

NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS in GREECE

P. M. Panagiotidis

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

1. General Introduction

The aim of this report is to present the results of the research carried out as to the degree of incorporation of the New Learning Environments (NLE) for language learning/teaching in Higher Education (HE) in Greece.

The research was conducted from January until August 2001 among all public agents of Higher Education of the country, as well as independent public and independent agents that are involved in language education/training at research level.

There was originally a series of personal contacts with people who are well known for their engagement in matters of language education: policy makers, presidents of University departments, directors of language laboratories and people in charge of research centers. At a second stage, a questionnaire was designed which was sent to the Heads of the Research Committees of 18 Greek Universities, the Heads of the Foreign Language Departments of these Universities and to the directors of certain Research Centers.

Out of the thirty questionnaires that were sent, a mere 5 answers were received, which, as can be inferred, are hardly sufficient for the deduction of reliable statistical results'. Therefore, the relative findings, being of a rather indicative character, cannot give a comprehensive picture of the situation and will be presented in this report quite tentatively.

Along with the dispatch of the questionnaires and during the same time, research was conducted into the Web Sites of all the institutions that engage in language education².

Overall, everything that will be mentioned hereafter provides, according to the writer, a non-exhaustive but nevertheless quite close to reality picture of the degree of incorporation and the tendency of adoption of the NLE in Greece.

2. The role of New Learning Environments in language teaching and learning

The first finding, which emerged even from the stage of personal interviews, is that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and their applications can indeed not merely assist the teaching of foreign languages but give it new perspectives. It is also believed that NLE are of primary importance for the promotion of Student and Staff Mobility (SSM). Furthermore, it is in everyone's intention that an application of NLE and their incorporation in the curriculum be developed in the near future.

¹ It should be noted at this point that during the time this research was conducted there was significantly extended turbulence in the area of Higher Education, which resulted in sub-operation or complete suspension of the operation of all University Institutions for more than 2 months. This event, connected with the summer holidays, is certain to have constrained the timely briefing of the people who were approached and might excuse the low degree of response to this research effort.

² This effort was even less productive both for reasons connected to the presence of such subject matter in the Greek domain (.gr) and for purely technical ones – the lack of effective in such subject matter Greek search engines and the weakness of the worldwide known search engines to function with Greek Keywords has been a particularly serious obstacle.

However, and this is the second finding, there is confusion concerning what NLE are as a widely known definition does not officially exist. As a result, some consider the use of electronic mail for communication purposes a form of realization of NLE in teaching.

The third finding is that the necessary know-how for the development of such forms of training does not exist. This is so both from the point of view of technical training and that of education philosophy of the parties involved in the teaching of foreign languages as well.

2.1 The integration of New Learning Environments in language teaching and learning

The incorporation on NLE in conventional curricula proves to be particularly difficult for reasons that hold true for education in general and for language training in particular.

1. general reasons

- Education is a mechanism that changes at a very slow pace: the change of institutional frame and instructions concerning education is hampered by sectional interests
- The teachers, in their majority, do not have either the flexibility to alter the methodology they are used to or the necessary skills for the application of such innovations
- The operation of the constructed educational environment is teacher oriented and does not favor the integration of different educational occupations, other than those they were originally designed for.
- The existing technological infrastructure is in most cases insufficient, mainly due to low funding.

2. special reasons

- The application of NLE presupposes the existence of specially designed teaching materials. This demands expertise that does not exist, and funds which, from the EU (LEONARDO, LINGUA, etc), on the one hand, are extremely limited, and from the state, on the other, have not even been foreseen (it is only lately, with the 3rd European Framework of Support (EFS), that certain efforts have been encouraged and funded ending in the production of materials/XENIOS)
- The University curricula are hard to change because the subjects are connected to the fields of interest of the teaching staff and the teaching materials have a conventional form (textbooks)
- Despite the fact that the languages can greatly benefit from NLE and particularly from the Internet, there have been very few cases in which the use of technologies is seen as necessary, due to the fact that such fields of study belong to Humanities.
- The parties involved with language education show "Technophobia" in certain cases and do not favor the technological equipment of their departments.
- Despite the above-mentioned difficulties, individual efforts are recorded, mainly as a result of programs of applied research.

