

# kids2write

## **KIDS2WRITE**

**Materialkoffer zur Förderung der Schreibkompetenz bei  
mehrsprachigen Kindern und Jugendlichen in Europa  
518878-LLP-1-2011-1-DE-KA2-KA2MP**

### **State-of-the-Art-Report**

**Rumänien, EN-Version**



GD Bildung und Kultur

**Programm für lebenslanges Lernen**



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# *Kids2Write*

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ANUP – International, Bucharest, Romania

May 2011

## THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ROMANIA

The Romanian **educational system** is based on a tuition-free, egalitarian system. Access to free education is guaranteed by Article 32 in the [Constitution of Romania](#).<sup>[1]</sup> Education is regulated and enforced by the [Ministry of Education and Research](#). Each step has its own form of organization and is subject to different laws and directives. Since the downfall of the communist regime, the Romanian educational system has been through several reforms. The last one is the Law of Education promulgated in 2011 (i.e. Law 1/2011).

### **General characteristics of the law**

It regulates all forms of education: K-12, higher education, public, private and confessional institutions. It consists of 7 titles (with chapters and sections), 365 articles and an appendix, and is printed on 63 pages of the „Official Monitor”.

*Titles:* General dispositions; Pre-university education; Higher education; Statute of educational personnel; Lifelong education; Juridical responsibility; Transitory and final dispositions

### **Principles of the law**

- Equality (non-discrimination), quality, relevance, efficiency
- Decentralization, public responsibility
- Guarantees for cultural identity of all Romanian citizens and for intercultural dialogue
- Academic autonomy, academic freedom

- Freedom of thought non-dependence of ideologies, religious dogmas, political doctrines
- Decisions must be based on dialogue and consultation
- Respecting the right of opinion of students as direct beneficiaries of the educational system

Kindergarten is optional under the age of six. At the age of six, children must join the "preparatory school year", which is mandatory in order to enter the first grade. Schooling starts at the age of seven, and is compulsory until the tenth grade (which corresponds with the age of sixteen or seventeen).

The school educational cycle ends in the twelfth grade, when students graduate the baccalaureate.

Higher education is aligned onto the [European Higher Education Area](#).

As of August 2010, there were approximately 4,700 opened schools in Romania. <sup>[2]</sup>

As of 2011, over three million students were enrolled in the educational system. <sup>[3]</sup>

## Kindergarten

Children can start as early as three years old and can stay until they are six or seven years old. Kindergarten is optional and typically lasts for 3 or 4 forms - "Small Group" (*Grupa Mică*) for children aged 3–4, "Middle Group" (*Grupa Mijlocie*), for children aged 4–5, "Big Group" (*Grupa Mare*) for children aged 5–6 and "School Preparation Class" (*Pregătire pentru Școală*) for children aged 6–7. The preparation class became compulsory, and is a requirement in order to enter primary school. <sup>[4]</sup>

Services include initiation in foreign languages (typically [English](#), [French](#) or [German](#)), introduction in computer studies, dancing, swimming etc. All kindergartens will provide at least one meal or one snack, some having their own kitchens and their own cooks, others opting for dedicated catering services. Many kindergartens (especially private venues) will provide children with transportation to and from the kindergarten. Groups typically have 1-2 teachers (*educatori*) and 10-15 children (typically more in state kindergartens).

The private sector has a very large role in providing kindergarten and day care services, having a large proportion in the market share for preschool education. Typical tuition fees for private kindergarten range between 100 and 400 EUR monthly, depending on the town/city where the institution is located and on the services offered, whereas for public kindergarten there is no tuition fee (some may, however, charge for meals and/or transportation).

The relative number of available places in kindergartens is small, many having waiting lists or requiring admission and formalities to be done at least six months in advance. The

lack of available places is especially obvious in state-run kindergartens, that charge no tuition fees, especially given the relatively high tuition fees of private venues. Local councils, especially in larger cities, where both parents typically work, seeing an increase in demand, have begun investing in expanding existing kindergartens, building new ones or offering stipends for private kindergartens as to cover part of the tuition fees.

