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# NEGOTIATE

Overcoming job-insecurity in Europe

NEGOTIATE – Negotiating early job-insecurity and labour market exclusion in Europe  
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## Strategies to improve labour market integration of young people: Comparing policy coordination in nine European countries Country report Greece

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## 1 *Political discourse and process regarding Youth Guarantee in Greece*

While Greek economy goes through the sixth consecutive year of recession with its GDP having shrunk by approximately 25%, unemployment is still reaching unprecedented levels. According to the Labour Force Survey, in the second trimester of 2016 the unemployment rate in the general population in Greece is 23,1%, slightly decreased in comparison to the same reference period in 2015 (24,6%). The groups in the labour force with the highest unemployment rate are those of young people 15-24 years old (49,1%); for women in this age category, the unemployment rate reaches 52,5%. Moreover, participation of young people in employment for the age group 15-24 during the first semester 2014 was quite low, i.e. around 28%, the third lowest in 28-Europe, while for those who have completed only secondary education this percentage falls to 12,4% (ILO 2014).

In the category 15-29, NEETs rate in Greece has almost doubled from 2009 to 2014, reaching 27% from 14% in 2008; it is the highest rate among European countries (Petmezidou and Polyzoidis 2015). The economic cost of non-participation of young people in the labour market is estimated to reach 3,3% of the GDP, while the EU average is 1,2% and in Germany it is less than 0,6%. Significantly high is also the social cost stemming from the growth of this category; it is presumed that young people who are outside education, training or employment are more likely to show less trust to democratic institutions and participate less in civic and social life. The problem of youth unemployment in Greece, to the extent that it has been increasing during the last years, is undermining any prospect for development and social cohesion (Youth Guarantee 2014).

Recent macroeconomic developments in Greece had a major impact on labour market and employment issues. Internal devaluation policies, imposed in order to restore international competitiveness of the Greek economy, had during the last consecutive years of recession a dramatic impact on wages, which decreased by 12,6% on the basis of the OECD nominal unit labour cost. They have also dramatically increased flexibility in the labour market. Particularly for young people under the age of 25 years, minimum wage was fixed by an Act of the Ministers Cabinet to 32% less than the national minimum wage, i.e. gross wage of 510,95 euros instead of 586,08 euros which is the minimum gross wage for those who are older than 25 years old. Apart from low wages, young people in Greece are faced with a labour market, which offers extremely precarious jobs with low protection and rights, but also jobs of low knowledge intensity and expertise. Moreover, most young people are not protected by collective agreements, while trial period, which is a frequent path of insertion in the labour market for young people, has been prolonged to one year during which someone can be fired without any compensation. Flexicurity attempts do not seem to have any concrete results in the Greek case, since flexibility in the form of precarity is so extreme that safety valves cannot function effectively.

According to a Eurofound study (2012), Greece belongs to the group of countries with the highest NEETs rates: among NEETs there is strong gender segregation, most of them are inactive, they lack previous work experience, they have medium to high educational level and they are strongly discouraged. In addition, place of residence seems to have a certain impact, with 51,5% residing in urban and 48,5% in rural areas (Pandis and Zagkos 2013). A recent study (Papadakis, Kyridis and Papargyris 2013) describes Greek NEET's dominant profile as follows: 20-24 years old, most often woman, with medium and sometimes high educational level; he/she is coming from a family with low or medium income, and he/she has not attended any training programme recently; he/she mainly relies on family support while he/she often has social insurance; he/she does not feel socially excluded, but he/she expresses mistrust of the welfare state and discontentment with political representatives and the political system in general.

In brief, Greek labour market offers to young people, even highly-skilled ones, very few employment opportunities while very often the only plausible solution seems to be emigration to countries with stronger economies and higher social protection. According to another study (Citibank-Alba Graduate Business School 2015), 60% of young people in Greece are willing to leave the country to find a job abroad, while 82% of young people wish to find an employment relevant to their studies and 67% are receiving financial support from their families. In this depressing landscape strengthening of employment and education policies might offer a solution; nevertheless, they can only have short-term results, since the heart of the problem lies on economic policies and creation of new jobs.

One of the most important initiatives of the last years aiming at strengthening young people's position in the labour market and increasing qualitative jobs for them is the Youth Guarantee. The European Union, becoming aware of the risk to create a 'lost generation' and realising that this phenomenon affects without exception all European countries but mostly Southern European countries where brain drain has become endemic, has disposed large amounts for activities concentrated specifically on youth employment and training. The aim is to facilitate under-24-year-old people's successful school-to-work transition, mobility from one employment to another and from unemployment or inactivity to employment.

Following the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C120/01),<sup>1</sup> Greece has submitted to the European Commission a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan on 31 December 2013. The plan was updated in June 2014 and it was foreseen to be fully implemented by 2016. In summary, it includes a comprehensive package of actions addressed to young people of 15-24 years old who do not work and do not participate in any kind of education or training. Given the very high unemployment rate among young people of 25-29 years old, Greece decided to include this age group as well within the Youth Guarantee actions and scope. The objective from the moment that the programme will be fully implemented is that within 4 months after leaving school or staying

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:120:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

out of employment young people receive an offer of a good quality employment, continued education, apprenticeship or internship. Greece is eligible for 171.520.000 euros from the Youth Employment Initiative, with all its regions being eligible.

The responsibility for the national coordination of the programme in Greece belongs to the Directorate of Employment at the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity in collaboration with the Greek Public Employment Agency (OAED). More particularly, the public employment agency, being the main institution that receives and provides services to the target group, serves as the operational arm for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee actions in Greece.

Other stakeholders that develop activities in the field of employment, vocational training and education of young people, constituting determining factors for the implementation of Youth Guarantee activities are the following:

From the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity:

- Directorate of Social Integration and Social Economy and Unit of Analysis and Documentation.
- National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (EIEAD), which has the mission to support actions with the appropriate tools, methods and techniques.

From the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs:

- The Institute of Educational Policy, which conducts research on issues linked to primary and secondary education as well as transition to tertiary education.
- The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP), which implements projects targeting 15-24-year-old young people, such as the National Qualifications Framework and Certification of Qualifications.
- The General Secretariat of Youth, which constitutes the coordinating body for the connection of activities addressed to youth with larger society and relevant institutions.
- The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning, which is responsible for the design of public policy for lifelong learning.
- The 'second chance' schools that contribute through their services and actions to the completion of nine-year compulsory education.
- The General Secretariat for Research and Technology that implements programmes of support to employers for the employment of high-skilled staff.
- The Employment and Career Structures of universities (DASTA) and technological institutes (to be transformed into universities of applied sciences), the Internship Offices and the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Units of universities.
- The private sector stakeholders that offer vocational training, such as the Vocational Training Centres (KEK) and the Vocational Training Institutes (IEK).

Other ministries, besides the Ministries of Employment and Education, are also involved in one way or another to youth employment. The Ministry of Agricultural Development and

Food implements projects that promote youth employment in the primary sector. The Ministry of Development and Competitiveness and its institutions such as the chambers and professional associations intervene through projects that put emphasis upon innovation. The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy promotes employment in the sector through the Directorate of Naval Work and the Agency for Naval Employment. The Ministry of Tourism promotes skill acquisition and employment in the sector through its educational institutions, such as the Higher Schools of Tourist Education. Finally, the Ministry of Culture implements projects for the enhancement of employment linked to the promotion, maintenance and protection of cultural heritage.

At the local level, municipalities and regions participate in projects which are implemented at regional and local level, funded within the Regional Operational Programmes (PEP), such as the Local Plans for Employment, Local Plans for the Employment of Vulnerable Social Groups etc.

Social partners – General Confederation of Workers (GSEE), Hellenic Confederation of Commerce and Entrepreneurship (ESEE), Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants (GSEVEE), Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV), Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE) – actively participate in the social dialogue for the initial design and update of programmes that target youth in Greece. Finally, the National Council of Youth (ESYN), as the official organisation representing youth in Greece promotes issues regarding youth (un)employment and submits proposals and opinions on relevant policies and projects.

The main priorities of the Greek Action Plan can be summarised as follows:

- Targeted vocational training for the integration of youth in the labour market and particularly in cutting-edge sectors and jobs of the Greek economy;
- The creation of a permanent system for the assessment of labour market needs, according to which resources will be directed towards professions and sectors with higher demand in order to meet supply and demand in the labour market;
- The support of internship, which is the main pillar for the vocational training in Greece, and the enhancement of targeted and innovative youth entrepreneurship;
- The enhancement of second chance institutions, through which young people who had abandoned the educational process for personal or social reasons can be reintegrated into society and become economically active. It must be noted that school dropout in Greece has decreased substantially during the last years, despite economic recession. According to Eurostat data, in 2014 the dropout rate was 9%, while the EU average was 11,1%, falling sharply since 2009 when it was 14,5%.
- A long-term objective is to set barriers to youth emigration, which entails the deprivation of the most productive part of country's labour force, by enhancing the sentiment of social protection to young people who enter or re-enter the labour market either as employees or self-employed.

