



VET STUDY VISIT, ATHENS, GREECE

30th March – 1st April 2011

Visit details

Study visit participants :

Tatjana Truscelova (expert from Latvia)

Kaija Suorsa-Aarnio (expert from Finland)

Chrysoula Stergiou (expert from Greece and host)

Anastasios Asvestas (expert from Greece and host)

Mary Kyriazopoulou (European Agency staff)

Programme:

1st day

Visit to the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs & Life Long Learning

Visit to the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs & Life Long Learning and a meeting with Mr. Alevizos, Director of the Directorate of Special Education.

Mr Alevizos informed us about special education in Greece. A research study has been undertaken to identify the educational settings that provide education for students with SEN, as well as the number and educational needs of students with SEN, in order to analyse to what extent the education provided corresponds to the actual educational needs of students with SEN. He also provided some data regarding the number of students that are registered as having SEN. In 2004 the registered number of students with SEN was 16.000. In 2009 the registered number of students with SEN was 30.500. In 2010 the registered number of students with SEN was 33.500. From the total of 33.500 students with SEN, approximately 7.000 are in Special schools and the remaining 26.500 students are in mainstream schools.

As regards students with autism, in 2010 there were:

470 in pre-primary education

1.900 in primary education

850 in secondary education

He also informed us about a new project on the employment and intensive training (15 days) of 900 support teachers in mainstream schools.

The policy in Greece is for students with SEN to attend mainstream classes or special inclusion units within mainstream schools. Only students with the most severe cases of SEN, who cannot attend mainstream classes or special inclusion units within mainstream schools, should attend special schools.

As regards special schools, children attend pre-primary schools from the age of 4-7, primary schools from 7-14 and secondary schools from 14 or 15.

As regards Vocational Education and Training, most students with SEN are enrolled in mainstream VET settings. Approximately 3.500 students with SEN are enrolled in special



Gymnasium (4-5), special Lyceum, and special VET Gymnasium. The tendency is for students with SEN who cannot attend mainstream Gymnasium (first 3 years of secondary education), Lyceum (last three years of secondary education) or VET settings to be enrolled in Special Vocational Education & Training Centres (E.E.E.E.K).



Meeting and discussion with stakeholders

- Presentation of “Inclusive policy in Greece”, by Ms A. Sideri, (NC), and President of the Department of Special Education, Pedagogical Institute and her assistant. They presented the development of legislation in Greece regarding inclusive education. The idea of inclusion was introduced in 1985, and further built upon in 2000 with the creation of the Centres for Diagnosis, Assessment and Support (KDAY), the development of the Individual educational plan, the use of new technology, the development of the department of special education in the Pedagogical Institute, the promotion of mainstream classes and the inclusion units within mainstream schools etc. They also mentioned that they are in the process of developing a new flexible curriculum that can be easily adapted to the individual needs of students with SEN. (see [Presentation Inclusive-policy-in-Greece.pdf](#))

- Presentation of the Greek educational system in brief, by Ms Stergiou, VET national expert. Mrs. Stergiou gave a brief presentation of the Greek educational system, focusing upon the dimension of creativity. (see [Presentation Education-system-in-Greece.pps](#))

- The role of the counsellor in Vocational Education Training, by Ms Mastoraki, EEEEEK Aigaleo. Mrs. Mastoraki gave a brief presentation of the career counselling and guidance provided within the Greek educational system. The aim is to provide an overview of the different professions (primary school) and to support the transition from primary to secondary education and from secondary to work.

The main objectives are:

- Focus on how to help young people to understand themselves and learn from the experiences they obtain from various areas of their lives
- To understand the young person’s social environment
- To prepare career plans (take decisions, make plans, etc)



(see Presentation EEEEEK-Aigaleo-in-GE.pdf)

- The role of self-determination as one of the facilitating factors for the transition from school to work, by Mr. Asvestas, VET national expert.

Mr. Asvestas gave us some information on the impact of self-determination on the transition from school to work for students with SEN and how we can facilitate transition and make it more effective for young people. (see Presentation self-determination.pps).

2nd day

Visit to a training establishment, Special Vocational Education & Training Center (E.E.E.E.K) Aigaleo.

Welcome from the young learners and the Director



Director Mr. Alexopoulos and a few young students presented the activities of the VET centre.

The Special Vocational Education & Training Centre (E.E.E.E.K) is a special public school, part of lower secondary education (the first 3 years of secondary education and is still compulsory education), and operates under the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs & Life Long Education The services target youngsters (from 14 to maximum 22 years old) with severe educational needs who are not able to attend any other type of special or mainstream public schooling at a secondary level so as to reach the ninth year of schooling (compulsory schooling). The students' education may last from 5 to 8 years, according to the needs of the individual. This was established in 2002 (according to the law 2817/2000).