## Elementary school

Elementary school lasts eight years in Romania. Most elementary schools are public; MEC statistics show less than 2 percent of elementary school students attend private school. Unless parents choose a school earlier, the future student is automatically enrolled in the school nearest to his or her residence. Some schools that have a good reputation are flooded with demands from parents even two or three years in advance. A negative consequence of this is that in many schools classes are held in two shifts lasting from as early as 7 a.m. to as late as 8 p.m. Education is free in public schools (including some books and auxiliary materials), but not entirely (some textbooks, notebooks, pencils and uniforms might be required to be purchased).

School starts in the middle of September and ends in the middle of June the following year. A class (*clasă*) can have up to 30 students (25 is considered optimum), and there can be as few as one class per grade or as many as twenty classes per grade. Usually each group has its own classroom. Each group has its own designation, usually the grade followed by a letter of the alphabet (for example, *VII A* means that the student is in the 7th grade in the 'A' class).

## Primary school

The first four years are taught by a single teacher (*învățător*) for the most subjects. Additional teachers are assigned only for a few specialized subjects (Foreign Languages, Introduction to Computers, etc.). Having only one main teacher for the first four years usually leaves students with life-long memories, and many people fondly recall their primary school teacher as one of the most influential figures of their lives. At the end of primary school, curriculum starts to become congested and it led over time to the high performance educational system we know today. For instance, a 4th grade student (9–10 years of age) may have on a weekly basis

- 4 classes of math
- 4-5 classes of Romanian language
- 1 class of history
- 1 class of geography
- 1-2 classes of science
- 2 classes of art
- 1-3 classes of a foreign language (Usually [French](#) or [English](#))
- 1 or 2 classes of Introduction to computers\*\*
- 1 class of Civic Education (a subject teaching everything from personal hygiene to the Constitution to manners in society)

- 1 of religion \* (optional; parents can withdraw children from these classes.<sup>[5]</sup> The situation is, however, fuzzy,<sup>[6]</sup> with many parent groups and associations being against teaching religion in schools.<sup>[7]</sup> Attempt of withdrawal of the student from these classes by a parent is usually met with opposition by teachers in most schools.<sup>[8]</sup>)
- 1 of music
- 2 of physical education

\*These subjects may or may not have teachers other than the main teacher.

\*\* These subjects almost always have teachers other than the main teacher.

## Gymnasium school

Classes are reshaped at the end of the 4th grade, based on academic performances. Many schools have special classes (such as intensive English classes or Informatics classes, providing one or two more courses in these subjects). Selection for such classes is done based on local tests. Assessing the students' performance is also different between primary and gymnasium cycles.

Starting with the 5th grade, students have a different teacher (*profesor*) for each subject.

Furthermore, each class has a teacher designated to be “class principal” (*diriginte*), besides teaching his or her usual subject. Additional counseling may be provided by a special counselor (*consilier pe probleme de educație* — counselor on educational issues) or by a school psychologist.

An 8th grade schedule may contain up to 30–32 hours weekly, or 6 hours daily, thus making it quite intensive, for instance:

- 4 classes of math
- 4 classes of Romanian language ( here we have also writing competences )
- 2 classes of history
- 2 classes of geography
- 2 classes of biology
- 1 classes of introduction to computers
- 4 classes of a foreign language, usually [French language](#) and [English language](#)
- 2 classes of physics
- 2 classes of chemistry
- 1 (only in the 8th grade) class of [Latin](#)
- 1 class of art and music
- 1 class of religion (optional; same situation like in Primary School regarding teachers.)
- 1 (only in the 7th and 8th grade) class of civic education
- 1 class of technology
- 2 (1 in the 8th grade) classes of physical education

In addition schools may add 1 or 2 subjects at their free choice. This possibility gave rise to *Intensive English Classes* or *Informatics Groups*, accessible only by special exams in the 5th grade.

