



## **ANED country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people**

**Country: Greece**

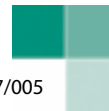
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The information contained in this report was compiled by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) in May 2010.

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the Thematic report on the implementation of EU Equality of educational and training opportunities in European countries with reference to equality for young disabled people.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation on equality of educational and training opportunities for young people, and in particular the National Strategic Reports of member states from a disability equality perspective in education and training, and provide the Commission with useful evidence in supporting disability policy mainstreaming.



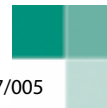
## Section 1: Executive summary and conclusions

Up to 2008 (law 3699/2008), the education of disabled children- either in special or mainstream school units- was not compulsory by law. This has meant exclusion of a significant part of disabled children from formal education and as a result continuing exclusion from social and economic life and means for independent living. This delayed policy move is also indicative of immature understanding and organization of inclusive education, which explains why policy for inclusive education since 2008 has changed little in practice as regards progress towards inclusive education.

Nevertheless, there has been increased interest and efforts in the last couple of years in the field of education of disabled students as well as in reforming the educational system as a whole. This is evident in numerous updates of legislation regarding different aspects of the education of disabled children, such as parallel support, alternative examination procedures and entrance to higher education, in emphasis on equal rights within the National Strategy Report 2008-2010, as well as in the new reform Bill on education (March 2010) which aims to introduce, among other measures, a committee that will work specifically on harmonizing education with the principles of the UN Convention on the rights of disabled people.

It seems that policy and structures are in place for inclusive education and vocational training, however, particularly as regards formal education, there is great need for political will to cover the great gaps created in the education of disabled people so far. In particular, efforts need to concentrate on allocating extra teaching staff in mainstream classes, providing resources for practical support of disabled students (such as equipment and personal assistance), to increase accessibility of mainstream schools, to monitor and ensure that every disabled child receives education and evaluate progress towards inclusive education.

This report outlines two examples of good practice in inclusive education on primary level as well as higher education, which demonstrate that initiative is equally required on behalf of teaching staff involved in implementing inclusive education.



## Section 2: Legal and policy context

The main law that addresses education of disabled people within the formal education system is the Law 3699/2008 *Special Education and Training<sup>1</sup> of people with disabilities or special educational needs<sup>2</sup>*. This legislation was a significant change from previous state of affairs, by making primary and secondary education compulsory for pupils with disabilities. The change of language and terms is also indicative of a move towards inclusive education, completing the aims of education for people with disabilities with principles such as “equal opportunities for full social participation”, “independent living”, “financial autonomy” and “social and professional inclusion”.

Education at primary and secondary levels is provided either in segregated special education schools or in separate classes in mainstream schools or with parallel support in mainstream classes. In some cases, education is provided at home if there are particular health reasons that prohibit a pupil from attending school (Ministerial Decision 108474/Γ6/ 2002<sup>3</sup>). This law covers people with disabilities up to the age of 22.

In addition, in August 2009, the Greek Ministry of Education published a circular for issues that concern the Parallel Support program, the support provided by the Special Supportive Personnel and the Education at Home program for pupils with disabilities (circular 102224/Γ6, 25/08/2009<sup>4</sup>). The circular however rested on clarifying administrative issues (i.e. the application process), rather than specifying the kind of support to be provided, the cases this applies to, or any other measures for ensuring implementation (e.g. staff and resource allocation ).

The assessment of disability or special educational needs up to the age of 22 is carried out by specialized staff at public Centres of Diagnosis and Support (KEDDY) as well as other Medical and Educational Centres that may belong to other ministries (such as Ministry of Health) but are also authorized by the Greek Ministry of Education to work under this responsibility. These centres are responsible for referring pupils with disabilities to the appropriate educational setting as assessed in each case, to point out needs in technological aids to ensure access to learning process and school environment, to provide continuous counseling and support to educational staff and to certify the need for alternative format of exams.

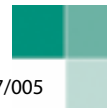
The flexibility of exams is another feature in the mainstream educational system that enhances inclusion of pupils with disabilities at all levels of education. In 2006 the Presidential Decree v60/2006 enabled pupils with disabilities or special educational needs to sit national exams for entering university either orally or in writing (depending on the nature of impairment).

<sup>1</sup> A better translation may be ‘special training and education’. The term Εκπαίδευση does not translate easily in English and refers to segregated special education in practice (the law does refer only to formal education).

