

The Education System in Greece



Crete Overview:

Crete is the largest and most populous of the Greek islands, the 88th largest island in the world and the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, after Sicily, Sardinia, Cyprus and Corsica.

Humans have inhabited the island since at least 130,000 years ago, during the Paleolithic age. Crete was the center of Europe's first advanced civilization, the Minoans, from 2700 to 1420 BC. The Minoan civilization was overrun by the Mycenaean civilization from mainland Greece. Crete was later ruled by Rome, then successively by the Byzantine Empire, Andalusian Arabs, the Venetian Republic, and the Ottoman Empire. In 1898 Crete, whose people had for some time wanted to join the Greek state, achieved independence from the Ottomans, formally becoming the Cretan State. Crete became part of Greece in December 1913.

Key features of the Greek education system

The provision of **free education** to all citizens and at all levels of the state education system is a constitutional principle of the Greek State. The Greek educational system is centralised. National laws, presidential decrees and ministerial acts are prevalent within it.

Central Level

The **central** administrative body for the education system across all fields, agencies and levels is the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

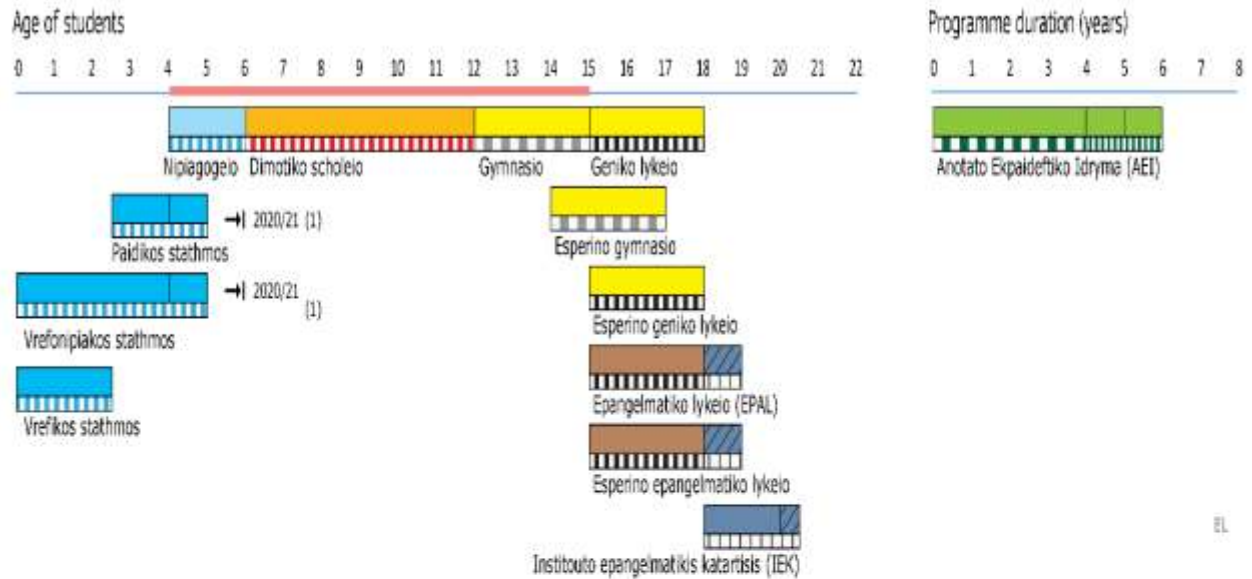
It takes the key decisions related to long-term objectives. It also regulates various issues, such as curricula content, staff recruitment and funding.

Regional and local levels

At regional level, the regional education directorates oversee the implementation of the national educational policy.

