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Mob4All

Mobility for All Guidelines

For mobility officers, academic and non-academic staff, and tutor students

To ensure the accessibility of the document for readers with visual impairments or with specific learning disorders, ANNEX I contains the text of the Guidelines in a format designed for universal accessibility, easy to read and adapted to the use of screen readers.

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INTRODUCTION

About

Mob4All is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme (KA2 Strategic Partnership). The project fosters the inclusion of students with special needs in international mobility programmes through the capacity building of the different actors who can support them, transforming the participant Universities' environments with the development and sharing of individual-centred practices and protocols, thus reducing the inequality of access to resources and opportunities in Higher Education. For more information about the project and its results, visit the project website: **Mob4All@Ulysseus – Promoting the transnational mobility of students with special needs.**

One of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme is the promotion of Inclusion and Diversity across all its actions. When implementing mobility projects, Higher Education Institutions should have an inclusive approach, making them accessible to all students.

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Each higher education institution, by signing the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, commits to ensuring equal access and opportunities to participants from all background.

However, statistics show that students with disabilities are still underrepresented in international mobility programmes, due to the many difficulties and obstacles that students with special needs encounter during a semester abroad.

The Mob4All Guidelines have been designed to support mobility officers, academic and non-academic staff and tutor students/buddies in adopting, adapting and implementing procedures to guide, accommodate, support and integrate students with special needs in international mobility.

The purpose of the Guidelines is to support Higher Education Institutions and the network of actors involved in a mobility to create a safe and accessible environment for all students, keeping in mind that each Institution is different from the others and being honest in the process: there are structural obstacles that cannot be overcome.

However, the focus should be on the barriers that can be broken down, finding ways and resources to meet the specific needs of each student.

The content of the Guidelines was gathered from the experience of Mob4All partners, gained from engaging with students with special needs and their expertise in mobility and education.

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How to use the guidelines

The Guidelines are divided in **two parts**. The first one is structured following the 3 different phases of any mobility (**Before**, **During** and **After**) from the perspective of both the sending and the receiving higher education institution. It is important to underline that the implementation of high quality inclusive mobilities needs a direct collaboration between the sending and the receiving institutions, at all phases of the experience.

The second part is divided into four sections, each focusing on mobility challenges related to a specific macro-group of disabilities and special needs: **Physical disabilities; Hearing and visual impairment; Dyslexia; Autism, attention deficit and mental health**.

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Part 1: steps towards inclusive mobility

The table of contents at the beginning of the first part allows the reader to have an overview of the different steps of each phase, from the point of view of the sending and receiving institutions. It is meant to be a guide for selective use of its content, depending on the topic the reader is currently looking for recommendations. Each step is linked to a paragraph that suggests procedures, actions and external resources that may help to ensure a high level of preparation, monitoring and evaluation of international mobilities of students with special needs.

Most of the recommendations and tools suggested in the Guidelines can be applied to the implementation of any student's international mobility, although the intention is to focus on the specific features of mobility of students with special needs.

Being aware of the different resources of each Higher Education Institution in terms of staff, time, budget, structure, policies and internal procedures, the aim is to offer a useful and practical tool to be used at the discretion and according to the possibilities of each institution, that can freely adapt it to its specific needs and resources.

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Part 2: special needs

The second part is divided into four sections, each of which analyses the specificity of the macro-group of disabilities it covers. The structure of each section is similar: it opens with a brief description of the macro-group of disabilities and special needs, the types and severities of which are mentioned. Thereafter, the focus is on the barriers that students might encounter during a study period abroad, the needs that might arise to overcome the obstacles, and the resources that a higher education institution might use to meet students' needs.

Every type of disability has many faces, and every person is different. The first and most important recommendation the Guidelines want to offer is to understand the complexity and diversity of every human being. The first fundamental step is to get to know the students, their expectations, their fears, their special needs and their perception of them. Only then you will be able to identify the barriers they might face in a mobility abroad, understand their needs and find solutions that turn obstacles into opportunities.

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Glossary

HEI:

Higher Education Institution

Sending HEI:

Sending Higher Education Institution

Receiving HEI:

Receiving Higher Education Institution

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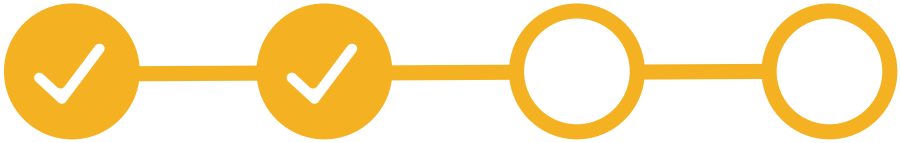
PART 1: STEPS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE MOBILITY



Any student about to leave for a study period abroad steps out of his/her comfort zone. Embarking on an international mobility experience can generate a number of anxieties and fears.

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Here is a non-exhaustive list of some of them:

- Fear of lack of support services provided by their home institution during the mobility period.

Lack of information on the accessibility of the host institution and host city.

- **Fear of being in a foreign country without educational support and familiar faces around.**

Concern about not being able to count exams taken in the host university as grades in their home institution.

- **Fear of not being included among other students.**

Fear of encountering bureaucratic challenges without the support of someone from the host institution's office.

- **Fear of social isolation and lack of interaction with other students.**

Worry about not receiving information about health facilities that can provide medical care for students in need.

- **Fear of feeling disoriented when they return to their normal life and university studies after the mobility period.**

Feeling anxious about having to take many exams in order to pursue their university career with the support they need.

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If these fears are common to any student, in the case of students with special needs they may be perceived and experienced as insurmountable barriers due to the inaccessibility of facilities and services combined with the lack of the specific support the student may need.

To make international mobility an accessible experience for all, the first step is to take into account that:

For a student it is important and helpful:

To **be aware of the support available.**

To know **how to access the support.**

To think about the **strategies and build routines which make the studies as successful as possible.**

Mobility Officers, Academic and Non-Academic Staff and Tutor students should ask themself the following questions at each step of the mobility, from preparation to return:

? Which support measures is available for the students?

? How do the students access this support?

? What do I need to consider in my work?

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Also keep in mind that:

Persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group and they may identify in several ways. Get informed about the self-perception and self-identification, the specific needs and expectations of each student.

Ensure barrier free communication by asking students or their close ones about their communication needs and requirements.

Anticipation is the key! Prepare the student and make sure you have clear and precise information about the support needs.

Language matters! Use inclusive language when referring to a person with special needs. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sets the standard that we must all follow. Some recommendations:

- Use people-first language (emphasise the person, not the disability, for example, use expressions such as “student with dyslexia”, “person with disabilities” rather than “dyslexic student”, “disabled person”).
- Avoid labels and stereotypes. Disability is a part of life and of human diversity, not something to be dramatised or sensationalised.
- Disability is not an illness or a problem. Remember that vulnerability is produced by external circumstances and is not intrinsic to the person.

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Resources:

United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2022

“Disability-Inclusive Communication Guidelines”

Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines

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1. Selection process

Each HEI has its own procedures regarding the selection of participants for international mobility. For this reason, and for the variety of existing selection processes that depend on the internal organisation and policy of each institution, this paragraph gives generic recommendations to take into account when opening a selection process.

The selection procedures of the HEI should consider **equity**, set **inclusion criterias** and they should assess applicants' merit and motivation holistically. It is important to strive for fair access to opportunities and to provide **personalised support** to participants according to their needs.

The publication of the opportunity, the modalities and requirements for applying and the number of vacancies must be **open**, **transparent** and outline the conditions for all candidates with relevant skills or following a relevant academic programme to apply.

The selection of candidates should take place via a fair and transparent procedure, shall be **merit-based and avoid all types of discrimination**.

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The mobility experience should be built and agreed on the free choice of all parties involved.

The Sending HEI shall support the students before starting their mobility in searching for a Receiving HEI, supporting them in defining learning objectives, expected outcomes and career objectives.

The Sending HEI should also help students with the necessary paperwork.

Once the Receiving HEI has been selected, the Sending HEI should contact the international relation office and, if applicable, the services for the inclusion of students with disabilities to assess whether they can provide the necessary support for the students.

Resources:

A map of European educational centres, both higher education and vocational training, could be useful while searching the Receiving HEI. Each centre in the database has an assigned page on which there are sections dedicated to the services provided by the centre for students with special needs. Representatives of the centres can register to edit the page and add all the information about accessibility and inclusivity of their institution.
Institutions | Inclusive Mobility

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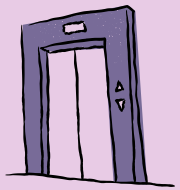
2. Preparation

Going to live abroad is a challenging prospect for anyone, but with the right preparation, international students can settle in quickly and thrive. There are however extra considerations for students with special needs, and by developing and delivering a pre-mobility workshop or more tailored training to students in advance of their mobility, you can support them to personally plan for a successful experience.

The pre-departure phase concerns preparation that can enable students not only to cope better with some of the challenges they will encounter during their time abroad, but also to further develop their mobility skills. **This involves**:

Informative meetings to be organised prior to mobility: formal or informal meetings in which students receive basic information for their arrival to the Receiving country and Receiving HEI. They seek to offer information and clarify doubts before mobility.



Travel and accommodation arrangements: Support students in their search for appropriate accommodation in the host city with the help of the Receiving HEI (see point 9. Logistical preparation). Help them to find the most suitable way to reach the destination city and, if needed, advise them on how to contact the travel company for specific requirements and/or support services.

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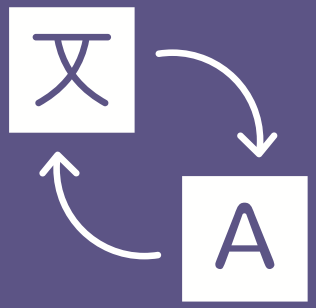
Intercultural preparation, which includes travel safety and health issues, intercultural awareness and cross-cultural communication, culture shock, information about the target culture, student learning possibilities. During this training are usually shared materials to clarify frequent doubts and offer tips to better face a mobility experience to students, in addition to tackling the prejudices they may have about the local environment. These are very varied in their durations (can last about 2 hours). Alongside intercultural preparation is the Psychological preparation on the mobility linked to what to do if a student encounters a problem.



Linguistic preparation: Having basic comprehension skills of the host country's language can ease students' adaptability as it diminishes the feeling of insecurity and helps in daily interaction with local people. Students could test themselves, start learning or refresh their foreign language skills via platforms such as Online Linguistic Support, now hosted in the EU Academy website. Furthermore, students could attend language courses tailored to their needs. The Sending HEI should advise and address students on the language online and onsite courses available in the University and/or external ones.

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Furthermore, one of the best ways for Sending HEI to build a student's confidence in going on mobility is **create a pre-mobility network** by connecting them with:

- Any students who have been on mobility in the region/Receiving HEI.
- Any student who is going on mobility to the same region/Receiving HEI in the same period.
- Students with special needs who had a mobility experience before, or those who are currently on mobility in the Receiving HEI. That can be done, for example, through the participation of returning students in Erasmus outreach events organised by the university, as ambassadors/role models, telling other students about their experience or sharing it on the institution's social media/website.

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Resources:

- **EU Academy is the EU's online hub for e-learning**. Among the various learning fields, the Learn Languages section stands out, offering the possibility of learning the fundamentals of 29 languages with Online Language Support. For more info click here: EU Academy (europa.eu)
- **The Intermove for Trainers project**, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme, created a free course for international learning mobility trainers, combining the intercultural training with the use of language intercomprehension tools to prepare participants on mobility projects. Module 3 of the course, INTERCULTURALITY, includes proposals for intercultural activities for pre-departure preparation. The course is available at this link INTERMOVE For Trainers: Entrar al sitio (intermove-training.eu)

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3. Facilitating a preparatory visit

The EPFIME research report shows that students with special needs highly value the opportunity to visit the Receiving HEI and city before going on mobility, and if possible, before making their final decision. The benefits of a preparatory visit are particularly positive for students with more complex support needs such as those with visual impairments and physical disabilities.

Institutions should inform students with special needs that there is Funding they can apply for at the **National Agency for Education and Internationalisation** to afford a pre-visit.

If a pre-visit is not possible, the university can provide an online-tour for the students.

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4. Minimum documentation required

At the beginning of a mobility abroad, clear learning outcomes shall be set jointly by all parties involved and shall be defined in line with the formal requirements of the educational organisation and referenced to an EQF level.

Before the mobility takes place, the student, the Sending and the Receiving HEIs must sign a **Learning Agreement**:

From 2021, students can complete it online thanks to the **Online Learning Agreement (OLA)**, which allows for digital completion of the document by the Sending and Receiving HEIs.

Before students leave for their mobility, the rights and obligations of all parties included shall be clearly set out in a written agreement (Learning Agreement).

The Sending and Receiving HEIs, together with the students, must have agreed on the academic outcomes to be undertaken by the students prior to the start of the mobility period.

These agreements define the content for the mobility period abroad and specify the formal recognition provisions of each party.
Make sure students know how many ECTS they need to complete the semester on a positive note.

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5. Protection and Safety of participants

All participants taking part in a Mobility action within the Erasmus+ Programme should be assured a safe environment that respects and protects their rights. To this end, each organisation participating in the Erasmus+ Programme should have the needed procedures and arrangements to promote and guarantee the safety and protection of the participants in their activity. Erasmus+ Programme does not define a unique format of insurance and does not recommend specific insurance companies. The Programme let the project organisers suggest the most suitable insurance policy according to the type of project carried out, to the specific needs and requirements of students and to the insurance formats available at the national level. It is important to verify the existence of internal insurance policies within the HEI and check if they apply to the mobility project and the students' needs.

The following areas **must be covered**:

- **Travel insurance** (including damage or loss of luggage).
- **Third party liability** (including, wherever appropriate, Professional indemnity or insurance for responsibility).
- **Accident and serious illness** (including permanent or temporary incapacity).
- **Death** (including repatriation in case of projects carried out abroad).

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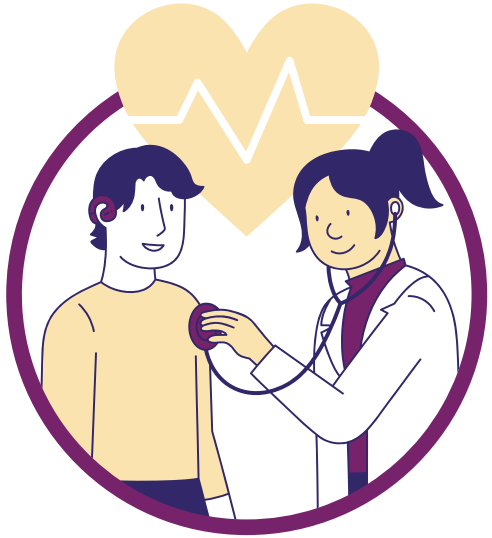
It is strongly recommended that participants in transnational activities have a **European Health Insurance Card**. This is a free card that gives access to medical services, state-provided healthcare, during a temporary stay in EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, under the same conditions and at the same cost (sometimes free, depending on the country) as people insured in that country.

The Sending HEI must inform students with special needs that they might need a special insurance policy to be taken out before the departure and that additional funding is available for participants with physical, mental or health-related conditions via the Erasmus+ special needs support. It is recommended to consult the **Erasmus+ National Agency**.



