

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.



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Good Practice Guide



**SPORT
HANDICAP
INCLUSIVE
EXPERIENCE**



Maquette **Studio Bohu Tohu** - La Rochelle - Octobre 2024

Good Practice Guide

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BACKGROUND

In the European Union, 87 million people have some form of disability, representing 1 in 4 adults. Statistics show that 50% of disabled people of working age are employed, as against 75% for people without disabilities. The risk of dropping out of school is twice as high among people with disabilities, who are also doubly exposed to the risk of poverty or social exclusion. (Source: Eurostat)

The issue of welcoming, supporting and training “students with special status” is a recurring one in higher education institutions, both in France and in all the countries represented in this consortium. Among these students, Students with Disabilities (SWD) represent the largest population, it is therefore legitimate for a European university to take a close interest in them when responding to a call for projects relating to cooperation. Indeed, laws, habits and financial resources are all factors that can vary from one institution to another in terms of the resources and procedures for supporting SWD, generally speaking in terms of access to training and more particularly when it comes to offering them the opportunity to take part in sporting activities. The needs expressed by many disabled students, for countless different reasons but very often linked to their disability, are directly tied to the difficulties they feel are inherent in the prospect of international student mobility, perceived as a project that is impossible to carry out under the right conditions, despite all the benefits it could offer. Our project is based on the benefits of interpersonal exchanges of practice (or inter-service exchanges, the services involved being those dedicated to supporting Students with Disabilities and to sporting activities) to make it easier for disabled students to study at the EU Conexus European University. The aim is to show students who are unsure that specific cooperation between the partner universities will not only provide them with the same level of individual support wherever they go, guaranteeing the best chances of success in their studies, but also give them access to the discovery and practice of sporting activities that will be fully accessible to them under optimal conditions.



GUIDE DRAFTED AS PART OF THE SHIE PROJECT

The EU-CONEXUS European University is a transnational academic and research institution focusing on the theme of Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability from a holistic perspective. This area of excellence creates a unique competitive advantage for EU-CONEXUS, which is well placed to bring together and make use of the complementary thematic expertise of all its regional partners and ecosystems, through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches.

Evenly distributed across Europe, the campus reaches out to all European coasts. Students, teachers, researchers and employees study, teach, conduct research, break new ground and work on a European scale.

SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE AND ADVICE ON READING IT

This guide is designed to improve the inclusion of Students with Disabilities in higher education, by compiling regulations, best practices and practical advice to promote and facilitate the mobility of disabled students within Europe.

TARGET AUDIENCE

“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (Source: United Nations).

REFERENCES TO NATIONAL REGULATIONS

◆ Cyprus and Frederick University

With regard to disabled people in general, the L127(1)/2000 Law for Persons with Disabilities provides for the protection of disabled people in Cyprus, including the guarantee of equal rights and opportunities and the promotion of their social and economic integration.



The law also establishes the principle that the State should ensure that appropriate vocational rehabilitation measures are made available to all categories of disabled people. More specifically, it provides for measures in the field of employment, including recruitment, professional promotion, vocational rehabilitation within the company, communication and information, etc. In addition, Amendment Act 57(1)/2004 prohibits all forms of discrimination, whether direct or indirect, in terms of promotion, access to all types and all levels of vocational guidance, vocational training, work experience, etc. The law also authorises positive action to prevent and compensate for disadvantages linked to disability.

In terms of education, as stipulated in Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, everyone has the right to free quality primary education, which is compulsory for all citizens. Article 28 of the Constitution guarantees non-discrimination among all citizens with regard to race, language, sex, political or other beliefs, national or social descent, birth, colour, wealth, social class, or any other grounds. Furthermore, in accordance with Law 24(1)/1993 on Compulsory Education, parents are required to enrol their children in a school of their school district, whether or not they are legal residents of the island. Education is compulsory and free in state schools for all citizens up to the age of 15.

According to the Cyprus Law on Education and Training of Children with Special Needs of 1999 and Regulations of 2001, “Students with Special Difficulties” are defined as students with severe learning difficulties or special learning difficulties, functional or adaptive difficulties due to physical, sensory, mental or other cognitive difficulties and mental disabilities.

