

## A Presentation of the Paideia Omogenon Program

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### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article fournit le cadre légal, historique et pédagogique du Programme Paideia Omogenon du Gouvernement Grec. L'auteur souligne en détail la philosophie et l'application du programme dans la diaspora, depuis la création du matériel didactique et son application expérimentale sur le terrain jusqu'au perfectionnement des enseignants. Elle met l'accent sur les différentes étapes d'application du programme et l'importance de la création de matériel s'appuyant sur les réalités de la diaspora grecque. Elle conclut en présentant des résultats recueillis après sept ans de l'existence du programme.

### ABSTRACT

This article provides the legal, historical and pedagogical background to the Paideia Omogenon Program of the Greek Government. The author outlines in detail the philosophy and application of the program in the diaspora, from material design and field testing to teacher training, building on the realities of the Greek diaspora. She concludes with results gathered after seven years of the program's existence.

### Introduction

*Paideia Omogenon* is one of the many educational programs funded by the European Union and the Greek government. This program targets groups of students with cultural and linguistic particularities, such as those of Muslim and Gypsy origin, immigrants residing in Greece, as well as repatriated Greeks; i.e., those who have returned to their homeland or those who continue to live abroad.

The main subjects of the program *Paideia Omogenon* are people of Greek descent in different countries outside Greece. The program's main goal is to maintain, develop and promote the Greek language and culture within these groups through the improvement of the primary and secondary education already provided.

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The implementation of the specific program began in June 1997, and continued until December 2004. It was funded by the Greek Ministry of Education (25 %) and the European Union (75 %).

The Ministry of Education, with its various departments, supervises the program, while its implementation has been assigned to the University of Crete and more specifically to the Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies (E.DIA.M.ME.) at the Primary Education Department of the University under the direction of Professor Michali Damanaki.

### **1. Implementation network and components of the project**

The organization of the implementation of this project is based on two components: one based in Greece and the other, abroad. This type of organization reflects the underlying philosophy of a mutual and equal interaction between the centre (Greece) and the diaspora.

The centre (Greece) consists of the Ministry of Education that supervises the project, the University of Crete that has undertaken the scientific responsibility and the implementation of the project, and the central committee that follows the general course of the project and more specifically coordinates the tasks of each individual work group that has come together according to the operational specifications of the project (see Table 1).

The diaspora consists, on one hand, of the representatives of the Greek Ministry of Education, the Coordinators of Education, who coordinate the project's application abroad by organizing educational seminars for teachers that teach the Greek language, distributing the educational material developed to the Greek schools abroad, and collecting evaluations of the material by the teachers who actually use them. On the other hand, it consists of the regional committees, which are based in every country, whose members are specialists, involved with universities and other institutions that deal with the Greek language. These specialists contribute to the project by following the general course of the project, while at the same time guiding the work groups abroad.

The contact and interaction between the groups that act in the centre (Greece) and the groups in the diaspora is constant and systematic. Once a year, the central committee meets with the regional committees and the

members of the work groups, within the framework of the Scientific Work Meeting at the University of Crete. At this meeting, work completed in the previous year and the course of the project is discussed. Goals for the following year are then set. Also, the educational material designed and developed by the work groups at the centre are evaluated and applied by teachers abroad while specialized scientists from the centre evaluate the material developed by the work groups in the diaspora. Finally, within the framework of various conventions and one-day/two-day conferences, the scientific committees of the project are given the opportunity to meet, exchange views, acquire new specialized knowledge and determine the theoretical axis upon which the various components of the project are implemented.

The different components of the *Paideia Omogenon* project refer to the development of educational materials in print and electronic format, the training of Greek teachers who are sent to work in the Greek schools abroad (assigned/seconded teachers), the training of Greek teachers who have graduated from universities abroad and teach Greek in Greek schools in their area (teachers of the same descent), the implementation of educational programs for Greek students living abroad, as well as the development of learning networks, databases and possibilities for on-line learning through the Internet and satellite television.

The project is comprised of three main activity areas, each is supported by a set of horizontal sub-activities designed to support the project as a whole.

