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**HUMAN
RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT
CENTRE**

**JOB
SEARCH
SPECIFICS
ANALYSIS - THE
NETHERLANDS**



OVERVIEW

The Netherlands ranks among the top three of EU countries with the lowest unemployment.

With an abundance of major Dutch brands and more than 3 000 international companies in the Netherlands, there's a wide variety of job options in many different fields in the country.

Job seekers can achieve a lot on their own these days. Between research, personal contact with local companies and job search engines, a candidate can keep track of most of the new job postings in the Netherlands.

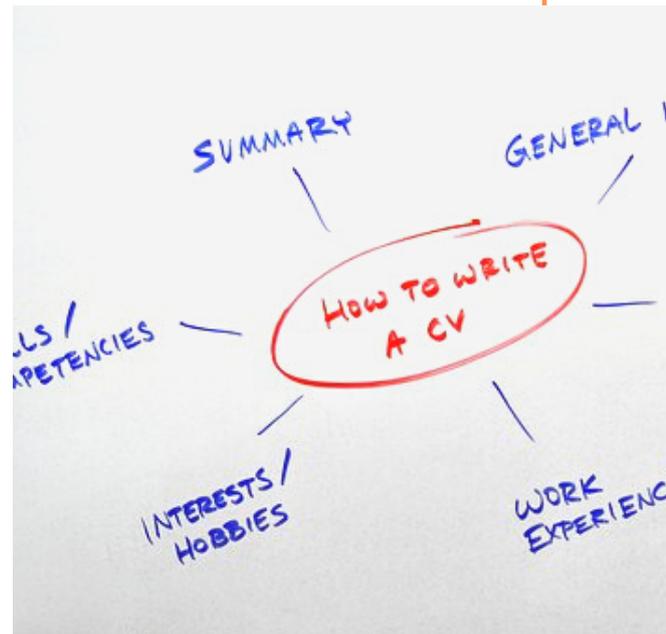
Newcomers to the Netherlands are often surprised by the informal atmosphere and flexibility of the Dutch work environment. The standard work week is 40 hours, but many companies are open to flexible work hours, such as a four-day week.



01

PRESENTATION

A. CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)



A good Curriculum Vitae is every candidate's best chance to make a great first impression with a prospective employer. Obviously, the impression it makes will have an impact on the screening process. Depending on the industry applying for, the goal is to make sure the CV reflects that. If one is applying for a creative job, they have to make sure to have a creative CV. If applying for something more technical, one has to make sure to have a resume that would fit that field. CV in the Netherlands should be to the point and concise. It should be factual and no more than two pages long. It is customary to send a one-page CV when applying for an entry-level position or when there is lack of work experience. A two-page CV is acceptable if the applicant provides a good description of their skills and experience. A good CV highlights skills and accomplishments and excludes irrelevant information. While it's important to 'sell' the candidate to the employer, the CV should represent them in a neutral way, as Dutch employers value modesty. Having international experience plays a big role in selecting candidates, as it is a good indication of soft skills and cross-cultural competence.

Moreover, a candidate shouldn't underestimate activities outside work and studying, as they are very important for Dutch employers. Dutch employers do like to see that a candidate values their out of work time, so showing leisure activities is also important, as well as making sure they elaborate on their volunteer work experience, side jobs and civic responsibilities. The candidate should not embellish roles or responsibilities nor exaggerate their own abilities – honesty is always the best policy. CVs should follow a logical, easy-to-read format and be free of any spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors.

The following list provides a very simple overview of the structure of a Dutch style CV:
Length: 1-2 pages maximum
Format: A4 European standard

CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)



PERSONAL DETAILS

- Full name, address and phone numbers.
- Current e-mail address.
- Date of birth and nationality are appreciated but not obligatory.

EDUCATION

names of Schools/Colleges/Universities/Work placements, Awards and Honours (grades and results are not to be mentioned)

qualifications - highest degree/current degree should be first. Including type of degree, name of university, location and (anticipated) date of graduation.

other degrees, relevant higher education coursework, ongoing professional educational and training courses as well as study abroad.



CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

WORK EXPERIENCE

LANGUAGE SKILLS

COMPUTER SKILLS

In reverse chronological order, most recent experience first, following this up with previous experiences.

Stating the name of the previous employer, job title, and most importantly, tasks and responsibilities. Part-time and voluntary work experience should be included, if applicable.

Listing work experience in short, plain sentences. (Tip: starting each line with a verb such as coordinated, managed, organised etc.)

Pointing out any additional qualities or experience gained during employment. For a clean, well-organised look, bullet points could be useful.

level of fluency (spoken/written)

proficiency in software packages, internet etc.

CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)



HOBBIES / LEISURE ACTIVITIES / CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Highly valued in the Dutch marketplace so taking the time in listing relevant activities is recommended. They can give an employer a more complete picture of the applicant's personal qualities.

Adding a long list of hobbies to cover up for lack of work experience is never a good idea.

REFERENCES

Although not required, it is customary to provide the names and contact details of two references.

Graduates and starters can list college lecturers, teachers and the managers of their internships, if applicable.

Contacting references in advance, to let them know someone may contact them may be a good idea. Some employers check references for accuracy.



CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

PHOTO

Recruiters use a resume to make a rough initial selection between candidates who do or do not meet the requirements of a position. An application procedure consists of different phases, so it is very important that a recruiter remembers the specific resume during the process.

A photo is an excellent way to attract the attention of a recruiter. But it only brings value to the candidate if it is a professional, appropriate photo that matches the position. A smile, neutral background, clear day light and paying attention on the clothing and exterior care is of high importance.

IMPORTANT

It is important to make sure the CV is well laid out, with clear headings and enough spacing between sections so that the information is easy to read. Keep it simple and concise so that the reader does not lose interest.

Emphasizing most relevant experience and skills to encourage the consultant or employer to read on. It could be helpful to list other skills which make the candidate stand out in the job search crowd, such as languages and IT skills.

The applicant should double check not to leave any gaps in their employment record as employers may assume the worst. Mentioning the reason for leaving a job (travel, study, etc) could be a positive addition. The layout should be kept simple. Fancy fonts and distracting colours should be avoided. Checking thoroughly for spelling and grammatical errors and reading the CV text allow to catch the little mistakes that are easy to miss.



B. COVER LETTER

The letter of motivation should be a typed letter, preferably 1 page and in A4 format. Dutch employers really favour a concise, short, direct and professional style.

The purpose of a cover letter /letter of motivation is to give an employer an overview of who the candidate is. Research from the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs indicates that a candidate's motivation is one of the main reasons for a job offer. The personal information should be written in plain language. The objective is to convince the employer that the candidate's skills, knowledge and background are useful.

Dutch employers really favour a concise, short, direct and professional style.

LAYOUT

Appropriate keywords include:

Accurate

Adaptable

Confident

Hard-working

Innovative

Pro-active

Reliable

Responsible

A brief introduction including career objective. The candidate should begin the letter stating their reasons for applying.

The bulk of the content should state what attracts the candidate about the company, followed by their work experience/qualities. a short round up of skills, education, and relevant background information.

Motivation is one of the main selection criteria. The applicant should briefly explain why they want the job and why they think they would be the best candidate.

In closing it is always good to mention that the candidate would like to be considered for an interview at their convenience.

02 COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

A MESSY OR CONFUSING RESUME

CVs that aren't clear and easy to read are a huge turn-off for employers. On average employers spend just a few seconds reviewing each CV - leaving the candidate little time to make a good first impression.

TOO LONG CV WITH TOO MUCH INFORMATION

CVs in today's job market should be (usually) a maximum of two pages, and an applicant's job descriptions should be concise and powerful. If the CV is longer than two pages, there is a good chance to be thrown away. Employers do not have enough time to sit around reading that many pages. If the applicant rambles on their resume, it demonstrates that they lack communication skills. Communication is key in the business world, and the inability to convey thoughts in a brief yet informative way is unattractive to employers.



A CV THAT DOES NOT MATCH THE POSITION

Employers expect the applicant to demonstrate how and why they are suitable for the position and why they think they would fit within the company. Therefore, making a customized CV for every application is advisable.

Reading the job description carefully and viewing the company's website prior could make a huge difference. Next, emphasize the skills, competencies, training and work experience that connect to the job and the company.

