

Country Profile - Greece

Job market

What are my chances of getting a job?

Greece was hit hard by the global financial crisis and is still deep in recession. The erosion of public finances, inaccurate statistics, lack of adherence to reforms and public tax evasion has led to a major financial emergency. The government has adopted austerity measures which include cutting government spending, reducing the size of the public sector, decreasing tax evasion and reforming health care and pensions.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Central Bank (ECB) and eurozone governments have provided Greece with emergency loans. There has also been speculation of introducing a six-day working week or Greece being expelled from the eurozone should they default on repayments. The public have strongly opposed the austerity measures and there has been strike action and public protests.

There may still be opportunities for UK graduates but knowledge of Greek will be essential, as will be an acceptance of the perilous state of the Greek economy.

- **Typical problems encountered:** unemployment is the second highest in Europe (at 23.1%, after Spain), with youth unemployment at 53.8%. There will be a high level of competition from home graduates. 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 home graduates.
- **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 if you are not fluent in 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.

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.
- **Major companies:** Hellenic Petroleum, ANT1 Group, Hellenic Telecommunications Organisation (OTE), Intracom, Motor Oil (Hellas), ANEK Lines, National Bank of Greece, Alpha Bank, Attica Group.
- **Search for more companies:** [Kompass](#) is a worldwide business directory searchable by product/service, [Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry \(ACCI\)](#), [British Hellenic Chamber of Commerce](#), [Greek Yellow Pages](#) and [Greek Export Directory](#).
- **Major cities:** Athens (capital and largest city), Thessaloniki (second largest city, also known as Salonica), Patras, Heraklion (on Crete).

What's it like working in Greece?

- **Average working hours:** the usual week is 40 hours.
- **Holidays:** minimum 20 days per year.
- **Tax rates:** foreign residents employed in Greece are only taxed on Greek income. Income tax rates are progressive, ranging from 18% to 45% (in 2012). The first €12,000 of income is tax exempt.

Applying for jobs

Application forms and CVs are the typical methods of application, although many Greek companies use application forms instead of a CV.

CVs, when requested, should usually be typed and two to three pages long. A photograph is not required, but is welcomed. Greek CVs are very detailed and usually in chronological order. For graduate jobs, all companies require at least a first degree, and a Masters will increase your chances. Practical experience is considered very important. Mention all the experience you have obtained, including apprenticeships, university projects and courses. A listing of leisure activities is optional, but welcome. Your knowledge of foreign languages should be stated.

The covering letter should be short and formal in style. Covering letters are typed and should be signed. It is important to state why you are applying for the job and why you think you are the best candidate. Include referees and their contact details if requested.

Interviewing is the primary selection method in Greece and it is common to undergo two or three interviews for a job. Greek recruiters look mainly at your general level of education and communication skills. Be prepared for a greater degree of inquisitiveness

about your personal circumstances than in many other [European Union \(EU\)](#) member states, although you are not obliged to answer questions on your personal situation.

Will my UK qualifications be recognised?

In Greece, academic qualifications can be recognised by [DOATAP \(National Academic Recognition Information Centre\)](#) in Athens and Thessaloniki.

More information about recognition of qualifications and related topics is available from [ENIC-NARIC](#).

Do I still need to pay UK tax and National Insurance?

If you are planning to live and work in Greece, check your UK tax and National Insurance position with [HM Revenue & Customs \(HMRC\)](#) to ensure that you are not losing any UK pension rights.

Vacancy sources

Job websites

There are many websites and search engines that will help you find work in Greece, including:

- [Kariera](#) - in Greek;
- [Just Jobs - Greece](#) - in English and Greek;
- [Global Management & Services](#) - in English - for jobs in hospitality and catering and on cruise ships;
- [Jobical](#) - in English and Greek - for IT jobs;
- [Job in Greece](#) - in English and Greek;
- [Stelechi](#) - in English and Greek - for marketing, administration, finance, IT, sales, engineering, medical, and consulting jobs;
- [EURES - European Job Mobility Portal](#) - maintained by the European Commission, provides information about job vacancies, living and working conditions, and labour markets in Greece, as well as a CV-posting service for jobseekers.

