

# ETUDES HELLENIQUES

# HELLENIC STUDIES

## LA CRISE GRECQUE THE GREEK CRISIS

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# The Economic Crisis and its Impact on International and Greek Education

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## RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cet article est d'étudier la crise financière actuelle et son impact sur l'éducation grecque. La Metapolitefsi (chute de la dictature) de 1974, l'apaisement du paysage politique, ainsi que l'intégration dans la Communauté économique européenne en 1979 et l'Union économique et monétaire en 2002, ont contribué à la modernisation, même dans le secteur de l'éducation. Ces réformes sont irréversibles même si leur application continue de rencontrer de la résistance. La situation s'est inversée depuis l'avènement de la crise financière qui, tout en étant préexistante, va éclater à l'exercice biennal 2009-2011 avec l'appel du pays au Fonds monétaire international et aux mécanismes de soutien de l'Union européenne. Après une brève référence à l'impact de la crise sur l'éducation internationale, l'article se concentre sur le cas grec, où, comme le montrent les recherches, la crise a entraîné des transformations spectaculaires dans tous les domaines de l'éducation (compressions budgétaires, coupures du salaire et des retraites des enseignants, fusions et fermetures d'écoles, réduction du recrutement des enseignants).

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to study the current financial crisis and its impact on Greek education. After the Metapolitefsi (fall of the dictatorship) of 1974, with the contribution of a calm political landscape, the country, pushed also by its integration into the European Economic Community in 1979 and the Economic and Monetary Union in 2002, will follow a more stable path to westernization / modernization, even in education sector, through successive reforms. These reforms are no longer overturned even if their application continues to meet resistance. The situation has been reversed since the advent of the financial crisis which, while preexisting, will break out the biennium 2009-2011 with the country's appeal to the International Monetary Fund and to the support mechanisms of the European Union. After a brief reference to the impact of the crisis on international education, the article will focus on the Greek area where, as shown by researches, the crisis has brought about dramatic transformations in all areas of education (education budget cuts, teachers' salary and pension cuts, school mergers and closures, reduction in teacher recruitment).

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## Introduction

The Greek educational system in its integrated form (primary, secondary and tertiary education level) was institutionalized by the Bavarians over the period 1834-1837 (Dimaras, 1974; Bouzakis, 2006; Tzikas, 2011; Tsoukalas, 1977; Fragoudaki, 1977). The evolution of Greek education in the following decades, especially after the bourgeois revolution of 1909 and the subsequent effort to institutionalize urban school in Greece, will pursue a Sisyphean path (Kazamias, 2011): reforms designed, sometimes enacted but ultimately not carried out (Dimaras: *op.cit.*). The school will be an area of intense political conflict throughout this period resulting in lack of continuity and stability. The education will be influenced by the continuous socio-economic and political - mostly - changes in a country that has experienced from the foundation of the greek state until today four bankruptcies -1827, 1843, 1893, 1932 (Veremis & Koliopoulos, 2006; Dertilis, 2009; Psalidopoulos, 1989).

According to Dertilis (2011), sharp increase in the public debt was observed during the period 1948-1998 and that rise was associated with the tax collection procedures as well as the military spending; but also before 1948 and over one hundred years the correlations had approximately the same characteristics. Thus, the fixed and long-term conditions compose a nexus of causal mechanisms. And while the story is generally not repeated, the constants remain and the mechanisms survive, bringing about the same consequences.

After the Metapolitefsi<sup>1</sup> of 1974, with the contribution of a calm political landscape (recognition of the Communist Party of Greece, new Constitution), the country, pushed also by its integration into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1979 and the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in 2002, will follow a more stable path to westernization / modernization, even in education sector, through successive reforms. These reforms are no longer overturned even if their application continues to meet resistance (Charalambous, 1990; 2007). The situation has been reversed since the advent of the financial crisis which, while preexisting, will break out the biennium 2009-2011 with the country's appeal to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and to the support mechanisms of the European Union (EU). Before, of course, Greece, other countries (Argentina<sup>2</sup>, Turkey, etc.) had already resorted to the IMF. For Dertilis (2011), Greece is still in the first phase of the evil scenario: in the deep recession as a result of memoranda, following the government's efforts to increase tax revenues as well as to cut the spending of a state that has been essentially bankrupted and excluded from markets.

