

# FROM EDUCATION TO TRAINING

Innovative and inclusive experiences or practices –  
training of teachers, professionals, families

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# Educational policy for pupils with disabilities and/ or special educational needs in Greece

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The Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs sets as goals for the education for all Greek pupils and especially the pupils with disabilities and/ or special educational needs the following:

- improving quality and effectiveness of education.
- enhancing equal access and participation of all pupils in the education system.
- decreasing school dropout.
- promoting equality and social cohesion.

# Educational policy for pupils with disabilities and/ or special educational needs in Greece

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These objectives, **in line with the educational priorities of the European Union**, define the framework within which **the state promotes inclusive education policies and programs** for pupils with disabilities and / or special educational needs.

- Special Education Schools continue to offer education to pupils with severe disabilities who can not attend the mainstream education curriculum.

## **However**

- More and more pupils with disabilities and / or special educational needs (including pupils with autism) **are attending mainstream school with appropriate support** from special education teachers.

This approach, which is a key priority of the Ministry of Education, requires:

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- the creation of **appropriate frameworks** for the education and support of children with disabilities and / or special educational needs (autism spectrum disorders included) either in the context of mainstream education or in existing special education units, with the ultimate objective of reducing exclusion and marginalization of pupils.
  
- the **staffing** of these frameworks **with specialized teaching and support staff**, who:
  - a) recognize and understand the particular characteristics of children with special educational needs (autism spectrum disorders )
  
  - b) design individualized educational programs and implement and evaluate educational interventions

# KEDDYs

(Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Special Educational Needs Support Centers)

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**The assessment of each child's special educational needs** is conducted by the KEDDYs, which are decentralized services of the Ministry of Education and belong to the Regional Education Directorates.

KEDDYs also (Law3699/2008, Article 4):

- suggest the proper school setting.
- monitor the child's progress and develop Individualized Educational Plans in cooperation with the teachers of the child and his/her parents or guardians.
- propose the necessary ergonomic arrangements for better access and attendance at school.
- suggest the implementation of early education programs when needed.

# KEDDYs

## (Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Special Educational Needs Support Centers)

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- suggest the replacement of written exams with oral or other tests for the students who attend special schools or those with special educational needs who attend mainstream schools. They also suggest alternative tests and evaluation practices for deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind, low-sighted and autistic students.
- support in constant basis the school staff and the professionals who take part in the education process and vocational education.
- organize advisory programs for the parents.
- make suggestions to the local services of their charge regarding the establishment, annulment, upgrade, degradation or merger of special schools and inclusive classes and their staffing.

## Other services

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Other services that evaluate pupils' special educational needs are:

- a. the **Committee of Diagnostic Educational Evaluation and Support (EDEAY)**
- b. the **Medical-pedagogical Centers (IPD)** of other Ministries certified by the Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs

# GOOD PRACTICES

Innovative inclusive practices implemented in mainstream schools



# Good practices - support for pupils with disabilities and / or special educational needs in mainstream school

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Support for pupils with disabilities and / or special educational needs in mainstream school is done in the following ways:

**A) In mainstream class, supported by the class teacher** (pupils with mild learning difficulties).

- The teacher cooperates on a case by case basis with KEDDYs, mainstream and special education School Advisors.
- Pupils with disabilities and / or special educational needs (apart from specific learning difficulties) are distributed in the classes of the same grade so that no more than one (1) attends the same class. If this is not possible, then the number of pupils in the class may be reduced by three (3) pupils than the maximum foreseen (L. 4452/2017, Article 11).

# Good practices - support for pupils with disabilities and / or special educational needs in mainstream school

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**B) In mainstream class with individualized parallel support , provided by a special education teacher** (defined by the type and degree of pupils' special educational needs).

More generally, parallel support-coeducation is provided to pupils:

- who can, with appropriate individual support, attend the classroom curriculum.
- with more severe special educational needs when there is no other special education framework (special school, inclusion class) or
- when parallel support becomes necessary - based on the KEDDY 's report - because of the pupils' special educational needs.

# Good practices - support for pupils with disabilities and / or special educational needs in mainstream school

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C) In **specially organized and suitably staffed Inclusive Classes** in mainstream general and vocational schools, staffed by special education teachers.

Inclusive classes provide **two types of educational programs**:

- **common and specialized program up to 15 hours per week.**
- **specialized team or personalized program of extended timetable** for students with more severe special educational needs. The specialized program may be independent from the common one, according to the pupils' needs.

# Parallel support

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- Parallel support is **the basic way of supporting pupils with autism attending mainstream school.**
- ✓ Pupils are usually of high-functionality who can attend the mainstream curriculum.
  
- It is a **program of specialized educational support for inclusion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs**, co-financed by the European Union and the State in the framework of the **Operational Program "Human Resources Development - Lifelong Learning"**
- The pupils are supported by teachers who have the formal qualifications to work in Special Education.

# Parallel support

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In particular:

- Parallel support in mainstream secondary education is **provided by literary, mathematics and science teachers** with the appropriate qualifications in Special Education **in language courses, mathematics and physics**, for some or all of the teaching hours.
- Parallel support for each student:
  - is **suggested by the local KEDDY**, which determines the support hours on a case-by-case basis.
  - is **approved as new or renewed annually** by the Ministry of Education Research and Religious Affairs, accompanied by the necessary supporting documents.

# Duties of parallel support teachers

## (Ministerial Decision 29922 / C6 / 08-03-2007)

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1. Parallel Support Teachers **are informed by the school headmaster about the pupil's needs** for whom parallel support has been approved following the relevant suggestion by the KEDDY.
2. They **assess the pupil's educational abilities** and **prepare an Individualized Educational Plan** in cooperation with the KEDDY and the special education school counselor. To implement it, they cooperate with the school headmaster, the mainstream class teachers and other school teachers to address the problems of the particular pupil in every aspect.
3. They **implement the Individualized Educational Plan** in and out of the classroom and are **responsible for all activities in school life** (breaks, visits, events, etc.) in which the pupil participates. In this way, they support pupils with autism not only in academic lessons but, mostly in the need of developing their social skills.

## Duties of parallel support teachers (Ministerial Decision 29922 / C6 / 08-03-2007)

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4. They **cooperate with the Special Education School Advisor and the local KEDDY** to draw up the parallel support program on the basis of the pupil's educational needs and the possibilities for inclusion in his classroom or in the case of pupils with particular difficulties and problems.
5. They **prepare an individualized educational weekly program of the pupil's supportive activities** and submit it in three copies to the Special Education School Advisor, who monitors its implementation.
6. They **offer their services to pupils in a contiguous or neighboring school who require parallel support**, following the recommendations of the Special Education School Advisor and the Director of Education.

# Inclusive classes

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- According to Law 4386/2016 (Article 82, § 5),

the purpose of the Inclusive classes is **to create fully inclusive school environment for pupils with disabilities and / or special educational needs** through special educational interventions and programs.

- ✓ **Children with autism** can attend inclusion classes of mainstream general and vocational schools, when they are not provided with parallel support.

- According to the aforementioned law,

**Pupils are supported in the environment of the mainstream classroom** by the inclusion teacher in cooperation with the class teacher. They both **implement differentiated learning activities and make appropriate adaptations to the educational material provided to the pupil and the educational environment.**

# Inclusive classes

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## However

Educational intervention takes place **within the inclusive classroom environment** by the inclusion teacher, **if imposed by the particular educational needs of the pupil**.

- ✓ The **ultimate goal** remains the pupil to be supported in the future in the mainstream classroom environment.

# Duties of inclusive class teachers

## (Ministerial Decision 29922 / C6 / 08-03-2007)

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1. Inclusive class teachers **evaluate students' special educational needs, based on the proposals submitted by the mainstream class teachers** to the Teaching Staff.
2. They **inform the student's parents or guardians** about the procedures needed to be taken to support the child in the inclusion class.
3. They **cooperate with the mainstream class teacher** to make connections between the mainstream and the specialized program, in terms of content and implementation (e.g. co-teaching).
4. They **reinforce the adjustment of inclusion class pupils in the school environment**, by organizing their participation in working groups, games and other school life activities.
5. They regularly **update the pupil's personal file**, which is kept in a safe place under the responsibility of the school headmaster.

