

# Greece

## Demographics for Greece

Population:	10,668,354 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$226.4 billion
Currency (inc code):	Euro (EUR)
Language(s):	Greek (official), English, French
Internet country code:	.gr

## Elementary and secondary education

Education in Greece is compulsory for all children six-15 years old and includes primary and lower secondary education.

Primary education consists of nursery school (Nipiagogeio), which provides optional pre-school education from the age of four to six, and elementary school (Dimotiko), which provides the first level of compulsory education. Attendance at the elementary school is compulsory and lasts for six years. The basic goal of the elementary school is to ensure that all children regardless of sex and origin have an opportunity to develop their personalities and live a creative life. The curriculum of the elementary school helps children grasp basic concepts and gradually familiarize themselves with abstract thought and master the written and spoken language. Pupils in elementary school are promoted from one class to the next without examinations. On completion of the sixth class the pupils are given a study certificate, which is forwarded to the local gymnasium by official channels so that they can continue their education there.

The Gymnasio covers the three final years of compulsory education. Education at this level is designed to help pupils widen the scope of their values, supplement and combine the acquisition of knowledge with the corresponding social problems, cultivate their powers of verbal expression,

achieve normal physical development, familiarize themselves with the various forms of art, develop aesthetic judgment, and become aware of their abilities and skills, inclinations and interests. Assessment is based on day-to-day oral tests or short written tests without warning throughout the school year and, finally, on written examinations at the end of the school year. On completion of studies, students are awarded a formal school-leaving certificate (Apolitirio), which constitutes the official authorization.

Along with the regular schools of primary and secondary education, special schools are also in operation, which admit pupils with special educational needs. Priority is given to children of working parents, who attend all-day primary schools, with an extended timetable and an enriched curriculum.

### **Higher education**

Graduates of the Gymnasio may continue their education without examinations in one of the post-compulsory secondary education institutions, namely: Eniaia Lykeia (Unified Upper Secondary Schools) and TEE (Technical Vocational Educational Schools). Mutual student transfer from one type of school to the other is possible.

More specifically, studies at the Lykeio last three years and emphasis is given on general education. The aim of Lykeio is to develop the pupils' all-round skills and abilities and to prepare them for a responsible role in modern society. At the end of the third year, the pupils take examinations both at school and national level with a view to obtaining the Apolitirio Lykeiou (Unified Upper Secondary School Leaving Certificate). Besides day schools there are also Esperina Lykeia (Evening Upper Secondary Schools) offering four-year courses for young workers. On the other hand, studies at the TEEs last up to three years and consist of two independent cycles covering specific fields and specializations. Their objective is to provide both general education and specialist technical and vocational skills to prepare pupils for the labor market. There are also evening TEEs for workers aged up to 50 who wish to improve their job prospects. Applicants are accepted without examination but must possess either a gymnasium leaving certificate (Apolitirio Gimnasiou) or an equivalent certificate issued abroad.

There are also Vocational Training Institutes (IEK), which provide a formal but unclassified level of education. They accept graduates from both lower and upper secondary schools according to the specializations they provide.

Public higher (also named tertiary) education is divided into university education and higher technological education. Students are admitted to institutions at this level according to their performance in national examinations, which take place at the second and third grade of Lykeio.

More specifically, the mission of university education is to ensure a high level of theoretical and all-round training for the future scientific workforce of the nation. The university education system includes the universities

(Panepistimia), the polytechnics, the Higher Fine Arts Institute and the Hellenic Open University. There are 20 universities in Greece located in various towns; the universities consist of faculties, which in turn are subdivided into departments and individual units. Studies last a minimum of four years. On successful completion of studies, marked by successfully sitting all required semester exams, each student is awarded the Ptychion (First Degree).

The role of higher technological education provided by the Technological Educational Institutes (TEIs) is to contribute to the country's development and to progress in the fields of science and applied research. The focus is on the absorption and transfer of scientific data into the production process. The courses are more practically oriented than in the universities. In Greece there are 14 TEIs composed of at least two faculties; each faculty comprises two or more departments. The TEIs are located in various towns in Greece. Some have independent branches, i.e. separate departments, in other towns. This group of institutions includes the Higher School of Pedagogical and Technical Education.

On the assumption that education is a lifelong entitlement, the Hellenic Open University was founded in 1998 and is currently located in the city of Patras. Students are admitted upon completion of their 22nd year of age by the drawing of lots. The curriculum is based on the distance-learning method. The degree awarded is equivalent to that of the traditional universities. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses as well as vocational training and continuing education programs, which lead to a certificate of attendance or training.

It is important to note that most universities and TEIs have coordination bureaux, which constitute a bridge between tertiary education and the labor market. Through close cooperation with the business community, graduates are helped to make a smooth transition to the world of work.

Postgraduate education includes programs of study leading to a Postgraduate Diploma of Specialization. The general goal of postgraduate studies is to allow students to specialize in certain fields. Greek universities offer a total of 213 postgraduate courses; the Hellenic Open University offers 12 postgraduate courses. These courses are open to university and TEI graduates. The candidates are chosen on the basis of a selection process or their (oral and/or written) examination results. Sufficient knowledge of at least one foreign language is yet another pre-requisite. Courses last at least one calendar year.

