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Social Pedagogical Reflexes of Greek Society during the Economic Crisis Period: Indicative Social Pedagogical Actions

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Social Pedagogical Reflexes of Greek Society during the Economic Crisis Period: Indicative Social Pedagogical Actions

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THEORY

PRACTICE

RESEARCH

The present paper investigates the social pedagogical reflexes from various organizations in Greece during the period of economical crisis in order to handle the various and different problems that have occurred. These social pedagogical reflexes are investigated and presented through an indicative presentation of several social pedagogical actions taking place in this country during this period, originating from different social pedagogical institutions. The indicative social pedagogical actions have been divided into five basic categories, aiming to show in a better way the respective lines of interest of the practice of Greek social pedagogy during the crisis period.

In this context, this paper presents different social pedagogical actions, focusing on the profile, the aims and the social pedagogical work of institutions, i.e. of non-governmental organizations, associations, public and private initiatives, usually based on volunteer actions of Greek citizens. These institutions are aiming to resolve and effectively address a wide range of social pedagogical problems.

With the support of the aforementioned institutions, coordinated and active networks of volunteers have been created throughout the country. These aim to effectively support social pedagogically oriented programmes and actions. Through their collaboration, selfless offer, systematic work, empathy, solidarity and respect towards every person, all of the individuals and groups involved strongly demonstrate the ethos of social pedagogy and greatly increase the possibilities for practitioners in social pedagogy.

Key words: social pedagogical reflexes, social pedagogical actions, social pedagogical ethos, theory and practice.

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Introduction

Social pedagogy is a multidisciplinary area that acts as a 'functional mediator' between the person and the society and, more precisely, between human systems and their social, political, cultural, economic and technological hyper-system (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2013). It deals with a wide range of subjects, focusing on a theoretical as well as practical approach, through intervention and mostly through prevention (Kyriakou, 2011; Petrie et al., 2006; Stephens, 2013).

During the period of economic crisis in Greece, the needs at all levels are growing all the time, and it is a major need to address them. From the beginning, social pedagogy has been associated worldwide with collective efforts of individuals and groups to deal with problematic situations through a continuous desire for improvement and change (Mylonakou-Keke, 2013).

The present paper is aiming to show indicative social pedagogical reflexes, demonstrated by social pedagogically oriented institutions in Greece during the period of economic crisis, in order to deal with various problems caused by it. These reflexes are realized through a wide range of social pedagogical actions. As a result, the indicative social pedagogical actions are divided into five basic categories, which (we believe) are showing in a better way the respective lines of interest of social pedagogy.

The first category refers to *'enhancement and ensuring of rights, qualitative education, all-round development of individuals, lifelong learning, improvement and change.'* Here we present social pedagogical institutions committed to the basic principles of social pedagogy such as: protection of human rights, lifelong personal and social development of the individual, creation of positive experiences, informal education, development and reinforcement of emotional and social skills and generally the complete development of the personality in order to achieve improvement and change (Eichsteller, 2010; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Kyriakou et al., 2009; Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2013; Pantazis, 2013; Petrie, 2011; Stephens, 2013; Surel et al., 2011).

The second category focuses on *'tackling social pedagogical problems like bullying in schools, dropout, discrimination and negative attitudes towards diversity, neglect of children, psycho-social problems in the family and social exclusion'*. The institutional actions presented in this category aim to realize another purpose of social pedagogy, which is the protection of every child from bullying, violence and neglect and the provision of child's progress and well-being (Eriksson & Markstrom, 2003; Kyriakou et al., 2014; Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, 2009, 2013; Stephens, 2011). At the same time, there is an endeavour to develop better social pedagogical practices, which will contribute to tackling social inequalities (Coussée & Williamson, 2011; Mylonakou-Keke, 2013; Petrie, 2011).

The third category concerns *'residential care, child protection, support and reinforcement of the family'*. We present here some social pedagogical institutions, offering residential care to children without family and bodies hosting children from families unable to meet the economic criteria or with hard working parents. These institutions support children and young people (who usually have social and emotional gaps) in order to help them live a higher-quality life and get access to society resources (Cameron, 2004; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011, 2012, Jackson, 2006).

The fourth category is focusing on *'foster families, adoptions and programmes in search of a child's natural family'*. The social pedagogical institutions presented here focus on foster care, adoption processes and search for children's natural family with the aim to reattach children with their biological family (Cameron, 2013; Cameron & Petrie, 2011; Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012; Petrie, 2007; Smith, 2012).

In the fifth category we mention briefly and generally (due to a big number of them throughout the country) the institutions that have created networks with organized programmes and actions focusing on *'support of socially vulnerable groups'*. All these aim to defend rights, improve the living conditions for vulnerable persons and groups such as needy, homeless, poor people and migrants,

in practice, with the basic priority of integrating, reintegrating and assuring their dignity and their participation in the educational, cultural, economic and social goods (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003).

All the above mentioned categories show the basic positions and priorities of practice in social pedagogy, such as the connection between theory and practice, development and reinforcement of team spirit and cooperation and, finally, raising awareness and preparedness in Greek society. All these can contribute to dealing with many and various problems created and multiplied during the crisis.

Enhancement and ensuring of rights, qualitative education, all-round development of individuals, lifelong learning, improvement and change

Folk High School

The *Folk High School* was founded in Athens¹ in 1865² by the *Eteria ton Filon tou Laou* (Society of People's Friends) as a result of a vision of ten young people. Their aim was a national, social and pedagogical input, i.e. they offered simplified, yet authoritative scientific and technical knowledge to all those who had no access to higher education or to any other form of learning, completely free of charge. At the same time, the *Eteria ton Filon tou Laou* founded the first School for Illiterates (Reading, Writing, Arithmetic). Moreover, the *Folk High School* vigorously supported various social issues, such as setting Sunday as a holiday, the reformation of the penitentiary system and improvement of conditions for detainees (Mylonakou-Keke, 2003, pp. 141-145). The *Folk High School* is still functioning continually and accepts as students all those who wish to register and do not have the possibility to participate and/or succeed in university admission exams³ and enter a university in Greece. The *Folk High School* offers study programmes in many scientific fields with lectures, seminars, laboratories and scientific discussions. The courses are delivered by volunteer university professors from public universities in Greece (Eteria ton Filon tou Laou, 2005).

Through the *Folk High School*, all those who wish to study a scientific field but do not have the possibility to enter university 'officially' can do so with no discrimination or restriction. Graduates of the People's University have academic but not professional rights.

The Church of Greece (Orthodox Christian Church)

From the beginning of its existence until today, the Orthodox Christian Church, officially mentioned as the Church of Greece, has been taking action across the whole country regarding the education, social integration and care of all those people living in poverty or below the poverty line and are unable to cover their needs due to an economical crisis. More precisely, at an educational level, it offers courses to all students of primary and secondary education through Society Tuition Centres called *Kinonika Frontistiria* (analyzed in the paragraph below) and operates early childhood centres to help working parents and their children. Moreover, it helps students by accommodating them in student residences and providing economic help with scholarships and grants. The Church of Greece has founded summer camps for children and teenagers during the summer months⁴ aiming

¹ Athens is the largest city of Greece, in population.

