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Erasmus+ project European Standards for Peer Support Workers in Mental Health

Guide for the national implementation of the further training concept for peer support workers in Greece (EQF) levels 4 and 5



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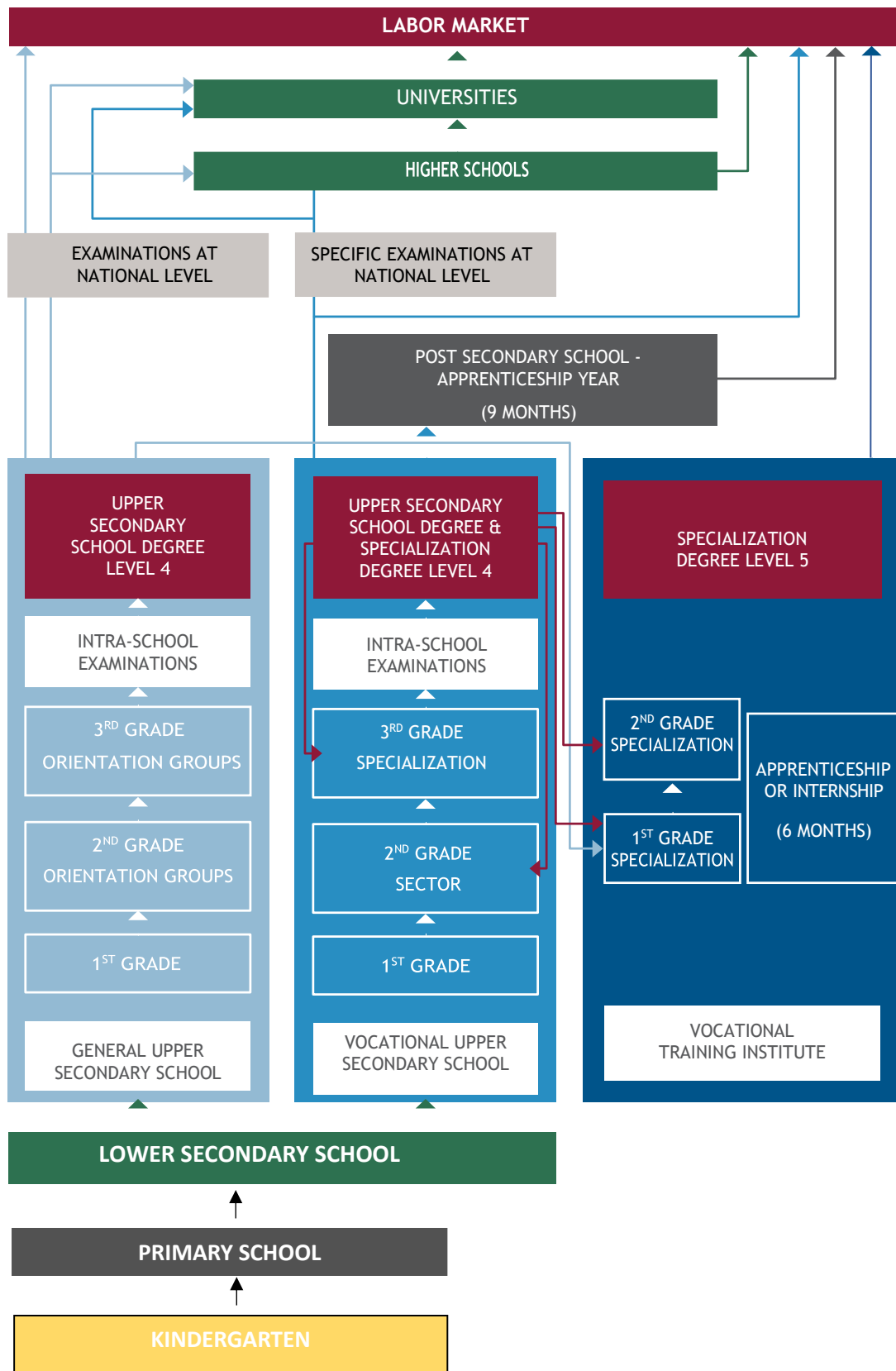
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1. Description of the VET system in Greece



https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/technical-education_final.pdf

INTRODUCTION

Education in Greece is protected by the country's Constitution. Specifically, article 16. par.2 states that "education is a basic mission of the State and aims at the moral, spiritual, professional and physical education of Greeks, the development of national and religious consciousness and their transformation into free and responsible citizens". Compulsory education is set at 9 years and all Greeks have the right to free education at all levels by attending the country's public schools. Moreover, state support is provided to distinguished students as well as to those in need of help or special protection depending on their abilities.

Regarding vocational education, it "is provided by the State through higher education institutions for a period that cannot exceed three years, according to law, which defines the professional rights of those who graduate these schools" (Article 16. par.7). It is also stated that the establishment and operation of private schools requires a permit in accordance to specific terms and conditions set by law. Respectively, their supervision and the official status of their teaching staff is defined by the legislation.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN GREECE

A. COMPULSORY EDUCATION

It consists of:

- Two-year attendance in kindergarten
- Six-year attendance in primary school
- Three-year attendance in Lower Secondary School.

According to the Greek Penal Code, whoever has custody of a minor student and fails to register or supervise his/ her studies is punished.

B. THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF GREECE

It consists of 3 levels of training:

1. Primary Education
2. Secondary Education
3. Tertiary/ Higher Education

Analytically:

B.1. Primary Education consists of:

- two years in kindergarten starting from the age of 4
- six years in primary school

There are also all-day kindergartens, as well as all-day primary schools. Primary schools can be public or private.

B.2. Secondary Education includes two levels:

- The first level, Lower Secondary School is compulsory, 3-year attendance, day or evening.
- The second level, Upper Secondary School is optional, 3-year, day or evening attendance and one can choose between General Lyceum (in Greek Γενικό Λύκειο, ΓΕ.Λ.) or Vocational Lyceum (in Greek: Επαγγελματικό Λύκειο, ΕΠΑ.Λ.).

Secondary schools can be public or private.

Secondary education also includes:

- Second Chance Schools (in Greek: Σχολεία Δεύτερης Ευκαιρίας, Σ.Δ.Ε.), for individuals aged over 18, who have not completed the compulsory nine-year education. They are public, two-year attendance schools.
- Post-secondary Vocational Education and Training level 3 (according to the National Qualifications Framework corresponding to the European Qualifications Framework [EQF]), which is provided by:
 - the Vocational Training Schools (in Greek: Επαγγελματικές Σχολές Κατάρτισης, Ε.Σ.Κ.) and
 - the Vocational Apprenticeship Schools (in Greek: Επαγγελματικές Σχολές Μαθητείας, ΕΠΑ.Σ.) belonging to the Organization for the Employment of Human Resources (in Greek: Οργανισμός Απασχόλησης Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού, Ο.Α.Ε.Δ.).

Attendance can be day or evening and lasts two years. Vocational Training Schools can be public or private, while Vocational Apprenticeship Schools are only public.

- Post-secondary Vocational training level 5 (according to the National Qualifications Framework corresponding to the European Qualifications Framework [EQF]), which is provided by:
 - The Vocational Training Institutes (in Greek: Ινστιτούτα Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, Ι.Ε.Κ.) and
 - the Post-Secondary School Apprenticeship Year of Vocational Upper Secondary Schools.

Ι.Ε.Κ. provide initial vocational training to non-compulsory secondary education graduates. The training duration varies depending on the basic degree chosen. Ι.Ε.Κ. are public or private and lead to nationally recognized diplomas. Respectively, the Post-Secondary School Apprenticeship Year of Vocational Upper Secondary Schools provides initial vocational training services to graduates of the secondary cycle of ΕΠΑ.Λ. This program lasts 11 months.

In order to understand the context of vocational education and training in Greece, the National System of Vocational Education and Training (in Greek: Εθνικό Σύστημα Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης or Ε.Σ.Ε.Ε.Κ.), which has been established by Law 4763/2020, is briefly presented. The purpose of Ε.Σ.Ε.Ε.Κ. is the redesign of the regulatory framework and the types of inputs and outputs of vocational education and training, in order to: a) improve the knowledge, abilities and skills of human resources and b) adapt vocational education and

training to the ever-changing needs of society and labour market, taking into account the internationalized employment environment, so that it is a conscious alternative educational choice for the country's population. E.Σ.Ε.Ε.Κ. is developed within three (3) levels of the National Qualifications Framework corresponding to those of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Specifically:

- a. EQF level 3 includes Vocational Training Schools (Ε.Σ.Κ.) and Vocational Apprenticeship Schools (ΕΠΑ.Σ.) of OAED,
- b. EQF level 4 includes the Vocational Upper Secondary Schools (ΕΠΑ.Λ.) and the Upper Secondary Schools of the Integrated Special Vocational Lower and Upper Secondary Schools (ΕΝ.Ε.Ε.ΓΥ-Λ) and
- c. EQF level 5 includes Vocational Training Institutes (Ι.Ε.Κ.) and the Post-Secondary School Apprenticeship Year of Vocational Upper Secondary Schools.

B.3. Tertiary/ Higher Education includes:

- the Universities' Sector (Higher Education Institutions – in Greek: Ανώτατα Εκπαιδευτικά Ιδρύματα – Α.Ε.Ι.), which includes Universities, Polytechnic Universities and the School of Fine Arts and
- the Technological Sector, which includes the Technological Educational Institutions (in Greek: Τεχνολογικά Εκπαιδευτικά Ιδρύματα or Τ.Ε.Ι.) and the Higher School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (in Greek: Ανώτατη Σχολή Παιδαγωγικής και Τεχνολογικής Εκπαίδευσης or Α.Σ.ΠΑΙ.Τ.Ε.).

Both sectors are only public. Since 2019, all Τ.Ε.Ι. have been integrated in the country's university institutions, having their study programs appropriately modified (excluding Α.Σ.ΠΑΙ.Τ.Ε.).