The legislative framework for the education of children with special needs is established by the 113(I)/1999 to 2020 Special Education Laws and the corresponding Regulations. This framework guarantees children’s rights to education, describes the processes for identifying children with special needs and determining their placement in the most appropriate educational setting. It also specifies the facilities and resources required for each individual case.

◆ Croatia

In Croatia, the laws relating to disability include several pieces of legislation designed to guarantee the rights and integration of disabled people into society. These laws include:

- *The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Zakon o pravima osoba s invaliditetom): This law establishes the fundamental rights of people with disabilities in Croatia, particularly with regard to access to education, employment, healthcare, transport and social life. It aims to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities.*
- *The law on the accessibility of public buildings and spaces (Zakon o pristupačnosti građevina): This law imposes accessibility standards for public buildings, public transport, public spaces and services, to ensure that disabled people have access to these infrastructures and services.*
- *The Law on the Employment of People with Disabilities (Zakon o zapošljavanju osoba s invaliditetom): This law compels employers to hire a certain percentage of disabled people in their workforce, to encourage their professional integration and economic participation.*
- *The Law on benefits and assistance for people with disabilities (Zakon o pravima hrvatskih branitelja, vojnih invalida, civilnih invalida rata i članova njihovih obitelji): This law sets out the eligibility criteria and procedures for granting benefits and financial assistance to people with disabilities, in order to support them with their specific needs.*

These laws aim to guarantee the rights of disabled people in Croatia and to promote their full integration into society. They also provide protection and support mechanisms to ensure their active participation in all aspects of life.

◆ France

In 1958, Article 1 of the Constitution of the French Fifth Republic established fundamental principles for the nation: “France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion”. Although this article does not explicitly mention citizens with disabilities, the members of the constituent assembly defined equality before the law for all, indiscriminately, as the foundation of the social order. This implicit inclusion laid the foundations for the evolution of the rights of people with disabilities in France.

In 2005, a significant turning point in the French legislation came with the enactment of the Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities, Participation and Citizenship of Disabled People. This law was the first in France to define disability as a “limitation on participation in society”. It marked a break with the traditional approach: disabled people are no longer simply “looked after”, but “taken into account”, by acknowledging their right to full participation in society. To make administrative formalities easier, the law introduced a single point of contact in each département, through the Maisons Départementales des Personnes Handicapées (Departmental Centres for Disabled People). These centres play a crucial role in centralising information and services for people with disabilities at a local level, thereby contributing to the concrete implementation of the equal rights set out in the Constitution.

◆ Greece

In Greece, the main laws relating to disability include:

- ▶ *Law no. 3986/2011 on the social integration of disabled people: This law aims to promote social integration and equal opportunities for people with disabilities in Greece. It establishes fundamental rights for people with disabilities, particularly with regard to access to education, employment, healthcare, transport and social life.*
- ▶ *Law no. 3699/2008 on the accessibility of public buildings and spaces: This law imposes accessibility standards for public buildings, public transport, public spaces and services, to ensure that disabled people have access to these infrastructures and services.*
- ▶ *Law no. 3699/2008 on the employment of disabled people: This law compels employers to hire a certain percentage of disabled people in their workforce, so as to encourage their professional integration and economic participation.*
- ▶ *Law no 3699/2008 on benefits and assistance for people with disabilities: This law sets out the eligibility criteria and procedures for granting benefits and financial assistance to people with disabilities, in order to support them with their specific needs.*

These laws aim to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities in Greece and to promote their full integration into society. They also provide protection and support mechanisms to ensure their active participation in all aspects of life.

◆ Lithuania

In Lithuania, the main law concerning disabled people is the Law on the Social Integration of People with Disabilities. This law, adopted in 1995 and amended several times since, aims to guarantee equal rights and opportunities for disabled people and to promote their social integration. It establishes the fundamental principles of accessibility, non-discrimination and protection of the rights of disabled people in various areas of life, such as education, employment, accommodation, social services, transport and leisure.

