



Refugees Country Briefing

VENEZUELA

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This country briefing – especially developed to help with the evaluation of credentials of refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation – should give orientation on the education system in Venezuela in the light of recent political and economic developments in this country. It presents a systematised overview on its higher education system and links to the available information sources that are useful for the evaluation of qualifications of refugees coming from Venezuela, even in cases where candidates present insufficient or lack of documentation.

VENEZUELA



Source: CIA World Factbook

Location: Northern South America, bordering the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, between Colombia and Guyana.

Population: 31,304,016.

Ethnic groups: Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arab, German, African, indigenous people.

Demographic profile: Over the last 4 years, an estimated 4 million Venezuelans have migrated, often illegally, to Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Panama, Chile, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, or taken perilous journeys by raft to Aruba and Curacao. Asylum applications increased significantly in the US and Brazil in 2016 and 2017.

Languages: Spanish (official), numerous indigenous dialects.

Political situation

In the last years, Venezuela has been living through political turmoil, a severe economic crisis, hyperinflation, and food and medicine shortages.

The timepoint is in 1998 when Hugo Chávez, a former soldier, won the presidential elections. He ran the country until 2013. Chávez's presidency was characterized by his Bolivarian ideology and the concentration of power in the person of the president. It culminated with a referendum in 2009 that determined the end of presidential term limits.

During the Chavez presidency the country's poverty rate fell from 50% in 1997 (the year before his election) to 30% in 2012; social services, including food and housing subsidies and educational programs were expanded. This contributed to an increase in Chavez's popularity among the Venezuelan people. Chavez's policies were economically backed by the high price of oil in that period fostered also by the nationalization of many oil exploration companies. In fact, Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world: oil accounts are 95% of Venezuela's export earnings and 25% of its gross domestic product.

After Chavez's death, Nicolás Maduro, who pledged to follow the socialist revolution, narrowly won the election, acting until now as the President of Venezuela.

However, the economic scenario changed and Venezuela has been suffering the consequences of its overwhelming dependence on oil revenues. Global prices fell from \$111 per barrel in 2014 to a low of \$27 per barrel in 2016. The remaining foreign companies have been driven out and production has dropped to the lowest level in thirty years. The resulting financial crisis has prompted the government to print more money, which has led to hyperinflation and a collapse of the currency. It also means that the government cannot import enough food and medicine to meet their demand.

The economic crisis led to a humanitarian emergency. In 2016 the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation estimated that 85% of basic medicines were unavailable or difficult to obtain. A local university study estimated that 87% of the population do not have enough money to buy necessary food. As a consequence of all these factors many Venezuelans left the country, mainly to neighbouring countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador. It is estimated that more than 2.3 million of people have left since 2014, according to the United Nations, and many others have left whose cases authorities have not registered.

Since January 2019 Venezuela's political situation entered in a new phase. Juan Guaidó, president of the National Assembly took a public oath and declared himself *interim* president of the country. He has been granting national and international support and he becomes a real opposition to Maduro's presidency. There has been clashes and confrontations between Guaidó and Maduro's supporters and the country is now buried in a total uncertainty.

1. Education

The most immediate consequence of Venezuela's current situation on primary and secondary education is the high number of students and teachers who are dropping out of Venezuela's schools. There are no official statistics on student abandonment, but according to some national sources, it is close to 60%. There are many different direct reasons for this: the country does not envisage an organized school bus route and most of the parents do not have enough money to take their children to school; the parents leave the country looking for better living conditions and leave the children with their grandparents; children are forced to leave school to work to support financially their families.



There is also a significant number of teachers who do not give classes anymore. Since they earn the minimum wage they do not have enough money to maintain their families or simply to pay for transportation to go to school. For these reasons, they opt to leave Venezuela trying to find better living conditions or do parallel jobs that force them to miss sometimes classes. As for other citizens, they have to wait in long lines (during the time they are supposed to be giving classes) waiting to receive food given by the state. Furthermore, many school buildings have become completely degraded and dangerous for students, since they are not being repaired. For the same reason there have been also problems with the basic hygienic conditions of schools.

