

# The Greek Review of Social Research

Vol 136 (2011)

Special Issue 136, C: Contemporary social inequalities



## The aims of employability and social inclusion / active citizenship in lifelong learning policies in Greece

Eleni Prokou

doi: [10.12681/grsr.50](https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.50)

Copyright © 2011, Eleni Prokou



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

### To cite this article:

Prokou, E. (2011). The aims of employability and social inclusion / active citizenship in lifelong learning policies in Greece. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 136, 203-223. <https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.50>

*Eleni Prokou\**

---

THE AIMS OF EMPLOYABILITY AND SOCIAL  
INCLUSION / ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN LIFELONG  
LEARNING POLICIES IN GREECE

---

ABSTRACT

*The argument of this article is that during the last two decades or so, in lifelong learning policies in Greece, priority was given to the confrontation of social exclusion that stems from unemployment and, thus, to the achievement of the aims of employability and social inclusion. EU funding and the relatively centralised character of the regulated part of adult/continuing education in Greece favoured the expansion of training programmes for the unemployed. As in the 1990s, so in the 2000s, the Greek State supported continuing vocational training which, however, was widely privatised. Thus, privatisation and the absence of coherent measures that would link education with employment, posed questions as to the fulfilment of the mission of fighting unemployment and consequently, social exclusion. At the same time, the fact that policies gave less importance to general adult education, posed challenges for adult education in Greece to meet all of its aims, which apart from employability include realisable social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development.*

*Keywords: Greece, adult education, continuing vocational training, lifelong learning, government strategy, employability, social inclusion*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last third of the twentieth century, the global forces have stridently demanded a more educated, and continually educated, workforce. Adult

---

\*Assistant Professor in Education Policy, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens.

education, in its traditional sense, has begun to disappear. The fact that it has been replaced by lifelong learning reflects the changes that advanced capitalism has been demanding (Jarvis, 2007b: 63).

In a number of European countries, the conditions of globalisation generated the so-called “learning society”, that is, a flexible and open society that meets the needs stemming from the knowledge economy and the market. In turn, “lifelong learning” stressed the flexible preparation of the workforce. The individual would be able to choose from a range of learning environments, in accordance with the emerging needs of the market. However, the expansion of learning opportunities would not necessarily have as a consequence the expansion of public provision. The dominance of a “government strategy”<sup>1</sup> in lifelong learning meant that governments would create the conditions under which the individual could maximise his/her learning, albeit on his/her own responsibility. Political discourse on lifelong learning was part of governments’ strategy for the fulfilment of the two aims of economic competitiveness and social inclusion/insertion. It was a discourse that dominated at international level (e.g., in European policy for lifelong learning) but also at the level of national policies. Nevertheless, linking lifelong learning with social aims took place at the same time that the role of the state in meeting these aims was suppressed by the very forces (globalisation forces) which formed the framework of lifelong learning and which were associated with the crisis of social democracy. In our days, the state manages the context in which citizens can make their own individual choices, participating in lifelong learning programmes in order to enter the employment sector and be no longer dependent on the state. However, the state’s withdrawal from public educational policy and its shift from lifelong education to lifelong learning<sup>2</sup> make it difficult for

---

1. As Griffin (2000: 9) argues, in a number of European countries, there has been a shift from «government policy» to «government strategy», which implies that governments relinquish control over the *outcomes* of policy and restrict themselves to organising the *means*. That is, they create the conditions in which individuals are most likely to maximise their own learning, but the ultimate responsibility lies with them. Consequently, the conditions of learning are created in the form of various incentives, mainly financial (e.g., vouchers), but also through persuasion or even veiled threat. Within this framework, lifelong learning is part of the government’s strategy to privatise the welfare system. Similarly, political discourse on lifelong learning is also part of the governments’ strategy to achieve not only the end of economic competitiveness, but also other ends such as social cohesion, social inclusion, active citizenship.

2. According to Jarvis, the term “lifelong education” refers to a planned series of events which have a humanistic basis, aim at the participants’ learning and understanding, and can happen at any time in life (2003: 53). It specifies a humanistic approach to education as an

social aims such as social cohesion and social inclusion, to be fulfilled (Prokou, 2009: 72-75).

This article<sup>3</sup> approaches lifelong learning policies in Greece during the last years, after an historical retrospection to the development of the basic adult / continuing education agencies from the beginning of the 1980s. The aim of the article is to show the priorities of the Greek State as regards the field of adult/continuing education in the 1990s and especially the 2000s. More specifically, the argument of this article is that during the last two decades or so, in lifelong learning policies priority was given to the confrontation of social exclusion that stemmed from unemployment and, therefore, to the achievement of the aims of employability and social inclusion, in accordance with the policies of the European Union (EU), the

---

approach that places the learner to the centre of the educational process (Op. cit.: 155). It is a thesis that points to the basic principles of adult education, as these have been developed by the theoreticians of the field of adult education. These principles are that adult education refers to *organised educational activities* that respect the special characteristics of adult learners and try to make them more active in the educational process (See Prokou, 2009: 68-70). More specifically, Rogers (2002: 75-77) argues that adult education is, in the end, the “education of mature age”, as it points to the provision of planned learning activities to persons that are mature not according to their date of birth, but according to their sense of responsibility, their social experience, their well-balanced way of life. The learners are treated as persons that have the above characteristics. In general, adult education aims at changing the participants by guiding them towards a predetermined aim, while at the same time it makes them more independent. Adult education means both well-disciplined action and free development. In the educational process, the educator helps the participant to achieve his/her emancipation but within the boundaries of a certain section of study or exercise.

In considering the above, although the term lifelong education refers to all stages of a person's life, it is widely used to point to the educational activities for adults and it is used within this article in this way.

