

WP4 Case studies

D4.2 Evaluation report on each case study

Case Study: An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market

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Table of contents

1. Introduction	7
1.1 The policy/programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market”	7
1.2 Regional/local context	10
1.3 Selection of the policy/programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market”	14
1.4 Report structure	16
2. Literature review.....	19
2.1 Policy analysis	19
2.1.1 Development of the policy	19
2.1.2 Legislative framework.....	22
2.1.3 Academic analysis	26
2.2 Previous evaluations	30
2.2.1 Search strategy	30
2.2.2 What do previous evaluations tell us?.....	31
3. Needs assessment.....	35
3.1 Introduction	35
3.2 Existing needs assessment	37
3.2.1 Target population	37
3.2.2 Population need	39
3.2.3 Evaluation of previous needs assessment	42
3.3 New needs assessment	42
3.3.1 Methodology	43
3.3.2 Target population	43
3.3.3 Population need	44
4. Theories of change	46
4.1 Introduction	46
4.2 Existing theory(ies) of change	46
4.3 New theory of change.....	49
4.3.1 Methodology	49
4.3.2 Background	50
4.3.3 Long-term outcome	51
4.3.4 Intermediate outcomes	53
4.3.5 Assumptions and justifications	54
4.3.6 Interventions and outputs	55
4.3.7 Inputs	56
4.3.8 Program Logic.....	57
5. Process evaluation	61
5.1 Introduction	61
5.2 Methodology	66
5.2.1 Quantitative methods	66
5.2.2 Qualitative methods	67
5.3 Results.....	71
5.3.1 Secondary data	71
5.3.2 Qualitative data	77
6. Impact evaluation.....	96
6.1 Introduction	96

6.2 Impact evaluation methodology	96
6.3 Results.....	102
6.3.1 Data from the existing evaluations	102
6.3.2 Data from the qualitative research	119
7. Economic evaluation	122
7.1 Introduction	122
8. References.....	130

Executive Summary

Both the immediate and the far-off future of Europe depend upon its youth population. Apart from the pressing challenges that young people are typically confronted with on their way to adult life, this generation specifically already lives in an era of full globalisation and will have to cope with the responsibility of an ageing population in a time that is not far from today. In this respect, it is a matter of utmost concern and risk that this social group has been hit fiercely by the economic crisis during the last 10 years roughly. Current situation in the EU concerning youth unemployment is more than alarming; vast numbers of young people remain unemployed. High unemployment testifies to an appreciably more inaccessible labour market for young people in association with the mismatch between education and skills in the EU youth as many are still not sufficiently educated or qualified for the existing job offers. Concurrently, statistical data on unemployment do not adequately capture the situation of young people as trainees and graduates are classified as being out of the labour force.

In light of the above developments the report deals with mapping and presenting the outcomes of the evaluation undertaken by PUA InnoSI team for the programme: “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market”. The programme was carried out in the context of the EU *Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)* and implemented in the eight Convergence Regions of Greece by a consortium of social partners coordinated by the *Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (INE/GSEE)* with the participation of *KANEP/GSEE*, *GSEVEE/IME & KEK*, *ESEE/KAELE & INEMY* and *EEDE*. The programme aimed at organising, developing and providing a solid “corpus” of skills, motives and working experience to 7.000 graduates of *Vocational Training Institutes (IEK)*, *Apprenticeship Schools (EPAS)* and *Vocational Upper Secondary Schools (EPAL)* and, also, be profitable for the participating enterprises through an integrated intervention that included:

- Theoretical education aspiring to cultivate and foster a set of horizontal (“soft”) skills that are tangent so as to match the career needs of all business sectors;
- Vocational counselling oriented to the establishment of *employability*, *professional adjustment* and *professional resilience*, i.e. factors that help the individual become accustomed to the labour market and recognise potential job opportunities;

- Acquisition of working experience (internship) in enterprises by developing an efficient and quality monitoring system of “coupling” the graduates’ specialties with the area each enterprise trades in.

Following and applying the guidelines described in the *InnoSI Case Study Report Template* the PUA InnoSI team outlined an *Evaluation Framework* with a sequence of methodological steps of the overall process. The method of analysis was designed and deployed on a two-fold level. First step was to comprehensively study the documents about the programme (call for proposals, technical fiche, implementation guides, existing evaluations, publicity material etc.). The next step was to conduct semi-structured interviews with members of the project team, educators, counsellors, quality inspectors and beneficiaries. This course of action helped us explore in depth all aspects required for the purposes of the report.

First of all, the key policy and literature regarding the programme was reviewed. This was followed by carrying out an assessment of the needs of the programme’s target population (vocational schools’ graduates) which concluded that the specific group immensely lacks working experience and viable prospects in its personal and social life. With that in mind we then tried to identify the changes that the programme brought about. Analysis implemented on the grounds of a *Theory of Change* approach showed that the initiative was successful not only in its initial objective, that is to operate as a way to familiarise the beneficiaries with the needs and prerequisites of the labour market, but also as a lever for empowering them, on the one hand, and as an experimental prototype for deploying similar programmes in the future, on the other.

In terms of process and impact evaluation the programme was well run and provided quantitative and, primarily, qualitative outcomes. Engagement of different social partners was wealthy and harmonic in general as the guidelines and the agreed type of interventions was adopted and followed. Most of actions and subprojects designed were implemented as planned. In spite of some organisational and bureaucratic difficulties all activities reached the target population of the programme. Therefore, it can be argued that the programme achieved the desired effects:

- Enhance the professional horizons of vocational school graduates’ in Greece;
- Create a feasible platform for the transition from education /training to the labour market;

- Equip beneficiaries with socio-intellectual skills, knowledge and tools that can innovatively be embraced towards new types of employment or the implantation of entrepreneurship initiatives.

One final aspect of the programme we explored was its economic evaluation. The programme is now established and available financial data were limited. In this respect, analysis concluded that financial realisation was quite sufficiently run, considering that the programme was implemented in a period marked by political instability and immense economic disturbances provoked by the referendum (on July 2015). Other types of analysis could not be carried out due to lack of indicators set after the completion of the programme that would allow comparisons and decisions in terms of benefit, effectiveness or social return of investment.

As findings of both existing evaluations and our qualitative research indicated, it can be claimed that the overall efforts of the programme led to substantial short-term effects. However, *mid-* and *long-term* benefits and impact could not be identified due to the absence of specific indicators and markers and the projection of follow-up procedures. In that respect, along with high unemployment rates and low prospects, the programme evaluated can evidently be prototyped as an initiative that can be applied and supplemented by interventions on policy level. This will unleash the potential of young people and will call for concerted actions from EU Member States, authorities, businesses and social partners.

1. Introduction

1.1 The policy/programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market”

The youth unemployment crisis has had a profound effect on young people and the societies in which they live threatening and undermining the very fabric of society. Young people are experiencing increased levels of poverty and social exclusion along with a widening economic gap between older and younger generations. On EU level, specifically, the issue of long-term unemployment is of paramount concern for young people. During the last ten years roughly the economic crisis has amplified the issue of youth unemployment in many EU regions, e.g. the Western Balkans, where more than half of young people are out of work in many areas, while large differences occur between Member States. Recent austerity measures have not only failed to solve these issues but have actually worsened them and have placed the future of an entire generation at risk. Therefore, it is necessary to amend these measures and replace them with policies of growth that will facilitate employment

As far as Greece is concerned the country has been in recession since 2010 when the risk of bankruptcy first officially appeared. The high levels of unemployment, the continuous wage and pension cuts and the ever-increasing austerity measures have led to a decrease in purchasing power and a significant slide in per capita GDP. Despite the considerable drop in the cost of labour investment remained low, while the political and institutional uncertainty also keeps on impeding inflows of new capital. A series of intense social issues are associated with this problematic situation:

- Early school leaving (school drop-out): young people abandon education early and the reasons for that are often personal, e.g. the loss of the family's father. The repercussions from this phenomenon affect people both on individual level and throughout their life, leading to the shrinkage of possibilities of participating in the social, cultural and economic life of society.
- Special/Vulnerable target groups (children with learning difficulties, immigrants, Roma): drop-out rate for vulnerable groups at schools is high in Greece. Socially disadvantaged groups and persons that have a low educational background constitute some recurrent patterns. Also, the continuous flow of immigrants, coming

from totally different cultural characteristics and environments, results in immense heterogeneity which by extension restrains the socialization of these children and their integration in the school environment. Thus, the feeling of rejection is reinforced in these children who are finally led to the abandonment of school.

- Low appeal of Vocational Education: Greek society primary characteristic has always been a solid demand for general education and university studies. VET holds little appeal for young people and is typically associated with “laborious” and “inferior” manual labour. Young people continue to see vocational education as a last resort, despite unceasing efforts by the authorities to present it as an alternative of equal value with general education.
- Mismatch between education-VET and labor market: There appears to be a very low connection between vocational training systems (initial and continuing) and employment. Only 15.7% of graduates from continuing training and 21.85% from initial training found work within the first (six) 6 months of graduation ([KANEP/GSEE, 2013](#)).
- Structure of labour market /Rigid labour markets: The sharp rise in youth unemployment during the crisis is caused by the *dualisation* of the labour market. On the one hand, older workers have well-paid jobs that are nearly impossible to terminate, with generous severance arrangements, while young workers are hired, if at all, only on a temporary basis, on the other. Also, the collective bargaining agreements of a sector usually apply nationwide. So, it is hardly possible for them to be adapted on individual company level that could help react flexibly to the continuous crisis. Instead, the necessary flexibility is established by limiting the duration of employment contracts for the younger employees.
- Ageing of population and demographic issues: The demographic factor is particularly important in a country like Greece which, compared to other EU countries, is geographically both small and, due to the many islands, extremely dispersed. Among the main demographic trends are: a) gradual ageing of the population, and b) change in the composition of the population brought about by immigration. These demographic transformations constitute a major challenge for the country's economy and development in that the shrinkage of the labour force observed in Greece leads the country to social and economic decline.

In response to the huge increase in youth unemployment (persons aged 15-24), the Greek Ministry of Labour drew up, in collaboration with the Ministries of Education, Culture and Development, a unified Operational Action Plan of targeted interventions to boost youth employment and entrepreneurship in the framework of the *National Strategic Reference Framework* (NSRF) 2007-2013¹ operational program. In the context of this action plan, a number of vocational training-related initiatives /programmes were implemented to foster employment and entrepreneurship of persons aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 35. Objectives of these initiatives included but were not limited to:

- Strengthening vocational training and apprenticeship systems, particularly by combining training and work experience, through programmes that subsidise job placements for young people and practical training in work place settings (voucher for vocational training) either during education or later, such as practical training for graduates of tertiary education institutions, IEKs or other bodies for initial vocational training, students in *Manpower Employment Organization* (OAED), apprenticeship schools and students at merchant marine academies;
- Institution of systematic transition-to-work programs to help students gain initial work experience. These would need to be adapted to the needs and profiles of young jobseekers through a combination of guidance, counselling, training and employment, e.g. job voucher schemes for young jobseekers;
- Providing more counselling and vocational guidance, especially for young jobseekers. Supporting vocational guidance in schools, career orientation and entrepreneurship counselling such as through vocational education career offices, actions promoting youth entrepreneurship;
- Measures aimed at reducing early school leaving.

Hence, it is understood that the challenge of tackling youth unemployment can primarily be achieved through the deletion of its structural characteristics, with actions oriented at the direct link of vocational education and training with employment and the labour market. This was one of the ideas for principally addressing the programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market” to graduates of *Vocational Training Institutes (IEK)*, *Apprenticeship Schools*

¹ <https://2007-2013.espa.gr/en/Pages/Default.aspx>.

(EPAS) and *Vocational Upper Secondary Schools (EPAL)*. For the design and implementation of the programme a consortium was assembled: INE/GSEE (Labour Institute of Greek General Confederation of Labour) was the coordinator of the programme, supplemented by the following social partners:

- Centre for the Development of Educational Policy (KANEP/GSEE);
- Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants (GSEVEE/IME & KEK);
- National Confederation of Hellenic Commerce (ESEE/KAELE & INEMY);
- Hellenic Management Association (EEDE).

The composition of the consortium reflects the will and ambition of the main social partners that are engaged in active employment practices and policies in Greece to join forces and bring about maximum effectiveness of this specialized intervention. The programme was implemented in 2015 (January to November); the *Call for Proposals* was issued by the Ministry of Education on July 2014; the Joint Ministerial Decision was issued on December 2014; the programme was publicly announced on the coordinator's and social partners' web sites on January 2015.

The programme was implemented in the context of *YEI*. The initiative intended to provide financial support to the Member States worst hit by youth unemployment, as it was allocated to the regions that have youth unemployment rates (YUR) of more than 25% in 2012 and, for Member States where the YUR has increased by more than 30% in 2012, NUTS level 2 regions that have YUR of more than 20 % in 2012 ([EC/ESF, 2014](#)). On national level, the programme was included in the Operational Programme (OP) *Education and Lifelong Learning*, one of the four OPs that were co-funded by the *European Social Fund (ESF)*.

1.2 Regional/local context

The programme was designed and implemented in all eight (8) *Convergence Regions*² (Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, Epirus, Western Greece, Thessaly, Peloponnesus, Ionian Islands & North Aegean, Crete). In 2012, unemployment rates ranged between less than 15%, in the Ionian Islands, and over 30%, in Western Macedonia. Moreover, between

² *Convergence Regions* are those with a GDP /capita of less than 75% of the average GDP /capita of EU-25. Convergence regions are eligible for funding from the *European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)*, the *Cohesion Fund* and the *European Social Fund (ESF)*.

2008 and 2012 unemployment rates increased by a 'low' 140% (or less) in the regions of Epirus, Ionian Islands, Western Macedonia and South Aegean; but by multiples of this (over 300%) in Crete, Athens and the North Aegean ([Monastiriotis and Martelli, 2013](#)). However, the intervention was not a strategic decision made by the coordinator of the programme in consultation with the participating social partners; neither was it a decision made on central political level or one that could be considered part of a national policy plan. Rather it was dictated by the figures above supplemented by stats presented in the *YEI Map3* for Greece:

- Unemployment rate (%), December 2014, Greece: 25.8%;
- Youth (under 25) unemployment rate (%), December 2014, Greece: 50.6%;
- Rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), 2013 (%), Greece: 20.4%.

In this respect, a set of data is provided that depicts the demographic, economic, educational, and employment/unemployment profiles of the regions wherein the programme was deployed.

Population on 1 January by age, sex and NUTS 2 region					
Last update: 12-09-2016					
AGE: Total SEX: Total					
TIME ▾	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GEO ▾					
Greece	11,123,392	11,086,406	11,003,615	10,926,807	10,858,018
Anatoliki Makedonia,	611,573	612,074	610,102	608,214	606,490
Ipeiros	346,503	345,437	343,128	341,046	339,142
Thessalia	747,690	745,839	741,593	737,686	733,663
Ionian Nisia	209,221	209,131	208,241	207,664	207,059
Dytiki Ellada	690,904	687,935	682,583	677,727	673,263
Peloponnisos	589,602	589,044	586,863	585,155	583,431
Nisia Aigaion, Kriti	1,161,958	1,164,738	1,164,215	1,164,272	1,164,073
Voreio Aigaio	200,831	200,591	199,478	198,581	197,695
Kriti	627,144	629,367	630,085	630,889	631,513

Table 1. *Population on 1 January by age, sex and NUTS 2 region*. Source: Eurostat.

³ Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13469&langId=en> [Accessed: 25 Feb. 2016].

Education indicators by NUTS 2 regions

Last update: 19-05-2014

[educ_regind]

INDIC_ED: Pupils and Students in upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3-4) - as % of the population aged 15-24 years at regional level

TIME ▾	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
GEO ▾					
European Union (28 countries)	:	:	:	:	:
European Union (27 countries)	:	:	38.4	38.9	:
Greece	31.2	:	32.3	32.4	33.6
Anatoliki Makedonia, Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	26.6	28.3	:	32.9	33.8
Ipeiros (NUTS 2010)	27.7	28.5	:	31.6	33.4
Ionia Nisia (NUTS 2010)	27.3	27.9	:	31.0	33.4
Dytiki Ellada (NUTS 2010)	25.8	25.8	:	30.2	30.6
Peloponnisos (NUTS 2010)	25.2	26.5	:	28.9	29.9
Nisia Aigaioi, Kriti	26.2	27.1	:	30.5	31.9
Voreio Aigaio	28.4	29.6	:	34.4	35.6
Kriti	27.7	29.3	:	34.3	35.4
	28.7	29.9	:	34.9	36.3

No footnotes available

Special value:
: not available

Source of data: Eurostat

Table 2. Pupils and students in upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 34) as % of the population aged 15-24 years at regional level. Source: Eurostat.

Early leavers from education and training by sex and NUTS 2 regions

Last update: 25-05-2016

[edat_lfse_16]

UNIT: Percentage
AGE: From 18 to 24 years
SEX: Total

TIME ▾	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GEO ▾					
European Union (28 countries)	13.4	12.7	11.9	11.2(b)	11.0
European Union (27 countries)	13.5	12.8	12.0	11.3(b)	11.0
European Union (15 countries)	14.7	13.7	12.7	11.8(b)	11.4
Euro area (19 countries)	14.6	13.8	12.8	11.9(b)	11.6
Euro area (18 countries)	14.7	13.8	12.9	11.9(b)	11.7
Euro area (17 countries)	14.7	13.9	12.9	11.9(b)	11.7
Greece	12.9	11.3	10.1	9.0(b)	7.9
Anatoliki Makedonia, Ipeiros	20.2	21.6	21.8	19.7(b)	17.2
Anatoliki Makedonia, Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	14.6	12.1(u)	10.4(u)	:(bu)	:(u)
Thessalia	:	:	:	:	:
Ionia Nisia	15.8	11.7	7.7(u)	5.9(bu)	7.9
Dytiki Ellada	:(u)	15.9(u)	14.7(u)	16.3(bu)	:(u)
Peloponnisos	13.6	11.2	9.6	9.5(b)	5.4(u)
Ipeiros (NUTS 2010)	19.3	15.2	14.0	14.8(b)	14.6
Ionia Nisia (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:
Dytiki Ellada (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:
Peloponnisos (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:
Nisia Aigaioi, Kriti	18.4	15.9	15.6	13.0(b)	11.7
Voreio Aigaio	14.2(u)	9.1(u)	10.9(u)	14.2(bu)	17.3(u)
Kriti	19.2	17.5	14.4	14.0(b)	10.8

No footnotes available

Available flags:
b break in time series
c confidential
d definition differs, see metadata
e estimated
f forecast
i see metadata (phased out)
n not significant
p provisional
r revised
s Eurostat estimate (phased out)
u low reliability
z not applicable

Special value:
: not available

Source of data: Eurostat

Table 3. *Early leavers from education and training by sex and NUTS 2 regions (from 18 to 24 years)*. Source: Eurostat.

Long-term unemployment (12 months and more) by NUTS 2 regions						[lfst_r_lfu2ltu]
Last update: 08-09-2016						
UNIT: Percentage of active population						
TIME ►	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
GEO ▼						
European Union (28 countries)	4.2	4.7	5.1	5.0	4.5	
European Union (27 countries)	4.1	4.6	5.1	5.0	4.5	
Greece	8.8	14.4	18.4	19.5	18.2	
Anatoliki Makedonia, Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	10.9	14.1	18.4	17.1	16.1	
Ipeiros	8.7	11.9	17.2	20.3	17.8	
Anatoliki Makedonia, Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Thessalia	7.8	13.1	16.9	18.6	19.7	
Ionian Islands	4.2	6.0	8.5	13.0	12.9	
Dytiki Ellada	9.4	16.4	20.6	22.1	21.7	
Peloponnisos	8.0	13.5	15.7	17.2	17.2	
Ipeiros (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Ionian Islands (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Dytiki Ellada (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Peloponnisos (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Nisia Aigaion, Kriti	5.1	9.5	12.4	13.3	11.3	
Voreio Aigaio	8.8	14.7	14.9	14.9	12.9	
Kriti	5.1	10.8	14.0	15.2	13.5	

No footnotes available

Special value:
: not available

Source of data: Eurostat

Table 4. *Long-term unemployment (12 months and more) by NUTS 2 regions (percentage of active population)*. Source: Eurostat.

Long-term unemployment (12 months and more) by NUTS 2 regions						[lfst_r_lfu2ltu]
Last update: 08-09-2016						
UNIT: Thousand						
TIME ►	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
GEO ▼						
European Union (28 countries)	9,957.8	11,250.4	12,458.3	12,267.4	11,058.1	
European Union (27 countries)	9,799.9	11,061.5	12,256.4	12,076.7	10,863.4	
Greece	435.1	706.2	892.7	936.8	875.3	
Anatoliki Makedonia, Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	28.0	36.1	47.1	44.0	41.6	
Ipeiros	12.6	17.3	24.6	28.8	24.9	
Anatoliki Makedonia, Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Thessalia	25.1	41.8	53.2	58.3	62.0	
Ionian Islands	4.0	5.7	7.8	11.8	11.6	
Dytiki Ellada	27.1	46.7	58.4	62.2	62.6	
Peloponnisos	19.8	32.9	38.4	42.4	42.7	
Ipeiros (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Ionian Islands (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Dytiki Ellada (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Peloponnisos (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:	
Nisia Aigaion, Kriti	26.8	50.2	65.0	68.2	57.5	
Voreio Aigaio	6.9	12.5	12.5	12.0	10.2	
Kriti	14.9	31.0	40.1	42.3	37.2	

No footnotes available

Special value:
: not available

Source of data: Eurostat

Table 5. *Long-term unemployment (12 months and more) by NUTS 2 regions (thousand)*. Source: Eurostat.

Unemployment rates by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions (%)

[lfst_r_lfu3rt]

Last update: 08-09-2016

UNIT: Percentage
AGE: From 15 to 24 years
SEX: Total

TIME ▸	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
GEO ▾					
European Union (28 c)	21.8	23.3	23.8	22.2	20.4
European Union (27 c)	21.7	23.2	23.6	22.0	20.2
Greece	44.7	55.3	58.3	52.4	49.8
Anatoliki Makedonia,	51.8	53.0	59.4	50.7	53.8
Ipeiros	48.6	61.1	67.4	69.8	58.6(u)
Anatoliki Makedonia,	:	:	:	:	:
Thessalia (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:
Thessalia	46.7	53.7	57.5	59.8	60.3
Ionia Nisia	26.2(u)	23.9(u)	51.5(u)	44.8(u)	54.6(u)
Dytiki Ellada	45.1	56.8	59.0	61.1	54.6
Peloponnisos	39.0	62.3	60.3	52.0	50.5
Ipeiros (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:
Ionia Nisia (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:
Dytiki Ellada (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:
Peloponnisos (NUTS 2010)	:	:	:	:	:
Nisia Aigaioi, Kriti	39.3	43.6	42.9	38.9	38.4
Voreio Aigaio	43.0(u)	45.8	46.1	40.2(u)	42.1(u)
Kriti	39.8	44.1	45.4	46.3	40.4

No footnotes available

Available flags:
b break in time series
c confidential
d definition differs, see metadata
e estimated
f forecast
i see metadata (phased out)
n not significant
p provisional
r revised
s Eurostat estimate (phased out)
u low reliability
z not applicable

Special value:
: not available

Source of data: Eurostat

Table 6. Unemployment rates by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions (%) (from 15 to 24 years). Source: Eurostat.

1.3 Selection of the policy/programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market”⁴

The social, economic and working environment is defined by risk, volatility and insecurity. Unemployment in Greece, especially among young people, has reached unprecedented rates, reaching double percentage compared to the levels recorded before the commencement of the fiscal crisis. At the same time, the deficit in social justice and quality grows continuously. Greece is in the 28th (last one) place among EU countries in terms of social justice. The gap between the young and the aged is getting wider. On EU-level the number of kids *at risk of poverty* has increased from 6.4 to 7.6 million, while 17.8% of youth (5.4 millions) are *not in employment, education or training* ([Schraad-Tischler, 2015](#)). Yet, although there has been an elevated attention to youth unemployment and

⁴ Data for this section are mainly sourced from: the call for proposals (issued on 11/07/2014) and European Commission /European Social Fund (2014). *Guidance on implementing the Youth Employment Initiative* (September 2014). Luxembourg: European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Unit E1.

the disadvantages and discrimination that young people face on the labour market in recent years by Europeans and international organisations many policy responses to date have been uncoordinated, haphazard and insufficient.

In light of so a precarious state of the economy and its effects on young people efforts and initiatives are deployed, constructive and immediate actions are proposed in order to reduce youth unemployment, protect youth rights, and safeguard the future economic and social stability of Europe. In Greece, the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) and its Labour Institute (INE) have long-lasting experience in designing and implementing EU-funded projects, aimed at low-skilled young adults (employed and unemployed), one of the most vulnerable social group that suffers from the impact of the austerity policies. Specifically, the programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market” aimed to provide low-skilled youth with necessary competences and, thus, support them in re-entering and remaining in the labour market. At a more structural level, the programme sought to connect vocational education and training with the labour market so as to address the dangerous phenomenon of extensive youth unemployment and, at the same time, the need to restructure the country’s economy. In doing so, the programme included a set of modular and interconnected actions:

- Training for acquiring and/or upgrading skills at a horizontal level involving the following modules: a) entrepreneurship and innovation, b) conflict crises management and communication, c) informatics, and d) administrative and organisational skills;
- Placement for acquisition of work experience in businesses for 2 up to 6 months (internship). Throughout this period participants profited from a system of professional guidance that supports and extends both their knowledge and experience; they were also inspired towards self-realisation and motivated towards efficiently planning their social and, specifically, professional future.

Factors taken into account for selecting the specific case study were:

- The aforementioned target group is particularly discriminated against, especially

⁵ See: European Commission Staff Working Document on a Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee {COM(2012) 729 final}. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9221&langId=en> [Accessed: 30 Mar. 2016].

within the current economic environment described above;

- This social group's continuous economic exclusion leads to their social and political exclusion on various levels and ways;
- The programme was addressed to an extensive number of young people who are believed to have significant insights and viewpoints and are eager to express and put them forward.

