



Industrial relations and social dialogue
**Greece: Developments in
working life 2022**

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Introduction

Greece's main economic and social developments in 2022 are related to high inflation and the rise in energy prices. The average wholesale electricity price in Greece in 2022 was the third highest in the European Union (€279.89/MWh) and significantly affected the economy and households. Energy subsidies from the state greatly relieved households and less so businesses, which passed on the increase in production costs to the prices of goods and services. On the other hand, according to the data released in the Press, the profits of the electricity providers in 2022 were €3.5 billion and of refineries €2.5 billion.

After a GDP decrease of 9% that was recorded in 2020 due to the pandemic, the country's GDP grew by 8.4% in 2021. Growth continued in 2022. According to the estimate of the Bank of Greece (2022) in its interim report, growth is projected to approach 6.2% in 2022.

Also, the Inflation rate continued its upward trend in 2022, and the Average Consumer Price Index (CPI) in 2022 showed an increase of 9.6% compared to 2021, while in 2021, the increase was 1.2% as compared to 2020 (ELSTAT, 2023a).

The CPI of December 2022 increased by 7.2% as compared to the corresponding CPI of December 2021, whereas the respective increase recorded between 2021 and 2020 was 5.1%.

The unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2022 reached 12.4% and showed a decrease compared to the corresponding quarter of the previous year (2nd quarter of 2021) when it was 15.8% (ELSTAT, 2022a).

The employed people amounted to 4.15 million, marking an increase of 78,907 people compared to December 2021 (1.9%) and 31,290 people as compared to November 2022 (0.8%). (ELSTAT, 2023b)

In December 2022, the unemployment rate in the country reached 11.6% compared to 12.9% in December 2021. The unemployment rate was 15.6% among women (17% in December 2021) and 8.3% among men (9.6% in December 2021). In the 15-24 age group, the unemployment rate continued to be very high, i.e., 28.9% (29.7% in December 2021), and in the 25-74 age group, it was 10.7% (from 12.1%).

In the same reporting period, the largest percentage of employed persons worked as dependent employees (69.9%), while the share of self-employed without staff was also considerable (19.3%).

The percentage of part-time employment is 8.4%, and the percentage of employees with temporary work is 7.9%. Part-time employment has increased by 9.7% compared to the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

The largest percentage of the employed (46.4%) worked 40 - 47 hours per week, and a significant percentage (20.6%) stated that they worked 48 or more hours.

In 2022, the minimum wage was increased twice (January and May 2022) due to pressures from high prices and high inflation and reached €713 on 31 December 2022 (from €650 on 31 December 2021).

The average monthly salary in 2022 was €1,176.5 compared to €1,046.3 in 2019, marking an increase of 12.4% (Ministry of Labour, ERGANI Information System of the, 2023). This increase typically exceeds the increase in the general price level for the same period, when the General Consumer Price Index increased by 9.73% (from 101.26 to 110.99 with 2000 as the base year).

In the year 2021 as compared to 2020 the 19.6% of the Country's total population was at risk of poverty after social transfers, recording an increase of 1.9%.¹ Before the granting of social benefits, the percentage at risk of poverty amounted to 24.7%² (ELSTAT,2023c).

The number of Ukrainian refugees received by Greece after the invasion by Russia was low. A large part of them was supported in their integration by Ukrainian communities in Greece, and another part left Greece for other countries (Ministry of Migration, 2023).

The data from the 2021 census show causes for concern about the ageing of the population. According to it the population of Greece has decreased by 1.9% compared to 2011. The legal population decreased to 9.7 million inhabitants from 9.9 million inhabitants (ELSTAT, 2022b).

Finally, an important development for the completion of this report for 2022 was the adoption of Presidential Decree No. 80 (Government Gazette 222/4.12.2022), which, on a proposal from the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, codifies the provisions of individual labour law in force until then in a single text entitled "Code of Individual Labour Law" (357 articles in total, 132 pages).

However, this codification does not actually replace the original existing legislation and the case law. It just puts in a single text the rights and the obligations of the employers and of the workers as concerns the individual labour law.

¹ The poverty threshold amounts to €5,251 per year per one-person household and €11,028 for families with two adults and two dependent children under the age of 14. Moreover, it is set at 60% of the median total equivalent disposable income of households, which was estimated at €8,752, while the average annual disposable income of households in the country was estimated at €17,089.

² Social benefits include the guaranteed minimum income, the winter fuel allowance, housing subsidies, family and social solidarity benefits.

Political context

There were no political changes in Greece in 2022. The government continues to be exercised by the New Democracy party led by Kyriakos Mitsotakis as a Prime Minister since 7 July 2019, the date of the last elections.

According to the government's statements, the next parliamentary elections will be held in Spring 2023.

