

# Country Report on Adult Education in GREECE

Helsinki, 2011

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### Introduction

This Report covers the situation of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Greece. It is divided into two sections. The section *Policy and Politics* gives an overview of the key policy currently in force, and also outlines the main legislation or political situation in the country. *Structure and Providers* gives a more detailed look at the organizational structures, and also outlines the main adult education providers, mainly looking at non-formal and informal learning.

We want to thank our members for their contributions to this reflection on the adult education situation in Greece as far as possible as of 2010/2011. Inevitably there will be new things emerging within the ever changing situation of adult education, but we believe the majority of the information provided will be relevant and useful for the foreseeable future. However, to keep the resource accurate and up to date we are open to suggestions to improve the texts. If you feel there is something you can add about your country please contact us via email at eaea-info[at]eaea.org.

### **Overview**

In Greece a **Lifelong Learning (LLL)** strategy has been adopted by the political leadership of the **Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs** (Ypourgeio Ethnikis Paideias kai Thriskeumaton, YPEPTH). Under its latest Operational Program (2007-2013), YPEPTH has planned a series of measures which aim to create a system of education and lifelong learning that will provide the resources and skills necessary for active participation in society [1].

Within the General Secretariat for Adult Education (GSAE), the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (YPEPTH), is the executive, public body responsible for adult education and training. Its mission is to design, coordinate and support measures which relate to supplementation of basic education and life-long learning and training both for the adult workforce of Greece and for those threatened with social exclusion [2].

Its main field relates to basic **education supplementation programmes** and **literacy** programmes, continuing training courses, measures to combat exclusion from the labour market and **Community Initiatives** financed by the European Union (**European Social Fund**), socio-cultural education courses, continuing training and repeat education measures for the adult workforce.

The GSAE collaborates with other government organisations, such as: the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, the Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED), the Organisations of Local Government, to achieve the essential co-ordination for the successful implementation and maximisation of return investment in the area of adult education. Moreover, the GSAE promotes **inter-country relations** with the corresponding institutions of other European and third countries, mainly via the **European Programs and Initiatives.** 

The **promotion of Lifelong Learning** constitutes a high priority for the Greek State, taking into consideration the European policies in this area. In this context the necessary legislative provisions have been developed to reinforce Adult Education, to **strengthen the role of the General Secretariat for Adult Education** and to **regulate** the different types of life long education and training providers [3].

### **Politics and Law**

In Greece the 3369/2005 law systematises lifelong learning. It defines lifelong education as an activity across people's life-span, aiming towards the acquisition and improvement of general and scientific **knowledge**, **skills and competencies** as well as **personal development and employability**. Lifelong training is defined as the initial and continuing vocational training, which helps people enter or re-enter the labour market and ensure **professional development**. One of the main points of the law is the establishment of the **National Committee for Lifelong Learning**, which aims to ascertain the needs of lifelong education and training, to evaluate the overall quality of delivery and to co-ordinate the institutions of lifelong education and training [4].

With the Educational Law 2909/2001, the General Secretariat of Popular Education has been renamed the General Secretariat for Adult Education (GSAE), and undertakes the planning, co-ordination and implementation of actions that concern lifelong learning on both a national level and on the level for emigrant Hellenism. Also within the law are basic adult education programs, in order to **counteract illiteracy** and increase participation in **compulsory education**; the general adult education and training programs, which **support continuing education and training**, and the training of special groups that are threatened by social exclusion. It also addresses the Greek second language programs as well as the education in the sector of new technologies, sociocultural education and training that concerns cultural, social, health and environmental issues as well as European affairs. Open and distance education and training is also a concern, as well as the connection and collaboration with the modern distance learning organisations; and the education of adult trainers.

GSAE oversees the Institute of Continuing Adult Education (IDEKE). The IDEKE is a private entity which is subject to the General Secretariat Lifelong Learning (Secretary D.V.M.). The main purpose of the Technological and Scientific Support programs Secretary D.V.M. is the implementation of activities related to lifelong learning. To achieve this basic objective it provides the logistical and scientific infrastructure and the dissemination of educational and training materials, seeks to integrate information technology and communications using modern educational multimedia and educational software and implements specific research and educational programs for adults [5].

