European Commission

Education and Training Monitor 2013

Greece

Education and Training

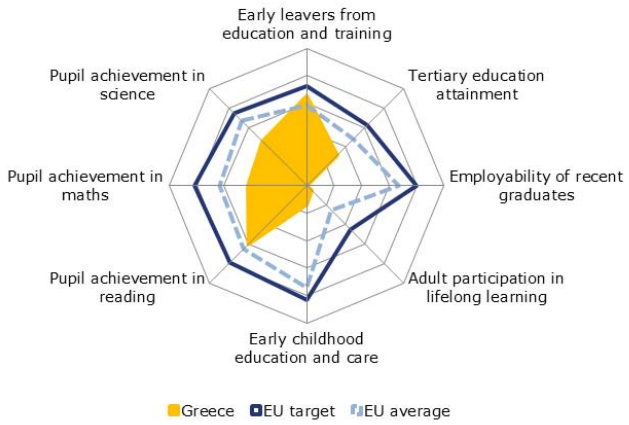
1. Key indicators and benchmarks

Europe 2020 headline targets			Greece 2009	Greece 2012	EU average 2009	EU average 2012	Europe 2020 target / Benchmark
1. Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)			14.5%	11.4%	14.2% EU28	12.7% EU28	**EU target: 10%** National target: 9.7%
2. Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)			26.5%	30.9%	32.1% EU28	35.7% EU28	**EU target: 40%** National target: 32%
ET 2020 Benchmarks							
3. Early childhood education and care (4 years old - year before start of compulsory primary)			70.2% 08	74.6% 11	91.7%	93.2% 11	**95%**
4. Basic skills Low achievers (15 year-olds; Level 1 or lower in PISA study)	Reading		21.3%	:	19.6%	:	**15%**
	Mathematics		30.3%	:	22.2%	:	**15%**
	Science		25.3%	:	17.7%	:	**15%**
5. Learning mobility	Initial vocational training (IVET)	**a.** Students participating in Leonardo da Vinci programs as a share of vocational students at ISCED 3	1.7% 10	2.1% 11	0.6%	0.7% 11	
	Higher Education	**b.** Erasmus inbound students as % of student population in host country		0.4% 11		1.1% 11	
		c. Inbound degree mobile students as % of student population in the host country		5.0% 11		7.0% 11	
6. Employment rate of graduates (age 20-34) having left education 1-3 years before reference year			64.7%	42.9%	78.3%	75.7%	**82%**
7. Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)			3.3%	2.9%	9.3%	9.0%	**15%**
Proposed ET 2020 benchmark							
8. Foreign languages skills	**a.** ISCED 2 students at proficiency level B1 or higher in first foreign language[1]		:	48.0% 11	:	43.5% 11	
	b. ISCED 2 students learning two or more foreign languages		97.0%	97.2% 10	58.6%	60.8% 10	
Other ET 2020 Indicators							
9. Investment in education and training	**a.** General government expenditure on education (% of GDP)		4.3%	4.1% 11	5.5%	5.3% 11	
	b. Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil/student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	: 08	: 10	€ 5,732 08	€ 6,021 10	
		ISCED 3-4	: 08	: 10	€ 6,964 08	€ 7,123 10	
		ISCED 5-6	: 08	: 10	€ 9,309 08	€ 9,168 10	
10. Digital competences	**a.** Pupils in grade 4 (ISCED 1) using computers at school		:	:	60.7% 07	64.7% 11	
	b. Individuals aged 16-74 with high computer skills[2]		13.0%	24.0%	25.0%	26.0%	
11. Entrepreneurial competences	Individuals aged 18-64 who believe to have the required skills and knowledge to start a business		:	:	42.3% a	42.0% a	
12. Vocational education and training	Share of vocational students at ISCED 3		30.9% 08	31.7% 11	49.6%	50.3% 11	
13. Skills for future labour markets Projected change in employment 2010-2020 in %	High qualification		:	9.5%	:	19.1% EU28	
	Medium qualification		:	6.9%	:	4.6% EU28	
	Low qualification		:	-29.9%	:	-20.2% EU28	
14. Low-skilled adults	Literacy		:	:	:	19.9% EU17	
	Numeracy		:	:	:	23.6% EU17	
	Problem solving in technology rich environments[3]		:	:	:	26.9% EU13	

