Support and Inclusion of students with disabilities at higher education institutions in Montenegro – SINC@HE

Deliverable 1.1: Analysis of EU practices and policies for inclusion in Higher Education

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1. Introduction

This Deliverable provides the first of three inter-linked Reports that together comprise the outputs of sinc@he Work Package 1: Background analysis for inclusion of disabled students in Higher Education. Work package 1 can be seen as the ‘baseline’ from which the strategy and activities necessary to achieve the overall goal of the project is developed. This goal is to improve the quality and relevance of support for the inclusion of students with disabilities in Montenegro. In line with this overall goal, the main objective of SINC@HE is to create the conditions and standards that will support the inclusion of students with disabilities in HE Institutions in Montenegro, in accordance with EU practices and policies. WP1 therefore has a descriptive purpose – mapping the ‘landscape’ of policies and practices to support the inclusion of disabled students in higher education in the EU; an analytical purpose – identifying commonalities and differences in policies and practices; and a ‘benchmarking’ purpose – comparing current state of the art in Montenegro with that of the EU and identifying areas for improvement. The results of this work feed into two other work packages of the project: WP2 – developing Guidelines for disabled students and staff, and Regulatory documents for HEI’s; and WP3 – identifying, developing and implementing support services based on the needs of students with disabilities.

In this context, the main objective of WP1 is to define and map the overall background on which the project activities will be implemented. This entails three key tasks (work activities) as follows:

- Work activity 1.1 - Analysis and Report on EU practices and policies for the inclusion of disabled students in Higher Education
- Work activity 1.2 - Analysis and Report on national practices and policies for the inclusion of disabled students in Higher Education (in Montenegro)
- Work activity 1.3 - Integration of comparative analysis of EU and national practices and benchmarking of Higher Education Institutions in Montenegro against current policies and practices.

Against this background, this document sets out the results of the first of these work activities, presenting an overview of EU practices and policies for the inclusion of disabled students in Higher Education. The document is structured as follows.

- Following this Introduction, Section 2 sets out the overall approach and methodology for carrying out the analysis
- Section 3 presents the results of a review of policies and practices at the transversal level (i.e. policies and practices developed and implemented by EU agencies)
- Section 4 presents the results of a review of policies and practices within those member states represented in the sinc@he consortium (i.e. UK, Poland, Greece, Italy, Slovenia).
- The final section, Section 5, summarises the results of the analysis and provides conclusions and implications for sinc@he.
- Annex I sets out in more detail the methodological approach used.
2. Methodological approach

The overall methodology for the analysis of EU practices and policies for the inclusion of disabled students in Higher Education is based on a ‘realist review’ approach (Pawson, 2004). This is set out in detail in Annex I. The realist review maps the direction and nature of travel along which policies and interventions aimed at providing support for students with disabilities in higher education institutions proceed, with a particular focus on how ‘context’ influences change, and how ‘intangibles’, like ideological positions and power relations, affect that journey. A key element of the realist review approach is a search for, and an assessment of, the ‘middle-range theories’ that underpin interventions. These lie somewhere between the ‘grand theories’ that seek to explain all social structures, interactions and behaviours within a unified theory, and the detailed minutiae of social relations that are too particular to be generalizable.¹

The review starts with identification and clarification of the research purposes, focusing on the key question on the research needs to address. Subsequent stages of the review entail an iterative process of:

- mapping the key ‘theoretical drivers’ that shape policy and practice
- searching the field for ‘evidence’, including ‘grey’ literature
- applying quality criteria to the material identified, based on relevance and rigour
- extracting data from the final shortlist of material to uncover evidence in support or contradiction of the theoretical drivers identified
- synthesising the results of the data extraction and analysis to re-assess the original ‘map’ of the field, and to produce conclusions and recommendations on ‘what works, for whom under what circumstances’

The realist review combines a range of data collection and analysis methods, covering: interviews and focus groups; field visits; theory of change analysis; logic model analysis. Theory of change seeks to identify the explicit and implicit ‘theory’ behind a policy or an intervention (Weiss, 1995; Sullivan and Stewart, 2006). It can be defined as a systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and context of a policy or an intervention. It involves the specification of an explicit theory of how and why a policy or intervention might cause or have caused an effect.⁴ SVM⁵. The focus here is on understanding how key actors construct the objectives, expected outcomes and impacts of policies and practices aimed at supporting the inclusion of disabled students in HEI’s; how these are then expressed, implicitly or explicitly, as ‘causal pathways’ that are embedded in the ‘vision’ of an intervention; how these in turn are linked to the selection and implementation of assessment methods, and whether these methods are appropriate, relevant and effective.

Logic model analysis provides a way of linking the theory of change to the ‘intervention logic’ of a policy or an intervention. Using logic model analysis in conjunction with theory of change analysis enables us to assess the ‘goodness of fit’ between the underlying ‘theory’ of a policy or intervention; how this ‘intervention logic’ is put into practice, and whether and how it works. This provides us with an additional method of data extraction for Step 5 of the realist review approach – gathering evidence to confirm/deny the candidate theories we are testing.

The methodological approach and tools used to carry out the analysis is presented in more detail in Annex I.

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3. Policies and Practices at the Trans-national Level

3.1 Overall legal and policy background

Until the Amsterdam Treaty of 1996, the EU’s approach to disability was based on a ‘medical’ understanding and a medical model. This supported the view that disability was the result of physical or mental impairments that affect the individual. The 1996 treaty, probably for the first time, publicly highlighted how the sustained predominance of the ‘medical model’ had contributed to the labelling, institutionalization and, ultimately, discrimination, of people with disabilities, since it suggested that the ‘cause’ – and the fault - of disability somehow lay with individuals themselves. The 1996 treaty offered an alternative perspective on disability – the ‘social model’ – that incorporated references to the effects of environment, culture and surroundings. A subsequent Council of Europe Directive, also in 1996, reinforced this shift in understanding and policy orientation, asserting that “The core value of equality – rendered here as equal opportunities – is now seen as the central benchmark against which economic and social structures must be assessed.”

The primary law on disability originates as part of Amsterdam Treaty, which included Article 13 allowing the Council of Ministers to take measures to combat discrimination on the ground of disability. The new Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union in December 2009 strengthened this provision with Article 19 and added a new provision - Article 10 - that stipulates that in ‘defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation’. In addition, with the entry into force of the TFEU, the Charter of the European Union on Fundamental Rights adopted in 2000 and containing a number of references to disability, became binding on the EU and the Member States when implementing EU law (except for three Member States which opted out).

The EU Fundamental Rights Agency was established in 2007 to provide the EU and its Member States with expertise relating to fundamental rights and support them in formulating courses of action in the field of fundamental rights. Neither disability nor any other specific ground is mentioned in the Regulation but the thematic activities of the Agency are listed in the multiannual framework regularly adopted by the Council, which includes ‘discrimination based on sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and against persons belonging to minorities and any combination of these grounds (multiple discrimination)’ as one the thematic areas of the Agency’s work.

Accessibility, equal opportunities and social inclusion for people with disabilities are also referenced in the EU general budget, for example in areas relating to: Employment and Social Affairs, Energy and Transport, Environment, Regional Policy, Education and Culture, Communication, External Relations, Enlargement, Commission’s Administration, Statistics, European Personnel Selection Office, and Administrative Expenditure related to Policy Areas. In most cases, budget expenditure must take into account the promotion of the well-being and/or rights of persons with disabilities.

Disability is also highlighted in the key over-arching policy ‘EU2020’. This replaces the former ‘Lisbon goals’ with a “new strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. To achieve


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*Commission Communication “Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”*
the objectives outlined in the Strategy, the European Council agreed to set EU headline targets, which serves as a benchmark for the national targets that the Member States will need to submit to the Commission. EU2020 includes seven “flagship initiatives”, some of which have direct relevance for people with disabilities, i.e.:

- Platform against poverty. This flagship proposes initiatives on disability at both EU and Member State level.
- Youth on the move. This may have an impact on inclusive education and job placement schemes for young people with disabilities. The initiative specifically acknowledges a ‘double exclusion’ experienced by young people with disabilities when breaking into the labour market.
- An agenda for new skills and jobs, aimed at increasing labour participation and enhancing labour mobility. Specific programmes targeting people with disabilities are envisaged.
- Innovation Union, which aims at improving research and innovation to benefit growth and jobs. The main link to disability here is the inclusion of provision for addressing the problems posed by an ageing Europe.
- Digital Agenda. This contains many explicit references to persons with disabilities, as well as referring to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

These key policy instruments have been supported by a number of additional ‘communications’, and mandates, notably:

- the Communication on eAccessibility, focusing on: improving the consistency of eAccessibility requirements in Public Procurement; exploring the possible benefits of certification schemes and standardisation for accessible products; making better use of the ‘Accessibility potential’ of existing legislation, and complemented by several background measures, including: Accessibility requirements and standards; Design for All; Web accessibility; Benchmark and monitoring; Research and technological development.
- Communication 2007/724 Single Market review, which focuses on Consumer Empowerment and the promotion of accessibility standards
- Communication 2008/133 on standardisation
- Mandate 420: Accessibility of the Built Environment, covering Public buildings, public places, parking, roads, schools, hospitals, sport facilities, transport facilities such as airports, train/coach stations, ports,
- Mandate M 376 (Accessibility issues in ICT products and services for public procurement)

### 3.2 EU Legal and policy background on higher education and disability

The over-arching legal and policy background for the EU is shaped by the European Disability Action Plan 2003-2010 aimed at mainstreaming disability issues within all relevant EU policies and the new EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 which emphasises equal access to quality education and lifelong learning as key factors in enabling full participation in society. This Plan echoes the key principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which highlights the importance of education. Article 4(i) on general obligations provides that the Parties to the Convention shall undertake: ‘To promote the training of professionals and staff working with
persons with disabilities in the rights recognized in the present Convention so as to better provide the assistance and service guaranteed by those rights’.

Article 5 on equality and non-discrimination establishes a clear link between promoting equality, eliminating discrimination and the necessity to ‘ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided’.

Article 8b (Awareness Raising) requires Parties to encourage ‘an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities’ at all levels of the education system.

Article 24 then deals with the issue of Education in detail. It requires Parties to ‘ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;

The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential; Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.’

It stipulates that persons with disabilities:

- ‘...are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability…’
- ‘...can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live’
- are provided with ‘reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements’
- and receive this support ‘within the general education system…’
- ‘...in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.’

They should also be provided with reasonable accommodation so that they ‘are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others’.

Against this background, accessibility of education and lifelong learning to persons with disabilities is gradually becoming a more prominent issue on the agenda of EU policymakers. Shared objectives and a framework for co-operation between countries were agreed by education ministers under Education and Training 2010 (including benchmarks, reporting processes and exchanges of good practice). The Education and Training 2010 work programme (now ‘ET2020’) included a commitment to ensure that European Union’s education and training systems became ‘accessible to all’. In particular, Objective 2.3 (Supporting active citizenship, equal opportunities and social cohesion), noted that:

A basic principle that needs to be reinforced is that all citizens should have equal access to education and training. This requires that in Member states special attention is paid to supporting vulnerable groups and individuals, particularly those with disabilities or learning difficulties.

A new strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training was adopted by the Council in May 2009. The main provisions identify a number of priorities that need to be addressed within the frame of higher education:
The Bologna Declaration in 1999 put in motion a series of reforms intended to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents. In the Leuven Communiqué of 2009 the Ministers identified these priorities for the next decade, the first of which was the ‘social dimension: equitable access and completion’. Whilst not explicitly targeting disability, this in principle supports a broad range of measures to modernise the content and practices of higher education, including improving access and support for students with disabilities. In essence, the main impact of the Bologna process should be to support increased standardisation and benchmarking in relation to legislation, policies and practices covering disability. However, there is little evidence available of the impact the Bologna process is having.

In addition to the main policy instruments, EU policy has established a range of programmes which include some provision for support for disabled students. In 2003, the decision establishing the eLearning Programme for the improvement of the quality and accessibility of European education and training systems through the effective use of ICT included Action 1 to digital literacy, addresses the barriers experienced by vulnerable users, including persons with disabilities, in access to ICT. The successor Lifelong Learning Programme, aimed at contributing to the development of the European Union as an advanced knowledge-based society, emphasised through a ‘horizontal action’, promoting equality between men and women and contributing to combating all forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on disability. The programme also recognises the need to widen access to lifelong learning to people from disadvantaged groups and reflects the higher costs of participation for disabled persons through the provision of higher grants.

The Erasmus Mundus programme 2009-2013 for the promotion of quality in European higher education and intercultural understanding makes several references to disability, including making the fight against disability discrimination as one of the programme’s horizontal issues and recognises the need to widen access to the programme to representatives of the disadvantaged groups, taking into account the special learning needs of persons with disabilities.

In addition, successive phases of the main research and technology development ‘framework programmes’ have contained specific measures targeting disability, including in the education sector.
3.3 The needs of disabled students in the EU

According to European Commission statistics, disability is a factor in shaping inequalities within education, with 63% of the 16-18 age group reporting some form of physical or mental restrictions in education, compared to 83% reporting no restriction; in higher education 48% reporting some form of physical or mental restrictions in education, compared with 85% reporting no restriction.

The literature shows a number of commonalities with regard to the situation and needs of students with disabilities in EU countries. In general, disabled young people have less chance to access higher education than their non-disabled peers. For example, in Norway, in 2009, 9% of disabled young people entered higher education compared to 21% of the general population of this age. In Malta, 4.4% of disabled people reached higher education against 10% of non-disabled people, while in Spain, in 2009, only 5.4% of the disabled people had a university education compared to 19.1% for non-disabled people. In the United Kingdom, only 28% of disabled young people enter higher education by the age of 19 compared to 41% of non-disabled young people, yet amongst those students who declare disability and complete their first degree (Bachelor), 56% attain at least an ‘upper second’ class degree, almost the same as for non-disabled students (59%).

