

GREECE

Educational reform : the foundation for better competitiveness

Over the last three years, educational reform has been a core policy objective of the New Democracy government of Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis.

As a result, earlier this year, the Greek Parliament passed new legislation to bring Greece in line with the European Union's Bologna Process to harmonize European higher education, and strengthen the international competitiveness of its universities.

The Bologna Process will see the creation of a European Higher Education Area by 2010. In short, this will mean that students, teachers, and researchers will be able to move freely around the EU to study or to work. Access to higher education will also be made easier to those outside Europe.

Having laid the foundation for re-

form, the second phase of the government's strategy, for 2007-2013, is based on four main pillars: Life long learning; quality of education; research and innovation; and linking education to the labor market.

"This government has decided to address higher education first, given its importance to growth and development," says Dimitrios Skiadas, Special Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

"We have completely changed the approach to post-secondary vocational training. Our new policy is focused on providing multiple options for students in post secondary education and to give them more choices regarding vocational, technical and university options. We are trying to bridge the gap between different levels of education," he explains.



“University needs to be part of society and not isolated from it.” says Dimitrios Skiadas



New facilities are being built

“We want to reform the way higher education is structured and operates by making it more responsive to the needs of the country,” says Mr. Skiadas, adding: “University needs to be part of society and not isolated from it.”

Rebuilding Greece’s education system has not been easy. “The Bologna Process began in 1998,” says Mr. Skiadas, “but previous governments were too worried about the political cost, so it was not introduced until 2005 under the current administration. We are now willing to accept the political costs if it means ensuring a future for our children.”

Quality Assurance the key to success

A key aspect of Greece becoming part of the European Higher Education Area is the introduction of a quality assurance process.

Education Minister Marietta Giannakou points out that quality assurance will mean that Greek university graduates will be accepted in post-graduate programs in other EU states.

“I strongly believe that the rise of quality assessment procedures will have a strong positive influence in every aspect of the academic, scien-

tific, social and economic development at regional, national and European level,” says Ms. Giannakou.

Quality assurance will be implemented through an independent Agency open to international experts, internal and external evaluations procedures, student participation, social partners participation, and publication of the results.


Ms Giannakou foresees the creation of a 'culture of quality' benefiting not just students, who will enjoy the privilege of qualitative studies, student provision, and reliable qualifications; but higher education institutions, which will acquire prestige and visibility, as well as participating in European and international projects.

“Quality Assurance becomes even more imperative now, as higher education institutions have been assigned a




Dimitrios Skiadas, Special Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

wider role than that of educating young students for four or five years of their lives. Adults return to universities for further studies or training as Life long learners; mobility of international students constantly increases; new forms of instruction, such as distance learning, set new challenges. Moreover, the increased need for research and innovation in Europe can be satisfied if our institutions not only attract but also keep talent,” concludes Ms. Giannakou. ■




Hellenic Republic
Ministry of National Education
and Religious Affairs

Managing Authority of the Operational Programme
for Education and Initial Vocational Training




European Union
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Better quality of education



ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ, ΕΡΕΥΝΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΥΜΑΤΩΝ
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Η ΠΑΡΑΧΕΙΡΑ ΤΩΝ ΚΟΙΝΩΝ
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Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs
Managing Authority of the Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training (European Commission
Co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund)

Reviving Europe through Knowledge

Dimitrios Skiadas, LL.B (Athens), M.Jur, Ph.D (Durham)
Special Secretary, Hellenic Ministry of Education

This is a time of healing for the European integration process. The damage inflicted by the rejection of the EU Constitutional Treaty during the French and Dutch referenda have sparked a major political crisis, along with concern and scepticism for the future of the European project. Analysis of this crisis demonstrated that the peoples of Europe are not interested only in figures and statistics indicating economic growth or stability. They want to be, once more, captivated by a European vision, by a European concept that will make them believe that together they can achieve more.

Europe used to define itself in external terms, towards other schemes of international co-operation, especially during the Cold War. This provided the integration process with certain points of reference. Today, the situation has changed. Europe has to define itself in internal terms, towards its citizens. If, fifty years ago, the European integration process managed to capture peoples' imagination, today it has to win not simply their minds but also their hearts and emotions. To achieve that we need not just informed people

but knowledgeable people. Knowledge has always been the decisive catalyst for progress, economically, politically, and socially. Therefore, it is vitally important to develop effective mechanisms for the creation and diffusion of knowledge through education and research. These are not merely instruments to prepare students for a particular way of earning a living: they form a lifelong process through which each individual can develop his or her personality, their civic identity.

The existence of a European economic, social and political area, with all the Union's member states being actively involved, is an impetus to develop education systems that are more responsive to the needs of European society. In terms of education, this means being able to move freely, as a pupil, a student, a teacher, a professor, or a researcher. Offering recognition of qualifications, in combination with establishing mechanisms of quality assurance and investing in language learning as well as lifelong learning, will facilitate this.

Developing European integration does not mean diluting national responsibilities, but rather making all

member states work together toward the common goal of reaching the same level of socio-economic development, and at the same time to help each other create a strong community, capable of common reasoning and common speech. This community will be based on the values of peace, democracy, freedom, solidarity, tolerance, respect for the rule of law, and human rights. These values form the core of the European project. It seems that somewhere, in the more-than 50 year process of integration, these values have been overshadowed by the need for a stable economic and monetary system. But the mere existence and operation of such a system, as the recent stagnation of the integration process has proved, is not enough. The main objective for Europe is not simply the creation of a high quality workforce, but the provision to all of the possibility to acquire knowledge, to develop skills, and to use them in their working and social lives.

Jean Monnet said that the result of the European project does not have to be a coalition of states, but it must be a union of peoples. Such a union must derive from the most competitive economy and coherent society, based on knowledge. Knowledge is the foundation upon which the entire architecture of reviving the European integration process must be built. This is the challenge that we all have to meet. ■



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Life long learning



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The Greek Educational System in the 21st Century

The main instrument for the implementation of the educational policy in Greece is the Operational Programme for the "Educational and Initial Vocational Training", which is co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

The Operational Programme is closely related to the revised Lisbon strategy and the other EU policies (employment policy, gender equality, ICT and life long learning), synergy with the pillars of the National Action Plan for employment, the ESF priorities and the objectives of the National Action Plan for social inclusion.

Lifelong learning is one of the most basic pillars to the Greek strategy in Education. Through the Programme, the aim is to provide everyone with the opportunity to acquire or improve his/her knowledge, that will allow him/her both to be an educated person, an active citizen, as well as a fully qualified member of the workforce needed in the labor market.

One of the main choices, reflected in the Programme, is to provide equal opportunities in education and beyond that, to the labor market. Efforts have been undertaken during recent years, aiming to include the less privileged groups of the population in the

educational system, to reduce school drop out, to improve employability and combat social exclusion.

In order to make strategic interventions, the Greek government is going to implement evaluation procedures in all educational levels. The evaluation process, which is going to be supported by the Operational Programme, is not a means for punishment but a means for improvement.

Furthermore, investing in the human capital of the educational system is one of the most significant priorities. Therefore an extensive programme of teachers' training schemes is being implemented, with resources from the Operational Programme.

Another major strategic choice is to create and consolidate a Greek Education and Culture Center for south-eastern Europe, by establishing a new International University in Thessalonica for students that are coming mainly from abroad focusing on the Balkans area and the Eastern Mediterranean basin, but also welcoming students from all over the world.

This new institution will be financed through the Operational Programme.



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Η ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΟΡΥΦΗ
Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Εκπαίδευσης και Αρχικής
Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης