

DUELING FOCUS GROUP – LARISSA, GREECE

NET not NEET Project

Larissa, 7th July 2015

Location: [Pappa's Flour Mill](#)

Facilitators:

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| Olga Kafetzopoulou, | European Projects Promoter - R. D. E. Thessaly |
| Tassos Matos, | Moderator of the expert's team |
| Margaritis Ntoumos, | Director of the Second Chance School of Larissa |
| Vicky Lentza, | Psychologist |
| Mina Erketziki, | Psychologist |
| Vassia Nima, | Psychologist |

Participants

The Dueling Focus Group took place in Larissa on the 7th of July 2015. Nineteen of the participants of the two Laboratories of Dialogue participated in it plus eleven representatives of the Policy making organizations in the fields of Education, Training and Labor.

Public Authorities representatives

1. Regional Director of Thessaly Primary and Secondary Education, Mrs. Eleni Anastasopoulou.
2. Thessaly Industry Association President, Mr. Apostolos Dontas
3. Regional Director of Manpower Organisation, Mrs. Olga Tsiourva
4. Head of Life Long Learning, Employment, Trade & Tourism Directorate in the Region of Thessaly, Mrs. Eleni Katsarou

5. Alderman of Social Policy of Municipality of Larissa, Mr. Dimitris Deliyiannis
6. Alderman of Education, Youth and Sports of Municipality of Larissa, Mr. Alexandros Batzanoulis
7. Thessaly Second Chance Schools Regional Counselor, Mr. Apostolos Barlos
8. 2nd Second Chance School of Larissa Director, Mr. George Trantas
9. 1st Institution of Vocational Training of Larissa Director, Mr. Agisilaos Varsamis
10. Vocational Training Center of the Thessaly Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants Supervisor, Mr. Athanasios Deliyiannis

Agenda of the Dueling Focus Group

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| 18:00 – 18:10 | Welcome addresses |
| 18:10 – 18:15 | Presentation of Policy makers (Mr. Margaritis Ntoumos) |
| 18:15 – 18:25 | Presentation of NNN-NETnotNEET Project (Mrs. Kafetzopoulou Olga) |
| 18:25 – 18:30 | Presentation of Neets The methodology of the Dueling Focus Group and the role of Moderators (Mr. Anastasios Matos) |
| 18:30 – 19:20 | Exchange of questions and proposals between policy makers and Neets: Part A (the three Neets group will pose a question to the policy makers and they will answer briefly and in due time) |
| 19:20 – 19:30 | Coffee break |
| 19:30 – 20:30 | Exchange of questions and proposals between policy makers and Neets: Part B |

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| | (the three Neets group will pose a question to the policy makers and they will answer briefly and in due time) |
| 20:30 - 21:00 | Presentation of the Labs results and the Dueling Focus Groups main points from the other partners of the project (Mrs Kafetzopoulou Olga) Conclusion-Results Certificate of attendance |
| 21:00 - 22:00 | Dinner |

Methodology

The aim of the Dueling Focus Group was representatives of NEET people and the public authorities to express and discuss openly their opinions, with the final aim to identify proposals and strategies to improve performances of the education and training system, employment services and relevant public authorities.

During the second Laboratory of Dialogue, there had been formed three sub-groups of NEETs. Each sub-groups focused on Education, Training and Employment respectively and prepared their questions and proposals for the policy-makers.

In order to facilitate the procedure of the Dueling Focus Group, between the NEETs and public authorities' people, there had been assigned the role of the discussion moderator to Mr. Giorgos Trantas – Director of the 2nd School of Second Chance, Larissa who coordinated the whole event. Once a NEET representative put his/her sub-group's question, the discussion moderator seek the appropriate public authorities' representative to give his/her answer/proposal.

Each NEET sub-group was supported by one of the members of the experts' group (psychologists). The whole event was video recorded and one member of the experts' team registered the minutes of the discussion.



