Ref. No. 6171.2/78/AS 2238

NOTE VERBALE

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and, following the latter's Note Verbale GVA-0704-ENG, dated 10 November 2011, on the right to education, has the honour to forward the responses, by the Greek Government (Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs), to the relevant questionnaire submitted by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education.

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, December 23, 2011

To: The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
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Pages attached: 8
1. Please list existing national laws, regulations and policies establishing norms and standards for quality of education in your country. Please also include any guidelines on the quality of education.

According to the Greek Constitution, education constitutes one of the basic missions of the State and every Greek citizen is entitled to it free of charge at all levels. A number of laws clearly state the objectives of Greek education. The basic target of primary and secondary education is to contribute "to the complete, harmonious and balanced development of the intellectual, psychological and physical potential of the pupils, so that, regardless of their gender or origin, they may become integer personalities and live in harmony". More specific provisions (a) protect and reinforce pupils’ right to freedom of religion; (b) encourage respect for their own cultural heritage; (c) promote the development of a spirit of friendship, cooperation and peaceful coexistence with all other peoples; and (d) promote the protection of the natural environment.

Additionally, with the aim of upholding the right of all children to education in practice a line of measures has been taken by the Greek Ministry of National Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs and its related bodies as follows.

Foreign and repatriated students (migrants / refugees) enjoy the right to free education exactly as natives do. Every child living in Greece is entitled to education regardless of their parents’ / guardians’ legal status in the country. Because of the frequently special conditions of migration, administrative adaptations have been made to facilitate registering of foreign students who at the time of registration do not possess the official documents that are otherwise required. If upon completion of the school year those documents have not been submitted, the student is given a certificate of attendance instead of an annual school report. That certificate provides for the promotion of the child to the next grade level.

Therefore, minor aliens who reside on Greek territory are liable to a 9-year minimum compulsory education, just like their Greek peers according to article 40 (1) of Law 2910/2001 and according to Presidential Decrees 201/98 and 155/78 that are in effect in Elementary Education, and the 100758/12/29-09-05 and 120839/12/01-11-2005 circulars that were in effect in the school year 2005-2006 for Secondary Education. Minor aliens studying at all educational levels have access to all school or educational activities. According to article 40 (3) of the same Law, the following minor aliens may register with public schools despite lacking complete documentation:

- Children of aliens protected by the Greek State as refugees and of those aliens protected by the United Nations High Commission;
- Children of aliens who come from areas with irregular conditions;
- Children of those who have applied for refugee status; and
- Children of aliens who reside in Greece although their legal stay in the country has not been settled yet.

With the aim of providing a well-rounded and quality education, the Ministry of Education is promoting measures and policies at all education levels which rest on the following pillars: a) human-centered education, b) environmental education, c) multilingualism and Greek language, d) education, culture and sports and e) digital convergence.

Pre-primary education in Greece begins at the age of 4 years when children are allowed to enroll in Niplogogia (pre-primary schools), while attendance in them is compulsory for all 5 year old children. The operation of Niplogogia falls under the authority of the Ministry of
Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs. In the framework of primary education, operate the all-day Nipiagogeia which provide an extended daily programme compared to that of the regular Nipiagogeia. Nipiagogeia may receive children of 4 years of age.

As stated in the law regarding the structure and operation of the primary and secondary education, the aim of pre-primary school is to assist children to develop physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. Special attention should be given to the development of motor and cognitive abilities.

Primary education, which is compulsory, is provided in primary schools (Dimotiko) and lasts for 6 years. All state primary schools are mixed-gender. The aim of primary education is to contribute to the complete, harmonious and balanced development of the mental and psychophysical abilities of the pupils, so that, regardless of gender or origin, they have the potential to evolve to integer and creative characters.

