

# Foundations for the development of a Higher Education inclusive curriculum



**H i L i v e s**

## **Coordinators**

Prof. Dr. Geert Van Hove (Ghent University – coordinator IO1)

Prof. Dr. Paula Santos (University of Aveiro - overall coordinator)

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Foundations for the development of a Higher Education inclusive curriculum

### COORDINATORS

Geert Van Hove (Ghent University – coordinator IO1) and Paula Coelho Santos (University of Aveiro - overall coordinator)

### LEADING IO1 ORGANIZATION

UNIVERSITY OF GHENT

- Geert Van Hove (UGHENT team coordinator)
- Evelien De Maesschalck

### PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF AVEIRO

- Paula Coelho Santos (HiLives Coordinator and UAVEIRO Team Coordinator)
- Ana Filipa Ferreira
- Ana Margarida Almeida
- António Augusto Neto Mendes
- Gabriela Duarte
- Gabriela Portugal
- Gracinda Martins
- Helena Araújo e Sá
- Jane Machado
- Manuel Ferreira Rodrigues
- Manuela Gonçalves
- Mariana Dantas
- Marisa Maia Machado
- Virgínia Chalegre

UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

- Kristín Harðardóttir (UICELAND Team Coordinator)
- Ágústa Rós Björnsdóttir
- Helena Gunnarsdóttir

UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA

- Borja Jordán de Urríes Vega (USAL Team Coordinator)
- Emiliano Díez Villoria
- María Victoria Martín Cilleros

- Patricia Navas Macho

#### ASSOL

- Mário Pereira (ASSOL team coordinator)
- Aida Araújo Rebelo
- Ana Margarida Melo
- Tânia Figueiredo

#### AVisPT21

- Eulália Albuquerque (AVisPT21 Team Coordinator)
- Isabel Catarina Martins

#### FORMEM

- Raul Rocha (FORMEM team coordinator)
- Joana Glória

#### PAIS-EM-REDE

- Gabriela Duarte (PAIS-EM-REDE Team Coordinator; deceased 28.11.2020)
- Oksana Tymoshchuk
- Cátia Cartaxo Manata



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Ana Filipa Ferreira

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## Introduction

*Geert Van Hove*

The partners involved in the HiLives project are situated in Portugal, Spain, Iceland and Belgium, countries that have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This shows that local governments take the human rights discourse in relation to persons with a disability seriously and so they want to implement the UN Convention in their policy. The countries involved have been engaged in discourses on diversity, inclusion, emancipation and deinstitutionalization for the last three decades.

This very positive evolution is however not easily realized in all parts of the social systems. For example, we see that in many countries education and its institutes continue to work with a two-track policy (special and inclusive education are then organized side by side). We also see that many citizens with a disability have little or no access to post-secondary education. The HiLives project is of great importance for the latter theme.

Various stakeholders (movements of parents, self-advocacy groups of people with an intellectual disability, institutes for higher education, organizations that guide the transition from education to employment, ...) come together in the HiLives project to learn from each other's experiences and good practices related to the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in higher education.

Throughout history, people with an intellectual disability were seen as inferior, deficient citizens, (...) but more and more we see that the transition from the charity to the human rights model raises questions (and demands) about e.g.: opportunities for lifelong learning, participation in society as real citizens, opportunities to take up a paid job (...) (O'Brien et.al., 2019).

These questions show that the deficit model is being abandoned and makes way for thinking about full citizenship (...) (O'Brien et.al., 2019).

The partners in this EU project under the coordination of the team of the University of Aveiro are all in a different position regarding the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in Higher Education. For example, the projects of the Spanish and Icelandic partners have a practice that has been running for several years already. For example, the project at the University of Aveiro is transitioning from a project to a structural embedding in the University policy and practice. For

example, the self-advocacy group in Belgium with several members is seeking access in the credit-driven system of Belgian Universities, University Colleges and adult education institutes.

It may be clear that the HiLives project does not see Higher Education as an isolated phenomenon. In addition to the qualification function of education, the socialization and individuation function are not lost sight of (Biesta, 2020). When young adults with an intellectual disability participate in Higher Education, thinking about the organization of and support for education is one aspect. The study tracks in Higher Education can also be used to acquire more than purely academic competences. The students learn about mobility, they become part of a Higher Education community, they learn a lot about the transition from education to employment, they learn to discover their own talents and work points, they learn that they can not only receive help and support but also that they can support others themselves ...

Outcome 1 of the HiLives project is best read as a kind of introduction. We try to outline the foundations for the project. We let different stakeholders have their say. We outline important European policy frameworks for employment. Scientific insights about Higher Education and students with intellectual disabilities are collected and analyzed. With this work package we hope to build a solid foundation so that the complex practices in the various countries can be better situated. HiLives wants European citizens with intellectual disabilities to have opportunities for lifelong learning, to participate in the reality of Higher Education arena and thus to better realize their position as citizens within the European Union.



# **CONTEXTS AND BACKGROUNDS**

## The foundations of the HiLives project

*Geert Van Hove*

During an intensive workshop at the start of the project, all participants went in search of the foundations for the project. After long discussions, the following elements were proposed as building blocks.

Regarding the general background for the project, a human rights approach and a cross-link between local examples of good practice and European policy frameworks were considered necessary.

The participants noticed that the medical model regarding people with intellectual disabilities is still reigning. In many countries, concepts such as IQ or adaptive behavior are still being actively used. We realize that these concepts are sometimes necessary to give people access to healthcare systems. On the other hand, they are relics of a history in which people with intellectual disabilities became the most discriminated citizens in many countries; they were incarcerated, could not attend school and were certainly not expected to enter postsecondary education. Because of this observed discrimination, it has been decided to situate the HiLives project primarily in a human rights tradition. The countries involved in the HiLives project have ratified the UNCRPWD. It therefore seems logical to us to base the project on this Convention. Given that we do not see this project only in terms of qualification (see later), a cross-link with the basic principles of the Convention seems a logical choice.

(...) Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons. Non-discrimination. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity (...) (United Nations Convention, preamble).

We do not want to fall into the trap that arises when too much attention is paid to local examples of good practice. We will always try to link these examples to important European Policy Frameworks (see e.g., concerning Youth Employment, see e.g. concerning micro-credentials, see e.g. concerning life-long learning). In this way, local embedding is guaranteed on the one hand, and projects get more 'visibility' at a higher level. The common language and common objectives of the European policy frameworks make it possible to link projects with similar practices within the

“European zone”. On the other hand, the intended link offers a great opportunity to participate in building a European policy for lifelong learning and equity.

Regarding the educational / pedagogical background of the HiLives project its members decided to rely on already existing frameworks and methods. Special attention was given to those frameworks and methods that are already available and known by people working with youngsters and adults of persons with intellectual disabilities and to colleagues used to work with ‘regular students’.

First of all, we agree with Biesta (2020, p.92) when he makes a plea for educational processes that contain more than a qualification function:

(...) I have suggested that what is special and most likely unique about education is that it is not oriented toward one purpose — such as medicine’s orientation toward (the promotion of) health or the legal profession’s orientation toward (the pursuit of) justice — but is actually oriented toward three purposes or, as I prefer to call it, three domains of purpose. The argument for this starts from a simple analysis of the way in which much education functions. Many would probably agree that one of the key functions of education has to do with the transmission — or, in less directive terms, the making available of — knowledge and skills. This qualification function of education is an important task and provides an important justification for schooling. Whereas some would argue that this is all schools should do, it is not too difficult to see that even the simplest provision of knowledge and skills already provides a certain way of (re)presenting the world and presenting what is considered to be of value. For this reason, in addition to qualification, there is always also socialization going on — the (re)presentation of cultures, traditions, and practices, explicitly but often also implicitly, as the research on the hidden curriculum has shown. Further to qualification and socialization, it can be argued that education always also impacts on the student as individual, either by enhancing or by restricting capacities and capabilities, for example. This third function can be called individuation, although in my own work — for reasons outlined below — I have referred to it as subjectification. From the observation that education always functions in relation to three domains, it can be argued that those involved in the design and enactment of education — including policymakers and teachers — should always engage with

the question of what their efforts seek to bring about in each domain. In this, the three functions of education turn into three purposes of education or, if it is acknowledged that under each “heading” more concrete decisions still need to be made, three domains of educational purpose Biesta (2020, p.92).

Due to the fact that we work with a specific group of students (with intellectual disabilities) we will need to think more about the individual support in balance with the inclusiveness of their training program. From authors as Thompson (2014) we learn that ...

The supports paradigm is based on the premise that the most relevant difference between people with intellectual disability and related developmental disabilities (ID/DD) and the general population is that people with ID/DD need different types and intensities of support to fully participate in and contribute to society (...) (Thompson, 2014).

The HiLives team members are following the ideas of Universal Design for Learning as they are expressed by Jiménez et. al. (2007) making sure students are provided multiple means of representation, expression and engagement in courses.

(...) *Providing students with multiple means of representation supports recognition learning and gives learners various ways of acquiring information based on their individual learning style, experiences and background knowledge... ...Instruction that provides students with multiple means of expression supports strategic learning and creates several alternatives for demonstrating what learners know. ....Teachers who create multiple means of engagement support affective learning by tapping into learners’ interests and offering appropriate challenges to increase their motivation... This framework requires teachers to change the way they view the teaching- learning process, and how they initially approach lesson planning and instruction for all learners. UDL anchors existing practices into a strong theoretical framework requiring teachers to anticipate, up front, in their instruction how activities and methods support multiple means of presentation, expression, and engagement (...)* (Jiménez et. al., 2007).

Students with intellectual disabilities get a lot of respect when they can learn by doing (Engelbecht et. al, 2003). A lot of them are confronted with barriers of abstract language; many are confronted with very high demands regarding the speed with which work has to be done... Active learning offers opportunities to tap into the talents of students (instead of starting from what they are unable to do), presumes competence, is the ideal way to make sure youngsters and adults with intellectual disabilities being engaged and motivated.

The HiLives members decided that the project couldn't develop without using some means that are available within the recent history of building projects.

The project group decides to follow one of the adagio's of the disabled people's movement: Nothing about us, without us. Therefore, a constant dialogue with persons with disabilities, their families, institutions of Higher Education and people responsible for labour market opportunities of our students will be organized.

The project group followed the advice of Barlott et al. (2020) when they state:

(...) the movement towards digital inclusion for people with ID is conceptualized as the fit between social opportunity and personal skills. We have identified the prominent role social supports play in creating (and constraining) opportunities for digital inclusion, and that digital inclusion has the potential to enable social connectedness and the development of agency (...).

We believe that HiLives must enable opportunities and skills making sure (going back to Biesta) that students get access to information (qualification), can connect with other students of the Higher Education community (socialization) and can realize their plans and dreams (subjectification).

Due to the fact that studying for persons with intellectual disabilities in Europe is a rather new phenomenon, Hillves members decided to make as much as possible use from the evidence we can get from recent research projects about this topic (e.g., Corby et. al., 2012; Bjornsdottir, 2017).

The ultimate goals for the HiLives partners are making sure the students get proper certificates diplomas at one hand and helping students to get closer to the status of 'real citizen' by motivating them to participate in the labour market after getting their certificate.

## **HiLives: Foundations for the development of a HE inclusive curriculum – visual support for the discussion carried out during the intensive workshop at the beginning of the project**

First Intellectual Output: Transnational / European foundations for the development of an inclusive, flexible and student-centred higher education curriculum for young adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disorders. - Ghent University, coordinator: Geert Van Hove, Prof. Dr.

### **Contents of IO1 (contract with Erasmus+)**

- IO1: Foundations for the development of a HE inclusive curriculum1 IO1 organisation
- Preliminary work
  - Literature review
  - Discuss, align concepts and define target needs
  - State of the art on the European offer
  - Benchmarking of current practices and experiences in HEI
  - Consult stakeholders (Students, Families, HEIs)
- Foundations development
  - Foundations draft proposal
  - Foundations draft discussion
  - Foundations beta version
  - Translation to each partner native language
  - Foundations validation
  - Foundations final version and translations update
  - Online publication of the Foundations final version

### **Elements gathered from our discussions**

- Framework → Foundations.
- Accessible/ Easy to read texts.
- Translation costs are not subsidized.
- This project is based on Human Rights Frameworks like UNCRPD.
- The medical model is still around and very strong (Figure 1):

- Evaluation of impairment.
- Adaptive behavior.

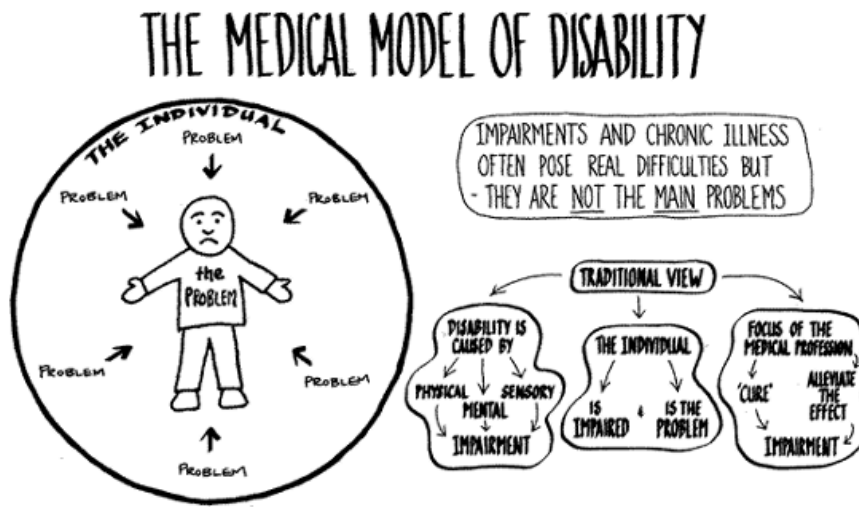


Figure 1 The medical model

- European project but also: local culture, local school system, local attitudes, local history, local laws, ... are very important.
- We need to get/stay in dialogue with policy makers (EU-level, local/country-level, university level...).
- Universal Design for learning is seen as very important (Figure 2).

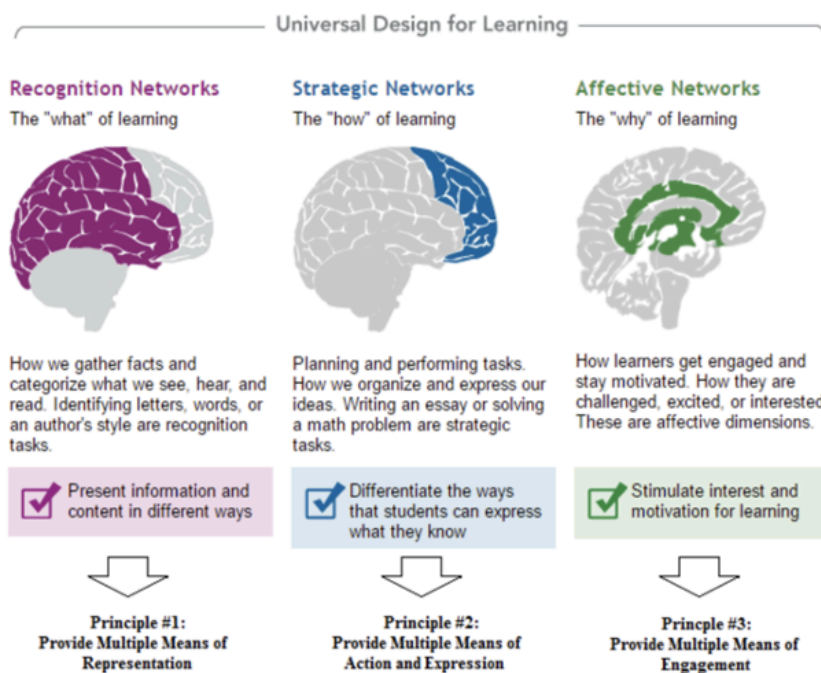


Figure 2 Universal design for learning explanation

- Evidence based work is important – gathering research material is important.



Figure 3 Evidence based work

- Vocational diploma – supported employment – working for/in the community – practice period/practicum...
- Academic qualifications (to study) – socialization (friends – mentoring – buddies...) – subjectivation (empowerment).
- Dialogue – negotiation.
- Supports.
- Person Centered Planning.
- Support to – talking to – working with staff members of HEI.
- Cooperative/Active learning.

	<b>Element</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>
<i>P</i>	Positive Interdependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Contribution of group members</li> </ul>
<i>I</i>	Individual Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual participation</li> <li>• Performance dependent on all group members</li> </ul>
<i>G</i>	Group Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functioning</li> <li>• Clear goals, processing events</li> </ul>
<i>S</i>	Social Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Clarification, paraphrasing, praising</li> </ul>
<i>F</i>	Promotive Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouragement</li> <li>• Facilitated communication</li> </ul>

Figure 4 Cooperative learning

- Benchmarking – quality control – sustainability.
- ICT – Technology.
- Certification.
- Desires.



## Normative and Political Framework for inclusion

*Raul Rocha and Joana Glória*

In a sub-report titled 'Normative and political framework for inclusion (European and International level) our colleagues from FORMEM are organizing' a legal space 'for the HiLives project. International Conventions, Charters, Treaty's "come alive" in this sub-report.

Inclusion thus does not remain an ideology or utopia. Human rights are translated in function of persons with disabilities and their families. The text shows a history, an evolution ... a revolution. Projects such as HiLives don't have to work in a vacuum. HiLives thus becomes part of a democratic process in the EU as a democratic space.

## Normative perspective

### Rules and directives of International and European Law that sustain the rights of persons with disabilities in general

#### Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>1</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106) was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007. It is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century and the first human rights convention to be open for signature by regional integration organizations. The Convention entered into force on 3 May 2008.

The Convention follows decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. It takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

#### Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a legally-binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. Adopted by the United Nations in November 1989 and signed up by 196 countries, consists of 54 articles that set out children’s rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children.

#### Article 23 – *e.g.*, 3.

(...) ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in

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<sup>1</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/UN-Convention-Rights-Child-text.pdf>

a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.

### European Charter of Fundamental Rights<sup>3</sup>

The rights of every individual in the European Union (EU) were established at different times, in different ways and in different forms. For this reason, the EU decided to include them all in a single document, which has been updated in the light of changes in society, social progress and scientific and technological developments. The Charter of Fundamental Rights brings together all the personal, civic, political, economic and social rights enjoyed by people within the EU in a single text.

#### Article 21 - Non-discrimination:

Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, **disability**, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

#### Article 26 - Integration of persons with disabilities:

*The Union recognises and respects the right of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community.*

### The Treaty on European Union<sup>4</sup>

EU equality legislation is legally binding in all EU Member States and it is also transposed in EEA countries, EU candidate countries and other countries that have undertaken to approximate their national legislation to EU equality law.

#### Article 2

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to

<sup>3</sup> European Charter of Fundamental Rights: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

<sup>4</sup> Treaty on European Union: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

### Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union<sup>5</sup>

*Preserves and reinforces anti-discrimination law, including for persons with disabilities.*

**Article 10** – *In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.*

#### **Article 19** –

Without prejudice to the other provisions of the Treaties and within the limits of the powers conferred by them upon the Union, the Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

### **European Social Charter**<sup>6</sup>

The European Social Charter is a Council of Europe treaty that guarantees fundamental social and economic rights as a counterpart to the European Convention on Human Rights, which refers to civil and political rights. It guarantees a broad range of everyday human rights related to employment, housing, health, education, social protection, and welfare. The Charter lays specific emphasis on the protection of vulnerable persons such as elderly people, children, people with disabilities and migrants. It requires that enjoyment of the above-mentioned rights be guaranteed without discrimination.

**Article 15** - *Disabled persons have the right to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community.*

### **European Convention on Human Rights**<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:EN:PDF>

<sup>6</sup> European Social Charter: <https://rm.coe.int/168007cf93>

<sup>7</sup> European Convention on Human Rights: [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

The European Court of Human Rights is a strong legal mechanism to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities, since the *High Contracting Parties shall secure to **everyone** within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined in Section I of the European Council's Convention on Human Rights Convention*, as stated in **article 1**.

## **Rules and directives of International and European Law that specifically sustain the rights of persons with disabilities to employment, vocational training and high education**

### Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>8</sup>

#### Article 24 – Education:

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning (...).

#### Article 27 – Work and Employment:

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps (...).

### Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention of the International Labour Organisation<sup>9</sup>

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation adopted in 1983 the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention which establishes a legal common framework for implementing national policies regarding promoting employment opportunities for disabled persons in the open labour market.

#### Article 7 - Action at the National Level for the Development of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services for Disabled Persons:

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<sup>8</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention of the International Labour Organisation: [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C159](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C159)

The competent authorities shall take measures with a view to providing and evaluating vocational guidance, vocational training, placement, employment and other related services to enable disabled persons to secure, retain and advance in employment; existing services for workers generally shall, wherever possible and appropriate, be used with necessary adaptations.

## Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>10</sup>

### Article 23.4 –

**States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international cooperation,** the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and **access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services,** with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills and to widen their experience in these areas. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

## European Social Charter<sup>11</sup>

The Council of Europe's European Social Charter states at **Article 9** right to vocational counselling and at **Article 10** right to vocational preparation (including access to higher technical and university education, based solely on individual aptitude).

## Directive 2000/78/EC – establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation<sup>12</sup>

The European Council Directive 2000/78, from 27 November 2000, lays down the general framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, **disability**, age, or sexual orientation as regards **employment and occupation**.

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<sup>10</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/UN-Convention-Rights-Child-text.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> European Social Charter <https://rm.coe.int/168007cf93>

<sup>12</sup> Directive 2000/78/EC – Equal treatment in employment and occupation – Concept of disability <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32000L0078&from=PT>

## Operational perspective

### International level: strategies, bodies, funds and programs aiming on social and professional inclusion of persons with disabilities

#### Sustainable Development Goals by UN<sup>13</sup>

The Sustainable Development Goals developed by the UN have a general commitment to **provide quality and inclusive education** in early childhood, primary, secondary and **higher education**, as well as technical and professional.

**Goal 4.5** - “By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”.

**Goal 4.A** – “Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability, and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”.

**Goal 8.5** – “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value”.

**Goal 10.2** – “By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status”.

#### The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)<sup>14</sup>

Body composed of **independent experts** which monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the States Parties.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention gives the Committee competence to **examine individual complaints** regarding alleged violations of the Convention by States parties to the Protocol.

#### United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability<sup>15</sup>

The United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability (UNVF) provides **small grants to support catalytic and innovative activities** and is administered by the Secretariat for the Convention on the

<sup>13</sup> The UN Sustainable Development Goals: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

<sup>14</sup> The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/CRPDIndex.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/united-nations-voluntary-fund-on-disability.html>



Rights of Persons with Disabilities, within the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

### **Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>16</sup>**

The Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (IASG) is tasked with promoting compliance with the Principles of the Convention and increasing the scale and effectiveness of the United Nations' involvement in disability issues. It also ensures that **development programmes**, including internationally agreed development goals, policies, processes, and mechanisms, are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.

### **UN DESA Policy and Action Plan for Disability Inclusion (2020-2021)<sup>17</sup>**

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) give guidance to the implementation of UN system-wide policy and strategy – the **United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)**.

### **World Health Organization Global Disability Action Plan (2014–2021)<sup>18</sup>**

The WHO global disability action plan 2014–2021 calls for the removal of barriers and improvements in access to health services and programmes; the strengthening and extension of rehabilitation, assistive devices, and support services; and the enhanced collection of relevant and internationally comparable data on disability.

In 2011, WHO launched the pioneering World report on disability as a **resource** for policy makers, service providers, professionals, and **advocates for persons with disability and their families**.

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<sup>16</sup> Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/inter-agency-support-group-for-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

<sup>17</sup> UN DESA Policy and Action Plan for Disability Inclusion (2020-2021):

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/news/news/policy-action-plan-disability-inclusion-2020-2021.html>

<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab\\_3](https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab_3)

## European level - strategies, funds and programs aiming on social and professional inclusion of persons with disabilities

### European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)<sup>19</sup>

The EU provides funding for a broad range of projects and programmes covering areas such as: regional and urban development, **employment and social inclusion**, agriculture, and rural development, maritime and fisheries policies, research and innovation, and humanitarian aid.

The Common Regulation of the ESIF asserts that when using EU money, EU Member States **cannot discriminate against persons with disabilities and should ensure accessibility**.

### EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)<sup>20</sup>

Financing instrument at EU level to promote a high level of **quality and sustainable employment**, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, **combating social exclusion** and poverty and **improving working conditions**.

### European Disability Strategies (2010-2020)<sup>21</sup>

The European disability strategy 2010-2020 aims to promote a barrier-free Europe and empower people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their rights and participate fully in society and economy.

It describes a set of objectives and actions for the implementation of the disability policy (and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) at the EU level. It also supports Member States in their implementation of the Convention. For the purpose of this research, we highlight these two objectives:

**Employment:** *increase the participation of people with disabilities in the labour market, where they are currently under-represented;*

**Education and Training:** *promote inclusive education and lifelong learning for students and pupils with disabilities. Equal access to quality education and lifelong learning enable disabled people to participate fully in society and improve their quality of life.*

### Council of Europe Disability Strategy (2017-2023)<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1304>

<sup>20</sup> EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI): <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081&langId=en>

<sup>21</sup> European Disability Strategies: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1484>

<sup>22</sup> Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/disability/strategy-2017-2023>

The Council of Europe adopted its Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2017-2023 on 30 November 2016.

The protection of rights, safeguarded and guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights, applies to all, including persons with disabilities, so this Strategy aims to **promote and protect human rights of all persons** and upholding democracy and the respect of the rule of law.

## **Internacional civil society organizations focused on persons with disabilities**

### **International Disability Alliance (IDA)<sup>23</sup>**

The International Disability Alliance is a network of global and regional organisations of persons with disabilities and their families, very active in promoting the effective and full implementation of the UN CRPD worldwide and ensure the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. It is a major partner representing voice of persons with disabilities in the United Nations system.

### **The World Institute on Disability (WID)<sup>24</sup>**

The World Institute on Disability was established in 1983 as one of the first global disability rights organizations founded and led by people with disabilities. WID works to advance the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities worldwide, bringing research and policy into action and operationalizing inclusion.

### **The European Disability Forum<sup>25</sup>**

Independent non-governmental organisation, run by persons with disabilities and their families, that functions as an umbrella organisation representative of persons with disabilities from across Europe.

### **Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD)<sup>26</sup>**

It is a regional organization operating in different Arab Countries, which the main objectives are promote the rights of people with disabilities, empower persons with disabilities and represent Arab persons with disabilities in the world.

### **The ASEAN Disability Forum (ASEAN-DF)<sup>27</sup>**

The ASEAN Disability Forum is a network of disabled persons' organizations (DPOs) in the ASEAN countries of Southeast Asia. It is a platform where DPOs coordinate actions to advocate for disability inclusive policy formulation and implementation.

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<sup>23</sup> International Disability Alliance: <https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/>

<sup>24</sup> The World Institute on Disability: <https://wid.org/>

<sup>25</sup> The European Disability Forum: <http://www.edf-feph.org/>

<sup>26</sup> Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities: <http://www.aodp-lb.net/>

<sup>27</sup> The ASEAN Disability Forum: <http://aseandisabilityforum.org/digaleri/>

## **Christian Blind Mission International (CBM)<sup>28</sup>**

CBM is an international Christian development organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the poorest communities of the world. Its initiatives seek to ensure persons with disabilities are not left behind by amplifying the global demand for sustainable inclusion through quality programming, influencing international development policy and providing quality technical support to development and humanitarian actors.

## **Harvard Law School Project on Disability (HPOD)<sup>29</sup>**

HPOD is committed to enabling civil society, and especially persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, to undertake informed human rights advocacy. It provides human rights training and education, facilitates the development of international law and policy, encourage inclusive development practices, share technical assistance on strategic litigation, and stimulate new thinking about the abilities of persons with disabilities and their human rights.

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<sup>28</sup>Christian Blind Mission International: <https://www.cbm.org/in-action/disability-inclusive-development-did/>

<sup>29</sup> Harvard Law School Project on Disability: <https://hpod.law.harvard.edu/>

## **Organizations focused on persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities**

### **Inclusion International<sup>30</sup>**

Inclusion International is an international network of people with intellectual disabilities and their families advocating for the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities worldwide.

### **American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)<sup>31</sup>**

AAIDD is considered a leader in advocating quality of life and rights for those with intellectual disabilities worldwide, that has 5000 members in 55 countries. It aims to promote progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

### **The Arc (United States)<sup>32</sup>**

The Arc's mission is to promote and protect the human rights of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetime.

### **Muskaan (India)<sup>33</sup>**

Muskaan is known for its pioneering work in the field of providing vocational training and work opportunities to adults with IDD.

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<sup>30</sup>Inclusion International: <https://inclusion-international.org/>

<sup>31</sup> American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: <https://www.aidd.org/>

<sup>32</sup> The Arc (United States): <https://thearc.org/get-involved/>

<sup>33</sup> Muskaan: <http://muskaanthengo.org/about-muskaan/>

## Inclusive Policies in 34 different countries

*Raul Rocha, Geert Van Hove, Ágústa Rós Björnsdóttir, Eulália Albuquerque, Gabriela Duarte, Helena Gunnarsdóttir and Joana Glória*

The HiLives project members are aware of the fact that a process of inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in higher education does not take place in a “policy vacuum”.

In order not to fall into the trap that we start to develop a project without connections with inclusive policies on the other levels of education (e.g., primary, secondary schools level) or without connections with inclusive practices in relation to the labour market a sub-report was developed in which information about inclusive policies in 34 countries was collected. This report is best read as a confirmation of the fact that the ratification of Articles 24 and 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities does lead to inclusive policies in several countries.

This Sub-Report contains a lot of good practices of inclusive policies on the one hand, on the other hand it opens up all the possibilities not to miss the cross connections already discussed.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in European society has made significant progress in the last decades, however, young people with disabilities still face many difficulties to have a full participation in social activities, including access to higher education and employment, and it seems persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have special difficulties in being included. For this reason, HiLives project [collaborative endeavor between the *University of Aveiro* (Portugal), *Ghent University* (Belgium), *University of Salamanca* (Spain), *University of Iceland*, and *ASSOL*, *Pais-em-Rede*, *FORMEM* and *AvisPT21* (the four last ones are Portuguese NGOs who support PwDs)] attempts to narrow these obstacles by creating networking opportunities for independent lives through inclusion of people with IDD in Higher Education.

To establish a connection between the outputs being developed with HiLives and the dissemination and implementation process, we attempted to synthesize the main features of the policies of PwDs regarding education and employment of the 34 European countries on the Erasmus+ Program. This exercise did not wish to be an exhaustive legal compilation, an academic work or a political analysis of the different European Social Models, but simply to enable HiLives to have a glimpse of the inclusion policies in each country and which stakeholder could be reached in further implementation stages.

Our focus was on the legal and public narrative, as well on the national actors, with special attention on Education, Higher Education, Employment and Persons with IDD. All data was

corroborated by the indicated sources and, in many cases, followed up by institutional search of the national websites (due to language difficulties, automatic *google translate tool* was often used). In a few cases, no website was available for the organizations and institutions mentioned, however, their existence and work were confirmed by primary or secondary sources.

The research was a collaborative task of the HiLives team, so different people with different cultural language, writing styles and searching choices contributed to this exercise (a first-hand example of Trans-European cooperation), in this sense, there may be some uneven selections and emphasises between countries, but all focused on the same elements and had, in general, an important source contribution from *DOTCOM, the Disability Online Tool of the Commission* developed *The Academic Network of European Disability Experts*.



## Austria

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- Austria was one of the first EU country to ratify the *UN Convention on Disability Rights*, including the *Optional Protocol* promotes, and has been openly promoting mainstreaming disability policies, seeing Inclusion as a principle of normalisation, according to which the lives of people with disabilities should exhibit as little difference as possible to those of people without disabilities.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, many aspects of integration and rehabilitation approaches remains. This is often attributed to its strong federalist component (responsibilities of the provinces), as all areas of disability policy that are not explicitly the responsibility of the federal government are provincial issues.<sup>35</sup>
- The three main legal instruments available to Federal Government are the *Disability Employment Act (Behinderteneinstellungsgesetz)*, the *Federal Disability Act (Bundesbehindertengesetz)* and the *Disability Equality Act (Bundebehindertengleichstellungsgesetz)*, which are used to implement the *Nacional Disability Plan 2012-2020*.<sup>36</sup>
- Education has a two-track system in Austria, with special schools and inclusive settings in mainstream schools, on which parents have the right to choose (*Article 8 of the Compulsory School Act – Schulpflichtgesetz*)<sup>37</sup>. For Higher education there is no special programmes for PwDs, but there is financial and technical support for university students with disabilities (mainly physical impairments).<sup>38</sup>
- Employment schemes for PwDs include quota system, protection against dismissal, employment module in social enterprises and financial support for personal or projects employment endeavors.<sup>39</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

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<sup>34</sup> Information from: Overview of the horizontal issue of disability in Austria | Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Long-term Care and Consumer Protection: <https://brochuerebservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=441>

<sup>35</sup> Information from: ANED European Semester 2018/2019 | Country fiche on disability Austria | Author: Information from: ANED European Semester 2018/2019 | Country fiche on disability Bulgaria | Author: Petra Flieger and Ursula Naue

<sup>36</sup> Information from: Overview of the horizontal issue of disability in Austria | Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Long-term Care and Consumer Protection: <https://brochuerebservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=441>

<sup>37</sup> Information from: The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education | Country information for Austria - Legislation and policy

<sup>38</sup> Information from: Overview of the horizontal issue of disability in Austria | Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Long-term Care and Consumer Protection: <https://brochuerebservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=441>

<sup>39</sup> Information from: Overview of the horizontal issue of disability in Austria | Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Long-term Care and Consumer Protection: <https://brochuerebservice.sozialministerium.at/Home/Download?publicationId=441>

- Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Long-term Care and Consumer Protection | <https://www.sozialministerium.at/en>
- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research | <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at>
- Institut Für Inklusive Pädagogik, Interkulturelle Pädagogik, Innovative Lehr- Und Lernkultur (Inclusive Pedagogy Institute) | <https://ph-ooe.at/>
- Austrian Disability Ombudsman | [https://equineteurope.org/author/austria\\_ado/](https://equineteurope.org/author/austria_ado/)
- Sonderpädagogische Zentren (Resource Centres for Inclusive Education) | [www.cisonline.at/home](http://www.cisonline.at/home)

**Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:**

- Austrian National Council of Disabled Persons | [www.behindertenrat.at](http://www.behindertenrat.at)
- Selbstbestimmt Leben Österreich (umbrella organisation for independent living) | <http://slioe.at>
- Atempo (Austrian social enterprises) | <https://www.atempo.at/en/>
- Assist (supports the autonomy and self-organization of people with disabilities) | <http://www.assist4amstetten.at>
- Integration: Österreich (parent's initiative to support inclusion from kindergarden to labour market) | [www.ioe.at](http://www.ioe.at)

## Belgium

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- Belgium signed the UN Convention and the *Optional Protocol to the Convention* on March 30, 2007 and ratified them on July 2, 2009. This means that Belgium has committed to respect its contents and to report regularly to a committee of independent experts. The Treaty and the Optional Protocol entered into force on 1 August 2009. On 12 July 2011, the federal government, the communities, and the regions of Belgium country jointly decided to entrust the mandate for the establishment and development of the independent body to the *Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism*, which is today called UNIA<sup>40</sup>. This happened because of an obligation on the countries that are party to the treaty. They must establish independent bodies to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention. Those authorities must ensure that a society is developed in which people with disabilities can fully assert their rights.
- Article 24 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* has a very clear message: inclusive education is much more than an option. It is a right and an obligation. UNIA is responsible for promoting the implementation of this right in Belgium; however, the different Federal States of Belgium have all tried in their own way to achieve the transition from special to inclusive education. *M-Decree in Flanders, the Pacte d'Excellence* in the French Community and the *Förderdekret* in the German-speaking Community. At the same time, these three communities lack support. Schools, teachers, and families want more support and structural measures to enable quality inclusive education. Not only for students with disabilities, but for all students.<sup>41</sup>
- Every Federal State in Belgium has his own legal framework about work and persons with disabilities. In the Flemish speaking part of Belgium, the *Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeids Bemiddeling* (VDAB) is the responsible organization who decides if an impairment can get legal basis to get extra support if citizens want/have to work. If your disability is recognized, citizens can request the right to benefits from the VDAB. For example, they can enlist the support of a sign language interpreter, but they can also get an intervention for the purchase

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<sup>40</sup> Information from: <https://www.unia.be/nl/discriminatiegronden/handicap/het-verdrag-van-de-verenigde-naties-inzake-de-rechten-van-personen-met-een-handicap>

<sup>41</sup> Information from: <https://www.unia.be/nl/publicaties-statistieken>

of work tools, or an allowance for travel expenses. Hiring someone with a disability at the work floor has also benefits for an employer. Employers who employ a person with a disability are eligible for a support premium. Since 2009, the *Guidance Committee for the Recruitment of Persons with Disabilities in Federal Public Service* (BCAPH) has monitored the application of the 3% target for the recruitment of persons with disabilities.

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities:

- Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (UNIA) | <https://www.unia.be/>
- Ministry of Education Flanders | <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/en/education-in-flanders>
- Ministry of Education in the French speaking part of Belgium | <https://desir.cfwb.be/home.html>
- The Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue | <https://employment.belgium.be/en>

#### Relevant civil society organizations in Belgium that help implement Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities:

- Gelijke Rechten voor Iedere Persoon met een handicap (GRIP) | <https://www.gripvzw.be/>
- Ouders voor Inclusie | <https://www.oudersvoorinclusie.be/>
- Divergent | <https://www.ugent.be/divergent/>

## Bulgaria

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The ratification of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2012) accelerated the inclusion policies in Bulgaria, giving a boost to the *People with Disabilities Law* (2018) and the *National Strategy for People with Disabilities* (2011-2020), who start to develop more mainstream schemes for PwDs in education and open labour market. Nonetheless, and despite some considerable progress, Bulgarian support system still favours segregated forms of teaching and a primary approach to adult life with disability allowances.<sup>42</sup>
- Non-discrimination in Education is legally framed in the *Public Education Law* (1998), which proclaims equal rights for all children to education (primary, secondary and professional training schools), including those with special educational needs; while the *Higher Education Law* prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disabilities but does not include an explicit obligation on colleges and universities to accommodate the needs of disabled students<sup>43</sup>. Life-long learning and inclusive education are set by the *Preschool and School Education Law* (2016) and the *Ordinance for Inclusive Education* (2016)<sup>44</sup>. Most inclusive education programs in Bulgaria are funded by the European Union.
- The general *Labour Code* already introduced the quota system and protection against dismissal of persons with disabilities, but it is only with the *Integration of People with Disabilities Law* (2005) and the *Strategy to Provide Equal Opportunities for Disabled People* (2008-2015) that mainstream employment is mentioned and programmes for job search and accommodation are created.<sup>45</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Education, Youth and Science | <https://www.mon.bg/>
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy | <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/>
- Employment Agency | [www.az.government.bg](http://www.az.government.bg)

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<sup>42</sup> Information from: ANED European Semester 2018/2019 | Country fiche on disability Bulgaria | Author: Slavka Kukova

<sup>43</sup> Information from: ANED country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people | Bulgaria | Author: Kapka Panayotova

<sup>44</sup> Information from: ANED 2016-17 -Task Social Pillar | Country Report Bulgaria | Author: Slavka Kukova

<sup>45</sup> Information from: ANED Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries | Bulgaria | Author: Kapka Panayotova

- National Agency for People with Disabilities under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy | <https://ahu.mlsp.government.bg/>
- National Council for People with Disabilities (Consultancy Organ under the Council of Ministers) | [https://saveti.government.bg/web/cc\\_11/1](https://saveti.government.bg/web/cc_11/1)

**Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:**

- Bulgarian Association for People with Intellectual Difficulties (BAPID) | <https://bapid.com/bapid/>
- National Council of People with Disabilities in Bulgaria (NCDPB)
- National Alliance for Social Responsibility (NASO) | <https://nasobg.org/en/>
- National Union of the Co-operative Society | <http://www.uniontpk.com/>
- National Federation of Employers of People with Disabilities | <http://nfri.bg/>
- Union of Disabled People in Bulgaria

## Croatia

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Pwds:

- *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023* provide the international framework to implement inclusive policies in Croatia, that are supported nationally by *The Anti-Discrimination Act and the National Strategy of Equalization of Possibilities for Persons with Disabilities*.<sup>46</sup>
- Inclusive/mainstream education is in place since the 2008' *Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools* and its operationalization is set by *National Pedagogical Standards* (special educational institutions still exists for exceptional situations)<sup>47</sup>. Articles 65 and 66 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia establish the basic principles for education, and the article 67 guarantees the autonomy of universities to decide independently on their organisation and operation.<sup>48</sup>
- Employment policies regarding persons with disabilities are, mainly, framed by the 2014 Act on *Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities*, where access to open labour market and quotas schemes are guaranteed.<sup>49</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities (Anka Slonjšak) | [www.posi.hr](http://www.posi.hr)
- Institute for Expert Evaluation, Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities | [www.zosi.hr](http://www.zosi.hr)
- Ministry of Science and Education | [www.mzo.hr](http://www.mzo.hr)
- Ministry of Labour and Pension System | [www.mrms.hr](http://www.mrms.hr)
- Croatian Employment Service | [www.hzz.hr](http://www.hzz.hr)
- Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia | [www.ljudskaprava.gov.hr](http://www.ljudskaprava.gov.hr)

### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities | [www.soih.hr](http://www.soih.hr)

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<sup>46</sup> Information from: Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities | [www.posi.hr](http://www.posi.hr)

<sup>47</sup> Information from: ANED 2016-17 -Task Social Pillar (focus topics) | Country report Croatia | Author: Tihomir Žiljak

<sup>48</sup> Information from: The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education | Country information for Croatia - Legislation and policy

<sup>49</sup> Information from: ANED 2016-17 -Task Social Pillar (focus topics) | Country report Croatia | Author: Tihomir Žiljak

- Croatian Federation of Disabled Workers' Associations | [www.hsuir.hr](http://www.hsuir.hr)
- Croatian Association of Societies of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities | [www.savezosit.hr](http://www.savezosit.hr)
- Croatian Union of Youth and Students with Disabilities "SUMSI" | [www.savezsumsi.hr](http://www.savezsumsi.hr)



## Cyprus

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Pwds:

- The *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the (Revised) *European Social Charter* are the international main legal binding forces that push national Cypriot policies towards the rights of Pwds. The *Law on Persons with Disabilities* (Law 127/2000 - A Law To Provide For Persons With Disabilities) recognizes important rights and establish the state support obligations, which have been operationalized by the *First National Disability Strategy 2018-2028* and the *Second National Action Plan for Disability 2018-2020*.<sup>50</sup>
- *Law for the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs 113(I) of 1999* (Special Education Law 113(I)/1999) is mostly about special educational needs, but it sets up also the bases for the inclusion of special education in mainstream education. Currently, in the new millennium, began to emerge a balance between mainstream placement and special schools, where the Cypriot state is legally obliged to equip special schools or mainstream schools where special education is provided.<sup>51</sup>
- *Regulations for the Education of Children with Special Needs K.186(I)/2001* defines that pre-vocational and vocational training of young people with disabilities (under the law -ages 16-21) is placed on special schools (vocational education centres) or technical schools in the case of integration in the mainstream education. Support for university students differs according to internal university policies, not the state; however, in transition to work there is the *Scheme for Recruitment of Higher Education Graduates (De Minimis) in Business*, which may benefit only young disabled people that have a higher education graduation degree.<sup>52</sup>
- The *Special Fund for the Centre for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Law (L.103 (I) / 2000)* is the main legislation that ensures training, education, and placement of people with disabilities in the open labour market. There is also in place a quota system for the wider public sector (not for private)<sup>53</sup>. However, civil society reports a gap between

<sup>50</sup> Information from: Department for Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities | Legislation and Strategic Plan DSID

<sup>51</sup> Information from: The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education | Country information for Cyprus - Legislation and policy

<sup>52</sup> Information from: ANED 2016-17 -Task Social Pillar (focus topics) | Country report Cyprus | Authors: Katerina Mavrou, Anastasia Liasidou

<sup>53</sup> Information from: Department for Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities | Vocational Training

legislation and access to open labour market, due to lack of financing of the employment schemes and legal loopholes set in place for private employers.<sup>54</sup>

#### **Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:**

- Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance | [www.mlsi.gov.cy](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy)
- Department for Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities | [http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf/index\\_en/index\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf/index_en/index_en?OpenDocument)
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth | <http://www.moec.gov.cy>
- Department of Higher Education | [www.highereducation.ac.cy/en/](http://www.highereducation.ac.cy/en/)
- Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights (Maria Stylianou-Lottidis) | [www.ombudsman.gov.cy](http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy)
- Pancyprian Council for Persons with Disabilities

#### **Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:**

- Pancyprian Alliance for Disability
- The Cyprus Confederation of Organizations of Disabled People | [www.kysoa.org.cy](http://www.kysoa.org.cy)
- Christou Steliou Ioannou Foundation | <https://en.ioannoufoundation.org>
- Pancyprian Organization for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons
- Organisation of Students and Graduates of the Centre for Vocational Rehabilitation
- Pancyprian Parents Association for People with Intellectual Disabilities

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<sup>54</sup> Information from: Pancyprian Alliance for Disability (2016) | Alternative Report: First Civil Society Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Cyprus.

## Czech Republic

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Pwds:

- The articles of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* are the guidelines for the *National Plan for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2015–2020*.<sup>55</sup>
- Mainstream education is expanding in Czech Republic, framed in the *Education Law (2005)* and following amendments<sup>56</sup>, however, there is a lack legislative framework for financial support in higher education and lifelong learning. Students with disability in higher education institutions are generally integrate on an individual basis.<sup>57</sup>
- Employment of persons with disabilities in open labour market has an active and passive support system, both for persons with disabilities and their employers, with a combination of incentive and sanction. The main legislative act that supports this system is the *Law on Employment (2004)* and it has achieved high scores of people with disabilities in ordinary employment.<sup>58</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) | <https://www.mpsv.cz/web/en>
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports | <https://www.msmt.cz/?lang=2>
- Government Board for Persons with Disabilities | <https://www.vlada.cz/en/ppov/vvzpo/uvod-vvzpo-en-312/>

### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Czech National Disability Council (CNDC) | <https://nrzp.cz/en/>
- Czech Association for Support of Persons with Intellectual Disability – SPMP/Inclusion Czech Republic | [www.spmpr.cz](http://www.spmpr.cz)
- National Association for Parents and Friends of People with Disabilities | <http://arpzpd.cz/>

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<sup>55</sup> Information from: Government Board for People with Disabilities | National Plan for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2015–2020

<sup>56</sup> Information from: The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education | Country information for Czech Republic - Legislation and policy

<sup>57</sup> Information from: ANED country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people | Czech Republic | Authors: Prof. Jan Šiška, Dr. Libor Novosad

<sup>58</sup> Information from: ANED Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries | Czech Republic | Author: Dr. Jan Šiška

- Association of Employers of Disabled People in Czech Republic (AZZP) | <https://en.azzp.cz/>

## Denmark

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Pwds:

- Denmark signed the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* on 30 March 2007. According to Article 45 (2) the Convention entered into force for the Kingdom of Denmark on 23 August 2009. A Danish translation of the *Convention* was published by the *Central Disability Council* in January 2009. Denmark has not signed the Optional Protocol.
- There is no law on inclusive education but there is a number of relevant laws on education: (1) *Folkeskoleloven* – The public school law; (2) *Gymnasieloven* – The grammar school law; (3) *Lov om Institutioner til almengymnasiale uddannelser* – Law on institutions for secondary education; (4) *Lov om Ungdomsuddannelse for unge med særlige behov* – Law on youth education for young people with special needs; (5) *Lov om Erhvervsuddannelser* – Law on vocational educations; (6) *Universitetsloven* – University law; (7) *Lov om Special needspædagogisk støtte ved videregående uddannelser* – Law on special needs educational support in further education; (8) *SU-loven* – The educational support law; (9) *Lov om åben uddannelse* – Law on open education; (10) *Bygningsreglementet* – The building regulation.<sup>59</sup>
- Employment policies regarding persons with disabilities are based on: (1) the Law on compensation to *disabled people in employment* (*lov om kompensation til handicappede i erhverv* 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006) who offers, among other things, personal assistants to disabled persons, if it is necessary for employment; (2) the *Law on active employment effort* (*lov om aktiv beskæftigelsesindsats*, 2005) which contains among other things provision for flexible jobs, that is jobs with permanent wage support of 50 % or 65 %; (3) and *Law on Social Service* (*den sociale servicelov*, 1998) covers, among other things, personal assistance in daily life, assistive aids and equipment, adaptation to the home, sheltered employment and payment of special expenses that follow from the disability.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Information from: <https://www.disability-europe.net/downloads/566-report-on-equality-of-educational-and-training-opportunities-for-young-disabled-people-denmark>

<sup>60</sup> Information from: <https://www.disability-europe.net/downloads/349-dk-employment-report>

## Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- The Danish Educational Support Agency | <https://ufm.dk/en/the-ministry/organisation/danish-agency-for-higher-education-and-educational-support/organisation-chart/centre-for-educational-support>
- Ministry of Higher Education and Science | <https://ufm.dk/en>
- Ministry of Children and Education | <https://eng.uvm.dk/>
- The Danish Institute for Human Rights | <https://www.humanrights.dk/what-we-do/our-work-denmark/disability/disability-index>

## Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Disabled Peoples Organisations Denmark (DPOD) | <http://www.handicap.dk/politik/rettigheder/rettigheder/fn-konventionen>
- Umbrella Organisation of the Danish Disability Organisations | [ijobnu.dk](http://ijobnu.dk)
- Danish Disability Council | <https://www.dch.dk/english>

## Estonia

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The adoption of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* by Estonia, in 2006, contributed for the improvement of inclusive policies and is used as guideline for the *National Development Plan for Protection Of Rights Of Persons With Disabilities for 2014-2020*.<sup>61</sup>
- The mainstream efforts for inclusion of PwDs are set by the *Welfare Development Plan* and developed by the *Social Protection Programme 2018-2021*, the *Social Care Programme*, the *Gender equality Programme*, the *Labour Market Programme* and the *Network of Schools Programme*.<sup>62</sup>
- The general education objectives for PwDs are the same as for other children, they do not vary according to whether education takes place within the mainstream system or in special groups (schools or classes), and parents have the prerogative to choose between the local mainstream school and a segregated special school (if needed)<sup>63</sup>. Even though higher education is not included in this general education objectives, the *Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2006-2015* aimed to make it more accessible and to include non-traditional learners – foreseeing a growth in access to higher education for students with special needs.<sup>64</sup>
- Specific employment schemes for Pwds are set by the *Social Benefits for Disabled Persons Act*, the *Labour Market Services* and the *Benefits Act*, all under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs<sup>65</sup>. Those can be workplace adaptation, equipment aid, supported employment and financial benefits, for example, but it also allows PwDs who found a job to continue to receive the disability allowance.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Information from: Estonian Human Rights Centre | Protection of rights of persons with disabilities in Estonia

<sup>62</sup> Information from: ANED | European Semester 2018/2019 country fiche on disability | Estonia | Authors: Luule Sakkeus, Asta Põldma, Tiina Tambaum and Lili Abuladze

<sup>63</sup> Information from: The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education | Country information for Estonia - Legislation and policy

<sup>64</sup> Information from: ANED | Country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people | Estonia | Author(s): Meeli Murasov, Tiia Kurvits, Luule Sakkeus

<sup>65</sup> Information from: ANED | Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries | Estonia | Authors: Luule Sakkeus, Katre Pall, Helmi Tampere, Mari Kreitzberg

<sup>66</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Estonia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

## Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia | <https://www.sm.ee/en>
- Social Insurance Board | <https://www.sotsiaalkindlustusamet.ee/en>
- Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund | <https://www.tootukassa.ee/eng>
- Ministry of Education and Research | <https://www.hm.ee/en>
- Chancellor of Justice | <https://www.oiguskantsler.ee/en>

## Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Estonian Human Rights Centre | <https://humanrights.ee/>
- Estonian Chamber of Disabled People (EPIK) | <https://www.epikoda.ee/en>



## Finland

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- By ratifying *the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016)*, Finland deepens its commitment to the full enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties for persons with disabilities as well as promoting their implementation. The *First National Action Plan* regarding implementation on UNCRPD (2018-2019) is being substituted by the *Second the Action Plan (2020-2023)*.<sup>67</sup>
- The core principles of the disability policy (rooted in the Finland's *Constitution and in the Social Welfare Act 1301/2014, the Disability Services Act 380/1987, and the Act on Intellectual Disabilities 519/1977*) are equality and non-discrimination; social inclusion in society and participation in decision-making; self-determination and mainstreaming; independent living and necessary individual services/support/plan.<sup>68</sup>
- Finland as in place mainstreaming services for employment and education of persons with disability, being special services for people with disabilities the social welfare last resort<sup>69</sup>. Supported employment arrangements are made available for people with disabilities, as well as rehabilitative work activities to help maintain working capacity, being this operationalized at the municipality level<sup>70</sup>. The Finnish Education system has no dead ends, learners can always continue their studies on an upper level of education. Higher education institutions are autonomous actors, but *Ministry of Education and Culture* steers and finances the activities of higher education institutions.<sup>71</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwD:

- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health | <https://stm.fi/en/ministry>
- Ministry of Education and Culture - Division for Higher Education Policy | <https://minedu.fi/en/higher-education-and-degrees>
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment | <https://tem.fi/en/frontpage>
- Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) | <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/disability>
- The Parliamentary Ombudsman | <https://www.oikeusasiamies.fi/en/eoa>

<sup>67</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Hungary: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>68</sup> Information from: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health | Disability Services | <https://stm.fi/en/disability-services>

<sup>69</sup> Information from: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health | Rehabilitation | <https://stm.fi/en/rehabilitation>

<sup>70</sup> Information from: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health | Disability Services | <https://stm.fi/en/disability-services>

<sup>71</sup> Information from: Ministry of Education and Culture | Education System | <https://minedu.fi/en/education-system>

- Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare | <https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en>
- Many Cities and towns have their own ombudsmen for persons with disabilities, for instance Helsinki | <https://www.hel.fi/vammaiset/en/support-for-everyday-life/disability-ombudsman/>
- Municipalities

Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Finnish Disability Forum | <https://vammaisfoorumi.fi/en/frontpage/>
- Vates Foundation | <https://www.vates.fi/en/vates-2.html>
- [The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(FAIDD\) | https://www.kehitysvammaliitto.fi/in-english/](https://www.kehitysvammaliitto.fi/in-english/)
- [Inclusion Finland KVTL | https://www.tukiliitto.fi](https://www.tukiliitto.fi)

## France

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Pwds:

- France ratified the *Convention* (CRPD) on 18 February 2010, it did not immediately take any concrete steps to apply it, considering that the act passed in 2005 “for equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship of persons with disabilities” went beyond the provisions of the CRPD. Only in September 2012 did the Prime Minister did his first reference to the CRPD in a circular. The *Interministerial Committee on Disability* finally met on 25 September 2013 for the first time since its creation in 2007. In March 2014 all French Ministries got focal points giving them advice when drafting legislation or regulations, policies or action plans, and to assess their impact on people with disabilities. A circular from the Prime Minister dated 4 September 2012 specifically refers to the Convention and states that disabilities must be considered in all public policies, and that specific provisions for disabled persons should, in principle, be included in every parliamentary bill. A “disability diagnostic sheet” will be systematically presented with each new act. The focal points will be tasked with developing these diagnostic sheets. They will represent civil society's points of contact for any questions regarding disability within the government administration that appointed them.<sup>72</sup>
- For France, mainstream schooling is a priority (art 112-2). Inclusion in ordinary schools can be organised either individually, with specific support of the mainstream teacher, adapted pedagogical situations and material, and/or the guidance of a school aid, depending on the child’s specific needs, or through an inclusion scheme dealt by a specialized teacher in charge of organising some of the teaching inside a special class and of supporting inclusion into mainstream classes. Whatever the schooling modality, disabled children can benefit from the support of a specialised education and care service, SESSAD (service d'éducation spéciale et de soins à domicile). Law n° 2013-595 of school reworking was voted in 2013.<sup>73</sup> It introduced the concept of school inclusion which implies disabled children being in the mainstream classroom with adapted teaching and it reinforced cooperation between ordinary schools and specialized institutions whose frame was defined in the code of education.<sup>74</sup> Teachers as well as other education personal now benefit from a training

<sup>72</sup> Information from: <http://www.euroblind.org/convention/article-33/france>

<sup>73</sup> Information from: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000027677984>.