AVOIDING CLICHÉS

When it comes to your CV, there are certain words and phrases that the applicant should try to avoid - and they mostly consist of overused clichés.

Not only could using them risk mildly irritating the person in charge of hiring, one could also end up blending into a sea of similar candidates.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID



LYING

Being dishonest about educational qualifications, work experience and personal history all fall within the remit of criminal fraud.

Lying is a bad idea for many reasons, not the least of which is that one is likely to get caught. From the initial background check to the multiple meetings that make up the interview process, there are just too many opportunities to reveal that the candidate has been less than truthful.

Even if the candidate makes it through and gets hired, they are not off the hook. History is full of examples of high-level executives who lost their positions and their reputations after being caught embellishing their resume or curriculum vitae. If one is caught lying before they are hired, they won't get a job offer. If the organization discovers one has lied after they've been put on the payroll, they can be fired. Lying on the resume can also impact the candidate's future employment. "FindLaw" notes that it can be harder to get hired when a person has a termination of cause in their work history.

Even the tiniest of white lies will get one into trouble. At the end, honesty is always the best policy.

ALTHOUGH ALL RECRUITERS WILL HAVE THEIR OWN PET PEEVES, HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE WORST AND OVERUSED CV WORDS:

Good
Excellent communication skills
Goal driven
Flexible
Motivated
Multi-tasker
Independent
Detail oriented
Self-motivated
Effective
Organized

AN INAPPROPRIATE OR UNKEMPT PHOTO

There are countless examples of inappropriate photos used in CVs. Although a photo is not required, applicants often choose to add one. Most times, unfortunately, they don't make the right choice which often time could lead to a wrong first impression and therefor rejection. "Selfies", party and beach photos, full body length, inappropriate clothing, face expressions are just to name a few.



GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION AND SPELLING ERRORS

Many CVs received by recruiters contain spelling or grammatical errors and a lack of punctuation. Employers are less concerned with the actual mistake in an applicant's resume and more concerned with the root of the mistake: applicant's skills (or lack thereof).

Typos or misspelling are often not considered as a serious mistake by the recruiters, although misspelling represents lack of attention to detail. Bad formatting shows applicant's inability to represent themselves or their company, and rambling demonstrates poor communication skills.

Unnecessary capitalization is an odd mistake to make, and yet it's a surprisingly common one. There's a tendency among writers to randomly capitalize common nouns in the middle of sentences, presumably in an attempt to draw attention to particular words.

A NON-REPRESENTATIVE ONLINE PROFILE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Applicants' social media profile gives employers the possibility to verify potential employers. Probably the most common current approach to social networking screening is to view profiles for potential disqualifying information. This approach resembles a type of background check. It seems that applicants with social network information that indicate drug use, discriminatory comments, misrepresented qualifications, or shared confidential information about a current employer, for example, might provide a strong basis to reject an applicant, particularly when considering the potential for deviant workplace behaviors. Hence, a primary concern of some companies may be related to public relations. They want potential employees to have a clean online presence that will not likely harm the company if the information is viewed by the company's stakeholders.

MISSING, INCORRECT OR INAPPROPRIATE CONTACT INFORMATION

Providing the correct e-mail address and telephone number on the CV is of course a must and self-evident. Mistakes are made easy, so double checking is advisable.

03 SEARCHING OPTIONS

Building and Using a Network

Networking is an integral part of this country's business culture. Networking during your job search in the Netherlands is not just going to events and job fairs to meet prospective employers and make small talk. It is more about leveraging who you know and spreading the word about your ongoing job hunt. Talking to people one already knows, e-mail and reconnects with people who are willing to help, connecting with the right people on LinkedIn, sharing career goals, passions and even... even resume too! A good reference, and show of genuine motivation, could be a hundred times more effective in the Netherlands than an impeccable CV or cover letter.





COMPANIES OWN WEB-SITES

Companies often post job openings on their own websites. Getting employment directly through the company itself often offers more benefits for their employees, including education and development possibilities.

RECRUITMENT AGENCIES IN THE NETHERLANDS

There's no denying that recruitment agencies play a powerful role in filling vacancies. Recruitment agencies (uitzendbureaus) are located all over the country. Be it short-term assignments or long term career moves, the experts working at recruitment agencies are often first to know about new openings and can have you on the phone as soon as anything suitable is available. What's more, when it comes to companies they frequently work with, they can also offer extra advice and preparation for interviews.

Like anywhere, there are agencies that specialise in temporary positions, meaning one can find work quite quickly, and those for permanent roles. Also, there are several agencies who recruit for vacancies that do not require Dutch. There are many and while the bigger brand names cover all career branches, smaller agencies often specialise – be it in finance, ICT, creative, engineering, students, hotels, etc. Submitting a CV or creating a profile can often be completed online.

Some examples of major recruitment agencies include:

Randstad Multilingual Recruitment: The largest recruitment agency in The Netherlands with around 38 000 employees. Specialises in the recruitment of multilingual candidates for a variety of roles and industries.

Undutchables: Pioneers in recruitment of international business sector personnel in the Netherlands.

Page Personnel: Specialists in recruitment and interim solutions for starters, middle management and operational vacancies in finance & accounting, secretarial & management support, sales & marketing, sales administration & supply chain.

MJ People: Specialised in the recruitment of hospitality professionals on management and executive level.

Having worked in the industry for years themselves, they have great knowledge of the market and are able to service their clients and professionals personally.



Through an extensive network of partner sites and (temporary) employment agencies, most vacancies registered with these partners are also registered in the online job database of the [UWV WERKbedrijf](#). An individual can drop by in person or search for vacancies online ([www.werk.nl](#) shown in several languages depending on your keyword search). They also offer lots of English-language information on working in the Netherlands for EU citizens on their website.

Internet

The most common avenue for job seekers, not only for searching and registering personal details but also to keep up to date with prospective employers. Searching web-sites such as [www.indeed.nl](#) is also a very common practice in the Netherlands. Indeed offers an easy and selective search method, a view to almost all available job position on the market and a fast and easy application procedure.

Social media

A job seeker can also involve social media in the search. Companies are increasingly using Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to find new employees and vice versa. Studies have shown that 92% of companies are using social media for hiring—and that three out of four hiring managers will check out a candidate's social profiles.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (UWV)

The public employment service, [UWV WERKbedrijf](#), plays an important role in the Dutch labour market. There are branches located throughout the city with specialists on hand to offer advice and information to job seekers.

Newspapers

A number of Dutch newspapers have job advertisements (English-language jobs as well) on their vacancy pages, although most are recruiting for senior positions in international companies. [The American Book Center](#) stocks a comprehensive range of reading material and the [Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam](#) offers an equally excellent range free of charge, as does [the University of Amsterdam](#).

Most job agencies regularly post vacancies on their sites, and if you are registered with them, they will contact you to alert you of new opportunities. If you prefer the direct route, job search engines such as the [Nationale Vacature Bank](#), [Intermediair](#) and [Monsterboard](#) are user-friendly, invaluable resources, and [ICTerGezocht](#) has a comprehensive list of tech- and ICT-related job vacancies.



Take initiative

.To apply for work at a particular company that currently has no vacancies, one can send an unsolicited application. Employers often appreciate the initiative. First find a contact person at the company of choice (e.g. in the human resources department), so the application is addressed to a particular person. When preparing to meet new contact, the candidate should have their CV and cover letter ready.

Coaching

There are many companies in the Netherlands offering coaching and training services (for English-speakers as well) looking to improve their skills or re-evaluate their career goals and aspirations. Enlisting the help of a professional life coach may be a good way for a job seeker to set their job related priorities and hear tips from an expert..

04 SELECTION PROCEDURE

Initial Interview

When invited for a job interview in the Netherlands, one should educate them self thoroughly in advance. This goes as much for the company's culture, as it does for the country's culture.

Researching the company's values, mission and goals as well as the people you will be working with, is a step that the candidate should definitely not overlook. This will help them align the answers to their expectations, adjusting their behaviour, and show the employer that they are a perfect fit for their team.

Aside from questions about your motivation, education and the company, the candidate should be prepare for questions about your character, strengths and weaknesses, extra-curricular activities, as well as questions on membership of societies and organisations.