The opposition parties strongly criticized the government in its policies as well as the decision-making procedure, alleging that all the important issues that arose, were addressed unilaterally during the last critical period (pandemic, energy crisis, inflation), without taking into account the views of other parties or social partners, and there was a lack of dialogue and public transparency.

Two major national strikes took place in 6 April and 9 November 2022, organised by the Trade Union Confederations in the private (GSEE) and in the public (ADEDY) sectors, against the rising of prices, the protection of the workers' income and demands for increases in wages and decreases of the energy costs of the households.

In addition, on 17 December 2022, a mass manifestation was organised by the unions and other social organisations with a central demand for "Collective Agreements and wage increases to combat inflation and against household auctions"

Actors, institutions and processes

Social partners

The structure of the national social partners continued to be the same in 2022 as in previous years. The private sector workers are represented by the GSEE (General Confederation of Labour). The five employers' organisations represent employers at the national level are:

- ΣΕΒ – SEV (Hellenic Federation of Enterprises)
- ΓΣΕΒΕΕ – GSEVEE (Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants)
- ΕΣΕΕ – ΕΣΕΕ (Hellenic Confederation of Commerce and Entrepreneurship)
- ΣΕΤΕ – ΣΕΤΕ (Greek Tourism Confederation)
- ΣΒΕ – SBE (Federation of Industries of Greece)

A significant change in 2022 was the establishment of a digital General Register of employees' trade unions (GEMISOE) and employers' organisations (GEMIEO) under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and the launch of a relevant electronic platform from 1 February 2022 (mitroaorganoseon.yeka.gov.gr).

This measure concerns the digital recording and the submission of legal and basic organizational data (such as membership figures, elected boards, legal representatives etc), as are they declared by the associations themselves, representing employers and employees to the Register. The electronic Register is kept and supervised by the Ministry of Labour in application of [Law 4808/2021](#) and Ministerial Decision No. 62599/16 September 2021.

Entering in the Registry is also a precondition for obtaining the right to conduct recognized collective bargaining, calling a strike, and signing a legally recognized Collective Labour Agreement (CLA).

According to the Ministry of Labour, this reform promotes transparency, democratic functioning, and representativeness in trade unions. The Ministry of Labour intends to use, among other things, the Registry for the expansibility or not of the CLA (i.e., checking the coverage of 50% of the workers in the sector by the employers who sign the CLA).

The trade unions appealed to the Council of State (CoS) in May 2022 and requested the annulment of the decision No. 62599/2021. In the appeal, they argued that the regulation suspends and indirectly abrogates workers' rights, such as that of collective bargaining, the conclusion of CLAs and the protection of trade union officials. Moreover, the personal and political data and rights of trade unionists and members of the Organisations are violated.

In November 2022, a decision was issued by a chamber of the CoS ruling that the regulations are partially unconstitutional. The final decision of the plenary session of the CoS is pending.

Social dialogue bodies or frameworks

Since January 2022, GSEE decided **not to be a part of and not to be represented in the Economic and Social Committee (ESC)**. By a letter, the GSEE withdrew all the fourteen (14) members of the Confederation from the ESC's working group and the participation of GSEE's President in the Council of Presidents of the ESC. The reason for the withdrawal was its disagreement and the lack of legitimacy of the procedure for electing the President and the Executive Committee.

Other working life related institutions

Labour Inspectorate

Launching the operation of the Labour Inspectorate as an Independent Authority from first July 2022 (Decision No. 67759/2022 of the Minister for Labour). Under Law 4808/2021, the new Independent Authority is the universal successor of the previous Labour Inspectorate (SEPE), which until then was a special department supervised by the Ministry of Labour directorate.

Other changes introduced by Law 4808/2021 as regards the framework for the operation of the Labour Inspectorate are:

- Removing the responsibility of convening conciliatory tripartite collective disputes' competencies from the Labour Inspectorate and transferring them at the responsibility of the OMED (Organisation of Mediation and Arbitration).³ In other words, the conciliatory role of the Labour Inspectorate was removed from the new Independent Authority and was given to OMED.
- Abolition of any form of social control and involvement of the social partners and workers' representatives in the work and the activities of the Labour Inspectorate. Under the previous regime, the report and planning of the SEPE were discussed and approved by the Supreme Labour Council (SLC), where the social partners were also represented equally (a tripartite body in the Ministry of Labour).

The above changes were unilaterally decided by the Government without any social dialogue. GSEE reacted strongly to the new arrangements, made its own proposals, which were not taken into consideration, and appealed to the ILO for the splitting off the SEPE from the Ministry of Labour and its transformation into an independent authority.

Public Employment Service (DYPA)

In 2022, after more than half a century, the Law 4921/2022 introduced the renaming of the OAED (Hellenic Manpower Employment Organisation) to Public Employment Service (DYPA).

