



**INVOLVE PROJECT:**

**FIELDWORK REPORT GREECE**



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## List of abbreviations

EQF: European Qualification Framework

EPAL: Vocational High School / Professional Lyceum

EPAS: Vocational Educational Schools

ESOM: National Coordinating Body for Apprenticeship

INE GSEE: Institute of labour of General Confederation of Workers of Greece

IEK: Vocational Training Institutes

KEE: Central Scientific Committee

KSEEK: Central Council of Vocational Education and Training

NQF: National Qualification Framework

NSRF: National Strategic Reference Framework

OAED: Greek Manpower Organization

OYM: Apprenticeship Support Teams

QFA: Quality Framework for Apprenticeship

SSPAE: Connection Council with Production and Labour Market

VET: Vocational Education and Training



## Introduction

The current report presents the main findings of the qualitative research conducted in the framework of INVOLVE project (“Involving social partners in dual VET governance: exploring the contribution of social partners in the design, renewal and implementation of dual VET” (VS/2020/0145), funded by the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission). Through the conduction of qualitative semi-structured interviews from representatives of state authorities, social partners, stakeholders, companies, schools, as well as, apprentices, the current research aims to explore a number of issues regarding Greek governance system of Dual VET mainly focusing in apprenticeships. In detail among the issues discussed were the:

- general views on the Greek Apprenticeship system, as well as, the main assets and the main problems of the system,
- role of Social Partners in the recent reforms on Dual VET and apprenticeships,
- conduction of collective bargaining on working conditions of in-company training,
- Greek governance system in both political and technical level,
- current conditions and the future needs for implementing an effective governance system.
- Main findings on the mini cases

Research findings constitutes the empirical part of one of the project’s main objectives which is to propose alternative scenarios aiming to the implementation of an effective governance system for Dual VET and -mainly- apprenticeships in Greece. The current report constitutes the second deliverable following that of “Desk Research Template Report” which includes a detail presentation of the Greek governance system which covers the period till the adoption of the new legal framework in December 2020 (Law 4763/2020).

## 1. Research Outline and Methodology

For the scopes of INVOLVE a qualitative research, based on semi-structures interviews, was conducted. Research methodology followed specific directives and preconditions that were agreed as a general guideline in the framework of INVOLVE. Research sampling was based on a purposive sampling since interviewees selection was based on their involvement in social dialogue and apprenticeships in general.

Semi-structured interviews were based on commonly accepted guidelines created for the needs of the project, while only limited adjustments were adopted in order to be compatible with the



Greek case. In total five questionnaires were used. Questionnaires had a common part and a part that was differentiated based on respondents' status.

In detail, based on project's methodology, interviewees were categorized in three concrete levels. The Political Strategic (PS) (which includes policy makers both in national and international level), the Technical Strategic (TS) (which includes social partners representatives and stakeholders) and finally the Technical Operational (TO) (which referred to members of the related ministries or other institutions directly involved in the implementation of the policies adopted). In addition, our sample included 3 mini cases each one composed of one VET provider (S), a company member (C) (participating in in-company training) and an apprentice (A). In total 24 interviews were conducted based on the following distribution:

- Political Strategic level **5 interviews**
- Technical Strategic level **7 interviews**
- Technical Operations level **3 interviews**
- **3 mini cases**. Each mini case included 3 interviews (in total **9 interviews**)

The research period was between April and June 2021, while for safety reasons due to COVID-19 conditions interviews were conducted through video conference platform. Sample was composed of state and social partners representatives, experts, companies, educational institutions and apprentices involved in apprenticeships in Greece.

Before the conduction of the interviews, interviewees received an informative email which included specific information on project's scopes and the main axes of the interviews. In addition, participants received a document which included the main commitments in ethics and deontology interviewers and INE GSEE would follow and their consent for the conduction of the interviews. Questionnaire was sent in advance to interviewees only in those cases they asked for.

## 2. General views on apprenticeships

A first issue discussed was the general evaluation of apprenticeships in Greece. Participants were asked to express their views both in general, but also through the identification of the main advantages and disadvantages of the Greek apprenticeship system. The specification of the main pros and cons constitutes an important factor in defining an effective governance system, given that it presents a holistic view of the existing conditions.

Overall, a positive view was expressed, since all interviewees acknowledge the important impact apprenticeships can have on several fields such as apprentices' skills, companies' operation, labour market, but also society in general.



*“Apprenticeship, has been proven to constitute the most efficient way of learning and acquiring the necessary skills...that way is facilitated transition from education to labour”, TS2*

*“Reducing youth unemployment constitutes the main aim of apprenticeships”, PS5*

*“It’s a win-win condition both for the apprentice and the company”, PS2*

In detail, the main advantages acknowledged by the interviewees’ covers a wide spectrum of issues which mainly focuses on the acquisition on behalf of the apprentices of the necessary knowledges and skills and the positive impact apprenticeship can have in labour market. At this point an important notification should also be made. Although the parameters mentioned below have a positive impact, in several cases it was deemed necessary a further improvement of their impact in apprenticeships. As deriving from the interviews as strong assets were mentioned the:

- acquisition of necessary skills and knowledges,
- bridging of gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation,
- company’s ability to find easier and better trained staff,
- reduction of youth unemployment,
- officially recognized qualifications,
- apprentices’ familiarity with a working environment,
- better adjustment to the future needs of a profession.

