to 12 noon and in the afternoon from 3 pm to 5 pm except during the first two weeks of June and the last two weeks of September when classes are held each day only between 9 am and 1 pm.

As a general rule, the school day must include a break of at least two hours between the morning and afternoon sessions. Furthermore, the time-table must be arranged in such a way that within the twenty-five hours of tuition per week, the total number of breaks amounts to two and a half hours. In the first cycle, suitable breaks can be set depending on the nature and pace of the school work, without exceeding twenty minutes per three-hour session.

Extra-curricular facilities

Pupils are entitled to meet in school for school-related or extra-curricular activities or for other education or training related activities.

Facilities provided by schools for these activities must include a multi-purpose room, a library and sports facilities.

In general, the teaching staff is responsible for pupils' safety during these activities, although

this depends on the internal organization of each school.

Each school decides independently which out-of-school and complementary activities will take place during the school year.

The school council, a body in which the various members of the school community participate, has the following functions, among others: drawing up guidelines for the scheduling and development of complementary activities, such as visits, school trips, canteen facilities and summer camps. It is also responsible for establishing criteria for the school's participation in cultural, sporting, recreational and social activities.

The role of physical education instructors includes coordinating and, where appropriate, organizing sporting activities out of school hours.

Moreover, various public and private bodies outside the school implement initiatives for promoting and organizing leisure activities: workshops, artistic activities (theatre, cinema, music, etc), sports competitions, cultural outings and end of year trips, camps etc.

FRANCE

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

In France compulsory education lasts ten years.

Children start their education in primary school after the summer holidays if they are six years old or will be before the end of the calendar year.

Education is compulsory up to age 16.

For all children, education begins with two, three or sometimes four years at nursery school (*école maternelle*), known as pre-primary education (*préélémentaire*). This level of education, which can take children from two years of age, is not compulsory, but 100% of four-year-olds attend. It represents the first stage of the learning process (*cycle des apprentissages premiers*).

The last year of nursery school (age 5) marks the end of this stage and the beginning of the basic learning stage (*cycle des apprentissages fondamentaux*) which continues into the first two years of compulsory education in primary school (*école élémentaire*). The remaining three years of primary education constitute the reinforcing and consolidation phase (*cycle des approfondissements*).

Secondary education is given in three types of establishment: *collèges* (lower secondary schools), *lycées* (upper secondary schools) and *lycées professionnels* (vocational secondary schools).

The *collèges* are comprehensive schools to which all pupils go on completion of their primary education. Education in the *collège* lasts four years, divided into two 2-year cycles - the observation cycle and the guidance cycle. The average age of pupils finishing the *collège* is fifteen.

Consequently (except in the case of those who have had to repeat a year), in order to satisfy the compulsory education requirements, pupils have to complete at least another one year of full-time education in either general/technical or vocational *lycées*.

The former accept pupils after completion of their education in the *collèges* while the latter may also take pupils at the end of the first cycle there, provided that they are at least 14 years old.

The school year

In France the school year begins during the first fortnight of September.

For children in the first stage (nursery and primary schools), the school time-table comprises 316 half-days' activity. At secondary level, the time-table can be more flexible depending on the subjects and options chosen.

The dates of school holidays throughout the year are fixed by Ministerial order for a three-year period. For this purpose the national territory is divided into three separate areas to ensure that holidays are staggered.

At present there is a tendency to shorten summer holidays and extend the short intermediate holidays.

The first school holiday period (of slightly more than one week) is granted around 1 November (All Saints holidays) and the second around Christmas/New Year. The Christmas and All Saints holiday periods are the same for the three areas. The winter holidays (approximately ten days) begin on different dates in February depending on the area. The two-week spring holiday takes place on different dates from April to May. The summer holidays are virtually identical for the three areas and begin at the end of June or at the beginning of July.

There is a special time-table for Corsica and the Overseas Departments.

The school week/school day

At primary level, schools operate a five-day week (9 half days): morning and afternoon on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and Saturday morning.

However, under decree no. 91-383 of 22 April 1991, the inspector (*inspecteur d'Académie*) responsible for national education at Departmental level can modify this weekly timetable provided however that this does not compromise, over the year as a whole, the number of teaching hours or their allocation to the various subject groups as laid down under the Ministry of Education order of 1 August 1990.

Under these arrangements, some experiments are being undertaken at the present time on the basis of reducing the school week to four days, working more weeks in the year and consequently reducing the length of the summer holidays.

