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EU MONITORING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities

Access to Education
and Employment

GREECE

Monitoring Report

ΕΛΛΑΔΑ

Τα Δικαιώματα των Ατόμων
με Νοητική Καθυστέρηση:

Η Πρόσβαση στην Εκπαίδευση και
στην Εργασία

Έκθεση Παρακολούθησης

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List of Acronyms

EEEEK	Special Vocational Education and Training Laboratories
ESAEA	National Association of People with Disabilities
KDAY	Diagnostic Evaluation and Support Centre
OAED	Human Resources Employment Organisation
POSGameA	Panhellenic Federation of Societies of Parents and Guardians of Disabled People
TEE	Special Technical Vocational Educational Schools

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Preface

The **EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP)** of the Open Society Institute monitors human rights and rule of law issues throughout Europe, jointly with local NGOs and civil society organisations. EUMAP reports emphasise the importance of civil society monitoring and encourage a direct dialogue between governmental and non-governmental actors on issues related to human rights and the rule of law. In addition to its reports on the Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities, EUMAP has released monitoring reports focusing on Minority Protection, Judicial Independence and Capacity, Corruption and Anti-corruption Policy, and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Reports on the Regulation and Independence of the Broadcast Media are also forthcoming in 2005. EUMAP is currently preparing reports on Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma; publication is expected in 2006.

EUMAP reports are elaborated by independent experts from the countries being monitored. They are intended to highlight the significance of human rights issues and the key role of civil society in promoting governmental compliance with human rights standards throughout an expanding Europe. All EUMAP reports include detailed recommendations targeted at the national and international levels. Directed at Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders, the recommendations aim to ensure that the report findings directly impact on policy in the areas being monitored.

The present reports have been prepared in collaboration with the **Open Society Mental Health Initiative (MHI)**, part of OSI's Public Health Programs. MHI seeks to ensure that people with mental disabilities (mental health problems and/or intellectual disabilities) are able to live as equal citizens in the community and to participate in society with full respect for their human rights. MHI promotes the social inclusion of people with mental disabilities by supporting the development of community-based alternatives to institutionalisation and by actively engaging in policy-based advocacy.

Throughout Europe people with intellectual disabilities still face serious stigma, prejudice and significant barriers to realising their fundamental human rights. Discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities is deeply rooted and widespread, standing in the way of positive change. Providing real access to education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities is key to ensuring their social inclusion, and enabling them to live and work in the community as equal citizens. The EUMAP reports focus specifically on these two areas because of their importance to people with intellectual disabilities and because of the existence of international standards, and national law and policy, relating to these areas.

Monitoring of the rights of people with intellectual disabilities was based on a detailed methodology (available at www.eumap.org), intended to ensure a comparative approach

across the countries monitored. The reports cover the eight Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries that joined the EU in May 2004 (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), Bulgaria and Romania, expected to join in 2007, one candidate country (Croatia), and three older EU member States (Greece, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom).

The preparation of reports on both member and non-member States highlights the fact that international human rights standards apply equally, and provides an opportunity to comment on general trends in the development and the policy application of these standards. The States selected represent a geographical spread and illustrate a spectrum of policy, practice and implementation.

Reports on each of the 14 countries monitored, plus an overview report resuming the main findings across all the countries, will be published separately. First drafts of each of the country reports were reviewed at national roundtable meetings. These were organised in order to invite comments on the draft from Government officials, civil society organisations, self-advocates, parents, and international organisations. The final report reproduced in this volume underwent significant revision based on the comments and critique received during this process. EUMAP assumes full responsibility for its final content.

Foreword

This report is one of a series of 14 country reports prepared by the Open Society Institute's EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program and the Open Society Mental Health Initiative. The report presents an overview of the opportunities and challenges facing people with intellectual disabilities in accessing education and employment. It provides an important contribution to research on this group, one of the most vulnerable groups throughout Europe.

The initiative of producing this report fulfils important objectives. There is a clear need for comprehensive studies based on reliable research about the situation of people with intellectual disabilities in Europe. Without reliable information, the strategies and policies targeting this particular group of people are often inadequate in terms of meeting their real needs. The monitoring underlying the reports also aims to provide a comparative overview on the countries analysed. The present report goes far beyond previous reports that have brought this issue to the attention of European and national decision-makers.

Presenting a wider picture, this series of reports provides a thorough analysis of the situation of people with intellectual disabilities in their access to education and employment in eight new EU Member States (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), two accession countries (Bulgaria and Romania) and one candidate country (Croatia). To give a broader view of practice across Europe, Greece, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have also been studied. The conclusions of the series of reports indicate that people with intellectual disabilities in Europe continue to face significant barriers as far as real access to education and employment is concerned. Discrimination also remains a major issue, despite measures taken at the national level and within a larger European context.

The reports also stand for the importance of civil society monitoring and the overall involvement of different stakeholders in dialogue regarding the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. A local expert in each country prepared the monitoring report, while local NGOs were involved throughout the monitoring process, providing the basis for broad consultation wherever possible. A central goal of this monitoring is to promote greater awareness and discussion of the issues at stake for people with intellectual disabilities at the local, national, and international levels.

Across the countries monitored, common problems continue to block access to education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities. In many countries, data on the situation of this group is extremely limited or insufficiently disaggregated, making it difficult for Governments to develop policy tailored to their needs. What data there is, shows that while integration of children with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools is generally increasing, a more fundamental process towards

inclusion, as presented in the 1994 Salamanca Declaration on Special Needs Education, has made little headway. Many children throughout the region are still segregated in special schools or denied an education altogether, leaving little hope that they will be able to find jobs as adults. In most countries monitored, there is only the most basic support for the transition from education to employment.

Existing incentive schemes in many countries, particularly hiring quotas, have not been successful in increasing the number of people with intellectual disabilities who have entered the work force. More specifically targeted programmes must be developed to meet the needs of this group. Throughout Europe, NGOs have piloted effective projects offering supported employment to people with intellectual disabilities, providing assistance such as job coaches, specialised job training and individually tailored supervision. However, this approach has not yet been adopted as Government policy and therefore the opportunities it offers cannot be extended to a much larger group of people.

The reports highlight numerous obstacles that people with intellectual disabilities face in accessing education and employment in various countries across Europe. Improved legislation still needs to be adopted and implemented nationally as well as at the EU level. Existing models of good practice in inclusive education and supported employment should be replicated on a more extensive scale. These reports should help domestic and European decision-makers to develop effective policies ensuring the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into society.

From the perspective of Inclusion Europe, the European Association of People with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families, this report makes a very important contribution to the present discussion on access to education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities. We only can encourage local, national and European decision-makers, service providers and disability and social NGOs to consider and follow the recommendations developed in this report.

Geert Freyhoff

Director
Inclusion Europe

I. Executive Summary and Recommendations

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

Throughout Europe, people with intellectual disabilities¹ face major stigma and prejudice and are confronted with significant barriers to realising their fundamental human rights. Discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities is deeply rooted and widespread, standing in the way of positive change. Providing real access to education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities is critical to ensuring that they can live and work in the community as equal citizens. There is a strong link between education and employment: without access to adequate education, people with intellectual disabilities cannot secure meaningful employment. This denial of access leads to life long dependency, poverty and social exclusion, adding to the stigma of intellectual disability. This monitoring report focuses specifically on the areas of education and employment, because of their importance to people with intellectual disabilities and because of the existence of both international standards and national legislation that specifically address them.

The situation of people with intellectual disabilities in Greece has improved significantly in the past 25 years, particularly as many of the large residential institutions have been closed or scaled down, and more community-based services have developed. However, access to education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities remains limited. Greece has adopted legislation and policies that emphasise the importance of providing access to education and employment for people with disabilities. The country has taken important steps forward in lowering the levels of institutionalisation and increasing community care options. Nevertheless, most people with intellectual disabilities remain excluded from mainstream school and employment options. The lack of programmes specifically for people with *severe* and *profound* intellectual disabilities leaves this group with very little access to services of any kind. Some regions of the country, particularly rural areas and the islands, do not have the necessary structures and resources to meet the needs of people with all levels of intellectual disabilities. Without greater focus on law and policy in these key areas, people with intellectual disabilities will remain greatly restricted in their participation and inclusion in society. In the first half of 2003, the European Year of Disability, Greece held the European Union (EU) presidency and took the lead in promoting equal treatment for people with disabilities. The Government must now take concrete

* N.B. the data in the Greek report is valid as of June 2005.

¹ The term “intellectual disability” (also described as “learning disability” or “mental retardation”) here refers to a lifelong condition, usually present from birth or which develops before the age of 18. It is a permanent condition that is characterised by significantly lower than average intellectual ability and results in significant functional limitations in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills.

steps in Greece itself to realise this goal for those with intellectual disabilities, people for whom social inclusion is too often only a promise and not a reality.

Background

Greece has ratified most of the major international conventions with provisions relating to access to education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities, but it has yet to ratify the Revised European Social Charter or Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Greek Constitution establishes the term “people with disabilities” and guarantees the right to measures for their inclusion in society, in line with Greece’s obligations as a signatory to the major international instruments offering protection to people with disabilities. Although measures to promote equal treatment have been proposed in order to comply with EU directives, this legislation has not yet been adopted, and the European Commission has indicated it will bring legal action against Greece for failure to transpose the two anti-discrimination directives.

There is no unified definition of intellectual disability in Greek legislation. Various terms and definitions, some of them stigmatising, are used to refer to people with intellectual disabilities in Greek law and policy. Internationally recognised standards – including the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition – have been incorporated into relevant law, and these standards are generally used in the diagnosis of intellectual disability by medical professionals. The procedures for diagnosis and assessment of disability, both for educational and employment purposes, are extensive and time-consuming; parents have called for these processes to be streamlined. Several forms of guardianship exist under Greek law. Plenary guardianship appears to be the most prevalent option, but it is difficult to be certain, because there is no statistical data regarding the numbers of people with intellectual disabilities who are placed under guardianship. Overall, there is very little statistical information regarding either people with intellectual disabilities or the services available to this population. Census data significantly underestimates the total number of people with intellectual disabilities at around 150,000. Lack of data severely curtails the possibilities of developing informed, appropriate policy for people with intellectual disabilities, and the Government should make the regular collection of data a priority. There has been an important process of deinstitutionalisation over the last decade, but up to 10,000 people with intellectual disabilities are thought to remain in institutional care.

Access to education

The Greek Constitution ensures the right to free education for all citizens, and it also obliges the State to provide support to students with special needs. The Greek educational system includes both mainstream and special schools. It prioritises mainstreaming, at least in theory. Up to the age of 22, people with special educational needs can receive an education in a variety of schools using adapted programmes. In practice, education for children with intellectual disabilities is offered in both

mainstream and special schools. In mainstream schools, “inclusion classes” are often organised for children with intellectual disabilities, who spend only part of the time integrated with other students. The assessment procedure for placing children in school has been criticised as having inconsistent results and being poorly coordinated among the relevant services.

In 2001, a new institution, the Diagnostic Evaluation and Support Centre, or KDAY, was established, to provide and coordinate services for children with special educational needs at the local level. The KDAY is the main body responsible for assessing intellectual disability and determining placement in the appropriate school. However, only half of the KDAYs are operational, and those that do function have not met parents’ expectations, particularly with regard to early intervention. Because KDAY centres are not established throughout the country, many families must travel long distances or endure lengthy waiting periods to have their children assessed. The inadequate number of centres, and their current focus on the school-age population, has led to a near-total lack of multidisciplinary early intervention services in most areas, forcing parents to find private alternatives, often at great expense. A KDAY is also expected to draft educational and integration recommendations for each child, but parents have expressed concern that these reports are difficult to understand and often give insufficient information about the service options available. A child’s age and level of disability determine which school the child will attend.

While Greece takes part in the European Agency for Development in Special Education, as well as using EU funding for projects related to the education of people with intellectual disabilities, the country’s policy in this area does not yet meet the needs of the population. A particular problem is the lack of any programmes for the education of children with *severe* and *profound* intellectual disabilities. Parents and advocates have called for the establishment of a stronger coordination body, which could help ensure that the available educational services are more accessible. The addition of far-reaching awareness programmes for teachers, students and families would also be a significant means of reducing misconceptions and prejudice against people with intellectual disabilities, both in the educational context and in wider society.

The Greek educational system takes an inclusive approach in principle, offering a range of options to children with intellectual disabilities. In practice, however, there are very few children with intellectual disabilities in the education system – only 2,859 in 2002–2003. Many students with *mild* to *moderate* intellectual disabilities are placed in special schools, while most children with more severe intellectual disabilities have little access to education at all. Although materials and adapted curricula have been developed, the individual needs of students with intellectual disabilities are not met in the classroom.

While mainstreaming is, by law, the preferred approach in Greece, the necessary support to facilitate inclusion is often lacking. Although officially, only 1,000 children with intellectual disabilities are mainstreamed, it is likely that, in areas where there are no services or facilities for children with special needs, many more children with

intellectual disabilities study in mainstream schools without any support. Where resources are available, mainstreaming has been highly effective. Parents have expressed concern that special schools place children with highly diverse needs and abilities in a single class, and that staff in special schools are not prepared to teach each child according to individual ability. Moreover, special schools run on a shortened daily schedule, so children do not receive a full day of instruction and training.

Home schooling is available for children whose health does not permit them to attend school. However, in practice very few children in Greece actually receive lessons at home. Because the law does not specifically include intellectual disability as a grounds for home schooling, there may be an understanding that this form of education is not available for children with intellectual disabilities, except as an expensive private option. Residential care institutions generally are not differentiated between children and adults, and there is very little information as to what, if any, educational opportunities there are in such institutions. NGOs offer a number of much-needed educational services, including training for children with *severe* and *profound* intellectual disabilities and assistance for people with intellectual disabilities who are making the transition from education to employment. The Government should examine ways in which these successful programmes can be supported and expanded to reach the people who currently do not have access to such services.

Transition from education to employment

Vocational training is available through a number of different facilities, including private vocational laboratories. These private facilities often provide a range of services in addition to pre-professional training, and they aim at building skills for independent living. However, the rate of employment for graduates of these programmes remains low. The Government must do more to facilitate the transition from education to employment. Although people with intellectual disabilities greatly benefit from adult and continuing education, there is no State-organised system of “refresher” courses or other training aimed at skill retention and development.

Access to employment

The Constitution specifically guarantees the right to work for people with disabilities, and draft legislation has been elaborated to bring anti-discrimination law into line with relevant EU directives, though this legislation has not yet been adopted. Assessment procedures are bureaucratic and tedious, and they must be repeated, even where a permanent disability is diagnosed. The teams conducting assessments of working capacity are primarily medical specialists, who, in some cases, are not trained to meaningfully assess an individual’s ability to work. Disability benefits are correlated to the level of disability, as well as other factors. Even though these benefits provide an inadequate level of support on their own, they are reduced if other sources of income exceed a given threshold. The lengthy procedures to re-qualify for benefits also discourage people with disabilities from seeking employment.

Greece has received support from the EU to develop programmes encouraging the employment of people with disabilities in general. However, local structures established to support the integration of vulnerable groups have not proven effective in enhancing employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. Other Government measures, including a quota system that requires State and local authorities to hire people with disabilities, have also had only limited impact on the employment of people with intellectual disabilities, because the quotas are filled by people with other forms of disability. A number of new incentive programmes have been adopted recently, and these may prove more effective.

Available statistical information suggests that very few people with intellectual disabilities are employed, either through incentive programmes or on the open market. No legislation or policy to promote supported employment has been elaborated.² The existing projects offering support to people with intellectual disabilities in the workplace are operated by NGOs and can serve only a fraction of the population that could benefit. The ERGAXIA centre, which is enabling 100 people with intellectual disabilities to gain employment on the open market, offers one example of good practice in supported employment. However, Government backing is required to reproduce such models on a wider scale. Sheltered workshops, also established by NGOs, do offer training and occupation to people with intellectual disabilities, but these are segregated workplaces that do not promote social inclusion. Without greater institutional support, there are few opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to make the transition from sheltered work to the open market.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

General recommendations

International standards

1. Greece should ratify the Revised European Social Charter and bind itself to Article 15, on the right of persons with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community. It should also ratify Protocol 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which entered into force on 1 April 2005.

