

# Spotlight on VET **GREECE**

Vocational education  
and training systems  
in Europe

2023

## VET in Greece

Vocational education and training (VET) is State-regulated, combining school- and work-based learning (WBL). It is offered at upper, post-secondary and tertiary levels. Overall responsibility is with the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. VET qualifications at EQF levels 3 and 5 are awarded after certification exams organised by the National Organisation for Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP).

Compulsory schooling lasts until age 15 and completion of lower secondary education (*Gymnasio*). At age 16, learners usually follow one of the two main upper secondary school education programmes, the general path (*Geniko Lykeio*, GEL) and the vocational one (*Epaggelmatiko lykeio*, EPAL). In 2021, 33.8% on all upper secondary learners were enrolled in VET. [VET permeability](#) is supported as well as its equivalence to general education: at the end of the first year, learners may change direction from VET to general education and vice versa; both types of programmes lead to an equivalent end of upper secondary school leaving certificate at EQF level 4.

EPAL provides 3-year upper secondary VET, with at least 25% of WBL, leading to [specialisation](#) at EQF level 4. Graduates can take part in national exams for admission to tertiary education on a [quota](#) basis: 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 employees under age 18 with lower secondary education. General upper secondary education graduates can enrol in year 2 of EPAL.

At post-compulsory level, two-year apprenticeship programmes (WBL >80%) address early leaving from education and training. They are regulated by the [2020 law](#) on VET and lifelong learning and can be delivered by the vocational training schools ([ESK](#)) of the education ministry and the apprenticeship schools ([EPAS](#)) of the public employment service (DYPA). Both programme types include an internship and provide training in sectors linked to the local economy to support the employability of graduates. They lead, after examination, to an EQF level 3 certificate (*ΕΣΚ, ΕΠΑΣ*) valued in the labour market.

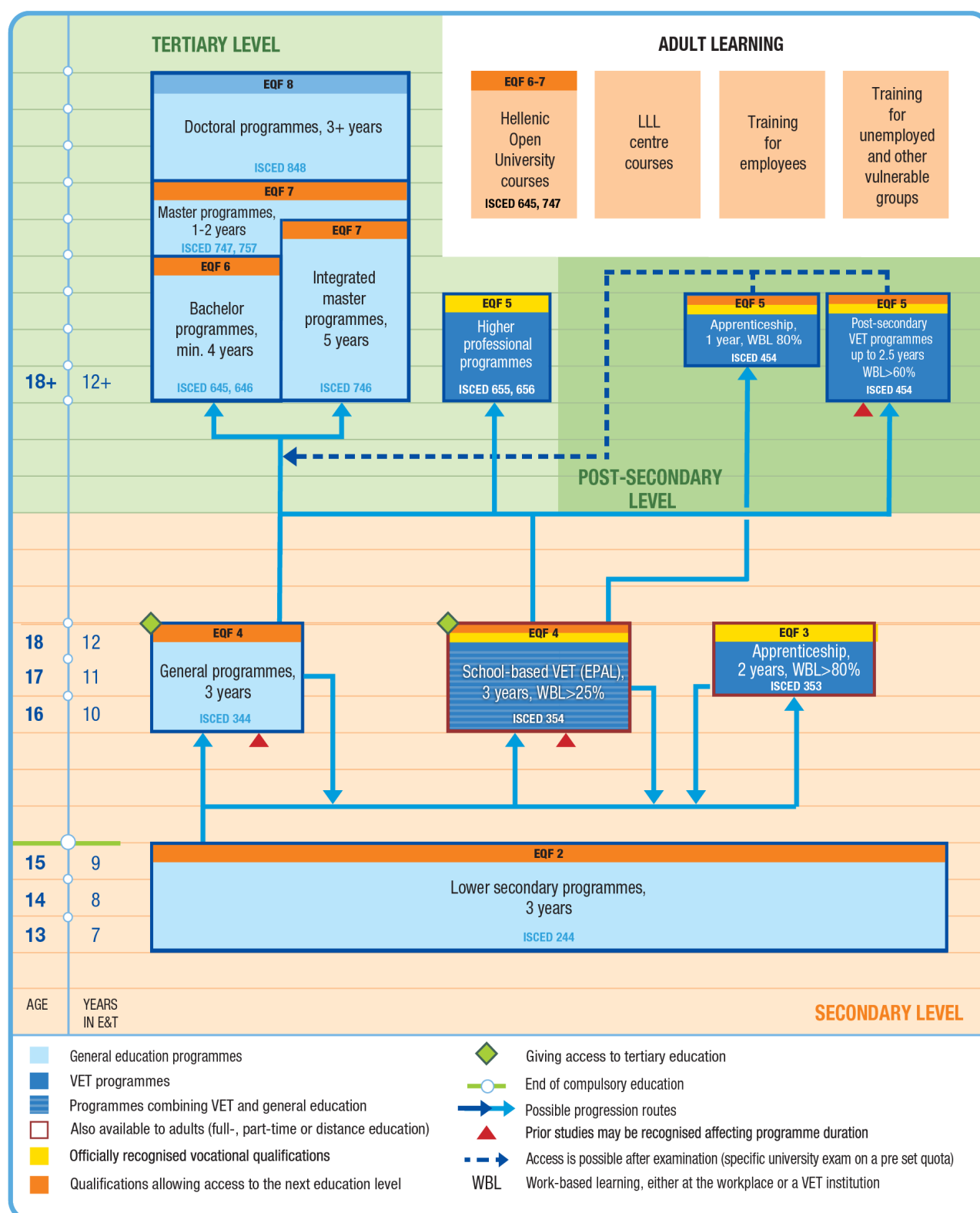
At post-secondary level, VET is offered in two formats:

- 1-year apprenticeship programmes (WBL 80%) offered by EPAL schools; Programmes are accessible only to those who hold an EQF level 4 VET certificate and lead to a VET specialisation at level 5, awarded after successful participation in certification exams, organized by EOPPEP. After completion of the apprenticeship year, learners may enter the labour market or continue in IEK programmes in relevant fields.
- 2.5-year VET programmes (WBL > 60%) offered by public and private vocational training institutes (IEK) to upper secondary graduates. These programmes only allow learners to obtain an attestation of programme completion; IEK graduates may take VET certification examinations (practical and theoretical) conducted by EOPPEP to acquire an EQF level 5 certificate. EPAL graduates who continue their studies in the related field can enrol in the second year directly. Graduates of the apprenticeship programmes have access to the second or third semester of IEK in related specialisations.

2- to 4-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 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 levels 3 and 5.

## VET in Greece's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Greece: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). *Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions* [Database]. [www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/greece-u3](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/greece-u3)

## 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.

Changes in VET are closely linked to [national priorities](#) set within the EU policy agenda. Greece is developing an overall lifelong learning culture through its reformed national VET and lifelong learning system (law 4763/2020) and its 2022-24 strategic plan for VET and LLL for resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. The General Secretariat for VET, Lifelong learning and Youth has a central role in the design, coordination and monitoring of national policies (law 4763/2020).

In the CVET sector, the reform of public employment services (4921/2022) set up a new funding mechanism, a quality assurance system for continuing training programmes and certification of competences for individuals.

## Challenges and policy responses

The Greek society is faced with high youth unemployment and persistent mismatches between skills demand and supply. Making VET responsive to labour market needs, improving its quality and laboratory infrastructure are among the aims of the ongoing reform of the national VET and lifelong learning (LLL) systems ([Law 4763/2020](#)). The law set a new governance for efficient policy coordination and monitoring at all system levels and established VET nationally at EQF levels 3, 4, 5. It secures social partners participation in advisory bodies created at national and regional levels and increases autonomy at VET provider level.

Significant measures recently implemented to support VET attractiveness include the launching by the education ministry of two-year VET programmes ([VTS/ESK](#)) for young learners with compulsory education leading to an EQF 3 VET certificate, and the creation of model upper secondary VET (PEPAL) programmes and experimental and thematic IEK institutes at post-secondary level. In addition, holders of an EQF level 5 qualification may enter tertiary education through a specific entry examination (on a pre-set quota basis).

The [2022-24 Greek strategic plan for VET, LLL and youth](#) aims to address system weaknesses, with focus on quality assurance, VET inclusiveness and responsiveness to the digital and green transitions and connections with the labour market. It sets targets to reinforce apprenticeships and internship schemes (respectively, up to 25000 new apprentices and 35000 new internships annually) by 2025 and beyond. In addition, around 200 occupational profiles shall be created or updated, and certified, by EOPPEP in 2024.