In the *collèges*, each establishment has its own weekly programme. The pupils' timetables have to include at least five mornings and may cover six. At least two and at the most four afternoons may be used, but always to the exclusion of Wednesday and Saturday afternoons.

In the *lycées*, the pupils also work on Wednesday mornings.

In the context of the implementation of the organization of education through learning cycles laid down by the Framework Law on Education (Law of 10 July 1989), the weekly length of education in kindergarten and primary schools of 27 hours has been fixed at 26 hours per week. Initially, this measure will be applied in 33 Departments where learning cycles will be introduced. It will apply in general during the 1991-1992 school year.

In the first secondary cycle, (observation cycle), the school week lasts 24 hours to which three hours of support teaching in accordance with various arrangements can be added for French, Mathematics and the first modern language. The school week during the guidance cycle lasts 24 1/2 hours to which must be added 2 or 3 hours of compulsory study in an optional subject.

During the school day pupils have between 3 and 6 class periods of 55 minutes each per day.

In vocational educational *lycées*, there are between 31 and 36 hours per week.

Extra-curricular facilities

In many primary schools, children may take lunch in the school canteen or restaurant. Canteen facilities are organized by the local authority or by an association (parents' association, for example).

There is generally organized study in the evening time after classes for children whose parents work. Sometimes, a child-care centre operates prior to the opening of school.

Sporting, artistic and cultural activities may form the subject of projects drawn up by the teaching staff of the school in cooperation with local partners: associations, local authorities, parents, etc.

In *collèges*, extra-curricular activities are organized in conjunction with external bodies, associations or cultural, scientific and technical bodies (museums, youth centres, national parks, etc) and also within the framework of "education action projects" specifically financed by the local authorities and the Ministry of Education, or completely outside school hours.

Other activities can be organised on the initiative of the socio-educational club and sports association established under statute in accordance with the law of 1901 on associations.



IRELAND

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

The Irish Constitution recognizes that parents are free to provide for the education of their children "in their homes or in private schools or in schools recognized 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 6 and 15 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 length of primary schooling is eight years, so that the majority of pupils transfer to second level schools at about 12 years of age (pupils are normally 12 years of age by 1 September of the year of entry). The last three years of compulsory education (12-15 year olds) usually take place in the *Junior Cycle* of one of the four main types of post-primary schools: *Private Secondary Schools*, *Public Vocational Schools*, *Comprehensive Schools* and *Community Schools*. Pupils may only transfer to post-primary schools when they have completed the primary school course up to and including 6th standard or its equivalent. Most post-primary pupils normally follow courses lasting a total of 5 years. It is proposed to develop post-primary courses so as to enable pupils to spend up to 6 years overall in a post-primary school. The *Junior Cycle* has been of three years' duration in all post-primary schools as from 1 September 1986.

The school year

The school year in Irish schools starts on 1 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 year 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 which open for six days a week (only possible at second-level) have to teach for at least 200 days per year.

The school week/school day

The organization 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 organized. Normally, *National Schools* are in operation 5 days a week. They should be open to receive pupils not later than 9.30 am and formal lessons must begin not later than 9.50 am daily.

There is no finishing time laid down. There are two breaks during the school day: one of ten minutes in the mid morning and a lunch-break of between 30 minutes and an hour. Total time spent at school per day should be at least 5 hours and 20 minutes.

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 30 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 6 hours each day from approximately 9 am to 4 pm with a one-hour break for lunch.

The duration of classes in second-level schools is approximately 40 minutes. A minimum of 28 hours class contact per week is required under the regulations.

Extra-curricular facilities

At primary level, leisure-time facilities vary as between different schools but for the vast majority, the school playground is usually the only facility available during break times. In the larger schools there is frequently a general purpose room or assembly-hall and these too would be available, particularly in bad weather.

Teachers are responsible for pupils for the entire school-day and have to carry out the necessary supervision at break times.

In many schools, teachers take groups of pupils for sports or other leisure activities, but this would be after school hours. Such matters are for local arrangement.

At secondary level also, any arrangement in this regard is at the discretion of the management authorities of each school.

ITALY

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

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 the subject of wide-ranging discussion 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 providing compulsory education, school year begins by law on 1 September and ends on 31 August.

Apart from the summer holidays, Italian schools are closed for Christmas (approximately two weeks) and Easter (approximately one week) and also on national and some religious holidays. The minimum annual number of teaching days is 200. The dates for the beginning of classes and the Christmas and Easter holidays are established by the Regional Superintendent of Schools, taking into consideration the requirements of the Regional Administrations and the provincial school boards. The dates for the end of classes and for examinations are established by the Ministry of Public Education.

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

The school week/school day

Following the primary school reform, implemented progressively from the 1990/1991 school year and beginning with the junior classes, the weekly number of hours of teaching has been fixed at 27 with a maximum of 30. Schools may choose to organize teaching on 5 or 6 days per week, in morning and afternoon sessions. The reform also provides for the possibility,

for schools, of organizing extra-curricular activities provided that the total weekly timetable does not exceed 37 hours, including lunch breaks.

In the primary school, lessons generally begin in the morning at 8.30 am; the end of lessons and the length of breaks depend on how the school management organizes the school timetable.

For the three years of compulsory secondary education, the number of hours of teaching per week is set at 30. It is also possible to extend the timetable to the afternoon at parents' request and up to a maximum of 40 hours per week.

The school week is six days. Full-time schools are closed on Saturdays.

In the lower secondary school, lessons last until 1.30 pm. There is usually a 20-minute pause in the mid-morning for a short break and a snack. If tuition continues into the afternoon, lessons end at 12.30 pm for lunch and a break of approximately an hour. In the afternoon, lessons and leisure activities take place from 2 pm to 4.30 pm.

Extra-curricular facilities

The initiative for organizing recreational activities complementary to the curriculum must come from the governing bodies of the school (teachers, class committees, etc.) and its Headmaster in response to the wishes of the families. The school is authorised to do this by the Ministry of Public Education provided that the municipal administration undertakes to provide the services and cover the costs for which it is responsible (transport, canteens, suitable buildings).

School time not dedicated to classroom educational activities can be spent in areas, which may be outdoors, such as playgrounds with play equipment, gymnasiums, sports fields, school libraries, canteens and inside areas used for interclass educational or recreational activities. The structure, size and equipment requirements of such areas are prescribed in the regulations governing school building.

The creative activities proposed by the school include drama, music and music appreciation, drawing and painting, handicrafts, technological activities, gymnastics and observation of the environment.

The responsibility for pupils throughout their presence in the school buildings (including gymnasiums and outdoor areas) lies with the teachers, even during breaks and lunchtime.

The basic provision for schools' educational and recreational activities is funded by the municipal authorities, whereas the State meets the cost of technical and scientific equipment, teaching aids (including audio-visual equipment) and books and their upkeep.

LUXEMBOURG

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

Luxembourg is the only country in the European Community to have introduced one year of compulsory education in pre-primary schools for all five-year olds. The relevant 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 enter primary education at the age of six and leave six years later.

After primary education, pupils (according to their ability and interests) are guided in their choice to complementary courses, secondary education, vocational training or secondary technical education.

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

The school year

The school holiday arrangements 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 is therefore 36 weeks.

The exact dates of the holidays are fixed every year by Ministerial order.

The school week/school day

In Luxembourg schools, the number of class periods is identical in primary education and in the first stage of secondary education, i.e. 30 hours per week (including breaks).

Lessons in primary schools are given as follows: Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 11.45 am; Monday, Wednesday and Friday also in the afternoon from 2 pm to 3.45 pm.

There is a fifteen-minute break every morning and afternoon. There is usually also a five-

minute break between lessons.

The relatively high number of class periods even for children in the initial phase of primary education arises from the fact that Luxembourg is a bilingual country in whose schools' both languages are given equal importance from the outset.

In compulsory secondary education, both in the lycées and in technical education, two parallel systems exist side by side. In general education, class periods are organized on the same basis as in primary education; in technical secondary education, however, class periods, in certain subjects and at certain levels, may continue each afternoon until 5 pm or 6 pm.

Extra-curricular facilities

For the moment, only a very limited number of primary schools have sports grounds and special recreational facilities.

Some of the larger primary schools have canteen facilities for the pupils. However most primary school pupils have to leave the school during the midday break, as there is no canteen or recreation area.

In the secondary education sector, most schools have a canteen or pupils at least have the opportunity of eating their midday meal at another school.

School canteens are run by the Education Ministry. In addition, every school has recreation rooms for pupils, libraries and to varying degrees, sports grounds and covered swimming pools.

The schools themselves are responsible for the upkeep of these facilities.

