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## Regional patterns of employability in the Greek labour market

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### Résumé / Summary

Massive un/underemployment is the major implications of crisis in Europe and particularly in vulnerable economies as Greece. The labour market is the field where the downturn outcomes are primarily recorded, as employment reduction and layoffs are the main practices of enterprises to adjust costs to consumption drop. Thus, much of the recent literature on economic crisis has focused on regional labour market resilience and recovery (Martin et al 2015). Yet, the focus of most studies is on macroeconomic and structural factors (global division of labour, industrial competitiveness, regulatory context); while research on place specificities of labour markets and their impact on resilience is still limited (Doran & Fingleton 2015).

The economic shock resulted to decreased job-vacancy rates and increased job-seeker rates all over Europe. This mismatch is arguably related to the degree in which job-seekers' skills and qualifications correspond to post-crisis structural shifts in the European economy and thus, to changed employers' needs (Zimmer 2012). In countries moderately hit, economic recovery has signalled the increase of job-vacancy rate, but only a small drop of unemployment rate (still above pre-crisis level). In severely hit Greece, the mismatch is wider: low-skilled workers (one-third of the labour force) recorded a proportional unemployment share; but highly-skilled workers recorded the biggest employment rate drop (World Economic Forum 2014). Recent research on the implications of the crisis in the Greek labour market (Gialis et al 2015) explored

changes in employment, unemployment and flexible employment on regional level. Analyses of pre- and post-crisis ELSTAT data indicated that diverse regional employment/unemployment and atypical employment patterns are related to diverse regional production structures. Regional diversity is depicted in lower/higher or increasing/decreasing rates; and lower/higher levels of flexibility and precariousness. The outcomes respond to different regional production systems (specialized in tourism, manufacturing, or agriculture) of different resilience level.

In most recent study we explore particularly the post-crisis demand and supply discrepancy of the Greek labour market, with focus on un/underemployment. In literature, labour demand - supply imbalance is identified either as 'shortage' in the number of workers in the labour market; or, as 'mismatch' between the specific skills of workers and employers' needs. Persistent imbalance between labour demand and supply is costly for both the economy and society and severely undermines recovery. Thus, 'employability' has become an issue of vital importance for policy makers and is the central topic of this paper.

The notion of employability has been mainly viewed from the perspective of employers and large enterprises as the required competences of individuals to be in employment (Hartshorn & Sear 2005). Hence, the point of view of small and micro enterprise (SmEs) is neglected, despite their larger share in employment; as well as the point of view of employees and job-seekers. Meanwhile, there is growing recognition of 'old' and 'new' employability competences in contemporary fluid labour market (Van der Heijden 2001). On this ground, this study investigates key-aspects of employability from both the demand-side (SmEs) and the supply-side (un/underemployed) of the labour market in Greece.

Our research combines regional-level data (i.e. employment conditions related to economic structures, industrial specialization and labour market specificities) with individual-level data (i.e. qualifications/skills, employee aspirations and socio-demographic factors) so to provide a coherent analysis of employability patterns and employment/unemployment outcomes (Baum & Mitchell 2010). The research hypothesis is that high un/underemployment is largely attributed to regional industrial structures of low competitiveness, thus of high vulnerability to economic shock. To establish this hypothesis, we examine: (a) prevailing entrepreneurship in different regional production systems and its contribution to the local labour market - in terms of job offers and requirements, employment relations, etc.; and (b) unemployed and underemployed labour force in the respective regional labour markets - in terms of skills/qualifications, employment and career perceptions.

The analysis of demand-side draws on secondary data, compiled since 2013 by ERGANI I.S. (Hellenic Ministry of Labour) for regional entrepreneurship (number of SmEs with employees, new entries across industries, etc.) and its contribution to the regional labour market (flow of hires and layoffs, types of employment contracts, wages, etc.). The analysis of the supply-side draws on primary data collected through field-survey, addressing the unemployed and underemployed in different regional labour markets. Selected regions serve as case-studies of different industrial specialization and production structure, but also as typical examples of the Greek economy. The expected research outcome is to identify key-aspects of employability and provide a comprehensive outline of the factors that differentiate employability patterns across different regional labour markets, in terms of employment/unemployment outcomes.

Labour market, Regional diversity, Employability

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