



This publication is based on document SWD(2015)199. The Education and Training Monitor 2015 was prepared by the Directorate-General of Education and Culture (DG EAC), with contributions from the Directorate-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) and the Eurydice Network. DG EAC was assisted by the Education and Youth Policy Analysis Unit from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the JRC's Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning (CRELL) and Institute of Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS), Eurostat and Cedefop. The Members of the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks (SGIB) were consulted during the drafting phase.

*Manuscript completed in September 2015*

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015

ISBN 978-92-79-51651-1

doi: 10.2766/872466

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*Printed in Belgium*

PRINTED ON ELEMENTAL CHLORINE-FREE BLEACHED PAPER (ECF)

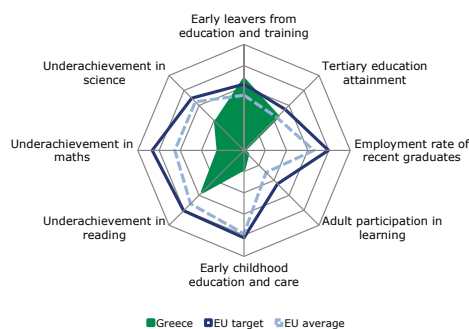
# GREECE

## 1. Key Indicators and Benchmarks

		Greece		EU average	
		2011	2014	2011	2014
<b>Educational poverty and spending cuts: challenges for the education sector</b>					
Share of 15 year-olds with underachievement in:	Reading	•	: 22.6% <sup>12</sup>	:	17.8% <sup>12</sup>
	Maths	•	: 35.7% <sup>12</sup>	:	22.1% <sup>12</sup>
	Science	•	: 25.5% <sup>12</sup>	:	16.6% <sup>12</sup>
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		4.4% 4.5% <sup>13</sup>	5.1%	5.0% <sup>13</sup>
	Public expenditure on education as a share of total public expenditure		8.2% 7.6% <sup>13</sup>	10.5%	10.3% <sup>13</sup>
<b>Education attainment levels of young people across Europe</b>					
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Men		15.9% 11.5% <sup>u</sup>	15.2%	12.7%
	Women		10.0% 6.6% <sup>u</sup>	11.5%	9.5%
	Total	•	12.9% 9.0% <sup>u</sup>	13.4%	11.1%
Tertiary education attainment (age 30-34)	Men		26.8% 32.9%	31.0%	33.6%
	Women		31.5% 41.6%	38.7%	42.3%
	Total	•	29.1% 37.2%	34.8%	37.9%
<b>Policy levers for inclusiveness, quality and relevance</b>					
Early childhood education and care (participation from age 4 to starting age of compulsory education)		•	76.0% 76.4% <sup>13,p</sup>	93.2%	93.9% <sup>13</sup>
Teachers' participation in training	Any topic (total)		: : <sup>13</sup>	:	84.6% <sup>13</sup>
	Special needs education		: : <sup>13</sup>	:	32.4% <sup>13</sup>
	Multicultural settings		: : <sup>13</sup>	:	13.2% <sup>13</sup>
	ICT skills for teaching		: : <sup>13</sup>	:	51.0% <sup>13</sup>
Foreign language learning	Share of ISCED 2 students learning two or more foreign languages		97.2% 95.8% <sup>12</sup>	63.0%	: <sup>12</sup>
Share of ISCED 3 students in vocational education and training (VET)			31.7% 33.7% <sup>13</sup>	50.4%	48.9% <sup>13</sup>
Employment rate of recent graduates by education attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4		46.1% 38.8%	71.3%	70.8%
	ISCED 5-8		52.8% 47.4%	82.5%	80.5%
	ISCED 3-8 (total)	•	50.4% 44.3%	77.1%	76.1%
Learning mobility	Inbound graduates mobility (bachelor)		: : <sup>13</sup>	:	: <sup>13</sup>
	Inbound graduates mobility (master)		: : <sup>13</sup>	:	: <sup>13</sup>
Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	•	2.5% 3.0%	8.9%	10.7%

Sources: Eurostat (LFS, UOE, GFS); OECD (PISA, TALIS). Notes: • ET 2020 benchmark; data refer to weighted EU average, covering a different number of Member States depending on the source; b= break in time series, d= definition differs, p= provisional, u= low reliability, <sup>12</sup>= 2012, <sup>13</sup>= 2013. Further information is found in the respective section of Volume 1 ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)).

