

MAKING THE BEST OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN GREECE

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Investment on human resources through education is the key for reinforcing the position of Greece within the knowledge economy and maintaining social cohesion. This investment is not only a result of public initiatives, but of private ones too. Well financed education and training reinforces and secures such social benefits as the reduction of unemployment, higher labor participation and an increase of productivity. This action follows the trend of increasing investments on education throughout the whole of Europe.

Yet in Europe there is a great variance in the level of the public investments on education and training as a percentage of the GDP. In most countries it lies between 4% and 6%, the average being 5.22%. In Greece there are invested almost 6 billion Euros each year. Public expenses in Greece are the 4.2% of GDP. The greatest part of public expenses goes to higher education. Even though in Greece, in general, there appears an insufficiency of public expenses for education, public expenses for higher education are high in comparison to the average educational expenses in the European Union of the 25.

Private investments in education complement the efforts of the state and are an essential part of the education and training domain. Private expenses in Greece are the 0,22% of GDP. Private expenses in Greece are even lower than those in certain newly arrived countries in the European Community.

The strategic goals of the Greek government, concerning the education and training of the country's human resources, are as following:

1st Strategic Goal: Investment in the Future- Improvement of the level of basic skills for everyone.

This goal highlights the following elements:

- The enhanced access to the educational system (formal and non- formal) of groups that run the risk of exclusion (i.e. such vulnerable social groups as immigrants, minorities, etc.).
- The acquisition of basic skills, necessary for living and working within the contemporary knowl-

edge society, by the entire population during their compulsory schooling.

- The improvement of the quality specs of all educational levels (compulsory and non-compulsory) and their assessment,
- The broadening of access to the new information technologies for everyone, by mainly reinforcing the relative infrastructure and the sufficiency of the technological knowledge teachers.
- The transformation of the Academic Institutions into centers of excellence through procedures that will ensure the quality of their educational, research and administrative work.
- The reinforcement of cooperation between the educational system (mainly Higher Education) and the broader field of economy and society, in order for everyone to acquire and utilize knowledge.
- The adaptation and modernization of education and training of the trainers and teachers upon language issues, informatics and pedagogic matters.

2nd Strategic Goal: Reformation of the educational system so that Lifelong Learning can be a reality for everyone.

This goal highlights the following elements:

- The reinforcement of participation in adult education and in continuing education schemes, especially for women, middle aged employees, and everyone with low level work qualifications so as to improve their skills and qualifications.
- The reduction of school leaving rate and early abandonment of the educational system, espe-

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- cially by weak social groups,.
- The identification and analysis of the contemporary needs of economy and society for skills and qualifications, with the participation of the social partners.
- The development of a national qualifications framework that will define the cognitive routes for the acquisition of each study title and the relative knowledge content, assessed both quantitatively (in academic units) and qualitatively (in skills and capabilities).
- The accreditation of formal and informal learning.
- The improvement of the access to Higher Education for non-traditional students (employees, people from socially weak groups, people above 30 years of age, etc) through participation in continuing education systems and e-learning.
- The provision of constant lifelong consulting and lifelong professional orientation so that there is correspondence between knowledge and the needs of society and economy.

3rd Strategic Goal: Increase of quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training.

This goal highlights the following elements:

- The assurance of quality in the provision of vocational education and training.
- The strengthening of the connection between vocational education and the field of economy and the market.
- The enhancement of the study programs so as to eliminate the obstacles between general education and vocational education.
- The evaluation of empirical learning and the provision of vocational training to the population of socially weak groups (immigrants, gypsies, fugitives, recently discharged, etc.).
- The further improvement of education of the vocational education and training trainers.
- The reinforcement of work practice schemes for the students of vocational education and training.
- The development of an integrated information system that will utilize databases useful for the learning and employment options both on a national and European level.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF GREECE

The Greek Educational System comprises three educational levels:

- **Primary** Education
- **Secondary** Education
- **Higher** Education

In addition, having recognized the need for ongoing lifelong education, the educational system is supported by bodies that provide educational opportunities to adults, thus creating an education- training grid suitable for every age group of the population.

Primary and Secondary Education

Primary Education consists of the non compulsory so far Pre-school Education, i.e. the *Kindergarten*, and the six years compulsory Primary Education, i.e. the *Dimotiko*. Most of kindergartens are public, yet

there are also private ones. The Kindergarten's exit age is at 6, when the compulsory attendance of Primary Education begins. There are Mainstream and All-day *Dimotiko* schools, as well as Special schools. The All-day school is integrated into Greece's official educational system since 1997. It serves social and educational needs and has promoted creativity through its flexible and broadened timetable. The primary schools are either public or private. Depending on the pupils' needs and their curriculum, public schools are either Mainstream or All-day, Experimental, Intercultural or Special ones.

Secondary Education is divided in two cycles:

- The compulsory Secondary Education, which is provided by Gymnasio (Lower Secondary Schools) and
- The post-compulsory Secondary Education, which is provided through the Unified Lykeio (Unified Upper Secondary Schools), the Technical Lykeia and/or the Technical Schools.

Gymnasio covers the three last years of the compulsory education. There are both public and private Gymnasia. Public gymnasia are General, Day or Evening ones (in which working young people above 14 years old study). There are also Intercultural gymnasia (with a special analytical curriculum for the meeting of the educational needs of repatriate Greeks as well as those of foreigners), Musical gymnasia, Experimental gymnasia, Physical Education gymnasia, Special gymnasia and Ecclesiastical ones. Extra teaching is also taking place in Gymnasio, for students with

learning difficulties as well as foreigners with low level knowledge of Greek. Gymnasio graduates are awarded a School-leaving certificate, which automatically provides them with the option-possibility to continue their schooling to the second cycle of secondary education.

