



**ADULT
EDUCATION
PRACTITIONERS
SUPPORTING
PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES**

Identification of national contexts

GREECE



Incredible Practitioners to empower adults with disABILITIES through Education, Employment & Social Entrepreneurship
Greece: country-report regarding adult education practitioners supporting persons with disabilities

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Incredible Practitioners to empower adults with disABILITIES through Education, Employment & Social Entrepreneurship
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1. Introduction

Partner name	NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE (NCDP)
Country	GREECE

Incredible Practitioners to empower adults with disABILITIES through Education, Employment&Social Entrepreneurship (All IN!) is a transnational Erasmus + project led by the Federation for Accessibility of Romania (FAR) and implemented together with 4 organizations: National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities (Greece); Cesur Formación (Spain); Association of Consultants and Experts in Social Economy (ACE-ES RO) (Romania) and the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD).

The project aims at **better equipping practitioners from the field of adult education and employment** (human resources managers, coordinators, trainers, educators, vocational advisers, social workers, mentors and other experts) with **new skills and competences needed to support persons with disabilities in inclusive adult education practices** and help them progress towards higher qualifications and labor market inclusion. The project also aims at **creating better links between the field of education & training and the labor market** by improving the cooperation between adult education providers, enterprises, public authorities, training and HR managers and other relevant stakeholders.

Aims of the research:

The project partners explored the **key challenges and needs of adult education practitioners support persons with disabilities in three countries: Romania, Spain and Greece.** The research methodology was based on desktop research, questionnaires to experts as well as consultations and interviews with practitioners working in the field of adult education, and specifically supporting persons with disabilities. The research looked at the adult education field from a global perspective – from the legal and financial frameworks within which this is organized to specific aspects related to the operational context of adult education practitioners supporting persons with disabilities in each country.

You can find more information about the project here: <https://all-in-erasmus-project.com/>



2. Organisation of Adult Education/Lifelong Learning in the national context¹

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (LLL) in Greece are offered either through the formal education system or in the form of non-formal education. Key providers of adult education and lifelong learning in Greece are the following:

Second Chance Schools

These are free of charge state schools for adult education that operate within the formal education system. They are addressed to citizens beyond the age of 18 who have not completed compulsory secondary education. These schools award a title equivalent to a Lower Secondary Education Leaving Certificate. The main goals of Second Chance Schools are the re-inclusion of adult learners into the Education and Training System, the formation of positive attitudes towards education and learning, the acquisition of skills and competences, the promotion of personality development and the ability to have access to the labour market.

Vocational Training Institutes

These are non-formal education bodies that target the transition to the labour market. They accept graduates of formal non-compulsory education (general and vocational upper education schools), as well as Vocational Training Schools graduates. The specialisations of their orientation include various fields such as Information Technology, Structural and Mechanical Engineering, Management and Economics, Nutrition and Dietology, Communication and Media, Tourism, Health and Welfare and other. Students who successfully complete attendance receive a Level 4 Diploma of Vocational Specialisation which is certified by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP).

Lifelong Learning Centres I and II

These are non-formal education bodies providing general adult education, continuing vocational training, career guidance and counselling with the aim to foster a positive attitude towards learning, promoting equal opportunities in accessing education, encouraging the productive use of free time, increasing chances of accessing the labour market and, finally, linking or re-linking those who did not complete compulsory education with adult education. Lifelong Learning Centres Level I are the former Laboratories of Liberal Studies and they provide services of non-formal education following an authorisation by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP). Lifelong Learning Centres Level II are the former Vocational Training Centres providing trainings of a relatively short duration (a few weeks to a few months) addressed at working and unemployed people, or those belonging to vulnerable social groups.

They may also include internships in companies. Both Lifelong Learning Centres I and II are open to any adult, employed or unemployed, with particular emphasis on vulnerable & marginalised groups. For socially vulnerable groups (Roma, prisoners, migrants/repatriated immigrants, people with disabilities, Muslim minority), apart from the mainstream classes there are also independent learning classes that promote their equal integration into the society. Lifelong Learning Centre Licence I and Lifelong Learning

¹ Eurydice https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-providers-32_en

Centre Licence II are granted by the Board of Directors of the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP).

Higher Education Institutions can establish Lifelong Learning and Training Centres after a proposition made by the Senate. The proposition defines the general framework of policies and activities within which Lifelong Learning and Training Programmes are developed. These institutions may organise and provide lifelong learning programmes, which lead to corresponding certificates of informal education. The criteria and procedures for the approval of lifelong learning curricula, the special terms and conditions of their operations, their administrative bodies, the terms and the procedure of their definition, as well as the criteria to accept new students are defined by the organisation of each institution. Higher Education Institutions may organise Distance Education Lifelong Learning programmes by taking into consideration the special needs of persons with disabilities and offering them electronic access to the programme.

The **Hellenic Open University (HOU)** practically broadens lifelong learning opportunities, since it offers exclusively distance education and training for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The HOU offers long distance higher education studies in humanities, social sciences, science and technology and applied arts. It provides distance education at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. For that purpose, it develops and implements appropriate learning material and methods of teaching. As a Greek Institution of Higher Education, it is independent and autonomous. Attendance is in the form of distance teaching where students receive educational material (printed, audiovisual, and in some cases electronic) which they study at their own time. In order to enrol at an undergraduate programme of the HOU, students are required to have obtained an Upper Secondary Education Leaving Certificate or an equivalent or corresponding certificate of secondary education, obtained either in Greece or abroad. Students above 23 years of age are admitted by priority. Students with disabilities are also admitted in the Hellenic Open University at a percentage of 5%, in addition to the pre-determined available positions.

Colleges provide post-secondary education and training services based exclusively on validation agreements and franchising with foreign higher education institutions, certified by the competent authorities in the country where they are based, which lead to a bachelor's degree after at least three years of study or to a master's degree. Colleges are mainly located in Greece's largest cities.

Other Lifelong Learning providers. Lifelong learning programmes may be offered by agents and legal entities of any type which operate at national, regional or local level. They are recognised as agents providing informal education and they are registered in the relevant General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning and Youth. Such entities are the following:

- The Foundation for Youth and Lifelong Learning (INEDIVIM)
- Bodies providing general adult education services, which may be NGOs and social, religious or cultural bodies.
- Bodies offering counselling and/or vocational orientation services.
- Employment Promotion Centres of the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED), to the extent that they provide lifelong counselling services and vocational orientation.
- Public bodies such as the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government and other professional associations and chambers, like the Institute for Small Businesses of the General Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants.

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- Bodies set up by the tertiary union trade organisations of employees and employers and the tertiary union trade organisation of civil servants. Such bodies are, for example, the Centre for Education Policy Development of the Hellenic Confederation of Greek Workers and the Hellenic Confederation of Professions, Craftsmen & Merchants, the Chambers and Scientific Associations.
- Other public and private vocational training schools.
- Consultancy services providers or vocational guidance providers.

In addition, adult education and training activities are implemented through Partnership Agreements by the following bodies:

- The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning and the General Secretariat for Youth that implement educational activities of national range.
- The Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (INEVIDIM) that implements the programmes of the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning. INEVIDIM is the beneficiary of public funds for the operation of Vocational Training Institutes and communal funds coming from the Partnership Agreement for the operation of Second Chance Schools and Lifelong Learning Centres.
- The Municipalities also undertake the establishment and operation of Lifelong Learning Centres.

Finally, adult education and lifelong learning programmes specifically for persons with disabilities are also provided by not-for-profit disability and parental organisations with the aim to assist adults in their general wellbeing, as well as in their social and labour market integration. Some of these organisations may operate Lifelong Learning Centres certified by the state.

3. Level of access of persons with disabilities to adult education programmes/lifelong learning

Following the priorities set by Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has been ratified by Greece, the Greek Educational Policy emphasises the right of all students, including students with disabilities and/or special educational needs, to equal access to education. Within such a framework, one of the basic pillars of the National Educational Policy is the promotion of inclusive educational policies. Orientations of new policies concerning Special Education have been: a) the reinforcement of institutional framework for integration and supporting classes, b) the upgrading of diagnostic, evaluation and supporting services, c) the promotion of programmes of joint education followed by innovative practices, d) the organisation of differentiated teaching methods and training courses for teachers, e) the systematic collection of statistical data concerning students with disabilities and/or special educational needs, f) the accessibility of digital learning content and resources regardless of mobility, visual, hearing, learning or other disabilities and g) the development of infrastructure and services that facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities and special educational needs in General Education Schools².

² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/educational-support-and-guidance-27_en

However, the national legislative framework for equal treatment does not cover discrimination on grounds of disability in sectors such as education³. Despite the positive changes that have been promoted⁴ and the inclusive policies that have been announced, problems are systematically ascertained in relation to the organisation, resources, staff, teaching programmes and methods, educational material, perceptions and practices in the education of persons with disabilities. To date, the implementation of a co-education system has not been feasible yet. Education is provided in general education schools with inclusion classes as special educational measures and parallel support as an individualised measure, as well as in separate special schools. Some of the main problems that continue to exist are the following⁵:

- Special education is mainly provided by temporary (substitute teachers) and inadequately trained staff.
- Appropriate parallel support is not provided due to its limited duration and the lack of trained staff. As a result, the overall special education needs of persons with disabilities are not covered by the Inclusion Classes.
- Special and personalised educational programmes, adapted to the persons' special educational needs with the corresponding adaptation of the educational teaching material, the electronic equipment and the systematic intervention to Special Education School Facilities (occupational health, speech therapy, physiotherapy, psychological support⁶) are absent.
- There are no generalised co-education programmes between general education and special schools, despite the provisions of Law 4368/2016⁷.
- Schools are not interconnected with community services⁸.
- Funds do not correspond to the legislative provisions and the actual, identified needs of pupils with disabilities in relation to the total number of pupils.
- Awareness-raising and shaping new perceptions on integrating pupils with disabilities in the general education school community (teachers, parents, pupils) are necessary.

With respect to tertiary education, other than the existing legislative measures that concern the possibility of acceptance into higher educational institutions, there is no sufficient care to ensure all the necessary means for the equal enjoyment of the right to education, such as the transfer of students with disabilities, their accessibility to infrastructures, classrooms, libraries, laboratories and educational materials⁹.

The situation described above also refers to a wide extent to adult education and lifelong learning of persons with disabilities. Of course there are some positive measures, such as the independent learning classes that operate in Lifelong Learning Centres with the aim to promote the equal integration of vulnerable groups in

³ THE GREEK OMBUDSMAN, Report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. July 2019. https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/ohe_en.pdf

⁴ Co-education programmes Law 4368/2016 - Official Government Gazette 21/A/21-2-2016, Article 82. and Ministerial Decision 172877/D3//04.11.2016 Official Government Gazette B 3561

⁵ <https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrens-rights.el.files.398932><https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrensrights.el.stiriksi.37349><https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrens-rights.el.smea.28928> <https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrens-rights.el.aksiologisi.29858>

⁶ Law 3699/2008, Article 2 para. 3

⁷ Co-education programmes Law 4368/2016 - Official Government Gazette 21/A/21-2-2016, Article 82. and Ministerial Decision 172877/D3//04.11.2016 Official Government Gazette B 3561

⁸ Law 3699/2018 para. 2 (f) as amended by Article 39 (4 b) of Law 4115/2013, Official Government Gazette 24/30.1.2013 as in force

⁹ THE GREEK OMBUDSMAN, Report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (July 2019). Available at: https://www.synigoros.gr/resources/ohe_en.pdf

society or the possibility for students with disabilities to be admitted in the Hellenic Open University at a percentage of 5%, in addition to the pre-determined available positions. The Greek Manpower Employment Organisation offers to adults with disabilities education programmes that are implemented in a limited number of vocational training centres based mainly in the capital of the country or in big cities. These programmes are adapted to meet both the needs of the employment market and the special characteristics of the adult trainees. Additionally, there are adult education and lifelong learning programmes for persons with disabilities which are developed and offered by NGOs, disability organisations and organisations of parents/guardians of adults with disabilities, etc.

However, there are generally no inclusive strategies in place for the participation of adults with disabilities in the mainstream adult education and lifelong learning programs. As stated by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *“There is no comprehensive, clear legislation or strategy on, or allocation of funds to, inclusive education, particularly with regard to lifelong learning. Schools and universities lack accessible and inclusive environments, buildings, educational material, services, equipment, information and communication technologies, as well as individualized support provided to students with disabilities¹⁰.”* Programmes and initiatives for the adult education and lifelong learning of persons with disabilities are fragmented and not systematic. There is a lack or inadequacy of specialised staff and lack of adequate resources and funds. Training programmes are not evolving and are not constantly updated and enriched, and there is no interconnection between the programmes and the social context in which persons with disabilities belong or participate¹¹.

According to Law 3879/2010, one of the goals of Lifelong Learning is to safeguard the access of individuals to general adult education and there is particular emphasis placed upon vulnerable groups, with programmes that aim to promote their socio-economic inclusion. In this context, persons with disabilities theoretically may attend any mainstream adult education and lifelong learning programme, but in practice they are faced with many obstacles such as inaccessible buildings and infrastructure, inaccessible educational material and methods, inadequately equipped and skilled staff, stereotypes and prejudice about their abilities and other. There are no sufficient structures and programmes in place for all persons with disabilities, particularly in relation to functionality, self-sufficiency and daily living issues. Funding remains a barrier for many aspects. Needs assessment is particularly costly and such costs often have to be borne by the learners.

With regard to the data provided, there are unfortunately no specific data and statistics on the participation of adults with disabilities in adult education and lifelong learning programmes. From data on Lifelong Learning in Greece in 2012 it is known that the percentage of the population aged 24-65 participating in Lifelong Learning in the country (3%) appears to be well below the European average (9,1%) and the 2020 Europe target (15%)¹². However, there is no distribution of this data by disability.

¹⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Concluding observations on the initial report of Greece* (2019), Par. 34

(a). Available at: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2019532/G1931296.pdf>

¹¹ NCDP, *Study on the diagnosis of lifelong learning needs of persons with disabilities living in or coming out from institutions* (2014). Available only in Greek at: <https://www.esamea.gr/projects-tenders/national-projects/39-publications/books-studies/2981-meleti-gia-ti-diagnosi-anagkon-dia-biomythisis-ton-atomon-me-anapiria-poy-diabiodyn-sta-idrymata-i-poy-exoyn-apoidrymatopoiithei-2014>

¹² GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF LIFELONG LEARNING. *Lifelong Learning in Greece 2012, Executive Summary National Report*. http://www.gsae.edu.gr/images/ekthesi/2-FYLLO__2013%201.pdf

4. Identification of practitioners providing support for persons with disabilities in adult education activities

In general¹³ adult trainers in Greece are individuals who have the essential formal qualifications as well as certified educational proficiency in adult General Education and Vocational Training within the context of Lifelong Learning. Professionals from the following groups are entitled to join the teaching staff of Public Vocational Training Institutes, Second Chance Schools and Lifelong Learning Centres:

- Professors of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- Primary and Secondary Education teachers who get transferred to the public sectors above.
- Primary and Secondary Education teachers including permanent, seconded or teachers assigned to the task of extra hours of teaching. Substitute or hourly paid teachers are also included.
- Adult trainers of different professions accredited and registered in the adult education teacher training registry with a fixed-term employment contract or work contract.
- Members of special teaching staff and special teaching assistant staff.

The above referred adult trainers cover the educational needs of public lifelong learning bodies that cannot be met through definite or temporary transfers and secondment of formal education staff. The selection criteria for trainers of Vocational Training Institutes, Second Chance Schools and Lifelong Learning Centres are specified by a Decision issued by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs. The Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation announces the trainer positions of public Vocational Training Institutes, Second Chance Schools and Lifelong Learning Centres. Eligible to apply are all individuals as well as public sector employees, but they must have the essential qualifications for becoming an adult trainer. For the trainers' selection and in relation to the respective thematic unit, the applying criteria are qualifications' standards: work and teaching experience, specialisation in the cognitive field they wish to teach, link of postgraduate degree with the subject taught and social criteria (unemployment, large family, etc.)

Practitioners supporting persons with disabilities in adult education may belong to the above categories and to different groups of professionals (teachers, special educators, social workers, sociologists, psychologists, service providers, therapists, etc.). However, they may also be individuals who have no specific professional status or certified knowledge on adult education, but who have acquired – on an informal basis and by experience – the necessary knowledge and skills to support adult learners with disabilities. Reference must also be made to the important role of parents and guardians of persons with disabilities such as intellectual disabilities, down syndrome, autism, etc., who in many cases act as practitioners and are involved in adult education and lifelong learning activities for their children, whether in a non-family setting (e.g.: special school or day care centre) or at home.

¹³ EURYDICE, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/initial-education-teachers-and-trainers-working-adult-education-and-training-29_en and https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/conditions-service-teachers-and-trainers-working-adult-education-and-training-27_en

5. Role of practitioners supporting persons with disabilities in adult education activities

The role and the tasks of practitioners supporting persons with disabilities in adult education depend on the structure/body and context they work in and the spectrum of activities and services that are foreseen in them, as well as on the type of disability of the persons they are supporting. Their tasks may involve providing counselling, guidance and support, designing adult education curricula, tools and methods adapted to the specific characteristics and developmental needs of the adult learners, or providing different educational and lifelong learning services with the aim to support the wellbeing of the persons with disabilities, promote their independent living, facilitate and encourage their integration into society and enhance access to employment.

Practitioners supporting persons with disabilities may be responsible for providing services such as:

- General education
- Social, psychological support and empowerment
- Implementation of creative activities for the development of personal and social skills
- Guidance and counselling support
- Rehabilitation services
- Education on daily living activities (e.g.: training for blind persons on mobility and orientation)
- Development of skills that facilitate and promote independent living
- Parallel support in mainstream educational settings and environments
- Vocational orientation and training for the acquisition of skills that would facilitate integration in the labour market
- Support in the workplace (in the open labour market or in supported employment structures)

6. Level of training of practitioners providing support for persons with disabilities in adult education activities

Adult educators in Greece receive initial education at Higher Education Institutes and are required to have educational aptitude. After their educational aptitude is recognised and certified by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP), adult trainers are registered in the Trainers' Register. The Foundation for Youth and Lifelong Learning takes all the necessary steps for its employees' professional education and continuing vocational training, which also includes adult educators. Trainers of adult educators are also professionals with the above-mentioned qualifications, as well as additional specialised knowledge and skills that enable them to coordinate and train adult trainers' groups in subjects pertaining to adults' general education, training and lifelong learning. Except for special assisting staff, Higher Education Institutions' professors, school teachers, adult teacher trainers and members of special teaching staff should all hold at least a first cycle degree. Special assisting staff should hold a post-secondary degree from a department of Preschool Education or a Social Welfare degree from Secondary Vocational Education or a degree from Private or Public Vocational Training Institutes. Entitled to a certified teaching proficiency are also holders of bachelor's degrees in either: Adult training, Lifelong learning, in Continuing Education and Training, in Continuing Education and Educational Policies. In addition, trainer positions in lifelong learning structures can be obtained

by professional craftsmen. Their selection is based on standard qualifications, working and teaching experience, further training, and seminars in relation with the respective thematic unit¹⁴.

Certified teaching qualifications are a prerequisite for a trainer to take part in a state-funded non-formal education programme. The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) issues the certification. This leads to inclusion in the Adult Trainers' Registry. As of 1 September 2020 (L. 4623/2019) educational proficiency is considered a prerequisite for their participation in a non-formal Education programme funded by public resources. In this case, applicants for the programme may certify their specialisation by taking certifying exams that confirm the adequate knowledge, skills and abilities required to teach in adult groups in structures of non-formal education. The precondition of taking certifying exams does not apply to Higher Education Institutes professors and registered adult teacher trainers in the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA)¹⁵.

With regard to adults with disabilities, practitioners providing services to this specific group usually have a degree or post-graduate in special education and other human and social sciences (social work, sociology, psychology, ergotherapy, etc.). On their own initiative, they usually have attended special seminars, educational programmes and workshops focusing on the adult education and lifelong learning of persons with disabilities, which provide them with the necessary competences and skills to effectively support learners with disabilities. Such training activities are unfortunately implemented on a small scale, sporadically and by a very limited number of training and education providers. Specific training is provided mostly by organisations and bodies whose activities include the provision of adult education and lifelong learning services to persons with disabilities and, in order to provide such services, they offer relevant training to existing or future staff. Training is also provided by the Greek Institute for Education Policy, but it refers mostly to primary, secondary and under-secondary education of persons with disabilities. However, some of the content of this training could be exploited in the field of adult education as well. Apart from training (if and when available), adult educators can always use material and tools that have been produced/developed in order to guide, support and facilitate their work with persons with disabilities (see below "Resources and tools").

In general, individuals who are educated or trained to act as adult educators do not necessarily have specific knowledge and skills to support persons with disabilities (except those with studies in special education), since the education they receive in various structures and contexts does not involve, in most cases, the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills that would also facilitate their work with adult learners who are persons with disabilities. Most of the times, the curricula provided for adult educators do not include a thematic section on disability issues and there is no organised framework for the provision of specific training on such issues. Plus, competences to support persons with disabilities in adult education are not obligatory and a prerequisite for someone to be officially recognised, certified and registered as adult trainer. Therefore, there is no guarantee that every adult trainer has the competences and skills to support persons with disabilities as well.

¹⁴ EURYDICE, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/initial-education-teachers-and-trainers-working-adult-education-and-training-29_en

¹⁵ EURYDICE, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/initial-education-teachers-and-trainers-working-adult-education-and-training-29_en

7. Resources and tools available for practitioners supporting persons with disabilities in adult education activities

In Greece there are various tools addressed to practitioners working with persons with disabilities which can be used to support learning procedures, but they refer mostly to primary, secondary and under-secondary education. However, depending on the type of disability they can also be used in adult education activities.

A number of tools and material that can be used by educators to facilitate the learning of persons with disabilities can be found in the “Edu-Gate”¹⁶, which is the official educational portal of the Ministry of Education and Long Life 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 these services are offered online to support both classroom-based teachers and distance learning teachers. Another critical role regarding education and ICT implementation in education is conducted by the Pedagogical Institute – an independent public organisation which is also the oldest research and consultant authority on education matters contributing to the national education policy.

