

# Poland

## Demographics for Poland

Population:	38,536,869 (July 2006 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$542.6 billion
Currency (inc code):	Zloty (PLN)
Language(s):	Polish 97.8%, other and unspecified 2.2%
Internet country code:	.pl

## Primary and secondary education

Compulsory school comprises six-year primary and three-year gymnasium education. There are the following post-gymnasium schools:

- two- to three-year basic vocational schools;
- three-year general lyceums;
- three-year specialized lyceums; and
- four-year technical secondary schools.

There are also complementary schools for basic vocational school graduates, i.e. two-year complementary lyceums and three-year complementary technical secondary schools and vocational schools for general lyceum graduates.

Pursuant to the currently binding Act on the System of Education, all primary schools, gymnasiums and post-gymnasium schools may be either state or private.

Following the definition contained in the Act, a state school is a school that: provides free-of-charge education within general teaching plans; enrolls students on a common access to schooling basis; and employs teachers holding qualifications defined by separate regulations. A state school must also:

implement curricula including curricular bases for general education and, in the case of vocational schools, curricular bases for vocational training or vocational education profile. They must follow:

- a general teaching plan;
- implement the principles of student assessment, classification and promotion as well as the principles of conducting examinations and tests set by the respective minister for education; and
- enable the acquisition of state certificates and Diplomas.

A non-state school may acquire the rights of a state school if it implements the curricula including the curricular bases mentioned above, applies the aforementioned principles of student assessment, classification and promotion and the principles of conducting examinations and tests, exclusive of entrance examinations, keeps teaching documentation established for state schools, in the case of vocational schools, teaches trades specified in the classification of vocational school trades or other trades with the permission of the Minister of National Education, and employs teachers of compulsory subjects holding the qualifications defined for state school teachers

### **Higher education**

The higher education system in Poland before 1990 comprised only state institutions. In 1990, the new Act on Schools of Higher Education laid down rules for establishing non-state institutions of higher education, whose number has been steadily growing since then. They all offer the following types of studies:

- vocational courses – graduates are granted Bachelor level titles of: licencjat (lic.) or inżynier (inż.);
- complementary Magister-level courses for holders of the abovementioned professional titles, the graduates obtain the title of Magister or equivalent;
- uniform Magister-level courses – graduates are granted master level titles of: Magister (mgr), Magister edukacji (mgr ed.), Magister sztuki, Magister inżynier (mgr inż.), Magister inżynier architekt (mgr inż. arch.), or lekarz (lek.), lekarz stomatolog (lek. stom.), lekarz weterynarii (lek. wet.) depending on the profile of the school;
- PhD studies for Magister-level graduates; graduates obtain the academic degree of Doktor;
- post-graduate studies.

Higher education courses are provided in various modes of study, including regular daily studies as the predominant arrangement as well evening and extramural studies, and those offered in the distance-learning system.

Until 1990 the distinction between university and non-university higher education did not exist. All higher education institutions were of university type, focusing not only on teaching but also on scientific research. Most of their faculties were entitled to award the academic degrees of Doktor and Doktor habilitowany.

At present, the following two types of institutions may be distinguished:

1. Higher education institutions, operating under the 1990 Higher Education Act which offer both university-type and vocational education. Most of these institutions, and state ones in particular, carry out scientific research and have the right to award both professional titles and academic degrees.
2. Schools of higher vocational education, established on the basis of the Act on Schools of Higher Vocational Education of 1997, which provide only vocational education and have the right to award only the titles of licencjat and inżynier. Those graduating from these schools may continue their studies in university-type institutions and subsequently obtain the title of Magister or Magister inżynier.

By the 1 September 2005 a new Act on Higher Education had been issued, and all the institutions of system of higher education are now are subject to this Act. This act divided the market into two types of schools: academic institutions are institutions granted to organize doctoral studies and vocational institutions for the rest.

#### *PhD studies and habilitation*

The permission to award the academic degree of Doktor may be obtained by an organizational unit which has at least eight full-time employees who hold the academic title or degree of Doktor habilitowany and represent the discipline of science in which the organizational unit is to obtain the permission. The permission to award the academic degree of Doktor habilitowany may be obtained by an organizational unit which has at least twelve full-time employees who hold the academic title or degree of Doktor habilitowany, including at least six persons holding an academic title, and represent the field of science in which the organizational unit is to obtain the permission.

#### *Organization of studies*

First-level programmes – Bachelor – (three-four years) – lead to the title of licencjat (lic) or inżynier (inż) which allows students to continue their education at Magister-level courses.

Second-level programmes are Master the “Magister”-level programmes (one to two years). In order to obtain the title of Magister (mgr) or its equivalent,

students are required to write a Master' thesis (project) and pass an examination which includes defending of the thesis (project).

Non-state higher education institutions usually offer bachelor-level programmes. Some of them, however, provide Magister-level programmes and a few of them, at present, have the right to award the Doktor degree.

PhD studies (three to four years) are also available at many faculties in state universities. In order to be admitted, candidates must hold the title of Magister. The degree of Doktor may also be awarded to those who have worked in a university for several years and have not been enrolled in PhD studies. In both cases the Doctor's degree is granted on the basis of a successfully defended dissertation. Degrees are awarded by the authorized faculty councils.

#### *Admission procedures*

The minimum requirement for gaining access to higher education is the matriculation certificate (świadectwo dojrzałości) or its foreign equivalents (recognized on the basis of a bilateral agreement or in the local educational authorities).