## **The economic Crisis and its Impact on International Education**

The global financial crisis, erupted first in the United States in 2008 with the collapse of the Lehman Brothers bank, has as first victim the education. As Fotopoulos (2011) notes, “the educational mechanisms do not remain unscathed from the structural crisis affecting the whole of Europe. On the contrary, they are unable to constrain the creation of new categories excluded, violently forced to the margins of society. Already a phenomenon in Europe from 2008 called NEETs (Young People - Not in Education, Employment or Training) constitutes a modern form of social vulnerability which is expected to increase significantly in the coming years”<sup>3</sup>. This is a phenomenon that affects young people worldwide and takes political, social, economic, educational and cultural dimensions (Papadakis, 2009).

Regarding the extent and intensity of the NEET problem in European countries, the most recent comparatively weighted data highlight both the geographical and age imbalance of NEETs (see Figure I)<sup>4</sup>. Perhaps the most worrying aspect of the phenomenon, however, is related to employment prospects (and hence reintegration of NEETs). In fact, it seems that the combination of low education level and delayed labor market integration is being crystallized in fixed hysteresis and expands the difficulties in entering the employment. It appears that the percentage of NEETs is high for most countries and is increasing (Papadakis, 2011: 1).

In England, it is estimated that during the last years more than 200.000 young people are in the “social nowhere” since, having generally left school prematurely, they do not participate in any official form of education, training or employment. This number accounts for around 10% of the population of young people between 16 and 24 years old. Simultaneously, Northern Ireland faces the same problem as NEETs are estimated at about 35.000 (15%) of the population between 16 and 24 years old. One of the most distressing aspects of this situation is that a 2009 study shows correlation between NEETs and premature mortality as 15% of NEETs die within 10 years (Fotopoulos, 2011).

In regard to Greece, complete mapping of the phenomenon has not yet been made neither are there official crossed data for NEETs. From the available data of the EU, it is estimated that Greece shows a slight improvement in the age group 15 to 24 years old from 2004 to 2008. Nevertheless, reducing the percentage of NEETs from 16.8% in 2004 to 11.7% in 2008 (i.e. 5.1 percentage points), Greece is still well above the average of the other EU Member States (10,8%) (Papadakis, 2011).

FIGURE I

NEETS (age 15-24)					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>EU-27</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>10.8</b>
BE	15.4	13	11.2	11.2	10.1
BG	26.4	25.1	22.2	19.1	17.4
CZ	13.7	13.3	9.2	6.9	6.7
DK	5.1	4.3	3.6	4.3	4.2
DE	10.1	10.7	9.5	8.8	8.3
EE	12.1	10.2	8.8	8.9	9.1
IE	11.9	10.9	10.1	10.7	13.6
EL	<b>16.8</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>11.7</b>
ES	12.5	13	12	12.2	14.4
FR	10.5	10.8	10.9	10.3	10.3
IT	16.6	17	16.8	16.2	16.6
CY	9.4	19.5	10.7	9	9.7
LV	10.9	10	11.1	11.8	11.4
LT	10.9	8.6	8.2	7	8.9
LU	6.3	5.5	6.7	5.7	6.2
HU	12.7	12.9	12.4	11.3	11.5
MT	13.1	11.9	10.3	11.7	10.4
NL	5.3	5.3	4	3.5	3.4
AT	8.6	8.3	7.5	7	7.1
PL	15	13.9	12.6	10.6	9.0
PT	11.1	11.2	10.6	11.2	10.3
RO	19.8	16.8	14.8	13.3	11.6
SI	7.5	8.9	8.5	6.7	6.5
SK	17.9	15.8	14.4	12.5	11.1
FI	9.1	7.8	7.7	7	8.0
SE	7.6	10.5	9.3	7.5	7.8
UK	11.9	11.9	11.9	11.9	12.1