Dutch recruiters attach great importance to leisure activities and civic responsibilities.

Body language is one of the first things that a Dutch hiring manager will note during an interview. Sudden movements and stiff posture will make the candidate look tense, while crossed arms and a laid-back posture will make them look arrogant. Sitting up straight and not in a 'closed' position is the way to go.

Appearance does matter in an interview situation. The applicant should be formal and professional – wear a suit, sport-elegant clothing, soft and natural make up, minimal jewelry, and a neat hairstyle.

At the end of the interview it is common for the candidate to ask some questions.



Some examples of general questions in job interviews in the Netherlands are:

What are your major strengths and weaknesses?

What do you like about our company?

Have you ever joined a student association?
Have you joined any commissions?

Did you have any civic responsibilities?

What is your current family situation and how do you foresee this in the future?

What are your hobbies?

Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?



Second Interview

Second interview usually happens when the candidate is applying for a higher position, such as shift supervisor, assistant manager, or manager. The second interview is usually with someone higher up in the hierarchy of the establishment. The questions usually aim to understand how qualified the candidate is for the position and how they would handle certain situations

Assessment of applicants

Usually the person or persons who have also interviewed the applicants make the assessment. Some considerations include:

Does this person fit within the stated job profile?

Does he have the right qualifications and experience?

Did he make a good impression during the conversation?

Accepted

candidate is invited to discuss the employment agreement, an appropriate salary, secondary work conditions, etc. When both parties agree with the conditions, an employment contract is signed.

Rejected candidate don't usually get an explanation for the rejection, unless they ask for it. If a recruiter mentions a reason for rejection, they always pay attention on the combination of words they are using. Someone may not be rejected because of age, health, pregnancy, language, ethnicity or religion.

The Follow-Up

In some countries, following up after an interview can come across as intrusive or rude. However, in the Netherlands following up after interviews via a thank you e-mail and a call to find out about the status of your application is considered appropriate and shows your genuine interest in the position.

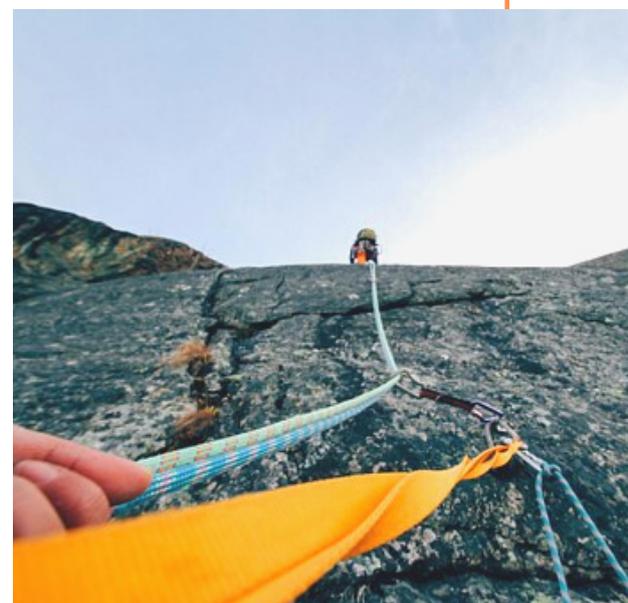
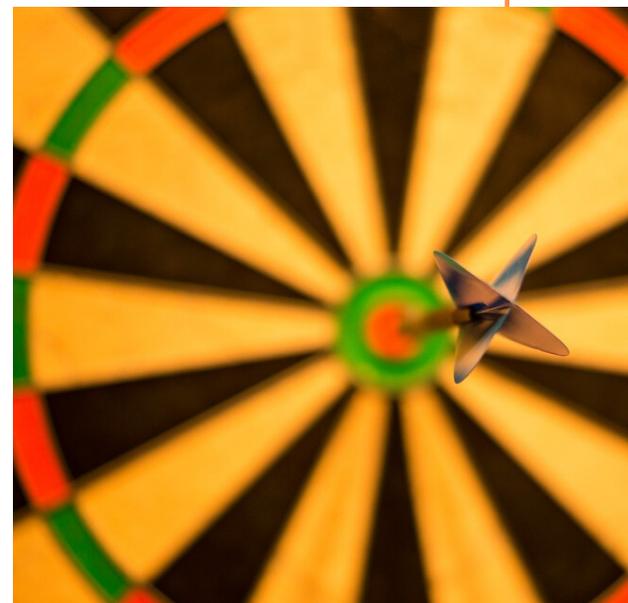
05 EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTUAL OPTIONS

Legal rights and obligations differ depending on the type of employment contract an employee has, so they need to consider most suitable option. To help the candidate makes this decision, the basic principles of the different contractual options are explained below.

There are three common labour contractual options:
Temporary labour contract
Permanent labour contract
Contract with an employment agency

a. Temporary labour contract

LA temporary contract has a start date and an end date. The contract will end on the agreed date without a dismissal procedure. It is strongly advised to get the contract in writing, although a verbal agreement is also valid in the Netherlands.



Trail period

A trial period is a common part of a (temporary) contract with the employer. The trial period applies for both parties and must be agreed in writing. If the duration of the temporary contract is less than two years, the maximum trial period is one month.

Term of notice

A temporary labour contract will end automatically and legally on the date agreed. This means that there is no dismissal procedure involved. The situation changes if either parties (or one of them) want to end the contract before the agreed date. In this case, the option for termination of the contract before the final date must be part of the contract. If the employer wants to end the contract before the agreed date, he needs to follow a legal dismissal procedure.

Repeated contracts with the same employer

The most important difference between a temporary and a permanent labour contract is that a permanent labour contract has no end date.

This means there is no indication of any intention to limit the duration of the contract, such as 'for the duration of the project'. Also the 'term of notice' will be different for a permanent contract, since the legal legal position is different.



b. Permanent labour contract

A permanent labour contract can be ended by one of the parties.

The legal "term of notice" need to be respected.

The rules are different for employers and employees. The employee has the legal right to end the contract without a procedure but he must respect the legal and agreed period, which is usually a minimum of one month's notice.

The employer needs to apply for a dismissal permit. The term of notice depends on the duration of the contract on the day the employer applies for the dismissal permit. We advise you to contact the UWV Werkbedrijf for more information if you are confronted with this situation. Both employer and employee have the right to go to court and ask to end the permanent labour contract.



c.

Contract with an employment agency

.To apply for work at a particular company that currently has no vacancies, one can send an unsolicited application. Employers often appreciate the initiative. First find a contact person at the company of choice (e.g. in the human resources department), so the application is addressed to a particular person. When preparing to meet new contact, the candidate should have their CV and cover letter ready.

06

EMPLOYMENT RELATED ORGANIZATIONS



In the Netherlands there are laws that are designed to protect employees against workplace exploitation. One of the best ways for employees to protect themselves is by getting informed on their rights and obligations.

a. Collective Labour Agreements (CAO)

Most companies and organisations participate in a collective labour agreement (CAO). This is a written agreement between one or more employers and one or more trades union about the labour conditions for all employees, such as wages, payment of extra work, working hours, probation period, pension, education and childcare. The agreements in a CAO are often better than those prescribed by law, but they may never contradict the law. If there is no CAO, the employee have to make an individual agreement with the employer about the labour conditions, preferably in writing. The legal rules are the basis for this agreement.

b. Institute for Employee Benefits Schemes (UWV)

The UWV (Institute for Employee Benefits Schemes) and the UWV Werkbedrijf (Public Employment Service) are the organisations that will assist employees if they become ill or unemployed in the Netherlands. It is the UWV that decides if a person is entitled to Dutch benefits upon becoming ill or unemployed. The UWV WERKbedrijf helps people find work if they become unemployed. UWV has created a separate web side - werk.nl - that helps guiding, instructing and training unemployed people on their way to employment.

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c. Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW)

The Inspectorate SZW is a combination of the organisations and activities of the former Labour Inspectorate, the Work and Income Inspectorate and the Social and Intelligence Investigation Service of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. "The Inspectorate SZW works for fair, healthy and safe working conditions and socio-economic security for everyone."