These factors are in compliance with the declared objectives of *WP 4* since the programme intended to provoke direct investment in human capital in order to bring jobless young adults into sustainable employment. It was also an initiative that, in a broader sense, will be able to offer coverage and personalisation over the life-course in that it was a respond to the needs of clients rather than offering a standardised service.

1.4 Report structure

The report presents the findings of the evaluation undertaken by the PUA InnoSI team of the programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market” coordinated by INE/GSEE and the participation of its social partners: KANEP/GSEE, GSEVEE/IME & KEK, ESEE/KAELE & INEMY and EEDE. For efficiently structuring and curating the results of the evaluation the report is arranged on the following elements (chapters):

a. *Literature review.* The key policy and literature regarding the programme is reviewed. Information and details in concern with the development of the policy are presented in relation to the general context of the social problem addressed (youth unemployment), the pillars and objectives upon the programme evaluated was designed and deployed, the conditions and drawbacks associated with connecting vocational education and training (VET) with the labour market, and how working experience can be enhanced in ways that it ensures re-entering to the labour market. Then the legislative framework on VET in Greece is described. These sections are followed by an academic analysis in which theoretical approaches, previous research and statistical data are cited and critically inspected in relation to the programme's objectives. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive reference to the methodology and main findings of the existing evaluations, an internal and an external one.

b. *Needs assessment.* The chapter probes whether there was an urge for the specific programme. Political, economic and social dimensions are explored in terms of the programme's feasibility and the specific problem(s) it aspired to deal with and/or confront beneficially for the target group and the society as a whole. In this respect, the characteristics and the needs of the target group (vocational school graduates) are outlined in conjunction with the first research conducted in Greece for the social group of those who are *Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)*. Analysis of official documents shows that the programme's target population is well defined and aspects such as: a) employability and access to the labour market, b) physical and mental health, and c) social exclusion are portrayed. This is followed by new needs assessment carried out with use of qualitative research methods, so as to examine if the existing one needs to be supplemented or amended. Results help us better comprehend the framework and the conditions of low youth participation in the labour market and also determine the needs to be covered by a programme like the one undertaken.

c. *Theories of Change:* In this chapter an approach of the type and the degree of change the programme would or has already provoked regarding a particular social group or the wider society is developed, given that the programme has already been established and this specific element was not part of its implementation. Based on discussions with stakeholders' members and project teams along with an analysis of official documents the ToC diagram created showed that the specific initiative initially intended to function as a "simulation" or a way to familiarise the beneficiaries with the conditions and prerequisites of the labour market. On second level, considering the background of the programme in association with mid-term outcomes (the programme as a means for empowering and motivating the beneficiaries) and long-term outcomes (the programme as a prototype for deploying identical programmes in the future, by incorporating ongoing mechanisms for securing the quality of implementation), it can be argued that the programme's "success" stems not only from the quite high levels of meeting the scopes and the financial indicators but also from producing positive side-effects for the benefit of individuals and the society as a whole.

d. *Process evaluation.* In terms of process (implementation) evaluation it can be argued that the programme was well and efficiently run. Analysis based on both quantitative and, mostly, qualitative points of view illustrate that the actions, subprojects and

activities designed by the coordinator and the participating social partners were to a great degree implemented as planned with only minor exceptions. The involvement of different partners was wealthy and harmonic as the guidelines and the agreed type of interventions was generally adopted and followed. Therefore, the programme can be considered successful in that it met the initial design and, at the same time, was skilful in times when difficulties came about.

e. *Impact evaluation.* The chapter examines whether the programme discussed managed to produce any kind of effect and impact and, if so, to what extend and of what kind. Documentary analysis combined with quantitative /qualitative findings from existing evaluations and conducted interviews with all actors and parts involved shows that the programme achieved its desired impact, i.e. to broaden the professional horizons to the graduates of initial and continuous training in Greece and also to create a feasible platform for the transition from education and/or training to the labour market. Additionally, the programme did not merely “produce” a number of potential employees. It furthermore equipped the beneficiaries with skills, ideas and tools that can be innovatively embraced towards new types of employment or the creation of entrepreneurship initiatives. Dynamic working environments suggest lofty goals and require immediate responsiveness to new conditions. So, the programme’s long-term impact, though not explicitly defined from the beginning and not presently measured, is assessed as decisive in terms of social, psychological and professional perspectives.

f. *Economic evaluation.* The last chapter of the report examines the economic implementation of the programme evaluated. Given that the programme has already been established and that very limited data was made available to the PUA InnoSI team, analysis concluded that the financial scope was sufficiently run, acknowledging that it was implemented in a period marked by political instability and economic disturbances provoked by the referendum (in July 2015). Other types of analysis could not be carried out due to the lack of measurable indicators after the establishment of the programme that would allow for comparisons in terms of effect or effectiveness.

2. Literature review

2.1 Policy analysis

2.1.1 Development of the policy

The rationale behind planning and implementing the programme is introduced and outlined via three primary resources: a) the guidelines and directives of the *YEI*,⁶ b) the guidelines and framework of the call for proposals addressed to the coordinator and the participating social partners, and c) the “Explanatory Note”⁷ posted at INE/GSEE’s web site as well as in various references on the web portal “diaSINDESI”⁸ built mainly for the publicity, administration and implementation of the programme. Based on these resources the underlying programme’s purposes and principles can be summed up as follows.

a. General context

The widespread employment crisis has emerged as one of the most aching and unstable aspects of the multi-dimensional crisis that influences Greece, followed by implications such as the depreciation of human capital, the disruption of social cohesion and the reduction of job opportunities. With unemployment of the general population reaching 27.5% in 2013 and 26.5% in 2014,⁹ and the consequent disintegration of individual quantitative and qualitative indicators, e.g. youth unemployment, long term unemployment, extension of the average time outside the labour market, becoming a prime national problem, the formation and implementation of focused actions and specific interventions seems imperative.

The structural expansion of the labour market is first and above all a matter of development. The formation of qualified and long-term sustainable employment is primarily associated with and organically followed by a productive model through an integrated and coherent “Strategic Development Plan”¹⁰ deployed on national and regional

⁶Available at the European Commission’s web site: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1176> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2016].

⁷ See “Explanatory Note”. Available at: <http://www.inegsee.gr/etiologiko-simioma/> [Accessed: 29 Feb. 2016] [in Greek].

⁸ <http://diasindesi.gr/> [in Greek].

⁹ See Hellenic Statistics Authority (ELSTAT) (2016). *Greece in Figures (July-September 2015)*. p. 114 [in Greek].

¹⁰ In 2014 the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Care issued a consultation text on social inclusion, which was later integrated into the government’s *National Reform Programme* (April 2016).

level. Of central importance to this plan is how workforce can be reclaimed in the best possible way so as to increase productivity and secure employment, along with the healthy development of competitiveness by strengthening social justice and solidarity. In light of this, a standing position of INE/GSEE and of the participating social partners is that active employment and labour market policies can only work in an interdependent way in conjunction with initiatives for investing in the knowledge society.

Therefore, active employment and participation in labour market policies should emerge promoting the following pillars as primary coordinates:

- Provision of horizontal (“soft”) skills to the unemployed;
- Re-design and upgrade of the vertical knowledge provision system of the unemployed as well as of their vocational skills through re-training;
- Organic engagement of *Vocational Counselling* (or *Career Counselling*) and vocational re-guidance practices;
- Better alignment of skills acquired by employees with the skills required by the labour market;
- Transformation of the work place as a dynamic learning environment, a process also beneficial to the employers;
- Shaping of a new work culture to both employers and employees;
- Ongoing qualitative assessment of the terms and conditions while /for acquiring professional experience.

All these wrap up around the concept of *employability*, i.e. the support of individual’s long-life ability to administer his /her career in ways that better ensure professional prospects ([Sullivan and Baruch, 2009](#)). Specifically, the accompanying objectives in an evolving knowledge-driven economy context would be:

- Provision of first job experience (internship);
- Direct support for high-quality traineeships and apprenticeships;
- Enhancement of access to the labour market;
- Increase of professional prospects by defining both the strengths and the weaknesses of the individual;
- Quality vocational education and training;
- Inversion of social exclusion, inequality and injustice rates by raising social awareness and re-connecting the individual to society, family and work place.

b. Youth (up to 29 years) unemployment

The age group of young people up to 29 years is at the centre of the adverse impact of the economic crisis on the labour market as an outcome of exceedingly high rates in unemployment (52%: 15-24 years, 40%: 25-29 years)¹¹ as well as in under-employment or part-time employment. This peculiar “professional impasse” that leads either to migration or to a continuous yet unsuccessful job pursuit, deprives Greece of the most promising part of its human capital and, simultaneously, the necessary expertise and innovation of the production process. In the meantime, the unstoppable rocketing of youth unemployment during the last six years (2010-2015) is also suggestive of some structural features. The value that is added by professional experience in the labour market integration as well as in vocational career rises as a “common place” in all international researches, while, on the other hand, shortage in professional experience can virtually be considered as a “disqualification penalty”.

c. Connecting vocational education and training with the labour market

Initiatives towards strengthening and empowering the interconnection of vocational education and training with the labour market are a lasting challenge in supporting the efforts of a country’s reconstruction. Alongside, it is a key tool for addressing structural unemployment on the ground of a contemporary and clearly oriented national strategic development and reform plan. The “coupling” of these two must be established on the constant update and on the efficient matching of the provided work skills in order to be able to meet the ever-changing needs of the labour market, without at the same time degrading its theoretical dimension and its cognitive role, as the vocational education and training is an integral part of a county’s “productive capital”. This is the reason why the programme was built upon the provision of theoretical training and acquisition of working experience in enterprises along with a series of vocational /career counselling sessions.

d. Access to the labour market: enhancing work experience

¹¹ See Hellenic Statistics Authority (ELSTAT) (2014). *Press Release on Labour Force Survey, 2nd Quarter 2014*, p. 2. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SJO01/2014-Q2> [Accessed: 1 Mar. 2016].

The challenge of tackling youth unemployment can primarily be achieved through the deletion of its structural characteristics, with actions oriented at the direct link of vocational education and training with employment and the labour market. In this respect, the programme was entirely addressed to graduates of Vocational Training Institutes (IEK), Apprenticeship Schools (EPAS) and Vocational Upper Secondary Schools (EPAL), in all eight (8) *Convergence Regions* (Peloponnesus, Macedonia & Thrace, Eastern, Epirus, Western Greece, Thessaly, Crete, Ionian Islands & North Aegean). The decision to implement the programme in these regions is arguably documented by the large increase of unemployment rates between 2010 and 2014, e.g. 11.9% → 28.7% in Western Greece, 9.6% → 23.4% in Peloponnesus, 9.4% → 22.3% in North Aegean, and 12.0% → 24.0% in Crete ([ELSTAT, 2015](#)). The initiative was designed and implemented by a consortium composed for this specific purpose, which reflects the will of the main social actors in Greece that are engaged in active employment practices and policies so as to join forces and achieve maximum effectiveness of this specialized intervention.

Specific objectives of the programme can be outlined as follows:

- Alignment of specialties and skills with labour market demands /needs;
- Creation of incentives to both graduates and enterprises;
- Increase of work experience that can lead to better job opportunities;
- Motivation and empowerment of the unemployed;
- Tackling of high youth joblessness /unemployment rates, especially on regional level, that can bring greater social cohesion and boost economic development of the Greek society.

2.1.2 Legislative framework¹²

a. Vocational education and training (VET) in Greece

Since 2000, four (4) laws – related to the national system linking Vocational Education and Training (VET) with employment (Law 3191/2003), systematising lifelong learning (Law 3369/2005), developing lifelong learning (Law 3879/2010), and restructuring secondary education (Law 4186/2013) – and quite many amendments have been enacted

¹² Data for this section are sourced from CEDEFOP (2014). *Vocational Education and Training in Greece*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

in an attempt to regulate the domain of VET and lifelong learning in Greece. This legislative activity is basically due to the EU's post-2000 emphasis on creating a competitive Europe that is capable of meeting the new challenges of the knowledge-based society. But the Greek state also recognises the positive impact of developing lifelong learning on the country's economic life and on social cohesion. International surveys show that direct link between vocational education and the requirements of the labour market and economy is a fundamental precondition for an efficient, high quality system that could make moving from school to active life easier ([McCoschan et al., 2008](#); [Wolf, 2011](#); [CEDEFOP, 2012a](#); [CEDEFOP, 2012b](#)).

The law on the restructuring of secondary – including vocational – education (Law 4186/2013), which came into effect in September 2013, opens the VET system to the economy and the job market and attempts to regulate the field from the perspective of lifelong learning. Nevertheless, the major issues facing the Greek VET system persist: closer links with the job market and economy, more vigorous involvement of the social partners, wider sense of social co-responsibility and consensus on vocational training matters, decentralisation and greater school autonomy, attracting more young people into vocational training, promoting the quality of initial vocational training and linking it more closely to continued vocational training.

b. VET within the Greek education system

In Greece schooling is compulsory for all children aged 5 to 15. Compulsory education includes primary (kindergarten: for one (1) year, and primary school: for six (6) years) and lower secondary education (for three (3) years), at a day or, for working students, an evening school. Graduation from lower secondary education completes the cycle of compulsory schooling and students can then choose whether to continue in general or vocational education. If they choose to continue in general education they will attend classes at a general upper secondary school (GEL), lasting for three (3) years of upper secondary education.

There are also evening schools for working students and in these schools the programme is four (4) years. Students enter upper secondary school at the age of 15 and graduate at 18. In the first year the programme is general, while in the second and third years students take both general education and special orientation subjects. The choice

of subjects is informed by educational or vocational guidance offered through the decentralised structures of the Ministry of Education's *Vocational Orientation Guidance and Educational Activities Directorate (SEPED)*. Those that graduate from a general upper secondary school can sit the national examinations for admission to a tertiary education programme.

According to the law regulating secondary education (Law 4186/2013), which among other things aims to engage more persons into VET, students have the following options in addition to the general upper secondary school:

- Initial vocational education within the formal education system¹³ in the second cycle of secondary education at a vocational upper secondary school (day or evening school);
- Initial vocational training¹⁴ outside the formal education system (referred to as *non-formal*) in vocational training schools (SEK), vocational training institutes (IEK) and centres for lifelong learning and colleges.

c. Initial formal vocational education: vocational upper secondary schools (EPAL)

At national level (Law 3879/2010 concerning lifelong learning), formal VET leads to the acquisition of certificates recognised nationally by public authorities, and is part of the education ladder. Formal education also includes education for adults. According to the law on secondary education (Law 4186/2013), vocational education is provided by the vocational upper secondary school. These schools (public or private) are solely founded by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs¹⁵ and may be day or evening schools. The minimum age for admission in a vocational evening school is 16. The public vocational upper secondary schools offer the specialties that are listed in the legislation. The programmes are organised by sector, group and specialty; most sectors offer two or more specialties. The sectors currently covered are information science, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering /electronics /automation, administration and economics,

¹³ Formal education system: the system of primary, secondary and tertiary education. National legislation reserves the term “formal vocational education” for programmes at upper secondary level (EPAL) that allows access to higher education through exams. Though they are fully or partially regulated by the state and lead to officially recognised qualifications, other upper secondary or post-secondary programmes and some CVET programmes are considered non-formal VET.

¹⁴ In this context, “initial vocational training” refers to training that provides basic knowledge, abilities and skills in trades and specialties, targeting the integration, re-integration, job mobility and enhancement of human resources in the labour market, as well as professional and personal development.

¹⁵ Its current name is Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs.

agronomy-food technology and nutrition, environment and natural resources, construction, and occupations in the merchant marine (captain, mechanic).

According to the law specialties should be accustomed to national and regional economic needs, following the recommendations of the ministries, regional authorities and administrations and social partners. Curricula should be developed in line with the *European Credit System for VET (ECVET)*, and take into account, wherever they exist, the relevant job profiles certified by the *National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP)*.

d. Non-formal VET: vocational training schools (SEK), post-secondary VET schools (IEK), colleges and lifelong learning centres (LLC)

The Lifelong Learning Act (Law 3879/2010) defines as “non-formal” the education provided in an organised framework outside the formal education system which can lead to nationally recognised qualifications. It encompasses initial vocational training, continuous vocational training and adult learning. Providers (public or private) of vocational training outside the formal education system are supervised by the *General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning (GSLL)* of the Ministry of Education. Under this law, the specialties offered in public vocational training and the sectors under which they are classified is determined by decision of the Minister for Education in accordance with the needs of the national and local economy and proposals of regional administrations, and authorities, competent ministries and social partners.

Curricula for each specialty should acknowledge related job profiles or required occupational qualifications. Curricula for initial vocational training are established and overseen by the GSLL and certified by the EOPPEP. These can be described in terms of learning outcomes and linked to credits, following ECVET.

e. Vocational training schools

The established SEK (vocational training schools) which replaced the previous EPAS can be public or private and provide initial vocational training to those who have completed compulsory education. The programmes are of three years’ duration and there are no tuition fees at public schools. Students who are over 20 years old or employed attend evening vocational training schools for four years. The last year of the three-year SEK programme is apprenticeship. Holders of a lower secondary school leaving certificate, or

equivalent, can enrol in the first year of a SEK without sitting examinations. Under the law on secondary education (Law 4186/2013), SEK programmes are structured in the following streams: technological applications, agronomy, food technology, nutrition, arts and applied arts, tourism and hospitality occupations. Each stream typically offers more than one specialty, while specific specialties are offered outside those groups. In “apprenticeship year”, finally, workshop lessons are coupled with work place learning (28 hours/week).

This process is governed by a contract between OAED and the employer, which should provide incentives for hiring the trainee after completion of the apprenticeship. Graduates of apprenticeship classes can also attend a programme to prepare for the assessment and certification of their qualifications to earn their vocational diploma from EOPPEP.

2.1.3 Academic analysis

Greece has been in recession since 2010, when the risk of bankruptcy first came out. The high levels of unemployment, the continuous wage and pension cuts and the ever-increasing austerity measures have led to a severe decrease in purchasing power and a significant drop in per capita GDP ([Matsaganis, 2013](#)). From 2009 to 2013, the GDP contracted by a quarter and unemployment tripled, while in the same period about one million jobs were eliminated (which is the same as the number of jobs that were created within a period of 17 years from 1993 to 2008) ([Petmesidou and Polyzoidis, 2015a](#)). Despite the considerable drop in the cost of labour, investment remains explicitly low while the political and institutional uncertainty prevents inflows of new capital. Consequently, the recession has aggravated chronic structural problems in the labour market of Greece.

Eurostat figures show that Greece has the fastest rising rate of unemployment in the EU with the numbers of the jobless ones having more than doubled (+209%) since 2008.¹⁶ Additionally, the increase of long-term unemployment is notably worrying;¹⁷ the longer people remain unemployed the less chances they have of re-entering the labour

¹⁶ See: code [une_rt_a] for the annual average (%) of unemployment rate by sex and age. Source: Eurostat.

¹⁷ See: code [une_ltu_a] for the annual average (%) of long-term unemployment in % of active population. Source: Eurostat.

market. The unemployment rate in Greece was 26.1% in the 4th quarter of 2014,¹⁸ up from 26% in the corresponding quarter of 2012 and 7.9% in 2008. In the 3rd quarter of 2013 the number of unemployed was 1,345,387; the non-economically active population was 4,422,800; and the working population was 3,635,905. For the first time since the commencement of the crisis, employment rates rose in two successive quarters (by 1.1% in the 3rd quarter of 2013 compared to the 1st. Still, it was 2.8% below the figure for the 3rd quarter of 2012.¹⁹ However, real unemployment in Greece appears to be much higher than the official figures show; according to the *General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE)* it has exceeded 25%.²⁰ The discrepancy is explained, among other things, by the high percentage of people working in family businesses without receiving a regular wage (this is termed as “concealed unemployment”). The national (Greek) 2020 employment rate target in the context of the Europe2020 strategy, which is 70% (EU target: 75%), seems rather impossible to be achieved in a period of prolonged deep recession and lack of investments. The share of part-time jobs rose to 8.2% of all employment and of this subset of workers 65.2% are working part-time due to their inability to find a full-time job. Part-time employment increased especially in the 15 to 24 age bracket and accounted for 21.3% of labour contracts.²¹ Although higher levels of education are linked to lower unemployment, for higher technological education the unemployment rate remains high (30.6% in 2013).²²

Unemployment rates are exceptionally high for women and young people. For women the rate is 31.3% and for men 23.8%, while the differential between the sexes is more than 20 percentage points. Unemployment is highest among those aged 15 to 24 (2014: 52.4%, 2015: 49.8%), reaching 58.1% in 2014 and 55% in 2015 for young women.²³ Greece has had high youth unemployment since 1983, with rates in excess of 20% even in years of strong economic growth, e.g. at the beginning of the new millennium when GDP was rising by roughly 4% a year. There are several reasons for this:

¹⁸ See Hellenic Statistics Authority (ELSTAT) (2014). *Press Release on Labour Force Survey, 4th Quarter 2014*. Available at <http://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SI001/2014-Q4> [Accessed 28 Feb. 2016] [in Greek].

¹⁹ Data sourced from Eurostat and the Hellenic Statistics Authority (ELSTAT).

²⁰ See INE/GSEE (2015). *Greek economy and employment. Annual Report 2015*. Available at http://www.inegsee.gr/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/EKTHESI_2015.pdf [Accessed 25 Feb. 2016].

²¹ Source: Hellenic Statistics Authority (ELSTAT), Labour Force Survey, Cholezas' calculations, 2013.

²² Source: Hellenic Statistics Authority (ELSTAT), Labour Force Survey, 2013.

²³ See: code [lfst_r_lfu3rt] for unemployment rates by sex, age and NUTS 2 regions (%). Source: Eurostat.

- An overlong transition period from education to employment;
- Early school leaving;
- Lack of vocational education that can attract young people's interest;
- Limited opportunities to combine work and study;
- Insufficiency of the labour market in Greece to create new jobs even in periods of high growth.

Meanwhile, the fiscal crisis and the uninterrupted economic recession in Greece, in conjunction with the increased emigration of highly qualified young people, particularly towards northern European countries, have had a direct impact on the supply of skills in relation to demand. One indication of this shift towards foreign job markets is that the number of visits to the Europass website from Greece has multiplied by a factor of 10 since 2009, and the number of Europass CVs completed by residents of Greece by a factor of seven over the same period.²⁴ Further to that, the misalignment between educational skills, qualifications and jobs ([Petmesidou and Polyzoidis, 2015a](#)) that could be attributed to the degree graduates have been persistently oriented to the public sector is also notable. University degrees (via the general upper-secondary education path) were sought after as a “passport” to the public sector jobs preferred to the private sector because of superior working, remuneration and social insurance conditions.²⁵ In addition, the inefficiency of businesses to provide jobs that require high qualifications is an important structural cause of unemployment for those at the higher end of the educational attainment ([Petmesidou and Polyzoidis, 2015b](#)). Reliance on family support has for a long time sustained a prolonged transition period by young graduates in their search for a job that could fulfill their expectations.

Also, high participation level in education is a characteristic of the Greek society as demand for general education and university studies is continuous. In the years from 2012 onwards, more than 30% of those aged 30-34 had tertiary level qualification²⁶

²⁴ Source: Europass, website activity report for 2013, 2014 and 2015.

²⁵ This was the case until the 1990s, when the public sector expansion started decelerating as rolling back public employment was declared as a major condition of the bailout deal that the country signed with its international creditors in Spring 2010.

²⁶ See: code [tsdsc480] “Tertiary educational attainment by sex, age group 30-34”. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc480&plugin=1> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2016], Source: Eurostat.

while participation in vocational education and training has steadily been low. The percentage of young people (18-24, both male and female) leaving education and training early has decreased since 2006.²⁷ Eurostat figures for the years 2012-2015 display that the early leaving rate²⁸ in Greece is below the European average (EU-28) but above the target set for 2020. On the other side, VET held little appeal for young people and was often associated with “laborious” and “inferior” manual labour. General education is associated with expectations of improved economic and social status. Young people usually see vocational education as a last resort, despite the unceasing efforts on the authorities’ end to “promote” it as an alternative of equal value with general education. Most young people (about 75%) still opt for the general upper secondary school that gives ample access to university studies. Concurrently, VET at the secondary level is considered as a way to ease the transition from school to work while supplying employers with trained workers. However, VET is not a panacea or a quick fix to reduce high youth unemployment ([Eichhorst, 2015](#)). It remains the second choice for most parents and children. It seems to appeal to low performers, who for the most part come from lower economic brackets. This tends to reinforce negative stereotypes and creates a vicious circle at the expense of vocational education ([Ioannidou and Stavrou, 2013](#); [CEDEFOP, 2014](#)). Low participation in VET seems to be associated with its inability to attract young people.²⁹

In addition, early leaving from VET is notably high, reaching 20.3% ([Pedagogical Institute, 2006](#)), in comparison with the 3.3% of those early dropping from the Unified Lyceum ([Pedagogical Institute, 2006](#)). There are noteworthy regional differences, with the highest early leaving rates occurring in Crete, Epirus and Central Macedonia (over 20%), and the lowest in Ionian Islands (less than 15%). Major reasons for leaving VET early appear to be the low social, economic and educational level of the student’s family coupled with his /her working in the family business or in a seasonal employment in the tourism sector ([Pedagogical Institute, 2008](#)). The percentage of students who choose VET varies among regions; it ranges from 20% to 34%. Participation rates in vocational and upper secondary schools seem to be influenced by a number of factors, encompassing: a)

²⁷ See: code [tsdsc410] “Early leavers from education and training”. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc410&plugin=1> [Accessed 26 Feb. 2016], Source: Eurostat.

²⁸ For the purposes of this figure, early leavers from education or training are people aged 18-24 who: a) have achieved only ISCED levels 0, 1, 2 or 3c, and b) declared that they had not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey.

²⁹ Source: CEDEFOP, based on Eurobarometer and EuroStat figures from 2013 and 2014.

the structure of employment in each region, b) the standards of living, c) the educational level of the parents, d) the accessibility of the school etc. ([CTL, 2011](#)).

