



## SUMMARY SHEETS ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

### POLAND

#### I. Description of the education system

##### 1. Education population and language of instruction

In 1999, the number of young people under 29 years of age (16 891 800) accounted for 43.7% of the population, and 5 249 065 pupils were of compulsory school age. The language of instruction is Polish.

##### 2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

Almost all pupils continue their studies in public-sector schools (99%). Most of the funds come from the state budget. The administration, organization and decisions relating to the use of financial resources by schools are the subject of consultation between the school and the body running the school, i.e. local authorities (*gminy*) and district authorities (*powiaty*). The inspection of teaching standards in schools comes directly under the national Ministry of Education and is represented by a government administrative body (*kuratoria*).

##### 3. Pre-primary education

This educational level is regarded as the first level of the school system. It concerns children from 3 to 6 years of age. Six-year-old children have the right to complete a year of preparation for primary education (under municipal responsibility). As many as 96.7% of children of this age take advantage of the provision. Access to public and private pre-primary schools can be fee-paying.

##### 4. Compulsory full-time education

###### (a) Phases

<i>Szkoła podstawowa</i> (reformed 6-year primary school)	7-13 years of age Stage 1 – integrated teaching, 7-10 years of age Stage 2 – block teaching, 10-13 years of age
<i>Gimnazjum</i> (3-year lower secondary school)	13-16 years of age Stage 3 – subject teaching

###### (b) Admissions criteria

All pupils attend school free of charge. The only admission criterion is the age limit (to have reached 7 years of age during the civil year in which compulsory education starts). Parents are obliged to register their children in the school nearest their home.

###### (c) Length of the school day/week/year

The school year is divided into two semesters. It comprises 185 days between September and June. The compulsory subjects (22 45-minute lessons for Stage 1, and 26 to 28 for Stage 2 and 3) are in general spread over five days a week.

###### (d) Class size/student grouping

In 1999/2000, the ratio of pupils to teachers in primary education was 15:1. The average class had 21 pupils. The main criterion for class composition is age.

Only one teacher is responsible for all subjects in the first Stage of instruction, with the exception of foreign language teaching (specialist teachers) in those schools in which finances permit this type of teaching. From the fourth year on, each subject (block of subjects) is taught by a specialist teacher.

###### (e) Curricular control and content

Core curricula for compulsory teaching are the same for all pupils. The schools (teachers) can choose the books from a list approved by the Ministry of Education. They are free to decide the teaching and assessment methods, introduce innovatory teaching methods and define individual curricula (worked out by the teachers and approved by the Ministry of Education).

## (f) Assessment, progression and qualifications

The assessment of the knowledge and skills of pupils is not yet standardized in Poland and remains totally at the discretion of teachers. Assessments are made throughout the school year (regular written and oral tests). The results obtained at the end of each semester must be approved by the teachers' council of each school. Pupils who obtain unsatisfactory results are required to repeat a year.

In the school year 2001/2002, the new system of external standardised examinations and tests will be implemented at the end of the reformed primary school and the gymnasium.

## 5. Upper secondary and post-secondary education

### (a) Types of education

#### I. Pre-reform system

<i>liceum ogólnokształcące</i> (general upper secondary school)	15-19 years of age
<i>technikum</i> (technical secondary school)	15-20 years of age
<i>liceum zawodowe</i> (vocational secondary school)	15-19 years of age
<i>liceum techniczne</i> (technical secondary school – lyceum)	15-19 years of age
<i>szkoła zasadnicza</i> (basic vocational school)	15-18 years of age
<i>szkoła policealna</i> (post-secondary school)	19-21 years of age (very rarely 20)

#### II. Post-reform system: starting school year 2002/2003

<i>Liceum profilowane</i> (upper secondary general school)	16-19 years of age
<i>Szkoła zawodowa</i> (upper secondary vocational school)	16-18 years of age
<i>Liceum uzupełniające</i> (supplementary lyceum)	18-20 years of age

### (b) Admissions criteria

#### I. Pre-reform system

The primary school-leaving certificate was required to apply for admission. The schools (except for the basic vocational schools) organized entrance examinations to select students according to their knowledge and skills (the number of places was limited).

#### II. Post-reform system: starting school year 2002/2003

The *gimnazjum*-leaving certificate will be required for admission.

### (c) Curricular control and content

The Ministry of Education defines core curricula for general education for each type of school. Teachers can choose the textbooks from a list approved by the Ministry of Education. They are free to decide the teaching and assessment methods, introduce innovative teaching methods and define individual curricula (worked out by the teachers and approved by the Ministry of Education).

