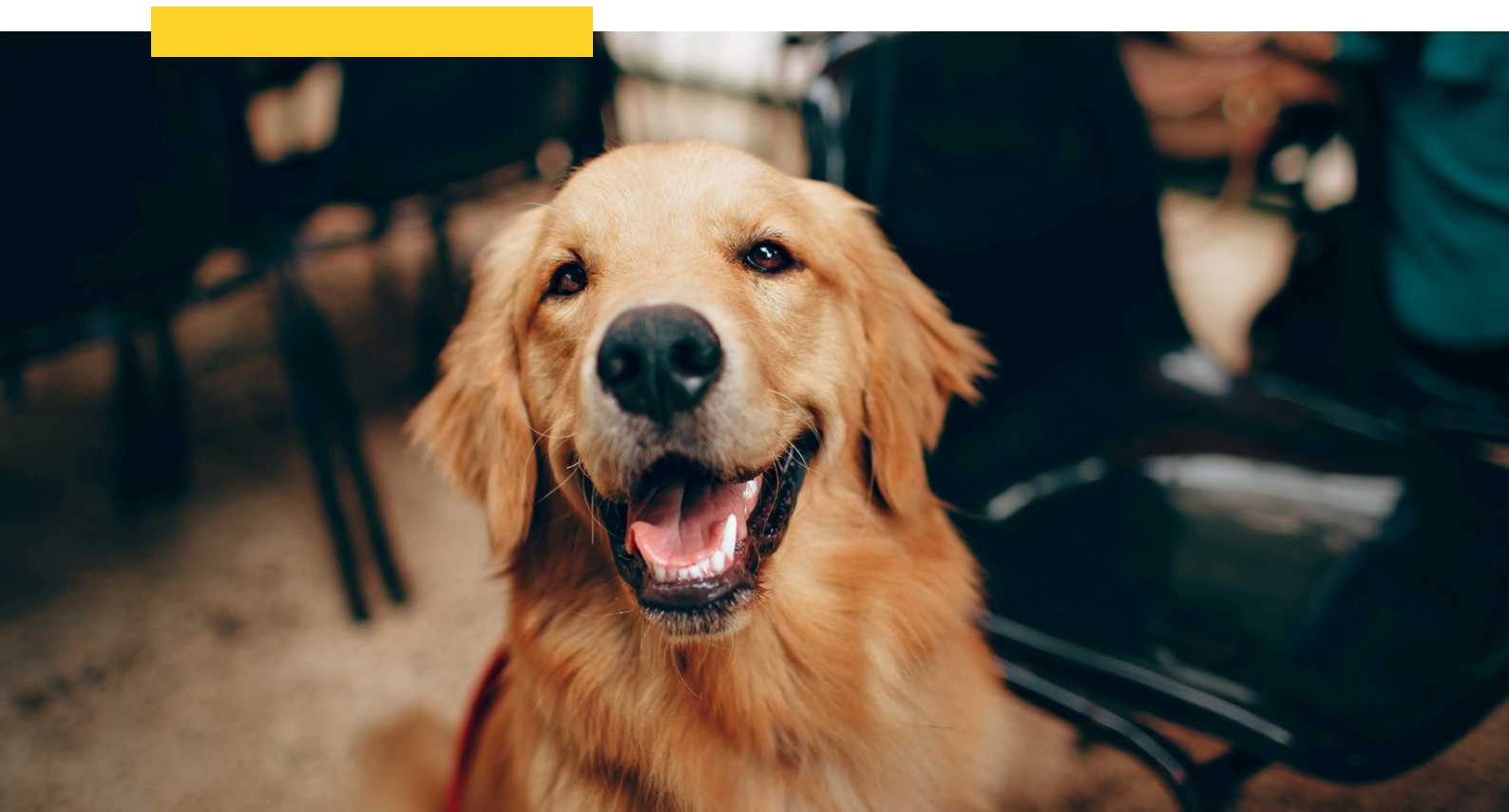


# BRIDGING PAWS AND PEOPLE: THE HYPER HANDBOOK ON INCLUSION AND ANIMAL WELFARE



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**HYPER-ACTION FOR ANIMAL SHELTERING**

Project No: 2024-1-EL02-ESC30-SOL-000235642





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# CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME NOTE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pride and gratitude that we present the Final Report and Handbook of the HYPER Project: Building Inclusion Through Animal Welfare. This document represents the collective journey of an entire community, young people, shelters, educators, volunteers, and supporters, who came together under a common mission: to create positive change for both humans and animals. The completion of this project would not have been possible without the dedication and passion of its many contributors. Our deepest thanks go first to the young participants, whose creativity, resilience, and willingness to step outside their comfort zones gave life to the project's activities. Their commitment to learning, volunteering, and taking responsibility has been the true driving force behind HYPER's success.

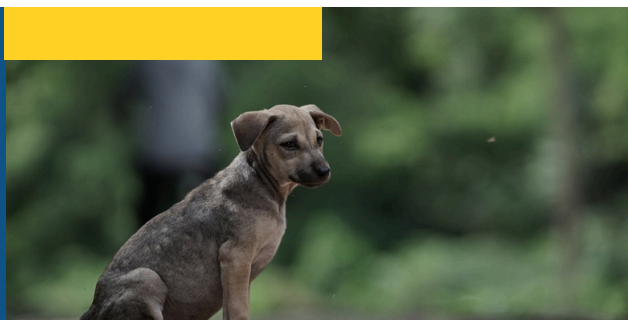


We extend heartfelt appreciation to the staff and volunteers of our partner animal shelters, who welcomed us into their spaces with openness and trust. They shared their expertise generously, allowing participants to experience first-hand the daily realities of animal care. Their collaboration transformed HYPER from a concept into practical, impactful action. Special recognition is due to our coach and mentors, who guided the team with wisdom, encouragement, and constructive feedback. Their role in facilitating reflection, problem-solving, and strategic planning ensured that the project remained on track and achieved its objectives.

Finally, we acknowledge the contribution of supporters, local partners, and community members. Their encouragement, resources, and engagement strengthened the project at every stage. Whether through participation in events, providing material support, or spreading awareness, their involvement created the wider ecosystem that made HYPER thrive. This handbook is dedicated to all these individuals and organizations. It is not only a record of achievements but also a testament to what can be accomplished when communities unite around compassion, inclusion, and responsibility.

## **PURPOSE OF THE FINAL REPORT & HANDBOOK**

The production of this Final Report and Handbook serves several important purposes. On one level, it is a comprehensive account of the HYPER Project. It documents the objectives we set, the methods we employed, the activities we carried out, and the results we achieved. In doing so, it ensures transparency and accountability to all those who supported the initiative, whether through participation, resources, or encouragement. On another level, this handbook functions as a learning tool. It compiles the lessons we gathered throughout the project and presents them in a way that can be useful for others.





Sharing our experiences, we hope to provide practical guidance to schools, shelters, youth organizations, and NGOs interested in adopting similar approaches. This includes details of training modules, methods of engaging youth with ADHD, and strategies for building partnerships between animal welfare organizations and local communities.

The handbook is also designed with sustainability in mind. The end of the project does not mark the end of its impact. Making our methods, findings, and resources accessible, we aim to enable continuity and replication. We invite others to use, adapt, and expand upon what we share here, ensuring that the spirit of HYPER continues to inspire and empower beyond its original timeline. Ultimately, this document is both a reflection and an invitation. It reflects on the work completed, but it also invites new initiatives, collaborations, and innovations. It is our hope that readers will not only learn from HYPER but also contribute to the ongoing mission of building inclusion through animal welfare.

## ABOUT THE HYPER PROJECT

The HYPER Project was born from a recognition of two pressing challenges in Thessaloniki and across Greece. The first is the persistent issue of stray animals. Each year, thousands of dogs and cats are abandoned or left without care. Shelters, though dedicated, are often overwhelmed, struggling with overcrowding, lack of resources, and insufficient staff. Animals in such conditions face long stays, limited opportunities for adoption, and, in many cases, physical and psychological distress. The second challenge lies in the social inclusion of young people with ADHD. Many of these youth encounter barriers in traditional educational or social settings. They are often misunderstood, stigmatized, or underestimated. Yet, with the right structures and opportunities, they demonstrate remarkable energy, creativity, and empathy. What is often needed is not less responsibility but rather meaningful responsibility, where their strengths can be recognized and their potential unlocked.

The HYPER Project set out to create a bridge between these two realities. By involving ADHD youth in structured animal care activities, the project offered a setting where inclusion was not forced but natural. Animals benefited from care, attention, and trust-building. Youth developed empathy, patience, and organizational skills by taking responsibility for living beings that responded directly to their actions. Shelters received much-needed support, while schools and families observed positive growth in the young participants. The approach was holistic. Training sessions prepared youth with knowledge of dog behavior and safe handling. Shelter visits provided real-world practice and connection. Awareness campaigns spread the message of adoption, responsible pet ownership, and the importance of inclusion. Round tables and community events brought together stakeholders to ensure collaboration and mutual support.

Through these activities, HYPER became more than a project. It was a demonstration that animal welfare and youth empowerment are not separate causes but can strengthen one another. Aligning them, HYPER created a model of social innovation that can be replicated in other contexts.

## PARTNERS, TEAM MEMBERS, AND COACH

The success of the HYPER Project is the result of collaboration between diverse partners, each bringing unique strengths and perspectives.

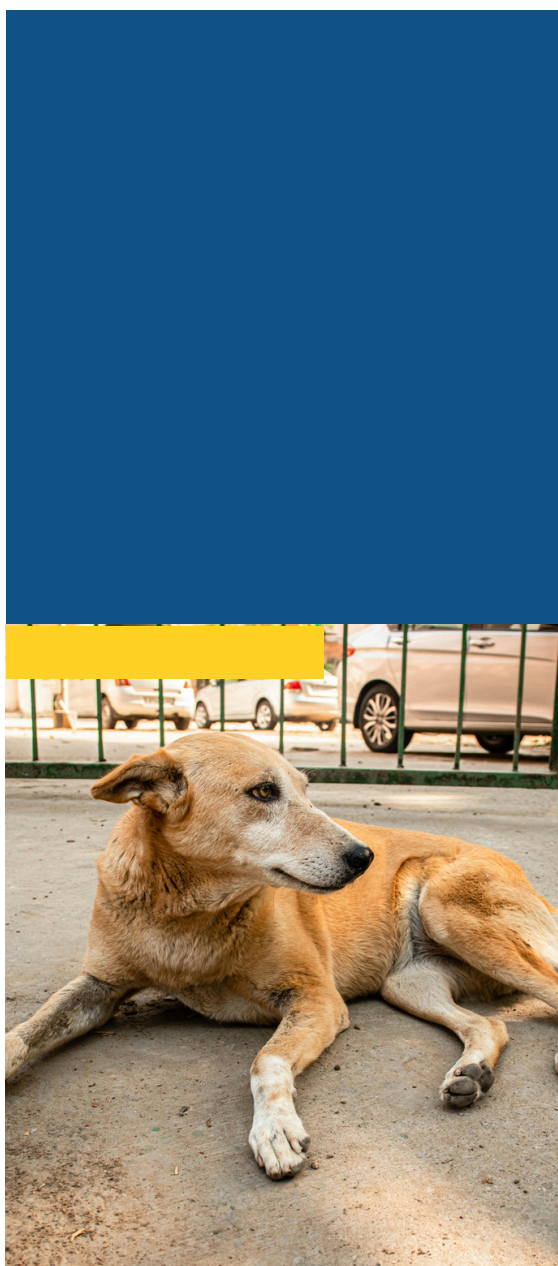


At its heart was the youth team, whose members planned, organized, and implemented the activities. Their creativity and resilience transformed abstract ideas into practical outcomes. They also gained personal growth, learning to work collaboratively, manage responsibilities, and adapt to challenges.

Supporting them was the project coach, whose role extended beyond technical guidance. The coach provided mentorship, facilitated decision-making, and encouraged reflection at every stage. This ensured that the team not only carried out activities but also learned from them, growing in confidence and competence.

Equally vital were the partner shelters in Thessaloniki. These organizations opened their doors and provided the practical context in which much of the project unfolded. They entrusted the youth with tasks that had real consequences for animals' wellbeing, thereby instilling responsibility and pride. Their staff shared expertise in animal behavior, shelter management, and adoption practices, enriching the educational value of the project.

Additional support came from schools, NGOs, and community partners. Schools integrated elements of HYPER into their educational activities, helping to raise awareness among students. NGOs contributed resources, networks, and advocacy. Community members offered encouragement, participation, and, in some cases, material or financial support. This constellation of actors illustrates the central lesson of HYPER:



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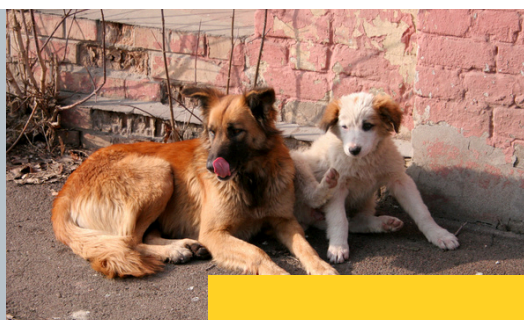
that no single entity can address complex challenges alone. It takes collaboration across sectors, generations, and experiences to create sustainable change. The teamwork between youth, shelters, educators, and community partners not only ensured the project's success but also laid the foundation for future initiatives.

## CHAPTER 2 - PROJECT RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

### WHY HYPER? ADDRESSING STRAY ANIMAL CHALLENGES IN THESSALONIKI

The city of Thessaloniki, like many other urban areas in Greece, has long struggled with the issue of stray animals. Estimates place the number of strays in the country at over 80,000 annually, and Thessaloniki accounts for a significant share of this number. Dogs and cats are routinely abandoned, neglected, or born on the streets, leading to an unbroken cycle of overpopulation and suffering. While local shelters play a crucial role in responding to this crisis, they are often overwhelmed. Many operate with limited staff, insufficient funding, and overcrowded facilities, making it difficult to provide adequate care. Animals that enter shelters frequently face long stays, with adoption rates failing to keep pace with intake. In this environment, animals endure not only physical hardships but also psychological stress resulting from confinement, limited social interaction, and the uncertainty of their futures.

The presence of large stray populations also creates broader social challenges. Strays often evoke mixed reactions from the public, ranging from compassion to fear.





Concerns about public health, safety, and community wellbeing make this a shared responsibility that cannot be relegated to shelters alone. Addressing the problem requires systemic approaches that integrate prevention, education, and community engagement. Traditional strategies, such as sterilization campaigns, adoption drives, and public awareness programs, remain essential, but they are not sufficient without broader societal participation.

It was in this context that the HYPER Project was born. The project recognized that animal welfare could not be advanced in isolation from human welfare and that addressing the issue of strays required a holistic strategy. Rather than viewing animals solely as recipients of aid, HYPER treated them as partners in a broader mission of community development and inclusion. By situating animals at the center of an educational and social program, the project sought to demonstrate that caring for strays is not only an act of compassion but also a means of building empathy, responsibility, and civic engagement.

The rationale was therefore both practical and visionary. On a practical level, HYPER aimed to relieve some of the pressure on shelters by mobilizing volunteers, particularly youth, to provide support in daily operations and awareness campaigns. On a visionary level, it aspired to change community attitudes toward animals, demonstrating that animal care is a shared duty with transformative social benefits. Thessaloniki, with its vibrant youth community and active civic organizations, was an ideal setting for this innovation. The city's challenges became the foundation for a project that not only addressed the welfare of animals but also created opportunities for human growth and inclusion.

## LINKING ANIMAL WELFARE AND INCLUSION (FOCUS ON ADHD YOUTH)

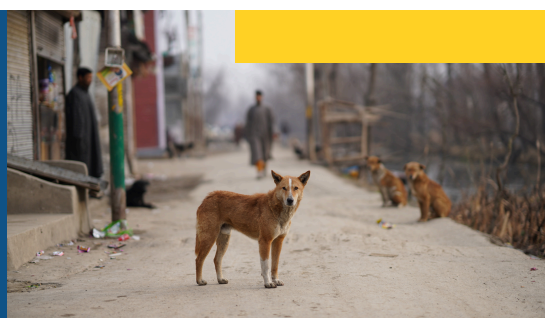
Parallel to the challenge of strays lies another reality that shaped the HYPER Project: the ongoing need for meaningful inclusion of young people with ADHD. Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is one of the most common neurodevelopmental conditions, affecting children and adolescents across Europe and the world.

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It manifests in patterns of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity that can make traditional educational and social environments difficult. Too often, young people with ADHD are misunderstood. Their energy may be dismissed as unruly, their difficulty in focusing perceived as laziness, and their impulsive behavior interpreted as disobedience. The consequences of such misunderstanding are severe: exclusion from peer groups, underachievement in school, and diminished self-esteem. However, ADHD does not define the whole of these young people's abilities. With the right conditions, they are capable of thriving. They often demonstrate high levels of creativity, quick thinking, and determination when engaged in tasks that truly interest them. They learn best when environments are structured but flexible, hands-on rather than abstract, and supportive rather than judgmental. What they lack is not potential, but opportunities to express it.

Animals, by their very nature, offer such opportunities. Unlike humans, animals do not judge inconsistencies in behavior, nor do they stigmatize mistakes. Their responses are immediate and authentic. A calm approach leads to trust; a rough gesture provokes fear. A dog responds to the tone of a voice, the consistency of a routine, the patience of a handler. This makes animals powerful mirrors of human behavior, especially for young people learning self-control, empathy, and responsibility. Interactions with animals are not abstract lessons; they are lived experiences, full of instant feedback and tangible rewards. For ADHD youth, this relationship can be transformative. Walking a dog requires focus and persistence. Feeding and grooming demand responsibility and gentleness. Playing with animals provides both stimulation and calm, channeling energy into constructive engagement. Each successful interaction builds confidence: the wag of a tail, the comfort of a purring cat, the visible improvement in an animal's behavior. These small moments of success accumulate, teaching youth that they are capable of care, of responsibility, of making a difference.

HYPER placed this insight at the center of its work. The project deliberately designed activities that matched the strengths and needs of ADHD youth: short, engaging tasks, hands-on experiences, and supportive guidance. In doing so, it created environments where these young people were not marginalized but celebrated. T



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hey were not only learners but contributors, essential to the wellbeing of the animals. This reframing of their role, from passive recipients of support to active agents of change, was as important as the care provided to the animals themselves.

The connection between animal welfare and inclusion thus became more than a project strategy; it became a philosophy. It showed that two groups often perceived as vulnerable could, together, create mutual growth. In the act of caring for an animal, ADHD youth also learned to care for themselves and their communities. In receiving this care, animals found not just survival but a chance at trust, socialization, and adoption. Both groups gained dignity, purpose, and hope.



## MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The objectives of the HYPER Project were not arbitrary; they were deliberately crafted to respond to two intertwined realities, the challenge of stray animal welfare in Thessaloniki and the broader societal need for youth inclusion, especially for those living with ADHD. From its very conception, the project aimed to operate at the intersection of these issues, recognizing that they are not separate but can be mutually reinforcing.


The first objective centered on improving the conditions of stray animals in local shelters. These facilities, though staffed by dedicated professionals and volunteers, are often overburdened by the sheer volume of animals in their care. The project therefore sought to provide direct, practical support.

This included mobilizing youth and community volunteers to engage in activities such as feeding, grooming, walking, and socialization. Such support is more than a matter of logistics: every walk taken by a volunteer relieves a stressed animal; every session of grooming contributes to the animal's physical health and increases its chances of adoption. Beyond this, HYPER aimed to address the broader cultural attitudes that perpetuate the stray problem. Through awareness-raising campaigns, educational activities, and community engagement, the project encouraged responsible pet ownership, promoted sterilization practices, and advocated for adoption as a humane and sustainable solution. By influencing both immediate shelter operations and long-term public behavior, HYPER positioned itself as a catalyst for systemic change.

A second core objective was the empowerment of youth, particularly those with ADHD, by providing them with meaningful opportunities for contribution. Too often, young people with ADHD are sidelined by educational and social systems that fail to recognize their strengths.



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HYPER sought to challenge this by placing them in active roles where their energy, creativity, and empathy could be assets rather than obstacles. Training programs in animal behavior, safety, and communication were carefully designed to be engaging and practical, ensuring that participants could succeed and feel capable. Importantly, youth were not merely participants in a pre-designed program; they were co-creators. They contributed ideas, took part in planning, and assumed leadership roles in implementation. This inclusive approach reflected the project's conviction that empowerment is not achieved through passive inclusion but through genuine responsibility and trust.

The third objective was explicitly educational. HYPER recognized that long-term solutions to both animal welfare and youth inclusion depend on knowledge and awareness. To this end, the project organized training sessions, round tables, and workshops where diverse stakeholders, from shelter staff to educators, parents, and local authorities, could exchange experiences and ideas. These platforms created opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and collective problem-solving. Education was seen as a form of prevention, equipping communities with the understanding and tools necessary to break cycles of neglect, abandonment, and exclusion. The project also worked to embed these lessons in schools, ensuring that younger generations were exposed to values of compassion and responsibility from an early age. Finally, HYPER aimed to produce tangible, lasting resources that would extend the project's impact far beyond its official duration. These outputs included structured training modules for youth and volunteers, educational guidelines for teachers and families, awareness materials for communities, and this Final Report and Handbook. Documenting its methodologies, successes, and challenges, HYPER created a blueprint for replication. These resources serve as a bridge between the immediate achievements of the project and the broader vision of long-term sustainability and cultural change.


Taken together, these objectives reveal a holistic and ambitious vision: to create a project that simultaneously improved the welfare of animals, empowered young people, educated communities, and left behind practical tools for the future. HYPER's objectives were not only about solving immediate problems but also about planting seeds of change, change that would grow in shelters, in schools, in families, and in the wider community.



## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

From the very beginning, the HYPER Project envisioned outcomes that were layered, far-reaching, and transformative. These outcomes were designed not simply as measures of success for individual activities but as a reflection of the project's broader philosophy: that compassion and inclusion, when combined, can create sustainable social change.

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For shelters, the expected outcomes were concrete and measurable. With the help of youth and community volunteers, it was anticipated that the daily quality of animal care would improve. More animals would be walked, groomed, and socialized, and as a result, their stress levels would decrease and their readiness for adoption would increase. The project expected that shelters would experience some relief from overcrowding as adoptions rose and community support grew. Importantly, the project aimed to strengthen the relationship between shelters and their communities, showing that shelters are not isolated institutions but integral parts of civic life, deserving of attention and resources.

For youth participants, especially those with ADHD, the project envisioned outcomes that were both personal and social. On a personal level, participants were expected to develop practical skills related to animal care, as well as broader competencies such as responsibility, patience, empathy, and self-regulation. Structured, hands-on experiences were designed to help them channel their energy productively and build confidence in their abilities. On a social level, the project anticipated that participants would gain recognition from their peers, families, and communities. Organizing public events, collaborating with schools, and conducting awareness campaigns, the project expected to spark conversations about responsibility, empathy, and civic duty. The visibility of ADHD youth actively contributing to animal welfare was intended to challenge stereotypes and reduce stigma, while the emphasis on adoption and responsible pet ownership was expected to encourage community members to take concrete action. In this way, the outcomes extended beyond the project participants to include families, educators, policymakers, and citizens at large.

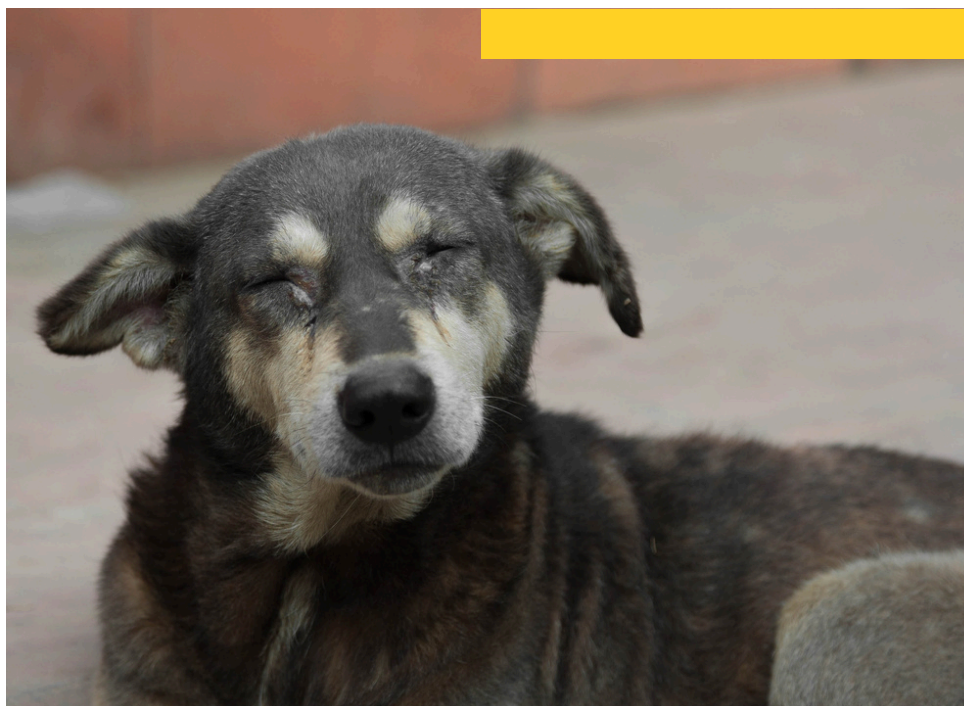
Perhaps the most ambitious outcome envisioned by HYPHER was the creation of a replicable model that could inspire and guide similar initiatives in other contexts. By carefully documenting its processes, successes, and lessons learned, the project aimed to provide a framework adaptable to different communities. This was not simply about replication for replication's sake but about demonstrating that innovation can occur when seemingly unrelated challenges, in this case, animal welfare and youth inclusion, are brought together in creative ways. The Final Report and Handbook, along with other materials, were therefore expected to serve as tools for dissemination, sustainability, and scaling. In sum, the expected outcomes of HYPHER were multi-dimensional: immediate improvements in shelter operations, lasting empowerment of youth, cultural change in communities, and the provision of resources for replication. Together, they represented the project's conviction that compassion, when structured and shared, can ripple outward to create systemic transformation. By uniting animal welfare with human inclusion, HYPHER sought not only to respond to pressing needs but also to reimagine what community, responsibility, and solidarity could look like in practice.

# CHAPTER 3 - PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

## TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES (MONTH-BY-MONTH OVERVIEW)

The implementation of the HYPER Project unfolded as a carefully choreographed process, structured across twelve months of activity. The design of the timeline reflected the project's dual commitment to precision and flexibility: precision in ensuring that all objectives were pursued systematically, and flexibility in allowing participants and stakeholders to adapt and respond to emerging needs. Rather than being a series of disconnected events, the timeline was conceived as a gradual progression, where each phase laid the groundwork for the next. This cumulative rhythm allowed the project to grow in depth, scale, and impact, ensuring that outcomes were sustainable rather than fleeting.

The initial months were devoted to laying the foundations, both in terms of external visibility and internal orientation. One of the first milestones was the unveiling of the HYPER logo, a symbol deliberately designed to represent the union of animal welfare and human inclusion.



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Alongside this, the launch of the official project website established a central hub for communication and visibility. The website was not merely a static page but a platform for engagement, hosting information about the project, updates on activities, and an interactive forum where participants and members of the public could exchange ideas. These early steps were significant, as they gave the project a public identity, conveyed its values of empathy and inclusivity, and built anticipation among the community. For participants, this phase also provided orientation: they were introduced to the aims, methods, and expectations of HYPER, which helped foster a sense of shared purpose and ownership from the very beginning.

The second phase of the timeline emphasized intellectual preparation and the generation of knowledge. Online brainstorming sessions were held to explore the connection between animals and mental health, bringing together a diverse group of youth, volunteers, and experts. These sessions were more than casual discussions; they were structured dialogues in which ideas were exchanged, challenged, and refined. The conversations confirmed the therapeutic value of animal interaction, particularly for youth with ADHD, while also identifying opportunities for community-based interventions. The brainstorming process was crucial for two reasons. First, it created a repository of ideas that informed subsequent activities. Second, it cultivated trust and cohesion within the group, as participants experienced the project as an inclusive space where their voices were heard and respected.

By the fourth month, the project transitioned into a more collaborative phase with the organization of round table meetings. These two-day events brought together shelter staff, educators, NGO representatives, and youth participants. The round tables provided a candid space for stakeholders to share their experiences, highlighting the pressing realities of overcrowding, lack of resources, and barriers to adoption. At the same time, they encouraged creativity in identifying potential solutions. Ideas such as school-based awareness programs, fundraising initiatives, and expanded volunteer engagement were discussed. Importantly, the round tables were not top-down consultations; they embodied the project's philosophy of co-creation, where every participant was regarded as a stakeholder with valuable perspectives. This collaborative spirit marked a turning point in the project, transforming it from a youth initiative into a shared endeavor involving multiple sectors of society.

The middle phase of the project was dominated by training activities. Recognizing that effective engagement in shelters required preparation, the project organized structured workshops on dog behavior, safe handling techniques, and the principles of inclusive participation.

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These trainings were comprehensive, blending theory with practical exercises, and tailored to accommodate the learning needs of ADHD youth. Trainers emphasized the importance of interpreting canine body language, maintaining calm and consistent approaches, and practicing safe handling in potentially stressful situations. Beyond the technical knowledge, the training also reinforced values of respect, empathy, and responsibility. By the end of this phase, participants felt equipped not only with skills but also with the confidence to apply them in real-world settings.

Following training, the project entered its most intensive and impactful stage: direct engagement with shelters. Youth participants and volunteers visited animal shelters in Thessaloniki, where they assisted with daily routines. They fed animals, cleaned enclosures, walked dogs, and provided enrichment through play and gentle interaction. These activities had immediate benefits for the animals, reducing stress, improving hygiene, and increasing the likelihood of successful adoptions. For the youth, the shelter visits were transformative experiences. They applied the lessons learned in training, gained firsthand insight into the realities of stray animal care, and experienced the fulfillment of contributing to a cause greater than themselves. ADHD participants, in particular, thrived in the structured yet hands-on environment, finding in the animals a source of affirmation and trust.

The final phase of the timeline was dedicated to dissemination and sustainability. The project launched awareness campaigns across digital platforms and in local communities. Social media posts shared stories of animals and youth, while community events showcased the project's achievements and promoted adoption and responsible pet ownership. These campaigns reached beyond the immediate participants, raising awareness among families, schools, and the broader public. Simultaneously, the team focused on documentation, compiling lessons learned, methods developed, and results achieved into a cohesive narrative.

his culminated in the drafting of the Final Report and Handbook, designed both as a record of the project and as a resource for replication.

Taken as a whole, the timeline of HYPER reveals a journey that was logical, cumulative, and deeply intentional. The project began with identity and orientation, moved into reflection and dialogue, advanced into training and practice, and concluded with dissemination and documentation. Each stage prepared the ground for the next, ensuring that the project was not simply a sequence of isolated events but a coherent process of learning, collaboration, and impact. This structured progression allowed HYPER to fulfill its dual mission of improving animal welfare and fostering youth inclusion, leaving behind both tangible results and an enduring model for future initiatives.


## BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS: KEY IDEAS ON ANIMALS AND MENTAL HEALTH

The brainstorming sessions organized in the early phase of the HYPER Project were pivotal in shaping the intellectual and practical foundation upon which later activities were built. They were not casual conversations, but carefully structured discussions designed to bring together a diverse range of voices, perspectives, and experiences. Conducted primarily in an online format, they ensured accessibility for participants across different locations and schedules, while also fostering inclusivity for youth who might find in-person gatherings challenging. This digital space became a forum where ideas could flow freely, and where the project team could begin weaving together the strands of animal welfare, youth empowerment, and mental health into a coherent vision.

The primary aim of these sessions was to explore the relationship between animals and human wellbeing, particularly in the context of mental health.



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The discussions were enriched by the participation of youth, educators, volunteers, and animal welfare experts, each group contributing unique insights. Youth participants spoke candidly about their lived experiences with pets, describing moments when animals provided them with comfort during times of stress or companionship during periods of loneliness. These personal testimonies underscored the emotional depth of human-animal bonds and reminded the group that the project was rooted not in abstract theories but in real, everyday experiences.

Experts and professionals complemented these stories with evidence from scientific research. They highlighted findings from psychology, education, and animal-assisted therapy, demonstrating that interaction with animals can lower cortisol levels, reduce anxiety, and promote emotional regulation. They also noted the particular relevance of such benefits for young people with ADHD, who often experience heightened stress and difficulty sustaining focus. The presence of an animal, they explained, can create a calming influence, while structured care routines can provide ADHD youth with opportunities to practice responsibility and self-regulation in rewarding ways. This interplay of personal testimony and scientific evidence gave the sessions both authenticity and intellectual depth.

As the sessions progressed, another theme emerged: the role of animals in fostering social bonds and strengthening community cohesion. Participants observed that activities involving animals often bring people together in meaningful ways. Volunteering at shelters, organizing adoption events, or participating in awareness campaigns were seen as opportunities not only to support animals but also to build relationships among people. The idea of “mutual benefit” became central to the discussions. On one hand, animals receive care, attention, and improved welfare. On the other hand, humans, particularly youth, experience companionship, empathy, teamwork, and a renewed sense of purpose. This dual dynamic highlighted that animal welfare and human wellbeing are not separate issues but interconnected dimensions of a more compassionate society.

Beyond the exploration of ideas, the brainstorming sessions served an equally important function in team-building. They created a collaborative environment where all voices were respected, regardless of age, background, or level of expertise. Youth participants came to understand that their insights and stories were valued as much as professional perspectives, while experts recognized the richness and authenticity of lived experience. This mutual recognition fostered a culture of respect and collaboration that carried forward into subsequent project activities. Participants developed a shared vocabulary, a sense of collective ownership, and a growing commitment to the project’s aims.

The impact of the brainstorming sessions extended well beyond the discussions themselves. The ideas generated during these meetings became the intellectual seeds for later stages of the project, including training activities, shelter visits, and awareness campaigns. Themes of mutual benefit, inclusion, and emotional wellbeing reappeared throughout the project's implementation, testifying to the foundational role played by these early conversations. Perhaps most importantly, the sessions instilled in participants the conviction that the HYPER Project was not a top-down initiative but a collaborative journey, one in which their contributions mattered, and one in which both animals and humans stood to benefit.


## ROUND TABLES: COLLABORATION WITH SHELTERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The round tables organized during the fourth month of the HYPER Project marked a decisive stage in its evolution. Up to this point, much of the work had focused on establishing the project's identity, building internal cohesion, and generating ideas through brainstorming. The round tables, however, signaled a shift from internal reflection to active engagement with external partners, particularly with the animal shelters that were central to HYPER's mission. These events represented the first true test of the project's ability to bridge different communities, youth, NGOs, educators, and animal welfare professionals, and to create meaningful dialogue across these diverse perspectives.

The round tables were carefully structured as two-day gatherings, allowing sufficient time for both open discussion and focused problem-solving. Ω



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The round tables were carefully structured as two-day gatherings, allowing sufficient time for both open discussion and focused problem-solving. The composition of participants reflected the diversity of stakeholders whose cooperation was necessary for the project's success.


Shelter staff brought firsthand experience of daily operations and challenges. The project coach contributed expertise in facilitation and team development. NGO representatives provided insights into advocacy, fundraising, and policy dimensions of animal welfare. Youth participants, meanwhile, offered fresh perspectives, creativity, and a sense of urgency that invigorated the discussions. The deliberate inclusion of these varied voices ensured that the conversations were comprehensive, multifaceted, and grounded in real experience.

The testimonies of shelter staff provided some of the most compelling and sobering insights. They spoke candidly about the chronic problems of overcrowding, where shelters designed for dozens of animals were often housing hundreds. They described the financial strain of operating on limited budgets, dependent on sporadic donations or insufficient municipal support. Staff shortages compounded these difficulties, as a small number of workers attempted to meet the needs of hundreds of animals each day. Beyond the logistical and financial pressures, shelter staff highlighted the emotional weight of their work. They described the heartbreak of receiving abandoned animals, often in poor health or traumatized, and the emotional fatigue of working in an environment where hope and despair are in constant tension. These accounts gave project participants, especially the youth, a vivid and often sobering picture of the environment in which they would later be volunteering.

Yet, the round tables were not solely forums for the expression of problems. They were also laboratories of ideas, where challenges were transformed into opportunities for creative solutions. Through facilitated discussions, participants explored potential strategies to relieve pressure on shelters and strengthen their role within the community. Suggestions included the systematic involvement of volunteers to expand capacity, the creation of educational partnerships with schools and universities to raise awareness, and the development of targeted campaigns to encourage adoption and responsible pet ownership. Each idea was considered not only for its creativity but also for its feasibility, ensuring that proposals remained realistic within the constraints of local contexts.

The contributions of youth participants were particularly noteworthy. Their fresh outlook and enthusiasm brought a new dimension to the dialogue.