A lot of accessible and adapted educational material and software are also provided by the Institute for Education Policy (IEP), a scientific agency that is supervised by the Ministry of Education and supports it on issues regarding primary and secondary education, post-secondary education, transition from secondary to higher education, teacher training, student dropout and early school leaving. In the framework of the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, and particularly under the Operational Programme “Education and Lifelong Learning” of the Ministry of Education, IEP implemented the project «*Design and Development of Accessible Educational & Instructional Material for Students with Disabilities*». The aim of the Project was the adaptation of textbooks for curricular subjects of different school grades, so that they could be fully accessible for students with visual, hearing, physical and mid-mental disabilities, autism and attention deficit disorder. Working Groups of Experts set the Standards for Material Development concerning scientific and pedagogical documentation for each type of disability and special education need, as well as the evaluation principles for textbooks and software. Upon completion of the “Production and Development” phase of the project, a “Teacher Training” followed for teachers to learn how to use the new material.

Within the context of the above project, a platform for digital content accessibility was developed to be used both by educators and learners with disabilities. This platform includes all adapted educational material and software that was produced under the project. Relevant educational material that had been previously developed was also archived. The educational material and the softwares are available for free on the project’s website¹⁷ - also known as the platform “prosvasio” (Greek for ‘accessible’).

¹⁶ Ministry of Education, Edu-Gate. Available in Greek at: http://edu-gate.minedu.gov.gr/index.php?option=com_sppagebuilder&view=page&id=29&Itemid=210

¹⁷ <http://prosvasimo.iep.edu.gr/en/>

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The classification of the material by type of disability is also foreseen only for practical purposes, without implying that any discrete educational software or material is targeted solely to a target group of students and without a criterion for a one-dimensional use of the material.

For example, adapted educational material based on the “Easy to Read - Text for All” method can be primarily linked to the education of students with intellectual disabilities but can be equally useful and effective for students with learning difficulties, autism and more. The educational software “Dolphin” developed for students with autism can also be used for students with intellectual and learning difficulties, etc.

The implementation of the above referred project continued in the framework of the Programmatic Period 2014-2020, under the Operational Programme “Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning”. The project includes activities such as using existing and adapted educational material for the effective development of some new one, the development of accessible digital educational material, the development of tools for the students’ evaluation for the educators to prepare personalised curricula, the training of general and special education teachers, the production of training material on disability, diversity, school integration and other.

Another important tool produced in 2017 by the Institute for Education Policy is a volume titled “*Educational material for the support and integration of students with disabilities and/or special educational needs in school*”¹⁸. The content of this volume was developed upon the use of existing training material and covers particularly useful topics, such as basic principles and approaches related to disability, inclusion and differentiated learning, cooperative practices of general and special education teachers, the method of parallel support in mainstream education, the use of information and communication technologies and, finally, a range of specialised approaches to specific categories of issues on the education of persons with disabilities.

NCDP has also produced various tools addressed to educators and practitioners with the aim to support them in their work for providing more effective, personalised and adapted services to learners with disabilities. Among them there is a handbook for adult educators which suggests a number of educational strategies and techniques that can be used with adults with developmental or intellectual disabilities in order for them to develop personal and social skills that can contribute to the improvement of their self-reliance, self-determination, wellbeing, quality of life, etc¹⁹. In addition, NCDP has produced an educational handbook titled “Education and Disability”²⁰ that covers a wide range of issues related to the education of persons with disabilities, as well as a handbook for educators with the aim to provide training on their rights to persons with psychological disabilities.

¹⁸ IEP

(2017). http://iep.edu.gr/images/IEP/EPISTIMONIKI_YPIRESIA/Epist_Monades/A_Kyklos/Proshol_Agogi_nea/2019/ekp_yliko_mathiton_me_anapiria.pdf

¹⁹ Available in Greek at: <https://www.esamea.gr/publications/books-studies/2730-egxeiridio-ekpaideuth-enhlikwn-twn-soulh-fwtiadou-kai-xristodoulou-2014>

²⁰ NCDP “Educational Handbook: Education and Disability”(2013) Available in Greek at: <https://www.esamea.gr/publications/books-studies/495-ekpaideytiko-egxeiridio-no-3-ekpaideysi-kai-anapiria-toy-spyridona-georgioy-soyli>

Tools that give the opportunity for personalised and adapted learning for learners with disabilities are produced by other entities as well (education and training bodies, state authorities responsible for different sectors related to education, NGOs and centres providing services to persons with disabilities, etc.) within the framework of projects funded by the European Commission and national funds. However, there is not one single space (e.g.: a platform similar to those of the Ministry of Education) where one could find all this material gathered together.

8. Continuing professional development

The increasing number of institutions and organisations that offer adult and lifelong learning programmes in Greece has led to a rise in the human resources involved in the design, organisation and implementation of these programmes. It is therefore necessary that these human resources are well-trained. In order to meet this need for training, many bodies, institutions and universities in Greece have begun to set up training programmes for adult trainers, aiming both at upgrading their qualifications and preparing them for the certification exams for the adult educational adequacy. Such programmes are directed to²¹:

- prospective adult trainers of all cognitive subjects, who want to be trained in order to certify their educational adequacy and teach their subject to adult learners;
- those registered in the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance as well as in other registers of adult trainers, who want to update their knowledge in the field of adult education; and
- existing and prospective staff members of lifelong learning structures, such as Institutes of Vocational Training, Second Chance Schools, Lifelong Learning Centres, etc., who want to upgrade their knowledge and gain an additional degree.

For adult educators in Greece, in order to assure quality in lifelong learning and meet the goals of general adult education, there is a system of: a) continuing training and assessment for trainers and executives in non-formal education and teachers at second chance schools and b) evaluation of programmes and efficiency of the national network of lifelong learning. Within this framework of continuing training for teachers and adult education trainers, various specialised training programmes are implemented. These programmes target adult education trainers who wish to develop and tailor their knowledge and competences. Programme specifications and issues concerning their scientific support and supervision are regulated by decision of the Minister of Education. Erasmus+ is a programme that is widely exploited for activities that address staff working in adult education providers. The staff members can improve their basic skills through transnational mobility activities. The activities aim at improving the quality of teaching and learning practices and developing links with the job market and society. Participants may provide teaching or training services to partner agencies based abroad, take part in structured course cycles or perform job shadowing observations in an adult education organisation abroad. The programme supports staff learning mobility that is part of the European Development Scheme for sending organisations, meets clearly identified staff-development needs, comes with a series of measures for selecting and preparing post-mobility activities and ensures learning outcomes are recognised, disseminated and widely used within the organisation. The State Scholarships Foundation is the national agency for the Erasmus+ programme for the education

²¹ Mavropoulos A., Sipitanou A. and Pampouri A., (2019). *Training of Adult Trainers: Implementation and Evaluation of a Higher Education Program in Greece.*

and training sectors. It manages Key action 1 – “Learning mobility of individuals” and Key Action 2 – “Strategic Partnerships”. Within the framework of Key Action 1, mobility plans in the field of adult education offer the option to staff entitled bodies to carry out transnational mobility for the purpose of Studies, Training, Work, Teaching, Education and Development of professional qualifications and competences. Activities in the adult staff training organisation learning mobility programme include: Teaching/training assignment duties, Structured educational or training cycles and educational events abroad, Job shadowing. Within the framework of Key action 2 the strategic partnerships concern the development and strengthening of transnational co-operations between organisations that engage in adult education. In particular, as a part of a strategic partnership in the field of adult education, the actions supported are: a) Action plans aimed at establishing the exchange of good practices and b) Action plans that promote the implementation of innovative practices²².