**Table 1: Summarized table of the activity areas of the project**

<b>serial no</b>	<b>Title of Activity Area</b>	<b>Subject of Activity Area</b>
I	ATHINA	Programs of Study and Educational Materials
II	PROMITHEAS	Training of Teachers and Educational Programs for Students
III	HERMES	Databases, Networks and e-learning Courses
IV	HORIZONTAL SUB-ACTIVITIES	

Activity area I, *Athina*, is concerned with the creation of the programs of study and the development of educational materials in print and electronic format for the teaching of Greek as a second and foreign language and for the teaching of the Greek history and culture in primary and secondary schools.

Activity area II, *Promitheas*, refers to the training of Greek teachers seconded from the homeland to work abroad, the guidance and further training of teachers working and residing abroad, as well as the organization and implementation of educational training programs for students of Greek descent who live abroad.

Activity area III, *Hermes*, has as a main objective the development of different forms of e-learning for teachers living abroad, as well as the development of databases and communication networks through the World Wide Web.

Finally, the horizontal sub-activities support the development and implementation of the project as a whole and refer to scientific meetings, conferences, one-day conferences, as well as the evaluation of the project.

## **2. Institutional framework of the Paideia Omogenon Program**

### *Law 2413/1996 and its theoretical basis*

The institutional framework according to which *Paideia Omogenon* was designed and implemented is Law 2413 “Greek education abroad, intercultural education and other provisions” (FEK 124/A/17-6-1996).

Law 2413 has two components. The first part is concerned solely with “Greek education abroad”, while the second refers to the “intercultural education of repatriated and immigrant students living in Greece”.

The first part is directly related to the program *Paideia Omogenon* (see chapter 3.3.) and, as it happens, not only from a legal perspective but also from the Explanatory Report, which is always more elaborate. Indeed, lawmakers aim at implementing Greek education abroad on new grounds. They accomplish this by acknowledging the multicultural reality of modern societies and aspiring to the “recognition of the diversity of immigrants, the acceptance of cultural pluralism, and the implementation of intercultural

education” (see *Explanatory Report*, page 1).

The acceptance of the multiculturalism of modern societies, on the one hand, and the need for the implementation of the principles of intercultural education, on the other, is a new pioneer way of thinking, and is a milestone for the Greek education reality, both within Greece and abroad.

The acceptance of multiculturalism within Greece is very important for the education of repatriated students as well as immigrants living in the country, because it shows that they are being acknowledged. This can lead to the implementation of intercultural principles not only in the education of repatriated and immigrant students in Greece, but also of the Greek students themselves. One thing, of course, which has to be clarified and clearly understood is how the policy advisors or lawmakers understand intercultural education within Greece, a topic beyond the scope of this article.

The acceptance of the need, on the other hand, to implement the principles of interculturalism in Greek language education of the Greeks living in the diaspora is as important given that the educational policies of the Greek government in the diaspora, until the year 1996, had a “welfare character” (M. Damanakis, 2004 a, 28-29). As the advocates of Law 2413 admit, this result was collective, damaging, bureaucratic and “standardized Greek education” abroad. Moreover the law failed to recognize or make use of the diversity of the pupils. By doing this, the richness of the customs and the knowledge of the Greek diaspora, was lost due to an educational orientation focused on the educational needs of Greek students living in Greece (*Explanatory Report*, p. 1-2).

Such a nationally focused educational system worked against a lot of Greek people’s involvement in Greek language learning, including a lot of immigrants who could have had the opportunity to learn the language and culture. In addition, it did not accelerate the original goal, which should have been the integration of the children of the diaspora in their host societies. This means that Greeks in the diaspora should primarily help themselves in developing an identity that will suit their lifestyle in their host countries, which are usually multicultural and multilingual.

As advocates of the law stress themselves, a living example of the failure of such a collective and nationally focused educational system for the Greek

people in the diaspora is the Greek Public Schools which consist only of Greek students, e.g., in Germany. Given the way that these schools have been run, they create a ghetto in the societies in which they live, which results in the “seclusion of the younger generation and its inability to participate equally in the social, financial, political and cultural life of those countries” (*Explanatory Report*, p. 2).

