



The  
**FUTURE**  
of **WORK**

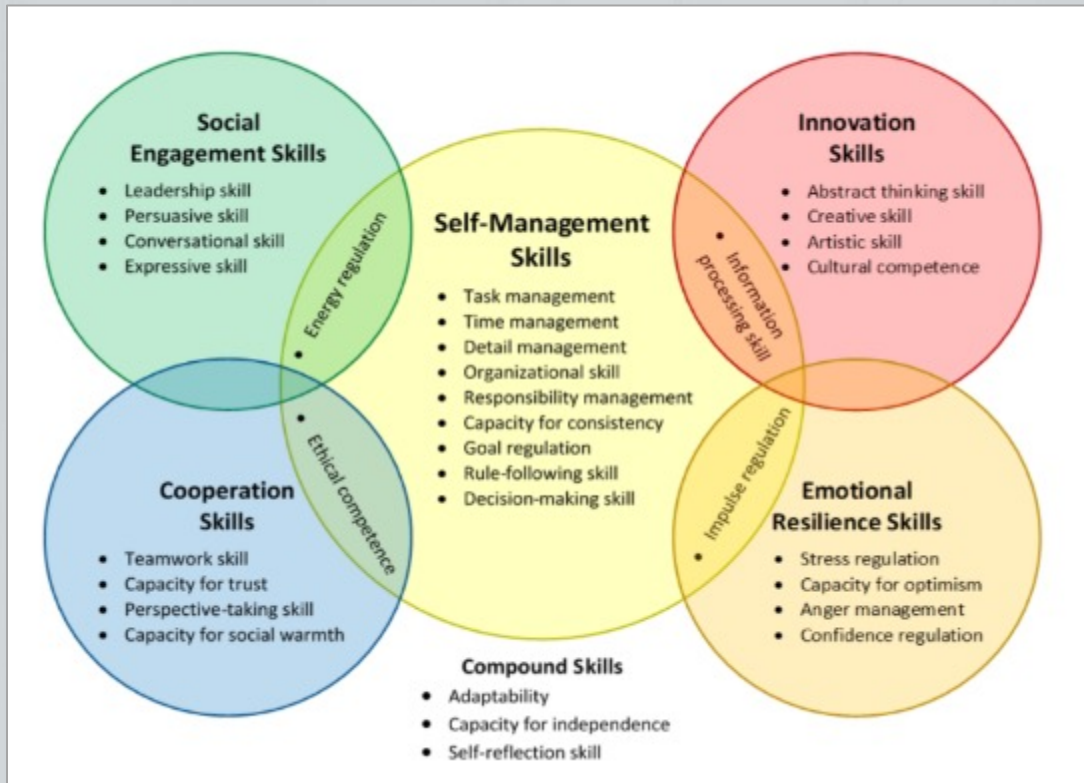
**Study on soft skills in  
vocational education  
and training in Greece**



**Launch of the Report and Round Table with Experts**

Greece, December 15, 2023

## Facets and domains of BESSI



Source: <http://www.sebskills.com/the-bessi.html>

- Developed by a team of researchers from the University of Illinois and Colby College
- Students are asked to assess how well they can perform an activity
- It contains 192 items, grouped in 32 facets and 5 domains
- The items take the form of simple statements such as “I keep calm even in stressful situations”



To measure the soft skills of high-school students in Greece, we adapted the Behavioral, Emotional, and Social Skills Inventory (BESSI)

December 2023

### Contextual student data

- Adaptation of the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) of the OECD
  - Data on demographics, well-being, attitudes and expectations, relations with parents and friends, school life, knowledge of Information Technology and Communications (ICT).
  - A short measure of cognitive ability

### School data

- Questionnaire to school directors, adapted based on OECD SSES and PISA surveys
- Information on school characteristics, policies and practices instituted at the school level to develop soft skills

### Qualitative information on needs, policies and obstacles

- Stakeholder workshop with key stakeholders from authorities, institutions, business associations and representatives of social partners

