

Digest

Tables on the

**SCHOOLYEAR**

in the Member States  
of the European Community



Eurydice



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of the European Community

1987

**EURYPDICE EUROPEAN UNIT**  
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B-1040 Brussels

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

This document presents a series of tables relating to different aspects of the school calendar in the Member States of the European Community. Its aim is to provide the reader with an instant general reply to certain basic questions frequently put to EURYDICE, The Education Information Network in the European Community.

It should be considered along with more detailed publications already issued by the EURYDICE European Unit, such as "The Education Structures in the Member States of the European Communities" and "Regulations concerning Compulsory Schooling in the Member States of the European Community".

The figures cover the 12 Member States of the European Community. For the United Kingdom, bearing in mind the differences that exist regarding the organisation of the education systems, a distinction has been made between England, Wales and Northern Ireland on the one hand, and Scotland on the other.

The figures given in the tables apply to pupils, and are not necessarily valid for teachers as well.

For the table relating to upper secondary education, separate figures have been given for general education and vocational education where this was applicable.

The figures given in the tables have been validated by the National Units of the EURYDICE network, and we would like to thank them for their co-operation.

Document compiled at the  
EURYDICE European Unit  
by A. BARRIUSO-DE CEUSTER

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TABLE I. COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGES

BELGIUM	6 to 18	(1)
DENMARK	7 to 16	
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	6 to 15-16	(2) (3)
GREECE	5 ½ to 14 ½-16	(4)
SPAIN	6 to 14	
FRANCE	6 to 16	
IRELAND	6 to 15	
ITALY	6 to 14	
LUXEMBOURG	5 to 15	(5)
NETHERLANDS	5 to 16	(6)
PORTUGAL	6 to 14-15	(7)
UNITED KINGDOM		
- England, Wales, Northern Ireland	5 to 16	(8)
- Scotland	5 to 16	

- 
- (1) Compulsory schooling is full-time until the age of 15 and includes a maximum of seven years primary education and at least the first two years of full-time secondary education. Full-time compulsory education is followed by a period of part-time compulsory schooling.
- (2) 16 : for the Länder of Berlin and North Rhine-Westphalia.
- (3) With part-time vocational education compulsory until the age of 18 for those who do not continue full-time school education.
- (4) Compulsory education lasts 9 years and therefore covers 5 ½ to 14 ½. However, by law, if a pupil does not successfully complete lower secondary school by 14 ½ he/she is obliged to stay up to the age of 16 in order to do so.
- (5) The first year of compulsory schooling takes place in Pre-primary schools; primary education begins at 6 years of age.
- (6) Compulsory schooling ends :  
 - either after 12 complete school years  
 - 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 part-time compulsory schooling.



- (7) The provisions relating to the extension of compulsory schooling to 15 years of age 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.
- (8) Attendance is compulsory from the beginning of the term which follows the child's fifth birthday, which includes a term beginning on his fifth birthday, to the end of the spring term (for those born before 31 January) or to the Friday before the last Monday in May (for those born between 1 February and 31 August) of the academic year in which pupils reach the age of 16.



TABLE II. LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL WEEK

COUNTRY	PRIMARY EDUCATION	SECONDARY EDUCATION
BELGIUM	5 days	5 days
DENMARK (1)	5 days	5 days
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	5 or 6 days (2)	5 or 6 days (2)
GREECE	5 days	5 days
SPAIN	5 days	5 days
FRANCE	5 days	5 days / 6 days (3)
IRELAND	5 days	5 or 6 days
ITALY	5 days (4) or 6 days	6 days
LUXEMBOURG	6 days	6 days
NETHERLANDS	5 days (5) or 6 days	5 days (5) or 6 days
PORTUGAL	5 or 6 days (6)	5 or 6 days (6)
UNITED KINGDOM - England, Wales, N. Ireland - Scotland	5 days 5 days	5 days 5 days

- (1) Folkeskole.
- (2) According to the Länder.
- (3) "Collèges / Lycées".
- (4) "Tempo pieno" system.
- (5) Usually.
- (6) When there is a lack of premises.



TABLE III. NUMBER OF SCHOOL DAYS PER YEAR

COUNTRY	PRIMARY EDUCATION	SECONDARY EDUCATION
BELGIUM	182	182
DENMARK	200	200
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	226/200 (1)	226/200 (1)
GREECE	175	175
SPAIN	185	170
FRANCE	316 half days	316 half days
IRELAND	min. 184	min. 180 (2) min. 200 (3)
ITALY	min. 200	min. 200
LUXEMBOURG	216	216
NETHERLANDS	200 (2) 240 (3)	195
PORTUGAL	175 (2) 208 (3)	164
UNITED KINGDOM - England, Wales, N. Ireland - Scotland	190/200 (4) 190	190/200 (4) 190

- (1) According to the Länder and whether lessons are given on Saturdays.
- (2) 5 day week system.
- (3) 6 day week system.
- (4) 400 sessions of which 20 can be subtracted for occasional holidays. Each day comprises 2 sessions.





TABLE IV. NUMBER OF LESSONS PER WEEK  
DURATION OF ONE LESSON

1° PRIMARY EDUCATION

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF LESSONS PER WEEK	DURATION OF LESSON
BELGIUM	28	50 minutes
DENMARK (1)	from 15 to 22, from 15 to 23 from 18 to 23, from 20 to 27 from 23 to 29, from 24 to 30 from 24 to 34 (2)	45 minutes
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	from 17 to 28	45 minutes
GREECE	from 23 to 30	45 to 50 minutes
SPAIN (3)	25	flexible
FRANCE	27 (7)	at the initiative of the teacher
IRELAND	23 (10)	30 to 60 minutes (11)
ITALY	24 (7)	at the initiative of the teacher
LUXEMBOURG	27 (7)	60 minutes
NETHERLANDS	min. 22 (4) min. 25 (5)	60 minutes
PORTUGAL	23, 45 (7) 20 (6), (7)	at the initiative of the teacher
UNITED KINGDOM - England, Wales, N. Ireland - Scotland	min. 20 (9) 25 (7), (8)	+ 35 - 40 minutes (8)

(1) Folkeskole.

(2) In the first year; in the second year; in the third year; in the fourth year; in the fifth year; in the sixth and seventh years; in the final classes.

(3) E.G.B. (Basic General Education).



- (4) During the first 4 years of primary education.
- (5) During the last 4 years of primary education.
- (6) When premises are used three times.
- (7) Real number of hours of schooling per week.
- (8) Fixed by each education authority; each head teacher is at liberty to determine the number and the duration of lessons within his own school.
- (9) Varies according to schools; local authorities and schools are free to adapt their timetable as long as children under eight receive a minimum of three hours of secular instruction per day, divided into two sessions; children aged eight and over receive a minimum of four hours of secular instruction per day.
- (10) Religious instruction not included (5 lessons of one half-hour duration).
- (11) The main subjects Irish, English and Mathematics are taught for the longer periods while Music, Art and Crafts, Social and Environmental Studies and Physical Education are given less time.



TABLE IV. NUMBER OF LESSONS PER WEEK  
DURATION OF ONE LESSON

2° LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF LESSONS PER WEEK	DURATION OF LESSON
BELGIUM	32	50 minutes
DENMARK (1)	from 24 to 30 from 24 to 34 (2)	45 minutes
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	from 29 to 33	45 minutes
GREECE	from 23 to 30	40 to 45 minutes
SPAIN	(7)	(7)
FRANCE	24; 26 ½ to 27 ½ (3) Vocational lycee : 30 to 36 average : 33	55 minutes
IRELAND	min. 28	40 minutes
ITALY	30 (8)	60 minutes
LUXEMBOURG	30	50 minutes
NETHERLANDS	from 24 to 32	50 minutes
PORTUGAL	30 24 (4)	50 minutes
UNITED KINGDOM - England, Wales, N. Ireland - Scotland	from 35 40 (6) 27 ½ (5), (8)	+ 35 - 40 minutes (5)

(1) Folkeskole.

(2) In the 6th and 7th year; final classes.

(3) Observation cycle; orientation cycle.

(4) TV - education.



- (5) Fixed by each education authority; each head teacher is at liberty to determine the number and the duration of lessons within his own school.
- (6) Varies according to the schools; local authorities and schools are free to adapt their timetable as long as children aged eight and over receive a minimum of four hours of secular instruction per day; divided into two sessions.
- (7) Not applicable, see table IV, 1°.
- (8) Real number of hours of schooling per week.





TABLE IV. NUMBER OF LESSONS PER WEEK  
DURATION OF ONE LESSON

3° UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF LESSONS PER WEEK	DURATION OF LESSON
BELGIUM	Type 1 (1) : 32/34/36 Type 2 (2) : 28/32 Technical/Vocational : 32/34/36	50 minutes 50 minutes 50 minutes
DENMARK	from 30 to 32	45 minutes
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	29/36	45 minutes
GREECE	Classical : 30 (6) General : 30 (6) / 22 (7) Comprehensive; technical : 34	45 minutes
SPAIN	Bachillerato : 33/31/29 (3) Vocational training : 25	60 minutes
FRANCE	"Baccalauréat" : first : 25,5 to 34 (4) final : 25 to 32 (5)	55 minutes
IRELAND	30	40 minutes
ITALY	Classical lyceum : 27 to 29 Scientific " : 25 to 30 Technical institutes : 31 to 38	60 minutes
LUXEMBOURG	30	50 minutes
NETHERLANDS	28/31	50 minutes
PORTUGAL	Complementary secondary :30 Technical/Vocational :34	50 minutes
UNITED KINGDOM - England, Wales N. Ireland - Scotland	40 (8) 27 ½ (9), (10)	+ 35 - 40 minutes (9)



- (1) Modern education.
- (2) Traditional education.
- (3) 1st year BUP / 2nd year BUP / 3rd year BUP  
BUP : Bachillerato Unificado Polivalente.
- (4) Refers to compulsory lessons / varies according to the section of the baccalauréat chosen.
- (5) Refers to compulsory lessons / varies according to the section of the baccalauréat chosen.
- (6) Day-time education.
- (7) Evening education.
- (8) Varies according to schools; local authorities and schools are free to adapt their timetable as long as children aged eight and over receive a minimum of four hours of secular instruction per day, divided into two sessions.
- (9) Fixed by each education authority, each head teacher is at liberty to determine the number and the duration of lessons within his own school.
- (10) Real number of hours of schooling per week.



# **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**

**Eurydice Informatiediensten**  
**Μονάδες του Δικτύου Πληροφοριών Ευρυδική**  
**Unidades de la Red Eurydice**  
**Unidades da Rede 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'Education 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<sup>e</sup> 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: 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.: 449.66.81/449.77.00

**FRANCE**

Unité Nationale d'Eurydice  
Ministère de l'Education 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

**HELLAS**

Evrydiki  
Ypourgio Paidias ke Thriskevmaton  
Dieftinsi Evropaikis Kinotitas  
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'Education 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.: 73.60.95/76.20.66  
Telex: 63553 GEPMEC 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 6JR  
Tel.: 557.29.44  
Telefax: 556.94.64

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