



Innovative Social Policies for Inclusive and
Resilient Labour Markets in Europe

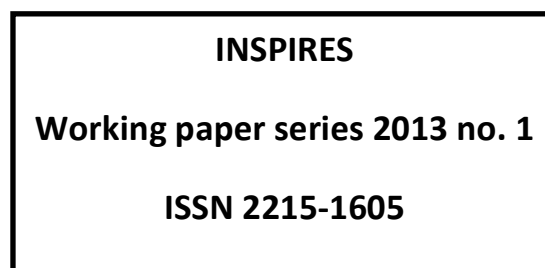


D4.1 and D5.2-GREECE

Part One: In-depth analysis the implementation and
development of policy innovations (D4.1)

Part Two: Policy learning adoption and policy learning
infrastructures (D5.2)

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Abstract:

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Part One: In-depth analysis the implementation and development of policy innovations (D4.1)

1. Introduction

The aim of this report is to present the outcomes of WP4 that is to analyze in depth the history and procedures of development and the factors and parameters which affect the results of innovative employment policies in Greece. Based on the results of WP3 the innovations selected for this duty are, according to the common methodological template, five out of 30 initially selected innovations:

- First innovation: Temporal employment for public benefit classified as a trend on the cluster of activation of unemployed jobseekers
- Second innovation: Voucher Schemes as financial assistance to the training cost for unemployed youths classified as a trend on the cluster of governance of active employment policies as well as on the cluster youths
- Third innovation: Stricter rules for obtaining unemployment benefit classified as a trend on the cluster of regulation of the labour market
- Fourth innovation: Restricting early retirement classified as a trend on the cluster of older workers
- Fifth innovation: Financial assistance for the ergonomic arrangement of the work place for disabled employees

The main criterion for selecting these innovations was their comparability with innovations selected in other partner countries and was classified according to common trends in the same cluster as well as their initiation –at least officially- as a response to the crisis. Apart from the fifth innovation (financial assistance for the ergonomic arrangements of the work place for disabled employees), all other innovation starts up during the current financial crisis and economic recession.

Table 1. Selected innovations for in-depth analysis in Greece

Innovation	Goals	Target groups	Scope	Type of policy	Type of strategies	Expected or estimated impact on resilience
Temporal employment for public benefit	Reduce long term unemployment and enforce social cohesion	Long term unemployed Unemployed couples	temporal	partnership	liberalization	Positive but insufficient
Voucher Schemes as financial assistance to the training cost for unemployed youths	Reduce youths unemployment rates Increase the effectiveness of ALMP	Unemployed youths	temporal	Partnership	liberalization	Negative
Stricter rules for obtaining unemployment benefit	Reduce undeclared work	Seasonally unemployed Undeclared employment	structural	public	Dualization	It is expected to reduce undeclared employment
Restricting early retirement	Increase the workforce and reduce the financial burden to insurance funds	Older employees	structural	public	liberalization	Negative in short term Positive in long term
Financial assistance for the ergonomic	Increase employment rates of	disabled	temporal	partnership	Encompassing security	Limited

arrangement of the work place for disabled employees	disabled					
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For the fulfilment of the objectives outlined above in these five concrete measures, raw material (official government documents, laws, explanatory reports, minutes of parliament, decrees and circulars, position papers and evaluation reports of research institutions and professional associations, etc.) was sought, collected and utilized. Equally, 25 in-depth interviews with key policy formulators and frontline bureaucrats at national and sub-national level were conducted (see list of interviewees in the appendix).

More specifically, two interviews with former Ministers and deputy Ministers were conducted, an interview with an academic / technocrat member of the negotiations group for the Greek government social policy issues, an interview with a scientific advisor of the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and an interview with a scientific partner of the Economic and Social Committee.

Also, an interview was held with the Manager of the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources responsible for implementing the Voucher Schemes for entering the labour market. An interview was also held with the president of the Association of Voucher Beneficiaries and three interviews with frontline municipality bureaucrats working on the subsidized temporal employment for public benefit and community services. Furthermore, an interview was also conducted with the former Head of the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED). Two interviews were held with two representatives of the social partners involved in the administration, and an interview was held with a Director of the Ministry of Labour in the Directorate-General of Employment.

The interviews for the remaining two measures -pensions and Employment of Persons with Disabilities- were the following: an interview with a former Minister of Labour, an institute researcher for employment issues of own-account workers, a trade union / party officer for pensions, a President of the Federation of Workers in Social Security Fund, one with a President of a Commercial Association, and a member of the Insurance Fund. Finally, concerning persons with disabilities, interviews were held with a representative of the National Federation of Persons with Disabilities (ESAmA), a scientific collaborator of the Ombudsman, a researcher dealing with employment issues of people with disabilities, a member of the managing authority of the Region, as well as a Regional Director responsible for employment issues of persons with disabilities.

2. Analytic Description of the selected innovations

Temporal employment for public benefit

Temporal employment for public benefit program is running since 2011 subsidizing the temporal employment for nearly 50,000 unemployed persons per year. The aim of the program is to finance the temporal employment in jobs of public benefit (cleaning parks, roads, school, social work, care etc) (Ministerial Decision Number 3.24641/Oικ.3.1574, Ministerial Decision Number 4.31879/οικ.3.1604).

Target groups are those registered as unemployed who are members of families in which no one works, those who are members of single-parent families with no member in employment at all, the youths who are registered as unemployed and are 18-29 years old, the long-term unemployed, and the unemployed graduates.

The beneficiaries are selected according to certain criteria (duration of unemployment, age, education, type of family, qualifications, annual family income) and are working for 5-7 months 6 hours per day, getting less than the national minimum wage and having no right to redundancy compensation or any other employment premium. They mainly work in municipal services, in regional authorities and as auxiliary personnel in education.

The wage cost is set: a) to 19.60 euros per day and no more than 490 per month for unemployed over 25 years whilst the minimum salary is 586 euro and b) to 17.1 euro per day and no more than 427 per month for the unemployed under 25 years whilst the minimum salary is 510 euro. The programme provides also insurance contributions, which: a) for the unemployed over 25 years do not exceed the amount of 258, 00 € and b) for the unemployed under 25 years the amount of 225,00 €.

When the program was initiated for the first time in 2011, it was implemented mainly by NGOs which were operating as sub-contractors of public authorities having the duty to register, select, council and sent for temporal employment the beneficiaries to Local Authorities. From 2012 onwards, the program is implemented directly by the Local Authorities and public agencies.

The implementation of such programs constitutes a cover for an entire theoretical scheme which proves that in times of great financial recession, the state as an employer may be the only resort left. The measure of community service aimed at mitigating the adverse effect of long-term unemployment and the risk of marginalization and exclusion that it implies through payments of employment benefits to those who temporarily work depending on the choice of place of the municipality and the non-governmental organization.

This innovation initiated from the Greek government who planned and undertook the configuration with the financial assistance of the European Social Fund. In

adopting the program, there were no special reactions by the public administration. Challenges to the effectiveness of the program were raised by the opposition parties on a political level, expressing concerns that it is an insufficient measure that does not lead the beneficiaries to real and durable employment. When designing the program, no specific agreed targets or indicators which require fulfilment were observed. Also, there was no pilot program which would lay the foundation for a more solid and successful implementation.

The approval of the programs was followed by the following procedure. After the memoranda of understanding concluded with NGOs, the Municipalities sent their business plans for approval to the Ministry of Labour. After verifying for coverage of the standards that had been set, the central level approved the business plans of the municipalities and entrusted the management and distribution of funds to NGOs.

From the interviews with persons coming from social agencies, a series of malfunctions occurred because of the selection of this mode of implementation. They highlighted the existence of many bureaucratic and procedural impediments that slowed the implementation process down and created obstacles to the smooth fulfilment of the program objectives. For this reason, it necessitated several circulars by the central level in order to clarify the issues that had arisen.

In any case, the main problem was that the design of the program did not include any future prospects for the beneficiaries to remain in employment, following the end of a period of five months. Thus, it is a measure that was initially designed without any broader perspectives.

Additionally, the extremely short-term nature of the program resulted in the incapacity of the program to fully exploit the capabilities of its workforce. As noted by the representatives of municipal social services, the short duration of the program resulted in that the beneficiaries, had to stop working just after adapted to the working tasks and obligations. This deficiency had a multifaceted impact on their substantial contribution to the improvement of the services of the municipalities and their psychology itself.

