



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

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Title of dissertation: **The views of persons who staff a Greek toy library about the contribution of play to the development and social inclusion of people with disabilities**

### **Abstract**

Toy libraries constitute an institution with global recognition. It is about specially adapted spaces for play the aim of which is the reduction of social inequalities providing an opportunity for play to sensitive social groups. Taking into consideration the needs of their target group in every case and the given social, economical, political and cultural conditions under which they are created, their philosophy and models vary from country to country. In countries abroad an increasing research interest has been noticed in the purpose and the way that toy libraries operate. The opinions of people who staff toy libraries as well as of those who participate as visitors- players in them and their parents, have been examined. In Greece this institution is not widespread and the studies which have taken place are limited. The existence of toy libraries in our country is inextricably linked to the participation of people with disability as players. Their ultimate goal is the promotion of inclusion through the process of playing.

The following qualitative research studies the views of 14 persons who staff a Greek toy library which is based in Attica. Specifically, it examines the opinions of ten volunteers who organize and carry out playful activities, the opinions of theatrical play animator and those of three people who are in charge of the Greek society of Toy Library and supervise the organization of all greek toy libraries. Their views about the contribution of play to the growth and inclusion of people with disabilities to the social context are examined. The way in which the play exists in the toy library and the practices which are

applied are also analyzed. The methodological tool used for the collection of data is the semi- structured interview and the data analysis is based on the content analysis.

The conclusive arguments of the following research demonstrate the influence of the medical model of disability in the formation of participants' opinions about play and disability. Disability is considered to be a problem which is thought to be the main cause of the difficulties that people with disabilities face in their play. Indeed, the majority of practices which are adopted by participants are not inspired by the philosophy of inclusion. Play is treated as means of the normalization of diversity of people with disability enhancing the marginalization and exclusion that they experience.

**Key words:** toy library, play, disability, inclusion.