More specifically for the age category 15-19, the actions foreseen in the plan aim at providing “qualitative offers” concerning either the acquisition of basic skills through their reinsertion in education, either adequate training programmes or internships in order to acquire necessary skills for their sustainable insertion in the labour market. For the category 20-24, the foreseen actions envisage the “offer of qualitative jobs” through the use of qualifications and skills in order to promote employment, experience acquisition and equal opportunities for self-employment.

The total budget foreseen for the implementation of actions relevant to youth unemployment during this programmatic period, both from the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative, is estimated approximately to 260.000.000 euros, which will be distributed among the following action packages (Ministry of Labour 2014):

- Activation – awareness raising (approx. 17.000.000 euros)
- Internship (approx. 38.250.000 euros)
- Training – education (43.000.000 euros)
- Work experience acquisition (approx. 77.750.000 euros)
- Entrepreneurship (approx. 39.000.000 euros)
- Integrated intervention (approx. 45.000.000 euros)

The above-mentioned objectives and action packages will be analysed below. It is important to note, however, that for the Greek implementation plan of the Youth Guarantee a crucial factor is the restructuring of OAED’s (Public Employment Agency) operational model, which has started from 2012 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. The main aspects of the of OAED’s restructuring involve the following:

- The new organisational structure that will be completed soon places emphasis on stronger planning, reporting and better alignment between the different organisational units.
- In terms of employers, new functions have been prescribed (Large Employer Unit, Employment Counsellor for Employers) that are dedicated to serving employers and several relevant new tools and methodologies have been developed.
- The online job portal that is prepared aims at enriching the range of personalised services provided online for employers and job seekers and providing a greater wealth of information regarding job vacancies.
- A mapping and diagnostic exercise has been completed; design and evaluation of ALPMs will be performed by a new dedicated function.
- In order to support job seekers, the development of the online service delivery channel has been one of the key priorities, while the new Call Centre is fully operational almost a year now, and a number of organisational and operational upgrades were already tested in the Fast Track point of services (Centres for the promotion of employment – KPA) and will be rolled out in the entirety of KPAs.

- A number of actions to revamp the level of service at OAED vocational schools and ensure better feedback mechanisms between vocational education design and employers have been completed, but the OAED apprenticeship function must be aligned with the framework agreed by the Ministries of Labour and Education.
- As far as the introduction of new management forms is concerned, an extensive process mapping exercise has been completed, several processes have been redesigned and a new forms of management seminar has been planned with the assistance of international experts.
- A thorough study of the potential forms and scope for partnerships is underway; meanwhile several partnerships have been implemented (among public sector, local government, trade unions, social partners, universities).
- To respond to current needs, 360 career coaches are going to get hired in 2017 and 900 in 2018 to expand the range and improve the quality of services offered to the unemployed.

The restructuring of the organisational structure and operation of OAED is crucial because in Greece, the public employment agency is not only the main institution that implements active labour market policies through activation programmes and vocational training of unemployed and employed persons, but also because it is the institution that implements active policies for the initial vocational training in correlation with internship through its 51 Vocational Schools (EPAS) that function all over Greece and are addressed to the age target group that is covered by the Youth Guarantee programme.

The political discourse on the design and/or the implementation of the Youth Guarantee programme was rather poor in the Greek case. The reason is that the national coordinator, the Directorate of Employment at the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity started a dialogue with the social partners and other stakeholders, which did not have the expected results. After long delays, i.e. more than two years, the programmes which are described below were finally announced and their implementation started. We do not have much public information on the overall process of the national dialogue, since the only public document available is the Greek Implementation Plan drafted by the Greek Ministry of Labour. What can be marked is the absence of all social partners in the designed programmes with the only exception of the tourism sector with the involvement of the Association of Greek Touristic Enterprises.

The most urgent reform in order to combat youth unemployment is to put effectively the emphasis on active instead of passive labour market policies that cannot cover a big part of unemployed people. The successful implementation of policies need a well organised state with control mechanisms. To implement successfully a programme like Youth Guarantee in the Greek case means that all stakeholders will realise the need to cooperate to reach the same goal. It is crucial that the enterprises, the employers and the state should agree on a new social contract which will promote mutual social responsibility as a necessary condition for success. This is the reason that in public dialogue in Greece on youth unemployment emphasis is put specifically on the role of vocational training. The Law 4186/2013 on the restructuring of

secondary education expands apprenticeship in the full range of vocational education and training ("Class Apprenticeship" in the fourth year of vocational high school), in order to extend the benefits of the dual system in larger groups of beneficiaries. In addition, the establishment of experimental vocational schools was foreseen. Moreover, OAED in the restructuring of its business model and particularly in the Axis on the "Support in the implementation of apprenticeship actions", has included actions aiming at enhancing and improving the quality of apprenticeship.

## *2 Assessment of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee*

The main obstacles to the implementation of the Greek programme (Greek Implementation Plan – YPAKP 2014) are of various kinds and roots. The main challenge for the successful outcome of the Greek programme is the impact of the economic crisis and recession during the last six years on youth employment. Moreover, the fact that many stakeholders implement and/or monitor projects on employment, education and vocational training leads to fragmentation and hinders coordinated information on the existing opportunities. In addition, the workload of the Public Employment Agency – apart from distribution of benefits and implementation of social policy programmes – in conjunction with the increasing numbers of registered unemployed and the small numbers of career coaches, pose further obstacles. Finally, the lack of a permanent system for the assessment of labour market needs, which is to be fully implemented, and the lack of an integrated framework for Internship are also crucial elements. In general, given the number of young unemployed to whom the actions of the Youth Guarantee programme are addressed, the available budget is considered limited if not insufficient.

More precisely, Youth Guarantee programme's financing describes the total of available resources for the implementation of initiatives described in the Greek Action Plan. The Greek Youth Guarantee Programme is based on a 'work-first' approach. The measures foreseen vary from subsidy of new employment positions, support of youth entrepreneurship (i.e. starting new businesses), providing initial work experience, apprenticeship subsidy, further education and training (as part of a work experience programme). Although the school-to-work transition in Greece appears to be quite problematic (Karamessini, Symeonaki, Stamatopoulou 2016), the Greek programme apart from the subsidy of vocational schools that already exist in Greece with this exact form since 2006, did not have any other specific action supporting training and education.

In order to apply for Youth Guarantee programmes registration as being unemployed is a necessary condition. Additional criteria give priority to long-term unemployed, but basically participation in the programmes depends on socioeconomic criteria and not on a simple PES suggestion. The only action that does not require being registered as unemployed is the enrolment in vocational schools, which consists a preventive measure for youth at risk. The offer of an action is not obligatory to come after four months of staying unemployed; this was only part of the initial design of the programme but given the current macroeconomic situation, Greece cannot insist on this parameter.

The Greek Action Plan of targeted interventions to strengthen youth employment and entrepreneurship includes beside the actions that have been designed and will be funded by the Youth Employment Initiative, a coherent package of measures which have been designed within the framework and funding schemes of the European Social Fund operational programmes for the period 2014-2020. These actions combined with the targeted actions of

the Youth Guarantee Programme aim at increasing opportunities and strengthening the position of youth in the labour market. They can be distinguished in two main categories:

- ***Actions of early intervention and activation:*** they include institutional reforms and optimisation of existing structures, prevention and consulting actions against school dropout, and raising-awareness actions towards young people being outside employment, training and education structures. More precisely, institutional reforms have to do with the restructuring of OAED's business model and the way unemployed people are approached, i.e. through an individual action plan and an individual approach for each unemployed person. This kind of action is defined as integrated intervention while the appropriate action proposed to each person (training, work, self-employment) depends on his/her profile.
- ***Actions to promote participation in employment, training or education:*** they refer to fundamental reforms regarding apprenticeship, institutional framework of internship, the national qualifications framework etc. They also include actions referring to participation of beneficiaries in training and education programmes that aim for the improvement of their qualifications and for the participation in employment and entrepreneurship programmes. Fundamental reforms have to do more with the mechanism of assessment of labour market needs. This constitutes an obligation of Greece towards the EU with the aim to rationalise expenditure on worthy actions (employment-training-education). This mechanism is in full operation from early 2016 and gathers data from different public or private sources.

