



APPRENTICESHIP REVIEW GREECE

Modernising and expanding
apprenticeships in Greece



GREECE

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THEMATIC COUNTRY REVIEWS

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Foreword

National governments do not just want apprenticeships; they want quality apprenticeships that help address youth unemployment and skill mismatch. This is what Cedefop's thematic country reviews (TCRs) on apprenticeships aim at supporting in the long run.

Our experience so far has been a win-win situation. Cedefop has achieved better insight into key issues in Member States while working with national authorities and social partners. Stakeholders have had the opportunity to gather together and reflect on national apprenticeship policies and practices benefiting from Cedefop expertise and technical advice. Our goal is to extend this approach to other VET sectors.

Since the launch of the European alliance for apprenticeships in 2013 and the spotlight shone on the added value of work-based learning, in particular apprenticeships, by the Directors General for VET in the Riga conclusions in 2015 (Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2015) European stakeholders and Member States have done a lot of work to increase apprenticeship offer and quality. By June 2017, 208 pledges for apprenticeship programmes within the alliance had been made by companies and business associations, chambers of commerce, industry and crafts, social partners, regional authorities, education and training providers, youth and non-profit organisations, think tanks and research institutes. Over 200 companies are also involved through the business-led *Alliance4Youth*.

Cedefop launched the first TCRs on apprenticeships in 2014 to support two volunteer countries (Malta and Lithuania) in their efforts to re-establish or improve apprenticeships while increasing the knowledge base on apprenticeships at European level. Since then, Malta has launched new legislation on work-based learning and apprenticeships and Lithuania has developed an apprenticeship action plan. Between 2015 and 2017, Cedefop conducted the reviews in three more volunteer countries: Greece, Italy, and Slovenia. With this second series of publications, we make the findings available and hope that they will support the national stakeholders in strengthening their structured dialogue and joint efforts, making apprenticeships a natural choice for learners.

Cedefop's TCR methodology relies on a participatory, evolving and iterative approach. Our interaction with stakeholders is one in which learning is reciprocal, where knowledge is challenged and revised, and

where participation is open and transparent. In cooperation with national stakeholders, we identified strengths and enabling factors, focused on the challenges, and developed action to help with the attractiveness and quality of apprenticeships. The involvement of stakeholders and beneficiaries across the board has clearly shown that dialogue among the ministries and the social partners is growing, that employers and trade unions are making efforts to find common ground and that the gap between education and labour market representatives is narrowing, with both reaching out for synergies and cooperation. The ultimate beneficiary of this process is the European citizen who achieves a feasible route to employment and a better quality of life.

Cedefop's TCRs allow all voices to be heard; hard evidence is collected from learners, schools, and companies and shared with policy-makers to enrich their understanding of workplaces before moving ahead with implementing policies. As brokers, Cedefop's goal is to build bridges of evidence and policy orientation.

TCR is a dynamic and developmental exercise. Cedefop's team followed policy development closely in the countries visited and will continue to do so by organising policy learning activities together with all the countries involved in the TCRs. Four more countries (Belgium-French Community, Croatia, Cyprus and Sweden) have been under review since the beginning of 2017; this is fulfilling our objective of making Cedefop's presence in Member States relevant and closer.

We would like Cedefop to have positive impacts in Member States and for resulting experiences to drive our future work programmes. Reciprocity is what makes stakeholders stronger. One of the objectives of the TCRs is for Cedefop to learn from the countries under review and share with them the capacity that it has built over these past 42 years. During that time we have gained a significant amount of in-depth knowledge and better understanding of the situations in the countries reviewed, of the effect of the contextual factors, both historical and contemporary, and of national approaches to apprenticeships. We believe that the in-depth information gathered so far will help both the countries concerned and, through our intermediary role, other countries to reflect on their practices and implement reforms towards better apprenticeship programmes.

People need skills to find jobs. Quality apprenticeships are an excellent vehicle for those who are prepared to learn and earn a living on their own. Cedefop will continue to be at the forefront of support Member States and social partners in creating structures for learning to work.

Joachim James Calleja
Director

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Executive summary

Executive summary

This report is part of the second series of publications on thematic country reviews (TCRs) on apprenticeships ⁽¹⁾: it presents the findings of the TCR conducted in Greece. Two more reports belong to this series and cover the reviews carried out in Italy and Slovenia. The three TCRs were conducted from 2015 to 2017.

Apprenticeship has existed in Greece as a distinct vocational education and training (VET) option for learners at upper secondary level since the 1950s, in the form of the EPAS (vocational (upper secondary) training schools) apprenticeship scheme, largely offered through OAED (Manpower Employment Organisation), the national public employment service. Since 2013, echoing renewed attention in EU policies on the topic, apprenticeship has been a priority in the VET policy developments in Greece. Activity to reform VET and apprenticeship in the country was particularly intensive between 2013 and 2016; it included the launch of a series of secondary laws, decisions and circulars particularly affecting the structure and governance of the apprenticeship system as well as the operational aspects of the system. The 2016 national strategic framework for upgrading VET including apprenticeships (hereafter referred to as 2016 VET strategy) includes the gradual introduction of new apprenticeship schemes next to the existing one offered by OAED.

As a result of these developments, the apprenticeship system in Greece includes:

- (a) the EPAS scheme offered at upper secondary level, leading to qualifications at level 4 of the national and European qualification frameworks (NQF and EQF) after two years of alternating learning at school and the workplace;
- (b) the EPAL (vocational education schools) scheme offered at post-secondary level, leading to qualifications at NQF/EQF level 5 after one year of alternating learning at school and the workplace;
- (c) the apprenticeship scheme of the vocational training institutes (IEK) that will be offered at post-secondary level, leading to qualifications at NQF/EQF level 5 after four semesters of learning at VET institutes and one semester

⁽¹⁾ The first series of publications on TCRs on apprenticeships include the reports for Lithuania and Malta (Cedefop, 2015a; Cedefop, 2015b).

at the workplace (for those IEK opting for apprenticeships instead of other forms of practical training that were the common practice so far).

All three schemes will coexist for a five-year period before the overall system is assessed (2020-21) and further decisions are made on its future structure. Alongside these, school-based VET programmes are offered at upper secondary level (EPAL lyceum, qualifications at NQF/EQF level 4).

The policy developments come at a time when the Greek economy has experienced significant changes during the economic crisis. Conditions in the Greek labour market have been continuously worsened since 2008, as the deeper-than-anticipated recession negatively affected employment rates across all age groups, regions and almost all sectors. There were around one million job losses from 2008 to early 2014 and high unemployment rates far exceeding 25%. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Greece were hit hard by the crisis and have still not recovered. These developments pose a great challenge to the envisaged apprenticeship system, both for enrolment goals in all schemes (broadly set, but pointing towards doubling figures of 2015-16), and in terms of future labour market transitions of apprentices to regular employment.

In July 2015, the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (hereafter the Ministry of Education), the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity (hereafter the Ministry of Labour) and Cedefop launched the *Thematic country review (TCR) on apprenticeships in Greece*. The main objective of the TCR was to take stock of accumulated experience and the 2013-16 policy developments, and to identify what needs to be considered in further developing and operationalising the new apprenticeship system in terms of solutions and policy recommendations.

Box 1. Focus of the review

The review examined:

- the regulatory framework, as well as practical organisation, of the EPAS scheme, in place before the 2013-16 policy developments, to draw lessons for the new apprenticeship system (which includes two additional schemes);
- the provisions laid down by the 2013-16 policy and regulatory documents which set-up a new apprenticeship system with implications for apprenticeships in terms of place in the education and training system, governance and overall offer and demand.



Analysing the invaluable experience of the EPAS scheme was instrumental in understanding the policy and regulatory set up of the new system, and identifying strengths and challenges of the new regulatory framework relevant to apprenticeship in general.

Source: Cedefop.

Main challenges

The extensive policy developments that took place in 2013-16 introduced many provisions that set about raising quality while extending apprenticeship provision through new schemes. Although they provide a good starting point for national stakeholders to put the system into practice, still some key challenges remain.

Governance

As a result of the 2013-16 policy developments, new bodies with competence on apprenticeship were introduced, alongside existing institutions and labour market actors. Their mandates, roles, responsibilities, and modus operandi are not clearly defined, while the two national technical bodies with competence on apprenticeship seem to have overlapping roles. The roles and responsibilities of the relevant national institutions and labour market actors need also to be revised and/or confirmed, and the links between these bodies, institutions and actors defined horizontally (on the same level: national, regional, local) and across level (how the national level governance structures link to the regional and local level ones).

The role of social partners and chambers is still not thoroughly defined: it is also too weak given that apprenticeship requires shared responsibility between education and labour market and direct engagement of companies. The governance framework of the new apprenticeship system is not complete; social partners and chambers are not part of the national and the technical committees for VET/apprenticeships, two of the new national-level bodies introduced by the recent reforms.

The members of the steering group seem to agree that governance issues are among the most pressing challenges for the reformed apprenticeship system. A key challenge for the country is to establish a governance framework that systematises dialogue, shares responsibilities,

promotes mutual trust, balances divergent interests and allows for longer-term planning. Stakeholders need to think and act in terms of a single apprenticeship system and a single governance structure.

Training content and responsiveness to the labour market

The review showed that the apprenticeship offer is not fully aligned with labour market needs.

First, the occupational profiles on which the apprenticeship curricula are developed are considered largely out of date; the procedures for their update (or introduction of new ones) are seen as rather heavy and inflexible. In addition, the apprenticeship curricula define only the school-based component of learning; the workplace component is missing.

Second, the selection of the occupational profile to be offered as apprenticeship specialities is not yet systematically aligned with labour market needs. It is not based on any research of needs, nor on evaluation of the system outcomes. Despite recent developments, such as the introduction of an overarching mechanism to anticipate skills needs (2016), provisions for a complete, functioning feedback loop that would inform policy-making on apprenticeships are limited or missing.

A further challenge posed by the introduction of two more schemes, is how the provision of apprenticeship specialities across the three schemes will be organised to avoid overlaps and/or competition (for learners, companies) among the three providers. Each scheme corresponds to one specific provider (EPAS, EPAL, IEK) and the different State actors in charge of the three schemes promote them in an uncoordinated manner. Companies and learners should be able to understand them as different options within a single system.

Participation and support of companies

Lack of information among companies about apprenticeships is a widely acknowledged challenge for the system. Non-participating companies are poorly or not at all informed about apprenticeships. Lack of information on procedures, terms, conditions and whom to address ranks high among the reasons companies cannot or do not wish to engage. At local level, chambers and professional associations are not actively promoting apprenticeship among their members, nor have they received a clear mandate for doing so.

Incentives to date have been rather single-sided, focusing on subsidies for enterprise contribution to apprentice wages. In the absence of cost-benefit analyses and a fuller set of non-financial incentives at their disposal,

companies value the financial incentives highly, especially in the context of the economic crisis. However, this approach is not sustainable, especially given the expected reduction in EU-funded subsidies after the end of the 2014-20 programming period.

Other challenges (scheme specific)

In addition to general challenges for the future system, some are related to specific schemes. A prominent weakness of the EPAS scheme is the limited progression opportunities for EPAS graduates, who are not entitled to move into higher education. Several stakeholders have raised concerns over the one school year duration of the EPAL scheme. Concerns over apprenticeship provision by IEK include whether this will be a similar scheme or programme to EPAS and EPAL. While the latter two are designed to be delivered wholly in systematic alternance between school and company, IEK seems to take the form of a semester of alternance between school and the company (out of the five semesters of a programme) where the learner signs a contract with the company for this period. There is no systematic alternance of the IEK apprenticeship scheme during its whole duration. Although the report refers to IEK as an apprenticeship scheme and puts it in on the par with EPAS and EPAL (as defined by the key policy documents), its current main features still seem to point to the fact that it will not be a scheme but a way to organise the work placement for the semester to be delivered in a company (currently organised only as traineeships).

Main areas of intervention

The review suggests that priority needs to be given to governance structures, and address all challenges through a thorough analysis of the roles related to apprenticeship development and provision and a clear distribution of responsibilities among actors (bodies, institutions, labour market actors) at different levels.

A national committee to support decision-making for VET and apprenticeships is foreseen by the VET strategy, but needs to open up to social partners and chambers. Also, its specific mandate on apprenticeships needs to be detailed and a decision-making role can be established in the medium term, at least in a defined range of topics related to apprenticeships.

There should be one technical body ⁽²⁾ with extended composition supported by adequate human resources to increase its operational capacity. Social partners and chambers need also to consolidate their internal channels of cooperation that will allow them to participate better prepared and efficiently in a common governance model. National institutions with curricula and occupational profiles competence need to increase their capacity regarding apprenticeships and to be included in the committees.

On the basis of a clear, participatory governance ⁽³⁾ structure, key functions regarding apprenticeship design and provision can be performed collectively at national level. The national committee can be the platform both for addressing short-term issues regarding the key features of the apprenticeship schemes and for their long-term positioning in the education and training system. The selection of specialities offered across the country through the three apprenticeship schemes can be decided by the national committee, based on labour market intelligence coming from a comprehensive system to be built around the anticipation mechanism recently introduced by the Ministry of Labour and the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (EIEAD) (2016); systematic evaluation of apprenticeship outcomes, including labour market transitions of apprenticeship graduates, should also be used. A wider set of incentives, with a renewed focus on non-financial ones, can be agreed at this level.

The (single) technical body can also support the development of a comprehensive feedback loop that would allow the national committee to make recommendations on the strategic decisions described. It can promote cost-benefit analyses or coordinate work on campaigns to promote apprenticeships, on quality assurance provisions or the coherence of guidance services for learners.

The proposed governance framework may enhance mutual trust and set clear roles for the social partners and chambers in many functions, while national authorities may retain a coordinating role. This may include a renewed or extended mandate for social partners and chambers in updating occupational profiles relevant to apprenticeship specialities, contributing to the development of the workplace components of curricula and developing standards for participating companies and in-company trainers.

⁽²⁾ Two technical bodies are currently foreseen: one introduced in the VET strategy and the other in the quality framework for apprenticeships (QFA).

⁽³⁾ The European Commission identifies governance elements at system level as a key issue for a future QFA in the context of the ongoing cooperation with the advisory committee on vocational training to this end.

Finally, in this context of consolidated cooperation and trust, some functions at national level can remain within the remit of national authorities. The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) and the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning (GSLLL) can retain their role in curricula development (fed by occupational standards and workplace components developed with social partners and chambers), provided they work closer with each other to avoid overlaps and benefit from synergies. The Ministry of Education can coordinate, and in some cases organise, training activities for teachers in all schemes based on peer learning. Similarly, governance local level structures need further description and operationalisation, in a direction that brings State authorities, schools and the business world closer to regular and systematic collaboration, above and beyond project-based approaches. Apprenticeship provision at local level may be boosted in several ways by cooperation among key actors: adjusting school-based curricula to local labour market needs; addressing learners and companies in a coordinated way; and sustaining companies and supporting quality learning at the workplace.

The areas of intervention are aimed at tackling the structural challenges identified and building a long-lasting, coherent system. This may take time. As the system is expected to be operational and evaluated in 2020-21 based on broad quantitative targets ⁽⁴⁾, little time is available for its thorough development, which risks hampering the aims of the reform (building a coherent and quality apprenticeship system where all parties are involved, share the same goals and procedures).

The report is addressed first to national stakeholders, represented in the steering group, and by those interviewed, and to broader audience. Distribution of possible interventions in different layers from short term to medium term before system evaluation, may help national stakeholders to allocate their resources efficiently and have more control over the reforms. Read in conjunction with the reports on Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia, the report will provide valuable insights to those interested in learning in more depth about the experience of other countries in setting up or expanding apprenticeships.

⁽⁴⁾ Quantified targets for the overall system are only broadly set and frequently revised since the 2015 *Memorandum of understanding* (MoU) of the Greek State and its international lenders. Specific targets are set in the context of specific European Social Fund (ESF) interventions.



1. Introduction

Introduction

In July 2015, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Cedefop launched the *Thematic country review on apprenticeships in Greece*. This happened in the context of the 2013-16 policy developments which introduced significant changes in VET (vocational education and training) in general, and apprenticeships in particular. The ministries nominated a steering group ⁽⁶⁾ appointing representatives of the most relevant stakeholder groups governing and managing the apprenticeship system (Chapter 2).

The steering group expressed a clear interest in focusing the review on the following areas of Cedefop's analytical framework:

- (a) governance structures;
- (b) training content and learning outcomes, linked with requirements for, and support to, teachers and mentors;
- (c) participation and support to companies linked with financing;
- (d) responsiveness to the labour market.

The aim was to understand how these areas could be improved in the newly shaped system (following the 2013-16 reforms) through suggestions for action. The review would draw lessons from the implementation of the longstanding EPAS (vocational training (upper secondary) schools) apprenticeship scheme (in place since 1952), would look at how policies shape the new system, and identify strengths, gaps and challenges in the light of lessons learned and international practices.

This report starts (Chapter 2) with a short description of the rationale and methodology of Cedefop's thematic country reviews (TCRs) on apprenticeships. After some background information about the Greek labour market context, Chapter 3 provides an overview of the VET system and of apprenticeships in Greece. Chapter 4 presents the main key findings (facts, figures and stakeholder views) of the TCR and the relative challenges,

⁽⁶⁾ According to Cedefop's methodology, the role of the steering group is to guide the TCR, to determine the priority areas, to discuss and provide feedback on intermediary products and results and to take note of the lessons and recommendations coming out of the TCR to inform national policy development on apprenticeships.

as elaborated during the analytical work. The findings cover arrangements in place before the 2013-16 policy developments, including the EPAS apprenticeship scheme offered at upper secondary level; they also present the provisions set by the 2013-16 policy developments. Chapter 5 concludes the report and proposes suggestions for action to improve the design and delivery of apprenticeships in Greece in relation to areas identified by the steering group as priority for the review.





2. TCR rationale and methodology

TCR rationale and methodology

Cedefop thematic reviews support countries in setting up, modernising or improving the quality of their apprenticeship systems in line with EU policies.

The main objectives of the TCRs are two-fold:

- (a) to analyse the existing situation in the country using a methodology specifically designed for the purpose; identify enablers and challenges characteristic to the national context and develop a set of policy pointers for ensuring quality apprenticeships;
- (b) to increase the evidence base at European level that can support policy- and decision-makers across Europe and, possibly, beyond, in designing and implementing policies and measures for quality apprenticeships, as well as supporting comparison across countries.

The TCR methodology relies on three key principles:

- (a) using a common analytical framework: this framework includes characteristic features present to different extents and in different combinations in existing (well-functioning) systems of apprenticeship. The framework does not offer a single approach but is based on a variety of models and systems that work. The set of features identified are not seen as ‘necessary conditions’; the framework is purely an analytical tool. It is based on three distinguishing features of apprenticeship and comprises 10 areas of analysis that are operationalised into detailed explanatory descriptors (see Annex for the full framework). These areas and descriptors were used throughout the review as a frame of reference for the data collection instruments and process, analysis and reporting;
- (b) an inclusive, participatory and collaborative approach and policy learning: this approach is organised at two levels:
 - (i) steering of the review and validation. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour appointed their own representatives to the steering group, including from the existing EPAS apprenticeship scheme offered by OAED (Manpower Employment Organisation), the Greek public employment services (PES). Upon invitation from the ministries, social partners also appointed their representatives to the

steering group, including one on behalf of the four third-level employer federations: the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEVEE), the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE), the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV) and the Hellenic Confederation of Commerce and Entrepreneurship (ESEE); there was also a representative of the General Confederation of Labour (GSEE). The steering group was involved in all project activities, determined priority areas and validated intermediate and final results;

- (ii) stakeholder involvement: at different stages of the review, a broader range of actors representing stakeholders in the country were involved. Individuals and groups were involved in in-depth discussions on the strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, solutions and policy, institutional, and organisational implications for the apprenticeship system in the country. During implementation, consultations with stakeholders took place in three consecutive rounds of interviews and round table discussions. A total of 150 individuals were surveyed during the TCR, with 17 participating more than once due to their involvement in round tables (Table 1);
- (c) an evolving and iterative approach.

The review relies on surveying stakeholders organised in three consecutive rounds of surveys where each round has its own objectives and informs the following one(s).

The first round consultations took place from April until June 2016. This was used to collect factual information from implementation level stakeholders (practitioners and beneficiaries). The first survey round comprised 100 interviews among students, recent graduates, EPAS apprenticeship school directors, apprenticeship teachers, directors of companies, in-company trainers, and guidance staff at OAED, the Greek public employment service, finalised with a round table of 10 participants. Most participants were currently or previously involved in the EPAS apprenticeship scheme, offered by OAED. Some interviewees were selected because of their participation in a brief pilot apprenticeship-like scheme offered by the Ministry of Education (*mathitia4u*)⁽⁶⁾ or a pilot apprenticeship programme offered by OAED in tourism (pilot schools for vocational training (PSEK) in tourism).

⁽⁶⁾ The scheme was titled *Apprenticeship programme for technical education (VET) graduates*. The aim of this programme was to help recent graduates acquire work experience. Learning lasted four to six months and was entirely company-based. The programme benefited 8 475

Table 1. **Stakeholders involved by group and number**

Group of stakeholders	Persons interviewed
Students	27
Recent graduates	15
VET school directors, deputy directors and teachers	23
Company trainers, directors or HR managers	33
Public employment service	2
Ministries	11
Education and training agencies	23
Industry representatives (chambers, employer organisations, sector organisations)	9
Trade unions	4
Researchers	3
Total	150

Source: Cedefop.

Building on the findings of the first round, a second round of consultations was carried out in September-October of 2016. There were 35 interviews with VET institutional or independent experts: Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, OAED, General Secretariat for lifelong learning (GSLLL), Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (NILHR), German Motor Vehicle Inspection Association (DEKRA Academy), social partners, National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP). This second round was used to discuss the challenges identified in the previous survey round, and the current and possible future role of these institutions in the provision of quality apprenticeships in Greece. An online survey of 828 companies was also carried out. As well as their individual contribution, interviewees also participated in a round table in November 2016, which concluded the second survey round by examining selected topics that came up during the round.

graduates by the end of 2014. Apprentices were supplied with a grant of EUR 300 per month and covered them for accidents. Although officially termed as apprenticeship, this was a work experience programme. No formal assessment or recognised certification and no predefined training plan were envisaged. For more information see: <http://www.mathiteia4u.gr/>

The third round of consultations took place in January and February 2017 and consisted of two round tables and five individual interviews with policy-makers, social partners and institutional or independent experts to discuss possible solutions and recommendations: the first gathered together six representatives of social partners and chambers, while the second involved 12 representatives from ministries and national institutions). The outcomes of these three survey rounds are integrated into the relevant sections of this report.