As noted by the interviewees coming from social agencies, these workers largely cover -albeit this does not constitute part of the objectives of the measure- the fixed and permanent needs creating a "substitution effect". Particularly in the fields of health, welfare and social services of general interest in the municipalities, the beneficiaries assisted significantly the local authorities in their efforts to support vulnerable groups because they were occupied in the context of redundancies and soaring social problems.

Also, in several cases, the labour legislation was circumvented, as beneficiaries recruited for general responsibilities, eventually ended up working in the Municipalities cleaning services. This is clearly an illegal case, since in these areas of work, an insurance coverage with heavy and unhealthy security-stamps is required.

Meanwhile, the strong temporary nature of their employment created significant impediments to the development of an appropriate occupational psychology and, by extension, of a favourable working climate. As reported by a municipality social service executive: "People do not feel as employees, they rather feel as beneficiaries. They felt as recipients of a charity benefit. Just because they knew that they were placed in a job for five months, to receive at some point a small amount of money and then return to unemployment. Nothing resembled the normal characteristics of employment and this program practically provided no prospects of improving working conditions. "According to the results of the evaluation of the program that was completed in May 2015, only 13% of the beneficiaries remain even temporarily employed after the end of the subsidy (IOBE, 2015).

The involvement of NGOs in the implementation process has created substantial additional problems. Their assignment to the allocation of funds and the municipality funds resulted in significant delays in the payments. This was because the NGOs sought first to settle their own financial needs and then fulfil their obligations to municipalities and beneficiaries.

Another factor in delaying the payment of money to beneficiaries, is a parameter which also referred to the previous measure. It related to issues of coordination at the central level and, in particular to the difficulties of the managing authority, mainly due to the lack of staff but also due to broader objective issues of public accounting interest, which however were not specified in the responses of the institutions.

Voucher Schemes as financial assistance to the training cost for unemployed youths

Although there were unsuccessful attempts to introduce voucher schemes in the field of training and employment since 2005 under the consultation and recommendations of the OECD with the financial assistance of the European Social Fund, the first real application was made as a response to the very high unemployment rates of youths in 2011 (Ministerial Decision Number 15323/624/6-9-2010).

The aim of the programme is to support financially the placement of unemployed youths in the private business sector by providing them with a voucher. The voucher finances the training of each eligible person as well as one's fixed-term employment aiming to assist them to acquire and improve their knowledge and skills in the work

place. This innovation is an active labour market policy focusing on the finance of training and short-term job placement for youths. The eligible unemployed youth has to agree with the employer on how the voucher will be valorised having the following available options:

-Training up to 80 hours (general and specialized skills) in conjunction with guidance and counselling.

-Internship / Work experience five (5) months, equivalent to 500 hours of training.

-Business grants covering employer's part on contributions for a year when the internship is changing to an employment contract.

-Support services and mentoring of trainees by the provider, before and during the internship.

The training allowance is defined at:

- 2,700 € (including statutory deductions) for the group of beneficiaries described as "unemployed young people aged up to 29 years who are graduates of Universities", of which 400 € correspond to the theoretical training and 2,300 € to the internship
- 2,400 € (including statutory deductions) for the group of beneficiaries described as "unemployed youth aged 18 to 29 years who are graduates of compulsory, secondary and post-secondary education", of which 400 € correspond to the theoretical training and 2,000 € bonus for the internship.

Additionally, free medical care in public health services is provided to all participants during the program.

The target groups of the voucher scheme are those unemployed who are aged up to 29 years and are graduates from secondary education schools or from universities.

The voucher schemes that were introduced to enter the labour market were seen as an employment measure that combines and offers theoretical education with the applied practice. The focus of the program was the problem of youth unemployment, an age group that faces serious problems in the transition from the education sector into the labour market. Based on observations by interviewees coming from social agencies, vouchers constitute a standard practice in many Member States, which are presented and promoted as a recommendation by the EU.

This measure was adopted by the Greek government on the basis of the broad guidelines of the European Employment Strategy. The Greek government undertook the design and the implementation of the configuration of specific guidelines. The choice of this innovation aimed at mitigating the inflated unemployment problem, especially concerning young people, which during the crisis has reached rates of around 60%. However, as mentioned above, this measure is a diverse, new version of internship programs that were adopted before the crisis period. Here, the reference is to the stage programs, for which, however, the public sector bodies were their principal employer. Judging by the results, these programs were considered to be programs that introduce precarious work in the public sector.

The implementation of this measure met with mixed reactions from the agencies, who criticized it as a form of substitution of both the fixed and the full employment. Also, there were reactions by the same beneficiaries and associations that were created for the promotion of the issue, touching on the inherent malfunctions that emerged in the context of its application.

The measure was not based on some specific quantitative targets or indicators, but on the direct use of EU funds which had been secured for the specific action. Moreover, no pilot application was implemented before the beginning of the formal implementation. Much of the implementation was assigned to private vocational training centres, which shouldered the burden of the preparation and conduct of theoretical training. Then, the beneficiaries would be transferred to the firms which they had chosen for internships themselves.

The representatives of social agencies have highlighted a large number of problems they encountered in the implementation of the voucher scheme for entering the labour market. To begin with, the attempt to link the education sector with the labour market has not been successful. This is due to a number of different reasons and parameters that we will attempt to specify in the following lines.

First, the large scale of responsibilities and activities that the private vocational training centres held for the implementation of the program, marked certain issues of malfunction and corruption. The agencies and the organization of the beneficiaries raised complaints about the virtual conduct of the theoretical training seminars and, generally speaking, about the distortion of the formal criteria that were provided for. Another important issue is the alleged unequal distribution of the current budget at the central level planning. This resulted in a great financial support to the vocational training centres and to the inadequate payment of the beneficiaries.

A second important issue raised was that due to the lack of specific institutional framework for traineeships in Greece, a large number of ministerial decisions were

needed to define and clarify the exact steps to be followed towards the implementation process. This burdened further the existing several bureaucratic problems. Yet, a positive point was considered to be the development of software for online operators and beneficiaries, which was an element to strengthen the transparency of the action.

Additionally, the expanded engagement of institutions to the program, starting from supranational institutions and ending up to the local vocational training centres, led to problems in the part of the coordination action. A consequence of the poor coordination was also significant delays in the financial earnings of the beneficiaries of the program. Based on interviews with the agencies, this is attributed to the general problems of bureaucracy and to the poor human resources to take up action at the central level of coordination.

Regarding the content of the program, significant criticism was expressed regarding the choice of providing horizontal theoretical training to the beneficiaries. Such an option was characterised as meaningless, since most of them were graduates of higher education and they had already been awarded such skills during their academic career.

Finally, one should also note the objective failure of the program relating to the maintenance of the beneficiaries' position into the labour market after the end of the internship. Based on the observations of the agencies, a small number of beneficiaries managed to retain the job at the end of the program. But even in these cases, the majority of workers signed contracts of a period of one to three months. These contracts mainly focused on the completion of the program turnover as agreed at the beginning of the internship. According to the program evaluation, the proportion of those who worked after the subsidized work-experience, even for a limited period of time, is nearly 10% (Karadinos D. (eds), 2014).

Stricter rules for obtaining unemployment benefit

This measure initiated in 2013 in the context of the second financial agreement between the Greek Government and troika.

From 01.01.2013 onwards, the total number of days the unemployed is subsidized cannot exceed a maximum of 450 days during the last four years and from 01.01.2014 onwards, it cannot exceed a maximum of 400 days during the last four years (Law 3986/2011, Law 4093/2012).

Additionally, the minimum contributions required increase from 75 to 80 full-time working days during the last two years from which 125 working days must be covered during the last 14 months not taking account the last 2 months (Dimoulas, 2013).

The cuts and the tightening of the criteria for the reimbursement of unemployment benefits to the unemployed beneficiaries was a result of wider changes in the labour legislation. These changes occurred in the context of Memoranda on fiscal adjustment concluded by Greece and its European partners and the International Monetary Fund (the so-called “Troika”).

The measure aimed at reducing the level of unemployment benefits to lower levels than the minimum wage, which fell under the same contextual changes. Innovation experienced severe reactions at the level of social agencies and trade unions, etc., but they did not focus on the specific measure but, on a broader level, on the institutionalization of memoranda and their mid-term implementation plan.

This measure was enforced by the Troika and answered to the main argument for the fiscal consolidation of the Greek economy and for achieving the sustainability of the social security system. For its application, there was no prior consultation with social agencies and social partners. There was also a strong absence of consensus between professional associations, opposition parties, internal public administration officers and overall the Greek society.

The innovation was applied to the central political level and was implemented by the National Employment Agency (OAED). As noted in the interviews, that measure was not based on any specific study or empirical data for its implementation. It was only as a symptom of broader changes in the field of economy and in the labour market.

A key parameter was the tightening of the criteria of the benefit returns. Consequently, at a time when unemployment increases, the number of beneficiaries has decreased considerably. An indication is that only a 10% of the total number of unemployed is unemployed benefit recipients (www.oeaed.gr)

A particularly adverse impact of the implementation of this innovation is reserved for the seasonal workers. In the pre-crisis period, the seasonal workers were employed for approximately five to six months a year and they had the opportunity to obtain the allowance for another two or three months. After the general changes, this sector is significantly affected as well, as noted from the interviews, and they end up being entitled to the allowance every four years. According to the OAED, the seasonally subsidized unemployed persons from 82 299 in December 2010 fell to 56 199 people in December 2013. The number of unemployed receiving the common public unemployment benefits fell to 113 813 people in December 2013 from 195 605 subsidized persons in December 2010, and those registered as unemployed rose in the period above from 653 552 people in 859 400 people (www.oeaed.gr).

Stricter rules for retirement

The measure implies the gradual increase of the minimum years of full-time employment required as a condition for receiving the old-age pension. Since 2015,

the level of pensions will be determined according to the sum of all the contributions instead of the average sum of the best five years. The mean annual actuarial rate is not permitted to be higher than 1,2%.

The agenda for reforms in the social security system also occurred based on fiscal consolidation and economic viability. This is a long-running dispute between the Greek governments, trade unions and the society. In the past decades, the Greek governments several times attempted unsuccessfully to introduce mild reforms in order to control deficits in the pension insurance funds. These changes failed to be implemented because there was no consensus between the objectives and the method of implementation of the reforms, the social dialogue was scrappy and the unions considered it to be ostensible. Also, the proposed changes were not documented on reliable evidence and the actuarial studies which were invoked to justify the proposed reforms were made by groups of technocrats, in the selection of whom social partners did not participate, and they were viewed as biased. In addition, throughout the entire period from 1995-2010, various methods unsuccessfully attempted to reform the pension system, the early retirement measure constituted a general practice to facilitate the restructuring of enterprises in both the public and the private sectors.

All the reforms that were not implemented in the past, an attempt was made to be applied directly and violently during the period of crisis. The pressures that were exerted by the economic downturn, led to the adoption of measures without compliance with the anticipated procedures, including consultation of the social partners and in general the provision of consent by social security agencies. Indicative here is the testimony of a former Minister, who denounced the non-cooperation of the insurance organizations, which created delays in the implementation of the measure. Reactions were certainly much smaller, in proportion to the reforms and the past, which is interpreted in a wider inertia of the Greek society in the face of the acute effects of the economic crisis.

The consequence of this reform was a large number of workers who were planning to retire in the near future to lose this right, sometimes at a breaking point (cases were reported of workers who lost their right to retirement because they were only a few months short of the appropriate period of time). However, the implementation of the extension measure for the retirement age in the early years, brought in many cases the exact opposite effects, as a direct increase of the official retirement age by two years was established by Law (from 60 to 62 for those working more than 40 years or in heavy and arduous professions, and from 65 to 67 years for most workers) (Law 3863/2010). Yet, it also predicted a gradual increase for many special groups (from 2013 until the end of 2015), thus the number of early retirees was increased by 150,000 within two years, the number of employees

mainly in the public sector who lost their work and the know-how of valuable managers was significantly reduced, and the insurance funds had to bear the reimbursement of additional retirement costs. The interviews with insurance providers and researchers reveal that the imposition of the measure during the first year led to a completely opposite situation. There was a big wave of applications for early retirement, only to avoid experiencing worse insurance conditions.

The most striking example is the field of the own-account workers. In the pre-crisis period, professionals that belong in this category remained in the labour market ever after the pension entitlement. The recession brought about by the crisis in the market, the burden of social security contributions and the deteriorating social conditions after the reform, they all resulted in a dramatically changing of the image of many freelancers, who resorted massively to the solution of the early retirement.

A respective soaring retirement trend is observed in the public sector by those employees who had secured a pension entitlement. Here, the wage cuts, the threat of temporary lay-offs and redundancies and the loss of insurance rights pushed a large number of people towards retirement, while they could still be active workers. In other words, the measure resulted in turning a large number of workers, about 50 or a little more, to pensioners in the first years of its implementation.

Therefore, despite the implementation of this intervention, a 'resistance' to the phenomenon of early retirement is evident. In the absence of other employment policies, the practice of early retirement in Greece has always been a measure of income to financially support older workers who lose their jobs. The first years of implementation of these changes appear to have no substantial effect on putting an end to the phenomenon.

Financial assistance for the ergonomic arrangement of the work place for disabled employees

Firms which occupy persons with disabilities can ask the employment authorities to subsidize the cost for the arrangement of their working place in order to be comfortable to the employees with disabilities. This particular initiative started in 1998 but the subsidies came to an end in 2008 because of the crisis. Currently, a small proportion of the private firms (for 50 persons with disabilities) that will occupy subsidized persons with disabilities will get back 90% of the cost and a maximum of 2500 euros (Law 2643/1998).

The measure of the ergonomic design for the access of People with Disabilities in Employment is a robust employment policy for the specific vulnerable social group. Its philosophy aims at eliminating objective obstacles that people with disabilities face to gain free access to their jobs. Within this framework, we may place related

issues such as reasonable adjustments and the appropriate ergonomic design of workplaces and interventions that will facilitate this goal.

It is an active employment policy adopted in the 1998 Act and is incorporating the EU Directive on the elimination of discrimination in employment. The interviews showed that in the years of crisis, the measure of reasonable adjustments shall essentially become 'obsolete'. The crisis exacerbates the unemployment levels in the general population, so for those who already face problems, such as people with disabilities, the situation is even more difficult.

The main problem to be identified on the ergonomic design is that there its initial implementation is either partial or non-existent. As it is mentioned, there are a few cases in which reasonable adjustments have been implemented in the companies. Even then, the ergonomic design of workspaces may be fragmented and there may be no overall concern for the smooth employment of people with disabilities.

Some indicative examples that were mentioned are: the existence of a ramp at the entrance to the business, but the absence a toilet for the needs of people with disabilities. Or, it could also be the case that some access areas may have been designed in some parts of the business, but they may not be compatible with the workplace of persons with disabilities. Such problems result in persons with disabilities to work in other positions than those intended, exclusively on the basis of their accessibility to these positions.

At the same time, the measure of the ergonomic design is intertwined and influenced by broader problems that are caused by the crisis and at a later stage they concern the employment of people with disabilities. The recession and the soaring unemployment affect significantly the implementation of employment programs for this social group. In general, it is noted that the framework of employment policies for people with disabilities shows a need to adapt to the conditions and data of the crisis by abandoning the aspects that decisively discourage employers from hiring them. More specifically, the measure of non-dismissal of other workers which is a prerequisite for obtaining a grant for the employment of people with disabilities appears unlikely to be implemented. In other words, the organizations of persons with disabilities reported that, in times of rising redundancies, it is unrealistic the granting of a job for persons with disabilities to entail an overall prohibition of any other redundancies for the company.

At the same time, it seems that the crisis leads to the interruption of the subsidies to jobs for persons with disabilities by large enterprises, which traditionally applied the measure to a certain percentage of their employees. This phenomenon is based on exactly the same factor as mentioned above, that is, on the general prohibition of redundancies as to receive the subsidies.

An additional issue was raised as a factor of discouraging the use of the measure, that is the complex bureaucratic procedure and the conditions required to be met by employers. As already mentioned, the bureaucratic requirements of the public administration are so great that, in reality, they constitute a real disincentive to employers to proceed with such recruitments.

Last, but of equal importance, an issue that concerns in general the employment of persons with disabilities is the incompatibility of the receipt of the disability allowance. In other words, with the beginning of the employment of persons with disabilities, the invalidity allowance by the state is automatically cut off. This treaty is an essential disincentive, as it is reasonable to prefer to obtain the allowance, rather than to be part of a daily, pressing and painful framework such as the workplace.

3. Assessment of the influence of different factors and parameters on the performance of the innovations

The first key element perceived, is the lack of specialized human resources for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the technical issues relating to employment policies. This underlines the need for an extended training of the personnel of the institutions on the technical issues relating to their competence. In other words, it is necessary to engage and use more technocrats in matters of public administration.

