



Project number: 101126432

Call: SOCPL-2022-IND-REL

Task 3_3

**Role of social partners and policy makers in developing,
implementing and monitoring youth-oriented policies**

COUNTRY REPORT

GREECE

Εργασιακός Οδηγός Νέων

Ερωτήσεις - Απαντήσεις



LABOUR INSTITUTE (INE GSEE)

of the GREEK GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR (GSEE)



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A. Country Overview of Social Dialogue for Youth Policies

1. Introduction

The report employs a qualitative methodology grounded in stakeholder engagement, policy document analysis, and interviews. It incorporates case studies from two Greek cities, Heraklion and Lamia, to analyse the implementation and impact of youth policies at the urban level. The methodology includes consultations with social partners and local authorities, combined with desk research to gather insights into policy frameworks, challenges, and outcomes. The approach is participatory, emphasizing the involvement of youth in discussions about policy relevance and effectiveness.

The report explores urban youth policies in the context of labour market challenges, focusing on employment, education, and social inclusion. It highlights the role of national frameworks, like the National Youth Strategy (2017–2027) and EU-funded initiatives, in shaping local policies. Specific programmes such as the Youth Guarantee and vocational training schemes are examined. Trade unions, local governments, and NGOs are discussed as crucial actors in designing, implementing, and monitoring policies. They advocate for youth employment, provide training, and foster inclusion. The report identifies barriers such as high youth unemployment, labor market mismatch, and limited participation in decision-making. Seasonal and precarious employment are noted as prevalent issues in cities like Heraklion and Lamia. Policies like information services and vocational counseling in Lamia and Heraklion are analyzed for effectiveness, with insights into their sustainability and transferability to other contexts. The report emphasizes the need for integrated frameworks, stronger partnerships, and enhanced youth participation to address systemic challenges and foster sustainable development.

2. Key characteristics of the collective bargaining systems as governance instrument with particular focus of youth - oriented employment and social inclusion policies in the urban contexts

Urban industrial relations, social dialogue and collective bargaining in Greece are part of the governance system in Greece, thus shaping employment and social policies. Traditionally, Greece has a highly centralised governance system, which is also reflected in youth-oriented employment and social inclusion policies. National and sectoral agreements play a significant role in setting terms and conditions of active employment policies. Despite making some legislative reforms towards decentralising decision-making on relevant spheres, such as in vocational education and training, the central state has a difficulty in accepting this decentralisation and thus in implementing it.

The Greek legal framework regulates collective bargaining, setting the system and the boundaries for negotiation, including minimum wage laws and employment standards. Institutions, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, play a crucial role in overseeing and supporting the collective bargaining process. Nonetheless, during the economic crisis years in Greece, collective bargaining and collective agreements underwent significant changes influenced by austerity measures and economic reforms imposed by international creditors, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB), and the European Commission. Before the economic crisis, Greece had a relatively stable system of collective bargaining, with agreements typically reached at national sectoral and company level. The national general collective agreements set the minimum standards and working conditions across Greece. Additionally, specific industries and professions set their own occupational agreements. Further, some individual enterprises negotiated at company level, often providing better terms than those in national or sectoral agreements.

However, the labour reforms that took place during the crisis, weakened the power of trade unions, gave precedence to company level agreements over the national and sectoral ones, allowing for more flexibility but also leading to reductions in wages and working conditions. The government's reduction of the minimum wage in 2012 further undermined the role of national collective agreements in setting the minimum wage. Moreover, the practice of extending sectoral agreements to cover all workers in a sector was suspended. This meant that agreements applied only to the parties directly involved, leading to a decline in the coverage of collective agreements. It also meant that the ability of trade unions to refer disputes to arbitration was restricted, weakening their bargaining power.

These changes had an acute impact on young people. The reduction of the minimum wage in 2012 imposed worst measures for young workers under the age of 25. More specifically, the general minimum wage was reduced by 22%, dropping to €586 per month, whilst the youth minimum wage was reduced by 32%, dropping to €510 per month. This measure was presented as addressing the exceptionally high youth unemployment rates of that times, which exceeded 50%, by making the hiring of young workers more attractive to employers. However, it mainly resulted in lower earnings for young workers, exacerbating poverty and social exclusion among young workers. Besides the wage reductions, austerity measures endorsed the flexibility in the labour market, leading to increased job insecurity and precarious employment, especially for young workers. All this led to the straining of the traditional system of industrial relations, disillusionment among workers and inter-generational conflict.

Since the end of the bailout programmes in 2018, there have been efforts to restore collective bargaining mechanisms, yet this has been achieved only partially. In 2023, only 31% of employees are covered by collective agreements. Moreover, the minimum wage has increased to €830, still this is not enough to prevent from social exclusion and poverty, especially due to the inflation and the cost-of-living crisis. As such, in 2023 the Kaitz index was at 54%, a finding that highlights the large deficit of decent living for minimum wage earners and the high risk of material deprivation of their families, since they are below the threshold of relative poverty.

Within this socio-economic context, specific policies are directed to a greater or lesser extent to youth employment and social inclusion. Collective bargaining addresses youth problems and interests by increasingly addressing issues such as internships, apprenticeships, vocational training and entry-level job opportunities. Initiatives like the Youth Guarantee programme, supported by collective bargaining agreements, aim to provide young people with employment, education, or training opportunities. Collective bargaining agreements also address broader inclusion policies which aim to integrate marginalised youth into the labour market. This includes addressing issues such as discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and ensuring decent working conditions. Social inclusion initiatives often address specific target groups of youth (e.g. disabilities, migrants or those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds).

The enhanced Youth Guarantees is the commitment made by all Member States to ensure that all young people under 30 "receive a quality offer of employment, continuing education, apprenticeships, traineeships, within four months of becoming unemployed or drop out of education". All EU countries pledged to implement the specific political commitment resulting from a Commission recommendation in October 2020¹.

¹<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>

Moreover, there are youth-oriented policies within the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and funded by the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), includes several initiatives targeting young people, in alignment with the broader objectives of the Youth Guarantee. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan is aimed at promoting sustainable economic recovery in key areas, including youth employment, education, and training.

3. National institutional framework for youth policies

The Greek National Youth Strategy (2017-2027) is a comprehensive framework established by the Greek government to promote the well-being, development, and active participation of young people in society. The Youth Employment Strategy covers the period 2021 – 2027, with a horizon of 2030, and comes to update and expand the previous Youth Guarantee Action Plan (2018 – 2020), and to incorporate the new principles and directions of the Enhanced Youth Guarantee. A special case of a group that needs support is the group of young people aged 15 – 29 years Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEETs), in 2021 they made up 3% of the total population.

The strategy was created to align with the broader goals of the European Union's youth policy and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to ensure that young people in Greece have access to opportunities in various fields. The National Strategy for Youth Employment, and the Action Plan for the Enhanced Youth Guarantee it contains, integrates the principles and directions of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the new Porto Declaration, the Recommendation for a Bridge to Employment for Youth, and the European Skills Agenda. At the same time, it specifies with special reference to young people in the age group 15-29 the national strategic directions for development, employment and social cohesion, as reflected - among others - in the Recovery Plan for the Greek Economy, the National Reform Program, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0", and the National Strategy for Active Employment Policies.

The key pillars of the strategy are:

- Education and Training
- Employment and Entrepreneurship
- Social Inclusion
- Youth Participation
- Health and Well-being

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- Volunteering and Non-formal Learning
- Culture and Creativity
- Environment and Sustainable Development
- Youth Rights and Equality

The strategy is implemented through a multi-level approach involving local, regional, and national stakeholders, as well as cooperation with NGOs, youth organizations, and international institutions.

Youth-oriented employment and social inclusion policies can be categorised into four types of programmes:

- Subsidised employment programmes, which reduce the cost burden for employers to hire young workers.
- Vocational Education and Training programmes that align educational outcomes with labour market needs, ensuring that young people upskill and reskill for available work positions.
- Entrepreneurship support initiatives, which include financial support, mentorship and training to start and sustain businesses.
- Social inclusion programmes, targeting disadvantaged youth and families.

