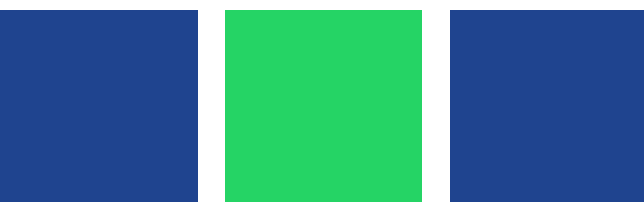

IMPLEMENTING EUROPEAN PRIORITIES IN VET

Making national VET agile,
flexible, innovative, attractive,
inclusive and quality assured

GREECE



Implementing European priorities in VET

Making national VET agile, flexible, innovative, attractive,
inclusive and quality-assured:
Greece

[Thematic perspectives](#) provide national overviews of specific themes in a common format and offer comparative dimension across the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway.

This thematic perspectives series complements the general information on vocational education and training (VET) policies and systems provided in [VET in Europe database](#) and the [Timeline of VET policies in Europe](#). The themes presented in the series feature high on the European agenda.

This thematic perspective was prepared based on data/information from 2023.

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[ReferNet](#) is a network of institutions across Europe representing the 27 Member States, plus Iceland and Norway. The network provides Cedefop with information and analysis on national vocational education and training (VET). ReferNet also disseminates information on European VET and Cedefop's work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway.

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Greek vocational education and training (VET) has undergone significant reforms aimed at modernizing the system and aligning it more closely with labour market demands. A key legislative milestone was the [introduction of Law 4763/2020](#), which established an integrated strategy for VET and lifelong learning. This reform moves away from fragmented approaches and draws upon the wealth of experience and challenges accumulated over the years. Key challenges in the Greek VET system included the lack of social recognition, declining appeal, unclear learning pathways, weak connection to the labour market, limited effectiveness of curriculum/study programmes content coupled with the existence of obsolete specialties and training guides and a disjointed system lacking coordination and integrated planning. These challenges were further compounded by the absence of mechanisms to align vocational education and training with labour market needs, the lack of a comprehensive system for developing vocational qualifications across all levels, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation processes, particularly in non-formal education and training contexts.

To address these challenges, the Greek [2022-24 Strategic plan for vocational education, training, lifelong learning, and youth](#) aims to transform VET into an attractive and strategic employment tool which also addresses the priorities and objectives outlined in the [VET Recommendation](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#).

The plan focuses on the following six strategic areas:

- (a) enhancing and consolidating VET and lifelong learning with a strong emphasis on quality.
- (b) boosting extroversion, collaboration, and mobility within the framework of VET, LLL and youth.
- (c) implementing targeted measures to ensure equal access to VET and LLL for vulnerable groups and individuals with low skills.
- (d) driving forward the digital transformation.
- (e) modernizing and improving the infrastructure and equipment of VET Centers and LLL schools.
- (f) establishing a robust and contemporary governance system for the VET and LLL sector.

In line with the Greek [2022-24 Strategic plan for vocational education and training, lifelong learning and youth](#) and in alignment with the priorities of the [VET Recommendation](#) and the [Osnabrück Declaration](#), Greece developed a sustainable National implementation plan (NIP), including the most emblematic actions in three packages of measures, which place a strong emphasis on developing a strategic approach to enhance learning quality through innovative methods. The core objective is to ensure the success of students and maximize learning outcomes.

Key goals of the NIP include boosting the relevance of VET to the labour market, enhancing employability and social inclusion, facilitating school/training-to-work transitions, provide more opportunities for VET graduates and trainees to gain experience and improve their qualifications in real working conditions. Moreover, the plan aims to confront various challenges, including the lack of innovation and attractiveness of VET, insufficient

development of digital skills and technology applications in the national economy and governance, and inadequate state of laboratory infrastructure.

To realise these goals, the Greek NIP concentrates on reinforcing apprenticeship and internships schemes, updating occupational profiles, facilitating the digital transformation by providing access to advanced equipment and technology, promoting research and innovation by establishing model, thematic and experimental vocational schools and enhancing the overall quality of VET provision.

