

## Vocational Education Systems in the participating countries

### Greece

#### Overview

Compulsory education until the age of:	Until the age of 15
Age of usual entrance into the vocational training:	15
What are the pupils' requirements for entering the VET system?	Lower secondary level
Is there a dual system?	No
If not, does any other work-based training exist?	Yes, but insignificant
Are internships scheduled during the training?	No

#### 1. Structure of the general school and VET system

Compulsory schooling in Greece lasts 9 years, from the age of 7 until 15, of which children visit elementary school for 6 years and lower secondary school (Gymnasio) for 3 years. After completing compulsory schooling with the age of 15, young people have a choice between 3 major options. They can either go to *Geniko Lykeio* (General Lyceum) which provides general secondary education for 3 years and entrance qualification for universities and universities for applied science.

There are 2 options for vocational secondary education. One option is the three years lasting *Epaggelmatiko Lykeio* (Vocational Lyceum) (EPAL) where specific occupational as well as general knowledge are covered and lead to double qualification, or two years at a *Tehnika Epangelmatika Ekpedeftiria* (EPAS) where the focus lies on professional knowledge and practical training hours are included. Besides those 3 major school-based options, young people can also decide for vocational education training with practical training at *Instituta Epangelmatikis Katartissis* (Institute for Vocational Education Training) that lasts 2 years. Theoretical training contents are provided by special EPAS schools of which 52 existed country-wide in 2009. Practical training hours are held in private or public enterprises. But this type of VET only plays a minor role in the Greek education system. It addresses adults who completed mandatory schooling only and aim to achieve IVET qualification. But also graduates from general education schools of higher secondary education or of the EPAS and EPAL schools can move on with vocational training at this kind of institutes with practical trainings.

## **2. Details of the Vocational Education System**

Due to political and societal changes during the 1960s, education policies focused consequently on general education. From that time on, vocational education only played a minor role and has been the second choice among pupils as well as their parents. In the Greek society, vocational education has always carried the image of hard and inferior work. Therefore, vocational education occurred to be for the weaker pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and lead into a downward spiral in numbers of participating pupils in vocational training.

Among many other factors, the weak education system is also a cause for the deep economic and social crisis, Greece is currently in. And of course the crisis leads to a massive brain drain in Greece due to high unemployment. As a result, at the same time there are lots of skilled workers missing on the labour market, that could build up the local economy again, and very high unemployment, especially among young people.

## **3. Statistics**

Less than 30% of the Greek students in the last decade chose vocational education trainings. A majority of students completed general education schools in order to go to universities and universities of applied science. Between 2002 and 2009 the amount of students participating in vocational education trainings decreased by 44% from 160.000 to 108.000 students.

90% of the Vocational Education Trainings in Greece are school-based and without any reference to the actual working conditions in form of workplace-based practical training courses.

## **4. Political responsibility**

The political responsibility for education lies with the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, it covers the general education as well as initial vocational education. Advanced professional training falls within the competences of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare.

The Greek education system is highly centralized and governed by national laws and legislative acts (decrees, ministerial decisions). Curricula and weekly timetables, for all types of primary and secondary education schools, are worked out centrally and must obligatory be operated in all schools in the country. But within the framework of the country's

adaptation to international standards in order to reduce the huge youth unemployment, the education system is being decentralized step by step.

## 5. Advantages and challenges of the VET system

A study on the reform process of the Greek education system by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) criticizes, that instead of reacting to the essential problems with relevant reforms, the policies have only focused on formal changes. The main challenges that the study points out are:

Challenges
1. Opening the vocational education system towards the labour market needs and actual conditions
2. Closer consolidation accounting of the social partners
3. Establishment of a dialogue and consensus culture in education policies
4. Decentralization and increase of autonomy of schools
5. Increase of attractiveness/ Improvement of the image of vocational education
6. Improvement of quality
7. Closer interlocking of initial education and further education

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## Literature

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