



# spotlight on VET

# GREECE

## VET in Greece

Vocational education and training (VET) in Greece is strongly State-regulated and, until recently, mostly offered through a school-based approach. Overall responsibility is with the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity.

Compulsory schooling in Greece lasts until age 15 and completion of lower secondary education programmes (*Gymnasio*). VET is offered at upper secondary and post-secondary level.

There are two main routes at upper secondary level; general education and VET. Both lead to an equivalent upper secondary school leaving certificate at EQF level 4. On completion of the first year, learners are allowed to change direction from general to vocational education and vice versa.

The main VET route goes through three-year vocational programmes at *Epaggelmatiko Lykeio* school (EPAL) that also lead to a specialisation degree. EPAL schools have over 25% of work-based learning (WBL). According to the 2016 reform, these programmes consist of:

- first year common for all learners (general education);
- second year; learners choose among nine sectors, with topics such as health and social care, mechanical engineering;
- third year (specialisation year).

EPAL graduates can take part in a designated national examination for admission to tertiary education programmes that correspond to their specialisation. The number of available places is governed by a quota system. EPAL programmes are also offered to employed people with lower secondary education, at evening classes lasting four years.

Adults who graduated from a general education programme at *Geniko Lykeio* school (the GEL) are entitled to enrol in VET, in the second year of EPAL.

Two-year apprenticeship programmes (EPAS) are also available at upper secondary level. They are open to young people, 16 to 23 years old, who have completed at least the first year of upper secondary education. These programmes have more than 80% of WBL, and lead to

specialisation degrees at EQF level 4. EPAS graduates can continue their education in post-secondary VET programmes.

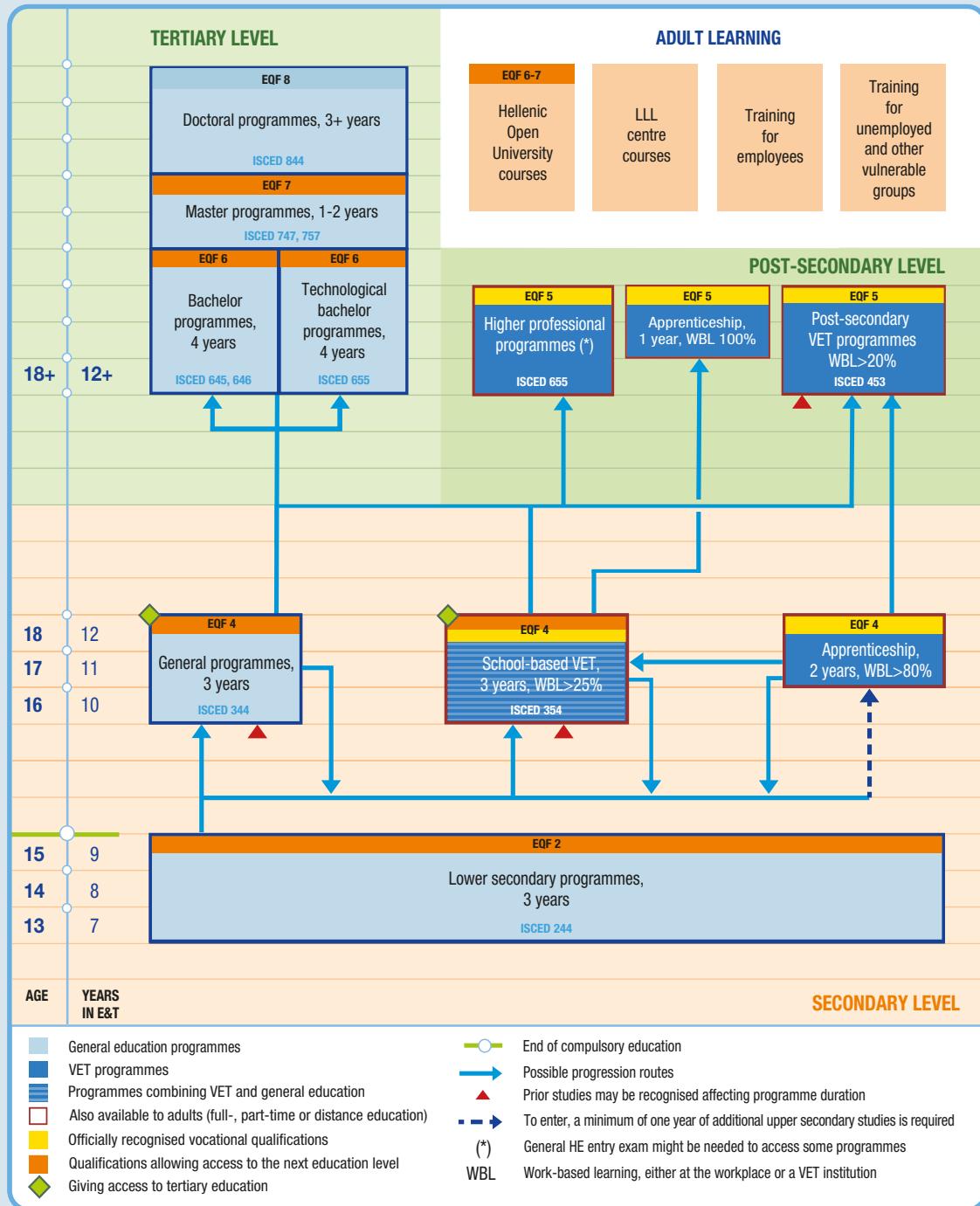
At post-secondary level VET is offered in two formats:

- (a) one-year apprenticeship programmes (EQF level 5, WBL 100%) introduced in 2016, offered by the local EPAL schools in cooperation with the Manpower Employment Organisation. This programme is offered only for people who hold an upper secondary school leaving certificate and an EPAL specialisation degree.
- (b) two and half-year post-secondary VET programmes (WBL > 20%) offered by public and private training providers (IEK) to upper secondary graduates. These programmes allow learners to get just an attestation of programme completion; alternatively, they can take vocational training certification examinations (practical and theoretical) conducted by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) leading to a post-secondary VET certificate (EQF/NQF level 5). EPAL graduates, who continue their studies in the related field, can enrol in the second year directly.

Two- to four-year higher professional programmes are offered by higher professional schools, under the supervision of the competent ministry. Admission is granted via general national examinations or a programme-specific admission examination. The diplomas awarded can be either equivalent to higher technological education diplomas (EQF level 6) in the case of merchant navy academies, or are considered non-university tertiary level diplomas (EQF level 5) for example, dance and theatre schools.

Continuing vocational training is offered to adults in centres for lifelong learning run by regional authorities, municipalities, social partners, chambers of commerce, professional associations, higher education institutions and private entities. EOPPEP is responsible for quality assuring non-formal education, accrediting providers and certifying qualifications for graduates in accordance with relevant provisions.

# VET in the Greek education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Greece.

## Distinctive features of VET

Greek society strongly favours general education and appreciates university studies. Both these factors reflect sociological stereotypes rooted in long-lasting perceptions and have affected overall VET attractiveness. VET has been characterised by: higher dropout rates; multiplicity and complexity of the legal framework; challenges regarding the design and implementation of VET-related policies; and impediments to linking with the labour market. It remains a second choice and often attracts low performers, who may also come from lower economic backgrounds.

## Challenges and policy responses

Since 2016, the education ministry has been conducting major reform of the VET system, taking into account challenges raised by the financial crisis:

- high unemployment rates (declined from 27.8% in 2014 to 20.5% by September 2017, however behind the rate of 9.5% in 2009); high NEET (people not in employment, education or training) rates (21.9 % in 2016), and low lifelong learning participation (4% in 2016);
- unexpected influx of refugees halted on Greek territory (requiring training and education initiatives which are currently being designed and implemented);
- ageing population: the Hellenic Statistical Authority, ELSTAT, estimates that working age population will be 54.9% of the total population in 2050 against 65.5% in 2016;
- increased brain drain (highly qualified and mostly young people).