Contrary to the aforementioned condition a considerable number of disadvantages were also mentioned regarding apprenticeships in Greece. A thorough exploration of the answers given reveals a wide spectrum of issues which include matters of coordination and promotion of necessary policies on behalf of the state, companies’ efficiency in implementing in-company training, lack of necessary social dialogue procedures and finally acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills on behalf of the apprentices.

*“A more well-established coordination in central level is needed for the different dual VET systems” TO1*

*“There is a need for updating curricula and specialties” TS5*





As main disadvantages were mentioned the:

- lack of a necessary procedure for updating curricula and specialties based on a common accepted methodology,
- lack of a sufficient coordination in central level regarding the different systems of dual VET and apprenticeships,
- bureaucratization of several procedures which makes the whole system demanding (e.g. company's participation),
- low level of social partners involvement as in most cases their participation is limited to an advisory role, while in several cases can be characterized as fragmented and ad hoc,
- limited involvement of companies in apprenticeships,
- lack of necessary evaluation of companies' involvement (e.g. implementation of training programme, replacement of job positions, capacity to offer in-company training),
- existence of many different systems of in-company training (e.g. internship, active labour market policies) which acts competitively to apprenticeships
- lack of a concrete supporting system for apprenticeships (e.g. promotion to the public, lack of necessary data for improving apprenticeships).

Beyond the aforementioned issues interviews arose some controversial issues among respondents.

The first ambivalent issue was the *existence of parallel apprenticeship systems* (i.e. EPAL, EPAS, IEK). Different systems in some cases were considered as an asset and in some other cases as a weakness. In detail, among some respondents the existence of parallel systems is supposed to provoke confusion among companies and apprentices in several levels (i.e. acquired knowledge by apprentices, companies' obligations, qualifications acknowledged). Contrary to that, some respondents believe that different apprenticeship systems are a strong asset given the fact that those systems include different educational routes (for example in terms of EQF and NQF), different level of qualifications and a wider spectrum of choices both for apprentices and companies (e.g. in terms of duration of in-company training).

Another controversial issue was that of *social partners' involvement in regional level*. In some cases, extending participation in regional level was assumed as something positive given that it enhances social dialogue and creates a more decentralized system. In those cases, it was mentioned that system becomes more "tailor made" to regional needs and peculiarities and as such more adjusted to local labour market characteristics. However, some respondents were



suspicious about such a perspective. Their main argument focused on a lack of necessary capacity on behalf of employers and employees' organizations in a regional level to contribute effectively in the governance system.

*The size of the company* was also a matter that provoked ambivalent opinions. From the one part, some interviewees argued that the prevalence of micro and small companies in Greek labour market has a positive impact since apprentices contribute in several posts and as such they acquire a more holistic knowledge of a profession. From the other side some respondents argued that it is difficult for a micro or a small company to offer the necessary knowledge to an apprentice given the limited spectrum of tasks which those companies are involved.

Although the aforementioned observations present some controversial issues on apprenticeships, undoubtedly they pose some crucial aspects that should be taken into consideration in the formation of an effective governance system.

### *2.1 Main Challenges for the Apprenticeships*

Another matter of discussion was that of the main challenges apprenticeship systems face. Participants were asked to describe those challenges by focusing on “how the system should be”. Responses (Table 1) reveals a very interesting and in-depth knowledge of apprenticeships in Greece. The main challenges monitored were the:

- ✓ identification of the necessary specialties based on a specified procedure,
- ✓ identification of the necessary skills for each profession,
- ✓ establishment of governance institutions based on a long-lasting perception,
- ✓ need for close cooperation between involved parties, such as state and social partners,
- ✓ definition of quality assurance preconditions for apprenticeships (e.g. in-company training),
- ✓ detailed description of the necessary infrastructure for each specialty,
- ✓ a clearly defined role for the in-company training procedure (e.g. qualifications for an in-company mentor),
- ✓ supplementary role of in-company training to that of school's offered knowledge,
- ✓ understanding of involved parties' needs including apprentices (and their families), companies and schools



*Table 1: Main challenges for the apprenticeship system (Quotes)*

Main Challenges	Quotes
<b>Identification of the necessary specialties based on a specified procedure</b>	<p>“The first issue for the definition of an apprenticeship system is specialties. In order to be defined is needed market research and needs identification” TO3</p> <p>“Specialties should be chosen, based on labour market needs. Ideally not the current needs but the future ones” PS5</p>
<b>Identification of the necessary skills and educational profiles for each profession</b>	<p>“Ideally we need mechanisms that will forecast skills needs 3 to 4 years from now”, TS3</p> <p>“Social partners should submit skills needs and then the educational system will convert them into content and curriculum” TS2</p> <p>“Educational profiles should be updated. School based knowledge should be compatible with the in-company practice” TS7</p>
<b>Establishment of governance institutions based on a long-lasting perception</b>	<p>“Creating stable governance institutions is very important for all the involved parties” PS4</p>
<b>Need for close cooperation between involved parties, such as state and social partners</b>	<p>“it is necessary a meaningful dialogue between social partners, sectoral representatives and chambers in order to be offered qualitative apprenticeship positions” PS1</p> <p>“Building an apprenticeship program should be a result of cooperation. It cannot be done without cooperation”, TS5</p>
<b>Establishment of quality assurance preconditions for apprenticeships (e.g. in job training, mentor)</b>	<p>“Main component for the implementation of apprenticeships constitutes its correlation with qualitative elements” PS1</p> <p>“Company should be capable of implementing all the parts described in the curricula, and not only those parts that company evaluates as necessary” TO2</p>
<b>Detailed description of the necessary infrastructure</b>	<p>“It is very important to have well equipped laboratories” TO3</p> <p>“Equipment and laboratories are very important. We cannot believe that companies will replace possible school deficiencies” PS5</p>
<b>A clearly defined role for the in-company training procedure</b>	<p>“It should be defined an in-company training that can be followed by the majority of the companies” PS1</p>
<b>Act supplementarily to school’s offered knowledge</b>	<p>“Apprenticeships should offer in terms of knowledge, what schools can’t”, TS4</p>
<b>Understanding of involved parties needs</b>	<p>“We need to have a thorough understanding of system’s users, meaning apprentices and their families, companies and finally the last component that of schools and teachers”, PS4</p>

