



LITERACY IN GREECE

COUNTRY REPORT
SHORT VERSION

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Main authors (in alphabetical order):

Eufimia Tafa, George Manolitsis, Dimitris Koutsogiannis, Stavroula Antonopoulou, Elissavet Chlapana, Panagiota Papoulia-Tzelepi, Maria Pavlidou

Contributing authors (in alphabetical order):

Christine Garbe, Dominique Lafontaine, David Mallows, Gerry Shiel, Renate Valtin

Coordinator of the ELINET-Project:

University of Cologne

Prof. Dr. Christine Garbe

Institut für Deutsche Sprache und Literatur

Richard-Strauss-Str. 2

50931 Köln – Cologne

Germany

christine.garbe@uni-koeln.de

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1 Introduction

This report on the state of literacy in Greece is one of a series produced in 2015 and 2016 by ELINET, the European Literacy Policy Network. ELINET was founded in February 2014 and has 78 partner organisations in 28 European countries¹. ELINET aims to improve literacy policies in its member countries in order to reduce the number of children, young people and adults with low literacy skills. One major tool to achieve this aim is to produce a set of reliable, up-to-date and comprehensive reports on the state of literacy in each country where ELINET has one or more partners, and to provide guidance towards improving literacy policies in those countries. The reports are based (wherever possible) on available, internationally comparable performance data, as well as reliable national data provided (and translated) by our partners.

ELINET continues the work of the European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (HLG) which was established by the European Commission in January 2011 and reported in September 2012². All country reports produced by ELINET use a common theoretical framework which is described here: "ELINET Country Reports – Frame of Reference"³.

The Short Country Reports are organised around the three recommendations of the HLG's literacy report:

- Creating a literate environment
- Improving the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion (and equity⁴).

Within its two-year funding period ELINET has completed Literacy Country Reports for all 30 ELINET member countries. In most cases we published separate **Long Reports** for specific age groups (Children / Adolescents and Adults), in some cases comprehensive reports covering all age groups. Additionally, for all 30 countries, we published **Short Reports** covering all age groups, containing the summary of performance data and policy messages of the Long Reports. These reports are accompanied by a collection of good practice examples which cover all age groups and policy areas as well. These examples refer to the **European Framework of Good Practice in Raising Literacy Levels;** both are to be found in the section "Good Practice"⁵.

¹ For more information about the network and its activities see: www.eli-net.eu.

² In the following, the final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy is referenced as "HLG report". This report can be downloaded under the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf.

³ See: <http://www.eli-net.eu/research/country-reports/>.

⁴ "Equity" was added by ELINET.

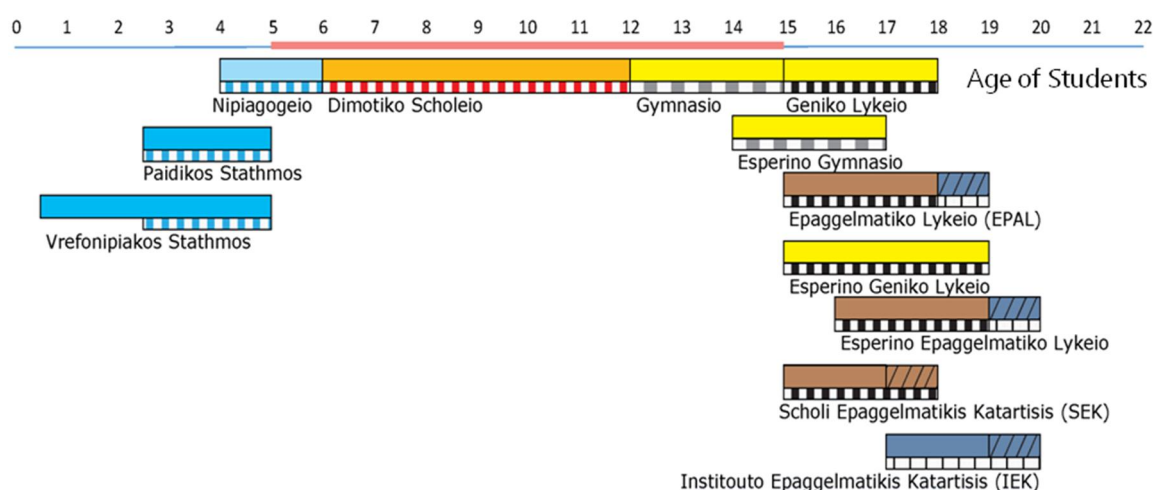
⁵ See: <http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/>.

2 General Information on the Greece Education System

The Greek education system is governed by national laws and legislative acts (decrees, ministerial decisions), while the general responsibility for education lies with the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion.

All schools in Greece implement centrally specified curricula and weekly timetables. Therefore, the educational system is centralised. As far as the structure of the school system is concerned, as can be seen from figure 1, the educational system includes: (a) Early education (0- 6 years), including ante-preschool (0-3 years) and preschool/pre-primary education (3–6 years), (b) Primary education (6-12 years), and (c) Secondary education, including (compulsory) lower secondary education (12-15 years) and (optional) upper secondary education (15- 18 or 20 years)

Figure 1: Structure of the Greece School System⁶



Pre-primary: Pre-primary education in Greece begins at the age of 4, when children are enrolled in kindergarten (Nipiagogia). However, since the school year 2007-2008, the attendance is compulsory only for children aged 5 years old.

There are half- and all-day kindergartens. The aim of both is to fully prepare the child for primary education, support working parents and reinforce the role of state care in order to eliminate any educational-social discrimination. The operation of kindergartens falls under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion.

For children aged less than 4 years old, centre-based day care provision operates under the auspices of the Municipal Authorities and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There are two types of centre-based day cares: (a) the Infant-Toddler Centres (Vrefonipiaki Stathmi) for children aged 6 months to 2.5 years; and (b) the Child Centres (Pediki Stathmi) for children aged 2.5-5 years old. At the age of 5, all children have to be enrolled in a kindergarten classroom. There is no law that requires schools to implement a programme for the smooth children's transition from kindergarten to primary school.