2.2 Policies underlying the integration of New Learning Environments

The intention of incorporating the PC in education was first expressed by government officials in 1985. However, the application of the political wills transformed into reality much later: the introduction of information technology into primary and secondary education is being realized over the last three years and at a pace that technology supersedes. The result is that there are just 1600 laboratories installed in secondary education at present, and only 500 of them possess relatively modern equipment. The relevant lessons are taught by 2700 information technology teachers of technology –who increase at a pace of 400 per year.

Nevertheless, it seems that those in office are becoming aware that the pace must be drastically accelerated. After the pilot program ODYSSEY (2nd EFS, it has not been evaluated yet) it seems clear that there is need for a change of attitude towards the traditional methods of teaching. Therefore, within the frame of the 3rd EFS, there is provision of significant funding aiming at the systematic training of teachers of all disciplines, institutional changes, production of educational software (programs CIRCE and PENELOPE) and the improvement of infrastructure. Concerning the latter in particular, the renovation of the equipment and the installation of networking infrastructure in 4000 schools is progressing (Edunet program, program "Aeolos").

All the above-mentioned concern the governmental actions for the primary and secondary education. As concerns higher education, which is independent and in particular, the foreign language departments, the policy is decentralized due to the fact that it is the departments themselves that decide. Therefore, there is significant difference among the Departments even within the same University: there are departments that have already incorporated NLE in their curricula and have well-equipped laboratories for education and research to show, while there are others that use the electronic mail only. This difference is of course recorded both in the participation of relevant to NLE research programs and in the final product.

The policy of the central government supports the departments that have introduced the use of new technologies with additional staff and resources.

2.3 New learning strategies: the introduction and promotion of independent learning

Independent learning in Greece almost exclusively means self-access outside institutional frame. The students can attend an independent learning program only beyond teaching hours and the organized curriculum.

The main providers of independent learning means are located in the private sector. They mainly use multimedia software of various levels and methodologies that are addressed to people of all ages, and are rarely on the Internet.

In the public sector, despite the fact that the state seems to be getting in tune with the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference elaborated by the European Council, language portfolios, with few exceptions, have not for the moment been realized. The list of exceptions includes the Hellenic Open university³, certain Foreign Language Departments⁴, research Institutes⁵ and the Pedagogical Institute of the Ministry of Education⁶. Access, though, of students to these institutions is restricted in number. This event does not allow us to talk of an "introduction" of NLE in language –in particular- education yet, and explains the absence of a promotion policy of the specific programs on the part of their producers.

A significant factor of the insufficient introduction and promotion is also the bewilderment of teachers in the issue. The awareness of the change of role that is demanded for the application of such educational programs makes them feel reserved towards not only their realization but towards technology in general as well.

2.4 Facilities for independent learning

The technological equipment of the various departments of Greek Universities presents significant differences due to their specific fields, the funding policy of relevant ministries but also their ability to participate in research programs of the EU (obtaining, thus, the necessary equipment with their own means).

Generally, the level of equipment could be assessed as high. All universities possess organized computer laboratories for general use equipped with the most recent editions of software, audio/video applications, sat TV and multimedia. However, in no language department are there classrooms especially designed for language

³ The Hellenic Open University was founded in 1997 and has incorporated in its curriculum programs that lead to a University degree (Spanish language and civilization), a post-graduate degree (Further Training of teachers of the English, German and French language) or a certificate of post-graduate training (Open and Distance Learning). These programs are offered, though, to a very limited number of students: 120 students in each. See <http://www.eap.gr>

⁴ In the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Languages Didactics Laboratory (LDL) of the Department of French Studies has incorporated applications of NLE language training that have developed within the frame of research programs of the EU in its curriculum. See <http://www.frl.auth.gr/xenios>

⁵ The Institute for Language and Speech Processing (ILSP) has developed a series of software for the learning of the Greek language. See <http://www.ilsp.gr>

⁶ The Pedagogical Institute has developed the program DIALOGOS for language communication within the frame of the program "Schools of experimental programs application" in association with the Aegean University, the University of Cyprus and Toronto of Canada and the participation of several regional schools. See <http://Rhodes.aegean.gr/programdialogos/>

training – at least in the sense of "Language Laboratories" (micro-casques, etc)-. In certain cases and in special subjects there is use of software of cooperative learning in laboratories⁷. In a number of universities there are also specially equipped classrooms for Tele-education⁸. Within the frame of the 2nd EFS, there have been significant investments by the state in laboratory equipment, computers and peripherals and – most importantly – in the network infrastructure of the universities (GUnet⁹) and the research institutes of the country and their interconnection in one national network with high speed lines. In this network it will be feasible to transmit any kind of data, a fact that will give the opportunity of realizing educational programs of higher standards. Especially in the field of foreign language learning, for which voice and video are extremely important factors, it will ensure the technical specifications for the production of real time ODL (Open and Distance Learning) applications.

