

Under the auspices of the Permanent Mission of Greece
to the United Nations



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**14th session of the Conference of States Parties to the
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

Roundtable 3

**Right to education: challenges with inclusive education
and accessibility during COVID – 19**

17 June 2021



SKEP – Association of Social Responsibility for Children and Youth

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Founder and President of the Board

Challenges

The key issues and challenges with inclusive education started long before the pandemic. In Greece, people with disabilities have constantly been invisible and isolated even before the COVID-19 imposed quarantine due to prejudice, stigma and discrimination.

During this unprecedented reality the whole world has been in a state of social exclusion. People felt and realized the effects of being isolated.

Now more than ever, there is a strong momentum for change in attitudes and behavior with the ultimate goal of building a fairer world that leaves no one behind.



The role general schools need to play in fighting ignorance and building an inclusive mindset

In Greece, placing students with disabilities in mainstream classes requires system-level changes to the educational structure. To achieve inclusive and accessible education presupposes an inviting environment for people with disabilities. More significantly, it is vital:

- I. to rethink the role and importance of general schools as a dynamic leverage to instill democratic conscience, thus encouraging an environment of mutual understanding, respect and acceptance.
- II. to address students without disabilities by making systematic steps in raising awareness and deconstructing stereotypes, aiming to facilitate their potential in behavior change and gradually guide them to an inclusive mindset.





Tried and tested:

A positive educational initiative by SKEP to change the way students perceive their peers with disabilities.

SKEP - Association of Social Responsibility for Children and Youth is a Greek non-profit organization established in 2008 in Athens, striving for a barrier-free and rights-based inclusive society.



Methodology

SKEP is the only entity in Greece that advocates for an inclusive education, thus running 2 Disability Awareness Educational Programs for thousands of young students and their instructors, within the school curriculum.

- **“Focus on the Person” – with physical presence** - since 2008
- **“Asking to Learn” – online** - Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic





Main Features of the Programs

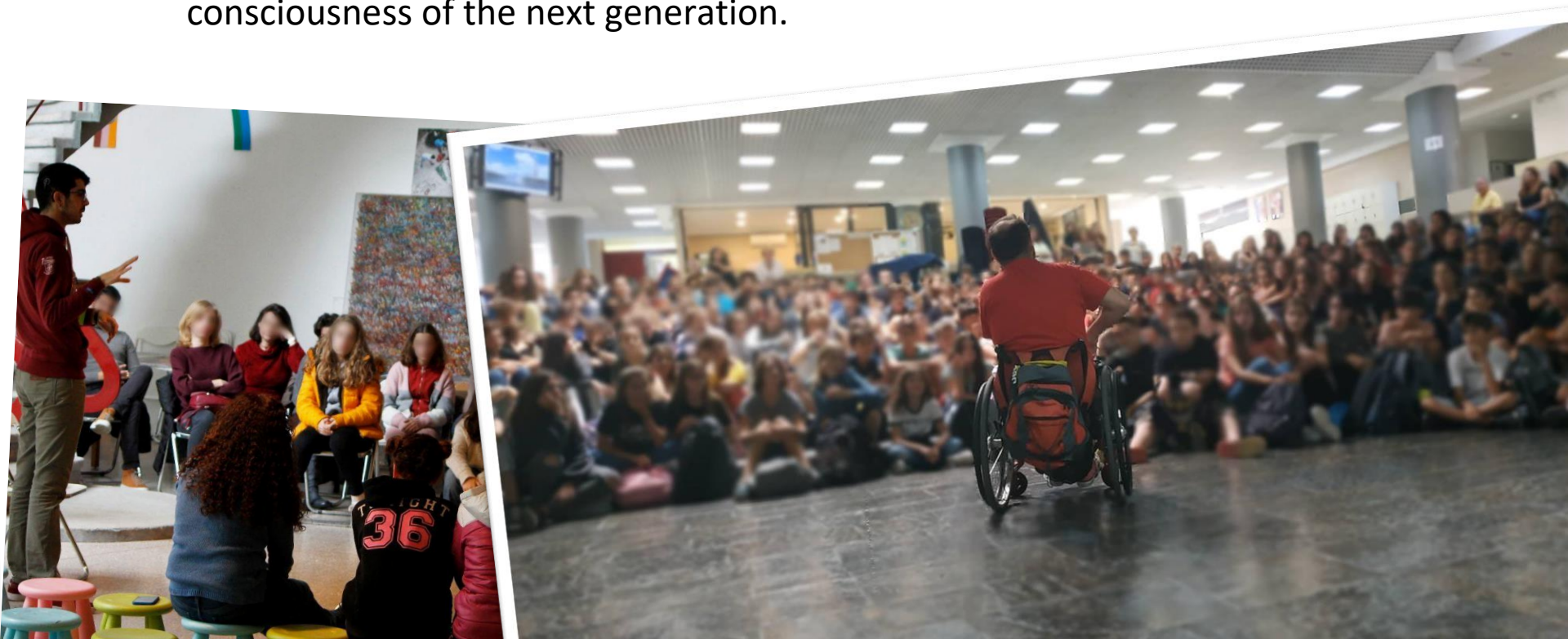
- A 2-hour program conducted in General Schools.
- Address primary & secondary education students.
- Coordinated and implemented by SKEP's motivational speakers with disabilities (motor, sensory).
- Experiential Non – Formal Methodology: through open dialogue, the motivational speakers address crucial issues with students, recount how they overcome challenges and defeat adversity, while describing their everyday life.