² Some decades after the independence of the newly created Greek government, following Greece's liberation from Ottoman domination (Turkocracy), which lasted for almost four hundred years.

³ In Greece all universities are public, financed by the Government and offer studies at bachelor level free of charge. If someone wants to enter university, s/he has to take part and succeed in the panhellenic (admission) exams taking place all over the country every year, held by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

⁴ The Church of Greece. Available online: <http://www.ecclesia.gr/>.

to create positive experiences, to develop social skills, entertain and cultivate relations based on reciprocity and collaboration. The Church of Greece has also contributed in the field of residential care which will be presented further on.

Educational Solidarity / Social Solidarity Networks

The aim of Educational Solidarity is to create a net of social protection, where the educational needs of school students can be met and equality in progress and provided education could be reached.^{5,6} As a result, a great number of Solidarity Networks has been organized by the Office for Youth of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens, by universities, municipalities, private social centres and many volunteers in Attica⁷ and every part in Greece. They organize daily *Kinonika Frontistiria* that provide course support for school lessons or foreign language courses. More precisely, *Kinonika Frontistiria* are free courses offered as tutoring to students of primary and secondary education, whose families cannot afford private courses. Furthermore, these Solidarity Networks have set up nursery schools, social conservatoires and dance schools free of charge for students from families unable to afford the fees.⁸

A volunteer and solidarity educational network, the *tutor pool*, shows the regions on Google Maps where parents or students can find a *Kinonika Frontistiria*, get to contact volunteer teachers and get information about the services offered.⁹

The services of Social Solidarity Networks are a social pedagogical offer. Without any discrimination, they provide greater possibilities and support to all people living in Greece, whether Greek or migrants, who face some economical or social needs and gaps that do not allow them to access educational, cultural and social goods.

The Mission

The Mission was founded in 2010 by the Holy Archdiocese of Athens, head of the Christian Orthodox Church of Greece. *The Mission* is an urban, non-profit organization with national and international scope, operating in humanitarian, developmental and educational fields¹⁰. Some of the social pedagogical activities offered by *the Mission* are listed below:

Programme 'I have a mission'

It started in 2011 and is working on sending educational books (for primary education) in order to support the school libraries in the outermost regions and to provide school students with books and stationery free of charge. So far more than 30,000 books and stationery have been sent to Greece's outermost regions.¹¹

'Dimitrio' Centre of Creative Occupation for Children

The centre has been operating in the municipality of Moschato-Tavros in Attica since 2013 and is helping vulnerable families. Several programmes are taking place for children 6-12 years old, after

⁵ Office for Youth of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens. Available online: <http://neotita.gr/κοινωνικά-φροντιστήρια/>

⁶ Antallaktiki Economia. Available online: <http://antallaktiki.gr/index.php/dorean-mathimata.html>

⁷ Attica is a geographical area and administrative region in central Greece, which includes the capital Athens.

⁸ Money-money.gr. Available online: <http://www.money-money.gr/news/pii-dimi-organonoun-kinonika-frontistiria/146>

⁹ Enallaktikos.gr.

¹⁰ Mission, (2012). *Charitable Organization of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens*.

¹¹ Mission, (2012). *Program "I have a mission"*.

the main school programme, offering educational support, activities reinforcing abilities and dexterities, entertainment and care. The centre is supporting working parents and offers educative leisure time activities for children such as painting, rhythmic gymnastics, folk dances, music, chorus, constructions, gardening, painting of icons, spinning, theatre and other creative activities.¹²

'The Annunciation' nursery school

This nursery school has been working in east-central Greece since 2014. Educational and entertaining activities and programmes are organized and breakfast is offered daily to children. Additionally, it offers pre-school education, emotional, mental and physical development through a complete educational system.¹³

Programme 'Greek Language – Greek Civilization'

Migrants living in Athens, irrespective of their origin and religion, are learning the Greek language in this programme. Thus, they get to know the Greek civilization, improve their living standard, get easier access to the job market and integrate better into Greek society in general.¹⁴

Programme 'Learning English'

Since 2013, children 6-10 years old have the possibility to get free English lessons of Junior A and Junior B¹⁵ level in Athens.

The social pedagogical actions of *the Mission* also includes programmes/activities of social care for vulnerable groups (people in need, uninsured citizens, homeless), providing meals, basic necessities and services of healthcare.¹⁶

Network for Children's Rights

Network for Children's Rights is a non-profit Greek association established in Athens in 2004. The social pedagogical work of the network is to protect and further children's rights in Greece and in Europe. It runs initiatives for the implementation of the UN Convention, informs children and their families on institutions that protect them. In addition, it supports vulnerable groups and poor families, raises society's awareness for the protection of children from any form of violence, abandonment, offence and exploitation, as well as smoking, substance abuse and others social pedagogical problems, whilst also carrying out relevant surveys.

To achieve these goals, the Network organizes educational workshops for students in primary and secondary education, which contribute towards the holistic development of their personality. An example of the workshops is the so-called *Network's Culture Lab*.

'Network's Culture Lab'

The Culture Lab hosts school classes and invites students to participate in educational programmes, social-pedagogically oriented at issues such as diversity, cultural diversity and identity, expressing and managing emotions, conflict resolution, individual's participatory observation and responsible attitude in society, personal and social decision making, social solidarity, collaborative action aimed at social cohesion, generation of critical thinking, proper internet use, etc. It organizes creative

¹² Mission, (2012). *"Dimitrio" Centre of Creative Occupation of Children*

¹³ Mission, (2012). *"The Annunciation" nursery school*

¹⁴ Mission, (2012). Program *"Greek Language – Greek Civilization"*

¹⁵ Mission, (2012). Program *"Learning English"*

¹⁶ Mission, (2012). Charitable Organization of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens

activities during children's leisure time as well as educational games, artistic and reading activities, environmental interventions and initiatives on children's rights. Furthermore, the Culture Lab introduces relevant films, theatre games and information about issues such as the environment, health promotion, treatment and prevention of violence in schools and drug trafficking. Volunteers teach English and Greek, provide students with private tutoring, psychological and counselling support, help organize creative activities and sports, undertake administrative tasks, inform society and support conferences and other events (Network for Children's Rights, 2014).

Social Support Organization for Youth ARSIS

ARSIS is a non-governmental organization active in Athens, Thessaloniki¹⁷ and every part in Greece. The social pedagogical offer of the organization focuses on education, development of emotional and social skills, preparation for professional integration and prevention of social exclusion. It addresses young people aged 15-21 living in challenging conditions, facing neglect, abuse, exploitation, insufficient family support, rejection from the educational system, migration, homelessness, unemployment and living in an institution. The help is offered through support centres for the young, mobile schools, rights education programmes, information on child labour, hostels, sleeping places for the homeless, activities in detention centres (aiming to provide education, creative activities, communication, expression), social services (material, advisory service, reference to institutions of social protection), goods collecting bank 'Syn-Praxi' and legal service 'Sym-Parastasi'.

