

## **Education (digital) for gender equality and against sexual violence in Greece**

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According to the Gender Equality Report of the European Social Committee, women in the 21st century continue to be the majority of economically inactive people, to be more vulnerable to poverty, social exclusion and violence and face even greater financial difficulties.

Today, the unequal working and living conditions of men and women are getting even more worse by the consequences of the severe economic crisis on a global, European and national level. In Greece, the multi-faceted attack of the crisis on women's rights has multiplied the obstacles to their equal integration into the labor market, thus leading a huge number of young women to unemployment. This fact imposed their massive return home, threw back the social state deficit with unpaid care services, which also deprives them of personal time and opportunity to engage in politics.

As resentful and unpleasant results seem to be the multiple forms of violence that women suffer and where they cannot react, the suffocating compression of their basic choices of life, and the consequent emergence of significant obstacles in their emancipation. However, in times of crisis, it is certain that the principle of gender equality is not a luxury, but a key component of the development, social and economic policy that today is trying to get out of the crisis. It is a deep belief in the state of equality that fair economic and social development needs the full exploitation of human potential, free of gender inequalities.

Education as a basic mechanism of knowledge production inevitably generates and reproduces gender divisions and inequalities. However, it can be equally a structural factor in creating and promoting gender equality in the light of a holistic and multidisciplinary approach. In this direction, a continuous and systematic study of the gender and educational process is required. The digital, therefore, creative commitment of Compulsory Education students to gender equality issues and so-called gender identities, is one-way today. This makes it imperative to introduce and exploit programs, such as those developed and created by "The Smile of the Child" team in collaboration with other organizations from Europe, and largely adopted by the educational community in Greece. With the help from the educational coordinators and their extended competence and jurisdiction in primary, secondary education (Gymnasium, Lyceum), we have the responsibility to create the conditions for smooth admission of CONVEY programs in schools. It is now imperative for students to participate creatively in the Greek educational system in CONVEY program and other activities that will be developed in the future because they are an attractive and useful proposal to stimulate pupils to become aware of policies to support gender equality and to prevent the use of gender- reporting and further sexual harassment with victims women, schoolchildren, refugees, etc.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the multi-level gender mix in educational practice and the necessity of introducing it into education as a basic interpretative tool, on the basis of promoting gender equality, democracy and human rights. It is an undeniable fact that the major crisis since 2009 has penetrated into all levels of the life of Greek families and not only in the economic sphere but mainly in the field of bioethics, social adaptation, democratic treatment of all pupils, especially girls whatever the cultural background they come from. The refugee crisis from 2015 onwards, is a new field of problems which the Modern Greek education system is called upon to take care of, to find solutions and give outlets without often having the means required for that purpose. It is also a multifaceted opportunity for awareness of diversity, multiculturalism and the potential for social development and prosperity stemming from osmosis with refugees and the dynamics that follow. The flows of immigrants and refugees from 2015 onwards created a distinctly diverse landscape with a variety of reactions from the Greek society, causing turbulence in school reality, with a predominant question of equal access for all pupils living in the country to Greek education system. Can all children participate in knowledge? Is the Greek school ready to accept the refugees in its classes? Is gender violence which is reproduced in families transferred and to what extent in schools? Does it affect refugee students?

The question is what actions and initiatives are we capable and ready to start and in what form can we implement them in order to reduce and perhaps in the long run eradicate the phenomena of gender and other violence, while at the same time promoting gender equality effectively, thus creating stable foundations for a democratic education. Modern methods of digital education such as CONVEY, with direct activation of students in formal education classes, are probably a new and promising area for the Greek school.

The problem that the modern educational reality in Greece has to address, during the crisis, is concentrated in the question: How can teachers shape a safe and inclusive environment for all students? How can equal opportunities be guaranteed for all people in order to gain access to quality education free of intimidation and violence stemming from gender stereotypes? Learning skills among other social experiences contribute to the formation of opinions, attitudes and skills so that school education plays a catalytic role in the fight against gender inequality, equal access to the educational good. A key component for this purpose is the multiplication of online digital interventions within the school environment, with direct involvement of students in the educational process to protect gender equality, avoid sexual harassment in whatever form it meets in the social fabric of modern Greece.