Benefits for students

- Familiarize them with the notion of disability.
- Help them comprehend the daily challenges faced by persons with disabilities as well as the potential they possess.
- Facilitate communication between youth with & without disabilities.
- Activate reflexes of solidarity & responsibility, aiming to empower the social consciousness of the next generation.





Goals of the educational programs

Change the mindset of students

- **Encourage** an environment of mutual understanding.
- **Eliminate** the mechanisms leading to stereotypes and prejudices.
- **Create** a new communication code based on respect and acceptance.

With the ultimate goal of connecting with each other and learning to live together.





Additional info about the Educational Programs

- Approved by the Hellenic Ministry of Education
- Provided free of charge
- Panhellenic presence and networking
- Financed by private initiatives and CSR

SKEP does not receive any financial support from the Greek State.



SKEP in numbers

- Carries out **10** Educational programs per school week, annually
- Raised awareness among more than **150,000** students
- Collaborated with more than **850** primary and secondary education schools in Greece

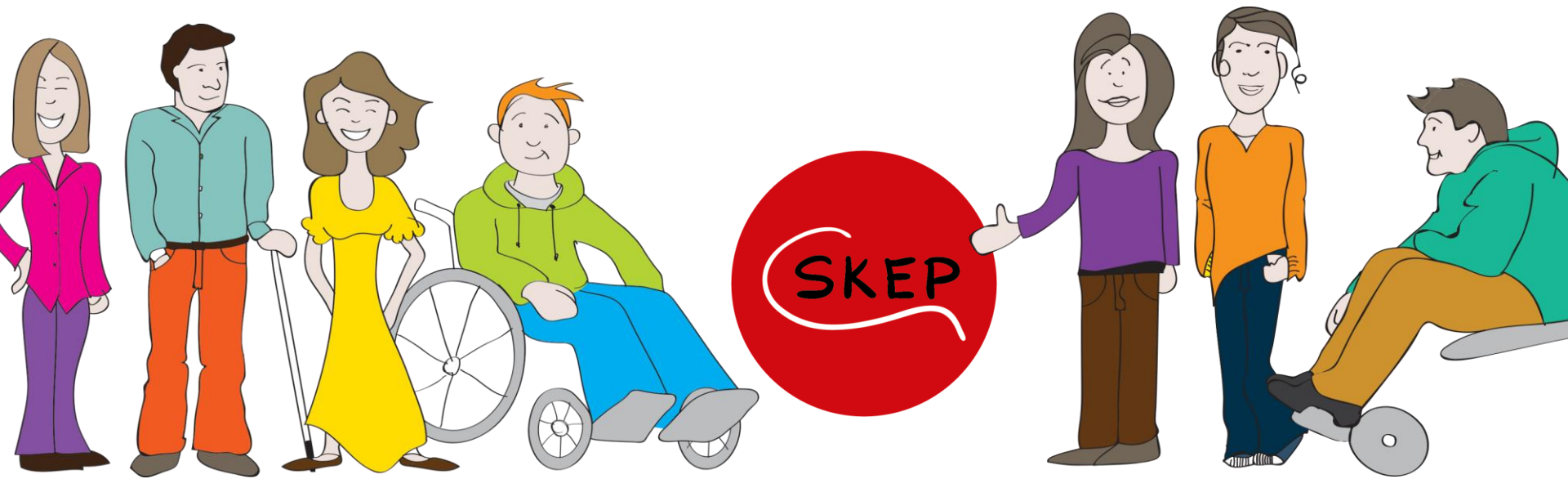


Impact

As part of SKEP's verification process, 2 initiatives were carried out:

- I. **Panhellenic Opinion Poll**
September 2019
- II. **Qualitative Analysis of the Educational Program « Focus on the Person »**
School Year 2017-2018

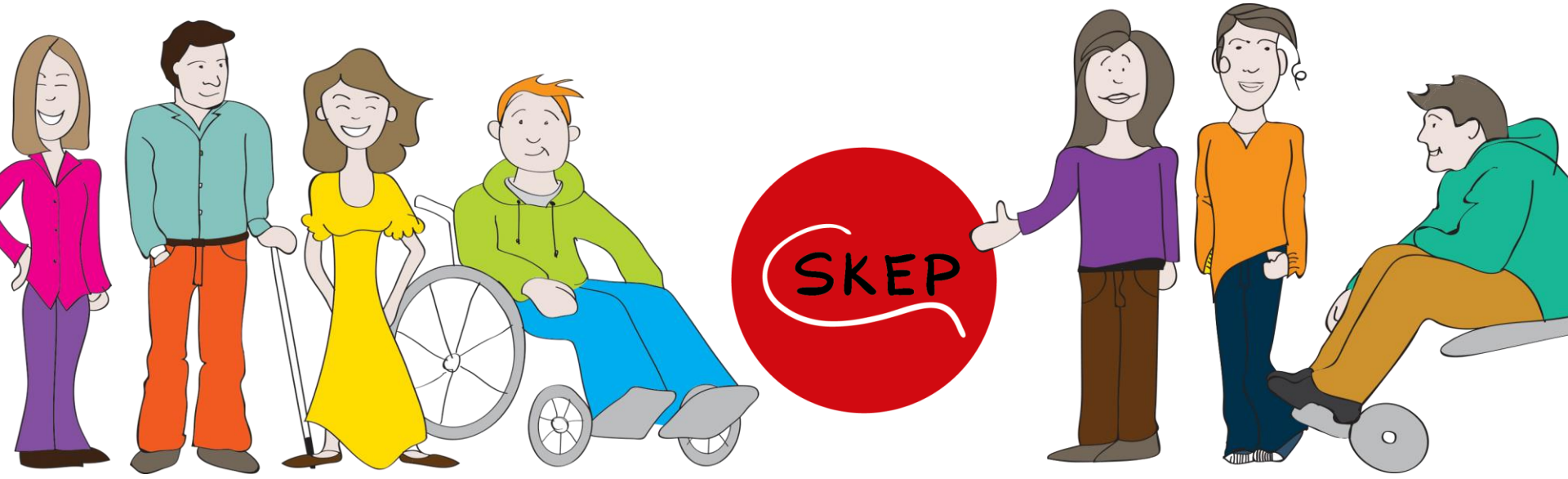




SKEP's Panhellenic Public Opinion Poll

«Tracing Attitudes, Perceptions and Behavior towards Disability»

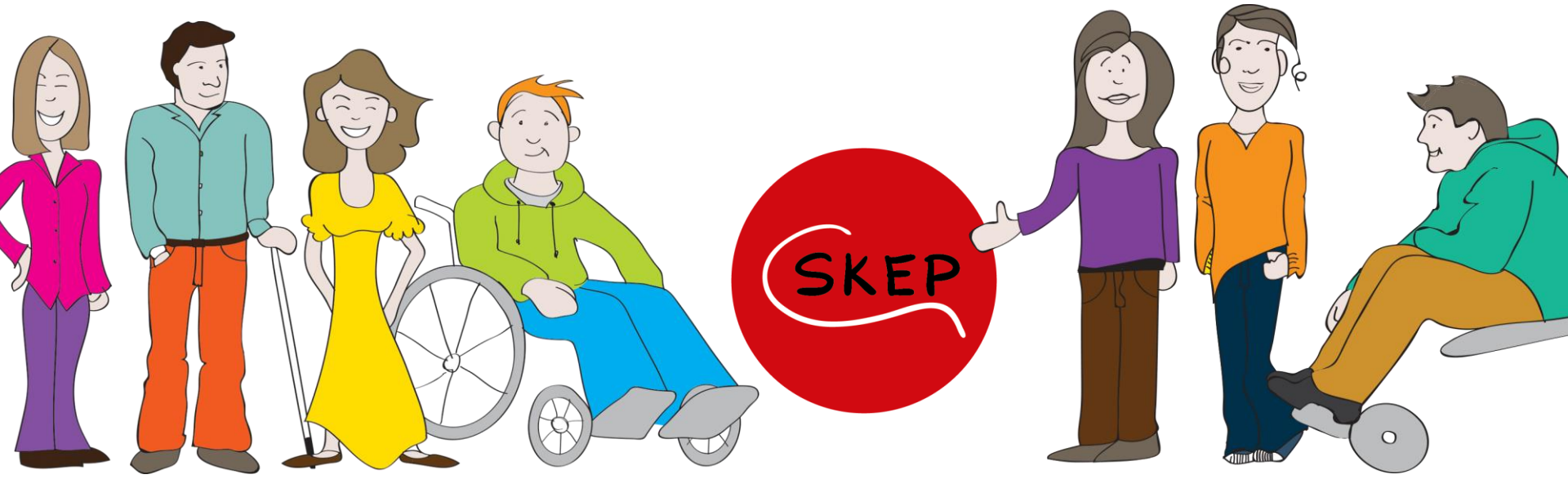
- Anonymous quantitative online survey
- Survey participants: **3,723** persons over 18 years of age
- Duration: September 26th to October 11th, 2019



