

Analysis of the policy context addressing 25+ NEETs

COUNTRY REPORT – GREECE

Institute of Entrepreneurship Development

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**IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT ‘LOST
MILLENNIALS – TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH
NETWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF INITIATIVES
TARGETING 25+ NEETS’**

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Project summary:

The project 'Lost Millennials' focuses on a regularly neglected group of the generation of Millennials: young people aged 25-29 neither in employment or education and training (25+ NEETs). This generation started their working life shortly after the economic crisis of 2008, perceiving uncertainty and lack of security for work and well-being, they are more likely to be inactive or in precarious jobs. The main objective of the project is to contribute to the successful integration of 25+ NEETs to the labour market through increasing knowledge on the effects of employment initiatives on 25+ NEETs, building capacity of stakeholders to perform impact studies and thus improving the quality of labour market interventions. This objective will be achieved through the creation of the transnational research network which will share know-how and good practices, the evaluations of governmental and community-based initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs, as well as the engagement of stakeholders to increase the policy-relevance of project results.

For more information, please visit our [website](#), contact us on lm.leadpartner@hetfa.hu and follow our [social media](#).

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Implemented by:



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1. Introduction

In Greece, various stakeholders show particular interest in tackling problems related to the integration in the labour market – support of education – training of NEETs. Such high-level interest is justified, as the particularly high rate of unemployment among NEETs is one of the major problems the country is facing. The institution of training programmes and of incentives granted to enterprises for the employment of NEETs becomes ever more imperative, as the current politic and economic context intensifies the threat of unemployment for this group of the population.

The Greek government has established as one of its key priorities to improve the prospects of Greek youth¹. Youth unemployment rates are structurally high, and it nearly tripled during the crisis, standing at 45% currently. The high NEET share demonstrates the risk of a ‘lost generation’. The ‘Youth 17-27’ strategy seeks to promote youth autonomy and independence and facilitate their transition to adulthood, provide a fair and qualitative education-training-apprenticeship, ensure decent work for youth and encourage youth entrepreneurship, enhance their health and wellbeing, youth participation in decision-making, reduce inequalities among young people and create youth-friendly cities. Although many interventions cover the ages of 25-30 years old NEETs, there are no discrete provisions specifically targeting this group.

2. Overall policy context

In Greece, strategies targeting NEETs are mostly designed at the national level, foreseeing support and regional mandates of local authorities. There are past examples of regional strategies targeting NEETs (e.g., the Regional Operational Programme of Thessaly- Mainland Greece- Epirus, 2007-2013).

Greece has a youth employment strategy, with the Youth Guarantee being the most emblematic policy among the Active Labour Market Policies². The Directorate for Integration in the Labour Market of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the public authority designated in Greece as responsible for the planning and implementation of actions stemming from the Youth Guarantee. For the latter implementation, the Directorate for Integration in the Labour Market is assisted by the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED, in Greek) (Youth Guarantee Greece, 2017). The responsibilities of the Directorate are set out in Article 22 of the Presidential Decree 134/2017, according to which the

¹ General Secretariat for Youth and Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, Strategic Framework for the Empowerment of Youth, May 2018. Retrieved on 12/05/2022 from https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/50359073/Neolaia_Entipo_ENG_dig.pdf/6ee8b162-57df-a302-e394-9f58850f9fbf.

² Transnational Report on the impact of employment policies on young NEETs, 2020. Retrieved on 11/05/2022 from http://youthshare.aegean.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Transnational_Report_NEETs.pdf.

Directorate coordinates the planning and implementing of actions, the measures to promote employment and the fight against unemployment. It also monitors the implementation of measures and related indicators, with a view to obtain feedback on employment policies. The National Youth Guarantee Action Plan was submitted to the European Commission in December 2013 and updated in June 2014 (Youth Guarantee Greece, 2017).

The Youth Guarantee is mainly funded by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). In Greece, initial funding (from late 2013 to 2018) amounted to approximately 393 million Euro, of which 343 million Euro was financed by the YEI special budget (171.5 million Euro) and the European Social Fund (ESF - 171.5 million Euro), whereas 49.6 million Euro from national resources (i.e., national participation in the respective ESF). The Youth Employment Initiative has been integrated into the Operational Programme: Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning 2014-2020, as a distinct priority axis (Priority Axis 3) and implemented through the Investment Priority Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those who are out of work, education or training (Ministry of Labour Social Security & Social Solidarity, 2018).

