Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2016 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-2015. It therefore complements the existing sources of information which offer descriptions of national education and training systems.

The structure of the country reports is as follows. 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 expenditure on education, and demographic and skill challenges. Section 4 focuses on early school leaving, early childhood education and care, and basic skills as important areas related to tackling inequalities and promoting inclusion. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise school education, covering, inter alia, the teaching profession and digital and language skills. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and training, as well as adult learning.

The manuscript was completed on 15 September 2016.
Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)
1. Key indicators

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<td>Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
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<td>Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)</td>
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<td>Early childhood education and care (ECEC) (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory education)</td>
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<td>Maths</td>
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<td>Science</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>
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<tr>
<td>Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)</td>
<td>ISCED 0-8 (total)</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
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Other contextual indicators

| Education investment | Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP | 4.5% | 4.4% | 5.0% | 4.9% |
| | ISCED 1-2 | : | : | : | : |
| | ISCED 3-4 | : | : | : | : |
| | ISCED 5-8 | : | : | : | : |
| Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24) | Native-born | 8.2% | 6.8% | 11.6% | 10.1% |
| | Foreign-born | 41.4% | 24.1% | 24.6% | 19.0% |
| Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34) | Native-born | 34.3% | 44.2% | 36.7% | 39.4% |
| | Foreign-born | 10.5% | 12.1% | 33.8% | 36.4% |
| Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year) | ISCED 3-4 | 34.2% | 35.8% | 69.7% | 70.8% |
| | ISCED 5-8 | 47.7% | 49.9% | 81.5% | 81.9% |
| Learning mobility | Inbound graduates mobility (bachelor) | : |  |  |
| | Inbound graduates mobility (master) | : |  |  |

Sources: Eurostat (see section 9 for more details); OECD (PISA).
Notes: data refer to weighted EU averages, covering different numbers of Member States depending on the source; b = break in time series, d = definition differs, p = provisional, u = low reliability, 11 = 2011, 13 = 2013, 14 = 2014. 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 2015) and OECD (PISA 2012).
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**

- Early school leaving and tertiary educational attainment rates improved significantly and are now better than the EU average.
- Performance is disappointing on basic skills attainment by young people and adults, and on participation in vocational education and training as well as in adult learning.
- A national dialogue on education and a review of the education system are highlighting key problems such as serious underfunding, teacher staffing, equity and efficiency.
- The reversal of previous reforms aimed at increasing transparency, accountability and evaluation in schools and higher education is a matter of concern.
- Greece has adopted sectoral strategies on higher education, vocational education and lifelong learning. Their implementation will be a challenge.
- The impact of the refugee crisis on the Greek education sector remains fairly limited for the time being, but might have more far-reaching consequences in the future.

**Box 1: The Memorandum of Understanding concluded in August 2015 under the economic adjustment programme**

The Memorandum of Understanding concluded in August 2015 under the third economic adjustment programme (section 4.1, as updated in June 2016) considers education as part of a future national growth strategy. It calls for the OECD to undertake a review of the Greek education system by the third quarter of 2016. The review is to cover all levels of education, including:

- implementation of the ‘new school’ reform;
- scope for further rationalisation (of classes, schools and universities);
- the functioning and the governance of higher education institutions;
- the efficiency and autonomy of public educational units;
- linkages between research and education and collaboration between universities, research institutions and businesses to enhance innovation and entrepreneurship;
- the evaluation of schools and teachers as well as transparency at all levels.

The review is set to propose policy recommendations in line with best practices in EU and OECD countries to further modernise the Greek education sector. The recommendations are set to constitute a further basis for the necessary legislative and regulatory changes to be carried out by the Greek authorities and a new education action plan for 2016-2018, due in the autumn of 2016.

A second phase of the review is expected to carry out further in-depth policy analysis and engage a wide range of stakeholders. It is to be undertaken between the second half of 2016 and the second half of 2017, providing a solid basis of evidence for further proposals to improve Greece’s education system.