An individual can submit a complaint to the Inspectorate SZW (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment) if they know or suspect that a company or an employer is not following the law in the following aspects:

- Working Conditions Act
- Working Hours Act
- Minimum Wage and Minimum Holiday Allowance Act
- Alliance Employment Act

A complaint could be submitted in a number of different ways, as well as anonymous, if preferred.

d. Legal Advice (Het Juridisch Loket)

Juridisch Loket is probably the best-known service for free legal advice in Amsterdam and across the Netherlands. The service is very comprehensive and covers work, housing, criminal and civil law, consumer rights, financial guidance, residency and immigration, social benefits, and accident and injury. They also offer a database of template legal letters in Dutch so that an individual can start the process themselves.



e. Antidiscrimination

Everyone in the Netherlands is entitled to equal treatment. This right is considered so important that it is enshrined in Article 1 of the Dutch Constitution. The law lists the forms of discrimination against which you can take action, including discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, origin, sexual orientation, sex, skin colour, race, civil status, disability or chronic illness, or age.

An individual can seek an advice from an antidiscrimination service. All municipalities in the Netherlands have such a service. Anyone can approach the service with a question or complaint about discrimination. The antidiscrimination service provides further assistance and advice and registers the complaint.

07 LIFELONG LEARNING



Average participation in formal and non-formal training and informal learning activities is high in the Netherlands. However, the participation of employees in small businesses, and of older, low-skilled, and flex workers, is relatively low. As a result, people are often losing their jobs and run a high risk of not finding a new one, even after retraining.

a. Training in addition to work

Everyone can follow different types of training in addition to their job. The most important forms of working and learning, further training or a work-study trajectory are:

Full education

this is a study in higher education that one can follow in full-time or part-time.

Dual study

a type of study that combines work with a study in higher professional education (HBO). A dual study is not the same as a part-time study. The difference with part-time training is that you have to work in a relevant professional field for a dual study. The participant will also be guided at work.

Distance learning:

there are many educational institutions that offer distance learning, including learning at University level (Open University)

Apprenticeship

a combination of a course in secondary vocational education (MBO) and a workplace at a recognized apprenticeship.

EVC procedure

the participant has their knowledge and skills converted into a certificate (experience certificate).

Course

a short training course that one can follow in addition to their job.

Flexible MBO for adults

The Dutch government wants to make MBO more attractive for adults. For example with an experiment where credits are interchangeable between institutions.

The value of the diploma or certificate does not only depend on the level of the study program. The duration and the gravity also play a role.

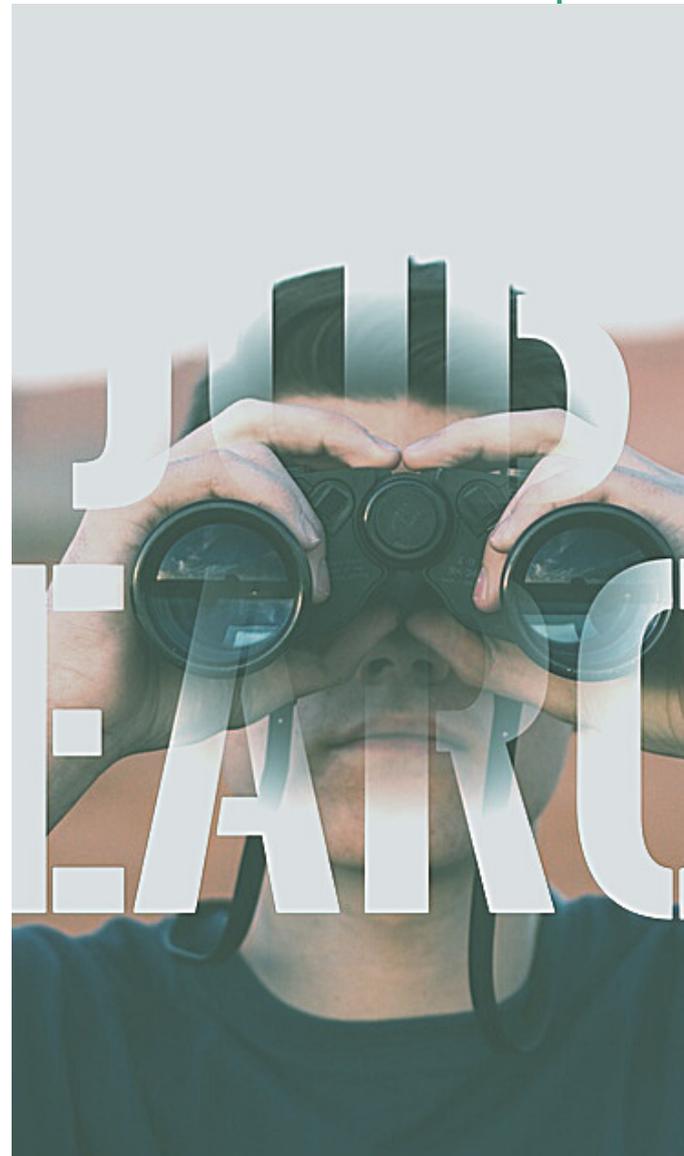


b. Diploma evaluation

Separate diploma or permit in order to work in the Netherlands or to establish a business in the Netherlands is not needed. However, some professionals are only allowed to practice certain professions if they meet specific requirements. These are regulated professions. A regulated profession is a profession where access to or practice of a profession is restricted to those who meet the professional qualifications required by law. The person must prove that they have the right education and professional experience to practise this profession.

If one has gained their diploma in any other country and they want to work or continue their studies in the Netherlands, they need to know what a particular certificate is worth in terms of the Dutch system. In the Netherlands, two centres of expertise work together on evaluating foreign diplomas (IDW): Nuffic and Colo. They have set up an Information Centre for Credential Evaluation (IcDW).

THE PROCESS AND SPECIFICS OF JOB SEARCH IN BULGARIA



OVERVIEW

Improving the quality of the workforce is crucial to the rapid pace of development of the modern economy in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Bulgaria is listed among the countries in the European Union where unemployment declined on an annual basis in November 2019, based on Eurostat data. Unemployment fell to 3.7% from 4.8% a year earlier. The functioning of the labor market, even in the face of an upward economic development, does not rely on automaticity. Moreover, with favorable economic conditions, structural discrepancies, some of which are related to human capital, are more clearly identified. The main challenge in the labor market is the difference in the demand and supply of labor with certain qualifications and skills.

The challenges of today's labor market are many:

On the one hand is the poor demographic characteristic of the country - low birth rate, insufficient number of economically active persons, on the other hand are socio-economic indicators, lack of coherence between the education system and the labor market, functional illiteracy, and the envisaged reforms of the pension system related to raising the required retirement age.



The current situation can be summarized as follows:

- On the one hand there are no suitable job positions - on the other - no suitable workforce;
- The young unemployed - illiterate persons who have dropped out of the education system early;
- Professional standards are different from educational standards;

As a result, the unemployed people in Bulgaria for the fourth quarter of 2019 between the ages of 15 and 64 are 134.7 thousand.

What is important for the successful realization of each worker is the level of acquired knowledge, skills and competences.

In 2015, worrying data emerged from the PISA 2015 international survey which evaluates the achievements of 15-16-year-old students in three areas - science, math and reading. It turned out that Bulgaria is 45th out of 72 countries, participating in the survey. Below the functional literacy threshold in sciences are 37.9% of Bulgarian students, 41.5% in reading, and 42% in mathematics. It should be made clear that functional literacy means the ability of students to find and comprehend - for example: 7% of 15-year-olds do not understand what they are reading. Only 9% of them distinguish fact from opinion.

The data from the same survey conducted in 2018 are disturbing. The period between 2015 and 2018 shows one of the strongest declines in scientific excellence among participating countries and economies (-22 PISA Result, Rank 24/25, 2018). The percentage of disadvantaged students who do not have a clear idea of their future work is one of the highest (34.5%, rank 8/78, 2018).

A fact is that these young people will leave the educational system unready and, accordingly, unprepared for the labor market.



Functional illiteracy

Functional illiteracy is the non-operational use of reading in practical situations. These are pragmatic competences for solving common problems of daily life that require elementary use of literacy, but also some knowledge of the cultural context of the relevant problems, the ways in which they are presented, etc. One may have attended school and be considered literate, but one will be functionally illiterate at the moment when he or she faces certain life problems.