It is, however, important to stress that the terms “lifelong education” and “lifelong learning” are in several ways distinct from each other. Lifelong learning refers to the unrestricted and perpetual character of learning that spans throughout life and comprises all forms of learning, including those provided by educational institutions, but also all other forms of informal learning. In our days, the term lifelong learning has prevailed at international level for three basic reasons: a) It reflects the need for continuous acquisition and renewal of knowledge that characterises post-industrial societies. b) Flexible forms of knowledge continuously increase and replace those that take place in traditional educational bodies. As a consequence, the number of people who continue their education individually at their own space, time and pace, or who follow open and distance education programmes etc., increases. c) Within conditions of acute international competition and trends of reduction of public expenses, nation-states reduce funding for educational institutions, thus transferring the responsibility for continuous education to the individual (Kokkos, 2005: 33-34).

3. The problematique of this article is developed in more detail in Prokou (2009).

main funding body for lifelong learning programmes in Greece. EU funding, together with the relatively centralised character of the regulated part of adult/continuing education in Greece,<sup>4</sup> were favourable factors for the expansion of training programmes for the unemployed. Recent empirical data, which refer to the funding of basic adult / continuing education agencies in Greece and the aspired number of participants in the programmes that the agencies carried out, showed that in the 1990s and the 2000s alike, the State supported lifelong learning in the form of continuing vocational training – vis-à-vis general adult education – but within a framework of its privatisation. At that time the State aimed at tackling social exclusion by offering training programmes (but also programmes of training and promotion to the employment sector) for the inclusion of the unemployed, and of other socially vulnerable groups, in the system of employment. However, withdrawal from public education policy posed questions as to the possibility of achieving the aim of social inclusion/insertion, while general adult education was given less importance.

#### ADULT / CONTINUING EDUCATION POLICIES IN GREECE IN THE 1980s AND THE 1990s

This section of the article will show that there was a significant shift in the policies for adult / continuing education in Greece from the 1980s to the 1990s. While during the 1980s the greatest part of adult / continuing education programmes was offered by the public sector, the situation changed dramatically during the 1990s, when mainly private centres of continuing vocational training began attracting the greatest part of EU funding to combat social exclusion that stemmed from unemployment. Meanwhile, the emphasis on continuing vocational training also meant the weakening of general adult education.

---

4. Greece presents the characteristics of the “statist” model of lifelong learning in Europe, namely a relatively strong state control – in line with the tradition of a centralised educational system – which was aided by European funding, in the framework of the semi-peripheral position of Greece in the EU. Despite the decentralisation of crucial responsibilities at the institutional level (particularly in the case of Vocational Training Centres), the role of the central government was decisive, as it exerted policies and control in initial and continuing vocational education and training through intermediary bodies. For instance, continuing vocational education and training (that takes place in Vocational Training Centres) was set under the supervision of the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training (*EKEPIS*), a body of private law that belonged to the Ministry of Employment until late 2009 (Prokou, 2009: 62) and since then, to the Ministry of Education.

More specifically, in the 1980s the basic adult / continuing education agencies belonged to the wider public sector, while the private agencies had a relatively small contribution to the development of adult education activities. The educational programmes that were run referred to legislation issues, but also to issues of public administration and local development, in view of the country's accession to the European Economic Community. Most agencies carried out training programmes for executives in both the public and the private sectors of the economy, on issues of organisation and management, marketing and public/international relations. Most adult / continuing education agencies offered training programmes in information technology, aiming at the modernisation of public administration and enterprises. Also, the demand for the development of the co-operative movement led to the organisation of a number of programmes on co-operative issues. However, the most massive adult / continuing education agencies during that period were the General Secretariat for Popular Education of the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The General Secretariat for Popular Education organised educational programmes for the working class, covering a wide range of issues concerning the productive use of "free time". The Ministry of Agriculture addressed the interests of those employed in the primary sector of the economy and, in general, of the inhabitants of agricultural areas. Adult education agencies were funded jointly by the European Social Fund (ESF), the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMP) and by other Community Funds and Programmes (Vergidis, 2005: 59-65). More specifically, funding coming from the ESF was mainly channeled to the General Secretariat for Popular Education and to the Hellenic Centre of Productivity (*ELKEPA*). Also, there were agencies carrying out continuing vocational training activities, such as the Organisation of Employment of the Work Force (*OAED*), the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (*EETAA*), and the Hellenic Organisation of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and Handicrafts (*EOMMEX*), that were based on resources coming exclusively from the ESF. However, changes in the aims of the ESF generated a series of developments in the field of adult / continuing education in Greece (Karakalis and Vergidis, 2004a: 180-181).

Until the mid 1990s, the overlapping of responsibilities and the friction among public training agencies, the lack of central planning and coordination, but also the wastage of European resources, led to the radical re-organisation of the regulated part of adult / continuing education in Greece, as well as to its extensive privatisation. A new institutional

framework was created, which stressed and promoted only certain aspects of lifelong learning, with emphasis in the development of a system of continuing vocational training (Vergidis, 2005: 66-69). The Organisation of Vocational Education and Training (*OEEK*), a body of public law under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, was founded in 1992. *OEEK* was the body that would deal with research, co-ordination and institutionalisation of technical-vocational education and training, through the foundation of the National System of Technical-Vocational Education and Training (*ESEEK*). *OEEK* aimed at: a) the organisation and functioning of the public Institutions of Vocational Training (*IEKs*), b) the supervision of the private *IEKs* and c) the realisation of the aims of *ESEEK* (i.e., the foundation of the *IEKs*, the placement of vocational training outside the formal educational system, and the recognition of the titles issued at national and community level). The aim of the *IEKs* was set to be any kind of vocational training, initial or complementary, for the inclusion of young people into the labour market (Kotsikis, 2002: 266-274).

