
Inclusion in Higher Education

A human rights perspective

Overview of presentation

- Introduction of the Agency
- Inclusion and Inclusive Education Systems
- Policy on Inclusion in general and on Higher Education in particular
- Data
- Access to information
- Outlook?

The Agency

- An independent organisation that acts as a platform for collaboration for the ministries of education in member countries
- Our mission is to help member countries improve all learners' achievement at all levels of inclusive lifelong learning

What we do

Help member countries improve their educational policy and practice in the field of education by:

- combining the perspectives of policy, practice and research
- providing member countries and stakeholders at the European level with evidence-based information and guidance on implementing inclusive education

Member countries



Currently

- 29 member countries: Austria, Belgium (Flemish and French speaking communities), Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales)
- Secretariat in Odense, Denmark and European Liaison office in Brussels, Belgium

Key activities

- Country policy review and analysis (CPRA) to provide information for member countries on their progress and developments with regards to inclusion
- Thematic projects focusing on priority topics identified by member countries
- Data collection and statistics (EASIE)
- Information dissemination via printed and digital media
- Organisation of special events, European Hearings, conferences, thematic seminars, workshops and meetings to raise awareness, share information and facilitate networking

Inclusion in Education – A system

- Understood to concern a far wider range of learners vulnerable to exclusion than those identified as having disabilities or SENs
- Involves a curriculum for all that considers academic and social learning; curriculum goals and implementation should reflect this dual focus
- Inclusion is a process and not a state; educators will always need to move their work forward to enable the learning and participation of all learners

Position on Inclusive Education Systems

The Agency member countries' shared ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers.

This vision is the focal point of all Agency work.

Legislation ...

... directing inclusive education systems must be underpinned by the fundamental commitment to ensuring every learner's right to inclusive and equitable educational opportunities

Policy ...

... governing inclusive education systems **must provide a clear vision** for and conceptualisation of inclusive education as an approach for improving the educational opportunities of all learners.

Policy must also clearly outline that the **effective implementation of inclusive education systems is the shared responsibility of all educators, leaders and decision-makers.**

Operational Principles ...

... guiding the implementation of structures and procedures within inclusive education systems must be those of

**equity, effectiveness, efficiency and raising
achievements for all stakeholders**

– learners, their parents and families, educational professionals, community representatives and decision-makers – through high-quality, accessible educational opportunities

Challenges for Inclusive Education

- Academic achievements (output) versus meeting individual needs
- Preparing all teachers for inclusive education
- Identifying and meeting the needs of 'out of school' children
- Over 2% of pupils are being educated in separate settings (schools and classes) across Europe

Why is inclusion so relevant?

- UN figures – half a billion people with disabilities worldwide
- WHO/World Bank estimate 15% of the world's population live with some form of disability (80 million in Europe)
- 2% - 18% of the total school population (temporary or permanent educational problems)







Inclusion impacts on everyone!



Ubuntu!

Why is ICT so relevant for inclusion?

- ICT is increasingly seen as a major tool in meeting individual learning needs
- People with disabilities are at risk of being doubly disadvantaged if their access to appropriate ICT is not supported
- They risk becoming one of the main groups experiencing the growing digital divide

Why is ICT so relevant for inclusion?

So while ICT opens up a multitude of educational and life opportunities for people with disabilities and/or special needs,

It is also in danger of denying them these opportunities if the ICT is not:

- Developed to be accessible and using universal design principles
- Available for those that need to access it
- Implemented in a way that it ties into learning processes

Do we have to be inclusive?

Policies supporting inclusion

Access to (Higher) Education as a human right

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a key driving force for change in the area. The Convention emphasises:

- the obligation to ‘provide accessible information to persons with disabilities’ (Art.4);
- the need for ‘the design, development, production and distribution of accessible ICT’ (Art.9);
- the right to education ‘without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity’ for persons with disabilities (Art.24).

