



VET in Greece

Vocational education and training (VET) in Greece is State-regulated, combining school-based and work-based learning (WBL). It is offered at upper secondary and post-secondary levels. Overall responsibility is with the education ministry, in cooperation with the labour ministry.

Compulsory schooling lasts until age 15 and completion of lower secondary education programmes (*Gymnasio*). There are two main routes at upper secondary level: general education (*Geniko Lykeio* with 70% of learners) and VET (30%). 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 uses three-year vocational programmes at *Epaggelmatiko Lykeio* school (EPAL) that also lead to a specialisation degree. They have over 25% of work-based learning. EPAL graduates can take part in national examinations for admission to tertiary education. Recent legislation reinforces VET permeability and its equivalence to general education. Quotas for EPAL graduates in higher education programmes have increased: a 5% quota for specific programmes such as polytechnics and medicine; a 10% quota for other university departments; and a 20% quota for the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPETE) (EQF 6). EPAL programmes are also offered at evening classes for adults and employed students below 18 with lower secondary education. General upper secondary education graduates are entitled to enrol 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 (WBL > 80%) 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:

- one-year apprenticeship programmes (EQF level 5, WBL 100%) offered by EPAL schools in cooperation with the Manpower Employment Organisation. These programmes are offered only to those who hold an upper secondary school leaving certificate and an EPAL specialisation degree;
- two-and-a-half-year VET programmes (WBL > 60%) offered by public and private training providers (IEK) to upper secondary graduates. These programmes only allow learners to obtain an attestation of programme completion; alternatively, they can take VET certification examinations (practical and theoretical) conducted by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) leading to an EQF level 5 certificate. 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 or a programme-specific examination. The diplomas awarded are considered non-university tertiary level diplomas (EQF level 5), as with merchant navy academies, dance and theatre schools.

Continuing vocational training is offered to adults in centres for lifelong learning (LLL) 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 at EQF level 5.