The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the Constitution) (Valstybės žinios (Official Gazette) No 33-1014, 1992) sets forth fundamental human rights and freedoms. The provisions of the Constitution comply with the requirements of protection and respect for human honour and dignity, and prevention of discrimination, as prescribed by international treaties. In order to consolidate the constitutional principles of human rights, a Law on Equal Treatment was adopted in 2003 (Valstybės žinios (Official Gazette) No 67-3350, 2010; No 114-5115, 2003; No 76-2998, 2008), which defines some basic concepts: direct and indirect discrimination, equal opportunities, harassment, etc. Discrimination is defined as any direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or incitement to discrimination based on sex, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, beliefs, convictions or opinions, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion.

Major concepts relating to disability are defined in Article 2 of the Law on Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities (Valstybės žinios (Official Gazette) No 67-3350, 2010; No 36-969, 1991; No 83-2983, 2004): A person with a disability is an individual who has a physical or mental impairment, or a working capacity of less than 55% and/or special needs, as recognised by the aforementioned law.

The definition of a disabled person is also included in Article 18.16 of the Technical Requirements STR 2.03.01:2001 Buildings and Territories. Requirements relating to the needs of persons with disabilities (Valstybės žinios (Official Gazette) No 53-1898, 2001; No 67-3350, 2010): disabled persons – people with complete or partial loss of function of a body part, including physical, visual, auditory, dexterity impairments, which result in partial or total limitation of the ability of people to move and have access to elements surrounding them.

https://www.urm.lt/storage/main/public/uploads/2024/02/56_en.pdf



◆ Romania

In Romania, Article 15 of Law No. 448/2006 guarantees disabled people free and equal access to education, whatever their age, adapted to their type and degree of disability and to their educational needs. This law also promotes lifelong learning and vocational training. The choice of type and form of education, as well as the educational institution, is the responsibility of the disabled person or, if necessary, his or her family or legal representative. Education for people with disabilities is an integral part of the national educational system and may be provided through: a) general education; b) special education integrated within the general education system; c) special education units; d) home education or education in health institutions; e) other forms of learning.

In accordance with Article 18 of Law No. 448/2006, people with disabilities are entitled to specific support within the educational process, regardless of level. These rights include access to educational support services, the provision of technical aids and equipment adapted to their type and degree of disability, adapted classroom furniture, textbooks and courses in accessible formats for students with visual impairments, and the use of assistive equipment and software for sitting examinations at all levels.

However, the concept of “inclusion” is not covered by the Romanian national education law. The provisions relating to the education of students with special needs refer to two special forms of education: segregated education and integrated education. An analysis of national regulations in this area reveals a frequent confusion between the terms “integration” and “inclusion”, although these terms have distinct meanings in international documents dealing specifically with special educational needs or disabilities. Unfortunately, Romanian legislation on special education reflects outdated views and neglects the concept of inclusive education, which emphasises the need to balance equality and equity among students and to personalise educational approaches and pathways.

REFERENCES TO INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARDS

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:

[HTTPS://WWW.OHCHR.ORG/FR/INSTRUMENTS-MECHANISMS/INSTRUMENTS/CONVENTION-RIGHTS-PERSONS-DISABILITIES](https://www.ohchr.org/fr/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities)

In addition to national laws on the social integration of people with disabilities, all the countries participating in the SHIE project have also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) of the United Nations in 2010. This international convention, a fundamental document in the recognition of human rights, establishes guiding principles to promote the full participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in society. It emphasises the importance of equal opportunities, accessibility, non-discrimination and respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities.

It also encourages States Parties to take effective measures to ensure access for people with disabilities to education, employment, healthcare, transport and other public services. As signatories to the Convention, the six countries have committed to implementing specific policies and measures to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. This includes the creation of a favourable legislative framework, the implementation of integration and awareness-raising programmes, and the provision of services and support suited to the

needs of people with disabilities. This partnership demonstrates our collective commitment to building inclusive societies that respect everyone’s fundamental rights, and to promoting equal opportunities and diversity.