⁶ See: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/education_structures_EN.pdf.

Primary Education: The next stage comprises the compulsory attendance of Primary School (*Dimotiko Scholeio*) which belongs to primary education and lasts for 6 years. There is no official programme related to the transition from primary to secondary schools and entrance exams are not required.

Secondary Education: The 3 year attendance of Lower Secondary Education (*Gymnasio*) constitutes the last period of compulsory education and is a prerequisite for enrolling and attending general or vocational upper secondary schools. In parallel with day *Gymnasio*, *Esperino Gymnasio* (Evening Lower Secondary Education School) operates, in which attendance starts at the age of 14.

The second tier of secondary education lasts also for 3 years, constitutes the non-compulsory upper secondary education and comprises General Secondary Education (including *Geniko Lykeio/General Lyceum*) and Vocational Secondary Education (including *Epaggelmatiko Lykeio/Vocational Lyceum*). Parallel to day schools, *Esperina Genika Lykeia* (Evening General Lyceums) and *Esperina Epaggelmatika Lykeia* (Evening Vocational Lyceums) also operate, while the minimum age for enrollment in Evening Vocational Lyceum is 16 years of age. There are also specific types of public secondary schools, such as Religious Schools (*Ekklesiastika Sholeia*), Music Schools (*Mousika Sholeia*), Art Schools (*Kallitexnika Sholeia*), Sport Schools (*Athlitika Sholeia*), which focus on a specific scientific and/or cultural field. Admission to those schools is selective and done (apart from Religious Schools) by special exams.

The administration of primary and secondary education is conducted at central, regional and local level respectively by: the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion; the Regional Education Directorates; the Directorates of Education (Prefecture); and the School Units.

As far as the daily timetable of day-schools is concerned, all the primary and secondary schools are **half-day schools**, i.e. regular classes take place in the mornings and lunch is not served in schools. However, in pre-primary and primary education pupils have the chance (under specific circumstances) to attend "all-day-schools", called *Oloimera Sholeia*.

The administration of primary and secondary education is conducted at central, regional and local level respectively by: the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion; the Regional Education Directorates; the Directorates of Education (Prefecture); and the School Units. For admission to higher education nationwide exams (*Panellinies*) are conducted.

Higher education constitutes the last level of the formal education system and comprises the University and Technological sectors. The University sector includes Universities, Technical Universities, and the School of Fine Arts. The Technological sector includes the Technological Education Institutions (TEIs), and the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPETE).

Higher education institutions are fully self-administered legal entities of public law. Collective bodies that are established and act in compliance with special legislation administer each institution.

3 Literacy Performance Data

Greece participated in IEA's PIRLS (4th graders reading comprehension) in 2001, and has been participating in OECD's PISA (15 year-olds' reading literacy) since 2000. This means it is possible to describe the changes over time in average reading proficiency, according to different characteristics of the readers and to compare relative reading levels of proficiencies for different age groups.

Greece performed well below the EU average in PIRLS 2001 (524 vs 534 EU-17 average). Similarly in PISA 2012, Greece performed below the EU's average (477 vs 489 EU-average). It showed an increase of its reading performance in 2009 (+9 points), but dropped again (by 6 points). So, a slight increase of the overall reading performance (+3 score points) was observed between 2000 and 2012.

The proportion of students who can be considered as low-performing readers was somewhat higher than the EU countries on average in both PIRLS 2001 (24% vs 20%) and in PISA 2012 (22.6% vs 20%). These students can read simple texts, retrieve explicit information, or make straightforward inferences, but they are not able to deal with longer or more complex texts, and are unable to interpret beyond what is explicitly stated in the text. The proportion of low-performing readers in PISA 2012 has slightly and gradually decreased (by 2%) in Greece between 2000 and 2012. The trend is different for girls (-4.4% of low performers) and boys (+1.3%). The proportion of top-performing readers was lower compared to EU average in both PIRLS (7% vs 10%) and in PISA (5.1% vs 7%).

In PISA 2009, the gap according to the pupils' socioeconomic background was very close to the EU average (91 vs 89 on average), while in PIRLS 2001 the respective gap between Greece and the EU-17 average was somewhat broader (82 vs 73 on average). However, the indices of socioeconomic background are not the same in PIRLS and PISA, so the comparison should be taken with caution. The higher socioeconomic gap among 15 year-olds is potentially linked to the structure of the educational system, in which tracking starts earlier than in most of the countries. Early tracking is known to increase inequity.

In PISA 2009, the gap between native students and students with a migrant background was higher than in EU countries on average (57 vs 38 in EU). The mean score difference between those who always spoke the test language at home, and those who spoke another language was higher (79 vs 54), namely the equivalent of two years of schooling. It should be noticed that the proportion of students who speak another language at home was rather low in Greece in comparison with the EU average, respectively 4.8 and 13.3%.

In Greece, the gender gap (in favour of girls) was close to the EU on average in both PIRLS (21 vs 17) and in PISA (47 vs 44). Whereas girls improved their performance in PISA between 2000 and 2012 (+9 score points), boys' performance slightly decreased (-4 points). The trend was close to what was observed in the European countries on average: girls' performance increased by 5 points; boys' decreased by 5 points.

In conclusion, Greece continuously performed lower than the EU-average. It showed an increase in PISA 2009 but went back to its low initial score in PISA 2012. According to the PISA findings, boys showed a decrease of their performance whereas girls' slightly increased. This result is then coherent with the European pattern. The overall proportion of low-performing readers decreased but it is a great matter of concern especially among boys: nearly a third of them scored below level 2, a steady number across the cycles. The proportion of girls is lower and decreasing in that category. The spread

of achievement in Greece is just above the EU countries' on average. The gap according to socioeconomic status is slightly higher than in the EU on average, which could indicate that the educational system in Greece is less equitable. Similarly, the gap according to migrant status and to language spoken at home is higher, but the results must be taken with some caution: the proportion of students who speak another language at home is rather low in Greece and is not consistent with the percentage of students with an immigrant background.

