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ACCEPT
PLURALISM

**(In)tolerance of difference in Greek schools:
the case of migrant and Roma children**

Anna Triandafyllidou
European University Institute

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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

**(In)tolerance of difference in Greek Schools:
The case of migrant and Roma children**

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**WP3: National Case Studies of Challenges to
Tolerance in School Life**

**D3.1 Final Country Reports on Concepts and
Practices of Tolerance Addressing Cultural Diversity
in Schools**

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Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)

ACCEPT PLURALISM is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

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Executive Summary

Faced with the challenges of ethnic and cultural diversity, schools may become places of inclusion, and contribute towards the incorporation of immigrant and native minority children, or they may propagate – directly or indirectly – prejudice, stereotypes, perceptions of cultural confrontation, superiority, or discrimination. The challenge for European societies and in particular for ‘new’ host countries such as Greece is to meet raised expectations for educational policies that are able to respond to the needs of the entire student population. Schools must thus prepare children for their successful integration into the labour market but must also socialize them into a set of core national and European values of democracy, peace and respect for diversity. They should in fact ideally enhance educational, socialization and personal development opportunities for all students regardless of their majority or minority/immigrant background.

The Greek education policy and the national educational system are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Training and Religious Affairs. The current educational system and policy was set up by the 1976 educational policy introduced with the new Constitution after the end of the 1967-1974 military dictatorship in Greece. Primary, secondary and higher education as well as research and lifelong learning policies have gone through a series of reforms during the 1980s, 1990s and most importantly in this last decade aimed at, among other priorities, modernizing the curricula and the textbooks and adapting them to contemporary pedagogical approaches and to the changing demographic realities of the country. As Greece has become host to a nearly 1 million migrant and co-ethnic returnee population, the Greek school population has become ethnically diverse. The Greek school population in the academic year 2008-2009 included approximately 9% of children from migrant families and 1% of children from co-ethnic returnee families. Co-ethnic repatriated are children of co-ethnic returnees from the former Soviet Republics who have naturalized upon arrival and whose mother tongue is Russian. Immigrant children are children who are of non-Greek citizenship and whose mother tongue is other than Greek.

Despite the subsequent reforms of the last three decades, the Greek education system has remained highly centralized with the Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute responsible for the curriculum, the school timetable and distribution of classes, the material and textbooks and the employment of teachers. Schools are governed by their Headmasters and the teachers working in them. During the last two years (2010-2011) the new socialist government (which came to power in November 2009) has embarked into a thorough reform of the education system at all levels.

Available studies show however that Roma children are not well integrated into the Greek school system. They have on average very high levels of school abandonment (77% across Greece although the levels of school abandonment vary depending on the locality, from 0 to 100%). Roma children are not well accepted in schools and have difficulties to adapt to formal education and its rules. Migrant children are well integrated in schools but studies have shown that they overall perform less well than their Greek peers and that they abandon the school earlier.

The focus of this study

This study focuses on how intolerance / tolerance / respect of ethnic diversity has been thematised in Greek school life when ethnic, cultural or religious diversity conflicts arise. Therefore, we have chosen to concentrate on two case studies that pose important challenges to the Greek school system. The first issue is the question of ethnic selection practices of migrant and Roma children. In particular we explore practices of ethnic selection of pupils in schools, according to which Roma and immigrant children are segregated respectively in Roma-only and in immigrant-only (or at least overwhelmingly Roma or immigrant) schools and classes. Some local authorities and school administrations are

thought to discourage or even hinder the enrollment of immigrant children in order to preserve a “good reputation” for their schools for which all those “different” children seem to be considered a burden. Although it is difficult to prove whether such ‘ethnic selection’ practices are applied by some school headmasters (none would admit to it as such segregation is illegal), we shall use these practices as an entry point to discuss with school teachers, parents and other stakeholders whether migrant and Roma children are rejected, tolerated or accepted in Greek schools.

The second issue that is discussed in this report concerns the accommodation of religious diversity in Greek schools. In this second case study we have presented to our informants (who include teachers, parents and pupils) the current policy and practice regarding religious minorities in schools and we have asked them to comment upon it. We have thus analysed the emerging discourses of intolerance, tolerance or acceptance of religious diversity in schools.

Data and Methods

This report is based on desk research as well as fieldwork. In terms of desk research we have collected the available statistical data, legal texts and policy documents (e.g. circulars or Ministerial decisions) as well as, of course, the relevant scholarly literature on the education of immigrant and Roma children. Fieldwork has been conducted into three phases, the first phase comprising the period between mid December and mid January, the second period between mid February and late March and the third period between early June and late July 2011. The fieldwork was for the most part conducted in the metropolitan area of Athens while one interview was conducted also in Thessalonike.

More specifically, we have conducted in total 32 semi-structured qualitative interviews. Of those, 9 interviews were with experts, policy makers and local politicians (for details see the Annex), 4 with middle rank Ministry officials. In addition to the expert interviews, we selected three schools in which to conduct interviews with teachers or headmasters, parents of Greek, migrant and Greek Roma children. Our study has focused on three different schools of Athens: a school with a high concentration of Roma children in a municipality at the outskirts of Athens that has a high percentage of Roma and of co-ethnic returnee (Pontic Greek) families; a school with a high concentration of immigrant children in an inner city area of Athens with a high concentration of immigrants; and a ‘normal’ school, i.e. a school with a small percentage of migrant children in a lower middle class neighbourhood of Athens.

During the third phase of the fieldwork we conducted eight discussion groups. Of those four discussion groups were held with immigrant parents, notably with Albanian parents, with Albanian Roma parents, with Eastern European parents and with a mixed group of immigrant parents comprising the smaller nationality groups (Pakistani, Egyptian, Moldovan). One discussion group with high school teachers was held at a middle class neighbourhood school in Athens. In the same school we conducted a discussion group with high school pupils of Greek origin. We also conducted a discussion group with lower high school children at a private high school in a working class neighbourhood. Both these schools had a 10-20% presence of migrant children from different national backgrounds. We also held a discussion group with three young people of sub Saharan African origin, 2 second generation and 1 first generation. All had attended Greek schools.

The materials generated for this study (qualitative semi-structured interview transcripts and group discussion transcripts) have been analysed adopting a critical discourse analysis approach. Going through the transcribed interviews, we looked for main argumentation strategies (the discursive *topoi*) that are adopted by different actors to present their viewpoint.

Main findings

On school selection – segregation

While segregation and discrimination against migrant or minority children are illegal and anti-Constitutional in Greece there is a certain level of informal segregation or ethnic selection taking place in some schools. While our background research and our expert informants confirm the existence of this problem, our own fieldwork in schools with larger or smaller migrant and Roma populations does not contain issues of clear segregation or ethnic selection. The relevant challenges in these schools is to avoid the risk of becoming a ‘ghetto’ or ‘all migrant’ schools because this is coupled with being a low quality school, where students are troublemakers and know no discipline and discrimination is common practice. The issue is thus not presented as a question of rejecting, tolerating or accepting minority or migrant children but rather on how to raise the performance of the school and its students.

A closer look into the data however shows that the discursive topos of *school quality* is in reality a politically correct discourse that disguises a strong ethnic prejudice according to which migrant children are worse than ‘our’ children and immigrant children lower the standards at a school regardless of whether they speak Greek fluently. While the school quality topos openly argues in favour of separating majority children from migrant ones, *the troublemaker* topos only indirectly supports the idea that ethnic selection would be a good thing because it would help avoid all the problematic children that create mayhem in the classroom. The *troublemaker* topos is quite common and uses another politically correct strategy to argue that migrant children are ‘bad’ for the school. They are not ‘bad’ because they are ‘inferior’ but because ‘they create trouble and interrupt the teaching.’ Similarly the *discrimination* topos indirectly justifies segregation as the argument goes that children are separated anyway even if they study within the same school. The *discrimination* topos takes ethnic prejudice for granted and does not question it. Interestingly we find within the discrimination topos that more than religion, race (skin colour) is a relevant dimension for being seen as ‘different’ in Greek schools.

The analysis of the discourses developing around the issue of school selection shows that ethnic and racial diversity is tolerated in Greece but not accepted. The presence of migrant and Roma children is considered a bad thing for a school (school quality going down, troublemakers) but is tolerated because segregation is against the law.

On the accommodation of religious diversity in school life

Ethnic and in particular religious diversity in school life is an important challenge that Greek schools face. The presence of the majority religion in Greek school life is visible and has so far not been contested. However, the growing diversity of the student population points to relevant challenges in the near future. Our interviews with teachers and parents (majority Greeks, Roma and immigrants) have provided useful material to discuss whether and how religious diversity should be tolerated, accepted or rejected in Greek school life.

We have identified five discursive topoi in the interviewees discourse on the topic. The first discursive topos is a topos of *resistance*, and points out that what is practiced in Greek schools is religious assimilation. It corresponds to a basic minimal definition of tolerance: diversity seen as a private matter that people are free to express in their private life but which they should keep outside the public space. The second topos argues that this is not about religion being a private matter but rather about being *forced to assimilate* in the dominant religion. The third topos supports the idea that *tolerance is a temporary solution*, suitable for the first period during which schools get acquainted with cultural and ethnic diversity within their school populations, but which should slowly lead to acceptance. Indeed the fourth topos is the one that argues in favour of *neutral acceptance*: The majority and its institutions need not change anything apart from providing the space in which minorities may express individually or collectively their different religion. Last but not least the discursive topos of tolerance developed by educators only recognises the need to change one’s own way of teaching and of thinking

with a view to taking into account the special sensitivities and the special cultural capital that migrant and minority children have. This is the *respect topos*.

The first case study on ethnic selection or school segregation of Roma and migrant children suggests that ethnic diversity is only tolerated in Greek school life: Greek majority parents, children and teachers argue that migrant children have a negative impact on the quality of education provided at a school. Migrant parents are aware of the stereotype and also sometimes deplore the poor quality of the school that their child attends, blaming it on the fact that the school has too many migrant children and that teachers are indifferent about their children's education. Overall they also express a feeling of being tolerated not accepted in Greek society.

The second case study which concentrates on religious diversity in particular yields more positive results. Religious diversity is generally tolerated in Greek schools – to the extent that it is confined to the private sphere it does not bother anyone. However, different attitudes towards religious diversity and different views on how it can be accommodated have been found among both Greek and non Greek informants. Overall parents and teachers were divided on the topic of religion and whether it should be part of the school curriculum at all; if it is part of the school curriculum whether it should include courses on all religions and/or a history of religions or not; and whether the current situation of minimal liberal tolerance (a child can be exempted from religious duties if her parents ask the school) is satisfactory. Competing discursive topoi reveal contradictory tendencies and tensions in Greek school life as regards the role of religion in education. The main two discursive topoi: *religion as a private matter*, and *assimilation* actually reveal the fundamental tension of the current arrangements: people are free to chose whether to be exempted from the majority religion classes or not but at the same time the whole school environment is impregnated with the majority religion to the extent that migrant children feel forced to assimilate (and hence not to ask to be exempted from the course).

The findings of this study on ethnic and religious diversity in Greek school life show that the predominant attitude towards diversity is one of tolerance that goes hand in hand with the unquestioned acceptance of the majority religion, the majority language, the majority ethnicity in Greek school life. This is well in line with the dominant discourses on national identity in Greece and the dominant tradition of only accommodating diversity (if at all) at the individual but not at the collective level.

There is a tacit assumption that the state belongs to the native majority, and that immigrants are not legitimate political subjects that could ask for a different policy as regards for instance religious education. Interestingly however while none questions the primacy of the Greek language in schools and the distinction between Greeks and non Greeks, religion appears to be less important an identity marker. Although the majority religion is taken for granted and seen as a legitimate part of the school life, there is also a general questioning of what religion is, whether it should be included in the school curriculum and whether it is a problem if children are of different religions. Indeed, religious diversity is not yet seen as a problem in Greek schools.

With regard to our conceptual framework this study shows that minimal liberal tolerance is rarely neutral but rather goes hand in hand with a tacit assumption that there is a majority culture and religion that provides for the blueprint as regards cultural and religious matters in school life. Thus the absence of any acceptance or respect policies and measures eventually leads not to liberal freedom of choice but rather to pressures for cultural and religious assimilation.

Keywords

Tolerance, acceptance, respect, school life, Roma children, migrants, education policy, school segregation, ethnic selection.

1. Introduction¹

Education is of paramount importance for the well-being of individuals and societies today. Access to information and knowledge influences access to employment, socio-economic integration and overall development prospects. At the same time, education is also the primary institution through which children become socialized into a core set of values and norms and through which they acquire a feeling of belonging to a specific country and/or a specific (minority or majority) group. The dominant national group in a society usually provides for the general framework of the educational system and the cultural and values that this propagates through schooling. Education thus determines not only learning and future employment prospects but also identity and perceptions of own identity and understandings of the ‘other.’ Indeed national education systems have been of crucial importance in the construction of modern nations and nation-states (Hobsbawm 1983; Anderson 1981).

