



Initial education policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: Greece

Strengthening adaptability and resilience in the context of COVID-19

Pre-existing resources in the education system may have facilitated areas of Greece's response. Several of the digital resources previously developed through the Digital School Strategy focused on developing digital solutions for synchronous and asynchronous learning. Previously used by a small number of teachers and students, these formed the educational background on which many further digital efforts were built. Furthermore, these solutions were realised thanks to collaboration with the private sector, allowing Greece to strengthen digital access and interactive resources despite considerable budget constraints. As Greece works to balance short-term responsiveness with longer-term strategic aims and resilience, the crisis has presented specific challenges. Greece's monitoring of participation in distance education provided a useful indication of the level of engagement and reach; however, further research is required to assess the impact on learning and the lived experience of teachers and schools. This is necessary to support students' return to face-to-face education. Furthermore, seeking the feedback of educational institutions and actors who were offered a certain amount of autonomy during school closures could help to inform future efforts to fortify the role of schools in their communities

This snapshot presents information originally published as part of the **Education Policy Outlook: Greece (2020)**, available at: www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Greece-2020.pdf



The Greek education system's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic

On 10 March, following some localised closures, Greece announced the closure of all educational structures, with immediate effect. Greece progressively reopened educational institutions to students from 11 May. Initial responses in light of the work of the *Education Policy Outlook* in 2020 in the context of this pandemic are:

- 1. Ensuring continued access to smooth and permeable pathways through the education system:** During closures, schools were expected to continue educating their students through synchronous and asynchronous methods. To support them, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (MoFERA) issued [Guidelines for Distance Education](#), and collated a list of available resources. Greece mobilised pre-existing digital resources, such as online libraries of [digital textbooks](#), [digital lesson plans](#) and [digital education platforms](#) and introduced new digital platforms for synchronous online teaching, initially for upper secondary students and schools in regions first affected by closures. Distance teaching was quickly rolled out nationally across all school levels. Special online training was provided to teacher support groups, who were then tasked with disseminating training among the wider teaching community. The Greek branch of the eTwinning project ran [regular webinars to support teachers](#) in the transition to distance education. Greece also introduced educational broadcasting via state television, principally for primary level students. At tertiary level, students received free textbooks and two digital platforms for distance and interactive learning were made available. To minimise disruption to tertiary admissions procedures, the application process took place remotely and Greece limited the content of admissions examinations to the topics taught prior to closures. Also at tertiary level, examinations would take place remotely whenever possible.
- 2. Strengthening the internal world of the student:** The [Centre for Educational Psychology](#) published multiple reports guiding parents and teachers on how to support children and foster emotional resilience during the pandemic.
- 3. Providing targeted support and interventions for vulnerable children and families:** To facilitate access to digital education resources, the MoFERA, in collaboration with mobile network providers, ensured free access through telephone landlines, mobile phones and tablets. The MoFERA issued specific [guidelines for providing distance learning to students with special educational needs](#) and staff from the Educational and Counselling Support Centres continued to support schools and children with special educational needs remotely. Digital features to enable access for those with disabilities were added to the digital learning platform. To support refugees and asylum seekers living in Greece, the UNHCR and UNICEF provided educational material, essential items such as solar lamps and, in collaboration with the MoFERA, translated the guidelines for distance education into 11 languages and dialects.
- 4. Harnessing wider support and engagement at local and central level:** The MoFERA secured commitments from several private companies to donate technological equipment to educational institutions, which in turn assigned them to students, prioritising those from low socio-economic backgrounds. In collaboration with three major technology companies, which provided services free of charge, the MoFERA launched three digital platforms enabling institutions to run synchronous online lessons. Higher education institutions were granted the financial autonomy to spend EUR 60 000 on facilitating distance education.
- 5. Collecting, disseminating and improving the use of information:** During the period of closures, the MoFERA regularly published [participation and engagement statistics](#).



Table 1

Selected indicators of system readiness (OECD)		Greece	Average	Min	Max
<i>Students' readiness (according to students' self-reports in PISA 2018)</i>					
1	Index of self-efficacy	0.05	0.01	-0.61	0.36
2	Percentage of students in disadvantaged schools with access to a computer at home that they can use for school work	80.2%	81.5%	23.5%	96.5%
<i>Schools' readiness (according to principals' reports in PISA 2018)</i>					
3	Percentage of students in schools with an effective online learning support platform available	34.2%	54.1%	23.9%	90.9%
4	Percentage of students in schools whose teachers have the technical and pedagogical skills to teach with digital devices	62.8%	64.6%	27.3%	84.1%

Note: The information presented in this spotlight covers key measures announced or introduced **before 14 May 2020**.

For more information visit: <http://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/>

Contacts:	Diana Toledo Figueroa (Project Leader): Diana.ToledoFigueroa@oecd.org Christa Rawkins (Policy Analyst): Christa.Rawkins@oecd.org
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