The following institutions are implementing the GSAE policy: the Institute of Continuing Adult Education (IDEKE); the Prefectural Committees of Popular Training (NELE), which provide training programs on culture, arts, social economy and business development at local level; and the Centre of Vocational Training (KEK), which is responsible for reinforcing GSAE initiatives to counteract unemployment. The major premise of the development of GSAE's nation-wide programmes is their delivery at the place of residence or at work



place. In this context, the GSAE has developed a nation-wide "Network of Lifelong Education for Adults" in which every Municipality and Local Community Council can participate. Today more than 1000 Municipalities and local Community Councils participate in the network.

The objectives and the total planning of EPEAEK are included in the national strategy for education. The Operational Program is implemented at the same time as other important actions of institutional character, in the sector of development of human capital. The priorities and the measures that are developed are in line with the broader policy of **development of human resources**, the **national plan of action for the employment**, the educational policy, and the directions of the **European Union**. They aim towards the improvement of provided education and the possibilities of young people to integrate in the social and productive web, in the promotion of equality of chances, **fighting of social exclusion**, promotion of subjects that concern the environment, the development of an **entrepreneurial** spirit, and the promotion of equality of the sexes [6].

The Operational Program (EP) "Education and Lifelong Learning" emphasises four goals, namely "Growth - Competitiveness- Education- Employment". At the same time, the National Reform Program (EPM) 2005-2008 for the Growth and the Employment highlights the importance of developing the knowledge society. Priority is given to the human capital investment, such as the increase of public expense for education, the reinforcement of the flexibility and cohesion of the educational system, the improvement of quality and its effectiveness via decentralisation, the reduction of bureaucracy, evaluation on all levels of education, and research and innovation. The utilisation of new technologies not only as an subject itself but also as means of teaching is basic parameter of planning, in the context of a more holistic national Digital Strategy. Lifelong learning is being chosen as the basic governmental strategy in order to ensure both the provision of knowledge which shapes the personality of modern active citizen, and the acquisition of skills that would improve accessibility in the job market as well as reduce structural unemployment in Greece.

The above strategic directions and choices have been shaped in the context of concrete developmental model that has been adopted by the Greek Government for the Knowledge Society and Innovation, as described in the **National Strategic Reference Framework (ESPA)** 2007-2013 [7]. ESPA allows, 3,3 billion Euros of public investment for education (via the EP Education and Lifelong Learning and the PEP of period 2007-2013). Additional national financial resources will be progressively invested by 2013, so that the expenses for education (as percentage of Gross Domestic Product) meet the European mean and take into consideration the EPM and the corresponding recommendations. Thematic priority of ESPA's developmental strategy constitutes the "Society of Knowledge and Innovation". In the particular thematic priority the General



Objective n. 4 titled: "The improvement of quality and the intensity of investments in the human capital for the upgrade of Greek educational system" is also reported. More specifically the aims of this general objective are the reinforcement of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning services will be promoted, with the mobilisation of individuals, particularly those of low qualifications, older people, or those who have left their formal education in order to **counteract the school drop out rates** by confronting school failure as well as promoting the growth of cross-cultural education and compensatory teaching [8].

# **Future trends/key concerns/directions**

The major strategic priorities for adult education are the creation of a common registration for GSAE adult trainers. This registry will be supplemented by the trainers that work under the banner of the Organisation of Vocational and Training (OEEK) so that a unified and certified registry comes into force. This common registration of adult trainers will be regulated according to the YPEPTH rules and legislation; including the connection of the adult education sector with the other structures of the formal educational system and its interconnection with the job market; the promotion of strategic planning for the 4th programmatic period (2008-2013); and the promotion of a System of Quality Assurance and program Evaluation and Certification. Also proposed is the growth of collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance; the finalisation of the operational charter and building infrastructure of the Lifelong Learning Research Centre - "Aristotle"; and the constitution of the National Library of Lifelong learning [9].