Young disabled people are also more likely than non-disabled youth to experience disruption to their studies. According to the OECD, disabled students tend to be more likely to follow part-time courses than non-disabled students, to drop out after the first year and are less likely to graduate (OECD, 2010). The OECD research on young disabled people’s transition to tertiary education and employment also shows that disabled young adults are less likely than their non-disabled peers to access the most professionally promising courses. The ANED report shows that, in Germany, disabled students tend to have more erratic pathways during their studies; need more time for their studies, are more likely than non-disabled students to change their courses and/or university and are less likely to gain a university degree. In the absence of appropriate support systems, such difficulties impact more greatly on students with more severe or complex impairments.

3.4 Support for students with disabilities in the EU

Because education systems have largely remained subject to the particular legal norms and practices of member states, rather than dictated by trans-national institutions, support for disabled students varies significantly across the EU. Some countries implement preferential enrolment procedures. Portugal imposes an admissions quota for disabled students; in Germany disabled applicants may be granted a privileged access by the national authority responsible for the allocation of university places; in Greece, 5% of all places are reserved for disabled students; in Hungary, disabled students are given 50 points more for their entry exam; in Norway disabled young adults who do not have an upper secondary school diploma can access tertiary education, on condition that they obtain this diploma during the first semester of university studies; in the UK further education Colleges and Universities may also provide ‘access courses’ to students who have not gained entry level at school, which may be targeted to social groups with low participation rates.
including those with disabilities. However, these incentives are not universal across all member states.

Similarly, provision of support to students with disabilities once they have enrolled varies from country to country. Broadly, the typical support provided is of two main types: technical and pedagogic. This usually covers things like: photocopies of selected course materials, tape recordings and transcriptions or Braille documents and special examination arrangements. In Ireland, a fund for disabled students pays for adapted learning aids (e.g. computers, printers, scanners, dictaphones), human support (e.g. personal assistant, note taker, educational support, specific courses) and transportation costs. The type and quality of such support will be dictated by the funding arrangements in place in a particular country. In Ireland, for example, there is a fund for disabled students which pays for adapted learning aids (e.g. computers, printers, scanners, dictaphones), human support (e.g. personal assistant, note taker, educational support, specific courses) and transportation costs. In Denmark youth eligible for special education support (SPS) are entitled to assistance and counselling for needs assessment, technological aids, interpreters, and note takers.

This variability in provision reflects the fact that in most countries it is the responsibility of universities, rather than the public authorities, to provide disabled students with support. The literature therefore shows a wide range of diversity in support services. In Malta, universities may provide motorised wheelchairs or speech synthesizers; in Spain universities provide sign interpreters, books in Braille, note-takers. In some countries, like the UK, non-discrimination legislation is specifically applied to higher education and imposes certain legal obligations on the universities, such as the requirement for UK universities to produce a ‘disability equality scheme’ and to report annually on initiatives taken and the progress made. However, in other countries, no such obligations are imposed. In Finland, for example, while universities may make special arrangements for entrance examinations, campus accessibility and learning support, they are not obliged to provide any special educational support. In these cases, a more significant role in support provision is taken by voluntary sector organisations, for example in Slovakia the Centre for Support in higher education within a special project providing students, teachers and parents with help to promote students’ integration.

This pattern also extends to financial support in general, where the EU situation is characterised once again by varying practices. These appear to be broadly linked to the cost of fees. In the Nordic countries, where costs tend to be relatively high, financial support is more likely to be linked to contingencies. In Norway, for example, students can apply for a state-funded study loan from the State Bank (statens lanekasse), which will be partially transformed into a grant if they successfully pass their examinations. In Denmark, the ‘handicap supplement’ compensates for the loss of income due to difficulties in accessing to employment during university studies for students eligible for the special education allowance, as such income would normally be necessary to pay the interest on a student’s loan. In other countries where tuition fees are not very high, young disabled people may have free or reduced tuition fees as in Germany, Iceland and Spain.

Financial support for students in higher education will also depend on the way in which universities are funded. In some countries, the university, after enrolling a disabled student, can request special direct state funding according to students’ assessed needs. The University will then provide the supports that are necessary (as in Spain and Latvia for instance). Other countries have opted for a
different administrative route, in which an extra benefit is allocated to the student who then has to organise and pay for his/her support with the help of a disability unit or disability officer. In the UK, funding is provided through a mainstream grant allocation provided through the higher education agency – HEFCE – as well as through individually-targeted support services like Disability Allowance.

Financial support for studying may also be impairment-specific. Some countries provide special grants to students with hearing impairments so that they may hire a sign interpreter (e.g., Austria and Spain). In Iceland, NGOs are more likely to play the role of grant-providers for students with special needs. In Lithuania, youth with visual impairments may have special grants for technical devices provided either by the university or by sponsors, or by a disability organisation. In Slovakia, support for disabled students is allocated by a special fund (Fund for the Support of Students with Disabilities) created by universities and funded by tuition fees, gifts, heritage and business activities. The ANED report notes that in some countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland and Slovenia) students may be supported by sponsors.

Universities are often obliged by law to establish at least a contact person, a disability officer, co-ordinator or disabled students unit. The terms of reference of these persons vary considerably from one country to another, according to the reports, and within the same country from one university to another. All appear to provide information, especially on financial support, allowances and so on. Other countries, like Greece and Spain, offer more comprehensive and integrated services and directly provide or organise with other specialised services, sign interpretation, personal assistant, note takers and act as contact person with providers of technical devices. Disability officers may also act as contact person with academic staff when the student requires adaptations in the examination procedures or in the curriculum. They may also provide guidelines and report good practices, as for example in Iceland, where the Committee for Disability at one University has issued a booklet intended to inform enrolling students about the services and resources offered at the university and what they might expect during the course of their studies. In those universities where disability co-ordinators or offices are well established and resourced they provide the key resource on which students depend for information, advice, advocacy and co-ordination of practical support. However, according to ANED, the existence of such support mechanisms remains very patchy and often does not exist as a general entitlement in the way that similar supports exists within the school system.

The area which has been most closely focused on in terms of support services for students with disabilities is accessibility. In almost all EU member states – with the exception of the Czech Republic – there are financial provisions in force which support HEI’s in improving their accessibility level. In many cases, these take the form of financial incentives designed to offset the additional costs that the presence of a student with special education needs may involve for the institution. For example, in Ireland, 1% of the annual tertiary education budget is allocated to accommodating disadvantaged groups (including disabled students) and the National Access Office allocates €45.5 per hour for additional support and has adopted a per capita financing formula for impairments that are deemed priorities. In Norway, 5% of government maintenance allowances to universities must be used for building accessibility purposes.

Financial incentives may also seek to support pedagogical innovation, skills upgrading for institutional staff, or research into tertiary education and training for disabled young adults. For example, Ireland’s New Strategic Innovation Fund, created in 2006, finances projects that support an
education policy to improve the quality of instruction and the academic level of students, and promote lifelong learning.

Other financial support is aimed at developing networks – such as the national bureau for disabled students (SKILL) in the United Kingdom; the Disability Advisers Working Network (DAWN) in Ireland, and the Network of universities from the capitals of Europe (UNICA) in Estonia, which works to develop and encourage compliance with minimum standards of duty of universities towards disabled students.

3.5 Gaps in provision EU

The literature highlights a number of issues, and gaps in the provision of support for students with disabilities, within EU education systems. Firstly, in many EU member states, there is a real difference between the support provisions in the school sector, which are typically reinforced in law, and in higher education, where there is much more scope for interpretation and voluntary action. HEI’s are merely required to make reasonable accommodation, in contrast to primary and secondary schools which are expected to provide all the conditions necessary to support students’ academic success. This has led to a situation where the level and quality of support varies considerably between and within EU HEI’s. In general, support after compulsory schooling is considered primarily in terms of ‘reasonable accommodation’ and technical support (such as note-taking, sign interpretation or mobility support) rather than the kind of pedagogical learning support often provided in schools. This may suggest particular barriers to academic study opportunities at higher levels for students with learning difficulties and intellectual impairments. In turn, the concept of ‘reasonable accommodation’ varies in interpretation. For example, in Germany, the social assistance authorities consider a bachelor degree as sufficient qualification for a job and, for this reason, refuse to provide additional support to disabled students for masters level courses. Similarly, support for transitions varies considerably. In Austria, Germany, Portugal and the Slovak Republic, special information on professional training and professional issues is provided during the last two years of compulsory schooling, but in some other EU states, no such provision exists.

The literature suggests a number of areas where improvements in support could be pursued at the trans-national level through EU institutions and through member state co-operation. These are:

- Requiring educational institutions to draw up a specific annual action plan for the equality of disabled students describing aims followed, means invested and improvements expected
- Placing more emphasis on supporting young people in transitions through the education system and into work
- Improving indicators and statistical data to support effective planning and monitoring of education and training policies
- Improving initial training and continuing professional development for teachers and other professionals involved in the education process so as to provide them with appropriate methodological tools and supports.
- Increasing the active involvement of young disabled people, their parents and representative groups at all levels of educational policy making
- Developing more and better awareness campaigns to disseminate good practice in transforming segregated educational systems towards inclusive education in schools and
Universities (e.g. by initiating an Accessible European University award similar to the accessible cities award; exploiting the Leonardo program for staff mobility and European Social Funds for national project initiatives; sharing good practice and expertise in assistive educational tools and devices, including ICT-based learning opportunities within the Tempus, Grundtvig and Transversal lifelong learning programs)

- Increasing the learning and teaching of sign language in EU funded programmes for language learning
- Mainstreaming disability equality concerns and monitoring in the main programmes and initiatives of the European Union on education, training and lifelong learning (e.g. mainstreaming guidance from the Disability High Level Group to the open method of coordination associated with Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training ‘ET2020’).

3.6 Good Practices in the EU

It is difficult to single out good practices in the provision of support for students with disabilities at the EU level, firstly, because at the trans-national level itself, EU policy and actions tend to be pitched at the generic ‘high level’ and, secondly, because, at the individual member state level, there is a great deal of variety and diversity across the 27 countries of the EU. Nevertheless, at the trans-European level, one could highlight the following as examples of good practice:

- The signing by the EU of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the passing of the European Equality Directive against Discrimination. These provide overarching authority for the implementation by member states of the provisions of these key instruments.
- The implementation of EU2020, and its relevant “flagship initiatives”, which underpin programmes aimed at providing support for programmes like ‘Youth on the move’, and the ‘Digital Agenda for Europe’ – which focuses in particular on improving access to ICTs for young people with disabilities.
- The implementation of ‘E&T2020’, which highlights priorities based on developing inclusive learning programmes; validating the non-formal and informal learning achievements of those disabled people whose learning is not acknowledged within formal qualification frameworks.
- The development and implementation of key funding programmes that provide opportunities for developing support for disabled students in HEI’s, notably: the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Erasmus Mundus programme and the ‘PROGRESS’ programme.

Similarly, there are a number of examples of innovative good practices that can be identified at the national level. These are summarised in the boxes below.
Initiatives aimed at promoting better access to higher education:

**Scottish Wider Access Programme**

SWAP (Scottish Wider Access Programme) provides independent advice to adults who may have missed out on higher or further education first time round and which provides them with access courses which can lead to guaranteed places in colleges or universities. This specifically targets those with a disability. SWAP facilitate a broad range of access programmes covering a range of courses including Humanities, Information Technology, Education, Nursing, Science, Arts and Health related studies.

SWAP oversees student progress on these programmes and provide guidance to students through presentations, interviews and guidance materials. In particular the Scottish Wider Access Programme is made up of three elements: the academic content (as agreed by the further and higher education partners); preparation for higher education (a specially devised unit to help students understand and prepare for higher education); and the student profile (a guidance document which enables both student and tutor to monitor student progress and make informed decisions about progression). SWAP programmes have flexible assessment, additional student support and provide guaranteed progression across a wide range of courses. To support these courses, SWAP’s core work consists of marketing and recruitment; programme enhancement and review; programme quality assurance; and facilitating guaranteed progression options for students.

**Belgium – Flemish Community - Good practices in Social Dimension implementation in Higher Education**

The objectives are aimed at widening participation by getting more young people to and through higher education in a way that promotes social cohesion and that addresses the demographic trends; improving the attainment and achievement for those who are most at risk of failing in higher education programmes; reducing the educational attainment gap between the different groups participating in higher education. Funding provides incentives to institutions for improving access and participation of students coming from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups in society, including disabled students, and for improving the outcomes; funding is tied to performance through the funding mechanism as well as through performance agreements, through performance agreements on diversity targets (between each HEI and the minister of education). These performance agreements cover an increase in participation of specific student target groups and an incentive for the institutions to support student achievement and progression and to improve academic success. HEIs are encouraged to develop their own approaches, including: pastoral support, summer classes, bridging courses for students coming from a non-academic track, language courses, students as tutors for high school students, distance education, lifelong learning as a means for broadening participation, recognition of prior learning, monitoring academic progression. The funding also covers curriculum reform.
France: The Active guidance Policy

The “Climbing ropes for success” (Cordées de la réussite) scheme aims at ensuring a smoother transition towards higher education for young people who do not plan to go on further studying, because of particular constraints due to their social or local backgrounds. For this purpose, a network of institutions connected with each other is set up, via partnerships between one or several higher education institutions (universities, grandes écoles) on the one hand, and on the other hand, secondary schools (including secondary schools with preparatory classes for the grandes écoles). The purpose is to enhance information dissemination about higher education courses, together with job opportunities provided, and to support these young people along their whole learning paths (tutoring, academic support, cultural support, student boarding or student accommodation, etc.)

UK: The Office for Fair Access and the HEFCE ‘Widening Participation’ initiatives

The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) is an independent, non-departmental public body which aims to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for under-represented groups in light of the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006-07. HEFCE has delivered a Widening Participation allocation to institutions since 1999-2000 as part of the block teaching grant. Currently this has two main elements, widening access (WA), improving retention (IR), as well as a further stream for widening access and supporting provision for disabled students. The process by which HE providers can establish the level of their fees and gain approval of their plans for WP is managed by the Office for Fair Access through access agreements. The HEFCE Widening Participation allocation is broadly intended to meet some of the additional costs incurred by institutions for activity to raise aspirations and attainment among potential students from under-represented groups. To calculate this allocation they take into account the number of students at each institution in receipt of the disabled students’ allowance. The funding for students with disabilities for 2010-11 totals £13.2 million.