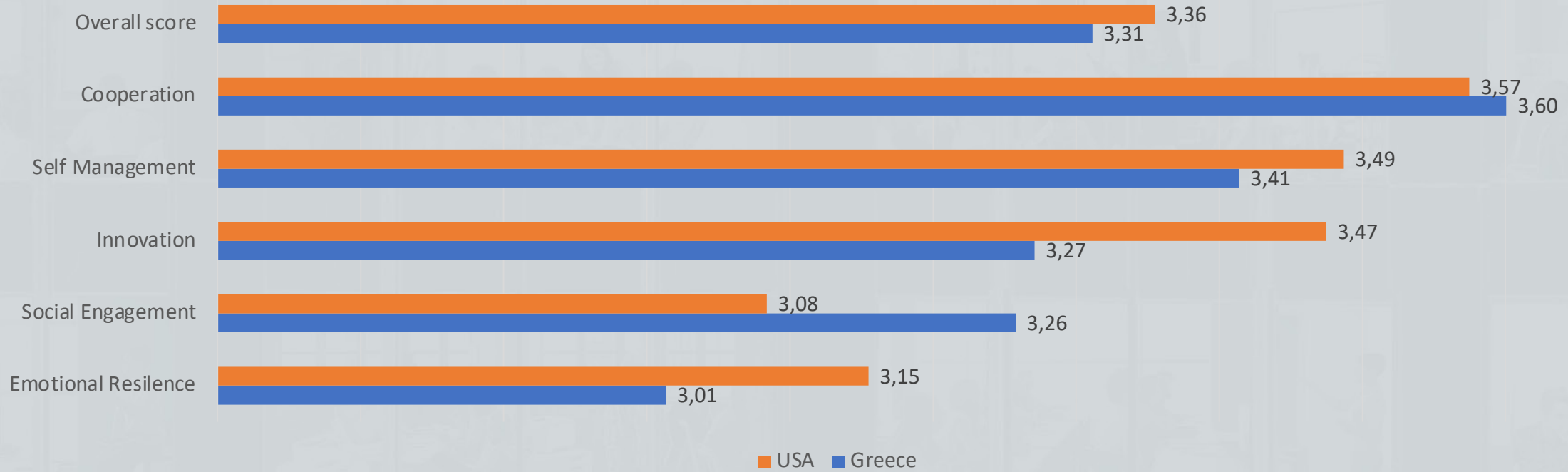
- The survey was approved by the Ministry of Education in early February 2023
- In March, we contacted 116 GEL and all 97 daily EPAL schools in the regions of Attica and Thessaloniki
- In total 41 schools (19 EPAL and 22 GEL) agreed to take part in the survey
- We collected responses from about 1,400 students from late March until early May 2023



**The soft-skills measure was supplemented with contextual student and school data and qualitative information from a stakeholder workshop**

December 2023

### BESSI domains, comparison with Soto et al 2022



Source: Student survey and Soto et al (2022)

Compared to peers in US high-schools, the Greek students report higher social engagement and lower innovation, emotional resilience, and self-management