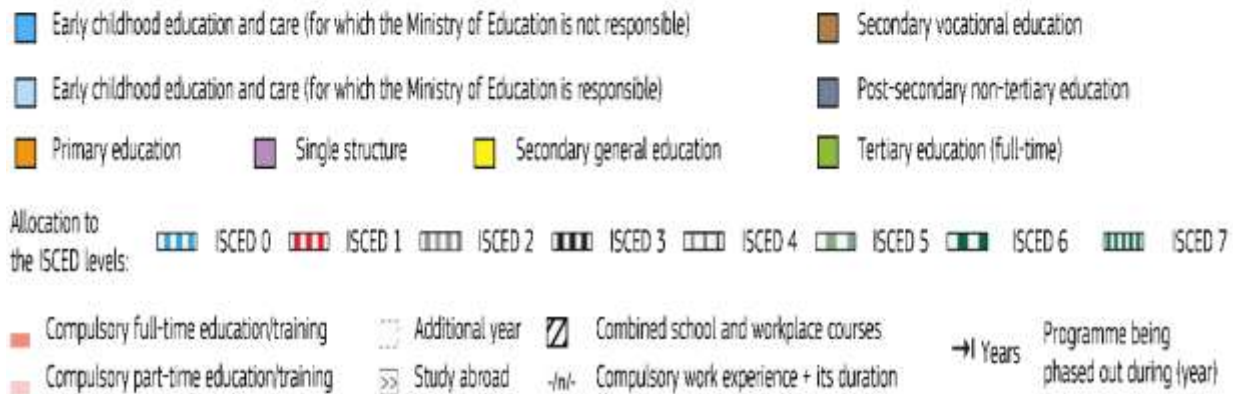
At local level, the directorates of primary and secondary education supervise all schools in their area. In their turn, school units make sure they run smoothly.

Greece - 2020/21



(1) Programme being phased out between 4 and 5 years old as from 2020/21.

Notes: Law 4521/2018 established the two-year compulsory *nipiogogia* (pre-primary school). The implementation of the measure spans a 3-year period from 2018 to 2021. School year 2020/21 (third and last year of its implementation) foresees the compulsory attendance of all pre-schoolers in all municipalities of the country. Meanwhile, for one last year, *Vrefonipiakoi stathmoi* and *Paidikoi stathmoi* will continue to accommodate children up to 5 years old.



Stages of the education system

Infant centres (*vrefikoi stathmoi*), infant/child centres (*vrefonipiakoi stathmoi*) and child centres (*paidikoi stathmoi*) represent early childhood care. They are run under the remit of the municipal

authorities. They cater for children between the ages of 2 months and up to the age of the beginning of compulsory education.

Compulsory education in Greece includes:

- The two-year compulsory attendance for 4 and 5-year-old children in nipiagogeio (pre-primary school).
- Six-year attendance of pupils in dimotiko scholeio (primary school).
- Three-year attendance of students in gymnasia (lower secondary education schools).

The stages of the Greek education are mainly 3:

Primary education

Primary education includes pre-primary and primary schools.

Pre-Primary School - Nipiagogeio in Greece has become compulsory for all 4-year-old children since school year 2018/19. School year 2020/21 foresees the integration of the two-year compulsory pre-primary school in the few remaining municipalities.

Pre-primary school's purpose, is to help children develop physically, emotionally, mentally and socially and in particular:

- Develop their senses and organise their actions, motor and mental ones.
- Enrich and organise their experiences from the physical and social environment and acquire the skill to differentiate the relations and their interactions therein.
- Develop the ability to comprehend and express themselves with symbols and particularly in the fields of language, mathematics and aesthetics.
- Forge interpersonal relations boosting their gradual and harmonious social inclusion.
- Develop initiatives freely and effortlessly in an organised environment and adjust in the two-way relation between an individual and a group.

Pre-primary education curriculum and the relevant educational support material is designed under the supervision of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) and are approved by the Ministry of Education.

For the compulsory program of public Pre-primary education (nipiagogeio): law 4692/2020 by decision of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, which is issued after a proposal of the Institute of Educational Policy, introduces:

- an educational action entitled "Skills Workshops", consisting of a pilot addition of new thematic courses in nipiagogeio. The aim is to enhance the cultivation of soft skills, life skills and technology and science skills.
- educational action for the creative engagement of students with English language through the organization and implementation of activities. During these, students interact with English teachers (PE06) in the presence of the Kindergarten Teacher.

More specifically, the pilot action introduces for the first time the implementation of «Skills Laboratories» in Primary and Secondary Education.

Primary education - Dimotiko scholeio is the next stage, spans 6 years. It concerns children in the age range of 6-12 years.

Since school year 2016/17, there is a single type of school with a new revised daily timetable. Within this framework, all pre-primary and primary schools provide an optional all-day programme. Attendance in dimotika scholeia lasts 6 years. It includes grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Six-year-old pupils enroll in grade 1.