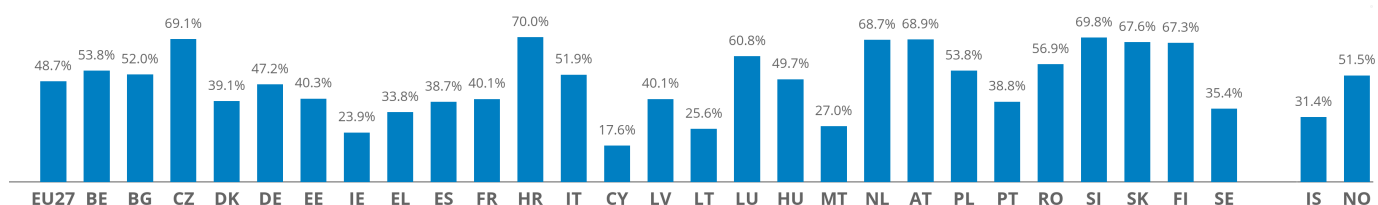
The plan is in line with [VET priorities agreed at European level](#) and the national implementation plan ([NIP](#)) commitments by 2025. These include the creation of a digital platform for VET for institutions and learners, digitalisation of EOPPEP services, modernisation of laboratory infrastructure in initial VET (117 laboratory centres). The NIP also foresees expansion of the network of model PEPAL and thematic IEK and the upgrading of the teaching staff, including in adult education and training.



Greece

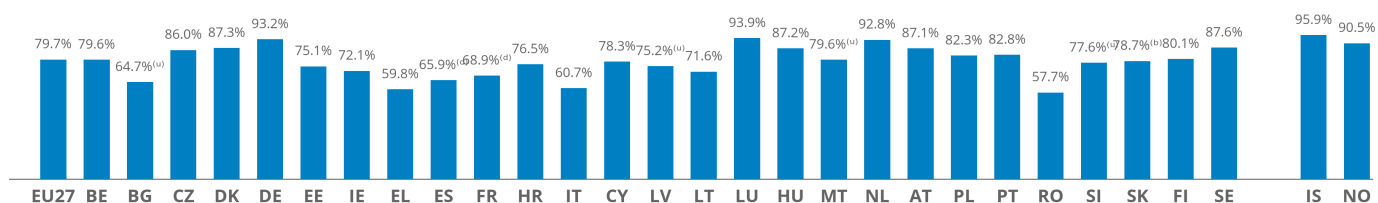
## Education and training in figures

### IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021



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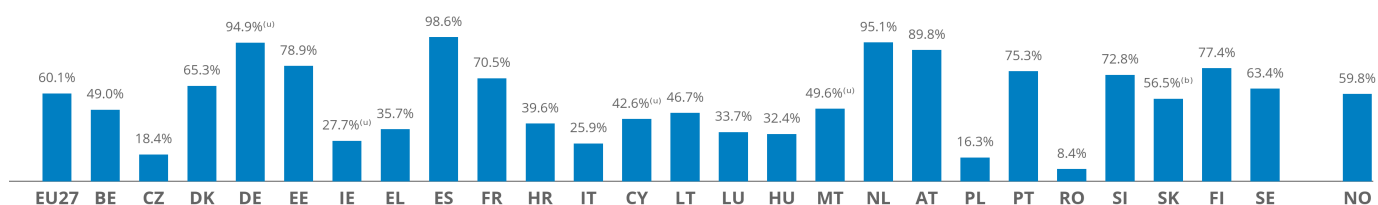
### Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%), 2022



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Notes: Bulgaria, Latvia, Malta and Slovenia: (u) low reliability, Czechia: (b) break in time series, Spain and France: (d) definition differs

