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CEDEFOP OPINION SURVEY  
ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

# GREECE

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# Introduction

In 2016, Cedefop launched an EU-wide Opinion Survey on VET, which was conducted by Kantar Public. Building upon findings from face-to face interviews, the Survey provides comparable data on awareness, attractiveness and effectiveness of vocational education and training (VET) in EU-28. In this report we focus on answers gathered from 1 301 respondents in Greece, these accounting for a 3.65% of the EU-28 total sample. Among Greek respondents, the majority was represented by General Education participants (Greece: 79%, EU-28: 59%), while the remaining derived from VET participants (Greece: 21%, EU-28: 40%). As shown, there is a noticeable difference in the composition of the Greek sample compared to the average EU, in relation to type of education at upper secondary level.

Regarding the educational system in Greece <sup>(1)</sup> likewise other Mediterranean countries it is significantly constructed on an educational programme that heads to tertiary education, while VET often represents a -less appealing- relatively weak component. This has shown that, at least until recent and ongoing reforms, vocational learning mainly took place during the job and was achieved in non-formal and informal settings. At the same time, formal qualifications are highly valued (as in the case of academic credentials) <sup>(2)</sup> and are often associated with improved social mobility prospects, in some cases even regardless of whether they lead to jobs. Recent VET reforms, aimed at addressing some of the education and training challenges such as improving VET's ability to smooth the transition from education to the labour market, modernizing VET, providing better practical skills to improve the relevance of

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<sup>(1)</sup> Formal education: Education which is provided within the formal education system, leads to qualifications recognised at national level by public authorities and is part of the education ladder. Formal education also includes general formal adult education. Non-formal education: The education which is provided in an organised educational framework outside the formal education system and can lead to the acquisition of certificates recognised at national level. It includes initial vocational training, continuing training and general adult education. See also Cedefop ReferNet Greece (2018). Spotlight on VET Greece 2017, May 2018. DOI: 10.2801/97571

<sup>(2)</sup> Constantinos Tsoukalas well known work presents the high prestige attributed to academic education in Greece, being a ladder for social and economic mobility. See Τσουκαλάς, Κ. (1977). Εξάρτηση και αναπαραγωγή: ο κοινωνικός ρόλος των εκπαιδευτικών μηχανισμών στην Ελλάδα (1830-1922) [Dependence and reproduction: the social role of educational mechanisms in Greece (1830-1922)], Αθήνα, Εκδ. Θεμέλιο.

VET and creating a positive culture for VET, take place at times of strict fiscal consolidation and steady effort for gradual, but consistent, recovery of the Greek economy.

In this overall context, understanding citizen's opinion about VET provides a constructive tool for policymaking. Still, literature regarding aspects of EU citizen's perception about VET has been rather limited. In the Greek case, as in other EU countries, this has become even more obvious when examined in terms of contextualised understanding and regularly updated evidence based figures. In fact, existing literature has provided either a general overview of VET attractiveness or limited insight on issues such as permeability or satisfaction with required skills.

Regarding VET image in Greece, Paidousi (2016) <sup>(3)</sup> highlights the lack of social acceptance and attractiveness. She attributes this to four main factors in regard to VET learners: (i) perceptions related to weaker school performance for those attending vocational schools <sup>(4)</sup>, (ii) lower parental educational level; (iii)

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<sup>(3)</sup> Paidousi, Ch. (2016), Ελκυστικότητα της Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης: Κοινωνικές και Έμφυλες Διαστάσεις [VET Attractiveness: Social and Gender dimensions], Άρθρα και Μελέτες (11), ΕΙΕΑΔ.

<sup>(4)</sup> Indicatively this has been confirmed by:

- Yiannis Milios (1984) as he mentions that 'technical vocational training crisis is primarily due to universal social devaluation, the deterioration of the social prestige of the' middle 'technical professions in Greek society'. See Paidousi (2016) mentioning Μηλιός Γ., (1984). Η κρίση της Τεχνικής - Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης, (Ένας ιδιότυπος ιδεολογικός «ρατσισμός») [The crisis of Technical and Vocational Education, (A peculiar ideological 'racism')], Θέσεις, Τεύχος 7, περίοδος: Απρίλιος - Ιούνιος 1984.
- Research conducted by the Greek Pedagogical Institute (2011), as Technical High School (TEL) students aged up to 19 had a strong belief that they would not be sufficient to study at a General Education Lyceum. See Paidousi (2016) mentioning Υπουργείο Εθνικής Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων, Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο, (2008). Έρευνα Απασχόλησης Αποφοίτων Ανώτερου Κύκλου Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης (ΤΕΕ-ΕΝΙΑΙΟ ΛΥΚΕΙΟ) [Employment Survey for Secondary Higher Education Graduates (ΤΕΕ-GENERAL LYCEUM) ]. Έργο: «Ανάπτυξη Παρατηρητηρίου Μετάβασης Αποφοίτων Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης και Αρχικής Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης στην Αγορά Εργασίας». Ομάδα Έργου: Γκλαβιάς Σωτήριος, Ραγιαδάκος Χρήστος, Καρβέλης Ιωάννης, Ρουσέας Παναγιώτης, Βρετάκου Βασιλεία.
- An OLME conference (2014) during which the problem of 'weak learners' choosing Technical Vocational Training was stated, while it was also mentioned that many of VET learners have 'diagnosed, inherent or not, learning difficulties', and 'to a large extent have low self-esteem and low expectations because of their reduced performance in the previous educational stages'. See Paidousi (2016) mentioning ΟΛΜΕ, 100 ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΤΙΚΟ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟ (2014). Ο ρόλος του Λυκείου και η Τεχνική Επαγγελματική Εκπαίδευση [The role of Lyceum and

limited possibilities for social mobility as rates of successful entrance to higher education are restricted, and (iv) gender orientation of pupils in vocational training which favors boys and, therefore, VET becomes less preferred by young girls. These features are reproduced over time, being responsible for relevant perception and attitude related to VET.

Among its findings, a 2011 Eurobarometer Survey (European Commission, 2012; 22-23) <sup>(5)</sup> describes a positive image for 72% of respondents in Greece, however it is important to record that there is no correlation between people's impression and their involvement in such training (only 30% have actually taken VET). Then again responses to more specific answers showed that Greeks hesitate to agree that VET gives access to modern equipment, a significant section of the society (65%) agrees that VET stimulates the creation of small companies, people most commonly say that they did not obtain any educational advice on learning pathways from a guidance counsellor (92%) and only 2% said that they used events and open days in schools as a source of information in choosing an educational path, the vast majority followed a vocational pathway due to personal interest, while future employment opportunities (98%), followed by the image of the school, institution or employer (90%) were cited as important in this choice (European Commission, 2012; 35, 67, 81, 87, 94, 95).

Mitrakos et al. (2010) <sup>(6)</sup>, as well as Pouliakas (2014) <sup>(7)</sup> and Livanos and Pouliakas (2011) <sup>(8)</sup> stress the persistent poor image of VET in Greece. They underline the greater tendency of young students to avoid VET mainly because of poor infrastructure, as well of other factors such as its school-based orientation and comparatively lower employment and income prospects.

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Technical Vocational Education], 4η Ομάδα Εργασίας «Τεχνική Επαγγελματική Εκπαίδευση, Κατάρτιση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση» Γιάννενα, 28, 29 & 30 Μαρτίου 2014.

<sup>(5)</sup> European Commission (2012). Special Eurobarometer 369: Attitudes towards vocational education and training.

<sup>(6)</sup> Mitrakos, T., Tsakloglou, P. & Cholezas, I. (2010). Determinants of wages in Greece, with emphasis on earnings of tertiary education graduates, Bank of Greece Economic Bulletin, Vol. 34 (Sep), pp.7-42.

<sup>(7)</sup> Pouliakas, K. (2014). A Balancing Act at Times of Austerity: Matching the Supply and Demand for Skills in the Greek Labour Market. IZA Discussion Paper No. 7915. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2389283>

<sup>(8)</sup> Livanos, I. & Pouliakas, K. (2011). Wage Returns to University Disciplines in Greece: Are Greek Higher Education Degrees Trojan Horses? Education Economics, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 411-445.

Boutsiouki (2014) <sup>(9)</sup> also acknowledges the negative social perception against VET in Greece, claiming that this is part of a failure to meet the personal and professional expectations of students, families and employers. She also notes that reforms in VET (i.e. Apprenticeship, EOPPEP Certification of IEK students' qualifications) and the new 'rhetoric' are viewed as an opportunity of improving attractiveness, effectiveness and/or 'a deeper change in the prevailing mindset'. However, while reflecting upon the recent crisis and the deterioration of the economic status of most Greek families, she claims that this has often resulted in encouraging young people to study in an IEK (Institute of Vocational Training) 'which is seen as beneficial option combining feasible professional outcomes with a lower financial burden' (2014: 22).