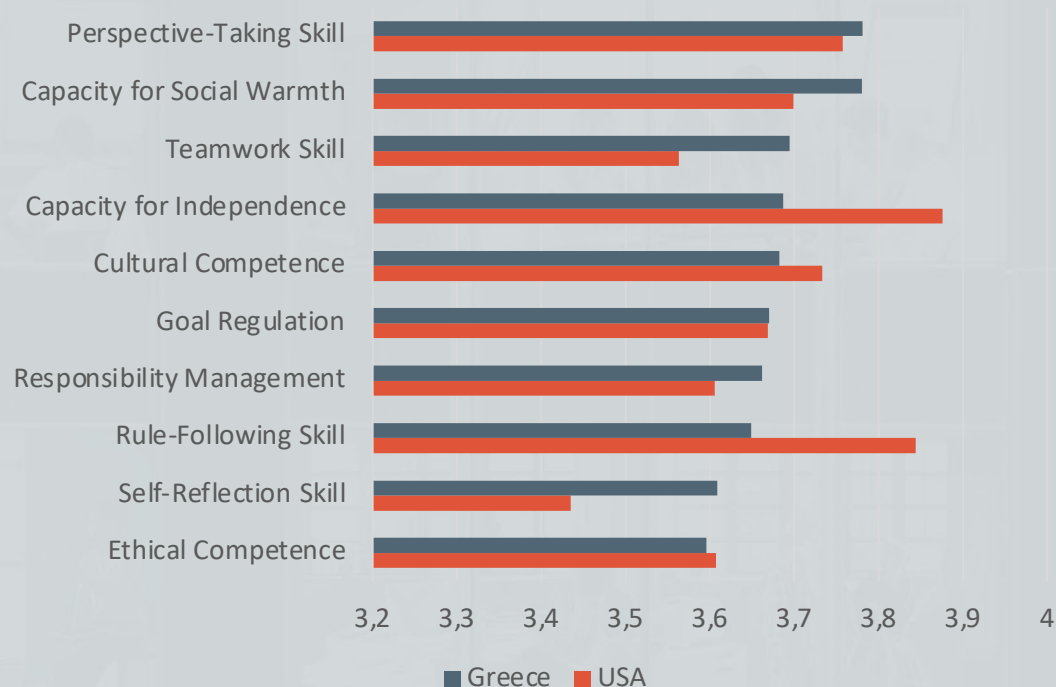


## The students report higher scores on average in Cooperation skills

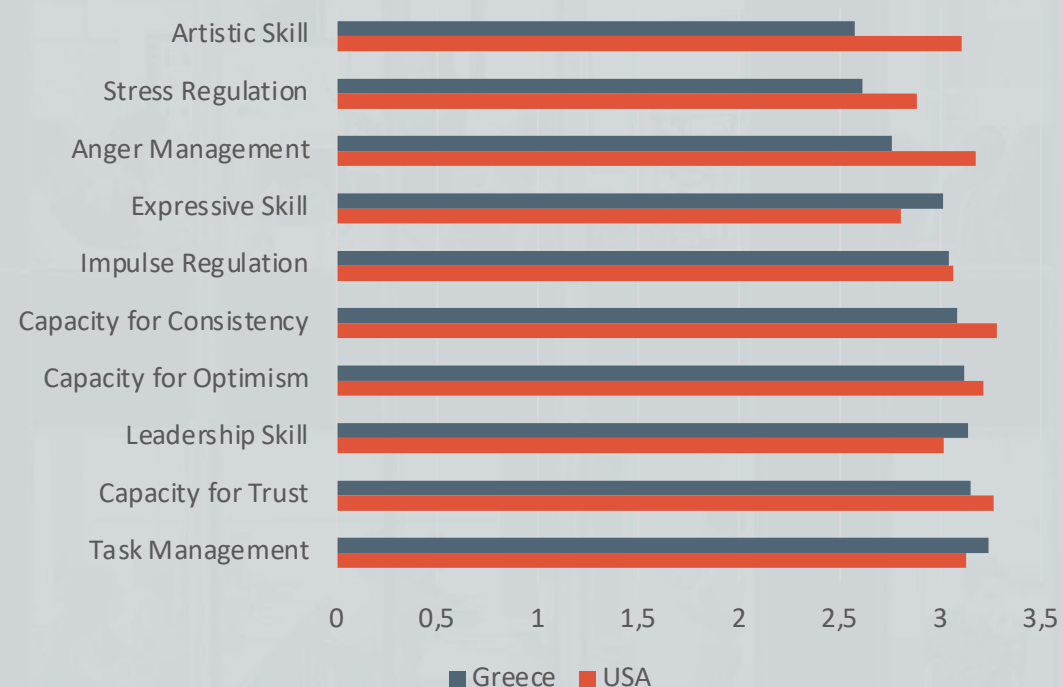
May 2023



Top 10 BESSI facet average scores



Bottom 10 BESSI facet scores



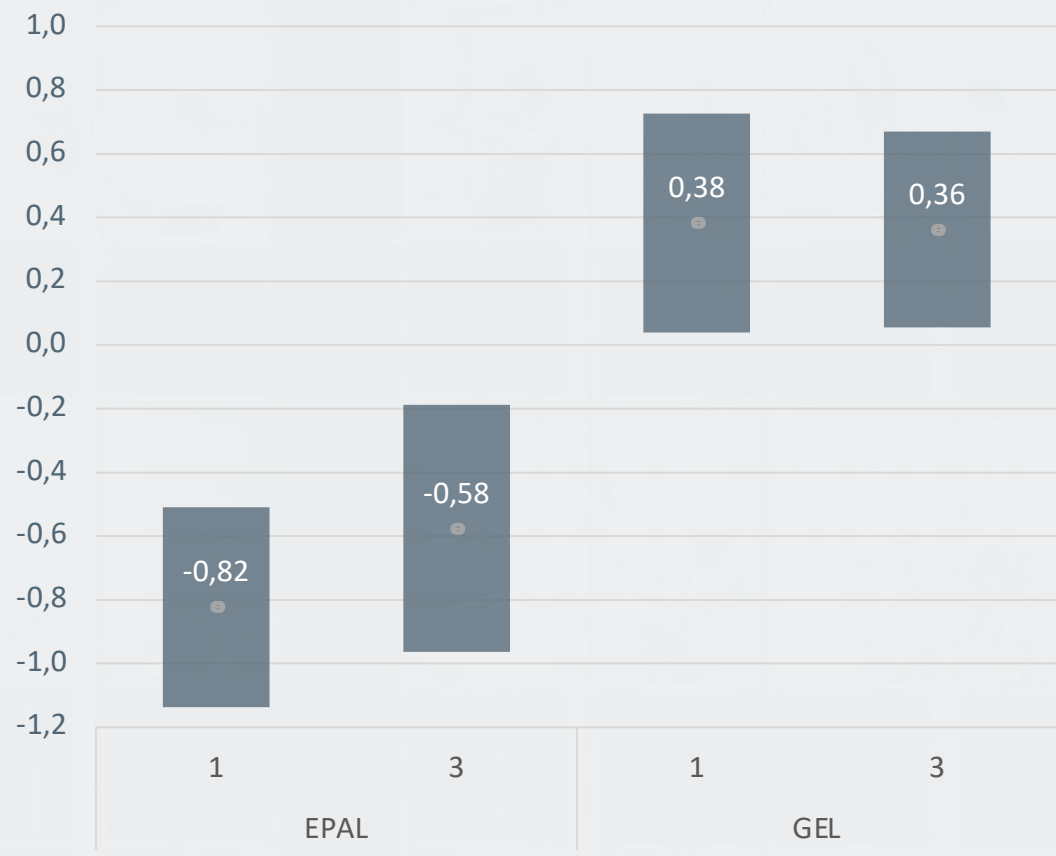
Source: Student survey and Soto et al (2022)

The lowest scores were obtained for Artistic Skill, Stress Regulation and Anger Management



The highest-ranking facets in the Greek sample are Perspective-Taking and Capacity for Social Warmth

Socioeconomic status score by school type and grade, weighted means and 95% confidence intervals, Girls



Source: Student survey

High-school vocational education students in Greece tend to have:

- Lower socioeconomic status