Recruitment agencies

- A small number of employment agencies are advertised in the [Greek Yellow Pages](#), available in both English and Greek.
- [Europages](#) (the European business directory) gives details of companies by products and services, and is available in English.
- Some UK-based employment agencies deal with international vacancies or have branches in Greece. Check with the [Recruitment and Employment Confederation \(REC\)](#) for lists of approved UK agencies and then contact the agency to see if they have jobs in Greece.

- Euro-CIETT is the European organisation of the [International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies \(CIETT\)](#) - check for details of their European members.

Newspapers

English language newspapers include:

- [Athens News](#) - weekly;
- [ANA-MPA](#) - Athens News Agency/Macedonian Press Agency;
- [The Guardian](#), [Times Online](#) and [The Independent](#) sometimes carry advertisements for jobs abroad.

Greek language newspapers can be accessed on [Dolnet](#) or as follows:

- [Aggelioforos](#)
- [AVGI](#)
- [Eleftherotypia](#)
- [Ta Nea](#)
- [To Vima](#)

Other sources

- [Chrysi Efkaيريا](#) - classifieds paper and online.
- European Economic Area (EEA) nationals have the right to set up their own business in Greece, but it is important to contact the [Embassy of Greece](#) in London or a [Greek Manpower Employment Organisation \(OAED\)](#) office in Greece to find out whether any special registration is required.

Hidden vacancies

- Many job vacancies are filled informally by networking with friends and relatives who may know suitable employers, although this method does not work so well for jobs with the big multinationals. Also try [LinkedIn](#).
- If you are a member of a professional association or union, they may have contacts with counterparts in Greece.
- Speculative applications are an important way of finding employment because most Greek companies are rather small and do not have a large personnel department. Word of mouth is still a very important medium for job hunting in Greece.
- Go to the Job market section for details of how to find Greek companies.

Work experience

Temporary work experience is an excellent way to learn more Greek to equip you to apply for employment or postgraduate study in Greece.

Work placements and internships

Organisations that can help you find internships or work placements include:

- [AIESEC \(Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales\)](#). AIESEC Hellas has strong links with employers. Every year they organise job fairs, events and placements for foreign students;
- [IAESTE \(The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience\)](#);
- [Europlacement](#) - searchable database of Greek internships in a variety of sectors;
- [Intern Abroad](#) - search for international internships;
- [International Voluntary Service \(IVS\) in Britain](#).

Exchange programmes

Your institution may be involved in the [Leonardo da Vinci Programme](#), where vocational training exchanges and work placements are arranged with partner organisations overseas. Contact your international office or careers service for more information.

Teaching schemes

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) is a popular option for UK graduates wanting to work in Greece. The main recruitment agency is [Anglo-Hellenic Teacher Recruitment](#). It advertises on [TEFL.com](#), where other jobs in Greece are posted from time to time. Although a TEFL qualification is not necessary to work as a teacher in Greece, you must be a university graduate, also check [The Guardian](#). Jobs are usually seasonal.

Volunteering

Opportunities for voluntary work in Greece are available through [Elix - volunteering in Greece](#) and numerous broader organisations such as the [European Youth Portal](#).

Casual work

UK graduates often find jobs in tourism, most commonly by going to Greece and making enquiries in cafés and hotels, etc. Vacancies are also advertised in the Greek press or check [Jobs Abroad](#) for examples of typical openings. Work in tourism is usually seasonal.

Postgraduate study

How does the higher education system work?

Public higher education is divided into universities, polytechnic schools (known as Higher Technical Educational Institutes (TEI)). Students are admitted on the basis of their performance at national level examinations in the second and third grades of Lykeio (high school).

Taught postgraduate courses are not as widely available in Greece as in the UK. However, recent years have seen a steady growth in postgraduate courses, both at Masters and PhD level.