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Some proposed organizing adoption events within schools, where young people could learn about animal welfare and connect with animals in need of homes. Others suggested leveraging social media to tell the stories of shelter animals, thereby increasing their visibility and adoption prospects. These ideas demonstrated that young people were not passive beneficiaries of the project but active contributors capable of shaping strategies in meaningful ways. Their involvement also reinforced the project's broader aim of inclusion, showing that youth, including those with ADHD, could participate in complex discussions and offer valuable insights. What distinguished these round tables from typical consultations was their collaborative spirit. The project deliberately avoided presenting pre-determined solutions, instead facilitating open dialogue where every participant was treated as an equal stakeholder. The process of co-creation was central. Shelter staff did not merely describe problems; they worked with others to identify practical steps forward. Youth did not simply listen; they proposed initiatives and received serious consideration. NGOs and educators contributed their expertise, while also acknowledging the lived realities presented by shelter staff. This horizontal approach created a sense of shared ownership, making it more likely that the solutions identified would not only be implemented but also sustained beyond the project's duration.

The outcomes of the round tables extended beyond the specific ideas generated. They strengthened relationships between youth and shelters, creating bonds of trust that would prove essential during the later shelter visits. They also fostered a sense of solidarity among stakeholders, reinforcing the belief that the challenges of stray animals are not the responsibility of shelters alone but of society as a whole. Perhaps most importantly, they modeled the kind of collaborative culture that HYPER aimed to promote: one in which diverse actors work together, not in isolation, to address complex social challenges. In retrospect, the round tables can be seen as the hinge on which the project turned. They transformed abstract ideals into concrete strategies, shifted the project from inward reflection to outward collaboration, and laid the groundwork for the practical activities that followed. Creating a platform where problems were acknowledged, solutions were co-created, and trust was built, the round tables embodied the ethos of HYPER: inclusion, empathy, and collective responsibility.

## TRAINING ACTIVITIES: DOG BEHAVIOR, SAFETY, AND INCLUSION

The training component of the HYPER Project was not merely a preparatory exercise; it was a central pillar of the initiative, designed to ensure that participants were both competent and confident in their engagement with shelter animals. It recognized that enthusiasm alone is insufficient when dealing with vulnerable creatures.

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Effective support requires knowledge, discipline, and empathy, and these qualities must be cultivated deliberately.

The workshops were therefore structured as immersive learning experiences, combining theoretical instruction with practical demonstrations and hands-on activities, all guided by professionals with years of expertise in animal behavior and shelter management.

From the outset, the training sessions were framed as an introduction to a philosophy of care. Participants were encouraged to see animals not as passive recipients of charity but as sentient beings with their own forms of communication, emotional needs, and capacities for trust and attachment. Trainers underscored that every gesture, every approach, and every interaction could either reinforce trust or deepen fear. This understanding formed the ethical foundation of the training, reminding participants that their role was not simply to provide food or exercise but to engage in a relationship of respect and responsibility.

A major focus of the workshops was the study of canine behavior and communication. Trainers carefully explained how dogs express themselves through body language, vocalizations, and subtle movements. Participants learned that a wagging tail does not always signal happiness but may also indicate nervousness, depending on speed and posture. They were taught to interpret the position of ears, the widening of eyes, the shifting of weight, or the lowering of the body as indicators of stress, curiosity, or submission.

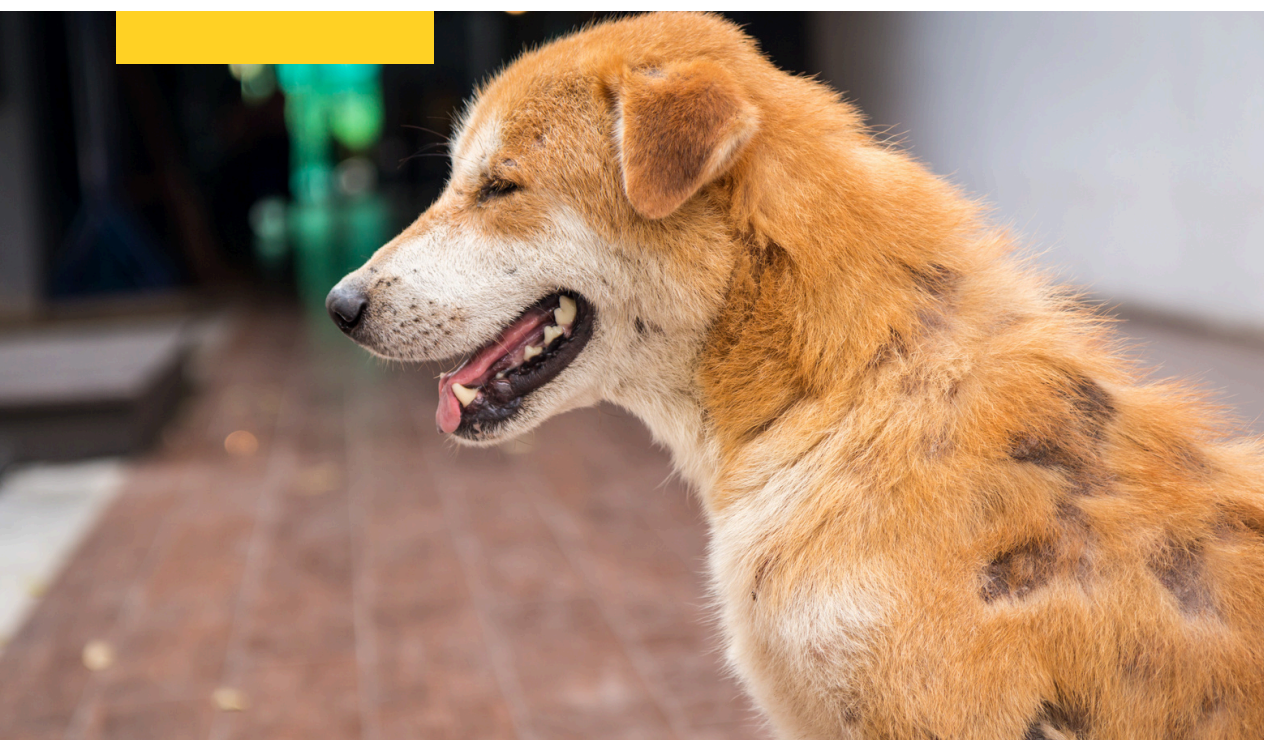


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These insights were reinforced through videos, live demonstrations, and role-playing exercises, allowing participants to observe and practice reading signals in controlled conditions. This emphasis on communication was transformative, as it equipped participants with the ability to “listen” to animals in non-verbal ways, thereby avoiding misunderstandings and preventing negative encounters.

Safety was another central dimension of the training. Participants were introduced to protocols for approaching unfamiliar dogs, methods for safely securing animals with leashes or harnesses, and techniques for avoiding escalation in potentially stressful situations. Trainers demonstrated calm approaches, encouraging participants to adopt steady movements, quiet voices, and predictable routines. Practical exercises simulated real scenarios — such as entering a kennel, meeting a shy dog, or managing a dog that pulls on the leash — to provide participants with the confidence to apply what they had learned. Safety was understood not only as a means of protecting the youth and volunteers themselves but also as a crucial aspect of animal welfare. By handling animals calmly and consistently, participants helped to reduce fear and stress, thus supporting the animals’ rehabilitation and adoptability.

The workshops also integrated broader lessons about the responsibilities inherent in working with shelter animals. Trainers highlighted that many of these animals had experienced trauma, neglect, or abandonment. Their behaviors often reflected past experiences of fear or mistreatment.



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For this reason, patience and consistency were emphasized as indispensable qualities. Participants were reminded that progress in animal care is often gradual: a dog that cowers at first may, after repeated calm and positive interactions, learn to trust again. Such progress is not measured in dramatic transformations but in small, steady steps, each of which represents meaningful change in the animal's life.

A distinctive feature of the training was its inclusive pedagogical design. Recognizing that participants brought different learning styles and abilities, particularly ADHD youth, the trainers employed a variety of methods to ensure accessibility. Visual aids, such as illustrated charts of canine body signals, were used to complement verbal explanations. Demonstrations provided concrete examples of best practices, while role-play allowed participants to embody both “human” and “dog” perspectives, deepening their understanding of interaction. Hands-on practice with real animals under supervision gave participants immediate feedback, reinforcing theoretical knowledge with lived experience. This layered approach created a dynamic learning environment in which every participant could engage according to their strengths.

For ADHD participants, the training had additional significance. The combination of structured tasks, visual materials, and physical engagement catered directly to their learning needs. Trainers broke complex processes into manageable steps, provided clear instructions, and allowed for repetition where necessary. This not only made the learning accessible but also validated the participants' abilities, reinforcing their sense of competence and inclusion. The training environment itself modeled inclusivity, demonstrating that with thoughtful adaptation, diverse groups can learn together and succeed collectively.

The outcomes of the training became evident as the project progressed. Participants entered the shelters not as unprepared novices but as capable volunteers equipped with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for safe and responsible engagement. Their confidence was visible in the way they approached animals calmly, adjusted their behavior in response to signals, and respected safety protocols. For ADHD youth, the training provided an empowering experience, demonstrating that they could master complex knowledge, take responsibility, and contribute meaningfully to a professional setting. For the animals, the benefits were equally tangible: interactions with trained volunteers were calmer, more predictable, and more conducive to building trust and socialization.

Looking back, the training activities can be regarded as a cornerstone of the HYPER Project. They exemplified the project's dual commitment to technical competence and inclusive empowerment.

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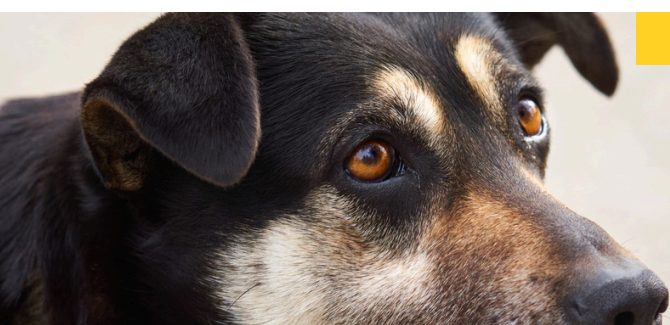
They provided participants with not only practical skills but also a deeper philosophy of respect, empathy, and responsibility. Preparing youth for safe and meaningful involvement in shelter environments, the training ensured that the later phases of the project would be conducted with integrity, compassion, and professionalism. More broadly, the training demonstrated that education, when inclusive and well-structured, can be transformative for both individuals and the communities they serve.

## SHELTER VISITS: HANDS-ON CARE & YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

The shelter visits carried out within the framework of the HYPER Project constituted the most vivid and practical dimension of the initiative. While earlier phases established identity, knowledge, and training, it was in the shelters themselves that the project's values of empathy, responsibility, and inclusion became concrete realities. These visits offered participants the chance to engage directly with animals in need, to apply newly acquired skills in real-world settings, and to experience the profound impact that human care can have on vulnerable creatures. For the shelters, the visits represented not only a form of practical assistance but also an infusion of energy, visibility, and community solidarity.

Careful preparation preceded each visit. Participants were introduced to the daily routines of shelters and were given a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Entering an environment often marked by noise, activity, and emotional intensity required structure and orientation, and the project ensured that youth were guided and supported at every stage. Once inside, they quickly discovered that the seemingly modest tasks entrusted to them, cleaning kennels, refreshing water bowls, ensuring proper feeding, carried real significance. These actions safeguarded the health and comfort of the animals, lightened the burden of overstretched staff, and reinforced the principle that animal welfare is built on consistent, attentive care.





Although daily maintenance formed an essential part of the visits, the heart of the experience lay in the moments of interaction and socialization. Many of the dogs encountered had histories of abandonment, neglect, or mistreatment, and as a result displayed fear, anxiety, or withdrawal. Gentle human presence offered a path toward healing. Walking dogs in safe spaces, engaging them in simple play, or sitting patiently nearby allowed trust to develop slowly and naturally. Small breakthroughs, such as a hesitant animal approaching for contact or relaxing in the company of a volunteer, carried deep significance. For the animals, these interactions represented steps toward rehabilitation and eventual adoption. For the youth, they created moments of affirmation, showing that empathy, patience, and calm presence could bring about visible change.

The emotional dimension of the shelter visits was profound. Many participants described their encounters as transformative, recounting the joy of witnessing an anxious dog settle at their side or respond positively to gentle handling. These experiences highlighted the reciprocal nature of the relationship: the animals benefitted from care and attention, while the young people discovered a sense of competence, purpose, and connection. For participants with ADHD, the structured yet hands-on environment of the shelter was especially valuable. Tasks demanded focus and responsibility but offered immediate, tangible results, creating an atmosphere where participants could thrive. The presence of the animals also had a calming effect, allowing the youth to channel their energy into constructive and compassionate activities.

Equally important was the opportunity for participants to gain an authentic understanding of the challenges faced by shelters. They observed crowded enclosures, limited resources, and the relentless effort of staff who worked tirelessly in emotionally demanding conditions. These realities impressed upon the youth that animal welfare is not simply a matter of goodwill but a continuous struggle requiring commitment, advocacy, and societal support.

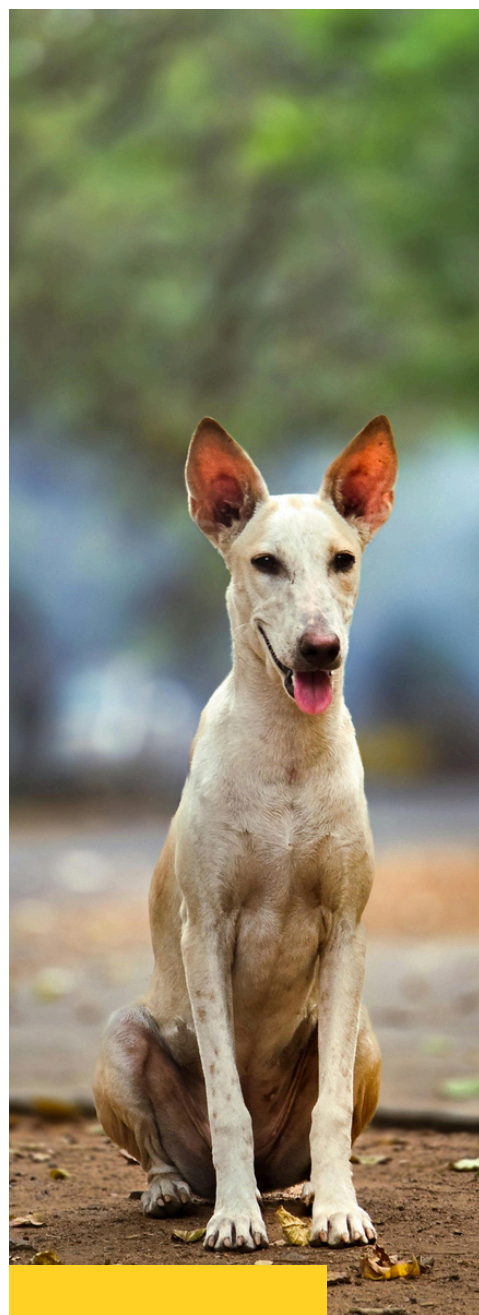
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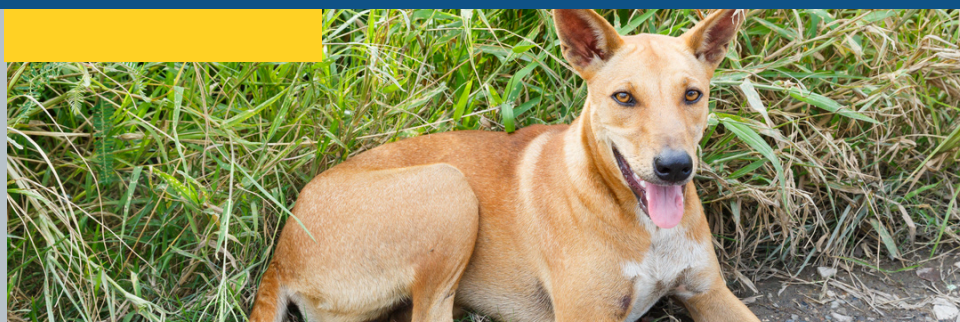
Far from discouraging them, these observations deepened their sense of responsibility and inspired critical reflection on how communities might respond more effectively to the issue of stray animals.

A reflective process followed each visit. Participants shared their experiences, articulated the emotions that the work had stirred, and considered the lessons they had learned. These debriefing sessions allowed them to connect their personal contributions to the broader goals of the project. Many expressed that the visits had reshaped their perspectives on animals, on responsibility, and on their own capabilities. For some, the encounters sparked a desire to continue volunteering beyond the lifespan of HYPER. Others resolved to raise awareness in their schools, families, or neighborhoods, thereby extending the project's impact beyond its immediate activities.

The visits also fostered relationships of mutual respect between youth and shelter staff. Initially cautious about entrusting young volunteers with meaningful tasks, staff members soon recognized the seriousness and commitment the participants brought.

The collaboration evolved into a partnership built on trust, in which staff acknowledged the valuable contributions of the youth, while the participants gained appreciation for the tireless work carried out daily in shelters. This spirit of cooperation mirrored the ethos of the project itself, which sought not only to deliver services but also to build bridges between groups often separated by age, experience, or circumstance.





The legacy of the shelter visits extended well beyond the individual encounters that took place. For the animals, the benefits were concrete: improved living conditions, increased socialization, and greater readiness for adoption. For the participants, the visits provided skills, confidence, and memories that shaped their sense of self and their view of community responsibility. The impact was especially significant for youth with ADHD, who experienced affirmation of their abilities and discovered contexts where their energy, empathy, and commitment could shine. For the shelters and the wider community, the visits demonstrated the potential of collaborative initiatives to address complex problems with creativity, compassion, and shared effort.

In essence, the shelter visits embodied the very spirit of the HYPER Project. They were not isolated acts of service but living expressions of the belief that inclusion and animal welfare are interconnected. They proved that vulnerable groups, stray animals in need of care and young people seeking opportunities for responsibility and belonging, could support one another in ways that enrich both sides. The visits left behind not only cleaner kennels and better-cared-for dogs but also empowered youth, inspired shelters, and communities more aware of their shared responsibility. They remain a testament to the transformative power of hands-on engagement, empathy, and collective action.

## AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS: SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The awareness campaigns carried out during the HYPER Project formed an integral part of its overall strategy. While the training sessions and shelter visits provided the most direct engagement with animals and youth, these activities alone could not bring about the systemic change the project envisioned. Broader cultural transformation required that the project extend beyond the confines of shelters and reach the wider community. For this reason, awareness campaigns were designed to complement practical work with an outward-facing dimension, ensuring that the lessons learned and values practiced during the project would resonate more widely and encourage lasting change in Thessaloniki and beyond.

