



# WP 1 - Situation Analysis Executive Analysis Greece

## Contents

1. Preface	2
2. Modern Handmade Ceramics Technician	3
2.1 Job Profile	3
2.2 Fields of employment	3
3. Ceramic training institutions	4
3.1 Ceramics in Education:	4
3.2 Ceramics as a profession:	4
4. Gap analysis on Ecodesign training material	5
4.1 Legal Framework and Standardization	5
5. Summary and conclusions	6



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



## 1. Preface

It is widely known that the first tools linked to the appearance of the Neolithic civilization in the European area, were manufactured in Greece and in particular in Thessaly, where the first farmers settled down as residents, passing from nomadic life to fixed dwellings in settlements<sup>i</sup>.

Since 7000 b.C. till today the fired clay, that is to say pottery or ceramic – from the ancient Greek «keramefs» - is being used and has taken various forms according to the civilizations, that came one after the other: from early to late antiquity, and from Byzantium to the years of the Turkish rule up to recent years.

During this period the presence of pottery was continuous and the reason why this sector of the material civilization played such an important role in the Greek area has to do with the factors which influenced in general the cultural course of the Greeks. Among others, the durability of this specific material, the variety of its uses, its symbolism at times, but also its abundance in nature created the suitable base for its endurance through time. The object of exchange in ancient times later became an important factor in the development of commerce and in the transportation of goods, covering at the same time many daily needs which were related to man's struggle for survival.

In all this historic and cultural development, the art of ceramics passed into the hands of the Byzantines, uniting East and West with the glazing that brought about the «ceramic revolution ». Its blossoming was quite significant in those years, as well as during the whole period of the Islamic rule, giving life to colours and civilizations from all the world then known to man.



## 2. Modern Handmade Ceramics Technician

### 2.1 Job Profile

The holder of an “IEK” (Institute of Vocational Training) Diploma as “Handmade Ceramics Technician” has acquired the necessary knowledge (theory, technology and applied knowledge) so that he/she is able to work as employee in a small-medium, large manufacture, handicraft unit or as a self-employed person – craftsman of batch products or original and unique pottery items.

These Departments give the trainees the opportunity to receive a diploma in the specialization of ceramist technician and to aim at an important position in the labour market, equivalent to that of Greek and foreign colleagues. Moreover through theory and practice they acquire the skill to apply theory to practice and to consider both professionally connected. In this way their works can aim at competitiveness in European and worldwide production. In these hard times, economically speaking, and given that the art of ceramics, possibly the most ancient profession in the world, is still considered up-to-date and profit making, we believe that the holders of the Ceramics Technician diploma can provide professionally their services to the production profile and to tourism and to help in their turn Greece to come out of the tight limits of a “close economy”

The “Handmade Ceramics Technician”:

- is acquainted with the principles of design, ergonomics and decoration
- is acquainted with the physical and chemical composition of raw materials, of clay and of glaze
- is acquainted with the basic techniques of the potter’s wheel
- has the necessary know-how for the construction of moulds
- knows and selects the best solution in the manufacture and firing of an object
- is acquainted with all special firing techniques
- has theoretical knowledge on the historical evolution of ceramic technology
- is acquainted with the structure, organisation and management of a manufacturing enterprise.

### 2.2 Fields of employment

The Diploma holder can:

1. work as skilled ceramist, technician, turner, decorator of ceramics in an handicraft establishment or in a large pottery workshop
2. open his/her own workshop
3. create a co-operative workshop with others
4. design and manufacture his/her own personal creations



### 3. Ceramic training institutions

#### 3.1 Ceramics in Education:

- There are many meeting places for children where children come into contact with various materials for the first time. The children make their own pottery and at the end of each school year their works are presented to the public at an Annual Exhibition. Many of these exhibitions were very successful so they travelled to various cities
- Some Municipalities have created free pottery workshops and anybody who wishes to approach the art of pottery making enrol. These are particularly creative classes, where freedom of expression has impressive results. These classes also organize an Annual Exhibition open to the public with the works of the participants
- We shall also include the schools of the Municipalities (Marousi, Kalamata, Volos etc.), which provide the opportunity to obtain a certificate through a State diploma as “handmade pottery technician” (see detailed data for Municipal “IEK”)
- Finally, the very same professional ceramists undertake, with a fee, to hold seminars or even to teach pottery making to people who are interested in working next to them and under their supervision

#### 3.2 Ceramics as a profession:

We may divide today’s ceramists into three categories:

- Traditional ceramists who mainly manufacture practical items belong to the first two categories. The second category is represented by modern ceramists, who mainly manufacture decorative items. The products produced in the various handmade pottery workshops are practical ones, as we might call them, pottery items (such as dishware, bowls, vases, jugs, ashtrays, candlesticks mirrors with ceramic frames, tables with ceramic surfaces, wall decorations, hangers, lights, pottery items for social events – such as weddings, christenings -, souvenirs or gifts for events, meetings and congresses, table mats and coasters, piggybanks or toys, decorative items for hotels or restaurants, imitations inspired by primitive or Byzantine techniques, etc.)
- Art ceramists belong to the third category. There are many workshops which have more of an artistic character and which deal with products of free expression, creation and aesthetics touching topics of sculpture or a combination of other materials with ceramics – as it is the case of the various installations – or other ceramic items, such as dolls, masks or copies of various objects (tools, shoes (!), houses, tables etc.) These ceramists make unique works and they promote them in personal exhibitions
- All the above named objects are manufactured following the production process, described below (see Issue 2) and they are packed ready to be sent to retail points or directly to individuals, according to the order. The quantity produced is established by



the capacity of each workshop, while the type of ceramic items depends on the single order or demand