Eight out of 10 students who opt for VET choose vocational upper secondary school while only 2 out of 10 prefer an apprenticeship school (national average is 17%; regional averages range between 10% and 26%). The apprenticeship schools (EPAS) operated by the *Public Employment Service*, the *Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED)* attract far more students than the corresponding Ministry of Education schools (now called SEK) because their apprenticeship system provides their graduates with more viable employment prospects and opportunities ([CEDEFOP, 2014](#)).

However, given the high unemployment rates, efforts have recently been taken up in Greece towards the establishment of a mechanism for the early identification of medium term trends in labour market demands through the *Employment Observatory (PAEPSA)* and, later, the *National Labour and Human Resources Institute (EIEAD)*. These did not produce the desired results and, thus, could not be used to shape education and training policy. The business survey carried out in 2011 by the *Foundation for Industrial and Economic Research (IOVE)* to forecast changes in regional /local systems and local labour markets provides important information about domestic human resources needs and the skills in demand. Most companies (70%) reported that their employees did not take initiatives or risks; they lacked organizational-administrational competencies and project management and technology/innovation-handling skills; they also often did not have the proper technical knowledge for the job they were doing. Clearly, today's labour force is deficient not only in social skills but in job-relevant technical knowledge as well. There seems to be much less of a problem with foreign language and communications skills and with the limited use of basic computer applications (IOVE and Remaco, 2013, as cited in [NetnotNEET, 2015](#)).

2.2 Previous evaluations

2.2.1 Search strategy

There are two (2) evaluations available for the programme: a) an *external* evaluation that examined all phases and parameters of the programme, from its conception until its establishment; b) an *internal* evaluation focused on assessing the vocational counselling sessions deployed as part of both the theoretical and practical training and targeted to

supplement beneficiaries' acquired skills, working experience and self-realisation capabilities. The external evaluation was an ongoing one. It was assigned to an evaluating company (EEO Group³⁰) selected after an open competition announced and performed by GSEVEE (one of the participating social partners).

On the other hand, the internal evaluation was directly assigned to a Scientific Associate of INE/GSEE and was conducted during the last month (November) of the programme. Reports for both evaluations were provided by the coordinator of the programme (INE/GSEE).

2.2.2 What do previous evaluations tell us?

a. External evaluation ([EEO Group, 2015b](http://www.eeogroup.gr/))³¹

Time /Period of evaluation	Ongoing
Rationale /Objective(s)	To independently assess the programme's objectives and overall actions
Survey methods	Mixed (quantitative and qualitative)
Sample /Quantitative method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20 interviews with stakeholder's staff (from all participating social partners) ▪ 5 focus groups
Sample /Qualitative method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 501 supervisors ▪ 1013 beneficiaries ▪ Questionnaire
"Strong" programme outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High rate of funds absorption; ▪ Achievement of quantitative and qualitative objectives;

³⁰ <http://www.eeogroup.gr/>

³¹ Programme's overall external evaluation report contains extensive information on the areas upon which it was assessed. So, it is preferable to briefly present survey methodology, sample data and main findings in table format.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High level of participation and positive beneficiaries' response to the activities of the programme; ▪ Sufficiency of funding; ▪ Positive effect of the vocational counselling sessions in uplifting young people's self-confidence and morale; ▪ Development of additional skills; ▪ High level of publicity; ▪ High level of usability and functionality of the web platform; ▪ Rational choice of modules; ▪ Highly-educated training staff; ▪ Rich educational resources; ▪ Productive "coupling" of beneficiaries' specialties and enterprises; ▪ Sufficient cooperation between beneficiaries and programme staff
"Weak" programme outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short amount of time for implementing the programme (hardly 1 year); ▪ Delay in the disbursement of funds; ▪ Travel expenses for the beneficiaries finally not included in total budget; ▪ Short duration of internship; ▪ Other similar programmes were implemented at the same time; this made competition more intense; ▪ Some modules were given less emphasis and attention than needed.

b. Internal evaluation ([INE/GSEE, 2015a](#))

The programme was supplemented by personalised vocational /career counselling sessions aimed at the beneficiaries so they can efficiently:

- Build up relationships of trust between the counsellor and the consultee;
- Acquire psycho-emotional skills and self-awareness techniques;
- Acquire career-orientation and decision-making skills;
- Scan new prospects for identifying and finalizing target (job) selection.

In this respect, the internal evaluation took into consideration the following parameters:

- The organisation and the infrastructure (rooms and buildings) deployed in the regional branches of INE/GSEE;
- Technical and other equipment;
- Selection and training of counselling staff;
- Achievement of the objectives as initially defined.

The sample of the research consisted of 70 beneficiaries (10 x 7 regions) and 14 counsellors (2 x 7 regions) with whom the evaluating team conducted semi-structured interviews via telephone. The evaluation was then deployed on two axes: a) one for the demographic profiling of the counselling staff (quantitative data: sex, age, region of residence, labour status, profession, previous working experience, studies (graduate, post-graduate), field or expertise (specialisation)), and b) one for the qualitative assessment of both counselling staff and sessions.

In relation to the qualitative part of the evaluation, outcomes can be categorized into positive and negative ones. Positive outcomes can be briefed as follows:

- Participants largely benefited from the counselling sessions as they were given and presented with general as well as specific aspects of the labour market;
- Counselling tools and psychometric tests implemented served the purposes of the programme;
- Counselling was personalized and adjusted to the participants' needs;
- Counselling and vocational guidance was overall considered of added "value";
- New skills were acquired e.g. how to write a resume or how to prepare for a job interview;
- Development of a motivational attitude for seeking a job.

On the other hand, negative outcomes can be briefed as follows:

- There was a short delay in launching the counselling sessions – this occurred as there was a general delay in the beginning of the programme;
- Beneficiaries' response to the sessions was reserved at first – this happened as the counselling rationale was not properly communicated to them;
- Part of the beneficiaries thought they would get extra payment for participating;
- Low educational level of many of the beneficiaries, in combination with the lack of prior experience on counselling and vocational guidance, proved to be a temporary drawback as the counselling staff had to explain in detail the process and the expected results of the sessions.

3. Needs assessment

3.1 Introduction

The programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market” was implemented from January 2015³² to November 2015. It was launched to provide theoretical education, vocational counselling support and working experience to 7.000 participants, i.e. young people aged up to 29 years that at the time of the programme resided in regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25% in 2012. In particular, it aimed to support young people who although their main feature was that they were graduates also were, in a broader sense, *not in education, employment or training (NEETs)*, a group that includes *short-* or *long-term* unemployed youngsters and /or those not registered as jobseekers.³³ This would ensure that in parts of Europe where the social challenges are most acute, young persons can receive targeted support. In general, on EU-level the *YEI* typically supported the provision of: a) apprenticeships, b) traineeships, c) job placements, and d) further education leading to a qualification.

A study on needs assessment was actually not a main part of the programme neither was there an intention or projection by the programme coordinator (INE/GSEE) or any other social partner for conducting one. So, the programme’s design and implementation were primarily grounded and dictated by the *YEI* rationale, principles and guidelines ([EC/ESF, 2013](#); [EC/ESF, 2014](#)).

At the same time, it turned out from the discussions and meetings with the stakeholders of the programme that it was also based on the findings of a research under the title “Barometer of the Absents: NEETs (Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training) in Greece” ([Papadakis, 2013](#)). The research, the first ever exploring and mapping this group of people in Greece, followed a previous EU-level research conducted by

³² In January 2015 unemployment rate in Greece was 25.7% and youth unemployment rate was 50.1% (149.000 persons). More specifically see: YEI Infographic: Map of the Beneficiary Regions. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13419&langId=en> [Accessed 10 Jun. 2016].

³³ The term *NEET* was officially termed on political level in the UK in the late 1990s (specifically in 1999), when there was a need for identifying an indicator for young people aged 16-18, who did not participate neither in education, neither in training nor in employment. Changes in the allowances provision policy for unemployed resulted in a large number of young people aged 16-18 not having access to this type of benefits (Furlong, 2006, as cited in [Inui, 2009](#); Furlong, 2007, as cited in [Eurofound, 2012](#)).

the *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions* ([Eurofound, 2012](#)). It was conducted and coordinated by the *Center of Human Rights (KEADIK)* (at the University of Crete) with the collaboration of the private research company *GPO (Greek Public Opinion)*, the *Institute of Technology and Research (ITE)* and KANEP/GSEE, one of the programme's participating social partners.

Consequently, the needs assessment of the programme or, i.e. data and information on mapping the social, psychological and economic field, describing the population in need and justifying the necessity for the implementation of such an intervention, were mainly drawn from the aforementioned report. Using both quantitative³⁴ and qualitative³⁵ methods, the research aimed: a) to outline the characteristics and the content of a newly-coined term (NEETs), which relates to a social group that is allegedly hard to access and presents a higher risk of being politically and socially alienated, and b) to assess its polyparametric consequences within a volatile socio-economic environment. Additional, yet less, information was extracted from the project's technical fiche as part of the proposal submitted for the approval of the programme.

Our evaluation in this section is therefore based on EC's documents on *YEI*, findings of the research report and other documents provided by the coordinator of the programme, and is supplemented by data and information derived from the interviews conducted mainly with members of the stakeholders and the beneficiaries of the programme.

The main issues we tried to explore were as follows:

- Why the programme was designed and implemented?
- Which were the programme's objectives?
- Where the objectives achieved? In what way?
- What was /were the social (or other) problem(s) addressed?
- What was the target population?
- What was /were the reason(s) for participating?

³⁴ Survey was conducted via phone interviews in households with use of structured questionnaire. The sample, a total of 3.459 persons, was chosen via multistage stratified sampling from all Administrative Districts of Greece.

³⁵ Survey was conducted via interviews with use of questionnaire (both open and closed questions). A total of 129 interviews were conducted with participants from regions all around Greece. Stratification of sample was by geographical district based on data from Hellenic Statistics Authority.

- Where there any regional specifications or particularities the programme aimed to include and /or bring out;
- What was the local societies' and the local labour market's attitude towards the programme? Was it supportive /hostile? If so, in what ways?
- Were there any structural, legal, political and/or policy changes during the programme's implementation or after its completion?

3.2 Existing needs assessment

As already mentioned, the programme's proposal and implementation was based on the *YEI* guidelines, in the first place, but mostly on the empirical outcomes produced by a research specifically conducted in order to: a) map NEETs in Greece, b) address the social problem incorporated, and c) outline the population in need. This was not actually part of a need assessment study per se undertaken by the programme's coordinator or any of the participating social partners. However, it was fully utilised for a better documentation and understanding of all aspects concerning youth unemployment in Greece.

3.2.1 Target population

In defining the target population, there were three main sources of data at our disposal: a) documents with directions on implementing *YEI*, b) documents provided by project team members and c) the research report on NEETs in Greece. Thus there were three separate yet overlapping "approaches" to describing the target population. According to the project's technical fiche as well as the information assembled and derived from other documents (including *YEI* guidelines, programme's implementation and management guide, vocational counselling guide, press releases and calls for expression of interest published on the participating social partners' web sites), all actions and subprojects of the programme were targeted to a group of people with the following characteristics:

- Age: up to 29 years (male or female);
- Educational level: graduates of Vocational Training Institutes (IEK), Apprenticeship Schools (EPAS) and Vocational Upper Secondary Schools (EPAL);
- Working status: employed or unemployed;³⁶

³⁶ No official data concerning the percentage of beneficiaries that were employed or unemployed where provided. However, after conducting interviews with members of project team, educators, counsellors and beneficiaries it turned out that the vast majority of applicants were unemployed at the time they filed their application.

- Residency: permanent residents at one of the eight (8) Convergence Regions (Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, Epirus, Western Greece, Thessaly, Peloponnesus, Crete, Ionian Islands & North Aegean).

One thing that needs to be stated here is that although the programme was addressed to the general population, within the specifications mentioned above, when announced it turned out that the call excluded – unintentionally – the children of second-generation immigrants. One of the documents applicants were obliged to submit was a certification of permanent residence in the city they resided, a type of document these people could not get. This problem was resolved after a political intervention by the President of GSEE that led to an amended Joint Ministerial Decision³⁷, which gave to an eventually very small number of immigrants' children the ability to participate. On the other hand, according to the findings of the research on NEETs in Greece, the description of all actions scheduled in the programme can be thought to be targeted to a group with the following characteristics:

- Age: 15-24 years (although the vast majority of NEETs is 20-24 years);
- Sex: female (54.4%) and male (45.6%);
- Residency: the majority lives in South Aegean, Ionian Islands and Central Greece; notably high is the percentage of NEETs residing in Peloponnesus, Central Macedonia and Western Greece;
- People that reside both in urban and rural areas of Greece;
- Education level: mostly General and Technical High School graduates;
- VET: only 1 out of 4 (25%) has participated in a vocational training programme, despite the fact that NEETs are in general willing to enter or re-enter the labour market;
- People that by and large live with their family and are economically supported by them;
- Working status: 1 out of 3 (32.9%) are unemployed for 1-2 year(s) or more.

On EU-level NEETs are estimated to 11% of the population aged 15-24 years old, while in 2011 this percentage increased to 12,9% (about 7.5 million young persons) ([Eurofound, 2012](#)). This percentage also increased in 2012 (13.2%) but started showing

³⁷ JMD 110753/K1 (23/07/2015), amending JMD 208068/K1 (31/12/2014).

slight decline in 2013 (13%) and 2014 (12.5%). In 2015, the percentage was 12% compared to 17.2% in Greece.³⁸

3.2.2 Population need³⁹

One of the most vulnerable social groups in Greece as well as in EU is that of young people, male and female, aged 15-24 years, not included in education, training or employment who until recently were not recorded in any social policy field among the institutions of the welfare state ([Papadakis, 2010](#)). This group is generally referred to in the literature as *NEETs* or “absents” as they are the part of the population that drops out of the formal education system and remains outside the institutional context of vocational and employment training.

Arguably, the necessities of this social group relate to its integration to the new dynamic socio-economic structures. This results into the identification of two important parameters for the realisation of this transition; one with regards to the issue of early leaving education and the chances of NEETs being able to enter it again, and the other in relation to the process of integrating them in training and employment. As for the first issue, given that education in Greece is compulsory for people up to 15, both the education system and the institutional actors involved on local, regional and national level seem to have not yet developed a solid political strategy so as to address and deal with the early education dropout phenomenon ([Fotopoulos, 2008](#)). Moreover, the prolonged recession Greece is going through since 2010 has had a tremendous effect on the reduction of job positions, on one hand, and on the skyrocketing of unemployment, especially in small age groups, on the other. So, in this subsection the programme’s population needs are explored on three basic perspectives: a) employability and access to the labour market, b) physical and mental health, and c) social exclusion.

a. Employability and access to the labour market

In times of great recession and acute social insecurity, as is the case in Greece, finding a job has become increasingly difficult. It is admitted that changes in the institutional and

³⁸ See: code [edat_lfse_29] Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and degree of urbanisation (NEET rates) (aged 15-24 years). Source: Eurostat.

³⁹ This section is sourced from Kotrogiannos, D., Tzagkarakis, St., Kamekis, A. and Chourdakis, M. (2013). Presentation of the results of the qualitative interviews and the role of the welfare state. In: N. Papadakis, ed., *Barometer of the Absents: NEETs (Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training) in Greece (Research Report)*. Athens: I. Sideris Publications, pp. 100-122.

policy framework field should be designed and put into effect so as a re-development and re-generation of this area can come to light earlier. As NEETs are one of the most vulnerable social groups of the Greek society, their concerns and suggestions for fundamentally reshaping the labour market are straightforwardly expressed. In particular, they seem to mostly focus on reforms aimed at improving: a) the services of the welfare state, b) the State's (infra-) structures, and c) the efficiency of the public services. Also, due to the prolonged unstable employment and economic situation, NEETs claim to be at a breaking point. The majority of them refer to the current economic reality as "rubbish" due to the fact that they can no longer cope with either the increasing expenses or costs of daily life or make plans for creating family and /or making long-term dreams. It surely is remarkable that most of them are financially supported by their parents (almost 90%) and their wife, i.e. the male ones, while a small percentage (less than 7 %) of them is financially dependent on unemployment benefits.

Given that, according to the NEETs, the two principal parameters that led to the economic recession were unemployment and wrong choices and actions on governmental level, a solid suggestion would be for the state to design and take up drastic initiatives so as to promote development and motivate enterprises create new jobs. At the same time, high unemployment rates are not considered an obstacle for almost half of the NEETs percentage to carry on their efforts to find a job in Greece. On the other hand, an appreciable percentage (about 20%), comprised mainly of those who have a university degree, say that they give to the choice to migrate to a foreign country in order to find a job a serious thought. This finding verifies the hypothesis that a large number of Greek young people with university-level education are willing to pursue an auspicious future abroad, instead of staying in Greece. In light of this, it is suggested that the welfare state should take immediate actions which will handily tackle unemployment and, hence, contribute to the integration of young people with the labour market, including NEETs, through vocational and training programmes.

b. Physical and mental health

The association between unemployment and mental health, anxiety levels, depression and suicides has long been well established and documented (OECD, 2008, as cited in [Drakaki et al., 2014](#)). Economic crisis undoubtedly immensely affects both physical and

mental health of that part of the population that feels socially vulnerable. High unemployment rates as an outcome of the economic crisis appear to be associated with the “adoption” of less healthy daily habits ([Anagnostou, 2012](#)). Regarding mental health, while surveying the effects of unemployment, Paul and Moser argue that the percentage of the people that are mentally ill is more than double among the unemployed against those who have a job ([Bouras and Lygouras, 2011](#)). This is corroborated by the findings of the research ([Papadakis, 2013](#)) as the majority of NEETs widely mention increased feelings of stress. Such feelings primarily derive from their anxiety about whether they will be able to enter and integrate with the labour market so as to achieve their personal and social life objectives.

Another factor that influences mental health is the feeling of despair. Though one would expect the percentage of those who feel desperate to be much higher due to factors such as: a) disappointment towards the education system as a result of limited opportunities provided for re-integration, b) lack of inter-connection with labour market, c) huge difficulty in finding a job, and d) lack of employment opportunities in both the public and the private sector, almost 1 out of 3 states that he /she feels desperate. At the same time, it is firmly believed that family plays a decisive role in terms of psychological backing. It acts as a protective net that narrows, even limitedly, such emotional manifestations, and concurrently as a major mechanism of confidence and support.

On the other hand, in relation to physical health, just about 1 out of 5 thinks that this is an aspect of their life that they often neglect. Concurrently, it is noteworthy that the percentage of NEETs who consider their health level bad and very bad is minuscule. ([Papadakis, 2015](#)), while some 42% of women vs. 28.9% of males and 39.4% of young people aged 20-24 years vs. 27.3% of young people aged 16-19 years characterise their level of health as excellent ([GPO and KEADIK, 2012](#)).

c. Social exclusion

The concept of social exclusion is quite often referred in association with the concepts of poverty and long-term unemployment as they both result into exclusion from the labor market. At the same time, the phenomena of racism and discrimination are also identified with social exclusion ([Tsiakalos, 1998](#)). According to the survey results, the majority of NEETs (80.2%) indicate that they do not feel socially excluded. This can be explained by two factors. First, by the social safety net of the “close” social environment of NEETs

(peers, friends, family etc.) around them; this decisively contributes to their feeling somehow an active part of the society. And second, by the intensity of the phenomenon itself. Although youth unemployment has reached unprecedented levels and a growing number of people suffer from that, they usually tend to believe they share the same feeling with lots of other youngsters. Yet another explanation might lie in the fact that the majority of NEETs is not long unemployed. Therefore, they do not feel they are actually excluded from the labor market. Contrariwise, they feel that they are experiencing a condition that is only temporary. This view is strongly held as they mostly reckon (65.3%) they will find a stable job and be able to start a family quite soon enough in the future. On the other hand, there is a significant 19.8%, i.e. 1 out of 5, who see that they have no support from anywhere (friends, family, the State).

3.2.3 Evaluation of previous needs assessment

The in-depth study of the material (*YEI* implementation guidance, programme implementation guide, press releases and announcements) on the rationale and objectives of the programme in connection with the findings of the research on NEETs in Greece provided us with a clear overview of the issues associated with young people's low participation in the labour market and the various problems associated with this situation. Further analysis of justifications helped us better comprehend the framework and the conditions of low youth participation in the labour market and also outline the needs to be covered by a programme like the one undertaken. In fact, research findings were not the crucial factor that led the consortium to take the decision for implementing the programme. They rather came to supplement knowledge and information already available via previous statistical⁴⁰ resources, e.g. *Eurostat*, *Hellenic Statistics Authority (ELSTAT)*, which, secondly, presented more vividly the exact size of the problem of the specific population and essentially supported the argument for the feasibility and profitability of such a programme.

3.3 New needs assessment

As mentioned above (section 3.1), prior to or in the beginning of the programme there was no either full or exclusive needs assessment study conducted by the programme's consortium, aimed to the investigation of the current situation in Greece, the collection

⁴⁰ See Chapter 2. [Literature review](#).

of data about the target population and their needs, and the review of existing literature on unemployment rates, youth unemployment rates, active employment initiatives and participation in labour market policies, especially on regional level. Therefore, the PUA InnoSI team decided to proceed with an evaluation of the existing needs assessment and conduct a partial new one in order to cross-examine and /or verify programme's documentation, report's findings and conclusions from the research on NEETs.

3.3.1 Methodology

The methodology used for this partial needs assessment was based on the study of documents made available to the PUA InnoSI team by the project team of the coordinator of the programme:

- Programme's implementation and management guide ([INE/GSEE, 2015b](#));
- Vocational Counselling' implementation guide for ([INE/GSEE, 2015c](#));
- Programme's technical fiche;
- Internal and external evaluation reports;
- Research report on NEETs in Greece.

In addition to the documentary study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with: a) members of the project teams in Athens (11 interviews) and in the Convergence Regions (7 interviews) the programme took place, b) educators (5 interviews), c) counsellors (7 interviews), and d) beneficiaries (11 interviews: 5 with male and 6 with female persons; aged from 23 to 29 years). Given that the programme was implemented in regions outside the city of Athens, all interviews with persons living there were conducted via Skype and recorded for the purposes of the analysis. For that reason, the PUA InnoSI team could not conduct research via focus groups.

3.3.2 Target population

Our analysis concluded that the target population was clearly described during the early stages of the programme and its implementation was grounded on this description (see section 3.2.1). This was verified by the answers received from the interviews. All interviewees unanimously contended that the programme's target population didn't differ from the one stated in the "official" documents available to the PUA InnoSI team. A minor change in the target group was the one related to the children of second-generation immigrants who initially were not eligible for applying to the programme. However, this

“flaw” was amended at a stage when implementation of the programme had already advanced. Thus, only a small number⁴¹ of immigrants’ children eventually participated.

3.3.3 Population need

As described in the previous section the analysis of documents and data from the interviews showed that only minor yet really significant, on policy and social level, changes took place regarding the target population. This was something that did not lead to any kind of deviation from the programme’s objectives and implementation. It must also be noted that the programme was announced in a crucial period for Greece (elections in January 2015; referendum in July 2015; new elections in September 2015) and was implemented in the midst of the economic crisis. This led to a huge interest among both young people and local enterprises for such a programme.

As it was mentioned during the interviews the programme via vocational counselling sessions and provision of professional experience empowered young people by creating favourable conditions for them to develop their skills and also to work and participate actively in society, which is an essential factor for sound and sustainable economic and social development. Being the first time most of the beneficiaries had ever worked in an enterprise this was something that had multiple effects:

- Internship time actually took the form of a “simulation exercise”;
- Familiarisation with the demands and the conditions of the labour market;
- Socialising, meeting new people and developing inter-personal networks;
- Feeling of social inclusion and usefulness.

At the same time, as far as the enterprises are concerned, the programme gave them the opportunity to employ, even though as interns and not as regular employees, a large number of graduates, to extend their workforce and to see fresh, new emergent ideas articulated and occasionally applied. Apart from that they were able to further inform themselves on issues like employee’s rights, legal support and social security. It was quite important for them to realise that they need to start behaving in a socially responsible manner by protecting human rights and actively complying with the spirit of the law, ethical standards and national policy norms, and that this should henceforth be done in practice. Sustainability in a volatile and competitive environment as is the one in

⁴¹ Data on the exact number not available.

Greece is ensured by the adoption of ethical attitudes and behaviors that promote the benefit of the society at large.

Another important aspect that came out of the interviews conducted was that the prerequisites of the working environment in Greece are not so friendly or efficient. Job opportunities are very scarce and young people's prospects for a healthier and better future diminish day after day. The economic crisis is argued to be the main inhibitor in the quest for employment as well as a serious obstacle in the formulation of appropriate, permanent and satisfactory working positions and conditions. Alongside, there is a unanimous feeling that the labour market needs to be restructured and major transformations need to be made in all State structures (unemployment programmes, systematic evaluation of the employed, training programmes etc.). This would mean initiatives towards the integration, or re-integration, of young people in the labour market by: a) strengthening the pathways to the labour market, b) giving economic incentives to employers so as to hire young people, and c) subsidizing programmes to enterprises.

4. Theories of change

4.1 Introduction

Theory of Change (ToC) is acknowledged as a crucial aspect of the evaluation process especially for projects implemented in order to achieve a social change regarding a particular social group or the wider society. ToC refers to the description of a sequence of events that are expected to direct to a particular desired outcome, a process that “helps create a structure to build an evidence base about what works or not, for who and why, and under which conditions” ([van Es, 2015](#)). In that sense, ToC is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change, how it happens and what that means for a particular sector or group of people and within a particular context ([Vogel, 2012](#)).

Evaluators need different information from a theory of change process. The focus here is basically to understand the issues of effectiveness and wider change for people intended to benefit. Theories of change aimed for evaluation purposes tend to drill down into the detail of theories about cause-effect, the different pathways, actors and mechanisms the programme has influenced, or could have influenced, as well as significant contextual conditions that had an influence. Differences between the design-stage theory of change and the implementation model are also investigated in depth ([Vogel, 2012](#)). This is a rapidly developing technical area in evaluation literature ([Stern et al., 2012](#); [White and Phillips, 2012](#)).