The Ministry of Education and some of the Autonomous Communities have a number of outreach programs towards secondary school students from under-privileged groups aiming at increasing their access to information about academic and professional careers, boosting their motivation and aspirations to pursue tertiary level studies, and improve their academic preparation. Actions, such as the ‘Summer Inclusive Campuses’ or ‘Campuses without limits’, funded under the International Campus of Excellence CEI Program, with the collaboration of the National Foundation for Blind People (ONCE) are being implemented with a view to scaling up the most successful ones. The first Summer Inclusive was organised by The International Campus of Excellence Campus Mare Nostrum led by the Universities of Murcia and Cartagena in July 2011 hosting 10 Secondary and High School disabled students for 2 weeks, after passing a technical audit on the accessibility of the campus site from the ONCE Foundation. The goal is to demonstrate and confirm that disabled students can continue their studies at...
universities that are well prepared to cover their specific needs. These programs help to improve the protocols of welcome and accessibility as well to adjust the education systems, methods and materials for disabled students, facilitating the development of their skills and the acquisition of competences in equal conditions with the other students. A similar approach towards expanding the most effective retention programs is followed in order to reduce the existing high levels of drop outs among students belonging to the various equity target groups.

Ireland: DARE
Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) is a college and university admission scheme in Ireland, which offers a number of places to school leavers with disabilities. DARE is designed for school leavers who have the ability to benefit from and succeed in higher education but who may not be able to meet the points for their preferred course due to the impact of their disability. Students who are eligible for the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) may secure a college place on a reduced points basis. All students with a disability, irrespective of whether they come through DARE or not, are offered a variety of academic, personal and social supports while studying at third level. Individual institutions will determine the nature and delivery of such supports in accordance with their own policies and practices and subject to the availability of resources. Examples of the types of supports available include: Orientation programmes to introduce students to university/college; Study skills, extra tuition if required and exam support; Access to assistive technology and training; One-to-one meetings with support staff, social gatherings and mentoring.

Support at Higher Education Entry

Germany: Student Services and Student Affairs
Student services are offered in Germany by 58 regional Studentenwerke outside the universities, offering their services to more than 350 Higher educations institutions in 180 university sites and to more than 2 million students. 38 Studentenwerke offer specific counselling services to students with disabilities, especially in social judicial questions. 53 Studentenwerke offer resident halls for Students with disabilities, and 9 Studentenwerke specific technical support. In their work the regional Studentenwerke are supported by the information centre for students with disabilities, located in the DSW.
Norway: Universell

*Universell* (‘Universal’) is the Norwegian national coordinator of accessibility in higher education, established in 2003 by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. It aims to contribute to promote better learning environments for students with disabilities and to provide advice and follow-up on the work of the Learning Environment Committees at the higher education institutions, in the context of the 2005 law in which all higher education institutions are obliged to have a learning environment committee composed of both staff and students which is responsible for the overall learning environment of the institution. Universell services include: contribute to the higher education institutions' action plans regarding disabled students through follow-up on implementation and advice in connection with revisions; offer support-on-demand to the higher education institutions; develop and maintain a website; organise seminars and conferences for higher education staff working on universal design and matters regarding disability; represent the higher education sector on disability issues. In 2007, these services were extended to cover the promotion and implementation of universal design in higher education.

Supporting study progress

France: Social criteria-based grants

The social criteria-based grants are the main element of the French student support scheme. They are granted according to the social situation of the student. To be allowed to get a socially-based student grant, as a higher education student, the following requirements must be met: being enrolled in initial education and attend full-time courses in a programme provided by a higher education institution eligible to receive government-funded students by the Ministry for Higher Education and Research; being 28 years old or less on 1 September of the academic year for a first grant application. This age limit is not effective for disabled students whose disability is recognized by the Commission for the rights and the autonomy of disabled persons; being French or a foreign national (ie: European citizens under certain conditions, refugees recognized by the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons [OPFRA: Office français pour la protection des réfugiés et apatrides], students that are not citizens of a European Union Member State but who have been living in France for two years at least and who have received a temporary residence permit or a residence permit and whose tax revenue (father or mother, parental authority delegate) has been located in France for two years at least).

France: Aids offered to students with disabilities or health problems during study progress

The Act of 11 February 2005 on “the equality of rights and opportunities, the participation and citizenship of disabled people” has changed fundamentally the obligations of universities in terms or reception of disabled people. Over the last few years, the measures taken by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research demonstrate its commitment to facilitate the integration of disabled people in higher education. This effort resulted on 5 September 2007 in the signature of a university disability Charter that aims at: improving the coherence and visibility of the reception arrangements for disabled students and of the financial, technical and political responsibilities of every party; making sure university political authorities are involved in the reception arrangements for disabled students, in particular by disseminating the information, creating services for this
purpose and designating a person in charge of the reception of disabled people, centrepiece of the reception arrangements; facilitating the provision of individual and collective resources in order to implement the objectives of the Act of 11 February 2005; offering disabled students the same opportunities as able-bodied students by strengthening disabled students’ autonomy. The Act covers: Reception - every higher education institution has a person in charge of the reception of disabled students. This person is in charge of the coordination of the different actions needed and works closely with them so as to resolve their problems. Accessibility - accessibility to newly built university premises is ensured, this requirement is now a compulsory part of every architecture project. Institutions with more ancient premises have a legal obligation to make accessible their premises within the time limits set in the Act of 11 February 2005. Aids for studies and student life - disabled students must contact the local office for disabled students (maison départementale des personnes handicapées) of their department. This office, together with the higher education institution, will evaluate disabled students’ needs according to their studies project. Universities make sure they can study in the best conditions thanks to the aids and adaptation needed. These measures are implemented together with student associations and/or associations of service providers for disabled people. Studies - students with disabilities or health problems attend the same courses as all students and have the same exams. Universities offer the appropriate academic assistance within their premises: handouts, copies of courses and tutorials, recording and transcription of magnetic tapes, Braille documents, loan of specialized material, tutorials. Examinations and National selective entrance examinations - specific measures exist to organise examinations and public selective entrance examinations for students with disabilities or health problems in order for them to benefit from arrangements that preserve their chances of success (increase in the duration of the examination, secretary, interpreter in sign languages...). Housing and catering - the National French Student Support Agency (CNOUS: Centre National des Oeuvres Universitaires et Scolaires) and the Regional French Student Support Agencies (CROUS: Centres Régionaux des Ouvres Universitaires et Scolaires) offer accommodation specially designed for people with disabilities. Student accommodation can host disabled people who need assistance for some everyday life actions. Employability - Universities develop more and more partnerships with companies in order to facilitate the transition to work for disabled students, in particular through work placements. An interactive website for work placements and jobs available for disabled people is available.
4. Policies and Practices in Member States involved in the sinc@he project

4.1 UK

4.1.1 Definitions

The UK initially adopted the ‘medical perspective’ in terms of defining disability. Under the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) a disabled person was defined as someone who has, ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. This definition has been interpreted very broadly and included, for example, children and young people with learning difficulties, dyslexia, diabetes, epilepsy or HIV, if this had a substantial and long-term effect on their education. A more detailed definition was also given in the 2007 Code of practice for schools - DDA 1995: Part 4 by the former Disability Rights Commission (now replaced within the Equality and Human Rights Commission).

The DDA was not applied to educational provision until amended by the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (known as SENDA). This specifies that disabled students should not be subject to ‘less favourable treatment’ by providers of education (including schools, colleges and universities) and that ‘reasonable adjustments’ should be made. As with the definition of disability, there is a wide interpretation of ‘less favourable treatment’ and ‘reasonable adjustments’. For example, less favourable treatment could be justified because of things like health and safety considerations; the effects on non-disabled students of making reasonable adjustments. In turn, a failure to make adjustments could be justified because of the effect on academic and other standards, cost and financial resources available or disruption caused to others.

4.1.2 Legislative and Policy Context

The current framework covering disability was established in the 2007 Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act. Responsibility for education and special education policy has been with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and reflects the ‘holistic’ approach to disability, and its focus on the links education and other policy areas like employment. This Department included a Special Educational Needs and Disability Division. Following the May 2010 General Election, the DCSF was re-organized to become the Department for Education. Policy for further education, skills and higher education is the responsibility of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, but there is considerable blurring of lines of responsibility with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Over-arching responsibility for all disability policy resides with the Office for Disability Issues, which is also located within the DWP. A new Minister for Disabled People (Maria Miller) was appointed in 2010.

There is a marked contrast in the UK between the relatively high level of policy focus and provision to support the needs of disabled students in the compulsory education sector and that afforded to the higher education sector. For example, the 1993 Education Act introduced a Special Educational Needs Tribunal system with the intention of allowing greater rights of appeal for parents and placed a duty on local authorities in England and Wales to identify all children with SEN in their area and to assess their needs. Such assessment can be requested at any time by the school or the parent (and may be carried out before a child reaches compulsory schooling age). Official guidance and resource materials on Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in Schools and Early Years Settings were
published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2006. Statutory guidance on Access to Education for Children and Young People was supplemented in 2010 with further guidance on the home education of children with SEN emphasising that local education authorities remain responsible for children even if they are not attending school.

However, post-compulsory education is not marked by similarly clear legislation and guidelines. Many secondary schools provide post-compulsory schooling (e.g. for students aged 16-19) but many school leavers study in local colleges of further education rather than in schools. Further education colleges also provide a very wide range of ‘adult and community learning’ opportunities, which may include vocational training courses and basic skills but which are not restricted to young people only. Further education colleges and universities may also provide ‘access courses’ with the specific intention of helping prospective adult students gain entry to higher education. Since these kinds of courses are intended for those who have not gained entry level at school, and from social groups who often have low participation rates, disabled students are sometimes targeted in provision. Finally, there are additional vocational training and qualification opportunities available to school leavers in the form of national (as well as local) apprenticeship schemes. HEIs, FE colleges, adult community learning and work based learning are all covered by the DDA so that those entering this phase have the same protection.

In theory, young people making the transition from school to post-compulsory education should have a ‘transition plan’ – if they received a statement of special need at school – that sets out the support they may expect to receive as they progress after the age of 16. Transition Plans are supposed to focus on hopes and aspirations for the future and how these can be met, including any special health or welfare needs that will require planning and support from Health and Social Care Services in the future. However, according to Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) practices have been patchy.\footnote{ANED (2011) United Kingdom: ANED Country Profile, University of Leeds} In terms of the evolution of legislation on disability and higher education, the key factors in practice on national disability equality include the Disability Equality Duty (DED), the trend towards a proactive approach, and the associated requirement for a Disability Equality Scheme (DES). An approach that may become more significant over the next few years is Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). HE developments over time have been influenced by specific reports and ideas about provision, and through the activities of HEFCE and other bodies.

4.1.3 Provision of support for students with disabilities in HEIs

i) Financial support

Support for students in further and higher education is organised within colleges and universities, largely funded by national government and, to some extent, controlled by the student. Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been paid to people aged 16-19 at a rate of up to £30 per week, means-tested (to support young people with their studies). It is not specific to disabled young people. EMA is currently ‘under review’ within the context of the new Government’s public spending review. Young disabled people may be able to claim disability-related benefits, for example Disability Living Allowance towards some of the extra costs of care or mobility. Those on a low income may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance while studying.
The most widespread form of financial support is Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) which is available to those in higher education who are assessed as having additional costs/needs arising from disability. The amount paid depends on the assessed need (for specialist equipment, personal assistance, travel costs, etc) but it does not provide any addition to the student’s basic income, which is paid at the same rate as other students via student grants and loans. DSA payments are subject to maximum amounts for equipment, for assistance, and for general costs. The current maximum rates are:

- Specialist equipment: £5161 for entire course (full-time and part-time students).
- Non-medical helper: £20520 a year (full-time study); £15390 a year (part-time study).
- General disabled students allowance: £1724 full-time; £1293 part-time.

For students in receipt of or applying for DSA, a range of services is offered and at different stages by most institutions, with many offering support and guidance at the early stages. The majority of institutions offer some form of financial support in the event of DSA delays. The DSAs are paid by the Student Loans Company on behalf of Local Authorities to individual students. If the student prefers, the money can be paid to a third party; for example, to a supplier of specialist equipment or other support. The student would need to give written consent for that to happen. Initially the DSA was means tested, and only available to students attending a full-time undergraduate course and eligible for a local authority grant. However, after publication of the Dearing Report in 1997, means testing for the DSA was abolished in 1998/1999, and coverage extended to part-time and postgraduate students (including part-time and postgraduate distance learners) in 2000/2001.

In order to receive the DSA, however, applicants have to provide proof of a ‘disability or specific learning difficulty’. Physical impairments must be confirmed by letter from an appropriate medical professional. Evidence of specific learning difficulties such as ‘dyslexia’, for example, must be provided by a diagnostic assessment by a psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher. As a consequence, the DSA application process can be highly stressful for disabled students and their families. According to a recent review of provision for disabled students in UK HEIs, ‘Access to Learning Funds’ were often cited as substitute funding. Recent research by the Snowdon Trust found that in many cases the DSA is insufficient to cover the full costs of overcoming barriers to inclusion in British HEIs. The Snowdon Survey 2006 showed that those with visual, hearing and mobility impairments are especially disadvantaged.

The other main source of financial support to students with disabilities is via the Higher Education Funding Council – HEFCE – mainstream disability funding grant to institutions. Allocation methods for HEFCE funding vary considerably, but many institutions use a method of allocating a block grant to some form of central support service, whilst others allocate it to disability services.

### ii) Other support

The ANED and HEFCE reports show that institutions’ use of HEFCE mainstream disability funding allocation is being used primarily to provide general dedicated disability services, technical...
assistance and equipment, or improvements to campus accessibility. Also important are providing individual support services (such as personal assistants), staff training, and supplementing DSA for individual students.

