
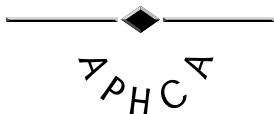


 OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
EU MONITORING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM

 OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

**ASSOCIATION FOR THE PSYCHOSOCIAL
HEALTH OF CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS**
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“Deinstitutionalisation has not yet brought satisfactory inclusion” denounces new monitoring report

Athens and Budapest – Monday, 29th of May 2006.

The process of deinstitutionalisation in Greece has given many people with intellectual disabilities (people whose learning ability is significantly lower than average) the chance to live outside of large, asylum type residential institutions. The goal of social inclusion for this group has, however, not been fully realised so far, and measures are urgently needed to address the needs of people with intellectual disabilities throughout their life. Most people with intellectual disabilities in Greece are today left to the care of their families, without adequate support in the community. Only a minority of children with intellectual disabilities is enrolled in schools while most — especially those who live in rural areas — have limited education opportunities at all. Government efforts to give people with intellectual disabilities jobs have had only minimal impact, and people with intellectual disabilities today in Greece cannot lead an independent and dignified life.

These are the main findings of the report ***Rights of people with intellectual disabilities: access to education and employment in Greece*** produced by the Open Society Institute (OSI). The report was prepared jointly with the Association for the Psychosocial Health of Children and Adolescents (APHCA). The main findings of the report are valid as of June 2005.

The main findings of the report will be presented on Monday 29th May, at the “Golden Age” Hotel (Michalakopoulou 57, Athens) from 12am to 3pm. The presentation was organised by APHCA, in cooperation with OSI. The main findings and recommendations will be presented by the Scientific Coordinator of APHCA, J. Tsiantis, Professor of Child Psychiatry, and Dr. St. Diareme, Clinical Psychologist, Ger. Kolaitis, Assistant Professor of Child Psychiatry and Dr. Eug. Soumaki, Child Psychiatrist. In addition, Aik. Giotopoulou-Maragopoulou, Professor of Criminology and President of the National Committee for Human Rights, and D. Stefanidis, President of the Panhellenic Federation of Societies of Parents and Guardians of Disabled People, will comment on the findings of the report. The OSI will be represented by Renate Weber, Katy Negrin and Katie Lipp.

Greek legislation prioritises integration of children with disabilities into regular schools for children without disabilities (a process known as “mainstreaming”), at least in theory. The report released today, however, reveals that a lack of resources and properly trained staff, as well as

The full text of this report is available at
<http://www.eumap.org/reports/2005>

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resistance to mainstreaming within the school community, are serious obstacles to integrated education.

Only about 1,000 children with intellectual disabilities today are in mainstream classes in Greece. About 2,000 children are placed in special, separate schools, alongside children with other forms of disability. According to APHCA Director, Prof. John Tsiantis, “the lessons and curricula in special schools usually are not even differentiated by the type of a child’s disability, never mind offering an individualised approach for each child. This kind of segregated environment does little to prepare children for an active, independent life in the community.”

The report released today urges the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs to ensure that school attendance, which in Greece is obligatory for all children, is also enforced for children with intellectual disabilities. The report highlights that where resources are available, mainstreaming has been highly effective. It therefore calls on the Ministry to increase the number of teachers trained to provide individualised support to students with intellectual disabilities, as well as, to increase educational opportunities for those with more severe intellectual disabilities in order to promote social integration and acceptance of these students.

In Greece, specialised social care structures and staff are not sufficient to meet the needs. The Diagnostic Evaluation and Support Centre, or KDAY network, established in 2001 to coordinate services for children with special educational needs, has not met expectations, with less than half of the 54 established centres actually operating by April 2004. According to Tsiantis “there are clear needs for more KDAY centres, as well as mobile support teams and multidisciplinary teams staffed by child psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and special educators, particularly in the islands and rural areas”.

The Greek Constitution specifically guarantees the right to work for people with disabilities. However available statistical information suggests that very few people with intellectual disabilities are employed, either through incentive programmes or on the open market. Programmes offering employers subsidies and incentives to hire people with disabilities have so far been ineffective. Quota requirements do exist, but employers meet them by giving jobs to people with other forms of disability.

Supported employment, which helps people finding a job on the open market offering support for day-to-day needs, is one of the most effective ways for people with intellectual disabilities to find work. Greece has, however, no legislation or policy in this area. Supported employment exists but is operated by NGOs and can serve only a fraction of the population that could benefit.

Census data significantly underestimates the total number of people with intellectual disabilities in Greece at around 150,000. The report urges the Greek government to ensure that disaggregated data is collected specifically about people with intellectual disabilities, and about the services offered to them.

To prevent the isolation of people with intellectual disabilities at home or in institutions, and enhance their ability to participate in education and community life, the Government — and especially the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare as well as the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs — should raise the awareness of parents and families about existing legislation and rights. The Government should also develop public awareness programmes, as well as campaigns directed at employers, to reduce stigma, prejudice and discrimination in the population.