OECD

Reviews of National Policies for Education

Improving Learning Outcomes in Greece

Strengthening School Governance, Teacher Professionalism and Digital Education

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STRENGTHENING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AND DIGITAL EDUCATION

OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

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Foreword

Greece has undertaken a wide-ranging reform agenda in recent years to improve the relevance, quality and equity of its education system. These efforts have led to important progress, while also revealing areas where further development may be needed. In this context, the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports invited the OECD to conduct an Education Policy Review to provide international insights and analysis to inform future efforts.

This review is part of the OECD's *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, carried out by the Directorate for Education and Skills. It examines policy priorities and implementation challenges across four thematic areas: school autonomy and accountability (Chapter 2), the teaching profession (Chapter 3), early childhood education and care (Chapter 4), and digital education (Chapter 5).

The OECD review process was conducted in close collaboration with Greek authorities and stakeholders. It included the preparation of a background report by the national authorities and a series of in-depth interviews, exchanges, and data analyses to provide a comparative, evidence-based perspective. The review builds on national data, international sources such as PISA and Education at a Glance, and relevant practices from other education systems.

This report presents the findings and policy recommendations from the OECD review. It aims to support Greece in advancing its education reforms by highlighting both strengths and areas for further development. The OECD review team hopes that the analysis presented here will support national authorities and stakeholders in taking forward their vision to continue building a more effective, equitable, and future-oriented education system for all learners in Greece.

Acknowledgements

This Education Policy Review of Greece draws on international evidence and comparative policy practices across OECD countries. The review process combined responses to a comprehensive background questionnaire by the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, extensive desk research, and a series of in-depth interviews with a wide range of national stakeholders, conducted during a country visit in February 2025 (see Annex A).

This report was prepared as part of the OECD's *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, coordinated by the Policy Advice and Implementation Division of the Directorate for Education and Skills. The OECD review team was led by José-Luis Álvarez-Galván, who coordinated the project and was the lead author of Chapters 1 (introduction) and 2 (school autonomy). Chapter 3 on the teaching profession was developed by Luka Boeskens, Chapter 4 on early childhood education and care was authored by Stéphanie Jamet, while Chapter 5 on digital education was prepared by Margus Pedaste (external expert, University of Tartu) (see Annex B). Young Chang provided support and co-authored chapters 1 and 2, Camille Sirera, Beatrice Bottura and Pedro García de León, provided extensive editorial and analytical support to the review process, Gwen Jacotin provided statistical analysis and support while Thomas Radinger and Camilla Stronati contributed to the initial phases of this project. The team benefited from the oversight and guidance of Paulo Santiago, Head of the Policy Advice and Implementation Division, and Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills. Administrative and editorial support was provided by Christina Mitrakos and Cécile Bily, with Eda Cabbar coordinating the publication process.

The OECD review team wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Greek authorities for their support throughout this process. In particular, the team extends its thanks to the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, under the leadership of Minister Sophia Zacharaki and also acknowledges the earlier contributions of former Minister Kyriakos Pierrakakis, who envisaged the project, and former Secretary General Ioannis Katsaros during the initial stages of the review. Special thanks go to Nelly Kanella Exarchakou, Head of the Minister's Cabinet, and to Panagiotis Passas, Director General for International and European Affairs, Education for Hellenic Diaspora and Intercultural Education, for his coordination and engagement throughout the process. The team is also grateful to Ioanna Patereli and Xanthippi Tokmakidou, Advisers to the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, to Panagiota Karkaletsi, Head of the European Programmes Department, and to Maria Fassari, Head of the International Affairs Department. Particular thanks are extended to Zoe Karathanasi, Counsellor at the Permanent Delegation of Greece to the OECD, for her continued assistance in facilitating the review.

The OECD is thankful to all those who contributed responses to the background questionnaire, as well as the many stakeholders who participated in interviews and workshops and generously shared their insights. These included representatives from various departments of the Ministry, regional and local education authorities, school leaders and teachers, pedagogical counsellors, researchers, professional associations, unions, civil society organisations and the private sector. Their perspectives were invaluable in shaping this report.

The European Commission provided financial support through the Erasmus+ programme to co-finance this review and contributed to the process by participating in virtual and in-person meetings, and by offering guidance, expertise and feedback on successive drafts. The review team is particularly grateful to Dimitra Kanellopoulou, Team Leader and Education Policy Officer at the European Commission, and Szilvia Kalman, acting Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission, for their collaboration and constructive engagement throughout the project. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

The OECD review team extends its gratitude to all those involved for their contributions to this review and hopes that the report will support Greece in its efforts to strengthen the quality, equity and future-readiness of its education system.

Table of contents

FIGURES

TABLES

BOXES

Executive summary

Greece has undertaken significant efforts in recent years to strengthen its education system, enhance the quality of teaching and learning, and support schools in addressing equity challenges. These efforts are taking place in a context marked by a historically centralised governance structure, persistent resource constraints, and the need to reinforce the implementation of reforms across levels of the system. Drawing on evidence from international data sources, national policy documents, and interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, this Education Policy Review provides an assessment of the Greek school system and identifies concrete policy priorities to support system-wide improvement.

The report covers early childhood education and care, primary and secondary education, with focussed analysis on five key areas: school autonomy, the teaching profession, early childhood education and care (ECEC), and digital education. Over the past decade, Greece has taken important steps to decentralise selected responsibilities to schools, introduce new teacher appraisal and professional development frameworks, and expand access to ECEC. A national digital strategy and related efforts have also enabled broader access to digital tools. Despite these advances, the country still faces challenges related to institutional local capacity, fragmented governance, limited purposeful integration of digital technologies in pedagogical practices, and the implementation of reforms in practice.

To address these challenges, the report identifies the following policy priorities:

Strengthening school autonomy, leadership and local capacity

Over the past decade, Greece has introduced important elements of school autonomy through internal school evaluation (re-introduction of this measure), school improvement planning and new school leadership roles. These reforms signal a gradual shift toward a more participatory model of school governance. At the same time, Greece remains one of the most centralised systems in the OECD in areas such as staff management, budgeting and curriculum implementation. Schools have limited discretion to adapt resources to local needs, and governance responsibilities across central agencies, regional structures and support services are often fragmented. School leaders play a central role in driving pedagogical improvement, yet many face heavy administrative workloads, uneven preparation for leadership responsibilities and restricted access to tailored professional development. The capacity of local support structures, including Education Advisers, counsellors and regional directorates, remains variable across the country.

Policy priority: Strengthen school leadership and build local capacity for improvement. This requires clarifying roles and responsibilities across agencies, progressively expanding schools' decision-making authority, and reinforcing leadership preparation and ongoing training. Stronger professional standards for school leaders, clearer expectations for pedagogical leadership, and more coherent support structures will be essential to support schools in using autonomy effectively.

Supporting the teaching profession and aligning appraisal mechanisms with professional growth

Teachers are the cornerstone of Greece's reform agenda. The creation of new roles (such as mentors and co-ordinators), increased numbers of permanent appointments and the recently introduced teacher appraisal system represent significant steps towards elevating the teaching profession. However, given demographic pressures, the system relies heavily on substitute teachers, and teachers' participation in high-quality professional learning remains limited. The new teacher appraisal system provides a promising foundation but is resource-intensive and not yet systematically linked to teachers' professional learning or to school improvement processes. Greece does not currently have a widely recognised framework defining high-quality teaching, which limits coherence across teacher education, appraisal, professional learning and career development.

Policy priority: Align teacher appraisal with professional learning and career development. A national competence framework for teachers and school leaders would clarify expectations at different career stages and guide improvements across professional development, appraisal and school leadership. Strengthening school-based professional learning, enhancing the role of mentors and co-ordinators and ensuring that appraisal supports continuous improvement will be central to building a more coherent, sustainable and effective teaching profession.

Improving access, quality and coherence in Early Childhood Education and Care

The expansion of compulsory pre-primary education for children aged four and above marks an important achievement for Greece. A new curriculum offers clearer pedagogical direction and opportunities to strengthen early learning. However, the ECEC sector remains fragmented: services for children under age four fall under multiple governance structures, access varies considerably across municipalities and quality assurance mechanisms are uneven. Structural quality, such as group sizes, staff-child ratios and staff working conditions, also varies widely.

Policy priority: Expand access and quality in early childhood education and care. Greece should strengthen pedagogical quality in pre-primary settings; improve structural conditions to support high-quality interaction and learning; and develop a coherent strategy to integrate services for children under four. Better system-wide data on participation, workforce and quality will be essential to monitor progress and ensure equitable access for all children.

Advancing the meaningful use of digital technologies in education

Greece has invested substantially in digital infrastructure, platforms and educational resources. The national digital strategy and the forthcoming Strategic Plan place a strong emphasis on digital competences, artificial intelligence readiness and the role of external partners in supporting innovation. Nonetheless, the use of digital tools in everyday classroom practice seems to remain limited and uneven. Teachers report varied levels of confidence in digital pedagogy, and evaluation of digital initiatives is not yet systematic.

Policy priority: Advance the meaningful use of digital tools in teaching and learning. Greece should strengthen teachers' digital competences, improve equitable access to digital infrastructure, and ensure that digital tools align with curricular goals. Clearer governance, stronger evaluation mechanisms and enhanced leadership capacity at school level will support the responsible, purposeful and equitable use of digital technologies.

Final consideration: A commitment to evidence-informed and coherent reform

The review highlights Greece's strong engagement with evidence-informed policymaking and its commitment to improving the quality and equity of education. Recent reforms demonstrate determination to modernise the system and support schools in addressing persistent challenges. To realise their full potential, reforms will need to be sequenced, prioritised and supported by robust implementation strategies.

A coherent framework that aligns teacher development, school evaluation, ECEC expansion and digital transformation will be essential (also considering the curriculum). Stronger data systems, targeted support for disadvantaged schools and sustained investment in school leadership and teacher professionalism will help ensure that reforms translate into improved learning outcomes and greater equity. The most recent strategy for primary and secondary education contains promising elements in this direction.

Assessment and recommendations

Greece has made significant progress in advancing its education reform agenda over the past decade. Major initiatives have aimed to enhance the quality and equity of the education system, including the (re)introduction of internal and external school evaluation, reforms to teacher policy, the expansion of early childhood education, and important steps toward digital transformation. These efforts are especially notable given the economic constraints, demographic pressures and longstanding structural challenges faced by the system. They reflect a strong commitment to modernising education and aligning it more closely with the needs of students, schools and society.

Despite these advances, persistent challenges continue to affect the performance and equity of the system. According to PISA 2022, Greek students' outcomes remain below the OECD average in all three domains, with a particularly steep decline in mathematics and reading since 2018. Disparities across socio-economic, geographical and school-level dimensions remain important. Greece also continues to operate one of the most centralised systems in the OECD, that is meant to secure national standards but is also limiting schools' ability to respond to local needs. Many of the reform tools introduced in recent years are promising, but their impact on classroom practice will depend on strengthening implementation capacity at local level and improving coherence across policies and structures.

The following assessment outlines the main strengths and challenges of the Greek education system identified in this review and summarises key recommendations proposed to support sustained improvement.

Strengthening school autonomy with accountability and local capacity building

Strengths

Greece has established important structural foundations for more balanced governance. The (re)introduction of internal school evaluation, external evaluation and school improvement planning provides mechanisms that can gradually shift the system from compliance to developmental improvement. Regional Directorates, school networks (for educational support) and the roles of education advisers might help to create new pathways for distributed leadership and local professional support. The new curriculum and evaluation framework also offer opportunities to encourage more instructional dialogue and collaborative approaches to school improvement.

Challenges

Despite these advances, schools continue to operate in one of the most centralised systems in the OECD, which reports some advantages but also some important disadvantages. For example, decision-making authority remains concentrated at the central level in crucial areas such as staffing, budgeting and curriculum implementation, which is meant to ensure standards, but it is also limiting schools' ability to adapt to diverse local needs. In addition, overlapping responsibilities across the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (MERAS), the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE), the Institute of Education Policy (IEP) and regional structures often generate

administrative burden and inconsistent guidance. School leaders face significant operational pressures, with uneven access to preparation programmes and professional learning that would strengthen their pedagogical leadership. Furthermore, evaluation tools have grown rapidly but they do not seem to be yet consistently aligned or supported across regions.

Taken together, these challenges highlight the need for Greece to consider a transit from a centralised governance model towards one that preserves national coherence while enabling schools and regional structures to assume greater responsibility for improvement. Strengthening leadership at all levels, clarifying institutional mandates and reinforcing support structures will be essential to ensure that autonomy is meaningful and that schools can use it effectively. A more balanced distribution of responsibilities, supported by coherent guidance and robust data, will help Greece turn promising governance reforms into sustained improvements in teaching and learning.

Recommendations

Enhancing school autonomy with accountability and support. Greece should gradually expand schools' decision-making authority in areas where local knowledge can improve relevance and responsiveness, including aspects of curriculum implementation, school organisation and the allocation of staff time. Greater autonomy must be accompanied by clear objectives, guidance and robust support structures, particularly for schools in disadvantaged communities. Streamlining school self-evaluation and external evaluation, and emphasising improvement rather than compliance, will help embed autonomy within a culture of evidence-informed practice.

Empowering school leaders for effective decision-making. Strengthening leadership preparation, professional standards and ongoing training is critical. Developing a clear framework for school leadership competencies, aligned with the national framework for teachers, would clarify expectations and support distributed leadership models. Enhanced mentoring, peer collaboration and middle-leadership roles, such as mentors and co-ordinators, can help relieve administrative burden and increase leaders' focus on pedagogy and school improvement.

Streamlining governance to support education efforts at school level. Greece should clarify the roles and responsibilities of central and regional bodies, ensuring alignment across curriculum, evaluation, teacher policy and digital initiatives. Strengthening data systems and communication channels between schools, regions and central authorities will help reduce administrative fragmentation and ensure consistent, evidence-informed decision-making.

Strengthening the teaching profession with responsive support and appraisal mechanisms

Strengths

Recent reforms have expanded permanent appointments and introduced new school-based roles, such as mentors and co-ordinators, which represent important steps toward strengthening the teaching profession. The new teacher appraisal system offers a clearer framework for professional growth and establishes expectations for teaching quality. Tools such as the Teacher Training Register and national training programmes lay the groundwork for more systematic professional learning across the system.

Challenges

Given demographic pressures (ageing workforce), Greece continues to experience high reliance on substitute teachers, which can disrupt instruction, especially in small and rural schools. Teachers have

unequal access to sustained, practice-oriented professional development, and school-based collaborative learning remains limited. The teacher appraisal process is resource-intensive, not yet systematically linked to teachers' learning needs and insufficiently connected to school improvement planning or career development. The absence of a widely recognised national framework for high-quality teaching makes it difficult to align teacher education, appraisal and professional learning across the career span.

These challenges point to the importance of consolidating recent reforms into a coherent and sustainable approach to strengthening the teaching profession. A clearer articulation of what constitutes high-quality teaching, coupled with better integration of appraisal, professional learning and career development, will help create a more supportive environment for teachers throughout their careers. Addressing these issues such is essential to improving classroom practice and ensuring that teachers can meet the expectations set by the new curriculum and digital transformation efforts.

Recommendations

Developing a framework for teacher and school leader competencies and high-quality teaching practices. A national competence framework, developed jointly with the profession, should clarify expectations and articulate the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed at each career stage. This framework should also include school leaders and align initial teacher education, professional learning, appraisal and career progression.

Embedding the teacher appraisal process in a continuous improvement cycle. Greece should ensure that teacher appraisal becomes a genuine tool for professional growth by more clearly linking appraisal to constructive feedback and relevant professional learning. The process should focus on narrative, improvement-oriented feedback for all teachers, with targeted support concentrated on those who most need it. Over time, the system should strengthen regular informal observations and feedback within schools so that appraisal contributes meaningfully to ongoing development.

Redesigning the teacher appraisal process to make it more sustainable and school-based. As Greece scales up its four-year appraisal cycle, the process should become more school-centred by gradually reducing the reliance on education advisers and giving principals, mentors and co-ordinators a greater role. External evaluators should focus primarily on teachers or schools requiring additional attention, while school-based staff increasingly lead routine appraisal. This shift will help ensure sustainability and strengthen pedagogical leadership within schools.

Strengthening school-based approaches to professional learning. Greece should continue shifting towards embedded, collaborative professional learning by empowering mentors, co-ordinators and school leaders to guide teachers' development within schools. This requires building staff capacity, providing dedicated time for collaboration and strengthening mechanisms to monitor teachers' learning needs and the quality of professional development. Clearer guidance and improved data will help ensure that school-based learning is coherent, targeted and impactful.

Expanding access and improving quality in Early Childhood Education and Care

Strengths

Greece has made important progress by introducing compulsory pre-primary education from age four and implementing a new curriculum. Participation in pre-primary education has increased significantly, and there is stronger policy recognition of early childhood education as a foundation for equity. Municipalities have expanded provision in many areas, and the reform momentum has created opportunities to strengthen both access and quality.

Challenges

Access to ECEC for children under age four remains uneven, with notable disparities between municipalities, particularly in rural or disadvantaged areas. Governance is fragmented between pre-primary education and childcare services, leading to inconsistencies in quality assurance, monitoring and workforce development. Structural conditions, including staff-child ratios, group sizes and staff workload, vary widely and are often insufficient to support high-quality interactions. Limited data on participation, quality, expenditure and children's development reduce the system's capacity to monitor progress and target support effectively.

The persistence of uneven access, fragmented governance and variable structural conditions indicates that Greece needs a more integrated and strategic approach to early childhood education. Strengthening the workforce, improving pedagogical quality and addressing disparities in provision will be crucial to ensuring that all children benefit from high-quality early learning opportunities. As reforms in pre-primary education advance, greater attention to children under four and stronger data systems will help build a more equitable and coherent ECEC sector.

Recommendations

Strengthening pedagogical (process) quality in pre-primary education. Greece should build on the new curriculum framework by providing clearer, practice-oriented guidance for teachers and ensuring that staff receive continuous support through targeted training and collaborative learning. Strengthening self-evaluation, peer feedback and monitoring of teaching practices will help ensure that curriculum innovations translate into high-quality interactions and more consistent learning experiences across all pre-primary settings.

Supporting quality pre-primary education through improved structural conditions. Greece should enhance the structural foundations of pre-primary provision by reducing administrative burden, improving staff-to-children ratios in settings facing the greatest challenges and strengthening support for multilingual and diverse learning needs. More flexible staffing arrangements and targeted resource allocation would allow leaders and teachers to focus on children's learning and well-being, particularly in remote and disadvantaged areas.

Advancing quality, equity and integration across the whole ECEC sector. Greece should expand access to high-quality ECEC for children under age four, reduce barriers to participation and move progressively toward a more integrated system covering children from birth to school entry. This includes strengthening affordability, supporting municipalities to expand provision, and developing a curriculum framework for younger children that aligns with pre-primary education and supports coherent monitoring and quality assurance across the sector.

Supporting the purposeful integration of digital technologies in teaching and learning

Strengths

Greece has made substantial investments in digital infrastructure, platforms and educational resources. The national digital strategy and the forthcoming Strategic Plan place strong emphasis on digital literacy, artificial intelligence competences and collaboration with external partners. Recent years have created momentum for digital experimentation in schools, and teachers gained valuable experience in using online tools.

Challenges

Despite these advancements, purposeful integration of digital tools into everyday teaching remains limited and uneven. Teachers report varying levels of confidence and competence in digital pedagogy, and schools often lack well-developed strategies for digital learning. Evaluation of digital initiatives is limited, making it difficult to identify effective practices or mitigate risks related to inequity, distraction or excessive screen time. Governance of digital education is not yet fully aligned with broader reforms in autonomy, teacher policy and school improvement.

These challenges emphasise the need to shift from expanding digital infrastructure to embedding digital technologies meaningfully in teaching and learning. Supporting teachers to develop stronger digital pedagogical competences, ensuring alignment between digital tools and curriculum goals and strengthening evaluation mechanisms will be key to realising the potential of digital transformation. A more coherent governance framework, combined with greater leadership capacity at school level, will help ensure that digitalisation enhances learning and narrows rather than widens disparities.

Recommendations

Ensuring equitable student access to digital technologies by enabling school-level agency and system-wide coordination. Greece should strengthen equitable access to digital tools by combining a coherent national access strategy with greater school-level flexibility to select appropriate solutions. Expanding device provision, improving connectivity, targeting support to disadvantaged learners and prioritising remote regions will ensure that all students can benefit from digital learning. Clear objectives, inclusive infrastructure and coordinated planning will help sustain local innovation while narrowing existing access gaps.

Strengthening evidence-based policymaking through improved evaluation of digital education technologies. Greece should reinforce its digital education strategy by investing in rigorous impact evaluation, national research programmes and long-term monitoring tools that capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects of technology use. Active participation in international studies should be complemented by national secondary analyses and locally generated evidence, enabling more nuanced and context-sensitive policy decisions. A robust monitoring framework linking digital practices to learning outcomes will support continuous improvement.

Reinforcing teacher digital competences through targeted evaluation, professional development and school-based learning structures. Greece should consolidate its efforts to build teacher digital competence by integrating digital pedagogy into professional standards, designing validated evaluation tools and offering extended, practice-oriented training programmes. Strengthening school-based learning, peer collaboration and the role of mentors and co-ordinators will help embed digital competences into everyday practice. Providing clear guidance, sustained support and opportunities for hands-on learning will be essential for teachers to lead meaningful digital transformation.

Strengthening governance, leadership and school capacity to support meaningful digital transformation. Greece should build a more coherent digital education ecosystem by clarifying roles, improving coordination across platforms and support structures, and developing dedicated expertise at the school or cluster level. Establishing specialised digital learning advisers, consolidating governance mechanisms and ensuring sustained funding and evaluation will help align national strategy with local implementation. A coordinated approach that connects infrastructure, leadership and professional practice will enhance the impact and sustainability of digital reforms.

1 The education system in Greece: Main features, performance and recent policy developments

This introductory chapter presents an overview of Greece's education system, including its structure, governance, performance, and recent policy developments relevant to the review. It outlines key national efforts to expand access and promote equity, particularly through reforms in early childhood education, school evaluation and digital learning. At the same time, it notes challenges that may hinder Greece from fully realising its educational potential. The chapter provides the contextual foundation for the rest of the report, which offers targeted recommendations on school autonomy, the teaching profession, early childhood education and care (ECEC), and digital education.

Country context: Economic and social context

Greece has experienced substantial economic and social transformation in the past decade. Following a period of economic adjustment and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, the country is now pursuing a dual agenda of fiscal consolidation and structural reform (OECD, 2024[1]; OECD, 2025[2]). Since early 2021, Greece's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per-capita growth has outpaced the euro area (OECD, 2024[1]). As of 2023, the country's overall GDP has returned to pre-pandemic levels, driven by increased private consumption and investment. In that year, the GDP grew by 2.3%, a rate that remained stable in 2024 and is projected to ease slightly (to 2.0%) but still remain stable throughout 2025 (OECD, 2024[1]; OECD, 2025[2]). Along with a rise in GDP Greece has also seen a fall in its debt (OECD, 2024[1]). Since 2022, the ratio between general gross debt and GDP has fallen from 192.5% to around 170%. This ratio is predicted to further decrease in the coming years (OECD, 2025[2]). Still, global price shocks, particularly in energy and food, have been imposing pressures on households and firms, underlining the vulnerability of the Greek economy to external shocks (OECD, 2023[3]; OECD, 2024[1]). Headline inflation reached a peak of 9.6% in 2022 but has since then declined, reaching 2.6% in April 2025. Conversely, core inflation has remained relatively unchanged, floating just below 4%, due to persistent price pressures in services and a tight labour market (OECD, 2025[2]; World Bank Group, 2025[4]). Both headline and core inflation are projected to decline in 2026 (OECD, 2025[2]).

In the labour market, unemployment in Greece has been steadily declining since its 2013 peak, with the rate falling to 8.3% in April 2025 (the lowest level since 2009) down from 10.8% in April 2024 (ELSTAT, 2025[5]). At the same time, Greece's labour market has been facing rising labour shortages, especially in the tourism and construction sectors (OECD, 2024[1]). Moreover, labour force participation is unevenly distributed, with many employers struggling to find workers with the necessary skills and nearly 35% of workers having a qualification that does not match their jobs' requirement (OECD, 2024[1]). Particularly, Greece is facing low levels of participation in continuous training as well as below OECD-average share of 25-34-year-olds graduating from a Vocational Education and Training (VET) track (OECD, 2024[1]). In response, the government has intensified efforts to reform the VET system, including the implementation of Law 5082/2024 (planned to be implemented in the beginning of the school year 2026-2027) and the launch of new training guides co-developed with social partners to align education with labour market needs (MERAS, 2025[6]). Data also reveal marked disparities in unemployment rates by education level. In 2024, 24.2% of young adults without upper secondary education were unemployed, compared to 16.2% with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment, and 12.3% with tertiary education (OECD, 2025[7]). At the same time, the share of 25–34-year-olds in Greece without upper secondary attainment has decreased from 13% in 2019 to 7% in 2024, aligning with OECD trends of rising attainment across the population (OECD, 2025[7]).

Finally, the country's demographic outlook presents additional policy challenges. Low birth rates, an ageing population, and the emigration of skilled workers continue to place pressure on the education system, the labour force, and public finances (OECD, 2024[1]). This will further constrain labour market participation, with the working-age population risking a 11% shrink over the next ten years if nothing changes (European Commission, 2023[8]; OECD, 2024[1]).

In this context, Greece has made education a cornerstone of its recovery and reform strategy. Recent policies have aimed to expand early childhood education, modernise vocational pathways, and strengthen digital and green skills. In 2024, the government reported substantial progress in implementing its Annual Action Plan for Education (*Ετήσιο Σχέδιο Δράσης*), highlighting the roll-out of new teacher training programmes, targeted support for school evaluation processes, and the implementation of school infrastructure and digital initiatives (MERAS, 2025[6]; MERAS, 2025[9]). As the country invests in its human capital, education policy must not only address learning outcomes but also reduce disparities in access and opportunity. Looking ahead, Greece's capacity to sustain economic recovery and respond to emerging social needs will depend in large part on its ability to equip all learners with relevant skills and support

schools in becoming engines of innovation and equity. An education system that is aligned with demographic realities, inclusive of all students, and responsive to future skill demands will be essential for promoting shared prosperity. Finally, it is worth mentioning the Strategic Plan for Primary and Secondary Education 2025–2027 (MERAS, 2025[9]). This plan sets out priority areas and objectives to address emerging challenges and guide future reforms in Greece's education system. According to Greek authorities, as implementation progresses, this framework will underpin efforts to modernise teaching, foster inclusion, and support continuous improvement in learning outcomes.

Characteristics of the Greek education system: Structure, governance and funding

Structure

Compulsory education in Greece spans from ages 4 to 15, covering pre-primary (*Nipiagogeio*), primary (*Dimotiko*) and lower secondary education (*Gymnasio*). The Greek government has taken progressive steps to expand early childhood provision, notably by introducing compulsory two-year pre-primary education for all 4-year-olds starting in 2018 (MERAS, 2025[6]). Primary education lasts six years (ages 6 to 12), and, since the 2016/17 school year, all primary schools have offered optional all-day programmes to better support working families and extend learning time. Secondary education is divided into two cycles: lower secondary (*Gymnasio*, ages 12 to 15), which is compulsory, and upper secondary (*Lykeio*, ages 15 to 18), which is not compulsory.

At the upper secondary level, students may follow either a general academic track (*Geniko Lykeio*) or a vocational track (*Epangelmatiko Lykeio, EPAL*). The vocational track includes both school-based learning and an optional fourth-year apprenticeship, aligning with efforts to strengthen labour market relevance and student employability (Eurydice, 2023[10]). This track has received significant policy attention since 2020 with Law 4763/2020 introducing Model Vocational Upper Secondary Schools (PEPAL) which is meant to raise the quality and attractiveness of vocational pathways (MERAS, 2025[6]).

Higher education is provided by public universities, and undergraduate programmes typically span four years, while postgraduate and doctoral programmes last one to three years, some academic programmes in Greece extend over a period of five years, such as those offered by Polytechnic Schools, which culminate in the award of an Integrated Master's degree. Others, such as Medicine, require six years of study to complete. The sector is currently undergoing reforms with the intention of enhancing its responsiveness to social and economic needs, including provisions for the establishment of non-state, non-profit branches of foreign universities operating with tuition fees in Greece (Eurydice, 2023[10]; MERAS, 2025[6]). Post-secondary vocational training is offered through Higher Vocational Training Schools (S.A.E.K.), with programmes typically lasting four to six semesters. These reforms mark a strategic shift to better align education with regional and sectoral labour market needs (MERAS, 2025[6]). In addition to the SAEKs, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports recently established, by Law 237/2025, the Vocational Training Academies, introducing for the first time a public–private partnership model involving businesses, institutions and associations. Private entities will ensure internship placements for students, with full insurance coverage and remuneration, and will commit to employ at least 40% of graduates upon completion of their studies. This new institution aims to encourage more young people to choose vocational education, strengthen Greece's vocational training system, and provide additional training and employment opportunities for young people. Finally, lifelong learning forms another pillar of the system, with provision for adult learners through Second Chance Schools (SDE) and Lifelong Learning Centres (KDVM). These pathways cater to early school leavers, low-qualified adults, and others seeking to upskill or retrain. The General Secretariat for Vocational Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning coordinates national policy in this area (Eurydice, 2023[10]; MERAS, 2025[6]).

In terms of the structure of the education system in Greece, Figure 1.1 illustrates the most recent official information, about the main educational pathways by ISCED level in the country, mapping the progression from early childhood education and care to doctoral studies (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2025[11]). This diagram highlights the diversity of both academic and vocational routes available to students, as well as the key transition points, most notably between upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. The inclusion of adult education and second chance schools further reflects Greece's interest in lifelong learning and inclusive provision.

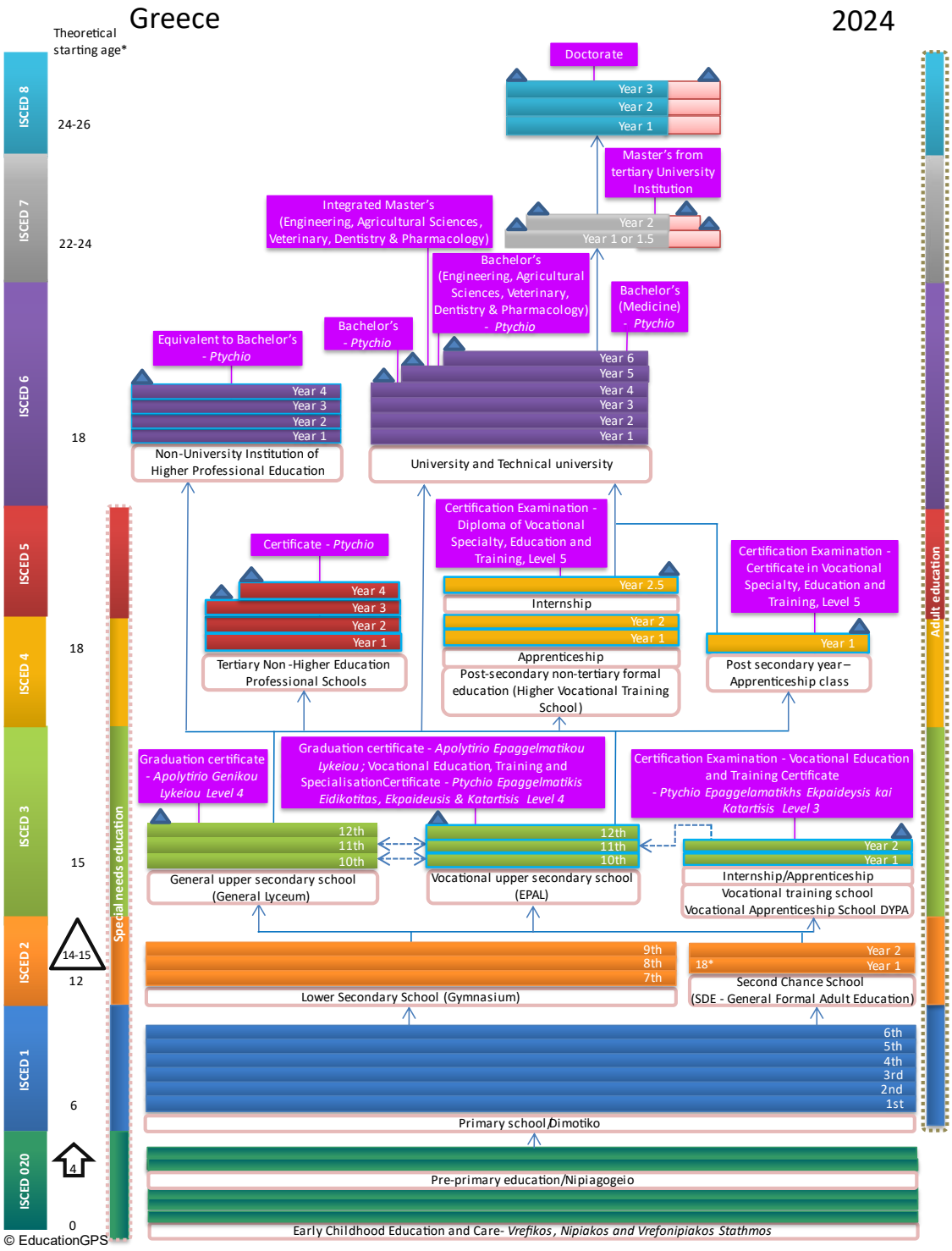
Despite these strengths, the system faces ongoing risks of fragmentation, particularly at transition points between educational levels and between general and vocational tracks. Like in many other countries, differences in social reputation and resource allocation between pathways persist. For example, general education is widely perceived as the default or more prestigious track, while vocational education remains less attractive to students, with only 12% of upper secondary graduates completing a vocational programme in 2022, well below the OECD average of 38% (OECD, 2025[12]). Although recent reforms have aimed to strengthen vocational provision, these programmes often face challenges such as lower enrolment, limited investment in training infrastructure, and weaker alignment with tertiary education options. Many learners might require targeted support to navigate these transitions effectively, as disparities in guidance, institutional coordination, and labour market connections can impede educational progression and equity (OECD, 2025[12])[1].

System-wide curricula and student learning goals

The Greek Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, MERAS), in collaboration with the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), is meant to continuously review and update the curricula to reflect modern educational practices and societal needs. The IEP is a public body supervised by MERAS that acts as the Ministry's scientific and technical adviser on curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and teacher development, with an advisory and implementation role rather than full institutional autonomy. Recent reforms have focussed on integrating digital technologies into the classroom (see chapter 5), promoting inclusive education, and enhancing teacher professional development (see chapter 3) (Eurydice, 2025[13]). Greece has undertaken significant reforms to its national curriculum, with the development of 166 new curricula covering almost all subjects in primary and secondary education. These changes are meant to shift the focus from content delivery to student-centred learning, emphasising critical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. The reforms also include a "multiple textbook" approach, where teachers and students can select from approved resources, aiming at fostering a more flexible and adaptive learning environment (MERAS, 2025[6]). Accordingly, the curricula at compulsory education levels in Greece are designed to provide students with a comprehensive and well-rounded education. The Ministry, in coordination with the IEP, oversees the development and implementation of these curricula, ensuring they meet national standards and prepare students for future academic and professional success (MERAS, 2025[6]).

In pre-primary education, the newly introduced curriculum has the objective of developing 21st century skills from a young age, while also following the principles of children's holistic development and learning (see Chapter 4). As such, it focusses on 4 areas: 1) Child and Communication, including language Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); 2) Child, Self and Society; 3) Child and Science and 4) Child, Body, Creation and Expression (MERAS, 2025[6]). In addition to these, the curriculum also promotes multilingualism from a young age and, thus, foresees English classes and Skills Labs since pre-primary (Eurydice, 2025[14]).

Figure 1.1. Structure of the Greek education system, 2024



Notes: Under ISCED 4 Post-secondary non-tertiary formal education (Higher Vocational Training School), I.E.K. (Ινστιτούτο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης) is renamed as ΣΑΕΚ (Σχολή Ανώτερης Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης) from 2024 onwards (law 5082/2024).
Source: MERAS (2025[6]), *OECD Background Questionnaire: Education Policy Review of Greece, Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports*.

In primary education, the curriculum is designed to develop basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking. Subjects include Greek Language, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Physical Education, Music, Art, two foreign languages, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Geography, Social and Civic Education, History, Science, Skills Labs, and Religious Education. Language instruction focusses on reading, writing, and comprehension, while mathematics covers fundamental concepts and problem-solving techniques. In addition, at this stage, Environmental Studies introduce students to basic scientific concepts and ecological awareness. Emphasis is placed on fostering an interest in learning (self-motivation) and developing social and emotional skills (Ministry of Education, Religion Affairs and Sport, 2024[15]).

In lower secondary education (*Gymnasio*), the curriculum expands to include more subjects and a deeper exploration of previously introduced topics. Subjects in the Greek curriculum include Modern and Ancient Greek Language and Literature, Mathematics, Natural Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology), History, Geography and Geology, Religious Education, Civic Education, Information Technology, Physical Education, Home Economics and the newly introduced subject of Economics, Culture (Music and Art), and Skills Labs. Within the Skills Labs, Career Guidance is offered in the 9th grade. In addition, the curriculum integrates cross-cutting themes such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (MERAS, 2025[6]). English is the first foreign language and is compulsory from kindergarten. A second foreign language (typically German or French) is introduced from the fifth grade of primary school. At this level, the curriculum aims to build on foundational knowledge and introduce more complex concepts, encouraging analytical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ministry of Education, Religion Affairs and Sport, 2024[15]).

In upper secondary education (*Lykeio*), which is not a compulsory level, the curriculum for students pursuing the general education pathway includes advanced courses in Modern and Ancient Greek Language and Literature, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Physical Education, Religious Education, Foreign Languages, Civic Education, ICT and Philosophy. From the second year, students can also choose one of several predefined blocks of orientation-track subjects, which function as cluster-based electives linked to the Panhellenic Examinations rather than individually selected optional courses. These clusters align with the academic and professional orientations chosen at the outset of upper secondary studies, thereby allowing for a more structured yet targeted educational experience. During the final year there is a strong emphasis on preparing students for the Panhellenic Examinations, which are crucial for university admission (MERAS, 2025[6]).

In addition to the academic subjects, the Greek education system aims to place importance on cross-curricular themes and extracurricular activities. These include health education, environmental education and cultural activities that promote a holistic development in the student. Indeed, schools often organise projects and activities that encourage teamwork, creativity, and a community sense of belonging to develop students' social skills and civic responsibility, with the aim of preparing them to be active and informed citizens (OECD, 2019[16]; MERAS, 2025[6]).

Table 1.1.Education levels in Greece: From pre-primary to upper secondary education

Level, ages, grades	Curriculum and content/subjects	Emphasis/Goal

Pre-primary education (compulsory)
Ages 4-6
(Grades 1-2)
	Curriculum: develop 21st century skills
	
	Content
	• Main areas
	  • Child and Communication (Language, ICT)
	  • Child, Self and Society
	  • Child and Science
	  • Child, Body, Creation and Expression
	  • English classes
	  • Skills Labs
		Emphasis/Goal
		• Follow the principles of children's holistic development and learning

Primary education (compulsory) Ages 6-12 (Grades 1-6)	**Curriculum**: develop basic skills in literacy, numeracy, critical thinking **Subjects**: • Greek Language: reading, writing, comprehension • Mathematics: fundamental concepts and problem-solving • Environmental Studies: basic scientific concepts, ecological awareness • Physical Education • Music • Art and Drama • English as a first foreign language • Second foreign language (German or French) from 5th grade • ICT • Geography • Social and Civic I Education • History, Sciences • Skills Labs • Religious Education	**Emphasis/Goal** • Foster interest for learning (self-motivation) • Developing social and emotional skills
Gymnasio (compulsory) (Lower secondary education) Ages 12-15 (Grades 7-9)	**Curriculum:** expands to include more subjects and deeper exploration of previously introduced topics **Subjects:** • Modern Greek Language and Literature • Ancient Greek Language and Literature • Mathematics • Natural Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) • History • Geography-geology • Physical Education • Information Technology (ICT) • Technology • English as a first foreign language • Second foreign language (German or French) • Religious education. • Social and Civic Education. • Home Economics. • Economics • Culture (music and art) • Skills labs • Career Guidance (Skills Labs, 9th grade)	**Emphasis/Goal** • Build on foundational knowledge • Introduce more complex concepts • Encourage analytical thinking and problem-solving skills

Lykeio (non-compulsory) (Upper secondary education) Ages 15-18 (Grades 10-12)	**Curriculum:** General and Vocational Education Pathways • **General Education Pathway Subjects:** Modern and Ancient Greek Language and Literature, English as a first foreign language, Second foreign language (German or French), Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Physical Education, Philosophy, Religious Education, ICT, Civic Education, and cluster-based elective courses aligned with orientation tracks for the Panhellenic Examinations. • **Vocational Education Pathway (1st grade):** I. General Education Subjects: Modern Greek Language and Literature, Mathematics, Natural Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology), Social and Political Education, History, Religious Education, English as a foreign language, Physical Education, ICT. II. Orientation Subjects: Career Guidance (SEP), Research Project in Technology, Creative Activities Zone. III. Elective Subjects: Health Education, Principles of Linear and Architectural Design, Principles of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Principles of Economics, Basic Principles of Composition, Agriculture and Sustainable Development, Maritime Principles. In the 2nd and 3rd grades, students are taught increasingly specialised technical and vocational subjects depending on their chosen field, while general education subjects are gradually reduced.	**Emphasis/Goal** • Prepare students for the Panhellenic Examinations and provide pathways for both academic and vocational progression

Source: Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (2025), *OECD Background Questionnaire: Education Policy Review of Greece.*

In addition to the academic subjects, the Greek education system aims to place importance on cross-curricular themes and extracurricular activities. These include health education, environmental education and cultural activities that promote a holistic development in the student. Indeed, schools often organise projects and activities that encourage teamwork, creativity, and a community sense of belonging to develop students' social skills and civic responsibility, with the aim of preparing them to be active and informed citizens (OECD, 2019[16]; MERAS, 2025[6]).

Governance

In terms of governance, Greece's education system is defined by a centralised structure, with MERAS and its General Secretariats (i.e. for Primary, Secondary and Special Education; for Higher Education; for Vocational Education, Training and Lifelong Learning; and for Religious Affairs) exercising primary authority over the curriculum, teacher appointments, assessment, and institutional oversight. MERAS also oversees the governance of pre-primary education for children aged 4 and 5 (ISCED 02, or *nipiagogeia*) in both private and public settings. Only pre-primary education for children under the age of four (ISCED 01) is not overseen by MERAS, but rather by the Ministry of Interior and local municipalities, in public settings, and by the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs, in private settings (Eurydice, 2025[17]). This centralisation aims to ensure consistency and equity across diverse regions, but it also limits responsiveness to local needs, particularly in Greece's many islands and mountainous areas, where the dispersion of the school network presents logistical and quality assurance challenges (Eurydice, 2025[13]; OECD, 2020[18]; OECD, 2018[19]).

At the regional level, the Regional Primary and Secondary Education Directorates serve as management and governance bodies. Each of the 13 regions has its own directorate which is responsible for overseeing administrative operations as well as providing scientific and pedagogical guidance. These directorates fall under the competence of the General Secretary for Primary, Secondary, and Special education and, thus, act as decentralised services of MERAS. In practice, they oversee the local authorities of Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education, which are based in each prefecture and are responsible for the

administration and operation of schools in the area. In doing so, these bodies link the central administration to local practices.

The Regional Directorates also host a variety of councils and boards. Relevant examples are the Regional Councils of Supervisors, whose main role and responsibility is the pedagogical supervision and coordination of the educational processes, (RCS) (*Περιφερειακοί Επόπτες Ποιότητας της Εκπαίδευσης* or PESEP), which play a key coordinating role in the school evaluation and educational process. Established under Law 4823/2021 as part of a major education system governance reform, RCS replaced Regional Centres for Educational Planning (PEKES) (*Περιφερειακά Κέντρα Εκπαιδευτικού Σχεδιασμού*) which had been in place since 2018 (MERAS, 2021[20]). The councils now have a broader remit for promoting the quality of education and implementing educational policy at the regional level and are composed of Regional Education Quality Supervisors (*Περιφερειακοί Επόπτες Ποιότητας της Εκπαίδευσης*) (MERAS, 2025[6]).

There are 116 Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education (hereafter "Education Directorates") across the country (58 for Primary and 58 for Secondary Education), operating under the authority of the Regional Directorates of Education. These structures play a central role in the governance of schools and education-related support services. Their responsibilities span administrative and pedagogical functions, including the organisation of examinations, allocation of educational resources, management of European and international programmes, and the oversight of school staffing, timetables, and disciplinary procedures. They also support curriculum implementation, vocational education, school safety, and health protocols. In addition, they supervise student assessment, career guidance, extracurricular activities, and school libraries, while administering data on staffing needs and mobility. These Directorates serve as an essential link between central policy and school-level implementation, in line with the mandates defined in national legislation, including Presidential Decree 18/2018 and Law 4823/2021 (Eurydice, 2025[21]).

In this context, it is important to mention that Law 4823/2021 substituted Educational Work Co-ordinators with Education Advisers (*Σύμβουλοι Εκπαίδευσης*), who operate at the local level with schools. Education Advisers are now responsible for providing scientific and pedagogical guidance to teachers and school leaders, supporting teacher training, and fostering innovation (MERAS, 2021[20]). They also contribute to both internal (self-assessment) and external evaluation processes of school units, in close collaboration with Education Quality Supervisors (Eurydice, 2025[22]; MERAS, 2025[6]). Because of their responsibilities, Education Advisers are a key component of the Greek education governance system, serving as a link between schools and the central administration (MERAS, 2025[6]). The roles of Education Quality Supervisors and Education Advisers as well as the RCS, are discussed more in depth in Chapter 2 on school autonomy and leadership.

The restructuring enacted via Law 4823/2021 was intended to streamline support, reduce bureaucratic overlap, and enhance the scientific and pedagogical leadership available to schools. However, decision-making remains centralised, with schools still having limited autonomy over staffing, budgeting, and curriculum adaptation. In Greece's highly dispersed school network, with a significant number of small schools operating in remote island and mountainous regions, this creates ongoing challenges for efficient resource allocation, staff retention, and quality assurance. The Ministry has taken steps such as implementing some school mergers, officially designated as "metavoli scholikon monadon" (*μεταβολή σχολικών μονάδων*), or modification of school units, which constitute a recurring annual administrative procedure under Article 23 of Law 4823/2021 rather than an ad hoc pandemic measure. At the same time it is also supporting distance learning, notably during the pandemic but, these actions seem to have provided only partial relief to the ongoing challenges of resource allocation, staff retention, and quality assurance in remote areas (Eurydice, 2025[13]).

Recent policy developments signal a shift from temporary compensatory interventions towards a rights-based framework for educational inclusion. The decision to maintain a fully operational school for a single student in Arki, the operation of the micro-school on Pserimos under similar demographic conditions, as

well as the establishment of an autonomous lower secondary class in Gavdos through Ministerial Decision 102754/Δ2/2024 under the legal mandate of Law 5128/2024, illustrate a deliberate state choice to guarantee physical educational provision even under extreme demographic constraints. These cases demonstrate that educational services are not merely calibrated to efficiency metrics but are framed as an obligation of territorial equity. At the same time, the introduction of blended learning classrooms and the nationwide Digital Tutorial Platform mark the extension of this principle into the digital domain. While micro-schools in remote areas represent a policy of geographic inclusion, the Digital Tutorial Platform operates as a digital instrument of socio-economic inclusion by providing free, curriculum-aligned support for national examination preparation. In doing so, the Ministry has repositioned digital technology as a welfare function rather than an auxiliary innovation tool. This is meant to be an infrastructural guarantee designed to mitigate inequalities arising from both geography and income. In this governance architecture, the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) contributes as the Ministry's scientific and technical adviser on curriculum and pedagogy, supporting the design and implementation of measures such as blended learning classrooms and digital tutorial resources within the broader inclusion strategy. This combined approach suggests an emerging model of inclusive digital governance in education, where territorial presence and digital public services work in parallel to reaffirm educational access as a universal public entitlement (MERAS, 2025[6]).

Funding

In terms of funding, the education system in Greece is grounded in the constitutional principle that education is a fundamental right, and as such, public education is provided free of charge at all levels: primary, secondary and higher education. The primary source of funding is the state budget, which is divided into the Ordinary Budget, covering operating expenses, such as staff salaries and day-to-day school operations, and the Public Investment Budget, which finances infrastructure projects and long-term development initiatives through the Public Investment Programme (PIP) (Eurydice, 2025[23]; MERAS, 2025[6]). This programme is used to fund the construction and renovation of school buildings. These types of projects are also co-financed via European Structural and Investment Funds and, more recently, the Recovery and Resilience Fund. For example, according to Eurydice (2025[23]), the Marietta Giannakou programme was initially launched with an estimated budget of EUR 350 million, aiming to restore and renovate 645 school units in 249 municipalities over a three-year period. With the new EUR 300 million donation, supplemented by EUR 250 million from the Public Investment Programme, bringing the total planned investment to EUR 650 million, upgrade projects in more than 2,500 school units in total will be carried out over the next three years. As of September 2025, more than 430 schools have already been renovated and are operational (MERAS, 2025[6]). The programme's budget has also been increased by EUR 300 million, bringing the total planned investment in school renovations to EUR 650 million over the next three years (MERAS, 2025[6]).

In regards to the allocation of available funding, the Ministry of Interior is responsible for overseeing the funding for Early Childhood Education and Care settings and collaborates with MERAS in overseeing the funding for both primary and secondary education (see Chapter 4 of this report) (MERAS, 2025[6]). The local distribution of these centrally defined funds to schools occurs via municipalities. The allocation of state funds to municipalities for school operations is determined by criteria such as the number of classes and students. In municipalities with over 100 school units, specific municipal bodies named School Committees manage operational expenditure at the local level, including maintenance, heating and minor repairs. School committees in smaller municipalities have been discontinued (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020[24]). According to OECD data, public expenditure on pre-primary education (ages three and above) reached 0.6% of GDP in 2022, aligned with the OECD average (OECD, 2025[12]).

Crucially, through this model educational resources are centrally administered, with municipalities managing them on behalf of MERAS and the Ministry of Interior, hence resulting in schools having no

autonomy over their finances or resources. Teaching and non-teaching staff positions, including the payment of salaries, are funded and administered directly by central authorities rather than by municipalities. This situation results in schools not being able to have control capital expenditures or purchases of school equipment. Additionally, under this framework, schools are generally allowed to receive funding through sponsorships or donations, rent out school premises for activities beyond the school schedule, or take out loans. However, according to Article 23 of Law 4692/2020, titled 'Upgrading of the School and Other Provisions', Model and Experimental Schools may receive donations and sponsorships from individuals or legal entities (MERAS, 2025[6]). Such contributions, which may include financial resources, equipment, infrastructure, or services, are accepted through formal decisions of the competent bodies and must be implemented with full transparency, in alignment with public accountability rules and public finance legislation. While School Committees for primary and secondary education connect central level funding with resource management at school level, their limited administrative role does not fundamentally change the lack of financial autonomy that schools in Greece face (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014[25]; Eurydice, 2025[23]).

Table 1.2. Funding mechanisms for ECEC, primary and secondary education in Greece

Aspect	Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) below age 4 provided in public settings	Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education
Main funding authorities	• Ministry of Interior (via Municipalities)	• Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports • Ministry of Interior

Local management and distribution	• Municipalities	• Municipalities
		• School Committees:
		  • Exist in some municipalities (if they exist, there is one for primary, one for secondary)
		  • Handle minor operational matters
		  • No financial or administrative autonomy

State budget sources	• State funding (unspecified budget type)- Annual municipal grants	• Ordinary Budget (operational expenses) • Public Investment Programme (infrastructure and development)

Allocation criteria	• Based on:
	  • minimum operating costs
	  • demographic
	  • geographic factors
		• Based on:
		  • The number of students and school classrooms
		  • With adjustments for minimum operational costs, demographic and geographic factors.

Additional funding sources	• Donations, sponsorships, limited parental contributions, and EU funding	• Public-only funding: schools cannot autonomously raise or manage private funds
Summary of financial management	• Financial management is led by central authorities • Municipalities oversee local distribution • Schools themselves have no control over finances or fundraising	

Source: Author's own elaboration based on information from Eurydice and European Commission (2025[23]; 2014[25]).

At the national level, public expenditure on education in Greece was reported at 3.9% of GDP in 2022, which remains below the OECD average of 4.7% (OECD, 2025[12]). More recent national budgets (2022–2024) indicate a modest increase in public allocations to education, although updated internationally comparable data are not yet available. This limited funding affects various aspects of the educational system, including infrastructure, teacher salaries, and educational resources. Expenditure per student across primary, secondary and post-secondary (non-tertiary) levels of education is also lower than the OECD average, with Greece spending USD 6 420 per full-time equivalent student compared to the OECD average of USD 12 647 (OECD, 2025[12]). In Greece, governments provide 78.3% of total funding for primary, secondary, and post-secondary non-tertiary education which is below the OECD average of

90.1% (OECD, 2025[7]). By level of education, 80.2% of pre-primary education funding and 78.3% of tertiary education funding come from public sources, compared to OECD averages of 85.6% and 71.9%, respectively (OECD, 2025[7]). Private sources account for 21.7% of total expenditure at primary, secondary, and post-secondary non-tertiary levels, reflecting a higher reliance on private funding compared to the OECD average of 9.9% (OECD, 2025[7]). In terms of the items covered by private expenditure on education, some relevant aspects are tuition fees for private schools, private tutoring ("*frontistiria*"), and supplementary educational services, especially at the secondary level (Eurydice, 2025[23]; OECD, 2025[7]).

Finally, it should be noted that the absence of a standardised monitoring system for funding allocation complicates oversight and transparency. Current mechanisms do not allow for consistent tracking of how resources are distributed or used, particularly at the school level, resulting in inconsistencies in funding across schools of similar size or need, especially those serving students with special needs. Local discretion is limited, and accountability structures remain unclear, further constraining the system's ability to address equity gaps.

Quality assurance mechanisms

Student assessments

Greece has introduced several changes to its student assessment system in recent years. One of the key reforms has been the reintroduction and further development of the Item Bank for upper secondary school exams, expanded under Law 4692/2020 and Law 4823/2021. This system standardises examination content while allowing for more diverse types of questions, with a selective inclusion of PISA-style tasks that aim to encourage critical thinking and real-world problem-solving (MERAS, 2025[6]). In parallel, diagnostic assessments have been implemented in a sample of schools, specifically in the 6th grade of primary education and the 3rd grade of lower secondary education (*Gymnansio*), as part of efforts to strengthen national learning assessment mechanisms. These assessments aim to identify learning gaps at key transition points and support early intervention through more targeted pedagogical strategies (MERAS, 2025[6]).

At lower levels of education, the assessment landscape in Greece does not have a comprehensive national system for assessing student performance. In pre-primary education (*Nipiagogeío*, ages 4 to 6), student assessment is informal, continuous, and descriptive rather than numerically based. Focussing on each child's development and socialisation, the assessment is based on children's progress, projects' results, peer assessment (conducted by the children themselves), and individual portfolios (MERAS, 2025[6]). Overall, the educator continuously tracks each child's development, noting the emergence of new ideas, attitudes, values, and skills (formative assessment) to evaluate if and how the programme's overall goals have been achieved (final assessment). In primary education (*Dimotiko*, grades 1 to 6), individual teachers primarily conduct student assessments (MERAS, 2025[6]). However, these assessments are not standardised at a national level, leading to variations in evaluation practices and a lack of comparable data across schools. This strong emphasis on teacher-led, largely formative assessment is in line with international practice at this level, as it is intended to support students' ongoing learning and development. At the same time, the absence of common tools or benchmarks at system-level limits the availability of comparable information on learning outcomes, which can constrain efforts to monitor progress and target support across the system.

In lower secondary education (*Gymnasio*, grades 7 to 9), students undergo school-based assessments at the end of each school year to progress to the next grade. These assessments cover subjects such as Greek Language and Literature (Ancient and Modern), English, Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and History. Subjects such as Chemistry and Geography belong to Group B subjects and are not assessed at the end of the year. While crucial for student progression, these exams are locally administered by teachers within each school and do not provide a national benchmark for student performance. This decentralised

approach means there is a lack of uniformity in the assessment standards and practices across different regions and schools (OECD, 2020[18]). In upper secondary education (*Lykeio*, grades 10–12), students keep facing school-based exams at the end of each school year and additionally the national Panhellenic exams only, at the end of the final year for those who want to enter tertiary education. The school-based assessments during all three years help determine student progression and are marked by teachers within each school. These assessments cover a wide range of general education subjects, including Greek Language and Literature, Mathematics, and Sciences (OECD, 2020[18]). In addition to general education subjects, students also take compulsory orientation (specialisation) subjects based on their selected educational stream namely: 1) Humanities, Law and Social Studies; 2) Science and Technology; 3) Health and Life Sciences; or 4) Economics and Informatics. This structure was defined by Law 4610/2019, which amended the earlier framework established by Law 4186/2013, as published in the Official Gazette A' 70/07-05-2019 (MERAS, 2025[6]). These orientation subjects are not electives, but mandatory components of each student's chosen pathway, and constitute the academic preparation for the Panhellenic Examinations (MERAS, 2025[6]). Corresponding provisions of the same law, as specified by relevant Ministerial Decisions, regulate the assessment of Vocational Upper Secondary (EPAL) students. These assessments cover both General Education subjects and Vocational or Specialisation subjects offered across the nine sectors and their related specialisations (MERAS, 2025[6]).

In the final year (Grade 12), school-based assessments also lead to the award of a School-Leaving Certificate (*Apolytirio* in General Education and *Apolytirio* and *Ptychio* in Vocational Education), certifying completion of upper secondary education (ISCED level 3). While this certificate grants access to post-secondary non-tertiary education, it does not by itself provide access to tertiary education. The nationally standardised Panhellenic exams are taken at the end of Grade 12 by students who have successfully obtained the *Apolytirio,* or the *Apolytirio* and *Ptychio* in the case of Vocational Education and wish to enter tertiary education. These exams assess the orientation subjects associated with the student's chosen stream. To ensure standardisation and fairness, Panhellenic exams are organised centrally by appointed committees composed of experienced educators and subject-matter experts. This process includes multiple checks to uphold the integrity and reliability of results (OECD, 2020[18]; MERAS, 2025[6]). More specifically, holders of a Vocational Education *Apolytirio* and *Ptychio*, or a School-Leaving Certificate of General Education combined with a Vocational Education *Ptychio*, are entitled to take special Panhellenic Exams. In these, they are assessed in four subjects from the third grade of EPAL: Two general education subjects and two specialisation subjects. The resulting grades are the primary criterion for eligibility and placement in higher education institutions.

This high-stakes assessment system at the end of upper secondary education is a pivotal aspect of the Greek education system, significantly shaping the behaviour of students, teachers, and families. Much of the final year of upper secondary education is often oriented toward preparing for the Panhellenic exams, which can lead to a narrowing of classroom instruction to focus predominantly on examinable content. This exam-focussed approach has contributed to the widespread use of supplementary education outside of regular school hours, commonly referred to as shadow education, including private tutoring and preparatory courses as identified in previous OECD reviews (OECD, 2018[19]; OECD, 2020[18]) and discussed with stakeholders during the OECD review visit.

The intensity of preparation for the Panhellenic exams reflects the strong societal pressure associated with securing access to higher education. As participation in shadow education typically requires additional financial resources, this trend may exacerbate inequities in educational opportunities and support, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as also identified for other OECD countries (OECD, 2018[19]; OECD, 2013[26]). In response, the Greek authorities have launched several initiatives under the Digital School reform, aiming to expand access to academic support through digital tools. These include the Digital Tutorial platform, which provides reinforcement and revision resources aligned with the national curriculum, and the Digital Tutorial for the Panhellenic Exams, offering live online lessons for candidates preparing for tertiary entry (MERAS, 2025[6]). Additionally, blended learning classrooms are

being developed to better serve students in remote island and mountainous areas. These initiatives aim to provide more equitable access to quality education and help reduce structural disparities in examination preparation (MERAS, 2025[6]).

Overall, the lack of a cohesive national assessment framework in assessments at lower levels of education limits the ability to monitor and enhance educational outcomes across the country. Furthermore, the high-stakes nature of the Panhellenic exams has significant implications for teaching and learning practices, as well as on equity. Addressing these trends through the development of a comprehensive and equitable assessment system remains a critical challenge for Greece.

Table 1.3. Student assessment in Greece: from pre-primary to upper secondary education

Level, Ages, Grades	Assessment approach and features	Emphasis, goals, and potential limitations
Pre-primary education Ages 4-6	**Assessment approach:** • Continuous, formative and final assessment throughout the school year • Descriptive and non-standardised • Conducted by the educator through daily observation **Features:** • Focus on each child's development and socialisation • Based on children's progress on and results of projects, peer assessment (by the children themselves), and individual portfolios • Tracks emerging ideas, attitudes, values, and skills	**Emphasis/goals:** • Understand and support holistic child development • Evaluate how well programme goals are achieved **Potential limitations:** • Limited availability of aggregated data on children's learning and development, which can make it harder to monitor equity and target support across regions or groups
Primary education Ages 6-12 (Grades 1-6)	**Assessment approach:** • Formative assessments during the school year • Summative assessments at the end of each term, in the sense defined by Ministerial Decision Φ7Α/ΦΜ/212191/Δ1/4-12-2017, which frames assessment as a continuous pedagogical process monitoring learning progression and determining final outcomes • Conducted by individual teachers • Not standardised nationally **Features:** • Teacher-designed and school-specific • No comparable national data • Diagnostic exam introduced (in a sample of schools) in Grade 6 to identify learning gaps (Modern Greek language & Mathematics)	**Emphasis/goals:** • Support learning through ongoing feedback • Early detection of academic needs **Potential limitations:** • No standardised national assessments other than the annual diagnostic exams in Grade 6 • Limited comparability across schools
Gymnasio (Lower secondary education) Ages 12-15 (Grades 7-9)	**Assessment approach:** • Formative assessment during the school year (everyday participation and learning at school, short tests or projects) • Summative assessments at end of each term • End-of-year school-based exams in the subjects (Modern Greek Language and Literature, Ancient Greek Language and Literature, Mathematics, Physics, Biology, History, English). Geography belongs to Group B subjects and	**Emphasis/goals:** • Ensure student progression • Evaluate subject mastery **Potential limitations:** Absence of standardisation reduces comparability and equity across the system

	is not assessed at the end of the year • Locally administered and graded by teachers **Features**: • No national benchmarks • Decentralised grading practices • Significant variability across regions and schools • Diagnostic exams in Grade 9 (Modern Greek language and Mathematics) in a sample of schools.	

Lykeio
(Upper secondary education)
 	
Ages 15-18 (Grades 10-12)
	Assessment approach:
	• Formative assessment throughout the school year (everyday participation and learning at school, short tests or projects)
	• Summative assessments at end of each term
	• End-of-year school-based exams (all grades -Grades 10–12): School-based exams marked by teachers
	  ○ Subjects common for all students and Grades include Modern Greek Language and Literature, Mathematics (for all students in Grades 10 & 11 and only for students in Humanities orientation in Grade 12), History. Subjects depending on Grade and orientation include Ancient Greek language and Literature Latin, Physics, Chemistry, English, Biology, Informatics).
	  ○ Half of the items (50%) are drawn at random from centrally administered Item Bank.
	• Grade 12: National Panhellenic Exams based on chosen orientation (1. Humanities, Law and Social Studies, 2. Science and Technology, 3. Health and Life Studies, 4. Economics and Informatics or Technology).
	  ○ Subjects include Modern Greek Language and Literature (common for all), Ancient Greek language and Literature, Latin, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, History, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Informatics, Economics, English).
	  ○ Panhellenic exams are centrally administered and marked by appointed committees of subject experts.
	
	Features:
	• Combination of decentralised and centralised assessment tools
	• Introduction of Item Bank (Law 4692/2020; Law 4823/2021) with emphasis on diverse and PISA-style tasks
	• Panhellenic exams serve as primary gateway to tertiary education
	• Recent reforms (e.g. Digital Tutorials, blended learning) seek to mitigate inequalities in preparation.
		Emphasis/Goals:
		• Determine eligibility and placement in higher education
		• Promote fairness via centralised exams
		• Address equity gaps and encourage critical thinking through recent reforms
		
		Limitations:
		The high stakes nature of these examinations may:
		• Narrow the taught curriculum toward examinable content
		• Increase reliance on supplementary education (e.g. private tutoring)
		• Reinforce disparities in access to quality support
		• Generate high levels of societal pressure

Source: Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (2025), *OECD Background Questionnaire: Education Policy Review of Greece.*

Teacher appraisal

The current teacher appraisal framework in Greece is defined by two complementary legislative acts, namely Law 4692/2020 and the major Law 4823/2021 (Eurydice, 2025[27]) that cover the evaluation procedure for all educators. Law 4692/2020 established a specific framework for teachers in Model and

Experimental Schools, emphasising pedagogical competence, teaching effectiveness, and professional conduct. These evaluations would influence tenure renewals and be conducted jointly by the Scientific Supervisory Board (ΕΠ.Ε.Σ.), the Education Adviser and the School Principal (MERAS, 2020[28]).

Law 4823/2021 institutionalises a systematic framework for the appraisal of teachers' work. Its framework evaluates teachers along two axes: A. teaching and pedagogical work (including didactic methodology and classroom management); and B. professional consistency and competence. Teachers are formally assessed every four years in field A and every two years for field B by education advisers and/or the school principal. Evaluations follow a structured process involving lesson observation, documentation, and post-evaluation feedback (MERAS, 2021[20]). According to the aforementioned framework, the role of the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE) is to oversee and specify evaluation criteria along with their operationalisation.

Similarly to Law 4692/2020, poor performance in these evaluations affects teachers' eligibility for promotion and may trigger mandatory training programmes developed by the Institute of Educational Policy. The concept of Law 4823/2021 also aligns with operational aspects of model and experimental schools with the broader system-level evaluation strategy (MERAS, 2021[20]). Importantly, the law ties teacher appraisal to a broader strategy of enhancing school autonomy, by giving school principals greater responsibility over instructional quality, internal evaluation, and staff development. More on this appraisal system can be found in Chapter 3 of this report.

