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Education and Training Monitor 2018

Greece
Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2018 includes twenty-eight individual country reports. It builds on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence to present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy measures in each EU Member State, with a focus on developments since mid-2017. It therefore complements other sources of information which offer descriptions of national education and training systems.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 briefly identifies the main strengths and challenges of the country’s education and training system. Section 3 looks at investment in education and training. Section 4 focuses on citizenship education. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise school education. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and training, while section 8 covers adult learning. The manuscript was completed on 1 September 2018. Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)
1. Key indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education and training 2020 benchmarks</th>
<th>Greece</th>
<th>EU average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)</td>
<td>37.2% (2014) 43.7% (2017)</td>
<td>37.9% (2014) 39.9% (2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)</td>
<td>76.3% (2012) 79.8% (2015)</td>
<td>94.2% (2012) 95.3% (2015)</td>
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<td>Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
<td>22.6% (2012) 27.3% (2015)</td>
<td>17.8% (2012) 19.7% (2015)</td>
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<td>Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)</td>
<td>ISCED 3-8 (total)</td>
<td>44.3% (2014) 52.0% (2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)</td>
<td>ISCED 0-8 (total)</td>
<td>3.2% (2014) 4.5% (2017)</td>
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<td>Learning mobility</td>
<td>Degree mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)</td>
<td>: 11.1% (2015) : 3.1% (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)</td>
<td>: 2.2% (2015) : 7.6% (2016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Other contextual indicators | | |
| Education investment | Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP | 4.3% (2014) 4.3% (2015) 4.9% (2016) 4.7% (2016) |
| Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34) | Native-born | 41.3% (2014) 47.1% (2017) 38.6% (2014) 40.6% (2017) |
| Foreign-born | 8.4% (2014) 11.9% (2017) 34.3% (2014) 36.3% (2017) |
| Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year) | ISCED 3-4 | 38.8% (2014) 44.8% (2017) 70.7% (2014) 74.1% (2017) |
| ISCED 5-8 | 47.4% (2014) 55.8% (2017) 80.5% (2014) 84.9% (2017) |

Sources: Eurostat (see section 10 for more details); OECD (PISA).

Notes: data refer to weighted EU averages, covering different numbers of Member States depending on the source; d = definition differs, 12 = 2012, 13 = 2013, 15 = 2015, 16 = 2016. On credit graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by DG EAC on the available countries; on degree graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by JRC over Eurostat and OECD data. Further information can be found in the relevant section of Volume 1 (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor).

Figure 1. Position in relation to strongest (outer ring) and weakest performers (centre)

Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2017, UOE 2016) and OECD (PISA 2015). Note: all scores are set between a maximum (the strongest performers represented by the outer ring) and a minimum (the weakest performers represented by the centre of the figure).
2. Highlights

- Education funding is low. Better monitoring of spending could help improve efficiency.
- Compulsory pre-primary education will be extended. Affordable childcare for under 3 year-olds remains scarce, resulting in declining participation and increased reliance on informal childminding.
- Citizenship education is well covered in general education but less present in vocational education.
- Tertiary educational attainment has increased further and is well above the EU average. Despite improvements, recent tertiary education graduates still face the lowest employability in the EU, together with the highest overqualification in their jobs.
- Provision of vocational education and training was strengthened by the expanded apprenticeship system, while adult learning remains insufficient, especially the training of employees in companies.

3. Investing in education and training

Spending on education remains low. At 4.3% in 2016, education expenditure as a share of GDP remained the same as in 2015 and below the EU average (4.7%). Education expenditure has picked up somewhat in real terms, reflecting GDP growth. Since 2010, cuts were proportionally higher in secondary and — to a lesser extent — tertiary education than in primary education. Private spending, which accounts for more than one third of overall spending on education, has between 2013 and 2015 considerably decreased for books, stationery and other school material as well as for private childminding. Spending on tutorial schools (frontistiria) and private tuition remains high and spending on studies abroad increased substantially (31.7%) (KANEP, 2018).

According to Eurostat, 89% of Greek households — more than in any other EU country — reported difficulties in paying for formal education\(^1\).

Spending on education is inefficient. Overall spending on education, which was severely affected by the economic crisis, is low. There appears to be room for more efficiency including on the distribution of administrative tasks for teachers and school directors (OECD 2018). Consistent data collection and consolidated budgets would render monitoring expenditure more effective (OECD, 2018). To tackle the problem, the Greek statistical authority ELSTAT has signed a memorandum with the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs\(^2\).

