



Making learning work in Greece: bringing together the worlds of employment and education

Thematic sessions

VET reforms in Greece

Work to modernise the vocational education and training (VET) sector began in September 2013 with law 4186/2013 on secondary education. The 2015 National Reform Programme recognises the need to improve VET's quality and effectiveness, notably through working with stakeholders; developing a well-functioning skills-forecasting mechanism; and setting up a national quality assurance system. Greek authorities produced (2015-16) a series of policy documents, such as a Quality framework for apprenticeships or a Quality framework for VET curricula, which were to a great extent included in or synthesised to a new Strategic framework for VET and apprenticeships, setting the key features for VET provision until 2020. Greek authorities are now, in principle, ready to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy and the government is expected to modernise and expand vocational education and apprenticeships, including by creating a quality assurance framework; setting up a monitoring mechanism to develop local partnerships in at least six regions; gradually involving employers and private sector funding in VET; identifying future skills needs and matching VET provision with the needs of the labour market.

The new strategy includes a series of reforms in school-based VET (EPAL), including greater focus on key competences and STEM (1st year) and reorganisation of sectors and specialties (2nd and 3rd year) both to avoid learners' over-specialisation too early in the programme's duration and to make better use of available resources (teachers, laboratories).

The strategy also includes and further describes an optional final post-secondary apprenticeship year for vocational upper secondary school students (EPAL graduates), that was initially foreseen in 2013 but has not been implemented since. Pilot actions of the new apprenticeship year have been gradually introduced and more specialties will be offered as from September 2016 (phase A of initial application) before its expansion in 2017. New curricula are being developed for this purpose and EPAL teachers will be trained to work with apprentices.

The new strategy foresees apprenticeships provision also through the existing post-secondary non-tertiary vocational training institute (IEK) that so far offered mainly school-based programmes often followed by an internship (usually six months at the end of the programme). Since 2015 a six-month internship or an apprenticeship is mandatory, but not similarly regulated. The referencing report from the Hellenic qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework (EQF) envisages an upgrade of the qualifications acquired through studying at vocational training institutes (IEK) to level 5. The new strategy

also promotes update and quality assurance of IEK curricula and accreditation of IEK providers.

Cedefop's support to Greece

Cedefop places particular emphasis on its cooperation with the Greek authorities having a consistently good relationship and providing technical support to the degree its remit and resources allow.

a) Support to the Hellenic qualifications framework developments

The Hellenic qualifications framework draft report was first presented to the EQF advisory group in November 2013. However, due to a number of concerns following a letter by the representative of GSEE (General Confederation of Greek Workers) on fake qualifications, the EQF AG agreed that the report could be approved only if Greece clarified the issues on the GSEE's letter.

The Commission offered its help in understanding the situation and invited the Greek representatives in the EQF advisory group to provide further clarifications. However, the Greek authorities never came back to these issues and the referencing report remained an unfinished task.

Cedefop's support focused on discussing and advising the Greek Ministry of Education and EOPPEP on the remaining final stages of the Greek NQF referencing report. More specifically Cedefop commented on quality assurance issues, referencing of all qualifications and validation arrangements.

In the period September to November 2015 three meetings and two Skype discussions took place that had as a result the submission by Greece of a note on the 'Latest developments of the Hellenic qualifications framework: response to the EQF advisory group comments' addressing all pending issues. The report was approved in December 2015.

b) Apprenticeship

The thematic country review (TCR) on apprenticeships

Cedefop has been working closely with the country through the TCR project or reviewing the apprenticeships provision in Greece. Cedefop cooperates with a steering group consisting of eight representatives of national authorities (Ministries of Education, Labour and the Public Employment Service) and social partners (employers and employees). A platform for cooperation has been established and several meetings took place in Athens (including the launching event in December 2015 where about key national 50 stakeholders attended) and in Thessaloniki. The steering group validated the key weaknesses and opportunities of the apprenticeship system in Greece (February 2016) on the basis of a background paper produced by Cedefop with help of national and international experts (contractor Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini). Following the steering group's prioritisation, and to explore further the key challenges, research questions were formulated and addressed to 100 participants at implementation level (apprentices, graduates, school directors, teachers, companies and

Public Employment Service staff) across the country until June 2016. New evidence was produced and initial findings were discussed with the steering group in a participatory and interactive approach. More interviews at institutional and policy-making level and a web-survey with companies will follow before Cedefop makes recommendations for the national apprenticeship system.

Cooperation on VET and apprenticeship reform

The political and economic situation created some uncertainty over the political priorities regarding VET and apprenticeships. After September 2015, the two Ministries were asked to work intensively on responding to ESF conditions and memorandum requirements regarding VET. Cedefop was asked to contribute to this procedure by sharing information on VET systems and VET developments across EU and by commenting on policy documents to the extent that these could affect the agreed project on the TCR. Cedefop's involvement facilitated the complementarity/ consistency between the national VET policy developments that were drafted in late 2015/early 2016 and the TCR project.

c) Skills diagnostics

Cedefop has agreed to participate in the working group on skill needs anticipation initiated by the Greek government. However, Cedefop had no active involvement in developing the skill needs anticipation system for Greece. Cedefop attended the meetings and provided some background documents on best practice. Greek authorities have taken various steps (e.g. have produced some quantitative indicators of skills needs and have initiated an employers' survey) to create an anticipation system and have been communicating these to the European Commission.

Practical cases/projects of cooperation between businesses and schools

This thematic session will include presentations by schools, enterprises and the Ministry of Education.