Within the framework of the development and interrelation of the systems of initial and continuing vocational education and training,<sup>5</sup> the System of Management and Supervision of Continuing and Vocational Education Activities was enacted in 1994. This system provided, on the one hand, that the operational programmes that were funded by the EU would be managed by the services in charge at the Ministry of Employment, and on the other hand, that this ministry would form a unified policy and strategy for continuing vocational education and training. For the realisation of the programmes announced by the above ministry, a provision was made for the foundation of public and private Vocational Training Centres (*KEKs*) (Vergidis, 2005: 74). In the area of continuing vocational education and training, the Ministry of Employment undertook the role of supervision and planning of policies through the National Council of Vocational Training and Employment (Mardas and Valkanos, 2002: 124-126). The Ministry of Employment would implement its policies through

---

5. The policies of co-ordination of the two systems continued also in the 2000s. For the promotion of lifelong education and learning, a special law (law under the number 3191/2003) was passed, according to which the National System of Linking Initial and Continuing Vocational Education and Training Systems with Employment (*ESSEKA*) was founded. With this system, the co-ordination of training activities was promoted and the effort to tackle the phenomena of overlapping responsibilities between competent agencies was enhanced. The aim of the system was the ability to accredit qualifications and vocational skills, independently of the way and the route one followed for their acquisition (Vergidis, 2004: 59).

the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training (*EKEPIS*). *EKEPIS* was founded in 1994, was re-founded in 1997, and its main aims were set to be the accreditation of: the *KEKs*, the adult trainers' training programmes, the training provided, and the Support Services Providers and their staff (Mardas, 2000: 155-156). The *KEKs*, the majority of which were private,<sup>6</sup> had the following main aims: studies of training needs, research on training needs and on needs in certain specialisations in the labour market, planning of staff training programmes and training programmes within enterprises, carrying out training programmes for the unemployed etc. (Mardas and Valkanos, 2002: 146-147).

By and large, although continuing vocational training in Greece had been exercised by a large number of bodies which belonged to the public, private and wider social sectors, since the early 1990s, the State had placed emphasis in continuing vocational training being conducted with the aid of the ESF (Efstratoglou, 2004: 3-4). In particular, the accredited *KEKs* had acquired the right to receive funding from the ESF in order to provide continuing vocational training, with the ultimate aim being to combat unemployment and social exclusion (Karalis and Vergidis, 2004a: 182). Such a development was consistent with the aims of the ESF in the framework of European policy for lifelong learning which, even from the beginning of the 1980s, had stressed the direct relation between the aims of employability and combating social exclusion, by means of offering continuing vocational training activities (Karalis, 2003: 8-9). So, since the 1990s, the development of a system of continuing vocational training in Greece (based on EU funding) had contributed to the enhancement of the "strategy of social inclusion and confrontation of exclusion". More specifically, this strategy referred to the creation of the social, economic, cultural and educational prerequisites for the inclusion of certain target groups (e.g., the unemployed and other socially vulnerable groups) in the socially and economically active population (Karalis and Vergidis, 2004b: 14-16). Nevertheless, research has shown that training activities of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework addressed mainly the educational needs of public sector employees and the unemployed (mostly university graduates), as well

---

6. For the period 1994-1999, Karalis and Vergidis (2004: 183) provided data which showed the pre-eminence of the private sector in the provision of continuing vocational training in Greece. As regards the number of *KEKs* in the various categories of organisations, the data were as follows: Local authorities (41), Prefectural Committees of Adult Education (17), Public sector (13), Private sector (144), Universities (19), Social partners (28).



as the training needs of students with unemployment cards from *OAED*, while the participation of socially vulnerable groups was relatively small (Vergidis, 2004: 60).

The emphasis attributed to continuing vocational training meant that, since the mid-1990s, a great number of (mainly private) training organisations had been accredited to carry out training programmes within the framework of the Community Support Framework. The condition of funding of certain public organisations, such as the General Secretariat for Adult Education<sup>7</sup> (the activities of which shrank), had come to an end. Although it was usually the public sector which had undertaken the bulk of training, its participation went noticeably down. The network of popular (adult) education had shown restricted participation in the system of continuing vocational training (although the General Secretariat for Adult Education had already created 17 *KEKs*). The participation of local government, social bodies and social partners, had also been restricted compared to the participation of private organisations (Karalis and Vergidis, 2004a: 181-183).

The difficulty of the public organisations to adapt to the particularly demanding specifications set by *EKEPIS*, together with the absence of technical know-how in demanding training programmes within a competitive framework, led to the privatisation of the system of continuing vocational education and training in Greece. The austere and rigid processes of accreditation that *EKEPIS* had adopted, led to the foundation of the *KEKs*, the majority of which were private and had high quality infrastructure and know-how. The absence of governmental policy towards supporting public organisations contributed to the privatisation of continuing vocational training in Greece. Also, the orientation of the activities of the system towards combatting unemployment and social exclusion through the development of employability, led to the decrease of general adult education activities. The latter comprise educational programmes aiming at personal development, educational activities about making productive use of “free time”, educational programmes enhancing the active participation of citizens, as well as educational programmes in cultural issues (Op. cit.: 183-184).

It should, however, be noted that at the beginning of the 2000s, also with the aid of EU funding, the Second Chance Schools and Adult Education Centres were created, in an attempt by the General Secretariat for Adult Education (*GSAE*) and the Institute for Adult Continuing Education

---

7. In 2001, the General Secretariat for Popular Education was renamed to General Secretariat for Adult Education.

(*IDEKE*) to organise a complex of activities of formal and non formal education. This would address the needs of young people and adults having not completed compulsory education, of socially vulnerable groups and of adults being interested in social and cultural issues. The activities of these new bodies were steered to supplementary education, to the confrontation of social exclusion, and to personal and socio-cultural development. Nevertheless, a comparison between the network of *GSAE - IDEKE* and *ESSEKA* revealed the priorities of the EU and the responsible bodies. The available resources had been used only for the continuing vocational training of young people and adults. On the contrary, there had been a very small number of educational activities carried out for personal and socio-cultural development and for the supplementary education of the under-educated (Vergidis, 2004: 65-68).

#### LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES IN GREECE IN THE 2000s

This section will show, through empirical data, the dominance of continuing vocational training vis-à-vis general adult education during the period 2000-2006.

With reference to the regulated part of adult / continuing education in Greece, during this period general adult education was offered by bodies under the control of the Ministry of Education and the supervision of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning.<sup>8</sup> The activities of general adult education took (and still take) place in the Second Chance Schools (*SDEs*), the Adult Education Centres (*KEEs*), the Schools for Parents (*SXOGs*), the Prefectural Committees for Adult Education (*NELEs*). There was also a series of independent educational programmes taking place in the structures of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning, which also supervised one *KEK*. Continuing vocational training, on its part, took place in the framework of the policies of the Ministry of Employment to which the *KEEs* belonged under the supervision of *EKEPIS*. The Ministry of Employment also superintended *OAED*, which organised programmes of continuing vocational training through the Association “Vocational Training S.A.” (For more information about the activities of these bodies see Prokou, 2009).

A parenthesis should, however, be inserted at this point, regarding a number of changes being introduced by recent lifelong learning policies

---

8. The General Secretariat for Adult Education was renamed to General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning in 2008.

in Greece. The role of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning was broadened to include both planning and implementing the strategy for lifelong learning. The Secretariat is now elaborating a National Programme of Lifelong Learning and a National Network of Lifelong Learning, in which adult education bodies such as the *KEKs*, the *KEEs*, the *SDEs* and other bodies of informal learning are included. Actually, a very important change in the system of lifelong learning in Greece is the control of continuing vocational training by the Ministry of Education. Also, the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning is now supervising the public *IEKs*, while *OEEK* is being abolished. The field in which *EKEPIS* may intervene is also broadened, as it is considered to be the basic organisation for the accreditation of lifelong learning structures and programmes (including the private *IEKs*), while the organisational framework of the *KEKs* is kept intact. Special Meetings, such as the Continuing Meeting for Lifelong Learning, as well as the Continuing Meeting for General Adult Education, to be held twice a year, are also being introduced. Overall, although at various parts the newly introduced law makes provision for general adult education, the emphasis is still on continuing vocational training. For instance, a Council for Lifelong Learning and Linking with Employment has been founded, and special emphasis is attached to the accreditation of qualifications, with the foundation of a National Organisation of Accreditation of Qualifications (For more information see Republic of Greece, 2010).

The research carried out by Prokou (2009) referred to the regulated part of adult / continuing education in Greece, at a time when there was still the distinction between, on the one hand, the bodies that belonged to the Ministry of Education (under the control of *GSAE*) and, on the other hand, the bodies (the *KEKs*) that belonged to the Ministry of Employment. This research led to a number of conclusions regarding the issues of funding of these different types of bodies, and the aspired numbers of participants in their programmes. In comparing the activities of the bodies that represent general adult education with the activities of the bodies that represent continuing vocational training, the data on funding and participation for the period 2000-2006, can be summed up within the following Table 1.

The above table shows the predominance of the bodies that represent continuing vocational training over the bodies that represent general adult education. The amount of money that was given to the bodies under the control of the Ministry of Employment (for the whole of their activities) was crushingly bigger compared to that given to the bodies under the control of the Ministry of Education [1.997.999,999 vis-à-vis 45.565,42980

TABLE 1  
*Funding and participation in the bodies of the Ministry of Education  
 and the bodies of the Ministry of Employment*

| Bodies                                                                         | Sum of public expenditure – budget (in thousand euros) | Aspired number of participants (for the period 2000-2006) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Ministry of Education (General Secretariat for Adult Education)                | 45.565,42980 (+ 12.363,0652*)                          | 42.700 (+ 110.094**)                                      |
| Ministry of Employment (activities of training and/or promotion to employment) | 1.256.999,999*** + 184.000**** = <b>1.440.999,999</b>  | 424.100*** + 210.000**** = <b>634.100</b>                 |
| Ministry of Employment (activities of training)                                | 390.000***** + 167.000**** = <b>557.000</b>            | 125.000***** + 198.000**** = <b>323.000</b>               |
| Total (for the Ministry of Employment)                                         | 1.997.999,999                                          | 957.100                                                   |

\* state's grant for the NELEs

\*\* actual participants in the NELEs

\*\*\* public expenditure for activities for the unemployed / socially vulnerable groups / women

\*\*\*\* public expenditure for activities for the employed / self-employed

\*\*\*\*\* public expenditure for activities for the employed

Source: Prokou E., 2009, Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Europe and in Greece, Athens, Dionicos (in Greek)

thousand euros (+ 12.363,0652 thousand euros state's grant for the NELEs) respectively]. Even when comparison refers to the activities of training alone by the Ministry of Employment, the bodies of the Ministry of Employment also prevailed noticeably in the amount of finance they received compared to the bodies of the Ministry of Education [557.000 vis-à-vis 45.565,42980 thousand euros (+ 12.363,0652 thousand euros state's grant for the NELEs) respectively]. Definitely, funding of the bodies belonging to the Ministry of Employment for activities of training and/or promotion to employment, was far higher than that for activities of training alone (1.440.999,999 vis-à-vis 557.000 thousand euros respectively) and, of course, much higher than funding for the general adult education activities of the bodies of the Ministry of Education [1.440.999,999 vis-à-vis about 45.565,42980 thousand euros (+ 12.363,0652 thousand euros state's grant for the NELEs) respectively].