The number of students currently enrolled: 110

Number of current personnel: 45

Vocational workshops: Handcrafting, Cooking, Gardening



Each class consists of 5 to 8 pupils

Most of the educators are professional teachers (of either primary or secondary education) who have had extra training on Special Education (various levels such as PhD, MA, or short training courses of 400 teaching hours).

In addition to the educational services, this type of schooling offers:

- a) Social Services Unit (staffed by social workers, psychologists, logotherapists) the objectives of which are individual and group work, psychological support, ensuring school attendance, family work, community (social and employment) integration etc.
- b. Ergo-Therapy Unit the main objective of which is the cultivation of independent living,
- c. Social Career Unit, whose objective is to give individual support to students for their day-to-day schooling.

The Special Vocational Education & Training Centre (E.E.E.E.K) is also running a pilot programme of a Career Counselling Unit that focuses on:

- Group and individual careers education,
 - Preparation of educational and vocational individual profiles,
 - Implementation of career school visits,
 - Development of pilot apprentices,
 - Bridging schemes in relation to transition from school to work,
 - Delivery of Career Days initiatives,
 - Development and monitoring of school, community and family networking,
 - Design and implementation of extra curriculum projects in relation to job hunting and job coaching skills, self-determination skills and actions.
 - Follow- up activities
 - For more info (See Document 5)
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- Two student representatives gave a tour of the VET setting and introduced the activities

Two students took us for a visit to the different classes and workshops of the VET centre, and explained the different activities being undertaken. We visited various workshops on handcrafting, cooking and gardening and spoke with trainers and students.

Besides the workshops, we also visited:

- the Social Services-Unit and spoke with the staff (social workers, psychologists, logotherapists) about their work, which is psychological support, ensuring school attendance, family work, community (social and employment) integration etc.



- The Ergo-Therapy Unit for training on independent living
- The Social Career Unit, whose objective is to give individual support to students for their daily schooling

- Meeting and discussion with the Career Counselling officer about her daily activities

In order to facilitate the transition from school to social and work integration for learners with SEN, her work involves:

- Designing and implementing individual educational plans,
- offering opportunities within and beyond the curriculum for the cultivation of key skills relating to self determination, social integration and independent living,
- opening school activities and life to local community stimuli and vice versa,
- strengthening ties between actors involved (learners, families, teachers, local community, other social and educational authorities).

The main outcomes of her work so far include:

- Increase of self-esteem and empowerment of graduates
- Follow up of post-school activities for the graduates (English and I.T. courses)
- Follow up contact activities once a month
- Assessment and re-design of the model on the basis of experience and feedback from the students
- Trusting relationship between teachers and students
- According to the new social economy law, Social Enterprises can also include workers with disabilities (including people with S.E.N.) and provide them with a monthly salary of 483 euro and social security without them losing their allowance.
- Some data in relation to the Career Counselling Unit:
- 04 graduates in 2009 (the first year of graduation for EEEEEK): 1 graduate (female) works and one is participating in education
- 13 graduates in 2010 (2 graduates work, 2 follow second chance school, 3 follow IEK, 9 follow long life education programmes)
- 32 graduates in 2011 (14 are involved in lifelong learning, 4 are prepared for continuing education, 4 are prepared for initial training)



-Meeting and discussion with parents' representatives

Discussion took place with the representatives of parents association. Parents expressed their principal concerns about the future of their children. Due to the economic recession it is not easy for young people with severe learning disabilities to get a job in the open labour market.

Beside work in the open labour market, they are also considering alternative forms of employment such as social enterprises.

Meeting with parents



-Meeting and discussion with trainees

At the end of the visit, participants had the opportunity to meet and speak with a number of trainees from different workshops and activities in the VET setting. Some of them were attending workshops, some were on practical training in work places, some had completed the VET programmes and were attending afternoon courses in EEEEEK (computer, English) and some had completed the VET programme and are working in the open labour market or in further education. They all spoke about their experience in EEEEEK, their wishes for the future, their experience in their work place etc.



The main issues raised in the discussion were: besides professional skills, the VET setting has positively influenced their self esteem and self confidence and made them believe that they can work and be equal citizens in society, they have made friends, learned to enjoy life and do similar things to their peers. Through working they earn money and can live on their own and job training in a workplace has given them the opportunity to see various jobs in practice and choose the one that best suits them.