Special Education School Units

Special Education School Units (in Greek: Σχολικές Μονάδες Ειδικής Αγωγής) are also included in categories B.1. and B.2. above. This is the set of educational services provided to students with disabilities and identified special educational needs. The type and degree of special educational needs determine the form, type and category of these school units. They are part of the integrated compulsory, free, public education. The state is obliged to provide Special Education and Training (in Greek: Ειδική Αγωγή και Εκπαίδευση, Ε.Α.Ε.) in schools of Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education. Ministry of Education and Religions is the exclusive competent body.

Broadly and beyond mandatory education, Ε.Α.Ε. is associated with all levels of formal education as well as non-formal and lifelong learning, seeking to develop the individual's personality and render it as capable as possible for autonomous participation in family, professional, social and cultural life.

Secondary vocational education specially provided to students with disabilities and identified special educational needs, provides the following:

- Special vocational lower secondary schools, where primary or special education primary school graduates enroll and attendance lasts five years. A program is implemented for the completion of the nine-year compulsory education and the provision of vocational education.
- Special Vocational Upper Secondary Schools, where graduates of Vocational Lower Secondary Schools, Special and General Lower Secondary Schools and Upper Secondary Schools enroll. Attendance lasts four years.
- Special Vocational school, in which Vocational Lower Secondary Schools and Special Lower Secondary Schools graduates enroll. Attendance lasts four years.
- Laboratories of Special Vocational Education and Training (in Greek: Εργαστήρια Ειδικής Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης, Ε.Ε.Ε.Ε.Κ.), where attendance lasts five to eight years. Primary school graduates coming from general or special education may enroll, following a proposal from the relevant diagnostic services, in order to cover compulsory secondary education. An individual may enroll in Ε.Ε.Ε.Ε.Κ. up to the age of 16. These workshops are part of secondary vocational education.

Specially adapted and individualized supportive educational programs are implemented in Lower Secondary Schools and Upper Secondary Schools of Special Education and Training. They may also include technical vocational education and training courses. Attendance can be extended over the 23rd year of age.

C. ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN GREECE

The concept of general adult education includes all organized learning activities (formal and non-formal) aiming at adults and seek to enrich their knowledge, develop their skills and personality, and make them active citizens. Therefore, adult education is divided into formal and non-formal.

General adult education has been adopted by a large number of educational institutions that are fully or partially subsidized by the state. Public adult education and training is provided free of charge and is accessible to all. A special Secretariat for Adult Education and Training (General Secretariat for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth) has been established in the Ministry of Education and Religions. The Ministry also supervises institutional bodies with an essential role in the development and implementation of central educational policy. These bodies include the following, which are specifically related to adult education and training:

The Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (Ι.ΝΕ.ΔΙ.ΥΙ.Μ.), which aims at the implementation of actions, programs and projects for Lifelong Learning with emphasis on young people and the support of youth innovation.

The National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Ε.Ο.Π.Ε.Π.), which develops and implements an integrated national certification system for non-formal education (initial and continuing vocational training and general adult education) and provides scientific support to the Greek Vocational Guidance and Counseling Services.

C.1. General formal adult education

Provided in:

- Second Chance Schools (S.C.S.) (see also above in B.2.) for adults who have not completed the nine-year compulsory education. This institution provides the opportunity to obtain a degree, equivalent to a Lower Secondary school diploma, through education that emphasizes on the acquisition of basic qualifications and the development of personal skills. There are 66 Second Chance Schools operating throughout the country and 22 Departments of S.C.S. 12 Second Chance Schools operate within the country's penitentiaries.
- Evening General Upper Secondary Schools (Γ.Ε.Λ.) (see in B.2.)
- Evening Vocational Upper Secondary Schools (ΕΠΑ.Λ.) (see in B.2.)
- Vocational Training Schools (Ε.Σ.Κ.) (see in B.2.)
- Vocational Apprenticeship Schools (ΕΠΑ.Σ.) belonging to the Organization for the Employment of Human Resources (Ο.Α.Ε.Δ.). (see in B.2.)
- Vocational Training Institutes (Ι.Ε.Κ.) (see in B.2.) which offer initial vocational training to graduates of formal, non-compulsory secondary education. There is a total of 126 public Ι.Ε.Κ.s under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religions.
- Post-Secondary School Apprenticeship Year (see in B.2.)
- Tertiary/ Higher Education (see in B.3.)