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The social media campaign served as the project's primary channel for visibility. It was chosen not only for its cost-effectiveness but also for its capacity to reach diverse audiences in real time. From the earliest months, the project established a consistent presence across platforms, ensuring that the public was kept informed of developments while also being invited to participate in ongoing conversations. Posts were carefully curated to reflect the dual focus of the project: animal welfare and youth inclusion. Rather than limiting content to dry announcements, the campaign highlighted real stories, striking images, and personal reflections. Dogs from the shelters were given names, personalities, and stories, which helped the public to connect with them emotionally. Similarly, youth participants shared their own voices, describing how the project had influenced their perspectives and given them a sense of responsibility. This balance of factual information and personal narrative proved highly effective in fostering empathy and engagement.

Visual communication was a central feature of the campaign. Photographs of shelter visits, short video clips of training activities, and graphic materials explaining dog behavior or the principles of responsible pet ownership were widely circulated. The decision to prioritize visual material was not incidental. Images of youth interacting with animals spoke directly to the heart, demonstrating the project's values in ways that words alone could not. The expressions of joy on the faces of participants, the trust visible in the eyes of rehabilitated dogs, and the collaborative spirit captured in round table photographs served as powerful testaments to the project's mission.



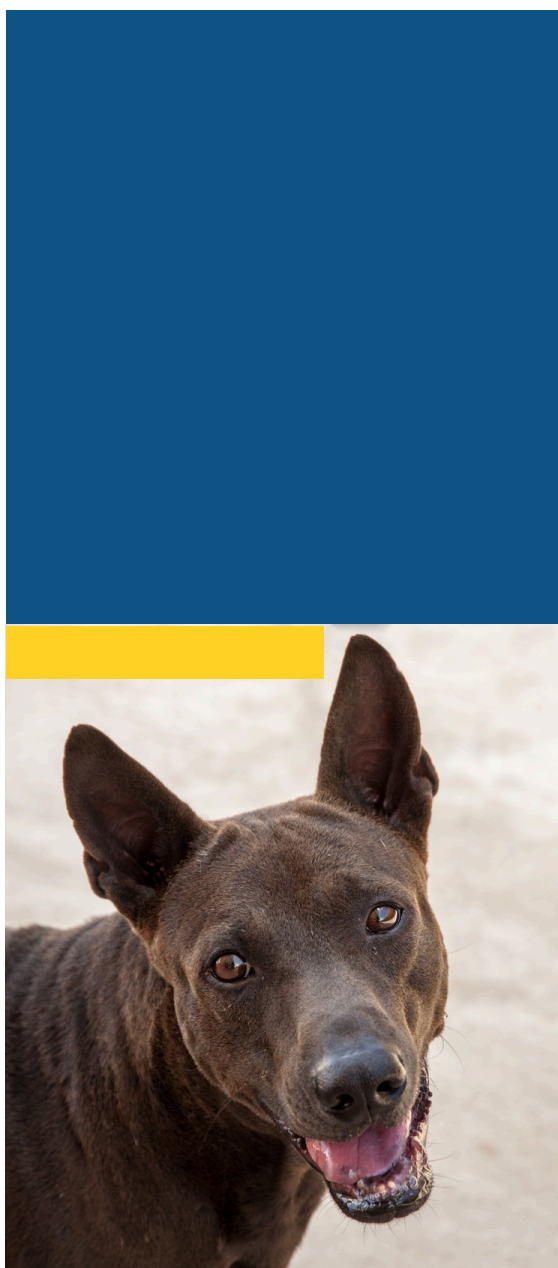
These images also helped to dismantle stereotypes, presenting youth with ADHD as responsible, engaged, and empathetic contributors to their community.

The content of the campaigns was organized around key themes that echoed the objectives of the project. One theme focused on the daily realities of shelters: overcrowding, limited resources, and the continuous influx of abandoned animals. Another highlighted the importance of adoption, encouraging families and individuals to consider giving a home to shelter animals rather than purchasing pets.

A third theme concentrated on inclusion, portraying youth not as passive beneficiaries but as active participants who were shaping change. These thematic pillars ensured that the campaigns communicated a coherent message, reinforcing the idea that animal welfare and social inclusion are deeply interconnected.

Community engagement was not confined to digital platforms. The project also organized a series of public-facing events designed to bring its message directly into schools, neighborhoods, and civic spaces.

These events included educational workshops in schools, where students learned about responsible pet ownership and the therapeutic value of animals; exhibitions of photographs documenting the project's activities; and presentations delivered during local community gatherings. Each event had a dual function: it raised awareness about the challenges of stray animal welfare and it celebrated the contributions of youth participants, positioning them as role models for their peers.

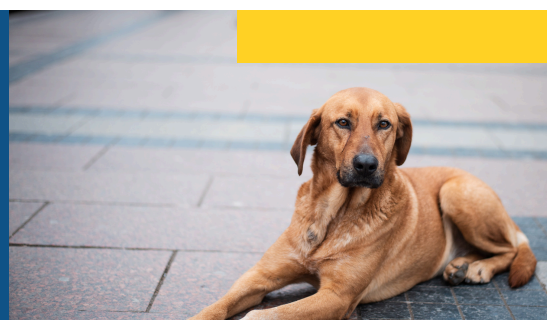


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The campaigns also contained a strong participatory element. Instead of presenting information in a one-way fashion, they actively encouraged members of the public to contribute their own ideas, share their experiences, and become involved. Online calls to action invited people to volunteer at shelters, to donate supplies, or to share their own stories of animal companionship. Offline, families were encouraged to attend adoption days, support fundraising activities, or collaborate with local NGOs. This participatory approach was critical in transforming awareness into action, ensuring that the campaigns did not simply transmit information but mobilized community involvement.

Youth participants themselves played an active role in the creation and dissemination of campaign materials. Their involvement ranged from writing posts and captions, to designing visual materials, to speaking at community events. This not only enriched the campaigns with authentic voices but also reinforced the educational dimension of the project. The youth acquired skills in communication, advocacy, and teamwork, while also experiencing the satisfaction of seeing their efforts make a tangible impact on the public. For ADHD participants, the opportunity to contribute creatively and visibly to a professional-level campaign was particularly empowering, challenging stereotypes and demonstrating their capacity to lead.

The impact of the awareness campaigns could be seen on multiple levels. For the shelters, increased visibility attracted new volunteers, donors, and prospective adopters. Some animals featured in campaign posts found homes more quickly, as their stories reached sympathetic audiences online. For the community, the campaigns created new spaces for dialogue about both animal welfare and inclusion, challenging assumptions and inspiring reflection. Parents reported that their children, after encountering the campaign, began conversations at home about adopting pets or volunteering at shelters. Schools expressed interest in integrating animal welfare topics into their curricula, extending the reach of the project into formal education. For the youth participants, the campaigns served as a public acknowledgment of their efforts, reinforcing their pride, confidence, and sense of belonging.



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The significance of the campaigns lay not only in their immediate outcomes but also in their contribution to sustainability. The materials produced during the project, stories, videos, guides, and visuals, remain available for continued use, ensuring that the message of HYPER continues to circulate even after the project's conclusion. The campaigns demonstrated that raising awareness is not a peripheral activity but a vital mechanism for social change. They amplified the voices of animals and youth, extended the project's reach far beyond its direct participants, and laid the groundwork for future collaborations and initiatives.

In essence, the awareness campaigns of the HYPER Project represented the outward-facing dimension of an initiative that was otherwise rooted in hands-on action. They connected local realities with broader social narratives, showing that the challenges of stray animals and the inclusion of youth are not isolated issues but part of a shared community responsibility. They demonstrated the power of digital tools and public engagement to amplify grassroots initiatives, and they ensured that the lessons of HYPER did not remain confined to shelters but entered public consciousness. More than simple communication, these campaigns were acts of advocacy, education, and empowerment, embodying the belief that sustainable change begins when communities are informed, inspired, and invited to take part.

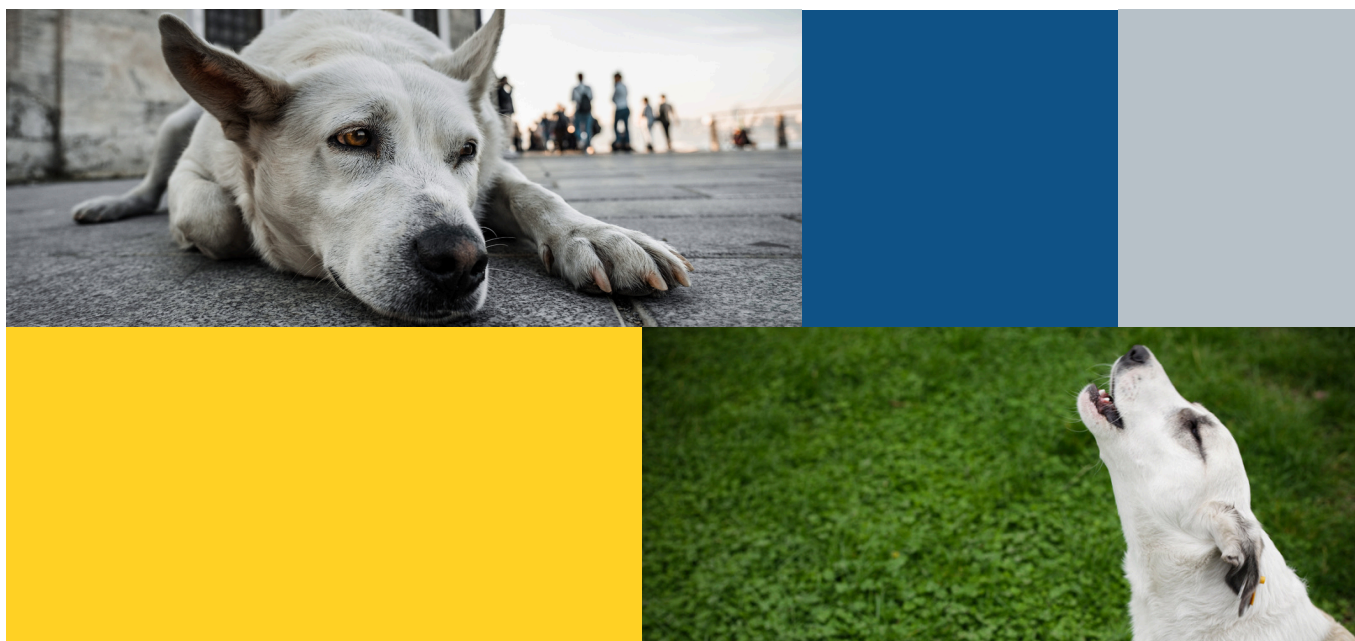
# CHAPTER 4 - INCLUSION & EMPOWERMENT

## UNDERSTANDING ADHD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

At the very heart of the HYPER Project lay a simple but powerful conviction: every young person possesses the potential to contribute meaningfully to society when offered the right structures, support, and opportunities. This conviction guided every element of the project's design and implementation. It was particularly significant in relation to youth with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), whose participation did not merely add to the project but shaped its very identity. The project recognized that young people with ADHD are too often seen through a narrow lens of deficits and challenges, defined primarily by what they struggle with rather than what they can achieve.

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In public discourse, ADHD is frequently described in terms of hyperactivity, impulsivity, restlessness, and lack of attention. These characteristics, while observable, provide only a partial and often misleading picture. They risk overshadowing the diverse abilities, talents, and qualities that many ADHD youth possess. ADHD is not solely a set of limitations; it is a complex neurodevelopmental condition that influences cognition, emotional regulation, and behavior in diverse ways. Alongside challenges, it can also foster creativity, originality, resilience, and an ability to think outside conventional patterns. Many young people with ADHD demonstrate high levels of imagination, sensitivity, empathy, and energy. In environments that are supportive and inclusive, these traits can flourish into strengths that benefit not only the individual but also their wider communities.



Unfortunately, the prevailing environments in which ADHD youth spend much of their time, classrooms, educational systems, and often even social settings, are rarely designed to recognize or nurture these strengths. Schools in particular often operate within rigid structures and standardized approaches that emphasize conformity, sustained attention, and predictable behavior. Youth with ADHD may struggle in such environments, not because they lack intelligence or capacity, but because the context does not accommodate different ways of learning and engaging. Too often, this mismatch leads to marginalization. These young people may be labeled as disruptive, difficult, or inattentive. Instead of encouragement, they frequently encounter frustration or dismissal. Over time, such treatment erodes confidence, limits opportunities for growth, and risks creating patterns of exclusion that extend into adulthood.


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The HYPER Project was conceived in response to this reality. It sought to challenge the assumption that ADHD youth should be managed or tolerated, and instead positioned them as individuals capable of making meaningful contributions. From the outset, the project avoided framing their inclusion as an act of charity or as symbolic representation. Instead, it offered genuine opportunities for participation, responsibility, and leadership. In doing so, the project redefined inclusion — not as mere presence in activities but as full engagement, where youth could shape outcomes, take ownership, and be recognized for their capabilities.

Animal shelters emerged as uniquely suitable environments for this vision. Their daily rhythms provided clarity and predictability, qualities that support ADHD youth in managing focus and behavior. Tasks such as feeding animals, cleaning enclosures, grooming, or walking dogs required attention, but also offered immediate and visible results.



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For youth accustomed to receiving criticism in other environments, the sense of achievement that came from seeing a dog fed, a space cleaned, or an animal respond positively was deeply affirming. Beyond the routines of care, the presence of animals introduced an entirely different dimension. Animals provided companionship without judgment, responded authentically to kindness, and offered calm where stress often dominated. For many participants, the relationship with animals became a stabilizing influence, nurturing patience, empathy, and responsibility.

Participation in HYPHER also highlighted the often-overlooked strengths of ADHD youth. Their energy, which in other contexts may have been perceived as disruptive, became an asset in the physically demanding environment of shelters. Their creativity and spontaneity enriched group activities, campaign planning, and problem-solving. Their capacity for empathy and emotional connection allowed them to bond deeply with animals, many of whom had experienced trauma or abandonment. Shelter staff and project partners often remarked on the vitality and sincerity that ADHD youth brought into their interactions. This revealed a truth that underpinned the project: when diversity is embraced, what once appeared to be limitations can become valuable contributions.

The decision to center ADHD youth within HYPHER was therefore not incidental but intentional. It reflected a deliberate strategy to demonstrate that social inclusion should be understood not as adjustment to the mainstream but as transformation of environments to recognize and cultivate the abilities of all individuals. Inclusion in HYPHER was not about making space for ADHD youth on the margins but about allowing them to stand at the center of the project's work, shaping activities and outcomes alongside their peers and adult partners. The impact of this approach extended far beyond the individuals directly involved. For the youth themselves, active participation nurtured self-confidence, created opportunities to develop new skills, and offered recognition that was often absent from other parts of their lives. For the shelters, their involvement brought fresh energy, creativity, and support at a time of constant strain. For the community, their visibility in campaigns and public events challenged stereotypes and demonstrated that ADHD youth are not defined by deficits but by possibilities.

In this sense, HYPHER did far more than provide experiences for a specific group. It created a model of empowerment, showing that with the right structures and ethos, youth with ADHD can thrive as leaders, caregivers, and changemakers. The project demonstrated that animal welfare and youth inclusion, when brought together, create not only mutual benefit but also a new way of understanding participation. In this model, inclusion is not an act of accommodation but a recognition of strength, potential, and shared humanity.

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## METHODS USED: PEER-TO-PEER, HANDS-ON PRACTICE, VISUAL AIDS

The success of the HYPER Project relied not only on the vision of linking animal welfare with youth inclusion but also on the practical methods chosen to engage participants in meaningful ways. From the earliest stages, the project team understood that conventional teaching or training approaches would not be sufficient. Many of the participants, particularly those with ADHD, required learning environments that were interactive, adaptive, and grounded in real-life experience. For this reason, three core methods were emphasized throughout the project: peer-to-peer learning, hands-on practice, and the use of visual aids. These methods complemented one another, ensuring that information was not only delivered but also absorbed, retained, and applied.

Peer-to-peer learning was introduced as a way to encourage active participation and mutual support among the youth. Rather than relying solely on formal instruction from adults or experts, the project created opportunities for young people to share knowledge, model behaviors, and encourage one another. This approach recognized that youth often respond more positively when they learn from their peers, who may express ideas in ways that feel more relatable and accessible. In practice, this meant that participants worked in pairs or small groups during training sessions and shelter visits, reflecting together on challenges and successes. Experienced participants guided newcomers, reinforcing their own learning while helping others to build confidence. The process fostered collaboration, broke down barriers between individuals, and promoted a sense of solidarity. Importantly, it also gave ADHD youth the chance to occupy leadership roles, demonstrating their capacity to guide and inspire their peers.

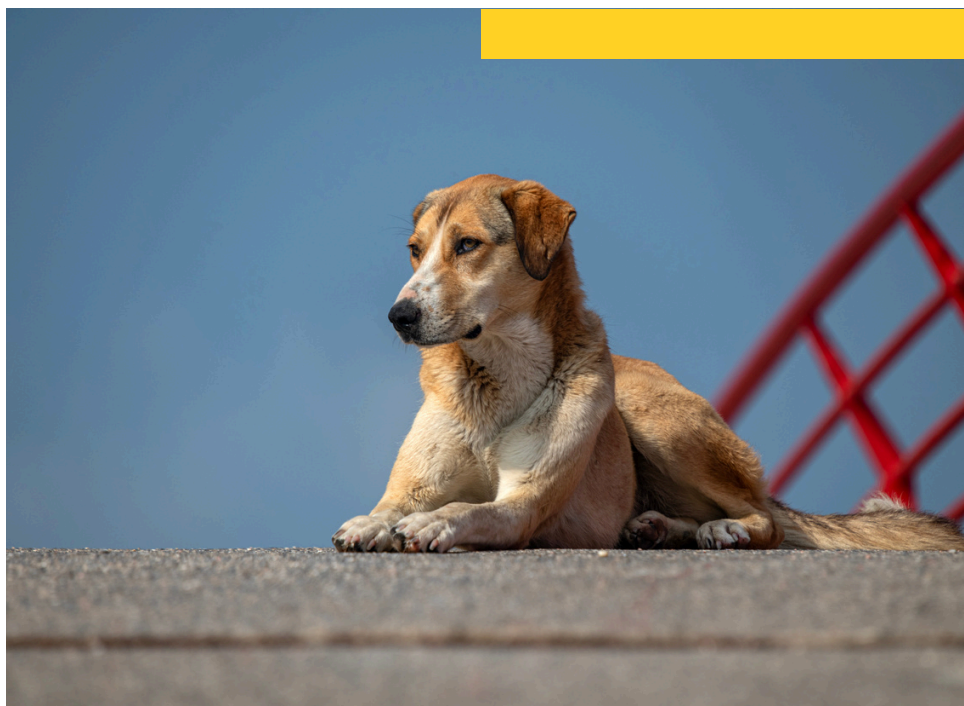
Hands-on practice formed the backbone of the project's training and shelter activities. It was recognized from the outset that abstract explanations about animal welfare or safe handling would have limited impact unless they were accompanied by direct experience. Participants were therefore consistently engaged in practical tasks such as feeding animals, grooming dogs, cleaning enclosures, walking dogs, and observing canine behavior under the guidance of trainers.