# Duties of inclusive class teachers

## (Ministerial Decision 29922 / C6 / 08-03-2007)

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6. They **inform and advise the members of the school community** on Special Education issues and cooperate with the Special Education School Advisors of their region and the staff of the local KEDDY.
  7. They **submit for approval** to the Special Education School Advisor the weekly timetable of **the inclusion class program and the annual** report.
  8. They **offer their services to pupils in a co-located or neighboring** school when they need parallel support, after the suggestion of the Special Education School Advisor.
- ✓ The inclusive classes of secondary education are staffed, as well as in parallel support, by **literary, mathematics and science teachers** with the appropriate qualifications in Special Education.

# Diagnostic Educational Evaluation and Support Committees (EDEAYs)

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- EDEAYs **operate in mainstream schools** as part of the local School Network of Education and Support (SDEY), which is a unity of mainstream public and private schools of an area supported by the local special school.
  - ✓ SDEYs aim at collaboration and empowerment of school units, inclusion of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and support of inclusive classes, individual parallel support and tuition at home (Law 4115/2013).
- EDEAYs:
  - are a **first instance body for the diagnosis, educational assessment and support of pupils' special educational needs** (Law 4115/2013), consisted by the headmaster of the school unit, a special education teacher, a psychologist and a social worker
  - **evaluate the education obstacles** and special educational needs of the pupils,
  - **make programs of differentiated learning** in cooperation with the teacher of the mainstream class

# Diagnostic Educational Evaluation and Support Committees (EDEAYs)

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- deal with the pupils' difficulties **making use of the resources that are available** in school, at home or the local community
  - **monitor the implementation of the Individualized Educational Plan** and **develop early education intervention programmes**
  - **refer pupils to the KEDDYs** to be diagnosed in case they keep having difficulties in learning, behavior or school inclusion despite having been supported by the school unit.
- ✓ In case of obvious indications of mental health problems, child abuse or parental neglect, EDEAYs cooperate with the IPDs, the local medical or mental public services and the judicial authorities.

# Panhellenic exams for pupils with autism for their entrance to the tertiary education

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According to Ministry of Education Circulars concerning the Panhellenic exams for pupils with disabilities and/ or special educational needs:

- pupils with autism spectrum disorders are **examined written or orally**, depending on how it is stated in the KEDDY or IPD report.
- During the three-hour examination for each lesson, if examined orally, **autistic pupils are allowed to have:**
  - **the routines they want**, provided they are not against the exam regulations (e.g. to have a specific object on their desk) or
  - **other specific procedures that help them maximize their performance** (e.g. to request to stand upright).

# Panhellenic exams for pupils with autism for their entrance to the tertiary education

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- **Examiners** take all the possible measures to **decrease stimuli in the classroom** that make difficult for pupils with autism to concentrate (e.g. noises or lighting changes).
- They **address short and specific questions** to the pupils, giving them short time to answer.
- During the exam, **pupils with autism have the right to be accompanied by the Parallel Support Teacher**. The Parallel Support teachers they do not intervene, do not explain and do not help the pupil but they can **support him with the non-verbal suggestions** and the **visual indices** they have established in order to achieve cooperation.

# QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS



# Special Education Qualifications and teachers' education

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Teachers who work in secondary special schools, parallel support or inclusive classes should have special education qualifications proven by:

- **PhD** in Special Education or School Psychology
- **Postgraduate studies** in Special Education or School Psychology
- **Bachelors degree with at least five years of proven experience in Special Education** units.
- Especially for physical education teachers, they are considered qualified in Special Education if their main specialty in their bachelor studies is relevant with Special Education.
- ✓ Training of teachers in modified forms of communication is considered as additional qualification for their placement in special school units with autistic pupils.

# Teachers' education

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The specialization of teachers in Secondary Special Education is done through:

- **Research at Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Studies in Autism** (research level)
- **Postgraduate Programs of Studies in University Departments** with thematic units on autism (theoretical and practical level) .
- **Annual training programs of at least 400 hours or other training programs on Special Education** from University departments and other bodies recognized by the Ministry of Education (theoretical and practical level).