#### **4. Gap analysis on Ecodesign training material**

Nowadays the ceramists seek their own way. As a profession it is quite crowded and as a result unemployment in this sector is a problem. The participation to the Annual Exhibition is decreasing at the same time when Chinese pottery has flooded the market. Other victims of the Chinese presence are also the traditional ceramists, who are disappearing, along with their workshops and their traditional firing and baking techniques.

Apart from the competition from China, the lack of State schools and diplomas, the complete absence of pottery classes in school syllabi and the lack of professional training, the art of ceramics in Greece needs much more: it needs financial or other incentives, which can push the profession towards new directions, with new ideas and new creations. In order for this to happen though we need the necessary basis from the State itself, that has taken so much advantage of ceramics all through the centuries.

##### ***4.1 Legal Framework and Standardization***

From now on every pottery product in Greece shall bear the indication that these objects are glazed with ecological glazing. (The comment refers to a law that has been recently passed)

Regarding the Standardization of Ceramics in Greece, according to the Hellenic Organization for Standardization (ELOT SA - EAOT AE), there is a Standard applied to all ceramic products titled EAOT EN 14441-2003.

According to this Standard, every producer of Ceramics is being assessed systematically by ELOT SA in order to confirm the continuous application of the standards directives and in the mean time it takes random samples of the products in order to evaluate in a certified Laboratory if the materials used are the allowed by Greek law and if they are eco-friendly.



## 5. Summary and conclusions

The reason for choosing the specific Greek partners, derives from the fact that mass production of tiles/ceramics in Greece, is not of special interest since, from the 70's and 80's many Industrial Ceramics Units have closed down and today almost 80% of Total Ceramics/Clay production comes from small, family based Workshops. Nowadays the few remaining Industrial units have to confront the numerous Chinese companies which have much lower costs and thus sale price of their products. On the other hand handicraft has always been the tradition in Greece. The respect for ceramic art is inherited from generation to generation, preserving the values of tradition. In Greece there are numerous, mainly family based, workshops (such as the ones we included as test partners) which maintain a high level of craftsmanship and participate in domestic and international exhibitions.

As a result, the data presented are based on SME's such as workshops and enterprises of handmade pottery and ceramics. Industrial ceramics (such as sanitary ware, tiles, bricks etc..) is a somewhat different sector, as it deals with mass production with different requirements.

Today's Pottery and Ceramics in Greece is based on Short Medium Enterprise Workshops. Still though all of them are on the one hand forced to adjust to the global changes towards sustainability and on the other hand are interested to produce products that incorporate the Ideas of Sustainability in General and the protection of the environment. However, these, as mentioned above are all small businesses and therefore production and supplies cost are a very important factor. As a result they must find equilibrium between development (through Ecodesign and Sustainability) and Production cost. As long as this fine balance is not disturbed and unsettled, almost all of them are willing to adjust and incorporate Ecodesign/Sustainability methods and rationales.

Finally, the ceramic tradition/profession, slowly but somewhat significantly, has a tendency to shrink and year by year more and more professionals are not willing to continue their profession, a tendency that is linearly connected to the Global Economic crises and of course the competition with Chinese products. In order to boost demand for such professions, related Vocational Training Centers are desperate to attract young people through incentives such as INEDIC Project. As a matter of fact, according to our leading Partner (Volos Vocation Training Centre), unless they participated in INEDIC Project, perhaps this year would be the last one to offer relative courses for Ceramics and Pottery due to very low demand on behalf of prospective students. The later, realizing that Ceramics Industry has almost disappeared in Greece and what remains are SME's, conclude that this sector is somewhat "dead" or to the best not promising!

All in all, INEDIC and in General new ideas and aspects that can support any Training institutes to attract students (and therefore the next generation of professionals) are almost essential and indispensable.

Based on the acquired answers from the questionnaires that were handed out, all of modern Ceramist are interested in adjusting in the new reality of ecodesign not only in order to promote their business but also to protect the environment and to become competitive. They are willing to participate in any form of production and know how upgrade, as long as the financials allow



them to do so. Finally they are all eager to participate in projects and/or funding schemes that will give them the opportunity to finance any possible investments or changes (of behaviors and/or capital) towards more Eco-friendly and sustainable products and services.

Comparing Greek Ceramic Sector to Spanish and Portuguese, we can clearly realize that there is a significant difference based on the fact that in Greece mass production of Ceramics has almost disappeared (about 20% of total ceramics production).

Nowadays no handmade pottery workshop can officially operate with a State licence or participate in financing programmes, unless it does proceed to draw up an Environmental Impact Study. This EIS is carried out pursuant to the Greek legislation in force of the Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate Change (it recently changed its name), which has been imposed by the EU and has been adapted to the Greek data. This legislation governs all matters about Environmental Protection (see also Joint Ministerial Decision 69269/5387/1990, O.J. 678/II/90).

---