



# POLAND

## INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

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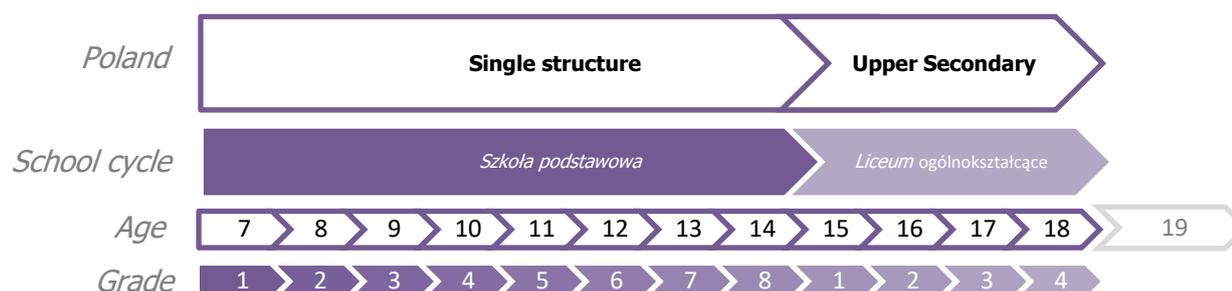
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The information below gives an overview of procedures<sup>1</sup> for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on data gathered in February 2021.

## GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



Education is compulsory until 18 years of age. General upper secondary schools<sup>2</sup> (*liceum ogólnokształcące*) lasts four years and is attended by 48.6 % of pupils in upper secondary education<sup>3</sup>. Pupils may move between the general, technical and vocational education tracks.

### Graduation and Certification

At the end of upper secondary education and having successfully passed all subjects, schools award a school leaving certificate. The certificate allows pupils to take the Matura exam, which consists of both written and oral parts.

The written part is organised by the Central Examination Board at national level. It covers three compulsory subjects at basic level (Polish language, Mathematics, one Modern foreign language). Additionally, pupils choose from 1 to 5 additional subjects at extended level from a list<sup>4</sup>.

The oral part is assessed by the schoolteachers and covers compulsory subjects (Polish language and one Modern foreign language) and one additional subject (Foreign or regional language).

Pupils who pass the Matura exam receive a Matura certificate, issued by the Regional Examination Boards. The certificate includes the results of the written and oral portions of the final examination. The Matura certificate provides access to higher education. The results of the Matura are used to determine entry to different faculties/courses.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

## INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM POLAND

### Age and grade

Pupils enrol in an exchange programme when they are 15-17 years old. This corresponds to the 1st or 2nd grade in the current system, and 2nd or 3rd grade in the new four-year school system. The

<sup>2</sup> The current structure was introduced in 2017 to replace the three-year upper secondary school cycle, and will be fully in place in the 2022/2023 school year. General upper secondary education does not include technical upper secondary schools, even though pupils enrolled in this type of school take the Matura examination.

<sup>3</sup> Data on general upper secondary school of the National Statistical Office, page 37.

2018/2019, <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/education/education/education-in-the-20182019-school-year,1,15.html>

<sup>4</sup> Biology; Chemistry; Philosophy; Physics; Geography; History; History of music; History of art; Computer science / Information technology; Latin and ancient culture; Minority language (ethnic or national); Modern foreign language; Polish language; Regional language; Mathematics; Civic education.

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four-year school reform should facilitate individual pupil mobility and its recognition, as going abroad in the 2nd year would allow sufficient time for exchange pupils to prepare for the final exam in the final year.

## Registration in the sending school

In order to ensure re-admission to your sending school on return from your exchange abroad, you must get permission from your school principal to go abroad and be enrolled in your sending school during the mobility. Your sending school is legally accountable for any issue arising during your mobility.

If you want to study abroad during the first year of upper secondary school, it is recommended you obtain a signed agreement from your sending school's principal to decide whether you must repeat the year or can be admitted to the second year after the exchange.

## Funding for the sending school

If exchange pupils are registered as fulfilling their compulsory education abroad, the school receives funding for them corresponding to 60 % of the amount they would receive for a pupil fulfilling their school obligation in Poland.

## RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 6 months, or a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad of more than 6 months and shorter than a full school year, or of any duration shorter than a full school year and finishing after the end of the school year Poland. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered.

The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

*Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>5</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as a tool for recognition, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.*

Re-admission of pupils upon return from a learning period abroad is regulated by a Ministry of Education Decree<sup>6</sup>. According to the law, recognition of learning periods abroad is the responsibility of the school principal who must ensure that learning outcomes from the general core curriculum have been taught and acquired. However, since the law does not provide further guidelines, different school principals and their external evaluators (*kurator oświaty*) have different interpretations. As a

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<sup>5</sup> within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>6</sup> Regulation of the Minister of National Education on the education of non-Polish citizens and persons who are Polish citizens, who were educated in schools operating in the education systems of other countries, Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej w sprawie kształcenia osób niebędących obywatelami polskimi oraz osób będących obywatelami polskimi, które pobierały naukę w szkołach funkcjonujących w systemach oświaty innych państw. (<https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20200001283/O/D20201283.pdf>).