Some general secondary and technical schools have, for some time, offered pupils with a strong interest in sport, art and music the opportunity of taking extra-curricular activities during the midday break.

The Luxembourg Education Ministry bears the cost of activities outside formal teaching time. The pupils are normally supervised by the teaching staff.

THE NETHERLANDS

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

Compulsory education begins at the age of five, or to be more specific on the first day of the month following the child's fifth birthday, and ends:

- either after twelve completed school years (e.g. eight 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 sixteen.

Students who are not in full-time education after their eleventh school year must attend an establishment for part-time education one or two days a week for one more year. Compulsory part-time education of one day per week applies to students bound by articles of apprenticeship pursuant to the Apprenticeship Act.

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

On completion of primary education, secondary courses may be followed at schools providing pre-university education (*VWO*), general secondary education (*AVO*), and vocational education (*BO*).

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 (primary school) or seven week summer holidays (secondary education) 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 days of September, depending on the region.

The rotation of the arrangements among these regions is governed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Other school holidays are determined by the competent school authorities.

Generally there is an autumn half-term holiday (usually a week in October), a minimum of two weeks at Christmas, a minimum of a half-week in February or March, a minimum of a week and a half Easter holiday and other additional holidays (national public holidays for example).

In primary schools, pupils with a five-day school week have tuition on at least 200 days per year and those with a six-day school week on at least 240 days. However, in secondary education, a maximum of 60 school days are given as holidays under the five-day school week and a maximum of 72 school days under the six-day 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 school week.

The school week/school day

The school week can be either a six-day or a five-day week. Generally, pupils attend school for five days a week.

Under the new law on primary education which entered into force on 1 August 1985, the time-table is arranged in such a way that in the first four school years pupils have at least 3520 hours of tuition and in the last four school years a minimum of 4000 hours of tuition. On average pupils have at least 22 hours of tuition per week in the first four school years and at least 25 hours in the following years.

Each day pupils have a maximum of five and a half hours of tuition, with care being taken to ensure that the balance of subjects is correct.

The school day must begin and end at the same time for all pupils. Each school determines its own annual plan of activities containing, for example, the class time-tables, holidays and other days off.

In secondary education, pupils have an average of between 28 and 32 class periods per week. In the first stage of secondary education, the total number of class periods varies between 960 and 1280 per year, that is, between 24 and 32 periods per week. A class period lasts 50 minutes.

Extra-curricular facilities

The Primary Education Act makes it compulsory for the competent authority of a school to enable pupils to stay in the school buildings and grounds during the lunch break, if the parents so wish.

Supervision is provided mostly by teachers or by parents.

The competent school authority may make the necessary arrangements themselves or they can leave them entirely in the hands of the parents.

The cost of staying at school during the lunch break is borne by the parents of those children who use this facility.

In secondary education, there are no regulations concerning the organization of the school day or the activities arranged for pupils during their free time. Such arrangements depend on the schools.

PORTUGAL

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

Until 1987, compulsory education in Portugal, lasted six years and comprised two cycles:

- primary education: four years of instruction divided into two two-year stages for the 6 to 9-year age group ;
- preparatory education: two years of instruction for the 10 to 11-year age group.

Compulsory education ended at age 14.

The Comprehensive Law on the Education System (Law 46/86 of 14 October 1986) provided that compulsory education should be extended to 9 years ("*Basic education* is universal, compulsory and free and lasts for nine years" - Article 6(1)).

This measure applied for the first time to pupils who enrolled in the first year of *basic education* for the 1987/1988 school year and concerns all those who enrol in subsequent school years. The full implementation of nine-year compulsory education will thus only be completed in 1996.

Children are enrolled in *basic education* in a particular year if they have reached the age of 6 years before 15 September. Those children who reach the age of 6 between 16 September and 31 December may be allowed to enrol if the person responsible for their education files such a request. Compulsory attendance for this level of education ends at the age of fifteen.

Basic education consists of three consecutive cycles: the *first cycle* of 4 years covers the 6 to 9/10-year age-group; the *second cycle* of 2 years covers the 10 to 11/12-year age-group and the *third cycle* of three years covers the 12 to 14/15-year age-group.

The school year

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

This text lays down the dates for the beginning and end of the school year which must include a minimum of 35 weeks of teaching.

It also sets out the school breaks for Christmas, Shrovetide and Easter, as well as establishing the periods for examination and final classification.

Holidays usually last one week at Shrovetide and two weeks at Christmas and Easter.