It is essential to ensure that participants receive the specific medical assistance they need in the host country. Communication between the Sending and Receiving HEI is important to ensure that all necessary documentation is prepared. The documentation required may vary from country to country. The Receiving HEI should help students to prepare customs documents or special certificates for medicines.

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The student must also sign, in accordance with **GDPR** and student data privacy regulations, a consent form before departure.

Students have the right, before signing the consent, to be clearly informed of the use of their personal data and the content of the document.

In terms of rights of access, students are entitled to access the following information:

- **The reasons why their data is being processed**
- **A description of the personal data concerning them**
- **Details of who has received or will receive their personal data**

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Resources:

- More information on the card and on how to obtain it is available at **European Health Insurance Card**
- Protection, health and safety of participants are some of the important features of the Erasmus+ Programme. For more information click here **https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/important-characteristics-of-the-erasmus-programme**
- Students and staff with physical, mental or health related conditions can benefit from specific support services. More information is available at **Students and staff with physical, mental or health-related conditions | Erasmus+ (europa.eu)**

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6. Assignment of a tutor

The mobility must be linked to a study plan and the Sending HEI shall appoint an academic tutor. The academic tutor of the Sending HEI shall be in regular communication with both the students and the tutor of the Receiving HEI during the mobility abroad. The tutors shall cooperate for the resolution of any problem that might arise within the mobility. In such cases, they shall provide the necessary support to the students in order to allow them to overcome any challenge they might encounter.

Depending on the Higher Education national system and/or the internal organisation of the HEI, the academic tutor of the Sending HEI and some specific departments (such as the international relation office, services for the inclusion of students with disabilities, careers offices or faculties) might oversee different tasks.

For example, they might be responsible for the selection procedures, organisation of learning activities and their recognition of credits associated with learning outcomes. The academic tutor of the Sending HEI could also conduct site visits to observe the students at the Receiving HEI and ensure that the students are following the right study plan. Receiving HEI should make reasonable arrangements to support visits by academic tutors where requested and appropriate.

If needed, the Sending HEI will also manage the recruitment of an accompanying person and define his/her tasks before the departure.

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7. Develop a **Support Mobility Plan**

The Sending HEI must contact the Receiving HEI prior to the student's mobility to inform them of the student's specific needs and the support services to be provided during the study period.

The Sending and Receiving HEI can co-develop a tool that could be useful in managing the inclusive mobility of students with special needs: a Support Mobility Plan.

The plan should include relevant details of the student's specific needs, examples could include:

- **Information about learning and communication needs.**
- **Daily living and studying requirements, such as, for example, a personal assistant or assistance animal.**
- **Relevant medical information and support needed.**
- **Physical access needs related to institution campus, local area, transport etc.**
- **Clear communication process: the student should know exactly who should be contacted in case of need.**

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Resources:

To get inspired on the Support Mobility Plan and how to co-design it, read pages 59-62 of the project Inclusivemobility.eu “Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions” clicking here: **Making mobility programmes more inclusive for students with disabilities (inclusivemobilityframework.eu)**

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8. Organise a **meeting to get to know** each other

A meeting between the tutor, the “buddy” at the Receiving HEI and the student should be organised a few weeks before departure to get to know each other, reassure the student, clarify his/her doubts and answer his/her questions.

Depending on the student's specific needs, several parties should participate in the meeting: student-tutor-family-other stakeholders.

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9. Logistical Preparation

Once the Receiving HEI has all the information on the specific needs of the incoming student, it is time to provide all the necessary services and support to ensure that students have access to the same opportunities as others. For example:

- **Mapping accessible accommodation** near the university to provide a list of options to the Sending HEI/student.
- **Checking the accessibility of transport** on the university-housing route and the accessibility of basic services (e.g. medical facilities, supermarket, pharmacy, etc.).
- **Checking the accessibility of the university services** and resources related to the specific student's needs.
- Others.

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10. Create a Pre-mobility Network

Erasmus Tutoring Service of the Receiving HEI could be structured as a team, which consists of several members:

Erasmus Project Tutor

is the general coordinator of the whole tutoring activity.

Buddy

is a volunteer student at the Receiving HEI that supports the incoming student for his/her adaptation and integration in the academic and social environment of the HEI.

Mentor

is responsible for welcoming international students and Erasmus Incoming students once they arrive in the host city. Mentor provides students with useful information about their stay, free time, social and academic activities in the HEI.

Staff

It is essential to inform all academic and non-academic staff who will be involved with the student of his/her specific support and equipment needs. Contacts in case of emergency and in case of need of specific support should be defined before the arrival of the student and shared with all staff.

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Incoming students should be advised to get in contact with the local section of the Erasmus Student Network. The association offers help in the academic, social and cultural integration of students on a mobility abroad. It has several local sections around Europe which organise social and cultural activities. Many of those sections have a mentor system, to support students through their integration process.

Resources:

Click here to find out more: Erasmus Student Network (esn.org)

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10.1. Develop a **Buddy System**

The Receiving HEI usually recruits volunteer students at the university to offer peer support to incoming students, especially for students with special needs, to make them feel at home. Volunteer student buddies assist incoming students before and during their mobility experience:

Before departure, they can contact incoming students via email, text message, phone call or video call. The Buddy System reassures the incoming student and allows him/her to create a social network among peers before departure.

After the arrival, the buddy shows the student around and gives him/her useful tips on cultural, social and academic life in the host country/city.

Resources:

For more information about "Buddies", click here Find your buddy! | Erasmus+ (erasmusapp.eu)

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10.2. Tutoring

The Receiving HEI shall always ensure a tutor with the relevant competences and experience needed to include the student in the regular studying process. A tutor becomes the person who represents the Receiving HEI in the interaction with the students, welcoming them and having a privileged relationship as well as some moments of planned confrontation during the mobility (monitoring).

The tutor is the contact person for the follow-up of students; he/she is also in charge of the explanation of rules and responsibilities, and provides support to enable the student to achieve the learning outcomes. He/she should have the necessary skills to be able to communicate with the student. The Receiving HEI shall ensure that the tutors have enough time in their schedule to provide a good quality tutoring through regular interactions with the students.

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11. Regular Monitoring Meetings

In addition to academic support and monitoring, both the Sending and Receiving HEI should set regular meetings to check on student's academic progress and wellbeing. Those meetings should be regular and scheduled with the student before the departure.

For some participants, a mobility abroad may be a completely new experience to which they have never been exposed before. Uncertainty and sudden changes can be hard for some people, and more likely for those who have not worked on developing their emotional intelligence. It is important for the tutor to be prepared to pick up negative emotions during the follow-up and to help channel them so that the participant can cope with the stay.
Some of the emotions that can appear when working with students abroad could be:

Agitation/worry. In many cases the result of the change of reality, the internal stress of the first days in a new place or the adaptation to an external regulation/element that conditions our life.

Apathy. Students might experience high levels of apathy from the first week onwards, often due to the change of routine, the stress of moving to new HE facilities (and its physical implications) and the unfamiliarity of the environment and culture in which they live.

Fear of not meeting others' expectations. Not being exposed to external judgement before and knowing that there are now many stakeholders who have expectations of what they do can provoke fear and distress.

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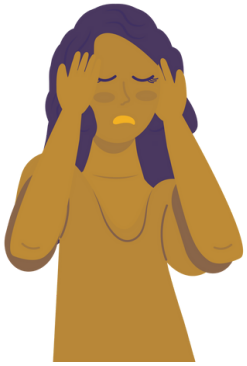

Frustration. Generally, this feeling can arise from the impossibility of doing what the student wants at any moment. Students may be used to having free disposal of their time and reject all activities that do not bring immediate pleasure (I don't feel like going to class - I don't go / I'm sleepy at any time - I sleep).

Here some tips that might help the student:

Follow simple guidelines such as:

- **Dividing the day into small parts** (to achieve small objectives) and automating them so that they do not consume mental resources (establishing exact timetables for transport, preparing food, etc.).
- **Avoiding postponing tasks** that cannot be carried out for a very long period (writing them down so that they do not take up mental resources, internalising that they are postponed indefinitely).
- **Carrying out simple tasks and not accumulating them** in the memory.
- Conveying that the first few days may be very stressful, but **with time this anxiety will fade away.**

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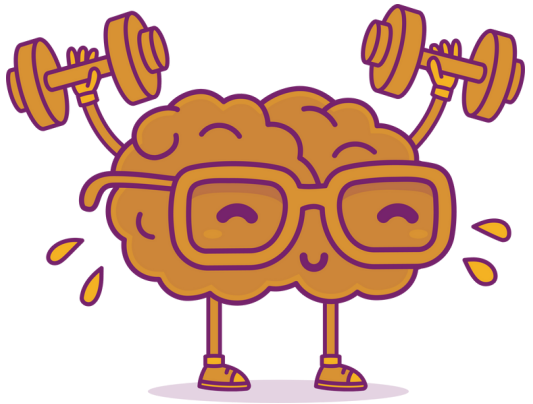
Work on creating new expectations and valuing the previous ones. After the creation of new expectations, it is advisable to carry out activities to fulfil them. It can be effective to explain the motivation curve and its phases.

Communicate with the student! Be clear with the student about what is expected from him/her (in terms of attitude and motivation and not so much in terms of task performance) and communicate any feedback received from the HEI always in an assertive way.

Encourage mental flexibility and frustration tolerance by learning to differentiate between what we want and what we need, controlling impulsive reactions and accepting unpleasant emotions to manage them. Understand that actions have immediate or long-term consequences and that certain efforts have positive long-term consequences, they only involve effort at the beginning and not when you are used to doing them on a daily basis.



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IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER:

The tutor figure is never meant to substitute any clinical professional figure such as psychologists and psychotherapists, as they do not have the competences needed and - even if they did - it lies outside the role they are invested in. Therefore, they should not either infer or diagnose any psychological condition nor try to intervene with any techniques or manage a situation that only an expert should manage. They will only provide help to make students comfortable, relaxed and reassured, make them feel the support, the presence of someone they can rely on and around whom they could feel sheltered.

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11.1. “Reinforced Mentorship”

This is a concept that describes an intensified mentoring process that can be used to support students that might need extra support, for example if they are not able to implement an activity independently or with normal mentoring or tutoring support. Reinforced Mentorship involves closer contact, more frequent meetings and more time allocated to task implementation. This guarantees a step-by-step support of the student during academical activities, as well as outside classes and studying hours. Reinforced Mentorship enables the students to gain as much autonomy as possible, thus contributing to the success of mobility.

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12. Onboarding

Arrival: Arrange for the mentor, the buddy or another staff member, to meet the incoming student at the airport or relevant bus stop and help him/her find the new accommodation.

Welcome and orientation meeting: Organise a welcome and orientation session with the incoming student to:

- Preview the student's academic calendar to ensure that he/she fully understands it.
- Provide a comprehensive tour of the campus and the neighbourhood (provide a map if possible), highlighting:
  - Key rooms where lectures will take place.
  - The library and other useful study areas.
  - Any existing quiet spaces for students with sensory overload difficulties.
  - Spaces to charge mobile devices and access free WIFI.
  - Supermarkets, pharmacies, transportation connection, medical facilities, restaurants, bars, gym and other relevant services.
  - Be sure to take the student's specific needs into consideration while showing him/her the environment, for example, a student using a wheelchair might need to know where to find accessible routes/entrances, the location of accessible bathrooms, etc.

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- Introduce the student to key university support staff and ensure that he/she can contact them with any queries.
- Make sure to clearly advise the student on the steps they'll need to take, for accessing the special needs services offered.

Social connection: Offer to connect incoming students to local ones, Organise activities and social events, particularly in the early weeks of the mobility. To do so this:

- **Collaborate** with the student's union or local branch of the **Erasmus Student Network** to highlight activities which may be suitable and consider accessibility of activities/events where relevant.
- **Devise a template suggested itinerary for the first few weeks of mobility** and edit it as students arrive with upcoming campus events, visits to key city landmarks and accessible cafes/hotspots close to their accommodation - all optional suggestions for students to consider.

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Resources:

- A map of European youth structures of international mobility support and disability support: Map - M (Map, n.d.)obility With Disabilities (mobility-with-disabilities.org)
- MindInclusion is an APP co-designed together with people with intellectual and physical disabilities. Its main aim is to support people with special needs in accessing and evaluating public places according to how much these are inclusive. Learn more and download it at this link: www.mindinclusion.eu

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13. Re-orientation Meeting and Evaluation

At the end of the mobility period, the Receiving HEI and the student should organise a meeting to discuss, evaluate and provide feedback on the mobility experience, identify skill sets gained and learning outcomes achieved, in line with the learning outcomes specified in the Learning Agreement or other document established at the beginning of the mobility. Furthermore, the student shall receive a written statement validating and recognizing their learning outcomes.

Both Sending and Receiving HEI should:

- **Assist students with documentation** and academic bureaucracy.
- **Engage in a re-orientation meeting with students** after their return from mobility to discuss their experience and see if their support needs and expectations have changed as a result of their mobility experience. If necessary, conduct a revised needs assessment.
- **Evaluate the experience of returning students**; evaluation tasks could include student surveys and/or qualitative exercises such as focus groups with students and staff involved in the implementation of the mobility. Evaluations should cover the students' personal experience and their thoughts on the process of planning and providing support, from the application phase to the end of the mobility experience.
- **Try to motivate students to write a detailed experience report** to give other students with special needs as good an insight as possible.

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Resources:

Europass is a free set of online tools to manage skills, and plan learning and career in Europe. Encourage your students to create an Europass profile. Among the various Europass tools, Europass Mobility can help students to showcase skills acquired during their mobility experience in another country, while Diploma Supplement can help them to describe their higher education qualifications in a clear and consistent way. More information is available on Document Library | Europass

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14. Returning students: Role model and Ambassador

Recruit students (and accompanying persons when applying) returning from mobility to act as role models and ambassadors. Spreading the word about the possibility of participating in a mobility project, and in particular an inclusive mobility project, could have a major impact on the institution, the students themselves and the local community.

Involving students who have previously participated in the programme increases awareness of Erasmus+ opportunities and provides support and accurate information to students that are getting ready for their own Erasmus+ experience, including information on locations, accessibility, lifestyle, university courses and social activities.

These leadership opportunities are often appreciated by both students and staff and may include:

- Acting as a **buddy or mentor** for future incoming or outgoing students.
- **Volunteering as an ambassador** to share their story at events promoting international mobility.
- Writing blogs, recording videos, **sharing their experience** on the institution's website and social media.

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Resources:

- The European Commission promotes an initiative, **Role Models**, that, through a European network supported by Erasmus+, enables local stakeholders to invite people with successful stories of overcoming difficulties to share their experience with young people and motivate them to rise above the challenges they may face in life. This initiative can be an interesting opportunity for HEI and students alike to promote inclusive mobility and encourage all students to live this empowering experience. For more information, download the leaflet at this link: Role Models: Promoting Common Values | European Education Area (europa.eu)

- Inclusive Mobility, a KA3 Erasmus+ project implemented between 2018 and 2020, developed a European platform about inclusion and support services offered by HEIs, national agencies and ministries for education to international students. Among other useful tools and resources, students with special needs returning from a mobility abroad shared their experience to inspire other people and encourage them to go abroad. You can find those inspiring stories at this link: Testimonials | Inclusive Mobility

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15. Final Evaluation meeting between the institutions

Organise a **meeting** to **evaluate the experience**, check that **quality assurance criteria** have been met and **readjust** possible deviations in order to lay the basis for future collaboration between Sending and Receiving HEI. Remember, cooperation between the HEIs is the key for successful inclusive mobilities.

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PART 2: SPECIAL NEEDS

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Physical disabilities

1. Short description

In general, a physical disability is a physiological limitation of the human body. A person is physically disabled if his/her physical functions are impaired due to damage to the **musculoskeletal system, organ damage or some sort of disease**. Some disabilities may have genetic causes. Damage can also be acquired during one's life, for example as a direct result of an accident or a chronic illness.

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There are **six manifestations** and types of severities that can be distinguished:

Damage to the central nervous system such as paraplegia, brain damage, cerebral movement disorders like spasticity, multiple sclerosis, splitting of the spine, polio or Parkinson's disease. Students with this kind of physical disability might have problems with moving their hands and arms but also might not be able to walk.

Damage to the skeletal system can manifest as spinal curvatures like scoliosis, brittle bone disease or joint deformities that might cause pain in the back and make it hard for students to sit for a longer period.

Deformities of the skeletal system meaning absence of limbs or malformation of one or more limbs. Depending on the kind of malformation, students may need very different support.

Damage to limbs meaning loss of limbs due to accidents or amputations because of tumours or vascular diseases. The type of support students need to receive depends again on what kind of loss they have because it covers such a wide range.

Muscle system diseases like muscle weakness or muscle atrophy that might cause problems to walk as students feel numbness or tingling in their arms and legs. If students have atrophied muscles in their face or throat, their facial muscles may start feeling weak and students may find it difficult to speak or swallow. Here again there is a wide range of possible needs for students.

Inflammatory diseases of bones and joints like arthritis or rheumatism which means that the immune system attacks healthy cells in the body by mistake, causing painful swelling in the affected parts of the body. Always consider that there are times when symptoms get worse, known as flares, and times when symptoms get better, known as remission. Considering this, students might need support to fulfil deadlines and successfully finish their semester abroad.

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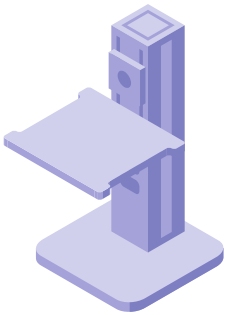
2. Barriers

Stairs at the entrance to buildings or seminar rooms located on floors that do not have elevator access.



Fixed-height furniture that can be hard to use with a wheelchair.

Increased **travel & accommodation costs** and transport costs.

Lack of automatic or push-button doors.

Inaccessible toilets, passages, doorways and rooms that do not accommodate wheelchair users, or are difficult to navigate for people with mobility impairments.

No **funding for an accompanying personal** assistant.

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3. Specific needs

Inform students with disabilities that there is a **funding to apply for to afford a pre-visit**. If a pre-visit is not possible, try to **provide an online-tour** for the students.

Inform students that there is another **funding regarding medication treatment if needed**. (For the funding of the pre-visit and the medication treatment please get in contact with your National Agency for Erasmus+ Higher Education.

Contact the student's union to make sure that all planned events are accessible.

For **teachers**: **eye contact is very important** for students that suffer from upper-body weakness or paralysis and therefore may be unable to raise their hand.

Create an inclusive environment between students as feelings of separateness in the learning environment may have an impact on learning.

Be **flexible with the schedule** as students with physical disabilities need more time to reach the classroom.

Try to provide **extended time** for tests and exams and allow alternative scheduling.

Allow tests & exams to be oral or written depending on what works best for the student.

Allow extensions to assignment deadlines if extensive research involving physical activity like collecting data from dispersed locations is required.

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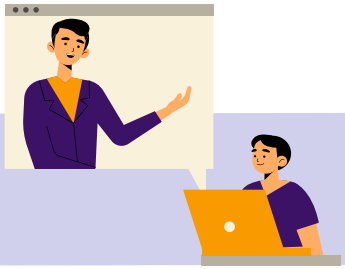
4. Resources and tools

Think about accessibility when booking the room for the orientation at your institution.

If the classroom or laboratory is not easily accessible, reserve seats. If this is not possible, ask for a change of seat.

Some students might need **assistive technology** like audio and/or video recordings to increase accessibility to the course and some may need a personal computer.



Materials like notes and handouts should be available online or before the course starts.

Some students may need **tutorship** for taking notes or always have a personal assistant with them.

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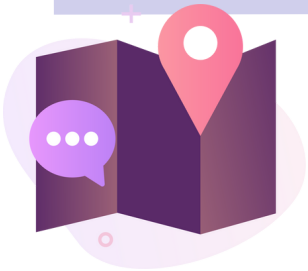
4. Resources and tools

Students may need to use a **personal computer or a personal assistant** during an exam.

Provide a list of **accessible apartments** for students with physical disabilities.



Provide a **map of the city where students can find elevators to the metro station** and let them know the best way to get around (e.g., low-floor trams)

Provide a **tutor who helps students to find their way** around and if needed pick them up at the airport/train station and/or organise a taxi that is specialised on transportation of people with disabilities.

Encourage students to **talk openly about accessibility concer**ns.

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Hearing and visual impairment

HEARING IMPAIRMENT

1. Short description

Hearing impairment is a condition in which an individual has a **partial or total inability to hear**.

There is a wide range of variability related to **several factors**, such as the physical **structure of the ear** (e.g., middle ear, inner ear, auditory nerve), the **cause of the hearing loss**, and the **degree of the loss**. International classifications propose subdivisions ranging from slight or mild hearing loss to profound or total hearing loss.

Beyond biological differences, **educational and rehabilitation histories** can influence the attitudes and skills of hearing-impaired students: the main subdivision is between **gestural** and **oral methods**, but differences also exist within the same subgroup.

The **type of amplification** system used, such as hearing aids versus cochlear implants, and the **age at which the hearing aid was placed**, or the implant was inserted also contribute to the variability in this population.

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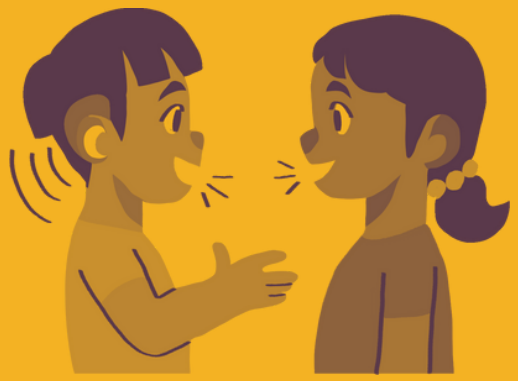
To **keep in mind**....



- Individuals with hearing impairments may experience **varying degrees of difficulty in receiving and interpreting speech sounds and in producing and understanding language**.
- Learning an oral language can be difficult but not impossible, even in cases of profound hearing loss or deafness, and **young adults may have good oral language proficiency**.
- **Phonological problems underlie most possible language difficulties and can constitute a barrier to accessing a foreign language for young adults**. Moreover, weaker development of lexical competence, sentence construction, and discursive skills can lead to difficulties in understanding complex texts, which is a problem that may arise during university studies.
- Although modern amplification systems have greatly improved the hearing ability of people with hearing loss, **communication can still be hindered for various reasons**, such as distance from the sound source, large groups, and ambient noise.
- **Not all hearing-impaired students prefer sign language**, and when they have good oral language skills, they can benefit from subtitles or other technological devices.

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2. Barriers

Difficulty in speaking and understanding the foreign language.

Fear of encountering bureaucratic challenges in understanding the documentation without an appropriate linguistic support from the Receiving HEI.

Difficulty in following the lessons under the same conditions of the other students, as they may require additional supports such as lip-reading, subtitles, sign language, or tutoring.

Fear of social isolation and lack of interaction with other students because of communication problems.

Fear of not being fully included in the host classes, both in the relationship with teachers and among other students.

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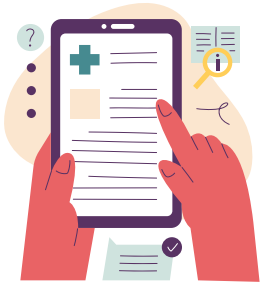
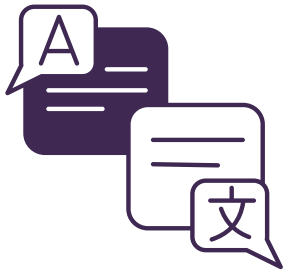
2. Barriers



Not having access to information about healthcare facilities that can provide medical or technical assistance to students in need, for example in the case of ear infections or malfunctioning hearing aids.

Lack of communication support systems such as a sign language interpreting service and hearing loops that facilitate the accessibility of offices, help desks, libraries, or classrooms.



Sign language is not universal. Each country has a different one. Therefore, it is not certain that students and interpreters understand each other.

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3. Specific needs

The Sending HEI should ensure that the Receiving HEI can meet the specific needs (in terms of **communication**, **learning** and **full inclusion**) of students in a mobility and determine how to address and overcome specific barriers. In particular is important to:

- **Check whether the Sending HEI can meet the students' needs in preparing them for the mobility period and in assisting them in the final choice** of the Receiving HEI, through effective support in bureaucratic procedures. For example, clear written or oral instructions must be given, obviously avoiding phone calls and possibly using sign language interpreters.

- Once the student's Receiving HEI has been selected, the **Sending HEI should contact the Receiving HEI and request them to guarantee the student's needs**, such as: follow lessons with visual support (lip-reading, subtitles, sign language, or tutoring), attend classrooms equipped with appropriate hearing aids, such as hearing loops, prepare teachers and possibly students to deal with the above communication problems.

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4. Resources and tools

Tutoring support in understanding **technical and specific** vocabulary.

Tutoring support in understanding **syntactically complex texts.**

Subtitles to access lesson content (possibly in the student's native language or in English).

A **sign language interpreter** may be needed to fully understand the content of the lessons

Learning environments that enable the deaf student to interact with other students.

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4. Resources and tools

Teachers must stand in front of deaf students during lessons to **enable them to lip-read**.

Support for taking notes on the laptop.

M3 recorder: allows lessons to be recorded in mp3 format and to be automatically transcribed into text by a specific tool (e.g. Dragon NaturallySpeaking); the tutor can help the students to verify the correctness of the transcription.

Hearing loops at counters.

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Useful links

- **Subtitles for PowerPoint:**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3glVapywOEA
- **Subtitles for Teams:**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NSYGcz5aA8
- **Dragon NaturallySpeaking:**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDMKK5WtDog
- **What is a hearing loop?**
  https://www.hearinglink.org/technology/hearing-loops/what-is-a-hearing-loop/

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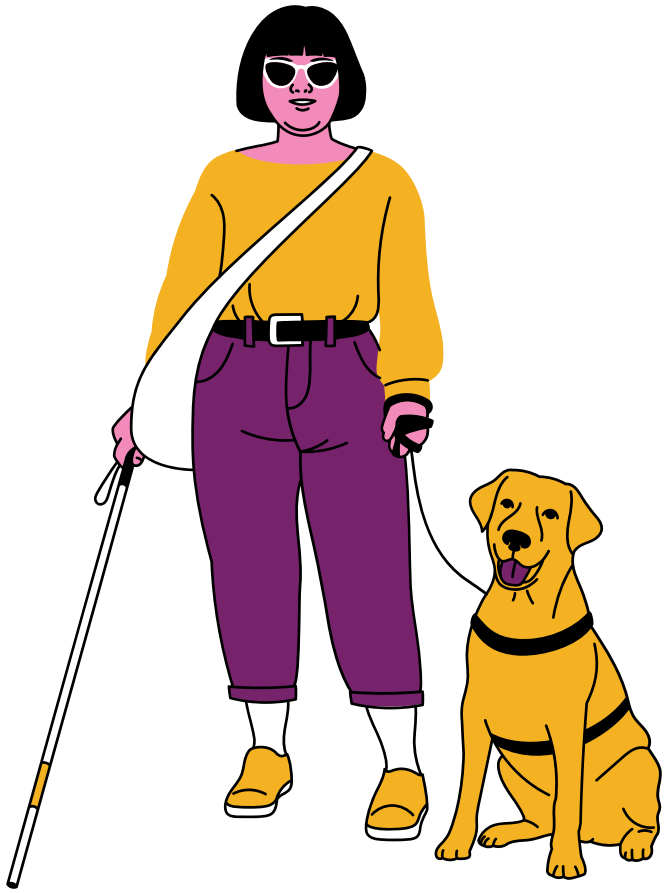
Hearing and visual impairment
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

1. Short description

Visual impairment is a term used to describe **any level of visual loss that affects a person's ability to carry out daily activities**. Because it is such a broad term, "visual impairment" usually also includes blindness.

Visual loss can be categorised based on **visual acuity** (the ability to discern the shapes and details of things you see) or **visual field** (the entire area that can be seen when one eye is fixed on a point), ranging from moderate low vision to complete blindness.

The timing of onset of vision loss is also important for individual development. Effects of total blindness from birth are very different from those of acquired blindness or of low vision.



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To **keep in mind**....

Due to the extreme variability of visual impairment, it is crucial to have a thorough understanding of each student's specific situation to anticipate potential barriers they may face during their university studies.

- **Congenitally blind individuals may have difficulty in spatial manipulation** tasks, even in adulthood, unlike individuals who are visually impaired or not congenitally blind.
- Beyond these limitations, it is important to remember that **a visually impaired student has learning abilities comparable to those of sighted students**, as long as they are supported by accessible material.
- **Loss of peripheral vision** (visual field) **can limit mobility**: for example, students may have serious difficulty moving around in an unfamiliar environment due to physical barriers that they cannot see because of their visual field.
- **Loss of central vision** (visual acuity) can **limit access to written texts, images, and academic material.**
- **Total blindness affects both functions**.

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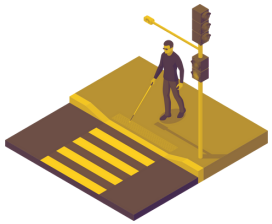
2. Barriers



Possible low accessibility of the Receiving HEI and the host city (for example, physical barriers such as stairs or obstacles that are not well marked; absence of tactile strips on the floor or sidewalk; absence of acoustic signals at traffic lights).

Lack of information on how to move around HEI buildings and access classrooms.

Difficulty in being autonomous in moving within the university environment.

Fear of encountering bureaucratic challenges in understanding written documentation without appropriate technical support from the Receiving HEI.

Lack of accessible teaching materials (e.g., audiobooks, PDF texts) or varying degrees of difficulty in accessing teaching materials.

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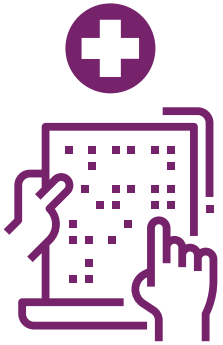
2. Barriers

Fear of not receiving support (tutoring) to take notes during lectures.

Fear of not being trained to use appropriate technology to assist or improve visual function.

Fear of not being able to interact with other students, due to lack of specific strategies useful for including a blind or visually impaired student (i.e. calling him/her by name, being recognized before the interaction begins)



Fear of not receiving information on health facilities capable of providing medical assistance to students in case of need. When such information is written, make sure that the student can decode it, for example through speech synthesis.

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3. Specific needs

Help the student **contact the relevant offices of the Receiving HEI before departure to see if support needs can be met** (i.e. information about possible physical barriers; also provide the student with a list of necessary documents in an accessible format, that is readable through a vocal synthesis or a braille printer).

