



HIDDEN DIMENSIONS

**Hidden Dimensions of
Inclusion in Youth Sector**

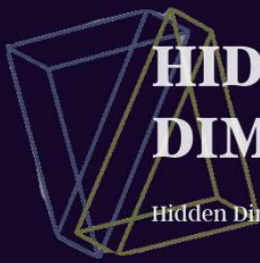
RESEARCH REPORT

Greece

United Societies of Balkans

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
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Designing Erasmus+ programs with a focus on disability requires careful consideration





1. Introduction

The Erasmus+ program has long been recognized as a vital tool for fostering intercultural understanding, personal development, and professional growth among young people across Europe. However, despite its overarching vision of inclusivity, the effective engagement of youth with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects remain an unmet aspiration. The evolving understanding of disability from the medical model to the social model has significantly influenced society's perception of individuals with disabilities, emphasizing the need to break down barriers and create a more inclusive environment.

The concept of disability has evolved over time, giving rise to contrasting approaches in understanding and addressing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Historically, the dominant perspective was the medical model, which viewed disability as an individual's impairment or deficiency, often leading to a portrayal of disabled individuals as victims in need of charity and medical treatment. However, this perspective has been challenged and surpassed by the social model of disability, which recognizes disability as a social construct rather than an inherent characteristic of the individual. According to the social model, disability results from the interaction between individuals with impairments and the barriers imposed by society, leading to social oppression and discrimination.

In Greece, where the pursuit of social inclusion faces unique challenges, spanning from education and labor market disparities to prevailing attitudes towards disability, the involvement of youth with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects is of particular significance. It emphasizes inclusion and diversity, striving to provide equal opportunities for all participants, including those with disabilities. Through this program, organizations are encouraged to adopt inclusive approaches in their projects, making them accessible to diverse groups. Non-governmental organizations and associations in Greece also contribute to youth work by providing training and specialized seminars for volunteers in the youth sector.

However, challenges persist in achieving full inclusion and participation for people with disabilities in youth work. To enhance the effectiveness of youth work with individuals



with disabilities, targeted training and resources may be necessary to equip youth workers with the necessary knowledge and skills in disability inclusion.

This research endeavors to present a comprehensive scientific report on the inclusion of people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects within the Greek context. Commencing with a meticulous exploration of fundamental concepts and definitions concerning disability, including an examination of the prevailing dominant models, the study delves deeper into the sphere of Social Inclusion in Greece. This exploration encompasses pertinent areas such as education, labor market dynamics, and societal attitudes towards disability. Moreover, the report sheds light on the distinct challenges faced in incorporating disability considerations within the framework of youth work in the country, drawing insights from an exhaustive literature review that offers an overview of the prevailing situation in Greece.

With a specific focus on Erasmus+ programs, renowned for their dedication to inclusivity as a priority, this research seeks to ascertain the concrete measures and strategies employed in translating this priority into practical implementation. Notwithstanding, the literature review indicates that Greece may lack the necessary structures and targeted educational resources dedicated to disability awareness and competence among youth workers.

To address these vital gaps, this report adopts a rigorous mixed-methodology approach, integrating surveys, interviews, and document analysis to gather scientific data. By doing so, this research aims to provide invaluable insights into the critical barriers that impede the full inclusion of people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects. Moreover, the study endeavors to illuminate potential solutions that can serve as a catalyst in fostering a more inclusive and empowering environment for individuals with disabilities in the realm of Erasmus+ initiatives in Greece.

1.1 Importance/Significance of the Research

The inclusion of youth with disabilities in the Erasmus+ programme is of paramount importance for promoting equal opportunities, diversity, and social cohesion among young people. Erasmus+ is a widely recognized European exchange and learning initiative that offers life-changing experiences to participants, fostering personal growth, intercultural understanding, and valuable skills. However, there is a pressing need to address the challenges faced by young people with disabilities in accessing and



participating in Erasmus+ projects. This research aims to shed light on critical issues that hinder their inclusion and to provide insights into potential solutions. By doing so, the study seeks to promote a more inclusive and accessible Erasmus+ programme, thus enabling young people with disabilities to fully benefit from the opportunities it offers.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to investigate and analyze the challenges faced by youth workers and youth organizations in involving young people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects. By examining the three hypotheses, the report aims to identify areas of improvement and propose strategies that will enhance the accessibility and inclusion of youth with disabilities in the programme. The findings will be valuable for policymakers, youth organizations, and relevant stakeholders in devising targeted interventions, training programs, and support mechanisms to create an inclusive environment for all participants.

1.3 Scope of the Report

The report will focus on the challenges related to the inclusion of youth with disabilities in the Erasmus+ programme. Specifically, it will examine the preparedness of youth workers in involving young people with disabilities, the ability of youth organizations to ensure accessibility despite resource constraints, and the potential influence of youth workers' limited experience and knowledge on their attitudes towards inclusion. The scope will encompass both physical and intellectual disabilities, as well as youth with complex needs.

1.4 Assumptions and Limitations

1. Assumption: Youth workers may not be adequately prepared to involve young people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects due to the inaccessibility of their daily youth services.
2. Assumption: Youth organizations may lack the necessary resources to ensure accessibility, resulting in limited participation of young people with disabilities in their services.
3. Assumption: The lack of experience and knowledge with young people with complex needs may lead to negative attitudes, contributing to the low representation of young people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects.



Limited Scope: The assumptions are focused on the preparedness of youth workers, resources of youth organizations, and attitudes towards young people with disabilities. Other factors influencing the involvement of young people with disabilities may not be fully addressed in these assumptions.

- a) Flexible and Inclusive Design; Designing Erasmus+ projects with flexibility and inclusivity in mind, including various formats of participation and accommodations, can make the programs more accessible to young people with diverse disabilities.
- b) The presence or absence of supportive policies at the national or regional level that promote disability inclusion and accessibility in youth programs can significantly influence the involvement of young people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects.

2 The conceptualization of the project

2.1 Terminology and concepts

For the purposes of this report, and in order to promote a common understanding and language, basic concepts are listed and clarified below.

United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: (United Nations, 2006, art. 29) includes the measures that States must take to protect and promote the human rights of persons with disabilities. The Convention does not create specific rights, but sets out how all human rights and freedoms apply to persons with disabilities. The Convention establishes a rights-based approach to disability, i.e. it recognizes persons with disabilities as subjects with full rights and freedoms, the capacity for self-determination and full participation in all spheres of economic, social, political and cultural life.

Disability: it is "an evolving concept", "resulting from the interaction between persons with disabilities and environmental and behavioural barriers that prevent their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (preamble, paragraph e) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).



Persons with disabilities ("persons with disabilities"): "persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, in particular institutional, environmental or social behavioural barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (article 6, paragraph 1 of Law 4488/2017; see also article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). The umbrella term "persons with disabilities" includes various categories of disability, which may be visible or non-visible, severe or mild, permanent or temporary, isolated or a combination thereof. (d) Mental disability (e.g. people with manic-depression, schizophrenia, etc.), (e) Chronic conditions (e.g. people with thalassaemia, kidney disease, diabetes mellitus), (f) Other disabilities (e.g. people with Down's syndrome), (g) Severe and multiple disabilities, (h) Multiple disabilities.

Discrimination based on disability or chronic condition: 'means any discrimination, exclusion or restriction based on disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, individual or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation" (see Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). There are different types of discrimination (see Article 2, paragraph 2, Law 4443/2016 - Government Gazette No. 230 A/09.12.2016). Discrimination against persons with disabilities and chronic diseases takes the form of barriers. The existence of barriers in one sector acts as an obstacle to the participation of persons with disabilities in other sectors (e.g. lack of accessibility to the built environment and public transport makes it difficult for them to join education, employment, etc.).

Barrier: anything that creates a barrier to the autonomous and equal participation (i.e. access) of people with disabilities and chronic conditions in all activities. Barriers can be institutional, architectural, technological, behavioural, ideological (e.g. attitudes, perceptions) and can be found in communication, information, practices, procedures, etc.



Access: the right of all citizens, including people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, to participate in all spheres of life, and therefore to use infrastructure, services and goods.

Accessibility ('accessibility'): the characteristic of the environment (built/building infrastructure or electronic/electronic applications), a service or a good that ensures that they can be approached and used independently, safely and comfortably by all users, without discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability and other characteristics (physical build, strength, perception, etc.).

Reasonable accommodations: the "necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments which do not impose a disproportionate or undue burden, where required in a particular case, in order to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy or exercise, on an equal basis with others, all human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). The difference between "accessibility" and "reasonable accommodation" is that accessibility is for all persons with disabilities and chronic conditions as a group, whereas reasonable accommodation is individualized. According to Article 10 of Law 4443/2016 (No. Government Gazette 232 A/09.12.2016), "the employer is obliged to take all appropriate measures, where applicable, to enable such persons to have access to a job, to exercise it and to progress in it, as well as to participate in vocational training, provided that these measures do not impose a disproportionate burden on the employer". An 'adjustment' is considered 'reasonable' when: (a) it is justified by the category and degree of severity of the disability; and (b) its cost is not so high as to cause a financial problem for the institution providing it. However, under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation applies not only in the field of employment, but also in other areas such as education, training and lifelong learning.

- ● **Disability mainstreaming:** this is the process/strategy by which the views and experiences of people with disabilities and chronic conditions are included in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, procedures, actions, measures and programmes in all spheres of economic, social, political and cultural life, so that people with disabilities and chronic conditions benefit from them. Disability mainstreaming aims to remove existing barriers and avoid the creation of new barriers



for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, which are the main cause of their exclusion from society. The term 'disability mainstreaming' was first used in the field of gender mainstreaming. It has since been adopted as a tool to promote gender equality at all levels. In the field of disability, the idea of disability mainstreaming is first encountered in para. 3 of Rule 14 of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993). This is based on the recognition both that disability-related problems - like gender-related problems - are cross-cutting and require a holistic approach, and that channeling resources into 'special' programmes can lead to the marginalization and segregation of people with disabilities from the rest of society (e.g. special schools, residential care institutions, etc.). As there are many different interpretations of 'disability mainstreaming' and considerable variation in what it means in practice, here are two definitions of recognized bodies.

2.1.1 Conceptual approach and classification of disability

Disability is one of the most debated and constantly topical issues in society. Its conceptual definition is an issue that has occupied the disability 'space' and has been the subject of controversy between different approaches/models of understanding disability. The concept of disability as a multidimensional one has been variously attributed and in the international literature it is found with many different definitions. Most definitions, have a medical orientation, emphasizing the deviation of the individual from the 'normal', neglecting the social factors that contribute to the definition of disability.

A scientifically validated definition from the World Health Organization (1980) states that persons with disabilities are "all persons who have a severe handicap resulting from a physical or mental impairment". In other words, it defines as disabled any person who is incapable of meeting all or part of his or her own individual and social physiological needs, whether or not due to a congenital impairment of his or her physical or mental capacities.

In this regard, the WHO adopted the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) in order to create an international reference standard for disability. Disability consists of three separate but interrelated parts, impairment, disability and handicap.