In particular, as Boutsiouki discusses VET reforms undergoing during 2010-2014, she reveals a set of factors that could influence VET attractiveness in Greece and thus contribute to the 'transformation of the broader national model of production promoted through the preparation of a specialized workforce' (2014: 24). As such she notes the significance of: (i) major investment in infrastructures, educational and laboratory equipment, (ii) reinforcement with appropriately trained administrative and teaching staff able to address organizational matters and to undertake initiatives on methodology and content, (iii) proactive involvement of social partners (in topics such as new specializations and curriculum) calling for the matching of skills/ competencies to labour market needs in addition to easing the education-to-work transition, and (iv) development of a clear vision concerning worldwide VET prospects and thus aiming to provide mobility opportunities for training or employment purposes. According to ReferNet Greece (2017) the 2017/2018 enrolment data for public IEK are indicative of the changing perception in favour of VET as this reflects initiatives aiming to upgrade VET in Greece <sup>(10)</sup>. Actually, as of autumn 2017, student's having successfully completed IEK vocational training in up-to-date specializations by way of foreseen by Law 4186/2013 (as in force) participated for the first time in the relevant practical and theoretical VET certification examinations. These were conducted under the jurisdiction of EOPPEP and in consistency with central requirements foreseen for new specializations (i.e. informed Subject Databanks,

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<sup>(9)</sup> Boutsiouki, S. (2014). Employment-oriented transformations in Greek education and training: lighting a fire or just filling a pail?, Conference Paper, Available at: [https://www.ilpc.org.uk/Portals/56/ilpc2014-paperupload/ILPC2014paper-Sofia%20Boutsiouki\\_ILPC%202014%20paper\\_20140330\\_062811.pdf](https://www.ilpc.org.uk/Portals/56/ilpc2014-paperupload/ILPC2014paper-Sofia%20Boutsiouki_ILPC%202014%20paper_20140330_062811.pdf)

<sup>(10)</sup> ReferNet Greece EOPPEP (2017), Upgraded studies at Greek IEK schools are becoming an attractive destination, News Item No3.

contemporary Study Guides matched with Initial Vocational Training Programs previously validated by EOPPEP).

Consequently, despite the fact that improving VET attractiveness and effectiveness remains a serious challenge rooted in long-lasting perceptions, Greece is gradually building upon creating a positive image for VET and the country has triggered a set of recent reforms for its educational and labour market system. Relevant changes in perceptions are reflected in the following analysis.



## CHAPTER 1.

# Awareness and knowledge of VET

This section focuses on the results from the Opinion Survey on VET about whether people in Greece are familiar with it, how they become informed and what they associate VET with. A majority (69%) of respondents were informed of VET even before the interview, this being a rate close to the EU-28 average of 71%. However, as a much higher share of the Greek respondents were primarily in General Education at the age of 16 to 18 years old (Greece: 79%, EU-28: 59%), this allows to say that under conditions initial hesitation at the earlier –still crucial- age could be turned into a more positive stance for VET later on.

The individual factors of awareness, along with the significance to which some aspects apply to respondents may differ within Greece (VET and General Education respondents), as well as in comparison to the EU-28 average. Specific results show that at a range of 79% to 92%, Greek respondents (even more than the respective EU-28 average) believe that VET always and/or often concerns four key aspects (Table 1.), independent of the kind of upper secondary education of the respondent. In fact, both categories extensively believe that VET always/often: (i) prepares for a specific occupation, (ii) precedes working life, (iii) occurs in a school environment, and (iv) relates to performing manual work. In comparison to previously mentioned aspects, as well as to the EU-28 average, it is also noted that: (i) a relevantly smaller (still sufficient) majority of 67% and 64% respectively considers that VET is always/often associated to personal development and/or continuous professional development in adult life, and (ii) a - more or less- narrower majority (55%) thinks that it always/often takes place in higher education.