3. Context

Context

3.1. The young in the labour market

The Greek economy experienced significant macroeconomic changes during the economic crisis. Since 2008, conditions in the labour market have gradually worsened, as the deeper-than-anticipated recession negatively affected employment and led to higher unemployment rates across all age groups, regions and on almost all sectors (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Finance, 2012, pp. 24-26). With an especially negative economic environment, characterised by a large drop of turnover in businesses, lack of liquidity and contraction of investment activity, the labour market is receiving the strongest pressure recorded nationally in recent decades (IOBE, 2012, pp. 14 and 16).

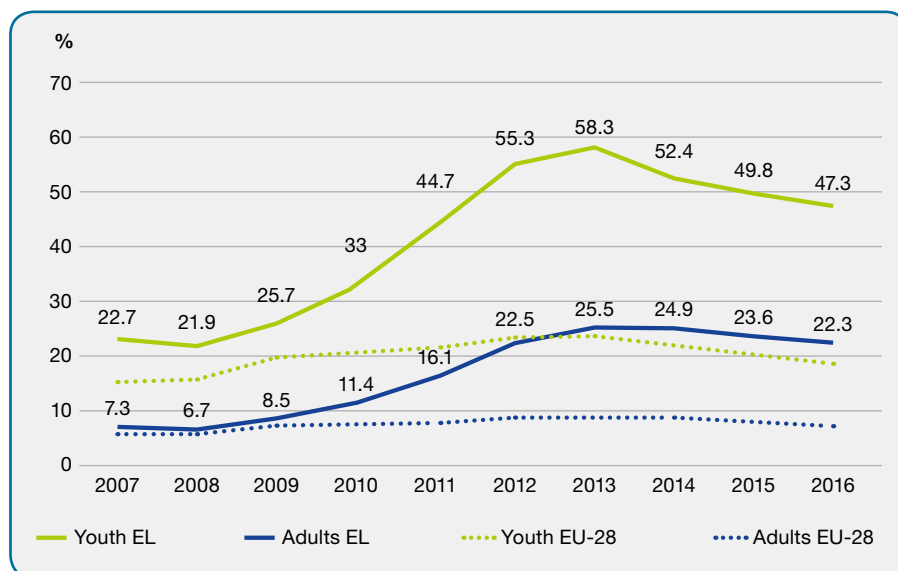
The recession has aggravated chronic structural labour market problems, as key labour market figures clearly show. According to Eurostat data (Figure 1), the adult unemployment rate (25 to 64 years old) in Greece more than tripled from about 7.3% in 2008 to its peak of 25.5% in 2013. Although the rate has slightly decreased over the last three years, it still remains 15 percentage points higher than the EU-28 average.

In comparison with the adults and also with the EU average, youth unemployment (15 to 24 years old) is even more serious. The rate increased from 21.9% in 2008 to a peak of 58.3% in 2013 (Figure 1). Although a significant reduction has occurred over the last three years, it remains 47.3% in 2016, about 24% higher than the EU average.

Empirical evidence supports VET as a relevant factor for labour market integration: the employment rates of VET graduates, in the EU-28 outperform those of graduates from general education (7). However, these differences are less visible in Greece, where employment rates of VET graduates differ little from general education (Figure 2), suggesting that VET does not provide a clear advantage in youth employability in Greece. The capacity of the education and training system to prepare young people for the transition to the labour market remains a challenge (European Commission, 2015a, p. 12).

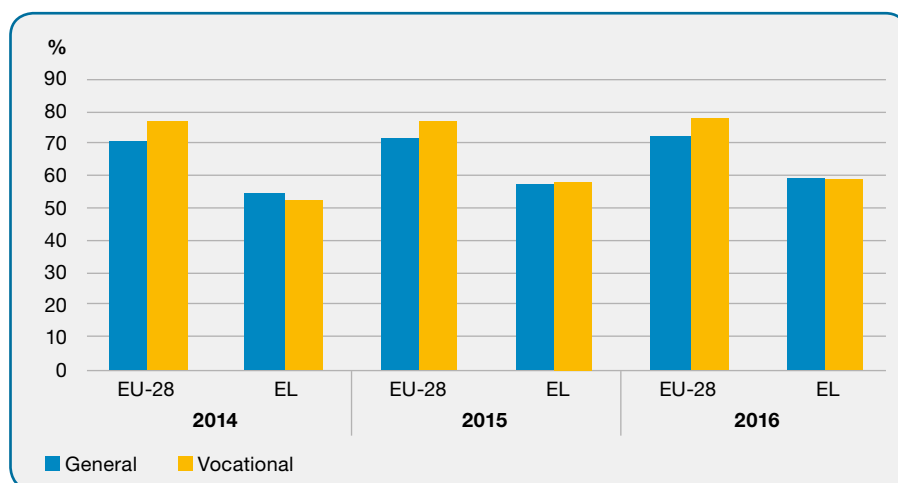
(7) Considering programmes at ISCED (international standard classification of education) level 3 and 4, upper secondary to non-tertiary education.

Figure 1. **Youth (15 to 24) and adult (25 to 64) unemployment rates in Greece and the EU-28 (2007-16)**



Source: Eurostat (a).

Figure 2. **Employment rates of general vs VET at ISCED 3-4 for 20 to 34 age group**



Source: Eurostat (b).

Evidence indicates that graduation from the apprenticeship system in Greece offers relatively positive employment results (EEO, 2015). Research conducted in 2015 among 700 graduates of the academic years 2011-14, showed that 40.1% of the total were in employment at the reference period, while 52.7% were still unemployed.

3.2. Additional background information

Since 2008, the cumulative economic loss in terms of GDP exceeded 25% (Bank of Greece, 2016, p. 7). The strengths of the Greek economy and of the domestic banking system were heavily tested. The fiscal adjustment measures implemented since 2010 managed to address the budget and the current account deficits, but had negative economic and social consequences (Ministry of Finance, 2015, p. 12), although the negative impact proved more moderate than initially expected (Bank of Greece, 2016, p. 8). Currently, the economy is moving towards slightly more positive rates of growth as it is gradually recovering from the recession that it entered again in 2015, after a short-lived moderate recovery in 2014 (IOBE, 2016, p. 7).

The energy sector is seen as having great potential for improving the country's competitiveness along with an energy-efficient and decarbonised transport sector (European Commission, 2015b, pp. 25-27). Tourism is also very important for Greece, both for its economic and job-creating potential and its social and environmental impact (Cedefop, 2014a, p. 10).

The Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE) has conducted a survey of development prospects in the Greek economy, with an emphasis on positions for graduates of upper secondary and post-secondary education. According to this survey, the sectors with growth prospects are:

- (a) ecosystems energy;
- (b) shipping;
- (c) health;
- (d) environmental industry;
- (e) IT and communications;
- (f) food and organic agri-foods;
- (g) tourism;
- (h) transport of goods;
- (i) construction products.

These sectors are expected to have increased need for manpower in the coming years, with demand for new inflow of human resources and for retraining existing personnel.

The survey focuses on those with upper secondary and post-secondary education certificates. This is because the existing pattern of recruitments shows a preference for either highly skilled, or low-skilled labour, leading to a lack of medium-level specialist and technical professions (IOBE, 2015, pp. 10-11 and 154-155). Apprenticeships, together with other work-based learning schemes and related active labour market policies (ALMPs), may offer a key input to increasing the employability of low- and medium-qualified young people. Apprenticeships can provide young people and adults with the job-specific and generic skills employers need and so help smooth transition from school or other learning to work. As employers often remark that school graduates entering the labour market lack job readiness, apprenticeships, by combining school-based learning with work based learning, can help to overcome this (Cedefop, 2014b, p. 1).

Most businesses in Greece (about 97%) are microenterprises (zero to nine employees); these also employ the biggest share of about 59% of all employees and produce more than one third of the total added value (about 36%). European data show that large enterprises are more likely to offer apprenticeships than their small and medium-size counterparts ⁽⁸⁾.

It is also known that innovative firms require a more qualified staff, able to deal with new technologies and production processes. European data ⁽⁹⁾ also show that innovative activity increases with the number of employees. Table 2 presents the shares of enterprises with innovative activity in the core innovative branches. Within this category, about 86% of enterprises with 250+ employees undertook innovative activity in the reference period, while this only applies for 50% of firms with 10 to 49 employees.

The share of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in added value and employment in 2015 were estimated at 35% and 22% respectively, contracting for five years in a row. Most recently, the recession has turned to stagnation, with added value roughly constant in 2014 and 2015. The negative trend for SME employment ended in 2015. Medium-sized companies are expected to grow moderately at rates of 2% and 3% with respect to added value and employment. Micro firms, however, which dominate the

⁽⁸⁾ In 2010, at EU level 44% large enterprises offered apprenticeships, against 31% of medium, and 22% of small enterprises (Eurostat CVTS 4, no data are available for micro enterprises).

⁽⁹⁾ Eurostat community innovation survey 2014 (CIS2014), http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/inn_cis9_esms.htm

Table 2. **Greece: enterprise size by number of employees and innovation**

Number of employees	0 to 9	10 to 49	50 to 249	250+	Total
Number of enterprises 2012	702 936	20 698	2 544	402	726 581
% enterprise of total 2012	96.7	2.8	0.4	0.1	
Value added at factor costs 2012 (in million)	19 656	10 998	9 179	14 870	54 703
% value added at factor costs 2012	35.9	20.1	16.8	27.2	
Number of persons employed 2012	1 288 790	374 801	239 105	296 290	2 198 986
% of total employed	58.6	17.0	10.9	13.5	
% of innovative enterprises 2012-14 (*)	N/A	49.7	55.2	86.4	51.0

(*) Share refers to NACE B-M73_INN innovative core activities (Commission Regulation No 995/2012). Innovative enterprises are such that undertook innovative activities during the period 2012-14, including enterprises with ongoing and abandoned activities. Enterprises that undertook innovative activities during the period under review, regardless of whether the activity resulted in the implementation of an innovation, are considered innovation-active.

Source: Eurostat (c), Eurostat (d).

economy, will perform the worst according to the forecast, suffering from a 2% contraction in added value and stagnation in employment (European Commission, 2016a, pp. 2-3).

3.3. VET in Greece

The education and training system in Greece occupies a central part within the framework of the new national growth strategy (under development in 2017). The 2015 economic adjustment programme indicates that modernisation and expansion of VET and, in particular, of apprenticeships is crucial to improving young people's transitions from education to employment and to foster sustainable employment (European Commission, 2015b, p. 22).

Despite high unemployment rates and the role VET plays in facilitating transitions from school to employment, VET at secondary and post-

secondary levels does not appeal to young people; it is considered a 'second choice' compared to general secondary or higher education, which is associated with perspectives of improved social standing. Efforts made by the authorities to present VET as an alternative of equal value with general education have not yet changed young people's attitudes. Most young people (about 75%) still opt for general upper secondary school giving access to university studies. At upper secondary level, VET remains the second choice for most parents and young people, resulting in low participation (Cedefop, 2014b, p. 17).

Table 3. **VET key indicators in Greece**

VET indicators	2014	EU-28 Average (%)
Share of ISCED 3 students in VET	33.7	48.9
Employment rate of recent graduates age 20-34 by education attainment 1-3 years before reference year – ISCED 3-4	38.8	70.8
Employment rate of recent graduates age 20-34 by education attainment 1-3 years before reference year – ISCED 5-8	47.4	80.5
Employment rate of recent graduates age 20-34 by education attainment 1-3 years before reference year – ISCED 3-8 (total)	44.3	76.1
Adult participation in lifelong learning age 25-64 – ISCED 0-8 (total)	3.0	10.7

Source: European Commission, 2015c, p. 2.

Table 3 shows low figures for Greece on many VET key indicators compared with the EU average. The share of upper secondary students enrolled in VET is low and the percentage of adults involved in lifelong learning is also lower than the EU average (Cedefop, 2015c, pp. 44-47). Participation in VET at upper secondary level remains particularly modest in Greece, with a rate of 33.7% in 2014 in comparison to an EU average of 48.9% (see Section 4.2 for participation in apprenticeship programmes). Greece also has a very low employment rate for recent upper secondary graduates at 38.8% in 2014, compared to an EU average of 70.8%. Adult participation in lifelong learning remains very low at 3.0% in 2014, compared to an EU average of 10.7%.

Efforts to modernise VET and apprenticeship provision began in September 2013 with Law No 4186/2013 on secondary education aiming at modernising VET and increasing the provision of apprenticeships. The 2016 national strategic framework for upgrading VET including apprenticeships (hereafter referred to also as 2016 VET strategy), adopted through Law No 4386/2016, reaffirmed and complemented provisions introduced since 2013. Figure 3 presents the main types of VET programmes, including the apprenticeship schemes.

EPAL school-based vocational education programmes at upper secondary level

Formal upper secondary school-based VET programmes are offered at vocational education schools (EPAL, *επαγγελματικά λύκεια*) run by the Ministry of Education. Enrolment is possible for graduates of lower secondary (general) education. Studies last three years, and learners receive qualifications at level 4 of the national and European qualification frameworks. EPAL upper secondary programmes are school-based, comprising general subjects, vocational theory and vocational practice in workshops. Graduates may sit national examinations allowing access to (certain) higher education institutes.

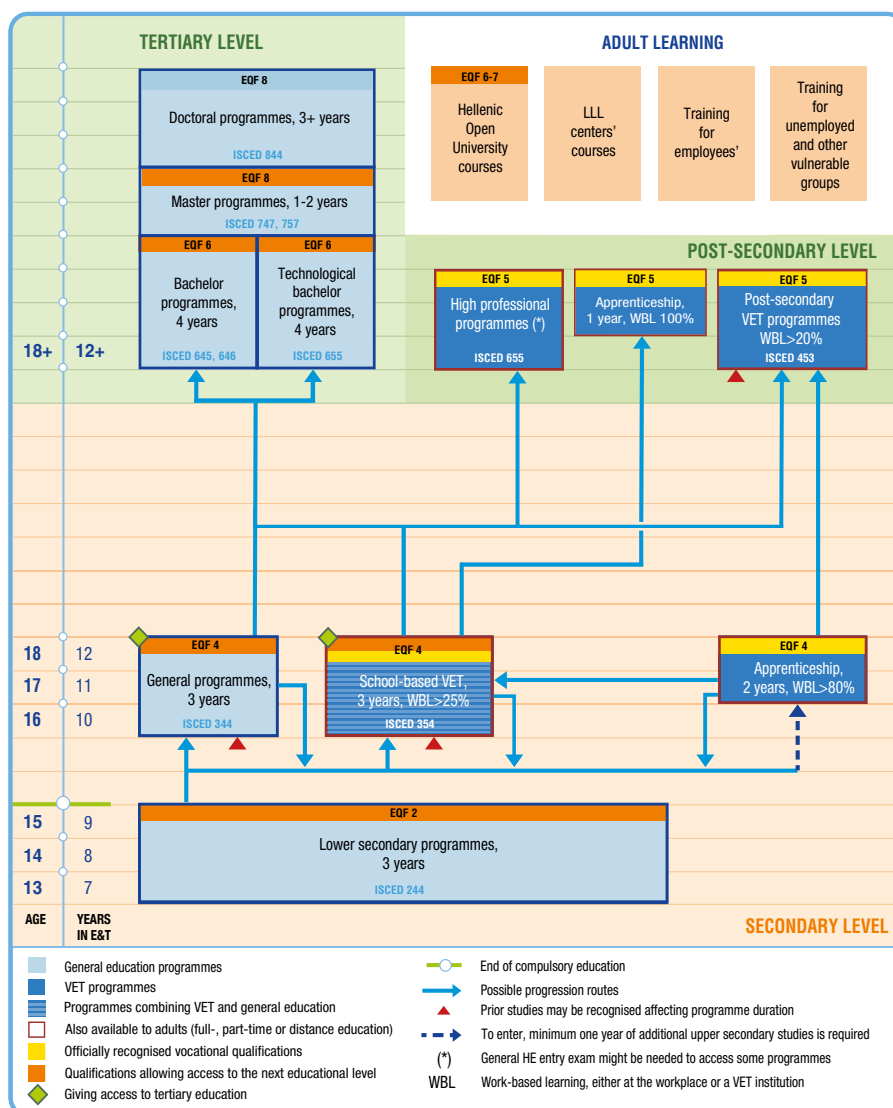
EPAS apprenticeship scheme at upper secondary level

Apprenticeship programmes are offered at vocational training (apprenticeship) schools (EPAS, *επαγγελματικές σχολές*) run mostly by the OAED, the Greek PES that is supervised by the Ministry of Labour. Enrolment is open to learners who have at least completed the first year of school-based upper secondary education, general (GEL, general upper secondary education) or vocational (EPAL) programmes. Studies last two years; according to the referencing of the national and European qualification frameworks (2015), learners should receive qualifications at level 4 of both. The EPAS apprenticeship scheme is offered in alternance between school and company. Graduates may proceed to post-secondary vocational education institutes (IEK) programmes and to the second year of school-based EPAL programmes, but not to higher education. The EPAS apprenticeship scheme is described in detail in Chapter 4.

EPAL apprenticeship scheme at post-secondary level

Apprenticeship programmes are introduced at post-secondary level in vocational education schools (EPAL, *επαγγελματικά λύκεια*) that

Figure 3. **VET in the Greek education and training system**



Source: Cedefop.

traditionally offered exclusively school-based VET programmes at upper secondary level. The Ministry of Education and OAED share responsibility, especially for attracting companies and placing students. Enrolment in this scheme is possible only for graduates of the three-year school-based EPAL programmes at upper secondary level. The EPAL post-secondary apprenticeship scheme lasts one school-year, leading to qualifications at level 5 of the national and European qualifications frameworks. This new scheme was piloted in 2016 and was expanded in March 2017. The scheme is described in detail in Chapter 4.

IEK post-secondary vocational training programmes, including provision of apprenticeships

The vocational training institutes (IEK) offer VET programmes at post-secondary level. IEK may be public or private; attendance at public IEKs is offered free of charge. The supervision of public or private IEKs lies with the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning of the Ministry of Education. Enrolment is open to practically all learners, including graduates of GEL or EPAL upper secondary programmes, EPAS apprenticeship scheme or the recently introduced EPAL apprenticeship scheme at post-secondary level. IEK programmes last five semesters, one of which is dedicated to training at the workplace, traditionally through internships. With the 2013-16 reforms, IEKs may also provide apprenticeships as a way to offer learners the opportunity to study in alternance between school and company. The IEK apprenticeship scheme, not yet piloted, is described in detail in Chapter 4.

Apprenticeship scheme provided by SEK

An additional apprenticeship scheme provided by vocational training schools (SEK) was introduced in 2013 and operated briefly until abolished by Law No 4386/2016. In this context, the scheme was not part of the review and is not further described in this section.



4. System development and stakeholder reflections

System development and stakeholder reflections

Chapter 4 introduces the 2013-16 policy developments affecting VET and apprenticeship and analyses the apprenticeship system against the Cedefop analytical framework. The analysis is separated into two main parts:

- (a) what was in place before the policy developments: lessons learned based on the old system's features and the implementation of the EPAS apprenticeship scheme;
- (b) what the policies shape: the new system's features and the gaps and challenges ahead based on the lessons learned.

4.1. Apprenticeship policy developments (2013-16)

Apprenticeships have existed in Greece since 1952, the mainstream apprenticeship scheme being EPAS. The major part of the EPAS programmes is provided under the supervision of the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) which is the public employment service (PES) in Greece under the competence of the Ministry of Labour ⁽¹⁰⁾. EPAS programmes offered by OAED are largely acknowledged as the prominent apprenticeship scheme in the country.

In this context, Law No 4186/2013 included measures to modernise and expand VET, including apprenticeships, introducing apprenticeship provision as an option at post-secondary level through EPAL and vocational training institutes (IEK) schools that fall under the competence of the Ministry of Education. The law also aimed at creating a quality assurance framework for VET: setting up a monitoring mechanism to

⁽¹⁰⁾ EPAS programmes specialising in certain sectors of the economy are provided by the competent ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Tourism), in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. Their features are similar to those of OAED EPAS programmes, but special regulations from the competent ministry may also apply. These programmes represent a very small share of all students at upper secondary level and therefore were deemed less determinant of the overall system and were not further reviewed.

develop local partnerships to promote apprenticeships in at least six regions; gradually involving employers and private sector funding in VET; identifying future skills needs; and matching VET provision with the needs of the labour market. However, in the first years after its adoption, operationalisation and implementation of the law were very slow and partial.

The 2015 national reform programme recognised 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* (MoU) (European Commission, 2015b) from August 2015 contained a set of key measures furthering the modernisation of VET, including apprenticeships in Greece. It called for a new VET strategy encompassing apprenticeships ⁽¹⁾, including:

- (a) introducing quality frameworks for the apprenticeship system and VET more generally and apprenticeship curricula;
- (b) securing apprenticeship placements including through intermediary structures involving social partners (major VET partnerships);
- (c) launching two small-scale pilot projects for apprenticeships.

Although the quantified targets accompanying the MoU were broadly defined and frequently revised, these main provisions remained, so expectations to increase apprenticeship placements significantly through new and existing schemes (at least doubling the number of placements registered by the EPAS provision). The provisions of the MoU were

⁽¹⁾ On VET, the supplemental MoU of June 2016 stated that ‘The government will by May 2016: (i) legislate the quality frameworks for VET curricula and apprenticeships; (ii) finalise and agree with the institutions the VET strategy, strengthening in particular the sections on continuous VET and securing apprenticeship placements. Furthermore, consistent with the 2016 budget and MTFS, the government will deliver the modernisation and expansion of VET (key deliverable) by: (a) finalising after agreement with the institutions the integrated implementation plan for VET with quantified targets for 2016/17 and 2017/18 (June 2016); (b) launching two small-scale pilots projects of apprenticeships for 2016/17 (June 2016); (c) the Ministry of Labour with the support of OAED and relevant stakeholders will develop, adopt the framework for, and launch a series of major VET partnerships, involving employer sectoral representative bodies and social partners, to serve as intermediary structures in order to support employers to offer work-based learning vacancies and ensure a sustainable expansion of apprenticeships for the academic years 2016-17 and 2017-18 (June 2016 for the adoption of the framework and September 2016 for the launch). In addition the government will include a human capital dimension to the national growth strategy by June 2016 and adopt an integrated plan for Human Capital development, addressing economic growth and supported by the VET Reform (October 2016)’ (European Commission, 2016b, p. 26).

translated into key deliverables required for unlocking EU funding for VET, including apprenticeships ⁽¹²⁾.