In the *support centres for the young*, children aged 5-18 are offered courses for school integration, workshops of creative activities to develop personal-social skills, creative leisure time activities, literacy programmes, tutoring, computer courses, experiential education on issues that concern the young, entertaining activities, advisory help, preparation for the job market and legal advice for the protection of their basic rights. The centres collaborate with other institutions and take part in other programmes as well. In addition, they can offer lodging as an exception and basic necessities.

The *mobile schools* are manually transferable vehicles with blackboards and a special place for educational entertainment panels. They are made for Roma communities, primary and secondary schools and are also taking part in social-cultural activities. They organize workshops for children and adults to inform on and raise awareness about children rights, violence, racism and child labour.

With regards to rights education, ARSIS offers a methodological guide for teachers, professors and scientists on educating the young. The COMPASS guide contains theoretical information on the rights, methodology guidelines, practical exercises, educational content and suggested activities. ARSIS educates and raises awareness amongst teachers, so that they stimulate young people, inform and instruct university teachers and students as well as organize common social actions (ARSIS, 2014).

PRAKSIS

PRAKSIS is a non-governmental organization working in all parts of Greece since 2004. The organization develops programmes with a social pedagogical direction, aiming to provide education to everyone, children – young people – adults, Greek people or migrants, to protect from child labour, to protect schooling and reduce dropout rates and consequences.

Through the programme '*provisions for life, steps for life*', PRAKSIS takes on the coverage of educational needs of children from families hit by the present economic crisis. It also provides

¹⁷ Thessaloniki is located in Northern Greece and it is the second largest city in population, after Athens.

psycho-pedagogical activities, such as a lending library, reading evenings and pathways to civilization with visits to cultural and educational institutions.

The *'mobile school'* programme has existed in Thessaloniki since 2009. It focuses on children aged between 5 and 18, who are not integrated in a school environment due to *'working'* in the street and seeks to provide them with psycho-social support, integrate them into a school environment and help them leave the streets.

The programme *'application of the new agenda for the education of adults'* seeks to cover all forms of adult education and address lowly qualified adults, young people who have not received any training and socially vulnerable groups.

Through the programme *'from alpha to omega'* for learning the Greek language, Greek history and Greek civilization, which is provided to adult migrants, PRAKSIS helps migrants to enrich their communicative skills in the Greek language and contribute to the integration process to prevent and face their social exclusion.

PRAKSIS offer other services too, such as free healthcare, sanitation services, psychological support, labour/legal advice, economic help and lodging.¹⁸

Open Care Centre for the Elderly (K.A.P.I. in Greek)

Today, more than 900 open care centres for the elderly are in operation throughout Greece. These centres provide systematic care, support and reinforcement of dignity for the elderly (above 60 years old). Their services are not limited to providing healthcare and social care, but also include residential care actions, entertainment, training, education and individual initiatives, so that their members remain equal and active members of society.

Some of the services provided by open care centres for the elderly (apart from healthcare issues) concern education with scientific talks, entertainment (excursions, promenades, going to theatre/concerts, visiting museums, archaeological sites, celebration of national holidays, sea baths), mutual assistance, volunteerism, lending library and other creative activities, such as handicraft, chorus, dances, gymnastics, camping programmes, etc.^{19,20}

The open care centre for the elderly programme is tailored to the goals of *'geragogy'*, i.e. aiming to preserve the intellectual performance of the elderly, their psychological plenitude, constructive use of their recreational time, revealing their interests, reinforce their social relations, upgrade their education and promote the feeling of being useful to others (Mylonakou-Keke, 2013: 52-54).

Tackling social pedagogical problems: bullying at school, dropout, discrimination and negative attitude towards diversity, child neglect, psycho-social problems in the family and social exclusion

Network development and action, prevention and treatment of school violence and bullying

The phenomenon of bullying at school is a major social pedagogical problem due to the fact that it threatens the physical and emotional health of students with potential results in learning and behaviour in general. For this reason, during the school years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, the

¹⁸ Praksis. Available online: <http://www.praksis.gr/el/>

¹⁹ Open Care Centre for the Elderly, (K.A.P.I. in Greek). Available online: <http://irakliokapi.blogspot.gr/>

²⁰ 50plus Hellas, Open Care Centre for the Elderly, (K.A.P.I. in Greek). Available online: <http://old.50plus.gr/kapi>

Ministry of Education and Religion Affairs has realized the action 'Network development and action, prevention and treatment of school violence and bullying' throughout the operational programme 'education and life-long learning' for the action category 'awareness-raising programmes'. The establishment, the functioning and the roles that occur in the network are under the responsibility of specialized committees and groups like the Central Scientific Committee (strongly representing social pedagogy), the Project Management Team, the Coordination Committee of Prevention Actions, the Regional Group of Prevention Actions and the Groups of Prevention Actions.

The actions of the network are addressed at the educational community (teachers, students, parents) and society at community level. Indicatively they seek to:

- ✦ Create a structure to prevent the phenomenon of violence and bullying at schools across the country;
- ✦ Train all headteachers and teachers in primary and secondary education to record, distinguish in time, prevent and treat the phenomena of violence and bullying at schools;
- ✦ Create actions to raise awareness, inform, train and involve the wider local community (parents, families, community representatives, policy makers, etc.);
- ✦ Actions to feature and advertise the network;
- ✦ Collaborate with universities and other institutions that share the objective of preventing and combating violence and bullying at schools;
- ✦ Create a methodology to evaluate the function of the network.

The network is also responsible for the prevention and the treatment of cyber bullying, the creation of appropriate educational programmes and the application of correct practices. The presentation of the feature *Cyberkid* is also of great significance.

Cyberkid is a smartphone application that gives children the possibility to communicate directly with officers prosecuting cybercrime, in real time, in case of danger or threat. This is possible through the Contemporary Centre of Cyber Alert Management. Moreover, specialized officers for specific tasks, with scientific knowledge, connect online with regional schools once a week and inform students about existing dangers and safe internet surfing.

The network provides the possibility to students, parents and teachers to find information on its website and ways to manage and practically tackle violence and bullying at schools which they possibly encounter in their daily lives. In addition, its website contains useful links to Greek and foreign sites, presenting institutions, organizations and networks studying the phenomena of violence, bullying at school and internet safety (Stop Bullying, 2013).

The Smile of the Child

The Smile of the Child is a non-profit social pedagogical organization founded in 1995 and has continued its function until today, aiming to defend children's rights, designate a child's uniqueness and respect everybody's diversity, mental and physical health and in general protect the child and its well-being (see Yannopoulos et al in this current Special Issue). *The Smile of the Child* has developed some social pedagogical practices against serious problems, one of which is against bullying and violence at schools. It is worth mentioning that *The Smile of the Child* took the initiative to create and lead a European network against school bullying (European Antibullying Network), starting a cooperation between seventeen expert organizations from twelve member states of the European Union (United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Malta, Lithuania, Rumania and Greece) (see The Smile of The Child, 2011). The network's aim is to systematically study bullying at schools, raise awareness amongst more and more people about the issue and its extent, directly intervene via school communities, spread best practices and formulate a united European strategy to deal with the problem and extend the network to all EU member states by including more relevant bodies. In this context, the network organized with great success

the 1st Scientific International Conference of the European Anti-bullying Network (EAN) on 'Bullying and Cyber-bullying across Europe', which took place in Athens in June 2014. Additionally, it has developed an interactive social pedagogical tool against bullying at schools (see Alevizos et al in the current Special Issue).

