



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
Υπουργείο Παιδείας,
Έρευνας και Θρησκευμάτων



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

2nd Junior High School of Amaliada
ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME KA 2 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP “European Schools Go Green” 2017 - 2020



Erasmus+ programme “European Schools Go Green” 2017 – 2020

3d Year of Collaboration

Galileo Galilei Technical High School of Genova, Italy
2nd Junior High School of Amaliada, Greece
Goethe Gymnasium Kassel, Germany

Renewable Energy Sources – Sustainable Development – Climate change

13 STUDENTS QUESTIONS TO DR EMMANUELLA DOUSSIS, ASS. PROFESSOR ON
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (NKUA), UNESCO CHAIRHOLDER ON CLIMATE DIPLOMACY



- 1. Dr Doussis we are very happy and honored to take your interview. After our research we are really inspired by your difficult work and admirable personality and your achievements! Why did you choose this difficult particular field of studies as a student and subjects as a professional?**

Please introduce us to your work, curriculum and yourself!!!

It is my great pleasure to participate in your project and I would like to congratulate you for your impressive work! I would also like to express my deep thanks for the opportunity to address to high school students. Young people deserve a say in environmental politics, and this starts by raising awareness among high school students about the key issues at hand, including climate change, and how to get involved in developing and implementing sustainable solutions.

My interest in environmental issues goes back, years ago, when I was a student in Paris, in the early nineties. I had just finished my master's on public international law and international organizations, and I had heard of a new master's on environmental law, offered by my University, the University of Paris I, better known as the Sorbonne. I immediately applied, as it was a new and interesting field to explore. It was one of the first master's degrees specialized in environmental law in Europe and it proved to be a unique experience. This was because our professors were not only academics, but mainly practitioners, such as Ludwig Kramer (then, head of the legal unit of the European Commission's Directorate General for the environment) and Christian Huglo, an famous environmental lawyer involved in many difficult cases. So, apart from the theoretical framework, I had the opportunity to hear about the practical issues raised by the implementation (and the non-implementation) of environmental laws and principles, as well as the difficulties in the drafting of environmental directives in the EU. This was indeed a unique experience!

Then, I had the extremely good fortune of being able to spend two years at the UNESCO, first as an intern in the biosphere reserves' unit and, later on, as a research assistant in an NGO hosted by UNESCO focusing on the environment of the islands around the world. There I learned that working for environmental issues means that you get to work close with other disciplines. For me, this is one of the best things about working in the environmental field. You get to work with wonderful scientists and technology experts, and you are almost obliged to have strong interdisciplinary (and multidisciplinary I would say) relations. You have to work closely with them to understand the actual environmental problems and the interactions between them. Actually, it is a two-way process as scientists also need international lawyers and political scientists in order to translate their proposed solutions in regulations and political decisions. This does not mean that the scientists, their opinion and the proposed solutions are always incorporated in regulations and political decisions or that their opinion leads to good decisions, but this is another story. One of the main weaknesses in environmental politics is the lack of meaningful communication between scientists, policymakers and citizens.

2. How important is the field of Environmental Politics and Law in Universities of Greece today?

Environmental Politics and Law has started to gain more recognition lately as a separate field of study and research lately. For many decades, the protection of the environment was not included in the priorities of our country, but this has changed. There is now more recognition that there is no planet B and that we need to act now to develop sustainable solutions and engage in a sustainable future. Greece is committed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals adopted unanimously by all the countries of the world in 2015. These goals provide an ambitious framework for a new, fair and sustainable development path, which ensures a balance between economic growth, social cohesion and justice as well as protection of the environment and of the country's unique ecological wealth. Greece is also strongly committed to apply the European Green Deal, adopted by the European Union in December 2019, which aims to transform Europe from a high- to a low-carbon economy, without reducing prosperity and while improving people's quality of life. Key national priorities include the

shift towards a low carbon circular economy and improvement in waste reduction, reuse and recycle, creating new green jobs and increasing resource efficiency.

3. How would you describe according to your studies the situation in Greece in comparison with the rest of Europe and the world, concerning renewable energies policy, sustainable energy, political ecology, sustainable transport, climate change policies? Are we really between the eighteen most vulnerable countries to climate change? What can you tell us about your great book on climate change?