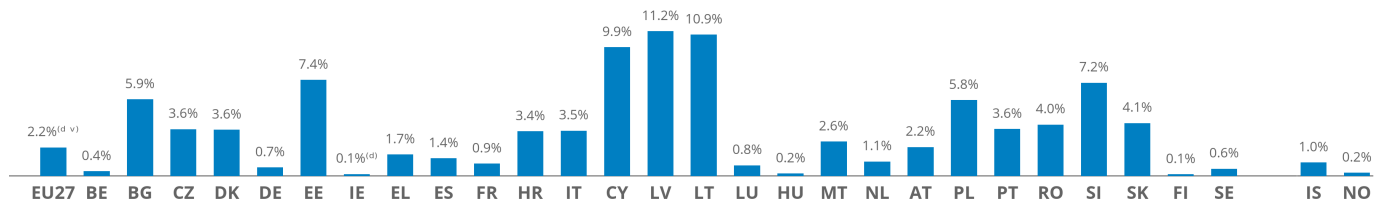
### Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%), 2022



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Notes: Germany, Ireland and Cyprus: (u) low reliability

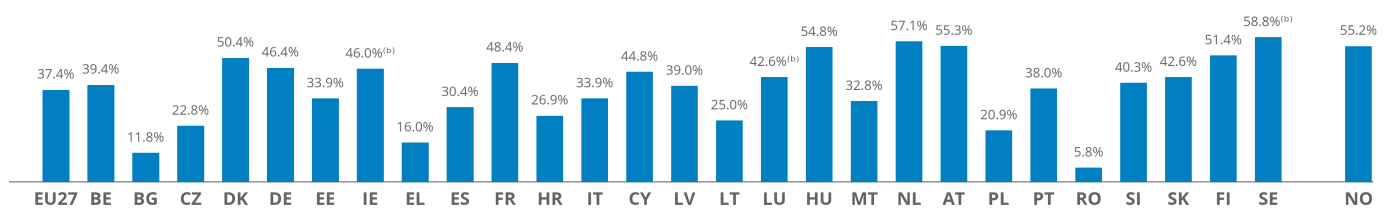
## IVET learners who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%), 2021



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Notes: EU27: (d) definition differs (v) Cedefop estimate, Ireland: (d) definition differs, Croatia, Cyprus, Netherlands and Slovenia: (z) not applicable

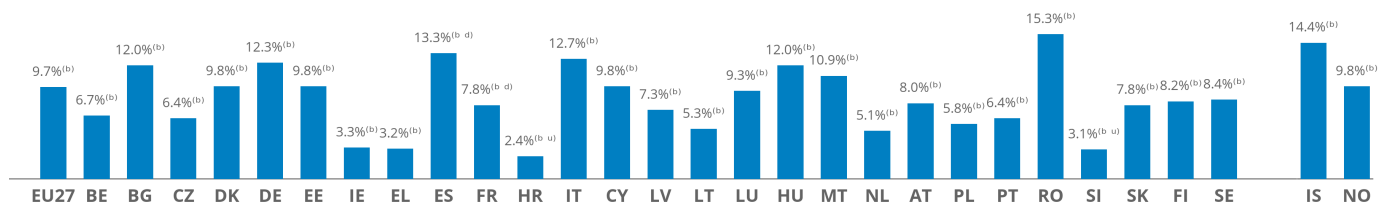
## Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2016



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Notes: All values: (b) break in time series

## Early leavers from education and training (%), 2021



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Notes: EU27, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway: (b) break in time series, Croatia and Slovenia: (b) break in time series (u) low reliability

Source: [Cedefop's Key indicators on VET](#)



## Further information

- Cedefop and ReferNet. (2023). *Timeline of VET policies: Greece*.
- European Commission. (2023). *Education and training monitor: Greece*.
- Eurydice. (2024). *National education systems: Greece*.

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="https://www.minedu.gov.gr/">https://www.minedu.gov.gr/</a>           | Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports                                        |
| <a href="https://gsvetlly.minedu.gov.gr/">https://gsvetlly.minedu.gov.gr/</a> | General Secretariat for VET and Lifelong Learning                                          |
| <a href="https://ypergasias.gov.gr/">https://ypergasias.gov.gr/</a>           | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs                                                      |
| <a href="https://www.dypa.gov.gr/en/">https://www.dypa.gov.gr/en/</a>         | Public Employment Service - DYP                                                            |
| <a href="https://eoppep.gr/index.php/en/">https://eoppep.gr/index.php/en/</a> | National Organisation for Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) |

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