Association for the Psychosocial Health of Children and Adolescents (A.P.H.C.A.)

The *Association for the Psychosocial Health of Children and Adolescents* has made important efforts against bullying and violence in the school environment. The Association (apart from actions in mental health) has developed an educational programme for teachers in order to prevent and deal with bullying and violence among school pupils. The programme includes important translations of relevant books and educational material (A.P.H.C.A., 2010).

Association of Social Solidarity 'HELP for the Child and the Adolescent'

HELP is a non-governmental organization taking actions on the Greek islands and focusing on children and young people of any social class, economic situation and cultural identity. It aims to protect children from any kind of exploitation and violence, to decrease school dropout rates and juvenile delinquency, to overcome their social exclusion and support their families. More specifically, it offers psychological and moral help to children who have been victims of psychological, sexual or physical abuse (in the family and social environment), victims of drug addiction, are parentless, abandoned, come from single-parent families or from malfunctioning families and children with unlawful or aggressive behaviour.

Additionally, it offers school support and creative activities to those who do not attend school systematically (provided by volunteer nursery school teachers and teachers), psycho-social support by colleagues (pedagogues, social workers, sociologists, psychologists), economical support for people in need to cover their basic needs (food, clothing, footwear, school supplies), legal and social support of the family. The organization takes protective measures from direct danger (removal of the child or of the mother - temporarily or permanently - from the family environment) and more drastic measures in difficult cases (offer of shelter, of a foster family). Additionally, it organizes various scientific, artistic, and entertaining activities as well as educational seminars, courses for the prevention of social pathogenesis, programmes for the prevention of violence and crime, programmes to develop skills in order to treat the phenomena of abuse, bullying at school, grief and use of substances.²¹

Organization for the care of children and families facing illness and death - PROVIDENCE (MERIMNA in Greek)

This is a non-profit society founded by nine experienced scientists in the domain of education and health, based in Athens and Thessaloniki. The main purpose of *PROVIDENCE* (Merimna in Greek) is the care of children and families facing psycho-social problems like serious illness or death of their closest persons. The social pedagogical role of the society includes organized actions to provide specialized education to health and education professionals, to provide services to children/adolescents going through the loss of their closest person or the serious illness of a family member. The organization also provides support to family members, 'the important others' for a child, prepares the school community to smoothly integrate a bereaved child, informs the Greek community and raises its awareness. All its professionals are trained accordingly in order to deal efficiently with the issues caused by illness or traumatic loss in the life of a child or an adult.

²¹ Association of Social Solidarity "HELP for the Child and the Adolescent". Available online: <http://vohtpe.blogspot.gr/>

Its educational programmes are addressed at teachers, pedagogues, social workers, pediatricians, nurses and other education and health professionals in order for them to obtain the necessary skills to be able to provide advisory support to children, their families and in the school communities in cases of bereavement (Merimna, 2011).

Centre for Children and Family Support

It is one of the most representative social pedagogical institutions, which provides support to socially excluded children (and their families) who victims of racism due to their racial, national and/or religious diversity. The aim of the centre is the social integration of these persons, to cultivate respect towards their culture and improve their living conditions and their personal possibilities. The centre organizes specially designed social pedagogical programmes for children living in Greece, such as the Muslim Roma in West Thrace²², the Turkish-speaking communities in West Thrace and the Roma Albanians, while an important majority consists of Greek children who cannot get family care due to economic problems.

One of the centre's activities is the *day centre for little children*. The mission of the programme is the social integration of children who do not go to schools because they work in the streets and sell things. The centre informs their parents about the necessity of education, preparing children for entering school, teaching them the rules and the appropriate behaviour, developing their fantasy and their creativity, helping them to realize the range of choices they have in their lives, helping them to get accepted in school, and also offers any stationery needed. Moreover, it supports programmes of school support for children already going to school and takes care of their food, hygiene and vaccination.

The *centre for adolescents and youth* focuses on socially excluded young people 13-20 years old (Greek, Muslims, Roma) and aims to reveal their personal skills, their social and professional integration and to protect them from any juvenile delinquency.

The *family centre* is a social service that supports the children's families at an advisory, educational, informational, motivational and steering level. It reinforces their role, their rights and obligations in bringing up and educating their children as well as helping them with their social needs (benefit-related, legal, bureaucratic, health issues, etc.) (Social Educational Action, 2008).

Scale (Klimaka, in Greek)

Scale is an organization whose social pedagogical offer focuses on the application of educational programmes, social participation, care and integration of vulnerable groups of people. It takes action to confront social exclusion and to achieve the 'coexistence of people beyond discriminations'. *Scale* plays a determinant role going against social exclusion by running the *programme of support for homeless people*, which includes actions of research, prevention, awareness-raising, community education, education, street work, covering of basic needs, consulting, work rehabilitation and reintegration of homeless people. It proposes designs of full-term interventions that (along with the cooperation of the Work Ministry and the Social Protection and accompanying supporting services) take care of the education, consulting and self employment of Roma, Muslims and other people with cultural diversities living in Greece.

As far as education is concerned, *Scale* offers professional training programmes for institution employees, seminars and educational programmes for victim families about the treatment and prevention of family violence and abuse. The organisation cooperates with Greek universities and offers practice placements to students (undergraduate and postgraduate). When it comes to its

²² Thrace is a geographic region of Greece.

general activities, *Scale* runs boarding houses, hostels, movable units and day centres to prevent the above mentioned problems. It also organizes courses of psycho-social and social pedagogical support for juvenile offenders and participates in related international actions and European programmes (Klimaka, 2008).

Residential care, child protection, support and reinforcement of the family

Amalieio Boarding School for Girls

The Amalieio Boarding School for Girls has been providing effective support for orphans who have lost one or both parents after major crises (1855, 1953, 1974)²³ faced by Greece. In these times of crisis, this boarding school has played a significant role by tending to orphaned girls with loving care, hosting and educating them. Furthermore, the boarding school established a higher vocational training school aimed at the professional training of accommodated girls.

Today, apart from providing residential care, the Amalieio educates free of charge the vulnerable pupil population, offers the possibility of learning English, educates school children to use computers, grants scholarships to cover the costs of higher education and hosts, completely free of charge, school children from rural areas. Furthermore, the boarding school participates in training sessions, seminars and conferences and organizes recreational, cultural, artistic, spiritual events and exhibitions.²⁴

The Ark of the World

The Ark is a non-profit organization for the special care and protection of mother and child, developing its activities both in Attiki and other areas of Greece. It aims to provide care, protection, hospitality and education to children from single-parent families, orphans, marginalized and abandoned children who are victims of racist attitudes. It has won an award for being 'the brightest example against racism and xenophobia in Greece.' *The Ark* has a guest house to accommodate unaccompanied refugee children, homeless and abused women and their children. In addition, it offers financial assistance and employment services to poor women.