4. Specific programs or plans (at the national level) in the field of urban youth policies

Within the framework of the Greek National Youth Strategy, various programmes have been developed that aim to strengthen the employment, education, entrepreneurship and social integration of young people. The main programmes for this target group are the following:

- Youth Entrepreneurship Programme, aiming at the development of start-ups by people aged 18-29 by offering financing, advisory support and access to educational tools for the sustainable development of businesses.
- Professional Training and Internship Programme, which provides vocational training and internship opportunities for young people who wish to acquire skills to join the labour market. The program works with businesses to place young people in jobs linked to market needs.

- Digital Skills for Young People Programme, which aims to upgrade the digital skills of young people to meet the demands of the modern labour market. This action focuses on training young people in areas such as programming, data analysis and IT.
- Young Farmers' Programme, that supports young people who wish to engage in agricultural production and the primary sector, offering financing and technical support for the development of innovative agricultural practices.
- Youth Housing Programme, which addresses the housing problem by providing vulnerable young persons with financial support for renting or buying a first home.

5. Role of national Trade Unions and other social actors in the design and implementation of national youth programs and policies at the urban scale

Trade unions, business associations, and other social actors are consulted by the government when designing youth policies. This aims at the programmes reflecting labour market needs, social challenges, and industry trends, particularly in urban areas, as these actors provide valuable insights into the labour market.

Greek trade unions, such as the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and sectoral unions, advocate for fair employment conditions for young workers. They lobby for policies that address precarious work conditions, youth unemployment, and labour market entry barriers, ensuring that young people have access to decent work. This takes place mostly through negotiating collective agreements that set wage floors and employment standards, benefiting young workers in sectors like retail, hospitality, and manufacturing. Moreover, unions participate in the design of vocational training and apprenticeship programs, ensuring that they meet the needs of the labour market while protecting young workers' rights.

Social partners representing employers also collaborate with government agencies to design programmes that support youth entrepreneurship, innovation and digital skills, as well as workplace integration programmes (traineeship schemes). Chambers of Commerce also support young entrepreneurs through business incubators, urban innovation hubs, networking opportunities and grants.

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Finally, NGOs focus on the social inclusion of marginalised youth, particularly migrants and refugees in urban areas. They implement programmes that provide career counselling, legal support and access to education and training. These organizations often collaborate with local governments and businesses to create programs specifically for young people living in cities, where issues like unemployment, housing insecurity, and social exclusion are more prevalent.

B. Case Studies of the Role of Policy Networks in Youth Policy Outcomes

1. Introduction: selection of cities and policy case studies

Although geographically a small country, Greece is characterised by regional differences and inequalities. This also has an impact on the Greek labour market, which can be characterised as fragmented rather than unified, while the differences between the regions of the country create labour markets with local characteristics. For this reason, the regional dimension of the labour market in Greece is particularly important to be examined in relation to the wider context in which young people move during their transition from education to employment².

With reference to the percentage distribution of the population in the 13 Regions of the country half of the total is concentrated in the Region of Attica and Central Macedonia, to which belong the 2 large urban centres of Greece (Athens and Thessaloniki). The two cities chosen for the Greek report are of medium size: **Heraklion, Crete** is located on an island area, and **Lamia**, in **continental Greece**. Accordingly, the Region of Central Greece represents 5%, and Crete 6% of the total population of the country.³

I. Region of Crete (Kriti) – Heraklion



Heraklion is the largest city and the administrative capital of the **Region of Crete**, an island with a strategic geopolitical position in the south-eastern Mediterranean Sea. Having a rich historical and cultural background, and connecting three continents, the city is also the

²Ιωαννίδης Αλ. (2023), «Απασχόληση και ανεργία των νέων στην Ελλάδα: υφιστάμενη κατάσταση και προοπτικές», Αθήνα: ΙΜΕ ΓΣΕΒΕΕ

³Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) <https://www.statistics.gr/en/2021-census-res-pop-results>

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commercial and technological centre of the island. It is the fourth largest city in Greece with a municipal population of 179.302 (2021) and 211.370 in its wider metropolitan area, according to the 2011 census. The greater area of Heraklion has been continuously inhabited since at least 7.000 BCE, making it one of the oldest inhabited regions in Europe. It is also home to the ancient Knossos Palace, a major centre of the Minoan civilization dating back to approximately 2000-1350 BCE, often considered Europe's oldest city.

Heraklion was selected for the Greek report of the project, as it is the city with Europe's fastest growing tourism levels. According to Euromonitor, in 2017 it faced a 11.2% growth in international arrivals. It is the 2nd in Greece for the year 2017, with 3.2 million visitors and the 19th in Europe for 2018, with 3.4 million visitors. This has shaped a particular type of economic development.

II. Region of Central Greece (Sterea Ellada) – Lamia



The **Region of Sterea Ellada** is an administrative region in the geographical division of **Central Greece**, consisting of a mainland and an island part. Located in the centre of the country, it borders Thessaly to the north, Western Greece to the west, Attica to the south, while the Region has also access to the Aegean Sea and the Ionian Sea. The Region incorporates various geomorphological, socio-economic and cultural features, which vary locally. It is characterised by agricultural production, industry and service provision, especially in tourism and trade. The capital of the Region of Central Greece is the city of **Lamia** which is located in the Fthiotida area (4,441km- 28.56% of the entire Region).

The city of Lamia was included in the Greek report of the project as it is in direct proximity to the Metropolis of Athens and occupies a geographically critical part of the mainland of Greece in the intermediate space between Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras, and between Athens and the Adriatic. It is also crossed by national transport rail and road networks while it has a connection to the natural gas network with its specialisation in the secondary sector and the metallurgical industry, particularly steel and aluminium production.

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2. City 1 “Heraklion” _ The context

a. Brief introduction to Heraklion

In Heraklion, as the tourism sector is characterised by high activity, especially during the period April- October, there is a significant number of seasonal workers and self-employed people in Crete. The tourism industry varies from high-quality tourist enterprises to small and medium-sized ones which employ a significant number of people. In addition, the personal services also hold a considerable part of the labour market. Another segment of the Cretan market is agriculture. Consequently, the job market in Crete is particularly seasonal in nature, where most recruitments and dismissals are made between April and October⁴.

According to the outcomes of the project "Regional Labour Market Monitoring Mechanism in Crete", a large-scale research project funded by the Region of Crete and carried out by the Entrepreneurship and Market Research Unit of the University of Crete (2016-2022)⁵ in 2020 the labour market situation in Heraklion changed due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, while there was a reduction of this effect, a full recovery was not achieved. In addition, there is a tendency for small and family businesses to shrink, and as a result, the entrepreneurs become employees of larger companies or unemployed. This change appears to be part of a more general downsizing of small and medium-sized individual and family businesses in favour of the large ones. Young people and older people approaching retirement were mainly affected, with a parallel increase in the long-term unemployed persons in general. Consequently, the youth entrepreneurship in 2021 is also extremely limited in relation to 2020. Despite subsidy measures to ease the impact of the pandemic, a significant part of the workforce is still at a disadvantage, with young people and women to be in the worst position.