Signatories & Ratifications

Convention

Ratifications/Accessions: 166 (85%)

Signatories*: 160

Italy

Signed in March 2007

Ratified in May 2009

Optional Protocol

Ratifications/Accessions: 90 (46%)

Signatories*: 92

Conventions relevance for Higher Education

Article 24:

4. ... employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and **to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education.**

5. ... ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, **adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.** To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

Policies supporting equity in education

- Conclusions on Accessible Information Society (2009)
- Digital Agenda for Europe (2010)
- Post i-2010 Strategy (2010)
- Council Conclusions: Support of the implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2010–2020

Policies supporting access to appropriate ICTs

- Ministerial Declaration on ICT for an Inclusive Society (2006)
- Council Conclusions on Accessible Information Society
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- ET 2020 Framework
- Opening up Education (2013)

Policies relating to Inclusion in HE

- Bologna Process
- Supporting growth and jobs (2011) – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems
- UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030
 - Goal 4 on Education: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education for the vulnerable, including people with disabilities.
- Europe 2020 Strategy
 - The strategy aims to increase the share of the population aged 30-34 having completed tertiary education to at least 40 %.

Inclusion/Access to education is a human right.

Available data?

Difficult to compare data in HE

... If there is any available

Within Europe:

- Differing definitions of disability and/or special needs
- Differing measures of financing and support
- Issue of labeling or disclosure

Barriers to accessing HE

- Physical barriers relating to travelling, studying and living
- Differences in ways of defining disabilities in countries
- Challenges in securing the necessary financial support
- Challenge of succeeding in a new community
- Lack of – or lack of access to – information for both the student and personnel in support services
- Access to accessible ICT and accessible information

What is currently being done at Higher Education for Inclusion?

- Counseling services
- Academic support
- Inclusion and participation in social activities
- Help in transition to active life
- High-level staff in charge of PwD
- Preparation of staff and faculty
- Adding Inclusion into missions of open universities;
- Research and study programmes.

Challenges for Inclusion in Higher Education

- Diversity is not yet reflected:
 - In achievement and success stories
 - In student body, staff, and academic populations.
- Awareness raising and training of the higher education community and beyond (schools, parents, labour market) is still needed.
- Rapid changes in assistive technology make improvements difficult to harness.

Challenges for Inclusion in Higher Education

More students with disabilities are reaching HE level and universities are not prepared for this.

Support to students with disabilities and/or special needs is mainly offered on an individual basis and hence very costly (and public support is receding, when and where available).

What can we do now?

- Mission statement or commitment from University management
- Department responsible for students with disabilities and/or special needs
- Provision of accessible learning material

Providing access to information

ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning

What is accessible information?

Accessible information is understood as information provided in formats that allow every user and learner to access content ‘on an equal basis with others’ (UN).

Accessible information is ideally information that:

- allows all users and learners to easily orientate themselves within the content; and
- can be effectively perceived and understood by different perception channels, such as using eyes and/or ears and/or fingers.

Why is accessibility so important?

All educational organisations have a duty to make their information accessible for everyone.

Access to information is a human right

Providing accessible information has the potential to create synergies, which may equally benefit people with disabilities and special needs, the ageing population as well as all members of society.

Why is accessibility of information important?

We believe the ability to access relevant information for and about education is a crucial prerequisite for learning. When learners have restricted access to information they have restricted access to learning opportunities and this barrier requires active solutions on the part of all stakeholders of lifelong learning to remove these restrictions.

ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning

Network of partners :

1. European Agency (co-ordinator)
2. DAISY
3. European Schoolnet
4. Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ICT)
5. International Association of Universities (IAU)
6. UNESCO

The ICT4IAL Journey

- Developing and Trialling of Practical Guidelines to support accessible information provision for learning materials
- Validation of Guidelines
- Dissemination and Exploitation of Results

Example: Implementation of Guidelines in Universities

International Association of Universities (IAU) participated in developing the Guidelines and trialing them:

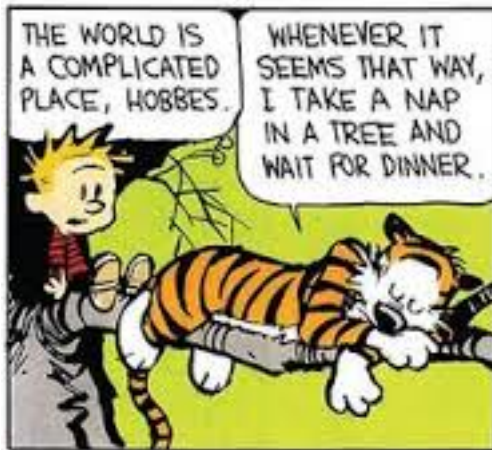
- At the organization's level
 - Organisational documents, emails, presentations
- At a university's level: Open University of Catalonia, Spain
 - Learning materials, online courses