### (d) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Assessment at this level of education is similar to the arrangements in compulsory education. At the end of the course, all schools (except for the *szkoły zasadnicze*) organize final examinations (*matura*). The *liceum ogólnokształcące*, the *technikum*, the *liceum techniczne* and the *liceum zawodowe* may issue *świadcstwo dojrzałości* (a certificate for those who sat for and successfully completed the final examination, which is required for admission to higher education). The *szkoły zasadnicze* issue *świadcstwo ukończenia szkoły zasadniczej* (a leaving certificate that gives students access to the job market). Post-secondary schools prepare their students for professional life. Students are awarded the title of *robotnik wykwalifikowany* (skilled worker), *technik* (technician) or an equivalent title.

## 6. Higher education

### (a) Types of institution

There are various types of non-university and university higher education institutions: *wyższe szkoły zawodowe* (non-university higher vocational colleges), *kolegia nauczycielskie* (teacher training colleges), *uniwersytety* (traditional universities), *politechniki* (technological universities) and *akademie* (academies).

### (b) Access

The final examination certificate (*świadcstwo dojrzałości*) is required by all institutions for admission to higher education. Admission is based on entrance examinations organized by most faculties or on free recruitment. In most cases, these institutions are free to decide on how to organise recruitment

procedures.

### (c) Qualifications

At the end of 3- or 4-year higher vocational education, students are awarded the vocational qualification diploma and the title of *licencjat* or *inżynier* which gives them access to the job market or to extended higher studies. Universities and other university-type institutions of 4.5 to 6 year duration issue *dyplom ukończenia studiów wyższych* (the university higher education diploma). Students are awarded the title of *magister*, *magister inżynier* or *lekarz*, depending on the field of studies they have followed. They can apply to do a doctorate.

## 7. Special needs

Special education is an integral part of the Polish education system. It is reflected in legislation, which is common to both mainstream and special education. Most children with special educational needs are taught in separate schools (1.6% of all pupils in compulsory education). Integration is subject to the favourable recommendation given by the competent authority and/or the parents.

## 8. Teachers

Teachers must have a higher education degree. The type of training required depends on the teaching level:

- Primary education: the teacher is required to have university-type higher education completed (of 3 or 5 years' duration, where teachers are awarded the titles of *licencjat* or *magister*), or non-university type higher education completed (of 3 years' duration, where they receive a diploma);
- Lower secondary education: a degree of *licencjat* or *magister*;
- Upper secondary education: a *magister* degree.

Completion of pedagogical training is also required at all the levels of education.

The new Teachers' Charter adopted on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2000 has introduced four categories in the teaching career:

- Trainee teacher
- Contract teacher
- Appointed teacher
- Chartered teacher

Chartered teachers with an outstanding record may also be awarded the title of honorary school education professor.

## II. Ongoing Reforms and Topics of Debate in Education

### EXTERNAL EVALUATION SYSTEM

#### Legislation

In accordance with the new education legislation (the Regulation of 19 April 1999 on Pupil Evaluation, Eligibility for Assessment, Promotion and Examinations and Tests in Public Schools) the new system of external pupils' evaluation was established.

#### Aims

The main aims of the external evaluation system are:

- to assure better quality control in education;
- to support diagnosis of pupils' achievements;
- to enable to compare the results of tests and examinations on the national scale.

#### Agencies

All tests and examinations will be organised by newly-established (in 1999) agencies: 8 Regional Examination Commissions supported and supervised by the Central Examination Commission.

The responsibilities of Examination Commissions are:

- to prepare syllabuses of all compulsory subjects on the basis of core curricula;
- to prepare tests and examinations according to syllabuses;
- to conduct tests and examinations using trained and certified examiners;
- to analyse results, formulate findings, keep appropriate records and prepare reports for school directors, local authorities, regional educational authorities and finally Ministry of National Education;

- to design and deliver a training for teachers – examiners.

### **External examinations**

The new external evaluation system will consist of the following external standardised tests and examinations.

**At the end of 6-year primary school (age 13)** - general, obligatory **competence test** with no selection function; to enter for the test will enable to start education in the gymnasium; it will provide pupils, parents as well as both schools, i.e. the primary school and the gymnasium, with information about the level of achievements of the pupils. The skills required in core curricula will be examined. For the first time it will be conducted in 2002.

**At the end of 3-year lower secondary school, gymnasium (age 16)** – general, obligatory **examination**, the results will be indicated on the gymnasium-leaving certificate. This examination will check both abilities, skills and knowledge in the field of humanities and science. For the first time it will be conducted in 2002.