GENERAL TRENDS REGARDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDY ABROAD

In October 2021, the European Commission announced the adoption of a framework to increase the inclusiveness and diversity of the **Erasmus+** programme for the period 2021-2027. This framework is broad and concerns different types of profiles, including people with disabilities. The participation of people with disabilities is a key priority of the programme. Financial support and specific provisions designed to encourage their participation in **Erasmus+** mobility activities are planned.

HIGH-IMPACT OPPORTUNITIES

The **Erasmus+** programme offers many opportunities to promote the education, training and social and professional integration of people with disabilities. Cooperation projects (key action 2) finance the creation of innovative tools and methods on a European scale. Mobility (key action 1) offers learners and employees from all education sectors the opportunity to study or train in Europe and beyond.

According to a [Note from the Erasmus+ Observatory](#) (April 2022) studying the benefits of international mobility, although the number of people taking part in mobility schemes for education and vocational training and higher education remains low, studying abroad has a major impact on the person’s personal and professional life. Mobility is an important lever in the path to success for learners with disabilities.



OVERVIEW OF REGULATIONS AND POLICIES RELATING TO THE PROMOTION/FACILITATION OF STUDY ABROAD FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

EXISTING ERASMUS POLICIES

Erasmus+ is committed to promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating “access for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds and with fewer opportunities”. This specifically includes people with disabilities or suffering from long-term illnesses (LTI), whose participation in transnational activities may be limited or hampered by their situation. The programme aims to create equal opportunities for all, providing specific support and reasonable accommodation to ensure the full participation of these people. By promoting the inclusion of these under-represented groups, **Erasmus+** helps to create an educational and cultural environment that is diverse and respectful of diversity. This approach aligns the programme with the principles of social justice and equal opportunities, boosting its positive impact on the lives of individuals and communities across Europe.

WHO IS CONCERNED?

Factors limiting mobility include social and economic obstacles, as well as disability and health problems:

- *Disability (participants with special needs): people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities – 87 million people have some form of disability;*
- *Health problems: people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions.*

ERASMUS+ COVERS ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM ILLNESSES

An additional “inclusion” top-up is allocated to facilitate and encourage the participation of people with disabilities or suffering from LTI.

In addition, a complementary amount based on actual costs may be granted when the situations of the people concerned give rise to expenses that the usual **Erasmus+** funding cannot cover. In such cases, priority will be given to situations related to disability or LTI.

REDUCING OBSTACLES THROUGH SPORT

Sport enables Students with Disabilities to discover and then regularly practice a sport in optimal conditions, including, for example, staff specifically trained in parasports or special equipment. The goal is to integrate able-bodied students and SWD in sports activities..., either in their training or in their practise of a sport: as part of an inclusive approach, priority will be given (depending on the possibilities linked to the sport practised) to the creation of mixed teams (e.g., sailing proposed in La Rochelle, or callisthenics proposed in Athens).



Sport is a powerful driving force for many people. It motivates them to push back their limits, forge an identity and share common goals and values with other sportsmen and women. For disabled students, sport is also a way of reclaiming their bodies and understanding their abilities.

There are many sports activities accessible to disabled people, whatever their disability. Certain sporting disciplines have also been created to enable as many people as possible to take part in sport in a setting adapted to their situation, focusing on three essential ideas:

- *Fun through leisure activities such as introductory courses and sports breaks;*
- *Progress leading to sports competition;*
- *Performance towards regular competitive practice in search of improvement.*

There are many solutions to enable everyone, taking into account their differences and specific situations, to practise a sport in an adapted setting, accompanied by people who are aware of their needs. Whatever discipline they choose, parasports allow all Students with Disabilities to test themselves in a fun, safe environment adapted to their specific needs. It's an opportunity for them to see how far they can go, but also to become aware of what they can and can't do.