The Unified Lykeia can either be public or private, day or evening ones. The duration of studies in the unified Lykeio is 3 years, while in the evening one it extends to 4 years. The day unified Lykeia can either be General Lykeia, Physical Education Lykeia, Musical Lykeia, Experimental Lykeia, or Intercultural, Special, or Technological ones.

In the second cycle of Secondary Education, there also belong the **Vocational Lykeia** and **Vocational Schools**. They aim at combining general education with specialized technical and vocational knowledge so as their graduates can be rapidly incorporated into the work market.

Higher Education

In Greece, Tertiary Education is divided into University Education, which is provided within the **Universities**, and into Higher Technological Education, which is provided within the **Technological Educational Institutions (TEI)**. Moreover, as from 1997/98, the Hellenic Open University is functioning as a higher education institution.

The mission of **University Education** is to provide high level theoretical and research generated education to the future scientific human resources of the country. University Education entails the Universities, the Polytechnic Schools, the School of Fine Arts and the Hellenic Open University. In

Greece there are operating 21 Universities in various cities of the country. Among them there are 63 Schools, which in turn are divided in 258 Faculties and their corresponding Departments.

The **Higher Technological Education's** mission is to contribute to the development of the country and to the progress of scientific and applied research. The education provided is oriented to the adaptation and the transfer of the scientific data to processes. Studying in a T.E.I. as compared to studying in a University, is of a more applied nature. In Greece there are 15 T.E.I.s which consist of at least two (2) Schools, which are in turn divided in two or more Departments (230 in total). The T.E.I.s are operating in different cities of the country, while some are spread in more than one city. Part of the Higher Technological Education is also the Higher School of Pedagogic Technological Education.

The **Hellenic Open University** serves open and distance education in the country. Its main aim is to offer more educational opportunities to a vast range of interested parties and age groups, with the underlying conception that education is a lifelong right.

Postgraduate Studies Programs (MA/MSc Level, PhD Level)

The general aim of the Postgraduate Studies Programs is the broadening of studies on a postgraduate level, so as to provide specialization in various fields either at an MA/MSc level or at a PhD Level.

University graduates as well as T.E.I graduates can join MA/MSc level postgraduate programs, on certain

preconditions. The applicants are either screened by a committee or sit for exams (oral or written ones). Moreover, a necessary precondition is the knowledge of at least one foreign language (usually English). Their duration cannot be shorter than two calendar years.

The general aim of the PhD Studies is to specialize in areas of strategic importance as well as to enrich and develop basic research in various scientific fields, and at the same time empower the scientific web of the country. In order to obtain a PhD one must necessarily have an MA/MSc from a university that offers organized Postgraduate Studies. However, it is possible for non MA/MSc holders to apply directly for PhD studies particularly in Faculties that do not run MA/MSc level post graduate studies. There are also certain University Faculties, as is the case in the Polytechnic School of Athens, which make provision for PhD Studies only. Enrollment terms in these programs are set by the Faculties themselves.

In the higher education level, there also belong various Schools that provide vocational specialization in certain sectors that concern religion, art, tourism, marine, army and public order. More specifically, among these schools are the Higher Ecclesiastical Schools, the Merchant Shipping Academies, the Higher Drama and Dance Schools, the Higher Schools of Tourism Education, the Higher Schools of Officers of the National Defence Ministry and the Higher School of Police Officers.

Lifelong Education

The internationalization of the markets and new technologies have made constant renewal of knowl-

edge and updated skills training of human resources necessary. In Greece, lifelong learning is not especially widespread. It is a fact that Greece shares with Portugal the last place among the 25 European Members as far as the participation of 25-64 years old citizens in lifelong learning programs is concerned, thus reflecting the limited options of adult education as well as the asymmetric distribution of corresponding options for the socially vulnerable groups. The deficiencies in this field are observed mainly because of the lack of systematic mapping of the employment demand characteristics, which results in an inability of recognizing the relevant training needs.

In Greece, the General Secretariat of Adult Education of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs is the executive body in the field of adult education that plans, coordinates and realizes actions that concern lifelong learning.

The Continuing Adult Education Institute (CAEI) belongs to the General Secretariat of Adult Education, though a private legal entity. Its main target is the Technical and Scientific support of the General Secretariat's programs, and the implementation of actions that concern lifelong learning. Besides CAEI, other program-running bodies of the General Secretariat are the Prefectural Committees of Public Training and the Vocational Training Centres.

The CAEI runs the following programs:

- Adult Education Centres
- Second Opportunity Schools
- Parents' Counseling

- Adult Immigrants Greek language Education, etc.

The Greek government plans to actively support lifelong learning through actions such as:

- The institutionalization of the National Linkage System of Vocational Education and Training with Employment as well as the institutioning of Lifelong Learning, which aim at systemizing lifelong learning service provision across the whole of the affiliated bodies.
- The planning and application of procedures for accreditation of structures, trainers, constant quality control systems, accredited bodies monitoring lifelong vocational education and training programs, knowledge-skills-competences accreditation procedures, etc.
- The development of Lifelong Education Institutes and the running of lifelong education programs in higher education and other lifelong education bodies.

USEFUL LINKS

Hellenic Ministry of Labour and Social Security
www.ypakp.gr

Greek Manpower Employment Organization
www.oaed.gr

Employment Observatory Research-
Informatics S.A.
www.paep.org.gr

National Accreditation Centre for Continuing
Vocational Training
www.ekepis.gr

National Center for Vocational Orientation
www.ekep.gr