Following the *InnoSI Case Study Report Template*, in this section of the evaluation report the PUA InnoSI team’s focus is on any possibly existing ToC developed by the stakeholders of the programme “An Integrated Intervention for Connecting Vocational Schools Graduates with the Labour Market” and, secondly, on the attempt to develop a ToC that will assist in the evaluation process of the programme.

4.2 Existing theory(ies) of change

After holding the first meetings and discussions with the programme’s stakeholders it was concluded that there was no ToC developed at the stages of the design, preparation and implementation of the programme. While the stakeholder staff clearly understood the concept and the need of a ToC for both the programme and the purposes of our evaluation, they have never heard of that before and they mentioned that they had not used

it so far in other programme(s) that is /are being implemented or before that. As a consequence, this has had some implications regarding the programme itself as well as our evaluation process.

At first, it should be acknowledged that any programme's "wish" is to bring some sort of change that will befall its implementation. This implies that between the two options described in the *InnoSI Case Study Report Template* the PUA InnoSI team worked to present an implicit ToC scheme before moving on to its own development of ToC, that could be considered as a *third*, or an *intermediate*, option between the first (an existing ToC) and the second one (no ToC).

From the programme's technical fiche it is evident that the main change the consortium aspired to attain was to *establish and broaden the access of an extensive amount of vocational (IEK, EPAS and EPAL) graduates to the labour market* (long-term objective). According to the implementation guides of the programme and of the vocational counselling in particular, the explicit and specific targets of the intervention were to: a) improve knowledge and skills of the beneficiaries, b) provide quality and profitable working experience and c) offer vocational /career empowerment and support. The technical fiche included some indicators regarding access to the labour market, e.g. how many participants are needed so as to consider the programme successful or the number of job positions that would be created *during* the implementation of the programme (calculated in man-years). However, there is no final indicator available, e.g. the number of the beneficiaries that remained as *permanent* employees in the enterprise they were placed for acquiring working experience after the programme was completed, or how many job positions were created *after* the programme. For example, there was a provision of an indicator of 7.000 participants in internship positions that was met at 98.74%, and an indicator showing that 340 job positions were finally created compared to 450,48 that were initially expected.

Despite the fact that, as stated above, we cannot actually talk about a ToC the PUA InnoSI team tried to "imagine" how the stakeholder's staff might have thought of developing a ToC based on existing information and data collected during our research. This has a very simple form and is depicted in the diagram as follows:

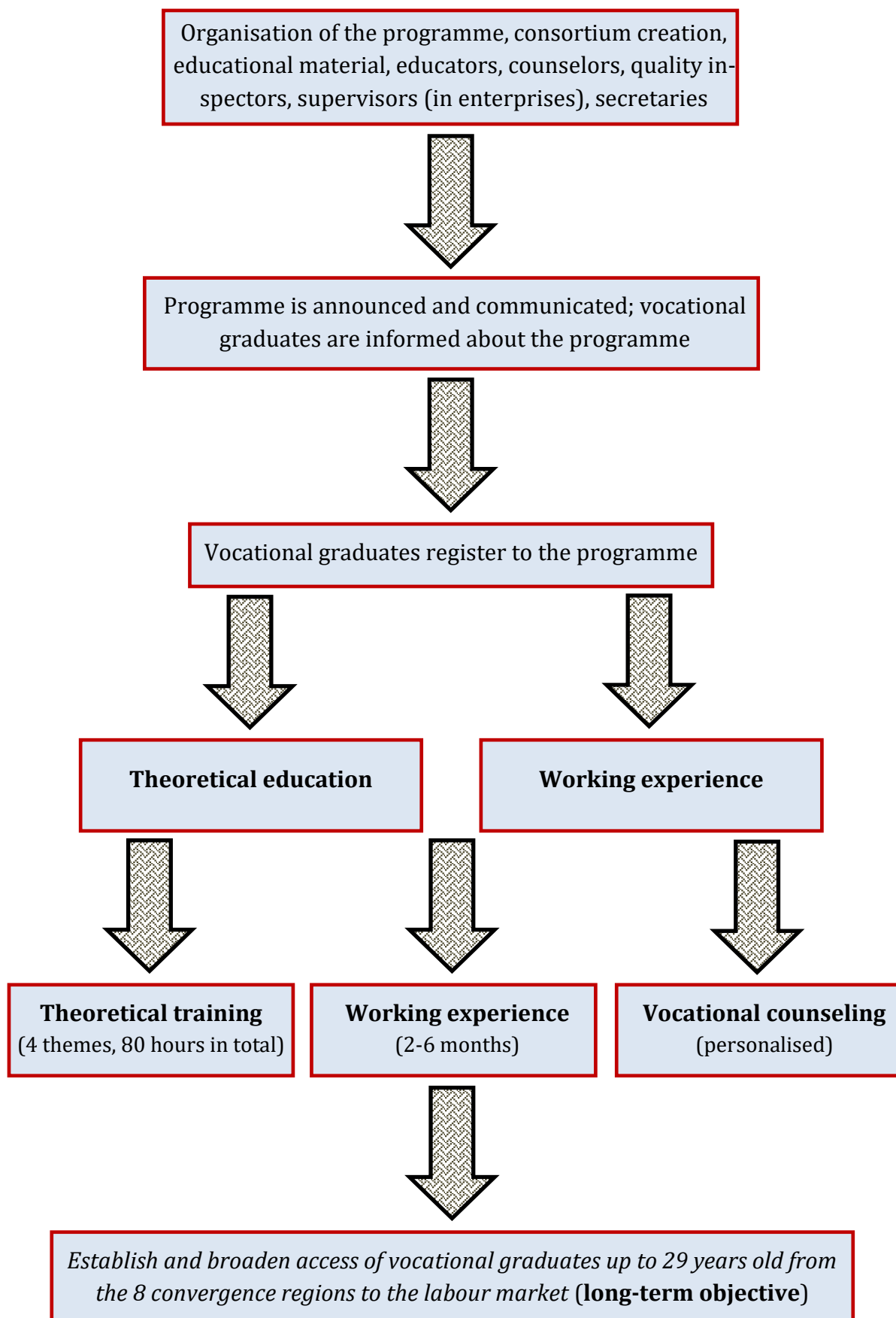


Diagram 1. *Initial ToC.*

The above diagram provides a clear picture of how the stakeholder considered the programme's advancement and the change that would occur, given that a ToC was not explicitly formulated beforehand. In fact, this is the PUA InnoSI team's interpretation of a ToC according to which the programme would be "expected" to run and "flow". Further analysis of the logic of the above diagram is provided in the next section where an effort to develop a full ToC from our part is presented.

4.3 New theory of change

4.3.1 Methodology

The elaboration of the ToC that PUA InnoSI team undertook considers elements such as the target group, inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. In this process we tried to find out: a) which factors influenced the programme, b) if (and what) kind of changes took place during the implementation of the programme, and c) why such decisions were made. We also examined what was the social change the programme coordinator and social partners wanted to achieve and if there were any indicators that could measure any possible changes. The ToC was discussed with our impact partner that coordinated the programme and with other staff, e.g. members of project teams from the participating social partners, educators, counselors. Given that the programme has been established the method of participant observation could not be employed. Instead, the first method incorporated was the in-depth study and documentary analysis of some of the main documents of/about the programme. These included: a) the call for proposals and its amendment (2 documents, 29 pp.), b) the technical fiche that was prepared and submitted by the coordinator and included the principles /objectives of the programme, its field of interest and regions of intervention, the type /description of activities undertaken (28 pp.), c) the programme's implementation and management guide (pp. 54), d) the vocational counselling guide (96 pp.), e) the brief report on the methodology of the external evaluation (52 pp.), f) the external overall programme evaluation report (131 pp.), g) the internal vocational counselling evaluation report (pp. 45), and h) the report from the research on NEETs in Greece (162 pp.).

After the first document review we drafted a diagram of a ToC which was then presented and discussed during a meeting with our impact partner at INE/GSEE's offices. Despite the fact that, as stated above, they had not used ToC while preparing and /or

implementing the programme, they basically agreed with the rationale and the flow of the diagram presented to them (see diagram 1, p. 47). As described in the *Evaluation Framework* outlined for the evaluation purposes, semi-structured interviews were conducted with: a) members of the project teams in Athens (11 interviews), from both the coordinator and the participating social partners, as well as in the convergence regions (7 interviews) where the programme took place. In some of these interviews we discussed the draft ToC, while all interviews were quite insightful in developing the new ToC.

Once most interviews had been conducted, another meeting was held with our impact partner so as to review and finalise the ToC. Our final step was to elaborate on this draft ToC by going back and re-reviewing the available documents. That was a process that helped us reconsider and edit the existing ToC by making some modifications that are presented in the following sections and illustrated in an updated ToC diagram in the final section.

4.3.2 Background

Young people have been particularly affected by the current crisis in Greece regarding both their employment prospects and the alarming levels of youth unemployment. The social, psychological and political impact of the increase in youth unemployment rates is equally high. Young people, specifically NEETs, appear to be less confident towards institutions and show greater tendency to abstain from civic life. Also, the problem of prolonged youth unemployment undermines the country's growth prospects and erodes social cohesion as due to the crisis young people are rather hired, whenever hired, on temporarily basis so as to replace permanent employees who have been dismissed as a result of the crisis exactly ([NetnotNEET, 2015](#)).

Apart from that, there is a lack of internal and external evaluation procedures and, therefore, a deficiency of information for quality control purposes. These "gaps" are held responsible for the absence of a full picture on the transition from the education system to the labour market. (This is something that takes a very long time in Greece in comparison with other EU countries.) As far as vocational training is especially concerned, a greater commitment by employers would be needed as well as improved "on-the-job" training. The aforementioned facts are clearly reflected in a study with the title "Exploring

the Connection between Education, Training and Employment” conducted by KANEP/GSEE ([KANEP/GSEE, 2013](#)) which among other results concluded that:

- There is a very low connection between VET systems (initial and continuing) and employment /labour market, as only 15.7% of graduates from continuing training and 21.85% from initial training found work within the first 6 months of graduation;
- There is a low relevance of training subject to the profession /specialty work of those who finally managed to find a job: 27% for graduates from ongoing training and 31% from initial training.

That considered, it can be argued that young people, NEETs and vocational graduates explicitly, were the social group hardest hit by the impact of the economic crisis and so a need is pressing for actions to tackle this situation.⁴²

4.3.3 Long-term outcome

According to: a) the call for proposals, b) the technical fiche, and c) the programme’s implementation and management guide, this intervention was intended to design, organize and realise an integrated set of focused actions for providing a large number of vocational graduates with ample access to the labour market. For this purpose the programme was deployed on two axes: on the one hand, by giving the graduates a significant corpus of horizontal (“soft”) skills on informatics, entrepreneurship, organizational and managerial competences, methods and techniques for handling crises in the working environment, and by “placing” them to enterprises as interns, so as to acquire as profound and rich as possible working experience that will be capitalized in the future by helping them find a permanent job. Or, to “create” a new one by innovatively combining their vocational specialty perhaps with the skills/knowledge and experience collected via the programme. In this respect, it is important to consider that each one of these graduates was a student of IEK, EPAS and EPAL, which implied a great variety of specialties involved. So, the objective was eventually to help these persons discover, or re-discover, their way to the labour market, even though some, not so many of them, had previous working experience, usually for a few months and even fewer of them for 1 or 2 years, as interviews revealed. Secondly, the programme sought to strengthen and broaden the professional

⁴² For a detailed account of the population in need and its distinct educational, social and psychological specifications see Chapter 3. [Needs assessment](#).

prospects of the unemployed or temporarily employed young persons, to upgrade their skills, to offer them empowerment and support on individual level, so that their active participation to the labour market is promoted and ensured as much as possible. That means that the impact the programme was trying to achieve was to increase and enrich the potentialities of young vocational graduates to become active members of the labour market.

However, after the detailed analysis of the programme's documents, but mainly after the interviews conducted with the stakeholder's staff and staff from the participating social partners, it turned out that actually the long-term objective, or in other words the impact, that the programme was aiming at was actually broader. Apart from equipping the vocational graduates with a set of skills that will be more or less useful in almost any type of future working environment and apart from giving them the chance to familiarise themselves in real-time conditions with an enterprise that is close to their specialty, the programme included vocational counselling and guidance which, on a *mid-* and, most importantly, on a *long-term* basis, will help them:

- Create awareness of career options through assessment of interests, values and skills. Although many graduates appeared sure of who they are and clear about what they want to become, there were quite many others who were either confused or had no idea about their career preferences. Aptitude tests and counselling sessions conducted by the counsellors helped them find out the "right" career options and the fields that truly interest them. On the basis of these counseling results, graduates were reportedly assisted in making the right choice regarding what job they want to do and what is required to accomplish their career goals.
- Support and motivation. Through personalised sessions (duration of every session was more than 1 hour) vocational graduates argued that they received essential support and boost of their morale by understanding the type of requirements and necessities of the labour market. They were re-built on the motivational level as employable persons, which is necessary for long-term success. These made them believe in themselves, feel much more confident and realise the practicality of expanding their network which in turn will enhance emotional support and future job possibilities.

Taking the above into consideration it can be argued that the long-term, or underlying, outcome of the programme was not merely to increase the chances of a large number of graduates to find a job, but also to show them that paths for making the most out of their knowledge, skills and experience do exist. Imperative for this was their empowerment and sense of self-confidence. The problem is that this objective cannot be measured, something quite evident after the analysis while processing our ToC.

4.3.4 Intermediate outcomes

Based on the analysis we conducted for the elaboration of the ToC the intermediate outcomes are the same *three* presented in the diagram above. However, after the change presented in the previous section about the long-term objective it could be argued that the intermediate outcomes are *four*. The first three are: a) acquisition of horizontal (or “soft”) skills, b) acquisition of working experience, and c) vocational and career-related support. All these are vital in order for young people to gain the feeling that they are able to correspond to the needs and demands of the labour market, to be fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and to become socially active. For example, many beneficiaries were not certain about the professional path they want to take. Others thought they had found it but through the counselling sessions they were able to re-assess ideas and visions. Also, the vast majority of them found itself for the first time in a working environment wherein it came face to face with aspects concerning not only the nature of the job, even in the form of internship, but also its daily interaction with the employer and other employees, potential problems referring to abusive behaviors, and the rights and obligations with regard to labour issues. But in order for this to happen, in order for the vocational graduates to become *employable*, they need to be self-aware and self-confident. Vocational counselling sessions helped them to that direction as, among other benefits, offered them information on issues also important for young (un)employed people in times of economic crisis. For example, they were informed on what it means to search for job when demand is low and jobs are under-paid. Finally, they were made aware of the significance that meeting new people and networking have in the future work place, which was another intermediate objective achieved by the programme. Everyone, those not employed, those who had never worked before or even those who had worked for a short period time, all realised that instead of staying at home thinking there is no hope,

possibilities show up when someone is more energetic i.e. searches job placement advertisements, sends out his /her resume to enterprises, goes to interviews and, broadly, strives to find a way out. All these four intermediate objectives are extremely decisive as in total they aim to the empowerment of a group of people still in its youth. This is associated not only with their role as employees or as employable persons, but with their role in the society at large. That is why it was eventually decided that participation in the labour market was not the long-term objective, but their empowerment and cultivation of the idea that they can be useful to both themselves and the society as a whole. Once again, the problem here was the lack of valid indicators that would measure these outcomes.

4.3.5 Assumptions and justifications

Despite the fact that a full and precise ToC was not elaborated by the programme's stakeholders as it came out from our analysis and development of ToC, some basic assumptions and justifications upon which the programme was based on do exist. The first one is that young vocational graduates in Greece face an immense problem in entering or re-entering the labour market. This is an ongoing dubious situation that has been intensified during the economic crisis which started in 2010. This justification was based on official information, statistical data and existing studies and surveys, both on national and EU-level. Another assumption was that skills and previous working experience alone are no longer sufficient factors that can guarantee one's professional future. Vocational and career counselling is now gaining an ever-increasing role as an inseparable component of a person's working traits and his /her professional /social life. Lastly, a third assumption relates to the fact that a large number of vocational graduates of which every single one had acquired a different specialty comprised a critical mass that for the first time in Greece would be able to learn through a variety of methods and tools and amass all necessary skills in order to confront unemployment and low (or zero) income, personal problems at home, psychological problems based on social exclusion, and get additional knowledge about issues such as their rights in the work place, managing crises, organizational competencies etc.

The programme was in essence grounded on the aforementioned assumptions and justifications, fully inter-related and fundamental for the programme's success. Analysis of the interviews PUA InnoSI team conducted concluded that all of them were proven valid. As described in the *Literature Review* and the *Needs Assessment* chapters, young

vocational graduates have difficulties in finding a job along with subsequent complications in their everyday lives. Also, it was argued by many of the beneficiaries as well as by members of the project teams in Athens and in the regions where the programme took place that vocational graduates learned a lot of new things, acquired and developed new, extra skills, got knowledge and information on various social and personal issues, and formulated a positive image about themselves through new perspectives and experiences.

4.3.6 Interventions and outputs

A complete ToC must also describe the types of interventions that each of the preconditions would be required to bring about on the pathway to change. An intervention might be as simple as a single activity or as complex as an entire programme and some central questions about the interventions are: “Do we have the resources we need to implement this intervention?”, or “Is the planned intervention enough to achieve the objective(s)?” ([Anderson, 2005](#)).

It is apparent from the call for proposals as well from the implementation and management guide of the programme that the initiative aimed to provide an integrated approach to the problem of youth unemployment. To that direction the *first* step was the formation of a solid consortium for designing and implementing the programme. This was decided on the basis of the idea that the programme’s objectives would be better served if a “coalition” of social partners was brought together. In this respect, joining forces for a shared purpose would ensure a multi-dimensional approach, with each social partner contributing on different levels according to its capabilities and specific perspective in Greek economy and society. Still, it was agreed that all participating sides would adhere to a common “line” and course of actions, as outlined in the implementation and management guide. *Second* step, or outcome, was the design of the educational material, methods and techniques for the theoretical training, on the one hand, and the design of methods, techniques and psychometric tools for the vocational counselling. In both fields special care was taken so that all educational courses and counselling sessions consider the specifications of the programme’s target group. A curriculum, common to all educators and counselors, was created for the purposes not only of the specific programme but also with the intention on the consortium’s part to be able to be applied to other similar programmes in the future. The *third* step was in relation to the formation of a *register*

that included all persons that participated in the programme as staff members (educators, counsellors, quality inspectors, supervisors, secretaries) as well as the enterprises that “hosted” the beneficiaries for their internship. Contribution to this outcome was wide, especially on the social partners’ part, in attracting a large number of enterprises via announcements to their members and promotion of the programme to the local communities in the convergence regions. One *final* step was the design and deployment of a system for securing the internship’s quality standards. Given that the acquisition of working experience was of uppermost concern actions for continuously monitoring the “progress” of this part of the programme so as to detect potential problems or misconceptions and intervene properly were designed and applied. All interventions embodied, as described, in the programme’s implementation and management guide as well in the vocational counselling guide, were expected to assist in meeting its objectives, and are connected with the assumptions and justifications stated in the previous section.

4.3.7 Inputs

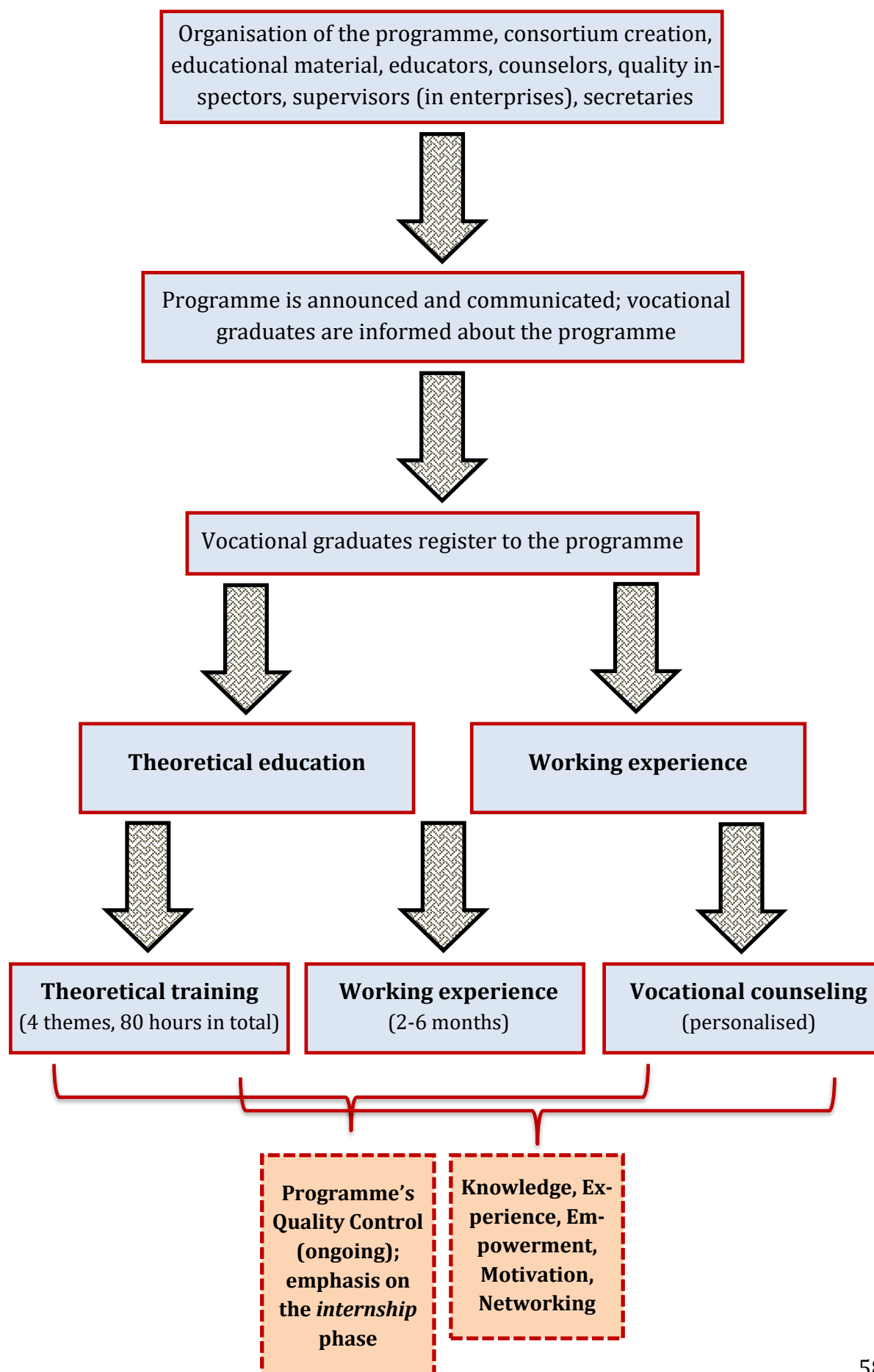
Further inputs also decisive for the implementation of the programme were highlighted during the interviews PUA Innosi team conducted with stakeholders’ members and with beneficiaries. It was widely argued that while applying for the programme there were quite a few vocational graduates that faced difficulties while filling the application form. Many of them didn’t have an e-mail account; others, who had e-mail account, could not remember it; and there were those, yet few, who could not remember other information needed for filling the form. In fixing this the support provided by members and staff of INE/GSEE’s regional branches was immediate, as they were eager and willing to offer their help wherever asked for. Another factor, or input, worth mentioning was that in some cases a second and a third call for expression of interest had to be issued so as to complete the necessary number of applicants for the programme. This occurred despite the fact that the programme was arguably well communicated and publicised in local communities and local labour markets via the social partners’ web sites, the local print and digital press, and invitations sent massively via SMS to large vocational graduates’ databases provided by the local vocational schools. Eventually, the integrated publicity actions taken up by the social partners succeeded in reaching the desired number of beneficiaries. Contrary to some procedural and bureaucratic obstacles in the beginning of the programme, the answers received during the interviews showed a widespread interest

in it, as participants started, the vast majority of them, to participate more actively, be enthusiastic and ask for additional advice, support and guidance. Finally, another input worth-mentioning had to do with the fact that all throughout the programme, from its start and in many cases up until today, the beneficiaries had, and still have, the feeling and the certainty that all sides involved in the implementation a person are always “present” to assist and guide them in any kind of problem. This was effective during all stages of the programme but especially in times of crises, e.g. when the payment of the scholarships was long delayed. Interviewees unanimously agreed that this was a vital contribution to the programme’s success in that it intensified the social partners’ “status” and value in the local communities as a kind of “proof” that implementing the programme well and as planned was the highest priority of the consortium.

4.3.8 Program Logic

In section 4.2 a diagram of a ToC was presented based on the in-depth analysis and review of the available documents about the programme, also acknowledging that the stakeholders’ members had never previously discussed and /or developed a ToC while implementing other programmes. After drafting the first ToC and conducting interviews with members of project team and other staff members (educators and counsellors) the diagram of a new ToC was created. The new diagram, while not fundamentally different from the initial one, represents, in our opinion, a more accurate, “realistic”, picture of the programme’s impact. Almost all interviewees, but especially the counsellors and the beneficiaries, recalling the “flow” of the programme after its completion underlined the fact that the objective was not only the provision of access to the labour market to people the vast majority of which had never worked before, but also: a) to make these people more active and useful to the society, and b) to set the basis and develop an integrated system and methodology for implementing similar programmes in the future. In other words, the programme intended to empower and make more confident a significant number of youngsters, to motivate them met new people and create networks, in order to change their self-perception, on the one hand, as well as their place in family, workplace and society in general, on the other. At the same time, the programme is thought, but not expected in the first place, as a “prototype” or as a “model” than can be adopted when designing and implementing similar programmes in the future.