The Greek Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan was presented in December 2013 and updated in June 2014³. The design of the YG scheme drew upon the experience gained from the 'Action Plan of Targeted Interventions to Strengthen Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship within the Operational Programme of NSRF' 2 (January 2013), which was the first cohesive effort to tackle youth unemployment. The scheme is based on the broader national strategy laid out in the 'Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework, 2014-2020' and the 'Action Plan for Creating New Jobs and Supporting Unemployed People' (May 2013). The Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare is in charge of the strategic planning and implementation of the YG, with the Employment Directorate of the Ministry appointed as the National Coordinator and responsible for fostering dialogue and cooperation with all institutions involved. The Ministry of Labour is supported by the PES (OAED) and other actors including the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Ministry for Development and Competitiveness, the Ministry of Merchant Marine and Island Policy, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Culture, local authorities and social partners.

Reforms and investments included in the 'Employment, skills and social cohesion' pillar aim at increasing long-term employment, employability and labour productivity through labour market reforms, modernisation of active and passive labour market policies (including measures targeted to the young unemployed individuals), upgrading the mechanisms for diagnosis of labour market needs, and reforming and digitalising the Public Employment Service (OAED). These reforms and investments are

³ European Commission, Youth Guarantee country by country, Greece, October 2020. Retrieved on 11/05/2022 from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13640&langId=en>.

directly related to the goals and priorities of the National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, and complement its activities, while they are expected to operate as complements in mitigating the employment and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another batch of reforms and investments included in the same pillar, aims at increasing long-term employment and labour productivity, through modernising and upgrading the national system for education, vocational education training (VET) and skill formation (skilling, reskilling, upskilling). These reforms and investments are expected to address the supply/demand mismatch in labour markets, which affects primarily the young and unemployed, and to better equip them with the necessary skills and competencies for long-term, sustainable employment.

The Youth Guarantee, funded by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), with a budget for Greece amounting to 171 million Euro (and equivalent amount from the European Social Fund) is mainly focused on supporting young people of the country, who are neither in employment, nor education or training (NEETs).

The actions of the National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan are divided into two basic categories:

- early intervention and activation actions (information campaigns, awareness raising activities), and
- labour market integration actions which focus on measures that facilitate entry into the labour market (training, job subsidies, support to entrepreneurial initiatives).

The Plan also includes a series of institutional interventions, which will have a positive effect on youth employment and are:

- development of a permanent mechanism to diagnose labour market needs,
- implementation of the reform in vocational training and the introduction of the 'Apprenticeship Class' as a 4th, optional year into the secondary level education professional schools (EPAL); development of a National Qualifications Framework and skills certification system through the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP),
- adoption of a new regulatory framework for mutual obligations of unemployed and public employment services.

Under the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, a number of sectoral actions has been drawn up and will immediately be implemented to provide unemployed youth from 18 to 24 years advisory services, vocational guidance, continuing vocational training and certification, as well as on the job training in private sector enterprises in the following areas affecting the dynamics of development: supply chain (logistics), retail trade, openness and international trade, information and communication technologies.

According to EMCO's assessment⁴, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is advancing, with improvements taking place in the context of a broader reform agenda. The Youth Guarantee action plan has been revised and a number of new measures and initiatives are being pursued to improve activation policies, including measures to improve the functioning of the public employment services. The effectiveness of partnerships has improved, but further efforts are needed to improve the delivery mechanism with a view to activate NEETs faster. New initiatives are being pursued, such as the policy design initiative 'ReBrain Greece'. Media campaigns are being pursued as part of outreach activities for NEETs, but further efforts are still needed to reach out to non-registered NEETs. The profiling system, which is being put in place, along with the monitoring and evaluation systems (currently at the design stage), should further increase the effectiveness of ALMPs. Efforts to address the quality of activation initiatives have been acknowledged, while the involvement of international organisations is welcomed. The new certification system for Continuous Vocational Training and the setting up of continuous monitoring of training action are also welcomed.

Most of the Youth initiatives described above, applying in Greece, are applicable to NEETs up to 30 years of age. There are no discrete initiatives targeting 25+ NEETs, while there are no initiatives identified including NEETs older than 30 years old.