## *2.2 The new legal framework in Apprenticeships*

The new legal framework in Greece was adopted in December 2020. The new framework among others creates a new governance system in apprenticeships. Inevitably, a considerable part of the interviews was devoted to the basic characteristics of the new law (4763/2020). Interviewees were asked to evaluate the new institutional framework by focusing on the positive and the negative provisions. However, it should be noted that during research period



the new governance institutions were under creation or had just started operating. Under that condition, main positive views on the existing framework to a large extent constitutes an initial assessment and not ascertained views. Contrary to that, the main negative views mainly focus on already existing conditions which are not manipulated by the framework adopted.

In detail, among the positive views mentioned can be highlighted the flexibility that seems to be adopted in several issues (e.g. companies’ participation), the creation of a concrete system of social partners’ participation and the specific provisions made on parameters such as needs’ identification and apprentices’ satisfaction.

When referring to negative views main references focus on the lack of flexibility regarding the definition of specialties, the poorly defined framework for the participation of companies and the lack of appropriate coordination between the different apprenticeship systems. In relation to companies’ participation, several issues were posed such as the lack of a concrete procedure for a company member to become an in-company trainer, the definition of specific preconditions for a company to offer an apprenticeship position, as well as the necessity for the existence of a concrete framework for hiring an apprentice after the completion of his/her in-company training. As mentioned above, a controversial issue remains the existence of parallel systems of apprenticeships and in detail the knowledge acquired in each one of them and the main differentiations among them.

*Table 2: Main views on the new legal framework*

Positive Perceptions	Negative Perceptions
<p>“New legal framework <b>makes some things more flexible</b>. It remains to be seen how will be implemented” TS3</p> <p>“New legal framework makes <b>specific provisions</b> on a new <b>governance system, needs identification, apprentices’ satisfaction</b>, apprentices’ attractiveness and alumnus trajectory” PS1</p> <p>“New legal framework creates <b>a more well-built framework for social partners’ participation</b>” PS5</p>	<p>“Having a <b>large number of different systems based on duality is not good</b> for both companies and apprentices” TS3</p> <p>“With the new legal framework there is <b>no apprenticeship system in level 4 of EQF</b>” PS5</p> <p>“There is <b>no institutional framework for companies to hire an apprentice</b>” TS2</p> <p>“Lack of legal framework in Greece is not the most important problem. <b>The problem is that we have a framework which is poorly implemented</b> or not implemented at all” TS6</p> <p>“<b>A further flexibility is needed in defining specialties and curricula</b>. So far the procedure is time consuming” PS5</p> <p>“Having so many different apprenticeship systems is not good. <b>In several cases students that graduates from</b></p>



EPAL or IEK (level 4 or 5) they go back at EPAS (level 3) because they gain more practical knowledge. As a society you don't need those drawbacks" PS4

"Institutional framework is very fluid... It should be clearly defined **whether a company can offer an apprenticeship position or not**" TO1

"**No specific procedure** is foreseen for someone to become **an in-company trainer**" TS1

### 3. Social partners role on the recent reforms on apprenticeships

A major component of the interviews was the evaluation of social dialogue conducted during the last years, and especially in relation to the latest framework adopted in December 2020. As it was mentioned by several respondents, social dialogue constituted a parameter of the reforms taken place and especially after 2013. At this point it should be noted that apprenticeship and dual VET in general, constitutes a field of social dialogue were traditionally is achieved consensus both between social partners (employers and employees' organizations) but also between social partners and the state. However, it was mentioned that in most cases those initiatives were mainly fragmented, ad hoc and not as effective as expected.

*"Since 2013 there is a constant preoccupation with apprenticeships. All the governments of the period, and mainly their representatives, were positive in social partners' involvement. That doesn't mean of course that our positions were accepted" TS6*

Regarding the recent framework adopted in December 2020 it is widely accepted that social dialogue took place both in an official and an unofficial way. In several cases social partners were asked to participate in negotiations regarding the new bill and submit their proposals. As mentioned, those discussions in some cases were fruitful given that common perception between social partners and state representatives were achieved.

*"Yes, we have had a role during the recent reforms. Two times we were called officially to participate in negotiations. In addition, several unofficial negotiations had taken place", TS5*

*"In general, social dialogue on apprenticeships can be evaluated as effective and successful. Dialogue took place in several fields and common perception in several issues was achieved" TS2*



*“Social partners’ proposals on recent reforms were meaningful and effective. Of course, not all proposals were accepted but most of them were incorporated in the new law” PS1*

However, for all the involved parties (e.g. employers and employees organizations, state representatives) the main challenge is to achieve a real and active participation for social partners. So far, as was mentioned by interviewees, the governance system remains state oriented, fragmented and without presenting stable and effective institutions. The role of social partners in most cases is restricted to discussions and negotiations, without any further jurisdictions.