Concerning the context in which the scene was set for the implementation of measures, in all cases the reduction in liquidity and the financial deficiency prevail. This is due to the effects of the crisis and the tough budgetary adjustment measures that were implemented. More specifically, the top down initiative for their adoption dominant is set to become dominant. Something that is conducted by terms imposed by the supranational environment and more specifically by the Troika (see: restraint of unemployment benefits, extension of the retirement age) or after the configuration of measures compatible with the EU guidelines by the Greek government (see: Voucher programs and community service, employment of persons with disabilities). Besides, innovations that do not constitute simply regulations but their implementation requires funding for specific actions, these are selected and adopted mainly because they can be financed and secondarily based on the criterion of the intended objectives.

The adoption of these measures does not seem to experience special impediments, proportionally to the size of the cuts with which they intertwine and proportionally to strong reactions that were expressed in pre-crisis reformative attempts respectively. The limited -compared with the past- range of reactions occurs due to a

generalized public discourse on the bankruptcy of the country which requires consolidation measures in the name of economic viability.

Nevertheless, the interviews revealed the absence of consent between those responsible for each policy institution. However, these reactions do not seem to be taken into account particularly, due to the lack of meaningful consultation. The phenomenon existed before the crisis. What is different during the crisis, is that, in many cases the process of consultation is completely bypassed because of the urgent nature of the implementation of the measures. These measures which do not have the consent of the involved actors; in many cases, the necessary consultation process was not conducted and, to a large extent, come from above to ensure the consent of the parties that form the majority in the Greek parliament. Yet, they lack the support of the trade unions and other social organizations which, although being weak partisan veto-players, in several cases, they go to court for the modification or abolition of institutional arrangements that impose restrictive policies -mainly on pensions- with a strong element of enforcement or adaptation to the EU guidelines.

The configuration of the measures that were examined did not rely on specific elements or on empirical studies. This raises major concerns about the successful fulfilment of the objectives pursued, as they do not consider the real dimensions and the special characteristics of the problem of unemployment. As a rule, concerning the interventions financed by the EU, the dominant criterion in the design and implementation of policies is the funding and secondly the achievement of objectives.

For these reasons, the adaptation of existing activities does not become evident in the characteristics of the Greek labour market. Particularly, in the case of vouchers, it is a measure that is inspired by similar practices in other countries, but the method of its implementation was not adjusted to the conditions of the Greek labour market. As a result of this lack of method, horizontal training activities were implemented that were concerned workforce that was already trained (see. young people with tertiary education), and sessions of practice without considering whether and to what extent they met the needs of both the unemployed and the businesses. The lack of proper planning and adjustments of the measure led, to a large extent, as it is mentioned later, to replace the full-time employees with the beneficiaries of the program.

Also, in all cases, there was no pilot implementation of the measures. For the Greek case, this could initially be seen as an expected fact, whether they were short-term measures, at least with regard to active employment policies, or they were institutional interventions with regard to passive employment policies (see. unemployment benefit cuts, lengthening of the retirement age limits).

At the same time, the multilateralism in the implementation process of these measures (EU, central, regional, local level and civil society) has negative effects on the coordination process. The involvement of many actors from every level policy causes delays and brings out a new version of problems in the bureaucratic system in Greece. In this case, the main problems seem to be caused by the involvement of the central level. While, the overall shortages of labour, as well as the deficiencies in qualified personnel lead to a considerable inertia delaying or blocking the normal development of these policies.

Another problem that creates resentment and operational impediments, is the delayed disbursement of bound funds to finance employment programs, which is due to the different rules that follow the regulations of the Structural Funds and the rules governing the Greek accounting system that were applied. Moreover, this malfunction is enhanced by the poor coordination and the lack of competent staff to perform the relevant procedures. Equally, major problems arise by the involvement of NGOs in the processes of distribution of the existing financial and human resources.

The poor coordination is largely a consequence of bureaucratic pathologies of the Greek public administration. This phenomenon also occurs in durable employment policies such as employment subsidy programs for people with disabilities. As mentioned in the interviews by the relevant agencies, the multiple conditions and rigid criteria for the entrepreneurs to receive the subsidy, create disincentives and discourage the businesses of hiring people with disabilities in their businesses.

Major problems also appear in the policy monitoring procedures during the implementation phase. The significant shortage in labour inspectors from the central level has resulted in the weak systematic monitoring of application framework of the measure. This shows the gap that exists along with many complaints from institutions about corruption in private vocational training centres which implemented the Voucher program.

The evaluation of measures remains weak and there is no substantial effect on the feedback on new policy interventions. This fact was evident in Greece even before the crisis outbreak. The answers of the executives revealed that the increased pumping of Community funds for the implementation of employment policies leads to the integration and the assessment procedures at the end of policies. However, this stage so far is likely to hold a typical function, rather than a substantive and in-depth assessment of strengths and weaknesses, the advantages and disadvantages and the broader impact of the measure on employment target groups.

4. Conclusion

Based on the innovations presented, some key findings that may be extracted relate to their contributions to the resilience and integration of vulnerable groups in the labour market. To begin with, all the innovations under analysis met with serious impediments during the implementation phase, which had a negative effect on their efficiency. Greece is the country that is experiencing the worst effects of the economic crisis with a large increase in unemployment rates. The content of these specific innovations do not seem to be able to contribute to the resolution of the original problem, let alone to improve the resilience and integration in the labour market. This can be explained by a number of reasons arising from the findings presented above.

First, the absence of acceptance of reforms between the actors involved in the implementation of interventions is verified. This is a result of the inadequate social nature of the adopted measures and is reinforced by the absence of real consultation and a competitive party culture with doctrinal characteristics which does not work in favour of a consensus.

Second, the dominant criterion for selecting the specific innovation measures seems to be the question of the financial coverage or, more broadly speaking, to ensure their economic viability. In both cases, the roots of innovation are top down and are based on European policies. This may occur either by top down enforcement (see: pensions, unemployment benefits), or by tailoring programs according to prevailing guidelines of the European Employment Strategy (programs of active labour market policies such as vouchers, community service or ergonomic design policies of access in workplaces for people with disabilities).

Third, there is a localized failure of the effectiveness of innovative practices because of the insufficient documented design and adoption of experiments that will improve the learning processes and the implementation of policies. In particular, there is the absence of policy making that is based on data, special studies on this specific problem or on a pilot implementation of the actions before the beginning of the implementation phase. This fact greatly reduces the chances of effectiveness of the interventions. A logical consequence of the issues discussed is the failure to adapt their content to national specificities which resulted in structural pathologies in the Greek labour market to reappear even in new versions of policies (eg. bureaucracy, poor coordination, substitution of full employment, patronage networks and corruption). There is no radical influence on the feedback on the evaluation of policies. Despite the increase in the projects evaluation, due to the European origin

of the measures, there is substantial impact so far on improving the subsequent interventions.

Part Two: Policy learning adoption and policy learning infrastructures (D5.2)

1. Introduction

The aim of this report is to analyze the role played by policy learning in the adoption of selected innovations, and more generally on the role played by institutions that exist in order to promote and facilitate policy learning, what we call the « policy learning infrastructure». More specifically, based on the analysis done in part one (wp4), we analyze the critical learning instances in three out of the five innovations presented in depth. These innovations are the abolition of early retirement, the subsidized temporal employment in public agencies and local authorities and the vouchers of the entrance of unemployed youths in the labour market. These innovations and their implementation, as demonstrated in part one, are introduced in the public debate before the crisis but are intensely enforced during the crisis under the press and aegis of the so-called troika (IMF-ECB- Commission), in a destabilized economic and financial environment while their impact on the resilience of the labour market and the employment of the vulnerable groups they focus on is ambiguous.

2. The learning infrastructure policy

Since the mid-1990s, mainly from the early 2000s onwards, the consultation and documentation of employment policy institutions rose significantly by creating mechanisms of monitoring, inspection and consultation on various social issues where employment is a central issue. The role of these mechanisms may be that of an actor, a committee or an information system which collect and analyze various dimensions of the labour market and employment. They publish a schedule for regular reports and reports on the results of policies and conduct advisory work to the Government and organizations that take decisions on employment.

In addition to the administration of some of these institutions or mechanisms, representatives of social partners and other social organizations are also involved

and there is exchange of views and information regarding the different way in which each social body deals with policies and employment programs.