To improve their knowledge and skills, practitioners may also benefit from training opportunities provided by various public and private bodies active in the field of adult education and lifelong learning, such as Lifelong Learning Centres, Vocational Training Institutes, Universities, etc. Training is usually offered in the form of seminars or educational programmes (distant learning may also be provided) addressed both to individuals interested in becoming adult trainers and/or in being certified as such and to those who already are adult trainers but wish to improve, update and extend their skills and knowledge and strengthen their professional efficiency. In addition, free training material can be found online in educational platforms of the Ministry of Education such as the “Edu-Gate” and the platform “Prosvasimo” (see also section “Resources and tools”) where there is a number of adapted and accessible educational software and material useful not only for the education of persons with disabilities, but also for the improvement of the educators’ skills and knowledge (e.g.: guidelines, presentations on specific issues related to the education of persons with disabilities etc.)

It’s worth mentioning that in Second Chance Schools, in Higher Education Institutions, in the Hellenic Open University and other adult education and lifelong learning structures there are counselling support services which are offered to learners, but are also addressed to trainers. The provision of such services allows trainers to manage problems and difficulties that may arise during their work. However, we cannot assess the effectiveness of these services when trainers in adult education need to deal with challenges related to the provision of support to persons with disabilities. However, adult trainers may always refer themselves to organisations experienced in disability issues, such as disability organisations, other bodies providing services to persons with disabilities, experienced practitioners, etc., from where they can receive guidance and support. Plus, they may use existing educational and other material that provides general information on disability issues as well as specific knowledge on issues related to the support of persons with disabilities.

We need to move rapidly to transformative learning processes that include the element of radical critical reflection. Thus, it is obvious that the development journey for the adult educator does not end with any certification or professionalisation process: the acquisition of a certification is just the beginning of a new and more profound journey. To facilitate transformative learning processes, adult educators need something

²² EURYDICE, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/continuing-professional-development-teachers-and-trainers-working-adult-education-and-27_en

more than the conventional certified teaching skills. They need to develop their critical self-reflection skills in order to challenge, first and foremost, the components of their own frame of reference that concerns their professional role. They should understand that their task is not simply to provide their learners with knowledge and skills that are needed within their professional settings, but to reinforce their movement towards a stage of being which is characterised by a self-directed, emancipatory way of making meaning. They should also be able to develop, first for themselves and then for their learners, some important core skills, like critical thinking, creative adaptability, emotional intelligence, empathy, creation of solidarity relationships and learn how to learn. All of the aforementioned are necessary in order to allow human beings to deal with the complex and hard challenges of the modern world. Many adult educators already feel this need, and they have formed unofficial groups that, through informal training processes, strive to better understand their own disjunctures or disorienting dilemmas. Such groups have been working for the last five years in Greece under the auspice of the Hellenic Adult Education Association. In these groups, adult educators from different practice areas apply innovative approaches that may foster the previously mentioned core skills, like the incorporation of the objectives of critical thinking and empathy within the learning outcomes of any adult education programme. These efforts seem to be very successful, and given the fact that the Greek state today does not seem capable of inaugurating any creative initiatives for the development of adult educators beyond certification, we believe that the perspective of this formation is going to be found in the initiatives coming from the civil society²³.

9. Legislative framework and financial framework related to adult education of persons with disabilities

In Greece there is an institutional framework for the Special Education of individuals with disabilities and special educational needs, which is laid down mainly in Law 3699/2008 and the subsequent complementary Laws 4115/2013, 4186/2013, 4368/2016, 4415/2016, 4452/2017 and 4547/2018. Moreover, there are Educational and Counselling Support Centres (KESY) which are exclusively competent to suggest classification, enrolment, transfer and attendance of individuals with disabilities and special educational needs in appropriate special education schools or other educational contexts or special education programmes, after having first identified and verified the kind and degree of difficulties those persons are facing. They are decentralised services of the Ministry of Education and belong to the Regional Education Directorates.

However, there is not a single integrated legislative and financial framework that focuses specifically on the adult education of persons with disabilities, as this group applies the framework that exists for all individuals, with or without disabilities. Below we present some of the main laws and aspects of this framework²⁴.

Law 3879/2010 (*“Development of Lifelong Learning and other provisions”*) and Law 4186/2013 (*“Restructuring of Secondary Education and other provisions”*), as being in force, are the main laws which shape the policy for and the landscape of Lifelong Learning (LLL) in Greece. Joint ministerial decisions define the jurisdiction of relevant state bodies and set specific measures. More specifically, by virtue of Law 3879/2010, inter alia, the National Lifelong Learning Network is established. In addition,

²³ Kokkos A., Koulaouzides G., Karalis T., *Becoming an Adult Educator in Greece: Past Experiences, Existing Procedures and Future Challenges*. https://www.academia.edu/12102585/Becoming_an_adult_educator_in_Greece_past_experiences_existing_procedures_and_future_challenges

²⁴ EURYDICE

collective bodies' role and regions' and Municipalities' involvement are described. Under Law 4186/2013, as amended and in force, the operation of non-formal education providers is defined, with reference to organisation and administration matters.

Law 4009/2011 (*"Structure, operation, quality assurance of studies and internationalisation of higher education institutions"*) foresees that Higher Education Institutions may organise and provide lifelong learning programmes, which lead to corresponding certificates of informal education. The criteria and procedures for the approval of lifelong learning curricula, the special terms and conditions of their operation, their administrative bodies, the terms and the procedure of their definition, as well as their way of accepting new students are defined by the organisation of each institution. Higher Education Institutions may organise their lifelong learning programmes via distance learning methods as well, with the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Law.

Law 4093/2012 (*"Approved Medium Term Fiscal Strategy 2013-2016 - Emergency Measures of Implementation of Law 4046/2012 and the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy 2013-2016"*) foresees provisions related to the Licensing system for providers/structures of non-formal education. The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) is the authority that issues opinion on the compliance of a provider with the requirements of Law 4093/2012, while the Minister of Education and the General Secretary for Vocational Education, Training and Lifelong Learning are responsible for granting licence to the providers/structures.

Law 4115/2013 (*"Organisation and operation of the Institute for Youth and Lifelong Learning and of the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance and other provisions"*) defines the responsibilities for the inspection and certification of qualifications which might be assigned to licenced bodies (like Lifelong Learning Centres I, Lifelong Learning Centres II, Private Schools, Foreign Languages Schools) which receive an authorisation by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) and which, following their authorisation, are placed under the supervision of the organisation. Terms and conditions for evaluating, licencing and supervising all types of bodies are outlined by presidential decrees issued on the recommendation of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs. Law 4115/2013 together with Law 3879/2010 form the legal framework on quality assurance in LLL which provides for the establishment of a system of continuing training and assessment of teachers and other education officials.

Law 4186/2013 (*"Restructuring of Secondary Education and other provisions"*) includes provisions for the transformation of General and Vocational Upper Secondary Schools, Vocational Training Institutes and Special Education structures. It establishes Schools of Vocational Education, as well as Lifelong Learning Directorates. It also supplements new provisions regarding Higher Education Institutions.

With the enactment of [Law 3879/2010](#) a single national strategy for lifelong learning (LLL) was for the first time created in Greece and the National Network for Lifelong Learning was set up, consisting of all the administration bodies and providing LLL services. In particular, Law 3879/2010 sets forth the following objectives:

- The systematisation and coordination of investigating the educational and training needs of adults in relation to the needs of labour market and social development

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- The planning and decentralisation of lifelong learning actions, the systematic support of institutions of the National Network for Lifelong Learning and the programmatic cooperation between the network governing bodies with service providers of lifelong learning
- The promotion of vocational training and adult education as two equal pillars of lifelong learning
- The establishment of standards and tools to develop and improve the quality of lifelong learning
- The assurance of accessibility for people and especially the members of socially vulnerable groups in all training and general adult education
- The continuing education and evaluation of educators for adults
- The creation of a coherent national framework for the evaluation and certification for all forms of training and adult education by setting up the National Qualifications Certification Agency (EOPP)
- The establishment of a single national framework of qualification recognition and certification of knowledge, skills and competences (National Qualifications Framework).