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1 The full text of the MoU in the version of 16 June 2016 is to be found under the following link: [http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/assistance_eu_ms/greek_loan_facility/pdf/smou_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/assistance_eu_ms/greek_loan_facility/pdf/smou_en.pdf)
3. Investing in education to address demographic and skill challenges

General government expenditure on education in Greece was at 4.6 % of GDP in 2013 and 4.4 % in 2014, below the EU-28 average of respectively 5.0 % and 4.9 %. The share of education spending in relation to total government expenditure improved slightly, from 7.5 % in 2013 to 8.8 % in 2014. However, this was again significantly lower than the 10.2 % EU-28 average. The central budget for education has suffered a sizeable reduction, from EUR 5.7 billion in 2014 to EUR 5.3 billion in 2015, or respectively 3.2 % and 3.0 % of GDP. The centrally managed education budget was reduced in absolute terms in comparison to previous years due to a general expenditure consolidation effort by the Greek Government (European Commission 2016a). These cuts also affected primary and secondary teachers’ salaries: a reclassification of the pay scale of all public servants was introduced on 1 January 2016, and pay has been frozen until 31 December 2017 to save costs.³

In an overall context of high unemployment, and especially persistent youth unemployment, employment rates in Greece vary strongly with the level of education. For lower qualifications (ISCED 0-2) the employment rate was 48.5 % in 2015, close to the EU-28 average. For medium qualifications (ISCED 3-4) it was 56.4 % in 2015, well below the EU average. For higher qualifications (ISCED 5-8) it stood at 68.7 % in 2015, also far away from the EU average. Greece also has the highest rate (40 %) of 15-29 year-olds with a tertiary degree who are not in employment, education or training. In addition, more young women in Greece continue to reach higher levels of education than their male counterparts, but their employment rates remain lower than for men (OECD 2015).

In parallel to the economic crisis, the number of births in Greece has fallen constantly in recent years: from 118 000 in 2008 to about 92 000 in 2014, a 22 % drop (ELSTAT 2016). The past few years have also seen net emigration and in the context of the recent refugee crisis Greece has so far mainly been a transit country. The decrease in the pupil population is already visible in pre-schools and is starting to be reflected at primary school level. In the next 6 years the number of pupils at primary level is expected to fall by around 25 %.

Box 2: The national dialogue on education

Greece’s education system is at a crossroads and a public debate on its future is under way. The Government has set up a national dialogue on education, while in parallel the OECD is conducting a comprehensive country review of Greece as envisaged in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The National Social Dialogue for Education was launched with the aim of developing a national Education Action Plan.⁴ Several committees were formed including stakeholders, practitioners and social partners. The topics discussed were: national education framework, reform of compulsory education, teacher training, digital education, admission to higher education, reform of higher education, vocational education and education funding. Members of the public, stakeholders and others could share their proposals on the digital platform ‘Dialogos’.

The final report of the dialogue was published in May 2016 and calls for a new national Education Action Plan, more social justice, equity and access to education for all disadvantaged groups.

Based on the conclusions of the dialogue the Standing Committee for Education of the Greek Parliament proposed the following changes:

- introducing a second compulsory year of pre-school education in addition to the existing one; hence compulsory early childhood education and care in Greece would cover

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² Source: Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (COFOG) database.
³ Law 4354/2015: ‘Management of non-performing loans, wage settlements and other urgent regulatory provisions concerning the agreement of budgetary objectives and structural reforms’.
⁴ Ministerial Decision 11803/18-12-2015.
The outcomes of the dialogue are likely to constitute, at least to a certain extent, the basis of future legislative proposals. More on: http://dialogos.minedu.gov.gr/