4. Citizenship education

Citizenship education is part of general education but less present in vocational education. Citizenship education is integrated into a range of subjects such as social sciences, languages and literature, ethics/religious and physical education in primary and general secondary school. It is also a separate subject in primary, lower and upper secondary education, with a significant amount of time allocated to it (European Commission, 2018a). In addition, it is covered during the thematic week when teachers design their own programmes according to the Ministry of Education’s guidelines. In initial vocational education and training (IVET), citizenship education is provided to a much lesser extent both as integrated and separate content (European Commission, 2018a).

The curriculum covers a broad range of objectives. Emotional awareness is primarily conveyed through communicating and listening. Responsibility and autonomy is already stressed at primary level and critical thinking extends to initial VET (European Commission, 2018a). Many more Greek students than their peers in OECD countries feel that their teachers give them the opportunity to express themselves (OECD, 2017). Respecting other cultures and religions is also

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\(^1\) The 2018 publication refers to data from 2016.

\(^2\) Henceforth the Ministry of Education.
part of the citizenship education curriculum whereas developing a collective identity is covered mainly in the subject of religious education.

The role and format for religious education at school are subject to debate. After the Greek Constitutional Court repealed changes to the religious education curriculum in April 2018, a public debate ensued over the role of the church in education. The Greek constitution stipulates that a national and religious conscience should be developed and defines Orthodox Christianity as the principal religion.

5. Modernising school education

Early school leaving decreased further. At 6% in 2017, the early school leaving (ESL) rate was well below the EU average of 10.6%. There is a significant gap between the very low ESL occurrence in Greek cities (3.8%) and a higher rate in rural areas (11.2%).

Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) remains lower than in most EU countries. In 2016, 79.8% of 4-6 year-olds attended ECEC facilities compared to the EU average of 95.3%. Participation in ECEC for under 3 year-olds declined further from already very low levels and stands at 8.9% (2016), well below the EU average (32.9%), making Greece one of the countries with the highest reliance on informal care (OECD, 2017b). In 2017, around 40 000 children from low-income families did not receive vouchers for participation in ECEC (EETAA, 2017a, b), suggesting a considerable gap between demand and supply both within and beyond the group eligible for subsidies. To reduce the gap, municipalities can apply for financial support from the government to create additional ECEC facilities (EETAA, 2018).

Compulsory pre-primary education will be extended by one year. Mandatory enrolment of 4 year-olds in kindergarten is being gradually introduced from 2018/2019, to be applicable in all municipalities after a three-year adjustment period. It remains to be seen how implementation will proceed given the shortage of places in ECEC.

Refugee education is becoming an integral part of the system. In 2017, 23 kindergartens were opened in refugee centres, including on the islands of Lesvos, Kos, Samos, Chios and Leros. Seconded permanent teachers worked as refugee education coordinators in all major refugee accommodation centres and monitored school attendance of children in residential neighbourhoods. Reception classes in primary and secondary schools allowed 5 291 children to attend mainstream schools in 2017/2018, while preparatory afternoon classes provided schooling for another 2 025 children. Two new preparatory afternoon classes for primary school children were opened on Lesvos. Furthermore, the working group for the integration of refugees within the Ministry of Education has been upgraded into an independent department. However, despite these major efforts, the challenge remains substantial and long term, especially on the islands where most refugee children still lack access to education.

Education professionals are missing an overall strategy for education. A survey among 1 248 educators and administrators from all education levels conducted in Spring 2018 revealed that a lack of overall strategic planning is considered the biggest problem of the Greek education system (71%), followed by underfunding (66%) and lack of evaluation (44%) (Global Link, 2018). Furthermore, 76% of respondents think that teachers should be evaluated, while opinion on whether evaluation results should be linked to salary development is divided (45% for vs 48% against). While some issues are clearly linked to the economic crisis, such as poor infrastructure (92%) or cancelled classes due to lack of personnel (78%), others are structural, such as the need for better organisation in classrooms (80%) and the overload of teaching content (66%).