In July 2010 the Greek Minister of Education announced the new Bill on the "Development of the Life Long Learning and other clauses". In general, the new bill mainly focuses on the revocation of a series of previous laws aimed to rationalise the Greek Adult Education and Training System. The National Network of Life Long Learning (NNLLL) will be created and will be composed as follows: General Secretariat of LLL (GSLL); Peripheral Departments of LLL, one for every Administrative Region (13 Peripheries); Municipal Departments of LLL, a Special Unit of the new Municipalities; EKEPIS; National Organization of the Accreditation of Qualifications; National Centre of Vocational Counseling; and a National Centre of Public Administration and Local Authorities.

A systemic relationship will be articulated through mutual information and communication sharing, negotiation, cooperation and synergy, and coordination and synthesis of proposals. The NNLLL will concern the following subject areas: the National Programme of Life Long Learning; models and standards relevant to vocational training and general Adult Education (structures, profiles, courses, trainers); the National Qualification Framework; Europass; Quality Assurance; Technical Plans; and the contractual praxis of LLL. The coordination of the overall strategies will be pursued by a new tool called 'Continuing Congress of

General Adult Education', aiming to contribute to the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of the LLL system.

Local Authorities will have the exclusive initiative in developing local strategies and programmes on Adult Education and Training in accordance with the needs and the general profile of particular areas [10].

### Structure overview

The system of education and training in Greece is divided into two basic sectors. The first sector relates to **formal educational** activities and the second sector to activities that are included in **lifelong education and training**. They are divided into three basic sub-systems.

Firstly, there is the sub-system of **initial vocational training**. The guiding institution of planning and implementing educational activities in this sub-system is OEEK, governed by the YPEPTH. Within the framework of the Greek National Vocational Education and Training System, the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK) was established. **OEEK is an autonomous legal entity**, which provides formal vocational education and training and has the overall responsibility for the Vocational Training Institutes which have been operating in country since 1992. Its actions are materialised via a network of public and private Institutes of Vocational Training (IEK). OEEK is also the National Centre of co-ordination of Europass. OEEK is responsible for the provision of all kinds of vocational training (initial or additional), the organisation and operation of IEKs, the determination of the curriculum for Public and Private IEK and the monitoring and control of Private IEK [11].

Secondly there is the sub-system of **continuing vocational training**. The National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training (EKEPIS) was founded in 1997 and is the national agency responsible for implementing national planning and of making actions concrete, together with the Special Departments of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. The EKEPIS policies are implemented via a network of public and private Vocational Training Centres (KEK). EKEPIS is the official institution for the development, implementation and follow-up of the National Certification System of Continuing Vocational Training in Greece. One of the EKEPIS core activities is to ensure - via the Certification process - that all continuing vocational training providers in Greece deliver quality programs. This process includes certification of the Vocational Training Centres (KEK) and the Special Centres of Social and Vocational Integration for socially excluded groups and individuals, trainers in VET and the Coordinators of Support Services (SYY); and also Vocational Profile Descriptions; Vocational Training Programmes; Knowledge, Skills and Competencies [12].



The final sub-system of lifelong education and training for adults is supervised by the General Secretariat for Adult Education (GSAE). In addition, several Ministries carry out educational and training programs. For example, the national Centre of Public Administration and Local-government (EKDDA) a Legal Public entity which operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Its main mission is the improvement of organisation and operation of Public Administration and Self-government, via the education, and the continuing training, of public employees. EKDDA in collaboration with the ADEDY (Public Servants' Confederation) will draw a modern system of training, certification and evaluation of public employees. Paying particular attention to the importance of the decentralisation of its activities, EKDDA has established 12 Regional Institutes of Training (PINEP) in the seats of corresponding administrative regions, thus covering the local needs in Greece.

Since 2005 there has also been the National School of Local-government (ESTA), which is responsible for the education of Local-government executive personnel. In the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance there is also OAED, which is the main body for the implementation of Governmental Policy for employment. It develops a dense network of employment services as well as advisory and vocational orientation via the Centres of Employment Promotion and specialised labour Advisers. Moreover, it implements programs of workers' training. The Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity provides educational programs, further training and also specialisations for health workers via the National School for Public Health [13].