Legislation

2. The Government should immediately take the necessary steps to establish a specialised body to promote equal treatment, as required by the EU Race

² Supported employment is an employment option that facilitates competitive work in integrated work settings for people with disabilities. It provides assistance such as job coaches, transportation, assistive technology, specialised job training and individually tailored supervision.

Equality Directive (2000/43/EC), and it should extend the mandate of this body to cover all grounds of discrimination, including disability.

Data collection

3. The National Statistical Institute, the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and the Human Resources Employment Organisation should develop and maintain a national-level database on the number of people with intellectual disabilities and the number and type of services provided for this population. The data on people with intellectual disabilities should be sorted according to age, gender, degree of disability and employment status.

Institutional care

4. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare should immediately take steps to close down the remaining asylum-type institutions for people with intellectual disabilities and people with a dual diagnosis within a reasonable time period.

Community-based services

5. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, and the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection should establish and develop decentralised community-based services, as a key component of the deinstitutionalisation process.
6. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should take steps to ensure that the KDAY system of diagnostic centres has the resources and personnel needed to provide early intervention services across the country.

Diagnosis and assessment

7. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, and the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection should establish assessment units and pre-vocational training centres in all regions, and increase the number of KDAY centres according to the population's needs.
8. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, and the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection should ensure that mobile support teams staffed by an appropriate number of specialised experts, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, doctors and special educators, meet existing needs, particularly in the islands and rural areas.
9. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, and the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection should enhance cooperation with schools, teachers and parents, to support the

social and educational integration of children with intellectual disabilities through support to the assessment units and prevocational training facilities.

10. To minimise problems and avert inappropriate practices, the Government should continue to develop inspection, supervision and evaluation policies that help ensure the quality of care provided by psychological health and KDAY centres. These policies should consider not only the evaluation feedback of expert evaluators, but also the views of service users.

Public awareness

11. The Government should develop public awareness programmes to reduce stigma, prejudice and discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities, because negative attitudes in the community can hinder access to education and employment for people with learning disabilities.
12. The Government should develop specialised awareness programmes particularly aimed at employees in health and social care services, teachers and State administrators, to raise awareness about the specific needs of people with intellectual disabilities.
13. The Government should develop awareness programmes for parents and families of people with *severe* or *profound* intellectual disabilities, to prevent the isolation of these people at home or in institutions, to contribute to the recognition of their rights and to enhance their ability to participate in education and community life.
14. The Government should establish specialised information offices within existing citizens' service centres, to inform parents who have children with intellectual disabilities or people with intellectual disabilities themselves about the current legislation and their legal rights, and to direct these people to the current services provided by relevant centres and organisations.

Coordination

15. The Government should establish a high-level body with the authority to coordinate policy development and implementation among the relevant ministries and organisations, in order to provide people with intellectual disabilities with better representation and protection of their rights.

Recommendations on education

Data collection

16. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should establish and regularly update a database on special schools, educators and other specialists. The database should also contain data on students with disabilities,

including those with intellectual disabilities, sorted according to their age, gender, ethnicity, type of disability and type of school in which they study. Furthermore, this database should also include information on the children who do not attend school at all.

Implementation of legislation

17. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should take steps to ensure that school attendance, which is obligatory for all children, is also enforced for children with intellectual disabilities, who are often kept segregated or confined at home.

Inclusive educational policy

18. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should make the promotion and development of full inclusion in mainstream schools a priority in education policy, to provide the opportunity for all children, regardless of their disabilities or differences, to learn together, and to build solidarity between children with intellectual disabilities and their peers.
19. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should issue specific regulations on home schooling for people with intellectual disabilities. The ministry should also develop appropriate standards, and allocate all necessary material and human resources, to make home schooling a genuine educational option for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

Resources and support

20. The Government should allocate sufficient funding to supply mainstream schools with all necessary human and technical resources, such as audio-visual and other teaching materials, and counselling support structures for children with intellectual disabilities.
21. The programmes that are implemented with the support of European subsidies and actions should be designed and selected with the direction of the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. It is also important to ensure that these programmes continue, and that they maintain their quality after European funding has concluded.
22. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should seek support to increase the number of secondary schools that are open to students with intellectual disabilities.

Teacher training

23. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should ensure that there is sufficient funding for teacher training. It is necessary to increase the number of teachers who are trained to provide individualised educational

support to students with intellectual disabilities, to promote social integration and acceptance of these students.

24. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should ensure that there is continuous supervision, education and specialised training for educational staff at all levels of education, and especially for those who work in secondary schools.

Curriculum

25. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should ensure that the National Education Policy includes a solid, specialised educational programme for students with intellectual disabilities. This programme should be differentiated according to students' needs and degree of disability.
26. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs should develop flexible curricula that are better adapted to provide all children with more developmental and prevocational activities and opportunities. The curricula should be developed according to children's abilities and needs, rather than focusing on academic achievement.

Education for people with severe and profound intellectual disabilities

27. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare should cooperate to develop day centres offering continuous education, vocational rehabilitation and psychosocial support, to promote the educational and social integration of people with severe or profound intellectual disabilities, a population that has been largely underserved.

Recommendations on employment

Legislation

28. The Government should propose legislation to promote the development of supported and sheltered employment through incentives, tax exemptions and support for the sale of products produced by people with intellectual disabilities. Priority should be given to programmes developing a supported employment system that meets the needs of people with intellectual disabilities.
29. The Government should develop and implement a legislative framework for the protection and promotion of employment rights of people with intellectual disabilities according to the level of their capacity and abilities.

Capacity assessment

30. The First Level Health Committees and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare should reform the assessment process for determining working capacity, to ensure that individual capacity and potential are taken into consideration, instead of using a process that relies on IQ levels or other categorisations.

Quota system

31. The Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, and the Human Resources Support Administration should establish a specific requirement for employers to hire people with intellectual disabilities, as part of the existing quota system for people with disabilities.

Social welfare benefits

32. The Government should raise the income threshold at which social welfare benefits are reduced or withdrawn to a level equal to the minimum wage determined by the General National Collective Employment Contract.
33. The Ministry of Employment and Social Protection should take steps to streamline the process that former recipients must go through to re-qualify for benefits when they fall below the income threshold.

Supported Employment

34. The Government should develop a legal and policy framework for supported employment that includes the allocation of appropriate resources to enable people with intellectual disabilities to find work on the open market.

Public awareness

35. The Government should develop specialised awareness-raising programmes that inform employees in public positions, and trade unions, about the vocational capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities.

II. Country Overview and Background

1. LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Greece has ratified most of the major international conventions with provisions relating to access to education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities, but it has yet to ratify the Revised European Social Charter or Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Greek Constitution establishes the term “people with disabilities” and guarantees the right to measures for their inclusion in society, in line with Greece’s obligations as a signatory to the major international instruments offering protection to people with disabilities. Although measures to promote equal treatment have been proposed in order to comply with European Union (EU) directives, this legislation has not yet been adopted, and the European Commission has indicated it will bring legal action against Greece for failure to transpose the two anti-discrimination directives.

1.1 International standards and obligations

Greece is party to most major human rights conventions, including those with provisions relating to the rights of people with disabilities. Greece acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)³ and the Optional Protocol to the CCPR on 5 August 1997.⁴ Greece also acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) on 16 August 1985.⁵ Greece ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 1 May 1993.⁶

Greece ratified the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) on 28 November 1953,⁷ and has signed but not yet ratified Protocol No. 12 to the ECHR.⁸ Greece ratified the European Social Charter

³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), 23 March 1976, 999 U.N.T.S. 171.

⁴ Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 23 March 1976, U.N.T.S. 302.

⁵ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), 3 January 1976, 993 U.N.T.S. 3.

⁶ International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 2 September 1990, 44 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (1989).

⁷ European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), 3 September 1953, E.T.S. 005, available on the Council of Europe website at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/005.htm> (accessed 22 October 2004).

⁸ Protocol 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, E.T.S. 177, to enter into force on 1 April 2005, available at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/177.htm> (accessed 22 October 2004).

(ESC) including Article 15, in June 1984. Greece signed the Revised European Social Charter (RESC) on 3 May 1996 but has yet to ratify it.⁹

Greece has ratified all of the eight fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO)¹⁰ and has also ratified the ILO Convention Concerning Vocational Guidance and Vocational Training in the Development of Human Resources, 1975 (No. 142) and the ILO Convention Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, 1983 (No. 159).

1.2 Domestic legislation

The Constitution of Greece generally provides that the respect and protection of human rights constitutes the most prominent obligation of the State,¹¹ and that all citizens are equal in rights and obligations and shall be equal before the law.¹² In addition, the Constitution provides that all people who reside within the boundaries of the Greek State have the right to receive the ultimate protection of their life, honour and freedom, without discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, language, or religious or political beliefs. The term “people with disabilities” is also used in the Constitution. It establishes the State’s positive obligation to protect the right to special care for people with a chronic physical or mental illness or disability in general: “People with disabilities have the right to enjoy measures that ensure their autonomy, professional incorporation and participation in the social, economic and political life of the country”.¹³

Under recent legislation, individuals with disabilities have specific rights for equal treatment and opportunities in the areas of education, employment, health and social services.¹⁴ The aim of this legislation is to allow the participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic and cultural life, according to their needs

⁹ Revised European Social Charter (RESC), 1 July 1999, C.E.T.S. 163, available at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/163.htm> (accessed 22 October 2004).

¹⁰ The International Labour Organization has identified the Organization’s eight fundamental Conventions: Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour, 1930 (No. 29); Convention concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948 (No. 87); Convention concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively, 1949 (No. 98); Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, 1951 (No. 100); Convention concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour, 1957 (No. 105); Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958 (No. 111); Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973 (No. 138); Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182).

¹¹ Constitution, based on the resolution of 6 April 2001 of the seventh revisionary Parliament of Greece, art. 2, para. 1 (hereafter, Constitution).

¹² Constitution, art. 4, para. 1, 2.

¹³ Constitution, art. 21, para. 6.

¹⁴ Laws 2430/1996 on People with Special Needs (on the disability card and other provisions), 2817/2000 on Special Education and 3194/2003 on Educational Matters and other Provisions.

and abilities. Legislation is generally in line with international standards and regulations, such as the United Nations' Standard Rules for the Equalisation of Opportunities for People with Disabilities, 1993; Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam on combating discrimination; and the EU's Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 (hereafter the Employment Directive), which establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

There is no specialised body to address discrimination issues on any grounds, although the EU's Council Directive 2000/43/EC, implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin requires the designation of an independent body for the promotion of equal treatment on the basis of race or ethnicity.¹⁵ According to Greek legislation, the Ombudsman, an independent body, has a mediating role between citizens and the State, and the Ombudsman's Office is committed to intervene procedurally to protect the rights of citizens and eliminate misadministration.¹⁶ As part of transposing the Race Equality Directive into domestic law, legislation was proposed naming the Ombudsman's Office as the independent body required by Article 13 of the Directive, but as of December 2004 the law had not yet been adopted.

2. GENERAL SITUATION OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

There is no unified definition of intellectual disability in Greek legislation. Various terms and definitions, some of them stigmatising, are used to refer to people with intellectual disabilities in Greek law and policy. Internationally recognised standards have been incorporated into relevant law, and these are generally used in the diagnosis of intellectual disability by medical professionals. The procedures for diagnosis and assessment of disability, both for educational and employment purposes, are extensive and time-consuming; parents have called for these processes to be streamlined. Several forms of guardianship exist under Greek law. Plenary guardianship appears to be the most prevalent option, but it is difficult to be certain, because there is no statistical data regarding the numbers of people with intellectual disabilities who are placed under guardianship. Overall, there is very little statistical information regarding either people with intellectual disabilities or the services available to this population. Such a lack of data severely curtails the possibilities of developing informed, appropriate policy for people with intellectual disabilities, and the Government should make the

¹⁵ Council Directive 2000/43/EC (hereafter Race Equality Directive), implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, art. 13. In July 2004, the European Commission announced it would take legal action against six member States, including Greece, for failure to transpose the Race Equality Directive by the required deadline. See Commission press release IP/04/947 of 19 July 2004, available at <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/947&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (accessed 7 September 2004).

¹⁶ Law 2477/1997-FEK 59/A, on the Ombudsman and the body of Supervisors-Inspectors of Public Administration.

regular collection of data a priority. There has been an important process of deinstitutionalisation over the last decade, but up to 10,000 people with intellectual disabilities are thought to remain in institutional care.

2.1 Definitions

There is no unified legal definition of intellectual disability in Greek legislation. Intellectual disability is only one of the terms currently used in Greece, alongside older terms, such as mental retardation, or even outdated and stigmatising terms, such as “Mongoloid idiocy” in certain legal documents. The broader term “people with mental disabilities” is also used.¹⁷ However, terms frequently used in the legislative framework, as well as in statistical records referring to people with intellectual disabilities, are “individuals with disabilities” or “individuals with special educational needs”. In scientific documents, individuals with special educational needs are defined as people who present serious learning and adjustment difficulties due to sensory, physical, cognitive, emotional and/or social impairments.¹⁸

Law 2817/2000 (hereafter, Law on Special Education), which covers the education of children with special educational needs and/or chronic illnesses, does not include any definition of intellectual disability. Nevertheless, the terms that it uses are in line with the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition, (hereafter, DSM-IV);¹⁹ or the World Health Organization’s International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision, (hereafter, ICD-10).²⁰ The ICD-10 defines “mental retardation” as “a complex disturbance in the cognitive, speech, motor and social skills which leads to deviations in adaptive functioning in everyday life”. It specifies four levels of intellectual disability: *mild, moderate, severe, and profound*.²¹

2.2 Diagnosis and assessment of disability

Medical professionals and mental health practitioners are not legally obligated to use the definitions of the DSM-IV or ICD-10 for diagnosing people with intellectual disabilities (“mental retardation”), since these diagnostic manuals are not specified as a

¹⁷ S. Padiadiou, Intellectual Disability in Europe: Working Papers, Greece, March 2003, p. 68.

¹⁸ People with special educational needs are also considered to be any people in their infancy, childhood or adolescence who need special education for a certain period of time or for their entire school career, due to any other health, emotional or social factor, excluding cultural or language differences. Law 2817/2000 (hereafter Law on Special Education), art. 1, para. 1, 2.

¹⁹ American Psychiatric Association (1994). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV), Washington, DC.

²⁰ World Health Organization, International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision, 1992 (hereafter, ICD-10).

²¹ World Health Organization, *ICD-10 Guide to Mental Retardation*, WHO/MNH/96.3, Geneva, pp. 3–4.

reference in legislation. However, the majority of psychiatrists and psychologists in Greece do follow the DSM-IV and ICD-10 classification systems and use them as diagnostic tools.²² In addition, official documents issued by the interdisciplinary diagnostic teams in community mental health centres or diagnostic centres use the term “mental retardation,” accompanied with the degree of intellectual disability and sometimes the IQ level as well. The IQ level generally is not included in the assessment reports issued for educational purposes, except when this is considered essential.

There is no legal framework to specify the age at which intellectual disability is diagnosed. The diagnostic manuals used in clinical practice (ICD-10 and DSM-IV) specify that the onset of below-average intellectual and adaptive functioning must be before the age of 18. While the classification systems of the ICD-10 and DSM-IV differ somewhat, both systems use the same criteria to specify intellectual disabilities, and both lead to consistent evaluations. As the evaluation of intellectual disability includes a complex assessment of cognitive, communication, and self-care skills, among others, intellectual disability in clinical practice is usually determined between the ages of three and seven. The precise level of intellectual disability cannot be diagnosed very clearly early in childhood, although there are rare cases where a child is diagnosed with *severe* or *profound* intellectual disabilities before the age of three, especially when the child’s intellectual disabilities are associated with an identified neurological condition. Parents usually take the initiative to seek assessment of their child during the pre-school or early school years.

Generally, the main body responsible for assessment for educational purposes is the local office of the Regional Diagnostic Evaluation and Support Centre (hereafter, KDAY) of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. Assessments are also carried out in public hospitals and community health facilities, such as psychological health centres and child guidance clinics.

Two committees are responsible for assessing capacity to work: the First Level Health Committee under the local authority, which determines eligibility for social benefits, and the State insurance funds’ own assessment committees for insurance provisions.²³

2.3 Guardianship

Adults who are partially or totally incapable of managing their affairs, due to mental, intellectual or physical disability, may be subjected to guardianship under Greek law.

²² Interviews with: Dr. Gerasimos Kolaitis, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, University Department of Child Psychiatry, Athens Medical School, Aghia Sophia Children’s Hospital, Athens, February-March 2004; Dr. Stavroula Diareme, Clinical Psychologist, Scientific Associate of University Department of Child Psychiatry, Athens Medical School, Aghia Sophia Children’s Hospital, Athens, February-March 2004.

²³ Written Information provided by the department for Children’s Rights of the Ombudsman, June 2004.

A minor who is under parental care or supervision can also be subjected to guardianship during their final year as a minor, under the condition that the guardianship terms are met.²⁴

The Greek Civil Code refers to the following types of guardianship (the Greek legal term is “judicial support/care”):

- “depriving” *plenary* or *partial* guardianship, where the ward has been assessed as incapable of performing all (under *plenary* guardianship) or some (under *partial* guardianship) legal acts;
- “supportive” *plenary* or *partial* guardianship, where the agreement of the guardian is required for the ward to perform all or some legal acts.

A combination of the two types of guardianship is also possible. The court is obliged to impose the minimal possible limitations within the ward’s best interest.²⁵ Under a combination of the two types of guardianship, the court can deprive wards of the administration of their property, including the free disposition of their finances or the disposition of gifts.

People with intellectual disabilities who are not under guardianship have the same rights as other citizens. However, it is doubtful whether in practice the opportunity to realise their rights is recognised and supported. Nevertheless, where no guardian has been formally appointed, third parties such as psychological health professionals, social health professionals and volunteers, may act as advocates for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities.²⁶ Staff in rehabilitation or occupational centres may advocate for the employment rights and opportunities of people with intellectual disabilities, the management of their finances, and their rights in relation to other matters, such as the issue of a passport or signing of contracts.

There is no national statistical data on the number of people with intellectual disabilities under any type of guardianship in Greece. However, research indicates that *plenary* depriving guardianship is the most common type for people with intellectual disabilities, as their parents perform all legal acts for them.²⁷ People with intellectual disabilities who are under *plenary* depriving guardianship do not have the opportunity to perform legal acts or realise rights in relation to employment issues, such as signing employment contracts, by themselves. Although no cases have been reported officially where guardians have abused their role and prevented their wards from working, there

²⁴ Law 2447/1996, FEK 278/1996 on Guardianship, Civil Code (hereafter, Civil Code), art. 1666.

²⁵ Civil Code, art. 1676.

²⁶ Interview with E. Zacharia, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Department of Family Protection, Athens, July, 2004.

²⁷ Interview with Ms. Ioakeimidou, Representative of the Panhellenic Federation of Societies of Parents and Guardians of Disabled People (POSGAmeA), Athens, 4 March 2004.

is no data available on the number of people with intellectual disabilities under *plenary* guardianship who have actually found employment.

2.4 Statistical data

A main obstacle in evaluating the needs of people with intellectual disabilities in terms of their access to education and employment in Greece is the lack of organised, consistent, official data. There is no regular data collection on the services and support organisations available for these people. Even in cases where data is available, it is not consistent and representative for people with intellectual disabilities, and consequently, it is not useful and reliable. This lack of official and consistent information hinders the development of effective, needs-based programmes and policies for people with intellectual disabilities.

According to various estimates, the number of people with intellectual disabilities in Greece is more than 150,000, in a total population of 11 million.²⁸ However, this is not a definite figure. There is no extensive national statistical information, and there are no integrated, extensive research initiatives measuring the prevalence of intellectual disability in Greece. At present, only indicative statistical information, derived from different studies of people with disabilities in Greece, is available.

No specific information for people with intellectual disabilities is available from the 2001 census. The most recent representative data of the existing population of people with intellectual disabilities in Greece come from the 1991 census, but this data is not consistent or reliable. Several questions have been raised regarding the accuracy of this census for people with intellectual disability, including doubts about the data collection method used and the lack of training for the census takers.²⁹ According to this data, the total number of people with all kinds of disabilities living with families or in the community was 232,571, while those living in various institutional settings numbered 34,432. From the first group, six per cent (or 13,954) were people with intellectual disabilities, while from the second group, 13.3 per cent (or 4,580) were people with intellectual disabilities. It is not specified whether these people had associated mental disabilities.

The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (hereafter, Ministry of Education) also collects data on the number of students with special educational needs. As shown in Table 1, according to the ministry's latest data, for the 2002–2003 school year, there are 2,859 students with intellectual disabilities in Greece in all types of schools, including both primary and secondary levels.

²⁸ M. G. Madianos, "Recent advances in community psychiatry and psychological rehabilitation in Greece and the other Southern European Countries" in *The International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, Vol. 40 (3), 1994, pp. 157–164.

²⁹ S. Padelidou, *Intellectual Disability in Europe: Working Papers*, Greece, March 2003, p. 70.

Table 1. Students with special educational needs, in all types of schools in Greece, by diagnosis, 2002–2003

Learning difficulties	12,412
Intellectual disabilities	2,859
Fine motor impairments	785
Autism	458
Emotional disorders including mental illness	852
Other disabilities, including sensory	1,219
Total	18,585

Source: Konstantinos Thevaivos, Director, Ministry of Education (YEPT), Athens, March 2004.

The Panhellenic Federation of Societies of Parents and Guardians of Disabled People (hereafter, POSGAmE) and the National Association of People with Disabilities (hereafter, ESAEA), which are the only national representative NGOs in the field, do not have any statistical data on the number of people with intellectual disabilities. However, POSGAmE has 160 association-member bodies in Greece, and 80 per cent of the members of those associations are parents of children with intellectual disabilities.³⁰ According to their data, there are approximately 10,000 families that are members of the federation and have a family member with intellectual disabilities or autism.

2.5 The extent of institutional care

Twenty years ago, the care system in Greece for people with intellectual disabilities was solely composed of various sizes of residential institutions, generally in more remote parts of the country. In the early 1980s, appeals regarding the inhumane conditions in these institutions motivated international, national and local academic bodies to develop deinstitutionalisation policies and programmes for the development of community care services. The EU has supported these reforms since the 1990s.³¹ To date, the largest psychiatric institutions have been eliminated, and a number of small care units, such as community-based hostels and boarding houses, have been developed. However, while minor advances have been made in the deinstitutionalisation of people with intellectual disabilities and associated disorders, a number of the older institutions, including institutions for children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities under the age of 18, continue to operate, and some of them are run under extreme and wretched conditions.³²

³⁰ Interview with Ms. Ioakeimidou, 4 March 2004.

³¹ See, e.g. J. Tsiantis (Editor), "The Children of Leros PIKPA" in *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 167, suppl. 28 (1995).

³² Unpublished report given from a scientific group consisted of Greek specialist in psychological health who visited institutions in rural areas, including Karditsa, Sidirokastro (Care Centre for Children-KEPEP, Patriotic Foundation of Social Welfare and Mentality-PIKPA), Athens, 2000.

According to the current data provided by POSGAmE, 54 residential institutions for people with disabilities – including individuals with intellectual, physical, motor or other disabilities – operate in Greece, and 20 of these are in the Athens area. It is estimated that more than 34,000 people with disabilities reside in different institutions. Out of this group, it is estimated that approximately 20 to 30 per cent (up to 10,000) are people with intellectual disabilities and associated disabilities. Most of these institutions are in the public sector, operating under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. These institutions have no inclusion criteria according to age, type of intellectual disability or level of intellectual disability. The majority of these institutions, nearly 65 per cent, care for a broad range of individuals between the ages of two and 36. Consequently, the specialised care and support that these institutions offer is very limited and is entirely inadequate in meeting the needs of individual residents, particularly the specific needs of people with intellectual disabilities.

As efforts have been made to eliminate and close down asylum-type institutions for people with intellectual disabilities and serious associated conditions, a number of alternative forms of accommodation have been developed in the community in the past 20 years. These include Centres of Education, Social Support and Training, which provide open social care services and are intended for people with disabilities and their families. These centres' main activities are diagnosis, advisory support, information and communication with specialised rehabilitation services, vocational and prevocational training, functional rehabilitation, and integration into the social network. They are staffed with specialised personnel and include guest houses for temporary accommodation where necessary. Centres have been established in 24 prefectures, and the establishment of 17 new ones is planned.³³ However, the number of these centres is not sufficient to satisfy needs in rural areas and islands. Service users also report that the established centres do not always operate properly, as they often lack structure, specialised staff and expected services.³⁴

Creative Occupation Centres for persons with disabilities are small open-care structures that operate in local municipalities as daycare facilities. These centres are intended to be connected with special education training units, social and other support services for persons with disabilities in the area. Their operation is designed to integrate children and adolescents with all levels of intellectual disabilities in creative occupation, in lieu of education in the formal school system (see section IV.3.3). According to POSGAmE, these centres are in an experimental stage and their number is not sufficient to cover the needs of people with intellectual disabilities.

³³ Ministry of Labour and Social Security, *Report against Discrimination for Disability Reasons*, 2003, page 18.

³⁴ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004. *Explanatory Note: OSI held a roundtable meeting in Greece in co-operation with the European Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP), the Mental Health Initiative (MHI) and the Association for the Psychosocial Health of Children and Adolescents (APHCA) in June 2004 to invite critique of the present report in draft form. Experts present included representatives of the Government and civil society, parents, and self-advocates.*

III. Access to Education

1. LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Greek Constitution ensures the right to free education for all citizens, and furthermore obliges the State to provide support to students with special needs. The Greek educational system includes both mainstream and special schools. Up to the age of 22, people with special educational needs can receive an education in a variety of schools using adapted programmes. In practice, education for children with intellectual disabilities is offered in both mainstream and special schools. In mainstream schools, “inclusion classes” are often organised for children with intellectual disabilities, who spend only part of the time integrated with other students. The assessment procedure for placing children in school has been criticised as having inconsistent results and being poorly coordinated among the relevant services.

In 2001, a new institution, the KDAY (Diagnostic Evaluation and Support Centre), was established, to provide and coordinate services for children with special educational needs at the local level. The KDAY is the main body responsible for assessing intellectual disability and determining placement in the appropriate school. However, only half of the KDAYs are operational, and those that do function have not met parents’ expectations, particularly with regard to early intervention. Because KDAY centres are not established throughout the country, many families must travel long distances or endure lengthy waiting periods to have their children assessed. The inadequate number of centres, and their current focus on the school-age population, has led to a near-total lack of multidisciplinary early intervention services in most areas, forcing parents to find private alternatives, often at great expense. A KDAY is also expected to draft educational and integration recommendations for each child, but parents have expressed concern that these reports are difficult to understand and often give insufficient information about the service options available. A child’s age and level of disability determine which school the child will attend.

1.1 The right to education

According to the Constitution, all citizens are equal in rights and obligations and shall be equal before the law.³⁵ Additionally, every citizen has the right to free education.³⁶ Any restrictions or privileges regarding access to education on the grounds of nationality, race, citizenship, religion or sex are explicitly prohibited. Article 16 of the Constitution, in paragraphs 3 and 4, stipulates that the State shall provide support and reinforcement to those students who require help and/or special consideration according to their needs and abilities. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 December 1993 (Rule 6),³⁷ have also been incorporated into the Greek legislative framework; this includes the principle of equalisation of opportunities in education for people with special needs, through participation in the national

³⁵ Constitution, art. 4 (1,2).

³⁶ Constitution, art. 16 (4).

³⁷ The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, United Nations General Assembly, 20 December 1993, Rule 6, see <http://www.un.org>.

educational system, with special consideration of the curricula, school structure and organisation.³⁸

The Ministry of Education and the Department for Children's Rights, part of the Ombudsman's Office since 2003, are responsible for taking appropriate action where discrimination in education is alleged. However, the department acts only as an intermediary: it can issue recommendations or offer social services, but it cannot compel cooperation or impose solutions.³⁹

The main legislation governing mainstream and special education in Greece is the Law on Special Education, Law 1566/1985 on Education (hereafter, Law on Education) and Law 3194/2003 on Educational Matters and other Provisions.

1.2 Structure and administration of the school system

According to the Law on Special Education, the main body responsible for the administration and operation of special education is the Ministry of Education. School attendance in Greece is compulsory for nine years: six years in primary school and three years in secondary school. However, in practice, this does appear to be enforced for students with intellectual disabilities.

Special education in Greece aims to meet the Constitutional obligation⁴⁰ to include and re-introduce children with special needs into the educational system. A Special Education Directorate, operating at the Ministry of Education, is responsible for implementing legislation on special education. There are also 16 special education school advisors, one at each district level, who coordinate, supervise and monitor the provision of education to pupils attending special schools and inclusion classes.

The relevant legislation consists of the Law on Education and the recent Law on Special Education, which supplements, updates and upgrades the existing institutional framework for special education. According to this legislation, people with special educational needs, including those with intellectual disabilities, are entitled to study in various types of special education. This education aims at developing their personality, improving their abilities, promoting their vocational training and helping them achieve equality in their social development. To accomplish these aims, measures are taken and services are provided for people up to 22 years old.⁴¹ Only where the nature and degree of a child's disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, prevent education in a mainstream school, should education be provided in separate special education schools or in schools or classes operating in hospitals, rehabilitation centres or institutes for

³⁸ Law 2430/96 on people with special needs (including the disability card and other directives).

³⁹ Information provided in writing by the Department of Children's Rights, Ombudsman, Athens, June 2003.

⁴⁰ Constitution, art. 16.

⁴¹ Law on Special Education.

educating children.⁴² In exceptional cases, education can also be provided at home, by special teachers.

Depending on their abilities, children with special educational needs can enter special or mainstream schools from the age of six, the usual age for beginning study at a mainstream school, and continue to study until age 22, or, under special circumstances, even beyond that age. Responsibility for allowing such an extension lies with the competent Head of the Education Directorate, a body under the Ministry of Education, upon the recommendation of the relevant KDAY.⁴³

The KDAY is a relatively new institution that operates in the country's prefectures as a decentralised unit of the Ministry of Education. According to a Ministry Decision, all the KDAYs' activities should have an educational orientation.⁴⁴ Specifically, KDAYs are responsible for:

- providing diagnoses for the purpose of determining special educational needs;
- recommending the placement of children with special educational needs in the appropriate mainstream or special school;
- providing advisory services and guidance to pupils, parents and teachers;
- providing special pedagogical support at home (in special cases);
- providing early intervention services.⁴⁵

Since 1 September 2001, 54 KDAYs have been established in different cities throughout Greece, but only 22 have actually started operating.⁴⁶ Although there is legislative provision for the operation of the remaining KDAYs, there is a lack of sufficient funding to staff and equip these facilities. The KDAYs were initially staffed by teaching staff of pre-school and primary and secondary schools, who were transferred and appointed to this new service. These centres are currently staffed by various specialists, such as special educators, psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, and, under certain circumstances, child psychiatrists. The KDAYs of the two major cities (Athens and Thessaloniki) are also expected to include specialists in Greek sign language, in mobility training and vocational guidance for people with vision problems.

Prefectural Education Committees and KDAYs are responsible for making recommendations on the establishment, transformation and merging of special schools and inclusion classes; they also make recommendations on staffing issues. These recommendations are made to the Directorate of Special Education, which is part of

⁴² Law on Special Education.

⁴³ Law on Special Education, art. 1, para. 9 and 15 a.

⁴⁴ Ministry Decision G6/4494/01.

⁴⁵ Law on Special Education.

⁴⁶ Interviews with: Konstantinos Thevaïos, Director, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Athens, March, 2004 ; George Anzaka, Director, Athens KDAY, Athens, April, 2004.

the Ministry of Education. Usually, the Directorate of Special Education makes final decisions. The administration structure is essentially the same for mainstream schools.

There should be close cooperation between special and mainstream school advisers, school principals and teachers. Administrative functions and the period of time in which they are conducted, including the dates for the beginning and end of school year, registration and examinations of students, are the same for all schools, special and mainstream. The same administrative procedures, such as the transportation of students and provision of school equipment, are also in effect for both mainstream and special schools.

General and technical-vocational education of persons with special educational needs is provided free of charge in State-run mainstream or special education schools. A child's age and level of disability determine which school the child will attend: either mainstream classes with support from a special education teacher, who is employed in the KDAY, or specially organised and appropriately staffed inclusion classes, which operate within mainstream schools providing general or technical vocational education. Children with all types of intellectual disabilities have the right to all educational options. However, the educational option they will follow – whether mainstream with support, inclusion class or special school – is determined by the assessment and the recommendations of the relevant KDAY, and sometimes depends on the authority of the relevant school principle.

Special kindergartens and special primary schools are for pupils and children with special educational needs aged 4-14. These operate as a single school unit and consist of a three-year course, which is equivalent to kindergarten, and a seven-year course, which is equivalent to primary school.⁴⁷ Special Lower Secondary Schools or *gymnasia*, are for students aged 14-18. These schools offer a preparatory grade and three subsequent years. Primary school graduates with mild learning difficulties and *mild* intellectual disabilities have the right to enrol directly in the first year of *gymnasia* without attending the preparatory grade, if this is approved after an evaluation by the relevant KDAY.⁴⁸

Special unified upper secondary schools (*lykeia*) are for the graduates of *gymnasia*, aged 18-22, and consist of a preparatory grade and the three subsequent grades. *Gymnasia* graduates with mild learning difficulties can enrol directly in the first grade of *lykeia* without having to attend the preparatory grade, after the evaluation of the relevant KDAY.⁴⁹

Special vocational education schools and laboratories have been established, and these offer students with intellectual disabilities several options for secondary study. Special kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools, and special technical vocational

⁴⁷ Law on Special Education, art. 13 para. a; art. 15, para. b.

⁴⁸ Law on Special Education, art. 13, para. b; art. 15, para. c.

⁴⁹ Law on Special Education, art. 13 para. c; art. 15, para. d.

educational schools, as well as the certificates they issue, are recognised as equivalent to the corresponding mainstream schools.

The relevant legislative framework for education provides that all students up to the age of 22 are eligible to receive support services. These services include the assessment of students' special educational needs, educational and psychological support, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and counselling support, as well as allowances for their transportation.⁵⁰ However, despite these legislative provisions, parents report that, in practice, there is a lack of specialised services in special schools, a lack of co-ordination among the relevant service providers to support parents and monitor students' progress, and a lack of cooperation and coordination among educators of different levels for the school programmes.⁵¹

1.3 Assessment of disability for educational purposes

There is no legal framework in Greece for regular screening of intellectual disability among children. Parents usually take the initiative to have their children assessed. A clinical or educational psychologist primarily conducts the diagnostic assessment, which includes a meeting with the parents for a psychosocial history intake and the use of psychometric instruments to measure the child's abilities. In many cases, an interdisciplinary team conducts the evaluation, where different specialists cooperate to assess the child's needs and abilities in different areas. These teams usually consist of child psychiatrists, clinical or educational psychologists, social workers, special educators, speech therapists and occupational therapists.

Both KDAYs and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare's child guidance clinics provide diagnostic reports that are valid for three years. However, only KDAY diagnostic reports are valid for educational purposes, and these constitute a necessary prerequisite for a child to be registered in a special school or to receive support in a mainstream school.

When the evaluation process is complete, the parents are given a diagnostic report, which refers to the child's type of special needs or disabilities and which contains educational recommendations and suggestions for counselling or other types of intervention. The parents can use this report for legal purposes, such as seeking social benefits and educational placement for their child. Usually, the educational recommendations suggest that the child should be placed in a mainstream or a special school, or that parents seek private specialised educational support from a special

⁵⁰ Law on Special Education, art. 7.

⁵¹ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

educator or psycho-pedagogue.⁵² Recommendations or other interventions, which depend on the child's individualised needs, may include psychotherapy, speech therapy, family or parental support, counseling or occupational therapy. Implementation of these intervention services within the public sector is usually minimal, due to the excessive number of referrals and families who seek assessment and support and due to the limited number of services available. For this reason, many families are referred to private practitioners or centres. In such cases, public insurance covers only some of the expenses for the interventions. Consequently, families are often put under great financial strain to get the services their children need.

Only the KDAYs' actions, assessments and recommendations are officially valid for evaluations aiming to include and re-introduce children with intellectual disabilities into the educational system. After an individualised evaluation of the student, and a meeting of the specialised staff members, KDAYs should issue an expert opinion, in which the student's level of intellectual disabilities is specified.⁵³ In addition, they should make recommendations regarding placement in an appropriate school, type of attendance, types of support that are necessary, and the required technical teaching aids and educational material to facilitate the education and communication of the student.⁵⁴ The expert opinion and the diagnostic report should be accompanied by an educational programme tailored to the student's individual needs. This programme should include the necessary short- and long-term goals, as well as the time framework for the re-evaluation of the student and reconsideration of his/her programme. The child's parents, and the school where the student is introduced, should be notified and informed about the content of the report and the individualised educational programme.

Despite the KDAY system's extensive responsibilities, the legislative framework providing for KDAY centres does not appear to have been fully implemented in practice. According to reports, only 22 of the 54 KDAY centres that were initially instituted have been operating. Most of them are located in the larger cities, and consequently, many rural and outlying areas remain substantially unsupported.⁵⁵ The low number of children registered with the Ministry of Education as having intellectual disabilities may partly be explained by this limited access to assessment and diagnosis. Furthermore, parents report that the lack of technical support for KDAY centres

⁵² Interviews with: Dr. Gerasimos Kolaitis, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, University Department of Child Psychiatry, Athens Medical School, Aghia Sophia Children's Hospital, Athens, February-March 2004; Dr S. Diareme, Clinical Psychologist, Scientific Associate of University Department of Child Psychiatry, Athens Medical School, Aghia Sophia Children's Hospital, Athens, February-March 2004; Dr E. Soumaki, Child Psychiatrist, Child Psychiatry Department, Athens University Medical School, Aghia Sophia Children's Hospital, President Of the Hellenic Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Vice President of ESCAP (European Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry), Athens, February-March, 2004.

⁵³ Operating Regulation YA Á 6/4494/2001, GG 1503/B.

⁵⁴ Ministry Decision G6 4494/FEK 1503/8.11.2001.

⁵⁵ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

creates problems, such as inappropriate working conditions, inadequacy of supplies for the evaluation of children and an insufficient number of specialised staff. Parents also report problems concerning the coverage of the staff's financial expenses. There are too few educators and specialised staff at KDAYs in the provincial areas of Greece, so that diagnostic and assessment reports are not always provided.⁵⁶ Particularly problematic is the situation in the islands, where only one KDAY centre exists. As a result, families face considerable obstacles in accessing the KDAY services. It has also been reported that there are considerable delays in relation to the assessment intakes, and concerns have been raised regarding telephone contact with the Athens KDAY.⁵⁷ In addition, although KDAYs are authorised to introduce, implement and support early intervention programmes, these services do not usually exist in practice (see section III.1.4). Four years since the KDAYs were established, concerns have been raised regarding the quality and availability of their services. Official complaints in relation to these issues have been made to the Ombudsman.

Questions have been raised regarding discrepancies between the KDAYs' diagnoses, which should always have an educational orientation, and those issued by the medical-educational centres, or child guidance clinics, operated by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. These two types of institutions usually do not follow the same diagnostic criteria, even when the purpose of the diagnosis is the same, and, consequently, they reach diverse diagnoses. The KDAY evaluations have been criticised as being insufficiently informative, unclear and difficult to understand. They use specialised terminology that is not familiar to parents and educators. In addition, they are not always accompanied by the individualised educational programme that is a prerequisite for the child's placement in the relevant school.⁵⁸ Parents do not always consider the KDAY assessments and evaluations accurate, especially when they disagree about the special school that is recommended as the most suitable for their child.⁵⁹ It has been reported that, although KDAYs are not authorised to include IQ level on their evaluations, they do so in some cases.⁶⁰

Parents also indicate that the psychological needs of children with intellectual disabilities are not evaluated or appropriately taken into consideration, and these needs are frequently underestimated. This is a serious service weakness, because it is understood that these children may have an increased number of psychological issues, such as high levels of anxiety, depression, psychotic symptoms and issues of neglect or abuse. Consequently, there is a need for better coordination and cooperation among KDAYs, schools, parents and psychological health professionals in order to address the whole range of issues concerning children with intellectual disabilities.

⁵⁶ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

⁵⁷ Interview with the Department of Children's Rights, Ombudsman, Athens, June 2003.

⁵⁸ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

⁵⁹ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

⁶⁰ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June, 2004.

In addition, because there is a lack of diagnostic and support services in many districts, particularly on the islands and in rural areas on the mainland,⁶¹ families must travel long distances to find services and get support, with excessive financial and psychological cost. Facing these difficult situations, parents have called for the establishment of mobile support and diagnostic teams, which would provide services in cooperation with the municipal educational services. Although the prefects have the authority to establish mobile diagnostic teams of specialised professionals to evaluate children with intellectual disabilities, this has not yet been implemented in practice.

According to parents, the diagnostic procedure is at times tiring for families, as the lack of coordination among services makes the process highly bureaucratic. In many cases, parents may be referred to different services for a diagnostic evaluation of their child's condition, or they may seek a second opinion on their own initiative. This is either due to the lack of coordination among services, or to the families' reluctance to accept their child's diagnosis. As a result, they may receive different diagnoses, which cause confusion. The discrepancies may include differences in evaluations, inconsistencies and contradictions in relation to the diagnostic criteria and/or different recommendations of the relevant services.⁶²

Parents generally advocate increasing the flexibility of the diagnostic services and improving regular follow-ups of the assessment results, so that they can identify and reconsider possible changes in the developmental needs of their children. They also seek to be properly and thoroughly informed about the assessment results and to have better communication with specialised staff, so that they can receive adequate support to strengthen the skills needed to support their children more efficiently.⁶³

1.4 Early intervention

Early intervention is one of the major issues of concern to parents of children with intellectual disabilities in Greece. Early intervention involves services and other support that is provided to infants and young children and their families, in cases where the child may have a condition or special needs that may adversely affect their development. The purpose of early intervention is to lessen the effects of the child's condition and to maximise the child's development and inclusion. In Greece, the number of existing centres for early development is extremely limited, and there is an urgent need for the establishment of new centres in all regions.

In 2001, the Ministry of Education established the KDAY network of diagnostic, evaluation and support centres, which have the statutory obligation to provide early

⁶¹ Greece consists of the mainland and the islands. The mainland of Greece includes mountainous parts and valleys, dominating areas such as Macedonia, Thraki, Ipeiros, Peloponnisos and Thessalia. The islands of Greece dominate the Aegean and Ionian Seas and the Sea of Crete.

⁶² OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

⁶³ Interviews with parents, 1 April 2004 and 4 April 2004.

intervention services. However, these services are limited in practice, as the need to provide support to the school-age population has taken precedence.

Where early intervention services are not available, parents must seek support privately. Furthermore, parents report that the public support structures that do exist, such as the KDAY, medical-educational centres and child guidance clinics, are minimally staffed. There have been requests to increase the number of specialised staff, and the range of services, to address the needs of children with intellectual disabilities.⁶⁴

2. GOVERNMENT EDUCATION POLICY

While Greece takes part in the European Agency for Development in Special Education, as well as using EU funding for projects related to the education of people with intellectual disabilities, the country's policy in this area does not yet meet the needs of the population. A particular problem is the lack of any programmes for the education of children with severe and profound intellectual disabilities. Parents and advocates have called for the establishment of a stronger coordination body, which could help ensure that the available educational services are more accessible. The addition of far-reaching awareness programmes for teachers, students and families would also be a significant means of reducing misconceptions and prejudice against people with intellectual disabilities, both in the educational context and in wider society.

2.1 The EU and Government education policy

Greece has ratified the articles of the European Agency for Development in Special Education, an independent organisation supported by Ministries of Education in the 18 participating countries and by the European Commission.⁶⁵ Along with the ratification of the major international instruments related to people with intellectual disabilities, membership in this organisation has contributed to the development of policies, practices and provision of services for students with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities and their families.

The EU has specifically supported the development of national programmes and policies for education of people with intellectual disabilities in Greece. As far back as 1983, several national governmental and non-governmental organisations and private legal entities, including vocational training institutions such as Theotokos and Margarita, have participated in the implementation of different European programmes aiming to provide education, social and vocational training, and rehabilitation to young individuals with intellectual disabilities. These programmes include:

- Vocational Training Programmes (“PEK”, 1983–1994);

⁶⁴ Interviews with parents, 1 April 2004 and 4 April 2004.

⁶⁵ See the Agency's website at <http://www.european-agency.org> (accessed 8 September 2004).

- Vocational Laboratories/Institutions' Equipment (Law 815/1984);
- HORIZON: A Programme for Employment (1992–1994);
- HELIOS I: “School Mainstreaming of Special Needs Students” (1994–1996);
- HELIOS II: “Economic Inclusion of Special Needs Individuals” (1996–1998);
- SOCRATES: “School Cooperation on a European Level” (1996–1998);
- LEONARDO DA VINCI: “Pilot Study for Improvement of Vocational Rehabilitation-Agora” (1996–2000);
- LEONARDO DA VINCI: “Systematic Skills Acquisition” (1996–1998);
- Telematics Application Programme (Tide) Project “Multiple” (1997–1999);
- Programmes Against Social Isolation for groups of young people with intellectual disabilities (1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000).⁶⁶

According to official evaluations of these programmes' effectiveness in Greece, improvement in the organisation and design of the projects is essential.⁶⁷ Their duration has been found to be too limited to efficiently meet the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities and to ensure these individuals optimal educational, social and vocational rehabilitation in an ongoing process. Consequently, it is important that the Greek Government takes steps to secure the continuity of these programmes after support from European funds concludes.

2.2 National programmes

The Ministry of Education has developed a national educational policy over the last 20 years through different laws, such as 1566/1985 and 2817/2000, which aim to provide equal opportunities for people with special needs. National education policy is designed to meet international standards, drawing upon the Treaty of Maastricht,⁶⁸ the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for People with Disabilities,⁶⁹ the EU's resolutions on the equalisation of opportunities across all the levels of education and vocational training for persons with disabilities,⁷⁰ and the

⁶⁶ Written information provided by Mrs. P. Papanikolopoulou, Scientific Director of the Theotokos Foundation, Athens, March 2004; telephone interview with Minas Nitsopoulos, Protection for the Child with Special Needs, Kavala, April, 2004.

⁶⁷ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

⁶⁸ Treaty on the European Union, Official Journal C 325, 24 December 2002, art. 126, 127.

⁶⁹ United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, A/RES/48/96, December 1993, available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r096.htm> (accessed 11 March 2005).

⁷⁰ See the EU website, http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/7003_en.html (accessed 11 March 2005).

Salamanca Declaration on Special Needs Education.⁷¹ The Ministry of Education has also incorporated the special educational needs of people with disabilities into proposals submitted to the European Commission, for programmes that were implemented between 1995 and 1999 under the Socrates and Leonardo Programmes.⁷² Generally speaking, national educational policy is, in theory, designed to develop specialised programmes for the education of individuals with intellectual disabilities, with the goal of achieving their social and academic integration.