To counteract these challenges the education ministry has undertaken the following key initiatives:

- implementation of a coherent national strategic framework for upgrading VET and apprenticeships (NSF, April 2016). This aims at: promoting and enhancing the social role of

VET; upgrading and expanding apprenticeships; strengthening links between VET and the labour market; increasing VET quality; and promoting VET attractiveness;

- reform from 2016 has established a new EPAL programme structure to reduce early overspecialisation by focusing more on key competences in the first year of the programme; this aids permeability between general and vocational education and allows for better allocation of the teaching staff;
- reform from 2016 has established a new pathway, a one-year apprenticeship programme at post-secondary level to offer upper secondary VET graduates the chance to acquire labour-market-relevant skills and to support labour market entry. This initiative was piloted and is now in the second phase of implementation. The aim is to include all 35 specialties in the near future;
- introduction of the skills diagnosis mechanism to reduce skills mismatch between VET and the labour market through updating VET curricula (EIEAD, National Labour and Human Resources Institute).

While Greece has demonstrated good performance in several areas of VET policymaking, as well as implementation in alignment with European guidelines and strategic thematic priorities, these efforts need time to yield concrete results and reach their maximum potential. However, interventions in the form of the new EPAL, apprenticeship, interconnection with labour market needs, as well as reinforcement of high-level VET at higher education institutions and improved governance under newly established committees, are all central features of current VET reform. First indications of VET enrolment (IEK, apprenticeship) have been promising.

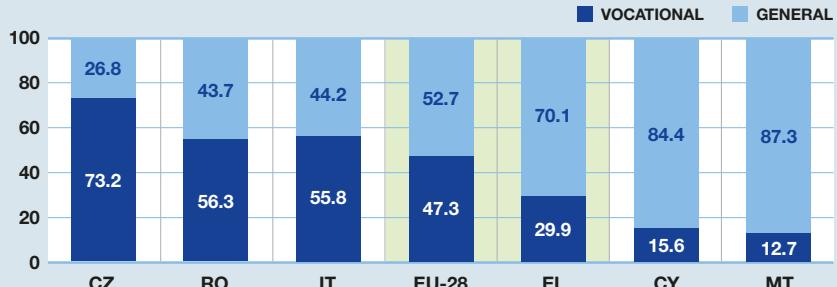


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## Education and training in figures

**Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes**  
 % of all students in upper secondary education, 2015



NB: EU-28 value is based on estimated Eurostat values.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 8.12.2017.

**Lifelong learning**  
 % of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2016



Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 8.12.2017.

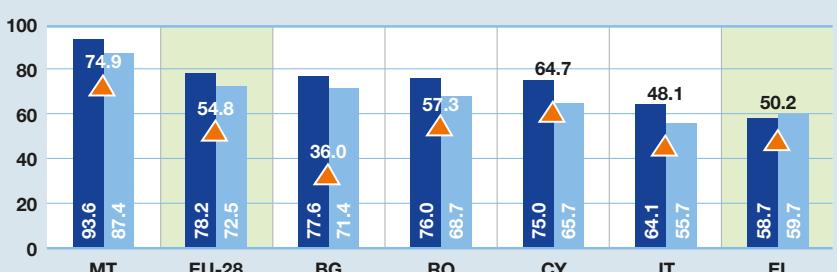
**Early leavers from education and training**  
 % of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and who were not in further education or training during the last four weeks prior to the survey, 2016



NB: Low reliability for 2016 HR value.

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 8.12.2017.

**Employment rates of young graduates**  
 % of 20 to 34 year-olds no longer in education and training, 2016



■ Upper vocational secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)  
 □ Upper general secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4)  
 ▲ Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 8.12.2017.



## Further information

- Cedefop ReferNet Greece (2017). *VET in Europe: country report 2016.* [https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016\\_CR\\_GR.pdf](https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_CR_GR.pdf)
- Cedefop (2017). *Statistical overviews on VET – Greece.* <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/statistical-overviews-vet-greece-2017>
- Cedefop (2018). *Apprenticeship review: Greece. Modernising and expanding apprenticeship in Greece.* Luxembourg: Publication Office <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4160>

<a href="http://www.minedu.gov.gr">http://www.minedu.gov.gr</a>	Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs
<a href="http://www.eoppep.gr">http://www.eoppep.gr</a>	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP)
<a href="http://www.gsaee.edu.gr">http://www.gsaee.edu.gr</a>	General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning
<a href="http://www.statistics.gr">http://www.statistics.gr</a>	Hellenic Statistical Authority
<a href="http://www.refernet.gr">http://www.refernet.gr</a>	ReferNet Greece

This Spotlight is based on input from EOPPEP (ReferNet partner in 2016-17).