When societies are characterized by a relatively high degree of cultural and ethnic homogeneity, the education system usually reflects the majority culture and views and there is little contestation about this. During the post-War period and increasingly so since 1989, European societies have become more heterogeneous because of the arrival of new immigrant populations. In addition, the international framework for the respect of human and collective minority rights has provided for fruitful ground for native minorities² to raise claims for the recognition of their cultural, linguistic, ethnic or religious diversity. In this context, national education systems can become fields of contestation as majorities may cling on to them as if they were their ‘cultural property’ while minorities may require for their ethnic, religious or linguistic identity to be incorporated into the national education system.

Faced with the challenges of ethnic and cultural diversity, schools may become places of inclusion, and contribute towards the incorporation of immigrant and native minority children, or they may propagate – directly or indirectly – prejudice, stereotypes, perceptions of cultural confrontation, superiority, or discrimination. The challenge for European societies and in particular for ‘new’ host countries such as Greece is to meet raised expectations for educational policies that are able to respond to the needs of the entire student population. Schools must thus prepare children for their successful integration into the labour market but must also socialize them into a set of core national and European values of democracy, peace and respect for diversity. They should in fact ideally enhance educational, socialization and personal development opportunities for all students regardless of their majority or minority/immigrant background.

The Greek education policy and the national educational system are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Training and Religious Affairs³. The current educational system and policy was set up by the 1976 educational policy introduced with the new Constitution after the end of the 1967-1974 military dictatorship in Greece. Primary, secondary and higher education as well as research and lifelong learning policies have gone through a series of reforms during the 1980s, 1990s and most importantly in this last decade aimed at, among other priorities, modernizing the curricula and the

¹ This report has been drafted by Anna Triandafyllidou. The interviews and discussion groups were conducted by Ifigeneia Kokkali (interviews 1-28), Eda Gemi (discussion groups 5-8 and interviews 29-31), Hara Kouki (discussion groups 1-3), Anna Triandafyllidou (discussion group 4).

² Native minorities are defined as populations historically established in a given territory and which took part in the formation of the (national or multi-national) state in which they live. In many cases their participation in state-building is recognised in the Constitution and they are guaranteed special rights regarding the preservation of their cultural, religious, or linguistic heritage. In some countries, there are special provisions regarding the political representation of a native minority in cases where that minority is so numerically small that it risks being left out of the political system (Triandafyllidou, 2010: 23).

³ www.minedu.gov.gr, formerly Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.

textbooks and adapting them to contemporary pedagogical approaches and to the changing demographic realities of the country. As Greece has become host to a nearly 1 million migrant and co-ethnic returnee population, the Greek school population has become ethnically diverse. The Greek school population in the academic year 2008-2009 included approximately 9% of children from migrant families and 1% of children from co-ethnic returnee families.

Despite the subsequent reforms of the last three decades, the Greek education system has remained highly centralized with the Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute responsible for the curriculum, the school timetable and distribution of classes, the material and textbooks and the employment and training of teachers. Schools are governed by their Headmasters and the teachers working in them. However, they have to abide by specific and relative rigid requirements about what is taught, when, how, on the basis of what books. As regards its territorial organization, the Ministry has regional directorates which are then divided into prefectural or local offices, to which specific schools correspond (on the basis of their geographical location). During the last two years (2010-2011) the new socialist government (which came to power in November 2009) has embarked into a thorough reform of the education system at all levels. The proposed changes, currently in progress, are outlined in the section that follows with a view to giving the current general context for the specific topic of this study.

This report focuses on the challenges that ethnic, cultural and religious diversity brings to Greek schools both as regards migrant and native minority children. As the focus of this study is on highlighting how intolerance / tolerance / respect of ethnic diversity has been thematised in Greek school life when ethnic, cultural or religious diversity conflicts arise, we have chosen to concentrate on two case studies that pose important challenges to the Greek school system. The first issue is the question of ethnic selection practices that may of migrant and Roma children. In particular we explore practices of ethnic selection of pupils in schools, according to which Roma and immigrant children are segregated respectively in Roma-only and in immigrant-only (or at least overwhelmingly Roma or immigrant) schools and classes. Some local authorities and school administrations are thought to discourage or even hinder the enrollment of immigrant children in order to preserve a “good reputation” for their schools for which all those “different” children seem to be considered a burden. Although it is difficult to prove whether such ‘ethnic selection’ practices are applied by some school headmasters (none would admit to it as such segregation is illegal), we shall use these practices as an entry point to discuss with school teachers, parents and other stakeholders whether migrant and Roma children are rejected, tolerated or accepted in Greek schools.

The second issue that is discussed in this report concerns the accommodation of religious diversity in Greek schools. In this second case study we have presented to our informants (who include teachers, parents and pupils) the current policy and practice regarding religious minorities in schools and we have asked them to comment upon it. We have thus analysed the emerging discourses of intolerance, tolerance or acceptance of religious diversity in schools.

The report is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the structure and scope of the Greek education system and of the reforms currently in progress, discussing also briefly the education policy measures implemented so far to meet the needs of children of migrant or minority origin. Section 3 presents the migrant and Roma school population and surveys the relevant research findings so far concerning their school performance and the problems that they face. Section 4 presents the methodology and research design of the case studies. Sections 5 and 6 present the two case studies and offer a critical discourse analysis on how intolerance / tolerance / respect has been thematised with reference to the two topics of interest, notably ethnic selection or ethnic ‘mixing’ in schools, and religious diversity and its accommodation in Greek school life. The last section presents our concluding remarks.

2. The Greek educational system and intercultural education

Primary education and lower secondary education is compulsory for all children aged 6–15 years old. Post-compulsory secondary education (lyceum), according to the 1997 educational reform, consists of the Unified Upper Secondary General Education Schools (“Eniaia Lykeia”) and of the Technical Vocational Educational Schools (“TEE”); students may transfer from one type of school to the other.⁴ As for the former type, studies last 3 years and after graduation a competitive national examination takes place giving access to University or to Technological Educational Institutes. For the latter type, the duration of studies is either of two (A' level) or three years (B' level), (Dimitrakopoulos and Mavrommatis, *op.cit.*).

The Greek educational system has suffered from chronic under-funding. In year 2000, Greece spent only 7.3 % of its total public expenditure for education (all levels of education included), compared to 13% that was the OECD average. Greece's spending again on education as a percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 4.2% in 2005⁵. Dimitrakopoulos (2004:11) argues that the Greek national education system has a history of ‘educational conservatism’ due to the country's nation-building effort and the primary role of education in political socialization and the formulation of a solid, common identity. Fragoudaki and Dragona (1997) in their seminal book entitled: ‘what is our homeland?’ also highlight the strongly ethnocentric views that permeate the Greek national education system, its curricula and textbooks.

Since the mid 1990s however, there has been a public and political debate (within the Ministry, among parties, among trade unions and in the press) concerning the need to change the ‘educational philosophy’ in order for Greek students (a) to be able to compete in an increasingly globalised and competitive environment; and (b) to be able to successfully integrate within the European Union. These arguments have been expressed by representatives and politicians from across the political spectrum suggesting a consensus on the need to reform and to benefit from access to EU community funds to financially support the costs associated with reform.

Intercultural education in Greece has developed as a response to a number of factors: the poor school performance of native minority children (the Roma in particular as well as the Muslims of western Thrace); the need to adapt to EU standards as regards intercultural education and the education of minority children in particular; the arrival of nearly half a million of immigrants (largely undocumented) during the first half of the 1990s and the need to enroll and integrate their children in Greek schools.

Greece's intercultural education policy was formally inaugurated with law 2413/1996 which created Institute for the Greek Diaspora Education and Intercultural Studies (IPODE, *Ινστιτούτο Παιδείας Ομογενών και Διαπολιτισμικής Εκπαίδευσης*). The main aims and work of this institute was geared towards co-ethnics living abroad (the former Greek emigrants and their descendants), however, a small part of its work concerned also immigrants and returning co-ethnics in Greece. Actually the data available on the composition of the Greek schools' population were collected by IPODE. IPODE was abolished in 2010, as part of the overall restructuring of Greek public administration and of the effort to reduce public spending.

⁴ Beside those two main types of schools, there is a small number of nurseries and schools of primary and secondary education dedicated to students with special needs, as well as a number of Musical, Ecclesiastical and Physical Education secondary education schools (Mavrommatis, 2004; referred data sourced from the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs⁴, http://www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_page1531.htm).

⁵ see OECD Education at a Glance, 2007, in more recent editions data on Greece are missing (available at: http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3746,en_2649_39263238_41266761_1_1_1_1,00.html, last accessed on 20 May 2011)

The same law (articles 34-37) also created the Greek intercultural education, notably the *intercultural schools*, 26 in total⁶. These were the schools formerly designated as school for returning emigrant children (σχολεία ομογενών). These schools were created (according to law 2413/96, article 34, paragraph 1) to cater for the needs of ‘children with special educational, social, and cultural needs’. These schools follow the mainstream national curriculum but they have a wider margin of flexibility to adapt this curriculum to the special needs of these children. They function to this day providing a friendly environment for immigrant and co-ethnic children that study in them. They cannot of course cover in any sense the needs of the wider immigrant and co-ethnic school population (details on the composition of the school population today are given in the section below).

The second component of intercultural education in Greece have been the reception and support classes. Reception classes were first set up in gymnasiums and lyceums in the 1980s, particularly in the Thessaloniki area for the children of co-ethnic returnees (Markou 1993; Damanakis 2005). Law 1894/1990 revised the 1404/1983 legislation on reception classes, incorporated these classes in the mainstream public school system and focused on Greek language, culture and history courses for pupils who did not have Greek as their mother-tongue. The initial priority of integrating co-ethnics and returnees was impregnated by an underlying logic of assimilation, since they were considered Greeks returning to their homeland. Triandafyllidou and Gropas (2011) actually argue that this assimilation approach of the early phases continues to define Greek educational policy today even though the overwhelming majority of the immigrant population in Greece does not fall within the co-ethnic, returnee category.

In 1999, reception and tutorial/support classes were reformed by a Ministerial Act (Ministry of Education). Reception classes are organized in schools when there are at least 9 pupils⁷ with no or a limited knowledge of the Greek language. They are organized during the normal school hours and are divided into two levels. Level 1 is for children with no knowledge of Greek and can last up to 1 year. Children follow some courses with their ‘normal’ class level such as arts, physical education, foreign language. Level 2 is for children with some knowledge of Greek and may last for up to 2 years. In this case children follow also science courses with their normal class but not Greek. Normally after 2 or 3 years the child is integrated fully in the class that corresponds to their age.

Tutorial/support classes function in the afternoon after the end of the normal school hours and comprise between 4 and 9 children. They aim at supporting children who have difficulties to follow the mainstream curriculum because of their poor knowledge of Greek. Both reception and support classes form part of public schools. While the organization of these classes is well spelled out in the Act⁸, their implementation in practice has been at best discontinuous, at worse ineffective. The reason has mainly been that teachers for the reception classes were not organic part of the schools but rather were appointed after needs were verified and hence would arrive in schools in November each year, if at all. During the last academic year (2010-2011) and because of the severe cuts in all branches of the Greek public sector including education, these classes have not functioned at all in many schools.

⁶ A drop in the sea of Greece’s 9-year compulsory primary and lower secondary education system which comprises 7,621 schools.

⁷ If there are less than 9 pupils support is given to children in need within the ‘normal’ class. If there are more than 17 pupils, additional support classes are created.

⁸ The same Act leaves the initiative to organise mother-tongue classes to the prefectures. The Act does not define the budget line that prefectures would utilize to pay for such classes and to the best of our knowledge no such initiative has been taken by prefectures. By contrast, our fieldwork has revealed that there have been sporadic initiatives by teachers and parents to organise classes of Albanian, Ukrainian and Arabic language in downtown Athens high schools. However, such classes have usually lasted for a couple of years (some did not even go beyond a few meetings) because of the practical problems (they operated unofficially in the evening in public high schools) as well as because the immigrant parents’ working hours were such that they could not bring their children to the classes, outside the normal school hours (see Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2007).

The third and most important component of intercultural education in Greece are the special programs co-funded by the Greek State and the European Union, which cater for the needs of Muslims children in Western Thrace, Roma children and children from immigrant and co-ethnic returnee families. These Programs have been running since 1997 and have provided for specialized textbooks concerning the teaching of Greek as a foreign language, training of teachers in intercultural education, special initiatives of intercultural education activities. We shall discuss the activities of these programs in more detail in the section below with special reference to immigrant and Roma children.

In concluding this section, it is important to note that the national education system is currently undergoing yet another major reform. The reform program announced by the Minister of Education Anna Diamantopoulou in early 2010 is symbolically entitled ‘the new school’⁹ and concerns all levels of education. Its special new features include: the expansion of pre-school education to age 4 (instead of age 5 as it is today), the conversion of all schools to ‘full-day’ schools (i.e. 8.10 to 16.15 instead of the current compulsory 8.00-13.30), and the strengthening of communication technologies and foreign language learning. The program announced by the Ministry introduces several new elements including the notion of zones of educational priority (ZEP) in areas with ‘vulnerable communities’ which will introduce innovative pedagogical approaches to fight social exclusion and school abandonment. However many of these measures including the general implementation of the ‘full-day’ timetable and the ZEP have not taken off because of the severe budget cuts of the last year.