4. Tackling inequalities and promoting inclusion

Greece's early school leaving (ESL) rate fell from 9.0% in 2014 to 7.9% in 2015, well below the EU-28 average of 11.0% in 2015. There is still a clear gender gap, with an ESL rate of 9.5% for men and 6.4% for women in 2015. However, the gap narrowed from 4.9 percentage points (pps.) in 2014 to 3.1 pps. in 2015, and is very close to the EU-28 average. For foreign-born students the situation remains difficult, with an ESL rate almost four times higher than for native-born pupils (24.1% against 6.8% in 2015). Figure 2 provides more information on regional ESL disparities across the country and how they have changed over time. It shows a noteworthy improvement in the northern and southern Aegean regions but a lack of progress in particular in Epirus (KANEP 2015).

![Figure 2. Early school leaving rate by NUTS 2 regions in Greece (2000-2014)](image)

Source: Eurostat. Online data code: edat lfse16.

Greece is continuing to implement the national strategic policy framework for ESL. In particular, the system for collecting and analysing information on school drop-out is being further developed. The Institute of Educational Policy and its student drop-out observatory will analyse the data and indicators. The aim is to take remedial, compensatory and supportive measures at regional and national level (Hellenic Government 2016). On 31 August the Greek parliament adopted a new education reform bill including a number of provisions on the new state regulation of private schools. The bill includes a set of new rules governing industrial relations in the sector. Its critics argue that it limits the freedom of private education providers in the country.

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5 The DIOFANTOS CTI will complete the implementation of the crucial MySchool information system and will streamline the data collection process.

6 Law. 4416/2016.
The new all-day school model (‘cohesive all-day primary school’) is supposed to be rolled out from the 2016-2017 school year for all primary schools (Ministry of Education 2016). The law 4386/2016 which was adopted by the Parliament on 31 August introduces the notion of a uniform model nationwide. This new model is applied in a larger number of schools, but in fact it is a less ambitious version of the new all-day school envisaged previously. It does not provide i.e. for the full deployment of the extra-curricular afternoon activities as initially foreseen. It concerns 3,555 schools with more than 4 teachers, representing ca. 80% of Greek schools.8

To support primary and secondary schools included in the pilot 'educational priority zones', various measures aimed at combating disadvantage are being implemented. These include introducing intercultural education activities in secondary schools, strengthening the operation of reception classes, and providing remedial teaching classes for pupils from socially vulnerable groups (such as foreign-born pupils, repatriated Greeks, Roma, members of the Muslim minority from Thrace, etc.).

Regarding migration, Greece has so far mainly been a transit country. It is now starting to address the education of refugees staying in Greece either temporarily (i.e. in camps) or for a longer period. On 30 August the Ministry presented together with major humanitarian NGO’s the programme for the education of refugee children. For children between 4-7 years old, kindergarten subsidiaries will be established within the refugee reception centres. Children between 7-15 years of age will be integrated in reception classes at neighbouring public schools, where they will be taught Greek as a second language.

5. Modernising school education

Greece is faced with a generational turnover in the teaching profession. Almost half (49%) of Greece’s primary teachers are aged 50 or over and fewer than 1% are under 30. A similar trend can be seen at secondary level, with 39% of teachers aged between 40 and 49.

Teachers’ salaries in Greece are lower in real terms than in many other OECD countries across all levels of education (OECD 2015). Due to the economic situation and public sector cuts they have fallen to 76% of their 2008 level.

At the same time, classes are comparatively small, especially in primary schools. The average primary class size in Greece in 2013 was 17 students compared to an OECD average of 21 students. The average lower secondary class has 22 students compared to an OECD average of 24 (OECD 2015). However, in the case of Greece the ratio of students to teachers is strongly influenced by the geographical situation of the country. To tackle a shortage of school staff in remote islands and mountainous parts of the country, and as part of the support for local communities, in 2015 the Ministry of Education introduced special incentives for permanent and substitute teachers who choose to serve in these areas. These take the form of a salary premium. In addition, the effective teaching time of teachers in such areas is half that of those in the rest of the country.