As regards the role of training, *the Ark* trains volunteers – teachers who help children with their studies through personal tutoring. In addition, children from different cultural backgrounds or who do not attend school are able to attend Greek and foreign language courses, participate in various educational and recreational activities, visit museums, theaters and participate in excursions. *The Ark* works with specialized centres and/or individuals in order to enhance its services (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, etc.) when necessary.

The vast majority of children supported by *the Ark* return home in the evening. Parents are informed daily via a communication book and in handovers on the child's progress and behaviour whilst staying at *the Ark*.²⁵

²³ 1855: Deadly cholera epidemic that hit Greece,

1953: Deadly earthquake in the cluster of Ionian Greece,

1974: Turkish invasion in Cyprus (Greek Island) and migration of war refugees to Greece.

²⁴ Amalieio. Available online: <http://www.amalieion.gr/>

²⁵ The Ark of the World. Available online: <http://kivotostoukosmou.org/kivotos/content/view/12/28/lang.el/>

Lyreio Children Foundation 'Orthodox Village'

This is a non-profit organization operating in Attica, providing care, nurture, protection and relief for children who, for reasons related to death, family or social problems, are deprived of parental care. It is noteworthy that the children at the institution are supported by it in all areas, throughout the duration of their lives, until the completion of their academic study, of military service and family rehabilitation.

The social pedagogical offer of the Foundation also extends to the provision of full quality education services. *Lyreio* comprises kindergarten facilities and an elementary school, while attendance in secondary education takes place in neighbouring schools. Teachers of all subjects (foreign languages, tutoring, music, visual arts, sports) contribute voluntarily, mainly in the education of children (Lyreio Children Foundation, 2006).

Guest House for Care and Rehabilitation for abused and neglected children, SOS ELIZA

This is a non-profit organization in Athens and Thessaloniki, which: a) protects children who were abused and neglected by their family (up to 5 years old), b) covers their basic needs, c) arranges for adoption and foster care programmes, d) implements educational programmes for children, intended to cope with the various problems they may face, and e) cooperates with schools in the local community by providing educational programmes for teachers, pupils and parents, as well as providing advisory support on the management of abuse and neglect phenomena and reinforcing healthy behaviours in the family and the school.

Families who take on adoption or provide foster care are systematically monitored by the scientific team of the *Guest House SOS ELIZA* to ensure that they have the potential to effectively fulfil the responsibilities they have taken on.²⁶

Christodoulou Child Protection Foundation

This is a charitable non-profit institution that operates in Attica, providing residential care, upbringing and care of girls from 4-23 years old who, for various reasons, have been disadvantaged and been deprived of their family environment. Girls attend public schools of all grades which are in the neighborhood of the Foundation. The *Christodoulou* institution is committed to enhancing the education of its accommodated children, offering them additional learning opportunities, such as language learning, information technology, music, dance etc. The children of the Foundation are supported in all areas throughout the course of their lives, until the completion of their academic, their professional and marital recovery (Christodoulou, 2010).

Orphanage of Volos

This non-profit foundation was established in Volos²⁷ in order to provide care and treatment to children aged 5-18 years who, because of the death of one or both parents, abandonment, divorced parents, a lack of economic means, etc. have been deprived of family care. The *Orphanage of Volos* takes on the legal custody for those children and ensures their all-round development, covering their basic needs (accommodation, food, medical care) and ensuring at the same time their systematic education, psychosocial support and the creative use of their leisure. The foundation has departments for training, career planning, social and child psychological support, creative activities and entertainment, staffed with experienced professionals – teachers and social workers (Orphanage of Volos, 2013).

²⁶ SOS Eliza Home. Available online: <http://eliza.org.gr/sos-eliza-home>

²⁷ Volos is one of the biggest cities and one of the most important ports in Greece.

Zanneio Child Protection and Education Foundation

The *Zanneio Child Protection and Education Foundation* (formerly Zanneio Orphanage for Boys) is a non-profit foundation located in Piraeus²⁸. The Foundation aims to provide care and protection to orphans and children from families with financial and/or social problems. In the past, it accommodated and treated a huge number of child victims of war. The *Zanneio Foundation* covers holistic educational and psychosocial needs of children until the completion of their academic qualification and entry into the workforce.²⁹

Centre for Child Protection, in Kavala (formerly Paidopoli)

This is a non-profit institution located in Kavala³⁰. This institution hosts 6-18 year old children from dysfunctional family environments. The institution aims to meet their needs (biological, educational, psychosocial), and it enhances their upbringing with programmes intended to support teaching, with group play and creative activities. In addition, the institution collaborates with the local community, ensuring the participation of children in schools (foreign language, computer skills), in educational, social and recreational activities. Additionally, the Foundation implements fostering and adoption programmes. It is worth noting that the *Centre for Child Protection* provides temporary accommodation on weekends and holidays for children of hard-working parents who are unable to be at home even on these days.³¹

Hatzikyriakio Childcare Institution

This is a non-profit foundation founded in Attica and aims to improve living and educational needs, as well as provide professional support to girls between 6 and 18 years of age who, for various reasons, are deprived of parental and family care. In particular, the *Hatzikyriakio Foundation* accommodates girls from families with serious social and economic problems. At the age of 18 years, when girls of the *Hatzikyriakio institution* successfully enter higher education institutions, they shall typically have to leave the institution, as provided by its statute. Additionally, a wedding allowance is given to girls who marry. The Foundation participates in conferences, publishes its own magazine and organizes psycho-pedagogical events (Hatzikyriakio, 2008).

SOS Children's Villages

*SOS Villages*³² are a well known and popular institution, created in Europe to protect children after the devastating effects of World War II. Today, institutions of *SOS Villages*, an independent non-governmental organization worldwide, offer an important social pedagogical and complex mission, with long-term and systematic care for orphans and abandoned children through the 'created' structure of the 'SOS family'. According to the organization of the *SOS Children's Villages*, each child has an 'SOS mother', who undertakes to offer love, security, stability to the children entrusted to her and to ensure their well-being, while respecting the family background, cultural roots and the religion of each child. In this way every child has a 'mother', as well as 'siblings', who live in their own SOS home, which belongs to the SOS village. The village is part of the wider local community.

²⁸ Piraeus is the third (after Athens and Thessaloniki) largest city of Greece, located near Athens and is the largest commercial port in eastern Masogeiou.

²⁹ Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Available online: <http://www.snf.org/29947>

³⁰ Kavala is one of the largest cities in Greece.