However, the implementation of these programmes has not measured up to expectations. The Ombudsman regularly receives appeals from parents of children with intellectual disabilities in relation to problems with education.⁷³ The complaints often refer to the inadequacies of service providers and the system as a whole, including weakness in the implementation of the legislative framework. In other cases, parents complain to the Ombudsman that educational programmes are not differentiated according to the level of intellectual disabilities. They also cite a lack of specialised staff to meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities and to support their subsequent social and educational integration.⁷⁴ The Ombudsman has the role of making formal reports to the relevant ministries, to recommend the development of the legislative framework and the operation of the relevant services, in order to address efficiently the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Moreover, although there is a need to ensure citizens' participation in the development of educational policy, parents and their representatives find they must struggle to promote their proposals.⁷⁵ Relevant policies should be designed and adopted following discussions and co-operation among scientific institutions, parents' associations and NGOs – including the Pedagogical Institute, POSGameA and the National Association of People with Special Needs.⁷⁶ To improve educational policy for people with intellectual disabilities, it is crucial to establish an authority to organise and supervise the operation of services for people with intellectual disabilities. Such an authority could also co-ordinate the actions of the relevant public and private structures, including the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, the Human Resources Employment Organisation (hereafter OAED) and parents' associations. Another possible means of improving access to these services would be the establishment of a specialised office where parents of children with intellectual

⁷¹ The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special, Salamanca, Spain, 10 June 1994, available at http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13030&URL_DO=DO_-TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed 11 March 2005).

⁷² Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (1994). Information guidance for special education.

⁷³ Department of Children's Rights, Ombudsman, Interview in writing, Athens, June 2003.

⁷⁴ Department of Children's Rights, Ombudsman, Interview in writing, Athens, June 2003.

⁷⁵ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

⁷⁶ Interview with Konstantinos Thevaivos, Athens, March 2004.

disabilities, or individuals with intellectual disabilities themselves, could receive information about the support provided.

A serious issue is the complete lack of development or provision of programmes for the education of children and young people with *severe* or *profound* intellectual disabilities. At present, these children do not get any education or attend school, and special schools receive no preparation or support in terms of programmes and infrastructure to meet their needs. Due to the lack of relevant specialised educational programmes, most people with *severe* or *profound* intellectual disabilities are kept secluded at home or in institutions, on the belief that only the family can help and that they have no possibilities for improvement.

There is a critical need to develop public awareness programmes as part of the Government's approach to education. Stigma, prejudice and discrimination continue to affect young people with intellectual disabilities in the community, especially those with *severe* or *profound* intellectual disabilities, and the situation hinders their access to education and employment. Specialised awareness programmes for the education of teachers, health professionals, students, parents and families who have members with intellectual disabilities is crucial. Such programmes will promote acceptance, cooperation, improved communication and strategies against the isolation of these people at home or in institutions, and consequently, it will contribute to their integration in education and equal participation in school life and the community.

3. EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

The Greek educational system takes an inclusive approach in principle, offering a range of options to children with intellectual disabilities. In practice, however, there are very few children with intellectual disabilities in the education system – only 2,859 in 2002–2003. Many students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities are placed in special schools, while most children with more severe intellectual disabilities have little access to education at all. Although materials and adapted curricula have been developed, the individual needs of students with intellectual disabilities are not met in the classroom.

While mainstreaming is, by law, the preferred approach in Greece, the necessary support to facilitate inclusion is often lacking. Although officially, only 1,000 children with intellectual disabilities are mainstreamed, it is likely that, in areas where there are no services or facilities for children with special needs, many more children with intellectual disabilities study in mainstream schools, without any support. Where resources are available, mainstreaming has been highly effective. Parents have expressed concern that special schools place children with highly diverse needs and abilities in a single class, and that staff in special schools are not prepared to teach each child according to individual ability. Moreover, special schools run on a shortened daily schedule, so children do not receive a full day of instruction and training.

Home schooling is available for children whose health does not permit them to attend school. However, in practice very few children in Greece actually receive lessons at home. Because the law does not specifically include intellectual disability as a grounds for home schooling, there may be an

understanding that this form of education is not available for children with intellectual disabilities, except as an expensive private option. Residential care institutions generally are not differentiated between children and adults, and there is very little information as to what, if any, educational opportunities there are in such institutions. NGOs offer a number of much-needed educational services, including training for children with severe and profound intellectual disabilities and assistance for people with intellectual disabilities who are making the transition from education to employment. The Government should examine ways in which these successful programmes can be supported and expanded, to reach the people who currently do not have access to such services.

3.1 Resources and support

3.1.1 Curriculum and support

The Special Education Curriculum Framework consists of 25 subjects and 30 teaching hours per week in schools of primary and secondary education.⁷⁷ In line with this curriculum, the School Book Publishing Organisation has published books, materials and methodologies under the heading “activities for learning readiness”. These include teachers’ books for special education teachers and study materials for students, such as books, notebooks and cards specifically related to speech, psychomotor functions, cognitive abilities, and emotional adjustment. CDs have also been prepared as supplements to special primary school learning materials for speech, psychomotor functions, cognitive abilities and emotional adjustment. These materials are intended to support the improved inclusion of individuals with diagnosed special educational needs, including those with intellectual disabilities, in the learning process.

The legislation also provides that, at special education schools, along with the daily teaching programme, an additional programme of creative occupational activities can be implemented. Prevocational educational activities are also included in the curriculum of special education primary schools, while technical vocational education and training components can be included in the curricula of special education high schools (*gymnasia* and *lykeia*). The content of these curricula are determined according to decisions of the Ministry of Education. The content is issued based on the proposals of the Department of Special Education of the Pedagogical Institute.⁷⁸

However, a number of specialists who visited schools in Athens in November 2001, under the framework of the third phase of the programme “Practices implemented in classrooms”, organised by the European Agency for Development in Special Education to evaluate classroom practices from the students’ perspectives, found a number of areas where implementation has fallen short of legislative goals.⁷⁹ The experts found that learning tasks for students with special needs are the same as those provided by

⁷⁷ Presidential Decree 301/1996.

⁷⁸ Law on Special Education, art. 16.

⁷⁹ Expert Meeting in Athens, Greece, “*Third Phase of the Classroom Practice Project: Practices Implemented in Classrooms*”, November, 2001, European Agency for the Development of Special Education, see the Agency’s website at <http://www.european-agency.org> (accessed 17 September 2004).

teachers of mainstream schools, but the tasks are adapted and simplified by the special school teachers. There is no provision of individualised educational programmes for each student with special needs, nor any provision of specialised educational material, such as CDs or audio-visual material. Generally, the programmes are prepared by teachers and adapted as needed. Diagnostic procedures or theoretical approaches aimed at understanding the specialised educational needs of each student and at effective means of teaching children with intellectual disabilities are rarely implemented. Consequently, the development of individualised educational programmes, programmes for creative occupational practice or vocational training for students with special educational needs do not appear to be carried out in practice.⁸⁰

3.1.2 Teacher training

In conformity with Laws 1566/1985 and 2817/2000 on Special Education, public special schools and special technical vocational schools should employ special education teachers and special educational staff, consisting of psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, school nurses and physiotherapists.

Continuous education of teachers is neither systematic nor obligatory. However, special education teaching staff, and primary and pre-school teachers, can train to work with children with special needs through seminars and postgraduate courses provided by university departments of primary and pre-school education. In addition, there are postgraduate programmes for special education provided by Greek universities. Training in special secondary education is only available through postgraduate studies, and generally, specialisation in intellectual disability can only be acquired through postgraduate studies in universities abroad.⁸¹ Overall, little or no training in working with children with intellectual disabilities is available to most teachers.

There is a clear need for the continuous education and training of educational staff, as the existing seminars and postgraduate programmes in Greek universities are considered insufficient to effectively prepare teaching staff to meet the educational needs of people with intellectual disabilities.⁸² In addition, there is a need for specialised training to teach special educational personnel how to meet the specific individual needs of students according to the level of their intellectual disability and their social and psychological characteristics. Such specialised training should result in an approach that is both comprehensive and individualised to the students' educational, social and psychological levels.

⁸⁰ Written information provided by the Department of Children's Rights of the Ombudsman, Athens, June 2004.

⁸¹ Written information provided by: Dr. Kartasidou Lefkothea, Lecturer, Department of Educational and Social Policy, University of Macedonia, June 2004; also written information by staff of the Agios Dimitrios Centre for the Care of Children: Anastasia Giannakou, President, Eleni Balatsou, Visiting Nurse, H. Gounidi-Nikiforidou, Physiotherapist, March 2004.

⁸² OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

3.2 Inclusive education

Following the principles of the Salamanca Declaration and the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (specifically Rule 6 referring to the equalisation of opportunities in education for individuals with special needs), Greek policy regards the promotion of inclusive schooling and the development of co-teaching as the most effective means for building solidarity between children with intellectual disabilities and their peers.⁸³ However, special education in separate classes and schools is still the most widely practised approach in Greece.

The Ministry of Education records of the number of students with intellectual disabilities for the academic year 2002–2003 indicate that, out of the 18,585 individuals with special needs studying in relevant educational units, only 2,859 had intellectual disabilities. From the same period, 2,619 special teachers were working in 1,419 special schools.⁸⁴ Table 2 includes the number of special educators, according to school category, in detail. There is no official data on the number of students with intellectual disabilities according to school category, or educational option.

Table 2. Number of schools and special teachers, by category

Type of School/class	Number of Schools or classes	Number of Special Educators
Inclusion classes in mainstream kindergartens	74	74
Inclusion classes in mainstream primary schools	920	920
Inclusion classes in mainstream lower secondary schools (gymnasia)	68	68
Inclusion classes in unified upper secondary schools (lykeia)	10	10
Inclusion classes in Special Technical Vocational Educational Schools	2	2
Special kindergartens	107	152
Special primary schools	155	675
Special lower secondary schools (gymnasia)	9	153
Special unified upper secondary schools (lykeia)	4	78
Special Technical Vocational Education Schools	8	87
Special Vocational Education and Training Laboratories	62 16 of which operate	400

Source: Konstantinos Thevaivos, March 2004.

⁸³ Law on Special Education, art. 1, para 11a, b; Law 2430/1996 on People with Special Needs, art. 3; Ministry Decision 102357/G6/10.10.02 (FEK B'1319).

⁸⁴ Written information provided by Konstantinos Thevaivos, March 2004.

It is generally agreed that the number of inclusion classes and special secondary schools is not sufficient. In particular, there are far fewer special secondary schools than primary schools. Consequently, individuals with intellectual disabilities either drop out of the school system when they reach secondary level; or they are provided with private tutoring, if their parents can afford it; or they are occupied in creative centres, where this option is available. Moreover, there are areas in mainland Greece, such as East Macedonia, Thraki, Ipeiros, Peloponnisos and Thessalia, and in the islands of the Aegean and Ionian seas, where there are no special schools or inclusion classes for most education levels. Consequently, it is unclear whether children with intellectual disabilities in these areas have access to education at all, particularly given that there is an insufficient number of specialised staff and support services in these areas, so that the psychological, developmental and social needs of the relevant population cannot be met.

3.2.1 Mainstreaming

The goal of achieving the academic and social integration of children with intellectual disabilities is to foster and strengthen cooperation between mainstream and special education, at all levels of the educational system.⁸⁵ In places where there are no special schools, such as in small provincial towns, children with special educational needs attend mainstream classes, where they should receive support from the specialised teachers of special schools or a KDAY centre, although this support rarely is available.

Inclusion classes operate within the framework of mainstream schools. The operation of the special inclusion class and shared education is based on the fundamental principle that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Students in these classes share some teaching hours with the rest of the students in an integrated class, and they also spend time in a special class operating within the mainstream school. Teaching and integration of students with intellectual disabilities in mainstream classes is ensured through the active presence and participation of an additional special education teacher. The role of this teacher is to satisfy and support the needs of students with special needs or intellectual disabilities.

In practice, however, the additional support for students with special needs from a special school teacher in a mainstream class is rarely implemented. The Department of Special Education of the Ministry of Education reports that the programme of parallel support, meaning shared or inclusive education and co-teaching, is implemented only in exceptional circumstances when students with special needs study in schools with inclusion classes.⁸⁶ It is estimated that the number of children with intellectual

⁸⁵ Law on Special Education, art. 1, para 11a, b; Law 2430/1996 on People with Special Needs, art. 3; Ministry Decision 102357/G6/10.10.02 (FEK B'1319).

⁸⁶ Official document of the Department of Special Education (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs-YEPT), to the Ombudsman after a parent's referral, Registration Number: 122528/G6/2002, Athens, 2002.

disabilities integrated into mainstream schools is less than 1,000, which is very few, given the country's size and the population of students. It is reported that the number of inclusion classes in primary and secondary schools is not sufficient, and there is lack of financial support to staff these classes with trained teachers. In addition, school directors may be hesitant, at times, to integrate children with intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, many parents are reluctant to accept a second special teacher in the classroom, due to their ignorance, prejudice or fear of stigma for their children.⁸⁷ Consequently, there is a need for teachers and parents to be sensitised and informed about the role and the need for the extended implementation of co-teaching in integrated classes in mainstream schools. It is also necessary to develop awareness among mainstream school students and to build understanding and support for inclusion in schools among students and the community.

According to parents, the staff members and support services are not sufficient to meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities, or to support their education and social integration.⁸⁸ Parents also report cases of harassment and bullying of children with intellectual disabilities by other students, with or without difficulties, as well as cases of prejudice and stigmatisation.⁸⁹ Research conducted by the European Agency for Special Needs Education indicates that the support system provided by law can be an extremely effective means of helping children with disabilities to succeed in mainstream schools.⁹⁰ However, only a fraction of students who need these services can hope to receive them.

The parents' organisation POSGameA reports that there are cases where mainstream classes have been reluctant to accept a child with intellectual disabilities, even where the diagnosis recommends such placement. In these cases, parents say, they must cooperate with teachers and other specialists in the school to provide the child with support, guidance and acceptance and to promote a positive atmosphere for optimal academic and social integration.⁹¹

3.2.2 Special schools

According to legislation, special education is provided with the aim of helping people with special educational needs to develop their personality and improve their abilities and skills, so that they can be included or re-included in mainstream education and social life. Special education should also provide vocational training, with the goal of facilitating participation, and is intended to promote the social acceptance of people

⁸⁷ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

⁸⁸ Interview with parent, Athens, April 2004.

⁸⁹ Interview with parent, Athens, April 2004.

⁹⁰ See the European Agency for Special Needs Education, Country Report Greece, part of the Classroom Practice Project, available at http://www.european-agency.org/iecp/downloads/case_studies/Greece.doc (accessed 20 January 2005).

⁹¹ Interview with parent, 1 April 2004.

with disabilities and support their social development on equal terms.⁹² These objectives are to be implemented through measures and services rendered to the people with special educational needs, up until they are 22 years old, through primary and secondary education. These measures include the elaboration and application of special educational programmes and teaching methods, the use of adapted teaching materials, the provision of special equipment and the provision of special support services. These services mainly include diagnosis and evaluation of the special educational needs, pedagogical and psychological support, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech training, social and advisory work, transfer and transportation. However, current legislation and the services and provisions of special education provided for by law do not always operate or are not adequately implemented in practice.

Parents maintain that there are no consistent criteria for placement according to the type of need or the level of intellectual disability, and they indicate this can lead to inappropriate placements within the special education system.⁹³ Parents generally express a preference for providing their children with private individualised education,⁹⁴ in part because children with different needs and with different levels of intellectual disability are frequently placed together in the same special education class, which can include students who learn slowly, children with borderline intellectual disabilities and students with *mild* or *severe* intellectual disabilities.

School programmes and curricula do not provide for individualised approaches according to the type of disability, and consequently, the specialised staff is not prepared to address the needs of each child as an individual. Of particular concern is the fact that most special education options do not give specific provision for the education of children with *moderate* to *severe* intellectual disabilities. Most of these children are kept segregated at home or in institutions without access to education.