The restructuring of Public Employment Agency's operational model, implying among others the obligation to fill in Individual Action Plans and keeping an individual approach for each unemployed person, is part of the fundamental reforms for early intervention and awareness-raising. Similarly, the development of the National Qualifications Framework and the establishment of a mechanism for the assessment of labour market needs, as well as the creation of an institutional framework for internship in Greece (Law 4186/2013) follow the same objectives. The restructuring of OAED's business model provides a package of actions for the advancement of apprenticeship, such as the improvement of internship's quality, the upgrade of educational structures and the cooperation with social partners and other sectoral and local bodies.

In addition, the National Qualifications Framework has been completed. The national institutional framework for internship is progressing and follows the discussion of the European framework for the quality of internship. Moreover, the establishment of a regulatory framework for the mutual obligations of registered unemployed in the Public Employment Agency, which has been recently set up and is not fully operational yet, and further use and development of the Greek EURES network for the promotion of youth mobility are also crucial for the successful implementation of the Greek programme. Finally, there is provision for funding dissemination and awareness-raising activities among youth through electronic and printed information material on new programmes. To this end, career offices are created

within the Vocational Schools of OAED, linking labour demand and supply in local societies after consultation with local stakeholders for the determination of needed specialties.

In the actions to promote employment, training and education one can find ‘second chance’ programmes in secondary education, education through e-learning platforms and higher ICT skills. Specific actions for the integration of disabled young people in the labour market are included, as well as subsidies for mobility in the framework of the pilot project ‘My EURES Job’. Finally, actions to support youth entrepreneurship are designed through the implementation of the pilot project for the support of creation of a Social Cooperative Enterprise (KoinSEP).<sup>2</sup> Similar programmes are also designed in order to promote young entrepreneurship through the support of innovation and creation of start-ups, along with actions to promote youth transition from unemployment to self-employment.

For the successful implementation of the Greek programme the coordinating institution, i.e. the Directorate of Employment of the Ministry of Labour, followed an approach of synergies and joint ventures in order to support dialogue and cooperation among all relevant stakeholders, sustained by several committees. More precisely, a Coordination Committee for the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative and a Working Group for the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative were established in order to draft a specific roadmap of actions and provide necessary data and knowhow through feedback processes with the coordinating authority. In addition, within the project “Restructuring of OAED’s Operational Model”, a Working Consultant Group for the support of apprenticeship actions has undertaken the responsibility to submit recommendations for the improvement of apprenticeship.

As we were informed by the Ministry of Labour, horizontal coordination between different stakeholders and particularly between relevant ministries was quite a challenge, since it was the first time that they had to effectively work together on a specific basis. They cannot evaluate fully their collaboration yet, since the programmes are still ongoing and their outcomes cannot be fully evaluated, but the experience was characterised positive even though participation was considered unequal among different stakeholders.

Collaboration among social partners, but also with the National Youth Council is considered decisive in the design, monitoring and implementation of actions. Besides, social partners have already communicated their intentions to the coordinating body as far as their potential involvement in actions is concerned, but they also submitted recommendations for improvement of designed actions. The National Employment Committee, comprised by representatives of social partners and productive forces and coordinated by the Minister of Employment, is continuously discussing the implementation trajectory of the Youth Guarantee Programme in Greece. The Greek Programme is also monitored by the Government Employment Council, which is comprised by the Prime Minister and Ministers

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<sup>2</sup> Introduced by the Law 4019/2011 (Official Gazette A’216).

who are involved in one way or another in implementation of actions targeting the promotion of employment.

If we focus on actions funded by the Youth Employment Initiative that belong in the core part of the Greek Youth Guarantee Programme, one could distinguish three projects implemented in 2014-2015:

- Voucher for the entry to the labour market of young 18-24 years of age, concerning employment of 12.000 beneficiaries in private companies, through theoretical training and internship in real working environment conditions; it potentially leads to placement of beneficiaries in jobs within private sector enterprises of all sectors of economic activity. The total budget of the action reached 43,2 million euros.
- Voucher for the entry to labour market of young unemployed from 25 up to 29 years of age, concerning 30.000 beneficiaries who acquired professional experience in private sector companies; the total budget of the action reached 108 million euros.
- Voucher for the entry to labour market of young unemployed up to 29 years of age, concerning professional experience in private companies in the sector of tourism; the action targeted 8.000 beneficiaries and its budget reached 29,8 million euros. The implementation of the project started in 2015 for a limited number of beneficiaries (1<sup>st</sup> cycle) and now the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle is implemented.

The main approach of the programmes is the work/first integration in the labour market through a short training period, which is the principal philosophy of voucher programmes. The priority in all Greek programmes is the placement in subsidised job positions, since the problem is detected mainly in the financial weakness of firms to hire people and not in the supply of low-skilled labour. Voucher programmes do not offer any kind of professional certificate at the end, only a recommendation letter can be provided by the employer.

In the following tables one can see the actions per category (training and internship – new jobs) that are or will be implemented in the near future through Youth Employment Initiative funding:

**Table 1: Training and Internship Programmes in Private-sector Companies under YEI Funding, 2016**

#	Actions	Budget	Unemployed Beneficiaries	Action's State – Comments
1	Training and certification opportunities for young unemployed of 18-24 years of age in specialties concerning cutting-edge sectors of the Greek economy	39.750.000,00	15.000	Still implemented, 2016

#	Actions	Budget	Unemployed Beneficiaries	Action's State – Comments
2	Voucher for the entry to labour market of young unemployed up to 29 years of age, concerning professional experience in the sector of tourism	24.261.250,00	6.500	2 <sup>nd</sup> stage – still implemented, 2016
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64.011.250</b>	<b>21.500</b>	

Source: Ministry of Labour, Directorate of Employment, 2016

**Table 2: Programmes of New Working Positions – Employment Guarantee in Private Sector under YEI funding, 2016**

#	Actions	Budget	Unemployed Beneficiaries	Action's State – Comments
1	Actions of integrated intervention for young up to 24 years of age	45.000.000,00	8.000	Beginning in December 2016
2	Promotion of young up to 29 years of age to self-employment	43.400.000,00	11.000	Beginning in December 2016
3	Programme for the acquisition of work experience and insertion in the labour market for young 18-24 years of age	44.000.000,00	10.000	Still implemented (Application procedure started on 22 August 2016)
4	Apprenticeship programmes for young 15-24 years of age	16.000.000,00	4.000	Still implemented
5	Programme for the acquisition of work experience and insertion in the labour market for young 25-24 years of age	13.200.000,00	3.000	Still implemented (Application procedure started on 22 August 2016)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>161.600.000,00</b>	<b>36.000</b>	

Source: Ministry of Labour, Directorate of Employment, 2016

Up until now, according to the DG Employment of the European Commission which is monitoring Youth Guarantee Programme implementation, Greece is considered to have made

significant progress since 2014; there are still, however, important challenges linked to the labour market (EMCO 2015). The EC is reporting that Greece has completed significant reforms mainly in three of the above-mentioned fields: in the development of vocational education and training, in the restructuring of OAED and in the assessment of labour market needs. These positive developments are crucial for the overall success of the Greek Youth Guarantee programme.

Nevertheless, for the European Commission of utmost importance seems to be the successful outcome of the individual approach implementation that OAED has started to implement. It has been pointed out that the agency needs to be reinforced by additional career coaches who could support the increasing numbers of NEETs registered with the public employment agency. Another crucial point for the insertion of young people in the labour market is that of further enhancement of Greek education's quality and efficiency, from the stage of compulsory education to initial and continuous vocational education and training. Moreover, it is pointed out that Greece should further develop control, monitoring and evaluation procedures regarding the implementation of the programme, through the deployment of appropriate methodological tools, such as the microdata collection on beneficiaries. In fact, Greece's response to the European Commission regarding data is considered insufficient and needs significant improvement.

It must be noted here that there is no special benefit in Greece for young people by the registration as unemployed except from the possibility to participate in active labour market policies or in consulting programmes organised by OAED. Any kind of cash benefits in Greece require a previous work activity for at least 14 months. The only incentive from 2015 onwards for a young person to register as unemployed is free public transport, only in the capital, not in other Greek cities. Non-registered NEETs are only contacted through publicity actions, e.g. leaflets, social media, website, and no other incentives are given to register as unemployed. As a stakeholder mentioned, "the Greek Youth Guarantee programme is quite introverted". A good way mentioned below to reach vocational schools are career offices that reach students who are not willing to proceed to the PES and do not have the skills to find directly a job.