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.dsanet.gr/Epikairothta/Nomothesia/n3699\\_08.htm](http://www.dsanet.gr/Epikairothta/Nomothesia/n3699_08.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <http://super.education.googlepages.com/108474-G6-2002Ekpaideysistospiti.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://edu.klimaka.gr/leitoyrgia-sxoleivn/anakoinvseis/145-parallhlh-sthrixh-mathhtwn.html>



At the end of 2009, the same principle was transferred to any kind of exam taken within the learning process at all levels of education (Ministerial Decision 253/155439).

According to that decision, students with disabilities referred to the Law 3699/2008 may take oral or written exams depending on their abilities. More specifically:

- a) Oral assessments concern pupils who cannot take written exams due to certain specified types of impairment:
  - i. Blindness (Law 958/79 (Official Journal of Government 191/A') or vision difficulties (vision loss  $\geq$  67%).
  - ii. Mobility disability  $\geq$  67% regarding the upper limbs
  - iii. Spasticity of the upper limbs
  - iv. Bone fracture or other temporary dysfunction of the upper limbs
  - v. Learning disabilities such as dyslexia

It is underlined that the pupils have to submit in advance their application along with the relevant documentation to the school's administration. In some case the corresponding diagnosis of the KEDDY is also needed.

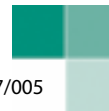
- b) Pupils within the autism spectrum are being assessed orally or written (a diagnostic certificate from KEDDY is required).
- c) Written examinations are acceptable for pupils with severe hearing difficulties (disability rate  $\geq$  67%) or speech difficulties and epileptic crisis (a diagnostic certificate is required).
- d) Especially for students who are blind (Law 958/79) or have a vision loss  $\geq$  67% or have severe hearing difficulties, diagnosis is required by the medical-educational services of the Centre of Education & Rehabilitation for the Blind (KEAT) and the National Centre for the Blind.

Pupils with disabilities who use the above alternative assessment procedures are being examined at the same time and on the same topics as the rest of their classmates.

Furthermore, pupils with disabilities who have completed upper secondary education can enter the university course of their choice without taking part in the national exams for university entry. Students with disabilities are accepted at a rate of 5% of all available places in any university course under this provision (Law 3794/2009<sup>5</sup>). This was changed from 3% which was first established in 1997 (Law 2525/1997<sup>6</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.proslipsis.gr/cm\\_download.php?cm\\_attid=1795](http://www.proslipsis.gr/cm_download.php?cm_attid=1795)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.pi-schools.gr/special\\_education\\_new/ftp/nomoi/Axiologisi\\_AMEA/N.%202525%20-1997-%20FEK.%20188%20-A-%2023-9-1997.pdf](http://www.pi-schools.gr/special_education_new/ftp/nomoi/Axiologisi_AMEA/N.%202525%20-1997-%20FEK.%20188%20-A-%2023-9-1997.pdf)



It is a prerequisite that the type of impairment does not prohibit attendance and completion of a university course, which is assessed by specialized university committees.

There is no particular legislative requirement in the field of education for ensuring accessibility of learning environments, such as anti-discrimination legislation as there is for employment (L.3304/2005) which in practice means that a mainstream school may not be able to accept a person with physical disability for instance. However the general urban planning regulation as modified in 2000 requires that all new buildings hosting educational and social services, among other fields, are accessible (Law 2831/2000).

On a university level, support services were established for disabled students through the law 3549/2007 within universities. These provide information and counseling with issues such as access, technological aids, career options, or any other aspect that relates to disability and university life. The mission of the Accessibility Units for Students with Disabilities is: to actively realize coequal access to academic studies for students with different abilities and needs, through: environmental modifications, Assistive Technologies and access services, and are located in all Greek universities.

In particular, those Units are responsible for:

- Taking all the necessary measures for ensuring the accessibility of the University's services for students with disabilities.
- Guaranteeing accessible approach (parking spaces, pavements), entry and movement inside the University's buildings (doors, corridors, lifts), and facilitating the use of water coolers, public telephones and toilets.
- Introducing all the available informational methods (one-stop information spots, accessing e-administration applications)
- Recording the current accessibility problems within the educational environment.
- Enhancing the awareness of University employees and students regarding disability and accessibility issues.

