

Regional Cooperation Event

Conference on “Inequalities in Education”

Athens, 20-21 March 2024

Concept Note

The **Active Citizens Fund (Acf)** Operators for **Greece and Bulgaria** jointly organize a regional conference on “Inequalities in Education” in the context of ACF Regional Cooperation Initiatives. The conference brings together fund operators, civil society organizations, and national, regional, European, and international actors and stakeholders. It features keynote speakers, panel discussions, and interactive workshops. All Acf Fund Operators are invited to participate and send relevant participants and speakers from their respective countries.

Objective

The event aims to share good practices and innovative approaches for achieving inclusive education and **eliminating inequalities in educational access and outcomes**. Particular emphasis will be placed on vulnerable groups, including refugee and migrant children, Roma children, and children with disabilities.

Target audience

The participants will include Fund Operators, CSOs, and state or international actors that have a role in combatting educational inequalities. The latter can consist of state agencies like Ministries of Education, as well as international organizations in the educational field such as the Council of Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency, and UNICEF. Actors working with specific marginalized groups (e.g. refugees, migrants, Roma, people with disabilities) will also be invited to participate.

Topics

After examining and discussing challenges to quality education in the European Area of Education and the opportunities for inclusion of all children, the conference will focus on efforts targeting three vulnerable groups: the refugee and migrant children, the Roma children, and the children with disabilities.

1. Inclusive Education: Challenges and Opportunities

In European countries, the percentage of enrolled children in schools is very high. However, there are still inequalities in access to inclusive quality education and learning outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups of children. Why inclusive education is beneficial for children and society? What are the barriers to benefiting from opportunities to thrive in school and learn in European countries? These are the questions to investigate through different experiences and good practices.

2. Education of Refugee and Migrant Children

In the last decade, there have been considerable influxes of refugees and migrants in Europe. Some countries are seen as a passage, while others as a destination. All of them have the obligation to provide quality education to the children no matter their legal status, from the emergency response to the integration phase. Different state approaches and programs by civil society have been developed to ensure access and retention to education, but inequalities in accessing quality inclusive education persist, requesting innovation and, in some cases, revision of practices.

3. Education of Roma Children

The Roma are among the most marginalized groups in Europe, with their rights systematically infringed throughout their history, including the right to education. Segregation, low participation in Early Education, and a high percentage of early leavers indicate inequalities in access and opportunities related to their needs. As of today, a significant number of Roma children do not benefit from quality inclusive education, even though it is fundamental to provide the young Roma with skills to succeed and thrive in society.

4. Education of Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities are facing challenges in accessing inclusive quality education at multiple levels, including stigma, discrimination, and poor implementation of inclusive policies. They are more likely to be out of school than their peers. In recent years, there have been considerable steps to fulfill the rights of education for disabled persons, but a lot more is needed to ensure that all children learn in the same classroom.

Draft Program ¹

10:00-17:30	20 MARCH 2024
10:00-10:30	Registration
10:30-11:00	OPENING - WELCOME
11:00-12:00	INTRODUCTION TO INEQUITIES IN EDUCATION Inclusive Education and Social Cohesion Inclusive Education in Greece UNICEF - The SDG 4 and its transformative dimension
12:00-12:20	BREAK
	INCLUSIVE QUALITY EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES The challenges to quality education – Ombudsperson for Children Rights Greece Tackling barriers to accessing education – Panel discussion
13:20-14:30	LUNCH
	REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN EDUCATION Situation on Refugee and Migrant - UNHCR

¹ The titles are provisory and reflect the overall content to be finalised with the speakers.

Refugee and migrant inclusion – Panel discussion

15:45-16:00 BREAK

16:00-17:00 2nd Panel on Refugee and Migrant Education

17:00-17:15 Closure of the DAY 1

10:00-17:00 21 MARCH 2024

10:00-10:15 Welcome and Summary of 1st day

10:15-11:45 EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN

Overview of the specific challenges for the Roma pupils - FRA
Roma inclusion in education – Panel Discussion

11:45-12:00 BREAK

12:00-13:30 EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The state of inclusion of children with disabilities
Inclusion of children with disabilities - Panel 1

13:30-14:30 LUNCH

Inclusion of children with disabilities - Panel 2

15:30-15:50 BREAK

15:50-16:20 COMMON CHALLENGES - JOINT SOLUTIONS

Early warning systems to tackle dropouts

Our challenges to learn and fulfill our dreams - Panel with
Youth

16:50-17:00 **CONCLUSION AND CLOSURE**