3. Greece’s migrant and Roma school population

The Greek legislative framework guarantees schooling for all children, citizen or foreign, from the age of 6 to the age of 15 (6-year elementary school and 3-year lower high school). Education is compulsory and is applicable to all children regardless of the residence status (legal or irregular) of their parents. Article 40 of law 2910/2001 stipulates that all children born to third-country nationals living in Greece have the right to public education. In effect, school authorities enroll foreign students even if they do not have the necessary documents, such as school certificates or birth certificates that are required for enrollment. The same is true for Roma children who may not have certificates of residence in a given municipality or may be enrolled at different ages than those foreseen by the law (e.g. age 6 for elementary schooling, and as of 2008 age 5 for compulsory pre-school).

Children of immigrant and co-ethnic returnee families

At present, approximately 10 % of the total school population in Greece may be categorized as foreign or co-ethnic repatriated. Co-ethnic repatriated are children of co-ethnic returnees either from the former Soviet Republics who have naturalized upon arrival and whose mother tongue is Russian. Immigrant children are children who are of non-Greek citizenship and whose mother tongue is other than Greek.¹⁰

According to data from the Institute for the Greek Diaspora Education and Intercultural Studies, in 2005-06, 42.7% of foreign pupils had been living in Greece during the past six years, while 57.3% had been living in Greece for under five years (Hellenic Regional Development Centre 2007: 55). Regarding the distribution of foreign students in Greek schools in 2005-06, 35.6% of schools in Greece have no foreign pupils enrolled. By contrast, the highest concentration of immigrant students is

⁹ The reform and re-organisation programme proposed by this government has been called (symbolically) ‘The New School’. For more information see the relevant web site of the Ministry: http://www.minedu.gov.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=402&Itemid=785&lang=el

¹⁰ For more information on the distinction between ‘co-ethnic’ and ‘other’ immigrants in Greece see the ACCEPT PLURALISM WP1 report (Triandafyllidou and Kokkali 2010), available at www.accept-pluralism.eu last accessed on 12 May 2011.

found in the Athens metropolitan area where immigrant and co-ethnic students are about 12% of the total school population (op.cit.: 56).

Table 1: Immigrant School Population in Greece, 2008-2009.

Schooling level	Foreign pupils	Co-ethnic pupils	Total foreign and co-ethnic pupils (percentage)	Total of all students (Greek, foreigner and co-ethnic)
Kindergarten	15,447	1,122	12.91	128,319
Primary	58,332	5,212	11.17	568,797
Gymnasium	28,713	4,327	10.46	315,998
Lyceum	9,229	2,262	5.45	210,701
Technical Schools	8,094	1,824	11.76	84,364
Total	119,815	14,747	10.29	1,308,179

The special needs of immigrant and co-ethnic children have been addressed by the reception and tutorial/support classes mentioned in the previous section but also by specific educational programmes (Πρόγραμμα Εκπαίδευσης Παλλινονστούντων και Αλλοδαπών Μαθητών – Programme for the Education of Co-ethnic and Foreign Children) implemented by the Capodistrian University of Athens in the period between 1997 and 2008. After a 2 year break the new programme started in 2010 is directed by the Aristotle University of Thessalonike.

These programs have provided for books and audiovisual support materials aimed initially at intercultural schools only but later diffused to a large number of mainstream schools who responded to the call for participating in the program. However, these books were discontinued in their production as there was an interruption in the implementation of the above mentioned programme between 2007 and 2010. It is worth noting that these books were not integrated into the standard list of textbooks printed and distributed to public schools by the Ministry either. Many intercultural schools have continued using them in photocopies (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2007 and Interview N.G.).

These programs have also implemented a large number of initiatives for the training of teachers in intercultural education as well as paying for specialized teachers that would teach support and tutorial classes in schools that participated in the program. Several studies (Palaiologou 2004; Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2007) testify to the their importance in supporting the education of immigrant and co-ethnic children.

Nonetheless, the scholarly literature shows that a large number of immigrant students experience school failure and other school-related problems (Nicolaou 2000). A disproportionate number of immigrant students fail to complete the lower high school grade (gymnasium) and even more

numerous fail to complete the upper high school grade (lyceum) (Voulalas 2007). School principals interviewed in the late 1990s (Bombas 1996; 2001) reported the students' lack of language fluency and their general cultural adaptation problems as the main issues. Difficulties were highest among students of higher elementary school classes with more advanced curricula that required more advanced written and oral communication skills. The immigrant students starting to attend Greek school from the first two classes were quicker to adapt to the new environment and to learn the language.

Studies conducted a decade ago signalled to the fact that the reception and tutorial classes risk being ineffective as few attempts, if any, have been made to raise the multicultural awareness of teachers and students (see also Bombas op.cit.). Dimakos and Tasiopoulou (2003) showed that native students have negative opinions about immigrants. The comments made by students (the study applied both quantitative and qualitative techniques) were derogatory or at best neutral. Positive arguments and views were very limited. Interestingly, these opinions were not influenced by the gender or the socio-economic profile of the responding pupils.

A recent study by Palaiologou and Evangelou (2007) shows that overall foreign or co-ethnic children perform worse than Greek children. However, there is variation: Foreign or co-ethnic children's performance suffers more in language than in maths. Russian speaking children do better than other foreign children and in particular in maths they perform almost as well as Greek students. Overall, children who have Greek friends perform better and progress more quickly than foreign children who have no Greek friends. Naturally, socio-economic and not only ethnic inequality is part of the explanation of why foreign children do worse than native ones. Worryingly although children who have been in a Greek school for 6-7 years improve their performance and diminish their difference from Greek children, the level of improvement compared to children who have been in Greek schools for 3-4 years is quite small.

Roma minority children in Greece

Until 1984, the Greek state had not shown any particular interest as to the school performance of Roma minority children. Actually a Ministry working group document dated 27 March 1986 on Roma children blamed Roma families for their children non-attending school or attending with very poor results. In 1987 there was a first attempt to study the issues of Roma children education and to identify the relevant problems in cooperation between the Ministry of Education (General Secretariat of Popular Education), the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior. The relevant study issued by the General Secretariat of Popular Education proposes for the first time a different approach to the analysis of Roma children educational issues with a view to recognizing their cultural specificity and addressing the root causes of their school failure. Actually this was the first study that tried to produce a mapping of the Roma populations and to estimate their total numbers (currently standing at 150-200,000, see also Triandafyllidou and Kokkali 2010).

However, it was only in 1993 when the Ministry of Education issued a circular (Circular G1/1126, 17 September 1993) which invited all Directorates and Regional Offices as well as teachers and school principals to cooperate in a special effort to integrate Roma children in public schools. According to Pitsiou and Lagios (2007) this slow realization that a special approach was needed for the integration of Roma children into the school system was largely due to a White Paper issued by the Ministers of Education of EEC member states on 22 May 1989 regarding Roma education and intercultural education at large.

It is worth noting that Roma populations in Greece include four different types of residence/societal organization:

- Those who are permanently settled in towns and cities in 'normal' housing
- Those who are permanently settled in Roma camps at the outskirts of towns and cities

- Those that are semi-settled and live for longer periods in camps but also move to different regions in search of temporary or seasonal work
- Those that live a truly nomadic life moving around in trucks and vans.

During the last two decades, the latter two categories of Roma communities include also Roma from other Balkan and central Eastern European countries (interview with T.K. local politician in Aspropyrgos, a neighbourhood of Athens with a high Roma population, and Discussion Group with 4 Roma parents). A study issued by the University of Ioannina (not dated) argues that the Greek Roma populations tend to become more and more settled and there is a significant reduction of those living a nomadic life. They rather tend to be settled in a specific locality and to move temporarily for employment reasons. It is however also worth noting that Roma people are overall highly mobile within the Greek territory (Omas Synergon Evaluation Report, 2008). These special features of the Roma way of life pose special challenges for the education of Roma children as these may start the school year in one place and finish it somewhere else, may not have a certificate of residence to enroll to a specific school.

In addition the Roma population has high levels of illiteracy which poses an additional challenge in the schooling of young children. Roma parents are not familiar with the formal educational system and the school environment and often see no usefulness of formal education other than basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills for their children. They are not able to check the performance of their children in school, and may induce their children to work from an early age because of economic need (Discussion group with Roma parents, T.K. Local politician in municipality with large Roma population, M.L. chairperson of an NGO that provides for day care and school support to Roma children).

In the period 1994-1996 Roma children were gradually integrated in the reception and support classes for children who do not know the Greek language (see also previous section) while in June 1996 the first Program for the Education of Roma children begun. This Program continues to this day with an interval between 2004 and 2006. It was initially implemented by the University of Ioannina (1997-2001 and 2002-2004), the University of Thessaly (2005-2008) and more recently it started again (2010-onwards) under the direction of the Capodistrian University of Athens and the Aristotle University of Thessalonike.

This program was met with significant success in reducing school abandonment of Roma children from 75% to 26% in 30 prefectures addressed by the program in its early phase. It trained about 5,000 teachers throughout Greece and developed special school programs and special approaches for the integration of Roma children in mainstream education. In the period 2002-2004 the program was implemented in 41 prefectures and introduced some innovative measures: after the normal school hours Roma children were integrated through special creative laboratories and music classes as well as 'normal' support/tutorial classes. The aim was to bring children close to school, reveal their special talents and cultural capital and help them perform better in the mainstream courses.

The evaluation report of this Program (Omas Synergon 2008) has identified a number of positive developments as well as several persisting problems concerning the integration of Roma children into Greek schools. Positive developments include:

- the Program had a significant positive impact in reducing school abandonment albeit only in the prefectures where it was implemented.
- The introduction of the Cultural Mediator was met with great success and should be generalized. It boosted the participation of Roma children in schooling and reduced absenteeism.
- Specialised training for teachers in primary education was evaluated positively by those who followed these courses

- Children from sedentary Roma families were generally enrolled in schools at the beginning of each school year.
- Teachers and headmasters in schools participating in the Program were particularly committed and obtained important positive results in enrolling Roma children, keeping them in school and helping them learn and not be discouraged by their initially low performance in school (see also M.L. chairperson of NGO providing day care and school support to Roma children).

Persisting problems are:

- The program had no effect on reducing school abandonment in areas outside those in which it was implemented and the general school abandonment rate remained at 77%. In other words the program and any other policies adopted so far had no lasting institutional impact on this issue.
- There was no evaluation on how the training provided to teachers actually was adopted in their everyday work and had eventually a positive impact on the educational attainment of Roma children
- There was no sustained and systematic effort to integrate Roma parents in the school community by providing for instance adult education courses. This was considered to be a key factor for the overall integration of Roma children as one of the main problems identified is that Roma parents are at best unable at worse not interested in supporting their children in their school career.
- Many school teachers and headmasters continued to be prejudiced against Roma families and created 'those conditions so that with the tolerance of the administrative authorities, children abandon the school and they [the teachers and headmasters] were not "disturbed" in their work' (Omas Synergon 2008: 248).

In October 2008, the Ministry of Education issued a circular where it emphasized the inclusion of Roma children in the reception and tutorial/support classes and presented the framework for the set up and functioning of such classes. Two years later, on 20 August 2010 the Ministry of Education issued another special circular that pointed to the obligation of school headmasters to assist and encourage the enrollment and participation of Roma children in schools. The circular reminded headmasters that Roma children have a special Student Card that follows them from school to school. Because of the frequent moving of families this Card allows schools to trace back the school history of the child and ensures a continuation in the school career of the child. The ministry thus invited school headmasters to enroll children even without the appropriate documentation (proving their residence), even if they were older than the class they should attend. It emphasized that the equality of the citizens is a Constitutional principle and should not be violated, and that any reluctance to enroll or effort to segregate Roma from non Roma children is a violation of this principle, introduces discrimination among Greek citizens and is against the obligations of Greece emanating from the international conventions (such as the UN Convention for Children Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights). Last but not least the Circular encouraged the cooperation among all relevant services (health services for instance for the vaccination of children and general family support services) for the successful inclusion of Roma children in the national education system.

It is in this context that we have engaged into our empirical research regarding the ethnic selection of Roma and immigrant children in Greek schools, the accommodation of religious diversity in schools and the overall thematisation of intolerance / tolerance / acceptance of ethnic and religious diversity.

4. Methodology and Research Design

This report is based on desk research as well as fieldwork. In terms of desk research we have collected the available statistical data, legal texts and policy documents (e.g. circulars or Ministerial decisions) as well as, of course, the relevant scholarly literature on the education of immigrant and Roma children. Fieldwork has been conducted into three phases, the first phase comprising the period between mid December and mid January, the second period between mid February and late March and the third period between early June and the end of July 2011. The fieldwork was for the most part conducted in the metropolitan area of Athens while one interview was conducted also in Thessalonike.