2.5 Development of learning materials

In HE, and of course in the fields that are connected to foreign language teaching, there is use of teaching materials that make use of technology. Some of these could be characterized as conventional (audiotapes, videotapes, satellite recordings) and some are implementations of NLE. In the latter we could classify:

- Commercial software that is available in the market (as agents of realization of the teaching and exercises)
- Custom made materials, designed/produced with the use of authoring tools (like Toolbook, Director, Authorware, Hypercard, etc.) for collaborative or independent learning
- Computer Aided Language Learning systems (CALL)
- Complete teaching materials in the form of CD-ROMs, both commercial and custom made
- The Web, both as an agent of authentic teaching material and as an agent of specially designed for DL teaching material.
- Services that depend on the Internet, such as mail (tandem), exchange of files (mail or ftp), written conversation in real time (irc) and desktop videoconferencing.

Concerning the use of technology as means, the situation is improving daily as more and more teachers are becoming aware of the profits that can result from its incorporation in the teaching process. Concerning the teaching materials, though, it should be noted that they are not, in most cases, specially designed to fully exploit the possibilities that they are given by the use of the computer and the Internet. It usually consists of a mere transfer of the old traditional materials in electronic form (CD-ROM or Web page) with the preservation of the traditional methodological approach. This is a critical issue, since learning in an electronic but, at the same time, traditional environment could finally prove to be less effective and interesting and definitely more boring than traditional teaching in classrooms.

The reasons due to which there is difficulty in the production of new teaching materials¹⁰ should be sought in the scientific adequacy, the degree of information, the creativity of teachers and also their ability to develop new strategies of utilizing the characteristics of the new means. Significant factors, though, also seem to be:

- the consolidation of the need for cooperation among information technology specialists and specialists of language teaching in the production of teaching materials¹¹

⁷ As ClassPoint of RealNetworks. See <http://www.aegean.gr>

⁸ At the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki these classrooms are used for distant courses/lessons (including foreign languages) in collaboration with national and foreign universities. See <http://www.tcom.auth.gr/isdn/services/classrooms.html>

⁹ GUnet (Greek Universities Network) uses the backbone of GRnet (Greek Research and Technology Network) offering Internet services to the academic and research community of the country. The backbone of GRnet (Athens, Thessaloniki) has a bandwidth of 155Mbps. The international connection of GRnet is nowadays at 2x 155 Mbps bandwidth, as part of the European Research Network TEN-155. See <http://www.gnet.gr>, <http://www.gunet.gr>, Pan European Network GEANT <http://ldante.net/geant>, TEN-155 <http://www.ten-155.net>

¹⁰ With few but remarkable exceptions. See chapter 9

- the development of new areas of expertise (in the application of IT in language education) which will function as a bridge between the above
- the awareness that the teaching materials that are to be used in NLE should be flexible, modular, easily renewable and based on authentic resources of language.

2.6 Redefining the profile of the actors involved

It is widely accepted that the application of ICT in language training will demand significant changes throughout the process as well as changes in the redefinition of the role both of the teachers and of the learners (and to that of the educational organizations). The NLE applications, depending on the public they address, can take various forms that begin with the totally individualized distant self-training and end with the "controlled" training of students in specially designed classrooms of an educational organization with a teacher present. Despite the fact that the demands of the process change depending on each case, it is easy to locate certain parameters:

a. the role of the teacher

It is easy to comprehend that the new capabilities offered by the NLE demand new skills from the instructor. After the turn of the teaching of language to communication this role has already changed. The teacher has ceased to be the decisive factor that possesses all knowledge and transmits it to the students and he no longer has the total control of the classroom. He has transformed into a councilor (tutor), supporter and coordinator of the activity developed by the learners to comprehend and master the new knowledge, or develop the sought skill. In order to be useful and effective using NLE the teacher should therefore:

- be able to handle effectively the technical equipment used each time, so that he be in position to help learners use it as well (if he is present in the educational process)
- be able to handle software that will enable him to develop teaching materials (except if these are provided by the institution within the frame of which training takes place)
- be able to adapt the already existing pre-designed teaching material for NLE use
- be able to provide individualized help (or even teaching material) to every learner who will need it

The above could account for the fact that, while there are many teachers that find the introduction of technology in education very useful and are interested in implementing NLE applications, there are many more who feel bewildered at this prospect. The development, though, on the part of teachers, of skills necessary to respond to their new role will be of major importance for the successful application of NLE in language education/training.

