

## **PREFACE**

This review takes place during a period of major changes. These changes demand a different orientation to the Greek education system.

For Greece, the orientation is clear: our new role in the Balkans and the Mediterranean; our active participation in the European Union; our important geographic location at a vital commercial crossroad; our new political, economic and cultural co-operation with nations in the area; our conversion from a nation of emigrants to one which now is on the receiving side; our agricultural and industrial modernisation; and the preservation of our cultural and ecological wealth.

Every nation faces problems of world-wide consequence: the internationalisation of markets; the knowledge society; the rapid technological and professional developments in production; the major problem of ecological destruction; the scourge of AIDS and drugs; the ever-increasing international competition; the unemployment of youth; the discrimination of minority groups; the challenge of a multicultural society.

Our education system is called upon, in all its facets – from the traditional school to distance education and continuing education – to respond, and give solutions, to the problems that arise, converting these solutions into aims, goals and educational innovation.

Our education system is called upon, at the same time, to give answers to all these issues in a way which guarantees equality in opportunities, and in this way, to reinforce our democratic ideals. The democratic ideals of our nations should not be expressed simply as laws and rights, but as the citizen's ability to actively participate in the society. This is what education can give.

Today, our education system is unfortunately still extremely centralised and inflexible, bureaucratic and insensitive to the changes around us. In short, it lives in a world of its own, in total isolation of the economic, social and international realities, unable to respond to the needs of society, of youth, as well as to the explosion in computer technology, the demand for greater connection with the real needs of society, of production and of international competition. It can not accommodate a modern Greek society; it is incapable of coping with the needs of bicultural

tural and environmental education; it remains distant from the problems and concerns of our youth and the social problems created by unemployment, drugs, etc.

Our aim, therefore, is to mobilise the "sleeping giant" of the education world – but also of all Greek society – in order for it to take the initiative and responsibility with us, in a common effort to decentralise and upgrade our education system.

The National Education Council (ESYP), which met for the first time at the end of October, 1995, will guarantee the widest possible participation in the processes and procedures which concern all levels of education and especially in the design and development of curricula. In this way, not only will continuity be given to our educational policy – regardless of Ministers and governments – but paternalism will be replaced by the decentralised administration of the system.

I hope that the valuable work and effort which has gone into this review of the Greek education system will manage to wake the "sleeping giant". I believe that it will give it food for deep thought and discussion regarding our education system which will result soon in decisions and actions.

I thank all those who contributed and who continue to contribute with much effort to this report, as I thank also each and every one of those who toil for the upgrading of our education system. They prove with their effort, their zeal, and their invaluable efforts, that education is a sacred mission for the people of Greece.

George A. Papandreou  
Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs  
Athens, October 1995