Functional illiteracy leads to a number of negative social consequences: among them long-term unemployment; difficulties in searching and finding the right job - especially in the preparation of the necessary application documents.



Our focus is on the following categories of persons in the labor market:

- Long-term unemployed encounter difficulties in the process of finding a job, have lower incomes and limited career prospects. The human capital of workers (whether actual or perceived by employers) may deteriorate during a period of long-term unemployment, and the time spent seeking for work usually decreases. Both factors mean that the likelihood of finding a job decreases with the increased duration of unemployment, leading to a greater possibility that these persons will become permanently unemployed. Over time, the unemployed are more likely to leave the labor market and retire, join programs for people with disabilities, or simply become the so-called 'discouraged workers' as long as they remain unemployed;
- Another vulnerable group that we are focusing on is young people, low-skilled workers and / or early school leavers;
- The third group is older workers and people with low qualifications in retirement age, who are challenged by the new technologies and the dynamics in the labor market.

Very interesting are the findings of a survey conducted on employers' perceptions and evaluation of young job applicants in Bulgaria. On the one hand, the survey aims to examine the perception and evaluation of employers of young job applicants, and on the other, to broaden the perspective of the challenges young people face in the transition from education to employment. Despite technological advances,

human resources are the most valuable capital of any company / organization. Personnel recruitment activities have a leading role in the process of attracting candidates with the specific qualities required by the organization, as well as the level of education, experience, and qualifications that contribute to achieving its goals. The job interview and the CV of the applicant are the two main components on the basis of which are evaluated the applications submitted for the vacant position. 88 percent of the respondents answered this way. Third, determining the appointment is the performance during the so-called trial period (67.7%).

Certificates of completed education ranked fourth in influence in the selection process (62.5%). This arrangement of degree of influence of the various components of selection is valid not only among all, but also for the profession of waiters, mechanics, and also of bank employees. The obtained diploma for completed education is important for the profession of nurses (86.3%), while among IT recruiters 80.2% say that the applications are evaluated with a test..

Personnel recruitment experts are also asked to say what is important in evaluating job applicants. Overall, teamwork skills (90.6%), readiness for further training (81.1%), appropriate vocational education and appropriate training (78% each) are in the top 3 of the ranking. "More important" or "very important" are also the presence of experience in the field - mentioned by 77.7%, as well as social competences (72.9%).

Leading HR professionals share their experience in recruiting LinkedIn staff. The inability of candidates to express themselves is a significant problem. In this way, even excellent specialists do not succeed in earning the desired job. Even more serious is the problem of the long-term unemployed, who, given their personal situation, have reduced self-esteem and are uncertain about their own capabilities.



Functional illiteracy

Of interest is the "My Ideal Candidate" section of the Careers Online Edition. In it, leading HR professionals from leading companies from across the country, across different economic sectors, share their recruitment experience.

The interviews were collected within 100 HR professionals. Each of them shares his impressions and based on them we have paid considerable attention to the issues related to the submission and preparation of the application documents, as essential and formal criteria for employment.

All interviewees pay particular attention to the CV of the candidates. This, of course, is expected because the business card is the first contact with the candidate, and must clearly state the personal motivation and abilities.

A good presentation begins with a well-designed CV and a cover letter. Of particular importance is the ability of job applicants to present themselves and properly display their professional and training experience.

At a first glance, these are easy steps to the desired job, but for the unemployed people the situation is quite different.

This group of people needs a more specific approach into presenting the information.

It should be noted that adult learning needs to go beyond the "student" idea of literacy, emphasizing more on the functions that the individual must perform in the global world; there is a modification of the idea of an adult being a "student" who must acquire certain basic skills in order to be considered a "participant" who knows and understands his or her life experience and manages to link the field of learning to the work, civic and other fields.



job search sites

VHR professionals in Bulgaria outline a few basic ways to look for work and accordingly – to recruit.

The first among these are job search sites such as www.jobs.bg, www.zaplata.bg, www.rabota.bg, www.jobtiger.bg and others.

Online job search through such sites is preferred by employers and job seekers because it is convenient, easy and fast. Most sites also provide the option to create a personal profile for easier communication with employers and for a better visibility.

professional contacts

The second way to look for a job is by creating a network of professional contacts that can help you find the desired job position and to give a positive recommendation to your future employer.

job brokers

The third most common way to look for a job is through job brokers - job desks or recruitment agencies. They offer advice, job vacancy information, recruitment and guidance.

It is crucial for the person, searching for a job to build a job search strategy. In most cases, job seekers randomly send a standard CV to employers in various fields, often dictated by the payment. Defining goals, personal skills and a job search approach are among the main first steps in a successful implementation of the labor market.

The necessity to create a user-friendly, easily accessible and understandable guide on various topics, related to the process of job search is irrefutable. The modern online sources of information should consider the rapidly-changing environment and the needs of the adults. The project "Job Toolkit" will not only take into account the necessary information, which will be embedded in the video guides, but also will create them in a way that will be in track with the requirements of the modern society.

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“SEARCH FOR EMPLOYMENT: WAYS AND DRIVES IN GREECE”



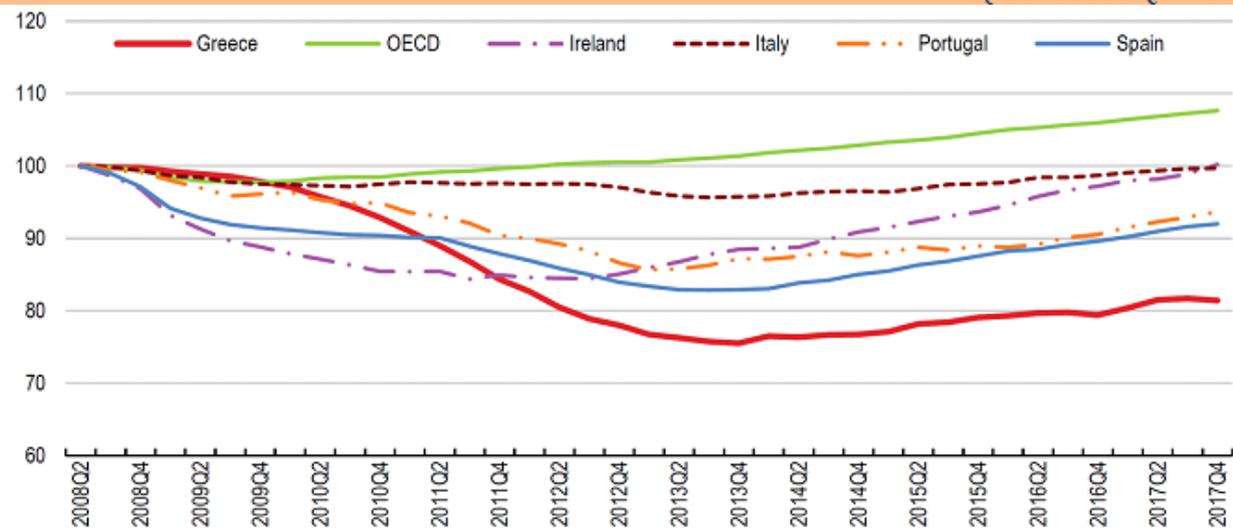
OVERVIEW

Among the top priorities in Greece is expanding employment which is cardinal for restoring a healthy economy, after the deep losses over the crisis. Statistical data shows that employment is now gradually recovering but still is far away from European mean (Figure 1, Table 1). The unemployment rate has fallen by 8.2 % from its peak in 2013, 27.5% to 19.3% in 2018 (OECD statistics). Participation in the labour force has continued to expand, particularly among women. More workers are obtaining employee positions, rather than being self-employed. Wages have been stabilised (Figure 2). However, full recovery remains distant.

Employment at the end of 2018 was still 11.5% above its 10 years earlier 2008 low. Limited inroads have been made into the surge in poverty that has followed joblessness and has particularly affected families with children.

Many of the new jobs are part-time or temporary and pay the minimum wage; the share of working poor is rising. While unemployment is decreasing, the share of long term unemployed has increased (Figure 3), especially among those with less education (Table 1).