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result, school principals usually fulfil this provision by testing pupils on all subjects through exams, rather than through recognition of learning acquired abroad.

The uncertainty of the recognition procedure places an extra burden on pupils as well as on school principals. In addition, for school principals and teachers it is difficult to keep with the ongoing school reforms and to adapt the recognition process accordingly.

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## Periods of between 2 and 6 months

For mobility periods of between 2 and 6 months, the school principal decides to re-admit pupils to their class in most cases. It is up to the teacher to decide how to prove that the pupil has achieved all the necessary learning outcomes. They can also use any documentation from the host school that the pupil is able to provide – though pupils do not have to provide specific documents upon return. Very often teachers assess competences through an exam, but they might also ask you for some presentation, portfolio, outcome of the exchange project, etc. depending on the nature of the mobility and the subject. Teachers have until the end of the school year to organise this assessment, and if you are unable to fulfil the requirements of the core curriculum by the end of the school year, you will have to repeat the grade. The time period in which the mobility takes place is also important – e.g. if the three-month mobility takes place between September and November, you may be exempted from taking exams to be readmitted to school in your class, or you may need to pass the exams your classmates took during the period you were abroad<sup>7</sup>.

## A full school year

Upon return from a year-long mobility, you must present adequate documentation to your school: a certificate of attendance with an apostille<sup>8</sup> from the host country, certificates, a transcript of results, a list of subjects attended etc. The school principal assesses the documentation and decides whether to apply partial recognition and test you only on the subjects you did not follow while abroad. However, most of the time, the school principal decides that the pupils need to take an exam on all subjects.

## Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year

The school principal can decide whether to organise an internal examination (*egzamininy klasyfikacyjne*) to test whether you acquired the knowledge specified in the core curriculum for a given school year.

## INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN POLAND

### Registration in the host school

Decisions on your admission as an exchange pupil are made by the school principal and no documents from the sending school are required. Once admitted, you have the same status as regular pupils, and school principals must report you in the school information system within 7 days of your arrival at the school. Age is the main criterion taken into consideration when assigning you to a class, together with your interests in relation to subjects.

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<sup>7</sup> E. Briga, 'Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning', EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Apostille is still needed to legalise school certificates within the EU, as this type of document does not fall under the Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the EU

You can be hosted in the last grade, however school ends in the last week of April and you would therefore have a shorter learning period abroad.

## Funding for the host school

Municipalities, which finance schools, receive the same amount of state subsidies for exchange pupils as for the other pupils. These funds are based on the number of pupils enrolled at the particular time when schools do the reporting.

## Certification for hosted pupil

The schools can provide a list of courses attended by the hosted pupil and marks might be given by the school teachers.

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

Technically, you can acquire a school leaving certificate and therefore have access to the Matura exam: however, in order to obtain the certificate, you must have the host school certify that you received passed all subjects. This is rare however, as hosted pupils do not have a sufficient knowledge of the Polish language to perform well in all subjects.

## TESTIMONIAL

### Ola from Poland: a full year to Spain

*"The most difficult moments are the most enriching ones."*

Becoming more independent, discovering a new culture and making international friends are the reasons why I went on exchange. My expectations before leaving were mainly based on stereotypes about Spain, but with time I got used to all the things I found strange at first.

I learnt some Spanish before leaving, but people in my host town didn't speak Spanish, they spoke Valencian. That taught me a hard but valuable lesson: to be patient, to accept things as they are and to deal with them.

A funny situation that occurred during the exchange was the school being evacuated due to heavy rain and lessons being suspended for a few days. I found it odd, since I didn't think it was raining so heavily, I've seen worse in my country. So I asked my host sister what would happen if it snowed. She looked at me as if I were an alien...that is how I learnt it never snows in Southern Spain!

### *Repeating the school year after an unrecognised exchange*

When I came back, I had to repeat the year, but it was my choice so I was fine with it. On one side, it wasn't easy at first, because I had to change my class and I fell behind in some subjects, like Polish, for lack of practice during the exchange. On the other side, other subjects were easier to study and both teachers and students respected me for going on exchange. However, giving me some more credit for the exchange would have been helpful.

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Despite all difficulties, I would still go on exchange, it was an eye-opening experience. It is not meant to be easy; there are hard moments that will sometimes push you to your limits, but those are the most enriching ones. I would definitely recommend the exchange to other pupils, it gives you a unique chance to see things from other perspectives and to share your culture with others. My only advice is to have low or no expectations. You never know what the future might bring you.

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