According to updated data of the European Commission (YG Country Fiche for Greece 2016), 33,5% of NEETs in Greece have benefited from a relevant action, while 24,1% of young people have been offered and accepted a position, i.e. work, apprenticeship, internship, within four months after their exit from education or from employment. As far as use of Youth Guarantee funding is concerned, 38.398 persons have already benefited and 25.923 have already completed an action. It is worthy to note that the Greek programme is still ongoing and as it can be seen in the tables above, most of the foreseen programmes are expected to be implemented from 2016 onwards. Therefore, another defining element of the Greek Youth Guarantee programme is the relatively slow absorption of available funding that leads to delays in implementing actions, compared to other EU member states. It is also important to note that Youth Guarantee actions in Greece are based on the voucher scheme where there is a

training period in the company up to 6 hours per day. The aim is the full-time employment and for that reason in some actions a specific number of work positions were subsidised, after the successful end of the training period. Part-time employment or other types of flexible work are not selected by the employees because they are low-paid and offer low labour rights, so they are not promoted by the state. To this end the aim of the programmes is the creation of full-time positions. In Greece, as mentioned above, flexible types of work are mostly involuntary and are considered as a stepping stone to stable full-time employment.

As far as evaluation of implemented actions is concerned, there are no published reports available; therefore, the trajectory of actions and beneficiaries in the labour market after their participation in the programme cannot be assessed. Beside the delays mentioned above, obstacles arise out of structural characteristics of the Greek society and economy, but also of the way that the state collaborates with productive forces. Public administration is still inefficient, rendering the need for its radical restructuring and the establishment of effective administrative structures indispensable preconditions for the successful implementation of any active labour market policy, therefore for Youth Guarantee (OECD, 2011-Coquet 2014). It is suggested that the lack of a cooperative culture between public and private sector necessitates for the introduction of a new social contract between employers, employees and the state aiming at strengthening cooperation and corporate responsibility (Cholezas 2013).

The Greek Action Plan has to deal with a large number of NEETs; this is however mostly due to little labour demand than labour supply of low qualification or mismatch between existing skills and labour market needs. Recession is a defining factor, since job, apprenticeship or internship offers within the private sector are limited. Moreover, the small size of the vast majority of Greek companies magnifies the existing problem given that within companies there are no appropriate structures for training of interns neither financial resources for their vocational support even when they do not obtain a paid position.

Greek labour market is characterised by long transition periods from education to employment, which are linked to a great extent to studies and to a general mismatch between education and labour market (Cholezas 2015). It must also be noted that in Greece the average time of first employment after graduation is double (12,1%) that the European average (6,3%) (Survey on the entry of young in the labour market-2009, ELSTAT). In addition, the extremely protective family environment that provides a safety net to young people hinders the successful implementation of programmes, particularly in periods of low wages and increasing precarity as it currently happens in Greek labour market (Ioannidou 2014).

In the Greek case, Youth Guarantee manifests also a structural deficiency linked to the age limit that it poses. More precisely, tertiary education in Greece, which often includes a master's degree, lasts very often up to 25 years of age, since it has been noted that young people in Greece generally complete their education later than in other EU member states. Therefore, the period during which someone can be eligible for such targeted actions is limited, fact that has triggered discussion about addressing programmes to young people older than 25 years of age, emphasising to tertiary education graduates.

Another point of discussion has been the emphasis put by the programme on vocational education and training for technical professions, which in Greece seem to be neglected because of their alleged low prestige. Contrary to the successful dual education system in some countries, notably Germany and Switzerland, in Greece parents and students do not show any preference to this kind of education (Ioannidou and Stavrou 2013). More than 70% of students chose to go to *General Lyceum* which gives the possibility of access to universities, while less than 30% chose *vocational lyceums* and apprenticeship (Cedefop 2014). There is significant demand and supply of degree holders in professions and sectors which are saturated, such as law, medicine or architecture.

Another factor that should also be added in the list of obstacles that hinder the successful implementation of the programme is the heterogeneous composition of young people who seek employment in Greece. In other words, young people with migrant background and members of other minorities, such as Roma, Muslims etc., need a more specific approach in the ways to integrate them in education and in labour market. The Greek programme does not seem to take into account these specificities, since it designs actions and opportunities addressed to general population irrespective of ethnic origin and gender.

Finally, no one can underestimate the shadow economy and the fully or partially undeclared work. In Greece, the relevant rate is estimated to reach 25% (ILO-EC 2016). The extent of so-called black labour market has been measured, because of its complexity as a phenomenon, in different but always high levels in Greece. The Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE 2012) indicates that the rate of undeclared work in companies that were investigated in 2011 was 30%, while the Labour Institute of the General Confederation of Workers in Greece (INE-GSEE) mentions that the rate of undeclared work in inspected workplaces was in 2013 40,5% (Kapsalis 2015).

Despite intentions of authorities and initial design, it has been noted during the interviews with stakeholders that there is still lack of substantial collaboration between relevant institutions, even at the very initial stages of designing and planning programmes, which hinders as well the further outreach of the actions to a much broader public. A high-rank official of OAED was quite eloquent:

*There was no substantial feedback from stakeholders to the call made by the Ministry of Labour as national coordinator to submit proposals for actions in the framework of Youth Guarantee; while the national coordinator did not pursue substantial contact afterwards. There were no contact persons indicated by each stakeholder so that the programme could be organized and start. OAED had submitted proposals through an analytical action plan. However, only apprenticeship was approved while other projects were postponed to the future and no funding was assured. We had proposed collaboration schemes with municipalities for dissemination activities, programmes for new working positions. Even apprenticeship is not an action that picks a young person from the labour market and attracts him, he comes, he enrolls and you offer him an action. These beneficiaries would in any case go to apprenticeship. There was not any substantial communication action. Youth Guarantee had*

*from the beginning as a fundamental element, communication activities so that inactive young people get informed and participate in relevant actions. We have been asked why we have not implemented any programmes; but there was no money. Responsible for the distribution of resources is the national coordinator and we do not know why they did not proceed so that funding could be absorbed. The other stakeholders had few and poor proposal, but the national coordinator should put some pressure on them. As far as the objectives of the programmes that target youth, opportunities of work experience is very significant, but it cannot solve the problem if young people cannot somehow remain for long term inside the labour market and not return to unemployment after the completion of the programme.*

### *3 Analysis of measures implemented within the framework of Youth Guarantee*

The biggest project that has been implemented so far in Greece under the Greek "Youth Guarantee" programme and financed by resources of the YEI is a work experience programme which operated in two phases in August 2014. The first phase young people aged 25-29 and the second for young people aged 18-24. Both programmes were supervised and monitored by the ESF Actions Implementation Authority, which is supervised by the General Secretary for the Management of European Funds of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity. The two following programmes are selected because they are the biggest and completed actions of the Greek YG so far.

#### *3.1 Programme for the acquisition of work experience and insertion in the labour market for young 18-24 years of age*

The total budget of the action reached 43.200.000 euros and the total number of beneficiaries 12.000, among whom 3.000 held a university degree and 9.000 had completed compulsory, secondary and post-secondary education. Action's budget was distributed to all regions of Greece. The biggest part of resources was distributed to the region of Attica (metropolitan area of Athens; 29.600.000 euros) where 3.600 vouchers were distributed, the region of Central Macedonia (Thessaloniki and its surroundings; 8.640.000 euros) with 2.400 vouchers and Thessaly (in Central Greece; 3.456.000 euros) with 960 vouchers. Beneficiaries should be registered with OAED, regardless if they were receiving unemployment benefit or not, and they should have drafted with a career coach an Individual Action Plan.

The objective of the action was the preparation of young unemployed integrated trajectory of entry to the labour market, which could potentially lead to a permanent job placement. The action provided necessary conditions for the integration of young unemployed in the labour market through the acquisition and enrichment of their skills. The action combined theoretical training and internship in relevant enterprises. Interventions and specific activities were designed and implemented taking into account specificities linked to educational level of beneficiaries, i.e. tertiary, secondary or post-secondary education.

More specifically, for people holding a tertiary education degree, foreseen actions included:

1. Theoretical training programme of 80 hours with a maximum of six hours per day.
2. Internship in private companies of 420 hours in total, implemented in two phases: the 1<sup>st</sup> phase involved 180 hours envisaging the adjustment of the trainee in the working environment of the company; the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase involved 240 hours focusing on acquisition of specific skills linked to the specific internship. The total duration of the internship could not be longer than 6 months and it lasted 4 to 6 hours per day.
3. Support and consultant services offered by trainers before and during the internship concerning: a) the assessment and correlation between educational needs and skills of trainees and employers' needs; b) the placement, monitoring and supervision of the trainee

during the internship; c) additional services for the conversion of internship to a work contract with the company where internship took place.

For compulsory, secondary and post-secondary education graduates the same actions were foreseen, but distributed in a different way. More precisely, the theoretical training programme included more hours (120), while internship included 380 hours in total.

Design and planning of the theoretical training, selection of accredited trainers, organisation of classes and production of training material were under the responsibility of training institutions. As far as the content of training is concerned, 40% of training should necessarily include the following topics:

- Health and security at workplace
- Basic principles of labour law
- ICT applications
- Preparation of trainees for an effective insertion in the labour market through techniques to draft a CV, personal strategy development, professional orientation, interview simulations etc.