C.2. General non-formal adult education

Greece does not have a long tradition in offering non-formal education to adults. Interest in this form of education and offer of similar programs have gradually increased after Greece joined the European Union, especially after 2000 with the implementation of new policies and initiatives for lifelong learning. This form of education and training is provided publicly and privately in an organized educational context beside the formal education system. Institutions providing general non-formal adult education fall into the following categories:

- **Lifelong Learning Centers** (in Greek: Κέντρα Δια Βίου Μάθησης, Κ.Δ.Β.Μ.), which offer continuous vocational training, retraining, skills upgrading, general adult education, counseling and vocational guidance. The framework of their establishment, licensing and operation is determined by Law 4763/2020.
 - Κ.Δ.Β.Μ. include Training and Lifelong Learning Centers (in Greek: Κέντρα Δια Βίου Μάθησης, Κ.Ε.ΔΙ.ΒΙ.Μ.) of Higher Education Institutions/ Universities (Α.Ε.Ι.). Κ.Ε.ΔΙ.ΒΙ.Μ. are University services, which develop training programs linked to continuous education, training and in general lifelong learning. Today, 22 of the country's University Institutions operate such Training and Lifelong Learning Centers.
- **Lifelong Learning Programs** are also offered by institutions/ legal entities of any type, which operate nationally, regionally or locally. They provide non-formal education to citizens officially registered. These entities are:
 - Social, religious or cultural institutions, which provide general (formal and non-formal) adult education services.

– Institutions that provide specialized training and counseling and/or vocational guidance services, such as Vocational Training Centers (in Greek: Κέντρα Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, Κ.Ε.Κ.).

– Employment Promotion Centers (in Greek: Κέντρα Προώθησης της Απασχόλησης, Κ.Π.Α.) which provide lifelong counseling and career guidance services.

– Educational centers of the wider public sector that provide non-formal training to the human resources of the above sector, such as the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government (in Greek: Εθνικό Κέντρο Δημόσιας Διοίκησης και Αυτοδιοίκησης, Ε.Κ.Δ.Δ.Α.) and other professional associations and chambers, such as the Small Business Institute of the General Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen of Greece (in Greek: Ινστιτούτο Μικρών Επιχειρήσεων της Γενικής Συνομοσπονδίας Επαγγελματιών, Βιοτεχνών Εμπόρων Ελλάδας, Ι.Μ.Ε. – Γ.Σ.Ε.Β.Ε.Ε.).

– Educational centers created by the tertiary professional organizations of employees and employers and the tertiary association of professional organizations of civil servants, such as the Center for Development of Educational Policy of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (in Greek: Κέντρο Ανάπτυξης Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής της Γενικής Συνομοσπονδίας Εργατών Ελλάδας (Κ.ΑΝ.Ε.Π. – Γ.Σ.Ε.Ε.)).

• **Colleges** are private educational institutions of non-formal post-secondary education. They provide curriculums that are required to have validated certification and franchise agreements with higher education institutions (universities) abroad, recognized by the competent authorities in the country of origin. Studies provided in the above context lead to a Bachelor degree of at least three years of study or to a postgraduate degree (Master's). College certificates can be recognized as professionally equivalent to qualifications awarded within the domestic higher education system.

European Qualification Framework (EQF)

LEVEL	CERTIFICATE
1	PRIMARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
2	LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
3	VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL CERTIFICATE (Σ.Ε.Κ.)
3	VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE CERTIFICATE (Ι.Ε.Κ.)
4	VOCATIONAL SCHOOL CERTIFICATE (ΕΠΑ.Σ.)
4	GENERAL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE
4	VOCATIONAL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE (ΕΠΑ.Λ.)
4	VOCATIONAL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE (ΕΠΑ.Λ.)
5	VOCATIONAL POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL APPRENTICESHIP YEAR (ΕΠΑ.Λ.)
5	VOCATIONAL TRAINING DIPLOMA (Ι.Ε.Κ.)
5	TERTIARY (AND NOT HIGHER) EDUCATION DIPLOMA OR DEGREE
6	BACHELOR DEGREE
7	MASTER'S DEGREE
8	DOCTORATE

<https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/el/qualification-certificate/national-qualification-framework>

During the last decade, while Greece was struggling with severe economic crisis, the important role of education and training in supporting the economic and social sector has emerged. In particular, Vocational Education and Training is the most efficient aspect of education, because, in addition to preparing people for work by providing them with skills and abilities, it also contributes to their personal development and effective participation in society.

In this process, the central problem the country faces, is the transition of young people from school to the labour market. The ever-increasing supply of knowledge to young people does not solve the problem of unemployment, because, according to employers, there are many difficulties in searching and finding employees with the right skills profile. The youth unemployment rate in 2019 was 35.2%, more than double the European Union average and the highest among the Member States. Also, the percentage of young people aged 20-24 outside education, work and training (NEETs - Not in Education, Employment or Training) in our country is 22.5%, ranking it within the countries with the highest percentage of NEETs, much higher than the European Union average. In the 30-34 age group, only 21% have a formal qualification of Vocational Education and Training of secondary level, while 42% have a degree of higher education. It has also been found that a great proportion of students that completed Vocational

Education and Training (30%), aged 20-34 (18%) proceed to higher education. This difference is smaller compared to the European Union average but much greater than countries with effective and successful Vocational Education and Training systems, such as Germany, France and Poland.

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (C.E.DE.FO.P.) provides information on the comparative performance of national skills systems in the Member States of the European Union (European Skills Index - ESI). Greece has the worst performance in the field of skills matching (9%). In this sector, a survey by the Associations of Greek Industrialists found that 42.6% of companies find it difficult to fill medium level vacancies due to the lack of appropriate skills and required work experience. Regarding the social acceptance of Vocational Education and Training, a C.E.DE.FO.P. market research (VET opinion survey, 2017) on the image of upper secondary Vocational Education and Training records that its attractiveness is positive at 69% and negative at 29%, percentages close to the European Union average.

2. Suggestions for a national strategy on level 4 and 5 for the training of peer support workers in Mental Health Care

Introduction

The first attempts to implement community psychiatry programs in Greece began in the mid-1980s after widespread reactions to the function of Leros Psychiatric Hospital, a topic broadly covered by the media. Until then, the operation of psychiatric hospitals was mainly asylum-like. With the intervention and support of the European Union, the psychiatric reform in our country began and the development of community- services was promoted (Leros I and Leros II Programs, Regulation 815).

The most important European program implemented to support psychiatric reform in our country is the "Psychargos" program, which has been divided into 3 phases. Each phase also marks a breakthrough in the difficult task of deinstitutionalization and developing community care. During the first phase (1997-2001), the deinstitutionalization process of the country's psychiatric hospitals started, psychosocial rehabilitation units and psychiatric clinics in general hospitals were established, child psychiatric services were developed and emphasis was placed on a. prevention and b. sectoral design and development of mental health units across the country. The enactment and implementation of Law 2716/99 has decisively contributed to the development of sectorized mental health services, as its provisions promote the implementation of an integrated network of mental health services, define the units and programs that comprise it as well as their regulation. Article 12 defines the establishment and operation of Limited Liability Social Cooperatives (in Greek: Κοινωνικοί Συνεταιρισμοί Περιορισμένης Ευθύνης, Κοι.Σ.Π.Ε.), as a work perspective for users of mental health services. Phase 2 (2001-2010) was characterized by the massive transition of psychiatric patients to the community through reintegration programs undertaken and implemented mainly by Nonprofit Organizations, Legal Entities under Private Law (in Greek: Νομικά Πρόσωπα Ιδιωτικού Δικαίου, Ν.Π.Ι.Δ.). One of the priorities of the third phase (2011–2020) has been about the protection of the rights of people with disabilities as well as promoting self-representation of mental health service users and their families. In this period emphasis has been placed on the organization of collectives in primary and secondary bodies. An important development is the membership of the Panhellenic Federation of Associations of Families for Mental Health (in Greek: Πανελλήνια Ομοσπονδία Συλλόγων Οικογενειών για την Ψυχική Υγεία, Π.Ο.Σ.Ο.Ψ.Υ.) in the National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities (in Greek: Εθνική Συνομοσπονδία Ατόμων με Αναπηρία, Ε.Σ.Α.μεΑ.).

A. The current situation in Greece

Greece is in a transitional phase in supporting people receiving mental health services. In addition to the focus on community care, the interest of many mental health professionals and practitioners shifts to new models of understanding mental health and illness and to new approaches concerning clinical and rehabilitation work. A different way of working is gradually being developed, moving away from the biomedical model, incorporating good practices of psychosocial rehabilitation and social integration that are applied internationally. During the last decade, great interest has been expressed in the concept of recovery in mental health (recovery model). The perception of care and support of mental health service users through

the conceptual framework of the recovery model, as applied in foreign countries during the recent decades, has highlighted a new professional role, which utilizes the personal experience of mental difficulties and recovery, in order to create the necessary "space" for the recovery of others. Starting from the individuals' reflection on their own experience, the exchange of experiences among peers and the study of relevant literature, an individual can be gradually led to the acquisition of important knowledge which can be furtherly used to support peers. Special training is then required to acquire and improve those skills that will enable them to effectively impart their experiential knowledge. At this stage, they have evolved into a professional and can be placed in various positions within organizations.

Many different terms are used for this specific job title. The terms "Peer Support Work" and "Peer Support Worker" (PSW) have been selected within the framework of the Erasmus+ Program, which includes the elaboration of this output. A commonly agreed term has not yet been adopted in Greek.

The role of PSW is now established, integrated into mental health systems and is a paid job in several European countries and internationally. In Greece, however, no structured educational program that leads to obtaining a relevant degree and professional license has been developed so far. None of the post-secondary education levels provide relevant training and the only possibility for someone interested is to attend special programs abroad, such as those offered at Recovery Colleges). Therefore, we are at a very early stage of awareness about this profession and systematic effort, so nationwide synergies are still required in order to achieve the establishment of this job and the introduction of PSWs in Greek mental health services.

Currently, the debate on peer support work is growing and expanding between stakeholders. Mental health organizations and users' self-representation associations hold a leading role in this discussion and a growing number of professionals and organizations are also involved. The fact that the Federation of Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Mental Health Institutions "ARGO" (a broad network of non-profit mental health organizations operating a total of 273 community services and also a member of Mental Health Europe) supports this process is of great importance. Up to now, there is no official representation of the three Ministries involved (Health, Education and Labour) in the dialogue taking place. The Ministry of Health has received little information, while no approach has yet been made to the other two ministries.