Other problems cited are the lack of specialised equipment and support services, such as psychological and counselling support for special educators and parents, and the schools' emphasis on academic achievement rather than socialisation and acquisition of daily living skills for students with intellectual disabilities.⁹⁵

Parents have called for special schools to provide full-day education and activities, just as mainstream schools do. Currently, mainstream schools run two to three hours longer than special schools. Implementing a full-day programme in special schools will ensure the most appropriate provision of creative and occupational activities. It will also facilitate acquisition of daily living skills, socialisation, and vocational and prevocational training for children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

⁹² Law on Special Education, art. 1, para. 6.

⁹³ Interview with parent, Athens, April 2004.

⁹⁴ Interview with parents, Athens, April 2004.

⁹⁵ Interview with parents, Athens, April 2004.

If Greece's educational practice is to meet the standards set in its legislation, school programmes must be modified to adjust the curricula and evaluation system for students according to the type and level of their special educational needs. Programmes must also be provided for the educational and social integration of people, with *severe* intellectual disabilities, as serving only those with *mild* or *moderate* intellectual disabilities is not enough. To protect their children from harassment or other problems, parents have called for measures such as separate breaks in schools where there are inclusion classes and better transportation from and to school.⁹⁶

3.3 Education outside the school system

3.3.1 Home schooling

The law provides for the application of educational programmes at home, so that an individual with special educational needs can receive academic and specialised support during a period of time when the individual's transportation to and from school has been assessed as difficult, due to serious health problems.⁹⁷ This provision is designed to secure, prepare and support the individual's future transition and adaptation into the school environment.⁹⁸ However, there are concerns that there is no specific provision in the law for home schooling of children with intellectual disabilities, and therefore, this option does not apply to children with intellectual disabilities.⁹⁹

Educators and specialists who are responsible for providing home schooling are required to continuously cooperate with the main school in which the students are enrolled. The goal is to secure the provision of the educational material and to ensure compatibility with the educational program that the student would receive in school. Educators should also play a mediating role between the student and the school by helping the student attend brief school visits, to avoid isolation and to promote social integration.¹⁰⁰

According to data provided by the Ministry of Education, 60 home schooling cases were accepted for the academic year 2001–2002. The number was increased to 130 cases for the academic year 2002–2003.¹⁰¹ It is not known if any of these cases were children with intellectual disabilities. In practice, a large number of children with intellectual disabilities are either educated at home, through private, individual education, or else they receive no schooling at all. Yet there is no official evaluation of the implementation of specific home schooling practices. Consequently, the extent to

⁹⁶ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2003.

⁹⁷ Law on Special Education, art. 1, para. 12, 20.

⁹⁸ Law on Special Education, art. 1, para. 12, 20.

⁹⁹ Written information provided by A. Giannakou, President, Agios Dimitrios Centre for the care of children, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Law 2817 on Special Education, art. 1, par. 12g.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Konstantinos Thevaivos, Athens, March 2004.

which these policies are implemented in practice is not known, but it is doubtful if they are sufficient to satisfy the respective needs. Where no other options are available, particularly in less urban areas of Greece, home schooling should be offered for students with intellectual disabilities.

3.3.2 Education of children in institutions

Individuals with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, have no opportunity for education or vocational training in residential institutions.¹⁰² These institutions are not differentiated for children, adolescents or adults, nor by the level or type of disability. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Education need to improve cooperation, to ensure that the educational needs of institutionalised people with intellectual disabilities are met. These individuals must be provided with training and vocational rehabilitation – specially designed to suit their age, level of disability and type of disability – so that they are not excluded from the educational process.¹⁰³ Educational programmes must also be provided to people who reside in asylum-type institutions and have a dual diagnosis of intellectual disability and associated psychiatric disorders, or severe intellectual disabilities. Their education must be followed up with supported or sheltered employment, as appropriate.

An example of good practice during the last five years is the effort made by specialised mental health professionals to train and educate staff of closed-care institutions to provide care and support to individuals with intellectual disabilities. A training package from the United Kingdom called “Mental Health in Learning Disabilities” has been translated and adapted to the Greek context, for training care staff who work with people with intellectual disabilities and associated disorders.¹⁰⁴

3.3.3 Alternatives to education

According to the current data provided by POSGAmE, parents have established 100 privately based occupational day centres, to provide people with intellectual disabilities with guidance and support in developing social skills, daily practical skills and technical skills. These centres are usually staffed by various specialists and operate as crisis intervention centres, where parents can get immediate support and care. However, their number is limited and, consequently, insufficient to meet the needs of the clients. Because parents initiate the establishment of these centres, they are usually involved with ensuring the care and welfare of these institutions, and promoting their optimal operation. At times, the role of parents is unclear, as far as their rights and

¹⁰² Interview with Mrs Ioakimidou, representative of the Panhellenic Organization for Parents and Guardians of individuals with Special needs (POSGAmE), Athens, March 2004.

¹⁰³ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

¹⁰⁴ N. Bouras, and G. Holt (Eds.) (1997). *Mental Health in Learning Disabilities Training Package*, (Second Edition). Brighton, p. 188.

responsibilities towards a specific institution are concerned.¹⁰⁵ Parents report that they are usually satisfied with the services provided in these centres, because they have control over the administration process.¹⁰⁶ There is no official data provided as to how many people are receiving services from these centres.

There is no specific governmental policy for the supervision and evaluation of these centres' operation, or their provision of educational services. Methodology and curriculum content are developed separately by each centre, in co-operation with their scientific team.¹⁰⁷ The centres generally offer prevocational training programmes, as well as activity programmes for individuals with different types of disabilities and various levels of intellectual disabilities. While these centres are useful, parents and professionals have raised concerns that most people with *severe* intellectual disabilities receive care mainly in residential institutions, where they do not have the opportunity to participate in creative occupational programmes and activities.¹⁰⁸

4. TRANSITION FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

Vocational training is available through a number of different facilities, including private vocational laboratories. These private facilities often provide a range of services in addition to pre-professional training, and aim at building skills for independent living. However, the rate of employment for graduates of these programmes remains low. The Government must do more to facilitate the transition from education to employment. Although people with intellectual disabilities greatly benefit from adult and continuing education, there is no State-organised system of "refresher" courses or other training aimed at skill retention and development.

4.1 Vocational education

Individuals with intellectual disabilities who wish to continue their education and acquire professional skills after completing the classes available at the special schools have several options. They may either enter one of the eight public Special Technical Vocational Education Schools (hereafter, TEE) or one of the Special Vocational Education and Training Laboratories (hereafter, EEEEEK).

The "level A" TEEs are for primary school graduates aged 14 to 19. These institutions fulfil the nine-year obligatory education requirements and provide specialised technical and vocational education. This type of school consists of five grades.¹⁰⁹ The "level B" TEEs include two cycles of studies, and school attendance for each of these cycles is at

¹⁰⁵ Written information provided by A. Giannakou, March 2004.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Ms Ioakeimidou, March 2004.

¹⁰⁷ Written information provided by A. Giannakou, p. 5, March 2004.

¹⁰⁸ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Law on Special Education, art. 13, para. d.

least two years. *Gymnasia* graduates are eligible to enrol in the first cycle, while A-level special TEE graduates, aged 19-22, are eligible to attend the second cycle of studies.¹¹⁰

The EEEEEK laboratories train individuals who are primary school graduates between the ages of 14 and 22 and are not eligible for other special educational options, such as the special secondary schools, TEE schools, or inclusion classes in mainstream schools. These laboratories consist of five-to-eight grades, depending on the specialisation and educational needs of the students.¹¹¹ In the 2001–2002 school year, 16 EEEEEK were operating, although 62 had been initially planned. The EEEEEK offer training in gardening, weaving, handicrafts, sewing, and other skills. The results of their programmes have not yet been officially evaluated, because Greece has not yet developed a system to evaluate the quality of the country's educational training and vocational rehabilitation services. Consequently, there is no official information on the quality of education the EEEEEKs offer, the graduation rates or the employment rates after graduation.

People with intellectual disabilities may also attend professional classes offered in private vocational laboratories established by NGOs and parents' associations. These institutions provide educational services outside the framework of the national education system. They were established as legal entities at parents' initiative, sometimes with State budget funding or, since Greece joined the EU in 1981, sometimes with the support of European funding.¹¹² These private vocational laboratories provide their students with an evaluation of abilities and educational support; programmes for the promotion of self-care, independence and social communication; programmes aimed at integration of people with disabilities; vocational training programmes; and vocational rehabilitation services. Each centre has its own conditions and procedure for placement, and each centre determines the appropriate specialists needed for its staff, which can include child psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, special educators, occupational and speech therapists, and special technicians.

There are several examples of good practice in relation to vocational training in Greece. One of these is the Margarita Special Education Laboratory, a private initiative that offers vocational training and practical experience to people from 14 to 22 years old with *mild* and *moderate* intellectual disabilities. The laboratory's department of vocational training consists of the following specialities: gardening, sewing, office support, hospitality and clothing manufacturing. The vocational training programme is enriched with daily skill-acquisition programmes, including traffic safety, cooking, communication skills, self-reliance and self-care, as well as yoga, physical exercise and theatre. The vocational

¹¹⁰ Law on Special Education, art. 13, para. e.

¹¹¹ Law on Special Education, art. 13, para. st; art. 14, para. st.

¹¹² These include: Vocational Training Programmes (PEK) of the European Social Fund, HORIZON programmes, programmes against the vocational isolation of the disabled individual, vocational training and rehabilitation programmes. Written information provided by P. Papanikolopoulou, Athens, March 2004; and an interview with D. Gazouka, representative of the Margarita Special Education Laboratory, Athens, March 2004.

practice department offers workshops for gardening, industrial activities, clothing, silk-screen printing, weaving and making gifts. This department was designed to be a commercial enterprise under the framework of sheltered employment.

Supported employment is another model for vocational rehabilitation. In Greece, the Theotokos centre is an example of good practice in this area, on a prototype basis. According to data provided by the Theotokos foundation, more than 110 of the centre's young graduates with intellectual disabilities have been employed in their respective fields in the last five years.¹¹³ However, it is reported that the important transition from education to employment is hindered by the established tendency in society to discriminate against people with disabilities. The general view that individuals with disabilities are incapable of living an independent life restricts their opportunities for their social and vocational integration.¹¹⁴

NGOs that have vocational training and rehabilitation programmes for people with special needs also assess their graduates' progress, based on each individual's level of professional skills, behaviour, consistency and professional consciousness. These assessments can determine a complete profile for the promotion of the individual in the open market. The assessments incorporate a "practicum", wherein the graduate receives group training on vocational orientation, management of job difficulties and the development of professional consciousness. The final evaluation of the graduate's readiness for vocational rehabilitation follows the practicum.¹¹⁵ The procedure for assessing a graduate's capacity to work is usually performed by the institution's scientific team and educators.

People with intellectual disabilities report that vocational training is essential in order to develop their abilities and promote their life and professional skills, so that they may be able to find employment in the open market.¹¹⁶ They believe that support from an organised vocational centre that provides vocational training and education enhances their confidence and self-reliance in building skills for their vocational rehabilitation and integration. Employment is an essential part of promoting self-esteem and helping to maintain and develop goals for independent and autonomous living. According to a person with intellectual disabilities, carrying out simple tasks, such as making coffee or helping with tools in a car service, maintains good skills and practices and opens opportunities for rewarding relationships with colleagues and employers.¹¹⁷ Staff

¹¹³ Written information provided by P. Papanikolopoulou, March 2004

¹¹⁴ Written information provided by P. Papanikolopoulou, March 2004

¹¹⁵ Interview with D. Gazouka, March 2004.

¹¹⁶ Interview with a person with intellectual disabilities, Thetis residential home, May, 2004.

¹¹⁷ Interview with a person with intellectual disabilities, Thetis residential home, May, 2004.

members working with individuals with intellectual disabilities observe that supported employment is useful even for people with *severe* or *profound* intellectual disabilities.¹¹⁸

The Margarita Laboratory, which is a private sector legal entity, operates vocational rehabilitation services for its trainees on the open market, with the continuous support of the laboratory.¹¹⁹ The laboratory reports that 12 individuals with intellectual disabilities have received vocational training in the public sector under Law 1648/86 between 1986 and 2001. Between 2002 and 2004, 15 people with *mild* and *moderate* intellectual disabilities, aged from 19 to 36 years, received vocational training in the private sector and the Organisation of Local Authorities (OTA).

The ERGAXIA centre, which operates in line with the principles of supported employment and as part of the Theotokos foundation for the care of children with disabilities, offers vocational training and rehabilitation in the open market to 12 people with intellectual disabilities each year. The foundation reports that 110 of the centre's graduates with intellectual disabilities are currently employed in the open market: 13 per cent of the graduates were employed in the public sector, 34 per cent in Organisations of Local Authorities and 53 per cent in the private sector.¹²⁰

While the efforts of these NGOs to provide vocational training to people with intellectual disabilities are essential, they are not sufficient to provide the majority of their trainees with vocational rehabilitation. To improve the situation, the vocational rehabilitation programmes of these NGOs should be officially recognised, and their graduates should be given qualifications equal to secondary education. Such measures could increase the graduates' employment opportunities in the market and ensure their employment rights.¹²¹

4.2 Adult or life-long education

Under the framework of the OAED, educational programmes are offered in three different vocational training centres for 300 adults with special needs. These programmes have been adapted to meet the needs of the employment market, as well as the special characteristics of the adult trainees, and they offer training in a variety of fields: office work, wood sculpture, religious painting, sewing and weaving. Trainees in these programmes receive €12 or €17.60 daily. Unfortunately, there are reportedly too few of these vocational laboratories to meet the needs of the population with

¹¹⁸ Interviews with: Panayotis Troboukis, staff member, Thetis residential home, May 2004; and Dionisis Serras, staff member, Thetis residential home, May 2004.

¹¹⁹ Written Information provided by D. Gazouka, March 2004. Margarita laboratory is a legal entity of the private sector established in 1979 through the initiative of parents. It is supervised by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and it is supported financially by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Prefecture, and donations.

¹²⁰ Written information provided by P. Papanikolopoulou, March 2004.

¹²¹ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

intellectual disabilities.¹²² In addition, it appears that since the majority of these laboratories mainly serve the Athens area, people with intellectual disabilities who reside in the rural areas of Greece have far fewer options for continuing their education.

¹²² OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

IV. Access to Employment

1. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution specifically guarantees the right to work for people with disabilities, and draft legislation has been elaborated to bring anti-discrimination law into line with relevant EU directives, although this legislation has not yet been adopted. Assessment procedures are bureaucratic and tedious, and they must be repeated, even where a permanent disability is diagnosed. The teams conducting assessments of working capacity are primarily medical specialists, who, in some cases, are not trained to meaningfully assess an individual's ability to work. Disability benefits are correlated to the level of disability, as well as other factors, and although these benefits provide an inadequate level of support on their own, they are reduced if other sources of income exceed a given threshold. The lengthy procedures to re-qualify for benefits also discourage people with disabilities from seeking employment.

1.1 National employment legislation

According to article 21 of the Greek Constitution, citizens with disabilities shall have the right to work and to receive measures that ensure their autonomy, their vocational integration and participation in the social, economic and political life of the country. In addition, all employed people, no matter their gender or other factors, have the right to equal salaries for equal value of work provided.¹²³ In accordance with Law 1426/84, which ratifies the European Social Charter, every individual with disabilities has the right to educational training and to vocational and social readjustment, no matter what the cause and nature of their disability.¹²⁴

In the past five years, Greece has substantially updated its legislative anti-discrimination framework, mainly to bring its laws in line with EU directives and standards. Most notably, a draft law on protection against discrimination has been elaborated, but it has not yet been adopted by the Parliament.¹²⁵ It specifically prohibits direct or indirect discrimination, including discrimination in employment, on the grounds of sex, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, religion and faith, disability, age or sexual orientation.¹²⁶ The draft law also sets forth definitions for direct and indirect discrimination in line with the Employment Directive.¹²⁷ Article 4 of the draft addresses equal opportunities in services, and this article requires accommodation (shelter) for people with disabilities.

¹²³ Constitution, art. 22, para. 1.

¹²⁴ Law 1426/84 on the Ratification of the European Social Charter, art. 1, 2, 3.