Source: EU Labour Force Survey, Annual Averages,  
Provisional Data & SGIB 2010

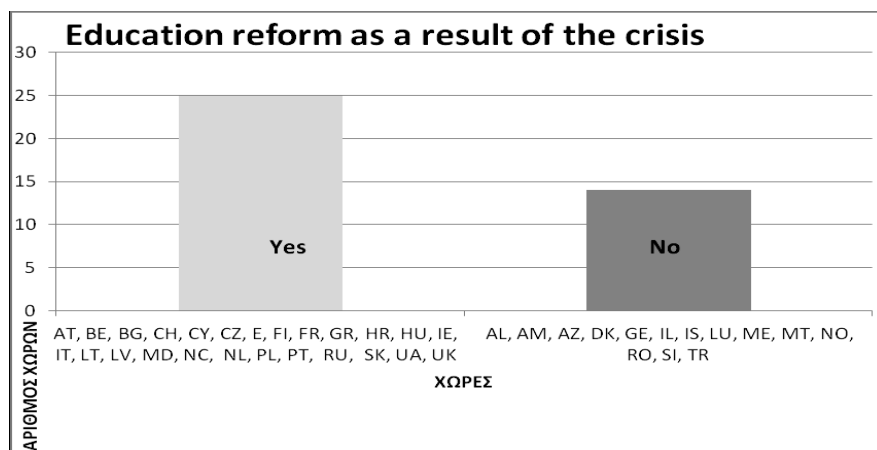
According to Duru-Bellat & Suchaut (2005), the results (e.g. repeating a grade or degree of attendance) of the countries participating in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are correlated with the economic and cultural characteristics of each country. Whenever the education indicators attempt to capture the early school leaving phenomenon, the unfulfilled promise of the modernist tradition providing education to all citizens returns to the fore (Fotopoulos, 2010). Indeed, Fotopoulos (2011) highlights the rise of ideology according to which the public sphere must be disconnected from the responsibility of providing basic social goods. And in

the light of this reasoning, policies which assign more and more weight to the role of citizens are being strengthened, promoting the payment and increase of school fees, the regional and weak role of the State, the practice of education vouchers, the “free” school choice, the teaching at home (Beck, 2012; Bouzakis, 2012; Roussakis, 2012). Of course, all these are viewed as an alternative and antidote to the crisis for the reason that they are based on the supposedly self-evident principles of “flexibility”, “freedom of choice”, “competitiveness” and “efficiency”.

Therefore, at a time when public funding of education is deteriorating, educational and trade unions (Trade Union Congress-TUC) as well as organisations (European Trade Union Institute-ETUI) indicate phenomena of worsening inequalities in education, expressing their deep concern about new forms of social vulnerability resulting from the intensity of poverty and unemployment.

As can be seen from an international survey conducted by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) for the impact of financial crisis on education<sup>5</sup>, the crisis has led to dramatic transformations in all areas of education, which in turn adversely affects the education employees. According to the data of the above research, education reforms were driven in 25 countries from 2008 to today as a result of the economic crisis, and there were only 14 countries that did not proceed with reforms (see Figure II).