CHAPTER 2. Main policy developments in 2023

2.1 Agile and resilient VET, adaptive to labour market needs

In 2023, the Greek vocational education and training (VET) system underwent significant reforms aimed at making it more agile, resilient, and responsive to evolving labour market needs. The key priority was to strengthen [the work-based learning aspects](#) through the expansion of apprenticeship programmes offered by vocational upper secondary schools (EPAL), [apprenticeship schools \(EPAS\)](#) as well as the provision of internships for learners in [vocational training institutes \(IEK\)](#).

The apprenticeship programme offered by [vocational upper secondary schools \(EPAL\)](#) is an elective post-secondary year which integrates theoretical learning with practical experience, allowing vocational upper secondary school graduates to gain hands-on work experience. The [EPAL apprenticeship year](#) commences on 1 September of each year and concludes on 31 August of the following year, governed by the Regulation of the post-secondary school year-apprenticeship class ([Ministerial Decision of 2023](#)). For 2023, the programme included on-the-job training, which constitutes at least 50% of the total programme duration, along with specialised laboratory courses held in school laboratories. Apprentices were also compensated at the rate of 95% of the legal minimum daily wage for unskilled workers, regardless of age. In the 2022/23 academic year, there were 4 708 apprenticeship placements available for EPAL graduates (2 802 in the public sector and 1 906 in the private sector). This number increased to 6 718 placements for the 2023/24 academic year (3 342 public and 3 376 private sector placements).

For [vocational training institutes \(IEK\)](#), the Common Ministerial Decision K5/97484 of 27 August 2021, introduced a paid internship scheme for IEK learners (for IEK under the jurisdiction of the education ministry). This scheme, effective from the 2021/22 academic year continued in 2022/23 and marks the implementation of paid internships in Greece, with trainees receiving compensation equal to 80% of the legal wage for unskilled worker. The project of internships has been included in the partnership agreement for the development framework (ESPA) and is therefore co-funded by the European structural and investment funds.

The [development of occupational profiles](#) in VET is essential to ensure that training programmes align with the evolving needs of the labour market and equip individuals with the skills required for occupations in-demand. In 2023, 44 occupational profiles have been updated and 10 new ones developed through collaboration with key scientific institutes and social partners, including the Labour Institute of the General Confederation of Workers

(INE/GSEE), the Institute of the Greek Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (IME/GSEVEE), the Greek Federation of Enterprises (SEV), the Centre of Greek Commerce and Entrepreneurship Development (KAELE ESEE), the Institute of the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE-INSETE), and EOPPEP. By the end of 2024, there are plans to update and develop an additional 109 occupational profiles. Additionally, EOPPEP is leading the digitalisation of these profiles, having initiated the [Ergon Esti](#) project in 2023 to facilitate this process.

2.2 Flexible VET, providing progression and lifelong learning opportunities

For the 2022/23 academic year, universities continued administering admission exams for graduates of vocational training institutes (IEK) and vocational upper secondary (EPAL) apprenticeship programmes. Graduates from vocational education and training (VET) and EPAL apprenticeship programmes who participated in these exams were able to secure up to 5% of the total first-year enrollments in each university department. This approach [enhances the accessibility of higher education for VET graduates](#), offering them opportunities to upskill, reskill, and engage in lifelong learning to remain competitive in the job market.

Additionally, IEK are empowered to create and implement new specialties in response to evolving needs, as determined by the [Central Council for Vocational Education and Training \(KSEEK\)](#) and the [Councils linking VET with the labour market \(SSPAE\)](#). Overall, IEK enjoy a degree of autonomy, allowing them to forge partnerships with social stakeholders and institutions across various levels-local, regional, national, and European.

2.3 Innovative and excellent VET

Promoting innovation is a central focus in the ongoing reform of the [existing national VET policy](#). A [key strategic axis within this reform](#) is the establishment and operation of model vocational upper secondary schools (PEPALs) and experimental and thematic vocational training institutes (IEK) across Greece. These institutions are envisioned as hubs for the development and dissemination of innovation and best practices in VET, achieved through active collaboration with national and European research and innovation centres.

