Erasmus 4 V.I.P.

Research on the inclusion and participation of youngsters with visual impairment in learning activities

General report on findings from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Macedonia and Romania

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Introduction

About the project

The "Erasmus 4 VIPs" project aims to identify new ways in which youngsters with disabilities, especially with visual impairments, can get more involved in various social and educational activities. In order to achieve this objective, the project consortium, consisting of five partners from Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Cyprus considered that first of all it was important to explore the real context of integration of young people with visual impairments. This would become the base on which we could later design powerful resources that youth workers and youth organizations can use to integrate young people with visual impairments in non formal education activities and international mobility.

This activity ran from November 2015 to June 2016, time in which partners carried out a research regarding the participation of young people with visual impairments in their countries, which was compiled in this report.

This research was oriented towards offering:

- ◣ Young people with visual impairments the chance to participate in a structured dialogue activity in which they could express their needs, interests and experiences, especially in relation to personal development through various youth activities.
- ◣ Different NGOs, public institutions and people with no disability the chance to express their needs, expectations and fears with respect to including people with disabilities in the regular activities, which helped in gaining a wider perspective on the issues discussed.

While the limited resources meant that total number of participating people and bodies could not be enough to consider this research a survey, it did provide partners with relevant input on the realities that surround young people with visual impairments, offering important results in terms of identifying the needs of people with visual impairments and the challenges they are facing. Moreover, even with low number of respondents, the data from the 4 forms did present consistency and we were in most cases able to connect the identified needs and difficulties VIPs are facing to their causes. For example, poor opinions regarding the interaction with public services was correlated with findings about their low accessibility and their lack of policies for supporting the young people with visual

impairments addressing them. Also, low number of VIPs being involved in activities of NGOs was correlated with the low accessibility of NGOs, their lack of skills for adapting their activities to the specifics of working with people with visual impairments and to the fact that most NGOs do not consider the need for adapting their work to be more inclusive for vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the recommendations that the working group has made, which can be found in the next sections of this report, take into account just the data that is consistent, so they can be safely used as starting points for future work aimed at creating a more accessible learning and working environment for the young people with visual impairments.

About the research

The research focused mainly on the following topics of interest:

- The actual level of inclusion and participation of young people with visual impairments in learning mobilities;
- The participation of young people with visual impairments in the community;
- The participation of young people with visual impairments in the NGO environment;
- The available support offered for integrating for young people with visual impairments;
- The level of sharing information about European learning opportunities through NGOs, schools, info points to young people with visual impairments;
- Qualitative and quantitative information was collected by using a tool consisting of four different Questionnaires and two Focus Group discussions.;

Data was collected from:

- Institutions and NGOs responsible for education;
- Youth NGOs;
- Schools and NGOs that are working for and with the young people with visual impairments;
- Local institutions;
- Young people with visual impairments;
- Young people without any disabilities;

Partners implementing the activity in the five partner countries were:

- Ofensiva Tinerilor, Romania;
- Magnites Tyfli, Greece;
- Center for Youth Activism CYA KRIK, Macedonia;
- National Association of Resource Teachers - NART, Bulgaria;
- Pancyprian Organization of the Blind, Cyprus;

Survey Methodology

Four questionnaires were created and administrated to the selected target groups (these are presented in Appendix A.)

The first two questionnaires were oriented towards Civil Sector Services and Non – Governmental Bodies which configure, promote and implement social policies and programmes for people with disabilities, in a direct or an indirect way. They were selected as subjects for the research also for analysing to what extent staff can act upon stereotypes and for learning more on how we can change or reverse these stereotypes.

Information collected from the Questionnaires concerned:

Questionnaire 1.

It addressed public institutions in each of the 5 countries, and aimed at finding more about:

- Profile: service identity, promoted activities, activities for the disabled, the general population or both groups;
- Implementation of the principle of equal participation: how is the concept of participation expressed in decision-making activities, consultation procedures and other actions while as well investigation of the degree of participation for the disabled;
- Application of the principle of accessibility: accessibility, determination of its extent;
- Resources and funding: financial, logistics, human resources used for the implementation of the participation principle, in relation to accessibility; resource allocation and investigation of any initiatives enabling the disabled participate in the service and its activities;
- Adequate mechanisms ensuring integration processes: report on organizational mechanisms and service operation, assessing the adequacy level of these mechanisms to ensure participation of the disabled;

Questionnaire 2

The second questionnaire was oriented towards people without disability and consisted of four (4) sections:

- Personal data of respondent (gender, age, educational level, years of service, type of studies);

- Environment, attitudes and perceptions: Sources of attitudes and shaping of perceptions as well as and their significance;

- Definition and classification of disability: How disability is defined as a phenomenon and its dimensions;

- Attitudes and perceptions of the non – disabled, concerning the disabled. Set of questions which explored the attitudes of the non-disabled in reference to the quality of life of people with disabilities, roles they attribute to them, expectations they shape, their personal attitudes and perceptions concerning them;

Questionnaire 3

The third questionnaire aimed to collect information from young people with visual impairment aged 15 - 30. The questionnaire included questions about their:

- disability;
- experiences with public services and institutions;
- integration in formal and non-formal learning;
- feelings about their participation or engagement when they were integrated;
- expectations for their education and their integration in society;
- ways of communication with institutions and factors that limit their access to various services;

Questionnaire 4.

It addressed NGOs/institutions offering opportunities for non-formal learning and international mobilities to young people. For each, we tried to get more information on:

- Profile: service identity, promoted activities, activities for the disabled, the general population or both groups;

- Application of the principle of accessibility: accessibility, determination of its extent;

- Adequate mechanisms ensuring integration processes: report on organizational mechanisms and service operation, assessing the adequacy level of these mechanisms to ensure participation of the disabled;

- Level of involvement of young people with disabilities in their typical learning/volunteering/leisure activities that they offer.

A detailed introductory letter was included, informing respondents about the project's objectives as well as the purpose and value of the survey. The questionnaires were multiplied and delivered to participants in various formats: via direct interview, e-mail, fax, or post, while some of them were completed over the phone.

Upon completion of the survey, partners uploaded all completed questionnaires on a database that enabled them to retrieve their results and information needed to complete the report.

Furthermore, two Focus Groups (FG) took place in each partner country in order to collect additional information.

The first FG was oriented towards young people with visual impairment. Its aim was to collect information on the following topics:

- Nature of their involvement in socio-educational activities organized by NGOs (e.g. for leisure, learning, training, exchanges, etc.);
- Actions taken by NGOs in order to create a more suitable environment for the participation of young people with visual impairment in non-formal education activities;
- Type of resources necessary for participating in the activities mentioned (in terms of materials, tools for accessibility, any other kind of support etc.);
- Appropriate communication channels that NGOs should use;
- The way NGOs can support young people with visual impairment in developing common skills (e.g. when getting a job, interacting socially, daily living, etc.);

The second FG, aimed at collecting information from various NGOs and institutions that show an interest in involving persons with visual impairments in their activities. The discussion dealt with the following issues:

- Experience in working with persons with visual impairments;
- Examples of activities addressing to people who have visually impairments;
- Kind of support these entities would need for involving young people with visual impairments in various educational projects;
- Involvement of their staff and attitudes of their regular target groups towards the participation in their current activities of young people with visual impairment;
- Services / projects that can involve people with visual impairment and those that cannot be adapted to their needs;
- Methods and challenges of contacting young participants with visual impairments;

◤ Awareness of opportunities or methods that can be used for including young people with visual impairments;

The table below summarizes the number of filled in questionnaires (Q) and the number of participants in the two Focus Group (FG) discussions, for each partner country.

	Public bodies / services providers	NGOs offering services to young people	Young people with visual impairment	Young people without disability	Focus Groups – Visually impaired young people	Focus Groups – NGOs and public institutions
Romania	9	9	75	72	11	15
Greece	22	62	48	56	8	10
Macedonia	29	46	59	63	10	11
Bulgaria	20	20	48	50	10	9
Cyprus	15	22	15	33	12	9
Total	95	159	245	274	59	54

Table (1)

Main findings

The analysis of the responses allowed us to take a closer look on what needs to be done in order to increase the participation of young people with visual impairment in various non-formal education projects and activities.

Main conclusions are:

- Most NGOs do not have accessible infrastructures and assistive technology which can support the inclusion of young people with visual impairments;
- Most NGOs are interested in including the VIPs in non-formal learning opportunities, volunteering and leisure activities while also considering that they will be needing funding and training of the staff in order to do so;
- Most NGOs need training materials containing: methods, activities and directions for making their projects more accessible; contacts from experts and organizations which are working with VIPs; visual materials such as videos and examples on how to involve persons with visual impairments in their regular activities.
- Most of the VIPs consider that a lot should be changed and adapted regarding accessibility and services they receive from institutions and NGOs.

Opinion of general population on disability issues

People usually have a positive/empathic view on disability. Almost half of the people that were interviewed said that they do not face any mental barriers while interacting with people with disability. More than 90% agreed to positive actions in favour of people with disability.

On the other hand, 63.49% of respondents in Romania, 44.90% in Greece, 36.51% in Macedonia, 27% in Bulgaria and 22.23% in Cyprus were refrained from offering their help to the disabled, due to the following reasons:

- lack of time (Romania: 54%, Bulgaria: 43%, Cyprus: 56%)
- difficulty to work with people with disability (Romania: 21%, Cyprus: 19%)
- lack of skills for offering support (Romania: 17%, Greece: 11%, Bulgaria: 28%, Cyprus: 26%)
- lack of awareness on opportunities for volunteering (Romania: 14%, Greece: 10%, Cyprus: 19%)

Taking into consideration the various types of disability, in all 5 participant countries general population acknowledges the difference of needs related to accessibility, something that can be a key for the integration of all disabilities.