School evaluation

In recent years, Greece has undertaken significant efforts to establish more robust school evaluation mechanisms and regulations through the (re) introduction of internal and external evaluation systems. Like in many other countries, this aims to enhance transparency, accountability and continuous improvement within schools. These efforts are part of a broader initiative to improve educational quality and ensure equitable outcomes across the country (MERAS, 2025[6]).

However, Greece has faced challenges in implementing a cohesive evaluation framework. For many years, there was an absence of formalised internal or external school evaluations, which hindered the ability to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This lack of systematic evaluation contributed to low levels of public trust and satisfaction with the education system (OECD, 2020[18]). To counter this, recent reforms (e.g. Laws 4692/2020 and 4823/2021) have introduced mandatory internal evaluations for all pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools (MERAS, 2020[28]; MERAS, 2021[20]).

Under this more robust school evaluation framework, school units are required to conduct annual internal evaluations, with external evaluations conducted by Educational Advisers. This dual approach is meant to ensure that schools not only reflect on their own practices but also receive expert feedback for continuous improvement. In particular, the internal evaluation process focusses on three domains: pedagogy, management and professional development, with specific emphasis on the alignment of teaching practices with the national curriculum frameworks and pedagogical standards (MERAS, 2025[6]). This new procedure intends to encourage collective self-evaluation by teachers and the development of school improvement plans informed by formative feedback provided by Educational Advisers based in the Regional Supervisory Councils (RCS or, in Greek, PESEP) (Eurydice, 2025[22]).

Complementary to this framework, one of the key developments in the Greek school evaluation system was the establishment of the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE). This autonomous (but still supervised by MERAS) body plays a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of education at the primary and secondary levels. ADIPPDE's responsibilities include conducting ex-post evaluations, supervising schools' strategic planning, and standardising school self-evaluation processes. The implementation and ongoing support of these processes, however, fall within the remit of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), which provides scientific and technical guidance to

schools and ensures consistency in the application of evaluation procedures. Additionally, ADIPPDE is tasked with developing proposals for school self-evaluation in cooperation with IEP. Their reports highlight the importance of detailed mapping of school conditions, annual planning for improvement actions, and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of progress (OECD, 2020[18]).

Finally, to further support these initiatives, Greece has implemented the MySchool database, which centralises educational data and strengthens system-level governance. This platform collects data on students, teachers, schools and curricula, providing essential administrative support and informing decision-making processes across the education system. In parallel, Greece has expanded the digitalisation of administrative processes through platforms such as e-Schools, which serves as an overarching infrastructure, integrating and enabling interoperability between existing and newly developed systems. This streamlines school operations, facilitate communication, and enhance transparency between school units, school communities, parents and central authorities (MERAS, 2025[6]). Additionally, as outlined in the 2024 Government Work Review (MERAS, 2025[6]), investments also included expanding digital infrastructure, enhancing the Digital School platform, and modernising school buildings through projects funded under the Recovery and Resilience Plan and co-financed EU programmes.

Overall, the reforms in Greece's school evaluation mechanisms and regulations reflect a concerted effort to build a more transparent, accountable, and improvement-focussed education system. According to the interviews with stakeholders during the OECD review visit, these changes are expected to foster better educational outcomes and greater public confidence in the quality of education in Greece. Chapter 2 of this review offers further discussion on the importance of internal and external school evaluations in the country.

Recent educational performance and outcomes in Greece

Access and participation

Access to and participation in the education system in Greece reflect a landscape of both achievements and ongoing challenges. The country has made significant advances in increasing enrolment rates and ensuring broader access to education at various levels. These efforts are essential for fostering a more equitable and inclusive education system.

Greece has made notable gains in ECEC participation, particularly among 4- and 5-year-olds. As of 2022, ECEC enrolment for 4-year-olds reached 96.4% and for 5-year-olds 99.7%, exceeding the OECD average (94% for 5-year-olds) (Eurydice, 2025[29]). Nevertheless, participation rates for children under 3 years remain low, at just 29.5% (EU average: 37.4%). Since the 2021/22 school year, compulsory ECEC for 4- and 5-year-olds has been fully implemented across all municipalities, marking a milestone in inclusive education efforts (OECD, 2023[30]; European Commission, 2024[31]).

Enrolment in primary and secondary education remains nearly universal at above 98%, but challenges persist due to Greece's geography: 18% of schools are situated on islands and often face accessibility issues. Despite these obstacles, Greece has consistently recorded one of the lowest rates of early school leaving in the EU. In 2023, the share of 18- to 24-year-olds leaving education early was 3.7% (well below the EU average of 9.5%). However, notable regional disparities mean some areas face rates up to four times higher than those in Attica (Athens) (European Commission, 2024[31]).

Tertiary education access has expanded considerably over the past decades. The number of tertiary education institutions has increased, providing more opportunities for students to pursue higher education. In 2023, 44.5% of 25 to 34-year-olds had completed tertiary education, exceeding the EU average of 43.1% (European Commission, 2024[32]). However, access to these institutions remains competitive, with a cap on available places influencing the demand for private tutoring or "shadow education." This system, deeply

rooted in historical and social contexts, continues to play a significant role in the education landscape, especially as students prepare for the Panhellenic examinations as mentioned in previous sections of this chapter (OECD, 2020[18]; OECD, 2018[19]). To reduce reliance on shadow education, Greece has introduced the Digital Tutorial Platform as a social policy instrument. This is designed to provide equitable opportunities nationwide for the preparation of the Panhellenic exam, especially for those students in remote and low-income regions (MERAS, 2025[6]).

Finally, efforts to support vulnerable groups, such as students with disabilities or those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, are ongoing. The establishment of Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counselling and Support Centres (KEDASY) aims to improve access to specialised support and reduce waiting times for needs assessments (MERAS, 2021[20]; Eurydice, 2025[33]). Since 2010, the introduction of Education Priority Zones (ZEPs) has also sought to enhance access to education in socio-economically disadvantaged areas by providing additional resources and support (OECD, 2018[19]; Eurydice, 2025[34]). Moreover, the integration of refugee and immigrant students has been strengthened through reception classes and the appointment of co-ordinators to support their inclusion in the school system (MERAS, 2025[6]).

Recent reforms indicate a shift in Greek education policy toward a layered support architecture resembling a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). This approach combines specialised human resources, inclusive school structures, and mechanisms for digital equity. Notably, the increase in school-based psychologists and social workers, alongside the digital upgrading of KEDASY and the introduction of new multidisciplinary diagnostic tools, are measures oriented to enhance targeted support for students with complex psychosocial or learning needs (MERAS, 2025[6]). At the same time, the establishment of 3 448 new Inclusion Support Units (*Τμήματα Ένταξης*) and the expansion of Reception Classes (*Ζώνες Εκπαίδευσης Προτεραιότητας*, ZEPs) constitute efforts to strengthening school-level responses to language, learning, and socio-cultural barriers. In parallel, universal measures such as the Digital Tutorial Platform are meant to offer a baseline layer of academic support accessible to all students, regardless of geography or income. Together, according to Greek authorities, these developments reflect a move from fragmented compensatory measures to a more coherent, multi-layered support system aligned with MTSS principles, even if this terminology is not formally used in national policy (ESOS , 2024[35]; MERAS, 2025[6]).

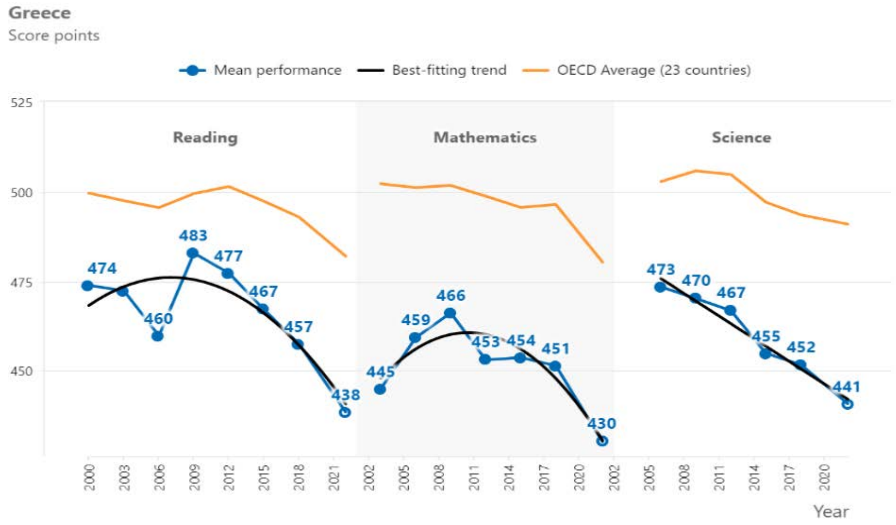
Performance in PISA: General insights

The 2022 PISA results for Greece paint a concerning picture, revealing a continued decline in student performance across subjects like mathematics, reading, and science (European Commission, 2024[32]; European Commission, 2024[36]). In fact, in 2022, the share of students performing below the baseline proficiency level (Level 2) rose significantly across all these subjects, with Greece's mean scores being consistently and significantly below OECD averages (Figure 1.2) (European Commission, 2024[36]). Students who do not reach Level 2 proficiency lack the essential skills required for daily life and continued learning, such as understanding basic texts, performing simple calculations, and applying scientific reasoning to everyday situations. Like in other countries with similar results, this raises serious concerns about the future academic and professional prospects of Greek youth and points to systemic shortcomings in the education system that must be addressed (OECD, 2023[37]).

This trend has been consistent over the past decade (OECD, 2023[37]; European Commission, 2024[36]). Since 2012, the share of low performers in mathematics rose by 11.5 percentage points, reaching 47% (European Commission, 2024[36]). During this time, Greece's average score in the subject fell by 23 points from 453 to 430 points (Figure 1.2), with the sharpest decline being from 2018 to 2022 (i.e. 20 points) marking the lowest average score since the country began its participation in PISA (OECD, 2023[37]). Though in 2022 the PISA assessment was centred on mathematics, similar results were registered also for performances in reading and sciences. The share of low performers in reading increased by 15 percentage points, reaching 38% (European Commission, 2024[36]), with scores in this subject dropping by

39 points from 477 to 438 points; whereas the share of low performance increased in science by 11.08 percentage points, reaching 37% (European Commission, 2024[36]), with scores dropping by 26 points from 467 to 441 points.

Figure 1.2. Trends in performance in mathematics, reading and science



Note: White dots indicate mean-performance estimates that are not statistically significantly above/below PISA 2022 estimates. Black lines indicate the best-fitting trend. An interactive version of this figure is available at https://oecdch.art/a40de1dbaf/C638.
Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database, Tables I.B1.5.4, I.B1.5.5 and I.B1.5.6.

Further, the gap between high and low-achieving students in Greece has decreased since 2012, especially in mathematics (OECD, 2023[37]; European Commission, 2024[36]). This was driven by the overall rise in underachievement but also a decline in top performance. In fact, the proportion of top-performing students (Level 5 or 6) decreased in all subjects. In mathematics, this share decreased by 1.9 percentage points, with just 2% of Greek students performing above Level 5 or 6 compared to the OECD average of 9%. Similarly, the share of top-performing students in reading decreased by 3.2 percentage points with, once again, only 2% of Greek students reached Level 5 or higher, a result significantly lower than the OECD average of 7%. Finally, the share of top-performing students in science decreased by only 1 percentage point with only 1.5% of Greek students reaching the top levels of performance (Level 5 or 6), compared to the OECD average of 7.5% (OECD, 2023[37]). Overall, the top 10% of students experienced a greater decline in scores compared to their lower-performing peers, highlighting a uniform decline in their PISA performance. These trends might suggest that a larger proportion of Greek students are struggling to reach basic proficiency levels, while fewer are excelling at higher levels of performance (OECD, 2023[37]).

Despite some progress, socio-economic factors continue to drive these trends and exacerbate educational disparities in Greece, with students' socio-economic status accounting for 12% of the variation in mathematics performance in PISA 2022 (against an OECD average of 15%) (OECD, 2023[38]). Disadvantaged students (i.e. students at the bottom quarter of the Economic, Social, and Cultural Status scale-ESCS) are still overrepresented among underachievers. In 2022, the rate of disadvantaged students among underachievers in mathematics was over double that of advantaged students (i.e. students at the top quarter of the Economic, Social, and Cultural Status scale - ESCS), with scores of 64% and 27% respectively (European Commission, 2024[36]). Although to a lesser extent, this trend was also present on average across the EU (European Commission, 2024[36]; European Commission, 2024[32]).

Disadvantaged students have been consistently scoring worse than their advantaged counterparts since 2012 (OECD, 2023[37]). However, in this timeframe, the performance gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students in Greece has declined in mathematics from 92 to 76 points (16 points), a value that is smaller than the average OECD performance gap in mathematics among the two groups (93 points) (OECD, 2023[38]). Such narrowing was present also in reading (by 8 points, from 90 to 82) and science (by 5 points from 87 to 82) (OECD, 2023[37]). Nonetheless, as highlighted above, this trend is likely driven by the overall worsening of students' performances, as highlighted above. In fact, Greek students with similar socio-economic status still tend to score lower than their counterparts in high-performing countries such as Estonia and Japan (OECD, 2023[38]). At the same time, it is also very important to note that Greece has a relatively high percentage of resilient students in mathematics (i.e. disadvantaged students that are top performers), surpassing the OECD average of 10% by 2 percentage points in 2022 (OECD, 2023[38]). Similar rates of resilient students were also found for reading (12%) and science (11%) (OECD, 2023[37]).

Immigration background also impacts students' performance. Indeed, irrespective of socio-economic status, immigrant students performed worse in mathematics than non-immigrants students by 13 points. Additionally, since 2012, the rate of underachievers in mathematics has been consistently higher among immigrant than non-immigrant students (European Commission, 2024[36]). This is especially for foreign-born students. For instance, in 2022, 43% of natives with native-born parents were underachievers, while that rate is 62% for natives with foreign parents, and 79% for foreign-born students (European Commission, 2024[36]). Language difficulties might play a role in this trend, as 45% of Greek immigrant students reported that the language most spoken in their household differs from that in which they took the PISA test (OECD, 2023[38]).

Immigrant students face also additional challenges. In practice, immigration background and socio-economic status are often correlated as immigrant students often have a more disadvantaged socio-economic profile, which might further worsen their academic performances compared to their peers (OECD, 2023[37]). In Greece, around 60% of students with an immigrant background are considered socio-economically disadvantaged, compared to 25% of non-immigrant students (OECD, 2023[38]). Consequently, when both immigration background and socio-economic status are considered, the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students increases, with immigrant students performing 40 points lower on average in mathematics in 2022 (OECD, 2023[38]). In the same year, similar performance gaps were also registered for reading and science as immigrant students scored on average 46 and 51 points lower than non-immigrant students, respectively (OECD, 2023[37]).

Finally, gender differences are also notable in Greece's educational performance. Consistent with global trends, girls outperform boys by 25 points on average in reading, with boys being more represented in the underachieving students for reading than girls (with rates of 44% and 32%, respectively) (OECD, 2023[37]; OECD, 2023[38]). This gender gap in reading, which has increased by 17 points since 2012, could have serious long-term implications for educational and career opportunities (OECD, 2023[37]). Still, in mathematics and science, boys and girls perform at similar levels, with boys' and girls' performances in the subject declining at similar rates since 2012 (OECD, 2023[38]).

In addition to performance scores, Greece lags behind the OECD average in several areas related to classroom support and discipline. For instance, 57% of students in Greece report that, during their mathematics lesson, their teachers provide extra help when needed (OECD average: 70%), 43% that students do not listen to the teacher (OECD average of 30%), 38% that digital devices are a distraction (OECD average: 30%), and 33% that other students are a distraction (OECD average: 25%). Though in line with OECD trends, other rising negative trends in Greece include bullying and declining parental involvement. In fact, parental involvement has declined sharply (reaching 41% in 2022 from 72% in 2018) and bullying is frequent with 19% of girls and 20% of boys reporting being victims of bullying, with similar results being recorded on average in OECD countries (20% for girls and 21% for boys). Additionally, life satisfaction among Greek students has declined form 15% in 2018 to 19% in 2022, a rate that slightly

surpasses the OECD average of 18% (OECD, 2023[38]). Finally, Greece outperforms the OECD average students' sense of belonging by 3% (OECD average: 75%) (OECD, 2023[38]).

In summary, the recent performance of students in Greece, as measured by PISA 2022, reveals a concerning decline in educational outcomes across all major subjects. However, Greece's decline in PISA scores is part of a broader trend observed in several other countries, such as Slovenia and Norway, where similar declines in performance have been reported across all three subjects. In contrast, countries like Singapore, Japan, Korea and Estonia continue to excel, with high mean scores and a large proportion of top performers (OECD, 2023[37]). Overall, the results underscore the need for systemic efforts to address both the declining performance of top students and the persistent gaps related to socio-economic status and immigrant background. These efforts are crucial to ensuring that all students in Greece have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and contribute to the country's future.

Educational attainment and labour market outcomes

Educational attainment in Greece continues to be closely linked with labour market outcomes. In Greece, young adults with vocational upper secondary attainment have a slightly lower unemployment rate (17.8%) compared to those with general upper secondary attainment (18.6%). This trend aligns with the OECD average, where vocational education tends to facilitate better integration into the labour market. To further strengthen this, the government is prioritising vocational education and strengthening collaboration with social partners to better align training with labour market needs (MERAS, 2025[6]). To this end, reforms such as Law 4763/2020, Law 5082/2024, and Law 5237/2025 have been introduced to improve workforce readiness by tailoring vocational programmes to the demands of local economies. Also, in line with OECD trends, individuals with tertiary education in Greece enjoy significantly higher earnings. Workers aged 25-34 with a bachelor's degree earn 42% more than those without upper secondary attainment, and those with master's or doctoral degrees earn 133% more (OECD, 2023[30]). Still, the decline in Greek students' performance in mathematics, reading, and science (as outlined in the previous section) raises concerns about future labour market outcomes, given the importance of these foundational skills for higher education and skilled employment (OECD, 2023[37]). The strong influence of socio-economic disparities in this decline also raises additional equality concerns.

Gender differences in education also impact labour market outcomes. The gender performance gap in reading, described above, has implications for future employment, where literacy skills are increasingly valuable (OECD, 2023[37]). PISA 2022 data further suggest that girls may be better prepared for the school-to-work transition: 88% of girls in Greece report having a clear idea about their future jobs, compared to 82% of boys, a statistically significant difference of 6 percentage points (OECD, 2024[39]). This gap is not mirrored across socio-economic or immigration background (OECD, 2024[39]): in Greece, 86% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds report having a clear idea about their future jobs, slightly higher than the 84% of advantaged students. Similarly, 85% of immigrant students report career clarity, nearly identical to the 84.8% of their non-immigrant peers. In addition, 83% of girls expect to complete a tertiary degree (ISCED 5 or above), whereas only 74% of boys report the same pointing to a 9-percentage point gap (OECD, 2024[39]). However, only 66% of immigrant students are expected to do so, compared to 80% of non-immigrant students, a substantial 14 percentage point gap. Even more striking, the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students is nearly 29%, with just 62.5% of disadvantaged students expected to complete a tertiary degree, in contrast to 91% of their advantaged peers (OECD, 2024[39]).

Finally, participation in lifelong learning is crucial for adapting to changing labour market demands. However, the rate of adult participation in job-related non-formal education in Greece is significantly lower than the OECD average. Only 1% of adults with vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education participate in such training, compared to 7% across the OECD. This low engagement in continuous learning may hinder the ability of the Greek workforce to adapt to evolving job requirements and new technologies (OECD, 2023[30]).

Previous OECD analysis and recent policy developments

Previous OECD analysis related to the scope of this review

Over the past decade, the OECD has engaged in several reviews and analyses of the Greek education system. These reviews have offered forward-looking recommendations aligned with international standards and have contributed to Greece's notable efforts and ongoing reform agenda. While each review responded to the specific priorities of the moment, three overarching themes have consistently emerged:

- Modernising the curriculum and strengthening teaching capacity. The OECD has underscored the importance of aligning the school curriculum with contemporary skills needs. Past reviews have advocated for greater emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy, to better prepare students for the demands of a changing labour market (OECD, 2017[40]; OECD, 2023[3]; OECD, 2018[19]). Improving the quality and coherence of teacher training has also been a theme. In particular, the OECD has recommended expanding access to high-quality professional development opportunities, including those focussed on new pedagogical methods and digital tools. The OECD has also highlighted the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) as a foundation for lifelong learning, encouraging both the expansion of access and attention to quality, particularly for disadvantaged children (OECD, 2020[18]).
- Addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting equity. Reducing educational inequality has been a central topic in past OECD reviews commissioned by the Greek government. Greece has been encouraged to strengthen support for schools serving disadvantaged communities and to foster inclusive learning environments. More broadly, expanding opportunities for adult learning and lifelong learning has been highlighted as essential to both equity and economic resilience. The OECD has called for the development of flexible, high-quality adult learning programmes to support basic skills acquisition and workforce adaptability, particularly in light of Greece's evolving labour market needs (OECD, 2016[41]; OECD, 2023[37]).
- Investing in education to improve outcomes and system resilience. Low levels of public investment in education, relative to other OECD countries, have been noted in previous reviews as a potential constraint on quality and equity. The OECD has recommended increasing public expenditure to improve school infrastructure and enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession (OECD, 2018[19]). Additionally, investments in digital infrastructure and the effective integration of digital tools in schools have been viewed as essential to strengthening teaching and learning. This includes not only improving student access to technology but also supporting teachers in the use of digital pedagogies (OECD, 2023[42]). At the same time, rather than focussing solely on increasing resources, it is equally important to ensure their more effective and efficient use.

Recent policy developments

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Greece experienced some of the longest school closures among OECD countries, with approximately 62% of students reporting closures lasting over three months, compared to the OECD average of 51% (OECD, 2023[3]). The rapid shift to remote learning led to significant learning losses. PISA 2022 scores declined across all domains, particularly in mathematics and among high-achieving students, suggesting that the disruption affected not only vulnerable learners but also the most capable (OECD, 2023[3]; OECD, 2023[37]). Additionally, around 38% of students struggled to understand assignments, and 29% had difficulty accessing help, both above OECD averages (OECD, 2021[43]). The pandemic also amplified equity concerns, as the digital divide seemed to contribute to widening learning gaps, affecting marginalised students the most (e.g. disadvantaged, rural, and immigrant students). Beyond academics the pandemic also took a toll on student well-being. Fewer students felt a sense of belonging at school in 2022 compared to 2018, the proportion dissatisfied with life rose from 15% to 19%

(OECD, 2023[37]), and only 11% were regularly asked about their feelings at school, well below levels seen in top-performing systems (OECD, 2021[43]). In response, Greece has launched several national policy initiatives and instruments since 2023 to strengthen psychosocial support in schools, including the deployment of additional school counsellors, psychologists and social workers, the implementation of targeted well-being programmes, and the launch of updated anti-bullying policies. These efforts aim to improve student mental health and reduce disparities in emotional support and school climate (MERAS, 2025[6]). In parallel, and also as a response to the crisis, Greece implemented a range of policy measures aimed at recovery and system strengthening. The Ministry of Education prioritised digital modernisation and learning recovery through initiatives such as expanding the Skills Labs, which promote transversal competencies such as digital literacy, problem solving, and critical thinking; updating national curricula with a stronger focus on student-centred learning; introducing diagnostic exams in a sample of schools in Year 6 of primary and Year 3 of lower secondary education to help identify learning gaps early and guide targeted interventions; and creating new teacher professional development opportunities that target digital pedagogy (MERAS, 2025[6]; European Commission, 2024[36]; European Commission, 2024[32]). Additionally, to support data collection and school monitoring, the MySchool digital platform was expanded, improving the management of student, staff, and school-level information (MERAS, 2025[6]). Moreover, new and more sophisticated digital platforms and digital infrastructures, including smart and interactive whiteboards are currently being developed through the Recovery and Resilience Fund, with the aim of further enhancing system-level data use, school performance monitoring, and evidence-informed policy design (MERAS, 2025[6]).

Other recent policy developments in Greece's education sector have also focussed on a comprehensive modernisation of the system. To enhance the quality of early learning and promote lifelong learning, significant reforms have been implemented in early childhood and primary education. These reforms include the reinforcement of all-day primary and kindergarten schools through extended operational hours and enriched curricula that incorporate creative activities and innovative teaching methods. Additionally, English has been introduced as a foreign language in pre-primary education through experiential learning activities jointly implemented by English and kindergarten teachers, as established by Law 4692/2020 (Eurydice, 2023[44]; MERAS, 2020[28]). To promote critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy among students, new curricula in secondary education emphasise competency-based outcomes and a greater integration of digital resources to support interactive and engaging learning experiences (Law 4823/2021) (Eurydice, 2023[44]; MERAS, 2021[20]).

Regarding vocational education and training (VET), new VET programmes introduced under Law 5237/2025 continue to expand on the framework established by earlier legislation, being developed in close collaboration with industry to incorporate expanded practical training and to generate synergies across education levels, facilitating the transition into employment. These reforms are supported by Law 4763/2020, Law 5082/2024, and more recently by the aforementioned Law 5237/2025 (European Commission, 2024[32]). As part of this effort, new training guides have been designed jointly with social partners, tailored to the evolving needs of the labour market and aligned with the broader goals of Law 4763/2020 (MERAS, 2025[6]). Moreover, Model VET Schools (PESK) have been introduced with the objective of serving as flagship institutions that promote high-quality technical education, strengthen employer engagement, and develop closer links to regional labour market needs (Eurydice, 2024[45]).

Table 1.4. Main recent education policy developments in Greece

Legislations are reported in chronological order

Name	Date
Law 4589/2019: Synergies between the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Agricultural University of Athens, and the University of Thessaly with the Technological Educational Institutes (TEIs) of Thessaly and Central Greece, the Pallimniakó Fund, and other provisions	29/01/2019
Law 4692/2020: Upgrade of the school and other provisions.	12/06/2020
Law 4763/2020: National System of Vocational Education, Training and Lifelong Learning; incorporation into Greek legislation of Directive (EU) 2018/958 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 June 2018 on the proportionality test before adopting new regulation of professions (OJ L 173); ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Hellenic-German Youth Foundation; and other provisions.	21/12/2020
Law 4777/2021: Admission to Higher Education, Protection of Academic Freedom, Improvement of the Academic Environment, and Other Provisions.	17/02/2021
Law 4823/2021: School Upgrade, Empowerment of Teachers, and Other Provisions.	3/08/2021
Law.5082/2024: Strengthening the National System of Vocational Education and Training and Other Urgent Provisions.	19/01/2024
Law 5224/2025: The establishment of a public law legal entity under the name "Hellenic Orthodox Holy Royal Autonomous Monastery of the Holy and God-Bearing Mount Sinai in Greece," provisions regarding matters under the competence of the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs, enhancement of security at higher education institutions, provisions for sports, award of a lifelong pension to writers and artists for the year 2025, and other provisions	1/09/2025

Source: Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (2025), *OECD Background Questionnaire: Education Policy Review of Greece.*

In higher education, important steps have been taken to foster internationalisation, quality and competitiveness through Law 4957/2022, which established provisions for foreign-language programmes at Greek higher education institutions, participation in European Universities Alliances and other synergies with foreign institutions, as well as automatic recognition of joint programmes. This framework was further enhanced by Law 5094/2024, which permits the establishment of non-profit branches of foreign universities in Greece under state supervision and quality assurance mechanisms (Eurydice, 2023[44]). To enhance the quality of teaching and improve student outcomes, the Greek government is also prioritising the professional development of educators. New policies have been implemented to provide continuous professional development opportunities for teachers, focussing on modern pedagogical approaches and the effective use of technology in the classroom (Law 4589/2019) (Eurydice, 2023[44]).

In summary, recent policy developments in Greece's education system reflect a comprehensive and strategic effort to modernise the sector, address systemic challenges and respond to contemporary societal needs. Though not exhaustive, the list of policies presented above have introduced significant reforms across curriculum design, assessment, teacher appraisal, early childhood education, secondary education, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education. These reforms aim to equip students with 21st-century skills by promoting competency-based learning, integrating digital resources, strengthening industry collaboration in VET and enhancing the internationalisation of higher education. Despite these advances, challenges remain: many reforms are still in early stages and their impact has yet to be fully assessed; school-level autonomy remains limited; and further investment is needed in digital infrastructure, teacher training and student well-being services. By prioritising these areas, Greece seeks to build a more resilient, inclusive, and dynamic education system capable of meeting future demands. In this context, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports has articulated a new strategic vision for the period 2025–2027, outlining key policy priorities and reform initiatives aimed at strengthening quality, equity, innovation, and digital transformation across the education system. These strategic priorities are summarised in Box 1.1.

Box 1.1. Strategic Priorities in Greek Education: National Vision 2025–2027

In 2025, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (MERAS), under the leadership of Minister Sofia Zacharaki, released a strategic vision to guide education policy for the 2025–2027 period. This national plan aims to create a democratic, inclusive, and sustainable school system that promotes quality, equity, and innovation. Its overarching goal is to prepare all learners for active citizenship and future social, economic, and technological challenges.

Key initiatives under this strategy include:

- **Strengthening public education** through permanent teacher appointments, expansion of early childhood education, and improved inclusion for students with special educational needs. The government is also revising curricula, expanding textbook options, enhancing infrastructure, and scaling up the digital transformation of schools.
- **Modernising the curriculum and assessment system**, including through the introduction of International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes, Sports Schools, and Innovation Hubs. These reforms are accompanied by institutionalised teacher training in digital literacy and pedagogical methods.
- **Accelerating digital transformation**, including the evaluation of investments (under Measure 16676) using key performance indicators. Planned actions include new digital content, upgraded digital infrastructure, and expanded teacher training.
- **Launching new projects for 2025–2026**, such as science laboratories in secondary schools, school gardens in primary education, and updated equipment for music schools. The strategy also includes a programme for the responsible use of artificial intelligence in schools ("AI in Schools"), and new training in areas such as media literacy, financial education, and early language development.
- **Promoting sustainability and inclusion** by embedding education for sustainable development across the curriculum, strengthening Environmental and Sustainability Education Centres (Κ.Ε.ΠΕ.Α.), and developing accessible digital materials. Initiatives also include entrepreneurship clubs and programmes to promote inclusion and creativity.
- **Introducing innovative policy tools**, including *Eduplan.ai* (an AI-based planning tool for staffing and resource allocation), *ConnectEdParents+* (a digital support platform for parents), and school-level risk reduction plans related to climate change.

According to the authorities, the strategic plan is designed to align Greece's education system with European and international standards while supporting inclusive, future-ready learning environments.

Source: MERAS (2025[9]) *Education Strategic Plan for Primary and Secondary Education 2025–2027*.

Summary and the structure of this report

This introductory chapter has presented an overview of the key contextual elements that shape education in Greece. The country has made significant efforts in increasing access and equity in education, despite enduring challenges associated with economic adjustment, demographic change, and territorial dispersion. The education system is centralised, with the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports overseeing most aspects of governance, curriculum, and staffing supported by other national and sub-national entities (like the Institute of Education Policy and regional entities). While the system provides

a wide range of educational pathways, the complexity of its governance and funding arrangements, especially in light of Greece's many small and remote schools, continues to pose efficiency and equity concerns. Public spending on education remains below the OECD average, and fragmentation in responsibilities complicates policy coherence. Greece's students performed below the OECD average in PISA 2022, and persistent equity gaps exist across gender, socio-economic status, and immigrant background. At the same time, recent reforms and investments (such as the expansion of early childhood education, the implementation of digital strategies and efforts to modernise teacher appraisal) offer promising avenues for strengthening quality and relevance across the system.

This report builds on these insights and sets out policy recommendations for the education community in Greece aimed at improving effectiveness, equity, and responsiveness in their education system across four key policy areas:

- **Chapter 2: Strengthening school autonomy with accountability and local capacity building**. This chapter explores key elements Greece may consider in its efforts to strengthen school autonomy, accountability, and local capacity. Drawing on national policy documents, relevant literature, PISA 2022, stakeholder interviews and international examples, the chapter discusses barriers to school-level decision making, including resistance to decentralisation, challenges in supporting the building of leadership capacity at the school level, and the procedural nature of internal and external evaluation processes. It proposes three main policy recommendations: enhancing school autonomy with appropriate accountability and support; empowering school leaders to make effective decisions; and streamlining governance to improve coherence and responsiveness. Each recommendation is accompanied by targeted policy considerations and international examples that may offer valuable insights for Greece's reform efforts.
- **Chapter 3: Strengthening the teaching profession with responsive support and appraisal mechanisms**. This chapter examines the teaching profession in Greece, focussing on teacher appraisal, professional learning and teaching standards. It highlights demographic challenges, including an ageing workforce, and analyses the limited use of formative evaluation for teacher development. The chapter reviews recent reforms introducing school-based professional learning roles, such as mentors and co-ordinators, and identifies gaps in policy implementation capacity, school leadership and digital teaching competency. Drawing on international evidence, the chapter recommends strengthening the formative use of teacher appraisal, investing in school-based professional development, and developing national professional standards to align the appraisal, training, and career progression of teachers.
- **Chapter 4: Improving and expanding early childhood education and care (ECEC)**. This chapter discusses the governance, quality, and accessibility of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Greece. It highlights recent reforms, including the extension of compulsory pre-primary education to age four and the introduction of a new national curriculum, while noting ongoing fragmentation between pre-primary education and services for children under age four, as well as disparities in provision across municipalities. Drawing on international evidence, the chapter recommends consolidating governance, developing a unified curriculum framework for children under four, and strengthening pedagogical quality. It also calls for improved structural conditions and targeted workforce support to ensure equitable access and high-quality learning environments for all young children.
- **Chapter 5: Improving the meaningfulness and impact of digital education**. This chapter reviews Greece's ongoing efforts to advance the use of digital technologies in school education. While important steps have been taken, such as the development of a national digital strategy and investments in platforms and devices, evidence suggests that digital tools are not yet fully and systematically embedded in teaching and learning practices. Drawing on international data and examples, the chapter highlights areas where further progress could strengthen implementation, including teacher preparation, system coherence, and equitable access. It outlines key policy

directions to support Greece's digital transformation, focussing on enhancing teacher competences, improving infrastructure use, and aligning governance and support structures. Realising the full potential of digital education will require coordinated leadership, sustained investment, and a focus on pedagogical effectiveness.

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Notes

[1] Beyond the direct initiatives of the Ministry of Education, additional cross-government measures have been introduced to reinforce education–labour market alignment and to accelerate the transition of young people into productive employment. At the 2025 Thessaloniki International Fair, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced a targeted fiscal policy framework providing strong incentives for early labour market entry. Specifically, the reform grants full income tax exemption for employees up to 25 years of age earning up to EUR 20,000 annually, and a reduced tax rate of 9% (from 22%) for young professionals aged 26 to 30 within the same income range. While not a direct educational policy, this initiative serves as a complementary mechanism to vocational and skills development reforms, by reducing economic barriers to workforce entry, enhancing education-to-work transition pathways, and creating a more supportive environment for early career progression. It thereby contributes to the broader national strategy for youth empowerment, aligning fiscal policy with skills-based growth, human capital development, and long-term labour market resilience (MERAS, 2025[6]).

2 Strengthening school autonomy with accountability and local capacity building

This chapter explores key elements Greece may consider in its efforts to strengthen school autonomy, accountability, and local capacity. Drawing on national policy documents, relevant literature, PISA data, stakeholder interviews and international examples, the chapter discusses barriers to school-level decision making, including resistance to decentralisation, challenges in supporting the building of leadership capacity at the school level, and the procedural nature of internal and external evaluation processes. It proposes three main policy recommendations: enhancing school autonomy with effective accountability and support; empowering school leaders to make effective decisions; and streamlining governance to improve coherence and responsiveness. Each recommendation is accompanied by targeted policy considerations and international examples that may offer valuable insights for Greece's reform efforts.

Introduction: The context of school autonomy

This chapter focusses on school autonomy in compulsory education in Greece, which encompasses pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary levels. It examines how decision-making responsibilities are distributed across governance levels, with particular attention to the roles of schools, regional authorities, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (as central authority), and supporting agencies. The analysis is structured around the premise that school autonomy, when appropriately balanced with accountability mechanisms and targeted support, can improve educational quality and responsiveness. Accordingly, the chapter explores how Greece's institutional arrangements enable or constrain local decision-making and assesses how these arrangements can evolve to support improved outcomes for all students[1].

In this chapter, school autonomy refers to the extent to which individual schools have the discretion to make decisions about key aspects of their operations, such as resource allocation, curriculum planning, and student assessment. This includes determining school budgets, selecting learning materials, deciding course offerings, and establishing policies for student admissions, discipline, and assessment. Additionally, it often involves authority over teacher hiring and dismissal, setting salaries, and managing instructional approaches. Findings from the OECD highlight that school autonomy typically entails granting principals and teachers greater decision-making power, with some models actively involving teachers in school management. However, such autonomy is frequently coupled with accountability mechanisms to ensure educational quality and adherence to national standards (Burns and Köster, 2016[1]; OECD, 2013[2]).

The distribution of decision-making power across different levels of the education system serves as an indicator of how centralised or decentralised a system is. Since the 1980s, many countries have increasingly transferred decision-making authority to the local or school level as part of broader educational reforms (OECD, 2020[3]; Mentini and Levatino, 2023[4]). Among the various decisions schools must take, those related to curriculum design and resource management have a direct impact on teaching and learning. Advocates of greater school autonomy argue that those closest to students, the school leaders and teachers, are best positioned to assess their learning needs and allocate resources effectively (Cheng, Ko and Lee, 2016[5]; Caldwell and Spinks, 2013[6]). They contend that reducing bureaucratic control fosters innovation, increases responsiveness to local communities, and ultimately enhances student performance. Consequently, many education systems have granted schools greater responsibility over curricular, instructional, financial and personnel management, with school leaders playing a pivotal role in these delegated tasks (OECD, 2016[7]; OECD, 2013[2]).

School autonomy is recognised as an important lever for promoting equity in education systems characterised by geographic dispersion, such as Greece, where many small, remote schools might operate under substantially different circumstances from urban schools (OECD, 2023[8]). In Greece, isolated island and rural schools often face significant barriers to attracting and retaining specialist teaching staff, particularly for subjects like foreign languages and science, due to both geographic isolation and limited local accommodation options. This is also a point often identified in Greece's policy documentation and confirmed by many stakeholders during the OECD review team visit, (MERAS, 2025[9]). Infrastructure challenges, such as unreliable internet access and outdated school buildings, continue to hinder educational provision, although new public–private partnerships (notably involving COSMOTE and the MERAS[2]) seek to bridge the digital divide by delivering free, high-speed internet and equipment to remote schools using advanced 5G technology (MERAS, 2025[9]).

Remote and rural schools also encounter persistent operational challenges which exacerbate inequities, including unreliable heating, limited student transport, and difficulties in fully implementing centrally designed educational initiatives due to staff shortages or local logistical constraints. Greater school-level autonomy, particularly around curriculum adaptation, resource allocation, and timetabling, can enable

these schools to tailor responses to their unique settings and meet local needs more effectively (OECD, 2025[10]).

However, enhanced autonomy also introduces risks because, if there is not an equitable distribution of resources or if schools with weaker leadership and capacity are left without appropriate support, gaps could widen between advantaged and disadvantaged schools. Evidence from OECD systems indicates that increased school autonomy over course content is correlated with greater equality of opportunity, while autonomy over hiring may have mixed effects and may even disadvantage schools lacking the administrative capacity to compete for specialist staff. Effective and needs-based resourcing and funding policies are essential to ensure that greater autonomy leads to equity rather than deepening existing disparities (OECD, 2025[11]).

International experience shows that flexible governance arrangements are critical in ensuring educational quality and relevance in remote settings. For example, in Finland and Norway, localised decision-making capacity has helped remote schools remain responsive to the needs of their communities, while maintaining coherence with national standards (OECD, 2023[8]). While the institutional and socio-economic contexts in Greece differ significantly from those in the Nordic countries, these examples illustrate how greater local autonomy (when accompanied by adequate support and national oversight) can help schools in geographically isolated areas adapt more effectively to local needs.

However, the degree of autonomy and the specific areas in which it is granted vary across countries. While decentralisation efforts have gained traction in policy discussions, many governments have simultaneously reinforced central authority in setting educational standards, curricula and assessments. In some cases, reduced control over financial regulations and school-level processes has been accompanied by increased oversight of educational outcomes, such as national assessments and examinations aligned with centralised curricula. Critics of expanded school autonomy caution that it may lead to politicised staffing decisions, widen regional inequalities and fragment national education standards. Thus, while school autonomy can foster flexibility and responsiveness, it must be carefully balanced with mechanisms that ensure equity and accountability (OECD, 2016[7]; OECD, 2013[2]).

A centralised school system in Greece

In Greece, the education system has traditionally been characterised by a centralised governance structure, with the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (MERAS) maintaining significant control over crucial aspects of school operations. This centralised model, aiming at ensuring uniformity and equity, has also received criticism for its rigidity and limited capacity for innovation (OECD, 2018[12]), an account that was also confirmed by several stakeholders during the visit of the OECD review team. From the perspective of school units, this governance framework directly shapes daily operations, decision-making, and ultimately, educational outcomes (MERAS, 2021[13]).

Decision-making within Greek schools is largely dictated by national authorities, particularly in relation to curriculum and assessment. The national curriculum is centrally developed and enforced, leaving schools with little flexibility to adapt content or assessment methods to local needs. Similarly, resource allocation is controlled at the national or regional levels, meaning that schools have minimal influence over budgetary decisions and resource distribution, limiting their ability to address specific institutional requirements (MERAS, 2021[13]). Nonetheless, some recent initiatives aim to create more pedagogical space for schools. For example, the establishment of the internal school evaluation system, based on action plans prepared, implemented, and reviewed by school teaching staff, offers a new framework for contextualised school-level planning. In addition, the introduction of Skills Workshops across kindergartens, primary and lower secondary schools (Ministerial Decision 94236/ΓΔ4/2021, Government Gazette 3567 B) enriches the national curriculum with new cross-cutting themes, promoting innovative and participatory teaching and learning practices (MERAS, 2025[9]).

The integration of digital platforms into school activities is another area shaped by national policies. While the promotion of digital tools is intended to enhance teaching and learning, their use remains governed by centrally defined priorities, limiting schools' ability to implement technology in ways that best suit their unique educational contexts (MERAS, 2021[13]). Still, according to the interviews of the OECD Review Team with stakeholders, the pandemic demonstrated the capacity of Greek educators to innovate. In many cases, it seems that teachers were able to rapidly develop new digital competences through informal learning, peer mentoring and professional collaboration. Furthermore, according to the Greek authorities, schools across the country participate actively in European initiatives such as eTwinning and Erasmus+, which often include projects tailored to local educational needs (MERAS, 2025[9])**.** Additionally, ongoing initiatives are aiming to enhance pedagogical autonomy by progressively transforming curricula into Open Educational Resources (OER), providing teachers with more flexibility in the design and delivery of instruction (MERAS, 2025[9]). This topic is further explored in the chapter on digital education in this report.

School leadership also operates within strict administrative constraints in Greece. While principals have the authority to approve the implementation of educational programmes, student competitions, and similar initiatives, as established in Law 5128/30-07-2024, Article 73 (MERAS, 2025[9]), the broader issue of limited institutional autonomy still restricts schools' ability to design, adapt, and resource tailored educational programmes or to engage systematically with the local community. As discussed with some stakeholders during the OECD review team visit, these constraints may affect the extent to which schools can respond to local needs through sustained and innovative initiatives. Nonetheless, recent reforms such as the school-level internal evaluation system and the implementation of the Skills Workshops might provide frameworks that partially alleviate these constraints, supporting principals and teachers in developing targeted actions that enhance learning and community engagement within the national framework (MERAS, 2025[9]).

The process for appointing school principals is defined in Law 4823/2021 and is based on a combination of measurable and clearly defined scientific-pedagogical and administrative qualifications, teaching and administrative experience, prior appraisal results, and a personal interview. This framework establishes a reliable, merit-based system of criteria that aligns leadership appointments with the specific requirements of each position. Principals are selected by a five-member Local Selection Council, which includes representatives from the Directorate of Education and two teachers, and are formally appointed by the Director of Education. The process is highly structured and centralised, with no participation from school-level governance bodies such as Teachers' Boards or School Councils (MERAS, 2025[9]).

Both internal and external evaluation processes remain closely aligned with national standards. While internal evaluations are school-led in implementation, they follow centrally established frameworks that may limit schools' ability to fully tailor improvement efforts to their local contexts. Similarly, external evaluations (conducted by education advisers and regional supervisory bodies) prioritise system-wide coherence and accountability. However, based on the feedback collected through these processes, Quality Supervisors and Regional Quality Supervisors may propose specialised professional development programmes, tailored in content and duration, at regional and local levels, thereby supporting school improvement and strengthening institutional autonomy according to Articles 6–7 of Law 4823/2021 (MERAS, 2025[9]). Ensuring that these processes also support school-driven development could help maximise their contribution to continuous improvement (MERAS, 2025[9]).

Finally, one of the few areas in which schools in Greece seem to enjoy more autonomy is in the definition of their operational rules. Every year, each school in the country is entitled to define its operational rules to foster an environment of cooperation, inclusivity, and respect (MERAS, 2025[9]). Drafted with input from teachers, parents, and students, and validated by education advisers, these rules are meant to promote punctuality, emotional well-being and a positive climate. Misconduct is meant to be addressed through pedagogical measures, and responsibility for maintaining a safe, respectful environment is shared across the school community. School events and extracurricular activities are expected to further support student

development and parent engagement (MERAS, 2025[9]). In addition, Law 5128/30-07-2024 grants school leaders the authority to approve the implementation of Educational Programmes, Student Competitions (except those regulated under Law 4692/2020, Article 40), Student Festivals, and Conference Simulations proposed by the Teaching Staff Association or initiated by the principal. These activities must comply with the quality criteria and specifications established by the Institute of Educational Policy (Law 4823/2021, Article 87, paragraph 2). Such provisions allow schools a structured space for innovation and engagement with their wider communities within the national framework of education governance (MERAS, 2025[9])

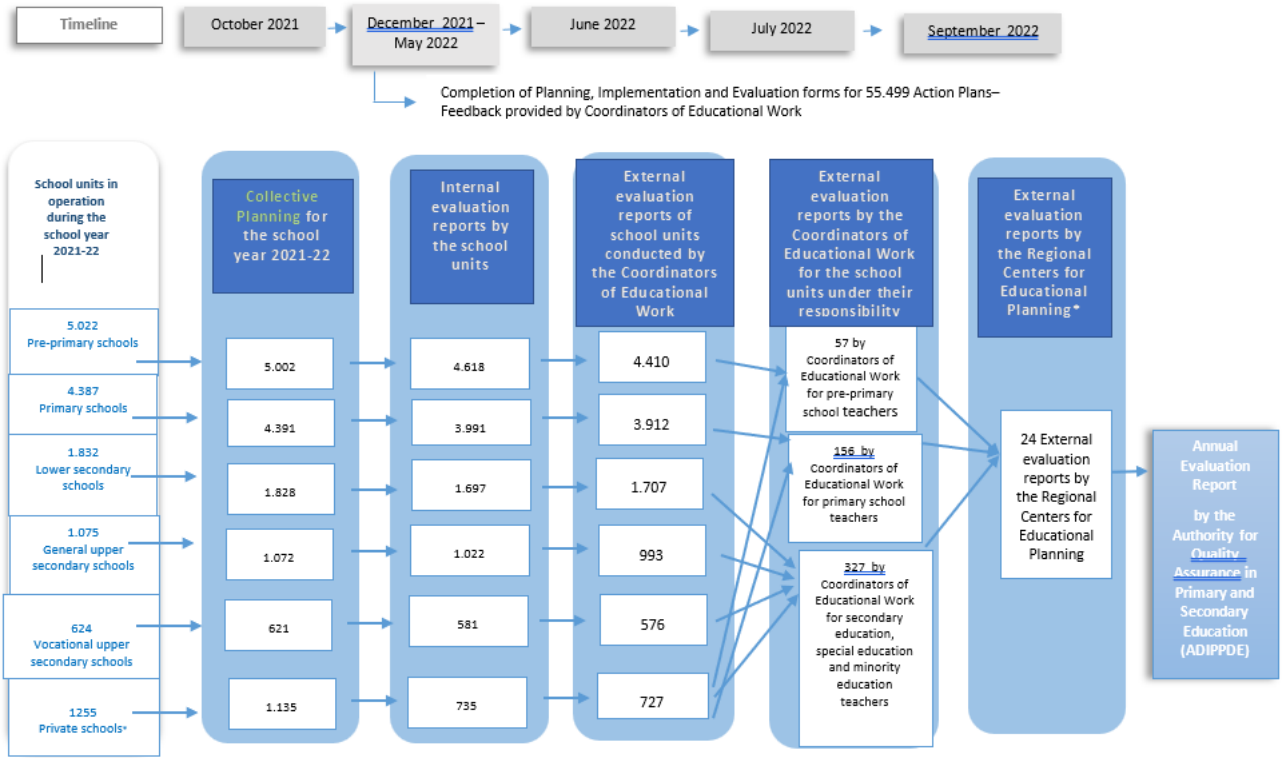
Potential strengths to balance school autonomy with accountability and support

Despite its centralisation, the Greek education system already possesses several institutional features that could serve as a foundation for granting greater autonomy to schools, provided that strong accountability and support mechanisms are developed in parallel. Among these features is the legal requirement for internal school evaluations, which creates opportunities for schools to engage in structured reflection and continuous improvement. The formal alignment between internal and external evaluation processes might offer a coherent framework for monitoring school performance. In addition, the system includes an expanded network of institutional actors, with responsibilities for supporting and overseeing schools, following the increase in the number of school advisers from approximately 500 to 1 200 under Law 4823/2021. This expansion has reinforced the pedagogical and administrative support available to schools and strengthened the conduct of both internal and external evaluation processes. These include education advisers who play a key role connecting policy and practice. Furthermore, the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE), established under Law 4142/2013 and amended by Law 4547/2018, serves as the independent national body responsible for ensuring the coherence, effectiveness, and transparency of quality assurance mechanisms across school education. ADIPPDE's role in meta-evaluating system performance contributes to continuous improvement and provides a solid institutional basis for advancing school autonomy within a framework of accountability. Finally, recent reforms aimed at enhancing school autonomy, strengthening evaluation, and promoting inclusive education suggest a political willingness to evolve towards a more balanced model of governance. The remainder of this section explores each of these features in greater detail.

Schools' internal or self-evaluation

The internal evaluation process in Greek schools (or self-evaluation) is meant to be a structured and collaborative annual procedure designed to ensure continuous improvement in educational quality. Established by Law 4692/2020 and Ministerial Decision 108906/ΓΔ4/10.9.2021, the internal evaluation is a mandatory process for all schools, and its reintroduction marks a crucial step in empowering schools to assess their strengths and challenges, make data-driven decisions for improvement, and align their practices with broader educational goals (MERAS, 2025[9]). By implementing structured internal evaluation mechanisms, schools can engage in meaningful self-assessment that fosters a culture of continuous improvement and professional development. These internal evaluations encompass the full cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting, providing a comprehensive framework for assessing current practices and identifying opportunities to enhance school operations (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]). Figure 2.1 offers an illustration of the number of internal and external evaluation reports by school units during the 2021-2022 school year[3].

Figure 2.1. Number of internal and external evaluation reports submitted by school units, education advisers and regional centres for educational planning



Note: Private schools, while subject to the same categorisation framework as public schools, may be viewed separately in the online platform of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) through the use of data filters. The platform includes all types of school units (pre-primary schools, primary schools, lower secondary schools, general upper secondary schools and vocational upper secondary schools).
Source: Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (2025[9]), *OECD Background Questionnaire: Education Policy Review of Greece*.

At the core of this process is the annual collective planning, which requires each school to design and implement one or more action plans (depending on number of staff) based on the findings of the previous year's evaluation report. These action plans aim to improve educational work across three main domains: 1) Pedagogy and teaching; 2) School management and administration; and 3) Teachers' professional development. The internal evaluation framework is structured around nine suggested axes, each accompanied by a set of analytic indicators. These are not mandatory or exhaustive; rather, they are intended as a basic reference. Schools have the flexibility to supplement or adapt these indicators to reflect their specific priorities and contexts when evaluating each axis. These axes include teaching practices, school dropout rates, student relationships, teacher-student relations, school-family relations, leadership and administration, community involvement, teacher training activities, and participation in national and European programmes (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]). As mentioned, schools have the flexibility to select the most relevant domain and axis (Table 2.1.), and supplement or adapt them, to design and implement their action plans, based on their specific needs and challenges.

Table 2.1. School evaluation in Greece

Axes for the evaluation of the pedagogical and learning function of schools

Axes	Indicators
1. Teaching, learning and assessment	• Implementation of innovative teaching practices • Enhancing students' soft and digital skills • Implementing differentiated learning practices • Supporting the inclusion of vulnerable groups of students and students with special educational needs • Development of educational materials to support teaching • Involvement in school clubs, activities, programmes • Preparation for participation in school competitions, cultural, artistic and sporting activities
2. School dropout – attendance	• Monitoring and reducing irregular/sporadic attendance and truancy • Ensuring the transition between educational levels and towards the labour market
3. Relationships among students	• Supporting and strengthening cooperation among students • Develop a climate of mutual respect, trust and respect for diversity • Developing ways of managing tensions and conflicts • Preventing and dealing with school violence and bullying
4. Relations between students and teachers	• Cultivating a climate of respect and trust between students and teachers • Supporting and strengthening cooperation between students and teachers
5. School-family relations	• Developing channels of communication, supporting and strengthening school-family cooperation • Support for actions to inform parents/guardians on issues of common interest
6. Leadership - organisation and administration of the school	• Setting and prioritising objectives • Ensuring the implementation of school regulations • Management of teaching staff (human resource management) • Allocation and management of resources • Protection, use and modernisation of school premises - infrastructure
7. School and community	• Initiatives to develop school networks • Strengthening relations and seeking partnerships with institutions • Extroversion - dissemination of good practice
8. Participation of teachers in training activities	• Participation in training courses organised by relevant bodies • Participation in teachers' in-service training • Design and implementation of training activities in the form of peer observation • Designing actions to develop linguistic and scientific literacy • Design and implementation of training activities in cooperation with other schools
9. Participation of teachers in national and European programmes	• Participation in national and European programmes (Erasmus, etc.) • Participation in actions of social interest, etc.

Source: Institute of Educational Policy (2021[14]).

Once selected, staff collaboratively develop targeted action plans, detailing their objectives, implementation strategies and evaluation criteria. These plans are carried out throughout the academic year, with their progress monitored and supported by the school's designated educational adviser. At the end of the school year, schools assess the impact of these initiatives, making adjustments where necessary to improve future outcomes (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]).

The internal evaluation reports are structured around three main functions, which together encompass nine thematic axes designed to guide schools' improvement efforts:

- First: The pedagogical and learning function (axes 1-5) focusses on enhancing teaching and assessment methods to promote inclusive practices, strengthen digital and soft skills, and encourage student participation in extracurricular activities. It also aims to address school dropout and attendance by monitoring irregular attendance patterns and supporting smoother transitions between educational levels and into the labour market. Additionally, this dimension prioritises

fostering positive relationships among students, preventing and managing bullying, and strengthening communication and trust between students, teachers, and families (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]).

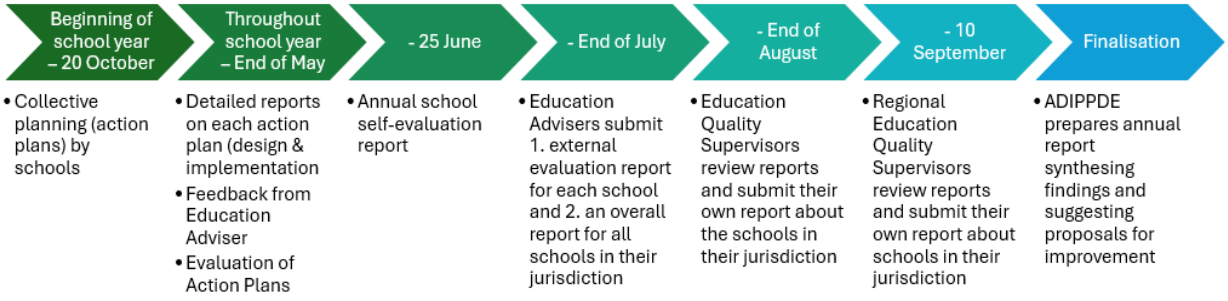
- Second: The administrative function (axes 6-7) is the second crucial component, with the purpose of encouraging effective leadership, organisation and resource management within schools. Initiatives include setting and prioritising objectives, overseeing the implementation of school regulations, managing teaching staff and maintaining school infrastructure. Schools are also encouraged to establish partnerships with local communities, institutions, and networks to exchange best practices and strengthen their role within society (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]).
- Third: The teachers' professional development function (axes 8-9) emphasises the importance of continuous learning and engagement in training activities. Teachers participate in professional development initiatives such as peer observation, in-service training and literacy development programmes. Additionally, involvement in national and European programmes, including Erasmus and other social initiatives, is encouraged to foster innovation and international collaboration in education (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]).

The reporting process is intended to ensure transparency and accountability in the internal evaluation process. Schools must publish a short version/summary of their annual internal evaluation reports on their websites, making key findings and developments accessible to the wider school community. These reports do not include any kind of individual teacher assessments or scores. They provide schools with the opportunity to highlight up to five action plans they consider effective. These exemplary initiatives may then be recommended by the educational adviser as good practices that could be disseminated more broadly to inform practice in other schools (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]). By integrating these processes, the internal evaluation system aims to foster a culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement in Greek schools. Through collective planning, structured monitoring, and systematic reporting, internal evaluations are meant to empower schools to refine their practices, enhance the quality of education, and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. At the same time, the approach followed by school internal evaluation in Greece faces some limitations and criticisms, which will be elaborated later in this chapter.

Schools' external evaluation

The external evaluation process for school units in Greece follows a structured and multi-tiered approach, involving different entities responsible for assessing and improving school operations. The process aims at ensuring that schools receive detailed feedback to encourage continuous refinement of their educational work (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]).

Figure 2.2. Timeline of school internal and external evaluations in Greece



Source: Greece, Ministry of Education, Religion Affairs and Sports (2025[9]).

Building on the internal evaluation process, education advisers with pedagogical responsibility play a key role in the initial phase of external evaluation. They begin by reviewing the internal evaluation reports submitted by the school units under their supervision. Based on this analysis, they prepare an external evaluation report for each school unit using a dedicated digital platform developed and run by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP). This external evaluation applies the same three functions and nine thematic axes used in the internal evaluation framework, with performance assessed across specific criteria on a four-level or ten-point scale, along with an overall evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, it offers specific feedback and recommendations for further development. Following the completion of individual school evaluations, these education advisers compile a broader report that summarises the strengths and weaknesses of all schools under their jurisdiction. This document includes proposals for enhancing school operations, addressing training needs, and promoting good practices. These reports are submitted via the IEP's digital platform by the end of July (Figure 2.2.).

Once the previous phase is completed, education quality supervisors oversee the next stage of the external evaluation process. Their responsibilities include reviewing both the internal evaluation reports of schools and the external evaluation reports prepared by the education advisers. By the end of August, they produce their own external evaluation reports, which provide overarching observations on the implementation of school action plans Figure 2.2.. These reports also contain proposals for improvements tailored to different school levels and types, documentation of successful practices, recommendations for the dissemination of effective strategies, and suggestions for necessary training initiatives (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]).

At the regional level, regional education quality supervisors are responsible for consolidating the findings from the education quality supervisors' reports. By 10 September each year, they submit a regional evaluation report, which aggregates data from the evaluations conducted in their respective regions Figure 2.2.. This report provides a comprehensive overview of school performance within the region, identifying key results, best practices, challenges and areas requiring further attention. The findings are then made publicly available on the website of the Regional Directorate, ensuring transparency and accessibility (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]).

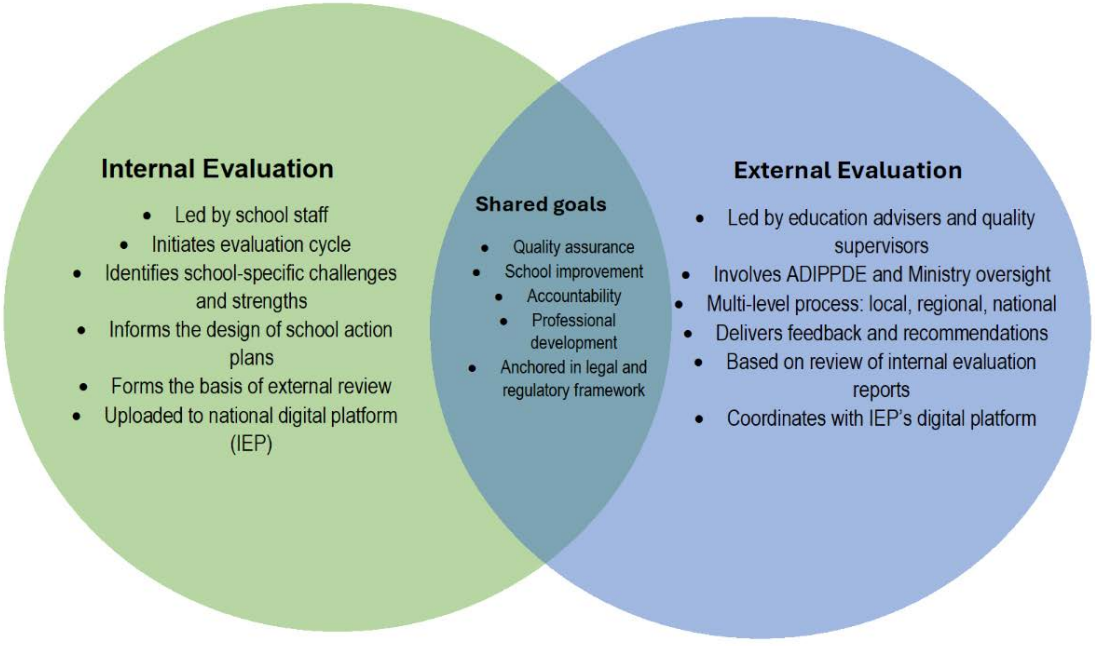
The coordination and monitoring of the external evaluation process occur at multiple levels. At the directorate level, education quality supervisors are responsible for monitoring and guiding evaluations within specific areas or institutions. Moving up to the regional level, regional education quality supervisors

oversee the process across broader geographical areas, ensuring alignment with regional standards. At the national level, the Authority for Assurance of Quality in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE) and the Institute for Educational Policy(IEP) coordinate efforts to ensure consistency and effectiveness in evaluation procedures across the country (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]).

The culmination of this process is the preparation of an annual report by the ADIPPDE, which synthesises the findings from the external evaluations conducted throughout the country. This report highlights key achievements, emerging trends, persistent challenges and areas for further development. It also includes recommendations to MERAS aimed at refining and optimising the evaluation framework (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]). The IEP collects and reviews good practices that have been proposed by schools and education advisers and selects a number of them as best practices to be uploaded on IEP's website for dissemination purposes.

A crucial aspect of the external evaluation process is the integration of digital technologies (see Chapter 5 on digital education). The IEP has developed a specialised digital platform to support the compilation and submission of evaluation reports at the local, regional, and national levels. This platform enhances efficiency, facilitates data collection, and promotes a more streamlined and consistent approach to school evaluation (MERAS, 2021[13]; Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]). Importantly, the external evaluation also serves a formative function. When planning their internal evaluation and school action plans for the following school year, school units are expected to take into account the findings and recommendations of the external evaluation process. By 20th October each year, schools submit their collective planning, based on the previous year's internal and external evaluations, via the IEP platform. This contributes to continuity in school improvement efforts and aligns internal planning with system-wide quality assurance goals.

Figure 2.3. School internal and external evaluations



Source: Greece, Ministry of Education, Religion Affairs and Sports, (2025[9]).

For authorities in Greece, the interaction between internal and external evaluations is meant to ensure a comprehensive and cohesive approach to school assessment (Institute of Educational Policy, 2021[14]; MERAS, 2021[13]). External evaluations not only verify and support internal evaluations but also provide

critical feedback that informs future school planning. This process of evaluation and refinement is oriented to strengthening accountability, promotes the continuous improvement of educational practices, and is meant to facilitate the widespread adoption of effective strategies across Greek schools (Figure 2.3.).

The role and importance of education advisers in Greece

Education advisers are fundamental in improving the quality of education in Greece, serving as intermediaries between schools and the broader education system to help align local practice with national education policies (OECD, 2020[3]). They are responsible for guiding teachers, fostering professional development and ensuring the effective implementation of educational policies. Their expertise supports the continuous advancement of teaching standards, providing pedagogical oversight to schools. By working closely with educators, they help to bridge the gap between national education strategies and classroom practice, ensuring that schools operate effectively and deliver high-quality learning experiences for students. Furthermore, they are expected to contribute significantly to school internal evaluation and collective planning, fostering a culture of continuous assessment and improvement (Government Gazette, 2021[15]).

The responsibilities of education advisers extend beyond only supervision tasks (Table 2.2). Their primary role is to provide pedagogical and curricular support and guidance to teachers and educational staff, supporting them through mentoring, training and lesson observations. They are responsible for developing professional training sessions, presenting model lessons and encouraging innovative teaching methods. In addition, they play a key role in promoting the use of educational resources such as school libraries and laboratories, ensuring that materials and equipment are effectively utilised to enhance learning. In parallel, education advisers closely oversee the collective planning and internal evaluation processes within schools. They monitor and support the implementation of action plans designed to improve educational practices in areas such as pedagogy, school management and teacher professional development (MERAS, 2025[9]). Their work in inclusive education is particularly important, as they provide support for teachers working with students with special educational needs, helping to implement inclusive practices across schools (Government Gazette, 2021[15]).

Each education adviser holds both pedagogical and curricular responsibilities, though these roles are distinct. Pedagogical responsibility refers to the oversight and support of teaching and learning across a defined group of school units, typically including all kindergarten and primary teachers within those schools in the case of pre-primary and primary education. Curricular responsibility, on the other hand, involves providing subject-area instructional leadership to teachers in a given discipline, who may or may not belong to the schools under the adviser's pedagogical supervision, particularly in secondary education. These responsibilities are formally assigned by Regional Education Quality Supervisors, and in cases where staffing gaps exist, may extend across different directorates or regions (MERAS, 2025[9]). In addition, a key aspect of education advisers' responsibilities is the evaluation of teachers and special education staff. This process is carried out jointly by the education adviser and the school principal and covers general and subject-specific teaching competences, pedagogical climate, classroom management and professional conduct. The overall aim is to enhance both individual teacher performance and the overall quality of public education (MERAS, 2025[9]).