As a result, the national strategic framework for upgrading VET and apprenticeships (VET strategy) was adopted in May 2016, through Law No 4386/2016. It includes measures to improve the labour market relevance of the VET system in close cooperation with stakeholders through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and strengthening of work-based learning provision. It also aims to increase the quality and attractiveness of VET, including through establishing a national approach for its quality assurance. On apprenticeships, the VET strategy reiterated the expansion of offer through the EPAL and IEK schools, abolished the briefly introduced schools for vocational training (SEK) programmes (Section 3.3.2), and extended the EPAS programmes (see more in Section 4.2.2). It also called for enhanced cooperation among existing (EPAS) and new providers (EPAL and IEK) and stakeholders.

The quality framework for apprenticeships (QFA), which was crucial to the above-mentioned requirements, was also presented in 2016 and adopted by law in 2017. It includes provisions on:

- (a) definitions of apprenticeships, including the workplace component;
- (b) a broad institutional framework for the apprenticeship system, including information on the apprenticeship agreement/contract, the accreditation of mentors and financing of the apprenticeships;
- (c) governance structures (i.e. the roles and responsibilities of the key actors in the apprenticeship system);
- (d) terms for the participation of companies in apprenticeship provision;
- (e) cooperation between educational structures and companies in the context of the apprenticeship schemes;
- (f) apprentices' working and learning conditions;
- (g) requirements for in-company trainers;
- (h) quality assurance.

Other initiatives of this nature were also launched during the review (such as the quality framework for VET curricula) or were in the pipeline (apprenticeship regional/business-led partnerships). Following the 2016 VET

⁽¹²⁾ In late 2015 to early 2016, the Greek authorities communicated to the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission a national strategic framework for upgrading VET and apprenticeships, a quality framework for apprenticeships and other supporting documents. These documents are key deliverables required under ex ante conditionality 10.4, the MoU and self-suspension clauses included in the 2014-20 Operational Programme for Human Resources.

strategy, it is estimated that two laws, seven joint ministerial decisions and 14 ministerial decisions relevant to apprenticeship provision were issued.

Greece is in the process of implementing policies to improve the quality and effectiveness of VET, which also encompasses the apprenticeship system. The range of activities envisaged is extensive, leading to a major overhaul of the apprenticeship system, and is to be carried out in a relatively condensed period after the introduction of the 2016 VET strategy. The strategy sets the general framework for apprenticeship provision and a medium-term milestone: apprenticeship schemes (and VET in general) should be assessed by 2020-21 and further decisions about apprenticeship provision should be made following this assessment.

4.2. Apprenticeship scheme distinguishing features and place in education and training

4.2.1. Apprenticeship prior to the reforms

At the time the review was initiated, the only mainstream apprenticeship scheme was that delivered by the EPAS schools, which operates at secondary education level (Section 3.3). Most EPAS programmes are provided under the auspices of OAED which is responsible for operating 51 EPAS schools. The OAED EPAS are attended by around 10 000 students annually (on average) ⁽¹³⁾, depending on the relevant annual call (4 500 to 5 000 students enrol each year) issued by OAED following consultation with employer representatives, mostly at local level (Section 4.4.1).

4.2.1.1. *Place in the education and training system*

EPAS apprenticeship programmes are formal in the sense that they lead to formally recognised qualifications included in the national qualifications framework (NQF) and are largely regulated by the State. However, although the scheme belongs to upper secondary vocational education, according to Law No 3475/2006, it does not lead to higher education.

The EPAS apprenticeship programmes last for two school years (four semesters). They admit students aged 16 to 23 who must have completed at least the first grade of upper secondary education, either general (*γενικό λύκειο*, GEL), or vocational (*επαγγελματικό λύκειο*, EPAL, see Chapter 3).

⁽¹³⁾ The number of students reached a peak of 20 360 in the academic year 1999/2000. At that time, and up to 2006, the apprenticeship scheme had a duration of three years. Since 2006, the duration has been reduced to two years.

On completion of their studies, EPAS graduates receive a specialisation diploma, corresponding to level 4 of the NQF (though the level is not yet indicated on the diplomas).

4.2.1.2. *Systematic alternance*

Varying according to the specialities, workplace learning may take place from four up to six days a week, usually up to six hours a day, in private or public-sector enterprises on terms specified in the relevant apprenticeship contract (Section 4.2.1.3). Learners attend the EPAS schools three or four days per week (for an average of two hours/day) after their spell in the enterprises, plus one day of the week which is normally dedicated to school-based learning (subjects offered in classrooms and workshops), i.e. a four-hour day spent at school.

Apprentices are expected to start their training in enterprises from the beginning of the contract. In practice, this might happen a few weeks after the beginning of the school year (this slight delay is due to lack of companies, administrative reasons or low preparedness of learners to accommodate immediately to alternating between school and company). Alternation between school and company lasts for the duration of the overall programme, two school years. In exceptional cases, learners might not be able to benefit from workplace learning at all and complete the programme only through studying at school (classroom and laboratories).

4.2.1.3. *Contract and remuneration*

An apprenticeship contract is signed by the learner (or their guardian), the school and the company and is registered to the Ministry of Labour authorities as a special type of contract. The enterprises participating in the programme are subsidised for their apprentices. As of 1 January 2014, the subsidy for enterprises was set at EUR 11 for each day an apprentice spends at the workplace ⁽¹⁴⁾; this subsidy may be paid either to the employer or directly to the apprentice. The remuneration of the apprentice amounts to 75% of the daily minimum wage for workers under 25 years (as determined by the National General Collective Labour Agreement) for all four apprenticeship semesters. As stipulated by the law (and described in the contract), apprentices also receive social security benefits and apprenticeship is considered work time counting towards pension years. Although the status of apprentice is not fully aligned with the formal status

⁽¹⁴⁾ Joint Ministerial Decision of the Ministries of Economy, Education and Labour 4.10721/3.569/2014 on subsidisation of EPAS apprenticeships.

of an employee, an apprentice receives most of the key benefits foreseen for regular employees.

4.2.1.4. *Employer responsibility*

Through the apprenticeship contract, employers assume responsibility to provide training; however, they are not required to appoint any tutor, nor are they provided with any document to guide or support training provision and monitoring (for example learning agreement, training plan). The formal criteria for their participation focus on the type of economic activity and health and safety conditions at the workplace. Content of learning at the workplace relies significantly on the semi-structured but regular visits of EPAS teachers to companies, and on the feedback provided by learners and enterprises to these teachers. EPAS schools have terminated contracts because of insufficient learning provided to apprentices in the past, when their efforts to address the issue with companies were not fruitful.

4.2.2. **Strengths and challenges prior to the reforms**

The EPAS apprenticeship offered by OAED is structured and has been available for several decades. The review showed that the EPAS scheme enjoys a high degree of confidence among stakeholders and has many commendable features and strengths. Social partners and national authorities consider the provisions protecting apprentices under the OAED scheme as robust, as apprentices are remunerated and covered for social security, under a contract signed between the authorities, the employer and the apprentice. Apprentices also receive formally recognised qualifications. All stakeholders agree that EPAS provide apprenticeship programmes which follow dual learning models, in terms of duration and of substantial alternating periods between schools and enterprises. Social partners have expressed the view that the EPAS scheme is, in principle, a good practice that should be maintained and improved and provides key features that should form the basis for other schemes.

The review shows that the EPAS scheme faces several challenges. Regarding its place in the education system, a prominent weakness is the limited progression opportunities for EPAS graduates, who are not entitled to progress directly to higher education. Although the programme belongs to upper secondary vocational education and leads to qualifications referenced to the NQF, progression is possible only through enrolment in the second year of school-based upper secondary EPAL programmes. This is considered by many VET experts and stakeholders as one of the

main reasons why EPAS programmes are perceived as a second-chance school for young people who face difficulties in school-based programmes, although they increasingly attract a higher number of upper- or post-secondary education graduates.

There are also negative factors in employer responsibility for the provision of training. The EPAS scheme lacks reference documents that describe company responsibilities to apprentices to learn in a systematic and transparent way and it lacks an appointed trainer and an overall workplace curriculum.

4.2.3. Apprenticeship after the reforms

According to Law No 4186/2013 on secondary education, apprenticeships should become available through more schemes that fall under the competence of the Ministry of Education:

- (a) apprenticeship scheme offered by vocational schools: EPAL is currently the main provider of vocational education (school-based, upper secondary level) and attracts most pupils opting for VET at this level (Chapter 3). In accordance with Law No 4186/2013, a post-secondary cycle of EPAL programmes, the apprenticeship class, has been established (also known as EPAL apprenticeship year, hereafter EPAL apprenticeship scheme). This is addressed to graduates of upper secondary EPAL programmes (including recent previous cohorts) as an optional pathway to continue their studies at post-secondary level. It should last one school year and lead to qualifications at level 5 of the NQF (national qualifications framework) and EQF (European qualifications framework). The EPAL apprenticeship scheme was not further detailed by the Law No 4186/2013 and was not actually introduced before 2016, despite pilot activities (such as the pilot *mathitia4u* (apprenticeships for you)) which lacked significant elements of an apprenticeship scheme (for example alternation of learning between the school and the workplace). The VET strategy of 2016 reinforced the introduction of the scheme, reaffirmed the combination of learning at school and the workplace, and detailed many aspects of its operation (Sections 4.2.3.1 to 4.2.3.4). The scheme was piloted in 2016 and extended from March 2017 to 183 classes across seven specialities, involving approximately 1 200 apprentices;
- (b) IEK provision of apprenticeship at post-secondary, non-tertiary level. According to Law No 4186/2013, IEKs may organise one semester of their programmes in an apprenticeship regime as an alternative to the existing

option of provision of practical training/internships. Since 2015 ⁽¹⁵⁾ the semester of internships or apprenticeship has become mandatory. The referencing of the NQF to the EQF in 2015 includes an upgrade of the qualifications acquired through studying at IEKs from level 4 to level 5. Law No 4386/2016 refers to a single semester of apprenticeship equal to 960 hours. IEK provision of apprenticeship had not been piloted at the time of the review. However, the 2016 VET strategy reinforced the introduction of apprenticeship in IEK programmes and detailed many aspects of their operation (Sections 4.2.3.1 to 4.2.3.4);

- (c) apprenticeship programmes offered at upper secondary level at SEKs. These programmes were introduced but attracted only a limited number of learners and were discontinued after the 2016 VET strategy. Hence they are not further described in Chapter 4 (see also Chapter 3).

Although Law No 4186/2013 foresaw the gradual abolishment of the EPAS apprenticeship scheme (and its integration to the then foreseen SEK schools) by 2015, EPAS programmes had not been discontinued at the time of the review. The VET strategy of 2016 and the subsequent Law No 4386/2016 extend these longstanding EPAS apprenticeship programmes until the end of a five-year period (2020-21, with the last cohort graduating in 2022) during which all schemes will be evaluated to inform decisions on future provision.

4.2.3.1. *Place in the education system*

The EPAL apprenticeship scheme and IEK provision of apprenticeship are offered at post-secondary, non-tertiary level. Access to the EPAL apprenticeship is possible only for graduates of EPAL school-based upper secondary programmes. The programme allows indirect progression to higher education, as school-based VET graduates are already entitled to sit the national higher education entry exams (general or special ones for EPAL graduates). Access to IEK is open to graduates of any secondary education programme including EPAL and EPAS, or even to higher education graduates as a form of adult learning in practice. Graduating from IEK programmes *per se* does not allow progression to higher education, but learners already entitled to sit national exams due to their previous education (GEL and EPAL upper secondary programmes) retain this right. For EPAS graduates, the VET strategy did not foresee any changes in relation to their progression

⁽¹⁵⁾ Joint Ministerial Decision 139931/K1/2015 of the Ministries of Economy, Education and Labour on IEK internships and apprenticeships.

to higher education. EPAS graduates still need to enrol in the second year of the upper secondary school based programmes at EPAL schools which give them the right to sit the national examinations granting access to higher education.

The common quality framework for apprenticeships refers explicitly to certification of apprentice qualifications, stating that certification exams will be organised and held by EOPPEP. The VET strategy reaffirms that OAED EPAS graduates will receive a level 4 degree (NQF/EQF), while EPAL graduates of the apprenticeship year and IEK graduates will receive a level 5 degree (NQF/EQF).

4.2.3.2. *Systematic alternance*

The VET strategy of 2016 and subsequent regulatory documents determine that the one-year EPAL apprenticeship programme will include 28 hours per week at the workplace and seven hours at school. The IEKs that will choose to offer apprenticeship (instead of the usually offered internships) through their programmes should ensure that learning at the workplace is equivalent to one semester (960 hours). Provisions for alternation of learning at EPAS remain unchanged, as the scheme is traditionally based on the dual learning model.

4.2.3.3. *Contract and remuneration*

The VET reforms built on the contractual framework used in the EPAS scheme and extended its application for both EPAL and IEK. Since the 2016 VET Strategy and the QFA, it is clearly stated that apprenticeship offered at EPAL and IEK will be based on the contractual framework for the EPAS scheme: the same type of contract, wage and the overall provisions protecting apprentices.

The 2016 VET reform, therefore, closes gaps in the Law No 4186/2013 that did not explicitly refer to contract and remuneration. It also amends the Joint Ministerial Decision 139931/K1/2015 for IEK (Section 4.2.3.b) that had lifted the obligation of companies to remunerate learners for their workplace learning. Remuneration for the period that learners spend in the company is foreseen for those IEK programmes operating the practical semester in the apprenticeship regime, as opposed to the IEK programmes operating the practical semester via internships, for which rules in this respect are not clear.

4.2.3.4. *Employer responsibility*

A key novel aspect of the 2016 VET reform is the introduction of clearer provisions regarding the responsibility of companies to provide training at the workplace: the strategy and the QFA introduce the obligation to use learning agreements for all schemes and the requirement to companies to appoint an in-company trainer. These provisions (missing from the Law No 4186/2013) affect apprenticeship provision (EPAL, EPAS, and IEK). The QFA includes provisions on future requirements for in-company trainers, their future accreditation, and steps for training the first wave of trainers.

4.2.4. Meeting identified and new challenges

After the 2013-16 policy developments, all three schemes will run under clear conditions regarding their key features. Key contractual aspects (wages, benefits) are common across the three schemes. Social partners appreciated the introduction of clear terms on learners' remuneration and rights following the arrangements used in the EPAS apprenticeship scheme. Concerns that companies may use EPAL and IEK apprenticeship provision as a means for accessing free/cheap labour are now gradually lifting. The place of the new EPAL apprenticeship schemes and IEK apprenticeship scheme in the education system is clearer than it was in 2013 and welcomed by most stakeholders in the respect of expanding apprenticeship provision at post-secondary level. Alternation of learning between workplace and school is also clearly introduced for EPAL, although the terms under which alternation can be introduced in the IEK curricula and implemented are missing; this raises questions in relation to its compatibility to being an apprenticeship scheme or programme such as EPAS and EPAL. The responsibility of companies for workplace learning is reinforced through, for example, use of learning agreements and appointment of in-company trainers.

A series of challenges lie ahead. The multiplication of the apprenticeship schemes raises concerns of overlaps and/or competition for the same pool of learners and specialities. For example, the EPAL and IEK apprenticeship schemes are both placed at post-secondary level (NQF/EQF 5) and are intended for upper secondary graduates from EPAL school-based programmes (exclusively in the case of EPAL scheme, among other target groups in the case of IEK apprenticeship). It was noted that the EPAS scheme, although at upper secondary level (NQF/EQF 4), attracts increasingly more upper secondary graduates (GEL and EPAL), or even IEK graduates. The increased number of schemes may also raise confusion among employers, as their representatives have argued; the challenge is to enable companies

to distinguish the different key features and understand the various schemes as different versions of one single system, alternative offers to choose from.

Alongside system-level challenges are issues related to a specific scheme. Social partners, during the review but also in previous studies and policy papers, argued that the duration of the EPAL scheme (one school year) was too short for it to be considered as apprenticeship or to lead to qualifications at level 5 of the NQF/EQF, although some representatives acknowledge that the Greek companies during the crisis are more reluctant to commit to long-term work-based learning schemes. The scheme *per se* would not count when it comes to progression to higher education as learners who enrol are already eligible to progress to higher education on the basis of their previous studies at upper secondary EPAL programmes. Some stakeholders criticised that progression to post-secondary EPAL apprenticeship class is not (directly) available to EPAS or general education graduates, who will have to enrol in upper secondary school-based VET first (EPAL).

In the IEK apprenticeship scheme, a semester out of a total of five in an IEK programme may be organised in an apprenticeship regime, instead of internship as is common practice. This raises the question from stakeholders of whether IEK qualifies as an apprenticeship scheme, especially compared to EPAS and EPAL where the whole programme is conceived and structured in alternance and the contractual commitments apply from the start.

The EPAS scheme still does not offer its graduates the possibility to progress to higher education. Although it is part of upper secondary education and its qualifications are formally recognised and included in the NQF/EQF, at the time of this review, several key actors within the education community do not acknowledge the outcomes of the programme as sufficient for such progression. Also, as the initial focus of the EPAS scheme to learners at risk of dropping out has become weaker, there are challenges on positioning of the programme.

Several interviewees noted that key policy documents are not fully translated into a comprehensive regulatory framework, such as relevant by-laws and circulars, to complete the operational, technical and binding nature of the VET strategy and the quality framework for apprenticeships. This is especially the case with the features and place of apprenticeship schemes in the education and training system.

Box 2. **Learners unclear on features and place in the system**

The recent policy and regulatory documents introduce common provisions across all three schemes for key contractual aspects such as wage and overall benefits for apprentices. This should reduce complexity for prospective learners and, in principle, allow them to base their choice on the place of these schemes in the education and training system, and other features such as the actual content of learning (specialities offered) in combination with duration and education level. In practice, though, the content of the relevant qualifications and their scope and position in the education and training system is not clearly described nor communicated by the guidance services. The task is made even more difficult because of the overlapping target groups. The Ministry of Education suggests a first distinction based on the profile of learners: while EPAL school-based VET graduates will be encouraged to enrol in the EPAL apprenticeship scheme, the IEK apprenticeship scheme should be available for learners graduating from other upper secondary programmes. The decision is (and should remain) for the learner to make.

Learners are to access to advisory career services such as the OAED centres for promoting employment (KPAs, although these are mostly targeted to adults), guidance services within EPAS schools, guidance centres of the Ministry of Education (KESYPs) and web tools provided by EOPPEP and OAED. Coordination of available structures and processes is limited and there is a lack of understanding of the key features of the apprenticeship schemes by staff in each guidance service. KPA officers, usually working with adult jobseekers, reported challenges when providing their services to apprentices, given their young age and limited life and work experience. Also, several interviewees raise concerns on the extent to which a guidance service would promote all possible options on equal terms. In this context, decisions by learners on enrolment – or not – in an apprenticeship programme depend more on the chance to start immediately some kind of paid training activity and the availability of education units close to their residence, than to the actual features of the apprenticeship schemes.

Source: Cedefop.

4.3. Governance structures, roles and responsibilities

4.3.1. Apprenticeship prior to the reforms

The roles and responsibilities of key players in implementing the EPAS apprenticeship scheme are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. **Roles and responsibilities in EPAS apprenticeships**

Actor	Responsibility
OAED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and decision-making body for the scheme (Article 2 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 1.7195/οικ.31289/2011) on subsidising EPAS apprenticeships • Through its territorial network and central administration (VET directorate), monitoring the apprenticeship programme (both school-based and company-based components), together with the EPAS teachers (Article 2 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 1.7195/οικ.31289/2011) • In cooperation with OAED local network and EPAS schools, carrying out administrative tasks related to reimbursement of companies and subsidising learner remuneration
EPAS schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for providing the school-based component of apprenticeship programmes • Responsible for finding work placements for their students • Reporting on the number for apprenticeship places for the forthcoming year to the VET directorate at OAED (Article 2 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 1.7195/οικ.31289/2011) • Responsible for monitoring the implementation of practical training at the workplace (Article 32 of Joint Ministerial Decision 40087) on the organisation of EPAS providers. • Monitoring the workplace component of the apprenticeship programme (Article 2 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 1.7195/οικ.31289/2011) • Registering contracts and monitoring adherence to their terms • Taking initiatives to resolve disputes between students and employers
EOPPEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for evaluating and updating occupational profiles • Overall responsibility on certifying qualifications

Actor	Responsibility
Social partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the OAED Administration Board, therefore with direct influence on the type and nature of measures, interventions and programmes that OAED develops and implements, including apprenticeships • Member of a national level working group with responsibilities on apprenticeship, led by the Governor of OAED (Decisions of the Governor of OAED No21976/2014 and No 110286/2014 on the cooperation of OAED and social partners)
KPA (OAED local offices)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer guidance and counselling to apprentices
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible (through IEP) for the overall design and development of curricula for the EPAS programmes
Ministry of Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervises OAED • Sets the overall framework for apprenticeship contracts • Provides the link among apprenticeship provision with overall employment policy

Source: Cedefop.

4.3.1.1. *Institutions at national level*

The roles and responsibilities of the key players in the existing EPAS scheme are clearly defined by joint ministerial decisions. OAED is the coordination and decision-making body for the scheme at national level, responsible for (re)designing and improving the regulatory and operational framework, while the EPAS schools play a major role in the implementation of the scheme at local level. OAED central administration coordinates the provision of the scheme, with its VET department having a prominent role backed by lengthy experience and know-how. OAED runs under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour. It funds the State part of apprenticeship provision (operation of schools, teachers' wages and parts of apprentices' remuneration) through public budget and mostly through contributions of companies to its budget (in a sort of training fund).

EOPPEP (under the Ministry of Education) issues provisions for final assessment, coordinates occupational profile updating, and certifies qualifications. The first generation of occupational profiles was developed by the social partners under the EOPPEP coordination.

Updating of curricula is under the competence of the Ministry of Education, through the Institute of Education Policy.

4.3.1.2. *Institutions at regional/local level*

At local level, the EPAS schools provide the school-based part of learning, and are also responsible for finding work placements for their students and for the practical training in companies. Each EPAS school has a list of private sector employers that is regularly updated by the teachers in charge of the programmes; the VET directorate in OAED maintains a central list with public sector employers. Every April, following deliberations with social partners and local stakeholders at EPAS career offices, each EPAS director reports the number of apprenticeship placements available in the private sector for the forthcoming school year to the VET directorate, for it to issue its annual call. Public institutions report their needs responding to a separate call issued by OAED that requires a longer procedure.

EPAS teachers play an important role in the implementation of the apprenticeship programmes by actively searching for enterprises and supervising apprentices on site. Permanent teaching staff may be appointed as supervisors of in-company learning; they visit the training companies once a month, although this may differ across schools and supervisors. EPAS directors handle cases of conflict among companies and learners on contractual or learning related issues, in consultation with the enterprises involved. EPAS teachers take initiatives to adjust national curricula in accordance with labour market needs, as well as to reduce the existing/identified gaps between theoretical education and the more practical education offered at EPAS laboratories. In practice, teachers adapt their teaching to labour market needs. Career offices within EPAS schools were set up to approach companies, local employers' associations, chambers and other stakeholders in a more systematic way and to make visible apprentices' competences to the local labour market, for example through skills competitions.

