



The Greek apprenticeship scheme for adults

Athens | 14–15 November 2022

The General Secretariat for VET, LLL and Youth of the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, hosted a Benchlearning country visit on 14 - 15 November that focused on the country's new reform of the apprenticeship system for adults. The event, held in the context of the European Year of Youth, brought together more than 100 EU and national stakeholders. These included the Minister, Deputy-Minister and Secretary-General of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the European Commission, Cedefop, the European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Apprentices Network (EAN), benchlearning coordinators from Belgium, France, Hungary and Latvia, the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, as well as regional coordinators of apprenticeships and VET teachers.

WELCOME NOTE BY THE MINISTER

Welcoming the audience, **Niki Kerameus**, *Greek Minister of Education and Religious Affairs*, highlighted the pioneering changes of the country's new reform to the apprenticeship system for adults and presented the early results of the reform. Following the Minister, the Deputy-Minister, **Zetta Makri**, and the Secretary-General, **Georgios Voutsinos**, took the floor and highlighted Greece's ambition to improve its apprenticeship landscape in line with the Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA) and in light of the twin digital and green transition.



'Our vision is turning apprenticeships into an informed career choice for everyone, instead of a last resort option for the few.'

Niki Kerameus, Greek Minister of Education and Religious Affairs

DAY 1

Nadia PISLI (Head of the Secretary General Office) kicked-off the event and presented a consolidated report on the actions carried out during the European Year of Youth, included in the map of activities of the European Commission. In turn, **Tamás Várnai** (European Commission) commended the political will of Greece in supporting apprenticeships. He then presented the European Commission's actions to support apprenticeships with an emphasis on the benchlearning process, before kicking off the event. The first day of the event included three sessions:

1. Setting the scene

The 1st session focused on the benefits of apprenticeships and the enabling conditions for multi-stakeholder participation. The session then touched on the new reform of the apprenticeship system for adults in Greece and its early results.

2. Challenges

The 2nd session brought into the spotlight the challenges of implementing the new reform of the apprenticeship system for adults in Greece. In this context, different stakeholders shared their views on what works well and what can be improved in the future.

3. EU work

The 3rd session featured presentations from the European Commission (EC), the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Apprentices Network (EAN) that highlighted what the EU is doing for apprenticeships.

SETTING THE SCENE

Vlasis Korovilos (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training - Cedefop) set the scene by presenting the benefits of quality apprenticeships for all involved actors. Vlasis emphasised that opening-up apprenticeships to adults can help companies and sectors to retrain staff, attract new learners, and address acute shortages, as well as help individuals to earn while learning. He then pointed to social partner activation as one of the key enablers for multi-stakeholder participation in apprenticeships. Vlasis's key message was that having a shared and clear vision on what apprenticeships are for can help Member States to make the most out of what they have to offer.

Following Vlasis, **Athanasios Tsagatakis** (Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs) presented some of the main features of the new reform of the apprenticeship system. These include the option for apprentices to access higher education, an increased workplace component of the apprenticeship (80 % of the time spent at the workplace), and other features. Athanasios then pointed to the importance of evaluating the new system's course, with the view to improve it.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

In this session, representatives of companies, regional apprenticeship coordinators and VET teachers shared their views on the new apprenticeship system for adults. All stakeholders agreed that apprenticeships are an important resource for both students, who have the opportunity to experience first hand the reality of work environment, and employees, who can, through apprenticeships, develop new skills. However, they also recognised some **challenges**. These included the need to increase awareness amongst and reduce the administrative burden for employers, strengthen the link of apprenticeships with local labour markets, and develop a shared vision on what apprentices are for. Stakeholders also proposed some **suggestions** on improving the new system. These included extending the duration of apprenticeships, enabling companies to select candidates and, equally, enabling candidates to have taster sessions (e.g. site visits) that can help them to see if the apprenticeship is a good fit for them.

EU WORK ON APPRENTICES

Kicking off the session, **Tamás Várnai** presented the Commission's latest actions on apprenticeships, and invited the audience to join the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** and benefit from the available services. **Stefan Thomas** (ETF) then shared his experience working with candidate and neighbouring countries. Stefan pointed to the importance of considering employers across the whole **curriculum value chain**. Stefan talked about the importance of using non-monetary incentives for attracting employers to apprenticeships because monetary incentives can quickly pose a burden on public budgets as apprenticeship schemes grow. Finally, **Giusepinna Tucci** (EAN) presented the seven priorities of EAN¹ and stressed the need to involve and represent learners in the co-creation of the systems they are expected to work within. Closing her presentation, Giuseppina called for an increased focus on issues such as mental health, and discrimination in apprenticeships.

¹ For more information, see: <https://apprenticesnetwork.eu/7-priorities/>

CLOSING

The event was closed by the **Georgios Voutsinos** (Secretary-General for VET, LLL & Youth of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs) who gave awards to companies that have supported the post-secondary apprenticeship class.



'Our efforts to involve more private sector companies in our apprenticeship scheme have worked: these companies now offer an impressive 56% of the total positions offered.'

Georgios Voutsinos, Secretary General for VET, LLL & Youth

HOW TO ATTRACT LARGE COMPANIES:

- Involve companies at all levels
- Use large companies as ambassadors
- Showcase exemplary projects
- Introduce non-monetary incentives
- Reduce administrative burden

DAY 2

In the second day of the event, following a visit to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, a benchlearning exchange on how to involve and engage large companies in apprenticeships took place. The exchange took the form of a round table discussion. Benchlearning coordinators from several EU countries (i.e. BE-nl, BE-fr, FR, HU, LV) presented good practices to engage and support companies to offer apprenticeships. Benchlearning coordinators then discussed these approaches with Greek regional coordinators and representatives of the Ministry as well as the potential challenges in and strategies for addressing them. A representative of the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV) as well as representatives from various enterprises participated in the round table discussion. The discussion pointed to several recommendations that can improve the participation of companies in apprenticeships.



Site visit to Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center

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