In addition to organizations such as the "The Smile of the Child", which develops and implements CONVEY programs in the direction of sensitizing students through their digital education in the classroom, the main pillar in this direction is the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) are analyzed below as far as they relate to education in Greece today.

## **National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020 (NAPGE)**

The NAPGE is a national scope and the strategic objectives set for the new period are the listed below:

- The protection of women's human rights, with emphasis on vulnerable population groups and migrant women and women refugees,
- Preventing and tackling violence against women in family, work and society,
- Supporting the employment of women and removing the consequences of reducing male employment with regard to gender identities and gender relations,
- Promoting equality in education, culture, the media and sport,
- The elimination of gender inequalities in health,
- The balanced participation of women in decision-making centers,

In this article we concentrate on the following main focus:

## **AXIS: EDUCATION, TRAINING, CULTURE, SPORTS AND MEDIA**

Basic thesis and direction of the GSGE is the importance of the role of education in promoting equality issues and in the production and promotion of an equality culture among pupils on the basis of reciprocity, partnership, solidarity, respect for diversity.

The GSGE supports any educational efforts to promote the principle of equality in education, seeks and wishes to broaden existing co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Research, the IEP and the educational community. Being aware of the structural (productive and reproductive) role of education in promoting gender equality, it has undertaken clear and concrete initiatives - actions. For example:

- Signing a Cooperation Agreement between the “Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs”, “General Secretariat for Gender Equality” (GSGE), “Institute of Educational Policy” (I.E.P.), and “Research Centre for Gender Equality” (KETHI), for the design and implementation of a project to raise awareness and educate pre-primary and primary school teachers on gender equality and gender discrimination issues.

- Conducting contests (poster, digital creation) throughout the whole range of the educational process in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary education, implemented by GSGE in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Research & Religious Affairs and Educational Television on the issue Separation of Games, Sex and the Environment and Gender Violence as a follow-up to the competitions of the previous year and aiming to inform and sensitize teachers and pupils to the principles of equality of Gender.

- Signing a cooperation agreement with Health Education Departments for interventions in the educational field on issues of sexual abuse and gender violence.

## **Objective 1: Promoting gender equality in formal education, science & research**

The economic, political, social and cultural changes that have taken place over the past decades in Europe and Greece are also directly reflected in the field of Education.

Some of the main changes in the field of education are the balanced participation of boys and girls in all formal education levels, the best school performance of girls, their better achievements in higher education, the fact that girls cover a percentage more than 50% of the student population, the successful course of girls in tertiary education, the increase in the participation and acquisition of postgraduate and doctoral degrees by girls, which enables them to claim high status and pay in the labour market and to overcome anachronistic social perceptions about female education and other inequalities.

However, the interconnection of Gender Equality and Education remains open, as, despite the mitigation of gender inequalities, gender discrimination and stereotypical choices are produced, reproduced and confirmed in public and private social practices. The current gendered understandings and the resulting divisions and inequalities are also identified and reflected in the field of education throughout the educational process, its forms and its levels. They relate to areas such as curricula (hidden and formal), books and papers, teaching practices, teachers' expectations towards boys and girls, the absence of cognitive objects promoting communication and partnership between the sexes, the use of the language that makes the female genre usually 'invisible', professional orientation, gender distribution of teachers in the professional hierarchy, syndicate unions and leading team of decision centers etc.

In particular, with respect to teachers and their positions in the educational hierarchy, this contrasts with the high proportion of women's participation in the specific workplace (e.g. female primary and secondary school teachers are the majority, but their representation at teacher and syndicate unions and decision-making centers is particularly low) and institutional arrangements for gender equality in the labor market. An indicative consequence of this is, for example, the division of gender studies, which is evident both in university schools and in initial VET fields, which decisively influences the professional choices of women and their subsequent professional careers. In addition, the traditional division of studies plays a decisive role in the reproduction of the gender discrimination of the professions in the labor market. Thus, it is no coincidence that the vast majority of the Greek student population of humanities is still women, while in polytechnic schools, for example, the percentage of women remains low.

