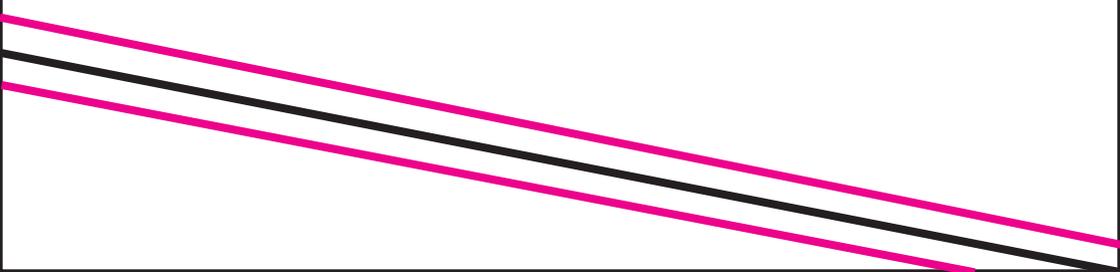# ERASMUS+ AND HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Guidelines on collaboration and good practice for International Relation Offices and Disability Services in Higher Education Institutions

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MappED

Introduction and training event output

MappED! is a project of the Erasmus Student Network - established with the aim of providing equal opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the Erasmus+ Programme; providing them with the necessary tools to be better informed about their rights, procedures and support services they are entitled to.

> *"At 0.15%, the rate of students with disabilities going on exchange is abysmal. With MappED!, we hope to encourage more students with disabilities to go abroad, by providing them security in the knowledge that support services are available to them at their host universities."*

Thomas Pappas
Board Member of ESN.

This booklet is the output from a 5 day training event which was held by the MappED project from 13th - 17th of March 2017 in Dublin (Ireland).

The purpose of the training event was to explore ways to improve and promote mobility opportunities for students with disabilities, with its main focus on developing better communication and collaboration between host and sending and host institutions. The training opportunity was availed of by delegates from a wide range of European countries. While the majority of delegates had roles within a Higher Education Institution International Office or Disability Office, ESN representatives, students, students and graduates with disabilities and volunteers were also in attendance.

Everyone worked well together and made invaluable contributions to this publication and the online mapping platform - app.

The aim of the training event was :

1 To identify effective means of collaboration and engagement between international officers and disability officers and students with disabilities in order to improve the mobility of students with disabilities in study abroad programmes.

2 To share state of the art good practices and thinking behind the provision of services for students with disabilities embarking on or considering a study abroad programme.

3 To share best practice in terms of procedures and processes for study abroad.

4 To develop a system of communication and joint collaboration for the mobility of students with disabilities between college services.

Moving forward

The group worked on developing and sharing ideas in a collaborative workshop format. The outputs were then used to form the framework and content of these guidelines which will be promoted within the delegates' own universities and shared through networks to other Higher Education Institutions in Europe. The following topic guide has been produced to facilitate an agenda for disability offices and international offices to work together to both encourage more students with disabilities to participate in international exchanges and to create fully accessible pathways to success for home and host institutions and students.

Topic guide

This topic guide has been drawn up to provide practical suggestions on how to anticipate issues regarding mobility for students with disabilities in general and examples of what works.

The five topics covered are:

Topic 1: Understanding the Erasmus+ programme and how it can support students with disabilities

Topic 2: Understanding how Changing Pedagogy can support Student Mobility - Inclusive Teaching and Learning/ Universal Design in Higher Education

Topic 3: Student Experiences

Topic 4: Developing policies, practices and procedures (protocols) for successful mobility for students with disabilities

Topic 5: How an Assistive Technology 'passport' can support effective mobility students with disabilities

Erasmus+ Higher Education Charter

The adoption of the Charter by Erasmus+ HE partners is an important step and offers support to Disability Offices in expressing their role as the number of students with disabilities undertaking part of their studies abroad increases. A self-assessment tool is being developed to help Higher Education Institutions track how they are meeting the Charter. This will be published in 2017.

ACTION POINT

Disability Offices and International Relation Offices to collectively identify who in their institution is responsible for adopting and implementing the Charter, and how they might be more involved and share information on students with disabilities undertaking an exchange program.

Funding and Support for Students with Disabilities

Guidelines have been published for National Agencies and Higher Education Institutions by the National Agencies Working Group. Work on improving the access arrangements for students with disabilities links with the work of MapAbility (read more at the page 17), the Erasmus Student Network study on the arrangements and resources across European Higher Education Institutions. National Agency websites have prominent displays of information, including additional financial assistance for students with disabilities. The National Agencies Working Group will continue until 2020 and will look further into what can be done to support traineeships and the portability of national supports.