³¹ Centre of Child Protection, in Kavala (formerly Paidopoli), (2011)

³² SOS Children's Villages in Greece. Available online: <http://www.sos-villages.gr/>

SOS villages are set up in central and northern Greece. In them, according to the structure and operation of *SOS villages*, every child belongs to a family who cares and provides love, respect and security and continually seeks the child's cognitive, emotional, social development, progress and prosperity. Apart from the aforementioned services, Greek *SOS villages* also offer wider social pedagogical work, providing services related to:

Workshops of Expression and Creative Occupation

They offer free creative opportunities for education and employment to children whose parents are experiencing financial difficulties. The workshops available are: visual art, theatre, music, new technologies and expression via computer and English language courses.³³

Therapeutic Pedagogy Workshop

They offer additional theoretical and practical training to graduates and students of pedagogy and psychology schools, through organized courses, providing students the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired in practice. Each student undertakes to supervise a child from the *SOS Village* twice a week in order to enhance the child's learning, emotional and childcare support.³⁴

Youth House

The Youth House offers organized educational programmes to adolescents, which help them become aware of social reality by enhancing their self-confidence, developing self-awareness of their communication skills as well as their ability to respond and decide, understanding the implications and responsibility their choices may have.³⁵

Child and Family Support Centres

It offers programmes of socialization and social integration to children with learning, mental or behavioural difficulties, intended to help them to develop and strengthen their cognitive, emotional and social skills through targeted activities and workshops.³⁶

Children's Asylum

This is a non-profit charitable organization established in Thessaloniki. The social pedagogical contribution focuses on meeting basic needs (housing, food, rest) and upbringing of children (at pre-school age) whose parents have financial problems preventing them to fully play their role. This is undertaken by educated staff who are continually trained. The cultural centre of the institution can accommodate children from a few days up to a year when necessary. The services provided by the institution include drafting pedagogical programmes, the children's home, the function of day school, the lending library and cultural centre (Children's Asylum, 2005).

³³ SOS Children's Villages. Workshops of Expression and Creative Occupation. Available online: <http://www.sos-villages.gr/content/actions/kentra-hmeras/44-ergasthria-ekfrashs-kai-dhmiourgikhs-apasxolhshs>

³⁴ SOS Children's Villages. *Therapeutic Pedagogy Workshop*. <http://www.sos-villages.gr/content/actions/kentra-hmeras/44-ergasthria-ekfrashs-kai-dhmiourgikhs-apasxolhshs>

³⁵ SOS Children's Villages. *Youth House*. Available online: <http://www.sos-villages.gr/content/actions/steges-newn>

³⁶ SOS Children's Villages. *Child and Family Support Centres*. Available online: <http://www.sos-villages.gr/content/actions/kentro-prolhpshts-gia-to-paidi-kai-thn-oikogeneia-toy>

Standard National Nursing Home (P.E.N. in Greek)

Based in Attica, the charity *Standard National Nursing Home* is the home of preschool children 2½ to 5½ years old facing serious problems in their intra-family environment for a certain time. Additionally, the institution aims to strengthen and enrich the emotional and social skills of children. When there is no possibility of reintegrating children in their family environment, they are given up for adoption. Furthermore, the Foundation runs a kindergarten, which serves the needs of families in the local community and which provides for the children, depending on their age, to attend programmes that allow them to acquire proficient communication and social skills (P.E.N., 2012).

The Children's Home Foundation

This non-profit organization operates in Attica in order to care for pre-school children, whose parents are forced to be constantly absent, either because they work hard or because they are looking for work and are therefore unable to dedicate themselves to their children's upbringing. Annually it accommodates about 500 children of working parents in five standard shelters. The institution ensures hospitality, meeting the children's basic needs and education, developing relations of trust and sense of security to every family. Its operation is based on the continuous training of staff while skilled educators undertake educational support and creative activities and entertainment for children (Paidiki Stegi, 2014).

Association of unborn child protection 'The Embrace' (Agalia in Greek)

This Association is in fact a non-profit organization founded in Athens in order to protect children from an early fetal period of life and after childbirth. It focuses on providing psychological, consultative and educational support to young mothers who are in trouble for socioeconomic reasons, for reasons of neglect and abuse, whether married or unmarried. Mothers are trained in 'parenting groups' and 'groups of young mothers' in order to educate themselves on ways to address adverse conditions in the family and learn how to create a healthy relationship with their child. Moreover, they are provided – with their husbands (where this is possible) – counselling and emotional support on how to manage stressful situations, thoughts and feelings caused by the changes during pregnancy and participate in creative groups.

Through organized activities (exhibitions, slideshows, lectures, seminars, workshops, conferences) *The Embrace* attempts nationwide information and awareness-raising regarding the prevention of abortion, motherhood, pregnancy, population problem and human rights. For the same purpose, it issues magazines, brochures and books and works with television and radio broadcasters. It conducts research and makes proposals for dealing with problems during pregnancy and childbearing, and it runs a centre for maternal and child care as well as childcare facilities (Agalia, 2010).

George and Catherine Hatzikonsta Institution

The *George and Catherine Hatzikonsta Foundation* is located in Attica and accommodates 6- to 18-year-old children. It cares for enhancing their learning, for their emotional and social development and their participation in various social activities. In addition, the institution has a day care programme for children of working parents as well as a programme for the support of needy families, offering financial assistance to help them complete their children's schooling. In exceptional circumstances (illness, accident) and with the help of the family, children can be temporarily accommodated in the Institution for as long as needed.³⁷

³⁷ George & Catherine Hatzikonsta Foundation. Available online: <http://xatzikonsta.gr/>

Papafio Orphanage in Thessaloniki

This orphanage located in Thessaloniki aims to provide care, education and vocational training to unprotected children lacking parental and family care. The Institution hosts boys who may be orphans with one or no parent, child victims of war, blind, deaf or otherwise disabled and ill, or from families with a parent in prison, with many children or otherwise in need who are therefore financially unable to bring up their children. The Institution seeks to meet the basic and educational needs of children. All children at the Institution have the opportunity to enroll in various educational programmes offered by the Institution and to attend educational, musical, sporting and recreational activities (Papafio Orphanage in Thessaloniki, 2005).

Children's Hospitals (care of abandoned children)

During the economic crisis in Greece, there is a strong increase in accommodation and/or abandonment of children in institutions by their parents. The role of institutions and the continuity of the education of these children is enhanced by certain hospitals of Attica *Children's Hospital*, which accommodates children abandoned by persons of their family for various reasons. These are mainly infants and children born out of wedlock, children with mothers who have severe economic and social problems, are dependent on drugs, mentally ill, are minors or have a disability. Pediatric hospitals are committed by court order to accommodate abandoned infants and children from some days up to several months, until a more suitable place is found to accommodate them. Pending the establishment of shelters in hospitals³⁸, children are staying in hospital rooms and at the request of Social Services. Trained volunteers from 'The Smile of the Child'³⁹ (see Yannopoulos in this Special Issue) and the 'Voluntary Patient Ministration' of the Archdiocese of Athens (see Kontogiannis in this Special Issue) provide creative activities and care for a few hours a day⁴⁰. With the help of volunteers children participate in games, excursions and recreational activities (Smile of the Child, 2011). When, for whatever reason, an abandoned child has to remain in hospital for a long time, the child attends the hospital's kindergarten. Within the *Children's Hospitals* operate schools (kindergarten, primary and secondary school) in order to meet the educational needs of children hospitalized for a long period. Those schools are part of the public school system⁴¹.