- Parents with lower education attainment level and lower occupational status
- Fewer household possessions
- Reduced aspirations to continue their studies and achieve higher occupational status in their 30s
- Higher reported exposure to bullying
- Lower global awareness
- Lower cognitive ability scores

Meanwhile, EPAL schools tend to have:

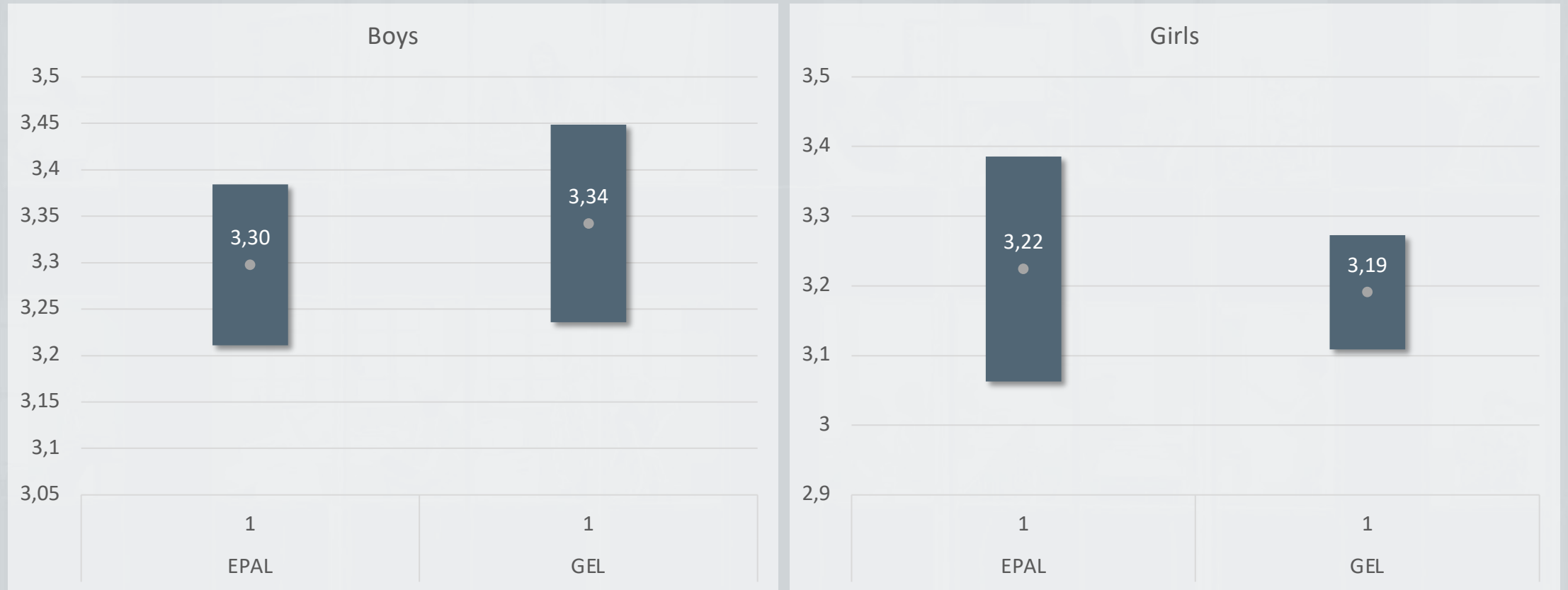
- Higher share of associate teachers
- Higher share of teachers with postgraduate degrees
- Lower class sizes
- Fewer students per teacher
- Higher share of students with special needs, from families with socioeconomic difficulties, with a different mother tongue or from a foreign country.
- Lower share of female students
- Higher likelihood to offer career advice or cooperate with psychologists