This experiential approach offered immediate feedback: a calm dog indicated that the participant had applied the correct technique, while signs of stress prompted reflection and adjustment. Such direct engagement allowed youth to internalize lessons more effectively than if they had been confined to theoretical discussion. For ADHD participants in particular, hands-on practice proved invaluable, as it provided physical activity, concrete outcomes, and a clear sense of purpose, helping them to maintain focus and motivation.

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Visual aids played a complementary role in supporting both peer learning and hands-on activities. Trainers introduced diagrams of canine body language, step-by-step illustrations of safe handling techniques, and photographs demonstrating correct approaches to animals in different situations. These materials served as reference points that participants could recall easily during practical tasks. For ADHD youth, whose learning can be enhanced by visual and multi-sensory cues, the use of graphics and demonstrations was especially effective. Videos and live demonstrations reinforced key concepts, allowing participants to see techniques in action before attempting them themselves. The visual dimension helped to anchor knowledge, making abstract principles more concrete and memorable.

The combined use of these methods created a learning environment that was inclusive, dynamic, and responsive. Peer-to-peer learning encouraged collaboration and leadership, hands-on practice ensured that knowledge was applied in real contexts, and visual aids reinforced comprehension and retention. Together, these approaches respected the diverse learning styles of participants while upholding the project's ethos of inclusion. They conveyed a clear message: everyone, regardless of ability or background, could learn, contribute, and succeed when training was adapted to meet their needs.



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The impact of these methods was visible in the confidence and competence of the youth during shelter visits and community campaigns. Participants approached their tasks with assurance, demonstrated safe and empathetic interactions with animals, and supported one another in challenging situations. Many reported that they not only understood the material but also felt capable of applying it outside the project, whether in volunteering, family life, or school settings. Trainers and shelter staff noted that the adaptive methodology allowed the youth to perform at a high level of responsibility, challenging assumptions about their capabilities and demonstrating the effectiveness of inclusive pedagogy.


In summary, the methods employed in HYPER were not incidental but carefully chosen to align with the project's twin commitments: animal welfare and youth empowerment. Peer-to-peer learning, hands-on practice, and visual aids transformed the project from a conventional program into a genuinely inclusive and interactive experience. They ensured that participants were not passive recipients of information but active learners and doers, capable of shaping outcomes and contributing to a shared mission. These methods thus stand as both a practical achievement of the project and a model for future initiatives seeking to combine inclusion with community engagement.

## CREATING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS IN SHELTERS

A defining ambition of the HYPER Project was to demonstrate that animal shelters, often perceived as places of hardship and limitation, could also become environments of empowerment, inclusion, and growth. Stray animals rely on shelters for survival, yet these same spaces can serve as vital arenas for human development, particularly for young people who, like the animals themselves, are often misunderstood or excluded. For this reason, the project deliberately treated shelters not only as sites of care but also as platforms where youth with ADHD could engage, learn, and discover their potential. The creation of inclusive environments was therefore not an afterthought, but one of the central pillars of HYPER's philosophy.

Shelters are typically characterized by conditions of strain. Overcrowded kennels, the constant noise of barking, the visible signs of abandonment and neglect, and the shortage of staff and resources can create an atmosphere of urgency and stress. For many, such environments might appear unsuitable for vulnerable youth. Yet the HYPER team recognized that with careful adaptation, shelters could become spaces that promoted responsibility, confidence, and resilience. The challenge lay in transforming environments marked by scarcity into ones that were also defined by opportunity.

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The first step in fostering inclusivity was the establishment of structure and predictability. For ADHD youth, unpredictability can heighten anxiety or create disengagement. To counter this, shelter visits were organized with clearly defined routines and transparent expectations. Each day had a rhythm: arrival and orientation, distribution of tasks, periods of animal care, moments for reflection, and debriefing with staff. This predictability allowed participants to focus their energy on the tasks themselves rather than on uncertainty. The clarity of roles also instilled a sense of accountability. When a young person was entrusted with feeding a group of dogs or walking a specific animal, they knew what was expected and could take pride in fulfilling that responsibility.

Inclusion was also ensured through task adaptation and progressive responsibility. Not all participants began with the same level of confidence or skill. Some required gradual exposure, perhaps starting with observing others, then moving on to cleaning enclosures, and eventually handling animals directly. Others thrived when given immediate, hands-on roles. By matching responsibilities to individual readiness, the project avoided overwhelming participants while still challenging them to grow. Over time, youth progressed from simple to more complex tasks, reinforcing a sense of personal development. Each achievement, no matter how small, was validated and celebrated, reinforcing motivation and demonstrating that their contributions mattered.

Equally vital was the role of adult mentors and supportive supervision. Shelter staff, trainers, and the project coach provided not only instruction but also encouragement. Their presence was reassuring, ensuring that participants could approach tasks without fear of failure. The ethos was one of positive reinforcement rather than criticism. Mistakes were framed as learning opportunities, and successes were acknowledged publicly. This culture of affirmation contrasted sharply with many participants' prior experiences in school or social contexts, where their efforts may have been overshadowed by their difficulties. Within the shelter, their strengths were visible, recognized, and celebrated.

The creation of an inclusive environment also relied heavily on the emotional dimension of animal interaction. Animals are inherently non-judgmental and responsive to care. For ADHD youth, who may have encountered misunderstanding or stigma in human interactions, the trust of a dog or the calm response of a cat offered powerful validation. Animals did not demand perfection but responded to patience, empathy, and consistency, qualities that youth could practice and strengthen through their interactions. In turn, participants discovered that they were capable of providing stability and comfort to another living being, a realization that reinforced their sense of competence and responsibility. At the same time, inclusivity extended beyond the relationship between youth and animals to encompass the social environment among participants.

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Shelter activities were structured as collective efforts, encouraging teamwork rather than competition. Participants learned to support one another in managing tasks, share strategies for calming anxious animals, and celebrate one another's achievements. This collaborative ethos reduced feelings of isolation and fostered solidarity. For ADHD youth, many of whom may have experienced exclusion from peer groups, the sense of belonging that emerged during shelter work was profoundly meaningful. They were not outsiders but essential members of a team working toward a shared goal.

Creating inclusive environments in shelters also carried a symbolic dimension. For many participants, being welcomed into a shelter community signified trust and recognition. They were not treated as liabilities but as contributors. The very act of entrusting them with animal care responsibilities sent a powerful message: they were capable, dependable, and valuable. This message was transformative, often reshaping how youth viewed themselves. Instead of internalizing narratives of inadequacy, they experienced success, agency, and empowerment in tangible ways.



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The inclusivity fostered within shelters had ripple effects beyond the project. Shelter staff who witnessed the contributions of ADHD youth reported a shift in their own perspectives. They came to see these young people not as limited but as capable of meaningful involvement. Families of participants noted positive changes in self-esteem, responsibility, and social skills, which extended into school and home life. Communities exposed to the project through campaigns and events also witnessed the powerful link between animal welfare and youth inclusion, challenging stereotypes about both strays and ADHD youth.

In essence, HYPER redefined the role of shelters. They became more than sites of animal rescue; they evolved into living laboratories of inclusion and empowerment. They demonstrated that even environments marked by hardship could be transformed into places of belonging when approached with creativity, patience, and commitment. They showed that inclusivity does not mean eliminating challenges but equipping individuals to meet them with dignity, support, and opportunity.

Through this approach, the project illuminated a broader truth: when shelters embrace inclusivity, they not only improve the welfare of animals but also nurture the potential of young people who are too often overlooked. This dual impact, on both animals and youth, revealed the deeper significance of HYPER's work. Shelters became spaces of healing, responsibility, and growth, proving that compassion, when shared across species and communities, has the power to transform lives.

## **EMPOWERMENT THROUGH RESPONSIBILITY: HOW YOUTH GREW THROUGH HYPER**

The HYPER Project revealed, with remarkable clarity, that empowerment is not something abstract or symbolic; it is a lived experience that emerges when individuals are entrusted with meaningful responsibility and supported to succeed. Responsibility was at the very core of this project's approach to inclusion, for it provided young people, particularly those with ADHD, with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities in tangible ways, to build self-confidence, and to challenge the limiting expectations that had often shaped their lives. Through responsibility, the youth participants of HYPER did not simply assist in shelter activities, they discovered new dimensions of themselves, developed essential life skills, and experienced empowerment as a transformative process.

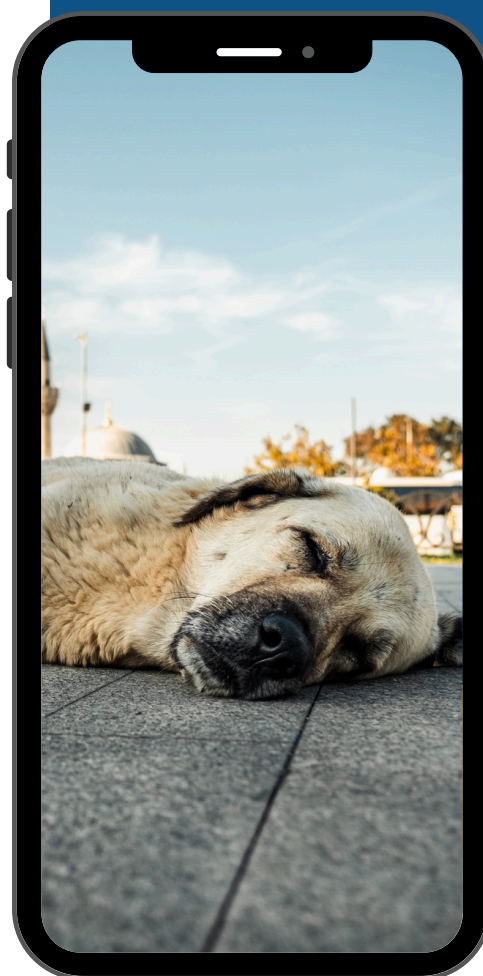
From the beginning, responsibility was framed not as a token gesture but as a genuine and indispensable contribution to the functioning of the shelters. Participants were not observers standing at the margins, nor were they given tasks designed only for practice without consequence.

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Instead, they were entrusted with duties that carried weight. Feeding animals, ensuring water bowls were filled, cleaning and preparing kennels, grooming dogs, walking them, and engaging them in play and socialization were all tasks on which the animals' health and emotional well-being depended. The youth quickly understood that their actions mattered. A dog that was fed because of their effort, an enclosure that became livable because of their work, or an animal that began to trust again through their patience and care demonstrated that they were capable of creating positive, real-world change. This awareness of impact was fundamental to empowerment, for it provided both purpose and validation.

For youth with ADHD, such opportunities were especially powerful. In many traditional environments, including schools, they had become accustomed to responsibility being framed primarily as a burden: an endless list of rules to follow, behaviors to suppress, and standards to meet. Too often, they were reminded of their perceived shortcomings, whether in staying still, paying attention, or adhering to conventional expectations. The HYPER Project offered an alternative experience. Instead of being treated as liabilities or problems to be managed, the youth were trusted as contributors. Responsibility was presented not as a source of pressure but as an act of recognition, recognition that they could succeed, that their efforts were meaningful, and that they had something important to give.

The transformation this created was visible on multiple levels. First, responsibility encouraged the development of essential life skills. The structure of shelter work required punctuality, routine, and consistency, all of which strengthened discipline and reliability.



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The practical demands of animal care nurtured patience, perseverance, and emotional regulation. A dog that trembled in fear or resisted handling could not be rushed; it required calmness, gentle persistence, and the ability to remain steady even in moments of frustration. These experiences provided youth with opportunities to practice self-control in authentic, high-stakes situations where the outcome mattered. Responsibility also fostered teamwork and communication. Many tasks required collaboration: feeding schedules had to be coordinated, cleaning duties shared, and walking routines organized. Through this, participants learned how to listen, cooperate, negotiate, and lead. Some naturally stepped into leadership roles, guiding peers or supporting newcomers. For ADHD youth, who are often excluded from positions of leadership in other contexts, this recognition of their capacity to lead was deeply empowering.

Equally important was the effect responsibility had on self-esteem. In their daily lives, many participants had become accustomed to experiences of failure or criticism. Success was often elusive in traditional classroom settings, where achievement was measured by abstract grades or long-term assessments. Within HYPER, success was immediate and visible. A dog wagging its tail after a walk, a freshly prepared kennel ready for use, or an adoption campaign that drew community attention offered tangible proof of accomplishment. These small but significant moments created a positive feedback loop, strengthening confidence and reinforcing the idea that effort leads to results. Being publicly acknowledged by shelter staff, project trainers, or peers added to this sense of pride. Participants began to see themselves not as individuals defined by difficulties but as capable, reliable, and valuable members of a team.

Responsibility also deepened the youth's connection to the broader mission of HYPER. They came to understand that their actions extended beyond their own personal development and beyond the immediate care of animals. They were contributing to something larger: the improvement of shelters, the rehabilitation of strays, the promotion of adoption, and the creation of a more compassionate community. In this way, responsibility nurtured a sense of civic identity and social engagement. Participants began to view themselves not only as individuals fulfilling duties but as actors in a collective movement for change. This expansion of perspective reinforced empowerment, for it showed that their efforts had meaning not only for themselves but for society as a whole.

The psychological impact of responsibility should not be understated. Many ADHD youth face stigma, misunderstanding, and exclusion. They are too often told what they cannot achieve, leading to internalized feelings of inadequacy. The HYPER Project disrupted this narrative. Within the shelters, responsibility became a tool of healing, allowing participants to rewrite their self-perceptions.

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They discovered that they could be dependable, that they could achieve, and that they could be trusted. This redefinition of identity was not temporary but carried lasting significance, influencing how they approached other areas of life such as school, family relationships, and friendships.

Ultimately, the empowerment fostered through responsibility represented one of HYPER's most enduring legacies. It demonstrated that responsibility, when offered with trust, guidance, and recognition, can transform not only individuals but also communities. It showed that empowerment cannot be imposed from the outside but must be cultivated through lived experience, through opportunities that allow individuals to see their own capacity and to believe in their own worth.

For the young people of HYPER, responsibility was not a burden but a gift, a chance to discover strength, resilience, and potential that had long been hidden under layers of stigma and doubt. In this way, the project achieved far more than temporary involvement in shelter work. It created a model of empowerment that can inspire future initiatives: a model in which responsibility is not simply a task to be managed but a pathway to transformation. Through HYPER, youth grew into roles of caregivers, leaders, and changemakers, and in doing so, they not only improved the lives of animals but also redefined their own.

## CHAPTER 5 - PROJECT RESULTS

### ACHIEVEMENTS IN SHELTER SUPPORT

The HYPER Project's most immediate and visible results emerged in the field of shelter support. Animal shelters in Thessaloniki, like many across Europe, had long been grappling with structural limitations that left them overwhelmed and under-resourced. The daily reality was marked by overcrowded facilities, limited financial means, shortages of skilled staff, and the constant emotional strain of caring for animals that had been abandoned, neglected, or mistreated.

Many staff members carried out their work tirelessly and with remarkable dedication, yet often felt isolated in their efforts, stretched to the limits of their capacity. It was into this environment that the HYPER Project stepped, not simply as a source of temporary relief but as a structured and sustainable intervention that reshaped how shelters functioned and how they were perceived by the wider community.

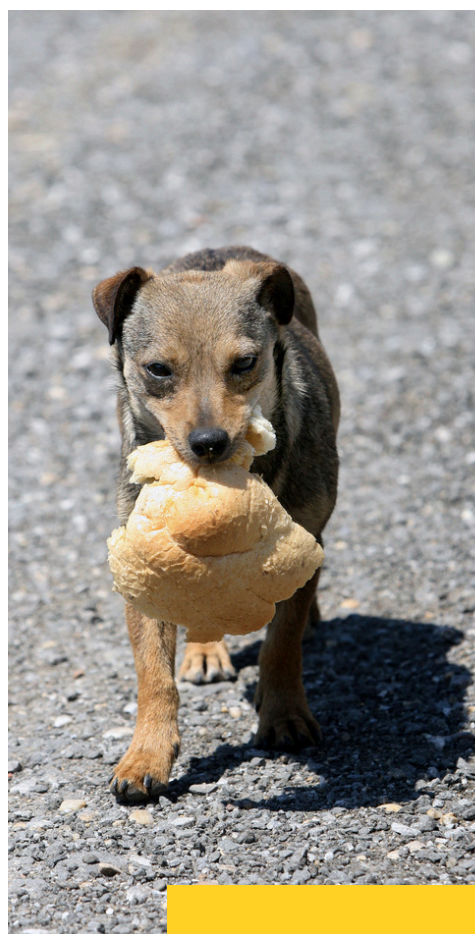
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At the heart of this achievement was the mobilization of volunteers, particularly young people, whose involvement was carefully organized to align with the immediate needs of the shelters. The work undertaken was neither symbolic nor peripheral. Volunteers were trained and entrusted with essential responsibilities: ensuring food and water were distributed consistently, cleaning enclosures to improve hygiene and comfort, grooming animals to maintain health and well-being, and providing exercise and socialization through regular walks and play sessions. These contributions, while seemingly simple, transformed the daily lives of the animals.

Clean, safe enclosures reduced stress and illness; grooming created both hygienic benefits and opportunities for gentle, reassuring contact; exercise reduced anxiety and boredom, allowing animals to develop calmer temperaments; and consistent feeding routines gave structure to lives often defined by uncertainty. For many animals, particularly those that had suffered trauma, these basic acts of care were also acts of healing.

The impact extended beyond the animals themselves. For shelter staff, the arrival of motivated, trained volunteers was a source of profound relief. Staff members who had previously been forced to prioritize between urgent tasks, feeding animals, cleaning spaces, administering medical care, now found themselves supported by young people who could share the load.

This allowed them to dedicate more time to specialized duties, such as veterinary treatment or adoption coordination, that had previously been compromised due to time pressures.