The chief bodies responsible for the employment policy in Greece are the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) and the National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (NILHR) that monitor and record the implementation and the results of employment policies on a constant basis. In both organizations, representatives of employers and workers are involved in their governance and, thus, provide feedback information to their organizations.

OAED is a legal entity of public law supervised by the Hellenic Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Welfare. It is directed by a Governor and an Administrative Board (www.oaed.gr).

The composition of the Administrative Board is based on the principle of a tripartite representation, since, not only state institutions but also employer and employee associations participate in it as representatives of social partners.

The OAED main policy axes may be summarized as follows:

1. Employment Promotion through programmes aiming to reduce: (a) wage labour costs and, (b) non-wage labour costs, by subsidizing social security contributions, facilitating transport from and to work, with special emphasis placed on the population groups most severely affected by unemployment, as well as vulnerable population groups.
2. Cooperation with social and local bodies within the framework of local employment programmes in which the local PES (KPA2) play a central role.
3. Counselling Services.
4. Promotion of the employees' and employers' adaptability in conjunction with employment preservation.
5. Implementation of the Vocational Education Schools' (EPAS) Apprenticeship System to the totality of OAED's educational work.
6. Matching of Work Supply and Demand with the support of Employment Counsellors and via the new OAED portal.
7. EURES network for the matching of work supply and demand at a European level.

The OAED uses its own monitoring system for the various employment measures that it implements and publishes periodic reports. It also finances evaluation studies on the impact of some but not all of its employment programs and advice the minister of employment on policies concerning employment.

The **National Institute of Labour and Human Resources (NILHR)** is a public body, operating under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare (www.eiead.gr). It was founded in 2011, as a result of the merger of the “Vocational Training SA (EIE)” and the “Employment Observatory Research Informatics SA (PAEP)”. The NILHR mission is to support the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare with regard to the policies and actions designed and implemented for the human resources in the country. In this context, the NILHR implements, monitors and analyses issues of the labour market and lifelong learning and, in particular, the evolution and structure of employment and unemployment, vocational training, labour relations and the interaction between economic and social developments for the population as a whole or for specific groups. A key objective of the NILHR is the analysis of the supply of, and demand for occupational categories and skills, and the identification of training needs at a national and a local level. The NILHR is also responsible for gathering and supplying the European Commission with the requisite data for the Labour Market Policies (LMP) database. In addition, the Institute of Labour and Human Resource Development has working groups to study the effects of the labour market policies and employment and publish an annual report concerning the employment and labour market situation and policies in Greece and its’ high level staff participate in expert committees and working groups defined by the ministry of employment with various purposes in relation to employment and training.

Two other organizations that monitor data on the labour market and publish reports are the **Labour Inspectorate (SEPE)** which inspects compliance with the law by companies and annually publish the account of his action, and the **Ombudsman's Office** who intervenes to resolve disputes among citizens in case they consider that

the public employment authorities do not respect or violate their rights regarding access to services or employment programs.

The Labour Inspectorate (SEPE) operates since 1999 and is responsible for the supervision and the enforcement of labour law provisions, research, discovery and prosecution of infringements of labour laws and illegal employment, as research on insurance coverage for workers and provide information and advice on the effective application of labour law provisions. Among the responsibilities of the SEPE, there are also inspections, measurements and sampling of firms to determine whether they comply with the provisions of labour law and the investigation of the causes of fatal and serious accidents at work and occupational diseases (www.ypakp.gr).

The **Social Control Council for Labour Inspection (S.K.E.E.E.)** functions under the SEPE with the participation of social partners. The Council is eminently competent to give opinions on issues concerning the operation and action of the body and, thus, evaluate the entire work (www.ypakp.gr).

The **Greek Ombudsman** is composed of six departments (Human Rights, Social Protection, Quality of Life, Children's Rights, Gender and Equality and State Citizen Relations) and nearly all of them relate directly or indirectly to employment issues (www.synigoros.gr). For example, the Gender and Equality department issues handles complaints with regard to the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions in all areas of the public and the private sectors, including employment, self-employment, work and pay. In addition, they handle complaints about discrimination based on sex outside the labour market, in the area of the access to and supply of goods and services. Furthermore, the department takes action on the promotion of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in cooperation with government agencies, NGOs and enterprises in the private sector, while the Social Protection department examines and mediates over complaints related to the protection of citizens' social rights and more specifically to cases concerning the areas of social policy, health, social security and welfare. The department focuses its mediatory

efforts on the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, the physically and mentally ill, the Roma, refugees or aliens etc. The Greek Ombudsman publishes every year annual reports as well as targeted reports which public authorities and politicians take into account and valorise.

As far as vocational training and its connection with the employment is concerned, the **National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP)** was created in 2010, an all-encompassing statutory body investing on better quality and more efficient & reliable lifelong learning services in Greece (www.eoppep.gr).

The EOPPEP develops and implements comprehensive national systems for the accreditation of non-formal & informal learning and provides scientific and technical support in designing and implementing the vocational guidance national policy, as well as the provision of such services in Greece.

Apart from the agencies involved directly in the employment policies, another category of agencies consists of those which have the responsibility for gathering data and monitoring labour market policies and their outcomes. The main agencies in this group are:

The **Greek Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)** which is responsible for conducting the Labour Force Survey and other surveys regarding social protection, the statistical analysis of administrative data for public policy programs and the publication of indicators that provide a general insight into employment. Unfortunately these data not allow for a deeper insight into the critical dimensions with respect to the effects of policies (www.statistics.gr). Thus, several times, the institutions and policy makers look on the data sets of the Eurostat, the OECD and the ILO for features that will enable the understanding of the employment problems faced by different social groups. In this context, they often use the comparative analysis to which the databases above are oriented and derive their argumentation from the working papers and Reports by the organizations above or by the participation in fora and conferences organized under the aegis of these organizations.

Another source of learning for employment is the **Information System "ERGANI"** that from 2013 onwards records electronically the flows of the dependent employment in the private sector of the economy, reflecting in real-time and in any part of the country critical elements of the labour market. "Ergani"'s officers provide the ministry of employment with data and opinions on various labour market issues concerning inputs and outputs in the labour market (www.ypakp.gr).

Especially for pensions, the "**E-Government Social Insurance**" public limited liability company (**I.DI.K.A.** plc.), established by the N.3607 / 2007 (Government Gazette 245 / A / 2007), has as a main purpose to report in detail the elements that refer to health services and pensions and, on the basis of elaborations conducted by the company, it publishes periodic reports to be considered by the bodies involved in the decisions regarding social security and pensions.

A major weakness of the information databases and methods that these institutions use to approach the problems of employment, training and social protection, is that they are not always compatible with each other, and they also use different coding indicators and analysis, and renew their data at different times, which result in them leading to different images and narratives of the same reality.

Another learning infrastructure is that of **social dialogue committees, consultation and expertise**. These include the **Economic and Social Committee (ESC)**, the **Parliamentary Standing Committees** and ad hoc **Expert Committees**.

The Greek **ESC** was established in 1994, based on the EU model of the ESC: a tripartite division of the interests represented, i.e. a division into three Groups, one of employers/entrepreneurs, one of private and public sector employees, and one including other categories such as farmers, self-employed people, consumers, environmental protection organizations, a confederation of persons with disabilities, gender equality organizations, and the local government (www.oke.gr).

The objective of the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) is to promote the social dialogue and through it to formulate -if possible- mutually acceptable positions on issues relating to society as a whole or to specific social groups. The aim of the ESC is not to curb different ideological and political views, but to reach and/or highlight them, by putting forward various arguments and proposals, the consensus on social and economic issues, whether it exists or can be created. Through its proposals and opinions, it also seeks to maximize the social benefit or minimise any possible negative effects of decisions taken by executive and legislative powers. Apart from these activities since 2007 ESC is very active in the field of active ageing and operates a dialogue forum about the managing of ageing.

The Greek Parliament included many **Standing Committees** to support its decision on making process. Standing Committees are instituted and composed at the onset of every Regular Session by a decision of the Speaker of the Parliament, in order to elaborate and examine Bills or Law Proposals. Following the Constitutional revision of 2001 and the respective amendments made to the Standing Orders of the Parliament, Standing Committees may also exercise both legislative work and parliamentary control. To the extend provided by legislation and the Standing Orders, they may also discuss issues that fall within their competence and give opinions on forthcoming appointments to certain public posts (www.hellenicparliament.gr).

Among the six Standing Committees, there are the Standing Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs, the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and the Standing Committee on Social Affairs as well as the Special Permanent Committee on Equality, Youth and Human Rights which has a subcommittee for people with disabilities.

