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Primary education or single-structure education, comprising ISCED 1 and 2 levels, is compulsory for all children. In the school system which has been gradually introduced since 1 September 2017, the new 8-year primary school (*szkoła podstawowa*) takes children aged 7 to 15 years. Subsequently, young people continue education in post-primary schools (secondary schools) or in other settings, as defined by law, such as practical vocational training at a workplace, combined with theoretical training, or vocational qualification courses (education is compulsory until the age of 18).

- Since September 2016, the school starting age has been again 7 years. However, the national legislation provides an option for parents to apply for admission of their 6-year-old child to the primary school under certain conditions (preschool education completed by the child and his/her school readiness).
- Education in public primary schools is free of charge for all pupils. Parents may also choose a non-public school; the requirements for compulsory classes to be based on the national core curriculum for general education are the same for all primary schools, regardless of their legal status.

Primary or single-structure education is divided into two stages:

1. **Stage I**, grades I to III of the primary school, offering integrated early school education,
2. **Stage II**, grades IV to VIII of the primary school.

No compulsory test or examination is taken between the two stages.

Until the end of 2016, at the end of the then existing 6-year primary school, pupils took a compulsory external test (set by the Central Examination Board and administered and assessed by the Regional Examination Boards). It was primarily designed to provide teachers and parents with information about pupils' achievements. Results of the test had no impact on completion of primary / single-structure education. The test was abolished as of 1 September 2016 as part of the ongoing school system reform. The new 8-year primary school established as part of the reform prepares pupils for the **eighth-grader exam** which will serve the same functions as the exam taken at the end of lower secondary education in the pre-reform school system. See also: [Poland: National Reforms in School Education](#) [1]

General education in the primary school **aims** to:

1. introduce pupils to the world of values, including generosity, collaboration, solidarity, altruism, patriotism and respect for traditions, and identify models of behaviour and build social relationships which support pupils' development in safe conditions (family, friends);
2. strengthen pupils' sense of individual, cultural, national, regional and ethnic identity;
3. develop pupils' sense of personal dignity and respect for other people's dignity;
4. develop competences such as creativity, innovativeness and entrepreneurship;

5. develop critical and logical thinking, reasoning, argumentation and deduction skills;
6. demonstrate the value of knowledge as the basis for the development of skills;
7. generate cognitive inquisitiveness among pupils and their motivation to learn;
8. provide pupils with a body of knowledge and skills which enable them to understand the world in a more mature and structured way;
9. support pupils in identifying their own aptitudes and further education paths;
10. ensure comprehensive personal development of pupils by enhancing their knowledge and satisfying and stimulating their natural cognitive inquisitiveness;
11. develop open-minded attitudes towards the world and other people, activity in social life and a sense of responsibility for a community;
12. encourage pupils to undertake structured and purposeful self-education based on the ability to develop one's own working methods;
13. guide pupils towards values.

Key skills developed as part of general education in the primary school include:

1. Proficiency in the Polish language and modern foreign languages
2. Efficient use of mathematical tools in everyday life, and development of mathematical thinking
3. Searching, sorting out, critical analysis and use of information from various sources
4. Creative solving of problems in various areas, with purposeful use of ICT-based methods and tools, including programming
5. Solving problems, also with the use of mediation techniques
6. Team work and societal engagement
7. Active participation in the cultural life of the school, local community and country.

Early school education aims to support comprehensive development of children. The education process in grades I to III of the primary school enables children to discover their own abilities and the meaning of activity and gain experience on the way towards the truth, goodness and beauty. Education at this stage is designed so as to cater to pupils' natural developmental needs. The school recognises that the pupil is at the centre of the process of building individual knowledge and transition from childhood to adolescence. With such support, children achieve readiness to start education at Stage II.

The aims of **education at Stage II** (grades IV to VIII of the primary school) are multi-faceted and refer to individual subjects taught at school. Currently, the national legislation places a strong emphasis on pupils' reading competences and proficiency in foreign languages (a second foreign language, and a bilingual teaching option in grades VII and VIII).