According to the classification, a disease or general health problem leads to impairment, i.e. 'loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function', which in turn leads to disability, which is defined as 'the limitation or lack of ability to perform activities in the manner or range considered normal for an individual'. This incapacity results in a handicap which 'limits or prevents the fulfilment of the roles of the individual which are regarded as normal for him or her' (WHO, 1980).

In May 2001, the revision of the ICIDH international classification was approved by the General Assembly of the WHO, which was the product of collaboration and research by experts from many countries in an effort to improve the first model, responding to criticisms that it had initially received and taking into account the experience gained from its use (Mavreas, 2006).

Therefore, the old classification was replaced by the new one, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), which includes the new terminology adopted and is intended to be a useful tool in many areas, such as health, social security, labour, education, legislation, etc.

The main changes compared to the first version of the classification concern three areas:

- The scope and coverage of different categories of disability. The new classification 'incorporates' the experience of disability, recognising that any person can experience a health impairment and therefore experience a degree of disability.
- In the use of terminology, where the terms disability and impairment have been replaced by the corresponding terms activities (limitation of activities) and participation (limitation of participation).
- The philosophy and model of disability, which differs significantly from that of the first version and accepts that the phenomenon of disability is multifactorial and complex. It also includes contextual factors that may have an impact on the health of the individual, i.e. environmental and individual factors.

Following on from the above, the WHO, in a more recent definition, defines disability as 'the result of organic or environmental causes that create a set of barriers in important areas of life, such as self-



care, employment, education, recreation and general social participation'.

2.1.2 Disability as an individual problem: the medical model

During the 20th century the dominant model in the field of disability was the individual/medical model, which was used to define disability and developed according to the paradigm of Western medicine (Kasseri, 2014). The medical model treats disability in the context of pathology and impairment and argues that impairment arises due to a disorder, syndrome, disease or condition, (Bricout et al., 2004) or as a result of an effect of biological causes or an accident, on the physical condition of the individual (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000), which is then categorised and classified.

Therefore, in the light of the medical model, disability is identified and limited to the individual level, i.e., disability is understood as a problem directly caused by disease, trauma or other health condition, which requires medical attention and is provided in the form of individual treatment (Marks, 1997; Vlachou et al., 2012; Nicolaidis, 2013).

The medical model is alternatively defined as the model of the "personal tragedy" of disability. This dimension recognizes disability as a tragedy experienced by the individual and consequently views people with disabilities as 'weak' and 'helpless victims' (Kasseri, 2014). The problem or deficiency causes the disability and the individual is the victim of it. Therefore, the individual is considered unable or limited to cope with his or her role and responsibilities and bears sole responsibility for his or her disability (Oliver, 1990)

Within this model, it is understood that the problem is approached from the perspective of illness, diagnosis and treatment. Since the problem is attributed to the person with a disability himself, then the difficulties he faces in his daily life are a direct consequence of his own dysfunction, therefore an individualized approach is required, which can only be medical (Nicolaidis, 2013). Treatment is geared towards reducing or eliminating the impairment (Bricout et al., 2004). However, some disabilities cannot be eliminated or improved by medical advances. This portrayal is usually associated with charity and passive welfare policies that are identified with disability (Haegele and Hodge, 2016).



As a result of the above, it appears that there is no individual-environment correlation in the shaping of disability. The medical model suggests that the problems faced by people with disabilities are independent of the wider socio-cultural or political environments (Vlachou et al., 2012). From this perspective, the environment constitutes a given context to which people with disabilities have to adapt.

2.1.3 Disability as a social construct: the social model

In recent decades, the development of scientific knowledge in the social sciences and humanities, but mainly as a result of the maturation and effectiveness of the disability movement's demands, the approach to disability has made spectacular progress. The most significant development has been the predominance of the so-called social model of disability over its medical counterpart.

According to the social model, disability is not seen as a characteristic of the individual, but as the result of the web of his or her relationships with the environment, i.e. disability is essentially a 'social construct'. Therefore, it is society that creates 'disability' by imposing barriers to the full participation of people with disabilities, creating formal and/or informal barriers that prevent these people from functioning equally in all aspects of social life (Bricout et al., 2004). The belief that these people are unable to participate in social life because of their impairments is a 'social construction', serving specific purposes of control by society and is considered a form of social oppression.

The social model does not deny the problem of disability but, unlike the medical model, it ceases to blame the individual and the responsibility is sought directly within society. The difficulties faced by people with disabilities should not be seen as the result of their individual functional limitations, but as a consequence of the deficiencies of society which erect barriers to meeting the needs of these individuals (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001).

It is important to distinguish between the terms 'impairment' and 'disability', which this approach adopts. Specifically, the former concept refers to some kind of dysfunction, while the latter refers to the limitation that this dysfunction causes in the lives of the



2.2 Social Inclusion in Greece

According to Greek Law No. 4019/2011 Social economy and social entrepreneurship and other provisions. (Gov. Gazette A 216/30.9.2011), Article 1 the term "inclusion" refers to the process of integrating individuals from vulnerable groups into society, primarily by promoting their employment.

Vulnerable groups are societal segments that face barriers to participating in social and economic life. These barriers may arise due to social and financial difficulties, physical or mental disabilities, cognitive or sensory impairments, or unforeseeable circumstances impacting the local or regional economy. According to the law, vulnerable groups are categorized into two main groups:

a) "Specific vulnerable groups" consist of individuals hindered in their social and economic inclusion by physical and psychological factors or delinquent behavior. This group includes people with disabilities (physical, mental, cognitive, or sensory), individuals with substance addiction history, those living with HIV, prisoners or former prisoners, and juvenile offenders.

b) "Special population groups" are societal segments that face disadvantages in smoothly integrating into the labor market due to financial, social, or cultural reasons. Examples of such groups include unemployed youth, unemployed women, individuals above 50 years of age seeking employment, long-term unemployed, single parents, members of large families (three or more children), abused women, illiterate persons, inhabitants of remote mountainous and island regions, people from diverse cultural backgrounds, immigrants, and refugees.

"Social care" entails producing and providing goods, health services, and welfare support tailored for specific societal groups. These groups may include the elderly, infants, children, individuals with disabilities, and people suffering from chronic illnesses.

2.2.1 Education

Law 3699/2008 (Gov. Gazette, 2008) defines Special Education and Training (SET) as the educational services provided to students with disabilities and identified special



educational needs. The National Action Plan (Gov. Gazette, 2008) for the Rights of People with Disabilities emphasizes equal access to education for such students.

Special education for minors in Greece is divided into Primary Special Education and Secondary Special Education. The educational system aims to integrate students of all levels, regardless of their needs and particularities, into mainstream education, promoting social participation and equal social development.

For students with special educational needs, it can be challenging to receive education in regular schools due to the type and degree of their problems. In such cases, they may be provided with education in independent special education schools, integration departments within regular schools, or schools in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and other care facilities.

Special kindergartens and special primary schools cater to children from ages 4 to 14, while special high schools serve students from ages 14 to 18. Especially high schools are for students from ages 18 to 22, consisting of preliminary classes followed by classes A', B', and C'. Students with mild disabilities may directly enter the first grade.

In higher education, students with disabilities are provided with support, and special examination committees allow those with physical, sensory impairment, or dyslexia to be examined orally alongside other candidates.

The goals of the special education system aim to enhance the skills and abilities of students with special needs and integrate them into mainstream education and society. However, challenges persist in integrating this student population into the public education system, often due to the lack of preparedness in the educational community.

2.2. Challenges and Limitations

Various international policies, such as the United Nations (2030) Agenda for Sustainable Development and UNESCO's "Education for All" initiative, stress the importance of providing equitable learning experiences for all students, regardless of differences. Despite good policy intentions in many countries, a significant number of schools and universities struggle to achieve equitable access, especially for students with disabilities and special educational needs, due to resource limitations.

According to Soulis (Mantzikos, C., & Lappa, C. (2023)), there are several main barriers to implementing inclusive education in Greek public schools. These barriers include a



shortage of educational and specialized staff, a curriculum that prioritizes knowledge-centered approaches, inadequate logistical infrastructure and modern equipment, and challenges in coordinating schools with other key structures under the Ministry of Education.

One of the most critical barriers to inclusive education is the attitudes and perceptions of general teachers towards disability and educational inclusion. Some general education teachers prefer to have students with disabilities and special educational needs taught separately by specialized teachers, believing that their presence may negatively impact the classroom environment.

Although special educational teachers play a crucial role in general educational schools, Greek public schools have not widely adopted international co-teaching models.

In conclusion, while international policies emphasize the importance of inclusive education, implementation in Greek public schools faces various challenges, including resource limitations, curriculum focus, infrastructure issues, and attitudes towards disability and inclusion among teachers.

Other Educational Institutions

The Department of Educational Innovation and Inclusive Education, part of the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), includes the Unit of Special and Inclusive Education, which offers Detailed-Special programs and Differentiation Guides. The IEP is also involved in the European Erasmus+ 2020 Program "Inclusive Schools," aiming to integrate inclusive principles in participating schools' educational culture.

Regarding education and training in detention facilities, the General Secretariat for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning, and Youth ensures efficient operation in line with Law 4763/2020 (Gov. Gazette,2020).

The Central Council of Vocational Education and Training (CCVET) plays a role in combating discrimination against people with disabilities and chronic diseases, as outlined in the Strategic Plan for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning, and Youth 2022-2024.



The Labour Employment Organization (OAED¹) operates two Special Education training structures to provide vocational specialization and socialization for unemployed people with disabilities, facilitating their employment in various sectors.

The initiative will be taken by General Secretariat for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning, and Youth to address the needs of vulnerable social groups like Roma, prisoners, immigrants, refugees, etc., for learning paths and plan positive actions.

Furthermore, the training of teaching staff in educational structures within Detention Centers is introduced as part of the Strategic Plan for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning, and Youth 2022-2024.

2.2.2 Labor Market

In 2019, the UN CRPD (United Nations, 2016) Committee made the following recommendations to Greece: **Article 27 UN CRPD** addresses Work and Employment. ‘39. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly women with disabilities, in the open labor market, with a view to achieving target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. It also recommends that the State party

- ensure the provision of specific measures and individualized support in the workplace;
- promote among employers the right of persons with disabilities to employment on an equal basis with others;
- and mainstream the disability dimension in all employment policies, measures and programmes, including in the policy design of the Greek Manpower Employment Organization.’

Data from EU-SILC (Eleni Strati, 2021) indicates that the employment rate for people with disabilities in Greece was only 31.1% in 2018, which is significantly lower than the 60.7% employment rate for other individuals and around 19.6 percentage points below the EU27 average. This large gap results in an estimated disability employment gap of approximately 30 percentage points. The disability employment rate in Greece

¹ OAED from 2022 is named to DYPA, and offers the same services as before



has been consistently one of the lowest in the EU, and it decreased from 36.7% in 2017 to 31.1% in 2018.

It's important to note that disabled women in Greece face even more challenges, with only 26.7% being employed, compared to 50% of non-disabled women in the country and 36.1% of disabled men. Young people with disabilities aged 16-24 also experience high unemployment rates. A significant factor contributing to this situation is the higher early school leaving rates among disabled children, which negatively impact their employment prospects in adulthood.

Evidence indicates that there is direct discrimination based on disability during recruitment and employment, which may lead to dismissal. Despite laws and regulations against discrimination, progress in implementing reasonable adjustments in the workplace has been limited. Some businesses are reluctant to adopt simple measures to ensure appropriate working conditions for disabled employees.