DYPA continues to be a legal person governed by public law and is under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Yet, the new law provides for several changes in the administration, organisation, and operation of the new service. The changes include:

- New composition of the Board of Directors, the establishment of a Social Partners Council, and "the autonomous" administration and management of the "Special Vocational Training Account" by a legal entity constituted exclusively by the social partners.
- The creation of new tools to boost employment and upgrade the training system.
- New responsibilities and tools to relaunch the housing policy to meet the housing needs of the workforce and young people in particular.
- The introduction of new digital tools (DYPA digital card, digital register, digital individual action plan).

³ OMED head office located in Athens and also has an office in Thessaloniki. Unlike SEPE, does not have a territorial network

- The introduction, for the first time, of a work allowance for subsidised unemployed people who find a job.
- The upgrade of the mechanism for diagnosing labour market needs.
- The creation of a National Workforce Skills Council to draw up a National Skills Strategy and establish a digital Individual Skills Account, in which the national social partners are represented.

The social partners, GSEE and GSEVVEE, made proposals that were not considered by the government (GSEE 2022, IME GSEEVVEE 2022).

Governmental responses to inflation

The government in the face of inflation and the energy crisis has taken several measures to address the impact on households and enterprises.

On 9 February 2022, the Minister of Environment and Energy announced the continuation of the state subsidy in the electricity bills for households for the month January 2022. Furthermore, with subsequent decisions the subsidy covered also the next months until August 2022. The amount of the subsidy was differentiated each month, according to a specific percentage calculated on the monthly rate of the MWh.ⁱ

On 11 February 2022 the government also decided the continuation of the natural gas subsidy for residential consumers and businesses, being already in force, in order to cover the month February 2022. With subsequent similar decisions (March, April, May and August 2022) the measure continued and finally covered all the period from January until August 2022. The amount of subsidy per MWh was also differentiated and was extracted from the final amount of the energy bill of the consumer.ⁱⁱ

On nine February 2022 the Ministers of Finance and Energy provided the subsidizing of the electricity cost for the non-domestic consumers (professional and businesses), for the period from January to March 2022. The subsidy with subsequent decisions expended until August 2022. The amount of subsidy per MWh was also differentiated and was extracted from the final amount of the energy bill of the consumer.ⁱⁱⁱ

At the end of February 2022, the government introduced the subsidising of fuel consumption for individuals, reducing diesel fuel prices. The measure aimed at strengthening the middle class and the lower income households and included: (a) Direct fuel subsidy to citizens, which covers a part of the price increases for three months (April, May, June 2022), for individuals with a declared family income of up to €30,000. The total subsidy ranged from €30 to €50 for the 3-month period depending on the vehicle. The measure was renewed (in July 2022) for the months July, August and September 2022. The new subsidy covered €80 for cars and €60 for motorcycles in mainland Greece. On the islands, the subsidy covers €100 for cars and €70 for motorcycles (b) Subsidy at the source, on the selling price of the diesel for April, so that the consumer can benefit from a 15 cent per litre for three months (April, May, June 2022).^{iv}

At the April of 2022 the government granted exceptional financial support measures for the vulnerable groups of the population which included: (a) Aid of €200 per person to low income pensioners, to uninsured elders and to persons with disabilities, (b) One monthly extra payment for the beneficiaries of the guaranteed minimum income, (c) An additional one and a half monthly payment of the child benefit in April to the beneficiaries of March 2022, i.e. an instalment corresponding to 1.5 months. The amount of this aid depended on the level of the income and varies: €105 or €63 or €42 for each child up to the first two, and €210 or €126 or €84 from the third and for each subsequent child.^v

On 27 May 2022 the government introduced an "emergency" financial support measure to households (named "Power pass") regarding the coverage of part of the increase in the cost of electricity consumption (60%). The assistance initially covered the period from December 2021 until May 2022. The measure expended by a new decision on 6 June 2022 to cover also June 2022.

Beneficiaries of the financial support were natural persons with a net family income in 2020 of up to €45,000.^{vi}

Other measures taken by the government especially for some sectors are the following:

- The government on 28 March 2022 introduced the subsidizing of fuel consumption for taxi services. The measure concerns the period from 17 March 2022 to 30 September 2022.^{vii}
- The government on 27 May 2022 introduced an extraordinary contribution of 90% of the additional revenues of electricity companies. This special levy which specified on 5 September 2022 is one-off measure, concerns the period from first October 2021 to 30 June 2022 and will be calculated on the basis of the increase in the gross profits of electricity producers as compared to the corresponding months of the previous year.^{viii}
- Also, the government on 27 May 2022 introduced Financial aid for farmers, which include: the determination of a zero-rate payment of the special consuming tax for diesel of engines used exclusively in agriculture, for the whole year 2022, the setting a VAT rate of 6%, instead of the current 13% for fertilizers, the subsidization of livestock farmers for the increased cost of animal feed.^{ix}
- The government, on eight August 2022 introduced a subsidy for the distribution and the newsprint paper costs of all newspaper and magazine publishing companies for the year 2022. The duration of the subsidy is set from first February 2022 until 20 December 2022.^x

ⁱ Eurofound (2021), [Electricity subsidy for consumers](#), case GR-2021-36/2379 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

ⁱⁱ Eurofound (2022), [Subsidised natural gas for households and businesses](#), case GR-2022-1/2380 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eurofound (2022), [Electricity subsidy for companies](#), case GR-2021-45/2410 (measures in Greece), EU Policy Watch, Dublin.