Those in favour of the law, who criticize the institutional laws that had been in practice until 1996, highlight the fact that the specific nationally focused educational system in Greece has not produced positive results. They talk about a “flexible, effective system of Greek education” abroad which will have as a “nucleus the Greeks all over the world” (*Explanatory Report*, p. 2). In this sense, they stress the fact that the intervention will be *Greek-oriented* rather than *Greece-oriented*, as it was until 1996. At the heart of such an intervention, one can find culture that is developing within Greece, as well as the various Greek cultural manifestations that the Greeks in the diaspora have developed in the various host countries where they live. In fact, the law’s advocates state that between Greece and the Greeks in the diaspora, close cultural relations will exist. Indeed, apart from the export of Greek cultural elements abroad there will also be “an assimilation from the Greeks living in Greece of the cultural elements that originate from the Greek people in the diaspora” (*Explanatory Report*, p.2).

The procedure of this two-way cultural relationship between the metropolitan centre and the diaspora, according to the academic director of the project, M. Damanakis, is called “intragreek interculturalism”. By this, Damanakis means the “dynamic procedure of the encounter, interaction and *interenrichness* of the various manifestations of the Greekness or otherwise known as the multiple Greek identities” (M. Damanakis, 2004b, 45).

In addition, those in favour of the law state that the new educational intervention will be widely intercultural, because the various cultural manifestations of Greek descent will be in a two-way relationship with “cultural elements that stem from other cultures” (*Explanatory Report*, p. 2). More specifically, the “contribution of the Greek culture in the enrichment of a European and international culture” is stressed as well as “the equal treatment of other cultures with which our culture meets” (*Explanatory Report*, p. 3).

However, in the *Explanatory Report*, parallel to the intercultural

educational approach, there is discussion about a national educational approach that causes notional confusions (*see also* M. Damanakis, 2004a, 29). Confusion stems from the fact that both these approaches cannot coexist. They are two educational policies that contradict each other because within the frameworks of intercultural education, all cultures are dealt with on an equal basis, and students come in contact with more than one culture; whereas, in the framework of a national educational policy, each individual national culture is in the centre of any development happening in their schools.

In general, despite the fact that in the general spirit of the specific law, values and principles converge towards an intercultural approach, at some points there are references to a national educational policy (*Explanatory Report*, p.2).

These elements must be seen as consequences of a long-term application of a national educational policy in the diaspora which focused solely on the educational system in Greece. On the other hand, what we need to retain given its value, is the new perspective opening up for educational issues of an intercultural approach. Within this approach, other cultures, as well as the multiple cultural manifestations of the Greek people in the diaspora, are considered to be equal to Greek culture of the centre. Meanwhile, interaction between these elements is highly recommended in order to create a cultural *interenrichment*.

Of course, the translation of such an approach into an educational act presupposes important changes in the education of both the Greek people living in Greece as well as those in the diaspora. For the changes in the educational system of those in the diaspora, efforts are being made through *Paideia Omogenon* (*see chapter 3.3*) but care must be taken so that a change towards an intercultural direction of the educational acts in Greece is also achieved.

### **3. The Objectives of *Paideia Omogenon***

The goals for the Greek language education abroad stem from Law 2413 and are specified in greater detail by the program *Paedeia Omogenon* in two areas: the pedagogical and the socio-political.

As far as the pedagogical goals are concerned, *“Greek language education has the obligation to help primarily in the development of the individual in every way, in order for him/her to develop all of his/her abilities and to acquire an identity that will be in accordance with his/her bicultural and bilingual conditions of his/her socialization.*

*As far as the socio-political goals are concerned “Greek language education has the obligation to contribute to the clarification and establishment of a relationship between the different communities in the Diaspora, as well as with their country of origin, Greece, and to a certain extent with the host country they are living in, within the framework of a universal existence.” (M. Damanakis 2004 b, 55).*

According to the program of study established within the framework of *Paedeia Omogenon*, the goal of the two cognitive subjects, *Language and Elements of History and Culture*, for which educational material is being developed, reads as follows:

*“As far as the Language is concerned, the Greek language is offered to those of the same Greek descent (the same nationality) at a symbolic level as a cultural good, as a transmitter of cultural elements and meanings and as an enriching and synthesizing element of their national and cultural identity. At a cognitive level, it is offered as a linguistic system (structure, vocabulary, usage) and therefore as a means of communication and learning.*

*As far as the Elements of History and Culture are concerned, there is a selective offer of historical and cultural elements from Greece and the Diaspora, which aims at helping students develop a personal and social identity, which will coexist with the bicultural/multicultural conditions of their socialization and way of living. Also, it helps them realize their family’s biography, as well as the history of their community and their place in the host country. Finally, it helps them get to know and realize the relationship between their community with the other Greek communities and with Greece and the history of Greek people inside and outside of Greece and their place and role in a universal existence” (M. Damanakis 2004b, 55).*

This double goal setting characterizes the activities of the program, which will be presented below.



#### **4. Application of law 2413/1996 through *Paideia Omogenon***

The *Paideia Omogenon* program is the official, approved educational intervention of the Greek government in the Greek diaspora. It is therefore natural that the implementation of the program interprets and applies the institutional framework for Greek language education in the diaspora.

##### **4.1 Activity area I, Athina**

If one studies Law 2413 and its *Explanatory Report*, it is clear that the advocates of the law recognize the inappropriateness of the educational material available to Greek students in the diaspora until 1996. The material “may be appropriate for the Greek students studying in Greece, but [is] inappropriate for the different conditions under which the Greek children in the Diaspora grow up” (*Explanatory Report*, p.4). In this way, “they propose the need to create new ways of teaching the Greek language, history and culture, ways which take into consideration the special conditions, sensitivities and cultures which are connected with the Greek culture in the Diaspora, as well as with the interest of many philhellenes” (*Explanatory Report*, p. 4-5).

The essential point is that the books designed and developed for the diaspora will represent the authentic conditions in which the children using the books are socialized.

The activity area of *Paideia Omogenon*, which is directly connected to the development of curriculum and the development of teaching materials for the teaching of Greek as a second or foreign language and for the teaching of Elements of History and Culture in primary and secondary education, is *activity area I, Athina* (see *Table 1*).

The teaching material developed within the framework of this activity area have an intercultural and cross-subject orientation and aim at meeting up to the particular bicultural and bilingual conditions of socialization of the children they refer to. For this reason, the subjects of the specific educational materials are taken from three sociocultural areas: their country of origin, their host country and the Greek community. The selection and use of subjects from these three areas, ensures not only an intercultural approach but also a cross-subject reference. In this way, teachers are given the ideas and tools to deal with eating habits in ancient Greece, in modern Greece, in Melbourne, in

the Greek community of Melbourne and in other ethnic communities in Melbourne, such as the Chinese (M. Damanakis 2004b, 56-59).

In addition, the systematic effort made concerning specific instructional materials should be underscored. This effort focuses on the cultivation of a common cultural base for Greeks everywhere, with the use of common subjects for all the students, in the *Core or Identity Materials*. On the opposite side, an effort is being made to learn and cultivate diversity, meaning the particular socio-cultural elements of history and literature of every Greek community in every host country. This is achieved through the *Diversity Materials* which accompany the *Core Materials*, enriching them with those particular elements, which can also be used independently (M. Damanakis 2004b, 73-74).

Another measure recommended by Law 2413/1996 is the design of books by “mixed committees and in cooperation with specialized scientists from both Greece and abroad” (Law 2413, clause 4, par. 1). This refers to a fundamental and essential parameter for the spirit of the intercultural theory that *Paideia Omogenon* implements to a great extent. It is achieved by creating mixed design groups with specialists from both Greece and other countries depending on the series of the teaching materials. As a result, in every series of teaching materials, especially for the design of the *Core Materials*, the knowledge and experiences of the Greeks living in Greece are mostly used, as they are the ones that are more familiar with the structure of the Greek language, the Greek history and the sociocultural elements of Greece. For the design of the *Diversity Materials*, the knowledge and experience of those specialists who live abroad is mostly used, because they are the people that know best the history of the Greek community, the particular sociocultural conditions of the countries they reside in and the particular linguistic and sociocultural needs of the students for whom the materials are being designed.