As mentioned in a previous section, another important dimension of the work of education advisers involves preparing external evaluation reports for each school under their supervision, drawing on the internal evaluation reports developed and approved by the School Teachers' Board (a formal decision-making body comprising all teachers at the school). The report is submitted to the digital platform by the head of school. These external reports provide structured feedback on the school's annual planning and the implementation of its action plans, offer a documented assessment across key evaluation axes, and present an overall judgment of the school's strengths and areas for improvement across the three core functional domains. In addition, education advisers must prepare a summary report covering all schools

within their remit, synthesising common strengths and challenges, identifying training needs, highlighting good practices, and flagging issues requiring further attention (Table 2.2). These evaluation reports are a central component of the school evaluation process, designed to support school-level reflection, enhance pedagogical quality, and inform system-wide improvement (MERAS, 2025[9]).

Table 2.2. Key responsibilities of education advisers in Greece

Domain	Key responsibilities
Curriculum and pedagogical guidance	• Mentoring teachers and guiding instructional practices • Conducting lesson observations and presenting model lessons • Providing subject-specific pedagogical guidance across schools • Promoting innovation in teaching and curriculum approaches
Professional development	• Organising training workshops and continuous learning opportunities • Supporting co-teaching and peer feedback • Tailoring training to local school needs
School evaluation	• Participating in internal evaluations and collective planning • Contributing to the evaluation of teachers and support staff • Preparing external evaluation reports for assigned school units
Inclusive education	• Supporting implementation of inclusive practices • Providing targeted support for special educational needs • Collaborating with KEDASY and related support structures • Special roles for students from vulnerable social groups (students with refugee or immigrant background, Roma, etc.) and inclusive education
Resource utilisation	• Promoting use of school libraries and laboratories • Encouraging effective use of learning materials and spaces
Collaboration	• Working with principals, teachers and parents • Cooperating with support structures and school networks
Administrative framework	• Reporting to Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education as well as Quality Supervisors • Submitting quarterly/annual reports aligned with national education strategy

Source: Government Gazette (2021[15])

According to documentation from Greek authorities, the allocation of education adviser positions is based on educational needs across different disciplines and school levels (MERAS, 2025[9]). A total of 800 positions have been created under Law 4823/2021, covering all specialisations taught in Greek schools, including academic subjects, vocational education, special education and support roles. Among these, four positions were designated for advisers supporting the Minority Education Programme: two for primary education, one for secondary education, and one for Muslim religion education. However, only the two positions related to the Minority Primary Education Programme are currently active (one in Xanthi and one in Rodopi, also covering the Regional Unit of Evros), as only this programme currently includes permanently appointed teachers (MERAS, 2025[9]). In line with the Treaty of Lausanne, Greece recognises a single religious minority, composed of Greek citizens of Muslim faith residing in the region of Thrace. These positions are distributed across the directorates of primary and secondary education to ensure balanced support for schools. In cases where a directorate lacks an education adviser for a particular subject area, responsibilities may be temporarily reassigned to another directorate to ensure that all schools receive the necessary support (Government Gazette, 2021[15]).

It is important to note that education advisers operate within a multi-layered administrative and supervisory framework designed to ensure coherence, accountability, and alignment with national educational priorities. Their day-to-day work is administratively coordinated by their corresponding Directorate of Education (either primary or secondary level), depending on the school level they serve. Oversight and evaluation of their professional performance is conducted by Education Quality Supervisors who provide direct oversight and evaluation. At the regional level, additional supervision is expected to be provided by Regional Education Quality Supervisors, who monitor quality across districts and help align local actions with broader policy objectives. Regional and central authorities also play a role in monitoring the contributions of education advisers to school improvement efforts (MERAS, 2025[9]). To ensure accountability and measure their impact, education advisers are required to submit quarterly and annual reports detailing their activities and assessing their effectiveness in enhancing educational outcomes. These reports are reviewed by the Education Quality Supervisor and the Directorate of Education to ensure alignment with national educational priorities. A transfer system allows for the reallocation of education advisers when necessary, ensuring flexibility in meeting the evolving needs of schools across different regions (Government Gazette, 2021[15]).

At the same time, the role of education advisers in Greece also faces important limitations that will be discussed in further sections of this chapter. For the moment, it is important to note that these limitations become even more apparent when compared with international practices. In other education systems, many of the responsibilities assigned to education advisers in Greece are distributed more broadly among a range of key stakeholders (Table 2.3). Greece stands out for concentrating a wide array of functions within the education adviser role, combining pedagogical leadership with system-level evaluation. In Ireland and in decentralised systems like Canada, these tasks are more widely shared to support greater school autonomy: curriculum policies and evaluations are typically overseen at the provincial or ministry level, while responsibilities such as professional development and decisions about how to use resources to support teaching and learning are often handled by district school boards or individual school leaders.

Table 2.3. Main responsibilities of education advisers in Greece compared to selected roles in other education systems

Domain	Greece (Centralised)	Singapore (Centralised)	Ireland (Decentralised)	Canada (Decentralised)
Curriculum and pedagogical guidance	• Ministry designs and oversees curriculum • Education advisers provide pedagogical guidance and subject-area instructional leadership • School heads promote and coordinate the implementation of educational innovations and pedagogical climate (Law 1340/2002)	• The Ministry of Education (MoE) centrally designs and oversees curriculum implementation • Head teachers support instructional practices	• The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) defines curricula • School principals and teachers oversee implementation	• Provincial Ministries of Education design curriculum • School boards and principals oversee implementation • Head teachers support instructional practices
Professional development	• Education advisers support and may deliver professional development • The IEP is responsible for designing and coordinating PD programmes • School heads are required to offer at least 15 hours of school-based training annually (Law 4823/2021, Art. 95) • Other education directorates and schools may also organise PD	• The MoE and the Academy of Singapore Teachers coordinate PD	• Provided by the Department of Education through support services • Schools may also organise PD	• Shared among provincial authorities, school boards, universities, and teacher unions
School evaluation	• Schools conduct internal	• The MoE conducts school	• The Inspectorate	• Varies by province

	evaluations through their School Teachers' Board • Education advisers review internal evaluations and prepare external evaluations	evaluations through its School Appraisal Branch	(Department of Education) conducts external evaluations • Schools perform internal evaluations	• Ontario: external evaluations conducted by external independent bodies; internal evaluations led by school boards
Inclusive education	• Education advisers guide schools • Specialised support provided by agencies such as KEDASY • Schools work with interdisciplinary teams and support staff	• Schools implement with support from specialised teachers	• Schools implement with regional support services	• Schools implement with support from specialised teachers and regional coordinators
Resource utilisation	• Education advisers support the pedagogical use of resources • Principals manage daily resource use	• MoE controls funds and resources • Principals manage daily resource use	• School principals manage resources	• School boards and principals/leadership team manage resources
Collaboration	• Education advisers collaborate with principals, teachers, parents, and support structures • Professional learning communities and school networks exist and are promoted by national frameworks	• Schools collaborate through networks and professional learning communities	• Collaboration among teachers, principals, and support services • Promoted by the Department of Education	• Encouraged among teachers, principals, and school boards • Professional learning communities organised by teachers and principals and led by school boards
Administrative framework	• Education advisers report to directorates and education quality supervisors • Principals manage school operations under national direction	• MoE centrally administers education • School principals manage day-to-day operations	• School boards and principals handle local management	• School boards (superintendents) and principals handle local management

Note: The comparison focusses on the education adviser role in Greece alongside multiple actors fulfilling similar functions in other systems. Other actors in Greece (such as school heads, the IEP, and regional directorates) also contribute to these domains.
Source: UNESCO (2024[16]); NCEE (2025[17]); Ireland Department of Education and Youth (2023[18]); Government of Canada (2025[19])

The role of ADIPPDE, IEP, and RCS in quality assurance of education in Greece

The Hellenic Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE) functions as an independent administrative authority with a central mandate in shaping, organising, and standardising the evaluation processes for Greece's primary and secondary education systems (Eurydice, 2023[20]). Drawing on European and international frameworks, ADIPPDE provides expert guidance to the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports regarding the design and implementation of evaluation frameworks for education officials and teaching staff (more information on this in the chapter on the teaching profession) (MERAS, 2025[9]). In addition, ADIPPDE is responsible for overseeing the appeals process related to evaluation reports for education officials, with the exception of school principals, deputy principals and heads of sectoral education centres. Its remit includes the continuous review and refinement of the evaluation system to ensure its consistency, effectiveness, and alignment with national educational priorities. ADIPPDE's annual reports assess both internal and external evaluation systems, offering recommendations for improvement and synthesising general observations on needs, trends and achievements within the sector (Eurydice, 2023[20]).

The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) is an executive, scientific, and research body that supports the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, as well as its supervised institutions, on matters related to primary and secondary education (Eurydice, 2023[21]; Institute of Education Policy, 2025[22]). Its responsibilities extend across teacher training, curriculum planning, post-secondary and transitional education, addressing educational inequalities, and preventing student dropout, contributing to the safeguarding of every child's right to education. The IEP issues opinions or makes proposals either at the

Minister's request or on its own initiative. It also plays a central role in the quality assurance system by developing and maintaining the digital infrastructure that underpins both internal and external school evaluations (MERAS, 2025[9]). Additionally, the IEP provides methodological guidance for action planning and school improvement, supports the pedagogical aspects of reform implementation, and ensures that evaluation processes are aligned with national educational goals. By facilitating the use of evaluation data, the IEP enables evidence-based policy design and supports the continuous improvement of educational practices across the country (MERAS, 2025[9]).

Beyond their regulatory and coordination roles, both ADIPPDE and IEP actively engage in research and analytical work. ADIPPDE publishes annual reports that analyse various aspects of the education system. For example, the 2022 annual report included research on teachers' views regarding the National Diagnostic Examinations and proposed targeted interventions to improve student performance in Language and Mathematics (MERAS, 2025[9]). Earlier reports have assessed textbook evaluation criteria and reviewed the selection process for education executives (MERAS, 2025[9]).

In terms of data administration, collaboration, and systemic improvement, ADIPPDE plays a central coordinating role by synthesising data collected at the school, regional, and national levels to inform systemic improvements (MERAS, 2025[9]). In preparing its annual reports, ADIPPDE draws on both internal and external school evaluation reports, which are uploaded to the dedicated digital platform managed by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), in line with the provisions of Law 4692/2020. Based on this data, ADIPPDE (a) submits proposals to the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs to improve the design and implementation of internal and external evaluation processes, and (b) analyses the needs, challenges, trends, and achievements of the education system (MERAS, 2025[9]). This process involves close collaboration with IEP and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that reform proposals are grounded in robust evidence and tailored to the evolving needs of schools. Through these combined efforts, ADIPPDE and IEP are meant to contribute to building a culture of accountability and continuous improvement in Greece's primary and secondary education system.

The Regional Councils of Quality Supervisors (RCS, or *Περιφερειακοί Επόπτες Ποιότητας της Εκπαίδευσης*, PESEP, in Greek) were instituted through Law 4823/2021 as part of a comprehensive effort to strengthen the quality assurance framework within Greek education. Each council operates under the auspices of a Regional Directorate of Education and is chaired by the Regional Quality Supervisor (*Περιφερειακός Επόπτης Ποιότητας*), with all Quality Supervisors (*Επόπτες Ποιότητας*) of the respective region serving as members. Their appointment and remit are clearly defined in the legislation (Eurydice, 2023[20]). The RCS play a pivotal role in coordinating regional quality assurance initiatives, supporting the professional development of educators, and facilitating the implementation of national education policies at the local level. By providing guidance, oversight, and support, these councils help to foster a culture of accountability and ongoing improvement across the Greek educational landscape. Their work is instrumental in aligning regional educational practices with national objectives, thereby promoting consistency and excellence throughout the system.

It is important to note that the establishment of the RCS reflects a broader trend towards decentralisation and enhanced accountability in Greek education policy. The councils serve not only as evaluative bodies but also as key agents for change, supporting schools in the adoption of innovative practices and the pursuit of continuous development. Their activities are governed by a legal framework, which emphasises transparency, collaboration, and the use of evidence-based approaches to educational improvement (Eurydice, 2023[20]).

In addition to the roles of ADIPPDE, IEP, and the Regional Councils of Supervisors, the Computer Technology Institute & Press "Diophantus" (CTI) plays an important role in ensuring the technological quality of digital infrastructures for education and in defining the technical quality assurance specifications concerning both digital and printed educational content. Part of this responsibility includes the quality seal

system, a quality assurance framework for open educational resources (OERs), which is implemented through a related public platform centrally managed by CTI (MERAS, 2025[9]).

Recent reforms strengthening Greece's school autonomy and quality assurance processes

In recent years, Greece has made notable efforts to modernise its education system, with a particular focus on enhancing school-level autonomy and strengthening national quality assurance mechanisms. These reforms aim to create a more adaptive and accountable education system, one that upholds national standards while allowing for greater responsiveness to the diverse needs of students and communities (MERAS, 2025[9]).

A cornerstone of these reforms was the adoption of Law 4823/2021, which mandated the implementation of a comprehensive internal evaluation process in all schools. Under this framework and, as explained in previous sections, schools are required to assess their performance annually across key domains such as pedagogy, teaching practices, school management, and professional development. Based on these assessments, schools develop targeted action plans to address identified areas for improvement. The implementation of these plans is supported and monitored by education advisers, who also conduct external evaluations and provide structured feedback. Short summary versions of both internal and external evaluation reports (excluding evaluative marks) are made publicly available on school websites, helping to promote transparency and stakeholder engagement. (MERAS, 2025[9]). Law 4823/2021 also redefined and expanded the role of education advisers, positioning them as central actors in Greece's evolving governance framework. In addition to overseeing evaluations, education advisers are now responsible for providing pedagogical and curricular guidance, offering training, supporting inclusive practices, and advising on school-wide planning. Their enhanced remit enables a more coherent and sustained approach to school improvement, bridging national policy and school-level implementation. To further reinforce quality assurance, the same law introduced new supervisory positions within Regional Directorates and local education authorities. These quality supervisors help ensure consistency and alignment across regions and support the professionalisation of the advisory and evaluative functions within the system. The integration of internal and external evaluation processes into a coherent national framework, coordinated by ADIPPDE, and IEP is another important step (MERAS, 2025[9]). This dual system aims to provide schools with the autonomy to innovate while holding them accountable for results, promoting a culture of continuous improvement.

Alongside these developments in evaluation and support, Greece has taken steps to increase school-level flexibility in several operational areas. Beginning in the 2026–2027 school year, schools will be able to choose from multiple approved textbooks for each subject. In addition, schools may engage in partnerships with cultural, social, and educational organisations, participate in research activities, and offer student internships. They are also authorised to organise in-school training seminars and collaborate with municipalities in the use of school facilities, including for income-generating purposes. In addition, schools may access supplementary funding through donations and grants and have discretion to organise extracurricular activities, competitions, and local initiatives. These measures represent emerging forms of operational flexibility, although core financial autonomy over budgeting and procurement remains limited (MERAS, 2025[9]).

These changes reflect a gradual but meaningful redistribution of decision-making responsibilities across levels of the education system. By strengthening local autonomy in key areas such as curriculum adaptation, instructional delivery, and resource management, Greece is beginning to move away from its traditionally centralised model. Schools are increasingly empowered to respond to their specific contexts and needs, an approach that may be particularly beneficial in remote or underserved areas, while also supporting innovation and responsiveness system-wide. The overarching aim is to improve educational quality, reduce regional disparities and foster innovation at the school level.

While these reforms represent a positive shift towards a more balanced governance model, their success will depend on sustained implementation efforts, the availability of capacity-building opportunities for school staff, and the continued development of robust accountability mechanisms. Notably, the 2025–2027 Education Strategy (MERAS, 2025[9]; MERAS, 2025[23]) is oriented to further reinforce these directions by highlighting school autonomy as a core pillar of system improvement. Initiatives such as the *Eduplan.ai* platform, which uses artificial intelligence to optimise staffing and resource allocation, and the *EDUQUALITY* project, which introduces a multi-criteria evaluation and support system for schools, are designed to promote evidence-based decision-making at the local level. The strategy also advances digital transformation through the digitisation of administrative processes and the deployment of accessible digital tools to support school-level autonomy (MERAS, 2025[23]). According to Greek authorities, these efforts, coupled with ongoing reforms in teacher training, inclusion, and sustainability, are meant to provide a strong foundation for building adaptive, resilient, and autonomous schools capable of responding to local needs. On this point, striking the right balance between autonomy and accountability will be essential to translating these reforms into tangible improvements in teaching and learning. The following section turns to the remaining challenges that must be addressed to ensure that school autonomy becomes a meaningful lever for system-wide improvement in Greece.

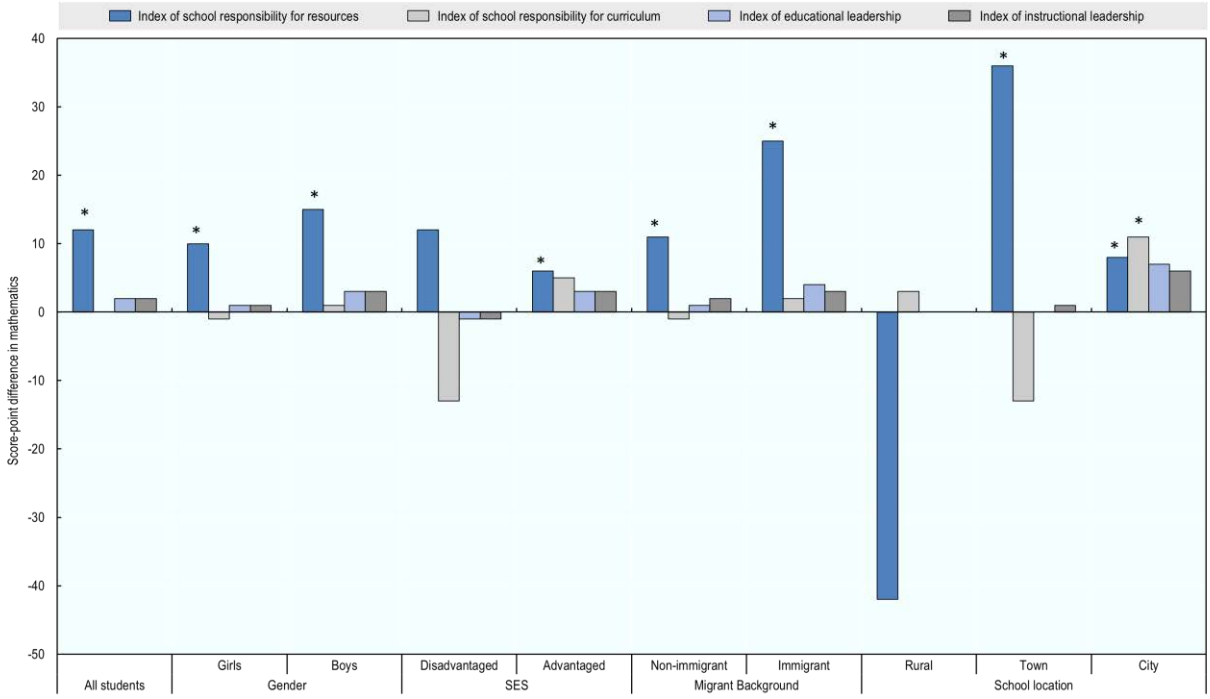
Challenges in enhancing school autonomy and internal evaluation

Strengthening school autonomy and evaluation has become a central policy objective in many education systems aiming to improve the quality and equity of learning outcomes. Autonomy allows schools to tailor decisions to their specific contexts, potentially fostering more effective teaching and learning. Yet, realising these benefits depends heavily on the conditions in which autonomy is implemented. Without adequate support, capacity, and accountability, autonomy can produce uneven results or even reinforce existing disparities. In the case of Greece, long-standing efforts to enhance school-level decision-making have encountered both opportunities and constraints. Understanding the complex relationship between autonomy, school evaluation, and student outcomes requires a closer look at recent international evidence, and insights from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) can be particularly helpful.

The complex relationship between school autonomy and student performance

School autonomy has emerged as one of the cornerstones of educational reform globally, with substantial evidence linking it to improved student outcomes when paired with robust accountability mechanisms (OECD, 2023[8]; OECD, 2020[24]). However, while increasing school autonomy can offer important benefits, the relationship between school autonomy and student performance is complex and shaped by a range of contextual factors, including system-level governance, school leadership capacity, and the broader policy environment (Hanushek, Link and Woessmann, 2013[25]). Evidence from PISA and related studies has revealed significant variations in how autonomy impacts educational outcomes, not only across different countries but also within countries across various school communities.

Figure 2.4. Change in mathematics performance associated with a one-unit increase in four indices of responsibility for school governance in Greece



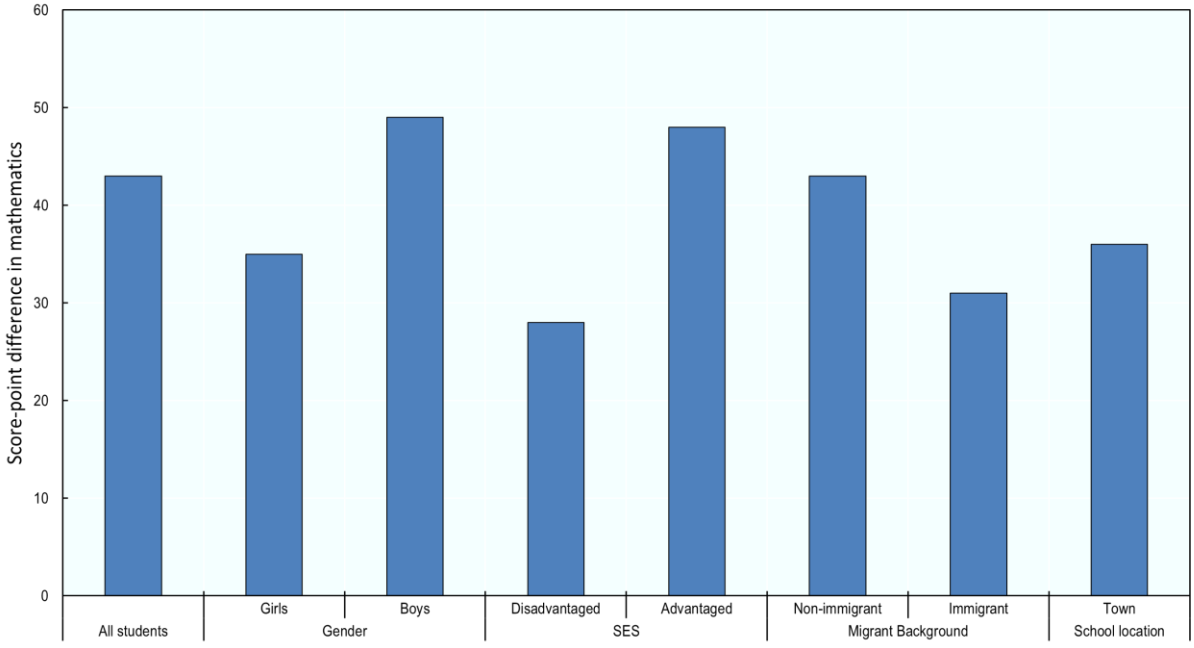
Note: Statistically significant differences are indicated by an asterisk. Each bar represents the coefficient from a bivariate regression of mathematics performance on the index, estimated separately for each subgroup (e.g. girls, boys, socio-economically advantaged/disadvantaged, etc.). No control variables are included in these models. Results reflect associations, not causal effects. A socio-economically disadvantaged (advantaged) student is a student in the bottom (top) quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in Greece. Rural area or villages are defined as having fewer than 3000 inhabitants; towns have between 3000 to 100 000 inhabitants; and cities have over 100 000 inhabitants. Educational leadership in the PISA refers broadly to the role of the principal or school leader in shaping the overall direction, culture or learning environment of the school and is comprised of seven items from the school questionnaire. Instructional leadership, on the other hand, focusses specifically on teaching and learning within the school and is comprised of five items related to direct engagement with teaching practice.
Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database

This complexity is also reflected in Greece. Variations in the four indices of school autonomy, namely educational leadership, instructional leadership, school responsibility for curriculum and school responsibility for resources, were associated with both gains and declines in student academic performance, with the direction and magnitude of these associations varying by student characteristics (Figure 2.4.). This mixed pattern underscores the complexities associated with effective autonomy policies and highlights the need to complement measures with sustained capacity-building and accountability mechanisms that are responsive to the specific needs and conditions of the Greek context. The benefits of granting schools more autonomy can be best realised when supported by robust accountability structures. The specific domains in which schools are granted autonomy and the extent to which it is coupled with effective accountability measures can significantly influence outcomes (OECD, 2013[2]). Autonomy is most effective when schools are held to clear expectations, supported by transparent reporting, and provided with consistent monitoring of performance. Particularly, the presence of effective quality assurance mechanisms, such as teacher mentoring, class observations, and systematic recording of student results, is essential to ensure that the autonomy granted to schools translates into improvements in teaching and learning (Burns and Köster, 2016[1]).

Recent PISA data further underscores the critical role of accountability and quality assurance mechanisms in ensuring that greater school autonomy can help to achieve better student outcomes. In Greece, the use of results from external evaluation to inform targeted improvement measures is associated with significantly higher mathematics performance, showing an average increase of 43 score points among all students (Figure 2.5). The associations are particularly strong among boys (49 points) and socio-economically advantaged students (48 points), although notable improvements are observed across all student groups.

Figure 2.5. Change in student mathematics performance when the results of external evaluations are used to implement measures derived from it

Thinking about the last external evaluation in your school: Were measures derived from the results of external evaluations put into practice?

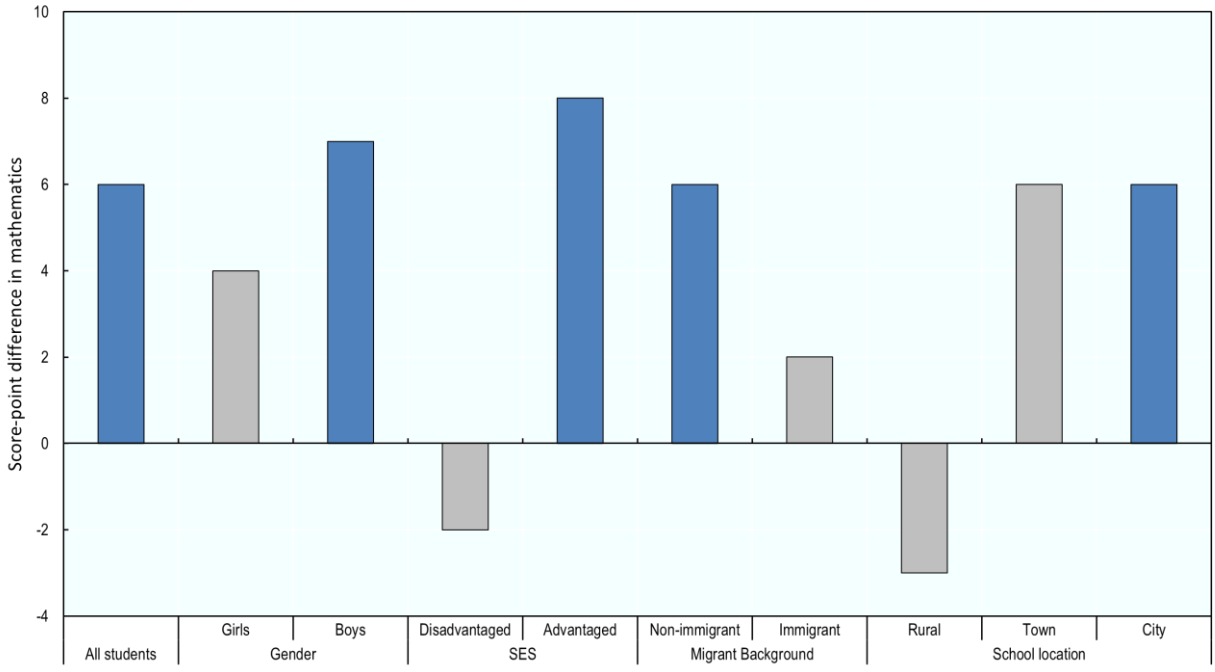


Note: Based on principal reports (school questionnaire). All student groups showed statistically significant improvements in mathematics performance. Each bar represents the coefficient from a bivariate regression of mathematics performance on the index, estimated separately for each subgroup (e.g. girls, boys, socio-economically advantaged/disadvantaged, etc.). No control variables are included in these models. Results reflect associations, not causal effects. A socio-economically disadvantaged (advantaged) student is a student in the bottom (top) quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in Greece. Data are not available for rural or city areas. Towns are defined as having between 3000 to 100 000 inhabitants.
Source: OECD, PISA2022, Volume II

Equally important to granting autonomy is ensuring that schools have the capacity to exercise autonomy effectively. Without sufficient leadership, resources and support, autonomy can inadvertently exacerbate inequalities, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged communities. As Hanushek, Link and Woessmann (2013[25]) argue, school autonomy alone is not enough to drive improvement if schools lack the ability to act on it. In this regard, while the association is not statistically significant for Greece, PISA data suggest that, as in several other countries, greater school autonomy is linked to lower mathematics performance among students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Figure 2.6). These patterns, though inconclusive (as they are not statistically significant), raise important questions about whether all schools, especially those serving vulnerable populations, have the necessary support to turn autonomy into

meaningful improvements in student learning. This issue deserves further investigation and more in-depth statistical analysis.

Figure 2.6. Change in mathematics performance associated with a one-unit increase in the index of school autonomy



Note: Statistically significant differences are shown in a blue tone. Each bar represents the coefficient from a bivariate regression of mathematics performance on the index, estimated separately for each subgroup (e.g. girls, boys, socio-economically advantaged/disadvantaged, etc.). No control variables are included in these models. Results reflect associations, not causal effects. A socio-economically disadvantaged (advantaged) student is a student in the bottom (top) quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in Greece. Rural area or villages are defined as having fewer than 3000 inhabitants; towns have between 3000 to 100 000 inhabitants; and cities have over 100 000 inhabitants.
Source: OECD, PISA2022 Database

Effective autonomy reforms must be embedded within a coherent and integrated policy framework, as context plays a critical role in shaping their success (OECD, 2016[7]; OECD, 2013[2]). Autonomy should not be implemented in isolation but must align with curriculum standards, teacher development policies, and funding mechanisms to ensure schools operate within a supportive and structured environment. At the same time, school-level decision-making must remain responsive to local needs (OECD, 2023[8]). This requires that schools have both the capacity and the tools to make informed, evidence-based decisions tailored to the specific challenges and opportunities of their communities. Achieving this balance demands a nuanced understanding of local contexts and necessary support to translate autonomy into meaningful improvements in teaching and learning.

The alignment of autonomy policies with other educational policies is essential, as policies need to be coherent and supportive to maximise the benefits of school autonomy. Local needs and conditions must be considered, as schools need to adapt their autonomous decisions to the specific challenges and opportunities within their communities. Additionally, the skills and motivation of school leaders and teachers are critical, as effective leadership and a capable teaching staff are necessary to leverage the benefits of autonomy (Hanushek, Link and Woessmann, 2013[25]).

A centralised system with fragmented responsibilities

The challenges associated with the centralisation of the education system in Greece are particularly evident in the difficulties schools might face to respond effectively to the specific needs of their student populations. For instance, schools in rural or remote areas may face unique challenges that require tailored solutions. In this sense, while the Canadian charter school model differs from the Greek context it might still offer an interesting set of experience to reflect on (Box 2.1). The lack of enough flexibility in national policies and curricula often prevents schools from addressing these issues adequately. In response to this kind of challenges, Greece is embarking in some new initiatives. For example, Greece's recent effort to establish the Public Onassis Schools (Δ.ΗΜ.Ω.Σ.) which is a network of model public schools created in partnership between the MERAS and the Onassis Foundation, might reflect emerging interest in approaches that promote innovation and local responsiveness within the public system. Through these schools, the Ministry intends to encourage the implementation of innovative practices and disseminate effective models across the wider education system (Onassis Foundation, 2025[26]). This flexibility-oriented reform effort could potentially address some concerns raised in previous OECD reports about the rigidity of governance arrangements that may limit schools' capacity to innovate and provide context-specific- educational experiences (OECD, 2018[12]).

Box 2.1. Charter schools as an autonomy lever for rural innovation in Canada

In Canada, Alberta's charter school model provides a notable example of using school autonomy to address the specific needs of rural and remote communities. Established under the 1994 School Act, Alberta's charter schools are fully publicly funded but operate independently of local school boards, giving them significant decision-making powers over curriculum, pedagogy, staffing and resource allocation.

This autonomy has been particularly impactful in rural settings, where charter schools have been established to maintain local education services and tailor learning to community contexts. For instance, Valhalla Community School in rural northwestern Alberta was created as a charter school following the threat of closure. Leveraging its autonomy, the school developed a distinctive programme combining classical education with agricultural literacy, entrepreneurship, and community-based learning, directly reflecting the area's rural character and priorities.

Alberta's charter schools demonstrate how enhanced school-level autonomy, within a publicly accountable framework, can empower rural communities to develop innovative educational models aligned with local needs and aspirations. The ability to self-govern key aspects of school operations has enabled these schools to remain viable, responsive and engaged with their communities.

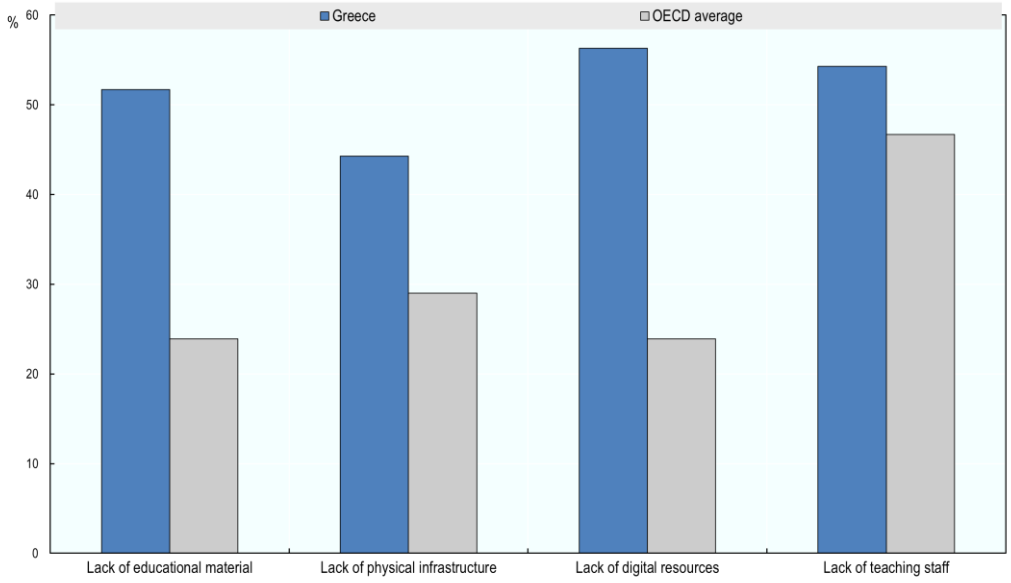
Source: Government of Alberta (2025[27]), *Public Charter Schools*, https://www.alberta.ca/public-charter-schools; Valhalla School Foundation (2025[28]), *Valhalla Community Charter School*, https://valhallacommunityschool.ca; Bosetti and Butterfield (2016[29]), *The politics of educational reform: The Alberta charter school experiment 20 years later*, https://ger.mercy.edu/index.php/ger/article/view/199

Interestingly, another challenge stemming from Greece's centralised governance model is the fragmentation of responsibilities across multiple agencies, ministries and local authorities. While the Ministry of Education retains primary control over policy and administration, regional and local bodies also play roles in implementing these policies. This overlapping jurisdiction seems to create inefficiencies and delays in decision-making processes. For example, school funding in Greece continues to be distributed through a complex, fragmented system involving the Ministry of Education, municipal budgets, and other administrative bodies responsible for infrastructure and support services.

Despite ongoing public investment and recent restoration initiatives such as the "Marietta Giannakou" programme (which targets the renovation of more than 2 500 school buildings nationwide

by autumn 2025), coordination between different funding streams remains limited (MERAS, 2025[9]). This fragmentation persists as a barrier to effective, strategic planning and resource allocation in schools. According to the OECD's Education Policy Outlook 2024 and PISA 2022 data, nearly half of Greek students still attend schools where principals report that shortages of staff and teaching resources directly hamper instructional quality and student learning outcomes (OECD, 2023[8]). The proportion of students in under-resourced schools in Greece remains above the OECD average, with figures stable or slightly higher than the levels previously reported (44% to 56%, compared to the OECD range of 24% to 47%) (Figure 2.7). These continued shortages reflect persistent national challenges around resource distribution and teacher supply, particularly impacting disadvantaged and rural areas.

Figure 2.7. Percentage of students in schools whose principals report the following challenges to some extent or a lot in Greece compared to the OECD average:



Note: Examples of educational materials include textbooks, IT equipment, library or laboratory materials; Physical infrastructure includes buildings, building grounds, heating/cooling systems, lighting and acoustic systems; and examples of digital resources are desktop or laptop computers, internet access, learning management systems or school learning platforms.
Source: OECD, PISA 2022, Volume II, Chapter IV.

The centralised and fragmented nature of Greece's education governance might have significant implications for policy implementation. Efforts to address these challenges must focus on streamlining governance structures and clarifying roles and responsibilities at all levels of the education system, like in the case of Singapore (Box 2.2). Strengthening local capacity through targeted investments in training and resources will also be essential for enabling schools to take on greater autonomy effectively.

Box 2.2. Streamlining governance for effective decision-making in Singapore

Like in Greece, Singapore's education system also operates within a centralised governance model. To mitigate inefficiencies often associated with such a system, Singapore has progressively enhanced the coherence and efficiency of its governance structures by consolidating oversight functions within a single central agency and clearly delineating the roles of subordinate bodies.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) serves as the sole authority for all education levels and types, overseeing curriculum, assessment, teacher training, school funding and quality assurance. The key to Singapore's success in overcoming fragmentation and duplication of efforts has been the establishment of specialised statutory boards and divisions operating under the MoE umbrella, each with a clearly defined mandate. This approach ensures that responsibilities are distributed in a complementary, rather than overlapping, manner:

- Assessments: The Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB) is a statutory board with an exclusive mandate to develop, administer, and assure the quality of national examinations and assessments. This clear delegation allows SEAB to focus solely on assessment, while the MoE retains responsibility for broader education policy, curriculum development, and governance. By separating these functions, SEAB can act as an autonomous expert body without involvement in day-to-day school operations or curriculum content, which remain under other MoE divisions.
- School operations: Cluster Superintendents form an intermediate leadership layer that supports schools directly while ensuring alignment with national policies. Appointed by MoE, superintendents provide both pedagogical and administrative support, bridging central authorities and individual schools. Their role ensures that schools receive timely support while maintaining coherence with system-wide priorities.
- Teacher training: The Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST) serves as the national hub for teacher professional development and pedagogical innovation. AST focusses exclusively on training, mentoring, and facilitating professional learning communities.

This integrated and streamlined governance model, sometimes referred to as Centralised Decentralisation, is designed to ensure that all major functions are managed by specialised, well-defined bodies reporting directly through clear structures to MOE. The result is a highly coordinated system that supports policy coherence, responsiveness, and implementation efficiency, helping Singapore avoid the fragmentation and overlapping responsibilities observed in other centralised systems.

Source: Singapore Ministry of Education (2024[30]), *Singapore Ministry of Education: Moulding the future of our nation*, https://www.moe.gov.sg/; Beck (2017[31]), *Learning from Singapore: the power of paradoxes*, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632434.2017.1397081

Resistance to decentralisation in the system

Institutional resistance to move power away from central authorities remains one of the most significant barriers to increasing school autonomy in many countries. This resistance is not confined to policymakers but extends to school leaders, who might often lack the training and experience necessary to operate in a more autonomous environment (OECD, 2023[8]). Beyond institutional resistance, cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards decentralisation. In the case of Greece, its long history of centralised governance might have fostered a cultural attachment to top-down decision-making processes.

This attachment creates a reluctance among educators and policymakers to embrace autonomy, as it represents a departure from established norms. School leaders and teachers might perceive autonomy as an additional administrative burden, a delegation of tasks from central authorities, rather than an opportunity for innovation and improvement. Although Greece did not participate in the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), findings from participating countries and economies offer relevant insights into this challenge. In both the 2018 and 2024 cycles of TALIS, teachers across OECD countries consistently identified administrative workload as a leading source of stress. This burden can reduce the time and energy available for high-quality teaching and learning, ultimately limiting teachers' ability to focus on core instructional tasks (OECD, 2020[24]; OECD, 2025[32]).

The combination of institutional and cultural resistance seems to be also compounded by a lack of trust between central authorities and local actors, further hindering efforts to decentralise governance, at least according to some of the stakeholders interviewed by the OECD review team. For example, reforms aimed at introducing school internal evaluation have faced opposition from teacher unions, who view these measures as overly bureaucratic or punitive rather than developmental (Bourelou and Fragkos, 2023[33]). These dynamics pose significant challenges for implementing reforms that aim to increase school autonomy. Efforts to decentralise governance must address these barriers by fostering trust among stakeholders and providing targeted training for school leaders and teachers. On this point, the experience of Ireland can be informative (Box 2.3) as building trust between different levels of government is essential for enabling schools to take on greater responsibilities effectively.

Box 2.3. Building stakeholder trust to promote school improvement in Ireland

Launched in 2011, Ireland's *National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011–2020* was developed in response to concerns about stagnant performance in foundational skills. Aware that introducing new accountability measures (such as national standardised testing and reporting) could meet resistance from educators, the government pursued a deliberate, trust-based approach to implementing the reforms.

Central to this strategy was the introduction of School Self-Evaluation (SSE), which placed schools in control of their own improvement processes through reflective internal evaluation. Rather than imposing rigid mandates, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education developed comprehensive SSE guidelines, offering schools a structured yet flexible framework to assess and plan improvements in literacy and numeracy. The approach emphasised professional dialogue, reflection, and locally driven action plans, reducing the perception of top-down interference.

To build trust, the government first engaged in extensive consultations with teacher unions, school leaders, and parent associations, ensuring that stakeholders had input into the design and rollout of reforms. This process also included phased implementation, capacity-building workshops, and the dissemination of good practice examples to support schools and foster ownership of the process. Combining school-led internal evaluations with national support structures and stakeholder engagement enabled the Department of Education to gain traction in a context of initial scepticism. By framing schools as active agents of change, rather than passive recipients of directive, the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy fostered a culture of improvement grounded in professional trust and shared accountability.

Source: Government of Ireland, Department of Education (2020[34]), *Literacy and Numeracy Learning for Life*, https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/interim-review-of-the-national-strategy-literacy-and-numeracy-for-learning-and-life-20.pdf

Underfunding and leadership constraints: Two resource challenges for school autonomy

Efforts to strengthen school autonomy in Greece must be considered within the broader context of funding and leadership capacity. Although the evidence collected for this review did not allow for a detailed assessment of school-level funding arrangements, it should be noted that this is a particularly important area; limitations in financial and leadership resources remain key constraints to schools' ability to exercise autonomy effectively and equitably. A more in-depth analysis of funding mechanisms would help clarify these issues, and merits future attention. In this regard, Greece continues to face chronic underinvestment in education. In 2025, public expenditure on education represented only 3.9–4.0% of GDP, compared to the OECD and EU averages of 4.7% (OECD, 2025[11]; Eurostat, 2025[35]). Education accounted for just 8% of total public spending, among the lowest shares in Europe. These financial constraints might contribute to persistent challenges such as outdated infrastructure, limited access to teaching materials, and insufficient professional development opportunities, a perspective also shared by several stakeholders during the OECD review visit. As reported in recent surveys and confirmed by earlier OECD reviews, a large proportion of Greek school principals continue to report that lack of resources hinders their capacity to improve student learning outcomes (OECD, 2025[11]).

The structure of education funding in Greece is marked by both centralisation and fragmentation. The Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (MERAS), the Ministry of Interior, and local municipalities all play a role (Eurydice, 2023[21]; MERAS, 2025[9]). The Ordinary Budget, drawn from central government funds, covers operational costs, while the Public Investment Programme (often co-financed with EU funds) supports infrastructure and long-term projects such as the Marietta Giannakou renovation initiative.

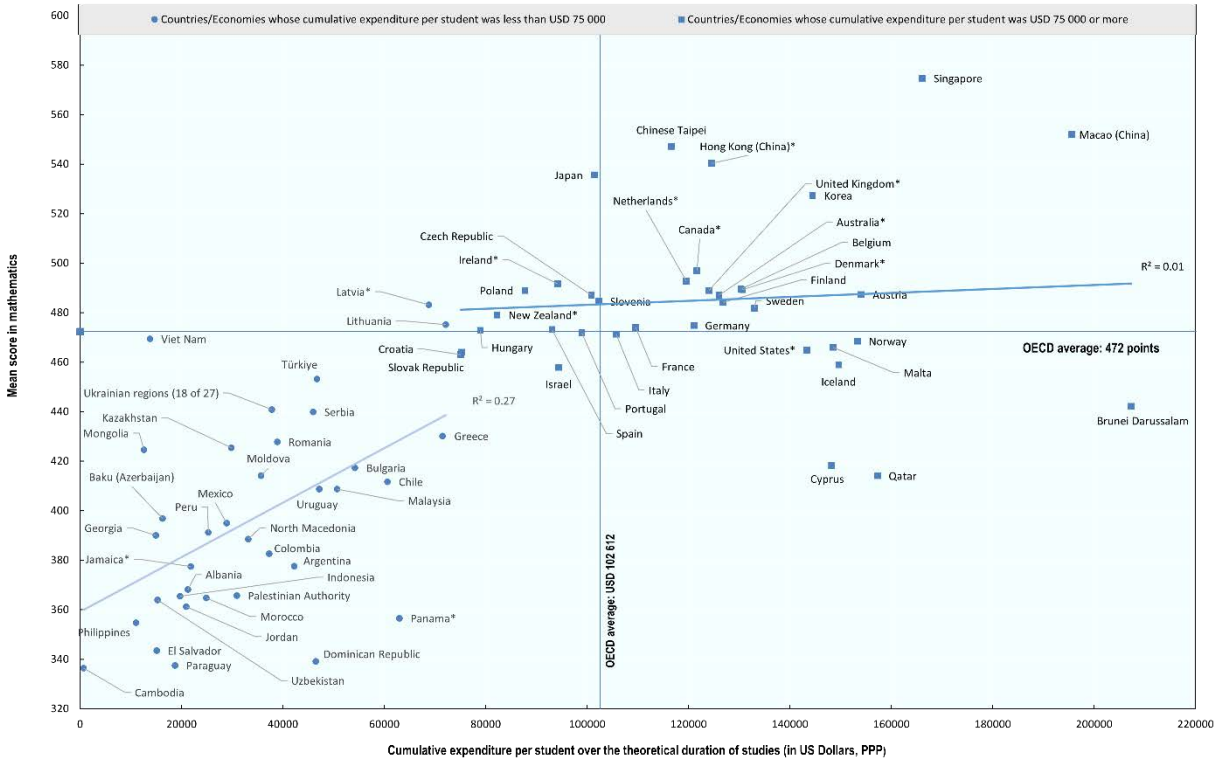
For ongoing operations, the Ministry of Interior disburses funds to municipalities four times per year, following Law 5056/2023 and Ministerial Decision 45120/2024. Allocations are based on enrolment, class size, building conditions, climate-related issues, and other factors. School-level distribution is managed by municipal authorities, often through separate School Committees for primary and secondary education. However, national agencies such as the Diophantus Computer Technology Institute are not involved in financial allocation or management (MERAS, 2025[9]). It should be noted that, in Greece, a funding formula is used to allocate resources at the municipal level, with 30% of funds based on the number of classes and 70% on the number of students (Eurydice, 2025[36]). While this formula outlines the basic distribution of operational funding, this chapter (due to time, information and length constraints) does not explore how teacher resources are allocated across individual schools or discusses targeted funding streams designed to meet diverse school needs. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this remains an important issue that warrants further analysis in future work.

As discussed, despite recent efforts to improve transparency and standardisation, school-level financial autonomy remains extremely limited. Schools are not permitted to raise or manage funds and lack authority over procurement or capital investment. Any flexibility is mediated through municipal School Committees, which does not fundamentally change the lack of school control, a challenge identified in previous OECD reviews (OECD, 2018[12]). Fragmentation, underfunding, and weak monitoring systems continue to hinder strategic planning and exacerbate regional inequalities, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Recent reforms have aimed to improve standardisation, monitoring, and transparency in the allocation process, yet persistent fragmentation, underfunding, and systemic inefficiencies continue to impede strategic planning and equitable resource allocation. Municipal discretion is further curtailed by the lack of robust monitoring, which complicates oversight and exacerbates regional disparities, especially for disadvantaged communities (MERAS, 2025[9])

Reliance on private spending remains high in Greece, especially for supplemental services such as tutoring, further amplifying inequalities in access and opportunity (OECD, 2025[11]; Eurydice, 2023[21]). As shown in PISA 2022, higher education expenditure is generally associated with stronger student

performance, but only up to a certain point (Figure 2.8). Among countries with cumulative per-student spending below USD 75 000, performance tends to improve with investment. However, beyond this threshold, the relationship weakens. For example, Singapore, with a mathematics score of 575, spends approximately USD 166 112 per student. Canada spends about USD 121 678 and scores 497, while Ireland and Poland show solid results (492 and 489, respectively) at more moderate spending levels. In contrast, Greece, with one of the lowest cumulative expenditures (USD 71 509), reports an average score of 430. As already mentioned, among countries whose cumulative expenditure exceeded USD 75 000, the relationship between spending and performance weakened, suggesting that how these financial resources are used matters more than how much is spent. For Greece, this implies that while addressing underfunding remains an urgent priority, efforts should also focus on improving the efficiency and strategic use of resources to maximise impact on student learning.

Figure 2.8. Mathematics performance and spending on education



Note: Spending on education and per capita GDP are highly correlated. In 2019, average total expenditure by educational institution per student from the age of 6 to 15 in OECD countries was USD 102 612 (PPP-corrected dollars).
Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database, Volume I, Tables I.B1.2.1 and I.B3.2.2.

In addition to funding constraints, school leadership also plays a critical role in implementing autonomy and driving school improvement. In the interviews with the OECD review team, school principals in Greece often report lack the necessary training and support to manage schools with greater autonomy. Traditionally, school leadership in Greece has been viewed as an administrative role rather than a pedagogical one. This limits principals' ability to engage in instructional leadership or foster innovation within their schools. The lack of professional development opportunities further compounds this issue. While recent reforms have introduced some training programmes for school leaders, these efforts remain insufficient given the scale of the challenge. For example, principals report limited access to structured leadership training that would equip them with the skills needed to manage resources effectively or

implement data-driven decision-making processes (OECD, 2018[12]). The experience of Poland might offer some relevant insights for Greece (Box 2.4). Through strategic reforms and capacity-building initiatives, including training cascades and independent leadership academies, Poland has strengthened school leadership within a centralised framework, balancing autonomy with accountability.

Box 2.4. Supporting school leaders for greater school autonomy within a centralised framework in Poland

Poland operates within a moderately centralised framework but has progressively granted more autonomy to schools, particularly in pedagogical and organisational matters. A significant shift occurred in the early 2000s with the Amendment of the Education System Act. School leaders gained authority over curriculum adaptation, teacher recruitment, internal evaluations, and budgeting within allocated funds. While the Ministry of Education set core requirements, schools were given autonomy to develop their own curricula and adjust timetables to local needs.

To support school leaders in exercising these expanded responsibilities, the Ministry of Education introduced capacity-building programmes, including the New School (*Nowa Szkoła*) initiative, which provided large-scale cascade training on curriculum development, assessment, and school management. School leaders were also provided access to dedicated guidance materials through the Reform Library (*Biblioteczka Reformy*), which was specifically created to offer practical resources on areas such as school organisation, financing, and instructional leadership of the reform.

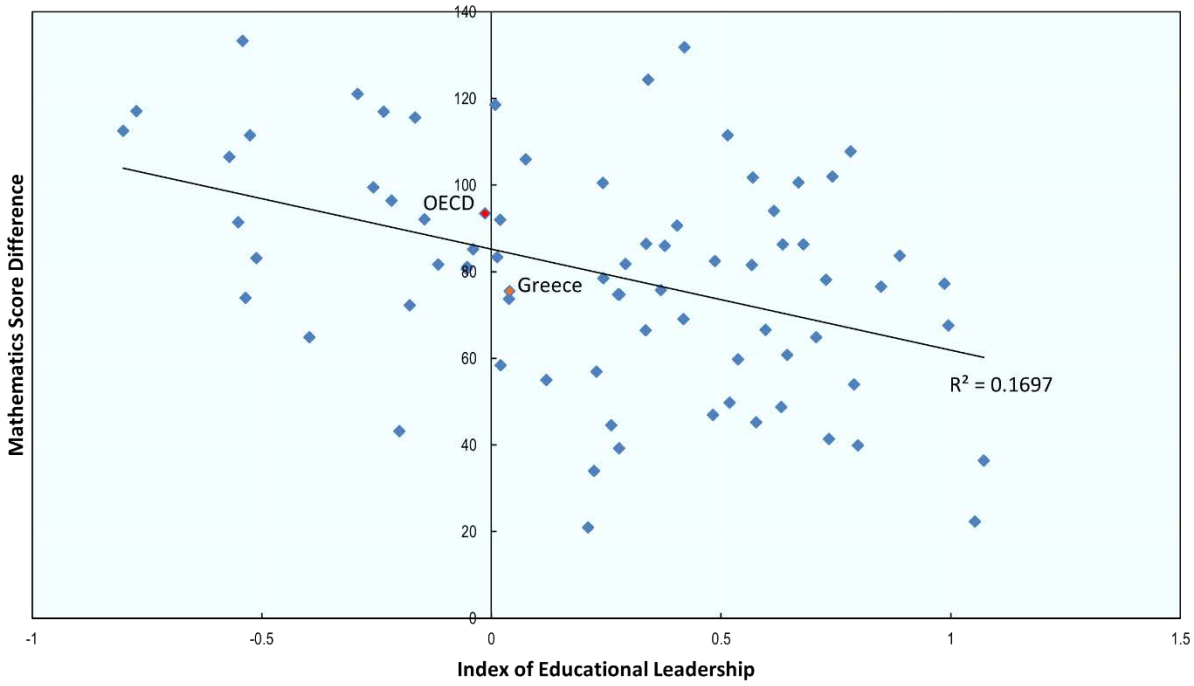
In 2017, reforms further emphasised decentralised school governance, giving school principals greater discretion over staffing decisions, professional development, and the organisation of learning processes, in line with efforts to improve responsiveness to community-specific needs. Beyond these government-led efforts, leadership capacity has also been strengthened by independent initiatives such as the Leadership Academy for Poland, which provides school leaders and other professionals with high-quality training on strategic leadership, innovation, and organisational change management. While autonomy remains bounded by strong national standards and external inspections, Poland is increasingly recognised as an education system where school autonomy is effectively supported within a high-accountability framework, seeking to balance innovation with equity and quality assurance.

Source: Poland Ministry of National Education (2025[37]), *Ministry of Education: Service of the Republic of Poland*, https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja; Eurydice (2024[38]) *Organisation and Governance*, https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/eurypedia/poland/fundamental-principles-and-national-policies; Jakubowski (2020[39]), *Poland: Polish Education Reforms and Evidence from International Assessments.* In: Crato, N. (eds) Improving a Country's Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59031-4_7

Providing school leaders with greater autonomy is not only a governance issue but a key lever in promoting greater equity in student learning outcomes. Recent PISA 2022 data show a negative association between educational leadership and the mathematics performance gap between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students (Figure 2.9). This suggests that in systems where principals are more actively engaged in shaping the educational direction and instructional practices of their schools, the impact of students' socio-economic background on performance tends to be smaller (OECD, 2023[8]). In other words, stronger educational leadership is linked to reduced disparities in learning outcomes. These findings are further supported by other OECD reports, which shows that school leaders who report higher levels of

instructional and educational leadership are more effective in fostering teacher collaboration and driving improvements in teaching practices (OECD, 2020[24]).

Figure 2.9. Mathematics performance gap between top and bottom quarter of SES and Index of Educational Leadership



Note: Educational leadership in the PISA refers broadly to the role of the principal or school leader in shaping the overall direction, culture or learning environment of the school and is comprised of seven items from the school questionnaire. A socio-economically disadvantaged (advantaged) student is a student in the bottom (top) quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in his country or economy.
Source: OECD, PISA 2022, Volume II.

These findings point to the need for Greece to not only grant school leaders more autonomy but to do so within a system that also invests in leadership capacity-building, strengthens internal evaluation practices, and fosters participatory and collaborative school cultures. Without such complementary measures, increased autonomy risks remaining symbolic, rather than becoming a lever for meaningful school improvement and innovation. A more meaningful approach requires building the capacity of school leaders through comprehensive training in instructional leadership, strategic planning and resource management. By equipping principals with the tools and supports they need to succeed in a more autonomous system, Greece can ensure that decentralisation efforts translate into meaningful improvements in educational quality. At the same time, addressing underfunding and resource constraints is critical for enabling schools to operate more autonomously and effectively. Streamlining funding mechanisms could reduce inefficiencies and ensure that resources are allocated transparently and equitably. Additionally, targeted investments in infrastructure and educational materials are essential for creating an environment conducive to learning.

A bureaucratic view of internal evaluation: A barrier to systemic improvement

Despite recent reforms, feedback from stakeholders interviewed by the OECD Review Team indicates that internal school evaluation is not yet consistently seen as a meaningful tool for improvement, and in some cases is still perceived as a bureaucratic task. This perception is rooted in a system where top-down directives dominate, and participatory approaches are less embedded in school culture. As a result, many teachers and school leaders see internal evaluation as a compliance exercise imposed by external authorities, disconnected from the realities of classroom practice and school-specific needs. The implementation of school action plans also requires a sound understanding of research and evaluation methodology, an area in which many educators are still adapting and evolving. While the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) has developed detailed guidelines, manuals, and digital tools to support schools in this process, there remains a need for more systematic and sustained professional development. According to Greek authorities, the main challenge appears to lie less in the lack of training opportunities than in cultural resistance to change, which continues to limit the potential of internal evaluation as a driver of school improvement. Without targeted professional development, the process often feels irrelevant to the challenges schools face or to the broader goals of quality assurance. Consequently, internal evaluation risks being reduced to a formalistic activity that lacks depth and fails to support meaningful reflection or improvement.

One of the core challenges in leveraging the full potential of the quality assurance system lies in overcoming the association of internal evaluation with red tape. Teachers frequently experience the process as overly procedural and misaligned with their pedagogical work. Such a compliance-driven culture undermines the transformative potential of internal evaluation, limiting its role in promoting innovation and continuous development (Bourelou and Fragkos, 2023[33]; Varkas, 2022[40]) Feedback collected during the OECD review team's school visits confirmed this view, with many educators describing internal evaluation as a routine task rather than a valuable opportunity for growth.

To address these issues, a cultural shift is needed, one that reframes internal evaluation as a developmental rather than administrative tool. The experience of Estonia (Box 2.5) may offer valuable insights for Greece in rethinking and reinforcing its approach. Central to this shift is the promotion of a collaborative and trust-based environment where all actors, including teachers, school leaders, and policymakers, share responsibility for school improvement. Professional learning opportunities, focussed on practical ways to use evaluation data for informed decision-making, are key to building this capacity. Ultimately, transforming internal evaluation into a driver of systemic improvement requires addressing both cultural mindsets and institutional structures. This includes embedding evaluation into broader quality assurance processes, aligning it with school-level priorities and national objectives, and creating space for professional dialogue. When internal evaluation is viewed as a tool for learning and development, rather than a regulatory formality, it can play a vital role in enhancing teaching practices, improving student outcomes, and fostering sustainable school improvement.

Box 2.5. Reframing school internal evaluations to foster a culture of school-led improvement in Estonia

Following the decentralisation of education governance in the 1990s, Estonia introduced requirements for schools to conduct internal evaluations as part of their quality assurance obligations. However, these processes were initially perceived by schools and municipalities as checklist-driven formalities, aimed primarily at satisfying central authorities rather than supporting meaningful improvement. This perception limited the effectiveness of internal evaluation, as schools approached it as a bureaucratic task disconnected from teaching and learning.

To address this challenge, the Estonian government undertook a significant reframing of internal evaluation processes in the early 2000s. The introduction of School Development Plans and Quality Assurance Guidelines positioned internal evaluation as a tool for school self-reflection and strategic planning, explicitly linking the process to each school's priorities, context, and development goals. This shift encouraged schools to use internal evaluation not as a compliance exercise but as an opportunity to assess their own performance, identify areas for improvement, and set actionable targets aligned with their educational mission.

Critical to this cultural shift was the establishment of dialogue platforms and participatory processes involving school leaders' associations, municipal education offices and teacher networks. The government organised capacity-building workshops, peer learning exchanges, and collaborative forums, ensuring that schools and local authorities saw themselves as co-owners of the process rather than subjects of external, top-down control. The use of the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) further supported this transition, providing user-friendly access to school data for self-diagnosis and improvement planning, rather than as a monitoring tool by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Recognising that shifting internal evaluation from control to developmental dialogue requires more than regulatory changes, the Estonian government focussed on school leadership capacity, collaborative platforms, and a reframing of evaluation as a school-owned learning process. By doing so, Estonia successfully overcame initial resistance and built a system where internal evaluation is widely seen as integral to continuous school improvement.

Source: Republic of Estonia Ministry of Education and Research (2016[41]); OECD (2020[42]);

Fragmented roles and systemic overload: Challenges undermining the effectiveness of education advisers

The role of education advisers is critical within Greece's education system, where schools have limited decision-making autonomy and rely heavily on external guidance for pedagogical and instructional support. In this context, education advisers serve as vital intermediaries between national policies and classroom practices, offering tailored support to teachers and school leaders. This function is especially important in remote areas, where access to professional development opportunities and pedagogical support is often scarce (OECD, 2018[43]; MERAS, 2025[9]).

Despite their essential role, the current number of education advisers in Greece seems to remain insufficient relative to the size and needs of the teaching workforce. This mismatch might be creating significant pressures, undermining their ability to provide meaningful and timely support. The broadening of their responsibilities through Law 4823/2021 (now including teacher appraisal, oversight of collective planning, and preparation of external school evaluations) has potentially intensified these challenges further (MERAS, 2025[9]). However, it is important to note that the increase in the number of education advisers, from approximately 500 to 1 200 under Law 4823/2021, it is expected to have a positive effect on pedagogical support and the implementation of both internal and external school evaluations. According to Greek authorities, this expansion is intended to enable more regular communication and guidance for schools, partly alleviating previous strains on the system (MERAS, 2025[9]). Nevertheless, without adjustments to their workload, there is a serious risk that these additional duties for education advisers may compromise the quality and developmental nature of their support, reducing their effectiveness to little more than procedural oversight.

Given the central position of education advisers in Greece's school improvement architecture, addressing these challenges is not only critical for enhancing the effectiveness of the advisers themselves but also presents a broader opportunity to strengthen the entire quality assurance and support system. On this

point, the experiences of Portugal and Singapore can be valuable examples for Greece to consider (Box 2.6). Streamlining and clarifying roles and responsibilities, accompanied by targeted professional development and better use of digital tools, could enable education advisers to focus on high-value support functions and provide more equitable assistance, particularly to disadvantaged schools. Moreover, expanding the number of education advisers and ensuring their more balanced distribution across regions and disciplines would reduce existing inequities in the provision of pedagogical support.[4] Complementary strategies, such as decentralising certain functions to regional teams or enabling peer-to-peer networks of schools, could further alleviate pressure on individual advisers and foster more sustainable, context-specific supports.

Box 2.6. Overcoming fragmentation and strengthening governance in Portugal and Singapore

Portugal

Portugal's 2008 education governance reform introduced significant changes to strengthen school autonomy and leadership by establishing the role of *Diretor* (school director) as the central figure in school management. This reform responded to the need to streamline governance, reduce fragmented decision-making, and reinforce accountability mechanisms at the school level.

Under Decree-Law 75/2008, all public schools and school clusters are managed by a single *Diretor*, who holds overall responsibility for the administrative, financial, and pedagogical management of the cluster. The role of the *Diretor* replaced the previous model of collegial management bodies, such as school councils, which were often seen as bureaucratic, slow, and prone to inefficiencies due to overlapping responsibilities and lack of clear leadership.

Diretores are selected through a competitive process by the school's General Council, composed of representatives of teachers, students, parents, staff, and local authorities. Once appointed, the *Diretor* is relieved of teaching duties and devotes full-time attention to school leadership, with a four-year renewable mandate.

The introduction of *Diretores* as single accountable leaders is widely seen as having strengthened decision-making coherence, improved the alignment between internal and external evaluation processes, and increased responsiveness to local educational needs.

Singapore

Singapore introduced an intermediate governance layer, known as Cluster Superintendents, in 1997 as part of the "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" initiative. This reform was driven by the need to reduce fragmentation, strengthen school leadership support and balance strong central policy direction with more agile, decentralised problem-solving capacities.

Under this model, the Ministry of Education (MoE) divides schools into 28 geographical clusters, each overseen by a Cluster Superintendent, who is a senior MoE-appointed leader, typically an experienced former school principal. Each Cluster Superintendent is responsible for 11 to 14 schools, including primary, secondary, and junior colleges, providing pedagogical, leadership, and administrative support. Cluster Superintendents serve as the direct interface between MoE and schools.

The Cluster Superintendent structure has been credited with reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks by clarifying roles and streamlining decision-making, while also strengthening school leadership capacity and enhancing system responsiveness, particularly in adapting policies to local contexts. Moreover, it ensures that school self-assessment, external reviews, and leadership development are closely integrated within a unified governance framework, preventing fragmentation of support and accountability functions.