<sup>74</sup> Information from: Article L351-1-1.

concerning disability and taking into consideration the variety of pupils, and disabled children in particular, initial training of teachers also includes disability modules.<sup>75</sup> In fact the proportion of disabled children is higher in the primary schools than in the secondary schools<sup>76</sup> and is increasing in secondary schools.<sup>77</sup>

- By January 1<sup>st</sup>. 2020, employers in France with at least 20 employees must have workers with disabilities account for 6 percent of their total workforce. This includes full- and part-time employees, trainees, and temporary workers. Companies that do not meet the annual quota will have to implement a collective bargaining agreement that favors workers with disabilities or pay into a government fund to support their employment. Companies with at least 250 employees must appoint a designated employee to guide, inform and support employees with disabilities.

#### **Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:**

- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Economic Inclusion | <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/>
- Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation | <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/>
- State Secretariat for the Persons with Disabilities | <https://handicap.gouv.fr/>
- French Commission for the Rights and Autonomy of Disabled Persons (Commission des droits et de l'autonomie des personnes handicapées)
- Maisons départementales des personnes handicapées | <http://www.mdph.fr/>
- Interministerial Committee on Disability
- AGEFIPH (Responsible for supporting the development of the employment of People with Disabilities) | <https://www.agefiph.fr/>

#### **Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:**

- APF France Handicap | <https://www.apf-francehandicap.org/>
- CLAPEAHA - Comité de liaison et d'action des parents d'enfants et d'adultes atteints de handicaps associés | <https://www.clapeaha.fr/>

<sup>75</sup> Information from: Decree of 27th August 2013

<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000027905257&categorieLien=id>.

<sup>76</sup> Information from: DEPP-RERS-2016 | [http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid57096/reperes-et-references-statistiques.html#Données\\_publicues](http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid57096/reperes-et-references-statistiques.html#Données_publicues).

<sup>77</sup> Information from: ANED 2016-17 -Task Social Pillar, France.

- FNATH - Association des Accidentés de la Vie | <https://www.fnath.org/>
- Unafam - Union nationale de familles et amis de personnes malades et/ou handicapées psychiques | <https://www.unafam.org/>
- UNAPEI - pour une société solidaire et inclusive | <https://www.unapei.org/>

## Germany

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The *UN Convention* and its *Optional Protocol* is binding in Germany since March 26th in 2009.
- Germany's administration is largely decentralised. Each *District Office* (Bezirksamt) has someone who handles 'disability matters' (Behindertenbeauftragter), who can give advice about the range of financial, educational and professional support available to disabled citizens in their district. For information about integration into the work force, disabled people should contact the rehabilitation team at the *local Labour Agency*.<sup>78</sup>
- The 16 different states of Germany are responsible for the educational system. Recent research show that still almost 60% of children with disabilities stay in special schools.<sup>79</sup>
- 'No person shall be disfavoured because of disability'. This anti-discrimination provision is contained in Article 3 of the *Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany*. Equality and promotion of equal opportunities to enable self-determined participation in society by people who are disabled or at risk of becoming disabled are therefore central to German government disability policy.<sup>80</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs | <https://www.bmas.de/EN/Our-Topics/Participation-of-Persons-with-Disabilities/employment-of-people-with-severe-disabilities.html>
- The 16 different States within Germany (Länder) have each their own policy and structures, although the different Länder try to work together and try to coordinate topics.<sup>81</sup>

### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Federal Association for the Blind and Partially Sighted (Deutscher Blinden – und Sehbehindertenverband, DBSV)

<sup>78</sup> Information from: REHA-Team, Agentur für Arbeit

<sup>79</sup> Information from: <https://www.eduserver.de/Special-needs-and-Inclusive-Education-Germany--4523-en.html>

<sup>80</sup> Information from: <https://www.bmas.de/EN/Our-Topics/Participation-of-Persons-with-Disabilities/disability-policy.html>

<sup>81</sup> Information from: <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/germany>

- Federal Association for People with Physical and Multiple Disabilities (Bundesverband für Körper und Mehrfachbehinderte, BVKM)
- Federal Association for the Disabled (Bundesverband Selbsthilfe Körperbehinderter e. V., BSK)
- German Association for the Deaf (Deutscher Gehörlosenbund)
- Federal Association of Lifetime Help for People with Mental Disabilities (Bundesvereinigung Lebenshilfe für Menschen mit geistiger Behinderung)

## Greece

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The main legal framework for inclusion in Greece is expressed by the *Greek Constitution* (article 4 and 21) and the adoption of the *UN Convention*. Disability targeted actions are found in the broader *National Strategic Framework for Social Inclusion (2014-2020)* where measures include widening the provision of community-based services, promoting de-institutionalisation, ensuring access to special education, extending tasks provided by home help services, promoting participation of people with disabilities in specifically designed VET schemes, active labour market programmes, and social entrepreneurship schemes.<sup>82</sup>
- De-institutionalisation and mainstream school are still an ongoing process, where, according to *Law 4547/2018 - Reform of Support Structures in Primary and Secondary Education*, the decision on whether a pupil with disabilities attends a mainstream or special school is determined on the basis of a needs assessment and support procedures. For higher education, there is no anti-discrimination legislation, however, there are in place certain measures aimed at enabling access to higher education for candidates with disabilities.<sup>83</sup>
- *Law 3304/2005* provides legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of disability in accessing employment, as well as in favour of reasonable accommodation in the workplace. The *Greek Manpower Organisation (OAED)* is responsible for the promotion, design and implementation of programmes and actions targeted at the inclusion of PwDs in the labour market, including public work schemes, self-employment and experience acquisition for younger people in the private sector. There is also a public sector quota scheme.<sup>84</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs | <https://www.minedu.gov.gr/>
- Ministry of Work, Social Security and Welfare | <http://www.ypakp.gr/>
- Greek Manpower Organisation | <http://www.oeed.gr/home>
- National Institute Of Labour & Human Resources (EIEAD) | <http://www.eiead.gr/>
- Welfare Benefits & Social Solidarity Organization (OPEC) | <https://opeka.gr/>

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<sup>82</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Greece: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>83</sup> Idem

<sup>84</sup> Idem



- National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance | <https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/>
- Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) | <http://www.hqaa.gr>

**Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:**

- The National Confederation of Disabled People Greece (NCDP) | <https://www.esamea.gr/>
- Support and Social Care Centre for people with intellectual disabilities (ESTIA) | <https://www.eseepea.gr/>
- ELEPAP- Rehabilitation for The Disabled | <https://elepap.gr/en/>
- Puzzle | <https://puzzle-se.eu/en/home/>
- To Ergastiri (Margarita) | <http://www.eeamargarita.gr/>
- Special Education | <http://www.specialeducation.gr/frontend/index.php>
- The Panhellenic Federation of Associations of Parents and Guardians of Persons with Disabilities (POSGAMEA) | <http://www.posgamea.gr/>

## Hungary

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The general anti-discrimination framework that protects persons with disability is based on *The Fundamental Law (Constitution)*, but it is the *Equal Treatment Act (Law 125 of 2003)* that provides detailed anti-discrimination rules. Most of the political endeavours to promote inclusion for PwDs are currently framed on the *National Disability Programme 2015-2025* (Decision of Parliament No. 15/2015) and in its *Action Plan to implement the National Disability Programme* (Government Decision No. 1653/2015)<sup>85</sup>, which stills upholds several features of segregated support to PwDs, nonetheless, it is moving towards open and inclusive options in several fields.<sup>86</sup>
- Regarding inclusive education, the *Act on National Public Education (Act 190 of 2011)* is the main legal framework, on which it provides two choices of education for children with disabilities: (a) special schools or (b) in mainstream pre-schools and schools. There are no special programmes to include PwDs in Higher Education, however, there are in place special entrance schemes (extra points, more time for examinations, accessibility, etc...) for PwDs in higher education. This, and the inclusion in *The National Disability Program 2015-2025* of this issue, may explain the doubling of the PwDs figures in Hungarian university and higher education institutes.<sup>87</sup>
- The *Equal Treatment Act (125 of 2003)* also provides the general provisions that shall be applied for discrimination in employment, while the Employment Service from the regional training centres provide training for people with disabilities according to the type of their disability (specialized training centres, for example, in Székesfehérvár it is specialised in people with physical impairment; the one in Pécs in people with intellectual disabilities; the one in Miskolc in people with visual impairment; and the one in Debrecen in people with hearing impairment). Moreover, there is in place a quota system for medium and large companies to employ people with disabilities, which provides financial incentives (fines and tax relieve).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Hungary: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>86</sup> Information from: The Equal Treatment Authority | <https://www.egyenlobanasmod.hu/en>

<sup>87</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Hungary: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>88</sup> Idem.

## Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Human Capacities | <https://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-human-resources>
- National Disability Council (Országos Fogyatékosügyi Tanács – OFT) | Official council, maintained by the government, in which the Members are made up of government representatives, disability organisations and other stakeholder organisations.
- The Equal Treatment Authority (Egyenlő Bánásmód Hatóság - EBH) | <https://www.egyenlobanasmod.hu/en>

## Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- National Council of Associations of Persons with Disabilities (FESZT) | <http://www.feszt.eu/english/>
- The National Association for the Protection of the Interests of People with Intellectual Disabilities and their Assistants (ÉFOÉSZ) | <http://efoesz.hu/magunkrol/>
- National Association of Associations for the Disabled (MEOSZ) | <http://www.meoszinfo.hu/>

## Iceland

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- Iceland ratified the *UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) on 23/09/2006, which is the main legal framework for promoting the rights of PwDs, but there are no clear plans on ratifying the *Optional Protocol*.<sup>89</sup>
- The *Ministry of Education, Science and Culture* is responsible for the implementation of legislation pertaining to all school levels, from pre-primary and compulsory education through the upper secondary and higher education levels, as well as continuing and adult education<sup>90</sup>. The Icelandic system for inclusive education was audit by an external entity who draft the Final report for *The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education*.<sup>91</sup>
- There is a national action plan for disabled people which concerns education and employment<sup>92</sup> and a Law on services for disabled people who need intensive support.<sup>93</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Social Affairs | <https://www.government.is/ministries/ministry-of-social-affairs/>
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture | <https://www.government.is/ministries/ministry-of-education-science-and-culture/>
- Directorate of Labour: <https://www.vinnumalastofnun.is/en>

### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- The Organisation of Disabled People in Iceland | <https://www.obi.is/is/english>
- The National Association for Intellectual Disabilities | <https://www.throskahjalp.is/is/samtokin/english>
- The Centre for Independent Living | <https://www.npa.is/>
- Átak (association of people with developmental disabilities) | <http://www.lesa.is/>

<sup>89</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Iceland: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>90</sup> Information from: <https://www.government.is/topics/education/>

<sup>91</sup>Information from: [https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/menntamalaraduneyti-media/media/frettatengt2016/Final-report\\_External-Audit-of-the-Icelandic-System-for-Inclusive-Education.pdf](https://www.stjornarradid.is/media/menntamalaraduneyti-media/media/frettatengt2016/Final-report_External-Audit-of-the-Icelandic-System-for-Inclusive-Education.pdf)

<sup>92</sup> Information from: <https://www.althingi.is/altext/146/s/1000.html>

<sup>93</sup> Information from: <https://www.althingi.is/altext/stjt/2018.038.html>

## Ireland

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Pwds:

- The broader legal framework to promote inclusion of PwDs in Ireland is set by the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*, ratified in 2008, the *Equal Status Acts (2000 – 2018)* and *The Disability Act (2005)*.<sup>94</sup> These rights are operationalized through a holistic approach to improve the lives of people with disabilities in *The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2021*.
- Current education policy in Ireland is to encourage the maximum possible inclusion for children with special educational needs in mainstream schools and is backed by *the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)*. Special schools are generally for children with overly complex special needs who would not manage in a mainstream school even for part of the week.<sup>95</sup>
- In Higher Education there are several access programmes to help people with disabilities and alternative admission schemes. These focus on broader approaches of enhancing teaching and learning; promotion of equity of access to higher education; the enhancement of institutions' responsiveness to the needs of wider society; research capacity-building; and the internationalisation of Irish Higher Education.<sup>96</sup>
- As with Education, Employment of PwDs in Ireland is stepping into an open and mainstream narrative. Several support and financial schemes are in place, but open to all the persons who need a specific help to reach employment. Nevertheless, there are several positive discrimination guidelines: 3% of jobs in public service bodies are reserved for people with disabilities; *The Employment Equality Acts (1998-2015)* outlaw discrimination in a wide range of employment and employment-related areas, including the obligation to make reasonable accommodations for staff with disabilities and enabling people with disabilities to participate in employment schemes, including promotion and training; *The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015* is a ten-year strategy

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<sup>94</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Ireland: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>95</sup> Information from: <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/ireland>

<sup>96</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Ireland: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

aimed at ensuring that people with disabilities, who can work and want to work, are supported and enabled to do so.<sup>97</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- National Disability Authority | <http://nda.ie/>
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission | <https://www.ihrec.ie/>
- Department of Justice and Equality | <http://www.justice.ie/>
- National Council for Special Education | <https://ncse.ie/>
- Department of Social Protection | <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-social-protection/>
- Employability Service | <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/8578c4-access-the-employability-service/>
- Higher Education Authority (HEA) | <https://hea.ie/>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) | <https://www.ideaonline.ie/>
- Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) | <https://www.activelink.ie/irish-links/disability>
- Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) | <https://www.ahead.ie/>
- Dublin South Supported Employment (DSSE) | <http://www.dsse.ie/>
- EmployAbility Clare | <https://employabilityclare.ie/>

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<sup>97</sup> Information from: [https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment\\_and\\_disability](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment_and_disability)

## Italy

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Pwds:

- Despite the regional distributions of power and responsibilities, inclusion policies towards PwDs in Italy are broadly proactive and legally bonded to the ratification of *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2009), providing a *National Observatory on the Status of Persons with Disabilities* and the *Framework Law for the Assistance, Social Integration and the rights of the disabled* (Law 104 of 1992).<sup>98</sup>
- Education is a good example of the public inclusive/mainstream policy, being, so far, the only European country which has reached 99.6% inclusion of learners with disabilities in mainstream education. In fact, by law there are no special schools or classes in the Italian school system. *Law 170 of 2010* guarantees the right to education of pupils and students with specific learning disabilities, and *Law 62 of 2000* states that any public or private, municipal, or regional school in Italy that obtains official recognition is obliged to accept any pupil with disabilities, even if they need intensive support.<sup>99</sup>
- In Higher Education the inclusive effort also took place. The *Law 17/1999* integrated and modified the previous legislation, completing the pattern of mandating inclusion into the higher stages of education and was complemented with *Law 17/1999* that provides funds to universities to support students with disabilities in various forms.<sup>100</sup>
- Employment schemes for PwDs on the labour market are based on the *Law 68 of 1999*, which structured the employment rules of people with disabilities and promotes work placement and work integration of PwDs by supporting services and targeted employment (this may include a quota system, partially reimburse expenses incurred for adaptation of the work environment and to finance activities aimed to support work placement). More recently, *Legislative Decree 151/2015* ("Jobs Act) defines the incentives for the enterprises who hire persons with disabilities.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Italy: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>99</sup> Information from: <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/italy>

<sup>100</sup> Idem

<sup>101</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Italy: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

## Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministero dell'Istruzione, Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca | <https://www.miur.gov.it/>
- Ministero della Salute | <https://www.salute.gov.it/>
- Centri Territoriali di Supporto | <https://www.superabile.it/>
- Osservatorio nazionale sulla condizione delle persone con disabilità | <http://www.osservatoriodisabilita.gov.it/it/>
- CNUDD - Conferenza Nazionale Universitaria dei Delegati per la Disabilità | <https://www.crui.it/cnudd.html>
- INVALSI - Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione | <https://www.invalsi.it/>
- Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali | <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/>
- Agenzia Nazionale per le Politiche Attive del Lavoro | <https://www.anpal.gov.it/>
- Istituto Nazionale per l'assicurazione contro gli infortuni sul lavoro | <https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/multi/english.html>
- Cliclavoro | <https://www.cliclavoro.gov.it/>

## Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- ANFAS - Associazione Nazionale Famiglie Di Persone com Disabilità | <http://www.anffas.net/>
- RIDS - Rete Italiana Disabilità e Sviluppo | <https://www.ridsnetwork.org/>



## Latvia

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Latvia signed the *UN Convention* on 18 July 2008 and entered into force on 31 March 2010, since then the Saeima (Latvian Parliament) compelled the Government to review existing national legislation in accordance to the Convention. There is no specific law for non-discrimination on the grounds of disability in Latvia, but the Article 91 of the *Constitution Law* (*Satversme*) states that all people in Latvia are equal before the law and the court, and that human rights shall be realised without discrimination of any kind and non-discrimination norms are included in several national laws, policies and strategies.<sup>102</sup>
- The right to education for every resident of Latvia is determined in the *Constitutional Law* (*Satversme*), which states that every citizen has an equal right to acquire education regardless their health status or disability. The *Law on Education* (1998) identifies special education as general and professional education adapted for people with special needs and health problems. The *Law on General Education* (1999) defines the types of education implemented in Latvia, it states that special education is a specific type of general education, the amendments to this Law (2011) state that learners with special needs should receive support and rehabilitation for their educational programme, according to their state of health, abilities and level of development. Children usually start their schooling in a mainstream environment, except for those who are diagnosed with a disability in early childhood and whose parents choose to place them in a special educational institution. On 22 May 2014, the Parliament approved the Guidelines for Education Development 2014-2020.<sup>103</sup>
- There are no specific grants, allowances or stipends (scholarships) available to disabled students and trainees for the purposes of their education and training in Latvia, although disabled people or parents of disabled children receive a disability pension or state social benefits and social services funded from social security (disability pensions) or the state budget.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Latvia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>103</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Latvia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom) and <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/latvia/legislation-and-policy>

<sup>104</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Latvia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

- Disabled people's rights to receive the necessary support apply also after compulsory schooling age accordingly to *The Constitutional Law (Satversme)*. The *Guidelines for Education Development 2014-2020* (2014) include measures which applies to all students (also those with disabilities). *The Implementation plan for 2018-2020* of the Guidelines includes measures to promote increasing access to higher education for PwDs, which would enhance their personal growth and increase their competitiveness in the labour market. It is planned that by 2020 3.000 persons from vulnerable groups will receive financial support for obtaining a higher education in the *Guidelines for Education Development 2014-2020*.<sup>105</sup>
- The *Labour Law* (2002) provides protection against all forms of discrimination, it refers directly to disability and includes a provision of shift of burden of proof. The Law does not include the issues of discrimination by association with disability. The *Guidelines on Inclusive Employment 2015-2020* specify actions to be undertaken to support the integration of disabled persons into the labour market, simultaneously promoting person's economic independence and social inclusion. The *Labour Law* (2002) defines it as a duty of the employer to ensure reasonable accommodation in the workplace. Technical equipment and technical aids for individual use are available for people with disabilities in accordance with the *Social Service and Social Assistance Law* (2003). Regarding unemployment, there are motivation programs for job search with a social mentor, determination of professional suitability and subsidized employment provided by the State Employment Agency. In the open labour market disabled people receive the full amount of the disability pension, there is a provision of financial support for the employment of unemployed persons with disabilities with the maximum duration of 24 months. In Latvia there is no quota system.<sup>106</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Education and Science | <https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/>
- National Centre for Education | <https://www.visc.gov.lv/en>
- Ministry of Welfare | <https://www.lm.gov.lv/en>
- The Social Integration State Agency (SIVA)

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<sup>105</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Latvia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom) and [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/legislation-34\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/legislation-34_en)

<sup>106</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Latvia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Apeirons (Organization of people with disabilities and their friends)  
<https://www.apeirons.lv/>
- Zelda (Resource Centre for people with mental disability) | <https://zelda.org.lv/en/>
- Association Latvian Movement for Independent Living | <http://lkndz.lv/en/>
- SUSTENTO - Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations  
<http://www.sustento.lv/?lang=en>

## Lichtenstein

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- Liechtenstein has not yet signed the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. As justification, the Government stated that a process is planned to clarify in detail the expected effects of ratification in cooperation with various organisations and civil society.<sup>107</sup>
- The *Constitution of the Principality of Liechtenstein* contains no provisions related to discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, age or disability. However, it includes the basic principle of equality (article 27 and 31). The *Law on Equality of People with Disabilities* aims at eliminating and preventing discrimination against people with disabilities and to guarantee equal participation in the daily life of society. In April 2016, an amendment to the *Criminal Code* entered into force, introducing a comprehensive prohibition against discrimination, which include publicly inciting hatred or discrimination on the grounds of language, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, ideology, gender, disability, age, or sexual orientation.<sup>108</sup>
- The *Law on Equality of People with Disabilities (2006)* asserts that the state must promote appropriate forms of training for pupils, as well as adequate training and support for teachers to integrate children and young people with disabilities into mainstream schools. Although in practice and in many cases, especially children and young people with children with intellectual impairments, attend the Special Education Centre. According to Article 18 of this law, the State must ensure early intervention and basic training that is customised to the specific needs of persons with disabilities. Regarding vocational training, the *Law on Vocational Training* supports the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities in any area of training. The State can participate in the disability-related costs if they are not covered by insurance and other benefits.<sup>109</sup>
- There are no specific measures for people with disabilities in university or university college education. However, general provisions from the *Act on Equality of People with Disabilities (2006)*, Articles 11 and 12, ensure access of PwDs to public buildings and Article 17 states

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<sup>107</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Lichtenstein: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>108</sup> Idem.

<sup>109</sup> Idem.

that the obligation of society is to take into consideration the special requirements of PwDs when interacting with them. Note that most of the university level education takes place outside Liechtenstein, since there is only a limited range of studies that can be pursued in this country.<sup>110</sup>

- The *Act on Equality of People with Disabilities* (in Art. 10, §1 and §2) states that PwDs shall not be discriminated against as employees in the public and the private sectors or at any other workplace, either directly or indirectly. There are exceptions to this general rule provided in Article 10 §3 and §4 of the same act, which state that discrimination does not apply if a special attribute is necessary to fulfil the professional tasks and the disabled person concerned does not fit into that specific arrangement. The *Law on Disability Insurance* guarantees people with disabilities assistance when they are searching for a job.<sup>111</sup>
- The *Liechtenstein Disability Insurance* has occupational integration of disabled persons as a central objective, stating that if a PwDs finds a new job which makes it necessary to relocate to another place (due to the disability), transportation costs are covered by the disability insurance. The *Act on Disability Insurance* (1960) and the connected *By-Law provide* financial incentives for employers to adapt the workplace for a person with a disability to continue an employment, or to integrate or to re-integrate a disabled person. Moreover, on Article 45 of this act, financial incentives as subventions to the wages and salaries are granted in the case of an employment of a person with disability of above 40%. The government is also entitled to provide a state grant to the salaries for employed persons with a disability under certain conditions.<sup>112</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Office for Equality of People with Disabilities | <http://www.lbv.li/Buero-Gleichstellung.php>
- Office for Education | <https://www.liv.li/inhalt/1425/amtstellen/besondere-schulbereiche>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Association for Human Rights in Liechtenstein | <https://www.menschenrechte.li/category/themen/>

<sup>110</sup> Idem.

<sup>111</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Lichtenstein: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>112</sup> Idem.

- Liechtenstein Association of Persons with Disabilities (LBV) | <https://www.lbv.li>

## Lithuania

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- *The Convention* was signed on 30 March 2007 and ratified on 27 May 2010 when the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the *Law on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol* (No. XI-854 on 27 of May 2010).<sup>113</sup>
- In Lithuania, special education for children and youth with disabilities is available at all formal education institution and non-formal education (as educational assistance). Special schools operate in special institutions for children and youth with disabilities which are segregated, special classes exist in some part of mainstream schools, but are still a segregated model. Children and youth with Special Educational Needs are evaluated by *Pedagogical Psychological Services* of the municipalities that recommend a school for the child (*Law XI-1281 of 2011* - Articles 34 and 35). On 27 June 2017, the Minister of Education and Science adopted Order No. V-527 on Children inclusive learning and approval of the *Action Plan on the Inclusion of Children in Education and Multidimensional Education 2017-2022*, in which all education of children and youth with disabilities is planned to be provided in inclusive schools. However, the *Law on Education* does not preclude schools from refusing children with disabilities.<sup>114</sup>
- *Law on Social Integration of Disabled Persons* (Act 9, in Lithuanian) affirms that all disabled people have an equal right to education, as other citizens, although vocational rehabilitation is not accessible to all PwDs.<sup>115</sup> Regarding higher education, students with disabilities have equal rights to attend higher education institutions and will be given priority, hence they fulfil equal admission conditions. Higher education institutions may establish additional conditions and procedures for admission of students with special needs (*Law XI-1281 of 2011*, Article 13) and PwDs may receive financial or technical support.<sup>116</sup>
- The *Law on Support for Employment* (No X-694, 2014) encompasses the monitoring of the labour market, the provision of general services of support and active labour market policy.

<sup>113</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Lithuania: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>114</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Lithuania: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom) and <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/lithuania/systems-of-support-and-specialist-provision>

<sup>115</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Lithuania: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>116</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Lithuania: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom) and [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/higher-education-44\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/higher-education-44_en)

The *Lithuanian Labour Exchange* (at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour), as well as the *Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority and Youth Job Centres*, are the most important institutions that guarantee the quality of employment services. The employment programmes for PwDs in Lithuania have significant shortcomings and some legal provisions in the legislation continue to discriminate against persons with disabilities. The provision of vocational training combined with supported employment measures and social enterprises are the main active labour market policy measure.<sup>117</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Education, Science and Sport | [https://www.smm.lt/web/en/education\\_1](https://www.smm.lt/web/en/education_1)
- National Agency for Education | <https://www.nsa.smm.lt/english/>
- Council for Disability Affairs | <http://www.ndt.lt/en/about-us/>
- Ministry of Social Security and Labour | <https://socmin.lrv.lt/en/>
- Equal Opportunities Ombudsman | <https://www.lygybe.lt/en/>
- Disability and Working Capacity Identification Service | <https://ndnt.lrv.lt/en/disability-level-assessment>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- The Lithuanian Disability Forum | <https://www.lnf.lt/en/>
- Lithuanian Association of People with Disabilities | <http://www.negalia.lt/en/>
- Kelmė Culture Center | <http://www.kelmesnd.lt>
- The Association for the Physically Disabled of Lithuania | [www.draugija.lt](http://www.draugija.lt)

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<sup>117</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Lithuania: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)



## Luxembourg

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- Luxembourg, as a member of the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) and of the European Union, follows the non-discrimination and inclusive policies regarding persons with disabilities. Moreover, even if *National Constitution* does not explicitly mention PwDs concerning human rights and non-discrimination, the *national law* prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in education, employment, transportation, access to health care, and the provision of other state services. The legal and administrative measures and arrangements are guided by the *Action Plan in Favour of Persons with Disabilities*.<sup>118</sup>
- The *Act on Education* (2009) set up a framework of cooperation between mainstream and special education schools, which favours inclusive school enrolment, but it does not abolish the special education system. Parents decide the type of schooling (special or mainstreaming education) they want for their children.<sup>119</sup>
- The University of Luxembourg is the only national higher institution and in its mission statement highlights the inclusion of students with special needs. *The Act on Higher Education at Luxembourg University* set several measures for individual reasonable accommodation (established by an appointed person responsible for compensation for disadvantages and reasonable accommodations). The number of students with disabilities at Luxembourg University has risen continuously since 2005.<sup>120</sup>
- Luxembourg provides sheltered workshops and therapeutic ateliers that offer vocational skills trainings and adapted formation for persons with disabilities, however, despite of the legal mission, the enrolment in special centres (preparing centres and sheltered workshops) does not result in inclusion into the open labour market. Nonetheless, the ADEM (*Agence pour le Développement de l'Emploi*) as changed the prior term 'travailleur handicapé' (handicapped worker) to 'salarié handicapé' (employee with disabilities); as a special section for counselling and support of persons with disabilities in the main labour market, the secondary labour market and sheltered workshops; and provides financial schemes that can

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<sup>118</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Luxembourg: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>119</sup> Idem.

<sup>120</sup> Idem.

go from 40 to 100% of the wage. Moreover, there is in place a quota employment system for private enterprises and public services (*Code du travail Livre V Art. L. 562-3*), depending on the number of employees).<sup>121</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Education, Children and Youth | <https://menej.gouvernement.lu/en.html>
- University of Luxembourg | <https://wwwfr.uni.lu>
- Employment Agency (ADEM -Agence pour le Développement de l'Emploi) | <https://adem.public.lu/en.html>
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and the Social and Solidarity Economy | <https://mteess.gouvernement.lu/en.html>
- Ministry of Family, Integration and the Great Region | <https://mfamigr.gouvernement.lu/fr.html>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- "Nëmme Mat ice cream!" ("Only with us!) non-profit association cross-disability self-advocacy organization. It was founded by and for disabled people | <http://www.nemmemateis.lu>
- Handicap Platform – FEDAS | <http://www.fedas.lu/fr/espace/handicap/>
- APEMH Foundation (association of parents of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities) | <https://www.apemh.lu/>
- Conseil National des Persons Handicapées | <https://info-handicap.lu>

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<sup>121</sup> Idem.

## Malta

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The *Maltese Constitution* declares that every Maltese citizen is entitled to the same rights, including persons with disability, but only more recently with the *Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act* (2000) and the signing *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2007) was a comprehensive legislation adopted to act on the principle of anti-discrimination against disabled people in education, employment, goods and services, physical access, accommodation and insurance. Many of the laws and measures to ensure the rights and inclusion of PwDs are set in the *Malta National Disability Strategy*.<sup>122</sup>
- The *Inclusive Education Policy* in 2000 enable most children with disabilities to attend mainstream schools, however, parents retain the right to choose whether to send their child to an education resource centre (reformed special schools) or a mainstream school. Regarding vocational training, the main provider is the state-funded *Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology* (MCAST), which implements an inclusive policy.<sup>123</sup>
- The University of Malta is the only university in Malta and following the adoption of the *Equal Opportunities Act* undergo changes to offer to student with disability, including an increase quality of access to certain areas of campus and the establishment of an Access Disability Support Unit (ADSU). Moreover, the *PEKTUR Programme* provides scholarships for persons with disability undertaking research in the field of Disability Studies.<sup>124</sup>
- The *Employment and Industrial Relations Act* and the *Equal Opportunities Act* transpose the European Employment Directive and safeguard the rights of disabled persons in employment. Besides a quota system, the '*Jobsplus*' state agency offers employment and training opportunities to PwDs through normal recruitment procedures and supported employment measures like *Bridging the Gap Scheme*, the *Employment Aid Programme*, and *Workplace Accessibility Scheme*, but also through Sheltered Employment Training programmes.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Malta: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>123</sup> Idem.

<sup>124</sup> Idem.

<sup>125</sup> Idem.

## Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing | <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20of%20Malta/Ministries%20and%20Entities/Pages/Ministries%20Nov%202020/Inkluzjoni.aspx>
- Ministry for Education | <https://education.gov.mt/en/Pages/educ.aspx>
- Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability | <https://www.crpdp.org.mt/>
- The National Commission of Persons with Disability | <http://www.knpdp.org/>
- The PEKTUR Programme (Disability Studies Scholarship Grant) | <https://www.crpdp.org.mt/services/pektur/>
- Malta University | <https://www.um.edu.mt/>
- Jobplus (state employment and training agency) | <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/>

## Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability - MFOPD | <https://maltafederationoforganisationspersonswithdisability.wordpress.com/>
- Lino Spiteri Foundation (sustainable employment of persons with disabilities) | <https://linospiterifoundation.org/>
- Inspire – The Foundation for Inclusion | <https://inspire.org.mt/>
- National Parents' Society of Persons with Disability | <http://www.npsdp.org/>

## Netherlands

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The *UN Convention* entered into force in the Netherlands on July 14th, 2016. Its main goal is to strengthen the position of people with disabilities including the right to live independently, to go to school, to use public transport or to work. The Dutch government (municipality, province and central government) must ensure that this is realized. In the Netherlands, the *Institute for Human Rights* supervises compliance with the convention and the way in which the convention is put into practice (implementation).<sup>126</sup>
- The Netherlands works since 2014 with the “*Appropriate Education Act*”. This should ensure that pupils with a disability go to a mainstream school as much as possible. Special school is available for students who need very special extra care. Schools are responsible for placing a student who needs (extra) support and must always first examine whether it can provide the student with (extra) support. If this is not possible, the school must look for another school where the student does receive extra support. The school is obliged to ensure this, it is called duty of care. In several reports, the *Institute for Human Rights* has concluded that inclusive education is not yet available in the Netherlands (see monitor 2017-2019). The number of pupils in special education and the number of children/youngsters staying at home is still increasing.<sup>127</sup>
- Because employers are too often reluctant to hire people with a disability, two laws have been made to encourage employers to do so: the *Participation Act and the Job Agreement Act and Quota Disability Act* (2015). Both laws fall under the *Broad Offensive*, a package of measures that should get and keep more people with disabilities working. These laws provide that 100 000 additional jobs should be created in the private sector over the next ten years and the government in the public sector must provide 25 000 extra jobs.<sup>128</sup>

### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- The Institute for Human Rights (College voor de Rechten van de Mens) | <https://mensenrechten.nl/nl/college-voor-jou>

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<sup>126</sup> Information from Institute for Humans Rights: <https://mensenrechten.nl/nl/vn-verdrag-handicap>

<sup>127</sup> Information from Institute for Humans Rights: <https://mensenrechten.nl/nl/subpage/onderwijs-met-een-beperking#:~:text=Naar%20inclusief%20onderwijs&text=Dan%20bestaan%20er%20dus%20geen.een%20'gewone'%20school%20gaa>

<sup>128</sup> Information from Institute for Humans Rights: <https://mensenrechten.nl/nl/subpage/werken-met-een-beperking>

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science | <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science>
- The Education Inspectorate | <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl>
- Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment | <https://www.Government.nl/ministeries/ministry-of-social-affairs-and-employment>
- Employee Insurance Agency - UWV | <https://www.uwv.nl/overuwv/english/>
- Movisie (integrated municipalities search website) | <https://gemeenten.movisie.nl/doel/inclusie-bevorderen>

Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Coalitie voor Inclusie (Coalition for inclusion) | [coalitievoorinclusie.nl](http://coalitievoorinclusie.nl)
- Ieder (in) | [iederin.nl](http://iederin.nl)
- Per Saldo (National association of people with a personal budget) | [pgb.nl](http://pgb.nl)
- LFB (national interest group by and for people with an intellectual disability) | [lfb.nu](http://lfb.nu)
- Wij Staan Op! (foundation by young adults with a physical disability) | [wijstaanop.nl](http://wijstaanop.nl)

## Republic of North Macedonia

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The *Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia* and antidiscrimination laws assure a general clause on equality and guarantees for all citizens, with no specific focus on PwDs. However, by signing of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007)*, national legislation began explicitly including discrimination on the grounds of disability, in particular in the field of labour relations.<sup>129</sup>
- The *National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2016-2020* defines the objectives, measures, indicators, key policy makers for the promotion of rights and equal opportunities in various fields, including disability. There are two quasi-judicial mechanisms available to citizens in case their rights are violated due to discrimination: the *Commission for Protection from Discrimination and the Ombudsman*. Despite the existing legislation and policies, discrimination is a widely spread phenomenon in the country according to surveys to PwDs and the parents of children with disabilities that consider that they are: not equal to other citizens (99.5%); do not enjoy equal protection before the law in comparison with other citizens (83%); and that they are discriminated (87%).<sup>130</sup>
- According to *The Constitution* education is available to everyone under equal conditions. Primary and secondary education is obligatory and free of charge, provided by the State. However, for PwDs primary education can be organized in the hospitals and health institutions. Segregated education is still in place, separate classrooms are provided for pupils and students standard with a ratio of disabled and non-disabled students. Students with special educational needs are enrolled in special primary schools or in special classes within mainstream schools (physically located in the same premises as their fellow students without disabilities but follow special curricula and instruction).<sup>131</sup>
- The vocational training for PwDs is very limited and dated, while the *Law for Higher Education* provides certain benefits for students with disabilities, such as no fee scholarships, free transport to school, free accommodation and meals in the student dormitory and accessibility.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Republic of North Macedonia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>130</sup> Idem.

<sup>131</sup> Idem.

<sup>132</sup> Idem.

- Besides prohibition of all forms of discrimination provided by the *Law on Labour Relations* and the *Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination*, positive discrimination measures for PwDs are scarce. Nonetheless, reasonable accommodation in working places is funded by the state, as well financial support for the total workers of sheltered companies and per individual worker with disability in normal companies. The public sector is excluded from these financial incentives.<sup>133</sup>

#### **Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:**

- Ministry of Education and Science | <http://mon.gov.mk/en/>
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy | <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/>
- Bureau for Education Development | <https://www.bro.gov.mk/>
- Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia | <http://av.gov.mk/home.nspx>

#### **Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:**

- National Council of Disability Organisations of the R.N Macedonia | <http://www.nsiom.org.mk/>
- The Republic Centre for Support of Persons with Intellectual Disability – PORAKA | <http://poraka.org.mk/about-poraka/?lang=en>

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<sup>133</sup> Idem.



## Norway

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Pwds:

- Norway signed the UN Convention on 30 March 2007, but the main law that empower rights of PwDs is *The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (2018)*. Norway's model of disability is focused around providing community-based treatment and based on the social model of disability (disability occurs at the intersection between the individual and physical surroundings which are not properly adjusted to differing abilities).<sup>134</sup> Due to a mainstreamed set of policies, disability is incorporated in different areas of action and treated as a general positive discrimination policy.<sup>135</sup>
- All children have the right to go to a local school (*Law on education*), but parents may apply for an alternative school. The state provides some regulations and supports, but in general the local authorities (municipalities) are responsible for education services and funding. Vocational training is normally a part of the secondary education system, following the same regulations as other primary and secondary education. The *Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act* also applies to higher education, where the *Law on Universities and University Colleges* encompasses a broad set of accessibility and positive discrimination measures towards PwDs.<sup>136</sup>
- The *Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act* also provides regulation in employment, where public and private employers should work actively to promote equality and meet requirements on individual accommodation. Employment is one of the four priority areas of the *Strategy for the Equality of Persons with Disability for the period 2020-2030*. The *Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)* is responsible for advice services and support for PwDs seeking employment (in or outside mainstream), however, the task of NAV is not to assist disabled people as such, but to assist people with employment problems. There are no quota schemes in Norway, but there are several financial incentives and programmes for improving qualifications, workplace adaptations, advice to employers, etc.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Information from: The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs | Disabilities in Norway | [https://bufdir.no/en/English\\_start\\_page/Disabilities\\_in\\_Norway/](https://bufdir.no/en/English_start_page/Disabilities_in_Norway/)

<sup>135</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Norway: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>136</sup> Idem.

<sup>137</sup> Idem.

## Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs | <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/asd/id165/>
- Ministry of Education and Research | <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/id586/>
- The Equality and Discrimination Ombudsman (Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombodet) | <https://www.ldo.no/en/ldo-english-page/>
- The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) | <https://bufdir.no/en>
- Universell - National coordinator of accessibility in higher education | <https://www.universell.no/english/>
- The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) | <https://www.nav.no/en/home>

## Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- The Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People (FFO) | <https://www.fo.no/Organisasjonen/About-FFO/>
- The Norwegian Association of Disabled (NAD) | <http://nhf.no/english/>

## Poland

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- Poland signed *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in 2007 but made significant reservations and an interpretative declaration with regards to articles 12, 23 and 25. Nonetheless, in general *The Polish Constitution* (1997) contains prohibition against discrimination and *The Charter of Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (1997) further specifies that persons with disabilities have the right to an independent, active life and free from discrimination.<sup>138</sup>
- Right to education is a citizen right (*Polish Constitution*) and obliges public authorities to ensure universal and equal access to education for all. The main legislative framework for the school education system is the *Act on Education System* (2016), on which mainstream schools have the legal responsibility to enrol every child living in their districts. Even if there is a recommendation for special schools, parents still have the right to send their child to the district mainstream school, in this sense, Polish education system is steadily going into the direction of less segregated and more inclusive education. However, special education is still a part of the education system in Poland, with separate special schools (including non-public schools, home-schooling and remedial centres).<sup>139</sup>
- In higher education, students with disabilities have no general positive discrimination policy but each college or university may implement their own disability policy, employ a disability plenipotentiary and establish an office for persons with disabilities (but this is always an autonomous decision of the institution). Nonetheless, student with disabilities the have the right to apply for financial support on the same basis as other students and are additionally entitled to a special disability scholarship.<sup>140</sup>
- The *Labour Code* (1974), the *Act on Promotion of Employment and the Institutions of the Labour Market* (2004) and the *Act on Rehabilitation* (1997) are the prominent pieces of legislations that prohibits discrimination in access to labour market (including employment agencies, employment counselling services and training courses for the unemployed). However, because many of the labour market programmes are aimed only at people

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<sup>138</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Poland: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>139</sup> Idem.

<sup>140</sup> Idem.

registered as unemployed (PwDs who are entitled to incapacity pensions cannot register as unemployed) and the mainstream job centres are often not critically assessed with regards to the support provided for the disabled job-seekers (and some of them remain hardly accessible for persons with various disabilities), the efficiency of this employment policies for PwDs is often questioned.<sup>141</sup>

- Positive employment discrimination of PwDs include reasonable accommodation of the working place, an active quota system (public and private enterprises with 25 or more full-time employees are required to ensure that 6% of their workforce consists of persons with disabilities or pay contribution to the Polish Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons) and subsidised disabled employees' salaries by up to 75% of the payroll costs of employers in the commercial sector and up to 90% in the case of others (e.g. non-profit/non-commercial organisations).<sup>142</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Family and Social Policy | <https://www.gov.pl/web/family/ministry1>
- Ministry of Science and Higher Education | <https://www.gov.pl/web/science>
- Ministry of Development, Labor and Technology | <https://www.gov.pl/web/gov/ministerstwa>
- The Commissioner for Human Right | <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/en>
- Government Plenipotentiary Office for People with Disabilities | <http://niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/strona-glowna>
- State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People | <https://www.pfron.org.pl/en.html>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- INTEGRACJA | <http://www.integracja.org/>
- Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability | <https://psoni.org.pl/>
- Polish Association Of Disabled People | <https://www.pson.org.pl/en/index.html>
- Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture (academics and legal practitioners with the aim of promoting a legal culture based on respect for human dignity and rights) | <https://en.ordoiuris.pl/>

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<sup>141</sup> Idem.

<sup>142</sup> Idem.

- The association of disabled women "One.pl" | <http://www.onepl.org.pl/english.htm>

## Portugal

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs):

- Portugal's policies towards PwDs are internally framed by the rights, liberties and guarantees given by the *Constitution (1976)*, the *Law on Prevention, Qualification, Rehabilitation and Participation of People with Disabilities (2004)* and the *Anti-Discrimination Law Regarding Disabilities (2006)*. Furthermore, Portugal ratified in 2019 the UNCRPD and follows the guidelines of the *European Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, as well of the *UN Sustainable Development Goals*.<sup>143</sup>
- Education is compulsory and free of charge for all children and young people aged 5-18 years-old, from preschool to 12th grade (including PwDs). A law adopted in 2008 led to the closure of most special education schools and, nowadays, almost all children with disabilities attend mainstream schools (in 2018 passed a law reinforcing the commitment with inclusive education).<sup>144</sup>
- Regarding higher education, and despite some policies designed to increase the number of students with disabilities, all students must finish the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (or equivalent) and fulfil access exams requirements. There is not a unified directive concerning services and practices that should be mobilized to support the inclusion of these students in Higher Education Institutions (HEI). Recent data shows that only half of the HEIs have special regulations and services in place to support students with disabilities, and support to students with disabilities in higher education remains uneven across the country.<sup>145</sup>
- Both the *Labour Code* and *Law no. 46/2006* prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability on access to employment. Moreover, there are quotas in place for the employment of persons with disabilities in the public (5%) and in the private sector (1-2%) (both sectors remain far below this quota-),<sup>146</sup> and several measures and employment schemes specially

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<sup>143</sup> Information from: National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disability 2021-2025 | INR: <https://www.inr.pt/documents/11309/284924/ENIPD.pdf/5bce7969-0918-4013-b95d-2a5a35a870c5>

<sup>144</sup> Information from: Pinto, Teresa Janela (2019) Portugal Fact Sheet on Social Care & Support Services Sector for Persons with Disabilities, Observatório da Deficiência e Direitos Humanos (ODDH) (Human Rights Observatory (ODDH), Institute of Social and Political Studies (ISCSP), University of Lisbon. Available at: [http://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/index.php/pt/2013-04-24-18-50-23/outras-publicacoes/item/445-oddh\\_easpd\\_fichainfo](http://oddh.iscsp.ulisboa.pt/index.php/pt/2013-04-24-18-50-23/outras-publicacoes/item/445-oddh_easpd_fichainfo)

<sup>145</sup> Idem.

<sup>146</sup> Idem.

designed for PwDs, including professional qualification, adaptation of working place and supported employment in open labour market, as well as sheltered employment.<sup>147</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security | <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/area-de-governo/trabalho-solidariedade-e-seguranca-social>
- Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education | <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/area-de-governo/ciencia-tecnologia-e-ensino-superior>
- Secretary of State for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities | <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/area-de-governo/trabalho-solidariedade-e-seguranca-social/secretarios-de-estado?i=inclusaodaspessoascomdeficiencia>
- National Institute for Rehabilitation | <https://www.inr.pt/>
- Dean Council of the Portuguese Universities | <http://www.crup.pt/>
- General Directorate of Higher Education | <https://www.dges.gov.pt/en>
- Portuguese Institute for Vocational Training and Employment | <https://www.iefp.pt/reabilitacao-profissional>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- APD (Portuguese Association of Persons with Disabilities) | <https://www.apd.org.pt/>
- CNOD (Nacional Confederation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities) | <http://www.cnod.pt/home.htm>
- Pais- em-Rede (national-wide parent network) | <https://paisemrede.pt/>
- HUMANITAS (Portuguese Federation for Mental Disabilities) | <https://humanitas.org.pt/>
- FORMEM (Portuguese Federation for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities) | <https://www.formem.org.pt/en/>

<sup>147</sup> Information from: Practical Guide – The Rights of Persons with Disability in Portugal INR: [https://www.inr.pt/documents/11309/283719/guia\\_pratico\\_acessivel\\_4\\_2\\_2020.pdf/6cc43949-c5f9-4658-9f9c-5b055b61ee97](https://www.inr.pt/documents/11309/283719/guia_pratico_acessivel_4_2_2020.pdf/6cc43949-c5f9-4658-9f9c-5b055b61ee97)

## Romania

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs):

- The *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023* provide the international framework to implement inclusive policies in Romania, that are supported nationally by *The Anti-Discrimination Act* and the *National Strategy of Equalization of Possibilities for Persons with Disabilities*. The National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities provides for specific actions regarding employment, education and social inclusion to build long-term support for the right to live independently.<sup>148</sup>
- Special schools, as well as special education classes within mainstream schools, are organized for all levels and are regulated by the *Law on Education no.1 of 5 January 2011*. The enrolment of students with disabilities in special schools is decided through the *Complex Evaluation Service*.<sup>149</sup>The Government adopted an *Emergency Ordinance to amend the Law on Education* with the provision of 'special integrated education'. The legislative document stipulates that 'special integrated education' is organised in regular education, by including every pupil with disabilities or special educational needs in mainstream groups, classes or study formations.<sup>150</sup>
- Vocational training under the compulsory educational system is available to PwDs who can choose either a mainstream or a special vocational school (as regulated by *Law on Education 1/2011*). Regarding higher education, all providers are subject to non-discrimination law and students with disabilities benefit from a certain number of facilities and adaptations in universities, in relation with their needs and options.<sup>151</sup>
- PwDs have the right to work, according to the *Law 448/2006 (Chapter V, Article 75(1))*. They may be hired in the open labour market, as well as in supported employment settings and sheltered employment. A quota system is in place (4% of positions must be occupied by PwDs, in the case of companies with more than 50 employee) for both public institutions and private companies, as well as of mandatory measures for workplace adaptations and incentives for employers. Furthermore, Law 448/2006 stipulates the right of PwDs who are

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<sup>148</sup> Information gathered from: Ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities | [www.posi.hr](http://www.posi.hr)

<sup>149</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Romania: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>150</sup> Information from: Romania Legislative Portal | [www.legislatie.just.ro](http://www.legislatie.just.ro)

<sup>151</sup> Idem.



'looking for a job' to be placed in training courses and to be funded through the unemployment insurance budget.<sup>152</sup>

**Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities:**

- Ministry of Labour and Social Justice | <http://www.mmuncii.ro/>
- Ministry of Education and Research | <https://www.edu.ro/>
- The General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection | <http://www.raa.ro/>
- National Authority for Persons with Disabilities (ANPD) | <http://anpd.gov.ro/>

**Relevant civil society organizations that help implement Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities:**

- Institute for Public Policy (IPP) | <http://www.ipp.ro/>
- The National Disability Council of Romania (NDRC) | <https://www.fcndr.ro/>
- The National Organization of Disabled People in Romania (ONPHR) | <http://onphr.ro/>
- Association RENINCO Romania | <https://www.renincor.ro/>

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<sup>152</sup> Idem.

## Serbia

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs):

- Serbia signed the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2007) and entered into force on the 2nd of June 2009 with the *Law on ratification of the Optional Protocol to CRPD*. On 11 May 2017, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the report on the implementation of the Committee recommendation to 'review the practice of the application of law to make sure legislation is not disadvantageous for persons with disabilities in terms of employment and labour market participation'.<sup>153</sup>
- The Article 71 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Serbia* states that primary education is mandatory, free to everyone and it lasts 8 years, and secondary education is free. The *Law on Foundation of the Education System and Upbringing* (2017) stipulates obligatory enrolment of all children in mainstream elementary schools.<sup>154</sup> Only after several months of attendance in a mainstream school and application of all available measures of inclusive education, can it be recommended to transfer a child with disability to a special school.<sup>155</sup>
- The main law regarding higher education is *The Law on Higher Education* (2017), which states that all persons who completed their secondary education (irrespective of, inter alia, their disability) can attend higher education. It also guaranteed that equipment and conditions needed for students with disability should be supported, including the right to take an exam in the manner adapted to him/her. Furthermore, *The Law on Pupil and Student Standards Support* identifies measure for vulnerable groups in higher education, including PwDs.<sup>156</sup>
- The *Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities* (2006) contains a section on 'Discrimination related to Employment and Work'. Since May 2010, the *Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities* (2013) introduced the obligation to employ persons with disabilities as the principle of affirmative action aiming to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in labour market.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Serbia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>154</sup> Idem.

<sup>155</sup> Information from: The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education |Country Profile Serbia: <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/serbia>

<sup>156</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Serbia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>157</sup> Idem.

- The National Employment Agency has established Centres for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities as the main providers of vocational rehabilitation services. These Centres also facilitate programmes of active labour market measures and various incentives, both financial and non-financial, aimed at supporting the employment of persons with disabilities, as well as providing support to employers.<sup>158</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities:

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development deals with inclusive education <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/>
- National Educational Council of the Republic of Serbia <http://www.nps.gov.rs/en>
- Institute for Improvement of Education <https://zuov.gov.rs/o-zavodu/>
- National Employment Agency <http://www.nsz.gov.rs/live/trazite-posao/svi-poslovi>
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sr>

#### Relevant civil society organizations that help implement Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities:

- The Association of Students with Disabilities (ASD) | <https://ush.rs/en/home/>;
- National organization of persons with disabilities of Serbia | <https://www.noois.rs/home>
- Independent Living Institute (ILI) | <https://www.independentliving.org/indexen.html>
- Union of organizations for helping people with intellectual disabilities in Serbia | <http://savezmnrosrbije.rs/>
- Serbian Association for Promoting Inclusion (SAPI)

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<sup>158</sup> Idem.

