



ACCESS

Needs Analysis & Knowledge Sharing

D.1.4 Collection of Best Practice Guide for Disability Management Services in HEIs

September 2022

Prepared by University of Macedonia



Consortium



Project coordinator



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

ACCESS is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme, under contract number 610273-EPP-1-2019-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP. The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. State of the Art.....	4
3. Good practice criteria.....	5
4. Best Practices per country.....	6
4.1 Cuba.....	6
4.2 Dominican Republic.....	9
4.3 Costa Rica.....	10
5. Discussion.....	12
Literature	14
ANNEXES	15
ANNEX I COUNTRY: CUBA	15
ANNEX II COUNTRY: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	17
ANNEX III COUNTRY: COSTA RICA	20

1. Introduction

The focus of this deliverable was to select, attune, modify and adapt good practices in the field of disability from EU context to partner countries' environment. As a means to achieve the most impact, the document will follow a very practical approach so that it can contribute directly to the daily activities, behaviors and processes of the academic and administrative staff as well as disability services' users and other members of the HEI community. The Consortium has cyclically updated and reviewed the content of the guide to incorporate the last advancements on the field.

The ACCESS Best Practice guide has been assumed as an essential commitment towards real inclusion, under a collaborative work model, not only with the rest of participating countries, but also with the work teams in each institution, involving all areas providing services to the student body, to create awareness of the social model for disabilities. Therefore, under these guidelines some Good Practices are proposed.

These actions aim to remove barriers, eliminate all forms of discrimination, and promote universal accessibility; principles that most certainly are part of the equality of opportunities vision the institution is constantly pursuing. As established in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we will look to “facilitate personalized and effective support measures in environments that promote a high social and academic development, in conformity with the full inclusion objective” (art. 24, p. 29). The road to equality and the active participation of the population with disability is a shared responsibility for the society, thus the articulated efforts through these strategies are crucial and must reach beyond the realm of thoughts. For this purpose, this document presents the good practices developed by Universities in Cuba, Costa Rica and Dominican Republic, as a pathway towards a horizon still stretching, since the journey is just beginning.

2. State of the Art

According to the United Nations (UN), around 15% of the world's population lives with a disability. What does this mean for the rest of the population? Surveying this reality implies an exhaustive review of the ways in which society dynamics are exclusive and discriminatory and are based on a standard reality that does not exist. A coherent and coordinated focus is essential, one that can draw all groups to a commitment and reaffirms all the rights and freedoms for all people. Once these necessities are recognized, action must follow by building and strengthening systemically, the Best Practices Guide, focused on a particular group, which represents the roadmap to new opportunities: education. This tool has been created as a guide for the services that support students with disability. It will allow to select, harmonize, modify, and adapt best practices in this field. It is important to deliver inclusive attention, that reaches every functional person, even every person looking for academical development, without distinction; therefore, the university must offer quality services and never obstruct growth opportunities.

Every year, students with highly visible disabilities such as visual and physical-motor disabilities enter the university, as well as others that are not so visible, such as hearing disabilities, which is why the first disclosure focuses on the help they should receive from the university community.

The academic staff of Higher Education is challenged to instruct and educate all students. To do this, they demand knowledge, skills and inclusive values that allow them to understand the developmental characteristics of students with disabilities, as a premise to promote quality learning for all.

The objectives of the support of students with disability is to conceive the preparation of the academic staff that interacts with students with disabilities by selecting the special psycho-pedagogical and didactic content to promote inclusive culture, policies and practices, with emphasis on diagnosis and curricular adaptations; sequence this content through forms of postgraduate organization and direct the special psychopedagogical and didactic preparation.

3. Good practice criteria

For the selection or suggestion of good practices the following criteria have been followed:

- **Effective and successful**

A good practice has proven its strategic relevance as the most effective way to achieve a specific objective; it has been successfully adopted and has had a positive impact on students with disability and academic and non-academic staff.