3. Institutional framework

Employment policies in Greece are designed at the national level, taking into account the guidelines of the European Employment Strategy and are mainly (but not solely) developed within the partnership agreement (ESPA) 2014-2020, which defines funds and objectives, notably: i) to promote sustainable and quality employment, social inclusion and the fight against poverty; and ii) to address structural problems in the labour market by improving the education and training system and the transition to the labour market and active inclusion.

The main institutions on national, regional and local level which are working to contrast NEET phenomenon, youth unemployment (within the Ministry of Labour) and early school leaving (within the Ministry of Education) are:

- Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs,
- General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning,
- General Secretariat for Youth,

⁴ European Commission, Youth Guarantee country by country, Greece, October 2020. Retrieved on 11/05/2022 from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13640&langId=en>.

- Regional Authorities of the Ministry e.g., Regional Directorates for Primary and Secondary Education,
- National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP),
- Institute of Educational Policy (IEP),
- Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (INEDIVIM),
- Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity,
- Manpower Employment Organization (OAED),
- Regional Directorates,
- Public Employment Services,
- Employment Offices for Special Social Groups.

Regions have the mandate for designing and implementing the Regional Strategies for Social Inclusion (PESKE) once the Ministry of Labour certifies that they are aligned with the National Strategy for Social Inclusion (ESKE). They also design projects related to Thematic Objective 9 as part of the ROP, of which the majority of the interventions have been defined by the relevant line Ministries of Labour and Health in line with the existing national strategies. This is not the case for other policy sectors, such as labour market inclusion and vocational training, which remain mostly the responsibility of national authorities. However, regional authorities claim that interventions across these sectors could be better linked. In particular, data on social vulnerabilities should be linked to information on labour markets and entrepreneurship to design projects that are more coherent with actual needs. More so, some regional actors would like greater involvement when designing the national strategy and question the fact that their regional plans have to align with nationally set priorities, when they have better knowledge of needs on the ground.

In terms of consultation with non-state actors, the existence of a well-established strategy ensures regular consultation with associations. For instance, the Greek Federation for Persons with Disabilities is regularly consulted just as it is consulted when the OPs for EU funding are formulated. However, noninstitutional stakeholders claim they are not regularly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy's implementation. Overall, several associations claim that disabled groups are not systematically taken into account when formulating government actions and investment in public infrastructures.

4. Supply-side policies

4.1. Education and qualification

In Greece, attendance is compulsory in Primary Education as well as in Lower Secondary Education (art. 2, section 3, of Law 1566/85), as long as a student is not older than 16 years of age. Whoever has the custody of a minor and neglects to enrol them in school or supervise them with respect to school attendance may be punished pursuant to article 458 of the Criminal Code. Furthermore, pursuant to Presidential Decree 161/2000, Prefects are now competent to impose sanctions on parents and guardians who fail to enrol their children in school and to make sure they attend school regularly.

In this context, through the implementation of the national strategy for education and lifelong learning, the primary objective of the Operational Programme, through cohesive measures and actions, is tackling early school leaving, especially regarding vulnerable groups. Probably, the most 'innovative' change is the recent consolidation of schools. According to the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, the consolidated schools that are established will be attended by children of the same grade. As a result, a better socialisation of students will be achieved, and school violence and early school leaving will be prevented. The term 'New schools' was used by the Ministry of Education to pinpoint the various, recent, changes in the educational system.

The Greek education system is highly centralised and exams are oriented for entering Universities. As there are no external evaluations of schools and/or teachers, there is a lack of important information for quality control purposes. In order to offset the lack of quality in the public school system, it is customary to invest in private tutoring (so-called 'frontistíria').

Besides these country-specific problems, the transition from the education system to the labour market needs to be improved. This takes a very long time when compared with other EU countries. As far as vocational training is concerned, a greater commitment by employers is needed, as well as improved on-the-job training. The countries under consideration are currently investigating ways of strengthening of their vocational training system and the introduction of a dual system similar to the German model. In some cases, they have already launched pilot projects in this regard. However, it is doubtful whether the highly acclaimed dual vocational training system can easily be exported to other countries. After all, the system in Germany was developed and enhanced over decades and is therefore adapted to the structure of the German economy.

4.1.1. Compulsory education

Law 3879/21.09.2010 about Lifelong Learning includes, among other provisions, actions that are not clearly related to lifelong learning, but mostly aim at mitigating various social disparities. The most

important one is the creation of Educational Priority Zones (EPZ) in Primary and Secondary Education, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning & Religious Affairs. The EPZs constitute an innovative feature of the 'New School', and their primary objective is to eliminate educational disparities and to facilitate access of students coming from different social and cultural environments to education.

