



ADVICE AND TIPS – GREECE



The Greek public employment service, Organismos Apasholisseos Ergatikou Dynamikou (OAED), has the monopoly on placement in Greece. It is therefore advisable to register with the OAED upon arrival in Greece. However, the most important route to a job in Greece is personal contacts. Therefore, in a country such as Greece it is important to 'network' and you will discover that in no time you will have become part of the Greeks 'network of recommendations'.

Knowledge of Greek is essential for most graduate positions.

- *Typical problems:* there is a high level of competition from home graduates, especially for jobs in the public sector, which traditionally offer more security and money. More than 15,000 students graduate each year and there is no shortage of Greek graduates with a Masters degree. Greek degree courses last at least four years, so holders of three-year undergraduate degrees from the UK may not be considered as highly qualified as graduates from Greek universities.
- *How to improve your chances:* vocational degrees such as engineering, accountancy and IT are more popular with employers than non-vocational courses such as humanities or science. As Greek employers tend to require a relevant degree, it is easier for UK graduates of non-vocational courses to find jobs in Greece once they are established in their careers, rather than immediately after university. The Greek higher education system is selective and some institutions are seen as more prestigious than others. Employers may, therefore, be favourably impressed by high grades and prestigious universities.
- *Language requirements:* it can be difficult to get a graduate job in Greece if you are not fluent in Modern Greek. The majority of younger people speak at least one foreign language, the most popular being English. Jobs that do not require a knowledge of Greek include teaching English, jobs in the tourist industry, working as an au pair, manual or agricultural work, working as a musician, dancer or dj. Competence in Greek is likely to be less important for those working for multinational companies which have English as their main language, or in UK/US companies.

The Application Letter

Greek application rules are not very strict. The letter should be short, in a formal and polite style. The letter is usually typed, and is accompanied by a CV. Many Greek companies use application forms to replace the CV. Those forms are long and detailed, and often copies of diplomas, up to three references (which will be checked in the final stage of your application), a health certificate and a certificate of absence of a criminal record (which can be obtained by the police of your country) are requested too.

The Curriculum Vitae

There are no strict rules for CVs in Greece. Usually the CV is three to five pages long. A photograph is not required, however it is appreciated. CVs are typed and are extremely detailed and normally in chronological order. At the end of the CV you have to sign. Practical experience is considered of great importance. Mention all practical experience you have obtained, including apprenticeships, university projects and courses. Leisure activities are optional, but much appreciated if you mention them. Put down everything in your CV that (you think) makes you an interesting candidate for an employer. Remember that a lot of paper looks impressive in the eyes of a Greek recruiter!

The Application Procedure

Interviewing is the prime selection method. Usually three to six interviews are common. The main criteria for Greek recruiters are a candidate's general level of education and his/her communication capabilities. Be prepared for a greater degree of inquisitiveness about your personal circumstances than common in many other countries. But of course, you are not obliged to answer detailed questions on your personal situation.

Where can I work?

- Major industries: tourism, food processing, textiles, chemicals, tobacco processing, metal products, mining, petroleum, shipping.
- Recent growth areas: technology and telecommunications, transport infrastructure, organic farming, research and development, minerals.
- Industries in decline: textiles, shipbuilding.
- Shortage occupations: qualified personnel for the shipping industry.
- Major companies: Hellenic Petroleum, ANT 1 Group, Hellenic Telecommunication Organisation (OTE), Intracom, Motor Oil SA, ANEK Lines, Unilever Hellas SA, Alpha Bank, Attica Group, Zagori.
- Major cities: Athens (capital and largest city), Thessaloniki (second largest city), Patra, Heraklio.

What's it like working in Greece?

- Average working hours: employees in the public sector usually work an eight-hour day. Employees in the private sector tend to work longer but less formal hours, with breaks during the day, including a long break in the afternoon. A higher proportion of the workforce work full time than is the case in other EU countries, despite the statutory introduction of flexible forms of employment. Part-time workers account for 6% of total employment, compared with the EU average of 18.5%.
- Holidays: average 20 days per year.
- Average graduate starting salary: €1,100 per month.
- Tax rates: income tax rates are progressive, ranging from 5% to 40% (in 2008). The first €12,000 of income is tax exempt. For 'permanent residents', tax is calculated on both Greek and overseas income, whereas foreign residents employed in Greece pay tax only on their earnings in Greece. Up-to-date income tax rates and other tax information are available from the Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance.
- Working practices and customs: similar to the UK. Dress code is less formal (smart casual) in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs dominate, with more

than 80% of businesses having a turnover below €150,000 and more than 85% having no more than five employees. Self-employment is much more common in Greece than in the UK and the notion of the portfolio career is not new to Greece. Many people have more than one job, especially if one is seasonal. Greek workers are rather less likely to move for work than in other other European countries. This is due partly to the high rate of home ownership (80%) and partly to social and cultural factors, particularly the strength of family ties, which form a very strong network of social protection