Another issue is the precarity of the workforce of specific demographic groups, such as foreign workers, including young migrants and refugees, in the local labour market. Here it is worth noting that Greek young workers between 18-29 years of age in general, while also facing difficulties regarding their job security, do not always suffer from economic weakness and

⁴https://eures.europa.eu/living-and-working/labour-market-information/labour-market-information-greece_en#crete

⁵ <https://mpacrete.soc.uoc.gr/>

precariousness. This is related to the fact that the Greek family often acts as a "safety net" supporting young people financially⁶.

b. Indicators at the city level

c. Table 1 - Indicators needed at the city level

Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Tot. Population	No data	173993	No data	No data	(2021) 179301	City/Heraklion	Absolute numbers
Tot. Population	No data	305490	310784	313766	(2023) 303769	Region (NUTS3), EL431 Heraklion	Absolute numbers
Youth population (15-24)	No data	No data	35560	35602	(2023) 33408	Region (NUTS3), EL431 Heraklion	Absolute numbers
Youth population (25-29)	No data	No data	19010	18234	(2023) 16141	Region (NUTS3), EL431 Heraklion	Absolute numbers
Youth population (30-34)	No data	No data	23023	18960	(2023) 17401	Region (NUTS3), EL431	Absolute numbers

⁶Vergis, E., Papadakis, N., & Taroudakis, M. (2023). Labour Market Dynamics and Socio-Economic Vulnerability: The COVID-19 Impact and Policy Challenges in the Region of Crete, Greece. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 349-375. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.116023>

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Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
						Heraklion	
Young-age dependency ratio (pop 15< over 15-64 population)*	No data	No data	26	26	(2023) 25	Region (NUTS3), EL431 Heraklion	Ratio (see *)
Old-age dependency ratio (pop 64+ over 15-64 population)**	No data	No data	28	29	(2023) 31	Region (NUTS3), EL431 Heraklion	Ratio (see **)
% of foreigners on the total population	No data	No data	No data	No data	(2021) 6	Region (NUTS3), EL431 Heraklion	%
% of foreigners on the total population	No data	No data	7,6	7,7	(2022) 7.3	Country (Greece)	%
% of foreigners on youth population*** (20-29)	No data	No data	No data	No data	(2021) 4.8	Region (NUTS3), EL431 Heraklion	%
% of people with tertiary education	No data	24	No data	No data	(2021) 24	City/ Heraklion city	%
% of youth with tertiary education*** (20-29)	No data	32	No data	No data	(2021) 38	City/ Heraklion city	%
% of employed people (15-64)	70.2	63.8	56.1	67.0	(2023) 69.4	Region (Nuts)	%

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Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
						2), EL43 Kriti	
% of employed youth*** (15-29)	No data	34.4	No data	No data	(2021) 35.0	Region (Nuts 2), EL43 Kriti	%
% of unemployed people (15-64)	5.5	15.8	24.3	11.4	(2023) 10.8	Region (Nuts 2), EL43 Kriti	%
% of unemployed youth***	5.7	17.8	18.9	8.4	(2023) 9.2	Region (Nuts 2), EL43 Kriti	%
% NEET among youth***	17.5	26.5	26.6	17.2	(2023) 16.6	Region (Nuts 2), EL43 Kriti	%
% of school dropouts among youth***	19,5	19,2	10,8	5,9	(2023) 6.9	Region (Nuts 2), EL43 Kriti	%
GDP per person	18500	15000	13500	13900	(2021) 13500	Region (NUTS3), EL431 Heraklion	Currency
Average income per household/person	12300	9300	9000	10000	(2021) 10100	Region (Nuts 2), EL43 Kriti	Currency

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Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Housing market price per sq	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City	Currency
Distribution of employment by sector:							
- Agriculture/mining (primary)	17%	20%	17%	15%	(2021) 16%	Region (NUTS3), EL431	%
- Construction	9%	6%	5%	5%	5%	Herakli	
- Manufacturing	8%	7%	7%	6%	7%	on	
- Services	66%	67%	71%	74%	72%		
Available beds for tourists in the city	149770	211575	223522	242707	240502	Region (Nuts 2), EL43 Kriti	Number
Universities in the city	3	3	3	3	(2023) 3	City/ Herakli on city	Number
Post-secondary non-tertiary centres	No data	No data	No data	No data	(2023) 8	City/ Herakli on city	Number
Secondary / Upper secondary schools	No data	No data	No data	No data	(2023) 32	City/ Herakli on city	Number
Unemployment benefits received by people looking for work	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Activation/support measures received by people looking for work	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries

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Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Incentives for Start-Up and/or support for self-employment	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Rent benefits for youth***	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Living benefits for youth***	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Social housing units	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts4	Number
Take-up rates of children 0-3 in Early Childhood Education and Care Services	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City	Rates
Average age of leaving the parental home	No data	No data	29.4	28.9	(2023) 30.6	Country (Greece)	Age
Average age of having the first child	No data	No data	30.2	30.6	(2022) 31.0	Country (Greece)	Age
Total public expenditure on education	No data	No data	3.7	3.6	(2021) 4.1	Country (Greece)	% of GDP
Expenditure in active labour market policies	0.16	0.11	0.22	0.36	(2021) 0.31	Country (Greece)	% of GDP
Expenditure in start-up incentives	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.02	(2021) 0.05	Country (Greece)	% of GDP

General Overview of Neighbourhoods in Heraklion

Heraklion, like many urban areas, exhibits some degree of segregation based on socio-economic factors, ethnic origin, and migrant background. Here are a few notable neighbourhoods:

1. City Centre (Kentro):

The city centre is a mix of commercial and residential areas, generally more affluent, with higher property values. It attracts a diverse population but is less likely to show significant segregation compared to other areas.

2. Agiou Mina and Daskalogianni:

These central neighbourhoods are traditionally Greek and relatively affluent. They tend to have fewer migrants and a lower level of socio-economic segregation.

3. Poros and Mesabelies:

These areas have seen an increase in migrant populations, particularly from Albania, Eastern Europe, and more recently, the Middle East and Africa. These neighbourhoods might show more ethnic and socio-economic segregation.

4. Patelles:

Known for its diverse population, including a significant number of migrants and working-class residents. It is an area where socio-economic and ethnic segregation can be more pronounced.

5. Nea Alikarnassos:

Historically, this area has housed lower-income families and has a significant Roma population. It can be characterized by socio-economic challenges and ethnic segregation.

6. Ammoudara:

This is a suburban area with a mix of locals and migrants, often lower-income. The area may exhibit some segregation based on class and migrant background.

d. The demand for youth policies at the city level: interpretation of the indicators and the map

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The youth population in Heraklion is significant, with a total of 67,684 people (combining the 15-24, 25-29, and 30-34 age groups). This large demographic emphasizes the need for targeted youth policies to support their transition into adulthood and the workforce.

At the same time the old-age dependency ratio of 31 compared to the young-age dependency ratio of 25 in 2021 underscores the aging challenges faced by the local community in Heraklion. Since the elderly population is growing, youth policies should aim to fully engage young people in the local economy. Programmes that boost youth employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation are essential to maintain productivity and prevent a shrinking workforce.

Youth employment (15-29) stands at 35.0% (2021), indicating that more than 1/3 of the youth is employed. However, youth unemployment remains at 9.2%. This suggests that more active labour market policies, internships, vocational training, and job creation initiatives are necessary to reduce youth unemployment rates.

NEET Rate (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) has been decreasing since 2011 and now stands at 16.6% (2021). It highlights that a significant number of youths are disengaged from both the job market and educational opportunities. This points to a need for policies focusing on re-engagement, skills development, and access to educational and vocational programmes.

With 3 universities, 8 post-secondary non-tertiary centres and 32 secondary / upper secondary schools, Heraklion supports various educational and career paths for young people. While the three universities provide opportunities for advanced studies, the post-secondary non-tertiary centres offer diverse career-focused training, equipping youths with the skills needed for technical and vocational jobs that are crucial for the local economy.

38% of the youth (20-29) have attained tertiary education (2021), which is a relatively high indicator. The share of youth who have attained tertiary education has increased significantly from 32% in 2011 to 38% in 2021. However, this also raises concerns about the match between education and employment opportunities. Youth policies could focus on aligning educational curricula with market needs, career guidance, and entrepreneurial support.

While there's no direct data on rent benefits or living benefits for youth, the indicators suggest the need for housing policies targeting young adults, particularly considering their delayed exit from parental homes (average age of 30.6 in 2023). Providing affordable housing options and rent support could help facilitate independence for young people.

These factors highlight a strong need for comprehensive youth policies in Heraklion, covering employment support, education alignment, housing benefits, and social inclusion measures.