Institutional care of the Church of Greece (Orthodox Christian Church)

The activities of the Church of Greece include both educational and residential care services provided for the protection of vulnerable groups. Specifically, the Church of Greece undertakes:

- ✦ The operation of a wide network of institutions that support large or single-parent families, destitute birth, adoptive or foster families, providing its members with vital living, educational and cultural goods;
- ✦ The support and offer of social and economic services to unmarried mothers;
- ✦ The accommodation of guests with disabilities in institutions and centres of training, rehabilitation and psychological support;

³⁸ Newspaper The Toc, Times of Change. Available online: <http://www.thetoc.gr/koinwnia/article/ksenwnas-gia-egkataleimmena-paidia-ton-martio>

³⁹ The Smile of The Child, (2011). Available online: <http://www.hamogelo.gr/77.1/Dhmioyrgikh-apasxolhsh-sta-Nosokomeia-Paidon>

⁴⁰ In.gr, (2014). Available online: <http://news.in.gr/greece/article/?aid=1231288556>

⁴¹ General Children's Hospital of Athens «Panagiotis & Aglaia Kyriakou» Available online: <http://0317.syzefxis.gov.gr/> ,
Agia Sofia Children's Hospital of Athens. Available online: <http://www.paidon-agiasofia.gr/>

- The establishment and operation of orphanages and child protection institutions, be they female or male;
- The establishment of welfare centres and homes for the elderly to provide care and hospitality for elderly people;
- The operation of a centre of attendance of returnees and immigrants, which tend to their (re-)integration into society and ensures social security;
- The operation of shelters for poor, homeless and abused women;
- The provision of services by specialized hospitals – institutions to chronic sufferers; and
- Supporting drug addicts and their families at prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration centres⁴².

Creative activity programmes to support children of hardworking parents

Many municipalities of Greece organize creative occupation projects, which they have enacted in the context of exercising their childcare policy for children of hard working or unemployed parents, who are constantly absent from home, doing their best to find work or to work even occasionally. The programmes are aimed at school and preschool children and offer them the opportunity to participate in educational and recreational activities, while the children, along with their stay in places where such programmes are implemented, have the opportunity to prepare themselves for the lessons of their school.⁴³ Moreover, leisure creative utilization programmes are organized for school children with disabilities. All children are trained to gain emotional, social, cognitive and psychomotor skills and specialist professionals offer advice to parents on the education of their child.

Foster families, adoptions and programmes in search of a child's natural family

Child Protection Centre of Attica 'MOTHER'

The *Infants Centre 'Mother'* develops protection activities for mothers and infants (supply of housing, feeding, health care, counseling, financial aid, etc.). Specifically, it a) provides free care for pregnant women who do not have a supporting environment, b) provides care for children who have to leave their family permanently or temporarily, c) provides care for babies abandoned for any reason, d) is organizing programmes for adoption and foster care of children, e) helps with the search of a child's natural family, f) accommodates and supports mothers trying to find their child and tries to reconnect them (Mhtera, 2009).

Hellenic Association of Foster Families

This is an association in Attica composed of a group of volunteers in order to strengthen the institution of foster families. More precisely, infants and children up to 16 who are deprived of parental care due to extraordinary/chronic needs (disease, loss, accident, imprisonment, unsuitability of parents), are given the opportunity to find a foster family who want to replace their natural family, with the association's help.

There are four types of foster care:

- a) Kinship foster care: In family crisis situations, persons related to the family undertake the child's care, if they wish.

⁴² The Church of Greece. Available online: <http://www.ecclesia.gr/>

⁴³ Municipality of Rethymnon, (2014)

- b) Medium-term foster care: It takes about two years, the time required for a family to overcome its crisis. This way of caring can be further developed in the future.
- c) Long-term foster care: Related to cases where the child doesn't return to the birth family.
- d) Hospitality foster care: These are cases where someone accommodates a child at his house for a certain period of time, as weekend, festivities, summer.

With the support of the *Greek Association of Foster Families*, abandoned children from institutions and children with delinquent behaviour have been placed in foster care. The Association is active in nursing homes, institutions for people with special needs, correctional education bodies and institutions for abandoned children, offering entertainment and education services, thus limiting feelings of loneliness and isolation that needy persons may experience. In addition, it collaborates with state agencies on child protection issues, participates in international educational programmes about foster care and has contributed to the wording of provisions and the adoption of the Law on Foster Care (Nasika, 2009).

Sanitarium of Penteli

The *Sanitarium of Penteli* is an autonomous social care unit for children without a family. It is one of the first institutions in Greece that has implemented programmes for adoption and foster care⁴⁴. It supports the institution of the family and accommodates children up to 6 years old, offering a safe environment, social care and protection. If children over 6 years have not been adopted or placed in foster families, the *Sanitarium* looks for another institution of child protection.

Adoption programme

The purpose of the programme is the adoption of protected children in the *Sanitarium of Penteli*, by families or individuals.

Fostering programme

Under this programme, the foster parents assume the care and parenting of the child and sometimes have to facilitate the communication of the child with his natural family while the *Sanitarium* has the custody. Foster parents may be families or individuals, regardless of whether they have children of their own or not. These families and individuals can come from the child's family environment or not.

Quality Assessment Programme of Adoption/Fostering

The purpose of the programme is for the Department of Adoptions and Administrative Leadership of the *Sanitarium* to communicate with adoptive or foster parents the scientific validity of the programme and its improvement through exchange of opinions and experiences. The adopted child's life history is studied as a result of a safe family environment and the sense of stability offered by parents. The final goal is the complete rehabilitation of the child.

Search for Roots Programme

Sanitarium of Penteli keeps a record of the adoptions made, with up-to-date files and information to support the right of the child to know its personal data. This programme is addressed at adopted children of the *Sanitarium* who are 18 years old and over, biological parents collaborating with the *Sanitarium* on the adoption of their child, relatives of the child and protected children.

⁴⁴ Similar institutions with hosting, adoption and foster care programs can be found in all the country. One of these is the Municipal Nursery School of Thessaloniki "St Stylianos" (http://www.yiothesia.gr/?page_id=23) (see relevant participation in the current Special Issue, Kallinikaki).

For the complete development and the well-being of the child, the Sanitarium offers many services and activities trying to provide the hosted children with a quality living.⁴⁵

Children's city 'St Andrew'

The *children's city 'St Andrew'* in Athens accommodates 3- to 12-year-old children who do not receive parental care. It has programmes for adoption and foster care. The final placement into a family is processed gradually, in the beginning with temporary accommodation during the weekends, holidays and for a period of time. The employees of the children's city collaborate with the biological parents to reconnect the family when the conditions will allow so.⁴⁶

Greek Association of Foster Families 'Amfidoron'

The association *Amfidoron* was founded in Thessaloniki during the present crisis and has a mediating role, supporting the adoption and informing citizens about their rights. More precisely:

- ✦ Promotes, spreads and informs citizens about adoption;
- ✦ Protects the rights of the foster families;
- ✦ Protects the right of all children for adoption;
- ✦ Provides advisory support to those interested;
- ✦ Offers legal support to foster families;
- ✦ Collaborates with the respective institutions around adoption issues (Amfidoron, 2012).