OAED KPA offices (centres for promoting employment operating at local level) direct companies interested in providing apprenticeship placements to the EPAS schools and offer guidance and counselling services to current apprentices, as exemplified by a career talk with apprentices and professional advice. These services are mainly related to supporting entrepreneurship.

4.3.1.3. *Social partners and chambers*

Social partners sit on OAED's administration board and so are in a position to influence directly the type and nature of measures, interventions and programmes that OAED develops and implements, including apprenticeships. So far, however, the actual involvement of social partners in the design and operation of apprenticeship programmes has been limited.

The current situation shows that professional associations (which are the structures of the social partners at local level) and chambers are not greatly involved in apprenticeship provision. In most cases, chambers and employer organisations do not provide companies with information concerning the apprenticeship scheme and usually do not actively promote or support apprenticeship provision at their own initiative. Nevertheless, some examples of good practices can be identified: cases where chambers and employer organisations submit their proposals to EPAS schools for the specialities to be approved in the following school year exist.

4.3.2. Strengths and challenges prior to the reforms

The review identified several strengths in the governance of the EPAS apprenticeship scheme. The roles and responsibilities of the key players including those of OAED staff (national level) and EPAS teachers (local level) are relatively well defined by joint ministerial decisions. Despite certain limitations, OAED has developed an elaborate administrative mechanism and accumulated significant technical expertise in coordinating apprenticeship provision across the country. Further, OAED has good knowledge of, and links with, the labour market and employers. It is a tripartite body, so social partners are offered a platform through which they can directly affect the development of apprenticeship programmes, to make them more relevant to the labour market needs (although, in practice, this is not happening). EPAS schools often work closely with professional associations, chambers, local and regional authorities, to identify and address labour market needs, as well as skill requirements across the country, and allow them to tailor the apprenticeship offer accordingly.

Social partners have a well-established understanding of the value of apprenticeships as both an education process and a means to link education with employment. Stakeholders interviewed generally recognise the importance of apprenticeships in assuring a skilled labour force. Therefore, despite some variation in views expressed on their current participation, all are motivated to assume a greater role in apprenticeship planning and implementation. Social partners also developed informal channels of collaboration among themselves on VET, including apprenticeships.

Nevertheless, weaknesses have been identified. Social partners want increased participation. Some indicate that they should not be involved in administrative activities (such as mentioned by SEV), while others say that they do not have the organisational capacity to allow them to get involved in apprenticeship management and administrative tasks (such as SETE).

Nevertheless, they say that they could play a more active role: in registering the skill needs of the enterprises (SETE); in offering guidance services to learners (GSEVEE), and establishing local partnership agreements/local apprenticeship pacts (GSEVEE) with relevant stakeholders (employers, chambers, and schools). Others declared their wish to play a key role in managing the apprenticeship system (such as KEEE, the union of Hellenic chambers).

The governance model and practices followed before the 2013-16 policy developments (and largely still in place) result in occupational profiles that are generally considered as heavy documents of limited practical use. Still, the process of their development helped social partners and EOPPEP develop significant know-how and reinforce collaboration and trust on VET-related issues.

The current governance model results in delays in updating curricula in line with labour market needs. Curriculum readjustment requires considerable time, as it involves a bureaucratic procedure by the Ministry of Education and IEP. Similar, but less serious delays occurred in OAED in the past, when its involvement in curriculum development was stronger. Stakeholders (mainly schools and employers) indicate that the delays, in conjunction with technological advancements, often result in out-of-date curricula.

At local level, chambers and professional associations are not actively promoting the EPAS apprenticeship scheme among their members; KPA offices also play a limited role in this sense. As a result, involvement of labour market actors is more often than not triggered by the EPAS schools through formal or informal practices, and mostly at the initiative of teachers and school directors. Although OAED centrally invites schools to consult employer representatives at local level, the actual level of cooperation varies depending on personal relations or school location. Companies are minimally involved in apprenticeship planning and implementation at local level and there is limited communication of their needs to the EPAS schools (ad hoc and not in a systematic way). Cooperation between KPA OAED and schools varies, also depending partly on personal relations or proximity of the two services: cooperation is much more frequent where KPA and EPAS share facilities but very limited in big cities where schools are located far from KPA offices.

4.3.3. Apprenticeship after the reforms

Law No 4186/2013 introduced some important changes in the described governance model; these had not been put in place at the time of

the review but set the scene for subsequent policy developments. Most significantly, the law called for the gradual transfer of the overall competence on EPAS apprenticeship to the Ministry of Education, which was appointed to coordinate the entire apprenticeship system. OAED was mandated to support the ministry with the new schemes (EPAL apprenticeship scheme, IEK apprenticeship) conveying its experience in implementing the EPAS apprenticeship scheme, for example, through sharing responsibility in placing students in the workplace.

Since mid-2016, a number of key policy documents have been brought forward, affecting provisions on VET and apprenticeship governance (Section 4.1). First, these documents acknowledge the complexity of the apprenticeship system in terms of governance and place both Ministries of Education and Labour at the higher decision-making level. The VET strategy foresees the establishment of the following national level governance bodies:

- (a) a national committee for VET and apprenticeships comprising the general secretaries of the Ministry of Education, of lifelong learning, of the Ministry of Labour and of the Ministry of Finance. The national committee will support decisions made by the Ministries of Education and Labour and will link decision-making with implementation. Although intended to be a recommendatory body, in practice it seems to be given overall responsibility for all issues of the apprenticeship system, including coordination and monitoring of actions of the national strategic framework for upgrading VET and the apprenticeship system;
- (b) a technical committee for VET and apprenticeships comprising directors from the Ministries of Education and Labour, as well as OAED, will be responsible for supporting the national committee and monitoring the implementation of the national strategic framework. The technical committee will have the ability to create ad hoc thematic working groups and may collaborate with various institutions. According to current provisions, no permanent representation of social partners is foreseen but collaboration with them is expected through the working groups. IEP and EOPPEP will have a close relationship with the technical committee.

The QFA approved in February 2017 ⁽¹⁶⁾ also foresees that a national coordinating body for the design and implementation of apprenticeships will be established. This body will comprise representatives of the Ministries

⁽¹⁶⁾ Joint Ministerial Decision of the Ministries of Economy, Education and Labour No 26385/2017 on the quality framework for apprenticeships.

of Labour and Education (directors or heads of department), OAED, social partners, chambers, education and research institutes, the union of Greek regions and the union of municipalities. Its technical composition will allow it to address topics regarding the design, organisation, implementation and evaluation of the apprenticeship offer but also may make recommendations to the Ministries of Education and Labour about the objectives, conditions, criteria, scope and effectiveness of the apprenticeship provision.

The QFA further describes the responsibilities of key stakeholders. The Ministry of Education will be, *inter alia*, responsible for:

- (a) determining the specialities available (in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and in accordance with the suggestions of the national coordinating body for the design and implementation of apprenticeships);
- (b) determining the qualifications required for learners to enrol in apprenticeships;
- (c) determining curricula following the quality framework for curricula in VET, including apprenticeships;
- (d) convening meetings of the national coordinating body for the design and implementation of apprenticeships;
- (e) creating the tools necessary for the evaluation of apprenticeship schemes;
- (f) updating occupational profiles;
- (g) evaluating and certifying the qualifications of apprenticeship graduates.

The Ministry of Labour will be, *inter alia*, responsible for:

- (a) specifying labour market needs, in terms of professional specialities and skills;
- (b) defining the criteria for the participation of companies in apprenticeship provision, after taking into account the suggestions of the national coordinating body for the design and implementation of apprenticeships;
- (c) determining the apprentices' working conditions.

Social partners will participate in the national coordinating body for the design and implementation of apprenticeships:

- (a) provide feedback on the growth prospects of economic sectors and on labour market needs;
- (b) participate in the design of training programmes for VET teachers;
- (c) inform their members about the importance of apprenticeships for enterprises and the national economy.

The VET strategy and the QFA include provisions for the establishment of regional committees of apprenticeship to be composed mainly of representatives of the regional administrations, the regional directorates of OAED, the regional directorates of the Ministry of Education, as well as representatives of social partners and chambers at this level.

At local level, to promote collaboration among providers, the QFA foresees teams for the support of apprenticeship (hereafter referred to as KPA teams). These will be established at OAED's centres for the promotion of employment. These KPA teams will comprise EPAS teachers, as well as those from the Ministry of Education. Teachers in each KPA team will be supported by a KPA career counsellor. These teams will be, *inter alia*, responsible for:

- (a) informing enterprises about all apprenticeship programmes available;
- (b) updating the register of the enterprises participating in apprenticeship programmes;
- (c) allocating apprenticeship placements to local apprenticeship providers across schemes;
- (d) monitoring the finances and administration of the programmes.

KPA teams should organise and implement activities for promoting apprenticeship schemes, such as initiatives in informing companies of the benefits of offering apprenticeship placements. They will collaborate with chambers and social partners at local level. The OAED centres for promoting employment will support the activities of the KPA teams and will be responsible for monitoring and coordinating these activities.

The QFA also introduces optional provisions for local apprenticeship partnerships, as a way to organise the apprenticeship offer at local level through extended collaboration between municipalities, schools, centres for the promotion of employment, local chambers, social partners, parent associations, scientific and research organisations. A particular form of local partnerships is promoted under the so-called regional/business-led partnerships that are part of the MoU requirements.

In designing and implementing appropriate policies, the Ministry of Labour, with the scientific support of the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (EIEAD), has already developed and put in operation (2016) a central mechanism to diagnose training needs in the labour market. A key objective of the mechanism is analysing the supply of, and demand for, occupational categories and skills, and identifying national and local training needs.

In addition to these bodies, OAED created an advisory committee to improve the apprenticeship system, with the participation of social partners and chambers, and took several additional initiatives aimed at increasing social partner involvement in the apprenticeship system (for example, conferences on partnerships in the apprenticeship system). According to OAED's reengineering plan and strategy ⁽¹⁷⁾, social partners are expected to play a key role in:

- (a) mobilising enterprises to increase their participation in EPAS apprenticeship programmes;
- (b) creating new curricula and updating old curricula;
- (c) contributing to the development of the required legal regulations.

Several studies and proposals were drafted by the Ministry of Education and OAED on developing local pacts/partnerships with social partners and chambers, aiming for better promotion of apprenticeships among both learners and companies. However, these proposals were not in practice at the time of the review.

4.3.4. Meeting identified and new challenges

Apprenticeship governance shaped by the 2013-16 policy developments is broader than it was in the past. It establishes structures and channels that, in the longer-term perspective, may lead to formal and permanent cooperation among public authorities and labour market actors on strategic design of apprenticeships. It provides the basis for the development of one/common governance structure for all provision and for a unique/coherent system, despite the differences among what is offered by the three providers, for example in terms of duration and education level. The representation of both Ministries of Education and Labour in the national committee allows for better alignment of apprenticeship provision with the broader strategic decisions regarding skills development in the country. The inclusion of OAED in the national technical bodies (but not in the national committee, with its more prominent role in supporting decision-making) brings valuable know-how, producing benefits for the apprenticeship system as a whole. The system envisaged gives responsibilities to the different actors; provisions at regional and mostly local cooperation were introduced next to the ones at national level.

⁽¹⁷⁾ As an example of OAED own work to improve EPAS programmes, Law No 4387/2016 (Article 118) allows OAED to pilot and test improvements of the regular EPAS programmes (curricula, syllabus, selection criteria for apprentices and teachers, procedures for cooperating with companies) through experimental EPAS schools.

The general architecture of the new governance system is described in the policy documents (Section 4.3.2), but its scope is as broad as the VET system, some mandates are still unclear, and potentially overlapping. Further, it is unclear how the envisaged architecture will be put into practice, how the new structures (for example national and technical committees) will actually carry out the work to fulfil their roles and responsibilities, and how cooperation between parties (committees, institutions) and levels will be organised.

The paragraphs below illustrate some critical points at national governance level.

As the scope of the national committee covers all VET provision, its specific mandate on apprenticeships is less detailed. On the one hand it is considered by national authorities as a body supporting decisions to be made by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour; on the other hand it bears the responsibility for overall governance of VET, including the apprenticeship system. The extent to which the decisions and/or preparatory work of the national committee are binding for the apprenticeship system as a whole, but also for its key actors individually, is unclear. The national authorities are prone to giving the committee a consulting role, while social partners would welcome increased capacity for decision-making within the committee. The picture becomes more complex with the planned creation of a national committee for continuing VET that could have, in theory, competence over IEK schools that offer adult learning programmes next to apprenticeship.

It is not clear how the national and technical committees will relate to the national coordinating body for apprenticeships foreseen in the QFA. This has the characteristics of a technical body which makes it similar to the technical committee. Subsequently, the division of responsibilities among these bodies is not fully clear as many key responsibilities seem to be overlapping.

Several interviewees acknowledge that, under the current provisions, the ministries are not bound to adopt the suggestions made by the committees (particularly the national committee) despite their inclusive composition and their otherwise extended mandate.

Regular cooperation at technical level among the national authorities overseeing each scheme or guidelines on this cooperation (who does what) at the technical level is still not well defined or operationalised. Many tasks seem to be assigned to the technical bodies, without further elaboration of their links with existing departments within ministries and OAED. Provisions

for clear inclusion of national institutions (IEP and EOPPEP) are also missing. Stakeholders indicated concerns about the capacity of each institution individually, such as arguing that EOPPEP is not well positioned to certify EPAL apprenticeship qualifications.

Despite greater prominence being given to social partners and chambers, their role remains limited both in policy design and delivery. Their participation is not foreseen either in the national committee or in the technical committee, apart from provisions for collaboration in working groups of the latter in forms that are not described. Their participation is foreseen formally and fully only in the national coordinating body for apprenticeships.

The social partners' and chambers' capacity to get more deeply involved varies with the degree of their previous experience with VET and apprenticeship provision. Chambers (mostly at local, but also at national level) are less experienced in supporting apprenticeship design and delivery. In contrast, social partners have know-how and have developed a shared view on many topics related to apprenticeships, thanks to their cooperation in occupation profile development and EU-funded projects related to apprenticeships.

One nationally coordinated, coherent apprenticeship system is still lacking. The different apprenticeship schemes (EPAS, EPAL) and IEK apprenticeship operate in a fragmented manner, despite the policy developments described above made in recent years towards a more homogenous apprenticeship system. Several interviewees acknowledge that the actors in charge of the different schemes and apprenticeship supply sometimes appear to have divergent understanding or interests, hindering effective policy development and an integrated approach to apprenticeship strategy and provision. Effective coordination among the two ministries responsible for apprenticeship policy also remains a challenge.

At lower levels of governance, there are concerns over how soon the systematic, collaborative approach aimed/promoted at national level will reach individual institutions and their staff. Stakeholders argue that a common management structure, both at national and local levels, dealing with daily operational matters for all schemes is, in principle, better. At the same time it was indicated that such an arrangement poses a great challenge, since the schemes differ too much (in duration of studies as well as permeability towards other education levels) and several institutional issues, similar to those pointed out at national level, need to be tackled first.

Many stakeholders argue that a common comprehensive structure (not a project-based approach) for the management of apprenticeship provision at local level, would better serve the interests of employers and apprentices. KPA teams seem to offer an initial framework for collaboration among schools, although a clear regulatory mandate is needed, such as circulars to schools and KPA offices on how to operate in practice. Professional associations, labour centres and chambers at local level could have a role in apprenticeship delivery, but are not linked to this new structure.

Other examples of local cooperation models are scarce, and the experience of the few piloted, such as the project on tourism with the Greek-German chamber and OAED, is not fully grasped and shared with stakeholders as a basis for alternative models of extended cooperation. Similarly, provisions foreseen to promote cooperation with social partners at local level, such as local or business-led partnerships, are less detailed; several stakeholders, including national authorities and some social partners, raised concerns over possible overlaps or misalignment to the work of the KPA teams and schools at local level.

4.4. Apprenticeship offer

4.4.1. Apprenticeship prior to the reforms

According to national legislation, OAED develops programmes of practical training for apprentices ⁽¹⁸⁾. Each year OAED (by decision of the OAED governor) issues a circular with the places available in the apprenticeship programmes (for each speciality); this follows research on labour market needs in the geographic area of each EPAS school and deliberation with social partners and chambers at local level through the career offices within the schools. Selection of specialities is based on semi-structured collection of labour market intelligence, although the introduction of a skills anticipation mechanism (Ministry of Labour, EIEAD) allowed OAED to use some of its early outputs in 2016.

The minimum requirements for learners to access apprenticeship programmes are stipulated. Those who complete the first grade of upper secondary education (EPAL or GEL, '*General Lyceum*') as a minimum can enrol with EPAS without taking exams ⁽¹⁹⁾. Those eligible to enrol are young

⁽¹⁸⁾ Article 26, Paragraph 1, Joint Ministerial Decision No 40087/2007.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Article 11, Paragraph 1 of Law No 3475/2006.

people aged 16 to 23. In practice, enrolment is possible and increasingly common for learners who have actually graduated from upper secondary (GEL, EPAL) and in some cases even from post-secondary programmes (IEK). At the end of each semester, EPAS students sit exams (oral or written) on theoretical and laboratory courses. Depending on their grades, they are promoted and graduate. On graduation, they receive an EPAS specialisation diploma corresponding to EQF level 4 through certification exams organised by EOPPEP.

The Ministry of Education through IEP is responsible for the development of curricula (OAED's direct role in this was stronger in the past). Curricula define the content and duration of the theoretical and laboratory courses. Students attend these courses at the EPAS units for 21 hours per week (one morning and four evenings), and undertake practical training at the workplace for a maximum of six hours per day (four, five or six days per week depending on the speciality) ⁽²⁰⁾. There is a probationary period of two months at the workplace, during which both the employer and the apprentice have the right to cancel the apprenticeship contract ⁽²¹⁾. The contract (a form provided by EPAS and signed by the EPAS director) should be filled out and signed by the apprentice (or her/his guardian if the student is below the age of 18), the employer and the EPAS school ⁽²²⁾.

The development of curricula is based on occupational profiles. These profiles record the content of occupations, and describe the qualifications required to practise a profession ⁽²³⁾. According to national legislation, EOPPEP certifies the occupational profiles upon input from the social partners. EOPPEP is responsible for the certification/accreditation and does not initiate the development of new occupational profiles. The social partners were responsible for the development of 202 occupational profiles and, during the previous programming period (2007-13), received funding to update occupational profiles.

Companies do not have a formal obligation to organise training at the workplace in a structured way; nor do they follow a specific plan with regards to the training of apprentices. The review revealed only a few examples of companies having a learning plan. Learning agreements were used only in certain pilots. Permanent EPAS teachers can be appointed as

⁽²⁰⁾ Article 2 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 40087/2007.

⁽²¹⁾ Article 25, Paragraph 4 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 40087/2007.

⁽²²⁾ Article 30 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 40087/2007.

⁽²³⁾ According to the Joint Ministerial Decision No 110998/2006 on the certification of occupational profiles.

supervisors and propose learning-related goals to the workplace in informal, unstructured way. They can also visit the company premises and get first-hand understanding of the conditions and the level of the training offered. Teachers also have the opportunity to check on the quality of company-based learning when learners are back in the laboratories. It is possible for an EPAS school to withdraw a learner from a company if there are repeated complaints about the training offered at the workplace.

Although training companies have the obligation to provide the necessary staff for training programmes at the workplace ⁽²⁴⁾, the legislation includes no mention of the need for a qualified staff member to be explicitly appointed as in-company trainer or tutor to accompany apprentices. Most of the time employers informally appoint a person as apprentice supervisor, but not necessarily tasked to train the apprentice. The head of a department/company often functions as a point of reference to help learners with the learning. Large companies appoint trainers and provide training to in-company trainers more often than small companies do. In-company trainers are cooperating and communicating informally with the responsible VET teachers. There are no provisions for training in-company trainers to develop and update their pedagogical/didactic and transversal competences. OAED has developed several smaller-scale initiatives for the training of tutors, especially for enterprises active in tourism.

EPAS teachers can be either permanent teaching staff with recognised degrees at higher/upper secondary education and competences in pedagogy/didactics, or stand-in teachers who can also be professionals from the labour market. There are requirements for becoming an EPAS teacher ⁽²⁵⁾.

4.4.2. Strengths and challenges prior to the reforms

The review identified many strengths of the current EPAS scheme on which future policies and practices can build. It shows that school- and company-based components gave graduates the competences necessary to start practising their profession. However, to be able to practise their profession fully, further work experience is usually needed. It seems that most learners are satisfied with many features of the apprenticeship programme so far. The strongest point of the EPAS scheme is the combination of learning and work experience; learners either chose EPAS programmes for this reason, or recognise its value during the programme and would recommend it to

⁽²⁴⁾ Article 27 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 40087/2007.

⁽²⁵⁾ Article 38 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 40087/2007.

other learners. This is particularly relevant when a recommendation comes from an EPAS graduate who previously attended the school-based upper secondary EPAL or even post-secondary education and can compare available options in a more informed way. Graduates also acknowledge that the learning gained at the workplace may be transferred to other companies, as it is not overly company-specific.

The teachers' experience and their interest in the students' progress is also a strong point of the scheme. Teachers have a wealth of experience in attracting companies, (informally) monitoring workplace learning, (informally) adjusting learning to local needs and handling (problems in) cooperation with companies. Both companies and learners seem satisfied with EPAS teachers. Although there are no standard procedures for cooperation between teachers and in-company trainers (wherever appointed) on training issues, this cooperation takes place and is deemed satisfactory by both sides.

Participants in the review largely share the view that the scheme plays an important social role by providing learning opportunities to students at risk of dropping out. The scheme is relatively inclusive and little stigma is attached to EPAS apprentices. Some learners appreciate the wage offered more than the actual content of the programme and would settle for a less favourite speciality or would enrol in a second speciality to receive the benefit. The scheme suffers little dropout and graduates are more likely than not to secure employment.

Nevertheless, there are some criticisms of the system that could be addressed. Despite OAED being able to offer up to 44 specialities, the ones that are popular are limited, whereas sectors of high growth perspectives are not fully grasped and matched by a relevant speciality. Many stakeholders view apprenticeship as driven by existing resources, mainly laboratories and teaching staff.

The interviews highlight that occupational profiles and curricula are not regularly updated and the current procedure is slow and leads to bottlenecks. For example, there are delays in nominating representatives of institutions that take part in the committee that certifies occupational profiles. As a result, there are cases where IEP creates curricula, regardless of whether an occupational profile exists or not. IEP cannot ask a social partner directly to create an occupational profile.

Employers and companies only indirectly influence the development of curricula through their role in shaping the occupational profiles.