3. City 1 “Heraklion” _ Youth policy subsystem

a. Institutional level: municipal frame in charge of youth policies

At the institutional level in Heraklion, the municipal framework responsible for youth policies typically operates under the city's local government. This framework usually includes departments, offices, or initiatives focused on supporting youth development, fostering participation, and addressing youth-specific challenges. In Heraklion, such responsibilities might be structured within:

- **Municipal Youth Council:** A platform for engaging young people in policy discussions and decision-making processes. This council often facilitates dialogue between the youth and municipal authorities.
- **Department of Social Services or Youth Affairs:** A municipal department that oversees the design and implementation of programs targeting education, employment, cultural activities, and well-being for young people.
- **Local Youth Action Plans:** These plans outline strategies to promote inclusivity, support youth entrepreneurship, and enhance opportunities for education and cultural engagement. They are often developed in collaboration with NGOs and educational institutions.
- **Partnerships with Regional or National Initiatives:** Municipalities in Greece often align with national policies or leverage European Union-funded programs like Erasmus+ or youth mobility schemes to provide additional resources and opportunities.
- **Cultural and Sports Activities:** Many municipal efforts in Heraklion focus on engaging youth through events, sports programs, and cultural festivals, which also encourage community cohesion and personal development.

b. Social level: list and description of relevant non-institutional actors usually involved across all local youth policies

In Heraklion, several non-institutional actors contribute to shaping and supporting local youth policies. These actors often work collaboratively with municipal authorities or independently to address the needs and aspirations of young people. Here's a list of the most relevant non-institutional actors typically involved:

- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)**, who often specialize in youth empowerment, education, cultural integration, and environmental awareness.
- **Cultural and Sports Clubs**, who play a critical role in fostering social inclusion and providing recreational opportunities for youth. These can be local sports associations, dance groups, music schools, and theatre workshops offer programs that enhance teamwork, creativity, and physical well-being.
- **Youth Networks and Informal Groups**, such as grassroots movements and youth-led initiatives often advocate for social change, environmental action, or cultural projects. They involve collectives organizing community clean-ups, art exhibits, or discussions on social and political issues.
- **Academic Institutions and Student Unions**, who are pivotal in youth engagement, providing platforms for participation in policy discussions, research, and skill-building activities.
- **Private Sector (Businesses and Start-ups)**, who contribute by offering internships, mentorship programs, and workshops, particularly focused on innovation and technology.
- **Religious and Charitable Organizations** that address social issues such as poverty, homelessness, and youth at risk by providing support services, such as counselling and material assistance to young people in need.
- **Cultural Foundations** connected to Heraklion's rich cultural heritage often involve youth in the preservation and promotion of art, history, and traditions.

c. Role of trade unions in the design and implementation of urban youth policies

Trade unions can play a significant role in the design and implementation of urban youth policies in Heraklion, particularly in areas related to employment, workers' rights, and vocational training. Their contributions can be summarized as follows:

- **Advocacy for Youth Employment and Rights**, advocating for fair labour conditions, minimum wages, and job security for young workers entering the workforce. They ensure that municipal policies address youth unemployment, precarious work conditions, and barriers to decent work opportunities.

- **Vocational Training and Skill Development by collaborating with educational institutions**, businesses, and local authorities to provide apprenticeships, internships, and vocational training programs tailored to the needs of young people.
- **Representation in Policy Dialogues**, by representing young workers' interests in municipal forums or consultations related to labour policies and economic development strategies. Their input helps shape policies that are inclusive of youth perspectives and address labour market challenges.
- **Collaboration on Social Programmes** in which unions partner with municipal authorities and NGOs to deliver programmes addressing social issues such as unemployment, discrimination, and economic inequality among youth. These partnerships enhance the effectiveness of urban youth policies by pooling resources and expertise.
- **Awareness and Education Campaigns** about young workers' rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in the labour market through workshops, seminars, and informational campaigns. Relevance to Youth Policies: These efforts complement municipal policies aimed at creating an informed and empowered youth population.

d. Remarks on the urban policy subsystem

The youth urban policy subsystem in Heraklion reflects a complex interplay between institutional and non-institutional actors working to address the diverse needs of the city's young population. The subsystem involves municipal institutions, NGOs, youth networks, trade unions, educational institutions, and the private sector, indicating a multi-stakeholder approach. As a city with a rich historical and cultural heritage, Heraklion integrates culture into its youth policies, using art, festivals, and heritage preservation as tools for youth engagement. While this focus enriches youth identity and pride, there is a need for a balanced approach that also prioritizes contemporary challenges like employment and digital skills.

Still, youth unemployment remains a significant issue in Heraklion, driven by economic dependency on tourism and seasonal work. Municipal policies aim to address this through vocational training and entrepreneurship programs, yet there is room for stronger partnerships with the private sector and trade unions to create sustainable job opportunities. Yet, there is limited youth participation in decision-making and greater efforts are needed to

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empower young people to take active roles in shaping policies that affect their lives, ensuring inclusivity and representation.

Moreover, it has to be highlighted that there is an extensive reliance on external funding as most youth-focused initiatives in Heraklion are tied to funding from the European Union or external grants (e.g., Erasmus+, Horizon Europe), making the subsystem vulnerable to funding fluctuations. The urban youth policy subsystem in Heraklion is well-positioned to leverage technology and innovation, particularly in areas like digital education, smart city initiatives, and creative industries. As such, investment in youth-led innovation and digital transformation could unlock new opportunities for economic growth and civic engagement.

Finally, there are challenges of inclusivity as youth policies often focus on the general population, marginalized groups such as immigrants, refugees, and youth with disabilities may face barriers to full participation in programs and services. Tailored policies and programs are essential to ensure inclusivity and equity within the subsystem.

4. City 1 “Heraklion” _ Policy 1

Policy 1 (Information services) in Heraklion was designed with emphasis on:

- Reliable and Accurate Information
- Easy access
- Multiple means, tools, actions
- Monitoring of current events
- Use of resources
- Publicity & Dissemination

The Beneficiaries of the Policy 1 were young Employed and Unemployed Greek and foreign citizens in Heraklion.

The Content of the Policy 1 covered three main pillars: *Social contribution, Labour and Employment* with key priorities related to the following thematic areas:

- Reversals in the social security system
- Abolition of labour relations
- Deteriorating labour market conditions
- Employability

The following is a description of the specific policy and the way it was developed in Heraklion, Crete:

- Replies to Thematic Questions (face-to-face or via online e-forms & the Interactive Platform)
- Group Information sessions & Legal Information Events
- Individual sessions
- Periodic Information in relation to specific themes (Writing and Dissemination of materials)

Specific categories of young people covered by the Individual and Group Information Sessions:

- Employees: Information and support in dealings with and access to Public authorities and various local stakeholders as regards labour rights and benefits, training programmes, etc. & Follow-up of the cases.
- Unemployed and NEETs: Information and support in relation to certification of qualifications, employability and Greek labour market, Community services, training programmes, unemployment benefits, etc.

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In the information meetings the representatives of local unions (Labour Centres, primary trade unions, etc.) were encouraged to distribute the relevant announcement and the forms for submitting questions to all their members, to collect data for the database of the project, and at the same time to upload the relevant announcements on their website. As a result, all involved actors contributed to this effort by disseminating the relevant information, both to their members and through their websites.

In addition, empowerment information workshops were organized by the local branch of INE Crete in the framework of the Equality Structure of the Heraklion Labour Centre for young female workers and trade unionists.

Similar information meetings were also held during employee training programmes for young employees in the private sector. Instructions were given on how interested individuals can access information on labour, social contributions and benefits, employment, training issues, etc.

Another element of the Information policy was the development of external contacts and meetings with young employees in their workplaces in collaboration with the relevant unions. In order to cover as much as possible multiple recipients, an assessment and cataloguing of public bodies and local businesses with which further networking can be developed, was implemented. To this end, in the Heraklion Regional INE Unit, an investigation was carried out for the existence of information structures for employees and unemployed young citizens and the possibility to collaborate.

Other information activities that were implemented concern meetings with representatives of local governmental bodies, associations, voluntary organizations, institutions, trainees in programmes for employees and unemployed, including young people.