The move towards inclusive education is only recently evident in policy, while this has been depicted in the National Strategy Reports and action plans for social inclusion in recent years. The NSR 2008-2010 strikes out from previous reports with emphasis on equal rights and inclusive education for disabled people, while the strategy for achieving this lies in coordination with mainstream measures for improving access to, as well as quality of, education, particularly at first levels. The new Bill for the reform of educational system came out in spring 2010 aiming at the direction of pupil-centred schools. The measures proposed address the modernization of the education system, the development of new curriculums and evaluation systems, training of staff and acceleration of the use of ICT in education.



Physical and electronic accessibility of schools and learning materials are particularly emphasized as regards education of disabled pupils and students.

Moreover, the reform Bill aims to introduce an administrative register of disabled pupils, which has not existed so far, as well as a monitoring and evaluation system for special education which is planned to provide yearly reports on progress. It is also mentioned that a specialized committee has been established to work on harmonizing educational policy with the UN Convention for the rights of disabled people, but also with the Greek Constitution, so as to combat any form of discrimination or exclusion in the field of education.

With regards to lifelong learning and vocational training, the most recent policy development was in Law 3369/2005<sup>7</sup> which provided a coordinating framework for existing structures for lifelong learning. There are numerous programs for the continuing education and training of adults, focusing on certified vocational training, on education of adults who have not completed upper secondary education, on language learning for immigrants, as well as for vocational training of disabled people. (For a full list of programs please refer to Euridice Report (EU) *Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe Greece 2009/10*<sup>8</sup>)

Active policies for inclusion of disabled people into mainstream or specialized vocational training are implemented by the Greek Manpower Organization (OAED) under law 2643/1998. In particular, 10% of all trainees that enter the courses of vocational training are by necessity disabled people, while there are three specialized vocational training centers exclusively for disabled people, who cannot enter mainstream training, in the cities of Athens, Thessaloniki (North Greece) and Larisa (central Greece). Around 260 people are trained every year in these centres. Training is offered in secretarial work and use of ICT, as well as in craftwork.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.dsanet.gr/Epikairothta/Nomothesia/n3369\\_05.htm](http://www.dsanet.gr/Epikairothta/Nomothesia/n3369_05.htm)

<sup>8</sup> [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/structures/041\\_EL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/structures/041_EL_EN.pdf)



### Section 3: Evidence of outcomes and progress towards inclusion

There is a lack data on the exact population of disabled people of school age, it is therefore not possible to compare the participation-rates between disabled and non-disabled pupils on a strict basis. As mentioned earlier, there is the possibility of a new administrative record of pupils with special educational needs.

In addition, the available statistics on the number of disabled children in education concern only those in special education units, rather than inclusive education. Neither of these numbers can provide estimation of the actual population of disabled children since the education of disabled children has only recently become strictly compulsory. It is therefore difficult to estimate progress towards inclusive education on a quantitative basis.

However, it is possible to evidence the extent of exclusion of disabled pupils from education by looking at the latest available figures for special education for the school year 2007/2008 (National Statistical Service 2008) . These figures not only show a significantly small number of disabled children attending education, but also a significant drop-out after completion of primary education.

During that year there were 367 special education units (from nursery up to upper secondary education) for 9,633 pupils in total. The respective population in mainstream public schools in the same year amounted to 1,317,853 distributed among 14,466 education units.

In particular, in terms of special education institutions there were 64 nurseries across the country attended by 302 children, 137 primary schools attended by 2,509 pupils, only 8 secondary schools for 296 pupils and 5 upper secondary for 119 pupils.

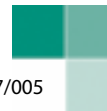
It seems, however, that there is an increased participation of disabled people in vocational training in upper secondary vocational schools (up to the age of 22) with 15 special education units for 500 students in 2007/2008, and 2,016 trainees attending 58 vocational training units for disabled people (regardless of age).

The respective figures for mainstream education show a smoother transition (with lower drop-out) from primary (589,152 pupils) to secondary (323,447 pupils) and upper secondary education (222,978 pupils). The population in higher education was estimated at 171,882 in that same year, however there are no statistics available for disabled people attending university.

An estimation announced at an information day at the University of Athens concerning disabled students is that the total number of disabled students in universities does not exceed 400 (Press Release 2005)<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.enet.gr/online/online\\_text/c=112,dt=03.12.2005,id=85659240](http://www.enet.gr/online/online_text/c=112,dt=03.12.2005,id=85659240)



There have not been any new statistics available since the Law 3699/2008, which provided a policy shift towards ensuring every disabled child receives education, as well as towards more inclusive education.