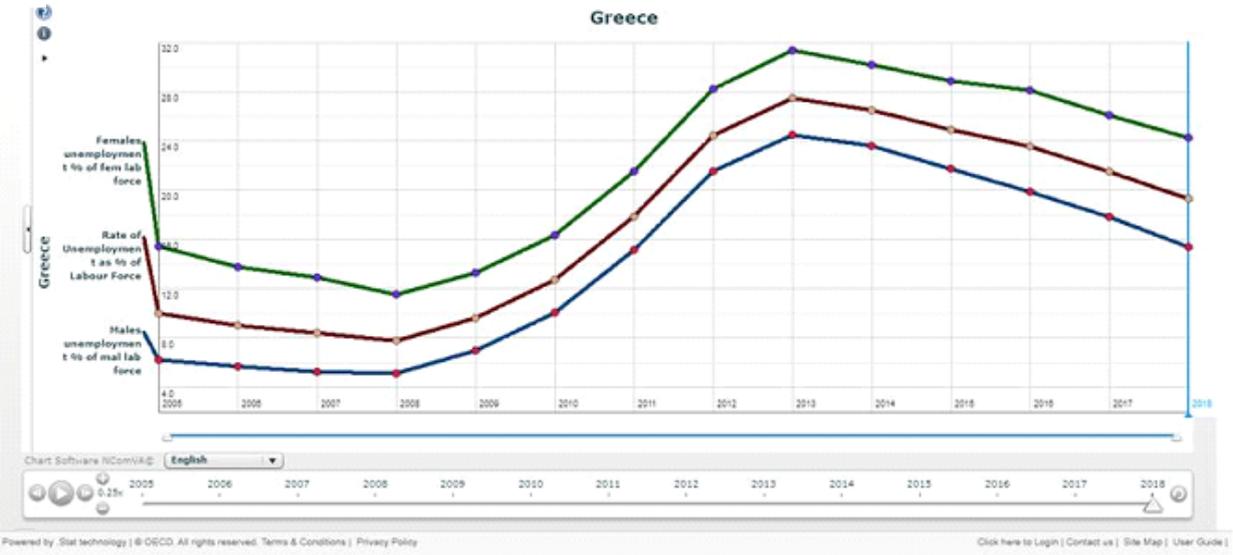
Figure 1: Employment in Greece dropped during the crisis and recovered more slowly
(Index 2008 Q2 = 100)



Source: OECD (2018), OECD Economic Outlook: Statistics and Projections (database).

ALFS Summary tables

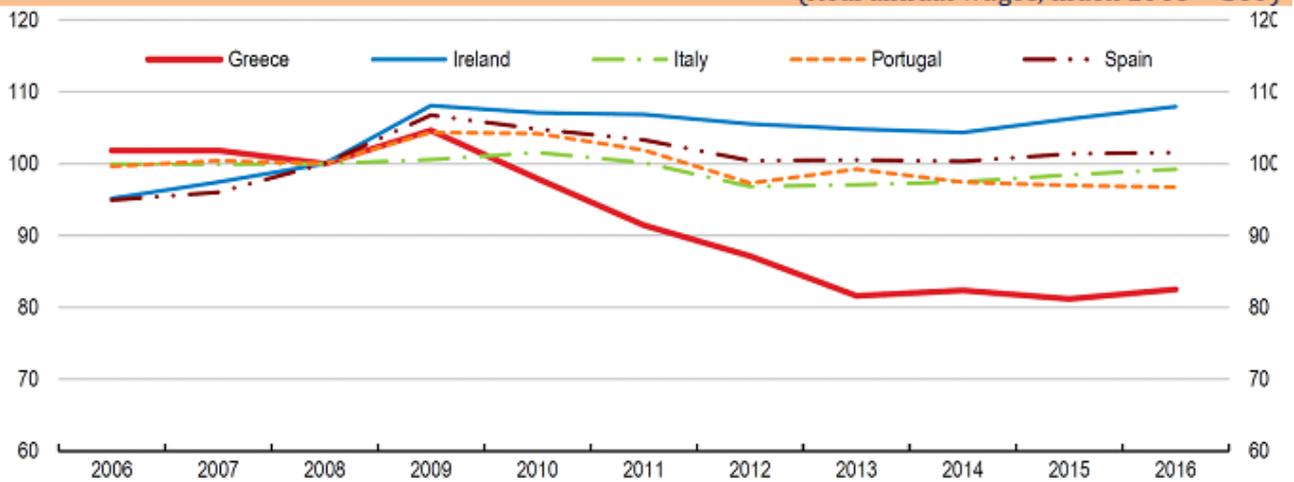
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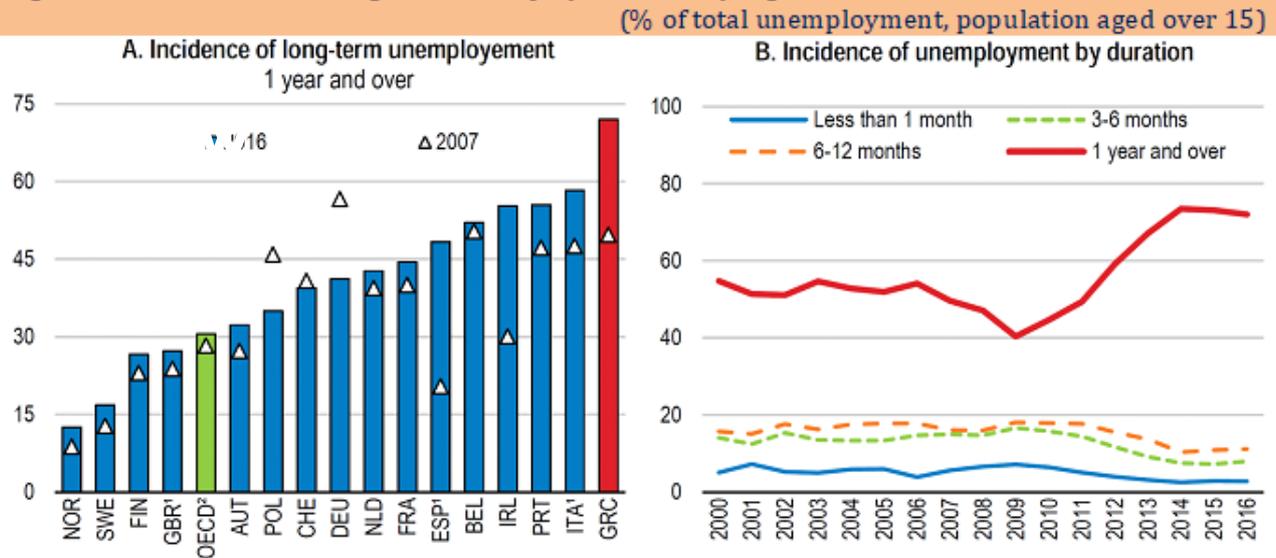
Figure 2: Real wages have been stabilised

(Real annual wages, index 2008 = 100)



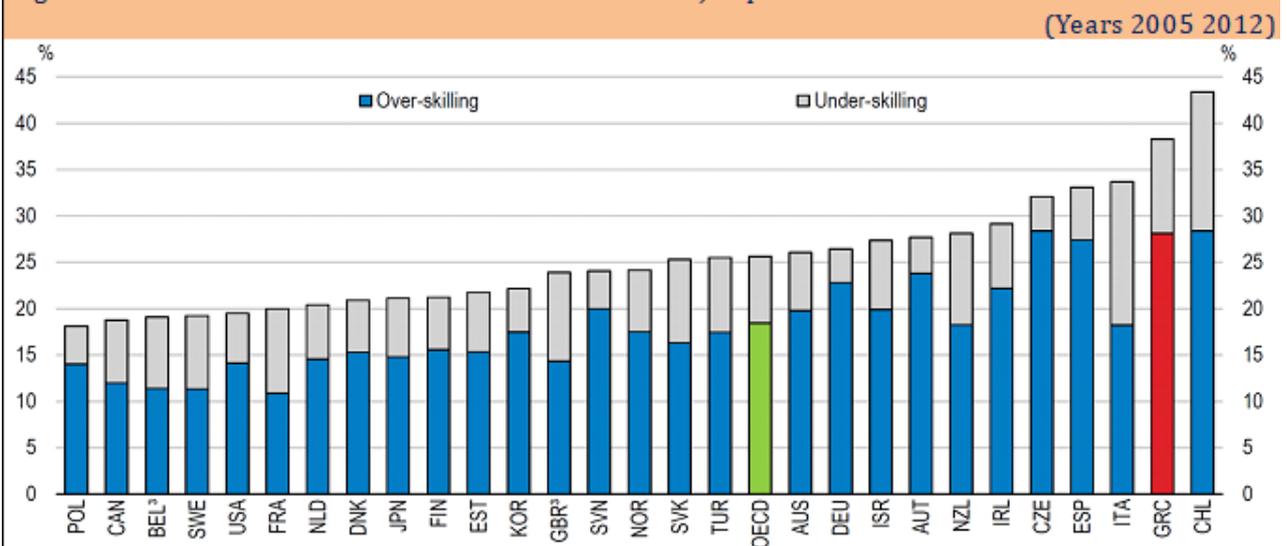
Source: OECD (2018), Labour Statistics (database).