Foreign students are required to have some knowledge of the Polish language as special courses for foreign students in the English language are not offered in all higher education institutions. Relevant information is available at all universities and other higher education institutions.

Foreign students wishing to continue their studies in Poland are required to submit transcripts of their academic records from home universities.

Admission procedures for candidates in individual fields of study are established by senates of higher education institutions.

#### *Study programmes (fields of study and curricula)*

In accordance with the Act on Schools of Higher Education, a list of official names of study fields is drawn up by the Central Council of Higher Education.

The Central Council of Higher Education also establishes the minimum curricular requirements for individual fields of study. Formally, curricula are adopted by faculty councils.

The language of instruction is Polish, but some subjects are available in English, and in some cases full study courses are offered in a foreign language (English, French, German).

Curricula and study regulations specify the minimum period of study for each cycle in each discipline. The student should successfully complete each semester before being admitted to the next semester.

#### *Diploma thesis and Diploma exam*

Students enrolled in all types of courses and all fields of study (except medical studies) write a Diploma thesis or project and defend it during a Diploma examination. The examination board consists of faculty teachers.

To be admitted to a Diploma examination, the student must usually have successfully completed all subjects and practical placements, etc. as prescribed for a given field of study; submitted by the specified deadline his or her Diploma thesis or project approved by his/her supervisor; and obtained from his/her supervisor a passing grade for the thesis or project.

In most higher education institutions, a final examination (except in medical studies where prospective graduates are not required to write a Diploma thesis) consists of two parts. The first one is held to examine the knowledge prescribed in the curriculum for a given field of study, and the second one is devoted to the defence of a Diploma thesis (project).

### **Management education**

Management education in Poland is provided by a wide range of institutions. Every programme that leads to title and Diploma has to be issued by an institution recognized by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Usually these courses are called “postgradual studies” and alumni are given a Diploma on successful completion of these studies.

In Poland there exist hundreds of institutions offering a wide range of business and management courses, open courses, and in-company training. The certificates they issue are not officially recognized as a degree; however, they certify completion of the training programme. Universities and colleges are also allowed to organize courses and training that are not awarded with any degree.

Many universities, academies and colleges offer “MBA” studies. As the Master of Business Administration is not an officially recognized degree they are organized as postgradual studies. To implement greater quality and recognition MBA programmes are offered in cooperation with the world’s top universities with accredited programmes. The alumni obtain two Diplomas:

1. An officially recognized Diploma of postgradual studies in Polish.
2. A Master of Business Administration in English.

The majority of MBA programmes are organized as part-time studies, usually at weekends. For enrollment some business experience is required.

The most popular business programmes are focused on management, economy, finance and accounting. Some colleges also offer programmes like psychology in business, management of local communities, etc. Curriculums of those programmes have to fulfill the requirements specified in the Ministry of Science and Higher Education regulations.

PhD studies, lasting usually three to four years, are available at many faculties in public and non-public universities. In order to be admitted, candidates must hold the title of Magister. The degree of Doktor may also be awarded to those who have worked in a university for several years and have

not been enrolled in PhD studies. In both cases the Doctor's degree is granted on the basis of a successfully defended dissertation. Degrees are awarded by the authorized faculty councils.

### *Accreditation*

The State Accreditation Commission (SAC) is a legal body working for the quality of education. Submission to the SAC's evaluation is obligatory, and being awarded a negative rating entails certain consequences such as the Minister of Higher Education either to revoke or suspend the right to decisions by the offer programmes in a given field or level of study.

The tasks of the Commission are: evaluating the quality of education, preparing evaluations of all applications to establish an institution of higher education, granting the right to run a study programme, extending the permission to run a higher education institution, as well as preparing evaluations of applications to establish an affiliate of a foreign higher education institution in Poland.

The Foundation for the Promotion and Accreditation of Economic Education (FPAKE) is an independent institution acting for higher economic and management education in Poland. It was appointed by the Conference of Rectors of Economic Universities. The main aim of the Foundation is to improve the quality of education in Polish higher education institutions and to promote and support its best patterns:

- Estimated number of institutions with undergraduate business degree programmes: 420.
- Estimated number of institutions with business Master's degree programmes: 200.
- Estimated number of institutions with business Doctoral degree programmes: 50.

Business schools develop rapidly mainly due to the fact that since they came into existence, i.e. since 1990, they have been operating within the framework of the competitive educational services market. Higher studies, post-graduate or MBA studies, courses and training are organized without state budget support. By gaining revenues from tuition fees higher education institutions are becoming more competitive.

The high quality of education expected by the potential students requires high outlays. The outlays are mainly allocated for employing highly qualified academic teaching staff and for investments in the necessary means of supporting the teaching process.

The main issue facing business schools in Poland seems to be the population decline. According to the statistics, from the academic year 2005/2006 the number of candidates for tertiary study should be decreasing. We may,

however, hope that Poland's membership in the European Union and the general requirement of higher education shall contribute to the growing interest in taking up studies.

Another way of increasing the number of candidates is to organize studies for foreign students. They are not common at present due to some difficulties connected with organizing the studies in a foreign language and providing properly educated staff as well as library resources.

But no threat from foreign higher education institutions has been observed. In the opinion of higher education institutions' managers the present regulations concerning establishing affiliates of foreign higher education institutions are restrictive enough to constitute no danger for the market development.

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