On 8 September 2016 the Ministry of Education announced the hiring of 5,179 temporary substitute teachers in the pre-school, primary and special education sectors, which is by far the highest number since 2008. Recently the restructuring of the school network has stopped and practically no further steps have been taken to bring the system into line with the needs at primary and secondary level. There is therefore a need to further quantify current staffing needs, and possible scope to increase the efficiency of the teaching force.

Given the positive influence that autonomy and accountability can have on education performance, it is worrying that the procedures for evaluating schools and teachers have been suspended (self-evaluation for schools and individual evaluation of teachers), even in private education (OECD 2016). The administrative authority responsible (ADIPPDE) is therefore not fully carrying out its mission of quality assurance and evaluation. The regulation on school

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7 Ministerial decision (Φ12/657/70691/Δ1) of 26 April 2016.
8 Law 4386/2016 from 31 August 2016, more on http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Nomothetiko-Ergo/Anazitisi-Nomothetikou-Ergou?law_id=e373a4cd-87fe-493c-b750-a6500109225a
heads from May 2015 introduces a new selection procedure and new weightings for various professional and personal aptitude criteria, which may limit head teachers’ independence (European Commission 2016d). The adoption of an average of 9.5 out of 20, instead of at least 10, as the passing grade for pupils in general upper secondary schools could also be seen as a lowering of standards (European Commission 2016b).

Greece ranks 26th out of the 28 EU Member States in the Digital Economy and Society Index for 2016. With an increasing number of talented, well-educated individuals emigrating in search of better pay or living and working conditions, Greek ICT companies are having difficulty finding people with the right digital skills (European Commission 2016c). The proportion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates is increasing, creating potential for the take-up of new professions. On 1 September the Ministry of Education has proposed the creation of Open Technology Workshops (edulabs) at primary and secondary schools, in the framework of the “act4Greece” crowd-funding platform. The platform is supported by the National Bank of Greece and has strategic partnerships with a number of well-known institutions, such as the Onassis Foundation, the Latsis Foundation, the Bodossaki Foundation, the Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO, and the Hellenic Network for Corporate Social Responsibility.

6. Modernising higher education

Greece has a fairly high tertiary education attainment rate at 40.4 % in 2015, slightly above the EU average of 38.7 %. However, a large gender gap persists, with females outperforming males by 10.2 pps. in 2015. Foreign-born students have a much lower participation rate than native-born ones; in 2015 the difference was 32.1 pps. Figure 3 provides more information on regional tertiary attainment disparities and how they have changed over time. It shows, for example, that there has not been any significant improvement in the Ionian Islands or eastern Macedonia (KANE 2015).

The employment rate of recent tertiary graduates\(^9\) remained very low. It improved only marginally, from 47.4 % in 2014 to 49.9 % in 2015, but was still very far away from the EU-28 average at 80.5 % in 2014 and 81.9 % in 2015.

![Figure 3. Tertiary attainment rate by NUTS 2 regions in Greece (2000-2014)](image)


\(^9\) People aged 20-34 who left tertiary education between one and three years before the reference year.
On governance in higher education, a legislative act adopted in October 2015 changed the way rectors and deans are elected, significantly diminishing the autonomy of higher education. The act reduced the role of university councils and made the eligibility criteria for candidates more restrictive and e.g. faculty members from abroad are no longer eligible. Under the previous regime, higher education institutions could also make their own statutes and regulations.

The 2012-2014 *Athina* project has not had a significant impact so far. It was aimed at increasing efficiency gains and consolidating the network of higher education institutions in Greece. Its main objective was to rationalise scientific fields and strengthen leading departments and institutions. The intention was also to make universities more innovative, create regional excellence hubs and better connect the academic sector with regional development needs. In theory the project contributed to the merger of over 120 university departments. But in practice it has not produced the financial rationalisation expected, as many departments which were consolidated did not in fact have any academic staff and/or any students. The four universities abolished have in practice merged with other tertiary institutions (European Commission 2016). Currently, the most pressing issues of lack of organisational efficiency concern Technological Institutes (TEIs).