¹²⁵ Interview with P. Matsiota, General Director, Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, Athens, March 2004.

¹²⁶ Draft law on protection against discrimination (Race Equality Directive): "implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial, national, ethnic or genetic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability and age", Athens, 2003.

¹²⁷ Compare with the EU Employment Directive (Council Directive 2000/78/EC), art. 2.

The main way in which the Government encourages the employment of people with disabilities is through a quota system for employers with more than 50 employees. Provision is made for people with disabilities to be placed in positions with legal entities of the public sector and organisations of local authorities, as well as positions in the extended public sector.

There is no legislative framework for supported and sheltered employment, even though such legislation could significantly promote the vocational rehabilitation of people with intellectual disabilities. Consequently, the small-scale attempts that have been made to promote these two types of employment have encountered difficulties and had little success.

1.2 Diagnosis and assessment for employment and benefits purposes

The First Level Health Committee of the local authority conducts the assessments to determine individuals' capacity to work and to establish eligibility for social benefits and pension funds.¹²⁸ For people with intellectual disabilities, the Prefecture's First Level Health Committee is primarily responsible for determining a person's percentage of disability, for access to social benefits and pension funds. This determination is based on the result of IQ measurement, assessed through psychometric testing according to the ICD-10 or DSM-IV criteria. The Committee consists of physicians of many different specialisations. However, it does not include a psychologist, social worker, special educator or other non-medical specialist, and the physicians who are the members of a Health Committee might not have the training to perform their task meaningfully.

A Health Committee examines individuals with intellectual disabilities and determines the person's percentage of disability based on the result of an IQ measurement submitted by public hospitals, child guidance clinics, or psychological health centres and a list of medical conditions prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The level of intellectual disability, either *mild*, *moderate*, or *severe*, is usually correlated with the percentage of reduced capacity to work. The committee determines an individual's permanent or reduced capacity to work and the subsequent duration and type of benefits the person might be eligible for. The assessment also takes into consideration the duration of the determined incapacity and the period of time when the person's condition should be reviewed. The process of determining the percentage of a person's disability is strongly correlated to IQ measurements and degree of intellectual disability, but it does not consider and assess the individual's particular abilities and potential capacity to perform certain duties in work. The process has been criticised as being both tiring and bureaucratic, and aiming mainly at determining eligibility for social benefits rather than assessment of capacity for employment purposes.

¹²⁸ Written information provided by the Department for Children's Rights of the Ombudsman, June 2004.

1.3 The role of the social welfare system

To become eligible for social services, a person with intellectual disabilities must have a diagnosis and a certificate from the local First Level Health Committee. All insurance and pension funds that provide welfare allowances and disability benefits are based on the committee's verification.¹²⁹

The First Level Health Committee may find that the condition of a person with intellectual disabilities is permanent and assign a lifetime allowance. Nevertheless, decisions are reviewed every three to five years, as a way of ensuring against fraud and monitoring insurance claims. This means that, in order to be eligible for certain services, people with intellectual disabilities must undergo a wearying procedure, of which the examination is only one part, many times in their lifetime.

Eligibility for a disability allowance and other benefits, which determines the services people receive, is based on three major criteria:

- the percentage of disability;
- the type of insurance, which depends on the individual or their parents' job;
- any financial assets and other financial support that the person receives.

People assessed with an IQ of 30 or below are considered to have a *severe* or *profound* intellectual disability, and, in 2004, they were eligible for a monthly allowance of €284, provided by the Provident Fund.¹³⁰ In 2004, those with an IQ between 30 and 40, but with a disability percentage equal to or greater than 67 per cent, became eligible for a Provident Fund allowance that was set at €200 per month. Where an individual receives a second disability allowance from another organisation, or financial support from a different service, that is greater than €29.35 and equal to the lowest disability pension of the Farmer's Security Organisation, then the extra amount of money is deducted from the Provident Fund allowance, so that an individual would receive €234, instead of €284, per month in 2004.

In case of employment, disability benefits are discontinued.¹³¹ This withdrawal of benefits appears to discourage people with intellectual disabilities from following vocational training rehabilitation opportunities and finding employment. Moreover, the procedure to re-establish benefits is lengthy and bureaucratic, and, in general, neither the salary nor the social security benefits are sufficient on their own to satisfy basic needs without other financial support.¹³² To meet the increasing costs of living, the threshold at

¹²⁹ There is no common insurance and pension fund for all employed people in Greece, but several professional categories have their own funds. Written information provided by Sotiris Georgopoulos, Director, Department for the Protection of Individuals with Special Needs, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Athens, March 2004.

¹³⁰ Ministry Decision P. 3^a/F.18/G.P. oik. 7513/22.1.2004 (FEK 134^B/29.01.2004).

¹³¹ Written information provided by K. Katsouda, Social Worker-Representative of the ERGAXIA Vocational Rehabilitation Team, Theotokos Foundation, Athens, March, 2004.

¹³² OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

which benefits are withdrawn must be raised to a level equal to the minimum wage, which is determined by the General National Collective Employment Contract.

Overall, the Government must improve the development and provision of services that will promote the educational, social and vocational integration of people with intellectual disabilities, in addition to providing support through benefits. Social welfare benefits remain an important source of support for people with intellectual disabilities, but these benefits fundamentally do not promote integration or encourage employment.¹³³

2. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Greece has received support from the EU to develop programmes encouraging the employment of people with disabilities in general. However, local structures established to support the integration of vulnerable groups have not proven effective in enhancing employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. Other Government measures, including a quota system that requires State and local authorities to hire people with disabilities, have also had only limited impact on the employment of people with intellectual disabilities, because the quotas are filled by people with other forms of disability. A number of new incentive programmes, offering subsidies for training and salaries, have been adopted recently, and these may prove more effective.

2.1 The EU and Government employment policy

The EU has specifically supported the development of national programmes and policies for the vocational training and the employment options of people with intellectual disabilities.

Between January and June 2003, during the first part of the European Year of People with Disabilities, Greece held the presidency of the EU.¹³⁴ In its conclusions on the follow up of the Year, the European Council:

Invites the current and acceding Member States to pro-actively mainstream disability issues into relevant policy areas and in particular to take due account of disability matters while elaborating and implementing their National Action Plans on Employment and Social Inclusion¹³⁵

¹³³ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

¹³⁴ See the web site of the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate at http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/disability/year_en.html (accessed 8 October 2004).

¹³⁵ Council conclusions of 1st and 2nd of December 2003 on the follow up of the European Year of People with Disabilities and the promotion of Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities, available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/council_eypd_fu_en.pdf (accessed 8 October 2004).

In 2003, the Government adopted a National Action Plan for the years 2003–2005,¹³⁶ as part of the “Charter of Convergence” effort to accelerate Greece’s social and economic convergence with the European Community countries.¹³⁷ The Action Plan is designed to meet international standards, relevant EU directives, recommendations and international good practices. The main principles of the Action Plan include policy measures for the social and vocational integration of the population, the promotion of access to different services, good use of national and financial resources, prevention of isolation, and support of socially vulnerable populations and minority groups.¹³⁸ The Action Plan does not make specific reference to the employment of people with intellectual disabilities, although the National Federation of Disabled Individuals was invited to consult in the plan’s development.¹³⁹

Since 1992, a number of related programmes, such as Horizon,¹⁴⁰ Helios II,¹⁴¹ EQUAL¹⁴² and Leonardo da Vinci,¹⁴³ were promoted by the European Commission and implemented in Greece. The aims of the programmes were to encourage skills acquisition of individuals with special needs and to assist in their social and vocational integration and rehabilitation.¹⁴⁴ The average duration of the programmes was two-to-four years, which was insufficient to address the needs of people with intellectual

¹³⁶ Ministry of Labour and Social Security, National Action Plan on Employment 2001: Greece, p. 12, available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/may/nap2001el_en.pdf (accessed 8 October 2004) (hereafter, National Action Plan).

¹³⁷ Adopted by the Greek Government on 10 September 2003.

¹³⁸ National Action Plan, p. 24.

¹³⁹ National Action Plan, p. 45.

¹⁴⁰ “Employment-HORIZON is the ‘strand’ of the Employment Community Initiative which supports Member States and the Commission in working together to overcome the challenges which disabled people face in their integration into work and society.” See http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/esf/en/public/sr_hor/hor1.htm#top (accessed 8 September 2004).

¹⁴¹ “To promote equal opportunities for and the integration of disabled people through the development of a community-level policy of cooperation with the Member States and non-governmental organisations directly involved in the fields of functional rehabilitation, educational integration and economic and social integration.” See <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11405c.htm> (accessed 8 September 2004).

¹⁴² “EQUAL is part of the EU’s strategy for more and better jobs and for ensuring that no-one is denied access to them. Funded by the European Social Fund, EQUAL will test new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job.” See http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/index.cfm?file=detart.cfm&nav_id_menu=126&art_id=10294&lang_id=5 (accessed 8 September 2004).

¹⁴³ “The objectives of the Leonardo da Vinci programme for the implementation of a Community vocational training policy include the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women in vocational training and employment.” See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/old/opportunities/compeo-en.pdf> (accessed 8 September 2004).

¹⁴⁴ Interview with D. Gazouka, Athens, March 2004.

disabilities in the longer term. Consequently, these programmes' long-term impact on the development and operation of new services is in question, especially given that their continuity was not ensured. Still, there are indications that these programmes have had a positive influence on public attitudes regarding services promoting the employment of people with intellectual disabilities.¹⁴⁵

2.2 National employment policy

2.2.1 Development of employment programmes

Each employment branch of the OAED has specialised employment counsellors, who deal with socially vulnerable people and are expected to promote better support and integration in the employment market for people with disabilities. These social workers, sociologists and psychologists cooperate on an individual basis with each unemployed person. Based on this process, they assess the clients' particular needs for social and psychological support and vocational training. In addition, the OAED should provide specialised information services that sensitise and inform employers and vocational service providers and organisations, to help ensure there is cooperation among the social structures involved and to facilitate communication between employers and newly employed people.

According to experts, however, there is a general impression that OAED services are insufficient and not effective in supporting and promoting the employment of people with intellectual disabilities on the open market.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop specialised awareness programmes as part of the Government's approach to employment, in order to promote and support the vocational capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities. Specifically, these programmes must be implemented for employees in public positions, and they must also be implemented within trade unions, to increase the recognition of the employment rights of people with intellectual disabilities and to encourage their vocational integration.

2.2.2 Government requirements and incentives

In accordance with Law 2643/98 on Care for the Employment of People with Special Needs, five per cent of all job placements must be made available for people from protected groups, including people with special needs, such as those with intellectual and other disabilities. Of this five per cent, three per cent of the total number of announced placements is made available to people with all types of disabilities. In 2002, 101 positions in public services and 512 positions in private companies were available through this provision, and these jobs were filled by people with special needs, including people with intellectual disabilities. However, it is not known how many of

¹⁴⁵ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

¹⁴⁶ OSI Roundtable, Athens, June 2004.

these positions became available to people with intellectual disabilities specifically. For this quota system to have a significant impact on opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, a defined percentage of these positions should be made available specifically for people with intellectual disabilities, as opposed to being available for people with any other disability. Furthermore, these positions should include appropriate support for people with intellectual disabilities, such as mentoring or coaching on the job. The actual experience of employers' and colleagues in working alongside people with intellectual disabilities, as required by a quota system, could be an effective means of reducing prejudice and stereotypes about the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities.

The OAED develops a number of programmes promoting the employment of people with disabilities almost every year. These programmes subsidise new working positions and new entrepreneurs, with the goal of encouraging productive vocational integration.¹⁴⁷ They provide for a number of measures encouraging employment and vocational integration amongst the most vulnerable groups in society. The beneficiaries of these programmes include unemployed people with disabilities, and various other vulnerable and high-risk groups. The programmes include provisions addressing employment for people with special needs, aged from 18 to 65.

Common decision 1503/12-12-03, of the Ministry of Finances and the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, established the following subsidies, to reduce unemployment among people with disabilities and to equalise opportunities in the open market:

- €35.7 million for 1,700 full-time working positions subsidised for 36 months at €22 daily for each employee during the period of 2003 to 2007;
- €7.95 million for 450 positions opened for people with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities, to create new personal companies or partnerships with a subsidy lasting 48 months between 2003 and 2007; the main amount of the subsidy for each new entrepreneur who participates in the programme increases by €1,500 if the new entrepreneur has special needs and a disability percentage more than 60 per cent, is a woman, or is a subsidised unemployed person over the age of 45;¹⁴⁸
- €120,000 for adapting the workplace for 50 people with special needs between 2003 and 2005; the OAED covers 90 per cent of the subsidy at a maximum of €2,400 for each adapted structure;

¹⁴⁷ Written information provided by P. Matsiota, General Director, Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, March 2004.

¹⁴⁸ The subsidy amount for all programme beneficiaries is €7,600 for the first year, €3,000 for the second and third year and €2,400 for the fourth year.

- 50 part-time working positions for all the beneficiaries of the programme, including those with disabilities, subsidised for 36 months at €12 daily for each employee;
- 270 full-time contract work positions of limited duration, specified from four to nine months, for which the subsidy for each employee is €22 daily for a total of nine months.

Of the 5,275 individuals with special needs who were included in the programmes for new employment positions and for new entrepreneurs to create personal companies or partnerships, only 266 participants, or five per cent, were people with intellectual disabilities.¹⁴⁹

Under the subsidy programme framework for new working positions, the first three months of employment are considered as an adjustment period. During this time, the employer must train the employee and facilitate a smooth integration. Where a business seeks to retain the same employee after the end of the programme, it is exceptionally possible to receive a new subsidy if the person has an intellectual disability.¹⁵⁰

As this programme was only adopted in 2003, it is too soon to evaluate the effect of its implementation. Clearly, the OAED must take the lead in ensuring these measures are carried through, with the participation of the associations for people with special needs that have an active role in the area.

According to information provided by the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, a number of actions aiming to promote the employment of people from vulnerable social groups, including those with intellectual disabilities, are in progress, with co-funding from the EU. Specifically, under the “employment and vocational rehabilitation” programme for 2000–2006, the following provisions have been made:

- A €31,500,000 subsidy for new employment positions and new entrepreneurs. It has been reported that this subsidy supported 3,285 people in total, and 152 of them were people with special needs. This programme ended on 31 December 2003. However, the number of beneficiaries in relation to the available funds is extremely small, and it seems that only limited gains have been achieved in practice.
- Subsidy programmes for new working positions and new entrepreneurs, to support the employment of unemployed socially vulnerable groups. These groups should receive support or prevocational training services in vocational training centres. Submission of applications is in progress, and 2,400 vulnerable

¹⁴⁹ Statistical information for the years 2001–2003 provided by A. Manousaki, Director of OAED, Athens, June 2004.

¹⁵⁰ National Action Plan, 2003–2005; also, Common decision 1503/12-12-03 of the Ministry of Finances and the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection.

individuals are expected to participate, including those with special needs. However, the percentage of people with intellectual disabilities that may benefit from this programme is not known. The cost of the programme is set to reach €28.4 million.

- Implementation of a programme for the provision of support services commenced in 2002 and was completed at the end of June 2004. According to information provided by the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, the programme, which had a budget of €17.6 million, should benefit 1,508 individuals with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities, whose number has not been estimated.
- A programme with a budget of €29.3 million, which would provide support services for 22,000 vulnerable individuals, has been announced. However, it is not known if people with intellectual disabilities will benefit, and it is not yet clear the extent to which the services will be appropriate for this group.
- Interventions for the social and vocational integration of minority groups have been announced. These groups will include 3,800 people with special needs, but no information is available on the number of people with intellectual disabilities that might benefit.

Public services, legal persons of public entities and local authorities of every level are obliged to appoint and employ persons protected by law, without competition or selection, for positions that amount to five per cent of the total positions throughout Greece.¹⁵¹ The legislative framework does not make specific provisions for people with intellectual disabilities.