The 3 year attendance in Gymnasio (lower secondary school) constitutes the last period of compulsory education and includes pre-vocational education. In parallel with day Gymnasio operate Evening Schools (Esperino Gymnasio) in which attendance starts at the age of 14 years old. 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 Epaggelmatika Lykeio/Vocational Lykeio and Epaggelmatiki Scholi/Vocational School). In General and Vocational Lykeio pupils enrol at the age of 15 years old while in Vocational School at the age of 16. Parallel to day General and Vocational Lykeio operate evening schools with the same conditions concerning pupils’ age for admission. Their timetable allows pupils to be in regular full time attendance and acquire work experience at the same time.

Regarding Gymnasio, its aim is to promote the well-rounded development of the pupils according to their age-related capabilities and the corresponding demands of life. In particular, Gymnasio helps pupils:

- to broaden their system of values (moral, humanitarian and other),
- to combine knowledge acquisition with current social issues, in order to successfully deal with different situations and seek for responsible solutions to problems, amid a climate of creative dialogue and collective effort,
- to cultivate their linguistic expression, formulating their thoughts clearly and correctly, both orally and in writing,
- to improve their physical fitness and cultivate their talents and physical skills,
- to become acquainted with the various art forms and create a set of aesthetic criteria useful for their own cultural expression,
- to realize their capabilities, disposition, skills and interests, acquire knowledge of various professions and pursue their further improvement in the context of cultural, social and economic life in order to evolve in harmony as individuals and future employees, fully aware of the equal contribution of spiritual and manual work to social progress and development.

The aim of Geniko Lykeio is:

- to provide a high level of general knowledge,
- to develop the students' abilities, initiative, creativity and critical thinking,
- to offer the pupils the knowledge and abilities necessary to continue their studies on to the next level of education,
to cultivate pupils’ skills which will, after specialisation or training, facilitate their access to the labour market.

The objective of Secondary Vocational Education is:
-to develop the pupils’ abilities, initiative, creativity and critical thinking,
-to transmit the required technical and professional knowledge and promote development of relevant skills,
-to offer pupils the knowledge and abilities necessary to continue their studies at the next level of education.

Apart from mainstream schools operate other types of schools, namely Peiromatika (experimental schools), Minority Schools for the children of the Muslim minority in Thrace), Intercultural Education Schools, Special Education Schools, the European Education School and Second Chance Schools, as well as Ecclesiastic Schools, Music Schools, Arts Schools and Additional Sports Classes in certain Gymnasia and Lykeia.

Along all the above-mentioned, the elimination of educational disparities has been at the core of the education policy. As a result, several measures combined with special programmes have been taken for the inclusion in the educational process of vulnerable social groups such as immigrant and repatriate students, Roma children and the children of Muslim minority in Thrace.

2. Please describe briefly applicable norms and standards and minimal requirements, especially with regard to the following:

a. School infrastructure
   in the majority of schools in primary and secondary education the following facilities are provided:
   Science Labs
   Computer Labs
   Foreign Language Labs
   Multiple Purpose Classrooms
   Libraries
   Physical Education Facilities
   Special Education Classes (in Primary Schools)

b. Class size and pupil-teacher ratio
   Nipiagogeia can be ‘one teacher’ schools (single classroom) or ‘two teacher’ schools (two classrooms). The first have from 7 to 25 children and the latter 26 to 50 children. The number of children per pre-primary school teacher is specified at up to 25 children. In Nipiagogeia operating with one pre-primary school teacher, all children of both age groups necessarily co-exist in one single class. The pre-primary school teacher works with the same class for at least one school-year. All-day Nipiagogeia are staffed by at least two pre-primary school teachers.

   Primary schools (Dimotika) are divided into one-teacher or two-teacher schools up to six-teacher schools or twelve teacher schools. Depending on the area, one-teacher primary schools can be merged into a central primary school (if the number of students attending the school is under 15). The students are transported free of any charge from the area of the merged schools to the pre-determined place where the classes will operate or to the place of central primary schools. Usually the number of pupils in classes ranges from 15 to 25.
In compulsory and non-compulsory education, all schools are mixed-gender ones and the number of pupils in every class should not exceed 30.