The wide-spread attitude that "disabled people are common people with their own personality and potential," (90.57% in Greece, 80% in Romania, 76,19% in Macedonia, 84% in Bulgaria, 93.30% in Cyprus agree with this), contributes to an effective integration. Still, the disabled need more effort to complete everyday tasks compared to people without disability. Thus, the term "people with special needs" should be used not only for presenting their deficiencies due to their disabilities, as it has been done until now, but also in a rewarding way for their additional effort.

A key to the integration process for people with disabilities is for the people without disabilities to understand that persons with visual impairments can have a number of roles and can be involved in a wide range of activities, provided that there are no exclusion criteria.

Providing information on available programs and services in a format that is accessible to people with disabilities and their families is a key step to encourage their participation in services and institutions.

Opinion of people with visual impairments regarding the accessibility of public services

➤ Equal opportunities in accessing Civil Services

A quite high percentage of the young with visual impairment (30% in Romania, 33.33% in Greece, 50% in Macedonia, 50% in Bulgaria, 70% in Cyprus) still considers that they do not have equal access to public services, compared to people with no disability. They attribute this phenomenon to the limitations imposed by the disability itself, but also to perceptions of the civil servants.

In addition, 60% in Romania, 33.33% in Greece, 60% in Bulgaria and 50% of all the people who have responded in the survey consider that civil services in general do not take their disability into consideration while designing and delivering their services, showing a need for improvement.

➤ Helpful / appropriate adjustments in Civil Services

17% of the adjustments in Romania, 68.18% in Greece, 61.82% in Macedonia, 75% in Bulgaria, 26.3% in Cyprus where characterized as helpful/ appropriate. The VIPs declared that in their opinion, Civil Servants who interacted with them, did not make any adjustments to take their disability into account.

➤ The disabled's experiences with staff in Civil Services

37% of VIPs in Romania and 42% in Cyprus rated the public services as poor or very poor.

In Greece, interviewed institutions said that they do not provide information material available in appropriate format (87%), a properly structured space (72.73%) or electronic reading devices (90%). Despite this, 66.67% of the people with visual impairment declared that civil servants respond politely to their needs and are ready to help with information and assistance in completing the paperwork. Their problems are bureaucracy and complex procedures that consume time and money and no efficient cooperation between governmental services resulting in the need for the procedure to be carried out by relatives, lawyers or any other who can help. Finally, 33.65 % of them rated the public services as very good, 48.98% as good.

In Macedonia 33.90% of VIPs assessed that their experience with the civil services was good. Some of them think that the services are good, but sometimes not equal to all and that VIPs need personal assistants.

A policy for evaluating the efficacy and quality of the support offered to people with disabilities was almost absent in Romania and Macedonia (where just 11% and respectively 7% of institutions have it) and more present in Greece, where 81.40% of institutions claim to have it, Bulgaria - 35% and Cyprus: 41%. As a result of these evaluations, it can be observed that in Greece the public services were rated as being more qualitative.

- ◣ Assistance that young people with visual impairments benefit from in a public institution.

Most of public institutions are not offering the basic assistance for people with visual impairments. Here are the results among the institutions questioned:

1) *Information material available in appropriate format (Braille, large print, etc.)*: Percentage of institutions providing it: in Romania: 14%, Greece: 14.30%, Macedonia: 6.90%, Bulgaria: 35%, Cyprus: 28.57%,

2) *Appropriate lighting*. Percentage of institutions providing it: in Romania 85%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 31.03%,: Bulgaria 35%, Cyprus: 52.38%

3) *A properly structured space (including signs in Braille, tactile Floors, removing potential obstacles, etc)*. Percentage of institutions providing it: in Romania: 28%, Greece: 27.27%, Macedonia: 6.90%, Bulgaria: 20%, Cyprus: 25%

4) *Electronic reading devices*. Percentage of institutions providing it: in Romania: 14%, Greece: 9.52%, Macedonia: 3.45%, Bulgaria: 20%, Cyprus: 4.76%

5) *Specialized staff ready to assist*. Percentage of institutions providing it: in Romania: 20%, Greece: 52.38%, Macedonia: 13.79%, Bulgaria: 60%, Cyprus: 47.62%.

Most of the improvements in accessibility have targeted people in wheelchairs, improving accessibility being often confused with just creating ramps that provide access. *(Percentage of institutions offering support/assistance for people facing Mobility and Physical impairments: Romania: 85%, Greece: 77%, Bulgaria: 80%, Macedonia: 51.71%, Cyprus: 45.45%)*.

Despite the fact that there are complaints made by the young people with visual impairments referring to "low accessibility", "lack of interest", "lack of experience" or "bad behaviour" by Civil Servants, (they are even "yelling" at them), in Romania and Bulgaria not even one of the institutions has considered the need for taking any measures/initiatives to combat staff's negative perceptions, stereotyping and prejudices against people with disability.

In Macedonia 34.5% of institutions take measures against employees who had negative perceptions towards people with disability.

51.72% of the institutions in Macedonia plan to take measures/initiatives to combat staff's negative perceptions, stereotyping and prejudices against people with disability. They plan to:

- develop a questionnaire through which they aim to identify the deficiencies that should be addressed in future work,
- provide better living conditions for the people with disability,
- follow special training, educational and informative workshops conducted by experts on this issue,
- evaluate the quality of the learning curriculum.

More than 70% of the respondents in Romania, 89% in Bulgaria and 91.30% in Greece, declared that people with disabilities have the opportunity to report when they are subject to discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice from the staff of the institution. However, comparing this information to the perception of young people with visual impairments regarding the quality of services that public institutions provide, it can be observed that these reporting methods have not reached their goal.

Opinion of people with visual impairments regarding the accessibility of non-formal education activities

86.27 % of young people with visual impairments in Greece, 64.41% in Bulgaria, 38% in Cyprus, 85% in Romania and 64.41% of the ones in Macedonia are unaware of the existence of European/international learning opportunities that are addressing youth.

Participation rates to youth mobility or other youth projects is low for the young people with visual impairments in Romania and Bulgaria.

- 38.46% in Greece, 6% in Romania, 5% in Bulgaria, have tried to volunteer in an NGO in their local community;
- 28% in Greece, 2% in Bulgaria, 4% in Romania succeeded in being a volunteer in an NGO in his/her local community;

Some of the reasons that were mentioned for not trying to participate to such events were:

- They did not have the necessary means;
- They were not provided with necessary financial resources for participation;
- There was no accessibility and relevant assistive technologies;
- Parents preventing them from participating, being afraid that this experience might deteriorate their condition, physically and psychologically;
- The topic was not interesting;
- They did not want fellow volunteers to feel sorry for them not being able to do the same things;
- Not wanting to make others feel uncomfortable having to face their disability;
- Fear of not being able to fulfill the tasks;
- They were afraid of being a burden to the others and lacked trust in the fact that people with disabilities could be accepted.

This was also confirmed by the findings related to NGOs accessibility where almost 90% of them declare that they do not provide accessibility to people with visual impairments.

VIPs who have been involved in different activities organized by NGOs found their experiences interesting and useful. They were offered the chance to further develop personally and socially, by being included in new and various activities, meeting many new people who do not belong to their family or their immediate social circle, exercise responsibility and take on leadership roles.

Overall, NGOs and public institutions are declaring that they are not well prepared in terms of providing environmental adaptations and should work towards removing physical obstacles and providing Braille signs, tactile floors, etc. for VIPs. In all participating countries, both NGO's and Public Sector representatives declared that they need further training in the field of disability, especially for being more aware about the needs of the young people with visual impairments (e.g. how to offer help, sighted guide techniques, help with practicalities, use of special equipment in working with VIPs).

Overall mapping of the existing situation, as it was revealed from the analysis of the study results, shows that there are a lot of measures that need to be taken in order to achieve a full integration of young people with visual impairment in services and programs addressing them.

Recommendations

Through the questionnaires and the focus group discussions, the five partners aimed to identify a number of recommendations on actions and measures that need to be taken to promote and improve the access of young people with visual impairment to various programs and services. This section summarizes the recommendations of the five national reports. It includes a number of recommendations on the following topics:

- How public institutions can improve their services in order to make them accessible to people with visual impairments;
- The ways NGOs can improve the participation of young people with visual impairment into more volunteering/learning/leisure opportunities;
- What NGOs can do for offering better volunteering or learning opportunities or opportunities for participating in international mobility, by creating a more comfortable environment for their participants;
- What are the most appropriate channels NGOs can use in order to communicate learning opportunities to young people with visual impairment;
- What skills do young people with visual impairment consider as interesting and would like NGOs to address, through formal and informal learning opportunities;
- What support measures can be taken, so as NGOs can involve young people with visual impairment in their programs;
- Who should be the recipient of an awareness workshop within a NGO;

Accessibility

One of the main findings of the study was the fact that public institutions are not aware of the true needs and challenges faced by people with visual impairment when attempting to access various civil services and programs. A number of recommendations on how these services can be improved, common to all partner countries, included:

- Ensuring that staff is supportive, by taking measures/initiatives to combat any negative attitudes and perceptions, stereotyping and prejudice related to people with disability. Even when resources are low, supportive and well trained staff can compensate for the lack of assistive technologies.
- Having trained employees that are aware of the needs of people with disabilities;
- Improving indoors and outdoors accessibility to enhance independent mobility (e.g. by tactile markings, audio traffic lights, acoustic signs, Braille signs, audio materials, color contrast, etc.);
- Raising awareness about the fact that disability and accessibility is not merely about access to the physical environment that can be overcome by creating a ramp. Institutions usually overestimate their accessibility. They should be better aware that accessibility means a lot more than one partial adjustment.