During the 2022/23 academic year, 25 model upper secondary VET schools (PEPAL) were in operation, primarily serving as testing grounds for pioneering new curricula, modern educational materials, and innovative teaching methods. These schools have also piloted advanced systems for evaluating the quality of educational outcomes and improving the material and technical infrastructure of school units. Moreover, they have introduced progressive standards for school management and practical training, fostering best practices that can be applied nationwide. In parallel, 10 experimental IEK supported the piloting of innovations within the initial vocational training system, offering a controlled environment for experimentation. 5 thematic IEK were also operational during the 2022/23 academic year, each focusing on specialised fields of study, further promoting targeted innovation in vocational training.

2.4 Attractive VET, based on modern and digitalised provision

The [digital transformation of VET and lifelong learning](#) is being achieved through a series of forward-looking actions designed to modernize and digitise VET provision, with an emphasis on innovation, accessibility, and sustainability.

In 2023, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports initiated the project 'Development of a digital platform for VET' in partnership with the Technical Chamber of Greece. This project, launched on 1 February 2023, and set to conclude on 31 December 2025, focuses on creating a cutting-edge digital infrastructure for VET, facilitating advanced e-learning opportunities for students and professionals alike.

The project's core activities include:

- (a) conversion of educational material in digital format, in specific disciplines;
- (b) installation and configuration services for the effective operation of the digital platform;
- (c) training of trainers in the use of digital learning and the new digital infrastructure;
- (d) provision of platform maintenance services, including technical support and technical problem-solving services;
- (e) establish a governance subsystem for the coordination and management of e-learning activities.

Also in 2023, the education ministry launched an ambitious project aimed at enhancing hands-on learning through state-of-the-art laboratory equipment. This project, with completion deadline the 31 October 2025, will renew and modernise the technical infrastructure of 117 laboratory centres, enhancing the practical training capacities of apprenticeship programmes.

EOPPEP embarked on a significant digitalisation project in 2023. This initiative aims to streamline services for citizens, minimize bureaucratic hurdles, and improve overall transparency and accessibility. Key components of this project include:

- (a) new information systems: Designing and developing advanced systems, such as digital registers, to modernize operations;
- (b) upgrading of existing systems: Enhancing current information systems and registers, along with training staff in new digital tools;
- (c) improved accessibility: Developing websites and mobile applications that make VET resources and processes more user-friendly and transparent for all stakeholders.

2.5 Inclusive VET promoting equal opportunities

The [reform of the national system of VET and lifelong learning](#) clearly identifies the obligation to provide all learning pathways, without discrimination and exclusion, with explicit reference to people with disabilities and chronic diseases, as well as other vulnerable groups.

In 2023, two new specialties have been introduced at the vocational training institutes (IEK) of special education, aiming to broaden the scope of VET available to individuals with special needs/disabilities: Hearing care and Hearing aid fitting specialist, and specialist typographer in Braille using new technologies and special technical equipment.

2.6 VET underpinned by quality assurance

Upskilling and reskilling of human resources in adult education and training, particularly

focusing on adult educators, has been a crucial issue for ensuring the [quality](#), effectiveness and success of LLL programmes. Actions initiated in 2023 include:

- (a) development of continuous professional training programmes based on the new needs arising from the digital transformation of educational practices (e.g., distance digital education) for the certified trainers, members of the of adult educators register of EOPPEP;
- (b) training of the candidates for inclusion in the adult educators register of EOPPEP as well as trainers and evaluators of adult educators;
- (c) training of executives responsible for the design, organisation and implementation of adult learning programmes;
- (d) training of the management of the certified lifelong learning centres;
- (e) development and dissemination of training material for the internship of trainers in companies.

To facilitate the implementation of the above [new occupational profiles](#) for adult educators, the officers for design, coordination and evaluation of lifelong education programmes and the career guidance counsellors have been developed by social partners and were delivered to EOPPEP to be certified. These occupational profiles are expected to contribute to the career development of the relevant staff and to the upgrading of the quality level of VET and adult education and training activities in Greece.