¹¹ Almost all the software for the teaching of foreign languages that are produced by information technology experts are characterized by their simplistic approach to the subject and the old fashioned methodology they adopt. Respectively, the efforts of the people of the teaching of languages, without the help of technologists (and that of graphic artists and web Designers who will see to the appropriate interface), are usually ergonomically hard to use and aesthetically boring.

b. the role of the learner

At a technical level, the demands of NLE from learners are similar to those from teachers. At this point there seems to be no problem as the knowledge of learners in information technology are at least equal to those of non-specialist teachers.

The change of "environment" learners face -equivalent to that of teachers- seems more difficult. In an NLE, learners are placed at the center of the educational process. They are not anymore simple recipients of information but they become autonomous and participate actively, having the ability to manage the time, choosing (depending on the case) the location, deciding on the pace, the sequence and the way they will handle the teaching materials.

However, together with the degree of freedom, there is an increased responsibility on the part of the learners concerning the effectiveness of the process. Learners should exhibit responsibility and motivation, define their strategy themselves –since this will no longer be done by the teacher-, explore and handle the teaching material critically, decide for the next step and spot their weaknesses through self evaluation. Furthermore, in order to attain aims that can be accomplished only through interaction with other people, they should develop communicative and group work skills, with or without the teacher's intervention.

2.7 Training programs and courses for language teachers: in-service programs, staff development

The training and the orientation of trainers towards new technologies, seems to be the most important factor for the successful incorporation of NLE in language education/training. The passage of teachers from traditional methods and techniques to the use of an electronic environment presupposes the existence of a didactic concept which will determine the choices they will make concerning the means to be used (which agent? which software? which communication channel?)

At this moment there is very little technical and pedagogical support for the introduction of ICT in the Greek education system. However, the situation is improving. Although there are no special programs for teachers of foreign languages, the state has already begun an extensive program for the training of all the teachers of the country in new technologies. There are also private initiatives: the German institute GOHTE, certain associations of teachers (such as the PALSO and the French language teachers' Union of Northern Greece) have developed programs for the training of their teachers in new technologies.

2.8 Measuring proficiency: assessment and self-assessment

Although the application of a program of assessment is under discussion, there is nothing under way at the moment. Within the frame of the 2nd EFS it was suggested to university departments to carry out self-assessment at will. The response, however, has been scant¹².

2.9 Action research on the implementation of New Learning Environments

As action research refers to the research carried out within the university departments (by post-graduate or pro-doctorate students), it is very difficult to be recorded in this report. In the university departments that have provided sufficient information, there is action research with the participation of post-graduate students and language lessons aiming at the contact with authentic forms – and authentic graphism – of language and the authentic cultural environment.

¹² The Department of French Language Studies of the Aristotle University responded to the call. The results are not yet available.

3. Promoting multilingualism and cultural diversity

Multilingualism has always been promoted in Greece by the Greeks themselves, who, conscious that they speak a less widely used and less taught language, have always learned many foreign languages independently of government policy. In consequence, the private sector is exceptionally highly developed in the field of foreign language teaching, both European and non-European. Symptomatic of this is the fact that the Panhellenic Federation of Foreign Language Teaching Centers (PALSO) alone numbers 7000 schools among its members countrywide. Moreover, there are also several independent chains of foreign language institutes.

In recent decades two languages only - English and French - were taught in state secondary schools, whilst German was added recently. In higher education, however, instruction is provided in several further languages (4-6). Departments which train foreign language teachers are gathered in two universities only: Athens University and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), which offer French, English, German, Spanish and Italian studies. It should be noted that these departments are monolingual. Nevertheless, there also exists an interlingual department of postgraduate studies, given that all foreign language departments come under its umbrella (see chapter 9).

