PRESS RELEASE

On-line School for Children Cannot Open because of Outdated Education Law in Cyprus

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Paphos, Cyprus—as part of the effort to mitigate the effects of the Coronavirus, The Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF) together with the Deputy Ministry of Research is inviting startups to submit ideas of how to promote "remote learning" in Cyprus.

But as Walker Rowe, American tech writer and computer programmer, learned, there is a huge gap in the education law in Cyprus that makes actually teaching classes online impossible, unless you are an existing public or private school with a physical location.

When the coronavirus came to Cyprus and schools moved online, Mr Rowe started the Hypatia Academy Cyprus online school to teach computer programming to lyceum and gymnasium students. He was to teach the Python programming language and machine learning in two classes of 90 minutes each throughout the summer and into the fall.

One week before the first scheduled classes Mr Rowe discovered he could not teach classes online, because he needed a brick and mortar physical facility. The education ministry said he cannot even use the word "academy" in the school's name. Further he could not even call himself a "tutor," such as some who offers online Greek classes via Zoom.

So, in early June he shut it down.

A legal assistant hired by Mr Rowe said:

> "Apparently, Cyprus has no legislation about online tutoring schools/classes and a workaround is required in order for Hypatia to get a permit and bypass this technicality. Specifically, you will have to have a physical location for the school, a workplace that will be inspected and upon being approved then you will be allowed to operate the online classes.
>
> Here is what you need to submit in order for the inspection of the facilities to successfully go through by the committee:
>
> (a) Urban planning license for the use of the specific property as a Private Tutoring Center.
> (b) Building permit for the use of the specific property as a Private Tutoring Center.
> (c) Certificate of approval or application to the relevant competent authority as provided in the provisions of the Law regarding the Regulation of Roads and Buildings, for the issue of a certificate of approval for the use of the specific property as a Private Tutoring Center.
> (d) Fire Safety Certificate from the Fire Department.
>
> The following photos of:
> - Classrooms
> - Labs (if any)
> - Reception area
> - Parking space
> - Toilets (with insignia for girls - boys).
> - Exterior sign with the name of school"

Mr Rowe makes $80 per hour writing documentation for computer software companies in the USA, UK, Brazil, and elsewhere as a freelance technical writer and programmer.

But he was going to teach computer programming and artificial intelligence to children online for 5 euros per hour because he wants to help children in Cyprus. He was doing this because he feels that "all children should learn computer programming," because, "no other jobs will exist in the future" because of machine learning, and because the tourism industry here is wiped out.

Mr Rowe spent heavily on Instagram to find students for his first class. This is in addition to 6,000 euros legal fees to register the business and a team of artists, translators, and web designers to design the [web page](#).

Mr Rowe has one scholarship student, who is too poor to pay the tuition. In addition his plan was to apply for funding from EU and Cyprus programs to provide computers and internet connectivity free for students as he says, "education should not be for just the rich."

What will he do now? Mr Rowe says, "What I need to do now is to find a politician who is willing to fix this gap in the law or have the education ministry update their regulations."

He says in the meantime children can study at the Khan Academy in the USA. This is a widely popular program in the USA taught by one man from his house. Bill Gates sent his children there.

But the Khan Academy does not offer one-on-one live training. Those sessions are recorded. For that, Cyprus needs the Hypatia Academy.