Regarding the number of participants which had been set as an aim for the period 2000-2006, a comparison of the bodies of the Ministry of Employment with the bodies of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning shows that the former prevailed over the latter [957.100 vis-à-vis 97.700 (+ 110.094 actual participants in the *NELEs*) participants respectively]. If one looks at the activities of training alone of the bodies of the Ministry of Employment, these bodies also predominated over the bodies of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning [323.000 vis-à-vis 42.700 (+ 110.094 actual participants in the *NELEs*) participants respectively]. The same applies for participation in the activities of training and/or promotion to employment, of the bodies of the Ministry of Employment, compared to participation in the bodies of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning [634.100 vis-à-vis 42.700 (+ 110.094 actual participants in the *NELEs*) participants respectively]. If one examines the activities of training and the activities of training and/or promotion to employment carried out by the bodies of the Ministry of Employment, one reaches the conclusion that, compared to the activities of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning, participants in the first type of activities outnumbered participants in the second type [957.100 vis-à-vis 42.700 (+ 110.094 final participants in the *NELEs*) participants respectively].

The data above demonstrate that funding that went to the bodies of the Ministry of Employment was tremendously higher than funding that went to the bodies of the Ministry of Education, especially as regards the activities of training and/or promotion to employment of the Ministry of Employment, with their emphasis being on the unemployed / socially vulnerable groups / women vis-à-vis the employed / self-employed. Similarly, the activities of training of the Ministry of Employment also prevailed over the activities of the bodies of the Ministry of Education, albeit to a lesser extent. It should also be stressed that the activities of training only addressed the needs either of the unemployed or of the employed / self-employed, and funding (from public expenses) for the first group was higher than funding for the second group. However, in these activities, the aspired participation of the employed / self-employed was higher than that of the unemployed. The comparison between the training activities of the bodies of the Ministry of Employment and the activities of the adult education bodies of the Ministry of Education, showed that participants in the first type of bodies outnumbered participants in the second type. Participants in training activities alone, of the Ministry of Employment, also outnumbered participants in the programmes of the bodies of the Ministry of Education.

Consequently, during the period 2000-2006, to the extent that the distinction between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment reflected the distinction between general adult education and continuing vocational training, financially priority was given to the second form of adult / continuing education, which to a great extent had been privatised. The State's emphasis was on the aim of employability and efforts were made to fulfil this aim by offering training activities to the unemployed. In addition, it appeared that priority was given to the strategy of social inclusion - confrontation of exclusion, taking into consideration that most of the activities of the bodies of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning addressed the needs of socially vulnerable groups (e.g., literacy activities in the *SDEs* and the *KEEs*, prevention of illiteracy through the educational activities of the Schools for Parents, autonomous programmes meeting the needs of immigrants, farmers etc.). The fact that the greatest part of state funding (coming mainly from EU resources) went to the activities of training and/or promotion to employment, which were to cover the needs of the unemployed / socially vulnerable groups / women, and to the activities of training for the unemployed (all these activities being carried out by the bodies of the Ministry of Employment), makes it clear that in relatively recent lifelong learning policies in Greece (at least at the level of rhetoric), the dominant aim was that of employability, accompanied by the aim of social inclusion / active citizenship. The data concerning participation, that is, the number of participants that was set as an aim for the period 2000-2006, show that there was a relative balance between these two complementary aims, with the emphasis being attached to the aim of employability. This was not only because the employed slightly outnumbered the unemployed in participation in the activities for training alone, but also (and mainly) because the greatest part of funding was directed to the total of the activities of the bodies of the Ministry of Employment, compared to the activities of the bodies of the Ministry of Education. Besides, only indirectly did the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning offer activities aiming at employability [e.g., through the *SDEs*, the autonomous programmes "Adult education in the acquisition of basic skills in new technologies (*Iron*)" and "Education of farmers to take over activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy (*Isiodos*)"].<sup>9</sup>

Now, if our examination is confined to the activities for training only that took place in the bodies of the Ministry of Employment (the *KEEs*) –

---

9. For more information about these programmes, see Prokou (2009).

which received more funding compared to the activities of the bodies of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning – these activities concerned solely the unemployed. In accordance with the declarations of the Commission of the European Communities,<sup>10</sup> the inclusion of the unemployed into the system of employment was considered to contribute to their social inclusion, beyond the necessity for the creation of a knowledge society and economy based on an internationally competitive environment.

However, at this point it should be pointed out that the unemployed in Greece were mostly young people with a middle or high educational level. Moreover, the majority of them were long-term unemployed, without the right to receive unemployment benefits (Palios, 2003: 64). The degree of participation of the unemployed young people in training programmes was much higher than that of the rest of the population at working age. As a result, a much greater part of unemployed young people was registered at the non-active population, either because they were not directly available to work or because they did not take any steps to look for work during the period they were being trained. Scarcity of employment chances for young people in Greece had been a strong factor for their discouragement to seek employment, contributing in this way to the reduction of their degree of participation in the active workforce, especially as regards young women (Karamessini, 2005: 29-34).

Previous research has shown that the implementation of continuing vocational training for the unemployed appeared to have satisfied mainly “benefit” aims, covering basic needs of social protection for the unemployed who had not established the right to unemployment subsidy. At the same time, continuing vocational training did not contribute substantially to the widening of equality of access to employment. The bodies did not promote compatibility between the needs and the training programmes offered (Palios, 2003: 173-174). As has already been noted, the training activities funded by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework finally appealed mainly to employees in the public sector and to unemployed persons (the majority of which were graduates) as well as to students with unemployment cards from *OAED*, while participation of the socially vulnerable groups was restricted (Vergidis, 2004: 60).