In the area of applied research, it is important to mention the production of multilingual tools including dictionaries and self-learning materials for use in specific occupational fields, such as economics (XENIOS ■ Ministry of Education - EU), textiles (DIMITRAILEONARDO DA VINCI), administration (CARPE D. M. ■ LINGUA III), automotive engineering (LINGUA III 1 University of Patras), etc.

3.1 Promoting the learning of less widely used and less taught languages

In the private sector there is a wide range of languages to be found. In the public sector, however, the only WULT language officially taught is Dutch. (It is incorporated within the Department of German Studies at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), by agreement between the Netherlands government, the Ministry of Education and the AUTH)

Concerning the Greek language itself, which also falls within this category, important efforts have been made by the IEL, with the production of teaching materials (see chapter 9), the School of Modern Greek of the AUTH, the Philology Department of Athens University¹³, etc.

3.2 Promoting cultural understanding and intercultural awareness

In the last few years Greece has received several waves of economic refugees from countries belonging to the former Eastern Bloc, particularly Russia, Georgia, the Ukraine and, above all, Albania. Greek society has ceased to be homogeneous and has acquired the characteristics of a polyglot, multicultural society, with all the problems, which that entails, particularly in the area of education. Since teachers were not equipped to deal with cultural pluralism, they faced difficulties at first, and it was necessary to create new books, teaching materials and in-service training programs in order to rectify the situation. The Ministries of Employment, Culture and Education have developed programs to aid the linguistic, social and vocational integration of these social groups on two levels: that of school education and that of adult education. Assessment of the results has not yet been published.

Further initiatives have also been taken by institutes of higher education, such as the Technical University of Thessaloniki, which in association with a Spanish University¹⁴ has been developing a node aimed at providing distance learning of Greek, as well as essential information for the placement of students from Spain.

¹³ Inter-University Postgraduate Studies Program entitled "Linguistic Technology" or "Technoglossia", organized by the Philology Department of Athens University and the Electrical or Computer Engineering Department of the National Technical University of Athens.

¹⁴ Program entitled Hellenic Enjoyable Language Learning on the Net (HELLO NET), see <http://www.teithe.gr>

3.3 Accessing authentic resources and materials

Apart from language material accessible on television - used to a limited extent in schools - all foreign language teachers draw on the foreign press in their lessons.

For the last four years Satellite TV and, on a systematic basis, the Internet have been employed as authentic language resources for the initial training of foreign language teachers, mainly at universities possessing a satisfactory telecommunications infrastructure.

3.4 Student and staff exchanges

All the universities in Greece participate in the Erasmus/Socrates programs. Foreign language departments, in particular, promote SSM, albeit with varying levels of activity. (The Department of French Studies at the AUTH, for example, places 40-50 students a year through the Erasmus program.)

Nevertheless, the foreign language departments of the AUTH are the only ones to have adopted the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

4. The role of New Learning Environments in training programmes for language and language-related professions

NLE are used very little in higher education, whether for the training of foreign language teachers or for that of translators and interpreters. This seems to be the case, despite an adequate technical infrastructure, because neither the necessary teaching concepts, nor suitable teaching materials have been developed yet. It also has to be mentioned that foreign language teachers appear reluctant to incorporate the use of NLE in their programs, or to employ ICT for purposes other than simple communication.

4.1 New Learning Environments and the training of language teachers

Here there seems to be some activity taking place on a research level. At the AUTH Department of French Studies the "XENIOS" program will be included, both as a CD-ROM and on the Internet (see chapter 9), within the undergraduate curriculum as an optional course for the initial training of foreign language teachers in 2002.

The Ministry of Education, on the other hand, provides short intensive in-service training courses, for all high-school teachers in the context of the 3rd EFS. So far, however, very few initiatives have been taken by local government authorities or foreign missions in Greece.

4.2 New Learning Environments and the training of translators and interpreters

The training of translators and interpreters is closely connected with sectors of life such as culture, politics, economics and technology. It is therefore very important that students should have the opportunity to gain practical experience and should be in touch with current events. With this object in view, albeit at a research level so far, the web camera and video-conferencing are being investigated as two possible means of providing postgraduate students with practical experience.

5. The role of New Learning Environments in continuing education programmes or courses

When continuing and/or lifelong learning programs are the subject of discussion, we usually refer to adult education programs probably designed for people in employment. Given that access to language training is usually gained through organized study programs, at specific venues with specific timetables, it is easy to see that an adult is likely to meet difficulties – often-insurmountable ones - in his or her efforts to attend such a program.