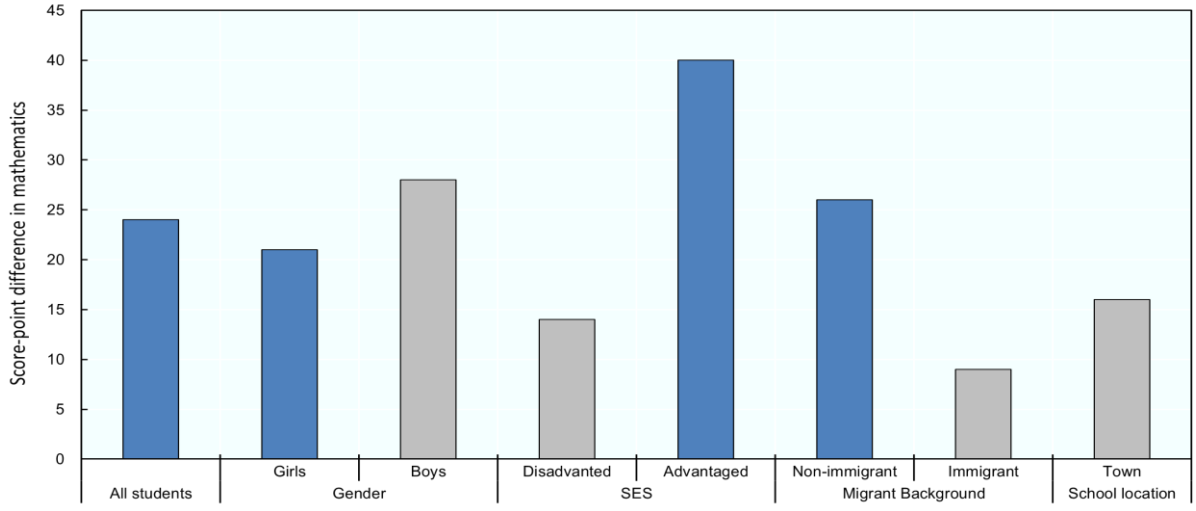
Source: (UNESCO, 2024[44]); (Eurydice, 2025[45]); (NCEE, 2025[17]); (Ho and Koh, 2018[46])

Policy recommendations: Balancing school autonomy with accountability and local capacity building

Over the past decades, the distribution of school management responsibilities has shifted significantly across education systems. While some countries have decentralised decision-making authority, granting local actors, such as principals and teachers, greater control over budgetary, operational, and instructional matters, others have reinforced the role of local, regional, or national education authorities in overseeing these areas (OECD, 2013[2]; OECD, 2016[7]; OECD, 2025[10]). The argument for greater school autonomy is based on the premise that local actors, being more familiar with students' needs, can make better-informed decisions to enhance learning outcomes. However, findings from PISA suggest that the impact of school autonomy on student performance might be associated with the scope of decision-making areas delegated to school leaders and the extent to which accountability measures and local capacity support these responsibilities (OECD, 2013[2]; OECD, 2016[7]; OECD, 2025[10]; OECD, 2023[8]). Notably, evidence suggests that students tend to perform better when school principals have greater autonomy in using accountability measures, such as external evaluations, to inform school development planning. In Greece, for example, the use of data from external evaluations to guide school improvement efforts is associated with higher mathematics performance (Figure 2.10) The gains are largest and statistically significant among socio-economically advantaged students (40 points), followed by non-immigrant students (26 points) and girls (21 points), underscoring the potential of data-informed planning to enhance academic outcomes across student groups.

Figure 2.10. Change in mathematics performance when data from external evaluation are used to plan specific action for school development

Thinking about the last external evaluation in your school, was the data used to plan specific action for school development?



Note: Based on principal reports (school questionnaire). Statistically significant differences are shown in a blue tone. Each bar represents the coefficient from a bivariate regression of mathematics performance on the index, estimated separately for each subgroup (e.g. girls, boys, socio-economically advantaged/disadvantaged, etc.). No control variables are included in these models. Results reflect associations, not causal effects. A socio-economically disadvantaged (advantaged) student is a student in the bottom (top) quarter of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) in Greece. Data are not available for rural or city areas. Towns are defined as having between 3000 to 100 000 inhabitants. External evaluations are part of a process controlled and headed by an external body. The school does not define the areas which are judged.
Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database

Moreover, the positive effects of autonomy are most pronounced when school leaders demonstrate strong educational leadership. These results reinforce the findings of earlier PISA assessments, emphasising that autonomy alone is not sufficient; it must be accompanied by accountability mechanisms and leadership capacity. If principals and school staff lack the necessary expertise and support, transferring decision-making authority to schools may hinder rather than improve student outcomes, as they may not have access to the resources and guidance available at higher levels of the education system (OECD, 2013[2]; OECD, 2016[7]). Ultimately, successful school autonomy requires a careful balance between decentralised decision-making, robust accountability structures, and investment in the capacity of school leaders and teachers (OECD, 2013[2]; OECD, 2016[7]).

It is therefore imperative that funding distribution mechanisms are designed to underpin equity and effectiveness as autonomy expands. International evidence highlights the importance of associating school funding formulas with individual school needs, ensuring that resources are allocated according to specific characteristics, including student socio-economic status, location, and other educational needs. In addition to basic allocation criteria, countries frequently deploy targeted or special programmes to strengthen the resources and support available to disadvantaged schools. Such approaches help mitigate the risk that autonomy could exacerbate inequities and are consistent with recommendations and country examples provided in related thematic reports on school funding elaborated by the OECD (OECD, 2022[47])

The aim of this final section of the chapter is to offer the education community in Greece a set of policy recommendations to balance school autonomy with accountability and local capacity building accompanied by relevant country examples. These findings seem also to align with recent directions in Greece's 2025–2027 Education Strategy (MERAS, 2025[23]), which places emphasis on enhancing school-level governance, improving evaluation systems, and strengthening data-informed planning tools such as Eduplan.ai and EDUQUALITY to support evidence-based decision-making at the local level.

Policy recommendation 1: Enhancing school autonomy with accountability and support

Greece's education system presents challenges in adapting to local needs. Expanding school autonomy in key decision-making areas, such as curriculum design, resource allocation and staffing, can improve responsiveness and innovation. However, autonomy must be accompanied by strong accountability mechanisms to maintain educational quality and equity.

Granting schools greater control over curriculum adaptation, resource management and teacher recruitment can enhance their ability to address student needs. Greece should consider, for example granting schools flexibility to adapt portions of the national curriculum to reflect regional needs while maintaining alignment with national education goals. But this autonomy should not equate to deregulation. Greater autonomy must be accompanied by the following key elements:

- Reinforce performance evaluations with flexibility for local adaptation.
- Encourage transparent reporting mechanisms, ensuring schools are accountable to both educational authorities and local communities.
- Secure training for school leaders on how to manage autonomy effectively.

Reinforce performance evaluations with flexibility for local adaptation

To ensure that increased school autonomy leads to improvements in student learning and overall school quality, Greece should reinforce its performance evaluations with flexibility for adaptation. The evaluation framework should build upon Greece's already existing dual system of internal and external evaluation, linking school-level action plans to system-wide quality objectives even more strongly. Lessons can be drawn from Portugal and Estonia (below), where evaluations are underpinned by structured national frameworks but allow for school-level adaptation. Clear communication of benchmarks, supported by

education advisers and regional supervisors in Greece, will help schools understand expectations and align improvement efforts.

Encourage transparent reporting mechanisms, ensuring schools are accountable to both educational authorities and local communities

Autonomy must go hand-in-hand with transparency and mutual accountability. All schools should publish annual reports that summarise internal evaluation findings, action plan progress, and external feedback, along with highlights of effective practices. In Greece, these reports are publicly available by law, as extracted from the central platform. However, school websites do not have a standardised format (MERAS, 2025[9]). Greece should expand on existing legal provisions (Law 4823/2021) by simplifying reporting formats and to consider encouraging schools to host annual public forums with parents and the local community. The model used in British Columbia (below), where district-level frameworks combine system-wide performance indicators with school-specific goals, offers a useful reference for strengthening bottom-up accountability and public engagement.

Secure training for school leaders on how to manage autonomy effectively

Effective school autonomy depends on leadership capacity. School leaders need targeted training in strategic planning, data use, instructional leadership, and resource management to manage autonomy effectively and improve learning outcomes. Greece already has a National Programme for public sector leadership development offered by the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA) (2025[48]), but might consider adapting or extending this for school leaders specifically. Drawing on the structured approaches of Ireland and Poland, Greek authorities might want to consider combining formal training with mentoring, peer learning and regional leadership networks. Special attention should be given to leaders in rural or disadvantaged schools who often operate with fewer support structures. Training should be continuous, allowing principals to refine their leadership skills throughout their careers, and should be integrated with the school evaluation framework to ensure coherence between school improvement and leadership development. Please note that the importance of strong school leadership warrants a dedicated recommendation in this chapter (see Recommendation 2), which expands on additional areas where school leaders require support.

A balanced approach, one that combines school-level discretion with clear national expectations, transparency and professional support, will help ensure that autonomy leads to measurable gains in student learning, school innovation, and equity. International experience highlights that autonomy alone is not sufficient; it must be embedded in a robust framework of accountability, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement to deliver sustainable results. Several elements of this approach are already present in Greece's 2025–2027 Education Strategy, which explicitly supports increased autonomy in areas such as curriculum flexibility, digitisation of administrative procedures, and the development of school-level evaluation tools (MERAS, 2025[23]). Continued implementation of these measures can reinforce the effectiveness of this balanced governance model.

Some relevant international practices can be considered such as:

- **British Columbia, Canada** emphasises flexibility and local adaptation in the revised curriculum (implemented progressively since 2016). While the curriculum sets provincial standards and core competencies, schools and teachers have the autonomy to design learning experiences that are relevant to their students' contexts, cultures, and communities. Schools also have significant discretion in resource allocation and staffing within district frameworks, enabling them to tailor programmes and recruit staff to address local needs. Accountability is ensured through the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, which requires schools and school districts to set

goals, monitor progress through local and provincial data, and report results publicly (Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2025[49]).

- **Portugal** granted schools the ability to adapt up to 25% of the curriculum to local contexts through the national curriculum flexibility and autonomy policy reform (2017). Schools are also empowered to allocate resources and manage staff within national funding and staffing guidelines, allowing them to adjust teaching methods and organise learning environments in ways that best meet the needs of their students and communities. This increased autonomy is accompanied by national guidelines for curriculum adaptation, capacity-building programmes for teachers and school leaders, and regular external inspections conducted by the General Inspectorate of Education and Science (OECD, 2018[50]).
- **Estonia** provides schools with high levels of autonomy in curriculum adaptation, budgeting, and staffing, while maintaining a strong framework for accountability and quality assurance. Schools can adjust the national curriculum to reflect local contexts, student interests, and community needs, within the overarching framework of national goals and standards. School leaders also have full autonomy over budget allocation, allowing them to make decisions on staffing, professional development, and educational programmes based on their specific priorities. Accountability measures include the annual school internal evaluation process and external quality assurance reviews, supported by national guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Research. Student performance is also regularly monitored through national examinations, ensuring alignment between local innovations and national educational objectives (OECD, 2020[42]; Republic of Estonia Ministry of Education and Research, 2016[41])

Policy recommendation 2: Empowering school leaders for effective decision-making

Expanding school autonomy requires strong and effective leadership at the school level. Given its central role in enabling autonomy to translate into improved outcomes, school leadership merits a dedicated recommendation within this chapter. In Greece, school principals have traditionally focussed on administrative duties, with limited involvement in instructional leadership. As their responsibilities broaden under recent reforms (for example, Law 4823/2021), it becomes essential to equip them with the skills and support needed to lead more autonomous and improvement-oriented schools. This calls for structured training in the following areas:

- Establish strategic planning and resource management to ensure schools operate efficiently.
- Use data-driven decision-making to assess school performance and improve learning outcomes.
- Support instructional leadership to guide teaching and learning improvements.

Greece currently offers relevant training programmes for school leaders and education officials through IEP and public sector leadership development programmes via EKDDA (National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, 2025[48]). Between 2018 and 2024, EKDDA provided over 10 000 training opportunities specifically targeted at the educational community, including principals, deputy principals, education advisers, and other education officials. These programmes covered key areas such as school administration, instructional leadership, digital transformation, crisis management, gender equality, and curriculum integration. For example, more than 5 200 participants attended training modules on leadership and school management, and nearly 1 000 participated in courses specifically designed for school principals and deputy principals in recent years (National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, 2025[51]). These initiatives already provide modules for principals, which could be adapted and further strengthened to address the evolving leadership demands in Greek schools.

Establish strategic planning and resource management to ensure schools operate efficiently

School principals must be able to set priorities aligned with school improvement plans and allocate human, financial, and material resources accordingly. This includes managing staff deployment, overseeing maintenance and infrastructure, and using available funds strategically. Drawing inspiration from Poland (more information below), where training for principals includes resource management and financial planning through regional teacher training centres, Greece could provide modules on operational planning and school budgeting, tailored to local administrative constraints. As this chapter notes, Greek principals currently have limited influence over resource allocation, and training in this area will be essential to support greater financial responsibility and reduce inefficiencies stemming from the country's fragmented governance system.

Use data-driven decision-making to assess school performance and improve learning outcomes

School principals need the skills to interpret data from internal and external evaluations, student assessments, and administrative records to inform decision-making and school improvement planning. However, recent evidence from OECD and academic sources shows that, while there has been a notable expansion in the use of digital platforms and data-informed leadership practices in Greek schools, many school leaders continue to face challenges in developing advanced digital competencies, accessing targeted training, and systematically applying evaluation data to drive improvement strategies (Geraki, 2014[52]; Lavranos, 2025[53]; OECD, 2023[54]). Contemporary studies and policy reviews emphasise that principals' roles increasingly include navigating platforms such as mySchool, eClass, and edupass, and making use of digital analytics tools. Nonetheless, persistent barriers, such as regional disparities in infrastructure, variation in digital literacy levels, and insufficiently cohesive strategic planning, continue to limit the depth and consistency of data-driven decision-making across the system (OECD, 2018[12]; European Commission, 2019[55]; Lavranos, 2025[53]). Progress has been made, but further professional development and institutional support are needed to enable all school principals to fully leverage digital and data-informed leadership practices in pursuit of improved student outcomes.

Recent years have witnessed concerted efforts across OECD countries (including Greece) to expand access to digital tools and enhance professional development for school leaders. International evidence from PISA 2022 demonstrates that schools which systematically use data for planning and monitoring purposes tend to have significantly better educational outcomes, especially in urban and disadvantaged contexts (OECD, 2023[54]). Nevertheless, gaps remain in school leaders' data literacy and their capacity for analysing trends, identifying equity gaps, and evaluating educational interventions across participating countries. In Greece, academic studies highlight additional challenges, such as fragmented digital infrastructure and the absence of statutory frameworks mandating digital competence training for principals, which constrain the capacity of school leaders to interpret performance data and implement evidence-based improvements (Lavranos, 2025[53]). Strengthening professional development in data literacy and digital leadership is thus essential for embedding data-informed decision-making in school leadership pathways, ultimately enhancing accountability and responsiveness across diverse educational settings.

Support instructional leadership to guide teaching and learning improvements

School principals should not only manage school operations but also act as instructional leaders supporting pedagogical innovation, mentoring teachers and fostering a collaborative school climate. While principals in Greece typically have both managerial and teaching responsibilities, the current perception and institutional framing of school leadership remains primarily administrative (an account also confirmed by some stakeholders interviewed by the OECD review team), often focussed on day-to-day operations and compliance. Drawing on Singapore's Leaders in Education Programme (more information below) and

Ireland's Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Greece could place stronger emphasis on pedagogical leadership, ensuring that school principals are empowered to lead curriculum development teams, observe teaching practices, and facilitate professional development aligned with school priorities.

In parallel to formal training, collaborative learning structures can strengthen school leadership capacity by providing opportunities for peer-to-peer support, collective problem-solving and professional dialogue. Greece might want to consider promoting the creation of Regional Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for school principals, which would serve as platforms to:

- Facilitate knowledge-sharing and the dissemination of best practices: School leaders can exchange insights on implementing internal evaluation plans, managing limited resources, or navigating relationships with education advisers and quality supervisors.
- Provide mentorship opportunities for new school leaders: Less experienced principals would benefit from structured mentoring by more experienced peers, as part of an embedded professional development approach. Mentoring has been a key feature of Ireland's CSL and Poland's cascade training model, contributing to the professionalisation of school leadership.
- Strengthen collaboration between schools to address common challenges: PLCs can support joint problem-solving in areas such as inclusive education, student engagement, or digital innovation. In Estonia, regional school networks have helped schools collectively design development plans and support each other through peer learning and resource-sharing, an approach particularly relevant for Greece's more remote or under-resourced schools.
- In addition, building on their current position within Directorates of Education, support education advisers in becoming more effective instructional leaders by reducing administrative burdens and enabling closer collaboration with schools. Their role could focus more clearly on mentoring teachers, supporting the implementation of school action plans, and aligning classroom practices with curricular objectives.

To reinforce these initiatives, the proposed National Leadership Development Programme (NLDP) (suggested in the first recommendation), should include a dedicated component on the creation and facilitation of PLCs, supported by regional education hubs and quality supervisors. Participation in PLCs should be formally recognised as part of ongoing professional development. Additionally, training and peer collaboration should be closely aligned with the internal and external evaluation systems. This alignment will help school principals link their own professional growth with school-level goals, enhancing both their leadership capacity and the overall impact of school autonomy reforms. It is also worth noting that the recent 2025–2027 Education Strategy also affirms the importance of strengthening leadership capacity as a key enabler of school autonomy, notably through digital tools and professional development efforts aimed at fostering data-informed, inclusive, and community-responsive leadership (MERAS, 2025[23]).

As mentioned, some relevant international practices that can be considered for Greece include:

- **Poland** grants extensive autonomy over school management, including staffing, budgeting, and instructional leadership to school principals. However, to ensure principals are prepared for these responsibilities, structured training and support mechanisms have been developed at the regional and national levels. Regional teacher training centres offer leadership courses that equip school leaders with skills in strategic planning, budgeting, and managing human resources effectively. These courses help principals align school improvement plans with resource allocation decisions. Training programmes also emphasise instructional leadership, supporting principals to lead curriculum development teams, mentor teachers, and foster school-based professional learning communities (Ministry of National Education, 2025[37]; NCEE, 2025[17]; UNESCO, 2024[16]).
- **Ireland** has made significant investments in professionalising school leadership through the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), established as a partnership between the Department of Education, the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), and the National Association of Principals and Deputy

Principals (NAPD). The CSL provides training on leading school improvement planning, financial management, and change leadership, ensuring school leaders have the skills to manage resources efficiently and strategically align them with school priorities. Principals receive training on using data from school self-evaluations, national assessments, and inspections to inform decision-making, helping them to identify areas for improvement and set measurable goals. Additionally, the CSL's leadership development programmes emphasise the role of principals as instructional leaders, focussing on guiding teaching and learning, fostering collaboration among teachers, and supporting professional development activities that enhance classroom practice (NAPD, 2025[56]; Government of Ireland, 2020[34]).

- **Singapore**'s Leaders in Education Programme (LEP), which is a flagship leadership preparation programme for future principals, delivered by the National Institute of Education (NIE), is also another useful model for reference. The LEP is internationally recognised for its rigorous approach, combining theory, practice, and innovation. The LEP includes intensive modules on strategic leadership, organisational change, and resource optimisation, equipping leaders with skills to plan strategically, manage school finances, and lead change initiatives effectively. Participants are trained to analyse school data and use key performance indicators to guide school improvement, including the use of evidence to make informed decisions about teaching strategies, resource deployment, and student support interventions. A key focus of the LEP is on developing leaders who can drive instructional excellence, through mentoring teachers, leading pedagogical innovation, and fostering a strong professional learning culture within schools. The Overseas Study Visits and School-Based Projects are core components that allow future principals to contextualise these skills in diverse settings (Ministry of Education, 2024[30]; Nanyang Technical University, 2025[57]).

Policy recommendation 3: Streamlining governance to support education efforts at school level

The effectiveness of school autonomy reforms depends not only on devolving decision-making but also on the clarity, coherence and functionality of the education governance system. To achieve this, a deliberate effort to streamline responsibilities and strengthen the alignment between different administrative levels is required.

To reduce inefficiencies and strengthen the delivery of education policy through higher levels of school autonomy, Greece should consider:

- Refine and clarify the roles of national, regional and local education authorities with a view to supporting school units.
- Clarify and reinforce the delegation of operational responsibilities (such as infrastructure maintenance and certain aspects of resource allocation) to regional and municipal authorities, ensuring coherence and responsiveness to local needs.
- Further strengthen the Ministry of Education's role in strategic planning and quality assurance by reducing administrative burdens and enabling a stronger focus on system-wide improvement.

Refine and clarify the roles of national, regional and local education authorities with a view to supporting school units

Each governance level should have a clearly delineated set of responsibilities to minimise duplication, reduce delays, and address institutional ambiguities, thereby supporting schools in their mission to improve learning outcomes for all students. National authorities, particularly the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, should continue focussing on strategic direction, curriculum development, national standards, and system-wide quality assurance. Meanwhile, regional and local authorities, which already

play key roles in implementation and operational support, could be further empowered and resourced to lead school-level planning and respond flexibly to local needs. While institutional structures are in place, it is not always clear how consistently or effectively they guarantee the support needed by all schools.

Delegate operational responsibilities (such as resource allocation and infrastructure maintenance) to regional and municipal authorities

Schools often face serious limitations in their capacity to address operational issues (for example, from building maintenance to resource procurement) because they depend on slow or unclear bureaucratic processes. As highlighted in the chapter, the fragmentation of financial responsibilities across various actors, including municipalities and central agencies, undermines strategic planning and equitable resourcing. Drawing on the governance model of Poland, where municipalities manage infrastructure and non-teaching staff, and Ireland, where ETB regional bodies coordinate education services, Greece should adopt a clearer decentralisation of operational tasks to subnational actors, accompanied by adequate resourcing and capacity-building.

Ensure that the Ministry of Education focusses on strategic planning and quality assurance

To maximise the effectiveness of the Greek education system, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (MERAS) should continue to focus on its core mandate of strategic planning and quality assurance. This means prioritising leadership in designing and monitoring the national education strategy, setting curriculum and quality benchmarks, and supporting innovation and inclusion through policies and funding, rather than direct involvement in the operational management of schools. This approach is reflected in the Singapore model, where the Ministry maintains strategic oversight while operational responsibilities are distributed across cluster superintendents and specialised agencies. Clarifying these complementary roles within the Greek system could improve coherence and enable more flexible, locally responsive school leadership**.**

Drawing from international practice in the previous points, models for Greece to consider are:

- **Ontario, Canada** made notable efforts to streamline governance and reduce fragmentation by clarifying the roles of the Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools, through reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Education Act of Ontario delineates the Ministry's responsibilities for setting curriculum standards, assessment policies, and overarching strategies, while school boards are responsible for local implementation, including staffing, facilities management, budgeting, and ensuring responsiveness to community needs. To enhance system coherence, Ontario reinforced the accountability relationship between the Ministry and school boards, requiring boards to report directly on student achievement and operational performance. This strengthened vertical alignment, minimised duplication in policymaking and resource allocation, and clarified school improvement responsibilities. Complementary initiatives, such as the Ontario Focussed Intervention Partnership (OFIP) and the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF), further aligned school improvement planning, data reporting, and monitoring processes across schools, boards, and the Ministry. These mechanisms established a coordinated cycle of planning, support and accountability, reducing bureaucratic overlap and ensuring that schools were primarily supported by their boards rather than through multiple Ministry channels, streamlining both support and oversight pathways (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2025[58]).
- **Poland** made decisive efforts to reduce governance fragmentation and clarify the division of responsibilities through its 1999-2000 education reforms, which introduced a clear separation between operational and pedagogical oversight functions. The Ministry of Education retained responsibility for national policymaking, curriculum and examination standards, and system-wide quality assurance, while operational management was formally delegated to municipalities (*Gminas*). Municipalities became solely responsible for school infrastructure, non-teaching staff

employment, and financial management, removing previous overlaps where both the Ministry and municipalities had roles in operational matters. At the same time, pedagogical supervision was streamlined under the *Kuratorium* (Regional Education Inspectorates), which became the sole authority overseeing pedagogical standards, compliance with regulations, and teaching quality at the regional level. To strengthen vertical alignment, municipalities are required to coordinate closely with the *Kuratorium* and report on operational management through defined channels, ensuring clear role distinctions and eliminating confusion between infrastructure management and pedagogical oversight (Eurydice, 2024[38]; Jakubowski, 2020[39]; Ministry of National Education, 2025[37]).

- **Ireland** streamlined its governance structures and reduced fragmentation through the establishment of the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) in 2013, consolidating over 30 education committees into 16 regional bodies. This structural reform aimed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education, ETBI and schools. The Department of Education retained responsibility for policymaking, curriculum development, funding allocations, and system-wide quality assurance, while ETBI was given full operational responsibility for managing schools and educational services within their regions, including staffing, budgeting, infrastructure and local service delivery. Clear accountability arrangements were also established, with ETBI reporting directly to the Department on the implementation of national strategies, operational management, and educational outcomes. This ensured vertical alignment of responsibilities and reduced overlaps that had previously existed between municipal authorities, school boards, and the Department itself (ETBI, 2025[59]).

In addition to clarifying responsibilities across governance levels, Greece should consider reinforcing the existing Regional Councils of Quality Supervisors (RCS), with a particular focus on supporting schools in remote, rural, and disadvantaged areas, including island communities. These councils could leverage their decentralised structure to function as regional support hubs, helping to bridge the gap between central policy and the practical needs of schools. Relevant experiences from earlier decentralised support mechanisms, such as the Counselling and Guidance Centres or Regional Centres for Educational Planning, could provide useful insights when revisiting and strengthening the role and mandate of the RCS. This could include the following functions:

- Providing guidance on curriculum adaptation, ensuring that schools have the flexibility to tailor parts of the national curriculum to local contexts, student profiles, and community priorities (within the boundaries of national standards). This echoes the approach used in Estonia, where schools receive support in adjusting the curriculum through regional centres and networks.
- Delivering professional development for teachers and school leaders, aligned with national priorities but adapted to local needs. This includes training on inclusive education, digital pedagogy, and instructional leadership. As discussed in this chapter, training is more effective when embedded in school realities, and the Portugal TEIP programme demonstrates how decentralised structures can deliver targeted capacity building.
- Establishing resource-sharing mechanisms, including shared access to specialised staff, materials, digital tools, or professional services. Such mechanisms are particularly important in smaller or rural schools, where economies of scale are harder to achieve. Models from Alberta, Canada, show how rural school networks benefit from pooled resources, shared professional development, and collaborative planning, while maintaining a high standard of educational provision.

International examples of how regional hubs can improve efficiency while maintaining quality standards include:

- In **Alberta, Canada**, rural education networks have been established to pool resources, centralise administrative services, and enhance instructional support across dispersed communities. These hubs support schools in small towns and remote rural areas by offering shared professional

development for teachers, leadership coaching, and curriculum guidance tailored to local needs. Schools within these networks benefit from collaborative planning structures, resource-sharing mechanisms, and centralised services such as IT, finance, and special education support. This approach allows for cost efficiencies while maintaining responsiveness to community needs, providing small or remote schools with equitable access to quality education services and leadership development (Government of Alberta, 2025[27]).

- **Estonia** has established a system of regional support centres, including Pathfinder Centres (*Rajaleidja* centres) and school networks that support pedagogical innovation and capacity-building, particularly in sparsely populated regions like Ida-Viru County and South Estonia. These centres offer schools on-demand support for curriculum adaptation, inclusive education strategies, and school development planning. Notably, these centres have helped support a shift in internal evaluation practices, from a primarily compliance-driven approach toward one that encourages self-reflection and strategic planning, by offering targeted coaching, peer-learning opportunities, and data literacy support for school leaders and teachers (Santiago et al., 2016[60]).
- **Portugal**'s Priority Intervention Educational Territories (TEIP) programme organises underprivileged schools into territorial networks that benefit from dedicated support teams. These teams provide schools with tailored guidance on improving instructional practices, adapting curriculum to local needs, and implementing inclusive education strategies. In addition, regional directorates coordinate teacher training centres, ensuring that schools in remote or disadvantaged areas have access to professional development opportunities and curriculum support aligned with their specific community challenges.

As central actors in the implementation of school evaluation and pedagogical support, education advisers must be explicitly integrated into the reformed governance architecture. Their current role spans mentoring, collective planning, professional development, and school evaluation. However, this wide scope, coupled with insufficient staffing and fragmented lines of supervision, risks diluting their impact.

To ensure their effectiveness:

- Education advisers are currently based within regional Directorates of Education, where they are administratively subordinate to the Director of Education and supervised by the Education Quality Supervisor. Building on this structure, their role could be further strengthened to function as dedicated pedagogical leaders working collaboratively with schools. Positioning them as active members of regional education support teams could help reduce bureaucratic load, improve responsiveness, and foster more coherent linkages between school-level needs and national policy objectives.
- Their responsibilities should be clarified and balanced, with greater focus on mentoring and school improvement, and reduced procedural and administrative burden. Lessons from Singapore's cluster superintendent model and Portugal's school director role suggest that support functions are most impactful when tied to leadership development, rather than routine oversight.
- The number and distribution of education advisers should be adjusted based on school needs, subject specialisation, and geographic equity. This includes prioritising underserved areas and enhancing their ability to support schools in implementing inclusive practices, curriculum innovation, and teacher professional development.

Education advisers, when supported through regional structures and clear mandates, can reinforce their position as key enablers of school autonomy and pedagogical improvement, ensuring that schools are not left alone in navigating new responsibilities, and that evaluation and support are meaningfully connected. Similarly, the Heads of Health Education, School Activities, Cultural Affairs, Career Guidance, and Environmental Education within the Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education play a decisive role in supporting the design and implementation of Educational Programmes tailored to local educational,

social, cultural, and health needs. These roles are vital for fostering school-led interventions that are responsive to the specific priorities of local communities and built on the principles of sustainability.

Finally, streamlining governance structures in education can strengthen support for evidence-based policymaking by fostering more efficient, transparent, and responsive decision-making. Reducing bureaucratic complexity and clarifying lines of accountability would enable the Greek education system to better integrate data, research findings, and school performance metrics into policy development. This, in turn, could help prioritise evidence over tradition or political influence, leading to more effective outcomes. Clearer governance arrangements can also promote collaboration among schools, research institutions, and government bodies, encouraging the exchange of data and best practices to inform policy.

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Annex 2.A. International governance arrangements: A comparative table for Greece

Table 2.A.1. International governance arrangements in Greece, Canada, Estonia, Polan, Portugal, Ireland and Singapore

Domain	Greece	Canada	Estonia	Poland	Portugal	Ireland	Singapore
Curriculum and pedagogical guidance	• The Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports sets the legal framework for curriculum design. • Education advisers provide pedagogical guidance and subject-area instructional leadership. • School principals oversee school-level pedagogical practices, promote a positive school climate, and coordinate instructional initiatives in collaboration with the Teachers' Board, Directorates of Education, and education advisers (Law 1340/2002, art. 29).	• Provincial Ministries of Education set curricula • School boards and principals oversee implementation • Head teachers support instructional practices	• The Ministry of Education and Research sets national curricula • Schools have autonomy to adapt them	• The Ministry of National Education sets curricula • School heads (Dyrektor) implement them at the school level	• The Ministry of Education defines curricula • School districts and principals ensure implementation	• The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) • School principals and teachers oversee implementation	• The Ministry of Education (MOE) centrally designs and oversees curriculum implementation
Professional development	• The Ministry sets the legal framework. • The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) plays a central role in designing, coordinating, and implementing teacher professional development. • Education advisers support PD delivery. • School heads are required by law (Law 4823/2021, art. 95) to organise and offer at least 15 hours of school-	• Shared among provincial authorities, school boards, universities, and teacher unions.	• The Ministry sets guidelines • Schools have autonomy to plan and implement PD	• Managed by the Ministry of National Education • Schools may also organise PD	• The Ministry of Education provides training • Schools may also organise PD	• Provided by the Department of Education through support services • Schools may also organise PD	•The MOE and the Academy of Singapore Teachers coordinate PD

	based training per year. • Other bodies, such as regional Directorates and education-related agencies, may also offer PD programmes.						
School evaluation	• The Ministry has oversight of the school evaluation system. • Schools, through their Teachers' Board (Σύλλογος Διδασκόντων), prepare internal evaluations. • Education advisers review internal evaluations and prepare school-level external evaluation reports. • Education Quality Supervisors and Regional Education Quality Supervisors provide higher-level oversight and regional synthesis reports.	• Varies by province • Some have external evaluations, while others focus on internal evaluations led by school boards	• The Ministry oversees evaluations • Schools are responsible for internal evaluations and improvement plans	• The Ministry of National Education supervises evaluations • School leadership team manages internal evaluations	• Inspectorate-General of Education and Science oversees external evaluations • Schools conduct internal evaluations	• The Inspectorate conducts external evaluations • Schools perform internal evaluations	• The MOE conducts school evaluations through its School Appraisal Branch
Inclusive education	• The Ministry defines legal frameworks and strategic direction for inclusive education. • Education advisers provide support to schools and coordinate with specialised support agencies (e.g. KEDASY). • School principals oversee local implementation of inclusive education practices.	• Provincial ministries develop policies • Schools implement with support from specialised teachers	• The Ministry provides guidelines • Schools implement with support from specialised teachers	• The Ministry defines inclusive education strategies • Schools implement with support from specialised teachers	• The Ministry sets inclusive education policies • Schools implement with support from specialised teachers	• The Department of Education provides policies • Schools implement with regional support services	• The MOE oversees inclusive education • Schools implement with support from specialised teachers
Resource utilisation	• The Ministry provides the legal framework, funding, and national guidelines. • Principals manage the day-to-day use of school resources. • Education advisers support the pedagogical use of resources but are not responsible for their allocation or financial management.	• School boards and principals manage resources • Ministries of Education provide funding and guidelines	• School principals manage resources • Ministry provides funding and policy direction	• School principals manage resources • Ministry provides funding and oversight	• School boards and principals manage resources • Ministry provides funding and guidelines	• School principals manage resources • Department of Education provides support and oversight	• The MOE centrally manages resources • Principals manage daily resource use
Collaboration	• Education advisers collaborate with principals, teachers, parents, and support structures to support	• Encouraged among teachers, principals, and school boards;	• Schools collaborate with parents and communities	• Collaboration among school staff is guided by the school head	• Schools collaborate within regions	• Collaboration among teachers, principals, and	• Schools collaborate through networks and professional learning

	educational improvement. • Principals coordinate internal school collaboration. • Professional learning communities and networks exist and are encouraged through various initiatives, including IEP and the Ministry.	• Professional learning communities are common	• Ministry supports collaborative initiatives	• Ministry provides overarching policies	• Ministry encourages partnerships	support services • Promoted by the Department of Education	communities • The MOE promotes collaboration
Administrative framework	• The Ministry oversees the national education system. • Education advisers are administratively subordinate to Directors of Education and supervised by Education Quality Supervisors. • School principals manage day-to-day operations. • Regional Education Quality Supervisors ensure regional oversight and alignment.	•Administered by provincial ministries • School boards and principals handle local management	• The Ministry oversees education • Schools have autonomy in administration within the national framework	• The Ministry of National Education oversees education • School principals manage individual schools	• The Ministry of Education administers education • School boards and principals handle local management	• The Department of Education oversees education • School boards and principals handle local management	• The MOE centrally administers education • School principals manage day-to-day operations
Allocation system	• The Ministry centrally determines staff allocation. • 800 education adviser positions have been created, assigned by subject area, education level, and regional needs. • Reassignment mechanisms allow redistribution across Directorates to ensure adequate coverage. • Teacher allocation is also managed centrally, based on national and regional requirements.	• Teacher allocation is managed by provincial ministries and school boards based on student enrolment and needs.	• Teacher allocation is managed by the Ministry • Schools have some autonomy in hiring decisions	•The Ministry allocates teachers • School principals may have input based on school-specific needs	• The Ministry assigns teachers considering regional requirements and subject specialisations	• The Department of Education allocates teachers based on enrolment and specific school needs	• The MOE centrally assigns teachers • Schools have limited input in the allocation process

Notes

[1] While this chapter does not provide a detailed analysis of school funding mechanisms, it recognises their critical role in shaping school autonomy and local capacity. The allocation and use of financial resources are central to enabling schools to exercise autonomy effectively and to respond to local needs. However, due to limitations in the available data, it was not possible to undertake a detailed analysis of funding arrangements at the school level or to assess how they interact with school autonomy— the central focus of this chapter.

[2] In October 2025, the Ministry of Education and COSMOTE TELEKOM will formally announce a new corporate social responsibility initiative aimed at reducing the digital divide in remote areas of Greece. Through this programme, the OTE Group will donate high-speed internet connections (up to 300 Mbps) to public schools located in remote areas, as designated by the Ministry. The donation includes free installation, free service for three years, and free classroom equipment (T-Tablets with protective case and stylus), delivered via 5G Stand Alone (5G+) Fixed Wireless Access technology. This public–private initiative forms part of COSMOTE's broader commitment to digital inclusion and equal opportunities in education (MERAS, 2025[9]).

[3] According to documentation provided by Greek authorities, during the school year 2021-2022, a total of 5 022 pre-primary schools, 5 002 primary schools, 1 832 lower secondary schools, 1 075 general upper secondary schools, 624 vocational upper secondary schools, and 1 255 private schools were in operation. Collective planning was conducted for the school year, resulting in 55,499 action plans, with feedback provided by Coordinators of Educational Work. Internal evaluation reports were submitted by school units, totaling 4 387 for pre-primary schools, 4 391 for primary schools, 3,991 for lower secondary schools, 1 828 for general upper secondary schools, 621 for vocational upper secondary schools, and 1,135 for private schools. External evaluation reports of school units conducted by Coordinators of Educational Work included 57 for pre-primary schools, 156 for primary schools, and 327 for upper secondary schools, special education, and minority education teachers. Additionally, external evaluation reports by Coordinators of Educational Work for school units under their responsibility amounted to 4 618 for pre-primary schools, 4 410 for primary schools, 3 912 for lower secondary schools, 1 707 for general upper secondary schools, 576 for vocational upper secondary schools, and 727 for private schools. Furthermore, 24 external evaluation reports were submitted by the Regional Centers for Educational Planning, and an annual evaluation report was prepared by the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE) (MERAS, 2025[9]).

[4] In a media release (12 April 2025), the Greek Minister of Education announced plans to increase the number of education advisers from 500 to 1 200. However, no further details, such as timelines or the number of positions, have been provided. The Minister also acknowledged that the education system lacks a clear, updated, and comprehensive description of roles and responsibilities and committed to clarifying these roles and addressing overlaps. (Source: Ministry of Education Announcement).

3 Strengthening the teaching profession with responsive support and appraisal mechanisms

Chapter 3 examines the teaching profession in Greece, focussing on teacher appraisal, professional learning and teaching standards. It highlights demographic challenges, including an ageing workforce, and analyses the limited use of formative appraisal for teacher development. The chapter reviews recent reforms introducing school-based professional learning roles, such as mentors and co-ordinators, and identifies gaps in policy implementation capacity, school leadership and digital teaching competency. Drawing on international evidence, the chapter recommends strengthening the formative use of teacher appraisal, investing in school-based professional development, and developing national professional standards to align the appraisal, training, and career progression of teachers.

Introduction: The context of the teaching profession in Greece

This chapter examines the organisation of the teaching profession and policies to attract, develop and retain effective teachers in Greece. The chapter presents an overview of the current state of the teaching profession and teacher policies in Greece, highlights strengths and challenges, proposes areas for improvement, and outlines recommendations for future policy development. The chapter's analysis focusses on three main policy issues: 1) Turning the teacher appraisal process into an effective and sustainable tool for continuing improvement; 2) Strengthening professional learning through guidance and support and promoting school-based professional development; and 3) Professional standards, including creating greater awareness of standards for high-quality teaching and using them to integrate initial teacher education (ITE), continuing professional learning (CPL) and appraisals. The chapter focusses on teachers in primary and secondary education. Staff in pre-primary education is covered in Chapter 4.

The teaching profession is critical to the success of education systems, and teachers' effectiveness is one of the most important school-related factors influencing students' learning outcomes (OECD, 2019[1]). In Greece, where efforts to enhance educational quality and equity are ongoing, attracting, developing and retaining skilled teachers is a critical policy priority. The following sections provide a descriptive overview of the context, key features and policies shaping the teaching profession in Greece, including its governance, teachers' initial education and continuing professional learning, their working conditions, career structure and Greece's approach to performance management. Reforms to Greece's systems of teacher appraisal, professional learning and quality assurance need to take a coherent approach to these interconnected policy areas in order to strengthen the teaching profession and contribute meaningfully to improved student outcomes.

Governance of the teaching profession

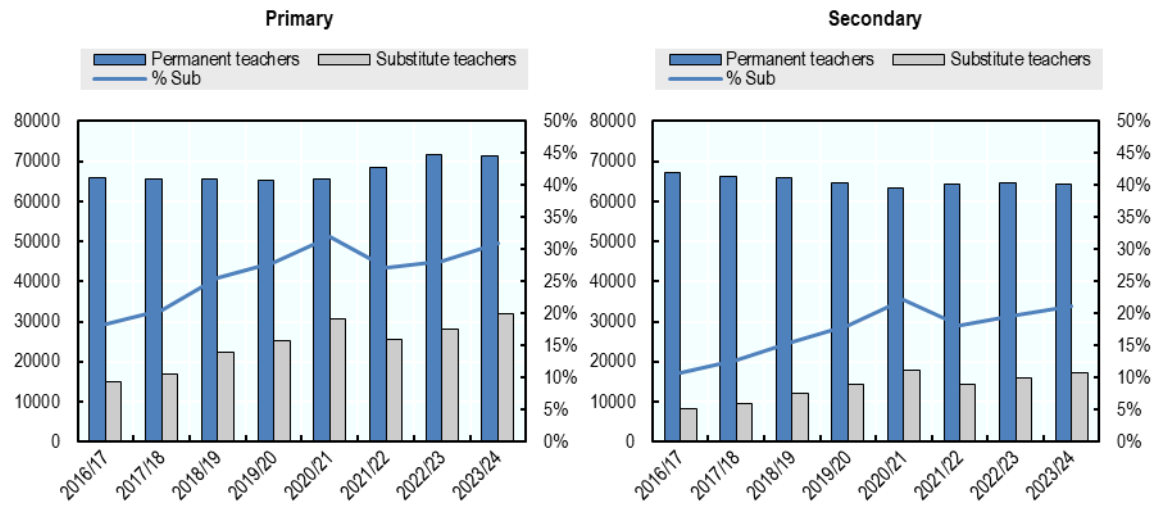
As described in Chapter 2, decisions on teacher policy and the governance of the teaching profession in Greece are highly centralised. The Minister of Education takes key decisions on the long-term objectives and operation of the education system, including those related to teaching times, the regulatory framework of initial teacher education, teacher salaries and the allocation of teachers and other staff to schools. Each school has a Teacher Board (*Σύλλογος Διδασκόντων*), which comprises all teachers of the school and is headed by its school leader. Teacher Boards have decision-making power concerning a wide range of operational and pedagogical aspects of their schools. At the national level, trade unions represent teachers' interests in collective bargaining processes. The main teacher unions are the Federation of Primary School Teachers (*Διδασκαλική Ομοσπονδία Ελλάδος*, DOE) at the pre-primary and primary levels, the Federation of Secondary School Teachers (*Ομοσπονδίας Λειτουργών Μέσης Εκπαίδευσης*, OLME) at the secondary level, and the Federation of Private School Teachers (*Ομοσπονδία Ιδιωτικών Εκπαιδευτικών Λειτουργών Ελλάδας*, OIELE).

Demographic characteristics

In the 2023/24 school year, a little over 184 000 teachers were employed in Greek public schools (around 103 000 in primary schools and 81 000 in secondary schools) – an increase since 2016/17 of about 28% in primary schools and 8% in secondary schools. Around 31% of primary school teachers and 21% of secondary school teachers were employed on "substitute contracts" in 2023/24. These substitute contracts are characterised by their fixed-term nature and their lack of civil servant status (Birch et al., 2021, p. 36[2]). Until 2023/24, the proportion of substitute teachers had risen continuously since 2016/17, except for a small decrease in 2021/22 (see Figure 3.1). In line with the ministry's strategic goal to reduce the reliance on substitute teachers, the number of permanent appointments was increased in 2024/25, compared to the previous two years, leading to a decrease in the share of substitute teachers.

Figure 3.1. Number of teachers by employment status and level of education (2016/17 to 2023/24)

Number of permanent and substitute teachers in public schools and proportion of substitute teachers



Note: Substitute teachers include part-time substitute teachers, hourly substitute teachers (in secondary education) as well as a small number of fixed-term private law teachers. Permanent teachers include a small number of indefinite-term private law teachers.
Source: Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (2024[3]), *OECD Education Policy Review: Improving Learning Outcomes in Greece - Country Background Report*.

Greece is confronted with an ageing teacher population and a significant share of teachers are nearing retirement age.[1] In 2022, the share of older teachers (aged 50 and over) in Greece stood at 45% in primary education, 56% in lower secondary and 60% in upper secondary education. This was above the respective OECD averages of 34%, 36% and 41% and constituted a significant increase in the share of older teachers at the secondary levels compared to 2013 (OECD, 2024, pp. 440, Table D5.3[4]). Although teacher shortages in Greece are limited for now, the share of young teachers (under the age of 30) is small and more than half of the teaching workforce is expected to retire in the coming 15 years (Birch et al., 2021, p. 32[2]; OECD, 2024, pp. 439, Table D5.2[4]). At the same time, demographic developments are expected to lead to a significant reduction in the number of students over the coming decades. Between 2022 and 2031, it is expected that the population of 5 to 14-year-olds will drop by 15% in Greece – the sixth largest reduction across OECD countries (compared to the average of 4%) (OECD, 2024[5]).

The teaching profession in Greece skews female, particularly at the primary level, albeit slightly less so than in many other OECD countries. In 2022, 25% of Greek teachers at the primary level were male (compared to 17% on average across OECD countries), 31% at the lower secondary level (32% across OECD countries) and 42% at the upper secondary level (40% across OECD countries) (OECD, 2024, pp. 441, Table D5.4[4]).

Pathways into the profession

Initial teacher education

Teaching in Greece is a career-based civil service profession with selective initial teacher education, a centralised, selective process for entry into the profession and lifetime employment for successful candidates. Primary education teachers in Greece complete their initial education in one of the country's nine universities with Departments of Primary Education (Eurydice, 2025[6]). The primary education programmes are not subject-specific and combine classroom teaching with theoretical and pedagogical

training in a concurrent format that lasts four years and leads to a qualification at the bachelor's level (ISCED 6). Prospective secondary education teachers usually complete 4-year university degrees at the bachelor's level (ISCED 6) in their substantive area of specialisation. Prospective secondary teachers with prior degrees in subject areas that do not include pedagogical training, such as law, finance or engineering, need to follow a consecutive model of teacher training, completing an additional one-year pedagogical training programme, unless they hold a master's degree or PhD in education sciences (Birch et al., 2021, p. 63[2]). The curricula for ITE programmes at both the primary and secondary level are developed by the universities, as is the case for all higher education programmes (OECD, 2024, pp. 436, Table D5.1[4]).

Teachers of technical subjects in vocational secondary schools (e.g. for technical professions such as plumbing or steamfitting) need to have completed at least two or three years of studies at the upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary level (MOE, 2024[3]). Overall, according to principals in PISA 2022, 61.0% of Greek teachers in schools of 15-year-olds held a bachelor's qualification and 33.9% held a master's qualification or equivalent, below the OECD averages of 78.3% and 44.2% respectively (OECD, 2023, pp. 409, Table II.B1.5.7[7]).

Greek Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and their degree programmes are subject to both internal and external quality assurance processes. Each HEI is required to operate an internal quality assurance system (IQAS), which is externally accredited every two years by the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education *(ΕΘ.Α.Α.Ε.* / HAHE) (Law 4653, 2020[8]). In addition, all HEI and degree programmes need to comply with quality standards established by the HAHE, which are aligned with the standards and guidelines of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The external evaluation and accreditation of degree programmes takes place every 5 years. The HAHE's standards for the accreditation of undergraduate programmes are not subject-specific (HAHE, 2021[9]). As a consequence, they do not explicitly prescribe or incentivise features that are characteristic of high-quality ITE programmes, such as substantial teaching practicums and active relationships with partnering schools (OECD, 2018, p. 180[10]; OECD, 2019[11]).

Selection and assignment to schools

As is the case in about a third of OECD countries, prospective teachers in Greece take part in a selective process at the end of their initial teacher education programme to determine their eligibility for (permanent or fixed-term) teaching positions in public schools. Prior to 2019, prospective primary and secondary education teachers were appointed based on their scores in a central written exam. Since then, the exam was replaced by a credit points (*μονάδες*) system that ranks teachers based on their academic qualifications, their experience and other factors. Every other year, teachers are ranked by the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (*Ανώτατο Συμβούλιο Επιλογής Προσωπικού*, ASEP), an independent commission responsible for the selection of civil servants. The process is governed by Law 4589/2019, and criteria include teachers' academic qualifications (incl. their attainment as well as foreign language skills and certified computer literacy), their teaching experience, and social criteria (e.g. the number of children in their custody and disabilities in the family) (Law 4589, 2019, p. 168[12]).

Teachers apply for teaching positions through a process administered by the responsible Departments of Education. They are selected and assigned solely on the basis of their accumulated credit points, although some schools (i.e. experimental and model schools, music and art schools) can take additional criteria into account (OECD, 2024, pp. 436, Table D5.1[4]). School leaders are not involved in the selection of teachers. This centralised approach to the selection and allocation of teachers has historically been considered an important mechanism to ensure an even distribution of staff across the country's school network, which is characterised by a high number of hard-to-staff schools on small islands and in remote, mountainous areas. Teachers are incentivised to work in remote primary and secondary schools through the credit points system, which assigns 2 points (as opposed to the usual single point) per month of teaching experience in remote schools for up to 120 months (Law 4692, 2020[13]). At the same time, the central

allocation of teachers limits principals' autonomy and prevents them from selecting staff in line with school-specific needs (see Chapter 2).

Teachers' career structure

Opportunities for professional advancement have historically been limited for Greek teachers. The career progression for classroom teachers is largely characterised by an incremental salary progression in line with their years of service (Birch et al., 2021, p. 52[2]). Teachers can assume additional responsibilities in their schools, e.g. to manage the school's ICT lab or work as deputy principals. Deputy principals in primary schools are compensated with a two-hour reduction in their weekly teaching hours, whereas deputy principals in secondary schools teach 16 hours (as opposed to the regular 20-23 hours), with an additional 2-hour reduction for those with over 20 years of service (MOE, 2024[3]; Law 4152, 2013[14]). Most other opportunities for career advancement (e.g. assuming positions as Education Advisors, Quality Supervisors, Directors of Education or Regional Directors) imply leaving the classroom.

Teachers can also apply for school leader positions. School leaders are appointed by the responsible Director of Primary or Secondary Education and the selection process is supported by a five-member local Selection Council (at the Directorate-level), which comprises the Director of Education, with their deputy, as President; the Education Quality Supervisor, with their deputy, as Vice President; one Education Adviser of Primary or Secondary Education; and two teachers. The Selection Council assesses candidates based on a range of criteria covering their scientific and pedagogical qualifications and skills, their teaching, counseling and administrative experience, previous performance evaluations, and their performance in an interview. The Selection Council uses a process specified in Law 4823/2021 to translate these criteria into evaluation scores and proposes a candidate to the Director of Education who takes the final decision on whom to appoint to a four-year term as school leader (Law 4823, 2021[15]; MOE, 2024[3]).

In 2021, two new formal roles were introduced for teachers in primary and secondary schools: mentors and co-ordinators (Law 4823, 2021[15]). Mentors are responsible for providing professional guidance to beginning teachers during the first five years of their careers. Class co-ordinators and subject co-ordinators are responsible for advancing their schools' pedagogical quality by convening regular teacher meetings throughout the school year to foster their professional collaboration, curriculum planning, the exchange of good practices, the introduction and evaluation of new teaching tools, and student assessment (MOE, 2024[3]). Depending on the size of the school, principals can appoint one mentor and one or more co-ordinators from among their schools' teachers, provided that they have received an "excellent" or "very good" rating in their last evaluation.[2] While the roles are not remunerated or compensated with reduced teaching hours, teachers who assume these responsibilities are rewarded with additional credit points, which they can use when applying for a new position or a school leadership role.

Working conditions

The Greek education system and teaching profession have been marked by a decade-long economic crisis that started in late 2009. A deep and prolonged recession – during which GDP fell annually by an average of nearly 4% between 2009 and 2015 – and a rising debt-to-GDP ratio imposed significant constraints on public expenditure (OECD, 2018[10]). Although Greece's GDP-per-capita growth has outpaced that of the euro area since early 2021, the effects of the crisis linger (OECD, 2024, p. 17[16]). Public expenditure on education did not increase over the course of the economic crisis and teachers' salaries were frozen for two years in 2016 and 2017 (OECD, 2018, p. 15[10]; Law 4354, 2015[17]). In addition, the number of new teachers hired on open-ended civil-service contracts (as was typical for fully-qualified teachers) was drastically reduced with very few or no permanent appointments made from the 2010/11 school year up to and including 2018/19 (MOE, 2024[3]). During this time, most teachers were hired as non-civil servant public employees on fixed-term "substitute teacher" contracts (Birch et al., 2021, p. 36[2]). Hiring of permanent teachers has since resumed, with around 48 000 permanent teachers hired since 2020 (MOE,

2024[3]). Whereas permanent teachers receive 12 monthly salary payments per year, substitute teachers are hired and paid for 10 out of 12 months. To increase the number of permanent hires while maintaining budget-neutrality, the ministry therefore hired 10 new permanent teachers for every 12 departing substitute teachers in 2024/25.

Teaching and working time

Teachers' time in Greece is centrally regulated based on their teaching hours and the time they are expected to be present at school (as opposed to their overall working time). Teachers in primary and secondary schools are expected to be present at their schools for no more than six hours per working day or 30 hours per week to carry out teaching or non-teaching tasks, as assigned by their principal (MOE, 2024[3]; Law 4823, 2021[15]). This amounts to a total annual working time with required presence at school of 1 110 hours in primary education and 1 158 hours in secondary education.

Statutory teaching hours in Greece are relatively low in international comparison and decrease with teachers' experience. At the primary level, teachers in small schools (with up to 3 classes) have 25 weekly teaching hours. Teachers in larger primary schools have 24 teaching hours per week and benefit from a 1-hour reduction in their teaching load after 10, 15 and 20 years of service. This amounts to a typical net annual statutory teaching time of 661 hours (compared to the OECD average of 773 hours) (see Table 3.1). At the secondary level, teachers have 23 weekly teaching hours at the start of their careers, which is reduced to 21 hours after six years of service and 20 hours after 12 years of service. As with primary school teachers, experienced teachers therefore have less contact time with students. The typical net annual statutory teaching time in secondary education is 613 hours (compared to the OECD averages of 706 in lower secondary and 679 in upper secondary education) (see Table 3.1).

The teaching load of Greek principals is relatively high in international comparison, through statutory requirements across OECD countries vary significantly (with maximum statutory annual teaching requirements ranging from 28% to 87% of those for teachers, depending on school characteristics) (OECD, 2021[18]; OECD, 2022, pp. 362, Table D4.6[19]). Principals of larger primary schools (with 12 or more classes) in Greece are expected to teach 6 hours per week, rising to 18 hours in the smallest primary schools (MOE, 2024, p. 59[3]). Secondary school principals are expected to teach between 5 and 10 hours per week, depending on the size of their schools. Teachers selected to serve as deputy principals in primary schools continue to teach nearly full time, benefiting from a teaching load reduction of only two hours. Deputy principals in secondary schools teach 16 hours per week (MOE, 2024[3]).

Table 3.1. Organisation of teachers' working time, 2023

Statutory annual teaching weeks, teaching days, net teaching hours and working time in public institutions

	Number of weeks of teaching				Number of days of teaching				Net teaching time, in hours (1)				Working time required at school, in hours				Total statutory working time, in hours			
	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower sec.	Upper sec.	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower sec.	Upper sec.	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower sec.	Upper sec.	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower sec.	Upper sec.	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower sec.	Upper sec.
Greece	36	36	36	36	174	174	175	175	661	661	613	613	1110	1110	1158	1158	a	a	a	a
OECD average	40.4	37.7	37.6	37.4	194	183	183	182	1007	773	706	679	m	m	m	m	1578	1560	1572	1577
EU25 average	40.7	36.9	36.9	36.8	196	178	179	178	1067	703	632	618	m	m	m	m	1553	1511	1528	1527

Notes: (1) Refers to maximum teaching time for Greece.
Lower and upper secondary education refers to general programmes. See OECD (2024[20]) *Education at a Glance 2024 Sources Methodologies and Technical Notes* p. 285 (https://doi.org/10.1787/e7d20315-en) for more information.
Source: OECD (2024[4]), *Education at a Glance 2024: OECD Indicators*, https://doi.org/10.1787/c00cad36-en, Tables D4.1 and D4.2.

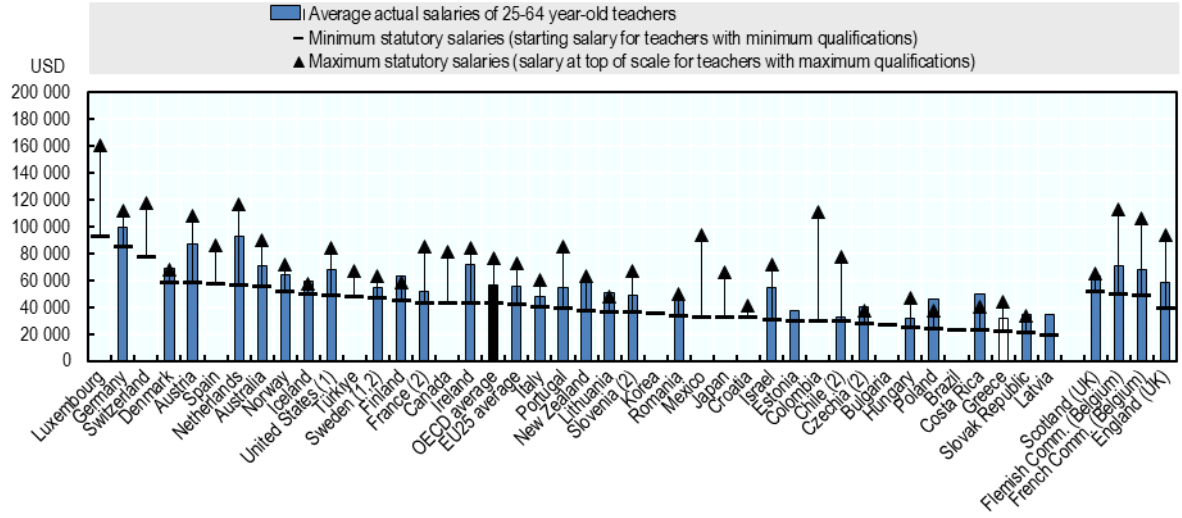
According to principals' reports in PISA 2022, most teachers (84.2%) in schools at the ISCED 2 level are employed on full-time contracts, i.e. working at least 90%. However, part-time work is more common among teachers in rural areas or villages with fewer than 3 000 inhabitants. In 2022, only 29% of students in rural areas or villages attended schools where 80% or more of teachers were working full time, compared to 71% in towns (with 3 000 to 100 000 inhabitants) and 66% in cities (with over 100 000 inhabitants) (OECD, 2023, pp. 410, Tables II.B1.5.94 and II.B1.5.96[7]).

Teachers' and school leaders' salaries

Teachers' statutory salaries in Greece are identical from pre-primary to upper secondary education and depend on their years of service and formal qualifications (MOE, 2024[3]). Teachers' salaries in Greece have deteriorated significantly since the country's economic crisis, dropping by 35% in real terms from a high point in 2010 across primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education (based on the most prevalent qualifications after 15 years of experience) (OECD, 2024, pp. 394, Table D3.6[4]). As of 2023, lower secondary teachers' average annual salaries were the second lowest among OECD countries with available data (at around 32 000 USD PPP) (see Figure 3.2). As in most OECD countries with available data, teachers' salaries in Greece are below those of similarly educated workers. In 2024, Greek teachers in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education earned 69-72% of what tertiary educated workers could expect on average, compared to 83-81% on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2025, pp. 403, Table D3.2[21]).[3]

Figure 3.2. Teachers' average actual salaries compared to the statutory minimum and maximum salaries (ISCED 2) (2023)

Annual salaries of lower secondary teachers in public institutions, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for private consumption



Note: Actual salaries include bonuses and allowances; Countries and other participants are ranked in descending order of the starting salaries for teachers with the minimum qualifications.
1. Actual salaries for minimum and maximum statutory salaries.
2. Year of reference for actual salaries differs from 2023. Refer to the source table for more information.
Source: Reproduced from OECD (2024[4]), *Education at a Glance 2024: OECD Indicators*, https://doi.org/10.1787/c00cad36-en, Figure D3.2.

Teachers' statutory salary progression over the course of their careers is in line with international averages. As of 2023, the statutory salaries of teachers with 15 years of experience were 32% above the starting

salary in primary to upper secondary education, based on the most prevalent qualifications. This is in line with the OECD average of 35% (for lower secondary teachers) (OECD, 2024, pp. 395, Table D3.1[4]). The top of teachers' statutory salary scale in Greece was 97% above the starting salary, which is higher than the OECD average of 64% (for primary to upper secondary teachers) (see Figure 3.2). Principals of primary and secondary schools benefit from a monthly allowance ranging from EUR 215 to 501, depending on the level and size of the school (as of January 2024, Law 5045/2023). In addition, teachers in borderline or remote regions benefit from a EUR 100 monthly supplement (MOE, 2024[3]; MOE, 2024[22]).

Class sizes and student-teacher ratios

Greek law defines both minimum and maximum class sizes. In primary schools with at least seven classes, the minimum number of students per class is 15 and the maximum number is 25. In lower and general upper secondary schools, the maximum class size is 27, although the responsible Director of Education can grant an exceptional increase by 10% (MOE, 2024, p. 48[3]; Law 4692, 2020[13]; Joint Ministerial Decision 129818/Γ2/2013, 2013[23]). On average, student-teacher ratios and class sizes in Greece are small by international comparison. In 2022, the student-teacher ratios in primary education (7.9) and secondary education (8.7) were significantly below the respective OECD averages of 14.0 and 12.7 (OECD, 2024, pp. 370, Table D2.2[4]). Likewise, the average class sizes in primary schools (17.0) and secondary schools (22.0) were lower than the OECD averages of 20.6 and 23.3 in 2022 (OECD, 2024, pp. 371, Table D2.3[4]). Furthermore, in the 2022 PISA survey, the number of students per teacher in schools attended by 15-year-olds was 8.7 – down from 9.6 in 2018 and significantly below the OECD average of 13.2 (OECD, 2023, pp. 409, Table II.B1.5.13[7]).

At the same time, as the 2022 annual report of the Quality Assurance Authority for Primary and Secondary Education (*Αρχή Διασφάλισης της Ποιότητας στην Πρωτοβάθμια και Δευτεροβάθμια Εκπαίδευση*, ADIPPDE) points out, the average class size in Greece masks significant regional heterogeneity. In particular, classes in urban areas routinely exceed 25 students, which teachers argue impedes their ability to engage in differentiated instruction (ADIPPDE, 2022, p. 99[24]). On average, language of instruction classes in Greece's urban areas had 25 students, compared to 20 in rural areas (a statistically significant difference in line with the class sizes observed in many OECD countries).[4] Classes in disadvantaged schools were, on average, slightly smaller than those in advantaged schools (22 vs. 25 students) (OECD, 2023, pp. 409, Table II.B1.5.15[7]).

Teacher shortages and attractiveness of the profession

Despite low salaries and limited prospects for career advancement, the teaching profession in Greece remains a comparatively attractive career path and the demand for teaching posts exceeds their supply. There is no shortage of young graduates seeking to enter the classroom and resignations among fully-qualified teachers in Greece are exceedingly rare, according to national statistics (OECD, 2024, pp. 431, Figure D5.6[4]). In 2022/23, 95% of fully-qualified primary teachers in public education and 96% of secondary teachers who left the profession did so through retirement, rather than resignation (OECD, 2025, pp. 505, Table D8.4[25]). Greece, together with Korea and Türkiye, was one of only three OECD countries with available data that did not report facing general teacher shortages at the start of the 2022/23 academic year (OECD, 2024, pp. 429, Figure D5.5[4]).

Nevertheless, there are shortages in some geographical areas, particularly remote regions and low-inhabited islands (Birch et al., 2021, p. 31[2]). Likewise, many school leaders across Greece report suffering from a lack of teaching staff due to budgetary constraints, rather than the availability of staff. In PISA 2022, 54.3% of 15-year-old students attended schools whose principal reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction was hindered "to some extent" or "a lot" by a lack of teaching staff (OECD average: 46.7%) (OECD, 2023, pp. 408, Table II.B1.5.1[7]). This constitutes a marked 10-percentage point increase compared to 2015 and a 28-percentage point increase compared to 2018 (OECD, 2023, pp. 408, Table

II.B1.5.4[7]). Shortages are more pronounced in rural areas and towns, compared to cities (though not statistically significantly so) (OECD, 2023, pp. 408, Table II.B1.5.2[7]).

Continuing professional learning

Teachers' engagement in continuing professional learning activities is largely voluntary, with the exception of two days of mandatory training at the primary level and a similar amount at the secondary level. Primary school principals are allowed to select two days per year in consultation with their Education Advisers, on which they close the premises for whole-school training. This mandatory training often covers topics of national priority and is typically organised by the IEP. In the past, it covered such subjects as the introduction of new curricula, differentiated instruction, inclusive education and bullying, with further training planned on teachers' digital skills (see Chapter 5) (MOE, 2024[3]). Education Advisers are responsible for ensuring that the whole-school training is aligned with the individual schools' development priorities specified in their action plans, and the workshops they organise need to be approved by the Education Quality Supervisors.

In secondary education, where teachers' training needs are more likely to vary across teachers of different subjects, Education Advisers usually send out a survey to identify the training needs of principals and teachers before the beginning of the school year. Based on the survey responses, Education Advisers plan training activities for individual subject teachers either online or in person throughout the year. While the duration of mandatory training for secondary teachers is not clearly stipulated, teachers usually engage in at least 3 or 4 training sessions of a few hours each over the course of the school year, according to Education Advisers.