Information was also provided to volunteer groups with young people members or in contact with this specific group (Social Clinic, Grocery Store, Tutoring Centre), the Archdiocese, local stakeholders that implement programmes for unemployed young people, the Municipal Lifelong Learning centres. In addition, young employees who attended related public and trade union education programmes in Heraklion. As a result, through the Policy 1 a significant number of young people have been informed in relation to concrete thematic issues developed during the legal Information group events and the individual information sessions. In the context of publicity, constant cooperation with local newspapers was created, where articles on social and labour issues were published every week, while information public events were organized to present the Policy.

Policy 1 is considered to be successful as it has become well-known amongst local young beneficiaries, for receiving questions regarding labour, social contributions and employment issues on a daily basis.

5. City 1 “Heraklion” _ Remarks and Comments on Policy 1

Young people were approached as an integral component of it - either as unemployed or employed. Their particular needs and capabilities formed the basis for the design of specialized actions and information interventions. In this light, research material of the institution, but also of local institutions that had a relevant research project to highlight, was utilized.

The thematic workshops and individual meetings were a powerful mechanism - and good practice - for informing, training - reaching out to young people. Their subject matter was determined to a large extent by the available expertise of the involved human resources, scientific collaborators and also the supervisory body - INE GSEE - its nature, identity and mission, its strategic priorities and its services.

The regional and local days/events that were implemented also had a significant contribution in approaching and attracting the city's young people. The ways of approaching young people focused on attracting them by approaching their gathering places, such as community centres, Higher Education Institutions, VET centres, etc. In addition, as a way of approaching young people, local networks with institutions, structures and individuals etc. were utilized.

The validity and reliability of the network in Heraklion was recognized by all the bodies of the local societies. The growing demand for services proves the effectiveness and quality of the actions.

The human resources of the structure in Heraklion were a decisive factor in achieving the aforementioned. It is noted that the participation in social dialogue was carried out at a staff and strategic level by the General Confederation of Greek Labour, considering the needs and possibilities of the local labour market and local society.

During the implementation, participation was at all levels, as networking was the mechanism for developing information services based on identified needs. The proposals, ideas and needs of all involved contributed to the achievement of the goals and to the coverage - to the extent possible - of the needs of the young people. In this light, partnerships were developed.

The trade union movement, the unions and the labour centre, highlighted and supported the development of political information in Heraklion, recognized the importance of their role and work and formed the first core of the network. Accordingly, partnerships were developed with the community centres of the municipalities, education providers, etc., consequently enhancing the socio-economic impact and added value of the project.

It is noted that the needs and potential of young people were utilized to the maximum extent possible with mutually complementary services of a holistic nature. The information was combined with professional counselling and professional guidance. The importance of information about quality jobs with full insurance coverage and all labour rights can be seen. At the same time, empowerment was supported with respect to the diversity of individuals and groups and the strengthening of collective forms of action and intervention based on identified needs. It is estimated that the objectives of the project were achieved and exceeded its specifications.

According to those involved in the regional structure, information on broader issues of social justice is considered to be of critical importance, something that should be considered, and presupposes a focus on wider socially vulnerable groups, in addition to young unemployed and employed people.

6. City 1 “Heraklion” _ Policy 2

Policy 2 also had young Employed and Unemployed Greek and foreign citizens in Heraklion as beneficiaries. Policy 2, that is Vocational Counselling, is selected to be presented as a less successful policy. It had comparatively very little participation of young people.

Perhaps the most important reason is that Vocational Counselling is not as widely accepted within the local culture. Also, the counselling process does not give immediately visible results, but time is needed to build a counselling relationship between the counsellor and the beneficiaries, and it requires a lot of personal work and effort from the person who will decide to follow the process

For the implementation of Policy 2, two different modules were designed as regards the personalized needs of the particular target group:

- Vocational counselling (group and individual sessions) of unemployed and NEETs: preparation of the beneficiaries to access the Greek labour market through obtaining employability skills & career planning goals & job searching technics, upgrading qualifications, CV writing and Skills development.
- Vocational counselling individual (group and individual sessions) of employed: Management of work stress, Conflict management in the workplace and Qualification upgrading.
- Vocational remote counselling of all categories of beneficiaries (individual and group e-Counselling)

Initially the counselling actions began experimentally at an individual level. For the design of the sessions, the methodology and tools for vocational counselling in the field were examined.

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Information (Policy 1) about the counselling services was used to make familiar Counselling (Policy 2) to unemployed young trainees of various local programmes in parallel with young individuals who came to the structure in Heraklion searching for information about current training programmes.

While the counselling activities began with high interest and motivation from the side of the counsellors, the response was not as extended as expected. The beneficiaries were exclusively interested in information about training programmes and job announcements, and at best, for writing their resumes. More specifically, a very small percentage of the young people who came with a request for employment and who were all unemployed, participated in individual counselling sessions for job search techniques to improve their professional profile.

It was observed that in an effort to identify weak points and to improve qualifications, such as the need to attend education/training programmes, to obtain a foreign language degree or a high school or college diploma, young individuals were negative and showed interest only in information on subsidized programmes or low-skilled jobs. During the examined period no group counselling sessions were implemented as there has been no corresponding interest from the beneficiaries.

7. City 1 “Heraklion” _ Remarks and Comments on Policy 2

The structure and functioning of the labour market in Heraklion, in the case of young people, is characterized by the lack of will and the inability to take advantage of opportunities. The obstacles identified through the actions of the local structure regarding young people were many, complex and intractable, such as:

Ambiguity between their needs and capabilities

- Unclear professional identity, as well as reduced possibilities to recognize what they are looking for, why they are looking for it, how and where they are looking for it, as well as how they utilize the potential information acquired.
- Lack of willingness to invest in the development of their educational profile. Failure in recognizing their needs, expectations, desires and potentials due to passivity, confusion and ambiguity of the concept of professional identity etc.
- Precarious and seasonal work, mainly in the tourism sector
- Insufficient compatibility of the knowledge and skills, resulting from the educational institutions, with the needs and possibilities of the labour market.
- Lack of professional maturity among young people, perhaps due to the fluidity of the labour market.
- Frequent change of jobs and undeclared work. Young people are overworked, for short periods of time, opportunistically in many and different subjects.
- Incompatibility of demand and supply in the case of specialized professional profiles.

These findings result that targeted professional orientation combined with counselling and encouraging the participation of young people in education - training is considered necessary.

The jobs created in the city for young people are usually low-skilled, which further limits the wages and working rights of young people. The opportunities and possibilities for internships / apprenticeship were also deemed insufficient, except in the case of the Manpower Services schools and some training programmes, with the result that multiple weaknesses and inequalities are identified during the transition of young people from education - training to employment.

In the case of youth employment of critical importance, compliance with health and safety conditions at workplaces was also assessed, where the environment should be improved.

Vocational guidance was characterized as deficient, a reality concerning problems, but at the same time it highlighted the potential of counselling to intensify specialized targeted action and intervention. In the unfavourable environment described, the action and operation of Counselling in Heraklion was critical and necessary, for the essential targeted support of young people based on the diagnosis of their needs, through professional counselling, the

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development of career plans, the development of alternative career paths, professional (re)orientation, empowerment.

It is noted that the thematic counselling workshops are a very effective method at group level. More generally, the advisory dimension of the network's services was assessed as critical, based on the identified needs, which require empowerment and guidance, orientation and counselling. A strengthened system of referrals to other relevant agencies, such as local government agencies and structures, chambers, liaison offices, etc., was utilized.

The retention of young people in their city presupposes their willingness and participation in the diagnosis of their needs. In addition, the response of the support services in meeting these needs, utilizing targeted bundles of information, information, counselling, empowerment and networking with other bodies, structures, individual people of the local society. The "exploration of young people's potential" was considered of critical importance, consequently strengthening the holistic character and importance of diagnostic mechanisms, systems, applications.

The development possibilities in the city are multiple and require willingness, decision and action. Development offers opportunities, but for multiple reasons - seasonality, precariousness, fragmentation, lack of a single plan - quality, stable, compatible with the educational and professional profile of young people, jobs are not always guaranteed. A prerequisite for their effectiveness was the continuous monitoring of their development. The changes identified require adjustments and readjustments, with corresponding flexible manipulations by the counsellor.