Source: Cedefop: 13 / EAC: 10a,b / European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC): 8a / Eurostat (Government finance statistics): 9a / Eurostat (LFS): 1, 2, 6, 7 / Eurostat (ISS): 10b / Eurostat (UOE): 3, 8b, 9b, 10c, 12 / IEA TIMSS: 10a / Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 11 / OECD (PIAAC): 14 / OECD (PISA): 4

Notes: 07 =2007, 08 =2008, 09 =2009, 10 =2010, 11 =2011, e= estimate, a= unweighted average b= break, p= provisional
Number of countries included in EU average: PISA=25, Entrepreneurship=18, Language skills=13, ICT/Computers at school=13, others: EU27
[1]= average of skills tested in reading, listening, writing, [2]= having carried out 5-6 specific computer related activities, [3]= Results cover people with scores below level 1 as well as people who have no computer experience or failed the ICT test

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



Source: DG EAC calculations on the basis of data from Eurostat (LFS 2012 and UOE 2011) and OECD (PISA 2009). *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 chart).

2. Main challenges

The Greek education and training system faces serious challenges in terms of its quality, its efficiency and its capacity to ensure a successful transition of young people to employment.

Greece is faced by multiple challenges, in particular the need to ensure wider access and to raise the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC), to increase adult participation in lifelong learning, to improve equity and to address geographic disparities, to value teachers and trainers more as well as reward them adequately, to improve the quality of initial teacher education and strengthen teachers' and trainers' professional standards, to enhance the quality, attractiveness and relevance of iVET to the labour market, to improve school infrastructures at all levels, and finally to make serious progress in improving the educational situation of disadvantaged groups, including migrants and Roma.

Given a context of strict fiscal consolidation under the current economic adjustment programme the Greek education and training sector is adversely affected by decreasing public spending and important budgetary cuts. However, perhaps more than lack of funds, the effective implementation of systemic reforms (primary, secondary and tertiary education, life-long learning) remains the key issue in the Greek context.

3. Investing in skills and qualifications

Investing in education in times of economic crisis

In the case of Greece the reduction in public spending on education was indeed very important in recent years. In fact the ratio of expenditure to GDP remained stable in Greece throughout the crisis (COFOG data, 4.1% of GDP throughout the period 2008-11), but since the cumulated GDP loss was of ca. 25% during this same time span, the spending on education was reduced virtually in the same proportion. Low public investment makes achievement of national targets (e.g. early school leaving, tertiary attainment) difficult. Investment in this field is crucial to support long-term sustainable growth in Greece. In the current context, however, in which new spending may not be an option, "smart spending" would include taking full advantage of the possibilities of the EU structural funds which can underpin education reforms and also finance educational infrastructure.

As regards education and training, Greece is pursuing the implementation of the provisions of the up-dated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality, in particular its section 2.11 on the up-grading of the Greek education system, which contains a reference to the Action Plan for the improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system[1]. Regarding the financing of education, in accordance with the MoU and given the strict fiscal consolidation context Greece is set to proceed with the reduction of spending on education and training by 0.1 of GDP per year throughout the period 2013-15 (in all ca. further 0.3% of GDP), which renders structural reforms particularly difficult and makes necessary efficiency gains a key element.

Skills

School education produces rather weak results in terms of basic skills: the share of low achievers in reading, mathematics and science remains above the EU average, with a persistent achievement gaps between migrants

[1] Based largely on the 2011 OECD Education Policy Advice for Greece report, see http://www.oecd.org/greece/48407731.pdf

and natives. This fact is particularly worrying given the forecasted shift in the employment pattern by qualification for Greece by 2020, with a very strong decrease in low qualifications demand (-29.9% by 2020).

As regards entrepreneurship, the share of the population believing to have the required skills and knowledge to start a business (50%) is among the highest in the EU. Learning of foreign languages starts in primary school and figures indicate above EU average language skills.

ICT skills of the adult population are close to the EU average, with 24% of individuals aged 16-74 in 2012 with high computer skills. The "Digital School" strand of the New School reform is the main vehicle for exploiting the potential of ICT and open education resources. This scheme has been piloted in 800 primary and 1.250 lower secondary schools aiming to provide a platform for digital content and tools and for teacher training, but its future depends on the availability of funding.