- **Gender equality**

A description of the practice should show how the actors: students, academic and administrative staff and / or other groups, involved in the process, were able to improve their performance at the university from a gender perspective, working together with women and men.

- **Disability equality**

A description of the practice should show how the actors, specifically students with disabilities, involved in the process of executing the good practice were able to improve their livelihoods and performance in the university environment.

- **Technically feasible**

Technical feasibility is the basis of good practice. The selected practice should be easy to replicate and scale-up in other settings. For this, a detailed description of all operational levels must be included in it.

- **Inherently participatory**

Participatory approaches are essential, as they support a joint sense of ownership of decisions and actions. The selected practice must demonstrate the participatory tools used for its design and / or execution.

- **Replicable and adaptable**

A good practice should have the potential for replication and should therefore be adaptable to similar objectives in varying situations.

- **Reducing of risks/ assumptions, if applicable**

A good practice contributes to risks and assumptions reduction for resilience in contexts of high uncertainty. Consequently, it must reflect or suggest possible

operational contingency alternatives depending on the context to which it is directed.

Each partner country has prepared an Annex of the suggested/proposed good practice and it is presented below.

4. Best Practices per country

4.1 Cuba

In recent years, Universities in Cuba have been increasingly aware of the needs of students with disabilities and try to adopt an inclusive culture, which promotes equality. Universities' actions show that they establish regulations to guarantee access of persons with disabilities in higher education. Also, they approve the policy for viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights, who can be active members of university society.

In Cuba, Universities have fostered an educational inclusion of students with disabilities, who face both attitudinal and methodological barriers during their education at the university. The university community knows that these barriers limit the permanence of students with disabilities at the University. For this, Universities are interested in the students' needs from the moment they enter the university and they have adopted practices to overcome any difficulties.

When students with disabilities enter the Higher Education Institution, regardless of whether there is an initial registration, based on cooperative relations with the previous educational level and the data is known in general, it is necessary to specify the developmental situation specific to each student. The official registration form of the University, only in one of its aspects alludes to the existence of a disability, an aspect that is insufficient to guarantee comprehensive care, accessibility and permanence of the student with disability in the institution.

Hence the need to make an initial record of needs and collect data on:

- Type of disability: physical, visual, hearing, speech and voice and other disabilities, as well as specific data within each of the types of disability.
- Needs for accessibility: access to the center, to common spaces and to services.
- Adaptation needs for access to the curriculum: planning, teaching methods and resources, and evaluation.
- On the necessary technical aids, mentioning some of the technical aids provided for each type of disability that are available at the University.

Knowing in advance the possible enrollment of students with disabilities, the enrollment process is supported with collaborators from the Support Center. Outreach activities and help for people with disabilities become a valuable experience in the inclusive practices of the educational system. The Universities focus on different activities towards the visibility of the professional development potential of new students with disabilities and the attitudes of the members of the university community.

The creation of the Support Center for an Inclusive University responds to the problem of supporting needs for accessibility of people with disabilities in the university process. In the design of actions for the socialization of the Support Center it is based on the criterion that a true educational process, to be considered inclusive, must involve everyone. An essential purpose of the Support Center is to develop an active participatory culture for all members of the university community: students (with and without disabilities), professors, support staff and directors, youth and student organizations, associations of people with disabilities and families.

Also, the academic staff of Higher Education is challenged to instruct and educate all students. Universities are interested in the preparation of academic staff that interacts with students with disabilities by selecting the special psycho-pedagogical and didactic content to promote inclusive culture, policies, and practices, with emphasis on diagnosis and curricular adaptations.

The implementation and dissemination of good practices create positive feelings in the university community. Post-graduate programs were designed to improve inclusive practices at the University, based on special psycho-pedagogical preparation. Students with disabilities show satisfaction with the adaptations made and the support they receive.