---

10. See Commission of the European Communities (2000) *Commission Staff Working Paper: A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, Brussels, 30.10.2000, SEC (2000) 1832 and Commission of the European Communities (2001) *Communication from the Commission: Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, Brussels, 21.11.2001, COM (2001) 678 final.

Recent research referring to the programmes of integrated interventions (which included training acts, among many others) for the confrontation of unemployment in the prefectures of Arta, Thesprotia, Preveza, Larissa and Fthiotida, showed that these interventions worked neither as selective employment policies for special categories of the unemployed nor as policies to reduce unemployment in selected areas. Rather, they worked as actions to stimulate job supply and also as latent ways of financial support for enterprises and professionals. Data presentation of this research revealed the weakness of the integrated interventions to function as policies of “positive discrimination” for certain categories of the unemployed, in particular, the unemployed confronting special difficulties in seeking employment such as women, the long-term unemployed, the unemployed over the age of 45 and the unemployed belonging to socially vulnerable groups of local societies (one-parent families, ex drug users etc.). On the contrary, the interventions favoured the employment of the unemployed with comparative advantages in the labour market (Dimoulas and Michalopoulou, 2008: 152-154). The research confirmed the hypothesis that “the integrated interventions function as selective employment policies for the above group of unemployed, do not contribute to linking labour supply and labour demand and do not increase the efficiency of the active employment policies” (Op. cit.: 53). At this point, one should also take into consideration the findings of available surveys at European level with regard to the efficiency of training programmes, which constitute one of the basic measures of active employment policies (other measures are supporting search for employment, employment subsidies and creating jobs in the public and the non-profit sectors of the economy). On the basis of micro-economic evaluation, surveys showed that training programmes exhibited low levels of achievement, either in employment for the unemployed or in income improvement for the employed. The most important measure appeared to be the direct creation of jobs in the public or the non non-profit sectors of the economy (Op. cit.: 31-33).

An evaluation of the *KEKs* in all of their educational activities, which took place during the period 2001-2003, showed that these bodies achieved their highest grades in the training axis (58,5%) and their lowest grades in the axis of employment (35,1%). The *KEKs* appeared to have more experience in the first axis than in the second, as the competence of promotion to employment was given to them later on, with the formation of a system of specification of training needs from the Association “Employment Observatory Research – Informatics S.A.”. Furthermore, the efficiency of its im-



plementation was associated with a number of factors not controlled solely by the *KEKs*, such as the rates of creation of new jobs, the functioning of public employment agencies, the existence of networks of promotion to employment, as well as employers' policies (Efstratoglou, 2007: 26). Generally speaking, to a great extent due to the nature of the Greek economy and state,<sup>11</sup> not substantial policies of linking training to employment were promoted in Greece, the result being that the responsibility for entrance to the system of employment was attributed to the individual. Furthermore, as there were no policies supporting the less qualified unemployed persons, most participants were already well educated (e.g., university graduates) as already mentioned.

Also, research carried out by Robolis et. al. (1999: 187-194) showed that, in Greece, the unemployed appreciated to a lesser degree compared to the employed, the use of lifelong learning in combating unemployment, and expressed strong disappointment at the inability of continuing vocational training to combat unemployment or/and to contribute to the maintenance of their job. Within the group of the employed, the most well informed about training programmes appeared to be those having completed higher education, a fact that led to the conclusion that participation in lifelong learning activities is positively influenced by the educational level of the employed. Karantinos (2010: 45-53) provided data from the European Workforce Research according to which, although during the 2000s the rate of participation in lifelong learning activities in Greece was doubled compared to the previous period, it remained low compared to the relevant European aim (12% until 2010). For instance, in 2006, the percentage of participation of people (between the ages of 25 and 64) was 1,9% (vis-à-vis the European average of 9,6%). However, as to the characteristics of the population participating in lifelong learning activities, the largest gaps in participation were observed within the group of the aged people and those with low educational level. In fact, the level of education proved to be the most influential factor in participation. A special Eurostat survey in 2003 also showed that although non-formal education in Greece aimed at meeting the needs of the unemployed and the economically inactive part of the population, eight out of ten of the participants in this form of education were employed. Also, according to the previously mentioned evaluation of the *KEKs*, Efstratoglou (2007: 24) stressed that the majority

---

11. About the nature of the Greek society and its effects in the policies for education, see Prokou, 2006.

(52%) of the trainees were employees in the public or the private sectors of the economy. Finally, the data of the research carried out by Prokou (2009) showed that the employed / self-employed outnumbered the unemployed in aspired participation in the activities of training only. Overall, data for Greece were in line with the conclusions from research at international level, showing that the higher the educational level, the higher the chances of participation in lifelong learning programmes.<sup>12</sup>

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, since the 1990s, the role of the State in adult / continuing education in Greece has been restricted to control through executive bodies (e.g., *EKEPIS* in the case of continuing vocational training) and to the allocation of European funding to the *KEKs*. The State's priority has been the confrontation of social exclusion stemming from unemployment, by offering training programmes (as well as programmes of training and/or promotion to employment) for the inclusion of the unemployed (and the unemployed / socially vulnerable groups / women) in the system of employment. However, research on the social characteristics of the participants in the programmes of continuing vocational training in Greece has shown that, in their majority, participants were either unemployed graduates or employed / self-employed persons. Moreover, for the most part, European funding was directed to vocational training centres, the majority of which were private, which had undertaken the mission to confront social exclusion that stems from unemployment. This was because public bodies were not supported by governmental policy, while up to the present, policies for lifelong learning have depended on European funding in front of an inefficient welfare state in Greece.<sup>13</sup> The withdrawal from public education policy could be seen in

---

12. According to Green, Wolf and Leney, in Europe, as a general rule, the most educated persons and the persons possessing administrative and professional positions have more chances to receive further training. The opposite applies to persons with less education and to persons doing jobs demanding low-level skills (1999: 225-226). According to Jarvis (2003: 86), research has shown that those people who have already received some form of education wish to receive further education for various reasons. Finally, Kelpandis and Vrynioti (2004: 109-170) have shown that in two of the most economically and technologically advanced countries in the world, namely the U.S.A. and Germany, the most influential factor in participation has proven to be the level of initial education.