Hence, according to aforementioned responses, in Greece awareness about VET seems satisfactory in general terms, while, when associated to individual factors the main striking difference with EU-28 average is the higher certainty attributed to the aforesaid key factors. This is justified by the fact that EU funding has created a rather informed environment. Also, Greek VET reforms (as of 2005 and even more during most recent years) in terms of addressing work related skills and increasing the content based significance of validation have had an additional effect in building a strong image, especially among targeted population.

**Table 1. Opinions revealing awareness about VET (June 2016, % of responds, Total, General Education & VET)**

	EU-28	Greece	Greece	
	Total		General	VET
<b>Answered 'always/often'</b>				
It prepares for a specific occupation	87%	92%	94%	95%
It takes place before starting working life	75%	85%	86%	88%
It occurs in a school environment	75%	84%	87%	87%
It is about doing manual work	70%	79%	82%	84%
It occurs in a work environment	75%	70%	71%	74%
It is about personal development	79%	67%	70%	67%
It is about continuous professional development in adult life	76%	64%	66%	67%
It takes place in higher education (i.e. university)	45%	55%	57%	57%

Source: European Public Opinion Survey on VET, Cedefop (2017)

As expected, VET respondents are better informed of VET. This in fact is furthermore confirmed by other answers in the Survey. In particular, those about whether information concerning VET was made available at the time the participant was deciding about his/her upper secondary education choices. It appeared that while in general 50% of Greek respondents were informed (against a 57% EU-28 average), however, this was related to great differences among the two groups of respondents: the majority of VET participants were informed (Greece: 76%, EU-28: 72%), while among General Education participants a much smaller fraction was informed, even less significant than their European counterparts (Greece: 43%, EU-28: 48%).

Taking into account answers from both groups of respondents, the factors that mostly played a role in the choice for their specific upper secondary education (when at the age of 16 to 18 years old) focused on the potential to find a job and career prospects, though, not necessarily understood as properly paid (Table 2.). In fact, such expectations appeared quite higher than the EU-28 average. Greek respondents also paid enough attention -although less compared to aforementioned- to factors such as their interest in the subjects, advice received by friends or family.

**Table 2. Factors that might have played a role for the upper secondary education choice at the age of 16 to 18 years old in Greece & EU-28 (June 2016, % of responds, Total, General Education & VET)**

	EU-28	Greece	Greece	
		Total	General	VET
The career prospects	31%	45%	46%	43%
The likelihood of finding a job	36%	40%	33%	64%
You are interested in the subjects	41%	37%	38%	33%
Your family or friends advised you to	33%	34%	35%	30%
You are good at the subjects	31%	34%	41%	9%
The possibility of continuing to higher education	32%	32%	39%	6%
The possibility of having a good salary	21%	23%	22%	25%
Your friends were taking the same subjects	12%	13%	14%	12%
The length of the studies	13%	12%	12%	14%
The distance from your home	14%	11%	12%	7%
The cost of the education	7%	9%	9%	9%
Someone at school (teacher or careers advisor) advised you to	18%	9%	7%	14%
Someone from the world of work advised you to	9%	4%	3%	11%
Other	6%	10%	10%	8%

N.B.: Multiple answers possible

Source: European Public Opinion Survey on VET, Cedefop (2017)

However, in the specific case of VET participants, it is noteworthy to mention the very limited role attributed to their ability to cope with the subjects, as well as the possibility to continue to higher education. So for this group VET appears as a choice due to possible job and career opportunities, rather than based on ability or as a university pathway.

Respectively, General Education participants' are more likely to state that career options, followed by capability and interest in subjects, as well as the possibility to continue in higher education, in addition to relevant advice from close by environment (family, friend), led them towards choosing general education at upper secondary level. Interestingly, General Education participants

were even likely to receive advice against attending VET <sup>(11)</sup>. This seems to confirm existing stereotypical attitudes and negative perceptions of VET in Greece. It is also more or less similar to the EU-28 case, with the exception that people in Greece rely much more on the career prospects expectations generated by General Education attendance (Greece: 46%, EU-28: 31%).

To sum up the above, in Greece awareness levels about VET appears satisfactory. Also, knowledge of the VET experience seems available to some extent, especially at the crucial age before up taking decisions for upper secondary education paths. At that same time, advice from family or friends seems to play a role against choosing VET. Replies among VET participants reveal a quite conscious preference based upon potential job prospects (twice as high than non-VET respondents), while the other group of respondents (noteworthy to remind that they are the majority of interviewees) seems to 'follow the mass' to General Education. In both categories, however, especially in the case of General Education respondents, the lack of systematic professional (namely from school or work related) career and advice guidance is evident both in comparative and absolute terms.