Dissemination becomes a driving force for search, participation and motivation, both for students and teachers, directors and support staff. From the various instances of the University, types of help are requested such as guidance, specific preparation about disability, exchange and enrichment workshops to join educational tasks that guarantee full accessibility for students with disabilities.

Moreover, the existence of the Support Center facilitates the permanence of students with disabilities at the University and provides solutions to their difficulties. The services provided by the Support Center were improved. A Rectoral Resolution on accessibility to the University for students with disabilities was approved, enriching the institutional legal framework. Specific collaboration agreements were signed with associations to involve them in the training process.

Evidence of the success to date, can be considered the approval of a Doctorate topic that is in progress "The university educational inclusion from the formation of the student with disability". The disclosure of the tasks and functions of the Support Center as a good practice, enhances the socialization of the ACCESS project, which enables the conscious involvement of all members of the University community. From the application of the inquiry instrument, information was obtained about the types of disability of the students, their needs for accessibility, adaptations of access to the curriculum and technical aids. In addition, appropriate technical advice to teachers was projected.

It is recommended to continue the implementation of good practices and their dissemination to students, the university community and society. The creation of brochures will give the possibility of socializing its content in the

networks of the university campus and making it extensive in face-to-face meetings at different levels: municipal university campuses, faculties, student groups, residence, among others. Likewise, a brochure is proposed, containing the main ideas of the Support Center and the Universities' practices, as an entity that promotes the accessibility of students entering the university.

4.2 Dominican Republic

Dominican Republic has recognized the need for change and evolution in order to achieve accessibility and equity for individuals with disability. In the following practices it is highlighted that all people have an equal right to fair and respectful treatment, independently of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, physical condition or preferences. The goal of this practice is to make a change in and out of the university. Internal and external practices are applied, in order to ensure an accepting and accessible environment in the university, but at the same time the creation of an external network with disability specialists and the community is the key to expand the microsystem of education into a macrosystem.

The effectiveness and the success of these good practices is starting already to show, as students with disabilities graduate using the services that are provided. One of the most important elements of these services is that they adapt to the unique needs of each student, according not only to their disability, but to their individual needs. Psychological factors, economic funds etc are examined in order to create a profile for each student. This practice shows endless opportunities of adaptation and replication in other universities as well.

Moreover, the universities' internal improvement process is promoting disability equality by selecting the appropriate psycho-pedagogical and didactic content to facilitate the adaptation of inclusive cultures, policies, practices and curricula. This practice also helps in the reduction of any risks, as the university faculty is able to support any unexpected incident and at the same time the students are educated in disability manners as awareness is raised.

Another crucial step is the collaboration with experts. Disability organizations are important in order to ensure that policies and practices have a participatory approach. Finally, the collaboration between universities and companies that expertise in technology is essential for achieving accessibility in our century.

4.3 Costa Rica

One suggested good practice is the Educational Support Committee, which is created to respond to periodic accompaniment and monitoring that the student with a disability may need. It is made up of the Student with disability, the Teachers who teach courses and the professional who assists the student with disability. In addition, the presence of the School's management is requested to support decision-making.

The committee makes periodic meetings on the educational support provided, on teaching advice on specific topics and on accessibility actions. It can be requested at any time during the school year by the student, any of their teachers or the professional in charge. This, of course, requires the investment of human resources and time to follow up on the actions.

The positioning of this practice allows for:

- Personalized accompaniment to all who is involved in the educational process of the person with disabilities.
- Teachers' feelings of getting advised in teaching practices.
- Students' feelings of accompaniment in their needs.
- Interdisciplinary approach to the students with disabilities and their educational needs.
- Assignment of tasks according to the corresponding sector.
- The improvement of articulation between programs and services for the fulfillment of the rights of this population.

In general, this practice seems to benefit the level of information that is handled by all parties about a student with a disability, presupposes teamwork to fulfill the rights of this population, promotes the active participation and

responsibility of each sector to achieve accessibility, as well as knowledge and consensus to provide what the person needs.