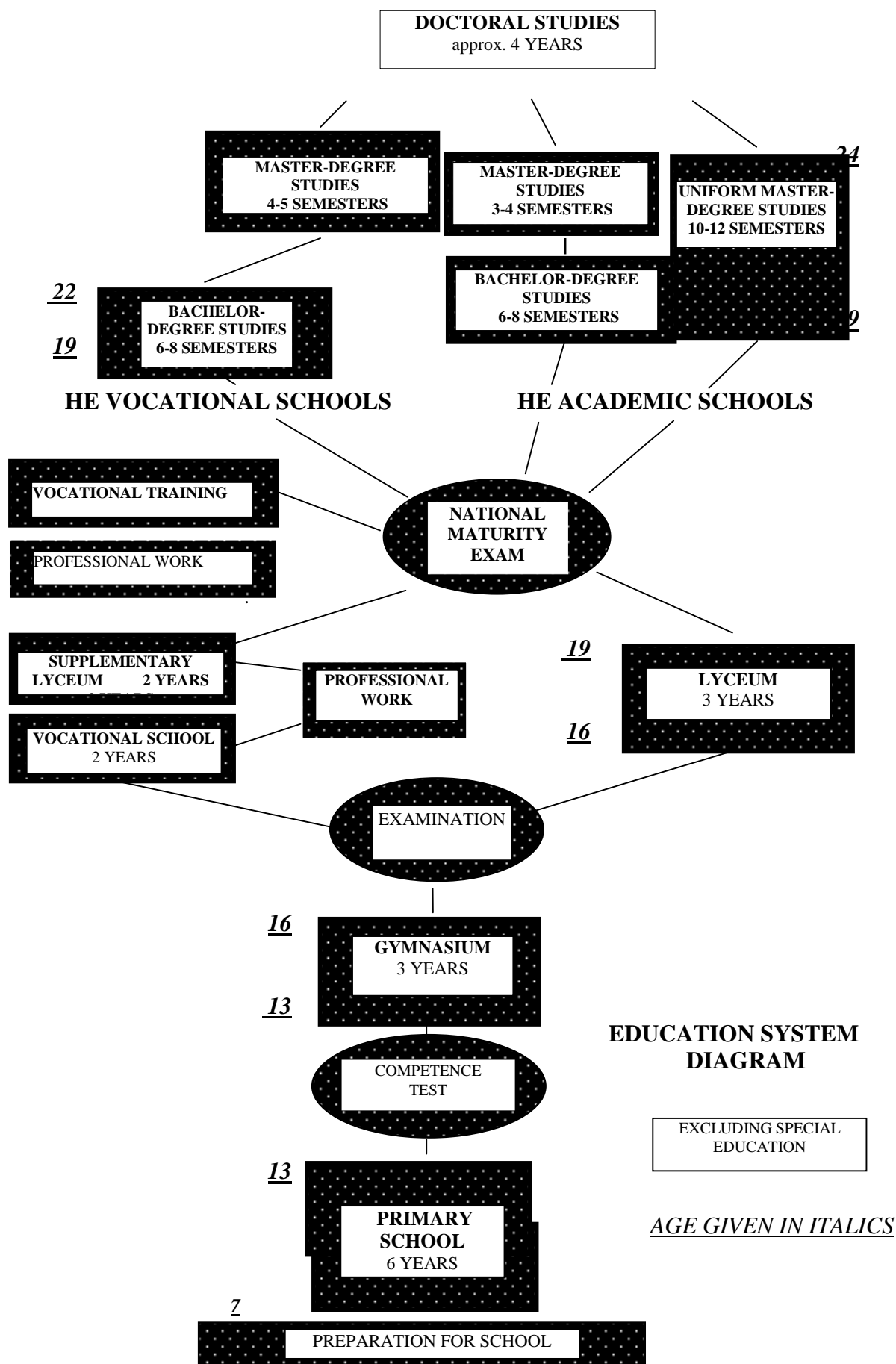
**At the end of 3-year upper secondary school, lyceum (age 19) or 2-year supplementary lyceum after 2-year vocational school (age 20)** – general, not obligatory **matura examination**, entitling pupils for admission to higher education. It will be made up of two parts: external written and internal oral. In these schools it will be conducted from 2005 and 2006. However, the new *matura* examination will be conducted for the first time in 2002, for the present system of upper secondary education.

**At the end of 2-year vocational school (age 18)** – external standardised **vocational examination**.

Works on the new **Bill on Schools of Higher Education** are in progress.

*Unrevised English*

**DIAGRAM: The reformed structure of the education system in Poland, which will be fully implemented as from the school year 2004/2005**



For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (<http://www.eurydice.org>)