Substitute teachers shoulder a large part of school education. Non-permanent substitute teachers continue, at 14% of the teacher population (OECD, 2018), to be disproportionately prevalent in Greek schools. Their contracts, which are limited to the duration of the school year and non-renewable for the same school, undermine continuity and sustainability for students and schools and impede on these teachers’ professional development and personal lives. Despite the

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3 Eurostat data.
4 Of the 58 000 estimated migrants, including refugees currently in Greece, 38% or 22 000 are children (UNHCR, 2018).
5 In 2015/16.
precarious status, in 2018 more than 120,000 candidates applied for around 20,000 available posts for 2018/2019. Reform options for substitute teachers presented by the OECD in its recent review on education in Greece include: (i) creation of a specific employment status that offers stable, though not lifelong, employment; or (ii) extending the induction period and adding a contractual period prior to obtaining public official status (OECD, 2018).

**Special needs education faces multiple challenges.** People with special needs in Greece are more likely than the EU average to be limited to lower secondary education attainment (42.8% vs 34.8%). Although the participation rate of people with special needs decreases at age 16+ across Europe, it is significantly lower in Greece, with 14.9% graduating from upper secondary and post-secondary education (ISCED 3-4) vs the EU average of 21.3% (KANEPE, 2018). In 2017/2018, of the 75,680 students who were officially recognised as requiring special needs education, most were included in mainstream schools, with only 10,883 educated in special needs schools. New Centres for Educational and Counselling Support are foreseen by law 4547/2018 with more staff. They are expected to shorten currently long waiting times — up to 3 years — for needs diagnosis, which leave many children without timely therapeutic and/or learning support. Furthermore, two thirds of special needs teachers have substitute contracts, so the continuity of support so important for this vulnerable group is not available.

**Box 1: Changes in school education for teachers and pupils**

**Law 4521/2018** reduces the number of subjects tested in school leaving exams in upper secondary from 12 to 4 (modern Greek, mathematics, history and biology) as of 2019. For the remaining subjects, assessment during the school year will count towards the final grade. The law also introduces creative projects in various subjects in upper secondary. The changes are intended to scale up upper secondary education from being merely a preparation for university. In addition, provision of primary and secondary education — including VET — will be significantly expanded in correctional facilities. Finally, several teacher subject specialisations are merged, reducing the overall number from 164 to 89.

**Law 4547/2018** reorganises support structures in schools and introduces mandatory evaluation of education executives (such as regional education directors, directors of educational support centres, school directors) and self-evaluation by schools. The existing — but partly scattered and/or overlapping resources — will be streamlined into fewer bodies, which will provide support for schools, in areas such as pedagogy, implementation of curricula and training and diagnoses for learning support. In the new support system, school advisors are removed from the front line within schools and their role is taken over by educational coordinators placed in centres. At the same time, schools are expected to exert greater autonomy by carrying out self-evaluation. The evaluation measures introduced for education executives are a step towards more accountability, which is largely lacking in the Greek education system (Dimitropoulos, Kindi, 2017). However, the law also abolishes teacher evaluation (which had in practice been frozen since 2014), going against the OECD’s recommendation for an overall evaluation framework for teachers, linked to their career development (OECD, 2018).

**More than half of the Greek population lacks basic digital skills.** At 46% in 2017, the share of Greeks reported to have at least basic digital skills has not progressed since 2016, putting the country in 25th position within the EU. Greece has the fewest ICT specialists (1.4%6) among the EU-28 despite an anticipated need for advanced digital skills in the EU labour markets (Cedefop, 2016). Through the European Social Fund (ESF), IT infrastructure has been provided at many schools, but digital education is still insufficiently integrated into the curriculum. On science education, a striking 50% of Greek 15 year-old students report they spend little or no time doing practical experiments in the lab (OECD, 2016).

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6 Of the working population.
Modernising higher education

Tertiary educational attainment has risen further. At 43.7% in 2017, Greece is well above the EU average (39.9%) and the national target (40%). This reflects one of the steepest increases (8.8 percentage points) in the EU over the last 5 years. The economic crisis, which may have caused people to stay longer in education, can only partly explain the increase. The most rapid expansion of higher education (HE) took place around the millennium and demographic changes resulted in a decreasing age cohort. Within Greece, big regional differences in tertiary attainment exist, ranging from over 50% in Attica (which includes Athens) to 25% in the southern Aegean. Foreign-born students are much less likely to obtain HE degrees than native-born students (11.9% vs 47.1%) — the biggest gap in the EU.

