Lifelong Learning in Greece is a national political priority, as its strong connection with employment, economic prosperity and full participation of the individual in society is clear. Especially in the context of the current economic crisis, Lifelong Learning is a crucial factor for growth and social cohesion.

With the enactment of Law 3879/2010 ("Development of Lifelong Learning and other provisions"), a single national strategy for Lifelong Learning (LLL) is for the first time created in Greece and the National Network for Lifelong Learning is set up, consisting of all the administration bodies and providing LLL services. In particular, Law 3879/2010 sets forth the following objectives:

1. The systematisation and coordination of investigating the educational and training needs of adults in relation to the needs of labour market and social development
2. The planning and decentralization of Lifelong Learning actions, the systematic support of institutions of the National Network for Lifelong Learning and the programmatic cooperation between the Network governing bodies with service providers of lifelong learning
3. The promotion of vocational training and adult education as two equal pillars of lifelong learning
4. The establishment of standards and tools to develop and improve the quality of lifelong learning
5. The assurance of accessibility for people and especially the members of socially vulnerable groups in all training and general adult education
6. The continuing education and evaluation of educators for adults
7. The creation of a coherent national framework for the evaluation and certification for all forms of training and adult education, by setting up the National Qualifications Certification Agency (EOPP)
8. The establishment of a single national framework of qualification recognition and certification of knowledge, skills and competences (National Qualifications Framework).

As defined in Law 3879/2010, Lifelong Learning applies to all forms of learning activities during the life of a person aiming at acquiring or developing knowledge, skills and abilities which contribute to the formation of an integrated personality, vocational inclusion and personal development, social cohesion, capacity development of active citizenship and social, economic and cultural development. It includes formal education, non-formal education and informal learning.

According to the dictates of Law 3879/2010, the national strategy for the development of Lifelong Learning is reflected in the following main policies.

The National Network for Lifelong Learning, which is activated under the stipulations of Law 3879/2010, consists of all Lifelong Learning bodies, which should cooperate both at the level of composing proposals and implementation of actions but also of interactive communication. Basic functions, such as those of initial or continuing vocational training and general adult education, and support functions, such as exploring the educational and training needs of adults, providing advisory services and guidance, inputs and outputs certifications, recognition of qualifications and professional
rights, etc, are exercised as part of the National Network for Lifelong Learning.

The following agencies for the management and provision of Lifelong Learning Services form the National Network for Lifelong Learning according to Laws 3879/2010 [1] and 4186/2013 [2]:

1. The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning
2. Regional and Municipal departmental units responsible for Lifelong Learning
3. The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP)
4. The National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA)

Institutions providing lifelong learning services are:

1. Vocational Training Institutes (IEK)
2. Vocational Training Schools (SEK)
3. Colleges
4. Lifelong Learning Centres (KDBM) - level I and II
5. Other public and private vocational training schools
6. Foundation for Youth and Lifelong Learning (INEDIVIM)
7. Higher Education Institutions
8. Consultancy service providers or vocational guidance services
9. Employment Promotion Centres (KPA), when they provide lifelong guidance and counseling services
10. Bodies of the public sector and the wider public sector providing non-formal education for human resources in the public and the wider public sector, such as EKDDA, and the bodies which are set up by professional associations and chambers and provide non-formal education to their members
11. Providers of Lifelong Learning services which comprise the tertiary trade unions of employees and employers co-signing the national collective labour agreement
12. Informal learning bodies.

The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning, falling under the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, is the executive body of Lifelong Learning in Greece pursuant Law 3879/2010. The General Secretariat’s mission is to plan the public lifelong learning policy, to formulate the relevant rules, to elaborate the respective national programme and to supervise its implementation thereof, to coordinate, evaluate and support the National Network of Lifelong Learning, supervise and manage the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training to Employment. In this framework, it cooperates with all management bodies and the Lifelong Learning service providers in order to create a single coherent framework for the provision of high quality Lifelong Learning services directly accessible to all citizens. Those services will be certified and interlinked through a formal, informal and non-formal educational and training system of the country. At the same time, the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning cooperates with the competent European bodies to harmonise our country with modern LLL policies promoted by the EU and other international organisations, such as the OECD and UNESCO. Meanwhile, the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning has the responsibility for the design and operation of specific training and adult education structures.

The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance [3] (EOPPEP) constitutes the competent body for studies certification in adults’ education institutions. EOPPEP was established under Law 4115/2013 [4] as the successor entity of the merger of the National Qualification Certification Organization (EOPP), the National Accreditation Centre for Lifelong Learning (EKEPIS) and the National Centre for Vocational Guidance (EKEP). It develops and implements an
integrated national certification system of non-formal education and provides the scientific support of Vocational Guidance and Counseling services in Greece. Moreover, EOPPEP is responsible for the elaboration of the National Qualifications Framework and its equivalence to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Within its powers, EOPPEP promoted and completed the development of the National Qualifications Framework, providing the basis for the classification - at its levels - of all titles issued by the Greek educational system. As shown in the next section, the correspondence of the NQF to the European Qualifications Framework was adopted in March 2014 by the competent European Advisory Committee.