As defined in Law 3879/2010, lifelong learning applies to all forms of learning activities during the life of a person aiming at acquiring or developing knowledge, skills and abilities that contribute to the formation of an integrated personality, vocational inclusion and personal development, social cohesion, capacity development of active citizenship and social, economic and cultural development. It includes formal education, non-formal education and informal learning.

According to the dictates of Law 3879/2010, the national strategy for the development of Lifelong Learning is reflected in the following main policies:

The National Network for Lifelong Learning, which was activated by the stipulation of Law 3879/2010, consists of all lifelong learning bodies, which should cooperate both at the level of composing proposals and implementation of actions, but also of interactive communication. Basic functions, such as those of initial or continuous vocational training and general adult education and support functions, such as exploring the educational and training needs of adults, providing advisory services and guidance, inputs and outputs certifications, recognition of qualifications and professional rights, etc., are exercised as a part of the National Network for Lifelong Learning.

The following agencies for the management and provision of lifelong learning services form the National Network for Lifelong Learning according to Laws 3879/2010 and 4186/2013:

- The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning
- Regional and Municipal Departments responsible for Lifelong Learning
- The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP)
- The National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA)

In the framework set by Law 3879/2010, the National Lifelong Learning Programme of the Ministry of Education is shaped, which brings together the administration and service provision of lifelong learning bodies. The main goal of the National Lifelong Learning Programme is to link and coordinate the field of education and the field of employment, which have been functioning autonomously in the past, thus shaping the two equal pillars of the National Lifelong Learning Programme: I) Vocational training (initial and continuing), for the integration and re-integration in the labour market and II) General adult education, for personal development and social cohesion. The application of the National Lifelong Learning Programme

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includes actions related to creating the infrastructure and conditions for the coordination and coherent functioning of Lifelong Learning. It also includes the implementation of training and educational actions with key recipient the manpower of the country. The strategic goals set in the National Programme of this period relate to the following:

- Universal participation: increasing participation of adults in Lifelong Learning activities
- Quality everywhere: quality assurance in all aspects of the educational process
- Change in teaching methods: focus on distance, experiential, mixed forms of learning
- Value and transparency in qualification: establishment of the National Qualifications Framework for the recognition and certification of acquired skills
- Serving the new development model: the interconnection of lifelong learning actions with the labour market needs at national, regional and local level
- Liberation from educational constrictions: ensuring alternative learning paths through networking of lifelong learning services
- Rational allocation, coordination and utilisation of community resources.

In the principles governing the public policy for lifelong learning, it is foreseen that lifelong learning should, among other, be human-centred and support the social and professional integration of vulnerable groups by providing their members with an adequate level of general and professional knowledge, skills and abilities. These principles, however, are not always reflected in practice. In recent years, Greece has made some efforts to upgrade and improve quality in adult education and lifelong learning programmes by focusing on facilitating accessibility for vulnerable social groups at all levels as well, but these efforts are limited and are not a part of a holistic approach.

It is worth mentioning that the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in its Concluding observations on the initial report of Greece, expresses concerns related to Education (Article 24 of the UNCRPD), such as that²⁵: “(a) *There is no comprehensive, clear legislation or strategy on, or allocation of funds to, inclusive education, particularly with regard to lifelong learning; (b) Schools and universities lack accessible and inclusive environments, buildings, educational material, services, equipment, information and communication technologies, as well as individualised support provided to students with disabilities; (d) There is insufficient data on the amount of public resources allocated for inclusive education in mainstream schools and higher education institutions, on regulated transparent protocols relating to individual education plans, and on relevant technologies and forms of communication to ensure accessibility for students with disabilities at all levels of education*”. Also, the Committee “*Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education, and taking into account Sustainable Development Goal 4, especially targets 4.5 and 4.a, recommends that the State party increase its efforts to guarantee inclusive education, and in particular that it: (a) Adopt and implement a coherent strategy on inclusive education in the mainstream educational system; CRPD/C/GRC/CO/1 8 (b) Ensure the accessibility of school and university environments, in line with the Convention, by promoting universal design, the provision of specific measures and individualised support, such as accessible and adapted materials, inclusive curricula, inclusive information and communication technologies for pupils and students with disabilities, and digital pedagogy;*

²⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Concluding observations on the initial report of Greece* (2019), Par. 34 (a). Available at: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2019532/G1931296.pdf>

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(c) Immediately ensure access to formal education for all refugee, asylum seeking and migrant children with disabilities, and for Roma children with disabilities; (d) Allocate effective and sufficient financial and material resources and adequately and regularly trained personnel, including persons with disabilities, to effectively guarantee inclusive education; (e) Incorporate inclusive education training into higher education curricula for trainee teachers, and into training programmes for current teaching staff, with an adequate budget.”

10. Funding of adult education and lifelong learning in Greece²⁶

Lifelong Learning is funded by state, community and private resources. The actions and projects implemented by state agencies are funded primarily by the Operational Programmes (OPs) of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) co-financed by Greece and the European Union. Significant steps have been taken to date for the implementation of the institutional framework (Law 3879/2010) while the organisation and systematisation of Lifelong Learning remain a major goal.

Adult education and Lifelong Learning (LLL) programmes in particular are funded to a great extent by state and community funds. First of all, they are funded on a permanent basis by the regular budget of the Ministry of Education through the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning and Youth which is the main administrative body for LLL in Greece. The educational and development programmes are mainly co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), which is the main funding body of the European Union. In 2018 the total appropriations from the regular budget of the Ministry of Education for adult education were € 19,12 million. This amount refers to the funding of public Vocational Training Institutes and is intended to support labour costs and their operational expenditure. The funding takes into account the specificities of the educational units, for example, the number of trainees/trainers. The funding refers to the total amount. The Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation is the body that handles the payment of expenses/wages on the basis for example of the number of trainees or the expenses for expendables or equipment.

Secondly, the main co-funded programme within the framework of PA (Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework) 2014-2020 for LLL and Apprenticeship is the Operational Programme “Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning” (HRDELL) which includes actions for the development of LLL and Vocational Education and Training primarily aiming to improve the relevance of education, training and lifelong learning to the labour market. HRDELL Operational Programme spans many sectors and is co-financed by a single fund (ESF). It includes comprehensive policies to support the creation of sustainable jobs, promote active inclusion in the labour market, including the inclusion of vulnerable social groups, improve the efficacy of the Greek educational system, improve the matching of education, training and lifelong learning with the labour market, with the main aim of limiting and/or eliminating the social consequences of the crisis and/or minimising the cost of high unemployment. Below we give some indicative examples of funding specific priorities/objectives:

INVESTMENT PRIORITY 10.3: Improving equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in the framework of formal, informal and non-formal structures, upgrading of knowledge, skills and competences of the work

²⁶ EURYDICE, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/adult-education-and-training-funding-33_en

force and promoting flexible learning opportunities, among others, through career guidance and certification of the acquired qualifications (76,2 million €). Particular Objective 10.3.1: Enhancing the quality and attractiveness of lifelong learning and participation of population in the age group 16-66+, with certification of the acquired knowledge and establishing links between formal, non-formal and informal learning (budget: 70,1 million €). Second Chance Schools and Lifelong Centres are among the beneficiaries of these amount.

INVESTMENT PRIORITY 10.4: Improving the relevance of education and training systems within the labour market, facilitating the transition from education to work and enhancing vocational education and training systems and quality through mechanisms for anticipating skill needs, adjusting study programmes and the establishment and development of work-based learning and apprenticeship schemes, including the dual learning systems. (Budget: 313,3 million €). Particular Objective 10.4.1: Raising the number of pupils/students/graduates of Apprenticeship programmes (Budget: 353,6 million €). The funded activities relate to the developing and running of Apprenticeship Pilot Programmes for graduates of Upper-Secondary Vocational Schools, to the Formation of Study Guides and Apprenticeship programmes for Vocational Training Institutes, to Apprenticeships and to the Validation System for Apprenticeships.