We have selected our two case studies on the basis of our knowledge of the relevant literature, of the Greek education context, past incidents of segregation especially of Roma children as well as past incidents of rejection of migrant children (Pitsiou and Lagios 2007; Vemi and Alexopoulos 2003; Ministerial Circular, Ministry of Education, 20 August 2010, Φ.3 / 960 / 102679 / Γ1; Markou 2010) and also on the basis of the interviews with key informants, with people who have held high political or administrative positions and who were directly involved with Roma minority and migrant education (interview 1, 2, 5 and 6) as well as with education experts (interview 3 and 4).

More specifically, we have conducted in total 32 semi-structured qualitative interviews. Of those, 9 interviews were with experts, policy makers and local politicians (for details see the Annex), 4 with middle rank Ministry officials. In addition to the expert interviews, we selected three schools in which to conduct interviews with teachers or headmasters, parents of Greek, migrant and Greek Roma children. Our selection of the schools has been based on the knowledge of the Athens metropolitan area and its different neighbourhoods with larger or smaller migrant and Roma populations. With a view to capturing different experiences of diversity and different approaches to it, we have on purpose selected three types of schools: a school with a high percentage of immigrant children and from different backgrounds. That was a gymnasium in the so-called *Yellow Neighbourhood*,¹¹ a neighbourhood in central Athens that is well known for the high percentage of immigrant inhabitants that it has. The second school was a school with a relatively high percentage of Roma minority¹² and migrant children with a strong representation of Pontic Greek children in particular (i.e. children of co-ethnic returnees from the former Soviet Union, This has been called the *White Neighbourhood* school and is located in the western outskirts of Athens. This is an area well known for the high percentage of co-ethnic returnee inhabitants, namely Pontic Greeks, and for its relatively high percentage of Roma minority families.¹³ These two schools can be called ‘difficult’ schools in that the challenges of diversity are acutely felt in the classroom because of the different ethnic, linguistic, religious and socio-economic composition of the student population.

In addition to these two ‘special’ schools, we have selected an ‘average’ school, notably a school in a lower middle class area of Athens, in the so-called *Red Neighbourhood*, again in the western suburbs of Athens, where there is a small even if visible percentage of migrant children of different nationalities but where native Greeks remain the majority.

In each of these schools we conducted 2 or 3 interviews with teachers or the school principal and 3 or 4 interviews with majority and immigrant or Roma minority parents. We conducted 19 interviews (of which 2 were with both parents) in total of which 7 with teachers or school principals, 5 with Greek

¹¹ These are fictitious names for the neighbourhoods in respect of protecting the anonymity of respondents.

¹² It has proven to be a formidable challenge to find a lower high school (a gymnasium) with a significant percentage of Roma minority children. Although gymnasium is part of the 9-year compulsory education, many Roma children abandon school after the completion of the elementary school. Many actually complete the elementary school at age 15 – i.e. at the age that they normally should be graduating from gymnasium.

¹³ Western Attica is the only area of the wider Athens metropolitan area that registers a relatively high percentage of Roma pupils in elementary schools (13%). In all other areas of Athens such percentages range between 0.2% and 2% (based on data for 2009-2010 from the Directorate of Primary Education, Ministry of Education).

parents, 7 with migrant parents and 1 with a Roma minority mother. Among the 19 informants, 14 were women and 5 were men. This over-representation of women has to do both with the fact that it was the mother that we would usually get for an interview with a parent and also that teachers and school principals are often women. In selecting our interviewees we have followed a mixed strategy. We used snowballing from initial contacts in the wider migrant civil society network as well as through our initial interviews with experts.

During the third phase of the fieldwork we conducted eight discussion groups. Of those four discussion groups were held with immigrant parents, notably with Albanian parents, with Albanian Roma parents, with Eastern European parents and with a mixed group of immigrant parents comprising the smaller nationality groups (Pakistani, Egyptian, Moldavian). One discussion group with high school teachers was held at a middle class neighbourhood school in Athens. In the same school we conducted a discussion group with high school pupils of Greek origin. We also conducted a discussion group with lower high school children at a private high school in a working class neighbourhood. Both these schools had a 10-20% presence of migrant children from different national backgrounds. We also held a discussion group with three young people of sub Saharan African origin, 2 second generation and 1 first generation. All had attended Greek schools.

Interviews were conducted in the schools, at the teachers' office, in public places (cafés for instance), in the workplace of a parent or at their home. Discussion groups were conducted at schools, at the premises of an NGO or research centre, and at a children's hospital - wherever it was suitable for the interviewees. They were all conducted in a friendly atmosphere and the researchers sought to create a feeling of equality, especially with parents of immigrant or minority background. All interviews were conducted in Greek and were taped and then transcribed. While recruiting experts for an interview was not particularly difficult due also to our network of contacts among colleagues working in the field of migration and minority studies, the recruitment of interviewees within the schools was much more complicated. In each school there was one contact that eventually functioned as a gatekeeper and which provided contacts with other parents and teachers. In one case where the school headmaster was completely against the conduction of the research this was particularly problematic and interviews were conducted outside the school hours upon condition of keeping the interviewees completely anonymous. The recruitment of migrant parents was much easier through our researcher of Albanian origin while contacts with additional schools were facilitated by the parent of one of the researchers who is a high school teacher.

All interviews were conducted in Greek with the exception of the discussion group with Roma parents that was conducted in Albanian. The audio records were transcribed into Greek and were anonymised. The interview guides used for the interviews as well as the list of interviews can be found in the appendix of this report. In the case of experts and politicians we have chosen to give their initials and their role. In the case of parents and teachers and for references to the discussion groups we cite them with their interview numbers. Some basic socio-demographic data (their ethnicity/nationality, gender, marital situation, gender of their child, and school they are attending) are given in the list of interviews at the annex of this report.

Our analysis of the interview data has been based on the tradition of qualitative discourse analysis, from a critical perspective. In particular we draw from the concept of *discursive topoi* as developed in the work of Wodak et al (1999), where *topoi* are conceptualised as highly conventional and core elements of argumentation. Going through the transcribed interviews, we looked for main argumentation strategies (the discursive topoi) which enable us to understand how individuals' discourse over the school, the foreigners, the immigrants, the minority and the majority, are constructed (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001).

5. Migrant and Roma Children Segregation

The first issue of concern in this study has been the question of migrant and Roma minority segregation in schools and the efforts to de-segregate them. Segregation as a policy means the spatial separation of children in separate classrooms and/or in separate schools. Such a policy is in Greece of course against the Constitution and is not implemented anywhere, at least not officially. However, there have been two types of segregation practices and two related discourses registered in Greece. Below we shall present the actual problem and the relevant discourses of state actors, teachers, and majority, minority or immigrant parents.

Segregation may take the form of informal spatial separation of the Roma minority children in separate school annexes created near a Roma camp with the excuse that they thus can better cater to the needs of the Roma children but with the implicit scope of keeping these children physically away from the local 'normal' school. As A.S., former secretary of state in Intercultural Education, and T.K. local councilor note in the area of Aspropyrgos, in the western outskirts of Athens there had been acute problems of rejection of the local Roma population by the local Pontic Greek and overall Greek population which have led among other things to the set up of a separate Roma¹⁴ school. Pontic Greeks have arrived in the area in the last 15 years, are Greek citizens like the Roma of course, and are locally a majority. Roma in this area are generally nomadic or in any case moving frequently between this place and other parts of Greece depending on where job opportunities arise and many among them come from other Balkan and central eastern European countries (see also Discussion Group 7, with Albanian Roma parents, interview with T.K.). These features create additional challenges for their local integration.

This type of direct segregation is against the Greek Constitution but is supported by local actors with the justification that Roma children are not vaccinated and suffer from various skin or other contagious diseases, thus representing a health hazard for other children (X.X. mayor of neighbourhood with high Roma nomadic population). A.S. (former secretary of State that had taken a special interest in Roma children integration in schools) confirms that such risks truly exist and that he as a secretary of state had to face such incidents where primary school teachers had been infected. The Ministry as a response had issued a circular reminding school headmasters of the protocol for registering Roma children including their accompanying them to the local health centre for vaccinations, the need to overlook the lack of residence certificates and the importance not to turn away Roma children from the schools. The importance of health related assistance to Roma children in also confirmed by an NGO chairperson working with Roma children (L.M.).

Apart from this form of acute segregation and complete rejection of Roma minority children, there are more subtle ways of indirect segregation, notably ethnic selection that appears to be practiced informally in some schools which refuse migrant or Roma children with the excuse that there are no more free places in the school. Such practices have been indirectly documented in a recent research (Markou 2010) and have also been referred to by teachers and parents in the Yellow neighbourhood school (interview 22, 23, 26) and in the White neighbourhood school (interview 18) as well as in the Discussion group 4 with young people of sub Saharan African origin. The relevant testimonies however are indirect: our informants accuse their neighbouring schools who are seen as 'elitist', all

¹⁴ In one specific locality of the wider Aspropyrgos area called Psari, with tent dwelling Roma, the local authorities had constructed a segregated primary school. It was made up of two containers with basic facilities, in the middle of nowhere as A.S. notes and a bus was taking the Roma children from the nearby camp to the school every day. When he intervened asking the local authorities that the Roma children from this camp be integrated in the nearby local elementary school, the other parents and the local authorities (the Mayor and the Prefect) opposed this view. They refused that their children and the Roma children be housed in the same school even if children would neither share the same classrooms nor the same recreation time. The Ministry had exerted pressure in this direction with a view to incorporating somehow the Roma with the other children but to no avail.

native children schools, to practice such informal ethnic selection with the excuse that the school is full. By contrast the three discussion groups with immigrant parents (discussion groups 5, 6 and 8) and the discussion group with teachers (discussion group 2) have had no experience of such ethnic selection practices and have refused that they exist.

We have not been able to test the truthfulness of these allegations as no school principal or regional director would admit to such practices. Quite the contrary they would ensure that such practices are forbidden and that schools enroll all the students that come to them (interview 17). Interestingly two teachers from the Yellow neighbourhood schools which is an inner city centre school in Athens noted that immigrant children keep the school (and the relative teacher jobs) alive because otherwise the school population in the Athens city centre is notably shrinking (Interviews 22, 24).

This is the kind of segregation or ethnic selection problems identified through our desk and field research. However when it comes to the testimonies of the teachers, the parents (and their children) involved the issues and relevant discourses are different. In order to avoid simply re-telling their views in our own words we have applied here the method of critical discourse analysis looking for structures of argumentation (discursive topoi) in the interview transcripts. We have thus identified three main discursive topoi concerning the ethnic composition of schools (in terms of Greek majority, immigrant and Roma minority children) and the idea of segregation or ethnic selection.

The first discursive topos is that of **school quality**. Here the ethnic segregation or ethnic selection of the children is directly related to the ‘quality’ of the children and the teachers. ‘Quality’ is a vague concept that ultimately has to do with students that do their homework and middle class (Greek) parents that exert some parental supervision over them, and about teachers that do their job diligently. Discussing the relationship between the two neighbouring schools (both in the Yellow Neighbourhood) in which school A (the teacher’s school) has more than 60% migrant children from more than 20 different nationalities while school B (the neighbouring school) has a majority of Greek children, and the concept of school quality, a teacher offers a very good example of this kind of discursive topos:

‘in the neighbouring school they have different class rooms, one for geography, one for history, one for mathematics. This is how it is, [in the school] across the street. But here we do not have this luxury, the school is old, we cannot do it. The students from the school across the street say: we want the teachers of A school because this gymnasium has a core of good teachers but [they say] we do not want the kids of A school. Because now there will be a merger of the two schools, it is only a matter of time¹⁵, if it is not this year, it will be next year. (..) [at the school across the street] there are children of judges, of lawyers, of chemists’, children that could have gone to a different school. We have some of these children too. But only a tiny minority. By comparison to the school across the street. We only have about 15 such children.’ (Interview 22).

This argumentation structure is proposed in different words by the Greek parents of a boy that attends this same school A. The dialogue between the two parents who both propose that migrant children should study in different, separate schools is eloquent:

‘Mother: [Albanian] children can attend Greek schools without having to attend a different school. They can do it because they have the basis [of language learning] from their own country, and even if they do not, they can learn Greek. But it would have been better to have different schools.

Father: ‘it would be better for us, that is’

¹⁵ This is part of the overall mergers of schools currently (2010-2011) implemented by the Ministry with a view to optimising the use of material and human resources.

Mother: 'no no, no. it would be better. For them'

Father: Why would it be better? In what sense? Because it would be convenient for us?

Mother: because separately they would learn differently, they would progress differently

(..)

Mother: you forget that now an Albanian [boy], a Moldavian [girl], another, comes G. [their child] and tells you [at home] an Albanian word, a Georgian word, another [word]' (interview 26).

This school quality discursive topos can thus be used to argue in favour of school segregation or simply to note that the problem exists and is real and has more to do with socio-economic and educational factors ('good' schools have middle class children with educated parents). However there is no consideration of what the school does to promote student integration and whether the educational approach and the existing means (e.g. textbooks) are such that they can bring the best out of the more socio-economically disadvantaged children.

This topos is however used also by a teacher (interview 17) to evaluate the school and while she draws the conclusion that the school is good, taking into account the diversity of its school population and the language learning issues that it faces (having children from different linguistic backgrounds with different levels of Greek language knowledge, including here the Roma children not only the migrant children).