There is a clear socioeconomic divide between vocational and general track students and schools in Greece

December 2023

## Overall score by school type and gender, weighted means and 95% confidence intervals



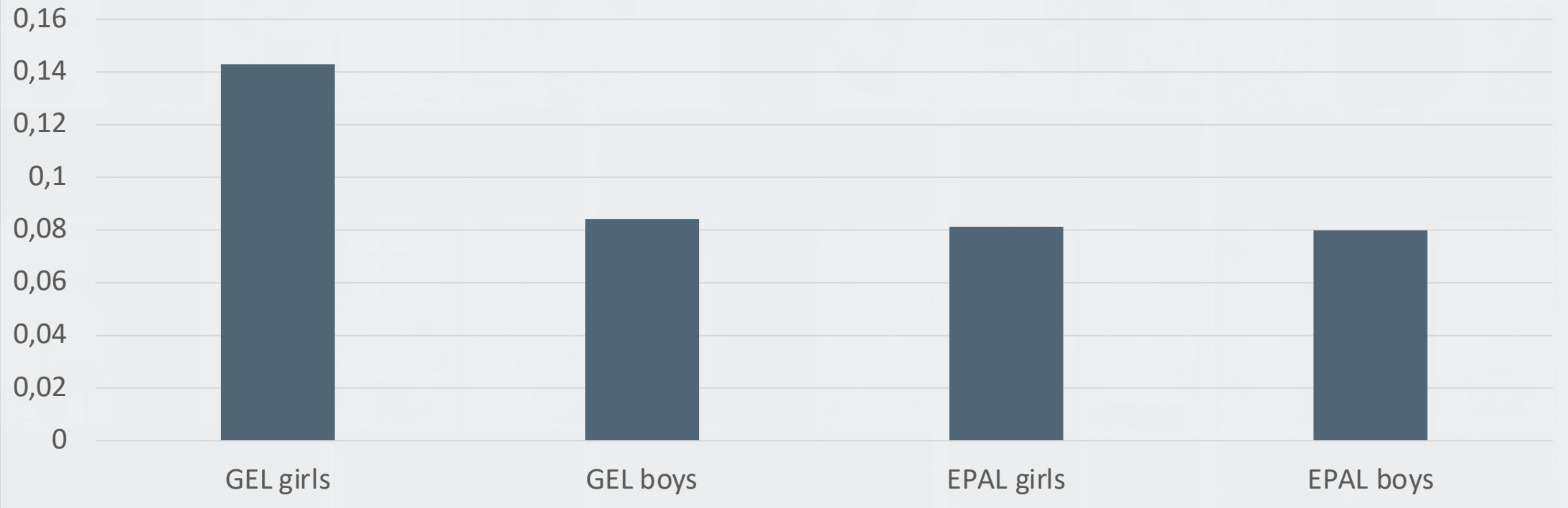
Source: Student survey.



