



Sailability Hellas

Sailing for Everyone

#2 Update – July 15, 2003

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URL: <http://www.sailability.org/gr/greece>

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Pursuing a Dream - A New Era for Greece

Vassilis Kourbetis, Ph.D.
Special Education Counsellor
Pedagogical Institute, Athens

I have been sailing for over ten years in the US and Greece and it has been a thrilling experience for me. Especially in Greece, sailing is an activity that can be enjoyed year-round in countless of places, unfortunately not for all.

For over two years I have been pursuing a dream: to see a fully accessible open sea sailing boat in Greek waters. It has been a lonely journey up until last month when Sailability, Sailing for All, had its demonstrations in Greece. The presentation of Access Dinghies in the Sailing Club of Piraeus has materialized part of my dream.

It seemed that it was not only my dream but also the dream of hundreds of other people. Young and old, able bodied and handicap, deaf and hearing, seasoned sailors and amateurs, Greek and Australian. Diversity at its best came together to sail at the demonstrations of Access Dinghies. The smiles on the faces, the laughter, the comments and the sun-burned faces, testified that this was not a summer night dream any more, but the beginning of a new era for Greece. An era that everyday barriers can be removed so sailing can be accessible to all.

As an educator of children with special needs, as a sailor and as a father of two little girls, I am looking forward to sailing for fun, for educational, social, emotional and personal development for everybody involved.

I thank you for all your support and services. Even though I have worked with students with special educational needs for over 20 years I am amazed with the results of your work. I am not an easily impressed person. I have to hand it to you. You, your entire organization and especially Barbara and Neil are superb. I will continue to work closely with Panayotis and hope that one day soon we will have a totally accessible open sea sailing boat in the Greek waters.

Access Dinghies is a dream come true and I strongly believe that many of the users will pursue their dreams and will have pleasure journeys in the years to come. Continue the beautiful work and the rest of us will follow you.



Sailing Club of Piraeus, Athens.
L-R Vassilis Kourbetis, Stamatis, Nikos, Panayotis,
Dimitri, Neil, Barbara, Andreas.

<http://sailability.org/gr/greece>

Sailability Thessaloniki – Panayotis Tsinganos 5th & 6th July, 2003

In Thessaloniki, the venue is great. Everyone who came and went sailing on the first day, came again on Sunday asking for more.

We experienced some great moments: Thomai is a friend of mine and mother of two sons and a daughter. The first boy, Kostas 16, has a disability. The second, Stavros 13, with some sailing experience with Optimists and, Marina she is 6. Kostas' disability causes some tension within the family.

You should have been there to see their mother's excitement, as she saw her two boys sailing together a double 2.3. Then, little Marina went sailing, as did both the parents. Now, Thomai is the best contact that we have in Thessaloniki. She will help forming Sailability Thessaloniki as a branch of



Sailability Hellas and is even considering to buy a Access Dinghy for her son. He keeps asking her every day: "Mom, when shall we go sailing again?"

We met Vassilis Iliopoulos. He is a sailing trainer, and helped us with the rubber boat on Saturday. He is a great guy and will help us. Unfortunately, we had had a few unexpected problems. To name a few:

1. The president of the club (he was my only contact) was in Athens, accompanying the team to a regatta.
2. First day (Saturday) it was one of hottest this summer. Due to the excessive heat, quite a few people left at 2pm. and other people did not come at all, due to the excessive heat.
3. It was on July, so a lot of kids were away to summer vacations with grandparents. If it was one week before, we could have more than 60 kids with mental disabilities, who were now in a camp.

The best part of the demos in Thessaloniki: the double 2.3 and 303 needed a person who can sail to be with someone who cannot. In Athens, Neil and Barbara did this. In Thessaloniki, two Optimists' kids did all the job, both of the days; Neil and Barbara did not even get into Access Dinghies. And the boys were so happy doing it. It was hard to believe !

Access Dinghies set sail for Athens— Arriving mid August 2003

On Monday 14th August a container left the Access Dinghy factory in Melbourne heading for Athens. This unit will become the basis for the eagerly anticipated activities of Sailability Athens.

Thanks to the generous sponsors of Ronstan International, RWB Marine, West Marine, Henri-Lloyd, Skandia and P&O Nedlloyd the following equipment is being sent to Athens:

- 1 x Access Liberty, with servo assist steering
- 2 x 303 wide seater sailing dinghies
- 1 x 2.3 single with servo assist controls
- 1 x 2.3 wide seat sailing dinghy
- 1 x C Crane for safe transferring of sailors
- 1 x keel caddy to transport ballasted centreboards
- 1 x custom built boat trailer to carry 5 Access Dinghies

Currently Sailability Hellas is being incorporated with two branches—Athens and Thessaloniki. While the Athens equipment will enable the programme to begin in September, Thessaloniki will need to wait a little longer while another four sponsors are sought.

So far the sponsors for Thessaloniki are the Melbourne City Council and the Greek Community of Wollongong. In August, the Greek community in Wollongong will hold a fundraiser event to raise funds for Sailability Thessaloniki. Also in August, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, John So, will present a cheque for \$7,000 to the Access Dinghy Foundation.

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of Melbourne and Thessaloniki's sister relationship, the Melbourne City Council is keen to assist the Access Dinghy Foundation to present Sailability to the community of Thessaloniki.

Perhaps the Greek business community in Melbourne will take up the challenge and become sponsors for Thessaloniki.

Pictured:
Top: 5 Access Dinghies and boat trailer for Athens
Lower: Trailer and boats being loaded into a P&O Nedlloyd container.
More info: www.sailability.org/gr/greece/athens_news