Picture 1: Dueling Focus Group – Dueling Focus Group – NEETs



Picture 2: Dueling Focus Group – Representatives of the policy making institutions



Εικόνα 3: NEET representative puts her questions to public authorities

Results

Each group elaborated proposals that concerned the education, training and employment. With respect to the **first thematic axis (education)**, the dialogue between the NEETs and the policy making bodies resulted in the following propositions with respect to the needs registered during the previous Laboratories of Dialogue.

- The evolution of the traditional school into a knowledge society school open to ideas which utilizes every modern (digital) tool.
- The enriching of school life with educational play activities and creative assignments.
- The training of educators so that they adopt modern teaching practices and learning techniques.

- As far as Special Education issues is concerned (a) no child with a disability or special educational needs will be deprived of the right to education, (b) all the educational personnel that has been specialized in Special Education will be utilized in order to cover the increased needs for Special Education educators, (c) special education will be mapped, monitored and evaluated in order to become more effective.

With respect to the **second thematic axis (training)**, the dialogue between the NEETs and the policy making bodies resulted in the following propositions with respect to the needs registered during the previous Laboratories of Dialogue.

- The structuring and operation of a national functional and effective system for the diagnosing and registering of employment needs with respect to professions, specialties and skills.
- The extremely high percentage of unemployment in our country dictates first of all the strengthening of the individuals found in the state of long-term unemployment and the seeking of a minimum of specialties that lead to or provide a better potential for the finding of employment.
- The development of effective and qualitative social dialogue, with the active participation of social partners, for the establishment and running of effective practical training schemes aimed at a more effective transition to employment.
- The development of an ongoing mechanism for the improvement, support, operation and modernization of professional profiles, as well as the establishment of mechanisms for their direct connection to the educational programs, aimed at their modernization and specialization in relation to the needs of employment.
- A significant issue is also the development of counseling systems, not only for the support of the trainees, but also the enterprises.
- The validity of vocational education and training should be enhanced. There must be a change of perception and the equivalence between general and vocational education should be pursued.

- The issues of vocational training cannot be examined segmentally and in an isolated way from the wider ill situation of lifelong learning in Greece.

With respect to the **third thematic axis (employment)**, the propositions that resulted from the registering of needs during the Laboratories of Dialogue and the interaction between the NEETs and the policy making bodies can focus on the following points:

- There is the need for the provision of sound and timely information and support to employees on issues related to work relations and insurance legislation.
- In a rural region such as Thessaly, the needs for the reformation of cultivation and the modernization of agricultural production through the acquisition of know-how are deemed particularly imperative.
- The rude behaviour of the employees of the Manpower Employment Organization and the lack of information with respect to the programs and provisions of the organization constitute a major obstacle in the effective service of the citizens.
- Employment counselors owe to have a personal contact with the unemployed and shape his qualifications profile by frequent monitoring.
- There is a need to take measures that will protect motherhood and for the ones responsible to formulate proposals, so that the year long motherhood leave of the public is also extended to the private sector.

Conclusion

We could say that the implementation of the program in Greece was successful, as its aims were met to a significant degree. The final Dueling Moderator Focus Group was implemented successfully with the participation of NEETs, but also a significant number of bodies, despite the fact that it was an unfamiliar procedure for both sides.

However, it seems that there is a lack of networking and cooperation among the bodies. Virtually, NEETs try to enter a system which consists of education-training-employment structures which operate as separate, secluded units that do not interact or/and are related to each other. Besides, it seems that there is a lack of initiative taking on behalf of the bodies. More specifically, the program adopted a methodology which foresaw the bottom – up restructuring of social policy strategies, in order to meet the needs of NEETs as those were registered by them. However, many times during the Dueling Moderator Focus Group the bodies bypassed the needs of the NEETs, referring them to either the existing legislation (legislation very likely to have been judged earlier as problematic by the NEETs, thus leading to a vicious circle), or to hierarchically higher institutions such as for example the relevant Ministries.

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