



European Institute of Public Administration
Institut européen d'administration publique



Greek Seminar on

**The Implementation of the Recommendation
“Investing in Children”**

Athens (GR), 8 May2014

Organised by the
European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA)
under the framework contract **VC/2013/386**

National Seminar to support the implementation of the Investing in Children Recommendation in Greece during 2014 Athens (GR) 8 May 2014

Introduction

Background: stepping up investment in children

In February 2013 the European Commission adopted the Recommendation “Investing in Children-breaking the cycle of disadvantage” (REC)¹ as part of the Social Investment Package. The Recommendation recalls that child friendly social investment is not only a fair but also a cost efficient approach, contributing to long term growth. It invites Member States to step up investment in children and grasp opportunities provided by EU instruments and EU funds such as the ESF, ERDF and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. This is all the more important in a context where the MSs have agreed to spend at least 20% of the 2014-2020 ESF financial envelope on projects that promote social inclusion. The European Commission is thus keen to look for ways in which EU instruments can mobilised to support Member States’ efforts for better investment in children.

Objectives and target audience

For this reason the DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (Unit D2, in cooperation with the geographical desk, Unit F3), would like to organise on **May 8, 2014**, at the premises of the Greek Ombudsman, a technical national seminar to discuss and promote the implementation of the Investing in Children Recommendation.

Through this seminar the Commission would like to raise the general awareness in Greek policy making for the need to invest more in children and to make sure that the opportunities provided by ESF, FEAD and ERDF are fully grasped. The immediate purpose of the seminar is twofold:

- 1/ to increase the understanding of structural challenges and to raise awareness of existing EU policy instruments (REC and Social Investment Package, European Semester)
- 2/ to inform officials, in particular from ministries, local governments and NGOs who are potential applicants for ESF, FEAD and ERDF co-financing, about the arguments in the REC and to show them good practices of child focused investment projects that could be initiated during the upcoming 2014-2020 programming period.

The seminars should bring together about 30 participants and a key role will be given to the 13 regional authorities in Greece which will be responsible for the management of the 'promoting social Inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination' thematic objective in the upcoming ESF programmes. The seminar is to be mainly conducted in Greek.

The three pillars of the REC cover a broad policy agenda: access to work for parents and income support measures, access to quality services (such as early childhood education and care, health or alternative care) and child participation (through for instance extra-curricular activities).

At the same time the levels and nature of child poverty differ greatly across the EU implying that the national priorities are also likely to be different. Therefore another important aim of the seminar is to discuss and agree on what types of projects deserve to receive priority in Greece.

¹ http://europa.eu/epic/about/index_en.htm

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Thematic Priorities for Greece

Greece lacks a national social inclusion and anti-poverty strategy and therefore a specific coordinated strategy to fight child poverty is also absent. This is a matter of great concern because Greece is one of the MSs with the highest child poverty rate and the lack of a coherent strategy may undermine the effectiveness of many child focused policy interventions.

As is well known Greece has been very hard hit by the crisis and as a result there are now a great many very poor and deprived, undocumented children that would benefit greatly from the type of emergency aid that can be offered by the new European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). So it is important to discuss how the FEAD can be best used to address this issue in Greece.

During the 2007-2013 programming period Greece spent about 25% of its ESF budget to finance the provision of subsidized childcare services. The ESF project for the 'Reconciliation of family and professional life' offered subsidized vouchers for pre-school child care facilities to families fulfilling certain socioeconomic criteria. In the new programming period 2014-2020, more attention must be paid to alternative more effective and less expensive ways of financing childcare and to an evaluation of the impact and result of the ESF investments in the past programming period. This will help to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the child-related ESF investments in the new programming period.

Representatives of the Greek managing authorities and implementing bodies will be asked to present the possibilities of the new funding period and how these can be best used when submitting a child focused project. The afternoon session will be devoted to a discussion of best practice cases that are relevant to the specific Greek priorities outlined above, see also the attached draft programme below.

Organisation and partnerships

The Commission has for the practical organisation of the seminar signed a contract with the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) in Maastricht. EIPA will take care of the logistics and pay for the associated travel and meeting costs.

The list of participants is to be drawn up in close cooperation with the national authorities. EIPA will provide the moderator. It will also contact the independent Greek social inclusion experts from EKKE who prepared a detailed country report for the Commission on the implementation of the REC in Greece. UNICEF and EUROCHILD should also be allowed to participate in the seminar.

EUROCHILD has put together with 16 other EU level NGOs a Commission funded *Joint Alliance on Investing in Children*. This Alliance will together with the Greek Ombudsman organise a more political event also dedicated to the implementation of the REC on the next day.

Learning methodology

The workshop will be a combination of plenary discussion and group work. The approach will be interactive: participants will be encouraged to intervene and present their experience.

Target Group

About 25-30 participants representing the community of applicants interested in child related social inclusion projects (ministries of welfare, social affairs and education, 13 regions and local officials, representatives of UNICEF and Eurochild)

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Language

The seminar will be conducted in Greek with English interpretation.

Duration

± 1 day

Schedule time

10.00 - 16.30

Venue

Premises of the Greek Ombudsman
5, Hadjiyanni str
Athens

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Programme

- 10:00 Presentation of the seminar: Cristiana Turchetti, EIPA
 Moderator from Greek ESF managing authority (tbc)
 George MOSCHOS Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights
- 10:15 Georgios TASKOUDISs from the Geographical Unit of the Commission
- 10:30 Stamatia PAPOULIA from the Greek ESF managing authority (tbc)
- 10:45 Julius OP DE BEKE from the Policy Unit of the Commission: presentation of the
 Recommendation (REC), Social Investment Package and links with Europe 2020
- 11:15 Dimitris ZIOMAS of the Greek National Centre of Social Research (EKKE) presenting
 the report on the implementation of the REC: setting the scene
- 12:00 General discussion of the priorities and adequateness of the Greek response to the
 REC- and of the policy reforms
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Presentation by the Greek ESF Managing Authority on the new FEAD programme
 followed by a discussion of the funding possibilities in the new ESF/ERDF programmes
 (tbc)
- 15:15 Julius OP DE BEKE presenting a series of Best Practices as suggested by EPIC-
 RAND/OECD/Eurochild/ESN
- 16:00 UNICEF/Eurochild on the Code of Conduct on Partnership (tbc)
- 16:30 Discussion of the next generation of child focused projects that can potentially be
 submitted for funding
- 17:00 Conclusions and Closure by Managing Authority and Commission