



Vocational education and training

Policy briefs 2023

GREECE



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1. Introduction

This VET policy brief produced by Cedefop presents a snapshot of vocational education and training policy developments in Greece between 2020 and the beginning of 2023. It presents the context and the challenges the country faces, a selection of the latest VET-related statistics, as well as the national priorities between 2025 and 2030 identified in [Greek national implementation plan](#). This VET policy brief provides information from Cedefop monitoring and analysis on the implementation of the [Council Recommendation on VET](#) and [Osnabrück Declaration](#). It offers stakeholders a regular source of information on VET policy developments that could be used for future policy making.

2. National VET context and challenges

2.1 National VET context

Vocational education and training (VET) in Greece is regulated centrally, by the State, with the education and labour ministries being the main authorities in charge of IVET and CVET provision. The National Organisation for Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP), supervised by the education ministry, is a key VET stakeholder, mandated with the certification of non-formal and informal learning and vocational guidance counsellors. Social partners play an advisory role.

Vocational upper secondary programmes (EQF 4) are the main formal initial VET (IVET) route. In 2016, the [National strategic framework for the upgrade of VET and apprenticeship](#) introduced the post-secondary apprenticeship class, which is offered by [vocational upper secondary VET schools \(EPAL\)](#). The EPAL apprenticeship class is a wholly work-based learning programme; its study programme embodies occupation-specific courses and is divided into 203 teaching hours of laboratory courses (16.87%) and about 1 000 hours (83.13%) of work-placed learning in companies. At post-secondary level, IVET at EQF level 5 is offered by [vocational training institutes \(IEKs\)](#).

Approved in December 2020, Law 4763 has been the main development shaping the Greek VET system and [reforming its governance](#). The General Secretariat for VET, Lifelong Learning (LLL) and Youth became the body responsible for designing, implementing, coordinating and monitoring VET and LLL policies. The law has set up the Central council for VET as the main advisory body at national level; the Council comprises representatives from the education and other relevant ministries, social partners and chambers. At the regional level, councils were established linking VET with the labour market. The law also provides for the certification of non-formal and informal learning.

2.2 Challenges

The main challenges that the country faced include high youth unemployment, relevance of VET provision to the labour market needs (partly due to low participation of social

partners in governance), and low quality of VET provision resulting in low VET attractiveness and outdated infrastructure, especially regarding digital equipment (European Commission, 2023).

Although Greece has one of the highest rates of university graduates and one of the lowest early school leaving rates in the EU-27, the country also presents one of the highest youth unemployment rates. More precisely, the unemployment rate of young Greeks aged 20-34 years old was 18.9% in 2022, among the highest in the EU, against the EU average of 8.9% (Cedefop, 2024). This can be largely attributed to problems in school- to-work transition, as higher education and VET graduates face problems in accessing the labour market and had limited exposure to work-based learning during their studies (European Commission, 2023).

Another challenge for the country was the lack of a comprehensive skills anticipation mechanism, which would allow for evidence-based policy making to increase the labour market relevance of VET. Skills mismatches remain high, and the skills supply needs to meet labour market demand better (European Commission, 2023). This problematic labour market relevance is also the result of fragmented and often overlapping governance and a complex legal system. The social perception of VET is low, favouring general education, which results in only about one-third of the upper secondary learners being enrolled in IVET (Cedefop, 2024).

Greece is below the EU-27 average in automation and digitalisation (European Commission, 2023), and VET is no exception in this respect.

2.3 National VET priorities

In 2022, Greece prepared its national implementation plan in VET in response to the [2020 Council Recommendation on VET](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#). It identified the following priorities:

- (a) improving labour market relevance of VET;
- (b) improving the quality of VET provision;
- (c) investing in the digital transformation of VET and laboratory equipment upgrade.

These priorities are also reflected in the Greek VET-related policy framework which is mainly set in [the 2022-24 Strategic plan for vocational education and training, lifelong learning and youth](#), approved in 2022.

3. Main policy developments between 2020 and 2023

3.1 Improving the labour market relevance of VET

Greece continues working towards improving the labour market relevance of VET. In 2021, the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (EIEAD), the competent authority for developing a [skill needs forecasting system](#), published its sixth annual report about

Work and employment in Greece. The report covered the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for the Greek economy and comparative data on education, skills level and labour demand and supply. It also included statistical data for the digital economy and dynamics/general trends in occupations and skills, VET, immigration and labour relations, and trends for specific social groups in the Greek labour market. It pointed out that NEETs is a target group in need of special attention. Previous reports have been used for the development of occupational profiles, curricula and as the basis for the selection of apprenticeship specialties. In 2022, EIEAD and its task to develop a methodology for skill forecasting, was integrated into the ministry of labour.