Contact the receiving organisation t**o ensure that the student's needs are met**. That might include accessible accommodations, the use of a laptop with specific software, tutoring support for notetaking during classes, and, if needed, the presence of a specific operator who can assist the blind or visually impaired student in moving both inside and outside of the HEI buildings.

Allow the student to **take examinations on a computer equipped** with speech synthesis programs or other aids that can convert written texts into speech or Braille.

Provide a **tutor both during lectures and examinations**.

Ensure that accessible teaching materials are available, such as audio books or PDF texts.

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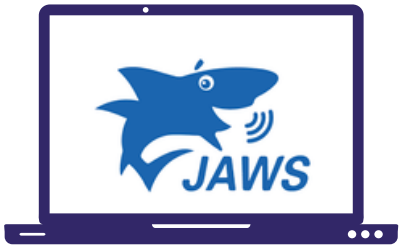
4. Resources and tools

Providing tactile strips for access to the building for blind or visually impaired individuals.

Labelling the environment in an accessible format (with information written in braille).



Providing a laptop with specific software such as JAWS and Zoom Text Magnifier/Reader.

Recording of lessons with an MP3 recorder.

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4. Resources and tools

Tutoring: support in **reading decoding and comprehension**, note-taking during lectures, and transcription of lectures from MP3 format to a text readable with a screen reader.

Availability of a specific operator who can support the blind student inside and outside of HEI facilities.

Accessible teaching materials such as audiobooks and PDF texts**.**

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Useful links

- **Braille display**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMfQNkRR9N0
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dV0KZtVmcIo

- **Zoom text Magnifier/Reader:**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et4i2yQc7pA

- **JAWS screenreader**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dlcY7QIsP0c

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Dyslexia

1. Short description

Dyslexia is neurological condition that makes accurate and fluent reading and writing difficult.

Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in:

- **Phonological awareness**: letter-sound connections not automatic, mixing letters
- **Verbal memory**: “What was it in the beginning of the sentence…”
- **Verbal processing speed**: slowness in reading and writing

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To **keep in mind**....

10% of the population are believed to be dyslexic – many individuals remain undiagnosed.

With the right support, the strengths and talents of dyslexic people can really shine: reasoning, visual, creative fields etc.

As **each person is unique**, so is everyone's experience of dyslexia.

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that **has no effect on intelligence**. It ranges from mild to severe and can co-occur with other learning difficulties.

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2. Barriers

Application could be tricky, since the students will probably have difficulties in reading and interpreting the documents, and some may even decide to not apply for student exchange because the process feels overwhelming.

The International Office professionals **may not identify** who are the dyslexic students, and therefore are unable to give support.

Arrival there is a lot of information to be absorbed, and plenty of it is written text. It can seem overwhelming to a person with dyslexia and there is a risk that useful information will not reach them.

Social connections formed in the beginning of a stay abroad are also very important.

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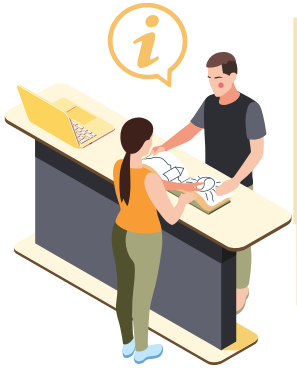
3. Specific needs



Dyslexic students may come forward to the HEI staff as students who are asking many questions, even asking questions about the same things the staff already informed them by email. When this happens, the HEI staff may reflect on their own attitude: rather than getting annoyed by this behavior, considering the fact that maybe the student is dyslexic and that is why they need more support.

Solution to recognizing students with dyslexia in the selection process is to **ask about learning difficulties** in the outgoing students application. It is, however, important to consider the ethical aspects of data procession: Stating that your learning difficulty does not affect the selection. Who has the access to the given information? Student masters the information.

After the students have been recognized, the HEI staff can ensure that the students are supported in understanding and processing the information. Offering peer support, such as a fellow student with international interest and/or experience, can be helpful and encouraging.

Developing a Support Mobility Plan helps a student to plan their exchange studies in a way that ensures successful completing of the planned courses. A student with dyslexia may need for instance extra time to complete written assignments and/or quiet study spaces.

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4. Resources and tools

A possibility to **review the material in advance** and/or possibility to **record lectures**

Teacher may **explain exam questions** in other words during the exam: can be done individually or for all exam participants – requires sensibility

Understanding questions correctly and producing coherent answers lectures is challenging for students with dyslexia, so lecturers may give **extra time in written exams**

Writing by hand is often challenging so it is advisable to ensure a possibility to **use computer in written exams**

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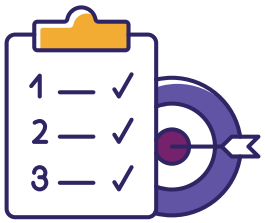
4. Resources and tools

Clear structure in materials is crucial for dyslexic students – and highly beneficial to every student! Useful tips towards better organisation skills include:

Use a planner: handwritten planner and handwritten notes are worth testing (if e.g. mobile calendar and computer notes do not work).

Reminders: Set reminders on your phone for lectures, meetings etc.



Importance of **small steps**: set realistic goals to complete the assignment on time.

Minimise distractions: set yourself time for a task and switch off your phone and social media. It can also help to keep your study sessions short, but regular.

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4. Resources and tools

Technology gives hands-on support. E.g. Microsoft Word's "Dictation" and "Immersive Reader" functionalities may come in handy.

Most challenges can be solved with **good, conscious and well-timed communication**.

Maintaining an encouraging mindset throughout the student's mobility journey is also crucial.

Clear, well-written instruction materials throughout the mobility journey will make the whole process more **user-friendly for all**, not only for the students with special needs.

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Useful links

- **International Dyslexia Association**: https://dyslexiaida.org/
- **British Dyslexia Association**: https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/
- **Find your national educational institution for dyslexia and special needs support.** They provide information and examples in your local language (E.g. in Finnish: https://digilukiseula.nmi.fi/)

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Autism, Attention Deficit and Mental Health

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS_ ASD

1. Short description

Autism spectrum disorders are a group of childhood-onset disorders characterised by impairment in social interaction and communication and by a pattern of repetitive, restrictive behaviours and/or sensory processing difficulties. This disorder may be associated with intellectual disability in some cases and language problems.

Asperger syndrome would be included in an ASD without language impairment and without intellectual disability. The degree of involvement varies from severe to mild and is the one that will mark the social evolution and adaptation in general in adult life.

The prevalence of ASD is currently between 1/100 to 1/150 children.

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2. Barriers

Communication and social reciprocity problems.

Problems of flexibility and variability in interests. Difficulty in changing routines and in accepting sudden changes in day-to day plans.

Sensory information processing problems (auditory, tactile or visual hypersensitivity is normal and often affects tolerance for social environments, such as a classroom or laboratory). In the HEI environment, hypersensitivity may generate anxiety.

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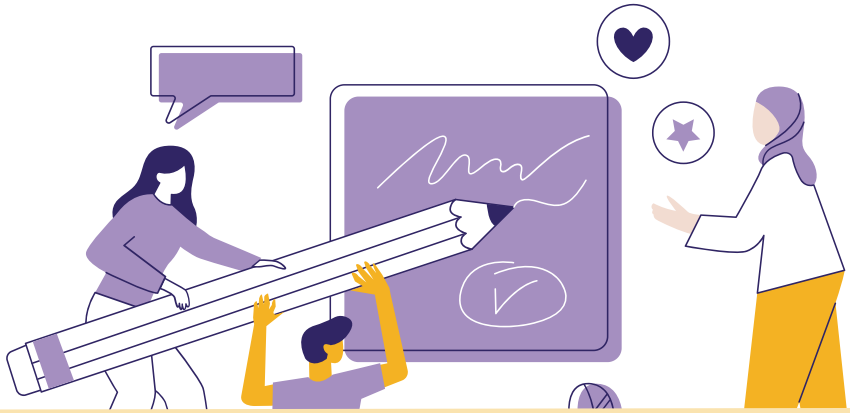
3. Specific needs



Students with ASD require specialised support from the services for inclusion of students with special needs in the HEI, which should be responsible for **developing a plan for the student's adaptation to the academic environment**.

Pedagogical Adjustments. They usually require an **academic tutor in each course**, to help them with difficulties related to all the subjects of the course and who is the person **who relates to the different departments** to solve the student's difficulties.

It is important the role of the **tutor**, who can **help the student organise the study period** and his/her schedule.

The **tutor** is responsible for **supporting the control of the student's day-to-day work** with specific techniques related to organisational and executive function difficulties.

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4. Resources and tools

Use visual aids to help organise knowledge. These can include schemes, blackboard diagrams, conceptual maps, etc.

Due to their difficulty in changing routines and in accepting sudden changes in day-to day plans, **encourage Asperger's students to keep a diary** for recording important dates, such as exam dates, submission dates, presentation dates, etc.

Assign a buddy to show the Asperger's student all that the campus has to offer. The buddy will also facilitate his/her inclusion into work groups. If the student is already getting help from classmates, he/she should be placed in the same groups as these classmates.

Break tasks down into smaller steps. When performing long, complex tasks, functional executive limitations hamper the performance of people with Asperger's Syndrome.

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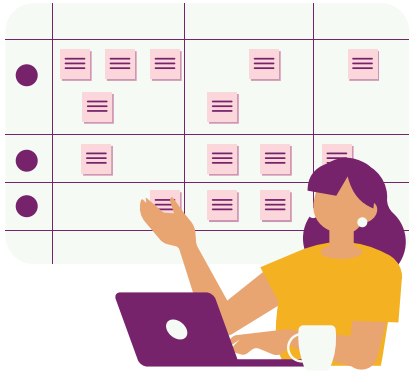
4. Resources and tools

Prepare materials and bibliographies in advance. They should be organised clearly and in chronological order. The student should be informed expressly – in writing, or by email where possible – of any changes.



Asperger's students need more time for oral presentations and, where possible, these should be done with **only the teacher present**. This is because such students usually have difficulties in talking in public, frequently causing them to freeze up.

As Asperger's students find spontaneous integration into groups extremely difficult, **group formation should be teacher-led**. They might also find problems in working in groups, so personalised monitoring is recommended. If the student's level of integration is considered to have an effect on his/her academic development, he/she should be given the opportunity to work independently.

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Autism, Attention Deficit and Mental Health

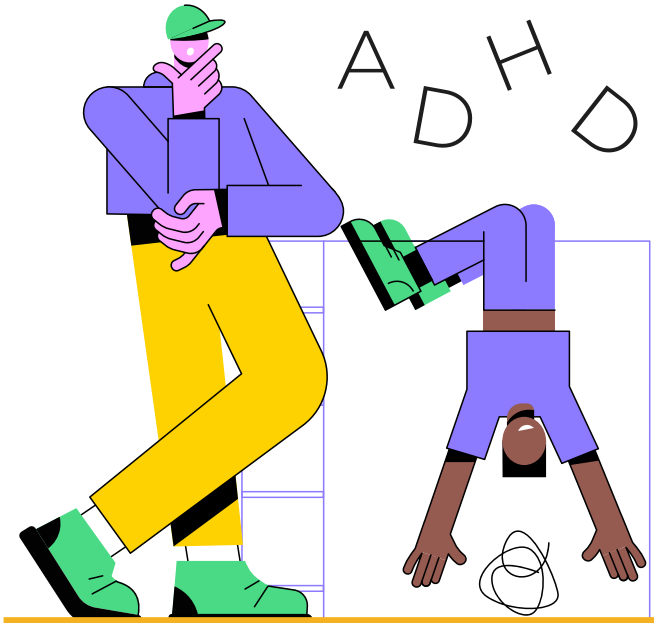
ATTENTION DEFICIT AND HYPERACTIVITY DISORDERS_ **ADHD**

1. Short description

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a **neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by persistent inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity** that interferes with developmental functioning and is maintained in some subjects into adulthood.

Inattention is evidenced by lack of persistence, difficulty in sustaining attention and disorganisation, hyperactivity in the adult is manifested by **great restlessness and excessive activity in general**.

Impulsivity is the quick and immediate actions without reflection and is usually dangerous for the subject.



It is associated with a tendency to socially interfere and make decisions without thinking about the consequences. In adults, motor hyperactivity is less frequent, but impulsivity is more frequent.

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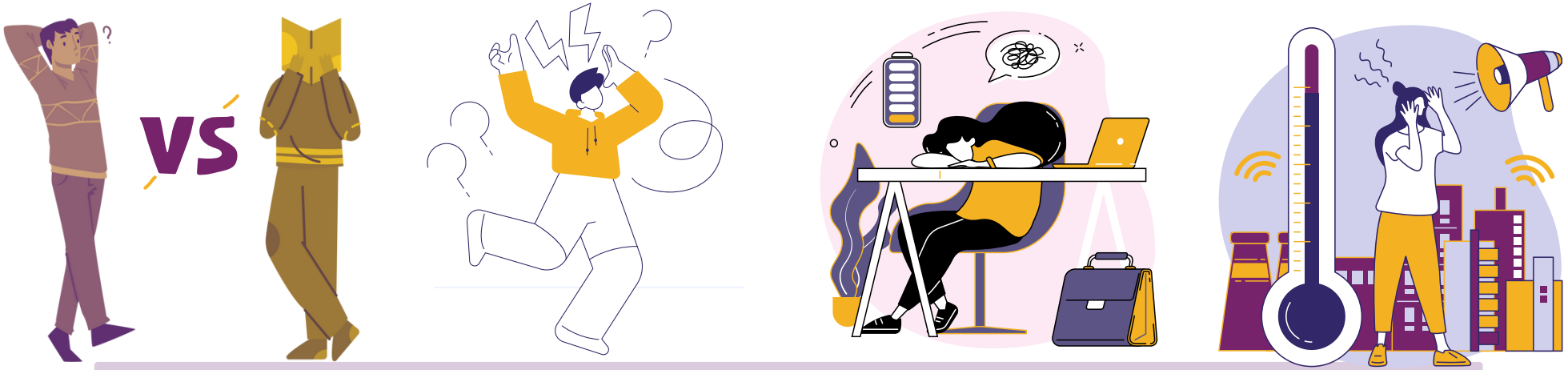
2. Barriers



Their ability to process and produce information from their environment may be affected.

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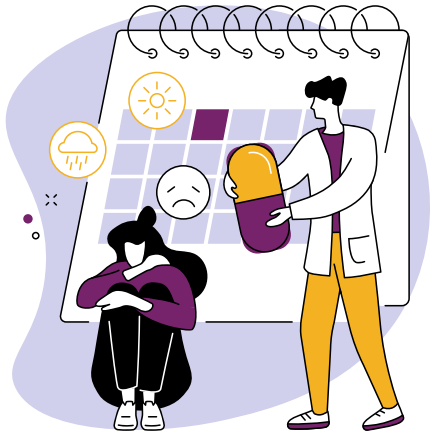
3. Specific needs



In the HEI students with ADHD usually have **pharmacological treatment** or **neuropsychological rehabilitation program**s, with guidelines and organisational structures that they maintain in their academic environment and that they must maintain during the mobility period.

It is recommended that prior to mobility, they **contact the special educational needs team** so that they can assess the needs they may or may not need at the Receiving HEI.

Students may need **more time for exams**.

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4. Resources and tools

Organisational support by the tutor for the monitoring and control of the dates of presentation of the works, dates of practices and exams.