Employment rates of recent graduates further increased but continue to be the lowest in the EU. Due to the incipient economic recovery, it has become somewhat less difficult for recent graduates to find jobs in Greece. For tertiary graduates (ISCED 5-8), employment rates grew by 8.4 percentage points over the period 2014-2017 and stood at 55.8% in 2017, but were still well below the EU average (84.9%). Among non-tertiary secondary graduates, 44.8% were employed in 2017 vs. 74.1% in the EU, an increase of 6 percentage points over the previous 3 years.

Skills mismatches are the highest in the EU. At 43.3% in 2016, the share of tertiary graduates working in jobs that do not require a higher education qualification was higher than elsewhere in the EU (EU average: 26%) (Cedefop, 2018). Crop production, retail trade, services and state administration are the four main employment sub-sectors in Greece and the most new jobs were created in the catering sector between 2014 and 2017 (National Institute of Labour, 2018). While the difficult macro-economic environment partly explains the high degree of mismatches, there is also a need to create stronger links between labour market needs and education. This includes well-functioning skills forecasting which feeds into VET and university curricula (OECD, 2017a). According to a recent study, main policy challenges include: to increase the attractiveness of VET; to reorientate from preparing graduates for the public sector to towards the private sector; and to upskill the unemployed (IOBE, 2018).

Study preferences of Greek students resemble those of their European peers. Most students graduate with a first degree in business, administration and law or engineering (both 19%) followed by arts and humanities (15%) and natural sciences (7% of in 2016). At master’s level, more degrees are awarded in business, administration and law (28.9%) than any other field,


Second only to Austria, where the increase is, however, due to statistical reclassification.

The best performer is the United Kingdom at 17%, followed by France (10%) and Germany (6%) (Eurostat data 2016).
10.2% of master’s degrees are awarded in natural sciences, above the EU average of 7.1%. However, the participation rate in master’s programmes is, at 8.1%, the lowest in the EU (European Commission, 2018c). At PhD level, with a participation rate of 3.5%9 (European Commission, 2018c), the share of natural sciences graduates is, at 11%, among the lowest in the EU (26%)10 while most PhDs (26.5%) are awarded in health and welfare.

![Figure 3. Distribution of Greek tertiary graduates by programme orientation (2016)](image)

Source: Eurostat. Online data code: educ_uoe_grad02.

**The higher education landscape is being re-mapped.** The Ministry of Education’s intention to upgrade technical education institutions (TEIs) — which focus on applied sciences, technology and art — into universities, entails several mergers of HE institutions. ADIP, the agency for quality assurance in HE, has pointed out the need for a strategic plan and comprehensive prior evaluation of the potential effects of this reform. The new University of West Attica was established in 2018 by merging the TEIs of Athens and Piraeus. As of 2019/2020 the TEI of Epirus will become part of the University of Ioannina, while the TEIs of Central Macedonia and of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace are to be merged with the International Hellenic University.

**Strong outward mobility continues.** With more than 30 000 students enrolled in a degree programme abroad in 2014/2015, Greece is fourth in the EU for outward degree mobility in absolute numbers after Germany, France and Italy (European Commission, 2018c). This student mobility is mainly privately funded since grants and loans do not extend to studies abroad apart from limited credit mobility within recognised short-term mobility schemes such as Erasmus+ (European Commission, 2018c).

**Resources are strained in the higher education sector.** After Croatia, Greece has the second highest teacher-student ratio in the EU, with one professor serving 44 students (EU average: 1 to 15). The net loss of professors since 2010 due to non-replacement of retirees is estimated at around 30%. The share of academic staff under 35 is, at 3.3%, the smallest in the EU, while

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9 2014/2015 data.
10 Preceded by Slovenia and Romania, with the leaders being France at 44.5% and Spain at 32%.
more than 50 % are aged 50 and above (European Commission, 2018c). For the 2018/2019 academic year, the Ministry of Education announced an increase of 4 000 places for first-year students (76 692 places overall) compared to 2017, as well as EUR 34 million in additional funding. Funded by the ESF, 1 500 young researchers will be hired as lecturers as of the 2018/2019 academic year. They are expected to teach up to three classes to acquire teaching experience. However, the positive effect on student-teacher ratio might be offset by an increasing lack of space at many higher education institutions (HEIs).

