

Reform of the national system of VET and lifelong learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATION/LEGISLATION

 GREECE

Timeline

2020 Approved/Agreed 2021 Approved/Agreed 2022 Implementation
2023 Pilot 2024 Approved/Agreed

ID number 39582

Background

Over time, the lack of vocational education and training (VET) attractiveness has been a main challenge. Increasing participation, involving social partners in designing VET policies, updating VET and lifelong learning (LLL) programmes in accordance with labour market needs and developing a quality assurance system are some of the other challenges policy actors and other stakeholders have faced.

Therefore, the education ministry, having taken stock of the changes already made in previous years and analysed what has worked well and what needs to be improved, introduced a new legal framework regulating VET and LLL in a more systematic, comprehensive and cohesive way.

Objectives

The government has set, as a strategic objective, the upgrade of VET from the level of a forced solution for few, to a conscious education and career choice for many.

The main objectives of the new legal framework are:

- (a) providing knowledge, skills and competences in accordance with the needs of the labour market;
- (b) empowering general adult education;
- (c) strengthening permeability among education levels;
- (d) improving employability for all.

The reform also aims to improve initial and continuing VET structures, curricula and certification procedures.

Description

In December 2020, Law 4763/2020 introduces a legal framework regulating VET and LLL and describing the organisation of each school type, the qualifications and the role of their staff (manager, teachers, career/vocational counsellors). The Law also establishes the structure of the Hellenic Qualifications Framework (HQF) and regulates qualifications for

NQF/EQF levels 3, 4, and 5.

The law also establishes for the first time a two-year vocational training programme for lower secondary (basic) education graduates leading to an EQF level 3 qualification, aiming to address early leaving from education and training and support the employability of vulnerable social groups. These programmes include school-based and work-based learning.

The law establishes the Hellenic qualifications framework (HQF). The main issues regulated are the governance of HQF, setting the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) as the statutory body for its development and implementation and the national coordination point for EQF, responsible for the referencing process and methodological tools for classifying qualifications in the levels of the HQF.

Important pillars of the reform are also:

- (a) the introduction of model vocational upper secondary schools (EPAL) and thematic vocational training institutes (IEK) at post-secondary level;
- (b) the active participation of social partners in the design and implementation of VET and LLL;
- (c) enhancement of synergies between the national system of VET and the diagnostic mechanism of labour market needs;
- (d) increase of permeability for EQF level 5 VET graduates, enabling them to enter higher education through a specific entry examination;
- (e) set up of a certification and validation process of non-formal and informal learning according to labour market needs;
- (f) further support for early career counselling and vocational guidance, as well as opportunities for internships in collaboration with local businesses.

2020 Approved/Agreed

Law 4763/2020 was approved in December 2020.

2021 Approved/Agreed

After the commencement of the reformed VET governance system in the context of the Law 4763/2020, the Ministerial Decision issued in May 2021 (K3 / 58084, Government Gazette B 2180, 25-5-2021) regulated issues of the educational aims for model EPAL, whose pilot implementation started in September 2021. By Decision of the Minister for Education, six model EPALs were established in six Regions of the country: Argos, Epanomi, Perama, Xanthi, Igoumenitsa and Trikala. For the school year 2021/22, the first grade was operated in the facilities of the existing EPAL school units. For the pilot phase of model EPAL, a series of systematic reforms were planned, such as modified curricula, that consider the labour market needs for qualifications, updated teaching and learning methodologies, and updated quality criteria for resources and procedures.

2022 Implementation

At the beginning of the school year 2022-23, the education ministry announced the operation of Vocational training schools (ESK) in Perama and Metsovo, The operation of ESK was foreseen in Law 4763/2020. ESK studies last two years and includes theoretical and laboratory courses, and paid internship/apprenticeship that is carried out in companies of the private and public sector, in positions related to the speciality. ESK graduates are granted a VET qualification at level 3 of the HQF, after passing certification exams conducted by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP).

In June 2022, a Ministerial Decree (F11/74076/D4, 16.6.2022) established 19 model EPAL for the school year that began their operation in the school year 2022-23 in high-edge specialties such as Marine Studies, Computer Science, Business Administration,

Applied Arts, Engineering etc.

The main objectives of Model EPAL foreseen in the legal framework are:

- (a) increasing the participation of social partners;
- (b) strengthening autonomy of vocational schools with an active role of the representatives of local communities;
- (c) promoting educational research;
- (d) developing international cooperation;
- (e) continuing professional development (CPD) for VET teachers;
- (f) piloting new curricula and training programmes, modern educational material, quality assessment of VET programmes and infrastructure, new models of school administration and operation and good practices of teaching methods and internships;
- (g) harmonising the fields and specialties of VET with the needs of local communities, with a view to increase internships and employment of graduates.

At the beginning of the school year 2022-23 the education ministry announced the establishment of five thematic IEK and 10 experimental vocational IEK by 2025.

2023 Pilot

In the 2022/23 school year, 25 model vocational upper secondary schools (PEPAL) were in operation. These institutions served as testing grounds for piloting new curricula, modern educational materials, and innovative teaching methods. PEPAL also supported the implementation of advanced systems for evaluating educational outcomes and improving the material and technical infrastructure of school units. Furthermore, they introduced progressive standards in school management and practical training, fostering best practices with the potential for broader application across the national VET system.