8. City 2 “Lamia” _ The context

a. Brief introduction to Lamia

The population data for Lamia not only presents a significant difference and decrease between the results of the Census 2011 and Census 2021 (75.315/ 2011 & 66.657/ 2021): men (37.417/2011 & 32. 459/2021) and women (37.898/2011 & 34.198/2021), irrespective of citizenship and residence status, but the Municipality of Lamia is recorded as the largest population decrease in the Region⁷.

According to the Mechanism for Examining Labour Market Requirements, as regards the occupational categories, the new workplaces created in the region mainly relate to personal services, mining, construction, manufacturing, transport, and office staff. There are lower numbers in teaching staff and lawyers. A major decrease was reported among employees providing protection services, while the highest employment rate is recorded in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, followed by the wholesale and retail trade sector. Finally, a substantial number of employed population commute to/from the region, mostly from the neighbouring Attica region⁸. The last published data from the Public Employment Service (DYPA) shows that the total number of all registered unemployed in the Region of Central Greece is 41.375 (4, 1%) (February, 2024)⁹.

b. Indicators at the city level

⁷Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) <https://www.statistics.gr/en/2021-census-res-pop-results>

⁸Mechanism for examining labour market requirements, Annual Report 2020: <https://lmd.eiead.gr/%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%AE%CF%83%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CE%AD%CE%BA%CE%B8%CE%B5%CF%83%CE%B7-2020>.

⁹DYPA, Statistics of Registered Unemployment, February 2024: <https://www.dypa.gov.gr/statistika?tab=statistika-stoikhia&tab2=meletes&tab3=>

c. Table 1 - Indicators at the city level – Lamia

Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Tot. Population	No data	75315	No data	No data	(2021) 66656	City/Lamia city	Absolute numbers
Tot. Population	No data	158231	161230	159387	(2023) 135798	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	Absolute numbers
Youth population (15-24)	No data	No data	15710	16194	(2021) 12087	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	Absolute numbers
Youth population (25-29)	No data	No data	8154	7523	(2021) 5861	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	Absolute numbers
Youth population (30-34)	No data	No data	9900	8631	(2021) 6324	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	Absolute numbers
Young-age dependency ratio (pop 15< over 15-64 population)*	No data	No data	24	23	(2023) 20	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	Ratio (see *)
Old-age dependency ratio (pop 64+ over 15-64 population)**	No data	No data	40	40	(2023) 46	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	Ratio (see **)
% of foreigners on the total population	No data	No data	No data	No data	(2021) 6.6	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	%

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Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
% of foreigners on the total population	No data	No data	7,6	7,7	(2022) 7.3	Country (Greece)	%
% of foreigners on youth population*** (20-29)	No data	No data	No data	No data	(2021) 6.5	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	%
% of people with tertiary education	No data	19	No data	No data	(2021) 20	City/Lamia city	%
% of youth with tertiary education*** (20-29)	No data	32	No data	No data	(2021) 39	City/Lamia city	%
% of employed people (15-64)	66.0	59.6	55.6	61.2	(2023) 69.8	Region (Nuts 2), EL64 Sterea Ellada	%
% of employed youth*** (15-29)	No data	33.0	No data	No data	(2021) 30.0	Region (Nuts 2), EL64 Sterea Ellada	%
% of unemployed people (15-64)	9.1	19.0	26.1	17.1	(2023) 9.9	Region (Nuts 2), EL64 Sterea Ellada	%
% of unemployed youth***	11.5	17.4	19.5	13.7	(2023) 7.6	Region (Nuts 2), EL64 Sterea Ellada	%

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Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
% NEET among youth***	20.8	25.0	25.3	20.3	(2023) 12.8	Region (Nuts 2), EL64 Sterea Ellada	%
% of school dropouts among youth***	25,3	20,2	9,7	10,2	(2023) 13.6	Region (Nuts 2), EL64 Sterea Ellada	%
GDP per person	18500	15000	13100	13200	(2021) 13300	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	Currency
Average income per household/person	12400	10600	8700	9100	(2021) 9300	Region (Nuts 2), EL64 Sterea Ellada	Currency
Housing market price per sq	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City	Currency
Distribution of employment by sector:	18%	19%	20%	19%	(2021)	Region (NUTS3), EL644 Fthiotida	%
- Agriculture/mining (primary)	9%	7%	5%	5%			
- Construction	17%	17%	18%	18%			
- Manufacturing	56%	57%	57%	58%			
- Services							

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Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Available beds for tourists in the city	33013	54139	53660	242707	(2023) 240502	Region (Nuts 2), EL64 Sterea Ellada	Number
Universities in the city	1	1	1	1	(2023) 1	City/Lamia city	Number
Post-secondary non-tertiary centres	No data	No data	No data	No data	(2023) 5	City/Lamia city	Number
Secondary / Upper secondary schools	No data	No data	No data	No data	(2023) 23	City/Lamia city	Number
Unemployment benefits received by people looking for work	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts 4	Number of beneficiaries
Activation/support measures received by people looking for work	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts 4	Number of beneficiaries
Incentives for Start-Up and/or support for self-employment	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts 4	Number of beneficiaries
Rent benefits for youth***	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts 4	Number of beneficiaries
Living benefits for youth***	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts 4	Number of beneficiaries
Social housing units	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City/Nuts 4	Number
Take-up rates of children 0-3 in Early Childhood Education and Care Services	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	City	Rates

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Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Average age of leaving the parental home	No data	No data	29.4	28.9	(2023) 30.6	Country (Greece)	Age
Average age of having the first child	No data	No data	30.2	30.6	(2022) 31.0	Country (Greece)	Age
Total public expenditure on education	No data	No data	3.7	3.6	(2021) 4.1	Country (Greece)	% of GDP
Expenditure in active labour market policies	0.16	0.11	0.22	0.36	(2021) 0.31	Country (Greece)	% of GDP
Expenditure in start-up incentives	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.02	(2021) 0.05	Country (Greece)	% of GDP

General Overview of Neighbourhoods in Lamia

Lamia, like many cities, exhibits some degree of segregation based on socio-economic status, ethnic origin, and migrant background. Here are notable neighbourhoods that might show these characteristics:

1. City Centre (Kentro):

- The city centre is typically more affluent, with higher property values and a mix of commercial and residential areas. It attracts a diverse population but is generally less segregated.

2. Gorgopotamos:

- This area is known for its historical significance and has a mix of socio-economic groups. It may have less pronounced segregation but can still show differences in class and ethnic background.

3. Anthili:

- A neighbourhood that may have a higher proportion of lower-income families and possibly a higher concentration of migrants or ethnic minorities.

4. Karavolas:

- This area might exhibit more socio-economic diversity and could have a significant number of immigrant residents, leading to some degree of segregation.

5. Nea Magnisia:

- Known for having a mix of middle and lower-income families, potentially showing some class-based segregation.

d. The demand for youth policies at the city level: interpretation of the indicators and the map

The youth population in Lamia is significant, with a total of 24,756 people (combining the 15-24, 25-29, and 30-34 age groups). This large demographic emphasizes the need for targeted youth policies to support their transition into adulthood and the workforce.

At the same time the old-age dependency ratio of 45 compared to the young-age dependency ratio of 20 in 2021 underscores the significant aging challenges faced by the local community in Lamia. Since the elderly population is growing, youth policies should aim to fully engage young people in the local economy. Programmes that boost youth employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation are essential to maintain productivity and prevent a shrinking workforce. To avoid "brain drain", Lamia could benefit from policies encouraging job creation and entrepreneurial support for graduates. Retaining young talent will help balance the aging population and promote local economic development.

Youth employment (15-29) stands at 30.0% (2021), and has slightly decreased from 33.0% in 2011. At the same time, youth unemployment reaches 7.6%. This suggests that more active labour market policies, internships, vocational training, and job creation initiatives are necessary to reduce youth unemployment rates.