# Teachers' training in special education provided by the State

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- **Mainstream teachers who work in special education units and teachers employed for parallel support with no former training or specialization** in Special Education are trained by the State.
- The **Institution of Educational Policy** has the responsibility and coordination of such training in cooperation with the KEDDYs. The content is directly linked to **the principles of inclusive education and the differentiated learning** in the context of the UN International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

# Teachers' training in special education provided by other institutions

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Training of mainstream and special education teachers are also organized by:

- **the Regional Training Centers (PEK)** all over the country.
  - **the Special Education Advisors** who organize training seminars in the region of their duty.
  - **Special education schools for pupils with autism**
  - **Other public and private bodies.**
- ✓ Teachers are informed by websites and e-learning platforms on issues related to autism.

# FAMILIES' SUPPORT AND TRAINING



# Families' support and training

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Families' support and training is of crucial meaning for the interventions implemented on pupils with autism be effective.

In Greece, families are supported in the following ways:

- **KEDDYs** have the eligibility to organize training programs for the parents or guardians of pupils with disabilities and/ or special educational needs on a constant basis.
- **Special school teachers** give guidelines to the parents on education at home and suggest leisure activities for the pupils.

# Families' support and training

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- **Special Education Staff who work in special school units support the families with autistic children in the following ways:**

- 1. Psychologists** provide psychological support to the family on the following issues:
  - a) information on the disability and the intervention methods.
  - b) parent-child education
  - c) counseling on emotional support
  - d) guidance on the need for additional medical, psychotherapeutic interventions and rehabilitation methods.

# Families' support and training

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## 2. Social workers :

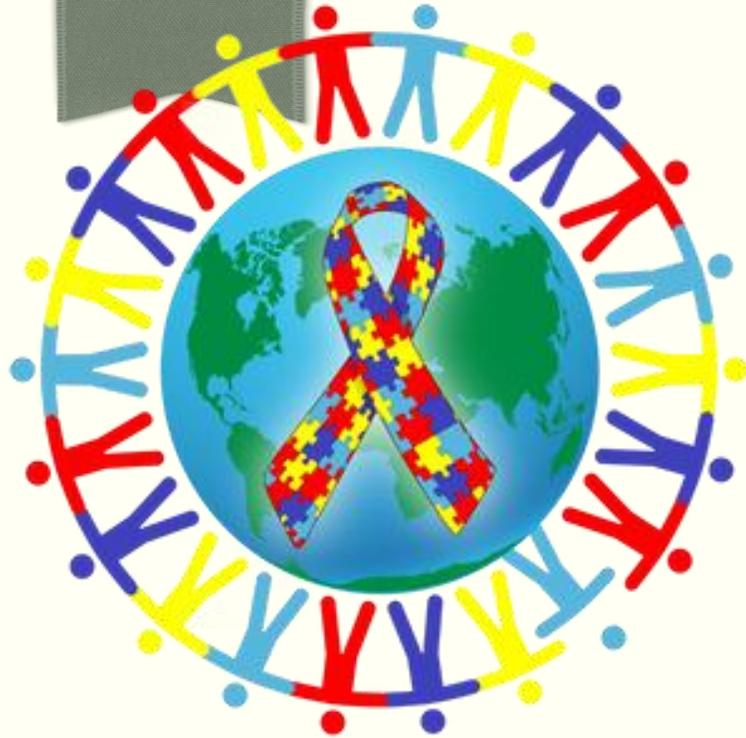
- a) are the link between the family, school and other social institutions and services that deal with the child, the family and their needs.
- b) work with the family (parents, siblings, the wider family) towards a positive attitude to the pupil's disability, improving quality of everyday life and dealing with problems of a personal or social nature.
- c) organize parent meetings in cooperation with the headmaster and other school staff and inform the families of any benefits they are entitled to. If necessary, they accompany the parents to various institutions.
- d) have the possibility to make planned visits to the families.

## Families' support and training

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3. **Speech therapists** give parents guidelines on how to handle their child's communication, speech and voice problems.
  4. **Physiotherapists** inform the family about the pupil's motor development and suggest, in cooperation with occupational therapists, any ergonomic arrangements that are necessary.
  5. **Occupational therapists** cooperate with the parents on issues of daily life and self-service activities for students.
- ✓ **Special school psychologists and social workers** can also **support families of mainstream schools** which are part of the local School Network of Education and Support (SDEY)

Finally, families with autistic children are also supported and trained by **Associations of Parents Guardians and Friends of Autistic People**.



THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR ATTENTION  
ANY QUESTIONS...?