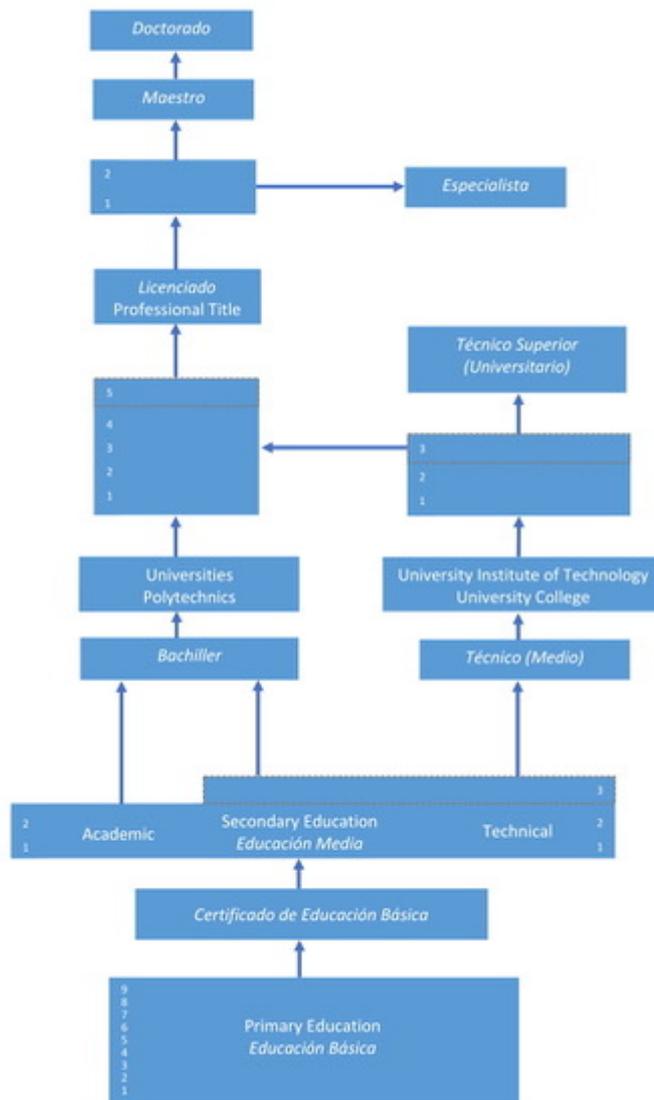
Higher education is subject to the same situation of crisis: professors are abandoning universities through academic leaves, sabbatical years, or simply using their vacations to try to continue their careers in other countries. Empty positions often go unfilled. Students are dropping out their studies in order to look for a job or to leave the country. Universities are closing professional tracks because students are not enrolling; the student absentee rate varies from 30% to 70%, depending on the university.

Along with the problems mentioned before, in higher education there is also criticism of attacks to institutions' autonomy by government manipulation. A recent report written by private and public universities published by the rectors of Universidad Metropolitana (UNIMET) and Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB), claims that the Venezuelan State "has deliberately manipulated norms, policies and practices in order to suppress academic freedom and university autonomy." In fact, since 2014 there have been intermittent strikes sometimes called by students and sometimes called by professors to protest against the political and economic situation of the country and its impact on the public higher education sector.

Notwithstanding, Maduro keeps announcing the creation of new institutions, one of the last ones is the *Universidad Experimental de Caracas*. Since 2000 the total number of new higher education establishments has risen to more than 30.



2. Education chart



3. Education System

The central government is the supreme authority in the educational field, therefore it is responsible for regulating, directing and inspecting education in the whole country. The control of pre-university education is under the responsibility of the Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación, (formerly known as Ministerio de Educación y Deportes) which is responsible for the planning, implementation, guidance, direction, coordination and evaluation of the national education system, both in the public and private sector. Education is compulsory for children from 6 to 15 years old.

Pre-primary

This includes the infant stage, for children from 0 to 3 years of age, and the preschool for children from 3 to 6 years old that includes at least one compulsory year.

Primary and secondary education

Primary Education (*Educación Básica*) and Secondary Education (*Educación Media*)

With the Ley Organica 1980 the primary education lasted 9 years and the secondary school lasted 2 or 3 years according to the path chosen by the student (*general* or *técnica*). With the introduction of the Ley Organica 2009, this structure was modified into 6 years of primary school and 5 years of secondary school.