The rest of the theoretical training could include one of the following topics, according to the needs and the skills of trainees:

- Services (restaurants, education and training, financial services etc.)
- Technology and technological professions (energy, environment, ICT etc.)
- Manufacture – trade
- Agricultural economy

Both young unemployed and training providers, which were private vocational training centres, were invited to declare their interest through their registration in an online registry of beneficiaries and in a registry of training providers, respectively. These centres provided the training before the internship. They are private structures in Greece that already existed and they were not created particularly for the purposes of the Youth Guarantee programme. They provide different kind of educational services in public programmes or in private companies. They are paid from the voucher of each participant, i.e. the total amount they receive depends on the number of participants they train in the centre.

For university degree holders the selection criteria regarding their eligibility were duration of unemployment, total individual or family income and previous participation in actions promoting insertion in the labour market. Thus, long-term unemployed and persons without previous participation in activation programmes were prioritised. For compulsory and secondary education graduates, in addition to the above-mentioned criteria, educational level was also taken into account: priority was given to those who had completed only the 9-year compulsory education instead of those who had completed upper secondary and had attended any kind of post-secondary education.

All beneficiaries were entitled to an educational benefit, divided into the allowance for theoretical courses and internship allowance. For the university degree holders, the allowance for theoretical training was 480 euros for each beneficiary and internship allowance was 1930 euros in total. Thus, the total educational benefit was 2.410 euros. For the compulsory-secondary or post-secondary education graduates, the theoretical training allowance was 720 euros and the internship allowance 1520 euros, i.e. the total benefit reached 2.240 euros.

People who were selected should activate their voucher within two months after the completion of beneficiaries' list. Practically this meant that each beneficiary should chose with his/her own responsibility and not after PES suggestion, according to his/her needs and possibilities a training provider within the limits of his/her region of residence, as well as the training programme and the curriculum he/she wished to follow. In fact, the PES is not involved in any phase of selection, agreement and communication between training provider, intern and employer. The selection of the employer where he/she would complete his/her internship was made in collaboration with the training provider, taking into account available posts of internship in correlation with beneficiary's skills and employer's needs. The action prioritised employers who were active in productive, competitive and innovative sectors as they were defined by the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020, such as agriculture and food industry, energy, environment, ICTs and logistics.

From the moment that the beneficiary, the training provider and the employer came to an agreement, they signed a three-party work contract which determined partners' duties and inaugurated the internship period. The training provider appointed an internship supervisor who was responsible for the monitoring, coaching and support of the beneficiary, before and during the internship. An employee of the company was appointed as internship manager, undertaking the task of helping the integration of the intern in the workplace and the development of effective collaboration with other workers. The internship manager was responsible for the integration of the intern in the functioning procedures of the company and in the production process at a certain timing. He/She was also responsible for the quality assurance of the internship and the development of intern's knowledge and skills. In this sense, his/her role was crucial for the successful outcome of the internship and an eventual placement of the intern in a steady job of good quality.

The action was based on mutual communication and contact between all parts, i.e. the internship supervisor from the training provider, the internship manager from the side of the employer and the intern/beneficiary. Meetings and discussions between the three part should be held at least twice per week. Personal contact of the beneficiary with the other stakeholders, but also support through consulting services in order to deal any kind of problems during the whole action, were considered as fundamental elements of the programme.

It must be noted that employers from the tourism industry were not eligible for this action, since a specific action concerning this sector was foreseen. Moreover, exchange of interns between different employers was strictly forbidden. In order to avoid substitution of workers by interns, each employer was obliged in order to be eligible to maintain a steady number of

employees before and during the internship period. In other words, employers should not proceed to any decrease of the number of employees since the date of signature of the three-party agreement, and in case of a layoff they should substitute the fired worker through a new recruitment within ten days.

### *3.2 Voucher for the entry to labour market of young unemployed 25-29 years of age, for the acquisition of professional experience*

This action was integrated in the Youth Employment Initiative funding and followed the same design path with the previous one, while it was monitored by the same institution. The action was addressed to 30.000 young unemployed of 25-29 years of age, of whom 12.000 were university degree holders and 18.000 were secondary and post-secondary education graduates. The total budget of the action reached 108.000.000 euros, distributed to all regions of the country: for the region of Attica 32.040.000 euros were provided for 8.900 training vouchers, for Central Macedonia, 21.312.000 euros for 5.920 vouchers and for Thessaly, 8.424.000 euros for 2.400 vouchers.

The action included the following:

1. Theoretical training programme of 80 hours with a maximum of six hours per day.
2. Internship in private companies of 450 hours in total, implemented in two phases as in the above-mentioned action, with total duration of no longer than 6 months, distributed in 4 to 6 hours per day.
3. Support and consultant services offered by trainers before and during the internship concerning the same issues as the above-mentioned action.

The educational benefit for university degree holders was 2.550 euros, 480 euros for theoretical training allowance and 2.070 euros for internship allowance. For secondary and post-secondary education graduates, the total benefit reached 2.280 euros, 480 euros for the theoretical training allowance and 1.800 euros for the internship allowance.

This action is in fact the continuance of the previous one; they both serve the purpose of an integrated intervention targeting the whole age range of youth in Greece, while nuances in curricula aim at meeting more effectively needs of specific age categories. To this end, beside the topics incorporated in the curriculum of the previous action, for young unemployed of 25-29 years of age emphasis was put on entry in the labour market than on training. Therefore, the curriculum was enriched with topics, such as the following:

- Preparation of the trainee for the labour market
- Business organisation and functioning
- The notion of quality and innovation in contemporary business
- Communication skills, professional behaviour, questions-complaints-claims-objections management
- Basic professional terminology in other languages
- Time management and team work

This action that covered young people up to 29 years old was implemented to a larger scale, since it provided more than twice as much vouchers as the previous one. This element confirms that there is an increasing need for policies targeting young people over 25 years old, because in Greece entry in the labour market occurs at a later age than in other EU countries. It has also been pointed out that employers prefer young people between 25-30 years than people below 24 years old, even if the subsidy is equally high for both categories. Medium and small size enterprises do not ‘invest’ in young employees, although there is still in Greece a problem regarding employment of minors (EYSEKT 2013). This seems to have been taken into account – it was also stated by the Directorate of Employment of the Ministry of Labour with whom we discussed – during the design of actions. Both actions focus on the additional difficulties that young people without tertiary education degree meet in their effort to find a job or subsidised training; for this reason this group has received at least more than twice as much vouchers as those who hold a university degree.

During the implementation of the actions, it was clear that beneficiaries opted mostly for internships in companies that seemed more likely to hire them after the completion of the internship. Factors signalling higher probabilities for hiring were mainly the size of the business and its reputation in the Greek market. This priority had an impact on the selection of theoretical training curriculum, since the main criterion for the selection of training provider was not the content and the quality of its training programmes, but its network with companies where internship could take place. In many cases, beneficiaries had already agreed with the company for an eventual internship, before consulting with the training provider.

Without neglecting the positive impact of the actions, in many case internship positions were not compatible with interns’ educational and professional profile, particularly in the case of the older group (25-29). This incompatibility lead to waste of resources without the expected outcomes. The orientation towards internship positions of high quality was also undermined by the lack of a stage where three-party agreements (training provider – trainee/intern – employer) would be evaluated in order to finance only those that met all the quality criteria posed from the beginning. Inexistence of such internal ‘safety valve’ diminished the degree of intervention in what kind of positions are needed and for whom.

In fact, the Greek voucher for the entry in the labour market programme does not seem to have successfully incorporated the part of consulting and monitoring. Despite the initial design of the programme, communication between different involved parts was weak and in many cases there was no effective collaboration. On the one hand, training providers ended their involvement after the completion of training, while they should continue monitoring and encouragement of trainees; on the other hand, internship providers, i.e. employers, limited their participation in the action in offering an internship position, without providing any support and training to young interns. It could be said that internship was used in many cases as a form of free labour, since interns were very often working beyond scheduled hours.

Another issue that hindered a more integrated and subsequently effective implementation of the actions was the insistence of many employers to offer internship positions without linking

them to the training that beneficiaries had received during the action. Attention was rather paid on trainees' CV and previous professional experience. The above-mentioned remarks show that the main issue in the Greek labour market is mostly the problem of low demand than a problem of structure or insufficient training of unemployed persons. Employers seem reluctant to hire even when they need labour force, because economic and financial conditions in Greece remain uncertain, while tax policy is unbearable for the vast majority of employers.