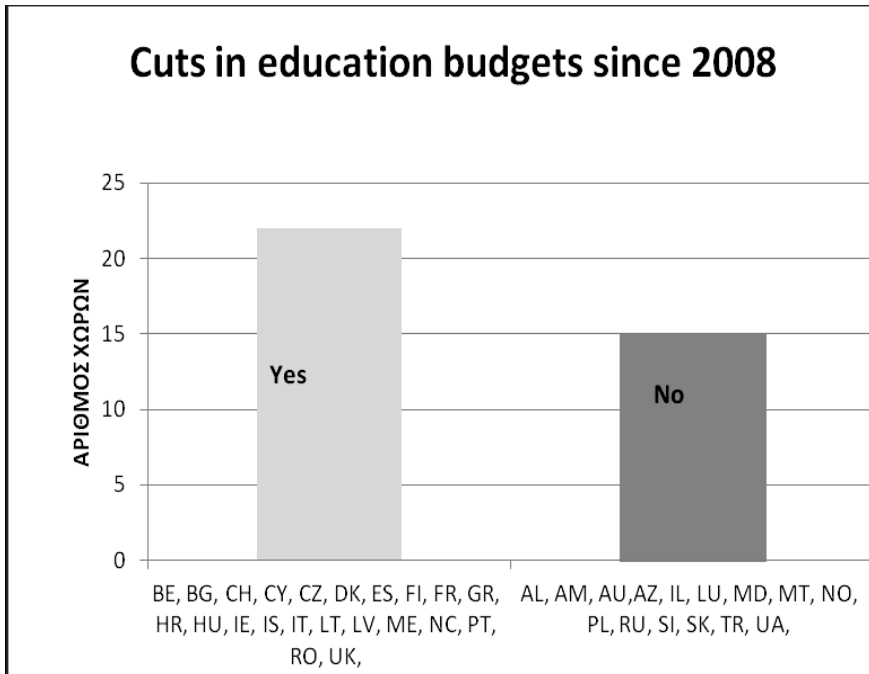
FIGURE II



ETUCE, 2012

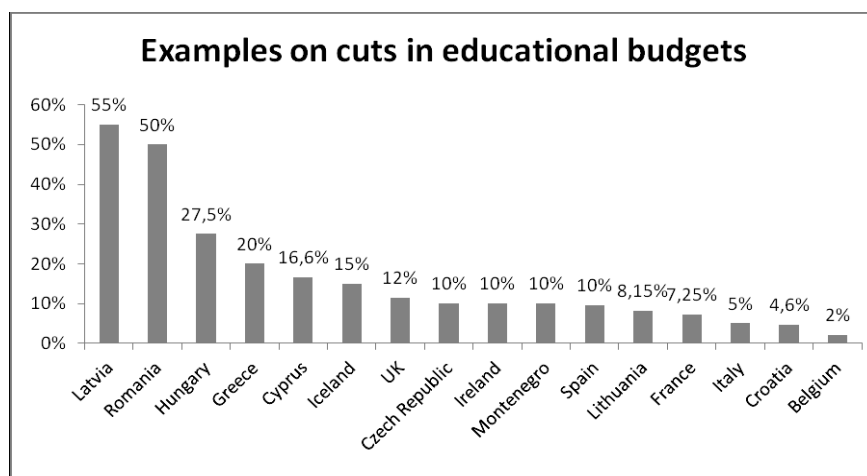
Furthermore, education budgets cuts were made in several countries; nonetheless, the largest percentage cut is in countries where the IMF has intervened, like Latvia (55%), Romania (50%), Hungary (27.5%) and Greece (20%), occupying the fourth position in the relevant list (see Figure III και IV).

FIGURE III



ETUCE, 2012

FIGURE IV



ETUCE, 2012

At the same time, an increase of privatization is observed in 14 countries, with the decline in public funding leading to the gigantism of the private sector<sup>6</sup>. However, the crisis seems to affect also the teaching profession. In 15 countries teachers are leaving their profession, in 5 countries teachers are leaving their country to work abroad and in 9 countries they are leaving the country to work in other professions (ETUCE, 2012)<sup>7</sup>.

In general, the key findings of the survey are summarized in the following: a) 22 countries have reduced their spending, b) teacher salaries have been “clipped” in 12 countries, they have been “frozen” in 19 countries, pensions have been cut down in 9 countries and various allowances have been reduced in 16 countries, c) teaching hours have been increased in 12 countries and d) there have been layoffs in 16 countries, schools mergers were recorded in 23 countries and school closures in 22 countries (op.cit.). Consequently, education has become one of the biggest victims of the financial crisis.

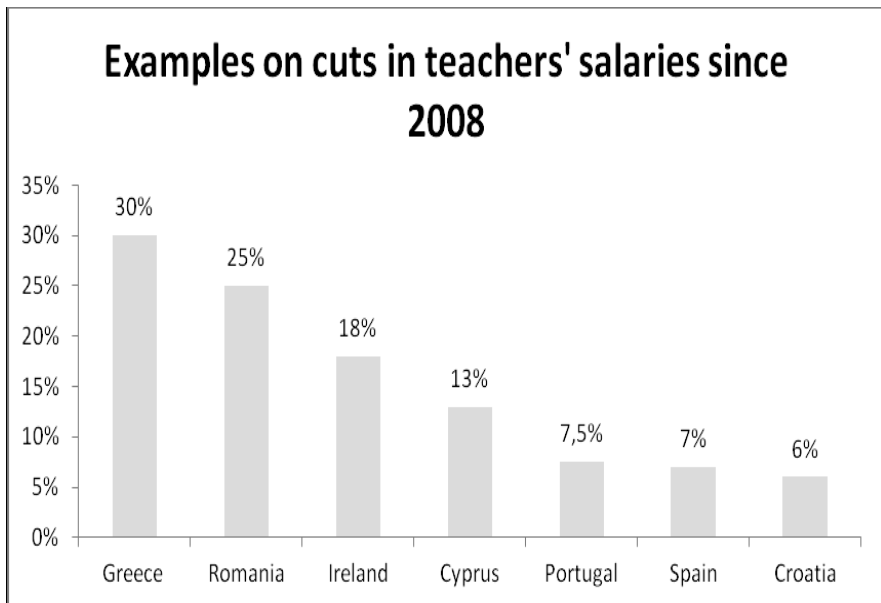
### **The Economic Crisis and its Impact on Greece**