Students are no longer automatically deleted from the university register if they fail to complete their studies within the normal period of study. This period corresponds to the minimum number of semesters necessary for the award of a diploma according to the curriculum, plus four additional ones. This change may lead to a new increase in the average duration of studies, which is already quite high in Greece. However, according to the Ministry those inactive students bear no cost for the system as they cannot claim any educational benefits. On 31 August the Greek Parliament passed a new law in this field. According to this act students are to register for each semester and make a declaration in case they wish to interrupt their studies.

In June 2016 the Greek authorities presented a new higher education strategy for 2016-2020 (Hellenic Government 2016). This document attempts to provide the country with a long-term strategic vision and future direction for the tertiary sector. The strategy includes several important general elements, such as improving the quality of education and learning and strengthening equity and access to the sector. It also includes the aim of improving quality assurance in higher education. The strategy contains fairly broad measures to increase participation, attainment levels and completion of higher education by all population groups. It also aims at supporting research and enabling innovation. The strategy is however short on specific and targeted measures, which poses difficulties for its full and effective implementation.

### 7. Modernising vocational education and training and promoting adult learning

Participation in vocational education and training (VET) in Greece remained broadly stable in 2014 at 31 %, but it was 17 pps. below the EU average. Participation in adult learning, at 5.7 % in 2015, also remained low and far away from the 10.7 % EU average. Greece has an alarmingly low employment rate for recent VET upper-secondary graduates. In 2015 it was at 37.5 %, virtually half the EU average of 73.0 %.

According to the 2016 OECD Adult Skills Survey (PIAAC) for Greece, overall the country performs reasonably well on both literacy and numeracy, but is slightly below the OECD average. However, it has a worryingly low level of achievement in problem-solving, highlighting the need for more provision of transversal and digital skills. The survey also found that the proportion of adults in Greece who score the highest levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy is considerably smaller than the OECD average, while the proportion of adults with poor skills in literacy and numeracy is much larger than average. In contrast to the pattern in other countries, where younger generations tend to outperform older ones, 25-34 year-olds in Greece perform as well in literacy as 55-65 year-olds. Tertiary-educated adults in Greece have

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10 According to the Law 4327/2015.
11 People aged 20-34 who left education between one and three years before the reference year.
relatively low proficiency in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments (OECD 2016b).

Greece is in the process of developing two key sectoral strategies, on lifelong learning (LLL) and VET, respectively (Hellenic Government 2016). The national strategic policy framework for LLL will include measures to:

- increase the provision of LLL for adults;
- intensify cooperation with stakeholders;
- ensure the complementarity of LLL with other sectors of education (initial and in-work VET);
- develop the skills of priority target groups (e.g. older workers);
- implement transparency tools effectively; these include the European and national qualifications framework, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, and the European Framework for Assurance Quality in VET.

The national strategic policy framework to improve the quality and effectiveness of VET will include measures to:

- better match VET provision with labour market needs and improve cooperation with stakeholders;
- adapt curricula, enhance the syllabus and draw up new textbooks;
- promote the acquisition of work experience mechanisms to anticipate future skills shortages;
- establish a national approach to quality assurance and to applying transparency principles;
- increase the number of students and graduates participating in apprenticeships by redesigning the apprenticeship programmes for 150 specialisations and professions;
- develop and implement the apprenticeship programmes for secondary and post-secondary VET (EPAL and IES schools) graduates and practical training in maritime academies.

Both strategies are primarily intended to comply with the pre-conditions for receiving financial support from EU Structural and Investment Funds. However, if fully implemented, they could constitute a first attempt to give a strategic steer to the country’s education and training sector.

8. References


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