^{iv} Eurofound (2022), [Subsidy for fuels for low- to medium-income individuals and taxi services](#), case GR-2022-12/2264 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

^v Eurofound (2022), [Ad-hoc financial support for vulnerable groups](#), case GR-2022-17/2262 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

^{vi} Eurofound (2021), [Power pass: emergency financial support for household electricity](#), case GR-2021-49/2917 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

^{vii} Eurofound (2022), [Subsidy for fuels for low- to medium-income individuals and taxi services](#), case GR-2022-12/2264 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

^{viii} Eurofound (2021), [Special levy on electricity producers](#), case GR-2021-40/2932 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

^{ix} Eurofound (2022), [Financial aid for farmers](#), case GR-2022-1/2298 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

^x Eurofound (2022), [Subsidization of distribution and newsprint paper costs](#), case GR-2022-33/2783 (measures in Greece), EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

Collective bargaining and inflation

How inflation features in wage negotiations

In Greece, the Law in force (Law 4172/2013, Article 103(3)) provides that: “The level of the statutory MW and regulated daily wage should be determined by taking into account the situation of the Greek economy and its prospects for growth in terms of productivity, prices, and competitiveness, employment, unemployment rates, incomes, and wages.”

Apart from that, there are no further criteria, i.e., there is no link to inflation (index-linked adjustment), no statutory indicators, nor is any formula used for setting the minimum wage (MW).

The MW is determined through specific consultation, during which the social partners have only the right to be consulted but the final decision is taken by the government.

In this legislative context, the government after the freezing of the minimum wage in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on 26 July 2021 decided the 2% increase as of 1 January 2022. With this decision, the minimum wage raised from €650 increased to €663 per month (14 salaries per year).

However, the pressure from the persistent inflation wave since autumn 2021 led the government to activate the MW setting mechanism again in January 2022 and to decide for a second increase within the same year (see also other sections) starting from first May 2022 (€713 month). Thus the total increase of minimum wage formed to 9.7% for the year 2022.

As regards the rationale for the decision, in line with the conclusion of the consultation on the formation of the MW drawn up (in April 2022) by the KEPE in cooperation with the Committee of Experts, it is stated that:

In July 2021, given the then volatile environment due to the pandemic and the fact that 2020 was witnessed a significant economic downturn (9% decrease in GDP), the government decided on a “moderate” 2% increase in the MW starting on 1 January 2022.

However, 2021 it was marked an 8.3% GDP growth, an increase in total consumption expenditure, and an increase in exports of goods and employment. Nevertheless, these developments were overshadowed by high inflation, which, in March 2022, was close to 8.9% compared to the prices in March 2021. Inflation is owed largely to increased energy costs that have put pressure on both households and businesses. Inflation deteriorated after the invasion of Ukraine, which has put pressure on energy and specific food sectors.

On this basis, during the consultation, social partners and research institutions proposed to support the economically weakest income categories and to increase the MW as a way to compensate for their income losses. The proposals on the level of increase were between 3% and 13.3%, with the majority converging to 4%.

Examples of recent responses

Greece, as described in detail, faced the increased inflation mainly with the institutionalization of a second increase in the minimum wage in the same year and therefore the change in the schedule of salary adjustments.

This change was of an exceptional nature, without causing any changes in the way the minimum wage is formulated.

As regards negotiations at sectoral or professional level, the agreed minimum wages were higher than the national minimum wage, as the law obliges.

That is, those sectoral agreements that provided for the minimum wage on the basis of remuneration, adjusted the introductory wage to the increase received by the national minimum wage (collective agreement of hoteliers).

While those sectoral agreements provided for an import wage higher than the national minimum wage, collective bargaining was free without any commitment from rising inflation. That is why some sectoral agreements for the year 2022 maintained the same remuneration.

A total of 24 sectoral or co-occupational collective labour agreements were signed in 2022. The punctuality caused by inflation and the increase in the price of energy were between the central issues in the national strikes called by the GSEE in April and November 2022 as well as in the strikes by the Labour Centres (Athens, Thessaloniki and elsewhere), the sectoral federations and trade unions.

Developments in working time

Changes to legislation

As of 2021, the Law 4808/2021 introduced new working time arrangements, which provide for:

Regulation of working time by individual agreement between employer and employee.

At the employee's request to the employer and following a written individual agreement between the employer and the employee, a system of working-time arrangement may be applied over a reference period of six or twelve months (Article 59). Such a procedure is possible only where there is no trade union in the company, or there is no company-level agreement in place.