Moreover, access to active labor policies for disabled individuals is hampered by ineffective information sharing, especially when it relies on inaccessible or outdated ICT platforms. Vulnerable groups may miss important information about eligibility for public work schemes, resulting in their exclusion from such opportunities.

The perceived prevalence of discrimination on the grounds of disability in Greece has remained stable over the years, with about half of Greek citizens believing that disability is a potential disadvantage for job applicants.

In conclusion, there is a substantial equality gap in the employment of disabled people in Greece. Despite efforts to combat discrimination and provide equal opportunities, various barriers persist, including educational challenges, discrimination during recruitment and employment, and limited access to active labor policies. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the employment situation and achieving EU2020 targets for disabled individuals in the country.

2.2.3 Attitudes towards disability in Greece

In Greece, attitudes towards individuals with physical disabilities, as measured by the ATDP-B scores, were generally poor, with scores just above the mid-point. However, there was a slight improvement in attitudes among individuals with medical



backgrounds or higher knowledge, as well as those who had experience working with people with physical disabilities.

Regarding attitudes towards intellectual disabilities, as measured by the CLAS-ID scores, nursing students showed slightly fewer positive attitudes in the "Similarity" subscale but more positive attitudes in the "Sheltering" subscale. Previous work experience and contact with individuals with intellectual disabilities were associated with more favorable attitudes in the "Sheltering" subscale, but higher age was associated with less favorable attitudes in both the "Similarity" and "Sheltering" subscales. Males had higher scores indicating more exclusionary attitudes.

Moreover, individuals who knew people with intellectual disabilities displayed less favorable attitudes in the "Empowerment" subscale. However, higher knowledge about intellectual disabilities was related to more positive attitudes across all four CLAS-ID subscales (Kritsotakis et al, 2017).

Greek Employers' Attitudes to Employing People with Disabilities

This study revealed that employers' attitudes towards individuals with disabilities vary depending on the type of disability. Respondents believed it would be easier for people with conditions like diabetes, thalassemia, and renal insufficiency to obtain employment compared to those with a history of hospitalization for conditions such as schizophrenia, blindness, learning disability, or depression. Reactions towards mobility impairment and deafness were assessed at a moderate level.

It's important to note that the study's results should be considered illustrative of potential trends among local employers rather than fully generalizable to the entire employer population, as the sample consisted of small-sized businesses in Greece with no prior experience working with people with disabilities. However, since small-sized self-employed businesses are typical in Greece, some generalization is possible.

Similar results have been found in previous investigations, showing that employers express more concerns about hiring individuals with mental disabilities compared to those with physical disabilities. Mental disorders are often associated with stigma and negative stereotypes, leading to discriminatory behaviors and misconceptions about employability. However, research has consistently shown that people with mental disorders can thrive in a supportive work environment, and supported employment has



been successful in helping individuals with severe mental illnesses obtain competitive employment.

Regarding learning disabilities, some employers in the study were conservative in their views, believing that individuals with mild to moderate learning disabilities may not be capable of gainful employment. However, actual experiences of employing workers with learning disabilities have shown positive outcomes in terms of attendance, retention, and improved public image for organizations.

For blindness, a majority of employers in the study were not willing to offer employment, aligning with findings from other studies where employers held unsupportive views towards blind individuals. Despite the fact that blind and partially sighted people can successfully work, discriminatory attitudes still prevail.

The study also highlighted a gap between employers' verbally expressed willingness to provide equal opportunities to disabled individuals and their actual employment practices. Lack of previous experience with workers with disabilities and limited awareness of measures and official policies for equal employment opportunities were identified as potential factors contributing to unsupportive attitudes.

To foster the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the labor force, there is a need for further research to identify specific factors that influence employers' attitudes. Additionally, social campaigns and education efforts directed towards employers can promote understanding and reduce misconceptions, ultimately contributing to the vocational integration of people with disabilities who are willing and capable of working. Supported employment programs offer promise in achieving this goal, and research methods should be refined to capture the complexity of employers' attitudes and actual employment practices (Zissi, A., Rontos, C., Papageorgiou, D., Pierrakou, C. and Chtouris, S., 2007).

2.2.4 Youth Work in Greece

Undoubtedly, studying the history of youth work poses a challenging and perplexing task due to the inherent complexity and ambiguity of the subject. As aptly expressed by Coussée, describing it accurately proves to be a demanding endeavor.

“Youth work is a polyvalent and multifaceted practice. It takes place in a wide range of settings, it varies from unstructured activities to fairly structured programmes, it

reaches a large diversity of young people, touches a lot of different themes and is on the interface with many other disciplines and practices". (Coussée 2009:7)

In Greece, youth workers primarily engage with young individuals aged between 15 and 25 years old, with the possibility of extending this range to include those aged 13 to 15 or 25 to 30 in certain cases. Youth services in the country typically provide a combination of "open" youth work accessible to all young people in the area and targeted youth work aimed at specific groups, especially those who are disadvantaged or socially excluded (Bohn and Stallmann 2007:24).

While there is no specific formal education and training specifically tailored to youth work with nationally recognized qualifications, individuals aspiring to work with young people or become youth workers can obtain relevant professional qualifications. One such path is by obtaining a higher education degree in social work, social sciences (such as sociology, psychology, social policy, social administration, social anthropology, etc.), or educational sciences and pedagogy (such as primary education, early childhood education, special education, social pedagogy, etc.) (Bohn and Stallmann 2007:31).

Additionally, training in youth work-related subjects, like social care/pedagogy, counseling, special education, leisure time management, and organization and management of youth camps, is offered by public and private vocational training institutes (IEK), private vocational training centers (KEK), centers for adult education (KEE), and the General Secretariat for Youth. Successful completion of these studies allows trainees to receive various certificates, depending on their training, such as a vocational training diploma, a further education certificate, a lifelong learning certificate, a certificate of attendance, and more (Bohn and Stallmann 2007:31).

Lastly, non-governmental voluntary organizations and associations offer training courses and specialized seminars for volunteers in the youth sector. However, there is no overall coordination in terms of administration, theory, or approach among these organizations (Bohn and Stallmann 2007:31).

The main actors in the field are described below.

- The General Secretariat for Youth, which is attached to the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs
- The Institute for Youth

- The National Youth Foundation (NYF)
- Second Level of Local Government (Regions or Peripheries)
- First Level of Local Government (Municipalities)
- Non-governmental organisations

Finally, one could suggest that although all categories of youth work do exist in the country, the main fields of action lie in the following: career/employment services, youth information, programmes for disadvantaged and socially excluded young people, cultural education and cultural programmes, social care, sports, and international youth work programmes.

2.2.5 Erasmus+ Programme and Inclusion

The Erasmus+ Program places a strong emphasis on inclusion and diversity, aiming to provide equal opportunities and access to all participants, including those with disabilities. To achieve this goal, the program takes several measures and implements an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

Barriers faced by individuals with disabilities are among the key areas of concern. These barriers may include physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal footing with others. Health problems, such as severe illnesses or chronic diseases, can also present barriers to program participation.

Education and training systems may create structural limitations for certain individuals, including early school-leavers, NEETs (people not in education, employment, or training), and low-skilled adults. Cultural differences can be particularly challenging for people with disabilities, especially those with a migrant or refugee background, linguistic adaptation and inclusion difficulties, and other minority groups.

- ● Social barriers, such as limited social competences, anti-social behaviors, and social marginalization, can also hinder participation. Economic disadvantage, dependence on social welfare systems, and financial hardships may pose additional obstacles. Discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, and disability can create barriers, as can geographical factors, such as living in remote or underdeveloped areas.



To address these barriers and promote inclusion, the Erasmus+ Program takes a proactive approach. It offers support and resources to organizations to ensure their projects are designed with inclusivity in mind and accessible to diverse participants, including those with disabilities. National Agencies, SALTO Resource Centers, and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) play crucial roles in promoting and implementing inclusion and diversity measures.

By recognizing and actively addressing these barriers, Erasmus+ strives to create an environment that fosters meaningful participation and opportunities for people with disabilities, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive society.

2.2.6 Youth Work and people with disabilities

In Greece, youth workers are engaged in a multifaceted and diverse practice that encompasses a wide range of young individuals. However, the provided information does not explicitly state whether youth workers in Greece are specifically trained or equipped to work with people with disabilities. The absence of specific formal education and training programs tailored to youth work with nationally recognized qualifications leaves room for questions regarding their preparedness to address the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Despite the lack of specific educational pathways, individuals aspiring to work with young people or become youth workers can obtain relevant professional qualifications in fields such as social work, social sciences, and educational sciences. While these qualifications may provide a foundation for working with diverse groups, they may not encompass disability-specific approaches.

On a positive note, the Erasmus+ program, which operates in Greece, places a strong emphasis on inclusion and diversity. It strives to provide equal opportunities for all participants, including those with disabilities. Through the program, organizations are encouraged to adopt an inclusive approach when designing their projects and activities, making them accessible to a diverse range of participants.

Non-governmental organizations and associations in Greece also play a role in providing training courses and specialized seminars for volunteers in the youth sector.



These organizations could potentially offer opportunities for youth workers to gain knowledge and skills related to working with people with disabilities.

While the information provided does not offer a conclusive assessment of the capacity of youth workers in Greece to work with people with disabilities, it suggests that there may be a need for further training and support in disability inclusion. The emphasis on inclusion and diversity within the Erasmus+ program is a positive step towards promoting more accessible and inclusive youth work practices in Greece. To enhance the effectiveness of youth work with people with disabilities, there may be a call for targeted training and resources in this area.

3. Research and Methodology

3.1 Research Hypotheses

The project focused on assessing barriers in existing youth-serving infrastructures and defining them as much as possible. The partnership gathered data and knowledge from professionals working in the field.

The project relied on the following hypotheses to organize the methodology of the research and the results in each country:

1. **The first hypothesis** is that youth workers may be underprepared when it comes to involving young people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects. This hypothesis stems from the observation that their everyday youth services may not be fully accessible to young people with disabilities.
2. **The second hypothesis** states that youth organizations may not be able to ensure accessibility for young people with disabilities due to resource constraints, resulting in lower participation in their services.
3. And **the third hypothesis** states that youth workers' limited experience and knowledge of young people with complex needs may influence their attitudes towards inclusion, possibly contributing to lower representation of young people with disabilities in Erasmus+ projects.

3.2 Methodology

Three types of methods were used in the research to capture youth organizations in Hungary, Greece and Romania.

1. An anonymous online questionnaire conducted on survio.com, using three established study instruments that measure social workers' attitudes (Balázs-Foeldi, 2018;



- Cheatham et al., 2015; Gregory, Noto, 2012). The questionnaire was completed by at least 150 youth workers.
2. Based on the results of the questionnaire and document analysis, interviews were conducted with 20 leaders of youth organizations (e.g., chairperson, board chairperson, executive director, etc.).
 3. Document analysis of 20 youth organizations to examine their strategies for including people with disabilities.

First, a list of organizations primarily targeting young people was compiled, including those implementing Erasmus+ youth programs in each country. This list was compiled using publicly available lists of Erasmus+ Youth Program beneficiaries between 2017 and 2020. All successful applicants from these years were asked to respond to the questionnaire to ensure a representative sample for the four-year period. Organizations were contacted once by email and phone; participation was voluntary and random.