**Violence at HEIs is a persistent problem.** Findings by the University of Macedonia reported in the press, indicate that 358 violent incidents took place from 2011 to 2017 at HEIs in Greece, including obstruction of activities, trespassing, threats, attacks and drug dealing. The report, which draws on print media articles, is inconclusive on the effect of abolishing ‘university asylum’ (which allows law enforcement presence inside universities only by permission of the University Senate) in 2011 and its reintroduction in August 2017. While violent incidents rose sharply in 2012, numbers later dropped, especially in the last 3 years covered by the study. To address the problem of delinquency at HEIs, the Ministry of Education set up a special ‘Committee for the Study of Academic Freedom and Peace Issues’. The committee’s recommendations were published in September 2018.

**7. Modernising vocational education and training**

**The national strategic framework for VET is in place but ensuring the attractiveness of the sector remains a challenge.** The proportion of students (at ISCED 3) in upper secondary VET in Greece remains stable at around 30 %, but is far below the EU average (47.3 %). The employment rate of recent VET graduates remains much lower than the EU average of 76.6 %, and well below the total employment rate in Greece (56.2 %), despite having increased to 40.7 % in 2016. Common quality frameworks for apprenticeships and VET curricula were established in 2017. Furthermore, two bodies support the national strategic framework, namely: (i) the National Education and Human Resource Development Council, which provides advice and scientific guidance for policy making, including effective linking to the labour market; and (ii) the new National VET Committee, which is monitoring the framework’s actions.

**Greece has continued to expand its apprenticeship system.** An optional fourth apprenticeship year for upper secondary VET graduates was introduced with the support of the ESF. Following a pilot phase, this option was launched in March 2017 for 1 200 apprentices in the public and private sector in seven specialisations. Nine more specialisations were added in October 2017 for the second cycle, involving 3 450 apprentices. This nine-month programme gives access to EQF level 5 qualifications. For the academic year 2018-2019 five new specialisations are introduced. There is also a dual VET scheme at upper secondary level implemented by OAED (the Greek Public Employment Service) in its vocational schools, with over 6 000 apprentices in 2017.

**Box 2: ESF support for secondary VET schools**

The ESF-funded ‘New beginning for EPAL’ programme (‘EPALS’ are vocational upper secondary schools), launched in October 2017, aims to improve the efficiency of VET provision and reduce the dropouts rates in upper secondary VET schools. Among other things, it offers pedagogical support in schools to improve learners’ literacy and numeracy competences and psychological support to assist their smooth integration into school. The programme is currently being piloted in nine EPALs and is expected to expand to all such institutions (approximately 400) in the 2018/2019 academic year. An overall budget of EUR 26.3 million has been earmarked for a four-year implementation period.


**8. Promoting adult learning**

**Despite the need for upskilling, participation in adult learning remains very low.** At 4.5 % in 2017, participation in adult learning was well below the EU average (10.9 %). According to the Continuing Vocational Training Survey, in 2015, 21.7 % of Greek companies provided vocational
training to their employees (EU average: 72.6 %) and only 18.5 % of employees participated in this training (EU average: 40.8 %) — the lowest rate in the EU. Most Greek companies consider customer service and teamwork skills as the most important for business development. To remedy the low level of digital skills (see Section 5), Greece is setting up a programme to train and certify young unemployed 18-24 year-olds in the ICT sector. In addition, 74 second chance schools across the country as well as Lifelong Learning Centres of municipalities provide education and qualification opportunities for low-skilled adults.

9. References


Cedefop ReferNet (2018b), Greece: apprenticeship reform achieves first results.

Cedefop ReferNet (2018c), Greece: national committees linking the education system and the labour market.


http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002595/259533e.pdf


Global Link (2018), Η παιδεία με τα μάτια των εκπαιδευτικών.


10. **Annex I: Key indicator sources**

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**Eurostat online data codes**

- edat_lfse_14
- edat_lfse_02
- edat_lfse_03
- edat_lfs_9912
- educ_uoe_enra10
- OECD (PISA)
- edat_lfse_24
- trng_lfse_03
- gov_10a_exp
- educ_uoe_fini04
- JRC computation based on Eurostat / UIS / OECD data
- educ_uoe_mobc02
11. Annex II: Structure of the education system


Comments and questions on this report are welcome and can be sent by email to:
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