Another suggested Good practice is the creation of a Centre for Inclusion in the Institute, whose duties would be:

- Academic Planning
- Tutoring: Study techniques and Exam preparation
- Psychological support
- Apply non-significant and access curricular aids

There must be a certain plan for enrolment and follow up to provide the students and professors with the proper assistance. The goal is to determine the barriers that the students need to have eliminated so that they may have access to a full university experience. This process enables support for the student from the time of admission to the assistance center to the point where the university experience concludes.

This practice includes (if required) advising the faculty about each particular case and the follow up for the specific aids necessary for each semester. At the end of each period, a report is requested from professors to gather feedback regarding the experience and if needed evaluate new educational adjustments. Since the subject of the classes vary, this process must take place every semester. Therefore, the population receiving the assistance are students with disabilities and the respective faculty members.

To achieve the aforementioned goals, the Centre should support the students and assist the professors with two psychologists and one administrative assistant that coordinates sessions with each area. The requirement is to provide one session for every new enrollment and two follow up sessions on weeks five and nine.

This is considered a best practice since it enables the identifying of possible issues that may impact the student during the semester, in order to avoid frustration and possible desertion. The existence of a specialized center of assistance for educational institutions reinforces the commitment with those in the student body who have particular needs. Hence, social, and academic

development are augmented, and the educational strategies can be adjusted accordingly.

The implementation of such a strategy, though, requires one or several professionals that would listen to the needs of the population and would be committed to help them by coordinating with faculty staff, and providing them with the necessary tools to support students in the best way possible. Apart from that, it must be understood that several scenarios require a mediation between the institution and the student's relatives, allowing for the application of the strategies designed for the academic development. Furthermore, it is recommended that information be designed in the center of assistance and be distributed accordingly to create awareness in the educational community in terms of inclusiveness, disabilities, and accessibility. Moreover, the role of the student must be active. Even though other stakeholders may participate in the development of the capacities, the student must take part in the decision-making process regarding every possibility, since they must take ownership of their own learning process. When possible, they should adopt a role of a facilitator, and guide towards obtaining the information and reach for their own goals, incentivizing autonomy.

5. Discussion

The good practices as described above, are the result of criteria defined by the Access project, it is recognized as an affirmative action of valuable contributions for the target population.

- **Effective and successful:**

The practices have been accepted by students with disabilities, the academic and administrative staff, and the university community. Students with disabilities show their satisfaction for the support they have received. The university staff has been trained in disability issues and has adapted their course content to the particular needs of students. They are effective and successful practices, which have helped the access of students with disabilities to the University.

- Gender Equality:

At the Universities there is no discrimination between men and women. Regardless of gender, all students have the same rights and treatment by the academic and administrative staff. Also, the choice of the staff and their responsibilities are not affected by gender bias. They demand knowledge, skills and inclusive values to understand students with disabilities particularities of development, as a premise to promote quality learning without distinction.

- Disability equality:

It seems that all persons with all types of disabilities have the right to participate in social and educational life of the University community. The Universities embrace diversity and seek to create an inclusive culture by training its staff and providing support and curricular adaptations at their students.

- Inclusion:

The inclusion of students with disabilities is one of the priorities of social policy, which is becoming more equitable and participatory every day; while the Universities offer a response to the different challenges posed by society, which implies a constant improvement in its actions to guarantee access, contribute to their comprehensive training and influence their socio-labour inclusion upon graduation from this educational level.

- Technically viable:

Being technically feasible means that a practice is easy to learn and implement. The preparation of the academic staff that interacts with students with disabilities as well as the services of the Centers can be implemented at other Universities.

- Inherently participative:

The insufficiencies in the educational inclusion of students with disabilities have created the services that the Universities offer. The creation of the accessibility service was made considering the significant access difficulties faced by students with disabilities and the actual needs of them at the

University. Students are free to make decisions about their educational future and autonomous to use the assistance they need.