The list includes the organizations' names, phone numbers, email addresses, and the name of a contact person. Contact was made by phone to introduce the questionnaire, and follow-up was done by email or phone as needed to prompt completion if responses were insufficient.

The goal was to obtain at least 150 completed questionnaires from youth organization staff that fit the description of a youth worker.

For the document analysis, 20 youth organizations were randomly selected from the original list to avoid bias and measurement error. In this random process, the names of the organizations were drawn from a hat for examination.

Data collection followed the methodology described above with questionnaires, document analysis, and interviews.

3.3 The case of Greece

In analyzing the hypotheses above, an SPSS analysis (Appendix I) was conducted. The data for this analysis came from a questionnaire distributed to 93 Greek organizations. Participants in these organizations were limited to individuals between the ages of 13 and 30 years old, reflecting the target group of Erasmus+ projects.

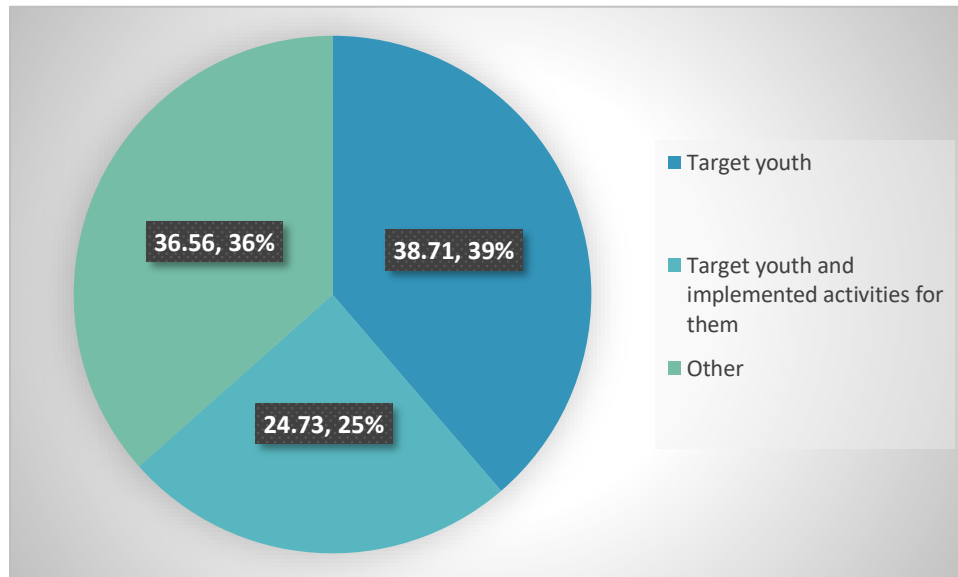
The aim of the study was to investigate whether youth workers in Greek organizations face challenges in effectively engaging young people with disabilities

in Erasmus+ projects. To this end, a comprehensive analysis was conducted using SPSS (Appendix I), focusing on data from a specially designed questionnaire distributed to 93 Greek organizations.

Through this analysis, we aimed to gain insights into the extent to which youth workers are prepared to engage young people with disabilities in Erasmus+ initiatives.

The research study included a heterogeneous group of 93 participants, including men and women from different age groups, marital status, and economic background. In addition, participants came from different levels of professional experience, which contributed to a broad representation.

Among the participants, it was found that 38.71% of them were employed in organizations that specifically targeted youth groups, indicating a clear focus on youth-oriented initiatives. In addition, 24.73% of the participants were employed in organizations that not only targeted youth, but also implemented specific programs for them. **This finding underscores the existence of a subset of organizations that prioritize comprehensive engagement with young people.**



On the other hand, it was found that 36.56% of participants were not associated with organizations that address the needs of young people. **This indicates that there is still a portion of the sample that is not directly involved in youth work, which may be influencing their views and experiences of youth-related projects.**



Regarding participants' views on the appropriate designation for people with disabilities, the survey results show varied responses. 38.71% of participants indicated that the correct term is "person with special needs," while 29.03% preferred the term "disabled person / person with a disability" A smaller percentage of 8.60% thought "handicapped" was the correct term and 23.66% opted for "people with disabilities"

It is important to recognize the importance of language and terminology when addressing issues related to disabilities. According to the World Health Organization (2001), disability is an integral part of the human experience, and almost everyone may experience a disability at some point in their lives, whether temporary or permanent. Currently, an estimated 1.3 billion people, or about 16% of the world's population, live with significant disabilities. This number is on the rise, due in part to factors such as an aging population and an increase in non-communicable diseases.

The results of this **survey demonstrate the diversity of views** on appropriate language when discussing disability. It is important to approach this issue with sensitivity and respect, and to understand that preferred terms may vary by person and community. By promoting inclusive language and attitudes, we can foster a more inclusive society and create better opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in different aspects of life, including initiatives such as Erasmus+ projects.

3.3.1 Experience with people with disabilities

Understanding the level of experience and engagement of individuals with disabilities is of paramount importance in fostering inclusive environments and promoting their meaningful participation in various aspects of society. This study delves into the extent of experience that participants have with people with disabilities, aiming to shed light on the current state of involvement and engagement. The data reveals a diverse spectrum of experiences, with 47.31% of participants have no relevant experience or have less than one hour/month of experience. 25.81% have relatively little experience and spend 1-2 hours/month with people with disabilities. Only 10.75% have reliable experience and spend 11-80 hours/month with people with disabilities. 16.13% have extensive experience, spending more than 80 hours/month with people with disabilities.

Knowledge gained during studies



40.4% of participants gained knowledge about people with disabilities during their studies.

50.5% of participants did not obtain relevant knowledge about people with disabilities during their studies.

Based on this data, we can conclude that a significant portion of participants have limited experience with people with disabilities. In addition, about half of the participants did not acquire specific knowledge about people with disabilities during their studies. **This indicates a potential knowledge gap that could impact their understanding and ability to work effectively with people with disabilities. Further efforts could be made to improve education and training in this area to promote inclusion and better support for people with disabilities.**

3.3.2 Attitudes of Participants

The main results of the study, based on the participants' responses, are as follows:

A majority of 51.61% of participants expressed a positive attitude towards youth service programs and recognized their important role in supporting people with fewer opportunities through various methods and programs. **This highlights the importance of addressing societal inequalities and providing essential assistance to those in need.**

17.02% of participants recognized the critical role of youth service programs in supporting youth with disabilities. **This recognition underscores the importance of inclusive initiatives that empower and support this special population.**

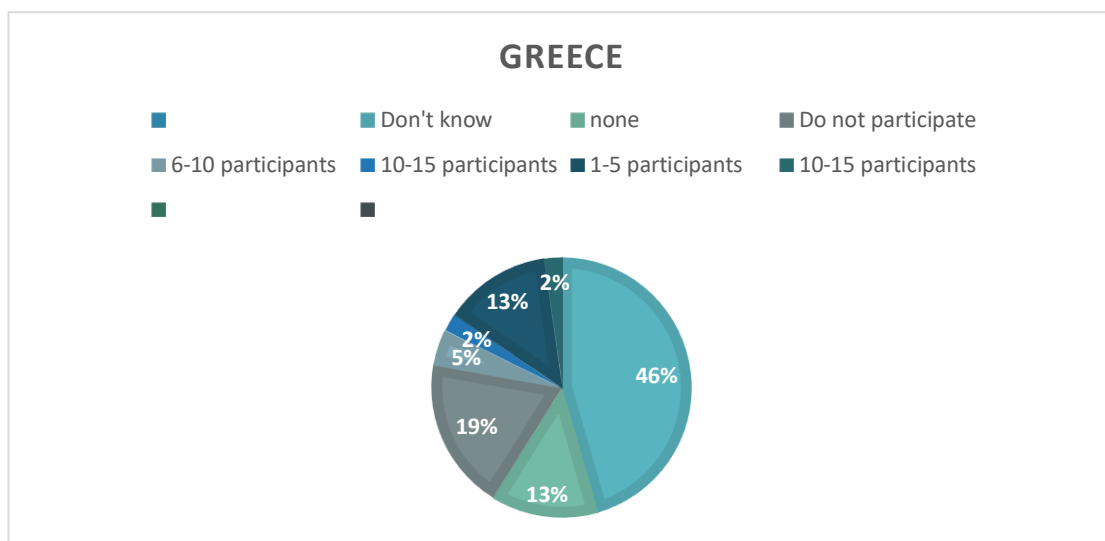
23.66% of participants valued youth services programs for their social inclusion services. **This finding highlights the potential of these programs to foster connections, understanding, and unity among diverse communities.**

7.53% of participants valued youth mentoring programs as valuable platforms for providing learning opportunities. **This underscores the importance of fostering the personal and professional development of program participants.**

The study reveals encouraging attitudes among participants toward youth programs, with the majority recognizing their positive impact on supporting those with fewer opportunities and young people with disabilities. In addition, participants recognize the role of these programs in promoting social inclusion and providing valuable learning opportunities.

In addition to examining participants' attitudes toward youth programs, this report looks at the funding of such initiatives and the contribution of local government and state agencies. Understanding the financial framework is critical to the sustainability and growth of these programs. The study collected responses from participants that shed light on the current funding status and level of government support for youth mentoring programs.

How many people with disabilities in E+ projects



3.3.3 Organizational support and capacity for inclusion of youth with disabilities

The majority of participants felt that accessibility was critical to inclusion, both in terms of infrastructure, human support, and planning for inclusion activities. The psychological support that an organization can provide when needed was also mentioned as an advantage. It is worth noting that according to the responses received, accessibility is synonymous and vice versa. Another point that all participants came to was that one of the most important steps to achieve equality would be if there was a



budget to make the organizations' offices accessible (toilet, location, kitchen, entrance, equipment). Also, in terms of infrastructure, it is very important to work with premises and hotels, hostels, restaurants, etc. that are also accessible. At the same time, most participants mentioned the need to hire a personal assistant for the program to provide the necessary and adequate support. Another insightful idea came from one participant who said:

"Get in touch with the hosts in another country so they know everything is accessible" or another mentioned the importance of having a group of young people who have already met and talked about their needs. *"It is important to make sure that there are no barriers between the young people and the excluded and that all needs are discussed. "openly and discussed their fears and expectations. "*

Two other participants spoke more specifically about practical support, such as covering the cost of a personal assistant, for the communication needed to ensure that all activities are integrated. The above reasons align well with the needs. Four other participants said that specialized experts would be helpful to be part of the organization's team. It is worth mentioning that the majority of participants felt that it is extremely important to include people with disabilities every step of the way, because working with and with them is what makes a difference.

Regarding the funding status of youth programs surveyed

16.13% of respondents indicated that their respective organization does not provide the services surveyed. **This finding may indicate gaps in certain areas that need further investigation to identify opportunities for expansion.**

Another 16.13% indicated that they were unsure about the availability of funding for the services offered. **This uncertainty highlights the need for improved transparency and communication within organizations regarding financial matters.**



Encouragingly, 20.43% of respondents indicated that they receive funding for the services they provide. **This positive response indicates that a significant portion of youth-serving programs have received financial support, ensuring the continuation of their valuable services.**

On the other hand, 47.31% of participants indicated that the services provided by their organizations are not funded. This highlights the financial challenges faced by a significant number of youth-serving programs and underscores the need for additional resources and support.