Another source of learning supply is the evaluation reports conducted by independent consultants (private firms) and international organizations (e.g. OECD, World Bank). However, in Greece, there is no tradition of evaluation and exploitation of evaluation results to redesign. When evaluations are carried out, they usually refer to programs financed by the European Union and are carried out ad hoc,

without comparing, in most cases, the situation before and after the intervention, but they are limited to the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation process. Also, these reviews are usually carried out by consultancies of dubious quality and reliability and not of certified and widely recognized evaluators. They are not published out, but they remain, mainly, available to a very limited number of officials in the administration and are not used to redesign the policy but only to a very limited extent.

The picture is similar in the field of **academic research** which is mainly based on the personal initiative of researchers and is orientated exclusively to the specification and the targeting of EU programs since the domestic research funding has reached a nihilistic level. Hence, the continuity is not ensured and rarely is the local dimension evident in the implementation of employment policies.

Another learning practice that is often followed in decisions in Greece, is the creation of special expert groups composed of specialists selected from the minister of employment and experts nominated by the main social partners. These working groups undertake very specific projects whose framework and implementation criteria are preset by the political leadership, and are not generally preceded by social dialogue and consultation, which results in critical issues and challenges to be rejected by the political opposition and/or organizations whose members are affected negatively.

Moreover, the main agencies and social partners have their own think-tanks and study groups for the study of social problems they are interested in, and regularly publish reports and studies on various employment issues. In particular, the annual reports of these think-tanks draw their arguments and assist the lobby practices of the organizations to which they belong. Yet, these think-tanks use different databases and indicators, therefore, the conclusions rarely coincide with each other's suggestions and so there is not a common framework of reference for genuine consultation and consensus. The most influential reports in policy formulation are the annual reports published by the President of Creek Central Bank (www.bankofgreece.gr) , by the Industrials' think-tank IOBE (www.iobe.gr), by the Labour Institute of GSEE (General Confederation of Greek Workers)

(www.inegsee.gr) , by the Institute of Graftmen and Small Firms(www.imegsevee.gr) and by the Institute of Greek Traders (www.inemy.gr).

The learning infrastructure in Greece is penetrated by the relationship with government and the political party networks. The government party apparatus, which is structured on clientele networks, intervenes in the appointment of staff responsible in key areas of the public policy, which turns it into a mechanism of filtering findings and proposals as these are expressed by the formal institutional learning and decision-making process. Furthermore, the great influence of the government party apparatus is manifested in the frequent changes that are observed in the categories used for analysis, the indicators and report findings and the reports published by the organizations which hold the responsibility for monitoring and analyzing the social problems.

The public services do not record the various data regarding the different policies followed in a systematic and reliable way. As a consequence the evidence that could support decision-making are frequently considered as biased and not sufficiently reliable.

In this context, consultation and social dialogue do not enjoy the necessary consensus and trust from the institutions involved and are treated several times as ostensible. Thus, in the frame above, evidence based policies are of limited weight and decisions based on learning come from the information networks of think tanks and the mobilization of different lobbies.

3. The role of policy learning in the adoption of the selected innovations.

Increasing the age of early retirement and abolition of early retirement

The question of raising the retirement age is a complex problem associated with the long-term evolution of the demographic problem, the amount and distribution of the public expenditure and the way in which the foundations of the pension system and its various pillars were originally settled and laid. Attempts for its reformation

affect in different ways the different groups of insured persons according to the age, the time remaining until retirement and the rules that govern their insurance policy. During the 1980s, the pension benefits were increased and early retirement programs were implemented primarily in companies that were facing financial difficulties and to avoid bankruptcy, they became public. Also, the retirement age in several groups of workers was reduced in order to facilitate the renewal of the workforce in large public and private enterprises. This measure was combined with voluntary retirement programs of work, while safeguarding the retirement conditions of the workers leaving the workforce. A technique adopted to this purpose was that of the recognition of "notional time of insurance" for early retirement, a technique that was later widely used by the party system as to meet the demands of corporatist employee groups which supported each time the current government party and were strong "partisan veto-players" in the party apparatus (Tsebelis, 2002). This is a game of "credit claiming" (Bonoli, 2012) which was benefited by the strong two-party system and the alternation of governments in the context of the "two-party-system". These policies adopted in the context of strong electoral competition have led to shorten the average retirement age and significantly burdened the public funds. While evidence was not taken seriously into account in policy formulation because the party activists were accusing the expert groups as unreliable and biased, the adaptation of innovative ideas with the goal to solve structural problems such as the sustainability of the pension funds or that of high unemployment levels, in the context of austerity and retrenchment. The policy learning was obscured because of the competitive arguments raised in public discourse from the different think tanks and expert groups and were influencing the stakeholders proposals and their consensus on the selected solutions.

Another mechanism that influenced the reduction of the retirement age from the mid-1980s onwards, is the "maturing" of the pension system and notably the institution of heavy and arduous professions. This institution, which was created in 1952 and was activated in 1964, provides for the possibility of receiving pension five years earlier than the official age limits for those who belong to the so-called heavy and arduous professions, i.e. those professions that are carried out under particularly unfavorable operating conditions such as those of dockworkers and

miners. Gradually, under the political pressure of different professional groups, the list of heavy and arduous professions was enlarged in early 2000 as to contain a total of nearly 30% of the workforce.

A third arrangement that affects the low retirement age limits is a weak welfare state which did not have the possibility to implement rational social policy as to solve the problems that arose and affected different social groups which by using the mechanism of pensions is not burden directly the state budget but the pension funds. Here are basically the arrangements for mother care, persons with disabilities or orphans for the care of which the pension mechanisms that had been established for the security forces and the military were utilized. More specifically, because of the fact that until 1974 the life expectancy of the military was low because of the frequent state of war, they were eligible to retire after the completion of 25 years of service, regardless of their age and, at the same time, a special social security scheme was established for members of their family through favorable retirement conditions.

Thus, through incremental reforms that were based on already existing path-dependent approaches, the retirement ages fell dramatically, the number of pensioners increased and (along with the decline in the birth rate) the ratio of pensioners to workers was burdened. This structural problem was already identified in studies conducted by academics and think-tanks of the social partners since the early 1990s -especially those of trade unions and employers' organizations that express large private companies-, but the governments trapped by the constraints that are imposed by the dominant two-party system for maneuver and possibilities of the partisan veto -players to influence the election result by moving to the other party, each time they transferred the problem to the next government, seeking to avoid taking decisions that they assumed they would have a negative electoral effect (blame -avoidance) (Weaver& Rockman,1993).

The first serious attempt to reform the pension system made in 1997 with the appointment of an expert group composed of academics and state officers leaded by professor Spraos who hand worked as national delegate in IMF. The so-called "Sprao's Committee" predicted the collapse of the financial liquidity of Greek pension system until 2005 and proposed the rapid rise in minimum retirement age,

the adoption of stricter actuarial principles and the gradual abolition of the pay-as-you – go principle causing strong reactions from trade unions and the dissolution of this

“Wise men’s Committee”. A few years afterwards the Minister of Labour and Academic Anastasios Gianitsis assigned to the UK Government Actuaries’ Department to conduct an actuarial study on the Greek Pension System and to suggest alternative solutions for its problems. The UK actuaries recommended rapid reductions of the provisions to pensioners, the abolition of early retirement and special regulations for arduous professions and the rise of the minimum age of retirement. Minister Gianitsis adopted most of these recommendations and suggested to the social partners to discuss them in order to proceed to legislative reforms. The trade unions whose activists were mainly members of the governing party PASOK, rejected these proposals and organized demonstrations all over Greece managing to cancel their adoption and the dismissal of the Minister (Mizirakis, 2006). The alternative argument based on studies conducted from the think-tank of Greek Trade Unions the Labour Institute of GSEE (INE/GSEE) and supported by trade unionist and left activists, who became later members of SYRIZA, suggested the legislation of financial contributions from the state budget to the pension funds and the undertaking of a concrete action plan in order to minimize the very high level of evasions of contributions (estimated at nearly 35-40% of total contributions) and to reduce gradually via unifications the large number of pension funds.