The school week/school day

In the *first cycle*, *basic education* is given five days a week from Monday to Friday, with single or dual occupation of the buildings.

The organization of formal teaching time each day depends on the relation between the number of pupils and the space available. Under the normal (single-shift) system, tuition is given in the morning from 9 am to 12 noon and in the afternoon from 2 pm to 4 pm. In the dual or two-shift system, lessons are given in the morning from 8 am to 1 pm and in the afternoon from 1.15 pm to 6.15 pm.

In both systems, the overall period of breaks is 30 minutes and the time spent at school is five hours per day.

In the *second and third cycles*, classes are held from Monday to Saturday although, if the governing body so decides, the five-day week can be followed.

Due to lack of classrooms, these cycles have had to be organized on the basis of alternating shifts. Under this system, pupils attending in the morning have classes in the afternoon on some days, and vice versa.

The daily time-table may vary depending on when classes begin and the length of breaks. Morning classes begin at 8 am or 8.30 am and end at 12.45 pm or 1.30 pm; the afternoon classes begin at 1 pm or 1.30 pm and end at 5.45 pm or 6.30 pm.

There are four breaks normally of 10 minutes each day. However, if appropriate, for example in order to take into account public transport times to and from the school, the first morning break and the last afternoon break can be cut to five minutes. One of the breaks in each shift can also be extended to 15 or 20 minutes.

The daily time-table is divided into five consecutive class periods or seven class periods spread over morning and afternoon sessions. An exception to this is in the eighth year when the daily time-table can be divided into eight class periods, but only on one day of the week. Where there are seven or eight class periods per day, two or three of these should be devoted to the following subjects: visual education, manual work (second cycle), workshop periods (3rd cycle), physical education and religious education or ethics. The school may also provide extra-curricular activities for the pupils for two extra periods per week. The total weekly time-table is 30/33 hours.

Extra-curricular facilities

In principle, pupils remain at school for the duration of their daily time-table plus the time spent on extra-curricular activities where staff and accommodation permit.

A large number of schools in the first cycle of *basic education* have a multi-purpose area and playgrounds, although very few have the facilities necessary for leisure activities. Local

authorities are responsible for the provision of these facilities. In some cases, the pupils have a library.

Most first-cycle schools do not have a canteen. Normally, those pupils attending school under the two-shift system bring their own meals or use the canteen of a nearby second or third-cycle school.

Playground supervision during breaks is undertaken by teachers and auxiliary teaching staff. The School Board establishes a rota system for supervision on the basis of two adults per hundred children.

In the 2nd and 3rd cycles of *basic education*, education establishments normally have a gymnasium where pupils can practice sports outside the periods of physical education, as well as using playgrounds which are adapted for sport. Some schools already have a sports hall. Virtually all these establishments have a library and a common room for pupils with a television set. Pupils can also have access to other types of equipment such as videos and computers, as long as these form part of school activities monitored by the teaching staff. In the context of musical education, choirs and instrumental groups may be organized in some schools. School clubs have also been set up around a range of cultural and artistic interests such as art, theatre, the study of languages, computing, the European dimension, etc.

Almost all of the schools at this level have their own canteen facilities and many also have a snack bar. In schools without a canteen, a snack bar will sometimes serve light meals.

Pupil supervision and the responsibility of teachers, auxiliary teaching staff and other employees for this supervision depends on the area used by the pupils. Whereas the various school employees are responsible for the canteen, the common room and the snack bar, auxiliary educational staff, where available, or a teacher who has reduced teaching hours (for health reasons), are responsible for supervising pupils in the library.

There is no supervision of pupils on the playing fields during activities which are not included in the curriculum.

Parent involvement in school life is insignificant at present apart from, in some cases, supporting school entertainment activities and school trips. With the publication of the new legislation on school management, it is expected that parents will be able to participate in other ways.

In the three cycles of *basic education*, remedial teaching is provided by teachers who have a reduction in their teaching time-table.

UNITED KINGDOM

a) England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

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 Education Act* requires that there should be two stages of compulsory education: primary (*junior*) and secondary (*senior*). 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 10 1/2 to those aged over 12. Normally middle schools provide a four-year course for pupils aged between eight and twelve years, or nine and thirteen years.

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*, in *grammar schools* where selection takes place according to ability, in *secondary modern schools*, or in technical schools. As an indication, in England in 1990, the percentage of pupils in each type of school was 85.9%, 3.4%, 3.8% and 0.4% respectively.