*“There still exists a state-oriented perception. I am the state I decide! What I need from you is your opinion and approval, not your active involvement” TS6*

In general, what seems to be commonly accepted is the need for a more active participation on behalf of social partners. From all the involved parties it is accepted that the governance system does not acknowledge an effective role for employers and employees’ organizations. Although initiatives taken so far are either fragmented and inefficient or not sufficiently tested (as in the case of the newly adopted framework) an optimistic feeling should be noted. The fact that within a political strategic level is recognized the need for a more active participation of social partners.

*“Social partners can contribute to any legal reform, but they should also participate in the implementation of apprenticeship systems. The all system should be more open to social partners’ involvement” PS5*

*“I don’t believe that the social dialogue on the last reforms was something innovative. The major here is to go a step further. To create an added value” PS2*

#### 4. Working conditions and Social Dialogue on dual VET/ apprenticeships

“Quality Framework for Apprenticeship” (QFA) was adopted in 2017. Among others the specific framework had as a major aim to regulate the conditions under which the in-company training of apprentices would take place. QFA included a common framework for all the parallel apprenticeship systems in Greece (i.e. EPAL, EPAS, IEK). Respondents mentioned that social dialogue on the working conditions was absent in that field, although in some cases it was mentioned that the existing framework on working conditions is effective.



*“I think in the specific issue we are in a satisfied level. We have effective framework for the participants. QFA foresees a range of efficient measures.” PS5*

Since than only limited changes have taken place, mainly through the newly adopted framework. The most concrete example is that of the differentiation of apprentices’ compensation based on their educational route (students of EPAS still receive 75% of minimum wage while according to the new framework EPAL alumnus which participate in “apprenticeship year” receive 95% of minimum wage).

In general, as deriving from our respondents, working conditions in apprenticeships is not an important component of the social dialogue implemented so far. At this point an important clarification should be made. Crisis conditions and the related agreements adopted in Greece (e.g. MoUs, MTFSF) between the Greek governments and the representatives of “Institutions” had as a result the constraint of social dialogue in several fields. As a result, collective bargaining as a concrete process of social dialogue which leads to the adoption of common accepted regulations and policies, has been marginalized during the last years in issues related to working conditions.

Based on the above, responses on the role of social dialogue regarding the working conditions of the apprentices reveals some interesting findings, which focus not only in social dialogue but also in collective bargaining. In detail, based on responses given:

- Social dialogue should take place in order to assure the best working conditions for both apprentices and companies,
- Social dialogue can have a positive effect on informing the apprentices on basic issues (e.g. health, safety, leaves), given that for most of them is their first time in a working environment,
- collective bargaining in sectoral level should be enhanced given that in specific specialties may contribute in adopting better conditions for apprentices, than those foreseen in the related collective agreements.
- tripartite social dialogue and common acceptance between involved parties in issues such as safety, payment, and leaves, should be promoted and enhanced.

To summarize, as deriving from the responses received, the existing framework on working conditions in general is evaluated as being effective. However, future changes should be based on a general cooperation between social partners and state authorities in order to be achieved more effective policies on apprenticeships.



## 5. The governance system at political strategic level

As described earlier (see section 3) research period coincided with a transitional period for the Greek governance system. The adoption of the new legal framework during December 2020 foresees new governance institutions for Vocational Education and Training, with a parallel operational postponement of the previous institutions. Under that condition respondents had the chance both to evaluate the previous existing governance structure, but also to present an initial evaluation and express their expectations on the newly adopted institutions. Given that condition, our analysis will focus both in the period before December 2020 and the operation of the National Coordination Body for Apprenticeships (ESOM) but also the period after the adoption of the new framework and the creation of the Central Council of Vocational Education and Training (KSEEK). Two institutional bodies which only have an advisory and not a decisional role.

Based on interviewees' responses one can speak of a general ambiguity both in relation to the general impact of ESOM in the governance of the apprenticeships, but also to the expectations respondents have from KSEEK. Regarding ESOM is commonly accepted that operated fragmentally, without having a clear orientation concerning the main axes of involvement on dual VET issues, while it had a limited impact in the operation of the system. Views on ESOM's operation ranges between complete rejection of its role, to some more modest views which refer to an effort made (although not effective enough) for a more active participation on behalf of social partners (especially due to the fact that ESOM did not have decisional jurisdictions). As main problems were mentioned the non-periodical operation, the lack of specific agenda for the conduction of the meetings and finally the marginalized role in influencing policies on apprenticeships.

Similar to the aforementioned evaluation, respondents are reluctant regarding KSEEK and the impact can have on the apprenticeship system and the enhancement of social partners' involvement. Although interviewees acknowledge that KSEEK and the jurisdictions accompanying its operation are to the correct direction, however a general hesitation is evident in relation to its actual role and impact, given its advisory role. A hesitation which is mainly related with the limited impact that previous initiatives had, as in the case of ESOM.

At this point an important differentiation should be noticed in relation to ESOM and KSEEK. ESOM constituted an institution which had as sole jurisdiction issues related with apprenticeships. Contrary to that, KSEEK is an institution which focuses in general to VET. A condition which may marginalize the interest on apprenticeships given the broader spectrum of issues VET includes. Based on that an important question a governance system should answer. Is there a need for an institution which is solely responsible for apprenticeships (or more broadly to dual VET)?