## Life in elementary schools

Life in a [city](#) school is very different from life in a [rural](#) school. An urban school will have over 100 or 200 students per year, science labs and well-stocked computer labs, clubs based on different interests (from math, film and drama to Harry Potter), teaching assistants and psychologists, free speech therapy and academic programs for gifted students, whereas rural schools are usually tiny, with some, in villages, providing only 4 years education — the rest being offered at a nearby larger village, having only one teacher for all students (generally under 10 students in total) — a situation almost identical to the one existing at the turn of the 20th century. Transportation to and from school is almost never provided — and in extreme cases, in remote villages, students as young as six must walk up to 10 km to school if there is no bus or train. Only starting in 2003 was a very limited rural transportation service introduced (The Yellow School Van with a Little Bell — *Microbuzul Școlar Galben cu Clopoțel*). Public transport for all students is in theory free, but, because of a very awkward system, students end up paying half the price for a season ticket. Students also pay half price at all commuter trains operated by Caile Ferate Romane –national railway system .

All schools follow the tradition of school shifts (originally done for lack of space, but now tradition). Teacher-student relations are quite formal, but this formalism has evolved in the past few years to a friendly, but respectful relationship. This is due to the difference of mentality between generations. While elder teachers usually demand respect and are exigent, some younger ones, who better understand what it is like to be in school, are friendly and understanding, rather than strict. Teacher-Parent relations are also formal, with teachers calling parents to school only for administrative issues at the beginning of the semester, and to discuss the marks at the end of the semester. Those teachers able to break the formalism and reach out to the students are very highly regarded both by officials and by students.

There is no school lunch in most schools, as school either ends before lunch or starts after lunch, although few schools have an after-school program that may include lunch.

Both urban and rural schools may organize clubs, but this is left to teachers. Dance clubs, school sports, traditions and story telling, drama, music, applied physics or chemistry and even math clubs are popular, depending on the teachers organizing. Additionally, many Physical Education teachers organize intramural competitions and one or two day trips to the mountains. Other teachers usually also organize such trips and even whole holidays during the summer - camps (*tabere*) - this being a Romanian school tradition. However, field trips or research trips are not common (one or two every year), and are usually visits to museums or trips to natural habitats of various animals or plants, to gather information for a school project.

## Curriculum in elementary schools

The Romanian curriculum is known as highly academic and performing. There are up to 15 compulsory subjects (usually 8-13) and up to 5 optional subjects (usually 1 or 2).

However, unlike in the United Kingdom or France, these optional subjects are chosen by the school and imposed on the student — they are known as School Decided Curriculum (*Curriculum la Decizia Școlii* — CDȘ) and are usually extensions to the compulsory subjects.

For the domain of key competence *Communication in the mother tongue* the Romanian official curriculum includes the following compulsory subjects within the curricular area *Language and communication: Romanian* – for all the students – and *mother tongue* for minority students (according to the *Constitution of Romania, articles 4, 6 and 13* ). All the students in Romania study two *modern foreign languages* within compulsory schooling. They start the first modern foreign language in grade 3 and the second in grade 5. The study of modern foreign languages continues in high school within the general and compulsory strands until graduation. A third modern foreign language can be studied at high school level as an optional course. The school curriculum for primary and lower secondary education is objective-centered and the high school curricula are competence-centered. There is **an important number of subject curricula which precisely mention the eight domains of key competence** in the Introductory note and in the Methodological recommendations (for instance curricula for *physics, geography, Romanian, modern foreign languages, counseling and guidance*). The curricula for modern foreign languages set their attainment targets according to the reference levels from the European Framework of Reference for Languages. Formally the presence of key competences in the official curriculum represents the educational aims explicitly stipulated at this level.

## Conclusions

- The general compulsive education lasts 10 years and consists of primary and gymnasium education; higher secondary (lyceum) education will become compulsory until 2020
- Religion is included as a subject, but at the request of parents or the pupil (if(s)he is major) pupils can be exempted from this subject
- Pupils can be transferred between schools with the acceptance of the receiving school
- Structure:
  - Early education (0-6 years of age) with a) ante-kindergarten(0-3) and b) kindergarten
  - Primary education: preparatory grade and grades I-IV
  - Secondary education: gymnasium (grades V-IX) and lyceum (grades X-XII/XIII, with 3 lines: theoretical, vocational and technological)
  - Professional education (between 6 months and 2 years)
  - Non-university tertiary education (post-lyceum)
- National minorities have the right to study and be educated in their language at all levels, types, and forms of pre-university education; all subjects are taught in their language, except Romanian language and literature
- It is possible to organize excellence centers for gifted children