The school year

The school year consists of 400 sessions, of which 20 may be taken as "occasional holidays". The school year, for the purpose 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* in consultation with the teachers' associations.

The school week/school day

The school week normally runs from Monday to Friday.

The school day is divided into two sessions: morning and afternoon. The time-table is at the discretion of the individual schools, on the basis of the general principles laid down in the *1944 Education Act*.

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.

The school day normally lasts from around 9 am until 3 pm for primary schools, 3.30 pm or 4 pm for secondary schools, with a break of 10 to 15 minutes mid-morning and mid-afternoon and a longer break, of between 30 minutes and 1 hour, at lunch times. Each lesson lasts for about 30-45 minutes.

Extra-curricular facilities

Facilities for leisure-time activities vary from school to school depending on their resources and priorities. Many have a library where pupils may pursue individual study outside class-time.

Some schools have a room set aside as a lounge for some pupils, often older pupils aged 16-18, but this depends on the space available. Some schools allow older pupils to use sports facilities outside class-time but a teacher must be present in a supervisory capacity.

A factor that has had an effect on extra-curricular activities is that, since August 1987, the annual *Teachers' salaries and conditions of service* document issued by the *DES (Department of Education and Science)* has stipulated the duties a teacher may be required to perform and enumerated hours of service. There is a strong tradition of teachers arranging or being involved in many extra-curricular activities, including team sports or the organization of clubs for interests such as photography, drama, dancing, but this is not part of the duties specified in their conditions of service.

b) Scotland

Beginning and duration of compulsory education

Compulsory education in Scotland lasts 11 years, 7 of which are spent in primary school and 4 in secondary. Children start school between the ages of 4 1/2 and 5 1/2. There is one intake per year, in late August, and all children must attend if they are already 5 years old or will be by the end of the following February. Parents may continue to educate their children at home but very few do so, and local education authorities (*LEA*) must be satisfied that in such cases the education being offered is adequate and efficient (*Education (Scotland) Act 1980*).

Young people who do not reach the age of 16 until after the summer break at the end of 4 years of secondary education must remain at school until the following Christmas.

Of the circa 2440 local education authority primary schools, all but one or two cater for both boys and girls. About 96% of 5-12 year-olds attend such primary schools. There are 440 secondary schools in the state sector, all of them comprehensive, i.e. responsible for teaching young people of all abilities (except those with physical or mental handicap who attend special schools). Some 95% of young people of secondary school age attend these schools, the remainder being educated in private (*independent*) schools. About 90% of secondary schools provide education on an all-through basis from 12 to 18; the others, located in the main in rural areas, offer 4 years of secondary education, after which any pupils wishing to continue their education must transfer to a school providing the six-year secondary course.

The school year

There are very few administrative regulations relating to the school year in Scotland. Local education authorities are free to fix any term or holiday dates which they choose, provided that every school under their management is open for pupils for at least 195 days (excluding Saturdays and Sundays) in the school year. Teachers must attend for 5 additional days for in-service training purposes. Only in very exceptional circumstances, and with the approval of the Secretary of State, can any reduction be made in the prescribed number of days of attendance.

The school term dates operated by the 12 local education authorities vary little from one authority to another. The summer holidays normally last for 6 weeks in July/August; the other breaks in the school year are of 1 to 2 weeks each: in October, at Christmas, and around Easter.