Two features have characterised recent developments in support provision in the UK. Firstly, the broadening of the definition of ‘disability’ to encompass a wider range of disability issues – and hence the range of students targeted by support services. This is linked to a second development – the customisation of an individual programme of support based on individual needs. A number of UK HEI’s now take a broader perspective to disability, one based on ‘well-being’ rather than specific impairments like visual or hearing problems. For example, the Institute of Education, University of London operates a ‘Disability and Wellbeing Support Adviser’ programme provides integrated support to individuals, including students with chronic medical conditions like diabetes, epilepsy, chronic pain, chronic fatigue and specific learning difficulties like dyslexia and dyspraxia.

4.1.4 Gaps in provision

The 2009 HEFCE survey involving university disability officers showed that 78% of UK HEI’s highlighted hearing and visually impaired students as those with the most difficult funding problems. The maximum DSA equipment allowance can fail totally blind students who are Braille users (Tozer, 2006, p.5). It was indicated also that the maximum DSA non-medical helper’s allowance is insufficient for the needs of students who require expensive human support in the form of non-medical helpers such as sign language interpreters, and note takers.

As a result of these shortfalls, disabled students attending university have to spend much of their time applying for additional funding from charities such as the Snowdon Award Scheme. In addition, assessments for the DSA may be variable, and not determined by rigid national guidelines, although assessment centres are audited by the Quality Assurance Group. Applicability is often limited solely to learning and teaching concerns, so that disabled students may not access the extra-curricular activities that are an integral part of the experience of HE. The situation is especially difficult for disabled international students, who may have to rely almost exclusively on independently resourced bursaries and charities for financial support when studying in the UK.

4.1.5 Good practices identified

Examples of good practices identified in the literature and in reports include the following:

• Mobility support. A number of UK HEI’s have focused on transport innovations to support mobility. In one example, a University in a campus with a number of steep hills bought a minibus to assist the mobility of disabled students with mobility impairments to get from their accommodation to classes, and to travel between classes. However, the HECE survey also identified a number of HEIs who did not see access between their buildings as within their responsibility.

• Consultation with disabled people’s organisations. In some cases, institutions have made links with the local disabled people’s organisation, and consult them about issues like environmental access.

• Proactive moves to identify impairment. One factor identified in the literature is the problem of ‘hidden disability’ – where disabled students, for various reasons, do not register as disabled. In one HEI, active attempts had been made by a dyslexia worker to uncover the condition in students, and
to encourage them to accept support and apply for DSA. She was proactive in informing students about the condition, and routinely went into classes and handed out information.

- Networking and support for staff. Although the literature suggests that on the whole in the UK there is a relative lack of guidance and leadership relating to support for disabled learners, there are a number of networks and forums established, for example the Disability Research Forum at Sheffield Hallam University. Other examples include Claud: Librarians in Higher Education Networking to Improve Access for Disabled Users (http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cloud/); NADP (National Association of Disability Practitioners http://www.nadp-uk.org/).

- The dissemination of accessibility information, and the production of online accessibility maps of university buildings and campuses. One UK HEI has contracted an external agency run by a wheelchair user – DisabledGo – to audit buildings on their campus (see http://www.disabledgo.info/). Several institutions have produced their own online accessibility maps.

- The appointment of an Accessible Curriculum Project Officer. One HEI has developed a dedicated role which entails advising all 28 academic schools in the institution about how to make their teaching more inclusive and accessible. However, there are reports that many schools were resistant to the idea and the officer’s input.

- Extensive use of ICTs and assistive technology. For example, the Institute of Education, London University has a dedicated Disability Assistive Technology room, which provides a range of facilities and tools including: specialized software (e.g. Text Help Read & Write; Inspiration); ergonomic aids (foot rests; adjustable seating; tracker ball mice). University College London has a Student Enabling IT Suite, which includes tools like: Dragon Naturally Speaking (a speech recognition programme which enables voice activated typing); Inspiration (software to convert a visual idea into an essay template); Texthelp (text-to-speech technology); Zoomtext (enlarges all that is seen on the screen).

Three illustrative case studies of innovative practices are shown in the boxes below.

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<th>Good Practice Example: the SPACE project</th>
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SPACE (Staff-Student Partnership for Assessment Change and Evaluation) is a three-year project funded by HEFCE, involving a consortium of eight institutions in the South West. The aim over a three year period has been to develop and promote alternative forms of assessment. Students are represented as well as academic staff and disability officers, and information is readily available about the project through a website as well as in publications that have arisen from it. The core activity has been to develop an alternative assessment toolkit in the subject areas of arts, education, business, science, humanities, human sciences and technology. Key elements include: a critical review of the issues governing the choice of assessment; case studies of inclusive assessment; institutional, departmental and individual procedures to support the process of assessment change; and staff and student evaluation forms. The emphasis in SPACE was towards encouraging dialogue and innovation between disability services and academic departments, supporting institutional change.
Good Practice Example: Thinking about Dyslexia

One HEI has produced a web-based service on dyslexia in order to support the development of best practices. This includes 33 video interviews linked to resources on inclusive teaching methods and reasonable adjustments, and supported by in depth documents. Videos and guidance were arranged across three themes, with reference to 19 “topics in academic practice”. These topics included planning of module content, mind-mapping, podcasting, webCT and students tape-recording lectures and meetings. Video material was intended to give insights into how students experience dyslexia in their studies, and how staff teach in ways that include a range of approaches to learning. Attention was also given to assessment and marking issues, with suggestions about such matters as giving feedback and adjusting deadlines.

Good Practice Example: ALiC

A HEFCE-funded (Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) initiative on Active Learning in Computing (ALiC) has brought together four institutional partners. Although the team is primarily concerned with group and project work, some staff have been producing training tools for improving teacher sensitivity to specific impairments in e-learning delivery. This draws on work carried out by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) TechDis Service, which supports the education sector with advice and guidance on disability and technology. As a result, a small group of staff has created an accessible site (linked to other relevant sites) which includes sample questions (with some simulations) in relation to ‘visual, motor, hearing and cognitive impairments’. The simulations are intended to illustrate the implications for disabled students of taught material, and of how e-assessment might cause problems – for example through time constraints, uses of colours, and over-complex language or layout. The initial pilot work with staff trainees led to the production of good practice guides, which are accessed by links from the main website pages. Further development includes focus groups of disabled students, together with staff training, which aims to raise awareness of potential problems in delivering teaching materials, and in administering certain kinds of assessment.

4.2 Slovenia

4.2.1 Policy and Legal Background

In the last 20 years society and educational institutions in Slovenia have become more and more aware of the needs of disabled students. Since the number of disabled students is increasing universities are trying to make suitable study conditions for them. But unfortunately there is still no unified support system for disabled students. There is also no specific national policy for supporting disabled students. As a consequence four universities in Slovenia have to deal with disabled students on their own. The problem is also that there is no special funding for support of disabled students including support for appropriate and accommodation.

No legislation defines students with disabilities. The definitions can be found in the internal rules of universities. But they vary from university to university or even from faculty to faculty.
4.2.2 Policy and practice in Slovenian HEI’s

i) University of Ljubljana

This university is the biggest university situated in Ljubljana, capital city of Slovenia. University of Ljubljana has no special rules on accommodation/adjustment of study but has some special provisions regarding students with disabilities in its statute. According to the Statute students with disabilities have the right to:

- progress to the next academic year although they didn’t meet all of the study requirements (Article 153),
- prolong the final year for up to one year (2nd paragraph, Article 158) and to prolong the student status (1st paragraph, Article 238)
- gain a status of the student with special needs. The status of a student with special needs is awarded to a student who in the course of enrolment submits an appropriate opinion of the responsible commission for the guidance of children, minors and younger adults with special needs or the opinion of the disability commission (2nd paragraph, Article 238)
- take the exam on an individually agreed exam date (2nd paragraph, Article 141).

Most of the faculties have their internal rules on students with disabilities. They regulate the status of students with special needs and accommodation of the study. Status is usually granted for one academic year.

There were 289 disabled students enrolled at the University of Ljubljana in the 2009/10 academic year. However, there are no data on the types of support they receive.

In 2008 the University of Ljubljana has constituted a Commission for students with special needs which deals with issues regarding students with disabilities. In 2009 they also prepared rules on students with special needs but the rules are not yet confirmed by the university.

The same year each faculty appointed one staff responsible for counselling students with disabilities. Their names and contacts are listed on the university website but it appears that the actual time they can devote to supporting individual students is limited due to other work obligations.

Faculties of the University of Ljubljana provide a tutor system for students with disabilities. To become a tutor-student, the student has to be at least in 2nd year of study, show interest for this kind of work, apply and carry out a selection interview. The tutor-student has many responsibilities such as guidance of the student with disabilities to achieve a successful study life and individual support and counselling.

ii) University of Maribor

The University of Maribor is the second largest university and has adopted rules regarding students with disabilities in 2008. There are some provisions also in the Statute of the University of Maribor:

- progressing to the next academic year if they fulfil study requirements of the preceding study years and have more than 30 ECTS in the current year (2nd paragraph, Article 85 and 2nd paragraph, Article 111)
exceptionally repeating a year if a disabled student participated in the study process even if he has less than 30 ECTS, but not less than 15 ECTS, if the reasons for such a situation are justifiable, which is determined by the commission. (2nd paragraph, Article 121)

- Students who, due to their needs need adjustments of the study process, can apply for a special status in one of the following categories: student athletes, student artists, students with long term illnesses, disabled students, student officials: vice rectors, vice deans in secretaries of the Student Council of the University of Maribor, other students, who due to special circumstances need adjustments in the study process.

Students with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in education on an equal basis with others’. The general acts adopted by the University Senate, with prior approval of the Student Council, govern the process of gaining the status of a disabled student. (2nd and 3rd paragraph, Article 211)

- prolongation of the student status for at most one year (2nd paragraph, Article 212)

- entitlement to special adjustments of study programmes considering lectures, seminars, exercises and examinations. The scope of adjustments is decided for individuals by the Commission for student affairs at the faculty (Article 216)

Rules on study process of disabled students at the University of Maribor enable students to apply for a status of disabled students and therefore receive certain adjustments. The status is granted upon individual request which needs to be supported by some proof of disability:

A placement decision by The national education institute of the Republic of Slovenia, Expert opinion by the Commission for placement of children with special needs, Decision by the Centre for social work, findings and opinion of the Expert commission for categorization of children and minors, decision by the Retirement and disability insurance institute of Slovenia.

The rules cover accessibility of build environment, communication, accommodation of lectures, seminars and other types of study process, study obligations and study literature, however detailed measures or adjustments are defined only for meeting study obligations, which include:

- taking the exam on an individually agreed exam date
- taking a written exam orally or taking an oral exam in written form
- alternative forms of exam papers (electronic, large etc.)
- longer time to complete the exam
- use of assistive technology
- assistance of the third person during exam
- sign language interpretation
- taking an exam in a special room
- having breaks during the exam
- taking certain assignments in pair with a non-disabled student
- individually agreed deadlines to submit seminar papers, home assignments, reports

In this academic year there are 65 disabled students studying at the University of Maribor. Unfortunately there is no detailed data on the adjustments and supports they receive.

The University of Maribor adopted Regulations for students with special status, which deals with adjustments for other types of students requiring adjustments, including those with long term or chronic diseases. Students with long term or chronic diseases are entitled to this status if they submit an individual application supported by the findings and opinion of a specialist medical doctor, which states that this is a chronic illness which will last for at least three more months and will have an effect on the student’s ability to study.

iii) University of Primorska

University of Primorska is a smaller university on the Slovenian coast. Similar to the University of Maribor, they have rules on the study process of disabled students and some articles of the University Statute also refer to disabled students.

According to the Statute, disabled students have the following rights:

- The student can exceptionally be enrolled in the following academic year even if he has not met all requirements for this, if the reasons for failing to meet the requirements are justifiable and the students has a special status defined in the university regulations. (Article 118a)

- Students with special needs or disabled students are students who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in education on an equal basis with others’. Status is granted by the Commission for student affairs based on the individual request by the student and additional supporting documents proving disability (Paragraph 1 and 3, Article 168)

- Students who have a special status defined in Article 168 of the Statute and cannot meet all study requirements on a stated deadline, can have their student status prolonged if the Senate or the appointed commissions adopts such a decision. (Article 170).

The University adopted the Rules on students with special needs in 2008, which defined many adjustments. Depending on the type and degree of disability, students are entitled to:

- progressing to the next academic year if they meet at least 50% of the study requirements,
- prolonging the student status for a whole academic year, if the disability prevents the student to meet all study requirements in the current academic year

- support at lectures and seminars
- providing lecture materials in advance
- providing list of study literature in advance
- recording of lectures and seminars
Tempus Project

Support and Inclusion of students with disabilities at higher education institutions in Montenegro

- use of assistive technology
- help of a third person
- providing paper materials in e-format
- taking certain assignments in pair with a non-disabled student
- doing certain assignments form home (a type of distance or e-learning)
- adjustments in practical assignments
- lower attendance at lectures, seminars due to medical check-ups, hospitalization, treatment or rehabilitation
- examination adjustments
  - longer time to complete the exam
  - taking an exam in a special room
  - taking an exam by using a computer or other accessible device
  - using the help of a third person
  - adjustments of on assessment and examination
  - alternative forms of exam papers
  - taking the exam on an individually agreed exam date
- adjustments in the library
  - longer deadlines to return loaned materials,
  - possibility to take out materials which are available for in-library use, when they need to be adapted or the student uses special devices for reading which are not available in the library,
  - help in searching and locating library materials.

Disabled students also receive support from the professor tutor or student tutor. The professor tutor is responsible for preparing an individualized study plan, and informs his colleague professors about this plan and gives them advice how to support the student.

The University and individual faculties keep data on disabled students – student applications, decisions of the Commission and individualized study plans.

There were 33 disabled students enrolled in the previous academic year, however we were not able to obtain data about the actual supports these students receive.

iv) University of Nova Gorica

University of Nova Gorica is the smallest university in Slovenia. For now they have no special rules relating to disabled students. However they do respond to staff training on how to support disabled students.
There are some national policies and legislation that have an impact on higher education (see appendices 3, 4 in 5):

- National guidelines to improve built environment, information and communications accessibility for people with disabilities
- Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act.