Doctoral studies lead to the award of a doctorate. The general goal of doctoral studies is high-level specialization in strategic areas of knowledge and the promotion of fundamental research in various scientific fields with a view to strengthening the country's scientific base. Each Department specifies the relevant admission requirements.

### **Management education**

A wide range of organizations (both public and private) provides management education in Greece. Specialized university schools and departments provide almost all management education that leads to a degree at any level. Such academic units can be part of either a general- or business-oriented tertiary level institution. Accordingly, there are specialized business departments in almost all public Greek universities. Particular reference has to be made to the special universities, which offer both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the fields of economics and business. Such institutions are: the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB), founded in 1920 and the University of Piraeus, founded in 1938.

It is interesting to note that most of the unofficial, yet operating, private higher education establishments also offer graduate and postgraduate degrees in the same areas.

Additionally there are a significant number of non-degree management programs (seminars, short courses, in-house training) offered by associations, consulting companies and enterprises, i.e. by private institutions. This kind of education is more specialized and focuses on particular topics or the specific needs of employees, and that is why many of these programs are tailor-made.

Postgraduate business education includes master's and doctoral-level education. There are postgraduate programs leading to a general Master of Business Administration (MBA), as well as more specialized Master of Science (MSc) degrees in International and European Economics, in Marketing and Communication with New Technologies, in Decision Sciences, in Statistics. It is worth mentioning that apart from the classical full-time programs, there have emerged executive programs as well. These are offered as part-time courses, in order to meet the demand of executives for high-quality specialized education provided on a flexible schedule thus allowing them to fulfill their professional duties.

In the case of public universities, it has become common in the past few years to organize postgraduate study programs in the specific fields in cooperation with one or more departments in the same or another university in Greece or an accredited institution abroad. An exceptional example of this kind of cooperation is the Athens Postgraduate Program in Business Administration, offered jointly by the National Technological University of Athens and specialized departments of the Athens University of Economics and Business.

Doctoral and research programs in business education are being offered by these public universities that offer specialized master's degrees. Such research opportunities are reserved to holders of either an MBA or a specialized MSc.

### *Accreditation*

At this point there is no particular body established in Greece that is duty bound with the accreditation of institutions that offer business and management degree programs. Nevertheless, Greek laws are in conformity with the European Community policy to respond to the movement of the workforce, through the academic and professional accreditation of the qualification of each citizen by the host country.

The requirement for the recognition of professional qualification is the complete definition of professional rights of all specializations at all education and training levels by the member state of origin. In Greece, the competent bodies for the recognition of professional rights are the following: the Organization for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK) for all vocational education and training levels, the Directorate of Statistical and Organization Studies of the central Agency of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs for the Educational Institutions of Higher Education. For degree or diploma holders of higher education from a member state of the European Union (or Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), there is also a Department of Recognition of Professional Qualifications in the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

Academic recognition consists in the acceptance by one member state, either entirely or in part, of a degree issued in another member state. In Greece, the competent agencies for the recognition of degrees issued by foreign institutions are as follows: the Inter-University Foreign Recognition Center (DIKATSA) for university degrees, the Institute of Technological Education (ITE) for higher technological education, the Organization for Vocational and Educational Training (OEEK) for secondary technical vocational training and the Directorate of Intercultural Education of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs for primary and secondary education:

- Estimated number of institutions with undergraduate business degree programs: 20.
- Estimated number of institutions with business master's degree programs: 41.
- Estimated number of institutions with business doctoral degree programs: 8.

### **Issues facing business schools**

Economics and management are the study areas with the largest number of students that have absorbed the increasing demand for university education in the last decades in Greece.

Most of the challenges faced in the field of management education emanate from the globalization phenomenon that requires business students to function adequately in a more integrated economy. In other words, business students

must be better prepared to cope with the forces that govern today's world economy. In the present context, a business curriculum, particularly at the undergraduate level, must accurately capture the main elements of shifting social, legal, economic, political and technological conditions. Failure to identify those elements will negate the intended purpose of educating successful business individuals.

In view of the above, Greek institutions both public and private currently offering management education are considering a redesign of their curricula. In an effort to meet modern challenges successfully, business education should become more internationally oriented. A cost-effective way of achieving a global understanding would be offering on-site opportunities. International business programs, study abroad programs and corporate internships are means to enhance the understanding of the business environment. This is a challenge also for the business faculties, in the sense that they should first acquire themselves a substantial intercultural experience to be able to impart global competency and sensitivity to their students.

Apart from strengthening the international business curriculum, emphasis should be given to the role of the International Relations Offices within the institutions. The main objectives of these offices could be European Union educational programs, participation in international student fora and exhibitions, organization of seminars, educational visits and cultural meetings and creation of new cooperation with foreign higher education institutions.

In any case, it is true that, given their multidisciplinary nature, business schools and faculty seem keener to deal with international issues than other academic constituencies.

Intensifying competition is yet another issue facing business schools in Greece. Challenges are imposed on many levels and with varying intensity. First of all, it is indisputable that there has been an increase in the number of MBA providers and programs, thus leading to increased competition for students. Competition has been especially intense between private and public tertiary level institutions, in relation to both full- and part-time business programs. In the past decade a significant shift has occurred from the public to the private sector, as students show more confidence in programs offered by private business schools. Such institutions are well funded, more businesslike and have established very close links with the market, thus ensuring better opportunities for a remarkable professional career after completion of studies.

**Athanassios Roulias**  
*General Manager, Hellenic Management Association*