Therefore, the new diagram presenting PUA InnoSI team’s final ToC is as follows:



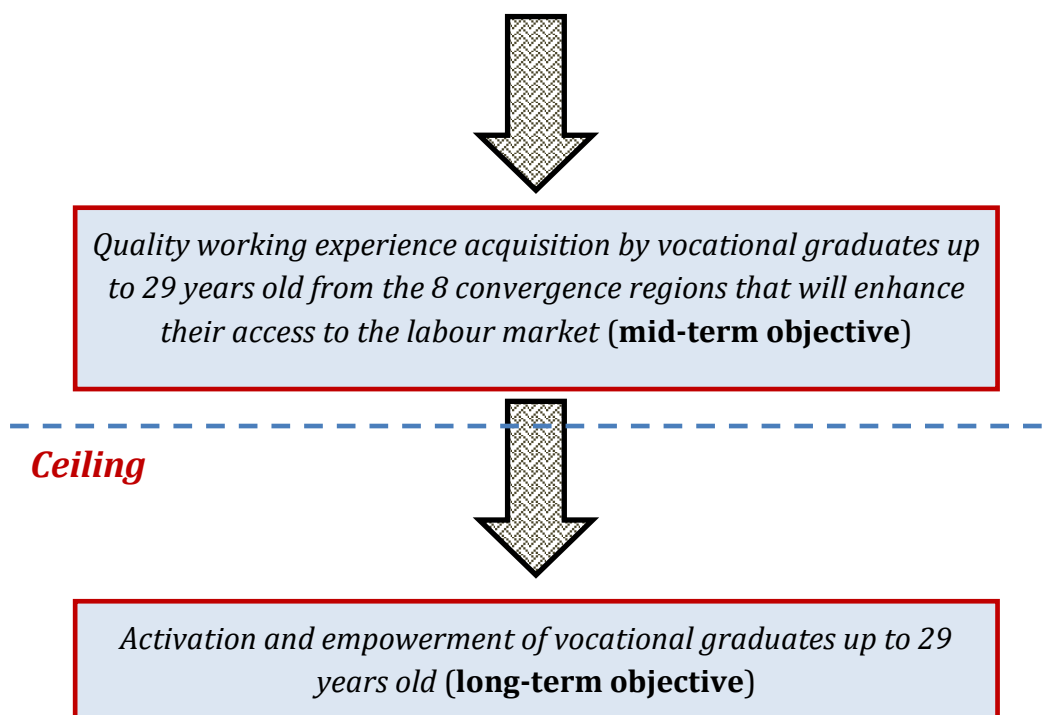


Diagram 2. *Final ToC.*

Following the diagram above, the programme’s “rationale” is structured as follows. First, the *long-term* objective is that young vocational graduates (are to) become more knowledgeable, self-confident, self-realised and empowered, so that they henceforth are more energetic throughout their personal and social life, including their professional life as well. This type of objective does not “end” with the establishment of the programme but becomes an inseparable trait throughout their life. One thing that must be noted here is that there are no indicators related to how these would be measured, given that no follow-up process was projected while designing the initiative. The *mid-term* objective is a part of the programme’s proposal included in the description of work /actions and represents a kind of “ceiling”. It involves a system for continuously monitoring the quality of the programme’s internship phase, securing the expected results and preventing possible abusive behaviours or other non-expected results. In contrast to the long-term objective, the mid-term one was qualitatively measured with use of two questionnaires, the final assessment of which could be utilised in the formulation of a set of good practices for the benefit of everyone involved in the programme.

After setting the mid- and long-term objectives, the programme is built on three vital pillars: a) theoretical education, b), working experience, and c) vocational counselling. All these largely contribute to the acquisition and life-long development of a solid corpus of horizontal (“soft”) skills along with self-appreciation and self-promotion skills that can virtually apply on a rather generic way in the working environment. This consequently leads us to the way the programme’s actions and subprojects are designed: a) 80 hours of theoretical training in four modules (informatics, innovation and entrepreneurship, organizational competencies and crisis management), b) up to 6 (six) months of internship (or “on-the-job training”), and c) four (4) vocational counselling sessions. These actions are supported by fully-experienced staff (project teams, educators, counsellors, quality inspectors, supervisors and secretaries) in Athens and in all eight Convergence Regions. The final stage of the programme is comprised of the overall arrangement of actions as well as the communication and coordination between the participating social partners that need to be as flawless and harmonic as possible.

5. Process evaluation

5.1 Introduction

Process evaluation is a very crucial part of an evaluation process. It typically aims to answer the question: “How was the policy, programme or project delivered?” ([HM Treasury, 2013](#)), or, alternatively, the “what is going on” question ([Robson, 2011](#)). As mentioned in *WP4 Case Study Guidance*, a process (or implementation) evaluation examines whether and how the programme was implemented and administered. Even with a plausible theory on *how* to intervene, a programme must still be implemented well so as to have a reasonable chance of making an impact. The basic issues process evaluation concentrates on are the following:

- Distribution of the policy;
- Social and managerial roles between public, private and third sectors;
- Evaluation of the legal framework used;
- Interaction and complementarity with broader social welfare policies.

Process evaluation “verifies what the program is and whether or not it is delivered as intended to the targeted recipients” (Scheirer 1994, cited in [Rossi et al., 2004](#)). In addition, it considers unintended or wider delivery issues encountered during implementation. According to the *WP4 Case Study Guidance*, the process evaluation of case studies is likely to consider most, if not all, of the following questions:

- Has the intervention been implemented as intended?
- What were the mechanisms employed for the programme to achieve its goals?
- Has the intervention reached the target population?
- How has the intervention been experienced both by those implementing it and those receiving it?
- What contextual factors were critical to effective implementation? In particular, what was, if any, the interaction and complementarity with broader social welfare policies?
- Were unintended or wider delivery issues encountered during implementation?

Process evaluations are increasingly concerned not with just whether an intervention is implemented correctly, but with the change mechanisms through which the im-

plementation is achieved ([Moore et al., 2014](#)). There are many theories describing individual and organisational processes of change. For example, Moore et al. ([2014](#)) cite the work of Hawe and colleagues ([2009](#)) who describe interventions as events within systems which “either leave a lasting footprint or wash out, depending how well system dynamics are harnessed” ([Moore et al., 2014](#)). They also underline how theories from Sociology and Social Psychology emphasise the processes through which interventions become a fully integrated part of their setting, operating the terms “*routinisation*” or “*normalization*” respectively to describe them.

This is related to what is termed as *change and innovation theory driven process evaluation* and, to some point, applies in this case study which focuses on labour market issues and, more specifically, in vocational graduates’ unemployment and participation to the labour market. Having the above in mind, our intention in this process evaluation is to investigate whether this programme that was implemented in a very sensitive area, i.e. youth unemployment in light of the severe economic crisis Greece faces since 2010, managed to leave a lasting footprint or washed out, according to Hawe, and how this can be supported mainly via the qualitative interviews with the stakeholders’ members and the recipients of the intervention.

Another theory that seems applicable in this case study is the one on systems and complexity. “Systems thinking” originated in the natural sciences before being applied to social inquiry. As applied to organisations, it “suggests that issues, events, forces and incidents should not be viewed as isolated phenomena but seen as interconnected, interdependent components of a complex entity” ([Iles and Sutherland, 2001](#)). Complexity theorists distinguish “complex” interventions from the “complicated” ones. The former are characterised by unpredictability, emergence (complex patterns of behaviour arising out of a combination of relatively simple interactions), and non-linearity of outcomes ([Moore et al., 2014](#)). Addressing the challenge of evaluating complex interventions or interventions delivered in a complex context is a key for the development of theories of change ([Weiss, 1995](#); [Kubisch et al. 1998](#)). The implication for process evaluation is that it must do more than describe whether an intervention was implemented as intended, but must also generate understanding (theory) about how mechanisms of change operate in the context of complex organisational settings.

In this case-study the programme was designed and initiated in 2015, during the ongoing economic crisis that started in 2010, a period characterised by high youth (both male and female) unemployment rates and by serious social consequences and effects due to the financial problems hundreds of families and households all over Greece faced with for many years. In this respect, trying to motivate and empower a large number of beneficiaries (young vocational graduates) whose only available “asset” at the time was the specialty obtained from the vocational school, so as to acquire a valuable set of horizontal (“soft”) skills along with working experience, in order to enter the labour market, even as interns, was a demanding and challenging task alone. Furthermore, the specific characteristics of the Greek labour market, i.e. prolonged joblessness among youth, deregulation, under-paid jobs, extensive black labour phenomena, inability of new entrants to find jobs, relatively low labour force participation rates for women and large size of “hidden” economy, were additional and significant, though peripheral, issues that could not be neglected. The stakeholders and actors involved in the programme needed to acknowledge these parameters and, therefore, be flexible in order to acclimate to possible changes and design the programme accordingly.

An additional aspect of the context that needed to be taken under consideration was the “rich” differentiation of specialties that vocational schools graduates “brought into” the programme. This can be seen as a complexity not in terms of the multiplicity of the specialties per se, but with regards to the need the educational tools and material as well as the tools and techniques for the vocational counselling to be so designed as to efficiently deliver the purposes and the expected programme’s objectives. In association with that, other parameters that should also be acknowledged in the process of laying out the educational /counselling methods were: a) the social and cultural background of the beneficiaries; a part of them lived in cities and/or urban areas and another part of them lived in rural areas, b) the differentiated educational background (IEK, EPAS and EPAL), c) their age, which varied from 19 to 29 years, d) the fact that most of them participated in a vocational programme for the first time in their lives, and e) the fact that the vast majority was not quite accustomed with the purposes and the usefulness of vocational counselling sessions; most of them had actually never heard about that before.

Another complexity that asked for solution was the very limited available time frame for designing and implementing the programme. The Call for Proposals was issued

by the Ministry of Education on July 2014; the Joint Ministerial Decision was issued on December 2014; the programme was publicly announced on the coordinator's and social partners' web sites on January 2015; all actions and subprojects had to be completed by November 2015; all payments foreseen in the budget had to be made by December 2015 if they were to be eligible and approved. All that given, a shared and accurate understanding of the pressing time schedule had to be established among all social partners. Alongside, actions for recruiting educators, counsellors and quality inspectors, as well as developing a wide network of enterprises for the beneficiaries' internship, had to be carried out under entirely insistent conditions. The initial "wish" and objective of the programme was that each beneficiary would be placed for acquiring working experience in an enterprise identical or, at least, close to his /her specialty. However, it turned out that in some cities this could not be the case, due to the apparent mismatch between the specialties and the job positions /type of enterprises available at the local labour market.

Finally, a parameter that reflects the complexity of the programme's implementation referred to the fact that the intervention was organised, administered, managed and deployed not by a single organization (stakeholder) but by a consortium of social partners established for that purpose. Although this was not the first time the participant stakeholders cooperated in implementing a programme, some special conditions were apparent and had to be considered: a) the programme would be implemented on an almost national basis, i.e. in 8 out of the 13 regions of Greece, c) the number of beneficiaries (7.000 persons) was quite extensive and unprecedented compared to previous similar interventions, c) the number of staff engaged in all parts and overall subprojects of the programme was also quite extensive and of multiple specialties (educators, counsellors, quality inspectors, supervisors, secretaries) which was really challenging and demanding in terms of coordination as well as of defining quite clearly the tasks incorporated.

So, these were practical issues /conditions that needed to be examined and overcome and, at the same time, reflect the complexity of the general context for the implementation of the programme. In this respect, in the process evaluation we will try to explore these complexity issues and evaluate the stakeholders' reaction and the flexibility of the consortium to deal with them.

An essential task for process evaluation is also to examine both the quantity and quality of what was actually implemented in practice and the reasons why. This might

inform implementation of similar interventions elsewhere and facilitate interpretation of intervention outcomes. While notions of standardisation are by all means central to implementation assessment, the nature of standardisation required in complex interventions is debated ([Moore et al., 2014](#)).

As mentioned in *WP4 Case Study Guidance*,⁴³ understanding the context in which complex interventions are delivered and received is critical to explaining why they do or do not work, or how we might expect impacts to differ if implemented elsewhere or otherwise. “Context” may include any factors that are external to the intervention, but which may impede or strengthen the effects of the intervention. This may include factors which existed prior to the intervention or factors which emerge during its implementation. While early process evaluation frameworks emphasised roles of context in shaping implementation, contextual factors may also moderate outcomes. Implementation will often require complex behavioural changes among implementers, and may be influenced by factors such as their circumstances, skills and attitudes. Similarly, participants do not receive interventions passively but interact with them in ways influenced by their circumstances, attitudes, beliefs, social norms and resources. The causal pathways of problems targeted by an intervention will differ from one time and place to another. Thus, the same intervention may have different consequences if implemented in a different setting or among different subgroups. Even in cases where an intervention itself is relatively simple, its causal processes and relationship with its context may still be considered complex ([Moore et al., 2014](#)). Having in mind the above discussion on the importance of the context and the specific circumstances during the implementation of this programme, it could be argued that a process evaluation was indeed a crucial aspect of the whole evaluation process undertaken.

As a consequence, and as it was described in the *Evaluation Framework*, the main questions connected with process evaluation in this case study are the following:

- Which were the methods /techniques used for implementing the programme?
- Did the educational methods /tools /material work?
- Did the counselling methods /tools work?
- Were there any problems /obstacles? Were they overcome?

⁴³ Guidance draws on Fox, C., Caldeira, R. and Grimm, R. (2016). *An Introduction to Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE Publications.

- Can this programme be implemented in other groups of people, e.g. unemployed people of different age bracket?
- Was the programme combined /supported with other policies on employment, unemployment, labour market etc.?

5.2 Methodology

Given that the programme assessed here had already been established when the PUA InnoSI team started conducting the evaluation process, the main methodology used was a qualitative one, while the quantitative data collected were secondary.

5.2.1 Quantitative methods

As stated in the *InnoSI Case Study* paper some limitations when collecting secondary quantitative data do exist. The key challenge is that, due to the fact that it is constructed primarily to assist in administration and management of a programme, monitoring data may not often capture the aspects of the implementation that are of utmost interest to the evaluation. Additionally, another common challenge is to ascertain the validity and reliability of the data:

- How consistently is monitoring data collected?
- How consistently are the requirements for monitoring data interpreted?
- What time and resources are given to data collecting and monitoring?

The secondary monitoring data we collected were sourced from the stakeholders of the programme, specifically through documents they provided to us. First, from the very beginning of the implementation of the programme data about the number of the participants in all convergence regions (and cities of regions) were collected so that the coordinator (INE/GSEE) and the other participating social partners could measure the rate of participation and see if the beneficiaries' expected number was finally met, on the basis of the thresholds they have projected in the beginning and described in the bid documents. Also, quantitative data were available about the number of counsellors that participated in the programme and were involved in the vocational counselling sessions of the beneficiaries. Data were only available for the number of counsellors that took part on INE/GSEE's part. Finally, quantitative data were accessible, even as estimates, on the number of onsite meetings the quality inspectors held and the number of counselling sessions conducted by the counselling staff with the beneficiaries. The main documents and

resources used for the quantitative data comprised of: a) the external evaluation report, b) the internal evaluation report on vocational counselling, c) the implementation and management guide of the programme, and) d) unofficial references about the total numbers of beneficiaries sorted by stakeholder and region (data were given during the meetings we had with the programme's coordinator and were presented in draft tables that include the expected and the accomplished quantitative target). We will present and evaluate these data in the following section on the results.

5.2.2 Qualitative methods

As it was mentioned above, the basic methodology used during the evaluation was a qualitative one. This included a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with: a) members of the project team in Athens (11 interviews) (see table 7), from both the coordinator and the participating social partners, b) members of the project team in the convergence regions (7 interviews) (see table 8, below), c) educators, counsellors and quality inspectors (14 interviews) (see table 8, below); all interviewees participated in the design, preparation and implementation of the programme as organisational staff and as educational/counselling staff during the theoretical training and the counselling sessions. In addition, we conducted interviews with beneficiaries of the programme (11 interviews) (see table 9, below). The sample included staff members coming from the stakeholders' headquarters in Athens and from cities outside Athens, i.e. Xanthi (in Eastern Macedonia & Thrace), Patra and Pyrgos (in Western Greece), Heraklion (Crete), Ioannina and Preveza (in Epirus), Larisa (in Thessaly), Tripoli (in Peloponnesus) and Chios (in North Aegean). Sample of beneficiaries included persons living outside Athens. All interviews with project members, educators, counsellors and beneficiaries outside Athens were conducted via Skype and recorded for our analysis.

Social Partners (Athens)	Interviews
INE/GSEE	5
KANEP/GSEE	2
GSEVEE/IME & KEK	1
INEMY/ESEE	1
KAELE/ESEE	1

EEDE	1
Total	11

Table 7. Number of interviews conducted with members of project teams per participating social partner.

Region	Project team	Educators	Counsellors
East Macedonia and Thrace	1	-	1
North Aegean	1	1	1
Western Greece	1 ⁴⁴	2	1 ⁴⁵
Epirus & Ioanian Islands	1	1 ⁴⁶	1
Thessaly	1	1 ⁴⁷	2
Crete	1	1 ⁴⁸	1
Peloponnesus	1	-	1
Total	7	6	8

Table 8. Number of interviews with members of project team, educators and counsellors per region.

Region	Interviews	Sex	Age
East Macedonia and Thrace	2	1 female	25
		1 female	27
North Aegean	2	1 female	26
		1 female	27
Western Greece	1	1 male	29
Epirus & Ioanian Islands	1	1 female	29
Thessaly	2	1 male	26

⁴⁴ Interviewee participated in the programme as member of project team as well as educator.

⁴⁵ Interviewee participated in the programme as counsellor as well as quality inspector.

⁴⁶ Interviewee participated in the programme as counsellor (at the city of Ioannina) as well as educator (at the city of Arta).

⁴⁷ Interviewee participated in the programme as counsellor as well as educator.

⁴⁸ Interviewee participated in the programme as counsellor as well as educator.

Crete		1 male	25
	2	1 male	29
		1 female	24
Peloponnesus	1	1 male	23
Total	11	5 male, 6 female	23 to 29 years

Table 9. *Number of interviews with beneficiaries per region, sex and age.*

Conducting interviews with members of project teams from Athens and the regional cities wherein the programme was implemented, as well as with beneficiaries, gave us the opportunity to collect data and information on how the programme was run specifically on a local /regional level and also to form a satisfactory picture of the programme's implantation on national level.

Further to that, the interviewees from the stakeholders provided us with all the necessary documentation that was used in order to conduct our evaluation. As stated above, qualitative methods are notably useful in cases where interventions are set in complex contexts, affected by a plethora of non-controllable independent (and exogenous) variables, with extended and non-linear causal chains. When well-designed and effectively implemented they can efficiently capture emerging changes in implementation, experiences of the intervention and can be used in the generation of a new theory. Qualitative methods are often used to capture perceptions and behaviours that are not fully apprehended by quantitative methods. Qualitative methods typically used in qualitative evaluation designs are categorised by some scholars as “data enhancers”, the assumption being that “when data are enhanced, it is possible to see key aspects of cases more clearly” ([Ragin, 1994](#)). The fact that data are enhanced as opposed to being condensed ([Ritchie and Lewis, 2003](#)) introduces a number of advantages in relation to the analysis and the consequent operationalisation of evaluations' findings and suggestions, namely:

- Analysis is more aligned with participants' own analytical categories and closer to the academic point of view, resonates with stakeholders' language, perceptions and analytical categories;
- In-depth study of cases and cross-case comparisons lead to analysis that provides rich illustrative information regarding complex phenomena and the relationships that they shape and that shape them in context.

Overall, the main methodological implications of this broad approach to social science research, and evaluation in particular, are purpose and participation. Thus, any qualitative evaluation design can only be applied in situations where:

- The purpose of the evaluation is clear enough for the evaluator to be able to unequivocally identify pertinent sampling techniques, e.g. case studies, and stakeholders;
- Internal and external stakeholders can be involved and participate throughout the evaluation process.

An influential set of quality standards for qualitative evaluation was drawn up by the British Government ([Spencer et al., 2003](#)). The framework is grounded around four (4) guiding principles that research should be ([Spencer et al., 2003](#)):

- Contributory in advancing the wider knowledge or the understanding about policy, practice, theory or a particular substantive field;
- Defensible in design by providing a research strategy that can address the evaluative questions posed;
- Rigorous in conduct through the systematic and transparent collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative data;
- Credible in claim through offering well-founded and plausible arguments about the significance of the evidence generated.

The framework is so designed to be applied to appraisals of the outputs of qualitative evaluations. It is designed to aid the informed judgement of quality, but not to be prescriptive or to encourage the mechanistic following of rules. The questions are open-ended so as to reflect the fact that appraisals of quality must allow judgement and that standards are inevitably shaped by the context and purpose of assessment ([Spencer et al., 2003](#)).

Conclusively, the abovementioned parameters were taken into account during the process evaluation, especially while designing and preparing the semi-structured interviews. It was significant for us to try and “detect” those qualitative elements, if any, which were not, or could not, be captured by the quantitative data.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Secondary data

As mentioned above few secondary quantitative data were available for the programme. We discussed this issue with the stakeholders' staff and it turned out that handy data could not help us much in answering the main questions: "How consistently is monitoring data collected?", "How consistently are the requirements for monitoring data interpreted?", "What time and resources are given to collecting monitoring?" Therefore, quantitative data were exclusively sourced from: a) the external evaluation's report, b) the internal evaluation's report on vocational counselling, c) the implementation and management guide of the programme, and) d) unofficial references about the total numbers of the beneficiaries sorted by stakeholder and region (data were provided during our meetings with the programme's coordinator). This deficit of extensive quantitative data about the programme is a parameter that should be acknowledged in the future for designing and implementing other programmes or in case a follow-up intervention takes place. However, based on the description and purpose of the programme it is clear that its main methodology was a qualitative one and this was also suggested by almost all of our interviewees from the stakeholders' staff when the issue of available quantitative data was discussed.

Therefore, based on the aforementioned rationale and justifications quantitative data available in relation to the number of the participants in all convergence regions (and cities of regions) were collected so that the coordinator (INE/GSEE) and the other participating social partners could measure the rate of participation and see if the beneficiaries' expected number was finally met, on the basis of the thresholds projected in the beginning and described in the bid documents. Achieving the desired objective of 7.000 beneficiaries was of utmost priority. This is the reason why, as it was concluded from the interviews with project team members in Athens and in the regions outside Athens, there were occasions when a second and sometimes a third call for applications was issued and publicly communicated, in addition to numerous SMS sent to large vocational graduates' databases provided by the local vocational schools.

Data concerning the quantitative indicators and thresholds concerning participation rates to the programme are presented in the following tables.

Indicator	Threshold	Completion	Percentage of completion
Number of beneficiaries	7.077 ⁴⁹	6.988	98,74%

Table 10. Total number of beneficiaries (threshold and completed).

Region	Beneficiaries
East Macedonia and Thrace	980
Epirus	630
Western Greece	1.190
Thessaly	1.190
Peloponnesus	1.050
Crete	1.120
Ioanian Islands	420
North Aegean	420
Total	7.000 ⁵⁰

Table 11. Number of beneficiaries in theoretical training per region (all social partners).

Region	Threshold	Completion
East Macedonia and Thrace	112	(112)
Epirus	72	(72)
Western Greece	136	(136)
Thessaly	136	(136)
Peloponnesus	120	(120)

⁴⁹ The initial threshold was for 7.000 beneficiaries. It increased by 77 beneficiaries after the amended Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD 110753/K1 (23/07/2015)), which permitted the participation to the children of second-generation immigrants. Figures are sourced by unofficial data available by the end of the external evaluation (November 2015).

⁵⁰ This was the proportion per region as initially distributed. It must also be noted that these proportions refer to the theoretical training, as the beneficiaries were given the option to go to a different region /city for the internship part of the intervention.

Crete	128	(128)
Ioanian Islands	48	(48)
North Aegean	48	(48)
Total	800	877 ⁵¹

Table 12. Number (threshold and completed number) of beneficiaries in theoretical training per region (INE/GSEE).

Region	Threshold	Completion
East Macedonia and Thrace	28	28
Epirus	18	18
Western Greece	34	34
Thessaly	34	34
Peloponnesus	30	30
Crete	32	32
Ioanian Islands	12	12
North Aegean	12	12
Total	200	200

Table 13. Number (threshold and completed) of beneficiaries in theoretical training per region (KANEP/GSEE).

Region	Threshold	Completion
East Macedonia and Thrace	140	140
Epirus	90	90
Western Greece	170	170
Thessaly	170	170
Peloponnesus	150	150

⁵¹ Information about the cities where the additional number of beneficiaries was placed was not available.

Crete	160	160
Ioanian Islands	60	60
North Aegean	60	60
Total	1.000	1.000

Table 14. Number (threshold and completed) of beneficiaries in theoretical training per region (GSEVEE/KEK).

Region	Threshold	Completion
East Macedonia and Thrace	140	140
Epirus	90	90
Western Greece	170	170
Thessaly	170	170
Peloponnesus	150	150
Crete	160	160
Ioanian Islands	60	60
North Aegean	60	60
Total	1.000	942 ⁵²

Table 15. Number (threshold and completed) of beneficiaries in theoretical training per region (ESEE/KAELE).

Region	Threshold	Completion
East Macedonia and Thrace	560	560
Epirus	360	360
Western Greece	680	680
Thessaly	680	680

⁵² Completed number of beneficiaries in theoretical training undertaken by ESEE/KAELE. Data provided by the social partner.

Peloponnesus	600	600
Crete	640	640
Ioanian Islands	240	240
North Aegean	240	240
Total	4.000	4.000

Table 16. Number (threshold and completed) of beneficiaries in theoretical training per region (EEDA).

Apart from the above quantitative data with regard to the number of beneficiaries that participated in the programme (thresholds and completed), other quantitative data pertain to the number of counsellors that contracted with INE/GSEE⁵³ for the vocational counselling sessions. More specifically, a total of 87 counsellors took part: a) 14 in Eastern Macedonia & Thrace, b) 18 in Western Greece, c) 6 in Peloponnesus, d) 6 in North Aegean, e) 15 in Epirus, f) 16 in Crete, and g) 12 in Thessaly.