What courses are available?

PhD courses are often modelled on the US Doctorate and include taught courses. These are primarily in technical areas such as IT, engineering and food technology. The main source of information is the university prospectus, usually in Greek, but some course information is available on the internet.

There are comparatively few students from other European countries studying in Greece, apart from a few doing classical studies. Some UK students do their Doctoral research in Greece, especially in classics and archaeology, whether or not they are students of a Greek university.

Masters programmes usually last two years and Doctoral degrees take a minimum of five years.

Where can I study?

A full list of Greek universities is available from the [Greek Ministry of Education](#) or [Universities Worldwide](#).

Applying for postgraduate study

Admissions tutors will usually decide on eligibility but, in general, a Masters degree will be required for entry to a Doctoral programme at a Greek university. The Greek first degree, or Ptichio, is officially regarded as being equivalent to a UK Masters degree.

Universities usually teach in Greek. Greek language requirements for students who are not native speakers vary between universities and departments. Some courses are taught in other languages, including English, but these are usually run by organisations representing universities from other countries.

Candidates should contact their postgraduate study programme of choice for information on closing dates.

Admission procedures vary between institutions, so contact the department you are interested in joining. As well as submitting an application form, you may have to take an oral and/or written entrance examination. Selection criteria vary from programme to programme, but may include: the grade you attained in your first degree; your performance in undergraduate courses related to your chosen postgraduate study programme; knowledge of foreign languages; your undergraduate dissertation and/or your experience of research and writing.

You should submit your application, together with your CV, a report on your work and/or a copy of your postgraduate degree certificate as required. Holders of postgraduate degrees from outside Greece should have their degrees recognised by the appropriate national authorities.

Further advice is available from the Greek Ministry of Education.

Fees and scholarships

The Greek Constitution states that higher education should be provided free of charge. However, fees may be set for some postgraduate study programmes. Contact individual institutions for information about fees.

Only a few postgraduate scholarships are available through the Greek Ministry of Education, so be prepared to fund yourself. Fees are usually lower than in the UK.

Are there any exchange programmes?

UK students on undergraduate degree programmes or postgraduate Masters and some PhD programmes may be interested in spending time studying in Greece through the [Erasmus](#) scheme. Check with your university's Erasmus coordinator (usually based in the international office) to find out what possibilities are available.

Will my qualification be recognised in the UK?

Candidates should contact [ENIC-NARIC](#) to enquire whether the qualification they want to study for in Greece will be recognised in the UK.

Visa and travel information

Visa requirements and applications

Nationals of most of the European Economic Area (EAA), which includes [European Union \(EU\)](#) countries, including Bulgaria and Romania, Norway and Iceland, have the right to live and work in Greece without restriction and without a work permit. They, and their families and immediate dependants, have the same rights as Greek nationals in terms of pay, working conditions, access to housing, vocational training, social security and trade union membership.

Passports must be valid for the intended period of stay in Greece. British passports holders are permitted to stay in Greece until the last day their passport is valid.

If you are from a non-EU country you should apply in person in the Greek Embassy in the country where you are for a National Visa. If you are in the UK, more information and forms are available online via [Embassy of Greece](#).

You are advised to ask your contacts in Greece, such as a potential employer, to send appropriate documents or letters before you go for your visa interview at the Greek Consulate.

You may wish to take advice from your ministry of foreign affairs, or from your own embassy if you are not in your home country, about whether there are any issues you should take into account when considering visiting or working in Greece.

Permanent residency

If you are an EU national and intend to stay for more than three months, you should apply for a residence permit within three months of your arrival, either at your local police station (*astynomia*) if you are living outside Athens, or at any Aliens Department Office (*grafeio tmimatos allodapon*) if you are living in Athens. After five years' continuous residence, you can apply for a permanent residence certificate.

Non-EU nationals who want to stay in Greece for 90+ days also need a residence permit (this includes permission to work). Applications are made at the municipality office or town hall (*dimarchio*) at least two months before the expiration of the entrance visa.