The school week/school day

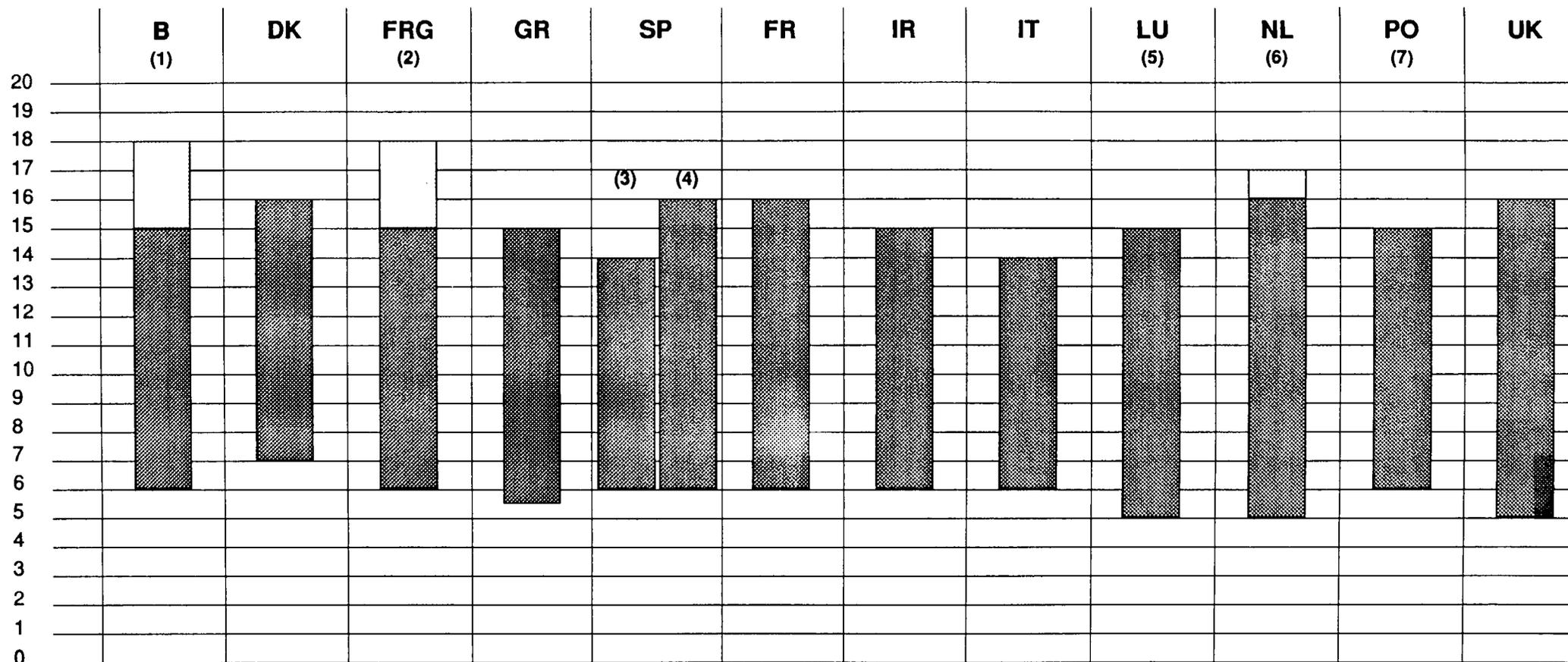
Lessons are given on 5 days each week (from Monday to Friday). There are no statutory requirements as regards time-tabling but generally the day is divided into two sessions (morning and afternoon). Local education authorities have discretion to determine the school hours for their respective areas and delegate responsibility for the time-tabling of the school day thereafter to headteachers. In practice, all schools, both primary and secondary, operate a 5 to 5 1/2 hour day, giving a 25 to 27 1/2 hour week. Children in the first two primary years generally have a shorter day than other pupils. In primary schools, the division of the school day is agreed between the headteacher and class teachers individually. A fairly normal pattern would provide a short mid-morning break of between ten to fifteen minutes, a lunch break of between 30 minutes and an hour at around midday and, possibly, an afternoon break of around 10 minutes (although afternoon breaks are not so common as morning breaks). The secondary school day is timetabled generally into 5, 6 or 8 periods of roughly equal length.

Extra-curricular facilities

All schools have, or have access to, dining halls, library, and some form of sports facilities provided by the local authority.

Provision of extra-curricular activities, however is entirely at the discretion of the education authorities and the schools themselves, and most extra-curricular activities are organised and supervised by teachers, other school staff or parents, on a purely voluntary basis.

Table: COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGES IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



Legend: ■ full-time compulsory education □ part-time compulsory education

(1) Compulsory education covers twelve years, from 6 to 18 years of age. It is full-time up to 15 years of age; those who have completed at least the first two years of secondary education and do not wish to continue full-time until 18 may then follow part-time compulsory education. Pupils who have not completed 2 years of secondary education must attend full-time compulsory education until 16 years of age.

(2) Compulsory schooling usually lasts 12 years, consisting in most Länder of 9 years of full-time schooling (10 years in Berlin, Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia) and 3 years of part-time schooling or the period of training for a recognized career in the dual system.

(3) pre-reform.

(4) post-reform.

(5) Compulsory education includes one year of pre-school education for pupils aged 5.

(6) Compulsory education ends either after 12 years full-time education (5 to 17), or at the end of the school year in which the pupil has reached the age of 16. Pupils who are not in full-time education after their 11th school year must then attend 1 year part-time education.