Concerning the impact of the economic crisis on the education sector in Greece, the survey of the European Trade Union Committee for Education is revealing. Conforming to the data of this study (ETUCE, 2012), Greece is



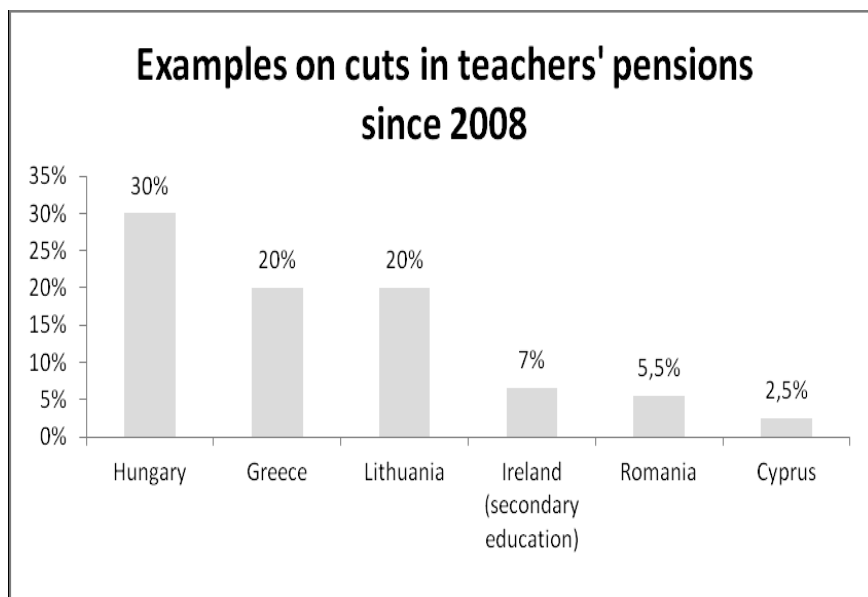
the fourth in the European Union with regard to rates cuts in spending on education. After the enactment of Law 3852/2010 “New Architecture of Local Government and Decentralized Administration – Kallikratis Programme” providing for the assumption of costs to each municipality from the School Committees<sup>8</sup>, the government spending transferred to municipalities for this purpose have been reduced about 50% over the last two years. Our country, however, is the first in the EU in teacher salary cuts (see Figure V). Moreover, Greece is the first European country to teachers’ salary cuts (30%) and second to teachers’ pension cuts (20%)<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, if Latvia has the lead on cutting funds for education in total, Greece is taking the primacy in wage cuts. Since 2008, teachers have suffered pay cuts of up to 30%, followed by Romania with 25%, Ireland with 18%, Cyprus with 13%, Portugal with 7.5%, Spain with 7% and Croatia with 6%. The pensions have also suffered corresponding reductions, with our country occupying the second position, while Hungary the first. More specifically, the biggest cuts were in Hungary (30%), followed by Greece and Lithuania with 20%<sup>10</sup> (see Figure V and VI).

