



Education is compulsory from the age of five to the age of sixteen, although it is possible for children to begin schooling at the age of four when they attend kindergarten (Nypiagogeia). This generally lasts two years before they attend primary school (Demotiko Scholio).

Schooling is compulsory in Greece for nine years of which six must be spent in primary school and three years in high school (Gymnasio). The state schools are free of charge but the system also provides private education in private institutions like the several international schools throughout Greece.

Secondary education is divided into lower and upper secondary. After completing three years in a Gymnasio (lower), pupils can be registered in a variety of upper secondary schools (Lykeio) as well as Technical Vocational Schools (TES) and Technical Vocational Lykeio (TEL). The TES and TEL systems prepare students over two years and are very much orientated towards the world of work.

For admittance to university in Greece, the basic requirement is a leaving certificate (Apolytirio Lykeiou) from a Lykeio and, due to the limited number of places, prospective students must sit further general exams in June. Entrance to the TEL's (non university technical institutes of tertiary education) is not by exam but decided on grade record at TEL school level. At post-secondary level, there is also the opportunity of participating in the training system offered by OAED, which provides practical training for young people by means of apprenticeships.

SOME NUMBERS ABOUT EDUCATION

The Greek education system has been consistently further developed over the past ten years. General compulsory schooling lasts nine years and more than 90 per cent of each age group moves on to the upper secondary level. Reforms to secondary education launched in 1997 resulted in changes to the main university entrance examination from the year 2000. Now a larger number of subjects is examined, not just four as was previously the norm. The main foreign language taught is English, both in state and in private schools. In 1992 a compulsory second foreign language was introduced, a reform that also benefited German. In the school year 2001/2002, German was taught as a second foreign language to more than 100,000 pupils at 693 schools out of a total of 1,948 grammar schools (secondary level I) and 1,296 lycées

(secondary level II). In comparison with the over 2,000 French teachers in the country (French was long the first foreign language to be taught) there are now over 600 German teachers, and the number is growing.

At present only a fraction of school leavers who want to do so (some 140,000 per annum) are able to go to university, due to a shortage of student places. Although in the past ten years the universities in Athens and Thessaloniki have been joined by newly-founded universities in the provinces (including on the islands), the 18 universities still cannot provide enough places, in spite of the decreed increase in student numbers in all faculties. In 2003/04 there will again only be 80,000 places available for first-year students, as in the year before. This shortfall means that large numbers of Greek students choose to study abroad, especially in Britain (over 28,000), France, the US, Italy (approx. 7,000) and Germany (in 1997/98, of approx. 8,000 Greek students in the country, some 3,700 had taken the "Abitur", the German university entrance exam). Private Greek institutions, too, have benefited for years from this situation. They cooperate with foreign universities to offer basic and further study courses in many subjects for a reported 30,000 students, although these are not recognized in Greece. The open university in Patras began offering courses in 1998 and now has about 6,000 students. Many universities now offer "free courses" which can be job-related. In 1992 Greece began developing a vocational education system on the German model.