Each National Agency decides the conditions for the extra grant funding for students with disabilities, over and above the baseline (€350 as of 2017, see below). The extra grant is related to costs of disability supports while on mobility. For example, a PA (personal assistant), differential costs of medication, return airfares for medical appointments and note-takers.

The National Agencies Working Group recommends:

▶ Liaison between International Relation Offices and Disability Offices could be helped by designating one member of staff in each office to have a liaison role on agreeing processes to share and support incoming and outgoing students with disabilities.

▶ Home and host Higher Education Institutions should have specific inter-institutional agreements.

▶ Guidance on Erasmus+ staff mobility should also be discussed within the Higher Education Institution.

▶ Ideas such as a mobility tool for faculties to share across institutions would also ease the arrangements in relation to subject based reasonable accommodations.

▶ Higher Education Institutions can draw down funding of €350 per student on Erasmus+ placement, the money is not ring fenced so this could, for example, be made available for capacity building activities such as preliminary visits between institutions by Disability Office staff.

The work of the National Agencies Working Group has identified the following barriers

Disclosure issues

▶ More students with complex needs who need more support

▶ Preparation time needs to be factored in, the work doesn't start at the Airport

▶ Lack of information or inaccurate information

▶ Anxieties and fear of the unknown may deter students

▶ Both physical and cultural barriers

And they suggest sometimes shorter trips might be helpful.

ACTION POINT

Disability Offices and International Relation Offices to regularly visit the Erasmus+ National Agency website and discuss how to take advantage of opportunities such as preliminary visit to host institutions.

Disability Offices and International Relation Offices to identify who holds the budget from Erasmus+ and how the standard fund payment is invested, and develop a long-term strategy to support the Disability Offices and International Relation Offices work collaboratively with faculties: for example developing subject based mobility tools to ease the arrangements with schools/faculties in host Higher Education Institutions.

Disability Offices and International Relation Offices to explore the opportunities created by preparatory visits now being possible. Being in touch with host students with similar disabilities at this time would also be helpful. Building up a personal network of contacts with host universities over time would help and protocols could be developed.

These networks should be shared between the International Office and Disability Office to be fully effective. There may also be subject centred networks which faculty members have access to. The aim should be to enable a liaison contact list to be created for the home Higher Education Institution.

International Relation Offices and Disability Offices can help disabled students by redirecting them to the MappED! website in which practical information will be highlighted (online map with accessible buildings, how to get a special needs grant, testimonies of disabled students…)

https://mapped.eu/

Topic 2: Understanding how Changing Pedagogy can support Student Mobility - Inclusive Teaching and Learning/Universal Design in Higher Education

As progress is made towards the adoption of universal design in course programmes, teaching and assessment, it will make it easier to cater for a diverse range of students. However, in reality Higher Education Institutions in different countries are and will be at different points in the implementation of UDL. Therefore, it is important that International Relation Offices and Disability Offices take into consideration that theses changes in pedagogy may not happen at the same time. Very large universities that run on a decentralised model may mean that change and development in pedagogy will come about at different rates.

It is important to understand that inclusive teaching and learning are part of the accessibility criteria for students with disabilities to succeed and it is equally important as access to the campus, accommodation and social environment.

Examples of changes in teaching and learning include flipped classrooms where students engage in tasks before a tutorial, and a more flexible approach to assessments. You can read about these in articles in the AHEAD Journal number 2, The Flipped Classroom: Rationale and Approaches for Higher Education and 'Flexible assessments? We will lose our accreditation!' in AHEAD Journal number 5, May 2017 or listen to an interview about flexible assessment with Dr Roy Erkens, a lecturer at the Maastricht Science Programme in The Netherlands

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHuVdeS_W58

Home and Host International Office and Disability Office should together find out who in their institution is responsible for progress in universal design in relation to teaching and learning. This could be, for example, the teaching and learning committee. They should familiarise themselves with the opportunities this offers students with disabilities. Any internal training available should be seen as a priority.

Home and Host staff should familiarise themselves with the guidelines produced by the UDLL Erasmus+ project Licence to Learn, see

https://udlleurope.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/bpg-web-version.pdf

TIPS

A range of articles can be found in the AHEAD Journals

https://www.ahead.ie/journal

Introducing UDL from disability service side can make it difficult to interest academics. A key resource is the work of Katie Novak. (Katie Novak, Ed.D., is an internationally recognised expert on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) with more than 14 years of experience as a teacher and school administrator. She is a member of CAST's Professional cadre and has written several books on the topic of UDL.)

https://ahead.ie/conference2017-keynote

TOPIC 3: STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Feedback from students has identified that students with disabilities need a sense of belonging and a positive social environment as well as technical and mobility support. They report that there was often more focus on access to the academic environment than on the social dimension. There is a need to build trust that they will be supported, that what is on paper will be there in practice; that transition will be smooth; that funding will be available at the time it's needed.