The Ministry of Agriculture via the **Organization of Agricultural Vocational Training** and Employment (OGEEKA) and the Centres of Continuing Training "DIMITRA", delivers programs for farmers and other workers in various occupations in the agricultural sector. Finally, large **enterprises of Public Sector** (e.g. the National Electrical Company, Hellenic Telecommunications Organization, the Greek Post, Hellenic Railways, etc.), as well as **trade-union organisations** such as the General Confederation of Workers Greece (National Workers' Union of Greece) and ADEDY provide various educational programs for their workers [14].

# **Key Providers/Main institutions/Sources for Adult Education**

### 'Non-Formal' Learning

There are many **voluntary programmes** existing in Greece; some examples are:

GSAE have developed the national educational program of crisis management "I PROTECT MYSELF AND OTHERS". This was in a partnership with the Ministries of Internal Public Administration and Decentralisation (General Secretariat of Political Protection), National Defence (KOMAK), PEXODE, (Organization of Antiseismic Planning and Protection), Public Order (Fire Brigade), Commercial Shipping (Harbour Authority), as well as the NGO's "Greek Red Cross" and "PRAKSIS". The educated volunteers may join the National Registration of Volunteers of the General Secretariat of Political Protection [15]. Also, seminars and congresses have been organised for the training of 2.500 executives of Public Administration in collaboration with the National Centre of Public Administration and self-government. Finally, a number of actions were taken concerning the education of teachers such as the program "Management of Dangers in the School Unit", in collaboration with the National Centre of Public Administration and self-government [16].

The educational program "Learning Greek as a second language by working immigrants" is offered to **immigrants** regardless of their nationality, to spouses of Greek citisens as well as to those who wish to acquire the status of a long term resident in Greece, for which it is an essential condition to hold a certified Greek language proficiency and have knowledge of **elements of Greek history and culture**. This educational programme is structured in four levels of learning. The three first levels are 100 hours of study each, while the fourth is 125 hours [17].

There are also many other programmes aimed to improve adult training in various areas, including **new technologies**, land workers education, health education, education for **Roma people** and **immigrants**.

### **Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)**

**GSAE** actively participates in European programs, which focus on innovation and particularly the education of trainers, and socially excluded groups.

The organisation "Association for Adult Education" (AAE) focuses on the development of Life Long Learning (LLL) and more particularly that of Adult Education. The Association has operated informally since 2000, and as a formally organised institution since 2003. Its members have untill now officiated



in actions like the Second Chance Schools, the Centers for Adult Education, consultancy of parents, and cultural programs in Adult Education, with significant social response. In addition to this, they have participated in all the leading European networks for the corresponding issues and they have vast experience concerning LLL policies, Adult Education and employment [18].

Regional Vocational Training Centers (KEKs) are activated in the field of non formal training, certified to provide training opportunities for those who are disadvantaged. The Vocational Training Centre "DAFNI" was founded in 1996 by a team of scientists with the goal to combat unemployment (especially in women and young people) with high-level vocational training based on the latest educational methods and technological innovations. DAFNI's KEK mainly focusses on community level learning initiatives, local networking, and participation in implementing regional policy of non-fomal VTC. It functions as a Certified (by the Greek Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) Vocational Training Center, which are non-profit non-government organisations with a nation-wide range of activities. It is based in Patras, in the state of Achaia, Western Greece with branches in Athens and Argos [19].

The ERGON KEK (centre for Vocational Training) was founded in 1995 and it is one of the first **Centres for Vocational Training** that operated on a nationwide level. Since then, it has established itself as one of the most dynamic businesses in the field, having acquired a great deal of experience by providing vocational training and learning services. In the past 15 years, the ERGON KEK has worked to expand the scope of its services and enter into new markets. [20]

The Hellenic Adult Education Association (HAEA) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation. The mission of the association is to promote the scientific development of adult education in Greece and South Eastern Europe, to support it's members by providing professional development, enhancing communication, and creating a sense of community [21].

### Vocational Institutions and career-related training

The institution of **Second Chance Schools** has been developed as an effort to **combat social exclusion** of adults who have not finished basic education and do not have the necessary qualifications and skills to **adapt to modern vocational requirements.** Young people (aged between 18 and 30) who have dropped out of school are then able to complete their compulsory nine year education.