Legislation

The basic legislative act for primary or single-structure education is *ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe* (**Act of 14 December 2016, the Law on School Education**), supplemented by *ustawą z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty* (**School Education Act of 7 September 1991**) (which is still partly in force). Detailed arrangements are laid down in Regulations of the minister responsible for school education. The most important ones include:

- *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 14 lutego 2017 r. w sprawie podstawy programowej wychowania przedszkolnego oraz podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły podstawowej, w tym dla uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu umiarkowanym lub znacznym, kształcenia ogólnego dla branżowej szkoły I stopnia, kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły specjalnej przysposabiającej do pracy oraz kształcenia ogólnego dla szkoły policealnej* (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 February 2017 on the core

curriculum for preschool education and the core curriculum for general education in primary schools, incl. for pupils with a moderate and severe intellectual disability, and for general education in stage I sectoral vocational schools, general education in special schools preparing for employment, and general education in post-secondary schools)

- *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 22 lutego 2019 r. w sprawie szczegółowych warunków i sposobu oceniania, klasyfikowania i promowania uczniów i słuchaczy w szkołach publicznych* (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 22 February 2019 on the detailed conditions and rules for learner assessment, eligibility for assessment and promotion in public schools)
- *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 3 października 2019 r. w sprawie dopuszczania do użytku szkolnego podręczników* (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 3 October 2019 on the approval of textbooks for the use in school)
- *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 25 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie nadzoru pedagogicznego* (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 25 August 2017 on pedagogical supervision)
- *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 11 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie wymagań wobec szkół i placówek* (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 11 August 2017 on requirements for schools and other educational institutions)
- *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie zasad organizacji i udzielania pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach* (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the rules for the organisation and provision of psychological and educational support in public nursery schools, schools and other educational institutions)
- *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 3 kwietnia 2019 r. w sprawie ramowych planów nauczania dla publicznych szkół* (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 3 April 2019 on the outline timetables for public schools)

Specific arrangements for the functioning of primary schools in view of the coronavirus epidemic threat are laid down in *rozporządzenie z dnia 20 marca 2020 r. Ministra Edukacji Narodowej w sprawie szczególnych rozwiązań w okresie czasowego ograniczenia funkcjonowania jednostek systemu oświaty w związku z zapobieganiem, przeciwdziałaniem i zwalczaniem COVID-19* (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 20 March 2020 on the specific arrangements for the duration of temporary restrictions for the functioning of school education institutions in connection with the measures to prevent, counteract and fight against COVID-19).

The implementation of the above-mentioned school system reform is spread over the years 2018-2022. Aside from the phasing out of lower secondary schools (*gimnazjum*) (which was completed on 31 August 2019), the reform involves extending the duration of Stage II of primary education and education in secondary schools (post-primary schools, earlier referred to as schools above the lower secondary level). During the reform implementation period, schools are governed by *ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Przepisy wprowadzające Prawo oświatowe*. (**Act of 14 December 2016, Provisions introducing the Law on School Education**). Pursuant to the Act, a number of Regulations based on the legislation adopted before 1 September 2017 (the starting date of the school system transformation process) will remain in force on a transitional basis. They still apply to students in post-primary schools who were enrolled in the pre-reform school system. However, they do not apply to the newly established 8-year primary schools.

As far as school financing is concerned, key arrangements are laid down in an annual Regulation of the minister responsible for school education on the distribution of the school education part of the general subsidy for local government units. The level of the general subsidy for the communes (*gmina*), that is local government units which are the administering bodies for most primary schools,

is fixed in the annual *ustawa budżetowa* (Budgetary Act).

Primary schools administered by private entities receive grants from local government budgets. Relevant provisions are included in *ustawa z dnia 27 października 2017 r. o finansowaniu zadań oświatowych* (Act of 27 October 2017 on the Financing of School Education Tasks) and resolutions adopted by communes.

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