The strategic target of establishing 15 thematic and experimental higher vocational training schools (SAEK, former IEK) was also achieved. Specifically, five thematic and 10 experimental SAEKs operated during the 2022-2023 school year. The experimental SAEKs functioned as controlled environments for piloting innovations in initial vocational training, while the thematic SAEKs focused on specialised fields, promoting targeted innovation in vocational education.

The conversion of public SAEKs into thematic and experimental SAEKs was carried out following recommendations by the Central council for vocational education and training (KSEK) and the Central scientific committee (KEE). Selection criteria included institutional extroversion, engagement in innovation, infrastructure readiness, and capacity to implement system-level improvements in collaboration with local authorities and universities.

2024 Approved/Agreed

Law 4763/2020 was further developed with the adoption of Law 5082/2024, aimed at strengthening the national system of vocational education and training. The new law focuses on:

- a. enhancing cooperation between all levels and providers of vocational education and training; and
- b. reinforcing synergies across different levels of the national qualifications framework (NQF), with the objective of upgrading learners' knowledge, competences and skills, and facilitating the smooth transition of young people into local communities, the labour market, and the national economy.

A key provision of Law 5082/2024 is the establishment of vocational education and training centres (KEEK) across the country. These centres will serve as hubs for collaboration between various VET institutions, including vocational upper secondary schools (EPAL), model EPAL (PEPAL), laboratory centres, and higher vocational training schools (SAEK). Approximately 60 KEEK campuses are planned, each equipped with

modern infrastructure and strategically located to maximise access and training outcomes. Special emphasis will be placed on ensuring inclusive access to quality VET services, particularly for persons with disabilities.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs
- General Secretariat for VET, Lifelong Learning and Youth

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Education professionals

Teachers
Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses
Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks
Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education
Lifelong guidance

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Sustainability - a green link in VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Law 4763/2020 on the national system of VET and lifelong learning](#)

[Pilot EPAL: the next day for Vocational upper secondary schools \(EPAL\)](#)

[Ministry of Education \(2022\). The operation of Public vocational training schools \(ESK\) begins for the first time](#)

[The experimental and thematic public IEK of the country in the 2022 school year: innovation, specialization and upgrading of the system of public, free vocational training-press release](#)

[Establishment of model EPAL](#)

[Establishment of model vocational upper secondary schools \(P.EPA.L\) - General Secretariat for VET, Lifelong Learning and Youth](#)

[15 experimental and thematic public IEKs \(now SAEK\) will operate nationwide in the new school year 2023](#)

[Law 5082/2024 - Strengthening the national system of vocational education and training and other urgent provisions](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

New training guides and educational materials for SAEK schools based on certified occupational profiles

The project is a comprehensive initiative to update and develop educational materials for SAEK (Former IEK) programmes. It is expected to include three distinct actions:

 GREECE

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

The Micro-CVET project: Continuing vocational training link to microcredentials

The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) represents Greece in various EU initiatives and networks.

 GREECE

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Approved/Agreed

Legal Framework for Strengthening the National System of Vocational Education and Training (Law 5082/2024)

Law No 5082/2024, published in Government Gazette A 9/19.1.2024 and titled 'Strengthening the National System of Vocational Education and Training and Other Urgent Provisions', aims to further enhance the National system of vocational education and training (VET) established under Article 1 of La

 GREECE

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

Restructuring the Public Employment Service, CVET and skills forecasting

The Labour ministry is redesigning its approach to vocational education and training (VET) especially to RRF-funded continuing VET (CVET) programmes.

 GREECE

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Implementation

The 2022-24 Strategic plan for vocational education and training, lifelong learning and youth

The six strategic objectives of the plan are further analysed into sub-objectives that serve the effective implementation of the strategy.

 GREECE

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Reforming VET governance

According to Law 4763/2020, the General Secretariat for VET, LLL and Youth is responsible for designing, implementing, coordinating and monitoring policies in the relevant fields. It is also the supervisory body for the implementation and monitoring of VET and LLL programmes.

 GREECE

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2024 Implementation

New beginning at EPAL initiative

In October 2017, implementing the 2016 strategic framework, the education ministry introduced the initiative A new beginning at EPAL, which included basic skills-enhancing measures, socio-psychological support and integration actions. The initiative was piloted in 2017/18 in nine schools.

 GREECE

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

2024 Implementation**Hellenic qualifications framework (HQF)**

The HQF was referenced to the EQF in 2015 but self-certification against the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (EHEA) remains a challenge.

**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

SubsystemIVET CVET

2024 Implementation**Easing permeability for VET learners**

Following the 2016 national strategic framework, the first grade of vocational upper secondary schools (EPAL) is common to all learners. The second grade is where sectoral division takes place, while in the third grade learners opt for a speciality.

**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

SubsystemIVET

2020 Approved/Agreed**Updating the regulations of non-formal VET**

For non-formal VET and in particular CVET, Law 4547/2018, supplementing Law 4186/2013, set new qualitative features for the operation of lifelong learning centres (KDVM), organised around four axes:

**Type of development**

Regulation/Legislation

SubsystemCVET

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). Reform of the national system of VET and lifelong learning: Greece. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

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