While the evaluation of the school quality in relation to its ethnic and socio-economic composition is a common theme in discussions about the challenges of migrant children education (see also Bombas 1996; 2001 and Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2007), the new feature here is its linkage to the question of school segregation or de-segregation. Interestingly it is an adolescent student that participated in part of the interview with his parents that noted that actually going to a school such as his (the Yellow Neighbourhood school with over 60% of immigrant children) is a good thing 'because you get to meet people from different countries' (Interview 26, also discussion group 2 with 17-18 years olds of Greek origin).

Interestingly our informants make also contradictory statements about this topos: they on one hand acknowledge that immigrant children who are born in Greece or have arrived in the country at an early age have no problems with the language (you would not be able to tell they are 'immigrants'), when asked if they would send their kids to a school with a high percentage of migrant children they say:

Respondent 1: I would avoid it, why not? Why hide it? There would be more problems

Respondent 2: even with friends when we talk, they search for a school with the fewer Albanian kids possible, why? Because the lesson goes more smoothly? How can you teach properly when there are kids who do not speak the language?

Interviewer: but you just said that there is no more a problem, that children of second generation speak 'normally'

Respondent 3: yes, of course, but this does not mean that their standards are not lower, these kids are not as good [in school] as our kids, except for exceptions...

[..]

Respondent 1: We also had very good students from Albania, this is not the issue...

Respondent 3: they do not have families that support them...

Eventually the school quality discursive topos is an ethnic prejudice discourse under disguise. The discussion groups with immigrant parents (discussion group 5, 6 and 8) show that migrant parents, especially those settled for a long time in Greece, have a strong interest in their kids' schooling, speak with teachers and generally actually say they are in good terms with teachers and headmasters in most cases. One informant, an Albanian mother who is a cleaner, applied and got her child into an Experimental School because she felt that her local school was not good enough (Discussion Group 6). An Egyptian mother chose an Arabic school for her daughter (Discussion group 5) and several migrant parents chose private schools for a period or for the whole schooling of their children if they could afford it because they wanted them to get a good education (Discussion group 8 and 4). Our informants of Sub Saharan African origin (discussion group 4) actually noted that African parents send their kids to foreign language schools (English speaking or French speaking, depending on whether their country of origin's post-colonial language is English or French) if they can afford it because they want their kids to have better prospects in life, especially if they have to live Greece.

The second discursive topos regarding ethnic selection and separation of children can be called **the troublemaker** topos. According to this topos ethnic diversity in schools is a problem when it comes to foreigners, because they are troublemakers. In this sense the Roma children, even if they are socio-economically disadvantaged and perform poorly in schools, are not a problem. Because they are not particularly demanding. Pontic Greeks, those settled for a longer period in Greece and with Greek citizenship and their children are not a problem either. The problem is the newly arrived 'Rossopontioi' (the Russian Pontians). This discursive topos is found in the White neighbourhood school which has a 10-15% Roma minority children, a high number of Pontic Greek children, of Greek children and a number of migrant children of Albanian and other nationalities too. A Greek mother, who is also the head of the parents' association in the White Neighbourhood school notes:

'Most problems are not created by the Roma. With the Roma we do not have a problem. The Roma, the poor things, they tried to squat the school, and we went and opened the school. Well we told them tell us what are your requests, what do you want. And they had no claims, no requests. After that the Russian Pontians came and the president of the student association and they squatted the school for 3-4 days and it finished. But Roma no, [they are not a problem]. The Roma, to the contrary, if you start yelling at them, and you tell them 'you will be punished, you will this and that' they get timid, they stop. The problem are the Russian Pontians. The Russian Pontians and the Albanians.'

The troublemaker topos is however associated to several nationalities depending probably on the context. Participants in our discussion group with Eastern European mothers (Discussion group 5) say that Albanian children are seen as violent and other children are actually afraid to tease them. In the discussion group with Greek 17 year olds (discussion group 3) a girl argued that Pakistanis are particularly violent and criminals. The other children rejected her arguments. Overall it seems that the troublemaker topos in schools is a corollary to the argument that immigrants have higher rates of criminality than natives.

Migrant parents note that some teachers attach the label of 'troublemaker' to some migrant children because they are prejudiced. They do not say it clearly though, but rather accuse the children for being trouble makers

'I do not like one or two of the teachers. They are not nice with the child [her child]. (...) they gossip about the children, they ask them strange things about their nationality, to 1-2 children from Kazakhstan they behave in a racist mode, they do not let them play at the computers, they punish them more easily than other kids, they yell at foreigners more than at Greeks. It is always the fault of the child: you are to blame because you run, you tease the other children, you throw litter on the floor' (an Albanian mother of 2 children, who lives in a downtown

Athens area with a majority of immigrant population in the neighbourhood and in the school, Discussion Group 6)

An interesting testimony comes also from a Russian woman, mother of 2 adolescent children and married with a Palestinian man (Discussion group 8):

I remember an incident when my son was at elementary school. The parents association had targeted a little Albanian boy, they said that he was teasing the other children and they wanted to expel him from the school. The poor child would react when they called him ‘Albanian’. He was very smart and strong. My son, Yannis, stood by his side, it was the two of them against all others.

Thus the troublemaker topos can be used both to explain ethnic selection or segregation in schools as well as discriminatory behaviour and prejudice within the school

A third topos is that of **discrimination**. The segregation of Roma children in particular and their rejection even when they are integrated in the school environment with other Greek majority and immigrant children as happens in our White Neighbourhood school is understood as discrimination. This view is supported by the Greek mother who is also the president of the parents’ association in that school (Interview 18) and by the Roma mother and daughter (interview 21).

In the interview we conducted with a Roma mother and her daughter this same topos of discrimination is taken up. The Roma adolescent daughter says:

‘I believe they do not want me in class because I am Roma (..) they tease me (..) they tell me bad words (..) both girls and boys [make a fool of me].’ (Interview 21)

This girl suffered from double discrimination. She was discriminated by Roma boys who made advances on her simply because she is a Roma girl and felt they had the right to. She was called names by migrant and Greek majority boys and girls because she is Roma. She was called ‘Gyftissa’ (which is a colloquial term used in Greece to refer to Roma people but also has a derogatory meaning, as someone who is dirty and uncivilized). Neither she nor her mother nor the Greek mother cited above could give any explanation of why the majority parents did not want the Roma in the school.

‘They [the majority of the parents] do not want them [the Roma children] (..) they have no justification. They just do not want them. (..) just because they are Roma. They consider them Roma, ok, they do not want them [in the school]’ (interview 18)

While Roma segregation and discrimination is widely documented in the Special Programme for Assisting Roma Children integration in the education system (see also Omas Synergion 2008), it is interesting that lay people, majority and minority parents, have no explanation to provide. They somehow take it for granted, as the ‘usual’ situation.

This topos is repeated in our discussion group with Albanian Roma parents (Discussion group 7): they expected to be rejected because they were Roma. However they argued that their segregation and exclusion was due to the fact that they were non Greek. An Albanian Roma mother actually argued strongly that she had been unable to enrol her daughter in elementary school because she tried to enrol it with some delay (a couple of years after than normal because the child had to have an operation in the eye) but they rejected the child. At the same time, Roma segregation acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy – since they expect to be asked for papers they cannot produce, they do not even try to enrol their children in schools (Discussion group 7). It has to be noted however that children of nomadic and non Greek Roma families are much worse off than the children of settled down Greek Roma families who attend and usually finish primary school (P.S., teacher at a primary school with nearly half Roma children).

The topos of discrimination is relevant also for children from Sub Saharan Africa. When speaking about religious diversity in schools, J. a young second generation migrant from sub Saharan Africa noted:

‘migrants from these countries [eastern Europe] have this [assimilation] mentality because they can hide, the African cannot hide, so you do not even start thinking about it. It is different, your child is different no matter what happens, what she does [she means because of the skin colour] (..) this is not just about Greece. Africans in Europe cannot hide...’
(Discussion group 4)

In fact the few informants in Discussion Group 4 and Discussion Group 5 who are from Sub Saharan Africa noted that skin colour is something that conditions their existence in Greece and in schools. A Kenyan mother of a 17 year old boy, married to a Nigerian and living in Greece for many years noted that ‘black’ people are always made to feel different:

‘I cannot say that they tell [my son] bad things, but generally they distinguish her from other children. This is how we have had to address this – in what way? With positive comments because he is African. For instance someone would watch a documentary about Africa and would come and say to the child I saw who you are and what you do, what clothes you were, and this kind of thing. The school headmaster expected him to be fast in running because he is black. I cannot say that it is negative, but to a certain extent it is a form of racism’

This view is confirmed also by discussion in Group 4 which include all sub Saharan African youth of first and second generation. They all noted that they were made to feel different. At best because ‘blacks’ are good at sports, at worse because ‘blacks’ steal our girls. Race is thus an important dimension in the discrimination topos.

The discrimination topos and its ramifications actually shows the subtle ways in which children at schools can be made to feel different, that they do not belong, by name calling or refusal to enrol them as happens for the Roma but also by stereotypes and labelling as ‘black’ or ‘African’ as happens with people of sub Saharan African origin.

Concluding Remarks

While segregation and discrimination against migrant or minority children are illegal and anti-Constitutional in Greece there is a certain level of informal segregation or ethnic selection taking place in some schools. While our background research documented in the earlier sections of this report and our expert informants confirm the existence of this problem, our own fieldwork in schools with larger or smaller migrant and Roma minority populations does not contain issues of clear segregation or ethnic selection. The relevant challenges in these schools is to avoid the risk of becoming a ‘ghetto’ or ‘all migrant’ schools because this is coupled with being a low quality school, where students are troublemakers and know no discipline and discrimination is common practice. The issue is thus not presented as a question of rejecting, tolerating or accepting minority or migrant children but rather on how to raise the performance of the school and its students. A closer look into the data however shows that the discursive topos of *school quality* is in reality a politically correct discourse that disguises a strong ethnic prejudice according to which migrant children are worse than ‘our’ children and immigrant children lower the standards at a school regardless of whether they speak Greek fluently. While the school quality topos openly argues in favour of separating majority children from migrant ones, the trouble maker topos only indirectly supports the idea that ethnic selection would be a good thing because it would help avoid all the problematic children that create mayhem in the classroom. The troublemaker topos is quite common and uses another politically correct strategy to argue that migrant children are bad for the school. They are not bad because they are inferior but because they create trouble and interrupt the teaching. Similarly the discrimination topos indirectly justifies segregation as the argument goes that children are separated anyway even if they study within the

same school. The discrimination topos takes ethnic prejudice for granted and does not question it. Interestingly we find within the discrimination topos that more than religion, race (skin colour) is a relevant dimension for being seen as 'different' in Greek schools.

The analysis of the discourses developing around the issue of school selection shows that ethnic and racial diversity is mainly tolerated in Greece but not accepted. The presence of migrant and Roma minority children is considered a bad thing for a school (school quality going down, troublemakers) but is tolerated because segregation is against the law.

6. Accommodating Religious Diversity in Schools: Tolerance or Acceptance?

Religious diversity is not mentioned spontaneously by our informants as a challenge for Greek schools. In the three selected schools where our fieldwork concentrated in spring 2011, teachers, headmasters and Greek parents noted that religion was not an issue mostly because the majority of immigrant children are either christened when they came to Greece or are not practicing Muslims. A Greek mother in the Yellow Neighbourhood school noted:

'most of the children who go to the High school, in the high schools of the neighbourhood, well most are christened, they declared they were christened, of course they were bringing some papers, because they had been christened here [in Greece], and those who were not, you could see who they were, they were writing religion: - dash, we knew they were Muslims most of them. (...) some children have asked not to follow the religion class, one or two Muslim girlfriends of my daughter, I think they have been exempted from religion class. (...) the motivation is not to go to the religion class. Not fanaticism. We do not have fanatic people in the area, on this level, no.' (Interview 24)

The same was true concerning the Roma children: their difference is understood as ethnic and cultural, not religious. However, the hypothetical question of conceding the right to collective prayer or other religious duties to children from a different religion and notably Islam proved to be a good research strategy for prompting interviewees to speak about what tolerance and acceptance of diversity in school life means to them.

We have identified five discursive topoi concerning people's attitude towards ethnic and cultural diversity. The first is **religion is a private matter** which is somehow in opposition with **the assimilation discursive topos**. The second is **tolerance as the first step to acceptance**. The third discursive topos is that of **acceptance**, and the fourth topos is **that of respect**.

The **religion is a private matter** discursive topos, from a Greek majority perspective, is epitomized in the following statement of a teacher in the White Neighbourhood high school (Interview 18):

'Yes we have [Muslim students] and yes, ok, we accept, yes, [that they do not want to participate in the prayer every morning] (...) at home they can do whatever they want. It does not concern us. We follow the rules of the school. We pray every morning, we do religion classes, all the normal stuff that we receive from the Ministry of Education, (...), we do not care of the religion of each person. One can believe whatever he wants, at home. (...) what does it mean to be different? In the classroom they are all together, to learn and go ahead. I do not think that the educator should see it in this way. (...) in the classroom we all progress together. With the particularities that may exist, we address them, we help the pupil, we include him in the group, we cannot leave her/him out because s/he is Roma, s/he is Russian Pontic or Albanian. I do not even ask what each person is.'