The abovementioned institutions in this category present an important social pedagogical offer, because they support the family value aiming to ensure for more children the development in a loving, secure and stable environment.

Support of socially vulnerable people and groups

In Greece, besides the institutions mentioned with important social pedagogical action, there are also institutions with equally important offers which focus their efforts on addressing the needs and supporting those termed socially vulnerable people and groups. Throughout Greece (not only in areas that are potential points of access to the country) there is a vast network of volunteers and services, which is coordinated and active, in order to support vulnerable people and groups effectively in order to meet their basic and psychosocial needs. These institutions are highly populated and, as mentioned, operate throughout the country. For this reason, in the below they will be mentioned according to the object of their project, which is summarized as follows:

- ✦ *All Holy Dioceses of the Church of Greece*⁴⁷ operate daily a) the free distribution of basic necessities (food, clothing) to all *needy, homeless and poor people* in their district, regardless of religion, nationality and any diversity that distinguish them, b) the provision of free medical aid to needy families and the organization of voluntary blood donations for those in need.
- ✦ *Local communities of the Municipalities in Greece*⁴⁸ have organized social solidarity networks with programmes like: a) *social groceries*, which include the free distribution of basic

⁴⁵ Annarotirio Pentelis. Available online: <http://www.filoiap.gr/adoption.htm> .

⁴⁶ Yiothesia.gr. Available online: http://www.yiothesia.gr/?page_id=23 .

⁴⁷ The Church of Greece. Available online: <http://www.ecclesia.gr/>

⁴⁸ Greece is administratively divided into Peripheries and Municipalities. These are self-governing legal persons, i.e. authorities elected by universal suffrage by registered citizens.

necessities and financial support for unemployed, uninsured, needy, homeless, poor people and their families, b) *social dispensaries and pharmacies*, which provide free medical care, therapeutic and nursing care, psychological support and infant necessities to those who cannot otherwise obtain them due to their economic hardship.

- ✦ Furthermore, a vast network of educational services and social *integration of people with special needs (SEN)* has been developed. Non-profit institutions and commissions operate throughout Greece and offer housing, food, financial aid, advisory and psychological support, learning opportunities and creative activities, sports and entertainment and training and development services for children and adults with physical disabilities and mental disorders. These institutions are staffed with skilled professional instructors and experts, who work together with the families of people with special needs in order to support them in a counseling, psychological and medical way.
- ✦ In addition, the continuous *increase in migratory flow*, has led to the creation of Hostels and Reception and Hospitality Centres on the islands and in central Greece⁴⁹ for migrants, refugees, unaccompanied minors and single-parent families. This is developing into a network of services designed to meet their living needs, realization of their identity, keeping record, medical examination and healthcare, security, housing, education, psychosocial support and providing them with information about their rights and obligations, with the ultimate goal of their integration and their social emancipation.

The institutions working with the project are focusing on protecting the rights of vulnerable people and groups, improving their conditions of life, their social integration and/or reintegration and providing them a decent living.

Discussion

Through our study we have tried to investigate and feature the practice of social pedagogy in Greece during the crisis period and have briefly presented– in the limited frame of this paper – indicative organizations developing social pedagogical activities in various directions. Throughout the aims, function, scope and orientations of these organizations we can identify some lines of action. In order to highlight the main priorities of social pedagogical activity in Greece, below we mention these lines of action:

- ✦ *Protection and safeguarding of children's and human rights in general*, such as:
 - protection of the child from every kind of exploitation, abuse, violence, etc.,
 - providing continuous psycho-pedagogical, social, economical support for children from socially deprived, vulnerable or even non-existent families,
 - free participation in higher education for everyone, regardless of their age,
 - ensuring basic needs such as food, shelter, medical treatment, security, right to asylum,
 - providing people with insufficient financial means with the opportunity to participate in cultural activities and general in the cultural asset,
- ✦ *support the family* on a psycho-pedagogical, social, economical, educational, consulting, legal and moral level and on the level of interpersonal relations, especially for families with respective problems,
- ✦ *support schools* and the community to confront social pedagogical problems like school dropouts. This can be confronted with the aid of internal motivation and high quality education, contributing to the full development of the child,

⁴⁹ Reception and Hospitality Centres in Greece, (2014).

- ✦ *residential care*, meeting the basic needs of abused, orphaned and abandoned children, taking care of their emotional support, strengthening their dignity and seeking their constant well-being,
- ✦ *implement the institution of a foster family and of adoption*,
- ✦ *management of psychosocial problems in families*, like those that occur from big (negative) changes like bereavement or a serious illness of their closest persons,
- ✦ *protect women and mothers – victims of abuse and abandonment*,
- ✦ *multiple support and reinforcement of dignity* of the elderly,
- ✦ *education and social integration of people with disabilities*,
- ✦ *prevention and treatment of antisocial behaviour with great attention to violence and bullying* in the school environment and the internet,
- ✦ *development of emotional and social skills such as respect of individuals' uniqueness and diversity*,
- ✦ *creation of positive experiences, leisure time education, development and reinforcement of children and young people's creativity*, irrespective of their economical, social situation or their cultural origin,
- ✦ *tackle juvenile delinquency and help afterwards with the social integration of the young*,
- ✦ *improvement of life conditions*, education and development of social abilities of prisoners,
- ✦ *admission of migrants (in special centres)*, of refugees and unaccompanied minors as well as meeting their basic subsistence, healthcare and security needs, *their integration, education and social empowerment*,
- ✦ *material, psycho-social and social care of people* living in poverty or below the poverty line.

The above mentioned lines show the main priorities of social pedagogical practice in Greece during the crisis period as well as the wide range and variety of roles for social pedagogy.

Conclusion

In summary, through the present paper, we sought to demonstrate the enormous efforts made by Greek society to overcome the problems that accompany the crisis. These efforts are supported by different institutions with many social pedagogical activities, revealing the multidimensional and dynamic character of social pedagogy and the range of possibilities for practitioners. The preventive and intervening social pedagogical actions taken by social pedagogically oriented institutions combine theory and practice and create a powerful value system that inspires to maintain the efforts and overcome the crisis difficulties as well as bring improvement and change.

It is important that in Greece, during this crisis period, there is a growing number of volunteers and institutions struggling, under very hard conditions, to offer the necessary multifaceted support to every person, to protect people's dignity and help them achieve progress and well-being. All these multidimensional social pedagogical reflexes, transformed into organized social pedagogical actions, show in our opinion the incessant social pedagogical ethos that has been a characteristic of Greek people from the ancient years until now and is becoming more obvious during periods of crisis like the present one.

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