FIGURE V



UTUCE, 2012

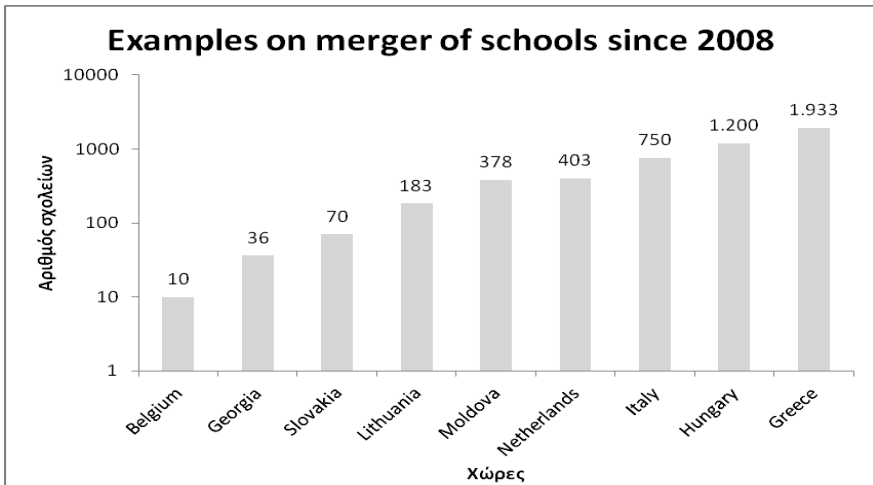
FIGURE VI



UTUCE, 2012

Greece, as shown in Figures, is in the first positions in the field of school mergers and closures. According to the figure below (see Figure VII), the number of schools that was merged in Greece since 2008 amounts to 1.933 schools, when in Hungary there have been 1.200 mergers, 750 in Italy, 403 in the Netherlands and 378 in Moldova since 2008. Actually, for the school year 2012-2013, new changes are expected in Greece as far as the primary and secondary schools are concerned. The criteria for merger are the building infrastructure/installations in addition to the potential development of classrooms, library, other ancillary facilities and equipment. Moreover, the mileage for the new school is estimated taking into consideration the transportation coverage area, the roads, the prevailing weather conditions during the route coverage for the arrival to the new school, which for the difficult and inaccessible areas can not exceed half an hour for primary schools and three quarters of an hour for secondary schools. Schools that operate in the same space as separate schools of the same level are merged into one school unit, in compliance with the above criteria (Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, 2012).

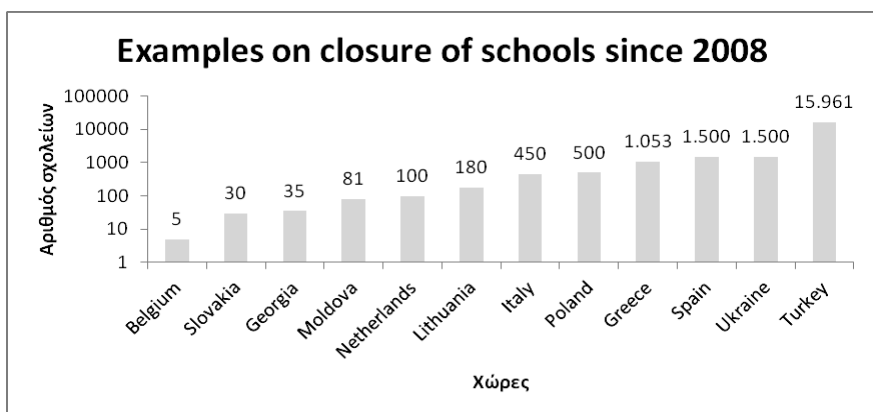
FIGURE VII



UTUCE, 2012

Greece, despite the particularities (long island area as well as schools in remote and mountainous regions), has a leading role also in abolishing schools (see Figure VIII). First here is by far Turkey with 15.961 school closures, followed by Ukraine and Spain with 1.500 and Greece with 1.053.

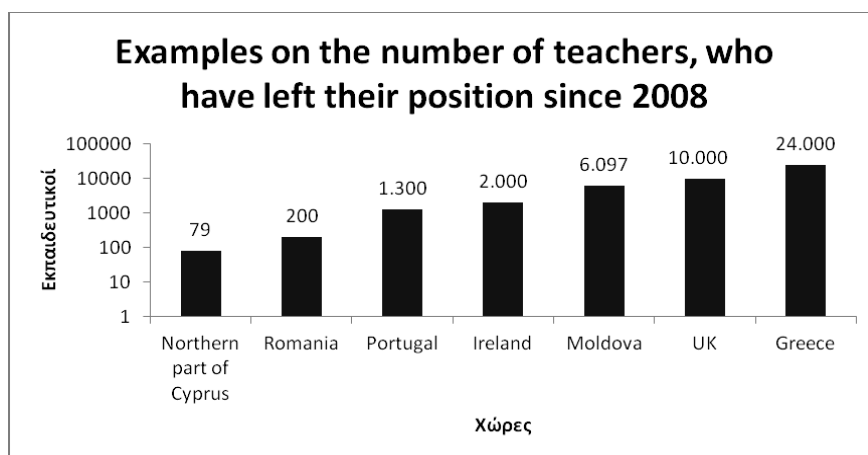
FIGURE VIII



UTUCE, 2012

In Greece, the layoffs are expressed by the non-renewal of contracts of thousands of substitute teachers while special interest causes the primary position of the country in the teachers' resignations / retirements (see Figure IX).