- Replicable and adaptable:

These practices are easy to be replicated and adapted by other universities. The research that has been done as well as the experience in promoting inclusive innovations can help other universities.

- Risk mitigation

These practices have taken into account the difficulties of students with disabilities and the risk of them to abandon the University. So, Universities have taken measures by adopting inclusive practices, training their staff and promoting quality learning without distinction.

Literature

<https://www.nice.org.uk/process/pmg15/chapter/writing-the-good-practice-guidance>

<https://helpjuice.com/blog/process-documentation>

<https://www.fao.org/3/as547e/as547e.pdf>

ANNEXES

ANNEX I COUNTRY: CUBA

Title of the practice	The educational inclusion of students with disabilities in the context of Higher Education.
Detailed information on the practice	<p>In Higher Education the problem arises: insufficiencies in the educational inclusion of students with disabilities.</p> <p>The academic staff of Higher Education is challenged to instruct and educate all students. To do this, they demand knowledge, skills and inclusive values that allow them to understand the developmental characteristics of students with disabilities, as a premise to promote quality learning for all.</p> <p>Objectives: to conceive the preparation of the academic staff that interacts with students with disabilities by selecting the special psycho-pedagogical and didactic content to promote inclusive culture, policies and practices, with emphasis on diagnosis and curricular adaptations; sequence this content through forms of postgraduate organization and direct the special psychopedagogical and didactic preparation. Actions: select from the Student Support Center the team of collaborators to direct the preparation; identify the basic nuclei of the content, which will guide the selection of the system of knowledge, skills and values, prioritizing the elements of the diagnosis and the curricular adaptations; direct forms of organization of preparation (courses and training); conduct research and introduce scientific results into inclusive practices. Beneficiaries: academic staff, with an impact on the learning of students with disabilities.</p>
Resources needed	Human resources: the academic and administrative staff of the support center for students with disabilities, who will direct the special psychopedagogical and didactic preparation of the university community to promote inclusive cultures, policies and practices in Cuban universities.
Evidence of success (results achieved)	Postgraduate programs will be designed to offer special psychopedagogical and didactic preparation. The services

	provided in the Support Center will be publicized and improved. Inclusive practices in Higher Education will be perfected, the legal framework for the access of students with disabilities to the University will be enriched, and collaboration links will be established with non-governmental associations to involve them in the training of these students.
Further information	http://edacunob.ult.edu.cu/ , http://opuntiabrava.ult.edu.cu/ https://www.eumed.net/rev/atlante/ https://www.ceceic.org.mx/2do-congreso-internacional-virtual-de-psicologia-educacion-especial-y-ciencias-de-la-salud/ https://www.facebook.com/Proyecto-Access-en-Las-Tunas-100247045960992/ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Yr2aBIYS-2dnfLRaEVCUDRjimk-y-Bf7/view?usp=sharing https://t.me/centroapoyo_UM
Contact details	Dirección: Avenida. 30 de Noviembre s/n. Las Tunas, Cuba. rectora@ult.edu.cu (53) 31349205 / (53) 3134 6343
Name	Dr. C. Blanca Nieves Rivas Almaguer. Profesora Titular
Email	blanca@ult.edu.cu

ANNEX II COUNTRY: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

<p>Title of the practice</p>	<p>Accessibility and inclusion awareness as a promoter of changes in the organizational culture.</p>
<p>Detailed information about the practice</p>	<p>Accessibility and inclusion were topics of interest, but had never been intentionally addressed as part of the plans, programs and projects formulated by the institution. As a result of our participation in the ACCESS project, concrete actions are integrated, with a strategic focus and for the purpose of transforming the organizational culture.</p> <p>A dissemination campaign was launched, and training workshops were held, as well as training meetings for administrative and academic staff and undergraduate students. Discussions were held along the following lines of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission, retention, and graduation of students with disabilities. • Inclusive teaching and learning methodologies. • Infrastructure and accessibility conditions • Teacher training and role in an inclusive environment. • Research and social responsibility in relation to disability. <p>By opening a space in which to speak openly, each organizational unit can identify, from their respective competencies, actions to initiate the transformation towards a more inclusive institution.</p> <p>The internal communication strategy, the training program we have developed (which has not yet concluded) and the development of institutional policies on accessibility and university inclusion are aimed at building an academic community that is sensitive and aware of educational inclusion at different levels.</p> <p>The training sessions were attended by teachers, students, members of the areas that provide student services and collaborators from the administrative area of the six ISFODOSU campuses throughout the country.</p>