Special, intensive primary and lower secondary school courses are run at Second Chance Schools and graduates are issued with a leaving certificate equivalent to that of the Primary and Lower Secondary School leaving certificate. This entitles them to register with the Unified Lyceum, Technical



Vocational Educational Institutes and post-gymnasium IEK and to attend certain vocational training courses.

The courses last 18 months with 20 hours of class per week held in the evenings. Today there are 5 Second Chance Schools in operation, in Athens (Peristeri, Menidi), Patra, Thessaloniki and Heraklion-Crete, and in the future there are plans to establish other similar schools. Second Chance Schools are established following a recommendation from the Institute of Continuing Adult Education (IDEKE) in collaboration with local government authorities in order to ensure the proper conditions for running such a school are met [22].

KEE support the learning of citizens who have completed various levels of education. In the educational period 2007-2008, 77 educational programs have been offered including a **wide spectrum of thematic fields**. KEE programs include: Greek language and history, European languages, basic mathematics, Information Technologies, economics, tourism, Active Citizenship programmes (rights and obligations) as well as cultural programmes [23].

NELE (Prefectural Committees of Popular Education) is one of the oldest institutions offering adult education in Greece. It was established in 1965, when it evolved from the "Prefectural Committees for Combating Illiteracy" (NEKA) which were set up in 1954. Today there are 54 NELE departments, one in each Prefecture of the country. NELE's adult education and training initiatives are mostly funded, and supervised, by the General Secretariat for Adult Education. The NELE establish adult education centres (for example KEKs), hire trainers, design study programmes and then aslo evaluate them. They offer courses, free of charge, for general education, vocational training and socio-cultural education.

Parent's Schools aim to provide advisory support and counselling to parents, as it recognises the complexities and difficulties of parenting in the modern socio-economic conditions. The program focuses on three training strands: "Parents' Counselling", lasting 40 hours, "Relations of School-family", lasting 20 hours, "Education and Counselling Support of Families from ROMA, Muslim, Repatriate and Immigrant Background", lasting 50 hours. The programme is delivered in collaboration with KEEs. [24].

Continuing vocational training is also offered by **Vocational Training Centers** (**KEKs**), as metioned previously. These institutions, and therefore the courses provided by them, are officially accredited by the National Accreditation Center of Vocational Training Structures and Accompanying Support Services (EKEPIS). The Centres, which operate under the GSAE, are one of the institutions responsible for the implementation of the national policy to counteract unemployment. The KEKs design and offer courses for **employees**, **the** 

**unemployed and school leavers** with all levels of education in many different subjects within the framework of continuing vocational training. [25]

Other more specific programmes include:

Heron - 'Adult Training in the Acquisition of Basic ICT Skills', was initiated during the educational period 2005-2006 and constitutes the first large scale effort to educate citizens in the basic skills of **new Technologies**. This runs as an educational program which lasts for 50 hours. It has been reported that programs have been completed in the 90% of the country's municipalities [26].

The Farmers Education for the Undertaking of Activities in the Secondary and the Tertiary Sector of Economy (ISIODOS) is an initiative which is designed, when completed, to function as a pilot for other programmes concerning lifelong learning and employability. It aims to improve the knowledge and skills of farmers and to encourage them to undertake enterprising activities so that they have a successful growth from primary to the secondary and tertiary sectors of production[27].

#### Universities

University education is divided into four types of schools: public Universities, public technical Universities, the **Hellenic Open University** (HOU) - which is a **distance education** institution - and various private colleges. Greek Universities are fully self-governed, overseen by the state and financially aided by it. There are currently 23 public Universities in Greece, 16 technical Universities and many private colleges. Many Departments of these Universities were founded very recently, as a response to the mainly political expectation for the increase of university grduates in the Greek economic environment. However, to date there are questions about the longevity of some of these insitutions, as increasing pressure is put on them for higher scientific and educational standards.