One criticism is the limited room to adapt specialities and curricula through formal channels, for example to local labour market skill needs.

In the absence of formal procedures, EPAS teachers used to update their courses in accordance with labour market needs informally but national stakeholders consider apprenticeship curricula as rigid.

EPAS curricula focus on the school-based component of learning and its assessment; the workplace component is missing. There is no clearly agreed and described training content to be achieved in the company (in any form: company-based curriculum, learning outcomes, training plan or learning agreement), as the pilot experience has not yet been mainstreamed. When an apprenticeship contract is signed, guidance is provided by EPAS schools to the employer on the training that the apprentices should receive at the workplace but generally in an ad hoc rather than strictly systematic way. The absence of clear reference documents on workplace learning hampers its monitoring and assessment of learner progress, although this is pursued in a non-systematic way on the basis of EPAS teachers' personal efforts.

Companies do not have an explicit obligation to assign a qualified staff member (tutor) to monitor and teach apprentices and there are no formal requirements for in-company trainer qualifications and competences. These gaps need to be considered together with the reduction in the numbers of the EPAS supervisors visiting the workplace (directly linked to the decreasing numbers of the permanent EPAS teachers among which the supervisors are appointed). As a result, monitoring and control of the training offered by the company is not considered as an easy task by the schools.

A small, but increasing, share of EPAS apprentices do not participate in workplace training, either during some parts of the two-year long programme or not at all, in extreme cases. This is mostly due to ending of contracts by companies that cannot complete the programme during the crisis or to apprentice personal reasons. Although these learners still benefit from classroom and laboratory learning, there are concerns over the compatibility between the training offered and the corresponding qualification (which is considered as an apprenticeship qualification).

EPAS teachers are diminishing in numbers, and the share of permanent staff is also decreasing compared with the share of teachers paid by the hour. This shift allows hiring professionals with better knowledge of current labour market needs, but weaker background in pedagogy/didactics. Operation of the schools is also hampered, as only permanent staff have the right to inspect learning at the workplace, while excessive turnover of teaching staff might put established relationships between schools and companies at risk.

The weakest points of the EPAS apprenticeship programmes from the learners' point of view are the intensive schedule (learners attend school and work in four or even five out of five days a week), the lack of equipment in the school-based component of the programme, and the need often to pay for their own materials.

4.4.3. Apprenticeship after the reform

Political commitment to develop and reform the apprenticeship system is illustrated by the 2013-16 national strategic policy framework to improve the quality and effectiveness of VET in general. The framework includes measures to:

- (a) increase the number of students and graduates participating in apprenticeship programmes by redesigning them for 150 specialities;
- (b) develop and implement apprenticeship programmes at secondary and post-secondary level;
- (c) better match VET provision with labour market needs and improve cooperation with stakeholders;
- (d) adapt curricula, enhance the syllabus and draw up new textbooks;
- (e) establish a national approach to quality assurance and transparency.

The VET strategy and the QFA foresee that the envisaged national bodies (national committee, technical committee and the national coordinating body) will have (different levels of) competence on key system-level decisions, which could include selection of specialities (although this is not explicitly stated in all cases).

An important development that is expected to have a positive impact on the matching of the apprenticeship provision to the labour market needs, including the updating and selection of specialities, is the introduction of a national anticipation mechanism developed by the Ministry of Labour and EIEAD, its competent institution. The mechanism collects labour market information from regions and social partners ⁽²⁶⁾, as well as from the labour force survey, OAED and the central information system used by the Ministry of Labour (Ergani). OAED has already made use of the mechanism outputs to inform EPAS apprenticeship provision and welcomed them as an improvement to their operation.

According to the QFA and the quality framework for curricula of the Ministry of Education, and in line with the requirements of Law No

⁽²⁶⁾ Social partners conducted quantitative and qualitative research to collect data on labour market inputs and outputs at both national and local levels.

4336/2015, certain provisions on curriculum development for apprenticeship programmes (as well as for other types of VET programme) are introduced and are to be applied across all apprenticeship provision. IEP retains competence on curriculum development for EPAL and EPAS, while GSLLL is responsible for upgrading curricula for IEK. Curricula should be expressed in terms of learning outcomes, describe corresponding teaching techniques, and include both general and technical competences the learner needs to achieve (in line with the relevant occupational profiles). They will also be flexible; a zone of flexible apprenticeship curricula is foreseen (for example 20% of total curriculum in the case of EPAL, i.e. 42 hours) allowing teachers to adjust the curriculum to local needs. This can include project-based learning and may be used to level out difference of learning across participating companies.

The learning outcomes to be achieved by the apprentice at the workplace will be described in detail in the learning agreements between the education structures, the enterprises and the apprentices; they are part of the apprenticeship contracts. Learning achievements in the company will be assessed during the programme and will be described weekly and at the end of the programme in the so-called learning diary.

A training company involved in an apprenticeship programme must designate an in-company trainer (tutor), whose name should be quoted in the apprenticeship contract. The apprentice tutor must have attended a special training programme, proved by certification, and should have the qualification in the vocation she/he trains for. Until a register of certified trainers is established, fast-track seminars will be provided, and local education structures and their teachers will be used to improve the pedagogical competences of in-company trainers. Chambers, in collaboration with sectoral bodies/institutions and OAED, will provide the training and certify in-company trainers. Where the tutor does not have the relevant qualification, the company should designate another person (possibly from an intermediate or sector institution/body) to follow up the apprentice. The obligation for companies to have qualified staff members (tutors) before taking in apprentices is waved for a transitional three-year period. However, priority will be given to companies where the apprentice tutor has a qualification in the vocation she/he provides training for.

The assessments that the apprentices undergo twice a year may include exams, a skills demonstration, and presentation of projects. The QFA mentions that, aside from the teachers in educational units, representatives of social partners, chambers, and enterprises, may participate in the assessment.

The QFA describes the establishment of a national approach to quality assurance of apprenticeship provision on the following basis:

- (a) planning: objective setting, for example, by involving social partners and integrating the learning outcomes approach in curricula;
- (b) preparation for implementation, for example, by training teachers and getting social partners involved in spotting apprenticeship placements;
- (c) implementation, for example, by adopting standard documents for apprenticeship contracts, apprenticeship manuals and by getting social partners involved in the apprentice assessment);
- (d) evaluation at the end of the apprenticeship, for example, by assessing apprenticeship scheme responsiveness to the labour market (based, for example, on graduate employment rates and remuneration);
- (e) integration of findings/feedback, for example, by updating occupational profiles and educational curricula.

IEP produced updated curricula for a number of specialities piloted in early 2017 in the frame of the EPAL apprenticeship scheme. Learning agreements were developed and piloted in the EPAL apprenticeship scheme in the 2016 pilots and their 2017 scale-up. Currently, OAED is following an internal procedure for the development of learning agreements for EPAS programmes after consultation and deliberation with social partners; new logbooks for in-company training are also being introduced. The Ministry of Education launched a project for training VET teachers to be involved in the development of new curricula for the EPAL apprenticeship programmes. EU funds are earmarked for curriculum development for IEK, although it is not clear if the aim is to develop apprenticeship-specific curricula or curricula to be implemented in either regime: school-based (with or without work placements) or apprenticeship.

4.4.4. Meeting identified and new challenges

Despite the 2013-16 policy developments, the OAED reengineering of the EPAS apprenticeship scheme and the EPAL apprenticeship scheme pilots, certain challenges remain at system level. Specialities and curricula are not regularly updated, and procedures are slow and cumbersome. Collection of data (through scoping studies and evaluations) to support better matching of the offer with labour market needs (adjust specialities and curricula) is not systematic. The feedback loop to adjust the apprenticeship offer to labour market needs is missing. Employer representatives argue that a route linking current or future research outputs with their use by the VET

authorities is missing. Research on apprenticeships is scarce and the VET programmes usually are not systematically evaluated. As a result, potential apprenticeship specialities, on which curricula are based, are not aligned with labour market needs.

On the positive side, the anticipation mechanism established by the Ministry of Labour under the scientific supervision of EIEAD may provide evidence that could be used in this way. However, as the mechanism was not primarily designed to serve the needs of apprenticeship provision but of employment policies in general, it lacks further operationalisation, especially for apprenticeship provision. The three national bodies do not currently have a clear mandate to make use of relevant data coming from the mechanism and an associated procedure is missing.

While the national bodies foreseen in the VET strategy and the QFA have some competence on speciality selection and distribution among apprenticeship schemes, it is not clear whether the national stakeholders overseeing the schemes (Ministry of Education, GSLLL and OAED) will work actively towards this coordinated approach or follow their own individual processes. Coordination of the distribution of specialities among the three schemes is also of particular interest because of the potential clash of specialities across programmes in the same geographic areas for the same types of learners and companies. Whether different providers offer competing programmes in the same city or they will join resources (such as laboratories) and rationalise offers in a mutually beneficial way (such as based on qualifications levels) remains a challenge for the system. Social partners seem to welcome coordination, although national authorities do not seem to fully embrace the idea.

There are no mechanisms or formal requirements for regular development and update of national curricula. At national level, cooperation of the two competent authorities (IEP and GSLLL) is not refined or clearly mandated, and provisions in the quality framework for curricula need further elaboration to address this aspect. Also, participation of social partners in curricula development is not explicitly pursued, apart from their envisaged involvement in occupational profile updates that should feed curricula. Different uncoordinated processes are followed: OAED initiated its own procedure to update and actually put in practice the workplace curriculum (with the participation of social partners), while the Ministry of Education introduced workplace components to the curricula updated by IEP for the EPAL apprenticeship programmes offered since March 2017.

The web survey among employers showed that apprentices often do not meet company expectations in their level of general and social competences, as well as technical skills; this is one of the main reasons why they withdraw from offering apprenticeship placements.

Another serious challenge is the transition to better defined and monitored workplace learning. Workplace training, as part of apprenticeship programmes, is currently weakly developed and lacks standards, so much depends on individual contexts. Learning agreements are being developed separately for each programme, as different agreements were used in EPAS pilots before 2016 and in recent EPAL pilots since 2016. The need for a national or national sectoral approach, in which social partners can have a clear role, seems to be underestimated.

The decreasing number of permanently employed EPAS or EPAL teachers is detrimental to the implementation of apprenticeship reform, given not only their role in conveying learning requirements to companies and monitoring the progress of learners, but also the need to offer a differentiated range of specialities in emerging sectors. EPAL and IEK teachers lack experience of the particular needs of an apprenticeship programme, such as the practices needed to support apprentices and work with companies.

4.5. Company participation and support

4.5.1. Apprenticeship prior to the reforms

The rights and obligations of companies participating in EPAS apprenticeship programmes are legally stipulated. The national legislation includes information on the employers' financial contributions and administrative obligations, as well as on aspects such as apprentices' working days, the maximum number of working hours, insurance, and annual and sickness leave. Employers must submit electronically to the Ministry of Labour several documents related to the recruitment and training of apprentices ⁽²⁷⁾.

Employers have legal obligations: to sign the apprenticeship contract; carry out the training programme; provide, for as long as the training lasts, formal requirements such as the required staff and the appropriate facilities; accept the role played by the supervisory staff of the EPAS in monitoring the implementation of the programme, and cooperate with them to improve the

⁽²⁷⁾ Articles 1 and 2 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 29502/85/2014 on electronic recording of work and apprenticeship contracts.

quality of the practical training and evaluate the apprentices' performance; comply with rules for the safety and protection of apprentices; cancel the apprenticeship contract, if the apprentice interrupts her/his studies or is not consistent with her/his obligations ⁽²⁸⁾.

Selection of companies to participate in apprenticeship programmes is based on labour market research conducted by EPAS and the teachers via meetings (held usually in April/May) attended by representatives of OAED EPAS, social partners and chambers, and through personal networks between the EPAS teachers and employers. EPAS career offices may also play a role in selecting companies to participate in the apprenticeship programmes. The regular practice for matching supply and demand at local level is that the EPAS directors, in cooperation with EPAS teachers or the career office, contact the companies and inform them about the specialities offered and the apprentices available for apprenticeship placements. Companies are not generally involved in selecting apprentices, although some wish to play a larger role in this process. Matching companies and apprentices is a responsibility of the education structure, in collaboration and agreement with the employer. Companies that generally have a good relationship with EPAS directors or that belong to former EPAS apprentices, normally approach EPAS directly. Generally, there is good contact between EPAS and companies, albeit on an ad hoc basis. Support from OAED KPA is limited to exchange of information with the company regarding the matching of demand and offer of positions (information from interviews with employers).

A subsidy (national and European funds) is the main financial incentive for companies to take on apprentices. This is EUR 11 per day ⁽²⁹⁾ and is paid either to the employer or directly to the student ⁽³⁰⁾. The employer contributes EUR 6.12 per day (plus EUR 3.40 for social security contributions, a total of EUR 9.52). The employer's contribution to the social security of the apprentice is 36.78% of half of the wage the apprentice receives.

⁽²⁸⁾ Article 27 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 40087/2007.

⁽²⁹⁾ As of 1.1.2014, Joint Ministerial Decision No 4.10721/3.569/2014.

⁽³⁰⁾ Article 3 of Joint Ministerial Decision No 1.7195/οικ. 3.1289/2011.

Box 3. Public and private company apprenticeship placements

During the last decade, and especially since the crisis, the number of apprenticeship places available in private sector enterprises has been shrinking compared to the number available in the public sector. Until 2008, 66% of the students were placed in private sector firms, with the remaining 34% securing training posts in the public sector. Starting from 2009, this trend has been reversed: approximately 66% of the students are engaged in practical training in companies owned by the State, and 34% in private sector companies.

Source: Cedefop.

There are no non-financial incentives for the participation of companies in the apprenticeship programme. The role of employer organisations in engaging and supporting companies is minimal.

4.5.2. Strengths and challenges prior to the reforms

The review identified a number strengths of the EPAS apprenticeship scheme on which future policies and practices can further build: the fact that employers' contractual rights and obligations are legally stipulated (although not extending to learning related issues); good practices of OAED career offices exist; cooperation between apprentices and employers is good; there is an online platform where companies can register their available placement; and labour costs of an apprentice are considered by employers as relatively low due to the subsidies in place.

Despite the lack of information on apprenticeship costs and benefits, which prevents more companies providing placements, the EPAS scheme enjoys a high degree of confidence among participating companies. The online survey among employers shows that most of those already participating in EPAS apprenticeship programmes stated that they were satisfied with the apprentices; the clear majority (around 70%) stated that they intend to continue offering apprenticeship posts in the future. When asked to reveal what they consider as strong features of OAED EPAS apprenticeships (perceived benefits) as opposed to other non-apprenticeship schemes offering training (including active labour market policies), three main reasons were given: apprentices cost less than the alternative training schemes or ALMP initiatives, apprentices are young and can thus adapt better to the needs of the company, and apprentices were considered the standard form of training in this company/occupation.

Other reasons mentioned were that there is enough time for the apprentices to become productive, the contract protects the company, and that apprentices are most relevant to the needs of the business.

When asked about the actual benefits, employers list the following as more important:

- (a) lower wage bill;
- (b) improved ability to train future staff;
- (c) improved productivity;
- (d) improved company image (in the sector, or in the local community).

In those cases where companies successfully trained apprentices and hired them after graduation, the companies were able to recover the investment they made during the apprenticeship programme and they value apprentices' work and contribution to their company. Nevertheless, it takes some time to recover investment.

The review also shows that employers are willing to play a larger role in the apprenticeship implementation, such as in needs analysis, learning plans, or assessment. Although cost is a significant factor, companies participating in apprenticeship programmes aim for and recognise a wider set of benefits; they positively assess apprentices' skills and are planning to continue hiring apprentices in the coming years.

When employers were asked what could be their contribution to improving the apprenticeship system, the most frequent suggestions were reporting anticipated needs in a more systematic way, cooperating with the school on a commonly agreed training plan, and agreeing on an individualised training plan and participating in assessment of the apprentice's performance. Other common responses were:

- (a) offering a job to suitable apprentices;
- (b) increasing the wage for good apprentices;
- (c) training/providing more qualified mentors.

Weaknesses can also be identified. There are no minimum requirements for companies willing to provide apprenticeship places and/or an accreditation procedure. There is no learning plan for the in-company training element: the learning objectives are often decided ad hoc. Companies are not explicitly asked to appoint a tutor/in-company trainer (Section 4.4.1). Not all key stakeholders are strongly in favour of introducing additional requirements in the short term, such as appointing accredited in-company trainers; they worry that such requirements would discourage companies from participating.

There is no recognition or award for companies that provide quality apprenticeships. Selection of enterprises to participate in apprenticeship programmes is carried out on an ad hoc basis through the semi-structured labour market research conducted by the EPAS and teachers and the development of personal networks between the EPAS teachers and employers.

Policies and legislation support wage costs but make no reference to covering indirect costs such as materials and trainers' participation. Procedures for participation in an apprenticeship programme are often considered time-consuming and bureaucratic.

According to the web survey, there are three main reasons why companies stopped (or may stop) providing apprenticeship placements:

- (a) apprentices lack the necessary skills when they start working for the company;
- (b) apprentices tend to leave the company after their training (the company does not recover its investment);
- (c) inability to cover wages and/or social security contributions.

The economic crisis has resulted in many companies finding it difficult to pay their contribution to the apprentice's wage, reducing their interest in taking on apprentices (information from interviews with employers); the financial compensation was not considered sufficient, especially for micro and small/medium enterprises. Many employers argued that if the apprenticeship programme had no cost (or a lower cost) for companies, it would be more attractive for them to offer more apprenticeship positions; this is despite the company contribution not being considered high for many companies. Most companies in the web survey did not feel that incentives such as simplification of administrative procedures, training of in-company trainers, and incentives to hire apprentices on completion of the programme would compensate them if their contribution to wages was to increase.

Lack of information about apprenticeships is a widely acknowledged challenge for the system. While participating companies were satisfied with the EPAS apprenticeship scheme, non-participating companies were not well or not at all informed about it. Lack of information on procedures, terms, conditions and whom to address ranks high among the reasons companies cannot or do not wish to engage in apprenticeship provision. Other counterincentives include lack of appropriate speciality programmes, lack of time, lack of administrative and financial resources, and the low level of general skills among students.

A further significant challenge is the rising share of public companies rather than private ones. The review showed that many public companies provide quality learning: they have organised training departments, appoint mentors and boost apprentice learning through rotation in various posts. The challenge mostly focuses on the limited, perhaps non-existent, opportunities for graduates to be hired by such public companies on completion of the programme, due to overall hiring restrictions in the public sector since the beginning of the crisis.

4.5.3. Apprenticeship after the reforms

The VET strategy and the consequent QFA promote a common approach to company participation in apprenticeships. Key terms and conditions, financial incentives and responsibilities are harmonised.

The QFA states that apprentice wages will be determined in accordance with the Joint Ministerial Decision No 1186/2011, as amended by the Joint Ministerial Decision No 10186/Δ5.12/2013. The wage will be 75% of the minimum wage of an unskilled worker (under the age of 25). Insurance coverage is provided by the national social security fund.

The QFA reiterates the OAED practice of shared financing of apprentice wages (Section 4.4.1). The Ministry of Labour will be responsible for determining the wage and the insurance coverage of apprentices, but there is no suggestion that the wage will vary from that fixed by law at 75% of the minimum wage for a full day's work for an unskilled worker (EUR 22.83). The QFA includes no additional information on financing and cost-sharing mechanisms. EU resources allocated for apprenticeship provision should be distributed proportionate to the number of apprentices per entity/educational unit.

According to the QFA, and in line with the requirements of Law No 4336/2015, companies that participate in apprenticeship provision will be, *inter alia*, responsible for offering good training conditions at the workplace, providing the necessary means and equipment, assigning a suitable trainer/tutor, and taking all necessary measures to protect the health and safety of the apprentices. Learning agreements will be introduced and help define and monitor training at the workplace. Public, private and social companies will be eligible to provide apprenticeship placements ⁽³¹⁾.

The framework proposes that the number of apprentices per company will depend on the number of company employees. For instance,

⁽³¹⁾ The following companies are not eligible to provide placements: companies that provide temporary employment, night clubs, companies providing cleaning and security services, gambling agencies; and any company where it is not possible for the competent authority to control the education process.

companies with 1-10 employees may offer up to two apprenticeship positions.

At national level, campaigns are foreseen to be launched by providers (Ministry of Education, GSLL and OAED); social partners or chambers may also add to this effort. Key 2016 VET policy documents refer to the possibility of coordination of promotion activities, at least among national authorities representing different providers. The documents also refer to the need to introduce more non-financial incentives; they name some, such as awards, but do not elaborate.

The KPA teams and OAED will inform (via publicity activities) companies about the benefits of apprenticeships. The teams will collaborate with social partners at local level, mostly to promote apprenticeships in accordance with local labour market needs. Chambers are in fact given a more prominent role in promoting apprenticeships through the pilot partnership projects (launched in late 2017). Models for increased cooperation between employer representatives and State authorities are foreseen as an option at local level through partnerships. These could offer a role as intermediary bodies that would significantly increase the support received by individual companies from their professional associations and chambers, alongside the support received by schools.

Companies that will receive future certification as providers of apprenticeship positions may become eligible for an award. They may also receive non-financial support for participation in apprenticeship provision; for instance, the State may provide them with the necessary equipment to carry out a specific type of class/programme.

4.5.4. Meeting identified and new challenges

The 2013-16 policy and regulatory documents introduce provisions that address the organisation and delivery of learning at the workplace. Responsibilities for participating companies are now clearer, including the need to follow a commonly agreed learning plan at the workplace and to appoint a mentor. The challenge is how this will be communicated to the companies for them to understand both the value and the practical implications of such arrangements without seeing it as a counterincentive.

The shared funding model of the EPAS apprenticeship scheme is extended to companies willing to cooperate with EPAL and IEK, while non-financial incentives are added to the policy agenda, although not very well developed. The system is flat (same incentives available to all companies, irrespective of size and/or sector, across regions and sectors) and over-reliant on financial incentives.

Apprenticeship provision based on current flat funding arrangements will remain costly for the State, inhibiting the national effort to expand apprenticeships in a sustainable way. Models that (gradually) reduce dependency on subsidies and (gradually) increase the actual direct cost for companies have not yet been adequately explored. Similarly, the prevailing flat financing model seems to limit the opportunity for targeted approaches, under which different sectors or regions may receive a different mix of financial and non-financial incentives that matter the most to them, in line with the capacity of companies in these sectors to assume greater shares of the financial cost. Reliance on a flat incentive system also signals that development of apprenticeship does not rely on a strategic targeted approach but on an intention to develop apprenticeship in the same way across the board.

As long as financial incentives are a key factor for company engagement, there are concerns among stakeholders that companies will see the expansion of apprenticeship as a means to substitute regular employment with cheaper labour, despite the extension of the EPAS contractual framework in all schemes.