It is necessary to take into consideration the whole range of activities that people with disability are required to do for accessing a service, including moving from their place to the venue, accessing the venue, working with the needed tools or documents, having the possibility to offer feedback, etc. For example, if a service provides support for the persons with visual impairments but there are no Braille signs or large print signs with good colour contrast leading to the venue, then accessibility is not fully achieved.

Also, by analysing the results we could see that there is a very small number of NGOs and institutions which are properly equipped for being accessible. While offering proper assistive tools should still be considered as an objective, there is also a need to identify more simple, creative and affordable solutions that still allow a good standard for accessibility, but which can be implemented by NGOs and institutions who lack the financial and technical capacity to buy/rent assistive technologies.

In the same context, it should be emphasized that the aim should not be to create activities that are specifically designed for persons with visual impairments (or that address them exclusively). The aim is to provide small adaptations to the regular activities such that these are accessible also to persons with visual impairments. It is not about doing activities "for the persons with visual impairments", but rather "with the persons with visual impairments".

A number of recommendations were common in more than one country.

- In Romania and Bulgaria a common recommendation was to support employment efforts of people with disabilities;
- In Macedonia, Greece and Cyprus, it was agreed that information should be provided in an accessible and preferred format such as email, printed document, Braille or large print;
- In Macedonia and Greece it was agreed that there should be a connection between institutions and the Associations of the visually impaired as well as assistive technology in the institutions;
- In Romania and Macedonia a common recommendation included the development of special policies for serving people with disabilities;

Further recommendation specific to each country included:

- Romania

  1) Developing and implementing measures for evaluating the effectiveness and quality of the support offered to people with disabilities, including staff's attitude;

  2) Adjusting the evaluation and forms of complaint, in order to be accessible for people facing all types of disability;

- Macedonia and Greece
  1) Providing an assisting person for the visual impaired.
  2) Organizing training courses for the assisting persons that would later provide support for the person with visual impairment.
- Cyprus
  1) Ensure that all public websites are accessible;
  2) Increase and improve online services;
  3) Update online information in time and provide better contact opportunities through websites.

Non-formal education opportunities for persons with visual impairments

There is a need for more volunteering/learning/leisure opportunities that address young people with visual impairment.

NGOs can provide this by adopting various suggestions that were collected from questionnaires and focus group discussions. Some of these recommendations were common to all partner countries and included:

- Provide assistive technologies that will help their full participation (assistive, adaptive and rehabilitative devices);
- Have a more positive attitude towards people with disability;
- Promote these opportunities better;
- Make opportunities more accessible;
- Make participation more affordable for people with disability;

NGOs should have at least one staff member who is trained to work with this target group.

Training should include:

- ways of involving VIPs in youth work,
- information about their needs,
- identifying their potential,
- adapting the typical working methods, the amount of information, the ways of delivering information, etc. to their needs/realities,
- offering guidance support / guide techniques,
- helping with practicalities,

Still, an ideal situation is for all staff members of the organization to attend a short-term awareness workshop on visual impairments that might include information on the needs and capacity of VIPs, how to guide and assist them, etc.

Some additional recommendations, related to more inclusive NGOs, identified in Romania and Greece, were:

- Making NGOs aware that there is a need for such initiatives, that this is also an important target group and that getting involved in this kind of activities is not as challenging as they perceived;

- Helping NGOs' staff to be more aware of the needs that young people with visual impairments have, in order to know how to respond to them;

- Supporting NGO staff to be more comfortable and willing to work with young people with visual impairments, by training or even by having them experience the realities of having visual impairments (e.g. "Dinner in the dark").;

- Teaching organizations how to make their rooms more accessible;

- Helping NGOs develop projects that are attractive to the young people with visual impairments;

- Providing good practice models or examples of methods, activities or projects which are suitable for the young people with visual impairments;

- Facilitating the connection between NGOs and young people with visual impairments;

- Providing NGOs with mentoring/support from specialists working with young people with visual impairments;

Further recommendations from the study applied in Cyprus and Greece include:

- NGOs should provide sufficient and adequate information in advance to participants with visual impairments concerning all the details of the activity, including the printed or displayed information that will be used in their preferred format, i.e. large print, Braille, electronic etc.;

- NGOs should support the participants with visual impairments to bring their own device for writing or accessing printed information such as Braille typewriter, magnification devices, laptop and to provide all necessary environmental adaptations for accommodating the use of these devices;

- NGOs should install in one of their computers a text to speech or magnification software for accessing the device;

- NGOs should have assistive devices or equipment that will help in the adaptation of activities (e.g. in case of sports to provide balls with bells, tandem bikes, tactile diagrams of the area etc.)

- When a group activity uses flash cards, make these cards in Braille or large print; if the activity includes writing; ensure that there is the appropriate and necessary devices for the person to write.

- When working in a group, make sure that there is an assistant to help with moving around and understanding the activity (moving around the room etc.).

- NGOs should take into account offering support during break and meals, if needed.
- NGOs should allow young people with visual impairments to go to the activity venue earlier in order to get familiarized with it and to meet facilitators to speak about their needs.

The study also looked into various recommendations on what NGOs can do for offering better volunteering or learning opportunities and for offering opportunities of participation in international mobilities by creating a more comfortable environment for their participants.

The common recommendation of all partners was for NGOs to provide the necessary assistive technologies and to ensure the appropriate accessibility for rooms.

Moreover, both in Macedonia and Bulgaria, it was agreed that NGOs should organize inclusive and accessible activities on various topics that interest young people.

From the study that was carried out in Romania and Greece it was added that NGOs should:

- Offer opportunities that take into consideration the financial limitations that people with disabilities face;
- Address topics that are relevant for the needs of young people with visual impairments;

In addition, according to information from the study carried out in Romania, NGOs should:

- Ensure proper integration for people with disability, but at the same time avoid presenting exaggerated care or exaggerated protection. NGOs should take into account the typical fears that young people with visual impairments have when thinking to join such an initiative: fear of not being accepted, being able to fulfil the tasks; fear of being a burden to the others, uncertainty about the fact that people with disability can be accepted;
- Limit support or positive action to the minimum that is needed for the participation and not offer too much, as this can also lead to a feeling of exclusion;
- Foster group integration for people with visual impairments and assure them about this;
- Have a thorough selection of the participants, as sometimes any person with visual impairments is selected just out of empathy;

- Check and ensure that the staff has a positive attitude towards people with disability;

Some additional recommendations from Cyprus and Greece include:

- Having an awareness training prior to the activity about the needs of the persons with visual impairment.
- Be willing to resolve some practicalities such as getting to the venue (e.g. arrange for a lift by another participant in the area)
- Sending any information in advance, in order to be able to prepare and overcome any anxiety that is related to participating in activities.
- Sending a detailed info pack with specific information prior to the activity
- Linking young people with visual impairments to a support participant (or a staff member who can help with activities)

Communication and promotion of opportunities addressing young people with visual impairments

Often, young people with visual impairments are quite hard to reach and there are cases when they are not interested in getting involved. The study identified a number of more appropriate channels for communicating the availability of learning and volunteering opportunities.

The majority of these channels were identical in all five countries and included:

- social media (e.g. a Facebook group or page addressing people with visual impairments);
- info-points (or the on-line equivalent: a website that would compile all information about different opportunities);
- NGOs offices and staff;
- newspapers;
- special websites;
- school;
- e-mail;
- phone;
- using the local Blinds' Association, as mediator of this;
- tv/radio;

Moreover, in Romania and Greece some other options were also presented as appropriate, like:

- A database containing contact details of the interested young people with visual impairments;
- Direct meetings for presenting different volunteering opportunities;
- A time-banking initiative, in which people could share their free time in the interest of the young people with visual impairments;

In Macedonia and Greece, other channels included the creation of a database with contact details from the interested VIPs as well as the organizations, of direct meetings and non-formal gatherings for presenting opportunities.

In Bulgaria, an additional recommendation included the creation of a specific web page / online platform where opportunities that are accessible to persons with visual impairments can be shared with them.

Moreover, other communication options in Greece and Cyprus included audio newspapers and the audio magazines produced by the National Organizations for the Blind.

In Cyprus and Greece, young people with visual impairments expressed their opinion on the tone and attitude that has to be used when NGOs announce upcoming learning opportunities or mobility opportunities. Even though it is well known to all that it constitutes a human right to participate in all these activities, the attitude of the announcement / information plays a vital role in encouraging young young people with visual impairments to participate or not. A special note mentioning that participants with disabilities are welcomed helps in making a quick decision for participation without worrying about stereotypes or rejections.

It would also be helpful if the announcement includes information such as practicalities of the activity, venue and how to reach it, which take into account the needs of the persons with disabilities.

Support measures to be offered to NGOs

In order for NGOs to be able to involve youth with visual impairments in their programs and activities, various support measures were identified in the study. Common to all were:

- Linking NGOs with the schools for the Blind or the Local Associations of Blind, establishing in this way good and close cooperation while also organizing campaigns / events for sharing the opportunities that are provided for young persons who are visually impaired;

- Raising awareness and offering training to the staff of the NGOs that include information on the needs of youth with visual impairments (e.g. their way of learning, moving around, carrying on their daily routines at home and at work, interacting with young people with visual impairments, guiding them and to offering appropriate help during the activities e.g. traveling, field trips, exchanges, meals, group activities).

- Sharing special pedagogical methods for teaching young people with visual impairments and information about how to modify teaching materials, how to overcome challenges (e.g. presenting visual information i.e. during a tour, a film presentation, a power point presentation).

- Interactive activities that will allow participants who see to better understand the unique experience and perspective of blind participants such as organizing events like *"Dinner in the dark"* or campaigns such as *"Put yourself in my Shoes".*

Further to the above, findings from Macedonia and Greece included few more recommendations for supporting NGOs.