Secondary education, for students between 12 and 17 years of age, has two options:

general: with a duration of five years, the completion of these studies leads to the title of *Bachiller*

technical: with a duration of six years, the completion of these studies leads to the title of *Técnico (Medio)*.

Even if the system has been modified with the Ley Organica 2009, some schools still use the previous one so it is still possible to receive qualifications awarded according to the previous system.

Guía de Colegios

<http://www.micolegio.com/guiacolegios/index.php?q=&estado=24>

Higher Education

Higher education includes vocational, undergraduate and postgraduate education.

The basic requirement for admission to a university or other higher education institution is the successful completion of secondary education. Students holding the *Bachiller* or *Técnico (Medio)* in any area are eligible to apply for university admission, although not in any field. In general, students are considered for admission only in a field related to the area of specialisation of their secondary studies. Admission to Venezuelan universities is regulated by the National University Entrance System (SNI).



Admission criteria to 1st cycle degree

The requirement for admission to a university or other higher education institution is the successful completion of secondary education *Bachiller*.

Admission criteria to 2nd cycle degree

Students are required either the *Licenciado* or a professional title.

Admission criteria to 3rd cycle degree

Students are required the *Magister*.

Types of qualification

Undergraduate Education:

Técnico Superior

- Short cycle degree
- Official duration of studies: 2-3 years (4-6 semesters)
- It is granted by a variety of institutions considered in Venezuela to be part of the higher education system, the institutes universitarios de tecnología (institutes of technology), colegios universitarios (university colleges) and institutes universitarios (university institutes). The *Técnico Superior* is also granted by a small number of universities
- It grants access to first cycle higher education programs in Venezuela.

Licenciado

- Official duration of studies: 4-5 years depending on the program
- Characterised by a high level of theory and an academic rather than an applied approach
- It grants access to second cycle higher education programs in Venezuela.

Título Profesional

- Official duration of studies: 5-6 years depending on the program
- Fields of architecture, dentistry, engineering, law, pharmacy, veterinary (5 years) and medicine (6 years)
- It qualifies the holder to practice the profession in question.

Postgraduate Education

Especialista

- It requires 1 year of study and the approval of a minimum number of 24 credits in the subjects or other postgraduate activities contained in the corresponding program and the elaboration of special coursework.

Magister

- Official duration of studies: 2 years
- It is offered in a wide range of subjects, both academic disciplines and professional areas
- Thesis is required
- The approval of a minimum number of 24 credits is required and the elaboration of coursework with a minimum number of 10 credits. Most Magister programs require submission of a thesis in addition to coursework
- Knowledge of a foreign language



- May grant access to the PhD in Venezuela.

Doctor

- It is the highest academic qualification
- It requires a minimum of 3 years of study
- It is equivalent to at least 45 credits + 30 credits of doctoral thesis
- Research-oriented
- It requires a good command of a foreign language.

Grading System

A number of different grading systems are used in Venezuelan higher education institutions. The following are those most frequently used.

- A scale from 0 to 9 is used mainly by *institutos universitarios* and some other technical institutions: *aprobado* (pass) is the range of marks between 5 (lowest passing) grades and 9 (highest) to 5 (lowest passing); however, a grade of 6 is required to continue to the next sequence or course. *Aplazado* (failure) is represented by grades from 0 to 4.
- A scale from 0 to 20 is used mainly by universities: *aprobado* (pass) is the range of marks between 10 (lowest passing) and 20 (highest); *aplazado* (failure) is between 0 and 9. An average grade of 11 or 12 is often required for graduation
- A scale from 0 to 5 may be used, with 5 being the highest and 3 being the lowest passing grade. Grades 0 or 1 are rarely issued; rather the transcript use instead *aplazado* (failure) or *diferido* (deferred to the next period).

Mark	Mark	Mark	Comment
8 - 9	16 - 20	4 - 5	Excelente (Excellent)
7	14 - 15	3 - 3,9	Bueno (Good)
5 - 6	10 - 13	3	Satisfactorio (Fair)
1 - 4	1 - 9	0 - 2	Deficiente (Fail)



Percentage	Comment
91 - 100	Excelente (Excellent)
81 - 90	Sobresaliente (Outstanding)
71 - 80	Distinguido (Very good)
61 - 70	Bueno (Good)
50 - 60	Satisfactorio (Average)
37 - 49	Deficiente (Fail)
25 - 36	Deficiente
13 - 24	Muy Deficiente (Low Fail)
1 - 12	Muy Deficiente

4. Education Institutions

Education is centralised. As mentioned before, the Government is the supreme authority in the educational field. The control of pre-university education is under the responsibility of the Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación.