There are, however, independent reports from the Citizen's advocate and mobilization from disabled people's associations that address the inadequate implementation of the law so far, showing in practice a very gradual transition from rhetoric to practice.

There are particularly problems with implementing parallel support in mainstream classes, which is the cornerstone for inclusive education. The Citizen's Advocate carried out a report<sup>10</sup> on this issue in June 2009, after receiving a significant number of complaints by parents of disabled children reporting that the Ministry of Education had rejected the option of parallel support applied for under the legal process, or that there had been a significantly extended waiting period (e.g. lasting a whole school year).

The report shows that the main reasons provided by the Ministry of Education are lack of resources and staff. In many cases, the option for parallel support is denied on the grounds that this is only available if there are no inclusion classes in mainstream schools. This shows that the Ministry does not perceive these two options as serving different educational needs or different purposes for inclusive education, in principle. So-called 'Inclusion classes' remain segregated from mainstream learning, while parallel support achieves inclusive education both in terms of mainstreaming and meeting support needs.

Even in cases where parallel support is approved, this is provided only some days or some hours during the week, which means that the needs of pupils with disabilities are only partially addressed. In addition, the placement of staff may take place long after approval, and as a result the option for parallel support remains in practice non-existent. In other cases, the Citizens' Advocate reported that staff engaged in parallel support lack specialization of training in disability needs.

Mobilization from disabled people's associations, similarly addresses the gradual implementation of the new law, both in terms of moving towards inclusive education, as well as ensuring education (mainstream or special) for all children with disability. In essence, despite the change in policy, this has not been followed by concrete organizational and structural measures for ensuring implementation.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.synigoros.gr/pdf\\_01/8207\\_2\\_poriparsti.pdf](http://www.synigoros.gr/pdf_01/8207_2_poriparsti.pdf)





#### **Section 4: Types of support for students and trainees**

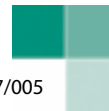
Based on the article 6 of the Law 3699/2008, pupils with disabilities and special educational needs are educated in:

- a) Classrooms in mainstream schools, (regarding students with mild learning difficulties) supported by the class teacher, who collaborates with the Centres of Diagnosis and Support (KEDDY; established in every Greek district by Law 2817/2000) and the Special School Councillors.
- b) Classrooms in mainstream schools, with Parallel Support by qualified teachers of Special Education, when necessary.
- c) Specially organised and staffed Inclusion Classes which operate within the mainstream schools and provide two different types of programs:
  1. Common program: it is formed by the corresponding KEDDY, for students with mild forms of special educational needs.
  2. Personalised or team specialised program: expanded timetable, formed by the corresponding KEDDY, for students with more severe forms of educational needs, which are not met in mainstream classes. Common programs may be different from the specialised programs; in that case co-teaching takes place.

According to the same Law (3699/2008), pupils who need assistance with personal needs go to School Units of Special Education or to mainstream schools or Inclusion Classes with the corresponding support and presence of the Special Supportive Personnel, according to their disability and their special educational needs.

When students with disabilities are not able to follow the educational program of the mainstream schools or the Inclusion Classes, they are referred to:

- a) The School Units of Special Education
- b) Schools or departments that operate as autonomous units or annexes of other schools within certain hospitals, rehabilitation units, discipline institutions for under-aged, institutions of chronic illnesses given that there are children with disabilities and special educational needs living in there. Those units operate under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and are considered as School Units of Special Education.
- c) Education at home, when it is necessary, for severe short-term or long-term health problems that prevent child's transportation to school. Education at home is provided by appointed mainstream teachers or qualified teachers of Special Education (according to needs).



The need for providing education at home is assessed by the Centres of Diagnosis (KEDDY) in cooperation with the headmasters of schools as well as in receipt of medical certification that outlines the necessity for education at home. (Ministerial Decision 108474/Γ6/ 2002<sup>11</sup>).

The curriculum of special education is planned by the Directorate of Special Education within the Ministry of Education, and includes- apart from basic courses of mainstream curriculum- courses such as sign language, Braille or use of ICT for students with mobility impairments.