Detailed information can be found at [Anglo Info](#).

Help in an emergency

The [British Embassy in Greece](#) (in Athens) can provide a range of help for UK citizens who find themselves in emergency situations, including:

- loss or theft of passport;
- arrest or imprisonment;
- political emergencies or natural disasters;
- serious illness;
- being victim of crime;
- searching for missing friends and relatives;
- dealing with the sudden death of a relative or friend.

Other emergency contact numbers in Greece are:

- 112 - emergency (general);
- 100 - police;
- 166 - ambulance;
- 199 - fire department.

Travel advice

Find the latest travel advice and a traveller's checklist on the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#) website.

Country overview

Geography

- **Full country name:** The Hellenic Republic
- **Population:** 11.4 million
- **Border countries:** Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Bulgaria, Turkey
- **Climate:** temperate with mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers.
- **Terrain:** mainland Greece is mostly mountainous with occasional plains, and has more than 2,000 islands.
- **Natural hazards:** earthquakes, forest fires, which are comparatively common during Greece's hot and dry summers.

Living in Greece

- **Cost of living:** compared to the average income, the cost of living remains quite high. The cost of living is higher in semi-urban and tourism areas. In non-tourism areas the cost of living is lower because of the availability of local agricultural products, lower rents and lower expenditure on travel.
- **Internet domain:** .gr
- **Health:** the national health system is operated by the Social Insurance Institute (IKA). You must obtain a health booklet from your local IKA office as soon as you start work. The booklet has to be presented on all visits to a doctor or hospital. If you are an EU national, you should obtain a [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#) before leaving the UK; this will entitle you to emergency medical treatment on the same terms as Greek nationals, but it does not cover you for medical repatriation, ongoing medical treatment or treatment of a non-urgent nature, so take out appropriate insurance.
- **Laws and customs:** rowdy or indecent behaviour is not tolerated and can incur heavy fines or prison sentences. Possession of even small quantities of illegal drugs can lead to long terms of imprisonment. Your insurance may not cover you after excessive drinking. Driving any vehicle whilst over the legal drinking limit is heavily penalised. If you are looking for work in bars or night clubs you must have a health certificate/licence issued by the local authorities, and you may be fined or imprisoned if you do not. The law requires that you should be able to identify yourself, so carry your passport or a document with an ID photograph at all times. In order to comply with Greek law, you should ensure that you obtain a receipt for goods purchased. Buying pirated CDs or DVDs can lead to imprisonment. Since September 2010, smoking in all indoor public places is illegal. Homosexuality is legal and is becoming less of a taboo, although same-sex marriage is not legally recognised. There is a well-established gay community in Athens and one is growing in Thessaloniki, plus the Athens Pride parade has been an annual event since 2005. The gay scene on the islands of Mykonos and Lesbos is internationally renowned.

Economy and finance

- **Currency:** Euro (€)
- **Type of economy:** capitalist
- **Health of economy:** Greece is currently seeking extra time to implement the additional fiscal cuts worth €11.6bn agreed earlier this year, in return for loans from the EU, the IMF and the ECB. Massive spending cuts have already been made and more austerity measures announced - including pension cuts, social spending cuts and public sector pay cuts.
- **Unemployment rate:** 23%
- **Main exports:** food and beverages, manufactured goods, petroleum products, chemicals, textiles.

Culture

- **People:** 98% Greek with a very small Muslim minority made up of Turkic people, Pomaks and Muslim Roma.
- **Major religion:** Christian Orthodox
- **History:** See [BBC Timeline: Greece](#).

Politics

- **Type of government:** Parliamentary democracy
- **Major political parties:** New Democracy (ND), Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), Communist Party of Greece (KKE), Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)

More information

- [Embassy of Greece](#)
- [BBC Country Profile - Greece](#)
- [The World Factbook](#)
- [XE Universal Currency Converter](#)

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