3.3.4 State contribution to youth mentoring programs

Respondents were also asked about the contribution of local government and state agencies to the operation of youth care programs:

47.31% of respondents were unsure of the specific contribution of local government. This lack of knowledge could be due to inadequate communication or limited transparency in the funding process.

27.96% of respondents indicated that their local government does not contribute to the operation of youth-serving programs. **This finding suggests that collaboration between these programs and state agencies can be improved.**

Only 7.53% of respondents indicated that their local government contributes 10-25% of the annual budget for youth programs. **This relatively low percentage suggests that greater financial support from the government is needed to effectively support these initiatives.**

Interestingly, in cases where the state or local government contributes more than 25% of the annual budget, percentages below 7% were observed. **This indicates that there is limited financial support from government sources.**



The results show an inconsistent funding landscape for youth programs, with a significant portion receiving no financial support. In addition, the contribution of local government and state agencies appears to be relatively limited, leaving room for increased collaboration and financial support. To ensure the success and sustainability of youth initiatives, stakeholders will need to work together to secure funding and obtain more government support. Addressing these financial challenges will play a critical role in ensuring that youth mentoring programs reach their full potential and positively impact the lives of vulnerable populations.

Day-to-Day Services

This study examines the assumption that youth organizations might lack the resources to ensure accessibility for young people with disabilities, leading to their limited participation in the services offered. The variables considered are whether the organization has the resources to establish special access structures for people with disabilities and whether they receive government funding for this purpose.

The analysis suggests that many youth organizations indeed lack the necessary resources to create accessible structures for young people with disabilities. This limitation is further exacerbated by the absence of dedicated government funding for such initiatives. Consequently, the correlation between these variables implies that young people with disabilities face barriers in accessing the services offered by these organizations.

The findings shed light on the importance of addressing accessibility concerns within youth organizations. Without adequate resources and government support, these organizations may struggle to provide inclusive services and accommodate young individuals with disabilities.



The analysis supports the notion that young people with disabilities might face challenges in accessing services offered by youth organizations due to limited resources and lack of dedicated government funding for accessibility measures.

To create a more inclusive environment, it is imperative for youth organizations to secure adequate resources and collaborate with government agencies to establish special access structures, ensuring that young individuals with disabilities can fully participate in and benefit from the services provided. Such efforts will lead to greater inclusivity, empowerment, and improved outcomes for all youth, regardless of their abilities.

Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from the study provide critical insights into the challenges faced by youth organizations in creating accessible spaces for people with disabilities and the impact on participation in Erasmus+ programs. Several key findings emerged from the analysis:

The study revealed that youth organizations **lack the necessary resources and financial support to establish special access structures for people with disabilities.** This deficit hampers the organizations' ability to create inclusive environments, thereby hindering the participation of young individuals with disabilities in Erasmus+ programs.

Another significant observation is that workers in these programs **often lack the required knowledge and expertise in supporting people with disabilities.** This knowledge gap may lead to negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities and a lack of understanding in managing conditions related to these individuals.

The combined effect of limited resources, funding constraints, and the lack of expertise significantly impacts access and participation in Erasmus+ programs. Young people with disabilities face barriers



that prevent them from fully engaging with the opportunities and benefits these programs offer.

The absence of special access structures, lack of expertise, and negative attitudes within youth organizations have a direct influence on inclusivity. The reduced accessibility and participation of individuals with disabilities undermine the core principles of Erasmus+ programs, which aim to foster diversity, empowerment, and mutual understanding.

3.4 The second part of the study with questionnaires

Following the above research complimentary a questionnaire prepared for 20 organizations. The aim of the study was to explore the participation of young people with disabilities in European programs, focusing on the insights of professionals working in institutions involved in Erasmus+ programs. A total of 20 participants were interviewed online, selected from relevant institutions that had previously received European programs. Participants were assured of confidentiality, respecting their desire for privacy.

The research findings are consistent with the experiences of participating professionals and show that young people with disabilities have limited participation in Erasmus+ programs. There are several reasons for this, including challenges related to accessibility, insufficient training of organizations by European and national bodies, and the lack of initiative for participation by young people with disabilities themselves. In the following sections, a more detailed analysis of the findings is provided, which offers valuable considerations for future action on disability, accessibility and young people in European programs.

Motivation in participating in focus group

- The majority of participants expressed their motivation for promoting equal representation in Erasmus+ projects and stressed the importance of giving disabled young people the same access to these programs as non-disabled people.



- Many participants showed a strong interest in improving the accessibility of Erasmus+ programs for people with disabilities. They advocated for the development of more inclusive programs and shared ideas and best practices to achieve this goal.
- Some participants indicated that they wanted to support other organizations' projects by participating in the study, demonstrating a collaborative approach to promoting accessibility and inclusion.
- A significant number of participants expressed a desire to work more frequently with volunteers with disabilities, indicating their willingness to promote greater inclusivity within their organizations.
- Some participants explicitly emphasized their interest in improving accessibility in terms of both the physical infrastructure and the process that enables disabled people to participate in Erasmus+ projects. They recognized the barriers their organizations face and expressed their commitment to overcoming them.
- Collaboration and cooperation were mentioned as important motivators. Participants recognized the value of connecting with other organizations to share ideas and knowledge about accessibility and inclusion.

These aspects underline the participants' commitment to promoting inclusion and accessibility in Erasmus+ programs. Their motivation is in line with the principle of equal representation and creating opportunities for young people with disabilities to fully participate in and benefit from these initiatives.

Information about the organization

The study included 20 participants from a variety of organizations, highlighting the diversity and representation from different institutions involved in Erasmus+ programs.



- The participants' motivation for engaging in the research was related to their belief in the Erasmus principle of equal representation, aiming to ensure that disabled young people have equal access to Erasmus+ projects.
- Many organizations expressed their interest in the subject of accessibility for disabled individuals in Erasmus+ programs. They indicated a commitment to developing more inclusive programs and shared thoughts on improving accessibility.
- Some participants joined the research to share good practices, ideas, and suggestions about accessibility, showing a supportive attitude towards promoting inclusivity within the programs.
- Several organizations mentioned their willingness to work more frequently with disabled volunteers and their commitment to hosting disabled participants in upcoming projects. Cooperation with other organizations was also highlighted as a key factor for sharing knowledge and know-how.
- Some organizations acknowledged the obstacles they face concerning accessibility, both in terms of physical infrastructure and the process of involving disabled individuals in projects.
- The majority of participants mentioned that their organizations' financial resources come from various sources. These include the Erasmus+ budget, which encompasses ESC, KA1, KA2 programs, and Alliances, as well as funding from Horizon and National Strategic Reference Framework. Donations from socially responsible companies and occasional government funding also contribute to their financial resources.
- Some participants highlighted that their organizations generate income through self-sustaining activities, such as conducting workshops and events. Owning the space instead of renting was noted to be financially beneficial for some organizations.



- Two participants mentioned receiving economic aid from the municipality, primarily in the form of providing free space and materials for activities. In return, their organizations offer volunteering services to the community, addressing various needs such as working with children in day care centers.
- Participants mentioned cases where the budget for their activities was covered by Ministries, such as the Ministry of Education or other peripheral ministries.
- Some organizations conduct youth festivals or parties to raise money for their activities, showing their proactive approach to securing additional funds.
- For certain actions or activities, participants mentioned that beneficiaries might be required to pay a financial participation fee to support the organization's endeavors.

Overall, the section highlights the diverse sources of financial support that enable these organizations to carry out their activities and support their mission. The funding landscape includes a mix of grants, donations, self-sustaining initiatives, municipal support, and beneficiary contributions, demonstrating their dedication to securing the necessary resources for their programs and projects.

Type of projects

The types of projects available are quite common among the organizations, as they provide KA1, KA2, KA3, Alliances. More specifically training courses, youth exchanges, mobility for youth workers, European solidarity Corps program -sending and receiving organizations and webinars.

The value for an organization to apply for E+ youth programs



- Participating organizations see E+ youth programs as valuable opportunities that strengthen their status on the European level. Collaborating with other agencies broadens their horizons, enhances their soft skills, and provides international collaborations.
- E+ programs serve as integration tools, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, fostering solidarity, and promoting civil society interactions.
- Many organizations do not have sufficient resources on their own, making E+ funding a transparently satisfying source to implement programs on topics of interest.
- E+ programs offer a platform for organizations to learn from good practices, network with corresponding organizations, and develop as an organization through valuable partnerships.
- For certain organizations, E+ funding is crucial for their survival, providing them with the means to implement their ideas into actions.
- E+ programs offer young people the chance to travel, obtain new experiences, expand their knowledge, interact with other cultures, and cultivate a different way of thinking. Participant K. highlighted the inclusion of disabled individuals in these opportunities.
- The benefits of E+ programs extend beyond the international level, as organizations bring back their learning and experiences to local communities, fostering solidarity and inclusive growth.

Qualities of an ideal E+ participant



- Participants overwhelmingly support the idea of not setting any special criteria based on physical abilities, aiming to be inclusive and provide appropriate assistance to all individuals.
- Participants expect young people to be open-minded, respectful of diversity, willing to interact and work with others towards common goals, and eager to meet new people and make friendships.
- The primary motive for participants is to empower young people to gain experience through exchanges and bring back their learning to implement in their communities.
- Despite not setting physical criteria in theory, participants acknowledge that activities and premises are often designed for able-bodied individuals. They recognize the need for changes and advocate for more inclusive programs and accessible spaces.
- Participants express a willingness to understand and adapt to the individual needs of participants, such as considering the effects of medications or other factors affecting engagement in the program.
- Pre-existing knowledge is not necessarily a prerequisite. Participants look for young people with a genuine interest and willingness to engage with the program's goals, embrace volunteering, and develop their personality.
- The participants emphasize the importance of hearing about young people's expectations, fears, and hopes to shape programs according to their specific needs and interests.



Experience regarding the involvement of disabled people in general and in E+ youth projects

- Most participants have encountered disabled participants in Erasmus+ projects, either abroad or in Greece. Some have been part of teams where disabled individuals actively participated.
- Participants shared positive examples of disabled individuals successfully participating in Erasmus+ exchanges and training programs. These examples include a person with neuropsychological impairment, a wheelchair user with assistance, a blind individual using an audio application, and a visually impaired person.
- Participants acknowledged challenges related to accessibility, both in terms of physical infrastructure and the need for accommodations to ensure the full participation of disabled individuals.
- Participants highlighted that disabled individuals' participation in youth programs remains relatively low, indicating a need for greater inclusion and support.
- Some participants shared experiences of personal challenges in interacting with disabled participants, while recognizing the learning opportunities and the importance of creating more inclusive environments.
- There were instances of successful inclusion, such as a person with hearing loss participating on equal terms with the rest of the team.

Involving disabled people into a program/activity

- The first step in involving disabled people in a program/activity is to understand their specific needs and requirements. This allows for the formulation of a program that accommodates everyone comfortably.