- Creation of a booklet with methods and activities, directions and contacts from experts and organizations that are working with persons who have visual impairments;

- Producing videos (visual materials) with examples on how to deliver activities;

- Creating a coaching space with contact details of professionals working with people with visual impairments where someone can turn to for any queries;

Types of activities engaging for young people with visual impairments

NGOs can support young people with visual impairments in developing different skills by offering a variety of formal and informal learning opportunities. In the five partner countries, young people with visual impairments provided an extensive list of various topics and activities they considered as interesting and to which they would like to participate if given the opportunity. Common to all partners were the following topics and activities:

- Local/international trainings on topics such as communication, social and employability skills;
- Local/international workshops such as information technologies and foreign languages;
- Leisure activities such as music, sports and literature;
- European Youth exchanges;
- Local/international volunteering for a cause;
- Volunteering for/working in / managing organizations;

In the national report of Romania, Greece and Cyprus there were some additional concrete examples of the topics and activities provided. These included:

Romania and Greece

- Social activities involving both young people with visual impairments and young people with typical development;
- Leisure activities (camps, sport activities, games);
- Sports activities;
- Awareness campaigns;

Romania

- Training on the development of employability skills, which is a very important matter for the young people with visual impairments, given their low employability rates; topics that were suggested were massage, kineto-therapy, IT, foreign languages, entrepreneurship, working as phone operator, etc.
- Artistic events (theatre or musical shows, dancing, movies, etc.), both as spectators but also as artists;
- Thematic camps;

- Music workshops and music therapy;
- Opportunities to use their skills in massage therapy;

Cyprus

Training on subjects such as:

- How to write a CV;
- How to have a successful interview;
- Body language and especially non-verbal communication (many youth have to master these skills since they are unable to observe these visual behaviours).;
- How to dress for a special occasion (job interview, employment etc.);

We have identified different topics for appealing workshops, such as:

- How to build self-esteem, empowerment, and resilience;
- Team building and working in a group, learning to collaborate, effective communication skills, dealing with stressful situations;
- Recreational and leisure activities such as camping, hiking, rafting, tandem bikes, climbing;
- Participating in cultural events (take part at a play, musical, play in a music group, dance);
- Sport activities such as yoga, zumba dance, pilates;
- Daily life workshops such as: international cooking courses or applying make-up

Detailed results of the surveys

Opinion of persons with visual impairments regarding Civil Services and local/international opportunities for learning or volunteering

The following sections present the results obtained in each country through the questionnaires and focus groups.

- ◣ Visually impaired people (VIPs) contacting various Civil Services

96% of VIPs in Romania, 94% in Greece, 90% in Cyprus, 71.18%, in Bulgaria, 30.4% in Macedonia contacted various civil services.

The most accessed services common to all partners were: Tax offices, Amenities, Tourism services, Leisure activities, Disabled facilities grants.
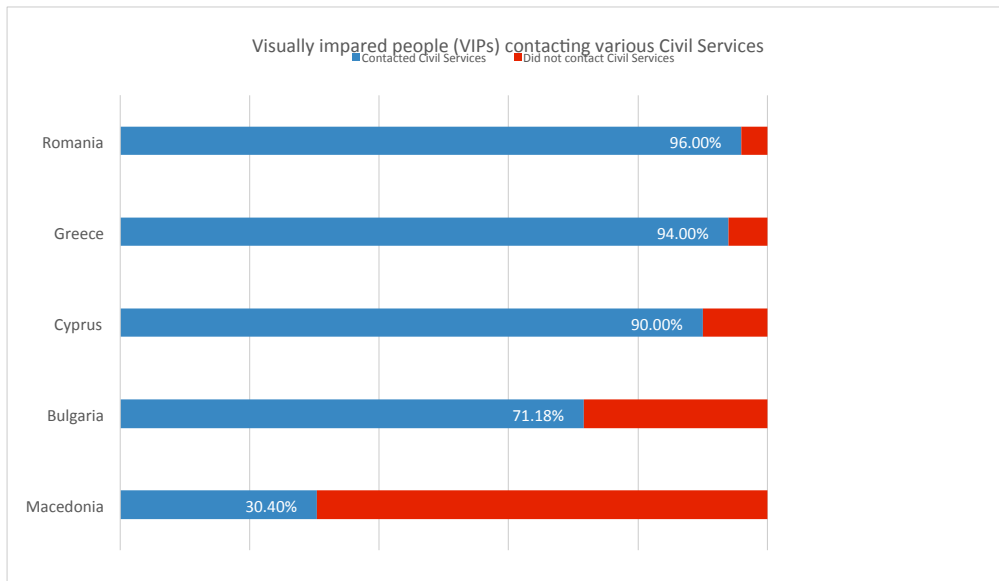
Romania: Health and safety, Electoral services, Services related to grants for the disabled and tax offices, Licensing and registration, Food safety, Planning enforcements or Building regulation.

Greece: Council Tax and Housing Benefits, Tourism, Leisure Facilities, Licensing and Registration, Health and Safety, Electoral services

Macedonia: Revenues and benefits, Electoral services, Car park management services, Tourism services, Planning/Disabled Facilities Grants

Cyprus: Amenities/Car park management, Revenues and Benefits, Regeneration/Tourism, Leisure facilities, Planning /disabled facilities Grants

Bulgaria: Health and safety, Leisure activities, Disabled facilities grants, Council tax and housing benefits and Car park management.
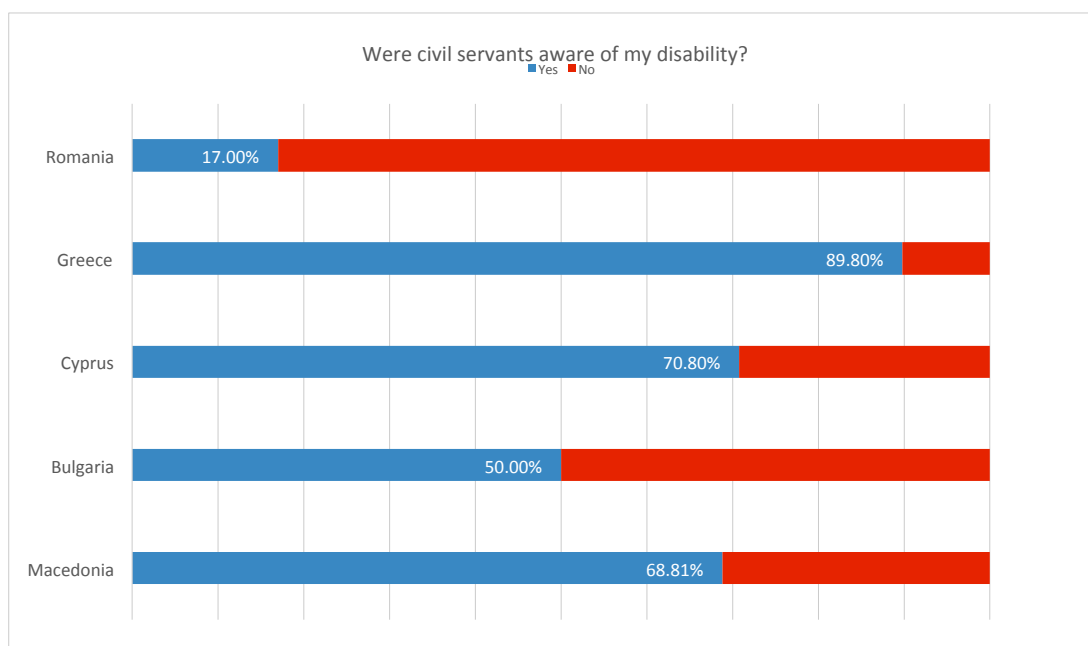
Visually impared people (VIPs) contacting various Civil Services

	Contacted Civil Services	Did not contact Civil Services
Romania	96.00%	
Greece	94.00%	
Cyprus	90.00%	
Bulgaria	71.18%	
Macedonia	30.40%	

► Interest shown by civil servants in adjusting their services according to each disability

89.80% of the respondents in Greece, 68.81% in Macedonia, 70.8% in Cyprus, 50% in Bulgaria, 17% in Romania replied that Civil Service staff was aware of their disability.

59.57% in Greece, 61.82% in Macedonia, 33% in Cyprus, 27.27% in Bulgaria, 17% in Romania civil services made adjustments taking into account the needs of the people with visual impairments.

68.18% of adjustments were characterized as helpful/ appropriate in Greece, 61.82% in Macedonia, 75% in Bulgaria, 26.3% in Cyprus, 17% in Romania.

Were civil servants aware of my disability?

Country	Yes
Romania	17.00%
Greece	89.80%
Cyprus	70.80%
Bulgaria	50.00%
Macedonia	68.81%

In terms of quality, the experience of VIPs with services received from Civil Services was evaluated as follows:

Romania: Excellent 1.39%, Very good 9.72%, Good 52.78% Poor - 34.72%, Very poor 1.39%.

Greece: Very Good 32.65%, Good, 48.98%.

Bulgaria: Very good 26%, Good 48%, Poor 22%, Very poor 4%.

Macedonia: Excellent 13.56%, Very good 18.64, Good 25.42%, Very poor 8.47%.

Cyprus: Excellent 10.53%, Very Good 26.32%, Good 36.84% Poor 5.26%, Very poor 5.26%.

▶ VIPs' equal access in public services

30% of VIPs in Romania, in Greece 88%, in Macedonia 100%, in Bulgaria 50% considered that they do not have equal access to public services compared to the general population.

▶ VIPs preferred methods for contacting Civil Services

Common methods of contacting Civil Services in Greece, Macedonia and Bulgaria are:

a. Telephone: 90% in Greece, 81.35% in Macedonia, 80% in Bulgaria.

b. E-mail: 36% in Greece, 30.15% in Macedonia, 38% in Bulgaria.