By taking part in a sporting activity, students are encouraged to develop or maintain their functional abilities and, as a result, develop their independence. It's an excellent way for them to reclaim their skills and regain confidence in their abilities. Physical activity also enables them to better understand their limitations, without judgement and with respect for their differences. Whether students are able-bodied or not, sport is a wonderful conveyor of values, both unifying and humanist. It enables everyone to come together around shared principles and, for some sports such as team sports, common objectives. For young people with disabilities, it is also an opportunity to meet others who are experiencing the same difficulties and facing the same challenges. Realising that they are not the only ones living in these conditions helps to fight isolation, to create links and, in some cases, give a new social dynamic to everyday life.

As well as sharing experiences, for young disabled people, taking part in sport means belonging to a group and being considered above all as a sportsperson. It is about valuing the individual as part of a team, a pair or a group, all driven by the same desire to succeed and have fun. This group dynamic, which can be found within sports clubs, enables many young people to assert themselves and gain in confidence. All of which goes to show that sport, whether for the able-bodied or the disabled, is a way of building values, social cohesion and self-esteem.

KEY FACTORS FOR A SUCCESSFUL STUDY ABROAD

SAFETY OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The safety of Students with Disabilities when they go on an Erasmus programme is a fundamental concern for the educational institutions and organisations putting together these international exchanges. In recognition of the diversity of needs and challenges that these students may face, specific measures are put in place to ensure their well-being throughout their stay abroad.

Even before their departure, SWD often benefit from a preliminary assessment process designed at identifying their accessibility needs, whether in terms of university infrastructure, student accommodation or public transport. This assessment makes it possible to plan and make the necessary adjustments, to ensure that students can participate fully in the academic and social life of the host country.

In addition, partner institutions and Erasmus programme management teams provide disabled students with detailed information about the services and resources available in the host country. This may include information on accessible facilities, financial support and local organisations offering specific support for disabled people.

Students with Disabilities can also benefit from additional individual support throughout their stay abroad. This may include personalised support from host university staff or local tutors, who can help with practical or administrative challenges related to their disability.

Sport can play a crucial role as a facilitating factor in this context. By improving physical fitness and boosting self-confidence, sport can help disabled students to cope better with the challenges they face during their stay abroad. Sport can also encourage social integration and help them connect with other students, which can contribute to strengthen their support network and improving their emotional and social security. By encouraging Students with Disability to take part in sport before they leave and by providing them with easy access to accessible sports facilities during their stay abroad, universities can help to ensure their safety and well-being throughout this enriching experience.

PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

To prepare for the departure of a Student with Disabilities abroad, it is essential to draw up a summary table of all the services available locally. This table serves as a clear and organised reference, enabling students and their carers to plan their stay efficiently and ensure that all their needs are covered.

In order to draft this summary table, it is necessary to identify the specific needs of the SWD. It is crucial to understand the particular needs of disabled students. These may include specific accommodations, technical support, medical services and educational and social support.

We carried out extensive research to identify the services available in the destination city or country. These include:

- *Medical services: Hospitals, specialists clinics, doctors who speak the student's language or have sign language skills.*
- *Public transport accessibility: Information on accessible public transport, wheelchair accessible taxis and special shuttle services for people with disabilities.*
- *Accommodation: Accessible hotels or student accommodation, with wheelchair access, adapted bathrooms, etc.*
- *Educational support: Universities and academic institutions offering support services, tutors and assistive technologies.*
- *Activities and leisure: Activity centres, sports clubs and other facilities offering inclusive activities.*

We created a clear, easy-to-use summary table. Each column of the table corresponds to a category of service (medical, transport, accommodation, etc.), while each row lists the options available with specific details when necessary.



Please note that before departure, it is important to check all the information collected to ensure that it is accurate. In addition, this table must be regularly updated to reflect any new information or changes in services.

We made sure that the table was easily accessible to students, their carers and the administrative heads. It may be useful to provide it in paper and digital formats, and to ensure that it is available on accessible platforms (such as adapted websites or applications).

We believe that creating a summary table of all the services available locally is a key element in preparing for the departure of a SWD abroad. This not only ensures that the student has all the necessary assistance, but also reduces stress and unforeseen events, thus facilitating a more inclusive and enriching experience abroad.