4 Key Literacy Policy Areas for Development

4.1 Creating a Literate Environment

4.1.1 Pre-primary years

Creating a literate environment at home: On an index of home educational resources in PIRLS 2001, 9% of students in Greece were categorised as having high resources, the majority had 'medium' resources (83%), with 8% of students having 'low' resources. On average across the EU-17, 13% had high educational resources, and 4% had low resources. In Greece, students with 'low' resources achieved a mean score that was 111 points lower than those with 'high' resources. This is slightly higher than the EU-17 average (107). This indicates that the relationship between home educational resources and reading achievement is similar but slightly stronger in Greece, than on average across the participating EU-17 countries.

Number of books in the home: In Greece, students with few/no books at home achieved a mean score that was 56 points lower than the mean score of students who reported having many books at home. This is lower than the average difference across the participating EU countries (70 points). Thus, this indicates that the association between books at home and reading performance is weaker in Greece than across the EU-17. A similar percentage of students in Greece (9%) and across the EU-17 (10%) reported to have fewer than 10 books at home, and a similar but slightly lower percentage of students in Greece (15%) reported to have more than 200 books at home, compared to the EU-17 average (18%) (see Appendix D, Table L.5).

4.1.2 Children and adolescents

Creating a literate environment in school

Pre-primary: In Greece the National Curriculum for pre-primary education anticipates the provision of a literacy-rich environment in school. According to its guidelines, children should be provided with different literature genres (e.g. narrative and informational texts and poetry), various reading materials (e.g. newspapers and magazines) and samples of environmental print (e.g. street signs, posters, labels, and logos), which help them understand the organisation and the function of written language and improves their literacy skills (Ministerial Decision G 2/21072b FEK. 304/13-3-2003/t.B', p. 594-596).

Primary: Based on data provided by their teachers, PIRLS (2001) shows that 61% of pupils in Greece were in classrooms which had a classroom library or a reading corner – (Mullis et al. 2003, exh. 6.28, p.206; EU averages from PIRLS 2011 database, s. Table H2 in Appendix C). This is lower than the corresponding EU-17 average of 70%; however for about 40% of students, there is no classroom library available. Moreover, classroom libraries counted on average 36 books which is below the

respective European average of 56. Additionally, classroom libraries counted on average 4 magazines, a quantity which is almost the same as the European average number of 4 magazines that exist in the classroom libraries across the European countries. Twenty-two percent of students in Greece could spend class time in the library/reading corner at least weekly – about the same proportion as on average across EU countries (22%) (Mullis et al. 2003, exh. 6.28, p.206). Across all classrooms (including those with no library), 29% of students in Greece had teachers who reported that they brought them to a library other than the class library at least once or twice in a month, almost the same percentage as the average of 28% across EU-17 countries (Mullis et al. 2003, exh. 6.29, p.207).

Secondary: Regarding secondary education, PISA 2009 (OECD 2010b, Table IV.3.24, p. 250) show that only 66.6% of students were in a school with a library, significantly lower than the OECD average (89.8%). In 50% of schools, the principal reported a lack of library materials, a significantly higher percentage than the OECD average (29.4%). It is also reported that 17.5% of 15-year-olds never or seldom read for enjoyment outside of school, among those 12% of girls and 24% of boys. On the other hand, it is also reported that Greece is the only OECD country where more than 10% of students read for enjoyment longer than two hours on a daily basis.

Offering digital literacy learning opportunities in schools (and other public spaces, e.g. libraries)

Digital environment of pre-primary students: According to the Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework guidelines, kindergarten children should be given plenty of opportunities to discuss the utility of the provided Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its use in daily school activities. Special emphasis is given on the computer use as a didactic tool and as a means which can help children discover new things and express themselves in daily activities. Regarding literacy, the computer can be used for playing computer games related to literacy skills, and for activities related to letter knowledge and/or writing.

Digital environment of primary students: According to teacher reports in PIRLS 2001, 82% of students in Greece had no access to computers in the school environment, a percentage which is significantly higher than the European average percentage of 48%. Among students who had access, 0% attended classes with a computer available in classroom (EU-17 average was 29%) and 17 % had available computers somewhere else in the school (EU-17 average was 50%). Small is also the reported percentage of students who had internet access (Greece 9%, EU-17 average 37%) (Mullis et al. 2003, exh. 6.31, p. 211).

According to a more recent study than PIRLS 2001, the ESSIE study (European Schoolnet and University of Liege, 2012), the ratio of computers to students in Greece at Grade 4 was 16:1, compared to an EU average of 7:1, and a ratio of 3:1 in Denmark, Norway and Estonia. In Greece, there were 50 students per laptop computer connected to the Internet, compared with 20:1 on average across EU countries. In Greece, at Grade 4, more computers tended to be located in computer rooms than in classrooms (70% in Greece, compared with 58% on average across EU countries). The ratio of students to interactive whiteboards in Greece was 500:1, compared with a ratio of 111:1 on average across EU countries. However, just 3% of students in Greece were in schools without broadband access, compared with 5% on average across EU countries. Teachers in Greece had low levels of experience with ICTS, compared with teachers in other countries. These data highlight the challenges that Greece will face in integrating ICTs into teaching and learning in literacy and in other aspects of the curriculum.