Given that the role of PSW is closely linked to the implementation of the recovery model and therefore cannot be developed in mental health systems that have not adopted it, organizations in our country, inspired by this model, seem better prepared to understand the importance of PSW and implementing it. Unfortunately, the majority of organizations in Greece, public or private, have not yet fully adopted a recovery- approach. However, some organizations are working towards this direction and are strongly interested in the progress of this issue.

According to the results of a small-scale research carried out in 2020 by Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellariopoulos, there is a growing interest in PSW in our country and stakeholders gradually recognize that: a) peer work is a good practice that is closely related to the recovery model and b) it is necessary to implement PSW for a comprehensive provision of recovery-services.

A.1. Initiatives that promote Peer Support Work in Greece

A number of recent initiatives in Greece highlight the growing interest in recovery model and peer support work. A supportive framework seems to be gradually forming in the progressive development of the PSW job title.

Among these initiatives, the only example of systematic training and employment of peers in the support and treatment of other people comes from the field of alcohol and substance abuse. On its own initiative, the Therapy Center for Dependent Individuals (in Greek: Κέντρο Θεραπείας Εξαρτημένων Ατόμων, ΚΕΘΕΑ) has established a Certification Board for Alcohol & Drug Counsellors and Prevention Specialists in collaboration with the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC). The Board examines applications and provides credentials for professionals living and working in Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Bulgaria in accordance to international standards and the particular cultural conditions of each country.

Moreover, the Psychology Faculty of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) in collaboration with the Hellenic Organization against Drugs (OKANA) implement the Self-Help Promotion Program, which, among other activities, educates and raises awareness former users and local communities on self-help issues and practices (in Thessaloniki, Chania and Larissa). The AUTH Self-Help Promotion Programs are the only state proposal placing the idea of self-help at the heart of the intervention methodology for preventing and dealing with addiction problems and other health and psychosocial problems.

In the area of cancer treatment, there are breast cancer survivors' associations, such as "Alma Zois" (transl: "Life Jump") association, that have established a role of a volunteer peer supporter. Specifically, they implement the "Reach to Recovery" Program, which offers psychological support to people who have recently undergone mastectomy in anti-cancer hospitals on a voluntary peer basis.

In the mental health field, systematic actions have been developed that target specific dimensions of recovery, in order for the individual to build a new life according to their personal goals. These actions focus on empowerment and promote self-determination, self-management, self-help, self-representation and self-advocacy.

In this context, the National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities (Ε.Σ.Α.μ.Ε.Α.) implemented during the 2011–2014 period the "Strengthening Collective Expression and Advocacy for Persons with Mental Disabilities" project. The project included activities in more than 20 cities nationwide, aiming at: a) informing users about the ways of managing and defending their rights, b) training users in empowerment, advocacy, support in organizing associations and c) training of trainers in respective subjects. This initiative is part of the broader actions of Ε.Σ.Α.μ.Ε.Α. for the systematic awareness raising of users (in the framework of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD]).

Additionally, since 2017, a three-day pan - Hellenic meeting (called "Empowerment Seminar"), organized by a Greek Users' Association (called "Self-Representation") and supported by SSP P. Sakellaropoulos, is held annually to promote empowerment, peer support and self-management. Results of these meetings have been notified to the Mental Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, significant initiatives/ campaigns have been developed by other Greek mental health organizations about combatting stigma, promoting self-

management, creating mental health service users' associations and federations of families and relatives, as well as promoting representation in the international Hearing Voices Network.

Some organizations, recognizing the importance of self-help and peer support, have used peers as mentors and trainers to help their service users integrate and adapt in various social and work contexts. In most cases, support is offered on the basis of solidarity and not as paid work, however, there are cases where peer guidance is part of their paid position. An example of the application of this model is the Limited Liability Social Cooperatives (Koi. S.P.E.).

The above actions are mainly fragmentary and do not have a major impact on the systematic development of the role of PSW. A number of obstacles, shortcomings and dysfunctions, such as fragmented mental health policies, prejudice and resistance against people with mental health problems, skepticism about the effectiveness of the recovery model and reluctance to abandon the traditional user-therapist relationship and adopt a collaborative model of joint decision-making, are obstacles in recognizing the role of PSW and in the coordinated effort to establish it. Regarding service users, the difficulties of access to relevant training in combination with the insufficient information about the existing educational possibilities as well as the wider social and economic inequalities are inhibiting their empowerment and effective inclusion in the mental health system.

Under these circumstances, the attempt to connect all the piecemeal efforts, in order to form a common, systematic, institutional effort for the development of PSW is a challenging and unique perspective. This is the context in which SSP P. Sakellaropoulos participates in the Erasmus+ project "European Profile for Peer Support Workers" (2019-2021). Through the experience gained of this European program and the interaction with partner organizations from the Netherlands, Norway, Germany and Poland, SSP P. Sakellaropoulos seeks to utilize the project's outputs in the effort to establish the PSW role in Greece, sharing its results with all stakeholders: service providers, user organizations and other associations, related ministries. Establishing PSW is a psychiatric reform goal in Greece and participation in this program is estimated to contribute to the integration of this professional role in mental health services.