To upscale their financial contribution (as a share) and raise their investment in learning, companies need to recognise clearly a wide set of benefits. At the moment, they do not see proven and exclusive benefits in providing apprenticeship placements.

Lack of cost-benefit analyses and systematic evaluation of apprenticeship outcomes hampers informed strategic decision-making. It prevents national authorities adjusting the features of programmes that affect perception of cost and benefits (for example cost of training mentors and their remuneration, preparedness of apprentices, duration, time spent at the workplace) or communicating them accordingly. The duration of the EPAL scheme poses a challenge in this respect, as many interviewed companies consider it too short for them to see the return of their investment in training.

When it comes to promoting apprenticeships, a silo approach still seems to be the preferred option of the national authorities that represent providers of different schemes. In 2017, the Ministry of Education ran a campaign to attract companies to the EPAL apprenticeship scheme, complemented by practical and useful guidelines and manuals for their participation. Although OAED shared some resources, the campaign was more a one-party action than a situation where all sides assume ownership for the task at hand and align their efforts for apprenticeship promotion. Social partners and chambers acknowledge more the need and value of coordination in this direction, to ensure coherence of messages sent to individual companies (and also learners).

Professional associations and chambers that could communicate the benefits of apprenticeships in a more company-friendly language and approach have not received a clear mandate in contributing and promoting apprenticeships. Regional or sectoral promotion strategies are missing. There are no coherent and coordinated national/regional/local strategies to attract companies to provide apprenticeship placements. The schools are the only institutions that reach out for companies; future involvement of chambers and social partners is currently pursued through key projects but these are not fully described or embedded at system level. KEEE maintains the most extensive and reliable company registry, which could complement the OAED registry, but it has not yet become available for the overall apprenticeship system.

4.6. Conclusions

The full and timely implementation of the 2013-16 policy reforms is expected to remedy some of the chronic deficiencies of the Greek VET system, particularly for apprenticeship. More important, it will develop stronger links with the labour market and reduce fragmentation of the apprenticeship offer. Partly for historical reasons, this system never developed strong links with an extensive part of the labour market. It is also evident that specific organisational features, numerous and different institutional actors, have contributed to fragmentation and lack of coordination among the various education and training streams and levels.

Implementation of the reforms remains a key issue. Many aspects need to be further elaborated, described and operationalised so that the system may be put in place successfully.

The roles and responsibilities of the different committees, public institutions and labour market actors both at national and local levels, as well as the interactions between them, still need to be clarified. It is important to define how the newly created committees will be able to carry out their mandate and how they will interact with the national institutions and labour market actors. Linking national level governance structures to those at local level seems an open issue.

The role of social partners and chambers is still not well defined and is also too weak, given that apprenticeship requires shared responsibility between education and labour market and direct engagement by companies.

Parties that will be involved in apprenticeship provision vary in terms of experience, capacity, interests and established presence in the system.

A significant convergence of views on apprenticeship provision is evident on many topics across national authorities and social partners/chambers, though there are areas where stakeholder approaches vary and goals and responsibilities are less detailed.

National stakeholders participating in the group that steered the review in Greece seem to agree that governance issues are among the most pressing challenges for the reformed apprenticeship system. A key challenge for the country is to establish a governance framework that systematises dialogue, shares responsibilities, promotes mutual trust, balances divergent interests and allows for longer-term planning. Stakeholders need to think and act in terms of a single apprenticeship system and a single governance structure.

Procedures and tools need to be clarified and streamlined to avoid risks of confusion, at implementation level, among education and training actors and companies. Although all programmes will follow conditions set at national level in the recent policy documents such as the quality framework for apprenticeships, not all of their features are clearly described and communicated to the worlds of education and business. Stakeholders should acknowledge and communicate to employers that apprenticeships also entail an educational factor, the quality of which is critical to their value for the economy and society in the long term.

The goals set by the MoU and the speed of the reforms, which cover the whole VET system, and the need to run many activities in parallel lead national authorities to focus on practical aspects (day-to-day organisation of apprenticeship provision); this leaves less room for strategic issues, such as the systematic involvement of social partners and chambers. The reforms proposed specifically for apprenticeship are complex: first, because apprenticeship is the most complex form of VET; and second, because the reforms are far-reaching (building a coherent system by integrating a long-lasting scheme with, eventually, two new ones) with a high number of components to take into consideration and many actions to introduce simultaneously. As the system is expected to be operational and evaluated in 2020-21 also on the basis of quantitative targets ⁽³²⁾, little time is available for its thorough development. This risks hampering the aims of the reform: building a coherent and quality apprenticeship system where all parties are involved, share the same goals and procedures.

⁽³²⁾ Quantified targets for the system are only broadly set and have been frequently revised since the 2015 MoU of the Greek State and its international lenders. Specific targets are set in the context of specific ESF interventions.





5. Areas and suggestions for action

Areas and suggestions for action

Based on the reported findings and on the challenges analysed through the TCR, Chapter 5 identifies areas for reform and suggestions for action. These are formulated by the authors of this report and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all stakeholders involved in the review. The country itself will decide whether and how these should be taken forward.

5.1. National governance structures

The large-scale reform of apprenticeships in Greece over recent years resulted in a series of key policy and regulatory documents that introduced new committees, bodies and structures, alongside public institutions with roles in apprenticeship governance, while envisaging an increased national role for social partners and chambers. Specifying and, wherever needed, clarifying and extending the scope and composition of these bodies, as well as the interaction between them and the relevant institutional actors and labour market representatives, should be the starting point of future interventions, to enable clear governance of the overall apprenticeship system.

5.1.1. National committee for VET and apprenticeships: revision and extension

The 2016 VET strategy introduces the national committee for VET and apprenticeships as a key body for coordinating the whole VET provision. It briefly describes its mandate to support national decision-making, and gives the committee the responsibility for the overall governance of VET, including apprenticeships (Section 4.3.3).

With due consideration to the prominent role of the Ministry of Education since 2013, a clearer decision-making role should be given to the national committee in its area of competence in the medium-term. While Ministries of Education and Labour (already represented in the national committee through their general secretaries) may retain their formal competence in

jointly signing key decisions, it is important to promote an approach where committee members are entrusted with decision-making in practice, as they accumulate the necessary expertise on apprenticeships. As an example in the medium term, the deputy minister for vocational education and training could preside over the national committee and promote its collectively made decisions by signature. This would serve to improve the much-needed continuity and consistency of policies on apprenticeships.

Ministries of Education and Labour need to clarify, formalise and possibly extend the functions of the national committee, particularly for apprenticeships given that its mandate covers VET in general. In the short term, the operational aspects of the committee need to be defined in terms of resources and procedures (how the committee will actually carry out the work) through coherent complementary regulatory documents, as well as its relationship with the foreseen supporting technical bodies ⁽³³⁾. Social partners suggest the national committee should assume responsibility over a wider range of topics than those broadly described in the VET strategy. Its competence over all apprenticeship programmes needs to be explicitly stated, including the minor EPAS programmes offered outside OAED and other project-type initiatives (pilots, regional partnerships, business community-led partnerships), to promote coordination and coherence of apprenticeship provision. Links between the national committee and other advisory bodies, such as the existing committee supporting EPAS OAED and the national committee foreseen for continuing vocational education and training (CVET), should also be defined.

Social partners expect inclusion in the national committee. Although Ministries of Education and Labour acknowledge the value of working closely with social partners and have increased possible consultation topics, they seem to prefer a small, flexible structure that keeps high-level decision-making competence within national authorities. Ministries need to consider an increased role for social partners and chambers, if not in the short term at least in the medium term. Social partners and OAED refer to the experience of their participation in the governing board of OAED as an example; some strongly request their full inclusion from the beginning.

In the short term, a working group of national authorities with social partners, chambers and national institutions can be set up to prepare their future inclusion, agreeing on relevant procedures and provisions. Social partners and chambers could also nominate one representative

⁽³³⁾ Technical committee for VET and apprenticeships foreseen in the VET strategy, national coordinating body for apprenticeships foreseen in the quality framework for apprenticeships

to attend meetings of the committee as observers and gradually assume a decisive role in some of the possible areas until future full inclusion. Also as a possible step towards gradual inclusion, the national committee may be bound formally to request the opinions of social partners and chambers (also of individual national institutions) in selected topics, through structured communication and within a timeframe that would allow proper preparation.

Similarly, the direct representation of key national institutions (most prominent being OAED for its expertise but also EOPPEP, IEP, EIEAD) in the national committee could be explored.

5.1.2. Specify aims and functionality for a single national technical body

The 2016 policy documents introduce two different technical bodies at national level, both with responsibilities on apprenticeship: the technical committee for VET and apprenticeships (VET strategy), and the national coordinating body for apprenticeships (QFA). Moving towards a single national technical body with competence on apprenticeship would achieve a clearer governance framework and benefit from synergies and increased capacity. The wider composition would also allow for the technical body to encompass a sectoral approach whenever relevant, for example in selection of specialities or in development of learning agreements at national sectoral level. In the scenario that both bodies retain competences on apprenticeship, the ministries should, at least, more clearly distribute responsibilities and areas of competence among the two bodies, indicate hierarchy and communicate this to all stakeholders.

Stakeholders agree on the need to clarify, elaborate and formalise the mandate and role of a single national technical body with competence on apprenticeship. Its role in relation to the national committee needs to be explicitly stated and formalised. Once the mandate is revised and finalised, its links with the competent authorities, and especially the ministries ⁽³⁴⁾ (see also Section 5.1.4), need also to be set and communicated. Its links with regional VET committees and the KPA teams and their responsibilities on other project-type initiatives (pilots, regional partnerships, business community-led partnerships) need to be clarified and formalised.

Operational aspects of the (single) national technical body need to be defined in the short term, including its regulatory framework, its support

⁽³⁴⁾ With the department for vocational education of the Ministry of Education, which assumed administrative responsibility over apprenticeships in overall, the department for vocational education and training at OAED and the General Secretary of lifelong learning, but also with the directorate of employment of the Ministry of Labour.

by adequate human resources and its source of financing if needed. The technical body cannot boost apprenticeship provision if it is limited to being a committee or working group, also given the wide range of topics on which this body can assume responsibility. Therefore, in the medium term, it is advisable to transform the body towards (or fully complement it by) a structure of a more permanent nature such as a secretariat or department; this could bring together experts and qualified staff from national authorities and social partners, building increased capacity in supporting design and provision of apprenticeships at national level. Different operating models can be explored to this end, so the contribution of each key actor is elaborated according to their expertise and capacity. In the short term, for example, this cooperation might start as a permanent working group that would later evolve into a specific structure. The single technical body could also encompass the role of an observatory for apprenticeships, collecting (and analysing) all information required for its work on designing apprenticeship provision (see more in Section 5.2). It could provide the platform for stakeholders to work with a sectoral approach in certain topics (such as incentives for participating companies) through designated working groups that would collect and process information at sectoral level provided by social partners and regional or local structures.

In terms of composition, it is advisable that the national technical body follows the extended structure of the national coordinating body for apprenticeships, including social partners, chambers and national institutions as described in the QFA.

5.1.3. Social partners and chambers in apprenticeship system design

Recent policy developments do not specify how the role of social partners and chambers will be extended to a wider range of apprenticeship functions. Their formal participation in the national committee and the national technical body on apprenticeship is advisable in the medium-term and short-term respectively. More effective participation of social partners and chambers in apprenticeship design and implementation will require a (gradual) increase in terms of both rights and responsibilities to contribute systemically, with a clear place in the governance model rather than through individual EU funded projects.

Considering existing constraints in terms of expertise and resources available, it would add value if social partners and chambers were to set up their own collaboration scheme (committee, working group) to enable consistent, coherent and collaborative exchange of views and better

preparation of their contribution on apprenticeship issues. This development would allow them to share knowledge, extend existing cooperation from higher levels to staff level, build capacity and operationalise their collaboration, particularly for apprenticeships. Chambers, as relatively new to apprenticeships, should aim for conditions that will allow them to build their capacity both at national and local levels, by training their staff on apprenticeship-related topics, establishing with the education side (ministries and schools at local level) and with the new structures foreseen. In this way they can assume an increased role in apprenticeships with a system-level, long-term perspective in collaboration with social partners that have a longer presence in this field.

Box 4. **Social partnership and governance**

Social partnership is central to the German apprenticeship system, and the vocational training act makes provision for wide-ranging trade union involvement in the design and implementation of apprenticeship training, by means of formal participation in education and training bodies at all levels. At national level, social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) are members of the board of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, which is often described as Germany's VET parliament and which conducts research into apprenticeship training and provides service and consultancy functions to the Federal Government and vocational training providers. At regional level, they are members of regional committees for vocational training which advise regional governments on apprenticeship training issues. At local level they are members of the vocational training committees of the competent bodies, which are responsible, *inter alia*, for monitoring apprenticeship training (supervising training institutions, assessing trainers, and organising examinations) and providing advisory services for apprenticeship training.

Source: European Trade Union Confederation, 2016.

5.1.4. **Increase institutional capacity and consolidate cooperation**

Stakeholders agree that national authorities and institutions should retain their roles in specific areas of competence. The departments of VET competent for each scheme in the Ministry of Education, in OAED and the GSLLL are expected to continue dealing with operational aspects of the programmes and schools under their competence on a daily basis, alongside

the coordinating work of the single national technical body in selected topics. To promote synergies, regular exchange of information on apprenticeship delivery, mutual learning and exchange of best practices, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education (in the driving seat for apprenticeships at high level) could be mandated to present procedures for systematic, regular and direct communication among the three organisations at staff level. The experience of OAED on administrative issues and implementation of apprenticeships could be valuable in this. Until further simplification of procedures, Ministries of Education and Labour may still retain their individual or shared responsibility in ratifying the outcomes of this collaboration where needed. The work of the national technical committee will also benefit from such cooperation mechanisms among the representatives of EPAS, EPAL and IEK.

There should be a focus on renewing or specifying their mandate on apprenticeship for EOPPEP and IEP (Section 4.3.1) and on securing the necessary human resources to promote their capacity to address the pressing needs of the apprenticeship reform. In several cases, such as the procedures to update occupational profiles (Section 5.2.3), regulatory work is needed to set up new mandates.

The links between these institutions and the national technical body with competence on apprenticeship need also to be explored and defined (5.1.2).

5.2. Allocation of key functions at national level

Within the framework described in Section 5.1, a number of key functions may be envisaged to be carried out by the key actors of the apprenticeship governance system.

5.2.1. Strategic function: refine, reform and (re)design apprenticeships

In the short term, the national committee should initiate a discussion on outstanding issues regarding key features of apprenticeship schemes, aiming at amendments in the short- or the medium-term. As a priority, the committee should examine and gradually address major concerns expressed by several stakeholders (Section 4.2.4):

- (a) the duration of the EPAL scheme, as many actors claim that one school year does not allow companies to recover their investment: they advocate that two-year programmes should be the main practice across schemes instead;

- (b) the alternating nature of IEK apprenticeships, given that most providers are used to providing a single block of internships only at the end of the programme; alternance should be reinforced and specified in new curricula especially designed for those IEK programmes offering apprenticeships instead of internships;
- (c) the progression opportunities of EPAS graduates to higher education, as current provisions set a dead end for current and previous cohorts; study cycles focusing on general subjects and transversal skills attached at the beginning or the end of EPAS programmes are suggested by several stakeholders.

The national committee should refine and reiterate the key features of the programmes as agreed in the 2013-16 policy documents, so that national stakeholders, individual companies, learners and local stakeholders have a clear basis for informed decisions. The national committee could be also mandated to work with other competent ministries to clarify the features of smaller EPAS programmes offered apart from OAED. It should also intervene to ensure, as much as possible, that apprenticeship schemes are differentiated substantially from other work-based learning schemes, such as active labour market initiatives or practical training of higher education students.

In the medium term, in the context of the evaluation of the three schemes ⁽³⁵⁾, the national committee should explicitly assume responsibility for evaluating the coexistence of the three schemes within the apprenticeship system, identifying strengths and weaknesses in the key features of apprenticeship schemes that affect their scope and place in the education and training system, such as their education and qualification level (including specialities/occupations requiring higher level of skills), duration, or target group in terms of learners. This assessment could inform terms and conditions under which apprenticeship schemes can be offered at various education levels, addressing challenges raised on the key features of each scheme, such as their duration, qualification level or progression opportunities (Section 4.2.4).

Through this work, the national committee could also explore new directions for apprenticeship provision, such as extending apprenticeships

⁽³⁵⁾ The 2016 VET strategy sets the general framework for apprenticeship provision and a medium-term milestone: apprenticeship schemes (and VET in general) should be assessed by 2020-21 and further decisions about apprenticeship provision should be made on the basis of this assessment.

at tertiary level (tertiary/higher VET, as opposed to the current post-secondary non-tertiary programmes) or through programmes designated to CVET/adult learning, as national VET experts suggested in their interviews.

5.2.2. Match apprenticeship specialities to labour market needs

The national committee should receive a clear mandate to make informed, evidence-based decisions on specialities offered through the three apprenticeship schemes at national, sectoral and local levels. Decisions made by the national committee should be based on recommendations developed by the (single) national technical body with competence on apprenticeship. Stakeholders welcome the launch of the mechanism by the Ministry of Labour and EIEAD to identify labour market needs but also acknowledge limitations due to its wider scope. It is proposed that the (single) national technical body assumes a coordinating role, building on and extending the work carried out through the Ministry of Labour anticipation mechanism (steered by EIEAD).

The role of the technical body regarding anticipation of labour market needs should entail:

- (a) conveying specific apprenticeship-related specifications to the EIAED mechanism, steering data collection to serve particular needs better on specialities that are or can be offered through apprenticeship schemes ⁽³⁶⁾; EIEAD and the Ministry of Labour would welcome such elaboration of requirements (what is expected, when and how regularly) ⁽³⁷⁾;
- (b) systematising information channels complementary to the mechanism through, for example, systematising EPAS semi-structured local consultations, conveying specifications/standards to social partners for studies that might not be part of the EIEAD mechanism or mobilising the chambers local network for direct collection of training needs in specific sectors/regions;
- (c) acting as a platform for dissemination of all collected information within its constituent members: key apprenticeship stakeholders;
- (d) coordinating data analysis;

⁽³⁶⁾ For example, OAED and social partners recommend that the set of data collected through the mechanism should be extended to cover not only occupations but also competences, skill/learning needs and their forecasting.

⁽³⁷⁾ In 2017 Cedefop began to provide technical advice to countries asking for its support to improve their governance of skills anticipation and matching. Greece is part of the first batch of countries in this project, which also includes Bulgaria, Estonia and Slovakia. In this, Cedefop works to identify country-specific challenges, bottlenecks and policy solutions for achieving effective skills governance.

- (e) preparing annual recommendations for the national committee to decide on specialities to be offered through apprenticeship schemes.

The technical body should coordinate the development of evidence on outcomes of the apprenticeship system, including labour market outcomes (transitions of graduates to employment and their characteristics in terms of aspects such as pay and sustainability).

Box 5. **Quality assurance mechanisms in apprenticeship provision**

The national technical body should be mandated to elaborate and operationalise the quality assurance provisions described in VET strategy and the quality framework for apprenticeships. The process should include introducing specific indicators (key performance indicators (KPIs)) and processes for data collection and assessment that will feed into strategic planning of the apprenticeship provision. The national committee should approve and support the introduction of these provisions. Subsequently, the technical body may also introduce and apply the relevant internal evaluation procedures, complemented by external evaluation by an independent body (which could possibly extend to accreditation of providers, especially in the case of private IEK providers that wish to offer apprenticeship programmes). Provisions that quality assurance feeds the overall strategic design of apprenticeships should be included in this work, ensuring the feedback loop is complete and that evaluation leads to system level improvements.

Source: Cedefop.

Selection of specialities should include identification of new promising fields in emerging sectors of the economy that are not currently part of apprenticeship provision, or are available only through limited programmes.

5.2.3. Base apprenticeship curricula on updated or new occupational profiles

When updating and developing occupational profiles, on which apprenticeship curricula are built, stakeholders widely accept that social partners should have a leading role under the coordination of EOPPEP, but processes should become leaner and faster. Social partners and chambers

should be given a renewed mandate to update existing or develop new occupational profiles in professions relevant to the specialities to be offered through apprenticeship schemes. All stakeholders agree that through updating occupational profiles social partners have accumulated significant expertise compared with limited know-how in their initial development. Chambers, although new to this process, can contribute further, using their capacity to address companies across sectors directly and collect descriptions of job profiles. To this end, social partners and chambers need to further define and systematise their cooperation through, for example, a permanent working group or some other structure of similar purpose (Section 5.1).

As suggested by national institutions, social partners and chambers, EOPPEP could retain a coordinating role, complemented by providing social partners and chambers with updated tools, guidelines and procedures for their engagement. EOPPEP should also remain the institution responsible for approving a new or updated profile developed by social partners/chambers.

Although social partners are ready to assume this responsibility, they also see the national technical body as a possible platform for collecting, filtering and prioritising requests for occupational profile update or development in specialities relevant to apprenticeships (for example in terms of popularity, potential of the sector). This role should not work against the flexibility of the procedure nor substitute the responsibility of social partners and EOPPEP. The national technical body could also be appointed to monitor whether occupational profiles are updated regularly, in the time frame and under conditions that need to be introduced by EOPPEP.

Box 6. A new approach for updating curricula

Given that the full update and development of occupational profiles is expected to take years, alternative options should be explored, particularly for apprenticeships.

In any case, the capacity of EOPPEP to coordinate an open, tripartite participatory procedure for occupational profile development should be enhanced, so that flexibility and speed are combined with common quality standards and procedures. Social partners and EOPPEP should collaborate to create common methodology for updating occupational profiles. In the short term, EOPPEP should be mandated to develop tools, templates, guidelines and



procedures that support social partners (and chambers if wished) in developing/ updating profiles relevant to apprenticeship specialities. The procedure should set clear and practical conditions for social partners and chambers to launch the process on their own initiative.

Many profiles (or parts of the profiles) should be updated in the near future to support the relevance of apprenticeship curricula. The national technical body could help prioritise which profiles should be addressed, first according to the priority specialities identified for apprenticeships. EOPPEP should introduce terms that commit social partners to updating profiles regularly in the medium or long term, and the national technical body could be mandated to monitor that these requirements are met.

As a next step, occupational profiles should function as a solid base for the knowledge and skills required for each professional speciality. Social partners propose that each occupational profile could be accompanied by a (more) concise and targeted list of competences (shortlist), which would provide a basis to inform training standards for both the school- and the company-based components of curricula (through the procedure steered by IEP as described in Section 5.2.4). Updating this list instead of the full profile is considered by stakeholders as a sufficiently quick response. EOPPEP and social partners/chambers should agree on guidelines on what this supplement should add to the new/updated occupational profiles. Similarly, a method and tools that will allow easy transition from an occupational profile (or list of competences) to curricula for apprenticeship programmes should be developed for institutions involved in curriculum development, as argued by social partners.