13. For that matter, the importance attributed to vocational training for the unemployed was associated with the political strategy of the enterprises and the State to enhance the attractiveness of the social position of the employed through deregulation of the labour markets. On the basis

the privatisation of the regulated part of adult / continuing education, i.e., the part concerning continuing vocational training, and in the individualisation of responsibility for learning, as there were no coherent policies linking training with employment. As to Griffin's (2006: 368) theorisation, the distinction lies between an approach to lifelong learning which reflects the continuing and redistributive role of the state, and one which envisages a minimal role for the state and a view of lifelong learning which has more to do with lifestyle, culture, consumption and civil society.

In fact, withdrawal from public education policy poses questions as to the possibility of achieving the aim of social inclusion, which was emphatically stressed but with reference only to employment.

Thus, it should be stressed at this point that there is no one single process of inclusion. On the contrary, there are a number of different forms of inclusion being promoted and then legitimised by society itself. The term social *inclusion* – together with that of *insertion*<sup>14</sup> – is a political term, with extended social use: it signifies and describes the policies of social inclusion and re-inclusion of the EU and refers mainly to socially vulnerable groups (Papadopoulou, 2008: 27).<sup>15</sup> As one can see from official EU policy documents<sup>16</sup>, social inclusion constitutes one of EU's declared aims together with the aims of personal fulfillment, active citizenship and

---

of the directives of European policies for lifelong learning, policies of vocational training were expected to function as substitutes for policies of social protection of unemployment. Through the eminence of employability as a primary aim of vocational training, what came off was its transformation from a policy of confrontation of unemployment to a policy of its management (Dimoulas, 2005: 212-214).

14. As sociological terms, the terms social *inclusion* and *insertion* refer to a process of socialisation through which a person is integrated in society. The factors and the mechanisms of socialisation are the family, education, work and all the institutions of a society. If these mechanisms dysfunction, they de-socialise individuals and groups. The term *insertion* refers mainly to the effort of inclusion when there are obstacles to normal socialisation (Papadopoulou, 2008: 26-27).

15. In particular, as regards immigrants, at the beginning, EU restricted intervention policies to the area of participation in the labour market by adopting the term "social inclusion". However, later on (in the mid 2000s), apart from the labour market, EU gave priority to the institutions of education, the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and the development of their urban and political rights, their access to services, but also to a cultural and religious freedom not in conflict with the virtuous ethics of national society (Papadopoulou, 2008: 20-21).

16. Indicatively, see again Commission of the European Communities (2000) *Commission Staff Working Paper: A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, Brussels, 30.10.2000, SEC (2000) 1832 and Commission of the European Communities (2001) *Communication from the Commission: Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, Brussels, 21.11.2001, COM (2001) 678 final.

employability. The last of these aims is dominant, while the aims of active citizenship and social inclusion are considered to be satisfied mainly through inclusion in the system of employment. In accordance with EU policies, lifelong learning policies in Greece emphatically stressed the issue of employability, especially as regards the socially vulnerable groups (mostly the unemployed), but with restricted efficiency both in terms of participant characteristics, since those who participated were the most educated ones, and in terms of the link between the system of continuing vocational training and the system of employment. Furthermore, lifelong learning policies in Greece emphatically stressed the aim of inclusion with reference solely to employment. This led to the weakening of general adult education (e.g., the educational programmes of the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning), which by definition, promotes active citizenship and personal development.

Jarvis (2007a: 29-36) has argued that in globalisation times, continuing vocational training dominated worldwide because it was more responsive to the needs of the market, in parallel to the withdrawal of the welfare state. The emphasis in lifelong learning in the form of continuing vocational training also meant that adult / continuing education was to become a commodity with not much reflective thinking. The need for radical adult education is thus becoming urgent.

Again, what should be seriously taken into reconsideration are the key values of social purpose adult education: social justice, greater social and economic equality, the promotion of a critical democracy,<sup>17</sup> as well as a vision of a better and fairer world where education has a key role to play through the development of reflective thinking (Johnston, 2006: 416-424).

It is high time that in Greece as well, the four aims of lifelong learning – namely, employability, active citizenship, social inclusion and personal development – were re-evaluated following Jarvis's (2004: 9-11) argumentation. In particular, inclusion in the employment system with the aid of lifelong learning, can contribute to the development of human potential and creativity. However, it remains under question whether this aim can be satisfied in the case of Greece, for reasons that do not necessarily pertain to the system of continuing vocational training per se, but rather to the pace

---

17. In promoting critical democracy, educational institutions are seen as sites where learners are invited to engage in a struggle whenever institutional, governmental, or popular limits to the meaning of freedom, dignity, and social justice are put into effect (Giroux and McLaren, 1992: xii).

of creation of new jobs in the economy. Undoubtedly, it is a fundamental precondition for lifelong education to substantially serve the socially excluded so that they are included in the socio-economic system through their employment. Nevertheless, it remains a challenge for lifelong education to contribute to the full development of human beings through their education in various fields of study, and to the formation of a democratic society with educated citizens, active members of local societies and with possibilities of intervention in the processes of government.