In the Higher Education sector, the regulating texts and governing bodies are:

- the Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación Universitaria, Ciencia y Tecnología
- the National Council of Universities (Consejo Nacional de Universidades - CNU)
- the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Constitución Nacional)
- the Law of Universities (Ley de Universidades)
- the Regulation of Institutions and University Colleges (Reglamento de Instituciones y Colegios Universitario)
- the Organic Law of Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación).

In Venezuela there are:

- Autonomous State Universities (Universidades Nacionales Autónomas)
- Experimental Universities (Universidades Experimentales)
- Private Universities (Universidades privadas)
- Institutes and Colleges (Institutos y Colegios Universitarios).

A list of recognized higher education institutions is available on the following website:

<http://loeu.opsu.gob.ve/vistas/index.php>



5. Certification / Documentation

National Format norms and composition of the file

The diploma of **Bachiller** or **Educación Media General** is characterised by the following elements:

- It is issued only in Spanish
- It contains a picture of Simon Bolivar on the left hand-side of the paper
- It is a horizontal vector certificate
- It always contains the number of *cédula de identidad*
- Before 2007 on the Degree certificate there was reported the old name of the Ministry of Education: Ministerio de Educación y Deportes. After 2007 on the certificate there is the name of the actual Ministry: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación.

The **Higher education diplomas** are characterised by the following elements:

- They are issued in Spanish
- Some universities have their own system to verify the authenticity
- They usually contain the logo and name of the University
- They always contain the number of *cédula de identidad*.

6. Useful sources and links

ENIC-NARIC networks website

<http://www.enic-naric.net/latin-america-and-the-caribbean.aspx?country=Bolivarian+Republic+of+Venezuela&c=188>

Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación:

<http://www.me.gob.ve/> (currently not working)

Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación Universitaria, Ciencia y Tecnología:

<http://www.mppeuct.gob.ve/>

Consejo Consultivo Nacional de Postgrado

<http://www.ccnpg.gob.ve/>

UNESCO – World Higher Education Database

<http://www.whed.net/home.php>

Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos

<https://www.oei.es/historico/quipu/venezuela/index.html>

Ley Orgánica de Educación

<http://www.defiendete.org/html/de-interes/LEYES%20DE%20VENEZUELA/LEYES%20DE%20VENEZUELA%20II/LEY%20ORGANICA%20DE%20EDUCACION.htm>



Available resources

Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación

<http://me.gob.ve> (currently not working)

Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación Universitaria, Ciencia y Tecnología:

<https://www.mppeuct.gob.ve>

Consejo Nacional de Universidades, Ofical de Planificación del Sector Universitario Libro de Oportunidades de Estudio

<http://loeu.opsu.gob.ve/> (sometimes does not work)

Centro de Investigaciones Culturales y Educativas (CICE)

<https://www.cice.org.ve/descargas/Sistema%20Educativo%20Venezolano.pdf>

Educación Superior en Venezuela – Informe 2002 A IESALC – UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001315/131594s.pdf>

Universidad Fermín Toro Venezuela

<https://www.slideshare.net/giangomezcelis/la-educacion-superior-en-venezuela-77731049>

7. Verification sources

Higher Education

As mentioned before, some Universities have their own system to verify the authenticity of Diplomas (filling out the student's data or through a contact e-mail offered by the website). To check the possibility of verifying the documents, one should visit the university website. Some examples are given below:

Universidad Dr. Rafael Belloso Chacín (Venezuela)

<https://www.urbe.edu/portal-empresas/>

Universidad Simón Bolívar

<http://graduados.dii.usb.ve/>

Universidad Metropolitana

<http://www.unimet.edu.ve/direccion-de-registro-y-control-de-estudios-sede-secretaria/>

Universidad Monteavila

<http://uma.terna.net/ComprobarConstancia.php>

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