Digital environment of secondary students: The latest 2012 OECD study “Students, Computers and Learning: Making the Connection” (OECD 2015) reports that 65.9% of 15-year-old students in Greece use computers at school (OECD average 72.0%) and only 44.9% of students reported that they browse the Internet at school for schoolwork at least once a week (OECD average 44.9%). In comparison to older survey results, there is an increase in the number of students with access to computers and those students who do school work on computers. This increase can be related to initiatives by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, such as a laptop-acquisition programme in the school year 2009-2010, during which laptops were distributed to every student on the first grade of lower secondary school and 1200 textbooks were digitised in order to be used by the students through their laptops. Moreover, the Ministry also implemented the “Programme of pilot integration of interactive systems and related equipment in the classroom for digitally supported teaching”, during which 800 primary and secondary schools were equipped with digital equipment, such as interactive whiteboards and laptop laboratories. Even though such initiatives were taken, there is still a home-school mismatch, as access to digital environments increases significantly while school does not follow the same pace of developments. Therefore, both the development of a central framework of ICT integration strategy and the sufficient technological equipment for schools is necessary.

Strengthening the role of public libraries: Public libraries in Greece are under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religion Affairs and there are 46 in the whole Greek territory. Twentynine of them have moving libraries whose role is to cover the needs of schools which do not have school libraries.

Greek public libraries in general are in charge with an informative and educational role⁷. Furthermore, in the context of public libraries' modernisation, the project entitled “Digitisation of public libraries material” is undertaken. The project aims to transmit knowledge through the use of ICT and enables students of all educational levels to have access to the books and the print materials of the public libraries⁸.

As a result of each library's or each municipality's initiative, public libraries in Greece implement various educational programs which promote reading literacy, such as reading groups, programmes for promoting pleasure for reading (“Philanagnosia”) and book presentations.

Since 2011, a network of public and municipal libraries across Greece, called “Future Library”⁹ has been developed. The network seeks to support the library community to offer innovative services, through workshops, seminars and conferences, access to resources. Various programmes which promote reading, such as reading campaigns¹⁰, are being implemented by the network.

Improving literate environments for children and adolescents: Programmes, initiatives and examples: The “National Book Centre of Greece” (NBCG) has been tasked with the promotion of reading in Greece, by organising multiple programmes. Such initiatives include author and illustrator visits to schools, promotion of reading clubs in schools and libraries, mobile exhibitions and mobile libraries in schools, and others.

Specifically for primary education, the Ministry of Education promoted the programme “Philanagnosia” in schools participating in the United Reformed Educative Program (*Enieo Anamorfomeno Ekpaideftiko*

⁷ See: http://www.e-yliko.gr/htmls/libraries/vivl_dimos.aspx.

⁸ See: <http://publiclibs.ypepth.gr/frontoffice/portal.asp?cpage=NODE&cnode=1>.

⁹ See: <http://www.futurelibrary.gr>.

¹⁰ See: <http://summer.futurelibrary.gr/>.

Programma - EAEP), during which specific actions for the promotion of reading enjoyment were held in every grade, as part of the literacy curriculum. On the other hand, in secondary education, all the initiatives regarding fostering of reading are mainly based on teachers' agency or libraries at a local level.

Other initiatives fostering literacy and literature reading can be found in cultural programmes organised by teachers, as part of their school activities, both in primary and secondary education. The themes of those programmes are generally described by the Ministry and include literature laboratories, creative writing clubs, school newspapers and themes of cultural heritage approached by multiple art forms, including literature. Participation in such programmes is optional for teachers and students.

Few initiatives have been undertaken to support the development of students' digital literacy, mainly with a focus on the production of digital learning resources: educational TV, repositories of digital learning objects, or digitisation of existing school textbooks in an interactive form.

All aforementioned programmes were financed by the National Strategic Reference Framework (2007-2013).

4.1.3 Adults

Fostering literacy provision for adults: Fostering adult literacy is not a policy priority in Greece and in general adult literacy provision is under-developed. The Greek government does support lifelong learning and an adult education programme is offered free of charge; this offer includes courses in basic education for adults. The General Secretariat for Adult Education (GSAE) has produced a conceptual definition of literacy to aid policy development, and some progressive approaches are evident.

Adult literacy courses are offered by Second Chance Schools, by Adult Education Centres and by HERON – "Adult Training in the Acquisition of Basic ICT Skills". Second Chance Schools focus on citizens aged over eighteen years who did not complete compulsory education (equivalent to lower secondary school leaving certificate) and support a cross-thematic approach to assure integrated learning in literacy (GSAE, 2008). Adult Education Centres are aimed at citizens who have completed various levels of education and include 77 educational programmes e.g. European languages or basic knowledge of mathematics. HERON is the first large-scale programme designed to help citizens acquire basic skills in the new Technologies (GSAE, 2008). Data from Eurostat indicate that there is a need in Greece to raise the literacy levels of older adults (65+), given policy decisions on the extension of the working age.

4.2 Improving the Quality of Teaching

To improve the quality of teaching, important aspects need to be considered:

- The quality of preschool
- coherent literacy curricula
- high-quality reading instruction,
- early identification of and support for struggling literacy learners
- highly qualified teachers (cf. Frame of Reference for ELINET Country Reports).

Especially crucial is the quality of teaching and of teachers, as the McKinsey report "How the world best performing school systems come out on top" states: "The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (McKinsey et al. 2007).

4.2.1 Pre-primary years

Improving the quality of preschool education: According to OECD Family database (2014)¹¹, the total public expenditure per child in pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP in Greece in 2011 was 0.01%. Greece belongs to the lower end of the distribution. According to the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion Affairs the student/teacher ratio in pre-primary schools for children at the age of four is 12.9, and 1.7% of the pre-primary teachers in Greece are males.