Aware of this problem, the European Commission has from time to time promoted various types of action giving emphasis to flexible forms of training with the use of new technology for the development of innovative models of distance learning and self-learning. With the same object in view, the European Parliament¹⁵, the OECD¹⁶ and the IRDAC¹⁷ have for the last decade repeatedly underlined the need for the use of NLE in continuing and/or lifelong learning/training, as a means of bringing about a more effective and comprehensive education/training of the work force, of increasing mobility within the European Common Space¹⁸, and of combating unemployment¹⁹.

Research has revealed that action taken to achieve these goals has been fragmentary. There is at present no organized state initiative in progress, with the exceptions of the Hellenic Open University at Patras, which offers distance learning over the Internet in various subjects, and of various projects still at a research stage.

6. How can Information and Communication Technology (ICT) come to be used for promoting European co-operation ?

6.1 Using ICT for co-operation in the development of programs

Extensive use is made of ICT by the Greek academic community in order to keep in touch and collaborate with colleagues in Europe. However, the majority of Greeks concerned with foreign languages use only email and the web.

Undoubtedly, these two facilities cover most of a program's needs in the planning stages (as also in the TNP). Nevertheless, the use of more advanced technology could be even more effective in securing the progress of such language projects.

Video-conferencing in both its forms (i.e. in a special video-conference room or, in the case of desktop video-conferencing, over a computer) could reduce the running costs of a program, as it would minimize both the number of journeys required and the amount of time needing to be set aside for meetings and for making practical arrangements. It could also offer a convenient way of providing lectures by visiting professors, or of promoting research and collaboration between research teams working on parallel themes in different locations (virtual mobility).

6.2 Using ICT for co-operation in the delivery of programs

The main objective of every attempt to create NLE must be to secure the use of ICT in the delivery of programs. This aim is nevertheless hard to achieve, since it requires the provision of financial support and specialized personnel with many different areas of expertise.

There is no information available in this area in Greece.

7. Needs in the field of New Learning Environments

Needs exist on the levels of technical infrastructure, teaching materials and the training of persons involved and concerned.

¹⁵ INFO CEDEFOP, No 211997, See <http://www.cedefop.ar>

¹⁶ OECD Announcement to the press, following Meeting of the Education Committee at Ministerial Level, Paris, 171111996. Included in Information Update 29, under the heading "Lifelong Learning", Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens February 1977

¹⁷ IRDAC, 1991, Deficiencies in Technical Capabilities in Europe, Report by the Commission, and IRDAC, 1992, Quality and Relevance. The challenge to European Education, Report by the Commission

¹⁸ EC COM(97) 563

¹⁹ Eurobarometer 34.2, Human Resources Task Force, Education-Training-Youth, May 1991.

7.1 In relation to language teaching and learning

In the field of language teaching and learning deficiencies exist in the following areas:

- lack of adequate classrooms
- lack of advanced technological infrastructure
- lack of trainers with expertise in new technologies
- lack of technical staff
- lack of *ad hoc* materials

7.2 In relation to the promotion of **multilingualism** and cultural diversity

In the field of multilingualism and cultural diversity deficiencies exist in the following areas:

- lack of multilingual and intercultural learning materials
- limited co-operation on shared objectives (e.g. on joint programs, joint training, joint research projects)
- lack of expertise in designing and implementing ODL programs

7.3 In relation to the promotion of European co-operation

In the field of promoting European co-operation deficiencies exist in the following areas:

- paltry funds available for SSM
- limited co-operation on shared objectives (e.g. on common curricula, intensive training programs, joint research projects); only SSM are promoted
- lack of information available concerning European initiatives. EE site needs to become more user-friendly

7.4 In relation to the provision of language learning to students with special educational needs

All of the above deficiencies exist in the provision of language learning to students with special educational needs, plus the following:

- lack of special facilities
- lack of specially trained supporting staff

8. Measures to be taken to meet the needs identified

8.1 At institutional level

Precise initiatives (programs) should be planned and implemented with the following goals:

- to develop the existing technological infrastructure
- to define the qualifications of teachers
- to train teachers and learners in the use of computers
- to prepare teachers and learners for dealing with a NLE
- to develop *ad hoc* materials
- to promote co-operation between language departments and disciplines

8.2 At regional level

Regional authorities should be persuaded of the need for co-operation with individual language departments (which has not yet occurred) and for the development of NLE with a view to language education/training. They should also co-ordinate collaboration between language departments and various professions and social bodies with a view to the development of joint NLE programs.