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Autism, Attention Deficit and Mental Health

MENTAL HEALTH

1. Short description

These clinical conditions can affect reasoning, behaviour, the ability to recognize reality or to adapt to living conditions, which can cause a **varying degree of social dysfunction and disability**, and those who suffer from them need assistance from various health and social resources.

Among the most common mental health problems experienced by Higher Education students are **depression**, **anxiety**, **eating disorders** and others.

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To **keep in mind**....

- Students with mental illness **have the same intellectual capacity as any other student**.
- **Each person's functions are different**. We must focus on the individual and all the characteristics that define him/her and avoid pre-established stereotypes.

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2. Barriers

The **ability to process and produce information** from the environment may be affected.

The **pharmacological treatment can affect academic performance**, impair attention span, concentration, memory, and affect the handling and comprehension of verbal and written information.

Risk to be **psychopathologised**.

Risk of **overprotecting or pigeonholing** the student.

Some students may have difficulties, such as **paranoia or stage fright**, that impair their ability to communicate in public.

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3. Specific needs

Students may need **support to face the challenges** of daily life with autonomy, both in their social dimension and in academic work.

Students with **clinical mental health problems** who enrol in a mobility abroad must **contact the HEI's psychological team** so that it can redirect them to the reference person at the Receiving HEI. This person will be the contact in case of any medical-psychological problem.

On the other hand, they must have an **academic tutor** to avoid that the difficulties of adaptation may cause them further stress that could worsen or compromise their condition.

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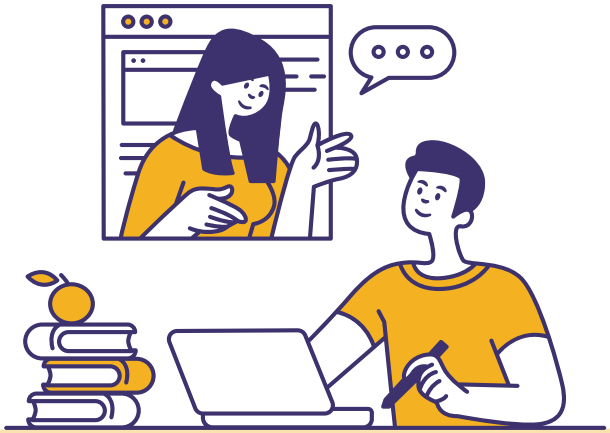
3. Specific needs

The student may need **more time for oral presentations**. When appropriate, these presentations should be made in the presence of the teacher.

The student may **have a slower studying and writing** pace than his/her peers.



If the student is absent due to a crisis or hospitalisation, **provide him/her with the class notes**. In these cases, it must be considered that the absence is due to the student's condition and difficulty in adapting to face-to-face activities.

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4. Resources and tools

Authorise the student in advance to leave the class without prior notice if he/she feels the onset of a crisis.

Adapt teaching plans, using small group work or individual work.
Other methods to achieve subject competences should also be allowed.

Be flexible with assignment deadlines.

Involve the psychology team of your HEI in the preparation and monitoring of the mobility.

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CONCLUSION

Students with special needs often fear that they will not be able to meet their learning and everyday life needs in an unfamiliar environment. For this reason, is not rare that they give up the idea of going on a mobility abroad.

Encouraging them to embark on that adventure and take advantage of this opportunity brings many benefits for the students.

The chance to prove (first to themselves) what they are capable of helps them to set new horizons and goals, to readjust limits and to recognise their own potential. Living abroad increases the clarity of one's sense of self. It is a life experience that fosters the development of essential life skills: **Autonomy, Self-confidence, Adaptability, Resilience, Problem solving, Self-awareness, Responsibility, Ambition, Initiative, etc.**

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Higher Education Institutions should cooperate to guarantee high quality mobilities around Europe, **creating a Network** of sending and receiving HEI, with common values and standards for inclusion and inclusive mobility.

Higher Education Institutions members of Mob4All project are already committed to that. They belong to Ulysseus European University, an alliance that aims to develop an excellency-recognized and internationally attractive, open to the world, persons-centred and entrepreneurial European University for the citizens of the future.

For more information: Home - Ulysseus

To deepen your knowledge and awareness of the disabilities and special needs covered by these guidelines and to learn more about the educational and social needs of students with special needs, we recommend you enrol in the specialised training course **"Training for better integration of mobility participants with disabilities"** **Ulysseus Open Courses: Log in to the site.**

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The training course, that is one of the project's outputs, target different actors who can support students with disabilities and special needs in the context of international mobility for educational purposes. It is a valid support to improve the knowledge and expertise of professors, students and non-academic staff members, providing adequate information about the academic and personal methodological aids they need.

The learning platform that hosts it is **Moodle**. The course is asynchronous, interactive and it **explains the basics of the disabilities addressed**. The feedback received during the prototyping underlines its dynamic and practical features. Participants said that:

"the learning process never feels tedious or repetitive, since the material is presented in a very accessible and engaging way",

"this course can give a general good knowledge of the different forms of disabilities"

"it also gives suggestions to teacher who have to deal with student with disability", it "raises awareness" and "covers multiple issues in a practical and compact course".

Besides the focus on information about the different types of disabilities,

"a special dedication to the Erasmus+ programme and its different modalities is appreciated"

Another positive feedback was the one regarding the articles added as extra resources for further reading.

"Start the topics with reflective questions before starting the explanation" facilitate a "more effective and constructive learning process".

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An engaging tool in the Moodle is the forum, where you can actively participate to discussions, share ideas, provide feedback and tell your experience and good practices in inclusive mobility.

Although the course and the guidelines are independent, we firmly believe that they are complementary as knowledge and awareness about disabilities and special needs lay the foundation for the implementation of inclusive mobilities.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasise the need to create an inclusive culture in Higher Education Institutions geared towards equal opportunities: the ultimate goal should be to create an environment that is **accessible to all**, providing tools and services that guarantee the inclusion of every student.

On the other hand, it is important to recognise the limitations dictated by the actual situation of each Institution and its environment. Some obstacles are structural, and we must be realistic in addressing them: there are barriers that cannot be eliminated in the short term, the approach must be to seek innovative solutions to overcome them in order to ensure equal accessibility.

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PROJECT PARTNERS

UNIVERSITY OF SEVILLE (SPAIN – PROJECT COORDINATOR):

US is a historic university, the second largest in Spain in number of students, with a relevant and robust comprehensive formation, internationally recognized for its academic excellence, research and technology transfer background. US ranks 8th in scientific production and 1st in international patents in Spain. USE provides strong expertise in coordinating European consortia.

UNIVERSITÉ CÔTE D'AZUR (FRANCE):

UCA is a research-intensive university relying on a strong cluster of Higher Education and research institutions. In 2016, Côte d'Azur won a prestigious "IDEX" award, placing it among the top 10 world-class, comprehensive universities in France. UCA provides its own experience of transforming a campus.

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UNIVERSITY OF GENOVA (ITALY):

Università di Genova

UniGe is one of the largest universities in Italy. It is defined by its high-level multidisciplinary, multinational educational pathways, its research projects and innovation activities, and its active technological transfer. UniGe provides long-standing expertise in social cohesion and public engagement empowerment.

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Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

Haaga-Helia is a strongly business-orientated University of Applied Sciences that focuses on co-operation, entrepreneurship, innovation and internationality. Haaga-Helia's strategic core areas corresponding to the needs of business life are: Business Development, Entrepreneurship, Experiential Service Innovation, Value through Sales, New Emerging Technology and Transformative Pedagogy.

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INCOMA (SPAIN):

INCOMA is a training and research centre based in Seville (Spain) with extensive know-how and experience in the development and coordination of international cooperation projects mainly funded within the framework of EU programmes, especially in the field of education, training and research.

UNISER (ITALY):

Since 1998 Uniser supports the internationalisation of education and training providers. The core activity is the organisation of Erasmus+ mobilities in the field of Vocational Education and Training for schools and educational institutions across Europe and beyond. Uniser is managing all KA2 projects aiming to develop new products, methodologies and approaches,as well as to allow best practices exchanges and enlarge the partnership worldwide.

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Mob4All

GUIDELINES FOR MOBILITY

Officers, academic and non-academic staff, and tutor students

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Mob4All

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MOBILITY FOR ALL GUIDELINES

For Mobility Officers, Academic and Non-Academic Staff, and Tutor Students

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT

Mob4All is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme (KA2 Strategic Partnership). The project fosters the inclusion of students with special needs in international mobility programmes through the capacity building of the different actors who can support them, transforming the participant Universities' environments with the development and sharing of individual-centred practices and protocols, thus reducing the inequality of access to resources and opportunities in Higher Education. For more information about the project and its results, visit the project website: Mob4All@Ulysseus – Promoting the transnational mobility of students with special needs

One of the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme is the promotion of Inclusion and Diversity across all its actions. When implementing mobility projects, Higher Education Institutions should have an inclusive approach, making them accessible to all students.

Each higher education institution, by signing the Erasmus Charter for Higer Education, commits to ensuring equal access and opportunities to participants from all background.

However, statistics show that students with disabilities are still underrepresented in international mobility programmes, due to the many difficulties and obstacles that students with special needs encounter during a semester abroad.

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The Mob4All Guidelines have been designed to support mobility officers, academic and non-academic staff and tutor students/buddies in adopting, adapting and implementing procedures to guide, accommodate, support and integrate students with special needs in international mobility.

The purpose of the Guidelines is to support Higher Education Institutions and the network of actors involved in a mobility to create a safe and accessible environment for all students, keeping in mind that each Institution is different from the others and being honest in the process: there are structural obstacles that cannot be overcome. However, the focus should be on the barriers that can be broken down, finding ways and resources to meet the specific needs of each student.

The content of the Guidelines was gathered from the experience of Mob4All partners, gained from engaging with students with special needs and their expertise in mobility and education.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES

The Guidelines are divided in two parts. The first one is structured following the 3 different phases of any mobility (Before, During and After) from the perspective of both the sending and the receiving higher education institution. It is important to underline that the implementation of high quality inclusive mobilities needs a direct collaboration between the sending and the receiving institutions, at all phases of the experience.

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The second part is divided into four sections, each focusing on mobility challenges related to a specific macro-group of disabilities and special needs: Physical disabilities; Hearing and visual impairment; Dyslexia; Autism, attention deficit and mental health.

PART 1: STEPS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE MOBILITY

The table of contents at the beginning of the first part allow the reader to have an overview of the different steps of each phase, from the point of view of the sending and receiving institutions. It is meant to be a guide for selective use of its content, depending on the topic the reader is currently looking for recommendations. Each step is linked to a paragraph that suggests procedures, actions and external resources that may help to ensure a high level of preparation, monitoring and evaluation of international mobilities of students with special needs.

Most of the recommendations and tools suggested in the Guidelines can be applied to the implementation of any student's international mobility, although the intention is to focus on the specific features of mobility of students with special needs.

Being aware of the different resources of each Higher Education Institution in terms of staff, time, budget, structure, policies and internal procedures, the aim is to offer a useful and practical tool to be used at the discretion and according to the possibilities of each institution, that can freely adapt it to its specific needs and resources.

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PART 2: SPECIAL NEEDS

The second part is divided into four sections, each of which analyses the specificity of the macro-group of disabilities it covers. The structure of each section is similar: it opens with a brief description of the macro-group of disabilities and special needs, the types and severities of which are mentioned. Thereafter, the focus is on the barriers that students might encounter during a study period abroad, the needs that might arise to overcome the obstacles, and the resources that a higher education institution might use to meet students' needs.

Every type of disability has many faces, and every person is different. The first and most important recommendation the Guidelines want to offer is to understand the complexity and diversity of every human being. The first fundamental step is to get to know the students, their expectations, their fears, their special needs and their perception of them. Only then you will be able to identify the barriers they might face in a mobility abroad, understand their needs and find solutions that turn obstacles into opportunities.

GLOSSARY

HEI: Higher Education Institution

Sending HEI: Sending Higher Education Institution

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PART 1: STEPS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE MOBILITY

Any student about to leave for a study period abroad steps out of his/her comfort zone. Embarking on an international mobility experience can generate a number of anxieties and fears. Here is a non-exhaustive list of some of them:

- Fear of lack of support services provided by their home institution during the mobility period.
- Lack of information on the accessibility of the host institution and host city.
- Fear of being in a foreign country without educational support and familiar faces around.
- Concern about not being able to count exams taken in the host university as grades in their home institution.
- Fear of not being included among other students.
- Fear of encountering bureaucratic challenges without the support of someone from the host institution's office.
- Fear of social isolation and lack of interaction with other students.
- Worry about not receiving information about health facilities that can provide medical care for students in need.
- Fear of feeling disoriented when they return to their normal life and university studies after the mobility period.
- Feeling anxious about having to take many exams in order to pursue their university career with the support they need.

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If these fears are common to any student, in the case of students with special needs they may be perceived and experienced as insurmountable barriers due to the inaccessibility of facilities and services combined with the lack of the specific support the student may need.

To make international mobility an accessible experience for all, the first step is to take into account that:

For a student it is important and helpful:

- to be aware of the support available
- to know how to access the support
- to think about the strategies and build routines which make the studies as successful as possible

Mobility Officers, Academic and Non-Academic Staff and Tutor students should ask themself the following questions at each step of the mobility, from preparation to return:

- Which support measures is available for the students?
- How do the students access this support?
- What do I need to consider in my work?

Also keep in mind that:

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- Persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group and they may identify in several ways. Get informed about the self-perception and self-identification, the specific needs and expectations of each student.
- Ensure barrier free communication by asking students or their close ones about their communication needs and requirements.
- Anticipation is the key! Prepare the student and make sure you have clear and precise information about the support needs.
- Language matters! Use inclusive language when referring to a person with special needs. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sets the standard that we must all follow. Some recommendations:
- Use people-first language (emphasise the person, not the disability, for example, use expressions such as “student with dyslexia”, “person with disabilities” rather than “dyslexic student”, “disabled person”).
- Avoid labels and stereotypes. Disability is a part of life and of human diversity, not something to be dramatised or sensationalised.
- Disability is not an illness or a problem. Remember that vulnerability is produced by external circumstances and is not intrinsic to the person.

Resources:

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- United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, 2022 “Disability-Inclusive Communication Guidelines” Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines

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	6) Assignment of a tutor		
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1) SELECTION PROCESS

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Each HEI has its own procedures regarding the selection of participants for international mobility. For this reason, and for the variety of existing selection processes that depend on the internal organisation and policy of each institution, this paragraph gives generic recommendations to take into account when opening a selection process.

The selection procedures of the HEI should consider **equity**, set **inclusion criterias** and they should assess applicants' merit and motivation holistically. It is important to strive for fair access to opportunities and to provide **personalised support** to participants according to their needs.

The publication of the opportunity, the modalities and requirements for applying and the number of vacancies must be **open**, **transparent** and outline the conditions for all candidates with relevant skills or following a relevant academic programme to apply.

The selection of candidates should take place via a fair and transparent procedure, shall be **merit-based and avoid all types of discrimination**.

The mobility experience should be built and agreed on the free choice of all parties involved.

The Sending HEI shall support the students before starting their mobility in searching for a Receiving HEI, supporting them in defining learning objectives, expected outcomes and career objectives.

The Sending HEI should also help students with the necessary paperwork.

Once the Receiving HEI has been selected, the Sending HEI should contact the international relation office and, if applicable, the services for the inclusion of students with disabilities to assess whether they can provide the necessary support for the students.