In fact, *Paideia Omogenon*, in as much as bureaucracy has permitted, advanced mostly by piloting the developed materials to the groups of students for whom they were designed. By doing so, each design team had feedback from teachers who participated in field testing the material. This is a very important link in the design of any instructional material. Before it leaves the hands of the designer it has been tested and evaluated, in an initial phase, by the end-users, both students and teachers.

At this point, it should be mentioned that cooperation with specialists from abroad was not confined to the design of the books, but was constant and permanent throughout the project and expanded to the field of research.

The creation of the target groups for the design of the educational material and their boundary setting is mainly a result of continuous investigations of the linguistic and cultural basis, as well as the educational needs, of the students. The target-groups for which the curriculum was created and for which the educational material is being designed and developed are the following:

1. Students of the same origin in pre-school and elementary education with limited communication ability in Greek.
2. Students of the same origin in secondary education with limited communication ability in Greek.
3. Students of the same origin in primary and secondary education with no linguistic knowledge of the Greek language and with few or “no” Greek cultural background.
4. Students of different origin/language, in primary and secondary education that are learning the Greek language.

Based on these target-groups and by dealing methodologically with groups 3 and 4 as one target-group, three Curriculums for the Language were organized with respective series of instructional materials for:

1. the teaching of Greek as a Second Language (GSL) in primary and secondary education (series: *Pragmata kai Grammata* and the Diversity Materials).
2. the teaching of GSL in Intensive Courses in secondary education (series: *Ellinika me tin pareia mou*).
3. the teaching of Greek as a Foreign language in primary education (series: Margarita).

As far as the Elements of History and Culture are concerned for primary and secondary education, they are designed for all target-groups, which consist of the Core Materials with the title “Emeis kai oi Alloi” and the

Diversity Materials with the title “Apo ti zoi ton Ellinon tis Diasporas” (see M. Damanakis 2004 b: 60-65 and 71-74).

#### 4.2 Activity area II, *Promitheas*

The philosophy of *activity area II, Promitheas*, is based on clause 4, par. 1d, of Law 2413, where “the training and further education of Greek teachers that will be detached and those of the same or different origin that live abroad permanently” is discussed, and on the other side on clause 9, where the opportunity is given for the organization of “exchange programs involving Greek students and teachers from Greece and students and teachers of Greek or foreign origin from other countries”.

More specifically, the groups that are trained are:

- a) detached/seconded teachers (also see clause 20), who are the main communicators of the Greek language and culture, who follow intensive programs to get informed on conditions in the host countries where they will be working and the philosophy of the program, before their departure from Greece.
- b) teachers of Greek origin (also see clause 21), who are the main communicators of the diasporic Greek reality, where their educational background as well as their knowledge of the Greek language knowledge vary. Through the program, these teachers may participate in temporary training seminars of 30-40 people that take place in Greece for three weeks approximately, in the training that takes place abroad for one or two days, or in long-term training sessions for 10-15 people, that take place only in Greece for four to five months.

The seminars that the teachers of Greek descent follow aim at bringing them in contact with Greece, the Greek language, and Modern Greek culture but also, more generally speaking, with Greek culture. For this reason, they participate in an intensive program that consists of courses on the structure and teaching of the language, on Greek history and the philosophy of the linguistic and cultural material designed by the program. In addition to this, they also visit historical monuments in Greece.

Within the framework of *activity area II, Promitheas*, students of Greek origin participate in educational hospitality programs in Greece, which last

a total of three weeks. These programs seek to provide the opportunity to Greek students in the diaspora to come in contact with authentic speakers of the language, to get synchronized with their Greek classmates, to interact culturally amongst themselves and to get to know elements of the general Greek culture.

It should be emphasized that there is an increasing need for constant and systematic training of both teachers of Greek descent in the diaspora, as well as those who teach in various areas of the Greek education system abroad. Most often, these teachers do not speak the Greek language well enough or do not have the necessary teaching background to work as teachers of the Greek language, but they do so for the needs of Greek education abroad.