Organisation of working time

Subject to an agreement between the employee and the employer, in the case of full-time contracts, employees are given the opportunity to work on a 4-day full-time basis for forty (40) hours a week and ten (10) hours per day. This working-time arrangement system may be applied either for six months in a calendar year or a reference period of one (1) calendar year. When this system is applied, it is not permissible to work for more than ten (10) hours per day and forty (40) hours per week allocated on a 4-day basis (Article 55 (2)).

Unpaid leave

A full-time or part-time worker may take unpaid leave through an individual written agreement with the employer. This leave is provided for the first time in the private sector and may have a duration of one year at maximum. It may be extended upon further agreement of the parties. The employment contract is suspended during the leave, and no insurance contributions are due (Article 62).

Working break

Where the daily working time exceeds four hours (instead of six hours under the previous regulation), a break of at least 15 minutes and a maximum of 30 minutes should be granted, during which workers are entitled to leave their workplace. Such breaks may not be granted at the start or end of daily work. Break time is not counted as working time. Workers employed full-time but on a split-shift basis for all or a few days of the week are entitled to rest between parts of their working hours, which must be at least three (3) hours (Article 56).

Digital job card

As of 1 July 2022, the Digital Job Card became applicable by force of Law N. 4808/2021 (article 74), as an obligation to operate an electronic system for measuring working time in businesses / employers, which is connected in real time to the ERGANI II IT system of the Ministry of Labour. The digital labour card is used by the Labour Inspectorate to check companies' compliance with working hours and to combat undeclared and under-declared work and unpaid overtime, as well as contribution evasion, protecting workers and businesses that comply with the rules from unfair competition.

The measure was initially applied as pilot to the banking and the supermarkets sectors with more than 250 employees. In parallel, the digital census of the working hours of workers from all companies in the Labour system was carried out and was completed on 20 December 2022.

The second phase of the Digital Job Card implementation concerns insurance companies and security companies starting from 16 February 2023. It will then be extended to the industry and the Public utility companies (DEKO) and gradually, in 2023, to all enterprises in the country, regardless of their size and sector of activity.

Bargaining outcomes

There is not bargaining including different regulations about the working time.

Debates on duration and organisation

See above “Changes to legislation”

Labour market shortages and social partners

Regarding the shortages in job specializations, there are different approaches from the employers' associations, the professional organizations and the representatives of the employees.

The research, entitled "Brain Regain vs Digital Skills Gap" identifies that companies face difficulties in finding a workforce with specialized digital skills. In fact, the "Brain Drain" phenomenon has intensified the lack of executives from the Greek labour market with specialized digital skills, because a significant number of specialists decided during the crisis, to immigrate to other countries.

Also, according to the Manpower Group employment outlook survey, it appears that 60% of employers state that they face relative difficulty in filling positions due to the lack of talent, 18% face great difficulty and only 20% encounter no difficulty.

According to a study by the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV), staff shortages are mainly found in six productive sectors: tourism, manufacturing, construction, business services, technology-communication services and activities related to health and social care.

In relation to the professions - specialties with high demand, from the SEV research, it appears that they mainly concern the sectors of manufacturing, information and communication technologies (ICT), energy, logistics. There is a significant lack of technicians of IT applications, networks and telecommunications, supply chain services executives, production electricians, industrial plant and automation maintenance technicians, industrial plant machinery and equipment operators, construction machine operators, skilled metal craftsmen, skilled food processing craftsmen. Additionally there is lack for highly qualified personnel in ICT specialties, in marketing and sales at the area of technologically advanced products and services.

According to SEV, for covering staff shortages, it is the technical vocational education that plays a significant role and there is an imperative need to upgrade the technical education system as updating well as the curricula (SEV 2023).

Shortages and narrowness in the labour market are also identified by the Ministry of Labour, mainly for specific specialties of high, medium or low specialization in the construction and tourism sectors and in new technologies.

The biggest problem of staff shortages in 2022 was appeared in the tourism sector, where the tourist season started with 55,000 job vacancies, a number slightly increased as compared to 2021. The picture is the same in the food industry, where there were 5,000 resignations according to the Panhellenic Federation of Employees in Restaurants and Tourism (POEET).

The ITEP (Research Institute for Tourism), argues that the previous period of the pandemic and the changes it brought about in the labour market, the increase in short-term accommodation rentals, the unequal competition they create as well as the migration of workers abroad, played an important role in the lack of staff in hotels and restaurants.

Regarding wages, the hotel employers argue that in tourism the wages are higher than the basic salary, where the sectoral collective agreements are applied. In addition, the sectoral associations are asking for inspections to be carried out by the Labour Inspection Agency, not only in hotels, but also in short-term rental accommodation units. They propose that the subsidy measure of hiring staff must be relaunched, so that hotels can hire personnel both in May and in October each year.