In summary, the analysis suggests that in Slovenia, provision of support is developing but there is still much to do. Much depends on the openness of the academic staff and on the student him or herself. It is still so that students, in most cases, need to arrange certain adjustments on their own, individually with each professor.

Students who are more confident and independent do better in their studies than those who need more support and adjustments. We see that students with hidden disabilities, such as mental health problems experience most difficulties.

There is still much work to do in the area of monitoring and evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of supports for disabled students. At the moment Slovenia does not have a system for monitoring how effective the support is and how to improve it.

4.3 Italy

4.3.1 Policy and legal background

The most important laws governing disability in Italy are:

- **Law No.104 of 1992** that is “Framework law for the assistance, the social inclusion and the rights of the disabled”;
- **Law No.17 of 1999** that is review Act 104 of 1992 for the University;
- **Law No. 170 of 2010** concerning the standards for specific disorders of learning in schools (e.g. dyslexia).

In relation to the inclusion of disabled students in universities, the key legislation is as follows:

**Act no. 104/1992** has made a significant contribution to a culture of inclusion. This covers the assistance, the social integration and the rights of disabled persons. This law states that the instruction of disabled persons is accomplished through their inclusion “in the common classes of the scholastic instruction of every order and grade…” (Art. 12, paragraph 2). The attendance of common classes establishes a fundamental tool for the achievement of the “development of the handicapped person in learning, communication, relations, and socialization” (Art. 12, paragraph 3). The law covers primary to university education (Art.12, paragraph 2).

The inclusion of students with disabilities at school and at University is realized through:

- Technical equipment and teaching aids as well as any form of technical support, notwithstanding the individual’s functional aids and promoting at the effective exercise of the right to education, also through agreements with specialized centers, having a function of pedagogical consulting, of production and adaptation of specific teaching materials (Article 13, paragraph 1, letter b).
The programs of the universities of "appropriate intervention either for the need of the person or for the peculiarities of individual educational program" (Article 13, paragraph 1 letter c).

Assignments of professional interpreters to facilitate the frequency and the learning of deaf students (Article 13, paragraph 1, letter d)

Specific appropriate technical and educational subsidies and support services of specialized tutoring (Article 13, paragraph 6-a)

The possibility, for disabled students, to take exams, even university exams, using the necessary aids, in agreement with the teacher of the subject and with the support of the Tutoring service (Article 16 "Evaluating the Performance and exams", paragraph 4)

The law 17/1999, which amended and supplemented the law 104/1992, has provided funding and specific guidelines to the Italian universities regarding the activities to be implemented in favor of the disabled students. In particular, this law established that each university should appoint a Delegate for Disabilities: "With coordinating, monitoring and supporting functions of all the initiatives for inclusion as part of the University". (Law no. 17/99, Article 1, addition of a paragraph 5 of Article 16 of Law of 5th February 1992, n. 104). At the same time it provides that each university delivers services for the integration of disabled students with specific reference to:

- Specific technical and educational subsidies (Law no. 17/99, Article 1, integration of Article 13, 6-bis).
- Support of appropriate specialized tutoring services (Law no. 17/99, Article 1, integration of Article 13, 6-bis).
- Individualized treatment for passing examinations and use of specific technical means in relation to the type, or the possibility of equivalent tests (Law no. 17/99, Article 1, replacement of paragraph 5 of Article 16 of Law of 5th February 1992, n. 104).

The most recent legislation covers students with specific learning disorders such as dyslexia or dyscalculia. On 29th September 2010 the Parliament approved a law (Act no. 170) that recognizes these problems and encourages schools to identify them early on and defines the strategies and stages of diagnosis and education through the use of compensatory measures. The law has introduced:

- the use of a personalized education system and the provision of supporting tools and new technologies in order to ensure and facilitate learning and school success;
- customization of verification and evaluation tests, such as public exams, university exams and entrance exams to the universities;
- training course for the teachers and the school leaders in order to make them acquire adequate methodological and evaluation skills.

The policy and legal context around disability in Italy has been shaped in recent years by changes in the way disability is defined. Only in 1992 was the concept of disability addressed and introduced in the Italian system finding a definition which affected both the recognition of rights guaranteed by the laws and the social integration of people with disabilities.

The Acts of 1992 and 2000 show that the first pragmatic approach focussed on the mere monetary assistance was slowly replaced by a more open approach which included a social
perspective (Ales, 2005). The issue of physical or mental impairments was, in fact, firstly covered by the perspective of the health problem ("medical model"). In the 80’s the functional limitations perspective, based on the International Classification of Impairments, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH), replaced the previous one addressing also non medical criteria to approach the notion of disability. Finally a third model proposed an “ecological perspective” in which disability appears as the result of different variables like “impairment, activity limitations and participation restrictions in a specific social or physical environment such as work, home, or school” (Baldassarre et al., 2008)

4.3.2 Profile and needs of students with disabilities in Italian HEI’s

Statistical data (from ISTAT) show the following key points:

- Data on students with disabilities enrolled at the State University show a rising trend. For the academic year 2000-01 and academic year 2007-08, students with disabilities increased from 4,813 to 12,403 members. (MIUR-CINECA, 2008).
- The distribution by type of disability shows that students with physical disabilities constitute the largest percentage (27.5%) of registered disabled people in the academic year 2006-07, while smaller percentages are found in cases of students with mental difficulties (3.5%) and dyslexia (0.9%) (MIUR-CINECA, 2007).

4.3.3 Support provided by Italian HEI’s

In 2001 the University National Conference of Delegates for Disability (CNUDD was constituted), an organisation capable of representing the policy and activities of the Italian Universities regarding students with disabilities and the issues related to disability.

The CNUDD has prepared some guidelines that are suggested to universities to provide services suitable for the integration of students with disabilities, while respecting the autonomy of each university. This incorporates three main elements: A ‘Rector’s Delegate’ for Disabilities, a Plan for the removal of architectural barriers; Services for the Disabled Students. This latter element covers:

- **accompaniment**: the universities prepare the accompaniment service for students with disabilities to the various universities, either independently, or through agreements with cooperatives and / or existing local services;
- **technological support**: providing students with disabilities all necessary tools to promote and ensure the autonomy of study, either individually or in dedicated classrooms, or in common classrooms with adapted positions
- **specialized tutoring**: with this expression it is intended the activities and services that aim at the inclusion of the disabled student in the academic life and that tend to support the student in the removal of conditions and situations that do not allow him/her to have equal opportunities of study and of treatment aids;
- **International Mobility**: Universities will devote a particular attention to the international mobility of students with disabilities as well, using either the resources provided by the Socrates / Erasmus / Leonardo programs, or the specific ones provided for disabled people even in connection with the Companies dedicated for the Right to Education.
• **Work Placement**: a particular attention will be dedicated either to ongoing routes of connection with work experience activities and apprenticeship aimed at job placement, using the specific rules of law 104/92 and Law 68/99 on job placement as well, or, in a following phase of orientation and selection of jobs in connection with the formative path followed through University.

• Operational structures, such as the **office for disability**.

### 4.3.4 Examples of good practices

Analysis of the situation in Italy identified three examples of good practice – one national initiative and two examples of initiatives adopted at the University of Macerta.

**WISE**

The national project, **WISE FIRB** (Wiring Individualized Special Education), is aimed at supporting homebound students. The WISE system combines on the one hand a platform aimed at delivering tools and services to support ‘homebound’ students, but also a much broader initiative, centred on a Web 2.0 portal, that will support a community of practice and the dissemination of knowledge and good practice, as well as promoting the aggregation of existing network resources (technological and human). This reflects the underlying research aim of the initiative – to study, develop and test innovative methodological and technological solutions for the education of ‘homebound’ people. The main objectives and activities are: analysis of the state of the art; development of a user model; collection and collation of resources and training materials for both end-users (people with disabilities) and trainers; development of a knowledge management system that integrates sharing; functional education / training for homebound with a focus on Web 2.0; development of criteria and instruments for the assessment of individual solutions.

**University of Macerata, University Centre of Orientation**

The University of Macerata provides support to students with disabilities through the work of the University Centre of Orientation (CAO), which is comprised of two main structures: - COT: centre for student orientation and tutorship; - CETRIL: centre for internship and job orientation. Although the services provided are for students in general, both these offices provide specialist services for students with disabilities. These include: a ‘front office’ to support ‘drop-in’ services; physical support; specialised tutoring; counselling; organisational support; assistive technology; use of the Learning Management System; personalised exams; tuition exemption; specially equipped rooms

The Centre for Internship and Job Orientation (CETRIL) is an example of good practices aimed at supporting students ‘post-study’. This aims to prepare students to enter the job market by providing information and advice, and supporting them in getting internships and job placements. CETRIL works with ‘Agenzia Lavoro Disabili’ – a small company which provides job placements. CETIL and Agenzia Lavoro Disabili are also collaborating in the FixO project (Education, Innovation for Employment) promoted by CETRIL whose main objective is to set a permanent special observatory that will co-ordinate disabled students’ job placements, monitor the participants progress and develop research on their experiences.
University of Macerata e-learning system (OLAT).

The OLAT platform is used for all online courses run in the seven Faculties of the University of Macerata. OLAT is optimized to support accessibility to visually impaired people. It includes: access keys for quick navigation; variable font sizes - users can adjust the font size in the browser to their needs; Web 2.a Mode ((Braille reader compatibility): in this mode all modified elements are marked in a special way: all the advantages of web 2.0 can be used without diminishing its accessibility.

University “Politecnico” of Milan: “MultiChancePoliTeam

The University “Politecnico” of Milan provides a “MultiChancePoliTeam”, a group of professionals who offers a variety of services to students with disabilities: psycho-educational counseling, innovative technological teaching aids (Text To Speech & Automatic Speech Recognition technologies), supporting actions to foster the inclusions of students (tutoring, personalized examinations, accessibility to the campus, etc.). The Politecnico has a wide experience in projects focused on accessibility of services and customizable applications based on multimodal communication. Among the different initiatives it is relevant to report “The 4Wheels Project” focused on students with motor impairments using a wheelchair and the “LAMUSA project” aimed at supporting mental retardation and autism through multimodal expressions and playing (more info: http://tiny.cc/4pveew; http://tiny.cc/npveew).

4.4 Greece

4.4.1 Policy and legal background

The Greek Constitution foresees equal treatment of individuals with disabilities. It consolidates the principle of equity (Article 4), which is the cornerstone of the regulatory framework for disabled people and their treatment by the State, while Article 22 establishes the rights of disabled people at work and the protection of their work. Under these provisions, the Greek Constitution is in line with the most progressive constitutions in other countries, adopting the social model of disability. The law gives the HEI the flexibility to decide and give any kind of support. It doesn’t clearly identify policies but rather gives general guidelines. These guidelines are always mentioned in the rules of procedure of each HEI. Specifically, the legal basis for support across a number of areas is in two main areas: Accessibility in the built environment - according to the law 2831/2000 all public buildings must follow the guidelines for accessibility; Study Support -Law 3549/2007 specifies there must be support and counselling services for all students.

The National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities (http://www.esaea.gr/), founded in 1989 by people with disabilities and their families, holds the official position of the Social Partner on issues related directly or indirectly to persons with disabilities and work, to the promotion of policies.
conducive to full participation of the disabled in social, economic, political and cultural life. The core values of the Confederation are self-representation, participation, solidarity and partnership. In addition, there are other disability unions representing different types of disabilities, such as the National Federation for the Blind (www.eoty.gr) and the Greek Federation for the Deaf (www.omke.gr)

4.4.2 Needs of Disabled students and gaps in provision

A study on Students with Visual Impairments in Higher Education Institutes in Thessaloniki in 2009 investigated the difficulties that students with visual impairments face during their studies in Higher Education Institutes. The participants were 17 students with visual impairments, who study in several University departments in Thessaloniki, Greece. In particular, this study investigates a number of aspects which are related to a) the reasons that lead students who are visually impaired to continue or drop out from their studies in higher education, b) the accessibility of the buildings, c) the attendance of students with visual impairments to the lectures and the difficulties that they face during the lectures, d) the provision of books or handouts from the Universities and the libraries in a suitable form, e) the frequency of the use of libraries and the possibility to use supportive technology in them, f) the collaboration of students with visual impairments with their sighted peers and the teaching staff, g) the participation of students with visual impairments to several activities that are organised by the University (e.g. sport activities, music events etc), and h) the satisfaction that comes from the quality of the studies. The study concluded that:

- There is a lack of important infrastructure that could facilitate mobility, such as paving tiles and signs in braille.
- Despite the fact that about half of the participants stated that the provisions of libraries meet their needs, nine of them said that they had never studied in the library. This might be associated to a great extent with the limited number of books that is provided by the libraries in a suitable format for students with visual impairments (e.g. digital form, braille).
- The majority of the students with visual impairments stated that transition from secondary to higher education was easy and that they were encouraged and motivated mostly by their high school teachers, their social environments and their families.
- Support provided whilst in the process of studying was limited, and most students reported problems that led them to re-consider their continuing study participation.
- Many participants stated that they are only partially satisfied by the quality of education provided by their department and the majority of them believe that the undergraduate degree will not give them equal opportunities to find a job. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that more than half of the participants said that they wished to continue to postgraduate studies.

The main gaps in provision cited by students focused on technical and practical issues, i.e: provision of books and hand-outs in a suitable form and the access to information related to their studies; better cooperation with their tutors has also to do with practical issues (e.g. permission to audiotape the lectures, hand outs in suitable formats); lack of awareness of the teaching staff on the particular needs of students with visual impairment.
4.4.3 Support for students with disabilities in Greek HEI’s

Disabled university students are offered the following special educational facilities in Greek universities:

- The Secretariats of the University Departments keep the students informed about the study program, course timetable, and any changes related to their student status.
- They are facilitated during the exams (oral exams if necessary, accessible exam rooms, under the escort of the university officials or their own people etc.).
- Throughout the academic year they have the support of a university professor who offers tutoring and may report the student’s problems to the university authorities if necessary.
- Students with disabilities are offered a monthly allowance which depends on the kind of disability.
- Disabled university students are provided with advisory services and psychological support by the staff of the University Counselling Centres.