In addition to the mandatory training, a law passed in 2021 requires principals to offer teachers at least 15 hours per school year of in-house training outside of their teaching hours, usually in the afternoon (Law 4823, 2021[15]). The topics for this training are decided by the school principal in line with the school's needs. According to principals interviewed by the OECD review team, the take-up of these voluntary training opportunities tends to be low, partly because teachers tend not to remain on the school premises in the afternoon. However, teachers also engage in independent continuing professional learning, benefiting, for example, from free online courses provided by the Institute of Education Policy (*Ινστιτούτο Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής*, IEP). Education Advisers sometimes point teachers to these training offers based on the learning needs they identify in their conversations with school staff (often targeting specific issues or groups of teachers, such as the use of specific methods in a particular subject area).

Teacher training in Greece is provided through several channels. Regional Education Quality Supervisors are responsible for organising and implementing training programmes or seminars and educational activities at the level of the Regional Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education. In doing so, they work with the Education Quality Supervisors, the Centres for Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counselling and Support (*Κέντρο Διεπιστημονικής Αξιολόγησης, Συμβουλευτικής και Υποστήριξης*, KEDASY) and Centres of Education for the Environment and Sustainability (*Κέντρα Εκπαίδευσης για το Περιβάλλον και την Αειφορία*, KEPEA), as well as the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), the Computer Technology Institute and Press "DIOPHANTUS" (CTI), ADIPPDE, Higher Education Institutions (Law 4823, 2021[15]), and – starting in 2025 – 13 Innovation Centres.

The Institute of Education Policy – an executive body that supports the Ministry of Education – is responsible for developing CPD programmes and for accrediting CPD providers. IEP offers a wide range of free training opportunities via its central Teacher Training Platform (*Πλατφόρμα Επιμόρφωσης Εκπαιδευτικών*). The IEP is subsidised with an annual grant of EUR 845k from the regular budget of the ministry to cover its operating costs. The IEP's development and delivery of teacher training and its work on the development of the new curricula are financed by the NSRF of the Public Investment Programme (PIP). The IEP's teacher training programmes and work on curriculum development was funded by

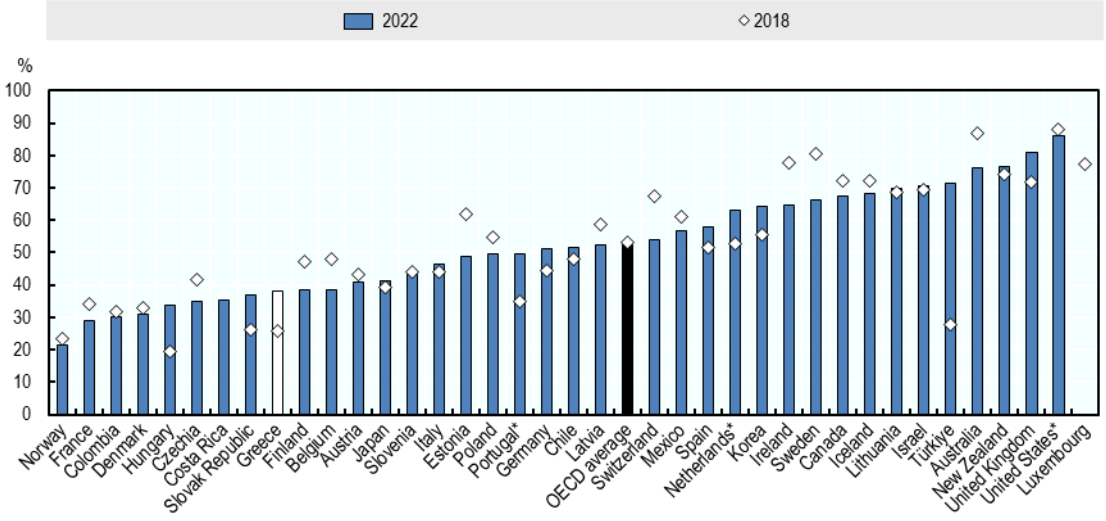
approximately EUR 7.1 million, through European Social Fund (ESF) Partnership Agreement projects implemented by the IEP during the 2014-2020 programming period (MOE, 2024[3]).

Since 2017, IEP has increasingly relied on distance learning (both synchronous and asynchronous) to deliver and expand the reach of its training programmes (MOE, 2024[3]). Recent reforms have transformed the structures for the delivery of professional learning. Since replacing the Regional Training Centres (*Περιφερειακά Εκπαιδευτικά Κέντρα*, PEK) in 2018, Regional Centres for Educational Planning (*Περιφερειακών Κέντρων Εκπαιδευτικού Σχεδιασμού*, PEKES) had been responsible for organising and implementing teacher training at the regional level, either in collaboration with the IEP (for centrally developed programmes) or on their own (for training programmes developed in response to local or regional needs) (Law 4547, 2018[26]). In 2021, the PEKES were abolished and their responsibilities for professional learning transferred to existing authorised training providers, including the Higher Educational Institutions and the Institute of Educational Policy, as well as schools, the Regional Supervisors of the Quality of Education and the newly established Education Advisers (Law 4823, 2021[15]; MOE, 2024[3]).

In 2024, Article 71 of Law 5128 laid the basis for the IEP's development of a Teacher Training Register (*Μητρώο Επιμόρφωσης Εκπαιδευτικών*). Once implemented, the Register is intended to establish a central digital database of all IEP training programmes, the trainers who implement them, training materials and other data related to teachers' professional learning (Law 5128, 2024[27]). Trainers in the IEP's Register will deliver courses and contribute to the identification of training needs, work on the design, evaluation and impact assessment of training programmes, as well as the development of training materials. With the introduction of the Teacher Training Register, IEP also intends to strengthen its quality assurance mechanisms by introducing procedures for the ongoing evaluation of trainers by participating teachers as well as managers (experts – usually IEP Consultants – who are appointed to take responsibility for a given training programme).

Figure 3.3. Teachers' participation in professional development activities (2022)

Proportion of 15-year-old students' teachers who had attended a programme of professional development during the previous three months; based on principals' reports



Note: *In this and all other Figures drawing on PISA data, the asterisk indicates that caution is required when interpreting estimates because one or more PISA sampling standards were not met (see Reader's Guide, Annexes A2 and A4 in OECD (2023[28])).
Source: Authors' analysis based on OECD (2023[28]), PISA 2022 Database; and OECD (2019[29]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*, Table II.B1.5.6, https://doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en.

The limited data available suggest that teachers in Greece engage in less professional learning than many of their international peers. The average share of teachers whose principals reported they had attended professional development in the previous three months had increased between 2018 and 2022 (from 25.9% to 38.1%) but remained well below the OECD average (52.3%) (see Figure 3.3).

Teacher appraisal

In 2021, Greece introduced a new teacher appraisal process (Law 4823, 2021[15]) with the aim to improve the quality of teaching as well as the pedagogical and support work provided by schools. The appraisal process, including its frequency, domains and scoring system, are defined in Law 4823/2021. It was established based on the recommendation by the General Director of Primary and Secondary Education Personnel at the Ministry of Education and with the approval of the Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education (ADIPPDE), an independent administrative authority responsible for the education systems' evaluation processes, including those for schools and teachers in Greece. ADIPPDE is also responsible for evaluating the new appraisal system and submits annual recommendations to the Minister of Education on how to enhance its procedures, domains and criteria (MOE, 2024[3]).

The new teacher appraisal process involves two separate appraisals on teachers' pedagogical work and their administrative work. The first (Field A) is designed to take place focussing every four years, the second (Field B) every two years (see Table 3.2). Both appraisals involve the external Education Adviser as well as the school principal. First, teachers are evaluated on their general and specific teaching abilities by their Education Adviser of Scientific Responsibility as well as on their "pedagogical climate and classroom management" by their school principal or the head of their school unit. Second, teachers are evaluated on their "professional consistency and competence" by their school principal and their Education Advisers of Pedagogical Responsibility (see Table 3.2). For each criterion, the appraisal framework includes descriptions of what is expected of teachers at four performance levels.

Table 3.2. Teacher appraisal framework in Greece

Criteria guiding the appraisal of teachers in primary and secondary education

Field	Sub-field	Criteria	Responsibility for appraisal
A: Teaching and pedagogical work (every 4 years)	A1: General and specific subject pedagogy	Lesson preparation; Readiness regarding the subject matter; Teaching methodology and practices; Pedagogical climate and classroom management; Reflection on teaching (teacher self-assessment).	Education Adviser of Scientific Responsibility
	A2: Pedagogical climate and classroom management	Pedagogical climate and classroom management; Reflection (teacher self-assessment);	School principal or head of school unit
B: Professional consistency and competence (every 2 years)		Consistency and interest in the performance of duties (e.g. adherence to working hours, active participation in teachers' meetings, etc.); Active participation in the operation of the school unit and its self-evaluation; Co-operation with colleagues; Communication and Collaboration with Parents and Stakeholders	Education Adviser of Pedagogical Responsibility and school principal

Source: MOE (2024[3]), *OECD Education Policy Review: Improving Learning Outcomes in Greece - Country Background Report*, Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports; Government Gazette (2021[15]), Law 4823: *Αναβάθμιση του σχολείου, ενδυνάμωση των εκπαιδευτικών και άλλες διατάξεις [School upgrading, empowering teachers and other provisions]*, p. 8990; Ministerial Decision 9950/ΓΔ5 (2023[30]), *Ρύθμιση Ειδικότερων και Λεπτομερειακών Θεμάτων Σχετικά με την Αξιολόγηση των Εκπαιδευτικών (…)* [Regulation of Specific and Detailed Issues Concerning the Evaluation of Teachers (…)], https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2023/ΦΕΚ_Αξιολόγησης.pdf.

The appraisal involves multiple steps, starting with a preparation meeting in which the teachers and evaluators discuss the timing of the appraisal, the lesson(s) to observe, the focus of the appraisal and any additional information to supply. The meeting's decisions are recorded and signed by the teacher and

evaluator. The evaluator(s) then observe the teacher's lesson using an observation framework adapted on a case-by-case basis. The process ends with a discussion and reflection within two days of the lesson observation, during which the evaluators provide the teachers with feedback on positive points and areas for further attention, as well as suggestions for improvements and opportunities for further support or training (Law 4823, 2021, p. 8995[15]). Teachers' performance in each of the fields is rated on a four-point scale ("excellent", "very good", "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory") (MOE, 2024, p. 27[3]).

During the first year of its country-wide implementation, in 2022/23, the appraisals focussed on 10 000 newly appointed teachers and those applying for promotion. Based on ADIPPDE's evaluation of the first round of teacher appraisals (ADIPPDE, 2023[31]), the ministry is currently considering ways to further simplify the appraisal process (MOE, 2024, p. 27[3]). Participation in the appraisal process is mandatory and teachers' refusal to take part in or obstruction of the process is treated as a disciplinary misconduct, leading to a fine, replacement and exclusion from the selection procedure for any position for the next eight years (MOE, 2024, p. 27[3]).

Strengths

The introduction of teacher appraisals is an important first step towards a culture of feedback, accountability and continuous improvement

Given the centralised nature of the Greek education system, teachers and school leaders have – by international comparison – little formal autonomy in areas such as determining course contents, selecting learning materials or establishing assessment policies (OECD, 2023, pp. 411, Table II.B1.6.1[7]). Nevertheless, Greek teachers enjoy significant pedagogical autonomy inside the classroom and are subject to limited accountability and oversight. Staff appraisal and regular feedback on teachers' work, linked with opportunities for professional development are considered central tenants of effective teacher policy (OECD, 2019[1]). While rigorous empirical evidence on the effectiveness of teacher appraisals in low-stakes contexts is limited, a well-identified study of a teacher evaluation process in Cincinnati (United States) (Taylor and Tyler, 2012[32]) suggests that it can lead to significant improvements in students' performance (about 0.1 SDs) (Liebowitz, 2022[33]).

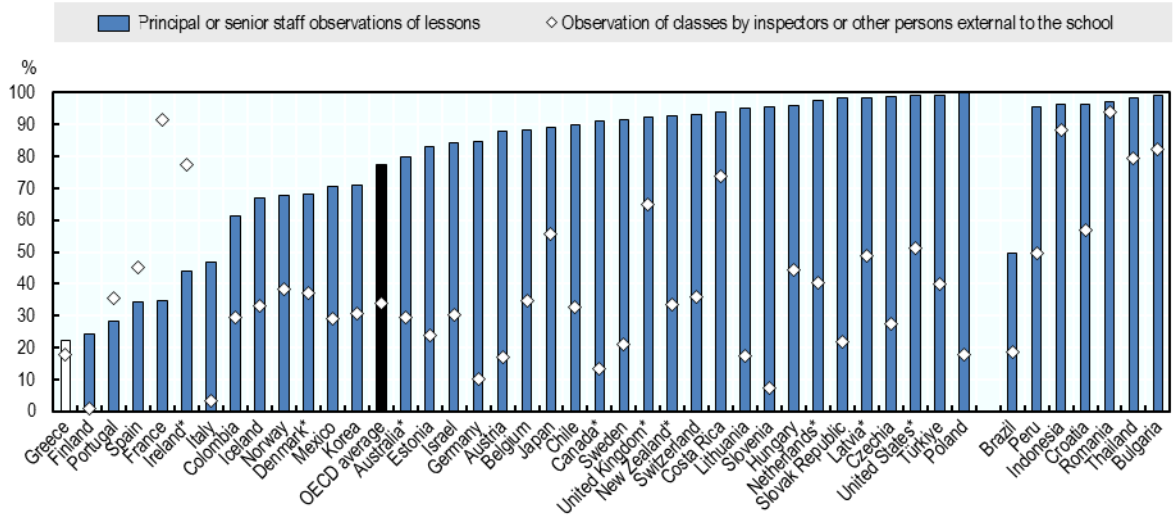
Until the new teacher appraisal process was rolled out in 2022/23, the long-time lack of formal teacher appraisals was particularly notable in the absence of a culture of peer-observations or other forms of informal professional appraisal in Greece. This left teachers with few alternative sources of feedback and support in their professional growth. As of 2022, Greece was one of the OECD countries where teachers were least likely to receive regular feedback from their school leaders. Only 63.4%% of students attended a school whose principal reported that they or a member of the management team provided feedback to teachers based on observations of instruction in the classroom at least once or twice a year, compared to 91.0% on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2023, pp. 411, Table II.B1.6.5[7]). This absence of a culture of lesson observation and support was in line with the historically administrative role of school leaders in Greece (OECD, 2018, p. 71[10]).

When PISA 2022 asked school leaders explicitly about the previous academic year, only 22.4% of students' principals reported that they or a senior staff member had monitored teachers' practice through lesson observations (see Figure 3.4). This constituted an improvement compared to 2015 but remained the lowest proportion across OECD countries and well below the OECD average of 77.3%. It is notable that this lack of school-based performance monitoring was not clearly compensated by external accountability mechanisms. Only 17.7% of students were in schools whose teachers' lessons had been observed by inspectors or other persons external to the school, compared to 34.1% across OECD countries (OECD, 2023, pp. 412, Tables II.B1.6.51 and II.B1.6.56[7]). This contrasts with countries such as France and Ireland, where the absence of widespread lesson observations by principals is compensated

by external monitoring (Figure 3.4). It is notable that, in the year prior to PISA 2022, lesson observations by principals were a lot more common in private schools than in public schools (68% vs. 19%) in Greece (OECD, 2023, pp. 412, Table II.B1.6.54[7]).

Figure 3.4. Monitoring teachers' practice through lesson observation (2022)

Percentage of students in schools where, during the previous academic year, the following methods were used to monitor teachers' practice; based on principals' reports



Note: Countries/economies ordered in ascending order of the share of teachers subject to lesson observations by their principals or senior staff members.
Source: OECD (2023[7]), *PISA 2022 Results (Volume II): Learning During – and From – Disruption*, https://doi.org/10.1787/a97db61c-en, Table II.B1.6.51.

Against this backdrop, Greece's recent introduction of regular teacher appraisals marks an important first step towards a culture of feedback, accountability and continuous improvement. Previous efforts to introduce teacher appraisals in Greece were met with strong resistance by the teaching profession and perceived as punitive or in opposition with teachers' professional autonomy and a democratic school culture (Stamelos, Vassilopoulos and Bartzakli, 2012[34]; European Commission, 2019[35]). Prior to recent reforms, Greece had therefore remained one of the few OECD countries without provisions for regular teacher appraisals (Birch et al., 2021, p. 108[2]).

Following the adoption of a legal framework in 2021, the country-wide roll out of teacher appraisals in 2022/23 introduced an important instrument to strengthen the quality of teaching in Greece (European Commission, 2023[36]). Although only beginning teachers were evaluated during the first two years since the reform, the government is planning to gradually expand the appraisal process to the entire teaching profession. Stakeholders interviewed during the OECD review visit reported that some teachers remained uncomfortable with the prospect of being observed or worried about the consequences of appraisals. However, the beginning teachers who had undergone the process generally reported positive experiences (although some pointed to its administrative and procedural burden).

The appraisal process is primarily designed for formative, rather than accountability purposes. Consequences for teachers who are deemed "unsatisfactory" are limited to participation in mandatory training, rendering the process relatively low-stakes. Positive appraisals are considered in promotions to positions of responsibility and the (modest) salary increases associated with them (European Commission, 2023, p. 7[36]). Given the low-stakes involved in the appraisal process, it will be important that its benefits for teachers' professional growth are apparent to all actors involved. This will be needed to ensure not only

that the process is taken seriously and becomes more than an administrative exercise, but also to justify the significant time and resources it requires.

The design of the teacher appraisal process includes important elements of high-quality appraisal systems, including repeated lesson observations and feedback with suggestions for improvement. Including both external and internal reviewers in the appraisal process can help to ensure its integrity, although it is more typically associated with high-stakes evaluations (e.g. for certifications or promotions), rather than growth-oriented appraisals (OECD, 2019, p. 124[1]). Involving school leaders in appraising their teachers also constitutes an important step in transforming their highly administrative role into one that places greater emphasis on pedagogical leadership. Given that many Greek principals had not previously engaged in regular teacher observations, the presence of experienced Education Advisers in the appraisal process may constitute an important source of support and peer-learning. During the OECD review visit, some principals clearly appreciated this support, while more experienced principals expressed no need for the involvement of external actors in the appraisal process.

There are encouraging efforts to make professional development more school-based and collaborative

Teacher training in Greece has, historically, been highly centralised and top-down, relying on the central development and provision of standardised large-scale training programmes aligned with major reforms or national priorities. School-based professional learning, by contrast, has traditionally been weakly developed. This is reflected in PISA 2022, where 29.9% of 15-year-old students in Greece attended schools whose principals reported “never or almost never” working on a professional development plan for their school. This was the second highest proportion across OECD countries and significantly above the international average of just 5.6% (OECD, 2023, pp. 411, Table II.B1.6.5[7]).

In recent years, several reforms indicate a reorientation of teachers’ professional learning in Greece. The new frameworks and processes for school self-evaluations (see Chapter 2) and teacher appraisals developed with ADIPPDE and the IEP signal a shift towards more individualised, needs-oriented and school-based professional learning. These approaches are conducive to encouraging professional development that is more closely linked to teachers’ and schools’ needs and more integrated with their daily practice. These forms of professional learning are also more aligned with evidence on effective teacher training (Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[37]).

The introduction of 15 annual hours of on-site training during school hours provides new opportunities for principals to make time for teachers to collaborate or engage in other forms of professional learning with their peers. Engagement in this training remains voluntary and interviews suggest that some principals struggle to motivate teachers to participate. Nevertheless, in interviews during the OECD review visit, representatives of IEP reported that some principals have worked with their Education Advisers and used this time effectively for teachers to work on school projects and engage in professional learning aligned with the schools’ action plans.

Professional development also features prominently in the school self-evaluation and improvement process as one of 9 thematic axes around which schools can develop their action plans (ADIPPDE, 2023[31]). In the school year 2021/22, ADIPPDE estimates that around 14.5% of primary schools’ action plans and over 10.5% of secondary schools’ action plans were related to teachers’ engagement in professional learning activities (ADIPPDE, 2023, pp. 210, 266[31]). The structure of the self-evaluation process itself encourages collaboration among teachers since it requires them to reflect on the school’s needs and action plans in groups of three to five. This professional exchange can itself be a powerful form of informal learning. Several of the schools visited by the OECD review team had also worked with their Education Advisers and used the action plans to select appropriate themes for their compulsory whole-school training at the beginning of the school year. The school self-evaluation process can thus serve both

to identify the school's needs, encourage a culture of collaboration among its teachers and integrate professional development into a whole-school improvement process adapted to each school's context.

In addition to their role in the teacher appraisal and school improvement process, the Education Advisers are also responsible for the pedagogical guidance of teachers, their training and subject-specific "scientific guidance". (These are three of the seven pillars guiding the Education Advisers' work). Education Advisers do so by providing teachers with practical pedagogical advice or by pointing them to appropriate training opportunities throughout the school year. In secondary education, Education Advisers use surveys to identify teachers' training needs before the beginning of the school year. Given the Education Advisers' limited capacity (each of the 800 Education Advisers is responsible for around 150-180 teachers), their professional development support for individual teachers is necessarily limited and ad hoc. In the medium term, expecting Education Advisers to orient individual teachers towards appropriate professional learning opportunities is unlikely to be sustainable. However, the Advisor's approach is indicative of an important recognition that teachers require individualised support to address their specific learning needs within the context of their particular school environment.

New staff positions have created opportunities for professional growth in a historically flat career structure

The teaching career in Greece has historically provided few opportunities for highly effective educators to put their skills to use by assuming greater responsibilities or by specialising in an area of expertise. This lack of vertical or horizontal differentiation in teachers' career structure can make it difficult to motivate teachers in the long term, provide them with recognition and prevent the most effective teachers from leaving the profession or entering leadership roles outside the classroom. The introduction of new roles for mentors and co-ordinators in 2021 constituted an encouraging effort to change this.

While mentors are responsible for providing beginning teachers with professional guidance during the first five years of their careers, co-ordinators are responsible for advancing their schools' pedagogical quality by convening regular teacher meetings to foster professional collaboration, advance curriculum planning and accompany the introduction of new teaching or assessment tools (MOE, 2024[3]). The professional responsibilities of mentors and co-ordinators are therefore well aligned with the goal to foster peer-learning and professional exchange within schools.

Both mentors and co-ordinators are appointed by the school principal on the condition of teachers having received "excellent" or "very good" appraisal results, thus giving highly effective teachers the ability to share their experience and knowledge with their peers and to contribute to the professional development of their Teacher Boards (Law 4823, 2021[15]). While the roles are not remunerated or compensated with reduced teaching hours, teachers who assume these responsibilities are rewarded with additional credit points, which they can use when applying for a new position or a school leadership role. They also offer a new means of recognising the work of highly motivated teachers and provide a starting point to expand the opportunities for formal career advancement available to classroom teachers in Greece.

The ministry has taken important steps to address challenges in the allocation of substitute teachers

Due to the constraints on the number of permanent teaching staff, Greek schools rely on substitute teachers with fixed-term renewable contracts to deliver instruction. Substitute teachers make up around 31% of teachers in primary and 21% of teachers in secondary schools on average (see Figure 3.1). Despite the centralised hiring of teachers, Greece lacks a unified human resource management system. Historically, vacancies were reported by school leaders at the beginning of the school year. The ministry then evaluated and approved schools' eligibility for substitute teachers and allocated candidates to fill vacancies through a lengthy process without the principals' involvement. This process was widely

considered to be administratively burdensome, time-intensive and inefficient. During the OECD review visit, stakeholders reported that delays in lengthy approval processes frequently left schools with unfilled vacancies at the beginning of the school year. While teachers in primary schools may be able to alleviate these staffing issues by substituting for one another, instruction in smaller secondary schools can be severely disrupted if vacancies for subject teachers remain unfilled (e.g. if a school is unable to provide mathematics instruction for several months).

The ministry has recently undertaken two initiatives to address this operational challenge and ameliorate delays in the hiring of substitute teachers. After two centralised recruitment phases, additional vacancies for substitute teachers are now allocated to the Regional Directorates of Education who can hire staff through "Local Calls" outside the regular centralised recruitment process. In addition to the creation of regional substitute pools, the ministry has piloted a new platform (*Eduplan.ai*) in 2023/24, which is aimed at increasing the efficiency of the substitution process. The platform makes it easier for principals and Regional Directors to enter staffing data for their schools. It also uses artificial intelligence (AI) to detect vacancies earlier than was previously the case and to match them with available candidates. At the time of the OECD review visit, the platform was being piloted in selected regions and it was planned to be rolled out country-wide, embedded in the eSchools platform, in the 2025/26 school year. The ministry's evaluation of the pilot estimates that the new platform has increased the efficiency of substitute hiring by 60-80%, based on indicators such as the teaching hours per teacher, the proportion of unassigned substitutes or the time it takes for upcoming vacancies to be identified and filled with suitable candidates.

Challenges

Teachers feel a lack of support in their continuing professional learning

Teachers in Greece are subject to multiple reforms and developments that give rise to substantial professional learning needs. The success of the Greek school system's digital transformation (see Chapter 5), its ambitious plans to promote inclusion, and the introduction of a new curriculum all rely on teachers' ability to acquire new skills on the job and to adapt to new methods of teaching and learning. In 2022, for example, 27.5% of 15-year-old students' teachers did not have the necessary technical and pedagogical skills to integrate digital devices in instruction, according to their principals. This was one of the highest proportions across OECD countries (compared to an average of 12.4%) and marked one of the smallest improvements since 2018 (OECD, 2023, pp. 409, Table II.B1.5.32[7]).

Likewise, the curriculum reform seeks to enhance professional practices and promote a more skills-oriented style of instruction that requires teachers to take greater ownership of the curricula and to select learning materials from multiple sources, rather than following a centrally prescribed syllabus. To put this bold vision into practice, teachers will need to be adequately prepared. Yet, despite the new curriculum's imminent introduction, only a small proportion of the country's 184 000 teachers have received training on the new curriculum to date. In 2022, 1 470 teachers in experimental and model schools were trained on the new curriculum, obtained B-level certificates and acted as multipliers, training an additional 1 900 teachers (MOE, 2024[3]). In a second phase (from March 2021 to July 2023), another 21 800 teachers from the pre-school to the secondary education level received training on the curriculum in a blended distance learning format (8 hours of synchronous and 28 hours of asynchronous training). IEP is planning to roll out asynchronous distant learning courses (MOOCS) for the remaining teachers. However, as of early 2025, most teachers interviewed during the OECD review visit reported having no knowledge of the curriculum's structure, content or pedagogical approach.

The two days of mandatory training that teachers usually engage in at the beginning of the school year are an important cornerstone of professional development in Greece, but it is doubtful whether the mandatory training alone will be sufficient to address the unprecedented training needs of the teaching profession.

Not all OECD countries require teachers to engage in a given amount of professional development each year. Some rely on strong culture of professional learning or incentives (e.g. related to career advancement) for teachers to build their skills. Yet, in comparison with most other OECD countries that require teachers to engage in in-service training, the amount of professional development required of Greek teachers is small (OECD, 2022, pp. 403, Table D7.1[19]). At the same time – although some teachers are highly motivated to acquire new competencies – there are few incentives, resources or expectations for Greek teachers to engage in training beyond the prescribed hours.

Some teachers interviewed by the OECD review team at both the primary and secondary education levels reported feeling a lack of orientation, guidance and support in their professional development. Historically, Greece's approach to professional learning relied primarily on central, large-scale training campaigns. As the system pivots to place greater emphasis on school-based approaches to professional learning and teachers' independent engagement in (online) courses developed by the IEP, teachers need to understand their responsibility for professional development and be empowered to become leaders of their own learning pathways. While the Education Advisers play an important role in collaborating with school leaders to shape school-based learning activities as well as making ad hoc suggestions for individual teachers' professional development (see above), their capacity is too limited to provide all teachers with in-depth guidance. As a consequence, there is a risk that teachers feel left alone or fail to engage in any professional learning beyond the legally required minimum.

The quality of professional learning is insufficiently emphasised and monitored

In addition to Greek teachers' relatively limited engagement in professional learning, insufficient emphasis is placed on ensuring its quality and on promoting effective formats of professional learning. Although there are longer-term in-depth professional learning opportunities – such as the B-level certificates – many of the training opportunities developed by IEP take the form of one-off online courses. Evidence suggests that such courses are unlikely to meaningfully enhance the quality of teaching, particularly if they are not directly applied in the classroom, connected to the specific challenges faced by the participating teachers or embedded in wider school improvement plans (Timperley et al., 2007[38]; Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[37]). Effective professional learning, by contrast, tends to be sustained over longer periods of time, involve professional collaboration with peers, respond to context-specific challenges, and offer time between sessions for teachers to apply what they have learned, evaluate its impact and make adjustments in an iterative way. As discussed above, more integrated and collaborative forms of professional learning remain less common in Greece. Although there are encouraging signs of change, few principals observe teachers' lessons to provide feedback (see Figure 3.4) and a below-average proportion of school leaders encourage teachers to engage in peer review (46.8% vs. 59.1% on average across OECD countries) (OECD, 2023, pp. 412, Table II.B1.6.51[7]).

Furthermore, Greece's approach to monitoring teachers' participation in professional development activities and its quality does not appear to be sufficiently developed to strengthen teachers' engagement in effective forms of professional learning. While IEP collects information on teachers' participation in its training programmes, quality assurance mechanisms around professional learning seem weakly developed. While IEP training courses usually include satisfaction surveys, the OECD review team is not aware of attempts to investigate their longer-term impact on teachers' practices. This was also the case for school-based professional learning programmes, even though schools are encouraged to select indicators (*δείκτες*) to evaluate their effectiveness (ADIPPDE, 2023, p. 475[31]). This may be explained by the absence of widely known standards or quality criteria that could guide school leaders in their selection of professional development activities. ADIPPDE's 2023 Annual Report on school self-evaluations includes a framework of suggested quality criteria to evaluate teachers' professional development actions. However, the criteria focus on the outcomes of effective professional development rather than its structural features, are relatively abstract and do not include specific examples of effective practices (ADIPPDE, 2023, p. 475[31]).

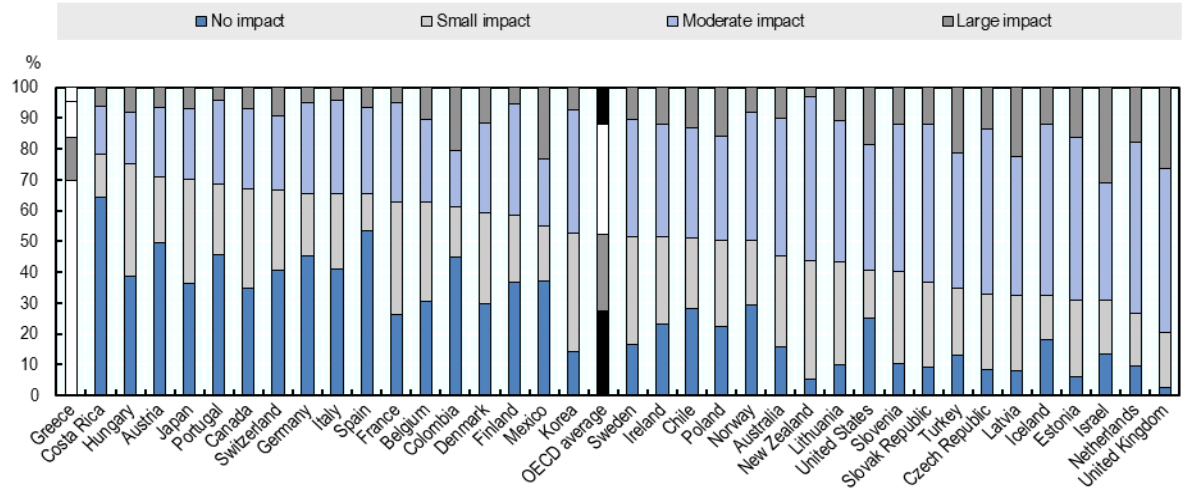
The IEP's monitoring ability is further constrained by the fact that the institute does not collect data on the professional learning activities that are locally organised in collaboration with the Education Advisers in schools (neither the topics covered, nor teachers' attendance). Given that the Education Advisers have been an important source of training and information concerning the upcoming curriculum reform, this constitutes an important blind spot, making it difficult for the ministry to assess how many teachers have already been prepared for the curriculum reform (apart from the 21 800 teachers who took part in the IEP's training programme). These gaps in monitoring also extends to teachers' training needs. There is no clear mechanism for the IEP to capture thematic areas in which teachers are in greatest need of further training and the information that the Education Advisers collect on a regular basis on teachers' training needs are not aggregated or passed on to IEP. With the development of a Teacher Training Register, IEP has committed to responding to some of these concerns by investing in both the identification of teachers' training needs and placing greater emphasis on the evaluation of its programmes (Law 5128, 2024[27]).

The teacher appraisal process is not sufficiently connected to professional learning and imposes a high administrative burden

In PISA 2022, the great majority of Greek principals reported that teacher appraisals had "no impact" on opportunities for professional development activities (69.8%, compared to 27.4% on average across OECD countries) and only 16.3% reported that it had a "moderate" or "large impact", compared to the OECD average of 47.7% (see Figure 3.5). The introduction of a new teacher appraisal system sought to address this weak connection between teachers' appraisal and their professional development and is an important first step towards a culture of feedback, accountability and continuous improvement. Yet, some structural features of the new appraisal process may impede it from fulfilling its full potential. Notably, the new teacher appraisal process is not yet sufficiently embedded in a continuous improvement cycle, which is a key feature of effective formative teacher appraisal systems (OECD, 2013, p. 340[39]). Although Greek teachers who receive an "insufficient" rating are required to engage in mandatory training, for all other teachers, the appraisal is not clearly connected to professional learning activities aimed at addressing identified areas for improvement.

Figure 3.5. Impact of teacher appraisals on professional development (2022)

Percentage of students whose principal reported that appraisals of teachers at their school had an impact on their opportunities for professional development activities



Note: Countries/economies ordered in ascending order of the share of principals reporting that appraisals had a moderate or large impact.
Source: Authors' analysis based on OECD (2023[40]), *PISA 2022 Database*, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/pisa-2022-database.html.

Rather than conceiving of training exclusively as a response to identified deficits, effective appraisal processes use professional learning as a means for every teacher to engage in continuing professional growth. Effective appraisal processes accomplish this by including discussions of growth opportunities for all teachers and by agreeing on steps that teachers can take to implement improvements in practice. Regular follow-ups can support teachers' progress and help them to adapt their approach as needed (OECD, 2019[1]). If the benefits of appraisals for professional growth are not apparent to the great majority of Greek teachers, they risk being perceived as an administrative exercise and receiving limited buy-in from the profession. (As discussed in Chapter 2, the same risk applies to perceptions of school-level evaluations).

A second structural feature that raises concerns about the longer-term sustainability of the appraisal process is its resource intensity. The appraisal involves six distinct steps, including two separate appraisals involving both external staff (the Education Advisers) and senior staff of the school. Principals and teachers interviewed during the OECD review visit reported that the appraisal process imposes a high administrative burden and involves a significant amount of reporting work. In addition, given the limited capacity of the Education Advisers and wide range of their responsibilities, it seems unlikely that they will be able to maintain their high level of involvement in the appraisal process once it is expanded to the entire teacher population. Unless the staff resources and administrative workload associated with the appraisal process are reduced, it will be challenging for teachers and principals to give appraisals the attention they deserve once all educators will undergo the process at least every four years.

There is no shared vision of "high-quality teaching" or the skills that teachers will need in order to remain successful

Professional standards or competency frameworks can be a highly effective instrument to align teacher policies across different domains and set clear expectations for the skills, knowledge and attitudes that teachers are expected to demonstrate at different stages of their careers (OECD, 2019, p. 123[1]). Greece currently lacks such clear and widely recognised standards outlining the characteristics of effective teaching and the skills and competencies that teachers are expected to display or develop for the future. Although ADIPPDE has developed a framework to guide the appraisal of teachers, the OECD review team formed the impression that this framework was not widely known by teachers or school leaders.

The lack of accepted professional standards and a shared vision of "high quality teaching" impedes co-ordination and joined-up thinking across relevant policy initiatives. Clear professional standards can help to clarify expectations among relevant stakeholders, align different policies affecting the teaching profession (e.g. related to ITE, CPL, appraisal or career advancement) and guide teachers' professional learning activities. In the absence of such standards, important initiatives (including the implementation of the new curricula, the development of ITE programmes, the IEP's development of professional learning opportunities and teacher appraisal) do not appear to be guided by a shared framework for high quality teaching. Instead, teachers lack certainty on the skills they will need in order to implement the new curricula successfully and the training developed by IEP risk responding to ad hoc initiatives and changing political priorities more so than a clear vision for the teaching profession.

Inefficiencies in the management of staff resources diminish teachers' impact on student learning

Greece is one of the few OECD countries that report not suffering from a shortage of teachers at the system level and benefits from a consistently high supply of graduates seeking to enter the profession (Boeskens and Meyer, 2025[41]). Nevertheless, 54% of Greece's 15-year-olds attend schools whose principals reported that instruction in their schools is hindered to some extent or a lot by teacher shortages (compared to 47% on average across OECD countries) (OECD, 2023, pp. 408, Table II.B1.5.1[7]). This seeming paradox points to the challenges in management staff resources in Greece's schools, which

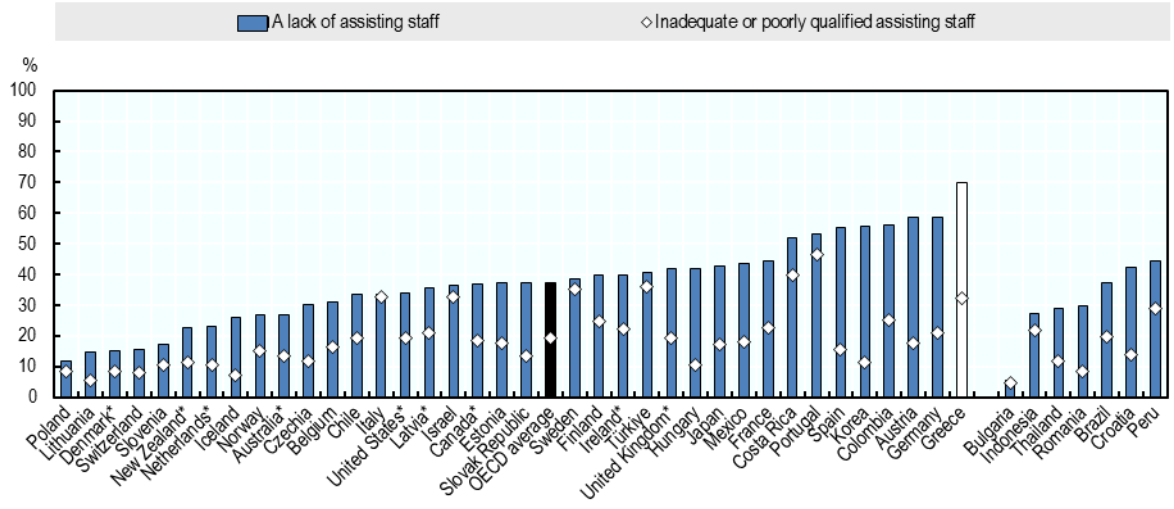
affects the use of teachers' time as well as reported frictions in the allocation of substitute teachers. These factors combine to diminish the potential of Greece's teachers to support student learning.

Many teachers (and principals) interviewed during the OECD review visit reported experiencing a high administrative burden. While no national or international data on Greek teachers' administrative workload are available (Greece has not participated in previous cycles of TALIS), educators reported spending a substantial amount of their limited time on duplicative administrative tasks, data entry or retrieval procedures unrelated to their core teaching responsibilities. The ministry has started to address these concerns, for example by creating a platform that encourages Teacher Boards to move their records online, includes templates of commonly required documents and facilitates teachers' approval of routine decisions online, rather than by physical signature (Ministry of Digital Governance, 2025[42]). Nevertheless, the administrative burden faced by teachers appears to remain high.

In a system characterised by heavy bureaucratic procedures and limited subsidiarity or decision-making autonomy for school leaders, teachers' administrative burden is increased by the absence of secretarial support in most schools (see Chapter 2). Among OECD countries, Greece has by far the highest share of principals reporting that their school's ability to provide instruction is hindered "to some extent" or "a lot" by lack of assisting staff (70.0%, compared to the OECD average of 37.2%) (see Figure 3.6) (OECD, 2023, pp. 408, Table II.B1.5.1[7]). Likewise, 75.6% of 15-year-olds were in schools whose principals reported that the school did not have sufficient qualified technical assisting staff, compared to 41.2% across OECD countries (OECD, 2023, pp. 409, Table II.B1.5.29[7]). As a result, given the small size of school leadership teams in Greece, many teachers need to take on a substantial part of their schools' administrative work.

Figure 3.6. Availability of assisting staff in schools (2022)

Percentage of students whose principal reported that their school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered by the following



Note: Countries/economies ordered in ascending order of the share of principals reporting a lack of assisting staff.
Source: OECD (2023[7]), *PISA 2022 Results (Volume II): Learning During – and From – Disruption*, https://doi.org/10.1787/a97db61c-en, Table II.B1.5.1.

Challenges in the timely allocation of permanent and substitute teachers (discussed above) add to perceived teacher shortages, regularly causing vacancies in hard-to-staff schools to remain unfilled at the start or during the school year. This places a burden on the remaining teaching staff who have to make up for lost instruction time, particularly in secondary schools that are unable to find replacements for subject

teachers. Another factor that may aggravate perceived staff shortages includes student-to-teacher ratios, which are significantly below the OECD average in both primary and secondary education (see above) (OECD, 2024, pp. 370, Table D2.2[4]). Furthermore, the progressive reduction in teaching hours quite early on in teachers' careers reduces students' contact time with the most experienced teachers. Although similar arrangements can be found in other OECD countries, this can add to existing inefficiencies in the use of staff time (Boeskens and Nusche, 2021[43]).

Teachers have limited professional agency and involvement in policy development at the national level

Greek teachers play an important role in the governance of their schools, where Teacher Boards (comprised of all teachers as well as the principal) are responsible for taking many of the operational decisions that, in other countries, are assumed by principals independently. Through the Teacher Board, teachers also play a leading role in preparing their schools' self-evaluation reports. However, given the limited consultation with trade unions on policy developments at the national level and the lack of alternative professional organisations or fora, teachers' ability to collectively shape the future of their profession and play a role in policy developments at the national level is limited.

Relationships between the main teacher unions – the Federations of Primary and Secondary School Teachers (DOE and OLME) – and the ministry have been tense, which has stalled social dialogue on key reform processes. Teacher unions in Greece have focussed much of their attention on improving teachers' material working conditions, such as their contractual status, pensions, salaries and working hours. Conflictual negotiations and an inability to reach mutually acceptable solutions and engage in the productive exchange of opposing views have led to a long-term deterioration of trust between public authorities and trade unions in Greece (OECD, 2018, p. 69[10]).

The Greek legislative process provides for a public consultation on draft bills during which stakeholders and other interested parties are invited to review and comment on bills before they are submitted to Parliament. Yet, in interviews conducted during the OECD review visit, union representatives reported no longer being involved in the co-design of policies or consulted systematically during earlier stages of their development. Given the lack of alternative professional organisations for teachers, this diminishes the systematic involvement of teachers in policy making. A recent exception was ADIPPDE's survey of teachers' views on the implementation of the new diagnostic exams, conducted in 2022, which (by their own account) constituted the first time the ministry had systematically requested teachers' opinions to inform policy development (ADIPPDE, 2022, p. 10[24]). By contrast, there was no systematic involvement of a broader group of teachers during the development of the criteria for the new teacher appraisal framework (beyond the teachers serving on ADIPPDE's Council, which approved proposals prior to their submission to the Minister). This lack of direct communication with and involvement of the wider teaching profession in key reform processes constitutes a missed opportunity to improve the design of policies based on teachers' input. It also and creates challenges when seeking the profession's buy-in for reforms, such as the new teacher appraisal process, risks undermining teachers' sense of professional agency and could heighten apprehensions around reform efforts.

Recommendations

Policy recommendation 1: Developing a framework for teacher and school leader competencies and high-quality teaching practices

To align teacher policies across different domains and set clear expectations for the skills, knowledge and attitudes that teachers are expected to demonstrate at different stages of their careers, Greece should develop a framework for teacher competencies, guided by a clear vision for high-quality teaching. Such a

framework should be used to align teachers' appraisal, their continuing professional learning and their initial education. An integrated framework would help to guide teachers' self-evaluation and orient their professional growth by helping them to identify training opportunities that match their development needs. For example, the IEP could use the central Teacher Training Register it is currently developing to index training opportunities based on the competencies included in the professional standards framework. Professional standards for teachers could also help to connect the teaching professions' development with system-wide priorities, such as the skills-oriented curriculum reform and the effective use of digital resources (see Chapter 5).

The teacher appraisal framework developed by ADIPPDE provides a strong basis for developing such professional standards since it covers important aspects of teachers' pedagogical competency, professionalism and their contribution to their schools' development (Ministerial Decision 9950/ΓΔ5, 2023[30]). Such professional standards are most effective when they are widely known and developed together with the teaching profession, allowing teachers to collectively reflect on the future of their profession and to assume ownership of its underlying vision. High-performing school systems, such as Singapore and Estonia, provide examples of how professional standards with clearly defined competencies and associated indicators of effective behaviour can support teachers' appraisal and career development (see Box 3.1).

Box 3.1. Using differentiated professional standards to align different aspects of the teaching career

The Estonian Qualifications Authority's professional standards for teachers

The Estonian Qualifications Authority has developed professional standards specifying the skills, knowledge and attitudes that teachers are expected to demonstrate at each stage of their career. First developed in 2003, Estonia's current professional standards were introduced in 2013 and have been updated in 2020 to place greater emphasis on digital pedagogy and inclusive education (OECD, 2020, p. 15[44]). Estonia's professional standards serve a range of functions. They provide the basis for the curriculum of initial teacher education programmes, they are used to evaluate teachers, they provide a framework to guide their continuing professional learning and they are used in the voluntary certification process that determines teachers' advancement across career stages (Révai, 2018, p. 25[45]; Pedaste et al., 2019[46]). The certification process is organised by the teacher professional organisation (the Estonian Association of Teachers) and teachers can apply for a new certification twice a year. A three-member committee oversees the two-stage application process, which involves an evaluation of the candidate's application materials and an interview.

The Estonian teacher professional standards are differentiated across different levels of experience, which facilitates their links to appraisal procedures and career advancement (see (Révai, 2018, p. 25[45]) for a detailed description). The standards are articulated for Teachers (Levels 6 and 7.1), Senior Teachers (Level 7.2), and Master Teachers (Level 8). For teachers at Level 7, for example, there are six mandatory competencies (B.2.1 "Supporting the learner"; B.2.2 "Planning learning and teaching activities"; B.2.3 "Teaching"; B.2.4 "Reflection and professional self-development"; B.2.5 "Collaboration and coaching"; B.2.6 "Development, creative and research activities") and two elective competencies (B.2.7 "Supporting learners with special educational needs" and B.2.8 "Implementation of digital pedagogy"). Each competency is associated with a set of indicators describing the corresponding behaviours that teachers are expected to demonstrate. For example, one of four indicators associated with competency B.2.4 states that the teacher "analyses and interprets the results of educational research and applies them in his/her work; conducts action research at the class/group level, analysing

the learning process, defining problems, gathering evidence from practice; shares evidence-based knowledge with colleagues" (Estonian Qualifications Authority, 2024[47]).

Singapore's Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS)

Singapore's Ministry of Education has developed a competency-based management framework, the Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS), which lays out the knowledge, skills and professional characteristics expected from teachers at different stages of their careers (Révai, 2018[45]). The EPMS informs the evaluation of teachers' performance, their professional development needs, decisions on their promotion and performance bonuses. The EPMS is aligned with Singapore's teacher career ladder, which allows classroom teachers to develop their careers along three distinct pathways: the teaching track, the leadership track and the specialist track (NISL, 2019[48]).

The EPMS comprises a broad set of competencies and outcomes, called Key Result Areas (KRAs). The 13 competencies are grouped into four categories: 1) Individual attributes, 2) Professional mastery, 3) Organisational excellence and 4) Effective collaboration. The latter, for example, covers the following competencies: Interpersonal skills and relationships, teamwork and team building, and internal and external partnerships. The three KRAs are 1) Holistic student development (students' learning, character development and co-curricular activities); 2) Professional development (development of oneself, coaching and development of others); and 3) Organisational outcomes (contributions to the school, committee work and nation, and collaboration with parents). All education staff typically work with their supervisors to set targets based on the KRAs at the beginning of the year and review their progress against them during a mid-year check-in and at the end of the year. Rather than providing precise metrics for each competency, the EPMS relies on professional judgement and each principal's ability to develop evaluation metrics and processes to assess their teachers' performance (NISL, 2019[48]).

Sources: Révai, N. (2018[45]), "What difference do standards make to educating teachers?: A review with case studies on Australia, Estonia and Singapore", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 174, https://doi.org/10.1787/f1cb24d5-en; OECD (2019[1]), *Working and Learning Together: Rethinking Human Resource Policies for Schools*, https://doi.org/10.1787/b7aaf050-en; OECD (2020[44]), "Education Policy Outlook in Estonia", *OECD Education Policy Perspectives*, No. 13, https://doi.org/10.1787/9d472195-en; Estonian Qualifications Authority (2024[47]), *Professional Standards: Teacher, Level 7*, https://www.kutseregister.ee/ctrl/et/Standardid/vaata/10824233; NISL (2019[48]), *Singapore's Career Ladder System*, https://documents.ncsl.org/wwwncsl/Education/Study-Group/NISLSingapore%27sCareerLadderSystem.pdf;

Professional standards should also be developed for school principals. This would help to promote professionalism and a coherent vision of school leadership, underlining the commitment to strengthening their role in the pedagogical leadership of schools. As for teachers, standards for school leaders could guide their preparation, their appraisal and their continuing professional learning. School leader standards should be developed with the profession to reflect the increasing complexity of their role, including their new responsibilities for pedagogical leadership and the appraisal of teachers (OECD, 2019, p. 177[1]).

Policy recommendation 2: Embedding the teacher appraisal process in a continuous improvement cycle

As the Greek education system pivots towards a more school-based and targeted approach to teachers' professional learning, educators need to be empowered to become leaders of their own professional growth and assume responsibility for continuing to develop their skills throughout their careers. Given the ministry's commitment to using teacher appraisal as a tool for professional growth, rather than accountability, the introduction of teacher appraisals constitutes a critical instrument to advance these goals. However, to fulfil its potential and provide teachers with guidance and support in developing their pedagogical practice, the appraisal process needs to be more strongly embedded in a continuous improvement cycle.

Although the teacher appraisal process in Greece comprises several important elements (including classroom observation and feedback conversations), its links with professional improvement are weakly developed and largely confined to a small number of underperforming teachers. This problem is not unique to Greece. In fact, many OECD countries fail to effectively link the outcomes of teachers' appraisal to their continuing learning, either in the form of professional development opportunities or structured improvement plans (OECD, 2019, p. 310[1]). In addition, many countries struggle to resolve tensions that can arise between the growth-oriented and accountability-oriented objectives of teacher appraisals (Liebowitz, 2021[49]). Greece should address this challenge in line with evidence on effective growth-oriented appraisal models.

Given that Greece has decided to focus primarily on the formative functions of teacher appraisal, it should continue to clearly communicate this commitment in order to ensure that teachers engage in the appraisal process with a sense of psychological safety and focus on their internal motivation (Liebowitz, 2022[33]). The focus of the appraisal should be to provide teachers with constructive, narrative feedback on their practice and orient them towards further learning opportunities and a professional growth perspective regardless of their performance level. A distinction should be made between teachers performing near or below the accountability floor and the majority of teachers for whom no accountability pressure should be applied.

For teachers performing above the thresholds, the reliability and validity of appraisal ratings is less critical (Liebowitz, 2022[33]). What matters is that they are provided with detailed feedback on their practice and corresponding suggestions for voluntary professional learning opportunities, motivated by a perspective of professional growth. In the medium-term, the involvement of external evaluators should therefore be reserved for teachers at the bottom of the performance spectrum to target limited resources where they matter most. Likewise, while all teachers should walk away from their appraisals with a clear sense of areas in which they want to improve, mandatory development plans should remain limited to teachers at the lower end of the performance spectrum, who are likely to be more responsive to accountability pressure (Pope, 2019[50]).

Evidence also suggests that the most effective growth-oriented teacher appraisal systems involve a commitment to regularly observe teachers and dedicate resources to post-observation meetings, to share feedback and to identify specific areas for skill development (Liebowitz, 2022[33]; Taylor and Tyler, 2012[32]). The "High-Quality Professional Learning Cycle" articulated by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is a good example of this approach (see Box 3.2). To move towards adopting these best practices, Greece should ensure that all teachers benefit from regular informal check-ins and lesson observations carried out by the school principal or co-ordinators as an opportunity to take stock of their progress and receive further input during the four years between their regular formal appraisals (OECD, 2019[1]).

Box 3.2. Linking teacher appraisals and effective continuing professional learning in Australia

Australia seeks promotes a continuous improvement cycle for teachers, integrating their regular appraisal with continuing professional learning to improve students' learning outcomes. The system is built around the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). The Professional Standards articulate a vision for high-quality teaching and the things teachers are expected to know and be able to do at different stages of their careers. While not all federal states and territories use the Standards in the same way, they are linked to teachers' registration requirements across Australia and help them to engage in professional learning that is aligned with the quality criteria elaborated in the Standards (Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020[37]).

AITSL has developed the concept of a "High-Quality Professional Learning Cycle", which proposes that teachers engage in four stages as part of an integrated cycle in which teachers 1) identify their professional learning needs; 2) select and undertake professional learning; 3) apply it in the context of their schools and refine their professional learning; and 4) evaluate its impact. Through its website, AITSL has published a suite of resources including practical guides, video case studies and research reports to support teachers in implementing each of the cycle's stages (AITSL, 2019[51]). AITSL recommends that teachers identify their learning needs with references to the Professional Standards, their students' needs and their schools' strategic goals, informed by regular performance and development conversations.

To help teachers in identifying their learning needs and find matching professional learning opportunities, AITSL has launched an online Teacher Self Assessment Tool (AITSL, 2025[52]). The tool allows teachers to review their practice against the Professional Standards and receive personalised feedback using a 30-minute questionnaire. The tool may be used for informal purposes of self-reflection, identifying strengths and areas for further development, professional learning planning or to set career goals. The tool can also be used in more formal contexts, e.g. in teachers' performance appraisals, to set developmental goals or to formally certify that teachers have reached the "Highly Accomplished" or "Lead Teacher" levels of the Professional Standards.

To support teachers' engagement in effective forms of professional learning, AITSL also published the Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL, 2022[53]), which lays out characteristics of high-quality professional learning, and the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (AITSL, 2022[54]), which supports school leaders in developing a positive performance and development culture in their schools. Previous evaluations of the AITSL's Professional Standards in 2013 and 2015 found them to be widely used across Australia at the national, state and school levels. While they were most frequently used in mandatory registration and certification processes, the reports also highlighted examples of their use to guide professional development and teachers' self-reflection (AITSL, 2016[55]; Révai, 2018, p. 35[45]).

Sources: Boeskens, L., D. Nusche and M. Yurita (2020[37]), "Policies to support teachers' continuing professional learning: A conceptual framework and mapping of OECD data", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 235, https://doi.org/10.1787/247b7c4d-en, Box 3.2; AITSL (2016[55]), *Final Report - Evaluation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/finalreport-of-the-evaluation-of-the-apst.pdf?sfvrsn=428aec3c_0.

The IEP's Teacher Training Register, currently under development, could play an important role in linking teachers' appraisals with professional learning opportunities (Law 5128, 2024[27]). To live up to this potential, the Register should be aligned with the professional standards that teachers are evaluated against. This would enable principals and teachers to identify training opportunities that can help them to strengthen their skills in areas that have been identified as needing further improvement.

Policy recommendation 3: Working towards redesigning the teacher appraisal process to make it more sustainable and school-based

The new teacher appraisal process is unlikely to be sustainable in its current form once it will be extended beyond beginning teachers in the coming years. The Education Advisers play a central role in the time-intensive appraisal process, which will not be feasible to maintain once every teacher is on a 4-yearly appraisal cycle. The many competing responsibilities of Education Advisers and the fact that each of them is responsible for around 150-180 teachers will require adjustments to the way the process is designed.

Given that many Greek principals had not previously engaged in regular teacher observations, the involvement of experienced Education Advisers offers an important source of support and a way to build

school leaders' capacity. As school leaders become more experienced in appraising their teachers and strengthen their pedagogical leadership role, the ministry should gradually reduce the involvement of Education Advisers in the appraisal process. As discussed above, shifting responsibility for the appraisal of teachers to schools could involve limiting the Education Advisers' involvement to teachers at the lower end of the performance spectrum or to selected schools that have been identified as requiring additional attention and support.

Making teacher appraisals more school-based could also involve giving senior school staff besides the principal, such as mentors or co-ordinators, a greater role in the appraisal process. Although teachers' appraisal is usually led by principals, it is not uncommon for peers or other senior school staff to play a role in the appraisal of teachers. Across OECD countries in TALIS 2018, 51% teachers were in schools whose principals reported that other members of the school management team contributed to teachers' formal appraisal at least once a year. For 34% of teachers, their mentors contributed to the appraisal, for 31% of teachers, other teachers played a role. (Principals annually contributed to the appraisal of 63% of teachers) (OECD, 2020, pp. 237, Table II.3.30[56]).

Although the overall responsibility for appraisals tends to rest with principals or other senior school staff in most countries, some high-performing systems, such as Shanghai (China) and Korea, routinely involve teachers in the appraisal of their peers (OECD, 2020, pp. 237, Table II.3.30[56]). Formative peer appraisal can be a powerful instrument for professional growth since experienced teachers can draw on their teaching experience as well as their understanding of the school context to provide targeted advice to their colleagues (OECD, 2020, p. 124[56]). An evaluation of a formative peer evaluation scheme in England, for example, found that teachers who received feedback from their peers improved students' test-score gains (by 0.07-0.09 SD) (Burgess, Rawal and Taylor, 2021[57]). If Greece were to give a greater role in the appraisal process to mentors, co-ordinators (or experienced teachers from other schools), it will be critical that evaluators are adequately prepared for their role and supported with structures and guidance to provide effective feedback to their peers.

Policy recommendation 4: Continue strengthening school-based approaches to professional learning

Greece has made encouraging efforts to reorient teachers' professional learning from centrally provided top-down, mass training programmes towards more school-based and embedded forms of professional development. The new processes for school and teacher appraisals, the guidance offered by Education Advisers as well as the introduction of 15 annual hours of additional on-site training constitute important steps in this direction. Nevertheless, more efforts are needed to foster a culture of school-based professional learning and ensure that teachers are guided and supported in the process. This should involve further investments in the capacity of staff to lead this transformation at the school level as well as a strengthening of provisions at the central level to monitor teachers' training needs and the quality of professional development programmes.

Further build the capacity of co-ordinators and mentors to lead school-based professional learning

To fulfil its commitment to enhancing the role of school-based learning, Greece's Ministry of Education and ADIPPDE should further integrate collaborative practices into the teacher appraisal, school improvement and action planning processes. While the Education Advisers play a critical role in promoting school-based professional learning and helping teachers to work together on their school action plans, the Education Advisers' capacity is too limited to provide all teachers with in-depth guidance for their professional learning. In the longer term, the orientation of teachers towards appropriate learning opportunities should happen within schools – both through the teacher appraisal process and through teachers' collaborative work on school improvement plans. Greece will need to build capacity among school principals as well as other school staff to accomplish this transition to avoid that teachers feel left alone or seize to engage in

any professional learning beyond the legally required minimum as the ministry shifts away from the central provision of uniform training.

A handful of OECD countries have sought to systematically support job-embedded approaches to professional learning that create opportunities for teachers to observe each other's work, provide feedback on each other's pedagogical practices and work on shared challenges or projects (see Box 3.3 for examples). The experience of these countries demonstrates that meaningful collaboration and professional learning in schools requires not only dedicated and shared time in teachers' schedules, but also teacher leadership, dedicated resources, protocols and technical support (OECD, 2019, p. 302[1]; Kraft and Papay, 2014[58]). Developing a culture of professional collaboration and learning in Greek schools will not happen overnight and its impact may take time to manifest in measurable indicators. Yet, without dedicated resources, it is unlikely to succeed.

Box 3.3. Facilitating school-based learning and collaboration at scale

Teacher collaboration in Chile

The Chilean Ministry of Education is promoting several formats of teacher collaboration, including professional learning communities, lesson studies, video study clubs and action research (*investigación-acción*). Teams of teachers are encouraged to engage in these methods with the goal to better respond to students' learning needs and address challenges they face in their teaching practice. The important role of collaborative work in professional learning had been established through Law 20.903, which establishes that schools must develop Local Plans that encourage collaborative work and pedagogical feedback. Furthermore, it establishes that local training must include processes by which teachers prepare classroom work, systematically reflect on their own practice, and provide evaluation and feedback for continuous improvement. Collaborative work has also been incorporated into the teacher appraisal process, which requires teachers to describe a peer-to-peer work experience and reflect on it in their professional portfolio (MINEDUC, 2019[59]).

The Teacher-led Innovation Fund (TLIF) (2015-19) in New Zealand

The Teacher-led Innovation Fund (TLIF) in New Zealand (2015-19) was an initiative by the Ministry of Education that provided teachers with time in their schedules and expert support to examine and improve upon their teaching practices (Tātai Aho Rau, 2019[60]). Teachers applied for funds, formed collaborative inquiry groups, received internal and external expert support, adapted practices as appropriate and documented what they learned. A 2017 evaluation of the programme through survey and focus groups interviews found that, although the quality of the TLIP project was variable, participants strongly appreciated the opportunity to work in teams and reported more opportunities for pedagogical feedback among peers (Sinnema, Alansari and Turner, 2018[61]). The New Zealand Education Research Council still administers the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (with a more limited budget of NZD 1.5 million), which funds joint research of practitioners and researchers rather than spreading best practice more widely (Haugh, Purwin and Santiago, 2024[62]).

Learning and lesson studies in Sweden

In Sweden, the National Agency for Education (*Skoleverket*) encourages teachers to collaborate by solving problems and critically scrutinising teach others' work to create systematic approaches within schools to improving teaching methods, assessments and grading. This form of professional learning has its roots in learning studies and lesson studies (practices pioneered in Japan) in which teams of teachers work collaboratively to develop a lesson, teach it in turn and provide each other with feedback to continuously improve the lesson over time (Swedish Ministry of Education and Research, 2016[63]).

Source: OECD (2019[1]), *Working and Learning Together: Rethinking Human Resource Policies for Schools*, https://doi.org/10.1787/b7aaf050-en, p. 302.

The introduction of formal roles for co-ordinators and mentors provides a unique opportunity to build capacity for teacher-led professional learning within schools. They are in a good position to work with Education Advisers and gradually assume greater responsibilities in leading school-based professional development and peer learning. To do so, they need to be empowered and provided with sufficient resources. Currently, teachers receive very little preparation (mostly in writing) to assume these roles effectively and they are neither remunerated nor compensated with reduced teaching hours. Providing co-ordinators and mentors with dedicated time to plan school-based professional learning activities will be an important condition for their success and Greece should consider remunerating them for the additional responsibilities they assume to increase the attractiveness of their roles. Further efforts should also be undertaken to overcome the professional isolation of mentors and co-ordinators to foster their professional exchange and the dissemination of best practices. This could be accomplished by creating local networks and regular meetings for mentors and co-ordinators to share experiences of successful practices or address common challenges with their peers. They should also be provided with guidance and protocols for effective collaborative practices. Likewise, more attention needs to be placed on strengthening school leaders' competency to support collaboration in schools as part of their selection process, their initial preparation and their appraisal.

Strengthen the monitoring of teachers' training needs and the quality of professional development programmes

To strengthen the quality of professional development, Greece will need to improve its monitoring of teachers' professional learning and their training needs. Education Advisers work closely with schools and regularly collect valuable information on teachers' learning needs, which could inform IEP's development of corresponding training programmes. A systematic exchange between the Education Advisers and the experts at IEP should seek to identify gaps in the professional learning offer and to strengthen its alignment with the needs identified at the school level. Given the growing importance of school-based learning, it will also be important to collect data on the types of activities that principals and Education Advisers organise during the mandatory whole-school training days, to gage whether system-level needs (e.g. related to the curriculum reform) are being sufficiently addressed or require further targeted training efforts.

Although IEP training courses usually integrate satisfaction surveys, there is scope to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms around teachers' professional development, including their school-based professional learning. The IEP has announced that the development of its Teacher Training Register will be accompanied by a strengthening of its quality assurance mechanisms, including the regular evaluation of trainers by teachers and managers (Law 5128, 2024[27]). These plans are commendable and should be further pursued. Central professional learning services in other OECD countries, offer examples of promising strategies that could inform Greece's efforts to monitor the quality of its professional development offer more systematically, such as the use of course evaluations by Ireland's *Oide* (see Box 3.4).

Box 3.4. Monitoring the quality of teachers' professional learning activities in Ireland

Ireland's Department of Education (DoE) offers a range of free professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders through its central support service *Oide* and the local Education Support Centres. *Oide* was launched in September 2023, bringing together four previously separate professional learning services: the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

Oide has engaged in a number of efforts to monitor and raise the quality of its professional learning offer. All summer courses offered by *Oide* include a teacher evaluation at the end and *Oide* regularly

reviews the quality of in-person training courses at the primary and post-primary levels, as well as a sample of online courses. In addition, the DoE Inspectorate evaluates the design and facilitation of a sample of online and in-person professional learning courses each year. Support and development services for school staff offered by the DoE's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) are informed by evaluations with teachers and educational psychologists that are carried out upon completion of the learning events.

In parallel, the Educational Research Centre (ERC) has developed an "*Evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning in Ireland*" to support the evaluation of different forms of teachers' formal professional learning, either by providers or external evaluators in 2023. This complements an internal (unpublished) framework developed by the DoE in 2021 to inform the design and quality assurance process of learning opportunities provided by its support services (Gilleece, Surdey and Rawdon, 2023[64]).

The ERC evaluation framework is designed to assess four components of teachers' professional learning (TPL): 1) the context in which it takes place, 2) its key features, 3) teacher outcomes, and 4) student, school or system outcomes. The key features of TPL covered by the framework are "structural features" (active learning; duration; collective participation; and access, administration & data), "core features" (TPL focus, coherence and ownership), and "facilitator competencies". For each of these components, the framework proposes a range of indicators and instruments that can be used to assess them. In a detailed case study, for example, a training on "Restorative Practice" was evaluated using pre- and post-TPL questionnaires for both teachers and principals, reflective journal prompts and a questionnaire for the TPL facilitator (Gilleece, Surdey and Rawdon, 2023, p. 37[64]).