The responsible bodies for diagnosing learning difficulties provide support services to students with special education needs, as well as information and awareness services to teachers, education personnel, parents and society. The following responsibilities fall under the role of KEDDY:

- Diagnosis of the type of difficulty
- Recommendation for subscription to the appropriate school unit
- Creation of personalised educational program
- Psychological support for pupils and their parents
- Advisory support for the parents
- Support of the teachers, professors and education personnel
- Recommendation for dispensation of special aids for the pupils
- Recommendation for oral assessment of pupils with learning disabilities (e.g. dyslexia)

The scientific research, study and documentation of special education issues in Greece (as well as the planning and development of curricula and the planning of teaching and supportive material for the education of students with disabilities and special educational needs) is undertaken by the Department of Special Education of the Pedagogical Institute<sup>12</sup>. The Department was founded in 2000 (Law 2817/2000), as well as in 2008, according to the new Law for Special Education of people with disabilities and special educational needs (N. 3699/2008), now called the “Department of Special Education and Training”.

Further duties and responsibilities of the Department of Special Education include the following:

- Submission of proposals for planning & implementation of the educational policy.
- Planning and support of training programs’ development, in collaboration with the relevant Training Department of the Pedagogical Institute, the Regional Training Centres (PEK) and the relevant University Departments.

<sup>11</sup> <http://super.education.googlepages.com/108474-G6-2002Ekpaideysistospiti.htm>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.pischools.gr/special\\_education\\_new](http://www.pischools.gr/special_education_new)

- Evaluation of special education programs in collaboration with the Evaluation Department of the Pedagogical Institute.
- Promotion and implementation of ICT.
- Scientific support of School Councillors and special education programs.
- Evaluation of the KEDDYs' work.
- Integration, study and graduation of students with disability or with special educational needs enrolling in all school types (Special Education Units, Inclusion Classes and early intervention programs as well as programs of parallel support).
- Regulation of the minimum number of students enrolling in the relevant school units and classes.
- The provision of education at home and the programs of parallel support.
- Managing the specialized duties and obligations of the personnel working in the School Units of Special Education and KEDDY.
- The identification, diagnosis, enrolment, re-enrolment, and evaluation and placement of people with special educational needs in autonomous units of School Units of Special Education and Inclusion Classes.
- The provision of advisory and supporting services to parents of children with special educational needs.
- The examination, assessment, scoring and the advancement of students enrolling in the School Units of Special Education, and the students with disability and special educational needs, who enrol in regular school classes.
- The provision of additional supportive means that are accessible and scientifically acceptable and can be used for the teaching of students with serious loss of hearing and/or with serious visual disability.

It is important to mention that there is no available financial or practical assistance for pupils or students with disabilities in Greece, in terms of allowances, direct payments, or financial budgets for support workers or personal assistants. If a personal assistant is needed, the student should cover the expenses by using personal and family budgets.

However, there is a type of practical assistance when it comes to the pupils' transportation to the School Units of Special Education; there are accessible vehicles that transfer pupils with wheelchairs and severe mobility difficulties from their homes to the School Unit and vice-versa. This responsibility was transferred with the law 3794/2009 to the municipalities, which are funded by the ministry of Education to buy or contract out accessible buses, particularly as regards special education schools, whereas before contracts were made on the basis of national procurement.

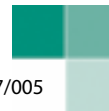
As far as the University training of school teachers is concerned, there are Departments of Special Education in some Universities throughout Greece that offer academic studies and training focused on nursery and primary school education. Within the Studies Program of those departments, students are able to choose between the following training categories of pupils with disabilities:



- a) Cognitive difficulties,
- b) Hearing difficulties,
- c) Vision difficulties,
- d) Autism,
- e) Learning difficulties.

Students that graduate from the Departments of Special Education are also allowed to teach within the field of General Education. However, regarding the general curriculum of university training, there are very few disability-related lessons for school teachers in the Pedagogical Departments of the country's Universities.

Moreover, the Pedagogical Institute is responsible for the program planning for the Training of Special Educational Personnel and the Special Supportive Personnel in the Ministry of Education, Life Long Learning and Religious Affairs (Law 3699/2008, article 25.2).



## Section 4a: Financial support

There is no provision for financial support for disabled people of school age (up to 22) targeting the educational needs of disabled students in particular.

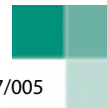
In general, financial support is available in the form of disability benefits provided under social security or welfare, varying in amount for different kinds of impairment. (For more details please refer to ANED reports on “Social protection and social inclusion” and “Support for independent living”<sup>13</sup>).