FIGURE IX



UTUCE, 2012

FIGURE X

<b>Recruitment of permanent teachers in primary and secondary education 2000 - 2011</b>		
Year	Number of recruitments in primary education	Number of recruitments in secondary education
2001	3.100	3.885
2002	3.080	4.341
2003	4.361	2.698
2004	5.294	2.939
2005	5.286	2.954
2006	5.062	2.933
2007	3.931	3.665
2008	4.321	3.515

2009	2.786	2.770
2010	1.425	1.400
2011	136	316

Source: C. Katsikas, August 2011

## Conclusion

The financial crisis, the deep recession, the rise of unemployment -especially among the young<sup>11</sup>, the growing imbalance between capital and labor forces constitute a particularly unfavorable context for the success of sustainable and socially equitable policies, resulting in further exacerbation of inequalities in education and society (Fotopoulos, 2011).

Although in our country ensuring equal opportunities for access to education is presumed, however it is observed a “two-speed” process, for those who successfully follow the path of formal education and for those who are driven or rather forced to leave school and face the danger of “isolation” and their inclusion in the category of NEETs, let alone in conditions of economic crisis.

It is clear that poverty, unemployment<sup>12</sup>, the increasing income deprivation will rapidly exacerbate the social inequalities in education, since having access to educational goods will become more and more difficult for the “have-nots”. The reason is that the until today already unaffordable “free education”<sup>13</sup> will become even more expensive and inaccessible; consequently, in the near future, we will witness widespread phenomena associated with increased dropout, abandonment of the studies or juvenile delinquency (Fotopoulos, 2011). Let us not forget that so far Greece ranks first in school closings and cuts in teacher salaries, second in pension cuts (with further reductions our country will be the first) and fourth in the list of compressing the state education funding.

Therefore, nowadays we need the chimeras “to be re-encouraged and, drawing from the chaos that threatens us, to enshrine something new -an *‘imaginary institution of society’*, a mutated chimera- ‘a possible utopia” (Dertilis, 2011).

## NOTES

1. A period in Greek history after the fall of the Greek military junta of 1967-1974 that includes the transitional period from the fall of the dictatorship to the Greek legislative elections of 1974 and the democratic period immediately after these elections.
2. For the Argentina's recourse to IMF and the impact of this fact, see the speech of A. Krueger (2002). «Crisis prevention and resolution: lessons from Argentina», International Monetary Fund, 17 July 2002, from <http://cdi.mecon.gov.ar/biblio/docelec/nber/books/Arg/krueger.pdf>.
3. This phenomenon is related to the expansion of a category of young people dropped out from the formal education system (drop outs) and then remaining outside the framework of training and employment, thus pushed to social exclusion. The term NEETs is used for people who fall in the age bracket of 15 to 24 years old and who are not participating in education, training or employment (according to a more expansive approach, this category extends between 15 and 29 while for a restrictive approach it is limited between 16 and 19 years old). See more Papadakis, N. (2011). *Νέες μορφές κοινωνικής ευπάθειας και προκλήσεις για την κοινωνική πολιτική: οι NEETS (Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training)* [New forms of social vulnerability and challenges for social policy: the NEETS (Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training)], "Policy Brief", 12, 1-16 (in Greek).
4. For the consequences of the economic crisis on education in countries outside the EU, see also the article of Torche (2010) referring to four Latin American countries (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico).
5. 55 Teachers Unions (covering the fields of early childhood education / primary / secondary / vocational education - training / tertiary education), representing 26 countries of the EU and 14 countries outside the EU, answered the survey conducted by the European Trade Union Committee.
6. For state education funding, see also the article of Reimers (1991) about the changes that have occurred in patterns of government funding of education in Latin America during the phase of structural adjustment programs that characterized most of the 1980s. This study discusses the context in which educational policy decisions are made, explaining why "adjustment to adjustment" may lead to neglect of efficiency and equity in the allocation of education budgets. For the financing of education in societies undergoing transition from socialism to market economies (e.g. Russia and China), see article of Bray & Borevskaya (2001) as well as the article of Chan & Mok (2001) in which the educational reforms and coping strategies that have been adopted by the socialist mainland, on the one hand, and the capitalist Hong Kong, on the other hand, in order to face the new challenge of marketisation, are compared and contrasted. These countries are trying to improve the quality of their educational services so that they can be more competitive in order to cater for the demands in the international markets. For the Chinese mainland, it seems that the central government

is adopting a policy of decentralisation in getting local governments to use multiple channels of resources and other methods to provide for their own educational services. Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, however, has adopted quite a different approach by employing the principle of managerialism in order to enhance its competitiveness in providing quality education to meet the increasing market demands.