Time management while traveling with Students with Disabilities

Travelling with disabled studentd requires careful planning and a thoughtful approach to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience for all.

Before travelling, it is essential to thoroughly check the accessibility of all the places you plan to visit: Make sure there are access ramps, lifts and toilets, and get in touch in advance to confirm accessibility features. In addition, choose a means of transport adapted to the needs of SWD by ensuring that buses, trains or other vehicles are wheelchair accessible and have the necessary equipment. Finally, prepare for any medical emergencies by making sure that you have the appropriate medication and medical equipment, as well as knowing the location of nearby health facilities.

Allow extra time for each activity, as Students with Disabilities may need more time to move between locations, use toilets or take breaks. You should also create a flexible timetable that allows for adjustments, as unexpected delays can occur. It is therefore essential to have buffer time between activities. Finally, include regular rest periods in the schedule: frequent breaks help fatigue and ensure that all students can participate fully in the activities.

Draw up a detailed emergency plan and make sure that all students and employees know the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency, including evacuation protocols and the contact details of emergency services. Also carry a well-stocked first-aid kit with supplies specifically adapted to the needs of disabled students.

By planning ahead, allocating extra time and taking accessibility into account at every step of the journey, you can ensure that travelling with SWD is an enriching and inclusive experience for all.

RAISING AWARENESS AND TRAINING FOR UNIVERSITY STAFF

Organising awareness-raising sessions for university staff on the specific needs of Students with Disabilities is an essential step in promoting inclusion and providing an educational environment that is accessible to all. These sessions should be carefully planned and structured to provide participants with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support SWD.

As part of these sessions, it is vital to raise awareness among university staff of the different types of disability and the challenges faced by students suffering from them. This includes



not only physical disabilities, but also sensory, cognitive and psychological disabilities. By better understanding the specific needs of these students, university staff will be better prepared to offer them appropriate support.

An important part of raising awareness is also highlighting the obstacles that disabled students may face in their academic career, whether in terms of access to facilities, teaching materials or social interaction. By identifying these obstacles, university staff can work to overcome them and create a more inclusive environment for all students.

In addition to these awareness-raising sessions, it is also important to provide regular training on the integration of Students with Disabilities, with particular emphasis on the benefits of sport for their physical and mental well-being. Sport can play a crucial part in the overall development of SWD, promoting physical health, boosting self-confidence and encouraging social integration.

This training should include information on the adjustments needed to enable disabled students to actively participate in sports activities, as well as strategies to encourage their participation and involvement. Making university staff aware of the many benefits of sport for disabled students reinforces the importance of their inclusion in all areas of university life.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SPORTS FACILITIES

Ensuring the accessibility of sports facilities on campus is a fundamental requirement for promoting inclusion and guaranteeing equal opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. To achieve this, it is essential to implement measures such as the installation of access ramps, elevators and other necessary equipment to enable easy and safe use of these spaces.

The installation of such facilities must be accompanied by careful planning and inclusive design from the outset, taking into account the specific needs of people with

disabilities. This also means ensuring that equipment meets current accessibility standards and follows recommended best practice to guarantee maximum accessibility.

In addition to the initial installation of equipment, it is crucial to establish regular maintenance programmes. These programmes are designed to ensure that facilities remain functional, safe and accessible throughout the academic year. Preventive maintenance plays a key role in detecting and resolving any problems at an early stage, thus guaranteeing continued accessibility for all users.

Furthermore, awareness-raising and training of maintenance staff are essential to ensure proper care of equipment and effective responsiveness when needed. They need to be provided with the knowledge and skills to proactively identify, report and resolve accessibility issues.

Finally, cooperation with disabled students' organisations can also be beneficial in gaining valuable feedback and identifying potential areas for improvement. By working together, the university can strive to create an inclusive sporting environment where all students feel welcome and supported in their sport practice, whatever their level of ability.