Within the framework of the Operational Programme HRDELL other key actions are also funded, such as: a) Programmes aiming at linking training with work-based learning and occupation in leading-edge sectors of the Greek economy which lead to validation and b) Training vouchers for the unemployed in sectors of economic activity where occupation is guaranteed.

11. Key decision-makers and relevant stakeholders in the field of adult education²⁷

At top level, the responsibility for adult education and training is distributed mainly between 2 ministries: the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for formal and non-formal adult education, lifelong learning, youth education and training, liberal education and volunteering. The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning, falling under the Ministry of Education, is the executive body of Lifelong Learning in Greece pursuant law 3879/2010. The General Secretariat's mission is to plan the public lifelong learning policy, to formulate relevant rules, to elaborate the respective national programme and to supervise its implementation, to coordinate, evaluate and support the National Network of Lifelong Learning, supervise and manage the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training to Employment. In this framework, it cooperates with all the management bodies and the Lifelong Learning service providers in order to create a single coherent framework for the provision of high-quality Lifelong Learning services directly accessible to all citizens. Those services will be certified and interlinked through a formal, informal and non-formal educational and training system of the country. At the same time, the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning cooperates with the competent European bodies to harmonise our country with modern LLL policies promoted by the EU and other international organisations, such as the OECD and the UNESCO. Meanwhile, the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning is responsible for the design and operation of specific training and adult education structures. Moreover, according to Law 4186/2013, the General Secretariat for

²⁷ EURYDICE, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/distribution-responsibilities-32_en

Vocational Training, Training and Lifelong Learning is the body responsible for monitoring and developing the educational framework for public and private non-formal education providers. Its responsibilities include the development of a Regulation which is ratified by the Minister of Education. The Regulation regulates, inter alia, issues relating to quality assurance procedures and criteria, the structure evaluation and review, as well as administration and teaching transparency issues.

There are a number of bodies and organisations that operate as legal entities of public and/or private law and answer to the Ministry of Education. Two main bodies that are supervised by the Ministry of Education that should be mentioned are the following:

- The Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (INEDIVIM) which implements actions for lifelong learning, mobility, innovation, and entrepreneurship schemes for young adults. It supports initiatives that encounter urgent social needs at the local and regional level. It is appointed as the second national agency for the implementation and monitoring of the Erasmus+ programme for youth and the European Solidarity Corps.
- The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP). The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) constitutes the competent body for studies certification in adults' education institutions. EOPPEP was established under Law 4115/2013 as the successor entity of the merger of the National Qualification Certification Organisation (EOPP), the National Accreditation Centre for Lifelong Learning (EKEPIS) and the National Centre for Vocational Guidance (EKEP). It develops and implements an integrated national certification system of non-formal education and provides the scientific support of Vocational Guidance and Counselling services in Greece. Moreover, EOPPEP is responsible for the elaboration of the National Qualifications Framework and its equivalence to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Within its powers, EOPPEP promoted and completed the development of the National Qualifications Framework, providing the basis for the classification - at its levels - of all titles issued by the Greek educational system. The Hellenic Qualifications Framework sets incentives for the development of lifelong learning and the updating of knowledge, competencies and abilities of the country's manpower, like linking programmes of non-formal education with the formal education system via modular and certified learning programmes, granting special training leaves for the participation in lifelong learning programmes, introducing individual training accounts with the participation of both employers and employees, introducing individual employee training time accounts for the attendance of lifelong learning and training programmes, linking the evaluation of lifelong learning bodies with their funding.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for the policies that prevent and tackle unemployment and those that address the social integration of vulnerable groups. To this end, it provides initial and continuing vocational education and training, apprenticeships, as well as guidance. The main body under the supervision of this Ministry that is involved in adult education and lifelong learning activities is the Labour Force Employment Agency (OAED). This body is developing active labour market policies and adult continuing vocational training programmes for the unemployed and employees in companies. For this reason, OAED has set a subsidy called LAEK (Account for Employment and Vocational Training). It is meant for all training programmes offered to employees. Each year the OAED generates the LAEK 0,24% subsidy from the employers. The subsidy enables companies

to organise training programmes for their staff. This is achieved through collaborations and partnerships between OAED and private sector stakeholders, employers, unions and NGOs. Plus, the OAED is implementing initial vocational education programmes. The latter are combined with internships within the apprenticeship system of vocational schools.

At a lower level, other stakeholders involved in the field of adult education and lifelong learning are those bodies that provide such services (see “Key providers”). Among them, Municipalities, for example, have the ability to decide on and organise the educational and training programs that they wish to implement in their region. This enables the process of selecting educational programs to be reversed, as it is possible to first investigate the educational needs of citizens and then ‘translate’ the needs into learning programmes. Municipalities have the option to open and operate **Lifelong Learning Centres** which will implement general adult education programmes with learning activities taking place at the national and local level. National programmes selected by municipalities reflect the National and European policies in adult lifelong learning issues pertaining to themes such as Economy – Entrepreneurship, Quality of life – Environment, New Technologies, Language and Communication, Social Skills and Actions, Culture and Art and Vulnerable Social Group Programmes. Local programmes proposed by municipalities are based on local needs and aim to foster residents' economic, social, cultural and personal development.

12. General recommendations for practitioners supporting persons with disabilities in adult education

There are specific requirements that need to be met to effectively support persons with disabilities in adult education. Such requirements include well-trained staff, adequate funding, accessible buildings and infrastructure, adapted educational material, etc. Requirements and delivery should be different depending on disability. Flexible learning pathways and learner-centred methods are necessary. The learner should be encouraged to participate in the development of the course. At the same time, some changes in teaching methods, if made, would correspond to the needs of other target groups. For example, simplified language and less focus on written language could help not only learners with special educational needs, but also migrants or older people²⁸.

It is undoubtful that practitioners supporting persons with disabilities in adult education need to be provided with the necessary means and support to be able to cope with the challenges that they face in their work. Therefore, bodies responsible for the development and implementation of adult education policies and systems should also take into consideration the need for improvements that will have a positive impact both on adult trainers and adult trainees with disabilities. In this respect, some issues to be taken into consideration for improvements are the following:

- Teaching methods and materials should take into account the specific needs and learning approaches of adults with disabilities. Intended learning outcomes should be explicit. In addition, adults must be

²⁸ Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)

2017. *Discussion Summary: How to improve adult learning for people with disabilities?* <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/8120-default.genres.article-19987-1-10-20190218.pdf>

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able to draw on learning support resources such as guidance, literacy provision and the development of studying skills as required.