- It is also possible to organize „schools after school” programs, in partnership with local authorities and parents
- All forms of schools must be accredited and periodically evaluated
- Size of classes: 5(7)9 for ante-kindergarten, 10(15)20 for kindergarten, 12(20)25 for primary education, 12(25)30 for gymnasium, 15(25)30 for lyceum, 15(25)30 for post-lyceum, 8(10)12 for slightly impaired children, and 4(5)6 for heavily-impaired children

## High schools

### Admission to high school

At the end of the 8th year of school (at age 14 or 15) a nation-wide test is taken by all students. Starting with 2004, this examination is called *Testarea Națională* (The National Test) and can be taken only once, in June.

The subjects are Romanian Language and Literature, Maths and either Geography or History, depending on the candidate's choice (and additionally the language of the school for ethnic minority schools or classes and for bi-lingual schools). Many high schools provide classes with intensive study of a foreign language, such as English, French, German or Spanish; a two-part examination (Grammar/Vocabulary and Speaking) is required for them.

The passing mark is 5 (on a scales from 1-10, 10 being the best mark) for each of the exams. If the student passes, he is allowed to enrol in a high school; should he fail, he will have to join a School of Crafts and Trades for two years. The finishing grade (also known as the admission grade) is computed as an average, taking into account for 50% an average of all the Yearly General Averages starting with year 5 and for the rest of 50% the mark obtained at the National Test (1-10, 10 being the highest, not rounded, precision 0.01). Despite the exams not being published, the marks are public, lists being placed both in schools and on the Internet.

In order to enroll in a high school, the student must choose a list of high schools he or she desires to attend (there is no automatic enrolment this time), based on his mark and options by filling in a nation-wide form.

A national computer system does the repartition, by taking into account students in the order of their preferences and their "admission grade". Thus, somebody with an 9.85 average (this is a top 5% mark) will certainly enter the high school he or she desires, while somebody with 5.50 has almost no chance to attend a top ranked high school. However, based on this system, the last admission averages for some prestigious high schools are over 9.50 or 9.60.



## Types of Romanian high schools



 Gheorghe Lazăr High School, Bucharest

There are five types of high schools in Romania allowing access to university, based on the type of education offered and their academic performance. All of these allow for a high school diploma, access to the *Bacalaureat* exam and therefore access to University studies. Unlike the Swedish or French systems, the choice of high school curriculum does not limit the choices for university. For example, a graduate of a Mathematics-Computer Programming (Real) Department of a National College may apply to a Language Department of a University without any problem. However, because of the subjects taught, the quality of education and the requirements for admission in universities, artificial barriers may appear: for example, a graduate of a Humane and Social Studies Department will find it very hard to apply for a Mathematics Department at a University because the admission exam for that university department requires knowledge of calculus, a subject not taught in Humanities and Social Studies. But there is no formal limitation: if that student manages to understand calculus, he or she is free to apply.

High school enrolment is conditioned on passing the National Test and participating in the National Computerized Repartition.

High school studies are four years in length, two compulsory (9th and 10th year), two non-compulsory (11th and 12th year). There are no exams between the 10th and the 11 years. There is also a lower frequency program taking 5 years for those wishing to attend high school after abandoning at an earlier age.

Each type of high-school is free to offer one or more academic programs (*profile*). These are:

### *Theoretical program*

- Science — *Profil Real* ("mathematics and computer programming" or "earth studies") — this is the most demanding of all the academic programs, and the most sought-after as it offers the best chance for university admission, teaching as it does most of the subjects needed for admission.

- Humanities — *Profil Uman* ("social studies" or "languages") — 3 or 4 modern languages, 4 years of Latin or Ancient Greek, literature (both Romanian and foreign), two years of each of the studied social sciences, more history and geography than in the case of real studies, but almost no mathematics, chemistry, physics or biology.
- *Technical programs* — *Profil tehnic* will give a qualification in a technical field such as electrician, industrial machine operator, train driver and mechanic etc. A lot of subjects are technically based (e.g. Calibration of Technical Measurement Machines, Locomotive Mechanics), with some math, physics and chemistry and almost no humanities.