**The evident advantages enjoyed by GEL students across a variety of indicators do not seem to transpire in higher soft skills**

December 2023

### Grade 3 soft-skills premium

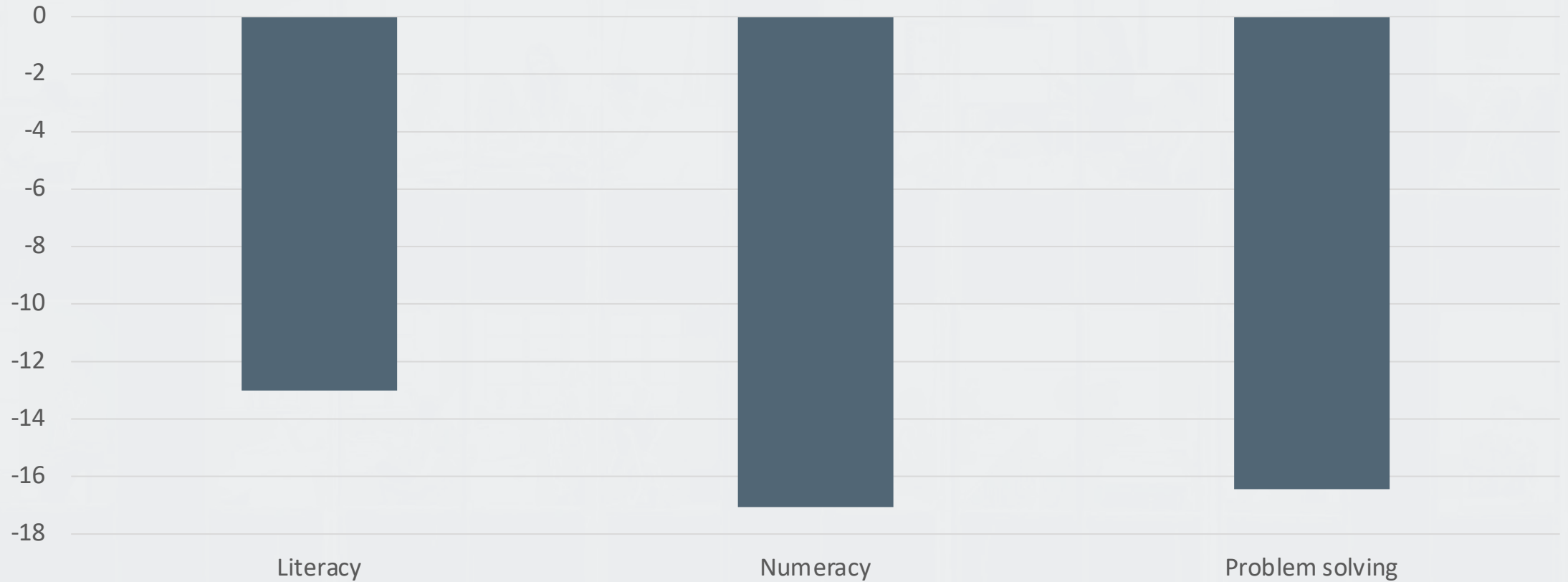


**Nevertheless, there are stronger indications for development of soft skills between grades 1 and 3 in GEL rather than EPAL schools**

December 2023



## Differences in PIAAC means scores between vocational and general upper secondary graduates



Source: OECD PIAAC, IOBE estimates



**Lower cognitive skills of upper secondary vocational than non-vocational graduates, controlling for demographic factors**

December 2023

### Significant differences in soft skills of high-school students in Greece compared to US high-school peers

- More sociable, expressive and conversational and less organized
- Significantly lower artistic and emotional resilience (stress and anger management) skills
- Indication of a possible lag in courses that stimulate the development of creativity and self-management in the Greek education system

### Stronger development of soft skills through the general rather than the vocational track

- There is a clear socioeconomic divide between vocational and general track students and schools in Greece
- It does not translate into higher level of social skills, when controlling for gender, socioeconomic and other characteristics
- Nevertheless, the difference between grade 3 and grade 1 students is more evident among GEL students

### Persistent gap in cognitive skills for vocational education graduates

- Lower scores in both PISA 2022 and PIAAC 2014-2015 among vocational secondary education graduates
- Lower scores in PIAAC 2014-2015 among younger cohorts, pointing to deterioration of the VET system's performance
- Need for measures of the soft skills in the adult population (e.g. with BESSI) and PIAAC update

The provision of foundational skills (both cognitive and soft) through the Greek education system and especially its vocational track should strengthen significantly



# Conclusions

December 2023

# Thank you for your attention

## Study team:

Svetoslav Danchev, Odysseas Mamalis, Nikos Paratsiokas, Konstantinos Peppas, Yakinthi Pountouraki and Foteini Stroubakou

## Supervision:

Nikos Vettas