#### REFERENCES

- Commission of the European Communities, 2000, *Commission Staff Working Paper: A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, Brussels, 30.10.2000, SEC (2000) 1832.
- Commission of the European Communities, 2001, *Communication from the Commission: Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*, Brussels, 21.11.2001, COM (2001) 678 final.
- Dimoulas K., Michalopoulou K., 2008, *Active Policies of Employment: The Case of Integrated Interventions in the Prefectures of Arta, Thesprotia, Preveza, Larissa and Fthiotida*, Athens, INE/GSEE-ADEDY (in Greek).
- Dimoulas K., 2005, "Vocational education and training as state policy: The case of Greece (1980-2000)", in Karamessini M. and Kouzis G. (eds), *Employment Policy: An Arena of Coupling Economic and Social Policy*, Athens, Gutenberg, pp. 207-239 (in Greek).
- Efstratoglou A., 2004, "Continuing vocational training in Greece", *Enimerosi*, 106: 2-15 (in Greek)
- Efstratoglou A., 2007, "Continuing vocational training and evaluation: The case of Vocational Training Centres (KEKs)", *Adult Education*, 11: 21-29 (in Greek).
- Giroux H. A., McLaren P., 1992, "Forward: Education for democracy", in Goodman J., *Elementary Schooling for Critical Democracy*, New York, State University of New York Press, pp. xi-xviii.
- Green A., Wolf A., Leney T., 1999, *Convergence and Divergence in European Education and Training Systems*, London, Institute of Education – University of London.
- Griffin C., 2000, "Lifelong learning: policy, strategy and culture", Working Papers of the Global Colloquium on Supporting Lifelong Learning [online], Milton Keynes, UK, Open University. Available from <http://www.open.ac.uk/lifelong-learning> [Accessed: (June 2006)].
- Griffin C., 2006, "Lifelong learning and welfare reform", in Jarvis P. (ed.), *From Adult Education to the Learning Society: 21 Years from the International Journal of Lifelong Education*, Oxon – New York, Routledge, pp. 366-394.
- Jarvis P., 2003, *Continuing Education: Theory and Practice*, Athens, Metaixmio (translated into Greek).
- Jarvis P., 2004, "The meaning of lifelong learning for lifelong education", *Adult Education*, 1: 4-11 (translated into Greek).
- Jarvis P., 2007a, "Introduction: Adult education – An ideal for modernity?", in Jarvis P. (ed.), *Twentieth Century Thinkers in Adult and Continuing Education*, Athens, Metaixmio, pp. 25-38 (translated into Greek).

- Jarvis P., 2007b, *Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society: Sociological Perspectives*, Oxon – New York, Routledge.
- Johnston R., 2006, “Adult learning for citizenship”, in Jarvis P. (ed.), *From Adult Education to the Learning Society: 21 Years from the International Journal of Lifelong Education*, Oxon – New York, Routledge, pp. 408-428.
- Karalis T., Vergidis D., 2004a, “Lifelong education in Greece: Recent developments and current trends”, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 23 (2): 179-189.
- Karalis T., Vergidis D., 2004b, “Typologies and strategies in adult education”, *Adult Education*, 2: 11-16 (in Greek).
- Karalis T., 2003, “Adult education in modern hellenic reality”, an article published in <http://www.adulteduc.gr> (accessed in October 2006) (in Greek).
- Karamessini M., 2005, *The Unemployment of Youth*, Athens, Institute “Nikos Poulantzas” (in Greek).
- Karantinos D., 2010, “Participation in lifelong learning: Trends and prospects”, in Vergidis D. and Kokkos A. (eds), *Adult Education: International Approaches and Greek Routes*, Athens, Metaixmio, pp. 43-62 (in Greek).
- Kelpanidis M., Vrynioti K., 2004, *Lifelong Learning: Social Preconditions and Functions, Data and Findings*, Athens, Hellenika Grammata (in Greek).
- Kokkos A., 2005, *Adult Education: Investigating the Field*, Athens, Metaixmio (in Greek).
- Kotsikis B., 2002, *Introduction to Vocational Education and Training: Systems of Vocational Education and Training*, Athens, Hellen (in Greek).
- Mardas G., 2000, *Social Policy, Education and Economy: Theory – Administration – National and International Level*, Athens, Papazisis (in Greek).
- Mardas G. D., Valkanos E. I., 2002, *Organisation, Administration and Finance of the System of Lifelong Education*, Athens, Papazisis (in Greek).
- Palios Z. (ed.), 2003, *Training and Employment*, Athens, INE/GSEE-ADEDY (in Greek).
- Papadopoulou D., 2008, “Social integration in the case of Greece”, introduction to the book by Schnapper D., *Social Integration: A Modern Approach* (edition-translation: D. Papadopoulou), Athens, Kritiki, pp. 13-37 (translated into Greek).
- Prokou E., 2006, “Nonuniversity higher education reform in France, Germany, and Greece: A comparison of core and semiperiphery societies”, *Comparative Education Review*, 50 (2): 196-216.
- Prokou E., 2009, *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Europe and in Greece*, Athens, Dionicos (in Greek).
- Republic of Greece, 2010, “Greek Law Number 3879/2010: Development of lifelong learning and other agendas”, *Official Gazette of the Hellenic Republic*, 163 (21 September), 3401-3426 (in Greek).
- Robolis S., Dimoulas K., Galata V., 1999, *Lifelong Vocational Training in Greece*, Athens, INE/GSEE-ADEDY (in Greek).
- Rogers A., 2002, *Teaching Adults*, Athens, Metaixmio (translated into Greek).
- Vergidis D., 2004, “The education of adults in Greece: Achievements and dysfunctions”, in the proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Hellenic Adult Education Association, Athens, Metaixmio, pp. 55-72 (in Greek).
- Vergidis D., 2005, “Social and economic dimensions of adult education”, in Vergidis D. and Prokou E., *Planning, Administration and Evaluation of Adult Education Programmes: Elements of Socio-economic Function and Institutional Framework*, Vol. A’, Patras, Hellenic Open University, pp. 13-128 (in Greek).