Sources: OECD (2024[65]), *OECD Review of Resourcing Schools to Address Educational Disadvantage in Ireland*, Reviews of National Policies for Education, https://doi.org/10.1787/3433784c-en, p. 168; Gilleece, Surdey and Rawdon (2023[64]), *An evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning in Ireland*, Educational Research Centre, Dublin, https://www.erc.ie/wpcontent/uploads/2023/05/TPL-Evaluation-Framework-Report-Online-2023.pdf.

There is also scope for strengthening schools' guidance on effective forms of professional development. ADIPPDE has developed a framework of quality criteria that schools can use to evaluate their teachers' professional development actions. In order to serve as an effective instrument to guide principals' and teachers' efforts to strengthen professional development, these criteria should be revised to cover not only the desired outcomes of professional learning activities, but also their structural features and specific examples of high-impact professional learning formats (ADIPPDE, 2023, p. 475[31]). The quality criteria would also need to be disseminated more effectively to ensure that school co-ordinators and principals are aware of them and draw on them when designing and evaluating their schools' professional learning. This should also involve a greater emphasis on evaluating the effects of both central and school-based forms of professional leaning on teaching practices.

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Notes

[1] Teachers' statutory retirement age in Greece is regulated by the Laws 4387(2016) and 4336(2015). Teachers can retire with a full pension at age 67 or at age 62, provided that they have served for at least 40 years. The statutory maximum age of service is 67 years. However, since the retirement system is currently going through a transition period, several factors affect the age of retirement, including teachers' years of service and the year in which they started working as civil servants. Moreover, there are specific provisions for female teachers with underaged children at a certain age.

[2] In primary schools with at least six and up to ten classes, principals appoint one class co-ordinator and one subject co-ordinator, provided that there are at least three teachers of the same specialty in the school. In primary schools with more than ten classes, principals appoint two class co-ordinators and one subject co-ordinator, provided there are at least three teachers of the same specialty. (The principal may assign the same teacher to serve both as class co-ordinator and subject co-ordinator). In secondary schools with up to ten classes, principals appoint one class co-ordinator. One subject co-ordinator per specialty is appointed if there are at least four teachers of the same specialty or, if this is not possible, at least four teachers in the same teaching field. In secondary schools with more than ten classes, principals appoint two class co-ordinators. (The same rules for subject co-ordinators apply). In both cases, principals may assign the same teacher to serve as both class co-ordinator and subject co-ordinator. (Ministerial Decision F12/102913/GD4/22, Government Gazette 4509 B/25-8-2022).

[3] Year of reference of the latest available data on earnings of tertiary-educated workers in Greece is 2018, which may affect the comparability. For detailed information on sources, methodologies and technical notes on the calculation of teachers' salaries in Greece, see OECD (2025, p. 234[66]).

[4] Authors' analysis based on OECD (2023[40]), *PISA 2022 Database*, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/pisa-2022-database.html.

4 Improving and expanding early childhood education and care

This chapter discusses the governance, quality, and accessibility of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Greece. It highlights recent reforms, including the extension of compulsory pre-primary education to age four and the introduction of a new national curriculum, while noting ongoing fragmentation between pre-primary education and services for children under age four, as well as disparities in provision across municipalities. Drawing on international evidence, the chapter recommends consolidating governance, developing a unified curriculum framework for children under four, and strengthening pedagogical quality. It also calls for improved structural conditions and targeted workforce support to ensure equitable access and high-quality learning environments for all young children.

Introduction: Context and rationale for investment in ECEC

Early childhood is a sensitive period for development and learning because early experiences can have a strong impact on various life outcomes (Bethlehem R.A.I., 2022[1]) (Shuey and Kankaraš, 2018[2]). Strong early learning positively predicts well-being across a range of indicators in adulthood, including general well-being, physical and mental health, educational attainment and employment. Areas of early learning that are of particular importance, and are all interrelated, include: language and literacy; numeracy and other non-verbal cognitive skills; self-regulation; emotional health, social well-being and social and emotional skills.

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) can give a strong start to all children by providing equitable opportunities and experiences that support development, promote well-being and connect families to one another and their community. Participation in ECEC is linked with both short- and long-term benefits that range across domains (Barry et al., 2024[3]) (Melhuish et al., 2015[4]). In the short term, these benefits include providing children with opportunities to enjoy exploring their own interests and growing capabilities while developing a sense of belonging. In addition, ECEC helps ensure children have the skills (cognitive, language and, and social and emotional) and confidence to transition smoothly into primary school. This early educational investment is followed by increased success in employment, social integration and sometimes reduced criminality. Families and society also benefit from ECEC in the short term, notably through stronger parental labour market participation.

Achieving these positive effects is strongly linked to the context and features of ECEC systems (Duncan et al., 2023[5]). Both the quantity of participation in ECEC and its quality matter for achieving short- and long-term effects (Dalli et al., 2011[6]). There are two main parameters for the quantity of ECEC: the starting age and the number of hours per week. The quality of ECEC is a broad concept that includes several dimensions (OECD, 2021[7]). Specifically, the quality of children's daily interactions through their ECEC settings with other children, staff and teachers, called process quality, is closely related to children's development and learning (Pianta, Downer and Hamre, 2016[8]). Structural features of ECEC provision (e.g. curriculum frameworks, staff training requirements, child-staff ratios) are instrumental by setting the conditions for high-quality interactions between children and staff in ECEC settings or process quality. Findings on the possible ideal quantity of participation in ECEC indicate that this is closely related to the quality of ECEC and thereby, the impact of early start in ECEC varies across countries (Melhuish et al., 2015[4]). According to the same source, overall, there is evidence that enrolment in ECEC at age 2 to 3 years is beneficial for children, while evidence is more mixed for younger children.

Policy makers increasingly recognise the importance of safeguarding children's access to equitable opportunities and experiences that favourably kick-start their educational careers. In this context, enrolment in ECEC is growing and is near-universal in several OECD countries including Greece for children aged 4 to 5. Many OECD countries have also reached large ECEC participation for children aged 3, which is not the case in Greece, although efforts to provide free ECEC for children below age 4 are ongoing. Yet, in most OECD countries, investments in the sector remain below public spending in comparison with the expenditure on later education levels, a critical factor that could hinder access and updated service quality. In addition, although enrolment of children under age 3 in ECEC is increasing, it is still more variable compared to the participation of older children. Finally, while children from low socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds and children in rural or remote areas are those who benefit the most from ECEC, in most OECD countries, they are less likely to be enrolled, particularly at younger age, and when they are, they tend to receive ECEC provision of lower quality (OECD, 2025[9]).

Over the recent years, Greece has invested in the early years, including by making pre-primary education for children aged 4 to 6 compulsory since 2020. This has been accompanied by introducing measures to strengthen the quality of pre-primary education, such as a new curriculum, and to make it inclusive for all children. PISA results discussed in Chapter 1 showing test scores for Greece being below the OECD

average concern students who attended ECEC 10 years ago and therefore do not capture the effect of these more recent reforms. However, with ECEC participation being low below age 4 and public spending also being below the OECD average as discussed in this chapter, investing more and better in the early years can be an important part of a strategy that aims to improve student outcomes. Furthermore, while the gap in test scores between socio-economically disadvantaged and advantaged students is not particularly large in Greece, the level of performance of socio-economically disadvantaged students in mathematics was among the lowest in OECD countries in 2022 (see Figure 3.5 in (OECD, 2025[9])). Therefore, effort needs to be placed on strengthening early learning experiences for vulnerable children, which involves a dual strategy that aims to remove barrier to participation in ECEC below age 4 and ensures these children benefit from high-quality ECEC.

Strengthening investment in ECEC, as discussed in this chapter, is part of a broad strategy to reduce inequalities from an early age and support economic growth. Despite progress in recent years, difficulties in access to ECEC for families with young children continue to hold back women in the labour market. Stepping up the provision of ECEC for children under age 4 would allow more women to join the labour market with positive effect on GDP growth by expanding the workforce and bringing a larger pool of talents, including in management positions, which has been shown to be associated with better firm performance (OECD, 2024[10]) (Criscuolo et al., 2021[11]).

Based on this context, this chapter examines policy directions to improve and expand ECEC in Greece. While the primary focus is on pre-primary education, in line with the scope of this review on compulsory education, the chapter also includes relevant information on ECEC provision for children under the age of 4, along with considerations for the future development of this segment.

Governance and organisation

The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system in Greece is fragmented in different parts (or "split"), with governance, responsibilities and type of provision divided by the age of the child. For children under the age of 4 (ISCED 01), public ECEC services-including municipal infant care, infant/childcare, and childcare centres are overseen by the Ministry of Interior and local municipalities. Private ECEC settings for this age group are licensed, operated, and supervised by the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs. For children aged 4 and 5 (ISCED 02), pre-primary education (*nipiagogeia*) is compulsory and provided under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, covering both public and private settings. Primary education (ISCED 1) begins at age 6.

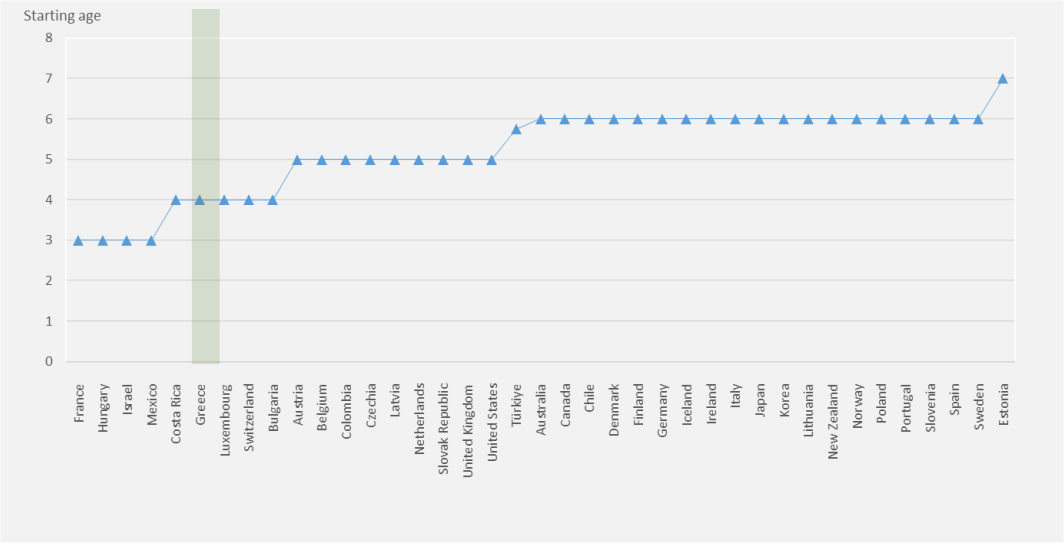
While Greek national legislation considers pre-primary education as part of "primary education", this chapter adopts the international classification: ECEC covers all education and care for children from birth until entry into primary education (ISCED 0). This includes:

- Pre-primary education (ISCED 02, ages 4 and 5), under the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports.
- Early childhood care and education for children under 4 (ISCED 01), provided by the Ministry of Interior and local municipalities (public) and the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs (private).

Pre-primary education is mainly public, centre-based and free for all children. In 2018, compulsory pre-primary education for children aged 4 to 6 was established by law and became effective at national level in the 2020-21 school year, placing Greece among the OECD countries with an early start of compulsory education (Figure 4.1). In 2023, 14% of children were enrolled in private pre-primary institutions, which was on the rise compared to 2013 (7%), but below the OECD average at 33% (OECD, 2025[12]). Children under age 4 can be enrolled in public municipal or private settings. For this age group, different types of settings exist depending on the children's age (infant care, infant/childcare and childcare centres).

Figure 4.1. Starting age of compulsory education

2023



Note: Countries are ranked in ascending order by the starting age of compulsory education.
Source: OECD (2025), Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en.

The ECEC system (covering children aged 0 to 6) is highly fragmented. All aspects of governance of pre-primary education (monitoring, curriculum design, ECEC workforce training and funding) are common to those for primary education while ECEC provision for children under age 4 follows different approaches, with limited co-operation between the Ministry of Education and the two Ministries in charge. While pre-primary education is mostly regulated and funded by the central government, public ECEC for children under the age of 4 is under the responsibility of municipalities although most of the funding comes from the central level (Ministry of Interior).

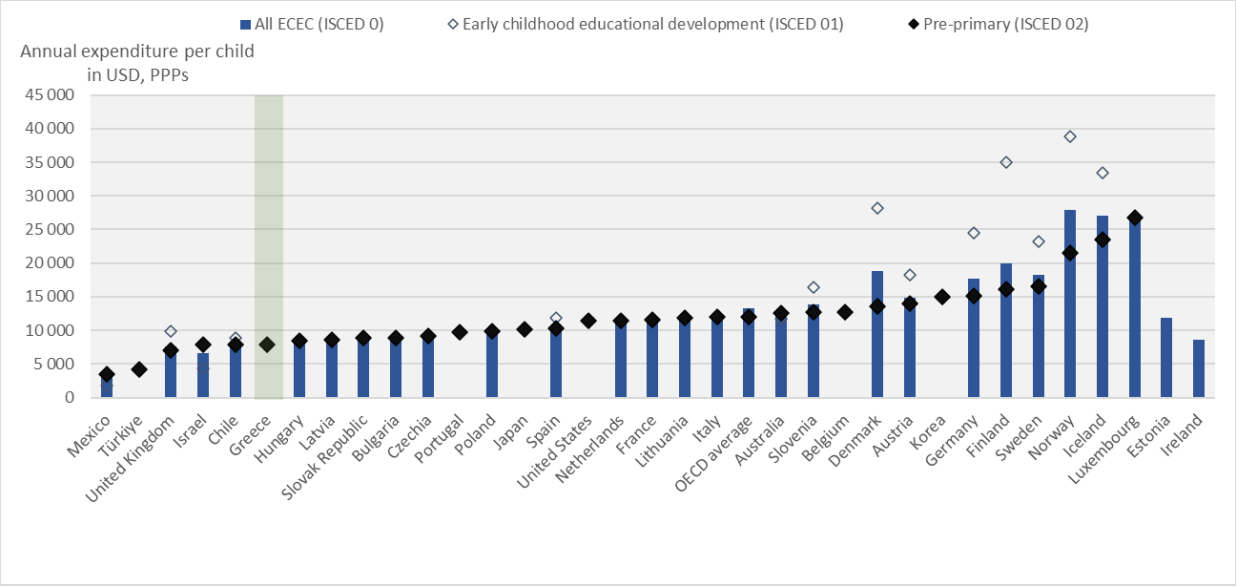
In pre-primary education, the number of children per class with one teacher should not exceed 25, which is among the highest number of children per teacher in European countries. However, due to the large share of very small schools according to OECD data, in 2023 there were on average 8 children per teacher in pre-primary education, which is well below the OECD average at 13 (OECD, 2025[12]). Compulsory preschool involves 25 teaching hours per week (from 8:30 am to 13:00 pm). In addition, children can attend a non-compulsory all-day programme that extends to 16:00 or 17:00 pm.

Expenditure and funding mechanisms

Greece's total spending on pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP was below the OECD average at 0.3% compared to 0.6% on average in the OECD in 2022 (OECD, 2025[12]). This, to some extent, reflects the fact that pre-primary education lasts two years in Greece compared to three years in many other countries. However, total spending per child were also well below the OECD average for pre-primary education (Figure 4.2). As pre-primary education is free to families in public institutions, most expenditure are public, with 11% of total expenditure on pre-primary education coming from private sources, close to the OECD average (14%). Private expenditure corresponds to the cost for children enrolled in private pre-primary institutions.

Figure 4.2. Total expenditure on early childhood education and care per child

Annual expenditure per child in USD, converted using PPPs (based on head counts), 2022



Note: Countries are ranked in ascending order of pre-primary annual expenditure per child,
Source: OECD (2025), Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en

OECD data on ECEC spending for Greece do not include ECEC provision for children under age 4. Public ECEC for this age group is funded through annual grants from the Ministry of Interior to municipalities, complemented by municipalities' own resources and parental fees for children who are not covered by a voucher. The annual grant is determined according to the minimum operating cost of the childcare setting and is further adjusted for demographic and geographic criteria. Salaries of staff are paid through this grant. Municipalities bear responsibility for funding physical infrastructure, while operating expenses (such as building maintenance and heating costs) are covered by the grant from the Ministry of Interior. In addition, the government has introduced a voucher system—co-funded by the European Social Fund—to support registration in both public ECEC settings and some private facilities participating in the voucher programme (MERAS, 2025[13]). Vouchers are allocated to employed or unemployed parents based on income, family characteristics, and employment status, making ECEC free of charge for children who receive a voucher. Furthermore, the government has introduced a specific voucher scheme for parents employing a home-based provider, under the "Neighbourhood Nannies" programme. In addition, it is important to note the following:

- According to the relevant legal framework (MD 41087/2017 and JMD 134947/2025), municipalities may set modest, income-based parental fees (*τροφεία*), but no additional fees can be imposed for core educational or care activities during official hours. Fees must be transparent and made known to parents prior to enrolment (MERAS, 2025[13]).
- Children in public childcare settings who attend with a voucher do so entirely free of charge; municipalities are reimbursed directly by the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (EETAA) on a per-child basis. No charges may be levied on parents with a valid voucher, and nurseries (municipal or private, if participating in the programme) contract with EETAA for reimbursement (MERAS, 2025[13]).
- In private ECEC settings, parents are generally responsible for all fees, except where vouchers are used and, in such cases, the voucher covers the full cost during its validity (MERAS, 2025[13]).

ECEC workforce qualifications, training and salaries

Workforce policies governing pre-primary education in Greece are broadly aligned with those for primary education, as detailed in the chapter on the teaching profession in this review. The staff composition consists primarily of leaders and teachers, with no assistant positions akin to those found in other OECD countries such as France, Germany or Norway, where staff may support teachers with the care and education of children. For compulsory pre-primary education (ages 4–6), teachers are required to hold a tertiary qualification at ISCED level 6 or above, obtained from a Department of Early Childhood Education at a Greek higher education institution or from an academically equivalent degree programme abroad. A bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement, and while a master's qualification is common among teachers, no data are available on the qualification levels of the pre-primary workforce. Bachelor's degrees typically include practical training, the duration and content of which vary across programmes (MERAS, 2025[13]).

Staff working in ECEC settings for children under age 4 are subject to different qualification standards. Lead educators must hold a vocationally-oriented short-cycle tertiary education degree (ISCED 5), as stipulated in Presidential Decree 85/2022, which details the required qualifications for each category of personnel. Assistants may possess a vocational high school diploma or a non-tertiary post-secondary qualification (e.g. SAEK diploma) with specialisation in early childhood education, applying equally to both public and private settings. These qualification requirements are meant to establish consistency across providers for children under age 4, distinct from those in place for pre-primary education (ages 4–6) (MERAS, 2025[13]).

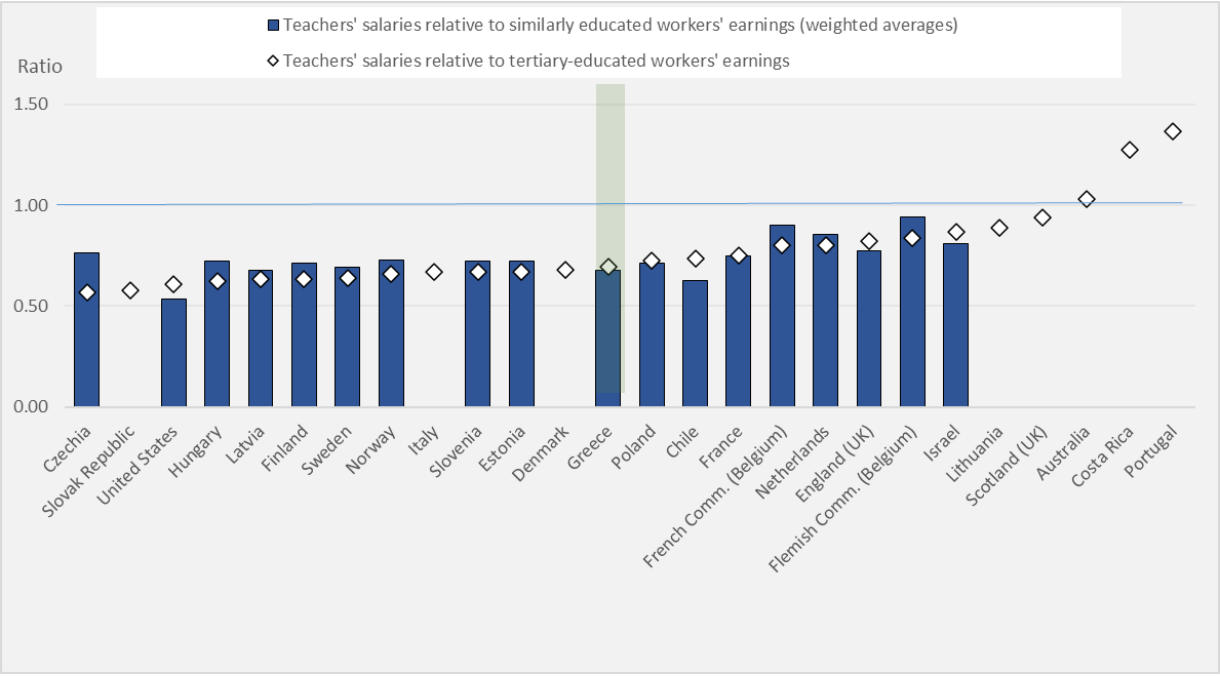
Recruitment procedures are defined by Law 4589/2019, which governs the permanent appointments and recruitment of temporary substitute teachers in primary and secondary education, including special education. The Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) prepares ranked lists of candidates based on sector and specialty, following predetermined merit criteria. In the Kindergarten Teacher sector, applicants must hold a degree from a Department of Early Childhood Education or an equivalent qualification from abroad. Additional qualifications and experience are required for special education and English language teacher posts. The appointment and recruitment process, based on academic and social criteria such as degree level, knowledge of foreign languages, teaching experience and family status, ensures that most teachers possess multiple formal qualifications (MERAS, 2025[13]).

Teachers are mandated to participate in compulsory professional development and can also engage in optional activities. Continuous professional development is organised in line with that for higher levels of education, with key institutions such as the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) responsible for designing and coordinating training programmes (see chapter on the teaching profession). Pedagogical and teaching competence is evaluated either before or after appointment and can be acquired through higher education studies or certified training programmes, as detailed by Law 4589/2019 (MERAS, 2025[13]).

Despite high qualification requirements, salary levels for pre-primary teachers remain low compared to other tertiary-educated workers in Greece as well as to teachers with similar attainment in other OECD countries. In addition, salary growth with experience is limited, which may affect the attractiveness of the profession (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. Actual salaries of pre-primary teachers relative to earnings of tertiary-educated workers

Ratio of teacher salaries relative to the earnings of full-time, full-year workers aged 25-64, 2024



Notes: Countries and jurisdictions are ranked in descending order of the ratio of teachers' salaries to earnings for tertiary-educated workers.
Source: OECD (2025), Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en.

Curriculum framework

The Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports introduced a new curriculum framework for pre-primary education for the school year 2023-24. This is part of a comprehensive reform of curricula for all levels of compulsory education, with the implementation for pre-primary education coming first. The curriculum has been developed by the IEP, the scientific and research body that supports the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, and aims to develop 21st century competences from an early age following the principles of children's holistic development and learning. The content of learning is organised around four main areas: 1) Child and Communication, including language Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); 2) Child, Self and Society; 3) Child and Science and 4) Child, Body, Creation and Expression. Multilingualism is also part of the curriculum: English classes for all children in pre-primary education have been introduced in 2021-22. The curriculum is organised around knowledge (what?), skills (how?) and attitudes (why?). It defines the role of teachers as "orchestrator" of children's learning experience, a social educator, but also a researcher, a critical friend, a mediator and a leader through participation in administrative tasks. Overall, the curriculum refers to several research-based concepts and principles that are recognised as central for child development.

The new curriculum framework was first piloted in 2021-2022 and then in 2022 to 2023 in experimental preschools. Experimental schools in Greece, known as "Peiramatika Scholeia," are public institutions established to promote educational research, teacher training, and the exchange of innovative practices. They operate at all levels of compulsory education and serve as testing grounds for new teaching methods and curricula, with the aim of improving the broader educational system. Admission is typically done through a lottery, ensuring equal access, and teachers are selected for their expertise in educational innovation. These schools are closely linked with universities and research institutes, fostering collaboration and continuous professional development (Eurydice, 2023[14]). Training to implement the new

curriculum framework has started with a third of teachers who have been trained by IEP and the remaining part who are trained by education advisors.

In contrast to pre-primary education, there is no curriculum framework for ECEC for children below age 4. Settings generally develop a pedagogical plan. An attempt to develop a common pedagogical programme in 2021 failed to be implemented. The lack of curriculum reflects the fact that this part of the sector in not under the Ministry of Education although the goals of ECEC for children under age 4 aims to offer comprehensive preschool care, following the most up-to-date scientific developments and support children's development in a holistic manner, physically, mentally, emotionally and socially (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2025[15]). Advances in neuroscience highlight the learning children are doing before age 3 and there is a growing recognition across OECD countries of the role curricula have to support the quality of ECEC that children experience (OECD, 2021[7]) (OECD, 2025[9]). Although the content may differ from curricula for pre-primary aged children, having a curriculum in place for ECEC settings that serve children under age 3 is common in OECD countries (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. The prevalence of curriculum frameworks in early childhood education and care

Curriculum frameworks' coverage across age groups and settings in some European countries, 2023/2024

Country	Ages covered by ECEC curriculum framework(s)	Common curriculum framework(s) across age groups and settings
Czech Republic	Only ages 3 to 5	No
Denmark	All ECEC ages	Yes
Estonia	All ECEC ages	Yes
Finland	All ECEC ages	Yes
Flemish community (Belgium)	All ECEC ages	No
France	All ECEC ages	No
Greece[1]	Only ages 4 to 6	No
Iceland	All ECEC ages	Yes
Ireland	All ECEC ages	Yes
Luxembourg	All ECEC ages	No
Norway	All ECEC ages	Yes
Portugal	All ECEC ages	No
Slovak Republic	Only ages 3 to 5	No
Slovenia	All ECEC ages	Yes
Switzerland	Only ages 3 to 5	No

Source: European Education and Culture Executive Agency (2025), *Eurydice, Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe 2025 – Eurydice report*, Publications Office of the European Union, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/66224.

Monitoring and quality assurance

For pre-primary education, monitoring and quality assurance systems are the same as for higher levels of education (see chapters on school autonomy and the teaching profession). Important changes have been introduced over the last five years with the development of frameworks, institutions and processes for monitoring at both the teacher and pre-school levels. In 2021, Greece introduced a new teacher appraisal process. The appraisal of teachers has followed the evaluation of school units carried out as a first step during the 2021/2022 school year, aiming to improve the efficiency of the education system, increase teachers' job satisfaction, enhance their professional development and better link assessment results with educational outcomes. The appraisal focusses on the pedagogical work of the teachers, as well as on the consistency and adequacy of their performance. To support this process, an electronic platform has been developed.

Reflecting the split governance of the ECEC sector, public ECEC settings for children under age 4 are supervised by municipal authorities, and monitoring practices accordingly show significant variation. Social

counsellors from the regional authority of the Ministry of Interior are currently responsible for inspecting the operation of these facilities to ensure compliance with applicable legal and quality standards. Monitoring in this sector mainly addresses health, safety and child protection aspects of quality, with limited focus on education purposes, due to the absence of a national pedagogical framework. The licensing of private ECEC settings is overseen by the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, which is responsible for the regulatory framework and terms of operation. However, establishment and operational licences for private centres are issued by municipal authorities, following the harmonised requirements set out in Law 3852/2010 (Government Gazette A' 87). Both public and private ECEC centres now operate under a unified regulatory framework with harmonised operational rules, and monitoring by Regional Social Advisors relies on this framework. Notably, a single pedagogical quality framework for ECEC settings is currently under development (MERAS, 2025[13]).

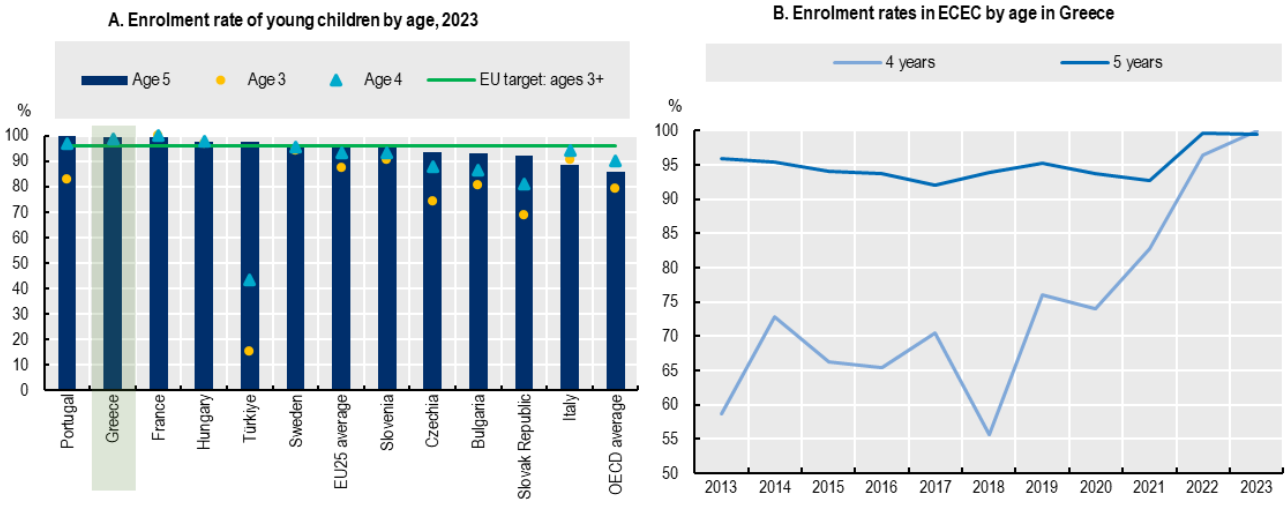
Strengths

Pre-primary education is universal and free starting from the age of 4

Enrolment rates of children aged 4 and 5 in ECEC are above the OECD average and the EU targets (Figure 4.4). These rates have increased markedly for children aged 4 from 2018 with the beginning of the introduction of compulsory education at age 4 to reach almost full enrolment at age 4 and universal enrolment at age 5 in 2022.

Free pre-primary education and easy access to all children are key achievements. Children from vulnerable social groups are accepted regardless of whether they are registered in government records and school leaders should not hinder the registration of children from vulnerable social groups due to the lack of a certificate of permanent residence. Any types of documents proving that the child lives in Greece should be accepted. In case of inability to register the child due to non-vaccination, cooperation with local, health and social agencies is required. In addition, children from vulnerable social groups can register in the optional full-day programme without any condition.

Figure 4.4. Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care for children aged 3, 4 and 5



Note: In Panel A, countries are ranked by the enrolment rate at 5-year-olds.
Source: OECD (2025), Education at a Glance 2025: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c0d9c79-en.

A broad enrolment in high quality ECEC can have multiple benefits on children, families, societies and economies. Participation in high quality ECEC has been shown to improve children's cognitive and socio-emotional skills in the short- to long-term, leading to a range of positive education outcomes, labour market

and social outcomes later in life (OECD, 2025[9]). With these effects being stronger for more vulnerable children. By supporting the development of foundational skills that children need to succeed in subsequent levels of education, ECEC policies set the groundwork for more efficient public investment in education later as this benefits to a full cohort of children thereby improving class climate in later years of education (Heckman, 2006[16]).

Pre-primary education is well connected to primary education

On many aspects, pre-primary education is integrated with primary education and in fact known and called "primary education" in Greece, which leads to important benefits. For example, governance and funding, workforce policies, and curriculum framework development are common or well-aligned between pre-primary and primary education, with almost no distinction between these two levels of education. This type of arrangement is similar to the one in some other countries that have historically placed pre-primary education under the Ministry of Education such as Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, France, Luxembourg and Scotland, but is different from other systems that are divided between pre-primary and primary education such as Germany for instance, although strong co-ordination can be achieved in systems with divided governance (e.g. Ireland).

Continuity in curricula and close collaboration between pre-primary and primary teachers and school principals, along with transition practices such as school visits, can offer multiple benefits for children, including smoother transitions and more consistent skill development. From the perspective of the ECEC workforce, having similar approaches to training, initial education requirements, quality monitoring, and equal pay in both pre-primary and primary education—as done in Greece—helps reduce the risk of the ECEC profession being perceived as lower in status compared to other levels of education. Furthermore, it should be noted that according to EURYDICE data, Greece is the only European country with an oversupply of teachers in pre-primary education (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2025[15]). This situation contrasts with most other OECD countries in which shortages of staff is a common challenge. In Greece, shortages of staff seem to mainly relate to lengthy and complicated process of teacher's allocation rather than to fundamental difficulties for the sector to attract candidates.

Candidates need to be well trained to enter the ECEC profession

Teachers in pre-primary education need to have a bachelor's degree (ISCED 6), which is similar to requirements to most European OECD countries. Programmes to become a teacher include a practical component and classes on child development and pedagogies to work with young children. Close connection with professors in initial education programmes and IEP that develops curricula is also a strength and ensures that new policy development on the curriculum is reflected in initial teacher training. Analysis across several countries (though not including Greece) shows that staff with higher levels of education—especially those trained specifically to work with children—are more likely to adapt their classroom practices to each child's developmental needs and interests (OECD, 2019[17]).

Several innovative approaches to pre-primary education have been launched

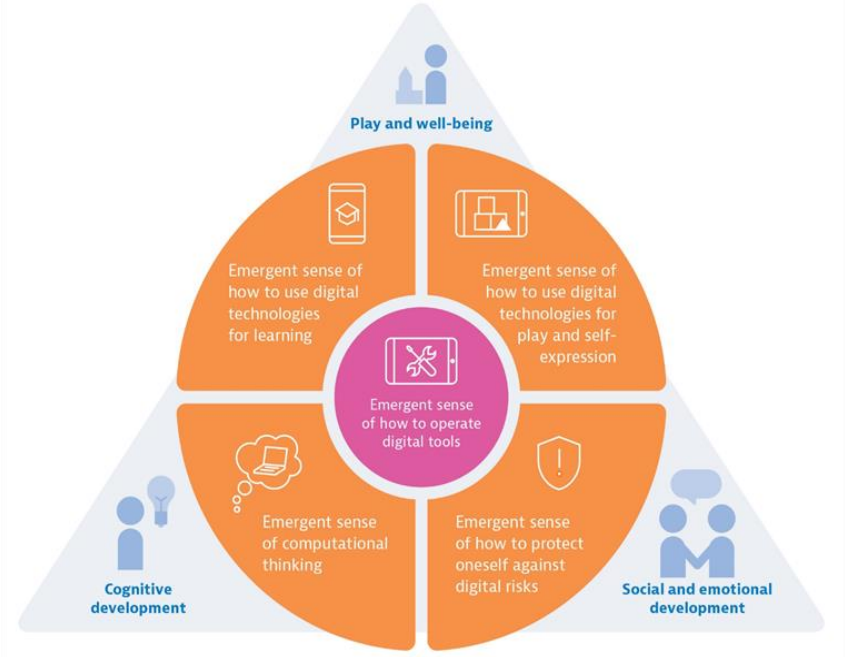
Over the last years, the government has followed an innovative approach to pre-primary education. The new pre-primary education curriculum is research-based and aims to develop 21st century skills in children.

The introduction of English learning also follows an innovative and play-based approach with the English teacher and the main teacher working together with children. English teachers need to have a degree in English Language and Literature from a Greek university or an equivalent academic qualification from a foreign university. In addition, they have received a training by IEP. Related educational material was developed by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The English teacher and the regular teacher have to be present during the two hours per week activities in English. This requirement aims to ensure that both teachers co-operate on the planning, implementation, and assessment of the implementation of activities in English.

The “Skills Labs” were piloted in 2020-21, introduced in September 2021, and now part of the curriculum. They consist in a set of activities aiming to develop transversal (e.g. communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity) and digital skills. Pre-primary and primary schools have to allocate some hours per week (three in pre-primary schools) to activities designed around a major contemporary issue (e.g. mental health, climate change, diversity, robotics) to foster these sets of skills. Education materials are developed by civil society (universities, non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations, citizens’ groups, local government, private research centres as well as teachers) and are evaluated, selected and monitored by the IEP. All educational materials are uploaded on an online platform which allows teachers to access material. The Ministry of Education plans to make the platform interactive to enable collaboration and exchange of good practices. In addition, robotics kits were distributed to some schools for children to develop early digital skills with this material. Most teachers have been trained on “Skills Labs” with a 32-hours online workshop (European Commission, 2022[18]).

Overall, the focus on the development of early digital skills in Greece is ambitious. The new curriculum includes all areas of early digital literacy that are generally considered for this age, but rarely all included in other OECD curriculum framework (Figure 4.5) (OECD, 2023[19]). In particular, an emergent sense of computational thinking is included in the Greek curriculum, which is still rarely the case in other OECD countries for this age group.

Figure 4.5. Key dimensions of early digital literacy



Source: (OECD, 2023[19])

Challenges

Ensuring high-quality ECEC is central for childhood and adult outcomes, but this has not been comprehensively and systematically monitored over the past years

In addition to large enrolment rates, ensuring strong quality ECEC (for both pre-primary education and ECEC under age 4) is key to lead to strong students and adulthood outcomes. The quality of ECEC is a complex and multi-dimensional concept that is difficult to assess (OECD, 2015[20]). Areas to monitor include

the quality of teachers practices with children, which is at the centre of their learning, the implementation of the curriculum framework, compliance with regulations, profiles of staff and their work practices, working conditions, leadership and management. Methods for monitoring are either external or internal. External monitoring generally involves inspections to observe and evaluate ECEC performance at the setting level. Other options could include parent surveys. Internal evaluation often relies on self-assessment tools employed by ECEC leaders and/or teachers to assess the level of quality in the setting they are working in. Self-evaluation can be combined with external monitoring. Appraisals of teachers by leaders or by peers is another option.

Recent development of monitoring in Greece includes both external and internal evaluation for preschools and external appraisal of teachers. For preschools, the school action plan, a self-assessment tool, can be a starting point for reflections on the pedagogical project of the school and exchanges on activities with children (see chapters on school autonomy and on the teaching profession for more information about these practices in Greece). However, it can also be a document with no concrete implications. The risk is that good pre-schools would in any case have worked in this way while more problematic schools develop a plan with no concrete actions in practices. Countries that have followed a similar approach (Luxembourg) identify schools that are more problematic and have regional officers who closely follow the preparation and implementation of the plan as discussed later in this chapter (OECD, 2022[21]).

Greece's internal evaluation framework is structured around nine axes, each accompanied by a set of analytic indicators that aim to improve educational work across three main domains: pedagogy and teaching; school management and administration; and teachers' professional development (see chapter on school autonomy). Since the evaluation system is relatively new, depth or quality of implementation of the evaluation framework may still vary across schools. Information on the quality of pre-primary education therefore remains limited. Research indicates that what matters the most for children learning and development is the quality of the interactions between teachers and children (process quality) (Pianta et al., 2005[22]). Some countries for instance use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to assess the quality of adults-child interactions in schools such as teachers' capacity to develop a positive climate, provide emotional support and support concept development in children.

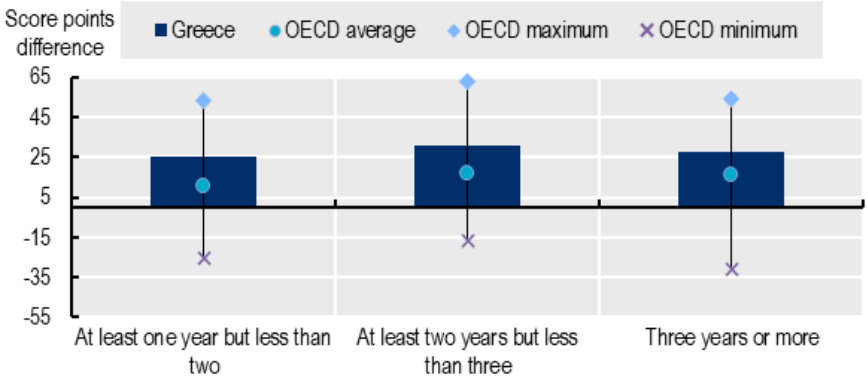
At the system level, despite its limitations, the association between participation in ECEC and children's outcomes in the early years of primary education—or later in their educational trajectories—can serve as an approximate indicator of certain aspects of ECEC quality. This can be done when the country has for instance national children's assessment in the beginning of primary combined with information on children participation in ECEC. In Greece, there was no national student assessment before Panhellenic exams until 2022. Since then, the National Diagnostic exams are carried out once a year in a sample of schools to test students' performance in language and mathematics at the end of sixth grade of primary school and at the end of the third year of lower secondary education (Gymnasium). At international level, association between participation in ECEC and children's outcomes can be estimated by using the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) surveys, or Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). However, Greece only participates in PISA, which concerns students at age 15 and therefore can only approximate the quality of ECEC ten years before the student assessment took place. Differences in the association between PISA scores and ECEC participation can be considered to signal differences in the system-level quality of ECEC between countries, but might also reflect different political goals for ECEC, including the weight put on school preparedness. Moreover, this particular measure concentrates on only some learning areas of the potential short-term effects of ECEC, neglecting other areas such as socio-emotional development (OECD, 2025[9]).

As displayed in Figure 4.6, the gap in PISA scores between children who have attended more than one year of ECEC but less than two or two but less than three and children who have attended for less than a year (first two bars) provide an approximation of the quality of *pre-primary education* ten years ago. The gap in PISA scores between children who have attended more than three years of ECEC and children who

have attended for less than a year (third bar) provide an approximation of the quality of *ECEC for children aged 4*. These comparisons suggest that, ten years ago, the quality of ECEC in this context was above the OECD average—and that pre-primary education was of higher quality than ECEC for younger children.

Figure 4.6. Association between attendance of early childhood education and care and mathematics scores at age 15

Score-point differences in mathematics at age 15 between students who had attended ECEC for different durations and students who attended ECEC for less than a year or did not attend ECEC, after controlling for students' socio-economic status, 2022



Source: OECD (n.d.), PISA 2015 and 2022 databases, https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/pisa/pisa-data.html [Table II.B1.4.5].

A key question for Greece is to ensure that pre-primary teachers implement the new curriculum and adopt practices that align with it. Experiences from other countries that have introduced ambitious/research based curricula, such as Ireland and New Zealand, indicate gaps between the ideal, intended curriculum and pedagogy, and how guidelines are interpreted and implemented in practice (Leseman and Slot, 2025[23]). One of the reasons is that early childhood teachers do not sufficiently understand the official curriculum or do not know how to translate guidelines into practice, as was noted in Sweden (Björklund and Barendregt, 2016[24]). This might be particularly the case when the official curriculum is global and open-ended (McLachlan, 2018[25]; Rege et al., 2018[26]; Yang and Li, 2018[27]). During schools' visits, interviewed teachers and leaders indicated that there was a feeling that the curriculum framework and Skills Labs are just formalising practices that teachers already use. Furthermore, teachers and leaders who are not concerned by teaching appraisal (for instance because they are not new) have no incentives to try to implement the curriculum framework. Overall, without further mechanisms to support the implementation of the innovations introduced for pre-primary education, these efforts might not fully lead to quality improvement.

Structural features of ECEC provision are likely to lead to varying or low quality

Structural features of ECEC provision, including class size, children-to-teacher ratios and the number of teaching hours, create the foundational conditions for teachers to build relationships with children and support their holistic development. In Greece, the maximum group size is 25 children per teacher, a figure that is comparatively high among OECD countries. This can pose specific challenges for teachers in adapting to individual learning and developmental needs, especially where children come from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, a situation often found in disadvantaged areas with high population density. In contrast, in remote areas with low population density, children-to-teacher ratios tend to be lower due to very small school sizes. However, this arrangement may result in the teacher being the only adult present in the school, a scenario that was discussed during school visits and meetings of the

OECD Review Team, which brings additional challenges such as being solely responsible for administrative duties or for preparing lunches while remaining in contact with the children.

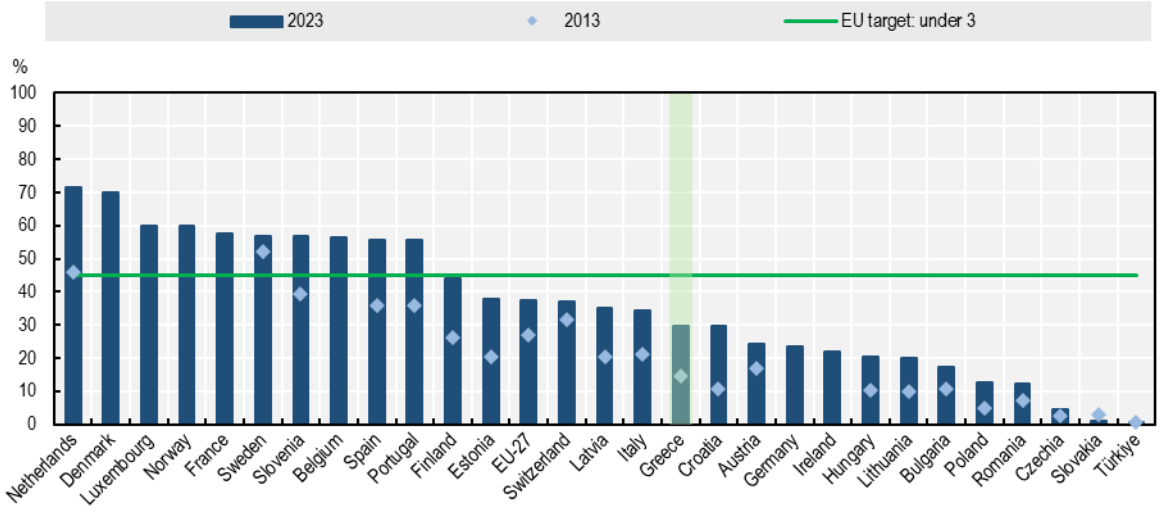
Paid hours for work without contact with children in Greece amount to one hour per day. This means that teachers have little time to prepare activities or train themselves. While there is no internationally comparable data on paid hours without contact with children, it seems that there are large variations across countries (OECD, 2021[7]). In Greece, leaders also have a high number of teaching hours. With high administrative burden, this leaves them with little time for informal learning and exchanges in teams (leaders and teachers) during paid hours.

These structural aspects of ECEC provision can hinder the quality of teachers' and leaders' interactions with children. The challenges are likely to be greater in schools with maximum class sizes or in very small schools. As far as these schools are in areas with more vulnerable children, it is likely that more vulnerable children tend to receive ECEC of lower quality, while they should in fact receive ECEC of higher quality for ECEC to close the achievement gap before it widens.

Enrolment of children under age 4 is low

While enrolments rates in ECEC are high for children aged 4 and 5, they are much more limited for children under age 3 (Figure 4.7). They have increased between 2013 and 2023 but remain below the EU target. Furthermore, with pre-primary education starting only at age 4 and not at age 3 like in many other OECD countries (e.g. Bulgaria, France, Italy), enrolment rate at age 3 in Greece is below the OECD average of 75% in 2022, although no recent international data exist for Greece for this specific age.

Figure 4.7. Enrolment rates in early childhood education and care of children under age 3



Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC (tepsr_sp210) (last updated 4 October 2024) in European Education and Culture Executive Agency: Eurydice, Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe 2025 – Eurydice report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/66224.

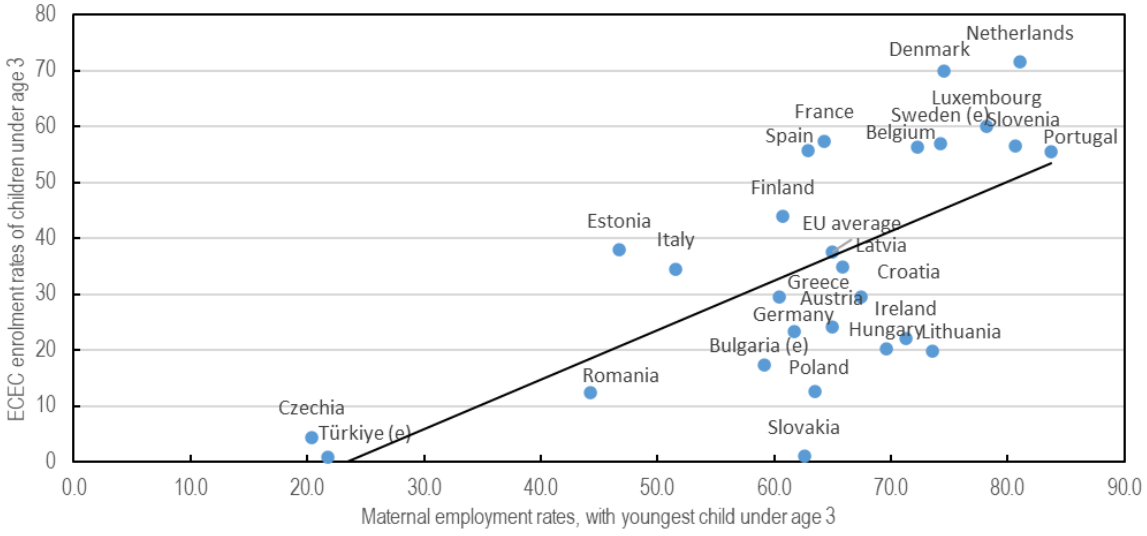
The provision of ECEC for children below age 4 can lead to multiple benefits (OECD, 2023[19]). The first years of life are a highly sensitive period for children's development and learning. Interventions during the first years of life can offset the effects of trauma and deprivation on children's brain development while interventions later in life tend to have a more limited effectiveness (Vanderwert et al., 2010[28]). This means that the opportunity cost of not investing enough in ECEC for the youngest children can be large. By supporting the development of foundational skills (a combination of cognitive and social-emotional skills, as well as executive function, which support learning across domains) that children need to succeed in subsequent levels of education, ECEC policies set the groundwork for more efficient public investment in education later on and limit the risks for vulnerable children to fall behind in their education pathways (Heckman, 2006[16]). ECEC policies can support parents' labour market participation and income, and

thereby mitigate the risks of poverty, with benefits for children through higher quality of home environments in addition to the economic gains of stronger parents' labour market participation (Humphries et al., 2024[29]). Mothers' labour market participation and enrolment rates in ECEC are closely linked (Figure 4.8). Both of them for Greece are below the EU average and well below the group of countries with high maternal employment (Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia).

Low ECEC enrolment of children under age 4 comes from multiple barriers to ECEC participation, ranging from immediate and tangible challenges such as cost and location to more subtle factors including social norms, parental perceptions or institutional biases. In Greece, the development of vouchers to cover the cost of ECEC should help to overcome some of these barriers and support maternal employment while bringing benefits to children enrolled in ECEC settings, particularly those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. However, direct barriers relating to the limited affordability of ECEC for children under age 4, particularly for parents not receiving the voucher, and to the insufficient supply of ECEC places together with the underdevelopment of the network of ECEC centres remain. Creating new ECEC infrastructures involves efforts from Municipalities to apply for funding and needs to co-fund new projects as well as complexities relating to the hiring of staff and other aspects of ECEC provision.

Figure 4.8. Association between mothers' labour market participation and early childhood education and care enrolment rates

Labour market participation of women whose youngest children are under age 3 years (2021) and enrolment rates in formal childcare of children under age 3 years (2022)



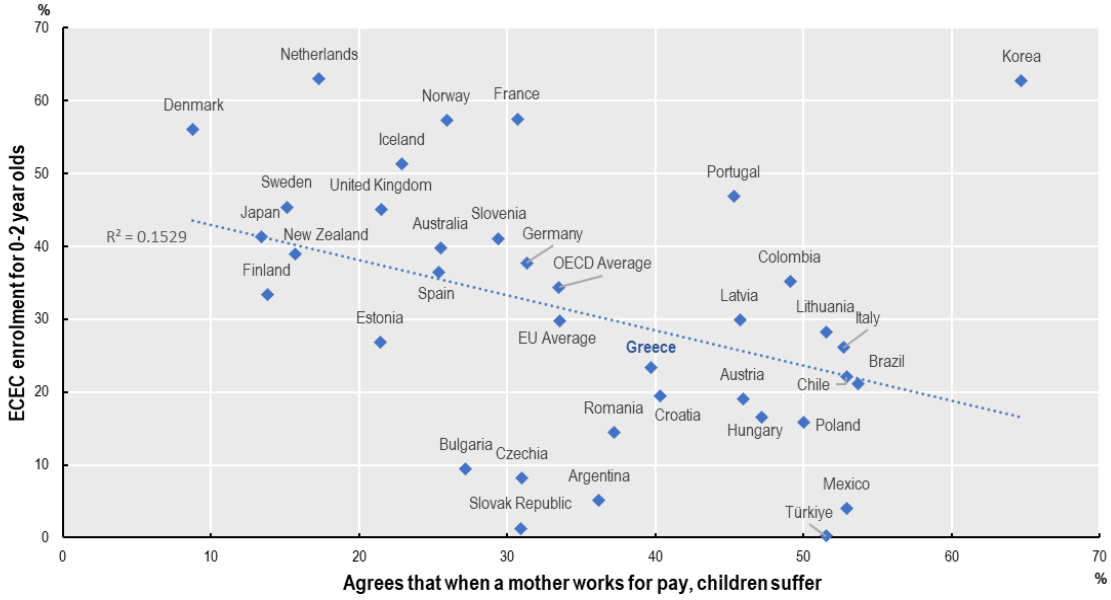
Note: Data generally include children enrolled in ECEC (ISCED 2011 Level 0) and other registered ECEC services (ECEC services outside the scope of ISCED 0 because they are not in adherence with all ISCED 2011 criteria. Employment rates refer to women aged 25-64 years whose youngest children are aged 0-2 years.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC (tepsr_sp210) (last updated 4 October 2024) in European Education and Culture Executive Agency: Eurydice, Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe 2025 – Eurydice report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/66224 and OECD Family Database, OECD, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

Social norms that emphasise the importance of parental childcare, particularly provided by mothers, act against children's enrolment in ECEC at a young age in Greece and tend to lower the demand for places. On average across OECD countries, around 34% of individuals think that children suffer when their mothers work, but this percentage reaches almost 40% in Greece (Figure 4.9). These social attitudes create what is called indirect barriers to ECEC participation (OECD, 2025[9]).

Figure 4.9. Social attitudes related to working mothers and enrolment rates among 0-2-year-olds

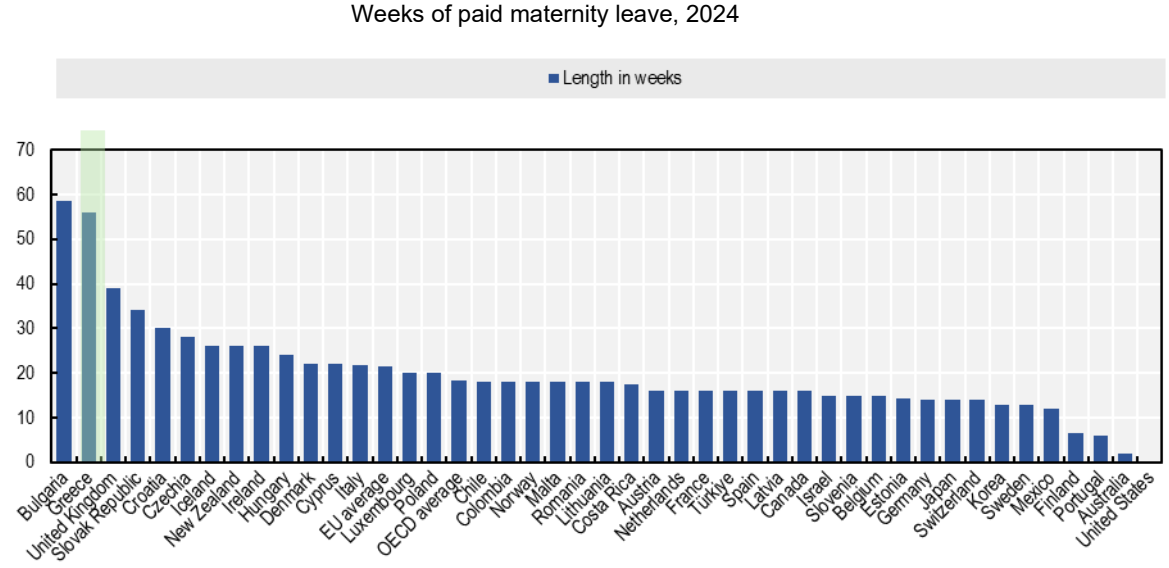
Association between the national population who agrees that "when a mother works for pay, the children suffer" and ECEC enrolment for 0-2-year-olds



Note: Data for 0-2-year-olds generally include children enrolled in early childhood education services (ISCED 2011 Level 01) and other registered ECEC services (outside the scope of ISCED Level 01, because they are not in adherence with all ISCED-2011 criteria) (see Annex B). Percentages for the response options "agree" and "strongly agree" from the World Values Survey (WVS) were combined. The WVS data was matched to the closest, most recent year of ECEC enrolment data available for each country.
Source: OECD (2025), Reducing Inequalities by Investing in Early Childhood Education and Care, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/b78f8b25-en.

Social norms partly relate to paid maternity leave, which are among the longest in Greece among OECD countries (Figure 4.10). While extended parental leave delivers multiple benefits to families and broader society, including supporting fertility rates in ageing populations, these advantages involve trade-offs that require thoughtful policy design (Adema, Clarke and Frey, 2015[30]; Thomas et al., 2022[31]). One notable trade-off is the potential impact on maternal employment. Although paid leave supports women's re-entry into the labour market, evidence shows that extending leave beyond six months may adversely affect wages and long-term employment prospects (Canaan et al., 2022[32]). Recent reviews of causal studies find that maternal work after childbirth yields either positive or neutral effects on children's outcomes, indicating that maternal employment does not necessarily compromise child development (Lo Bue, Perova and Reynolds, 2023[33]). In response to ongoing demographic challenges, the government has introduced a National Demographic Action Plan in recent years to devise strategies addressing the implications of adverse demographic developments on fiscal sustainability, long-term competitiveness, prosperity and social cohesion (MERAS, 2025[13]).

Figure 4.10. Paid maternity leave



Source: Source: OECD Family Database, PF2.1.A, Summary of paid leave entitlements available to mothers, https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

Furthermore, despite long maternity leaves, as in many OECD countries, there is a discrepancy between the duration of paid leave and access to free ECEC that starts at age 4 (Eurydice, 2023[34]; OECD, 2024[35]). Women in low-income families have higher incentives than those with high income to leave the labour market and take care of the child as the loss in wages can be smaller than the costs associated with private ECEC. This explain why, in Greece as in many other OECD countries, children from socio-economically disadvantaged are less likely to be enrolled in ECEC in the first years while they would benefit the most from it [see Figure 5.1 in (OECD, 2025[9])].

Finally, there are signals of variation in the scope and quality of ECEC for children under age 4 across municipalities. Municipalities have large degree of freedom to allocate public ECEC places. Although the government has developed vouchers to cover fees for disadvantaged children, there seems to be limited funding to expand ECEC provision for this age group. In the absence of curriculum framework and national quality framework, some features of the quality of these programmes are not monitored. Overall, low enrolment rates of children aged 3 and below and risks of low quality of these programmes mean that there is a missed opportunity to give a strong start to all children at an age that is particularly important for child development.

Policy recommendations: Improving and expanding early childhood education and care

Over the past decades, Greece has introduced substantial reforms aiming to expand access to ECEC and improve its quality, with a particular focus on pre-primary education. However, there are still gaps that can be progressively addressed. This section presents three main recommendations to improve and expand ECEC in Greece:

- **Recommendation 1: Strengthen pedagogical (or process) quality in pre-primary education**. With large efforts recently made to modernise pre-primary education such as the introduction of a new ambitious curriculum framework, the development of training for teachers as well as changes

made to school evaluation and teacher assessment for compulsory education, conditions are there to strengthen the quality of teachers' practices with children, which is a key driver of children's learning outcomes. However, additional efforts are needed to ensure that these changes deliver their outcomes.

- **Recommendation 2: Support quality pre-primary education through improved structural conditions.** Structural factors such as the number of children per teacher and workforce's workload relative to administrative tasks set the conditions for the quality of teachers' interactions with children in the class. Addressing gaps in these structural conditions between urban and rural areas as well as between advantaged and disadvantaged ones will ensure more equity in the provision of quality pre-primary education.
- **Recommendation 3: Advance quality, equity and integration across the whole ECEC sector.** Improving access to ECEC for children under age 4 and raising its quality will support all children's development and learning before learning gaps widen while also supporting female labour market participation. This can be done by progressively integrating ECEC for children under age 4 and pre-primary education. This could also help improve structural conditions for pre-primary education as discussed in the following sections.

In the following sections each one of these recommendations are further developed. In addition to these three main recommendations, two additional transversal recommendations are proposed:

- As Greece has already advanced the ECEC policy agenda and is planning to do more, it is recommended to **explicitly articulate the various policy measures around a strategy** to improve visibility on the reform agenda, help following progress made, and ensure the consistency of the various reforms. For instance, the method followed by **Ireland** to put in place, adapt and review its strategy for early years policies can inform the approach followed by Greece (Box 4.1). A particular strength of Ireland's "First 5" strategy is its built-in process for review and updates every three years. Another strength of Ireland's strategy is to include a national "Workforce Development Plan", recognising that the ECEC workforce is at the core of policies to strengthen ECEC quality. Furthermore, to develop and advance the strategy, the government has adopted a participatory approach aimed to consolidate a national vision for the ECEC sector, which can also be beneficial to Greece.
- As data on the ECEC sector are scarce for Greece, it is also recommended to **develop data covering the whole ECEC sector that enable to monitor the performance at the system level**. Data on the expenditure (public and private) in the sector and workforce are important. In addition, as the government has set ambitious goals for pre-primary education, children's assessment at the beginning of pre-primary education would help understand the extent to which innovations in the sector are implemented as well as their effect on children's outcomes. This would need to start as soon as possible and before all schools implement the new curriculum in practice. In particular, the introduction of National Diagnostic exams provide data on children outcomes and can help assess quality and equity in ECEC at a system level, particularly as data on children's participation in ECEC are collected.

Box 4.1. Adopting a national strategy to support the reform of the ECEC sector: the case of Ireland

Ireland's "First 5" is a 10-year strategy (2019-2028) that focusses on improving systems and supports in the first five years of a child's life, recognising that no single measure can address the full range of child and family needs in this period of the life course (Government of Ireland, 2019[36]). The strategy includes multiple elements. It has committed to increase public funding, with the objective of improving quality, affordability and accessibility. The Government has revised the monitoring and inspection

system with the aim of strengthening quality assurance. Ensuring that all ECEC settings implement the curriculum framework is also a priority for the Government. To build a high-quality workforce, a national Workforce Development Plan covering both initial and continuing professional development has been developed. Finally, a National Action Plan for Childminding has also been published, as part of a strategy to extend regulation and support for childminders.

A particular strength of the First 5 strategy is its built-in process for review and updates every three years through "Implementation Plans", as it is intended to be a living strategy that develops and adapts to the context. Another relevant feature is its governance structure, with oversight and accountability in the hands of the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Services, which is comprised of ministers from numerous departments, and national leadership for implementation lying with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, which is the agency responsible for ECEC in Ireland. Furthermore, to develop and advance the strategy, the government has brought together different stakeholders in the sector through a participatory approach (e.g. the Early Learning and Childcare Stakeholder Forum). In the context of a complex governance system, these consultations aimed to consolidate a national vision for the ECEC sector.

Source: (Government of Ireland, 2019[36]), (OECD, 2021[37])

Policy recommendation 1: Strengthening pedagogical (process) quality in pre-primary education

Significant efforts have been made to modernise pre-primary education and align it with research-informed practices, including the introduction of an ambitious new curriculum framework grounded in the science of child development. This includes the incorporation of English language learning and "Skills Labs". Going forward, sustained support will be needed to ensure the effective implementation of these innovations and to translate them into tangible improvements in the quality of pre-primary education.

The new Greek curriculum framework has been piloted in experimental schools, however, as teachers who work in experimental schools have applied to work in these schools, they are more likely than other teachers to be willing to innovate and adapt new practices, and therefore, they might not be an ideal and reliable control sample. Efforts should now concentrate on ensuring that these innovations deliver their effect in all pre-primary schools and lead to stronger learning and development outcomes for all children. This includes:

- Developing effective guidelines on the new curriculum framework.
- Supporting progressive training of the workforce through in-service training and informal learning.
- Strengthening the monitoring of the quality of teachers' practices, including through self-and peers-evaluation.

Develop effective guidelines on the new curriculum framework

The curriculum framework and its accompanying guidelines are lengthy and research-oriented. It is therefore recommended that IEP develops simpler educational guidelines highlighting examples of activities with a clearer focus on teachers' practices with children. More clarity on features of teachers' practices that are not anymore aligned with the goals of the curriculum framework is needed for the implementation of these innovations and the evolution of teaching practices. In relation to this, it is important to note that the IEP has already issued teaching guidelines with sample practical educational activities. However, this proposal specifically concerns guidelines on staff practices and not just examples of activities. The latest teacher's guide accompanying the new curriculum focusses on teaching practices

such as active engagement of pupils, transition issues, and lesson design for inquiry-based learning, but further clarity is recommended to ensure comprehensive alignment with the curriculum's goals.

Examples of countries that have developed guidelines for the ECEC workforce on the implementation of the curriculum include:

- In **Luxembourg,** to facilitate the understanding of the curriculum framework for non-formal education, the Ministry has developed series of publications for ECEC leaders, for staff and for parents as well as a library of short videos (Enfancejeunesse, 2025[38]). Publications for staff include multiple concrete situations with clear description and explanation of the role and attitude of staff in the situation.
- In **New Zealand**, the ECEC curriculum is framed in general terms and focusses on broad competencies, which has led to difficulties for the ECEC workforce to implement the curriculum. The Ministry of Education has therefore developed an online curriculum resource that aim to help staff to implement the curriculum and strengthen their practices with children (Ministry of Education, 2025[39]). The online resource is organised around three broad competencies, social and emotional, oral language and literacy and mathematics. The documents indicate what the ECEC staff can do to support children's development according to the curriculum approach, with concrete examples, including on how staff can assess children's progress. The resource pays particular attention to the cultural background of children and proposes examples that make explicit references to it (e.g. by proposing to use music that is familiar to the child for the developmental assessment).

