

INTRODUCTION

Improving the performance of youth in the labour market is a crucial challenge in OECD countries. Population ageing is looming, but this is not a magic pill to solve young people's problems. While smaller youth cohorts are likely to create more job opportunities for youth, it is crucial that young people possess the skills required in today's and tomorrow's labour market.

Over the past decade, the labour market performance of Greek youth improved significantly. The youth unemployment rate, the incidence of long-term unemployment among youth and the share of youth neither in employment nor in education or training all declined between the late 1990s and the late 2000s. However, as the current economic downturn caused Greece to enter recession in 2009, some of these gains have been wiped out. In addition, the barriers to further improvement observed prior to the current crisis remain. The performance of Greek youth on the labour market is still well below the OECD average. Transitions from school to work are long and difficult, even for the most qualified, and some sub-groups of the youth population perform much worse than average.

Starting in 2006, a number of initiatives have been launched to respond to the challenges faced by Greek youth on the labour market. The education system has been the object of a number of reforms aimed at ensuring that youth leave school with the skills required in the labour market. In addition, a number of labour market programmes have been launched to help unemployed youth find work. While the thrust of these reforms is in the right direction, some of them have only just started to operate in the country and their effects on participants' labour market outcomes are still unknown and need to be assessed.

The purpose of this report is to point to areas where further change or improvement is necessary and possible. Chapter 1 presents basic facts on the situation of youth in the Greek labour market. The role of education and training in shaping the transition from initial learning to the labour market is analysed in Chapter 2. The demand-side barriers to youth employment are explored in Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 4 analyses the role of welfare benefits and public employment services in helping non-employed youth get a job.



From:
**Jobs for Youth/Des emplois pour les jeunes:
Greece 2010**

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264082106-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2010), "Introduction", in *Jobs for Youth/Des emplois pour les jeunes: Greece 2010*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264082106-3-en>

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