Improving and ensuring the quality of Lifelong Learning has become a key pillar of the strategy for lifelong learning, as reflected in the provisions of Law 3879/2010. Article 19 provides, inter alia, the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system for the programs and effectiveness of the National Network for Lifelong Learning. The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs developed the National Framework for Quality Assurance in Lifelong Learning, giving stakeholders a tool for planning, delivering and evaluating the results of Lifelong Learning, as it:

- Defines quality by setting quality principles in all three components of the educational process, i.e. inputs, processes and outputs
- Provides measurable qualitative and quantitative indicators for assessing the implementation of quality principles by stakeholders.

The National Lifelong Learning as defined in Law 3879/2010, includes all implementation actions of the public Lifelong Learning actions, developed at central, regional and local level and financed by public funds (national or European).

The main aim of the Programme is the interconnection and coordination of lifelong learning to employment, forming two equal pillars:

- Vocational Training (initial and continuing) for the integration and reintegration in the labor market
- General adult education aimed at personal development and social cohesion.

The application of the national Lifelong Learning program includes actions related to creating the infrastructure and conditions for the coordination and coherent functioning of Lifelong Learning. It also includes the implementation of training and educational actions with key recipient the manpower of the country.

The National Lifelong Learning Programme of 2011-13 made the following principles, which govern Lifelong Learning policy:

- Lifelong learning is human-centered, as its starting point is the human being and his needs
- Lifelong Learning is an active, continuous process and not mandatory process, as it is an open and continuous opportunity for personal, social and professional development in human life
- Lifelong Learning is universal, seeking to involve everybody throughout life, and holistic, with the possibility of recognition and certification of non-formal and informal learning forms
- Lifelong Learning supports the country's development, as it aims to update the knowledge and skills of the employees in view of the rapidly changing working conditions, by identifying early the needs of the labour market
- Lifelong Learning supports social integration and seeks the social and professional integration of
vulnerable groups, providing their members with an adequate level of general and professional knowledge, skills and abilities

- Lifelong Learning aims at fostering social skills compatible with the new conditions and the development of one's personality, critical thinking and the capacity of being an active, informed citizen.

Similarly, the strategic goals set in the National Programme of this period relate to the following:

1. Universal participation: increasing participation of adults in Lifelong Learning activities
2. Quality everywhere: quality assurance in all aspects of the educational process
3. Change in teaching methods: focus on distance, experiential, mixed forms of learning
4. Value and transparency in qualification: establishment of the National Qualifications Framework for the recognition and certification of acquired skills
5. Serving the new development model: the interconnection of Lifelong Learning actions with the labor market needs at national, regional and local level
6. Liberation from educational constrictions: ensuring of alternative learning paths through networking of Lifelong Learning services
7. Rational allocation, coordination and utilization of community resources.

Achieving these individual objectives helps to achieve the national target: citizens with knowledge, professionals with qualifications, interface between education and employment.

The categories of actions implemented for the National Programme during 2011-13 concern: initial vocational training, continuing vocational training, adult education activities, staff training in the public / local authorities/ social partners, research actions of educational needs, guidance and support of youth entrepreneurship, certification activities of inputs and outputs of lifelong learning.

The targets of the National Programme of Lifelong Learning 2013-15, approved by the Council of Lifelong Learning and Connection with Employment on the 28th of May 2013, follows the same direction, by broadening the actions of the previous period to achieve the following strategic priorities:

- Increasing and broadening the participation of adults (16-66+ years old) in LL, emphasizing the overcoming of access difficulties of vulnerable social groups
- Upgrading the knowledge-skills-abilities of adults and connecting them to the labour market
- Improving the quality of adult education and training
- Forming a network of carriers of LL, decentralizing the structures and services of LL and connecting them with a viable local and regional development
- Connecting formal with non formal education

Lifelong Learning is funded by state, community and private resources. The actions and projects implemented by state agencies are funded primarily by the Operational Programs (OPs) of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) co-financed by Greece and the European Union. Significant steps have been taken to date for the implementation of the institutional framework (Law 3879/2010) while the organisation and systematisation of Lifelong Learning remains a major goal.

Greece connects its policies and objectives with the ones of the European Union and in this context, given the information on Lifelong Learning development, is called upon to lift the access discrepancies to adult education, mainly for people aged 55+, for workers, farmers, inhabitants of semi-urban or rural areas and even for persons with low educational background. The shift towards strengthening development policies constitutes the only way ahead for Greece to make progress and for this purpose the quality of Lifelong Learning actions is enhanced, intensified and upgraded.
A more extensive report on Lifelong Learning is given in Chapter 8 “Adult Education and Training” [7].

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