Dual objective

The purpose of the poll was to record the opinion of Greek citizens regarding:

- Perceptions and attitudes towards disability
- The role the government and the educational system need to play to battle discrimination



Key numbers – What do Greek people believe?

- **83%** - The state should play the most decisive role in battling stereotypes and prejudices.
- **9 out of 10** - The absence of a relevant school curriculum perpetuates bias and reinforces stigmatisation and marginalisation.
- **91%** - A curriculum should be implemented in schools that seeks to change the students' perceptions regarding diversity and introduce the concept of social acceptance and equality.



Qualitative Analysis

of the Educational Program « Focus on the Person »

Conducted by SKEP and the Department of Psychology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

- The program's evaluation was held during the school curriculum **in 14 schools within the Attica area**
- **340 primary & secondary education students**
- *It was designed to assess the influence of the program on both students and their instructors, through observation and recording of their emotions in the familiar environment of the classroom.*



Feedback received

from students revealed that SKEP's Program:

- Raised awareness among their thoughts and feelings regarding disability
- Contributed to the change of attitudes, perceptions and feelings about disability

Based on evidence, SKEP's educational program seems to familiarize students with the reality of disability, providing the framework for an inclusive school of equal opportunities.



Concluding

SKEP's Awareness Programs are in line with the findings of global research, surveys and public opinion polls. In their majority, they have demonstrated that the interaction of persons with disabilities with other students is key to altering attitudes and behavior regarding diversity and disability. The findings emphasize the importance of the implementation of such disability awareness programs in order to combat discrimination and arbitrary prejudice.



Methodologie:
Mise en place de Programmes Éducatifs de
Sensibilisation au Handicap dans le cadre scolaire
Programme "Focus sur la personne"

↳ Dialogues réalisés par nos orateurs/motivateurs en situation de handicap (motriceur et sensoriel)
↳ Durée: 2 heures consécutives

2 significant distinctions

for the Educational Program « Focus on the Person »

- Included among the best-case studies of **UNESCO** and the **European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (January 2020)**.
- Implemented on a pilot basis by the **Hellenic Ministry of Education**, during the school year 2020-2021, under the topic "I care and I act".



Awards

- **2019:** SKEP awarded by the **Bravo Sustainability Dialogue & Awards 2019** for its “Educational Disability Awareness Program in Schools: Focus on the Person” as an initiative that contributes and supports the "Greece of Tomorrow".

- **2017:** SKEP awarded with the “**Models of Excellence 2017**” by the “CITIZENS’ MOVEMENT for an Open Society”.
H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos gave the award.

- **2017:** SKEP awarded with **2 Prizes at the French-Greek Innovation Forum Mazinnov2**, an initiative of the Embassy of France in Greece and by His Excellency, the Ambassador Mr Christophe Chantepy.
 - I. **First place in its respective category**
 - II. **Grand Jury Prize**



Recommendation



Ignorance, stereotypes and prejudice are deeply rooted beliefs that do not change in one day, nor by one person.

To develop an inclusive mindset requires continuous efforts and persistence.

This can be accomplished by:

- I. Maximizing the access to information on disability
- II. Achieving massive implementation of the educational programs in schools to increase awareness

To pave the way to inclusive education, it is crucial to establish state-run systematic disability awareness educational programs at all levels of the education system, on a National scale.



Thank you

Very much

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