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<sup>(11)</sup> As suggested by relevant replies in the 2016 European Public Opinion Survey on VET, it becomes interesting to note that 3 out of every 10 General Education respondents were discouraged to uptake VET by the close environment of family (mostly) and friends.

## CHAPTER 2.

# Attractiveness and access

Based upon rather conventional understanding of some VET parameters in terms of attractiveness and access, the results from the Opinion Survey in Greece indicates the firm perception in favour of General Education compared to VET (notably as identified among General Education participants) <sup>(12)</sup>. Specifically, according to agreement to relevant statements/questions (Table 3):

- (a) the majority of Greek respondents (85%) agree that General Education has a more positive image than VET. However, there are some variations between the two groups of participants, as well as with the respective EU-28 average in each case. In fact, the vast majority of General Education participants agreed to this (Greece: 90%, EU-28: 82%), while the agreeing share of VET participants was less (Greece: 79%, EU-28: 71%);
- (b) overall, 29% of Greek respondents agree upon a -mostly 'fairly'- negative image of VET among those aged 16-18. Of these, 25% attended VET, while 34% attended General Education. Comparison with the EU-28 average (23%) shows a smaller share attributing a negative image to VET. As the negative image is related mostly to a 'fairly' negative approach against VET, this implies that there is room for improving attractiveness in order to transform any misleading or stereotypical understanding of VET;

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<sup>(12)</sup> Alexandra Ioannidou (2013) mentions the 'Royal Pathway' of General Education, while characterizing technical vocational education (TEE) 'stepchild' of the Greek educational system. See Ioannidou A. (2013). Challenges and perspectives for vocational education and training in Greece [Προκλήσεις και προοπτικές για την επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση στην Ελλάδα], Slides from Presentation in November 2013.

**Table 3. VET Attractiveness and access in Greece and EU-28 (June 2016, % of responds, Total, General Education & VET)**

	EU-28	Greece	Greece	
	Total		General	VET
<b>Extent to which respondents agree</b>				
General education has a more positive image than VET	74%	85%	90%	79%
Upper secondary VET education has a negative image among aged 16-18 (% of 'fairly' negative)	23% (20%)	29% (24%)	34% (28%)	25% (23%)
It is easier to get a qualification in vocational education than in general education	63%	85%	88%	85%
Students with low grades are directed towards vocational education in Greece/EU-28 (accordingly)	75%	84%	89%	78%
In Greece general education has a more positive image than vocational education	74%	85%	90%	79%
People in vocational education learn skills that are needed by employers in Greece/EU-28 (accordingly)	86%	91%	89%	93%
Vocational education leads to well paid jobs	61%	48%	43%	59%
Vocational education leads to jobs that are highly regarded in Greece/EU-28 (accordingly)	60%	60%	58%	69%
Vocational education allows you to find a job quickly after obtaining a qualification or diploma	67%	53%	52%	62%
It is easy to continue into higher education such as university after vocational education at upper secondary education	54%	55%	58%	73%
Vocational education at upper secondary education provides opportunities to study or work abroad	61%	57%	58%	68%

Source: European Public Opinion Survey on VET, Cedefop (2017)

- (c) in terms of VET image, the grand majority (84-85%) agree that:
- (i) it is easier to get a qualification in VET (differences in agreement between the two groups of participants are small). Yet, there is great variation in comparison to other European counterparts (Greece: 85%, EU-28: 63%);
  - (ii) students with low grades are directed towards VET. However, there are considerable variations between the two groups of participants (General Education participants: 89%, VET participants: 78%).

It seems that expectations concerning the overall academic achievement (good grades, inclination in lessons etc.) until the point of choosing an educational path, plays a central role in deciding (or not) upon a vocational orientation.

In terms of labour market outcomes, to some degree the picture is mixed. An extensive (91%) share of all Greek respondents trusts that people in VET learn skills that are needed by employers. However, a roughly reasonable proportion (6 out of 10 respondents) believes that VET offers jobs which are well thought-of ('highly regarded') and a rather moderate share believes that VET leads to well paid jobs or allows individuals to find a job quickly after gaining necessary credentials (qualification or diploma).