However, there is financial support in programs for vocational training operated by OAED for disabled trainees. These include two-year vocational training, funded at €5.5 per hour of training. They also provide health security under IKA, while trainees are able to maintain their unemployment status (i.e. receive unemployment benefit)<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.disability-europe.net/content/pdf/EL%20social%20inclusion%20report.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ep-katartisi.gr/>



## Section 4b: Personal assistance, equipment and adaptations

As mentioned before, there is no available provision by the state or other body regarding personal assistance or relevant allowances and direct payments that concern the educational life of a Greek student.

Nevertheless, there are certain Greek schools of different educational levels (special and mainstream) that offer adjusted assistive equipment for pupils with different disabilities.

In the website of the Hellenic Pedagogical Institute<sup>15</sup> there is a published list of titles of special and accessible educational software products addressed to pupils with mobility, vision and hearing disabilities. In addition, there are also contact details for the public schools (throughout Greece) that were provided with that special software within the context of an inclusive project coordinated by the Hellenic Pedagogical Institute:

- 4 Primary schools of special education for pupils with vision disabilities (exclusively)
- 12 schools of special education (6 Primary schools, 3 High schools, 1 Lyceum, 2 Technical Educational Institutions) for pupils with mobility disabilities (exclusively)
- 15 schools of special education (1 Kindergarten, 8 Primary schools, 3 High schools, 1 Lyceum, 2 Technical Educational Institutions) for pupils with hearing disabilities (exclusively)
- 125 (different level) schools of special education for pupils with cognitive disabilities (exclusively)
- 872 mainstream Primary schools
- 326 mainstream High schools

The above equipment would not be available to disabled students who were studying in another country as part of their course; however, those educational assistive means would be available to students from another country who are studying in Greece as long as they can submit the requested certifications to the school's administration.

It is important to mention that the Accessibility Unit of the University of Athens offers an online free AT software inventory<sup>16</sup> that aims at informing students with disabilities on the available solutions provided by the assistive technologies (AT) free of charge.

The included applications are presented in an organized and systematic way after they have been installed and tested in the University of Athens Speech and Accessibility Laboratory.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.pi-schools.gr/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://access.uoa.gr/fs>

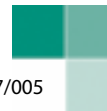


For each free AT software, the available application is documented and the following fields of information are filled: application name, developer, version, AT category(ies), related disability(ies), description, operating system(s), installation procedure, settings and hints, download links, and a screenshot.

There are three ways to browse the online free AT software inventory's applications:

- Browse by Disability: lists the related applications based on the chosen disability (Speech, Hearing, Motor, Blindness and Low Vision).
- Browse by Category: lists the applications by type of AT software category.
- Show All Applications: simply lists the whole inventory's applications in an alphabetical order.

The support provided by the Accessibility unit at the University of Athens is discussed in more detail in the next section regarding good practice.



## Section 5: Evidence of good practice

### 1. School co-teaching of children with vision disabilities in Greece

Within the frame of the European project “HELIOS”, the school adviser of Special Education (of the 4th Region of Athens), implemented inclusive educational programs (on a pilot basis) for blind pupils of the 2nd Primary School of Moschato (school year 1990-1) and of the 35th Primary School of Piraeus (school year 1991-2). Those inclusive programs were successfully implemented and are still taking place - in various Primary Schools throughout Greece where there are pupils with vision disabilities - using the same or alternative inclusive models.

For the implementation of those programs the model of “Co-teaching with two educators in the classroom” was selected, according to which:

- a) 8 blind students were placed in the 3rd grade of the 2nd Primary School of Moschato and in the 3rd grade of the 35th Primary School of Piraeus (4 in each one), where they were co-educated with the rest of their classmates, all in the same room, according to the “common” schools’ curriculum. In some cases the blind students were supported by a special support teacher in a separate classroom (e.g. for the implementation of complicated linguistic or mathematic exercises, etc.).
- b) Within the inclusive classroom there were 2 teachers working in a daily full-time basis: the teacher of the classroom which was in charge for the education of the non-disabled students and the support-teacher who was responsible for providing special educational help to the pupils which had vision disabilities, in order for them to equally participate in the daily training process.

Additionally, in the Special Municipal School of Blind people in Athens there are co-teaching programs taking place every year where entire classrooms or single students are included and educated in “common” schools.