The previous targeted expert groups, which involved Greek academics and experts with experience from other countries and international organizations (e.g. OECD and IMF), were not based on social dialogue and consensus on the objectives as well as the standards they were following in order to determine the problem and formulate proposals. In addition, the data utilized were disputed as being selective and biased, while politicians used their proposals to legalize changes that always excluded some endearing political professional groups, so they did not acquire the necessary consensus on their implementation. For example in 2002, a special scientific committee was established by the Law 3029/2002 to review the list of heavy and arduous professions as to reduce the number of employees that were included in them in order to increase the retirement age and to enhance the employment rates

of older workers in line with the guidelines of the European Employment Strategy. However, the committee soon dropped the case because it thought that it lacked the necessary elements to proceed with its work.

In 2007, when a similar committee was set up for the same purpose under the provisions of N.3483 / 2006, the goal setting and the operation mode was deemed to be discriminatory and led to the withdrawal of the trade union representatives as a result of the findings, to be adopted on one hand by the government but, on the other hand, to be challenged by unions and, no consensus to be evident on their application, although the new regulation was implemented to apply to those ensured since 2008 onwards. In this context a combination of factors and variables composed of the two-party system, the partisan veto players (trade unions and leftist activists), the opportunistic appointment of expert- groups without the consensus of the main stakeholders on their working method and goals, promote alternative political learning and obscure policy learning.

The approach to the problem of early retirement directly shifted to the choice of "shock-therapy" under the auspices of the IMF in 2012, when suddenly, the age limits for pensions were increased by two years and a transitional period of three years was established for the complete abolishment of the early retirements. This decision was combined with measures that aimed to limit the influx of pension claims on the part of the employees in order to prevent the exploitation the previous settings for personal gain. These measures would be the reduction of pensions by 70% for those working pensioners and the increase of penalties for those who retire early. The last measure was imposed on the private sector since 2002 but had no practical effect because the older workers faced with the risk of long-term unemployment where workers do not receive unemployment benefits choose to receive pension even if this is very reduced. Therefore, the retirement applications increased sharply and instead of an increase in the proportion of older workers there was a decline from 43% in 2008 (59.2 for men and 27.5 for women) to 34% in 2014 (44% for men and 25% for women). The rapid changes on the goals and instruments on pension policy imposed by "troika" as a necessary precondition for the provision of financial assistance to the Greek State in order to overcome the risk of default to

its debtors, and implemented through the supervision of the legislative and administrative procedures for their successful implementation by establishing a special “task-force” of foreign experts who settled in Greece and worked hand-in-hand with Greek public officers and ministerial advisors.

The Temporal Subsidized Employment for Public Benefit

The roots of the temporary subsidized employment programs in community service in Greece are traced in the efforts by municipalities to benefit from the programs of the EU Structural Fund to integrate the special groups of unemployed into the employment sector. In the early 1990s, with the assistance of the European Social Fund, the Local Employment Pacts were applied in areas that had very high unemployment levels, where -for a period of 12-24 months- employment of long-term unemployed social organizations and local governments was subsidized, mainly in social care work and care of public spaces (parks, squares etc.). These practices were also applied in the context of the Community Initiatives such as Youthstart programs, Leader, Equal, Horizon etc.

In the 2000s and in order to facilitate the temporary subsidized employment, the ability of municipalities to employ staff was established regardless of the rules governing their permanent staff. Specifically, the Law 3250/2004 introduced the possibility of public bodies and institutions of local government to employ staff on fixed-term or part-time contracts (the priority is given to young people who are long-term unemployed or long-term unemployed who are close to the retirement age) subject to private law in order to provide social services to citizens. This regulation has been used by the local authorities in order to employ staff under the "Local Employment Initiatives" programs that were financed by national and European funds until 2008. So, through the initiatives taken by the European Funds and the exchange of views in fora, conferences and Peer Reviews, that were held in the context of the European Strategy OMC for Employment, a new practice of internship was gradually created as well as a new category of workers, that of workers who are temporarily employed in subsidized jobs in the social sector.

At the onset of the crisis in 2008, the practice above was discussed with consultation agencies responsible for employment policies and social partners and was combined with the experience brought by academics and researchers of Greek origin who had worked on projects run by the US Levy Economics Institute of Bard College in South Africa, India, and other developing countries (Antonopoulos, 2008 a, Antonopoulos 2008 b). Some of these researchers became executive political consultants for the Greek government and carried out studies targeted to the implementation of relevant programs in Greece. One of them, the Associate Professor Antonopoulos retained a cooperative relationship with the Labour Institute of GSEE (the think-tank of the Greek trade unions) and conducted an appointed study on the role of temporal employment in public works, whose recommendations adopted from the General Confederation of Greek Workers (Antonopoulos, 2015) and part of them included in the Political Program of the main opposition party –SYRIZA. After securing financing through the EU program of development NSRF, these programs were implemented in 2010 while, at the same time, the period of subsidized employment was limited to five months in order to cover a larger number of - mainly long-term- unemployed with a view to reducing social exclusion that the long-term unemployed are faced with in Greece (European Commission, 2013, European Commission, 2014).

The expectations created by this program regarding the management capacity of the acute effects of long-term unemployment and of the support of social cohesion, strengthened the social acceptance of the program. However, the first evaluation of the program was not very positive regarding the implementation of standards and the argument for their review was enhanced with a simultaneous numerical extension. A key role in this development was played by the integration of a variation of these programs in the political agenda of the opposition party SYRIZA which promised to the electorate the creation of 200,000 new jobs under the scheme of temporal employment in public and community works. When SYRIZA took the government of the country in 2015, assigned the portfolio of the Ministry of Employment to the supporter of these proposals Rania Antonopoulos and the administration of the National Employment Agency (OAED) to the Professor at

Panteion University Maria Karamesini who is also a supporter of temporal subsidized employment in public works and community services as well as in the private sector and was the coordinator of SYRIZA's working group on employment policies. Under the political supervision of Rania Antonopoulos hired as advisors a couple of researchers and experts in the Ministry of Employment who are supporters of these policies and special working groups were set up in order to implement these programs as soon as possible with the financial assistance of EU funds. Thus, in 2015 the subsidized employment programs in the civic sector were redesigned so that the beneficiaries are ensured and paid the basic salary as regular employees.

Training and Work Experience Vouchers for the entrance of youths in the labour market.

The "Voucher for the entrance in the labour market" program was discussed for the first time in the context of the Scientific Committee of the National Council of Association of Vocational Training to Employment (ESSEEKA), when it was proposed by the then Designated Secretary of the Operational Program for the Development of Human Resources of the Ministry of Employment and member of the above mentioned Scientific Committee Constantine Tsoutsouplidis, to adopt this instrument in order to limit clientelist relationships in the subsidized training programs, to strengthen the individual choice and responsibility of the unemployed and to reduce the distortions created in the training market by the mediating role of the Training Centers. This assigned political officer conveyed to the Committee the experience that he had gained in his previous job as a technocrat in the European Commission in Brussels. Some union representatives in the committee reacted claiming that the voucher schemes in training would weaken the position of the unemployed into the labour market as most of them received no other benefit other than the voucher, and this will gradually lead to the withdrawal of the state from its responsibility to protect the unemployed, a view that reflected the official position of the unions. On the contrary, employers reacted favorably to this prospect, so a pilot implementation of a program was proposed to be finance by the Operational Program for the Development of Human Resources in Greece which is part of the National Reference Framework 2007-13, financed from EU. Despite securing

funding, the planned pilot implementation remained inactive because of reaction expressed by Vocational Training Centers and non-governmental organizations which, until then, were implementing vocational training programs for the unemployed in a totally different method and logic.

However, the inclusion of the project in the Operational Program remained and it enforced as an urgent reaction to the crisis and the rising youths' unemployment without pilot implementation in 2011.

The purpose of the first implementation of the program was to address the negative effects of unemployment that was caused by the austerity measures that took effect in 2011, when the then government of the Socialist Party (PASOK) adopted the vouchers-scheme as an effective instrument in order to increase the effectiveness of training and the employment opportunities for youths after recommendations expressed by government advisers who were working earlier as experts in the World Bank and the IMF.

The implementation of this measure took effect in a confrontational environment with the absence of any social dialogue and extensive consultation with the parties involved in the decision and the implementation of employment policies or with key executives and first-line managers of organizations that focus on the implementing of this policy, with the unique perhaps exception of some private training centers and employers in the tourism industry. The former thought of the program as an opportunity to raise money from compulsory training for the unemployed before placing them in subsidized internships and, the latter as an opportunity for free seasonal employment for the unemployed, who substituted and covered positions in the normal seasonal employment.