### *3.3 Funding of apprenticeship in OAED Vocational Schools (EPAS OAED), class 2014-2106 – Establishment of Career Offices*

The apprenticeship vocational schools run by the Public Employment Agency (OAED) constitute a substantial part of secondary vocational education in Greece for more than 50 years. Vocational schools belong to the intermediate secondary education, between Gymnasium (lower secondary, compulsory) and Lyceum (upper secondary). They provide a diploma, which is practically a work license of assistant technician that can be upgraded to a Chief technician license after 18-24 months of professional experience and accreditation exams. Schools are funded by 80% by OAED's regular budget without charging state budget, given that OAED receives regular funding from employees' and employers' social contributions in favour of unemployment and training. The rest 20% comes from EU funding. Social partners play a key role in the successful implementation of apprenticeship apart from the funding they offer from the contributions. We can say that in the Greek case the integration of the social partners in the programme is successful especially in the local level where relations among actors are more personal. There is an appropriate cooperation in the central level as well. Stakeholders at last always give the impression that there is always room for improvement.

OAED is implementing the dual system of apprenticeship through 51 Vocational Apprenticeship Schools (EPAS) throughout the country. It is estimated that every year there are 11.000 active students and 2.500 teachers. Within the apprenticeship scheme, theoretical and experimental education is combined with internship in organisations of the private and public sector. EPAS students serve as interns for six hours every morning for 4 or 5 days per week and in the afternoon they attend theoretical courses and laboratories for 21 hours per week in relevant specialties. Offered modules are approximately 40 in different sectors of economic activity and curricula in a profession is the same in the whole country. The main sectors which are covered by vocational schools are mechanics, electricians, ICTs, beauty, finance-administration-tourism, health and care, construction, agronomy and food, applied traditional arts. The main admission criteria are grades and social parameters, such as number of children in the family, orphan students and low household income. Students whose parents run relevant businesses are also promoted.

The duration of courses is two years, i.e. four semesters. Students are between 16 and 24 years old, having completed the first grade of Lyceum. Trainees' wage reaches 75% of unskilled worker's gross daily wage, determined by the National General Collective Labour Agreement for all four semesters of internship, including full social insurance. Internship

remuneration is 17,12 euros per day (given that less than 25-year-old unskilled worker's gross daily wage is set at 22,83 euros), of which 6 euros are covered by the employer. Employer and apprentice – or his/her guardian in case he/she is a minor – sign an Apprenticeship Agreement, which defines the terms and conditions of the internship. The Agreement must be also approved by the principal of the school. Among others reference is made to the beginning and ending of the internship, to employer's obligations regarding facilities for the implementation of the internship, security and protection of apprentices, while issues regarding absences, regular and student leaves are regulated.

In Greece, students who enter the apprenticeship system are in vast majority graduates of higher secondary education (General or Vocational Lyceum) and they have failed or do not wish to enter tertiary education. It has been pointed out during an interview with an OAED official that “the Ministry of Education mostly cares about studious students; they have missed this group of students [who attend vocational apprentice schools]. Us, on the other hand, through OAED vocational schools we try to reach these students by offering them a recourse, future prospects.” The vast majority of students, approximately 80%, come from families with annual income less than 12.000 euros. About 15% of them come from families with more than three children and about the same proportion come from families where parents or relatives work in the same sector that students want to pursue. Graduates of OAED vocational schools cannot enter tertiary education, but they can be enrolled in a relevant specialty in a Vocational Training Institute.

Internship of EPAS students from 2008-9 to 2014-5 was subsidised by the Operational Programme “Education and Lifelong Learning” in the framework of the Partnership Agreement 2007-2013. The beneficiaries of the programme were 26.073 and the total cost for subsidies and benefits reached 54.532.378 euros.<sup>3</sup> The apprenticeship programme in EPAS OAED for young people of 15-24 years of age was funded by the Youth Employment Initiative in the framework of the Youth Guarantee programme for the school years 2014-5 and 2015-6. The title of the action was “Apprenticeship Programme for NEETs” and involved subsidised apprenticeship positions for 3.400 NEETs; its total cost was 9.500.000 euros. From the total cost, an amount of approximately 1.750.000 euros was foreseen for preparatory dissemination, information and consulting activities addressed to NEETs.

In order to participate in the action, NEETs had to prepare an Individual Action Plan in collaboration with local Career Offices of the EPAS vocational schools. They could turn to EPAS structures in order to be consulted and oriented towards available education, apprenticeship and training positions. There, they could fill in the relevant template provided by teachers and be registered in the online information system of OAED, through which information on services addressed to young people could be made available. An OAED official is describing this process as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> According to data from the Directorate of Initial Vocational Education of OAED.

*For me, the greatest innovation within the Youth Guarantee funding is that this time NEETs approached our schools' Career Offices, after the promotion of the action within local societies and that with their application they were drafting a call of interest where for the first time their qualifications, their skills, educational level, language or ICT skills, professional experience, interests, were written down. In other words, young people in collaboration and with the help of the trained career officer they draft a small individual action plan where young person's interest in participating in OAED vocational education activities is stated. All this information has been collected as a paper and electronic archive, which constitutes a subsystem in the OAED Integrated Information System. I think that this was a gap until today, that we did not investigate young people's skills, desires and possibilities. It is a move to the positive direction and we keep on following this procedure although it might not be asked as a prerequisite for funding; but we think that it is an interesting feedback to have this information in our schools for our students. We have chosen in collaboration with Coordination Direction of Centres for Promotion to Employment a small and comprehensive Individual Action Plan because, you have to know, particularly young people of 15-24 years old hardly come to the Public Employment Agency, even if there are career coaches specially trained to approach this age group. (...) Therefore we try to approach a very particular age group that lacks the culture of going and registering with the national unemployment registry. But they can much more easily reach our schools and the Career Offices, which are able to provide consulting services to students.*

The fact that from 2001 to 2006, only half of the apprentices were interns, while from 2007 to 2011 there was a further decrease of the part interns lead to the need for a coordinated action in order to increase internship positions (EEO Group 2015c). During the interviews it was highlighted that the increase of apprenticeship positions was a priority for all member states and EU as a total: "Schools' efficiency is linked to the total number of internship positions offered. Besides, we are obliged by the Memorandum to offer internship positions to all of our students". To this end, 30 Vocational Education Career Offices (GDDE) were created in 2014 throughout the country. This project was integrated in the Operational Programme "Education and Lifelong Learning" and it was co-funded by the European Social Fund. The total cost of the action reached 18.851.866 euros. The action included equipment, teachers' training, production of educational material and dissemination activities, such as public events in collaboration with social partners, chambers, municipalities etc.

Career Offices' main objective is to link vocational education and labour market by enhancing apprenticeship in OAED vocational schools. To this end, the career offices try to develop activities that contribute to the improvement of students' internships and to the integration of graduates in the labour market. They run under the supervision of EPAS principles. Their organisation and operation are monitored by the Initial Vocational Education Direction of OAED. They are situated within the school units and they are open every day throughout school year, following the time schedule of the school. In each Career Office one or two

trained teachers offer a wide range of services that cover apart from personalised support to students, consultation with relevant stakeholders, monitoring of available internship positions, dissemination and awareness-raising activities, monitoring and assessment of student's professional trajectory after their graduation etc.:

*Their main objective is to systematise our schools' outreach efforts, because there is a lack of dissemination activities that could render apprenticeship widely known within Greek society. This means that apprenticeship and more generally technical vocational education must become more attractive in Greece. This can be done only if we get out of schools and reach local societies and local labour markets. Their main objective is to keep contact with employers and social partners, mainly at the local level. According to the offices' regulation there is an annual consultation meeting where social partners submit their proposals regarding specialties that are needed in the region. Labour market needs change all the time and the question is whether vocational education can adjust to these changes. The career offices are our antennas to the world out there, in other words we try to listen to what society is saying, what labour markets are saying and use this feedback to the benefit of our schools. The offices beside the support they provided to NEETs in the frame of Youth Guarantee, they completed an electronic mapping of all organisations of collective representation in their region; i.e. of all chambers, employers' associations, trade unions – we must have contacts with workers as well – developmental NGOs, municipalities, regions, the church.*

With regard to the main task of career offices, which is the placement of students in internship positions of high quality, this is hindered by the general economic situation. In the province, more particularly, the small size of enterprises has proven to be an additional limiting factor. Teachers also state (EEO Group 2015c) that there is lack of interest on behalf of employers. Moreover, difficulties to match internship with the working hours of some businesses were reported, along with the incapability of some students to adjust in the working environment in which their internship was taking place. It is important to also note that there are overlapping internships from Vocational Training Institutes, Vocational Lyceums, Universities of Applied Sciences or Vocational Training Institutes run by the Ministry of Education, for which employers do not undertake any financial cost.