**Figure 1. Position in relation to highest (outer ring) and lowest performers (centre)**



Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2014 and UOE 2013) and OECD (PISA 2012, TALIS 2013). Note: all scores are set between a maximum (the highest performers visualised by the outer ring) and a minimum (the lowest performers visualised by the centre of the figure).

## 2. Main strengths and challenges

In recent years, the Greek education and training sector has undergone strict fiscal consolidation and a number of important structural reforms took place under the economic adjustment programme, which lasted until the end of June 2015. Greece has begun significant work to reorganise general education and upgrade the vocational education and training (VET) sector. The country has also undertaken to reform the governance and organisation of its higher education system. While it is important that these initiatives continue, recent legislation indicates the intention to revert to the educational policy from the pre-2010 period. There is still considerable room to increase efficiency and effectiveness at virtually all levels of education. The Greek education and training system requires further modernisation in terms of its performance and its ways of working, in particular with regard to providing basic skills, and its capacity to ensure the successful transition of young people to the labour market.

The new Memorandum of Understanding concluded in August 2015 sees education as part of a new national growth strategy. It foresees measures for the modernisation of vocational education and training, as well as a review of the Greek education system and a subsequent Education Action Plan.

## 3. Investing in education and training

The Greek education and training sector has been strongly affected by very low and decreasing public spending, due to strict fiscal consolidation. General government expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP is among the lowest in the EU (Figure 2). It stood at 4.5% in 2013, compared to an EU average of 5.0%.<sup>1</sup> The ratio of expenditure to GDP remained more or less stable throughout 2008-13, but since there was a cumulative reduction in GDP of approximately 25% during this time period, spending on education was reduced by at least the same proportion. The Greek authorities report a 36% drop in funding for education during the 2009-15 period (Hellenic Government 2015). Finally, the proportion of spending on education out of total public expenditure is the smallest in the EU, at 7.6%, compared to an EU average of 10.2%.

According to the latest data (European Commission 2014), the 2014 education budget was EUR 5.71 billion (3.16% of GDP), down from EUR 5.92 billion in 2013 (a decrease of around 3.5%). The Greek national authorities indicate even lower expenditure:

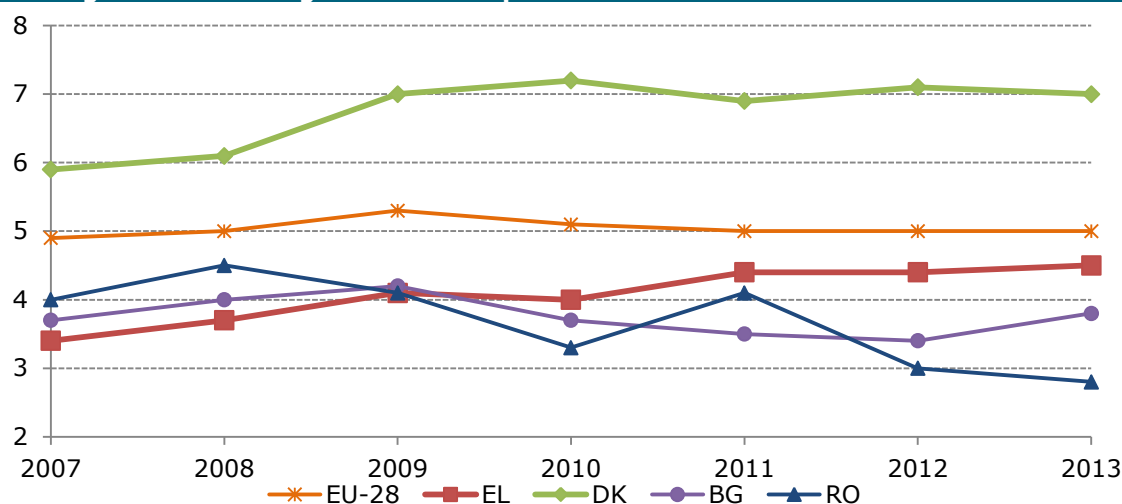
Year/Amount	2015 (proj.)	2014 (est.)	2013 (pay.)	2012 (pay.)	2011 (pay.)	2010 (pay.)	2009 (pay.)	2008 (pay.)
Total EUR	4 331 000	4 624 841	4 869 962	5 370 703	6 203 133	6 297 248	6 933 407	6 635 927
GDP (current prices, EUR)	187 000 000	180 800 000	182 400 000	194 200 000	207 800 000	226 200 000	237 400 000	242 100 000
% GDP	2.3	2.6	2.7	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.7