Moreover, in Greece, there are two types of early childhood professionals: (a) the pre-primary teachers (kindergarten teachers) who deal with children at the age of 4 and 5 years old, and (b) the infant-toddler pedagogues and care providers (vrefonipiokomoi) who deal with children under the age of 4. The kindergarten teachers are educated in Universities following a 4 year Bachelor programme and they can work in public or private kindergartens. The infant-toddler professionals are educated in Higher Technological Educational Institutes following a 4 year higher education programme and they can work in infant-toddler centres and child centres for children under the age of 4. The minimum required level to become a qualified teacher is Bachelor level (ISCED 5). The length of training is 4 years (European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat 2014, p. 101). There are also a number of early childhood practitioners who are trained for two years either in post-secondary vocational training centres or in vocational high schools (EPAL) with the specialty in early childhood care (this second choice of training assistants ended in 2013). These early childhood practitioners are trained as infant-toddler care assistants and they work in the centre-based day cares. In Greece, the continuing Professional Development for early childhood professionals is not obligatory (Eurostat 2014, pp. 104–105).

Preschool language and literacy curriculum: Fostering the development of emergent literacy skills through playful activities is an important function of pre-school institutions and provides a basis for formal literacy instruction in primary school (Tafa, 2008, 2011). In Greece the kindergarten Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework is based on the emergent literacy philosophy and highlights that children, through the context of play, should be provided with opportunities for developing awareness of their written language system (Ministerial Decision G 2/21072b (FEK. 304/13-3-2003/t.B', p. 593-597). The curriculum sets goals that help children understand the directional rules of print, that print and not pictures carry the message, that different kinds of print carry messages in different ways and that letters have names and sounds. Children are encouraged to discover very common words in texts and to recognise them in the environmental print. Moreover, children are helped to understand story structure when stories are read aloud to them and to name different kinds of texts. They are also encouraged to write their names, their friends' names, as well as small, frequently used words. In addition, there are goals to encourage children to understand the 'technical' language of literacy (e.g. page number, first line, book title, book cover, etc.), as well as punctuation. In addition, the kindergarten curriculum emphasises the enrichment of the classroom environment with books and reading and writing materials and strongly suggests the use of environmental print

¹¹ See: <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>.

4.2.2 Children and adolescents

Improving Literacy Curricula and Reading instruction in schools: The curricula of Greek primary and secondary education have been drawn up by the Pedagogic Institute and they are implemented in all schools country-wide. Current curricula fall under the integrated philosophy of the Interdisciplinary Single Curriculum Framework for Compulsory Education (DEPPS). Both in primary and secondary education, reading literacy is an element of the Greek language syllabus. Regarding secondary education, literacy is served by the teaching of: Modern Greek Language; Modern Greek Literature; Ancient Greek Language; Ancient Greek Literature (in the original form and in translation).

Primary education: According to Eurydice's report "Teaching Reading in Europe" (2011), most of the elements regarding explicit instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondences are included in steering documents. The same applies for reading strategies, although Greek curricula for primary education do not define reading comprehension. According to PIRLS 2001 (Martin et al. 2003), the multiple reading strategies were more frequently taught in Greece than on global average. That is in line with the emphasis given on reading instruction in the curriculum, as 26% of school time is devoted to reading.

Secondary education: As the Greek educational system treats every subject mostly as an autonomously taught lesson, there is little or no attempt for content area literacy. Not all teachers are treated as literacy teachers, and only language teachers are responsible for the acquisition of literacy competencies. Only a few general guidelines are given regarding cross-thematic literacy abilities that should be acquired in all taught subjects (e.g. communication skills, skills of critical processing of information, and other) along with indicative activities and projects.

Specifically for the language curriculum, its' aims are organised on the axes of the four competences (listening, talking, reading and comprehension, writing) along with indicative concepts for possible interdisciplinary approaches. Each of the general axes also includes a focus on grammar knowledge.

New pilot curricula for the improvement of literacy instruction were implemented in some lower secondary schools. The new curriculum has a special focus on improving reading strategies in order to help students become critical readers. It is organised on the axes of four competencies (comprehension of oral and written language, production of oral and written language), and each of the axes is then organised on basic themes, genres, indicative activities and educative material that can be used. Those new curricula for literacy education remained only on a pilot level and need to be more firmly continued, implemented and supported in all schools.

Regarding upper secondary education, there is no specific curriculum for Modern Greek Language lessons but mostly general instructions, mainly focused on the contents of the obligatory school textbooks. In 2012, new instructions were given for the first year of upper secondary school, with a specific focus on the development of critical reading literacy and digital literacy competencies. Those new Instructions were mandatory for all schools. There are no guidelines regarding content area literacy in upper secondary education.

Although some initiatives have been taken so as to implement new curricula in lower and upper secondary education, with a stronger focus on literacy competencies, those initiatives remained at a pilot level and need to be more firmly continued, implemented and supported in all schools.

Digital literacy as part of the curriculum for primary and secondary schools: In primary and secondary schools, ICT is taught as a separate subject, and is used as a general learning tool for other learning subjects. According to national reports (Centre for the Greek Language 2011), there is a need

for increased integration of ICT into literacy lessons. In targets mentioned in literacy curricula, technology is treated as a field of the world to be explored and mainly as a pedagogical medium, such as a means for searching and obtaining information. The perception that ICT are also literacy mediums is not a clear aim of the curricula.

There are some clear efforts to implement digital literacy as part of the newest pilot curricula in lower secondary education and in the Instructions for the Modern Greek Language lessons in upper secondary education. In those steering documents, digital literacy (with critical dimensions) is an important part of language education, as specific educative activities are proposed for the acquisition of digital literacy competencies, and ICT are both considered as pedagogic media and also as media for literacy practices (e.g. reading and writing through digital media).

Although some initiatives have been taken in order to focus more on digital literacy, there is still a need for higher attention on the aspects of critical digital literacy, both on the literacy curricula and the textbooks used.

Early identification of and support for struggling literacy learners: In Greece, there are no official national benchmarks/standards for children's and adolescents' literacy performance. The only means to assess adolescents' literacy achievements is by the OECD's PISA assessment. Assessment constitutes an instrumental element of the teaching-learning process and is the combined outcome deriving from daily pupil participation in lessons, short written tests, hour-long compulsory written tests, homework, assignments and final exams.