- Successful examples of involving disabled individuals include providing opportunities for mobility-impaired volunteers to work in nature, with the option of extending their involvement based on their satisfaction with the project.
- Collaborating with disabled individuals and addressing their unique needs enables organizations to create inclusive experiences, as seen in the example of beneficiaries visiting Italy for a program on dancing and returning with joy and new experiences.
- Inclusive programs can foster positive interactions and cooperation among participants, including those with disabilities. For instance, a recreational activity in a private school allowed students with disabilities to interact and cooperate successfully with others.

Gaining more experience on part of organizations to involve disabled young people in their E+ projects

- Involving disabled people in programs requires careful planning and consideration of their needs, including personal assistants, accessible accommodations, and facilities. Writing a comprehensive proposal that addresses these aspects is essential.
- Organizations can create partnerships and collaborate with groups that advocate for the rights of disabled individuals and have experience in implementing inclusive Erasmus+ programs. Listening to the needs and ideas of young disabled persons is crucial in this process.
- Due to challenges in finding accessible and affordable accommodations and centers, a flexible budget is essential to ensure inclusivity and accessibility.



- Participants emphasized the importance of creating accessible websites with all necessary information, including alt texts for social media. The idea of having disabled individuals as providers of knowledge was central in their approach.
- Participants emphasized the need for training courses for organization staff, making them mandatory to ensure proper understanding and implementation of inclusive practices.

Difficulties in involving disabled young people in international youth programs

- Participants emphasized the need for accessible buildings and spaces where the team will work and socialize, though they recognized challenges, especially in countries like Greece where accessibility is limited.
- Participants recognized the importance of addressing stereotypes and ignorance about defending the rights of disabled individuals. They highlighted the need to become more informed and involved in disability-related issues.
- Challenges included considering the specific needs of disabled individuals, such as providing personal assistance during accommodation, breaks, or before sleep. Ensuring proper interaction within the group and addressing feelings of insecurity were also highlighted.
- Participants stressed the importance of choosing activities that are inclusive to all young people and using language that accommodates individuals with disabilities, such as agreeing on activity formats for deaf participants or specifying restaurants accessible to those with guide dogs.
- Participants mentioned challenges in writing calls for programs that include disabled people, as it may be difficult to anticipate whether personal assistance will be required, potentially affecting the program budget.



- Participants recognized the lack of knowledge and know-how to effectively include disabled people in youth programs. They advocated for training courses to raise awareness and change perceptions regarding disability.
- Ensuring professional support from doctors, psychologists, and first aid providers, as well as creating a safe environment with necessary equipment, were identified as important aspects of inclusive programs.
- Participants believed that with proper organization and planning, difficulties related to specific disabilities could be overcome, making inclusive programs feasible.
- Participants mentioned age restrictions and government policies related to income support as challenges that may hinder disabled people from joining certain programs. They noted that some programs may not be eligible for disabled individuals, and specific support for their participation may not always be provided.

Support and capacity needed from the organization to involve young disabled people

- Participants stressed the significance of accessibility in terms of infrastructure, support, and planning inclusive activities. They saw accessibility as a key aspect of ensuring equality and inclusion.
- Providing psychological support when needed was mentioned as an asset for organizations to consider, recognizing the importance of addressing the mental well-being of participants.
- Participants emphasized the need for a dedicated budget to make organizations' offices and facilities accessible, including toilets, sites, cuisine, entrance, and



appliances. Collaboration with accessible spaces like hotels and restaurants was also highlighted.

- The need for hiring personal assistants during programs to provide essential and suitable assistance for disabled participants was emphasized.
- Participants highlighted the importance of effective communication with host countries to ensure accessibility and the significance of having all participants meet beforehand to discuss their needs and ensure mutual understanding.
- Encouraging disabled young people to open up about their fears and expectations was seen as a valuable way to provide support and foster inclusion.
- Covering expenses related to personal assistants and communication needed for inclusive activities was considered essential.
- The majority of participants emphasized the importance of involving disabled individuals in every step of the process, from planning to execution, to ensure meaningful inclusion and impactful outcomes.

Involving people with disabilities in a project or activity

Understanding the needs is always the first step in creating a program that is acceptable to all. E. noted that they had a volunteer who had to work outside due to a mobility impairment. The person had asked for an extension because they were so happy with the project and their tasks. It is important to note that the person in question always had access to independent transportation, which was another factor in the NGO's ability to work together. E. says, "Our volunteer work is in the forest, and some places are inaccessible, so we were not able to provide transportation that met their needs." K. said several recipients traveled to Italy last year to participate in a dance program. They joined with others, learned new songs and dances, and came back beaming and happy. In a private school program, Q. reported a recreational activity in which children, some of whom had disabilities, successfully interacted and collaborated with others.

Gaining more experience on part of organizations to involve disabled young people in their E+ projects



Writing the proposal requires oversight and a lot of work, such as incorporating personal assistants and accessible housing, dining, and recreation options. Organizations should partner with organizations that advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, organizations that have previously established inclusive Erasmus+ programs, and organizations that work closely with young people with disabilities to understand their needs and perceptions. It should be reiterated that in Greece, for example, it is quite difficult to find hotels and facilities that are both accessible and affordable, so the budget should be more lenient. For example, one of the participants noted that even if the Erasmus+ Committee wanted to propose a program that included people with disabilities, it would give a bad grade to his organization if it could not find anyone in the end. Many participants said that they had started building an accessible website that included all the information they needed, and that they had since learned how to create alt-texts for social media. All of the participants' speeches centered around the idea of asking people with disabilities to share their knowledge. "It's best if we let people with disabilities teach us," or some variation of "We need to ask professionals to give us new ideas." Almost all participants said it would be important to create training programs for people who work in organizations. More specifically, O. said that these types of educational programs need to be mandatory.

Benefits of involving a young disabled person in an international youth program

- Participating in youth programs offers opportunities to experience new cultures, interact with diverse individuals, and exercise soft skills, leading to personal growth and new experiences.
- Youth programs help agencies acquire more knowledge and become more inclusive, promoting accessible and discrimination-free environments.
- These programs offer specific socialization in safe and caring environments, boosting participants' self-esteem and providing opportunities for self-expression.



- Participation in youth programs for disabled individuals promotes visibility and representation, contributing to positive changes and avoiding bad practices related to disability.
- Participation positively impacts society by promoting the social and professional inclusion of disabled individuals.
- Participants value the opportunity to be equal members of a team and interact with others, fostering personal evolution and relationship-building.
- For disabled young people who may have faced exclusion in the past, youth programs offer a counter-narrative of socialization and equal membership, challenging negative experiences.
- Some programs can create proposals for more inclusive practices, advocating for accessibility and equality.

Difficulties in attracting young people with disabilities to participate in international youth programmes

Accessibility was at the top of the list of participants' responses. For example, it must be taken into account that the buildings and all the places where the team will work and meet **must be accessible, which is extremely difficult in a country like Greece where the accessibility of buildings and roads is minimal.** Participant C. said that he also believes that stereotypes and ignorance are the first things to confront before implementing a program:

"At first, I had to face the fact that I do not know much about the rights of people with disabilities and that I need to look more into these issues and educate myself."

Challenges also have to do, as half of the participants said, with their own needs, such as personal assistance in housing during breaks, or when going to bed. Other



participants expressed concerns about whether there would be good interaction within the group or whether participants with disabilities would face some degree of distancing. It was also pointed out that people with disabilities may feel insecure about how others might treat them. In addition, before the course/training/exchange is implemented, thought should be given to appropriate activities that are not exclusive but can include all young people. One participant gave an example involving the appropriate use of language, e.g., if someone has a hearing disability, it should be agreed how the activity should proceed, or if they have a guide dog with them. should specify which restaurants they can and cannot enter so that they are not disadvantaged. Another aspect that makes it difficult for some participants is that the written part of the call includes people with disabilities. It was said that they did not know earlier if the person needed a personal assistant and eventually, they would, so the organization had to cut and eliminate money from something else in the program.

N. said that “we were not trained on how to develop programs and write applications to successfully integrate people with disabilities”.

Some participants pointed out that a lack of knowledge about how to include people with disabilities in youth programs can lead to mistakes, such as choosing hard-to-reach locations or an inability to assess the needs of young People with disabilities. I said that they always try to provide professionals such as doctors, psychologists, and people with first aid skills. They also provide a safe space and any necessary equipment and supplies they need. O. and R. argue that awareness training is necessary because people need to change their perception of people with disabilities. M., on the other hand, believes that the difficulties are related to the disability, adding that any difficulty can be overcome if the program is properly organized. Finally, K. mentions the age limit and government income support policies as another challenge. She also added that many programs are not disability-friendly and do not always provide special assistance to people with disabilities who participate in the program.

What makes a situation equal for a disabled person?



- All participants emphasized the importance of universal accessibility as the foundation for achieving equality. They advocated for equal access to buildings and facilities for both able-bodied individuals and disabled persons.
- Participants stressed the need for activities to be tailored and structured in an accessible way, from the ice breakers to the closing reflection time. The goal is to ensure that no disabled person feels excluded during the program.
- The primary focus is on creating an environment where disabled individuals do not experience discrimination and are treated as equal members of the team. Supporting them based on their specific needs is crucial for their inclusion.
- Participants emphasized the importance of disabled individuals being able to participate in all activities on an equal basis with others. The aim is to create opportunities for everyone to be involved in outdoor activities and other program elements.

Best to provide support for a disabled young person

- Participants emphasized the importance of involving the disabled person themselves in the decision-making process regarding the type of support they require. The approach is to listen to their needs and preferences to ensure the best support is provided.
- Participants recognized the significance of involving disabled individuals in the process of preparing an inclusive program. While only a few participants had implemented this approach, most expressed interest in adopting it and sharing the idea with colleagues.



- Participants suggested that disabled individuals should have a say in who provides support to them, with some mentioning professionals or individuals with relevant knowledge and education in disabilities as ideal choices.
- Several participants mentioned collaborating with associations of people with disabilities to ensure that all possible needs are addressed and programs become fully inclusive.

Having a disabled member in your family

- Participants expressed concern about the lack of accessibility in Greece, which impacts the lives of disabled individuals and their families. It was mentioned that some families might consider relocating to a more accessible country due to this issue.
- Participants discussed the worries related to the future care of disabled family members, especially when the current caregivers are no longer alive. The lack of suitable living arrangements and support from the state was a common concern.
- Participants highlighted the financial challenges faced by disabled individuals in Greece, as they are often excluded from the job market and may face difficulties in achieving financial well-being.
- The lack of support from the Greek government for disabled individuals and their families was a recurring theme in the discussions.
- Participants expressed the need for greater awareness and information about disability-related issues to navigate more effectively through challenges.



- Participants noted that in countries of central Europe, disabled individuals are more visible and actively participate in various events and activities, unlike in Greece where they might be "hidden" within their homes.

Social stereotypes about youth with disabilities

The majority stated that they believe that people with disabilities with visual impairments (Down syndrome, people in wheelchairs) and people with intellectual disabilities have the most prejudice in society. For the first group, the statement includes the belief that when they see a defect, they can be the target of discrimination and inappropriate behaviors, such as staring at them, harming them, and treating them as if they were children even though they are adults. For people with intellectual disabilities, the majority believe that the more help a person needs in daily life, the more likely they are to experience prejudice and lack of trust. Participant I stated that:

“In Greece, people with intellectual disabilities are considered useless and nothing has been done to change this mentality and create an equal framework for participation.” Participant L. believes that people with intellectual disabilities experience more prejudice because they believe that they cannot be independent from other disabilities. In the same vein, R. argues that this group is considered useless because society considers them ineffective. Q. told us about her own prejudices against people with Down syndrome, in her own words. She noted that she thought so until recently, but she changed her mind when she learned that this group of people can study and get a job.