There is a need for students with medical conditions to discuss the arrangements for the Erasmus+ placement with their medical team. The medical team may have contacts within their specialty in other countries, and be able to advise on the nearest specialist centre. The host university should then make these contacts and arrange a protocol on what happens if the student needs urgent medical assistance.

Transport for students with complex mobility needs should be explicitly agreed, with information on accessible vehicles in the host /Higher Education Institution or local community. Students with complex disabilities rely on a family and friends support network and consideration should be given as to how this might continue during the year abroad. One solution might be that student organisations such as ESN or students engaging in mentorship / buddy programmes take on 'some' of the role of supporting body during the period abroad. However, this should not be used as a substitute for reasonable accommodations (supports) that have been agreed as part of a needs assessment - see Topic 4..

ACTION POINT for institutional policies and procedures

How do we assist students to engage in the social and community fabric, particularly if they have shown a tendency to struggle in their home institution? They may need help to develop advocacy skills and agency/autonomy. Opportunities to develop these can be included in the protocols suggested in Topic 4. This will enable specific individual transition plans to include actions to support this aspect of transition, Topic 4 provides details of how to undertake a student needs assessment in preparation for a study abroad or placement period.

The questions around infrastructure can be assisted through the development of networks suggested in Topic 2, and in the development of protocols and inclusion of information suggested in Topic 4

The funding discussions suggested in Topic 1 could facilitate the special Erasmus+ funding be used to support costs of family visits agreed in advance.
Funding could be allocated to support student volunteers or to develop a mentorship (buddy programme), etc. For more information, please contact your Erasmus+ National Agency.

Case Study

Seonaid O'Murchadha
a student perspective of study

Seonaid described her experiences on a placement in Spain (2000 - 2001). The experience was very worthwhile. On reflection she was able to highlight issues where, if she had received more information at the time, life would have been less stressful. These included aspects which at the time she thought were her own responsibility such as transport, housing, medical support. She found out that the university took responsibility for course access arrangements, for example, access to the campus, teaching rooms, library, a parking space, advice from the disability and international offices. She had needed help from a PA and had funded it herself and so she was interested to hear that the Erasmus+ special funding could cover particular needs such as this. She thought it would be helpful to be put in touch with students with similar disabilities at the host Higher Education Institution beforehand, as 'you don't know what you don't know', meaning it's hard to know what questions to ask.

◯◯ Read further case studies here :

On the MappED! website: *https://mapped.eu/testimonials*

Here you find the portraits of 9 participants in a research project run by SIHO in Belgium. Participants came from all over the world including The Netherlands, Lithuania, Belgium and Ireland and went to Sweden, France, Belgium, Spain, Suriname and Denmark: *http://www.siho.be/in-beeld/portretten/mobility-portraits/*

AHEAD Ireland also gathered the experiences of 4 students with disabilities who undertook study abroad in countries across the world, from France to Australia. *https://www.ahead.ie/studyabroad-experience*

Topic 4: Developing policies, practices and procedures (protocols) for successful mobility for students with disabilities

Higher education institutions across Europe vary in size, academic focus and the nature of their location. However, all these institutions are covered by European equality legislation and each institution is developing its own Erasmus+ Higher Education charter response. This means anticipating that there will always be incoming and outgoing students with disabilities on placements. There are common elements regarding mobility in relation to students with disabilities which can be shared and implemented which should make it easier to organise individual needs.

Here are some suggestions :

Review your own institutions practice regarding

Identify effective means of collaboration and engagement between International Relation Offices, Disability Offices and students with disabilities to improve the mobility experiences of this cohort of students in study abroad programmes

Within your institution, build inter-departmental contacts and arrange events where you can provide information and advice, such as, organising orientation days jointly between International Relation Offices/Disability Offices with follow up/feedback from staff and students

Meet on a regular basis to :

▶ Share understanding of roles

▶ Agree tasks/checklists

▶ Communicate jointly with schools/faculties

▶ Gather information on funding, especially Erasmus+ special funding

▶ Repare communications – International student handbook to mention disability early in text

▶ what information needs to be gathered and made ready for any student

▶ set up ambassador or mentoring scheme - this could be done using ESN volunteers

Jointly prepare the communications strategy for incoming students

It is important that the information from host institutions welcoming incoming students gives clear information on where to get specific information and support. This should not be hidden at the back as an 'afterthought' but highlighted early on in the publication. Consideration should be given regarding in what languages to publish. Direct email links should be provided so that students can feel comfortable asking questions and know who might see any confidential information they provide. Some good examples are given below.

http://www.univ-lyon3.fr/medias/fichier/welcomeguideinternationalstudents-20162017_1461767614810-pdf

http://www.ucd.ie/international/study-at-ucd-global/coming-to-ireland/international-student-handbook/

Student needs assessment

Do you provide a student needs assessment process for each student with disabilities that goes on a placement abroad? A student needs assessment interview held by staff either at the International Office, together with the Disability Office can provide a relaxed conversation. Be sure to use positive words and body language and be re-assuring about the process. A Placement Plan should be drawn up and agreed with the student, and a named point of contact agreed as the placement draws near. Students should be clear about who is taking the lead and the process of making arrangements with the host university.

