Note to readers

Significant developments took place between early 2011, when the work on this report started, and the end of 2012. These developments reflect a determination on the part of the Greek Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare to move forwards speedily with deep reforms.

An active reform agenda is currently implementing many of the reforms recommended in this report, as well as others, including:

Institutional leadership

- The Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare has been given the overall leadership of social assistance and social insurance (as recommended by the OECD), which includes the transfer of social welfare responsibilities from the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare is now vested with the strategic responsibility required to take forward reforms in this critical sector.

Strategic design

- Strategic design decisions have been taken in the direction of means testing as the basis for social welfare programmes. For example, means testing has been introduced for family benefits. A new family benefit has been introduced, following the abolition of five benefits.

Reformed benefits

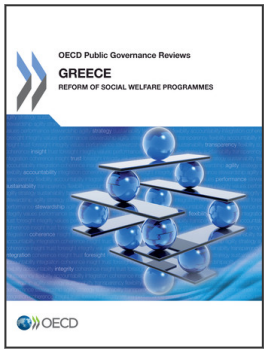
- Downward adjustments have been made to the minimum wage and unemployment benefits. At the same time, a new means-tested unemployment assistance benefit has been created for those who have been unemployed for more than a year.
- Other reforms have also been made, including the reforms to social solidarity allowance for pensioners and a pilot for a guaranteed minimum income to those living under the poverty threshold.

Benefit delivery and monitoring

- Key practical implementation anchors are being put in place. In order to facilitate the setup of a common database, and to eliminate double counting, the creation of a National Register of Beneficiaries of social welfare benefits has been established. The next step is expected to be a single source of payments for both social insurance and welfare benefits. The AMKA personal identity number has also been adopted.

These issues will be crucial in ensuring that the reform process stays on track:

- The adoption of reforms is not enough; the reforms need to be carefully monitored and assessed during and after their implementation. Progress with mechanisms for the detailed design and implementation of these reforms (specifically, how the enacted laws are being operationalised) will need to be closely monitored by the Greek authorities, against a clear timetable. Thus, it is critical to focus on the pace of the implementation of the reforms.
- The reforms will need to be coherent and complete, covering all the issues necessary to secure effective systemic change to social protection policy, including the relationship between social insurance and welfare, the design and implementation of a new data collection system, and effective service delivery at the local level. Linking the reforms with reforms to the tax system will also be critical to success.



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