Source: Hellenic Ministry of Finance (2015)

There are several possible reasons for the large differences seen in the level of spending, such as:

- changes in the composition of public expenditure from year to year;
- a discrepancy between budgeted and actual expenditure on education;
- the fact that, for example, 2014 data refers to the period July 2013-June 2014, whereas the GDP refers to the whole year;
- frequent adjustments to national accounts figures in line with the economic adjustment programme for Greece.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (COFOG) database.

**Figure 2. General government expenditure on education as a share of GDP**


Source: Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (COFOG) database

#### 4. Tackling inequalities

The early school leaving rate was 9% in 2014, with Greece performing significantly better than the EU average (11.1%). The early school leaving rate fell by 5.3 percentage points during the economic crisis, from 14.3 % in 2007. Greece has also already reached its Europe 2020 national target of 9.7%. However, the national average masks significant variation between geographical areas (e.g. in 2013, the *Anatoliki Makedonia* region had an early school leaving rate which was twice the national average), types of schools and social groups. For instance, children born abroad had a much higher early school leaving rate, of 27.8% in 2014, compared to just 7.3% for students born in Greece. Finally, boys were almost twice as likely to leave school early as girls (11.5% compared to 6.6% in 2014).

In contrast to the relatively good figures on early school leaving, the 2012 OECD PISA survey shows that Greece has one of the worst performances in Europe with regard to basic skills. The proportion of low achievers is higher than the EU average in all three fields tested (reading, mathematics and science), and is significantly higher with regard to reading (OECD 2013). There is a slightly worsening trend in performance compared to the 2009 PISA tests and stagnation in all three fields over the last decade. There continues to be a large gender gap in reading and in science, with girls outperforming boys. There is also a large performance gap between native and migrant students, as well as between first- and second-generation students having an immigrant background. In its 2015 National Reform Programme, Greece recognised the need for a strategic framework to deal with the issues of early school leaving and low achievement, based on research and focusing on the most vulnerable social groups (Hellenic Government 2015).

Participation of 4-6 year-olds in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is low. In 2013, 76.4% of children in that age group took part in ECEC, compared to an EU average of 93.1%. A significant increase (9.1 percentage points) in participation rates was recorded between 2008 and 2012. However, in 2012, only 55.6% of 4 year-olds took part in pre-primary education, compared to an EU average of 86.7%. *Attiki* was the only Greek region where less than half of all 4 year-olds were in pre-primary and primary education. In the Greek capital, 30.8% of 4 year-olds took part in early childhood education, approximately one third of the EU average.

In terms of measures targeting early school leaving and low levels of basic skills, a new information system ('MySchool') has been in place for all primary and secondary schools since the 2013/14 school year. It consists of a student database and includes the indicators which are

required for measuring early school leaving. The data is available in an aggregated form at national, regional, provincial, local and school level. The pilot of the 'Education Priority Zones' scheme also aims to improve performance in basic skills through all-day schooling and additional support measures, which now also covers pre-schools. The wider roll-out of these zones and the effective introduction of all-day provision is dependent on the availability of sufficient funding in the future, including from the European Structural and Investment Funds.