Support progressive training of the workforce through in-service training and informal learning

Training for ECEC teachers and leaders is a critical mechanism for securing the adoption of practices that support the objectives of the new curriculum framework. According to national sources, a third of teachers and all education advisers have participated in curriculum framework training, and additional professional development is planned by the IEP from the end of 2025 (MERAS, 2025[13]). Participation in training is mandatory under Article 17 of Presidential Decree 79/2018. Education advisers have a statutory role in pedagogical and scientific guidance, as defined by Law 4823/2021 (Article 10), which includes providing training and support through seminars, model lessons, and innovation initiatives. Selection processes and regulatory provisions ensure advisors are qualified for this role and authorise the use of up to two working days per year per class for professional development activities without the need for additional permission. All teachers within a region are required to participate in these sessions, according to Law 1566/1985. Advisors collaborate with principals, teachers, training organisations and specialists to help ensure comprehensive coverage and quality in professional development programmes. Constraints related to time, working hours and resources may limit opportunities for structured training. While formal professional development is indispensable, effective implementation of the curriculum framework can also benefit from informal mechanisms such as peer collaboration and experiential learning, combined with more structured approaches including workshops. These factors will be important to consider when designing future strategies to support ECEC workforce development.

Evidence suggests that features of continuous professional development (CPD) that positively relate to the quality of ECEC staff practices include responsiveness to the context, a practical component, opportunities for reflection in real situations, and the inclusion of feedback or individual guidance (Egert, Fukkink and Eckhardt, 2018[40]). CPD in Greece mainly relies on traditional in-person or online classes with little peer exchanges and practical experience with a trainer. In addition to structured CPD, team collaboration and regular professional exchanges are valuable means to implement and transfer newly acquired knowledge (Resa et al., 2017[41]). Some relevant international practices can be considered to develop new formats of CPD:

- In **Luxembourg,** to support the implementation of the new ECEC curriculum framework for children aged 1 to 4, the government has developed an extensive supply of CPD programmes (freely provided to staff and leaders), as well as a system of extra quota hours at the centre level for leaders' coaching and training programmes in teams of staff.
- In **Ireland**, the official CPD programme on the curriculum framework includes five individual workshops (two and a half hours each) and two onsite support visits from an Early Years Specialist to support settings to apply the learning from the training.

The Greek Ministry of Education could set mechanisms to identify regional education advisors, leaders and teachers who have been trained on the curriculum framework and/or have particular expertise in ECEC and build on them as "coaches" to train other regional education advisors and other ECEC staff. Special focus needs to be put on preschools with higher shares of socio-economically disadvantaged children. Some country examples can inform policies going in this direction (OECD, 2020[42]):

- In **Israel**, a 2013 reform on the resourcing of the ECEC sector included funding for an additional staff member for ECEC centres with over 30 children aged 3 to 4 and funding for a leading teacher for small centres. A leading teacher is a teacher who stands out in their educational activities and is therefore appointed by the supervisor at the district level to serve as a leading teacher, alongside their duty as a teacher. Each leading teacher supports teachers from 10-15 ECEC centres (within a geographical district), for 30 hours per year (recognised for promotion and salary increase), where they mainly support the professional needs of teachers and promote community-related issues. A leading teacher is required to first participate in a year-long training before taking the role and undergoes continuous professional development activities while in the role. In 2021, approximately 5% of all teachers were also leading teachers. The leading teacher role is considered as middle-level leadership (higher than a teacher, but lower than leaders), which offers teachers a career development path.
- In **Norway**, there are two specific leadership roles in ECEC centres: head teachers and pedagogical leaders. Head teachers, who act as centre leaders, carry the day-to-day responsibility for pedagogical practices, staff and administration. Besides the head teacher, there are pedagogical leaders, who are trained teachers with the responsibility to lead a team working with a group of children. The pedagogical leader oversees the process of planning, implementing, documenting, assessing and developing the work taking place with the group of children. In practice, pedagogical leaders and the head teacher have meetings where they discuss and work together to achieve the common goals of the ECEC centre. In smaller ECEC centres, both leadership roles may be combined, and the centre leader may work partly as head teacher and partly as pedagogical leader.

Strengthen the monitoring of the quality of teachers' practices, including through self-and peers-evaluation

With teachers' appraisals starting only recently, there is not enough information on the quality of teaching practices. The monitoring of the implementation of the curriculum framework and of the quality of teachers' practices with children is a crucial process for ensuring that pre-primary education influences children's development. This is also an opportunity to create more positive views and innovative approaches around evaluation steered towards improvement and collective training, as discussed in the previous section and in other chapters of this review. With limited capacity for external appraisals done by regional education advisors, options to develop a monitoring system steered towards quality improvement for pre-schools is highly connected to building capacity within leaders and teachers to advise and reflect on high quality practices with children.

Directions to develop strong monitoring mechanisms steered towards quality include:

- Developing self-evaluation tools to clarify standards of practices aligned with ECEC goals and encourage observations by peers as part of internal evaluations.
- Developing a risk-weighted approach to teachers and schools' external evaluation to first focus on those that are more likely to require support for quality improvement, such as those in rural/disadvantaged areas and small schools with only one teacher and no opportunity for peer learning.
- Linking outcomes of evaluation to quality improvement measures. Specifically, appraisal processes should include feedback and advice that support teachers' professional growth, rather than routinely requiring intensive training courses to address specific weaknesses, as this practice may be time consuming and less targeted.

Several country examples can inform policies going in these directions:

- In **Finland**, ECEC centre evaluation and teacher appraisal heavily rely on self-evaluation (Box 4.2). The "Guidelines and recommendations for evaluating the quality of early childhood education and care" offer standards for municipalities, leaders and teachers of what quality means for each of these levels of the ECEC system. Reports coming from the evaluation process offer information to ECEC staff and leaders that can help them improve the quality of their practices. The self-evaluation materials aim to promote reflection on how quality can be improved by setting out clear standards for high-quality ECEC.
- In **Scotland**, the two inspectorates playing complementary roles in the ECEC sector promote self-evaluation and improvement planning in the sector. Education Scotland published *How Good is our Learning and Childcare?* a self-evaluation resource which sits within a well-established family of guides produced for schools and other actors in education (Education Scotland, 2016[43]). Evaluating a setting's arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning is a core part of the evaluation process promoted by this guide. It is also a core element in any inspection undertaken by Education Scotland inspectors. In 2019, the Care Inspectorate published *Self-evaluation for Improvement - Your Guide*, which provides guidance on how settings can develop systematic processes for assessing their performance against the recently revised National Standards for Early Learning and Care Providers (Care Inspectorate, 2019[44]). Guidance is provided on how to turn the outcomes of self-evaluation into an effective programme of action to generate improvement. The Care Inspectorate is also providing a more intensive programme of improvement support for staff in almost 90 ECEC settings which were identified as needing help to move forward.
- In **Luxembourg**, the introduction of a curriculum for ECEC for children under the age of 4 was accompanied by a new system to monitor process quality, closely linked to workforce training. This approach aimed to support curriculum implementation and strengthen the quality of interactions in ECEC settings. Regional officers, somewhat similar to regional education advisors in Greece, are in charge of the monitoring of process quality, but do so by working closely with ECEC centre leaders specifically on the implementation of the curriculum (Box 4.2).
- In **Ireland**, the Better Start Quality Development Service is a national initiative that provides professional development support to all ECEC settings. The service is delivered by Early Years Specialists, who offer mentoring and coaching to support the implementation of the national quality and curriculum frameworks. These specialists collaborate with ECEC centre leaders and staff in conducting joint assessments using curriculum self-evaluation tools to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Together, they set quality development goals, define concrete actions, and agree on realistic timeframes for implementation. A range of mentoring, coaching, and modelling strategies are employed to help centres achieve these goals.

Box 4.2. Approaches to the monitoring of ECEC quality steered towards improvement

Regional officers in Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, providers of ECEC for children under age 4 are supported by a team of 32 regional officers working under the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth to focus on process quality and improvement of education and care to complement the other body of inspectors, who are predominantly focussed on structural quality and compliance with regulatory standards. Regional officers are trained to exchange with ECEC settings and explore pedagogical approaches and practices that are documented of practices by centre staff and leader in a logbook. New guidelines for monitoring procedures were introduced at the end of 2021, with a stronger focus on pedagogical approaches, setting environment and materials, staff-child interactions, interactions with parents and the quality of management. In addition, indicators have been developed for each area to help regional officers in their evaluations. At the end of their visit, regional officers make recommendation to the ECEC centre to improve quality and have a discussion with the setting leader. Regional officers are not responsible for coaching managers and ECEC staff, but they are responsible for supporting providers to collaborate in the development of improvement plans. Each regional officer needs to hold a master's degree in pedagogics or equivalent, receive two months of initial training and is regularly monitored by two co-ordinators.

Data-driven monitoring based on self-evaluation in Finland

In Finland, where a large part of responsibilities and funding for ECEC lie with municipalities, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent authority responsible for the national evaluation of education from early childhood education to higher education. For ECEC, FINEEC's task is to conduct national external evaluations of ECEC and provide support for ECEC organisers (municipalities for public ECEC provision and private ECEC providers) in their statutory task of self-evaluation and quality management.

A document called "Guidelines and recommendations for evaluating the quality of early childhood education and care" provides a conceptual basis for quality evaluation at both the national and local level. In particular, the document presents a list of "indicators" similar to standards for the national and local levels as well as for ECEC centre leaders and staff for hight quality ECEC. The purpose of the document is to support local authorities and private providers in their self-evaluation of the quality of ECEC they provide as well as to support quality at the ECEC centre level.

A national digital system (Valssi) aims to support the quality management of ECEC. The digital system can be used to carry out the collection of evaluation data, obtain evaluation reports from local authorities or ECEC centres, produce location-specific evaluation summaries and publish the statutory evaluation results of local operators. Valssi has different user profiles: administrators (FINEEC), main users (municipalities for public ECEC provision and private providers), implementers (ECEC centre leaders) and respondents (ECEC staff). Main users can view evaluation reports and ECEC centres' self-evaluations. Leaders of ECEC centres are responsible for carrying out the evaluation process at their centre. They send the evaluation forms to the staff and support the staff at different stages of the evaluation. Together with the staff, leaders identify strengths and development areas associated with the theme to be evaluated, draw up a development plan and monitor its implementation. In addition to the evaluation report, the main users can examine the summaries saved by ECEC centres and other information, such as customer service surveys. Based on this information, the strengths and development areas of the entire ECEC provision can be identified, and plans of action and monitoring plans can be drawn up. Once the evaluation has been completed, Valssi is used to publish the evaluation results and inform the entire organisation about them, including guardians, stakeholders and decision-makers.

Source: (OECD, 2022[21]); (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2025[45]).

Finally, once training material is made available by IEP in Greece, there could be clearer obligation for preschools to include actions towards the progressive implementation of the curriculum as one of the themes of the school action plan (the new self-evaluation tool for schools, see chapter 2) in the coming years. This would encourage teamwork and leader's engagement in training on the curriculum, particularly if this is repeated each year. For instance, in **Finland** and **Luxembourg** (Box 4.2) where ECEC setting leaders develop an annual report with their plans to improve the quality of their provision, the implementation of the curriculum is central to the report rather than being an optional theme.

Policy recommendation 2: Supporting quality pre-primary education through improved structural conditions

Greece aims to provide high quality pre-primary education to all children. As in all large-scale systems variation in the quality is inevitable. In Greece, the geography of the country with several remote areas creates variations in the quality of pre-primary education coming from the prevalence of small centres where human and material resources are more limited. Likewise, socio-economically disadvantaged areas face difficulties to provide high quality pre-primary education due to staff absences and shortages of specialised staff. Improving structural conditions that set the basis for high quality ECEC, with a particular focus on remote and disadvantaged areas will ensure more equity in the provision of quality ECEC. This includes:

- Alleviating administrative burden to allow pre-primary leaders and teachers to focus on core educational tasks.
- Streamline the organisation of "Skills Labs" and build on the experience of English classes to further address the needs of children with diverse home languages.
- Considering directions to improve staff-to-children ratios in preschools that demonstrate the greatest needs.

Alleviate administrative burden to allow pre-primary leaders and teachers to focus on core educational tasks

Alleviating the high administrative burden on pre-schools leaders and teachers is central to expand their time for quality work with children, preparation of activities, engagement in training and interactions with parents. For instance, it seems that several prescribed learning activities ("Skill labs") need to be heavily and regularly documented by schools. The same applies to any unusual activities initiated by teachers or schools (e.g. outdoor activities outside the schools, library visits etc.). This administrative burden might discourage schools to implement innovative or outdoor practices that can benefit children's development, learning and well-being. It might also take too much of leaders' and teachers' time, leaving them with insufficient time to focus on the quality of the activity itself.

While some regulations and administrative processes are necessary, they can at times be excessive or poorly adapted to the geographical context of ECEC settings—for example, requirements for outdoor activities may be less relevant in rural areas than in densely populated suburbs. In some cases, these procedures are not sufficiently proportionate to the actual safety or operational risks involved. Reviewing, streamlining, or removing unnecessary administrative burdens could help free up time for staff to engage more meaningfully with children and better prepare educational activities. More generally, several European countries have adopted strategy to better support leaders, including through adequate support from national and regional authorities, and build on leadership as a key pillar of ECEC quality that can inform policies in Greece (European Commission, 2024[46]).

Streamline the organisation of "Skills Labs" and build on the experience of English classes to further address the needs of children with diverse home languages

The introduction of "Skills Labs" to foster the development of 21st century skills as well as of English classes are important innovations. Attention should be put on ensuring that "Skills Labs" are well integrated into the curriculum framework and teachers' activities with children, rather than being treated as separated activities as this is now the case. Teachers have to report specifically on activities done as part of the "Skills Labs" and have to allocate a fix number of hours to these activities (three hours per week). While a clear identification of these activities might be needed during the phase of their introduction, in the future, it seems unnecessary to treat them separately from the curriculum framework as this has created administrative burden to teachers and leaders, as discussed in the previous section.

While the goal to develop children's foreign language skills is welcome, countries that are at the frontier of multilingualism, such as **Luxembourg**, integrate foreign languages throughout the day at school rather than through specific classes (Box 4.3). Luxembourg's programme is particularly ambitious due to the country's unique linguistic context. However, several of its features may offer useful insights for Greece, including the integration of multilingual learning into everyday activities and the inclusion of children's diverse home languages, which is also an objective of Greece's curriculum framework.

Box 4.3. Multilingual education integrated into other ECEC activities: the case of Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, a multilingual education programme was launched in 2017, building on a playful initiation to languages (OECD, 2022[21]). ECEC centres serving children aged 1-4 are obligated to implement the multilingual education programme in order to receive public funding. The multilingual programme places specific emphasis on ensuring children are exposed to both French and Luxembourgish but also aims to promote the different home languages of children. As multilingualism is central to Luxembourg's societies, requirements for ECEC staff are strong: at least one person with basic fluency in French and one in Luxembourgish must be employed at the ECEC centre. In addition, each centre must appoint a pedagogical referent who co-ordinates the implementation of multilingual education for the setting. A specific 30-hour training course is offered free of charge by the National Youth Service for these designated referents. In addition, all ECEC staff in the non-formal sector must have content on language development included in their ongoing professional development. The multilingual education programme benefits from input from a scientific council, which was involved in establishing the programme and advises on its ongoing implementation. In addition, parents are viewed as key partners in this programme, and their involvement in sharing their languages and cultures in ECEC settings is a core pillar of the programme.

Source: (OECD, 2022[21]).

Consider directions to improve staff-to-children ratios in pre-schools that demonstrate the greatest needs

Improving the number of professionals with groups of children in pre-schools where working conditions are particularly difficult would facilitate teachers' work with children and could improve the learning and well-being environment. Particular attention needs to be placed on very small schools with only one teacher, schools in remote areas or areas with large shares of disadvantaged children, and schools with high teacher turnover. Considering that the budget is limited to increase the number of staff, efforts can be made to more strategically allocate staff across pre-schools. Growing attention from researchers as well as from countries are put on multi-professional teams, given the potential of complementary specialisations and profiles to better accommodate the complex range of supports needed by children and families in increasingly diverse societies (Oberhuemer et al., 2023[47]). Multi-professional work in ECEC may involve collaboration between professionals from different sectors on a shared task or programme, or, at the setting

ECEC level, differently qualified ECEC professionals working together with the same group of children. ECEC settings can build on the various strengths present in multi-professional teams and allocate tasks according to individual staff competencies to offer more tailored supports to children and families with diverse needs.

In Greece, the pool of professionals working in pre-primary schools includes leaders and teachers, psychologists and other staff for children with special education needs, nurses, English teachers and art teachers. In addition, assistants and teachers working in ECEC settings for children 4 can be considered as part of the potentially extended pool of candidates as discussed later in this chapter. These professionals work relatively independently rather than in teams, apart from leaders and teachers (including English teachers) who work together. A direction could be to build more strategically on the pool of professionals as a team of staff who can give more consistent support to schools. This could include:

- Changing the "shadow teacher system" (as planned by the government) in which professionals for special education needs are allocated to one child in particular rather than working more broadly with the group of children. For instance, **Ireland**'s Accession and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a comprehensive programme that aims to create a more inclusive environment in pre-schools (Box 4.4). It includes universal support, such as the possibility for staff to take a training to become an inclusion coordinator (in addition to the regular role) who provides leadership in ECEC settings in relation to issues of diversity, equality and inclusion, and can therefore benefit all children. Among the targeted support that can be granted when universal support is not sufficient to address the needs of a particular child, the highest level of support consists in additional funding to pre-schools that can be used either to reduce the child-to-adult ratio in the pre-school room or to fund an extra staff member as a shared resource with other children in the ECCE setting. This type of approach, which aims to provide additional support to a child in particular while also benefiting to other children can inform policies in Greece. It involves an efficient allocation of resources that builds on the capacity of the existing ECEC workforce rather than systematically involving specialised staff.
- Allocating more flexibility to leaders and teachers for arranging children's groups when the English teacher (or another teacher on a specific subject) is in the school. While the requirement that the English teacher and the regular work together with children is a strength of the approach, there could be flexibility in its application depending on pre-schools contexts, such as in small schools.
- Considering the creation of a pool of assistants who would be allocated to schools that are most in need and could work in several schools per week (working part-time in one school) on a regular basis to avoid uncertainty. In pre-primary education, there are no assistants (teacher aids) working together with teachers as they exist in countries like France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden. Particularly when educational requirements for teachers, and therefore wage expectations, are high and when budget constraints are strong, having assistants working together with teachers can be a cost-effective way to improve staff-to-children ratios. The government could consider enrolling a pool of assistants and allocate them strategically to pre-schools (on a part-time basis in one school), depending on the needs of schools. These assistants would have received a vocational degree in early childhood education and care, such as those working in settings for children under age 4 (see section below). As discussed at the end of the chapter, a more substantive reform of the overall ECEC sector could include the development of age-integrated settings with pre-primary education teachers and ECEC staff for children under age 4 working together in the same settings to serve children below age 4 and older children.
- Planning to allocate these staff to schools by considering all categories of staff together to avoid that the English teacher and a specialised staff come on the same day with no one coming on the other day. Additional examples of ECEC organisation that builds on teams of professionals are given in Box 4.4. In **Finland**, specialised staff can advise on a range of ECEC centres activities. In **Portugal**, multi-disciplinary teams work with clusters of schools.

These options to improve the staff-to-children ratios would help free up time for teachers and leaders' work without contact with children. In particular, this will offer room for more frequent informal exchanges on practices with children and self- and peer-reflection on measures to improve the quality of ECEC provision.

Box 4.4. Multi-professional teams in ECEC

Targeted staffing as part of targeted supports in the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) in Ireland

The model aims to create a more inclusive environment in pre-schools and offer support focussed on the needs of the child without requiring a diagnosis of disability. The model is organised around seven levels of support, the first three being universal and the last four being targeted. AIM universal supports continuous professional development, an inclusion charter and guidelines for pre-schools and an ISCED 5 (Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years Care - LINC). The goal of the universal supports is to build capacity in the existing ECEC workforce on addressing children's needs rather than always involving specialised staff. Some of the targeted supports available under AIM involve staffing to cater to a wide range of children's abilities and needs (Government of Ireland, n.d.[48]). The first of these is expert advice through access to early years specialists who can coach and mentor other staff, support parents and ECEC providers when applying for AIM targeted supports, and support children's transitions to primary school. At another level, therapeutic supports such as behaviour support plans or professional advice can be provided though collaboration with health services and local networks of disability services for children who have complex needs. Lastly, additional assistance in preschool rooms can be provided by means of funding for extra staff to reduce the child-to-adult ratio or as a shared resource with other children.

Multi-disciplinary teams to support educational inclusion in Portugal

In Portugal, in each school cluster, there is a multi-disciplinary team to support inclusive education (*Equipa Multidisciplinar de Apoio à Educação Inclusiva* – Decree-Law 54/2018). This team includes permanent and variable members. The permanent members include a teacher who supports the school director, a special education teacher, three members of the pedagogical council and the school psychologist. The variable members are chosen according to each learner's needs. The learners' parents/guardians and the learners themselves are also part of the team (OECD, 2022[49]).

The multi-disciplinary teams can intervene at all levels of education, from preschool education to upper secondary school. Among the responsibilities are to raise awareness of the educational community towards inclusive education; to suggest the learning support measures to be mobilised; to follow up and monitor the implementation of the learning support measures and to provide advice to teachers about the implementation of inclusive pedagogical practices.

Multi-professional ECEC teamwork in Finland

In Finland, multi-professional teamwork is considered a key component of contemporary ECEC professionalism. Finnish ECEC policy states the right of children to receive support from regular ECEC staff teams as well as from early childhood special education teachers (ECSETs), who are experts in individualised child supports with particular qualification requirements (e.g. a master's degree in special education) beyond teacher training. While ECSETs can act as special education teachers as part of a team, often ECSETs also participate in planning, implementation and assessment of support in a consulting role for multiple teams, which offers them a privileged perspective into the factors promoting teamwork's success, which they can then bring from one team to another (Karila and Kupila, 2023[50]); (Ranta et al., 2023[51]).

Source: (OECD, 2025[9]).

Policy recommendation 3: Advancing quality, equity and integration across the whole ECEC sector

A key direction for Greece is to further expand access to ECEC before age 4 and ensure high quality early learning experiences from a very early age. This will support women labour market participation and help address inequalities in children development before they widen. Moving towards a more integrated ECEC sector that covers children from the first months to entry into primary education includes:

- Removing barriers to participation in ECEC for children under age 4.
- Considering the possibility to develop age-integrated settings and to move towards greater integration of the whole ECEC sector.
- Developing a curriculum framework for settings serving children ages 0-3.

Remove barriers to participation in ECEC for children under age 4

Removing barriers to participation in ECEC before age 4, particularly for children from low socio-economic background, would help address inequalities of opportunities from the early years while supporting women's participation in the labour market. A comprehensive effort is needed to address the multi-faceted barriers to ECEC participation that are likely to disproportionately affect children from low socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds as well remote areas, removing the impediments to the supply and demand for ECEC places. Such an effort could include:

- The introduction of legal entitlements to ECEC to provide strong messages about the importance of child development in the early years.
- Central-level support for municipalities to apply to EU funds and strategically develop the ECEC network in areas where this is more needed.
- Building on private provision to expand supply while ensuring affordability of private ECEC and strong monitoring of its quality.
- Information campaigns on the benefits of high quality ECEC for children's development, particularly those from low socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds.

Several country examples can inform policies going in these directions:

- In **Norway**, the Kindergarten Agreement of 2003 initiated a series of comprehensive policy changes to enhance participation and address availability and cost barriers in the sector. Public funding for the sector tripled between 2003 and 2011 to enable the provision of kindergarten places under reduced parental fees. The Agreement provided municipalities enhanced funding and obligated them to provide per-child funding for private kindergartens. An individual statutory right to a kindergarten place for all children aged 1-5 entered into force in 2009. The policy changes resulted in an expansion of kindergarten spaces since 2003 and of children enrolment, particularly for the youngest children and children from low-income families. The reforms have resulted in a shift in parental attitudes of Norwegian parents towards ECEC, with stronger preference for ECEC services as the best form of care for preschool-age children (Ellingsaeter, Kitterod and Lyngstad, 2016[52]) A fee cap was set for public and private kindergartens, and discounts were granted depending on household income.
- In Flanders (**Belgium**), the "Opgroeien" (Grow up) programme established by the Flemish Child Family Agency, has established an outreach network, made up of different professionals - including nurses, social workers, psycho-pedagogues and volunteers – either directly employed or affiliated through partnerships. These professionals help raise parental awareness on the importance of vaccination, health and development screenings, participation in ECEC and other social programmes. Professionals also offer parents practical advice on how to access basic public services. Outreach is carried out through universal and regular home and hospital visits, and

tele/virtual consultations. Parents can also access outreach centres for free; these centres are located across the region, according to their population density and accessibility. The programme reaches virtually all (98%) newborns.

The affordability of ECEC for children under age 4 needs to be maintained and possibly even improved, particularly for low-income families. Greece's voucher system subsidises public and private ECEC depending on the economic status of the family. The OECD childcare cost indicator suggests that this system covers most of childcare fees in public ECEC settings, at least in some regions (OECD, 2025[3], Figure 5.5). However, affordability needs to be checked for ECEC private provision, particularly for most vulnerable families if places cannot be allocated in the public sector.

As recommended in the OECD Economic Survey on Greece, expanding ECEC provision for children under age 4, particularly vulnerable children, can be financed by shifting public spending from birth grants towards ECEC (OECD, 2024[10]). Static estimates suggest that an increase in in-kind ECEC support combined with reduced family cash benefits, including birth grants, would have a moderate negative fiscal impact (Table 1.6 in (OECD, 2024[10])). These estimates however do not account for the positive effect on women labour market participation and related increased tax revenues.

Consider the possibility to develop age-integrated settings and to move towards greater integration of the whole ECEC sector

When considering plans to expand ECEC participation of children under age 4, it is recommended to move towards a more integrated system for ECEC covering all children from the first months to entry in primary education rather than keeping ECEC for children under age 4 and pre-primary education separated. This would expand the gains achieved from the integration of pre-primary education with primary education to the ECEC sector for children under age 4.

In a first step, Greece could build on the successful development of pre-primary education for children under age 4 and expand it to children below age 4 (e.g. starting with children aged 3), particularly those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Demographic trends mean that more places will be available in at least some preschools in the future, which can free-up spaces for children under age 4. In doing so, care will be needed to ensure that learning content, activities and pedagogies are appropriate to children's ages. In a second step, or in parallel, the three Ministries involved in ECEC could work together to more broadly develop age integrated settings that are adapted to the needs of children with different ages, with an objective to guarantee all children's right to benefit from the same quality education and care. With several geographical areas in Greece having very small pre-schools (e.g. schools with around 15 children or less) and lack of funding to develop settings for the youngest children, age integrated settings could be a cost-effective option. This could be a way to reorganise groups of children and staff from both the under age 4 and pre-school sectors with pre-primary education teachers working together with staff for children under age 4. This could offer options to move towards a model with teachers and assistants working together to improve staff-to-children ratios in areas where this is most needed, as suggested earlier in this chapter. This would ensure that ECEC provision is adapted to children's needs, with the perspective of staff working with the youngest children fully integrated. These age-integrated settings could be piloted in a couple of municipalities and progressively extended to co-exist with or replace age-specific nurseries and pre-schools.

While the opening of pre-primary education to some children aged 3 would be a relatively simple measure to implement, moving towards a more integrated ECEC system is more substantial reform that would require careful planning and considerations. Some countries have moved into this direction that can inform the situation in Greece:

- In Korea, the ECEC system has been split between kindergartens for children aged three to five under the Ministry of Education and childcare facilities for children aged from zero to five under the

Ministry of Health and Welfare and managed by local authorities (see Box 4.5). This situation was similar to the one in Greece. Since 2023, the government has advanced the integration of the ECEC sector, with administrative and financial responsibilities for ECEC from the Ministry of Health and Welfare (for childcare centres) being moved under the Ministry of Education, which takes full responsibility for ECEC from 2025. This consolidation involves moving funding and administrative responsibilities from municipalities and regions to local and regional offices of the Ministry of Education, with funding mostly coming from the central government in the integrated system. By strengthening the central level's management and funding responsibility and moving the sector under the Ministry of Education, this reform aims to reduce regional inequalities and improve access to services, while also improving overall quality (KICCE Policy Brief, 2023[53]). Policy developments in Korea could inspire policies in Greece. On the method, the government established a committee and a taskforce to work on the steps of the integration while building consensus among the main stakeholders (see Box 4.5). On the content, the integration plan builds on existing structure, aims to reduce the differences between daycare centres and kindergartens, and then move to integrated facilities, which could also be a good strategy for Greece.

- In Japan, the government introduced Integrated Centres for ECEC in 2010, in addition to existing kindergartens for children aged 3 to 5 and nursery centres for children under age 3. They combine the functions and characteristics of both types of older ECEC settings. In particular, they offer support to local communities on children's development and learning, even for families who do not attend the centre. Existing nursery centres and kindergartens can decide to become an integrated ECEC centres depending on the needs and characteristics of the local areas, with the help of municipal services. Japan provides example of a gradual and limited integration of the sector, which can also inform policy developments in Greece.

Box 4.5. Examples of an ongoing integration of the ECEC sector: the case of Korea

In Korea, the ECEC system has long been split between kindergartens for children aged 3 to 5 that aim to educate young children and are placed under the authority of the Ministry of Education and childcare facilities for children aged from 0 to 5 that are social welfare services that protect and nurture children but also educate them, under the authority of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Kindergartens are part of the school education system and in terms of administration and financing, are managed and supervised by the provincial offices of education. Childcare is managed by local governments. Kindergartens are mostly financed by a grant of the Ministry of Education from the central to local levels while childcares are financed by grants from the Ministry of Health and Welfare as well as local governments' own resources. There are also differences in the qualification requirements for teachers, with a university degree for those of kindergartens and a high school diploma for teachers in childcare centres. Finally, while the national curriculum "Nuri" for three to five-year olds should apply to both age groups, there are still gaps and there is no curriculum for children under age 3.

As a starting point, the government announced that all policy tasks related to ECEC will be under the authority of the Ministry of Education at the end of 2023. The first stage (2023-2024) aimed to set the foundation for the integration. This included allocated support to regional offices of education to help them put in place measures to reduce the gap between kindergartens and daycare centres (cost support, care time and facility improvement). In the second stage starting in 2025, existing kindergartens and daycare are converted into new integrated institutions. In parallel, the government worked on a unified teachers qualification requirements and the extension of the curriculum to the youngest children.

Korea explicitly recognises the need for consensus-building among stakeholders to achieve the government's vision for a unified ECEC system for children from birth to primary school, as well as strong co-ordination with primary school education. To achieve this vision and integrate ECEC settings,

a Committee on Consolidation of ECEC was established in 2023. The Committee is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, to provide strategic guidance and high-level support across the government. The Committee also includes five additional political members from other relevant ministries and 19 non-political members, representing various stakeholder groups (e.g. teacher unions, researchers, local authorities, parents). Under the Committee, a taskforce was created to handle administrative aspects of moving forward the agenda developed by the Committee. This taskforce includes 30 members from regional government, local governments, and research centres. It is headed by a representative from the Ministry of Health and Welfare, with support from a director from the Ministry of Education, to ensure balanced consideration of the perspectives from both of these ministries. Gathering input from stakeholders on planned reforms in a core aspect of the work assigned to this taskforce. In addition, the taskforce oversees four advisory groups that provide expertise on core areas of policy reform. The areas focussed on by these groups are: (1) funding and planning; (2) alignment of standards for facilities; (3) linking curriculum standards, and (4) reforming teacher qualification and initial teacher training systems.

Source: Korean Ministry of Education, *Press release on Consolidation of Early Childhood Education and Care to Provide Safe and Responsible Public Education and Childcare Service from Birth*, https://english.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/viewRenewal.do?boardID=265&boardSeq=93891&lev=0&searchType=null&statusYN=W&page=1&s=english&m=0201&opType=N.

Develop a curriculum framework for settings serving children ages 0-4

Developing a curriculum framework for settings serving children below age 4 would clarify the goals for this part of the sector and help achieve more uniform quality within the country and between public and private provision. Ideally, the curriculum would be developed in co-ordination between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Cohesions and Family to ensure alignment with the pre-school curriculum. If age-integrated settings are considered, as proposed in the previous section, the curriculum framework could be developed for these settings and give a basis for adaption in ECEC settings for children under age 4. Curricula that are age-integrated or focussed on children under age 3 tend to have less focus on specific learning areas and instead include broad concepts, principles and values (OECD, 2021[7]).

As the government contributes to the funding of private ECEC provision, a curriculum framework would help ensure that public expenditure in this part of the sector supports ECEC provision with learning goals that align with those of the government. A curriculum framework would also provide a basis for the monitoring of process quality in this part of the sector. As the government develops schools and teachers' assessment for pre-primary education, there could be discussions on introducing monitoring of process quality for this sector in a form that is adapted to its characteristics, particularly if age-integrated settings are considered.

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5 Improving the meaningfulness and impact of digital education

This chapter reviews Greece's ongoing efforts to advance the use of digital technologies in school education. While important steps have been taken, such as the development of a national digital strategy and investments in platforms and devices, evidence suggests that digital tools are not yet fully and systematically embedded in teaching and learning practices. Drawing on international data and examples, the chapter highlights areas where further progress could strengthen implementation, including teacher preparation, system coherence, and equitable access. It outlines key policy directions to support Greece's digital transformation, focussing on enhancing teacher competences, improving infrastructure use, and aligning governance and support structures. Realising the full potential of digital education will require coordinated leadership, sustained investment, and a focus on pedagogical effectiveness.

Introduction: the context of digital education in Greece

Digital education can be defined as the innovative use of digital tools and technologies during teaching and learning, including blended and fully online learning, to enhance students' educational experiences and outcomes (Redecker, 2017[1]). This definition highlights the significance of both the learning process and its outcomes that could be positively affected by the meaningful application of digital technologies. It also clarifies the primary beneficiaries (i.e. students) while recognising the central role of teachers as pedagogical agents guiding this process. Finally, it highlights that the use of digital tools and technologies should be innovative.

In view of the aforementioned definition, OECD reports on the matter stresses that digital transition alone is insufficient; what is needed is a deeper digital transformation (OECD, 2023[2]). Transition refers to the adoption of student information systems, online learning platforms, and the use of digital devices in classrooms. However, this may not be sufficiently innovative to ensure a meaningful learning process or to positively impact both cognitive and non-cognitive learning outcomes. In contrast, digital transformation entails fundamental changes in educational processes, integrating technology not just as a tool, but as a driver to reshape teaching methodologies, learning processes, and the educational ecosystem at large to make it more effective (OECD, 2023[2]). Greece's Digital Education Transformation Initiative highlights the importance of transformation, yet it does not clearly define the concept. The initiative primarily focusses on the digitalisation of educational content and the development of interactive learning systems across all levels of education. Recent OECD work on shaping digital education underscores that such transformation relies on key enabling conditions. These conditions include coherent governance, adequate and well-targeted resourcing, robust infrastructure and data systems, and sustained support for educators' digital competences, which together form a set of enabling indicators for quality, equity and efficiency in digital education (OECD, 2023[3]). While significant progress has been made in areas such as digitising resources, integrating applications in teaching, and the emergence of advanced AI-powered platforms (including new developments like the Kaleduscope system), the operationalisation of "digitalisation" in Greece may still differ in scope and depth from some international conceptualisations of full digital transformation. Consequently, digital education in Greece could benefit from adopting a digital transformation framework that unfolds across three stages (Luo and Wee, 2021[4]), that could be explicitly linked to these enabling conditions for system-level change (OECD, 2023[3]):

- **Stage I. Digitisation:** the conversion of non-digital records into digital format, for example, turning printed books into digital learning material.
- **Stage II. Digitalisation:** the conversion of processes or interactions into digital equivalents, such as using a mathematics application on a tablet to learn multiplication and division.
- **Stage III. Digital transformation:** an innovative and disruptive reconfiguration of education, for instance, using educational data analytics and Artificial Intelligence to support pedagogical decision-making.

Greece is taking steps across all three stages of digital development, but progress is most visible in **digitisation**, with considerable efforts made to expand opportunities for digital education in different learning environments. **Digitalisation** is supported through teacher training; however, based on the evidence available, it is not yet consistently reflected in everyday classroom practice. Teachers could more fully move beyond traditional pedagogies and adopt digitally supported collaborative approaches. **Digital transformation**, by contrast, is a deeper process that should become evident in how teachers and students work. It depends not only on access to tools but also on shifts in mindset and practice, including decisions about what to discontinue. It requires teachers to augment, modify, and redefine learning goals, monitor learning processes in new ways, and support students in collaborating effectively through digital technologies.

Therefore, meaningful and impactful digital education should not merely substitute traditional teaching and learning methods in digital environments. It should support the augmentation, modification, and redefinition of pedagogical methods at the level of both teachers and students in alignment with learning objectives (Puentedura, 2006[5]) as follows:

- **Augmentation** replaces a traditional practice with a functional improvement made possible by the digital environment.
- **Modification** enables learners and teachers to significantly redesign tasks, for example, through real-time collaborative creation of online documents.
- **Redefinition** allows for the design of entirely new learning activities that would otherwise be impossible, such as exploring molecular processes or evolution at a visible scale or within an observable timeframe.

In addition. the purposes of using digital technologies in education can be categorised into three areas (Kirkwood and Price, 2013[6]):

- **Operational improvement** – e.g. automated grading and feedback, or content navigation.
- **Quantitative change** – e.g. increasing engagement and motivation through enhanced interaction.
- **Qualitative change** – e.g. using visualisations or simulations to enable inquiry-based learning.

Recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for teaching and learning have ushered in a completely new era in which digital education requires redefinition, and learning processes can no longer remain unchanged. Even if the use of AI tools is somewhat restricted in formal educational settings, their use in the wider society cannot be limited. If students are expected to use AI tools as adults, schools must prepare them to do so responsibly. Therefore, it is crucial to initiate a discussion of the meaningful and ethical use of AI in the context of digital education.

In conclusion, Greece has the potential to benefit from a meaningful and impactful form of AI-supported digital education that goes beyond basic digitisation to support deeper transformation. Such a transformation involves the augmentation, modification and redefinition of learning processes and outcomes, with a focus not only on operational or quantitative improvements, but more importantly on qualitative pedagogical change. The full benefits of digital education can only be realised if the broader educational ecosystem, including policy, infrastructure, leadership and pedagogy, provides all actors, especially students and teachers, with the appropriate tools, guidance and support. Against this backdrop, this chapter examines the state of digital education in Greece's school system, focussing on compulsory levels (primary and lower secondary education), while excluding pre-primary education. It explores three interrelated themes: the use of technology in schools, the digital competences of teachers and students, and the role of teacher training in enhancing the meaningful integration of digital technologies into classroom practice.

Finally, while this review focusses on developments up to early 2025, it is worth noting that Greece has recently adopted a new Strategic Plan for Primary and Secondary Education (2025–2027). This plan places significant emphasis on digital transformation, including the development of digital content, inclusive learning tools, AI integration in schools, and improved monitoring of digital investments (MERAS, 2025[7]). These forward-looking objectives align with several of the recommendations in this chapter, although their implementation falls outside the period reviewed.

Digital education in Greece

Greece has adopted a national strategy to guide digital education in the country (Digital Transformation Bible). The strategy was developed by the Ministry of Digital Governance and sets out seven objectives, some of which are also relevant to the education sector (see Box 5.1). The education section of the strategy was developed by the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports and it aims at **strengthening the**

digital experience across all levels of the education system. A key objective of the strategy is to ensure **equal participation** for all in education. Furthermore, the strategy highlights the importance of digital infrastructure, and the collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Box 5.1. Objectives defined in the Digital Transformation Bible 2020–2025, a national strategy for digital transformation

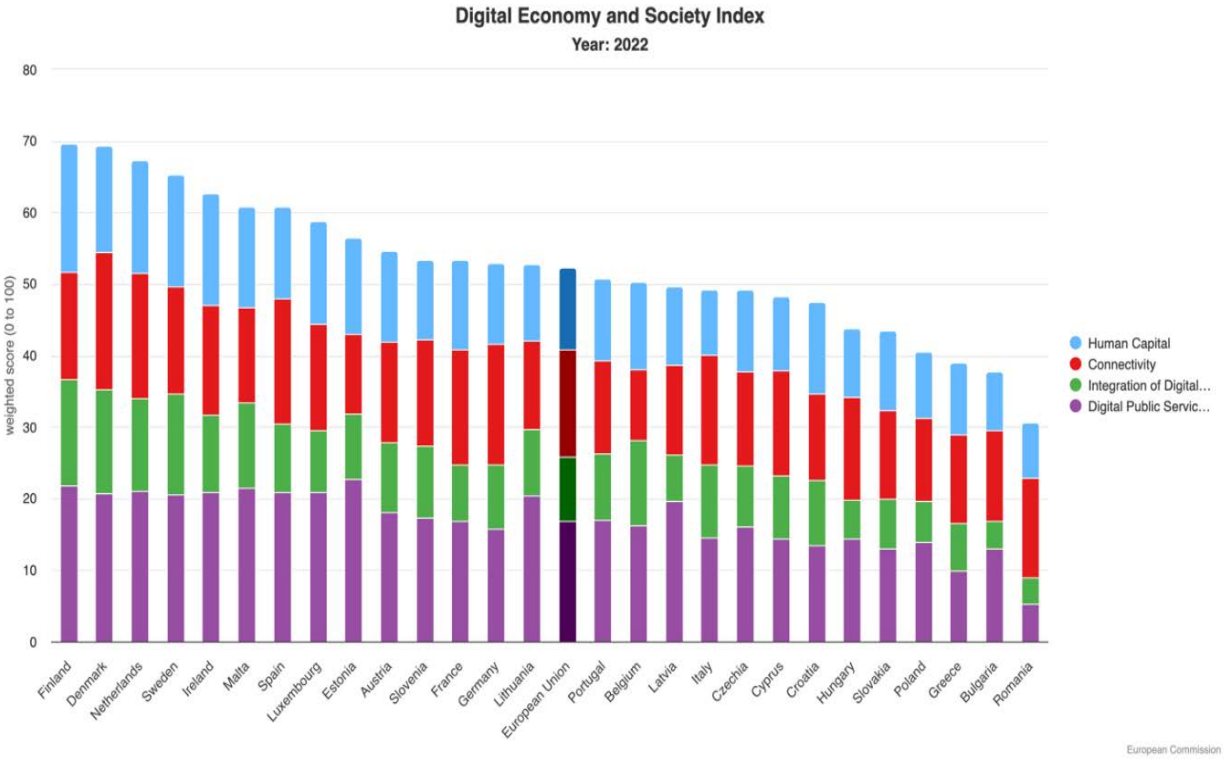
- Safe, fast and reliable **access** to the internet for all.
- The development of digital **skills** of all citizens.
- The support and strengthening of digital **innovation**.
- The productive use of public **data**.
- The integration of modern technologies in all sectors of the **economy**.
- The facilitation of the transformation of every Greek business into a digital **business**.
- A digital state, which offers better digital **services** to citizens, in all the events of their lives.

Source: Digital Transformation Bible 2020–2025

This chapter focusses on two core objectives for advancing digital education in Greece: (1) ensuring access to technology, and (2) developing digital competences among students and teachers. It aims to support Greek stakeholders by offering: (1) concrete suggestions for achieving these objectives; (2) research-based reasoning to underpin the proposals; and (3) international examples highlighting both successful approaches worth emulating and less effective practices to be avoided. The analysis draws on the OECD Review Team's understanding of the Greek context, informed by meetings and school visits conducted during the February 2025 country mission, as well as materials provided by national authorities. However, this input offers only a partial view of current developments. As such, the recommendations should be interpreted with caution and adapted as needed to reflect local conditions and perspectives that may not be fully captured in this review.

Digital education can be viewed as a vehicle for driving the digital transformation of Greek society. However, to be effective, it must be embedded within the wider national context and informed by international benchmarks. According to the *Digital Economy and Society Index* (DESI), Greece ranked 25th out of 27 European Union countries in 2022 (see Figure 5.1). Within the education sector, the most notable component of the DESI is what is referred as "**human capital"**, which refers to internet user skills as well as advanced digital skills and development. These competencies are crucial not only for teachers but also for school principals to ensure the effective adoption of meaningful digital education. In line with the *Digital Transformation Bible*, such skills are needed to foster digital innovation and to enable the productive use of available data in designing learning processes. More specifically, the DESI 2022 analysis identified persistent challenges in basic digital skills and digital content creation. Even so, Greece ranked somewhat higher in these domains (at 18th place) suggesting a foundation on which to build. According to Eurostat data from 2023, 52% of individuals in Greece have at least a basic level of digital skills. This is below the European Union average (56%) and has not changed in Greece compared with 2021 (Eurostat, 2024[8]). However, good improvement is seen in the age group 16–24 where **78% Greek youth have basic digital skills,** which is **higher than the EU average (70%).** It shows that Greek students have good potential to apply digital technologies in learning if schools provide relevant meaningful opportunities for digital education. These patterns are consistent with recent OECD work showing that the impact of digital technologies on learning depends less on access alone and more on how technology use is embedded within coherent pedagogical strategies and enabling system conditions (OECD, 2025[9]; OECD, 2023[3]; Forsström et al., 2025[10]; Forsström et al., 2025[11]).

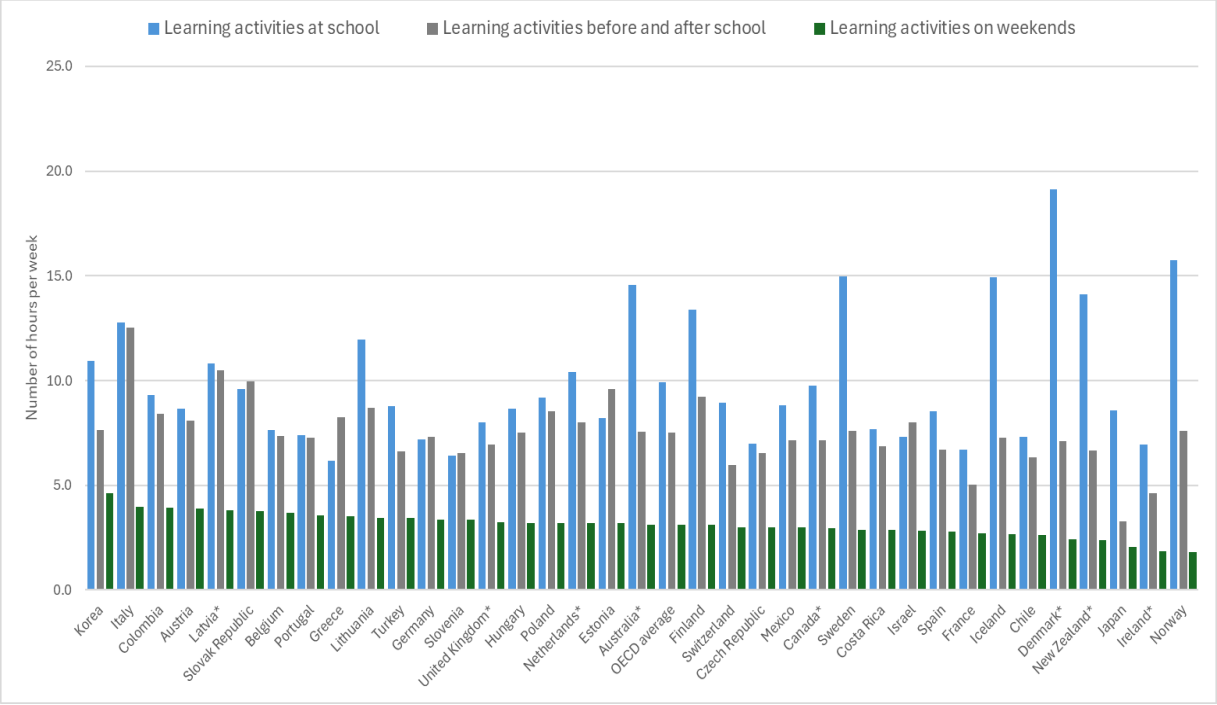
Figure 5.1. Digital Economy and Society (DESI) composite index 2022



Note: Data from 27 countries participating in the DESI analysis.
Source European Commission. (2022[12]). Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022 composite index. Shaping Europe's digital future. Retrieved November 19, 2025, from https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi

In addition, digital education practices in Greece can be analysed using PISA data comparing 36 countries. Among these, Greece reports the lowest average time that students spend learning with digital devices during school hours (see Figure 5.2). In contrast, the amount of time spent using digital devices before and after school, as well as on weekends, is broadly in line with international patterns, with Greece ranking 9th out of 36. This might suggest that Greek students are expected to develop their ability to use digital devices meaningfully in the learning process largely on their own. Introducing policies that allow more frequent use of digital devices for learning in schools could be considered as a strategy to support the development of digital skills in both students and teachers, a goal explicitly stated in the Greek *Digital Transformation Bible*. Moreover, increased use of digital devices in schools could offer educational policymakers richer data to inform decisions on the effective integration of technologies, as also anticipated by the national strategy. Currently, however, a misalignment remains between strategic goals and school-level implementation according to international comparisons and to the evidence collected during the visits of the OECD Review Team. This is limiting the potential for a successful digital transformation.

Figure 5.2. Number of hours per week for learning activities with digital devices according to PISA 2022



Note: Data from 36 countries participating in the PISA
Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database

This misalignment is also evident from the general association between time spent on digital devices and mathematics performance. According to PISA data, there is a negative association between mathematics performance and the time spent on learning activities using digital devices at school, before and after school, and on weekends (see Figure 5.3). This trend is common across participating countries with Australia and New Zealand being the only exceptions where all three associations are positive. Positive associations between device use during school learning activities and mathematics performance are also observed in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. One of the key questions for this report (see the chapter on the teaching profession) is how to support teachers in acquiring the competences needed to enable the purposeful and effective use of digital devices in ways that also improve subject-specific outcomes.

In contrast, the use of digital devices for leisure activities (before and after school and on weekends) is positively associated with mathematics performance in most countries, including Greece. This highlights the need for both teachers and students to develop **competences** that support the purposeful use of digital technologies in ways that clearly enhance learning outcomes. A more nuanced analysis of students' practices and competences is therefore necessary to inform sound policy recommendations and enabling teachers to act as change agents who can guide students towards more meaningful and impactful use of technology.

Figure 5.3. Association between time spent on digital devices and mathematics performance, after accounting for the socio-economic profile of students and schools

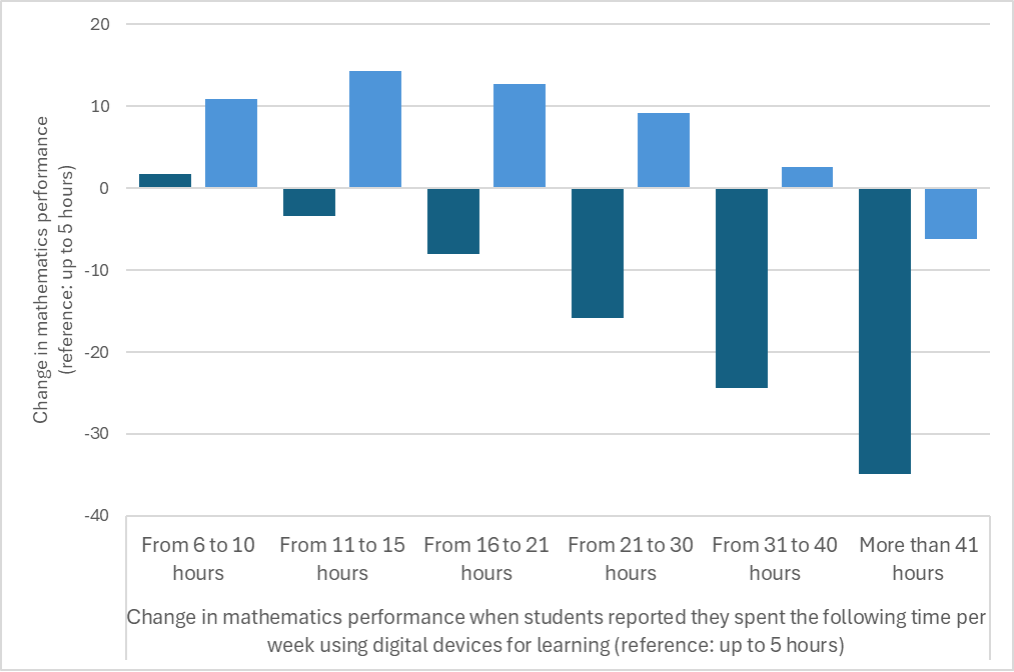
	Time spent using digital devices for...					
	Learning activities at school	Learning activities before and after school	Learning activities on weekends	Leisure at school	Leisure before and after school	Leisure on weekends
Australia*	4	6	7	-8	6	7
Austria	-3	-3	-3	-5	3	3
Belgium	-4	-3	.i	-8	2	2
Canada*	.i	2	2	-6	6	6
Chile	-4	.i	-3	-3	1	1
Colombia	.i	3	.i	-4	2	1
Czech Republic	-6	-6	-6	-5	.m	.m
Denmark*	7	-5	-4	-9	2	2
Estonia	-8	-5	-5	-6	2	1
Finland	-2	-4	-3	-4	4	3
France	-5	-7	-4	-4	2	2
Germany	-4	-6	-4	-9	3	2
Greece	-5	-5	-5	-7	2	2
Hungary	-4	-4	-3	-6	.i	.i
Iceland	-3	-2	2	-3	6	6
Ireland*	.m	.m	-2	-6	7	5
Israel	.m	.i	.m	-5	2	3
Italy	.i	.i	.i	-2	2	.m
Japan	-6	-9	-4	-11	.m	.m
Korea	-3	.i	3	-5	4	.m
Latvia*	-8	-4	-3	-4	2	1
Lithuania	-6	.i	.m	.i	5	4
Mexico	.i	2	.i	-4	2	1
Netherlands*	-2	.i	.m	-4	3	2
New Zealand*	4	3	5	-3	8	8
Norway	5	-6	-8	-11	3	2
Poland	-4	-4	-3	-4	1	1
Portugal	-4	-2	.i	-4	4	4
Slovak Republic	-4	-2	-4	-4	2	1
Slovenia	-6	-4	-3	-5	2	2
Spain	.i	.m	.i	-10	3	2
Sweden	3	-5	-4	-8	3	1
Switzerland	2	-3	.m	-6	.i	1
Türkiye	-2	-3	.m	-6	3	2
United Kingdom*	-3	7	6	-14	5	3
OECD average	-2	-2	-1	-6	3	2

Note: Data from 35 countries participating in the PISA
Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database

The challenge of developing digital competences among teachers and students in Greece is particularly evident when examining differences in the time students spend learning with digital devices. As shown in Figure 5.4 mathematics performance in Greece increases when students use digital devices for learning activities for 6 to 10 hours per week—surpassing the performance of students who report using them less. However, unlike the OECD average, where performance continues to improve with increased device use (up to 21 hours), student performance in Greece declines steadily beyond the 10-hour mark. This pattern

may reflect limitations in the effectiveness of digital pedagogical practices or students' ability to engage productively with digital tools for learning.

Figure 5.4. Association between mathematics performance and the number of hours per week spent on learning activities using digital devices in Greece, according to PISA 2022



Note: Data from 35 countries participating in the PISA
Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database

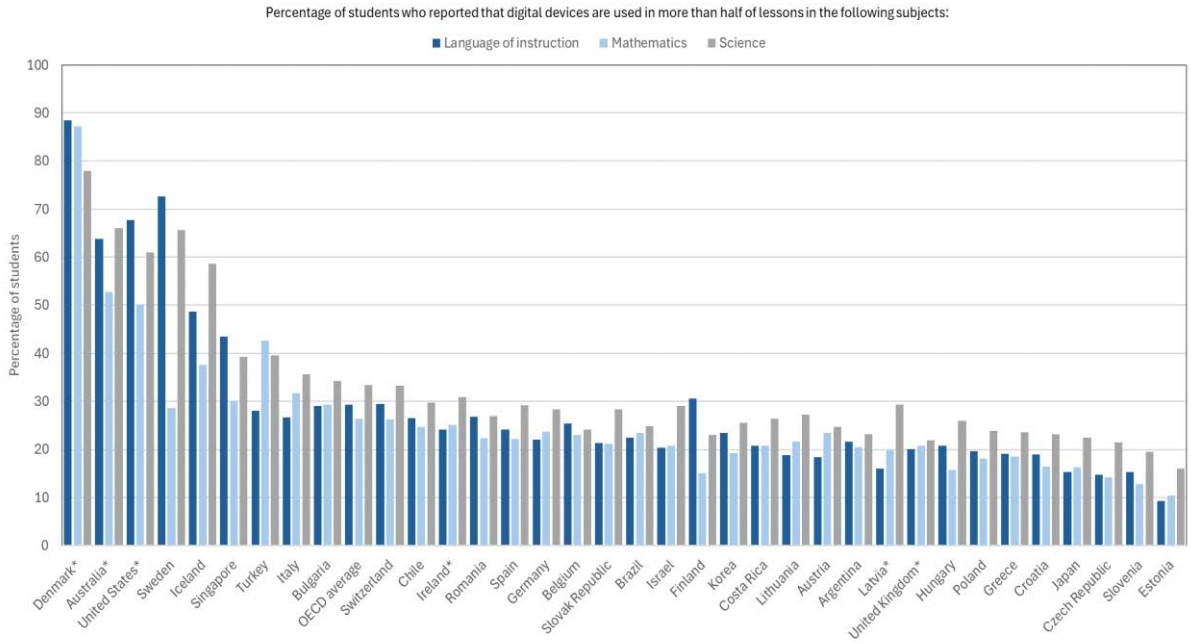
While associations between the use of digital devices and positive educational outcomes exist, these do not establish causal relationships: in Greece, PISA data shows time spent on digital devices in school is positively related to several factors, including digital self-efficacy and school device infrastructure. International evidence suggests, however, that effective integration depends on substantive policy, sufficient resources, and alignment with national context. Importantly, although some systems have pursued Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies to bridge access gaps, such approaches require robust equity safeguards, such as device provision, subsidies, and technical support, to avoid exacerbating digital divides (OECD, 2023[13]). In Australia and New Zealand, BYOD has supported digital learning, but its success depends on existing digital cultures, formal device requirements, and strong system-level support for disadvantaged students. Even where BYOD policies are well established, persistent challenges remain, including issues of compatibility, technical support, and ensuring that digital access does not depend on household resources alone (OECD, 2024[14]).

Greece has adopted a comprehensive policy restricting the use of mobile phones on school premises, a measure that has been reinforced since the 2024–2025 school year (MERAS, 2025[7]). This approach aligns with strong support from parents, teachers and school leaders, and reflects broader international debates about how to balance digital opportunities with wellbeing and safety concerns. According to PISA 2022, 95% of Greek school principals reported limiting mobile phone use, compared with an OECD average of 34% (OECD, 2023[13]). From an international perspective, such policies vary widely across countries, depending on national priorities, school culture and societal expectations. The Greek approach emphasises focus, safety and a structured learning environment, while other countries allow broader use

of student devices within regulated frameworks. The aim of this discussion is not to suggest a preferred model but to situate Greece within the diversity of international practices.

In addition, according to the PISA student questionnaire, around one fifth of language, mathematics, and science teachers in Greece report using digital devices in more than half of their lessons, one of the lowest proportions among OECD countries participating in the study (see Figure 5.5). In contrast, about half of Greek students report that digital devices are never, or almost never used in these core subjects, highlighting a significant gap in students' exposure to technology during instructional time.

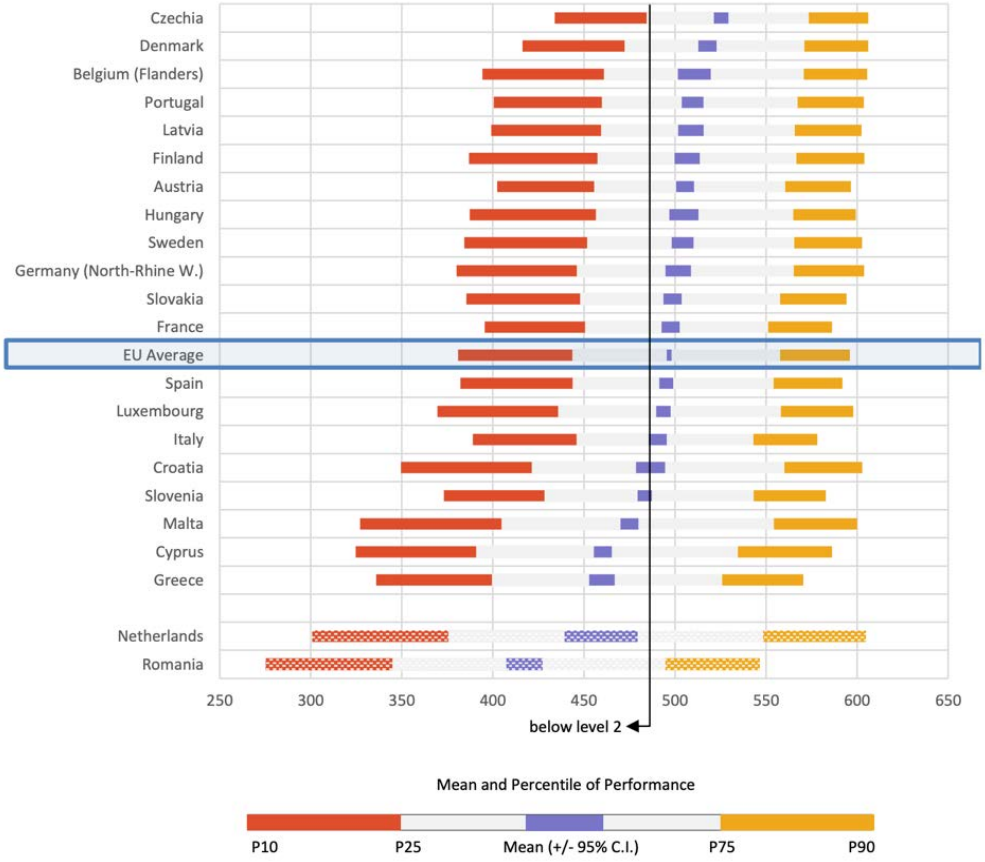
Figure 5.5. Percentage of students who reported that digital devices are used in more than half of the lessons in the following subjects according to PISA 2022



Note: Data from 35 countries participating in the PISA
Source: OECD, PISA 2022 Database

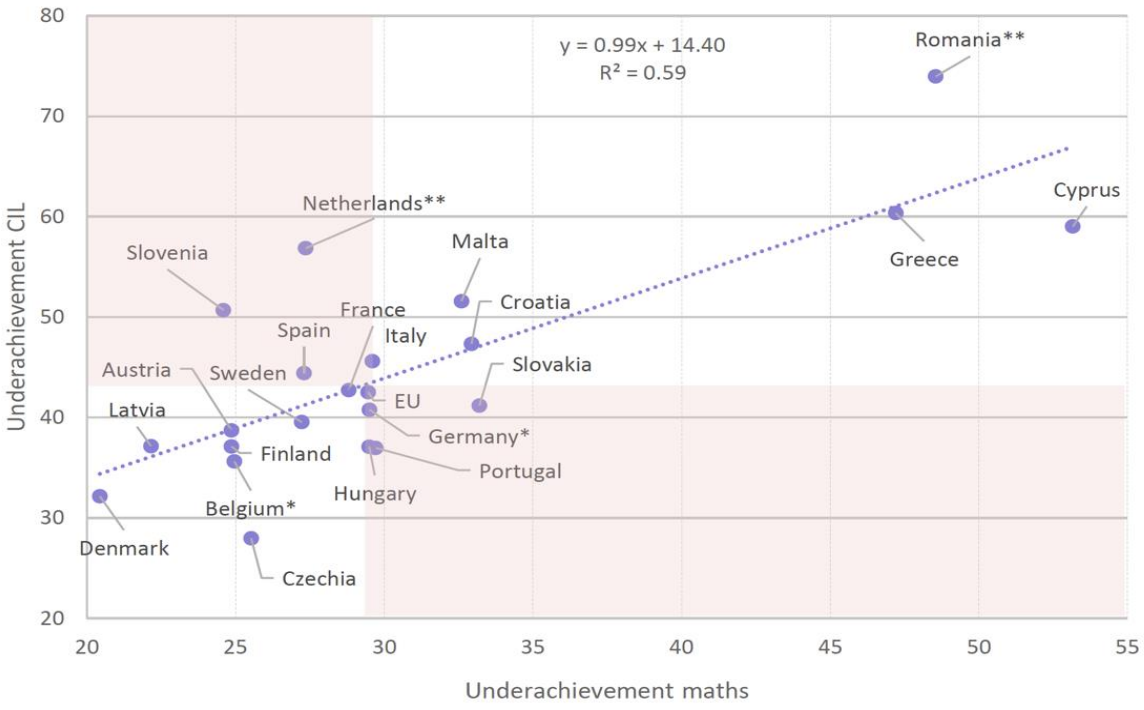
At the same time, Greek students' digital competences have been assessed through the *International Computer and Information Literacy Study* (ICILS) (https://www.iea.nl/publications/study-reports/national-reports-iea-studies/icils-2023-research-results-report-greece). According to this survey, Greek students demonstrate relatively low levels of digital competence (see Figure 5.6), with an average score of 459.9 points — significantly below the EU average of 496.8 points. This measure is particularly relevant, as there is a strong observed correlation between underachievement in ICILS 2023 and underachievement in mathematics in PISA 2022 (see Figure 5.7). A similar pattern is observed among high-performing students, where strong performance in ICILS aligns with top performance in mathematics in PISA, suggesting a link between digital competence and broader academic success.