It must be noted that each counsellor was assigned about ten (10) beneficiaries, taking into account the number of beneficiaries in each region (and cities) as well as, which was most important, the urge to ensure the quality of the counselling services provided.⁵⁴ However, the quality of counselling services is further reflected on extra quantitative data concerning: a) the years of counsellors' past working experience, and b) the percentage of counsellors that held a postgraduate diploma or were specialised in fields relevant to the programme (see tables 17 and 18 below).

Years of previous working experience	Percentage
More than 21 years	4,2%
16-20 years	8,5%
11-15 years	22,2%
6-10 years	29,2%
3-5 years	22,6%

⁵³ Quantitative data on the number of educators contracted with INE/GSEE not available.

⁵⁴ Quantitative data on the number of educators and counsellors contracted with the other social partners not available.

1-2 years	13,2%
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Table 17. *Counselling staff's years of previous working experience at the time of applying.*

Post-graduate /Specialisation	Percentage
Postgraduate diploma /Specialisation	9%
Vocational Counselling	29,9%
Human Resource Management	9%
No postgraduate diploma	53%

Table 18. *Counselling staff's percentages by postgraduate diploma /specialisation, vocational counselling specialisation, human resource management specialisation, no postgraduate diploma, at the time of applying.*

Lastly, quantitative data were available, even as estimates, on the number of on-site meetings the quality inspectors held and the number of counselling sessions conducted by the counselling staff with the beneficiaries. As for the former, there was a projection for two (2) meetings per beneficiary; this means that a total of 14.000 meetings were scheduled to be held. As for the latter, there was a projection for four (4) counselling sessions per beneficiary; this means that a total of 28.000 counselling sessions were scheduled to be conducted. There are no official data available about the final numbers of realised meetings and counselling sessions. However, given that these stages of the programme can be considered certified by reports and daily logs signed by the beneficiaries, the counsellors and the quality inspectors accordingly, we can conclude that the projected estimates were fulfilled. This was also arguably verified especially by the interviews conducted with the staff involved in these particular activities.

In conclusion, the main development from the existing quantitative data is that the indicator with regard to the number of beneficiaries was the most crucial one for defining whether the programme was successful or not. Although the number of beneficiaries targeted was not defined by the participating social partners but by the Administrative Authority of the programme, it could be argued that the quantitative objective was finally met. That was the case even though in some regions a second and sometimes a third call for applications had to be issued so that the necessary number is completed. Also, though relevant quantitative data might not be considered sufficient, it can be argued that, in

general, the counselling staff employed in the programme was highly-skilled (about 40% had previous working experience in vocational counselling and human resource management) and was exceptionally qualified in terms of previous working experience (about 30% from 6-10 years, about 35% over 11 years). Finally, the estimates concerning the numbers of onsite meetings and counselling sessions seem to have been met, although this is not a clear indicator about the programme's success as these activities were rather intended to produce qualitative outcomes. However, given that these were the only quantitative data available it is more than apparent that the programme didn't aim to present significant figures and/or data with regards to the design and the implementation process. Instead, as it was highlighted by most of the interviewees, the crucial part of the programme was that the beneficiaries participated eagerly and willingly in both the theoretical training and the acquisition of working experience that, in organic combination with the vocational and career counselling, would empower and activate them in the labour market. This suggests that the major evaluation methodology was rather a qualitative one. Still, the above presented quantitative data reflect to some extent that the programme was a strong intervention. At the same time, they do not inform us on crucial aspects of the programme: Where the objectives of the programme accomplished? Did the actions and subprojects planned serve the purposes of the programme? Were the educational and counselling methods, tools and techniques properly and efficiently deployed? Did any problems emerge during the internship, between the beneficiaries and the owners of the enterprises? These are some among other issues and questions explored in the following section of this chapter in the context of assessing the qualitative data available or produced.

5.3.2 Qualitative data

Process evaluation is related to the analysis of how programme activities are delivered. The basic issues to be answered are as follows:

- Who delivers the program and how often?
- Was the programme implemented as planned? If so, to what extend?
- How was the initiative received by the programme staff and the target group?
- Where there any obstacles /barriers in delivering the programme?
- Was the data /input used to make program improvements/refinements? If so, what changes were made?

These questions enable evaluators to also assess the quality of implementation, which is decisive in terms of maximising the programme's intended (expected) benefits and demonstrating strategy effectiveness. Process evaluation also provides information needed to make adjustments to strategy implementation, if needed, so as to strengthen effectiveness. In this respect, quality implementation implies that the implementers of each strategy have:

- Assured that strategy matches the cultural, developmental features and characteristics of the population;
- Received training or technical assistance to support appropriate implementation of the intervention;
- Worked with the program developer, policy expert, or the evaluator to efficiently understand core components – the elements most responsible for demonstrated outcomes;
- Assessed the need for any adaptations to the strategy, especially with regards to core components, in order to meet the particular needs of the target population;
- Sought input from the programme developer concerning planned adaptations to assure they are consistent with the core components;
- Planned necessary adaptations to target population, programme content and /or materials, delivery setting or timeframe to assure integrity of implementation;
- Sought to deliver programme's core components with fidelity when possible;
- Tracked implementation through process evaluation as well as all planned and unanticipated adaptations to inform outcome evaluation findings;
- Used process evaluation data to inform and strengthen implementation when outcome evaluation did not reveal desired program results.

Therefore, process evaluation measures should be designed to assess how well the implementers adhered to the above items.⁵⁵

In the qualitative process evaluation undertaken in the context of *WP4* the PUA InnoSI team will try to bring to light the major components and deliverables of the programme following their description in the bid. The next step is their evaluation based on the documents provided and the interviews conducted for this reason. The purpose here

⁵⁵ See "Process Evaluation To Monitor Implementation". Samhsa.gov. Available at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/capt/tools-learning-resources/process-evaluation-monitor-implementation> (Accessed 21 Sep. 2016).

is to focus on and identify, if any, possible differences between the initial plan of actions and subprojects and the end outcome, to define the realised interventions and to explain the reasons behind them as clearly as possible.

The initial design of the programme and structure of the subprojects was clearly outlined and described in two basic documents: a) the technical fiche submitted by the coordinator (INE/GSEE) so as to have the proposal approved, and b) the programme's implementation and management guide. In particular, the programme was structured into seven (7) actions and eighteen (18) subprojects, which were analytically depicted in the documents mentioned above. According to the bid document, INE/GSEE would be the coordinator of the consortium comprised of the following participating social partners: KANEP /GSEE; GSEVEE/IME & KEK; ESEE/KAELE & INEMY; EEDE; INSETE;⁵⁶ and SEV.⁵⁷ INE/GSEE would also be responsible for the implementation of the programme and the coordination of the consortium. Each member of the consortium was obliged to involve its own specialised staff in the programme along with their technical know-how, their long-time experience and their expertise in the field. However, given the nature of the intervention there was an apparent need for contracting additional external staff for implementing and executing specific actions and subprojects. The programme's actions were identified as follows:

- Action 1: Design and deployment of actions in order to “attract” beneficiaries and enterprises to the programme;
- Action 2: Design and deployment of a Training Guide (curriculum); development of print and digital material;
- Action 3: Development of web tools for the support of the programme;
- Action 4: Implementation of theoretical training;
- Action 5: Supportive actions;
- Action 6: Acquisition of working experience;
- Action 7: Programme evaluation.

Accordingly, the subprojects deriving from the actions designed and their corresponding deliverables were as follows:

- **Action 1**

⁵⁶ INSETE stands for *Institute of SETE (Greek Tourism Confederation)*.

⁵⁷ SEV stands for *House of Greek Industry*.

- **Subproject 1:** Design and implementation of actions for “attracting” beneficiaries and enterprises and for the publication and dissemination of the outcomes of the programme

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Publicity material;
- ⇒ Invitation for call of interest;
- ⇒ Conferences;
- ⇒ Regional events.

- **Subproject 2:** Design and production of creative maquettes for implementing the actions for “attracting” beneficiaries and enterprises and the actions for publication and dissemination of the outcomes of the programme

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ TV spots;
- ⇒ Radio commercials;
- ⇒ Maquettes of publicity and promotion material.

▪ **Action 2**

- **Subproject 3:** Design and deployment of Training Guide (curriculum) and development of print and digital educational material

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Training guide;
- ⇒ Digital and /or print educational material.

▪ **Action 3**

- **Subproject 4:** Creation and operation of web portal for the selection of the beneficiaries

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Invitation for call of interest;
- ⇒ Beneficiaries’ applications;
- ⇒ List of participants;
- ⇒ List of runner-ups and rejected applicants;
- ⇒ Development and operation of web portal;

- **Subproject 19:** Creation and operation of e-mentoring platform

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Sub-contracting agreement;

⇒ Counselling tools.

▪ **Action 4**

- **Subproject 5:** Theoretical training of 800 beneficiaries;
- **Subproject 6:** Theoretical training of 200 beneficiaries;
- **Subproject 7:** Theoretical training of 1.000 beneficiaries;
- **Subproject 8:** Theoretical training of 1.000 beneficiaries;
- **Subproject 9:** Theoretical training of 4.000 beneficiaries

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Trainees attendance reports;
- ⇒ Educators attendance reports;
- ⇒ Curriculum reports.

- **Subproject 10:** Identifying and mentoring of enterprises for the acquisition of working experience of 4.000 beneficiaries

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Cooperation agreements with enterprises for the internship of 4.000 beneficiaries;
- ⇒ Register of enterprises.

- **Subproject 11:** Provision of interconnection services of 4.000 beneficiaries with enterprises

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Cooperation agreements with enterprises.

- **Subproject 12:** Supportive actions for the theoretical training of 4.000 beneficiaries

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Contract for the provision of supportive services.

▪ **Action 5**

- **Subproject 13:** Survey for a methodology on the acquisition of working experience

↳ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Survey for a methodology on the acquisition of working experience.

▪ **Action 6**

- **Subproject 14:** Acquisition of working experience (beneficiaries of *Subprojects* 5 and 6);
- **Subproject 15:** Acquisition of working experience (beneficiaries of *Subproject* 7);
- **Subproject 16:** Acquisition of working experience (beneficiaries of *Subproject* 8);
- **Subproject 17:** Acquisition of working experience (beneficiaries of *Subproject* 9)

⇒ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Register of enterprises;
- ⇒ Working experience attendance reports;
- ⇒ Supervisors of acquisition of working experience attendance reports;
- ⇒ Reports by vocational counselors;
- ⇒ Daily logs of counselling sessions (signed by both the counselors and the beneficiaries);
- ⇒ Reports on realised results by counsellors;
- ⇒ Register of quality inspectors;
- ⇒ Reports on quality inspection;
- ⇒ Reports on supervision.

▪ **Action 7**

- **Subproject 18:** Programme evaluation

⇒ **Deliverable(s):**

- ⇒ Report on the design and analysis of the evaluation system;
- ⇒ Interim progress reports;
- ⇒ Report on overall programme evaluation.

The above structure (actions, subprojects and deliverables) accurately illuminates how the coordinator and the participating social partners “approached” the programme. It can be argued that it reflects their aspiration to design and implement not just a “typical” programme but to provide an *integrated*, as the programme title suggests, intervention with benefits that are anticipated to exceed the social, psychological and economic advantages of previous similar interventions on local, regional and national level. With

that in mind there follows a qualitatively critical presentation of the “flow” of the programme based on the stages and the outcomes finally realised. The content and the directions of each subproject is first described and elaborated; then follows a series of estimations from the comparison between the actions originally planned and the actions implemented in the end and on how these are related to the programme’s objectives.

Action 1 (*subprojects 1 and 2*) includes activities aimed on the one hand to “attract” the primary target group, i.e. vocational schools graduates, and the enterprises, and to publicise, communicate and disseminate the programme, on the other. The criteria of those eligible to apply were sufficiently defined in a Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD 110753/K1 (23/07/2015): a) graduates of public and private IEK, EPAL and EPAS, b) permanent residents at one of the eight (8) Convergence Regions, c) aged up to 29 years at the date of application. Activities in the context of this Action incorporate all participating partners of the consortium particularly in taking publicity measures, e.g. announce the call of interest to their websites, and in promoting the programme multidimensionally (local societies, local enterprises, local vocational schools, local organisations). Publicity activities also include a series of TV spots and radio commercials, the participation to local informational events and /or conferences in order to maximise the possibilities of the initiative reaching its final recipients, and promotional material in print and /or digital form (posters, brochures etc.).



Image 1. Promotional poster of the programme.

Action 2 (subproject 3) refers to the development of the *Training Guide* (curriculum) and the educational material, in print and digital form, that will be used for the courses of the theoretical training and education. The educational material should be produced so as to be handily utilised in various training programs and various / different target populations and as a *learning data repository* as well, for the support of processes of continuous training needs. Training courses will take a unified and undivided form. They will be developed on a modular basis so they provide both a shared horizontal (“soft”) corpus of necessary knowledge and employment skills for entering the work place, and be flexible to adapt to different needs and career options.

Thus, the training guide will outline the methods of deployment of the four (4) distinct yet inter-related modules: a) *Informatics*, b) *Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, c) *Administrative and Organizational Skills*, and d) *Conflict Management and Communication* (4 x 20 hours/module = 80 hours). The guide will be accompanied by a detailed and comprehensive curriculum that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Modules and courses with defined time duration;
- Orientation towards the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes;
- Teaching methods and techniques;
- Student-centered learning;
- Productive delivery procedures;
- Educational hardware and tools;
- Methods for the evaluation of the learning outcome;
- Methods for the development of youth entrepreneurship.

The curriculum will also be able to acclimate to reuse requirements based on the needs that derive from reusable educational entities (*learning objects*) that in turn correspond to modules upon which the courses are specialised. Educational entities have to be operationally and pedagogically self-sufficient and, at the same time, synthesised and adjusted to the demands and specifications of different (training and /or vocational) programmes. The educational entities that formulate educational material should fulfill the following criteria:

- Include learning objectives, assessment procedures, content, evaluation and necessary documentation procedures;
- Be compliant with international standards;
- Be functionally independent;
- Make pedagogically validated use of hypermedia and internet technologies;
- Involve primary material of high quality;
- Make good use of information available on the Web;
- Support collaborative learning processes;
- Use simple and understandable language;
- Enable the promotion and production of (new) knowledge;
- Enable feedback.

Action 3 (*subprojects 4 and 19*) pertains to developing a set of web-based tools to support all stages of the programme by means of creating and operating a portal for: a) accepting the applications of the candidate beneficiaries and of those enterprises that wish to participate, b) providing information to anyone interested in the programme, and c) being a digital node of transporting and offering personalised services to beneficiaries, staff and enterprises involved in the part of the programme that refers to the acquisition

of working experience (internship). Under *subproject* 19, specifically, the creation of an e-mentoring platform is foreseen for providing:

- Specialised information on topics and issues related to the implementation of the programme and its value-added provisions on local, regional and national level (events, activities, news, documents and announcements relating to the characteristics and interests of each beneficiary);
- Interactive counselling services for empowering the beneficiaries on an ongoing basis (online counselling);
- Electronic facilities on training, education and exchange of viewpoints and ideas, supported by actions on local, regional and national level (energetic adaptation to the working environment, taking entrepreneurship initiatives);
- A register of specialised vocational /career counsellors who will provide their services to the beneficiaries, namely in assisting them to grow up professionally and learn how to handle problems /difficulties related to choosing a profession, and in supporting their integration with the labour market (instructions, technical assistance, counselling tools, guidance on drafting and outlining a business plan, business plan standards, finance guidebooks, technology audit tools, marketing innovation).



Image 2. Front page of the programme's web portal: www.diasindesi.gr.

Action 4 (*subprojects 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12*) includes main and supportive actions for the provision of horizontal (“soft”) skills to the overall beneficiaries of the programme (7.000 persons) through the implementation of 350 courses of theoretical training. The courses will be carried out in methodological accordance with the *Training Guide* resulting from Action 2 (*subproject 3*) and are scheduled to have a duration of 80 hours per module based on the educational material developed in Action 2 (*subproject 3*). Each participating partner will be responsible for a pre-determined number of beneficiaries in each of the eight (8) Convergence Regions. Further on, additional activities will be deployed so as to identify and monitor enterprises for the acquisition of working experience of 4.000 beneficiaries (*subproject 10*) with which they will then be inter-connected (*subproject 11*). Finally, a series of supportive activities will be implemented for achieving a more effective and integrative capability of the theoretical training of 4,000 beneficiaries (*subproject 12*). It should be noted here, however, that subprojects 10, 11 and 12 are allocated only to EEDE and, thus, are addressed only to the number of participants undertaken by this social partner.

Action 5 (*subproject 13*) refers to the design and conduct of a joint model for acquiring working experience whereby a consistent method of implementation will be established and guaranteed and a common set of monitoring and control standards of implementation will be defined via a survey on the methodology of acquiring working experience by vocational school (IEK, EPAS and EPAL) graduates.

Action 6 (*subprojects 14, 15, 16 and 17*) consists of combined activities for the provision of working experience (internship), lasting from two (2) to six (6) months, to the overall beneficiaries of the programme (7.000 persons) who have either completed or are still attending the theoretical training of the programme. It is obligatory that both the theoretical and internship stage of the programme are completed until the last day of November 2015. This means that the latest deadline for placing a beneficiary in an enterprise to acquire working experience expires on October 2015. This particular action of the intervention is further supported by the following activities:

- Design and deployment of a mechanism for identifying the enterprises that will participate in the internship part of the programme;
- Design and deployment of a mechanism for monitoring and inspecting the quality control of the internship part of the programme;

- Supervisors' activities for monitoring and inspecting the "flow" of working experience acquisition;
- Vocational /career counselling of the beneficiaries.

And more specifically:

- Activities for identifying the enterprises that will "host" the beneficiaries. These relate to the development of a wide network of enterprises for the efficient "coupling" of the beneficiaries with the participating enterprises so that the latter are aligned to the greatest extent with the specialties of the vocational graduates. It must be noted that this is a demanding and complex process which requires valid and reliable qualitative criteria that will ensure high quality of the end result. This objective will be served by identifying the actual skills, competencies and desires of the beneficiaries so that they are correlated to the needs of each enterprise as precisely as possible. Methods that will assist the staff charged with carrying this out are questionnaires and semi-structured personal interviews.
- Activities for monitoring and verifying the quality of the "internship" part of the programme. These relate to the programme's consortium intention to closely observe the implementation and the outcomes of the working experience acquisition part via regular communication of the quality inspectors with the beneficiaries and onsite meetings at the enterprises so that they can intervene in cases this is needed. Emphasis will be given on the compliance with the legal framework on labour issues and on ensuring that the beneficiaries are placed in the enterprises as interns who are there to learn and familiarise themselves with the conditions of the work place and not as full-time employees.
- Supervisors' activities for monitoring "flow" of working experience acquisition. Each enterprise can "host" up to three (3) beneficiaries. Also, in each enterprise one (1) person is defined as supervisor, and is responsible for inspecting, directing, administering and assisting each intern via: a) regular discussions and onsite meetings, and b) questionnaires designed for that purpose.
- Vocational counselling activities and services to support the beneficiaries during the acquisition of working experience. These services are provided on a personalised basis in order to enhance interactivity and complementarity between the

knowledge acquired by beneficiaries in the theoretical part of the training and the skills developed in the work place. The prime objective is to assist and promote the both personal and professional development of the individual and enhance decision-making processes.

Finally, **Action 7** (*subproject 18*) relates to the evaluation of the programme. There is a projection for two (2) evaluations; an interim and a final evaluation. Specifically, the latter shall thoroughly examine all subprojects and activities related to the implementation of the programme, starting from its conception and rationale until its establishment, e.g. strengths and weaknesses, deviations from the initial design and plans, socio-economic impact of the programme, quality of provided services.

Social Partner	Action(s)	Subproject(s)
INSETÉ	1	1, 2
INE/GSEE	4	5
	6	14
KANEP/GSEE	2	3
	4	6
GSEVEE (KEK & IME)	4	7
	6	15
	7	18
ESEE (KAELE & INEMY)	4	8
	6	16
SEV	5	13
EEDE	3	4, 19
	4	9, 10, 11, 12
	6	17

Table 19. *Engagement in programme's actions and subprojects per participating social partner.*

The structure of the programme's overall actions, subprojects, deliverables and activities as outlined and described in detail above comprehensively reflects the consortium's concept of the rationale, the objectives and the way the intervention can efficiently "evolve". As stated in section 5.1 the PUA InnoSI team aimed to consider and evaluate this

structure, its eventual content and deployment in particular, by conducting documentary analysis, on the one hand, and interviews with programme's staff (members of project teams, educators, counselors and quality inspectors) and with beneficiaries, on the other. Our research resulted in the following findings and ascertainments:

1. The original composition of the consortium was altered. INSETE and SEV did not eventually participate in the programme. This was a decision taken centrally.⁵⁸ However, the stakeholders' staff reported in the interviews that this change did not practically affect the implementation of the programme. INSETE, that was responsible for Action 1, was replaced by INE/GSEE; SEV, that was responsible for Action 5, was not replaced by some other social partner, which led to the cancellation of this Action and its subproject (see below). In general, the levels of communication and coordination between all participating social partners were high and no particular implications came about.
2. The vast majority of the actions and subprojects included in the bid documents of the programme were eventually implemented as initially planned. The actions and subprojects not finally implemented were:
 - Action 1, *subproject 2*; it referred to the design and production of creative maquettes for operating the activities of "attracting" beneficiaries and enterprises and the activities of publication and dissemination of the outcomes of the programme. It was cancelled due to INSETE's retraction.
 - Action 3, *subproject 19*; it referred to the creation and operation of an e-mentoring platform for specialised information, interactive counselling services electronic facilities on training, exchange of viewpoints and ideas, and a database of specialised vocational /career counsellors. Decision for cancellation was made due to the limited timeframe available for the programme as the implementation of the specific subproject required an open international contest that was practically impossible to conduct under the circumstances.
 - Action 5, *subproject 13*; it referred to the design and conduct of a joint methodological model for acquiring working experience. It was cancelled due to

⁵⁸ SEV retracted its participation due to the fact that the limited time available for the programme would not finally allow for an effective implementation of Action 5, subproject 13. Accordingly, INSETE retracted its participation due to the programme's pressing time schedule and, most importantly, the long delays in disbursement, although it initially managed to self-finance a small part of publicity activities.

SEV's retraction.

3. Activities oriented to publicising and communicating the programme to the general population and its specific recipients were designed centrally but were implemented in close cooperation of the participating social partners in all regions around the country. Delays in disbursement, as reported in the interviews with the stakeholders' staff, affected the initial publicity arrangements that included TV spots and radio commercials. Thus, alternative pathways were preferred and utilised, namely via the internet, IME/GSEE's Facebook pages⁵⁹, the social partners' web sites and the sending of e-mails and SMS to the target populations, i.e. vocational schools graduates and enterprises. Given the overall adverse political and economic conditions within which the programme was implemented, publicity can be overall characterised as successful. So was the web portal "diaSINDESI"⁶⁰ that was built for implementing, administering and communicating the programme's stages of realisation (via announcements, press releases, posts, discussion with beneficiaries). It should also be underlined that all staff and personnel of participating social partners were keen and willing to support the programme on every possible level as responses to incoming questions, feedback to messages and information on various issues were admittedly immediate.
4. Some problems appeared while interested vocational school graduates tried to file their application. The application form was handily accessible via the programme's web portal⁶¹ and easy to complete. However, as we were told by the members of project teams interviewed it occurred that in some regions and cities applicants were not in position to do so. This happened because some of the applicants did not have an e-mail account or, in some other cases, the applicants did have an e-mail account but could not remember what the password was. There were also applicants who had no access to the internet and for that reason they could not file their application. Moreover, many were the cases where the applicants could not remember pieces of necessary information required, e.g. details concerning their bank account. Such complications were a real surprise as they were not awaited; yet they were promptly resolved by members and staff of all

⁵⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/inegsee/> [in Greek].

⁶⁰ <http://diasindesi.gr/> [in Greek].

⁶¹ <http://diasindesi.gr/application> [in Greek].

participating social partners who volunteered willingly to assist the applicants. At the same time, the application procedure of all other participating staff (educators, counsellors, quality inspectors, secretaries, supervisors) and the enterprises, was totally unproblematic.

5. The part of the programme concerned with the theoretical training and education of the beneficiaries run without difficulties or any further complexities. The training staff proved out to be quite competent and highly qualified. In fact, many of them had participated in other programmes implemented by the INE/GSEE in the past, so they were quite aware of the demands of adult training. On the other hand, the beneficiaries also responded well to the courses and the modules they were taught. What made things more simple was that the educators preferred to apply the student-centered learning technique instead of the teacher-centered one. This was something rather unusually new to many of the beneficiaries, in particular to the younger ones, who still conveyed the mentality of the “student” who simply goes to school, listens to what the teacher says and leaves. This kind of mentality gave rise to some temporary complexities in the class among the beneficiaries, which were soon overcome. Also, some beneficiaries interviewed mentioned that the time dedicated to the theoretical education was pressing and short, e.g. two or three weeks; this made them feel stressed and troubled, but did not influence the efficient way this part was implemented. Finally, the total number of educators contracted with the consortium was sufficient as each educator was assigned with approximately 20 beneficiaries.
6. The part of the programme concerned with the vocational /career counselling of the beneficiaries was also implemented satisfactorily well. There occurred some complexities in the beginning that mainly pertained to: a) delays in starting the counselling sessions due to the overall delay of the programme; b) some yet minor organizational complexities while “matching” the beneficiaries with the enterprises, c) vocational counselling was something totally brand-new to most of the beneficiaries; few of them thought they would actually get extra payment for participating. These complexities were quickly resolved as the rationale, the objectives, the usefulness and the feasibility of vocational counselling were better communicated to the beneficiaries. Most of the counselling staff consisted of external associates but it was overall competent and quite qualified. The projected number

of sessions was completed. Also, as most of the counsellors mentioned while interviewed, there were a lot of occasions when the sessions lasted more than one (1) hour, the estimated average duration of a counselling session, as many beneficiaries took the chance to discuss with the counselors concerns and ideas of exclusively personal interest apart from issues related to the content and the scopes of the programme.