(Liodakis D. 2000, Atrapos publications: “Educational programmes for the blind”)

### 2. Accessibility Unit of University of Athens – A Good example

The Accessibility Unit of the University of Athens is the only educational body that has taken the initiative to provide students with all the necessary equipment and adjustments in order for them to equally participate in the University’s educational life.

Some of the basic needs of the students with disabilities which are addressed are:

- Access to interpersonal communication with the members of the academic community.
- Access to the University’s premises.

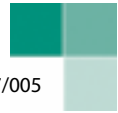


- Access to the educational content (printed or digital).
- Access to the lectures, assessments, internet content and informatics applications.

The Accessibility Unit includes the following departments and activities:

- A. **Electronic Accessibility Department (e-access)**  
This Department is responsible for the evaluation of the students' abilities and the provision of the Personal Assistive Technologies – as well as the technical support of the accessible workstations in University's libraries. Within the Department a Video Relay Service (VRS)\* is operating for deaf students, while there is production and distribution of accessible educational material.  
\* VRS is a video-telecommunication service that allows deaf, hard-of-hearing and individuals with speech difficulties to communicate over video telephones (and similar technologies) with hearing people in real-time, via a sign language interpreter.
- B. **Structured Environment Accessibility**  
The Accessibility Unit deals with every-day accessibility problems and validates the accessibility specifications for the new University buildings and the external environment of the campus. It also makes modifications of the existing buildings and the external environment of the campus in order to restore its accessibility.
- C. **Transportation Service**  
It arranges daily transportation to the University of students who use a wheelchair, or those with severe mobility disabilities. An accessible mini-van (capacity of 5 students with disabilities; of which 2 passengers with wheelchairs) is staffed to transfer (daily) the students from their homes to the University and vice-versa between 7am. and 10pm.
- D. **Psychological Counselling Service**  
This service provides individual and team psychological counselling to students with disabilities.
- E. **The University's Assistive technology (AT) products are designed to provide additional accessibility to students who different accessibility needs (vision, hearing, motor, speech, learning difficulties).**

The computer-based Assistive Technology (special AT software/hardware) and the Accessibility Options of the Operating system are being used for augmenting & enhancing the capabilities of the studies and/or for facilitating computer access. The Accessibility Unit of the University of Athens provides personalised technological solutions for each student with disability and technical support, while it facilitates the supply of the corresponding equipment.



Some examples of AT provided by the Unit:

- For students with vision difficulties: Screen reader, Text to Speech, Braille Display, Braille Embosser, Braille Translation Software, Scanner with OCR Software, CCTV Magnifier, Screen Scanning, etc.
- For students with mobility disabilities (especially on upper limbs): Speech Recognition, Switches, Switch Interface, Mounting System, Foot Switches, Joystick, Trackball, Head mouse, Sip/puff Switch, Virtual Keyboard with Word Prediction, Click Software, etc.
- For students with speech difficulties: Speech Recognition, Voice enhancing systems, Text to Speech programs, etc.

Moreover, a larger (in personnel and equipment) unit has been designed to produce accessible material quickly and in larger quantities. The Accessible Educational Material Production Dept. is responsible for:

1. Receiving applications from students
2. Contacting Publishers (obligated by law to provide books in electronic format)
3. Acquiring books in digital format when available
4. Scanning, OCR, and correction of printed material
5. Making books to conform with the guidelines (e.g. description of figures, scientific formulas in MathML)
6. Securing and distributing electronic books (in various formats) or in Braille or in large print

Finally, the University's Libraries are equipped with Accessible Workstations (<http://speech.di.uoa.gr/libaccess>) for low-vision, blind and motion disabled students, while the librarians have been properly trained in order to support the students during the use of the accessible equipment.



## Section 6: References

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Ministry of Education Ministerial decision 108474/Γ6/ 2002 *Regulation of provision of education at home* Official Journal of Government B 1356 / 21.10.2002

Law 2817/2000 *Education of persons with special educational needs* Official Journal of Government A'78/14.03.200

Law 2831/2000 *General Urban Planning Regulation* Official Journal of Government A/140/13-6-2000

Law 2643/1998 *Measures for employment of people of special groups and other regulations* Official Journal of Government A/220/1998

### **Websites**

Accessibility Unit of the University of Athens <http://access.uoa.gr/fs>

Hellenic Pedagogical Institute - <http://www.pi-schools.gr/>

OAED [www.oaed.gr](http://www.oaed.gr) and <http://www.ep-katartisi.gr/> (vocational training)