In Vocational Non-compulsory Secondary Education pupils may not exceed 25 in classes.

c. Teacher qualification

Kindergarten teachers are University graduates and come from the Pedagogical Departments for Kindergarten Teachers. Their studies last for four years. Teachers in primary education are exclusively university graduates and, more specifically, of the Pedagogical departments of primary education. Their studies last for four years.

In primary education a teacher is responsible for all subjects apart from Physical Education, Music and Foreign Languages, which are taught by teachers of the respective specialisation. It is common practice for the same teacher to remain in a class for two years.

Teachers at Gymnasia as well as in general upper secondary education offer instruction exclusively on the subject of their specialization. They are University graduates of departments relative to the subject they teach. Their studies last for four years.

Teachers in Vocational Lykeia may be University or Technological Education Institutes (TEI) graduates. Their studies last for four years. TEI graduates teach technical subjects and get one-year teacher training from the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPAITE).

All the above-mentioned teachers are Civil Servants or in cases of extra teaching needs they are appointed on a supplementary basis. The aforementioned Departments grant degrees which offer their holders the possibility of participating in the examinations held by the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) and being registered in a chart of provisional supplementary teachers so as to be appointed as teaching staff. Apart from their success in the written exams, the following are being taken into account: a) Degree grade, b) Postgraduate degrees, c) PhDs, d) past experience in the field.

d. Working conditions for teachers and their professional development

The educational counselling offered to teachers is provided by: a) the Institute of Educational Planning and b) The School Advisors who belong to the Departments of Scientific and Pedagogical Guidance of the Regional Education Directorates. The additional vocational training is organized by the Organization of Teacher Training (OEPEK) which is supervised by the Ministry of Education. In-service teacher training is made-up of a compulsory phase for the newly appointed teachers and a continuous component (featuring both compulsory and optional stages).

During their service, teachers may require help in terms of technology infrastructure. Thus, besides traditional support methods, new technologies such as computers, the internet or specific application programmes in certain courses can be additionally provided.

e. School curricula content and pedagogical materials

The Curricula in pre-primary schools are developed by the Institute of Educational Policy. Their aim is to support children's gradual socialization so that they develop physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. These programmes are organized around pedagogically appropriate themes that attract children's interest. Emphasis is placed on an
interdisciplinary and holistic approach to knowledge and on the mobilisation of children's interests and ideas in the learning process.

The Curricula of primary education are drafted by the Institute of Educational Planning which makes a proposal for final approval to the Ministry of Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs. Abiding by the curriculum is compulsory for teachers. The Institute of Educational Planning evaluates the school books and makes a recommendation to the Ministry which is responsible for the final selection. It is not possible to choose from among different textbooks. Organisation of Curricula and preparation of school-books are based on the Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework and has as its main target the cross thematic approach to knowledge.

On the whole, the Curricula for primary education are based on the following basic principles: a) the offer of a general education, b) the promotion of pupil's interests and development of their skills, c) the assurance of equal learning opportunities for all pupils, d) the reinforcement of the cultural and linguistic identity within the framework of a multicultural society, e) the preparation of pupils to use new information and communication technologies, f) the promotion of physical, mental and social health and g) the awareness of the necessity to protect the natural environment and adopt socially responsible patterns of behaviour.

Essential to the application of effective methods of teaching is the contribution of the school advisors of primary education, who collaborate with teachers for the implementation of supplementary educational support in certain subjects for pupils facing learning difficulties.

The curricula and timetable of Gymnasia and of General non-compulsory Secondary Education (Geniko Lykeio, Vocational Lykeio and Vocational School) are drawn up by the Institute of Educational Policy and submitted to the Ministry of Education Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs for approval. Abiding by the curriculum is compulsory for teachers. Teachers do not have the option of choosing among different school books. Curricula and the writing of school books are based on the Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework. In the beginning of each teaching year the Institute of Educational Policy sends directions to the teachers indicating the method and teaching aids for all subjects. In order to support the educational level of pupils and reduce school dropout, social exclusion and social inequality in Gymnasia, Vocational Lykeio, as well as in Geniko Lykeio there are programs of Remedial and Support Teaching especially for pupils facing learning difficulties. Participation in them is optional.