## Slovakia

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- Slovak Republic is part of the *UNCRPD*, but the *Slovak Constitution* (1992) already encompasses broad rights to PwDs, namely article 38 where it is stated 'extra' protection regarding health and working conditions, labour relationships and vocational training. Moreover, the *Anti-discriminatory Act* (2004) and the *National Disability Programme for 2014-2020* provide a comprehensive set of measures in areas such as health care, employment, education, rehabilitation, cultural life, political and civil participation.<sup>159</sup>
- According to the *Slovak Constitution*, everybody has the right to education and to attend school. Pupils with different types of disabilities may be educated in a mainstream school (with an individualised integration approach or a classroom integration approach) or in a special school. On a medical recommendation, the child can be exempted from the obligation to attend the school and can fulfil his/her compulsory school attendance in two ways: (1) individual education or (2) education under an individual learning plan. Children who were diagnosed with light intellectual disability based on their cultural background and anti-Roma prejudice cannot be admitted to a special school or to a special class of pre-school, primary school or secondary school.<sup>160</sup>
- Universities and colleges are explicitly subjected to non-discrimination laws and the implementation of the equal treatment principle, which ensures access to tertiary education by providing special support to the establishment and development of assistance centres for students with disabilities. The *Higher Education Act* (2002) establishes: (1) the general obligation for universities/colleges to create reasonable study conditions for students with disabilities (reasonable conditions include the choice to study under an individual study plan and, if necessary, to extend the study period); (2) students with special needs have a claim for support services in minimum standards; (3) universities appoint a disability coordinator (legally speaking, a coordinator for students with special needs) and also appoint faculty coordinators.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Slovakia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>160</sup> Idem.

<sup>161</sup> Idem.

- Employment counselling and support services for PwDs are provided by the public employment services (*Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family* and its branches) and are legally set by the *Employment Services Act* (2004). However, the employment services must have a separate administrative register of PwDs, which in addition to basic identification data, covers information on the degree of disability and a reduced work capacity (including the legal justification for the status of a disabled person). Support wise, Slovakia has specific legislation for sheltered employment, workplace adaptation and wage subsidies (*Social Economy and Social Enterprises Act – 2018*) but is making way to open labour market measures that include: specific allowances to supported employment of PwDs; enforcement of employment quotas; and reduced social contributions.<sup>162</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family | <https://www.employment.gov.sk/en/>
- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport | <https://www.minedu.sk/about-the-ministry/>
- Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family | <https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/>
- Comenius University (Bratislava) | <https://uniba.sk/en/>
- Technical University (Kosice) | <https://www.tuke.sk/wps/portal/tuke>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Slovak Disability Council
- Association for people with developmental disabilities (BIVIO) | <https://bivio.sk/en/about-us/>
- Alliance of Organizations of Disabled People Slovakia
- The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights | <http://www.snslp.sk/?locale=en#actual=1>

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<sup>162</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Slovakia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

## Slovenia

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Person with Disabilities (PwDs):

- The main legal guarantees for PwDs in the Republic of Slovenia are the *Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia* (Article 14 states that everyone shall be guaranteed equal human rights and fundamental freedoms regardless of personal circumstances, including disability); the *UNCRPD* (signed in 2007); and the *Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act* (2010).<sup>163</sup>
- In Education, even if mainstream schooling is available to some children with disabilities and more present in the last decade (*Children with Special Needs Act* - 2000), segregated education is still very present, namely regarding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), who can stay in special primary schools until they reach the age of 26 and afterwards be enrolled in sheltered workshops.<sup>164</sup>
- Access to higher education for PwDs is limited and has no legal ground for claiming discrimination, since each university, as well as many other institutions for lifelong learning, have their own regulations about students with special needs (which are mostly defined by conditions based on medical documentations, medical assessments and diagnosis).<sup>165</sup>
- The main legal framework and policies for PwDs in employment is the *Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act* (2007). However, and once again, the legal framework includes only persons with physical and sensory disabilities, not people with intellectual disabilities (legislation prevents people with IDD to move from the status of welfare beneficiaries to the status of active job seekers and back). The *Employment Service* offers rehabilitation counselling which ends-up in two possible support schemes: employment rehabilitation and work rehabilitation. These schemes include open labour market supported employment, workplace adaptation, vocational training, and quota system (positive reward to employers who employ more PwDs than the stipulated by the quota).

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<sup>163</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Slovenia: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>164</sup> Idem.

<sup>165</sup> Idem.

## Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities | <https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-za-delo-druzino-socialne-zadeve-in-enake-moznosti/>
- Ministry of Education, Science and Sport | <https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-za-izobrazevanje-znanost-in-sport/>
- Institute of Social Welfare | <https://www.irssv.si/>
- Employment Services | <http://english.ess.gov.si/>
- National Education Institute | <https://www.zrss.si/en/>
- University Rehabilitation Institute – Soča | <http://www.ir-rs.si/en/>
- Varuh - Human Rights Ombudsman | <https://www.varuh-rs.si/en/>
- Zagovornik - Advocate of Equal Opportunities | <http://www.zagovornik.si/en/about-us/>

## Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- NSIOS – The National Council of Disabled Organizations of Slovenia | <https://nsios.si/o-nas/>
- Sožitje - Slovenian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities | <http://www.zveza-sozitie.si/?lang=en>
- DSIS - Slovenian Association of Disabled Students | <http://www.dsis-drustvo.si/>
- ZIFS - Forum Slovenije (Association of Disabled People – Slovenian Forum) | <https://www.zifs.si/>
- Sklad SILVA (SILVA Fund - Society for Quality Living of People with Disabilities) | <http://www.skladsilva.si/home>

## Spain

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs):

- Spain signed the *UNCRPD* (2007) but before that Spanish Law already adapted to the evolution of the paradigm of disability towards a social model, namely through the *Law on Social Integration of Disabled Persons* (LISMI – 1982) and the *Law of Equal Opportunities, Non-Discrimination and Universal Accessibility of People with Disability* (LIONDAU – 2003). Moreover, the Spanish Disability Strategy 2012-2020 is based on the *European Disability Strategy 2010-2020* and the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, which aims to improve the welfare of PwDs and align the public policies towards inclusion and non-discrimination.<sup>166</sup>
- Equal treatment and non-discrimination have been consolidated as basic principles of all levels of education in Spain, with broad mainstreaming of education for PwDs. Yet, a special education system is still provided, that can be either temporary or permanent, for those disabled children for whom attendance in the ordinary educational system is impossible. National legislation states that the general objectives for students with special educational needs must be those generally established for all students, with the necessary curricular adaptations, however, each *Autonomous Community* (17 in total) regulates the adaptation and application of these laws to their territories.<sup>167</sup>
- Universities, as public institutions, must comply with *LIONDAU Law* and guarantee equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility for all. In addition, the *Royal Decree 1393/2007* organises university studies and includes measures to guarantee equal access to disabled students (including the possibility of making curricular adaptations, although many of these adjustments are at the discretion of each professor), and universities have their own normative documents.<sup>168</sup>
- Spanish national legislation applies the principle of non-discrimination to all sectors of public and private employment and occupation, including contract work, self-employment and holding statutory office. The *Public Service of State Employment* (SEPE) provides employment advice and support services to PwDs in a mainstream employment approach. These SEPE function according to each specific *Autonomous Community* regulation and

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<sup>166</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Spain: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>167</sup> Idem.

<sup>168</sup> Idem.



policies, but generally all offer vocational training and workplace reasonable accommodation possibilities, as well as several financial incentives for the employment of workers with disabilities in the open labour market (e.g. wage subsidies, enforcement of employment quotas, tax concessions), incentives for hiring in cooperatives and labour societies and for recruitment in labour enclaves.<sup>169</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Universities | <https://www.ciencia.gob.es/portal/site/MICINN/menuitem.7eeac5cd345b4f34f09dfd1001432ea0/?vgnnextoid=5203b385213a4610VgnVCM1000001d04140aRCRD>
- Ministry of Work and Social Economy | <http://www.mites.gob.es/en/index.htm>
- Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration | <http://www.inclusion.gob.es/en/index.htm>
- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training | <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/en/portada.html>
- Directorate General for Disability Support Policies | <https://www.mscbs.gob.es/organizacion/ministerio/organizacion/SEssi/dgpdF.htm>
- Disability Nacional Council (CND) | <https://www.mscbs.gob.es/ssi/discapacidad/cnd/home.htm>
- Support office for the Disability (OADIS) | <https://www.mscbs.gob.es/ssi/discapacidad/proteccionDerechos/oficinaAtencionDiscapacidad.htm>
- Public Service of State Employment (SEPE) | <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe>
- Observatorio Estatal de la Discapacidad – OED (State Observatory for Disability) | <https://www.observatoriodeladiscapacidad.info/>
- Instituto Universitario de Integración en La Comunidad | <https://inico.usal.es/>
- Disability Information Service (SID) <https://sid.usal.es/>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Spanish Committee of Representatives of People with Disabilities (CERMI) | <https://www.cermi.es/en>

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<sup>169</sup> Idem.

- Plena Inclusion (umbrella organization for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities) | <https://www.plenainclusion.org/>
- Fundación Universal <https://www.fundacionuniversia.net/es/index.html>
- Fundación ONCE | <https://www.fundaciononce.es/en/page/who-we-are>
- ILUNION (quality employment model for PwDs) | <https://www.ilunion.com/es>

## Sweden

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The *UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* has been applied in Sweden since 2009, but before that *The Swedish Anti-discrimination Act* (2008) already gave a large legal protection towards the rights of PwDs and has been enforced by *The Equality Ombudsman*.<sup>170</sup>
- Inclusive education is the rule in Sweden, legally set by the *Anti-discrimination Act* (2008) and the *Education Act* (2010),<sup>171</sup> according to the principle of equal access for all, from childcare to the transition period. However, children with learning disabilities can attend compulsory schools for pupils with learning disabilities as an alternative to mainstream schools. The Swedish education system is decentralised and managed by overall goals and rules, being all decisions concerning the implementation of the *Education Act* and the curriculum made within the local self-governing municipalities.<sup>172</sup>
- There is no policy on students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in higher education (the public policy for these students ends with upper-secondary school).<sup>173</sup> Nonetheless, at all universities and institutions of higher education there is a contact person/coordinator working with issues relating to educational support for students with disabilities.<sup>174</sup>
- The Public Employment Services (PES) is responsible for labour market policies concerning PwDs, where job seekers with disabilities are offered a range of vocational rehabilitation measures and employment support (including support at the workplace in terms of assistive devices or physical up to a certain amount of money and wage subsidies). Public protected employment is provided for persons with impairment who have a reduced working capacity (this employment measure of rehabilitation should lead to work in the open employment market). Public protected and sheltered employment is regulated by the *Ordinance on*

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<sup>170</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Sweden: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>171</sup> Information from: [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/diskrimineringslag-2008567\\_sfs-2008-567](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567)

<sup>172</sup> Information from: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education | Country Profile Sweden: <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/sweden/legislation-and-policy>

<sup>173</sup> Idem.

<sup>174</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Sweden: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

*Certain Support for Persons with Work Impairment (2000) and the Ordinance on the Political Working Programme (2000) and has in Samhall AB the biggest employer.<sup>175</sup>*

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of Education and Research | <https://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-of-education-and-research/>
- Ministry of Employment | <https://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-of-employment/>
- Swedish National Agency for Education | <https://www.skolverket.se/andra-sprak-other-languages/english-engelska>
- Swedish Schools Inspectorate | <https://www.skolinspektionen.se>
- National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools | <https://www.spsm.se>
- National board of Health and Welfare | <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/en/>
- Public Employment Agency | <https://arbetsformedlingen.se/other-languages/english-engelska>
- Samhall AB (state owned enterprise who employs people with disabilities) | <https://samhall.se/in-english/>
- The Equality Ombudsman | <https://www.do.se/other-languages/english/>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- The Swedish Disability Rights Federation | <https://funktionsratt.se/om-funktionsratt-sverige/in-english/>
- The Swedish Down Association | <https://www.svenskadownforeningen.se/#/>
- Parents' Association for Dyslexic Children | <https://www.fdb.nu/>
- The Independent Living Institute (ILI) | <https://www.independentliving.org/about.html>
- Funka (private company in the field of accessibility) | <https://www.funka.com/en/>

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<sup>175</sup> Idem.

## Turkey

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- Turkey signed the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2007) but has in the *Law on Persons with Disabilities* (2005) the major comprehensive law on disability rights, openly prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of disability and including different public policies, namely, education, vocational training and employment. The *Constitutional Amendment* (2010) to Article 10 (equality before the law) provides a legal basis for positive discrimination and the *Law on the Human Rights and Equality Institution* (2016) introduces the exclusion and multiple discrimination terms into the national legislation.<sup>176</sup>
- The *Executive Order on Special Education* (1997) stresses the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools has a priority in education policies and there has been an increasing number of students with disabilities in both mainstream primary and secondary schools since 2002. However, there are still public and private segregated special schools for children with disabilities and, apart from public and private special schools, there were 2.437 private sector-run special education and rehabilitation centres operating in Turkey.<sup>177</sup>The typified option for PwDs to benefit from special education (public/private/non-formal) is to attend: (1) separate special education schools for types of disabilities; (2) special education classes of the schools in general education; or (3) classrooms where integration training is applied in preschool, primary, secondary, and common educational institutions.<sup>178</sup>
- Vocational education is mostly delivered under the general education system (both formal and non-formal education institutions offer vocational training for PwDs), while access to higher education is regulated by the *Directive on Counselling and Coordination for Persons with Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions* (2010). Even if some universities are committed to broader inclusive policies towards PwDs, the general focus has been on accessibility.<sup>179</sup>
- The Republic of Turkey has in place measures concerning the employment of PwDs, such as workplace adaptation and sheltered employment, but the main positive discrimination

<sup>176</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Turkey: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>177</sup> Idem.

<sup>178</sup> Information from: General Directorate of Services for Persons with Disability and Elderly | FAQ: <https://www.ailevecalisma.gov.tr/eyhgm-en/faq/gdsde>

<sup>179</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile Turkey: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

policy in this field is a broad public and private quota scheme, with financial initiatives and public (Turkish Employment Agency - İŞKUR) and private employment placement services.<sup>180</sup> *Sheltered Workshop Project* was only introduced in 2013 and protected workplaces are aimed specifically to create employment environments for individuals with mental disabilities who have limited opportunity to work in the labour market.<sup>181</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education, Higher Education and Employment of PwDs:

- Ministry of National Education | <http://www.meb.gov.tr/en/>
- Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services | <https://ailevecalisma.gov.tr/en-US>
- Council of Higher Education | <https://www.yok.gov.tr/en>
- General Directorate of Services for Persons with Disability and Elderly | <https://www.ailevecalisma.gov.tr/eyhgm-en>
- Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) | <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/en>
- Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey | <https://www.tihk.gov.tr/en/>

#### Relevant civil society organizations involved in Inclusive Education and Employment of PwDs, with a with a special focus on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

- Confederation of the Persons with Disabilities | <https://www.engellilerkonfederasyonu.org.tr/homepage-2/>
- Social Rights and Research Society (TOHAD) | <http://www.tohad.org/tohad/>
- Sabanci Foundation (Haci Omer Sabanci Foundation) | <https://www.sabancivakfi.org/en>
- Association for Monitoring Equal Rights – AMER (Eşit Haklar İçin İzleme Derneği - ESHİD) | [https://www.esithaklar.org/homepage\\_en/](https://www.esithaklar.org/homepage_en/)
- Demokratik Engelliler Federasyonu (Democratic Federation of Persons with Disabilities)
- Federation of Associations for Barrier Free Living (Engelsiz Bileşenler Federasyonu) | <https://www.engelsizbilesenler.org.tr/en/>

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<sup>180</sup> Idem.

<sup>181</sup> Information from: General Directorate of Services for Persons with Disability and Elderly I FAQ: <https://www.ailevecalisma.gov.tr/eyhgm-en/faq/gdsde>

## United Kingdom

### Public narrative towards Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities (PwDs):

- The United Kingdom (UK) is part of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2007) and the *Equality Act* (2010) gave a national legal framework to rights of PwDs in employment, education, access to goods and services, buying or renting land or property, functions of public bodies, and requires that public sector organisations take steps to eliminate inequality. However, the UK Government has currently no National Disability Strategy (2020) in action.<sup>182</sup>
- Mainstream education is the rule in the UK. The *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* (2001) strengthened the assumption that pupils will be educated in mainstream schools unless a more 'suitable' provision is available in a special school. Regarding vocational training, there is no specific structure for PwDs, although various specialist providers exist.<sup>183</sup>
- Non-discrimination obligations (make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the causes of potential disadvantage are removed) are imposed on providers of post-16 education by the *Equality Act* (2010) and by the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1995). Moreover, *Disabled Students Allowance* were introduced in 2016-2017 to improve inclusive practice provisions in the delivery of their teaching and learning by higher education institutions.<sup>184</sup>
- UK uses a liberal social model (Anglo-Saxon) approach to employment of PwDs, with few positive discrimination measures (no quota schemes or direct financial wage subsidies or tax incentives for employers) and the existing ones framed in the normal Job Centres network (managed nationally by Jobcentre Plus). However, *The Equality Act* (2010) makes it illegal for employers to discriminate due to disabilities and sets out legal duties of employers to make reasonable adjustments (cover both work arrangements, such as times and duties, and the physical setting).<sup>185</sup> Traces from a different approach to employment of PwDs can be recognized in the liquidation in 2017 of the *Disabled People's Employment Corporation* (DPEC).<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Information from: ANED | DOTCOM: the Disability Online Tool of the Commission | Country Profile United Kingdom: [www.disability-europe.net/dotcom](http://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom)

<sup>183</sup> Idem.

<sup>184</sup> Idem.

<sup>185</sup> Idem.

<sup>186</sup> Information from: UK Government website | Disabled People's Employment Corporation (GB) Ltd: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disabled-peoples-employment-corporation>

- At a Job Centre PwDs may be eligible for extra support given by *Disability Employment Adviser*, including the following programmes and grants: *Access to Work* (money towards a support worker or for the cost of equipment or travelling to work); *Intensive Personalised Employment Support* (individual training and help to get you into work); and *Work and Health Programme* (help to find and keep a job).<sup>187</sup>

#### Public institutions that deal with Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities:

- Department for Education | <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>
- Department for Work & Pensions | <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>
- The Disability Unit | <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disability-unit>
- Equality and Human Rights Commission | <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en>
- Jobcentre Plus | <https://www.jobcentreplus.co.uk/jobcentre-plus-guide/4/what-is-the-jobcentre-plus>
- Academy for Social Justice | <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/academy-for-social-justice>
- Centre for Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Research (University College of London) | <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/intellectual-developmental-disabilities-research/>

#### Relevant civil society organizations that help implement Inclusive Education and Employment of persons with disabilities:

- The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion | <https://www.enei.org.uk/>
- ALLFIE (The Alliance for Inclusive Education) | <https://www.allfie.org.uk/>
- Enabling Education Network | <https://www.eenet.org.uk/>
- Disability Rights UK | <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/>
- CHANGE (inclusive NGO led by PwDs) | <https://www.changepeople.org/>
- In Control (national inclusive charity organization) | <https://in-control.org.uk/>
- Inclusive Solutions | <https://inclusive-solutions.com/>
- Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities | <https://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/learning-disabilities>

<sup>187</sup> Information from: UK Government website | Looking for work if you're disabled: <https://www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled>



- Business Disability Forum | <https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/>
- British Association for Supported Employment | <https://www.base-uk.org/about-british-association-supported-employment>

## Spanish Universities and their good practices

*Borja Jordán de Urríes Veja, Emiliano Díez Villoria, María Victoria Martín Cilleros and Patricia Navas Macho*

We present a sub-report on one of the important stakeholders for the HiLives project, namely the institutions of Higher Education. In this important sub-report, the team from the University of Salamanca provided a description, an evolution and an analysis of the Spanish situation. This report is interesting because:

- the Spanish practice of people with intellectual disabilities who have been studying in higher education has been implemented for a number of years now (the Report starts describing the situation from 2017-2018)
- the project in Spain is not limited to one institution of Higher Education, more than 20 Universities are involved
- the opportunities for youngsters and young adults with intellectual disabilities to study in Higher Education are linked to EU Youth Employment programs. The local anchoring could be realized through the intermediary activities of the ONCE Foundation. This foundation formulates its mission as to promote social inclusion of individuals with disabilities through training and employment.
- the described academic programs allow young people to participate fully in the University Community, in such a way that in addition to the academic objectives, work can also be done on 'social and labour inclusion'.
- this project gets also a scientific follow-up by Prof.dr. Francisco de Borja Jordan de Urries and his team.

# **Framework to develop Higher Education Programs for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Spain**

## **Background**

On December 19th 2013, the Spanish Government presented the National Youth Guarantee Plan to the European Commission. This plan is aligned with the Spanish Strategy of Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment which contains a common set of actions that will be developed within the context of The Youth Employment Operational Program, one of the main financial resources of the EU to finance the application of the Youth Guarantee Plan.

The Youth Employment Operational Program (2014-2020) seeks to reduce the youth unemployment rate in Spain through the improvement of qualifications and the promotion of employment and self-employment. The target audience is unemployed young population, ranging from 16 to 30 years old. They must be not participating in any other education or training activities. The ONCE Foundation, whose mission is to promote social inclusion of individuals with disability through training and employment, was designated as an Intermediate Body of the Youth Employment Operational Program by means of a delegation of functions dated July 26th, 2016. As an intermediate body, ONCE Foundation seeks to involve Universities as decisive agents in social inclusion of individuals with disabilities enrolled in the National Youth Guarantee System by developing higher education programs focused on promoting employment opportunities and fostering social inclusion of young people with intellectual disabilities, whose opportunities when accessing employment settings are significantly reduced when compared to other persons with disability. To that end, a public call is announced every year by ONCE Foundation. Details of this call are explained in the next section.

## **Purpose of the call**

The object and purpose of ONCE Foundation program is to provide funding to Spanish universities to develop and implement Higher Education Programs that promote employment and inclusion within the University environment of young people with intellectual disabilities enrolled in the National Youth Guarantee System. The programs should have the following goals:

- Provide university training to young people with intellectual disabilities focused on improving their autonomy, academic training and job preparation.

- Provide young people with intellectual disabilities the necessary skills and competencies to increase their possibility of entering the job market and accessing jobs by means of supported employment or ordinary employment.
- Provide inclusive experiences within the University Community.
- Facilitate comprehensive and personalized training so they can participate as full members in their community.
- Involve Spanish universities in the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities through training and employment opportunities.

## **Beneficiaries**

Spanish universities (or centres related to them), that are in condition and wish to develop a university program for young people with intellectual disabilities enrolled in the National Youth Guarantee System. Individuals with intellectual disability enrolled in these programs should meet the following requirements:

- Have an intellectual disability, officially recognized by the competent body of their Autonomous Community after appropriate assessment. This evaluation takes into account different factors that might affect daily living, and ends with an assessment of the degree to which the person's daily activities are affected. This degree is expressed as a percentage, 33% being necessary for the disability to be officially recognized.
- Have turned 18 in the year in which the program will start or be under 30 years old.
- Be a beneficiary of the National Youth Guarantee System prior to the start of the course. Documentation proving participation in the National Youth Guarantee System must be issued no later than 15 days before the start of the program.

## **Requirements: Definition and characteristics of the Programs**

The participating Universities must meet the following requirements and design the programs according to the following criteria:

- Programs must be taught as university degrees. Programs should be aimed at providing academic training courses to reinforce employability, improve social and employability skills and promote labour inclusion.

- Each University should present only one proposal (one program) to the call. If a University presents more than one proposal, none of them will be reviewed, due to non-compliance with the bases of the call.
- The application must be signed by the Rector of the University.
- The program should have at least four school days a week and must be taught within the University Campus, so students can participate in University life. It is recommended, because of the collaborative synergies that could be generated, that the classes take place in the Faculties of Education, Psychology, or Social Work.
- The program must start in the first quarter of the academic year, and no later than November 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Faculty who will teach the courses may have the corresponding recognition in their teaching load, according to the criteria internally agreed by each university. Faculty should preferably belong to the following areas of knowledge: Psychology, Education, Social Education, Social Work and / or Labour Relations, although the participation of teaching staff from other faculties will be valued, given the interdisciplinary nature of the courses.
- Taking into account the characteristics of the students, the course must also have the necessary support staff. Among the functions of the support staff will be tutorial action, document management, adaptations, individualized behavioural support plans, interviews with families, support during internships and assistance in collecting data regarding each participant and their report to ONCE Foundation. The programs presented must specify the support staff they will have.
- The funding will be used for the program to be carried out during the academic year and will cover the costs of developing the course. Students must be exempt from paying any fees.
- The ONCE Foundation grants will cover the cost of those programs that, at the beginning of the course, have a minimum of 12 students and a maximum of 15. Exceptionally, the University may admit up to a maximum of 3 students more, as long as it assumes their cost.
- Universities, referring to this call, will carry out the appropriate publicity actions to make this program known to potential beneficiaries, indicating the requirements to participate in it, as well as the means to conduct the registration. It will not be an essential requirement for students to have a certain previous academic qualification.

- The selection of the students will correspond to each university. In order to do this Universities can approach intellectual disability organizations in their area, which must expressly agree to collaborate in the program. Universities will assess the suitability of the candidates and make decisions regarding their selection. However, participants should be able to autonomously move to the university, have basic academic skills with minimal literacy and numeracy skills, express a desire to be taught and appropriate social behaviour to ensure inclusion in an environment such as the university. Likewise, a balance between men and women must be taken into account in the selection.
- The program should consist of a first part focused on general training and a second part of specialized training oriented towards employment. Overall, the program should be aimed at improving employability of people with intellectual disabilities by acquiring the necessary skills and competencies so that their incorporation into the labour market is possible. Therefore, the program should be focused on job preparation and organized in functional and professional subjects or courses, as well as emotional training and social skills. The program should promote comprehensive training, so students can achieve personal development and increase their autonomy.
- Universities must participate in periodic research, to be coordinated by the ONCE Foundation, with the aim of evaluating the development and impact of the programs and move forward to a global strategy for the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. The Universities will take responsibility and report data about the professional and personal situation of each participant to the ONCE Foundation. Information should be provided at the beginning of the program, its end, and 6 months after its end. The ONCE Foundation will make available to the Universities a computerized tool for data collection and reporting. Providing this information constitutes a mandatory requirement established by the European Social Fund, so any failure by the Universities to comply with it will result in a serious violation of the terms of this call.

### **Duration and methodology of the Programs.**

The programs must contain at least 30 ECTS credits per course. The study plan and subjects must promote the following learning goals:

- Acquire and apply the concepts, theories and principles of problem solving and decision making.

- Acquire socio-labour commitments that contribute to their growth as full citizens.
- Acquire and demonstrate social and emotional skills needed to successfully participate in different environments and work as a team
- Acquire information and communication technology management skills that allow them to effectively solve tasks related to their work
- Develop flexible attitudes and the ability to adapt to change
- Successfully participate in internships in ordinary employment settings.

These learning objectives can be pursued in the following subjects:

- Specific / vocational training
- Training in job skills
- Communication training, social and emotional skills, cognitive training.
- Internships with job coaches which will introduce them to supported employment to further achieve ordinary employment. The internships can be offered within the University context.

Funding provided by ONCE Foundation is limited to annual calls. The programs, however, may comprehend two academic years if they are designed to advance in more specialized student training. In these cases, students must be the same in both courses. Universities must justify each academic year and apply for funding for the second academic year in the next call of proposals.

Methodology:

- Without prejudice to the methodologies that may be developed by the teaching team of each university, at least the following methodological issues must be taken into account:
- *Universal Design for Learning*: Teaching must be inclusive, which implies a didactic approach that responds to the training needs of all students. The materials and activities designed must be accessible to all students.
- *Tutorial actions*: All students must have a reference tutor. Tutors' function will be to accompany and guide the students and their families during their formative stage for an optimal performance in the program.
- *Learning-service*: It is recommended to promote the use of methodologies that encourage learning from volunteer experiences, thus achieving social participation and curricular learning.

- *Cooperative learning*: Teaching techniques based on cooperation are recommended to show students how to support each other and establish common learning goals that allow them to live with diverse people.
- *Problem-based learning*: The European Higher Education Area promotes a competency-based learning model. Learning of transversal competences is recommended to help students to make decisions about specific problems that may be found in the future.
- *Training seminars*: Invited experts can participate in the program and develop specific training seminars about a topic of interest for the students. These seminars may be oriented to reinforce some important contents for students' future employability.
- *Flexible groupings*: The diversity of students' competencies may require some courses to be developed in flexible groups.

## **Funding amounts**

The program is co-financed by both the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund through the Youth Employment Operational Program, being the ONCE Foundation the Intermediate Body of the aforementioned Operational Program. The Universities benefiting from this call will receive a maximum amount of 4,000 euros for each student who completes the program (must attend at least 80% of the total hours of the program). Each university may receive a maximum of 60,000 euros for the development of an annual training program.



## Some data of the program at national level

The number of universities developing programs with the funding provided by Once Foundation has increased from 15 in 2017 to 23 in 2020.

Table 1 Number of universities developing programs with the funding provided by Once Foundation

Call 2017-2018	Call 2018-2019	Call 2019-2020
228 students	323 students	335 students
15 universities	21 universities	23 universities
U. of Alcalá	U. of Alcalá	U. of Alcalá
U. of Alicante	U. of Alicante	U. of Alicante
U. of Almería	U. of Almería	U. of Almería
U. of Burgos	U. of Burgos	U. of Barcelona
U. of Castilla La Mancha	U. Camilo José Cela	U. of Burgos
U. Complutense	U. of Cantabria	U. Camilo José Cela
U. of Extremadura	U. of Castilla La Mancha	U. of Cantabria
U. of Granada	U. CEU San Pablo	U. of Castilla La Mancha
U. of Jaén	U. of Extremadura	U. CEU San Pablo
U. of La Coruña	U. of Granada	U. of Gerona
U. of Málaga	U. of Jaén	U. of Granada
U. Miguel Hernández	U. of La Coruña	U. of Jaén
U. of Murcia	U. of Málaga	U. of La Coruña
U. Pablo Olavide	U. Miguel Hernández	U. of La Rioja
U. of Navarra	U. of Murcia	U. of Málaga
	U. Pablo Olavide	U. Miguel Hernández
	U. of Navarra	U. of Murcia
	U. Rey Juan Carlos	U. Pablo Olavide
	U. Rovira y Virgili	Polytechnic U. of Madrid
	U. of Salamanca	U. of Navarra
	U. of Valencia	U. Rovira y Virgili
		U. of Salamanca
		U. of Valencia

## Employment outcomes

The universities participating in ONCE Foundation calls have included in their training programs an internship at the universities themselves and/or in ordinary external companies. Universities have developed these internships so far following the methodology of supported employment, hiring job coaches to support students.

Some of the external companies in which the students have carried out their internships have hired them at the end of the training. The contracts made immediately upon completion of the training process demonstrate the usefulness of these courses to achieve the ultimate goal of autonomy and employment inclusion for young people with intellectual disability.

Table 2 Contracts made after intership

University	2017-2018		2018-2019	
	Contracts	Companies	Contracts	Companies
Alcalá	3	Carrefour Ondu Packaging Food handling company	3	Orpea Sanchinarro Carrefour Ministry of Education
Alicante	9	Sprinter Hotel Meliá Alicante Espais Verds Torrevieja City Council Inditex Group Passed public examination Jimten Alicante Aspanias Association of Elche Pans & Company	4	Corte Inglés (Mall) Hotel Meliá Alicante Nike Sprinter
Almería	3	Almería swimming club – Clece cleaning company Mc Donalds Ballesol Nursing Home	2	McDonald's Ballesol Nursing Home
Burgos	6	Bar Restaurant Burgos University Store Burgos City Council environment office Compass Services University and Aspanias Sprinter		
Camilo José Cela	Did not participate in this call		4	Dachser Envera Ceesur

			Orpea Ibérica
Cantabria	Did not participate in this call	3	El Astillero City Hall University of Cantabria Kostka School
Extremadura	4	"Centro de la Luz" industrial Laundry Company services Badajoz Town Hall Cooperative created to promote a quality seal of Extremadura's typical food	
Granada	3	Leroy Merlin Hotel Meliá Granada University of Granada	Ecopark (Aspogrades) Porcel Hotels Group Group Hotels Porcel Laundries Carrefour Rovi Laboratories Reina Sofia Center
Jaén	4	SAS Officer Jaén City Council Play centre	Andalucía Health Service Residence and Day Stays Unit (Ilunion Baena) Jaén City Council Linares Bowling Leisure Center Aprompsi Sheltered Workshop
Málaga	4	Museum	
Miguel Hernández	5	Pikolinos Juan Perán Foundation Pikolinos Alcampo Carrefour Pizza hut	Tempe Juan Perán-Pikolinos Foundation Children's Health Foundation Sprinter
Murcia	4	Leroy Merlin Vidal Espinosa Favorite RTE	Prosegur
Pablo Olavide	4	Crustum Panem Disclean Everis	Meat sector company
Pública de Navarra	11	Feradetrans Transport Gureak Caja Navarra Foundation Aspace Tasubinsa Down Syndrome employment program Official of the Government of Spain	

		Official of the Government of Navarra ILUNION		
Rey Juan Carlos	Did not participate in this call		1	Roncalli Foundation
Rovira y Virgili	Did not participate in this call		5	Tarragona Civil Government Aprodisca CRAI of the URV
Salamanca	Did not participate in this call		3	Feltrero Discotheque Salamanca City Council Renfe (Ilunion contract)
Valencia	Did not participate in this call		4	CERMI Circus Finestra Nou Circ PANARIA MLV (Valencia Modular Logistics) of the Ilunion group Muñoz and Bosch
Total	60 (26%)	60 (26%)	50 (15%)	50 (15%)

## Conclusion

The evaluation and impact of the programs carried out so far has been highly positive for all the participants involved: young people with intellectual disabilities, their families, the entire university community (teachers, students, service personnel, etc.) disability organizations and companies. In this sense, it should be noted that the best valued item (score of 4.76 out of 5) by the students in the final questionnaire developed by ONCE Foundation, corresponds to question 9, which ask them about the general opinion of the course. The vast majority of students, 9 out of 10, found the course interesting and would recommend it to a family member, friend or acquaintance.

Young people with intellectual disability are gaining the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to access ordinary employment. They feel like any other student in a privileged socializing environment such as the university, and they are also graduating as other university students do, which contributes to their self-esteem, professional expectations and job opportunities.

## **Approach developed by the University of Salamanca: Unidiversitas Program**

### **Unidiversitas Program**

The UNIdiVERSITAS program was designed to provide university training to young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, in order to improve their autonomy and academic and labour training. The aim is to improve their social and labour competences in order to facilitate access to labour market and the access to jobs in ordinary companies, using when necessary the supported employment modality. Their time at the University also provides them with an inclusive experience in which they will participate as full university-community members.

The design of the UNIdiVERSITAS program is consistent with the model of definition of intellectual and developmental disability, which states that the difficulties in IDD are related to conceptual, social and practical skills (Schalock et al. 2010, 2011; Verdugo, Schalock, Thompson and Guillén, 2013). Therefore, it is these types of skills that guided the organization and development of the program. Also, the program has been designed in accordance with the recommendations of the "Report on Model Accreditation Standards for Higher Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability: A Path to Education, Employment, and Community Living" developed by The National Coordinating Center Accreditation Workgroup [NCCAW] of Think College<sup>188</sup>.

The main teaching methodology of the program is the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. The UDL is a set of principles, guidelines and checkpoints for the design and development of curricula and instruction that seeks to ensure equal opportunities for people, regardless of their characteristics and abilities. It is based on research in the learning sciences, and its three fundamental principles focus on the deployment of supports and alternatives for the what (recognition networks), the how (strategic networks) and the why (affective networks) of learning. UDL allows the development of learning experiences in flexible ways to meet the needs of individual learners by providing multiple means of representation (eg, easy reading), engagement (eg, varied assessment methods) and motivation (eg, deployment of various active teaching methodologies). In the words of Rao, Smith and Lowrey (2017), "UDL is considered a curriculum design approach for students with and without disabilities that has the potential to support the meaningful inclusion

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<sup>188</sup> <https://thinkcollege.net/>

of students with intellectual disabilities in mainstream educational contexts". In addition, the ideas of universal design for transition have been applied (Gabriels, Thoma, Bartholomeu & Scott, 2010). Together, the curricular design of the degree is based on considering the principles of both approaches:

- Consider the multiple domains of life.
- Provide multiple forms of assessment.
- Promote self-determination.
- Provide multiple resources and perspectives.
- Provide multiple forms of representation.
- Provide multiple forms of engagement and motivation.
- Provide multiple forms of action and expression.

With this, the accessibility of the information has been ensured (all the teaching content was adapted to easy reading), participation / evaluation methods appropriate to the objectives (evaluations based on different objective, subjective and participation criteria) and have allowed the deployment of a set of teaching strategies to improve motivation (the variety of teaching methods themselves and the ongoing tutorial and support work of the job coaches hired from the degree budget). In the classroom sessions, a set of teaching methodologies have been deployed aimed at implementing in the best possible way the principles of Universal Design for Learning. Teaching has been carried out in a classroom with a non-traditional spatial arrangement of movable tables and chairs; traditional classes (i.e., master lecture or master class) have been kept to a minimum and most of the teachers have used cooperative and problem-based learning. and focused on Since the first day, the students have an academic guide (adapted for easy reading) with essential information about the degree. In addition, through the learning platform (Moodle) they have had access to various information and resources (subscription to calendar, mobile version of the platform, student-teacher communication guidelines, videos, and additional materials)

In most classes, students have conducted both individual and group work. The composition of the groups within the classroom was carried out by each teacher with advise from the job coaches, in order to promote help among students. In addition, specific groups have been created to work numerical skills and money management with students who poorly performed at these activities. Thus, the job coaches provided specific and individualized support for these students to acquire these skills.

The UNIdiVERSITAS program is offered as a diploma (i.e., specific certification issued by a higher education institution which offers a specific, non-official, training) from the University of Salamanca. Its first edition started in 2018-2019. It lasts one academic year (38 ECTS) and is taught in the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Salamanca. In the present edition (2019-2020) there are 17 students enrolled.

The program consists of two parts. The first part of the programme (from November to March) focuses on the teaching of transversal skills that may be needed to carry out a wide range of work. These competences are divided into the following subjects:

- Oral and Written Communication applied to employment settings
- Competences for digital communication
- Learning to think and self-management
- Emotional Intelligence and Teamwork
- Numerical Competence Applied to personal, academic and labor areas
- English
- Independent living
- Labor Relations and risk management

In addition, and in order to further improve their employability and encourage motivation towards active job search, they received training in job search techniques. In this subject the following skills are taught: knowing where to look for job offers, learning how to write a CV or how to do a job interview or, for example, or *finding jobs by using social media*. From the first moment, motivation and the importance of being actively involved in the job search were worked on.

During the second part (March to May) students do their internships in different companies or university services, depending on their preferences. Thus, after analyzing the work preferences of each student, they perform their internships following the methodology of supported employment. Students are trained by two job coaches in the specific tasks and competences related to their job. This training and support takes place once they are in their workplace. This training approach fits into the 'in work support' element of supported employment. These internships have a duration of 150 hours, equivalent to a subject of 6 ECTS credits.

In addition, all the students have to write and present in public at the end of the program an "End of Degree Project" that aims to communicate in a structured way the achievements made during the internship period.

Figure 5 shows the structure of the program and its organization based on those adaptive behaviour skills we would like the students to improve.

MODULE	MATTER	SUBJECT	38 ECTS
(1) CONCEPTUAL	(1.1) COMMUNICATION	(1.1.04) English	3
(1) CONCEPTUAL	(1.1) COMMUNICATION	(1.1.06) Oral and written communication applied to employment settings	4
(1) CONCEPTUAL	(1.1) COMMUNICATION	(1.1.07) Competences for digital communication	3
(1) CONCEPTUAL	(1.2) SELF DETERMINATION	(1.2.08) Learning to think and self-management	4
(2) SOCIAL	(2.1) SOCIAL SKILLS	(2.1.09) Emotional intelligence and teamwork	6
(3) PRACTICAL	(3.1) PERSONAL AUTONOMY	(3.1.01) Independent living	3
(3) PRACTICAL	(3.2) JOB SKILLS I	(3.2.02) Labor relations and risk management	2
(3) PRACTICAL	(3.2) JOB SKILLS I	(3.2.03) Job search	2
(3) PRACTICAL	(3.4) APPLIED NUMERICAL SKILLS	(3.4.05) Numerical competence applied to the personal, academic and labor areas	3
(4) INTERNSHIP (SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT)	(3.3) JOB SKILLS II	(3.3.10) Support employment internships	6
(5) FINAL PROJECT			2

Figure 5 Structure of the program UNIdiVERSITAS

## Academic period

The classes taught in the first part of the title, have been necessary both to appropriately perform the internships and improve student employability. According to students' opinion (collected through a survey at the end of the program) the classes have allowed them to demonstrate a series of skills and knowledge in the workplace. Specifically, they highlighted the following skills as the most useful during the internship period:

- Social skills
- Assertiveness
- Empathy
- Give and receive feedback
- Active listening
- Digital skills
- Teamwork
- Time management
- Decision making
- Personal autonomy
- Oral and written communication
- Delegation
- Numerical knowledge



- Risk management

## **Supported employment internships**

Supported employment internships are developed from March to May, generally in the morning from 9.00 to 13.00, although in some cases work schedule has been slightly different to ensure the coincidence of student and professional tutor.

During the internship period, almost all the students have had the support of a job coach and two professional tutors (colleagues on the job). Only 4 students have had a single professional tutor and a job coach.

The methodology used during the internship period is that of supported employment. The entire internship process is developed from an individualized perspective and personal adjustment of interests and abilities for the choice of the position to be filled during the internship period. To this end, a job orientation process is conducted with job coaches. Thus, in the pre-internship phase, tools for collecting professional information were applied, in particular, an inventory of job preferences was administered and a personalized interview was prepared with elements from the Professional Profile - EUSE Model template, to which some new questions were added.

The final interview allowed for the collection of data from the following sections: (1) personal data, (2) people involved in deliberations about students' professional interests, (3) health status and data on disability, (4) studies undertaken, (5) further training received, (6) work history, (7) hobbies and interests and (8) job preferences. Regarding this last aspect, data is collected on: expectations, ideal career, preferred work tasks, preferred working conditions, preferred work environment. Data is also collected on (9) the skills and abilities of each student: daily life skills, communication skills, social interaction skills, daily routine and additional information that each student considered of interest. All the questions on job preferences are reinforced with new questions formulated in different ways and with reflection questions about their ability and the adjustment of their training and abilities to the requirements of the chosen position.

Once each student decides what job they want to train in, and the skills/training and job requirements are checked, the program contacts the selected companies and the selected University services.

With the services and companies that accept to participate, the protocols of the "internal agreement of educational cooperation to carry out the internship" are made. The agreements are

managed through the University's Professional Insertion, Internship, Employment and Entrepreneurship Service (SIPPE), in the University of Salamanca's centralized registry of educational cooperation agreements for external internships.

Once the agreements and protocols of internal cooperation have been signed and after an informative interview with the heads of each company and the University Services, the analysis of the job is carried out.

The analysis of each job position, as explained in another section of this report, is carried out in collaboration between the workers of the selected companies or services of the University and the job coaches. The objective of this analysis is to identify possible difficulties that the student might have, in order to design the necessary supports for the correct adjustment between the student's performance and the demands of the job.

During the internship period, the job coaches record all work procedures so that students learn the job tasks without difficulty. In addition, different supports are designed for the specific needs of each student. The occupational risk prevention manuals are also adapted for easy reading.

Therefore, in addition to the transversal skills studied in the first period of the program, each student receives additional training in the tasks and skills specific to the position he or she has held during the work placement. For example, those who completed their internship in the position of "service and information officer" had to demonstrate a number of skills and learn a number of tasks, which were then assessed by their professional tutors. Example of skills:

- Punctuality
- Flexibility in the workplace
- Organization
- Responsibility
- Honesty
- Problem solving, conflicts and contingencies handling
- Manual ability to carry out tasks
- Ability to work without supervision
- Capacity for teamwork
- Communicative skills
- Observation
- Skills

## Academic results

The general structure of the academic program is organized as a set of modules (conceptual skills, social skills, practical skills, supported employment internship), and subjects. In addition, there is a catalogue of transversal and specific competences that are specified in a set of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are statements that describe the knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of a particular subject. These learning outcomes are assessed by each teacher using a variety of assessment methodologies. Finally, since the program must conform to the numerical grading system of the University of Salamanca, each student has an average grade in each subject that more or less reflects the degree to which he or she has achieved the learning outcomes. The overall average rating of the participants in the first edition was 8.4 ( $SD = 0.6$ ) with a minimum of 7.50 and a maximum of 9.23 out of 10.

The average grade obtained by our students during their internships has been 8.7 out of 10 ( $SD = 0.9$ ). Their performance was assessed by their professional colleagues.

Regarding other performance indicators, we will describe that the average percentage of class attendance was 96.7%, which denotes a high level of student involvement.

In summary, the level of acquisition of skills after this period was very adequate and in fact many participants highlighted the usefulness of this first period for the development of subsequent work practices.

## Employability outcomes

Overall, the Unidiversitas program has successfully met the employment objectives. Firstly, because it has served to train all students in a set of transversal or soft skills that are useful for any job, in any sector, and to carry out the tasks of any job position. Secondly, the programme has allowed each student to carry out a 2-month work placement period, during which they have learned the tasks of a specific position. The position was chosen by the student himself after a period of orientation and always taking into account his professional interests. And most importantly, the students themselves have stressed that the program has given them something they did not have, the confidence and certainty of knowing how to perform the tasks of a position.

For example, after the first edition of Unidiversitas program (2018-2019):

3 students (all male) are working: 1 first in the position of carpenter in the company Feltrero, and then in a discotheque; another in the position of concierge in a center of the Salamanca City Council, and the third assisting passengers with disabilities in Renfe hired by Ilunion.

- 1 student (man) has worked as a moving officer and although the company where he did his internship offered him a contract, he decided to change his profession and is currently taking a course in building maintenance.
- 1 student (man), is a finalist in a selection process for a nursing home (Residencia Clece Vitam Salamanca), which is scheduled to open soon.
- 7 students (5 women and 2 men) are preparing the exams for the position of Services and Information Officer at the University of Salamanca. In addition, 2 of them are admitted to compete as administrative assistant in Andalusia. In addition, one of them has just participated in a personnel selection process at the Corte Inglés, and is waiting for the results. The other student has completed a Business Assistant course in the last few months and she will begin an internship at Carrefour in the near future.
- 4 students (2 men and 2 women) are preparing the free access exams to obtain the Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) Degree, they prepare it from an organization and in these moments of confinement they follow classes through an online platform. Initially the exams would be in May, but with the current state of alarm they have been postponed. The objective of these students is to obtain the ESO diploma and then prepare for Service and Information Officer.

Once students graduate, they are put in contact with different organizations, recruitment agencies and temporary employment agencies where they send their CVs. In addition, we inform them of some job or training offers that come to us from some associations and that may be suitable for them. Also, they are provided with easy reading contents to prepare the competition for a position of service and information officer.

### **Connection to community resources and employers**

Once the students graduated, the necessary steps were taken to put the students in contact with different entities that are part of the Salamanca Platform of Entities for Employment. From the group of entities that make up this platform, those that dedicate their activity to people with disabilities or young people at risk of social exclusion were selected. Among them: Accem, Adsis, Asecal, Cáritas, COCEMFE, Inserta, Asociación Tas and YMCA. In all of them, students who want to

participate are interviewed and included in their job offers. In addition, some of the students, who did not have a Compulsory Secondary Education Degree, will participate in the preparation classes for the free ESO tests at the YMCA, through the “You can with ESO: second chance for young people” training program, which will help them to obtain a qualification in ESO through individualised training itineraries.

Likewise, information has been provided to students on new calls for competitions, providing them with summaries and general information adapted to easy reading.

## Evaluation

The evaluation of the activity of the Unidiversitas program has been developed at different levels and has been approached with different methodologies. Firstly, the management and coordination team of the diploma itself has held regular meetings in which issues related to the evaluation of different aspects of the diploma itself have been addressed. As far as the students are concerned, fluid communication has been maintained at all times with the group and its delegate on the progress of the course, the teaching methodology and the general functioning of the different subjects. As for the teaching staff, direct communication has been maintained from the beginning of the degree, with joint initial coordination meetings and messages with information in the form of documents to facilitate and standardise the different aspects of the implementation of the degree. Once the participation of each teacher has been completed, informal meetings have been held to discuss their participation in the degree, the problems that have arisen and other aspects related to their teaching action. The participation of the teaching staff is very variable and fits in with their initial desire (some have taught only 5 hours and others more than 20). Most teachers are not only involved in teaching, but also collaborate on other issues

In addition, satisfaction and opinion surveys are administered to both students and teachers in order to obtain average global indicators that allow the degree to be assessed from the point of view of students and teachers. The main aspects of the evaluation are summarized below.

*Evaluation tools:*

- **For students:** Questionnaires developed by the program for each content.
- **For professors:** The evaluation of the teaching staff has been carried out with a survey based on the one used by the quality system of the University of Salamanca. The standard model has been adapted to fit some specific issues of the Unidiversitas program.

## Program staff

The Unidiversitas team is made up of 5 people: 2 co-directors, 2 job coaches and a professor from the Faculty of Psychology, a member of the research institute on disability at the University of Salamanca, INICO, who has been a really important support in all phases of the project from its draft into its completion. The programme involves:

- A total of 24 teachers of different undergraduate programs at the University of Salamanca (Education, Psychology, Social Work, among others) and services. Participation in the program is voluntary and varies from 5 to more than 20 teaching hours, depending on their availability.
- 27 professional tutors who have played the role of natural supports. Professional tutors are colleagues on the job, who teach the student with disability the profession, act as role models, and provide supports following the advices given by our job coaches.
- 16 academic tutors, associated to the Faculties of Education and Psychology, as well as to different services of the University. These professors participate as teachers in the program and also offer support to students with disability on different academic aspects through the course. Students can contact their academic tutors to ask for detailed explanations about a specific content, to require help when doing their final project, or to ask for support and advice in aspects regarding the University.
- 17 students without disabilities who joined the mentoring program. The mentor role is understood as a figure of an equal that promotes participation spaces outside the classroom. Mentors are Master students or undergraduate students attending mostly to the Faculty of Psychology and who want to volunteer with individuals with intellectual disability attending Unidiversitas. Their role is as equals, and they provide support in aspects regarding University life and also organize activities outside the University campus.

The hiring of job coaches was carried out through a public call and selection process, requesting 2 University Graduates (Group II) for the Own Title of Expert in Socio-Labor Skills, with the profile, merits and functions indicated below.

- **Knowledge:**
  - Knowledge of supported employment
  - Knowledge of human resources
  - Knowledge of easy reading

- Knowledge of socio-labor and transversal competences
- Knowledge of job training for people with disabilities
- **Merits:**
  - Bachelor or Degree in Psychology, Occupational Therapy or Education
  - Training in Human Resources Management
  - Training as a specialist employment coach with support
  - Experience in the design and delivery of online and face-to-face training on job search and socio-labor skills of a transversal nature
  - Experience in training in socio-labor competences of a transversal nature to students with disabilities
  - Training and experience in creating and adapting documents for easy reading
- **Functions:**
  - Conduct professional evaluation of UNIdiVERSITAS students
  - Carry out job prospecting
  - Carry out job evaluation
  - Carry out complementary theoretical / practical training at UNIdiVERSITAS
  - Perform job coach job specialist with support during UNIdiVERSITAS work practices
  - Create and adapt content on socio-labor / transversal competences to easy reading

## **Contact with families**

Regarding contact with families, it is only carried out in cases where they are necessary for decision-making, either because the student is not clear about what he or she would like to work on and needs the support of the family to identify his or her strengths and weaknesses, or in cases in which the student has an organic disease in which it is necessary to take into account whether the tasks that he or she has chosen can be carried out without risk, as it is sometimes necessary to even discuss the decision with his or her doctors..

In the first edition, relatives were consulted in only one case and in the current edition in two.

## **Connections with organizations and companies outside the university**

UNIdiVERSITAS submitted its design and training program to the main organizations of the sector at national level, which gave their support to the program through a letter of endorsement

that makes it explicit and authorizes UNIdiVERSITAS to express it in its website and in the materials developed. These organizations are:

- Full Inclusion Spain
- Down Spain
- Spanish Association of Supported Employment

At the local level, UNIdiVERSITAS has established synergies and relations with the main local organizations, within the framework of a collaboration strategy developed by INICO, which is reflected in a Collaboration Agreement between the University of Salamanca and the following organizations:

- Asprodes
- Full Inclusion Salamanca
- Down Salamanca
- Insolamis
- Ariadne

The companies that have been contacted in the first promotion have been the following:

- Feltrero División Arte S. L dedicated to moving, storing, designing and manufacturing packaging, transporting and exhibiting works of art and manufacturing museum items.
- The Limcasa Group, a cleaning and services company for people and institutions.
- Singer Labores. A small shop whose main activity is custom-made sewing and embroidery.
- WebProgramación Consultoría Informática, dedicated to the development of custom applications, Web pages, online stores, Web Accessibility, usability.

One of the main conclusions after implementing this program for two years is that it constitutes a great opportunity not only to promote the academic development of the students with ID, but also their social and personal development. By feeling like full citizens within the university community, we observe improvements in their self-determination as well as in their future aspirations. The university offers an ideal context for them to be encouraged to continue studying, pursue a better job, expand their social network, and above all, feel part of a community that also belongs to them. This program also has an impact on the university community itself. University services have realized that many of the supports provided to our students in their workplace are also useful to other employees. They have valued diversity as an element that brings richness to



their service. Professors have also experienced that by implementing UDL they can improve other courses they teach and benefit a wider range of students.