In terms of VET opportunities for accessing higher education and study/work abroad, more than half of respondents believe VET grants such opportunities (55% and 57% respectively, with VET respondents more inclined to agree on these). Yet, Greek respondents seem divided (with some excess towards those who find it difficult) when asked whether it's easy or difficult to switch from VET to General Education (Greece: 49%, EU-28: 42%).

The above analysis shows the need to make progress in VET attractiveness and image with measures intended to promote (both among the general public, as well as students at time of choosing their upper secondary education) VET's benefits. Possible measures to promote VET benefits may include: (i) the use of creative, interactive and productive ways of providing information (i.e. expanding the use of the updated PLOTEUS portal) <sup>(13)</sup>, (ii) effort to improve the quality of guidance offered to young learners and their families by career guidance professionals (i.e. through the use of ESF funding), (iii) promoting VET value added on a national and local level (i.e. via a variety of tools and events with the involvement of all stakeholders), (iv) motivating students participation in VET by achieving conditions for learners self-fulfilment (i.e. fostering the new Apprenticeship system and its focus both on delivering clear results regarding their professional expectations and safeguarding learners in terms of insurance, payments, health and security standards, as well as social security arrangements).

Nonetheless, other measures are yet to show their positive impact. As such, enabling access to higher education was recently legislated (i.e. the number of available places for EPAL <sup>(14)</sup> students is governed by a 5% quota system instead of 1% until 2018), while as links to higher education institutions (i.e. two year courses for EPAL graduates in order to support the improvement of skills within an enhanced post-secondary environment) have not so far revealed their influence.

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<sup>(13)</sup> Ploteus: portal on Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe.

<sup>(14)</sup> VET route goes through three-year vocational programs at *Epaggelmatiko Lykeio* School (EPAL).

## CHAPTER 3.

# Experience and satisfaction

According to the Opinion Survey, education received at upper secondary education is generally school based. In fact, a vast majority of overall Greek respondents state that all upper secondary education was received at school (Greece: 89%, EU-28: 70%), while even when the separate groups are examined only 5% of General Education and 31% of VET respondents confirm receiving at least some education in the workplace. This seems consistent with following observations showing the low levels of satisfaction for work related skills developed by those who had taken a general academic orientation.

Greek VET respondents, as outlined in Table 4., are very satisfied with the general and work related skills acquired (94% and 88% respectively), as well as with the quality of teaching (90%) and to a lesser extent with the available equipment (69%) <sup>(15)</sup>. Conversely, General Education respondents are generally less satisfied than their VET counterparts and in particular they seem less satisfied with the work related skills acquired (49%) and existing equipment (44%). Comparisons with the respective EU-28 groups, indicates room for improving satisfaction in Greece regarding available equipment, especially in the case of General Education respondents.

**Table 4. Satisfaction for aspects of education received in upper secondary education (June 2016, % of responds, Greece and EU-28, General Education and VET)**

	EU-28		Greece	
	General	VET	General	VET
<b>Total of 'satisfied'</b>				
General skills developed	88%	90%	85%	94%
Quality of teaching	80%	89%	80%	90%
Work-related skills developed	62%	87%	49%	88%
Equipment that was available	73%	81%	44%	69%

Source: European Public Opinion Survey on VET, Cedefop (2017)

<sup>(15)</sup> Even in these cases most respondents confirm to be 'fairly' satisfied while many less are 'very' satisfied.



Greek VET respondents believe to have developed during their education at upper secondary level essential soft skills (i.e. creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking), as well as fundamental work related skills (i.e. in S&T and entrepreneurship), but less so cultural awareness, foreign language and computer knowledge (Table 5.). This is a profile that differs from that of a General Education respondent who believes to have developed in a less extent to be creative, cooperative, provided with entrepreneurship skills, as well as the ability to arrange own learning, but confirms to a higher extent of possessing mathematical skills, critical thinking, social and civic competences and cultural mindfulness.