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Resources:

- A map of European educational centres, both higher education and vocational training, could be useful while searching the Receiving HEI. Each centre in the database has an assigned page on which there are sections dedicated to the services provided by the centre for students with special needs. Representatives of the centres can register to edit the page and add all the information about accessibility and inclusivity of their institution. Institutions | Inclusive Mobility

2) PREPARATION

Going to live abroad is a challenging prospect for anyone, but with the right preparation, international students can settle in quickly and thrive. There are however extra considerations for students with special needs, and by developing and delivering a pre-mobility workshop or more tailored training to students in advance of their mobility, you can support them to personally plan for a successful experience.

The pre-departure phase concerns preparation that can enable students not only to cope better with some of the challenges they will encounter during their time abroad, but also to further develop their mobility skills. This involves:

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Informative meetings to be organised prior to mobility: formal or informal meetings in which students receive basic information for their arrival to the Receiving country and Receiving HEI. They seek to offer information and clarify doubts before mobility.

Travel and accommodation arrangements: Support students in their search for appropriate accommodation in the host city with the help of the Receiving HEI (see point 9. Logistical preparation). Help them to find the most suitable way to reach the destination city and, if needed, advise them on how to contact the travel company for specific requirements and/or support services.

Intercultural preparation, which includes travel safety and health issues, intercultural awareness and cross-cultural communication, culture shock, information about the target culture, student learning possibilities. During this training are usually shared materials to clarify frequent doubts and offer tips to better face a mobility experience to students, in addition to tackling the prejudices they may have about the local environment. These are very varied in their durations (can last about 2 hours). Alongside intercultural preparation is the psychological preparation on the mobility linked to what to do if a student encounters a problem.

Linguistic preparation: Having basic comprehension skills of the host country's language can ease students' adaptability as it diminishes the feeling of insecurity and helps in daily interaction with local people. Students could test themselves, start learning or refresh their foreign language skills via platforms such as Online Linguistic Support, now hosted in the EU Academy

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website. Furthermore, students could attend language courses tailored to their needs. The Sending HEI should advise and address students on the language online and onsite courses available in the University and/or external ones.

Furthermore, one of the best ways for Sending HEI to build a student's confidence in going on mobility is **create a pre-mobility network** by connecting them with:

- Any students who have been on mobility in the region/Receiving HEI.
- Any student who is going on mobility to the same region/Receiving HEI in the same period.
- Students with special needs who had a mobility experience before, or those who are currently on mobility in the Receiving HEI. That can be done, for example, through the participation of returning students in Erasmus outreach events organised by the university, as ambassadors/role models, telling other students about their experience or sharing it on the institution's social media/website.

Resources:

- EU Academy is the EU's online hub for e-learning. Among the various learning fields, the Learn Languages section stands out, offering the possibility of learning the fundamentals of 29 languages with Online Language Support. For more info visit the online hub: EU Academy (europa.eu)
- The Intermove for Trainers project, co-funded by the Eramsus+ programme, created a free course for international learning mobility trainers, combining the intercultural training with the use of language intercomprehension tools to prepare participants on mobility projects. Module 3 of the course, INTERCULTURALITY, includes proposals for

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intercultural activities for pre-departure preparation. The course is available at this link: INTERMOVE For Trainers: Entrar al sitio (intermove-training.eu)

3) FACILITATING A PREPARATORY VISIT

The EPFIME research report shows that students with special needs highly value the opportunity to visit the Receiving HEI and city before going on mobility, and if possible, before making their final decision. The benefits of a preparatory visit are particularly positive for students with more complex support needs such as those with visual impairments and physical disabilities.

Institutions should inform students with special needs that there is Funding they can apply for at the National Agency for Education and Internationalisation to afford a pre-visit.

If a pre-visit is not possible, the university can provide an online-tour for the students.

4) MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED

At the beginning of a mobility abroad, clear learning outcomes shall be set jointly by all parties involved and shall be defined in line with the formal requirements of the educational organisation and referenced to an EQF level.

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Before the mobility takes place, the student, the Sending and the Receiving HEIs must sign a **Learning Agreement**:

From 2021, students can complete it online thanks to the Online Learning Agreement (OLA), which allows for digital completion of the document by the Sending and Receiving HEIs.

Before students leave for their mobility, the rights and obligations of all parties included shall be clearly set out in a written agreement (Learning Agreement).

The Sending and Receiving HEIs, together with the students, must have agreed on the academic outcomes to be undertaken by the students prior to the start of the mobility period.

These agreements define the content for the mobility period abroad and specify the formal recognition provisions of each party.

Make sure students know how many ECTS they need to complete the semester on a positive note.

5) PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF PARTICIPANTS

All participants taking part in a Mobility action within the Erasmus+ Programme should be assured a safe environment that respects and protects their rights. To this end, each organisation participating in the Erasmus+ Programme should have the needed procedures and arrangements to promote and guarantee the safety and protection of the participants in their activity.

Erasmus+ Programme does not define a unique format of insurance and does not recommend specific insurance companies. The Programme let the project organisers suggest the most suitable insurance policy according to the type of project carried out, to

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the specific needs and requirements of students and to the insurance formats available at the national level. It is important to verify the existence of internal insurance policies within the HEI and check if they apply to the mobility project and the students' needs.

The following areas must be covered:

- Travel insurance (including damage or loss of luggage).
- Third party liability (including, wherever appropriate, Professional indemnity or insurance for responsibility).
- Accident and serious illness (including permanent or temporary incapacity).
- Death (including repatriation in case of projects carried out abroad).

It is strongly recommended that participants in transnational activities have a European Health Insurance Card. This is a free card that gives access to medical services, state-provided healthcare, during a temporary stay in EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, under the same conditions and at the same cost (sometimes free, depending on the country) as people insured in that country.

The Sending HEI must inform students with special needs that they might need a special insurance policy to be taken out before the departure and that additional funding is available for participants with physical, mental or health-related conditions via the Erasmus+ special needs support. It is recommended to consult the Erasmus+ National Agency.

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It is essential to ensure that participants receive the specific medical assistance they need in the host country. Communication between the Sending and Receiving HEI is important to ensure that all necessary documentation is prepared. The documentation required may vary from country to country. The Receiving HEI should help students to prepare customs documents or special certificates for medicines.

The student must also sign, in accordance with GDPR and student data privacy regulations, a consent form before departure. Students have the right, before signing the consent, to be clearly informed of the use of their personal data and the content of the document.

In terms of rights of access, students are entitled to access the following information:

- The reasons why their data is being processed
- A description of the personal data concerning them
- Details of who has received or will receive their personal data

Resources:

- More information on the card and on how to obtain it is available at European Health Insurance Card

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- Protection, health and safety of participants are some of the important features of the Erasmus+ Programme. For more information visit the website: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/important-characteristics-of-the-erasmus-programme
- Students and staff with physical, mental or health related conditions can benefit from specific support services. More information is available in the website Students and staff with physical, mental or health-related conditions | Erasmus+ (europa.eu)

6) ASSIGNMENT OF A TUTOR

The mobility must be linked to a study plan and the Sending HEI shall appoint an academic tutor. The academic tutor of the Sending HEI shall be in regular communication with both the students and the tutor of the Receiving HEI during the mobility abroad. The tutors shall cooperate for the resolution of any problem that might arise within the mobility. In such cases, they shall provide the necessary support to the students in order to allow them to overcome any challenge they might encounter. Depending on the Higher Education national system and/or the internal organisation of the HEI, the academic tutor of the Sending HEI and some specific departments (such as the international relation office, services for the inclusion of students with disabilities, careers offices or faculties) might oversee different tasks.

For example, they might be responsible for the selection procedures, organisation of learning activities and their recognition of credits associated with learning outcomes. The academic tutor of the Sending HEI could also conduct site visits to observe the

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students at the Receiving HEI and ensure that the students are following the right study plan. Receiving HEI should make reasonable arrangements to support visits by academic tutors where requested and appropriate.

If needed, the Sending HEI will also manage the recruitment of an accompanying person and define his/her tasks before the departure.

7) DEVELOP A SUPPORT MOBILITY PLAN

The Sending HEI must contact the Receiving HEI prior to the student's mobility to inform them of the student's specific needs and the support services to be provided during the study period.

The Sending and Receiving HEI can co-develop a tool that could be useful in managing the inclusive mobility of students with special needs: a Support Mobility Plan.

The plan should include relevant details of the student's specific needs, examples could include:

- Information about learning and communication needs.
- Daily living and studying requirements, such as. for example, a personal assistant or assistance animal.
- Relevant medical information and support needed.
- Physical access needs related to institution campus, local area, transport etc.

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- Clear communication process: the student should know exactly who should be contacted in case of need.

Resources:

- To get inspired on the Support Mobility Plan and how to co-design it, read pages 59-62 of the project Inclusivemobility.eu "Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions" available at this link: Making mobility programmes more inclusive for students with disabilities (inclusivemobilityframework.eu)

8) ORGANISE A MEETING TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER

A meeting between the tutor, the "buddy" at the Receiving HEI and the student should be organised a few weeks before departure to get to know each other, reassure the student, clarify his/her doubts and answer his/her questions.
Depending on the student's specific needs, several parties should participate in the meeting: student-tutor-family-other stakeholders.

9) LOGISTICAL PREPARATION

Once the Receiving HEI has all the information on the specific needs of the incoming student, it is time to provide all the necessary services and support to ensure that students have access to the same opportunities as others. For example:

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- Mapping accessible accommodation near the university to provide a list of options to the Sending HEI/student.
- Checking the accessibility of transport on the university-housing route and the accessibility of basic services (e.g. medical facilities, supermarket, pharmacy, etc.).
- Checking the accessibility of the university services and resources related to the specific student's needs.
- Others.

10) CREATE A PRE-MOBILITY NETWORK

Erasmus Tutoring Service of the Receiving HEI could be structured as a team, which consists of several members:

- Erasmus Project Tutor --> is the general coordinator of the whole tutoring activity.
- Mentor --> is responsible for welcoming international students and Erasmus Incoming students once they arrive in the host city. Mentor provides students with useful information about their stay, free time, social and academic activities in the HEI.
- Buddy --> is a volunteer student at the Receiving HEI that supports the incoming student for his/her adaptation and integration in the academic and social environment of the HEI.

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- It is essential to inform all academic and non-academic staff who will be involved with the student of his/her specific support and equipment needs. Contacts in case of emergency and in case of need of specific support should be defined before the arrival of the student and shared with all staff.

Incoming students should be advised to get in contact with the local section of the Erasmus Student Network. The association offers help in the academic, social and cultural integration of students on a mobility abroad. It has several local sections around Europe which organise social and cultural activities. Many of those sections have a mentor system, to support students through their integration process.

Resources:

- Visit the ESN website to find out more: Erasmus Student Network (esn.org)

DEVELOP A BUDDY SYSTEM

The Receiving HEI usually recruits volunteer students at the university to offer peer support to incoming students, especially for students with special needs, to make them feel at home. Volunteer student buddies assist incoming students before and during their mobility experience:

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- Before departure, they can contact incoming students via email, text message, phone call or video call. The Buddy System reassures the incoming student and allows him/her to create a social network among peers before departure.
- After the arrival, the buddy shows the student around and gives him/her useful tips on cultural, social and academic life in the host country/city.

Resources:

- For more information about “Buddies”, visit the website Find your buddy! | Erasmus+ (erasmusapp.eu)

TUTORING

The Receiving HEI shall always ensure a tutor with the relevant competences and experience needed to include the student in the regular studying process. A tutor becomes the person who represents the Receiving HEI in the interaction with the students, welcoming them and having a privileged relationship as well as some moments of planned confrontation during the mobility (monitoring). The tutor is the contact person for the follow-up of students; he/she is also in charge of the explanation of rules and responsibilities, and provides support to enable the student to achieve the learning outcomes. He/she should have the necessary skills to be able to communicate with the student. The Receiving HEI shall ensure that the tutors have enough time in their schedule to provide a good quality tutoring through regular interactions with the students.

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11) REGULAR MONITORING MEETINGS

In addition to academic support and monitoring, both the Sending and Receiving HEI should set regular meetings to check on student's academic progress and wellbeing. Those meetings should be regular and scheduled with the student before the departure.

For some participants, a mobility abroad may be a completely new experience to which they have never been exposed before. Uncertainty and sudden changes can be hard for some people, and more likely for those who have not worked on developing their emotional intelligence. It is important for the tutor to be prepared to pick up negative emotions during the follow-up and to help channel them so that the participant can cope with the stay.

Some of the emotions that can appear when working with students abroad could be:

- **Agitation/worry.** In many cases the result of the change of reality, the internal stress of the first days in a new place or the adaptation to an external regulation/element that conditions our life.
- **Apathy**. Students might experience high levels of apathy from the first week onwards, often due to the change of routine, the stress of moving to new HE facilities (and its physical implications) and the unfamiliarity of the environment and culture in which they live.
- **Fear of not meeting others' expectations**. Not being exposed to external judgement before and knowing that there are now many stakeholders who have expectations of what they do can provoke fear and distress.

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- **Frustration**. Generally, this feeling can arise from the impossibility of doing what the student wants at any moment. Students may be used to having free disposal of their time and reject all activities that do not bring immediate pleasure (I don't feel like going to class - I don't go / I'm sleepy at any time - I sleep).

Here some tips that might help the student:

- Follow simple guidelines such as:
  - Dividing the day into small parts (to achieve small objectives) and automating them so that they do not consume mental resources (establishing exact timetables for transport, preparing food, etc.).
  - Avoiding postponing tasks that cannot be carried out for a very long period (writing them down so that they do not take up mental resources, internalising that they are postponed indefinitely).
  - Carrying out simple tasks and not accumulating them in the memory.
  - Conveying that the first few days may be very stressful, but with time this anxiety will fade away.
- Work on creating new expectations and valuing the previous ones. After the creation of new expectations, it is advisable to carry out activities to fulfil them. It can be effective to explain the motivation curve and its phases.
- Communicate with the student! Be clear with the student about what is expected from him/her (in terms of attitude and motivation and not so much in terms of task performance) and communicate any feedback received from the HEI always in an assertive way.
- Encourage mental flexibility and frustration tolerance by learning to differentiate between what we want and what we need, controlling impulsive reactions and accepting unpleasant emotions to manage them. Understand that actions have

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immediate or long-term consequences and that certain efforts have positive long-term consequences, they only involve effort at the beginning and not when you are used to doing them on a daily basis.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER:

The tutor figure is never meant to substitute any clinical professional figure such as psychologists and psychotherapists, as they do not have the competences needed and - even if they did - it lies outside the role they are invested in. Therefore, they should not either infer or diagnose any psychological condition nor try to intervene with any techniques or manage a situation that only an expert should manage. They will only provide help to make students comfortable, relaxed and reassured, make them feel the support, the presence of someone they can rely on and around whom they could feel sheltered.

"REINFORCED MENTORSHIP"

This is a concept that describes an intensified mentoring process that can be used to support students that might need extra support, for example if they are not able to implement an activity independently or with normal mentoring or tutoring support. Reinforced Mentorship involves closer contact, more frequent meetings and more time allocated to task implementation. This guarantees a step-by-step support of the student during academical activities, as well as outside classes and studying hours. Reinforced Mentorship enables the students to gain as much autonomy as possible, thus contributing to the success of mobility.