Another crucial element was the assurance of social partners' consent and positive attitude. In small towns in particular, interpersonal contacts and relations with small and medium size employers is crucial, but also time-demanding:

*With regards to coordination I believe in the bottom up approach. The directive that leaves from the Administration [of OAED] is the same. We send the same thing to 31 Career Offices and 51 schools. But I find extremely significant the initiatives taken by the principal of the school, the head of the Career Office and the board of teachers. The events organised by the schools they become effective thanks to teachers' readiness and networking with local stakeholders. To mention an example, in*

*Heraklion, Crete, in collaboration with social partners and the local chamber during the consultancy meeting a demonstration and skills competition took place. I have to tell you that this had no cost for the school. The whole event was sponsored by the companies that offered internship positions. Labour market must also respond to the needs and businesses must be healthy. Crete is a tourist destination where economy flourishes and there are possibilities to support apprenticeship. I cannot compare this to Western Macedonia [Northwest of Greece]. Initiatives like that occurred in other places too. This demonstrates the significance of the bottom-up approach, the interpersonal contacts, the informal networks of contacts that our teachers have established all these years in local societies. I don't want to underestimate the process of an electronic application, but up to now apprenticeship is based on the interpersonal contacts of teachers with employers.*

Employers who have participated in the past in an apprenticeship programme of OAED, mostly employing up to 10 persons, stated being enough to very satisfied. The employers who declare low interest in participating, mention as main reasons lack of need to use an intern because of a reduced business cycle, preference for experienced employees than interns, time-consuming and bureaucratic procedures, no demand for specific specialities and availability of internships by tertiary education and Vocational Training senior students (EEO Group 2015a). Therefore, better information to employers regarding apprenticeship, update of specialities according to labour market needs and simplified online procedures, are some recommendations for the improvement of the OAED apprenticeship scheme in order to attract more employers. Tax exemptions and total subsidisation of internships would also contribute to further expansion of the scheme.

It is important to note, however, that 89,7% of businesses that participated in an apprenticeship programme did not hire any apprentice after the completion of internship (EEO Group 2015b). Despite this, 47% of former apprentices found a job in other companies. The reasons for not hiring apprentices are either purely financial – impossible to bear labour cost – or there is no need for the specific skills. Other reasons have also been reported, such as reduced recognition of the qualifications provided by apprenticeship schools both in Greece and abroad, the need to add in the curriculum a foreign language and the need for better vocational training and work experience provided by the school. It is true that in Greece vocational education has been signalled as inferior compared to general education. This is also demonstrated by the fact that employers do not participate actively in undertaking the cost of apprenticeship, as it happens in other European countries. It is also demonstrated by the fact that the number of young people who follow this kind of education is significantly and constantly lower than the number of those who follow general education (Paidoussi 2014).

Moreover, the socio-demographic characteristics of students are reproduced perpetuating dismissive perceptions and attitudes towards vocational education. The latter seems to restrain possibilities for professional and social mobility, particularly for young women. Basic concern of policies aiming at increasing attractiveness of vocational education should be the

development of a culture that gradually subverts stereotypes and perceptions that reproduce educational and social inequalities that are subsequently translated into inequalities in the labour market (Paidoussi 2016).

The cost for apprenticeship depends on two factors: the relation between public and private burden, i.e. the distribution of wage cost between subsidy and employer's contribution; and the relation between demand and supply of apprenticeship positions, i.e. how many of the trainees can find an internship (IOBE 2015). It is obvious that recognition of the value of apprenticeship by relevant stakeholders and social partners in Greece is vital for the sustainability of the scheme. Social partners have expressed their intention to participate actively and equally in consultation processes in order to enhance the effective role and impact of apprenticeship in dealing with the persisting problem of youth unemployment in Greece (Policy Brief of Greek Social Partners 2015).

#### 4 *Typology of national policy and analysis of change*

Deep changes in labour relations and labour rights in Greece started already in 2010 as part of fiscal discipline policies imposed by the structural adjustment programmes that accompany the Memoranda of Understanding between Greece and its creditors (for more see Karamessini, Kominou, Papazachariou 2016). Changes have mainly focused on the expansion of flexible forms of employment against steady and full-time employment, on working hours' flexibility, on layoffs liberation and facilitation, and on changing the way of determining wages through collective bargaining (Kouzis 2014).

Part of the changes in labour legislation have particularly affected young people. The definition of a specific minimum wage for young under 25 years of age and apprentices, which is reduced by 32% in relation to national minimum wage, has certainly had a significant impact on young workers' lives. In February 2012, by an Act of Cabinet, the government established 22 per cent lower wage floors than the national minima set by the national general collective agreement (was at 756 euros), introduced a subminimum floor for those below 25 years of age (32 per cent lower than the minimum wage set by the national general collective agreement) and froze both floors until the end of the Greek Economic Adjustment Programme. The minimum wage floor was set by then at 586.08€ for employees over the age of 25 and at 510.95 for those under 25. Furthermore, the trial period of newly recruited has been extended from 2 to 12 months and employers are generally facilitated in hiring on fixed-term contracts or part-time and alternate workers through employment agencies. Those who enter labour market have been affected to a great extent by the extension of flexible forms of employment. It is indicative that since 2008 the part-time employment rate has almost doubled in the age category 15-25 (from 13,4% to 21,1%), while for the category 25-29 it has increased from 6,1% to 12,2%. In the Greek case part-time employment is hardly voluntary; most of part-time employees have no other option, but they accept this form of employment due to the lack of full-time employment: 63% in the age category 15-24 and 74,4% in the category 25-29 reported that they work part-time against their will (Petmezidou and Polyzoidis 2015).

Therefore, milestone for the institutional changes in the Greek labour market is the year 2010. The introduction of the Youth Guarantee programme in 2013 has not affected or encouraged the above-mentioned developments. It is however important to note that in Greece, even before the current financial and economic crisis, education-to-work transition appeared quite problematic. According to a survey on the participation in employment of university degree holders conducted during the years 2005-2006, 84% of respondents were working 5-7 years after their graduation, but 45% of them on fixed-term, part-time or project-based contracts (Karamessini, Viotratou, Gazon, Moustaki 2008).

Social work programmes launched largely from 2013 onwards, do not have any specific provision for young people. They mostly focus on specific social criteria, such as single parents, income, number of underage children etc. On the contrary, subsidised employment or internship schemes seem to be affected by European commitments to decrease the number of

NEETs and they increasingly focus on youth. It must be noted that social protection in Greece is to a great extent insufficient due to fragmentation of social services and benefits (Karamessini 2010) while clientilistic networks, family and relatives still play a significant role (Petmezidou 1996, Katrougkalos and Lazaridis 2003, Karamessini 2008).

Unemployment benefit for young people did not follow the path of reduction, as it happened with minimum wage. However, other benefits have reduced; since 2015, for example family allowance has been replaced by allowance for children, which is distributed according to income criteria. The only kind of welfare benefit targeting those who enter labour market is an allowance provided for five months to people who were registered as unemployed with the Public Employment Agency (OAED) for more than one year. Social insurance is also provided to all young unemployed up to the age of 29 years. Despite the fact that young people in Greece constitute a group at risk of poverty and social exclusion – at-risk of-poverty rate in the 15-29 category reaches 45% according to Eurostat-Youth Database – the measure of Social Solidarity Income, introduced since 2014 on a pilot basis, has not age criteria but only income. The implementation of this programme has already been extended and it is going to be further extended in the following years.

In Greece, labour policies targeting youth had adopted a focus on activation measures already before the introduction of Youth Guarantee. Before 2013, policies on work-study balance included an allowance for students during exams and subsidies of internships for students in universities of applied sciences that covered 50% of the cost. Since 2013, a dialogue has been launched for the formation of an institutional framework for internship as part of the European Quality Framework of Internship, but also of the National strategy for the improvement of vocational education and training. These institutional initiatives were funded partly by the Greek Youth Guarantee programme.

Vocational training and its incorporation in the general educational system has not really been very high in the political agenda and in the design of main policy objectives. The main target is the adjustment to labour market needs. Policies and measures that encourage young people who abandoned education to return have been relatively weak. The only exception is the establishment of ‘second chance schools’, which was however a fragmented initiative that had low impact on the target group. When it comes to employment policies, one can see that vocational training has diachronically played an important role, since it is usually the most significant part of active labour market policies. During the last years, voucher programmes for the entry in the labour market have been significantly extended. These programmes are implemented by the Ministry of Labour on the basis of geographic criteria, i.e. according to local unemployment rates or level of economic development, but they also target specific groups of redundant workers, e.g. from big companies, or specific sectors which have been affected by the economic crisis.