On the other hand, the representatives of the employees argue that the staff shortages are mainly linked to the low wages and the existing poor working conditions as well as to the low number and coverage of the sectoral collective agreements or their non-mandatory nature in some cases. Specifically, according to POEET, the main reasons for the vacancies are the non-extension of unemployment benefits during the months when seasonal workers in the sector are not employed and the poor working conditions with low wages in several companies. Poor working conditions include long working hours, low wages, undeclared and partially undeclared work, high accommodation costs for the tourist workers in popular destinations. This phenomenon combined with seasonality has caused many workers to look elsewhere for full-time jobs on a year-round basis such as in the delivery sector. POEET proposes that the government should give enough incentives in order to cover the workers from the unemployment fund for more than three months, because tourist workers are employed for 4, 5, 6 months due to the seasonality. Another important issue for solving the problem in the hotel industry is the timely implementation of the sectoral collective agreement, through its declaration as mandatory by the Minister of Labour. The extension of the collective agreement was too late during 2022.

It is noted that the problem of finding workers in the tourism sector during the summer season of 2022 was also recognized by the Minister of Labour, who urged employers to give higher wages and requested inspections from SEPE. Furthermore, to deal with the problem, a meeting was held (May 2023) with the participation of representatives of the employers, officials of the ministries and the Public Employment Service (DYPA) but without the participation of employees' representatives.

Other important policy developments

Labour market shortages

The number of Job Vacancies continued to be significantly increased during 2022. In the third quarter of 2022, the existing data on job vacancies for the whole economy, (excluding Primary Sector and Activities of Households), recorded an increase of 60.8% as compared to the third quarter of 2021 (24,324 and 15,125 job vacancies respectively). As a point of comparison the corresponding number of job vacancies in the third quarter of 2021 had recorded a decrease of 56.2% compared to the third 2019 (ELSTAT, 2022c).

The sectors that showed the most pressure on labour shortages were the Accommodation, Food Service activities, Construction, IT, Manufacturing and Retail sectors.

The fact that, the unemployment general rate has been falling steadily and significantly lately but at the same time the unemployment rate among vulnerable groups (women, youth) continues to remain high, that is serious problem.

The same goes on with the share of part-time workers, who either wish to work more hours or they are available to work according to their job contract, but at the same time they are not looking for a sustainable work and on the other hand, face the problems on the mismatch between requested and offered jobs remains significant.

At the same time, it is difficult for the businesses to recruit suitable workers, because they either do not have the required qualifications or they have turned to find jobs into other sectors, where exist better employment prospects. This specific situation has been described by the Bank of Greece (2022) as a distortion of the labour market.

Nevertheless, labour shortages continued to be particularly acute in the tourism, agricultural and public health sectors (Eurofound, 2022).

Based on a recent survey of the Institute of the Association of Hellenic Tourism Enterprises (INSETE), at the peak of the 2021 summer season, 53,249 jobs were not filled out of the 244,124 positions needed in hotels. This is a shortage rate of 22%. It also indicates a recurring problem during 2022, causing problems in the operation of businesses.

In the agricultural sector, the problem of lack of potential human staff is largely connected with the lack of a fully organized system of legal immigration procedures (for seasonal or potential employment workers) and a special framework of fully legal work in the agricultural sector.

The issue of labour shortages, especially in the agricultural sector, has been around for a long time. For the years 2021-2022, for example, the estimates of work needs in the agricultural sector extend to 158,087 positions, of which only 31,315 jobs were finally approved, i.e., 20%. A number of thousands of immigrants enter irregularly in the country and/or working illegally in the agricultural sector.

And this is quite true, if someone examines the duration and the function of operation of the transfer refugee system from 2001 until 2022.

The extraordinary measures taken in 2022 are also considered as insufficient because they did not contribute to the formation of an environment of social protection and thus creating the necessary

conditions for attracting workers in the agricultural sector. They only provided facilities of a unilateral administrative nature of the labour staff to the agricultural enterprises, where at the same time the major issue was the lack of the available labour and its working conditions.

The causes of the lack of labour during the two years 2020-2021 have to do with the reduced influx of foreign workers and the tendency to leave the existing ones from Greece (Asians mainly, but also Albanians) as land workers and to seek job opportunities in other European countries, where national legalization programs are easier and implemented to a greater extent. Also, in Greece there is a rapid deterioration of labour relations in the agricultural sector and an employment regime dominated by precariousness, low daily wages and undeclared and uninsured work. Part of the workers in the agricultural sector also moved to the tourism sector, which also faces shortages (Kapsalis, 2022).

Employment status and contracts

There are not any legislative changes during the year.

Self-employed

There are not changes.