In summary, having individuals with intellectual disability studying at the University improves not only their employability, but also their sense of community belonging, as the University becomes a much more facilitating space when they are and participate in it.

# **STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR PERSPECTIVES**

## The involvement of employers/companies in the process of Post-Scholar Life Transition

*Mário Pereira, Aida Araújo Rebelo, Ana Margarida Melo and Tânia Figueiredo*

We would like to give an important place to employers in the analysis with stakeholders. All over Europe, people with disabilities do not seem to have easy access to the labour market. Moreover in many European countries, people with intellectual disability appear to be (almost) completely absent from employment statistics. Some visit a daytime activity center for adults; others stay at home with their parents or live on campus in a residential facility.

In addition to the fluctuations in employment in a capitalistically organized labour market, the large gap for people with intellectual disabilities can mainly be explained by:

- the low expectations vis à vis children and youngsters with intellectual disabilities
- the often non-existent transition programs and transition plans for young people and young adults with intellectual disabilities who leave school
- the lack of specific support concerning employment for this group (jobcoaching, supported employment programs,...) (Riches et.al., 2019)

We are therefore very satisfied that the HiLives partner ASSOL was able to organize discussions with employers about, among other things: the preparation for employment; transition programs and the necessary support for employment.

## Summary

This text reflects on the importance of developing a process of preparation for the socio-professional integration of young people with intellectual disabilities (ID) and other limitations during school attendance.

The work presented is an investigation based on the action/work previously developed by ASSOL in creating partnerships with employers, trying to understand their motivations, fears and the gains they may have from this collaboration.

The theoretical discussion around the concepts of socio-professional inclusion is based on two authors who have exerted great influence on ASSOL's philosophy and decisions over the years: Professors Ad Van Gennep of the University of Amsterdam, and Lou Brown of the University of Madison, Wisconsin USA, who was one of the pioneers of school transition programs to adulthood, by implementing traineeships in actual work contexts.

The research work carried includes two questionnaires, one applied to 182 employers collaborating with ASSOL, answered by entities; the other surveyed 16 professionals, whose task is to support the relationship between employers and the people served. These professionals work in different programs, namely: Post-Scholar Life Transition, Vocational Training, Supported Employment and Occupational Activities, all of these involving experiences in real work contexts.

The main conclusion of this research is that employers are open to receiving people with disabilities, namely young students to perform training activities in a real work context and they recognize that this cooperation brings gains for their organization and for the person.

The most mentioned condition, by the employers, for the success of these processes is the existence of a close and available support.

The diversity in size and sector of activity of employers is also interesting and it seems that all activities or organizations can welcome students with some kind or level of disability.

## Part I - Transition from school to adult and work-life

The first part presents the concepts and pedagogical methodologies that ASSOL considers essential to understand the goals and the process of the transition from school to adult and work life.

We describe ASSOL’s work experience involving the partnerships with employers, as well as some methodologies used in the transition process in secondary education.

The second part analyses the questionnaires and its possible conclusions.

### Who is ASSOL and why is involved in this project

ASSOL is a nonprofit organization based in Oliveira de Frades, with intervention in several municipalities of the Intermunicipal Community of Viseu Dão-Lafões, whose mission is to promote social inclusion of people with disabilities and people with chronic and disabling mental illness.

ASSOL depends mainly on public funds but also on the cooperation of partnerships with employers. We could not do our work without public funds, but without the partnerships with companies, we could not achieve the same level of quality and efficiency.

This engagement began in a natural way, step by step.

The following table shows how the partnership became indispensable in different programs.

Table 3 Partnerships in different programs

Service	Partnerships with Employers
Resource Centre for School and Inclusion(CRI) - Students having a Transition Program	44 students are doing small internships in real work contexts
Vocational Training	All of 180 trainees do their practicing in real work contexts
Employment Resource Center	128 people are in support employment programs, working in regular work sites
Occupational Activity Center for disabled	About 75 (of 86) people are doing some activities

adults	in regular work sites
USO (Day care for adult people with mental illness)	About 25 (of 45) people are doing some activities in regular work sites
Community Support Program Offices (GAPRIC)	All of 32 supported people do some activities in regular work sites

The table below shows the number of active partnerships (with formal protocol) in each year, as well as the rate of renewal of these protocols.

Table 4 Number of active partnerships in each year

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Total number of partnerships</b>	354	367	353	427	430
<b>Renewal rate of partnership protocols</b>	99,5%	96,4%	96,6%	98,4%	97,56%

We take on as a prior assumption that it is not possible for students to experience a good transition from school to the work context without having an effective experience in this world, but we never studied this problem from the point of view of employers.

We can contribute to Hilives Project studying the motivations, fears and needs of these partners. This analysis also helps us organize the necessary support to maintain a productive and positive long-term collaboration.

**Inclusion: Concepts and scopes**

According to Ad Van Gennep (2019) existential co-inclusion recognizes disability and instead of trying to change it, inclusion does change the status of the individual in the community.

This concept calls for the enlargement and variability of ways of human interaction, which is a permanent and endless task and It requires a constant dialogue with people who are “different” and to whom it is “allowed” to continue to be different.

This concept assumes the *diversity* of human beings; we are all equal because we are human beings, but we are so special that every human being differs from all the others. Therefore, each of

us is a unique human being. *Equality* is not innate, but rather the result of a social evolution that has equated human beings who differ from each other in a structural and unalterable way. This concept of co-existential 'inclusion' needs to be the main foundation for social and pedagogical action to make inclusion a reality.

Inclusion in school, workplaces or in the community can only happen if people are there. Only being present can evolve into a sense of belonging and only established this feeling is it possible to participate in conditions of equity and with dignity.

Unfortunately, the system of supports leads to situations where people with disabilities are, too often, confined to situations where they only interact with other people with disabilities and with people who are paid to relate to them.

Lou Brown (2016) insists on the idea that valuable relationships are the ones we maintain with people who are not paid for it.

A central task for professionals who support people with disabilities at any age, but particularly in school ages is to promote the development of these support networks given by non-professionals, which are essential for:

- Increasing the chances of people with intellectual disabilities to experience a sense of "social belonging" due to increased opportunities to establish meaningful relationships with others in the community.
- Increasing the capacity of the general population to include people with intellectual disabilities in common life.

In fact, inclusion is always inclusion in a social network, which can be defined as a dynamic network of relationships that are important in the daily life of the person.

When a member of the social network supports a person with intellectual disabilities so that they can perform the activities of their choice, it can be a step towards inclusion.

The concept of co-existential inclusion is based on the affirmation of the individuality of the person. The inclusion should not transform the person, but it gives new forms to the person's life through the interactions established (Ad Van Genneep, 2019).

## **Inclusive employment a condition for individual dignity and freedom**

Having a job and making the money needed to meet our personal needs is, in our Western society, a mandatory condition to be recognized as a citizen.

“What is your job? What do you do for a living?” are main questions in the personal presentation of every adult person.

Our experience, with adult people with ID or with mental illness, shows that when they are asked about what their biggest dream is, the most frequent answer is: having a job.

Although, in some Western countries, people with disabilities benefit from good economical support that allows them access to decent living conditions, it does not have the same social dignity or significance as the money obtained by a paid job.

To have a job is a condition to have access to a life with personal freedom. Not having a job leads to poverty, but also contributes to reducing the opportunities for access to diverse social contacts.

Worldwide, the unemployment of people with disabilities constitutes a very negative and concerning reality. In Portugal the data are not reliable, but the Censuses 2001 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2002) report that in Portugal about 6% of the population has some type of disability and that of this universe only 26% work, that is, 74% of the population with some type of disability has no work. According to the 2019 report “Human Rights Indicators”, by the Disability and Human Rights Observatory, in 2018, of all the unemployed people registered, 3.85% had disability.

On the other hand, there are studies in Western countries that point to unemployment rates around 90%.

This means that adult people with disabilities are living into poverty and social exclusion.

It seems clear that secondary school is failing to prepare students for the employment market. The big question is what is or should be the school's role in this process.

It would not be acceptable for our schools to completely fail in preparing the best students to access higher education. Our dream is that, one day, we will see society showing the same concern towards school failure in preparing students with ID to get a job when they finish school. Certainly, this situation is related with the functioning of the school and with the teaching options that are



made throughout the school years, but it highlights the importance of taking care of the preparation of young people for this change in their lives.

## **The importance of transition from school to work**

Lou Brown was a pioneer in the study of the importance of preparing students for work and defines it as follows: "Preparation for work consists of ensuring that students with disabilities are provided with experiences, skills, work ethics, attitudes, values and everything that is necessary for their training so that at school, they can perform work in real situations and activities, according to standards minimally acceptable by employers" (Lou Brown, 2016).

The employment depends not only on school, but also on many other after-school policies. But although we have no scientific evidence, we can assume that what happens in school has repercussions on post-school policies and the way society looks at this problem.

The school's role is critical as an accelerator of change. In Portugal it can be said that inclusive education has been established in the 1980 decade, but only in 2015 would legislation be published that gives the same support to open market-supported employment to those who existed for sheltered employment.

This change cannot be dissociated from the fact that only now there are a large number of young people finishing "integrated" education.

The argument that it is not up to the school to prepare young people for the labor market is fragile and does not resist criticism.

Just as high schools assume that their job is to prepare good students to go to university, they should also be concerned about preparing other students for what comes next in their lives: an adult and work life.

The central challenge must be teaching knowledge and experiences that the person will need to use in their adult life.

Professor Lou Brown (2016) tells the story of a farmer to whom he tried to explain that his son with ID would learn much less than between 98%/99% of students. After some dialogue, the father said: "If my son will learn less than the other children, please teach him the most important things he needs to have a decent life in our community."

Thus, the school should integrate into the "curriculum", specifically in each student Individual Program, learning objectives directly related to the skills necessary to carry out a job, which involves learning in the contexts in which they will be necessary.

Lou Brown (2014) introduces two interesting concepts: "authentic assessment" and "authentic instruction" and defines them as follows:

- **Authentic assessment** consists of placing a person in a real-life situation, activity or context and then determining the significant discrepancies between what person expresses and the requirements for minimally acceptable functioning.
- **Authentic instruction** consists of teaching the necessary skills for meaningful participation in important situations, activities and contexts.

Leaving the physical space of traditional classrooms is still a big issue, for schools.

Our education system, traditionally, doesn't attribute the same value at the work done inside or outside the classroom. In our experience, it has happened, more than once, when we teach students outside school, in community sites, to be asked if we are just walking around. Worse than that, is if you are seen at a cafe or restaurant with your students.

Even in vocational training programs for people with disabilities, the trainer of the sessions in the classroom or workshop needs to have a special accreditation, but this is not required to the trainers who follow up the practical internships in real work situations. This shows that the value or importance given to the two parts of vocational training is not equal.

ASSOL became involved in transition plans from school to adult life due to this prejudice. Special education teachers consider they have more important activities than to go to a company to prepare or monitor an internship of a student and school doesn't have the resources to pay for the needed travel.

Therefore, the support we provide to schools includes the planification, monitorization and control of the internships outside school.

When we teach in real life situations, one of the many problems raised is that it's not possible to learn by trial and error, which is a very common teaching strategy inside classroom and in traditional school contexts.

When we teach in real life situations, we have to use strategies that avoid error, because a single mistake can be very problematic.

If we teach a young man how to peel potatoes, we cannot allow him to cut himself with the knife. If we teach a person how to iron, we cannot allow him to ruin his clothes. Even more dramatic cases can happen if we teach a person to cross a street, in which a single mistake can be fatal.

Since students cannot learn by trial and error, it is necessary to use strategies that:

- Give the necessary support for the student to perform the activity without error;
- Organize the activities in such a way that facilitates their implementation;
- Work the environment so that it provides the necessary allude in a natural way.

## **Transition (tva) and active learning**

The Transition from school to adult live (TVA) process must take into account the theories and learning models, while meeting the specificity and individuality of each student in their learning process.

In this context we highlight some of the characteristics of students with ID and their impact on learning (Lou Brown, 2016):

- They learn a smaller number of skills;
- They need a greater amount of attempts and more time to carry out an apprenticeship;
- They forget faster and have greater difficulties in the recovery process;
- They have difficulties in generalizing and transferring knowledge;
- They present greater difficulties in complex activities;
- They have greater synthesis difficulties.

Since the 1970s, people with intellectual disabilities, especially children and young people, have ceased to be seen as sick and incapable of learning, and started to be seen as pupils with skills to learn and develop.

The second change took place in the 1990s when AAIDD review the definition of mental disability saying that it is, firstly, a social problem and, therefore, the solution of this problem has to occur within the community in which the person lives. The person with an intellectual disability must have the support to enable him to position himself as a citizen in society, despite his shortcomings.

A change that also relies on the definition of ID is that learning in contexts has become a right and not a kindness that we choose to give.

From this understanding follows that the main desired result of support is a better quality of life, namely: increasing environmental characteristics such as community presence, choice, competence, respect and community participation.

Tradition says that the person needs to be prepared in advance to be able to access a certain situation of life or work. From the moment we recognize as the objective of the support increase participation in the community, the issue is no longer the prior preparation but the support we give so that the person can function properly in these contexts.

The intention is to admit the person in the situation, let her learn from the experiences of this situation and provide the necessary support if the person does not have sufficient knowledge, skills or relationships.

Support should be given in a flexible way: not all people need the same intensity of support, nor support in all areas; in addition, support can and should be gradually reduced.

The support given helps enabling friendships, financial planning, employment support, behavioral support, support in independent home life, access to the community, assistance in the disease, etc...

It should be assumed that support is not the exclusive function of professionals and support activities can and may be carried out by people in the social network, who are assisted, only when necessary by professionals.

Support is also not limited to the areas of any school curriculum, it shall be provided in all areas of a person's life.

What we do with and for disabled people can be considered a support if and when it increases the opportunities for integration and participation and enlarges their personal freedom.

If that doesn't happen, we need to question if our work is being helpful to this person.

In short, education must support personal development as a part of the process that allows you to shape and give content to your independent life, according to your basic needs. When we do this under normal living circumstances and according to normal living standards, in such a way that these are achieved, then we support the person's quality of life.

The amount, intensity and withdrawal of support are very important points.

People can fail because adequate support is not given for as long as necessary. We need to realize that individuals may need or re-need different types and intensities of support. Too little is bad, but too much is not good either. Balance is the constant challenge.

## **ACTIVE LEARNING**

Active learning provides a greater possibility of developing skills, since, through multisensory stimulation, it allows a greater capacity for acquiring and mobilizing knowledge.

Thus, the TVA process promotes this learning in contexts through the development of practical internships in real work context.

The success of the TVA processes, training and professional integration depends on the motivation and commitment of the person served, but also on the involvement of technicians and awareness and openness of the business fabric. The integration of people with disabilities into training must take into account their interests and needs as well as the labor market.

The practice of ASSOL has been corroborating the principles of active and cooperative learning to the extent that real experiences in the context of work show the following:

- **Provide opportunities that can facilitate:**
  - a growing satisfaction with his/her own life;
  - a feeling of love, affection and belonging that comes from loving relationships;
  - a sense of security that stems from the ability to decide their actions and control over the environment itself;
  - opportunities for choice and control.
- **Provide well-being, where the important factors are:**
  - physical: health and personal safety;
  - materials: material comfort and financial security;
  - social activities: civic and community activities;
  - intellectual stimulation: work that is useful, interesting and rewarding;
  - leisure and recreation in a perspective of obtaining pleasure.
- **Promote stability, predictability and control:**

The environment stability is an important condition, but at the same time there must be variability in the intensity of the supports. Having opportunities, well-being and stability certainly contributes to improving the functioning of the person. The better the functioning of the person

in his community, the greater the recognition of the quality of the person as a citizen who is equal to others in society.

## TRAINING IN NATURAL WORKPLACES

The presence and the participation of the student in a workplace implies the learning of a huge repertoire of behaviors, mostly in an informal way, that go far beyond the skills of performing tasks.

In the questionnaire given to employers, we found curious that one of their strongest motivations is: "The challenge of helping someone to develop as a person and as a worker", what reinforces the importance of these informal learnings and many of them related to moral values.

- **The learning of global working capacities and the generalization of those capacities**

In "*The Own Initiative Model*" Timmer and De Vries (2014) say that "practical experiences in a real work context, in the open market" is a good model for this preparation by increasing learning general skills: guidance (ability to think about the things needed to draw up and design a plan); implementation (ability to think about what is done) and evaluation (ability to verify whether goals are achieved, learning from and through).

- **The learning of specific working techniques**

The employers don't have the expertise or the obligation to welcome our students. So this work requires the support of a professional, to prepare for integration into a workplace in a normal working environment.

This professional support has a broad range of points, namely:

- **Assessment** of the personality, abilities and desires of the person served, concerning work.
- **Support for job placement:** the analysis of the job, the context, and strategies that enhance both the environment and the person's work and adaptability.
- **Support and training in the workplace:** training, with the support of a professional, to improve the performance in specific tasks based on a support plan.
- **Post-placement support** - long-term follow-up and support to facilitate the process of maintaining previously acquired capacities. Once the supported worker demonstrates that he or she is gaining and improving the professional skills, the support technician begins to spend less time with him in the workplace, reducing his presence during periods when the worker can perform his tasks autonomously. This progressive decrease in support will continue until the worker demonstrates the ability to perform tasks in the workplace on his

own. During this time, the professional will work closely with the worker's supervisor and, if appropriate, also with co-workers in the sense that they assume responsibility and supervision – moving from technical support to natural and community support.

- **Natural support in the community:** the principle of equal rights implies that the needs of each person are equally important. These needs should be the starting point for the way in which the community is organized and implies that all means available in the community are used in such a way that all people have equal opportunities for participation (inclusion).

## **SUPPORT FOR THE EXERCISE OF CITIZENSHIP**

Support should promote quality of life improvement, resulting in greater autonomy, participation and inclusion. The person does not need to fulfill a certain condition to be allowed to participate in a given activity or situation. Support must be flexible and we must constantly assess whether adjustments are needed. The social network of the person plays a major role in this support.

Being an equal citizen does not require that the person with ID functions at a certain level. In fact, it means the need for society to respect human dignity by giving all its members an equal status. Considering this statute, members of society with biopsychosocial limitations are entitled to all the support they need. Respect for and protection of human dignity implies treating people with intellectual disabilities with dignity and assuming that they have the right to a dignified life.

The focus is placed on the difference, uniqueness, the sense that everyone is irreplaceable and different. However, people also have something in common: all people have the same dignity, but each one differs from another in a permanent and fundamental way. Social dignity leads to the appreciation of the person as a member of the community who belongs to it. (Ad Van Genep, 2019)

### **Without a curriculum what can we do?**

In this transition process the standard is the individualization.

If the standard is not to have a standard, this can create a feeling of insecurity within the professionals involved.

Teaching without a curriculum also poses great challenges to teachers and other professionals, in programs such as vocational training and, at the limit, even working with adults with very serious disabilities.

In fact, if there are no curricula or reference standards, professionals can feel insecure. More than helping a person to fulfill a curriculum, the challenge is to make an Individual Program that fills the aspirations, motivations, needs and dreams of each person.

In the absence of collective standards, the guidelines in decision-making process, which can dramatically affect a person's life, mainly have a moral nature.

Without patterns to follow and without a reference that tells us what is right or wrong, the moral dilemmas will be a constant. In this process is also common to state that what is good for one person and much desired by him/her, can be harmful to another.

Hence the importance of a clear understanding of the moral values, it is necessary to use pedagogical techniques aligned with these values.

When we teach, there are two important questions: What to teach and why? To decide the "what" can be easy if we have a curriculum or program to follow.

Without this curriculum we can only answer the question **what** if answering the question

**why:**

Lou Brown (2016) proposes a list of "Good whys", that we reproduce because it seems to us a good list of commandments for professional's:

- It is Chronological-Age-Appropriate;
- It is functional: it will reduce demands made on others;
- It is a student preference: he/she asked that I help him/her learn it;
- It is a clearly expressed parent/guardian preference;
- It is a justifiable professional preference;
- It will increase the number of environments and activities experienced;
- It will increase his/her social relationship range;
- It will enhance physical status, appearance and stamina;
- There is a reasonable chance he/she can learn it;
- There are reasonable transfer, practice and natural supervision opportunities;
- It will help generate curricular balance;
- It is important vocationally;
- It enhances privacy, choices, respect, pride and social status;
- It will reduce government involvement in his/her life;



- It will increase expectations;
- It will enhance feelings of belonging and connectedness;
- It is logistically feasible;
- Research results of acceptable quality support teaching it;
- When parents see them do it, tears will run down their cheeks.

## **PERSON CENTRED PLANNING**

Person Centred Planning is an approach developed in the 1980 and 1990 decades, conceived to promote social inclusion of long-term institutionalized people.

This approach allows us to design Educational Programs, namely transition programs, aligned with the expectations, hopes and dreams of the person served and their social network.

The center is the person rather than their limitations. The importance is given to what the people want for their future.

The clinical diagnosis and the difficulties that the person may have are placed on a secondary level. The focus are the preferences, desires and dreams of each served person.

In this methodology life is seen as a journey, in which our goals adjust as we walk. The important thing is the path that we have ahead, not what has already been left behind.

Being aware of the desires, interests, motivations and direction that the person wants to take for his/her life, gives us the ability to negotiate with them and define a set of coherent supports aligned with their life project.

Person-Centred Planning helps to raise awareness of the desired future of and for the person served and their community. In addition, it gives us tools to plan actions towards this desired future, namely PATH (Pearpoint, O'Brien & Forest, 1993) and MAPA (Falvey *et al.*, 1997). Nevertheless, the main tools are:

Listening and dialogue to make sure that we correctly understand the direction that people want to take and what are the choices that they are able to make presently.

This understanding is necessary so that we can adjust the support according to the person's desires. Support negotiation is the tool needed to achieve this adjustment.

The people served participation in the planning process is indispensable, as well as their family, friends and social network. It is very important that the caregivers directly involved also participate in the planning.

Concerning this methodology, ASSOL has translated and edited two books in Portugal:

- PATH: Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (2009);
- All my life's a circle (2011).

This approach and its tools are very useful when we help a person or a family to think about a future with hope. It is this vision of future that gives a direction to the person's life and allows us to organize the necessary and possible support.

### **Transition from high education to post school live: our experience**

An Individual Transition Plan (PIT) is designed for students who benefit from the most restrictive curriculum adaptations. According to our legislation, students must begin a transition process three years before the term of compulsory schooling, i.e. 15 year-old students and/or at the beginning of the first three years of high school/secondary education (Ferreira & Pereira, 2015).

Through the Resource Centre for School and Inclusion (CRI), ASSOL has a history of about 25 years of cooperation with 8 high schools in Post-Scholar Transition (TVA) for students with the most restrictive curriculum adaptations.

Along this time some frustrations took place, but we also experienced many very good situations, that stimulates us to move on.

Experience shows that there is a great availability of employers what allows us to find internship locations for all students who want it, and almost always in the areas of their preference.

Geographical conditions are limiting the range of activities that student can choose to do in their internships because their location must be very near to the school. Most of the times the students must go on foot, because we do not have an available net of transportations.

One of the great difficulties posed is that these stages are seen as a secondary activity of the Individual Educational Program.

Still too often the internship is seen as a way to occupy a student in the hours in which the school has difficulty finding him activities.

The importance of preparing these people for post-school life is not rooted in the school's culture, which makes it difficult for these internships to last longer, according to the student's and company's wants and needs.

Lou Brown (2016) mentions that in the last year of schooling these internships should occupy half of school hours. In our reality it has been difficult to achieve more than two afternoons or two mornings because academic activities are given precedence, including support by "special education" teachers.

Despite the difficulties, it has been possible to take steps in what we think is the right direction, but it is important to ensure:

- **A link between the Individual Transition Plan (PIT) and the Educational Program**

Transition should be a continuous process of student development, which means performing activities to promote autonomy and various personal and essential skills throughout their school path, which are essential in environments outside school.

It is mandatory in our legislation to ensure that the PIT remains a component of the PEI and not an autonomous and disconnected instrument. The transition technician must work in close coordination with school so that all the work can be properly framed in the document that discriminates the curriculum adaptations (PEI) and linked to the work of their class and special education teachers, always accepting the principle that school is the entity that is responsible for the student's educational process (Ferreira & Pereira, 2015).

- **That student must make a well-informed choice**

The process of choosing the internship workplace is conditioned by the will of the student, but also by external factors, such as the availability of the chosen company, as well as the proximity or existence of compatible transportations.

To identify and respect the wishes and dreams of the students, but also the expectations of the family, it is necessary to set up a network of support that can involve the use of all kinds of natural support existing in the community, and even more specific support to be ensured by the family, involving them actively.

The process of sensitization of the internship site implies a flexibility for the technicians to be able to adjust to the schedules and availability of companies, which is not always easy for

teachers due to the rigidity of school schedules. However, the flexibility and willingness to support whenever necessary is still a crucial factor in the success of this process.

- **Practical aspects: stages of the process, negotiation, mediation, working in partnership**

The transition process (TVA) involves several steps that we have described synthetically (Ferreira& Pereira, 2015).

- **Vocational Screening:** the central element is the dialogue with students and their families, as well as visits to different companies and community services. The student needs to be properly informed in order to make choices. These visits can be more open (when the student does not have a preference area yet) or more directed (when the student already has some idea of what he wants).
- **Negotiation of the internship:** Involving the student, the school and the company.
- **Search for internship locations:** The search for the right place for every student according its interest and possibilities.
- **Preparation of the PIT:** The process only begins when all the actors - school, student and family – reach a common understanding. In this stage the location of the internship is defined, the tasks to be performed are decided, as well as the schedules, transportation to the place and the responsibilities of each part.
- For each internship, a list of tasks that the student can perform is organized, which, in practice, functions as the curriculum of the activity, in addition to serving as a guide for all elements involved.
- It is important for the TVA technician to have some knowledge of task analysis in order to be able to identify tasks which are accessible to the student and help establish learning objectives tailored to the students' abilities and motivations. This issue is essential so that the student is not stuck with the routine performance of some too simple tasks, and to prevent that, on the contrary, the student is continuously faced with requirements that exceed his abilities, which generates frustration and withdrawal from the task. Maintaining high motivational levels in the student is critical to a successful TVA process.
- **Introducing the student to company:** We must be careful with aspects like the presentation of the student to the company and the written protocol.

- **Monitoring of the internship:** The technician should adjust the frequency of the visits according to each situation, balancing his presence so it is not understood as inaccessible or distant and, on the other hand, avoid that it is felt as bothersome.
- The follow-up aims to help solve logistical problems, mediate situations that may arise, plan the learning and their continuous and periodic evaluation and articulate with the school.
- **Transmission of information between the company and the school:** School must be aware of the whole process, so the TVA professional transmits the relevant information about the internship to the teachers and informs internship workplace about the relevant subjects involving the student (Ferreira & Pereira, 2015).

The process includes also:

- Evaluation at the end of school periods;
- The student Self-assessment;
- Assessment of family satisfaction;
- Student evaluation by the company/entity (Ferreira & Pereira, 2015).

## Part II - Collaboration of employers

### *Availability, Motivations, Fears and Conditions*

Part II of this study aims to process the data obtained through the questionnaires applied both to employers who welcome supported people and ASSOL employees who mediate and provide support to employers.

### **Employers questionnaire**

The employer's questionnaire was specifically designed for the present study and consists of three essential parts. The first part allows the characterization of employers at the socio-demographic level and the scope of their collaboration with ASSOL. The second part seeks to acknowledge the appreciation that employers make of their motivations, fears and conditions. The third and final part, evaluated through an open question, wants to know the opinion of employers on the integration of people with disabilities in the working world.

### **METHODOLOGY FOR PROCESSING AND DATA ANALYSIS**

For the data analysis related to the employers' questionnaire, descriptive analysis was used, which is based on a study of non-uniform characteristics of the units observed or experienced. It is used to describe the data through statistics, so in the present study we used the absolute (n) and relative (%) measures of central tendency and dispersion as is the case of the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), whenever necessary (Pestana & Gageiro, 2014).

From question 3, the subjects answered each statement on a *Likert scale* ranging from 1 (nothing important) to 5 (totally important). Since the classifications proved to be very similar, not allowing to show very clear differences between the importance of the factors, it was understood to complete the analysis by creating a scoring system of the various answers, which allowed to perceive some interesting differences to be underlined.

In view of the above, the answers are presented either by distributing the number of responses, with their percentage at each level of the scale, or by ordering the factors hierarchically. We took the liberty to carry out an operation which consists of multiplying the level of the scale (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) by the number of recorded responses and make the respective sum. This score, not having a special meaning, because it keeps very balanced scores, allows an easier reading and also evidences some nuances. The factors in each of the tables are already in an orderly manner, according to this weighted score.

## Sample and availability

The questionnaire was sent to 272 employers who have established cooperation protocols with ASSOL to integrate people with disabilities into their activities.

A total of 182 entities answered, and it was found that:

- 136 (74.7%) are private entities, 19 (10.4%) are IPSS/NGO and 27 (14.8%) public sector/municipalities;
- These 182 entities are distributed in 41 different fields of economic activity;
- These entities employ an average of 28 workers;
- Each entity welcomes, on average, one person with disability;
- 50% of entities have been collaborating with ASSOL for more than 5 years (Table 5).

These data lead to the conclusion that all types of entities and all types of economic activities have the potential to accommodate people with disability and/or some level of incapacity.

Also, because they constitute the majority of people supported by ASSOL, there is a predominance of employers who host trainees in vocational training (60.4%), soon followed by the small internships carried out in the context of the post-scholar life transition (30.8%) (Table 6).

It is also possible to infer that once the cooperation is established it tends to continue, since only 22.5% of the entities have been collaborating for a year or less.

It is stressed that employers are located in the area of the CIM (Intermunicipal Community Viseu Dão Lafões), a region marked by interiority, in which economic activity is very unequal between the different municipalities. According to the study on the "Poder de Compra Concelhio - 2017" (National Institute of Statistics, 2017), the Viseu Dão-Lafões region has a *per capita* purchasing power of 80.4% of the national average, and it is verified that in some municipalities this value stands between 60 and 65%.

Table 5 Socio-demographic characterization

Entity	N	%	Average	DP	Range
Company	136	74.7			
IPSS/ONG	19	10.4			
Municipality/public sector	27	14.8			

<b>N° of workers</b>	133	----	28.56	70.36	01 - 600
<b>Years collaborating with ASSOL</b>					
<b>About 1 year</b>	41	22.5			
<b>More than 2 years</b>	49	26.9			
<b>More than 5 years</b>	37	20.3			
<b>More than 10 years</b>	22	12.1			
<b>More than 15 years</b>	20	11			
<b>More than 20 years</b>	13	7.1			
<b>N° of people with disabilities welcomes entity</b>	177	----	1.59	1.55	0-10

Table 6 Scope of collaboration with ASSOL

		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Transition to Pos-Scholar Life Internships</b>	n	56	126
	%	30.8	69.2
<b>Vocational Training</b>	n	110	72
	%	60.4	39.6
<b>Internships or integration contracts</b>	n	46	136
	%	25.3	74.7
<b>Supported employment</b>	n	22	160
	%	12.1	87.9
<b>Socio-professional experiences</b>	n	46	136
	%	25.3	74.7



## Motivations

In this issue we sought to know the motivations of entrepreneurs for the maintenance of partnerships and not so much the initial motivations, because often the involvement began with some persistence and insistence of the ASSOL workers. The sample ensures that the motivations result from a lived experience.

Table 7 shows the frequency and percentage of the responses, with an identical importance for almost all factors. Nevertheless, it can be emphasized that entrepreneurs were unanimous in their opinion, mentioning the variables as totally important: "ASSOL ensures support whenever there is some difficulty" (59.9%), "It is a way to help those who need it" (57.7%), "The challenge of helping someone to develop as a person and as a worker" (56%). For entrepreneurs, the factors "Some people with disabilities, due to their enthusiasm for life, are a source of inspiration" (36.3%) and "Their presence gives a positive image of the organization" (30.8%), were considered very important in maintaining the partnership.

Through the weighted score that we had the audacity to perform, it is possible to hierarchize, more clearly, the factors by the level of importance that they reveal to entrepreneurs. Thus, it is perceived that the two statements with the highest weighted score are of a moral, personal and social responsibility nature and the third is the confidence of the support provided by ASSOL. It should be stressed that the importance of the work performed appears only in seventh place (in eight possibilities), which makes it possible to assume that the access of employers is not dependent on the work capacities of the person.

Table 7 Factors that led to maintaining a partnership with ASSOL

		1	2	3	4	5	WS	NR*
The challenge of helping someone develop as a person and as a worker.	n %	-- --	-- --	18 9.9	54 29.7	102 56	780	8 4.4
It's a way for us to help those in need.	n %	1 0.5	-- --	20 11	46 25.3	105 57.7	770	10 5.5
ASSOL provides support whenever there is any difficulty.	n %	-- --	-- --	21 11.5	41 22.5	109 59.9	754	11 6
Some people with disabilities, because of their life enthusiasm, are a source of inspiration.	n %	-- --	8 4.4	44 24.2	66 36.3	47 25.8	625	17 9.3
Their presence gives a positive image of the organization.	n %	4 2.2	14 7.7	47 25.8	56 30.8	40 22	597	21 11.5
The person served creates a good work environment.	n %	-- --	15 8.2	55 30.2	55 30.2	36 19.8	595	21 11.5
The work that people do.	n %	8 4.4	11 6	67 36.8	44 24.2	34 18.7	586	18 9.9
The coexistence among employees, in general, has improved.	n %	5 2.7	17 9.3	61 33.5	57 31.3	20 11	550	22 12.1

\* 1 (unimportant) 2 (slightly important) 3 (important) 4 (very important) 5 (totally important) WS (weighted score) NR (nonrespondent)

Faced with the question "what do people with disabilities who are welcomed in your entity gain?", entrepreneurs present consistency and coherency in their responses, thus, there is agreement at the level of importance (totally important) that they attribute to the following factors: "They feel important because they have a job" (61%), "They are cherished by their colleagues" (49.5%), "They gain a place in society" (48.4%), "They are seen in a more positive way" (45.6%), "Work helps them stabilize their lives" (44.5%) and "There is always someone who becomes friends with them" (44%) (Table 7).

Through the weighted score and the hierarchization of the factors by the level of importance they reveal to entrepreneurs, it is verified that the first three items with higher scores are directly related to the issue of inclusion in the community and society. Entrepreneurs consider that, being a support network, they extend the range of possibilities for people with intellectual disabilities to increase opportunities to establish meaningful relationships with others, develop feelings of social belonging, as well as allow the increase in the number of people who are committed to helping the success of the supported person. These results also indicate that natural support in the community is based on the principle of equal rights, which implies that the needs of each person are of the same importance.

Once again, it is verified that the financial issue is the item that proves to be less important for entrepreneurs, being positioned at the end of the table (Table 8).

Table 8 Benefits that people with disabilities earn in entities

		1	2	3	4	5	WS	NR*
They feel important because they have a job.	n	--	--	18	47	111	797	6
	%	--	--	9.9	25.8	61		3.3
They are cherished by their colleagues.	n	--	--	24	59	90	758	9
	%	--	--	13.2	32.4	49.5		4.9
They find their place in society.	n	--	--	20	62	88	748	12
	%	--	--	11	34.1	48.4		6.6
Work helps them stabilize their lives.	n	--	1	23	65	81	736	12
	%	--	0.5	12.6	35.7	44.5		6.6
Their physical and mental health improved.	n	1	1	23	72	75	735	10
	%	0.5	0.5	12.6	39.6	41.2		5.5
They are now seen in a more positive way.	n	--	1	24	61	83	733	13
	%	--	0.5	13.2	33.5	45.6		7.1
There's always someone who becomes friends with them.	n	--	1	24	61	80	718	16
	%	--	0.5	13.2	33.5	44		8.8
Advice provided by coworkers helps them better solve everyday problems.	n	--	3	30	69	67	707	13
	%	--	1.6	16.5	37.9	36.8		7.1
They improved their behaviour.	n	--	5	23	68	71		15
	%	--	2.7	12.6	37.6	39	706	8.2
They can earn more money.	n	2	5	41	51	68		15
	%	1.1	2.7	22.5	28	37.4	679	8.2

Entrepreneurs say that if they stopped receiving people with disabilities in their companies, they would lose someone who is important to them (56.1%) and that the environment would be sadder (39.5%). On the other hand, it becomes noticeable that people with disability are not considered a negative factor, because most totally disagree with the statement "We would no longer have a concern" (57.1%). These data are in line with the total scores obtained, which allowed verifying this same hierarchy at the level of the most and least important factors for entrepreneurs (Table 9).

Table 9 Consequences of not receiving people with disabilities in the company

		1	2	3	4	5	WS	NR*
We would lose someone who's important to us.	n	1	8	52	54	48	629	19
	%	0.5	4.4	28.6	29.7	26.4		
The work environment would be sadder.	n	5	17	70	47	25	562	18
	%	2.7	9.3	38.5	25.8	13.7		
We would lose someone who executes indispensable tasks.	n	24	31	56	27	9	407	35
	%	13.2	17	30.8	14.8	4.9		
Loss of productivity.	n	33	37	60	13	3	354	36
	%	18.1	20.3	33	7.1	1.6		
We wouldn't have a concern anymore.	n	57	47	33	10	5	315	30
	%	31.3	25.8	18.1	5.5	2.7		

\* 1 (unimportant) 2 (slightly important) 3 (important) 4 (very important) 5 (totally important) WS (weighted score) NR (nonrespondent)

## Fears

When analyzing the answers concerning the question related to the fears that entrepreneurs had before starting the experiment, it is verified that the most frequent mentioned factors are directly related to psychological well-being and physical integrity, namely "Hurting themselves" (46.7%) and "Not adapting" (44.5%) (Table 10). On the other hand, it is possible to verify, by ordering the factors, that those that reveal themselves with a level of lesser importance for entrepreneurs are those that relate to the issues of discrimination and the possibility of some kind of injury, in the sense that the supported people could spoil machines or materials. Perhaps, due to the experience that entrepreneurs have with ASSOL, these results may be a reflection of the confidence placed in the work that has been carried out over time, in the way that the company forms and adjusts the profile of the subject to the functions to be performed, with the monitoring technicians being the facilitating agents. It is a process of choosing and preparing the "right person for the right place", seeking the balance between the demands of the job and the person profile, who as a worker can effectively perform his function in a post that justifies the place he occupies.

As for the issues of non-discrimination, it is believed that the change of mentalities was made by the multiplication of successful experiences.

Table 10 Fears mentioned before starting the experiment

		1	2	3	4	5	WS	NR*
That they didn't adapt to the workplace.	n	9	15	70	54	27	600	7
	%	4.9	8.2	38.5	29.7	14.8		3.8
That they would get hurt.	n	14	19	52	48	37	585	12
	%	7.7	10.4	28.6	26.4	20.3		6.6
That they needed a lot of help to complete the tasks.	n	9	35	67	40	17	525	14
	%	4.9	19.2	36.8	22	9.3		7.7
That they had aggressive moments or behaviors that we couldn't handle.	n	19	31	57	41	15	491	19
	%	10.4	17	31.3	22.5	8.2		10.4
That they would interfere with the colleague's work.	n	26	48	52	26	9	427	21
	%	14.3	26.4	28.6	14.3	4.9		11.5
That they would wreck machines and materials.	n	35	48	51	22	8	412	18
	%	19.2	26.4	28	12.1	4.4		9.9
That our workers wouldn't accept and help them.	n	43	31	42	31	11	410	24
	%	23.6	17	23.1	17	6		13.2
That the costumers wouldn't accept their presence.	n	49	38	43	22	8	382	22
	%	26.9	20.9	23.6	12.1	4.4		12.1

\* 1 (unimportant) 2 (slightly important) 3 (important) 4 (very important) 5 (totally important) WS (weighted score) NR (nonrespondent)

## Conditions

Most entrepreneurs mention that in order to maintain the partnership it is essential that the person likes to be in the company (68.7%), that ASSOL support is always available (62.6%) and that co-workers get along well with supported people (52.2%). Although the financial support of the government represents some weight, a large portion of the sample devalues it (31.8%) (Table 11).

When analyzing the ordered factors by the weighted score obtained, it is verified that the most important condition still refers to the supported person liking the place of internship/work. At the same time, the factors related to ASSOL support also have a high degree of importance, because experience shows that this availability of support is essential to ensure a good mediation between the supported person and the employer. This follow-up has as main objective to help solve logistical problems, mediate situations that may arise, plan learning and their continuous and periodic evaluation and articulate with the school/company. In the hierarchical ordering of the factors, the financial issue still does not reveal a high level of importance, and entrepreneurs seem to value aspects related to the positive and wholesome emotional and personal development of supported people.

Of the 182 companies that answered the questionnaire, 114 collaborate with internships of TVA, professional training or socio-professional experiences for which there is no financial support from the government. Of the remaining 68 companies, 46 collaborate on contracts and traineeships of

professional insertion in which there is relevant financial support and 22 have people employed, under the supported employment measures that has a financial component.

Table 11 Indispensable factors to maintain the partnership

		1	2	3	4	5	WS	NR*
That the person served enjoys being in the company.	n	--	--	12	40	125	821	5
	%	--	--	6.6	22	68.7		
ASSOL's support.	n	1	2	20	41	112	789	6
	%	0.5	1.1	11	22.5	61.5		
That ASSOL's support is always available.	n	--	--	22	38	114	788	4.4
	%	--	--	12.1	20.9	62.6		
That the coworkers get along with the person served.	n	--	--	21	53	95	750	13
	%	--	--	11.5	29.1	52.2		
Government financial support.	n	24	11	23	40	62	585	22
	%	13.2	6	12.6	22	34.1		

\* 1 (unimportant) 2 (slightly important) 3 (important) 4 (very important) 5 (totally important) WS (weighted score) NR (nonrespondent)

In the entrepreneurs opinion, the participation of people with incapacity and/or disabilities in their entities helps to transform society. Therefore, for this transformation, entrepreneurs consider the factors: "Working is better than living on subsidies" (56%) and a greater awareness of its value (45.6%). Entrepreneurs classify as "very important" the following factors for the transformation of society: they get used to being and talking to different people (42.9%), one has a more positive view of them (40.7%), people are more receptive to welcome them (39.6%) and make an important contribution to the economy (34.6%) (Table 12).

When analyzing the data taking into account the weighted score, the previously mentioned pattern is verified, as well as the gain of awareness of the value of the supported people and the fact that they are working is better than living on subsidies, continue to reveal the factors that entrepreneurs consider most important in the transformation of society. This may allow us to conclude that there has been a progressive recognition of the disability and an increase in the ability to understand the inclusion term (Table 12).

Table 12 Opinion on the factors that help transform society with the participation of PDI in companies

		1	2	3	4	5	WS	NR*
We become aware of their value.	n	--	--	21	69	83	754	9
	%	--	--	11.5	37.9	45.6		
Working is better than living off subsidies.	n	1	5	21	42	102	752	11
	%	0.5	2.7	11.5	23.1	56		
We're more receptive to receive and support them.	n	1	--	28	72	70	723	11
	%	0.5	--	15.4	39.6	38.5		
We have a more positive view of them.	n	--	--	25	74	69	716	14
	%	--	--	13.7	40.7	37.9		
We get used to being and talking to different people.	n	1	--	22	78	62	689	19
	%	0.5	--	12.1	42.9	34.1		

They make an important contribution to the economy.	n %	1 0.5	7 3.8	37 20.3	63 34.6	60 33	678	14 7.7
It has become more common to meet people with disabilities in several locations and under different circumstances.	n %	-- --	3 1.6	38 20.9	64 35.2	57 31.3	661	20 11

\* 1 (unimportant) 2 (slightly important) 3 (important) 4 (very important) 5 (totally important) WS (weighted score) NR (nonrespondent)

## Opinions on the integration of people with disabilities into the working world

The last question, requesting an open answer, aimed to know the opinion of entrepreneurs, as a synthesis, regarding their opinion on the integration of people with disabilities in the working world. A total of 98 respondents answered.

The most frequent responses were that is an opportunity for professional and social integration, (9.9%), an added value/benefit for both parties (8.8%), there is personal and professional appreciation for people with disabilities (6.6%), promotes inclusion, integration in the labor market, economic independence and personal appreciation (4.9%), increases self-esteem and feeling of usefulness at work (4.9%) and it's a positive project for society (4.4%) (Table 13).

Table 13 Opinion on the integration of people with disabilities in the world of work

	n	%
It is an opportunity for professional and social integration	18	9.9
Added value/benefit for both parties	16	8.8
It is a personal and professional appreciation for the person with disabilities	12	6.6
Promotes inclusion and integration into the labor market, economic independence, personal appreciation	9	4.9
Increased self-esteem and feeling of usefulness in the work of people with disabilities.	9	4.9
Positive project for society	8	4.4
Integration as a form of equitable capacity building in the working world is important	5	2.7
They have an occupation	3	1.6
Support in the socio-professional and human use	3	1.6
Team interpersonal relationships are strengthened	3	1.6
There must be availability for the support	2	1.1
It is a factor minimizing segregation and discrimination issues	2	1.1

Integration allows people with disabilities to take responsibility and not be seen differently	2	1.1
One learns to deal with different people, but they are very useful	2	1.1
People have to show a willingness to be more needed in society	1	0.5
Creates opportunity for access to certified training with technical or superior equivalence	1	0.5
Integration in the public sector is not yet proper	1	0.5
Integration is a mission of solidarity, sharing and generosity	1	0.5
Nonrespondent	84	46.2
Total	182	100

## ASSOL WORKERS QUESTIONNAIRE

The objective of this questionnaire is essentially to understand the nuances of the mediation process in the relationships between companies and people with disabilities. At the same time, this questionnaire also validates the responses of employers.

### SAMPLE

The questionnaire was answered by 16 ASSOL workers, whose role is to support people who perform activities in a real work context.

### METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire consists of 14 open questions, where respondents were invited to answer each one appropriately.

The processing of the data is based on the counting of responses.

Given that there are different answers but with similar meaning, these were grouped, generating several categories.

The following tables show the most mentioned issues and categories:

Table 14 What reasons do you find more relevant when suggesting a given company to a person served?

<b>What reasons do you find more relevant when suggesting a given company to a person served?</b>	
Company environment, responsiveness and company sensitivity	9
Meeting the preference of the professional area	9
Characteristics, abilities and the person preferences	6
Meeting the dreams of the supported person	5

Table 15 Which aspects do you take under consideration when first approaching the companies?

<b>Which aspects do you take under consideration when first approaching the companies?</b>	
Sensitivity to "deal" with the supported person and/acceptance of the supported person	11
Willingness to listen to and understand the importance of including people with disabilities and the role of the company in this process	10
Availability to experience/receive and teach the supported person	6
Learning and personal development perspectives	6
Physical conditions, clarity in articulation and possibility for future employment	3

Table 16 Which features does a company worker must demonstrate in order to become a reference for the person served?

<b>Which features does a company worker must demonstrate in order to become a reference for the person served?</b>	
Convey empathy, trust or security	16
Understanding the supported person's problems	8
Availability to teach/support the supported person	5
Acceptance and appreciation of the supported person	4
Social responsibility	2

Table 17 Which strategies do you use to help create a bond between the person served and the company's liaison worker?

<b>Which strategies do you use to help create a bond between the person served and the company's liaison worker?</b>	
Valuing the characteristics, namely the strengths of the supported person	11
Create bridges by conveying trust, security and protection	9
Active listening, conversation and communication care	3



Active participation in receiving the person supported in the entity	2
Understanding and empathy towards the supported person	2
Make the person feel useful and valid for the community	1

Table 18 What are the most frequent issues that you find in the initial steps of the integration process?

<b>What are the most frequent issues that you find in the initial steps of the integration process?</b>	
Difficulties in adapting to company rules and routines, by the supported person	9
Lack of understanding of the limitations of the supported people by co-workers and/or guardians.	8
Difficulties in linking and communicating between the company and the supported person	3
Lack of tasks for the supported person to perform (which results in demotivation)	3
Fears in adaptation, not being able to "do", lack of self-confidence of the supported person	2
Creating high expectations in relation to the profession	2
Limited range of companies in the region with willingness to collaborate	2

Table 19 What kind of support do the companies most request from ASSOL?

<b>What kind of support do the companies most request from ASSOL?</b>	
Conflict management and support in interpersonal relationships	9
Personal issues (hygiene, initiative, emotion management)	7
Support in compliance with company rules, by the person supported	4
Support in communication between the supported person and the entity	4
Information on employment support measures	3

Table 20 What kind of assistance does the person served most request from ASSOL?

<b>What kind of assistance does the person served most request from ASSOL?</b>	
Problem solving/personal life situations	11
Guidance for resolving workplace situations	5
Social support (e.g. filling out and interpreting documents for social support, follow-up consultations, bureaucratic issues for the funders)	4
Integration into the community, society	3
Personal protective equipment	2
Increase in the training grant	2

Table 21 What kind of assistance do the people served's families most request from ASSOL?

<b>What kind of assistance do the people served's families most request from ASSOL?</b>	
Help with the future by calling for integration into the labor market	7
Social support (e.g. integration into one of ASSOL's social responses)	4
Conflict management	2
Community integration	2
Other	3

Table 22 What kind of support do the person served's colleagues/company workers most request from ASSOL?

<b>What kind of support do the person served's colleagues/company workers most request from ASSOL?</b>	
Support in problem solving, conflict management or compliance with rules (e.g. attendance, punctuality)	10
Suggestions for dealing with a particular situation/attitude/behaviour of the supported person	7
Support to build salutary interpersonal relationships	3
Collaborate in helping personal life situations	2

Table 23 Which practices do you enforce to assure the person served's continuity in the company?

<b>Which practices do you enforce to assure the person served's continuity in the company?</b>	
Continuous and close support, namely being present on the most vulnerable moments	7
Listening and observing their behaviour, to intervene whenever necessary and to prevent further issues	4
Enabling and helping the process of integration	3
Appealing to the sensitivity, comprehension and acceptance by the company	3
Dialoguing with the supported person about their professional strengths and those to improve	3
Honesty	2
Applying the strategies of Gentle Teaching and Person Centred Planning	2

Table 24 Name examples of relevant assistance given by the person served's colleagues/coworkers.

<b>Name examples of relevant assistance given by the person served's colleagues/coworkers.</b>	
Teaching them and encouraging them in performing the tasks correctly	8
Material support (eg.: economic help/feeding/gratificações/giving rides)	7
Treating the supported person as any other coworker	5
Supporting the integration in community activities	3
Supporting the daily life routines	2
Participation in community events, counting on the coworkers support	2
Being alert to signs of demotivation	1

Table 25 In your opinion, which are the key aspects for integration success?

<b>In your opinion, which are the key aspects for integration success?</b>	
Believing in yourself (supported person), the motivation and feeling valued and helpful	11
The supported person persistence, commitment, proactivity and dedication	5
Adapting to the tasks	4
Healthy relationships between all parties (company, supported person, ASSOL workers, family)	4
Support provided at the work site by employees of the entity	5
Defending the cause/sensitivity for difference	3
Family support of the supported person	2
Physical and emotional well-being of the supported person	2

Table 26 In your opinion, which are the key aspects for integration failure?

<b>In your opinion, which are the key aspects for integration failure?</b>	
Lack of motivation and commitment of the supported person	9
Non-adaptation of the person and/or entity	8
Lack of sensitivity by the entity	5
Dysfunctional behaviors and habits	2
The supported person's health	2
Uncertainty and lack of investment from employers	2
Other	5

Table 27 What are the companies expectations from ASSOL support?

What are the companies expectations from ASSOL support?	
Active ASSOL worker follow-up (e.g. always present)	11
Positive, as it recognizes the work developed by ASSOL	2
Help in integrating the person/success in the inclusion of the supported person in the community	2
Other	4

## Possible conclusions

The analysis of the questionnaires allows us to draw some conclusions, namely:

- About 41 sectors of economic activity have been identified, where supported people are inserted. This is contrary to the idea that there are particularly convenient activities for people with disabilities and essentially show that all sectors and activities are possible, the decisive issue being the adjustment of the person to tasks, but above all to the physical but above all human environment of the place.
- Prior preparation or training in the tasks to be performed is not a condition, confirming the ideas expressed by Lou Brown and Van Gennep, who preconize that that it is possible to learn in contexts without it being required that a person has a high level of prior competence to perform the tasks in different workplaces. According to these authors, what is necessary is not the previous training, but rather to give the person the support they need for the performance of the activity as long as necessary.
- The certainty of the availability of adequate technical support is an important condition for employers. It follows that when we plan these placements, particularly in traineeships with links to schools, it is essential to ensure support that goes far beyond task training. As evidenced in the questionnaire given to ASSOL employees, support can be mobilized to solve a wide range of problems.
- The availability of support that ensures a good and sufficient mediation between the supported person and the employer, is pointed out as indispensable by employers.
- The monitoring aims to help solve logistical problems, mediate situations that may arise, plan learning and their continuous and periodic evaluation and articulate with the school or company. For ASSOL support should be given flexibly: not all people need the same intensity of support or support in all areas; in addition, support can and should be gradually

reduced. The essence of support is to allow the person to choose and execute things on their own, making them more able to access the resources, information and relationships integrated into the environments in which they live and work.