Example: Implementation of Guidelines in Universities

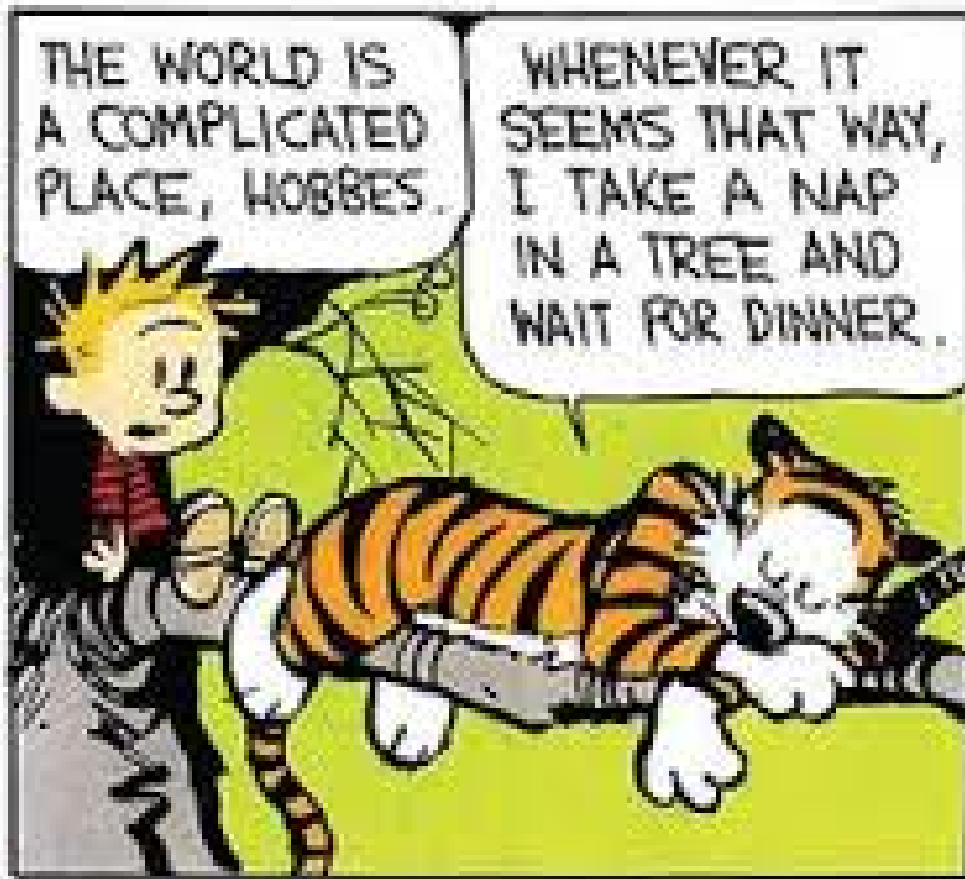
Implementing the Guidelines in both the organisation and University was:

- Easier than imagined
- Less time consuming than expected
- And very rewarding

Is this image meaningful to you (if you can see it)?



Calvin and Hobbes



Calvin (boy): The world is a complicated place, Hobbes.

Hobbes (tiger): Whenever it seems that way, I take a nap in a tree and wait for dinner.

Outcomes of ICT4IAL activities

For Practitioners: Guidelines for the Implementation of Information Accessibility in Learning

- Available in 27 languages (EU languages, Arabic, Chinese and Russian)

For Organisations: *Making your Organisation's Information Accessible for All*

- Recommendations for organisations on steps to providing more accessible information
- Includes a self-audit tool
- Available in 24 EU languages

How can change happen?

Top down:

- National and organisational policies on inclusion, to which each staff member commits and is given the support and resources needed to implement.

Bottom up:

- Individual staff members being aware of where there is exclusion and working towards inclusion.

Inclusion is not a state but a journey!

Thank you!



More information

www.european-agency.org

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