The subjects in Vocational Lykeio are distinguished into general education subjects and technical-vocational education subjects, the latter including theoretical, workshops, design and combined (theory and workshop) subjects, for a total of 35 instructional hours per week. The subjects offered in Vocational Schools correspond to the occupational specialization selected by pupils.

f. Teaching-learning processes
The orientation of the education policy is human-centered. Therefore, serious efforts are made to integrate all pupils with their distinct characteristics and needs into the class and school activities. Improving the quality of education, as well as reducing the rate of early school leaving and school failure constitutes top priorities.
g. **School management, including student and parents participation**

Heads of Kindergartens are kindergarten teachers. Administrative bodies of each primary and secondary school are the principal, the assistant-principal and the teachers' association. The principal is responsible for the proper operation of the school, for co-coordinating school life, ensuring conformity with laws, circulars and service instructions, and implementing decisions of the teachers' association. The principal participates in the evaluation of the teachers of the school unit and co-operates with school advisors. The assistant-principal acts as deputy for the principal when there is no principal, or when the principal is absent or prevented from carrying out their duties. The teachers' association, president of which is the principal of the school, comprises of all its teachers and is the collective body for charting directions for the better application of educational policy, and the better operation of the school.

To ensure their participation in school life, the parents of pupils form associations. The parents of pupils in each school form a Parents’ Association and Parents’ Associations of schools in the same community or municipality form a Parents’ Union. Parents’ Unions in every Prefecture make up a Parents’ Federation. All The Parents’ Federations in the country make up the Parents’ Confederation.

h. **Methods to evaluate student performance and assess learning outcomes**

In *Niplagogeio*, evaluation is continuous and is based on observing the everyday behaviour and activities of the infants, both on an individual and on a group level. Assessment results, records, occasional notes of the teacher and the child's work file are included in the evaluation file of each child. At least once a month, or more often if needed, cooperation is arranged beyond teaching hours with the parents of the children. The evaluation file is accessible to parents. On special circumstances cooperation is possible during teaching.

In primary schools, the assessment of pupils is done by the teacher or teachers of all subjects on the basis of ‘Descriptive Evaluation’, which gives them the chance to provide accurate and detailed information to pupils and their parents with regard to the results of pupils’ efforts at school, their skills and preferences as well as their weaknesses in certain areas. Teachers keep a record where they register analytically the descriptive evaluation of pupils. The assessment takes into account four elements: a) everyday oral participation in the teaching—learning process and other school activities, b) the results of the pupil’s performance on the ‘assessment criteria’ included in the teaching material, c) the results of tasks and work assigned to the pupil, d) a creative project in the 5th and 6th Grade. The results of the assessment of pupils constitute the topic of discussion in a special meeting of the Teachers' Association. Regarding the assessment of pupils, parents or guardians are informed by teachers at least once every term.

‘Progress reports’ for the first and second grade include only a descriptive evaluation. For the third and the fourth grade the scale of grading is additionally employed: Excellent (A), Very Good (B), Good (C) and Fairly Good (D). For the fifth and the sixth grade the following scale is used: Excellent (9-10), Very Good (7-8), Good (5-6). For pupils who receive a Fairly Good grade Support Teaching may be provided.

In primary education pupils pass from one grade to the next if, according to the teacher's judgment, they meet the defined standards of assessment and as long as they have attended classes for more than half of the teaching year. Repetition of the 3rd or 4th grade occurs if there are more D (Fairly Good) marks among the final average marks for the various subjects and in the 5th and 6th grade, if the general average mark is less than 4.5 (out of 10).
In practice, however, a grade is rarely repeated in primary school since regulations provide for an individualized instructional/remedial Programme of Support Teaching for pupils facing serious learning or other difficulties, as well as for timely communication and cooperation between the teacher, the parents, the school advisor, and the teachers' association.