**Table 3: Institutional Bodies on Apprenticeships in political level before and after December 2020 (main quotes)**

Institution	Main Quotes
<p><b>National Coordinating Body for Apprenticeship (ESOM)</b> (operated till December 2020)</p>	<p>“ESOM operated four times, mainly focusing in informing participants in issues related with apprenticeship. Only during the last two times an effort was made to discuss more important issues...” PS1</p> <p>“I believe ESOM was the only institution that had a practical intervention and a concrete role for apprenticeships” PS3</p> <p>“ESOM operated in theory. If you don’t involve social partners based on a specified procedure than all these is pointless. State wants to have an effective institution in cooperation with social partners but so far the all initiatives are not well organized” PS2</p> <p>“I was member in ESOM. As I know it operated and in some cases we have had some very interesting discussions. We also submitted some proposals for the recent reform” TS3</p> <p>“Actually it didn’t work a lot. We had some meetings. Those meetings were fragmented and not well organized” TS5</p>
<p><b>Central Council of Vocational Education and Training (KSEEK)</b> (since January 2021)</p>	<p>“With the new legal framework, social partners participate in all the fields of National System for VET (e.g. KSEEK, SSPAE, skills committees, certification etc). We have no results so far. But we have many expectations... The new bodies are related with specific deliverables which should be submitted to the responsible parliamentary committee” PS1</p> <p>“Social partners have acquired a very active role in the hyper level of governance system of VET. It cannot be done differently since we refer to labour market. Otherwise there is no point to all those initiatives” PS3</p> <p>“I don’t believe that the new law, changes dramatically things. It mainly changes some names. We have had some related initiatives and during past” PS2</p>



## 6. The governance system at technical strategic and technical operational level

An analysis of the previous and the current governance system in Greece, can result in a differentiation between technical strategic and technical operational level. In detail, the previous governance system was characterized by the absence of an institution operating within a technical strategic level, while the new governance system foresees the creation of the Central Scientific Committee (KEE), which mainly offers scientific support to KSEEK in issues related to VET. Within a technical operational level, two major institutional bodies can be identified. During the previous governance system were created the Apprenticeship Support Teams (OYM), while the new system abolishes OYMs and foresees the Connection Council with Production and Labour Market (SSPAE) which have a regional character. At this point two notifications should be made. The first is that the current system remains centralized and state oriented with major institutional bodies having mainly consultative and advisory jurisdictions. The second is that the current system does not make any provision for institutional bodies responsible solely for dual VET, but the related issues are part of the aforementioned organs which discuss VET issues in general<sup>1</sup>.

### 6.1 The technical operational level

OYMs were adopted during the previous governance system and they had a local character, while social partners did not participate in their composition. OYMs were mainly responsible for coordinating the process of finding in-company placements, allocating in-company positions between the different VET schools, operating the registry of companies participating in apprenticeships and auditing the correct implementation of in-company training. . However, OYMs never actually operated since their initially adoption in 2017. This condition was a result of a general lack of interest mainly on behalf of state authorities who were responsible for their constitution. As it was mentioned from some respondents there was a general hesitation on behalf of all the involved parties (e.g. state authorities, OAED services, schools) regarding OYMs' function. In addition, the necessary preparation for their operation never actually took place (e.g. composition, sources needed). That condition is mainly related with the lack of a specific orientation regarding the evolvement of a governance system beyond the national level, which would presuppose a more active engagement on behalf of all the involved parties. This matter is of major importance given that an effective governance system is necessary to include employers and employees' representatives within a sectoral and/or regional level. As such what

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<sup>1</sup> The existence of decisive jurisdictions constitutes a major issue of discussion with interviewees and an important parameter in the identification of the proposed governance scenarios.



is of interest for our analysis is the complete lack of any institution of social dialogue for apprenticeships beyond the national level.

However, an important notification should be made at this point. Some respondents mentioned that several initiatives have taken place in order to build a cooperation between schools and sectoral or regional representatives. In most cases those initiatives are taken by schools in order to propose or adjust specialties based on real market needs. Although some of those initiatives seems to have a considerable impact, in some cases weren't fruitful a condition which is mainly related with the lack of commitment as a result of non-existent institutionalized procedures (e.g. lack of interest on behalf of sectoral representatives).

Based on the new legal framework OYMs have ceased to exist and was adopted the SSPAEs, with their operation having a regional character. SSPAEs have advisory role which mainly focuses on the enhancement of VET within a local level. In addition, SSPAE submits proposals to KSEEEK related to specialties and apprenticeships based on local market needs, while it is responsible to promote KSEEEK's decisions. Members of SSPAEs are representatives of different VET school programs (EPAS, EPAL, IEK), local administration and representatives of social partners.

During our research period SSPAE was about to have (or already had depending on the region) their first meeting. Most of our respondents believe that SSPAE constitutes a positive initiative although they are very reluctant about their future impact on apprenticeships as a result of several parameters (e.g. previous experience, lack of capacity among the involved parties, non-periodical operation, not precise identification of roles and fields of intervention).

In addition, some respondents expressed reservations regarding specific aspects of SSPAE. One of them was related with the composition of SSPAE and the large number of representatives coming from the educational structures of apprenticeship systems and mainly those operating under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. In that case it was mentioned that this might result to an overestimation on those systems and mainly educational issues. In addition, another reservation was that the fact that the agenda of issues included in SSPAE is too large a condition which may result to a marginalized interest concerning apprenticeships. As in the case of KSEEEK, SSPAEs are also involved with VET in general and not only apprenticeships or Dual VET.

## *6.2 The technical strategic level*

New legal framework makes a specific provision for the creation of KEE. KEE has as a major aim to offer scientific support in KSEEEK and the Ministry of Education, as the main responsible institutions for VET.