So many questions! I could speak for hours! I will try to be as brief as possible. As I previously mentioned, the protection of the environment is a recent priority in Greek politics. Our environmental legislation has been improved because of the EU environmental policy, which is one of the most developed environmental policies in the world. Actually, almost 90% of our environmental legislation comes from the EU legislation, including legislation on renewable energy, sustainable energy and climate change.

As far as climate change is concerned, although Greece has contributed very little to the problem, it is very vulnerable to its impacts. Indeed, the country is between the most vulnerable countries in Europe and we should develop policies concerning not only mitigation policies (reduce greenhouse gas emissions) but also policies concerning adaptation to climate change (adapt to the consequences of climate change). We should also learn to adapt to the detrimental consequences of climate change. At the time of the global health and impending economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Greece's commitment to the transition to a sustainable path must be reaffirmed. What we need now are transformational shifts in infrastructure, behaviour, participation and livelihoods that will impact on, but also empower, citizens in multiple ways.

I have recently written two books focusing on climate change. The first one, entitled *Climate Change, Facts and Dilemmas*, (Κλιματική Αλλαγή, εκδόσεις Παπαδόπουλος, 2017), is a brief introduction on the politics of climate change. The main research question relates to the ability of the global cooperation to mitigate the adverse outcomes of pollution effectively. It also includes a chapter focusing in Greece.

The second book, entitled *International Law and Climate Change Diplomacy. The role of International Law and Diplomacy in effectively managing Climate Change* (Διεθνές Δίκαιο και Διπλωματία της Κλιματικής Αλλαγής, Νομική Βιβλιοθήκη, 2020) offers an overview and analysis of the climate change international framework and its interactions with other areas of international law. It explores the role of international law in managing this global threat and highlights how international rules are currently evolving through diplomacy. The main argument is that the lack of substantive progress in effectively addressing climate change is not the absence of international rules but the fact that climate change has been framed just like any other environmental problem; this approach further delays the necessary action for the implementation of international rules combatting climate change.

4. What do you think we should completely change in the future regarding renewable energy policies, carbon management and gas emissions in Greece? What are your proposals on our country's energy policies?

According to the European Green Deal, launched in December 2019, the European Union will be the first climate neutral continent in 2050. In other words, we should gradually stop the production and consumption of fossil fuel and turn to renewable sources for energy production. Fortunately, Greece is a rich country in renewable sources, such as solar energy and wind energy. We should develop a comprehensive road map to guide this transition to become carbon neutral by 2050. The Greek government has already announced the phase out of lignite production to be completed by 2028 and a long-term plan is being prepared. However, the transition to a

sustainable and climate-neutral economy will require substantive investments in order to help the communities that are strongly reliant on extractive industries and carbon intensive industries to restructure and diversify their economy and retrain the affected workers and youth to prepare them for future jobs. To assist this process and address the specific challenges, the EU has launched a Just Transition Fund that provides targeted support to these communities.

5. How is international and Greek environmental laws and policies prepared, suggested, decided and voted and by whom? Are there legal consequences for those who do not comply with restrictions and instructions who are established?

Greek environmental laws are prepared and suggested by the Ministry of the Environment, then discussed in a specialized parliamentary committee and voted by the parliament. Stakeholders and citizens are involved in this process through a consultation process. It has to be mentioned though, that although there is a specialized parliamentary committee on environmental issues, it has only consultative authority.

Of course, there are legal consequences for those who do not comply with restrictions and instructions. These consequences are in their majority laid down by the laws.

6. What about sustainable transportation in Greece? Do you think we will ever be ready to have "green" mobility in Greece as for example some great efforts like in Larissa city? Is there a Greek government or European plan on sustainable transportation?

Transport currently accounts for a quarter of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions and this figure continues to rise as demand grows. The European Green Deal seeks a 90% reduction in emissions by transportation by 2050. Moving to more sustainable transport means putting users first and providing them with more affordable, accessible, healthier and cleaner alternatives. A key objective is to boost the uptake of clean vehicles and alternative fuels. It also requires a shift to more sustainable transport modes such as rail. For this to happen, the capacity of this mode needs to be extended and better managed.