September 2014 marked the launch of the 'Social School' programme which aims to draw the attention of teachers, parents and students to social issues. Its main objective is for schools and pre-schools to become places where students are able to develop socially responsible behaviour and an active understanding of citizenship. Following the creation of the Observatory for Preventing School Violence and Bullying in December 2013, a nationwide survey on this issue was held during April-May 2013.

On 17 April 2014, the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs presented new draft legislation on special education. This is designed to improve the structure and functioning of special education arrangements in Greece. A public consultation is being held on the draft legislation, which is expected to be adopted in the near future.

All in all, there is still however a lack of a culture of performance evaluation, which would increase the quality of general education. The Greek education system will need to continue measures to improve the internal and external assessment of schools and educational staff, and their accountability and transparency. A further challenge will be in implementing new decentralisation measures to increase the financial and organisational autonomy of primary and secondary schools across the country.

## 5. Modernising school education

Greece has a highly centralised school education system. While in most European countries teachers in primary education can act relatively autonomously in matters related to teaching, Greece is the only country where the relevant education authorities take decisions nearly on all matters relating to teaching, including the choice of teaching methods (European Commission 2013). In addition, in Greece, only around 40% of 15-year-old students were enrolled in schools whose head teachers said that they often make sure that the professional development activities of teachers are in line with the school's teaching goals. In order to objectively assess the quality of teaching in the country, Greece would benefit from taking part in the next OECD TALIS survey.

The teaching profession remains moderately attractive from a financial point of view, especially given the high overall unemployment rate. In 2012, primary school teachers' salaries were 89% of earnings for full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education, while secondary school teachers earned 93%. The EU averages were 71% and 90% (OECD 2014). However, the salary level in purchasing power standard and salary progression remain fairly limited, e.g. in primary education in 2012, Greek teachers were paid 63.6% of the EU average at the beginning of their career and 77.6% at the end of their career.

Greece is one of the countries with the lowest levels of digital skills in the EU. The country ranks 23rd out of 28 Member States in terms of human capital development and 25th in terms of internet usage (European Commission 2015a). In 2014, 33% of the population had still never used the internet, which is significantly higher than the EU average of 18%. In 2012 as many as 65% of Greeks had few or no digital skills, compared to an EU average of 47%. Within the workforce, levels of ICT skills are also low. For instance, in 2012, as much as 55% of the workforce had few or no digital skills, compared to an EU average of 39%. Greece also has lower rates of daily use of the internet ('frequent users'), with 49% of the population reporting going online every day in 2014, compared to an EU average of 65%. Significant work to

improve digital education and training is required, as the lack of digital skills may slow down progress in developing the Greek digital economy and hinder economic growth in general.

At primary and secondary levels, the Greek education system was significantly rationalised between 2011 and 2014. Greece previously had one of the lowest numbers of teaching hours in the OECD and one of the smallest numbers of pupils per class. In addition, numerous organisational rigidities impeded a rational allocation of staff. Increasing the number of students per classroom and the number of teaching hours has now brought Greece closer to the OECD average. Other rationalisation measures were also introduced, such as consolidating the school and pre-school networks, a new electronic database of schools, legal changes to allow for more staff mobility and a decrease in the number of temporary teachers. The wage bill and operational expenditures have therefore been significantly reduced, leading to an approximately 24% reduction in human resources costs, but these changes have also had a significant impact on the teaching force. For instance, the 2015 national reform programme estimated there were approximately 25 000 vacancies for teachers in primary and secondary education schools.

Regarding in-service teacher training, a number of actions were undertaken in 2013-14, in line with the introduction of revised curricula in Greece. These included projects co-financed with EU structural funds, such as the high-profile Digital School project (Box 1). The 2015 national reform programme considers teachers' education and training to be part of improving education quality and efficiency. However, the omnibus law adopted in May 2015<sup>2</sup> seems to roll back a number of key improvements in the primary and secondary education sector, in particular as regards the autonomy of schools and the need for internal and external evaluation of schools and teachers.