7. Activities designed and deployed for the “coupling” of the beneficiaries with the enterprises for acquiring working experience (internship), for the quality control of the internship and for the onsite supervision of the interns (beneficiaries) were broadly efficient. There were cases wherein the “coupling” procedure was not initially successful due to the fact that the specialties of the beneficiaries did not quite align with the available work positions in the local enterprises, e.g. in Lesvos (North Aegean) and Pyrgos (Western Greece). This complication was overcome either via interventional actions taken by the consortium or by providing the beneficiaries with the possibility to make a suggestion themselves about the enterprise they wanted to be placed. As for the quality control and the onsite supervision it must be underlined that the anticipated number of meetings at the enterprises’ offices and places was completed. Lastly, minor problems that happened to appear during the programme were resolved immediately; in doing so the beneficiaries’ readiness to report them was of great significance.
8. A substantial drawback of the programme’s implementation was the delay in the disbursement of the funds. This can be explained by, or attributed to, the instability of the political and economic conditions at the time in Greece. Apparently, the two consecutive elections (on January and September 2015), along with the referendum held on July 2015, by and large affected the procedures related with the timely absorption of the programme’s financing. Truth is that this troubled situation did not affect the programme’s implementation. But it caused the side-effect of making the beneficiaries feeling distressed and uncertain about whether they would eventually get the scholarship (money) for participating or not. Further to that, many beneficiaries received the full amount of the scholarship just one or two months before the programme’s establishment.
9. The part of the programme that was concerned with the acquisition of working experience by the beneficiaries was well run and realised. Most of them, roughly

estimated above 90%, had the chance to be placed in an enterprise for four (4) to six (6) months, and almost all of them went for six (6) hours per day, which was the maximum projected. The quality and level of cooperation /communication between the interns and the enterprises was positively evaluated by both sides, without reporting or identifying any extreme problems or difficulties except for some single cases.

10. Finally, a major feature of the programme's implementation was that the money the beneficiaries received for participating were given in the form of *scholarship*. This served two significant purposes. On the one hand, it reflected the consortium's intention to provide the beneficiaries with the highest financial benefit possible as scholarships are tax-free. On the other, it aimed to be some kind of incentive for the vocational graduates as an award for continuing their training efforts.
11. In brief, the actors (participating social partners) that designed and implemented the programme had to overcome particular organizational obstacles: a) short period of time available for implementation, b) actions and subprojects fashioned a complex, multi-level and inter-related system that many times required proficient coordination, procedures of immediate decision-making; c) the consortium had to deal with managerial and bureaucratic issues such as mistakes in the beneficiaries application forms, extensive amounts of contract and evaluation forms, misconceptions with the unemployment allowance some of the beneficiaries were receiving from OAED; d) each social partner had its own regulatory framework that to some extent affected the digitisation of procedures upon a common platform. Next to these, though funding was assessed as sufficient, the first disbursement was received when the programme was about to end (Nov 2015).

Conclusively, given that the programme was implemented on a pilot-scale basis, as most of the stakeholders' staff and members of project teams asserted when interviewed, it could be argued that it was altogether well and competently implemented. It combined innovative elements and activities in terms of lifelong and adult learning processes, of introducing and applying vocational /career counselling to an extensive number of recipients, of establishing practices and mechanisms such as the quality control in the enterprises, and of actively enabling a complex system and variety of specialties (on the vocational graduates' part) to become acquainted with the demands and conditions of the labour market.

The hypothesis regarding what would have happened if all actions and subprojects initially projected had been overall implemented is open to debate. But this does not imply that the programme was misimplemented. On the contrary, secondary dysfunctions, minor organisational flaws, technical problems, namely with filing the application by the candidate beneficiaries, or even major ones as was the short amount of time available for implementing all programme's actions were all surpassed successfully. This is credited to the exceptional cooperation of the consortium that skilfully "invested" a great deal of human resources, time, infrastructures, knowledge and expertise.

6. Impact evaluation

6.1 Introduction

Effective implementation doesn't guarantee that the programme has the desired impact. An impact evaluation asks whether the desired impact was achieved and whether there were unintended side-effects ([Rossi et al., 2004](#)). As a consequence it is important to ask specific questions in order to examine if and to what extent the programme despite its effective implementation, which was generally agreed by all participants, had an effect and of what kind this effect was. Based on the *Evaluation Framework* the main questions regarding impact evaluation were as follows:

- What were the programmes' outcomes? Were they expected?
- Were there any non-expected outcomes? If yes, of what kind?
- Did the programme offer theoretical knowledge /skills, counselling services and internship of good /high quality?
- Did the programme lead to the creation of new job opportunities /positions?
- Which was, if any, the social and /or psychological impact of the programme to the participants?

6.2 Impact evaluation methodology

While quantitative methods, such as a survey of users or analysis of management data, might be best suited to addressing questions of overall programme impact, a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods may be more appropriate when assessing the social and psychological impact and effect of social welfare reform both on individuals and communities, including the ways individuals' sense of identity is shaped by their interactions with welfare policy and its reform. For the needs of the impact evaluation we used the findings and results of the ongoing external evaluation conducted with use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. These were supplemented by a series of semi-structured interviews that was scheduled and carried out with stakeholders' (both coordinator and participating social partners) staff as well as with beneficiaries of the programme. At this point it is essential to note that, as initially stated in the *Evaluation Framework*, conducting one or two focus groups with beneficiaries for the purposes of the impact evaluation was projected. However, this was not eventually possible due to the fact that the programme was exclusively implemented in regions and cities outside Athens, which

consequently made organising this type of qualitative survey not doable as it would imply large and time-consuming efforts and coordination.

Specifically, in relation to the semi-structured interviews conducted we aimed to cover a wide range of people involved in all aspects of the programme, e.g. staff engaged in the programme's design, members of project teams, educators, counsellors, quality inspectors, beneficiaries. In this respect, we tried to include a representative sample coming from all the regions of Greece wherein the programme was implemented. So we conducted interviews with programme staff from Athens, Xanthi (in Eastern Macedonia & Thrace), Patra and Pyrgos (in Western Greece), Tripoli (in Peloponnesus), Heraklion (in Crete), Larisa (in Thessaly), Chios (in North Aegean) and Ioannina and Preveza (in Epirus and Ionian Islands). The sample of beneficiaries included only persons living outside Athens as the programme was implemented in all eight convergence regions of the country. As for the sample of beneficiaries, specifically, it should be noted here that it consisted of: a) both male and female persons, b) their age varied from 23 to 29 years, and c) they were graduates from all types of vocational schools the programme was addressed to (IEK, EPAS and EPAL). By doing this, it could be argued that we were quite successful in gathering a wealth of information and also in forming a concise picture of the programme's impact by tracing viewpoints from all different places of Greece.

The main problems we faced while organising and conducting these interviews were actually related to issues of time, distance and content. This meant difficulties and complications in making appointments with the interviewees due to their lack of time. In one of the first meetings we held with our impact partner (INE/GSEE), that was the programme's coordinator, we were given three contact lists of persons:

- A list of persons engaged in designing and implementing the programme of the coordinator's part, located in Athens;
- A list of persons at the regional branches of INE/GSEE who took part in various stages of the programme, namely in its implementation and coordination;
- A list of persons from the cooperating social partners who took part in the design as well as the implementation and coordination of the programme.

We first started making contacts via telephone and e-mail with programme staff in Athens. Our next step was to communicate, also via telephone and e-mail, with staff from the participating social partners and with INE/GSEE's staff at regional branches. The

latter was essential for the purposes of the evaluation process in general since the members of “regional” project teams would serve a two-fold function; on the one hand, they would participate as interviewees and, on the other hand, as “intermediates” in an effort to reach the persons who were contracted with the consortium as educators, counsellors and quality inspectors, as well as the persons who were the recipients of the intervention (beneficiaries). After the first contacts, arrangements were made for the first series of interviews which involved programme’s staff in Athens. At the same time, the members of project teams in the regions outside Athens willingly responded to our invitation to participate. They also provided us with an extensive list of staff (educators, counsellors, quality inspectors) and beneficiaries that included contact details so we can communicate with them. Then, a second wave of contacts was made, via telephone and e-mail again, and arrangements were made for a second series of interviews. It is worth mentioning that the rate of responsiveness to our contacts was exceptionally high and almost all persons agreed to participate whole-heartedly to our survey. Also, given that in most cases physical presence was not a feasible option a large number of interviews was conducted via Skype and recorded for the purposes of the analysis that followed. Finally, a significant parameter we were concerned about was whether the interviews would provide us with data and content adequately useful for the purposes of impact evaluation. Yet, it turned out, as it will be presented in the relevant section (6.3.2), that the interviews were quite insightful and returned fruitful understandings of the aspects of the programme we wanted to explore.

The interviews conducted can be classified into three (3) categories. The first category is comprised of those stakeholders and project team members who by default could give us all the necessary information available and they could reply to almost all of our questions, as they were central actors during the design and implementation of the programme. The second category consists of the beneficiaries who participated in specific actions of the programme: a) theoretical training, b) vocational counselling and c) acquisition of working experience. The main problems here were two. Many of the beneficiaries we contacted had quite limited time available to dispose. Others reported that they had no Skype account; those that had a Skype account could not remember the login details. The latter problem was resolved in some cases e.g. in Heraklion and Larisa, with the help of the regional branch of INE/GSEE whose staff voluntarily offered their offices and PCs for the interviews to be conducted. Further to that, although not much time had

passed since the programme was established some of the beneficiaries said that they could not remember exact details of the courses and the counselling sessions or were not quite sure of the impact the programme had on them in psychological and social terms. Others said that they had participated in other programmes as well; this was a reason why they appeared somehow confused and their memories were a little bit blurred about the programme in general and their vest interest in it. Finally, a third category was the members of project teams at INE/GSEE's regional branches alone. Those were the persons that would, and finally did, provide us with a fine "how things went in the local area" picture. Apart from having the ability to routinely monitor the programme during its implementation, they were proven key-actors to the impact evaluation process. In many cases, in almost all regions, and up until today they have maintained contact with many beneficiaries. It must be said that most of the cities the programme took place are actually small societies or "communities". Everyone knows each other and they meet on a daily basis. In this respect, it was rather easy for the members of the regional branches to inform us on the "how is things in the local area after the programme's establishment" picture.

As far as the programme's internal and external evaluations are concerned it is understood that the first one aimed to assess the quality and degree of effectiveness of the vocational counselling sessions, while the latter aimed to overall assess all stages, actions and subprojects of the programme, from its beginning to its establishment. At this point it should be noted that the internal evaluation was conducted during the last month of the programme's implantation (November 2015) with use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, while the external was an ongoing one (the final report was delivered in November 2015) and was also conducted with use of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

More specifically, the internal evaluation was laid out, monitored and operated by one of INE/GSEE's Scientific Associates, who was also responsible for designing the methodology and the tools employed in the vocational counselling sessions. Evaluation referred to the sessions conducted for the number of beneficiaries (800 persons) that INE/GSEE had undertaken in the context of the programme. It was actually part of a sum-

mative evaluation based on the collection of data via semi-structured interviews conducted via telephone. The sample consisted of 70 beneficiaries (10 beneficiaries x 7 regions) and 14 counsellors (2 counsellors x 7 regions); the criteria defined were as follows:

- Technical and other equipment;
- Selection and training of counsellors;
- The organisation and the infrastructure (rooms and buildings) deployed in the regional branches of INE/GSEE;
- Achievement of the objectives as initially decided.

A set of quantitative indicators was defined. Their analysis would demonstrate the degree of accomplishing the objectives of this subproject, e.g. by the total number of sessions performed per beneficiary, the time duration of each session, or the degree of satisfaction acquired by both the counselor and the beneficiaries during the counselling process in comparison with their expectations. Yet, qualitative indicators and data were included as well, which came out of interviews with some counsellors and some sort of participatory observation, as counselling staff from INE/GSEE's headquarters in Athens visited the regional branches and acquired a personal onsite overview of things. A more detailed and extensive account of the internal evaluation's outcomes is given in the relevant section (6.3.2) of the report in relation to:

- Degree of satisfaction;
- Mid- and/or long-term benefits (and kind of benefits);
- Positive and/or negative results;
- General satisfaction after the programme's establishment;
- Feedback.

The external evaluation, respectively, was an ongoing one and was assigned to an evaluating company (EEO Group) that was selected after an open competition announced and performed by GSEVEE (one of the participating social partners). The evaluation processes broadly aspired to rate and verify the programme's impact on the targeted population and to identify whether the expected programme's objectives were met or not. Specifically, the evaluating team taking into consideration the rationale and the particular aims set programmatically, the activities and subprojects, the anticipated results, and the

wider social and policy perspectives of the programme, e.g. in relation to the development of best practices and /or the programme's implications on regional level, tried to answer the following questions:

- What were the expected results compared to the initial objectives?
- Where there any non-expected results that (finally) exceeded the purview of the initial objectives?
- Did the programme respond to its key objectives based on the final results and consequences?

The overall evaluation verified the way in which each action and subproject of the programme contributed in achieving the stated objectives. In this respect, analysis and assessment also took into account the final results of other programs implemented on national and regional level. In addition, having determined whether the strategy and the action plan remained intact all through the implementation of the programme, the evaluation examined its effectiveness and efficiency on the basis of the final results and the final costs. Specifically, the issues considered were:

- Estimate of evidence based on international standards;
- Level of acceptance of the programme by the target population;
- Programme's ability to be implemented;
- Supportiveness (was funding allocated sufficient?);
- Potential positive and negative impact of the programme;
- Design and implementation of the specific actions and subprojects offered;
- Level of fulfilment of the objectives and the performance of each action and each subproject of the programme, on the grounds of the degree of satisfaction and of responsiveness to the beneficiaries' needs;
- Evaluation of educational /counselling material;
- Evaluation of supportive material, if any;
- Quantitative and qualitative adequacy of staff (educators, counsellors and supervisors);
- Effectiveness and quality of theoretical training to the beneficiaries;
- Effectiveness and quality of working experience in the enterprises.

Apart from the above considerations, the evaluation report drew conclusions on the key issues mentioned above and examined if they identified any kind of weaknesses

in the overall implementation. Finally, the evaluating team concluded with some factual, realistic and feasible suggestions towards the improvement and the enhancement of the programme, especially in case it is re-implemented in the future.

One major drawback of both evaluations was that they were conducted during or at the end of the programme. It was clear that a follow-up evaluation of the programme after its establishment was not part of the initial design. As a consequence, there is no official information recorded on, e.g. the number of beneficiaries that remained in the enterprise they were initially appointed so as to acquire working experience, or on how many permanent job positions were established after the programme. Or, alternatively, a picture of what precisely is the present situation of the beneficiaries in terms of their working status and the way(s) they possibly made (or made not) use of the theoretical education and the horizontal skills in particular. Other issues that could be explored in the context of a follow-up survey could also include but not be limited to:

- The type of (qualitative) long-term change(s) the programme provoked;
- The possible implications, outcomes and effects on local /regional societies and /or local labour markets;
- The policy reforms instigated;
- The feasibility of implementing a similar programme in the future.

In this respect, what both internal and external evaluations lack is exactly the parameter concerning the “what happens next” step of the programme as well as the issue concerning the direct impact of the programme in association with the rate of participation in the labour market. That given we can only conclude on the outcomes of the programme in terms of the beneficiaries’ satisfaction and their benefits out of their participation.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Data from the existing evaluations

In this section data from the existing evaluations, internal and external, are presented. Study of the final reports afforded by the coordinator of the programme provided us a preliminary yet explicit picture on both the quantitative and qualitative indicators with respect to the programme and its outcomes. Also, we were in position to fashion an idea about the way the programme was implemented, the way the separate subprojects led to

the expected results and how these results were perceived by those involved: stakeholders' staff, project teams, educators, counsellors, quality inspectors, supervisors and, most importantly, beneficiaries, who were the final recipients of the intervention.

a. Methodology⁶²

Evaluation was conducted with use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.⁶³ The first one focused on a distinctly defined and representative sample of participants and aimed to analyse common source data and to draw reliable results. Regarding the size of the final sample (completed questionnaires) this comprised of 1.000 beneficiaries/vocational graduates and 500 supervisors (of the beneficiaries' internship in the enterprises). Sampling took place into two stages. In the first stage stratified sampling was conducted by dividing the general population according to: a) region, and b) department. This method was preferred as it enables the division of a heterogeneous population into smaller homogeneous sub-populations. In the next stage the final sample was identified by conducting a systematic sampling till the required number of participants was reached. Standardised structured questionnaires were used for the quantitative research as they provide an increased capability of collecting and statistically processing of data, of comparative analysis and correlation of variables. This assisted the evaluating team to identify general trends and, therefore, approach quite validly the opinions and ideas of the population.

Region	Department	Beneficiaries
Eastern Macedonia & Thrace	Drama	35
	Kavala	47
	Xanthi	31
	Rodopi	15
	Evros	47
North Aegean	Chios	21
	Lesvos	14

⁶² For the methodology and the sampling of the internal evaluation see section 6.2.

⁶³ Source: Deliverable P.1: Report on the design and analysis of the evaluation system ([EEO Group, 2015a](#)).

Western Greece	Aitolokarnania	69
	Achaia	146
	Ileia	20
Epirus	Arta	26
	Thesprotia	12
	Ioannina	23
	Preveza	16
Thessaly	Magnisia	36
	Larisa	83
	Trikala	76
	Karditsa	131
Ionian Islands	Kefallinia	20
	Lefkada	3
	Zakynthos	4
	Kerkyra	2
Crete	Heraklion	43
	Rethymnon	2
	Chania	10
Peloponnesus	Argolida	11
	Arkadia	28
	Lakonia	5
	Messinia	16
	Korinthos	7
Total		1.000 ⁶⁴

Table 20. *Sample of beneficiaries.*

⁶⁴ Final number of beneficiaries' number finally came up to 1.013 ([EEO Group, 2015b](#)).

Region	Department	Supervisors
Eastern Macedonia & Thrace	Drama	17
	Kavala	24
	Xanthi	15
	Rodopi	7
	Evros	24
North Aegean	Chios	10
	Lesvos	7
Western Greece	Aitolioakarnania	34
	Achaia	73
	Ileia	10
Epirus	Arta	13
	Thesprotia	6
	Ioannina	12
	Preveza	8
Thessaly	Magnisia	18
	Larisa	41
	Trikala	38
	Karditsa	66
Ionian Islands	Kefallinia	10
	Lefkada	2
	Zakynthos	2
	Kerkyra	1
Crete	Heraklion	22
	Rethymnon	1
	Chania	5

Peloponnesus	Argolida	6
	Arkadia	14
	Lakonia	2
	Messinia	8
	Korinthos	4
	Total	500

Table 21. *Sample of supervisors.*

As for the external evaluation's qualitative research, the prime objective was to capture and identify the trends, suggestions and opinions of the participants via their experience from the actions and subprojects of the programme. Qualitative methods allow the in-depth examination of the beneficiaries' ideas and viewpoints and give the chance to highlight qualitative parameters about how they perceive the value as well as the efficiency of the programme. Moreover, qualitative approaches permit the creation of a dynamic cognitive mapping of the participants' thoughts that, on a second level, can be encoded in suggestions about organisational issues, the content of the intervention, the efficiency of similar programmes in the future. This procedure presents with *clarity* and *sensitivity* the ways the overall programme's staff and participants will be defined in the final sample. With these in mind, the qualitative section of the external evaluation was conducted via combining two inter-related methodologies: a) focus groups, and b) in-depth personal interviews. For sampling and research tools see table 22 below:

a. Focus groups	
Target group	Educators (theoretical training)
Population	Total number of educators contracted with the consortium
Sample	12 persons
Sampling methodology	Random sampling
Target group	External associates
Population	Total number of external associates

Sample	12 persons
Sampling methodology	Random sampling
Target group	Stakeholders' staff
Population	Total number of stakeholders' staff
Sample	6 persons
Sampling methodology	Random sampling
b. Interviews	
Target group	Stakeholders' staff
Population	Total number of stakeholders' staff
Sample	20 persons
Sampling methodology	Random sampling

Table 22. *Methods, tools and sampling for the qualitative research of the evaluation.*

b. Results

In this section the primary findings of the existing evaluations are summarised and outlined with relation to the most significant aspects of the programme's impact. These can be categorised by research method employed (qualitative /quantitative) and by type of staff involved in different phases of the programme's implementation (educators, counsellors, quality inspectors, supervisors).

In identifying and describing the impact that the programme had on the beneficiaries, the team of *educators* reported the following:

- The overall activities of the programme highly attracted the beneficiaries' participation; their exceptional rate of response and engagement to the demands and the requirements of the intervention reflects a positive outcome considering that the beneficiaries were carefully targeted by the consortium;
- The programme provoked the vest interest of the beneficiaries which leads us to the assumption that the theoretical training, the vocational counselling and the

internship stage were appealing to them;

- Positive effect of the programme can, in particular, be detected, through the personalised counselling sessions, whereby the young people's morale was uplifted and their self-confidence was strengthened. This effect had in fact had proliferative value to the beneficiaries, especially the long-unemployed ones, and, hence, felt inactive and discouraged, or to those whose management and working skills /experience were notably limited;
- Contact with the environment of the work place and the actual prerequisites and conditions produced essential impact as most of the beneficiaries participated in an "on-the-job" training for the first time in their life;
- Familiarisation, also for the first time in their life, with the methods and techniques of adult and life-long learning was illuminating to almost all beneficiaries, as the vast majority experienced the transition from school to vocational education;
- The purely experiential acquaintance of the beneficiaries with the enterprises and the labour market by extension, largely contributed to the empowerment of their ability to correspond successfully and, above that, to fully comprehend the expectations on the enterprise's end;
- Horizontal ("soft") skills were fruitfully developed;
- Internship provided the beneficiaries with the opportunity to establish, cultivate and extend as much as possible a network of acquaintances which might be useful in the future while searching for a job or starting-up their own enterprise. Alongside, it prompted them to move themselves from impassivity and feel that solutions are more possible to show up via an energetic attitude;
- Finally, the programme motivated those beneficiaries that specifically reside in rural areas by actively incorporating and "persuading" them to show more zeal given that programmes and initiatives as the one discussed here are hardly implemented in the places they live.

As far as the team of *counselors* is concerned with regards to the impact of the programme it is concluded that their viewpoints are pretty much identical with that of the educators. They argued in particular that via the individualised counselling sessions the beneficiaries acquired general as well as specific information on the labour market

but, also noticeably, on issues and matters of rather personal interest. Both the psychometric tests and the counselling tools (questionnaires) were proven accurately appropriate for the purposes of the programme that in turn implies that they can also be used and deployed in other similar programmes in the future. Further to that, given that the tests and tools were specifically standardised for the Greek population this can lead to the improvement or re-adjustment of the content of vocational counselling, on the one hand, and to more efficient and qualified staff that will be able to use them more profitably for the individual, on the other. Lastly, the counsellors argued that the programme had positive aspects in the following areas:

- Counselling sessions and interventions were personalised and appropriately adjusted to the necessities of each beneficiary;
- Beneficiaries learned and worked with tools that can potentially be useful in job searching, e.g. preparing their resume, preparing for a job interview etc.;
- Beneficiaries learned and became acquainted with utilising the internet and the social media in particular as a means to search for job and establish networks;
- Beneficiaries developed a more critical viewpoint towards their position in the work place, their rights and their cooperation with the employer; they were also accustomed to techniques for better evaluating a job placement advertisement;
- Acquisition of extra skills, e.g. on how to think about their career, about themselves, or on how to behave in the work place, added to the skills obtained during the theoretical training, which add to their employability, despite that the overall time duration of the programme cannot by any means considered adequate for these skills to “mature” so that they have profound effects;
- Motivation enhancement, increase of self-esteem, boost of self-confidence in relation to the beneficiaries’ personal and social prospects.

The viewpoints of the team of *quality inspectors* were on the same wavelength with those of the educators and the counselors. Given their specific position in the programme, that of the person responsible for ensuring the quality of the internship, they argued that the intervention provoked impact on the following areas:

- All beneficiaries without exception, i.e. those employed, those unemployed and those who had worked before, acquired working experience that is not only valuable per se but it can be included in their resume, specifically in their work history

field;

- The programme was targeting at a specific social group, with specific characteristics, across the country, the most central of which was that they were all vocational schools graduates;
- The participating enterprises had the opportunity to work and collaborate with young graduates who in quite a few cases brought new ideas in the work place;
- Apart from the horizontal (“soft”) skills taught during the theoretical training the beneficiaries had the chance to explore and develop general as well as personal working traits;
- The programme benefited the participating group of quality inspectors in that it enabled them to establish and advance specialised working skills as this particular “task” was somehow completely new;
- In cases where the specialty of a beneficiary could not be aligned or was not coherent with an internship position in an enterprise, the programme allowed for that person to propose another enterprise; this attached flexibility to the implementation of the programme in spite of the fact that a usual method was to select a family business for acquiring working experience;
- Through (internship) time relationships of trust in the workplace between the beneficiaries and the employers came to light, which can virtually produce permanent working positions in the (near) future.

In addition to the findings of the existing evaluations’ qualitative research there are also findings⁶⁵ stemming from the quantitative research with concern to the impact of the programme. The ones presented here chiefly refer to the acquisition of working experience, which were the programme’s utmost priorities, and other related issues.

Percentage	
Very high	23,40%
High	68.80%
Fair	7.20%
Low	0.60%
Total	100.0%

⁶⁵ For convenience reasons results are presented first, then discussion and comments follow.

Table 23. Supervisors' replies to the question: "Do you believe that acquisition of working experience enhanced the vocational schools graduates' possibilities of employment?"

	Percentage
Very high	22.95%
High	68.66%
Fair	6.79%
Low	1.60%
Total	100.0%

Table 24. Supervisors' replies to the question: "To what extent do you believe that acquisition of working experience changed the vocational schools graduates' work culture?"

	Percentage
Very high	21.86%
High	71.46%
Fair	5.67%
Low	1.01%
Total	100.0%

Table 25. Supervisors' replies to the question: "To what extent do you believe that acquisition of working experience enhanced the vocational schools graduates' communication skills?"