This excerpt exemplifies the dominant benevolent view of liberal tolerance towards ethnic or religious diversity. People are different but this difference is not relevant for the school or is only barely relevant to the extent that the teacher must help all students to feel included in the class and to perform

well in school. Religion is a private matter, and minority religions should be exercised at home. In school there is only space for the dominant religion.

There is an interesting variant of this topos expressed by several immigrant parents and some Greek children in our discussion groups which says that religion should be left out of the school. Thus religion is a private matter and hence should not be in schools, any kind of religion. Parents who originate from post communist countries note that they would prefer some morning physical exercise instead of the gathering together of all the pupils, standing in line and 'praying' (this is the common morning ritual in all Greek schools) and learning some crafts instead of religion (discussion group 8; discussion group 6). They see religion classes as a 'wasted time' and note that religion is a private matter and is about God and belief in God not the church and the teaching of organized religion

The religion is a private matter topos is contradicted by **the assimilation topos** adopted by several migrant parents:

'Are you sure that this decision [of being exempted from the religion class] is in force? Because I have this problem. For me religion is something very complicated. Believing is one thing and ideology is another thing. Here in Greece religion is ideology. It is not about what you believe. You are obliged. You have to follow. When I told my child not to participate he said I cannot because I will be separate from the rest of the class and none will play with me. And my child is not christened and they called her: non christened (avaptisti), atheist. And it was a problem. And she participates [in religion class] to be with the other children. And now in gymnasium the problem is even greater (..) I do not like it that children have to take marks about what they believe. And religion is what you believe. And my daughter wants to leave [the class] but she does not know what to do. That is why I want religion to go, to be out of the school. Completely. Maybe it is how I grew up. But I have never told my child because I do not believe you should not believe [in God] (..) there used to be a lot of xenophobia [related to religion] and there still is, even if much less. We had to hide behind a cross then [when they arrived, 10-15 years ago] (Albanian mother of two children, cleaner, who sends her child to an Experimental School, Discussion group 6).

Not all migrant parents have had problems with their religion and with their children being asked to assimilate. Some (discussion group 6 and 8) note that religion was not an issue and others that there was. Experiences and opinions are divided. However, the last sentence of the Albanian mother above is eloquent: we had to hide behind a cross.

The practice of religious assimilation by encouraging migrant children to be christened has been documented in a previous study (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2011) and while not reported directly by the informants of this study seems to loom at the back of many migrants' experiences in Greece. An interesting version of the assimilation topos is expressed by the Albanian mother of an adolescent boy who gave birth to her child in Greece:

It came as a surprise that when I gave birth they registered the child as 'non christened'.¹⁶ Well we had not decided about a name, we did not know it was a boy and in any case we had not a name ready to give. And when I gave a name they did not register it. I do not like being seen with a different eye [means: I do not like being discriminated, treated differently]. So I christened the child and I did very well. I have no objection to this. I did it with love.

¹⁶ When children are born in Greece they are registered as without a name, literally using the term 'avaptiston' that means 'non christened' because it is expected that the parents will christen the child within the first two years of her/his life and will then communicate the given name to the municipal registry. If a parent does not want to christen their child they may do a civil act of 'name giving' at their municipality of residence but many Greek, let alone immigrant parents are not aware of this option.

Generally the religion is a private matter topos is not accepted by the migrant parents – regardless of their own views which vary a lot (some are in favour of religion classes as they are, others would like religion out of the school, still others would like to see religion classes diversified teaching all religions). We have not even found a concrete pattern of opinions depending on the country of origin or on the religion of the parents that participated in the discussion groups. The few practicing Muslim parents that participated in discussion group 5 noted an increased sensitivity on the issue: it is important for them that their children learn about Islam and do not lose their faith by assimilating into Greek society. However, even among them some (e.g. an Egyptian mother of an adolescent daughter) feel more confident that their teaching of the religion at home is sufficient, while others (e.g. a Pakistani father with two adolescent sons in Greece and 3 younger children in Pakistan) are quite worried that children will eventually adopt what they are taught in school even if they are only required to be in class without participating or having to study religion (Discussion group 5).

The religion is a private matter topos includes a certain level of liberalism: individuals are embraced in their diversity but they should keep their diversity for their private life – there is no room for collective diversity or collective minority rights. At the same time, contrary to a Republican view, the public space is impregnated with the dominant religion (as the assimilation topos emphasizes). The legitimacy of the dominant religion is not based in history or identity but on what the Ministry of Education, the ‘authorities’ dictate for the school life. Thus, we have here an interesting mix of liberal, minimal tolerance of diversity and a level of communitarian intolerance: the majority community has its religion respected by all. Those who are not part of it may not participate to relevant rituals, they can be exempted, as private citizens/residents but they cannot ask for alternative arrangements.

The third discursive topos is the one that sees **tolerance as the first step to acceptance**. In this topos, the argumentative structure supports the idea that tolerance, acceptance and respect are different steps on the same ladder. They are separated by a time element: the first contact is fraught with suspicion, then comes tolerance, then acceptance of diversity, under some conditions. The school principal of the White Neighbourhood school (interview 17) provides an eloquent example of this topos:

‘We have different populations here, all these populations have to co exist in the first instance, not necessarily to accept one another, we cannot impose on one another diversity. This comes as a habit, through the years. Right? The contact, the first contact that they have initially here, will have to become, so that it does not create problems in the next stage, it will have to become acceptance. The first phase is not acceptance (..) The first phase is to examine diversity, right? To process it. To look at it with a bit of an investigative eye, with some suspicion and then we move on to acceptance. Provided differences are not created, are not increased’ (Interview 17).

Here there is no separation of the public and the private confining religion or ethnic identity to the private sphere. Rather the school offers an appropriate space where to meet ‘Others’ and get used to their diversity, so that a relationship of simple acceptance develops later.

For this however to take place the migrant parents note that there is a need for more information sharing:

‘my daughter told the religion teacher: if you do not teach us about other religions how can we say if they are worse than ours?’(Russian mother married to a Palestinian, 2 adolescent children, Discussion Group 8)

Greek children in our discussion group with 17 year olds also note that it is good to learn about other religions. At the same time they see religion as not important any more. In both discussion groups conducted with Greek adolescents (Discussion group 1 with children aged 12-15 and Discussion group 3 with 16-17 year olds) the children did not see religion as an issue of difference with migrant children and generally argued that religion was not important any more and that the main reason for being exempted from a religion class was to take advantage of the free time or because one did not like the

teacher. These views are confirmed by the discussion group with Greek teachers (discussion group 2). These contradictory findings suggest that native and migrant children (and parents or teachers) perceive religion and the current arrangements (one can be exempted by there are no other courses offered while religion is heavily present in school life) in different ways. Those who belong to the native majority do not see an issue of tolerance, intolerance or acceptance of people from different religious backgrounds. They see it as a non issue. And they are happy with the current arrangements. Migrants by contrast have different experiences and while for some religion has been a secondary issue, others have had difficult experiences where their children were made to feel very uncomfortable and where they opted for assimilation in order to avoid being 'different'.

The fourth discursive topos is that of **acceptance**. This topos is closer to what Elisabetta Galeotti has termed toleration as recognition. This topos argues in favour of changing the institutional framework with a view to accommodating not only the individual difference but also collective needs of minority and migrant children. For instance, when prompted by the interviewer, a mother of an adolescent boy in the White Neighbourhood high school notes that she would not have liked it if her son was in a foreign country and he had to participate to a morning Muslim prayer. She goes a step further and argues that mere tolerance of their religion by way of not obliging them to participate in the morning Christian Orthodox prayer is not enough. Room should be made both physically and in the school weekly programme so that children of other religions, notably Muslims, can fulfill their religious duties:

'They have a right to this, I believe. They have a right. If they do not want to do the morning prayer, I do not know what their religion dictates, I cannot know that. But what I know is that they have some time to pray, yes, I believe they have a right to this and that they should ask for it' (Interview 18).

The same argument is put forward by the Head of the Regional Education office in the White Neighbourhood. She argues that such collective needs should be accommodated but also notes that the most important and inalienable right is the right not to participate in the morning prayer. This topos does not include however any reference to the need to incorporate minorities or migrants to the self-perception of society. They are allowed to exist and co-exist with the majority children in the school life having both their individual and collective level of difference accepted but they are not seen as changing the majority group or the school overall. Somehow the process of acceptance foresees a neutral provision of institutional space but not real embracing of diversity nor re-consideration of the meaning of the 'we'- Greeks.

Most interestingly we also find among the teachers and the experts interviewed a discursive topos that argues for **respect** and recognition of diversity. A teacher of classics at the Red Neighbourhood school argues that she would change her way of teaching history and religion if she were to find herself teaching in a school where Roma minority or immigrant children are a local majority:

'Look I would do it differently. [If I were in a school] with a majority of Muslim children, I would say the same things, as regards historical facts, these are the facts but I would not analyse the strength of the faith (..) I would opt for some more neutral [topics] so that I would not touch upon their religious sentiment, because this would be unfair to these children' (interview 11).¹⁷

While this classics teacher uses the topos of respect to argue in favour of a modification of teaching methods, an expert informant uses the respect topos to argue for a truly intercultural education (his own words):

'For me tolerance is the first step, because it is not sufficient. (..) in some cases you need to show tolerance, when a child speaks a different language in class. But what I say is that this is

¹⁷ A similar concern and a similar solution to this concern (changing the content and the approach to the course)

not enough for true intercultural education, we need more, we need to bring up the culture of the children, not just to tolerate it, that they have their own culture, but to encourage it, to reveal it, to bring to the surface. To learn ourselves this culture. Ok? It is only like this, this is for me what we should do, not tolerance.

The respect topos include both a change in the way the teacher understands her role in the classroom and an adaptation of the teaching approach and methods, and a valorisation of the cultural capital of the immigrant and minority children. The respect topos is adopted by some immigrant parents too but they see such a situation, a policy that would provide space for all religions by, for instance, teaching different religions in the school including minority religions as an ideal situation that cannot materialise anywhere (Moldavian mother of 2 grown up children, discussion group 5).

In conclusion, ethnic and cultural diversity in school life is seen as an important challenge that Greek schools face. While there have been no major incidents documented in the media concerning the rejection / tolerance / acceptance of diversity upon which to base our case study our interviews with teachers (mainly) and secondarily with parents have provided useful material to discuss what is the understanding of tolerance in Greek school life. We have thus identified five topoi of those four may be seen as incremental, while one discursive topos is a topos of resistance, the topos that points out that what is practiced in Greece is assimilation. The first topos corresponds to a basic minimal definition of tolerance: diversity seen as a private matter that people are free to express in their private life but which they should keep outside the public space. The second topos argues that this is not about religion being a private matter but rather about being forced to assimilate in the dominant religion. The third topos supported the idea that tolerance is a minimal solution, suitable for the first period during which schools get acquainted with cultural and ethnic diversity within their school populations, but which should slowly lead to acceptance. Indeed the fourth topos is the one that argues in favour of minimal, neutral acceptance: The majority and its institutions need not change anything apart from providing the space in which minorities may express individually or collectively their different religion. Last but not least the discursive topos of tolerance developed by educators only recognises the need to change one's own way of teaching and of thinking with a view to taking into account the special sensitivities and the special cultural capital that migrant and minority children have.

7. Concluding Remarks

This report starts with a brief presentation and evaluation of the policies adopted by the Greek state to favour the integration of immigrant and native Roma children in the national educational system. Studies show that Roma children perform poorly in Greek schools both because their parents cannot afford to send to school or are not familiar with the formal education system or are indeed discouraged/rejected by school headmasters. At the same time studies have shown that there is a number of schools and teachers in primary education that make heroic efforts to keep Roma children in schools. As regards immigrant children, some of them excel but on average they perform less well than native children.

It is against a short critical survey of the size of the migrant and Roma school population that we analyse qualitatively, adopting a critical discourse analysis methodology, the discourses of relevant stakeholders (policy makers, experts, middle rank officials of the Ministry), teachers, parents and children of Greek, immigrant and Roma origin. Interestingly our two case studies have yielded slightly divergent results.

While the first case study on ethnic selection or school segregation of Roma and migrant children suggests that ethnic diversity is only tolerated in Greek school life: Greek majority parents, children and teachers argue that migrant children have a negative impact on the quality of education provided at a school. Migrant parents are aware of the stereotype and also sometimes deplore the poor quality of the school that their child attends, blaming it on the fact that the school has too many migrant children

and that teachers are indifferent about their children's education. Overall they also express a feeling of being tolerated not accepted in Greek society.

The second case study which concentrates on religious diversity in particular yields more positive results. Religious diversity is generally tolerated in Greek schools – to the extent that it is confined to the private sphere it does not bother anyone. However, different attitudes towards religious diversity and different views on how it can be accommodated have been found among both Greek and non Greek informants. Thus, overall parents and teachers were divided on the topic of religion and whether it should be part of the school curriculum at all; if it is part of the school curriculum whether it should include courses on all religions and/or a history of religions or not; and whether the current situation of minimal liberal tolerance (a child can be exempted from religious duties if her parents ask the school) is satisfactory.