7. The opinions of the unions for the problems of recruitment and retention of teachers in the profession since 2008 are revealing. In Belgium, in the first five years of teaching, 40% of teachers have left the profession. In France, it is difficult to establish recruitment since the initial training was abolished as well as there is increasing work pressure on school staff. In addition, to the two exits there is one recruitment (job losses). In Greece, the annual number of recruitment has fallen by 88% since 2008. In Hungary, there is difficulty in attracting teachers as a result of an unacceptable level of remuneration, of increasing violence in schools and deteriorating working conditions. In Spain, non-permanent teachers in some areas (Murcia, Valencia) resigned during the summer months, which has never been done before, and stayed unemployed. In the field of higher education, the most important result is the non-renewal of fixed term contracts affecting a significant number of employees. Particularly those associated with the research area, thus they are forced to seek work abroad. In the United Kingdom, the government withdrew a substantial amount of financial support for the Initial Training of Teachers (ETUCE, 2012).
8. See provisions of paragraph 2, Article 103 of the Law 3852/2010 “New Architecture of Local Government and Decentralized Administration – Kallikratis Programme” (OGG 87<sup>A</sup> / 2010) as well as the circular “Defining School Committees function and regulation of economic issues concerning Kallikratis Municipalities” (OGG 318/2011).
9. It is estimated that, with the new measures being announced these days in order to save 11.5 billion euros (the agreement was signed with the Troika by the Papademos government last June), there will be further cuts in wages and pensions (from 5 to 35%), especially for employees in Public Enterprises and Entities (DEKO) and in special payrolls (military, police, justice officials, NHS doctors, academics).
10. In 2010 the following cuts were made in the salaries of Greek teachers: 1) reduction in all benefits except the stimulus money at the rate of 12%, 2) reduction in summer, Christmas and Easter holiday allowances, 3) further reduction in all benefits except the stimulus money at 8%. And in 2011 the following cuts were made: 1) reduction 2% of total earnings (solidarity levy to combat unemployment), 2) reduction 1% of total earnings for TPDY, 3) reduction of performance incentive in half, 4) reduction of the annual tax-free from 12.000 to 5.000€, 5) wage freeze, 6) extraordinary contribution on the net income in 2010 to 1% and 2%, 7) from 01/11/2011 the new wage eliminating bonuses is applied, salary is associated with grade and the unimpeded salary grade promotion is repealed.

11. The highest unemployment rates in the European Union with regard to young persons aged 15-24 are recorded in Greece (53.8%) and Spain (52.9%), according to the latest figures from the European statistical agency Eurostat ([http://ec.europa.eu/ellada/press-center/news/archives/news\\_20120910\\_youth\\_report\\_el.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/ellada/press-center/news/archives/news_20120910_youth_report_el.htm)). So, with a one in two young people unemployed in Greece, many of them, especially qualified, are looking for work abroad.
12. According to the annual report of the Labour Institute GSEE (IN.E.) for 2012, the predictions of IN.E. for unemployment are confirmed to be 17.7% in 2011 and 24% in 2012. In fact, money is withdrawn from the real economy without to be replaced by a corresponding flowing or more financial resources for the development and restructuring of the Greek economy. So in 2010 the unemployed amounted to 628,000 persons. In 2011 the number of unemployed rose to 877,000 people and in 2012 the European Commission's assessment is for 952,000 unemployed people, while the one of IN.E. / GSEE – ADEDY's assessment is for 1,200,000 people (24%). The number of employees in 2008 and 2009 was 4.8 million people. These adverse developments in the Greek economy shape one preoccupying ratio 1:1 ie one employee to an unemployed and retired, thus creating a concern for the restoration of economic and fiscal stability.
13. If one considers that until today a large proportion of expenditure on education (over 4.5 billion) is annually paid by private household budgets for purchase of goods and services, under current conditions, even this social paradox will not help to the "partial coverage" of the anyway existent deficit of public education (Fotopoulos, 2011).

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