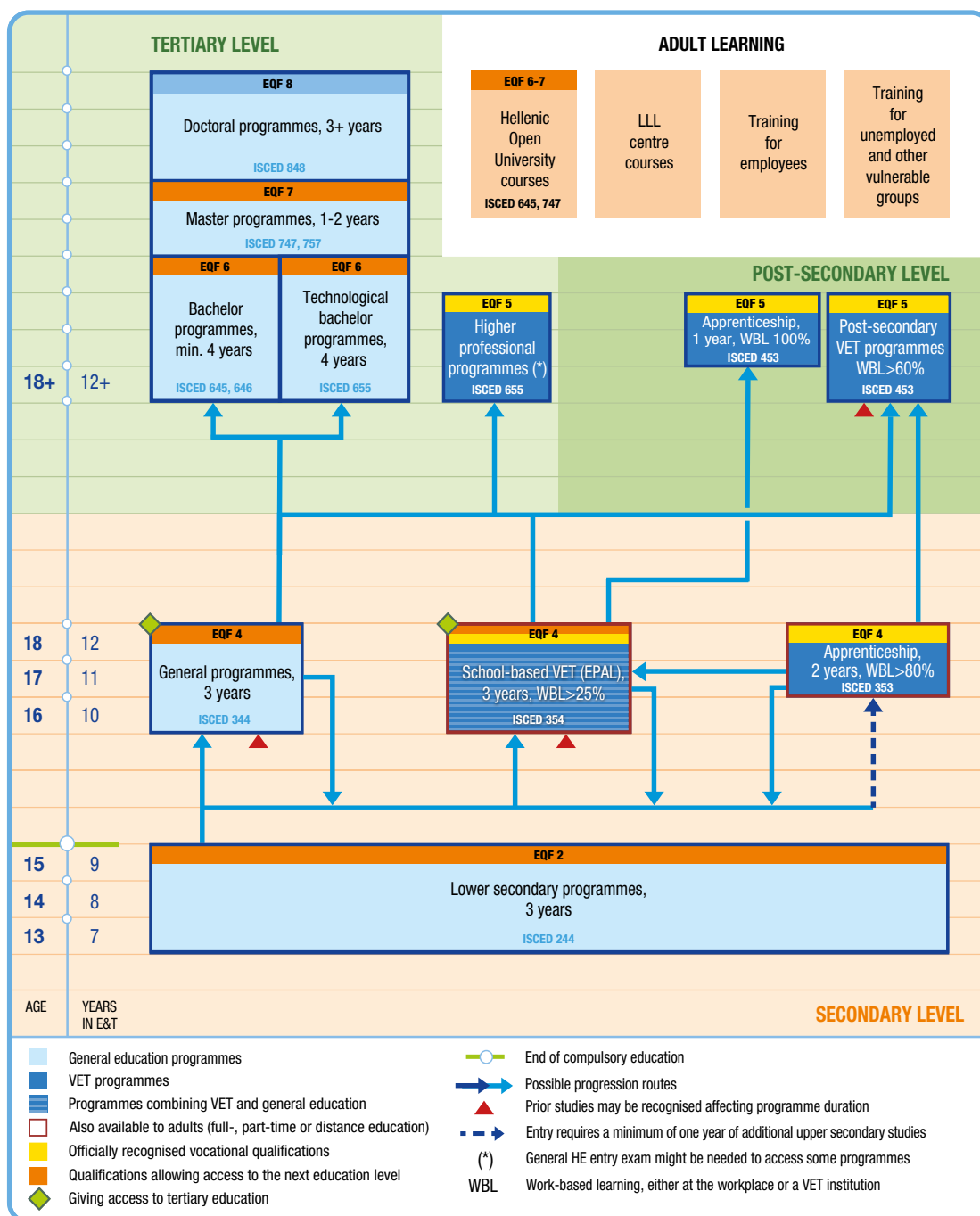
Distinctive features of VET

Greece has an educational culture that favours general education. The main IVET route at upper secondary level is the EPAL programmes. Reforms in the last decade have endorsed apprenticeship and work-based learning in IVET to enable smooth transition from education to work and contribute in reducing youth unemployment and the share of NEETs. Companies provide apprenticeships in accordance with the training regulations, developed by the education ministry with the contribution of social partners. National standards, training regulations and the quality assurance framework ensure the quality of IVET programmes. In order to increase the permeability of IVET, recent policies have opened access to higher education for IVET graduates. The changes follow the Riga conclusions in fostering the role of work-based learning and apprenticeship schemes in VET, and improving access for all to VET and to professional qualifications through more flexible and permeable systems.

The total number of learners enrolled in post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education has increased from 15 852 in 2014 to 82 860 in 2018. Participation in adult education and training remained stable during the previous decade (3.9% in 2019) well below the EU28 average (10.8%). The share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training (15 to 24 years old) has been constantly decreasing from 20.4% in 2013 to 12.5% in 2019.

Challenges and policy responses

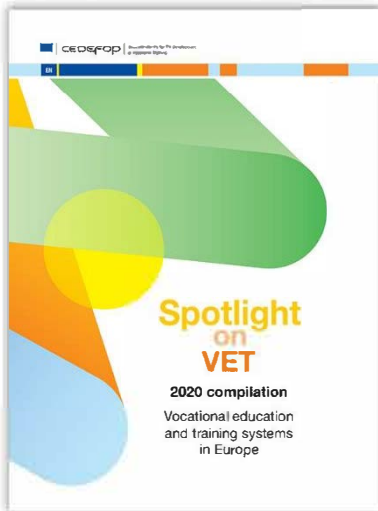
The education ministry, with the significant contribution of the social partners, is currently initiating VET reform directly linked to increasing productivity and economic growth and reducing unemployment. It will also aim to raise VET attractiveness, increase VET graduates' employability and further improve VET responsiveness to labour market needs. The main areas of reform include: linking VET and LLL with the labour market, using labour market diagnosis and tracking of VET graduates; redesign of programmes and teacher training for IVET; endorsing career counselling and internships in VET programmes; and creating pilot vocational schools promoting VET innovation.



NB: ISCED-P 2011.
 Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Greece, 2020.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the delivery of VET courses. During the ban on physical presence in education institutions, the education ministry made digital platforms available to teachers and learners (also in VET) for distance education and interactive digital media. Since the reopening of the econ-

omy distance education has still been available. Social distancing is still the norm as physical presence in training institutions is limited, the number of students in class and laboratories reduced, and the use of masks obligatory.



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