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12) ONBOARDING

Arrival: Arrange for the mentor, the buddy or another staff member, to meet the incoming student at the airport or relevant bus stop and help him/her find the new accommodation.

Welcome and orientation meeting: Organise a welcome and orientation session with the incoming student to:

- Preview the student's academic calendar to ensure that he/she fully understands it.
- Provide a comprehensive tour of the campus and the neighbourhood (provide a map if possible), highlighting:
  - Key rooms where lectures will take place.
  - The library and other useful study areas.
  - Any existing quiet spaces for students with sensory overload difficulties.
  - Spaces to charge mobile devices and access free WIFI.
  - Supermarkets, pharmacies, transportation connection, medical facilities, restaurants, bars, gym and other relevant services.

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  - Be sure to take the student's specific needs into consideration while showing him/her the environment, for example, a student using a wheelchair might need to know where to find accessible routes/entrances, the location of accessible bathrooms, etc.
- Introduce the student to key university support staff and ensure that he/she can contact them with any queries.
- Make sure to clearly advise the student on the steps they'll need to take, for accessing the special needs services offered.

Social connection: Offer to connect incoming students to local ones, Organise activities and social events, particularly in the early weeks of the mobility. To do so this:

- Collaborate with the student's union or local branch of the Erasmus Student Network to highlight activities which may be suitable and consider accessibility of activities/events where relevant.
- Devise a template suggested itinerary for the first few weeks of mobility and edit it as students arrive with upcoming campus events, visits to key city landmarks and accessible cafes/hotspots close to their accommodation - all optional suggestions for students to consider.

Resources:

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- A map of European youth structures of international mobility support and disability support: Map - Mobility-with-disabilities.org
- MindInclusion is an APP co-designed together with people with intellectual and physical disabilities. Its main aim is to support people with special needs in accessing and evaluating public places according to how much these are inclusive. Learn more and download it at this link: www.mindinclusion.eu

13) RE-ORIENTATION MEETING AND EVALUATION

At the end of the mobility period, the Receiving HEI and the student should organise a meeting to discuss, evaluate and provide feedback on the mobility experience, identify skill sets gained and learning outcomes achieved, in line with the learning outcomes specified in the Learning Agreement or other document established at the beginning of the mobility. Furthermore, the student shall receive a written statement validating and recognizing their learning outcomes.

Both Sending and Receiving HEI should:

- Assist students with documentation and academic bureaucracy.

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- Engage in a re-orientation meeting with students after their return from mobility to discuss their experience and see if their support needs and expectations have changed as a result of their mobility experience. If necessary, conduct a revised needs assessment.
- Evaluate the experience of returning students; evaluation tasks could include student surveys and/or qualitative exercises such as focus groups with students and staff involved in the implementation of the mobility. Evaluations should cover the students' personal experience and their thoughts on the process of planning and providing support, from the application phase to the end of the mobility experience.
- Try to motivate students to write a detailed experience report to give other students with special needs as good an insight as possible.

Resources:

- Europass is a free set of online tools to manage skills, and plan learning and career in Europe. Encourage your students to create an **Europass profile**. Among the various Europass tools, **Europass Mobility** can help students to showcase skills acquired during their mobility experience in another country, while **Diploma Supplement** can help them to describe their higher education qualifications in a clear and consistent way. More information is available at the link: Document Library | Europass

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14) RETURNING STUDENTS: ROLE MODEL AND AMBASSADOR

Recruit students (and accompanying persons when applying) returning from mobility to act as role models and ambassadors. Spreading the word about the possibility of participating in a mobility project, and in particular an inclusive mobility project, could have a major impact on the institution, the students themselves and the local community.

These leadership opportunities are often appreciated by both students and staff and may include:

- Acting as a buddy or mentor for future incoming or outgoing students.
- Volunteering as an ambassador to share their story at events promoting international mobility.
- Writing blogs, recording videos, sharing their experience on the institution's website and social media.

Involving students who have previously participated in the programme increases awareness of Erasmus+ opportunities and provides support and accurate information to students that are getting ready for their own Erasmus+ experience, including information on locations, accessibility, lifestyle, university courses and social activities.

Resources:

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- The European Commission promotes an initiative, *Role Models*, that, through a European network supported by Erasmus+, enables local stakeholders to invite people with successful stories of overcoming difficulties to share their experience with young people and motivate them to rise above the challenges they may face in life. This initiative can be an interesting opportunity for HEI and students alike to promote inclusive mobility and encourage all students to live this empowering experience. For more information, download the leaflet at this link: Role Models: Promoting Common Values | European Education Area (europa.eu)

- *Inclusive Mobility*, a KA3 Erasmus+ project implemented between 2018 and 2020, developed a European platform about inclusion and support services offered by HEIs, national agencies and ministries for education to international students. Among other useful tools and resources, students with special needs returning from a mobility abroad shared their experience to inspire other people and encourage them to go abroad. You can find those inspiring stories at this link: Testimonials | Inclusive Mobility

15) FINAL EVALUATION MEETING BETWEEN THE INSTITUTIONS

Organise a meeting to evaluate the experience, check that quality assurance criteria have been met and readjust possible deviations in order to lay the basis for future collaboration between Sending and Receiving HEI. Remember, cooperation between the HEIs is the key for successful inclusive mobilities.

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PART 2: SPECIAL NEEDS

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

1. **Short description**

- In general, a physical disability is a physiological limitation of the human body. A person is physically disabled if his/her physical functions are impaired due to damage to the musculoskeletal system, organ damage or some sort of disease. Some disabilities may have genetic causes. Damage can also be acquired during one's life, for example as a direct result of an accident or a chronic illness.

- There are six manifestations and types of severities that can be distinguished:
  - **Damage to the central nervous system** such as paraplegia, brain damage, cerebral movement disorders like spasticity, multiple sclerosis, splitting of the spine, polio or Parkinson's disease. Students with this kind of physical disability might have problems with moving their hands and arms but also might not be able to walk.
  - **Damage to the skeletal system** can manifest as spinal curvatures like scoliosis, brittle bone disease or joint deformities that might cause pain in the back and make it hard for students to sit for a longer period.

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- **Deformities of the skeletal system** meaning absence of limbs or malformation of one or more limbs. Depending on the kind of malformation, students may need very different support.
- **Damage to limbs** meaning loss of limbs due to accidents or amputations because of tumors or vascular diseases. The type of support students need to receive depends again on what kind of loss they have because it covers such a wide range.
- **Muscle system diseases** like muscle weakness or muscle atrophy that might cause problems to walk as students feel numbness or tingling in their arms and legs. If students have atrophied muscles in their face or throat, their facial muscles may start feeling weak and students may find it difficult to speak or swallow. Here again there is a wide range of possible needs for students.
- **Inflammatory diseases of bones and joints** like arthritis or rheumatism which means that the immune system attacks healthy cells in the body by mistake, causing painful swelling in the affected parts of the body. Always consider that there are times when symptoms get worse, known as flares, and times when symptoms get better, known as remission. Considering this, students might need support to fulfill deadlines and successfully finish their semester abroad.

2. Barriers

- Stairs at the entrance to buildings or seminar rooms located on floors that do not have elevator access.
- Lack of automatic or push-button doors.

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- Fixed-height furniture that can be hard to use with a wheelchair.
- Inaccessible toilets, passages, doorways and rooms that do not accommodate wheelchair users, or are difficult to navigate for people with mobility impairments.
- Increased travel & accommodation costs and transport costs.
- No funding for an accompanying personal assistant.

3. Specific needs

- Inform students with disabilities that there is a funding to apply for to afford a pre-visit. If a pre-visit is not possible, try to provide an online-tour for the students.
- Inform students that there is another funding regarding medication treatment if needed. (For the funding of the pre-visit and the medication treatment please get in contact with your National Agency for Erasmus+ Higher Education.
- Contact the student's union to make sure that all planned events are accessible.
- For teachers: eye contact is very important for students that suffer from upper-body weakness or paralysis and therefore may be unable to raise their hand.
- Create an inclusive environment between students as feelings of separateness in the learning environment may have an impact on learning.
- Be flexible with the schedule as students with physical disability need more time to reach the classroom.
- Try to provide extended time for tests and exams and allow alternative scheduling.

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- Allow tests & exams to be oral or written depending on what works best for the student.
- Allow extensions to assignment deadlines if extensive research involving physical activity like collecting data from dispersed locations is required.

4. Resources and tools

- Think about accessibility when booking the room for the orientation at your institution.
- If the classroom or laboratory is not easily accessible, reserve seats. If this is not possible, ask for a change of seat.
- Provide a ramp (or something similar) if classroom is not on the ground floor or accessible via an elevator.
- Some students might need assistive technology like audio and/or video recordings to increase accessibility to the course and some may need a personal computer.
- Materials like notes and handouts should be available online or before the course starts.
- Some students may need tutorship for taking notes or always have a personal assistant with them.
- Students may need to use a personal computer or a personal assistant during an exam.
- Provide a list of accessible apartments for students with physical disabilities.
- Provide a map of the city where students can find elevators to the metro station and let them know the best way to get around (e.g., low-floor trams)
- Provide a tutor who helps students to find their way around and if needed pick them up at the airport/train station and/or organize a taxi that is specialized on transportation of people with disabilities.

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- Encourage students to talk openly about accessibility concerns.

HEARING AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

HEARING IMPAIRMENT

1. **Short description**

- Hearing impairment is a condition in which an individual has a partial or total inability to hear.
- There is a wide range of variability related to several factors, such as the physical structure of the ear (e.g., middle ear, inner ear, auditory nerve), the cause of the hearing loss, and the degree of the loss. International classifications propose subdivisions ranging from slight or mild hearing loss to profound or total hearing loss.
- Beyond biological differences, educational and rehabilitation histories can influence the attitudes and skills of hearing-impaired students: the main subdivision is between gestural and oral methods, but differences also exist within the same subgroup.
- The type of amplification system used, such as hearing aids versus cochlear implants, and the age at which the hearing aid was placed, or the implant was inserted also contribute to the variability in this population.

To keep in mind….

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- Individuals with hearing impairments may experience varying degrees of difficulty in receiving and interpreting speech sounds and in producing and understanding language.
- Learning an oral language can be difficult but not impossible, even in cases of profound hearing loss or deafness, and young adults may have good oral language proficiency.
- Phonological problems underlie most possible language difficulties and can constitute a barrier to accessing a foreign language for young adults. Moreover, weaker development of lexical competence, sentence construction, and discursive skills can lead to difficulties in understanding complex texts, which is a problem that may arise during university studies.
- Although modern amplification systems have greatly improved the hearing ability of people with hearing loss, communication can still be hindered for various reasons, such as distance from the sound source, large groups, and ambient noise.
- Not all hearing-impaired students prefer sign language, and when they have good oral language skills, they can benefit from subtitles or other technological devices.

2. Barriers

- Difficulty in speaking and understanding the foreign language.
- Fear of encountering bureaucratic challenges in understanding the documentation without an appropriate linguistic support from the Receiving HEI.

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- Difficulty in following the lessons under the same conditions of the other students, as they may require additional supports such as lip-reading, subtitles, sign language, or tutoring.
- Fear of social isolation and lack of interaction with other students because of communication problems.
- Fear of not being fully included in the host classes, both in the relationship with teachers and among other students.
- Not having access to information about healthcare facilities that can provide medical or technical assistance to students in need, for example in the case of ear infections or malfunctioning hearing aids.
- Lack of communication support systems such as a sign language interpreting service and hearing loops that facilitate the accessibility of offices, help desks, libraries, or classrooms.
- Sign language is not universal. Each country has a different one. Therefore, it is not certain that students and interpreters understand each other.

3. Specific needs

- The Sending HEI should ensure that the Receiving HEI can meet the specific needs (in terms of communication, learning and full inclusion) of students in a mobility and determine how to address and overcome specific barriers. In particular is important to:
    - Check whether the Sending HEI can meet the students' needs in preparing them for the mobility period and in assisting them in the final choice of the Receiving HEI, through effective support in bureaucratic procedures. For

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example, clear written or oral instructions must be given, obviously avoiding phone calls and possibly using sign language interpreters.

- Once the student's Receiving HEI has been selected, the Sending HEI should contact the Receiving HEI and request them to guarantee the student's needs, such as: follow lessons with visual support (lip-reading, subtitles, sign language, or tutoring), attend classrooms equipped with appropriate hearing aids, such as hearing loops, prepare teachers and possibly students to deal with the above communication problems.

4. Resources and tools

- Tutoring support in understanding technical and specific vocabulary.
- Tutoring support in understanding syntactically complex texts.
- Subtitles to access lesson content (possibly in the student's native language or in English).
- A sign language interpreter may be needed to fully understand the content of the lessons.
- Learning environments that enable the deaf student to interact with other students.
- Teachers must stand in front of deaf students during lessons to enable them to lip-read.
- Support for taking notes on the laptop.
- M3 recorder: allows lessons to be recorded in mp3 format and to be automatically transcribed into text by a specific tool (e.g. Dragon NaturallySpeaking); the tutor can help the students to verify the correctness of the transcription.
- Hearing loops at counters.

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Useful links

Subtitles for PowerPoint:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3glVapywOEA

Subtitles for Teams:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NSYGcz5aA8

Dragon NaturallySpeaking:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDMKK5WtDog

What is a hearing loop?

https://www.hearinglink.org/technology/hearing-loops/what-is-a-hearing-loop/

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

1. **Short description**

- Visual impairment is a term used to describe any level of visual loss that affects a person's ability to carry out daily activities. Because it is such a broad term, "visual impairment" usually also includes blindness.

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- Visual loss can be categorized based on visual acuity (the ability to discern the shapes and details of things you see) or visual field (the entire area that can be seen when one eye is fixed on a point), ranging from moderate low vision to complete blindness.
- The timing of onset of vision loss is also important for individual development. Effects of total blindness from birth are very different from those of acquired blindness or of low vision.

To keep in mind…

Due to the extreme variability of visual impairment, it is crucial to have a thorough understanding of each student's specific situation to anticipate potential barriers they may face during their university studies.

- Congenitally blind individuals may have difficulty in spatial manipulation tasks, even in adulthood, unlike individuals who are visually impaired or not congenitally blind.
- Beyond these limitations, it is important to remember that a visually impaired student has learning abilities comparable to those of sighted students, as long as they are supported by accessible material.
- Loss of peripheral vision (visual field) can limit mobility: for example, students may have serious difficulty moving around in an unfamiliar environment due to physical barriers that they cannot see because out of their visual field.
- Loss of central vision (visual acuity) can limit access to written texts, images, and academic material.
- Total blindness affects both functions.

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2. Barriers

- Possible low accessibility of the Receiving HEI and the host city (for example, physical barriers such as stairs or obstacles that are not well marked; absence of tactile strips on the floor or sidewalk; absence of acoustic signals at traffic lights).
- Lack of information on how to move around HEI buildings and access classrooms.
- Difficulty in being autonomous in moving within the university environment.
- Fear of encountering bureaucratic challenges in understanding written documentation without an appropriate technical support from the Receiving HEI.
- Lack of accessible teaching materials (e.g., audiobooks, PDF texts) or varying degrees of difficulty in accessing teaching materials.
- Fear of not receiving support (tutoring) to take notes during lectures.
- Fear of not being trained to use appropriate technology to assist or improve visual function.
- Fear of not being able to interact with other students, due to lack of specific strategies useful for including a blind or visually impaired student (i.e. calling him/her by name, being recognized before the interaction begins)
- Fear of not receiving information on health facilities capable of providing medical assistance to students in case of need. When such information is written, make sure that the student can decode it, for example through speech synthesis.