MENTORING PROGRAMME

Setting up a mentoring programme is a valuable way of helping Students with Disabilities to integrate into university life, particularly in the field of sport. The aim of this programme is to pair disabled students with more experienced peers or members of staff, to provide them with personalised support adapted to their specific needs. Mentors can share their experience, offer practical advice and encourage disabled students to take an active part in sport activities. This mentoring relationship not only promotes the social and physical integration of SWD, but also helps to boost their self-confidence and sense of belonging to the university community. Mentors can also make other members of the university community aware of the challenges faced by disabled students and promote a culture of inclusion and mutual support. By introducing such a programme, universities prove their commitment to equal opportunities and provide an environment where every student, whatever their needs, can reach their full academic and personal potential.

DESCRIPTION OF HOW TO CREATE A BUDDY SYSTEM

Developing a tutoring programme is a particularly effective way of supporting students, especially those with disabilities, by pairing them with fellow students who can offer help and support. Based on the experience conducted at Klaipeda University, this system involves first clearly defining the objectives, such as support, promoting inclusion, improving social interaction and safety. The respective roles of tutors and Students with Disabilities are then specified, where tutors can assist with orientation, social integration and academic support, while SWD benefit from their support and assistance.

The recruitment of tutors begins by seeking empathetic, patient and committed volunteers, using methods such as displaying posters, sending emails and organising meetings to spread the necessary information. A rigorous selection process is



put in place to pair tutors with disabled students, including application forms, interviews and compatibility tests based on interests, needs and personalities.

Tutors also benefit from training sessions, covering topics such as disability awareness, communication skills, conflict resolution and emergency procedures. They receive useful resources such as guides on mobility assistance or specific information on the needs of their “buddies”.

Tutors and Students with Disabilities are paired according to criteria such as shared interests, compatible schedules and specific needs, thus encouraging the development of meaningful relationships. A first meeting is organised to enable tutors and SWD to meet each other: these encounters are facilitated by ice-breaking activities aimed at creating a safe and caring environment.

Regular follow-up with tutors and disabled students is planned to assess progress, resolve any problems and provide additional support from administrative teams. A feedback system will be set up so that tutors and SWD can share their experiences and suggest improvements via tools such as surveys or meetings.

In recognition of their efforts, incentives are offered to encourage and retain tutors, in the form of small gifts, extra points when appropriate or special privileges.

Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the tutor programme, using indicators such as Students with Disabilities satisfaction, commitment levels and target achievement, guides the adjustments needed to improve the programme. These adjustments may include reviewing training materials, making changes to the pairing process or strengthening support schemes to maximise the impact of the programme.

ADAPTING SPORTS PROGRAMME

Adapting existing sports programmes to meet the needs of Students with Disabilities is an essential step in ensuring their full participation and development in sport. This involves taking a number of actions, including the addition of adapted sports that take into account the abilities and limitations of SWD. These sports may include wheelchair basketball, goalball for the visually impaired, or para-athletics, offering a variety of options for different types of disability.

In addition, it is vital to adapt sports equipment to meet the specific needs of disabled students. This may involve the use of special wheelchairs, audible balls for sports played by visually impaired students, or securing devices to ensure the safety of participants. Adapting equipment guarantees that all students have access to the same sporting opportunities.

Finally, the rules and methods of play need to be changed to make sports activities inclusive. This may involve modifying the rules of the game to take into account the abilities of disabled students, or introducing classification systems to ensure fair competition. By adapting the rules, all participants can benefit fully from the sporting experience, whatever their disability.

SUPPORT FOR EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Encouraging Students with Disabilities to take part in sporting and recreational activities outside the university curriculum is an essential step towards fostering their social integration, promoting their well-being and strengthening their sense of belonging to the university community. By offering them opportunities to get involved in informal sports and recreational activities, universities are creating an inclusive environment where all students have the chance to fulfil their potential outside the classroom.

To support their involvement, it is crucial to provide financial assistance to SWD to cover the additional costs associated with their participation in sporting activities, such as travel, specialised equipment or participation costs in sporting events. This financial support removes the financial barriers that might otherwise limit disabled students' access to these opportunities.