Source: Cedefop.

5.2.4. Update existing or develop new apprenticeship curricula

Social partners and chambers agree that developing and adjusting apprenticeship curricula is a highly technical task that should be carried out by a specialised institution rather than be transferred to them or to a participatory national technical body. Social partners also agree that the proposed increased contribution in updating occupational profiles and in developing national (sectoral) standard learning agreements should set the basis for significantly improved relevance of apprenticeship curricula so that they do not have to participate further in curriculum development, at least not in the school-based component. Therefore, all stakeholders

acknowledge that national authorities and institutions relevant to the provision of apprenticeship schemes should retain a leading role in this area.

As curricula are developed by both IEP (for EPAS and EPAL) and GSLLL (for IEK), collaboration is essential to ensure coherence and clear identification of similarities or differences of content provided in each scheme. It is proposed that IEP assumes a coordinating role for both school-based and workplace components of the curricula, ensuring frequent collaboration between their staff and their counterparts in GSLLL, and with OAED staff who may have experience in curriculum development through past involvement. Future merging into a single approach (for example through a permanent technical working group) should be explored by national authorities. IEP and GSLLL should also agree on explicit requirements on the regularity, procedures and conditions for future curricula update.

Their work should allow stakeholders at local level, through participatory approaches described in Section 5.4.1, to adjust curricula to an agreed extent according to local needs, under procedures and conditions set at national level.

EOPPEP should have a significant role in the procedure, ensuring that the content and level of learning outcomes for each apprenticeship programme are in line with the attributed qualification level (EQF4 or EQF5) and the particular features of each programme, such as the education level of the relevant scheme and its duration. EOPPEP is also in a position to review curricula for permeability and faster progression of learners on validation of prior learning ⁽³⁸⁾. IEP and GSLLL should involve EOPPEP in a consulting role on learning outcomes and assessment criteria in curricula, so that these criteria reflect differences in qualification levels in each scheme.

IEP, exercising its suggested coordinating role for all schemes, should explore further the social partners' suggestion on their contribution to the development of a methodology under which occupational profiles can be translated into curricula (Section 5.2.3). The short list of competences that social partners propose to complement occupational profiles would be of significant use, describing the content of possible training programmes in terms of learning outcomes. Given its lack of experience in developing the workplace component of apprenticeships, IEP should invite social partners to contribute to this in a coordinated, common approach for all schemes, for example by defining the learning outcomes to be included in the workplace component. IEP and GSLLL should then ensure alignment with the school-

⁽³⁸⁾ EOPPEP has validation of non-formal and informal learning in its mandate.

based component for all programmes. The agreed workplace components should serve as a basis for standard learning agreements (Section 5.2.5).

Curricula should be based on a learning-outcomes approach. They should be updated to reflect changes in technology (vocational subjects) as well as key competences, personal and interpersonal skills, and career management skills. Innovative teaching methods should be introduced to support this. Differentiated training material should be developed for apprenticeships, moving closer to the approach or a pool of sources available to teachers and trainers.

The national technical body could be mandated to monitor whether curricula are updated regularly, using requirements agreed by IEP and GSLLL.

5.2.5. Promote quality of workplace learning and training of in-company trainers

The introduction of learning agreements is a novelty for the apprenticeship system. Most stakeholders, including social partners, argue that excessive flexibility in learning agreements at local level could undermine the common level of learning outcomes across companies and might risk the perceived quality of the new apprenticeship programmes. They agree that standard learning agreements should be developed centrally, at national level, through collaboration among key stakeholders, and include details on learning outcomes, key tasks and their duration. These learning agreements should guarantee a certain level of common learning across different companies (common core of learning outcomes per qualification), but also allow for a minimum level of flexibility depending on company characteristics. Requirements set should promote a higher level of quality of workplace learning, without discouraging companies from engaging in apprenticeships. Learning agreements should be flexible, easy-to-use tools to improve the quality of learning at the workplace, helping all sides (apprentices, companies, teachers and trainers) to direct their efforts into commonly agreed goals expressed in terms of tasks and/or learning outcomes. It is advised that the national technical body (comprising social partners) assume a central role in developing standard learning agreements at national or national sectoral level.

Standard learning agreements should be accompanied by instructions for providers on how to adjust, including to what extent on the basis of the specificities of their schemes, such as the duration of the programme, or qualifications levels. The technical body should mandate the development

of templates for logs or other tools of the same nature to monitor learning. As learning agreements should be based on occupational profiles and curricula, the national technical body should agree on procedures and mechanisms for updating them in the event of update of the corresponding profile and/or curriculum.

In the medium term, social partners and chambers should assume the responsibility to develop additional national standards for participating companies, reflecting the size of companies or particularities of sectors, and propose them to the national technical body (in which they are represented). These standards should complement the minimum ones set in the VET strategy and the QFA, shifting the focus from health and safety aspects to conditions at companies that enable or hamper learning: elaborated requirements for mentors, infrastructure, and equipment. Social partners and chambers should then develop centrally adequate guidelines and practices for their local structures that will enable them to support companies preparing for apprenticeships and meeting agreed standards. A central registry for participating companies meeting (or exceeding) these standards can be developed and maintained by the social partners and chambers; it should be accessible by other members of the national committee and the national technical body to support evidence-based decision-making.

Apart from standards for private companies, the national technical body could take steps to assess participation of public entities in apprenticeships and establish clear conditions that increase quality of learning provided at the workplace.

Standards proposed by social partners and chambers to the national technical committee reference in-company trainers (mentors) should set out the broad requirements described by the QFA and detail how the training and certification of mentors will take place in the medium term, once the short-term approach steered by the Ministry of Education is concluded (Section 4.4.3). Social partners acknowledge that they need to assume greater responsibility in this respect, but also question the feasibility of an approach where training and certification of trainers falls exclusively under their responsibility. Cooperation is required within the national technical body to ensure complementarity of approaches used for apprenticeship teachers and to reap the benefits of common training, including staff exchange initiatives. Employer representatives are in a better position to ensure that requirements for mentors will not be perceived as excessively high by enterprises and will not discourage them from offering apprenticeship placements. In the medium term, social partners and

chambers should consult with education to develop a national curriculum for trainer training where pedagogical competences will be a prominent part, complemented by guidelines, tools and material and web-based communities of practice within/across sectors. A registry for in-company trainers and their qualifications could be developed by social partners and chambers and allow stakeholders interested in apprenticeship provision to verify the suitability of companies interested in apprenticeships. Social partners and chambers at national level should devise procedures and guidelines for their local network to support SMEs in preparing their staff to become certified apprenticeship trainers.

Social partners and chambers could also present national bodies with procedures that allow alternatives for cases when a single company cannot provide the learning outcomes included in the learning agreements. Cluster approaches or rotation among companies could be explored as an option, for example rotation in more than one enterprise.

5.2.6. Improve procedures for assessment of learning

Criteria for assessing learners should be determined centrally already during curriculum development by IEP and GSLLL. EOPPEP should work closely with them to set up common guidelines and procedures for formative (during the programme) and summative (at the end of the programme) assessment, including certification exams on completion; there should also be a focus on assessing technical skills in business or business-like contexts, which is currently less developed. EOPPEP should ensure that qualifications levels (NQF/EQF 4 or 5) are reflected in the assessment criteria of corresponding apprenticeship schemes.

EOPPEP should assume responsibility for introducing procedures that further promote openness of assessment and certification exams, through a methodology that allows professional associations and chambers at local level to support schools and companies in assessing learning at the workplace. The practice of IEK practical training assessment (regional certification committees with tripartite representation) that are formed by EOPPEP can be adjusted to meet the needs of assessing apprentices, as it involves social partners and allows a satisfactory level of national coordination. EOPPEP should be mandated to introduce tools and registries that would allow greater efficiency, transparency and an increased role for the world of business in assessment, such as an assessors' registry, a bank of examination subjects, and a registry of examination venues.

Social partners and chambers, can contribute to the development of national registries of assessors and examination venues, and by issuing guidelines for their local network on how to participate in learning assessment practices.

5.2.7. Introduce practices for upgrading teacher competences

Social partners and chambers agree that the leading role in apprenticeship teacher training and professional development lies with the national authorities. It is advised that, in the medium term, the Ministry of Education assume a clear mandate on planning, coordinating or implementing activities that address the needs of teaching staff in all schemes (EPAS, EPAL, and IEK). Given the vast experience of EPAS teachers, their representation in the planning by the Ministry of Education is crucial.

Although training activities can be carried out by each national institution in charge of the schemes (Ministry of Education for EPAL, GSLLL for IEK and OAED for EPAS teachers) according to the particular starting point and needs of their teaching staff, it is recommended that common training activities and peer learning is encouraged and promoted, with the participation of guidance staff or company trainers (mentors) whenever applicable. The national technical body could be mandated to coordinate selected flagship teacher training activities and promote major national partnerships for teacher training in the short term, signalling a common approach to all teaching staff across schemes.

Social partners and chambers could contribute to teacher training through key national scale projects, or pilot staff exchange programmes, but the initiative for these approaches should remain with the State authorities.

Box 7. A comprehensive approach for training apprenticeship teachers

In the short term, to promote EPAL and IEK teachers' capacity to work with apprentices and companies, the experience of EPAS teachers needs to be acknowledged, documented and diffused. Under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, groups of teachers from each scheme can work together on the specifications, standards and content of teacher training programmes. Attention should be given to increasing the capacity of teachers to adjust to curriculum updates and changes in occupations and specialities, helping them adapt to a more flexible future apprenticeship provision. To deal with the lack of



flexibility among teaching staff (mainly at EPAL), a broad programme of capacity building should be designed and implemented. Their capacity to apply a learning outcomes approach and promote interdisciplinary work in teams should be also raised. Practices for peer learning among teachers of EPAS, EPAL and IEK should be a priority, including networks of teachers in similar educational subjects that could be developed centrally or bottom up, to make it possible to utilise in the best possible way the expertise related to each speciality. Training and peer learning activities should include guidance staff in schools or local structures. The Ministry of Education should develop tools and materials for teacher training, including platforms such as a depository for educational material and interactive educational tools. Material already developed (for example through ESF projects) should be collected and distributed to all interested parties.

In the medium term, Ministry of Education should develop standards and a national curriculum for teachers in apprenticeships, followed by a mechanism for regular identification of future training needs. Professionalisation of apprenticeship teaching could act in favour of its security and attractiveness alongside financial incentives for teachers to turn to VET and apprenticeships.

Source: Cedefop.

5.2.8. Expand enterprise incentives and promote apprenticeship benefits

Decisions on financial and non-financial incentives should be linked to the strategy for shaping the apprenticeship system and planning its provision; they should be taken by the national committee with the input from the single technical committee with competence on apprenticeship. The national committee can make such decisions (on the basis of recommendations of the technical body), as it includes a representative of the Ministry of Finance and has greater capacity to promote political support needed from a range of competent ministries and national authorities. Representatives of social partners and chambers should be mandated to bring forward to the national technical body proposals for incentives that would work for the business world. The national technical body should launch cost-benefit analyses with the support of social partners and chambers that would improve the evidence on which selection of incentives and selling points for apprenticeship schemes are based.

Box 8. Which incentives could work? Input from the web survey and lessons learned from other countries

The web survey among companies implemented during the TCR indicates that the following elements motivate companies to participate in apprenticeships:

- higher contribution to wages and social security;
- more and better information on the procedures for employing an apprentice and on the costs and benefits of apprenticeships;
- apprentices equipped with better general, transversal or technical competences;
- possibility to select apprentices.

Research at the European level demonstrates that the most widespread types of financial incentives include grants for companies, grants for individuals, tax incentives for companies and national or sectoral training funds. However, experience of the countries (for example interviews and focus groups carried out in the thematic country review on apprenticeships in Italy, Lithuania and Malta) shows that employers do not necessarily need financial incentives. A good apprenticeship system with, for example, well-developed feedback loops, early and comprehensive vocational guidance, a good match between companies and apprentices, extensive company support services and performance-based education and training services could lead to a good result: highly qualified and motivated apprenticeship graduates. In such cases, financial incentives may not even be necessary for companies.

Source: Cedefop.

On approval by the national committee, the national technical body should be responsible for elaborating the incentives and for coordinating the work needed by competent ministries and national authorities in introducing relevant regulation (or possibly deregulation) necessary for their introduction. Key financial incentives and a core of non-financial ones should be common across schemes to reduce competition and confusion among possible participants. In addition to a common core of incentives, targeted offers may also be envisaged. Some non-financial incentives may differ depending on the sector (and speciality offered), as companies may respond better to a particular incentive that is more attractive for their

sector, rather than to general ones. Incentives for participating companies in high priority sectors could be differentiated within the common principles agreed at national level. Additional recognition or reward could be made possible for companies that excel in standards set for quality workplace training (Section 5.2.5).

Attention should be given to non-financial incentives, communication and simplification of procedures. Companies need to be presented with a comprehensive set of benefits that promote the value of apprenticeships for them, apart from the traditional approach based on subsidising costs. The role of employer representatives is crucial, as they can better package and communicate these benefits to their members.

The importance of financial incentives for companies should be reduced in favour of non-financial ones, in a pursuit of more sustainable shared funding arrangements that will gradually reduce dependency on EU funds. Stakeholders should explore scenarios under which the share of company contribution to the cost of apprentice remuneration is increased, either directly from participating companies or through contributions by the business world to a national training fund. In these scenarios, the balancing role of non-financial incentives is crucial.

Incentives devised by the national technical body should also target an increase in the share of private companies over public ones, to raise the opportunities for labour market transition of apprentices on graduation. Public companies may still offer apprenticeship placements on the basis of agreed criteria (Section 5.2.5). Cases where public companies offer quality learning should be acknowledged, rewarded and used as an example.

The national committee should be explicitly mandated to decide on a coherent strategy and on national level campaigns promoting apprenticeships, agreeing on key messages which should be based on clearly defined features for each scheme (Section 5.2.1). Given the envisaged expansion of apprenticeship schemes and numbers, coordination of activities and coherence of messages communicated to enterprises and learners are of utmost significance. The national technical body should assume responsibility for promoting and coordinating key national campaigns run by providers across schemes (EPAS, EPAL, and IEK) based on the national promotion strategy to improve planning, exploit synergies and ensure coherence and efficiency. Each national provider (Ministry of Education, OAED, and the GSLL) can organise and launch its own complementary campaign, ensuring it fits the provisions and principles of the agreed strategy. The national technical body could be appointed to keep track of the key

campaigns run by social partners, regional or local authorities or large scale projects such as business-led partnerships to ensure consistency with the national strategy for promoting apprenticeships. The national technical body should promote improvement of the OAED platform for companies' interest in apprenticeships.

Social partners and chambers should take a leading role in promoting apprenticeships among companies; addressing companies using 'their language' is considered by all stakeholders as a success factor for their engagement. Social partners and chambers are in a position to present the advantages of participation in these programmes, but they currently lack the detailed information to do so. Once features of the programmes are clarified by the national committee and the national technical body, social partners and chambers should be invited to run their own campaigns to attract companies. Alignment of these campaigns to a national promotion strategy will ensure proper timing and coherence of messages.

Targeted approaches for priority sectors (as agreed by the national committee) can be explored by social partners and chambers; these should also develop guidelines and material for their members to support them in implementing promotion activities locally. Social partners and chambers could also be given the mandate to merge into a single registry the databases used by individual stakeholders, such as the OAED registry which includes companies that do not participate in apprenticeships or the general registry maintained by chambers (KEEE). The single database should be available to all members of the national committee and the national technical body and should be linked with the registry of companies participating in apprenticeships (also to be maintained by social partners/chambers) and OAED's platform for company interest.

Social partners and chambers see their increased participation in apprenticeship design and delivery as a means to increase trust in individual companies in the medium term and highlight the benefits of apprenticeships for enterprises. That could better justify investment of the business world both collectively and individually, by offering more apprenticeship placements, increasing the financial contribution to apprentices' wages or funding the training of in-company trainers.

Box 9. Why is it important to involve company representatives in promotion?

The web survey of companies during the TCR shows that employers do not know whom to contact to participate in apprenticeship programmes; they also lack information on apprenticeship costs and benefits and receive limited administrative support from existing structures (EPAS schools and/or KPA). These findings depict an information gap between authorities and enterprises and getting company representatives more involved in the promotion of the apprenticeship system is a way to deal with this.

International experience demonstrates that addressing the information gap between public authorities developing and/or implementing the apprenticeship system and companies that use it often proves to be the key missing ingredient in the system. It often proves to be the key incentive which is needed to run the system. Countries develop different approaches to addressing this issue.

In Ireland the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) launched in 2016 an online platform [apprentices.ie](http://www.apprenticeship.ie) – a construction sector-specific marketplace for advertising apprenticeships ⁽³⁹⁾. On the website both apprentices and companies can register if they are interested in an apprenticeship. People can create a personal profile and be included into the database of apprentices, which is accessible to all construction firms that register. The website fills a substantial information gap by opening communication around apprenticeship supply and demand to a wider audience and has led to the launch of other similar initiatives. For example, the [apprenticeship.ie](http://www.apprenticeship.ie) platform has been opened to apprenticeships in all sectors of the Irish economy. Employer representatives in Belgium (Brussels-capital region) – Confederation of Construction Brussels-Capital (CCBC, *Confédération Construction Bruxelles-Capitale*) ⁽⁴⁰⁾ – aim at establishing a single point of contact between enterprises, education providers and young people to strengthen the links between these groups. They are appointing a single person within the organisation to assist SMEs with various administrative tasks in relation to apprenticeship, including finding financial support or filling out documents. CCBC emphasises the importance of establishing trust between stakeholders and seeks to ensure that entrepreneurs can always contact the same person for help. This person also attends construction sites to resolve any communication problems between companies and VET schools, and to follow-up on individual apprentices.



⁽³⁹⁾ <http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/SitePages/Home.aspx>

⁽⁴⁰⁾ <http://www.confederationconstruction.be/bruxellescapitale/nl-be/home.aspx>

The above examples illustrate that information gaps can be addressed with the help of different activities stretching well beyond information campaigns.

Source: Cedefop.

5.2.9. Improve guidance to promote informed choice for learners

Under the same principle of communicating apprenticeships in a coherent and coordinated manner to potential clients, the national technical body should be mandated to design a national strategy to promote apprenticeship schemes to prospective learners and their families, which then should be operationalised and implemented. The strategy should include all apprenticeship schemes on an equal footing and should also include provisions for increased cooperation among existing guidance structures of EOPPEP and the ones operating under Ministries of Education and Labour (OAED). The national technical body could also coordinate national level campaigns to attract learners, given the limited resources of EOPPEP (responsible for guidance at national level) to assume an extensive role in each area for apprenticeships. It could develop material, coordinate national campaigns, and support and monitor campaigns at local/regional level through the network of providers. Attention should be paid also to parents who may base their preferences on limited information and stereotypes about VET in general. Regular contribution by apprenticeship learners or graduates as role models for future learners should be included.

Box 10. Apprenticeships as a service for sale

Apprenticeships can be understood as a service like any other public or private endeavour that aims to provide public or private good to the public. It needs the right selling points to attract customers; these may be various. For example, apprenticeship may build on recent policy trends and feature in new professions related to sustainability, climate change, and digitalisation. It may build on local, regional, national or even international skills competitions to encourage young, but not yet rooted, talent to make a choice in favour of vocational education and training following inspiring examples among their peers. Another selling



point, used in Germany and Ireland, is higher VET or dual studies programmes combining vocational education and training with higher education and enabling eligible candidates to acquire degrees that are easily converted into well-paid jobs cushioned with good working conditions. Apprenticeships may also build on the need of young people to give themselves to society: some companies in Germany enable social volunteering services (for example in renovating old buildings) leading to both public good and improved skills set for the volunteer. Such volunteers are often hired by companies after the end of social service. A key element for all measures to be effective is early vocational guidance. This should start in kindergarten and acquaint a person (parents included) consistently and comprehensively with as many different professional career choices as needed. Only then can a young person make a well-informed decision.

Source: Cedefop.

5.3. Governance at regional and local levels

5.3.1. Clarify regional VET committee mandates and make them operational

Regional VET committees were foreseen in 2013 but set up in only three of the 13 regions. The national technical body needs to assess whether these structures are considered relevant for the implementation of the apprenticeship schemes and submit opinion to the national committee; if these committees are considered relevant, their apprenticeship-related mandate and functions, modus operandi and composition must be defined. Subsequently, they need to be activated. Their relationship to the foreseen national and local bodies and ministry departments also needs to be defined through this work. Where regional level governance is reinforced, social partners such as GSEVEE also suggested their inclusion at regional level as they have more capacity to contribute compared to the local level. This framework should be approved by the national committee and ratified by appropriate regulatory documents.

5.3.2. Clarify KPA teams' mandate and *modus operandi* and extend their composition

It is advised that the national technical body submit to the national committee for its approval a detailed document elaborating the mandate, functions and *modus operandi* of the KPA teams, clearly setting out the expected contribution of each side and describing processes and mechanisms towards this collaboration. This work should include explicit provisions on the connection of the KPA teams to pilots and projects run at local level (including large-scale business community-led partnerships, Section 4.5.3). Their role should be to monitor implementation with an interest in coordinating resources, exploiting synergies, reducing complexity for learners and companies interested in participating in pilots and identifying features of pilots that can be integrated in mainstream provision. Most stakeholders agree that the KPA teams (see more in Section 4.3.3) should assume a coordinating role for common activities adding value to apprenticeship design and delivery at local level, rather than mere administrative tasks (which can be dealt with at schools).

It is clear that schools should maintain a key role in several aspects of design and implementation of apprenticeships at local level. For example, direct communication among apprenticeship teachers and mentors should be reinforced and supported by the work of KPA teams (already staffed by teachers), which can provide a more structured framework, coordination, tools and procedures that support individual teachers and aid experience sharing among schools. The KPA role should be also clarified reference individual schools operating in the same community, to ensure complementarity and coordination instead of adding unnecessary rigidity and obscurity of responsibilities.

It is advised that, in the medium term, the composition of the KPA teams be extended to include representatives of chambers and depending on their capacity, of social partners at local level (professional associations, labour centres). The local partnerships foreseen as an option in the QFA should become, in the medium term, common practice across the country, moving from one-off, project-based approaches to a system-level logic of permanent, regular cooperation followed by proportionate contribution of all actors in human or financial resources and infrastructure. In the short term, this can be promoted through improved cooperation practices (such as working groups on selected topics) that could gradually or directly lead to full membership.