	Percentage
Very high	22.29%
High	70.08%
Fair	6.02%
Low	1.61%
Total	100.0%

Table 26. Supervisors' replies to the question: "To what extent do you believe that acquisition of working experience enhanced the vocational schools graduates' competency to work efficiently as part of a team?"

	Percentage
Yes	31.67%
No	68.33%
Total	100.0%

Table 27. Supervisors' replies to the question: "Do you believe that vocational schools graduates' acquired other additional skills through the programme?"

At this point it is essential to underline the fact that the acquisition of extra skills was of decisive added value to the programme. Though the percentage (31.67%) seems low in the first place, it is quite encouraging as it consists of a non-anticipated impact on the beneficiaries. Extra skills mostly refer to specialised competencies that relate to the areas of activity of the enterprise.

	Percentage
Very high	38.10%
High	55.85%
Fair	4.44%
Low	1.61%
Total	100.0%

Table 28. Supervisors' replies to the question: "To what extent are you satisfied by your cooperation with the vocational schools graduate at the enterprise?"

	Percentage
Yes	86.37%
No	13.63%
Total	100.0%

Table 29. Supervisors' replies to the question: "Would you participate to the programme even if there was no payment for that?"

	Percentage
Very likely	13.63%
Likely	27.45%
Not likely	30.06%
Not likely at all	28.86%
Total	100.0%

Table 30. Supervisors' replies to the question: "How likely is it for you to keep the beneficiary as a permanent employee after the programme has been established?"

This result is another one of added value to the programme. The fact that a total 41.08% of the supervisors argue that they would *likely* or *very likely* keep an intern as a permanent employee in their enterprise can be considered as another non-anticipated impact, which is even more significant in times of great economic recession.

	Percentage
Very high	45.98%
High	44.98%
Fair	8.63%
Low	0.41%
Total	100.0%

Table 31. Supervisors' replies to the question: "Do you believe that your enterprise/the enterprise you work at benefited from 'hosting' beneficiaries as interns?"

	Organisational Skills	Informatics	Communication and Conflict Management	Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Interest	8.48	8.03	8.65	8.64
Usefulness	8.25	7.72	8.41	8.33
Practicality	8.12	7.64	8.30	8.32
Curriculum	8.52	8.48	8.82	8.68

Table 32. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "How do you rate the modules according to the given criteria?"

	Percentage
Very effective	30.77%
Effective	58.54%
Fairly effective	10.19%
Not effective at all	0.50%
Total	100.0%

Table 33. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "How do you rate the theoretical training in terms of effectiveness?"

	Percentage
Sufficient	52.58%
Fairly sufficient	44.44%
Not sufficient at all	2.98%
Total	100.0%

Table 34. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "How do you rate the overall training duration in terms of sufficiency?"

Yes	No	Total
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EEDE	54.88%	45.12%	100.00%
ESEE/INEMY	67.55%	32.45%	100.00%
INE/GSEE	66.20%	33.80%	100.00%
GSEVEE/IME	69.32%	30.68%	100.00%

Table 35. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "Would you participate in a similar training/educational programme in the future if there was no provision for paid acquisition of working experience?" (Replies divided by participating social partner).

Percentage	
Very high	20.12%
High	62.83%
Fair	14.67%
Low	2.38%
Total	100.0%

Table 36. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "How do you rate the degree to which you made good use of the skills and knowledge you acquired during the theoretical training/education while placed in enterprises as interns?"

	Very high	High	Fair	Low	Total
Eastern Macedonia & Thrace	10.6%	66.48%	20.67%	2.79%	100.00%
North Aegean	34.29%	48.57%	14.29%	2.86%	100.00%
Western Greece	6.72%	77.31%	15.13%	0.84%	100.00%
Epirus	12.00%	72.00%	12.00%	4.00%	100.00%
Thessaly	35.47%	49.54%	13.15%	1.83%	100.00%
Ionian Islands	3.33%	63.33%	13.33%	20.00%	100.00%
Crete	14.29%	78.57%	7.14%	0.00%	100.00%
Peloponnesus	33.33%	50.72%	14.49%	1.45%	100.00%

Table 37. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "How do you rate the acquisition of horizontal ('soft') skills?" (by region).

Percentage	
Very high	32.97%
High	35.74%
Fair	15.05%
Low	16.24%

Total	100.0%
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Table 38. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "How do you rate the degree of relevance between your specialty and the enterprise you were placed as an intern?"

	Percentage
Very high	23.90%
High	55.88%
Fair	18.13%
Low	2.09%
Total	100.0%

Table 39. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "How do you rate the degree to which the acquisition of working experience enhanced your possibilities of employment?"

	<i>To what extent do you believe that acquisition of working experience changed your work culture?</i>	<i>To what extent do you believe that acquisition of working experience enhanced the vocational schools graduates' competency to work efficiently as part of a team?</i>
Very high	25.02%	23.19%
High	64.19%	65.01%
Fair	10.19%	11.40%
Low	0.59%	0.40%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

Table 40. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "To what extent do you believe that acquisition of working experience changed your work culture?"

	Percentage
Yes	45.11%
No	54.89%
Total	100.0%

Table 41. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "Do you believe that you acquired other additional skills through the programme?"

	Percentage
Very high	39.20%
High	55.30%
Fair	5.00%

Low	0.50%
Total	100.00%

Table 42. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "How do you rate the guidance you received at the enterprise you were placed for acquiring working experience?"

	Percentage
Very high	39.20%
High	55.30%
Fair	5.00%
Low	0.50%
Total	100.00%

Table 43. Beneficiaries' replies to the question: "What was the degree to which the expectations you had in the beginning of the programme were finally fulfilled?"

The above cited quantitative results and findings can be summarised as follows:

- The vast majority of supervisors rigidly believe that the internship phase of the programme had noteworthy impact on the beneficiaries' professional prospects (see table 23), work culture (see table 24), communication skills (see table 25) and efficiency in working as part of a team (see table 26). It is also important that, in their opinion, 1 out of 3 beneficiaries acquired skills further to those obtained during the theoretical training/education (see table 27). Finally, a significantly high percentage of them is satisfied by the cooperation he /she had with the intern (see table 28) and feels that the programme was generally beneficial for his /her enterprise (see table 31). This is supported by the fact that the possibility of participating again in a similar programme in the future is exceptionally high even if there will be no payment for that (see table 29).
- On the other side, the beneficiaries rating of the modules taught, the effectiveness of the theoretical training /education and the time duration of the overall programme was quite high (see table 32, 33 and 34). The vast majority of them hold the strong conviction that the knowledge and skills they acquired were usefully deployed in the enterprise during internship (see table 36), wherein they also had the opportunity to obtain extra skills mostly related to the area of activity of the enterprise (see table 41). There was a high rate of relevance between the beneficiaries' specialty and the area of the enterprise (see table 38) as well as high levels

of satisfaction by the guidance and support they received in the work place by the supervisors (see table 42). Lastly, the programme did enhance not just their work culture (see table 40) but also their employability and their professional prospects (see table 39), which is far more important. This is evidently reflected by the notable percentage of those who *highly* and *very highly* stress that the expectations they had in the beginning of the programme were ultimately met to a large extent (see table 43).

Apart from the aforementioned outcomes that admittedly had a positive impact, there also were some features of negative tone pointed out in relation to the implementation of the programme. These can be summed up as follows:

- Heterogeneity of the beneficiaries' professional specialties resulted in some cases in difficulties during the theoretical training as the educators had to adjust the material and their methods accordingly;
- The overall implementation time period was assessed as quite short, limited and pressing given that the involvement of various different subprojects and actors often demanded quick and dynamic response rates on the organisers' end;
- The fact that some of the programme's actions and subprojects were not eventually implemented diminished to some degree its effectiveness, which would otherwise be (possibly) wider and weighty;
- The beneficiaries' attitude towards the counselling sessions and the staff was reserved and participation was low, if not hesitant, in the beginning; some of them even asked if they were obliged to attend;
- Given the rather differentiated social, economic and educational background of the beneficiaries, the counselors were somehow compelled to present and clarify the rationale and the purposes of this part of the programme;
- Delays in receiving the money of the scholarship were immense in quite many cases, which resulted in feelings of distress and irritation as money was necessary to quite many beneficiaries;
- Accurate alignment between the beneficiaries' specialties, the theoretical education and the enterprise's area of activity was not always doable;
- Internship period too short to allow beneficiaries reap the most out of it;

- In few cases there was rather observed a spirit of competition instead of cooperation between the intern and the employer;
- There was a small number of beneficiaries who participated in the programme solely for the money or because they (reported they) didn't have anything better to do;
- Unexpected lack of digital skills and /or access to the internet made the application procedure hard for some beneficiaries and, at the same time, increased the managerial and administrative load on the consortium's shoulders;
- Complications concerning the unemployment allowance some of the beneficiaries were receiving before entering the programme caused misconceptions about how this would be balanced with the money of the scholarship;
- Some beneficiaries didn't finally complete the internship part of the programme; as a result they were not paid for it, money were not absorbed, participating social partners' trustworthiness was undermined;
- Some enterprises "exploit" these types of programmes only to find workers and employees for free;
- The role of the supervisor was somehow miscomprehended due to the fact that in many cases this person was the same as the employer and/or owner of the enterprise;
- There scarcely appeared some difficulties in contracting the required number of educators for the theoretical education;
- There was no provision for follow-up procedures: a) on the socio-economic status of the beneficiaries, with emphasis on how many of them remained as permanent employees in the enterprise they were placed to acquire working experience, b) on the evaluation of educators, counselors, quality inspectors, supervisors, c) on measuring the impact of the programme in the local societies /labour markets as well as on regional /national level.

From the above qualitative and quantitative results it can be argued that as both the internal and the external evaluations were designed and conducted while the programme was ongoing specific and definite conclusions on its impact cannot be reached. The purpose of both evaluations was not to measure the impact *after* the establishment of the programme as the evaluation undertaken for the purposes of *WP4* was; it was ra-

ther to estimate and outline short-term effects. Moreover, no specific or focused questions on the impact the programme had on the participants were included in their research. So, it was not easy to draw insightful information about it. Yet, even from these data it is concluded that the initiative produced an overall clear and positive impact on the participating vocational schools graduates on various aspects and ways, e.g. acquisition of skills, knowledge and some sort of advantageous expertise in relation to the labour market, self-motivation and self-realisation, networking and cooperative capabilities, etc. At the same time, the programme was beneficial for all other parts involved in its implementation: the participating social partners, the project teams and all other staff (educators, counsellors, quality inspectors, supervisors, secretaries) as it added a great deal to their experience, which can well be invested and upgraded in similar programmes in the future. This is a set of beneficial findings that to a lesser or larger extent were verified by our interviewees (stakeholders' members and other staff as well as beneficiaries) and will be thoroughly presented in the following section.

6.3.2 Data from the qualitative research

The principle objectives of the qualitative research the PUA Innosi team conducted for the purposes of the impact evaluation were to verify the findings of the existing internal and external evaluations, on the one hand, and to explore other aspects of impact the programme provoked either on the target group or elsewhere, on the other. That said, it should be noted that limitations of this process were apparent as generalisations were not feasible. Still, through qualitative data via semi-structured interviews we expected to reveal extra facets related to the impact evaluation of the programme. In light of these, the outcomes of our research can be briefed as follows:

- All interviewees unanimously argued that the programme had decisive effect on the beneficiaries' social and psychological lives. Quite many young people were given the chance to socialise, meet new people, make acquaintances, e.g. develop friendships or establish professional networks. Especially during the internship they discovered new challenges and means of self-development; they acquired a sense of pride, identity and personal achievement; levels of empowerment and self-confidence increased, even though this was somehow temporary;
- The crucial role of vocational counselling in an individual's personal and professional competencies was particularly emphasized. Specifically, counsellors from

Xanthi (Eastern Macedonia & Thrace) and Larisa (Thessaly) argued that it can in fact be an inseparable advisory resource for anyone. With regards to that special reference was made to the *Specialised Employment Promotion Centres*⁶⁶ and to the *Network of Information and Counselling Services*⁶⁷ that are two of the most recent initiatives run by INE/GSEE.

- There is great demand for training programmes such as the one evaluated in the context of *WP4*. People in local societies and local labour markets welcomed the initiative warmly. However, some of the beneficiaries were profoundly skeptical about the real usefulness of these programmes as they think that they are actually a means for the enterprises to employ for free young people in need.
- There were reported, mainly by the counsellors, some cases wherein the beneficiaries came to realise that the specialty acquired in the vocational school was in fact not to their liking and that they would have much preferred to follow utterly different career pathways. Via in-depth counselling sessions those beneficiaries were enabled to define new professional perspectives in which they would arguably be better at accomplishing.

While trying to assess and describe the impact of the programme it was evident that our findings and determinations could not actually be considered as *impact* in the strict sense of the term. As concluded from the existing evaluations' findings as well as from the results of our qualitative research, the programme did produce positive effects on various levels. However, the absence of a follow-up examination of the impact is preventive in that it does not allow us to have a clear picture of the present situation of the beneficiaries and the status of the enterprises affected, or not, through the programme. For instance, it would be really advantageous to have some measurable information on, e.g. how many of the overall participating beneficiaries actually remained as permanent employees in the enterprise they were placed as interns or, in other words, *how many* working positions were created after the establishment of the programme and *for how long* did they remain active. In addition, a qualitative survey of the current conditions of the beneficiaries' social, economic and professional status would also be revealing of the programme's impact almost a year after its establishment. To this direction, during the interviews with the stakeholders' staff a major development came about. Specifically, a

⁶⁶ <http://www.ergasiaine.gr/ekpa/> [in Greek].

⁶⁷ <http://www.ergasiaine.gr/Default.aspx> [in Greek].

member of INE/GSEE's project team informed us that a follow-up intervention is intended to be implemented in the near future; yet, no specific or further information is available at the moment. Provided that this will include quantitative as well as qualitative indicators a more precise picture on the programme's impact will be portrayed.

7. Economic evaluation

7.1 Introduction

For the purposes of the economic evaluation four (4) options were provided via the *InnoSI Case Study Report Template*: a) a cost-benefit analysis, b) a cost-effectiveness analysis, c) a social return on investment analysis (SROI), and d) to make use of a previous economic evaluation. The PUA InnoSI team had meetings and discussions with the programme's stakeholders in which, among other issues, the aforementioned options and the availability of relevant data was explored. This procedure concluded that an economic evaluation was not on the coordinator's plans while designing the actions and subprojects of the programme. Consequently, given that an economic evaluation was neither intended nor scheduled, it turned out that there were no specific indicators for making economic analyses and comparisons. That considered, our next step was to examine if and what financial data were available. In doing so, we went on studying the documents provided by the programme's stakeholders (technical fiche, implementation and management guide, external evaluation). This concluded into data mainly about the total budget of the programme, the percentage of final absorption (by November 2015) and the costs foreseen for the implementation of the programme. Available data are presented in the following sections.

a. Budget distribution by programme's subprojects⁶⁸

Subproject	Budget	Completion	Percentage of completion
▪ Design and implementation of actions for programme publicity (calls, press releases etc.) and dissemination of results	100.000 €	20.000 €	20%
▪ Design and development of curriculum	120.000 €	120.000 €	100%
▪ Portal for candidate participants' applications	50.000 €	50.000 €	100%
▪ Implementation of theoretical training (INE/GSEE)	794.913 €	794.913 €	100%
▪ Implementation of theoretical training (KANEP/GSEE)	181.280 €	181.280 €	100%

⁶⁸ Source: Deliverable P.3: Overall Programme Evaluation, p. 31 ([EEO Group, 2015b](#)).

▪ Implementation of theoretical training (KEK/GSEVEE)	906.400 €	872.464 €	96,26%
▪ Implementation of theoretical training (KAELE/ESEE)	906.400 €	842.000 €	92,89%
▪ Implementation of theoretical training (EEDE)	3.549.926 €	3.549.926 €	100,00%
▪ Acquisition of working experience (INE/GSEE)	5.015.841 €	4.858.722,73 €	96,87%
▪ Acquisition of working experience (IME/GSEVEE)	4.470.660 €	4.230.379 €	94,63%
▪ Acquisition of working experience (INEMY/ESEE)	4.470.660 €	3.350.000 €	74,93%
▪ Acquisition of working experience (EEDE)	17.472.640 €	14.981.852 €	85,74%
▪ Project evaluation	70.000 €	46.407,90 €	66,30%
▪ E-mentoring platform ⁶⁹	250.000 €	0	0,00%
TOTAL	38.358.720 €	33.897.944,63 €	88,37%

b. Budget distribution by social partner⁷⁰ (data based on the 3rd amendment⁷¹ of the programme, on 19/06/2015)

SOCIAL PARTNER	BUDGET
INE/GSEE	5.810.754,90 €
KANEP/GSEE	301.280,00 €
IME/GSEVEE	4.540.660,00 €
KEK/GSEVEE	906.400,00 €
INEMY/ESEE	4.470.660,00 €
KAELE/ESEE	906.400,00 €
EEDE	21.322.566,00 €
INSETE ⁷²	100.000,00 €
TOTAL	38.358.720,90 €

⁶⁹ Not implemented.

⁷⁰ Source: Deliverable P.3: Overall Project Evaluation, p. 24 ([EEO Group, 2015b](#)).

⁷¹ Not available to the PUA InnoSI team.

⁷² The specific social partner (INSETE) did not eventually participate in the programme although it was included in the initial consortium, budget and design of the programme.

c. Information about estimated expenses⁷³

- *Implementation cost* for the theoretical training by INE/GSEE. Subproject 5, 40 courses⁷⁴, 800 beneficiaries, hourly cost: 11,33€ (includes educational allowance and insurance contributions).

	Theoretical training courses (80 hours)
Number of courses	40
Beneficiaries	800
Hourly training cost	6 €
Hourly allowance cost	5,33 €
Overall hourly cost	11,33 €
Total cost	725.120 €
Allowances cost	341.120€

- *Implementation cost* for the theoretical training by KANEEP/GSEE. Subproject 6, 10 courses, 200 beneficiaries, hourly cost: 11,33€ (includes educational allowance and insurance contributions).

	Theoretical training courses (80 hours)
Number of courses	10
Beneficiaries	200
Hourly training cost	6 €
Hourly allowance cost	5,33 €
Overall hourly cost	11,33 €
Total cost	181,280 €
Allowances cost	85.820 €

- *Implementation cost* for the theoretical training by KEK/GSEVEE. Subproject 7, 50 courses, 1.000 beneficiaries, hourly cost: 11,33€ (includes educational allowance and insurance contributions).

⁷³ Source: Programme's Implementation and Management Guide.

⁷⁴ Total programme courses: 350.

	Theoretical training courses (80 hours)
Number of courses	50
Beneficiaries	1.000
Hourly training cost	6 €
Hourly allowance cost	5,33 €
Overall hourly cost	11,33 €
Total cost	906,400 €
Allowances cost	426,400 €

- *Implementation cost* for the theoretical training by KAELE/ESEE. *Subproject 8*, 50 courses, 1.000 beneficiaries, hourly cost: 11,33€ (includes educational allowance and insurance contributions).

	Theoretical training courses (80 hours)
Number of courses	50
Beneficiaries	1.000
Hourly training cost	6 €
Hourly allowance cost	5,33 €
Overall hourly cost	11,33 €
Total cost	906,400 €
Allowances cost	426,400 €

- *Implementation cost* for the theoretical training by EEDE. *Subproject 9*, 200 courses, 4.000 beneficiaries, hourly cost: 8,33€ (includes educational allowance and insurance contributions).

	Theoretical training courses (80 hours)
Number of courses	200
Beneficiaries	4.000
Hourly training cost	3 €

Hourly allowance cost	5,33 €
Overall hourly cost	8,33 €
Total cost	2.665,600 €
Allowances cost	1.706,600 €

Note: The implementation cost for the theoretical training is, actually, the cost for the scholarship each beneficiary will receive for the theoretical education. For 80 hours of acquiring horizontal (“soft”) skills, each beneficiary will receive 400€, that is 5€/hour of education. Added to that is the cost for insurance contributions (6.45% for health care) from the project promoters to the insurance organisation. Thus the overall hourly cost is 5,33€ (scholarship and insurance contributions).

- *Scholarship cost* for acquiring working experience (internship): 480€/month. One (1) month equals to twenty (20) days of internship in the enterprise.
- *Cost for rental fees*: not specified. (It is probable that the project promoters will need to rent estate for the implementation of the theoretical training.)
- *Cost for supplies*. 240€/training course, i.e. 12€/beneficiary.
- *Cost for catering*: 5€/person/day (rough estimate).
- *Cost for the beneficiaries transportation*: not specified.
- *Cost for “coupling” beneficiaries with the enterprises*: 180€/beneficiary.
- *Cost for Educators*. Educators are paid according to the number of lessons they have delivered. Their hourly payment is estimated to 21€ (based on Ministerial Decision 2/106902/0022 (23/12/2013)).
- *Cost for Counsellors*. Each counsellor is expected to conduct four (4) counselling session. The cost for each session is estimated to 75€.
- *Cost for Quality Control Inspectors*. For every onsite visit the payment is estimated to up to 70€.
- *Cost for Supervisors*. Payment is predicted for the persons that will be employed and be responsible for the onsite supervision of the beneficiaries in the enterprise they have been placed for acquiring working experience (internship). Payment for each supervisor varies from 80€ (minimum) to 100€ (maximum), according to the number of beneficiaries (up to 3 persons) he /she will eventually supervise. More specifically:

- Supervision of 1 person: 100€/person
- Supervision of 2 persons: 90€/person
- Supervision of 3 persons: 80€/person.
- *Cost for Secretariat.* Estimated up to 8€/hour (net amount).

d. Other financial data⁷⁵

Data⁷⁶ is based on the decision by the Ministry of Economics, Development and Tourism concerning the list of programmes included in the *Public Investment Programme (PIP)* for 2016.

PROJECT CODE / MIS		2014ΣΕ24580064		
PROJECT TITLE		FUNDING OF INE/GSEE FOR THE PROJECT "ACCESS TO LABOUR MARKET: ACQUIRING WORKING EXPERIENCE BY IEK, EPAS & EPAL GRADUATES"		
		S	A	B
TOTAL BUDGET		.00	38,358,720.00	.00
PAYMENTS TILL 31/12/2015		.00	35,627,944.59	.00
RESIDUE AFTER 31/12/2015		.00	2,730,775.41	.00
YEARLY CREDIT		.00	991,000.00	.00
QUARTERLY CREDIT FOR 2016	Q1	.00	991,000.00	.00
	Q2	.00	.00	.00
	Q3	.00	.00	.00
	Q4	.00	.00	.00

e. Evaluation of the programme's scopes/objectives⁷⁷

Indicator	Target	Completion	Percentage of completion
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⁷⁵ Source: National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013 web site (<http://www.edulll.gr/>).

⁷⁶ Available at: http://www.edulll.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/00_Tropopoiisi_2016_SAE_2458_EP-E-DBM_28_4_2016.pdf [Accessed 4 Sept. 2016].

⁷⁷ Source: Deliverable P.3: Overall Programme Evaluation, p. 30. Based on unofficial data available by the time the external evaluation report was delivered (November 2015).

▪ Number of beneficiaries	7.077	6.988	98,74%
▪ Number of information centres with use of ICTs	1	1	100%
▪ Studies, surveys, evaluations	2	1	50%
▪ Communication and publicising actions	1	1	100%
▪ Job positions created while implementing the programme (measured in man-year)	450,48	340	75,48%
▪ Percentage of the Operation Programme funds disposed to the social partners	1,75%	1,55%	88,57%
TOTAL			91,18%

f. Reflections on economic evaluation

Figures show that the programme was successful in terms of largely achieving high percentages of budget absorption by almost 90% (88.37%). This is extremely important given that the period the programme was implemented was marked by political instability and economic disturbances provoked by the referendum (in July 2015) and the capital controls imposed. Nonetheless, budget allocated to subprojects concerning separate stages of the programme was quite sufficiently absorbed, with absorption percentages ranging from 75% to 100% (in most cases). In general, the programme succeeded in spending 88.57% of the funds attributed by the Operation Programme budget (1.55% out of 1.75%). Also, the programme can be considered to have largely met the indicators set in the beginning of the programme by 91.18%. The target for the participation of 7.000 beneficiaries was accomplished almost in total (98.74%). The target numbers of information centres with use of ICTs and actions for communicating and publicising the programme were also achieved (100%). Also, the target concerning 450,48 job positions created during the programme's implementation was met by 75%.

From the above financial data and the consequent results it is understood that the programme succeeded in making a largely good “use” of the funds attributed for the objectives and the scopes of the initiative. However, these data and outcomes cannot apparently be used to conduct the type of economic analysis requested and described in the *InnoSI Case Study Report Template*. They might be thought of as a starting point or as a valid basis for performing a cost-benefit or a cost-effectiveness analysis, but other data and/or indicators are missing (or could not be accessed and/or retrieved).

For example, a cost-benefit analysis would require us to:

- Determine if the investment/decision was sound (justification/feasibility) and verify whether its benefits outweigh the costs, and by how much;
- Provide a basis for comparing projects, which involves comparing the total expected cost of each option against its total expected benefits.

After holding meetings and discussing possible ways to approach this option with the programme stakeholders it turned out that a cost-benefit analysis was not possible given that there were no prediction for measuring expected benefits and impact.

On the other hand, it was doubtful whether a cost-effectiveness analysis, which is typically expressed in terms of a *ratio* where the denominator is a gain in, e.g. health from a measure (years of life, premature births averted, sight-years gained) and the numerator is the cost associated with the health gain, could apply to the purposes of an economic evaluation of the programme. Again, there is insufficiency and/or lack of data and/or indicators that would allow us to make comparisons and decisions about the percentage of maximising the average level of an outcome via the programme’s actions. Such was the case as far as the Social Return of Investment (SROI) option is concerned, given that certain boundaries in defining a methodology for this option were early evident. We could possibly develop outcome indicators or, perhaps, more than one indicator and a mix of complementary, subjective (or self-reported) and objective indicators. But we would not be able to determine how long outcomes last as this would require an extensive qualitative survey, which could not be performed for practical reasons.

8. References

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