- Participants mentioned that disabled individuals with visible impairments, such as Down syndrome or wheelchair users, are more likely to face prejudices in society. They can be targets of discrimination and inappropriate behavior, such as being stared at, pitied, or treated like children even if they are adults.
- Participants also highlighted that people with mental impairments face significant prejudice. The level of help a person needs in their daily life often determines how they are treated, with those requiring more assistance being more likely to face prejudice and mistrust.



- Participants noted that people with mental impairments are sometimes perceived as useless or unproductive by society, leading to discrimination and unequal treatment.
- Some participants shared personal experiences of changing their own prejudiced views towards individuals with Down syndrome after learning more about their capabilities, such as their ability to study and work.

Integration and disabled young people

The majority of participants said that peer disintegration also applies to everyone, although it is said to be more common in people with disabilities. Disability because they also face stereotypes just because they are disabled. R. said that other than a lack of knowledge and acceptance, there are no other barriers to the inclusion of people with disabilities in a peer community. K. mentioned the need to educate parents in general as they seem to promote the common stereotype: "I really believe that if you tell a child that not everyone has the same movements, talks the same, acts the same, or thinks the same, they will see the person and not the inadequacy." On the other hand, S. and T. said that people with intellectual disabilities cannot integrate because they cannot communicate with others. "We communicate through the way we think, this group of people has no consciousness, so we can not communicate with others. successfully interact with their peers," T. said. The suggestions made have a common educational background. Specifically, it is recommended that inclusion courses be taken beginning in kindergarten and throughout all school years. In addition, there should be parent groups where they can talk about their struggles and hopes and generally share and support each other. The role of non-formal education seems to be crucial for the participants, as most developed the very social role of NGOs. D. said that in Greece there are still a large number of families that "hide" children with disabilities for many different reasons. But the most important thing is that because of the lack of accessibility everything becomes a barrier, even a walk in the park if it is not accessible cannot be realized. When you develop a program, it must be accessible without people with disabilities to promote a culture of inclusion and remember that good will is not enough, action must be taken.



- Participants acknowledged that integration into peer communities can be difficult for everyone, but disabled individuals may face additional challenges due to stereotypes and lack of knowledge and acceptance.
- Participants emphasized the importance of education, particularly for parents, to challenge common stereotypes and promote understanding and acceptance of disabled individuals.
- Some participants noted that people with mental impairments may face difficulties in integrating due to communication barriers, but the majority of proposals still focused on education and support.
- Participants highlighted the significant role of non-formal education and NGOs in promoting social inclusion and creating accessible environments for disabled individuals.
- Participants stressed the importance of creating accessible environments and programs, even if there are currently no disabled individuals involved, to foster a culture of inclusion and ensure that actions are taken to support integration.

Type of jobs and disabled people

- Participants suggested a variety of jobs that could be suitable for disabled individuals, including IT officers, secretarial work, teaching, office jobs, and positions in the public sector.
- Participants emphasized that the main determining factor for job opportunities for disabled individuals is accessibility. Without proper accessibility, even suitable jobs may not be feasible for disabled individuals.



- Some participants mentioned existing laws about hiring disabled individuals in certain sectors, such as banks and public offices, but they expressed doubts about the effectiveness of these measures for promoting employment for the majority of disabled people.
- Some participants shared positive examples of inclusive workplaces, such as cafes where only disabled young persons are employed, indicating that inclusive employment is possible with the right support and accessibility.
- Participants highlighted that the suitability of jobs for disabled individuals depends on their wishes, talents, knowledge, and personalities, similar to any other person, regardless of disability.

Reasoning answers a to questionnaire about not accepting a disabled person as a spouse but, only as a partner

- Participants perceived negative answers to the question of dating or marrying a disabled person to be based on ignorance and stereotypes about disabilities. They believe that people who hold such views may not have had personal experiences with disabled individuals, leading to misconceptions.
- Some participants suggested that the lack of accessibility in society may contribute to negative perceptions about dating or marrying a disabled person. They mentioned that difficulties in accessing places and activities together might be a concern for some individuals.



- Participants noted that personal experiences, such as having disabled family members or friends, and inclusive education play a significant role in shaping people's attitudes towards dating or marrying disabled individuals.
- Some participants suggested that negative views about dating or marrying a disabled person may stem from a fear of commitment or concerns about shared family responsibilities, such as raising children.

General perception about disabled people in society

- Participants observed a discrepancy between people being aware and informed about the rights and challenges faced by disabled individuals, and the actual efforts made to support and create an inclusive society. Many people may show compassion on social media, but practical changes in everyday life are lacking.
- Participants highlighted that society often views disabled individuals as incapable of doing things, but fail to acknowledge that societal structures and lack of accessibility hinder their participation and inclusion.
- Participants expressed that society lacks the necessary structures and support systems to accommodate and empower disabled individuals. This can result in making their lives even more challenging.
- Several participants mentioned that society can be racist towards disabled individuals, and this discrimination is particularly evident in rural areas. Disability is sometimes considered a hidden topic that is not openly discussed, leading to a lack of awareness and understanding.

Training about disability and no willingness to participate as results of the questionnaire showed



- Participants noted that the lack of knowledge, contact, and experience with disabled individuals may lead to unwillingness to participate in discussions or activities related to disability.
- Some participants mentioned that fear, sadness, or discomfort could be factors contributing to the unwillingness to engage with the topic of disability
- Ignorance and stereotypes about disability were highlighted as potential reasons for the reluctance to address the issue.
- Participants suggested that individuals who do not have a disabled person in their family circle or are not disabled themselves may not feel personally connected to the topic.
- Some participants speculated that the topic of disability may not align with the interests or priorities of those who showed a lack of willingness to participate.

Conclusions

Different and diverse perspectives emerged from the 20 interviews conducted. The general conclusion is that the lack of knowledge and education regarding disabilities is a major problem, as it leads to social exclusion and perpetuates harmful stereotypes, even unintentionally, within organizations. **The majority of Erasmus+ projects are not accessible, reflecting an apathetic attitude towards disability.** Inclusion policies and education should start at kindergarten and throughout school, while employers should be trained to overcome stereotypes and be more open-minded towards disabled employees.

Interviews emphasized that people with disabilities can fully participate in various aspects of life, such as forming relationships, working, pursuing hobbies, and becoming parents. The biggest obstacles they face are lack of accessibility in society and insufficient support from the government. Disabled people should be integrated



into all types of workplaces, including organizations involved in Erasmus+ programs.

The perception of disability in Greece seems to be difficult and organizations need to actively create a new perception that promotes inclusion. Working with young disabled adults should be a natural and integral part of achieving equality in Erasmus+ programs. Organizations should be supported in creating an inclusive environment and European Union institutions should simplify procedures for funding and provide more training and webinars for staff.

In summary, measures need to be taken to help organizations make their spaces accessible and support them in their mission to create a more equal world for people with disabilities.

3.5 The third part of the study with document analysis

The purpose of this qualitative research was to conduct a document analysis of 20 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actively involved in Erasmus+ youth projects. The main focus was to assess the commitment of these organizations in promoting inclusion and accessibility for youth with disabilities. The analysis involved the review of various documents, including founding documents, annual reports of non-profit organizations, social media platforms, and official websites, to assess their inclusivity towards young people with disabilities.

In addition, the study used foundational documents that were available on GEMH state electronic platforms when they were not accessible on the organizations' websites. The aim of the study was to identify opportunities for improvement in the implementation of Erasmus+ youth projects through this document analysis and to gain insight into the organizations' actual commitment to inclusion and accessibility.

The analysis focused on the following sections for each organization

- Field of Activity



- Non-formal Educational Activities
- EU Programs Participation
- Social Media Presence & Website Accessibility
- Lack of Specific Inclusive Activities for Disabled People
- Information on Financial Transparency

Filed of activity

The organizations in question are actively engaged in youth activities, with each one participating in at least one project under Erasmus+ program. These organizations are based in Greece and operate across various geographical areas, allowing them to reach and impact diverse communities.

The activities conducted by these organizations have been diligently documented and made available to the public. Approximately 90% of the activities are thoroughly described on their respective websites, ensuring transparency and easy access to information for interested individuals and potential participants.

In addition to their websites, these youth-oriented organizations maintain a vibrant presence on popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Through these channels, they regularly share updates, highlights, and engaging content related to their ongoing projects, events, and accomplishments.

The Erasmus+ program, being a vital aspect of their activities, offers invaluable opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and international exposure for the youth involved. It allows them to explore diverse cultures, exchange ideas with individuals from different backgrounds, and enhance their knowledge through non-formal educational activities.

The organizations' commitment to youth development and empowerment is evident through their enthusiastic participation in the Erasmus+ program and their continuous efforts to share their activities transparently on various platforms.



Non-formal Educational Activities

The described field of activities of the organizations, which involves activating young people and the general public with a passion for social involvement in various areas, aligns with the concept of non-formal education. These organizations in Greece are actively engaged in providing non-formal educational opportunities to both young people and adults, either in their local areas or throughout the entire country.

While the primary focus of these organizations lies in youth empowerment and social engagement, it is noteworthy that only two of the organizations have extended their activities to include individuals with disabilities. These inclusive organizations recognize the importance of providing opportunities and support for people with diverse needs, acknowledging that disability is not a barrier to participation and growth.

The two organizations that actively address activities for disabled individuals, including both young and adults, are commendable for their commitment to inclusivity and equal access to non-formal education. By extending their services to cater to disabled individuals, they contribute to breaking down barriers and stereotypes, promoting respect for human rights, and fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among this often-marginalized group.

While the majority of the organizations focus on youth-related activities, these two inclusive organizations stand out as pioneers in promoting inclusiveness and social equality, not only within the youth community but also within the broader scope of individuals with disabilities.

As they continue their efforts in the field of non-formal education, all organizations have the potential to learn from these two inclusive models and consider how they, too, can make their activities more accessible and accommodating to individuals with disabilities.

EU Programs Participation



EU Programs Participation is a crucial aspect of the organizations' funding strategies, with the majority of them heavily relying on the Erasmus+ program as their primary source of financial support. This program, funded by the European Union, offers valuable opportunities for these organizations to carry out their youth-oriented activities, including education, training, and volunteering initiatives.

Erasmus+ plays a pivotal role in empowering these organizations to provide young people and adults with the chance to travel, learn, and volunteer abroad without bearing the burden of significant financial costs.

While Erasmus+ is the primary source of funding for most of these organizations, they also explore other avenues to secure financial resources. Some of these alternative funding streams include national and private donations or contributions from corporations and philanthropic organizations that share their vision and mission.

However, it is worth noting that while the organizations make efforts to seek governmental support, the level of financial assistance from the government remains limited. This situation may present challenges for these organizations in terms of sustaining and expanding their activities, as they primarily rely on external sources for their funding needs.