An alternative to unviersitites for high school graduates are the **Institutes for Professional Education** (IEK), which offer mainly **technical education** [28]. Adult teaching is often a part-time role for many of the trainers participating in this field, however during the past few years the number of trainers who have undertaken studies in Adult Education has been increased.

Higher Education Institutions, which offer programs in the area of the Adult Education, are:

- The University of Athens and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the two biggest public Universities in Greece, who offer **distance education courses** through the **e-Class platform.** This is one of the distance education platforms mostly used in Greek Universities as part of the Greek University Net (GUNET),



(an initiative in which most Greek Universities participate), which mainly support asynchronous e-learning services. Aristotle University also offers distance education classes through Blackboard software. The e-class platform is also used by the University of Thessaly and the University of Crete is currently working on 'class-web', a platform for distance education applications. The University of Athens currently offers 1547 online modules through GUNET, as well as continuing education programs through a distance education platform [29].

- The University of Patras provides post graduate courses in Life Long Learning through the Department of Early Childhood, and the Department of Primary Education (School of Humanities). These post graduate courses are usually adapted to new trends of AE and provide educators, trainers and other AE executives with the nesessary skills and theoretical background to confront the challenge of further education and training (Continuing Education). The university has its own structure of VTC (KEK), and participates in National Calls for Proposals on Innovative Vocational Training Courses to Unemployed, as well as using the e-Class platform. The university also has a centre for Intercultural Education (KEDEK), which provides Greek Language Courses to migrants and Erasmus Students [30].
- The University of Macedonia. The departments of Educational and Social Policy awards double degrees, with two main specialisations, one of which is Continuing Education. This direction aims to educate students with respect to the acquisition of educational, psychological and administrative skills, so that they can work as experts in the Continuing Education field. The program of study is comprised of two 'circles' of study (each lasting two years), the first circle of study is common for all students and includes subjects such as pedagogy, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and the didactics of special objects, ICT and statistics. The second circle of study includes specialised courses such as continuous education, and education of people with special needs [31].
- Hellenic Open University (EAP). The postgraduate Program "Adult Education" has been offered by the EAP since the academic year 2003-2004. The aim of the program is to provide specialised knowledge and to develop skills so that graduates are able to design, organise and evaluate adult education programs, as well as to teach in them. It focussed on using modern educational methods as well as methods of distance learning. [32]

The University of Peloponnese. The department of Social and Educational Policy of the University of Peloponnese operates in the Faculty of Social Sciences in Corinth. The department of Social and Educational Policy has as a mission to "promote the science and the research in the sectors of the protection of citizens' social rights...the deepening of structures of social state, the prevention and the security in combination with social growth, the continuous education, the

education of adults and the planning of new social and educational policies and institutions" [32].

### e-learning

E-learning in Greece is mostly provided by the Hellenic Open University (HOU) in Patras. However most public Universities use e-learning platforms and offer e-learning lessons at both undergraduate and postgraduate level in order to support the learning procedure. In the secondary education level the Greek Schools' Network and the Pedagogical Institute are responsible for e-learning procedures.

The Greek Schools' Network is the educational intranet of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, which interlinks all schools and provides basic and advanced services. The implementation of the Greek Schools' Network is funded by the Framework Programme for the Information Society, in close cooperation between the Ministry of Education as well as 12 Research Centers and Highest Education Institutes, specialised in network and Internet technologies.

E-Yliko is the official educational portal of the Ministry of Education and Life Long Learning and is actually a place for members of the sector to meet and gain support, including useful links, educational software, articles, teaching proposals, support material and information about conferences and competitions. All of these services are offered on-line to support both classroom based teachers and distance learning teachers. Another critical role concerning the education and ICT implementation in education is held by the Pedagogical Institute - an an independent public organisation founded in 1964 and the oldest research and consultant carrier concerning education matters - who contribute to the national education policy through the Ministry of Educational and Public affairs.

IDEKE - through its e-learning platform - now offers several e-learning programmes for adult training covering ICT, economics, the environment and tourism, which are divided into five sub-units of 50 hours each. The HOU's mission is to provide distance education at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and to achieve this it works to develop and implement appropriate learning materials and methods of teaching [33].

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