Figure 3. The incidence of long-term unemployment is very high



Source: OECD (2017), Labour Force Statistics (database).

Figure 4. Share of workers with skill mismatch for their job position



Source: Adalet McGowan, M. and D. Andrews (2017), "Skills Mismatch, Productivity and Policies in New Zealand: Evidence from the second wave of PIAAC", OECD Economics Department Working Papers, No. 1403, OECD Publishing, Paris. OECD calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) 2012 and 2015).

Table 1: Labour Data in Greece in comparison to OECD

	Greece				OECD			
	2007	2013	2016	2017Q4	2007	2013	2016	2017Q3
Labour force participation ¹ (15-64)	66.5	67.5	68.2	..	70.6	71.0	71.7	..
- of which:	54.8	58.3	60.4	..	60.9	62.5	63.6	..
Youth (15-24)	31.0	28.4	24.6	..	49.4	47.0	47.2	..
Prime-age workers (25-54)	81.8	83.9	85.5	..	81.0	81.5	81.9	..
Older workers (55-64)	44.2	42.4	44.9	..	55.7	59.7	62.1	..
Employment rate ² (15-64)	60.9	48.8	52.0	53.4	66.5	65.2	67.0	68.1
Female	47.7	39.9	43.3	44.0	57.2	57.4	59.4	60.2
Youth (15-24)	24.0	11.8	13.0	13.7	43.4	39.4	41.1	42.7
Older workers (55-64)	42.7	35.6	36.3	38.9	53.5	56.3	59.2	60.6
Part-time employment ³ (Total)	7.7	10.3	11.0	..	15.4	17.0	16.7	..
Temporary employment ⁴ (Total)	11.0	10.1	11.2	..	12.2	11.1	11.2	..
Unemployment rate ¹ (15-64)	8.5	27.7	23.7	21.4	5.8	8.1	6.5	5.8
Youth (15-24)	22.7	58.3	47.3	..	12.1	16.3	12.9	..
Prime-age and older age ¹ (25-64)	7.3	25.5	22.3	..	4.8	7.0	5.6	..
Tertiary education ⁵	6.2	19.4	17.2	..	3.3	5.3	4.6	..
Below upper-secondary education ⁵	7.1	28.7	26.2	..	9.0	13.9	11.7	..
Long-term unemployment rate ⁶ (Total)	49.7	67.1	72.0	..	28.2	35.2	30.5	..
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) ^{1,5} (15-29)	16.6	28.5	23.5	..	13.9	15.5	13.9	..
Working age population (15-64, thousands of persons)	7357	7180	6934
Share of employment ⁸ , by industry:								
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	11.1	12.2	11.3					
Industry, including energy	11.3	9.8	9.3					
Construction	8.1	5.1	4.9					
Services	69.5	73.0	74.6					
of which trade ⁷	20.5	19.7	20.1					
Share of employment in general government ^{3,8}	18.0	18.6	17.8		17.9		18.1	

Employment grew more strongly for workers with higher levels of education, though jobs created since 2013 typically require fewer skills than those lost during the crisis. Despite solid education participation rates, the labour market and education system are not providing workers with the skills that employers need. Greece's workers are among the most likely to report being over-qualified for their jobs among OECD countries (Figure 4).

At the same time, surveys find that high school students' test performance and adults' skills lag other OECD countries (OECD, 2016b). Adult education and active labour market programmes have lacked the capacity, quality and focus on the skills needed by workplaces to help the large number of unemployed access Greece's emerging economic opportunities. As the reform agenda progresses from rectifying the imbalances underlying the crisis to longer-term progress in activity and wellbeing, the government will need to address these issues.



New pathways to develop professional skills

Adult education has a growing role in Greeks' careers, although from a very low level and was set back by the crisis (Karalis, 2017). For adults entering the workforce and later in life, the tertiary education system has offered few pathways to develop professional expertise or to re-skill for evolving workplace needs. Universities offer limited possibilities of entry later in life (OECD, 2017g). Access to on-the-job training is limited especially for the majority of the workforce employed by SMEs (less than 10% of the employees had access to employer-provided training in the past year).

The quality and cost of adult training is patchy and participation is limited. Recent reforms to technical and adult education seek to better connect teaching with workplace needs. Tertiary and vocational education institutions are better coordinating with regional employers, and pilot programmes support students' transition from technical high schools into workplaces (MoERRA, 2017b). The government is developing 2-year professional courses that are linked with universities, towards ensuring they offer both practical skills and rigour. These efforts must expand to provide adults with the skills for the growing number of 'technicians and associate professionals' jobs (Athanasouli, et al., 2017). Specialised language courses for refugees would allow them to participate in these courses and contribute their skills to the labour force (OECD, 2015e).

Clear information about the content and quality of adult education courses needs to accompany expanded supply. Reforms in 2012 sought to redress the limited supply of places in vocational education programmes at public institutions by liberalising private institutions' offerings. Programmes proliferated, but their quality and effectiveness has been patchy (OECD, 2017j). Following the approach developed in Chile, an existing education quality assessment body with a track record for independence, rigour and clarity should certify the quality of courses, at the request of course providers. It can aid institution needing support (OECD, 2017j).

Enhancing employability

A mix of programmes is necessary to address the different skill gaps faced by different groups. For adults with work experience, programmes that develop specific skills needed by employers can be more effective than those that develop general skills. The government is developing these, focusing on the skills needed in Greece's most dynamic sectors. This effort complements the government's investments in vocational education, apprenticeship and adult learning systems. On the other hand, many out-of-work youth new to the labour force can lack solid general education. For them, reinforcing transferable, general skills, alongside work experience can improve long-term employability and earnings more than specific skill training (Card, et al., 2015; OECD, 2015b)..

Supply of private professional skill training programmes exploded after the sector was liberalised in 2012. However, their quality is patchy and would benefit from certification, so as that participants have the information to choose high quality programmes.

The benefits of effective quality indicators is demonstrated by the better results achieved when employers, who have more experience with different providers, are able to select training providers, than when youth choose the training providers.

The effectiveness of public jobseeker training programmes has also fallen short of what Greece needs. Some programmes have been very costly, while completion rates have been low – fewer than half of entrants completed their programmes in 2013 and 2014.

On-going monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of different programme approaches should continue, and successful programmes should be supported.

Better matching job seekers and employers

Effectively matching job seekers with employers shortens spells of unemployment, and supports labour productivity and wages by ensuring skills are used efficiently. Greece's large pool of unemployed fills any vacancy quickly, but workers report high rates of skill mismatch, hindering firms' growth and aggregate productivity.



Greece's public employment service (OAED) engaged with 323.869 people in 2015, or over one-quarter of the unemployed. Approximately 4% of those who found a job in the previous 12 months used OAED, a lower share than in most OECD countries. Greece's large number of SMEs would particularly benefit from greater recruitment support from OAED, given that most lack internal human resource departments. The government is re-engineering OAED to enhance its capacity to engage with employers and to more actively match job seekers' skills with vacancies. These efforts are welcome. The government is also expanding specific areas of OAED's capacity, in part by redesigning processes and directing counsellors to better liaise with employers and advice jobseekers. OAED is also expected to integrate into the new network of community service centres.