There is also no systematic assessment of children in order to identify language development problems. Assessment of language and reading problems is implemented in the local "Centres of Differential Diagnosis and Support (KEDDY's)" which provide diagnoses for the purpose of determining special educational needs¹². The centres not only investigate the degree and type of difficulties pupils face, but also provide consultation and information for the teaching staff.

Lower secondary schools run a supportive teaching programme, focused particularly on pupils who face learning difficulties in language learning (and other core subjects). The programme aims to reinforce educational levels of pupils, prevent dropping out and combat social exclusion, as well as social inequalities. Also, Remedial Teaching ("Enischytiki Didaskalia") is applied in primary and lower secondary schools, and additional teaching support ("Prosthethi Didaktiki Stirixi") in upper secondary schools.

Based on responses provided by teachers in PIRLS 2001, no (0%) of students in Greece are in classes where the teacher arranges for students falling behind in reading to work with a specialised professional (e.g. a reading specialist or a speech therapist). This is well below the EU average (32%), confirming the relative disadvantage under which schools and teachers in Greece work.

Improving the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training: Both primary and secondary education teachers are educated in Universities, in four-year bachelor programmes. Pre-service education of primary teachers focuses both on scientific knowledge and pedagogic competencies, while pre-service education of secondary teachers mostly focuses on scientific knowledge. Literacy expertise of pre-service language teachers is examined by entry tests of the Higher Council of Staff Selection (ASEP), which also determines teachers' recruitment. Specifically, for primary teachers, literacy

¹² See: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Greece:Special_Education_Needs_Provision_within_Mainstream_Education (Accessed August 27, 2014).

expertise regards: knowledge of the literacy curriculum, basic linguistic concepts, phonological, morphological and grammatical knowledge, composition of written texts and genres, the role of literature in the curriculum. For secondary language teachers, literacy expertise regards: knowledge of the curriculum for ancient Greek language and literature, modern Greek language and Literature and History, basic knowledge of ancient and modern Greek literature, grammar of modern and ancient Greek, hermeneutic ability of texts, and more. Secondary teachers of other taught subjects (maths, science, arts etc) are not examined for their literacy competencies but only for their knowledge around their scientific field. All teachers, either primary or secondary, are examined for their pedagogic competence.

Continuing professional development is optional in Greece. According to information available on Euryptedia, the aims of the in-service education and training of teachers (INSET), in Greece, are the following: teacher training focused on the new curricula in Compulsory Education; teacher training on ways to organise and implement Experimental Actions and Projects, based on the principles of experimental and inquiry-based learning; teacher training specialised in ICT, drama, music, arts and intercultural education, who are employed today in all-day primary schools using a unified and revised curriculum; induction INSET for newly-appointed and substitute teachers - INSET for teachers on the use and application of ICT in the teaching practice.

Other in-service training programmes include the *Major in-service Teacher Training Programme*, which focused on innovative features such as group process, implementation of modern educational methods, development of students' "horizontal abilities" transversing all school activities, implementation in authentic learning environments. Another action was the "Teachers' education for the utilisation and implementation of ICT in the teaching process", with its main goal to prepare teachers for the challenges of knowledge and information societies, focusing on the Information Technologies' utilisation and use in the teaching process.

Improving the quality of literacy instruction: Programmes, initiatives and examples: There are not many initiatives regarding the improvement of the quality of literacy instruction, apart from the in-service training programmes mentioned above. There is an increasing attention paid to initiatives for tackling reading difficulties, such as the programme "Screening pupils with learning difficulties – Creation and standardisation of Twelve Assessment Tools" (University of Patras) and the project "Primary and secondary prevention of learning difficulties and speech problems in preschool and school age for all children" (Pedagogical Institute). Those programmes are mostly on a local level, in collaboration with specific schools, rather than on a national level.

4.2.3 Adults

Monitoring the quality of adult literacy providers: The General Secretariat for Adult Education established the National Quality Assurance & Assessment Framework in 2006-2008 to monitor the quality of all adult learning. This system provides self-evaluation for each adult learning/education provider as well as an independent external evaluation.

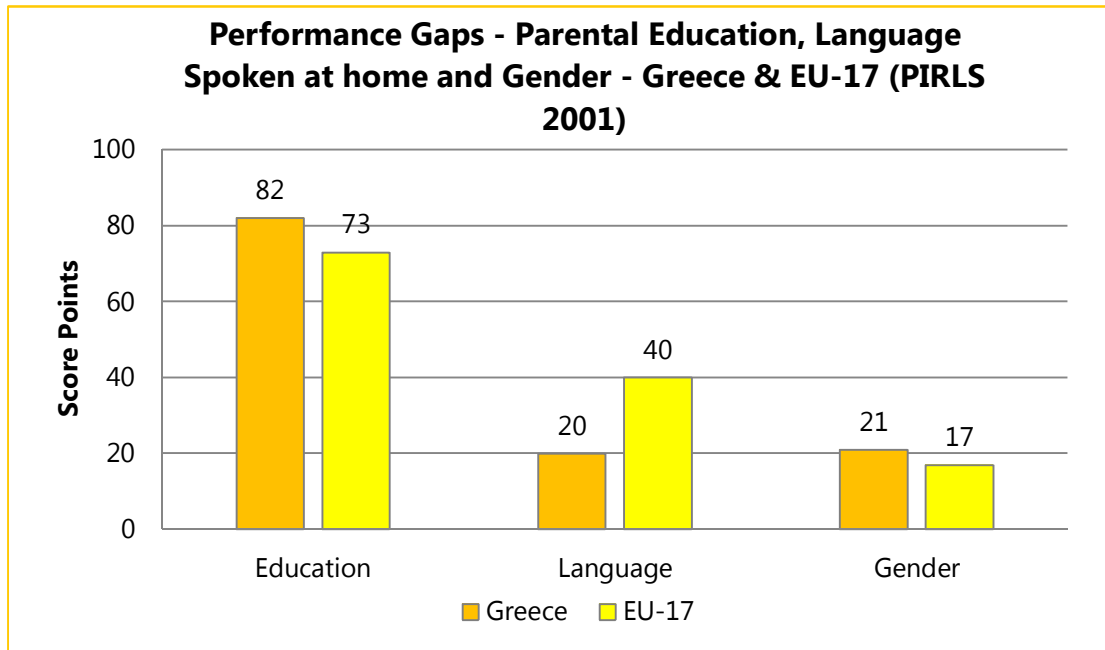
Developing curricula for adult literacy: There is no national literacy curriculum framework for adults in Greece.