#### *4.3 Activity area III, Hermes*

The types of training that are recommended within the framework of *activity area II, Prometheus* are both very costly and time consuming if all Greek teachers living abroad are to be trained, at least once. At the same time, the lifespan of such educational programs cannot be ensured. For this reason, Law 2413 suggests the “exploitation of new technologies with the preparation and organization of different types of training from a distance” (*Explanatory Report*, p. 3). *Activity area III, Hermes*, develops this function systematically.

More specifically, in the framework of the program, learning materials and the necessary substructures have been developed on the World Wide Web for the continuous training of teachers who teach Greek as a second and foreign language through e-learning. Based on the initial plan, learning materials were designed and developed for three courses:

- a) Socialization and Education in the Diaspora
- b) Historical paths in the Greece of yesterday
- c) Topics in Modern Greek Literature

This material was designed to work in an environment with both synchronous and asynchronous e-learning, whose goal is to create a “learning community” on the web between instructors of Greek descent working all over the world and teaching the Greek language. Within the framework of this “community”, all teachers of Greek descent will have the

opportunity to communicate with their colleagues, as well as with special scientists (Damanakis & Anastasiades, 2005). They will be able to discuss educational questions and issues of daily concern and also get trained on specialized subject matters that will help them in their job

Also, all the learning materials and articles that have been published within the program can be found online, for the support of e-learning (synchronous and asynchronous) but also for those who wish to get generally informed (<http://www.uoc.gr/diaspora>).

## 5. Results of the Paideia Omogenon Program

After seven years of implementation, *Paideia Omogenon* is approaching the completion of its original goals.

More specifically, for *activity area I, Athina*, and concerning the teaching of Greek as a Second language in primary and secondary education, the educational materials up to and including grade 8 (4<sup>th</sup> level) have been completed with books for the student, activity books, teacher's books, as well as additional materials in CD-ROM format. Similarly, the materials up until the grade four (2<sup>nd</sup> level) for the teaching of Greek as a foreign language in primary education have also been completed.

In terms of linguistic material for the teaching of Greek as a second language in intensive courses in secondary education for children ages 12 to 16, they were completed according to the initial goals set. Three linguistic manuals as well as a grammar book were developed to suit the three levels of students who would participate in the courses.

Also, for Greek students ages 5 to 7 who are studying abroad to have initial contact with the Greek language and culture, the first part (consisting of 15 episodes) of a television-based educational tool was designed to be projected by satellite TV or DVD players or even personal computers.

For the teaching of history and culture, the core course materials have been completed up to and including the eighth grade (4<sup>th</sup> level) with books for students and additional material in CD-ROM format. Also, materials on *Diversity* have been designed and developed for the eight countries in which

the program is active and where the presence of Greek people in the diaspora is significant.

Within the framework of *activity area II, Promitheas*, six educational seminars for the Greek detached teachers were implemented, educational seminars for the Coordinators of Greek Education abroad, eleven educational seminars for the Greek teachers of the diaspora held in Greece and fifty-one held abroad. In addition, two programs were implemented for further training of teachers of Greek or other origin at the University of Crete, as well as, twelve educational programs for students of Greek descent and six Student theater festivals.

As part of *activity area III, Hermes*, databases, such as the database of scientific studies, learning materials, educational bibliographies, schools and other agents of Greek language education, as well as a list of teachers and students of Greek descent have been designed (<http://www.uoc.gr/diaspora>). In these databases one can also find the material developed for *activity area I, Athina*, as well as informative material gathered within the framework of *activity area II, Promitheas*. In addition, a platform has been designed for e-learning courses (synchronous and asynchronous) using the principles of distance-learning methodology (Anastasiades, 2005), for teachers of Greek descent, for the teaching of Greek and Greek culture.

Finally, as part of the horizontal sub-activities, seven “Scientific Work Meetings”, two international conferences, five international 2-day conferences and one daily conference have taken place. An overall evaluation was also done under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, from people outside the program *Paideia Omogenon*, the results of which were very positive.

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