These are positive moves as they address reform priorities discussed in various Economic Surveys of Greece (OECD, 2013). Changing OAED job counsellors' responsibilities complements the investments in IT systems. More contact between counsellors and employers improves job matching rates (Frolich, et al., 2007). These changes may also require strengthening counsellors' 'soft' skills, such as job brokering, counselling and social work (OECD, 2015d). In the future, OAED could offer specialised support services for SME employers, following the success of such services at the British public employment service.

Bringing youth into work

Youth inactivity is a significant challenge in Greece. High before the crisis relative to other OECD countries, youth inactivity has since risen further (Table 1), due to fewer employment opportunities and weak incentives to actively engage in job search or apprenticeships. Extended periods of inactivity depreciate human capital and can do lasting harm to income prospects. Most countries' ALMPs under-target youth (ILO, 2012) and Greece is not an exception.

The most effective approaches tailor strategies to individual jobseekers' needs, such as additional general skill development, job-specific training, or employment matching (Eurofound, 2012).

This requires different agencies to coordinate, which is best managed through a single point of contact across agencies (European Commission 2016b).

Greece's current social protection reforms go in this direction and merit pursuing resolutely.

In Greece, making a modest unemployment benefit conditional on job-search and training activities could encourage out-of-work youth to engage with the labour force. Greece also has ample scope to exploit more intensively and effectively the EU-funded youth guarantee scheme (European Commission, et al., 2017).

General Recommendations to Increase Employability

Strengthening education and skills

- Introduce assessment frameworks and professional development schemes; gradually give schools and teachers greater pedagogical and managerial autonomy.
- Develop regular and broad assessments of students' learning, supplemented by general aptitude tests that, in the medium-term, can replace the current university entrance exam.
- Regularise the supplementary teacher workforce in a manner that is fiscally sustainable and that encourages effective teaching.
- Scale up post-secondary vocational education and adult education, linking them with labour market needs, and certify the quality of courses.

- Provide tertiary institutions with autonomy and incentives to consolidate courses, departments and institutions, to raise teaching quality, and to adapt courses to students' demands and workplaces' needs. Assisting re-employment
- Evaluate reskilling programmes, expand successful and cost-effective approaches and cancel those that are not efficient.
- Certify the quality of professional skill development courses.
- Pursue the overhaul of the public employment service to better match candidates' skills with employers' needs, including by developing a unit focused on serving SMEs.
- Finance effective job training and search programmes by reallocating resources from public works and private employment subsidies.

THE FORMS OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN GREECE

The statute of School Vocational Guidance (SVG) in Public Sector

Attempts to develop career guidance services during the first decades of the 20th century have been both rare and fragmentary. The first significant efforts date to the early 1950s, with the term Epagelmatikos

Prosanatolismos (Vocational Guidance) was established as a lesson in schools, being generally used to refer to guidance until the end of 1970s. In 1953, the establishment of vocational guidance services was among the innovative measures taken by the then Ministry of Labour aiming to improve workforce employment. In the same year a Research Centre for Psychological Testing was set up and in 1955 a small number of employment counsellors were trained in order to offer their services in some of the Employment Offices that had been operating since 1937. In 1969, guidance services were assigned to the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED),





The effort continues and at the end of 1997 the SEP Institution becomes of particular importance as it recognizes its contribution to the upgrading of the role of Education and its harmonization with contemporary economic and financial problems. Among the innovations introduced in the operation of the institution was the establishment of Office of Counseling and Vocational Guidance (GRASEP) as well as the implementation of "Career Education" programs and the organization of "Career Day" in schools

The GRASEP were established by the Ministry of Education and were intended to support the implementation of the Vocational Guidance in the school as well as to provide information and counseling support to the entire school community (educators, trainers and teachers) of the School Unit in which the Office was operating and of the nearest School Units. They were staffed by trained counseling experts and had a library with books and information material about the CVT.

The aim of the vocational guidance in school was to:

1. To facilitate students' personal development and self-awareness.
2. To familiarize students with information as a communicative process, with emphasis on the importance of developing active search, critical processing and information utilization skills.
3. To help students solve problems and make decisions through activities that gives them the opportunity to experience similar situations in order to develop personal maturity.
4. Facilitate the goal of transitioning young people to the world of work by expanding students' experiences with diverse and complex activities inside and outside the school.

Today, Educational and Counselling Support Centers (KESY) have taken on the role of GRASEP they operate under the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs in all prefectures of the country and provide regionally vocational guidance services to students, their parents or caretakers as well as teachers. The services are provided free of charge with the help of experts from various public bodies for teenagers, students and adults not older than 25 years can arrange a person to person meeting in one of the Educational and Counselling Support Centers (KESYP) of the ministry of Education, Culture and Religions. Finally Counselling Offices also operate at Second Chance Public Schools where students are adults that does not have concluded the obligatory secondary education.

Unemployed individuals older than 25 years of age can benefit from the career management, job search and entrepreneurship services provided by the OAED.

The consulting activities implemented by OAED are:

1. Activation Workshops - Mobilization of Unemployed Workers
2. Career Guidance Counselling
3. Job Search Techniques Consulting
4. Business Initiative Consulting

In order to participate in a free Career Guidance Counselling Program and Counselling on the Job Search Techniques, the person interested must be registered unemployed, have his/her unemployment card in force and have completed the process of developing an Individual Action Plan in cooperation with the Employment Advisor. Career Counselling is also provided under various training and support programs aimed at young entrepreneurs, workers, the unemployed and the ECD and implemented with the co-financing of the European Social Fund.

Developments towards the future

Career guidance in Greece was (and still is to a large extent) underutilised and fragmented while focused mainly to the unemployed or responding to individual requests for support. However, following the EU lifelong guidance priorities, there is strong effort to address a number of challenges and support citizens of any age to develop their Career Management Skills (CMS) so as to be able to search, find, interpret and make the most effective use of labour market information.

The collection of labour market information (both current status as well as forecasts on e.g. the skill needs in the labour market) is fragmented as various social actors (such as the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED), the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV), the various Chambers of Commerce, etc.) analyse the current situation in various business sectors and carry out foresight activities.



As a result, information on professions and the world of work is scattered, making it difficult for the citizens to find answers to their questions when planning their career. EOPPEP experts consult all available official data sources and collect and present relevant information through the EOPPEP's Interactive Guidance Portals constituting it a 'single source of labour market information'. In addition, the recently launched information system "ERGANI" (under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security & Welfare) collects information on the active workforce currently, there is no qualification framework for career counsellors.

However, a Joint Ministerial Decision is under preparation which will lead to the certification of the profession ensuring a unified level of service provision. Even though, there is a gradually increasing focus on career management skills perspective as a key aspect of lifelong guidance interventions, there isn't an operational national or sectoral CMS framework in Greece.



However, EOPPEP organised several trainings and has developed relevant training material and tools targeting both:

- (a) guidance practitioners working in education, training and employment public and private settings in order to develop the relevant knowledge, competencies and skills required to serve the needs of the different target groups in acquisition of CMS; and
- (b) End-users in order to help them acquiring the necessary skills for career management.

Especially with regard to the career guidance services for youngsters, the on-line tools and material developed by EOPPEP "Interactive Guidance Portal for adolescents and youngsters" and the "Lifelong Career Development Portal "e-Stadiodromia" for adults" are not yet adequately exploited due to both cultural (e.g. the vast majority of pupils are unused to seek assistance for their career development and most of the times follow the 'advise' of their social environment, such as family and friends, or the 'modern trends') and systemic (e.g. lack of resources for career guidance, there no vocational guidance in the school curriculum, etc.) weaknesses.

However, the establishment of the Career and Counselling Centres (KESYPs) in all prefectures (despite all the difficulties in their operation) as well as the existence and development of new on-line tools (such as the Greek version of the Real Game which focus on youngsters and follow the latest gamification techniques), are positive signs on a changing mentality in the provision of career guidance services. In fact, the latest statistics of EOPPEP show a clear increase of the usage of those tools, while feedback from career practitioners highlight that pupils are getting more and more familiar with them and eventually approach KESYPs counsellors seeking assistance. Overall, the economic crisis in Greece has a great impact on the career guidance services as the citizens do not choose are the profession that suits their interests and expectations but rather any profession. High levels of unemployment and long-term unemployment means there is an increasing demandfor career guidance services, but the on-going recession inhibits the increase of human resources, among others, for the provision of career guidance services.

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