*Vocational programs* — *Profil vocațional* will give a qualification in a non-technical field, such as kindergarten educator, assistant architect, or pedagogue. A lot of subjects are based on humanities, with specifics based on qualification (such as Teaching) and almost no math, physics or chemistry. Art, music and design high schools are grouped here. High schools belonging to religious cults are also included. Usually, admission in these high schools is done by a special exam besides the National Tests in music or art.

*Services and Economics programs* — *Profil economic* will give a qualification in the fields of services, such as waiter, chef, tourism operator. Offering a quite balanced program, similar to the real studies in the theoretical program, but a bit lighter, and giving a valuable qualification, this program is very sought after (being second only to the real program).

The following high-schools forms does not allow entrance to universities:

- School of Crafts and Trades (*Școală de Arte și Meserii*) — a two year school providing a low qualification such as salesman or welder or builder. In case the student wants to continue to high school he or she must attend a special year between the 2nd year in the School of Crafts and Trades, and the 11th year in high school.
- Apprentice School — a two year school, almost integrally based on apprenticeship with a company, that usually also hires the graduates. Once highly popular, nowadays only a handful remains and will be almost completely phased out by 2009. There is no access to high school from this type of school.

Optional subjects are either imposed by schools on the students, or at best, students are allowed to choose a package of two or three subjects at group level (not individual level). Usually optional subjects provide additional hours of the hardest subjects, through "extensions" and "development classes". In addition, there are also a large number of specializations. A student can be, for example, enrolled in a National College, study a real program, specializing in mathematics-informatics.

## The Bacalaureate exam

High school students graduating from a College, *Liceu* or *Grup Școlar* must take the National Bacalaureate Exam (*Examenul Național de Bacalaureat* — colloquially known as the *bac*). Despite the similarity in name with the French word [Baccalauréat](#), there are few similarities. The *Bacalaureat* comprises 2 or 3 oral examinations and 4 or 5 written examinations, usually spanning on the course of one and a half weeks in late June and September. It is a highly centralized, national exam. Usually the exam papers are taken to a centralized marking facility, sometimes even in another city, under police guard. The exam supervisors (always high school teachers or university professors) cannot teach in, or otherwise be related to, the high school they are sent to supervise. Starting with 2007, the ministry drafts 100 different sets of subjects for each exam, and makes them available 6 months in advance through both the official web site and via booklets available free of charge. The solutions to each of the sets are also made public by the ministry.

Except for the languages exams, the subjects are provided in any language desired by the candidate (demands can be made "on the spot" for a number of languages — Hungarian, German and Romanian subjects are available in all high schools nationwide, with other languages in areas where the respective language is spoken, while for other languages the request must be filed alongside the registration form, two months in advance). Braille can also be provided.

The Bacalaureate is a requirement when enrolling in a university, because, technically, without passing it, the student is not a high school graduate, but, usually it counts for almost nothing in the admission scores (in most universities, 0-20% is the norm). In the best possible situation, it makes up half of the total university admission score, but only in the most undesired departments of the small, backwater universities.

## Teachers' TRAINING

**For kindergarten and primary education** the initial teacher training is organized within the departments for the pedagogy of primary and pre-school education from the faculties of sciences of education (before the Bologna process implementation, the initial teacher training was organized within a three years short cycle in the university colleges).

**Teachers for secondary education are initially trained** in the departments for teacher training (departamentele pentru pregătirea personalului didactic - DPPD).

## Competences of the future teachers

The specialists in education share a large consensus regarding the need of a new set of competences for the teaching staff that meet the social, economical changes and the reforms in the Romanian education. These new competences are connected to the roles of the teachers: develop and organise school-based curriculum, design and implement cross-

curricular activities, assess and select textbooks, participate in local, national and international projects, work in an intercultural environment, develop partnerships between school and community, self management and professional development.

**The analysis of the curricula within the pedagogical module highlights various competences of the future teachers that can be connected to a competence-centered approach in education.** For instance **the Psychology of education course** values the theoretical data in order to understand the learning process and the roles of the teacher in guiding and facilitating learning (understand the students, the specificity of the psychological development as well as the relationship between development and learning, types of learning, the theory of the multiple intelligences, individual and group stimulation of the students' creativity, the psychological approach of the student-teacher relationship etc.).