The teaching subjects of the single type of all-day primary school are:

1. Religious Education
2. Language
3. Mathematics
4. History
5. Study of the Environment
6. Geography
7. Natural Sciences
8. Civics Education
9. Arts Education (Visual Arts, Music, Drama)
10. Physical Education

11. English
12. 2nd Foreign Language
13. Flexible Zone
14. ICT.

According to law 1566/1985, primary school aims at the multifaceted intellectual and physical development of children. In particular, primary school helps pupils:

- Broaden and rearrange the relationship between creative activity and things, conditions and phenomena under study.
- Build up mechanisms helping them to assimilate knowledge, develop physically, improve their physical and mental health.
- Conquer the content of the most basic concepts and gradually acquire the ability to ascend from sense data to the sphere of abstract thinking.
- Attain the ability to use correct oral and writing skills.
- Familiarise themselves with moral, religious, national, humanitarian and other values and organise them into a system of values.
- Cultivate their aesthetic criterion, so as to appreciate works of art and express themselves accordingly, through their own artistic creations.

The optional all-day school in dimotiko scholeio aims at the pedagogical use of the time pupils spend in the afternoons at school. Hence, it reduces the family's financial burden. Parents do not need to search for extra educational services beyond the school environment. Educational goals, pedagogical practices, types of assessment and formative assessment are shaped by school units and groups of schools with the co-operation of:

- Educational and Counselling Centres (KESY)
- Environmental Education Centres (KPE)
- Regional Centres for Educational Planning (PEKES).

In parallel with public primary education, primary education private schools operate.

Secondary education

Secondary education includes two cycles of study:

Gymnasio

The first one is compulsory and corresponds to gymnasio (lower secondary school).

- It lasts 3 years
- It provides general education
- It covers ages 12-15
- It is a prerequisite for enrolling at general or vocational upper secondary schools
- Parallel to imerisio (day) gymnasio, esperino (evening) gymnasio operates. Attendance starts at the age of 14.

Lykeio

The second one is the optional geniko or epangelmatiko lykeio (general or vocational upper secondary school).

- It lasts 3 years
- Pupils enrol at the age of 15
- There are two different types:
 - a. Geniko (general) lykeio. It lasts 3 years and includes both common core subjects and optional subjects of specialisation
 - b. Epangelmatiko (vocational) lykeio. It offers two cycles of studies:

The optional post-secondary cycle, the so-called “apprenticeship class”. Parallel to day lykeia, there are also:

- a. Esperina genika (evening general) lykeia
- b. Esperina epangelmatika (evening vocational) lykeia.

Tertiary education

Higher education is the last level of the formal education system. Most undergraduate degree programmes take 4 academic years of full-time study. Postgraduate courses last from one to two years, while doctorates at least 3 years.

The university sector (panepistimio):

- Universities
- Polytechnics
- The School of Fine Arts.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Learning in Greece takes place in Lifelong Learning centers which are usually supervised by Municipality services. These centers offer a variety of courses, aiming at both formal and informal education. On the other hand, Vocational Training Institutes and Vocational Training Schools often adapt their curriculum to suit the needs of their adult students and of the labor market. Finally, Second Chance Adult Education Schools cater for those students who have dropped out of school at some point in their life, but wish to continue with their studies at a later date.

Greek educational system and inclusion

The Greek education system is based on the principle of inclusion, which is why migrant and refugee children are educated and trained in the schools attended by Greek-speaking pupils. Thus there are classes for migrants and refugee children within the schools in 39 primary schools in the prefecture of Heraklion, which are spread across the whole prefecture, both in the centre and in the region (2020-2021).

There are 2 classes for migrants and refugee students, Class 1 and Class 2. Class 1 is aimed at pupils who do not know or speak Greek at all, while the Class 2 is aimed at pupils who can communicate in Greek even in a basic form.



The Directorate for Primary Education Heraklion aims at better and more effective management of migrants and refugee children in terms of their education and training. To this end, we cooperate with organizations and institutions dealing with refugees and migrants such as the Immigration Centre of the Municipality of Heraklion and Malevizi and various other non-governmental organizations. The Directorate also helps find the appropriate school for pupils based on their home address and then contacts the appropriate school in order to facilitate the enrolment of those pupils. Throughout this whole period there is close cooperation both with special social workers, special pedagogues and education coordinators to facilitate and accommodate pupils' learning needs more appropriately. For example, in the recent past there were pupils with special educational needs and the Directorate helped to facilitate the procedures for these students to get the additional support they needed.