Competing discursive topoi reveal contradictory tendencies and tensions in Greek school life as regards religions. The main two discursive topoi: religion as a private matter, and assimilation actually reveal the fundamental tension of the current arrangements: people are free to chose whether to be exempted from the majority religion classes or not but at the same time the whole school environment is impregnated with the majority religion to the extent that migrant children feel forced to assimilate (and hence not to ask to be exempted from the course).

The findings of this study on ethnic and religious diversity in Greek school life show that the predominant attitude towards diversity is one of tolerance that goes hand in hand with the unquestioned acceptance of the majority religion, the majority language, the majority ethnicity in Greek school life. This is well in line with the dominant discourses on national identity in Greece and the dominant tradition of only accommodating diversity (if at all) at the individual but not at the collective level.

There is a tacit assumption that the state belongs to the native majority, and that immigrants are not legitimate political subjects that could ask for a different policy as regards for instance religious education. Interestingly however while none questions the primacy of the Greek language in schools and the distinction between Greeks and non Greeks, religion appears to be less important an identity marker. Although the majority religion is taken for granted and seen as a legitimate part of the school life, there is also a general questioning of what religion is, whether it should be included in the school curriculum and whether it is a problem if children are of different religions. Indeed, religious diversity is not yet seen as a problem in Greek schools.

With regard to our conceptual framework this study shows that **minimal liberal tolerance is rarely neutral but rather goes hand in hand with a tacit assumption that there is a majority culture and religion that provides for the blueprint** as regards cultural and religious matters in school life. Thus **the absence of any acceptance or respect policies and measures eventually leads not to liberal freedom of choice but rather to pressures for cultural and religious assimilation.**

While the assimilationist tendencies of the Greek national education system shown in this study comes as no surprise, there are two key messages arising from this study for policy makers. The first message is that minority and immigrant children's continuing negative stereotyping and marginalisation in Greek schools needs to be addressed. Relevant measures should not only target issues of learning (improving the school attendance and educational achievement levels of migrant and minority children) but also and more urgently civic education. There is a need for a renewed emphasis on citizenship and civics education that introduces the concepts of identity, diversity, citizenship, tolerance, acceptance, respect of ethnic and religious diversity, ethnic prejudice and racism. Children should be better equipped to deal with an increasingly diverse classroom and society at large. Within this course or within courses of contemporary history and the history of European integration there is a need for acknowledging the role that emigration and immigration has played in the recent history of Greece as well as of Europe. A better understanding of Greece's role as a migrant receiving country can be achieved if the current experience of migrants in Greece is linked to that of the Greek diaspora

abroad. Similarities and differences in the experiences of a child's grandparents or great grandparents who emigrated from Greece and of a child's parents (or grandparents) who immigrated to Greece can provide a useful common ground for reflecting on what it means to be a citizen/resident of Greece today. Given the changes introduced by the new Greek citizenship law of 2010 which facilitates citizenship acquisition for the second generation, an increasing number of children labelled as 'immigrant' will be Greek citizens soon. It is important that the national education system recognises their experiences through the making of a new more civically oriented citizenship ethos.

A second key message for policy makers, that is closely related to the one above, is that Greek citizens and residents are ready to consider small changes in the education curricula that would acknowledge the increasing ethnic and religious diversity of Greek society. Relevant measures could include the introduction of alternative options for the religion course so that children of other Christian denominations or of Muslim or other religious background can have the option of being taught their own religious tradition. Also parents should be able to justify their children's absence on the days of major religious or ethnic festivities in which they children are absent from school.

While there continues to be a negative stereotyping of migrant children as a 'problem' for schools and while there are complaints from both native and immigrant or Roma parents about the ways in which minority and immigrant children are marginalised in Greek schools, there is also a growing awareness that the position and role of the majority religion in schools can be and perhaps should be questioned.

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Annex I

List of interviews

(all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, unless otherwise stated below)

Interviews with experts and policy makers

- No. 1, A.S., male, former Secretary of State for the Education of Greeks Abroad and Intercultural Education, Ministry of Education, 12 and 13 January 2011
- No. 2, T.D., female, former Special Secretary for Educational Planning, Education of Greeks Abroad and Intercultural Education, interview 14 January 2011.
- No. 3, N.P., female, University lecturer, expert on intercultural education, 14 January 2011.
- No. 4, N.N., male, Teacher at intercultural gymnasium in the wider Athens metropolitan area, researcher on the teaching of Greek as a foreign language, interview 15 January 2011.
- No. 5, D.H., male, former Secretary of State on Intercultural Education, interview, 17 January 2011.
- No. 6, Z.Z., female, University professor, former Director of programme on the education of migrant and co-ethnic children, interview 20 January 2011.
- No. 30, T.K., male, Elected local councillor in White Neighbourhood, 13 July 2011
- No. 31, M.L., female, NGO chair person and activist, NGO providing day care and school support for Roma children, Athens, 10 June 2011.
- No. 32, X.X., male, Mayor of a municipality in the outskirts of Athens with a relatively high nomadic Roma population, Athens, 11 July 2011 (the interview was not taped. The mayor initially refused to concede an interview but eventually gave some general observations about the Roma situation in his municipality).

Interviews with middle rank Ministry officials

- No. 7, M. F., female, School Councillor, and former Headmaster at an intercultural gymnasium in the wider Athens metropolitan area, will now become local councillor at the 1st area of the Municipality of Athens, 8 March 2011.
- No. 8, D. H., male, Director for Educational Matters, 3rd Office of Secondary Education in Athens, interview 11 March 2011.
- No. 9, A. A., male, Director of Secondary Education, Prefectural Office, First Directorate of Athens, short discussion with note taking (no tape).
- No. 29, P.S., male, Support Teacher in Primary Education (special role in supporting migrant and Roma children with learning difficulties) teaches for 10 years at a school in a western neighbourhood of Athens with 45% of Roma children, 14 July 2011.

Interviews in 3 selected Schools with teachers and parents

Red Neighbourhood High School ('average' school with some immigrant children but not many)

- No. 10, Teacher of Sociology, male, 10 March 2011
- No. 11, Teacher of History, male, 10 March 2011
- No. 12, Headmaster of Gymnasium, female, 10 March 2011
- No. 13, Greek mother with daughter in Gymnasium, 11 March 2011
- No. 14, Ukrainian mother with child in Gymnasium, 11 March 2011
- No. 15, Bulgarian parents (joint interview) with child in Gymnasium, 11 March 2011

White Neighbourhood High School ('difficult' school with high percentage of Pontic Greek children, a smaller (about 10=15%) of Roma children and with other immigrant and Greek children)
No. 16, Teacher of Chemistry, female, 15 March 2011
No. 17, Headmaster of gymnasium, female, 15 March 2011
No. 18, Greek mother with son in Gymnasium, 18 March 2011
No. 19, Albanian mother with son in Gymnasium, 18 March 2011
No. 20, Russian Pontian mother with Greek origins (the father is Georgian) with son in Gymnasium, 18 March 2011
No. 21, Greek mother married to a Greek Roma man, with daughter in Gymnasium, 18 March 2011

Yellow Neighbourhood High School ('difficult' school with very high percentage of immigrant children from 20 different nationalities, Greeks are a numerical minority in this school, inner city centre of Athens)

No. 22, Teacher of English, female, 16 March 2011
No. 23, Teacher of Classics, female, as of this year a pensioner but has been workign for 10 years in this school, 23 March 2011
No. 24, Greek mother with son in Gymnasium (the father and the son participated in part of the interview), 21 March 2011
No. 25, Albanian father with son in Gymnasium, 26 March 2011
No. 26, Greek parents with child in Gymnasium, 21 March 2011
No. 27, Teacher, female, 9 March 2011
No. 28, Teacher of classics, female, 9 March 2011

Discussion Groups

Discussion Group 1: Seven children of Greek origin (5 boys and 2 girls) at the level of Gymnasium (aged 12-15). The discussion lasted 33 minutes and was held at the school premises. A classics teacher was present but did not interfere with the discussion. The children are students at the 2nd High School of a rich residential suburb in northern Athens, 27 June 2011.

Discussion Group 2: Seven teachers, all Greek, 6 women and 2 men, all serving at the same High School as above, , discussion lastex for 36 minutes and was held at the premises of the school at an available classroom, 27 June 2011

Discussion Group 3: Seven children of Greek origin (5 boys and 2 girls) at upper high school level (Lyceum), aged 16-17. The discussion lastex 36 minutes and was held at the school premises. No teacher was present. The children are all students at a private school in a working class neighbourhood of western Athens, 7 July 2011.

Discussion Group 4: Five participants: N.M. is in his late 20s and is a first generation African immigrant and well known NGO activist who arrived in Greece at age 8, J. is in her early 20s and is a second generation African immigrant who did all her schooling at a private english speaking school of Athens, A. is in his late 20s, a first generation Somali immigrant in Athens and NGO activist. In addition a Greek researcher and a trainee Greek researcher (both male in their late 20s and early 30s were present at the discussion – the male researcher is a close friend of N.M. and made the contact for the discussion). The discussion group was held at the premises of a research centre (ELIAMEP) in Athens on 12 July 2011. The discussion lasted 1.5 hour.

Discussion Group 5: Five participants: all parents of children in adolescence. The daughter of the Egyptian mother is attending an Arabic school, the other children attend Greek schools. Nationalities: an Egyptian mother, a Ukrainian mother married to an Egyptian man, a Moldavian mother, a Pakistani father, a Kenyan mother married to a Nigerian man. The discussion group was held at the premises of the Children's Hospital of Athens A. Kyriakou, 28 June 2011.

Discussion Group 6: Five participants: Five Albanian mothers of adolescent children attending Greek schools. All established in Greece for 10 years or more. The discussion group was held at the premises of the Albanian Cultural Centre (NGO), 26 June 2011.

Discussion Group 7: Four participants: Two mothers and two fathers, Albanian Roma living in Greece for 15-20 years, 3-7 kids each. Working in agriculture, at the garbage site (recycling iron) and with other manual jobs, they are all residents of the White Neighbourhood. They live in temporary makeshift dwellings as they are among the semi-nomadic Roma. None of their children attends school. Only one mother with 5 children stated that she tried hard to enroll her youngest daughter (now 12) to elementary school although with some years delay due to a health problem of the child but she did not manage and she is very sad about it. The others had occasionally considered enrolling their kids to school but never did. Their elder kids work with them, some have their own kids already, the younger kids stay at home with relatives if the mother or father are out for work. The discussion was held at the premises of the Albanian cultural association, July 2011.

Discussion group 8: Four mothers of adolescent children all studying in Greek schools, nationalities: Russian, Uzbek, Ukrainian, Georgian. The discussion group was held at the premises of the Albanian cultural association, July 2011.

Interviews 1-28 were conducted by Ifigeneia Kokkali

Interviews 29-31 were conducted by Eda Gemi.

Discussion Groups 1-3 were conducted by Hara Kouki

Discussion Group 4 was conducted by Anna Triandafyllidou.

Discussion Groups 5-8 were conducted by Eda Gemi (Discussion Group 5 jointly with Meri Kumbe).
44 people in total participated in the discussion groups.

Annex II

Interview-guide for key-informants

1. What is your main responsibility now / in the period just before now (in the Ministry /etc.)
 2. How long have you been in this position and how has your work evolved in that time? What were / are the main challenges in your work (today)?
 3. What are the main challenges of diversity (cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic) in school life in Greece today?
 4. In your opinion, which are the most important policy measures that have been taken so far to address these challenges? What were the difficulties faced to? What is your evaluation of the situation so far? What did work well and why? What did not work and why?
 5. What does tolerance means for you? Can the concept of tolerance provide a basis for the creation of "social cohesion" both in and outside the school?
 6. If you disagree with the concept of tolerance as a basis for developing social cohesion, what notion/norm/principle would you suggest instead? And how do you define it?
 7. In which way do you understand the acceptance and the respect of cultural and religious diversity in school? How do you define them? [IF NOT ANSWERED ABOVE]
-

Part A: spatial segregation

1. At a more practical level, it seems that some school principals object – in putting forward various obstacles – the enrolment of foreign students in their schools, usually after pressure coming from Greek parents (but not always). According to some NGOs (eg Greek Helsinki Monitor, European Roma Rights Centre) this has been done for years now in the case of Roma. What do you think about this?
 2. Alternatively, what other options are there in such situations?
 3. In your opinion, what are the determinants of whether a school adopts or not such practices? Why do some schools do so while others do not?
-

Part B: school bullying

1. Is there school bullying in Greek schools?
[E.g. children taking things from other children or pocket money/money, threats, verbal and physical violence, etc.]
2. Do you know where the spoof /violence is focused on (in which kind of characteristics)?
[E.g. associated with religious diversity?]
3. Do you have in mind any such incidents? In which schools?
[What has happened exactly? What was the reaction of the teachers'/parents' association and of the school principal? How was the matter settled?]
4. Are there any measures (preventive or other) anticipated for such situations on the part of the Ministry / state? What has been done so far?