Other methods common for all are: by post, websites, personal contact, SMS text messages, personal contact, on line provision of services.

- ◣ Experience of young people with visual impairment in various learning and volunteering opportunities.
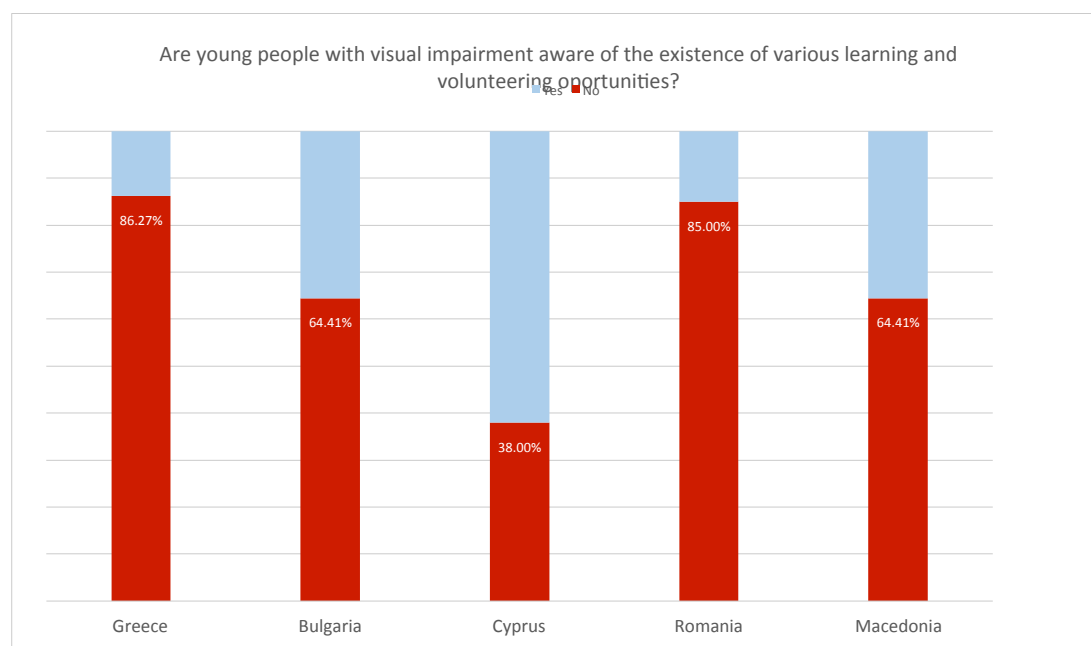
86.27% in Greece, 64.41% in Bulgaria, 38% in Cyprus, 85% in Romania, 64.41% in Macedonia (of young people with visual impairments) are not aware of the existence of learning opportunities.

Regarding the experience of young people with visual impairment on the various volunteering opportunities, data from the questionnaire showed that:

38.46% in Greece, 55.93% in Macedonia, 50% in Cyprus, 63% in Bulgaria are not aware of the existence of different NGOs in their local community offering volunteering opportunities.

38.46% in Greece, 78.57% in Macedonia, 6% in Romania, 5% in Bulgaria, have tried to volunteer in NGO in their local community.

71.43% in Greece, 50% in Bulgaria, 95.83% in Macedonia, 4% in Romania succeeded in being a volunteer in NGO in his/her local community.

Are young people with visual impairment aware of the existence of various learning and volunteering opportunities?

The reasons for which the VIPs did not succeed in volunteering are common for all countries participating: physical environment was not accessible, persons that they were in contact had a negative attitude towards disability, they didn't have the required skills for participating, they fear that their presence would complicate participation of the other members of the team, they fear that NGOs do not need or accept people with disabilities.

VIPs who have been involved in various activities organized by NGOs in all participating countries, found their experiences both interesting and useful. They were offered the chance to further develop personally and socially, by being included in new and various activities, meeting many new and different people who do not belong to their family or their immediate social circle, exercise responsibility and take on leadership roles.

According to the surveyed, the most appropriate channels for communicating the availability of learning and volunteering opportunities in all participant countries are TV/Radio, School, Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.); Info points, Email, NGOs and Specific websites, e.g. Municipality website.

In order to offer better volunteering or learning opportunities to VIPs, local NGOs from all participant countries should:

- provide assistive technologies for assisting participation,
- make opportunities more accessible,
- make participation more affordable to people with disability,
- promote opportunities better,
- retain a more positive attitude towards people with disability.

The most interesting learning/volunteering opportunities for VIPs in all countries participating were Local/International trainings in the topics of: social competences, professional competences, foreign languages, sports, media, leisure activities, and European Youth Exchanges in the topics of: social education, psychology, communication competences and exchange with other youngsters with visual impairments.

Findings about public institutions and services they provide to persons with visual impairments

▰ Accessibility support and assistance provided by questioned institutions to people with various disability types:

Mobility and Physical – "There is a type of support/assistance available": Romania: 85%, Greece: 77%, Bulgaria: 80%, Macedonia: 51.71%, Cyprus: 45.45%.

Learning – "There is a type of support/assistance available": Romania: 33%, Greece: 52.89%, Macedonia: 41.37, Bulgaria: 95%, Cyprus: 71.43%.

Hearing – "There is a type of support/assistance available": Romania: 60%, Greece: 52.32%, Macedonia: 20.23%, Bulgaria: 50%, Cyprus: 40.00%.

Mental and emotional – "There is a type of support/assistance available": Romania: 50%, Greece: 57.89%, Macedonia: 34.48%, Cyprus: 47.62%.

Speech and language – "There is a type of support/assistance available": Romania: 33%, Greece: no type of support Bulgaria: 90%, Macedonia: 24.13%, Cyprus: 61.90%.

Visual – "There is a type of support/assistance available": Romania: 66%, Greece: 57.14%, Bulgaria: 55%.

▰ Support/assistance available for persons with visual impairments

Percentage of questioned institutions offering information material available in appropriate format (Braille, large print, etc.): Romania: 14%, Greece: 14.30%, Macedonia: 6.90%, Bulgaria: 35%, Cyprus: 28.57%.

Percentage of institutions offering appropriate lighting: Romania: 85%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 31.03%, Bulgaria: 35%, Cyprus: 52.38%.

Percentage of institutions offering a properly structured space (including signs in Braille, tactile floors, removing potential obstacles, etc.): Romania: 28%, Greece: 27.27%, Macedonia: 6.90%, Bulgaria: 20%, Cyprus: 25.00%.

Percentage of institutions offering electronic reading devices: Romania: 14%, Greece: 9.52%, Macedonia: 3.45%, Bulgaria: 20%, Cyprus: 4.76%.

Specialized staff ready to assist: Romania: 20%, Greece: 52.38%, Macedonia: 13.79%, Bulgaria: 60%, Cyprus: 47.62%.

- Assisting policies addressed to people with disabilities

Percentage of institutions having a policy for working with persons having Mobility and Physical disabilities: Romania: 71%, Greece: 77%, Macedonia: 19.23%, Bulgaria: 80%, Cyprus 0%;

Percentage of institutions having a policy for working with persons having hearing disabilities: Romania: 29%, Greece: 52.38%, Macedonia: no policy because there is no need, Bulgaria: 65%;

Percentage of institutions having a policy for working with persons having learning disabilities: Romania: 33%, Greece: 52.89%, Macedonia: 30.77%, Bulgaria: 95%;

Percentage of institutions having a policy for working with persons having mental or emotional disabilities: Romania: 17%, Greece: 57.89%, Macedonia: 19.23%, Bulgaria: 95%;

Percentage of institutions having a policy for working with persons having speech and language disabilities: Romania: 14%, Greece: no policy for this type of disability because there is no need, Macedonia: 3.57%, Bulgaria: 95%;

Percentage of institutions having a policy for working with persons having visual disabilities: Romania: 43%, Greece: 57.14%, Macedonia: there is no need for this type of disabilities, Bulgaria: 70%;

In Cyprus in a percentage of 33.33%, there is a policy for evaluating the efficacy and quality of the support offered to people with disabilities.

- Policy for assessing the efficacy and quality of the support offered to people with disabilities

Out of the total institutions questioned, the following percentage declared that they have a policy assessing the efficacy and quality of the support offered to people with disabilities: Romania 14%, Greece 35.88%, Macedonia 21.43%, Bulgaria 68.4%.

- Measures/initiatives combating staff's negative perceptions, stereotype and prejudices on people with disabilities

In Romania: None of the institutions questioned consider that there is a need for taking any measures/initiatives to combat staff's negative perceptions, stereotyping and prejudice on people with disability.

Percentage of institutions that have taken measures / initiatives to combat staff's negative perceptions, stereotyping and prejudices on people with disabilities (Greece: 56.52%, Macedonia: 17.24%, Bulgaria: 61%, Cyprus: 93.33%).

- Institutions who have identified the need to take measures against employees who had negative perceptions about the people with disability

Romania and Bulgaria: no institution considered that there is a need for such measures.

Greece: 91.30% of responders declared that they have the opportunity to report when they are subject of discrimination, stereotype and prejudice from the staff of the Organization.

In Macedonia 34.5% of institutions take measures against employees who had negative perceptions about the people with disability.

Cyprus: 6.67% stated that they do not offer the opportunity because there is no need for this.

Findings about the involvement of young people with visual impairments in organizations offering local/international opportunities for learning or volunteering

▸ Opportunities for learning or volunteering, offered by NGOs to persons with visual impairments

Percentage of NGOs offering an accessible environment for persons facing disabilities related to Mobility: Romania: 10% of organizations, Greece: 88.24%, Macedonia: 28.26%, Bulgaria: 20%, Cyprus: 45.45% offer support for young people with mobility and physical type of disability.