The **Pedagogical disciplines** focus: a better knowledge and understanding of the teachers' professional roles and of the standards for the teaching career; to thoroughly plan and assess so that there should be coherence among the reference objectives, the operational objectives, the learning contents, the didactic strategies, evaluation, curricular standards of performance; a better use of a variety of instructional, learning and evaluation strategies, methods, techniques (cooperative learning methods, projects, portfolios, visual organizers etc); to promote the relationships that value the democratic principles within the didactic strategies and the daily school practice; the participation at the personal professional development and the institutional development; to promote innovation; to assume and promote the inclusive education principles and to develop the potential of every single participant at education; the cooperation with the members of the school community and the students' families.

The **Pedagogical practice** aims at planning learning situations, applying didactical strategies, the teaching and learning methods according to the students' profile etc.; self assessment and assessment of the sequence of learning opportunities that were organized on the basis of clear criteria; developing the necessary teaching/ learning resources which are necessary in order to facilitate learning; communicating and interrelating with the students and parents.

The above mentioned competences which are aimed by the curriculum for the initial teacher training show the correspondence with those competences that are necessary for a key-competences- based approach in the school practice: the teacher as a constructor or facilitator of learning, cooperation with parents, participation at school development, formative evaluation, self development.

The team teaching was promoted in 1998 when the new national curriculum started to be implemented. At the level of the school curriculum management and planning teaching every school organizes teachers' commissions for each curricular area and for school subjects (in the 9 schools where there are more teachers who teach the same subject). These commissions are a form of cooperation for the planning and organization of the learning activities.

At classroom level team teaching is difficult to be implemented at a large scale given the timetable structure, the teaching load, the financing within the DPPD include: psycho-pedagogical studies for the teaching career that is offered to 8 students and graduates

according to the curriculum stipulated in the Ministry Order nr. 4316/2008, and adapted through the optional and non-mandatory subjects to the specificity of each domain.

## Conclusions

- There is a national curriculum, consisting of a common part (compulsory subjects) and an optional part
- Number of hours/week: 20 for primary education, 25 for gymnasium, and 30 for lyceum
- Compulsory subjects cover 80% of the subjects in compulsory education and 70% in lyceum
- For each subject 75% of the time is dedicated to the common syllabus
- 8 domains of key competences: communication in Romanian and mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; basic mathematics, sciences and technology; information technology; social and civic; entrepreneurial; 'sensitivity and cultural expression'; learning how to learn
- Schoolbooks (manuals) are designed and evaluated based on syllabuses approved by the Ministry of education; teachers select and recommend to pupils the manuals they will use
- There is a Virtual School Library and an e-Learning School Platform
- There is a first evaluation at the end of the preparatory grade, of the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, communication development, and of the capabilities for learning. This starts the 'educational portfolio' of the child
- At the end of second grade: evaluation of basic competences: reading-writing, mathematics („The 3 Rs”)
- At the end of IV-th grade: a national-level evaluation „by sampling” of basic competences, after the model of international tests
- At the end of VI-th grade: two transdisciplinary tests: language and communication, and mathematics and sciences
- At the end of IX-th grade: national evaluation of all pupils: Romanian language and literature (written test); mother tongue (written); transdisciplinary mathematics and sciences (written); foreign language (written); computer usage (practical, during the school year); transdisciplinary civic and social competences (oral, during school year)
- At the end of lyceum: national bacalaureat with 5 tests: A) oral communication in Romanian; B) oral communication in mother tongue; C) communication in 2 foreign languages; D) digital competences; E) written tests in: Romanian language and literature; mother tongue; 2 tests specific for each profile (real, humanistic, technological, vocational)

## References

1. [^ Article 32 from the Romanian Constitution](#)
2. [^ There are 18300 churches in Romania, and just 425 hospitals](#)
3. [^ Over three million pupils start the new school year on Monday](#)
4. [^ Prep class mandatory from September: see what the children will learn](#)
5. [^ Law on Education](#)
6. [^ Religion - compulsory but optional](#)
7. [^ Bill on compulsory religion classes in high-school \*abandoned\*](#)
8. [^ Not allowed not to attend religion classes "Choice" of attending religion classes - de jure, but not de facto](#)