3. Specific needs

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- Help the student contact the relevant offices of the Receiving HEI before departure to see if support needs can be met (i.e. information about possible physical barriers; also provide the student with a list of necessary documents in an accessible format, that is readable trough a vocal synthesis or a braille printer)
- Contact the receiving organization to ensure that the student's needs are met. That might include accessible accommodations, the use of a laptop with specific software, tutoring support for notetaking during classes, and, if needed, the presence of a specific operator who can assist the blind or visually impaired student in moving both inside and outside of the HEI buildings.
- Allow the student to take examinations on a computer equipped with speech synthesis programs or other aids that can convert written texts into speech or Braille.
- Provide a tutor both during lectures and examinations.
- Ensure that accessible teaching materials are available, such as audio books or PDF texts.

4. Resources and tools

- Providing tactile strips for access to the building for blind or visually impaired individuals.
- Labeling the environment in an accessible format (with information written in braille)
- Providing a laptop with specific software such as JAWS and Zoom Text Magnifier/Reader.
- Recording of lessons with an MP3 recorder.

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- Tutoring: support in reading decoding and comprehension, note-taking during lectures, and transcription of lectures from MP3 format to a text readable with a screen reader.
- Availability of a specific operator who can support the blind student inside and outside of HEI facilities.
- Accessible teaching materials such as audiobooks and PDF texts.

Useful links

Braille display

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMfQNkRR9N0

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dV0KZtVmcIo

Zoom text Magnifier/Reader:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et4i2yQc7pA

JAWS screenreader

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dlcY7QIsP0c

DYSLEXIA

1. **Short description**

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- Dyslexia is neurological condition that makes accurate and fluent reading and writing difficult.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in:
  - phonological awareness: letter-sound connections not automatic, mixing letters
  - verbal memory: “What was it in the beginning of the sentence…”
  - verbal processing speed: slowness in reading and writing

To keep in mind…

- 10% of the population are believed to be dyslexic – many individuals remain undiagnosed.
- With the right support, the strengths and talents of dyslexic people can really shine: reasoning, visual, creative fields etc. As each person is unique, so is everyone's experience of dyslexia. Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that has no effect on intelligence. It ranges from mild to severe and can co-occur with other learning difficulties.

2. Barriers

- Students with dyslexia face most challenges in the selection process. Application could be tricky, the students will probably have difficulties in reading and interpreting the documents, and some may even decide to not apply for student exchange because the process feels overwhelming. The International Office professionals may not identify who are the dyslexic students, and therefore are unable to give support.

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- At arrival there is a lot of information to be absorbed, and plenty of it is written text. It can seem overwhelming to a person with dyslexia and there is a risk that useful information will not reach them. Social connections formed in the beginning of a stay abroad are also very important. If a student struggles with absorbing the formal welcome information, the social connections may also suffer.

3. Specific needs

- Before the Application stage, the dyslexic students may come forward to the HEI staff as students who are asking many questions, even asking questions about the same things the staff already informed them by email. When this happens, the HEI staff may reflect on their own attitude: rather than getting annoyed by this behavior, considering the fact that maybe the student is dyslexic and that is why they need more support.
- Solution to recognizing students with dyslexia in the selection process is to ask about learning difficulties in the outgoing students application. It is, however, important to consider the ethical aspects of data procession: Stating that your learning difficulty does not affect the selection. Who has the access to the given information? Student masters the information.
- After the students have been recognized, the HEI staff can ensure that the students are supported in understanding and processing the information. Offering peer support, such as a fellow student with international interest and/or experience, can be helpful and encouraging.

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- Developing a Support Mobility Plan helps a student to plan their exchange studies in a way that ensures successful completing of the planned courses. A student with dyslexia may need for instance extra time to complete written assignments and/or quiet study spaces.

4. Resources and tolos

Useful tips for teachers include:

- a possibility to review the material in advance and/or possibility to record lectures: building good practices into courses is beneficial for all students.
- extra time in written exam: more time needed for understanding questions correctly and producing coherent answers.
- teacher may explain exam questions in other words during the exam: can be done individually or for all exam participants, requires sensibility.
- possibility to use computer in written exams: writing by hand is often challenging.

Organizing is challenging for many people with dyslexia. Clear structure in materials is crucial for dyslexic students – and highly beneficial to every student!

Tips you can give for students:

- Use a planner: handwritten planner and handwritten notes are worth testing (if e.g. mobile calendar and computer notes do not work).

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- Importance of small steps: set realistic goals to complete the assignment on time.
- Reminders: Set reminders on your phone for lectures, meetings etc.
- Minimise distractions: set yourself time for a task and switch off your phone and social media. It can also help to keep your study sessions short, but regular.

Technology gives hands-on support. Discuss with the students which support technologies they use, e.g. Microsoft Word's "Dictation" and "Immersive Reader" functionalities may come in handy.

Since the challenges are mainly communicative, most of them can also be solved with the help of good, conscious and well-timed communication. Maintaining an encouraging mindset throughout the student's mobility journey is also crucial.
Useful questions that higher education professionals can ask themselves include:

- How to enhance communication?
- What can I do in my own work?
- What works well already?
- What can be realistically changed?

Ensuring that instruction materials throughout the mobility journey are written in a clear manner will make the whole process more user-friendly for all, not only for the students with special needs.

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Useful links

International Dyslexia Association:

https://dyslexiaida.org/

British Dyslexia Association:

https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/

Find your national educational institution for dyslexia and special needs support. They provide information and examples in your local language.

E.g. in Finnish:

https://digilukiseula.nmi.fi/

AUTISM, ATTENTION DEFICIT AND MENTAL HEALTH

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS_ASD

1. **Short description**

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- Autism spectrum disorders are a group of childhood-onset disorders characterized by impairment in social interaction and communication and by a pattern of repetitive, restrictive behaviours and/or sensory processing difficulties. This disorder may be associated with intellectual disability in some cases and language problems.
- Asperger syndrome would be included in an ASD without language impairment and without intellectual disability. The degree of involvement varies from severe to mild and is the one that will mark the social evolution and adaptation in general in adult life.
- The prevalence of ASD is currently between 1/100 to 1/150 children.

2. Barriers

- Communication and social reciprocity problems.
- Problems of flexibility and variability in interests. Difficulty in changing routines and in accepting sudden changes in day-to day plans.
- Sensory information processing problems (auditory, tactile or visual hypersensitivity is normal and often affects tolerance for social environments, such as a classroom or laboratory). In the HEI environment, hypersensitivity may generate anxiety.

3. Specific needs

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- Students with ASD require specialised support from the services for inclusion of students with special needs in the HEI, which should be responsible for developing a plan for the student's adaptation to the academic environment.
- Pedagogical Adjustments. They usually require an academic tutor in each course, to help them with difficulties related to all the subjects of the course and who is the person who relates to the different departments to solve the student's difficulties.
- It is important the role of the tutor, who can help the student organize the study period and his/her schedule.
- The tutor is responsible for supporting the control of the student's day-to-day work with specific techniques related to organisational and executive function difficulties.

4. Resources and tools

- Use visual aids to help organise knowledge. These can include schemes, blackboard diagrams, conceptual maps, etc.
- Due to their difficulty in changing routines and in accepting sudden changes in day-to day plans, encourage Asperger's students to keep a diary for recording important dates, such as exam dates, submission dates, presentation dates, etc.
- Assign a buddy to show the Asperger's student all that the campus has to offer. The buddy will also facilitate his/her inclusion into work groups. If the student is already getting help from classmates, he/she should be placed in the same groups as these classmates.
- Break tasks down into smaller steps. When performing long, complex tasks, functional executive limitations hamper the performance of people with Asperger's Syndrome.

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- Prepare materials and bibliographies in advance. They should be organised clearly and in chronological order. The student should be informed expressly – in writing, or by email where possible – of any changes.
- Asperger's students need more time for oral presentations and, where possible, these should be done with only the teacher present. This is because such students usually have difficulties in talking in public, frequently causing them to freeze up.
- As Asperger's students find spontaneous integration into groups extremely difficult, group formation should be teacher-led. They might also find problems in working in groups, so personalised monitoring is recommended. If the student's level of integration is considered to have an effect on his/her academic development, he/she should be given the opportunity to work independently.

ATTENTION DEFICIT AND HYPERACIDITY DISORDERS_ADHD

1. **Short description**

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by persistent inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with developmental functioning and is maintained in some subjects into adulthood.
- Inattention is evidenced by lack of persistence, difficulty in sustaining attention and disorganization, hyperactivity in the adult is manifested by great restlessness and excessive activity in general.

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- Impulsivity is the quick and immediate actions without reflection and is usually dangerous for the subject. It is associated with a tendency to socially interfere and make decisions without thinking about the consequences. In adults, motor hyperactivity is less frequent, but impulsivity is more frequent.

2. Barriers

- Their ability to process and produce information from their environment may be affected.

3. Specific needs

- In the HEI students with ADHD usually have pharmacological treatment or neuropsychological rehabilitation programs, with guidelines and organizational structures that they maintain in their academic environment and that they must maintain during the mobility period.
- It is recommended that prior to mobility, they contact the special educational needs team so that they can assess the needs they may or may not need at the Receiving HEI.
- Students may need more time for exams.

4. Resources and tools

- Organizational support by the tutor for the monitoring and control of the dates of presentation of the works, dates of practices and exams.

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MENTAL HEALTH

1. **Short description**

- These clinical conditions can affect reasoning, behaviour, the ability to recognize reality or to adapt to living conditions. which can cause a varying degree of social dysfunction and disability, and those who suffer from them need assistance from various health and social resources.
- Among the most common mental health problems experienced by Higher Education students are depression, anxiety, eating disorders and others.

To keep in mind...

- Students with mental illness have the same intellectual capacity as any other student.
- Each person functions are different. We must focus on the individual and all the characteristics that define him/her and avoid pre-established stereotypes.

2. **Barriers**

- The ability to process and produce information from the environment may be affected.
- The pharmacological treatment can affect academic performance, impair attention span, concentration, memory, and affect the handling and comprehension of verbal and written information.

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- Risk to be psychopathologised.
- Risk of overprotecting or pigeonholing the student.
- Some students may have difficulties, such as paranoia or stage fright, that impair their ability to communicate in public.

3. Specific needs

- Students may need support to face the challenges of daily life with autonomy, both in their social dimension and in academic work.
- Students with clinical mental health problems who enrol in a mobility abroad must contact the HEI's psychological team so that it can redirect them to the reference person at the Receiving HEI. This person will be the contact in case of any medical-psychological problem.
- On the other hand, they must have an academic tutor to avoid that the difficulties of adaptation may cause them further stress that could worsen or compromise their condition.
- The student may need more time for oral presentations. When appropriate, these presentations should be made in the presence of the teacher.
- The student may have a slower studying and writing pace than his/her peers.
- If the student is absent due to a crisis or hospitalization, provide him/her with the class notes. In these cases, it must be considered that the absence is due to the student's condition and difficulty in adapting to face-to-face activities.

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4. **Resources and tolos**

- Authorize the student in advance to leave the class without prior notice if he/she feels the onset of a crisis.
- Adapt teaching plans, using small group work or individual work. Other methods to achieve subject competences should also be allowed.
- Be flexible with assignment deadlines.
- Involve the psychology team of your HEI in the preparation and monitoring of the mobility.

CONCLUSION

Students with special needs often fear that they will not be able to meet their learning and everyday life needs in an unfamiliar environment. For this reason, is not rare that they give up the idea of going on a mobility abroad.

Encouraging them to embark on that adventure and take advantage of this opportunity brings many benefits for the students. The chance to prove (first to themselves) what they are capable of helps them to set new horizons and goals, to readjust limits and to recognise their own potential. Living abroad increases the clarity of one's sense of self. It is a life experience that fosters the development of essential life skills: Autonomy, Self-confidence, Adaptability, Resilience, Problem solving, Self-awareness, Responsibility, Ambition, Initiative, etc.

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Higher Education Institutions should cooperate to guarantee high quality mobilities around Europe, creating a Network of sending and receiving HEI, with common values and standards for inclusion and inclusive mobility.
Higher Education Institutions members of Mob4All project are already committed to that. They belong to Ulysseus European University, an alliance that aims to develop an excellency-recognized and internationally attractive, open to the world, persons-centred and entrepreneurial European University for the citizens of the future. (For more information visit the website: Home - Ulysseus)

To deepen your knowledge and awareness of the disabilities and special needs covered by these guidelines and to learn more about the educational and social needs of students with special needs, we recommend you enrol in the specialised training course "Training for better integration of mobility participants with disabilities", available at this link: Ulysseus Open Courses: Log in to the site.
The training course, that is one of the project's outputs, target different actors who can support students with disabilities and special needs in the context of international mobility for educational purposes. It is a valid support to improve the knowledge and expertise of professors, students and non-academic staff members, providing adequate information about the academic and personal methodological aids they need.

The learning platform that hosts it is Moodle. The course is asynchronous, interactive and it explains the basics of the disabilities addressed. The feedback received during the prototyping underlines its dynamic and practical features. Participants said that "*the learning process never feels tedious or repetitive, since the material is presented in a very accessible and engaging*

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way", "*this course can give a general good knowledge of the different forms of disabilities*" and "*it also gives suggestions to teacher who have to deal with student with disability*", it "*raises awareness*" and "*covers multiple issues in a practical and compact course*". Besides the focus on information about the different types of disabilities, "*a special dedication to the Erasmus+ programme and its different modalities is appreciated*". Another positive feedback was the one regarding the articles added as extra resources for further reading. "*Start the topics with reflective questions before starting the explanation*" facilitate a "*more effective and constructive learning process".*

An engaging tool in the Moodle is the forum, where you can actively participate to discussions, share ideas, provide feedback and tell your experience and good practices in inclusive mobility.

Although the course and the guidelines are independent, we firmly believe that they are complementary as knowledge and awareness about disabilities and special needs lay the foundation for the implementation of inclusive mobilities.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasise the need to create an inclusive culture in Higher Education Institutions geared towards equal opportunities: the ultimate goal should be to create an environment that is **accessible to all**, providing tools and services that guarantee the inclusion of every student.

On the other hand, it is important to recognise the limitations dictated by the actual situation of each Institution and its environment. Some obstacles are structural, and we must be realistic in addressing them: there are barriers that cannot be

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eliminated in the short term, the approach must be to seek innovative solutions to overcome them in order to ensure equal accessibility.

PROJECT PARTNERS

UNIVERSITY OF SEVILLE (SPAIN – PROJECT COORDINATOR): US is a historic university, the second largest in Spain in number of students, with a relevant and robust comprehensive formation, internationally recognized for its academic excellence, research and technology transfer background. US ranks 8th in scientific production and 1st in international patents in Spain. USE provides strong expertise in coordinating European consortia.

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UNISER (ITALY): Since 1998 Uniser supports the internationalisation of education and training providers. The core activity is the organisation of Erasmus+ mobilities in the field of Vocational Education and Training for schools and educational institutions across Europe and beyond. Uniser is managing all KA2 projects aiming to develop new products, methodologies and approaches,as well as to allow best practices exchanges and enlarge the partnership worldwide.

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