Percentage of NGOs offering an accessible environment for persons facing disabilities related to Hearing: Romania: 20% of organizations, Greece: 66.67%, Macedonia: 13%, Bulgaria: 27%, Cyprus: 40%.

Percentage of NGOs offering an accessible environment for persons facing disabilities related to Learning: Greece: 57.14%, Macedonia: 17%, Bulgaria: 67%, Cyprus: 71%.

Percentage of NGOs offering an accessible environment for persons facing disabilities related to Mental or emotional health: Romania: 10%, Greece: 85.71 %, Macedonia: 19.15%, Cyprus: 47.62%.

Percentage of NGOs offering an accessible environment for persons facing disabilities related to speech and language: Greece: 57.14 %, Macedonia: 13%, Bulgaria: 50%, Cyprus: 61.90%.

Percentage of NGOs offering an accessible environment for persons facing disabilities related to Vision: Romania: 10%, Macedonia: 15.21%, Bulgaria: 16%, Cyprus: 42.46%, Greece no type of support/assistance but there are plans for this 42.86%.

▸ Type of support/assistance available for persons with visual impairments:

Percentage of questioned NGOs offering information material available in appropriate format (Braille, large print, etc.): Romania: 0%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 11.90%, Bulgaria: 15%, Cyprus: 28.57%.

Percentage of questioned NGOs offering appropriate lighting: Romania: 22%, Greece: 55.56%, Macedonia: 19.05%, Bulgaria: 30%, Cyprus: 52.38%.

Percentage of questioned NGOs offering a properly structured space (including signs in Braille, tactile floors, removing potential obstacles, etc.): Romania: 0%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 9.52%, Bulgaria: 15%, Cyprus: 25%.

Percentage of questioned NGOs offering electronic reading devices: Romania: 0%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 9.52%, Bulgaria: 15%, Cyprus: 4.76%.

Percentage of questioned NGOs offering specialized staff ready to assist: Romania: 12%, Greece: 66.67% Macedonia: 19.05%, Bulgaria: 35%, Cyprus: 47.62%.

- ◣ Policies for assisting people with disabilities with whom organizations are interacting

Percentage of questioned institutions/NGOs which have a Policy for addressing persons with Mobility and Physical disabilities: Romania: 0%, Greece: 96.88%, Macedonia: 11.90%, Bulgaria: 35%, Cyprus: 59.09%;
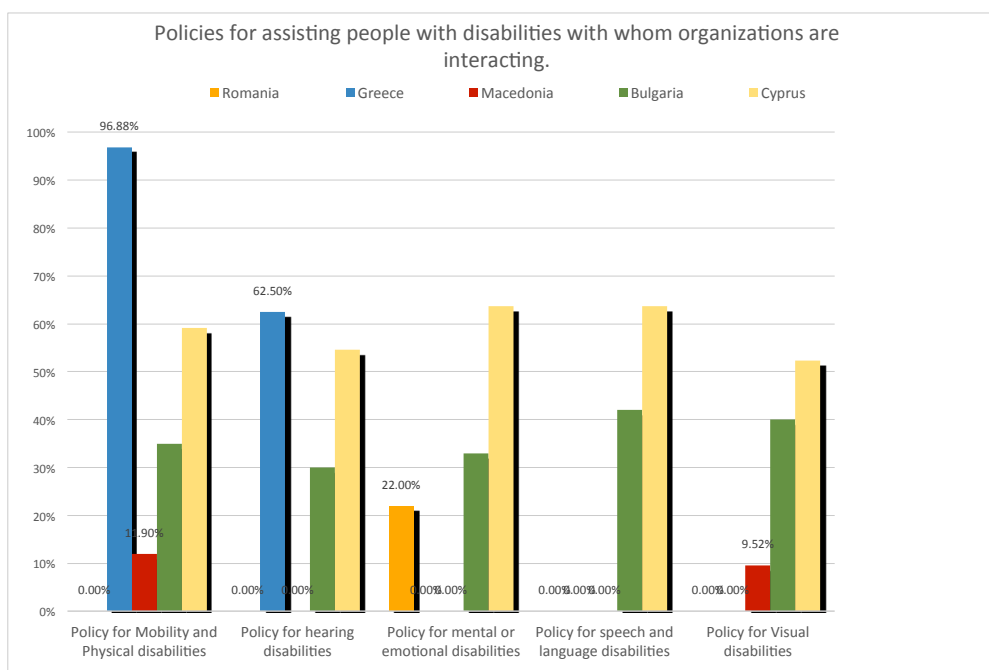
Percentage of questioned institutions/NGOs which have a policy for addressing persons with hearing disabilities: Romania: 0%, Greece: 62.50%, Macedonia: 0%, Bulgaria: 30%, Cyprus: 54.55%;

Percentage of questioned institutions/NGOs which have a policy for addressing persons with learning disabilities: Romania: 22%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 0%, Bulgaria: 33%, Cyprus: 63.64%;

Percentage of questioned institutions/NGOs which have a policy for addressing persons with mental or emotional disabilities: Romania: 11%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 11.90%, Bulgaria: 42%, Cyprus: 63.64%;

Percentage of questioned institutions/NGOs which have a policy for addressing persons with speech and language disabilities: Romania: 0%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 0%, Bulgaria: 42%, Cyprus: 63.64%;

Percentage of questioned institutions/NGOs which have a policy for addressing persons with visual impairment: Romania: 0%, Greece: 0%, Macedonia: 9.52%, Bulgaria: 40%, Cyprus: 52.38%;

Policies for assisting people with disabilities with whom organizations are interacting.

- Organizations declaring that they have a policy for serving with priority the persons with disability.

Romania: 66%, Greece: 85%, Macedonia: 23.81%, Bulgaria: 75%, Cyprus: 52.38% - of all questioned organisations declare that they have a policy for serving people with disability with priority.

- Organizations declaring that they have a policy for evaluating the effectiveness and quality of the support offered to people with disabilities.
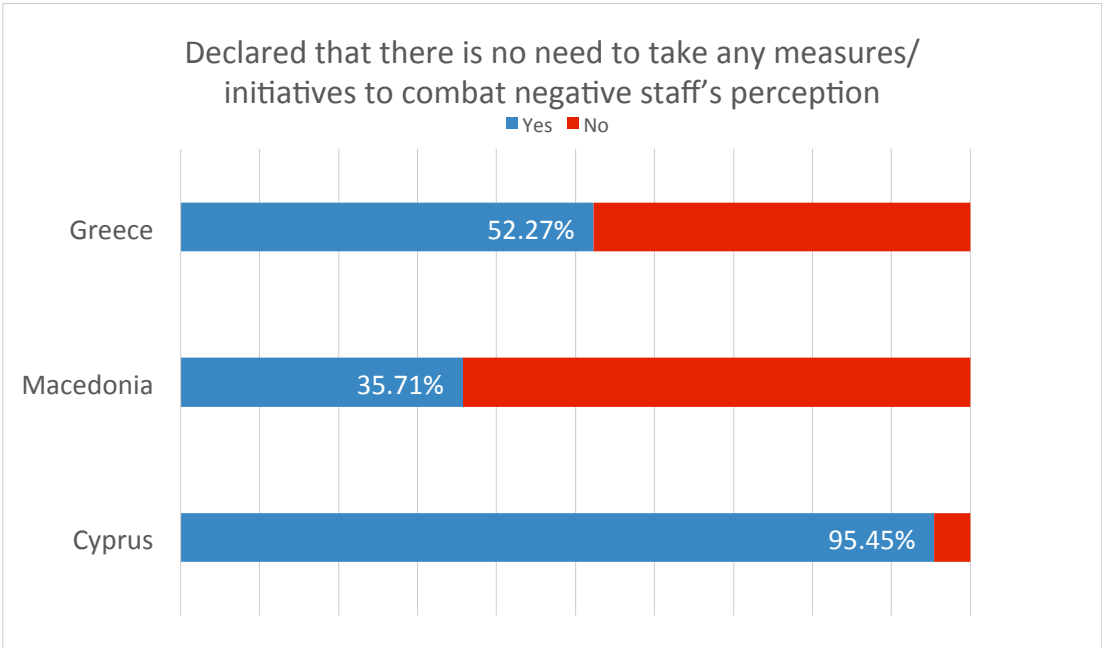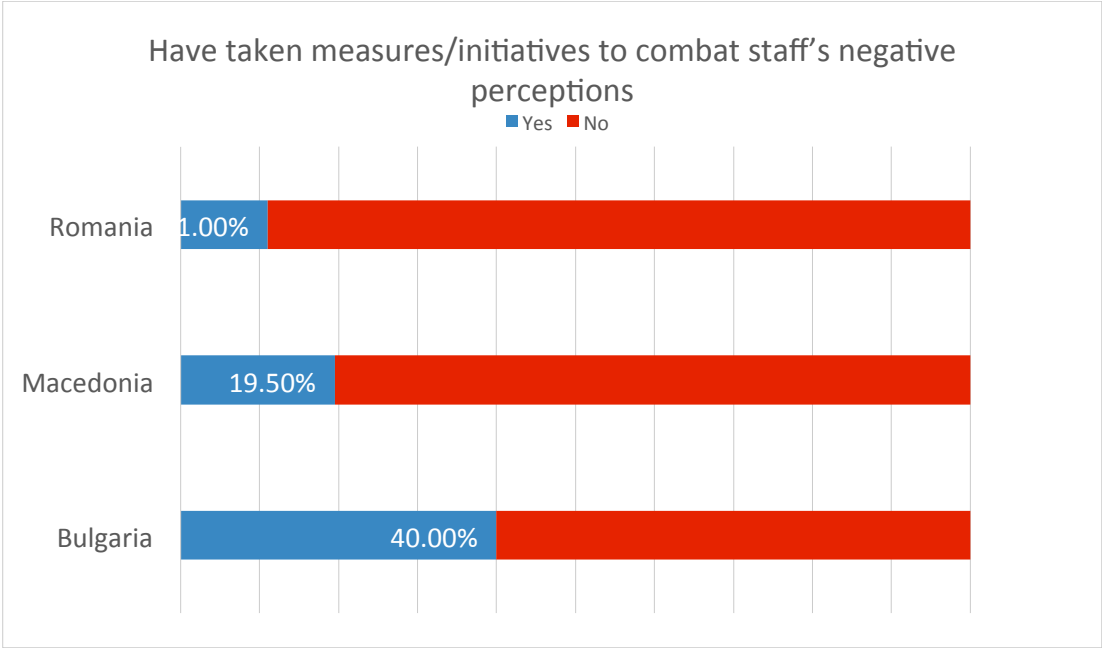
Romania: 11%, Greece: 81.40%, Macedonia: 7.14%, Bulgaria: 35%, Cyprus: 40.91% - of all questioned organisations declare that they have a policy for evaluating the efficacy and quality of the support offered to people with disabilities.
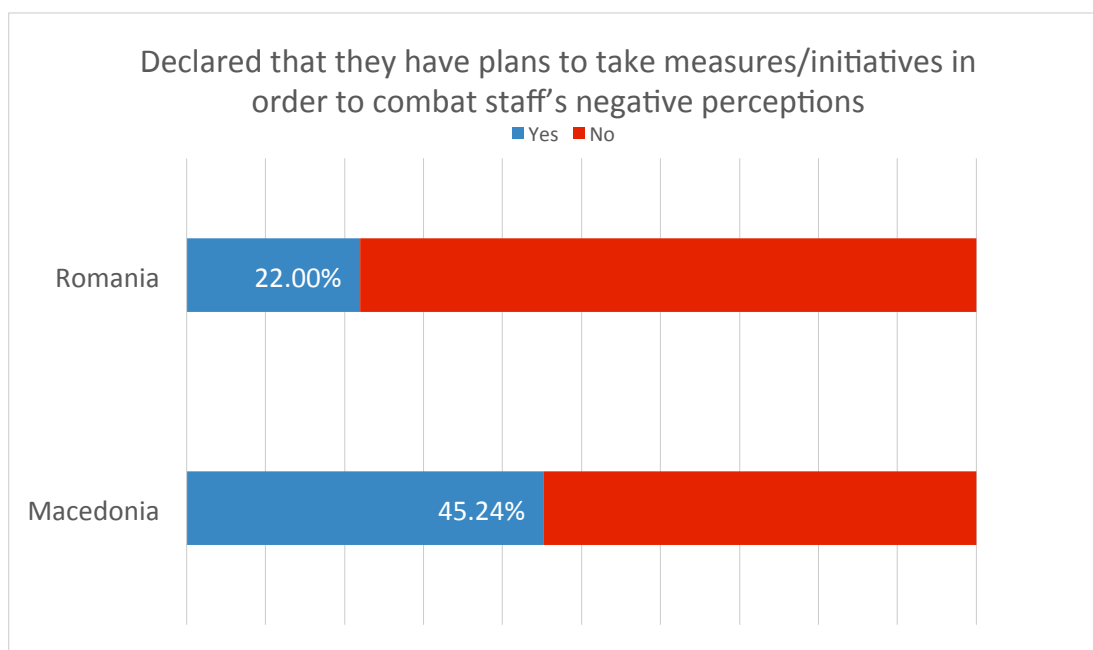
- Measures/initiatives taken from Organizations to combat staff's negative perceptions, stereotyping and prejudice towards people with disability.