Their establishment is based on the sense of positive discrimination, so that students may overcome the obstacles they face in terms of education due to economic, social and cultural reasons. They include support actions for the improvement of performance at school in areas where problems have been detected, such as the operation of reception classes, tutorial courses, and courses for teaching the mother language of the students' country of origin. The areas that are most in need are for instance, Thrace, Pella, the periphery of Pireaus, Elia and the run-down districts of urban centres.

In Greece, particular emphasis is being put on facilitating reintegration into the school or 'learning' environment, in order for a smooth and reliable reintegration of early school leavers to be achieved. So, the State recently proceeded with the expansion and support of the institution of Second Chance Schools through actions that shall expand and upgrade the services provided by these structures. For that purpose and through financing by the European Social Fund (ESF), the available resources allocated to the specified intervention are increased. Precedence is given to the commitment to increase the investments regarding Lifelong Learning and, at the same time, to the support of socially vulnerable groups that are threatened with exclusion. At the same time, a similar intervention for Second Chance Upper Secondary Schools is being planned, focusing on forms of distance learning and flexible curriculums (e.g., part-time attendance in case that the student should wish to cover the subjects of an academic year over two calendar years).

4.1.2. Vocational Education Training

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)⁵. 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, as well as from the labour force survey, OAED and the central information system used by the

⁵ CEDEFOP (2018), Apprenticeship review: Greece. Modernising and expanding apprenticeships in Greece. Retrieved on 12/05/2022 from https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4160_en.pdf

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 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 differences 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. 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.

In recent years, several reforms have been promoted in education, including the VET system, while valuable new tools have been developed including the ‘Mechanism for diagnosis of labour market needs’ developed in recent years by Greek governments in cooperation with social partners and with the support of Cedefop. Unfortunately, until now at least, these initiatives have been unable to establish a real-time, forward-looking connection between the job market, on the one hand, and the design of the VET curriculum and the professional orientation services provided within the broader educational system (including tertiary education), on the other hand.

4.1.3. Higher education

Since 2018, all higher education programmes in Greece are offered in universities (see ‘Governance’). Admissions are competitive, based on a centrally-determined numerus clausus with upper secondary graduates admitted according to their grades in the Panhellenic examination. However, economic advantages for tertiary graduates are comparatively small: in 2017, holders of a tertiary qualification in Greece earned a wage premium of 37% relative to their peers with upper secondary education only,

compared to an OECD average of 57%. While having a tertiary qualification, as opposed to upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary, reduced the risk of unemployment by 25% on average across the OECD, the equivalent was just 8% in Greece. Despite this, according to students' self-reports in PISA 2018, a larger-than-average share of Greek students expect to complete tertiary education (74% compared to 70%). This varies by socio-economic background, reaching 90% among advantaged students and only 56% among disadvantaged students. The OECD (2017) reported that adapting post-secondary education to the needs of both students and of the labour market is an ongoing challenge for Greece. Recent efforts to make admission to low-demand university departments less selective have since been suspended.

There is a need to improve the curriculum review processes in higher education to ensure that they are not absent and/or superficial, as has been reported to be the case in other economically challenged countries (Hall & Thomas, 2005). The involvement of employers in this process will enable higher education institutions to be aware of the needs of employers, and to follow trends and developments in the labour market. Moreover, higher education institutions should provide more practical training and applications that will promote the employability of their graduates, on the one hand, and facilitate their adjustment to the workplace, on the other. It is important that graduates develop the capability to acquire new knowledge and expertise and develop their flexibility in the workplace (Kostoglou et al., 2011). If this is done, the discrepancy between graduate expectations and the reality of the workplace will be minimised, resulting in a smoother transition and more successful job assignments in the labour market.

In addition, reforms in the education system have an impact on the labour market only in the medium to long term. Nevertheless, from an economic perspective, it makes sense to eliminate the aforementioned structural problems in the education system, which existed even prior to the financial and economic crisis.