Despite the limited governmental support, the organizations' dedication and creativity in securing funds from various sources demonstrate their commitment to their respective causes. By tapping into EU programs like Erasmus+ and exploring other funding options, they strive to ensure the continuity and growth of their impactful initiatives in the field of non-formal education and youth empowerment.

Social Media Presence

The organizations demonstrate a strong commitment to engaging with their target audience through active social media presence. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram play a significant role in showcasing their activities, projects, and achievements. The focus on social media is particularly evident among organizations



that prioritize youth programs, as they aim to attract and connect with younger participants who are more active on these platforms.

However, there is an area that requires improvement. Despite their efforts in maintaining a strong social media presence, it is concerning that the majority of their websites are not accessible for people with disabilities. This lack of accessibility may inadvertently exclude individuals with disabilities from fully engaging with the organizations' content, events, and opportunities.

Web accessibility is essential for ensuring that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can access and interact with online content. By not providing accessible websites, the organizations may be unintentionally limiting their reach and impact, as well as missing out on the valuable contributions and perspectives of individuals with disabilities.

To address this issue, organizations should prioritize making their websites more accessible. This can be achieved by implementing features like alt-text for images, captioned videos, clear and intuitive navigation, and compatibility with screen readers and assistive technologies. Investing in web accessibility not only demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity but also opens up opportunities to engage with a broader and more diverse audience.

Lack of Specific Inclusive Activities for Disabled People

In the course of the research conducted, a significant observation emerged, revealing that the organizations under study were found lacking in their efforts to actively engage or provide specific activities for disabled people. While these organizations demonstrated a strong commitment to youth empowerment and social involvement, there appeared to be a notable gap when it came to inclusivity and catering to the needs of individuals with disabilities.



The absence of tailored activities for disabled people implies that these organizations might not be fully embracing the principles of diversity and equal opportunities. By not actively involving disabled individuals, they unintentionally create barriers and may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes and social exclusion.

The research findings underscore the importance of promoting inclusivity in all aspects of these organizations' endeavors. Inclusive practices not only enhance the impact and relevance of their initiatives but also contribute to a more compassionate and equitable society.

It is essential for these organizations to recognize that disability should never be perceived as a hindrance to participation. Instead, it should be regarded as an opportunity to embrace diversity and ensure that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, can fully benefit from their programs and activities.

Information on Financial Transparency

Regarding financial transparency, the research findings highlighted a notable lack of sufficient information available on this aspect across the organizations studied. While the organizations actively participated in EU funding programs, with Erasmus+ being a prominent source of financial support, there was a distinct absence of comprehensive data and documentation pertaining to their financial activities.

The limited availability of financial information creates challenges in assessing the organizations' financial health, allocation of resources, and overall financial accountability. Stakeholders, including potential donors, participants, and the public, may find it challenging to gain insights into how funds are utilized, the impact of investments, and whether the organizations are meeting their financial objectives.

Transparency in financial matters is essential for maintaining trust, credibility, and accountability within any organization, particularly those operating in the non-profit sector.

While the organizations' dedication to their respective causes and their active involvement in social media platforms were evident, the lack of financial transparency raises questions about their commitment to open governance and responsible financial management.



To address this issue, it is crucial for these organizations to prioritize financial transparency and take proactive steps to provide comprehensive financial reports and disclosures. Annual reports, financial statements, and breakdowns of funding sources and allocations should be made readily accessible to the public through their websites or other accessible means.

Conclusions

The organizations in question demonstrate a strong dedication to youth activities and non-formal education, actively participating in projects under the Erasmus+ program. They are based in Greece and operate across various geographical areas, allowing them to impact diverse communities.

The activities conducted by these organizations are diligently documented and made accessible to the public, with approximately 90% of them thoroughly described on their websites. Their active presence on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram further enables them to share updates and engage with their audience, particularly the youth.

Despite their focus on youth empowerment, there is a noticeable lack of specific inclusive activities for disabled individuals among the majority of these organizations. Only two organizations stand out for actively addressing activities for disabled individuals, emphasizing inclusivity and equal access to non-formal education for this marginalized group.

EU Programs Participation, especially through Erasmus+, is a vital aspect of their funding strategies. While the organizations explore other funding sources such as national and private donations, they heavily rely on Erasmus+ for financial support. However, limited governmental support poses challenges for their sustainability and expansion.

Furthermore, the research revealed a concerning lack of financial transparency among the organizations. While they actively participate in EU funding programs,



comprehensive financial information, including annual reports and funding details, is not readily available to stakeholders. This lack of transparency raises questions about financial accountability and governance.

In conclusion, while these organizations are making commendable efforts in youth empowerment and non-formal education, there is room for improvement in several areas. Enhancing inclusivity for disabled individuals and prioritizing financial transparency are essential steps to further strengthen their impact, credibility, and commitment to their mission of empowering and engaging young people and the general public in social involvement and sustainable development.

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Based on the findings presented in the research, several crucial conclusions can be drawn regarding the challenges faced by youth organizations in promoting inclusivity for individuals with disabilities in Erasmus+ programs.

Firstly, the majority of youth organizations actively participating in Erasmus+ projects demonstrate a strong commitment to youth activities and non-formal education. However, there is a noticeable lack of specific inclusive activities for disabled individuals among most of these organizations. Only a small number stand out for their efforts in addressing the needs of disabled individuals, highlighting the importance of prioritizing inclusivity and equal access to non-formal education for this marginalized group.

Secondly, the heavy reliance on Erasmus+ funding underscores the significance of these programs in supporting the organizations' activities. However, limited governmental support poses challenges for the long-term sustainability and expansion of these initiatives. Diversifying funding sources and exploring other opportunities for financial backing is crucial to ensuring the continuity and growth of their impactful work.



Moreover, the research exposes a concerning lack of financial transparency among these organizations, despite their active participation in EU funding programs. The absence of readily available comprehensive financial information raises questions about their financial accountability and governance. Enhancing financial transparency is essential to maintaining credibility and building trust among stakeholders, including the public and potential donors.

The study also highlights the need for increased knowledge and education regarding disabilities, both within organizations and society as a whole. Negative attitudes towards disability can lead to social exclusion and perpetuate harmful stereotypes, hindering the creation of accessible and inclusive environments for people with disabilities. Training and awareness initiatives for employers and staff can help overcome these attitudes and foster a more open-minded and inclusive approach towards disabled individuals.

To promote inclusivity and accessibility in Erasmus+ programs, it is crucial for youth organizations to actively create a new perception that prioritizes disability inclusion. Investing in resources and training to develop inclusive environments will enable organizations to support the full participation of young individuals with disabilities in their initiatives. Additionally, simplifying funding procedures and providing more training and webinars by European Union institutions will help organizations navigate the challenges and work towards achieving equality and inclusivity in Erasmus+ programs.

In conclusion, while youth organizations in Greece demonstrate commendable efforts in youth empowerment and non-formal education, addressing the highlighted areas for improvement, such as enhancing inclusivity for disabled individuals and improving financial transparency, will strengthen their impact and commitment to empowering young people and promoting sustainable development. Creating accessible spaces and fostering a supportive environment for people with disabilities within Erasmus+ programs is essential to uphold the program's core values of diversity, mutual understanding, and equal opportunities for all participants.



4.1 Recommendations to promote inclusivity within youth organizations and E+ programs:

- The state and funding bodies should not only increase the allocation of resources but also ensure sustainable funding support for youth organizations to establish accessible structures for people with disabilities. Long-term funding will enable organizations to plan and implement inclusive initiatives effectively.
- Develop and implement a holistic training approach that goes beyond disability-related issues. Training programs should encompass diversity, equity, and inclusion, empowering staff to create an inclusive environment that respects and celebrates individual differences.
- Involve young individuals with disabilities in the co-creation of youth programs. Their valuable perspectives and input can lead to more tailored and meaningful experiences, enhancing the overall inclusivity of the initiatives.
- Conduct regular accessibility audits of physical spaces and digital platforms used by youth organizations. Address barriers and make necessary adjustments to ensure that all facilities and resources are accessible to individuals with different types of disabilities.
- Foster mentorship programs that connect young individuals with disabilities to successful role models who have overcome similar challenges. Positive role models can inspire and encourage them to participate more actively in youth programs.
- Empower young people with disabilities by providing opportunities for leadership development. Encourage them to take on roles in decision-making, organizing events, and leading projects within the organization.
- Collaborate with media outlets to promote positive and accurate representations of individuals with disabilities. This will challenge stereotypes and foster a more inclusive perception of disability in society.



- Ensure that outreach and recruitment efforts actively reach out to and engage young individuals with disabilities. Employ diverse channels and networks to connect with this demographic.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building between youth organizations, disability advocacy groups, and experts. Encourage the sharing of best practices and innovative approaches to inclusivity.
- Regularly assess the impact of inclusivity initiatives on young participants with disabilities. Use feedback and data to continuously improve and refine programs for better outcomes.
- Organize events and initiatives that celebrate diversity and the achievements of young individuals with disabilities. Recognition and celebration contribute to a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere.

*In summary, the research highlights the existing challenges youth organizations face in including people with disabilities in Erasmus+ programs. **Limited resources, lack of funding, and insufficient expertise hinder access and participation and limit the potential impact of these programs in promoting inclusion and empowerment.** By addressing these challenges and adopting the recommended strategies, youth organizations can pave the way for a more inclusive future where all young people, regardless of ability, can actively participate in and benefit from Erasmus+ programs.*



4.2 Designing Erasmus+ programs with a focus on disability requires careful consideration and a commitment to creating truly inclusive opportunities for all participants.

Here are some key principles and strategies to guide the design of such programs:

- Ensure that the program's objectives explicitly include promoting inclusivity and accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Aim to create an environment where all participants can actively engage and benefit from the experience.
- Collaborate with disability advocacy groups, NGOs, and experts in the field to gain insights and expertise. Engaging these organizations as partners will help inform the design of inclusive activities and ensure that the programs cater to diverse needs.
- Conduct thorough accessibility assessments of all program components, including physical locations, accommodation, transportation, and digital platforms. Make necessary adaptations and provide accommodations to ensure full participation for individuals with disabilities.
- Provide comprehensive pre-departure preparation for all participants, with a specific focus on disability awareness, etiquette, and the importance of fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.
- Offer personalized support services to participants with disabilities, such as accessible materials, sign language interpreters, and assistive technologies. These services should be readily available throughout the program.



- Plan diverse activities and workshops that are inclusive and accessible to participants with various abilities. Encourage active participation and engagement from all individuals, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

- Provide opportunities for participants with disabilities to take on leadership roles and actively contribute to program planning and execution. Empower them to become advocates for disability inclusion both during the program and beyond.

- Implement an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process that includes feedback from all participants, with a specific focus on experiences and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. Use this data to make continuous improvements to the program.

- Organize events and workshops that raise awareness about disability issues, challenge stereotypes, and promote a culture of inclusivity. Encourage open discussions and learning about disability rights and accessibility.

- Design programs with a focus on the long-term impact on participants with disabilities. Provide follow-up support and resources to help them continue their personal and professional development after the program.

- Share the successes and best practices of inclusive Erasmus + programs with other organizations and institutions. Encourage the adoption of inclusive approaches in other mobility and exchange programs.



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