



23rd INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF INEPS

It is an honor for me as the President of Movement PROTASI to welcome you, once again in Patras, in the twenty third (23rd) **International Congress of INEPS** .

In 2002 we hosted again in Patras the fourteenth (14th) International Congress of INEPS, which proved very successful according to the evaluation and the feedback we received from you.

There have been many congresses of INEPS as well as seminars of IPLE since then, in which members of Movement PROTASI participated. We believe that we have shared a lot through this cooperation.

Personally, I have seen significant similarities as regards the philosophy and methodology of PROTASI and the network of INEPS.

Most importantly, I have met people with imagination and courage, who are inspired and restless enough to set forward and support radical ideas and practices.

In addition, the eighth (8th) International Congress of Youth of INEPS which took place in Patras and Olympia in 2004 brought together the students of Productive Learning, who worked together and created very important things.

Like INEPS with Productive Learning, PROTASI educates the community.

What in fact we do, is to prevent the causes which may lead young people to the margin of society or to escape from reality or to offensive behaviors through using addictive substances.

As you know, these are some of the causes that lead to a marginal life in society and to the exclusion from employment.

In fact, our primary goal is to inspire young people to adopt a lifestyle open to an active search of personal happiness and social prosperity .

So, we both share the same principles and although PROTASI is a local NGO (Non Governmental Organization), we try to be as helpful as we can, using as our tools, our common ideals for inspiration, for strength, for expertise and techniques.

On our part, we offer our own human resources of active citizens, of committed volunteers and of dynamic people, who are ready to explore fresh ideas and methods.

And as I am sure you will agree with me, we all have a role to play in this issue.

One of our main ambitions is to pursue the establishment in Patras of the first Productive Learning Program.

This has been our long-standing goal all these years that we collaborate with INEPS. We know that we live in very difficult times and governments impose cut-backs or reduce budgets in the framework of conservative choices. Very recently the Greek state closed or united 1056 schools for economical reasons.

And this makes it even more difficult to apply alternative school programs.

All these years we have made effort to put into practice some principles of Productive Learning in the CCO (Center for Creative Occupation) of PROTASI, without getting out of our main target, which is to establish a Productive Learning Project in Patras.

We have committed ourselves to continue working with innovative education approaches towards prevention in cooperation with the Health Education department and with Environmental Education department which are two bright examples of alternative education in the traditional school.

We know that these alternative approaches despite the limited support from the State have brought light to schools and have opened a small window towards life and action. They have rekindled the interest of both teachers and students.

Under these circumstances, we now claim the right which Greek students have to alternative forms of education, beyond the traditional school, so that they can also have equal opportunities as their peers in Europe and in the United States.

In addition, we believe that a Productive Learning School can function as a prevention school, because it goes deeper, earlier and more practically and effectively in the formation of the personality and the character of young people.

PROTASI is an NGO for the prevention of drug use.

Since 1996 that we have collaborated with INEPS, we have developed projects for mainly extra-curricular activities, in the direction of keeping students inside the school environment by empowering and encouraging their own individual personalities.

At the same time, PROTASI trains teachers on how to make it easy for students to remain at school.

In the same way and with the same drives, the Center for Prevention of Addictive Substances of Achaia collaborates with O.KA.NA. which is the National Organization for the Prevention of Drugs.

In this sense, there has been built a good experience in Achaia, taking into account the excellent cooperation of these bodies with:

- the Primary Education Department
- the Secondary Education Department, as well as with the people in charge of
- the Environmental Education Department,
- the Health Education Department and
- the Advisory Station.

At the same time there are many more educators who are trained in such forms of education organization.

INEPS is now called upon to play a significant role through its experience in European countries and in the United States.

Seeing that the President of OKANA is here today, I'd like to take the opportunity to point out that as Ms President very well knows, the fight for the treatment of young people who have lost their opportunity in life is hard and sometimes unequal.

The results often prove poor in the end compared to the investment made on all levels: emotional, financial or labor in our effort to support those addicted young people.

These people are very often the same ones that left school because they could not find something to keep them in it.

I really wonder why we should wait until we see all those young people who quit school end up in the streets or in notorious places as drug addicts or as people living in the margins of society.

Why not give them a better chance by working on prevention before it is too late for anything else?

The School for Productive Learning would turn many of those young people to other alternative paths towards a creative lifestyle. Even those students who are not potentially at risk of using drugs, but they simply find it difficult to adjust in the present teacher-centered model of our schools, Productive Learning would make them feel useful and well prepared.

Today we are lucky to have among us very important Greek people, who enthusiastically supported the principles of Productive Learning School when we presented them for the first time.

Dear Ms President of OKANA, we would like to call upon you today, to put your personal interest and care as a stamp on our initiative, so that our endeavors will be more energetically backed up so that they will start to take shape.

We feel that with all the experience which our colleagues in INEPS have built up, we now have the opportunity to be ahead of time.

We are at a critical moment right now, and this Congress will either aid and support something positive to come to life in our country or we will sadly watch the significant potential of all those people who have made themselves available go wasted.

We feel that much of the success of this Congress will depend on how this question will be addressed.

I would like to end with the wish that what we will say and work on during this Congress will have a positive effect on all the participants, so that we all raise our awareness of the prospect to begin the first Productive Learning School in Patras.

I hope that our guest participants will contribute with their experience in order to formulate a realistic proposal for the Greek reality.

Thank you very much for your attention.