In Romania: 11%, Macedonia: 19.5% and Bulgaria: 40% of Organizations, have taken measures/initiatives to combat staff's negative perceptions.

In Greece: 52.27%, Macedonia: 35.71% and Cyprus: 95.45% of Organizations, declared that there is no need to take any measures/initiatives to combat negative staff's perception.

In Romania: 22% and Macedonia: 45.24% of Organizations, declared that they have plans to take measures/initiatives in order to combat staff's negative perceptions.

Have taken measures/initiatives to combat staff's negative perceptions

■ Yes ■ No

- Romania: 1.00%
- Macedonia: 19.50%
- Bulgaria: 40.00%

Declared that there is no need to take any measures/ initiatives to combat negative staff's perception

■ Yes ■ No

- Greece: 52.27%
- Macedonia: 35.71%
- Cyprus: 95.45%

Declared that they have plans to take measures/initiatives in order to combat staff's negative perceptions

Yes ■ No ■

Romania: 22.00%

Macedonia: 45.24%

▰ Opportunity that organizations offer to persons with visual impairments to report when they are subject to discrimination, stereotyping and prejudices from their staff.

Percentage of organizations who offer persons with visual impairments the opportunity to report when they are subject to discrimination, stereotyping and prejudices from their staff: Romania: 10%, Greece: 52.27%, Macedonia: 39.9%, Bulgaria: 80%, Cyprus: 54.55%.

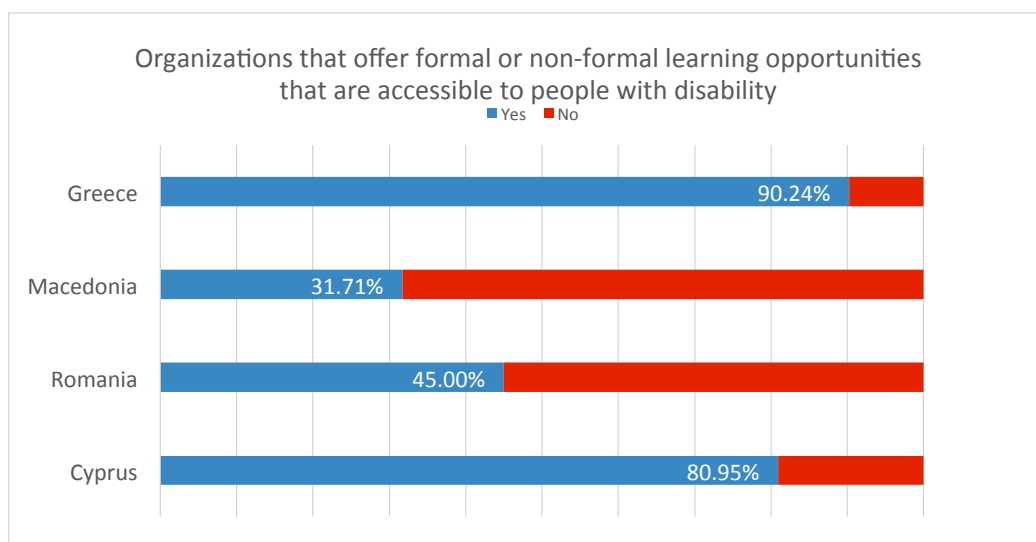In Romania, 22% of the Organizations plan to do this in the future.

Percentage of organizations who do not consider necessary to offer persons with visual impairments the opportunity to report when they are subject to discrimination, stereotyping and prejudices from their staff: in Romania: 68%, Greece: 52.27%, Macedonia: 46.34%, Cyprus: 45.45%.

▰ NGOs that offer formal or non-formal learning opportunities accessible to people with disability.

In Greece, 90.24%, Macedonia 31.71%, Bulgaria 45%, Cyprus 80.95% of organizations that were questioned offer formal or non-formal learning opportunities that are accessible to people with disability.

Romania: 22%, Macedonia: 31.71% of Organizations have plans to offer formal or non-formal learning opportunities that are accessible to people with disabilities.

In Romania 67% of the Organizations are not interested at the moment in this topic.

Organizations that offer formal or non-formal learning opportunities that are accessible to people with disability

- ◤ Organizations, which offer volunteering opportunities, which are accessible to people with disabilities.

Percentage of questioned organisations which offer volunteering opportunities that are accessible to people with disabilities in: Greece: 52.38%, Macedonia: 33.33%, Bulgaria: 50%, Cyprus: 45.45%.

In Macedonia, 30.95% of Organizations have plans to offer in the future volunteering opportunities that are accessible to people with disabilities.

- ◤ Organizations, which offer leisure/free time spending opportunities, which are accessible to people with disabilities.

Percentage of questioned organisations which offer leisure activities accessible to people with disabilities in Greece: 88.10%, Macedonia: 21.43%, Bulgaria: 36%, Cyprus: 77.27%

In Macedonia, 23.81% of Organizations have plans to offer leisure free time spending opportunities accessible to people with disability. Still, 51.56% of Organizations consider that there is no need to offer leisure activity.

- ◤ Organizations who involved people with disabilities in learning/volunteering/leisure activities

Percentage of questioned organisations who already involved people with disabilities in learning/volunteering/leisure activities: in Greece: 84.09%, Macedonia: 34% Bulgaria: 36%, Cyprus: 81.82%.

- ◤ Channels used by NGO for communicating the availability of learning/volunteering/leisure opportunities for people with disability.

In Romania: social media, direct contact, telephone, Blind's Associations;

In Greece: e-mail, TV/Radio, Newspapers;

In Macedonia, Bulgaria and Cyprus use the following channels for communicating the availability learning/volunteering/leisure opportunities: Facebook, other social media platforms, direct contact, info points, TV/Radio, Newspapers;

Perception of the general population related to disability.

Most of the general population (from 50.97%, in Greece to 90% in Romania) declared that they are acquainted with disability.