4.2. Labour market policies

In response to recommendations by the Commission, the new OAED is implementing, among others, the preventive approach to unemployment and the use of personalised assistance⁶. OAED is also undergoing organisational change, including the frequent reshaping of the active labour market measures (Karantinos, 2011a). Recently, OAED launched a EURES-type portal enabling the efficient matching of the demand and supply of labour. Starting also in 2014, OAED is called upon to develop an implementation plan for the so-called Youth Guarantee. According to the EU Council Recommendation

⁶ European Parliament, Policy Note, An evaluation of the social and employment aspects and challenges in Greece, Karantinos (2014). Retrieved on 12/05/2022 from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2014/497760/IPOL-JOIN_NT\(2014\)497760_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2014/497760/IPOL-JOIN_NT(2014)497760_EN.pdf).

of April 2013, establishing a Youth Guarantee, the scheme would ensure that every person under 25 gets a quality offer of a job, continued education, training, apprenticeship or traineeship within 4 months of leaving school or becoming unemployed.

In 2012, a thematic National Social Dialogue Committee was established, with a number of issues for consultation, including: a) the fight against unemployment, b) the fight against undeclared employment, c) non-wage costs, and d) reforming the mechanism for the determination of the minimum wage. In addition, new representatives were appointed in the National Social Protection Committee, and in the National Employment Committee (both committees were established by Law 3144/2003). The National Social Protection Committee will promote social dialogue for fighting poverty and social exclusion. The National Employment Committee aims to promote social dialogue for the development of policies to increase employment and will monitor and evaluate the National Action Plan for Employment. The social partners participate in these committees, but it remains to be seen whether the committees will function properly and ensure fair arrangements in the framework of the current crisis (Georgiadou, 2013).

In the area of active labour market measures (ALMPs), the potential for fighting unemployment is substantial, given the large informal sector, the low labour market participation rate and the high level of structural unemployment. The recession hit employment and wages severely and aggravated the already high level of structural unemployment among vulnerable groups. Getting people back to work with active labour market policies and boosting job growth over time are high priorities.

With respect to active labour market programmes, there is scope for improvement as Greece spends, relative to GDP, approximately one-third of the Euro area average. In addition, the available indicators show that the amounts dedicated to active labour market policies are particularly low in comparative terms, as labour market policy expenditure seems to rely more on passive measures than on active ones. Other indicators give additional evidence of the relatively low enrolment of the unemployed and inactive in education and training, as well as relatively fewer resources devoted to employment services (OECD 2010a). What is needed is placing a greater emphasis on activating the unemployed, especially youth and women. Existing employment subsidies should be better targeted to the most disadvantaged youth, such as early school leavers and individuals who have not been in employment, education or training for a long time. Furthermore, employers should be required to provide training in exchange for the subsidy. Job-search training should be the top priority in individual action plans drawn with the help of personal advisers and participation should be mandatory after a period of unfruitful independent job search (Karantinos, 2010).

The main action related to entrepreneurship skills development, implemented since 2013, is the Voucher for the entrance of unemployed young people to the labour market according to their formal skills⁷. The programme aims to provide job experience opportunities to new labour market entrants and achieving a structured entrance of new young unemployed into the labour market, that will eventually result into their recruitment by private sector enterprises. It is estimated that the first round of the programme, implemented in 2013, benefited approximately 45,000 individuals. The Voucher scheme has been recently re-launched as part of the Youth Guarantee Plan. The new round of the Voucher scheme (late 2014) covers 12,000 young people aged 18-24 years old (3,000 tertiary education graduates and 9,000 compulsory, secondary and post-secondary education graduates) at a cost of EUR 43.2 million. Within the frame of the Operational Programme 'Education and Lifelong Learning 2007-13', Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Units were established in tertiary education institutions, including both universities ('AEIs') and tertiary, non-university institutions ('TEIs'). This action expanded and upgraded entrepreneurship interventions in universities, as an integral part of the strategy for the connection of higher education to the labour market.

4.3. Entrepreneurship

In Greece, there is no subsidy policy or start-up grant for young (want-to-be) entrepreneurs.

4.4. Work-life reconciliation policies

Despite the significant progress made during the last decades, largely due to EU funds (see e.g., the work-life balance programmes offering childcare services to mothers who are unemployed/self-employed/employed in the private sector and who fulfil the low-income criteria), Greece continues to lag behind other EU countries in a series of indicators regarding the provision of the services discussed here (see e.g., OECD, 2017)⁸. Parameters such as the mediocre quality of provisions targeted at children up to the age of three (see e.g., Megalonidou, 2020) still undermine the equal participation of men and women in the domestic labour market.

