

**QUESTIONNAIRE IN PREPARATION OF THE SEMINAR ON PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION
GREECE**

Georgios Paraskevaïdis

How does the law, in light of constitutional principles, regulate the legal relationship between school authorities and parents on the following points in the European member states:

Topic 1 primarily examines how the law regulates the legal relationship between school authorities and parents on school choice and admission?

- Can a school for primary or secondary education ask parents to pay fees?
Public schools: NO; Private schools: YES (obviously).
- Can a school refuse parents to register their child? On what grounds?
Public schools: NO; Private schools: YES (behavior record, problematic family situation, incl. financial, etc.), or simply the fact that places are limited and not everyone can be admitted.
- Can a child disagree with a parental decision on school choice and be heard to seek governmental review of a parental decision (right of the child to be heard)?
The child may raise objections (or preferences) with his/her parents, but in most cases the will and choice of the latter will prevail; no governmental intervention foreseen.
- Can denominational schools established by parents be legally enforced to teach "alternative worldviews"?
No such practice (and legal framework) in Greece.
- Are parents prevented from homeschooling their children?
Yes. According to the Constitution and related laws, every child must obtain at least primary education in a public or private school. No homeschooling foreseen/allowed.

Topic 2 examines how the law regulates the legal relationship between school authorities and parents on the school project?

- What does the school's duty in loco parentis – to stand in the parent's place – essentially mean? Is it interpreted that the rights of parents over their children end at the school door?
Indeed. Parents have no right to get involved in the way their children are handled by the school. If discontent, the parents can decide to take their children to another school (subject to acceptance by the latter).

Topic 3 examines how the law regulates the legal relationship between school authorities and parents on the exercise of fundamental rights within the school?

- What are the limitations on the freedom of expression in school, can pupils express worldviews of parents in schools?
There is no relevant legislation. The freedom of expression, though generally fully admitted, is under the control of the school authorities, who may adopt a soft or tough approach or anything in between. Then punishment for stepping over the limits varies accordingly.
- How is in educational environments the respect for the private life of parents regulated?
Schools do not usually intervene with the private life of parents, nor take initiatives to contact parents unless there is need to inform about something (often a wrongdoing) concerning their child. The school learns about parents what children tell about them, but very rarely takes action to get involved in any situation. In private schools, parents may have to give out some personal/family information during the 'interview' with the school authorities in view of admission and first registration of their child(-ren).

Topic 4 examines how the law regulates the legal relationship between school authorities and parents on the application of disciplinary measures/ questioning of pupils?

- What rights do parents have in discipline procedures against their child? Is parental notification part of student discipline procedures?
Parents are usually immediately informed of the wrongdoing of their child, but cannot have a say on the level of punishment and must accept it as a *fait accompli*. In case of relatively minor events, where the disciplinary measure consists of exclusion from class from 1 to 3 days, the decision is taken immediately by the school and parents only find out about it from the child or from a later communication by the school. In case of a major problem created by the child, the parents are informed immediately and normally the school's decision is that of permanent exclusion from the class and school.
- Can a child be interrogated by school officials and coerced to give a confession for non-criminal offenses without notification to the pupils and parents that an interrogation is taking place?
Yes, depending on the seriousness of the offense and the justified need of the school to take immediate corrective action. In some cases, after a first interrogation on the spot, the child is asked to return the next day with his/her parent(s), mostly in an attempt to have the parent(s) understand the seriousness of the situation and less in view of giving them the opportunity to defend their child.

Topic 5 examines how the law regulates the legal relationship between school authorities and parents on curriculum development?

- Can parents choose which religious instruction their child should follow in school? Or do parents only have the authority to give their children advice about religion?
The child must attend the religion courses given by the school as per the program / curriculum approved by the State (Ministry of Education *and Religious Affairs*); no alternative religion course can be taught.
- Can parents opt their children out of religious instruction?
Yes, if the parents sign at the start of the school year a declaration to the effect that they belong to another denomination, the child can be exempted from the religion course and exams and spend the relevant course hour doing something else outside the class; such declaration is to be renewed annually.
- Can parents opt their children out of sex education?
No such education is available in the Greek schooling system.
- Do pupils have the right to reproductive health information and services, including abortions, without parental knowledge or consent?
No such information / services are available in the Greek schooling system. In the best of cases, and mostly in good private schools, pupils (and/or interested parents) may be offered lectures or information sessions from experts in the fields of alcoholism and drug prevention, combating excessive stress or anorexia, and similar issues.

Topic 6 examines how the law regulates the legal relationship between school authorities and parents on the quality of education?

- What legal procedures exist for the parents to submit a complaint for failure in provision of quality education to their child?
None. Dissatisfied parents have the option of taking their child(-ren) and leaving. Recently though, a pilot program is carried out in a number of volunteering schools, whereby the school is auto-assessed (on the basis of guidance documentation and procedures proposed by the State) and the parents contribute to the exercise on equal footing with the school's educational community; it is intended to generalise this approach after its improvement based on the results of the pilot phase, and to use its outcomes for introducing novelties and enhancements across the educational system.
- What is the responsibility of the school towards parents in case of failure to provide quality education?
None. Dissatisfied parents have the option of taking their child(-ren) and leaving.

Topic 7 examines how the law regulates the legal relationship between school authorities and parents on the evaluation of educational performances?

- What legal procedures exist for parents to submit a complaint against the evaluation of educational performances of their child?

None is really regulated. At most, and although highly improbable, parents of children attending public school may turn to the (national) Ombudsman with a request to consider a case of maladministration. However, as the Ombudsman's eventual recommendation is non binding, parents are more likely to attempt to raise awareness with the supervisory and controlling State authorities competent for the school in question, with varying degree of chance to get something out of it.

Concluding topic: What are special difficulties within the present legal norms of educational relations in the member states?