In Gymnasia Student assessment is based on:
- Day to day oral examination and the pupil's total participation in the teaching-learning process,
- Short written tests,
- Hourly compulsory written tests which are given without notice in each of the first two terms, and cover the material of a broader teaching unit under the condition that relative revision has preceded the test,
- The assignments done by the pupils at school or at home,
- The projects undertaken by the pupil either privately or as part of team work with classmates on a subject of their choice and under the guidance of the teacher,
- Written review examinations at the end of the school year, for all subjects except for Physical Education, Music, Household Economics, Technology, Art and School Vocational Guidance as well as for Information Technology in the first two Gymnasia grades.

The assessment of pupils in Geniko Lykeio is regarded an integral part of the teaching process and its aim is to define the degree to which the teaching goals and those of the curriculum have been achieved. An effort is made to apply a variety of assessment methods and techniques so as to arrive at a valid, reliable, objective and accurate assessment of pupils' knowledge, their critical ability and skills. Its ultimate purpose is to foster pupils' self-directed learning, to keep pupils and guardians fully informed and to enable teachers to draw conclusions about the results of their efforts and provide feedback for the teaching process. Within this framework, pupils are evaluated on the basis of:
- Their participation in daily class work and their overall activity in school,
- Their performance on written tests and exams during the two four-month terms of the school year,
- Their projects.

The abovementioned with regard to assessment in Geniko Lykeio applies to Vocational Lykeio as well, in which additional assessment methods are applied regarding the results of pupils in Laboratory subjects.

3. Please provide information on other relevant initiatives and developments aiming to promote quality in education.

The main current reform is the "New School" which aims at a 'public, free and high level quality education for all'. It makes practice of the motto 'PUPILS FIRST' as it places pupils at the center of policy design initiatives. In the New School, teaching is individualized depending on each pupil's needs while active participation in the learning activities is promoted to replace passive attendance.

The New School serves certain educational strategic objectives such as:
- Promotion of lifelong learning,
- Quality improvement of education,
- Promotion of social cohesion and active citizenship,
- Enhancement of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.
The strategic objectives in the framework of the New School include:
- facilitating access to pre-school education and increase of participation from the age of 4,
- ensuring access to primary education,
- reducing the number of pupils who complete compulsory education with low performance in reading, mathematics and sciences,
- reducing drop-out rates from compulsory education,
- certifying foreign language knowledge and the use of P/C,
- increasing the number of teachers who use ICT in teaching,

New technologies constitute a basic tool in serving the New School aims. A key requirement is to upgrade the existing networks and create a single digital environment for pupils and teachers that would ensure a better educational outcome. Further legislative initiatives are undertaken in support of teachers who constitute the key to the educational process, such as teacher training and the establishment of the Educational Training Certification.

The plan for exclusively all day primary education schools form part of the policy for the New School. Gradually, all primary education schools will be converted to all day schools with a single educational programme. Pupils attend foreign language courses in these schools leading to certification; they do sports and get familiar with arts or other creative activities. In the first grades, study (group or individual) is carried out within the school timetable. For the school year 2010 – 2011, a plan of immediate interventions was promoted regarding:
- reducing the material taught,
- broadening the compulsory timetable,
- focusing on Greek language and mathematics,
- increasing teaching hours for civilization and literature courses,
- certifying the use of foreign languages and PC.

Another measure that has recently been taken by the Ministry of Education, and is expected to contribute positively to combating segregation and its consequent effects in certain schools, is that of the Educational Priority Zones (ZEP). The general aim behind the implementation of ZEP is to shape, and test under real classroom conditions, alternative and flexible educational approaches of differentiated teaching so as to ensure the equitable integration into the system of students from areas with low education and socioeconomic indicators, and possibly remove the social and economic barriers to students' progress.

The Educational Priority Zones action is implemented in geographical regions where the basic school integration indicators are low. The said Zones enhance a holistic approach regarding the education process which transcends the typical teaching and learning in-school processes and aims to connect school units with local social agents through the implementation of educational, social and cultural actions.

One of the actions through which the educational support offered to students will be implemented is that of support from specialized staff (psychologists, social workers) to monitor special cases and resolve potential problematic situations.