Participation of students with disabilities in mobility programmes
Introduction

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10+ years experience of the Erasmus programme

Inclusion in mobility programmes since 2013

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*Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education*

Collaboration of university associations, the Flemish Government and national student union in Flanders, Belgium

Focus on implementation of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

@SIHOtweets
In Flanders

- **Action plan** for mobility of students (2013)
- Specific attention for **inclusion**:
  - targets
  - comprehensive monitoring
- **33% of the mobile students** should belong to **underrepresented groups**
  - students with study grant
  - students with disabilities
  - working students
Students with disabilities in Erasmus+
Special needs in Erasmus+

Students who received a special needs support represent only 0.14-0.17% of the beneficiaries in Erasmus+ mobilities for Higher Education studies and traineeships.
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!
Inclusive Mobility Alliance

DEFINITION

Inclusive Mobility means creating and ensuring adequate conditions to learn, work or volunteer abroad for people with fewer opportunities, by addressing their diverse support needs.

It is a needs-based approach to what the individual beneficiary needs to ensure a safe and exciting mobility period abroad. It is important to not generalise needs, needs are specific and the individualised aspect in it is highly important.
EPFIME Project

Enhancing a thought-out Policy and Framework on Inclusive Mobility across Europe
Collaboration
Ministry of Education – Universities – Students – Civil Society
Online surveys

- Student survey
- Ministry survey
- University survey
Student survey
Student survey

Answers from 1134 students with disabilities from 30+ countries!

Austria (2), Belgium - French Community (4), Belgium - Flemish community (581), Cyprus (4), Czech Republic (49), Estonia (10), Germany (41), Greece (17), Hungary (24), Iceland (1), Ireland (149), Italy (92), Kazakhstan (1), Lithuania (5), Malta (20), Netherlands (9), Poland (2), Portugal (2), Romania (5), Russian Federation (1), Serbia (5), Slovak Republic (21), Slovenia (1), Spain (46), Sweden (1), Switzerland (3), Turkey (1), United Kingdom (8), Other (5)
Student surveys

Most represented type of disability

- 29% dyslexia
- 19% chronic illness
- 15% physical disability
- 15% autism
Student survey – Key findings 1/3

Information provision on study abroad for students with disabilities is lacking. **Too many students still don’t know that extra support and supplementary grants are available.** And a large portion of students with disabilities don’t think that Erasmus+ or other mobility abroad programmes are also open for them.

Although the overall satisfaction regarding the covering of financial expenses via grants is positive, mobile students with disabilities indicate challenges about the difficult eligibility criteria and **inaccessible application process.**
Student testimony 1/3

“When preparing for my own year abroad in studies I was told I need to speak with my lecturers and faculties who don’t know any info about disabilities in those countries. As a result of the lack of info I have decided to not go for a study abroad. For fear I won’t be taken care of adequately”
The **key criteria** for choosing a host institution to study at widely depends on **accessibility criteria** (city, learning, transport, housing and campus), which are currently not easily found.

**Pre visits** at the host institution before the mobility takes place have proven to have an **important positive impact** on reassuring both the student and the staff in charge of its mobility, reducing doubts and fears to the lowest.
Student testimony 2/3

“ I had the possibility to find a good accessible accommodation, pre-visit the university and visit an information center for people with disabilities in my host city, which helped me organize medical aids and to search for personal assistance in advance of my studies ”
International mobility exchanges have comparable advantages towards students with disabilities in terms of higher academic achievement, increased language skills, personal confidence, and personal development. In addition, students with disabilities testified about a more normalised self-perception, making them feel more similar to their peers.
“The exchange period really had a moving impact on me as a person. I truly created a different picture of mine in terms of confidence, expectations, achievements I could make, and an overall new perspective on what I could do and could not do. I had never had the chance to live in a community other than mine [...] where no one sees you as a normal person [...].

In the community where I lived during the exchange program, I met with a different perspective on blindness. They supported every movement I made and also the people I met in the street were highly more informed than those in my home country. Plus the opportunities to participate in various programs and activities as a person with disabilities were far greater at the receiving institution and beyond. This had an amazing impact on me and I started integrating more into the community. I gained better social skills, I also acquired better mobility skills as the infrastructure of the city was of course appropriate for blind pedestrians.”
Next steps
Next steps

Publish a policy report on existing national regulations on Inclusive Mobility across Europe

Publish policy recommendations on how to implement a sustainable Framework on Inclusive Mobility at European/national/ regional/ institutional level

Create a guideline on Inclusive Mobility to stimulate higher education institutions to implement a sustainable inclusive mobility strategy at institutional level
The project

Create a self-assessment tool for national authorities and higher education institution to monitor policies on inclusive mobility around Europe and compare their own position.

Develop an online platform inclusivemobility.eu where everything is to be found about Inclusive Mobility for national authorities, practitioners and students with disabilities. Connected to the existing MappED! Platform, national authorities will be able to register their information on regulations, policies and support services.
INCLUSIVE MOBILITY.EU

inclusivemobility.eu

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siho.be

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