The mid-term evaluation of programs, although it is descriptive and does not refer to critical and controversial social dialogue points of the program, it highlighted the effect of substitution but was not published or presented by the appropriate institutions and remained available to a limited number of executive institutions. The result was that the program did not work as a mechanism to enhance learning. On the contrary, the creation of an association of beneficiaries of voucher programs and their fighting spirit of action (with protests and communications to the trade unions,

the political parties and the media) sensitized a significant number of politicians, and the revision or repeal of such employment programs is already under discussion.

The role of policy learning

In Greece, the function of the learning infrastructure is fragmentary and it lacks critical data and indicators. Thus, the development of evidence-based methods is very limited and is often based on partial, biased or too general and vague data to support any decision-making. The almost exclusive funding of employment innovations (when these necessitate the allocation of cash resources for their implementation) from the European Social Fund, sets up a grid of regulations and administrative procedures that hinder the implementation of employment innovations. The complex administrative procedures that are applied several times in the programs, do not allow for the proper recording of administrative data or the indicators flow around them and the players involved in the decision-making.

The choice of the executive management on the basis of party criteria and clientelist relationship and the dominant role of the governmental mechanism in the public services, also prevents the adoption and the use of the evidence-based approach in the field of employment policies.

Furthermore, the strong partisanship usually leads to ostensible procedures of social dialogue, where a partial consensus is achieved, generally that of the stakeholders that belong to the same political party. This political tradition and practice, in combination with the strong two-party system that prevailed after 1974, led to the prevalence of the political phenomenology of "two opposing and hostile worlds" that prevents the development of sincere dialogue and consensus on how to deal with social problems which, therefore, prevents learning.

Faced with all these political and administrative weaknesses, the normal learning processes are those inspired by the mobilization of the beneficiaries of policies, the international organizations and the conferences organized under their auspices, the international databases and the interpersonal linkages of researchers with executives who receive critical decisions about the design and the conduct of policy.

The main route to policy learning, apart from the need of public authorities to respond to the demands raised by stakeholders, is that of the transformation of

experiences of other countries via the occupation of experts with international experience as consultants, advisors and responsible officers in the state apparatus and in public agencies.

Concerning the voucher scheme the route to learning was that of the transformation of EU recommendations by occupying as key policy makers expert of Greek origin who were previously working in EU services. These policy makers responded to the demand to reduce the influence of clientelism in employment measures with the adoption of vouchers as the proper policy instrument.

The rise of the minimum age for retirement and the abolishment of early retirement imposed as a precondition for financial assistance from EU and IMF after several failures to be introduced as recommendations from international think tanks and experts' committees in the context of social dialogue. The specification of these innovations in Greek reality are implemented by appointing a special "task-force" composed of experts who settled in Greek Pension funds as consultants and technical advisors to the Greek bureaucracy.

As far as concerning the program of temporal public employment the policy learning route applied was that of gaining experience from other countries by occupying two academic experts as Minister of Employment as well as governor in the National Employment Agency.

These alternative routes to policy learning demonstrate that in the context of disagreements and political opposition the imposition of new goals and policy instruments is strengthened by using financial tools supported by the occupation of policy expert who agree with the goals of the policy as extra technical advisors during the implementation of the policy innovation. Additionally the experience from other countries is adapted effectively in Greece country if high level academics and experts in these specific innovations are occupied as key policy-makers in governmental positions and leading staff in the agencies responsible for the adoption and implementation of the innovation.

4. General conclusion

The facilitation of learning by institutions and training institutions of employment policies in Greece relates to the relations of these institutions with the environment and the supporting structures, and the procedures of dialogue and the exchange of

information that to enable the reflection and the review of concepts for the ways of addressing the employment problems. The main parameters that influence this process are:

- a) The interconnection of information databases that are available to various research and policy makers. This relationship in Greece is very weak or non-existent.
- b) The nature of the data that are recorded and set the indicators for employment and the employment actions that are taken at a both national and local level and the extent to which they allow these robust, reliable and acceptable comparisons for different groups of workers and unemployed persons.
- c) The techniques and the dissemination and promotion channels of new knowledge results either from the evaluation of research policies or the analysis survey of problems relating to employment.
- d) The relationship of research to policy and the way fora and conferences function, and the publications in the electronic and the printed media.
- e) The social dialogue culture that is founded in the institutions and developed by the policy bodies as well as the active presence of 'competitive' decision-making and exercise of employment policies such as the patronage networks and personal relationships.
- f) The mobilization of groups facing employment problems or of the beneficiaries of the implementation of different employment measures.

Regarding the European Union, its role is positive for learning in issues that relate to the elimination of discrimination and to the facilitation of the access of vulnerable groups in the labour market. A number of Community directives that were incorporated in the Greek legislation, resulted in the adoption of certain minimum standards for different aspects of employment policies (such as the quality and accessibility of employment services and the subsidized employment programs) for which no systematic assistance was provided by the Greek social protection system. On the contrary, the role of the EU on issues relating to a broader employment policy is perceived to be negative. In particular, the current form of the measures (voucher / community service and measures relating to pensions) are perceived by

key-actors of the employment policies as a result of active employment policies and flexible labour relations that are promoted by the EU Member States.

The ways in which the EU demonstrates its effects on specific policy areas may vary. The main references are made to forms of financial coverage, technology transfer and promotion of efficient practices through data collection and experience sharing across the Member States. The absence of binding to non-EU economic practices does not help in achieving the necessary Europeanization on a level of administrative mechanisms. Such a convention would be able to lead to the solution of chronic problems of the Greek public administration, such as bureaucracy, the clientele networks and corruption. Finally, there is a growing involvement of those institutions that were surveyed in European networks, conferences and other fora. The EU has a positive impact on the development of transnational cooperation among institutions, the collection of facts and raw data, such as the exchange of experiences between different Member States.

However, there is a general negative perception of the EU's influence on the content and the final result in mandatory interventions relating to the economic dimension of the labour market. There is persistence on active employment policies ignoring the lack of allowance protection of the unemployed which in times of crisis are “normalized” and become dominant in the management of the high unemployment rates. An exception to this negative perception could be considered to be the EU influence on the elimination of discrimination in the access to the labour market of vulnerable social groups.

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Appendix

List of Interviewees

Number of Interviewee	Name and Surname	Role-responsibilities(e.g.ex-minister, consultant to the minister, governor, president, social worker, employment consultant etc)
01	Panos Tsakoglou	Professor AUEB, Chairman of the Council of Economic Experts (advisor to the ministry of Economics)
02	Ioannis Tolidis	Consultant to the Vice-Minister of Employment , Ministry of Labour
03	Vasileios Kegkeroglou	Member of Parliament, former-Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Welfare
04	Maria Ioannidou	Consultant of the Greek Economic and Social Committee (ESC)
05	Katerina Ganidi	Consultant to the Minister of Labour, Social Insurance and Welfare
06	Panagis Karelis	President of Athens' Traders Association
07	Giorgos Koutroumanis	Former-Minister of Labour and Social Insurance
08	Stamatis Vardaros	Scientific Fellow, Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants (GSEVEE)
09	Giorgos Kyriakopoulos	President of the national trade union of employees in

		IKA(National Insurance fund for workers and employees)
10	Despoina Spanou	Trade unionist
11	Euangelia Fagkra	Member of OAEE(National insurance fund of free-lancers and self-employed)
12	Theodoros Ambatzoglou	Former-Governor of OAED(National Employment Organization)
13	Eleutherios Eleutheriou	Scientific Fellow, ESEE(National Confederation of traders)
14	Athena Diakoumakou	Member of Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Welfare
15	Manolis Kontopanos	Member of the Board of Directors of GSEE(General Confederation of Greek Workers)
16	Kostas Fothiadakis	Member of the trade union of Voucher Programs Beneficiaries
17	Eleni Lampritzzi	Member of the Hellenic Institute of Labour and Human Resources
18	Theofanis Koumpis	Employee on the social services department of the Municipality of Spata-Artemida
19	Maria Katsani	Street-level Employee of the Social Services department of the Municipality of Nea Ionia
20	Dimitris Konstantakopoulos	Street-level Employee of the Social Services department of the Municipality of Aigaleo

21	Menelaos Theodoroulakis	Executive Member of KOISPE (NGO supporting disable persons)
22	Paraskeui Tsavalia	Consultant to the Regional Authority of Attiki
23	Giannis Lymvaios	Member of the Board of Directors of ESAMEA (National Confederation of Disabled Persons)
24	Konstantinos Bartzeliotis	Scientific Fellow of the Greek Ombudsman
25	Sophia Stauropoulou	Member of the managing council of the Regional Authority of Athens