5. What kind of children (= which ethnic/national group of children) are more targeted, in your opinion? (= who are those who are teased/ bullied more often) Why?

6. Are there any fights taking place at school between 'different' groups of children? (E.g. Albanians, Russians, Greeks Afghans, etc.)?

7. Do you remember the story of Odysseus Tsenai and the flag in Mihaniona, Thessaloniki? What would you say in relation to this incident, how would you comment on it?

[Prompts: Has anything changed in the last 10 years?

Finally, who is Greek – how to determine who is Greek? → What is your opinion on this and what do you think is the prevailing view (on who is Greek) among the bodies of the Greek educational system (Pedagogical Institute, Ministry, etc.)]

8. Do you think that kids like Odysseus - good or excellent students with foreign parents - may be targeted at school? (= Can have a harder time at school than an excellent Greek student?)

9. Would you like to add anything you consider important to our discussion?

10. In your opinion, which are the institutions (social and others) involved in the above issues and with whom it will be necessary for us to discuss with?

Interview-guide for teachers of Secondary Education (high school)

1. You are a teacher of ... [philologist, physicist, etc.].

2. For how long have you been teaching in the Secondary Education? For how long have you been teaching at [Number] High School?

3. Did you know anything about this high school before coming to teach here? Have you selected it (and if so why)?

4. In recent years the presence of foreigners and repatriated pupils in Greek schools has been particularly noticeable at least in some areas of the country. What is approximately the percentage of foreign students in your school?

5. What are the main challenges you face at work today in this respect, meaning the 'different' – so to speak – students?

[For middle-class neighborhood school]

OR [for the two "difficult" schools]

The students of your school come largely of immigrant /Roma families [*depending on the school*].

From your everyday experience: What are the main challenges you face in class

- due to the presence of children whose mother tongue is not Greek and who come from countries with different traditions, customs and religion from Greece/ OR

- because of the presence of Roma children that have different customs from the majority Greek population?

Challenges = key issues / problems

6. Can you talk to me about an event or a problem that occurred in class or in the school in general with respect to the relations between the children in the classroom?

[Prompts: Problem to be associated with different ethnic origin of children. What happened? How did the school deal with it? What should have been done? Were you satisfied with the solution found?]

7. [IF RELEVANT] If, in the future, a similar issue occurs, in which way do you think you should deal with it? What would you suggest? What would you do in order this problem NOT to occur again? What does the school about similar issues?

Part A: spatial segregation

8. How would you describe your school? Do you consider it as a good school? Why?

[E.g. in relation to student performance; define what they consider a 'good school']

9. Is there some kind of choice in the enrolment of students in your school? And if so, in which way does this happen?

10. [If applicable / if not already answered] Does this concern specific groups of foreign students? To what extent?

[= which groups are preferred and which are they discouraged? How do you explain / justify this choice? [if justified]

Part B: school bullying

11. [if not already answered] How are students' relations? Is there any segregation in groups made in the basis of nationality / ethnicity/origin? Are there any particular tensions?

12. Is there any school bullying taking place at your school?

13. Do you have in mind any such incidents?

[What exactly did it happen? What was the reaction of the teachers'/ parents' association and of the school principal? Has the issue been resolved?]

14. Is intimidation/bullying related to religious or other difference, e.g. with the fact that some children do not speak Greek very well or have darker skin?

15. Do you remember the story of Odysseus Tsenai and the flag in Mihaniona, Thessaloniki? How did you evaluate the decision taken at the time in this school?

16. Were there any such incidents in your school?

[If there have been excellent foreign students, was there a problem/negative atmosphere/tension at school regarding the issue of the flag?]

17. In your opinion, kids like Odysseus – good or excellent students from foreign parents – do they target of bullying at school (and if so, more than Greek children that have an excellent performance at school?)

**** [If there is time / appropriate atmosphere]

18. [WHERE APPROPRIATE/ IF RELEVANT] I would like to have your opinion on some hypothetical scenarios and how should school face them:

If the school had a relatively large proportion of Muslim pupils (e.g. 10%) and the parents of those children wanted them not to attend the customary morning prayer but instead pray at noon at a specific time according to their own traditions, would you accept it? What do you think the school should do in such a case?

19. If foreign/Roma children spoke during classes (or during the break in the courtyard) their own language, how would you deal with this? You, as an individual teacher, but also, what do you think should be done in the school for this?

20. I would also like to have your opinion on the following:

If a school was attended by several children from Roma/immigrant families, would it be appropriate to devote some lessons of history to the particular experiences and traditions of those people (e.g. the Greek Roma or European Roma) in recognition of their separate (minority/migrant) identity in Greece?

21. Finally, I would like to have your opinion on something more theoretical:

What does tolerance of cultural diversity at school mean for you? Is it a solid basis/principle for the making of social cohesion and peace at school?

22. Would you like to add something else that you consider important to our discussion?

Interview-guide for Greek parents

Part A: spatial segregation

1. Is the school of your child in your neighborhood?
2. Do the children attending this school live in the neighborhood or elsewhere too?
3. Did you encounter any problems (e.g. bureaucracy) when you went to enroll your child for the first time in this school? If so, what kind of problems?
[e.g. documents were missing (and if so, of what kind), etc.]
4. Are you happy with your child's school? Is it a good school? (If yes / no) Why?
5. Does the school have immigrant/Roma pupils? In what percentage approximately?
6. Have you ever thought of enrolling your child to another school?
7. If yes, in which school you would like to enroll your child?
[Why do you prefer this school? (E.g. there are more Greek students, it is closer to home, the bus passes near, etc.)
Why haven't you finally enrolled your child to that particular school? What happened?
(IF RELEVANT) Have you chosen the actual school of your child?]

8. With what kind of kids is your child hanging out? What does s/he have in common with her/his friends from school?
(e.g. all of them are Greeks, etc..)

Part B: school bullying

9. Have you ever heard of cases of bullying in your child's school? Meaning, have you ever heard that some kids tease others systematically, make full of them, take their things, etc.?
10. Has your child ever complained about something similar?

[For the interviewee's child]

11. Do you know where teasing focuses on?
[E.g. because of being Greek.]

[If for someone else's child]

What is that makes those children targets of bullying?
[e.g. other religion/language or skin color or very good students or who have a disability...]

[For both cases]

12. [IF RELEVANT] What social/cultural or other characteristics have in general those children who "intimidate"/bully other children at school? (if you happen to know...)

13. Is there any segregation in the pupils' groups according to nationality? Are there any particular tensions? (e.g. fights at school among children who speak different languages, say Greeks and Albanians or Russians, etc.)

14. Has your child ever asked to change school? If yes, why/ what was the reason put forward for this request?

15. [If yes] In what kind of school did your child ask to go to? [What was the difference with the current one (i.e. more Greek children/ no Roma children at school/ better reputation/ supposed to be an easier school, etc.)

16. Do you remember the story of Odysseus Tsenai and the flag in Mihaniona, Thessaloniki? In your child's school was there any such issue?

Which was the child that has been the flag carrier this year on October, 28th?

[If an immigrant child, was there dissatisfaction/reactions, as in the case of Odysseus? What has been said? / What has happened?

How do you feel about this issue? Is it right/fair? What should be done?]

17. Sometimes, students with excellent performance at school become victims of bullying too. Are you aware of such cases in the school of your child?

18. [If yes] Is there a difference between immigrant children and local children? (=immigrant children who excel do they receive the same pressure and/or the same admiration at school as the local children? Is there a difference?)

[If yes, what is the difference?]

**** *[If there is time / appropriate atmosphere]*

19. [WHERE APPROPRIATE/ IF RELEVANT] I would like to have your opinion on some hypothetical scenarios and how should school face them:

If the school had a relatively large proportion of Muslim pupils (e.g. 10%) and the parents of those children wanted them not to attend the customary morning prayer but instead pray at noon at a specific time according to their own traditions, what would you think of this?

20. I would also like to have your opinion on the following:

If a school was attended by several children from Roma/immigrant families, would it be appropriate to devote some lessons of history to the particular experiences and traditions of those people (e.g. the Greek Roma or European Roma or immigrants) in recognition of their separate (minority/migrant) identity in Greece?

Interview-guide for parents (non-Greek + Roma)

Part A: spatial segregation

1. Is the school of your child in your neighborhood?
2. Do the children attending this school live in the neighborhood or elsewhere too?
3. Did you encounter any problems (e.g. bureaucracy) when you went to enroll your child for the first time in this school? If so, what kind of problems?
[e.g. documents were missing (and if so, of what kind), etc.]
4. Are you happy with your child's school? Is it a good school? (If yes / no) Why?
5. Does the school have other immigrant/Roma children apart your own child? What is approximately their percentage?
6. Have you ever thought of enrolling your child to another school?
7. If yes, in which school you would like to enroll your child?
[Why do you prefer this school? (E.g. there are more Greek students, it is closer to home, the bus passes near, etc.)
Why haven't you finally enrolled your child to that particular school? What happened?
IF RELEVANT: Have you chosen the actual school of your child?
8. With what kind of kids is your child hanging out? What does s/he have in common with her/his friends from school?
(e.g. all of them are Roma/Albanians, etc..)

Part B: school bullying

9. Have you ever heard of cases of bullying in your child's school? Meaning, have you ever heard that some kids tease others systematically, make full of them, take their things, etc.?
10. Has your child ever complained about something similar?

[For the interviewee's child]

11. Do you know where teasing focuses on?
[Is it that they are Albanian, Bulgarian, Gypsy, etc.]

[If for someone else's child]

What is that makes those children targets of bullying?

[e.g. other religion/language or skin color or very good students or who have a disability...]

[For both cases]

12. **[IF RELEVANT]** What social/cultural or other characteristics have in general those children who "intimidate"/bully other children at school? (if you happen to know...)

13. Is there any segregation in the pupils' groups according to nationality? Are there any particular tensions? (e.g. fights at school among children who speak different languages, say Greeks and Albanians or Russians, etc.)

14. Has your child ever asked to change school? If yes, why/ what was the reason put forward for this?

15. [If yes] In what kind of school did your child ask to go to? [What was the difference with the current one (i.e. more Greek children/ no Roma children at school/ better reputation/ supposed to be an easier school, etc.)

For immigrant parents

16. Do you remember the story of Odysseus Tsenai and the flag in Mihaniona, Thessaloniki? In your child's school was there any such issue?

Which was the child that has been the flag carrier this year on October, 28th?

[If an immigrant child, was there dissatisfaction/reactions, as in the case of Odysseus? What has been said? / What has happened?

How do you feel about this issue? Is it right/fair? What should be done?]

For Roma parents

16. Do you remember the story of Odysseus Tsenai and the flag in Mihaniona, Thessaloniki? In your child's school was there such an issue?

17. Has there ever been a Roma flag carrier in this school?

[If not, why do you think this is so?]

18. How does your child do at school? What are his/her grades?

[ever happened to have the lowest grades in the classroom?]

Discussion Group Guide

June 2011

Topic 1: Selection of school (lower high school/gymnasium)

We would like you to tell us what have been the main criteria for selecting the school in which your child goes?

The school is close to home

This is the school that the child prefers (because it is close in the neighbourhood, or because her/his friends from elementary school go there)

Are you happy with the school?

How are your relations with the school headmaster and with the teachers?

What does your child feel at school? Does s/he like it? Does s/he have friends? Did s/he ever had problems with fellow pupils from other countries (including from Greece)? did they tease him? If yes why?

Does the school have a high percentage of foreign/co ethnic migrant or Roma children?

Is this something good or bad for you?

If you could, would you change your child's school? If yes why?

What is most important for you in selecting a high school for your child?

Have you heard of cases when a school headmaster avoided to enrol children from other countries, of Roma origin or from co-ethnic families?

Topic 2: Religious diversity in schools

In Greece schools children are required to participate in the morning prayer. Children of other religious or who are atheist do not have the option of doing something else but stand in line together with other children even if they do not pray.

Something similar happens with the religion class. Parents who wish may ask the school that their child is exempted from religion class. In this case children have to stay in the class but don't participate in the lesson, nor give exams on the subject.

Do you think that the above solutions are satisfactory? i.e. the possibility to stand in line but not pray? Or to be in class but not participate in the course? Is this a good solution for children from different religious backgrounds? Would you propose a different policy or practice? What would you propose?

(if they have a hard time proposing something, you may suggest possible solutions such as

The organisation of alternative religion classes like history of religions

The organisation of different courses for children from different backgrounds (e.g. Muslims, Catholics etc.) and of philosophy classes for children whose families are non-believers.

The school could provide a place for people who are of a different (from the majority) religion to pray in the morning or in the time that their religion requires.

To celebrate all the important festivities of the big religions, e.g. not only Xmas but also the end of the Ramadan, or the Chinese New Year or the Jewish Passover.

Generally do you feel that in Greece there is acceptance or at least tolerance of religious difference in school life?

How do teachers treat children of different religions? In the same way as Christian Orthodox children? Is there some sort of distinction?

Has your child suffered ever from such a distinction? If you recall a relevant incident please tell us the story.