NEET Rate (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) has been decreasing since 2011 and now stands at 12.8% (2021). It highlights that still a significant number of youths are disengaged from both the job market and educational opportunities. This points to a need for policies focusing on re-engagement, skills development, and access to educational and vocational programs.

With 1 university, 5 post-secondary non-tertiary centres and 23 secondary / upper secondary schools, Lamia has a solid foundation for youth education. This suggests that the city is capable of fostering a well-educated population, which is crucial for the local economy. The presence of post-secondary non-tertiary centres offers alternative pathways for students not pursuing university, which can be leveraged to prepare young people for vocational careers or further studies. Youth policies should ensure that these educational opportunities align with market demands.

39% of the youth (20-29) have attained tertiary education (2021), which is a relatively high indicator. The share of youth who have attained tertiary education has increased significantly from 32% in 2011 to 39% in 2021. However, this also raises concerns about the match between education and employment opportunities. Youth policies could focus on aligning educational curricula with market needs, career guidance, and entrepreneurial support.

While there's no direct data on rent benefits or living benefits for youth, the indicators suggest the need for housing policies targeting young adults, particularly considering their delayed exit from parental homes (average age of 30.6 in 2023). Providing affordable housing options and rent support could help facilitate independence for young people.

These factors highlight a strong need for comprehensive youth policies in Lamia, covering employment support, education alignment, housing benefits, and social inclusion measures.

9. City 2 “Lamia” _ Youth policy subsystem

a. Institutional level: municipal frame in charge of youth policies

The municipal framework in Lamia for youth policies is centered around participatory governance, cultural and educational programs, and collaborations with broader initiatives. While it has a solid foundation, there is room for growth in ensuring inclusivity, fostering innovation, and expanding opportunities for youth empowerment. At the institutional level, the municipal framework in charge of youth policies in Lamia operates under the local government, focusing on addressing the needs and aspirations of young people in the city. Here are the key components and roles of this framework:

The Municipal Youth Affairs Office is responsible for designing, implementing, and coordinating youth-focused programs and policies. It develops and manages projects related to education, employment, health, and cultural engagement for youth, collaborating with local, regional, and national stakeholders to secure funding and align with broader youth policy objectives.

It includes the Municipal Youth Council that is a participatory body designed to engage young people in decision-making processes, to act as a bridge between young citizens and the municipal authorities, ensuring youth perspectives are considered in policy development and to organise forums, workshops, and consultations on issues affecting the youth of Lamia. Yet, its function is actually limited.

The municipality also works with local schools, vocational training centres, and universities to align youth policies with educational opportunities. It forms partnerships with local schools to promote skill-building programmes and supports initiatives like career counselling and guidance for young people entering the workforce. The municipal government also organises or funds cultural and sports programs targeting youth engagement and development. It hosts events such as youth festivals, athletic tournaments, and art exhibitions and maintains sports facilities and cultural centres accessible to young residents.

b. Social level: list and description of relevant non-institutional actors usually involved across all local youth policies

In Lamia, non-institutional actors play a significant role in shaping and supporting local youth policies. These actors complement the efforts of municipal authorities and often address gaps by providing specialized expertise, resources, and grassroots engagement. These non-institutional actors involve Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), who are involved in areas like education, social inclusion, cultural development, and environmental awareness. They often partner with local authorities to implement youth programmes, such as vocational training and employment support.

Key role is also played by Cultural and Sports Associations, who provide platforms for youth engagement through cultural activities and sports. These can be local music schools, theatre groups, art collectives organizing workshops and events and sports clubs. Additionally, Academic Institutions and Student Organizations contribute to youth policies by fostering skill development, innovation, and activism by organizing career fairs and skill-building workshops and by advocating for better education policies and facilities.

Last, but not least, local businesses, from their part, collaborate with authorities to offer employment opportunities and internships for young people. In this way, they host in Lamia apprenticeship programmes in fields like technology, tourism, and retail.

c. Role of trade unions in the design and implementation of urban youth policies

Trade unions in Lamia advocate for youth employment policies as they can act as intermediaries between the youth and employers, ensuring that the voices of young workers are heard during the development of policies aimed at reducing unemployment and underemployment among the youth.

In a practical way, they provide training and skills development in collaboration with local authorities. They collaborate with local government and educational institutions to design vocational training programmes tailored to the labour market needs of Lamia. They also support the implementation of apprenticeship and internship, which enhance the employability of urban youth.

They also organising forums and workshops to serve as platforms for youth to articulate their challenges and propose solutions. Finally, trade unions can serve as watchdogs, ensuring that urban youth policies are implemented effectively and equitably. By maintaining ongoing dialogue with the youth, they can provide regular feedback to policymakers on the success or shortcomings of implemented initiatives.

d. Remarks on the urban policy subsystem

The urban policy subsystem for youth in Lamia reflects the challenges and opportunities inherent in addressing the needs of young people within a mid-sized Greek city. This subsystem is shaped by local governance structures, economic constraints, social dynamics, and the broader European and national policy frameworks.

The prolonged effects of Greece's financial crisis continue to limit the resources available for youth policies, particularly in urban areas like Lamia. This has led to gaps in funding for education, vocational training, and social services. Persistent unemployment and underemployment among youth remain central challenges. Local policies often struggle to create sustainable job opportunities for young people, particularly in a city where the industrial base is limited. Especially, youth from marginalized backgrounds, including those from immigrant families or low-income households, face significant barriers to accessing education, employment, and social services. Urban policies in Lamia often lack targeted interventions to support these groups.

Youth voices are often underrepresented in policy-making processes. There is a need to establish formal mechanisms for youth participation in urban governance, such as youth councils or advisory boards. Indeed, there is a need for more cohesive frameworks that align various programmes and initiatives to achieve shared goals for youth development. Drawing from European Union funding for youth initiatives, such as Erasmus+, the Youth Employment Initiative, and cohesion policy funds can further enhance local programmes, if effectively utilized.

10. City 2 “Lamia” _ Policy 1

Policy 1 (Information Services) was selected in Lamia as a good practice because it was the policy that was reported with the highest number of beneficiaries. Information services in Lamia covered the topics of:

- Jobs and Employment
- Job Advertisements
- Subsidized Training and Employment Programmes
- Education and Training Issues
- Professional Development and Career Issues
- Recognition of Academic Qualifications and Certification of Knowledge
- Professional Profiles
- Procedures and Required Documents
- Benefits

Particularly, Information Services in Lamia targeted unemployed and employed youth residing in the town. More specifically, beneficiaries included young job seekers who needed information about the procedure for participating in various public sector competitions (how to access related websites and to navigate them applying for positions in the public sector), job seekers who needed support with issuing unemployment card in order to participate into training programmes from the Manpower Services, or support with other subsidized employment training programmes. Moreover, information was provided on claiming the Social Solidarity Income. Collaboration with the Community centre of the Municipality of Lamia was important for assisting these beneficiaries.

Information services for young employees in Lamia, who tend to work in precarious positions, covered subjects as employment issues, labour rights, social rights, and trade union rights, etc. The main emphasis of Policy 1 in Lamia was the constant information about current Employment and Vocational Training programmes, most of which are subsidised. These programmes were either focuses on specific sectors of the labour market or could refer to a general upskilling regarding the digital transformation. Another important aspect of the policy was information about the recognition of qualifications – certification. This is a process required for graduates of higher education in private providers in Greece or of institutions abroad. Moreover, beneficiaries received information and support regarding the process of recognition of VET qualifications from the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance.

Additionally, a large number of open group information events (distance or face-to-face) on different topics of interest were developed for both categories unemployed and employed youth. E.g. "The impact of the pandemic on labour relations" & "Correct completion of online applications for the Public Sector competitions" & "New Labour Law. Analysis and concerns", etc. For these events, there was collaboration with local stakeholders, such as the labour centres, the municipality, the Chamber and other social partners.