- The effectiveness of ASSOL support translates into the high rate of partnership renewal (around 98%) that has been recorded over the years.
- Person-Centered Planning is a methodological approach that enhances the adjustment between the person, the place of support and the available supports.
- Person-Centered Planning allows us to know what to do, indicating the direction that the person wants to give to his/her life, his/her desires, interests and motivations and with that we can negotiate with him a set of coherent supports aligned with his life project.
- We found no negative reviews or comments on the presence of people with disabilities in the workplace. In fact, there is widespread recognition of its importance in society, at work and in the subsequent positive socio-economic impact.
- These data agree with Van Genneep, who argues that a community-based approach close to people and in small and family entities is essential to achieve quality of life for this group of people. This support within the community where they live enables a position on an equal footing as a citizen in society, despite their shortcomings.
- The continued presence of people with disabilities is a decisive factor in raising the awareness of employers (and the socio-economic field in general) which translates into the number of times the presence of people with disabilities is referred to as: *an added value/benefit for both parties*.
- Employers rate the economic incentives they receive from the government with low levels of importance, favoring instead the increased self-esteem of the supported person, the fact that they feel useful, good and seen as an asset in their workplace, in the tasks they perform and in the environment they create around them.
- The person's motivation is the decisive factor and employers are available to help people develop their potential, but not so much to take care or educate them. This point is confirmed by ASSOL employees who were asked "*In your opinion, which are the key aspects for integration failure?*". 9 of 16 respondents mentioned: "*Lack of motivation and commitment of the supported person.*"
- The presence of supported people in the workplace is crucial to enhance access to employment for people with disabilities. This is evidenced by the fact that the Dão Lafões

Employment Centre, whose geographical area coincides with ASSOL's area of intervention being at national level one of the few in which unemployment of people with disabilities is no longer an endemic problem.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

- The availability of employers is positive;
- The motivations are very varied;
- Fears tend to fade;
- The main condition mentioned by employers is to feel supported;
- The ASSOL employees questionnaire confirms that the availability of this support is a critical factor for success.

In summary, the results show that employers have a strong willingness to cooperate with schools in the performance of internships for young people with disabilities, namely ID, so it is a necessary condition for courses for students with ID to have a strong component of experience in real work context.

## Stakeholders Point of View: Parents and Families of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

*Isabel Catarina Martins, Oksana Tymoshchuk and Eulália Albuquerque*

In her influential study Blacher (2001) presented a model to understand the connection and importance of families during the transition from late adolescence to young adulthood of persons with intellectual disabilities. Within this transition period – where formal secondary schooling ends and changes in residential and social status are becoming prominent topics, family involvement is of utmost important.

Colleagues pf AVIS PT21 and Paise Em Rede involved in the HiLivesProject managed to work with 22 parents having in depth discussions and dialogues about the future of their children and the possibility to get access in institutions of Higher Education.

As we can learn in this report, the experiences of this sample of parents is rich, full of dreams, ...but also very varied. We learn (once again) that THE family does not exist and that we should listen carefully to the experiences and questions of each parent/family.

## Abstract

*Making Higher Education more inclusive for students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities can have significant benefits both for the students themselves and for the academic community in general. Family involvement is essential for the successful transition to post-scholar life, namely Higher Education.*

*This study presents and discusses the research and results of a study conducted with four focus groups with 22 Portuguese parents of young people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The main objective was to understand the perspectives and expectations of parents about the inclusion of their children with with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Higher Education. This study is carried out within the HiLives project scope, which has one of its objectives to create strategies that allow the inclusion of students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions and transition to an active and independent life.*

*The study results showed the prevalence of positive perceptions by parents about the possibility of young people attending Higher Education and allowed to identify the preferred teaching models and methods, needs for support, barriers, and incentives in the process of transition of youngsters to University. This paper brings some final recommendations for improving transition process and the organisation of inclusion of students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Higher Education*

**Keywords:** Higher education (HE); Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD); Inclusion; Parents perspectives



Results of several longitudinal studies indicate that, after secondary school, students with disabilities have lower values of employability, less probability of completing secondary education and continuing their studies, and less success in their professional training (Patrick & Edwards, 2010; Wagner et al., 2005). These difficulties lead most of the time to inactivity and social isolation, affecting these young people's well-being. In this regard, an OECD report (OECD, 2011) shows that the lack of possibilities after secondary education has a strong effect of untying young people from the community, restricting their participation and depriving them of social and economic independence well as of their well-being.

Education and post-scholar possibilities for students with disabilities are scarcer when compared to those of their peers (Garrison-Wade, 2012). Best practices for transition services have been considered work experience, preparation for employment, family involvement, inclusion in general education, social skills training, daily living skills training, self-determination skills training, and interagency or community collaboration (Landmark et. al., 2010).

In Portugal, transition possibilities to post-scholar life shown to adolescents and their families, usually includes protected employment, participation in community activities, daily living experiences or inclusion in occupational activity centres. Furthermore, there is an increasing trend of students with Special Education Needs (SEN) to enter Higher Education (HE). For example, in 2019, there was an increase of 28% from the previous year in Portugal (GTAEDDES, 2019). Although an increasing number of students with disabilities consider, nowadays, postsecondary educational possibilities, these students very rarely have Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

Several studies carried out in Portugal also show that the lack of transition programs and low social participation were the factors that most affected the quality of life of people with disabilities (Fânzeres et al., 2017; Ferreira, 2019; Veiga et al., 2014). There is a lack of activities to be performed by those individuals who are autonomous to accomplish socially useful tasks but cannot access a job and do not want (or do not need) institutionalized support (Martins, Albuquerque, & Pereira, 2020).

The responsibility for the transition moments, as well as the whole educational process, must be shared by the family and the school. Preparatory activities to post-scholar life have been considered as being the responsibility of teachers, families, and students themselves (Garrison-Wade, 2012). Although the major importance of their participation in postsecondary preparation programs and developing self-advocacy skills (Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003), students are rarely involved in this

activities and decisions. However, compulsory education and academic practices of students with disabilities often fail to prepare them for post-secondary successful experiences and parents report frequently low expectations from the school staff. Most families struggle with many challenges and frequently refer to feel lonely in during this transition process.

Parents have, commonly, low expectancies concerning this stage of their lives and we all know from previous research (Doren et al., 2012) that parental attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and involvement strongly influence transition processes. Their perceptions concerning the transition process can have a huge influence on education and continuity and further studies. For all this, it is important to hear parents' voices concerning possibilities of a successful transition to post-secondary life.

Due to the major importance families have in transition processes and the influence their perspectives have in successful post-scholar experiences, it appeared to us of great importance to listen to their worries, dreams, and conceptions.

## Listening to Families voices/perspectives

To understand the transition processes, we must use multiple sources: teachers, students, social agents, and parents. Parents can be an important source of information as they have the best knowledge about their children's characteristics, abilities and needs. Therapeutic and educational intervention plans, in which the transition is included, must include parents in their construction.

Families should be encouraged and supported to empower students with disabilities to make options and to be involved in decisions concerning their lives. Considering the importance of supporting families, Dunst et al. (1988, 1998) introduced the concepts of "empowerment" and "enabling". "Enabling" implies the creation of opportunities for family members to acquire skills that reinforce the functioning of the family. The concept of "empowerment" (Dunst et al., 1998) proposes the implementation of interventions so that family members maintain or acquire a feeling of control over important aspects of family life, such as the result of their own effort to achieve goals. In this sense, empowerment is a process in which the family becomes more competent and better able to mobilize resources that can positively influence the functioning of the child and parents, and the family's ability to meet the needs of their needs, thus promoting a sense of control in important aspects of family functioning.

Studies also show that it is essential to consider young people's desires and dreams to transition to adulthood, adapting a person-centred methodology (Caldwell et al., 2020; Clark, 2018). These authors show the effectiveness of applying the *Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope* (PATH) methodology (Pearpoint, Forest, & O'Brien, 1993)

PATH is a planning and problem-solving methodology for individuals and schools. According to Pearpoint et al. (1993), PATH consists of "a vision of a just world, rich with diversity, where each person's gifts are acknowledged, supported, valued; a world where everyone is included, belongs and makes valued contributions" (p. 1). Thus, this methodology focuses on the individual's quality of life, their growth and development, and strengths that enable an individual to thrive. PATH is a creative process for strategic planning, which encourages participants to visualize a future based on shared values and beliefs. Therefore, the PATH consists of a structured process which is underpinned by a focus on finding an alternative way for achieving a desired vision for the future (Wood et al., 2019). Thus, the PATH process aims to create meaningful change for individuals placing their aspirations and wishes at the forefront of decision-making processes.

The authors also suggest adapting the *Gentle Teaching* approach as a methodology that can promote the transition of students with IDD to postsecondary life (Beirne-Smith, Ittenbach, & Patton, 2002). *Gentle teaching* is a non-aversive method that aims to establish a mutual relationship between the individual and the caregivers, allowing them to support people, even in situations of stress and negative emotion. The main premise of Gentle teaching is based on the analysis of the person, providing the caregiver a deep understanding of their needs and motivations, and bringing interactional change, characterized by a more intense and frequent expression of the unconditional appreciation of the person (McGee, 1987; Van de Siepkamp, 2010). Despite being born as a therapeutic approach in the institutional context, in the last decade, Gentle Teaching has been presented as a valid and effective approach in the relationships with students in the school context (Cullen & Mudford, 2005; Marques et al., 2021, Pereira, 2017).

Gentle teaching advocates a balance between the skills training, guided by the educator and self-determination of the student, implying that those who are supported can express their dreams, make their choices, towards a meaningful life. People who live active and meaningful lives have higher levels of psychological and emotional health (Martins, Ferreira, & Ribeiro, 2016). Adjustments in daily life that allow decision-making and involvement in reciprocal relationships with peers and in meaningful activities are said to be successful in reducing maladaptive behaviours (Beirne-Smith, Ittenbach, & Patton, 2002) and are important indicators of students' self-determination, as they promote an active role in their present and in the construction of their future.

It is, therefore, important to develop a clear understanding of parents' perspectives of school practices regarding transition processes. This information can facilitate parent-school partnerships, which are crucial for the implementation of inclusive education (Lui et al., 2017) and for a successful transition to the post-compulsory education.

## Methodology

This study is part of a research work developed under the project HiLives<sup>189</sup> – Including and Connecting in HE: networking opportunities for independent lives. The HiLives project aims to create opportunities to share knowledge and practices in this field, towards the creation of a strategic partnership in (i) inclusion of students with IDD in HE Institutions, and (ii) transition to an active and independent life, exploring the role that digital media can play in this process.

This study intends to show the organization process and main results of four FG that aimed to identify the perspectives of parents of young people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities about the possibility of their inclusion in HE. Sessions were organised by three researchers from the NGOs Avispt21<sup>190</sup> and Pais em Rede-Aveiro,<sup>191</sup> involved in the Hlilives project.

According to Bryman (2012), the FG technique is a method of interviewing in which: "there are several participants (in addition to the moderator/facilitator); there is an emphasis in the questioning on a particular fairly tightly defined topic; the accent is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning" (p. 502). Morgan (1998) has argued that the typical group size is six to ten members. However, this author recommends smaller groups when participants are likely to have a lot to say on a specific theme or topic.

Lune and Berg (2017) suggest a list of essential ingredients needed for a FG, which include: i) a clearly defined objective and research problem; ii) consideration of the nature of the group of participants; iii) creation of a positive and constructive atmosphere/relationship; iv) an aware listening facilitator; v) a well-organized and prepared facilitator; vi) definition of flexible structure/direction and with the facilitator's restrained contribution to the discussion; vii) the

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<sup>189</sup> <https://www.ua.pt/en/cidttf/page/25273>

<sup>190</sup> AVISPT21 (Viseu Association of Down Syndrome Patients) is an NGO, created in 1996, by a group of parents from the district of Viseu-Portugal. Its mission is to implement actions related to scientific, educational and social aspects regarding Down syndrome, as well as other disabilities and other developmental difficulties, pursuing a more inclusive society. Avispt21 includes a Development Center (Arco-Íris) that provides therapeutic support in the areas of health and education and a Support Office for Included Programs in the Community (GAPRIC) that aims to support the post-school transition process. Avispt21 also develops Inclusion through Art projects.

<sup>191</sup> The "Núcleo de Aveiro - Pais em Rede", an integral part of the national Association Pais em Rede (Networked Parents), is a non-profit organization, with the status of IPSS (Private Institution for Social Solidarity) and of ONGPD (Non-governmental organization for people with disabilities). Since the reorganization in 2012, PER-Aveiro has served around 100 families a year. The "Núcleo de Aveiro - Pais em Rede" develops several projects aimed at facilitating young people with disabilities to be socially and vocationally self-reliant, through developing an individual support plan for providing appropriate assistance to those young people from a broad perspective that encompasses education, welfare, psychological and vocation support.

research assistance of the observer; viii) systematic analysis of the content of the statements made by subjects during the FG.

## Participants

22 parents (4 male; 18 female) participated in the FG, which represented 20 youngsters with IDD (as shown in Table 28). Selection criterion was to have a son/daughter aged plus than 15 years old. For this study, the selection of the target audience did not contemplate any other criteria, so participants represent different profiles in terms of education, age, gender, and role performed in society.

Five children still attended compulsory school (seven parents, as two were couples) and 15 participants were parents of people who had completed compulsory education. The parents were contacted by the researchers involved in the investigation. The invitations were formalized by email.

Table 28 Participants (Parents) characterization according to gender

Genre	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Male	2	1	-	1	4
Female	3	5	3	7	18
Total	5	6	3	8	22

## Procedure

Four sessions, using the FG methodology, took place on 17th June, 4th and 17th November and 3rd December 2020. Sessions were held in an online format, using the ZOOM (Colibri) platform video conferencing. For each session, seven or eight parents were invited, although some parents were unable to attend.

FG were identical regarding the way they have been organised and were facilitated by one researcher, supported by two others. After welcoming the participants and gathering their informed consent, the facilitator explained the goal of the FG and provided participants with context on the Hilives project within which the FG was being conducted.

Interviews were recorded after getting the interviewee's permission. Participants had the option of leaving the interviews if they considered them to be harmful at any time. The researchers will

guarantee the participant's anonymity; no information will be shared with third parties and the confidentiality of the research will be guaranteed.

An interview guide with some questions was established for the meetings. The starting questions for exploring the first interviews were as follows.

- What dreams/expectations do you think your child has for his own life?
- Have you ever thought about pursuing studies for higher education?
- In your opinion, what other support should there be in HE
- Which could be the role of NGOs (linked to disability) in this process?

Each FG lasted about 150 minutes, the sessions were recorded on video and audio and later transcribed verbatim. The data transcribed were imported to WebQDA, where they were coded and analysed. It is a software intended for research in human and social sciences, providing multiple advantages in the analysis of qualitative data. It is the first non-numeric and unstructured data analysis software in a collaborative and Internet-based environment (Neri de Souza et al., 2011).

The coding process followed a mixed coding approach (Creswell & Clark, 2010), where an initial set of categories was defined based on the research questions, but then changed and evolved according to the codes and categories that emerged during the data analysis. Once there was a first version of the coding tree, it was discussed, among researchers for improvement. Table 29 presents an overview of the interview guide by topic and the dimensions observed, under each topic, as well as the studies used to frame each of the concepts involved.

Table 29 Analysis of topics and dimensions

Topic	Dimension	Reference
Model	Full inclusion (O'Brien et al., 2019)	O'Brien et al., 2019
	Mixed / hybrid programs	
	Segregated model	
Support	Preparation and transition from secondary to post-secondary	O'Brien et al., 2019
	Support services	
	Inclusive university tutoring	
	Volunteering	
	Digital solutions supporting inclusion in HE	

	Opportunities for training & professional development	
Policies	Funding	O'Brien et al., 2019
	Accreditation and regulations	
	Admission policy	
	Graduation policy	
	Disability policy	
Inclusive Pedagogy	Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	O'Brien et al., 2019
	Problem-based learning (PBL)	
	Service-Learning – experiences in the community	
	Transition to Profession	
	Group dynamics	
	Seminars	
	Person Centred Planning (PCP)	
	Cooperative learning	
	Curricular Accommodations	
	(Peer) mentoring	
	Academic tutoring	
	Collaboration between teachers/tutors/mentors/academic/community/ families & other stakeholders	
Gentle teaching	Feeling safe	McGee et al., 1987
	Having safe and loving relationships	
	Feeling a sense of connectedness	
	Body integrity	
	Feeling self-worth	
	Feeling secure	
	Having meaningful daily activities and a meaningful and valuable day	
	Feeling inner contentment	
PATH-Planning	Dreams	
	Factors associated with successful transition	



Alternative Tomorrows with Hope	Factors that constitute barriers to transition	Pearpoint, Forest, & O'Brien, (1993)
	Formal transition planning	
	Pathways transition resources	

It is important to note that the researchers chose to adopt the O'Brien model's categories (2019) to analyse the results. The project team used these categories in the systematic review conducted under the Hilives project. The same categorisation would allow us to perform a comparative analysis of FG inputs with the scientific studies' data.

In the coding process, however, we collected a lot of inputs from parents about their dreams and those of their children and plans for the near future. In this context, we chose to create new categories based on Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) (Pearpoint et al., 1993).

A set of other inputs from parents were collected related to well-being and fundamental human values, as well as to the desire that children feel safe, valued, loved, and respected. To facilitate these inputs' analysis, we created a group of categories based on Gentle Teaching methodology (McGee et al., 1987).

## Results

This section shows the FG main results conducted under the Hilives project. During the four FG, the researchers collected 2077 contributions from the participants. The presentation of results is organised according to the main research topics and dimensions introduced in the previous section. For each research dimension, the researchers created a table summarising the main results of the coding.

### Characterization of youngsters

To better understand the target audience of this project, the characterization of the young people whose parents participated in the FG was carried out. The four FG involved parents of 20 young people with IDD. It is important to note that young people live in Continental Portugal (Viseu, Aveiro, Ílhavo, Oiã) and Madeira (Funchal). Some participants belong to associations that support people with disabilities (AVISPT21; ASSOL<sup>192</sup>; Pais em Rede).

Youngsters age between 15 and 40 years old, (M= 21.5 years) (Table 30). It is important to note that four of the parents reported that their chronology age does not correspond to “mental age”.

Table 30 Age of young people

Age	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
15 years	1	-	-	-	1
18 years	2	-	-	2	4
19 years	-	-	-	1	1
20 years	-	-	-	1	1
21 years	-	1	-	1	2
23 years	-	-	1	1	2
24 years	1	-	-	-	1
25 years	-	2	-	1	3
26 years	-	1	-	-	1
28 years	-	2	-	-	2
30 years	-	-	1	-	1
40 years	-	-	1	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>

As shown in Table 31, most young people are male (12/20) and 8 youngsters are female (8/20).

<sup>192</sup> ASSOL- Associação de Solidariedade Social de Lafões (Lafões Social Solidarity Association)

Table 31 Gender of young people

Genre	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Male	4	2	2	4	12
Female	-	4	1	3	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>

Regarding education level, parents report that eight youngsters have concluded 12th grade, three of them attend 3rd grade, two youngsters attend 7th grade, and one young person attends the 6th school year (Table 32). It is important to note that five young people were still completing their studies.

Table 32 Young people's education level

Education	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
6th grade	-	1	-	-	1
7th grade	2	-	-	-	2
9th grade	1	-	-	2	3
12th grade	2	4	-	2	8
Individual Educational Program (PEI)	-	5	-	2	7
Individual Specific Curriculum (CEI)	6	-	1	-	7
Regular education	1	-	-	1	2
Professional course	4	3	3	5	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>45</b>

Parents also reported that seven young people benefited from the Individual Educational Program (PEI) school and seven young people had an Individual Specific Curriculum (CEI). Only two students attended a regular curriculum. According to parents' statements, 15 young people attend or attended a professional course (Table 32).

Table 33 Professional qualification courses

Professional Courses	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
APPACDM Professional Course	6	3	2	1	12
ASSOL Professional Course	-	-	-	2	2
EPA <sup>193</sup> Professional Course	-	1	1	1	3
CERCI <sup>194</sup> Professional Course	-	2	1	-	3
Professional <sup>174</sup> heatre course	-	-	-	1	1
Professional photography course	-	-	-	1	1
Sociocultural Animation Course	-	1	-	1	2
Auxiliary Health Technician Course	-	-	-	2	2
Bar and Restaurant Employee Course	1	1	-	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>28</b>

Table 33 provides an overview of the professional training courses mentioned and the number of references that the FG participants made for each of these courses. It is important to mention that the most mentioned courses were professional courses of APPACDM<sup>195</sup> (12/27).

Regarding special needs parents report that the youngsters present, participants made 81 references. Table 34 shows an overview of the number of references participants have made about each special need.

Participants highlighted the following special needs: intellectual difficulties (20/81); visual difficulties (9/81); reading difficulties (8/81); difficulties in socialization (7/81); writing difficulties (8/81) and motor difficulties (6/81).

Table 34 Special Needs reported by parents

Special Needs	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Intellectual	4	6	3	7	20
Visual	-	1	8	-	9

<sup>193</sup> EPA- Escola Profissional de Aveiro (Aveiro Professional School)

<sup>194</sup> CERCI- *Cooperativa para a Educação e Reabilitação de Crianças Inadaptadas* (Cooperative for the Education and Rehabilitation of Disabled Children)

<sup>195</sup> APPACDM- *Associação Portuguesa dos Pais e Amigos do Cidadão Deficiente Mental* (Portuguese Association of Parents and Friends of the Mentally Disabled Citizen)

Reading	1	6	1	-	8
Writing	1	4	1	-	6
Motor	-	1	5	-	6
Speech and language	-	3	-	1	4
Communication	-	3	-	1	4
Logical reasoning	1	1	-	3	5
Behavior	-	2	1	2	5
Attention	-	2	-	-	2
Hyperactivity	-	-	4	-	4
Socialization	3	-	4	-	7
Dependence on food	-	-	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>81</b>

It is essential to mention that researchers did not ask any questions regarding the young people's clinical diagnosis. However, some parents referred to their children's various diagnoses. In some cases, parents reported that their child has more than one clinical diagnosis. The researchers consider pertinent to present these data to help understanding these young people's specific characteristics.

As shown in Table 35, parents reported a range of different clinical diagnoses. In this context, the diagnosis "Intellectual and developmental disabilities" (12/30) stood out. Some young people have more than one diagnosis; only a young woman has no defined clinical diagnosis.

Table 35 Associated Diagnosis (reported by parents)

<b>Diagnostics</b>	<b>FG1</b>	<b>FG2</b>	<b>FG3</b>	<b>FG4</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
IDD	4	3	2	3	12
Asperger's syndrome	2	-	-	-	2
Palentolili syndrome	-	-	-	1	1
Prader Willi syndrome	-	-	-	1	1
Trisomy 21	-	1	-	1	2
Metabolic disease GAMP	-	1	-	-	1

Cerebral palsy	-	1	1	1	3
Low vision	-	-	1	1	2
Epilepsy	-	2	1	-	3
Psychiatric disorders	-	1	1	-	2
Without diagnosis	-	-	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>30</b>

It is also important to note that IDD were often referred to in consequence of another clinical situation. For example, a young woman whose rare disease was diagnosed too late and therefore, it was not being treated with the necessary medication for a long time. In this case, the disease left several sequels, including IDD.

Another example, a mother reported that her 5-year-old daughter had Meningitis and then started to have very severe epileptic seizures that did not respond to medication, dietary therapy or other therapies. The child underwent focal resection, a surgery that removes the area of the brain that causes seizures. Today young man presents several intellectual difficulties.

Parents reported that young people have already had some professional experience: participants made 31 references for the 16 different places where young people were working. Among the workplaces mentioned, parents slightly highlighted coffee (6/31); hospital (4/31) and kindergarten 3/31) (Table 36).

Table 36 Professional experience of the youngsters

Professional experience	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Greenhouse	-	-	2	-	2
Coffee	-	6	-	-	6
Hospital	-	-	-	4	4
Store	-	-	1	-	1
Nursing home	-	2	-	-	2
Veterinary clinic	-	1	-	-	1
Pub	2	-	-	-	2
Laundry	1	-	-	-	1

Parish Center	-	-	2	-	2
Teacher House	-	1	-	-	1
Kindergarten	-	3	-	-	3
Pastry shop	-	1	-	-	1
Drugstore	-	1	-	-	1
Supermarket	-	-	-	2	2
Restaurant	-	2	-	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>31</b>

Parents reported that these socio-professional experiences, even of short duration, had a very positive impact on their children's development. In some cases, this socio-professional experience, after some time, became a contract job. It is happening to the young woman who is doing a socio-professional experience under the GAPRIC project. Her mother mentioned "There is already a prospect of a one-year contract at the hospital" (EE4.4).

Most parents report that their children had or have had an unpaid socio-professional experience, developed within the scope of the individual transition plan (PIT) (13) and the Gapric Project (5). In three cases, the youth were volunteers; only one mother mentioned that her son works as an employee.

### **Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)**

The several testimonies were collected about parents and their children's future and dreams during FG. Parents also mentioned factors that they consider beneficial for realising these dreams and several barriers in this path. To perform an in-depth analysis of this information, we chose to adopt the principles of the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) methodology (Pearpoint et al., 1993).

As shown in Table 37, 57 references about children's dreams and 23 references about parents' dreams were collected. Among children's main dreams, participants mentioned continuing studies (12/57), having work, being happy, and having an independent life. Among parents' dreams it was said to see their children happy (9/23) and autonomous (5/23).

Table 37 Youngsters and parents' dreams

Dreams	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
<b>Youngs Dreams</b>					
Continue learning	3	2	4	3	12
Have work	-	1	2	8	11
Living independently	-	4	2	1	7
Have your home	-	3	2	1	6
Have family	-	1	-	5	6
Draw the card	-	1	-	1	2
Having a girlfriend	-	-	-	2	2
Achieve self-support	-	-	-	1	1
Be happy	5	1	2	-	8
Feeling useful	-	2	-	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Parents Dreams</b>					
"Their dream is our dream"		-	2	-	2
See the happy son/daughter	1	6	-	2	9
That the son /daughter be able to support themselves	-	-	-	2	2
That son/daughter gets a job	-	1	-	2	3
That son/daughter be autonomous	1	2	1	1	5
Knowing that the son/daughter has a future	1	-	1	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>

Researchers collected several factors parents see as facilitators in building a happy future for their children. These factors were grouped into six groups: Inclusive relationships; Therapies; specialty medical appointments; Support at school; Support from associations; and Participation in extracurricular activities. Table 38 presents an overview of the number of references FG participants made to each of these group of facilitating factors.



Table 38 Facilitators to a successful transition

Factors associated	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
<b>Inclusive relationships</b>					
Affective relationships with colleagues	5	3	-	4	12
Affective relationship with teachers	4	1	2	1	8
Effective collaboration with school	2	4	1	3	9
Sharing moments of with other parents	3	2	5	1	11
Receptiveness by companies.	-	3	2	2	7
<b>Therapies</b>					
Physical Therapy	-	-	1	-	1
Hippotherapy	-	-	3	-	3
Speech therapy	-	-	2	1	3
Psychology	1	1	-	2	4
<b>Specialty consultations</b>					
Development team	2	1	-	1	4
Neuropediatric	-	-	2	1	3
Psychiatry	-	-	2	-	2
<b>Support at school</b>					
Multidisciplinary team	1	-	-	2	3
Special Education Teacher	7	1	3	3	14
Support teacher	1	-	3	1	5
<b>Support from associations</b>					
APPACDM	-	4	1	-	5
APCV <sup>196</sup>	2	-	-	-	2
ASSOL	-	-	-	3	3
AVISPT21	-	2	1	7	10
Pais em Rede	-	8	8	15	31

<sup>196</sup> APCV - Associação de Paralisia Cerebral de Viseu (Cerebral Palsy Association of Viseu)

Participation in extracurricular activities					
Theatre group	-	-	-	3	3
Sailing Club	-	-	-	2	2
Dance Club	3	-	-	-	3
Swimming	-	3	1	-	4
Activities in the association	-	3	6	5	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>166</b>

We collected 14 concerns from parents about their children's future. These concerns can be organised into two groups. 1) "My child is finishing school. And now?" 2) "What will happen to my child when I will not be here?"

The data collected, during the four FG, report that parents' dreams were also linked to fundamental human values: the desire for their children to feel safe, valued, loved, and respected.

As a mother mentions "neither I nor the father will live forever, he doesn't have siblings so it's a worrying situation, which I don't even want to think about so I don't get sick; if he can finish a course, great, if not can't, at least I wish he develops enough to get a job and support himself " (EE4.3). The researchers collected five testimonies with the worries of the parents.

As shown in Table 39, data from the FG shows that the main reasons of participants' frustrations are: Difficulties in accessing education (14/116); Lack of inclusion (14/116); Difficulties in relationship with school (13/116); low acceptance from teachers/staff at school (13/116); and Difficulties in relationships with colleagues (13/116)

The current pandemic situation has also been referred to as one of the strong limitations in the development and transition of young people to post-school life. Many parents reported that children were forced to interrupt their professional experience because of Covid-19. "It was a prison, my son stayed at home doing nothing" refers to the mother of a young man (EE4.3).

Table 39 Barriers to transition

Factors that constitute barriers	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Activities in segregated environments	6	-	-	-	6
Bureaucratic procedures	3	-	1	1	5

Difficulties in adapting to the new environment	-	-	-	1	1
Difficulties in accessing education	4	1	5	4	14
Difficulties in accessing work	1	3	2	3	9
Difficulties in relationships with colleagues	1	-	-	10	11
Difficulties in relationship with school	6	-	-	7	13
Lack of Information	-	2	-	3	5
Lack of inclusion	-	1	4	9	14
Lack of support	-	-	2	1	3
Lack of reception from teachers/staff at school	3	2	-	8	13
Lack of teacher preparation	2	1	-	2	5
Lack of specialized support (psychologist, speech therapist)	-	2	-	1	3
Lack of follow-up in the workplace	-	-	1	-	1
Late diagnosis	-	-	-	2	2
Pandemic situation	-	5	3	3	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>116</b>

Parents mention the importance of having specialised training for teachers to be able to have more sensitivity and more knowledge to support pupils with IDD.

It was heard:

*"I think there should be special training for teachers, for example, my daughter has certain difficulties, she does not make certain movements, certain tasks, so one has to be prepared to know how to deal with and know each disability, every limitation of each and the things that they can and cannot do" (EE2.1).*

*"If the teachers who dealt with my son had had such an experience at the university, maybe my son would have had a different support from the teachers at the school." (EE2.5)*

## Gentle teaching

The data collected during the four FG report that the dreams of the parents were also linked with fundamental human values: with the desire that children feel safe, valued, loved, and respected. The researchers considered that these factors are linked to the main principles of the

theory of Gentle Teaching (Pearpoint et al., 1993). Thus, the researchers added the following categories of analysis: Feeling safe; Having safe and loving relationships; Feeling a sense of connectedness; Body integrity; Feeling self-worth; Feeling secure; Having meaningful daily activities and a meaningful and valuable day; Feeling inner happiness (Table 40).

Table 40 Principles of Gentle Teaching

Principles of Gentle Teaching	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Feeling safe	1	-	2	-	3
Having safe and loving relationships	1	2	2	2	7
Feeling a sense of connectedness	-	4	2	4	10
Body integrity	-	1	2	-	3
Feeling self-worth	-	3	-	1	4
Feeling secure	-	2	-	1	3
Having meaningful daily activities and a meaningful and valuable day	2	7	2	7	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>48</b>

Table 40 shows that parents give more importance to factors such as having significant daily activities and a significant and valuable day (18/48); Feeling a sense of connection (10/48); and having safe and loving relationships (7/48). As one mother says: *"I think the most important thing will be emotionally, to be more autonomous, to have more self-confidence and more security in themselves"* (EE3.1).

### Higher education and young people with IDD

The HiLives project team analysed parents' perspectives, regarding the possibility of young people with IDD attending HE courses, based on O'Brien's model (2019). We can add that the same categories are formed in carrying out the systematic review, which is being carried out within the scope of this project. Thus, it is expected to compare the data of the FG with those collected in scientific articles.

Regarding the teaching model to be implemented in HE, most parents preferred the full inclusive model. This model provides individualised support to students, with a support system (tutor/coach,

mentors), in curricular units from undergraduate/master's degree courses. The student's interests and goals motivate the choices of the curricular units and their supports (Machado et al., 2020).

Table 41 Models of Inclusion in HE

Model	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Full inclusion	-	6	1	3	10
Mixed/hybrid programs	-	3	-	1	4
Segregated model	-	-	1	-	1
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>

Considering the *Inclusive Model*, it was said:

*"I think that Associação Pais em Rede should be considered as a model for planning higher education courses where these young people will integrate because what they do there is what is really significant, they commit themselves." (EE2.2)*

*"The aim is really that these young people have the opportunity to attend an academic environment of Higher Education, that they are included, but that really have such a design appropriate to their characteristics." (EE2.3)*

Four parents prefer the mixed model:

*"I know little about Higher Education, but there are models of schools in other countries, where there is a possibility, possibilities for mixtures, favourable to our children (ours are very tight)" (EE4.5)*

Only one mother defended the segregated model, because her daughter went to school at an establishment for people with SEN in Brazil. Today, the young woman has many difficulties in the relationship with young people without needs, so the mother thinks that:

*"In a separate class, they feel more comfortable, but I speak from my experience with my daughter, because when she is in an environment where every agent is like her, she feels more comfortable, and when she is in a group where there are so-called "normal" people, she somehow excludes herself, prejudice already comes from her" (EE3.1).*

Parents stressed the importance of not only offering courses but also developing a support network, which mobilizes resources that can positively influence the academic experience, providing personalized support and responding to the needs of students with IDD in HE.

Concerning the support needed for young people with IDD to attend HE, parents highlighted the following: Including university tutoring (24/124) (Table 42).

As several parents have pointed out, *"this tutor figure seems very important, because it can help someone who manages the student's expectations and career while he is in college"* (EE2.2). Besides, parents mention that *"there should have someone who could understand them, to understand and indicate the right path, because sometimes they are dazzled by something, or are disappointed with others"* (EE2.7). *"I think that there must always be someone there, not to pick them up, but to guide them"* (EE4.1).

Table 42 Supports

Supports	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Preparation and transition from secondary to post-secondary	-	1	-	3	4
Support services	-	2	4	-	6
Support in adaptation	2	4	5	-	11
Support in daily life	-	1	4	-	5
Support in guidance	4	3	6	-	13
Support from associations / community	2	4	10	-	16
Collaboration of several professionals (teachers/administrative/collaborators)	-	-	6	-	6
Collaboration with family	1	1	1	-	3
Inclusive university tutoring	1	2	20	1	24
Volunteering	-	1	-	1	2
Digital solutions supporting inclusion in HE	1	8	-	-	9
Zoom	-	6	-	-	6
Mail	-	1	-	-	1
Teams	-	1	-	-	1
Mobile applications for accessibility	4	1	-	-	5
Opportunities for training & professional development (staff, mentors & volunteers)	2	-	6	1	9
Special education training for teachers	2	-	3	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>127</b>

The second most prominent dimension was Support from associations/community (16/127), mentioning the mediating role associations can play in this process. Parents also mentioned the important role of communities/associations in promoting changes in society. For example, one mother said:

*"I think that if people, organizations, associations come together and fight for something concrete, it is easier to get where we want to go. So, if there is a desire to do something for these kids, for these young people, I think the more people and associations come together in this sense, the easier it will be to take our message further" (EE3.3).*

Regarding the role of NGO, parents referred to expressions such as:

*"It is good to share with each other the problems of our children because then we do not feel so lonely, we can help each other" (EE4.3).*

*"The path opened by professionals, it's completely different from having to be us showing up and asking for favours, and I think it helps a lot" (EE2.2).*

*"It is good to share with each other our children's problems because then we do not feel so alone, we can help each other" (EE1.3).*

As shown in Table 42, the FG participants also highlighted the importance of Support in orientation (13/127), Support in adaptation (11/127) and Digital solutions to support inclusion in HE (9/127). Parents mentioned the importance of having a period of adaptation to the University with a more significant follow-up, for example, help with guidance on Campus, support with the organization of studies, help with the library and other services. This monitoring should decrease over time, promoting youth autonomy. Concerning digital solutions parents evoke the time of lockdown in which *"the technologies helped a lot with teams, zoom, and the online activities that were wonderful, as the isolation ended"* (EE4.3). Among the digital solutions that can facilitate the learning process of young people, parents highlighted Zoom (6/127) and mobile accessibility applications (5/127).

Regarding public policies related to admission, accreditation, and funding of courses "for all" in HE institutions, parents refer the funding of these courses (Table 43). As one parent mentions, "the question of the resources and means needed is fundamental for the courses to work. We must understand that our young people are all different from each other, have skills in completely

different subjects and need very personalized monitoring; without funding, the course will hardly have legs to walk" (EE2.2).

Table 43 Public Policies

Polices	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Funding	-	7	1	-	8
Accreditation and regulations	-	-	-	-	-
Admission policy	-	-	-	2	2
Graduation policy	-	1	-	-	1
Disability policy	1	-	-	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>

The realization of FG made it possible to understand the parents' perspectives of the methodologies and pedagogical strategies that can facilitate the process of inclusion and learning of students with IDD in HE. They can, therefore, contribute to the programs to be developed and implemented with this population.

As shown in Table 44, the FG participants attributed the most significant importance to the category "tutoring (of peers)" (19/116). As one mother says: *"the role of peers is fundamental in all aspects, whether collaborating, interacting or helping to help her to be more uninhibited"* (EE3.3).

Table 44 Inclusive Pedagogy

Inclusive Pedagogy	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	-	2	12	3	17
Problem-based learning (PBL)	-	1	-	-	1
Service-Learning – experiences in the community	-	-	1	-	1
Transition to Profession / Employment – Socio-professional experiences for employment	-	1	5	-	6
Group dynamics	-	-	2	-	2
Seminars	-	-	-	-	-
Person Centred Planning (PCP)	-	4	9	2	15
Cooperative learning	-	-	1	-	1



Curricular Accommodations	4	1	7	-	12
Practical courses	1	3	-	-	4
Alternative Resumes	1	1	5	1	8
(Peer) mentoring	2	9	7	1	19
Academic tutoring	1	1	14	1	17
Collaboration between teachers, tutors, mentors, academic community, families & other stakeholders	-	2	10	-	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>115</b>

As shown in Table 44, the parents also highlighted other categories, as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (17/115); Academic tutoring (17/115); Curricular Accommodations (12/115); and Collaboration between teachers, tutors, mentors, academic community, families & other stakeholders (17/115).

Parents mention that the learning programs in inclusive educational environments must be flexible and adaptable and designed to overcome barriers that students with IDD may encounter in HE. As one parent mentions, *"the aim is that these young people have the opportunity to also attend an academic environment of HE, that they are included, but with an adequate curriculum"* (EE4.1).

Among the HE courses in Portugal, the parents also highlighted the experimental course of the University of Aveiro (UA) (Table 45). It is important to note that four of the young people participated in this course and mentioned a great satisfaction with how the course was organized. As one mother says: *"I think the most important part of this experience [UA] was the way colleagues saw her, accepted her and included her"* (EE2.4). Three parents reported the great hope of opening the new course for young people with IDD at the University of Aveiro and mentioned that their children really want to attend this course.

Table 45 Higher Education Courses

Higher Education Courses	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
Experimental course "Inclusive University" at the University of Aveiro	-	4	1	5	10
Course for students with intellectual disabilities at the Polytechnic of Santarém	-	3	-	-	3

General Studies Course at the University of Lisbon	-	-	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>

Parents also discussed the situation regarding youth education with IDD in universities in other countries. For example, one mother said: "In Spain, there are around 30 courses like this, in the United States I don't know how many universities but a lot, in Iceland, the same." (EE4.1)

Regarding the possibility of their child attending HE, most (14/21) responded positively. The parents consider it could be a very interesting social experience (Table 46). Even if they do not graduate, they could develop more skills.

As a father says:

*"at the level of higher education, I think it would be a fantastic experience for him and for parents, for sure, as well. I think it was a personal gain for him, as a person, as a young adult at all levels. I don't think the academic part is very important but being part of such a project, I think, for him would be very beneficial as a person" (EE1.3).*

There was also a group of parents (6/21) who had never thought that their children could go to HE and refer that no one has ever spoken to them about it, nor have they put that hypothesis.

Table 46 Perspectives about the possibility of attending the University

<b>Perception about the possibility of attending the University</b>	<b>FG1</b>	<b>FG2</b>	<b>FG3</b>	<b>FG4</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Youngsters</b>					
Positive	1	4	2	4	<b>11</b>
Negative	1	1	1	1	<b>4</b>
Not defined	3	1	-	3	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Parents</b>					
Positive	1	3	7	3	<b>14</b>
Negative	-	-	3	3	<b>6</b>
Not defined	-	-	-	1	<b>1</b>

Total	1	3	10	7	21
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However, six parents reported that they did not want their child to attend HE (Table 46). In four cases, these answers were related to the fact that young people are working or volunteering in a place they like very much, so parents prefer to continue. In two cases, this response was due to the negative experiences of the young person at school.

As a mother says:

*"I have the notion that he was not happy during 12 years in school, so he doesn't want a university project of more than 3 or 5 years or whatever it is, he will not be happier because of it, I want him to be happy" (EE1.1).*

Even parents who reveal low expectations were happy to hear there is a team working on the possibility of students going to HE. They mentioned expressions like "We can already dream, this was something unimaginable, thankfully someone is thinking about this" (EE3.2).

Regarding the parents' perception of young people's interest in attending HE, eleven parents stated that their son/daughter would like to participate in these courses. Three parents said that their children do not want to continue studying, and six parents were not sure. Some of these parents mentioned that they never spoke to their children about this subject as they were unaware that these opportunities could exist.

As shown in Table 47, the parents also mentioned several academic subjects they consider their children would like to attend, highlighting English (10/52), computer science (9/52) and arts (8/52).

Table 47 Academic disciplines

Academic discipline	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	TOTAL
English	3	-	7	-	10
Computing	1	2	3	3	9
Orientation and mobility course	-	-	2	-	2
Music	1	-	1	1	3
Artistic expressions	-	1	1	-	2
Arts	-	3	3	2	8
Child education	-	3	-	-	3



This study shows that parents believe that with appropriate methodologies, it is possible to include people with IDD in HE. However, parents also point that “we need to change mentalities, although we know that at the HE level, it may not be easy to change some mentalities, but with a little bit of will and above all the will of those who are responsible to decide on this, I think it may be possible.”

## Discussion

As universities explore strategies and programs to support students with IDD and try to provide the conditions to ensure access to educational materials and activities, several questions have been raised that still need further investigation (Thurston et al., 2017). Studies demonstrate the need to implement new approaches to serve university students, by promoting support networks that involve the entire academic community and offer a range of inclusive solutions designed to ensure that all students have equal access to a learning environment and can progress successfully in their studies (Simplican, 2015; Thurston et al., 2017).

Under an inclusive perspective, the collaboration between the family and HE institutions is essential in searching for the best solutions that allow them to respond to these students' specific needs. According to Traina and Hoogerwerf (2018), parents can provide valuable information about prior learning, namely "about competencies already acquired and about what, according to them, could be the next steps in the development of independence in all life areas" (p.33). Besides, these authors report that "through input coming from the persons that know the potential learner, it can be easier to define learning programs" (Traina & Hoogerwerf, 2018, p.33).

Although it is essential to discuss learning needs and the motivation for learning with the youngsters directly involved, this study shows that parents' involvement is also essential. However, to understand their perspectives, it would be beneficial to triangulate parents' perspectives with data published in scientific studies.

It is important to know factors that stimulate the development of young people with IDD as well as to identify the barriers in this process, because it allows the creation of strategies and networks that encourage the inclusion of these young people in society.

The factors that stimulate young people's development with IDD were grouped into six groups: 1) inclusive relationships; 2) therapies; 3) speciality medical appointments, 4) support at school; 5) support from associations (NGO); and 5) participation in extracurricular activities.

Several factors were found in this study that facilitate or hinder the transition process of young people to post-scholar life, namely HE: Parents referred to some factors as instrumental in their transition, ie, that could influence this transition process and determine their success. Parents consider social skills and interpersonal relationships as some non-academic factors that influence the transition from high school to HE. Extra-curricular activities are considered but less, as already

shown in previous studies not to be a major factor (Lombard, 2020). Parents state that high school experiences often do not prepare them well for a successful transition to HE.

Some needs have been identified. It is clear through parents reports that peers appear to be essential in the process, teachers' attitudes, and knowledge.

Parents mentioned that digital technologies could also be useful for creating new forms of learning and teaching. According to Woodward & Rieth (1997) digital technology can improve the acquisition of skills and knowledge of the content of these students as computers are used to deliver well-designed and managed instructions through curricular adaptations. Other studies show that digital technologies allow students to engage in drill and practice, simulations, exploratory, or communication activities that meet their individual needs and capabilities (Corby et al., 2012; Traina & Hoogerwerf, 2018).

Among the barriers in this process, parents highlighted difficulties in accessing education, lack of inclusion, difficulties in the relationship with the school, lack of acceptance from teachers/staff at school, and difficulties in relationships with colleagues. These barriers have been observed in other studies (Corby et al., 2012; Shevlin, Kenny, & Mcneela, 2004) on the inclusion of adults with IDD in post-secondary and HE. For example, the study by Corby et al. (2012), identified the following barriers in the process of inclusion of young people with IDD in HE: transition or preparation; coping with demands of education at a higher level; support requirements including access issues for those with physical disabilities; accessing supports; availability of appropriate level courses; and difficulties associated with the level of knowledge and awareness of staff within the HE institutions. According to Mara (2014, p.80), among the obstacles that "hamper their access to HE may be: high costs, almost prohibitive for universities to provide suitable means for assimilation of the curriculum for these people with disabilities, physical barriers, material, lack of qualified staff for educational mentoring people with disabilities, lack of guidelines/proper supervision with mentors help for a smooth learning and motivation processes".

Parents consider that transition models and practices do not encourage students with IDD to consider HE as an option. How to implement? Considering the model, some parents consider that their children can go to HE, since they can attend more technical courses. Others consider it could be very interesting as a social experience. Even if they do not graduate, they could develop more skills. Parents argue that there should be a structure that continues in HE, essentially those students who, even with difficulties, are very fond of the School. This study demonstrates that parents believe

that learning pathways should be implemented when possible on an individual basis, using a person-centred approach, considering the life relevant goals for these young people.

According to Ainscow et al. (2006) curricular adaptations and contextualized educational strategies can facilitate these students' teaching and learning process. Because the needs of these young in the training and learning pathways may be very diverse, the educational process must be flexible and adaptable to the situation. The study of Coby et al., (2012) shows the "requirement for a flexible approach from all stakeholders involved, ensuring a realistic approach to students' needs as they begin to consider the option of higher-level education" (p.72). Other studies show that "teachers/trainers/educators if use a flexible methodology to plan activities for appropriate training, can guarantee the necessary support for the acquisition of knowledge and skills" (Traina & Hoogerwerf, 2018, p.36).

Results collected also allow us to conclude that most parents consider that attending HE can benefit their children. Other studies show that attending HE allows these students to improve their self-esteem and confidence (Weinkauf, 2002; Blumberg et al., 2008), their future job opportunities and earning prospects (Blumberg et al., 2008), increases their friendship networks, allowing them to feel more accepted and included in the community (O'Brien et al., 2009).



## Concluding remarks

This study investigated perspectives of parents of young people with IDD about the possibility of inclusion in HE. We can organize parents' answers and perspectives into three categories:

- Parents who would like their children to have the opportunity to attend an HE courses. Some parents said, openly, that their children should go to HE, and that they do not understand why this possibility is forbidden. This group includes parents of students who have already had the opportunity to participate in the experimental course at the University of Aveiro or who know this type of course at national and international universities. These parents were more involved in the discussion about the models that should be applied, suggestions about programs and courses, the role of the teacher and peers, as well as questions about the financing of the courses.
- Parents who do not want their children to attend HE, some of them have had a "bad" experience in school education and prefer children to develop professional competences. This group also includes parents of young people who are successful in a workplace and who prefer they continue working. This group focused a lot on the barriers in the teaching process, difficulties in accessing work and the lack of inclusion in the community in general. They consider that if it is already difficult in secondary education, the more difficult it will be in HE.
- Parents who were surprised by this possibility of continuing their studies at HE, who had never thought that their children could go to HE, as no one has ever spoken to them about it, nor have put that hypothesis. This group mainly includes parents of the youngest young people (aged 15-18) who are still attending school. They refer that it was the first time that they were approached on this issue and still do not have a defined opinion on the subject. They became more involved in the discussion about the types of support that should exist for these young people to be able to continue their studies. These parents attached great importance to the transition to active life processes to the existence of transition plans and projects that promote this process, such as GAPRIC.

When children are more autonomous and have more skills, it seems logical to parents, they could attend HE. However, parents reveal low expectations, and they were happy to hear there is a team working on the possibility of students going to HE. They mentioned expressions like "We can

already dream, this was something unimaginable, thankfully someone is thinking about this" (even if it is not for their children, it can help others.)

Our main aim was to hear parents' perspectives on the possibility of young people with IDD attending HE. However, this research exceeded expectations, allowing to collect information beyond the parents' perspectives on HE and the conditions that can help this process. The interviews offer a lot of pertinent data, to a better understanding of complexity of the development processes, the school path, and the transition of these young people to post-secondary life.

Therefore, the researchers collect precious results on:

- the process of development of young people, comprising facilitators and barriers in this process in Portugal;
- different paths and experiences of young people in school education, realizing the difficulties and the conditions enhancing this path;
- different processes of transition to adulthood, types of support that exist or lack in this process, as well as the worries of some parents who unfortunately feel alone in this course;
- young people's expectations about their future, gathering dreams and plans for the near future and realizing their reasons for wanting or not to attend HE.

Understanding these factors is essential in creating HE possibilities to these young people.

The present study has some implications and suggests clues for both secondary education and inclusion in HE. We can also find suggestions for reflecting on measures to be developed with young people and parents. High Schools should be encouraged to develop transition planning that should take place in due time. Since some young people with IDD may need ongoing support and services, they should be aware that these supports, and services are available at HE and have continuity. It is important to develop socialization as an engine of other skills.

Institutions (secondary and HE) could develop practices that support the transition and encourage people with IDD and their families to consider HE an option. Dreams and perspective on the near future may be considered. In this process, it is important to listen and empower parents, as well as to involve them in the teaching and learning process of young people, including transition.

At HE there must be a period of adaptation to the University (with greater monitoring and mentoring programs). HE institutions should consider different models of education and different models of support. It is not enough to offer courses, but also to develop a support network.

Curricula may be adapted according to the interests and skills of young people. The resources may be adapted to their characteristics. We must keep in mind that digital technologies can make HE more accessible to these students. It may make sense to include in the process of defining HE courses for young people with IDD the issues related to Gentle Teaching (well-being and human values such as security, affection, being able to be affectionate and bonding) and PATH. NGOs / associations may have a mediating role between the university (teachers / tutors / employees) and the family, namely in supporting the transition process of young people to HE, in defending the rights of young people, in raising community awareness.

Finally, a very focused aspect was the training of teachers. NGOs can play a role in training teachers and tutors in knowledge and methodologies about SEN. Furthermore, it is essential to highlight that this research's qualitative nature demands that its generalizability is limited. As discussed in the previous paragraph, results concur with previous research, giving reliability and robustness to our findings.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Stakeholders Point of View: People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

*Raul Rocha, Joana Glória and Rita Cavalheiro*

In the perspective of consultation with stakeholders, the conversation with people with intellectual disabilities themselves should not be missing. (Turley, 2019). The HiLives partner, FORMEM, interviewed 31 people with intellectual disabilities in group interviews. 18 men and 13 women between 17 and 52 years old were given the opportunity to express their opinion about a possibility to study in Higher Education.

This sub-report is very interesting because many participants had never thought about (further) studying in Higher Education. Many of them seem to resign themselves to the low expectations placed on them. It becomes clear that many of them have a form of 'self-stigma' (Ali et. al. 2012). They live a life in which they have been told several times that they do not fit in with the expectations set by the education system for 'the ideal pupil / student'.

In addition, it is also interesting to learn that those who would consider continuing their studies (should they ever have the opportunity) attach great importance to the free choice of training and courses. They do not just want to join in on top-down imposed or fixed processes.

In order to provide a broader and deeper understanding of the needs and motivations regarding the inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Higher Education, HiLives project performed several informal conversations to obtain direct feedback of key stakeholders.

This report will concentrate on 6 collective conversations (interviews) with people with IDD that were enrolled in vocational training programs in different organizations and in different regions of Portugal. Various subjects were addressed during the conversations, but for the purpose of this project we will focus on *studying in higher education, employment and digital accessibility*.

The organization and deliver of these conversations were performed by FORMEM (Portuguese Federation for Vocational Training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities), one of the HiLives project partners.

## Executive summary

- **Timeline:**
  - the planning and preparation occurred from 21/02/2020 till 11/09/2020.
  - the interviews took place from 12/09/2020 till 12/10/2020.
  - the editing and translations were developed from 19/10/2020 till 13/12/2020.
- **Organizations hosting the interviews:**
  - All 6 organizations that collaborate in this endeavour are FORMEM's affiliates.
  - They are organizations that support persons with disabilities in different fields, but all have vocational rehabilitation programmes and are mainly funded by public resources.
  - None of the organizations gives support to students in higher education, but all have in their mission social inclusion.
- **People interviewed:**
  - 31 persons with IDD were interviewed in 6 small groups.
  - The age of the persons interviewed varied between 17 and 52 years.
  - 18 of the persons interviewed of them were male and 13 were female.
  - All of them were taking vocational training courses, some for the second time.
- **Methodology used:**
  - Informal group conversation with two or three interviewers shifting subjects and recording the data: no fixed script but trying to talk about issues of *higher education*, *employment* and *access to digital tools*. The interviewers are also part of the conversation answering any question from the interviewed and sharing things of their own.
  - In preparation an interview outline was designed (with logistic issues and questions) that could be used during the conversations as a back-up tool for the interviewers.
  - All participants were, before the interview, informed verbally about the reason of the interview, the context of *HiLives Project* and procedures of participation. In completion of this, we prepared a "gift bag" with: a flyer with HiLives information; a certificate of participation; a consent form to use the data and image only for *HiLives* purpose; writing paper and a pen; water; and hand sanitizer gel.