Wage setting

The legislative framework for the formation of the minimum wage continues to be the same as provided by law 4173/2013. In 2022, the minimum wage mechanism was activated on 19 January 2022 with decision No. 5117/19.1.2022 of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, "Establishment and appointment of members of the Three-member Commission of Coordination for the Minimum Wage" and completed with the Ministerial Decision No. 38866/21-04-2022 on "Determination of minimum wage and floor daily wage for employees and cat technicians of the whole country" starting from first May 2022.

In addition, a National General Collective Agreement (EGSEE) was signed for 2022 which concerned the extension of the validity of the previous EGSEE agreements, which does not include regulations on minimum wages between social partners.

Gender pay gap

In Greece, women's participation in paid employment increased over the three-year period 2019-2021. The total number of the employees in the private sector increased between 2019 and 2022 by 263.263 persons, or 13.3 %. The increase was higher for women (+15.8%) than for men (+11.1%); as a result, the share of women in total employed persons increased by 1.1 points (from 46.6% in 2019 to 47.7% in 2022).

As concerns the gender pay-gap, Greece exhibits a relatively low gender pay gap compared to the EU average. In 2018, Greek female employees received wages, 10.4% lower than male employees, a difference that has considerably decreased since 2010 (15%). However, this number should be carefully assessed, as Greece also exhibits the lowest share of female labour force participation across the EU (Eliamep, 2022).

Health and safety

On 3 August 2022, the National Strategy for Health and Safety at Work for the period 2022-2027 and the Action Plan for the current two-year period (2022-2023) were voted. They provide, among other things, for:

- Modernising the conduct of inspections with the use of new technologies and the adoption of a standardised electronic inspection procedure.
- Actions to prevent psychosocial risks at work and to train employers, employees, and health and safety professionals.
- Updating the national legislation on Health and Safety at Work.
- Deepening cooperation with social partners by using the Hellenic Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (ELINYAE) and upgrading the Occupational Health and Safety Council.

The number of accidents at work increased in 2022 to 102, whereas it was 51 in 2019 and 41 in 2020.

According to estimates from workers' representatives, one of the main causes is the work intensification intensive return to normality after the pandemic. In addition, the transformation of the Labour Inspectorate (SEPE) into an Independent Authority created a transitional period (1st half of 2022) during which control inspectorate mechanisms were "frozen."

Work–life balance

Since 2021 Law 4808/2021 has introduced several work-family balance arrangements, such as:

Caregiver's leave

Any employee who has completed six (6) months of employment is entitled to caregiver's leave of up to five (5) working days per year, without pay, to care for a person in need of care or support for a serious medical reason (Article 29).

Right to absence of the working parent or caregiver, up to two (2) times a year and up to one (1) working day at a time, on a paid basis, for reasons of force majeure linked to urgent family matters in the event of illness or accident that renders the immediate presence of the worker necessary. (Article 30).

Leave to undergo medically assisted reproduction methods.

Female employees in the private sector are entitled to seven working days of paid leave each time they undergo medically assisted reproduction methods (Article 35).

Pre-natal test leave

Pregnant workers are discharged from work without any reduction in pay, subject to prior notification to the employer, to undergo pre-natal tests, in case that the tests have to be carried out during working time (Article 40).

"Neighbourhood nannies" social programme

Moreover, a new project called "Neighbourhood nannies" was launched on 28 March 2022, at a pilot level. The programme mainly concerns the care of babies aged between two months and 2.5 years and provides financial support for working parents, single parents, foster parents and the family, in general, to take care of their child or children, either within the family home or at the home of the

childcare worker/caregiver. As a first step, the electronic platform ntantades.gov.gr was set up, and registration in the “Register of Carers” started.

The programme’s aim is twofold: on the one hand, to support and make it easier for mothers and guardians to achieve their full reintegration into the labour market after having a child and, on the other hand, to reduce undeclared work by encouraging, in particular, unemployed women to work as childcare workers/caregivers.

Lifelong learning and skills development

The government announced in December 2022 the launch of the *Pao brosta* programme (which means “I move forward”), to develop digital and green skills was. The programme involves training 150,000 workers from all sectors in digital and green skills. The body implementing the programme is the Public Employment Service (DYPA), and the funding comes from the Recovery and Resilience Fund. The programme aims to adapt workers to the requirements of modern workplace trends, upgrade their prospects, and contribute to the modernisation of the Greek economy.

By way of example, the options will range from essential digital office tools, social media marketing and e-shop management programmes to more specialised subjects such as data analytics, artificial intelligence applications, logistics and uptake of digital technologies in the agricultural sector.

Working life of Ukrainian refugees

Employment and working conditions

Ukrainian nationals who have sought refugee status in Greece since 24 February 2022 are entitled to temporary protection (Ministerial Decision 131035/04.03.2022).

As of 31 October 2022, 20,418 temporary protection permits have been issued, of which 69% concern women and 31% men (Ministry of Migration, 2022).