Lastly, the provision of personalized information services contributed decisively to the effective support of beneficiaries, as it made it possible to access and utilize useful information related to Social Security and Labour Rights issues for a large number of people. Given that in some cases (e.g. job advertisements) the immediate response was crucial - a significant number of persons preferred alternative means of communication - via phone or online - for the provision of remote information on employment issues.

11. City 2 “Lamia” _ Remarks and Comments on Policy

1

A critical sustainability problem, affecting the local community of Lamia, is the aging of the population with multiple negative consequences in the field of education, training, employment, as well as socio-economic development. The barriers identified regarding young people were many, complex and intractable. In the case of Lamia, the structure and operation of the labour market, customer and personal networks, reduced to non-existent growth, the lack of will to take advantage of important investment opportunities, the passivity of young people and their different attitude towards participation in education (positive) and employment (negative), insecure work and seasonal work, form an unfavourable intervention environment.

This intervention was promoted at the local level with political and social objectives. The information services policy in the city of Lamia targeted support of young people. Nevertheless, young people from Lamia are leaving their town, because there are no recognized opportunities and political will to develop action in their place. Also, there are no jobs and especially quality jobs related to their professional and educational profile. The information services policy supported unemployed and working young men and women, based on the recognized and explicitly formulated needs. Thematic workshops, events, mobile information levels on job-finding and legal labour problems/needs, local networking, etc. were developed.

During the implementation, active participation was at all levels, as it was the mechanism for the development of collaborative services based on identified needs. In the same light, the multiple roles of some partners were complementary with positive consequences (Lamia) in the development of targeted complementary support services.

12. City 2 “Lamia” _ Policy 2

Policy 2, that is Networking, in Lamia involved local employers, local social partners and beneficiaries. More specifically, beneficiaries were reached through existing contacts who had asked for support in relation to training programmes, information events, workshops, etc. In addition, the relevant data was completed after communication with representatives in companies where employees have established unions. Also, continuous efforts were made in order to involve enterprises with which partnerships in training programmes have been developed, and to explore the possibilities of developing networking with local authorities or other local bodies.

Networking as a mapping exercise was selected as not so successful policy to reach the young citizens of the region, as young people tend not to be in contact with these organizations. In general, the young participation and access is low in collective activities and organizations, not only in the city of Lamia, but in Greece as a whole.

13. City 2 “Lamia” _ Remarks and Comments on Policy

2

In the context of networking, young people were approached, either as unemployed or as employed. Their particular needs and capabilities formed the basis for the design of the actions. For this purpose, research material of the organization, but also of local organizations that had relevant research work to highlight, was used.

In more detail, existing networking, existing organization and operation, available human resources and existing know-how formed the basis for the development of Networking. The local agencies embraced the network idea, were approached by the executives, recognized the existing know-how and utilized it according to their capabilities and the services provided. They also participated in the thematic workshops and events through their representatives. Especially with local government, at the level of municipality and communities, partnerships

were developed that contributed to the comprehensive support of young people based on their identified needs.

Thematic workshops played a critical role in networking, which constituted a powerful mechanism - and good networking practice - for informing, informing, counselling and training young people, depending on their individual needs. For example, some beneficiaries with a very high professional and educational profile may have a higher education degree, with a specialty compatible with the needs and possibilities of the labour market, a master's degree and know at least one foreign language. In these cases, the structure in Lamia provided substantial support, through information and networking, so that they could find work, certify their knowledge and skills, and explore and exploit their potential career options.

At the same time, local days/events of networking also had a significant contribution in reaching and attracting young people and agencies. In this light, the networking policy in Lamia achieved its goals, due to its executive potential and the versatility of its role. The role of the municipality in this case of the youth information and counselling network, concerns the approach, the attraction and the information of young people, but also of the unemployed and the employees as a whole. A typical example of its effectiveness is that young people re-approach the municipality looking for similar programmes. At the same time, they evaluate their experience of participating in the network as very positive.

14. Final conclusion

The policies selected for the field research of the Back in Town project in Greece were designed through communication and dialogue with local stakeholders (policy documents, meetings, talks, briefings at local level, formal and informal discussions, etc.). At this point, it needs to be highlighted that the examined period in Greece faced conditions at socio-economic and ideological-political level that have favoured the implementation of legislative measures which are particularly harmful to the world of work. The changes in social and labour rights have limited social protection, worsened the economic situation of workers and created generalized marginalization and job insecurity in large parts of the workforce and especially amongst youth.

The implementation of the policies presented was structured and stable but at the same time, open and flexible depending on the needs. Networking culture is reflected in the composition of formal and non-formal associations, their profile and role, goals and services provided. Interactions are pervasive in the development of the network created in both cities. They

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characterize the relationships between young people, counsellors and local agencies, so that comprehensive, multifaceted, targeted support is achieved. The adoption of a philosophy of participation in all phases had the effect of bringing together forms of cooperation, promoting interactive functions and processes, ensuring the complementarity and diversity of services in a single framework of quality, action and intervention.

The participation of social partners in the implementation of the two interventions ensured the key role of social dialogue and collaboration with the local governments, the chambers, social agencies, etc. In the two cities, the services provided are differentiated and are fed by the evolving needs, in Heraklion, for example, cooperation is being developed with the Universities and the Local Government, the Community Centres, while the cooperation with rehabilitation centres, regarding the cases of particularly socially excluded young people is also considered crucial.

Multiple thematic workshops and workshops/events were implemented, within the framework of the policies in both cities, which were key components of the methodology of the information, counselling and networking policies. In addition, they were triggers for approaching and attracting young people, unemployed and workers, ways of attracting new partnerships, means of disseminating existing knowledge and experience, etc. In addition, the legal counselling of young people was supported.

The results of the policies, their quality and effectiveness are evident in the interviews. These qualities have further attracted more and more young people. The innovation and mainstreaming of the 2 policies are reflected in their purpose and goals, methodology and results.

In relation to the question **“Are the two cities a favourable environment for the integration of youth?”**, we can say that despite problems, the development potential of the two cities forms a favourable environment for their integration and retention in their places of origin.

In relation to the question **“Are the policies under review best practice for youth integration in your country?”**, we may say that the representation of young people in policies at all levels and fields is directly ensured, as the outcomes of the policies feeds into the General Confederation of Greek Labour, which in turn participates in the social dialogue for youth and can transform the results of the project into policy proposals.

In relation to the question **“What are the conditions for their success?”**, we see that through these policies, the complex and intractable problems of the young people of the two cities require the joining of forces, the complementarity of roles and projects, systematic communication and cooperation, the continuous dissemination of existing know-how, the education and training of those directly and indirectly involved in the network, the utilization

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of local networks in a single strategic framework, the utilization of new technologies and remote work possibilities, information, counselling, education, training, as well as networking with the result of strengthening the negotiation capacity of the network.

In relation to the question **“Is it the right case to transfer it to other European contexts? What are the conditions for their success?”**, we must highlight that work confusion, youth insecurity and job insecurity require strong negotiation mechanisms in a unified coordination framework. In this light, the above policies can be mechanism for intervention, but also a good practice for horizontal and vertical mainstreaming at European level. The evaluation of the described policies recognizes a number of good practices, as it approaches the specificity of its strategy at local level, but also its methodology and development. The coordination of the services is based on the synergy of the policies, a reality that in Greece is not usual.

ANNEX

Interviewees

(in alphabetical order)

Ms Korkou Dimitra, Youth Representative, Resident of Lamia

Mr Melabianakis Emmanouil, Scientific Associate in Crete for the General Confederation of Greek Labour

Ms Perdiki Theodora, Youth Representative, Resident of Heraklion

Mr Petrakis Manos, Career Counsellor in Crete for the General Confederation of Greek Labour

Mr Tsiamis Konstantinos, Municipality President in the Fthiotida Prefecture

Mrs Tsibouri Maria, Scientific Associate for the Central Greece Vocational Training Centre of the General Confederation of Greek Labour

Mr Vlachos Giorgos, Board Member of Municipality in Heraklion

Mr Vogiatzis Spiros, Scientific Associate in Central Greece for the General Confederation of Greek Labour / Adult Trainer