The law transposed Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers, which lays down minimum requirements designed to achieve equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work, by facilitating⁹ the reconciliation of work and family

⁷ OECD, Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies, Country Assessment Notes, Greece, 2020. Retrieved on 12/05/2022 from <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/Greece-IE-2020.pdf>

⁸ D. Katsikas, D. Nicolitsas, and T. Fløtten (2021), Youth inclusion and gender equality in the Greek labor market. Trends, challenges, and lessons from the Nordic countries. Retrieved on 12/05/2022 from <https://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/EEA-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>

⁹ Greece: Greek Law 4808/2021 - Major reforms in employment legislation. (2021). IOE-EMP. Retrieved May 12, 2022, from <https://ioewec.newsletter.ioe-emp.org/industrial-relations-and-labour-law-august-2021-1/news/article/greece-greek-law-4808-2021-major-reforms-in-employment-legislation>

life for working parents or carers¹⁰. It provides for paternity leave of 14 working days, irrespective of the employee's prior work experience or years of service, or marital or family status, and individual subsidy during half of the 4-month parental leave. The new law further provides for the employee's right to ask for flexible working arrangements, such as teleworking, flexible working hours or part-time employment. Telework remains, in principle, voluntary both for the employee and the employer. The new law introduces two exceptions of unilateral application. Employers may unilaterally impose remote working on employees on grounds of protection of public health. In addition, employees may also request to work remotely to avoid health risks. Employers remain obliged to bear the costs incurred by the employee due to telework, including to provide, install and maintain the necessary equipment, to provide technical support and to compensate the employee for the use of his/her home for work purposes. The new law establishes the right of teleworkers to 'disconnect', namely to be able to disengage from work and refrain from engaging in work-related electronic communications, such as e-mails, telephone calls or other messages, outside normal working hours or during vacation time. Employers are explicitly prohibited from monitoring the performance of teleworkers with the use of webcams. The above framework is not fully applicable yet as special legislation is expected to regulate various aspects of its implementation, such as health and safety requirements, compensation and notification obligations etc.

4.5. Health/ Social Insurance policies

Law 4387/2016, which was voted under the framework of the Third Memorandum of Understanding (signed in August 2015), sets uniform social security and pension rules for adoption by all the workforce subject to social security in Greece¹¹. For this purpose, the provisions of the law provide, among other issues, for the integration of all public main pension funds into one fund (the so-called 'Unified Social Security Institution' (E.Φ.K.A.)) and of all auxiliary pension and lump-sum benefits funds into one fund (the so-called 'Unified Auxiliary Social Security and Lump Sum Benefits Fund' – (E.T.E.A.E.Π.)). Further, Law 4387/2016: (a) replaces main pension by a national pension and a contributory pension, (b) expands the types of income subject to social security and (c) also provides for new rules to apply to pensioners continuing to work following their retirement.

EU funds contributed significantly to planning and implementing dynamic policies on vocational training, consulting, vocational guidance and occupational experience etc. The supporting services provided for people with disabilities are the following: inclusion in vocational training programs, actions facilitating

¹¹ Social Security in Greece—CPA LAW. (n.d.). Retrieved May 12, 2022, from <https://www.cpalaw.gr/en/insights/articles/2019/01/social-security-in-greece/>

accessibility and rehabilitation in the labour market, subsidising of employment providing the employers with specific motives so that the employment of disabled people will become easier, incentives for business entrepreneurship with subsidies to young professionals who set up small businesses or form partnerships. Respective quotas are promoted to all companies (Law N.648/86 and Law N.2643/1998), either public or private, which employ more than 50 people and oblige them to employ disabled people for at least 5% of the total posts in the company. However, despite all institutional regulations, disabled people have been underrepresented in the labour market.

5. Demand-side policies

4.6. Incentives

The redesign of the entirety of incentives provided to enterprises, so as to make the recruiting of young people (NEETs) aged 16-30 more attractive, and the radical '*restructuring*' of the employment services provided by the Hellenic Manpower Employment Organization (OAED) are two frontier intervention measures taken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in the labour market aiming at tackling unemployment. Thus, 4 new programmes were recently announced, which grant incentives to enterprises (mainly in the form of increased subsidisation of the social security contributions or of the employment) to recruit about 60,000 young persons, mostly unemployed, up to 30 years of age. Last, but not least, the Law 3986/2011 about 'Urgent Measures for the Implementation of a Medium-term Fiscal Strategy Framework 2012-2015' that was passed recently provides for employment contracts of a specified term for young people of 18 to 25 years of age, aiming at the acquisition of professional experience. Employers and employees may now conclude employment agreements for a maximum duration of 24 months that provide for earnings reduced by up to 20% compared with those provided for a newly hired employee without any previous work experience in the specified profession. Employees are insured by the pension, sickness and professional risk sectors of the Social Security Fund (IKA-ETAM), and the respective social security contributions are paid to IKA-ETAM by the employer.