- The professional development of the people working in adult learning is a vital determinant of the quality of adult learning. There are many educational and professional routes to becoming an adult learning practitioner and the profession is not always recognised within formal career structures. Compared with other educational subsystems, adult learning is characterised by high percentages of part-time staff (and people working on a voluntary basis), who may have few career prospects and are frequently hourly-paid. Social partners should become involved in the recognition of competences of adult learning personnel.
- Improving the delivery of adult learning is essential to raise participation. Measures to promote effective delivery include availability of learning sites and local facilities; provision of blended learning models and open and distance learning services for those in remote areas; information and guidance; tailored programmes and flexible teaching arrangements. To this end, the existing quality assurance framework needs to be revised at three stages (before, during and after provision), based on solid indicators.
- When training programmes for practitioners are offered by private bodies, tuition fees become a barrier and prevent many prospective practitioners and adult educators from attending programmes that would allow them to obtain skills for better supporting persons with disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary that such programmes are affordable and subsidised by the state.
- Adult practitioners supporting persons with disabilities have declared a number of stressors referred to the difficulties of teaching persons with disabilities due to the lack of resources and equipment, their feelings of increased responsibility for their pupils' wellbeing and education, the general lack of support from the government regarding their occupational status, a shortage of time at school, and discrimination. Trainers may feel inadequate when they need to balance their responsibilities with shortage of resources and equipment (e.g.: libraries, supportive technologies, resource banks) in order to meet the different needs of each trainee, which may lead to high levels of stress and low self-esteem²⁹. Therefore, practitioners supporting persons with disabilities in adult education should be provided with training programmes on stress management. Specific measures and adjustments should be implemented by the responsible authorities and providers of training programmes addressed to adult educators in order to reduce these relevant sources of stress. Such trainings could help practitioners become more effective in their own work settings. In addition, the curriculum content of training programmes for adult trainers requires reappraisal and updates to include the disability dimension in adult education.

References to a number of challenges faced by adult educators in supporting persons with disabilities as well as proposals for overcoming them are included in a Handbook produced by NCDP in 2013 titled "Development of policy on disability issues: Handbook for Adult Trainers". Some of its contents are presented below³⁰.

²⁹ Antoniou A-S, Polychroni F., Kotroni C, *WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN GREECE: TEACHERS' STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES*. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION Vol 24, No 1, 2009. https://www.academia.edu/26742142/WORKING_WITH_STUDENTS_WITH_SPECIAL_EDUCATIONAL_NEEDS_IN_GREECE_TEACHERS_STRESSORS_AND_COPING_STRATEGIES

³⁰ NCDP, Xatzipetrou Anthi (2013). *Σχεδιασμός πολιτικής σε θέματα αναπηρίας: εγχειρίδιο εκπαιδευτή ενηλίκων (Development of policy on disability issues: Handbook for Adult Trainers)* Available only in Greek at: <https://www.esamea.gr/help/39-publications/books-studies/902-ekpaideytiko-egxeiridio-no-8-sxediasmos-politikis-se-themata-anapirias>

During the educational process, adult educators must promote the idea of equally integrating persons from vulnerable groups into society. Adult educators have to address a number of important issues related to their interaction with trainees with disabilities, such as stereotypes and prejudices, negative experiences of the learners, the greater need to define the role of the adult educator, as well as the lack of training on specific issues related to disability. Against this background, adult educators, especially in the case of persons with disabilities, are asked to address a number of key challenges such as:

- Get acquainted with the profile of the team with which they collaborate and diagnose particular educational needs.
- Request from the body that implements the educational programme (in the event that the body has not provided for it) information on the categories of disability to which the trainees belong, in order to adapt the training process to their needs, maintaining confidentiality and safeguarding the confidentiality of sensitive data and information. Trainees should also be given the opportunity to discuss their specific needs. In addition to paying close attention to the unique characteristics of persons with disabilities, it is equally important to keep in mind that these persons have the same needs and desires as those without disabilities. That means that they have the same need for challenge, acceptance and success. They do not want to be stereotyped and discriminated against because of their disability.
- Highlight the group's shared experiences. Sharing experiences, collective rather than individual, and the effort to exchange views on them can be used as a means to: (a) identify the trainees' common needs; and (b) highlight the challenges and difficulties collectively faced by adults with disabilities.
- Gradually introduce methods and techniques that trainees are not familiar with. Persons with disabilities have developed their own models of learning, which may come from limited educational experiences or even experiences from specific learning environments. Participatory teaching techniques may not be familiar to trainees, making it difficult for them to manage and respond to them. Trainees should be gradually encouraged to work in pairs or small groups. This is an effective way of managing a classroom with learners with different disabilities.
- Create a climate of trust and teamwork. A climate of trust and cooperation can be achieved when the programme addresses the real needs of the learners. Therefore, the adult trainer needs to: (a) recognise learners' cognitive deficiencies; (b) adapt the programme material as much as possible to meet real needs and (c) create a climate of cooperation. Creating a climate of cooperation in practice means trusting one's trainer and co-learners.
- Be trained on issues related to team dynamics and how to resolve conflicts. It should be realised that the learning process in socially vulnerable groups, and especially in persons with disabilities, is more influenced by personal assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices than in other groups. Even if stereotypes and prejudices are not manifested during training, they may be susceptible. The adult trainer education undoubtedly contributes to a deeper understanding of the needs of the target group, the adult educator's assumptions about the target group, and the adult educator's expectations of his or her role. However, an adult educator, even if they do not have special training in the above issues, can promote equity in their relationships with the trainees, treating them not as a special individual or a special group, but as a group seeking its rights to equal treatment.

The educational process is a two-way relationship between the trainer and the trainees. In the case of persons with disabilities, this two-way relationship acquires additional qualitative characteristics due to the particularities of communication and participation that the trainer has to work out. Gaining knowledge of this process will help the trainer overcome initial reflection and potential embarrassment. The prerequisite for the functioning and utilisation of the two-way relationship is to treat the learner with respect to their personality, based on common sense and with a focus on knowledge, critical thinking and self-efficacy. In general, the pace of the educational process must be adapted to the heterogeneity of the audience (educational level, age, gender, etc.). In the case of persons with disabilities, there are additional factors of heterogeneity due to disability category and degree. In addition to the general observation on the pace of the educational process, below are some suggestions per disability category to facilitate the participation of the trainees in the learning process:

- **Suggestions for supporting deaf / hard of hearing learners:** speak directly to the trainee and not to the trainee's sign language interpreter; during classroom discussions make sure that no more than one person is speaking at a time; when a trainee asks a question repeat the question before answering; loss of visual contact can mean loss of information for deaf or hard of hearing persons. If trainees do not use sign language interpreters, make sure they have eye contact with you before you begin the presentation. Avoid giving information while handing out papers or writing on the board; ensure that deaf and hard of hearing trainees sit in the front of the classroom so they can have both visual and auditory signals; use subtitles when viewing videos; if the classroom is dark for viewing, make sure that the trainee can see his or her interpreter.
- **Suggestions for supporting blind / partially sighted learners:** make sure they sit in the front of the classroom to hear clearly what you are presenting and to see (in the case of partially sighted) as much as possible; when using a projector, the font of your presentation should be large; if they wish, let the trainee record; avoid references that cannot be understood by blind learners (e.g.: "This chart summarizes what we said about the statistics"); do not worry about using words and phrases that refer to vision (e.g.: "See you later!") since such expressions are commonly used, and most people with visual disabilities do not find it offensive; read everything you write on your board or slides and describe verbal objects and processes as much as possible; make comparisons and proportions using familiar objects that are not dependent on prior visual knowledge.
- **Suggestions for supporting learners with motor disabilities:** persons with weakness in the upper extremities may not be able to raise their hands to participate in a classroom discussion. Make eye contact with trainees and invite them when they declare they want to contribute to the discussion; the wheelchair is part of the trainee's "personal space". No one should, unless asked, lean on the wheelchair or push it; whenever you are talking one-on-one with a wheelchair trainee, you should sit so that the trainee does not have to look up; a special seating arrangement may be necessary to meet the needs of wheelchair trainees.
- **Suggestions for supporting learners with speech problems:** in communicating with trainees with speech problems, resist the temptation to show that you have understood, while in fact you have not. Persons with speech problems are used to being asked to repeat, so do not be afraid to offend



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them if you ask them to "say it again"; if the trainee is accompanied by a personal assistant in the classroom, direct your observations and questions to the trainee and not the assistant.