4.4.4 Examples of good practices

Certain Departments have established accessibility units for students with disabilities. For instance, the National and Kapodestrian University of Athens has established the “Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities” – ACCESS (http://access.uoa.gr) in order to facilitate equal access for disabled students to academic studies. Its mission is to actively realize coequal access to academic studies for students with different abilities and needs, through (a) environmental modifications, (b) Assistive Technologies and (c) access services. The Unit deals with matters of environmental and building adjustment and offers assistive technology and access services.

Similar services are offered to university disabled students by the “Disabled Students Accessibility Office” which has been established at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. This has been initiated by the Social Policy Committee, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki. It has developed different kind of activities for the support of all students among them for students with disabilities, including:

- Dedicated bus or taxi transport for students with physical disability
- Organization of seminars for students with visual impairment in order to help them use ICT
- The establishment of a ‘Volunteer Group’ to provide ‘buddying’ and support for students with disabilities.

The University of Macedonia operates an eLearning platform – CoMPUs - that aims to provide flexibility to academic staff supporting all students during their courses with online exercises, power point presentations and information. The platform includes modules to support usability, for example high resolution graphics; text magnification and audio.

The University library provides full support to students with visual impairment, with a focus on two elements: firstly, the digitisation of books and conversion into audio-books and, secondly, the provision of a dedicated technical unit on the library premises that can be used by students with visual disabilities. This includes hardware with braille keyboards and high magnification text scanners.
4.5 Poland

4.5.1 Policy and legal background

Poland has signed the United Nations Convention but not the Optional Protocol. The two key legal and policy instruments governing disability are:

- The Charter of Rights for Persons with Disabilities (1997). This endorses the right of people with disabilities to an independent, active life, free from discrimination. However, since this is a resolution, it is not legally binding, although legislation cannot contradict the terms of the Charter. It also imposes an obligation on the Polish Government to provide information concerning implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities.
- The Act on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (1997) This act regulates the social and vocational rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities in Poland as well as disability assessment procedures.

The main legislative framework for the school education system is the Education System Act, (1991) which sets out the rights of students who have been evaluated as needing special education, in particular their right to education provision for a longer period than ‘normal’ (up to the age of 24 for secondary education). The main legislative framework for the higher education system is the Law on Higher Education (2011). The amendment law of 2011 made significant changes in the responsibility of higher education institutions for guaranteeing full participation and access to students with disabilities.

The biggest changes were:

- Article 13 imposes the obligation of creating the conditions for full participation in educational process as well as in the research for all students with disabilities.
- Article 162 imposes the duty to respect the educational needs of persons with disabilities in regulating the educational process.
- Article 94 changes the purpose of government subsidy for persons with disabilities. Before it was meant to support the educational needs and medical rehabilitation, since 2011 it is to be used only for creating conditions for full participation in educational process. Medical rehabilitation has been withdrawn from the higher education responsibility. Since 2011 the government subsidy will go also for non-public higher education institutions.

Higher education is free of charge in public sector institutions but in full-time day courses only and a tuition fee is charged for part-time degree programmes.

4.5.2 Profile and needs of students with disabilities

There are approximately 4.5 million of people with a legal status of disability in Poland (11.7% of the general population). However, using figures from the National Census, it is estimated that the real total (including un-registered) is closer to 5.5 million (14.3% of the population) of which 47.1% are male and 52.9% female. Of these, 5.3% were aged under 20; 57.1% aged 20-64; 37.6% aged 65 and over. Research by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) in 2004 suggests that the largest proportions of people with disabilities are those with motor impairment (almost 50%); circulatory system impairment (just under 50%); visual impairment (around a third); neurological disorders (just under a third); hearing impairment (14%); mental health disorders (8%).
In line with other countries, data show that disabled people experience far higher rates of unemployment. In 2007 the employment rate of disabled people was 19.4% compared to 57% for the general population of working age, with female disabled suffering greater disadvantage. Data on educational statistics indicate that people with disabilities have significantly lower levels of education than others, with almost 70% of people with disabilities aged 15 and over with an education below secondary level (compared to 49.5% for people without disabilities) and only 5.7% with a university education (compared to 15.7% for people without disabilities. The publicly available CSO statistics lack in-depth information on students with disabilities in higher education institutions and the data concerns mostly the number of students. The number of students with disabilities in higher education has been increasing year on year, from 9,247 in 2004-2005 to 25,265 in 2008-2000.

Another feature of the situation in Poland, in line with other EU countries, is the low level of specialist teaching skills, and training, in education for people with disabilities. Current legislation defining standards for teachers training includes minimal knowledge of disability issues and there is no legal provision to deliver training leading to a qualification to teach students with special educational needs.

4.5.3 Support provided to disabled students in HEIs

Although, the Polish Constitution (1997) states that “public authorities shall ensure universal and equal access to education for citizens”, the implementation of these rights is not clearly defined. As with most other EU countries, the provisions of the two key legislative instruments - the Act on Promotion of Employment 2004, and the Law on Higher Education 2000 - left considerable opportunity open to HEIs to interpret how the law should be operated in practice. However, the 2011 amendment to this Law has now imposed new responsibilities on HEIs.

Financial support is geared to the welfare payments infrastructure, which is financed through compulsory social insurance payments by employees, self-employed people and employers, as well as through taxes. The system supports people whose income is lower than that specified in the social welfare regulations. However, the level of the income is very low, and welfare support itself is too small to offer the independence for daily existence for persons with disabilities. Municipalities also provide in-kind assistance, social work, special advisory services, care or nursing services in people’s homes, at care centres and in residential institutions, and the level of care depends on individual assessment. In practice this system is not efficient and does not offer necessary support for either persons with disabilities or their families. In particular the system of care and nursing does not work and daily support is mostly provided by family members. As a result, at least one person in the family with disabled person leaves their professional career in order to be able to offer necessary care for the person with disability.

Medical rehabilitation is financed by public resources. The health care system is financed mainly from the National Health Fund and the social welfare system mainly from the State budget and from the funds of local self-governing organisations. However, the evidence suggests that the system is very inefficient and is not practicable.

As institutions of higher education are autonomous, legislation does not precisely describe the content and scope of the support available to disabled students or university applicants. Students with disabilities have the right to apply for financial support on the same basis as other students,
using system of scholarships and allowances that cover: low-income scholarship, scholarship for achievements in learning and sport, social and food allowance, housing allowance. Student credits and loans are financed from the financial resources of commercial banks, with the costs of interest partly covered from the State budget. Additionally, they are entitled to a special disability scholarship. This is not means-tested but requires a disability certificate. In 2008, 96% (24296) students with disabilities received some kind of scholarship. Beyond this, HEIs are free to decide on their own level and type of support, which means that the scope and quality of the support varies between institution. ‘Block’ funds assigned by the Minister of Science and Higher Education are then distributed by the Rector and the student self-government boards according to internal rules.

In addition to these provisions, targeted programmes are delivered by the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons. The main programmes for disabled students are:

- **Student II** – this targets learners with a significant or moderate level of disability, who are university students, post-graduate students, PhD students, attendants of college for social workers, college for teachers or teachers of foreign languages, students of foreign higher education providers, students undergoing an internship abroad within European Union programmes, persons who have started their PhD proceedings but who are not the PhD students. It provides: tuition fees, board (when the place of study is different from the place of living), travelling, access to Internet (installation and a subscription fee), participation in rehabilitation activity workshops or receiving psychological therapy, procurement of goods and objects facilitating the study, excursions organized within school curriculum.

- **Pythagoras 2007** - this aims to provide deaf students, students with hearing impairments, including students with visual and hearing impairments, and participants of exam preparation courses for higher education schools, with sign language translators or hearing aid equipment.

### 4.5.4 Good Practices

Warsaw University provides an instructive example of integrating support within a centralising organisational infrastructure.

**Warsaw University: Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD)**

The OPD is the centralizing agency set up to implement the provisions of the Act on Higher Education. It provides: on-going assistance for students and university applicants who have disabilities or chronic illnesses; support for university staff who teach students with disabilities; mobility adaptation of University premises; transportation provision; ICT solutions; digital library. The key support provisions are:

**Computer Centre**: work-desks with personal computers, speech synthesizers, scanning device. Specially adapted keyboards: trackball devices, Magic Wand Keyboard, ‘HeadMouse’ sensor replacing the standard desktop computer mouse for people who cannot use their hands. Text magnification software - ZoomText Magnifier or SuperNova Magnifier - enlarges pre-selected part of the screen.
Digital Library - books and other texts are recorded or scanned and made available mainly by internet. The recording work is all done by volunteers. provides CD recordings, collections of computer text files, text recognition software, speech synthesizers, Braille printers.

Devices and support for visual and hearing impairments: Devices based on FM radio technology transmit sound waves from the lecturer’s microphone to receivers connected with the students’ hearing aids; portable transmitter-receiver sets; sign language interpretation.

Transport: two mini-buses adapted for wheelchair the transportation; transportation assistants to help disabled students move around the campus.

Built environment: 50 places in its halls of residence in rooms adapted to the needs of students with mobility disabilities. Mobility training: familiarisation with topography of the University premises and with the routes between accommodation and the University buildings.

Studying adjustments: free-of-charge photocopying of lecture notes made by other students; extension of allowable class absences without medical certificates; off-campus studies; end-of-term exam session extended; leave of absence; adjustments in examination procedures (e.g. use of Braille, personal computers with speech synthesizers or a reading assistant’s help; oral examinations).
5. Conclusions and implications for sinc@he

5.1 Summary of the situation in the EU

Drawing together the results of the analysis at the EU level and in the participating countries in sinc@he (UK, Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Poland), the key features of policy and practice to support students with disabilities in higher education institutions can be summarised as follows:

- At the trans-national level, and across virtually all Member States, there is a legislative framework in place which in principle supports the integration of students with disabilities within the higher education system. This has as its foundation the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, in particular Article 4 - promoting the training of professionals and staff; Article 5 – the right to reasonable accommodation; Article 8b – supporting awareness-raising and Article 24 – promoting an inclusive education system. EU instruments – particularly the treaty of Amsterdam (Article 13); the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Charter of the European Union on Fundamental Rights – have reinforced the UN Convention. Most member states have put into place legislation at national level which ratifies and formalises these UN and EU instruments.

- This has in turn been reinforced by policy initiatives at EU level – notably the EU Fundamental Rights Agency; the European Disability Action Plan 2003-2010 and the new EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 which emphasises equal access to quality education and lifelong learning as key factors in enabling full participation in society. An additional set of funding mechanisms associated with recent EU over-arching policies like EU2020 and E&T2020 – for example the ‘Framework 7’ research and development programmes, and the Lifelong Learning Programme – further provide opportunities for operationalizing legislation and policy.

- However, turning legislation and policy into practice has proved problematic, and support for disabled students varies significantly across the EU. This is because in most countries, unlike in the school sector, provision of support in the Higher Education sector is not obligatory, and is largely left to individual institutions to make their own interpretations on what is adequate provision.

- Most of the effort to support the needs of disabled students has been focused on providing support for students with disabilities whilst they are studying. This support has been concentrated in three main areas: Financial support – for example block grants to HEIs and ‘tailored’ support for individual students; Access and mobility – for example providing ramps; wheelchair access and transport – and Technical/Pedagogic support – for example providing photocopies; tape recordings; transcriptions; braille documents; e-exams; notetakers; signing facilities.
Less effort has been devoted to other key areas of need for students who are studying in HEI’s, in particular: raising awareness amongst student peers and teaching and support staff of the issues faced by disabled students and how to address them; providing training for staff in order to improve the level and quality of support; developing dedicated services for students with disabilities – for example Disability Officers and Student Counselling Services.

The areas that have remained particularly under-developed, and where the main gaps in support are highlighted, are in the ‘pre-study’ and ‘post-study’ phases of student life. Although some instances of good practices can be identified in some countries, a crucial area where more work is needed is in improving the opportunities for young people with disabilities to enter higher education in the first place. Whilst some countries – like Portugal; Greece; Hungary; Germany; Norway and the UK – are implementing ‘positive action’ initiatives, for example preferential enrolment schemes, the evidence suggests that significant numbers of young people with disabilities who could benefit from higher education but choose not to apply are not given enough support to do so.

Equally, the evidence suggests that students with disabilities are less likely to go on to postgraduate study, and are less likely to find a job on graduation, than students without disabilities. In this context, provision to support disabled students following graduation is significantly under-developed in the EU.

### 5.2 Provision and Gaps

Table 1 below provides a more analytical summary of the current state of the art in the EU as a whole and in the five countries participating in sinc@he in terms of three analytical dimensions:

- The policy context – the extent to which UNCRDP principles are endorsed; the extent to which EU policy actions are incorporated and the level and comprehensiveness of national policies to support disabled students in HEI’s
- The level of implementation of these key policy instruments and their objectives, in relation to pre-study; financial; accessibility; accommodation; use of ICTs and assistive technology; use of adapted content; organisational and governance support; awareness-raising and training; post-qualification support
- Outcomes and impacts – the level and quality of available profiling and evaluation data on disabled students; their needs, and the effects of policy and practice

Each aspect is assessed, on the basis of the evidence, on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not covered or very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Summary of provision and gaps in EU, UK, SI, IT, GR, PL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>IT</th>
<th>GR</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Endorsement of UNCRDP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endorsement of EU Disability Action Plan and Disability Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of national policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>IT</th>
<th>GR</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-study (improving access)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility (built environment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of ICTs and assistive technologies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted content (e.g. digital libraries)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational support and governance (e.g. dedicated support staff)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness-raising and training for staff and students</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-qualification support measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes and Impacts</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>IT</th>
<th>GR</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level and quality of data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level and quality of monitoring and evaluation of impacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With reference to Table 1, it is possible to highlight both the areas in policy and practice that are relatively well-developed – and which can provide transferable ‘learning’ to support more effective development of policy, strategy and practice in the provision of support for disabled students in HEIs in Montenegro, and, conversely, the areas that remain relatively under-developed, and which thus require more focussed attention.

