

Greeting of the Vice Rector for Research and Lifelong Learning of the University of Macedonia, Professor Dimitrios Chandrakis

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy for the opportunity to greet you on behalf of the rectorate at the opening ceremony of the 4th International Festival "The reflection of disability in art". This sincere joy comes from the fact that the Festival is an initiative that we warmly embraced and supported from the beginning, because we all believed in its importance and sought to make it an institution of the University of Macedonia. In fact, it is a great honor for our University that it takes place again this year under the auspices of Her excellency, the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellariopoulou, which bears testament, in the clearest way, to the importance, the scope and the impact of the event.

The festival, which has become international since last year, has been since the very beginning and still remains a special event. It fully fulfills its goals which are none other than supporting and promoting the social inclusion of people with disabilities through their participation in cultural events in any role they wish, as actors, directors, musicians, volunteers or, simply, as spectators.

The International Festival "The reflection of disability in art" is held every year from 3 to 10 December. The choice of dates is not random, as this period includes three world days established by the UN, particularly important and emblematic for the purposes of the event. The first is December 3rd, like today, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The second is December 5th, World Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development and the third day is December 10th, World Human Rights Day. These are the three pillars on which this so inspiring initiative rests.

For the inspiration of the initiative and the tireless efforts made every year by herself and her collaborators but also for the obvious success of the event and, in fact, under the adverse conditions of the pandemic, I want to congratulate and thank on behalf of the rectorate the Associate Professor of Special Education of our University, Mrs. Lefkothea Kartasidou. Indicative of its success is both the number of films submitted this year from around the world for the competition section of the Festival, which reaches 600, as well as the ever-expanding framework of activities such as the open invitation to music composition and the voluntary blood donation.

In closing, I would like to thank the jury, the scientists, the employees and those who have contributed to this year's event and, of course, the Thessaloniki Film Festival,

the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Region of Central Macedonia. Above all, however, I want to thank and congratulate the volunteers, all the groups, the clubs, the schools, the teachers and the children themselves, for their efforts and commendable participation.

The Rector's Office of the University of Macedonia and I personally, wish every success in the organization. Thank you very much.