The Memorandum of Understanding from August 2015 foresees a full review of primary and secondary education, to be undertaken by the OECD and international experts by April 2016 (European Commission 2015b). The recommendations formulated in this review are set to constitute a basis for the necessary legislative and regulatory changes to be carried out by June 2016.

### **Box 1. The Digital School project, part of the 'New School' initiative**

The most well-known reform taking place in Greece to introduce ICT in schools is the Digital School project. The project was launched in 2010 to better integrate ICT into curricula and teaching practices. The project has three main goals:

- creation of a single digital environment, which will ensure better educational results both for general subjects as well as specifically in ICT;
- better allocation of resources, by incorporating ICT as a tool for efficient administration and management of the education system at both regional and central level;
- better accessibility, using digital resources to provide equal access to the education system.

The results expected from implementing the project are as follows:

- increase in-class ICT use by teachers (from 36 % to 75 %);
- more schools with fast internet access (from 30 % to 65 %);
- more schools with their own website (from 37 % to 70 %);
- more students with their own e-mail accounts (from 44 % to 75 %);
- fewer students per computer (from 17 to 8).

In order for the implementation of the Digital School to be successful, three priorities were identified:

- 1) improving the infrastructure;
- 2) producing digital material including new curricula and e-books;

<sup>2</sup> Law 4327/2015 on "Emergency measures for primary, secondary and higher education" of 14 May 2015.



### 3) improving teacher training.

To achieve these, the following actions are being gradually implemented:

- an educational platform and digital content are being created;
- interactive media and classroom equipment and high-speed internet connections are being provided for all schools;
- support for digital actions and infrastructure is being provided;
- teacher training is being given in using ICT (for approx. 60 000 teachers).

The project is currently being implemented and is expected to be completed in stages. Significant progress has been made in some fields, such as e-books for primary and secondary education, e.g. the 'Light Tree' (*Photodendro*, <http://photodentro.edu.gr>) and e-Books (<http://ebooks.edu.gr/>) are already partly operational. However, more work needs to be done on installing ICT equipment in all schools and on teacher training. The full and timely implementation of the Digital School project is crucial for the future of the education and training sector in Greece.

The project is being co-funded by the European Social Fund 'Education and Lifelong Learning' operational programme and the European Regional Development Fund 'Digital Convergence' operational programme for Greece. The project's content is available at <http://dschool.edu.gr>.

## 6. Modernising higher education

The tertiary education attainment rate in Greece is around the EU average (37.2%, compared to an EU-28 rate of 37.9%, in 2014). Greece has also surpassed the Europe 2020 national target of 32%. However, tertiary education attainment remains very low for those born outside Greece, at only 8.4% in 2014 (while the EU average is 28.6%), compared with 41.3% for those born in Greece. A significantly higher proportion of women (41.6%) complete higher education than men (32.9%). However, Greece continues to suffer from very low levels of employability for recent tertiary graduates,<sup>3</sup> at only 47.4% in 2014, in comparison with an EU average of 80.5%. Finally, Greece has relatively balanced levels of incoming and outgoing students, with a 3.8% inbound mobility rate and 4.5% outbound mobility rate during the 2011/12 academic year (European Commission 2015c).

In 2013-14, Greece carried out a comprehensive reform of the governance and organisation of its higher education system. As part of the *Athina* project, it has completed a wave of consolidation of higher education institutions, reorganising the academic map of the country, while tackling the issues of the increase in the number of study fields and the geographical dispersion of departments and faculties. Under *Athina*, two universities were closed down (the University of Central Greece and the University of Western Greece). A large number of departments at universities and technological institutes were also consolidated. *Athina* reduced the number of higher education departments by 123 (Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Education 2015), with a much stronger impact on the technological institutes (TEI). *Athina's* main objective was to upgrade higher education institutions by rationalising scientific fields and strengthening leading departments and institutions, making them more innovative and creating centres of excellence. The government's intention was also to better connect the academic sector with regional development needs.

