

The **I-AM: “Inclusive education using Animation and Multimedia”** project aims to support the inclusive education of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), through an innovative, person-centred, inter-disciplinary and art-based approach, implemented in Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, and Poland.



The Erasmus+ project, which was launched in 2020, utilizes multimedia resources, with a particular emphasis on animation, through a blended learning capacity building programme, to develop a welcoming environment for children with SEND in mainstream schools.

During the past few years, we have been working together with school communities, promoting common values of social inclusion. Respect for children with SEND rights and their equal access to education was promoted, while stereotypes and discrimination were combated. The project comes to an end in December 2022, and at this point we have succeeded in **connecting the dots between inclusive education approaches & techniques, the cultivation of emotional intelligence and multimedia usage in mainstream schools.**

The project’s main activities were:

- ▶ **Mapping the current situation** regarding the inclusive education of children with SEND and the needs of both educational staff & individuals with SEND.
- ▶ **Development of effective and tailored tools**, based on the research findings and an inter-professional learning framework, that will support educational staff to adopt inclusive educational approaches and implement best practice techniques in the classroom.
- ▶ **Capacity building of educational staff**, through a blended learning programme, that will support them to promote the notion of inclusiveness among students in mainstream schools. Educational staff will obtain skills on emotional intelligence, inclusive education techniques, leadership & classroom management skills, as well as basic animation development skills.
- ▶ **Video animation school contest** to engage children, young people, and their communities in the promotion of inclusive education. Winning entries will be shown at the Animasyros International Animation Festival.

Results that we are proud of:

- ✓ Enhanced the use of effective state-of-the art methodological approaches and tools that support inclusive education.
- ✓ Increased the awareness, knowledge, and competence of educational staff to address diversity in the classroom.
- ✓ Raised awareness of inclusive educational approaches among the members of educational communities and supported increased engagement.
- ✓ Effectively and efficiently promoted the inclusive education of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools among policy & decision makers and relevant stakeholders at local, national, and European level.

Besides all these activities, partners implemented **national policy recommendation workshops** in each country, in order to initiate a fruitful discussion about policy recommendations **to stimulate and**

facilitate inclusive education for students with SEND nationally. The aim was a European-level 'system innovation' for tackling the societal challenges linked with the inclusive education of students with SEND in mainstream schools, while unlocking new opportunities for further research and development, by launching new projects (EU-funded or sponsored by other sources) based on the experiences gained in the project.

Some of the partners' policy recommendations were:

CMT Prooptiki Ltd, Greece: Policy recommendations are one of the most important parts of the I_AM project. In this area, our partners from Greece (IMEGEE and CMT PROOPTIKI) and Cyprus (Open University of Cyprus) decided to organize a joint Policy Recommendation Forum on 26th November 2022. We decided to have a joint workshop, because of the common language and culture of the two countries and the similar political situation in terms of inclusion.

The forum was structured in two sections: *“Political-legislative interventions & practices for inclusive education in the world and in Europe”* and *“The role of educational leadership in inclusion – Developing relevant skills of the educational community”*. The I_AM project results and conclusions were presented briefly at the beginning of the Forum, while keynote speeches took place, related to the aforementioned themes. Stakeholders from the field of education (specialist and mainstream), policymakers, as well as representatives from relevant civil society organizations were invited to participate in the workshop, and offered meaningful recommendations about inclusive education of children with SEND.

During this workshop, we engaged in constructive dialogue and offered solutions, while prioritizing and reaching a consensus among participants regarding policy recommendations for inclusive education.



Maria Grzegorzewska University, Poland: Supporting the development of inclusive education requires the introduction of various methods. We have already tried some of them in Poland. Nevertheless, we are looking for other, more effective methods. Animation is a good way to express children's emotions, experiences and desires. They provide a safe context for activities against the background of the group, and involvement within the group. Animation is likely to become popular fastest with groups of children with verbal communication difficulties. It can be included in the curricula of subjects such as: tutoring time, fine arts, technology through the school boards of education.

In Poland, animation competitions can be organized at the local and national level under the supervision of the school board. Animation competitions on the topic of inclusion can be added to already existing festivals and cyclical events, e.g. Week of Culture Without Barriers. It is worth involving non-governmental organizations such as: Culture Without Barriers, OSPAR, etc. Materials on the introduction of animation can be used in the course of education at the academic level. It is worth presenting them to students and engaging them to make animations themselves.

The Open University of Cyprus: Countries are expected to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This means that everyone involved in education will play an important role towards the fulfilment of that goal. Therefore, the Open University of Cyprus's participation in I_AM project has been a great opportunity to secure its future sustainability and - despite the many challenges due to the Covid pandemic - to become one of the major national and international key actors who advocate for immediate policy change towards the promotion of inclusive education.

IMEGEE (Institouto Meleton ke Erevnon Genikis ke Edikis Ekpedefsis), Greece: We take the issue of policy recommendations very seriously and, thus, have planned along with CMT PROOPTIKI and Open University of Cyprus, a Policy Recommendation Forum in the form of an Open Dialogue on 26th November, with very important and prestigious speakers, leading experts in the field, prominent educators and policy makers. In the Forum, the results and conclusions of I_AM project were presented along with the insights we gained through the survey, the capacity building seminars and the making of I_AM shots. We drew valuable conclusions and took on board expert opinions about policy recommendations.

Representatives from the European Parliament, the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, the Ministries of Education of Greece and Cyprus, as well as academics from different schools, teachers and special educational staff, will contribute actively and substantially to the Open Dialogue. We formulated policy proposals for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in education.

The agenda included sections that will concern Policy-legislative interventions & practices for inclusive education in the world and in Europe, the role of educational leadership in inclusion and the development of skills of the educational community. The need to develop skills, i.e. for training, also emerged from the results of the research in Greece and Cyprus. For this reason, the agenda ended with a proposal from two countries that organized circles of training seminars based on the I_AM handbook, also translated into the Greek language.

Hand in Hand Foundation, Hungary: We asked important stakeholders in Hungary to help to distribute I AM project materials, so that as many educators as possible can learn about the approach around Hungary. They promised to find ways to integrate methods and tools of I AM into the already existing tools of the Hungarian education system. As animation as a visual art was new to the stakeholders, this may take time, but they were open to finding new approaches to the topic. We have proposed to them the possibility of online courses, as this is favoured by educators, fitting better as it does with a busy schedule, especially if a participant lives in the countryside.

PLATFORMA-Urban Culture Co, Greece: The organization was established in 2004 in Athens, as a non-profit company aiming at the organisation of cultural events and the promotion of digital audiovisual culture. From 2008 until today, the Company organizes annually in Hermoupolis-Syros, in collaboration with the Municipality of Syros Hermoupolis and Region of South Aegean the International Animation Festival + Agora animasyros, aiming at artistic decentralization and creating an environment of encouragement and inclusivity for the inhabitants of the periphery of Greece. The most important message of the project and the closing conference – where Platforma was the organizer – was that animation had been incorporated very successfully as an educational tool. We are very optimistic for the future of inclusive education.

Please follow our work here:

<https://inclusiveeducation.eu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/iamprojecterasmusplus/>

<https://twitter.com/IAM16708848>

PROJECT NUMBER: 621502-EPP-1-2020-1-EL-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN

PROJECT DATES: December 2020 – December 2022

PROGRAMME: Erasmus+

KEY ACTION 3: Support for Policy Reform

ACTION TYPE: General education and training



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The content of this dissemination material represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.