Improving the qualification and status of teachers of adult literacy: In Greece, adult teaching is mostly a part-time profession. No data are available on the working conditions of those in the adult education sector. There are no specialist qualification routes for adult literacy teachers

4.3 Increasing Participation, Inclusion and Equity

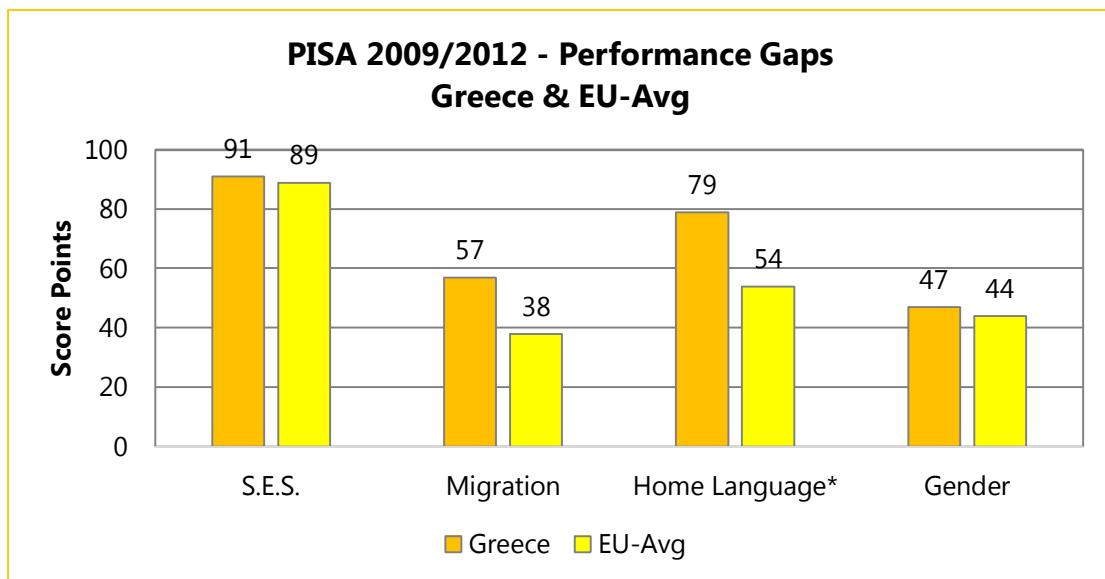
The High Level Group of Experts on Literacy drew attention to persistent gaps in literacy, namely the gender gap, the socio-economic gap, and the migrant gap (HLG Final report 2012, pp. 46–50). These gaps derive from the reading literacy studies that repeatedly show unequal distribution of results among groups of children and adolescents (PIRLS, PISA). Performance gaps in Greece and on average across the EU-24 are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2: Performance Gaps – Gender, Education and Language Spoken at Home



Education: Parent has University vs. Lower Secondary/Primary education; Language: Student speaks language of the test at home always vs. sometimes/never; Gender: Girls vs. boys.

Figure 3: Performance Gaps in Greece and on Average across EU Countries - Post-Primary Level



SES: Top – Bottom quartile on PISA ESCS scale; Migration: Native – first/second generation immigrants; Language: Speaks language of the PISA test at home – speaks another language; Gender: Girls - Boys

The figures show a close to average socio-economic gap and gender gap on both primary and post-primary level. However, the language gap is quite below-average at primary level but at post-secondary level the gap between native students and migrants as well as second language learners is above average.

4.3.1 Pre-primary years

Encouraging preschool attendance, especially for disadvantaged children: The participation rate at age 3 is just 1.7% (based on 2010 data) and at age 4 and age 5 is about 74.6%. The length of pre-school education attendance has a positive effect on reading. In Greece, children who attended 3 years and more had a higher reading score at grade 4 (543) than children who attended between 1 and 3 years (522).

Identification of and support for preschool children with language difficulties: In Greece there is no systematic assessment of children in order to identify language development problems. Assessment of language problems is implemented by multidisciplinary teams operating in the “Centres of Differential Diagnosis and Support (KEDDY’s)” only for children who have been referred by their teachers.

Compensating socio-economic and cultural background factors: Greece has a moderate percentage of pupils who have a migration background (10%) which is close to EU average. About 5% sometimes speak another language than Greek at home. The difference in reading achievement between pupils in Greece reporting that they always or sometimes/never spoke Greek was 72 score points, which is higher than the corresponding EU-24 average difference (52).

4.3.2 Children and adolescents

Support for children with special needs: In Greece, children with special needs (including students with language problems) get support mainly in mainstream schools, in inclusive classes operating within mainstream schools and in some cases in special schools (EURYDICE et al., 2014, p. 109). Assessment of children with special needs is implemented by multidisciplinary teams operating in the “Centres of Differential Diagnosis and Support (KEDDYs)” only for children who have been referred by their teachers.