The reform of VET and apprenticeship, a flagship reform included in the Greek National recovery and resilience plan (2021), has as its main element updating, upgrading and aligning VET curricula with labour market needs. In a similar line of action, in 2022, the [updating of occupational profiles](#) restarted, [a key element in modernising the VET offer and delivery](#). EOPPEP, in cooperation with the national social partner institutional bodies, decided to continue shared funding projects related to updating occupational profiles: this work is coordinated by an employer organisation, the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftspersons and Merchants (*IME GSEVEE*). A mapping study was carried out, which identified outdated occupational profiles and occupations where new profiles are necessary, and proposed a methodology for updating or developing occupational profiles. The study also found that some occupational profiles had been updated by the social partners.

Since 2016, Greece has developed work-based learning in VET, and more specifically [apprenticeship](#). The [2022-24 Strategic plan for vocational education and training, lifelong learning and youth](#) set the aim by 2025 to reinforce apprenticeship schemes of the [Post-secondary year - Apprenticeship Class](#), and paid internship schemes of [IEKs](#). The former started implementation with 50% of the programme taking place on the job and some classes in school laboratories. Paid internship in IEKs started in 2022, with a ministerial decree, and its continuation has been confirmed until 2025.

3.2 Improving the quality of VET provision

Greece has taken several measures to improve the quality of its VET system, ranging from the introduction of an action plan for VET reform to the establishment of VET education institutions that support innovation and excellence, mainly at upper secondary and post-secondary levels.

[The 2022-24 Strategic plan for vocational education and training, lifelong learning and youth](#) could be regarded as the systematic effort to ensure optimal use of EU funding and a roadmap for the envisaged reform of the VET system. In 2022, the plan was approved by the Greek parliament and its implementation began. The plan earmarks EUR 5 million for the assessment and quality assurance of all institutions involved in VET provision.

In 2022, the establishment and operation of [Model EPALs, thematic and experimental IEKs and vocational training schools](#) continued as a result of the implementation of Law

4673/2020: 19 model EPALs began their operation in the academic year 2022/23. The Model EPALs were established to strengthen the autonomy and quality of VET institutions by establishing links with the regional and local labour market and strengthening the role of the social partners. They will potentially pilot innovative curricula and study programmes and implement innovative models of operation and VET teacher continuous professional development. In 2022, the education ministry announced the establishment of five thematic and 10 experimental IEKs by 2025.

Another measure aiming to improve the quality of VET provision is the [certification of post-secondary non-formal IVET and CVET teachers](#); this has been systematised since 2020, though it was a regulatory requirement before this period. In 2020, a committee of experts on lifelong learning developed recommendations concerning the update of certification procedures for adult trainers. In 2022, 19 168 adult educators were enrolled in EOPPEP's national adult educator registry.

In 2022, EOPPEP, in its capacity as national reference point of the [European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training \(EQAVET\)](#), developed [a quality assurance methodology for post-secondary IVET](#). It is planned to pilot it in the following specialties: air transport services officer; communication and information technologies in the travel industry (V.I.C.T. travel); and digital marketing specialist in e-commerce.

3.3 VET digital transformation and laboratory equipment investment

The [Digital transformation of VET and lifelong learning](#) and provision of state-of-the-art equipment, are among the objectives set by the [2022-24 Strategic plan for VET, lifelong learning and youth](#). It is planned to develop a digital platform for VET that would support governance and distance education through two sub-systems. It is also planned to modernise 117 laboratory centres to current technological standards. These centres are where practical training is conducted for EPALs, IEKs, vocational training schools and post-secondary apprenticeship class learners. In 2022, the digitalisation of EOPPEP began.

4. Statistical information in relation to EU targets

The employment prospects of Greek IVET graduates cannot be considered favourable. In 2022, the employment rate of recent IVET graduates was 59.8%, which is below the EU average of 79.7% and below the target of 82% set by the [Council Recommendation on VET](#) by 2025.

For IVET graduates (aged 20 to 34) with work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education, the 35.7% in Greece is below the EU average of 60.1%. However, this reflects a significant increase of 17.1 percentage points from 18.6% in 2021.

The participation of adults (aged 25 to 64) in training was 15.1% in 2022, below the EU-27 average of 39.5%.