**Policy**

In terms of policy, the Table shows that, on the whole, the provisions of the UNCRDP have been, in principle ratified and endorsed. However, there is much less evidence that key EU policy instruments on disability and education are being addressed. This suggests that we need to consider more closely the provisions of the EU Disability Action Plan and Disability Strategy in developing procedures and tools to support Montenegrin HEI’s.

In turn, national policy aimed at promoting support for disabled students has been relatively well-developed in the UK, Greece and Italy, and these countries can provide useful benchmarks for the Montenegrin HEI’s.

**Implementation**

The least-developed areas here are in the phases of the study course that come before and after studying itself, i.e. the pre-study phase (focusing on helping disabled young people to apply for HEI places) and the post-qualification phase (focusing on preparing disabled graduates for the job
market). Work in these two areas remains poorly-developed across the EU, although Montenegrin HEI’s could learn from what has been done in the UK and Italy, and in some other EU countries like France.

Measures to provide financial support for disabled students have been relatively well-developed, with the exception of Slovenia, and there are a number of initiatives and programmes across the EU that could provide inputs to developing support systems for Montenegro.

Similarly, measures and practices for study support are relatively well-developed, though provision is variable between and within EU countries. Most countries and many HEIs are now routinely using ICTs to support study for disabled students, through digitisation of teaching material, on-line digital libraries and the use of assistive technologies.

Adaptations to the built environment and to accommodation facilities are two areas that are relatively well-developed across the EU, although again the level and quality of provision is uneven, and depends on a number of factors, including the length of time the HEI has been established; the interpretation of the UN and EU directives in national legislation; the spatial configuration of the HEI.

Conversely, awareness-raising and staff and student training in providing support for students with disabilities rates relatively poorly, as shown by Table 1. These aspects of support would therefore need particular work in relation to developing procedures and practices in Montenegrin HEIs.

Outcomes and Impacts

With the exception of a small number of initiatives operating at the trans-national level – for example the ANED (Academic Network of European Disability Experts) – and ad hoc research operating at the national level (for example the UK HEFCE survey of universities) there is very little systematic data collected at transversal or national levels on the profiles and needs of disabled students – particularly ‘prospective’ students – and even less on the effects of the implementation of policy and practices aimed at supporting them. This is an important area that would need to be considered with regard to promoting improvements in Montenegrin HEIs.

In summary, the specific gaps that sinc@he needs to focus on in developing effective procedures, systems and tools to support disabled students in Montenegrin HEIs should focus on:

- Developing systems and tools to help HEIs design and implement integrated ‘action plans’ for the equality of disabled students describing aims followed, means invested and improvements expected
- Developing systems and tools to help HEIs support young people in transitions from school to university and from university into work
- Improving indicators and statistical data to support effective planning and monitoring of disability policy and practice in HEIs
- Improving initial training and continuing professional development for professionals involved in HEI’s to provide them with appropriate methodological tools and support.
- Increasing the active involvement of young disabled people, their parents and representative groups in educational policy making and in the governance systems of HEIs
- Developing more and better awareness campaigns to disseminate good practice towards developing inclusive education in Universities
5.3 Transferable learning and good practices

Drawing on the review of policy and practices to support disabled students in HEIs, Table 2 provides a set of good practice examples that could be used to inform the development of sinc@he protocols and tools.

Table 2: Examples of transferable good practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Good Practice Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| EU Policy                     | EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020
EU2020 - ‘Youth on the move’, and the ‘Digital Agenda for Europe’
E&T2020 – validation of informal learning                                                                 |
| National policies             | Disability Equality Duty (DED) (UK)
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (UK)
Delegate for Disabilities (IT)                                                                 |
| Implementation                |                                                                                                                                                    |
| Pre-study (improving access)  | Admissions Quota (Portugal, Germany, Greece)
Reduced entry level requirements (Hungary)
Access courses (UK)
Scottish Wider Access programme (UK)
Good practices in Social Dimension implementation in Higher Education (Belgium)
Climbing ropes for success (France)
HEFCE ‘Widening Participation’ initiatives (UK)
Campuses without limits (Spain)
DARE (Ireland)                                                               |
| Financial support             | Fund for learning support (Ireland)
Statens lanekasse (Norway)
Reduced tuition fees (Germany, Iceland, Spain)
Disability Living Allowance (UK)
Disabled Students Allowance (UK)
Grants for signing (Austria, Spain)
Social criteria-based grants (France)                                                                 |
| Accessibility (built environment) | Universell (Norway)
DisabledGo (UK)
National and Kapodestrian University of Athens - Accessibility Unit for Students with Disabilities (GR)
the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - Disabled Students Accessibility Office (GR) |
| Accommodation                 | National French Student Support Agency (France)                                                                                                       |
| Use of ICTs and assistive technologies | ALIC (UK)                                                                                                                                               |
### Support and Inclusion of students with disabilities at higher education institutions in Montenegro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adapted content (e.g. digital libraries)</th>
<th>University of Macedonia– CoMPUs platform (GR) University of Warsaw – Digital Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational support and governance (e.g. dedicated support staff)</td>
<td>Disability Equality Scheme (UK) Disability officers (Greece, Spain) New Strategic Innovation Fund (Ireland) Studentenwerke (Germany) SPACE (UK) Disability and Well-Being Support Advisors (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness-raising and training for staff and students</td>
<td>Disability Advisers Working Network (Ireland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-qualification support measures</td>
<td>University National Conference of Delegates for Disability (IT) University of Macerata - CETRIL: centre for internship and job orientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outcomes and Impacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitoring and evaluation of impacts</th>
<th>WISE (IT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
ANNEX 1: Approach and Methodology

I.1 Overview

The review of policy and practice in the EU and in the selected member states (UK, IT, GR, SI, PL) entailed two main tasks:

- Firstly, identification, collection, collation and analysis of material on the inclusion of disabled students in HEIs
- Secondly, working visits by partners to participating institutions, to both contribute to the collection of material on policies and practices, and to collaboratively review the material collected and analysed.

Three data collection and analysis methods were used to implement these tasks:

- Realist Review
- Learning Dialogues
- Triangulation

These are discussed in detail below.

I.2 Realist Review

Policy and practice reviews in fields characterised by complex social issues typically come up against three main problems - the potentially vast body of evidence that needs to be collected and assessed; the variability of the evidence base in terms of relevance and quality; the problem of 'attribution' – establishing 'what works' in environments that are highly contextualised. Applying traditional systematic reviews in this type of field – using for example the 'Jadad scale' \(^{13}\) to measure robustness of data – hardly ever produces good results, because of the fact that social interventions are too complex, too contextualised, too embedded in open systems, and too prone to change. The realist review, developed by Ray Pawson \(^{14}\), is a way of addressing these problems. Realist review allows researchers and policy-makers to take context into consideration when making decisions and sharing knowledge. The process looks at how something is supposed to work, with the goal of finding out what strategies work for which people, in what circumstances, and how.

Pawson and other prominent writers in this field, such as Weiss \(^{15}\) focus on what has been termed the 'recursive discontinuous process' through which policy and policy interventions are made and carried out. The argument is that interventions involve a number of complex steps over time, rather than the implementation of a clear, and subsequently unchanging logic at the beginning. As Weiss observes, all interventions are subject to 'knowledge creep' – that is their vision, logic, objectives and purpose change over time as the policy or intervention develops. The realist review maps the direction and nature of travel along which a policy, approach or intervention proceeds, with a


particular focus on how ‘context’ influences that change, and how ‘intangibles’, like ideological positions and power relations, affect that journey. A key element of the realist review approach is a search for, and an assessment of, the ‘middle-range theories’ that underpin interventions. These lie somewhere between the ‘grand theories’ that seek to explain all social structures, interactions and behaviours within a unified theory, and the detailed minutiae of social relations that are too particular to be generalizable.16

Figure 1 shows how the approach works. As the Figure shows, the review starts with identification and clarification of the research purposes, focusing on the key question on the research needs to address. This clarification is normally supported by a conversation, between the research team and stakeholders who are aware of the ‘problem and who are looking for answers on to how to improve current approaches and practices. The main aim of this conversation is to pin down and further clarify the scope of the enquiry and to specify the key question for the review. Subsequent stages of the review entail an iterative process of:

- mapping the key ‘theoretical drivers’ that shape policy and practice
- searching the field for ‘evidence’, including ‘grey’ literature
- applying quality criteria to the material identified, based on relevance and rigour
- extracting data from the final shortlist of material to uncover evidence in support or contradiction of the theoretical drivers identified
- synthesising the results of the data extraction and analysis to re-assess the original ‘map’ of the field, and to produce conclusions and recommendations on ‘what works, for whom under what circumstances’

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Support and Inclusion of students with disabilities at higher education institutions in Montenegro

Figure 1: The Realist Review approach

- **Clarify Scope**
  Identify review questions and purpose: ‘What policies and practices are applied to support disabled students?’

- **Conversation**
  With key experts: ‘What are the key theories on inclusion of students with disabilities?’

- **Map key theories**
  Theoretical drivers for HEI inclusion policy and practice- why do they work?

- **Searching**
  Databases; citations; grey literature; snowballing

- **Quality Appraisal**
  Assess contribution to review question: relevance and rigour

- **Data Extraction**
  Extract data from different sources to support/deny theories and identify causal pathways

- **Synthesis**
  Integrate findings and derive recommendations: ‘What works, for whom under what circumstances’
As Pawson puts it, doing a realist review entails “feeling your way” through the available literature to find out how to do something that may involve many different ways, depending on the complex and changing social systems that surround a particular question. It is essential, therefore, that the research starts with a systematic and robust scoping exercise that specifies the parameters and boundaries of the research, and that subsequent mapping and data analysis procedures follow rigorous procedures that ensure that the material used shows a consistent ‘goodness of fit’ with the research questions. This supports the main goal of the realist review, which is to provide policy makers with a roadmap, alerting decision makers to the problems they might confront along the way, and some of the safest measures to deal with these issues. This helps decision makers understand what is happening around them and develop long-term strategies and ways of thinking that incorporate not only research results, but also different kinds of influences, ideologies and values.

The use of the realist review approach as an overall methodological framework brings into play two supplementary methods that were used to add further analytical and explanatory power to the study. These are:

- theory of change
- logic model analysis

**Theory of change** seeks to identify both the explicit and implicit paradigm of change that underlie policies and interventions and their impacts assessment (Weiss, 1995; Sullivan and Stewart, 2006). It can be defined as a systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and context of a policy or an intervention. It involves the specification of an explicit theory of how and why a policy or intervention might cause or have caused an effect. Since unpacking the underlying ‘candidate theories’ that shape policy, programmes and interventions is crucial to carrying out realist reviews, it is essential that we have a robust method to do this. The focus here is on understanding how key actors construct the objectives, expected outcomes and impacts of policies and practices aimed at supporting the inclusion of disabled students in HEI’s; how these are then expressed, implicitly or explicitly, as ‘causal pathways’ that are embedded in the ‘vision’ of an intervention; how these in turn are linked to the selection and implementation of assessment methods, and whether these methods are appropriate, relevant and effective.

**Logic model analysis** provides a way of linking the theory of change to the ‘intervention logic’ of a policy or an intervention. Figure 2 illustrates how this works. The Figure shows two main things:

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firstly, the ‘intervention logic’ of a policy, programme, intervention or project (represented by the top horizontal dotted line). This shows how a policy, programme or intervention has an implicit ‘logic’ or theory of change that reflects a strategy for dealing with identified problems, needs and issues. This theory of change is then converted into a set of objectives intended to promote this change and provide solutions to the problems and needs identified. The objectives are converted into ‘inputs’ (for example programme or intervention activities) and these in turn generate outputs (for example training), then outcomes (immediate short term results like increased skills) and finally impacts (longer term results like reduction in social exclusion). In parallel to the intervention logic is an evaluation process (represented by the second horizontal dotted line) that monitors the actual progress and results of the programme or intervention in relation to its expected objectives, inputs and results. Using logic model analysis in conjunction with theory of change analysis enables us to assess the ‘goodness of fit’ between the underlying ‘theory’ of a policy or intervention; how this ‘intervention logic’ is put into practice, and whether and how it works. This provides us with an additional method of data extraction for Step 5 of the realist review approach – gathering evidence to confirm/deny the candidate theories we are testing.  

Figure 2: Logic model analysis

Annex I provides the procedures and templates to carry out the Realist Review.

I.3 Learning Dialogues

The Working Visits had three main purposes:

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to exchange knowledge between participating partners on policies and practices being applied at EU level, national level and within particular HEIs, thus contributing to the data collection and analysis effort

- to collaboratively review the results of the WP1 activities carried out (i.e. analysis and reporting on policies and practices, and benchmarking of policies and practices)

- to facilitate a common understanding between partners of what needs to be done in the next steps of the project – in particular how to effectively implement WP2 and WP3.

The methodology for the Working Visits involves ‘Learning Dialogues’. These have a ‘participatory’ orientation and focus on collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and the participation of users, in order to promote ‘change through learning’. Essentially, the purpose of the Dialogues is to promote ‘sensemaking’ between the different stakeholders in this complex field, each of which has a distinctive position, perspective, ‘voice’ and power position. The development of the approach draws on existing state of the art in theory, research and practice in collaborative learning, group learning; communities of practice and ‘action learning (Mase, Sumi & Nishimoto, 1998; Argyris and Schon).

The Learning Dialogue provides a platform to enable sense-making to be implemented in practice. It incorporates an ‘Action Learning’ model to promote dialogue. Action Learning is defined as ‘an approach... which takes the task as the vehicle for learning. It is based on the premise that there is no learning without action and no sober and deliberate action without learning.’ (Pedler, 1997). Action Learning Sets essentially involve ‘role playing’ – that is getting different stakeholders to ‘step into each others shoes’. In the Learning Dialogues, participants reflect on assumptions and beliefs that shape practice in thinking about how e-inclusion policy and practice has evolved and where it is going. Critical reflection can be powerful because attention is directed to the root of the problem and transforms perspectives. People recognise that their perceptions may be flawed because they are filtered through views, beliefs, attitudes and feelings inherited from family, school, professional training and society. Critical thinking brings real issues to the fore and subjects them to scrutiny – allowing participants to call into question the rationale underlying their actions and to examine problems from multiple perspectives.