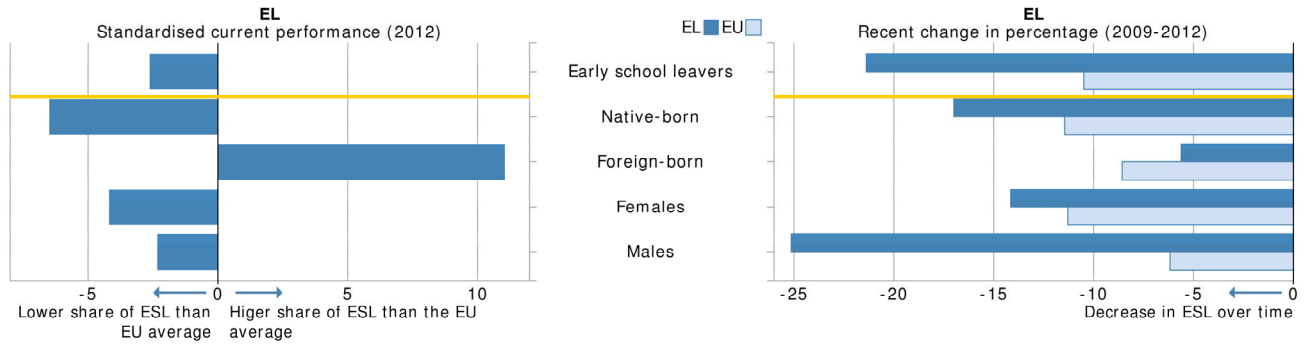
Greece is currently developing an NQF for lifelong learning (Hellenic qualifications framework, HQF), which should include all parts and levels of education, training and qualification and will accommodate non-formal learning. The referencing of the national qualifications system levels to the EQF is scheduled to take place before the end of 2013.

4. Tackling early school leaving and raising the bar in school education

Greece performs slightly better than the EU average in early school leaving (11.4% in 2012, having dropped from 15.5% in 2006), in comparison with 12.8% for the EU average in 2012. The national target of 9.7% by 2020 remains an ambitious one. The ESL rated diminished by 1.7 p.p. during the period 2011-12. However the national average masks a significant variation between different geographical areas, types of schools and social groups. For instance, the sub-group of people born-abroad is lagging very significantly behind, with an ESL rate of 42% in 2012 versus 8.3% for the native born student group. The current reduction could also be a side-effect of the economic crisis, hence more needs to be done to sustainably improve education and to prevent ESL.

There is a persistent achievement gap between migrant-background and native pupils as well as inequalities in educational opportunities and outcomes in all levels of education and training; a large share (approx. 15%) of young 15-24 years old are not in employment, education and/or training (NEETs).In addition there are high drop-out rates from education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Finally regional disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes are also very visible. Since late 2009, school reforms are aiming to improve compulsory education and to tackle low performance in basic skills. Structured around 20 broad objectives, they put emphasis on foreign languages, revised curricula, all-day provision, a culture of evaluation, teacher education, reform of special needs provision, a pilot scheme of Education Priority Zones and the already previously mentioned "digital school" pilot scheme. Its success hinges on its future co-financing, i.e. from EU structural funds.

Figure 2. Early leavers from education and training: sub-groups

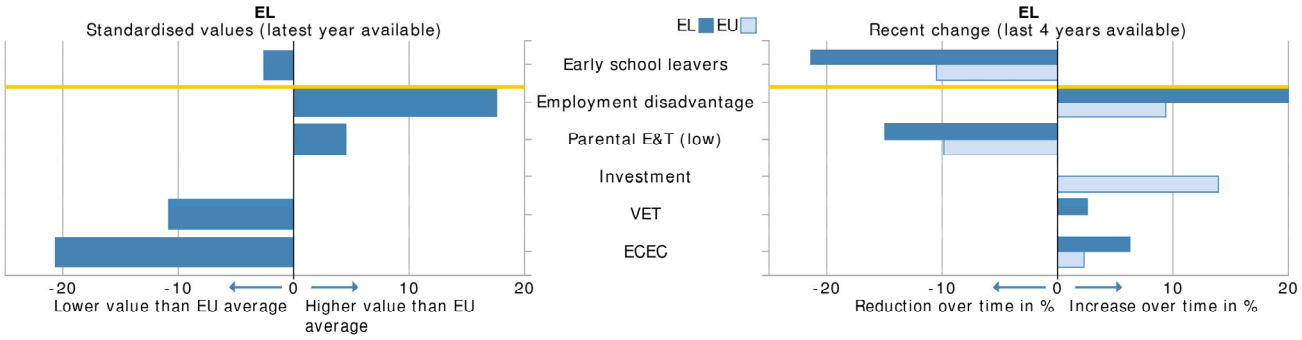


Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* ESL = early school leaving. See Annex 2 for further information.