7. What about gas emissions in Greece and climate change awareness? Do you think people have understood the importance of climate change? Are there fake news and numerous irrelevant and misrepresenting public opinions circulating in media even often expressed by important politicians that misguide people? Maybe sometimes for economical and political benefits of big industries?

According to the Eurobarometer, 90% of the Greeks that participated in the poll, consider climate change as a very important problem. So, people are aware, but things change when we pass to the action. Addressing climate change involves not only governments and the big polluting companies, but also the general public, communities, cities, schools. Solving climate change requires us all to work together. We can't do that without finding common ground with those who may not share our perspective. So, we may start by discussing the problem and have a conversation about climate change that helps cultivate understanding as well as find common ground and decreases divisiveness. Overcoming polarization is key to moving forward on climate solutions.

8. Is Greece state prepared for climate change? We heard you mentioning in one of your interviews that the governments do not study as they should the scientific researches before

introducing new laws. How this can be solved?

Things have changed since I have given this interview. In December 2019, the newly created European Commission announced the European Green Deal which is the EU's road map to transform its economy and society to put it on a more sustainable path and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Greece was one of the first countries to be committed to implement the European Green Deal and has started to elaborate its strategy. This process is still on-going. Of course, such strategies should overcome the 4-year electoral cycle and have a long-term goal.

- 9. How can you explain how Greece is late in changing laws and sustainability approaches, and especially Ileia prefecture where we live? Here recycling, sustainable development, biodiversity protection etc are not the first concern of the citizens and the authorities. What are the main reasons for that, is it economical depression, crisis and maybe denial and lack of education? What is the role of media?**

Every region has its own particularities and needs. Therefore, sustainable solutions should be developed locally and not been imposed by the central government. The central government should guide this process and offer the requested support.

For example, each region, including Ileia, should develop its own Green Deal, taking into consideration the natural capital, its specific needs and capabilities. All stakeholders should be involved in this process, including young people. Why don't you start by drafting your own Green Deal for Ileia? You could start by collecting all relevant information about the challenges that your region currently faces, including erosion of the coasts (which will be aggravated in the near future), floods, fires (the 2007 catastrophe is not so far away), protection of the biodiversity, water supply, etc. Interview the main stakeholders and jot down their views in developing sustainable solutions. Interview your parents and relatives and ask them what they think. Develop a culture of discussion and collaboration between high school students, as well as awareness of the challenges that your region is currently facing and try to propose sustainable solutions to overcome them. Be innovative!

- 10. Do you think European projects and funds have helped Environmental issues in Greece the past years?**

Absolutely. European environmental policy has shaped domestic policies to protect the environment. The majority of the projects related to environmental protection issues have been supported by European funds.

- 11. Do you think students and their families are informed on the above issues on Greece? Do you think there should be other ways to engage them? Are European projects like Erasmus a way of introducing and cultivating environmental awareness? Do you have any suggestions for a better climate crisis education for example?**

Students are very much aware of environmental protection issues and should lead the way to develop sustainable solutions. The potential of young people is immense, but we should give them opportunities to develop their creativity. Climate change should be part of the education process but in an innovative way that will inspire students to discover their potential. The most important is to get them involved in this process.

12. What is your opinion on wind-turbines and the objections and strong protests about them in Greece?

The story of the wind-turbines and their development in Greece is a very long one to be answered only in a few words. Wind energy has a great potential in Greece. However, there should be a comprehensive strategy, respecting the natural environment and regional communities should be involved in these projects from their inception. There is a lot of misinformation concerning the development of eolian parks.

13. In this three years Erasmus project we learned to communicate and work together better, as European students and citizens and as people of our world and our planet. Is it a problem of Greek society and Greek authorities, as well as European countries, the lack of communication and better cooperation? What are your suggestions for the future to be able to really work together on our common problems and better future?

This is an amazing project and I am sure that you have gained a great experience in participating and developing a culture of communication with high school students from other parts of Europe. You should be grateful to your professors who took the initiative to participate in this project and lead you to this wonderful path. You should continue this way and try to build bridges among different school communities even in your region with the aim of creating sustainable solutions. The future is yours and you should be involved in this process of working for a better and more sustainable world.

Thank you so much Dr Doussi for your time and support!!!

The students of 2nd Junior High School of Greece

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