Annex II provides the procedures and templates to carry out the Learning Dialogues.

I.4 Triangulation

Triangulation allows for the synthesis of evidence of different types and from different sources, drawn from different kinds of research activities, in order to arrive at conclusions in situations where attributing causality is difficult. (Figure 3). In particular, a key aim of triangulation is to capture and reflect the ‘voice’ of different stakeholders in order to identify and understand their different positions and perspectives. Triangulation is essential in a realist review approach for the following reasons. First, it allows for the capture of complex contextual data. Second, it avoids relying on ‘expert’ knowledge and evidence (for example that derived solely from peer-reviewed journals) and third, it provides a means to consider ideologies, values and power relations between different actors. Triangulation supports generalisability and transferability of findings in a situation like this.

domain, where, as noted above, the evidence base is uneven and lacks ‘robustness’. This is because it increases the ‘robustness’ and transferability of findings through cross-checking of data derived from different sources and from different actors thus helping to boost the internal validity of the research.26

Figure 3: Triangulation

It can be seen as the penultimate stage of the ‘realist review cycle’, depicted in Figure 1 above. In line with the principles of realistic review, the analysis will identify the key success and failure factors, key variables and enabling conditions that govern ‘what works, for whom, under what conditions’ with regard to support for the inclusion of students with disabilities in HEI’s.

I.5 Procedures and templates for Realist Review.

1. Overview

The realist review entails the following steps:

- Step 1: The conversation
- Step 2: Searching
- Step 3: Quality and relevance appraisal
- Step 4: Content Analysis
- Step 5: Theory of Change and Logic model analysis
- Step 6: Summary Report

2. The Conversation

The review starts with identification and clarification of the research purposes, focusing on the key question on the research needs to address. This will be done via a conversation, between the research team and key stakeholders. The main aim of this conversation is to pin down and further clarify the scope of the enquiry and to specify the key question for the review. The conversation will be done as follows:

- As part of the 1st Working Visit involving Arcola, UOM and the Montenegrin partners, Arcola will co-ordinate an exploratory Discussion group. This will: clarify the key research questions for WP1; identify the underlying ‘theories’ driving policy and practice in the field; review the proposed methodology.
- The results of this initial conversation will be further discussed in the subsequent partners Meeting.

3. Searching

The second sub-activity involves mapping and collating information on sources of material to be used in the review – i.e. a Data Audit. The data audit will identify relevant source material for mapping of policy and practice. By ‘material’ we mean resources of relevance to the project research questions. This will include ‘content’ (mainly textual material drawn from the ‘formal’ knowledge base, e.g. books, journal articles, but also ‘grey’ literature like conference papers and websites) as well as information on ‘activities’ (programmes, interventions, projects).

The search strategy will involve the following:

Collation of available material. This will draw on the literature reviews completed through relevant studies (e.g. Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED)).

Additional searches of bibliographic databases.

The search will cover: i) searches of bibliographic sources and databases, covering books, publications and journals in the field ii) Studies and research reports iii) Conferences and conferences iv) trans-European databases (e.g. the FP7 database of funded projects; the Lifelong Learning Programme database of projects; database of projects funded under the EQUAL
programme; initiatives contained in the e-practice portal; v) additional sources searched through search engines

4. Quality and relevance appraisal

This sub-activity applies a quality appraisal exercise to ensure that the most appropriate and relevant material is included in the mapping exercise. This involves checking the material for relevance and rigour from a ‘fitness for purpose’ perspective. Fitness for purpose is defined as: i) status regarding inclusion and exclusion criteria - ii) relevance to the research questions iii) comprehensiveness of the material. The inclusion/exclusion criteria defines which kinds of material should be included and which should be excluded (e.g. which kinds of practices?); the geographical parameters of the review (e.g. a representative spread of countries rather than all countries in all EU regions).

The criteria will then be applied to screen the long list of material identified by the Data Audit, using two ‘screeners’ from the research team assessing each item against the relevance, inclusion and exclusion criteria defined above, to produce a short list of material. At this stage, the screening will involve ‘light touch’ screening, i.e. scanning abstracts, keywords against the criteria.

The checklist below provides a simple way of carrying out the appraisal. It consists of six assessment criteria. Apply the checklist to each item identified, ticking each of the boxes that meets the relevant criteria. Then add up the number of ticked boxes and write the total in the ‘score’ box at the bottom of the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Tick box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domain relevance</td>
<td>Does the item cover inclusion of people with disabilities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Group relevance</td>
<td>Does the item cover students in higher education?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical relevance</td>
<td>Does the item cover countries in the EU, European Economic Area or Candidate Countries?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>Is the item relatively recent (i.e. produced after January 2000)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Is the item sufficiently well-written and intelligible enough to summarise?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensiveness</td>
<td>Is the material extensive enough in breadth and depth to allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCORE**

The higher the checklist score, the stronger the case for selecting a particular item for subsequent analysis.

The final stage will compile a database of the shortlisted material. The list will include a basic ‘profile’ of each example, covering, inter alia:

- item type (e.g. policy; programme; project; practice)
- source and date of item (e.g. book; journal; website)
5. Content Analysis

The Mapping exercise will develop and apply a content analysis procedure to classify and document the residual database of items collected following the Quality Appraisal. The procedure will be based on the ‘realist review’ approach outlined above. Technically, this approach follows established content analysis procedures (Stemler, 2001) using “a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding” 27. These explicit rules of coding entail constructing a coding frame that enables each item in the database to be systematically analysed using common constructs (Thorndike, 1971; Nuendorf, 2002).

There are two ways in practice of carrying out this content analysis: either by manual ‘inspection, or by using software, like NVivo’. It is proposed to use the first method for this review – manual inspection. This entails scanning each item of material manually, using a classification framework and coding constructs to map the occurrence of particular items, and the relationships between them. This classification frame and set of constructs are then modified and added to as the analysis develops. An initial coding frame is shown below. The coding frame is divided into two sections.

Section 1 provides details on the item (name; type of material; source; brief summary of the content).

The template below provides a framework for analyzing the item. Each item should be analysed across three dimensions:

- A Thematic dimension (column 1), reflecting the key themes and research questions of the project
- Each theme is broken down into a number of ‘constructs’ that should be searched for within each item being analysed (column 2)
- Codes and Examples or descriptors of how each construct is treated (described) in the material being analysed should be entered into Column 3. This could include direct quotations from the text/material to help illustrate the study research questions

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27 Stemler, S (2001) An introduction to content analysis
Coding frame for analysis of policies and practices for disabled students in higher education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Template compiled by:</th>
<th>Item Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item Type (policy; programme; project; practice)</td>
<td>Source (Where information obtained (e.g. book; website url)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary (give a brief description of the content of the item)

Content Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Code/Descriptor/Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy domain</td>
<td>Education policy areas</td>
<td>Inclusion policy areas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disability policy areas</td>
<td>Other (e.g. youth policy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolution</td>
<td>Date originated</td>
<td>Original key focus and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes to key focus and objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeting strategy</td>
<td>Groups targeted</td>
<td>Legal basis of strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conceptual/theoretical model underlying inclusion approach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation strategy</td>
<td>Support principles for inclusion</td>
<td>Accessibility measures: transport</td>
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<td>Accessibility measures: built environment</td>
<td>Accessibility measures: ICT</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accessibility measures: fundamental rights</td>
<td>Accessibility standards applied</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representation of disabled students in HEI governance</td>
<td>Pre-entry Support services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study Support</td>
<td>Post-study support services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes and Impacts</td>
<td>Evaluation approach and measures</td>
<td>Outcomes identified for disabled students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Longer term impacts Outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Good practices and learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovative aspects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good practices identified</td>
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<tr>
<td>What learning can be transferred to SINC@HE</td>
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Other

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<th>Other</th>
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6. Theory of change and intervention logic analysis

Theory of change analysis, as noted above, can be defined as a systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and context of a policy or intervention. It involves the specification of an explicit theory of how and why a policy or intervention might cause or have caused an effect. Intervention logic analysis is intended to isolate the underlying ‘logic’ of a policy or an intervention and then looks for causal pathways that link its objectives to impacts. In this review, we will combine theory of change and intervention logic modelling to explore how the conceptual and explanatory features of policies and interventions can be more explicitly linked to actual practices (i.e. the delivery of inclusion services for disabled students) and then associated with particular outcomes and impacts. The approach firstly uses content analysis of relevant documents to develop a theory of change for a specific policy/intervention (by unpacking the ‘intervention logic’ and how this relates to the underlying conceptual approach) and then constructs a ‘logic model’ to identify how the overall ‘intervention logic’ is applied; how this relates to objectives and results; the method and evidence chosen to assess results and ‘goodness of fit’ between the intervention logic and the assessment methods chosen. The approach is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Establishing ‘causal chains’ through theory of change and logic model analysis

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As Figure 2 shows, we begin with the ‘raw material’ – the policies and practices compiled through the data audit - which contains both explicit and implicit theories about how support measures can facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities. A set of indicative examples that reflect the range of items collected is then chosen. Each selected item is then scanned to identify i) the theoretical model that gives the policy or practice its main focus ii) the expected changes associated with applying this theory. Intervention logic analysis then further unpacks the theory of change, looking for the implementation mechanisms (objectives; actions; expected results; assessment choices) that operationalize the intervention logic.

The intervention logic model, as shown in the illustration below, typically contains the following components in a linear sequence that represent the logical flow from:

1. inputs (resources) to
2. activities, programs or processes, to
3. the immediate outputs of the activities that are delivered, to
4. outcomes or results that are the long-term consequences of delivering outputs, and which denote some change in behaviour.

In addition, logframes will contain:

- the indicators used to assess results
- the means of verification (MoV) that provide the data to apply the indicators
- ‘assumptions’ - defined as ‘external factors beyond the control of policies, programmes, projects and programme and project managers which may influence positively or negatively their goals and outcomes’. 32 Another way of defining assumptions is ‘the external conditions that need to be fulfilled if the logic of the logical model components are to hold true’.

32 see, for example, The Logical Framework Approach, Handbook for objectives-oriented planning, Fourth edition, NORAD, 1999
For this review, we used an analysis framework that combines theory of change with a simplified intervention logic model, as shown in the Table below.

**Theory of change – intervention logic coding framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of policy/practice</th>
<th>Theories of change</th>
<th>Expected changes</th>
<th>Objectives/Goals</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes/Impacts</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
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I.7: Procedures and templates to carry out the Learning Dialogues

Overview

The method used for the Learning Dialogues is the ‘Action Learning Set’. An ALS is a means of getting stakeholders who are involved in an organization, a partnership, an initiative – or any environment in which communication, collaboration and learning are considered to be important – to work together and share ideas, experiences and perspectives. They provide a ‘safe space’ for review, reflection and learning. They are particularly focused on applying learning to support change, and in supporting learning and change through ‘action’.

The distinctive features of Action Learning Sets are:

- They emphasise the importance of looking at a problem or issue from the different points of view of different stakeholders, and treating each different stakeholder ‘voice’ equally
- They typically involve ‘role-playing’ and ‘role swapping’ in order to reflect the different stakeholder voices
- They aim to promote ‘sensemaking’ – aligning, as far as possible, the different stakeholder perspectives in order to arrive at an agreement on ways forward
- They look at things from a ‘whole systems’ viewpoint – for example how change in one part of an organization or partnership affects another part

How they work

Action Learning Sets involve ‘small group work’ with groups representing key actors and stakeholders. Group work is co-ordinated by a facilitator in order to generate practical learning by reflecting on experiences in a structured way. There are typically three small groups, each taking on a stakeholder ‘role’ and ‘voice’ to explore the particular topic/theme selected for the Learning Dialogue. For example the three groups could represent:

- policy-makers – those responsible for designing and operationalising policies to support the inclusion of disabled students
- programme managers – those responsible for implementing policies
- beneficiaries – those who are expected to benefit from the implementation (i.e. disabled students)

Each group needs to elect a representative (an ‘assessor’) whose role is to visit the other groups in order to provide their group perspective on the task each group has been allocated. The aim of this ‘assessor’ role is to ensure that the views and positions of the different stakeholders are represented in the work that the groups do. The tasks are set according to the particular focus of the Learning Dialogue, and its themes. These are set out in the Table below.

The final session of the ALSI is a plenary session where the group as a whole discusses the outcomes of the Action Learning Set and, through critical review and discussion, produces an integrated ‘Green Paper’. It is facilitated by the Learning Set Director. It involves the following activities:

- The groups come back together as a whole.
• The Director facilitates an open discussion about what has been found, and what has been learned
• The group as a whole comes to a common position on what should be presented in terms of the agreed outcomes of the Learning Dialogue.

I.8: Triangulation: Summary Template for Policies and Practices

Triangulation involves integrating the data derived from the desk research together with the Learning Dialogues to produce an overview of the landscape of support for disabled students in HEI’s at the national level. To support EU and cross-national comparison, the template below provides a tool to summarise the situation for each of the countries covered in the review, by integrating the results of the content analysis and the Learning Dialogues.

Summary Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy and legal background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of Article 9 of the United Nations Convention (transport, built environments and ICTs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of EU Disability Action Plan 2003-2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Education and Training policies (ET2020) with regard to disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU 2020 policies with regard to disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of national policies on disabled students in HEI’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to policies and legislation in last decade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Drivers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there particular theories/models on social inclusion/education that are influencing policy and practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other factors are influencing policy and practice? (e.g. employment situation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Targeting
Is there a specific targeting strategy adopted? (e.g. all disabled people; split into types of disability)

### Implementation
What kinds of support measures are implemented in HEI’s for disabled students?

Which specific areas do they cover? (e.g. accessibility; built environment; rights; governance)

Are there support measures to help disabled students apply for higher education?

Are there support measures to help disabled students when they have completed their studies?

### Outcomes and Impacts
Have studies/evaluations been carried out to assess the outcomes and impacts of support for disabled students?

What outcomes and impacts have been identified?

### Good practices and learning
Can examples of innovation be identified?

What good practices can be identified?