8.3 At national level

The Ministry of Education should not limit itself to the 3rd EFS, but should provide for allocations from the national budget to cover European initiatives in education generally, and NLE especially. More specific tasks should include the following:

- supplementary financial support for travel scholarships
- the drafting of action plans for teacher training
- the provision of additional posts in all language departments
- the legal recognition of activity within the European framework on the part of teachers at any level as a qualification for promotion
- financial support for the continuation of successful programs

8.4 At European level

The European Union should not only encourage but also support the creation and development of NLE in the following ways:

- by increasing funding
- by simplifying procedures for participation in educational programs (such as LEONARDO, SOCRATES)
- by increasing the number and size of scholarships
- by facilitating the continued sponsorship of successful programs
- by financing the promotion of important tools produced within its programs
- by creating a database to store and assess the results of its programs
- by organizing or financing forums for the exchange of expertise

9. Examples of good practice

The following Greek Universities and research institutes are concerned with NLE²⁰.

9.1 Hellenic Open University (Web Site: <http://www.eap.gr>)

The Hellenic Open University (EAP) was founded in 1992 and has functioned since 1998 with the aim of providing distance learning at university level and promoting scientific research into the field of transmission of knowledge from a distance.

The following degrees and Certificates are awarded by the EAP: first degrees, postgraduate degrees (Master's and Doctorates), Further Training Certificates and Postgraduate Training Certificates.

Courses leading to Certificates and Degrees - and of particular interest within the context of this report - include the following:

Bachelor's Degree:

Spanish Language and Culture

Master's Degree:

Teaching of the English, German and French Languages

Courses leading to Postgraduate Training Certificates:

Language development, Open and Distance Education/Adult Education

At present, the teaching materials employed are usually printed (hardcopy or in electronic form) or, in some cases, audiovisual. The lecturer communicates with students in writing, either by email or by telephone. The

²⁰ The texts in this chapter – slightly abridged for the sake of brevity – derive from the respective Web Sites.

possibility of maximizing the use of ICT is being explored, however, and research is being carried out into the creation of NLE.

9.2 Language Didactics Laboratory (LDL) ■ Department of French Studies, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Web Site: <http://www.frl.auth.gr>)

The Department of French Studies of the AUTH is divided into three Sectors: Literature, Linguistics and Teaching, and Translation.

The Linguistics and Teaching Sector is responsible for planning the Department's language courses, and for giving students their - compulsory - training in the use of ICT.

Research is carried out in this sector in the fields of general linguistics, ethnolinguistics, the semantics of lexicology and lexicography, pragmatology and didactics. The Language Didactics Laboratory (LDL) was set up in support of the last of these research fields. The LDL functions as an "annex" and pursues research into the language applications of ITC. The LDL has so far been funded by both public and private bodies, as well as by the European Union (LINGUA, MED-CAMPUS, LEONARDO, EKT, EPEAEK, etc.).

The LDL has three aims:

- to introduce undergraduate and postgraduate students of the whole Department to the use of computers and networks, and to provide them with practical experience
- to support research on NLE within the Sector
- to support teaching and research on the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program (IPP)

For the last few years the LDL's research programs have aimed at the development of multimedia materials for language teaching in Greek and other European languages for specific professional groups (e.g. for scientists from the former Soviet Union /European Social Found, university administration officials/LINGUA, food technologists /MED CAMPUS, textile executives /LEONARDO).

As an example of its work, over the last three years the LDL has undertaken and completed the following two programs:

- XENIOS: Foreign language training in Economics and International Trade by means of ICT. Self-learning software (CD and Web) in six languages (English, French, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish) and a companion six-language phrase dictionary. XENIOS was developed within the framework of the EPEAEK with a view to incorporation in the curriculum as an alternative optional course for the development of communication and language skills. <http://www.frl.auth.gr/xenios>
- DIMITRA - DICTIONNAIRE INTERACTIF MULTIMEDIA DU TEXTILE: Support software (CD) for textile enterprises, developed under the European program LEONARDO DA VINCI. This consists of a multimedia phrase dictionary in five languages (Dutch, French, German, Greek Spanish).

The Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program (IPP) in "Sciences & Technologies of Language & Communication" was set up in co-operation with the Departments of German and Italian Studies and the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department. Postgraduate students participate in the development of research programs, depending on the needs of each individual program.

The Department's Translation Sector is also moving in the direction of incorporating ICT in its program; it is in the process of developing a translation contest on the web under the auspices of the EUROLANG 2001 program. <http://www.e-pedia.gr>

9.3 Institute for Language and Speech Processing (ILSP) (Web Site: <http://www.ilsp.gr>)

The ILSP was founded in Athens under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (Ministry of Development) to support the development of language technology. Among its activities is the development of language technology for Greek.

The ILSP has developed research activities in the fields of theoretical, applied and computational linguistics, natural language processing and engineering, computer assisted language learning (CALL), speech processing, synthesis and recognition.

More specifically, the ILSP pursues the following main activities:

- It develops environments for translating from and into the Greek language, as well as computational tools and products, which assist in the task of translation.
- It develops CD-ROMS for computer assisted Greek language learning.
- It creates electronic dictionaries (monolingual and multilingual), computational lexica and electronic dictionaries for children.
- It develops prototypes for speech recognition, syntheses and compression.
- It creates text correction tools.
- Among the ILSP's products in the field of NLE are the following titles:
 - "Logomathia". Program for the teaching of modern Greek
 - "Filoglossia". A multimedia program for learning Greek as a foreign language, addressed to beginners
 - "Logonostisi". Educational software for teaching Greek as a second language, supported by Russian
 - "Learning Greek on the Web". A series of Greek lessons for beginners, based on the material of the CD-ROM "Filoglossia"
 - "Lexipedia". A multilingual, multimedia dictionary with an initial target of 8,000 entries specifically processed for primary school children (under development).

9.4 Institutions associated with the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs

9.4.1 The Institute of Pedagogy (Web Site: <http://www.pi-schools.gr>)

The Institute of Pedagogy's role includes the following:

- scientific research and study of issues concerning primary and secondary education
- the preparation and submission of proposals instrumental in setting new directions, and the designing and planning of educational policy, with a view to achieving the objectives of primary and secondary education, in parallel with the program for the economic, social and cultural development of Greece
- close observation of the evolution of education technology, study of its implementation within education, and monitoring of the results
- the design and implementation of further education programs for teachers

Participation in European Programs:

TRENDS (Training Educators through Networks and Distributed Systems - Europe Initiative), Y.D.E.E.S., ODYSSEIA (Introduction of ICT in Secondary Education ■ Teacher Training), LEONARDO RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP - DUOQUAL, etc.

9.4.2 Center for the Greek Language (Web Site: <http://www.greeklanguage.gr/>)

Among the aims of the Center for the Greek Language are the promotion and dissemination of the Greek language within and outside Greece, the support of teachers of the Greek language in Greece and abroad, and the production of teaching materials.

The Center for the Greek Language acts as a coordinating, advisory and strategic organ of the Ministry of Education on matters of language education and policy. It serves as a focal point for information on topics pertaining to language and co-ordinates communication among organizations, both within Greece and abroad, which deal with the Greek language. Through the Center the State demonstrates in practical terms its conception of the support and training in the field of language of Greeks abroad, return migrants and foreigners.

In the context of the "Komvos" (Electronic Node for the Support of Teachers of the Greek Language) Program, the Center for the Greek Language has created a Portal to assist in the instruction, support and further training of teachers. <http://www.komvos.edu.gr>

"Komvos" provides teachers with the following:

- support material to assist in the preparation of lessons, in self-learning, and in professional development
- lexicographical tools for the writing of exercises on the etymology, meaning and usage of words
- briefing on matters connected with the teaching of the Greek language
- opportunities for communication and participation in scientific discussions

9.4.3 Web sites concerning Secondary Education via ICT

<http://www.sch.gr>

An educational network for secondary education: forums, email, webmail, web hosting for school pages, interconnection of all school units

<http://www.edunet.gr>

EDUnet: The Greek Education Portal. A Panhellenic Education Network/Intranet. Services provided: connection services, Web hosting, email, people search, newsgroups, chatrooms, Video-on-Demand, Helpdesk, Distance learning. Research on alternative technologies providing network access: satellite, radio, ADSL.