The main reason why Ukrainian refugees choose Greece as a destination country is deemed to be the large Ukrainian community in Greece and the networks of acquaintances and relatives. By 8 August, 75,945 Ukrainians, of whom 19,760 were children (up to 17 years old), had found refugee status in Greece after the outbreak of the war. However, only a few people are seeking asylum in Greece; and even fewer people live in accommodation facilities. Out of 20,420 people with temporary protection, only 212 were in accommodation facilities at the end of October (125 in Elefsina and 87 in Serres).

To provide holistic support to Ukrainian refugees, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, since 20 June 2022, also enabled displaced persons from Ukraine, who are beneficiaries of temporary protection, to participate in the HELIOS (Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection) programme, which is implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The programme is a comprehensive intervention for all adult beneficiaries of international protection and their family members and provides beneficiaries with services such as:

- Ensuring Housing.
- Integration courses (Greek language, social skills, etc.).
- Job-search support with individualised job counselling which includes: Identification of needs and interests, recording of skills under the EU Skills Profile Tool, covering the cost of obtaining various certificates (e.g., a certificate proving knowledge of the Greek language, professional driving licence, English language degree, ECDL, etc.), organisation of “career days,” liaison with employers, the definition of objectives and professional guidance, information on the services of the DYP A and the rights and obligations of employees and employers in Greece.

According to IOM Greece (International Organisation for Migration) data for the period from 15 July to 11 November 2022, 4,215 Ukrainians were included in the Helios programme. 73% of them are women. 60% belong to the 26-49 age group, and 30% are over 50 years old.

Regarding their professional profile, 20% are teachers, 14% have worked as administrative or commercial managers, and 11% have engaged in legal, social or cultural professions. Smaller shares include engineers (8%), health professionals (7%) and administrative officials (6%), 20% have no previous professional experience.

Social partner initiatives to support Ukrainian refugees

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine began, the social partners have expressed their support to the people of Ukraine without taking concrete initiatives.

The Ukrainian communities in Greece, the Hellenic Red Cross, the GCR (National Council for Refugees) and the IOM played an essential role in supporting Ukrainian refugees.

Commentary and outlook

In Greece, the pandemic crisis, the energy crisis, as well as the consequences of the invasion of Ukraine has weighed on an economy and a society already burdened from the ten-year fiscal adjustment programmes and exacerbated weaknesses and problems in the labour market.

Despite high growth in the country, high inflation and high prices of products and services have lowered the standards of living in the country. The population at the poverty line increased in 2022, although the benefit policy implemented by the government was comprehensive. The unemployment rate decreased, but the minimum wage, despite two (2) successive increases, is still below the minimum wage in Greece before the 2010 crisis and the increases do not compensate fully for inflation, meaning a real wage decrease. The increase in central bank interest rates led to a further rise in mortgage and business loans in an environment of high inflation. Housing expenditure is among the highest in Europe. Low wages, high rents and high prices result in 72.9 % of young people aged 18-34 living with their parents, and Greece ranking second on the list of 26 EU countries, when the European average does not exceed 49.4 %. The share of these young people increased by 3.5 percentage points from 2019 to 2021, while they continue to migrate abroad to find a job. At the same time, low wages and poor working conditions discourage young unemployed people from working in dynamic industries such as tourism and create staff shortages. The new jobs created are, to a large extent, below the qualifications of the labour force in Greece. The country's population has declined, and demographic ageing is a direct threat.

As regards working terms and conditions, they seem to continuously deteriorate since the adoption of recent measures has weakened the role and work of labour control mechanisms (due to a change in legal form and management mode), increased flexibility in the labour market, reduced the possibility of unilateral recourse to arbitration for trade unions, no collective labour agreements are signed, procedures for extending collective labour agreements are delayed and, more generally, a unilateral procedure is followed in decision-making by the government.

Social dialogue in 2022 (as pointed out by most social partners) remained virtually absent and, where it took place, was insufficient and ostensible. In addition, new legislation reduces the cases of institutional involvement of the social partners in social dialogue bodies, institutions and processes. One example is the design and implementation of major programmes, such as sustainable development plans, which are carried out without any form of social dialogue.

In terms of public social goods, despite the experience of the pandemic and the irreplaceable role of the public health system it has highlighted, public health continues to be understaffed and underpaid. The recent energy crisis and global price increases for oil, gas and electricity have placed a disproportionate burden on the cost of living due to even higher increases in Greece than in other countries.

According to the last Eurobarometre, 77% of Greeks are dissatisfied with the management of the high cost of living at the EU level and 79% with its management at the national level. Moreover, the cost of living is a concern for almost 100% of Greeks.

Finally, it is not an accident that the majority of the national social partners in Greece, seem to be unsatisfied by the government policies on issues such as the minimum wage, the energy prices for

workers and businesses, the policies to face inflation and high prices and overall, by the lack of a meaningful social dialogue in the decision-making process.

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