

Trends in Disability Policy in Greece 2008-2011: Welfare-Employment-Education

The impact of the economic crisis



- Social protection systems were already quite weak before crisis (2009)
- Reductions in personal income through austerity measures and growing unemployment arguably hit first already socially and economically disadvantaged groups
- Social support mechanisms seem to fall rapidly short of needs due to cuts on social expenditure, at a time when these become even more necessary for disabled people to cope.

**Trends in Disability Policy:
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- Data: **18%** population are disabled/ long-term health conditions, of whom more than half are over 65 years old (National Statistical Service of Greece, Labour Force Survey 2002).

Welfare/ Social Security:

- disability cash benefits
- disability pensions (inc. entitlements for spouses and parents of disabled people for earlier retirement)
- provisions in basic disability aids/ equipment
- community based rehabilitation services

Welfare/ Social Security: Basic Features and Trends



- Total Social Expenditure, including pensions, benefits, health and social care, was **21,13% of GDP** in **2008**.
- **13% of all pensioners** received disability pension (Social Budget 2008).
- The social budget for **2009** planned for an **increase by 11%** of total expenditure (57.7 billion euros).
- National Budget **2010** applied **8.7% decrease** in expenditure for health provisions and social inclusion (excluding pensions)
- **2011: Cuts up to 50%** in aids provision and community-based services (Single Regulation of Health Provisions, 2011)

Welfare/ Social Security: Basic features and Trends



- Law **2643/1998** placement of individuals from protected social groups in public sector (quota 5%) and private sector (8%) for companies with more than 50 staff
- Funding programs through the Greek Manpower Organization. Most recent (October **2010**) involve funding for a. 600 self-employed disabled people, b. 2,300 placements of unemployed disabled people in private sector and c. 50 workplaces for accommodating needs of disabled employees.
- **2011**: launch of the Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship policy framework and funding

Employment: Basic features and Trends



- **84% of disabled population** are economically inactive, against 58% of the general population.- **8.9%** of disabled people unemployed compared to 9.6% of general population (Labour Force Survey 2002)
- Out of 885 public agencies, **284** employ disabled people, amounting to **2,232** employees with disability (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2006)
- Only 20% of surveyed private companies with more than 50 staff employed disabled people. (MDA Hellas 2007)
- Unemployment rate has reached **16.3%** in the second quarter **2011** in comparison with **11.8 %** in **2010** (National Statistical Service, 2011)
- Unemployment rates: Downward trend 2007-2008 (8.1% to 7.2%)
Upward from 2009 (8.9%)

Employment: Basic features and Trends



- **Law 3699/2008:** education for disabled children became compulsory
- Only 9% of all disabled children attended special education, 90% of which complete only primary education (National Statistical Service of Greece, Students in Special Education **2007**). It is estimated that 180.000 children with disability or special education needs are excluded from education.
- Higher Education: Entry to university without national examination at 5% of places in each school (Min.Decision **2006**; Law 3794/2009 increased quota from 3%)
- Ministry of Education: (School year **2011-2012**) 1,500 disabled students entered university, using almost all places made available by the quota of 5%.

Education: Basic features and Trends



- More recent trends (National Reform Program 2011): “restructuring special education” and achieve target of reducing early school leavers to under 10%.

Open calls for:

- creating an electronic record of all disabled pupils in special and mainstream education
- development of accessible educational materials and
- increasing educational support for disabled pupils in inclusive education

Education: Basic features and Trends



- **Reductions in disability pensions:** pension supplements (equal to 2 extra pensions per year) reduced to 800€ in total. Solidarity fee for pensioners, taxes pensions above 1400€ at different scales, starting from 3%.
- Measures affect disability pensioners with a number of impairments (exc. Para/tetraplegia and blind), as well as pensioners with disabled family members (for instance parents with disabled children).
- **Reductions in provisions in kind** (medical supplies, technical aids, community rehabilitation services, home-help): September 2011 the Single Regulation of Health Provisions, introduces a horizontal 50% cut on assistive equipment and a further 30% to 50% reduction on medical supplies and specialized health and community based services. The circular is expected to be applied on 1st November onwards, however still under consultation.

2010-2011 Measures

The impact of the economic crisis



- In reality, disabled people have been experiencing cuts in provisions in kind by 2010, although not officially announced.
- **Significant delays in payments** of monthly disability benefits (more than two months) and disability provisions, exceeding 6 months
- January 2011, Home help embedded under NSRF 2007-2013 priority for "Harmonising family and professional life", rendered unemployed people (with family members who require assistance) as direct beneficiaries.
- In practice, disabled people living alone or whose family members are working are now excluded from these services. (Ministry of Internal Affairs Circular 64/ 2010)

2010-2011 measures

The impact of the economic crisis



- **Further reduction of income** through:
- Urgent tax tolls (income and property tax)
- Reduced threshold for taxable income and 50% cut on expenses which reduce taxable income, such as for medical and rehabilitation services, aids and special education fees
- Increased VAT along the whole scale of daily goods and services, endangers capacity to cope in an extensive economic crisis in the country.

2010-2011 Measures

The impact of the economic crisis



- Current circumstances endanger disabled people's capacity to cope and meet needs on a daily basis; their very survival and quality of life

"Socially fair" measures should take into account:

- Increased cost of living due to disability
- Support needs
- Disabling barriers that affect educational and employment status

The impact of the economic crisis