Figure 5.6. Students' digital competence according to the International Computer and Information Literacy Study in 2023



Source: European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) in Europe, 2023 – Main findings and educational policy implications, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/5221263

Figure 5.7. Relationship between underachievement in ICILS 2023 and underachievement in mathematics in PISA 2022



Source: European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) in Europe, 2023 – Main findings and educational policy implications, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/5221263

In summary, while Greece has taken important steps to expand access to digital technologies and develop strategic plans, digital education remains in an early phase of implementation relative to national aspirations and international benchmarks. Key areas for further development include the effective integration of digital tools in classroom practice, the strengthening of digital competences, and closer alignment between policy goals and day-to-day realities in schools. These findings echo broader OECD analyses of PISA data, which caution that increases in digital device use do not automatically translate into better learning outcomes and highlight the importance of purposefully designed digital learning activities (OECD, 2025[9]; Forsström et al., 2025[11]; Forsström et al., 2025[10]). The following section explores emerging strengths in the Greek digital education landscape, highlighting promising initiatives and areas of progress that can serve as a foundation for sustained improvement.

Strengths in Greece's digital education

Despite persistent challenges in digital education, Greece has developed a number of strengths that can support more effective and equitable digital learning across the system. This section identifies five key areas where positive developments are evident: updated digital infrastructure in schools, the provision of curriculum-aligned digital resources, access to professional development opportunities for teachers, the potential of the experimental school network, and the evolving role of education advisers. Recognising and building on these strengths is critical to advancing digital transformation in education in a sustainable and inclusive way.

Investment in digital infrastructure has expanded access to updated digital tools but it may seem to remain underused

Greece has made significant investments, using EU funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility, to equip all classrooms for students aged 10 and above with interactive digital boards — large touchscreens that can be used by teachers and students to engage with interactive resources aligned with the national curriculum. According to information provided by the Ministry of Education, 87% of these classrooms are now equipped with digital boards. Visits by the OECD Review Team confirmed that digital boards are actively used; however, their use was primarily teachers-led and mostly with the purpose of showing content — such as materials from the Digital Educational Platform "e-me" or YouTube videos — with students largely remaining passive in the learning process. While in some cases students were observed interacting with the digital board, this still left most of the class in a passive role.

In addition, many schools have been supplied with robotics kits, which offer opportunities for active and constructive learning to enhance students' computational thinking skills. However, in the schools visited by the OECD Review Team, some of these kits seemed not in regular use and were stored away in cupboards. One possible reason for the limited use of robotics kits may relate to teachers' competences and their beliefs about the value of applying them. Empirical studies show that personal factors — such as ease of use, confidence, openness to new tools, participation in social networks, and experience with using multiple technologies — are stronger predictors of teachers' use of technology than contextual factors such as classroom equipment, students' access to devices, school infrastructure, curriculum support, or peer influence (Lucas et al., 2021[15]). These challenges are explored further in the following section.

Curriculum-aligned digital platforms offer universal access, but usage is uneven

Greece has made substantial investments in developing educational digital platforms and curriculum-aligned digital textbooks that incorporate interactive learning objects. The central digital platform, *Digital School*, serves as a portal for all public digital education services for teachers, students, and parents. Among other features, it will include until mid-2026 an on-demand video library with courses for a wide range of classes and subjects. The platform also enables live-streamed tutoring sessions in the afternoons, featuring interactive question-and-answer segments for students. The videos are concise—typically three or nine minutes long—and focus on specific curriculum topics. Live-streamed tutoring is supported by Moodle and targets senior secondary school subjects through 90-minute sessions offered in the afternoons. These sessions are widely used by final-year students. To promote equity, the platform also provides soon a remote classroom solution that combines on-site teaching with live online instruction.

A notable initiative within this ecosystem is the *Digital Tutorial Platform* (*Ψηφιακό Φροντιστήριο*), which offers curriculum-aligned video lessons beginning in the fifth grade of primary school and extending across all lower- and upper-secondary subjects that are assessed through written examinations. For general lower- and upper-secondary education, the platform delivers structured video lessons that comprehensively cover the curriculum, allowing students to consolidate their learning at their own pace. In the final year of upper-secondary education, lessons are delivered live, recorded, and made available on demand, ensuring continuous access for students preparing for high-stakes national examinations.

While the platform was designed primarily to support students, it also indirectly contributes to teachers' professional development by modelling alternative approaches to presenting curriculum content and demonstrating diverse teaching practices. The platform thus combines flexibility with high-quality instruction, helping to democratise access to educational resources nationwide. Its design promotes equitable access for specific groups—for instance, students with visual or hearing impairments—while also reducing geographical disparities by reaching learners in remote or under-resourced areas.

The online textbooks developed by Photodentro are freely available to all students and teachers, ensuring equitable access to educational content. Greece has also established an extensive digital educational repository infrastructure for the organisation, hosting, and distribution of open digital learning objects and resources. The Photodentro educational repositories provide open access to around 15,000 digital learning objects, including interactive simulations, visualisations, exercises, educational games, interactive maps, and videos. The National Aggregator for Educational Content (https://photodentro.edu.gr) collects educational resources from various repositories and sources, serving as a central access portal to approximately 19,000 resources. The Photodentro repositories, along with related systems and services for educational content (accessible via https://dschool.edu.gr), are widely used by the educational community. They have been developed, maintained, and operated by CTI "Diophantus". However, the development of Photodentro stopped in 2020 and a new repository, Kaleduscope, is underway.

In addition to the Photodentro repositories, the collaborative Digital Educational Platform "e-me" (https://e-me.edu.gr) has been developed. This platform serves primarily as a digital workspace and collaboration environment for pupils and teachers. Currently, plans are being implemented to upgrade the infrastructure and services of the platform, advance the digital transformation of education, and promote related initiatives at the Ministry of Education level. For example, a study has been launched to improve the Digital Educational Platform "e-me", aiming to develop it further into a collaborative, AI-powered Next-Generation Learning Environment (e-me NextGen). At present, the platform functions primarily as a repository of educational content and supports the creation of new materials and "hives" — collaborative learning spaces (MERAS, 2025[7]). The platform is freely accessible to all teachers and students, thereby ensuring equal access regardless of a school's or family's financial situation. More than 560,000 students and over 138,000 teachers are registered users over the years (MERAS, 2025[7]). However, more active and pedagogically meaningful use of the platform depends on students' access to personal digital devices — both at school and at home — as well as teachers' competences to guide students, and students' skills for self-regulated learning with digital tools. The integration of AI-powered tools into the platform also holds promise for improving digital learning. These tools aim to facilitate students' collaborative inquiry and knowledge construction, foster creativity, and develop critical thinking, while also empowering and supporting educators in the effective integration and use of Artificial Intelligence in teaching and learning.

Professional development opportunities are widespread but weakly integrated

The MERAS and the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) in Greece provide distance-learning opportunities focussed on digital education, and digital tutorials have been developed to support both teachers and students across several topics at the national level. However, teachers need to be better informed about the value of these tutorials and of the *Digital Tutorial Platform*, which offers students numerous learning opportunities. Teachers' motivation to engage in distance learning should also be examined to improve participation rates. Furthermore, a critical and independent review of the available professional development opportunities—including how the *Digital Tutorial Platform* can be integrated into teachers' practice—is warranted.

During the country visit by the OECD Review Team, it became evident that teachers participate in both compulsory training provided by authorities and additional school-organised activities. The compulsory courses are delivered during working hours — two days per academic year — but their total duration is limited, and they do not specifically focus on the digital competences required for more meaningful and effective digital education. In the case of school-based courses, participation depends on individual teacher motivation, which may be reduced by the need to invest personal time outside of the regular school day.

Another potential strength for advancing digital education in Greece lies in the availability of a range of professional learning opportunities focussed on digital teaching and learning. Nationally offered distance-learning programmes and online tutorials provide teachers with access to digital education resources,

regardless of their geographic location. However, as highlighted in Chapter 3 on the teaching profession, teacher participation in professional development overall remains limited, reflecting systemic barriers that affect not only digital education but all areas of continuous professional learning. In recent years, the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) has offered asynchronous distance-learning programmes on Universal Design and the Development of Accessible Digital Educational Material to almost 30,000 primary, secondary, and special education teachers, as well as education coordinators and other professionals involved in special education, during 2022–2023. In addition, short four-hour courses have been provided to around 2,500 teachers on Artificial Intelligence in Education, alongside longer 50-hour programmes on Generative AI for Educators. However, when compared to the total number of teachers in Greece, these efforts remain insufficient to achieve the goals set for digital transformation in education. The barriers for engaging in professional development activities include limited mandatory training time, relatively weak incentives for voluntary engagement in professional learning, and constrained opportunities for sustained, school-based collaboration. Moreover, as described in Chapter 2 on school autonomy, Greece's centralised governance model historically limits schools' flexibility to organise professional development tailored to their specific needs and priorities. Despite these challenges, the existence of national frameworks for professional learning, combined with growing digital infrastructure and school self-evaluation processes, offers a platform from which Greece could strengthen teacher engagement with digital education initiatives in the future.

An additional strength of Greece's digital education landscape is the existence of a national framework for school internal evaluation, which offers a structured mechanism through which schools can reflect on and improve their educational practices. As discussed in Chapter 2, internal evaluation processes require schools to set annual priorities and action plans in key domains such as teaching quality, student engagement, and professional development. This framework provides a ready-made opportunity for schools to integrate digital education goals into their improvement planning. While Chapter 3 highlights that current teacher appraisal processes place limited emphasis on digital pedagogical competences, the school-level internal evaluation cycle could be more actively used to identify teachers' professional learning needs in digital education and to monitor progress in the meaningful use of digital technologies. Strengthening the capacity of school leaders and education advisers to guide these processes presents an opportunity to embed digital transformation objectives more fully into school improvement efforts.

Experimental schools could drive innovation, but impact is limited by fragmentation

Greece has developed an extensive framework of experimental schools — public institutions that serve as hubs for educational innovation, research, and teacher training. The Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports plans to establish 13 Innovation Centres during the 2025–2026 school year, one in each Regional Directorate of Education across the country. These centres aim to promote digital transformation and strengthen STEM education in primary and secondary schools, but these will be open to the community as well. The Innovation Centres will host experiential workshops featuring advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and virtual reality. The overarching goal is to enhance 21st-century skills, foster educational equity, and encourage community collaboration. This initiative is funded through the "Greece 2.0" Recovery and Resilience Plan.

These schools hold strong potential as platforms for testing new educational technologies, particularly pedagogical approaches that leverage digital tools to enhance learning outcomes. However, this potential is not yet fully realised. Research activities within formerly established experimental schools or the Innovation Centres would benefit from more strategic planning, and the findings from their studies should be more effectively disseminated to schools nationwide. Another key challenge is the need to build system-wide trust in the relevance and value of experimental schools and Innovation Centres and their research activities.

A promising international example of empowering experimental schools through collaboration with universities comes from the Estonian context (Pedaste et al., 2014[16]). The Estonian Innovation Schools model defines four dimensions of collaboration between schools and universities: traineeship, professional development, team teaching, and research and development. Together, these dimensions promote synergy and support scalable innovation grounded in collaborative research.

Another Europe-wide example (Sotiriou et al., 2016[17]) presents empirical evidence on how stimulating teacher engagement, embedding innovation within school environments, and accelerating implementation processes can lead to the successful adoption of innovative learning approaches. The study also highlights the importance of systematic trials in testing and refining education innovations before large-scale implementation. Drawing on these insights, Greece could develop a more coherent strategy for planning, piloting, and scaling innovation in digital education. Strengthening collaboration among experimental schools, innovation and testing centres, and universities acting as research and development hubs would enable the effective translation of innovative practices into mainstream education.

Several national initiatives demonstrate Greece's emerging capacity in this field. The EDUCONTACT project (2025–2026) supports the educational community by leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) through a comprehensive citizen support system. The "AI in Schools" programme, implemented with OpenAI and the Onassis Foundation, promotes the responsible and creative use of AI in teaching and learning. Complementary initiatives such as the "Critical Readers" project, which enhances students' digital literacy and critical thinking, and the Universal Design and Development of Accessible Digital Educational Material programme, which ensures inclusive access to learning resources, further illustrate the growing institutional commitment to educational innovation. Collectively, these projects represent important steps aiming at building a structured ecosystem that supports innovation, experimentation, and evidence-based improvement in Greece's digital education sector (MERAS, 2025[7]).

Education advisers can support digital change but face capacity constraints

A distinctive strength of the Greek education system, as discussed in Chapter 2 on school autonomy, is the presence of a nationwide network of education advisers. These professionals play a central role in providing pedagogical guidance, supporting teacher professional development, and facilitating the implementation of national education policies at the school level. With responsibilities that include mentoring teachers, guiding the use of curriculum resources, supporting inclusive education, and contributing to school internal evaluation processes, education advisers represent an important institutional mechanism for driving change in schools—including in the area of digital education.

From the perspective of digital education, education advisers offer schools a key point of contact for expert advice on integrating digital tools into teaching and learning. Their subject-specific expertise and pedagogical experience position them well to help teachers navigate emerging digital pedagogies, especially when combined with their role in reviewing school internal evaluation reports and supporting school-based action planning. Their involvement in the external school evaluation process also enables them to observe patterns across schools and identify promising practices for wider dissemination.

Furthermore, as described in Chapter 2, the recent expansion of the education counsellor role—following the adoption of Law 4823/2021—has increased their potential contribution to system-wide improvement efforts. The alignment between their pedagogical advisory functions and their responsibilities in school evaluation creates an opportunity for education advisers to support more coherent and context-sensitive professional development related to digital education. This dual role enables them to act as both evaluators and facilitators of improvement, making them well-positioned to help schools translate evaluation findings into targeted actions for enhancing digital teaching and learning practices.

Although their capacity to fully engage with digital education varies across regions and specialisations, the national presence of education advisers offers Greece a valuable infrastructure for building teacher

capacity in digital education. Their existing connections with schools, experience in leading professional development activities, and formal responsibilities in school evaluation provide a strong foundation for further strengthening their role as catalysts for digital transformation at the school level.

Challenges in Greece's digital education

Greece has achieved considerable progress in its ongoing digital transformation of education; however, challenges remain that limit the effective integration of technology into classroom teaching and learning. The primary obstacles include an absence of robust evaluation mechanisms for digital education policies and the need for systematic development and assessment of teachers' digital pedagogical competences. Addressing these persistent challenges through evidence-based evaluation and targeted professional development is essential to ensure that digital education continues to advance student learning and support sustainable improvements across Greek schools.

There is insufficient systematic evaluation of the impact of policy decisions intended to support digital education

Rigorous evaluation of the impact of digital learning on student outcomes is a prerequisite for evidence-based policymaking in digital education. Establishing both school-level monitoring mechanisms and a coherent national evaluation framework is essential to ensure systematic measurement of progress and impact. At the school level, tools should be designed to help teachers assess how digital tools and pedagogical practices influence student learning outcomes. These instruments could be developed and validated nationally in collaboration with universities and research institutions, accompanied by clear implementation and interpretation guidelines to support context-specific improvement at the school and classroom levels.

The ongoing Smart Schools initiative under the Technical Support Instrument of the EU (TSI) provides a valuable foundation for this work. However, effective evaluation requires the involvement of specialists in educational assessment, psychology, and psychometrics, in addition to experts in digital learning technologies. The formation of a national Scientific Committee by the MERAS, composed of university members, educational officials, and practitioners, represents an important step towards strengthening institutional coordination. To ensure validity and relevance, this Committee's work could be broadened to include experts in digital competence assessment, as well as researchers focussing on student attitudes, beliefs, and self-regulation competencies. This multidimensional approach would align national evaluation efforts with international quality standards and create a robust evidence base to inform future digital education policies (MERAS, 2025[7]).

When designing impact evaluations, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of surveys in producing valid conclusions. Surveys may elicit socially desirable responses, and previous research has shown that survey data often does not strongly correlate with data collected through observations, tests, data logs, or other methods that are less reliant on respondents' willingness to present themselves in a positive light (Parry et al., 2021[18]). During the site visits, we observed little evidence of evaluation regarding the impact of digital technology use on student learning outcomes. A systematic approach is needed to evaluate both outcomes and the quality of the quality of the learning process — including how technology is used in classrooms and for homework.

As part of the planned update to the Greek *Digital Educational Platform* "e-me", research is expected to focus on existing AI-powered educational platforms and the applications they offer, alongside proposals for technological and functional extensions to "e-me". However, there are currently no plans to evaluate the impact of either the existing content and features or the new developments that will be introduced. Such evaluation will be essential to support informed policy development and continuous improvement.

Teachers' digital pedagogical competences need to be systematically assessed

The assessment of teachers' digital pedagogical competences is a crucial starting point for understanding how to effectively support digital education in Greece. Digitally competent teachers are key to the meaningful and impactful integration of technology into teaching and learning. Currently, there is insufficient evidence of a systematic framework that evaluates the full spectrum of teachers' digital pedagogical competences. Such a framework should incorporate not only technical skills, but also pedagogical knowledge, values, attitudes, and the capacity to design and implement effective learning scenarios, as well as evidence of impact on student outcomes. Existing assessments, such as those conducted as part of the B-Level teacher training programmes, involve digital examinations with both knowledge-based and practical tasks. Although these initiatives are important, they remain narrow in scope and do not adequately capture the complex, multidimensional nature of teachers' digital competences required for transformative teaching practices. To be effective, any future evaluation framework should place particular emphasis on formative assessment, offering tailored feedback and supporting teachers' ongoing professional learning. This is essential to ensure that assessment serves as a catalyst for continuous improvement, rather than as a purely summative judgement. To ensure professional development is tailored to real needs, Greece would benefit from establishing a comprehensive national framework for evaluating teachers' digital pedagogical competences, which would employ multiple forms of assessment and emphasise observable improvements in teaching quality and learning outcomes.

As discussed in Chapter 3, teacher appraisal in Greece has recently been reformed through the introduction of a new appraisal framework in 2023. This new system includes assessment of pedagogical skills but currently places limited emphasis on teachers' digital pedagogical competences. Expanding the evaluation framework to include digital competences could provide important feedback and professional learning triggers for teachers.

The Greek national digital transformation strategy for 2020–2025 defined seven actions to promote the development of digital skills among all citizens. Two of these actions focus specifically on general education. The first involves the integration of innovative technologies into the teaching and learning processes of primary and secondary education, with the aim of enhancing students' creativity, problem-solving abilities, and collaboration skills. The second action proposes the institutionalisation of weekly IT lessons across all grades of secondary education, with clearly defined educational content and teaching methods tailored to each grade level.

It is not yet clear whether these actions have been successful. During interviews conducted as part of the study visit to Greece by the OECD Review Team, it was noted that digital skills are a requirement for those aspiring to become school principals. Greek authorities offer a free training programme to support this goal, and as a result, an increasing number of teachers are gradually enrolling. However, many of the teachers interviewed still reported discomfort with using technology. For this reason, the authorities have initially focussed its efforts on targeting younger teachers, who may be more open to adopting digital tools in their professional practice.

Teachers are also subjected to appraisal mechanisms within the Greek education system (see the chapter on the teaching profession). However, this appraisal does not place strong emphasis on assessing their digital pedagogical competences. While the use of digital boards and digital learning resources is included in the evaluation, the criteria remain limited in scope. The "Selfie" tools are employed to help schools assess whether teachers are using technology.

The assessment of teaching methodology and practices includes reference to the appropriate use of teaching aids and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Each aspect, including ICT use, is assessed on a four-level scale:

1. **Unsatisfactory:** technology use is not mentioned in the assessment rubrics.
2. **Satisfactory:** adequate and functional integration of ICT into the teaching process.

3. **Very Good:** extensive use of participatory teaching strategies in processing lesson content, with an emphasis on dialogical or hands-on activities, as well as the use of visual and digital media (ICT).
4. **Excellent:** technology use is not mentioned in the assessment rubrics.

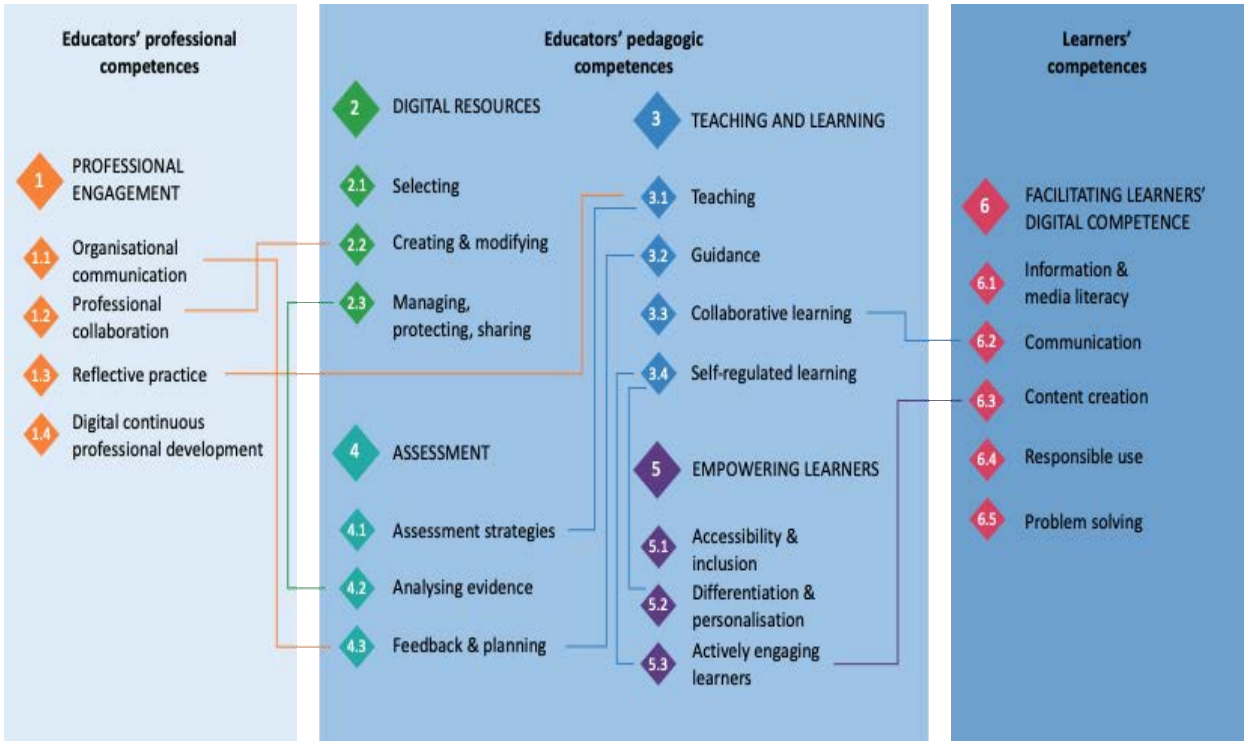
A systematic framework is needed to assess and improve teachers' digital pedagogical competences

A central challenge for Greece's digital education agenda lies in the absence of a comprehensive and systematic framework for assessing teachers' digital pedagogical competences. While teachers are subject to appraisal processes within the broader quality assurance system described in Chapter 2 on school autonomy, the current focus remains general and does not sufficiently address the specific pedagogical skills needed for effective digital teaching and learning. As outlined in Chapter 2, the national framework for teacher appraisal involves education advisers conducting assessments of teaching practices, including elements related to the use of educational resources and ICT. However, digital education is treated as only one among many aspects of teaching quality, and assessments rarely delve into how teachers design, deliver, and assess learning activities using digital tools. Furthermore, schools' internal evaluations, while focussing on multiple domains of school functioning, also lack specific indicators that track teachers' digital pedagogical growth. This limitation is compounded by the centralised governance structure of Greece's education system. As discussed in Chapter 2, the design and implementation of teacher appraisal instruments remain under tight national control, leaving little space for schools to tailor evaluation tools to local needs—including those related to digital education. Schools do not currently have the authority to conduct targeted assessments of teachers' digital competences or to use evaluation results as a basis for school-level professional development planning in this area.

In view of this situation, a more comprehensive and structured approach is offered by the *DigCompEdu* framework (see Figure 5.8). The *DigCompEdu* framework (Redecker, 2017[1]) distinguishes three key dimensions for evaluation: educators' professional competences, pedagogical competences, and their role in supporting learners' digital competences. In the context of the B-Level training programmes in Greece, the TET-SAT self-assessment tool, based on the *DigCompEdu* framework, is used both at the beginning and at the end of the training. However, it is not employed to systematically capture the professional development needs of all teachers. Within the B-Level programmes, educators receive feedback derived from the collected data—initially, to help them better plan and organise their teaching (pre-training results), and subsequently, to evaluate the effectiveness of the training and the learning outcomes (post-training results). A similar structured approach could be extended more broadly to identify teachers' professional development needs across Greece.

According to the DigCompEdu framework teachers' professional competences are defined in terms of professional engagement, including organisational communication, collaboration, reflective practice, and continuous digital professional development. Pedagogical competences are organised into four areas: digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, and empowering learners. Finally, learners' digital competences are assessed in line with the *DigCompEdu* framework (Vuorikari, Kluzer and Punie, 2022[19]). Teachers are expected to support students in developing competence across five domains: information and media literacy, communication, digital content creation, responsible use, and problem-solving.

Figure 5.8. The DigCompEdu framework



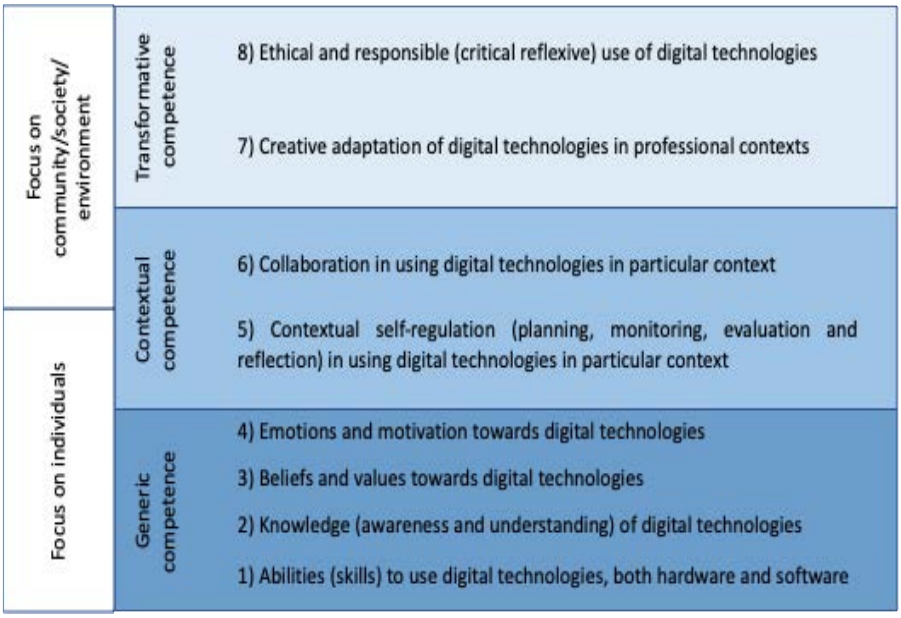
Source: The Digital Competence Framework (European Commission, 2025[20]).

This *DigCompEdu* framework has been further developed in a revised model for describing digital competence among professionals, including teachers (Pedaste and Bardone, 2023[21]). This has resulted in a *Framework for Digital Competence for Learning and Teaching* that incorporates elements of the *DigCompEdu* framework but also integrates key elements from earlier conceptual models by Martin's (Martin, 2009[22]) and Krumsvik's (Krumsvik, 2011[23]) frameworks to better address contemporary societal needs — with a focus on collaboration, the creative adaptation of digital technologies in professional settings, and their ethical and critically reflective use, in line with UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (https://www.unesco.org/en/sdgs).

More broadly, this new framework (see Figure 5.9) highlights the importance of three types of digital competence: generic, contextual, and transformative.

- **Generic competence** encompasses not only abilities and knowledge, but also beliefs, values, emotions, and motivation related to the general use of digital technologies.
- **Contextual competence** refers to the competence to apply digital technologies in educational settings, both individually and collaboratively.
- **Transformative competence** focusses on innovation through the creative, ethical, and responsible adaptation of digital technologies.

Figure 5.9. Framework for *Digital Competence for Learning and Teaching*



Source: Pedaste, M., & Bardone, E. (2023). Trends and Issues of Digital Learning in Estonia. Trends and Issues of Promoting Digital Learning in High-Digital-Competitiveness Countries: Country Reports and International Comparison.

These frameworks could support Greece in developing a more systematic approach to assess those teachers' competences required for implementing meaningful and impactful digital education. Several countries have already created self-assessment tools to evaluate teachers' digital competences. More recently, however, there have been efforts to combine self-assessment with test-based assessment methods in order to improve the validity of results. One example of this is the 360-degree assessment approach developed through the European project Upgrading Higher Education Teachers' and Students' Hybrid Learning Competences. This initiative, involving partners from Finland, Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, and Portugal, aims to design assessment instruments and tools that empower teachers' digital competences in hybrid learning environments. Within this context, a psychometrically validated instrument has been developed that can be used with both teachers and students to assess ten digital competences, grounded in twelve theoretical models (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Digital competences assessed in the context of the project Upgrading Higher Education Teachers' and Students' Hybrid Learning Competences

Dimension/scale	No of tasks/items (points)	Task type
*Assessment of **generic digital competences** for hybrid teaching and learning*		
Knowledge of implementing hybrid teaching / for learning in hybrid learning settings	3 tasks (10 points)	Open-ended
Performing operations with digital tools	4 or 5 tasks* (12 or 14 points)	Multiple-choice and open-ended
Communication and collaboration in the digital world	3 tasks (11 points)	Open-ended
Legal behaviour in the digital world	3 tasks (13 points)	Multiple-choice
Protecting yourself and others in the digital world	2 or 3 tasks* (7 or 6 points)	Open-ended
Self-efficacy in hybrid teaching	8 items	Scale 1–7
Attitudes towards hybrid teaching	12 items	Scale 1–7
Emotions related to hybrid teaching	16 items	Scale 1–7
Motivation and forming motivation related to hybrid teaching	18 items	Scale 1–7
*Assessment of **contextual digital competences** for hybrid teaching and learning*		
Learning goals in hybrid learning	6 items	Scale 1–7
Learning strategies supported in hybrid teaching	12 items	Scale 1–7
Contextual self-regulation in hybrid teaching	9 or 10 items*	Scale 1–7
Contextual collaboration for hybrid learning	5 questions (26 points)	Open-ended and scale 1–7

Note: *Students and teachers had a different number of tasks/items – teachers had more tasks/items in a few cases.
Source: Pedaste, M., Saks, K. Leijen, Ä., Nakata, A., Järvenoja, H., Santos, P. J. M., Guerra, C., Balula, A., Moreira, A., Krejins, K., & Weinberger, A. (submitted). Assessment of higher education teachers' and students' readiness for hybrid teaching and learning using a novel framework of digital competence.

Improving teachers' digital competences requires more systematic and sustained training opportunities

Fewer than half of Greek principals (46%) reported that their school schedules time for teachers to meet and share, evaluate, or develop instructional materials and approaches that incorporate digital devices (OECD, 2023[13]). The OECD average for this practice is 58%, and some countries consider it an important strategy for improving digital education — with 99% of principals in Singapore and 91% in Iceland reporting such opportunities for collaborative planning (OECD, 2023[13]).

Systematic training is essential to equip teachers with the competences required for the meaningful and impactful use of digital technologies in education. Such training should not only enhance their ability to integrate technology into teaching and learning but also foster motivation to do so. In Greece, the current provision of only two days of state-guided professional development per academic year may be insufficient. It does not nudge teachers towards more advanced B-Level training programmes (see for details below) that could potentially serve the needs. Given the rapid pace of change in the digital education landscape, significantly more time is needed to develop teachers' digital competences. Moreover, these two days are intended to cover a wide range of professional development areas — not exclusively digital education — further limiting the focus and depth of training in this critical domain.

Training should focus not only on delivering theoretical knowledge but also on changing teaching practices and evaluating the impact of these changes on learning outcomes. For example, longer-term training programmes involving multiple sessions — where teachers are expected to apply what they have learned between meetings and collect data on its impact — could adopt an action research model. In Greece, that

approach is somewhat implemented in the design of B2-Level training programmes, but these have been provided to a limited number of teachers. During site visits to Greek schools by the OECD Review Team, it became apparent that teachers often support one another in addressing digital education challenges. However, this support is primarily limited to technical issues rather than pedagogical ones. Furthermore, teachers demonstrated limited awareness of Ministry-coordinated training opportunities, suggesting a need for improved communication and outreach.

In Greece, two levels of ICT Teacher Training certification are currently specified: the A-Level and B-Level certificates. The A-Level certificate is obtained through digital examinations and confirms that a teacher possesses basic ICT skills. However, training for the A-Level has not been offered since 2008. The focus has since shifted towards more advanced B-Level training, which places greater emphasis on contextualising ICT use for teaching and learning. This shift can be seen as a constructive development in the professional training of educators.

The A- and B-Level ICT Teacher Training programmes and certification activities have been continuously implemented since the early 2000s by the Computer Technology Institute and Press “DIOPHANTUS” (CTI), in accordance with its institutional responsibilities and in collaboration with the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP). These initiatives have been carried out through successive projects funded under the National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRF). In 2015, the B-Level programme was updated, expanded, and made available to teachers of all specialities. Since 2017, B-Level ICT Teacher Training has been structured into two sequential, distinct training programmes:

1. **B1-Level ICT Teacher Training** – Introductory training on the educational use of ICT (36 hours).
2. **B2-Level ICT Teacher Training** – Advanced training on the integration and application of ICT in teaching practice (60 hours, including activities for preparing and delivering in-class practice).

Both programmes are implemented across 13 distinct “clusters” of related teacher specialisations, covering all disciplines: Literature, Science, Mathematics, Informatics, Primary Education, Kindergarten Teachers, Foreign Languages, Fine Arts, Physical Education and Health, Educational Engineers, Economics, Management and Social Sciences, Land Professions, and Special Education. Educators who deliver B-Level ICT training are highly qualified teachers drawn from the teaching profession itself, selected through an open competitive process. They must complete an intensive and specialised training programme of 380 hours at universities and are subsequently certified as B-Level ICT Teacher Trainers following rigorous examinations.

However, while this system supports the professional development of a selected group of trainers, it does not directly ensure the development of digital competences among all teachers. Between 2008 and 2014, approximately 27,000 teachers participated in B-Level ICT Teacher Training. A further 30,000 were trained from 2017 to 2019, and 5,800 between 2020 and 2022. The current plan for 2023 to 2027 aims to train 12,600 teachers at the B1 level and 15,000 at the B2 level. In addition, training programmes for teacher-trainers were conducted, with 640 graduates between 2007 and 2012 and a further 300 in 2019. Given the rapid evolution of digital education, the competences required for training other teachers are also changing quickly.

Therefore, a more flexible and responsive approach is needed—one that ensures regular upskilling and annual professional development for both trainers and teachers. A promising initiative to support continuous professional learning in the field of digital education has been introduced within the framework of the B-Level training programmes. Online Learning Communities have been established for both teachers and trainers to promote peer collaboration and ongoing professional exchange on the pedagogical use of digital technologies. These communities provide participants with opportunities to share expertise and educational materials, and to stay informed about emerging technologies and related pedagogical approaches. However, better coordination of collaborative learning activities and formal recognition of these efforts within teachers’ daily professional responsibilities are still needed. The forthcoming Teacher Training Register (described in Chapter 3) presents a significant opportunity to

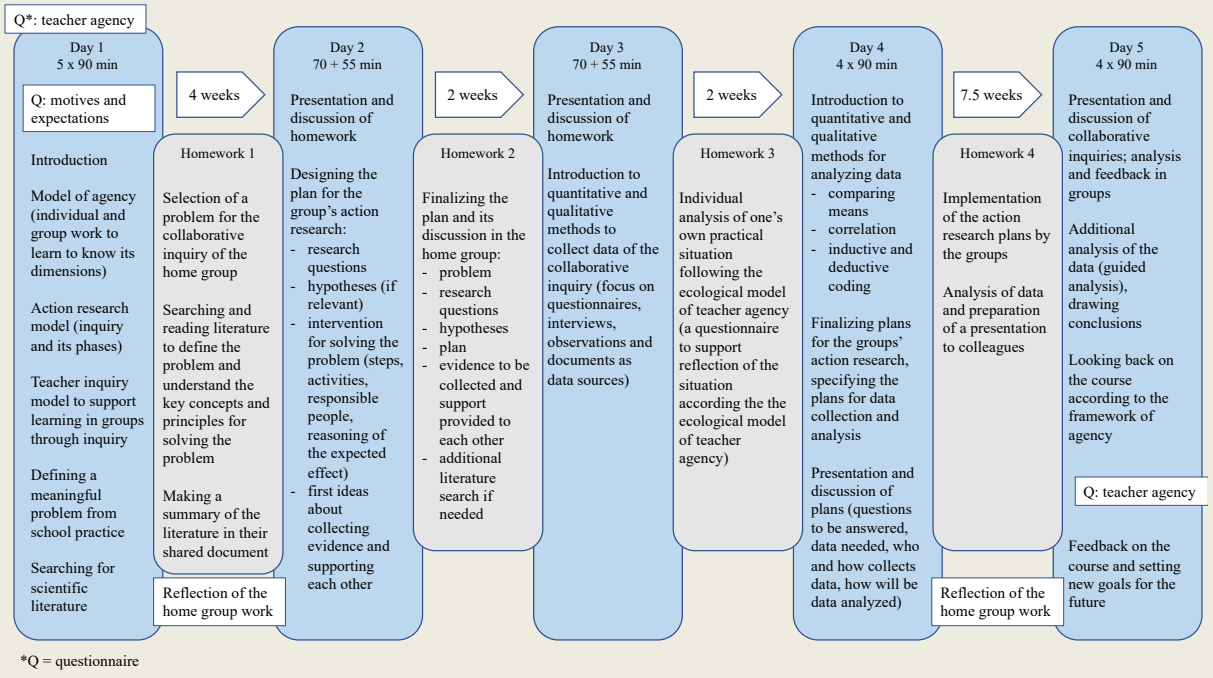
improve the coordination, quality assurance, and needs-responsiveness of digital education training for teachers. Aligning digital training offers with the broader professional learning system reforms discussed in Chapter 3 would help ensure greater relevance and teacher engagement.

Another challenge relates to the content and structure of the training. The B1-Level ICT Teacher Training consists of 36 teaching hours over approximately 12 weeks — typically one session per week (2–3 teaching hours), supplemented by asynchronous activities. These asynchronous activities are a core component of the programme. Between training sessions, participants complete small tasks assigned by their trainers, intended to reinforce learning and support practical application. The training content includes: an introduction to the educational use of ICT; open-source tools and environments that foster collaboration and participation in the learning process; digital platforms that support the school community; educational social networks; presentation tools; modern general-purpose software; emerging technologies (e.g. AI, VR/AR, IoT); internet safety; and digital citizenship. Activities are designed to leverage these tools and technologies. However, the main limitation of the B1-Level training appears to be its relatively narrow focus. While it raises awareness among teachers about the tools available to them, the limited duration (36 hours) and the emphasis on tools rather than pedagogy, along with a lack of extended opportunities to test new methods in practice, restrict its impact. Furthermore, there has been no systematic assessment in Greece of the training's effect on either teaching practices or student learning outcomes.

The B2-Level ICT Teacher Training is a 60-hour programme delivered over 20 weeks and serves as a continuation of the B1-level course. It focusses on the advanced use and integration of ICT into teaching practice and places slightly more emphasis on pedagogical aspects. Among the stated objectives of this training are to enable participants "to understand the principles of designing an educational scenario or activity in their field of expertise, to be able to design activities themselves in their specialty and include them in the teaching process", and "be able to reorganise the classroom accordingly so that their teaching is in line with modern teaching requirements of their specific area of expertise and that the new digital technologies fit in the educational process in the most productive way". Another key aim is to support teachers in reorganising their classroom environments so that their teaching aligns with contemporary pedagogical requirements, and digital technologies are used in the most productive way possible. However, the main emphasis still appears to be on the use of digital educational resources within specific subject areas. One notable strength of the B2-level training is the inclusion of "in-class application of ICT", which provides opportunities for teachers to implement what they have learned in real classroom settings. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how, or whether, the impact of these revised teaching practices is systematically assessed.

A strong example of a training model aimed at changing teachers' practices can be found in the Estonian context. This half-year, school-based approach is designed to foster a professional community in which teachers collaboratively address contextual challenges and support one another throughout the learning and implementation process. A key feature of the programme is that teachers work in teams to design and carry out action research projects. These projects aim to gather evidence on how their changes in practice influence specific target outcomes. The model strongly emphasises teacher agency and collaborative inquiry. Research shows that this approach positively impacts teacher practices, regardless of whether participants are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to engage in the training (Leijen, Pedaste and Lepp, 2024[24]). Further details can be found in Box 5.2.

Box 5.2. Schema of the in-service teacher education course to support teacher agency through collaborative teacher inquiry. An example from Estonian context.



Source: Leijen, Ä., Pedaste, M., & Lepp, L. (2024). Supporting teacher agency during a collaborative inquiry-based in-service teacher education course. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *47*(4), 769–786.

Policy recommendations: ensure access and support competences in an evidence-informed digital ecosystem

According to a comparison of countries with high levels of digital transformation (Lee and Lee, 2023[25]), digital education is most meaningful and impactful when it is evidence-informed, ensures access to digital technologies and resources, and equips both students—and especially teachers—with the digital competence required to act as autonomous agents of change in the learning process. At both the national and local government levels, there is a pressing need to support digital education through the provision of adequate resources and enabling regulatory frameworks.

Greece's potential for successful digital transformation in education hinges on three interrelated enablers: 1) the development of digital competences among students and teachers; 2) effective teacher training and professional learning systems; and 3) the use of high-quality data to inform ongoing decision-making. While the affordances of educational technologies offer promising opportunities for personalised learning, students and teachers must retain agency. Technology should support—not replace—collaborative and socially shared learning practices.

Building on these insights and drawing from international experience and the analysis in this chapter, four policy recommendations are proposed to support Greece in strengthening its digital education ecosystem: 1) ensuring equitable student access to digital technologies by enabling school-level agency and system-wide coordination; 2) strengthening evidence-based policymaking through improved evaluation of digital education technologies; 3) reinforcing teacher digital competences through targeted evaluation,

professional development and school-based learning structures; and 4) strengthening governance, leadership and school capacity to support meaningful digital transformation.

Policy recommendation 1: Ensuring equitable student access to digital technologies by enabling school-level agency and system-wide coordination

Ensuring equitable access to digital technologies is a foundational condition for achieving meaningful and inclusive digital education in Greece. Without adequate access, the benefits of digital tools and resources cannot be realised, especially for disadvantaged students, rural communities, and those in under-resourced schools. Evidence from high-performing education systems shows that effective digital transformation requires the convergence of national strategy, robust infrastructure, and inclusive implementation. Greece should adopt a proactive and systemic approach that combines a clear access strategy (including personal devices, school connectivity, and open digital content) with targeted support for underserved learners. System-wide initiatives, such as the digital transformation and upgrading of Centres for Educational and Counselling Support (KEDASY), investment in assistive technology for students with special educational needs, and contributions from public-private partnerships like the COSMOTE TELEKOM donation for remote schools, are advancing equitable provision. This policy recommendation outlines key actions to promote equitable access by integrating personal devices in classrooms, supporting low-income families, investing in school infrastructure and open resources, and expanding digital provision in remote areas. Furthermore, while central coordination through upgraded digital infrastructure and newly developed tools for KEDASY is promising, it is essential that future planning also prioritises increasing school-level agency and fostering bottom-up innovation. Such an approach would maximise the potential for local solutions, ensure responsiveness to diverse educational needs, and enhance the sustainability of digital transformation in Greek schools. Also, it is important to note that, according to Greece's new Strategic Plan for Primary and Secondary Education (2025–2027), which falls outside the timeframe of this review, further investments are planned to upgrade school infrastructure, including the procurement of interactive systems, STEM kits, assistive technologies, and inclusive digital content based on Universal Design for Learning principles (MERAS, 2025[26]). If fully implemented, these initiatives may help to address some of the current access disparities and support more inclusive digital learning environments

Clarify the rationale and objectives underpinning the use of digital technology in Greek schools

The use of digital technology should not be an aim in itself, but rather a means to more effectively achieve the learning objectives set out in the curriculum. Consequently, the evaluation of digital education should be closely linked to the assessment of learning outcomes. For example, in the Australian context, the national curriculum mandates technology and digital literacy education for all students, ensuring consistent exposure from Foundation to Year 8 or 10 (Cameron and Gulzar, 2023[27]). A strong emphasis is placed on online safety and digital citizenship education to protect students from online harm and to foster responsible technology use. This foundational competence appears to be a prerequisite for both students and teachers to effectively engage with digital technologies. The rationale for digital education must be aligned with its objectives and supported by appropriate resources for schools, clear criteria for selecting and implementing technologies, and a coherent policy framework.

Support inclusive and reliable access to digital technology through school-level provision and targeted national investment

To strengthen equitable access to digital technologies, Greece could focus on expanding classroom access through school-provided devices, shared digital resources, and targeted support for disadvantaged learners. International examples highlight the importance of clear device specifications, robust

infrastructure, and strong technical and pedagogical support for teachers. Comparative evidence from countries that allow students to use personal devices shows potential benefits, but these approaches require extensive regulatory, infrastructural and pedagogical frameworks. The Greek context, including the national policy restricting mobile phone use, calls for alternative forms of access that align with national priorities while still ensuring that students can engage with digital tools meaningfully under teacher guidance

Establish partnerships to provide subsidised or donated devices to disadvantaged students from socio-economically weaker backgrounds.

Inclusive education and the prevention of a digital divide are internationally recognised goals, and they are equally relevant in Greece. Corporate partnerships with technology companies could help ensure affordable access to devices that meet the technical requirements for high-quality learning. As demonstrated in the Australian example (Meyerkort, 2025[28]), device requirements may vary by educational level: more advanced devices may be needed for secondary education, whereas simpler models—such as second-hand computers no longer in use—may be sufficient for primary schools. Such devices could be donated to schools to promote equity and inclusion.

Promote a public discourse on the meaningful use of technology in education

Many societies face challenges in recognising the educational value of technology, often due to limited exposure to its positive impact on learning outcomes (Navarro-Martinez and Peña-Acuña, 2022[29]). However, more nuanced research indicates that educational technologies can enhance learning when used to support constructive and interactive pedagogies (Pedaste and Bardone, 2023[21]). Therefore, public discussion in Greece should aim to raise awareness of the responsible, informed, and effective use of digital technologies in education, fostering a shared understanding of their role in enhancing teaching and learning. For example, in Australian context students are expected to develop the capacity to make ethical and moral decisions regarding emerging technologies, and to modify these technologies to meet their needs — becoming confident producers, not just users, of technology. Students explore a range of technologies through project-based learning, including activities in coding and robotics (Cameron, 2020[30]).

Prioritise digital access in remote areas of Greece, such as the islands, where a shortage of qualified teachers might be a challenge

In remote areas of Greece, online and hybrid learning models—successfully implemented during Covid-19-related school closures—can offer viable solutions. Promising practices from countries such as Estonia, Finland, and New Zealand show that remote teaching and inclusion of students from geographically isolated areas in larger, on-site classrooms can help bridge access gaps. Additionally, the example of fully online schools (virtual school) in Ontario, Canada, provides valuable insights into both the opportunities and limitations of virtual education in terms of personalisation and equitable access to high-quality learning (Farhadi and Winton, 2024[31]). Greece could explore similar models, adapted to the local context, to enhance educational provision in underserved areas.

Policy recommendation 2: Strengthening evidence-based policymaking through improved evaluation of digital education technologies

Strengthening evidence-informed policymaking is a cornerstone of effective digital education systems. High-performing countries prioritise not only the provision of digital infrastructure and training, but also the systematic evaluation of what works, for whom, and under what conditions. Greece has already taken important steps by participating in international studies such as PISA and ICILS, and by developing national

digital education strategies. However, to ensure continuous improvement and the scalability of digital innovations, greater emphasis must be placed on rigorous data collection, impact evaluation, and the integration of evidence into policymaking. This includes not only large-scale assessments and national monitoring systems, but also school-level tools for tracking progress and enabling local adaptation. This recommendation identifies key levers to strengthen Greece's digital education system through robust evaluation and the use of evidence, and is closely aligned with recent OECD analyses of how digital technologies affect student learning and what kinds of evidence are needed to inform policy and practice (OECD, 2023[3]; OECD, 2025[9]; Forsström et al., 2025[11]; Forsström et al., 2025[10]).

In the Strategic Plan for Primary and Secondary Education 2025–2027, developed by the MERAS, focus is also set on recording and assessing the results of digital transformation actions in education. However, the examples of related key performance indicators (KPIs) list only quantitative measures (frequency of use, participation, and utilisation of resources). The KPSs should mainly focus on quality of use that could be assessed through qualitative added value in the learning process. In this regard, Greece's new 2025–2027 Strategic Plan introduces a methodology to monitor the digital transformation of education, linked to investments under Measure 16676. This includes key performance indicators (KPIs) across four pillars—digital content, equipment, teacher training, and digital services—and proposes annual data collection and stakeholder feedback (MERAS, 2025[26]). While the implementation of this system lies beyond the timeline of this review, it could serve as a foundational step toward a robust national monitoring framework.

Continue active participation in international comparative studies that assess students' digital competence and broader learning outcomes

Notable examples include the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which incorporates optional questionnaires on digital technology use, and the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS). While Greece has taken part in both, the impact of participation could be enhanced by conducting national-level secondary analyses of the data. Combining international datasets with locally collected data would allow for more nuanced, context-sensitive interpretations. These insights could, in turn, inform more targeted and evidence-informed decisions regarding digital education policy.

Initiate national research programmes to evaluate the impact of digital technology use on student learning outcomes

Such initiatives should aim to go beyond surface-level correlations and explore how different patterns of technology use influence various domains of student development. An illustrative example is Estonia's DigiEfekt study (Pedaste, Raave and Baucal, 2023[32]), which examined the relationship between students' learning practices, teachers' teaching practices, and outcomes such as academic achievement, learning competence, digital competence, and socio-emotional skills. The study revealed that the positive impact of digital technology depends heavily on how it is used—specifically, interactive, constructive, and personalised digital activities are more beneficial than passive or unstructured use. Comparable conclusions emerge from recent OECD reviews of international evidence, which underline that technology tends to support learning when it is embedded in well-designed tasks, explicit instructional goals and supportive learning environments (Forsström et al., 2025[11]; Forsström et al., 2025[10]). Greece could benefit from similar research initiatives to guide policy and pedagogical strategies that maximise the effectiveness of digital education. For example, in Australian context digital competence is assessed as an ability to use digital technologies appropriately and safely, apply computational and design thinking, develop new understandings, collaborate and communicate, and engage with emerging technologies. Results of these evaluations are publicly available (ACARA, 2022[33]).

Develop and implement national instruments for monitoring the long-term impact of digital learning

Such tools should enable systematic evaluation of how digital practices affect student outcomes across various subjects and contexts. For instance, Estonia conducts triennial national assessments in mathematics, science, and language at key stages of schooling. These assessments are combined with background questionnaires and other studies to analyse the influence of digital education practices and digital competence on learning outcomes, while accounting for contextual variables. A similar longitudinal monitoring framework in Greece would allow for evidence-informed policy adjustments and ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of digital learning initiatives.

Ensure digital tools and resources are freely accessible and supported through national digital infrastructure

The Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) serves as a valuable body for coordinating existing platforms, and for implementing strategies aimed at enhancing these platforms. This includes ensuring the provision of high-quality digital resources that promote accessibility and inclusion for all learners.

Policy recommendation 3: Reinforcing teacher digital competences through targeted appraisal, professional development and school-based learning structures

Teachers play a pivotal role in determining the success of digital education reforms. Their capacity to use digital technologies in meaningful, inclusive, and pedagogically sound ways depends not only on access to tools, but also on the development of specific competences. These include technical proficiency, instructional design skills, and the ability to foster student engagement in digital environments. In high-performing systems, the digital competence of teachers is clearly defined, embedded in qualification frameworks, and regularly assessed through structured appraisal processes. Greece has laid the groundwork for strengthening teacher competence—particularly through its B-Level ICT training—but further progress requires targeted reforms. These include the creation of valid assessment instruments, the integration of digital competences into professional standards, and the design of extended, practice-oriented training programmes. This recommendation proposes key actions to ensure that teachers are fully supported to lead digital transformation in the classroom and beyond. The Strategic Plan for Primary and Secondary Education 2025–2027, developed by the Ministry of Education Religious Affairs and Sports, also needs to focus on assessing student and teacher digital competences. Finally, it is worth noting that the 2025–2027 Strategic Plan signals a renewed policy focus on digital literacy as part of continuous teacher training (MERAS, 2025[7]). Planned initiatives include the integration of AI competencies into training programmes, partnerships with organisations such as OpenAI and the Onassis Foundation and expanded teacher participation in national certification and upskilling efforts. While this strategic plan falls beyond the timeline of this review, these future-oriented initiatives could provide a basis for embedding digital competence more firmly into teacher professional standards and qualification systems.

Develop instruments to assess teachers' digital pedagogical competences using validated self-assessment and peer-assessment frameworks

A 360-degree approach (Toegel and Conger, 2003[34]) may serve as a valuable methodology for enhancing the validity of those instruments to assess teachers' digital pedagogical competences. Notably, international models such as the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu), the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers, and the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) model offer structured and validated approaches that could inform the design of Greek assessment systems. Research initiatives such as the Estonian DigiEfekt project (Pedaste, Raave and Baucal, 2023[32]) have designed and validated various instruments that could be

reused or adapted for the Greek context while maintaining their core structure. However, it is important to note that teacher appraisal is a sensitive undertaking and should be structured in a way that offers personal benefit and reward to participating teachers. Sensitivity can be improved by integrating both formative and summative elements. In line with OECD guidance and international best practice, it is crucial to emphasise the formative purpose of such systems: assessments should provide feedback for reflection and improvement, rather than serving as basis for high-stakes summative judgements or punitive measures. In particular, formative assessment should focus not solely on quantitative metrics but also on qualitative insights helping teachers identify strengths and areas for further professional growth. In developing these instruments, Greece could draw on recent teacher appraisal reforms described in Chapter 3, ensuring that digital pedagogical competences become an explicit and systematically assessed component within the broader teacher appraisal framework. This approach would support capacity building while fostering a culture of trust and continuous improvement.

Incorporate digital competences in teacher standards

Digital competences should be integrated as a formal component of teacher qualification requirements and professional standards, so that both initial teacher education and continuous professional development systematically build teachers' capacity to use technology in pedagogically meaningful ways. In doing so, the Greek qualification system could benefit from alignment with established European frameworks, such as the European Qualifications Framework, which defines teacher competences more broadly, and the DigCompEdu framework (Redecker, 2017[1]), which outlines specific dimensions of digital competence for educators. This should be closely linked with the broader development of teacher professional standards currently under discussion in Greece (see Chapter 3), which aim to create an integrated competency framework guiding initial education, professional learning, and appraisal. Additionally, recent scholarship on redefining digital competence for professionals (Pedaste and Bardone, 2023[21]) offers a contemporary perspective that may be useful for shaping competence profiles in line with current societal and technological demands. Given that only 63% of Greek students perceive their teachers as willing to use digital resources for teaching — one of the lowest rates in the OECD — there is a clear need to focus not only on technical skills but also on attitudes and confidence in digital pedagogy. This shows a need for teachers' continuous professional development. It is an ongoing long-term need. For example, while 92% of Australian teachers believe digital learning is important for their students, 83% report needing more professional development in this area (ACER, 2018[35]), mainly in integration of digital technologies in teaching and learning activities; development of digital learning resources; assessment of digital learning; management of digital learning environments; and ethical use of digital technologies in schools.

Expanding in-service training on digital pedagogy

Extended, quality-assured in-service training programmes should focus on the pedagogical integration of digital technologies, drawing on insights from research on teacher learning. In designing these programmes, insights from research on teacher learning should be considered—particularly the framework proposed by Shulman and Shulman (Shulman and Shulman, 2004[36]), which emphasises that effective teacher learning occurs within professional learning communities, through the development of a shared vision, a robust knowledge base, and collaborative practices for designing, testing, evaluating, and reflecting on educational tools and methodologies. These training programmes should also be integrated with the broader CPD reforms outlined in Chapter 3, with greater emphasis on school-based, collaborative learning approaches and the involvement of mentors and co-ordinators in supporting digital competences at the school level. Collaborative, inquiry-based action research models—such as those implemented successfully in Estonia (Leijen, Pedaste and Lepp, 2024[24]) and Finland (Antinluoma, Lahti-Nuuttila and Toom, 2018[37])—can serve as exemplary practices. Similarly, the Lesson Study approach, originally developed in Japan, has been widely adopted in many countries as a meaningful, in-depth collaborative method of teacher professional learning (Cheung and Wong, 2014[38]). Effective implementation of these

models requires organisational support at the school level. For example, in Estonia, state-level resources are provided to enable schools to design and implement their own in-house professional development initiatives.

Policy recommendation 4: Strengthening governance, leadership and school capacity to support meaningful digital transformation

The successful digital transformation of education requires more than devices and training—it depends on a well-coordinated and coherent ecosystem that brings together governance structures, infrastructure platforms, and support roles across all levels of the system. In Greece, various components of this ecosystem already exist, including national digital platforms, education advisers, and experimental schools. However, their integration remains limited, and responsibilities are often fragmented across different actors. High-performing education systems demonstrate the importance of clearly defined roles, consistent communication channels, and coordinated implementation strategies. To build a resilient and scalable digital ecosystem, Greece must clarify responsibilities, strengthen horizontal and vertical coordination, and ensure that all digital education initiatives are supported by sustained political commitment and robust evaluation mechanisms. This recommendation outlines concrete steps to help align platforms, actors, and policies around shared goals for impactful and inclusive digital learning. Looking ahead, several initiatives outlined in Greece's 2025–2027 Strategic Plan demonstrate a growing commitment to strengthening system-level governance and support structures for digital education (MERAS, 2025[26]). These include the planned expansion of digital services such as eSchools, eUniversity and eParents, as well as the development of new platforms like EDUCONTACT, an AI-enabled helpdesk designed to improve communication and service provision for schools, students, parents, and educators. In parallel, announced forthcoming investments in tools such as Eduplan.ai are intended to support evidence-based human-resource planning and may eventually contribute to clearer delineation of roles and more efficient deployment of digital support functions across the system. While these future initiatives fall outside the timeframe of this review, they signal increased attention to creating a more coherent digital ecosystem and could, once fully implemented, strengthen the enabling environment described in this recommendation

Strengthening the digital education ecosystem

The national digital education ecosystem should be strengthened to align tools, platforms and stakeholder roles around supporting students' learning. In a digital education ecosystem, students should be placed at the centre, supported by a coordinated network of actors and resources. The process begins with policy formulation at the state and local government levels. These policies are then implemented by educational technology companies/organisations (public or private) and other providers, who supply platforms, services, and digital content to schools. Education advisers (operating at both school and regional or national levels) should act as intermediaries between policymakers and schools, helping translate strategic objectives into school-level action. Experimental schools can also play a pivotal role by piloting innovations prior to broader implementation.

At the school level, teachers and school leaders are responsible for integrating digital tools into both administrative and instructional practices, while guiding students in the meaningful and responsible use of technology. Parents contribute by supporting students' learning at home in alignment with school objectives, and broader community stakeholders help define shared goals and reinforce a culture of innovation. The success of this ecosystem depends on coherence, sustained investment, and effective collaboration across all levels of the education system.

Establish dedicated roles for digital education advisers (educational technologists) at the school or school-cluster level to support the implementation and innovation of digital practices

Drawing on the Estonian model, digital education advisers could undertake a range of responsibilities, including staying abreast of current trends in digital education and disseminating this knowledge within the school community; participating in educational technology projects to broaden learning opportunities; delivering in-house teacher training; co-teaching alongside classroom teachers; and assisting in the preparation and assessment of digital learning practices (Lorenz, Kikkas and Laanpere, 2014[39]).

While Greece currently employs education advisers at the regional level, their responsibilities span multiple thematic areas and a large number of schools. This breadth of duties may prevent them from developing deep expertise in digital education, thereby limiting their impact. To address this, Greece could consider the introduction of a new, specialised role—digital learning counsellor or educational technologist—focussed exclusively on enhancing teachers' digital pedagogical competence. As demonstrated in Estonia, such roles can be successfully established even at the individual school level.

Ensure all digital education initiatives are supported by sustained funding, strong political commitment, and comprehensive assessment frameworks

To guide and monitor progress effectively, a national coordination body or taskforce should be established. This entity or taskforce (a group of professional from relevant institutions) would be responsible for overseeing implementation, assessing impact, and initiating adjustments as necessary to ensure the long-term success and scalability of digital education reforms. The evaluation of digital education initiatives should include systematic assessment of the outcomes of teacher training programmes and technology integration efforts, using both quantitative and qualitative data; evaluation of the effects of regulatory measures on learning environments and student outcomes; and development of data collection and analysis strategies to inform continuous policy refinement and evidence-based decision-making. For example, some countries also advocate for evaluating digital learning environments through testbeds, recognising that research shows mixed results regarding the effectiveness of various educational technologies (Escueta et al., 2017[40]). Indeed, some of these countries also report a lack of external evaluation of EdTech innovations, with research capturing only a small portion of this rapidly growing sector (Vegas, Ziegler and Zerbino, 2019[41]). In sum, effective evaluation might enable policymakers to identify what works, for whom, and under what conditions, ensuring that digital education initiatives are responsive, scalable, and sustainable.

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Annex A. Agenda of the OECD Team review visit to Greece

Table A A.1. Agenda of the OECD Team review visit to Greece

Date and place	Time	Meeting / Visit
Monday, 3 February 2025 Athens	09:15 – 10:15	Opening meeting with the Minister, Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (MERAS)
	10:15 – 11:00	Secretary General and Director General for International and European Affairs (MERAS)
	11:00 – 12:00	Institute of Educational Policy (IEP)
	12:00 – 13:00	Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) discussion with the IEP
	14:00 – 15:00	Director General for Primary and Secondary Education (MERAS)
	14:00 – 15:00	Director for Primary Education and Head of Department for Experimental and Model Schools (MERAS)
	15:00 – 16:00	Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family and Ministry of Interior on ECEC
	16:00 – 17:00	Director General for Teacher Staff (MERAS)
	17:00 – 18:00	Director for Special Needs Education (MERAS)
	17:00 – 18:00	Director for Secondary Education (MERAS)
Tuesday, 4 February 2025 Athens	09:00 – 11:00	School visit 1: 21st Lower Secondary School, Grava, Athens
	14:00 – 15:00	Regional Education Director of Athens
	14:00 – 15:00	Directorate of Primary Education in Athens
	15:00 – 16:00	Directorate of Secondary Education in Athens
	16:00 – 17:00	Education advisers from the IEP
	17:00 – 18:00	Civil society representative (NGOs)
	17:00 – 18:00	Education Project Manager of “Solidarity Now”
Wednesday, 5 February 2025 Gerakas	09:00 – 12:00	School visit 2: Gerakas (Pre-primary and Primary) and Local Authorities
	14:00 – 15:00	Educational quality supervisors
	15:00 – 16:00	ADIPPDE (Authority for Quality Assurance in Primary and Secondary Education)
	16:00 – 17:00	Teachers’ Union
	17:00 – 18:00	OECD Review Team Meeting
Thursday, 6 February 2025 Delphi	09:00 – 13:00	School visit 3: Delphi (Pre-primary and Primary) and Local Authorities
	14:00 – 15:00	School visit 4: Delphi (Lower Secondary) and Local Authorities
	15:00 – 16:00	PISA National Coordinator (MERAS)
	16:00 – 17:00	Education Advisers
Friday, 7 February 2025 Athens	09:00 – 10:00	Director of Executive Unit of the National Strategic Reference Framework (for education projects)
	10:00 – 11:00	Director General for Financial Services
	11:00 – 12:00	Advisors to the Minister on Digital Issues
	14:00 – 15:00	Computer Technology Institute and Press (ITYE “Diophantus”) on digital education
	15:00 – 16:00	Computer Technology Institute and Press (ITYE “Diophantus”) on teacher training for digital skills
	16:00 – 17:00	Kapodistrian University of Athens – Initial Teacher Education
	17:00 – 18:00	Closing meeting with the Minister, Secretary General and Director General (MERAS)

Annex B. The OECD review team

José-Luis Álvarez-Galván is a Policy Analyst in the Policy Advice and Implementation Division of the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills. At the OECD, he has managed numerous national policy reviews and international comparative projects, with a focus on governance, school evaluation, skills policies and digital education. He has led or contributed to major reviews in Ireland, Spain, Sweden, Mexico, Peru, Costa Rica, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Austria and other countries. Before joining the OECD, José-Luis held academic and private-sector positions in Mexico and the United Kingdom. He holds a doctorate from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). From 2022 to 2023, he served as Head of Policy and Advocacy at the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development in New Delhi, India.

Luka Boeskens is a Policy Analyst in the Policy Advice and Implementation Division of the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills. Since joining the OECD in 2015, Luka has worked on international reviews of education policy focussing on education governance, school funding, the organisation of school networks, teacher policy, and professional learning. He has co-authored OECD reports on *The Funding of School Education* (2017), school infrastructure (*Responsive School Systems*, 2018), human resources (*Working and Learning Together*, 2019) and digital education (*Shaping Digital Education*, 2023). Luka holds an MSc in Sociology and a BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from the University of Oxford.

Stéphanie Jamet is a Senior Policy Analyst in the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, where she focusses on early childhood education and care (ECEC), school leadership, and professional development. Stéphanie has contributed to a number of international studies and policy reviews on ECEC and school improvement. Before joining the OECD, she worked as an economist in the private sector and in international development. Stéphanie holds degrees in economics and public policy.

Margus Pedaste is Professor of Educational Innovation at the University of Tartu in Estonia. He served as an external expert to the review, contributing to the peer-learning event and supporting the analysis of digital education. His research focusses on education innovation and digital learning environments, teacher education, and inquiry-based learning. He has advised international projects and governments on digital transformation in education. He has led or participated as a principal investigator in numerous international research and development projects supporting innovation, student learning, teachers' professional development, and teacher education reform. He is also a Research Fellow at the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence under the auspices of UNESCO.

Reviews of National Policies for Education

Improving Learning Outcomes in Greece

Strengthening School Governance, Teacher Professionalism and Digital Education

Improving Learning Outcomes in Greece: Strengthening School Governance, Teacher Professionalism and Digital Education provides an in-depth analysis of the Greek school system, with a focus on performance, equity, governance, the teaching profession, digital transformation, and early childhood education. Drawing on international comparisons, policy and data analysis, as well as stakeholder insights, the report identifies strengths and challenges and proposes evidence-informed policy directions to support Greece's ongoing reforms and improve student outcomes.

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