The sources of information about disability are common in all participant countries:

- Personal research/need for information: Romania: 59%, Macedonia: 65.07%, Bulgaria: 25%, Cyprus: 29.63%;

- Media and Internet: Romania: 44%, Macedonia: 55.55%, Bulgaria: 26%, Cyprus: 48.15%;

- Work/environment: Romania: 18%, Macedonia: 22%, Bulgaria: 26%, Cyprus: 18.52%;

- Disabled friends or carers of people with disability: Romania: 16%, Macedonia: 34.92%, Bulgaria:6%;

- Studies: Romania: 16%, Greece: 39%, Macedonia: 30.15%, Bulgaria: 36%, Cyprus: 62.96%;

- Seminars on disability: Macedonia: 33.33%, Bulgaria: 14%, Cyprus: 29.63%;

- Co-workers with disability: Macedonia: 19.04%, Bulgaria: 13%;

View on disability:

- 93% of respondents in Romania, 100% in Greece, 92.06% in Macedonia, 91% in Bulgaria, 100% in Cyprus say that they would hang out with a disabled person.
- 75% of respondents in Romania, 98.8% in Greece, 79.37% in Macedonia, 80% in Bulgaria, 96.30 % in Cyprus believe that would provide care and accommodation overnight for a disabled child.
- 88% of respondents in Romania, 88.46% in Greece, 77.05% in Macedonia, 93.5% in Bulgaria, 100% in Cyprus do not consider that a disabled person is a punishment for his family.
- 71% of respondents in Romania, 88.46% in Greece, 77.05% in Macedonia, 93.5% in Bulgaria, 100% in Cyprus do not consider that a disabled person is unbearable burden to his family.

- 85% of respondents in Romania, 87.23 % in Greece, 87.30 % in Macedonia, 76% % in Bulgaria, 100% in Cyprus do not consider that disabled children should not be born.

What general population would include in a definition of disability:

- 52% of respondents in Romania, 88.24% in Greece, 67.16% in Macedonia, 84% in Bulgaria stated that disability is different way of life.
- 28% of respondents in Romania, 2% in Greece, 16.07% in Macedonia, 8% in Bulgaria consider that disability is disease.
- 13% of respondents in Romania, 2% in Greece, 5.36% in Macedonia consider that disability is incompetence.
- 7% of respondents in Romania, 10.71% in Macedonia, 8% in Bulgaria consider that disability is a problem.
- 20% of respondents in Bulgaria, 81.48% in Cyprus consider that disability is lack of accessibility.
- 24% of respondents in Bulgaria and 85.19% in Cyprus consider that disability is lack of supportive environment.
- 29% of respondents in Bulgaria, 77.78% in Cyprus consider that disability includes Psychological issues.
- 35% of respondents in Bulgaria, 74.07% in Cyprus consider that disability includes loss of mental functions.
- 35% of respondents in Bulgaria, 74.07% in Cyprus consider that disability includes loss of sensorial functions.

Main barriers people face against interacting more with people with disability are:

- 16% of respondents in Romania, 5% in Greece, 4.41% in Macedonia, 18%in Bulgaria, 18% in Cyprus feel uncomfortable working together with the disabled due to their *Different way of life;*
- 10% of responders in Romania, 10% in Greece, 4.41% in Macedonia, 7% in Bulgaria, 7% in Cyprus feel uncomfortable working together with the disabled because of *lack of accessible places for hanging out/interacting;*
- 7% of respondents in Romania, 10% in Greece, 4.41% in Macedonia, 5% in Bulgaria, 5% in Cyprus feel uncomfortable working together with the disabled because their need for assistance;

- 4% of respondents in Romania, 4.41%in Macedonia, 22% in Bulgaria, 22% in Cyprus consider they would meet difficulties in interacting with the disabled;
- 30% of respondents in Romania, 30% in Greece, 75% in Macedonia, 30% in Bulgaria, 30% in Cyprus do not feel uncomfortable or face a mental barrier in interacting more with people with disability;

Ways people refer to persons with disabilities:
- 84% of respondents in Romania, 98.11% in Greece, 95.24% in Macedonia, 71% in Bulgaria, 88.89% in Cyprus are referring to a person with disability as "a person with"
- 16% of respondents in Romania, 4.86% in Macedonia, 29% in Bulgaria, 11.11% in Cyprus when referring to disability use the phrase *"he suffers from"*

Opinion of persons with disabilities:
- 80% of respondents in Romania, 90.57% in Greece, 76,19% in Macedonia 84% in Bulgaria, 93.30% in Cyprus believe that people with disability are common people with their own personality and abilities.
- 41% of respondents in Romania believe that disability is equivalent to Special skills and 22% believe that disability is equivalent to mobility problems.
- 87% of respondents in Romania, 82.69% in Greece, 90.48% in Macedonia, 94% in Bulgaria, 53.85 % in Cyprus believe that the disabled are heroes who exceed their physical and environmental obstacles.
- 55% of respondents in Romania, 81.13% in Greece, 65.08 % in Macedonia, 32% in Bulgaria, 88.89% in Cyprus believe that the disabled do not have less productive capacity.
- 93% of respondents in Romania, 100% in Greece, 95.24 % in Macedonia 98% in Bulgaria 96.30 in Cyprus agree that people with disabilities can work.

Type of support that the general populations considers should be given to people with disability:

- 88.46% of respondents in Romania, 88.46% in Greece, 69.84 % in Macedonia, 86% in Bulgaria, 74.07% in Cyprus believe that Initiatives should be given by the State to encourage private enterprises to recruit people with disabilities.

- 91% of respondents in Romania, 56.60% in Greece, 74.60 in Macedonia, 92% in Bulgaria, 73.03% in Cyprus agree or partially agree that more flexible working conditions for persons who take care of a disabled person should be introduced.
- 98% of respondents in Romania, 92.45% in Greece, 95.24% in Macedonia, 72% in Bulgaria, 96.30% in Cyprus agree or partially agree that vocational training schools for people with disabilities should be introduced.

Achievements considered possible for people with disability by the general population:

- In Romania:

	Mental Disability	Blindness	Deafness	Mobility Disability
Work	33%	74%	74%	63%
Study	39%	76%	71%	76%
Get married	31%	75%	75%	69%
Have children	24%	67%	74%	60%
Lead an autonomous life	0%	57%	65%	60%
Have a good time	68%	76%	72%	81%
Have social life	74%	78%	78%	76%
Travel	44%	63%	65%	61%
Elect	32%	67%	68%	65%
Be elected	26%	60%	61%	63%

◣ In Greece

Greece	Mental disability	Blindness	Deafness	Mobility Disability
Work	50.6%	100%	100%	100%
Study	20%	100%	100%	100%
Get married	50%	100%	100%	100%
Have children	50%	100%	100%	100%
Lead an autonomous life	10%	80.6%	80%	50%
Have a good time	95%	100%	100%	100%
Have social life	75%	100%	100%	100%
Travel	90%	100%	100%	100%
Elect	15%	100%	100%	100%
Be elected	15%	90%	90%	90%

- In Macedonia

	Mental Disability	Blindness	Deafness	Mobility Disability
Work	88.88% (56 people)	88.88% (56 people)	88.88% (56 people)	87.30% (56 people)
Study	74.60% (47 people)	92.06% (58 people)	93.65% (59 people)	93.65% (59 people)
Get married	77.77% (49 people)	93.65% (59 people)	93.65% (59 people)	92.06% (58 people)
Have children	61.90% (39 people)	90.47% (57 people)	90.47% (57 people)	88.88% (56 people)
Lead an autonomous life	0	80.95% (51 people)	88.88% (56 people)	84.12% (53 people)
Have a good time	85.71% (54 people)	88.88% (56 people)	85.71% (54 people)	88.88% (56 people)
Have social life	88.88% (56 people)	92.06% (58 people)	92.06% (58 people)	92.06% (58 people)
Travel	83.53% (52 people)	87.30% (55 people)	90.47% (57 people)	87.30% (55 people)
Elect	74.60% (47 people)	90.47% (57 people)	92.06% (58 people)	90.47% (57 people)
Be elected	57.14% (36 people)	74.60% (47 people)	83.53% (52 people)	80.95% (51 people)

Feelings of general population on personally facing impairment:

- 84% of respondents in Romania, 13.64 %in Greece, 58.73% in Macedonia, 91% in Bulgaria, 8% in Cyprus stated that they feel insecure facing impairment.

- 85% of respondents in Romania, 60.32% in Macedonia, 90% in Bulgaria, 0% in Cyprus stated that they would feel fear about becoming impaired.

- 35% of respondents in Romania, 41.30% in Greece, 7.94% in Macedonia, 32% in Bulgaria, 33% in Cyprus stated that they would feel embarrassment facing an impairment.

Support offered to disabled by the general population:

- 36.51% of respondents in Romania, 55.10 in Greece, 63.49 in Macedonia, 73% in Bulgaria, 77.77% in Cyprus have considered offering support to disabled.

- 63.49% of respondents in Romania, 44.90% in Greece, 36.51% in Macedonia, 27% in Bulgaria, 22.23% in Cyprus have considered not offering support to the disabled.

Main reasons for not offering support to the disabled:

- 54% of respondents in Romania, 18% in Greece, 43% in Bulgaria, 55.56% do not offer support to the disabled because of lack of time.

- 21% of respondents in Romania, 3% in Bulgaria, 18.52% in Cyprus do not offer support to disabled because of difficulties in working with them.

- Lack of skills for offering support for 17% of respondents in Romania, 11% in Greece, 28% in Bulgaria, 25.93% in Cyprus do not offer support because of lack of skills.

- 14% of the respondents in Romania, 10% in Greece, 3% in Bulgaria,18.52% in Cyprus do not offer support for the disabled because of lack of awareness on opportunities for volunteering

Further information

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- Magnites Tifli, Greece,

- NART, Bulgaria,

- Center for Youth Activism CYA KRIK, Macedonia

- Pancyprian Organization of the Blind, Cyprus.

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