The official data on the evaluation of the participants in these various incentive programmes is not disaggregated according to the type of disability. Furthermore, no monitoring or evaluation system has been maintained to report on the effectiveness of these programmes. The general impression is that the reality is different from the policies announced. In practice, there is no clarity regarding the expenditures of the relevant funds, and people with intellectual disabilities continue to be excluded from these employment programmes. Better data collection, along with closer monitoring, would allow the Government to assess the impact of these programmes, and to make any necessary adjustments and improvements.

¹⁵¹ Law 2643/1998 on Care for the Employment of People with Special Needs, and other Provisions.

3. EMPLOYMENT IN PRACTICE

Available statistical information suggests that very few people with intellectual disabilities are employed, either through incentive programmes or on the open market. No legislation or policy to promote supported employment has been elaborated. The existing projects offering support to people with intellectual disabilities in the workplace are operated by NGOs and can serve only a fraction of the population that could benefit. The ERGAXIA centre, which is enabling 100 people with intellectual disabilities to gain employment on the open market, offers one example of good practice in supported employment. But Governments backing is required to reproduce such models on a wider scale. Sheltered workshops, also established by NGOs, do offer training and occupation to people with intellectual disabilities, but these are segregated workplaces that do not promote social inclusion. Without greater institutional support, there are few opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to make the transition from sheltered work to the open market.

3.1 Statistical information

The National Statistical Institute and the OAED collect data on unemployment rates in the country, but they only record the sex and age of the unemployed population. There is no official data on the employment level of people with disabilities, or, more specifically, people with intellectual disabilities. As of 2003, according to the information provided by the General Secretariat of the National Statistical Institute, the proportion of unemployed people was recorded at 9.5 per cent of the total population of 10,964,000 people in Greece. There is no official data on the unemployment level of people with disabilities. According to recent data provided by Eurostat, 959,000 people in Greece, or 9.3 per cent of the population, have disabilities, and among this group are those with intellectual disabilities.¹⁵² An evaluation consultant of the European programme against vocational isolation has estimated the percentage of unemployment for people with disabilities to be 64 per cent for men and 88 per cent for women.¹⁵³

Statistical information provided by the OAED indicates that, out of the total number of 12,120 people with disabilities registered as unemployed, 11,942 were placed in employment programmes implemented by the OAED, and 178 individuals were placed in co-funded European programmes.¹⁵⁴ As mentioned above, out of the 5,275 adults with special needs who were placed in the programmes for new employment positions and for new entrepreneurs to create personal companies or partnerships, only 266 individuals, or 5 per cent, had intellectual disabilities. Of these 266 people with intellectual disabilities, 75 per cent of whom were men, 239, or 90 per cent of the total, were appointed to new employment positions, while the remaining 27 individuals, or 10 per cent of the total, were placed in programmes subsidising new

¹⁵² Archive for Disability and Rehabilitation, issue 25, News, p. 2.
See <http://www.disabled.gr/gr-arts/25eidisis.html> (accessed 8 September 2004).

¹⁵³ Eurostat, new Kronos Database.

¹⁵⁴ Statistical information for the years 1993–2003 provided by A. Manousaki, June 2004.

entrepreneurs to create their own businesses. In general, given the extremely small number of people with intellectual disabilities placed in employment positions, the measures have had only a limited impact on this population, and they cannot satisfy the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

3.2 Supported employment on the open market

There is no legislative framework for supported employment in Greece, nor any budget allowance for such programmes. Some private-sector employers have agreed to take on a worker with intellectual disabilities informally, on the basis of their good will and cooperation with a vocational workshop.¹⁵⁵ In some such cases there is no official employment contract, but only an informal agreement between the employer and the employee, based on the individual's skill level.

Supported employment services do operate independently, in NGO centres established for the vocational training of people with intellectual disabilities. These centres adopted the model of supported employment from elsewhere in Europe early in the 1990s. The number of these centres is very small – not more than ten – and they use the model of supported employment on a prototype and pilot level. In 1997, the Greek Association of Supported Employment was established in Greece to support, with specific practices, NGOs aiming to promote employment of people with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, in the open market.

One such NGO is the ERGAXIA centre, which has operated since 1996, in line with the principles of supported employment and as part of the Theotokos foundation for the care of children with disabilities. Specialised staff members offer vocational training and rehabilitation in the open market to 12 people with intellectual disabilities each year. In this framework, more than 100 people with intellectual disabilities are currently employed in the open market with support from ERGAXIA. The centre reports no incidences of discrimination or harassment of the employed people with intellectual disabilities by other employees in the workplace.¹⁵⁶

Five identified steps comprise the model of supported employment:¹⁵⁷ the assessment (professional profile), the search for the appropriate employer, the matching of the candidate with the relevant job position, the vocational training of the candidate and finally, the psycho-educational and social support of the candidate. Where a position becomes available, a vocational consultant draws up a professional and personal profile of the candidate and confirms that the individual with the disability voluntarily decides to seek employment and that the family supports this choice. The vocational consultant elaborates the job description, where the profile of the working environment, the

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Achilleas Vassilikopoulos, Director, Thetis Residential Home, March 2004.

¹⁵⁶ Written information from Anrike Dibeve, President of the Greek Association of Supported Employment, Vocational Trainer at the ERGAXIA centre, March 2004.

¹⁵⁷ Written information from Anrike Dibeve, March 2004.

working hours and the nature of the job responsibilities are specified. Then the job consultant compiles this information, matches the profile and the job description and identifies a person who is suitable for a job meeting most of the requirements. Subsequently, the consultant schedules an interview meeting between the employer and the candidate. If they reach an agreement, the individual is employed and trained in the working environment. There is usually a trial period of two weeks to one month. The vocational consultant provides information about OAED subsidies to employers.

Under this model of supported employment, the aim is an official employment contract with provision for payment and insurance. The candidate's training commences with traffic safety education, if it is required, and all the steps for developing professional behaviour and practice. In addition, issues such as payments, insurance and job rights are emphasised. One of the major aims is to train the individual to work independently, without a trainer's continuous support. When the basic training is completed, the trainer withdraws gradually. However, the supported employee or the trainer chooses a mentor in the working environment. This mentor supports the person with intellectual disabilities, while the trainer provides support only as requested.

Overall, the available supported employment services and programmes are minimal. At present, only prototype and pilot efforts have been undertaken, even though broader measures are needed. There is a general impression that the only a small percentage of the overall number of people with intellectual disabilities benefit from these programmes. The Government should work closely with existing initiatives to develop policies to promote supported employment at the national level, and it should examine whether some of existing incentive programmes could be structured to incorporate good practices in supported employment.

3.3 The sheltered workplace

The system of sheltered employment for people with intellectual disabilities has not been developed or officially supported in Greece. However, a small number of specialised vocational institutions have been established for people with disabilities. Among the organisations promoting sheltered employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities is the Margarita special education laboratory, Estia and Theotokos. These structures are mainly private and established by NGOs.

There are 21 specialised institutions for people with disabilities in the Athens area. These operate as legal entities and are supported by private funds and parents' initiatives for the most part. There are also 11 units for pre- and post-vocational rehabilitation in the public sector.¹⁵⁸ They have workshops for practising various specialities, such as painting, pottery, decoration structures, sewing and typing. The

¹⁵⁸ Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration, and Re-decentralisation, "Guide for the Citizen with Special Needs", Athens, 2001, pp. 384–393.

goods and services these establishments can produce are sometimes offered on the open market. They should provide people with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, with support, such as vocational training, while also providing opportunities to find work and to promote their products for sale on the open market. In these establishments, people with intellectual disabilities usually receive a symbolic amount of money as a payment when they sell their products in the open market. However, there is a lack of data on the quality of the provided services.

The number of special laboratories that operate under the framework of supported or sheltered employment is very small, and these are concentrated mainly in larger cities, leaving rural areas under-served. Although attempts to promote a framework for sheltered employment have had a positive effect, these laboratories are not recognised in official Government policies, and there is no legislative framework to support their establishment or to promote their operation. In addition, there is no legislative framework to support and promote the sale of products that people with intellectual disabilities produce in the special education workshops, even though such promotion would help to increase their enterprising abilities. The official governmental employment bodies and organisations, such as the OAED, have not developed any incentives for employment through sheltered structures, in contrast to the incentives they provide for private enterprise. While sheltered work is not an optimal solution for people with intellectual disabilities, as it is generally in a segregated context, the opportunities it offers for gaining valuable skills that could be an effective springboard to employment on the open market should be explored further.

V. Conclusions

Greece has signed and ratified most main international conventions referring to human rights and specifically to the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. In addition, individuals with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, are guaranteed equal treatment and opportunities with the rest of the population regarding their access to education, employment, health and social services. However, in practice, not all legislative initiatives are implemented satisfactorily in order to meet the needs of these people and their families.

People with intellectual disabilities have specific educational, cognitive, social, psychological and psychiatric needs. The assessment, identification and effective satisfaction of these needs is important for the educational, vocational and social integration of society. However, a main obstacle in assessing and meeting the needs of people with intellectual disabilities in Greece is the lack of organised official data on their socio-demographic and other characteristics, as well as the services provided to them. This lack of official data hinders the development of effective needs-based programmes and policies for people with intellectual disabilities.

During the last 20 years, a number of social care structures have been developed to provide care, support and psychosocial rehabilitation to people with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities. However, the number, structure and specialised staff of these institutions is not sufficient to meet the needs of the relevant population. Consequently, there is a need for the establishment and development of more social care and rehabilitation services, and there is a need for the improvement and development of policies to inspect, supervise and evaluate the quality of care that the existing services provide.

In addition, it is essential to develop awareness programmes to inform the public, including parents, State employees and educators, about the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities. These programmes should sensitise the public against stigma, prejudice and discrimination. Such heightened awareness will facilitate the appropriate and comprehensive support of the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and further their productive educational, vocational and social integration.

With regard to people with intellectual disabilities, Greek legislation promotes and recognises their need for equal treatment, their right to obligatory and free education, the necessity to give them support according to their abilities and special needs, their right to equalisation of opportunities in inclusive education, and the importance of adjusting school curricula and school structures according to their special needs. The Department of Special Education within the Ministry of Education is obliged to implement legislation aiming at the development of personality, improvement of skills, vocational training and equal social development of people with intellectual disabilities.

However, despite these legislative provisions, the educational needs of people with intellectual disabilities are not sufficiently met in practice. Although a great number of families seek referrals for assessment and support, there is no unified structure for the diagnosis of intellectual disability in Greece. A number of organisations, such as the KDAY centres, public hospitals, psychological health centres and child guidance clinics, are responsible for assessment and diagnosis. However, they do not appear to cooperate effectively, and at times there are discrepancies in the assessments, diagnosis and recommendations they issue. Improved coordination of these services is needed, to ensure that the diagnostic process is less confusing, tiring and bureaucratic for parents and children. In addition, all these services should consistently employ the same diagnostic and recommendation criteria, in order to avoid problems with different or contradictory evaluations.

The lack of adequate diagnostic and support services in larger cities, as well as rural areas of the mainland and islands, leaves a significant proportion of the population without access to these services. There are no mobile support and diagnostic teams at all, although there is the legislative provision for their establishment and operation. The lack of material-technical structure and the insufficient number of specialised staff has also been cited as a problem, especially for the KDAY system, so that their assessment-diagnostic reports do not include sufficient information and are not always accompanied by an individualised educational programme for the child. Greece needs to increase the number of social services, and establish centres in rural areas, as well as to support their structure and their staffing by specialised professionals, so that the population's needs can be met adequately.

National policy provides for specialised programmes for the development of education of people with intellectual disabilities, and EU funding has supported the development of several national programmes for the education of people with intellectual disabilities. However, the Government must assume responsibility for ensuring the continuation of these programmes and the evaluation of their effectiveness.

Additional resources and support for the education of children with intellectual disabilities is urgently needed. Curricula for students with intellectual disabilities must be introduced and adapted according to the level and the type of their educational needs. There is a lack of specialised educational material at schools, even though the Ministry of Education has issued this material. In addition, it is essential to make provisions for the development and implementation of educational programmes and specialised education structures for people with severe or profound intellectual disabilities, to ensure they are not excluded from the educational process. Furthermore, there is a need to increase the number of creative activities and prevocational training in primary and secondary special education. These types of activities and training are important, because they help individuals with intellectual disabilities of all levels to develop new skills for community living. At the same time, it is essential to provide for the specialisation, continuous education and in-service training of educators, so that they can sufficiently respond to the special needs of each student.

Greek policy supports the promotion of inclusion classes and the development of integrated teaching within a regular classroom as the best means to build solidarity between children with intellectual disabilities and their peers. However, at present in Greece, it is more common for children with intellectual disabilities to be enrolled in special education in special inclusion classes in mainstream schools or in special schools, which are not fully inclusive. In addition, neither the number of the existing special school units and inclusion classes nor the teaching hours are sufficient. Many rural areas are not supported by special schools and support services. Meanwhile, a number of cases of harassment and stigmatisation against individuals with intellectual disability have been reported in special inclusion classes in mainstream schools. Consequently, it is essential to develop awareness programmes for educators, students, parents and the public in general, to prevent stigmatisation of intellectual disability. It is also essential to establish a specialised body to promote equal opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. In addition, the promotion of integrated teaching within a regular classroom, the introduction of the whole-day programme in special schools and the implementation of home schooling for individuals with intellectual disabilities are of major importance for the effective promotion of educational and social integration of these people.

According to the Greek legislation, each person with a disability has the right to vocational education and social integration, no matter what the nature of the disability is. In addition, benefits allowances support individuals with intellectual disabilities, though they do not essentially promote the provision and establishment of services for these individuals' vocational and social integration. Under this framework, a number of European programmes implemented in Greece were intended to prepare individuals with special needs for the acquisition of vocational skills and their social and vocational rehabilitation. However, their duration was too limited to satisfy the needs of these people.

Since October 2003, the development of national and local programmes with governmental and European incentives, including programmes for new employment positions and new entrepreneurs to open their own businesses, programmes subsidising employers to employ individuals with disabilities, and educational programmes in vocational training centres, create opportunities for employment positions in the open market. These programmes emphasise vocational training, the importance of interventions on an individual level and the establishment of support services according to the special needs of the population, including those with intellectual disabilities. A small number of people with intellectual disabilities benefited from these programmes. However, there remains a need to establish a quota system according to the type of disability and, specifically, for individuals with intellectual disabilities, so that an equal distribution of employment positions can be promoted.

In another recent improvement, NGOs and parents' associations have made great efforts to develop the vocational training and rehabilitation of people with intellectual disabilities. However, these organisations lack the capacity to provide vocational rehabilitation for the majority of trainees with intellectual disabilities. A significant

discrepancy exists between the number of employment positions and the number of graduates from both public and private vocational training centres – there are too few available positions, and greater efforts are needed to find appropriate placements for these graduates. Vocational training programmes should also receive official recognition by the State as a form of secondary education, which could increase graduates' opportunities to find employment in the open market. In addition, the Government should develop and implement a legislative framework that protects and promotes the vocational rights of people with intellectual disabilities, as well as supports them with vocational training and rehabilitation.

There have been several attempts from services and programmes to promote supported and sheltered employment. These initiatives have been successful in offering vocational training and rehabilitation for some individuals, mainly with *mild* or *moderate* intellectual disability, but they can serve only a small part of the population. These initiatives tend to remain in a pilot form, and most of them are located in the larger cities, so that the majority of rural areas remain unsupported. It is thus important to establish a legislative framework for supported and sheltered employment in Greece, as well as a legal framework to support the sale of products made by people with intellectual disabilities, in order to enhance their business skills.

The development and implementation of effective laws, policies, and practices in Greece that ensure equal opportunities in education and employment for people with intellectual disabilities are necessary to promote the full social, educational and vocational integration of this population into community life.

ANNEX 1. Legislation cited in the report

Constitution

Constitution, based on the resolution of April 6, 2001 of the seventh revisionary Parliament of Greece

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2447/1996, FEK 278/1996, the Civil Code

2643/1998 on the Care for the Employment of People with Special Needs

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