Greece performs very well in relation to early school leaving. With the rate of early leavers from education and training of 4.1% in 2022, the country has achieved the EU-27 target of less than 9% by 2030, set in the [European Education Area strategic framework](#). At the same time, the percentage of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) was high at 15.4% in 2022, above the EU-27 target of 9% for 2030.

Table 1. **European vocational education and training policy dashboard: Greece**

Type of indicator ⁽¹⁾	Indicator	Last available year	EL	EU-27	Policy Document	EU target (year)
VET for developing a lifelong learning culture						
Progress	Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%)*	2022	15.1 ^u	39.5	Skills Agenda	50% (2025)
					Council Resolution on EEA	47% (2025)
					ESPR Action Plan	60% (2030)
Progress	Low-qualified adults with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%)	2022	4.5 ^u	18.4	Skills Agenda	30% (2025)
Progress	Unemployed adults with a learning experience in the last 4 weeks (%)	2022	5	13.2	Skills Agenda	20% (2025)
Context	Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	2022	66.3	74.6	ESPR Action Plan	78% (2030)
Context	Early leavers from education and training (%)	2022	4.1	9.6	Council Resolution on EEA	<9% (2030)
Context	NEET rate for 15-29 year-olds (%)	2022	15.4	11.7	ESPR Action Plan	9% (2030)
VET for Resilience, transitions, sustainability and excellence						
Progress	Adults (16-74 year-olds) with at least basic digital skills (%)	2021	52.5	53.9	Skills Agenda	70% (2025)
					ESPR Action Plan	80% (2030)
Progress	Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20--34- year-olds) (%)	2022	59.8	79.7	Council Rec o VET	82% (2025)
Progress	Recent IVET graduates (20--34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%)	2022	35.7	60.1	Council Rec on VET	60% (2025)
					Council Resolution on EEA	
Context	25-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	2022	45.2	42	Council Resolution on EEA	45% (2025)
Context	Gender employment gap (%)	2022	21	10.7	ESPR Action Plan	To be halved (2030)
Context	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (1000s)	2022	2 722	95 284	ESPR Action Plan	15 million decrease (2030)
Context	Employed ICT specialists (1000s)	2022	103.1	9 370.2 ^e	2030 Digital Compass	20 million, with convergence between men and women (2030)
VET for the European Education Area						

(1) [Definitions](#) on the type of indicators are available.

Progress	Learners in IVET who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%) **	2021	1.7	2.1 ^{dV}	Council Rec on VET Skills Agenda	8% (2025)
Context	Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	2021	0.8	1.2		

Available flags: d-definition differs, e – estimated, u-low reliability, V-Cedefop estimate. Special value: - not available

* Eurostat data (Adult Education Survey, special calculation excluding guided on-the-job training)

** Provisional estimates affected by the Covid19 pandemic

Source: Cedefop. [European VET policy dashboard](#)

5. Conclusion

Greece has taken steps to improve VET labour market relevance and quality and to modernise it in terms of digitalisation and infrastructure.

The country has made progress in improving the labour market relevance of VET by moving towards a comprehensive labour market diagnosis mechanism, [improving skills anticipation and forecasting](#). Work-based learning has gained strong impetus since the introduction of the post-secondary apprenticeship class for upper secondary VET graduates and the internship for post-secondary IVET learners. [Occupational standards were developed and will constantly be updated](#); new ones will be developed according to the economic priorities of the country. A comprehensive skills forecasting mechanism, coupled with occupational standards and curricula aligned to the labour market needs, would substantially improve VET graduate education and employment outcomes (European Commission, 2023).

Improving the quality of VET provision is another area in which steps have been taken. [The 2022-24 Strategic plan for vocational education and training, lifelong learning and youth](#) optimises VET funding and serves as an action plan for the major reform of the VET system, which is explicitly mentioned as a goal of the country's national recovery and resilience plan. The establishment of [Model upper secondary VET schools alongside thematic and experimental vocational training institutes](#) is a step towards improving the quality of VET provision. However, these schools have not yet produced any graduates and there is no information on student satisfaction rates. The country could improve VET quality by further integrating green skills in curricula and by improving lifelong guidance and counselling (European Commission, 2022).

Greece has started implementing its planned investments in [digitalisation of VET and LLL](#), including the digitalisation of EOPPEP, started in 2022. The country has earmarked around EUR 113 million for the infrastructure/digital upgrade of 117 laboratory centres which will be used by upper and post-secondary IVET learners by 2025. The efficient implementation of this project could increase VET attractiveness and, consequently, participation in VET (European Commission, 2022).

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