CHAPTER 3. Involvement of VET stakeholders in the implementation of policy developments related to NIP

In Greece, the government approves the national education policy designed by the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports. Social partners including trade unions and employer organizations participate in the working group on developing legislation. [The Central Council for VET \(KSEEEK\)](#) is responsible for monitoring labour market developments, adjusting VET programmes to labour market needs, and reorganising specialties to fine-tune the VET offer, ensures a wide participation of representatives from key stakeholders. Ministries, local government authorities together with employer and employee associations, and chambers take part in the KSEEEK and play an active role in all the key policies related to VET.

Further, in each region, a [Council linking VET with the local labour market \(SSPAE\)](#) has been established, aiming to align VET programmes with local labour market needs.

CHAPTER 4. Achievements of implementation

Since 2020, Greece has made significant strides in implementing VET initiatives to enhance the skills and employability of its workforce. The law 4763/2020 attempted a major reform in VET, emphasising an integrated strategy for vocational education, training, and lifelong learning. This law aimed to improve the quality and relevance of VET by establishing stronger links between education providers and the labour market.

Main achievements include:

- (a) Expanded apprenticeships and internships: apprenticeship placements for vocational

upper secondary (EPAL) graduates rose from 4 708 in 2022-23 to 6 718 in 2023-24. Interns from vocational training institutes (IEK) now receive 80% of the legal minimum wage;

- (b) occupational profile development: by 2023, 44 occupational profiles were updated and 10 new ones created, from a pool of 124 existing profiles identified for updates and 39 new ones to be developed by 2024;
- (c) flexible learning opportunities: VET graduates gained access to university admissions, securing up to 5% of available positions;
- (d) VET innovation: 25 Model VET Schools and 15 Experimental/Thematic IEKs were established by 2022/23, serving as hubs for educational innovation. This suggests that Greece has achieved the quantitative targets for setting up these institutions by 2025;
- (e) digital transformation: initiatives like the VET digital platform, EOPPEP's digitalization, and infrastructure modernisation are underway, set for completion by 2025;
- (f) enhanced stakeholder involvement: increased engagement from ministries, industry, and local authorities ensures VET programmes align with labour market demands.

CHAPTER 5. Challenges of implementation

Since 2020, Greece has made considerable progress in VET; however, certain areas have lagged in meeting EU priorities, presenting persistent challenges. The primary obstacles and reasons for these setbacks are:

- (a) limited employer engagement in apprenticeships. Numerous employers, especially in SMEs, are hesitant to participate in apprenticeship initiatives due to perceived administrative burdens and costs;
- (b) economic constraints, administrative and bureaucratic hurdles. Greece's gradual economic recovery has impacted investments in VET infrastructure and resources. Furthermore, complex regulatory frameworks and administrative inefficiencies have hindered the implementation of VET reforms and new initiatives;
- (c) cultural perceptions. VET lacks prestige compared to academic education, and this affects learner enrolment rates and employer engagement in VET programmes.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach involving increased investment, streamlining regulations, and shifting cultural attitudes to appreciate the value of vocational education. Enhanced collaboration among the government, educational institutions, and the private sector is vital to surmount these obstacles and align fully with EU priorities.

CHAPTER 6. Conclusions

Since 2020, Greece has made significant steps in VET sector through a series of focused initiatives. Legislative reforms, the expansion of apprenticeship and internship programmes, the update and development of new occupational profiles and digitalisation have been the key focus areas. Additionally, Greece has responded to the changing job landscape by introducing new specialties that incorporate digital and green skills into VET programmes, preparing learners for future employment opportunities.

Despite these achievements, challenges persist. To address these challenges by looking

ahead to 2024-25, the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports plans to further enhance Greece's VET and LLL system. A unified quality assurance framework, with systematic evaluations, will be implemented to uphold high standards. Financial incentives and support mechanisms for employers, particularly SMEs, will be introduced to encourage greater participation in apprenticeship programmes. Targeted outreach programmes and financial support initiatives will be developed to increase VET participation among marginalized groups. Additionally, flexible learning options and pathways for adult learners will be expanded to facilitate continuous professional development and lifelong learning. These steps aim to address existing challenges, ensure continuous improvement in VET quality and accessibility, and align the Greek VET system with EU priorities.

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