- Due to the pandemic, all present during the conversations used masks and were physically separated, which for some participants made it more difficult to communicate and establish a proper contact.
- The biggest methodological difficulty was to approach and make conversations about a subject most of the participants never thought about and which made it a hypothetical exercise: Higher Education. To overcome this obstacle, present since the first conversation, we start to inform prior to the dialogue that higher education would be a topic to be addressed and ask the mediators in each organization to introduce this topic in one of the citizenship training modules, for example. It helped, but for many it was still a non-real scenario which make them less eager to participate when discussing this topic during the conversation. This difficulty shows that to promote inclusion in Higher Education one has also to approach societal awareness and citizenship empowerment of people with IDD.
- **Main findings:**
  - Few had really thought of going to university, and only a couple of them had a real desire and thoughtful interest to attend higher education.
  - Many could try if there was a possibility, most of them never put that possibility and some have no interest at all in Higher Education.
  - In general, the mindset of the groups interviewed was focused on practical things of life and still very connected with the impossibilities driven by their difficulties.
  - In a higher education scenario, the main support needed would be from the teacher, curricular adaptation and more tolerance/time to perform as a student. Other barriers identified are connector with socialization with colleagues, financial support and transport issues.
  - When presenting an opportunity to study in High Education, it is important to provide a choice of courses of their interest and not imposed possibilities.
  - Regarding work, and despite attending vocational training courses, most of them rely on soft-skills and family to get a job. However, some also entrusted the organizations that give them support (vocational training and other) to help them to get employed.
  - Most of them use and are interested in smartphones and internet, and would happily use an online tool to help to find a job. However, due to illiteracy and others

interests, some stressed the importance of human and direct contact when searching for a job.

- **Evidences:**

- Action plan;
- Conversation/interview outline (in Portuguese and in English);
- Video and audio recording (in Portuguese and only accessible to HiLives partners);
- Interviews reports (in Portuguese and in English);
- Information flyer (in Portuguese);
- Informed consent forms (in Portuguese);
- HiLives timesheet (in English).



## Conversations/Interviews reports

### Presential interview at APPACDM de Coimbra | 14th September 2020

**Geographical and demographic characterization:** Coimbra, medium-size city in the centre region with one of the largest university community of Portugal.

**Participants:** 6 male persons with IDD, ages between 17 and 52.

**Interviewers:** Joana Glória, Raul Rocha and Rita Cavalheiro (FORMEM).

**Duration:** 45 minutes (10h00-10h45).

#### Topics addressed:

- Recurrent replies to the initial conversation about their dreams:
  - To get a job, mainly in restaurants and kitchens<sup>197</sup>;
  - To have their own home with their own family.
- Replies related to issues about attending higher education:
  - Most attended special schools or special curriculum in mainstream schools, so they do not have a certificate that allow them to apply to university. In this sense, enrolling in higher education was never something they really thought about it.

*"I studied in a special school and it was hard because I wasn't with my colleges and I didn't get the certificate so I can't go to university"* Roberto (fictional name)

- None the participants dreamt of going to university and it is not something that makes part of their life plan.
- Two of the participants also referred that they do not know how to write or read, so going to higher education was never an option.
  - a. The whole group was quite shy in thinking and expressing about the benefits of studying in a university.
- When proposed a hypothetical reality that they were studying in the university, lack of preparation and support from the professors was stated as the main barrier.

*"I think professors wouldn't be prepared for us"* José (fictional name)

- Reaction related to search and support needed to get employed:

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<sup>197</sup> Editorial note: mainly due to enrolment in vocational training in this area.

- Despite all being enrolled in vocational training, they were reticent in sharing the support they would need to get a job. The general idea was that people close to them (family and tutors) would be the key support to get employed.
- When opening the possibility of having an online software specially designed for people with IDD to search for work, 4 out of 6 were very enthusiastic with the idea and showed that they were very into digital technology. The two participants who were not excited, said that because they do not know how to read, so they do not use internet or smartphone.

## Presential interview at CERCIMOR | 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020

**Geographical and demographic characterization:** Montemor-o-Novo, small-size city in the south and one of the less populated region of Portugal.

**Participants:** 5 persons with IDD, 2 male and 3 female, ages between 19 and 34.

**Interviewers:** Joana Glória and Rita Cavalheiro (FORMEM).

**Duration:** 45 minutes (14h15 -15h00).

### Topics addressed:

- Recurrent replies to the initial conversation about their dreams:
  - To be happy.
  - To travel.
  - To have a home and work.
- Divergent reactions over what is higher education:
  - The highest level of scholarization/education.
  - Some of the participants believe that a higher degree brings a better job and an easier way to start a carrier.
  - Others participants expressed that, “even if knowledge does not fill up space<sup>198</sup>”, they know a lot of examples of people with higher education degrees and it did not help them to get a better job or more opportunities;

*“Although university helps, I know people who became millionaires and didn’t go to university”* Armando (fictional name)

*“I have friends that went to university and are engineers and now aren’t working, I prefer to learn things while doing them... but university could give me some tools”*

Pedro (fictional name)

- Replies related to issues about attending higher education:
  - One of the participants said that she/he could not go to university because he/she already had many difficulties in regular school. Nonetheless, after reflecting a bit she/he said that with special supports and the help of the teachers, like she/he had in the regular school, maybe he/she could do it.

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<sup>198</sup> Translation note: Portuguese saying, no knowledge is enough.

- Three other participants expressed that if they would have the opportunity to study in higher education they would go:

*"I had the opportunity to go to university, when I was in London, but I was younger, but I didn't go, my head didn't think with sense, if I could now, I would go."* Armando (fictional name).

- Another participant shared that he/she would not like to go university. He/she would only go as last resort, if there was no other possibility left.
- Responses related to fears that they may have while studying in higher education:
  - One of the participants said the hardest thing would be to interact with new people, due to her shyness and because people always ask too many questions.
  - In response to this sharing, two other participants stated that they would not have problems interacting with other people.
- Replies related to the support they might need while being in higher education:
  - There was a consensus that the most important support was the teacher(s).
 

*"For me, I would like that they would have more work to my adaptation, for example, not having the things they do at university, but things adapted to me, things that I could learn slower, don't know how to explain."* Ana (fictional name).
  - However, some would prefer a more active and present support from the teacher, and others more autonomy and just ask for help when needed.
- Reactions related to search and support needed to get employed:
  - Some of the participants focused on the need to have degrees (even regular school ones) and good curriculum.
  - Other centred their sharing on soft skills like being punctual, likeable, tidy<sup>199</sup> and always justify why missing work.
  - When opening the possibility of having an online program specially designed for people with IDD to search for work, the majority would use the program, but one stressed that online is not the only way to find a job, making contacts with friends and known people is also very important.

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<sup>199</sup> Translation note: approximation to have hygienic behaviours (e.g. take a shower every day)

## Online Interview at Fundação Liga| 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

**Geographical and demographic characterization:** Lisbon, the capital and the biggest and most populated city of Portugal.

**Participants:** 5 persons with IDD, 3 male and 2 females, ages between 19 and 53

**Interviewers:** Raul Rocha and Rita Cavalheiro (FORMEM)

**Duration:** 40 minutes (14h30 -15h10)

**Topics addressed:**

- Divergent replies to the initial conversation about their dreams:
  - To finish regular education and go to university.
  - To go to college learn English and French.
  - Be a parent.
  - Be a cook.
  - Finish the vocational training and get a job.
  - To have a girlfriend.
  - To have a driving licence.
  - To have a job so he/she can have money and buy a house.
- Reactions over what is higher education:
  - The place where you can learn foreign languages.
  - It is the next step after regular school ("but first we need to finish it").
  - It is a place where there are many parties.

*"They have parties ...which my father does not allow me to go."* Manuel (fictional name)
  - It has many nice academic uniforms<sup>200</sup>.
  - You can be part of exchange program with other countries.
  - A place to learn a profession.
- Replies related to issues about attending higher education:
  - All would like to go to university.

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<sup>200</sup> Editing note: special outfits students wear in many Portuguese universities.

- However, some shared that they would struggle to remember the subjects but would like to learn new things.
- Trying is always good.
- Replies related to the support they might need while being in higher education:
  - Money.
  - Support to understand the subjects.
  - Adapted programs to their needs.

*"(...) adapted to each one, because each one has their difficulties, some have more difficulties than the others and it would be good to have support in that area."* Maria  
(fictional name)

- Responses related to fears that they may have while studying in higher education:
  - Fear of being bullied by the others for being "dumb", for having a disability and more difficulties.
  - Afraid of losing patience with others and explode with anger.
  - One of the participants had a distinctive discourse. She would not have problems to impose herself towards others, because she knows how to listen and the most important is to be able to communicate with colleagues and teachers:

*"We have a problem, unfortunately, but we also have an enormous strength and will to learn and to go further!"* Paula (fictional name).

- Moreover, she stated that by talking with us about the possibility of going to university is a sign of hope and that because of that she is closer to the path of higher education:

*"It has been my dream for many years, I would like to finish secondary school and go to university. Being here talking to you, and I don't know the day of tomorrow, is already a good opportunity...being here talking about it is already very good, because there are things that don't happen by chance."* Paula (fictional name)

- Reactions related to search and support needed to get employed:
  - A school degree<sup>201</sup>.
  - A vocational training in the area one wants to work.

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<sup>201</sup> Translation note: it refers to a habitation certification which correspond to the compulsory school path.

- Learn to speak English.
- Know how to communicate and be available.
- When opening the possibility of having an online program specially designed for people with IDD to search for work, all said it would be welcomed and they would use it.

## Presential interview at ARDAD | 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020

**Geographical and demographic characterization:** Peso da Régua, small city in the north-inland of Portugal.

**Participants:** 5 persons with IDD, 2 male and 3 female, ages between 23 and 38.

**Interviewers:** Joana Glória and Rita Cavalheiro (FORMEM) + 1 professional from ARDAD (presence insisted by the participants).

**Duration:** 30 minutes (14h30 -15h00)

### Topics addressed:

- Divergent replies to the initial conversation about their dreams:
  - Be a doctor.
  - Be a radio host.
  - Travel.
  - Be a hairdresser.
  - Have a parrot.
  - To have a driving license and be a professional driver.
- Reactions over what is higher education:
  - It is like getting a job, is something that you do for the rest of your life.
  - It is a school, where you learn to get a job.
  - Is a place to study.
  - It is a place you go to have a future<sup>202</sup>.
- Different replies related to issues about attending higher education:
  - One participant said he/she never thought of going to the university, while another expressed his/her doubts with a maybe.
  - Another said that when in school he/she was feed up with studying, but now he/she would like to go but it is too late.
  - One shared that she told her mother that she had no interest in furthering studies, so she did not want to go higher education:

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<sup>202</sup> Translation note: it refers to have chance in life.



*"I told my parents that I wouldn't want to study anymore, that I wanted to find a job."* Júlia  
(fictional name)

- A participant also stated that if there was an opportunity, he would go, because his sister went to higher education to study nursing and now has her life sorted out:

*"I would like to go, to have a better life. For example, I have a sister that went to university and did the nursing course and now she has her life put together... I would have to learn a lot."* Afonso (fictional name)

- Replies related to the support they might need while in higher education:
  - They would need help, but they could not explain or phrase it what exactly.
- Responses related to fears that they may have while studying in higher education:
  - Difficult subjects, only one participant intervened to say that he/she expected that teachers would be even more demanding.
- Reactions related to search and support needed to get employed:
  - We need to excel, to do everything right without any mistake.
  - To be responsible.
  - To be punctual.
  - Prepare a portfolio, a letter of motivation and a curriculum.
  - The help of specialized organization like ARDAD to find a internships and work.
  - The help of family.
  - When opening the possibility of having an online program specially designed for people with IDD to search for work, all said it would be welcomed and they would use it.

## Presential interview at APSCDFA| 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020

**Geographical and demographic characterization:** Fornos de Algodres, small village in the inland of Portugal.

**Participants:** 5 persons with IDD, 3 male and 2 female, ages between 19 and 62.

**Interviewers:** Joana Glória and Rita Cavalheiro (FORMEM).

**Duration:** 90 minutes (11h30 -12h30).

### Topics addressed:

- Different replies to the initial conversation about their dreams:
  - Be happy.
  - Travel.
  - Be heathy.
  - Meet her/his idol.
- Reactions over what is higher education:
  - It is a place where only people with more capacities can reach:

*"I think the people that go to university are the ones that have more ability, than the others that don't. I have always struggled in studying and I think if someone asked me now, I wouldn't say yes or no, because I think I wouldn't have the ability to get there."* Mariana (fictional name)
  - It is a plus in life.<sup>203</sup>
  - It is a place to study.
  - It is unknown.
- Different replies related to issues about attending higher education:
  - One participant considers that he/she has not capacities to attend university due to his/her difficulties, but he/she would like to go:

*"I would like to go to university, but I don't know if I would be able to go. For me it would be difficult because I have difficulties at maths and stuff like that."* Alberto (fictional name)
  - Another participant referred that, although he never really thought about it, if there was a possibility he would go, because it is never too late:

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<sup>203</sup> Translation note. Can also mean it is an added value to life.

*"I would like to study more to be more knowledgeable."* Sérgio (fictional name)

- The rest of the group did not show interest to attend higher education because they do not like to study or they prefer to do other things (for example, work and have an income):

*"The daughter of my godfather that lives in Luxembourg, she is 15 and already knows that she wants to come to Portugal to study law at university, I'm not like her, I had a lot of difficulties in school, even with help."* Mariana (fictional name)

- Replies related to the support they might need while being higher education:
  - Curiously, none of the participants expressed any fear regarding going to university.
  - Nonetheless, all considered that they would need support in different levels:
    - Social (from friends and colleagues, e.g.);
    - Specialized (from a psychologist, e.g.);
    - Curricular (from teacher, e.g.);
    - Financial (a scholarship, e.g.).
  - They also considered especially important to be able to choose the field of study in an area of their interest, contrary to what happens with their current vocational training.
- Reactions related to search and support needed to get employed:
  - Because they live in a rural area with few public transport routes, having a driving license or someone to drive them to work is essential.
  - Having certified competences for the job is particularly important.
  - Be punctual and hard-working are core characteristic to have.
  - To find a job they would rely on Social Services, search on the internet, contact known people or go ask directly in different places if they need workers.

## Presential interview at MAPADI | 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Geographical and demographic characterization:** Póvoa de Varzim, medium-size city in the north coast of Portugal.

**Participants:** 5 persons with IDD, 2 male and 3 female, ages between 23 and 38.

**Interviewers:** Joana Glória, Raul Rocha and Rita Cavalheiro (FORMEM).

**Duration:** 50 minutes (14h55 -15h45).

### Topics addressed:

- Different replies to the initial conversation about their dreams:
  - To recycle and make it my work.
  - Be a fireman.
  - Kindergarten teacher and take care of children.
  - Be a mother.
  - Work at a mobile phone shop.
  - Be policeman.
  - Play football and table tennis.<sup>204</sup>
  - Be a veterinary.
- Consensual reaction over what is higher education:
  - At the university you study to get a job.
- Different replies related to issues about attending higher education:
  - One participant said she would like to go to university. However, she thinks it would be difficult because of her 60% incapacity:

*"I would like to go to university to be a veterinary, but as I have 60% incapacity I would need help in the course...sometimes I have difficulty reading...and with the pass<sup>205</sup> as well."*

Cátia (fictional name)
  - Another shared that he/she would want to go to university to get a degree in Biochemistry.
  - One referred that he/she does not think about university and would have no idea what to study there.

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<sup>204</sup> Translation note: ping-pong.

<sup>205</sup> Editor note: metro/underground pass

- And another stated that he/she would like to go study veterinary medicine, but he/she was afraid of going to university.
- Many responses related to fears that they may have while studying in higher education:
  - The majority referred that they would have difficulties dealing with people; since those would be more distant, there would not be so much proximity and trust. In this topic, one of the participants explained that she/he suffered a lot of bullying at school and did not want to live that again.
  - Some referred the difficulties of transport as barrier since they cannot take a metro<sup>206</sup> alone:
 

*"I'm not used to use the metro alone, I'm afraid of going alone to places... and because of the virus... My sister is at university and goes there without problem, but me, I'm afraid to get lost and to be surrounded by a lot of people, the traffic on the street..."* Gonçalo  
(fictional name)
  - Many said they were concerned with the noise and the confusion of big classrooms and in big spaces – social anxieties.
  - Two of the participants also shared that they have difficulties in dealing with money<sup>207</sup>, so that would also be a difficulty when going to university.
- Replies related to the support they might need while being in higher education:
  - They all consider important to have educational support. With their learning difficulties a constant follow-up and support is needed.
  - Moreover, there was also a consensus they would need more time to do their study works.
- Reactions related to search and support needed to get employed:
  - All of them where enrolled in vocational training, but most had no clear idea what to do when the training was over.
  - One said she/he would get a job by asking friends and people he/she knows.
  - Another shared that he/she had already a job waiting for him in a hotel.
  - Yet another said the municipality would get him/her a job.

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<sup>206</sup> Translation note: refers to the subway that links Porto to Póvoa de Varzim.

<sup>207</sup> Editing note: mainly difficulties in counting money.

- When opening the possibility of having an online program specially designed for people with IDD to search for work, all said they use smartphones<sup>208</sup> and internet, but despite saying they would use the online tool, they did not show much enthusiasm.

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<sup>208</sup> Editing note: and were keen to show their favourite applications/online tools.

## **Stakeholders Point of View: The voice of members of the self-advocacy movement in the Flemish speaking part of Belgium**

*Evelien De Maesschalck and Geert Van Hove*

Self-Advocates with a label of intellectual disability, living in the Flemish speaking part of Belgium, are raising their voices offering us their lived experiences and insights about their dreams to study. Some of them were having negative experiences throughout their school trajectory and arrive at the door of Higher Education Institutions with a lot of negative emotions and experiences. Others have been confronted with a lot of prejudices and very low expectations and are overwhelmed by the idea that they (even) can think freely about studying in postsecondary trajectories. And some of them are taking the lead and try to open doors, programmes,... offering us and themselves opportunities to learn about reasonable accommodations and practicing together the 'Hippocratic oath for educators': presuming competence (Biklen & Burke, 2006).

## Situation in Flanders

### UN-convention

Belgium ratified the UN-convention regarding people with a disability in 2009. Article 24 of this treaty mentions the following things:

- The States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. In order to realize this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunities, the States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning services with the following objectives:
  - the full development of human resources and the sense of dignity and self-esteem and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
  - the optimal development of the personality, talents and creativity of persons with a disability, as well as their intellectual and physical capacities, according to their state of ability;
  - the participation of people with a disability in a free society.
- In exercising this right, States Parties shall ensure that:
  - persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of their disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded on the basis of their disabilities from free and compulsory primary or secondary education;
  - persons with disabilities have access to inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on the basis of equality with others in the communities in which they live;
  - reasonable accommodations are provided according to the individual's needs;
  - persons with disabilities receive, within the general education system, the support they need to facilitate effective participation in education;
  - effective, individualized supportive measures are taken in environments that optimize cognitive and social development, consistent with the goal of non-exclusionary education.
- States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to acquire practical and social skills in order to facilitate their full participation in education and in community life on an equal basis. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:



- the facilitation of the learning of Braille, alternative spellings, the use of supportive and alternative communication methods, tools and forms, as well as the acquisition of orientation and mobility skills and the facilitation of peer support and counselling;
  - the facilitation of the learning of sign language and promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
  - the certainty that education for persons, and in particular for children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, takes place in the languages and with the methods and means of communication most appropriate for the person concerned and in an environment in which their cognitive and social development are optimized.
- In order to facilitate the exercise of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to appoint teachers, including teachers with disabilities, trained in sign language and / or Braille, and train officers and staff. who are active at all levels of education. In this course, students should be trained in how to deal with persons with disabilities and how to use the relevant supportive communication and other methods, means and forms of and for communication, teaching techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.
  - States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities have access to tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that a reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

Source: <https://www.gripvzw.be/nl/artikel/65/tekst-vn-verdrag-inzake-de-rechten-van-personen-met-een-handicap>

In Belgium, the 3 different communities - the Flemish, French-speaking and German-speaking community - are competent for personal matters, such as education. This implies that the communities are responsible for putting all aspects of education policy into practice, with the exception of the federal residual education competence such as compulsory education (source: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/de-regionale-overheden-gemeenschappen-en-gewesten>). As a result, these communities have competence to, among other things, comply with Article 24 of the UN Convention for persons with disabilities.

As far as the Flemish community is concerned, two decrees with regard to tertiary education are worth to have a closer look at: the higher education decree and the adult education decree.

## Higher education

The Higher Education Decree (2013) deals with the “officially registered institutions”, i.e. “the university colleges and universities” as “institutions of public utility for post-initial education, scientific research and scientific services...” (Art. II.1).

The decree also provides an overview of all recognized Flemish universities (Art. II.2) and university colleges (Art. II.3) and their teaching qualifications (chapter 5).

Article II.57 states that higher education comprises courses leading to a graduate degree, a bachelor's degree and a master's degree. Higher education also includes courses that can be concluded with a postgraduate certificate. In addition, the doctor's degree is also conferred in higher education.

### DEGREE OF GRADUATE

When university colleges\* offer a study program in the context of higher professional education, this leads to the degree of a graduate person (Art. II.59).

These courses are in line with secondary education (Art. II.63) and have a study load of 90 or 120 credits \*\* (Art. II.64).

Each graduate course contains a relevant proportion of workplace learning. The minimum standard is one third of the study load (Art. 66/2).

To be admitted to a higher professional education program organized by university colleges, the student must have complied with compulsory education.

In addition, the student must have 1 of the following study certificates:

- a certificate of study of the second year of the third stage of secondary education, which has been passed for at least 3 years;
- a certificate of completion of secondary education;
- a certificate of a secondary education for social advancement education of at least 900 teaching periods;
- a certificate of a secondary adult education course of at least 900 teaching periods;
- a certificate of higher education for social promotion;

- a certificate of higher vocational education;
- a diploma of higher vocational education;
- a certificate of short term-higher education with full curriculum;
- a bachelor- or master-certificate;
- a study certificate that is recognized by virtue of a legal standard, a European directive or an international agreement as being equivalent to 1 of the diplomas mentioned in points 1 ° to 9 °. In the absence of such recognition, the board of the institution may allow persons who have obtained a diploma or certificate in a country outside the European Union that gives access to higher education in that country to enrol in a higher professional education program (Art. II. 176).

Contrary to this, the board of the institution will include deviating admission conditions in its education regulations. The deviating admission conditions can only take into account the following elements:

- humanitarian reasons;
- medical, psychological or social reasons;
- the general level of the student, assessed by means of an entrance test organized by the board of the institution (Art. II.177).

## **BACHELOR'S DEGREE**

Bachelor's programs are either professional or academically oriented.

Professional orientation means that the programs are aimed at the general education and the acquisition of professional knowledge and competences, based on the application of scientific or artistic knowledge, creativity and practical knowledge. More specifically, professionally oriented bachelor's programs aim to bring students to a level of general and specific knowledge and competences necessary for the independent exercise of a profession or group of professions. These courses are offered in university colleges.

Academic orientation aims to bring the students to a level of knowledge and competences specific to scientific or artistic functioning in general and to a specific domain of the sciences or the arts in particular, with a view to progressing to a master's degree or transfer to the labour market. These courses are offered in universities (Art. II.58).

Bachelor's programs tie in with secondary education and generally have a study load of at least 180 credits (Art. II.64).

General admission requirements for a bachelor's program are:

- a certificate of secondary education;
- a diploma of higher education of the short type with full curriculum;
- a diploma of higher social promotion education, with the exception of the Certificate of Pedagogical Competence, or
- a diploma or certificate awarded in the context of higher professional education;
- a study certificate that is recognized as equivalent to 1 of the previous diplomas under a legal standard, a European directive or an international agreement (Art. II.178).

The board of the institution determines in the education regulations the deviating admission conditions on the basis of which persons who do not meet the conditions referred to in Article II.178 can be registered for a bachelor's program. The deviating admission conditions can only take the following elements into account:

- humanitarian reasons;
- medical, psychological or social reasons;
- the general level of the candidate, assessed in the manner determined by the board of the institution. The board of the institution may assign this assessment to a validating body referred to in Article II.231. On the basis of the assessment, the board of the institution can make enrolment dependent on the successful completion of a preparatory program (Art. II.179).

## **MASTER'S DEGREE**

Universities offer academic education. This leads to a master's degree (Art. II.60).

Academic orientation means that the programs are aimed at general education and at the acquisition of academic or artistic knowledge and competences specific to functioning in a domain of the sciences or the arts. Academically oriented courses are based on scientific research.

The master degree trainings aim to bring students to an advanced level of knowledge and competences which are typical of the scientific or artistic functioning in general, and typical of a specific area of sciences or arts in particular, which is indispensable for the autonomous practice of sciences or arts or for the application of scientific or artistic knowledge in the autonomous practice

of sciences or arts or the application of scientific or artistic knowledge in the autonomous exercising a profession or group of professions (Art. II.58).

Master's programs are linked to bachelor's programs in academic education or follow other master's programs and have a study load of at least 60 credits (Art. II.65).

The general admission requirement for a master's program is a bachelor's degree (Art. II.180).

The board of the institution can limit admission to a master's program to graduates of bachelor's programs with specific program characteristics. The board of the institution may determine that the registration for a master's program is also open to graduates of bachelor's programs with other program characteristics, if they have successfully completed a preparatory program. The board of the institution can differentiate the content and study load of such a preparatory program according to the degree of related content (Art. II.182).

The board of the institution can enrol students who do not meet the admission requirements stated in Article II.174 for separate course units under a credit contract or an exam contract on the condition that an investigation shows that the person concerned has the competence to properly understand the course unit or courses. (Art. II.191).

## **POSTGRADUATE TRAINING**

Universities as well as university colleges can offer postgraduate courses. Certificates can only be awarded after successful completion of training courses with a study load of at least 20 credits (Art. II.62).

## **DOCTOR'S DEGREE**

The general admission requirement for enrolment for the preparation of a doctoral thesis is possession of a master's degree (Art. II. 184).

## **REGISTRATION**

A person can only enrol at an university or university college if he / she meets the statutory and regulatory admission requirements (Art. II.195).

A person can enrol through a diploma contract, a credit contract or an exam contract (Art. II.199).

With a diploma contract, the student aims to obtain a diploma from a specific study program. Those who register for a credit contract, on the other hand, work towards obtaining a credit for one or more included courses. Finally, an exam contract is aimed at obtaining a degree, a diploma or a

credit certificate. Whether and how the student may participate in educational activities and make use of educational support activities is determined by the institution (Art. II.201).

Institutions can decide that certain courses are not eligible for a credit and / or exam contract (Art. II.199).

## **INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION ACCORDING TO THE DECREE**

To support the policies pursued by universities and university colleges in the context of inclusive higher education, an additional amount has been added to the social allowance since the 2017 financial year. This amount may only be used for program-related matters concerning students with disabilities, as described in Article II.276, § 3 (Art. II.117 and Art. II.118).

This article states that students with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations.

Students with disabilities are students with long-term physical, intellectual or sensory disabilities that, in interaction with various barriers, may prevent them from participating in higher education fully, effectively and on an equal basis with other students.

An accommodation is a concrete measure, of a material or immaterial nature, that neutralizes the restrictive influence of an inappropriate environment on the participation of a person with a disability. A reasonable accommodation is considered to be an accommodation that does not impose a disproportionate burden. A decision to refuse the requested accommodation may be motivated on the basis of an assessment made by the institution that the requested accommodation impedes the possibility of achieving the domain-specific learning outcomes of the study program or the possibility of achieving other objectives of the study program in general.

The Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO) has the task of guiding and supporting the institutions in the implementation of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Central to this implementation is improving the participation of students with disabilities in Flemish higher education (Art. III.98 / 2).

Each institutional board specifies in the education regulations the procedure that students with disabilities must follow in order to request reasonable accommodations and the way in which they can lodge an appeal within the institution against a refusal of accommodations (Art. II.221). In the examination regulations, the institution states the procedure that students with disabilities must follow in order to request reasonable accommodations with regard to the exams and the way in which they can appeal against a refusal of accommodations within the institution (Art. II.221).

In the context of reasonable accommodations, students who are unable to follow certain courses due to their disability may be exempted from doing so if they follow alternative educational activities. The board of the institution decides in consultation with the student concerned about the exemption and records the replacement activities.

Furthermore, boards can, jointly or individually, take measures to guarantee the accessibility of higher education - in a material and immaterial sense - with regard to students from objectively demarcated population groups whose participation in higher education is significantly lower than that of other population groups (Art. II.276).

Boards have the option to take or maintain corrective inequality measures, insofar as these measures:

- have a temporary nature and disappear when the objective set out in the first paragraph has been achieved, and
- does not imply an unnecessary restriction of other people's rights.

Finally, universities and university colleges also offer student facilities (Art. II.336).

Student services aim to promote equal access to and participation of all students in higher education by improving the basic conditions for studying. They pursue this goal by offering tangible and intangible help and services and by removing study obstacles (Art. II.337).

The allocation of student facilities may be linked to specific conditions (Art. II.339). Furthermore, access to student facilities can be differentiated on the basis of the number of credits for which a student enrolls (Art. II.340).

## **INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRACTICE**

Van Hees Valerie, coordinator of the Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO), took the time on 4 November 2020 to give us a taste of inclusive higher education in practice. She clarified the role of SIHO and took us along in her practical experiences.

SIHO aims to support universities and university colleges with their questions regarding students with a disability. For example, there is one contact person for each institution. This is usually the person who coordinates policy or care for students with a disability. These persons distribute information to the authorized employees.

SIHO therefore does not work directly with students, but nevertheless considers it important to inform students about the possibilities within the existing regulations. In addition, SIHO is also a bridge to the government. Bottlenecks are passed on to the regulator.

Van Hees Valerie notes that more and more tailor-made programs are being set up in compulsory education. These students receive a certificate at the end of their secondary education. This certificate is not an admission ticket to higher education. Nevertheless, Van Hees Valerie sees opportunities for these people.

For example, a prospective student can take an entrance exam. The competences of this person are examined. The only condition is that this person is at least 21 years old. In this way, our government wants to avoid that someone who does not pass his / her final year of secondary education immediately takes an entrance exam.

A credit contract is also possible. This is not a full registration. Someone registers for one or more courses. You do need the permission of the teacher for this. There must be credibility that the person can participate. Consequently, an institute can refuse someone if it thinks he / she is not competent. However, Van Hees Valerie has little or no experience with this. There are also binding conditions: if you fail, you will be inhibited in your learning account. When a student's credits has been used entirely, his / her higher education track ends.

Students can switch from a credit to a diploma contract by obtaining their credit certificates and by taking a test of deviating conditions.

The scenario in which people with a disability register for a credit contract occurs more often than the scenario in which people with a disability aim to obtain a diploma through a diploma contract. Van Hees Valerie does not know any person who studies in more technical / scientific directions. She notices such trajectories especially in social studies.

The fact that options exist means to Van Hees Valerie that higher education is not closed. At the same time, she recognizes that our higher education system builds on degrees. Higher education institutions often believe that someone should meet the standard. The fact that they receive subsidies for the diplomas they award reinforces this fact.

Van Hees Valerie has very little experience with people with intellectual disabilities in higher education. For her, this is a group that has little access. She acknowledges the "diploma gap" here.



This refers to the fact that according to the traditional system people with intellectual disabilities often do not have the required diploma to be able to continue their studies.

Finally, Van Hees Valerie also took us along in the story of the reasonable accommodations. To be entitled to reasonable accommodation, a student must register. He / She must be able to submit a certificate.

As soon as a student is recognized, he / she is recognized for his / her entire career. However, the student must annually optimize his / her reasonable accommodations. This is done on the basis of a needs assessment. Students reflect on what they need. This is based on the idea that different restrictions work in different ways. It is therefore important that students think about what is difficult for them and what can help them.

Reasonable accommodations may differ from program to program. Schools often tend to think that something touches the essential learning conditions and is therefore unreasonable. An open dialogue is important here.

University colleges have a less central procedure than universities. There is a diversity coach for each study program at university colleges. This person moves between the teachers. Accommodations are imposed on the lecturers, whereas the universities insist on their autonomy. Universities advise the professors. The latter have the final say. This is a different story for the student. The student will not often argue, as there will be another assessment by the same professor.

If reasonable accommodations are refused, the student can lodge an appeal. This appeal is handled by an independent committee. They come to a decision. This is a mediation procedure.

\* In the academic year 2019-2020, the Centres for Adult Education transferred their competence for offering higher professional education courses and granting the corresponding study approval to the university colleges (Art. II.394).

\*\* Learning Credit

At the start of his/ her studies in higher education, every student receives a learning credit of 140 credits. Students who enrol via a diploma or credit contract use x number of credits. The sum of the courses and the corresponding credits determine the total number of credits that a student takes. A student can also acquire credits by obtaining a credit certificate. Obtaining a credit certificate for a particular course unit leads to a situation in which the student acquires his credits again. If a student's learning account is less than or equal to zero, an institution can refuse a student's enrolment.

## **Adult education**

A centre for adult education, or CVO for short, aims to “provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for personal development, social functioning, further participation in education, exercising a profession or mastering a language” and to “enable students to obtain recognized study certificates”(Art. 3 Adult Education Decree, 2007).

To be admitted as a student to a course of secondary adult education, the student must have fulfilled the full-time compulsory education (Art. 32 Decree Adult Education, 2007) to avoid any competition with compulsory education (personal interview Schroyens Katlijn and Minten Veronique, Flemish Education and Training Department, January 11, 2021).

In addition to the admission requirements, enrolment conditions also apply within adult education:

- meet the admission requirements;
- have paid the registration fee or being legally exempt from it;
- have agreed to the centre regulations;
- have agreed to the centre's own agogic project.
- if one has complied with part-time compulsory education, has provided proof of Belgian nationality or compliance with the provisions of legal residence, as referred to in Article 2, 48 ° (Art. 37 Decree on Adult Education, 2007).

Furthermore, there are no conditions regarding the admission and / or registration of students in adult education. Neither do any further statements prevent the admission of a student with an intellectual disability. Schroyens Katlijn explains: “This has grown historically. There is no special adult education. The aim was to make adult education accessible to everyone.” (personal interview, January 11 2021).

In addition, the Adult Education Decree (2007) encourages additional efforts for those who do not learn easily. For example, it is possible to deviate from the total number of teaching periods for special target groups (Art. 24). This in function of slow learning students. A student can also choose to spread out the modules he / she takes up. There is no fixed maximum or minimum speed for taking up the different modules of a course.

Furthermore, an open learning centre will be set up in every CVO (Art. 62). This is a space where students can do self-study on an independent basis. This is not aimed at specific target groups, but often provides an added value for the more vulnerable students who are less likely to learn in their

home environment (personal interview Schroyens Katlijn and Minten Veronique, education and training department, January 11, 2021).

Finally, the decree promotes the organization of learning trajectory counselling at the level of the individual student. Organizing demonstrable learning trajectory counselling is more specifically mandatory for course participants who follow the Supplementary General Training, Dutch second language, target grades 1 and 2 and Dutch second language, target grades 3 and 4 (Art. 63). A CVO can choose to open up individual learning paths to all students, but will not receive additional resources for this. Whether a centre will do this, depends from centre to centre.

In practice, access for people with intellectual disabilities is not always easy. For example, no incentive policy is pursued by the government. The government does not provide additional (financial) resources to promote access to adult education for people with intellectual disabilities.

The financial resources for a CVO are determined on the basis of a complex formula in which various elements play a role. One of these is the number of registrations (Chapter II Financing or subsidizing the Centres for Adult Education). In other words: the higher the number of registered students, the higher the subsidy the CVO will receive. Doesn't this pose the danger that CVO's allow everyone in, regardless of whether they can offer each student the right support or not?

Schroyens Katlijn acknowledges this gap in policy (personal interview, January 11, 2021). That is why a new financing system has recently been introduced. The funding only applies if a student is registered before the one-third moment of the training. In addition, a split was made: the centres receive 80% of the subsidies per student at the beginning of the school year. The remaining 20% will follow when the module has been successfully completed by that student. The centres also receive a bonus when someone obtains his / her diploma. In this way, the policy hopes to stimulate the centres to support every student as much as possible.

Does this prevent the pendulum from swinging to the other side? Does this not discourage centres from enrolling people with intellectual disabilities who are only taking the module to intellectually enrich themselves?

A striking trend within centres for adult education is the organization of training specifically for people with an intellectual disability. It concerns a number of accessible courses with the aim of lowering the barriers that people with intellectual disabilities encounter. Just think of: the degree of difficulty of the course, the contact with fellow students without disabilities, ... CVO's do not

receive extra resources for this. The question is also whether such training can be labelled as inclusive.

## **CVO INCLUSIVE**

One project that tackled these challenges is “CVO inclusive”. The aim of this project was to support CVO’s in training people with intellectual disabilities with a view on finding a job. In this project, six adults with an intellectual disability followed a course at CVO HIK in Geel or at CVO KISP in Ghent. The experiences of these two CVOs were bundled in a script. This script provides guidance for other CVO’s who wish to take steps in this direction.

<https://www.thomasmore.be/praktijkgericht-onderzoek/mobilab-care/cvo-inclusief>

Jo Daems, project leader of CVO Inclusive and researcher at Thomas More University College, has given further information on this project in a personal interview on January 21, 2021.

Initially, it was their intention to implement this project in the Thomas More University College. From an administrative point of view, however, this turned out not to be realistic, as the course participants did not have a diploma of secondary education. Centres for Adult Education offered more options in this regard.

The people Jo Daems spoke to were immediately involved in the story. However, this did not always appear to be self-evident. At the start, for example, there was often fear and uncertainty among the teachers. Am I going to be able to teach someone with an intellectual disability? That is why the focus was on teacher training. This provided the teachers with the necessary guidance to deal with these uncertainties.

Jo Daems also saw a strength in the diversity that is inherent to CVO’s. There are students in all sizes and shapes. This is different from other higher education institutions. Likewise, the teachers themselves often have very diverse backgrounds.

The students with an intellectual disability often initially experienced the process as something very overwhelming. They all had many questions. After the first lesson, most of them were already positively surprised. “This went much better than expected!”.

Ms. Daems experienced this project as a great success story. However, she made one caveat: the lack of resources. Thanks to this project, CVO HIK and CVO KISP were able to support students with intellectual disabilities well. The loss of these project resources and the lack of government

support in this area does not make it obvious for the two centres to continue to implement their inclusion policies as well as for interested centres to actually implement the script.

By submitting a new project application, Jo Daems and her colleagues hope to continue the path they have taken on the aforementioned CVO's and to encourage other CVO's to adopt a more inclusive policy.

## **Conclusion**

The Flemish government is indeed making efforts to make higher education and adult education accessible to a very diverse group of people. However, the question remains whether people with intellectual disabilities belong to this group.

There is a strong normative image of persons with intellectual disabilities and their possibilities, ambitions, motivation, ... to continue studying. The section "HiLives in Flanders" offers a counter narrative with regard to these prevailing ideas. As Ludo, self-advocate of Our New Future, puts it succinctly: "It is not because we have an intellectual disability that we cannot learn. We can learn, but in a different way. At our own pace. "

## HiLives in Flanders

### Intent of the project

HiLives in Flanders starts from the question: "How can people with intellectual disabilities participate in higher education?". This sounds like a very clear question. Nevertheless, we would like to clarify the following three concepts:

- intellectual disability
- participation
- higher education

Clarifying these concepts starts with situating HiLives in Flanders. This project is realized in a very close collaboration with Our New Future. Our New Future is a Flemish self-advocacy movement. This is an organization in which people with - mainly intellectual - disabilities stand up for their rights. Self-advocates are people with disabilities who know very well what they can and cannot do. If they want or think it's necessary, they will ask for support from a coach. They are in full control of this themselves, as well as with the various projects they are working on. For more information: [www.ont.be](http://www.ont.be).

The self-advocates of Our New Future embraced and shaped HiLives in Flanders. They themselves set out the outlines of HiLives and then go through them step by step.

This intensive cooperation shapes the above mentioned concepts.

To start, there is the concept of intellectual disability. A concept for which there is a very clearly defined definition. However, when someone is introduced into the daily reality of Our New Future, it will very quickly become clear to this person that theory does not always correspond with reality. Although the majority of self-advocates have been officially given the label "intellectual disabled", this often turns out to be not the only label this person has. In addition, there is a number of people who do not fit the strict definition of "intellectual disability", but do feel a strong connection with this group of self-advocates. These are people who find a connection with the ideas of Our New future, as well as with the stories that the self-advocates share with each other.

At the start of HiLives in Flanders, it was soon clear that we had to abandon the strict definition of the term "intellectual disability". Not only because not everyone fits within this picture - witnesses a self-advocate:

*So we focus on an intellectual disability? I dare not say of myself that I am intellectually disabled. I don't always understand things very well. Are you seen as intellectually disabled because of this?*

(Brent)

Also because of the broad willingness to work with HiLives, the sometimes too restrictive definition of the term "intellectual disability", needed to be abandoned.

*You are talking about people with a low IQ. I have a mild intellectual disability, but when I see what I am able to do... I speak not less than 3 languages. (Tom)*

In addition, the concept of participation also deserves further explanation. We make conscious use of this concept rather than the concept of "studying". This choice was also made thanks to our collaboration with the self-advocates of Our New Future. The self-advocates are experienced professionals in giving lectures, as well as in participating in research as a participant and / or as co-researcher. Because they felt that the concept of "studying" did not cover the full meaning, we opted for the concept of "participating". Moreover, the concept of "participation" bridges the three core tasks of higher education, namely: post-initial education, scientific research and scientific services.

Finally, there is the concept of higher education. According to the basic Flemish legislation, this term only includes universities and university colleges. Through the discussions with the self-advocates, however, it became clear which role the adult education centres can play in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

*When I went to the CVO... That was not always easy. But I'm glad I did. I have pushed my boundaries. I did learn some things there. (Tom)*

The choice to include these centres for adult education in HiLives was therefore an easy one.

## **Development of the project**

It is impossible to tell anything about the development of HiLives in Flanders without talking about the rhythm at which the project took shape. The specific context of the Covid-19 pandemic plays a critical role here.

In April 2020 we started with HiLives. At that time, Belgium was in lockdown. Teleworking was the norm and non-essential travelling was prohibited. As a result, all of our meetings took place online.

As there were previously challenges associated with organizing meetings, these were only magnified by covid-19.

Before the covid-19-outbreak, it was important to:

#### Before the meeting

- Make good agreements about the time, location and purpose of the meeting
- Repeat these agreements sufficiently
- Take into account the daily routine of the self-advocates
- Take into account the travel possibilities of the self-advocates
- Look for an accessible location

#### During the meeting

- Make use of accessible language (easy-to-read, easy-to-understand)
- Sufficiently repeat certain things
- If necessary, give extra explanation on certain things
- If necessary, return to elements of the previous meeting
- Have an eye for the meeting pace
- Take sufficient breaks
- Allow sufficient time for the concerns of the self-advocates
- Help with recording data, make a schedule

#### After the meeting

- Provide room for feedback
- Allow sufficient time for the concerns of the self-advocates
- Remind self-advocates of agreements made (substantive and practical)

Covid-19 made it difficult to meet many of these support needs. In addition, working in an online environment brought new challenges.

First of all, we had to look for a suitable digital platform. Which platform is most accessible to as many self-advocates as possible and at the same time offers sufficient opportunities to facilitate smooth cooperation? As soon as we found this platform, we could start. At least: this was what we thought.



Agreements made in advance seemed to be suddenly lost, the meeting link could not be found, for those living in a grouphome fellow residents came to get involved, birds whistled loudly in the background, ... After a month of working online together, it still took another half an hour (and more) to get anyone who wanted to participate online.

After this, the search for the most suitable way of organizing online meetings started. *How do we see this smooth collaboration and how can we shape it in an accessible way?* A question that appeared to run through the project as a common thread. The letting go and tightening of the COVID-measures played an important role in this. They determined whether we could come together at our familiar workplace (Department of Special Education, Ghent University), whether we could go to a self-advocate individually or whether we should work completely online.

Witness to this is the following extract from the report of the large group of July 27, 2020:

- ***How do we meet during corona?***
  - *We standardly meet online.*
  - *People we cannot reach online can come to the university department. This up to a maximum of 8 people per meeting.*
  - *If there are still places available, extra people may join.*
  - *We agree to this now. This until the National Security Council or Ghent University decides that this way of working is no longer allowed.*
- ***What should we take into account when we meet digitally?***
  - *No overly long online meetings. That is not good for anyone's concentration.*
  - *Everybody must have the possibility to share his / her ideas*
  - *Not scheduling too many online meetings*

To this day (March 2021), our way of working together remains a topic of discussion. Arrangements made are regularly adjusted in order to find a new temporary balance.

We also see this special notion of time recurring in the trajectories that the various self-advocates take. They each deal with time in their own way.

It is certain that most of them need more time. They need more time to (be able to) make a well-founded study choice, to get people on board with their lesson and research plans, to get their support and adjustments arranged, ...

All of this illustrates how self-advocates move through time - how they experience and deal with time. Or, as Kafer (2013) puts it:

*Operating on crip time might be not only about a slower speed of movement but also about ableist barriers over which one has little to no control; in either case, crip time involves an awareness that disabled people might need more time to accomplish something or to arrive somewhere. ... Crip time is a flex time not just expanded but exploded: it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of "how long things take" are based on very particular minds and bodies.*

Three groups gradually emerged on this cadence: the large group, the script group and practical tests group.

\*\*\* It is an illusion to think that anyone who wanted to participate could actually participate in a way of their own choice. For example, not every self-advocate has the necessary resources or skills to participate digitally. Some had no computer, no internet connection, no place where they could quietly participate in the meeting without the rest of the group home residents watching, ... There was also a lot of resistance towards the digital way of working at the start of the project. People refused to participate digitally and waited for better times.

The degree to which the measures were tightened or relaxed offered, respectively, fewer or more options to meet the support needs of the self-advocates. For example, during the summer holidays, there was the possibility to meet in a limited group. This allowed us to invite needy people to our desks and still allow others to participate digitally. The second lockdown put an end to this way of working, but nevertheless offered the possibility to visit people at home and thus support them in their digital participation in meetings.

This does not alter the fact that some self-advocates have little or no opportunity to participate: they are afraid to make the move to our offices or do not dare to receive anyone in their home. Covid-19 imposed, in other words, severe restrictions on some.

## **LARGE GROUP**

The large group emerged first. The large group consists of all self-advocates who show an interest in HiLives in Flanders. They don't necessarily have to have experience in higher education or a desire to be a part of it themselves. Showing interest in the project is the common ground of this group.

The table below provides an overview of the self-advocates who show an interest in HiLives.

Table 48 Overview of the self-advocates

Name	Age	Function within ONT
Stefan	39 years old	Member of ONT
Matthieu	24 years old	Member of the youth group****
Karel	24 years old	Member of ONT and the youth group
Nico	41 years old	Member of ONT
Kimberley	31 years old	Member of ONT, the youth group and the women's group
Carli	34 years old	Member of ONT and the youth group
Peter	57 years old	Member of ONT
Dominiek	57 years old	Member of ONT
Tom	48 years old	Member of ONT
Marc	54 years old	President of ONT
Ludo	54 years old	Member of ONT
Jonathan	17 years old	Member of the youth group
Brent	23 years old	Member of the youth group
Didier	49 years old	Treasurer of ONT
Lucas	22 years old	Member of the youth group
Patricia	53 years old	Vice-president of ONT
Adinda	25 years old	Member of ONT, the youth group and the women's group
Patrick	54 years old	Webmaster and founder of ONT
Michiel	31 years old	Member of ONT and the youth group

\*\*\*\* The youth group, also called Our Young Future, is a youth department within Our New Future. Our Young Future arose from a need to rejuvenate Our New Future. In addition, the self-advocates found it important to inspire young people and young adults with an intellectual disability, as they are at a key moment in their lives.

\*\*\*\*\* The women's group is a women's department within Our New Future. This women's group was founded on the basis that Our New Future consists mainly of male self-advocates. The women's group aims to strengthen female self-advocates and to attract new women.

In the first meeting of this large group, we got to know each other and the project. Higher education experiences, as well as expectations regarding HiLives were shared. What was striking was the willingness of all self-advocates to share their vision of higher education. This created a very powerful atmosphere.

*How come people with a disability can't study? It is not right. How can we improve this? How can we adapt these rules? Higher education should not just exclude people because they have an intellectual disability. (Michiel)*

That first meeting already provided a lot of information. We extracted the most striking quotes and presented them to the group during the third and fourth meeting. We skipped one meeting because we already had enough work ahead of us at that time: coming up with questions that we wanted to ask the Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO).

Although there was no shortage of quotes, we only managed to scrutinize 2 quotes per meeting. The drive of the group can hardly be described in words. They shared to their heart's content. The emotions were all over the place. Even new self-advocates were able to speak openly about their beautiful and painful experiences.

*In higher education I had the opposite feeling as in secondary education. I had serious doubts whether I wanted to join a new group, but it worked so well that I am really grateful for it. My mother encouraged me to do this. She said: "If they are not open to this, then I don't know if people in any other place will." Myself, I have grown like this as a person. I have such a fantastic group of friends now. They are so open. I've never felt better amidst people. I was used to being called names. I was laughed at, not understood. Also by teachers. It got so bad that I got used to it. I seemed to be air for them. They literally ran into me. They also told me to just shut up. Why am I reacting so strongly to this now? This still affects me a lot. I have always put that away. But they told me, I was the one to blame. Even the student guidance said so. They said I wasn't open enough, wanted to get too many good grades, ... There was a time where I didn't want to study. After all, nothing helped. I also think those people didn't get that. It was a habit for them. (Lucas)*

After two long afternoons of talking, we felt that the group needed action. In between the talks, the self-advocates launched ideas about how we could tackle the inequality, which is still far too common today. During meeting 5 we discussed our plan of action. This originated in "group script" and "group practical tests".

However, the large group continues to exist. The large group connects all self-advocates interested in the project. With the emergence of the other two groups, the intensity of the meetings of the large group has decreased. Today (March 2021) the large group meets every two months.

While the focus of the large group was initially on substantive work (sharing and discussing opinions and experiences with regard to higher education), the focus shifted more and more to the practical side of the project. The large group maintains an overview of the project. This is the group in which the real decisions are made. However, it is not the intention to completely abandon this substantive track. You will read more about this later.

## **GROUP SCRIPT**

Group script's starting point was the realisation that there are few places where people with intellectual disabilities can go to obtain information about studying in higher education in an accessible way. The self-advocates indicated that they needed a handhold: something or someone who could provide them with the necessary tools.

*When I started, I called Sofie. How do you do this request? How do you do that? We also looked up a lot of information. How exactly should you do that? They want to make adjustments, but you have to ask it all yourself: they don't present it on a tray. (Lucas)*

To arrive at a script, we started in small groups by analysing all the meetings of the large group. What's important? What do people want to know? What do they need? Which themes keep recurring? In this way we arrived at twenty themes.

These twenty themes all stand on their own, but are also strongly intertwined. By clustering these themes under five overarching questions, we tried to provide the readers with a clear overview. This representation could also form the basis of the script.

### **Why do people with an intellectual disability want to study in higher education?**

#### *Self-development*

It's about getting and taking responsibility. Being able to undertake and achieve things yourself. It is about substantive and personal enrichment.

*It was only in higher education that I learned to think for myself. In secondary education, everything was chewed up, my opinion was not asked or not listened to. (Carli)*

### *The social aspect*

People with an intellectual disability do not just continue to study to develop themselves. Meeting fellow students, getting in touch with them, developing friendships, learning from each other and moving between people with the same interests were cited as important arguments.

*I made many friendships there. In my secondary school I was bullied badly, I had few friends. Those friendships in higher education mean a lot to me. (Lucas)*

The self-advocates also felt that the way fellow students, teachers and even the entire institution looked at people with disabilities changed by working with them.

## **What do people with intellectual disabilities expect from their higher education pathway?**

### *Ownership*

Too often things are still decided over the head of people with intellectual disabilities. It is the task of higher education to always listen carefully to what the person in question has to say. People with intellectual disabilities want to be given responsibilities. They want to have a say.

*This was different in higher education. From day 1 I have had all responsibility. My parents were there, but I was allowed to attend all meetings. (Lucas)*

### *Belonging*

Inclusive higher education means that everyone is welcome. The opposite is often a fact. People with intellectual disabilities often have little or no opportunities, which makes them feel excluded.

Reasonable adjustments were mentioned as a condition for this. If the university / university college wants to make reasonable accommodations, this gives a feeling of acceptance.

### *Freedom of choice*

It is important that people with intellectual disabilities can make their own choices. "What do I want?", should be the central question. However, this does not mean they have to make this choice on their own. It is important to involve their environment in this process, so they also know what the person in question wants. Only in this way they can fully support him / her.

People with intellectual disabilities should be able to choose a field of study that interests them. They must be able to participate in society in a domain of their own choice. Higher education should not only be for the elite.

*Nor would I just want to talk about further study in disability care: it has to go further, about everything. Not just about studies in special education. Because then you do not create an inclusive society: then all people with a disability will be in the same place. (Jonathan on his take on HiLives)*

### Recognition

People with intellectual disabilities want to be recognized for who they are and what they do. They want to be themselves. They want to do this with their own possibilities.

### **Which elements do people with intellectual disabilities themselves find important to include in their higher education pathway?**

#### *Assess yourself correctly*

What do I like to do? Where are my interests? Try to make your dreams concrete. Convert them into small steps. Communicate clearly about this.

Opinions and perspectives of other people often also play an important role here.

*People think that people with disabilities cannot cope with more complex things. They don't know us. You have to look in the mirror: What are my talents? Can I take the burden? (Didier)*

#### *Talking about your disability*

The extent to which someone can communicate honestly about his / her disability depends on the openness of the institution. Sometimes it is good to have an open conversation, sometimes it is not. It is a matter of assessing the situation correctly.

On the contrary, it's very important to ask for help when needed.

#### *Perseverance*

People with an intellectual disability have to be convinced of their talents to study in higher education. They often collide with thresholds.

*People with a disability come much more across difficulties than other people. (Brent)*

## Talents

People with intellectual disabilities often look at what they cannot do. Nevertheless, the self-advocates indicate that they have many talents. They therefore find it very important that people with an intellectual disability start from their talents, their strengths.

*If you have talents, but are not allowed to show them, it is a shame for yourself and your environment.*

(Michiel)

## Which factors do people with intellectual disabilities in higher education experience as supportive?

### Higher education as a right

Studying in higher education is a right for people with intellectual disabilities. This was anchored in the UN Convention. Reasonable accommodations are also a right.