By investing in this financial support, universities demonstrate their commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their physical abilities or financial resources. By actively encouraging the participation of disabled students in sporting and recreational activities outside the university curriculum, the institutions foster an environment where everyone can blossom, feel valued and contribute to community life in a meaningful way.

PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

Promoting mobility programmes to Students with Disabilities is critical to ensuring their equal access to academic and cultural exchange opportunities. By highlighting the benefits of sport to their social integration and general well-being, academic institutions can actively encourage their participation in these programmes.

Sport not only offers physical benefits, but also promotes social interaction, boosts self-confidence and reduces stress, which is particularly beneficial for SWD. By presenting these benefits, institutions can address the potential concerns of disabled students regarding their participation in mobility programmes. In addition, by offering specific support, such as reasonable accommodations and personalised support, institutions can ensure that disabled students can fully benefit from their experience abroad. Ultimately, by actively promoting these programmes and highlighting the benefits of sport, academic institutions are creating an inclusive environment where all students have the opportunity to explore new cultures, develop their academic skills and strengthen their social ties, thereby contributing to their personal fulfilment and academic success.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Providing individual support for Students with Disabilities participating in mobility programmes is essential to ensure their full participation and success in this rewarding experience. This support aims to meet the specific needs of each disabled student, providing them with individualised support to overcome the potential barriers associated with international mobility. This may include services such as access to adapted accommodation, reasonable accommodations for travel and academic activities, as well as additional resources to meet their needs in terms of health and well-being.

By ensuring that SWD have access to all the services and support they need to succeed, academic institutions prove their commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their physical abilities or limitations. It also ensures that disabled students can take full advantage of the academic, cultural and personal benefits of international mobility programmes. Ultimately, this individual support helps to create an environment where every student, whatever their situation, can reach their full potential and succeed in their studies and in life.

CONTINUOUS EVALUATION

Implementing a continuous evaluation process is a crucial step in ensuring the effectiveness of initiatives to support Students with Disabilities. This process makes it possible to gather relevant data on the impact of the initiatives put in place, in order to assess the extent to which they meet the needs of SWD. Evaluations can cover various aspects, such as the accessibility of facilities, the effectiveness of support services and the satisfaction of disabled students.

By analysing this data, academic institutions can identify strengths and areas for improvement, allowing for necessary adjustments to better meet the needs of SWD.

This may involve reviewing policies and procedures, increasing the resources available, or providing additional training for staff to better support disabled students.



An ongoing evaluation process also enables us to measure the progress made in promoting inclusion and equal opportunities for SWD, and to identify best practices that can be reproduced in other contexts.

General impact for the students who travelled within the SHIE's project

The members of the team travelled with students suffering from all kinds of disabilities: deafness, autism, mental disorders, physical disabilities, etc.

Experience showed that the rapid and direct benefits are almost identical for everyone, despite the diversity of situations and needs.

Personal development: UAPs reported significant personal growth. They noted increased confidence in the students' ability to adapt to new environments, as well as a significant improvement in their communication skills. By interacting with their classmates and teachers in a variety of contexts, they were able to overcome social barriers and develop a sense of independence. These interactions enabled them to feel more at ease in various situations, strengthening their autonomy and resilience.

Academic and social integration: Taking part in physical activities alongside other students greatly contributed to the social integration of SWD. They felt more integrated and valued, which had a positive influence on their academic progress and results. By sharing common experiences in a sporting context, disabled students were able to create bonds with other students, strengthening their social network and sense of belonging. This social inclusion also boosted their motivation and enthusiasm for their studies, contributing to greater academic success.

Cultural exchange: Travelling abroad enabled SWD to enjoy rich cultural experiences. Discovering different cultures and practices broadened their perspectives and deepened their understanding of inclusion efforts worldwide. By exploring different approaches to the inclusion of disabled students, they were able to compare practices and behaviours in different countries, deepening their awareness and sensitivity to the global challenges of inclusion. This cultural openness not only strengthened their intercultural skills, but also enabled them to develop a more holistic and inclusive vision of society.

RIGHTS/CONTACT

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