In general, KEE was accompanied by positive views given that it was deemed necessary the existence of a body which would offer scientific knowledge. At this point it should be noted



that during the conduction of interviews it was several times mentioned the necessity for the existence of data related with apprenticeships. Several respondents mentioned that it cannot implement an effective definition of specialties and skills needed without the existence of the necessary data both on current and future needs. Although KEE cannot fully cover the specific need, it can contribute to the improvement of that field. However, as a negative view was mentioned the fact that social partners do not participate in KEE. Undoubtedly non-participation of social partners constitutes a parameter that should be reevaluated. Most social partners operate research institutes which dispose great technical expertise (data, researches) and as such can contribute in the effective operation of KEE.

*Table 4: Technical bodies (operational and strategic) on dual VET before and after December 2020 (main quotes)*

Institution	Main Quotes
<b>Apprenticeship Support Teams (OYM)</b> (postponement of operation from December 2020)	<p>“OYMs that were adopted with the previous legal framework, never actually operated” TS5</p> <p>“OYMs never actually operated because non involved party actually want them” PS2</p>
<b>Connection Council with Production and Labour Market (SSPAE)</b> (since January 2021)	<p>“<b>SSPAE is the most important institution, since all the important parties</b>, such as state, schools, social partners, regions <b>participate</b>. Regions can propose the kind of industrializations they want. Than the rest members will handle the all system” TS4</p> <p>“Social partners’ role in the framework of SSPAE among others will include an <b>active involvement in proposing main specialties</b>” PS3</p> <p>“<b>Based on our first meeting I am not that sure that SSPAE will focus on apprenticeships</b> and not in general issues related with EPAL or IEK. But this is a first impression. In general, the new framework is to the correct direction. But this remains to be seen in practice” TS5</p> <p>“<b>I don’t believe that SSPAE can have a major influence within a regional level</b>. Companies’ regional representative bodies do not have the capacity and the resources to contribute effectively” TS7</p> <p>“The major problem in both KSEEK and SSPAE is that Social Partners hold and advisory role” TS1</p>



**Central Scientific Committee (KEE)**

**“It’s not clear to me its actual responsibilities.** However, we need a related institution since one of the most important problems is the lack of data” TS4

**“KEE’s role is very important although social partners do not participate” TS2**

## 7. Social dialogue in Greece: current condition, future needs

Given the marginalized role of social dialogue in the formation of apprenticeships an important issue was to monitor the main challenges and inefficiencies of the governance system in Greece. A major parameter of the current analysis was the identification of the main challenges and necessities for the formation of an effective governance system. Based on research findings five major parameters should be taken into consideration for the formation of an effective governance system. Although some of those parameters are closely related their accomplishment presupposes different preconditions and activities. In detail:

1. The need for an institutionalized and active role for social partners
2. A precise identification of social partners’ role in order to be feasible a higher investment and commitment from their part (e.g. human resources, technical expertise)
3. A general need towards more stable structures and institutions
4. A clear division regarding social partners’ role and tasks between national level and that of regional/sectoral level
5. Creation of a coordination body responsible for the educational (mainly in-company) procedure

The first issue discussed was that of the *definition of an institutionalized and active role for social partners*. So far, the governance system in Greece can to a large extent be characterized as having a state-oriented character. In addition, the role acknowledged for social partners is limited to an advisory and consultative role which is related with their participation in some institutions. Any other involvement seems to have ad hoc character based on an initiative mainly coming from state institutions (e.g. OAED). Although several initiatives have taken place during the last years, state authorities (e.g. involved Ministries, OAED) retains the major role both in defining policies and implementing them.



*“So far I have not understood a real contribution on behalf of our part. The whole framework is very restrictive. Ministry defines everything” TS7*

Based on the above an effective role for social partners is closely related with an institutionalized role for social partners, which will define in detail their fields of intervention and responsibilities, a condition which will contribute to a more effective role from their part.

*“There is a need for trade unions to have an official involvement. So far such a condition does not exist” TO2*

*“An institutionalized role for social partners is very important...Than it’s easier for them to go to their members and ask them to support the all system” PS5*

Closely related with the above, *a precise and thoroughly defined role for social partners will result to a higher commitment* from their part. A commitment which can have several aspects and include issues such as acquisition of technical expertise, representatives’ training, creation of new structures etc. At this point an important notification should be made. A notification which holds for all those parameters analyzed at this section (although to a different extent). The need for preparatory negotiations between social partners and state authorities in order policies to have a long-lasting character, a condition which has multiple effects for all the involved parties and mainly apprentices, schools and labour market.

*“Based on the current structure of social partners and their institutes the existing dialogue is the best it can be implemented... A further involvement should also answer the questions, how a further involvement can be achieved?” TS3*

*“Social partners could also support companies in several fields, but this also requires resources” TS6*

As evident from the aforementioned analysis a general hesitation regarding institutions adopted is evident. That condition can be connected with the limited impact related initiatives had so far (limited or no operation, not clearly identified jurisdictions). In addition, the fact that there is a constant amendment of the governance system (e.g. creation or cancellation of structures and institutions) contributes to a general reluctance regarding the possible impact initiatives can have. As such is deemed necessary the *establishment of more stable structures and institutions* with a long-lasting perception.