**Table 5. Skills developed in upper secondary education (June 2016, % of responds, Greece and EU-28, Total, General Education and VET)**

	EU-28	Greece	Greece	
	Total		General	VET
<b>Answered 'yes'</b>				
Ability to be creative	67%	62%	58%	76%
Ability to work with others	83%	56%	52%	75%
Communication skills	76%	74%	75%	72%
Ability to think critically	74%	74%	75%	68%
Mathematical skills	73%	78%	82%	63%
Science and technology skills	62%	48%	44%	63%
Ability to pursue and organise own learning	76%	50%	48%	60%
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	58%	42%	38%	56%
Social and civic competences to engage in active democratic participation	60%	62%	63%	56%
Digital and computer skills	43%	33%	31%	42%
Speaking a foreign language	58%	45%	47%	40%
Cultural awareness (appreciation of music, performing arts, literature and visual arts)	54%	44%	49%	28%

Source: European Public Opinion Survey on VET, Cedefop (2017)

## CHAPTER 4.

# Outcomes and effectiveness

In terms of VET effectiveness, results from the Opinion Survey (Table 6.) tell us that a large majority of respondents, regardless of their educational orientation, believe VET strengthens the economy (77%), helps tackling social exclusion (75%) and reduces unemployment (66%). VET participants, however, are more likely than general education participants to agree that VET strengthens the Greek economy (83% VET participants vs. 78% GE participants). It is noteworthy to comment that, compared to the EU-28 average, a lower share of overall Greek respondents believe VET helps fighting unemployment (Greece: 66%, EU-28: 80%).

At the individual level, 39% of Greek respondents declared they found their first job within six months of completing their main studies (against 73% in EU-28), however the figure for VET respondents was much higher (51% vs. 34%). Also, compared to European counterparts a much greater share of Greek respondents had problems in attaining a job after fulfilling highest level of education (Greece: 45%, EU-28: 27%). In the case of General Education respondents, the main reason behind this was the lack of work experience. Yet, satisfaction from their professional career is expressed by 67% of total Greek respondents, though a share which is not as high as the EU-28 average (81%).

**Table 6. VET outcomes and effectiveness (June 2016, % of responds, Greece and EU-28, Total, General Education & VET)**

	EU-28	Greece	Greece	
	Total		General	VET
<b>Answered 'yes'</b>				
Vocational education and training strengthen the Greek/EU-28 economy (accordingly)	84%	77%	78%	83%
Vocational education and training play an important role in reducing unemployment in Greece/EU-28 (accordingly)	80%	66%	67%	68%
Vocational education and training help to tackle social exclusion in Greece/EU-28 (accordingly)	78%	75%	77%	75%
Had difficulties in finding a job after completing highest level of education	27%	45%	48%	50%
Satisfied with professional career	81%	67%	69%	74%
Found first long-term job up to six months after main studies (including the period before finishing)	73%	39%	34%	51%
Continued studying at a higher level of education after finishing upper secondary	58%	52%	56%	40%
Participated in work-related training during last 12 months	19%	5%	7%	11%

Source: European Public Opinion Survey on VET, Cedefop (2017)

The results above call for more and better promotion of VET, as it could be further exploited as an educational option in order to address severe unemployment problems caused by the crisis in Greece. This is underlined by the fact that Greece is a country with good levels of educated people at the same time as a lot of young people can't find a job and vacancies are still unfulfilled (OECD, 2018: 22, 207) <sup>(16)</sup>.

In terms of further education and training, among the Greek sample, VET respondents are generally less likely to have continued to higher education (40%), but more likely than their General Education peers, to have attended work-related training in the last year (11%).

<sup>(16)</sup> This is widely recognized in labour market analysis for Greece. See OECD (2018), *Education for a Bright Future in Greece*, Reviews of National Policies for Education, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264298750-en>.

Also, according to ReferNet Greece see (pages 22 and 42) Athanasouli, A., Georgiadis, N., Karnemidou, A., Mavris, D. (2016). *Vocational education and training in Europe – Greece*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports. [http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/2016\\_CR\\_GR.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/2016_CR_GR.pdf)

It is interesting to see that while all respondents strongly agree that VET contributes positively to the economy, the Opinion Survey seems to show an interesting picture when looking into the responses concerning effectiveness in terms of learning and career opportunities among VET and non-VET, as well as among Greek and EU-28 respondents. In Greece, people are more likely to have difficulties in finding a job or work related training (Table 6.), however VET respondents (although numerically less) seem to be in a somewhat better situation than General Education respondents. To conclude, when considering the so called 'big picture' there is considerable appreciation of VET contribution to the economy. However as expected at times of economic crisis, job and career related difficulties exist and these are more acute in the case of non-VET participants.