	<p>The internal and external communication strategy has been developed to impact mainly undergraduate students, graduates and those related to the Institution (individuals and companies) who live in communities where ISFODOSU has close ties.</p> <p>Both actions have been concurrent with the development of inclusion policies aimed at the integration of people with disabilities.</p>
<p>Resources required</p>	<p>The project has involved 12 students and 7 teachers who have joined the project on a voluntary and honorary basis (among them, some with disabilities); the staff of the Student Welfare Office (approximately 10 people); facilitators from allied institutions, specialists in disability and inclusion issues (National Board for the Blind, National Council for Disability, among others).</p> <p>In budgetary terms, the actions are formulated within the annual operating plans (AOP) of the Academic Vice-rectory.</p>
<p>Evidence of success (results obtained)</p>	<p>A good example of the positive impact of this sensitization and awareness plan is the following:</p> <p>The second stage of the teaching or professionalizing internship takes place during one school year. Insertion in the classroom takes place in teams made up of three students (triads). Last year, a group of students expressed their refusal to be part of a triad with a visually impaired member. If this student did not participate in this activity, his goal of graduating on time would be jeopardized.</p> <p>Given this situation, from the area of professional internships, a differentiated accompaniment to the student and the guidelines for follow-up were defined. This was the beginning of the collaboration between ISFODOSU and the Patronato Nacional de Ciegos (National Board of the Blind), through which a medical diagnosis could be made, and other support was arranged to facilitate his academic career. As a result of these actions, the student completed his university studies and obtained a teaching</p>

	<p>position, after passing the 2021 National Teacher Examination organized by the Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic (MINERD).</p> <p>This experience was decisive in understanding the importance of designing a sensitization and awareness campaign to address issues related to inclusion and disability in the teaching context.</p>
More information	Does not apply
Contact information	Address: Calle Caonabo, Esquina Leonardo D'Vinci Urbanizacion, Santo Domingo 10114 Tel.: 809-482-3797 Ext: 206. Cel 809 604 6007
Names	María Teresa Peralta / Sabrina M. Rivas Pérez
Email	maria.peralta@isfodosu.edu.do / sabrina.rivas@isfodosu.edu.do

ANNEX III COUNTRY: COSTA RICA

Title of the practice	Having an educational support department to follow up on students with educational needs
Detailed information about the practice	<p>Problem addressed: The educational needs of the student/person with disability.</p> <p>How is it reaching its objectives? The creation of support mechanism increases the cooperation between institutional units.</p> <p>Benefited and interested parties: Students with disabilities. The interested parties are the units in charge of providing educational support to people with disabilities</p>
Resources required	Three psychology or special education professionals per center Funding can range between €2651 and €8500
Evidence of success (results obtained)	<p>The student feels supported on their needs. Schools get to know their students with disabilities and other educational needs.</p> <p>The articulation between programs and services is improved to fulfil people with disabilities rights.</p> <p>Task delegation is promoted (Based on the corresponding sector)</p>
More information	<p>https://desk.zoho.com/portal/cenfotec868/es/kb/articles/article</p> <p>https://www.tec.ac.cr/programa-equiparacion-opportunidades</p>
Contact information	+506 6000-8055
Names	Laura Gamboa Peña
Email	lgamboa@ucenfotec.ac.cr