*Social partners mainly submit proposal which have a long-lasting perception. For political reasons, that proposals are less attractive” TS6*

*“I think we are in a transitional phase. Speaking with colleagues the general idea we have is that we are seeking social partners cooperation, but it’s not clear what we are seeking from them” PS2*

Another issue that was mentioned from several respondents is the differentiation that seems to exist between the different levels of social partners’ representation. As noted, it exists a considerable differentiation concerning capacity and knowledge between social partners in national level and their members within sectoral and/or regional level. That differentiation makes even more important a clear *definition of roles and tasks among the different levels of representation*. In that case, a tighter cooperation between different levels of representation can have a positive impact in the operation apprenticeship systems.

*“Social partners readiness to get involve mainly refers to 4-5 organizations within national level. This is an important problem from the part of social partners...It does exist a considerable fluctuation in terms of interest and capacity” TS6*

*“In some cases, contacting and cooperating with sectoral representatives in several fields (specialties identification) is not easy” TS4*

*“Although considerable knowledge has been acquired within national level by social partners, this knowledge is not transferred in the lower levels of representation. A condition which makes me impression!” PS2*

The last parameter is closely related to the *creation of a new concrete institutional body responsible for the learning procedure and mainly in-company training*. As was noted by some interviewees a separate body responsible for the learning procedure and mainly in-company training may contribute to a larger stability of the governance between the involved parties, a better “communication” between the different systems of dual VET, but also to send a clear message to companies, schools and apprentices regarding the stability and the common approach of the different systems.

*“What is needed is a body responsible solely for the educational procedure, which would include all the dual VET systems (general and sectoral). That way an important message to market, schools and families would be sent...A stable institution independent from political changes...This is the rationale followed in several European countries” PS4*



*“As Schools of Tourism Education of the Ministry of Tourism we do not participate anywhere, although Ministry of Education is responsible and for our curricula. There is no discussion on our needs. A central procedure is needed here regarding the educational procedure” TOI*

In the previous sections several times was mentioned the need for a clear definition of social partners' role and tasks involved. So far, social partners' involvement is limited to their participation in some institutions whose role is not clearly defined and in most cases it is not solely devoted to apprenticeships, but to VET in general. Although some ad hoc efforts have been made for a more active participation, mainly they had a fragmented character. A major challenge for a future governance system is closely related with those tasks were social dialogue, under specific conditions, would be possible to have an active role. Based on the responses given those fields of apprenticeships are:

- ✓ Skills identification
- ✓ Curricula updating
- ✓ Specialties definition
- ✓ Final exams and certification
- ✓ Information and publicity
- ✓ Research and data collection
- ✓ Training in-company trainers
- ✓ Auditing in-company training
- ✓ Finding apprenticeship positions (enhance companies' participation)

Those fields mentioned above presents a wide spectrum of issues. However, it should be taken into consideration that each one of them can be implemented under specific preconditions, in terms of preparatory procedures, sources and knowledge needed and in any case under an institutionalized role for social partners.

## 8. Apprenticeship in practice: Mini case studies analysis

The three mini-case studies were conducted in three different categories of Greek companies, namely: small, medium and large companies. The data analysis from the three case-studies indicates the fact that small and medium companies deal with common issues regarding apprenticeship while large companies are a totally different case. It must be said, though, that the vast majority of Greek companies are small and medium companies and therefore the data





analysis from small and medium companies are most representative for the Greek case while the data from large companies can only be used as an example of good practice which is not applicable in small and medium companies.

From the analysis of the case studies it was very obvious that all the research participants have a very positive opinion on the apprenticeship. Even if a number of problems arose the interviewers strongly support the institution of apprenticeship and they willingly suggest ways of support and improvement.

Starting the mini case-studies analysis we will initially focus on the main advantages and difficulties for engaging companies in apprenticeship. According to the interviewers, the main advantages for engaging companies in apprenticeships schemes are:

- linking education with society
- school and market connection
- smooth transition of the apprentice to the labor market
- the apprentice learns at the same time, in addition to the technical knowledge and how the business works, namely the culture of the business
- culture of cooperation
- economic benefits
- Experience.

*“This program is very positive. It helps us a lot, because an inexperienced craftsman, in order to be able to get to a point where the company can pay him, must have some time that he does not offer to the company.” C1*

*“Apprentices acquire a culture of real-world collaboration within the business, while at the same time having a financial benefit.” S5*

The most common problem in the engagement of companies (in apprenticeship) appears to be the bureaucracy and the insufficient information of the employers and consequently of the companies about the apprenticeship programme:

*“The process is very time consuming unfortunately and requires specialized staff to deal with the bureaucracy.” C7*



*“So here's what happens: apprenticeship is a co-financed project with all that entails for bureaucracy and for funding” S8*

*“The difficulties were in the bureaucratic support of the institution, that is, not so much in the employer as in its financial support, that is, from its accountant.” C2*

It seems that all small and medium companies are having difficulties with the bureaucratic process of the engagement in apprenticeship mainly due to the fact that the funding for apprenticeship in Greece is part of NSRF (ΕΣΠΑ) programme. Some companies have solved this problem by hiring (or training) specialized personnel to deal with bureaucracy issues. In any case, according to many interviewers, if a company manage to engage once in an apprenticeship programme then it is really easy to repeat it:

*“...once you do it (the procedure), it goes away on its own”. S2*

As mentioned above, another issue seems to be the lack of information regarding the apprenticeship.

*“We discover the (apprenticeship) programme from other companies in our neighborhood. Before that we had never heard of apprenticeship before.” C1*

Small and medium companies are unaware of the benefits of apprenticeship programme and also are unaware of their rights and their potential benefits. The representatives of these companies are asking support from the Social Partners in order to engage more actively in apprenticeship. This demand derives also from the lack of workers' representatives at company level. The density of trade unionism is very low in these companies (most of them are mainly family companies) so it is very difficult to have access on critical information such as subsidies, grants etc. So the lack of support from the trade unions' is big issue that raised from the research, at least for the small and medium companies.