In the future, the higher education system could benefit from providing better matching between higher education outcomes and the future skills needs of the Greek economy (e.g. using the *ERGANI* system, which monitors the situation of the labour market), and by developing professionally focused tertiary VET opportunities. A step in the right direction is the participation of 8 500 university and technological educational institute graduates in a practical training programme implemented by the Greek manpower and employment organisation

<sup>3</sup> People aged 20-34 who left education between one and three years before the reference year.

(OAED, the Greek public employment service), thanks to the transfer of EUR 45 million from the national strategic reference framework co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds.

The provisions in laws 4009/2011 and 4076/2012 on modernising higher education organisation and governance continued to be implemented in 2014. In particular, an external evaluation of universities was carried out by the Hellenic Quality Assurance Authority, new organisational charts and internal regulations for higher education institution were drawn up, and university councils were put in place. During 2013/14, 85% of higher education institutions were externally assessed. This evaluation was expected to be completed by the end of 2014, and the results were supposed to be made public. The majority of the previously centralised powers and responsibilities, including financial and human resource management, would then have been delegated *de facto* to higher education institutions.

However, law 4327/2015 seems to roll back a certain number of crucial improvements in the governance and functioning of the higher education sector, including the limitation of the powers of university councils and the abolishment of time limits for keeping the student status (Hellenic Parliament 2015). The public consultation of this new draft omnibus law on higher education was completed on 29 June 2015, but it was not debated in Parliament.

In its 2015 National Reform Programme, the government seemed to lay more emphasis on equal access as a key issue for tertiary education (Hellenic Government 2015). This is a positive development, as this is the first time in many years that this question has been publicly addressed by the Greek authorities. Steps in this direction have already been taken, with the adoption of law 4283/2014 in September 2014, providing people with disabilities more access to higher education institutions.

The review foreseen in the Memorandum of Understanding from August 2015 includes higher education. The review is to be presented by April 2016 and necessary legislative changes by June 2016.

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

Participation in initial VET remains modest in Greece, with a rate of 33.7%, in 2013 in comparison to an EU average of 48.9%. Greece also has a very low employment rate for recent upper secondary graduates,<sup>4</sup> at 38.8% in 2014, compared to an EU average of 70.8%.

Adult participation in lifelong learning in Greece remains very low and has tended to stagnate over time. It stood at 3.0% in 2014, compared to an EU average of 10.7%. Some groups of people, such as the lower skilled (ISCED level 0-2) - with a participation rate of barely 0.4% in 2014, compared to an EU average of 4.4% - or older people and those living in isolated, remote and sparsely populated areas have less access to training (Figure 3). As of September 2016, the OECD's PIAAC survey will provide, for the first time, direct and reliable data on the level of basic skills of adults in Greece.

Work to modernise the VET sector began in September 2013 with law 4186/2013 on secondary education. This act provides for an optional final apprenticeship year for vocational upper secondary school students, as from September 2016. This additional year will lead to a higher level of qualifications (European qualifications framework level 5). The Greek authorities are now, in principle, ready to ensure the effective implementation of this law and the government is expected to modernise and expand vocational education and apprenticeships, including by:

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<sup>4</sup> People aged 20-34 who left education between one and three years before the reference year.

- 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;
- matching VET provision with the needs of the labour market.

These investment priorities have been included in the programming for EU structural funds for 2014-20. However, there have been considerable delays in implementing this reform, and this fact risks undermining its full deployment by September 2016.

Post-secondary non-tertiary vocational training institute (IEK) graduates who began an internship between 2008 and June 2015 and completed it no later than the end of December 2015 are eligible for a financial subsidy. This project, financed through the European Social Fund, involves implementing programmes for optional practical training for graduates from public and private vocational training institutes, so as to develop links between initial vocational training and the labour market. The internship programme aims to improve the integration of students at vocational training institutes into the labour market by strengthening the capacities and the skills of graduates. The programme is expected to focus on around 9 200 students. The draft referencing report from the Hellenic qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework envisages an upgrade of the qualifications acquired through studying at vocational training institutes to level 5.