4.7. Social security policies

The programme for the 'acquisition of work experience by 10,000 unemployed persons aged 16-24 who enter the labour market, through their employment in private enterprises' aims at enhancing the skills of and the acquisition of work experience by unemployed persons aged 16-24, who are entrants to the labour market, through their employment in private enterprises and private sector employers in general. The scheme is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and is intended for entrants to the labour market aged 16 - 24, who are Greek citizens, or citizens of another EU member state or Greek expatriates entitled to stay and work in our country. The term of subsidy that regards the *1st stage* of the programme

(acquisition of work experience) may be up to twelve (12) months. The amount of subsidy is equal to the amount of social security contributions for the pension, sickness and occupational hazard sectors of the Social Security Fund (IKA – ETAM), as it is calculated based on the gross earnings that are equal to 80% of the minimum wage, or based on the gross monthly earnings that are equal to 80% of the minimum daily wage, as determined each time by the National General Collective Employment Agreement. The term of subsidy for the 2nd stage shall be twelve (12) months. The amount of subsidy corresponds to 70% of the monthly social security contributions (payable by employers and employees), for all the principal insurance sectors of IKA-ETAM and supplementary insurance sector of the Uniform Supplementary Social Security Fund ([ETEAM](#)), and to 70% of the monthly social security contributions that IKA collects or jointly collects on behalf of social security entities and sectors.

6. Orientation

The Youth Information Centres (YIC) were first established in 1997 and are operating in the capitals of prefectures and in major cities of Attica and Thessaloniki under the supervision of the GSY and at the responsibility of the Local Government. Their objective is to familiarize young people with Information and Communication Technologies, and to provide reliable and timely information on sectors that interest young people (education, EU programmes, vocational training, leisure time, etc.). More specifically, young persons aged 15-30 are able to: obtain information about the EU programmes for young persons –mainly, the programme ‘Youth in Action’-, use a PC of the Centre for free under the supervision of a person in charge and look for information on the Internet, connect to data bases kept or accessed by the YIC (for instance, Eurodesk), or receive newsletters. Moreover, they may participate in various programmes or events implemented and organized by the YIC in cooperation with local authorities or specialised professionals. These activities include: provision of consultancy services on various matters, like, for instance, social problems, vocational orientation, etc., presentations, conferences, exhibitions, youth festivals and other entertainment activities, cultural and sports events. At this stage, financing comes mostly from resources of the Municipalities and, to a lesser extent, by the General Secretariat for Youth (mainly financing of events).

7. Conclusions

The country’s policy focuses on the promotion of young people’s employment and on maintaining young people’s professional stability. The proactive steps that are taken with respect to the employment sector are of a general nature; namely, they are intended for all the young people, without exception, and for special groups of the population, unlike those actions that deal with early school leaving, school-to-work transition and the various opportunities for training and the acquisition of skills, which are intended

primarily for young people not in employment, education and training. The operational programmes entitled 'Lifelong Learning' and 'Development of Human Resources' incorporate the European Union agenda as regards the NEETs, adapting it to the Greek reality. Further reforms, both of the educational system and in terms of employment policy, are required for supporting the specified group of the population. At the same time, though, a joint effort is also required: the State, the Local Government, employer organisations and trade unions shall have to adopt a common action plan with a view to protecting the young people who are not in employment, education or training. At this point, the important role played by the Local Government in treating the specified category should be underlined. The Local Government, the state institution that is closer to citizens, may implement programmes intended for NEETs, by setting up the competent offices after taking notice of the proportions of the problem in every local society. At the same time, the Local Government, in co-operation with the local employer entities (Industries, Companies, Associations of Craftsmen and Merchants, self-employed persons, etc.), may give young people who wish to acquire experience the opportunity to work for a limited period of time in the context of paid traineeship programmes.

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