It is worth noting that the employment disadvantage (incentive to stay in school) is high and increasing while VET and ECEC participation are low but also increasing. In September 2013 a new law reforming upper secondary education and in particular the VET system has been adopted by the Greek Parliament.

Greece performs significantly below the EU average in early childhood education, with a 73.5% participation rate in 2010 as against an EU-27 average of 92.3%. In the future Greece will have to substantially increase access to quality early childhood education and care, especially for disadvantaged families and invest in ECEC infrastructure as well as provision, e.g. through the use of structural funds for the period 2014-20.

Figure 3. Early leavers from education and training: sub-indicators



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

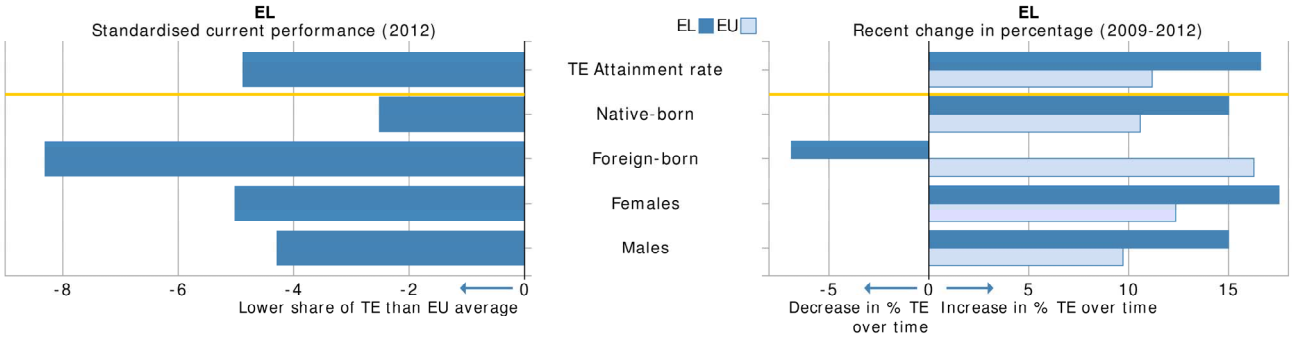
The need to consolidate public finances has led to reductions in the recruitment of teachers and in teacher salaries, although the profession remains relatively attractive. While the Greek authorities argue that the quality of the education provided has not been affected by spending cuts (since some compensating measures have been taken such as extensive school network rationalisation which reduced operating costs) there is a risk that the budgetary measures could potentially hamper progress towards the Europe 2020 targets, e.g. as regards the ESL rate, due to the mergers or/and closures of existing primary and secondary schools. As regards teaching hours Greece is one of the countries in which is the lowest of all OECD member states (400 hours *per annum* in 2009 in comparison to the OECD average of 700 hours this same year)[2]. The recently passed Omnibus Law increased its duration by two hours per week.

There is room for improvement as regards professional and personal support for new teachers: early career support is limited to 100 hours at present, a proposed new system of mentoring has not been implemented yet, and there is no workload reduction for new teachers[3].

5. Encouraging participation in tertiary education and modernising higher education

Tertiary attainment rate increased in 2012 to 30.9% but it is still lower than the EU average of 35.7% in 2012 and has been increasing relatively slowly over the past decade (25.4% in 2000). Tertiary attainment in Greece increased by as much as 2.0 p.p. during the period 2011-12 and Greece is now close to its national target of 32% set for 2020. Finally, it should be added that tertiary attainment remains very low for the foreign born group, with only 10.3% in 2012.