(7) Until 1987, compulsory education in Portugal lasted 6 years, whilst compulsory attendance lasted until 14 years of age (ie. 8 years). The Basic Education System Law of October 1986 extended compulsory education to 9 years - applicable to pupils enrolled in the first year of basic education for the 1987-88 school year and for subsequent school years.

EURYDICE

The Education Information Network in the European Community

Educational cooperation in the Community

The education systems in the twelve EC Member States vary considerably and this variety, which is the result of historic and cultural factors, is itself a source of wealth.

In order to ensure that this diversity does not become an obstacle to the free movement of people, it is essential to provide effective information on the operation and structures of the education systems.

It is also vital for each country to benefit from the experience of its Community partners and thus contribute to the development of European educational cooperation.

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 (1).

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

It was recognized in 1990 as the chief instrument for providing information on national and Community structures, systems and developments in the field of education (2).

In accordance with their own distinctive education structures, each Member State has designated at least one Unit to participate in the network and the Commission of the European Communities has arranged the establishment of the EURYDICE European Unit, which is part of the network.

EURYDICE is based on the mutual cooperation of all the Units. In addition the European Unit coordinates and animates the network.

(1) Official Journal n° C38, 19.02.1976, p.1.

(2) Official Journal n° C329, 31.12.1990, p.23.

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

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

The Eurydice European Unit
Rue d'Arton 15
B-1040 Bruxelles
Tel.: 238.30.11
Telefax: 230.65.62

BELGIQUE/BELGIE

Unité francophone d'Eurydice
Communauté française
Organisation des Etudes
Rue de la Science 43
B-1040 Bruxelles
Tel.: 238.86.91
Telefax: 219.77.87

Nederlandstalige dienst van Eurydice

Ministerie van Onderwijs
Informatie- en documentatiedienst
Koningsstraat 150
B-1000 Brussel
Tel.: 210.54.01 / 210.53.93
Telefax: 210.54.09

DANMARK

Eurydice's Informationskontor i Danmark
Undervisningsministeriet
Frederiksholms Kanal 25 D
DK-1220 København K
Tel.: 92.52.01
Telex: 22275
Telefax: 92.55.67

BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND

Eurydice Informationsstelle beim
Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft
Heinemannstrasse 2
D-5300 Bonn 2
Tel.: 57.21.91
Telex: 885666
Telefax: 57.20.96

Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder

Nassestrasse 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.: 549.66.81
Telefax: 543.73.90

FRANCE

Unité Nationale d'Eurydice
Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports
D.A.G.I.C./7
Bd Saint-Germain 173
F-75006 Paris
Tel.: 40.65.66.65
Telex: 270925
Telefax: 45.44.57.87

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HELLAS

Evrydiki
Ypourgio Paidias ke Thriskevmaton
Diefthinsi Evropaikis Kinotitas
Mitropoleos 15
GR-10185 Athens
Tel.: 323.74.80
Telex: 216270
Telefax: 322.52.59

IRELAND

E.C. Section Eurydice Unit
Department of Education
6th floor - Ahollo House
Tara street
EIR-Dublin 2
Tel.: 73.47.00
Telex: 31136
Telefax: 67.91.315

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
Telefax: 242.884

LUXEMBOURG

Unité Nationale d'Eurydice
Centre de Psychologie et d'Orientation Scolaires
Route de Longwy 280
L-1940 Luxembourg
Tel.: 45.64.46.604
Telex: 3311 MENJ LU
Telefax: 45.45.44

NEDERLAND

Nationale dienst van Eurydice
Informatie-Documentatie
Ministerie van Onderwijs en Wetenschappen
Postbus 25.000
NL-2700 LZ Zoetermeer
Tel.: 53.19.11 (poste 3502)
Telex: 32636
Telefax: 51.19.53

PORTUGAL

Unidade Nacional de Eurydice
Ministério da Educação
Gabinete de Estudos e Planeamento
Av. Miguel Bombarda 20
P-1093 Lisboa Codex
Tel.: 793.60.95
Telex: 63553 GEPME P
Telefax: 793.45.38

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 Scotland
Scottish Office Education Department
Room 4/55
New St. Andrew's House
St. James Centre
GB-Edinburgh EH1 3SY
Tel.: 244.51.24
Telefax: 244.47.85

CAT. NUMBER
UU1091044ENC