If higher education is a right, it means that people with intellectual disabilities can fall back on it: they are entitled to it. However, people with intellectual disabilities often have to fight for their rights. They often depend on the opportunities they get from others.

*What does this right mean if you can't do anything with it? (Brent)*

### Assistance

If you have an assistant, higher education often assumes that you can easily participate in everything. An assistant is indeed a great added value. He / She supports you in various areas. But an assistant is still no magic bullet.

There is a lot of suspicion about assistance in higher education. *Isn't that assistant going to take over? Is it the assistant or the person with an intellectual disability who is taking an exam?* Clear communication and good agreements are very important.

*My personal assistant was allowed to come along. This had to be well framed every time. Every lesson again. This was not stuck in the system. You had to explain this to them and almost ask for a favour.*

(Carli)

### Reasonable accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are described as a right in the Flemish Decree on Higher Education. However, what is reasonable and what is not is not further specified here. Institutions of higher education are free to make their own decisions about this. What one institution considers reasonable is labelled unreasonable by another institution.



*If there are already accommodations such as a reading software, then it is much faster, because those are accommodations that they often have to make. If those adjustments apply specifically to you, you will not get this that easy. (Lucas)*

In addition, it is often not easy to request reasonable accommodations. A student must do this again every school year and must always provide good reasons why he / she needs a certain adjustment.

Fellow students may show misunderstanding of the student with an intellectual disability who gets more things done. It is important here to increase understanding among these students by providing more information.

*Fellow mate.*

People with intellectual disabilities are often dependent on others. Not only for their support, but also for the opportunities they get in higher education. Universities, university colleges, teachers... must have a strong belief in them.

Knowing that you are not alone is a great added value. Our self-advocates therefore encourage people with intellectual disabilities to look for a fellow mate. A fellow mate is someone who fights together with people with an intellectual disability. You can find a partner within your family, circle of friends, fellow students, teachers, ...

### **What are the barriers that people with intellectual disabilities encounter in higher education?**

*Under- and Overestimation*

This often goes together with the (in)visibility of a disability. If your disability is visible, you often run into an irreconcilable prejudice. If your disability is not visible, it is not always easy to explain what your support needs are. People don't believe the use of it. They think you are lying to them.

*Prejudices*

There is a standard picture of people who are going to study in higher education, of the competences they need to have. People with an intellectual disability often do not fit into this picture. Many prejudices stem from ignorance.

*Always have to prove themselves*

People with an intellectual disability are extra monitored. They have to debunk prejudices and pass all their courses. In addition, they also have to account for themselves continuously.

*I felt I had to prove that I was worthy to be there. (Brent)*

### Burden

Everyone carries his / her own burden. Every threshold that someone encounters, every setback marks a person. They take all this with them in their backpack. These experiences are often the reason why some people do or do not do certain things. They sometimes shy away from things to protect themselves.

*People sometimes say: Forget the past, but you can't. That also affects me enormously. (Jonathan)*

### The system of higher education

The higher education system itself is often experienced as inaccessible. The strong focus on obtaining a diploma, going through a predetermined route, the strict admission conditions, ... do not always match the objectives that people with intellectual disabilities set first.

*Higher education has a limited vision of who I am and what I am capable of. At college or university, I can also work on things that are important to me and my future. Higher education does not look that far. They are limited in their view of a person's future. (Brent)*

### Access >< accessibility

If access is only possible for those who have a diploma, this means that higher education is only an option for some and not for others. In addition, access does not mean that it is also accessible.

Ludo, a self-advocate of Our New Future, always speaks about four types of accessibility:

- physical accessibility (devices)
- intellectual accessibility (comprehensibility)
- relational accessibility (trust, openness, interaction, respect)
- structural accessibility (accessibility, usefulness, affordability and availability)

It is important that these four forms of accessibility are met. Only in this way a person with an intellectual disability can participate fully.

Kafer (2013) refers to this diade by citing Tanya Titchkosky: *"Access is not a synonym for justice but a beginning place for critical questioning."*

## GROUP PRACTICAL TESTS

The practical tests group was founded around the trajectories which are currently going on. These trajectories are - just like the people who follow them - very diverse.

Group practice tests consists of a group of 15 self-advocates in total. It concerns 15 people who are also part of the large group. Of these, 7 are (or will) go through a trajectory. The other 8 self-advocates follow up on the current trajectories.

This group meets (bi)monthly. During such a meeting, the various trajectories are discussed. The person who goes through the trajectory proposes his / her trajectory. In his/her absence, the self-advocate and / or coach who supports him / her takes on this task. If there are uncertainties or questions, the other attendees can raise them. Where necessary, the person can also ask (support) questions to the group.

This group is separate from the group that works on the script and is at the same time very closely associated with it. The experiences that these self-advocates gain in practice will feed the script and, conversely, the tips & tricks that the script group collects can be of added value for those who go through a process.

An overview of the 7 different trajectories is given broadly below.

- **Ludo**

Ludo has a special role within HiLives. He guided us, for example, through the Master Thesis 'Studeren met een verstandelijke beperking in het hoger onderwijs?' ('Studying with an intellectual disability in higher education?') of Toon Mailiard (2012), in which he cooperated as a co-researcher.

In this thesis Ludo repeatedly expressed his interest in acquiring knowledge and taking a course for that purpose. When Evelien asked him whether he was still interested in this, the answer turned out to be resolutely "yes". It also immediately became clear what he wanted to study, a course given within the Special Education Department. It was not yet entirely clear which course this would be. It was certain that he wanted to add theoretical knowledge to his many practical experiences as a person with an intellectual disability.

Soon, it was clear that it was not easy for Ludo to get started with this wish himself. This is not only because almost 10 years have passed between his participation in the thesis of Toon Maillard and HiLives, but also because he showed little initiative in exploring the different subjects or contacting Prof. Dr. Geert Van Hove and Dr. Elisabeth De Schauwer. The latter are close acquaintances of Ludo and also lecturers in the department of special education.

However, when Evelien started to support Ludo intensively, this changed and it became easier for Ludo to make decisions. When both considered this, it turned out that the courses of Elisabeth and Geert had already started. As a result, they started looking for courses that were taught in the second semester. The various study sheets were reviewed. As soon as it was clear to Ludo what each course included, it was very easy for him to make the decision. It turned out to be theoretical special education, a course of no less than 8 credits in the 3rd year bachelor.

Choosing the course was one thing. Getting everything done related to registration was more difficult. How does that work exactly? Can you just register for one course from the third bachelor? What are the conditions for this?

With Ludo's approval, Evelien contacted the Faculty Educational Support Service (FDO). A first appointment was soon scheduled. It turned out to be a very open and constructive conversation. Ludo spoke about his desire to develop himself intellectually. He also said he didn't necessarily want to take exams or get a degree. He just wants to gain knowledge, just like other students. Our contact person within the FDO made it clear that this was possible in the form of a credit contract. The only condition to be able to enrol appeared to have an approval from the responsible lecturer. Ludo and Evelien did not expect any major difficulties in this area. The lecturer in question is not only a colleague of Prof. Dr. Geert Van Hove and Dr. Elisabeth De Schauwer, but also someone who is fond of Our New Future. This presumption was quickly confirmed, as they got a very enthusiastic response.

Once that permission was granted, Ludo only had to register. At least, that's what Evelien thought. Before the registration could be made, Ludo had to fully participate in this story with his caregivers. Ludo lives together with 4 other people with an intellectual disability. He and his housemates receive support from caregivers who work for an institution. Fortunately, Ludo his caregivers are very supportive towards him. They help him to think about his trajectory and how he wants to set it up. His work turned out to be an important element in this. Certainly, when it turned out that the lessons did not match Ludo's days off. The possibility of changing his days off was thoroughly investigated by Ludo's caregivers.

Ludo's employer indicated that this is possible, but not evident. Ludo comes under progressive employment. This means that Ludo is exempted from working two days a week, because he cannot mentally cope with working more than 3 days a week. If he wants to take this course, he will have to request permission from the occupational physician (because of this

progressive employment). Ludo then runs the risk that the occupational physician will assume that he can work those two extra days a week, as he can follow a training. An argument that is not true at all.

That is why Ludo chose a plan B. He still wants to register as a student, but will not follow the lessons live. The fact that the lessons are recorded offers him the opportunity to make up for the lessons on his days off. If he has any questions, he puts them on e-mail. However, during the week of the study trip, he has taken a full week's leave to attend it with his fellow students.

Once this was all cleared up, we could proceed with the registration. This is now almost complete. Ludo will soon be able to officially call himself a student at Ghent University.

- **Lucas**

Lucas is 22 years old. When we got to know him, he was in the middle of a sabbatical year. A year in which he wanted to work on his independence without having other obligations.

Before that sabbatical year, Lucas was a student at Ghent University. He studied at the special education department. An entire new world opened up for him there. A world in which he could feel at home, where everyone looked at him as Lucas and not as 'that boy in a wheelchair', where he got to know his current friends, where he should not be afraid of bullying, ... Yet that academic world turned out to be no world for Lucas. Although he spread his subjects and was able to make use of reasonable accommodations, he struggled to keep up with the fast pace and process the large amounts of material. Statistics turned out to be the biggest stumbling block. Due to his CVD (Cerebral Visual Disorder), he experiences extra difficulties with this. Ultimately, Lucas dropped out because he couldn't get an exemption from this course and therefore had to pass it if he ever wanted to get his degree.

The sabbatical year offered him the necessary rest. However, as the end of the year was near, Lucas panicked. He realized that he was situated at a crossroad: the decision he would then make would largely determine his further life. For example, he wanted to enrol in the study Social-Cultural Work at the Artevelde University College. Rationally, Lucas knew very well that he had to tie the knot and enrol in that training. The fact that he was overcome with shock every time he thought of this made it difficult for him to live up to the deed.

Lucas was terrified. Frightened that it would not work - as with his studies at Ghent University. Frightened that he would not be able to live up to the high expectations he feels on all sides. Fear that he will not be included in the group. Fear that his teachers will not accept him.

At one point, he literally mentioned how these psychological barriers stand in his way more than the physical barriers. His overcrowded backpack clearly got in his way. However, something changed throughout our conversations. Lucas was increasingly able to distance himself from this backpack full of bad experiences. He was increasingly able to open himself up to the opportunities that this new direction could offer him.

When we heard shortly after that Lucas had enrolled in this study trajectory, we were simply perplexed. Lucas had found the strength to push aside all the rubbish and go for it. In fact, he had decided to follow the entire study program. He did not want to spread courses, but did appeal to the reasonable accommodations to which he is entitled.

Lucas independently takes care of everything in his trajectory. He thinks this is very important. He also wants to grow in this. We follow him from the margins, try to register his experiences as much as possible so that we too can learn from them.

In the meantime, Lucas has passed his first exams! He has succeeded all along the line. He even has an 18/20 for his internship!

- **Dominiek**

Dominiek is an experienced self-advocate. He is one of the first self-advocates within Our New Future and also has a lot of experience in guiding students. It did not surprise us that he was very keen to follow his own trajectory. Not as a student, but as a teacher and researcher in higher education.

Together with his assistant Lana, Evelien looked at how Dominiek wanted to shape his own trajectory.

- Dominiek wanted to teach a lesson with an assignment attached to it

Dominiek wanted to teach at a faculty or a university / college where they don't know him yet. He was curious to what extent they would be open to him as a teacher.

Dominiek wanted to teach a lesson about relationships and sexuality among people with an intellectual disability. He himself was shielded from this theme for a long time, so he only

became acquainted with it at a later age. Now he wants to break this taboo by talking about it. To initiate this conversation, he developed a "relationship board game" together with a student: a goose board game in which themes such as privacy, relationships, friendships and sexuality are discussed. This game is often used within Our New Future in working with people with disabilities and / or their caregivers.

After some research, we discovered that Ghent University offers a therapy course "sexuology". Dominiek immediately thought it would be a good idea to teach there. Unfortunately, it took a very long time before a response was received. The response that came was moderately enthusiastic. If everything goes well, Dominiek will receive more information about the possibilities in the spring of 2021.

- Supervising a master's thesis on the theme of sexual desires

In the 2019-2020 school year, Dominiek was involved in a study by the Catholic University of Leuven about sexual desires among people with an intellectual disability. This theme intrigued him. He thought it would be a great idea to conduct a similar study at Ghent University. In the spring of 2021, a student will be working on this theme for her thesis. Dominiek will guide her.

- Giving a task to students

Dominiek had already started working with this part himself. In the 2019-2020 school year, for example, he gave an assignment for the first time to the students of the special education synthesis course. He liked this so much that he wanted more. His assignment this year is about the impact of Covid-19 on the lives of people with an intellectual disability. To this end, the students will talk to people with an intellectual disability themselves.

At least, these were the original plans. Enthusiastic as Dominiek is, he is always open to more. He is also constantly thinking about new projects. Throughout the school year, the following projects came his way:

- Together with students of the special education synthesis course, he prepares a teaching package on the theme of sexuality in people with an intellectual disability.
- Giving a group assignment to students of the course 'Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Human Rights' in connection with the rights of people with a disability.

We are curious how all this will continue and what more will come to Dominiek's path!

- **Kimberley**

Even before HiLives got off to a good start, Kimberley seized her chance. She wanted to continue studying. However, it was not entirely clear to her whether she could do this. *Can someone with an intellectual disability study in higher education? Do you not need a degree for that?*

Kimberley asked a lot of questions. What was very clear to her from the start, however, was the direction she wanted to take.

*I would like to study childcare. Preferably at a centre for adult education. College or university is too ambitious for me. I don't want to go back to secondary school either. I am 30 years old and do not like to take lessons with 17, 18-year-olds.*

This question was followed by an initial exploratory search. *In which centre for adult education can you study childcare?* This search resulted in a list of 3 centres. One of those centres was found to be merged with another centre and the third centre did not offer the training in Kimberley's immediate surroundings.

The choice was therefore quickly made. At least for Kimberley. Her caregivers turned out to have many concerns. *Can Kimberley cope with the pressure and stress of studying? What about her long-term carrying capacities? What are the financial consequences if Kimberley starts working as a childcare worker after her education?* However, those concerns turned out not to be solely about Kimberley herself. *What's the impact of this on us? We don't have time to support Kimberley with her studies.*

Kimberley stays in a residential facility. She lives in a group together with 7 other people with an intellectual disability. Her caregivers ensure that every resident has a good time and that the practical, often household tasks, are completed successfully. The concerns of her caregivers made it clear that a good plan of action would be crucial. The following concrete agreements were made:

- Studying childcare is a unique chance for Kimberley to develop herself intellectually.
- Kimberley is not intended to complete the entire study. She can sample some or all of the courses, but does not have to pass.
- We will talk to someone who has experiences with similar studies and the CVO itself in preparation.
- Kimberley can rely on Our New Future for her support.



As soon as these agreements were made, the next step could be taken. Together with another self-advocate and coach, Kimberley listed all her questions for the CVO. They searched for answers to these questions on the CVO website. To get an answer to the remaining questions, an appointment was made with the coordinator of the training.



Figure 7 Conversation with Kimberley

The coordinator took Kimberley with her in the study trajectory and how it works. She answered her questions and was willing to investigate questions she could not answer herself. At the same time, she also radiated a certain concern. *Will this work? Will you take all courses in 1 year?* Yet this concern turned out to be irrelevant and Kimberley already made some concrete plans with her regarding the orientation trajectory she would follow and the courses she would take.

Then it was time again for a conversation with Kimberley her caregivers. They again emphasized that Kimberley will be able to count on little support from them. Another concern that surfaced was the fear that Kimberley would not connect with her fellow students.

None of this seemed to bother Kimberley. She had a good feeling when talking to the coordinator and she was incredibly excited to get started!

Even before the unfortunate news came that Kimberley would not be able to start in February 2021 due to organizational reasons within the program, things went a little less well for Kimberley. Her psychological well-being deteriorated, so she decided to take some time for herself and postpone the start of her training until September 2021.

- **Jonathan**

Jonathan is the youngest of the group at 17 years old. Despite this, he has a very clear picture of his future and what he thinks it should look like. Jonathan has an enormous fascination for eyes and glasses. It is therefore his dream to study optometry and later open an optician with special frames. A dream that is constantly being punctured from various sides.

When we got to know Jonathan, he had already attended 7 different schools. This concerns both mainstream and special education schools. Nowhere did he really seem to find his place. School 8 turned out not to be much better. Contact with his fellow students was anything but smooth, his teachers also showed the necessary reservations. The prospect that he would not be able to obtain his diploma at this regular school and thus would not be able to start studies in higher education forced him to take more drastic measures.

During the summer vacation of 2020, Jonathan moved to the Netherlands. He went to study there at a school for special education.(school 9) He was in a class where everyone had the opportunity to work at his / her own pace. At the end of the ride, Jonathan could get his diploma.

It was not difficult for Jonathan to take this step. His father lives in the Netherlands and Jonathan himself does not really have a special relationship with Belgium or his own region.

This does not mean that it was all easy. Jonathan got up every day at 5:30 am to get to school on time. His father's place of residence was not at all close to his school, so he had to travel (one way) for nearly two hours every day to get to school. This made them very long days. In addition, Jonathan his father insisted that Jonathan would work on his independence. He did this by living in a "kangaroo house" adjacent to his father's house.

In other words, a lot came together for Jonathan. That his school did not want to give him ownership of his own trajectory was the proverbial last straw. As a result, Jonathan spent two months at home without school, without classes. The search for the 10th school did not ran smoothly. Finally, the news came that Jonathan could go back to his previous, 8th school, in Belgium.

At the moment, he only takes up the subjects of economics and mathematics. This counts for 8 online hours of lessons each week. In addition, Jonathan is still looking for daily activities. It is currently uncertain which direction this will take.

What the further trajectory of Jonathan will bring, is difficult to predict. Nevertheless, we are still involved in his story. We keep searching for the possibilities to make his dream reality. This by taking small steps, such as a voluntary internship, obtaining information, an orientation course, ...

- **Didier**

Didier has been an important person within Our New Future. His announcement that he – all of a sudden? - wanted to study in higher education, was a surprise to many people.

Even though he had a very clear view on what he wanted from the start (*I want to study arts*), a further exploration seemed to be indispensable (*What does art mean to you? In which areas do you want to gain knowledge? In which area of this subject you want to deepen your knowledge?*).

Carli (self-advocate) and Evelien engaged to search together with Didier the best course to study. The starting point were his interests. They were many!



Figure 8 Conversation with Didier

As expected, the principal interests of Didier were mostly artistic. Poetry, singing, theatre, word art, drawing, ... But Didier was also interested in things that were different from this artistic path, such as: politics, doing research, teaching, working with children, coaching, accessibility, ...

As soon as all these interests of Didier were written on the large paper, which Evelien and Carli had brought with them, Didier thought it was important to think about his future. Evelien and Carli supported Didier to think about this. *Which of your interests would you like to continue working with in the future? What is your most important passion? Which talents do you want to develop?*

In Didier's vision of the future, three big parts were distinguishable.

First of all, the artistic part. This is Didier's passion. Inside the organisation of Our New Future, but also far beyond, Didier is well-known as a real poet. He often writes poems on demand, but he also makes poems himself when you have an appointment with him. The last months, Didier focused on his drawing capacities. It's mostly the latter in which he wants to develop.

The second part is coaching. Didier connects this beautifully to the artistic part. His dream is to become a guide in a culture house. He wants to help people in the discovery and understanding of art. He sees himself as a coach, a guide. To Didier, this is strongly connected with his interests in the area of experiential expertise, accessibility and research.

The third part, finally, is working with children. Didier doesn't necessarily want to develop himself within this theme. He enjoys his voluntary work in Melopee. This is a nursery and primary school in which he supports the teachers two days a week. He just wants to be and to stay a part of this team in the future. Nevertheless, he would like to set up and support creative projects with children.

Little by little, it became clear for Didier what he wanted to do exactly. This was the start of his first exploring search. *Where can Didier develop in the artistic area? In which way, a correlation between the artistic work and working with children can be created? Do any places exist where Didier can develop his coaching talents?*

This search is still going on right now. We keep in mind that Didier now focusses on the artistic part, but also that this can still change in one of the other two parts.

- Karel

Karel is 24 years old and goes to a school for special education. Karel is taught in teaching module 1. This module is aimed at guiding youngsters to a protected living and working environment. As a consequence, higher education is not seen as a logic sequel. Nevertheless this is Karel's desire.

Karel wants to study special education at the university, because he likes to work with people. He wants to learn more about humans and how he can help them. The target group he wants to work with has not yet been determined.

Karel does not only want to gain new experiences on a theoretical level: he also wants to do an internship. He sees further studies as an opportunity to get to know new people and develop friendships. In addition, he wants to get to know himself better in this way and further develop his own skills.

Where his thoughts were initially focused on following a full study program at the university, his doubts about this gradually increased. *Wouldn't it be better for him to take a few courses rather than the full package?* It is striking that his own steadfastness decreased as he shared his wish to continue studying with others (assistants, parents, teachers, ...).

It was time to take a step back. We asked Karel to let go of his fixation on special education and the university and we went in search of his interests together. We let him dream about the things he likes to do, apart from school.

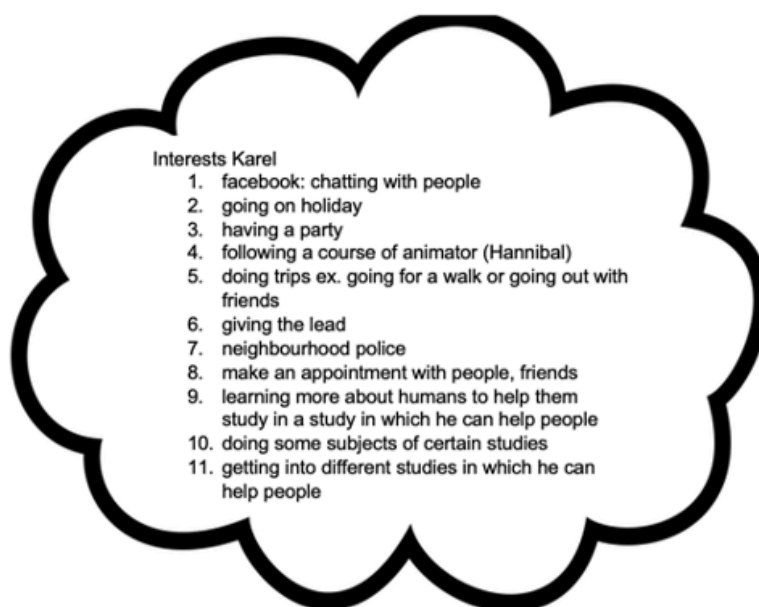


Figure 9 Karel interests

In addition, we went through the 'education selector' with him. This is a questionnaire that can provide more information about which study could possibly be of interest to someone who wants to continue studying.

As the education selector for higher education turned out not to be accessible enough, Karel chose to use a different education selector: education selector junior – designed for secondary school students.

The three areas of interest that emerged thanks to this education selector were: human sciences, personal care and tourism/reception.

The education selector has cost a lot of time and energy. Karel wants to investigate which fields of study covers his interests within these three domains. We will therefore focus on this in the coming weeks and months.

## **WHAT WILL THE COMING MONTHS OFFER?**

Although a lot of work has already been done, we are very much looking forward to everything that is yet to come. This is still on the schedule for the coming months:

- Watch and discuss Dan Habib's film *Opening Doors to College* (large group).
- Discuss the story of Carli and Sofie about their journey in higher education (large group).
- Interviewing people with an intellectual disability who want to start, run or have completed a higher education pathway (group script).
- Elaboration of a first version of the script (group script).
- Continuing to follow up on the current trajectories (group practical tests).
- Setting up at least one new trajectory (group practical tests).
- Publishing the trajectories in the form of a diary (group practical tests).
- Visual work: giving a picture of the experiences of the self-advocates.
- Research into self-image: What is the impact of studying at higher education on the self-image of people with an intellectual disability.
- Make our own version of the higher education decree (new group?).
- Explore the opportunities that micro-credentials can potentially offer.
- Establish exploratory contacts with the Flemish Universities and University Council, the Flemish Interuniversity Council and the Flemish University Council.

# Stakeholders Point of View: The voice of members of the self-advocacy movement in the Flemish speaking part of Belgium (Easy-To-Read-Version)

*Evelien De Maesschalck and Geert Van Hove*

## Situation in Flanders

Belgium ratified the **UN-convention on the rights of people with a disability** in 2009.

This implies that Belgium:

- signed the convention
- and will make sure that these rights are being implemented in policy frameworks

In article 24 of this convention, it is stated that people with a disability have the **right to study in higher education and in adult education**.

In Flanders, the **Flemish community** bears the responsibility to put this right into practice.

The Flemish government has made up **two laws**:

- **A legal text for higher education**

This law tells us something more about **what higher education means and how it works**.

In this law you can find which **trainings** universities and university colleges offer.

This law tells us about:

- Which degrees you can get.
- Which requirements are set to be admitted.
- Which are the requirements to sign up for a training.
- What inclusive higher education means.

- **A legal text in favour of adult education**

This law tells us something about **what adult education means and how it works**.

This law tells us about:

- Which conditions exist to be admitted.
- What adult education should do to support vulnerable students.

These laws make clear that the Flemish government does efforts to help students with an intellectual disability.

But still a lot of work needs to be done.



## HiLives in Flanders

In the HiLives project, we reflect upon the question:

**“How can people with an intellectual disability participate in higher education?”.**

To this end, we work together with the **self-advocates of Our New Future**.

Our New Future is an organisation in which people with an intellectual disability defend their rights.

Our New Future helps us to look in a different way to this question.

They think it is important not to limit the concept of **“intellectual disability”** to one fixed definition. Everyone with a disability must have the opportunity to study in higher education.

They think it is important to use the word **‘participation’**. Participation implies studying, teaching and doing research in higher education.

**Higher education** is being considered as a very broad term. It implies University Colleges, Universities, Adult Education, ...

On the 1st of April 2020, we started working on the HiLives project In Flanders.

First of all, we did **a lot of talking with the self-advocates** of Our New Future.

They shared their opinions and experiences about higher education.

They explained what’s important to them. They also talked about thresholds they came across.

Later, we called this group the **large group**.

This group kept on sharing their opinion and ideas, but also increasingly followed the more practical side of the project.

Out of this group, two little groups emerged:

- **Group script**

Group script was founded, because the self-advocates experienced the need to have a grip. This is **something or someone they can rely on when they have questions**.

In this group, we look for things that people with intellectual disabilities want to know before they start studying.

Our goal is to create a manual in which the vast majority of these questions is being answered.

- **Group practical tests**

In the group of the practical tests, we are **very bold!** We look for the possibilities that people with intellectual disabilities have to study, to teach or to do research in higher education.

Do they get as many opportunities as people without a disability? What are the thresholds they encounter? This is what interests us.

In total, **7 people are doing a trajectory in higher education.**

This is what we have been working on from April 2020 until March 2021.

In the coming months, we want to continue what we have right now. We are also brooding on **new plans.**

**Do you have any ideas on what we can do?** Please, send an e-mail to Evelien: [evelien.demaesschalck@ont.be](mailto:evelien.demaesschalck@ont.be)

**EVIDENCE BASED AND  
INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE**

# Scoping Review - Opening Higher Education to students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: the evidence

*Paula Coelho Santos, Ágústa Rós Björnsdóttir, António Augusto Neto Mendes, Gabriela Duarte, Gabriela Portugal, Gracinda Martins, Helena Araújo e Sá, Helena Gunnarsdóttir, Jane Machado, Manuela Gonçalves, Marisa Maia Machado and Virgínia Chalegre*

## Abstract

Higher Education is the ultimate opportunity for those who look for education and formation to optimize their full human potential in all dimensions, including the access to full professional satisfaction. Although in many countries Higher Education has been fully inclusive for many years, there are many others where it's not accessible to some individuals or groups, namely people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. And even those who are accessible, assume quite different designs, corresponding to different curricula and, therefore, to significantly different ways of participating in Higher Education.

This report presents the results of a literature scoping review conducted within the project "HiLives - Including and Connecting in Higher Education: networking opportunities for independent lives", funded by the European Commission through the ERASMUS+ Program [KA203 - Strategic Partnerships for higher education]. The aim was to find evidence for foundations relevant to inclusion of students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Higher Education.

The results, emerging from studies developed in different countries and diverse continents, cover a wide range of dimensions and elements that proved to be relevant in the search for transforming Higher Education institutions in contexts that are truly able to become accessible and include ALL students, thus, pointing a diversity of opportunities through which one can improve their inclusiveness.

**Keywords:** *Higher education; Intellectual and developmental disabilities; Inclusion.*

## Introduction

Motivated by the will of contributing to the process of transforming the European Higher Education (HE) into a more accessible and inclusive setting, namely in some countries that have not yet fully opened their "doors" to students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), we have formed a consortium made up of four universities - Aveiro (Portugal), Salamanca (Spain), Ghent (Belgium), and Iceland -, and four Portuguese non-governmental organizations - ASSOL, Pais-em-Rede, FORMEM and AVisPT21. The European Commission, through the ERASMUS+ Programme [KA203 - Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education], approved and funded the "HiLives Project - Including and Connecting in Higher Education: networking opportunities for independent lives" – which intellectual outputs (IOs) are:

- IO1 - the Transnational / European foundations for the development of an inclusive, flexible and student-centered HE curriculum accessible to young adults with IDD.
- IO2 - a prototype of a digital tool to connect and network opportunities, tackling gaps and mismatches between the expectations, skills and needs of young adults with IDD, and both the HE offer and the employment opportunities.
- IO3 - a Transnational/European good practice guide for HE Institutions, Secondary Schools, and Employers, aiming to help young adults with IDD to access HE and start an independent life.

The transnational/European foundations for the development of an inclusive, flexible, and student-centered HE curriculum for young adults with IDD (IO1) is organized into three parts: (i) the normative and regulations relevant for inclusion of people with IDD after completion of compulsory education; (ii) the views of the stakeholders toward access and inclusion of people with IDD in HE; and (iii) the evidence available about processes and results relevant for promoting access and inclusion of people with IDD in HE.

This document presents "the evidence", namely, the results of a literature review developed under the principles of the *scoping review methodology* (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2020). The data, emerging from studies developed in different countries and continents, cover a wide range of categories and subcategories, mainly within the elements established by O'Brien et al. (2019) as prominent in the search for transforming HE institutions in accessible, inclusive academic and social environments, able to include ALL students, in their uniqueness and singularity.

“Inclusive rhetoric versus reality”, presented in Table 49, applies to the equation proposed by O’Brien et al. (2019) for organizing eight elements pertinent for designing and implementing inclusive programs in HE, accessible to students with IDD, within two “positions”: (i) Operationalizing an “Inclusive human right”; and (ii) Keeping people in “their right place”.

Table 49 Inclusive rhetoric versus reality (O’Brien et al., 2019)

Element	Operationalizing an “Inclusive human right”	Keeping people in “their right place”
Model	Full inclusion	Locational inclusion on the university campus
Funding	Guaranteed and sustained government funding to support inclusive initiatives	One off funding grants from government, philanthropies or corporates
Admission policy	Open to enrolling students with intellectual disability (ID) into courses without them having to have university entrance exam scores or being a mature aged student	Auditing courses only owing to lack of entry grades; visitor/affiliate status arising from participating in a special program
Accreditation rules and regulations	University supports development of new course that includes students with ID into life of university	Students attend classes, but do not receive written university recognition of competencies
Support services	All university support services, inclusive of medical counselling, disability tutoring services	Official support only available if the student is officially enrolled
Inclusive pedagogy	Academics design their courses and instruction according to the principles of Universal Design for Learning to meet the diverse needs of all learners	Academics design their courses and instruction to meet the needs of the “average” student.
Graduation policy	Graduate from the university with full recognition of course completed on official transcripts	Presentation/internal award evenings with certificate of Attendance only
Disability policy	Inclusion of people with ID strategically included in the policy and practice of the university	People with intellectual disability not included as students within the university’s rules and regulations

Source: O’Brien, P., Bonati, M., Gadow, F., Slee, R. (2019). Moving from Rhetoric to Reality: Inclusive Tertiary Education for Adults with Intellectual Disability. In Patricia O’Brien, Michelle L. Bonati, Friederike Gadow, Roger Slee (Eds.), *People with Intellectual Disability Experiencing University Life: Theoretical Underpinnings, Evidence and Lived Experience*, (pp. 277-287). Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.

Inspired by this “formula”, the HiLives team used “webQDA, a Qualitative Data Analysis Software” (version 3.0) and obtained a “tree” composed by five categories and 28 sub-categories found in the 100 scientific sources – articles in journals and books - selected in Scopus and ERIC databases, and a few other, published in the languages of the HiLives partners (Portuguese, Spanish, Flemish and Icelandic), in the time range between 2011 and 2020, according to the PCC strategy: Population (P) - students with intellectual and developmental disabilities; Concept (C) – Inclusion; and Context (C) – Higher Education. The search question guiding the team efforts was “Which elements are relevant to the foundations of the inclusion of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Higher Education?”. The departing indicators were Themes/Models;

Subthemes/elements; Authors; Year and country when/where the study took place; Participants; Aims; Main findings; Main conclusions/recommendations; Categories found, according to the proposal of O’Brien et al. (2019). A new category, “Personal and social development”, emerged from 18 of the 100 analyzed articles, enriching the initial *elements*, as shown in Table 50.

Table 50 Personal and social development in inclusive Higher Education path

<b>Element</b>	<b>Operationalizing an “Inclusive human right” (O’Brien et al., 2019)</b>	<b>Keeping people in “their right place” (O’Brien et al., 2019)</b>
Personal and social development	Students with ID participate in the university life (academic, social,...) according to their interests, needs and motivations, acceding to support that nourishes their personal and social development, braiding opportunities with experiences in an individual, unique manner.	Students are guided by pre-defined academic and social experiences and are expected to respond within certain parameters of behavior, attitudes, and knowledge.

Source: the researchers.

Table 51 presents the final group of categories and sub-categories emerged from the scoping review developed.

Table 51 Group of categories and sub-categories emerged from the scoping review developed by the HiLives Project team focusing on inclusion of students with IDD in HE

Categories	Sub-categories
1. Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full inclusion</li> <li>- Mixed or hybrid programs</li> <li>- Locational inclusion or substantially separate programs</li> </ul>
2. Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding</li> <li>- Accreditation and regulations</li> <li>- Admission policy</li> <li>- Graduation policy</li> <li>- Disability policy</li> </ul>
3. Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Logistical, adjustments and volunteering</li> <li>- Digital solutions supporting inclusion in HE</li> <li>- Opportunities for training and professional development (Staff, mentors and volunteers)</li> <li>- Community dynamics supporting the program</li> <li>- Team structure and dynamics</li> <li>- Transition from High School to Higher Education</li> <li>- Transition from Higher Education to Employment/Professional Life</li> </ul>
4. Inclusive pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)</li> <li>- Problem-based Learning (PBL)</li> <li>- Person-centered Planning (PCP)</li> <li>- Curricular accommodations</li> <li>- (Peer) Mentoring</li> <li>- Academic Tutoring</li> <li>- Collaboration between stakeholders</li> </ul>
5. Personal and Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-determination</li> <li>- Quality of Life</li> <li>- Opportunities for students with IDD to socialize among peers</li> <li>- Health and wellness</li> <li>- Inclusive residence [in campus]</li> <li>- Opportunities for involving in Trusting Relationships</li> </ul>

Source: the researchers.

The studies found in the literature, involving students, parents, and staff (including management), identify areas of major need of improvement, as well as principles, recommended practices, and new approaches to develop, covering the different elements and proposing a multitude of descriptors for evaluation and intervention. The five chapters of this document are dedicated to each category, and respective sub-categories.



## Chapter 1 – Model

Smith and Benito (2013) point the need for the programs to establish a set of core values and principles – e.g., inclusion, collaboration, support, social capital, and quality of life -, which will guide and orient the stakeholders, permitting to establish a path and to develop a culture [of inclusion], thus supporting the development of a sense of belongingness and participation in the context, vital pieces for learning and inclusion.

Martinez et al. (2012), based on the data emerged from staff views, identified six major themes: (1) motivations for agreeing to host the auditing students; (2) attitudes to inclusive practices; (3) impact on other students, of the participation of their colleagues with IDD in inclusive classes; (4) adjustments and challenges within existing teaching practices; (5) resource issues; and (6) suggested improvements to the auditing arrangements.

Gasset et al. (2010), describing the UAM - Prodis Patronage Chair program, point out the three principles supporting it: (i) the principle of individualization - it starts from recognizing the difference, the right to cultivate it, and the enrichment of everyone because of it; (ii) the principle of integration – it's about offering all people the same opportunities and in the same environment; (iii) the principle of standardization - offering an *open space* and multiple services, as standardized as possible, together with other university students.

The participation of students with intellectual disabilities (SWID) in college classes benefit both the SWID and their peers without disabilities (Green et al., 2017).

Several studies stress the importance of **offering a post-program support** to promote the maintenance of the results achieved during the experience of an inclusive HE (Ramirez, 2013; Hendrickson et al. 2013; Judge & Gasset, 2015). Diverse initiatives can be implemented, guaranteeing (i) ongoing training throughout the life of the participants, so they're able to continue exercising their right to work in inclusive work environments; and (ii) providing the necessary support for individuals with IDD to achieve independent living as full members in their community (Judge & Gasset, 2015).

Different design, different curricula, and organizational arrangements – corresponding to distinct opportunities to participate in the Higher Education (HE) context - can be found in the literature. All of them aim to promote and guarantee the inclusiveness of the context, providing “training, tailored to individual differences, to enable youth with IDD to work in inclusive work environments”

(Judge & Gasset, 2015). The diagram in Figure 10 shows the most representative models of inclusion in HE.

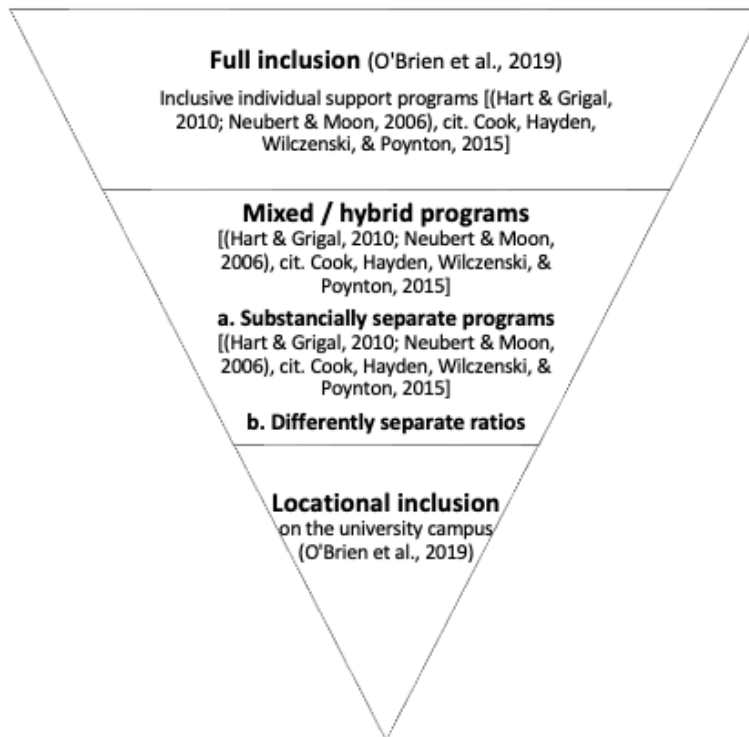


Figure 10 Models of Inclusion in Higher Education. Source: the authors

Transversal to all models, we can identify three transversal recommended principles: offering opportunities to socialize with peers without disabilities; developing an inclusive extended curriculum; and offering a post-program initiative, supporting transition and further experiences and events towards an active and independent life.

Many authors highlight the importance of guaranteeing **opportunities** for SWID to **socialize among peers without disabilities** as inclusion is about communication and interaction, not only in formal occasions, but also in informal ones (Hendrickson et al. 2015; Hendrickson et al. 2013; O'Connor et al., 2012; Gasset, 2012; Martinez & Bilbao, 2011; Moreno, 2017; Griffin et al., 2016; Kelley et al., 2016; Lewis, 2017).

Attitudes are one of the main elements that may facilitate or hinder the process of inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education, and knowledge of such attitudes can help foster a process of changing to ensure that our universities reflect a positive vision of people with disabilities with opportunities, potentials, capacities, rights, and freedoms comparable to those of other people (Martinez & Bilbao, 2011).

Students with ID are highly valued by all members of the university community who state that "the presence of people with disabilities enriches the university". Students with ID express deep appreciation for the acceptance of the university community, feel privileged, and express that the university has given them the opportunity to increase their autonomy and self-confidence by valuing themselves much more as individuals. About employment results, 92% of the graduates get a job (permanent in 74% of the cases). Their job positions are very diverse, since the training they receive is generalist. When a student begins to work, the methodology of supported employment allows him or her to learn the specific task required by the job. Employers and co-workers in the sample studied are highly satisfied with the program, and specially value the work done by the job coaches (Gasset, 2012).

Students attending "Next Steps Program" participate in an undergraduate course each semester. It involves activities designed for students (e.g., employment internships, student clubs, and other social opportunities). Moreover, they spend 10 hours per week in scheduled sessions with peer mentors; meet "exercise partners" and join them in some form of exercise— from pick-up basketball to attending a yoga class (Griffin et al., 2016).

Sharing spaces and activities with university SWID is a key-feature to their acceptance by other students without disabilities. However, real inclusion is easier in some university degrees, mostly related to social sciences. More knowledge about disability is needed to facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities within the University context (Moreno, 2017).

**Inclusive extended curriculum** comprehends the initiatives and efforts to implement in the curricula of all courses, the resources and techniques that proved to promote inclusiveness in one or more courses; this means that the processes and results must be scrutinized, monitored, evaluated, in order to identify successes and difficulties across the whole curriculum of the program, and thus facilitate the communication between all the stakeholders and the implementation of what is working in one situation, to another (teachers, students, mentors, tutors, other support staff, families,...) (Hendrickson et al. 2013; Ramirez, 2013; Lewis, 2017; Manikas et al., 2018).

Also, the social function of the university needs to expand towards a lifelong learning approach that reflects the social inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities (Ramirez, 2013).

The HE institutions have the opportunity to extend the experience of the SWID through the community, mediating and promoting partnerships with community agencies. Inclusive community service experiences can be extended to structured, organized activities, so that more students have

opportunities to serve alongside their peers. A study focusing on a volunteer experience in which students worked together to plan aspects of a service project, addressed to aging adults in the community, showed that the students – having reflected upon the experience and shared their personal insights -, benefited from participating (Manikas et al., 2018).

“People First Initiative” (PFI) is a student’s organization based on promoting awareness and dedicated to creating and fostering social inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Their mission is to create equal and reciprocal relationships between typically developing individuals and individuals with disabilities to reduce misconceptions based in prejudice, believing that such relationships are mutually beneficial, and are the first step to create an equitable society in which diversity is celebrated (About PFI, 2015, cited by Lewis, 2017). PFI hosts different regular events on campus, from a disability-related speaker series to campus accessibility tours led by students with disabilities (Lewis, 2017).

To promote equal opportunities in the maintenance and promotion of the employment of people with IDD, and offering continued employment support, is of major importance (Judge & Gasset, 2015), and a role to be taken by the HE institutions. In fact, the relevance of providing a post-program support is widely established as a condition to maintain the achievements made during their stay in Higher Education (Hendrickson et al., 2015).

Alcazar (2019) describes two Higher Education profiles aimed to answer to the diversity of interests and needs of the students: EDUCADEMOS enables the young person to perform various tasks in the educational environment, both in activities related to the direct care of students and other related to the administration and maintenance of the center; it provides the development of skills related to child development, basic care and child needs, as well as those related to administrative services, library and concierge; professional opportunities are offered in spaces such as Nursery Schools, Primary Education Centers, Leisure Centers, Libraries and Special Education Centers; TECNODEMOS is aimed at all those young people who want to work in more technological or business environments; it provides skills in order to carry out activities related to new technologies, computerized information processing, as well as those related to administrative management.

Staff views on six major themes were identified by Martinez et al. (2012): (1) motivations for agreeing to host the auditing students; (2) attitudes to inclusive practices; (3) impact of the auditing students in participation of other students (4) adjustments and challenges within existing teaching

practices; (5) resource issues; and (6) suggested improvements to the auditing arrangements or themes. In summary, implications for theory, measurement, practice, and public policy include a clear need for improved information and dissemination practices regarding PSE as a transition option.

Hendrickson et al. (2015) describe good educational practices, such as (a) Group dynamics - students working with other students on projects during class, b) Transition to Profession / Employment - Socio-professional experiences for employment - students talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, and (c) students experiencing a campus environment that provides the supports that the student needs to thrive socially positively affect the cognitive development, learning orientations, and educational aspirations of students. Collaboration between teachers, tutors, mentors, academic community, families and other stakeholders is a key element: Inclusive and successful accommodations result from the cooperative efforts of multiple stakeholders. A holistic student development philosophy is considered essential to student success.

So, departing from these transversals, it is possible to design different HE inclusive programs, combining the elements in different curricula, regarding: the organization of the curriculum, the participation of the SWID in formal and social situations in the academic community, and, in fact, the whole (and never ending) process of transformation of the HE institution (HEI) in a more inclusive one. The literature reports three main models characterized ahead: full inclusion, mixed or hybrid programs, and locational inclusion or substantially separate programs.

## **Full inclusion**

*Full inclusion* happens when SWID attend HE alongside with their peers, in regular classes and curricular units, participating in equitable opportunities and accessing resources and adaptations, such as tutoring, mentoring, inclusive pedagogy, universal design for learning and teacher training (Qian et al., 2018; Lifshitz, 2018; Griffin et al., 2012; May, 2012; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Izzo & Shuman, 2013; Lynch & Getzel, 2013; Miller et al., 2018; Smith & Benito, 2013; Kelley & Westling, 2013).

Inclusion experiences are provided through natural inclusive opportunities, structured inclusive opportunities, and academic inclusive opportunities (Moore & Schelling, 2015).

Although meeting the criteria for “full inclusion programs”, a diversity of curricula can be found. For example, the *Diploma* program at the School of Education of the University of Iceland, a

program accessible to SWID has never been a “special” curriculum; the learning outcomes for each course are adapted to meet the needs of each student who also receives support from student mentors (undergraduate students at the School of Education) (Björnsdóttir, 2017).

The focus of inclusive individual support models is to engage SWID through inclusive practices (Hart & Grigal, 2010, cited by Cook, 2015). That is, students participate in all aspects of the campus community, like mainstream college students, with additional counseling and instructional supports (Folk et al., 2012, cited by Cook, 2015). For example, such programs often provide education coaches to work individually and in small groups to assist students in reaching educational and career goals (Hart & Grigal, 2010, cited by Cook, 2015). There are opportunities to engage in inclusive higher education programs while working toward high school completion. Such dual enrollment programs allow SWID to gain exposure to a college setting through inclusive programming, and they typically receive coordinated transition assistance through services provided at both the college and high school. Once high school is complete, SWID in these dual enrollment programs may continue to participate in college-related experiences like mainstream students. These experiences include, for example, engaging in student orientation, completing placement tests, and meeting with academic advisors (Hart & Grigal, 2010, cited by Cook, 2015). They also have the opportunity to complete project-sponsored workshops, which provide development and training in employability skills, study skills, money management, and other life skills.

The UI REACH is a two-year certificate program designed to provide young men and women with autism and other ID an opportunity for a holistic college experience—an experience similar to that of undergraduates at the university. The UI REACH model emphasizes four areas: (i) Inclusive Student Life, (ii) Person-Centered Planning and Academic Enrichment, (iii) Career Development and Inclusive Internships, and (iv) Post-Program Support. The foundation of these four areas involves dynamic, collaborative interactions with the student, family, and community. Being a holistic college experience program, its focus is on student-centered and programmatic goal areas. Student-centered goal activities include collaborative teamwork, the core curriculum, person-centered advising, inclusive residence hall life, integrated academics, community internships, and campus/community engagement. Program goal activities pertain to the advisory board, the support of university systems, the family-alumni association, community partnerships, campus wide supports, professional and staff development, and evaluation processes (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

## Mixed or hybrid programs

The “mixed” or “hybrid programs” preview the participation of SWID in HE in a combination of regular plus specific curricular units (specifically created for students with IDD), who attend them in regular or separated classes, respectively (Herrero et al., 2020; Love & Mock, 2019; Björnsdóttir, 2017; Green et al., 2017; Moreno-Rodriguez et al., 2019; Cook et al., 2015; Griffin et al., 2016; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Judge & Gasset, 2015).

While participation in coursework and campus activities within programs following the substantially separate model are primarily exclusive to students with IDD, the mixed/hybrid model offers greater opportunities for SWID to be involved in campus activities with mainstream college students (Hart & Grigal, 2010, cited by Cook et al. 2015). In these mixed/hybrid programs, SWID typically complete specific coursework on life skills development, such as building financial literacy and independent living skills, and they often have opportunities to engage in internships and job training while attending some college courses alongside traditional college students (Casale-Giannola & Kamens, 2006, cited by Cook, 2015).

Although mixed/hybrid programs are often two-year programs, they vary in length and offerings, and tend to offer more opportunities for inclusion, both in coursework and campus activities, than programs following a substantially separate model (Hart & Grigal, 2010, cited by Cook, 2015).

A variety of programs can be found, combining in diverse ways resources and strategies, according to the principles and demanding of the specific HE context.

The *Promotor Programme* (Herrero et al., 2020) follows a mixed model of inclusion in the university environment, offering support services to the academic community and to the family of the students with IDD. Following an inclusive pedagogy approach, the educational methodologies adopted in the course, and its assessment, criteria, and techniques, are adapted to each student’s needs.

The UI REACH Program model emphasizes four areas: Opportunities for Personal and Social Development; Inclusive Student Life; Inclusive Pedagogy - person-centered planning, academic enrichment, career development and inclusive internships; and Post-program Support (Hendrickson et al., 2015). At UI REACH, full-time SWID participate in a minimum of six semester hours of required core classes; core classes at UI REACH are designed to improve students’ life skills in such areas as health and wellness, financial management, career awareness and development, social and

interpersonal skills, literacy, and computers and technology (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Core classes are taught cooperatively, by either two co-teachers (Walther-Thomas, 1997) or a lead teacher and a mentor. Courses of one to four semester hours meet in classrooms across campus with a typical class size of 12-20 students. Students attend study sessions during two-to-three late afternoons per week and may go to a Wednesday evening study session in the residence hall. Students are assisted by trained tutors who support completion of course assignments. Tutors are encouraged to be respectful, build rapport, use multiple strategies for assisting students (e.g., active listening techniques, serving as a scribe, organizational strategies), communicate with and bring questions to staff, and generally create a supportive learning environment for all students (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

Within the *Next Steps* program (Vanderbilt University), SWID participate in an undergraduate course each semester, with activities specifically designed for them (e.g., employment internships), student clubs, and other social opportunities; students spend 10 hours per week in scheduled sessions with peer mentors (Griffin et al., 2016).

At the University Rey Juan Carlos of Madrid, a one-year program for people with IDD is provided. The teaching methodology includes service-learning, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and flexible groupings. The 30 ECTS program combines participation in ordinary undergraduate classes with specific training (Moreno-Rodriguez et al., 2019).

Students participated in the *College Experience Program* (**The College of Saint Rose and Living Resources**) between two and four years, based upon interest level and funding. More than 50% of a student's day was spent participating in nondisabled, inclusive college experiences on campus (Love & Mock, 2019).

### **Locational inclusion or substantially separate programs**

The "locational inclusion" model comprehends the programs where the SWID attend separated classes in a HE institution, studying courses specifically created for them, participating only in classes with other students with disabilities, and thus there's often little connection with mainstream college students (Lifshitz, 2018; Moore & Schelling, 2015; Cook et al., 2015; Lewis, 2017). The coursework provided is designed to address the diverse learning needs of students with IDD, including teaching life skills (Hart & Grigal, 2010; Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez, & Will, 2006, cited by Cook et al., 2015).



The program *Transition Opportunities*, at the University of Rochester (TOUR), launched in 1997, had a dedicated, separate space on campus. SWID received a rich education in independent living, health and wellness, and employment preparation. They had access to campus resources including the library, dining centers, and recreation facilities. But for twenty years, TOUR students were without access to the college courses offered by the University of Rochester to its *traditional* students. Their transition and independent living education were of excellent quality, but decidedly separate from the rest of the campus community (Lewis, 2017).

Colleges and postsecondary institutions running programs following a substantially separate model offer distinct course work and activities for students with IDD, and thus there is often little connection with mainstream college students (Hart & Grigal, 2010, cited by Cook, 2015). The coursework provided is designed to address the various learning needs of students with IDD, commonly including teaching life skills (Hart & Grigal, 2010; Hart et al., 2006; cited by Cook, 2015).

Framing, shaping and materializing each model, there are policies, resources, competences, dynamics and practices that proved to be relevant for the way SWID experience, participate and learn in the HE context. In sum, relevant to promote inclusion and equity at the HE contexts. The second chapter is dedicated to present the main policies reported in literature as pertinent to frame and shape the HE inclusive programs. They should cover the domains of funding, accreditation and regulations, and admission, graduation, and disability policies.

## Chapter 2 – Policies

It is necessary to develop inclusive policies in the university environment in response to a demand for justice, and for the optimized enrichment of the University. Inclusive organizations in themselves, where all members are trained to deal with diversity, where disability is valued as a source of enrichment for the educational community as a whole, and for its institutional development, should be encouraged; supports for students with disabilities is one of the quality standards that should be met by all universities in the new framework of the European HE Area (Cerrillo et al., 2013).

Implementing these programs requires efforts, more resources and the preparation of the university community. The results fully justify the efforts made. The experience should be extended to other universities. Public policies should be developed to allow young people with mild intellectual disabilities and with scarce resources to opt for this educational experience (Aguilar & Fürstenberg, 2012).

### Funding

In many countries, the public governmental policies do not permit to apply public funds in HE programs non-conferring academic degree. So, the HEIs determined to offer inclusive programs, accessible to IDD, must work to find sponsors willing to be part of a consortium to make it possible to implement such a program.