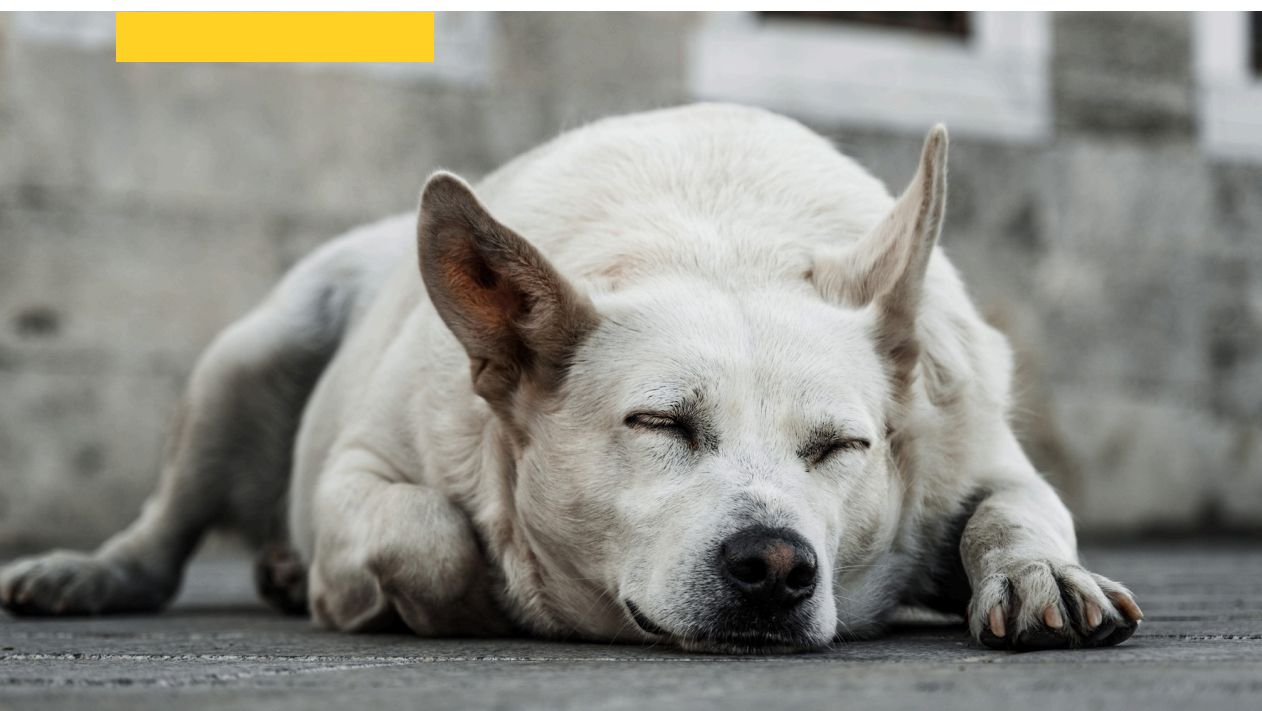


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In effect, the presence of volunteers helped rebalance the shelters' internal operations, ensuring that no area of responsibility was consistently neglected. Staff reported feeling less burdened, more optimistic, and more able to envision long-term improvements rather than merely responding to immediate crises.

A distinguishing feature of HYPERS' shelter support was its emphasis on professionalization. Unlike many volunteer initiatives, where enthusiasm alone drives participation, HYPERS invested in preparing its participants through structured training sessions. Youth were educated in canine behavior, safe handling techniques, and appropriate modes of interaction. This training ensured that their presence contributed positively to rehabilitation rather than unintentionally creating stress or reinforcing negative behaviors. As a result, shelters expressed greater confidence in welcoming volunteers, knowing that their engagement was guided by knowledge and sensitivity. This created a replicable model of volunteer integration: shelters could host young people with the assurance that their involvement would support, rather than hinder, animal welfare.

The cumulative effects of this support were evident across multiple dimensions. Animals benefitted directly from improved care and, in turn, became calmer, healthier, and more adoptable. Staff benefitted from reduced workloads and renewed morale. The shelters themselves became more efficient and more open to partnerships with external actors, moving away from isolation toward integration with the wider community.



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Importantly, the youth volunteers also benefitted, as their contributions were recognized as indispensable, further reinforcing their sense of responsibility and empowerment.

Beyond immediate improvements, HYPER's work in shelters had symbolic significance. It demonstrated to the community that shelters were not closed, desperate spaces but open, collaborative environments where change could be achieved collectively. This shift in perception helped to reframe the issue of stray animals from being solely the responsibility of shelter staff to being a shared responsibility of the community. It encouraged a culture of solidarity, showing that everyone — from trained staff to volunteers, from educators to families — had a role to play in improving conditions for abandoned animals.

Perhaps the greatest achievement, however, was the establishment of a framework for sustainability. HYPER proved that volunteer support, when properly structured, could become an integral component of shelter operations. The model of preparing volunteers through training, integrating them into daily tasks, and supervising their engagement offered a blueprint that could be replicated not only in Thessaloniki but also in other cities facing similar challenges. This sustainable approach ensured that the project's impact would outlive its official duration, leaving behind a legacy of improved shelter capacity and community engagement.

In conclusion, the achievements of HYPER in shelter support cannot be measured solely in the number of tasks completed or the hours of volunteer labor contributed. They must also be understood in terms of the broader transformations they inspired. The animals experienced improved welfare and greater chances of adoption. The staff found relief, support, and renewed motivation. The shelters became more functional, more hopeful, and more connected to their communities. And society at large was invited to reconsider the role of shelters, not as isolated institutions struggling alone, but as collaborative spaces where inclusion, responsibility, and compassion can intersect to create lasting change.

## ACHIEVEMENTS IN ADHD INCLUSION

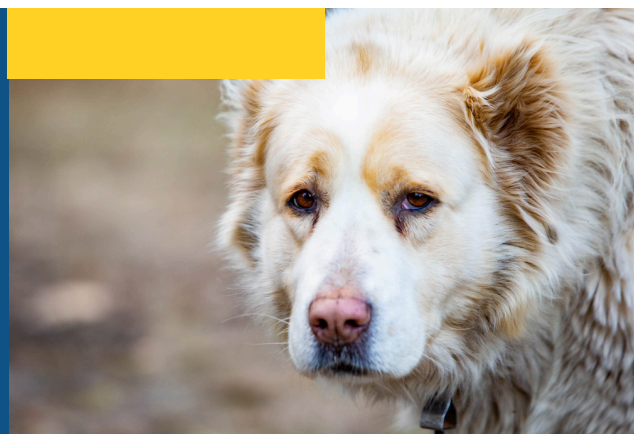
Among the most significant contributions of the HYPER Project was its success in advancing the inclusion of young people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). While the project responded to the urgent needs of stray animals in Thessaloniki, it was equally committed to addressing the social exclusion that many ADHD youth face in educational, social, and family settings.

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This dual focus created a powerful synergy: as the animals benefitted from care and attention, the young participants benefitted from new opportunities for growth, responsibility, and empowerment. The results were not only practical but transformative, demonstrating that inclusion, when implemented with seriousness and vision, has the capacity to change lives.

ADHD is too often framed as a deficit, described in terms of hyperactivity, impulsivity, or lack of focus. In schools and communities, this framing has led to lowered expectations, misunderstanding, and at times outright exclusion. Young people with ADHD frequently encounter environments that fail to accommodate their needs and fail to recognize their strengths. They are told to sit still, to quiet down, to conform, rather than invited to express the creativity, empathy, and resilience that often characterize their personalities. The HYPER Project challenged this narrative at its core. It insisted that ADHD youth be viewed not through the lens of limitation but through the lens of potential. It treated them not as recipients of support but as active contributors, capable of responsibility, leadership, and creativity.

This shift in perspective was evident in the daily experiences of participants. Within the shelter environment, they were entrusted with tasks that mattered. Feeding animals, grooming, walking dogs, or cleaning enclosures were not theoretical exercises but real responsibilities that directly affected the welfare of living creatures. For youth accustomed to being doubted or underestimated, the realization that animals depended on them for care was both humbling and empowering. Each successful action, a dog calmed, a kennel cleaned, a feeding completed, reinforced the message that they were capable, dependable, and valued. These experiences of responsibility helped to reshape self-perceptions, counteracting years of stigma or doubt.





Equally important were the adaptive methods employed in the project. The training sessions that prepared youth for shelter work were deliberately designed to accommodate diverse learning styles. Hands-on practice allowed participants to learn through doing, visual aids reinforced understanding of complex ideas such as canine body language, and peer-to-peer support created opportunities for learning in collaborative and relatable ways. These methods ensured that no participant was left behind and that each could learn in ways suited to their strengths. For ADHD youth in particular, the balance of structure, movement, and creativity was invaluable. Trainers noted that participants showed marked improvements in concentration, persistence, and the ability to regulate their emotions when engaged in structured, purposeful activities that had immediate outcomes.

The project's achievements were also social in nature. Many ADHD youth struggle with peer acceptance, often facing exclusion or misunderstanding. In HYPER, however, they became part of a team united by a shared mission. Their energy and enthusiasm, sometimes perceived as disruptive in other contexts, were here celebrated as contributions to the vitality of the group. Their creativity enriched awareness campaigns, their empathy deepened connections with animals, and their resilience inspired others. This sense of belonging was perhaps one of the most powerful forms of inclusion achieved. Within the project, they were not outsiders but essential members, and this recognition provided a model of acceptance that extended far beyond the shelter walls.

Families and educators also observed the difference. Parents reported that their children returned home from shelter visits with a newfound sense of pride and responsibility. Educators noticed improvements in self-confidence, greater willingness to engage in group activities, and more positive relationships with peers. These changes underscored that the lessons learned within the project, patience, responsibility, teamwork, were transferable to other areas of life. The benefits of inclusion extended well beyond the immediate scope of the project, influencing education, family dynamics, and social development.

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At the community level, the project had a broader impact. The visible involvement of ADHD youth in public campaigns, round tables, and shelter work challenged stereotypes and shifted perceptions. Where once these young people may have been viewed through the prism of limitation, they were now seen as contributors, advocates, and changemakers. Their presence demonstrated that inclusion is not a matter of charity but of recognizing and harnessing potential. The HYPER Project thus contributed to a cultural shift, encouraging communities to rethink how they view ADHD and, more broadly, how they understand the concept of inclusion.

Perhaps the most lasting achievement was the redefinition of inclusion itself. Too often, inclusion is reduced to symbolic gestures, inviting youth to attend activities but not entrusting them with meaningful roles.

HYPER rejected this superficial approach. Its model of inclusion was grounded in empowerment: providing real responsibilities, creating supportive structures, and offering recognition for achievements. It showed that when young people are genuinely included, not as guests but as partners, they thrive. And when they thrive, the entire community benefits.

In conclusion, the achievements in ADHD inclusion within HYPER were profound and far-reaching. They were visible in the confidence of the youth, in the relief and pride of families, in the observations of educators, and in the changed perceptions of communities.



They were also visible in the lives of the animals, who received care and compassion from young people who discovered their own strengths in the process. The project demonstrated that inclusion is not about adjusting to deficits but about cultivating strengths, and that empowerment arises when responsibility and trust are placed in the hands of those who are too often denied them. In this way, HYPER not only improved the lives of ADHD youth but also offered a model for inclusive practice that can inspire future initiatives across Europe and beyond.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS IN COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The HYPER Project was never conceived solely as an initiative for shelters or as a training ground for youth; at its core, it was also a community project, designed to influence public attitudes, generate dialogue, and establish stronger links between different social actors. One of its most remarkable achievements was its ability to reach beyond the immediate circle of participants and create a ripple effect of awareness and engagement throughout Thessaloniki and, to some extent, further afield. In doing so, HYPER contributed to reshaping how the wider community perceives both the issue of stray animals and the role of youth with ADHD.

In Thessaloniki, stray animals have long been visible but often perceived as a nuisance or, at best, as a matter to be handled by shelters and municipal services. This narrow perspective has led to indifference or even hostility, reducing the problem to technical management rather than viewing it through a lens of compassion and shared civic responsibility.

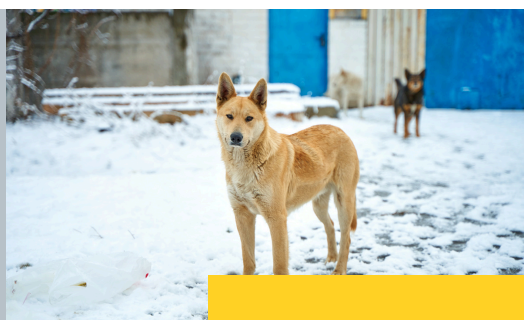


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One of the major achievements of HYPER was its ability to reframe the narrative. Through public campaigns, educational activities, and storytelling, it encouraged citizens to see stray animals not as problems to be removed, but as beings with needs and rights. By linking the issue to broader social values such as empathy, inclusion, and solidarity, the project shifted conversations from “what to do with strays” to “how can we, as a community, create solutions that reflect who we want to be.” This reframing proved transformative, particularly in engaging schools, families, and younger generations, who were more receptive to viewing the issue as part of a wider culture of care.

The project’s social media presence played a crucial role in this transformation. Through carefully crafted campaigns, HYPER reached audiences beyond immediate participants. Posts highlighting the daily realities of shelter work, the stories of individual rescued animals, and the voices of ADHD youth who contributed to the project created an atmosphere of authenticity and connection. Unlike abstract appeals, these personal stories resonated deeply, inviting citizens to reflect on their own responsibilities. A simple post showing the before-and-after journey of a dog that had been walked, groomed, and socialized by volunteers carried a powerful message: change is possible, and everyone can play a role in making it happen. In this sense, the campaigns did more than inform; they mobilized empathy and inspired action.

Equally significant was the project’s outreach to schools and educational institutions. HYPER recognized that cultural change begins with education, and it therefore sought to involve students not only as future volunteers but also as multipliers of awareness. Through workshops, classroom discussions, and collaborative projects, students were introduced to themes of animal welfare, inclusion, and civic responsibility. Teachers reported that these activities encouraged qualities such as empathy, teamwork, and critical thinking. Importantly, students who may never have interacted with shelters or ADHD youth before were exposed to new perspectives, broadening their understanding of community challenges. For many, HYPER provided their first concrete example of how social projects function and how individuals can create tangible change through collective effort.





The round tables and stakeholder meetings that formed part of the project also had a profound community impact. They brought together actors who had previously operated in isolation: shelter staff, local NGOs, educators, municipal representatives, families, and volunteers. These meetings created opportunities for dialogue that extended beyond the scope of HYPER itself. They revealed common challenges, such as the lack of sustainable funding, the need for better volunteer coordination, and the absence of structured educational programs, and encouraged collaborative solutions. The networks established during these encounters outlived the individual events, laying the foundation for ongoing partnerships that could strengthen both animal welfare and inclusion initiatives in the future.

A particularly notable achievement was the way HYPER challenged social attitudes toward ADHD youth. For years, many families had struggled against stigma, watching their children misunderstood or underestimated. Within the project, these same young people became visible in new roles: not as problems, but as contributors. Their involvement in public campaigns, shelter work, and events demonstrated their capacity for responsibility, creativity, and leadership. This visibility challenged stereotypes and invited the community to reconsider its assumptions. Parents reported that seeing their children celebrated publicly was transformative not only for the youth themselves but also for the families, who felt that their struggles for recognition and respect had been validated. Shelter staff and community members who initially expressed hesitation about the involvement of ADHD youth later acknowledged their indispensable contributions. This attitudinal shift may prove to be one of the project's most enduring legacies.

The cumulative effect of these activities was the cultivation of a stronger culture of civic engagement. Citizens began to recognize that shelters were not distant institutions but integral parts of the community that required collective support. They saw that caring for animals and including marginalized youth were interconnected acts of compassion that reflected broader values of justice and solidarity. Volunteerism increased, conversations about adoption and responsible pet ownership gained momentum, and the sense of collective responsibility deepened.

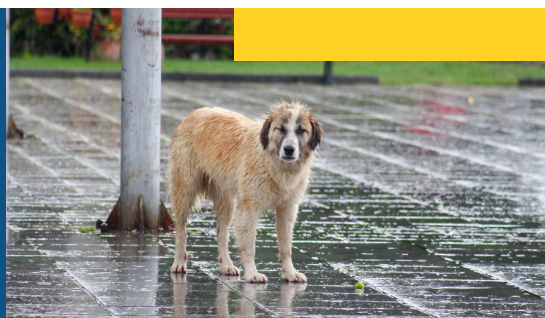
For many in Thessaloniki, the HYPER Project became a symbol of what community-driven action could achieve when guided by empathy and collaboration.

In conclusion, the achievements in community impact represent one of the most far-reaching outcomes of the HYPER Project. They extended into public consciousness, reframed the way issues of animal welfare and inclusion are understood, and created networks and partnerships that will continue to bear fruit. Perhaps most importantly, they demonstrated that communities can be transformed when they embrace responsibility for their most vulnerable members. The animals gained advocates, the youth found recognition, and the wider community discovered that compassion and inclusion are not abstract ideals but practical forces capable of shaping a better civic culture. The impact of HYPER on Thessaloniki, therefore, went far beyond its immediate activities, planting seeds of awareness and solidarity that will continue to grow long after the project's formal conclusion.

## **SUCCESS STORIES: VOLUNTEERS, RESCUED ANIMALS, AND SCHOOLS**

Perhaps the most human and memorable dimension of the HYPER Project lies in the individual and collective stories that emerged along its journey. While statistics, training activities, and structured objectives reveal the scope of achievements, it is in the lived experiences of volunteers, the journeys of rescued animals, and the engagement of schools that the true spirit of HYPER can be understood. These success stories illuminate not only what was accomplished but also why the project mattered so profoundly to those involved.

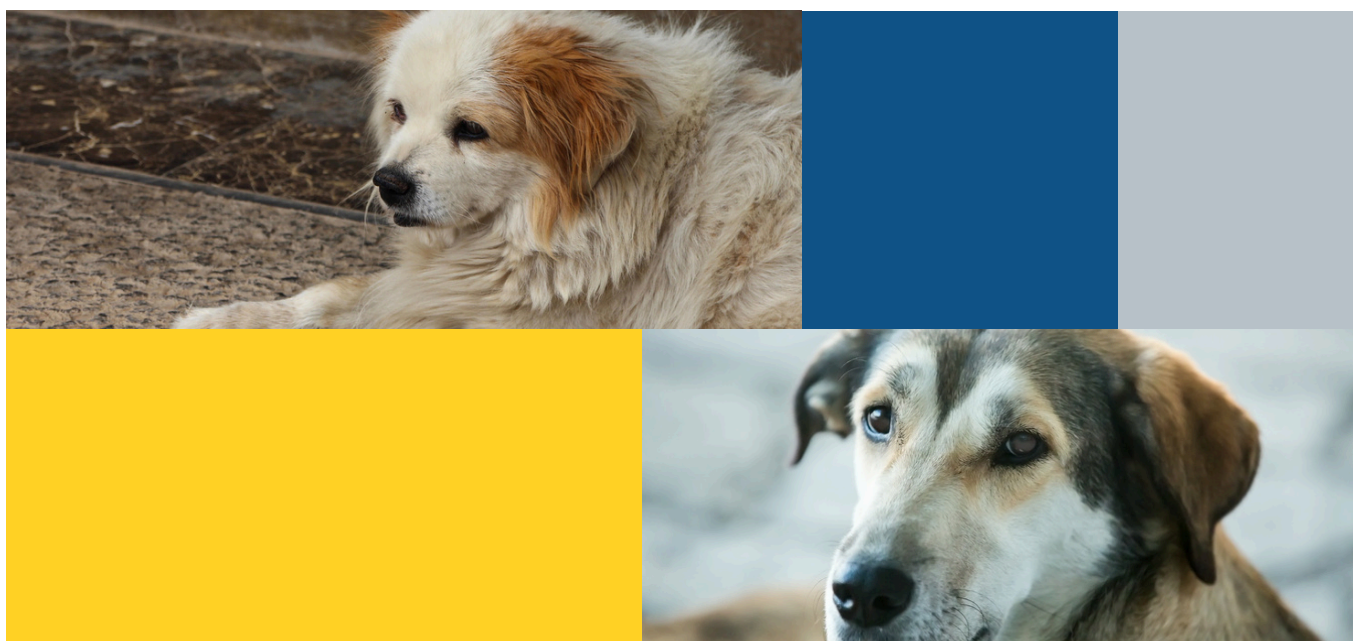
The role of volunteers was central from the beginning, yet the project revealed how transformative such involvement could be. Many of the young participants entered the program with little prior experience of structured responsibility. For those with ADHD, daily life often included narratives of limitation or exclusion. Within the framework of HYPER, however, volunteering became a source of pride, discipline, and empowerment. Youth reported feelings of accomplishment when completing even simple tasks such as grooming a dog, ensuring clean water supplies, or preparing kennels.