In the context of the above program, SSP P. Sakellaropoulos organized two conferences in 2021, which contributed a) in the publication of the program's outputs, b) in informing about the evolution and tasks of the PSW role in Europe, the criteria for admission and the framework of its integration within an organization and also c) in familiarizing the participating stakeholders with the prospect of introducing PSWs in Greece. These are two large-scale awareness events, as participation exceeded 200 people coming from more than 60 organizations in Greece.

In particular, the second conference, "Shaping a new model of mental health services in Greece: from personal experience to institutional and substantive inclusion", gave the opportunity for the first formal, nationwide discussion on the role of PSW and its prospects. This Erasmus+ project creates perspective and leads to new collaborations, which will continue in 2022. Indicatively, two Democritus University of Thrace (D.U.Th.) Faculties (Social Work and Medicine) have invited professionals from SSP P. Sakellaropoulos, as guest speakers in special lessons on PSW for future mental health professionals.

More broadly, in the context of raising awareness of the scientific community, P. Sakellaropoulos participated in the 29th Panhellenic Congress of Psychiatry (2021) with a poster paper titled: "The Peer Support Worker Role in psychosocial care. What is the Greek reality?"

B. Next steps towards the establishment of Peer Support Workers

A national level meeting between stakeholders will be held during the first half of 2022, following the two conferences that took place in 2021, in order to organize the next steps for the establishment of PSW. The event will be organized by SSP P. Sakellariopoulos. Representatives of the Ministries of Health, Education and Labour will be approached, in order to: a) have a general idea about peer support work and the role that each ministry is expected to play in the establishment of the role and also b) to be invited to the imminent meeting and dialogue that will take place. The conference will also include discussion concerning the future use of this Erasmus+ project outputs.

In the context of the above meeting, as well as in subsequent meetings that will be defined in 2022, but also in the context of the already formed collaborations within the mental health network, a primary goal is to raise awareness among all stakeholders that this initiative is of major importance for a modern and integrated model of mental health services. Wider awareness activities about recovery model and peer support work through events, scientific meetings, publications and updates to special target groups (user organizations, mental health professionals, students, educational organizations, etc.) will contribute to this effort.

Awareness raising will also help reduce resistance and prejudice about recovery model and particularly about the role of PSWs. Some of the issues incommencing the establishment of PSW role, as, what PSW are and what they are not, whether this role is ancillary or substantial, whether it is promoted as "cheap workforce" or whether PSWs can cope with work pressure, need to be thoroughly discussed with stakeholders.

The primary aim is to support and motivate service users, user organizations and other organizations that undertake empowerment and advocacy activities, in order to a) acquire an active role in the implementation of the recovery model and b) develop initiative in the framework of the recovery model and peer support. This will be a good practice of empowerment, a contribution to their readiness for the next step, which for some may be the role of PSW, and will answer skepticism and resistance to their potential.

Furthermore, the creation of a national, stable network is desirable, that will support this initiative, putting continuous pressure on the competent state structures. Whenever we seek for innovation, it is of vital importance to methodically approach political parties or/and members of the parliament, especially responsible for quality and availability of mental health services. This network will include representatives from various sectors (mental health services, health services and social services, universities, local government and regional units, representatives of professional associations of psychologists, social workers etc., user and family organizations, federations and collective bodies).

The aim is to strengthen collaboration with European organizations, that have experience in PSW and can support the Greek initiative. The results from pilot projects and good practices at European level are not just examples of successful implementation, but also strengthen the documentation to the competent ministries about the need to establish the role of PSWs and the benefits of their integration in organizations.

The ultimate goal is institutional cooperation with the ministries involved, which requires systematic effort and steady steps. The Federation of Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Mental Health Institutions "ARGO", which maintains a long-term cooperation with the Mental Health

Directorate of the Ministry of Health, can be the main interlocutor with the Ministry. Accessing the Ministry of Health and claiming the introduction and integration of PSWs in the mental health system may be less difficult compared to the other two ministries, as it is the most accessible ministry for mental health providers.

However, it is estimated that cooperation with the other two ministries will be promoted through nationwide networking described above. In this context, cooperation with universities in the country is strengthened, which maintain a key role, not only because of their influence in the scientific community and society at large, but because they train future mental health professionals and can also develop PSW training and certification programs.

Cooperation with the Ministry of Health can be a starting point, and systematic awareness raising, networking and synergies will be a stepping stone towards an effective approach of the other ministries, i.e., the signing of a cooperation agreement with competent bodies of the three ministries, in order to create an interdisciplinary working group representing all stakeholders for the gradual establishment of PSWs. A training program that will lead to the certification of PSWs is the next goal. Educational experience coming from European examples and the work produced by Erasmus+ can contribute to its design and implementation. At the same time, an effective solution for the official professional certification of the PSWs and the protection of their labour rights must be sought. This process is perhaps the biggest challenge and the most difficult part of the overall effort, as demonstrated by similar examples in other countries.