*“There is insufficient information of the employers and consequently of the companies about the institution. From 2017 until today, this remains a disadvantage. All the*



*effort that was made to integrate the private companies in the processes of the institution was our effort, it is of the school and the teachers". S2*

The situation appeared to be rather different when the conversation goes to the large companies. The large companies possess the know-how as well as the necessary staff to engage in apprenticeship. Moreover, they have the opportunity to cooperate directly with Social Partners, such as the Greek-German Chamber of Commerce, getting the necessary support for the whole apprenticeship programme. Moreover, in the large companies the worker's representatives are playing a crucial role helping in the integration of the apprentices in the work environment and culture. The workers' representatives, among others can guide the apprentices regarding their rights and obligations, and also can give them alternatives and solutions to any problem may arise in the working environment. In addition to the above mentioned, large companies have the ability and the flexibility to deliver a more concrete apprenticeship programme due to the fact they can offer to the apprentices a holistic rotation in several roles and jobs into the company. This is definitely not the case in small and medium companies which they do not have not the time and staff nor the flexibility to make an extensive job rotation to their apprentices.

Regarding the coordination for implementing in-company and school-based training we could say that many positive aspects have been provided with the new legislation but they cannot be assessed yet. What is known for sure is that the role of the supervisor is very important. On the one hand it helps in the smooth transition of the apprentice to the labor market and on the other hand it controls the business and at the same time protects it.

In any case it seems that the funding of the programme is a really crucial factor for the succession of the programme and the optimal cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders.

*“An important part is funding. The educational process is a costly process. It requires resources and time from the trainers as well as material and technical infrastructure. The companies could provide the material and technical infrastructure, in which the people, the trainees, will be trained. Beyond that, however, in order for this to happen on a larger scale, it definitely needs the support of the state. The social partners and the European Union must also contribute.” C4*

According to the results of the mini case-studies analysis it appears that the insufficient legal framework for cooperation as well as the curriculum are the main problems of the system. Especially, the curriculum of the apprenticeship programme seems to be an inhibitory factor for the participation of the companies, as it is considered out-of-date and old-fashioned.



*“The cooperation of the involved bodies is institutionalized but in practice it does not always work.” C7*

*“...better cooperation between companies is needed for in-school teacher training, ie seminars for teachers, seminars for students, but the legal framework is insufficient”.*  
C4

*“When creating a curriculum, both educational centers and the social partners and companies must be involved, so that the curriculum is as modern and up-to-date as possible. The syllabus is insufficient. It does not meet the modern needs of businesses and for this reason companies do not follow it. The cooperation of all stakeholders is needed to modernize the programs.” S5*

As far as the overall assessment of the apprenticeship in Greece all the interviewees of the mini cases have a very positive aspect. They all agree that Dual VET is a very important level of the Greek educational system and it must be enhanced by all means.

The participants also agrees regarding the participation of the Social Partners in the whole process of apprenticeship. The need for enhancement of Social Partners involvement is granted. The enhancement of the Social Dialogue is also granted and the new legislation provides measures for this.

*“My opinion is positive; these programs are very important”. A9*

*“For me the most important thing is that it combines both theoretical knowledge and practice.” A6*

*“My opinion is positive; these programs are very important. I believe that the wishes of schools, teachers, students, parents and society in general have been fulfilled. What I see now, after the 4 phases of apprenticeship we organized at school, is a positive response from both our students and employers. Obviously, the society was positive about the institution. I am very positive and the results are positive”. S2*



*“Speaking in general about the institution of apprenticeship, in my opinion it is a very important measure to enhance vocational education. I consider it a very important parameter because it allows graduates of VET to have a first look at the labor market”*

S8

Finishing we summarize some concluding thoughts from the mini case-studies:

- All the participants agree that there is need for more incentives, especially economic. Also, it is crucial for more funding of the system even with the economic participation of social partners or the European Union.
- There is need for less bureaucracy.
- Need for more involvement of social partners and commercial chambers.
- Need for more specialization of all the involved parts and need for training.
- Need for a stable and coherent apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship system must be enhanced.
- In the companies with successful programme of apprenticeship it seems that a training culture is created/ developed and many of the oldest employees asking for training programmes in new technologies or new specialties.

## Conclusions

The Greek governance system on apprenticeships currently is characterized by its transitional character. However, research findings reveal a very interesting image on both past conditions and future expectations on social dialogue regarding apprenticeship. In general apprenticeships is considered a privileged field of social dialogue both between social partners (i.e. employers and employees) but also between social partners and the state. So far, policies targeting on the creation of an effective governance system are characterized by their limited impact. Although in several cases are detected promising initiatives in relation to social dialogue, in most cases they didn't have the expected results.

Research interviews featured a number of parameters of major importance for the adoption of a governance system based on needs, knowledges and capabilities of the involved parties in several levels. Within a structural level the need for institutions with a long-lasting perception, the acknowledgement of an active role beyond bargaining for the social partners and the division of social dialogue between national and regional/ sectoral level, seems to be the most important issues. In addition, in an educative level the involvement



of social partners in issues such as definition of specialties and skills identification for a profession are of major importance. Finally, within in-company based level the need for clear preconditions in offering apprenticeship positions, the auditing of in-company training and finally the supporting companies in participating in apprenticeship are considered as the main challenges of an effective governance system.