In the context of the HEIs determined to offer inclusive programs, accessible to students with IDD, other sources of funding, not related to special education, are requested to avoid the restrictions that might be imposed by an education funder; the funding is specifically designated to hire facilitators, not to fund faculty or the infrastructure of the postsecondary institutions (Oakes & Thorpe, 2019; Uditsky & Hughson, 2012).

The United States of America (USA) Department of Education created the “Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID)”, which provides grants to HE institutions or consortia to “enable them to create or expand high quality, inclusive model comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities”<sup>209</sup> (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

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<sup>209</sup> U.S. Department of Education (2015). Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities. Retrieved at 14-10-2021 from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/tpsid/index.html>

Miller et al. (2018) describe a combination of paid supports and volunteers assisting ICS<sup>210</sup> students in having a comprehensive university experience that prepares them for life following graduation.

The Federal Office of Postsecondary Education (USA) funds a program to demonstrate opportunities for SWID having authentic college experiences that lead to successful career and life paths (Lynch & Getzel, 2013).

The University of Rochester became one of forty-four campuses nationwide to receive funding from a Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) grant, awarded by the Department of Education. TPSID grants are designed to either expand existing programs for SWID or develop brand new initiatives in colleges across the United States (Grigal & Hart, 2010). Grant recipients are funded for five years and are charged with observing and applying the Think College Standards, Quality Indicators, and Benchmarks for Inclusive Higher Education (Think College, 2009) developed by the Think College, at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, the national coordinating center for the TPSID grant project (Lewis, 2017).

In the USA, families requiring financial support may submit a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Additionally, UI REACH has generous scholarships for both in-state and out-of-state students (Hendrickson et al., 2013). The TPSID model demonstration project is funded by the USA Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education (Papay et al., 2018; Qian et al., 2018). The Higher Education Opportunities Act (2008) introduced new provisions aimed at increasing access to PSE (e.g., eligibility for financial aid), funded cohorts of modal demonstration programs and established a national technical assistance center (Bumble et al., 2019).

The nonprofit disability agencies, by making available staff members on campus, aimed to support adults with IDD attending the college, play an important role (Love & Mock, 2019).

Another example is the Michael Cameron Fund, established in memory of a child with Down Syndrome (Michael Cameron) by his family, who sustains the Down Syndrome Research Program (Faragher, 2019).

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<sup>210</sup> Integrative Community Studies (ICS) certificate program at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG).

In campuses, two different categories of support staff can be found: academic staff employed by the university; and life support staff, employed by a partnering nonprofit organization to provide person-centered, habilitative (or enabling) supports.

There are programs where the main source of funding is a contract with the state vocational rehabilitation agency, with some public services and foundations contributing with donations (Fisher et al., 2020). Tuffrey-Wijne et al. (2020) describe an inclusive HE program paid by the National Institute for Health Research of the United Kingdom.

## **Accreditation and regulations**

One important element in HE inclusive programs is the degree to which students are included in state assessments (regular assessment with or without accommodations, alternate assessment, or waived assessment) (Shogren et al., 2018).

Papay et al. (2018) describe different types of enrollments in inclusive courses (non-credit student; student with standard IHE credit; unofficially attending/sitting in on course; not for-credit or as a non-credit student; course with TPSID credential).

## **Admission policy**

The findings set out a shared vision among stakeholders about the juridical equality on the issue of accessing to the institution but, in the case of teachers, conditioned upon the requirement of an exhibition of a guarantee of success and an assisted career choice. Practices of exclusion and discrimination were reported in accessing, which happened in intangible relationships that are established internally and need to be revised. The greatest difficulties appear around the continuation and not in accessing. Both actors agree on the vision of a welfare institution and income demanding in accessing but neglecting in the accompaniment and the transformation that should characterize a process of inclusive education (Delgado & Blanco, 2016).

The studies show a positive representation regarding the university inclusion of the students with disabilities; however, there is a latent discrimination in the absence of the minimum accessibility concerned (Cruz, 2016).

Admission policy can assume diverse forms; in UI REACH, all families are encouraged to come to campus for a tour through the program, prior to applying. They apply using a downloadable application on the program's website [[www.education.uiowa.edu/reach](http://www.education.uiowa.edu/reach)]. Once completed, the application is reviewed by an admissions committee and a decision is made to interview or not to

interview. If an interview is granted, the family and student are interviewed separately. The admissions committee reviews all information and makes a recommendation to admit, not admit, reapply at a future date, or be wait listed. Major factors in admission include the potential of the student to adjust to life in the residence halls and living with a roommate (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

## **Graduation policy**

Different policies of graduation exist in inclusive HE programs. Upon completion of a substantially separate program, students would typically receive a certificate of completion but not a degree (Cook et al., 2015, p. 43).

UI REACH is a two-year certificate (non-degree earning) program for students with intellectual and other cognitive disabilities (Hendrickson et al., 2015).

Shogren et al. (2018) report a study examining the degree to which students were included in state assessments (regular assessment with or without accommodations, alternate assessment, or waived assessment).

The TOUR program assumed a key-step: the development of a TOUR student portfolio that codifies the specific requirements for completion of the program (Lewis, 2017).

The ACE-IT in College, at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), has embraced the Think College Standards in all aspects of its program development and evaluation. SWID (18- 26 years of age) have access to VCU's undergraduate courses and are full members of the VCU community. Each ACE-IT in College student completes a minimum of eight college courses (20 to 22 credits total) over four semesters, as well as a semester-long work internship. The model is fully inclusive, meaning that students select their courses from the VCU undergraduate course catalogue and are full and active members of the campus community. There are no special curricula or classes designed solely for ACE-IT in College students. The academic program is inclusive and individualized based on the student's interests and desired career path. The certificate these students earn has been established by and is awarded through the VCU School of Education (Lynch & Getzel, 2013).

## **Disability policy**

The disability policies are a capstone in the way HE institutions offer inclusive programs, accessible to SWID (Algazian et al., 2019; Gilson et al., 2020).

The Higher Education Opportunities Act (2008) introduced new provisions aimed at increasing access to PSE (e.g., eligibility for financial aid), funded cohorts of modal demonstration programs and established a national technical assistance center (Bumble et al., 2019).

Schwartz and Robertson (2019) acknowledge the right that people with IDD have to sexual health, call the attention to the issue, investigate sexual education opportunities, and produce literature.

Inclusive policies acquire their full attempt and extension when they're implemented throughout contingent, extensive, and well-established support. The third chapter presents the support founded to be relevant to the development and implementation of inclusive HE programs. the services available at the HE institution to all students; the inclusive university tutoring; the volunteering; the digital solutions supporting inclusion in HE; the opportunities for training and professional development, regarding staff, mentors, and volunteers; the community dynamics supporting the program; the team structure and dynamics; the considerations and procedures to implement in the field of the transition from High School to HE, and from HE to Employment.

## Chapter 3 – Support

Knowing that the goal for ALL students is to increase independence and gradually fade formal supports (Griffin et al., 2016), different types of support are needed to develop inclusive programs in HE, directly addressed to the individuals and/or to the institutions, so they are able to deliver individual supports.

When appropriate educational and student life supports are available and utilized, SWID may benefit from college much like other first-year students (Hendrickson et al., 2015).

Individual supports and services addressed to increase the academic and social inclusion of SWID in academic courses, extracurricular activities, and other aspects of the HEI dynamics, must be provided (Shogren et al., 2018), either at the HE institution, and in secondary education (aiming at a well-succeeded transition to HE).

### **Logistical, adjustments and volunteering**

It is not enough to establish measures for SWID to access the University. It is also necessary to facilitate their permanence in the university through reasonable adjustments; schooling in segregated settings limits the possibilities of accessing HE (Quispe, 2018). The supports provided to all students are crucial, but it may be needed to adjust them or the way they're provided, to the needs of the SWID (Oakes & Thorpe, 2019; Shelton et al., 2019).

A study reported by Shogren et al. (2018) examines the access to accommodations (received specialized accommodations provided by the program, received accommodations provided by the university disability services office, or received accommodations from both).

Behavioral and social supports and assistance with activities of daily living, such as personal care, assistance and physical supports are required. Additionally, logistical supports that include transportation assistance, financial support, and housing on or near campus, are needed (Smith & Benito, 2013).

Volunteer students are important resources to the success of inclusive programs, accessible to SWID in HE (Harrison et al., 2019). They support, mediate, and eventually develop friendships or, at least, companionships with the SWID they're supporting, as they get to know them deeper, participating and acceding to the experiences they're going through, so becoming participants too. Other members of the academic community can participate as volunteers (teachers and other employees).

## **Digital solutions supporting inclusion in HE**

The use of universal design and assistive technology is necessary for facilitating access to campus, classrooms, and materials (Smith & Benito, 2013).

Having the ability to use technology is critical for engagement in society. Parents cited a number of technological skills their young adults developed while in college. They included using a smartphone and applications to assist with time management and independent living, email, social media, and internet research. Parents referred to technology as “opening up new worlds,” allowing individuals to remain socially connected and supporting their independent living (e.g., putting reminders in calendars to pay rent) (Miller et al., 2018).

The ACE-IT in College project uses a variety of digital mechanisms to monitor program implementation and assess outcomes within the framework of the TC Standards. To facilitate the systematic collection and review of evaluation data, a comprehensive web-based data entry system has been developed. All staff members have access to data entry screens that allow them to report their program activities and observations on an ongoing basis using both structured and unstructured data entry forms. The ACE-IT in College database accommodates input of both qualitative and quantitative data, including objective measures of student progress and project implementation (Lynch & Getzel, 2013).

Vidal et al. (2018) obtained results quite encouraging, since they conceive the game as a useful tool to involve users in complex processes and predispose them towards the acquisition of various kinds of learning. The objective of the analyzed interventions is that people with IDD are more autonomous and independent and feel more integrated in their social environment. The gamification makes it possible, since it develops communication skills, social interaction, expression of emotions and symbolic function.

Evmenova et al. (2019) highlight the important role of the *wearable technology*, in the process of learning and inclusion of SWID in HE.

## **Opportunities for training & professional development (staff, mentors and volunteers)**

Staff development and ongoing technical assistance and supports are key elements in facilitating successful, positive outcomes (Gasset & Ero, 2016; Green et al., 2017; Judge & Gasset, 2015; Smith & Benito, 2013).



Additionally, faculty needs training, beyond subject matter expertise, to maintain effective Post-secondary Programs (PSE) for students with ID. There are numerous possibilities and opportunities for training and professional development, to be implemented according to the needs and circumstances of the individuals and institutions, e.g.: an Inclusive PSE network of all the institutions in Alberta (Canada) that regularly meets to share knowledge; a commitment to reflective critique that addresses collective issues; regular in-service training for facilitators; biannual retreats with students, faculty, facilitators, and families; a DVD titled “Living the Dream: Inclusive Post-Secondary Education”; a peer evaluation tool to support continuous quality improvement now adopted by the Alberta government; mentorship and peer evaluation; and inter-initiative facilitators’ exchanges (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012).

Recognizing the vital nature of the academic coaching program that had thus far been grant-funded, the University of Rochester approved a budget for RCCL’s continued facilitation of TOUR academic coaching, including wages for student academic coaches and a new experiential learning course that is now mandatory for all coaches. The course is called “Creating inclusive campus communities: disability, mentorship, and inclusive higher education” and covers topic areas including: (a) disability history; (b) disability legislation and policy; (c) universal design for learning; (d) establishing appropriate boundaries in mentoring relationships; and (e) strategies for supporting executive-functioning skill development (Lewis, 2017).

Every new staff member is cross trained in a variety of roles and works daily with other staff to provide program services - University of Iowa Realizing Educational and Career Hopes (UI REACH) Program (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

The conditions of the implementation of the inclusive HE programs must be rigorously assessed, so that mistakes are not repeated. It is necessary to ensure the real, informed, advised and conscious involvement of the teaching staff, of each and every one of its members. It is essential to choose, personalize and adapt training programs (Cabezas, 2016).

Rochester Center for Community Leadership piloted a new Academic Coaching program, wherein undergraduate students were hired and underwent significant training in academic mentoring strategies, executive functioning development, the history developmental disability, and other relevant topics (Lewis, 2017).

In order to optimize the conditions of the programs' implementation, it is necessary to ensure the real, informed, advised and conscious involvement of the teaching staff, of each and every one of its members; it is essential to choose, personalize and adapt training programs (Cabezas, 2016).

### **Community dynamics supporting program**

The community dynamics (including academic community and families) supporting the program are crucial for its success (Herrero et al., 2020). Behavioral and social supports and assistance with activities of daily living, such as personal care assistance and physical supports are required (Smith & Benito, 2013).

Tuffrey-Wijne et al. (2020) reported a final presentation of a program where the support services, family, friends and support workers were present when the SWID had their final presentation, in a powerful opportunity to participate and belonging.

In turn, SWID find greater inclusion on their campus and invaluable academic and social skills that will launch them into self-determined lives as contributing citizens of their community. In addition to the notable impact on individual students, we are witnessing a culture shift throughout our campus community (Lewis, 2017).

In a university at the USA, monthly social events are organized not only on the university campus, but also in social environments. The team includes two faculty members from special education and rehabilitation counselling, a post-doctoral fellow and a peer mentor coordinator (a certified rehabilitation counsellor with training on supporting people with IDD in vocational and social settings) (Fisher et al., 2020).

To promote public attitudes towards people with IDD to improve their quality of life, information and contact with persons with IDD will lead to a positive attitude. A soccer program where athletes with and without IDD were training and competing for eight weeks increased the athletes' positive attitudes towards people with IDD (Li & Wu, 2019).

### **Team structure and Dynamics**

The team structure and dynamics is of major importance for the level of quality at the educational reality. Staff have 12-month appointments and participate in a wide range of shared instructional, advising, and outreach responsibilities (Hendrickson, et al., 2013).

## **Transition from High School to Higher Education**

It is critical for SWID to envision a life beyond high school, and along with their non-disabled peers, they need to be prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup>. century workforce; they have significant strengths upon which counselors and educators can build throughout the postsecondary transition process (Kleinert et al., 2012; Shogren et al., 2013; Wehmeyer et al., 2004; cited by Cook et al., 2015).

Schooling in segregated settings limits the possibilities of accessing higher education. Although essential, it's not enough to establish measures for students with ID to access the University. It is also necessary to facilitate their permanence in the university through reasonable adjustments (Quispe, 2018).

High school counselors can help students with ID take the lead in their own career preparation and community inclusion. Given high school counselors' expertise in the areas of college and career readiness, they serve a key role in assisting students with ID throughout the transition process. Specifically, they can provide direct services to students and parents through counseling interventions and consultation; they collaborate with outside service providers to promote effective transition from high school to PSE options; and they engage in advocacy to ensure all students with ID can access services and take action to remove potential barriers. Through providing these services to support students with ID, high school counselors take a culturally sensitive approach that is responsive to the diverse needs and preferences of students and families (Cook et al., 2015, p.52).

Coordinated efforts are needed to increase access to PSE opportunities and to effectively prepare students with ID to be college and career ready, to support students and families throughout the postsecondary transition process. While the diagnostic criteria emphasize limitations, it is important to recognize that individuals with IDD have significant strengths upon which counselors and educators can build throughout the postsecondary transition process (Kleinert et al., 2012; Shogren et al., 2013; Wehmeyer et al., 2004).

Judge and Gasset (2015) report the provision of continued employment support to promote equal opportunities in the maintenance and promotion of employment.

## **Transition from Higher Education to Employment/Professional Life**

Gasset and Ero (2016) state the importance of socio-professional experiences for employment success of young adults with IDD.

Smith and Benito (2013) point that customized, competitive employment as the outcome for all students, including the ones with IDD. Incorporating options for job training or employment preparation into the curricula would facilitate success in obtaining employment following completion of the PSE program.

Part-time employment is encouraged for ACE-IT in College students while attending the university. Students apply for accommodations at the VCU Disability Support Services office; they take most of their courses for audit and meet with an academic advisor to establish a study plan based on their career interests, identified through a person-centered planning process. There are various socio-professional experiences available, including part-time employment in campus - reprography, library, cafeteria and others. Full-time employees of VCU are granted tuition waivers to take classes for credit (Lynch & Getzel, 2013).

In the Promentor Program, 10 graduating classes, corresponding to more than 150 students with IDD, have been trained at the university. Seventy-five percent of graduates are currently working with a contract of employment in ordinary companies. Their model of inclusive training has been transferred to other Spanish and international universities (Ruiz et al., 2017).

After the analysis of the experience of the implantation of the program to the present day, a positive assessment of it stands out, which expands the possibilities of socio-labor insertion of young people with intellectual disabilities. For the students, important advances are observed in their work, academic and personal skills; in the same way, their possibilities of socio-labor inclusion for certain jobs have been favored. In general, an improvement in the quality of life of these people has been favored in the field of autonomy, socialization, personal development, self-esteem, self-concept, etc. and an increase in the development of their qualitative and quantitative capacities (Pegalajar & Xandri, 2015).

In the Promentor program, the figure of labor mediator is essential not only in employment but also in maintenance in the workplace; 2) The most valued competence dimension is "Responsibility, autonomy and motivation"; 3) In the second most valued competence dimension, there are discrepancies between labor mediators and collaborators. The first highlights the dimension "Interpersonal skills", while companies put more emphasis on "Management and organization" (Gasset and Rodriguez, 2016).

Alcazar (2019), referring to TECNODEMOS, states that its profile is aimed at all those young people who want to work in more technological or business environments. The program provides

skills to carry out activities related to new technologies, computerized information processing, as well as those related to administrative management.

Socio-professional experiences for employment and supporting the transition to profession during the first year after HE is of major relevance (Love & Mock, 2019; Ryan et al., 2019) for the full emancipation of the people with IDD. The task of the HEIs does not end with the training process aimed at preparing the students to assume a profession. To achieve a successful job insertion in the future, the participation, from then on, and in a permanent basis, of labor intermediation offices in charge, not only of the job search that fits the characteristics of each young person, but also of its maintenance, is imperative. For this reason, given that HEIs do not have this task among their organizational objectives, it is necessary to establish alliances with organizations in the community that do have this purpose (Fürstenberg & Illanes, 2017).

Knowing that supports and policies are important elements in the organization and implementation of accessible inclusive HE programs, the pedagogical resources to promote students' optimized participation in the learning processes must be activated and collaboratively put into practice. Fourth chapter presents data about the main pedagogical inclusive practices, relevant to HE inclusive programs, accessible to students with IDD, namely: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Problem-based Learning (PBL), Person-centered Planning, Curricular Accommodations, (Peer) Mentoring, Academic Tutoring, and Collaboration between Teachers, Tutors, Mentors, and other members of Academic Community.

## Chapter 4 - Inclusive Pedagogy

A number of practices, across different dimensions, are recommended in the literature to transform the Higher Education curriculum, so that it becomes accessible and inclusive, able to respond to the needs of ALL students, therefore able to provide opportunities for optimizing the learning and development processes of students with IDD. An approach to promote lifelong learning of the SWID is also stressed and inserted in the social role of the university (Ramirez, 2013).

Many programs offer a diversity of academic resources and courses, expanding the possibilities for students to find a match between their interests and motivations, and the opportunities to study in HE. They have access to academic resources and courses that are consistent with their career and life goals (Miller et al., 2018; Moreno et al., 2020).

The UI REACH (the University of Iowa Realizing Educational and Career Hopes) model has two distinct goal and activity dimensions: one that focuses on critical student components and the other on critical program components. Within these, founded on dynamic, collaborative interactions with the student, family, and community, four areas are emphasized: (i) Inclusive Student Life, (ii) Person-Centered Planning and Academic Enrichment, (iii) Career Development and Inclusive Internships, and (iv) Post-Program Support (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

Moreover, Hendrickson et al. (2015), describing the main dimensions in which the HE institutions can materialize inclusive principles, point (a) Group dynamics: students working with other students on projects during class; b) Transition to Profession / Employment: socio-professional experiences in employment contexts, with students talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, and (c) students experiencing a campus environment that provides the supports the student needs to thrive socially, positively affect the cognitive development, learning orientations, and educational aspirations of students. The same authors stand that inclusive, successful and cooperative accommodations result from efforts of multiple stakeholders, namely, collaboration between teachers, tutors, mentors, academic community, families & other; finally, a holistic student development philosophy is declared essential to student success.

### Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and assistive technology is necessary to facilitate access to campus, classrooms, and materials (Love et al., 2019; Smith & Benito, 2013). UDL is a

recommended content for the training programs for students and (other) faculty members (Gilson et al., 2020).

UDL, combined with other elements, like: Service-learning; Problem-based Learning (PBL); Collaboration between teachers, tutors, mentors, the whole academic community, families and other stakeholders, is a powerful strength for well succeeded inclusive HE programs (Jiménez, 2019).

Hafner et al. (2011) describe good practices in diverse programs: UDL practices have been beneficial for SWID; peer mentors have been a valuable asset to facilitate inclusion of SWID; increased social inclusion fosters greater independence for SWID opportunities for personal and social development; and orienting parents of SWID to college creates better partnerships (information and dissemination) (Hafner et al., 2011).

### **Problem-based learning (PBL)**

The relevance of using PBL (Problem-based Learning) methodology in inclusive approaches at HE is well asset in literature (Manikas et al., 2018), most of the times, combined with other methods and strategies.

Jiménez (2019) points UDL, Service-learning, PBL, and Collaboration between stakeholders (teachers, tutors, mentors, academic community, families, and other), as crucial for inclusion in HE.

Moreno-Rodriguez et al. (2019) report a study that analyzes the outcomes of a one-year program for people with ID provided by the University Rey Juan Carlos of Madrid. The teaching methodology includes service-learning, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and flexible groupings. The 30 ECTS program combines participation in ordinary undergraduate classes with specific training. This paper analyzes: improvements students' social and emotional skills, teachers and students' satisfaction with the program, and the impact that the inclusion of people with ID in the University has on other students without disabilities.

### **Person Centered Planning (PCP)**

The Person-Centered Planning (PCP) methodology honors and prioritizes to hear the student's voice, as the means to identify and achieve his/her self-determined goals and objectives, through collaboration with a team of supporters. According to Folk et al. (2012), Francis et al. (2018), and Tuffrey-Wijne et al. (2020), PCP activities and experiences can facilitate the student finding and developing a voice to self-advocate for personal needs and objectives;

furthermore, interagency teaming can be an effective collaborative process where agency and organization personnel come together to share their expertise, insights, ideas, and voices in service to a shared cause.

One third-level institution in Ireland offers to SWID the opportunity to audit undergraduate courses as part of their certificate studies. The ethos and inclusive curriculum initiatives of the university provide a solid foundation for students to enjoy successful academic and social outcomes from completing their award. This has enhanced their image as valued and contributing students in the eyes of their host lecturers (O'Connor et al., 2012).

Miller et al. (2018) reported that students work closely with their advisors to explore the principles of strategic life planning, which culminates in a post-graduation portfolio that serves as a summary of the knowledge and skills that have been acquired through the program.

Lynch and Getzel (2013), describing support services, report that students take most of their courses for audit and meet with an academic advisor to establish a program of study based on their career interests, identified through a person-centered planning process. Part-time employment is encouraged for ACE-IT in College students while attending the university; Students apply for accommodations from the VCU Disability Support Services office.

A key step described within the TOUR program has been the development of a TOUR Student Portfolio that codifies the specific requirements for completion of the program (Lewis, 2017).

Person-centered advising with experienced and trained UI REACH staff (Holburn et al., 2000, cited by Hendrickson et al., 2013) facilitates student's development and proactive decision-making. Advising sessions allow the student and advisor to develop a trusting relationship (Ferguson, 2011) that is especially valuable in high stakes circumstances (e.g., medical or personal emergencies).

Espinoza (2019) points that all university degrees must be considered in the process of supporting young people with disabilities to pursue subjects of their interest and not just focus on degrees more related to health or social sciences. In the study reported by Miller et al. (2018), the students work closely with their advisors to explore the principles of strategic life planning, which culminates in a post-graduation portfolio that serves as a summary of the knowledge and skills that have been acquired through the program.



## **Curricular accommodations**

Curricular accommodations and the educational methodologies adopted in each course, its assessment, criteria and techniques, and curriculum enrichment are needed to facilitate success of SWID in inclusive PSE settings and must be adapted to each student's learning needs (Herrero et al., 2020; Smith & Benito, 2013; Lifshitz et al., 2018; Brewer & Movahedazarhouli, 2019; Shelton et al., 2019; Green et al., 2017).

Other good educational practices such as (a) group dynamics - students working with other students on projects during class, b) transition to profession/socio-professional experiences for employment - students talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, and (c) students experiencing a campus environment that provides the supports that the student needs to thrive socially, positively affect the cognitive development, learning orientations, and educational aspirations of students (Smith & Benito, 2013).

## **(Peer) mentoring**

Diverse elements are important to high quality programs in inclusive HE: opportunities for training and professional development (staff, mentors and volunteers); facilitator education and coordination; regular in-service training for facilitators; biannual retreats with students, faculty, facilitators, and families (Uditsky & Hudson, 2012). Mentorship is reported as one of the most powerful supports in the field of inclusive HE.

Along with mentorship and peer evaluation, and inter-initiative facilitator exchanges, a DVD titled "Living the Dream: Inclusive Post-Secondary Education" and a peer evaluation tool to support continuous quality improvement has been adopted by the Alberta government (Uditsky & Hudson, 2012) to increase the quality of the PSE program offered at the VCU.

The study developed by Jones and Goble (2012) identified several key components for creating and improving effective mentoring partnerships on a university campus (Inclusive Pedagogy). These include (1) providing mentoring orientations and faculty training; (2) developing effective systems for communicating and collaborating across stakeholders; (3) promoting the establishment of co-equal relationships among mentoring partners; (4) maintaining high expectations for students with ID; (5) using mentors as resources to professors and establishing natural supports in the college class-room (Inclusive Pedagogy); (6) encouraging independence; (7) prioritizing fun and socializing; and (8) staying focused on the big picture of inclusion. The authors concluded that the study

provided insight into the strengths of effective mentoring support programs, while simultaneously placing a spotlight on potential challenges and drawbacks.

The C&C is a structured mentoring program designed for SWID and utilizing relationship building, problem-solving, and capacity building (Christenson, Stout, & Pohl, 2012, cited by Qian et al., 2018), with high / positive results.

In Next Steps program, undergraduate and graduate students are asked to volunteer for at least two hours a week over the course of a semester. The group of peer mentors that supports an individual student is called a Circle of Support; most are composed of 8-12 peer mentors. Each Circle has a Lead Peer Mentor who serves as a liaison between Next Steps staff and the members of the Circle. The Next Steps staff forms each Circle of Support and develops student schedules based on the needs and preferences of each individual student (Griffin et al., 2016).

This paper describes how the use of natural supports facilitate inclusive opportunities, responsibilities, recruitment, training, coaching, coordination, scheduling, and evaluation of work performance. We conclude with benefits of having undergraduate students serve as natural supports in postsecondary education programs (Kelley & Westling, 2013).

PSE programs cannot be limited to academics and be considered fully inclusive. Opportunities for students with ID to socialize among peers without disabilities and to receive support by peer mentors are essential to full inclusion in campus life (Smith & Benito, 2013).

Peer mentorship plays a direct and significant role in making the college environment supportive and welcoming for people with IDD. If mentors begin by presuming competence, the pitfalls of a deficit mindset, including negative impact on mentees' sense of ability and possibility, may be avoided. When traditional undergraduates mentor their peers with IDD, they gain academic and teaching skills, greater disability and diversity awareness, and an understanding of how and why inclusive communities are valuable (Lewis, 2017).

Belmonte et al. (2020) report a "triple mentoring and guidance system", consisting of: (i) content tutor, the teacher responsible for each subject, establishing a system of individualized tutorials of compulsory attendance for participants, allocating a weekly session for this; in addition to this day, participants will have access to UMU resources for virtual tutorials with the content tutor; (ii) Personal tutor: specialist in intellectual disabilities, assigned individually based on the initial psych pedagogical evaluation, and who will accompany the student throughout the program, providing

support to both the student and his / her family with regular meetings; (iii) reinforcement tutor, a volunteer university student, assigned individually, after an open call, with special emphasis on the target centers (Psychology, Social Education, Social Work and Labor Relations), in charge of supporting weekly the approach to the contents and the student's personal work, motivating him to achieve the set of goals.

In Diploma Programme (University of Iceland), there's never been a 'special' curriculum for the; the learning outcomes for each course are adapted to meet the needs of each diploma student who also receives support from student mentors who are undergraduate students at the School of Education. Mentors assist students, individually or in small groups (Björnsdóttir, 2017).

The C & C mentoring model, a structured mentoring program designed for students with disabilities and utilizing relationship building, problem-solving, and capacity building (Christenson, Stout, & Pohl, 2012, cited by Qian et al., 2018).

In HE inclusive programs described by Harrison et al. (2019) and Ryan et al. (2019), all SWID are paired with in-person peer mentors. Mentors meet with students at least an hour a week and work together to create social and behavioral goals throughout the semester. Peers can play varied roles by providing mentoring or support in one or more of the following (Carter et al., 2019). Peer mentors attend classes, provide study assistance to the mentees with IDD and participate in social activities with their mentees (Fisher et al., 2020). Priority was placed on utilizing an individual support model where students receive individualized services in college courses, certificate programs, and/or degree programs for audit or credit (Smith & Benito, 2013).

## **Academic tutoring**

Facilitators are essential individual support for SWID to succeed in HE, thus becoming a measure of inclusive pedagogy. This role can be performed by mentors, tutors, volunteers, or other members of academic community, in collaboration with all stakeholders (Gasset et al., 2013).

Rather than directly instructing students, a facilitator's primary role is to engage the student in campus life, interpret both student and environment when necessary, and remain in the background as much as possible (Uditsky & Hudson, 2012), although, for example, Tuffrey-Wijne et al. (2020) describe a situation in a HE inclusive program where the students wrote an article together with the tutors.

Across the programs accessible to SWID in HE, one can find different designations to the figure of the tutor, facilitator, instructor, assistant, coach or job-coach (related to transition to employment); but all agree that this is a crucial resource for the success of the program (Brewer & Movahedazarhouligh, 2019; Evmenova et al., 2019; Ryan et al., 2019), and most recommend a ratio of no more than five or six students per tutor.

One important aspect is that this function should be performed as close as possible to what already exists at the HEI where the program exists; for example, if the HEI has a program of academic **tutoring**, available for any student who needs this kind of support (e.g., the students who are at the first year of their courses and are facing difficulties to get involved in the learning processes), this feature of the inclusive program must be a part of the general tutoring program.

Uditsky and Hughson (2012) stress that, rather than directly instructing students, a facilitator's primary role is to engage the student in campus life, to interpret both student and environment when necessary, and remain in the rearguard as much as possible.

Recognizing the vital nature of the academic coaching program that had thus far been grant-funded, the University of Rochester approved a budget for RCCL's continued facilitation of TOUR academic coaching, including wages for student academic coaches and a new experiential learning course that is now mandatory for all coaches. The course is called "Creating inclusive campus communities: disability, mentorship, and inclusive higher education" and covers topic areas including: (a) disability history; (b) disability legislation and policy; (c) universal design for learning; (d) establishing appropriate boundaries in mentoring relationships; and (e) strategies for supporting executive-functioning skill development. Each TOUR student taking a college course is required to be paired with a trained and supervised academic coach. As part of their job, coaches must attend class alongside their mentee and meet for individual coaching sessions for at least one hour per week (Lewis, 2017).

Accommodations, mentoring and tutoring, combined, play a powerful role at inclusive programs in HE (Rillotta, 2020).

## **Collaboration between stakeholders**

A holistic student development philosophy is considered essential to ALL students' success (Hendrickson et al., 2015). Inclusive, successful accommodations result from the cooperative efforts of multiple stakeholders, either inside and (and ou or) outside the academic community.

It is important that rehabilitation counsellors, psychologists, and other professionals, providing direct services to people with disabilities, collaborate with postsecondary programs in order to promote more inclusive community opportunities and competitive employment outcomes (Kelley & Westling, 2013).

The Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the University of South Florida, coordinated the development of the Florida College Collaborative (FCC) which consisted of a diverse group of 51 stakeholders including self-advocates, family members, school district personnel, representatives from state agencies, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Florida Protection and Advocacy Center, and college faculty and staff from 14 academic institutions within the State of Florida. The FCC project included five primary activities that were completed with technical assistance, training, and support from the Think College staff. Activities included a) establishing the Florida College Collaborative; b) developing a strategic plan; c) compiling a Florida PSE program registry; d) developing a PSE webpage; and e) completing a statewide survey of students, families, and professionals (Smith & Benito, 2013).

At UI REACH Program, staff participate in Monday morning meetings to review each student's status, identify any needs, make action plans, and arrange communications with stakeholders. Others meetings. All-staff business meetings and UI REACH leadership team meetings are scheduled weekly. Program staff also meets as needed to plan and execute tasks associated with each division of the UI REACH Program (Hendrickson et al, 2013).

Collaboration between teachers, tutors, mentors, academic community, families and other stakeholders is of crucial importance, as to consider the perspectives of parents of young adults with disabilities as they supported their sons and daughters in transitioning from secondary school to college (Francis et al., 2018).

The role of inclusive pedagogy strategies and procedures, framed by policies, and complemented by supports and the type of curricular organization followed in the HE inclusive program will be intensified by providing the students with opportunities to participate in academic life, embedded in natural, everyday activities, alongside with their peers, experiencing opportunities for personal and social development, operationalized through the domains of: self-determination, quality of life, opportunities for SWIDs to socialize with their peers, health and

wellness, inclusive residence (on campus), and opportunities to engage in trusting relationships. The main aspects to consider in this domain are presented in fifth chapter.

## Chapter 5. Personal and social development

The discussion about “the how” to open Higher Education to students with IDD, guaranteeing inclusion and equity is, first and foremost, a matter of guaranteeing high quality education. According to current standards, “high quality education” involves respecting individual’s characteristics, differentiating and adjusting curricula, observing and operationalizing the principles and practices of Universal Design for Learning, and optimizing the more advanced available resources (eventually, creating other, contingent to individual’s interests, competences and needs), in continuous communication with ‘the real life’ and ‘the outside world’.

In our commitment to identify the foundations for inclusive Higher Education, open to students with IDD, we need to reflect upon the different functions of Education, and the different potential purposes it can serve. According to Biesta (2010), the discussion around what constitutes “good education” encompasses not only the perspectives about the functions of education – *qualification*, *socialization* and *individuation* or *subjectification* – but the aims, ends and purposes [of education].

*Qualification* of children, young people and adults is often seen as a major function of education. It involves promoting the knowledge and skills needed to perform a certain role or activity, considered relevant to a particular job or profession, but also the introduction to current culture; both are undoubtedly important to the development of “cultural literacy” and citizenship (Biesta, 2010).

These domains overlap with another major function of education: *socialization*, through which education, either in an explicit or implicit way, “inserts individuals into existing ways of doing and being”, so they gradually “become part of particular social, cultural and political orders” (Biesta, 2010. p. 15).

But education doesn’t only prepare individuals to become part of a group. It plays an important role in the way the individual evolves, distinguishing him/herself from the group or existing order, to become a subject, a unique person, in a *subjectification* process (Biesta, 2010).

In the overlapping areas of these three major functions, an important element to the organization of fully inclusive programs in HE, emerges: personal and social development of the students, as a key dimension to their subjectification, their socialization, and their qualification processes, in sum the process of becoming a person, fully participating in Humanity.

Some key elements in the domain of personal and social development have been identified in the process of inclusion in HE: processes of autonomy and decision making; to work on self-regulation of behavior; to help students be aware of the consequences of decisions in their own lives; to work on self-esteem and self-knowledge about abilities and difficulties in cognitive, emotional and social aspects; to promote self-determination; collaboration and commitment to the family (Berástegui & Garcia, 2013).

Two adults with learning disabilities made the following suggestions to other young adults with learning disabilities to help guiding their transition to post-secondary education and adult life: (i) self-advocacy: young adults with disabilities need to learn to advocate for themselves because their parents would not be there forever; (ii) work hard: the importance of a strong work ethics (they felt they had to overachieve to counteract other people); Low expectations toward them, especially in academic work; (iii) discover your interests and talents: it is important to explore new ideas, opportunities and challenges; (iv) beware of the costs of special education supports: significant costs for being labeled as special education students; (v) educational opportunities later in life were limited by their participation in modified programs in elementary and secondary school (Wilson et al., 2012).

Although we cannot yet evaluate the program reported by Vidal (2018) in terms of results, or the effectiveness of the job training processes, it is possible to determine that both the students themselves, as well as their families, are highly motivated by the experience it has meant. For them to be able to pass a new stage in relation to the Chilean educational system, and to be “equal” to their brothers, cousins, or neighbors.

The increase that occurs in the self-esteem and personal value of the 17 young people who have accessed an educational alternative reported by Tomé (2016) is highly significant, highlighting the expressions that indicate “Now I feel like an adult”, or “I am no longer a child”, or “I am studying at the university and then work and get married”, realize the importance for them to set new goals and challenges that lead them to keep working to fulfill their life plans.

Surriá et al. (2016) report results showing positive relationship in the academic achievement and empowerment of SWID in HE inclusive programs. Also, statistically significant differences were found in the empowerment observed. The results showed that the degree of the participants’ empowerment was, in general, moderate. Students with IDD and sensory disabilities scored lower



than their peers with other types of disabilities. Participants with birth-acquired disability show higher levels of empowerment

The results obtained within the *Todos somos Campus* program are satisfying. They show that a holistic learning has been achieved, which unites theory and practice as well as the development of professional and affective competences. We are satisfied with the goal achieved, not only in terms of learning outcomes, which are important, but even more because the activity has achieved the empowerment of our students, who have believed in their ability to achieve things, especially the students with cognitive disabilities, who, in many cases, have a low self-perception of their possibilities and doubt their capabilities to face or resolve certain situations. The evaluation of results has been positive, since the experience that has been carried out has contributed, from practice, to an improvement in knowledge and the acquisition of skills in relation to the evaluation of undergraduate students, as well as the development of skills to face an interview with the students of *Todos Somos Campus*. In the same way, the experience has been rich for its protagonists, since all the students indicate the desire that experiences of this type be carried out more frequently. And finally, the experience brings positive values, such as inclusion and collaboration, among a diverse student body. Undergraduate students have appreciated the possibility of participating and collaborating, since they have been approached by classmates in a situation of disability of which they were not aware in many cases. For the students of *Todos Somos Campus* it has meant full inclusion as university students, sharing classrooms and homework, valuing their collaboration (Suárez & Castillo, 2020).

A teaching without considering the moral dimension will not be a complete teaching. Education in values cannot be like the traditional teaching of knowledge transmission but requires the experience of value. Through cooperative structures in school sports, education in values can be promoted in students. Here lies the importance of educational programs such as the one presented, by associating the work of moral values with the practical experience of the same that sport and physical activity entail, when indicating the suitability of sports programs to promote values in the school environment (Binaburo & Muñoz, 2007, Ortega & Mínguez, 2001, González et al., 2008, Monjas et al., 2015, cited by Sánchez et al., 2017).

The results after conducting the Promentor Program for more than 10 years coincide with those obtained in other international studies, confirms that the inclusion of SWID in higher education is not only possible, but desirable; and even imperative from the viewpoint of social justice. Inclusion

in higher education contributes to raising SWID's quality of life (benefit from the opportunity to mix with other students of their age and feel valued and respected, thereby improving their self-image and self-esteem) and employability (Gasset, 2018).

Social and emotional skills both showed improved scores following the course, thus confirming the effectiveness of the proposal (Felgueras et al., 2020).

The results indicate a high achievement regarding the acquisition of skills by the participants, as well as a high degree of satisfaction from the experience (Conte & Delgado-Pastor, 2016).

The results obtained in each of the objective and subjective evaluations, especially in the self-determination dimension, urge professionals who work in job training centers to promote and enhance aspects related to skills that promote self-determination. In this way, the decision-making working with people with disabilities must be based on a person-centered approach and adequate training programs that allow generate economic independence and social inclusion (Castro et al., 2016).

The program described by Green et al. (2017) embraces the values of community inclusion, cultural diversity, and self-determination, and promotes the pursuit of postsecondary options that include.

Kelley and Westling (2013) propose that natural supports allow the HE programs to provide individualized supports in a fully inclusive college setting that many individuals with disabilities will never get to experience again in their lifetime. Natural supports are crucial to the participants so they can achieve their own personal dreams and goals, as well as increased self-determination to transition into productive individuals in their communities and potentially improved quality of life.

## **Self-determination**

Self-determination is defined as a set of competencies which assist individuals to identify and establish their wants and needs, make suitable life choices, decide on and take the best course of action, and evaluate and improve on the outcome; these skills are necessary to participate in the transition planning process, to succeed in PSE, to secure and sustain employment, to participate as a member of the community, and to assume and perform other adult roles and responsibilities; although its promotion is considered a best practice, self-determination has been identified as a missing ingredient from the learning protocol of many students with disabilities (Yamamoto et al., 2014).

The level of self-determination has been associated with positive post-school outcomes, academic success, and community engagement of people with IDD. The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) is an evidence-based curriculum that focuses on goal attainment through engaging in self-directed activities (Wehmeyer et al., 2000, cited by Cook et al., 2015, p.45).

Focusing on strengths, Wehmeyer et al. (2007) emphasized the importance of developing students' self-determination, which include skills involving self-advocacy, self-awareness, problem solving, goal setting, and decision-making. Level of self-determination has been associated with positive post-school outcomes, academic success, and community engagement (Landmark, Ju, & Zhang, 2010; Shogren et al., 2013).

There are significant positive employment outcomes for individuals with IDD who attend postsecondary programs compared to those who do not attend such programs (Moore & Schelling, 2015, cited by Shogren et al., 2018).

Given the tremendous problem with obesity and its association with a number of diseases, poor health outcomes, and the vulnerability of this population to these conditions, consideration of more structured fitness components in IPSE programs must be balanced with educators' desire to promote self-determination and freedom of choice for young adults with ID (Roberts et al., 2018, pp. 247-248).

In grounded theory research, a strong category system "emerges" from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). After the data were coded and analyzed, three prevalent themes as to how IPSE programs address fitness and exercise were apparent: (1) program Structure, (2) Challenges, and (3) Supports. Subthemes within each of these were identified as well. Student-led choices and structured requirements were identified within Program Structure, individual barriers and systems barriers within Challenges, and peer involvement and program resources within Supports. The results are organized using these three primary themes and their subthemes. Prior to reporting the coded results, it was noted that several participants stated appreciation for this project. Furthermore, regardless of exercise and fitness implementation method, rigor, or formalization, data indicate that programs view health and wellness as an important construct within their program, with eight of the nine participants rating health and wellness at least a six out of 10 (1 being least important to 10 being of the utmost importance) (Roberts et al., 2018, p. 242).

Miller et al. (2018) reported parents' testimonies on increased expectations of the students' self. Parents explained that as their son/daughter developed new skills, their self-perceptions improved. Consequently, their expectations concerning their future also shifted.

## **Quality of life**

Survey responses reflected that SWID share the hopes and dreams of their peers without disabilities. These include having a job, a home, a spouse, good friends, and involvement in their communities (Smith & Benito, 2013).

The study reported by Roberts et al. (2018) is important, given the high degree of obesity and associated health problems in adults with IDD. Interview respondents indicated a number of programs and individual factors that may support or inhibit students' physical activity within a four-year residential inclusive PSE programs. Interestingly, despite the variability in how fitness and exercise services were delivered, nearly all programs valued health and wellness as important to their program (at or above a '6' on a scale from 1-10). It was also found that fitness-related content and activities may reflect programs' underlying foundational philosophies with student-focused versus program-mandated programming as the primary distinguishing feature (see Figure 1). However, the extent to which one philosophy or approach promotes better fitness and exercise outcomes has yet to be determined and should be investigated further. Given the tremendous problem with obesity and its association with a number of diseases, poor health outcomes, and the vulnerability of this population to these conditions, consideration of more structured fitness components in IPSE programs must be balanced with educators' desire to promote self-determination and freedom of choice for young adults with ID (Roberts et al., 2018, pp. 247-248).

Increased expectations of self (in students with IDD) are reported by Miller et al. (2018). Parents explained that as their son/daughter developed new skills, their self-perceptions improved. Consequently, their expectations concerning their future also shifted.

The work reported by Sánchez (2015) reflects on the concept of disability, approached from philosophical, anthropological and health issues, and trying to elucidate an integral vision of the human being, of his vulnerability and of all that is necessary so that an authentic training is given.

The results after conducting the Promentor Program for more than 10 years coincide with those obtained in other international studies, confirms that the inclusion of PWID in higher education is not only possible, but desirable; and even imperative from the viewpoint of social justice. Inclusion

in higher education contributes to raising PWID's quality of life (benefit from the opportunity to mix with other students of their age and feel valued and respected, thereby improving their self-image and self-esteem) and employability (Gasset, 2018).

### **Opportunities for students with IDD to socialize among peers**

PSE programs cannot be limited to academics and be considered fully inclusive. Opportunities for students with ID to socialize among peers without disabilities and to receive supports by peer mentors are essential to full inclusion in campus life (Smith & Benito, 2013).

They have become involved in co-curricular activities, such as campus clubs, ministries, activity boards, intramural and club sports, and sororities/fraternities. Participate in new student orientations and tours, work out in the recreation center, attend intercollegiate sporting events, and participate in graduation ceremonies. ICS students are part of the fabric of the campus community (Miller et al., 2018).

Judge and Gasset (2015) point the need to provide continued employment support to promote equal opportunities in the maintenance and promotion of employment.

Kelley et al. (2016) reported a transatlantic adventure involving college students with and without disabilities. The students benefited from the rapport they built with each other prior to leaving. While traveling abroad together, students deepened their familiarity and trust as they shared new opportunities and experiences with each other. Inclusive travel gave all members of the class the opportunity to view physical, social, and political landscapes in ways that would be otherwise impossible. Meaningful personal and professional connections through shared values about the importance of quality of life for individuals with disabilities were found. The collaboration, connections, and exchange of information were almost magical.

### **Health and wellness**

Roberts et al. (2018), in a *grounded theory* research on how inclusive PSE programs address fitness and exercise, reported a strong category system emerging from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, cited by Roberts et al., 2018), with three prevalent themes and respective subthemes, presented in Table 52.

Table 52 Themes and subthemes on how inclusive PSE programs address fitness and exercise (Roberts et al., 2018).

Themes	Subthemes
1. Program Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-led choices</li> <li>• Structured requirements</li> </ul>
2. Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Structure</li> <li>• Individual barriers</li> <li>• Systems barriers</li> </ul>
3. Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer involvement</li> <li>• Program resources</li> </ul>

Source: the researchers

Prior to reporting the coded results, it was noted that several participants stated appreciation for this project. Furthermore, regardless of exercise and fitness implementation method, rigor, or formalization, data indicate that programs view health and wellness as an important construct within their program, with eight of the nine participants rating health and wellness at least a six out of 10 ('1' being least important to '10' being of the utmost importance) (Roberts et al., 2018, p. 242).

The work reflects on the concept of disability, approached from philosophical, anthropological and health issues, and trying to elucidate an integral vision of the human being, of his vulnerability and of all that is necessary so that an authentic training is given (Sánchez, 2015).

Parents described their sons/daughters as developing a better understanding of and standing up for their needs and preferences during the college years (Miller et al., 2018).

The results after conducting the Promentor Program for more than 10 years coincide with those obtained in other international studies, confirms that the inclusion of SWID in HE is not only possible, but desirable; and even imperative from the point of view of social justice. Inclusion in HE contributes to raising SWID's quality of life (benefit from the opportunity to mix with other students of their age and feel valued and respected, thereby improving their self-image and self-esteem), and employability (Gasset, 2018).

### **Inclusive residence [in Campus]**

Hendrickson et al. (2013), presenting the UI REACH program, and standing for the power of the "holistic college experience" it involves, with its focus on student-centered and programmatic goal

areas, clarify that student-centered goal activities include: collaborative teamwork, the core curriculum, person-centered advising, inclusive residence hall life, integrated academics, community internships, and campus/community engagement. Program goal activities pertain to the advisory board, the support of university systems, the family-*alumni* association, community partnerships, campus wide supports, professional and staff development, and evaluation processes.

Inclusive residence in campus includes a person-centered approach, as the methodology needed to create the right and contingent supports each student needs to live independently in campus, in an *optimized equation* between each person, with his/her own characteristics, competencies and needs, and the environment: social, physical, academic,... in all the kaleidoscopic features that compose academic environments.

### **Opportunities for involving in trusting relationships**

Involving in trusting relationships is the basis and the *fluid* for significant and evolving deep human development. We can observe this in all domains and in all stages of the human development cycle, beginning in early childhood, with the attachment relationship established between the baby and his/her primary caregivers, mainly the family, but also other *reference persons* in her/his life. One can say that the most the human being is vulnerable, the most the trusting relationship with a reference person is foundational.

In the field of the inclusive HEI, there are many ways of building and nurturing trusting relationships between the students and those who share that environment with them: the mentors, the teachers, the other members of the academic community,... but we can say that the relationship with the academic tutor plays a very important role, as the tutor, besides the academic support in “academic subjects” has the wider responsibility to promote and support a network of diversified persons, articulated and interacting with the students, building a network of supports contingent to the characteristics and needs of the students.

Simple, ordinary events of the day-to-day life are very important as they compose our routines and support our dynamics. But there are special, extraordinary events that are important, too. Both are crucial for the development of a trusting, supportive relationship involving the students and those who interact with them in a regular basis. The academic tutor not only is directly involved with the students, participating in a trusting relationship with them, but also is the mediator between the students and a diversity of persons, identified as relevant to the process of inclusion, which quality

depends in a great extent on the opportunities created for the development of true trusting relationships.



## Conclusion

This document intends to support the efforts that many HE institutions are developing to organize inclusive opportunities for learning in Higher Education in the European Community, accessible to students with IDD. It presents the result of the work done within the HiLives Project (2019-1-PT01-KA203-061312), funded by the European Commission, through the ERASMUS+ program, in the framework of the measures KA2 - *Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices*, and KA203 - *Strategic Partnerships for higher education*.

Departing from the proposal made by O'Brien et al. (2019), the HiLives team has developed a literature review according to the principles and procedures of the scoping review methodology. The results are an integrated part of the first intellectual output of the project [the transnational/European foundations for the development of an inclusive, flexible, and student-centered HE curriculum for young adults with IDD] and must be combined with the two other components of the same output: the normative and regulations for inclusive HE in the European context, and the views of stakeholders (students with IDD, their families, HE teachers and employers).

Being such a new area in many countries, and demanding innovative projects, the inclusion of students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Higher Education is a powerful, involving and worthy challenge, which mobilizes the HiLives team and many other people and organizations around the world.

## Scoping Review - Opening Higher Education to students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: the evidence (sources in Spanish language)

*Borja Jordán de Urríes Veja, Emiliano Díez Villoria, María Victoria Martín Cilleros and Patricia Navas Macho*

*Borja Jordán de Urríes Veja, Emiliano Díez Villoria, María Victoria Martín Cilleros and Patricia Navas Macho*

Given the relevance of a number of sources in Spanish language, it was decided to include in this document the results of a systematic literature review (following a scoping review methodology) that went beyond the criteria established for this activity within the project, and which resulted in the document entitled "Opening Higher Education to students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: the evidence (sources in Spanish language)".

They can be found at [https://mega.nz/file/GKhxWBjS#HCKU9nwIF1TtbvDs7DxnCEW9KDHxQ\\_2H-nBPoFKBTE](https://mega.nz/file/GKhxWBjS#HCKU9nwIF1TtbvDs7DxnCEW9KDHxQ_2H-nBPoFKBTE).

**CONCLUSION**

Inclusive higher education for persons with (intellectual) disabilities is a right. This states paragraph 5 of Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This paragraph guarantees access to general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning. This without discrimination and on an equal basis with others (United Nations, n.d.).

In many countries, legal frameworks are often insufficient and the number of initiatives targeting students with intellectual disabilities is rather limited. In devising and setting up study programmes in Higher Education Institutions, one of the three forms of higher education identified by Hart et al. (2006) is usually used: the substantially segregated model - the hybrid model or the inclusive model. In the first Intellectual Output - the basis and introduction to the HiLives project - we learnt several things.

First, the urge and dream to continue studying (lifelong learning) is present in many people with intellectual disabilities. In addition, it is also clear that we need quite a lot of collaboration with many stakeholders: many young adults with intellectual disabilities still live with their parents, and the latter are (not yet) always on board with their children's plans. It is also useful to involve the natural network because studying also involves extra energy to organize mobility and budgets, something that often cannot be arranged without the parents (and their consent). It is also good to have employers involved in the discussions. They will face questions from employees about lifelong learning and training. They will also be approached (there are good examples of this in the Spanish and Portuguese projects, for instance) to help students with intellectual disabilities to get engaged in work experiences.

We thus see that Higher Education here is not just a matter of students on the one hand and an Institute for Higher Education on the other.

With HiLives, we also tried not to disconnect Higher Education practices for those students from local contexts and European regulations. These educational pathways do not take place in a vacuum on the one hand and are about more than education on the other. By introducing local and European regulations, we hope to contribute to the further development of the phenomenon of 'handistreaming'. Handistreaming" (a contraction of the terms "disability" and "mainstreaming") is

the systematic consideration of disability in all local, regional, national and international policy dimensions. This preventive and cross-cutting approach to public policies is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. From this perspective, it is not so much individual impairments that determine disability as the interaction between the individual and society or the environment, which impose standards that marginalize or even exclude the individual.

Finally, we also want to emphasize that despite the variations in implementation in different countries, the HiLives project intends to base itself on scientific research that is available. With two meta-analyses (one focusing mainly on Anglo-Saxon literature, another on Spanish-language literature), this Output is the ideal run-up to make practices in the participating countries evidence-based.

We believe that the scientific basis provided here, together with the room for locally differentiated practices, the embedding in the perspectives of the different stakeholders and the insight of the need to build concrete practices into local and international policies (through e.g. handstreaming), offers opportunities to build and stabilize Higher Education for People with Intellectual Disabilities in the European area.

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