Briefly, the following steps aim at:

- the empowerment of users and their effective inclusion/involvement, so that they can play an active role in establishing the role of PSWs
- multi-level awareness of several target groups
- national networking and synergies.

B.1. Training and Certification of Peer Support Workers in Greece

The role of PSW is complex and multilevel. Based on personal experience, a PSW can support other people in their own recovery process by providing personalized services, have a coordinating role within an organization and organize recovery-oriented activities and programs, participate in executive decisions and policies of the organization, interact with the community and contribute to the fight against stigma and the creation of social opportunities. Being a PSW requires teamwork and collaboration, respect and acceptance, as an integral part of the interdisciplinary team. All parameters above must be taken into account in the design of an educational curriculum for PSW. There is no structured educational program in Greece that leads to the acquisition of a relevant degree and a professional license. The previous section presented the steps that are planned for the gradual development of the role of PSW. However, there is still a lot more to plan until the official certification of the first PSW in our country.

European experience in the implementation of PSW training programs and certification can contribute to organizing a corresponding training program at EQF levels 4 and 5 in Greece. This Erasmus+ project outputs will also contribute effectively in the formation of the final curriculum and expected educational results. The basic tasks, work areas, specific professional knowledge

and skills of a PSW are described in detail in other intellectual outputs. Through this information a general framework for the required curriculum content is formed.

B.1.2. Proposed Curriculum

- Curriculum Content

A proposed, indicative training content at EQF levels 4 and 5 for future PSWs in Greece could include:

Theoretical training: systemic approaches, life event management, team function and dynamics, recovery model and its applications, empowerment, etc.

Internship: communication techniques, active listening, promoting a culture and language of hope and optimism, motivational interviewing and recovery-orientated intake, boundaries management in a therapeutic relationship, professionalism, methodical work, learning strategies and reflection, teamwork and cooperation, mutual support of colleagues, intervision and supervision, etc.

Referring the contextual knowledge areas: knowledge of users' movements and their networking, knowledge of social networks and mapping, access to support resources, legislation, procedures and protocols in support and care delivery, multi-disciplinarity, diversity and personalization, awareness of the users' history, empathetic approach to their personal stories/narratives, etc.

In particular, certification level 5 provides knowledge and skills about: Identification - analysis - dealing with problems and complex situations, recovery-oriented services within an organization, strategy, action plan and decision making within an organization, community training techniques, management of stigma and prejudice, mental health and quality of life promotion in the community, etc.

- Training / certification bodies and prerequisites for study

- a. EQF Level 4:

Certification will be (indicatively) granted by:

- K.Δ.B.M.
- K.E.Δ.I.B.I.M. University Institutions

Proposed certification bodies at this level belong to non-formal adult education.

Prerequisites for attendance are the following:

- age (at least 18 years old)
- mental disorder experience
- Lower or Upper Secondary School diploma (of Greece or foreign country), officially recognized by the Greek state.

- b. EQF Level 5:

Certification will be (indicatively) granted by:

- I.E.K.
- Post-Secondary school apprenticeship of EPAL.
- K.Δ.B.M.
- K.E.Δ.I.B.I.M. University Institutions

Proposed certification bodies at this level belong to both formal and non-formal adult education.

Prerequisites for attendance are the following:

- age (at least 18 years old)
- mental disorder experience
- Lower or Upper Secondary School diploma or Higher Education Institutions (of Greece or foreign country), officially recognized by the Greek state.

- Curriculum Structure

For levels 4 and 5, two courses of study (A and B) are proposed with a total duration of 2 years. Analytically:

- Theoretical training

It is provided in both courses A and B (twice/ week, 5 hours / day) (for both levels 4 and 5). The courses will be differentiated to provide students with the necessary knowledge and qualification, according to the proposed curriculum content described above.

- Internship

The internship provided by each proposed certification body is differentiated. For example, at IEK a lot of emphasis is put in internship the second year. Our proposal for the duration and the frequency is that internship will be provided in course B, in collaboration with mental health organizations:

Level 4: Twice a week, 5 hours/ day

Level 5: 3 times/ week, 5 hours/ day with provision for advanced subjects.

- Supervision

Supervision is required (total of 4 hours/ week) during internship (cycle B – levels 4 and 5).

Greece is still at an early stage in the recognition of the PSW role and at an even more initial stage in relative training and certification, in the introduction and integration of PSWs in mental health services, in the institutional and legal establishment of the profession. However, some important steps have been taken during the past two years - initiatives for the development of this role have gained momentum and significant supporters from

stakeholders. It is estimated that experience and knowhow of other European countries, outputs of the Erasmus+ project "European profile for Peer Support Workers", along with the initiative of user organizations and other bodies that believe in a new mental health service delivery model, will substantially contribute to the recognition and establishment of the Peer Support Worker job title in Greece.