The above requires an educational policy that incorporates policies to promote and shape a value system that promotes gender equality, removing any dichotomous understandings and social based on gender, race, religion, class, and discrimination.

In this context, the main objectives of the new National Action Plan on Gender Equality in Education are to modernize the fundamental role played by education, to make use of the educational process in combating stereotypical perceptions, to

promote balanced participation of the sexes in education, science and research, strengthening and exploiting all human resources and at the same time eliminating all forms of gender discrimination.

## **Objective 2: Promoting Gender Equality in Lifelong Learning (LLL) and in Informal Education**

Lifelong learning (LLL) is a field with a large participation of women, both trainers and trainees. Their participation was overwhelmingly bigger by 2009, but declined after 2009 (due to the crisis), but their percentage is still high. This is because the unstable and ominous environment of the Greek market can be a major barrier to entrepreneurship, but it is not an obstacle to exploiting opportunities for lifelong learning, given the gender-related function of education and the labor market. Consequently, it is an area whose documented study will lead to important conclusions and proposals on the gender dimension in the LLL field.

Gender mainstreaming in LLL policy, priorities, programs and actions is a necessity for genuinely addressing gender discrimination and the creation of stereotypes. This will allow a different view of the LLM and will enrich the overall policy required in this area.

The need for systematic and organized training, as well as sensitization, remains, therefore, great. This training should be addressed to teachers, citizens, workers and employees in the public and private sectors. Particularly for the public sector and local government, training on gender issues should be extended to all human resources and not only to staff / employees who show personal interest.

It is obvious that in the case of informal education with a view to gender and with a view to promoting gender equality, the challenge of patriarchy, stereotypical gender roles in the private and public spheres, family, work, education, culture, politics, and so on, as well as the emergence of causes that produce and reproduce inequality, gender exclusion, sexism, and all forms of gender violence, are components of the process of emancipation and active i legitimacy citizenship (active citizenship). Therefore, the GSGE includes in the new NNGIP and actions to promote gender equality and the fight against gender inequalities and in the field of non-formal education.

On the basis of the above and exploiting the axes of the Greek National Policy for the involvement of education in the promotion of Gender Equality, the reduction of sexual harassment and the equal education of all the children living in the country are presented below all the actions that formally take place in Greek schools. Main target is the awareness of the dimensions of gender violence, the delimitation of gender stereotypes, the prevention of gendered violence (with emphasis on sexual violence and harassment) within education / schools in Greece.

Actions in schools and partnerships with the Ministry of the Interior, the IEP and the thematic bodies:

1. "44 actions of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality for Education in the school year 2016-2017":

2. "67 actions of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality for Education in the school year 2017-2018":

3. "87 actions of the Directorate for Planning, Standards and Monitoring of Gender Equality Policies of the General Secretariat for Health. in the field of education in the year 2018 ":

All the publishing activities are available at the following link: <http://www.isotita.gr/en/publications/> & <http://www.isotita.gr/en/library-on-gender-and-equality/>

In this context, actions related to the activation of school units with the CONVEY program in the Peloponnese and Northern Greece (Central Macedonia, Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace) are being carried out with great success by teachers of all specialties in Primary and Secondary Schools the active participation of pupils in activities within 10 hours of in-school programs, and in the "Thematic Week" in Gymnasia of the same duration. The interactive game is installed in the School's IT workshops and is used offline by the students under the guidance of trained teachers. From the beginning of the next school year, it is expected that the implementation, use and operation of the "CONVEY, not a game" game tool will be generalized with the introduction of more schools in the Regions of responsibility of the Primary and Secondary Education Coordinators. In this direction, we hope to have support and support in all areas of the "Smile of the Child" services and, of course, its executives.

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