## CHAPTER 5.

# Main conclusions and further research needs

This 2016 Opinion Survey allowed the understanding of awareness, attractiveness and effectiveness of VET in Greece, as this is perceived within the relevant Greek context by VET and non-VET individuals. It gave insight about their perspectives, while also highlighting comparison with the EU-28 average. Although not all developments can be explained by the Survey, there are some interesting observations, when looking more in depth to responses, especially when this is discussed with reference to the educational background of the respondents. This section provides principal conclusions from the previous analysis, as well as suggestions for further study.

In Greece, as in other European countries, some things have been changing: policies, actions and perceptions about VET. As in most structural issues regarding the economy and society, embedded views and attitudes become the most demanding issue. This explains why VET has shown gradual adjustment (or even forward moving), at the same time with persisting short comes. This is not only the case of VET. This is not only the case of Greece.

Perhaps not surprisingly, as the Survey was conducted in June 2016, some reforms introduced previously in Greece have left their positive footprint on people's attitudes towards VET. This becomes more obvious among VET participants, however they represent a much smaller share of those attending upper secondary education. Compared to previous analysis it becomes evident, that perception of VET has improved since the past, possibly because the crisis has led to increased understanding for adjustment to labour market requirements and VET, on the other hand, offers tangible results. Another reason is that a more clear strategy has been put in place either due to VET reforms and/or particular orientation of European funding.

As highlighted earlier, more specific conclusions based upon responses in Greece demonstrate the following:

- (a) People are generally familiar with VET, while they are also duly aware of its various dimensions (i.e. regarding what it is associated with). As for the factors playing a role upon deciding an educational pathway, it becomes evident that among VET participants', their choice was principally based upon VET being more closely related to finding employment. Still, VET seems less motivating than General Education. Actually, there is still work to

do in the field of professional career guidance and this is also apparent as family and friends take up this role, while in very limited cases students choose VET because of their own capability or inclination to this (being 'good at subjects'). Career advice and guidance when left alone to family and friends, might cause a less informed -sometimes misleading- picture of VET.

- (b) As for VET attractiveness and access, the need to make progress in Greece remains a challenge. It became obvious that this should include even more intensive effort towards measures intended to promote VET's benefits. In this perspective it becomes necessary not only to think in terms of making VET more attractive, but also for more and better promotion of VET, both inside and outside VET (including all stakeholders such as students, parents, VET providers, employers, as well as the general public).
- (c) In terms of experience and satisfaction, people who have actually taken part in VET in Greece seem quite satisfied not only with general and work-related skills gained during their upper secondary education, but also with the soft skills they developed. Conversely, those who had taken a general academic orientation seem to be less satisfied with the work related skills developed. This suggests that while VET is widely seen as beneficial, especially in gaining skills that should lead to a job, it is perhaps not seen as being quite as attractive as General Education.
- (d) VET outcomes and effectiveness reveals two important messages. At macro level, VET seems to have a positive impact on the economy, while at the individual level VET graduates seem to have better labour market prospects as they are less likely to find difficulties in getting a job or work related training.

Finally, regarding the above, as part of the National Strategic Framework for VET, undergoing and planned interventions in Greece are expected to contribute towards facing weaknesses, raising overall quality, improving motivation to participate and therefore making VET a more attractive option. Actually, these are expected through already initiated/implemented actions, such as:

- promotion and strengthening of the social role of Vocational Education via the 'New beginning in EPAL' approach;
- upgrading and expansion of the new Apprenticeship scheme, which among others improves the accessibility of VET graduates to the labour market;
- upgrading of VET quality by modernizing VET curricula and VET Guides, as well as the programs that will meet Apprenticeship requirements;
- the reinforcement of high-level VET by linking VET to higher education;

- enhancing the interconnection of VET with the labour market and society by exploiting the outcomes of the Labour Market Needs Analysis Mechanism.

After broad implementation of the above interventions and upon conclusion of the Partnership Agreement for the 2014-20 Programming Period, it would be suitable to conduct a renewed Opinion Survey in order to capture outcomes concerning Greece. Moreover, knowledge could be deepened by addressing additional issues related to evaluation and validation in VET, the effects from outdated or upgraded level of training programs content, whether reliable labour market data analysis has had a positive impact or to what extent available interventions have made specific jobs and/or sectors more attractive.

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