Special Education services are provided for children with special needs when they enter compulsory education (that means from Kindergarten and onwards) and they have been diagnosed by the KEDDYs. These services may include the following: differential diagnosis, diagnosis, evaluation and depiction of the special educational needs, as well as systematic pedagogical interventions with specialised and properly adjusted educational tools and programmes¹³. Individualised Education Programmes can be implemented for pupils with special needs, and required technical aids and educational materials can be provided accordingly¹⁴. Also, additional individualised teaching support (“Parallili Stirixi”) in primary and secondary schools is provided for pupils who have severe special needs.

¹³ See: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Greece:Educational_Support_and_Guidance (Accessed August 27, 2014).

¹⁴ See: <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/greece/national-overview/identification-of-special-educational-needs> (Accessed August 27, 2014).

Support for migrant children and adolescents whose home language is not the language of school: In PISA 2009, the gap between native students and students with a migrant background was higher than in EU countries on average (57 vs 38 in EU). The mean score difference between those who always spoke the test language at home, and those who spoke another language was higher (79 vs 54), and is the equivalent of two years of schooling.

Every school unit can establish special reception classes (“Taxeis Ypodoxis”) and Tutorial Courses (“Frontistiriaka Tmimata”) for foreign pupils who do not possess an adequate knowledge of the Greek language. Such classes can also be organised each year by schools in selected areas on established Educational Priority Zones (*Zones Ekpaideftikis Proteraiotitas* -ZEP). There are two different reception classes; the first one regards intensive language courses, for students with little or no knowledge of the Greek language; the second regards parallel language support during regular classes, for students with average knowledge of Greek. For pupils who haven’t participated in reception classes or who still face language difficulties after participating in them, Tutorial Courses, in after school hours, may be offered.

By the virtue of Law 2413/1996, schools with over 45% of the student population being foreign or repatriated were changed into Cross-Cultural (“Scholeia Diapolitismikis Ekpaidefsis”) schools. There are 26 cross-cultural schools in Greece (13 primary, 9 lower secondary and 4 upper secondary) which is 5.8% of the total number of schools. These schools adapt their curricula according to pupils’ special needs and may have additional or alternative classes, with their priority being lessons on Greek language and culture.

There are also minority (*Meionotika Scholeia*) schools operating in areas with a dense Muslim-Turkish population. In such schools, instruction is bilingual, usually Greek and Turkish. Minority schools often operate to cover the educational needs of Muslims residing in the geographical department of Thrace (Pomak, Roma and Turkish origin).

Preventing early school leaving: Following the Eurostat, in Greece, the rate of early school leavers was 9.0 % in 2014, 10.1 % in 2013, and 11.4% in 2012. The previous rates are somewhat below the average EU-27 (11.3% in 2014 , 12.0% in 2013, 12.8% in 2012). However, the target value of the early school leaving (ESL) rate set for 2020 is 9.7%.

In recent decades, the main measures with regards to early school leaving are the following:

- Specialised authorities have been established with a view to mapping early school leaving research.
- A series of measures has been taken in terms of implemented pedagogy in schools (such as changing textbook, establishing Flexible Zone, All-Day Schools, individualised teaching, etc.). These measures aim to address school failure which constitutes one of the main causes of early school leaving.
- Two supplementary intervention programmes have been designed and implemented for students who face learning difficulties: “Remedial Teaching” (Enischitiki Didaskalia) and “Additional Teaching Support” (Prostheti Didaktiki Stiriksi).
- A series of measures has been taken for the inclusion and integration of immigrant students, such as Reception Classes (Taxeis Ypodochis) and cross-cultural schools (Diapolitismika Scholeia). Moreover, additional programmes have been designed and implemented in order to prevent specific groups of students with high rates of early school leaving (such as Roma children and Muslim).

- Second Chance Schools have been established for students who left school early.
- One-year compulsory education in kindergarten has been established, which is thought to significantly contribute to the smoother progress in school.
- In recent years, due to the financial crisis, additional social support services (such as free meals) are provided to students who are at high risk of dropping out of school.

4.3.3 Increasing participation, inclusion and equity for children and adolescents: Programmes, initiatives and examples

Multiple initiatives have taken place for increasing participation, inclusion and equity for children and adolescents. They are mostly programmes financed by the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013 and focus on specific schools, rather than a national level initiative. Such programmes are:

- 1) "Education of repatriated and foreign students" for the support of existing Reception Classes and teachers in them.
- 2) "Education of Roma children" (NSRF 2007-2013), for the specific group of Roma children, threatened by marginalisation and early school leaving.
- 3) "Education of Muslim Children" (NSRF 2007-2013), for the specific group of minority schools.
- 4) "New School (21st Century School): Integration of vulnerable social groups to Primary Education", which supported schools on the Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP).

4.3.4 Adults

Increasing offers for second-language learners: The educational programme "Learning of Greek as a second language by working immigrants" is aimed at migrants of different nationalities, spouses of Greek citizens, or those who want to acquire the status of a long-term resident in Greece. These programmes contain mandatory elements on certified Greek language proficiency and knowledge of Greek history and culture. This provision is partly funded by the European Social Fund (75%). All trainers on this course must be educated to at least degree level in philology, with the majority specialised in linguistics.

5 Conclusions / Key Areas for Development

Greece continuously performed lower than EU-average on reading competencies, both in PIRLS and PISA. Although some initiatives have been taken by designing new curricula with a stronger focus on reading literacy and digital literacies, those initiatives remained on a pilot level and need to be more firmly established and supported in all schools. Also, there is a need for more actions regarding the promotion of reading enjoyment in secondary schools, as no such actions exist in Greece.

The literate environment in Greek primary and secondary schools lacks in infrastructure regarding libraries and digital media. The vast majority of the student population spends no time on computers during language lessons.

Although many programmes for in-service training have been organised, Continuing Professional Development for teachers in Greece is not obligatory.

There is a disadvantage for students falling behind in reading, as there is no systematic assessment of children in order to identify language development problems.

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