Figure 4. Tertiary education attainment: sub-groups

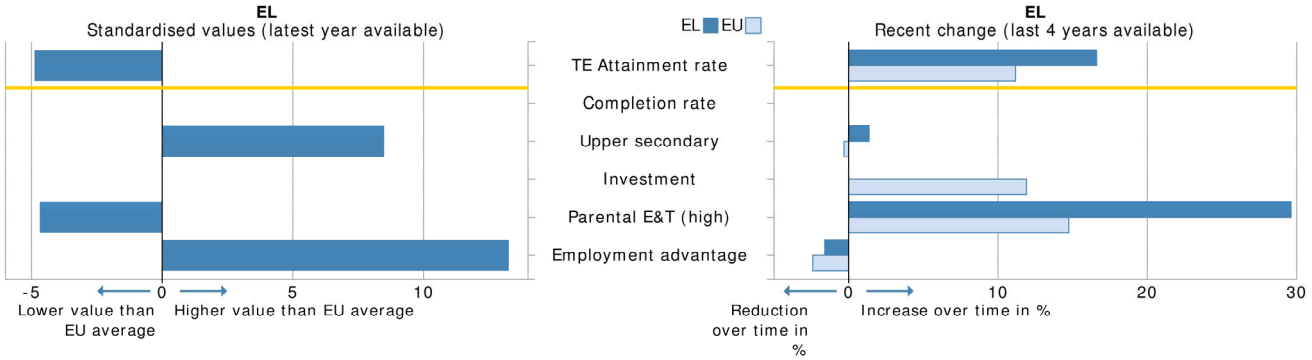


Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* TE = tertiary education. See Annex 2 for further information.

It is worth noting that the tertiary attainment is low despite strong (but somewhat decreasing) employment advantage. Upper secondary supply is large, so opportunity does exist.

2 See the OECD study and 2009 figures at http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/48631419.pdf.
3 Study on Policy Measures to Improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe, European Commission 2013.

Figure 5. Tertiary education attainment: sub-indicators



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

In the field of tertiary education, structural reform legislation voted through the Greek Parliament in 2011 with a big majority remains only partially implemented. The reform includes, inter alia, changes in the governance and financial autonomy of universities, their re-organisation around "schools" rather than narrowly specialised "departments", mergers and redeployment of institutions to better serve regional development and labour market needs, internationalisation, implementation of a culture of evaluation, better use of universities to provide lifelong learning opportunities to local and regional populations, better monitoring of inputs and outputs. Reform measures are included in the MoU and are on-going, with the majority of them yet to be fully implemented. The rationalisation and evaluation measures are going in the direction of the consolidation of the network of higher education institutions (*Athina* Project) and the improvement of the quality of higher education.

Finally, the appointment in late 2012 of the President and the Governing Body of the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQAA) took place, *de facto* providing for the effective activation of this important agency, which will be in charge of the external evaluation of universities

6. Facilitating the transition from education to work

The employment rate of graduates suffered hugely from the economic crisis and has decreased alarmingly since 2006, further increasing the gap in relation to the EU average (42.9% vs. 75.7% in 2012).

In Greece more than half of the young people are unemployed (64.9% in the second quarter of 2013). In addition in the Greek case approximately one third of the jobless youth are both low skilled and long-term unemployed. This situation has also a strong impact on emigration of young people, in particular higher education graduates.

In the field of vocational education and training (VET), Greece decided to join the EU Alliance for Apprenticeships and seems to be committed to the establishment of a genuine dual system, drawing on the example of other EU member States (e.g. through a bilateral agreement with Germany). This in turn could provide for a significant reduction in the very high youth unemployment, but will require closer cooperation with social partners as well as the establishment of a functioning governance structure.

A new law has been adopted by Parliament in September 2013 aimed at introducing in the country the notion of dual-VET and more apprenticeships. Its implementation remains a key issue for the future of this sector of education in Greece.

7. Upgrading skills through lifelong learning

Adult participation in lifelong learning has been and still is far below the EU average and one of the lowest in the EU (2.9% in 2012, but with only 1.6% for the foreign born group), with the gap being even more marked for particular population groups such as migrants, low-skilled, unemployed, women and older people[4]. In addition, only one out of five enterprises reports to offer continuing vocational training to their employees (EU: 66%), with only 28% of employee participating in it (EU: 48%) .

The national Lifelong Learning (LLL) Strategy was adopted in 2011 by Greece, with the aim of providing more and better learning opportunities for adults and non-traditional learners. The plan is not however an overarching strategic vision for learning within the meaning of a 'coherent and comprehensive LLL strategy'. It is in fact an adult education plan with two strands: initial and continuing training for the labour market; and general adult

[4] Eurostat, LFS 2012.

education. The self-imposed national target is to reach 6 % of adult participation in LLL by 2013 and seems indeed very difficult to reach.

In June 2013 the Greek General Secretariat for LLL has published a national LLL strategic document for 2013-15, which is a step in the right direction but whose duration is in fact quite limited .