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Their sense of usefulness was reinforced by the recognition they received from shelter staff, who openly acknowledged the relief provided by the extra hands. Families, too, noted changes: some parents described their children returning home calmer, more focused, and eager to share their achievements. For these young volunteers, the shelter became not only a place of service but also a space of personal transformation, where their energy and creativity found meaningful outlets.

Equally powerful were the stories of the animals themselves. Many of the dogs encountered during the shelter visits had experienced neglect, abandonment, or prolonged confinement. Some were initially fearful, withdrawn, or reactive.



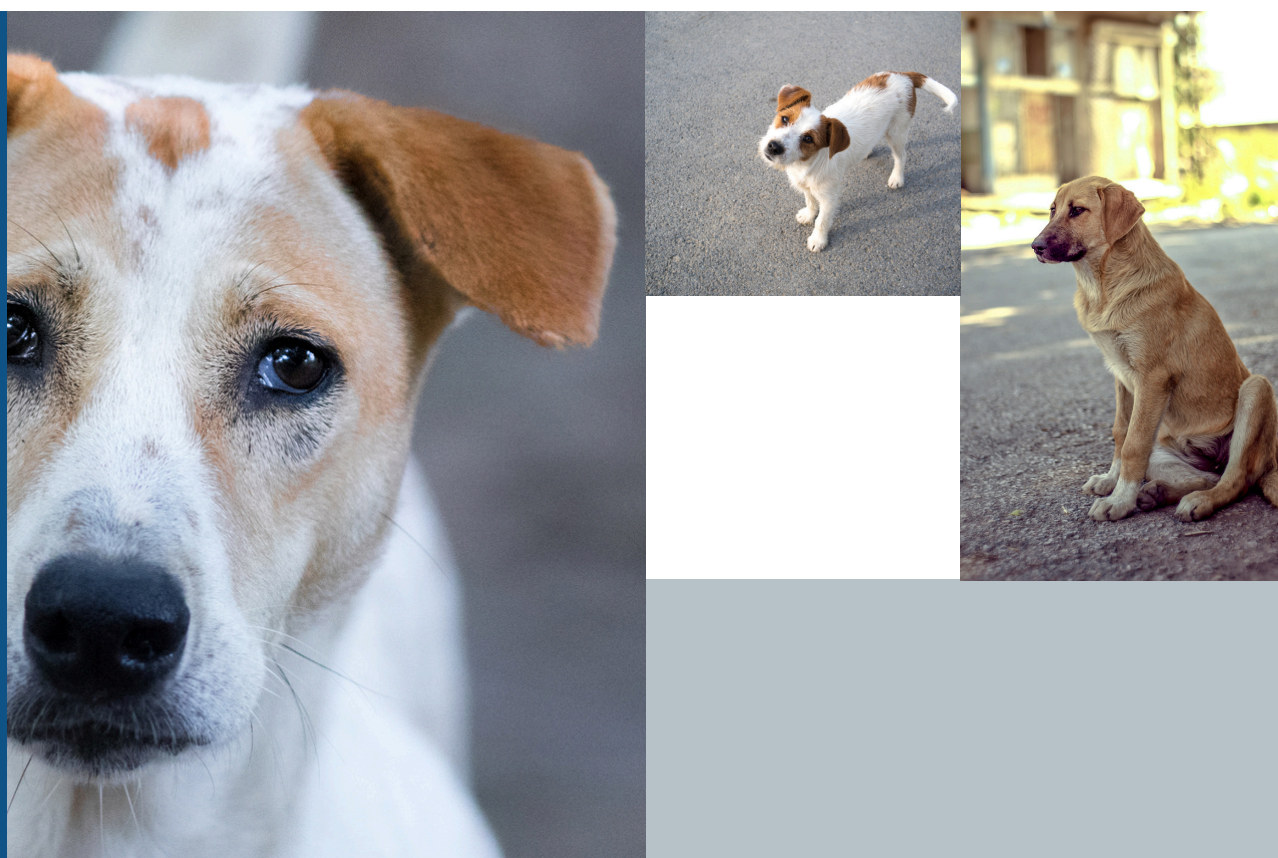
Through the patient presence of volunteers, these animals began to change. One dog, described by staff as particularly anxious and difficult to approach, gradually softened after repeated gentle interactions with a small group of youth participants.

Over the course of weeks, the dog allowed grooming, accepted walks, and eventually began to seek out contact. In another case, a long-term shelter resident who had rarely shown interest in people became noticeably more social after regular walks and play sessions. These transformations were not just heartwarming anecdotes; they increased the animals' chances of adoption, demonstrating the tangible effect of care, consistency, and human connection. The schools that engaged with the project also contributed to some of its most inspiring stories. Teachers reported that students who participated in workshops and visits returned to classrooms with new perspectives on responsibility and empathy.

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In one instance, a teacher observed that a group of students who had struggled with teamwork in academic settings worked together seamlessly when caring for animals, dividing tasks naturally and supporting each other in moments of difficulty. This experience prompted the school to integrate more service-learning opportunities into its curriculum, recognizing that practical, socially meaningful tasks can unlock skills and attitudes not easily cultivated in traditional classroom environments. Furthermore, schools became important multipliers of awareness: students shared what they had learned with families and peers, extending the project's reach beyond its immediate circle.

These success stories also intersected. The journey of a single rescued animal often mirrored the growth of the youth who cared for it. As a once-fearful dog gained trust, the volunteer who had been entrusted with its care also gained confidence and patience. The process of walking a nervous animal required calmness and self-regulation, teaching participants skills that transferred into their daily lives. Similarly, schools that celebrated the achievements of their students simultaneously highlighted the progress of the animals, illustrating the profound interconnectedness of human and animal wellbeing.



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What makes these stories particularly compelling is their authenticity. They were not orchestrated outcomes but natural consequences of care, responsibility, and collaboration. Each act of volunteering, each moment of trust gained, each classroom reflection added to a larger narrative: that inclusion and compassion, when practiced with sincerity, produce results that are both practical and transformative.

In conclusion, the success stories of HYPER offer a vivid portrait of the project's deeper impact. Volunteers discovered strength and responsibility within themselves, animals found comfort and increased chances for adoption, and schools became spaces for empathy and community learning. Together, these stories demonstrate that the HYPER Project was not only about structured activities but about human and animal lives changing in parallel. They provide living proof that when communities invest in inclusion and welfare, the results are not only measurable but also profoundly meaningful, leaving legacies of hope, trust, and transformation that endure beyond the project itself.


## CHAPTER 6 - LESSONS LEARNED

### INCLUSION LESSONS: WHAT WORKED FOR ADHD YOUTH

One of the most profound lessons to emerge from the HYPER Project was the clear demonstration that young people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) can thrive when they are placed in environments that provide them with structure, responsibility, and recognition. For far too long, ADHD has been framed primarily in terms of its difficulties, inattentiveness, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, leading to environments that exclude or underestimate these young individuals. The project revealed, however, that the issue does not lie in the capacities of the youth themselves but rather in the contexts in which they are expected to function. When these contexts are designed to accommodate their needs and recognize their strengths, ADHD youth not only participate but excel.

The shelter became a powerful example of such a context. The daily tasks associated with animal care, feeding, grooming, cleaning, and walking dogs, provided a structured routine with clear goals and visible outcomes. For ADHD youth, whose attention often fluctuates in traditional classroom environments, these practical tasks offered immediate feedback and a sense of accomplishment. The knowledge that a dog would go hungry without being fed or would remain in discomfort without being groomed gave their work genuine purpose.

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This direct connection between responsibility and outcome reinforced a sense of competence and reliability that many participants had not experienced before. Far from being overwhelmed by responsibility, the youth flourished under it, demonstrating focus, patience, and perseverance.

Another key lesson learned was the importance of adaptability in teaching and learning methods. Standard approaches to instruction, particularly those that are heavily verbal or abstract, often fail to engage ADHD youth effectively. The HYPER Project recognized this and instead emphasized methods that allowed for active participation. Training sessions incorporated visual aids to illustrate canine behavior, role-play exercises to practice safe handling, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities that encouraged collaboration. These techniques engaged multiple senses and learning styles, ensuring that participants could not only understand but also apply their knowledge in real situations. The combination of practical demonstration with immediate practice proved especially effective, showing that when learning is interactive, ADHD youth are more likely to remain attentive, motivated, and successful.

At the same time, the project revealed the delicate balance required between flexibility and structure. Too much rigidity can stifle creativity and discourage engagement, while too much freedom can lead to distraction. HYPER found that the most productive environments were those where expectations were clearly defined, for example, outlining specific tasks to be completed during a shelter visit but where there was also room for participants to approach these tasks in their own way. This balance respected the individuality of ADHD youth while providing enough guidance to ensure success. It also highlighted that structure does not mean limitation; rather, it provides a framework within which creativity, energy, and spontaneity can be channeled productively.

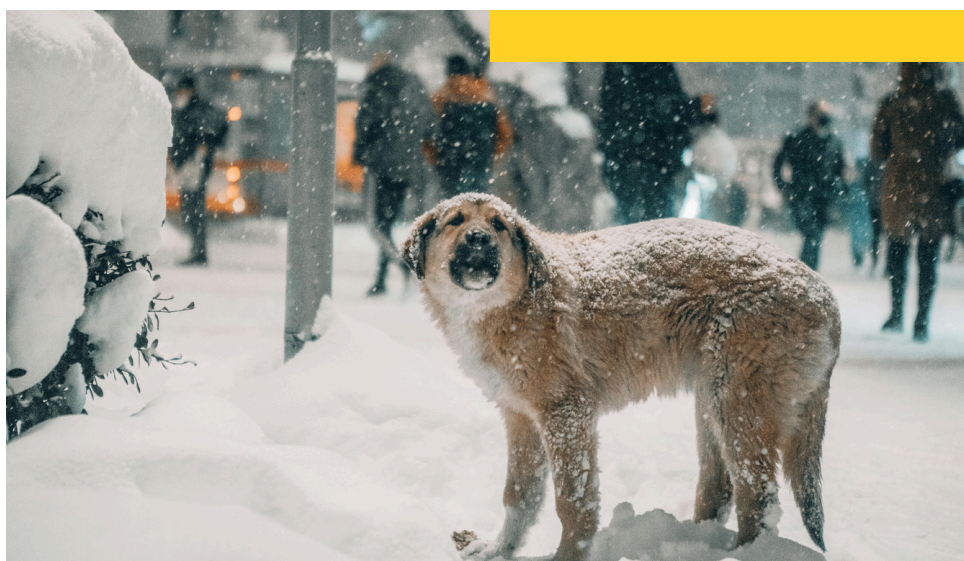
Perhaps the most significant lesson, however, was the transformative power of recognition and trust. Many ADHD youth are accustomed to being underestimated or even dismissed in traditional settings. Their energy is often seen as disruptive, their impulsivity as problematic, and their creativity as impractical. Within HYPER, the opposite occurred: their efforts were seen, valued, and celebrated. Shelter staff expressed gratitude for their contributions, families noticed newfound pride in their children, and peers acknowledged their competence. This recognition had a visible effect. Participants reported higher levels of self-confidence, describing themselves as capable and useful in ways they had not experienced before. Trust played a crucial role in this transformation. When youth were entrusted with responsibilities that truly mattered, they rose to the occasion. The trust placed in them by adults and peers became a catalyst for growth, inspiring them to prove themselves worthy of that confidence.

The lesson here is profound: empowerment is not achieved through empty encouragement or symbolic inclusion. It is achieved through real opportunities to contribute, genuine trust, and recognition of effort and achievement. When ADHD youth are given roles that carry responsibility and impact, they demonstrate resilience, creativity, and dedication. This not only benefits the young people themselves but also challenges the broader community to reconsider its assumptions about ADHD.

In summary, the inclusion lessons of the HYPER Project show that ADHD youth thrive when they are provided with structured tasks, adaptable teaching methods, and authentic recognition. These young people are not limited by their condition but by the environments that fail to value them. When those environments change, when they become supportive, flexible, and empowering, ADHD youth demonstrate not only their ability to participate but their ability to lead, to care, and to inspire. This lesson is one of the most valuable outcomes of HYPER, offering a model of inclusion that can inform future projects and reshape how society understands both ADHD and youth participation.

## **SHELTER COLLABORATION LESSONS: BALANCING NEEDS & RESOURCES**

A central dimension of the HYPER Project was its collaboration with animal shelters in Thessaloniki. These shelters, which operate as the front line of animal welfare, face complex and persistent challenges that extend far beyond the daily tasks of feeding and housing animals.



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They function with limited financial resources, chronically insufficient staff, and facilities that are often stretched beyond capacity. Against this backdrop, the involvement of youth volunteers offered both opportunities and challenges. Through this collaboration, the project uncovered a number of important lessons about how to balance the needs of shelters with the resources available from external partners such as community groups, NGOs, and volunteers.

The first and most important lesson was that preparation and training are non-negotiable. Shelters expressed an understandable concern that untrained volunteers, particularly young people, might inadvertently cause stress to the animals or increase the workload of already overburdened staff. The project responded by ensuring that all participants received structured training in animal behavior, safe handling, and shelter protocols before they began their work. This preparation reassured shelter staff that the presence of volunteers would be an asset rather than a liability. The lesson here is clear: collaboration must be professionalized. Volunteers cannot simply arrive with goodwill; they must be equipped with knowledge and skills that make their involvement genuinely supportive.

Another lesson centered on the balance between immediate relief and long-term sustainability. The contribution of youth volunteers undoubtedly improved conditions for animals in the short term. Kennels were cleaned, dogs were walked, animals received grooming and socialization, and staff benefitted from the reduction in daily workload. However, shelters also reminded the project team that volunteer support alone cannot solve systemic problems. Issues such as chronic underfunding, lack of veterinary services, and overcrowding require structural solutions that extend beyond the scope of individual projects. HYPER thus learned that while volunteerism is vital, it must be accompanied by broader advocacy for sustainable funding mechanisms, policy reforms, and stronger community engagement to ensure lasting impact.

The project also highlighted the importance of mutual respect and dialogue. Collaboration with shelters succeeded when it was built on an understanding that both sides brought valuable contributions. Shelter staff possessed deep knowledge of animal welfare, hard-won through years of experience, while youth volunteers contributed energy, creativity, and manpower. When these contributions were combined through dialogue, innovative and realistic solutions emerged. For instance, adoption campaigns suggested by youth participants benefited from the practical insights of shelter staff, while staff welcomed fresh approaches to community outreach. This spirit of co-creation ensured that solutions were not imposed but developed collaboratively, increasing their relevance and sustainability.

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A further lesson concerned the emotional dimension of shelter work. Staff described the heavy emotional burden of witnessing abandonment and neglect on a daily basis. For volunteers, especially young people, the initial exposure to these realities was often shocking. The collaboration taught the project that supporting shelters must also include addressing the emotional wellbeing of both staff and volunteers. Reflection sessions, debriefings, and opportunities to share experiences proved essential in helping participants process what they had seen and done. In the absence of such spaces, the risk of burnout or disillusionment is high, both for professionals and volunteers.

Finally, the collaboration revealed the value of building networks around shelters. Shelters are often isolated, left to manage overwhelming challenges with limited external support. HYPER demonstrated that bringing in new partners schools, NGOs, families, and youth groups, can reduce this isolation and distribute responsibility more evenly across the community. Shelters reported that the visibility created by the project, through awareness campaigns and community events, helped them gain new supporters and begin building networks that extended beyond the immediate circle of animal welfare professionals. This showed that shelters do not only need hands-on help; they also need advocacy, visibility, and long-term allies.

In conclusion, the lessons learned from shelter collaboration highlight that effective support requires preparation, professionalism, and respect. Volunteers must be trained, structural problems must be acknowledged alongside immediate relief, and emotional as well as practical needs must be considered. Perhaps most importantly, shelters thrive when they are not left alone but integrated into wider community networks. By balancing needs and resources, HYPER demonstrated that collaboration is not about replacing the efforts of shelters but about strengthening them, ensuring that their mission can continue with renewed energy and broader support.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LESSONS: RAISING AWARENESS & CHANGING ATTITUDES**

The HYPER Project was not confined to shelters or training sessions. From its earliest stages, it aimed to influence the broader social environment of Thessaloniki, recognizing that animal welfare and youth inclusion cannot be achieved in isolation. They require communities that understand, value, and actively support both goals. Through its campaigns, school collaborations, and public events, the project gained valuable insights into how awareness is raised and, more importantly, how attitudes begin to change. One of the most striking lessons was that awareness becomes effective when it is humanized. General appeals or abstract statistics about stray animals rarely move people to action.


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What proved far more powerful were personal stories that connected the public emotionally to the issues at hand. Posts on social media that followed the journey of a single dog, from fearful newcomer to adoptable companion, resonated deeply, as did testimonials from youth participants who described how their work in shelters gave them pride and purpose. These narratives allowed citizens to see both animals and young people as individuals with needs, strengths, and potential, rather than as anonymous categories. The lesson learned here was that storytelling is not an accessory to advocacy; it is its heart. When people are invited into the stories of others, empathy grows and attitudes shift.

Another key lesson was the role of schools as multipliers of awareness. HYPER discovered that classrooms and school communities are fertile grounds for shaping long-term attitudes. Workshops, discussions, and peer-to-peer learning activities created opportunities for young people to think critically about animal welfare and inclusion. Teachers reported that students returned home and shared these insights with their families, extending the impact of the project beyond the school gates.