In general, in Greece policies regarding school-to-work transition are weak. Their ineffectiveness is demonstrated by the extremely low probability of school leavers to find an employment one year after their graduation: in Greece in 2013, the probability to find an

employment was 19%, to be unemployed 56% and to be inactive 25% (Karamessini, Symeonaki, Stamatopoulou 2016). Even if the Youth Guarantee programme seemed to trigger a dialogue on the obligation of all relevant stakeholders to establish a sort of social contract for the enhancement of young people's probabilities to be able to find a place in the labour market or in education, the outcomes of the programme up until now were relatively poor. There has certainly been a significant impact of the actions particularly on the acquisition of some work experience for those who wish to enter labour market. Nevertheless, youth unemployment rate remains the highest in the EU, (involuntary) flexible forms of employment keep growing at the expense of steady and full employment, while wages remain low. In other words, it seems that financial and economic policies in Greece and low demand in the Greek labour market undermine any initiative for the increase of employment among youth.

**Table 3: Typologising Youth (employment) policies**

	before 2013			2016			Change influenced by		Comment
	strong	medium	weak	Strong	medium	weak	YG	other	
<b>POLICY OBJECTIVES</b>									
<b>Work first approach</b> Flexible forms of employment as 'bridge'	X			X				X	Labour flexibility has increased during the last years. A significant shift has been the introduction of a minimum wage specifically for young up to 25 years old. Subsidy programmes have been influenced by Youth Guarantee, but not the social work programmes.
Pricing young workers into jobs: age-related (minimum) wages	X			X				X	
<b>Occupation</b> job subsidies		X		X				X	
public employment			X			X		X	
<b>social security/financial incentives</b> familialised support (parents plus/without child allowances etc.)			X			X		X	Social benefits have been diachronically weak in Greece, even before 2013. The Greek YG programme promotes active measures, it does not finance welfare services in employment or education.
individual social transfers			X			X		X	
transfers during educational attainment			X			X		X	
in-work or /in-education-benefits sanctions for non-compliance			X X			X X		X	

<b>employment assistance</b> short term measures such as: placement services, counselling			X		X		X		Counselling services are provided mainly through joint partnerships among social partners. The Greek YG has contributed since it foresees a necessary phase of counselling and monitoring before and during placement.
<b>Upskilling/enabling</b> Encouraging training/ formation of human capital as long term measure within general school-system within vocational training system as further training in general and/ or as particular part of employment policy pathways back to education	X  X	X X X		X  X	X X X			X	Formal education focuses on introduction to tertiary education and it is strongly linked to national exams.
<b>Target groups</b> according to educational level NEETs People with migration background young parents women	X	X X	X X	X	X  X	X X	X		Youth Guarantee has contributed to shift focus towards young people.

	before 2013			2016			Change influenced by		Comment
	strong	medium	weak	strong	medium	weak	YG	other	
<b>GOVERNANCE and vertical coordination</b>									
<b>Centralisation of/most relevant level of regulatory competences</b>	X							X	<p>Coordination of general education, vocational training and employment policy has been always centralised. During the last years, consultancy procedures involving social partners and chambers have been developed with regard to employment policies and apprenticeship.</p> <p>Funding comes from national, but mainly EU resources.</p>
General education	X			X					
Vocational training	X			X					
Youth employment policy								X	
<b>Centralisation of funding/most relevant level of funding for</b>	X								
General education	X			X					
Vocational training	X			X					
Youth employment policy				X					
<b>Forms of cooperation between actors on vertical axes</b>	X							X	<p>There is a vertical coordination and strict administrative concentration in the Ministries of Employment and Education.</p>
hierarchy negotiation, network		X			X			X	

<b>GOVERNANCE and horizontal coordination</b>									
vocational training system as intermediary institution between school and work			X			X		X	Vocational training as a tool for more effective school-to-work transition still remains underdeveloped. Tertiary/university education remains higher than vocational education in the preference of students and parents.
<p><b>...between different policy fields</b></p> <p>organised/institutionalised school-to-work transitions</p> <p>employment policy and youth welfare policy</p> <p>employment policy and family policy</p> <p>alternative paths from work back to education</p> <p><b>...within administration</b></p> <p>fragmented access to different services/transfers</p> <p>creation of one-stop institution/single gateway</p>	X		X			X		X	<p>National policies on education-labour market link have been enhanced because of prioritisation of lifelong learning and training by EU institutions. Lack of resources and fiscal policy hinder effective correlation between active and passive policies.</p> <p>Fragmentation of accessible services and transfers is linked to increasingly strict criteria, weak design and lack of interoperability of information systems. One-stop-shops, i.e. Citizens Service Centres have significantly contributed to provide integrated services for citizens' interaction with public administration and services. One stop shops were created in 2002 and they offer one-stop services to all</p>

									citizens, not especially to young people.
<b>Forms of cooperation between actors on horizontal axes</b>									Horizontal policy coordination has not been significantly effective due to low participation and impact of social partners in horizontal procedures.
hierarchy		X			X				
market		X			X				
negotiation, network (i.e. social pacts)			X			X			

	before 2013			2016			Change influenced by		Comment
	strong	medium	weak	strong	medium	weak	YG	other	
<b>Governance ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ forms of coordination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ employment/educational guarantee as social right (binding)</li> <li>○ involvement of social partners/</li> <li>● other non-state actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● designing youth guarantee</li> <li>● implementing youth guarantee</li> </ul> </li> <li>● as mandatory (law) /informal /no involvement</li> </ul>		X		X				X	Rapid increase of youth unemployment rate and increasing brain drain lead the state and social partners to realise the necessity of reinforced youth employment policies.
		X		X				X	
	X			X				X	
	X			X				X	
<b>OUTCOMES</b>									
Improvement of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ youth unemployment</li> <li>○ NEET rate</li> <li>○ Educational attainment (stratification)</li> </ul> by gender/migration/early parenthood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Segmentation of labour market</li> <li>○ distribution of flexible forms of employment</li> <li>○ low wage employment according to sector/profession</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		X	X		X			X	YG programme does not seem to have any positive impact regarding youth unemployment rate. This is due mainly to the general economic situation in the country. Persisting emigration of young people demonstrates that opportunities provided by policy measures and initiatives do not convince for their sustainability regarding job and employment insecurity.
			X					X	
	X			X				X	

according to age and gender	X X			X	X				
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## 5 *Policy recommendations*

The Greek Youth Guarantee programme has up until now been implemented on a small scale and it funded actions that had already been to a certain extent implemented before. Actions planned for the following two years that are about to begin are expected to provide more concrete results. A common perspective for a coordinated effort shared by relevant stakeholders is necessary for a successful outcome of policies and initiatives. From what has been presented above, certain points of concern and possible recommendations occur that might facilitate further dialogue.

First of all, the actions foreseen in the Greek programme provide limited possibilities for synergies and interconnection. Moreover, they lack innovation and provision for *ex post* evaluation based on valid and measurable data. Overlaps of competences have been noted both at the level of implementation and coordination on both vertical and horizontal axes. Insufficient funding and fragmentation of actions are without any doubt determining factors. The economic conjuncture, within which actions for the reinforcement of young people's position in the labour market are implemented, is extremely discouraging. This, however, should not impede political initiatives. Young people, on the other side, should reorient their career choices based on their talents and skills and not on established social patterns and stereotypes. Development of 'resilience skills' and alternative strategies during the process of searching employment could be a useful tool for them.

Strengthening career offices in vocational schools but also in universities through synergies and common actions could provide better conditions for a more effective outreach to wider society and certainly to young people. Internship schemes should be encouraged and generalised if possible for all students, so that every young person who leaves education has some experience of a workplace and of labour market. It is imperative, however, to establish or reinforce feedback mechanisms in order to update curricula according to labour market developments and needs. In this sense, educational institutions should enhance their contacts and collaboration with relevant stakeholders and social partners.

In the field of vocational training in particular, further economic incentives for employers could encourage them to hire young workers after their internship. Vocational education and training could be more actively linked to programmes of subsidised jobs or entrepreneurship in ways that could form an integrated intervention for the effective reduction of unemployment. It is already encouraging that almost one out of two vocational school graduates remain in the labour market, even if he/she does not find a job in the same employer or even if he/she becomes self-employed.

When the labour market needs assessment system becomes fully operational and OAED's operational model is restructured, coordination and implementation of policies is expected to be more effective. Moreover, collection in one database of disparate available data and research conducted by several institutions would contribute significantly to a better assessment, monitoring and evaluation of implemented actions. It is important to encourage

collaboration between stakeholders through concrete initiatives, such as common research endeavours on youth employability.

Employers from their side should incorporate programmes of coaching and mentoring for young interns, so that internship becomes a much more productive process for both interns and businesses. Greek employers should participate more actively in the establishment and consolidation of apprenticeship as paid work and perceive it as a valuable pool of skilled workforce instead of cheap, short-term labour.

Last but not least, it is important to restore equity between young and the rest of workers. Similar wages for similar work for all workers regardless their age is a necessary step towards the improvement of young people's position in the labour market. In any case, despite the difficulties full and steady employment for all should remain the main objective of all employment policies.

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