In September 2014, under the motto '*ready in 18'*, the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs launched vocational training schools (SEK). This is a new type of institution providing recognised national certification and training in 56 specialities, aimed at those who have completed compulsory education. The schools are intended to provide initial training to those who have completed compulsory formal education. The course will last three years, with two years of vocational training and one year of apprenticeship. Attendance at public vocational training schools is free of charge. In the end, the number of students in apprenticeship schemes is to be increased, although the source of funding for this increase is not clear. Greece has hence adopted a major initiative to upgrade and expand VET and apprenticeships, but its full and timely implementation is still an open question.

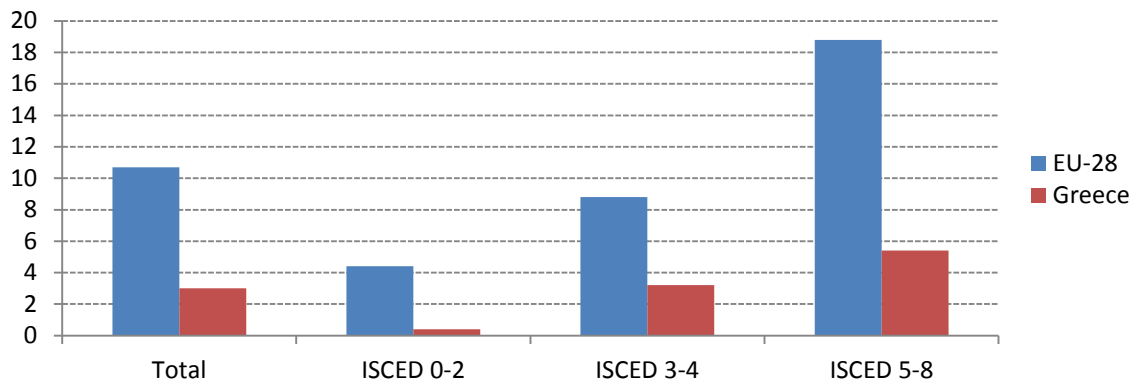
At the same time, also at upper secondary level, dual learning programmes are offered at vocational schools of the public employment service (EPAS) supervised by the Greek Ministry of Labour. The government intends to gradually integrate these vocational schools into the so-called formal education system (i.e. allowing students to progress to higher education). Several popular specialisations, including health-related and applied arts specialisations, will be reintroduced into school-based VET programmes at post-secondary level.

Finally, the 2015 National Reform Programme clearly recognises the need to improve the quality and effectiveness of VET, notably through working with stakeholders; developing a well-functioning skills-forecasting mechanism; and setting up a national quality assurance system. Also the Memorandum of Understanding from August 2015 contains a set of key measures furthering the modernisation of VET in Greece.

Improved access to lifelong learning, focusing in particular on the most vulnerable groups and including measures to recognise previously acquired competences, is a priority for programming European Structural and Investment Funds for 2014-20. At its meeting on 28 May 2013, the Council of Lifelong Learning adopted the national lifelong learning programme (2013-15). It sets out the medium-term strategic framework for lifelong learning in Greece, in which adult education and training is a policy priority. However, the 2015 National Reform Programme recognises that Greece still needs a long-term strategic and holistic vision for developing lifelong learning in the future. Greece is also one of the countries still working on their national

qualifications framework, ensuring qualifications are based on learning outcomes, and preparing to reference these to the European qualifications framework.

**Figure 3. Adult participation in lifelong learning by level of education (2014)**



Source: Eurostat

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European Commission  
Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Education and Training - Monitor 2015

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

2015 — pp. 10 — 21 x 29.7cm

ISBN 978-92-79-51651-1

ISSN 2466-9997

doi: 10.2766/872466

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