This then needs to be shared with the host institution. How and when will this be provided to the host institution? Are you clear about translation arrangements within your institution and the host institution? The needs assessment should also provide information on Assistive Technology. Topic guide 5 provides a detailed model of how to provide an AT 'passport' to the host institution.

Key Point: Make preparatory visits where partnership relationships exist between institutions.

Identify existing regional/national/international networks – for example, the LINK *Network https://www.ahead.ie/link* ;
your Erasmus+ national office and European networks, UNICA (*larger Higher Education Institutions from the capitals of Europe*); the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and their national branches; the European Students' Union (ESU) and their national branches, subject centred faculty networks. Explore how other institutions in your country are developing the Erasmus+ HE Charter – is there a network on this? Networking will lead to developing and sharing good practice.

Can you set up a smaller networks as a first step?

TOPIC 5: HOW AN ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY 'PASSPORT' CAN SUPPORT EFFECTIVE MOBILITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Introduction

Students with disabilities are now supported by a range of Assistive Technology, but the approach to this support may vary between countries and institutions. To assist staff and students to prepare for the placement, we suggest that each student has an Assistive Technology 'passport'. Here is how it might work:

The Home Institution prepares a report on student's individual assistive technology

Who should be involved in putting the report together?

The student; Disability Office; Learning Resources (may need to consult central IT/AT Service); Centre for Digital Pedagogy (France) The International Office in the home institution needs to be aware of process, completing the passport should be on transition checklists for both the Disability Office and International Office.

What key information should this report contain?

How the student uses AT to study relative to course requirements and the student's impairment, for example: for classes, completing assignments at home, lab work, etc.

The current AT packages used and on what devices. Is the student able to take all devices with them to host institution?

Identify any AT that is accessed through home institution central IT/AT resources.
Identify how any AT is accessed through home institution student learning resource centre, for example: output devices such as Braille printer.

What response is expected from host institution?

Once the passport is received the host institution will need to respond in a timely manner. A process will be needed so that the host institution disability office and international office work together to be fully aware of student's needs.

Both offices will need to work together to identify:
Who will be the main contact regarding AT support for the student? Name and email address. This may be in the school or faculty, or in the Disability Office.
Provision of written confirmation that this fits with agreed digital pedagogy of host institution, including school or faculty.

What is the availability of AT equipment? Is an equipment loan pool available for students with disabilities?

Identify a list of any issues which need to be resolved before the student arrives, for example: where AT software package is accessed through home or central IT/AT service but this is not available at host institution; any IT protocol/ security issues

When should the report be sent?

As soon as the exchange is confirmed, copying student in on the process.

When should the host institution respond?

Well in advance of the student's arrival date, to give student the opportunity to respond.

Key Point: Both home and host institutions should include this in their action plan checklist

▶ *Screen Reading software*

▶ *Magnification devices and software*

▶ *Braille devices*

▶ *Scanning equipment*

▶ *Speech to text/language input software*

▶ *Planning/organisational software*

Note-taking

The AHEAD Ireland website publishes top ten AT apps regularly, see

○○ *https://ahead.ie/appwatch-top-ten-student-apps*

About MappED! project

MappED! is a long-term project developed since September 2015, in Brussels and which has strongly evolved in 2016. The objective of the project is to increase the participation of students with disabilities in mobility, thus enabling Erasmus Student Network to be more inclusive. This project links ESN International's ExchangeAbility program to promote inclusive mobility. It follows the pilot project MapAbility (2014) funded by the Council of Europe.

Seven partners gathered around this project : ESN International, ESN France, Universities of Vigo (Spain) and University of Warsaw (Poland), UNICA network (Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe), AHEAD (Specialist NGO - Ireland) and Jaccede (Specialist NGO - France).

It has created not only a web platform for universities and students with disabilities to promote mobility, but also a mobile app . The MappED! mobile app has been developed to inform French and international students with disabilities about the accessibility of university services and buildings.

This MappED! web platform was created to provide practical information for students with disabilities and universities. More specifically, to publicize the Erasmus+ program and provide information about the grant covering special needs for students with disabilities. The goal is also to encourage them to go abroad thanks to testimonials posted on the website of MappED!

Universities can find good practice guides from several European universities which offer advice and information about mobility opportunities for all students.