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This intergenerational transfer of values, from students to parents, from classrooms to households, showed that engaging schools is one of the most effective ways to create lasting cultural change. By investing in education, HYPER ensured that awareness was not temporary but embedded in the outlook of future generations.

A third lesson was that visibility matters. Many communities remain unaware of the daily realities faced by shelters or of the abilities of ADHD youth simply because these stories are not part of public life. Through community events, round tables, and social media, HYPER created a visible presence that challenged this invisibility. Citizens who saw ADHD youth confidently speaking at events or walking dogs in shelters were invited to reconsider their assumptions. Likewise, publicizing the efforts of shelters and volunteers helped normalize the idea that caring for stray animals is a shared civic responsibility rather than a niche concern. Visibility created legitimacy, and legitimacy opened the door to broader acceptance and engagement.

The project also learned the importance of participation in awareness-building. Campaigns were most effective when the community was not simply an audience but a co-creator. For example, interactive posts that invited citizens to share their own stories about pets generated stronger engagement than one-way messages. Community members who attended adoption events or volunteered at shelters did not just absorb information; they became advocates themselves, spreading awareness within their networks. This highlighted that engagement should be designed as a process of empowerment rather than passive reception.

Finally, HYPER recognized that changing attitudes is gradual and requires persistence. A single campaign or event is rarely enough to transform deeply ingrained views. What made a difference was the steady rhythm of activities over the project's duration: repeated exposure to stories, consistent visibility in schools and public spaces, and ongoing dialogue with community members. Over time, this persistence built familiarity and trust, softening resistance and planting seeds for long-term cultural change.

In conclusion, the lessons learned from community engagement show that awareness is not about broadcasting information but about building relationships and fostering empathy. It thrives on storytelling, multiplies through education, relies on visibility, and deepens through participation. Above all, it requires persistence. Through its efforts, HYPER demonstrated that communities can evolve when they are invited to see differently, to care more deeply, and to act together. These lessons will remain vital for future initiatives that seek to unite animal welfare with social inclusion, reminding us that community transformation is as much about hearts as it is about minds.

# CHAPTER 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

## FUTURE OF SHELTER SUPPORT (FUNDING, PARTNERSHIPS, VOLUNTEERS)

The first priority for sustainability is strengthening the capacity of shelters. While the contribution of youth volunteers has been invaluable, shelters cannot depend solely on short-term or occasional assistance. Sustainable support requires long-term planning and reliable resources.

One recommendation is to expand funding mechanisms. This could include applications for EU or municipal grants, partnerships with private donors, and creative fundraising initiatives such as charity events or crowdfunding campaigns. By diversifying income streams, shelters can reduce dependence on a single source and achieve greater stability. Equally important is the establishment of long-term partnerships. Collaborations with universities, NGOs, and local businesses can bring not only financial resources but also expertise, visibility, and logistical support. Businesses might, for instance, sponsor food or veterinary services, while universities could provide student interns or research support.

Finally, the volunteer model developed through HYPER should be institutionalized. Training modules for new volunteers can ensure continuity, while mentorship systems can allow experienced volunteers to guide newcomers. This structured approach guarantees that shelters benefit from reliable, prepared, and motivated helpers, reducing the burden on staff and ensuring consistent quality of care for animals.

## LONG-TERM INCLUSION STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH

The empowerment of ADHD youth was one of the project's most inspiring achievements. To sustain this success, inclusion must move from being project-based to becoming a permanent feature of community life. One recommendation is to institutionalize youth programs in shelters and NGOs. Creating structured volunteer opportunities specifically adapted to ADHD youth can ensure ongoing engagement. These programs should include clear routines, flexible learning methods, and opportunities for responsibility and recognition.

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Another recommendation is to integrate skill development into youth participation. Beyond immediate shelter tasks, programs could offer workshops on communication, leadership, and teamwork, preparing young people to transfer these skills into education and employment. This approach would ensure that inclusion is not limited to shelter work but becomes a pathway for broader social and professional growth. Finally, youth inclusion should involve active participation in decision-making. Giving young people roles in planning, evaluation, and leadership fosters ownership and prevents inclusion from being symbolic. Their perspectives bring innovation and authenticity, ensuring that programs remain relevant and engaging.

## **ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

Schools emerged as powerful allies in raising awareness and shaping attitudes. Their involvement must be strengthened if the cultural impact of HYPHER is to be sustained. One recommendation is to embed animal welfare and inclusion themes into curricula. Service-learning programs, classroom discussions, and project-based activities can help students connect academic knowledge with practical civic responsibility. Schools can also integrate shelter visits into extracurricular activities, providing students with hands-on experiences that cultivate empathy and responsibility.

In addition, teacher training programs could be developed to equip educators with the tools to discuss ADHD inclusion and animal welfare in meaningful ways. This ensures that awareness is not limited to isolated workshops but becomes part of the broader educational mission. Schools should also be encouraged to act as community hubs, hosting events, exhibitions, and adoption days in collaboration with shelters. Such initiatives would not only raise visibility but also normalize the values of care, inclusion, and responsibility among the next generation.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALING AND REPLICATION**

The achievements of HYPHER hold potential far beyond Thessaloniki. With careful planning, the project can serve as a model for replication in other cities and even across national borders. One opportunity is to document and standardize the project's methods. Training manuals, awareness materials, and volunteer protocols can be compiled into toolkits that other organizations can adapt to their contexts. This would ensure that the knowledge and practices developed through HYPHER do not remain localized but inspire broader change. Another opportunity lies in international cooperation.

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Building networks with animal welfare organizations and inclusion-focused NGOs across Europe, HYPER's model can be scaled, benefiting from shared experiences and joint advocacy. EU-funded programs could provide a framework for such cross-border collaboration.

Finally, replication should be guided by flexibility and adaptation. While the principles of HYPER are universal, compassion, inclusion, empowerment, their implementation must be tailored to local realities. Each community has unique cultural, social, and institutional contexts, and replication should honor these differences while maintaining the project's core values.

## CHAPTER 8 - DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

### REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS (COACH & TEAM INVOLVEMENT)

The preparation of the final report and handbook was followed by a thorough review conducted with the involvement of the project's coach and team members. Drafts were carefully examined for accuracy, completeness, and clarity. This process ensured that every activity, training session, and outcome was represented faithfully. The review was more than a technical exercise; it was also a moment of reflection. Participants revisited the journey of the project, assessed whether the documents captured the essence of HYPER, and adjusted sections where necessary.

The collaborative nature of this stage reinforced the project's commitment to inclusivity. Youth participants contributed perspectives based on their direct experiences, while the coach provided oversight to guarantee professionalism and coherence. Once the team reached consensus, the documents were approved as a collective achievement. This process strengthened ownership and ensured that the final publication reflected both the factual results and the values that had guided the project from the beginning.

### PUBLICATION OF THE FINAL REPORT ON THE HYPER WEBSITE

The official release of the Final Report and Handbook took place on the HYPER website. Throughout the project, the website had served as a recognizable platform for information and interaction. The decision to place the final outputs there ensured visibility and open access for all stakeholders.

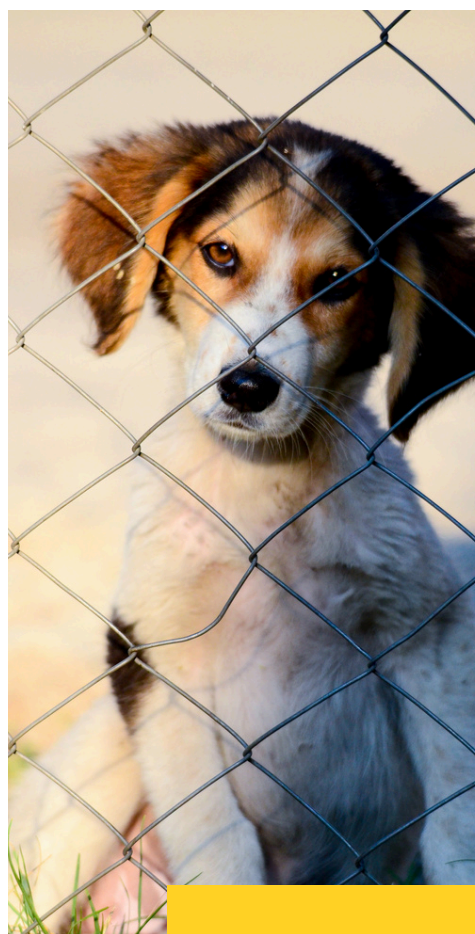
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The online publication carried symbolic weight as well. It represented the culmination of many months of collaborative work and stood as a permanent record of what had been achieved. Visitors could consult the full report, download sections of interest, and share materials within their networks. This openness reflected the project's philosophy: knowledge and experience should be available to the community as a whole, not confined to a small group of participants.

## COMMUNICATION CHANNELS FOR TRANSPARENCY (EMAILS, SOCIAL MEDIA, NEWSLETTER)

The dissemination strategy extended to several communication channels in order to reach diverse audiences. Direct communication was carried out through email notifications to participants, shelter staff, schools, and partner organizations. These messages included access to the report and expressed gratitude for the contributions that had made the project possible.

At the same time, social media announcements shared key highlights in a more visual and engaging format. Posts included images, infographics, and short extracts from the report, making the content accessible to a broader public. This form of communication encouraged dialogue with the community, as followers reacted, commented, and reflected on the results. In addition, a newsletter summarizing the main findings was distributed to schools, NGOs, and local partners.



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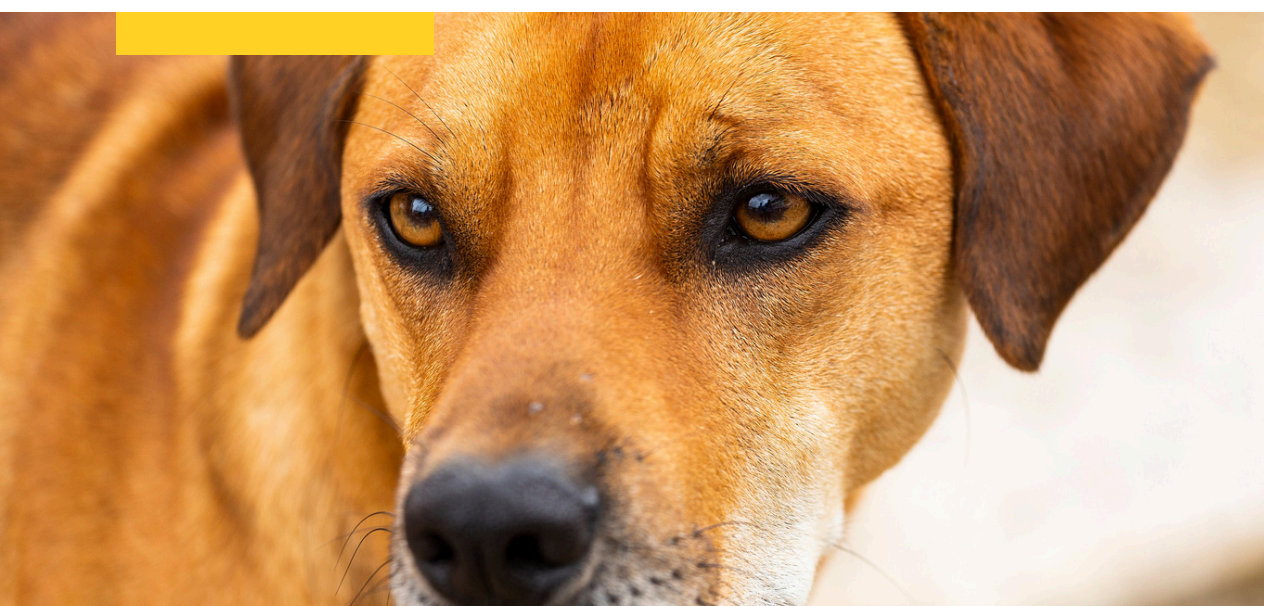
The newsletter provided a concise overview and directed readers to the full report for further details. This ensured that even individuals with limited time or access to online platforms could remain informed.

Each of these channels served a specific purpose, but together they formed a coherent strategy that balanced professionalism with accessibility. Information reached immediate stakeholders directly, while the wider community also gained access to the project's achievements and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSION

### KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM HYPER

The HYPER Project has shown that the challenges of animal welfare and youth inclusion are deeply interconnected and that solutions emerge most powerfully when addressed together. Shelters gained essential support through the presence of trained volunteers, while animals benefitted from improved living conditions, socialization, and increased chances of adoption. At the same time, ADHD youth discovered opportunities for growth, responsibility, and empowerment, proving that inclusion succeeds when participation is meaningful and responsibilities are genuine.



The project also underlined the importance of collaboration. Shelters, schools, NGOs, and families worked together, demonstrating that networks are stronger than isolated efforts. Community engagement extended the impact even further, raising awareness, shifting attitudes, and fostering empathy among citizens of Thessaloniki. Through awareness campaigns, school programs, and storytelling, HYPHER managed to reframe the way both animals and ADHD youth are perceived, leaving behind a cultural shift as well as practical achievements.

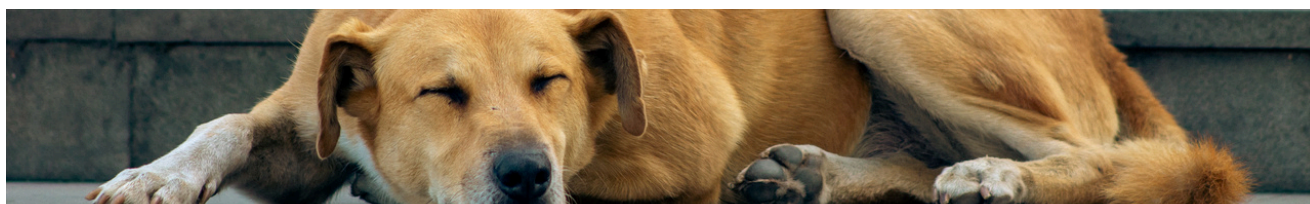
Perhaps the most enduring lesson is that change requires persistence and vision. The impact of HYPHER was not confined to temporary improvements but created models and tools that can guide future action. Training modules, awareness materials, and this handbook ensure that the project's achievements will remain accessible, providing inspiration and guidance for new initiatives in Thessaloniki and beyond.

## **FINAL WORDS OF THANKS**

The success of HYPHER was made possible through the dedication of many individuals and organizations. Deep appreciation is extended to the shelter staff who welcomed the project with openness, sharing their knowledge and providing opportunities for meaningful collaboration. Their work, often carried out under difficult circumstances, remains the foundation upon which all animal welfare initiatives depend.

Equal gratitude is owed to the youth participants, particularly those with ADHD, whose energy, creativity, and commitment gave life to the project. Their growth and achievements stand as a testament to what is possible when inclusion is practiced sincerely. Families, educators, and schools also played an essential role, supporting the youth and reinforcing the values of empathy and responsibility.

The coach and project team deserve special recognition for guiding the initiative with professionalism and care. Their efforts in planning, coordinating, and reviewing activities ensured both the integrity and the success of the project. Finally, thanks are extended to the broader community of Thessaloniki and to all partners who engaged with HYPHER through events, campaigns, and dialogue. Each contribution, no matter how small, formed part of a collective achievement.



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## CONTACT INFORMATION & WEBSITE

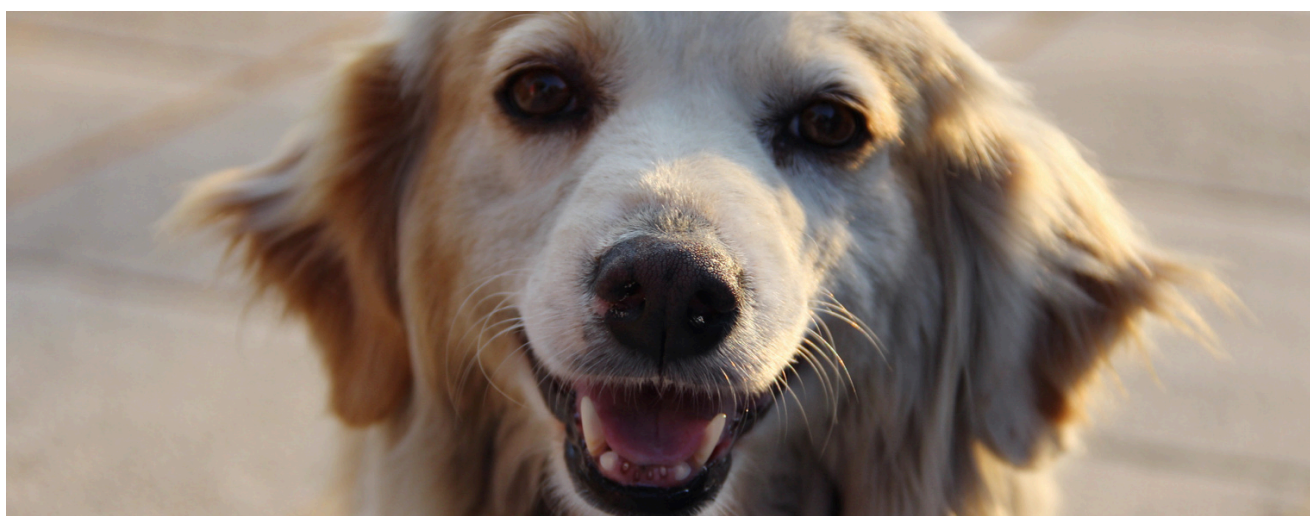
The HYPER Project remains committed to transparency and continued engagement. Those interested in learning more about its activities, accessing the Final Report and Handbook, or exploring opportunities for collaboration are invited to visit the official website:

 [www.hyper-action.eu](http://www.hyper-action.eu)

For direct inquiries, questions, or partnership proposals, the project team can be contacted through the communication channels provided on the website. The platform also serves as a space for sharing updates, resources, and future initiatives connected to animal welfare and youth inclusion.

## CLOSING REFLECTION

HYPER was built on a simple but profound idea: that two vulnerable groups, stray animals and ADHD youth, could support one another and, in doing so, enrich the entire community. This idea has proven itself in practice, leaving behind stronger shelters, empowered young people, and a more compassionate community. The conclusion of the project is not an end but a call to continue building on this foundation. The work of care, inclusion, and responsibility must go forward, guided by the lessons and achievements that HYPER has made possible.







# BRIDGING PAWS AND PEOPLE: THE HYPER HANDBOOK ON INCLUSION AND ANIMAL WELFARE

 [www.hyper-action.eu](http://www.hyper-action.eu)

 [www.fifty-fifty.gr](http://www.fifty-fifty.gr)

**HYPER-ACTION FOR ANIMAL SHELTERING**

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