The regulatory work of the national technical body should describe a list of topics for which local representatives of social partners and chambers can be invited to contribute to the work of the KPA teams before further integration in the medium term. Although national level stakeholders would welcome collaboration of the KPA teams with business representatives at local level, explicit relevant provisions are missing apart from a broadly defined option included in the QFA and two pilots to be launched in certain regions. By joining forces with the KPA teams in a more structured way, local stakeholders will be in a position to offer support to companies in a full array of services, extending from administrative to pedagogical support.

5.4. Key functions at local level

Within the framework described in Section 5.3, a number of key functions may be envisaged for local apprenticeship governance.

5.4.1. Support relevance and quality of the school-based component

The KPA teams could be involved in adjusting school-based curricula to local labour market needs to the extent allowed and through procedures foreseen at national level (Section 5.2.4). Especially in the case of EPAL, where a project-based approach is envisaged, local stakeholders can discuss local needs and propose projects and practices to be promoted.

Chambers and professional associations may be invited to assist in teacher training activities, either collectively or by mobilising members to provide facilities and equipment for apprenticeship teacher training. The General Confederation of Labour has successful previous experience in such initiatives with adult trainers and strongly advocates in this direction. Employers' representatives could also set up initiatives for peer learning among VET teachers and company trainers, either through common training activities in the short term or more sophisticated staff exchange schemes in the medium term.

5.4.2. Improve guidance coordination and attract learners

Learner guidance on education and training opportunities can be offered at local level by schools individually, local guidance offices under the Ministry of Education and OAED KPAs. The platform offered by the KPA teams could help coordinate guidance activities and promotion of apprenticeships to potential learners and their families, including support of social partners

and chambers. In this way, coherent messages will be promoted at local level, reducing confusion for learners and allowing them to make informed decisions on the features and career opportunities offered by the programmes available through various schemes. This collaboration would increase in practice the guidance capacity at local level and would allow guidance staff to address the challenging combination of supporting learner choice at an early stage at lower secondary schools, alongside the guidance and career management services that should be offered to apprentices within or after their studies.

5.4.3. Introduce coordinated practices to attract and support companies

The KPA teams, schools, chambers and local partnerships all have a role in attracting companies at local level. Attention should be given to how benefits, requirements and standards for companies are communicated to interested companies in a coherent and coordinated way, so that actors do not compete and companies do not receive mixed messages about apprenticeship schemes that could eventually discourage them from engaging. It is suggested that the KPA teams, extended to include at least a representative of chambers, should coordinate the activities carried out by different actors for promoting apprenticeship provision at local level.

This coordination would create synergies, with social partners and chambers receiving a clear mandate to assume a key role in attracting companies at local level in cooperation with schools. Social partners and chambers recognise that chambers are in a better position to promote apprenticeships given their extended network and increased capacity at local level. Areas of possible contribution by social partners at local level (professional associations, labour centres) according to their (limited) resources should be explored, piloted and documented; this should include individual cases that could set good practices for the future. National authorities (as representatives of VET providers) seem to share the opinion that the contribution of chambers and social partners should be both welcomed and pursued as multipliers and intermediates to enterprises, but to complement, rather than substitute, the role of VET teachers in establishing and maintaining connections with the workplace. All actors at local level should receive guidance and material developed centrally by social partners and the national technical body (Section 5.2). Chambers and local professional associations should claim this role systematically across the country, regardless of current projects or pilot partnerships, which have

specific targeting and lifespan. The experience of such endeavours can be documented, assessed and extended to other regions or sectors.

The KPA teams are expected to allocate apprenticeship placements per educational unit and these units then allocate apprentices to enterprises. However, a way needs to be found to involve company representatives and companies themselves in selecting apprentices. Extended, balanced representation promoting better matching to the interest of both learners and companies is feasible, despite some concerns expressed on practicalities. Educational stakeholders at national and local level understand the value of this step in increasing trust among companies, while employer representatives also understand and can convey to their local representatives that educational aspects of apprenticeships also need to be taken into consideration. As a first step to increase company trust and participation, KPA teams should promote the involvement of professional associations/chambers in allocating apprentices to companies based on a centrally agreed approach and criteria prepared by the national technical body (which should include social partners and chambers at national level).

5.4.4. Support quality in workplace learning

State authorities represented in the KPA teams, especially social partners and chambers, should act to provide stronger support to companies so that they can meet the agreed requirements to participate in apprenticeships and prepare the best possible way to offer quality training. Social partners and chambers should be mandated to introduce local mechanisms and practices that improve company preparedness for participating in apprenticeships. This includes supporting companies in understanding contractual requirements, preparing mentors and using relevant tools (such as learning agreement and log), but also improving their understanding of the value of apprenticeships and of the importance of delivering quality training; this should lead to the development of a training culture among companies. Chambers and social partners at local level should pay particular attention to supporting microenterprises; these often lack the resources and established training culture to apply for apprenticeships, deal with administrative tasks and prepare for offering quality training.

Cooperation with schools and the KPA teams would allow greater effectiveness and would consolidate the collaborative culture that should steer local activities. For example, training of in-company trainers for SMEs could take place within the framework of school units, with participation of apprenticeship teachers with sound pedagogic qualifications and experience, coordinated by chambers and/or professional associations.

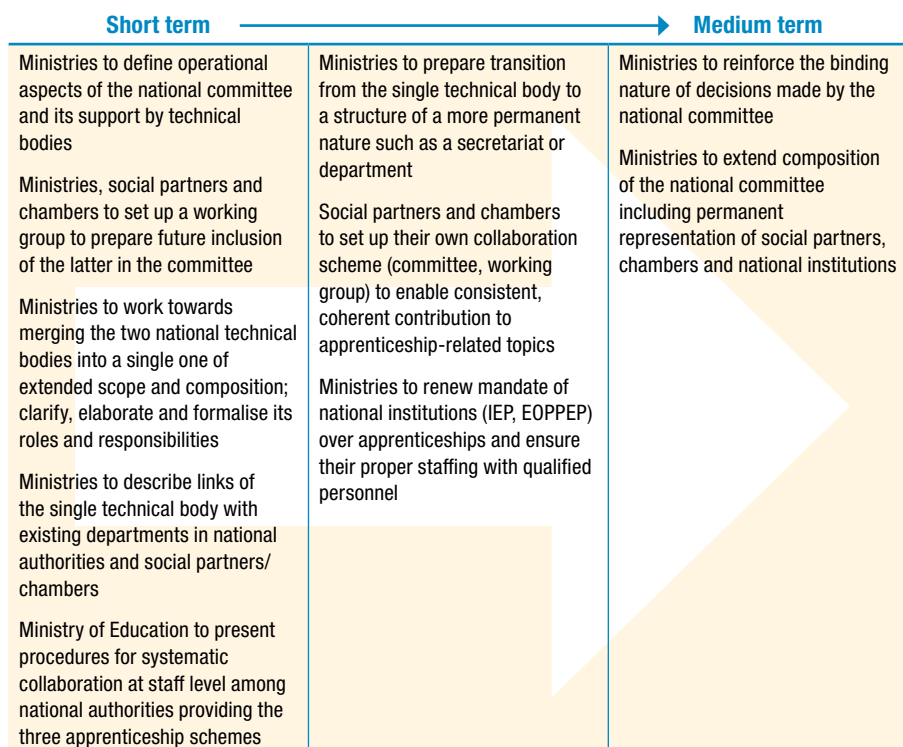
Social partners and chambers should be invited to explore the possibility and, whenever applicable, develop complementary training practices at local level, such as networks of companies that could help learners reach the intended learning outcomes when companies individually cannot offer the appropriate training. With the support of their national structures, social partners and chambers are invited to explore the opportunities and conditions for setting up regional or local training centres (across or within sectors). For both cases to work, adjustment of the legal framework (contractual aspects) and technical preparation at national level are needed (Section 5.2).

Professional associations, trade unions and chambers should assume a role in assessing learning, especially at the workplace, under procedures and guidelines agreed at national level (Section 5.2). As an example, their members or representatives could join assessment panels for apprentices during or at the end of the apprenticeship programme, or individual companies can provide facilities to this end (assessment venues).

5.5. Setting an intervention plan

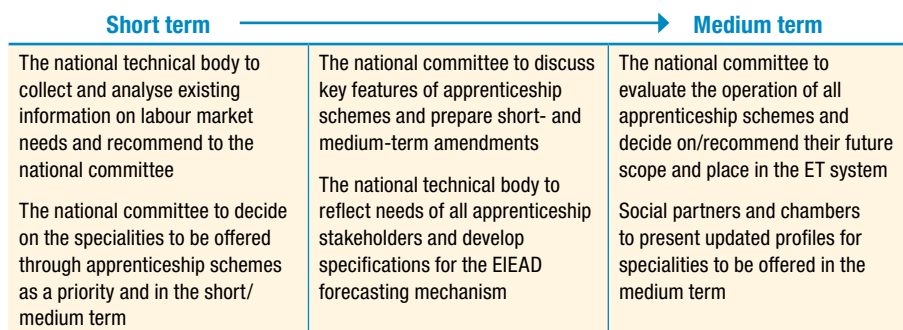
As stated in Section 4.1, the scale of reforms and policy developments, especially since 2016, affecting vital aspects of apprenticeship design and delivery to be implemented in a short time span (the system is planned to be evaluated in 2020) poses a significant challenge both at national and local levels. Distribution of possible interventions in different phases from short term (deployed during the 2017-18 school year wherever applicable) to medium term (three to four years, before the evaluation of the system in 2020-21) may help national stakeholders address existing challenges and allocate their effort and resources gradually, so having more control over the reforms. This approach may also allow for periodical revision of the interventions. The following figures cluster the interventions in three waves, from interventions to be carried out in the short term to medium-term ones.

Figure 4. **Intervention layers: governance structures at national level**



Source: Cedefop.

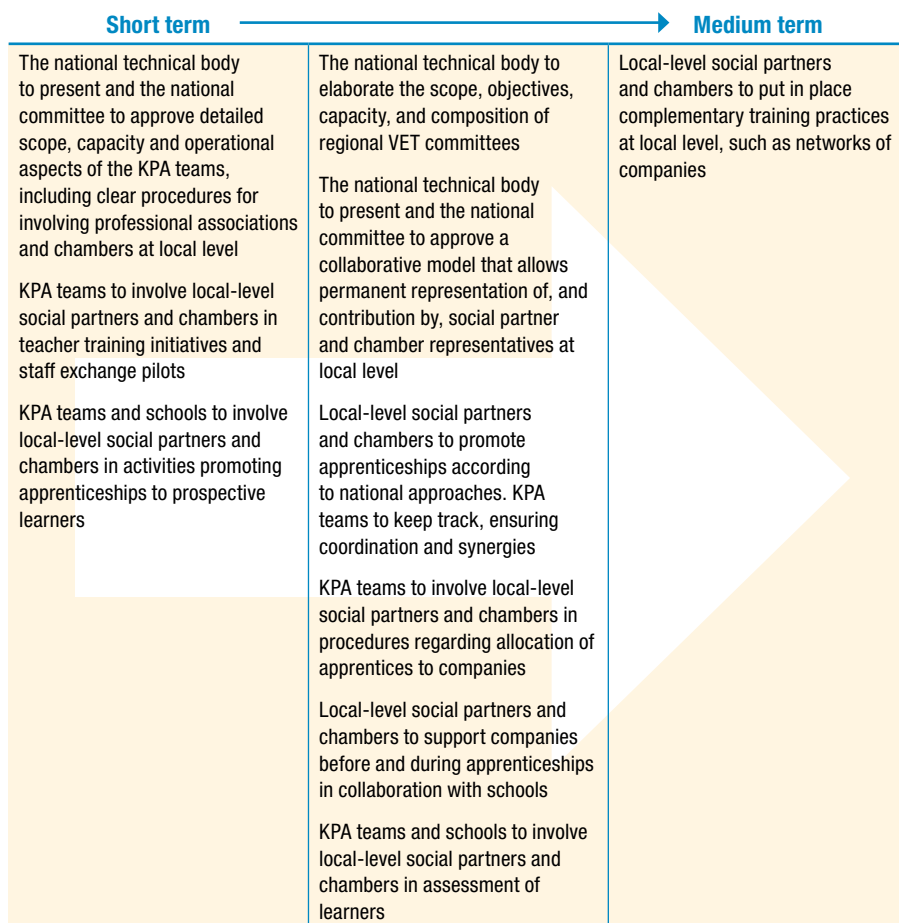
Figure 5. **Intervention layers: allocation of key functions at national level**



Short term	Medium term
<p>EOPPEP, social partners and chambers to agree on flexible procedures for updating occupational profiles, including short lists of competences</p> <p>Social partners and chambers to present updated profiles for specialities considered as a priority</p> <p>IEP and GSLLL to develop common approach in developing curricula, including procedures to engage social partners/chambers in the workplace component</p> <p>IEP and GSLLL to present new/updated curricula for the specialities considered as a priority</p> <p>The national technical body to coordinate trainer training according to the QFA provisions</p> <p>Ministry of Education to present a plan for training apprenticeship teachers across schemes and coordinate its implementation</p> <p>The national technical body to recommend a wider range of financial and non-financial incentives</p> <p>The national committee to decide on financial and non-financial incentives</p> <p>The national committee to decide on a coherent strategy and on national level campaigns for companies</p> <p>Social partners and chambers to launch their campaigns as part of the overall strategy</p>	<p>Stakeholders to agree on a procedure for regular update of occupational profiles and curricula</p> <p>EOPPEP to review curricula under the prism of the NQF and suggest refinements or adjustments</p> <p>Stakeholders to agree on a procedure for regular update of curricula</p> <p>Social partners and chambers to develop an approach to support companies before and during their engagement in apprenticeships</p> <p>EOPPEP and ministries to prepare procedures for increased participation of social partners and chambers in assessment of learning and certification of graduates</p> <p>The national technical body to elaborate and operationalise the quality assurance provisions of the VET strategy and the QFA, including KPIs and internal and external evaluation steps</p> <p>The national technical body to plan and coordinate national campaigns for learners</p> <p>IEP and GSLLL to present new/updated curricula for the specialities to be offered in the medium term</p> <p>Social partners and chambers to present national standards for participating companies and in-company trainers, followed by relevant registries</p> <p>Social partners and chambers to present models of cooperation among companies to provide quality learning</p> <p>Ministry of Education to develop procedures and terms promoting the continuing professional development of apprenticeship teachers</p> <p>The national technical body to launch cost-benefit analyses</p> <p>The national technical body to plan and coordinate key national campaigns to be run across schemes, and monitor campaigns run by social partners, regional or local authorities or large scale projects</p> <p>Social partners and chambers to merge their registries to boost outreaching capacity</p>

Source: Cedefop.

Figure 6. **Intervention layers: governance structures and allocation of key functions at local level**



Source: Cedefop.



6. Concluding remarks

Concluding remarks

Greece has a long established apprenticeship scheme (EPAS) since the 1950s, which despite limitations, and in some cases failures, enjoys the trust of participating companies and of learners, and is considered by social partners as a good basis for expanding apprenticeship provision (to the post-secondary level). Since 2013, and more intensively since 2016, policy developments have brought forward two new apprenticeship schemes at post-secondary level, EPAL and IEK, and introduced a comprehensive approach that sees apprenticeships as one system with common governance structures and quality standards.

While the structure of the system is there, it needs to be developed before it becomes fully functional. All stakeholders need to be activated by further specifying mandates and functions, by ensuring synergies and clarifying interactions, and by providing the necessary resources, tools and guidelines. The main goal is also the main challenge: ensure cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders. First, and most important, is cooperation between education and training institutions and the labour market, through the full involvement of social partners, but it is also needed between the public institutions themselves. Social partners and chambers are willing to play an increasingly important role both in apprenticeship design and implementation; public authorities are not resistant to such an increased role in a medium- and long-term perspective.

List of abbreviations

ALMPs	active labour market policies
CCBC	<i>Confédération Construction Bruxelles-Capitale</i> Confederation of Construction Brussels-Capital
CIF	Construction Industry Federation
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DEKRA	<i>Deutscher Kraftfahrzeug-Überwachungs-Verein</i> German Motor Vehicle Inspection Association
EAfA	European Alliance for Apprenticeships
EIEAD	National Institute of Labour and Human Resources
EOPPEP	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance
EPAL	<i>επαγγελματικό λύκειο</i> vocational education school
EPAS	<i>επαγγελματική σχολή</i> vocational training (apprenticeship) school (upper secondary)
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESEE	Hellenic Confederation of Commerce and Entrepreneurship
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
GEL	<i>Γενικό Λύκειο</i> general education school (upper secondary)
GSEE	General Confederation of Labour
GSEVEE	Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants
GSLLL	General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning
HR	human resources
IEK	vocational training institute (post-secondary)
IEP	Institute of Educational Policy

IOBE	<i>Ίδρυμα Οικονομικών και Βιομηχανικών Ερευνών</i> Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IT/ICT	information technologies/information and communication technologies
KEEE	union of Hellenic chambers
KESYPs	guidance centres of the Ministry of Education
KPAs	<i>κέντρα προώθησης απασχόλησης</i> centres for promoting employment (OAED)
KPI	key performance indicator
MoU	memorandum of understanding
NILHR	National Institute of Labour and Human Resources
NQF	national qualifications framework
OAED	Manpower Employment Organisation (Greek public employment service)
PES	public employment services
PSEK	pilot school for vocational training
QFA	quality framework for apprenticeships
SEK	school for vocational training (upper secondary)
SETE	Greek Tourism Confederation
SEV	Hellenic Federation of Enterprises
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
TCR	thematic country review
VET	vocational education and training
WBL	work-based learning

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Table A1. **Cedefop's thematic country reviews on apprenticeships: analytical framework**

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
Distinguishing features	Systematic long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an education and training institution or training centre that leads to a qualification.
	An apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage).
	An employer is responsible for the company-based part of the programme.
Place in the ET system	Apprenticeship is defined and regulated in a legal framework.
	Position of apprenticeship in relation to other learning paths is clear.
	Apprenticeship offers both horizontal and vertical pathways to further specialisation or education at all levels.
Governance structures	Roles and responsibilities of the key players (the State, employers' organisations, trade unions, chambers, schools, VET providers, companies) at national, regional, local levels are clearly defined and distributed: decision-making, implementation, advisory, control.
	Employer organisations and trade unions are actively engaged at all levels.
	Employers' organisations, trade unions, and companies understand and recognise the importance of apprenticeship to a skilled labour force (i.e. social responsibility).
	One coordination and decision-making body is nominated.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
Training content and learning outcomes	Qualification standards and/or occupational profiles exist, are based on learning outcomes and are regularly evaluated and updated.
	Curricula and programmes are developed based on qualification standards and/or occupational profiles.
	The content, duration and expected outcomes of company and school-based learning are clearly distributed and form a coherent sequence.
	There are provisions for adjusting part of curricula to local labour market needs.
	(Minimum) requirements to access apprenticeship programmes are stipulated.
	Final assessment covers all learning outcomes and is independent of the learning venues.
Cooperation among learning venues	There is cooperation, coordination and clear distribution of responsibilities among the venues as well as established feedback mechanisms.
	A school, a company and an apprentice together develop a training plan, based on the curriculum.
	In case a company cannot ensure the acquisition of all required learning outcomes for the company-based learning as defined by the curriculum, there are arrangements to compensate for that (for example, intercompany training centres, cooperation of companies, etc.).
	One of the venues takes up (is designated by law) the coordinating role in the process.
	It is clear who is responsible for the administrative tasks related to the company-based part of the programme (for example, checks the suitability of the accredited training enterprise, technically and personnel-wise, is responsible for logging of apprenticeship contracts, etc.).

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
Participation of and support to companies	Rights and obligations of companies providing training are legally stipulated.
	There are strategies, initiatives in marketing apprenticeship and informing companies of benefits of taking apprentices, related responsibilities and available incentives.
	There are minimum requirements for companies willing to provide apprenticeship places and/or an accreditation procedure.
	Companies, especially SMEs, receive non-financial support to implement apprenticeship.
	There is recognition and even award, for companies that provide quality apprenticeships.
	Employers' organisations play a key role in engaging and supporting companies.
Requirements and support to teachers and in-company trainers	Companies have to assign a qualified staff member (tutor) to accompany apprentices.
	There are stipulated requirements for qualification and competences of an apprentice tutor.
	An apprentice tutor in a company has to have qualification in the vocation he/she trains for.
	An apprentice tutor in a company has to have some proof of pedagogical/didactic competence.
	There is a provision of training for in-company trainers to develop and update their pedagogical/didactic and transversal competences and for teachers to update their technical competences.
	There are mechanisms for cooperation and exchange between in-company trainers and VET teachers in schools.
	There is a clear indication who (teacher or trainer) has ultimate responsibility for apprentices' learning.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
Financing and cost-sharing mechanisms	Apprenticeship companies pay wages and cover indirect costs (materials, trainers' time).
	The State is responsible for financing VET schools and/or paying grants to engage apprentices.
	The duration and organisation of apprenticeships is such that it allows companies to recuperate the investment through apprentices' work.
	There are incentives (subsidies, tax deductions) to encourage companies to take on apprentices, generally and/or in specific sectors or occupations.
	Employer organisations and trade unions cover part of the costs (direct and/or indirect).
Quality assurance	Quality assurance system covers apprenticeship.
Apprentice's working and learning conditions	Rights and obligations of apprentices are legally stipulated, both for working and learning.
	There is a reference point (responsible body) that informs the apprentice of rights and responsibilities of all parties and supports him/her in case of problems.
	An apprentice has an employment contract with the company and enjoys all rights and benefits of an employee and fulfils all responsibilities.
	An apprentice is protected in case of company failure (bankruptcy, for example) to provide training.
	An apprentice has access to guidance and counselling services.
Responsiveness to labour market	There are institutional procedures that allow apprenticeship to respond to or to anticipate the needs of the labour market.
	Outputs and outcomes of apprenticeship are regularly monitored and evaluated.
	Ex-ante and/or ex-post impact evaluation of apprenticeship are in place.

Source: Cedefop.





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APPRENTICESHIP REVIEW

GREECE

Modernising and expanding
apprenticeships in Greece

This publication is the final report of the thematic country review of apprenticeships (TCR) in Greece. The review took place between October 2015 and March 2017 at the request of the Greek Ministry of Education and the Greek Ministry of Labour. This report presents the key findings of the review and suggestions for action in the short and medium term. The review suggests starting by elaborating efficient and participatory apprenticeship governance structures at national level; detailing areas of shared responsibility among stakeholders comprising national authorities, social partners and chambers; acting collectively at national level to bring forward improvements in selecting apprenticeship specialities, updating occupational profiles and curricula, promoting quality of learning in the workplace, training teachers and trainers, expanding incentives for enterprises; and diffusing this approach of shared responsibility to the local level, through regular and systematic cooperation among State authorities, schools, chambers, professional associations and companies.

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