

Winner of Excellence in Teaching Prize 2010

This year, the jury for the AESOP Excellence in Teaching Prize received a significant number of applications from many European countries (Austria, Greece, Poland, UK) showing a widespread interest in testifying potentials for teaching and learning across the European space. The high quality of the applications made it very difficult to choose among them.

However, after intensive deliberation, we are proud to be able to award the Prize to the Department of Planning and Regional Development, University of Thessaly, Volos, Greece.

The task of the course was to have students preparing a plan for the Mediterranean Games of 2013, supposed to take place in Volos and Larisa. The jury positively considered several aspects of the course, and namely:

- (1) it addresses an unusual topic in planning courses: the organization of Mega Events;
- (2) it focuses mostly on the process towards critical knowledge construction;
- (3) it encourages articulation between - "theoretical knowledge, practical experience and procedural elements" - exploring an "open ended and continuously challenging" process;
- (4) it encouraged challenges: for example by creating ways to generate argumentative spaces such as moving from antagonism to consensus;
- (5) moreover, students were obliged to take under serious consideration the present difficult condition of economic crisis, which presented additional challenges to the course: to learn how to organize such 'mega events' even in periods of 'poverty' and the aftermath of economic crisis, how to use these events for future development, how to maximize their added value and, most important, how to communicate and persuade politicians, stakeholders and the local population.

The concept of planning which underlies the course is particularly significant: planning as a mean of reversing attitudes of apathy and depression in broad sectors of society, teachers and students included.

We are especially pleased by how this course shows how to react to the crisis, affecting cities as well as universities.

On behalf of the jury, I am very happy to congratulate Konstantinos Lalenis who is the winner for 2010 for his course "Planning interventions for the 2013 Mediterranean Games in Volos and Larisa: from decay to opportunity" and the important contribution it makes to a critical and constructive approach to teaching in such difficult times.