



Press Release

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Topic: PISA shows the decline. The data show the path.

The PISA 2025 results, announced in September 2026, leave little room for complacency. In Greece, 49.5% of 15-year-old students do not attain the basic level of proficiency in Mathematics. The corresponding figures are 43.8% in Reading and 40.9% in Science. Greece's average scores were 424 points in Mathematics, 423 in Reading and 434 in Science, lower than the respective OECD averages. Compared to 2022, Greece's performance fell by 6 points in Mathematics, 16 points in Reading and 7 points in Science. However, the slowest decline in student performance compared to many other countries is probably the only positive fact in this year's report, because it has resulted in a narrowing gap between our country and the average. Surely, this is no reason for celebration.

PISA captures the school performance of 15-year-olds at a specific point in time and allows international comparisons. The European research project LINEup, in which the Centre for Planning and Economic Research (KEPE) participates together with 13 other partners from six European countries, addresses a different question. Using anonymised administrative data from MySchool and teacher-assigned school grades, the KEPE research team¹ followed the same female and male students longitudinally in Greek Language and Mathematics, from the first year of lower secondary school (Gymnasium) to the final year of upper secondary school (Lyceum), across five successive cohorts. Thus, instead of a static picture of performance at a single age, the data allow answering questions like when educational inequalities emerge, to what extent they narrow or widen during secondary education and how they evolve across cohorts.

The initial results show that **there is no single achievement gap**. Girls have higher grades than boys in both subjects, with the difference being particularly pronounced and persistent in Greek Language. In Mathematics, it is smaller and narrows as students progress through secondary education. The gap between Greek and non-Greek students follows a different trajectory: **by the end of upper secondary school, the initial gap in grades has been reduced by approximately half**, both in Greek Language and in Mathematics. The largest differences recorded, however, are associated with family background, as approximated by father's occupation. At the beginning of secondary education, the difference in

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grades between the two extremes of occupational categories (senior professionals vs. unemployed) is approximately twice the corresponding difference between Greek and non-Greek students.

However, a narrowing gap does not always mean improvement. The data show that convergence in performance follows two different mechanisms, depending on the subject. In Greek Language, differences in educational performance are reduced mainly because the higher-performing groups decline as students progress through education. By contrast, in Mathematics, differences decrease because the lower-performing groups improve more rapidly. Thus, the same finding can mean entirely different things. In one case, convergence towards the bottom; in the other, genuine recovery. This is a distinction that only longitudinal data can reveal, and it has direct implications for where education policy should be targeted.

The Greek longitudinal data also highlight something else. **In lower secondary school, most differences in grades appear between male and female students even within the same class.** In upper secondary school, however, differences between schools become noticeably larger. This increase coincides with the transition to an institutionally differentiated level of education, including, among other things, the distinction between general and vocational upper secondary schools and different types of schools. Therefore, it does not by itself allow a causal conclusion about the effect of a particular type of school. In Greek Language, the share of differences in grades that is found between schools approximately doubles from the beginning to the end of secondary education. This does not prove that the school itself causes the differences. It does, however, show that the picture of educational inequalities changes significantly over the course of students' school trajectories.

It should be emphasised that the PISA and MySchool data are not directly comparable. PISA uses common standardised tests, whereas the KEPE analysis is based on students' school grades, which contain subjectivity, as teachers consider additional student characteristics, such as participation in class. From a different perspective, however, they raise the same critical question: **what lies behind the average?** In the new PISA, for example, the gap in Science between the most and least socioeconomically advantaged students remains large and has not been substantially reduced over the past decade.

From measurement to policymaking

To identify when these inequalities emerge, we need data that follow the same students over time. As part of LINEup, more than 100 longitudinal educational data sources were mapped across 24 European countries, within a broader survey of 32 European countries, and are brought together at <https://www.lineup-project.eu/map/>. The mapping revealed significant differences both in the availability of and access to data and in the information they contain. Greece lags both in data availability and access to them.

PISA's major advantage is that it allows for international comparability. National longitudinal data offer something different: the richness of longitudinal information, which allows us to trace when

inequalities emerge, widen or narrow. The aim should be to combine these two advantages as far as possible.

The retrospective harmonisation of existing national databases attempted within the framework of LINEup, however, is only partly feasible: the data were collected for different purposes, using different definitions, variables and methods of measurement. This is why greater ex ante coordination in the collection of educational data is needed, together with better access for research purposes.

PISA warns us that the problem is intensifying. Longitudinal data can help us understand when it begins, whom it affects and how it evolves, so that we can identify where and when to intervene. The first step, however, must be institutional: Greece needs more systematic collection of longitudinal educational data and better access to them for research purposes. Without this, we will continue to see only the average — and not the path that shapes it.